



ANNUAL REPORT

2008



Comhar
Sustainable Development Council

About Comhar Sustainable Development Council

Comhar was first set up in 1999, as Comhar the National Sustainable Development Partnership. It is now known as Comhar, the Sustainable Development Council (SDC). Comhar SDC is 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
- evaluate progress on achieving sustainable development in Ireland
- research and make 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
- advise on means of raising public awareness of sustainable development and environmental issues, and encouraging positive behaviour at individual, community and sectoral levels
- contribute to the formation of a national consensus on sustainable development

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 completed its third term on 31st December 2008 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 full list of members for the third and final 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. Comhar SDC is supported by a full-time Secretariat based in St. Andrew Street, Dublin.

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Chairman's Foreword

I am delighted to present the 9th annual report of Comhar Sustainable Development Council. The year 2008 saw the start of Ireland's slide into recession, bringing with it rising unemployment and less investment in vital infrastructure and technology needed to lead us down a more sustainable path. While the economic situation brings with it a host of challenges, it also provides opportunities for us re-evaluate our society and how we value the environment, social equality and social cohesion. Indeed, Comhar has recognised that it can play a key role in providing advice on how to stimulate the economy, create jobs and minimise our impact on the environment through the green economy.

Ireland still faces many challenging targets at international and EU level. We are on-track to meet or come close to our Kyoto targets, due to the decrease in economic activity. However, there is the danger that we will continue business as usual and not use this as an opportunity to change our behaviour and reduce our emissions in the long run. In particular, we do not want to intensify the gap between the rich and the poor, without reviewing how we can allocate carbon fairly. Comhar has commissioned an extensive piece of work on Cap and Share, a system of allocating carbon fairly throughout society.

2008 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 2008, including:

- Recommendations to the Department of Education and Science to the National Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development
- Recommendations to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government on the Green Paper on Local Government Reform
- Recommendations to the Department of Transport on the Biofuels Obligation Scheme
- Recommendations to the Department of Communications Energy and Natural Resources on the National Energy Efficiency Plan
- Recommendations to the Department of Finance on Carbon Pricing
- Biodiversity recommendations to the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government on the 2nd Biodiversity Action Plan
- Recommendations to the Commission on Taxation
- Recommendations to the Government on the Budget 2009
- Research "*Cap and Share*", a personal carbon trading scheme was undertaken by AEA Technologies and Cambridge Econometrics and the final report of the study was completed in December 2008
- Research on Sustainable Development Indicators, called Sub-national Sustainable Development Indicators was commissioned for the 2008 Comhar Annual Conference and was conducted by Dr. Magnus Amajirionwu and Dr. John Bartlett.
- Sean O'Riordain was commissioned by Comhar SDC to prepare a briefing paper for the 2008 Conference on how best to integrate environment and sustainable development dimensions into the work of the County and City Development Boards, specifically through new environment sub-committees proposed by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.
- Comhar published a report – Adapting to Climate Change: The Challenge Ahead for Local Government.
- A Joint meeting between the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Group and the Biodiversity Forum



Frank Convery.

- Comhar SDC hosted a seminar series on transport during 2007 and 2008. The final seminar was held in January 2008.
- Comhar SDC's Annual Conference 2008
- Comhar SDC Media Fund
- Chairman's Commentary
- In 2008 Comhar SDC sponsored several awards and events including; the Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition, the Tidy Towns Sustainable Development award, Young Environmentalist Sustainable Development Award, Fashion Evolution Industry Roundtable, two Cultivate events and a third level Sustainable Development Lecture Series.

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 a 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. 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

The Work of Comhar SDC in 2008



1 Introduction and Overview of Work

Comhar SDC works in three-year cycles and began its third term on 1st January 2006 under the Chairmanship of Professor Frank Convery. This annual report covers the final year of Comhar SDC's third term, the twelve-month period up to the end of December 2008. 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 2008, 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 Government on the Budget 2009 – Comhar SDC recommended that the focus should be on mobilising markets for a low carbon future that ensures quality of life in Ireland, especially in regard to environmental and social domains, is protected and enhanced.
- Recommendations to the Commission on Taxation – Comhar SDC delivered a set of recommendations to the Commission on Taxation on reducing carbon emissions through fiscal measures. Many of these recommendations were similar to the budget recommendations, especially with regard to the carbon levy.
- Biodiversity recommendations on the 2nd Biodiversity Action Plan – the Biodiversity Forum commissioned an extensive briefing paper for the preparation of a new National Biodiversity Plan (NBP), which was submitted to the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.
- Joint meeting between the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Group and the Biodiversity Forum – the Biodiversity Forum and the Northern Irish Biodiversity Group (NIBG) held a joint conference in Newry on 18th November 2008 entitled 'Ireland's Biodiversity in a Changing Climate – Helping Nature to Adapt and Survive'. The principle aim of the conference was to inform government departments and decision-makers North and South of the actions that need to be taken to support Ireland's biodiversity during this period of rapid climate change.
- Recommendations on Carbon Pricing – Irish greenhouse gas emissions need to be reduced significantly to meet our international commitments. As a result, carbon emissions must be factored into all proposed central government project appraisals in the future. In November 2008, Comhar SDC made recommendations to Department of Finance on the inclusion of carbon pricing in capital project appraisal.
- Recommendations on the National Energy Efficiency Plan – the Department of Communications Energy and Natural Resources issued the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2007-2020 for Consultation in October 2007. Comhar SDC made a number of suggestions for strengthening and improving the plan.

- Transport Seminar Series – Comhar SDC hosted a seminar series on transport during 2007 and 2008. The final seminar was held in January 2008. The seminar examined capital investments including motorways, public transport and technology.
- Recommendations on the Biofuels Obligation Scheme – In 2008, Comhar SDC made recommendations based on the Department of Transport’s public Consultation on the Sustainable Transport and Travel Action Plan. Comhar SDC believes that the key to making transport in Ireland more sustainable is to provide direct incentives to all drivers to reduce their use of fuel and associated carbon dioxide, particulates and other pollutants, and their use of scarce road space at peak travel times, and to improve the availability of alternatives and make them more attractive.
- Recommendations to the Green Paper on Local Government Reform – In September 2008, Comhar SDC made recommendations to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government based on their public consultation on the Green Paper – Stronger Local Democracy: Options for Change.
- Recommendations to the National Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development – In 2008, Comhar inputted into a set of recommendations submitted to the department of Education and Science on a National Strategy for Sustainable Development.
- Comhar SDC’s Annual Conference 2008 – Comhar SDC hosted the conference Implementing Sustainable Development: Empowering Local Communities. It addressed the role of regional and local authorities, local communities and local groups in fostering positive change in relation to sustainable living



Biodiversity Forum, NIBG.

- Comhar SDC Media Fund – the Comhar Sustainable Development Media Fund is a funding scheme offered by Comhar, the Sustainable Development Council, for media projects focusing on sustainable development. The fund is open to all Irish media, and is aimed at promoting more and better coverage of sustainable development issues. 2008 was the first year that the funding was offered.
 - 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.
 - In 2008 Comhar SDC sponsored several awards and events including; the Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition, the TidyTowns Sustainable Development award, Young Environmentalist Sustainable Development Award, Fashion Evolution Industry Roundtable, two Cultivate events and a third level Sustainable Development Lecture Series.
- Comhar SDC’s policy analysis and recommendations is informed by evidence-based research which is undertaken in-house or commissioned following calls for specific proposals. The following commissioned research was completed in 2008:
- The Biodiversity Forum commissioned an extensive briefing paper entitled Conserving Ireland’s Biodiversity for the preparation of a new National Biodiversity Plan (NBP), which was submitted to the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government. The work was conducted by environmental consultant, David Hickie.
 - Research “*Cap and Share*”, a personal carbon trading scheme was undertaken by AEA Technologies and Cambridge Econometrics and the final report of the study was completed in December 2008
 - In November 2008, Comhar SDC made recommendations to Department of Finance on the inclusion of carbon pricing in capital project appraisal. This report was called Carbon Pricing for Central Government: Cost Benefit Analysis in Ireland and was carried out by Shirley Kilcullen, a Masters student at the Dublin Institute of Technology and a part-time intern in Comhar SDC during 2008.
 - Comhar published a report – Adapting to Climate Change: The Challenge Ahead for Local Government. This research was conducted by Comhar SDC interns Niamh Kirwan and Stephen Flood for the 2008 Comhar Annual Conference.
 - Research on Sustainable Development Indicators, called Sub-national Sustainable Development Indicators was commissioned for the 2008 Comhar Annual Conference and was conducted by Dr. Magnus Amajirionwu and Dr. John Bartlett.
 - Sean O’Riordain was commissioned by Comhar SDC to prepare a briefing paper for the 2008 Conference on how best to integrate environment and sustainable development dimensions into the work of the County and City Development Boards, specifically through new environment sub-committees proposed by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

2 Comhar SDC Working Groups

Many of the issues highlighted in the work programme were actively pursued through Comhar SDC's working groups. The working groups for the last year of Comhar SDC's third term, focused on specific issues – such as climate change, biodiversity or education and awareness. The working group membership comprised Comhar council members, secretariat staff members and other interested stakeholders, where appropriate. Ad hoc groups may be established from time to time to address particular items.

2.1 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 in Ireland, 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.

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. In 2008, Comhar SDC published the Biodiversity Forum's briefing paper with an extensive set of recommendations for the second national biodiversity plan.

The Biodiversity Forum members in 2008 were;

Peter Wyse Jackson <i>(Chair)</i>	National Botanic Gardens
Rosaleen Dwyer	LA Biodiversity/Heritage Officers Network
Karin Dubsy	Coastwatch
Ethna Diver	Institutes of Technology
Anja Murray	An Taisce
Fr Sean Healy	CORI
Cathy Maguire	Envirocentre
Ken Whelan	Marine Institute
Ornagh Darcy	Irish Rural Dwellers Association
Clodhna O'Brien	Heritage Council
Liam Lysaght	Heritage Council
Bob Brown	NIBG
Ken Bradley	DOE NI
Louise McAlavey	DOE NI
Mike Meharg	Environment and Heritage Service
Renny McKeown	Northern Ireland Environment Agency
Siobhan Egan	Birdwatch Ireland
Niamh Hunt	Janssen Pharmaceutical Ltd.
Rob O'Shea	IBEC
Richard Moles	University of Limerick
Ruaidhri Deasy	Irish Farmers' Association
David Kelly	NPWS (DOEHLG)
Ciaran O'Keefe	NPWS (DOEHLG)
Colman O'Críodáin	NPWS (DOEHLG)
Noel Casserly	Comhar
Paschal Stephens	Comhar
Niamh Kirwan	Comhar

2.2 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 completed in December 2008. The main role of the climate change working group in 2008 was steering the publication of this commissioned work.

The members of the working group in 2008 were;

Pat Finnegan	Grian
Richard Douthwaite	FEASTA
Mark Winkelmann	DoEHLG
Ornagh Darcy	IRDA
Emer Colleran	NUI Galway
Tony Larkin	CCMA
Laura Burke	EPA
David Manning	IBEC
Frank Convery	Comhar SDC
Noel Casserly	Comhar SDC
Shirley Kilcullen	Comhar SDC
Stephen Flood	Comhar SDC
Lisa Ryan	Comhar SDC

2.3 Communication, Education and Awareness Working Group

The working group was established to make recommendations on developing outreach activities. The working group recognised that there is major challenge to communicate sustainable development in a manner that is more meaningful and understandable to the broader general public. The main aims of the group included:

- 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).
- Making policy recommendations, as appropriate, to advance ESD Ireland including on the adoption and implementation of a national strategy for education for sustainable development.
- Participation in the network of the Regional Centre of Expertise for Education for Sustainable Development (RCE).
- Reviewing existing funding mechanisms for ESD.

The members of the working group in 2008 were;

Liam Johnston	ENFO
Matt Crowe	EPA
Emer Dunne	Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers
Billy Murphy	Co. Wexford Partnership/Planet
Roland Tormey	University of Limerick
Elaine Nevin	Eco-unesco
Carmel Sheridan	Limerick VEC
Niamh Hunt	Janssen Pharmaceutical Ltd.
Matthew Seebach	National Youth Council of Ireland
Ben Whelan	Cultivate
Michael McKenna	DoEHLG
Laura Burke	EPA
Noel Casserly (Chair)	Comhar SDC
Stephen Flood	Comhar SDC
Lisa Ryan	Comhar SDC
Niamh Kirwan	Comhar SDC

2.4 Transport Working Group

The Government has announced that a Sustainable Transport Action Plan (STAP) will be published in 2008. The Department of Transport is preparing this Action Plan and has begun soliciting input from different stakeholders. A Working Group on Sustainable Transport was formed gather stakeholder views and the latest national and international research findings to provide input to the debate and to make specific recommendations to the Government and the Department of Transport in particular. The Working Group on Sustainable Transport had the following specific tasks;

- Seek to 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 members of the working group in 2008 were;

David Browne	Department of Transport
Liam Berney	ICTU
Pat Finnegan	GRIAN
Brendan Walsh (<i>Chair</i>)	UCD
Stephen Flood	Comhar SDC
Lisa Ryan	Comhar SDC
Frank Convery	Comhar SDC
Noel Casserly	Comhar SDC
Paul Sweetman	IBEC
Judy Dunne	Consumers' Association of Ireland
Richard Douthwaite	FEASTA
Tony Larkin	CCMA

3

The Work of Comhar SDC in 2008

A summary of the main recommendations and advice is set out in the following paragraphs. The full text of the Comhar SDC recommendations and advice can be found on our website www.comharsdc.ie

3.1 Recommendations on Budget 2009

Comhar SDC made specific proposals to the Department of Finance, in October 2008, on the national budget for 2009. Comhar SDC recommended that a carbon levy should be introduced immediately in the non-ETS sectors to provide the right signals to emissions reduction activities. Initially the carbon levy should be set at the same price as the ETS market price to encourage least cost reductions although emissions targets for the non-ETS sectors will be more difficult and expensive to meet than in the ETS sector. This would imply a levy of approximately €20 per tCO₂, which would translate to roughly 5c per litre of petrol. It should be clearly marked on receipts to raise awareness of the carbon implications of purchases.

The carbon levy revenue should be ring-fenced for specific activities. For example, in the residential sector carbon levy funds could be used to eliminate fuel poverty, provide grants to increase alternative fuel use in homes; give tax credits to spending on energy efficiency measures such as home insulation, continue grants for renewable heating and electricity systems. Comhar SDC prioritised the following sectors to reduce GHG emissions:

- Agriculture will not be affected by a carbon tax and investment is needed in education and incentives for best practice in cattle and slurry management.
- The rate of sustainable afforestation should be increased significantly to provide carbon sequestration and biomass options.

- Policy measures for sustainable transport should focus on a rural transport strategy, least cost options such as eco-driving and work towards a national road pricing system.
- Refund a portion of carbon tax to the services sector under condition that companies join energy-saving agreements.
- Implement green procurement requirements beginning with public sector.
- In the residential sector, carbon tax funds could be used to eliminate fuel poverty, provide grants to increase alternative fuel use in homes; give tax credits to spending on energy efficiency measures such as home insulation, continue grants for renewable heating and electricity systems.

3.2 Recommendations to the Commission on Taxation

Comhar SDC delivered a set of recommendations to the Commission on Taxation on reducing carbon emissions through fiscal measures. Many of these recommendations were similar to the budget recommendations, especially with regard to the carbon levy.

3.3 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.

3.3.1 Recommendations on the 2nd Biodiversity Action Plan

The Biodiversity Forum commissioned an extensive briefing paper for the preparation of a new National Biodiversity Plan (NBP), which was submitted to the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government in April 2008. The work was undertaken by David Hickie. The main recommendations were the following;

- The knowledge base for biodiversity conservation needs to be built up. Information on the current status of protected species and biodiversity within protected areas needs to be compiled and readily available.
- The second NBP should include well-defined, measurable targets set out within a manageable time frame. S.M.A.R.T. (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time bound) targets ensure that stakeholders involved in the execution of targets are left with no confusion in relation to the precise actions to be carried out, timescales and priorities.
- Biodiversity should be 'core' or 'mainstream' in decision-making at government level. Concern for biodiversity issues should not be relegated to particular sections of the government, but should be fully incorporated as a fundamental matter pertaining to all relevant cabinets. Cooperation between various governmental departments is vital in order to make further progress with conservation and ensure a wide-reaching influence within all sectors of society. There is a necessity for cross-cutting measures that integrate biodiversity into all relevant national plans and programmes, spatial planning, financial schemes, and the tax system.
- Involvement in biodiversity issues also requires broader integration into other sectors of society, such as planning, agriculture, forestry, transport, education, tourism and leisure, and horticulture.

- Public awareness needs to be substantially increased. Harnessing local groups and ensuring local engagement with biodiversity issues would have a significant impact on conservation.
- Protected areas need to be expanded and their management and monitoring improved.
- Biodiversity conservation outside protected areas needs to be substantially improved through better planning, partnerships, incentives and enforcement.
- The effects of climate change, invasive species and bio-safety need to be investigated and responses prepared in order to protect biodiversity in Ireland.
- Ireland should aim to take a lead role in reversing loss of biodiversity, taking encouragement from successful national social and economic initiatives.
- Ireland has one of the highest per capita ecological footprints in the world and has a significant amount of work to do to protect biodiversity. Ireland's obligations in biodiversity conservation extend well beyond its national boundaries too. The NBP should recognise that biodiversity, wherever it occurs in the world, should not be put at risk as a result of Ireland's actions.

3.3.2 Joint Meeting between the NIBG and the Biodiversity Forum

The Biodiversity Forum (BFI) and the Northern Irish Biodiversity Group (NIBG) held a joint conference in Newry on 18th November 2008 entitled 'Ireland's Biodiversity in a Changing Climate – Helping Nature to Adapt and Survive'. The principle aim of the conference was to inform government departments and decision-makers North and South of the actions that need to be taken to support Ireland's biodiversity during this period of rapid climate change. The conference was chaired by Dr. Bob Brown (NIBG) and Dr. Peter Wyse Jackson (BFI). Comhar SDC commissioned a briefing paper on the effects of climate change on biodiversity in Ireland, which was presented at the conference. The key

point arising from the conference was that action, including harmonisation of adaptation policies, is required on an all-island basis to help biodiversity adapt to climate change. Other recommendations were made under the headings; Research, Monitoring, Sites, Planning and Renewable Energy.

3.4 Climate Change

Combating climate change represents an increasingly difficult challenge for Ireland. 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. A National Climate Change Strategy was published in 2007, which set the policy framework for tackling climate change in Ireland from 2007-2012.

3.4.1 Recommendations on Carbon Pricing

Irish greenhouse gas emissions need to be reduced significantly to meet our international commitments. As a result, carbon emissions must be factored into all proposed central government project appraisals in the future. In November 2008, Comhar SDC made recommendations to Department of Finance on the inclusion of carbon pricing in capital project appraisal. This report was called *Carbon Pricing for Central Government: Cost Benefit Analysis in Ireland* and was carried out by Shirley Kilcullen, a Masters student at the Dublin Institute of Technology and a part-time intern in Comhar SDC during 2008.

- As an interim measure, the EU ETS futures pricing should be used as a carbon pricing basis for the period 2008 to 2012. December 2013 and December 2014 futures prices should be used for 2013 and 2014.
- All market-based pricing should be based on calendar year averages, to avoid structural break related price distortions.

- For the post-2014 period, a fixed price of €39t/CO₂ is recommended since the European Commission assumed an average carbon price of €39/tCO₂ in its Impact Assessment of the January 2008 Proposed Climate Change and Renewable Energy Measures from 2012 to 2020
- As a matter of urgency, Marginal Abatement Cost Curves should be carried out for all sectors in Ireland. These sectoral MAC curves should be used to inform national climate change policy going forward.
- As simplicity is one of the key criteria in the carbon price setting process, the application of sectoral MAC-based prices in a public CBA context would be overly complex and could lead to serious errors or inaccuracies. Consequently, there is strong preference for the usage of a single aggregate MAC-based carbon price in public CBA for capital project appraisal in the long-term.

3.5 Energy

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

3.5.1 Recommendations to the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan

In October 2007, The Department of Communications Energy and Natural Resources issued the draft National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2007-2020 for consultation. The draft 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, including:

- 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, addressing the relevant 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 relevant actions for each policy instrument.
- 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.

3.6 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).

3.6.1 Transport Seminar Series

Comhar SDC hosted a seminar series on transport. The final seminar was held in January 2008. 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.

The seminar examined capital investments including motorways, public transport and technology. The main topics of discussion were

- Carbon-proofing infrastructure expenditure
- Sustainability in road design (e.g. ecosystem protection, induced traffic)
- Appraisal of public transport and other non-car infrastructure
- Freight
- Supply-side technology

3.6.2 Recommendations to the Sustainable Transport and Travel Action Plan

In 2008, Comhar SDC made recommendations in response to the Department of Transport's public Consultation on the draft Sustainable Transport and Travel Action Plan. Comhar SDC believes that the key to making transport in Ireland more sustainable is to

- provide direct incentives to all drivers to reduce their use of fuel and associated emissions of carbon dioxide, particulates and other pollutants,
- minimise their use of scarce road space at peak travel times, and
- improve the availability of alternatives and make them more attractive

Transport impacts can be reduced with the good design of transport policies and in many cases will require political leadership and the ability to draw together many different areas of policy. Comhar SDC believes that the Department of Transport has a key role to play in implementing transport policy measures directly and indirectly by putting the institutional arrangements in place to lead collaboration with other departments and agencies on transport policy.

Priorities for sustainable transport policy can be focused on the five Is:

- Incentives
- Integration with planning
- Infrastructure
- Institutional arrangements
- Information

The first two of these – Incentives and Integration with planning – are key to sustainable transport yet not wholly within the remit of the Department of Transport. However, transport incentives and fiscal measures are urgently needed to deliver behavioural change and also to provide a source of revenue for investments in transport services and infrastructure currently lacking. Better institutional arrangements are needed to ensure that policies can be implemented effectively and at least cost, while information helps us measure our performance and informs us of the consequences of our actions.

Where incentives take the form of increased taxes or levies, the revenues should in effect be given back to those who paid them to support investment and behaviour that encourages conservation of energy and road space, and that protects the most vulnerable.

3.6.3 Recommendations on the Biofuels Obligation Scheme

The Government intends to introduce a biofuels obligation to ensure that a certain percentage of the transport fuel used in the state by 2010 consists of biofuels. This means that from 2010 it will be obligatory for all transport fuel suppliers to ensure that a certain percentage of their fuels are made up of biofuels. In October 2008, Comhar SDC made recommendations to the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources as part of the consultation process on the Biofuels Obligation Scheme (BOS). The main recommendations were:

- An Impact Assessment for the scheme is needed. This is necessary to identify the impact of the scheme on
 - Environmental impact – estimated CO₂ emissions savings?
 - Employment/Rural development;
 - Agricultural practices;
 - Production of other crops;
 - Macroeconomic impacts.
- The purpose of the BOS should be made clear. It appears from the consultation paper that the priority is to increase the share of renewable energy in transport. This does should not be a goal in itself, rather it should be more strategic, such as to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from transport, increase rural development, or to increase the security of Irish energy supply. Depending on the chosen goal, the scheme should be designed accordingly.
- The target metric should be changed from volume to energy equivalent substitution or GHG emissions saved, depending on the priority of the scheme. A volume target may not mean anything in terms of how much energy is replaced or GHG emissions are saved. The EU biofuels Directive targets are given in energy equivalence terms so if different metrics are used in Ireland then it may be difficult to reconcile the amount of biofuels used with our EU commitments.

- The benefits and costs of this measure should be estimated at different levels of biofuels penetration on the Irish market in order to properly evaluate the merits of the scheme.
- If a volume-based scheme is used, then increased credits or certificates should be awarded to suppliers of biofuels with higher greenhouse gas emissions savings. In addition there should be incentives to supply advanced or 2nd generation indigenously-produced fuels, however more work is needed to establish the details of such a scheme.

3.7 Governance

3.7.1 Recommendations to the Green Paper on Local Government Reform

In September 2008, Comhar SDC made recommendations to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in response to the public consultation on the Green Paper – *Stronger Local Democracy: Options for Change*. Comhar SDC's main recommendations include;

- Comhar SDC supports a directly elected mayor. However, Comhar cautions that it is essential that the geographic boundaries are well defined and respect potential future considerations. Defining the boundaries is a difficult task and it needs to be conducted properly in the beginning.
- In addition, the mayor should not simply be an extra layer, with no real authority or power. Developing this role is an opportunity to enact real change. The role of the mayor needs to be extremely well defined and his/her powers should be clarified. This needs to be stated in terms of the role (mission statement) of the mayor and a clear set of targets that he/she is expected to meet. Accountability requirements also need to be drawn up.
- A link with the transport authority would be essential, as transport is one of the key concerns in Dublin's development. It is essential in ensuring continued economic success and in reducing carbon emissions (through effective and efficient public transport services).
- Regional authorities could potentially play a more significant role in Ireland and offer a valuable link between national and local government. They play more of a strategic role than a delivery role, and as a result do not always get the necessary funds. The Dublin regional authority could play a significant role in retaining links between the mayor and both national and local government, as well as ensuring a flow of information between the three parties.
- There needs to be definite links between mayors and national government. This could be conducted through a board, or through a mayor representative body, similar to the County and City Managers Association for local authority executive managers. This communication must be two way. The mayors must be able to communicate with national government as easily as national government can communicate with local government. Establishing strong links and effective means of communication with local government should be a key priority of national government in order to succeed in local government reform.
- Local authorities should be encouraged to use Section 109 of the LG Act 2001 to establish a Community Fund to foster greater participation of community and voluntary sector and active citizenship engagement.
- While local authorities need to be continually developing and streamlining services they also need to concentrate on 'softer activities' such as developing links with the community, and funding and supporting community groups. Local government is expected to be as efficient as organisations in the market place, but also has to administer many added functions and does not have a single focus.

3.8 Education, Awareness and Communication

3.8.1 Recommendations to the National Strategy for ESD

The Irish government made a commitment to the development of a National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). 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.

In 2007 and 2008, Comhar SDC inputted into the drafting of a National Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development under the coordination of the Department of Education and Science. At the end of 2008, publication of the National Strategy for ESD was still awaited.

3.8.2 Regional Centre for Expertise for ESD

The Regional Centre of Expertise – Ireland (RCE – Ireland) is an action and research network consisting of higher education institutes, public sector bodies and NGOs. RCE-Ireland aims to promote and support activities and research that result in effective integration of ESD principles and practices into formal, informal and non-formal education in Ireland. Comhar SDC is an active member of the RCE network and hosts quarterly meetings.



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

4

Comhar SDC's Annual Conference 2008 and Commissioned Briefing Papers

Comhar SDC hosted the conference *Implementing Sustainable Development: Empowering Local Communities* on 11th and 12th November 2008. It addressed the role of regional and local authorities, local communities and local groups in fostering positive change in relation to sustainable living. The issues addressed were:

1. Governance and structures: the role of local and regional authorities
2. Local communities and best practice
3. Developing local responses for adapting to climate change
4. Local and regional indicators for sustainable development

The conference was inter-active with a mix of keynote presentations, panel discussion and open forum. 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:

- Comhar SDC published a report – *Adapting to Climate Change: the Challenge Ahead for Local Government*. This research was conducted in-house for the 2008 Comhar Annual Conference. The research examined international best practice to provide practical adaptation measures for local authorities. It addressed a range of adaptation issues including; flooding water supply, biodiversity, agriculture, coastal management, infrastructure and planning/development.

- Research on *Sub-national Sustainable Development Indicators* was commissioned for the 2008 Comhar Annual Conference and was conducted by Dr. Magnus Amajirionwu and Dr. John Bartlett. The research examined the actions required for developing and implementing sub-national SDIs in Ireland.
- Sean O’Riordain was commissioned by Comhar SDC to prepare a briefing paper for the 2008 Conference on how best to integrate environment and sustainable development dimensions into the work of the County and City Development Boards, specifically through new environment sub-committees proposed by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

5 Outreach

5.1 Comhar SDC Media Fund

The Comhar Sustainable Development Media Fund is a funding scheme offered by Comhar SDC for media projects focusing on sustainable development. The fund is open to all Irish media, and is aimed at promoting more and better coverage of sustainable development issues.

The successful applicants in 2008 were selected by a judging panel comprising Noel Casserly (Director, Comhar SDC), Duncan Stewart (Environmentalist and TV broadcaster), Elaine Nevin (Director, ECO – Unesco), Martina Quinn (DHR Communications) and Stephen Flood (Comhar SDC). The maximum level of funding per successful applicant was €2,000. The award recipients were:

Recipient of Award	Description of Project	Award
Colm Ward (Limerick Leader)	“Making Regeneration Sustainable” : A print media project that examined how sustainable development principles can be applied to the Limerick regeneration projects. The applicant examined previous experience, particularly in Ballymun, to identify what lessons can be learned and how these can be applied to Limerick.	€400
Aengus Daly (Raidió Na Life)	“A mhuintir á bheathú, fear agus bó” (His people a nourishing, man and cow): A 52 minute radio documentary (2 x 26 minutes) detailing the life story and practices of an organic milk farmer (Mr. Koot) in Norway and his work, through farming, to heal and nurture people from the community. The applicant visited the farm interviewed Mr. Koot, some members of his family and others working there.	€1,200
Damian Palin (Design and Sustainability Consultant)	“Designer Waste” : A 27 minute television documentary, ‘Designer Waste’, a sustainability workshop run by Global Action Plan (GAP) Ballymun.	€1,600
Gary Delaney (Spline Design)	“My Power Crib” : An interactive 3D internet site employing an exploratory format that uses a combination of motion graphics and audio. It aims to teach children about the merits of implementing renewable practices in the home and introducing them to a sustainable ways of living.	€800
John Callaghan (Eden Bee)	“Turn it off” short film (published on a video podcast on www.thebubble.ie) which highlights the ecological message of energy consumption. The film was created using light trail photography. The film’s aim is to be the world’s first short film production entirely powered by renewable energy. To do this the film makers intend to purchase a solar power kit to charge the batteries used by the cameras, and to power the laptops used in the post production process.	€2,000

5.2 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 2008:

- Sustainability and the Nuclear Option – examines the pros and cons of nuclear power for electricity generation in Ireland.
- Sustainability and the Transatlantic Arc: Creating Markets for Greenhouse Gas Abatement and Innovation on Both Sides of the Atlantic – looks at creating markets for greenhouse gas abatement and innovation on both side of the Atlantic
- The Missing Signage Gene – looks at the lack of signage in Ireland
- Information and Sustainability – examines the need for better consumer and policy information to reach sustainability
- Easter and Sustainability – examines religion and our moral imperative to achieve sustainable development
- Biofuels: Costing the Earth? – looks at biofuels, their impacts on food production and need to link bio-fuel production targets with climate change mitigation
- Titles and Substance – examines the use of titles
- The Elephant in the Room – considers how Dublin will meet its water needs in the future, specifically looking at two options – water pricing and identifying new water sources
- Getting the Cap to Fit – comments on how to achieve a 20 per cent reduction in the non-trading sectors by 2020 through fiscal measures
- Sustainability and Final Waste Disposal – outlines how to most efficiently address that fraction of household waste that must go to final disposal
- Size and Sustainability: Does it Matter? – examines trends for bigger cars, houses, food portions etc and their impact on sustainability
- Purging the Sins of Car Emissions – gives some tips on 'ecodriving' and on how to choose a fuel-efficient car to best meet your needs
- Boston and Sustainability: Reflections on Cities and Universities – looks at cultural differences and what Ireland can learn.
- Chaos and Sustainability – outlines the role of environmental economics research
- Age, Lisbon and Sustainability – reflects on the result of the recent Lisbon Treaty referendum, considering if age was a deciding factor in how people cast their vote
- Saving Money While Saving the Environment – outlines some eco-friendly cost-saving measures to help readers meet the challenges of the current downturn
- Flooding: The Importance of River Basin Management – comments on the recent floods in different parts of the country, and the role river basin management has to play in preventing future flooding
- A Sensible Fact-Based Debate with Michael O'Leary – response to views recently expressed by Michael O'Leary, Chief Executive of Ryanair, on the topic of sustainable transport
- Irish Living Longer as Mortality Rates Decline – Guest commentator Brendan Walsh looks at recent trends in Ireland's mortality rates and highlights the factors that have led to Irish people living longer

- Where's the Salad? – addresses the recent call from the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation for consumers to eat less meat, and explores the implications for Irish agriculture
- Innovation and the Budget: Sustaining Progress During the Big Adjustment – outlines why it is essential that Budget 2009 stimulates innovation in the Irish economy
- Financial Chaos and Sustainability – looks at the causes behind the current financial crisis and the steps that must be taken to ensure a sustainable, reliable financial system in the future.
- Not so Smart Metres – Guest commentator Professor Gerry Wrixon argues that lowering CO₂ emissions in Ireland can be better achieved with the introduction of buy back schemes for micro-generators rather than installing smart meters.
- Culture, Creativity and Sustainable Development – Noel Casserly, Director of Comhar SDC, looks at the links between culture and sustainable development and the impact of contemporary consumer culture on the sustainability agenda.
- Christmas and Sustainability – outlines why we should view Christmas as a time to wind down and rediscover the joys of the more simple things in life.

5.3 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.

5.3.1 Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition

In 2008, Comhar SDC sponsored a special sustainable development award in the BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition. 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. In 2008, the Comhar sustainable development award was won by the students from Presentation Secondary School, Thurles, Co. Tipperary for their project "Carbon Footprint: Obviously Not Obvious."

5.3.2 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. In 2008, the Comhar SDC sustainable development award was made to Ardee Civic Offices, Fairgreen, Ardee, Co. Louth.

5.3.3 Young Environmentalist Award

The Awards, which are run by Eco-unesco, 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. The Comhar Sustainable Development award went to St. Killian's Community School, Bray, Co. Wicklow for their project 'Grow Your Own'. The overall Junior Young Environmentalist Awards 2007 went jointly to students from Banbridge High School and St. Catherine's College, Armagh. The overall Senior Young Environmentalist Awards 2007 went to students from CBS Secondary School, Charleville, Cork.

Further information available at www.ecounesco.ie

5.3.4 Fashion Evolution

In April 2008, Comhar SDC sponsored industry roundtable talks as part of Fashion Evolution. The aim of the seminar was to open discussion between Irish educators, designers, buyers and researchers on the ethical and environmental effects of the industry with a view to developing strategies and shaping future policies/practices with regards to ethical and environmental standards.

Further information available at www.re-dress.ie

5.3.5 Cultivate

Over a number of years, Comhar SDC has sponsored events and activities undertaken by the Cultivate Sustainable Living Centre in Dublin. Comhar SDC has provided funding for educational events and activities which are complementary to the work of Comhar SDC and which engage with a wide range of sectors and local communities. Comhar SDC provided funding for the following initiatives in 2008.

- The Convergence Festival in April 2008 which focused on Transition Strategies and looked at how communities can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build resilience and Rethinking The City which explored how cities can respond to climate change and energy uncertainty.
- Rethinking Education in the Light of Climate Change in November 2008
- Further development and the progressing of FETAC accreditation of the Powerdown Course
- Initial set up and administration of the Transition Town Network in Ireland

Further information available at www.cultivate.ie

5.3.6 3rd Level Sustainable Development Lecture Series

Comhar SDC, in conjunction with the EPA, funded an Occasional Lecture Series delivered by Gavin Harte, consultant in Education for Sustainable Development. The lecture is flexible and can be tailored to meet the specific needs and interests of diverse groups of students. It covers a broad range of topics under the theme of sustainable development. Student evaluations of the lecture series suggest that it is an effective tool for learning about sustainable development.

Further information available at www.esdtraining.net

6 International Dimension

6.1 Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC)

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 Bordeaux, France in October 2008 and participating councils adopted a statement on Sustaining Europe for a *Long Way Ahead: Making long-term sustainable development policies work*. The purpose of the conference was to assess the capacity and effectiveness of present day governing institutions for designing and creating sustainable futures for Europe, and to relations to the planet as a whole, for the rest of the century.

Noel Casserly, the director of Comhar SDC prepared a paper examining what forms of cultural norms, social outlooks and patterns of citizen behaviour will be needed for guaranteeing sustainable long-term futures, bearing in mind the shifts that will also have to take place in governance and education and markets. Further information on the EEAC is available at www.eeac-network.org.

6.2 UN CSD – 16th Session

The 16th Session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) took place at UN headquarters in New York, from 5th-16th May 2008. CSD 16 aimed to review the thematic cluster of issues relating to agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa. A re-occurring theme throughout CSD-16 was the connection between the food crisis and climate change. Noel Casserly represented Comhar SDC as part of the Irish delegation.



Comhar SDC meet school children.

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: Professor Frank Convery

Pillar 1 – State/Public Sector

Noel Keyes

The Heritage Council

Tony Larkin

County and City Managers' Association

Tom O'Mahony

Environmental Network of Government Departments

Laura Burke

Environmental Protection Agency

ClIr. Therese Ridge

General Council of County Councils

Pillar 2 – Economic Sectors

Niamh Hunt

Chambers of Commerce of Ireland

Donal Buckley

Irish Business and Employers' Confederation

Liam Berney

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

EENGOFC

Anja Murray

EENGOFC

Richard Douthwaite

EENGOFC

Pillar 4 – Social/Community NGOs

Judy Dunne

Consumers' Association of Ireland

Br. Kevin Codd

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 Moles

Royal Irish Academy

Caitriona Maguire

EnviroCentre Belfast

Eithne Diver

Council of Directors of the Institutes of Technology

Carmel Sheridan

Royal Dublin Society

Emer Colleran

Royal Irish Academy

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 review¹ 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, 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 a 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.

¹ Making Ireland's Development Sustainable: Review, Assessment and Future Action (2002).

A recent study² 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 Plan³ commits to the establishment of a Biodiversity Forum, comprising a broad range of representatives reflecting the scope of the Plan. The earlier Comhar SDC report⁴ 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 material⁵.

■ **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).

■ **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 prosperity⁶ 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 consultations⁷ on the UN Decade for ESD at the Convergence Festival in Dublin and this can provide a context for taking this work forward.

² Sustaining Sustainability: A benchmark study on national strategies towards sustainable development and the impact of councils in nine EU member states (2005).

³ Published by the Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government on 4th November 2005.

⁴ *Comhar Recommendations on the Implementation and Review of the National Biodiversity Plan* – November 2004.

⁵ This Fund has now been established and will be administered by the Heritage Council.

⁶ *Redefining Prosperity: resource productivity, economic growth and sustainable development* – UK Sustainable Development Commission, 2003.

⁷ Organised by the Sustainable Ireland Co-operative and Eco-Unesco in June and October 2005.

- **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.⁸
- **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 strategies⁹ 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.

⁸ 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.

⁹ 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>.

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.

The NESC and CSO have already done work¹⁰ 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 UK¹¹ and Finland¹². The EU 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.

¹⁰ In 2002, the NESC 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*.

¹¹ 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/

¹² The Commission has already published a communication to members of the Commission – February 2005.

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.

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.

Appendix 4 Quality Customer Service

We are committed to the provision of high quality service to all its customers. During the year under review we developed and published the Comhar SDC Customer Charter.

Our Customers

Our customers are varied and come from many sectors including members of the public, schools/universities, elected representatives, Government Departments, local authorities, international organisations and many voluntary and representative groups.

Our Aim

We aim at all times to provide our customers with a professional, efficient and courteous service and to do our best to improve the standards of the service which we provide. The purpose of this Customer Charter is to set out the standard of service our customers can expect to receive from Comhar SDC. (Note: the publication of a Customer Charter is not intended to create new legal rights for customers)

Our Commitment to our Customers

Customer satisfaction is very important to us and we aim to achieve this by:

- giving our customers the best possible service and advice;
- treating customers in a proper, fair, impartial and courteous manner;
- aiming to ensure that rights to equal treatment set out by equality legislation are upheld in the delivery of our services;
- aiming, where possible, to meet any special need our customers may have.

Telephone Enquiries

Our aim is to answer all calls quickly. We will identify ourselves, be polite and helpful, and do our best to provide our customers with clear and correct information. If we cannot give an answer straight away, we will take the customers details and call them back at a suitable time.

Written Communications

We will deal with written correspondence as soon as is practicable and acknowledge receipt if there is going to be an undue delay in responding. Our staff will provide our customers with full contact details and if the correspondence is for another Government Department or body, we will pass it on directly to them and we will tell the customer what we have done with it.

Personal Callers

We will be available to meet by appointment with our customers during normal office hours. We will greet visitors politely, be fair and helpful, and deal with their enquiries as quickly as possible. We will also make sure that our offices are accessible for people with disabilities.

Equal Status Policy

We are fully committed to providing a service that all our customers can avail of and that treats all customers equally. We will do our best to make sure that the service we provide takes account of the needs that particular groups of customers may have.

Service in Irish

We will ensure that customers who wish to deal with us through Irish can do so.

Customer Complaints

If a customer has a complaint about the service we have provided they should either ask to speak to Paschal Stephens who will investigate the complaint, or write to Comhar, 17 St. Andrew St., Dublin 2. We will acknowledge complaints within 5 working days and try to deal with them within 10 working days. If we need to carry out further investigations we will let the customer know and will try to have this completed within 20 working days. If the customer is still not satisfied with the outcome they can write to the: Office of the Ombudsman, 18 Lower Leeson Street, Dublin 2. Telephone +353 1 678 5222; LoCall 1890 22 30 30; email: ombudsman@ombudsman.irlgov.ie

Contact Point/ Phone Numbers

Tel: 01 8883990

Fax: 01 8883999

Website: www.comharsdc.ie

Email: comhar@environ.ie

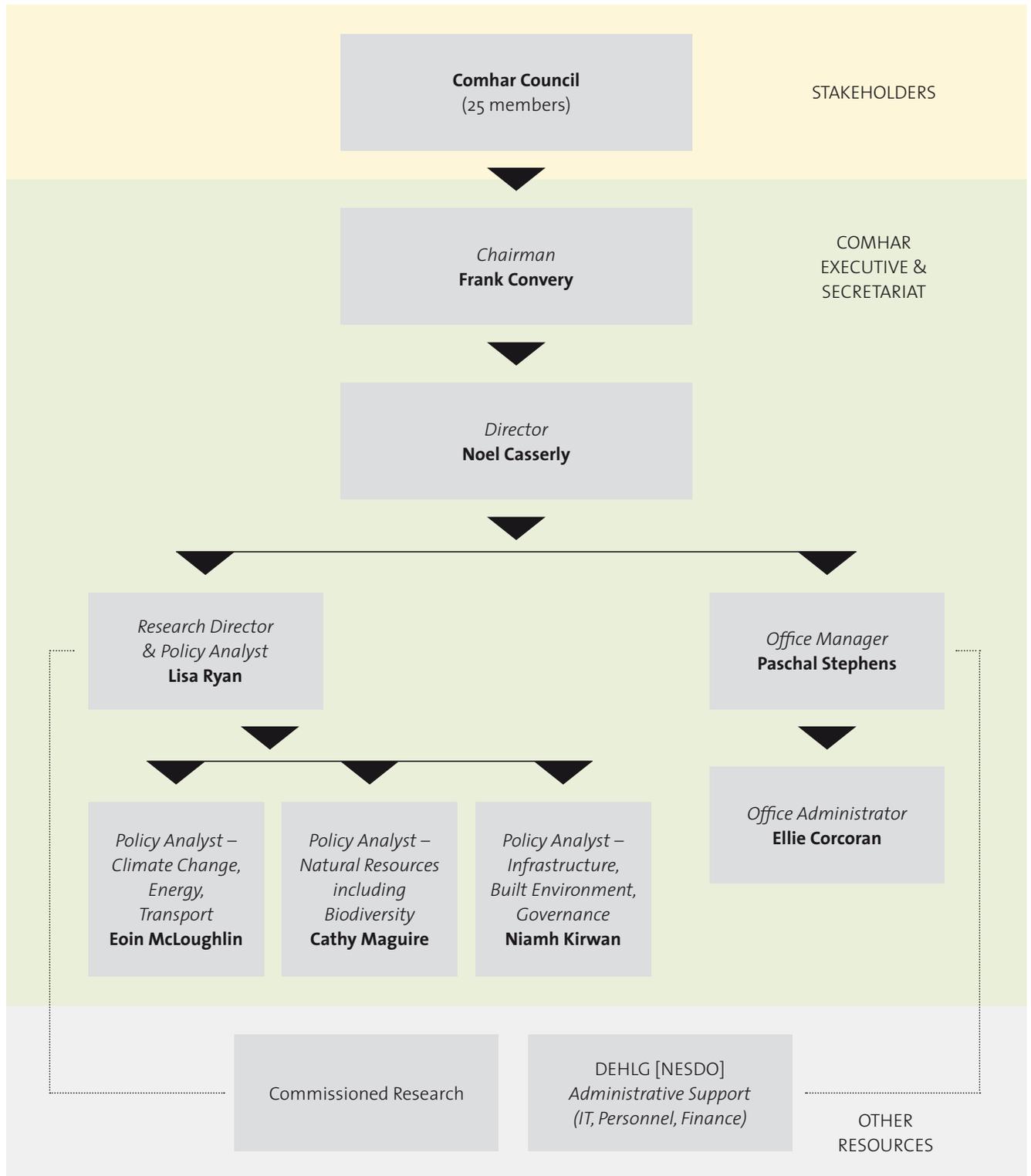
Comhar

Sustainable Development Council

17 St Andrew St

Dublin 2

Appendix 5 Staff Organisation Chart





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Ireland

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Fax: +353 1 888 3999
LoCall: 1890 200 327
Email: comhar@environ.ie
Web: www.comharsdc.ie

