

# NIEL 'From Message to Behaviour Change' Conference 7<sup>th</sup> March 2011 – NIEA Strategic Plan Workshop

## Discussion paper questions:

- *What is the role of this Strategic Plan in relation to the Environmental Strategy?*
- *What role does partnership and integration have in the Plan?*
- *Who are the primary partners (other Departments, UK/RoI, NGOs) and what can they most usefully contribute?*
- *How can the relevant partners be involved in the formation of the Plan to ensure full endorsement and the best result?*

## Session 1

### Role of the Strategic Plan

- Concern was raised that the development of a Strategic Plan for the Agency would be constrained by current functions and rounds of budget cuts. Perception that areas of work which don't have an EU obligation will be cut or compressed.
- NI high level strategies are not coordinated. For example, it is unclear where the RDS fits in the big picture and the messages included are confused. We therefore **need to be clear how the NIEA Strategic Plan relates to the Department and rest of government, and demonstrates a strategic approach to delivery.**
- The NIEA Strategic Plan is likely to be high level but needs to fit with the Environment Strategy.
- The Plan should be for the organisation and not the environment as we are only a small cog in delivering the environment. It should also highlight where progress in new areas is needed.
- The Built Heritage Directorate is more focused on what they can deliver to the economy and recognised the need to focus on bringing in more resources to deliver elsewhere

### What should be in it?

- It was agreed that the starting point for the NIEA Plan should be the fundamental building blocks for delivery of NI Plc i.e. better quality environment, economy and social cohesion, with a number of sub programs underneath.
- The vision should be about the environment, achieve something and be over arching (i.e. across the agency).
- Suggested vision for the organisation - 'recognised as being good at what we do' and recognise our input into the NI Environment Strategy and Program for Government (PfG). It was felt that the 'best at what' argument was more powerful

in economic terms e.g. BH economy project.

- In terms of our 'aspirations to do better' we need to develop targets to demonstrate we are working better and smarter.
- The 'givens' are our day jobs; the Strategic Plan to focus on a small number of things to get energy behind and allow people to assimilate.
- NIEA will not be able to achieve national and international biodiversity loss targets by 2016 on its own. It is currently failing these targets due to lack of staff and resources. If favourable condition is not achieved there is no penalty; the Agency simply says it will do better next time.
- It was suggested that the new NI Environment Strategy should spell out Biodiversity targets and ensure the Agency meets them. It was recognised that targets tend to be part of a process and that the Strategy needs to recognise the short comings of what has been done in the past. The unified approach used in the Water Framework Directive, despite its short comings, was seen as a good model.
- NIEA has a wide remit with a range of underlying strategies. Parts of NIEA are unrelated. Delivery Plans are what will make a difference on the ground.

## Key Partners and how they are engaged

- **The public** are NIEAs customers and we need to be perceived as a successful organisation.
- **NGOs seen as a key partner. As an outward reaching organisation we need to provide funding to NGOs etc. Suggested that Service Level Agreements set up to contract out key targets.**
- NIEA currently seeking EU funding; spin off benefits for everyone. Money given to NGOs likely to yield a good return with hidden benefits to the economy.
- Biodiversity Conservation Volunteers funding greater in Wales and Scotland and results in more joined up projects e.g. on growing vegetables and healthy environment etc.
- **Schools and colleges** also seen as a key partner. There are shared fund opportunities where education and training programs overlap with environmental objectives.
- The need to strengthen links with the **NI Tourist** Board was highlighted.
- The Agency needs to be pushing **community involvement** with an environmental agenda.
- Healthy living appears as part of our strategies; potential to tap in to Health Protection Agency money.

- Shared Effort – EU proposals on effects of Climate Change on the Built Heritage submitted to EU today.
- Need to recognise that delivery partners do things differently.
- NI silo mentality; NIEA grants driven by land management. Funding opportunities in Wales are more liberal. In NI the Agency tends to channel these through umbrella organisations such as for waste through WRAP. Highlighted that using this model small organisation would disappear. We need to tender out projects, however there is a danger that larger firms would come in to compete. We need to keep NI money here.
- Suggested that Wrap or other bodies such as NIEL may be able to help more with the funding and grants process but on reflection the group thought that this could be divisive as there could be favouritism. On balance felt that NIEA need to retain control.
- Recognised that there were problems of scale. NI is a small place; a review of legislation was needed due to increased administrative burden. The current legislation constrained what could and couldn't be funded.
- **Other government departments** were also seen as a key partner.
- The loss of the NIEA educators was viewed as a tragedy. Funding for initiatives such as the extended Schools project and Eco Schools who provide environmental education not included in the current curriculums are being cut. Concern that NGOs will not be able to provide an education role either as their funding has been cut also.
- Other key partners were seen as **local government** in advance of RPA and the rest of **Europe**.

## The Special Deliverables

- WFD seen as good example backed up by science.
- Marine Management, planning likely to be important.
- Land management / landscapes e.g. EU Landscape Convention will tie in but needs to be presented in such a way that people relate to our landscapes, value them and want to be involved in their protection. In these terms the NIEA and DOE Strategies need to be aspirational.
- Highlighted that in a time of cuts engagement with the public becomes limited. As a result it was even more important that we target the right partners. For example, the National Trust was an ideal partner as they were open all the time. NIEA are competing for the public's attention; the NIEA Built Heritage are currently trying to engage more via the web.

## Session 2

### Role of the Strategic Plan

- **Line of sight needed from PfG** through the NI Sustainable Development Strategy to the DOE Strategy and the NIEA Strategic Plan.
- The Agencies Strategic Plan will be in the public domain and needs to tell people what the Agency is trying to achieve. Previously one year targets included in Balance Score Cards and Business Plans. The Plan will help with clarity and the public's recognition of the Agencies overall objectives.
- The general lack of knowledge of what the Agency does was highlighted. Dissemination was critical.
- Noted that the Agency needs to get the how right and then the why. Sometimes strategic plans become a navel gazing exercise. Needs to be understandable from outside with targets right across the board. The language used should be simple plain English but put across in a way that doesn't diminish the message. For example, a carrot and stick approach.

### What should be in it?

- The NIEA Strategic Plan should be short and broad, possibly only one page. However, there is a danger that the Agency will try to use one document to hit many audiences. NGOs want to see priorities, targets and objectives included so they see where they fit.
- The Plan should explain what the Agency does in simple messages and how we do it. It should recognise that the work we do directly and indirectly through others to deliver the Agencies objectives was equally important.
- The Plan should be outcome driven; set out the Agencies priorities and how they will be achieved in a coordinated way. It should identify the imperatives; including things that the Agency does that others may be able to do better.
- There is a tendency just to describe what the Agency is doing; re-enforcing the audit role of chasing compliance. The plan needs to recognise new approaches such as civil liabilities. Currently the Agency spends a time dealing with the 'backlash'. Having a Strategic Plan which outlines what we are going to do or not do may help with clarity.

### Key Partners and how they are engaged

- The Agency needs to think out outside the box on who they engage with. There is a tendency to go back to the same people but these might not necessarily be the right people or target groups. The Agency also needs to be open for partners to reach out to them.

- NI government is not joined up. Potential to engage with key cross departmental groups and external umbrella groups such as NIEL.
- Potential for multiple benefits and outcomes coming out of strategic engagement with others.
- Potential for the **Heritage Lottery Fund to provide funding** for some of the areas that the Agency is interested in.
- Key partners include; the public, the agricultural sector, Planning Service, Universities, councils, NGO and EPG.
- Relationships with individuals will be helped by; the Environment White Paper which is looking at unified inspection regimes under IPPC; and new Pollution Payment Policy.

## The Special Deliverables

- WFD seen to have delivered as it encompasses both the Natural and Built environment.
- Important that the Agency engages with the right people and that they care about protecting the environment and species.
- It's important that the public value the environment and see it as feeding quality of life and not just focusing on litter and graffiti issues. The Agency has a role in educating the public on how to go about protecting the environment and encouraging social responsibility.
- Customer Care is an important issue for the Agency. Noted that most the Agencies customers are people who already care about the environment.
- The Agencies Strategic Plan needs to include actions relating to communication, information provision and education. It also needs to link and identify synergies with the NI public health and tourism agendas.

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## Annex 1

### SESSION 1 Post-it Notes

1. The top 10 built heritage sites fully accessible in wide community and corporate use. "Alive and working for their living"
2. I'd like to make key partner links in New Europe to help me in EU funding bids.
3. I want to deliver projects by sharing costs, resources and ideas with key partners in NI.
4. Need joined-up environment and move to landscape scale conservation (including marine).
5. Joined-up government is overdue. DARD/DOE/NIEA should not be working against each other.
6. Find ways to work more with communities and involve people.
7. Top 100 companies with ENSY ISO 14001 with 60% fee reduction for licences due to their compliance.
8. Link education and health to environment.
9. NIEA strategy – key area – Pro-active approach to developing and implementing marine management (Marine bill, MPAs etc).
10. NIEA strategy – key area – Landscape/Ecosystems scale approach to management.
11. Landscape scale conservation – more efficient and effective.
12. Reach out to NFOs and provide support through training, service level agreement, transfer funding.
13. Service tendering with support for home based!
14. Joined-up government.
15. Marine conservation – the poor relation.
16. Greater collaboration between government departments to share funds and reach common goals e.g. education dept. funding environmental education.
17. Outreach
18. Joined-up strategy with other departments.
19. Rethink nature conservation – landscape scale.
20. Capitalise on the links to health and well-being.
21. Engage with people.

22. Complete the work started in the SOE by establishing a baseline across all of our environment – including Built Heritage.
23. Join up effort under climate change.
24. Join up effort under the Landscape Convention.
25. In the Strategic Plan – a small number of bigger things. Links with EU, other government departments, local government and stakeholders.
26. Strategic Aims – Better integration of environmental policy and delivery. Partnerships working at all levels, individual, organisational and government. Integrated permitting and inspection.

## **SESSION 2 Post-it Notes**

27. Agency brokering relationships across partner organisations for sustained environmental benefits.
28. More transparency/clarity. More engagement-seeking –a wide range of partners at various levels.
29. “Special Deliverables” – aim – to mainstream the environment assets across ALL government departments.
30. NIEA Strategy needs to be fully co-ordinated with overall Environment Strategy and set out visions and objectives for a 5-10 year period.
31. Vital – influencing behaviour essential role for NIEA. Key partners have to be able to reach audiences targeted and be respected/trusted. Create perception that crime does not pay and deliver reality that those wanting to make a difference can get the relevant support.
32. Facilitate a more co-ordinated approach for NGOs to help us reach our common goals.
33. NIEA strategy DOE strategy ENVIRO strategy P4G Waste Management Strategy
34. S.DEV strategy. Strategy overload leading to paralysis!!! Keep strategy short and aspirational. Underpin with outcome driven action plan.
35. Better management of AONBs to protect the countryside.
36. Promoting practical environmental action as a means of achieving pro-environmental behaviour change.
37. NIEA needs a PR strategy! Highlight all the good stuff you already do! You are a hidden service to most people.