

# Regional Development Strategy

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**RDS**  
2035  
—

*Building a Better Future*



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## Foreword

I am very pleased to publish the Regional Development Strategy 2035 which is the spatial strategy of the Executive. Its purpose is to deliver the spatial aspects of the Programme for Government. It complements the Sustainable Development Strategy and informs the spatial aspects of the strategies of all Government Departments.

The Strategy is a long-term plan which recognises the important role Belfast plays in generating regional prosperity and that Londonderry is the focus for economic growth in the North West region. To ensure that all places benefit from economic growth, the Strategy reflects the Programme for Government approach of balanced sub-regional growth and recognises the importance of key settlements as centres for growth and investment.

It recognises there is a need to understand the role and function of settlements and their role in serving rural communities and the importance of promoting co-operation between places. It encourages clustering of towns and cities so that services can be shared and do not need to be duplicated. It identifies those settlements within close proximity to each other which have the potential to cluster.

We must also plan to deal with climate change as a key environmental and economic driver. It is important that we in Northern Ireland play our part by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and that we plan for the impacts which climate change brings. The Strategy sets out measures on transport, energy and the location of jobs and houses to help address and adapt to these important issues.

Sustainable communities are at the heart of what we do. It is important that we maximise the use of existing infrastructure and services and that we create places which are safe and inclusive and offer equality of opportunity. The Strategy is not limited to land use but recognises that policies for physical development have far reaching implications. It therefore addresses economic, social and environmental issues aimed at achieving sustainable development and social cohesion.

I am committed to working in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders in the delivery of this Strategy for the benefit of all the people in Northern Ireland.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Danny Kennedy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

**DANNY KENNEDY, MLA**

**Minister for Regional Development**

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CHAPTER 1  
*Purpose and Status*

# 1.0 Purpose and Status

## BACKGROUND

1.1 This document is the revised Regional Development Strategy (RDS) for the future development of Northern Ireland to 2035 and is the spatial strategy of the Executive. In recognition of the changing challenges facing the region the Executive agreed that the Regional Development Strategy that was published in 2001 and amended in 2008 needed to be reviewed. Whilst many of the objectives of the previous strategy are still valid this document now replaces it.

## PURPOSE

1.2 The RDS provides an overarching strategic planning framework to facilitate and guide the public and private sectors. It does not redefine other Departments' strategies but complements them with a spatial perspective.

It influences:

- the Programme for Government (PfG);
- the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI);
- Departments' investments;
- Councils' decisions and investments; and
- investment by the private sector.

1.3 It takes account of key driving forces such as population growth and movement, demographic change, the increasing number of households, transportation needs, economic changes, climate change and the spatial implications of divisions that still exist in our society. It seeks to inform and guide the whole community in the drive to create a dynamic, prosperous, and progressive Northern Ireland in the third millennium.

1.4 The RDS will influence the future distribution of development throughout the Region including the marine area. It is not limited to land use but recognises that policies for physical development have far reaching implications. The RDS therefore addresses economic, social and environmental issues aimed at achieving sustainable development and social cohesion.

1.5 It is not a bidding document nor a fixed blueprint or master plan. Rather it is a framework which provides the strategic context for where development should happen. It does not contain operational planning policy and guidance which is issued through Planning Policy Statements (PPSs) published by the Department of the Environment (DOE).

## **STATUS**

1.6 The RDS has a statutory basis. It is prepared under the Strategic Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1999. Under that Order the Department for Regional Development (DRD) is responsible for formulating “in consultation with other Northern Ireland departments, a regional development strategy for Northern Ireland, that is to say, a strategy for the long term development of Northern Ireland”.

1.7 The Order requires Departments to “have regard to the regional development strategy” in exercising any functions in relation to development.

1.8 The RDS is material to decisions on individual planning applications and appeals. Changes to the legislative requirements will be made under the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. The bulk of the Act will not come into force until planning powers transfer to councils at a time to be decided by the Northern Ireland Assembly. When planning powers transfer the DOE will continue to be responsible for planning policy and guidance. The requirement for these policies to be in general conformity with the RDS will remain.

Responsibility for the preparation of local development plans and development schemes will transfer to local councils; these must ‘take account’ of the RDS. A strategic system of marine planning for all NI waters - i.e. ‘inshore’ [out to 12 nautical miles (Nm)] and ‘offshore’ [beyond 12Nm] will be established through a combination of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, and a NI Marine Bill (when enacted). This will balance the environmental, social and economic needs of the marine environment and will include provision for marine plans. The RDS is relevant to marine planning and its strategic guidance will be taken into account in marine plans which are to be prepared by DOE.

**The RDS contains a Spatial Framework and Strategic Guidelines. It aims to provide long-term policy direction with a strategic spatial perspective. However, nothing contained in this document should be read as a commitment that public resources will be provided for any specific project. All proposals for expenditure will be subject to economic, social, financial and environmental assessment and be considered against the overall availability of resources.**

## DEVELOPING THE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

1.9 The revised RDS was prepared by a team in DRD guided by a Ministerial sub-group, an inter-departmental sub-group and a working group of stakeholders from the academic, voluntary, business and local government sectors.

1.10 The review started with a major conference in November 2008 followed by a series of public pre-consultation events held across Northern Ireland. The approach to the review was evidence driven. Trends and projections of key indicators were analysed and specific research was undertaken on the likely effects of the economic downturn on the distribution of employment. The Strategic Investment Board provided advice which helped shape the spatial framework in particular.

1.11 A 12 week public consultation was carried out which included a total of 11 information events across Northern Ireland. Meetings with a number of stakeholder organisations were held and a total of 129 written responses to the public consultation were received.

1.12 In addition, the following statutory assessments have influenced the policy and have been published as separate documents. They are:

- an Environmental Report which informs and guides the policy development process to ensure its outcomes are environmentally sustainable;
- a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA), including an Appropriate Assessment, which looks at the environmental impacts on designated sites of natural importance; and
- an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) on the impacts on the nine groups within Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

1.13 This document was agreed by the Northern Ireland Executive on 26 January 2012. The strategy has 4 key elements;

- A **Spatial Framework** which divides the region into 5 components based on functions and geography.
- **Guidance** at two levels
  - a) Regional level that is to be applied to all parts of the region and
  - b) Specific guidance for each element of the Spatial Framework
- A **Regionally Significant Economic Infrastructure** section which identifies the need to consider strategic infrastructure projects.

- **Implementation.** This section sets out how the strategy will be implemented.

## **EUROPEAN UNION POLICY CONTEXT**

1.14 The EU recognises that its regions are best placed to plan their own futures. To do this means looking at factors such as location, climate, natural resources, quality of life and economies of scale, described in EU policy terms as “territorial capital”. The RDS does this and is therefore important in setting the framework for future European funding.

1.15 When the Treaty of Lisbon came into force in December 2009 territorial cohesion became an additional EU policy objective together with economic and social cohesion. The Fifth Cohesion Report by the European Commission concluded that more emphasis should be put on territorial cohesion. Territorial cohesion should address urban-rural linkages in terms of access to affordable and quality infrastructures and services.

1.16 The Spatial Framework in the RDS accords with EU policy. It encourages clustering of places, includes policies to reflect local needs and emphasises the importance of understanding the function of urban and rural settlements.

1.17 The special Task Force set up by EU president Barroso has helped encourage Northern Ireland to become more involved in the shaping of EU policies. The Northern Ireland Executive’s document ‘Winning in Europe’ sets out how proactive and forward-looking engagement in European policies, funding programmes and knowledge networks will help to deliver the European Union’s 2020 Strategy .

The EU Europe 2020 Strategy is the overarching, long term economic strategy for the EU. Its priorities are smart, sustainable and inclusive growth to allow the EU to meet the challenges and seize the opportunities of the global economy of the future. The objectives and guidance of the RDS take account of and complement the approach set out in the Europe 2020 Strategy.



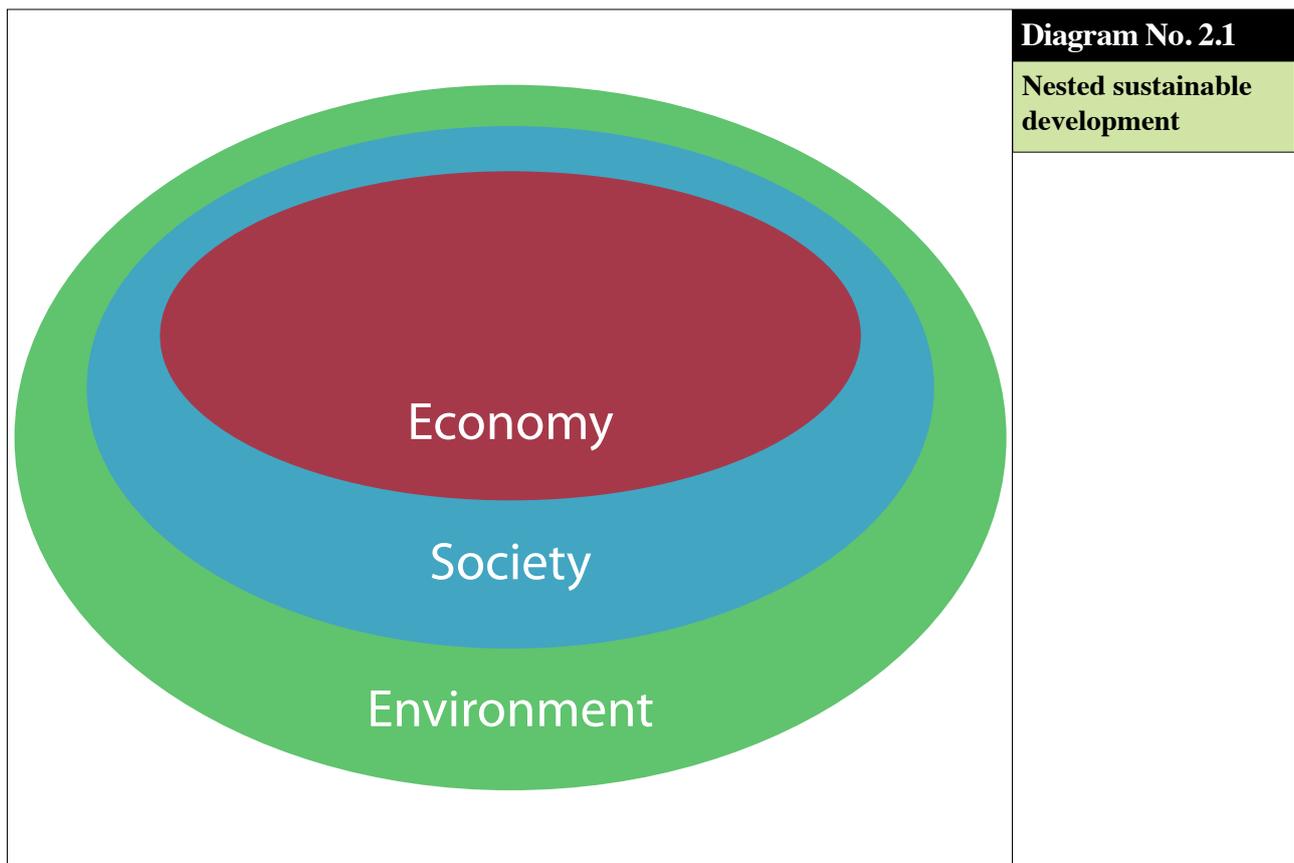


CHAPTER 2  
*Meeting the Challenge*

## 2.0 Meeting the Challenge

### SIGNIFICANT PAST TRENDS

2.1 Sustainable development is at the heart of the Regional Development Strategy. The RDS aims to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Our society and economies are completely dependent on the environment which encompasses them and are therefore bound to its limits and capabilities.



### 2.2 Economy

Employee jobs rose to a high point in June 2008 of 733,500 however, they have been falling since. The latest seasonally adjusted employee jobs at December 2011 were

698,390 a level not seen since the start of 2005. The economic inactivity rate for those aged 16-64 fell by 21,000 and remains higher than the UK average rate.

## **2.3 Society**

Population growth has been unevenly distributed in the region with the fastest growth rates in villages and intermediate settlements over the period 2001-08. Belfast has experienced a 3% population loss in contrast to a 10% expansion in the West and South of the region. Northern Ireland's population is projected to reach 1.946 million by 2023 with a marked increase in the size of the population at older ages. The number of people at pensionable age is estimated to increase by 40% to 2023. The most deprived areas and the least deprived areas continue to be the most urbanised.

## **2.4 Environment**

Transport, agriculture and energy supply are the main contributors to greenhouse gas emissions. In 2008 these represented 68% of total emissions with transportation the only sector where emissions were rising rather than falling. Climate change is widely accepted as a major environmental threat with increases to annual rainfall and average temperatures potentially impacting on species and habitats. If current rates of waste production continue (1 million tonnes of municipal waste produced annually), municipal waste arisings will increase by almost 50% by 2020.

2.5 Analysis carried out by Oxford Economics shows that, over the period to 2028, city economies are expected to come to the fore again. Almost half of all Northern Ireland's net new jobs are expected to be created in the 4 city Councils of Belfast, Londonderry, Lisburn and Newry. Belfast City is expected to remain as the most important job centre. The reasons for this urban focus are the availability of skills, quality infrastructure and the efficiencies to be gained from the clustering of businesses. In analysing recent economic forecasts, Oxford Economics concludes there is a more than adequate supply of employment land for the Region up to 2028 with an estimated need for 450 ha compared to a supply of 2,000 ha. However, this does not mean that all of this land is developable. In addition, the spatial distribution of total office employment is expected to remain heavily city focused.

## VISION OF THE FUTURE

2.6 During the consultation carried out for the first RDS a shared vision emerged:-

**“An outward-looking, dynamic and liveable Region with a strong sense of its place in the wider world; a Region of opportunity where people enjoy living and working in a healthy environment which enhances the quality of their lives and where diversity is a source of strength rather than division.”**

2.7 This long-term Vision supports the aim of the PfG “to build a shared and better future for all”. The RDS will contribute to the PfG and the associated Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland by co-ordinating policies with a spatial dimension and providing the strategic spatial policy context for decisions by both central and local Government. It is an essential tool for the Executive to tackle structural regional disparities and promote equality of opportunity for all in Northern Ireland.

2.8 The RDS published in 2001 described how the Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS) is an integral part of it and set the vision for it “to have a modern, sustainable, safe transportation system which benefits society, the economy and the environment and which actively contributes to social inclusion and everyone’s quality of life”. This vision is still appropriate for the new approach to regional transportation.

2.9 The new approach to regional transportation will refocus and rebalance our transport priorities and present a fresh direction for transportation with sustainability at its core. It will provide a series of high level strategic objectives, associated policies and indicators with economic, environmental and societal themes. The overarching aim is to deliver transport arrangements which promote equitable access and meet wider economic and social needs, while limiting environmental impact and realising reductions in harmful emissions.

## AIMS

2.10 The 8 aims of the revised RDS are:

- **Support strong, sustainable growth for the benefit of all parts of Northern Ireland**

A growing regional economy will benefit from strong urban and rural areas. This needs a co-ordinated approach to the provision of services, jobs and infrastructure and a focus on co-operation between service providers. Balanced regional growth

and tackling regional imbalance are critical issues for the region.

- **Strengthen Belfast as the regional economic driver and Londonderry as the principal city of the North West**

Successful regions have strong and vibrant cities at their core. Belfast drives much of the economic growth and shares its wealth across the Region. Londonderry, as the principal city of the North West, has the capacity and potential for strong economic growth.

- **Support our towns, villages and rural communities to maximise their potential**

Our rural areas including our towns and villages have a key role in supporting economic growth. They offer opportunities in terms of their potential for growth in new sectors, the provision of rural recreation and tourism, their attractiveness as places to invest, live and work, and their role as a reservoir of natural resources and highly valued landscapes.

- **Promote development which improves the health and well-being of communities**

A healthy community is better able to take advantage of the economic, social and environmental opportunities which are open to it. Improved health and well-being is derived not only from easy access to appropriate services and facilities, although this is important, but also from the creation of a strong economy set within a safe and attractive environment. The provision of more social and affordable housing also helps to build strong balanced communities.

- **Improve connectivity to enhance the movement of people, goods, energy and information between places**

Improved connectivity will support the network of towns and their associated hinterlands. Neighbouring towns support each other and their hinterlands in the provision of services. Good linkages between towns and rural areas for access to services and business opportunities are vital.

- **Protect and enhance the environment for its own sake**

Protecting the environment is essential for enhancing the quality of life of current and future generations. Northern Ireland's environment is one of its greatest assets, with its stunning landscapes, an outstanding coastline, a complex variety of wildlife and a rich built and cultural heritage for the ecosystem services it provides, and its sense of place and history for all.

- **Take actions to reduce our carbon footprint and facilitate adaptation to climate change**

It is recognised that climate change is one of the most serious problems facing the world. We are all contributors to global warming and need to play our part

to reduce and offset our impact on the environment. We need to reduce harmful green house gas emissions to help reduce the threat of climate change and promote sustainable construction, consumption and production. We should aim to prevent waste and deal with it in line with the revised Waste Framework Directive. Everyone should contribute to reducing the Region’s carbon footprint.

- **Strengthen links between north and south, east and west, with Europe and the rest of the world**

There is already collaboration on a north/south basis promoting the development of gateways and cross border connections. Opportunities exist to further develop this along with improved East/West linkages. In a rapidly expanding and interdependent global marketplace opportunities exist to compete and trade with Europe and the rest of the world. In order to achieve this accessibility, communications, education and employability within the population need to improve.

2.11 The aims of the Strategy support the Executives principles towards achieving balanced sub-regional growth.

**PEACE • PROSPERITY • FAIRNESS • WELL-BEING**



The following table shows how the RDS aims support the PfG Priorities.

<b>TABLE 2.1: RDS aims in supporting PfG</b>					
PfG Priorities RDS Aims	Growing a sustainable economy and investing in the future	Creating opportunities and tackling disadvantage and improving health and well being	Protecting our people, environment and creating safer communities	Building a strong and shared community	Delivering high quality and efficient public services
Support strong, sustainable growth for the benefit of all parts of Northern Ireland	X				
Strengthen Belfast as the regional economic driver and Londonderry as the principal city of the North West	X				
Support our towns, villages and rural communities to maximise their potential		X		X	X
Promote development which improves the health and well-being of communities		X	X	X	
Improve connectivity to enhance the movement of people, goods, energy and information between places	X	X			X
Protect and enhance the environment for its own sake			X		
Take actions to reduce our carbon footprint and facilitate adaptation to climate change			X		
Strengthen links between north and south, east and west, with Europe and the rest of the world	X				

## THE SPATIAL FRAMEWORK

2.12 Implementation of the Vision and aims of the RDS requires a Spatial Framework to enable strategic choices to be made in relation to development and infrastructural investment. It will also assist private investment decisions. It provides for a degree of continuity with existing policy, but sets new directions and priorities to better achieve sustainable development in the interests of future generations.

2.13 The Spatial Framework and the supporting guidance in Chapter 3 are designed to deal with the major issues of climate change, population growth and movement, transportation and how investment should be focused on the Main Hubs and Clusters. Its success will depend on how it is taken into account in the plans and programmes of Government Departments and also in the priorities and actions set out in the Investment Strategy.

The key issues which influenced the Spatial Framework within the RDS are the:-

- Importance of Belfast City, at the heart of a Metropolitan area, as the major driver for regional economic growth; its population has declined but it remains the regional focus for administration, commerce, specialised services and cultural amenities;
- Significant role which Londonderry has to play as the principal city of an expanding North West region; its recognition as the UK City of Culture 2013, will add impetus to the integrated approach to regeneration being taken forward in the 'One Plan' (One City One Plan One Voice: Regeneration Plan for Derry~Londonderry);
- Importance of Main Hubs and Clusters well placed to benefit from and add value to regional economic growth; and that critical mass to attract growth can be created by the identification of clusters.
- Need to build on the approach to urban renaissance of developing compact urban form by further integrating key land uses with transportation measures. The focus should be on the use of land within existing urban footprints, particularly within the hubs;
- New emphasis on how to reduce dependence on the car and change travel behaviour; and
- Importance in all aspects of forward planning to address the consequences of climate change; this means an even greater focus on where people live and work and how transport and energy needs are planned.

2.14 The guiding principle of the Spatial Framework is to put the person at the centre. To do this there needs to be an understanding of how different places are influenced by the range of services and functions required by individuals, where they are located, how frequently they are used and by whom. This helps give a clearer understanding of the relationship between people and places – an appreciation of where people live, work and access services.

2.15 The Hierarchy of Settlements and Related Infrastructure Wheel (Diagram 2.2) illustrates the range of public and private services needed to ensure citizens have access to the necessary economic, social and cultural opportunities, as well as the infrastructure required by businesses to build a competitive dynamic and innovative economy. These services include transport and communication networks, education, health, social, environment, commercial and justice. The wheel outlines the patterns of service provision that are likely to be appropriate at different spatial levels including neighbourhoods, smaller towns, regional towns (or groups of towns) and cities or at a regional level. The model recognises the strong relationship between settlement size and the levels of service that can be supported. The wheel provides a forward perspective, providing some understanding of the level of facilities and services anticipated at different spatial levels rather than necessarily reflecting the stock of services that are currently available in villages, towns, cities or regionally. The outer level of the wheel illustrates not only the infrastructure that would be appropriate for principal cities but also those of regional significance.

2.16 This approach also recognises that:

- settlements often provide either a greater or lesser range of services than the core population may dictate. It is not appropriate therefore to consider ‘urban’ population alone in classifying service settlements within any district – the population of rural hinterlands can also support services in urban centres;
- service centres tend to be hierarchical, with a large number of centres providing a smaller range of services, and a smaller number of centres providing a wider range. Each class of settlement provides services lower down in the hierarchy; and
- access to services and facilities is important. Creating a critical mass to support a level of services raises challenges for service providers in meeting the needs of spatially dispersed populations.



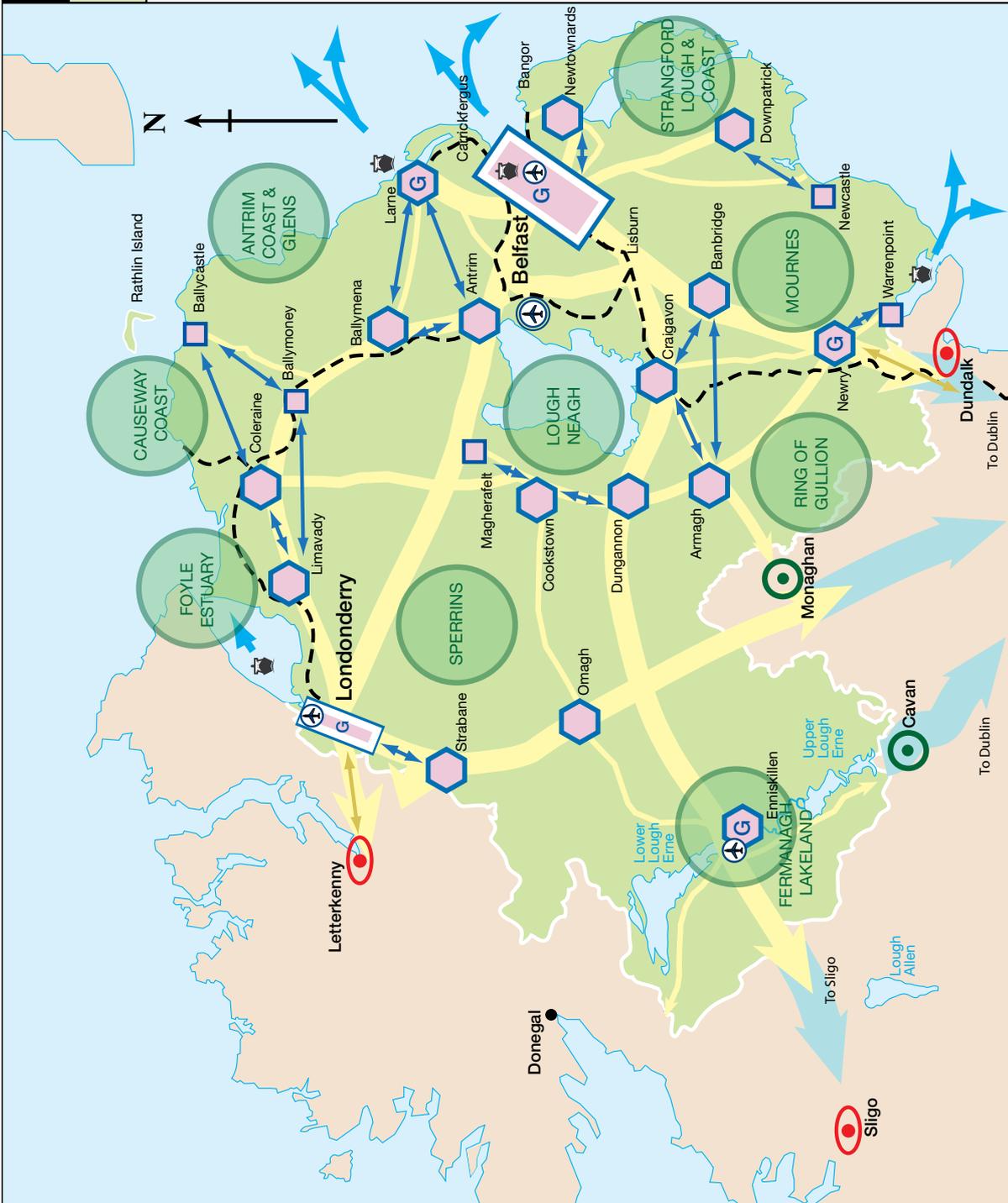
2.17 The **spatial framework** has the following 5 components which are shown in Diagram 2.3.

- The Metropolitan Area centred on Belfast.
- Londonderry - principal city of the North West
- Hubs and Clusters of Hubs
- The Rural Area
- Gateways and corridors

2.18 Chapter 3 provides more detail on the elements of the Spatial Framework and guidance specific to each area.

**Diagram No. 2.3**

**Spatial Framework for Northern Ireland**









CHAPTER 3  
*Strategic Guidance*

## 3.0 Strategic Guidance

3.1 This chapter provides long term policy direction to guide the public, private and community sectors. It is not intended to prescribe operational policy. The Department of the Environment is responsible for operational planning policy and guidance which is normally issued through Planning Policy Statements (PPSs).

There are two types of Strategic Guidance outlined in this chapter;

- Regional Guidance (RG) – This applies to everywhere in the region and is presented under the 3 sustainable development themes of Economy, Society and Environment.
- Spatial Framework Guidance (SFG) - This is additional to the region-wide guidance and is tailored to each of the 5 elements of the Spatial Framework.

### Regional Guidance

- **Economy**
- **Society**
- **Environment**

### Economy

3.2 To underpin economic growth, Northern Ireland needs a modern and sustainable economic infrastructure. Guidance in this section is aimed at ensuring people can connect with a range of facilities and services and how they get to places of work. Businesses depend on efficient connections for goods and services including the necessary infrastructure to service economic growth, such as robust electricity and telecoms connections. Wealth and value-added employment created by export driven economic growth will help achieve balanced regional growth and sustainable development and enhance equality. Decision makers will have to balance economic growth and the environmental impacts on air quality and energy supply for industry and transportation.

**RG1: Ensure adequate supply of land to facilitate sustainable economic growth**

3.3 To ensure that Northern Ireland is well placed to accommodate growth in jobs and businesses there should be an adequate and available supply of employment land. It should be accessible and located to make best use of available services, for example water and sewerage infrastructure, whilst avoiding, where possible, areas at risk of flooding from rivers, the sea or surface water run-off. The focus will be on larger urban centres and regional gateways taking advantage of their locations on the regional transport network.

- **Assess the quality and viability of sites zoned for economic development uses in the area plans.** A system to monitor the take-up (and loss) of employment land is required to help inform planning and investment decisions and actions. It is likely that the highest quality and most easily accessible land will be used up first and it is important that decisions are not based purely on the quantum of land available but how well connected it is, for example to public transport. The framework at Table 3.1 will enable Planning Authorities to identify robust and defensible portfolios of both strategic and locally important employment sites in their development plans. This will safeguard both new and existing employment areas for employment rather than other uses.

<b>TABLE 3.1: The Employment Land Evaluation Framework</b>	
<p><b>Stage 1</b></p> <p>Taking Stock of the Existing Situation</p>	<p>An initial assessment of the ‘fitness for purpose’ including the environmental implications of the existing employment land portfolio. This is principally in order to identify the ‘best’ employment sites to be retained and protected and identifying sites that should clearly be released for other uses.</p>
<p><b>Stage 2</b></p> <p>Understanding Future Requirements</p>	<p>Quantify the amount of employment land required across the main business sectors during the development plan period. This is achieved by assessing both demand and supply elements and assessing how they can be met in aggregate by the existing stock of business premises and by allocated sites. Account should also be taken of turnover of existing sites due to relocation or closures. Both short/medium term and strategic provision need to be considered in this process.</p>
<p><b>Stage 3</b></p> <p>Identifying a ‘New’ portfolio of sites</p>	<p>Devise qualitative site appraisal criteria to determine which sites meet the occupier or developer needs. Confirm the existing sites to be retained, replaced or released, and any gaps in the portfolio. In this allocation, consideration should be given to previously used sites, and in the reallocation, the environmental impact of one site relative to others should be included. The results of Stage 2, together with this site-appraisal should provide a robust justification for altering allocations for employment land.</p>

- **Protect Zoned Land.** Land zoned for economic use in Development Plans should be protected as it provides a valuable resource for local and external investment, thereby contributing to the aims of the PfG. Protection of such zonings should ensure that a variety of suitable sites exists across Northern Ireland to facilitate economic growth.
- **Promote economic development opportunities across the Region focused on the BMUA, Londonderry and Hubs as the main centres for employment and services.**  
The objective is to capitalise on the development opportunity provided by the concentration of people and goods combined with available infrastructure and the clustering of a range of business services essential to economic development.
- **Provide a network of economic development opportunities.** Make provision in development plans for an adequate and continuous supply of land for employment purposes.

## **RG2: Deliver a balanced approach to transport infrastructure**

3.4 To remain competitive in the global market it is important to continue to promote transport which balances the needs of our environment, society and economy. The focus is on managing the use of road and rail space and how we can use our network in a better, smarter way. The new approach to regional transportation will develop this further.

- **Improve connectivity.** It is important that we manage the use of road and rail space for the movement of people and goods. We need to maximise the productivity of our transportation network, particularly the use of well maintained finite amount of road space. The capacity of road space can be increased by moving people in a more efficient way and by providing more attractive transport choices. This will improve access to our cities, towns and rural areas.
- **Maximise the potential of the Regional Strategic Transport Network.** This includes road and rail Key Transport Corridors, Link Corridors and the remainder of the Trunk Road network. The Transport Network enhances accessibility to towns and helps to build an integrated regional economy, facilitates tourist travel including improving connections to key tourism sites and reduces where possible, unsuitable traffic into towns.
- **Use road space and railways more efficiently.** This will require an improvement in the public transport service. Continued investment in public transport and in infrastructure such as the development of quality multi-modal facilities and park and ride sites, will encourage motorists to take the bus or train for the main part of their journey and reduce the volume of traffic on the network.
- **Improve social inclusion.** This will mean seeking innovative public transport services including transport programmes focused on the user and services that meet the needs of communities. These will include Door-to-Door services, demand responsive services, Rapid Transit and services tailored to the needs of older people and people with disabilities.
- **Manage the movement of freight.** There are specific issues to be addressed in relation to freight. These include safety, compliance, sustainability and the potential conflict between bus priority on roads and the delivery and collection of goods from shops. We need to ensure that freight transport remains competitive in a sustainable manner and that the movement of goods is undertaken in an efficient, safe and compliant way. This is essential if businesses are to be competitive in a global market place.
- **Improve access to our cities and towns.** This will include providing transport solutions to growth areas and town and city centres. Towns and cities and other growth areas such as our ports are the economic drivers of our region. They

require particular solutions that address congestion and ensure the free movement of people and goods.

- **Improve safety by adopting a ‘safe systems’ approach to road safety.** This approach considers roads, vehicles and road users together and seeks to ensure that each of these three elements takes account of the limitations or potential weaknesses in the other two. A new Road Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland 2010-2020 is being developed by DOE.

**RG3: Implement a balanced approach to telecommunications infrastructure that will give a competitive advantage**

3.5 Northern Ireland’s core telecommunications network is world class, with 5 competing fully-fibre networks. However, the telecommunications market is fast moving and competitive advantage can be quickly eroded or lost if a region fails to continue to invest in its infrastructure. Working with industry and the Telecommunications Regulator, the key challenges for the Region will be to improve international and internal connectivity and to ensure that the opportunities provided by access to high quality telecommunications services are fully exploited.

3.6 Northern Ireland’s first direct international telecommunications link to North America was completed in March 2010 and work is ongoing to rollout higher speed, next generation broadband services in support of 85% of businesses.

- **Invest in infrastructure for higher broadband speeds.** The delivery of communication systems using alternative technologies including fibre optics, cable and wireless needs to be investigated. This will require an approach which balances the deployment of infrastructure and protection of the environment. It will also require realistic expectation about what can be delivered within available budgets and that solutions using particular technologies may be unaffordable or commercially unsustainable. The inclusion of telecommunication ducts as part of proposed civil works programmes can also significantly lower the costs of network deployments.
- **Improve telecom services in smaller rural areas to minimise the urban/rural divide.** In a fully privatised market network operators will decide where to deploy their infrastructure. Such decisions will typically be driven by evidence of demand. There is therefore a need to stimulate take-up of telecom services to demonstrate demand and examine ways to encourage further expansion of networks by operators.

- **Increase the usage of broadband.** Provide information to businesses on the opportunities available through broadband connections and the LOGON-NI business support programme.
- **Capitalise on direct international connectivity.** In March 2010 Northern Ireland's first direct international telecommunications link to North America was completed. This also improved existing links to Europe with high bandwidth. Connectivity supports foreign direct investment and offers a significant competitive edge for the benefit of the Region.

#### **RG4: Promote a sustainable approach to the provision of tourism infrastructure**

3.7 The unfulfilled potential of the tourism industry reflects the fact that it lost some three quarters of its global market share of incoming visitors at the start of the troubles. Investment in tourism brings new facilities to our towns, cities and surrounding landscapes, thereby creating a sense of pride for the people of Northern Ireland. It also provides the opportunity to get maximum benefit from our wealth of environmental and heritage assets; our waterways, landscapes, coastline and built heritage. There are health benefits to be gained by a more active resident population who are motivated to be out and about exploring more of Northern Ireland's tourism assets. Tourism can make a step change in its contribution to the economy if the public, private and voluntary sectors work together. All new or extended infrastructure required to support and enhance the tourist industry needs to be appropriately located and sited with proper regard to tourism benefit and the safeguarding of the natural and built environment on which tourism depends.

- **Promote a balanced approach that safeguards tourism infrastructure while benefiting society and the economy.** Sufficient choice of the right type of visitor accommodation in the right areas is important; there must also be an adequate supply of things to do. It is possible to create and/or maintain a feeling of being somewhere unique with quality natural assets, interesting architecture and built heritage and a feeling of sense of place. Sports tourism, for example golf, walking, cycling, equestrian, surfing, and other water sports actively contribute to the Northern Ireland economy. All new or extended infrastructure required to support and enhance the tourist industry needs to be sensitively sited with proper regard to both the tourism need and the natural and built environment it seeks to serve.
- **Improve facilities for tourists in support of the Tourist Signature Destinations.** Stakeholders need to work together to invest in access, accommodation, and visitor facilities in support of the Tourist Signature Destinations. This will ensure that local authorities, businesses, public transport providers, tourism promoters and the public all benefit from improved facilities that support our tourism assets.

- **Encourage environmentally sustainable tourism development.** Development of tourism infrastructure needs to be appropriate to the location to ensure that the natural assets are protected and enhanced.

#### RG5: Deliver a sustainable and secure energy supply

3.8 Northern Ireland needs a robust and sustainable energy infrastructure. This should deliver reliable and secure sources of energy to communities and businesses across the Region. New generation or distribution infrastructure must be carefully planned and assessed to avoid adverse environmental effects, particularly on or near protected sites. At the plan or project level, this will require a Strategic Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Assessment and potentially a Habitats Regulation Assessment to identify likely effects and appropriate mitigation. Decision makers will have to balance impacts against the benefits from a secure renewable energy stream, and the potential for cleaner air and energy for industry and transportation.

- **Increase the contribution that renewable energy can make to the overall energy mix.** There will need to be a significant increase in all types of renewable electricity installations and renewable heat installations, including a wide range of renewable resources for electricity generation both onshore and offshore to meet the Regions needs.
- **Strengthen the grid.** With an increasing number of renewable electricity installations as well as increasing numbers of renewable heat installations we will need to strengthen the grid. It will be necessary to integrate heat and electricity infrastructure (e.g. district heating networks and new electricity grid) alongside new road infrastructure development at the planning stage. If electric transport becomes more widespread, there will need to be a reliable recharging network. It also means increasing electricity interconnection capacity to strengthen the linkages between transmission and distribution networks.
- **Provide new gas infrastructure.** New gas infrastructure, including provision of natural gas to new areas of Northern Ireland would enhance diversity of energy supply. Gas storage provision would have a positive impact on the security and reliability of future gas supply. It would also have considerable environmental benefits as it is the least polluting fossil fuel.
- **Work with neighbours.** This will ensure a secure energy supply from competitive regional electricity and gas markets in the EU's Internal Market.

- **Develop “Smart Grid” Initiatives.** This will improve the responsiveness of the electricity grid to facilitate new forms of renewable generation, to improve reliability, productivity, and energy efficiency and empower customers to make a more informed choice in relation to their energy usage.

## Society

3.9 Sustainable communities are places where people want to live, work and play, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all.

3.10 The guidance in this section supports the aims of 'A Shared Future' published by the office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister in March 2005.

### RG6: Strengthen community cohesion

3.11 An integrated and cohesive community is one where people from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities and people know their rights and responsibilities. These are places where there is a sense of belonging for everyone and relationships between people from different backgrounds are positive and differences are valued. The right environment can help strengthen community cohesion, foster a stronger community spirit and increase our sense of place. The village concept is important for both rural and suburban areas as it can bring people together and strengthen communities by sharing a sense of place and identity.

- **Develop integrated services and facilities.** This will enable people to meet and undertake shared activities whilst ensuring there are no barriers, perceived or physical, to access these places.
- **Foster a stronger community spirit and sense of place.** Encourage community participation in the planning process to reinforce a sense of belonging and place.
- **Encourage mixed housing development.** Neighbourhoods with homes in a range of sizes and tenures will allow heterogeneous populations to live together. Diverse populations lead to more stable communities and can help reduce social isolation.

### RG7: Support urban and rural renaissance

3.12 Many places do not offer the quality of facilities required to meet the needs of local people. Cities, towns, villages and many neighbourhoods have unique identities and these should be recognised and built upon and enhanced. Regeneration is necessary to create more accessible, vibrant city and town centres which offer people more local choice for shopping, social activity and recreation.

3.13 Urban renaissance is the process of development and redevelopment in urban areas to attract investment and activity, foster revitalisation and improve the mix of uses. Rural renaissance likewise is about revitalising the centres of small towns and villages so that they meet the immediate needs of the communities they serve. Redevelopment can include the reuse of both Listed Buildings and of locally important buildings, particularly the reuse of vernacular buildings and industrial heritage buildings/structures. Development is dependant upon the availability of necessary infrastructure, including water and sewerage infrastructure but should avoid, where possible, areas that are at risk of flooding from rivers, the sea or surface water run-off.

3.14 In some places community division has created areas and interfaces where businesses are reluctant to invest. Economic deprivation leads to environmental problems characterised by derelict buildings and undeveloped sites. It is important to promote a joined up approach to support urban and rural renaissance to ensure all stakeholders are involved.

- **Develop innovative ways to bring forward under-utilised land and buildings, particularly for mixed use development.** There should be a focus on integrating new schemes within the existing townscape. The sensitive design of interfaces and access arrangements can allow a wide range of uses to co-exist peacefully. Mixed use developments can play a very important role in helping to regenerate and revitalise a declining area.
- **Promote regeneration in areas of social need.** Development initiatives should target areas that suffer low employment and high deprivation.
- **Ensure that environmental quality in urban areas is improved and maintained, particularly with adequate provision of green infrastructure.** Part of the process of urban and rural renaissance requires even greater significance being given to the design and management of the public realm. It is important to promote recreational space within cities, towns and neighbourhoods, and new developments or plans should make provision for adequate green and blue infrastructure. This is particularly important near designated nature-conservation sites as it will help reduce recreational pressure on these sites.
- **Reduce noise pollution.** Noise levels which are above comfort levels can be caused by traffic, construction, industrial, and some recreational activities. It can aggravate serious direct, as well as indirect, health effects. When new developments or plans are being prepared it will be important to take into consideration the European Noise Directive which aims to avoid, prevent or reduce, on a prioritised basis, the harmful effects of noise.

**RG8: Manage housing growth to achieve sustainable patterns of residential development**

3.15 The varied housing needs of the whole community need to be met. This includes the availability of affordable and special needs housing. Housing is a key driver of physical, economic and social change in both urban and rural areas. Strategic planning places emphasis on the importance of the relationship between the location of housing, jobs, facilities and services and infrastructure. This includes the need for development patterns that do not have an adverse impact on environmental resources and the built heritage and which mitigate the risk of flooding by avoiding those areas known to be at risk.

3.16 The emphasis is on managing housing growth to ensure that there continues to be a focus on developing more high quality accessible housing within existing urban areas without causing unacceptable damage to the local character and environmental quality or residential amenity of these areas. It is recognised that there are significant opportunities for new housing on appropriate vacant and under-utilised land, particularly as part of mixed use developments. Any proposed housing development will be dependant on the availability of all necessary infrastructure, including the availability of sustainable water resources and sewerage capacity.

3.17 This Strategy sets a regional target of 60% of new housing to be located in appropriate 'brownfield' sites within the urban footprints of settlements greater than 5,000 population. The glossary defines both 'brownfield' and 'urban footprint'.

3.18 The Department for Regional Development will carry out research on housing development on brownfield land and will develop its monitoring of housing within urban footprints.

3.19 There is no presumption that brownfield land is necessarily suitable for housing development or that the whole of the curtilage should be developed. Planning Policy Statement 7 'Quality Residential Environments' and the Addendum 'Safeguarding the Character of Established Residential Areas' set out policy for appropriate housing in settlements.

- **Promote more sustainable housing development within existing urban areas.** It is important to ensure that the future housing needs in Northern Ireland does not use a disproportionate amount of regional resources including infrastructure, services, industrial and agricultural land. This requires a two-pronged balanced

approach of encouraging compact urban forms, and promoting more housing within existing urban areas. This should support urban renaissance and investment in the clusters of main towns whilst conserving town settings and saving and concentrating resources. This will also mean more urban housing by recycling land and buildings and making use of other suitable sites thereby reducing the use of greenfield land.

- **Ensure an adequate and available supply of quality housing to meet the needs of everyone.** Housing land will be identified in development plans. Planning authorities should take account of existing vacant housing in any assessment of housing need. They should also take account of need identified, in the Housing Needs Assessment/Housing Market Analysis when allocating housing land, including land for social and intermediate housing such as shared ownership and affordable housing. An estimate of new dwelling requirement is set out in Appendix B.
- The figures in Appendix B, Table B2 are not to be seen as a rigid framework but as guidelines for local planning. The distribution across council areas reflects what might be required to achieve the policy objectives of strengthening Belfast as the regional economic driver and Londonderry as the principal city of the North West. They are not based purely on past trends of population movement.
- While the figure is for the whole council area, it is recognised that a proportion of this figure will be built in the open countryside and will depend on the application of PPS 21 “Sustainable Development in the Countryside”. The delivery of any housing will be dependent on the availability of water resources and sewerage capacity.
- **Use a broad evaluation framework (Table 3.2) to assist judgements on the allocation of housing growth.**

<b>Resource Test</b>	Studies should be carried out to assess and detail the existence of community assets and physical infrastructure such as water, waste and sewage, including spare capacity.
<b>Environmental Capacity Test</b>	An assessment of the environmental assets of the settlement, the potential of flooding from rivers, the sea or surface water run-off and its potential to accommodate future outward growth without significant environmental degradation should be made.
<b>Transport Test</b>	Studies should be carried out to assess the potential for integrating land use and public transport and walking and cycling routes to help reduce reliance on the car.
<b>Economic Development Test</b>	The potential to facilitate an appropriate housing and jobs balance and to unlock any major strategic development opportunities should be assessed and detailed.
<b>Urban and Rural Character Test</b>	Assessment should be made of the potential to maintain a sense of place, and to integrate new development in a way that does not detract from the character and identity of the settlement.
<b>Community Services Test</b>	The potential to underpin and, where necessary, reinforce the community service role and function of the settlement should be assessed and detailed.

3.20 The regional housing figure was allocated on a 52/48% split between the North/South and West of the Region and the BMUA districts and hinterland in order to help achieve balanced regional development. These figures are not to be seen as a rigid framework but as guidelines for local planning. The distribution across council areas reflects what might be required to achieve the policy objectives of strengthening Belfast as the regional economic driver and Londonderry as the principal city of the North West and is not based purely on past trends of population movement

3.21 The allocation of housing growth to specific locations in a district is a matter for decision through the development plan process. In the allocation process due weight needs to be given to reinforcing the leading role of the Hubs and the clusters of Hubs. Another important step in this allocation process is making judgements to achieve a complementary urban/rural balance to meet the need for housing in the towns of the district and to meet the needs of the rural community living in smaller settlements and countryside.

## Environment

3.22 Improving the quality of the environment can make an important contribution towards achieving a better quality of life. Significant progress towards more sustainable settlements and the conservation and protection of our built and natural heritage cannot be achieved without a change in attitudes and lifestyles of individuals.

3.23 Fossil fuels represent over 90% of the Northern Ireland's power generation and over 70% of households still use oil for home heating. Increasing the contribution that renewable energy can make to the energy mix will reduce reliance on fossil fuels and improve security of supply. To build an outward-looking, dynamic and liveable Region there needs to be significant investment in upgrading the electricity infrastructure, developing the natural gas network and exploring the potential to develop a renewable heat generation and distribution network. Transportation currently accounts for a quarter of the man-made greenhouse gas emissions. It is also the only sector where emissions are rising rather than falling. In order to address this we need to promote ways to make the most efficient use of our infrastructure so that we can move people and freight safely and reliably while also reducing pollution.

**RG9: Reduce our carbon footprint and facilitate mitigation and adaptation to climate change whilst improving air quality.**

3.24 Climate change is increasingly seen as one of the most serious problems facing the world. Air pollution from particulate matter is currently estimated to reduce the life expectancy of every person in the UK by an average of 7-8 months. The young and infirm are often particularly affected, as well as people living in deprived areas. In addition, emissions of sulphur (SO<sub>2</sub>), nitrogen (NO<sub>x</sub>) and ammonia (NH<sub>3</sub>) can be deposited on land and water causing either acidification, or nutrient enrichment (eutrophication). Whilst action is required internationally, it is important that Northern Ireland plays its part by reducing air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for the impacts of climate change. These include the effects on species and habitats and on health as a result of warmer temperatures, storms, floods and coastal erosion.

3.25 Consideration needs to be given on how to reduce energy consumption and the move to more sustainable methods of energy production. The use of fossil fuels and greenhouse gas emissions can be reduced by recycling waste and recovering energy from it.

### 3.26 Mitigation

- **Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transport.** This will include reducing the need to use the car. By designing neighbourhoods that have shops, workplaces and services, schools, churches, parks, and other amenities near homes, residents and visitors will have increased opportunities for walking, cycling, or taking public transport as they go about their daily lives.
- **Reduce noise and air pollution from transport.** This will include the need to adapt the existing transport network to facilitate the modal shift away from the car. The car may be essential for some journeys but its social and economic value needs to be weighed against its impact on the environment. The way existing transport is used needs to be looked at to favour modes of transport that allow reduction of Northern Ireland's carbon footprint.
- **Use more energy efficient forms of transport.** There is already demand for more fuel efficient vehicles and vehicles which do not rely on fossil fuels. Some of these technologies, such as electric vehicles, will require investments in infrastructure to unlock their potential. The Northern Ireland ecar project which consists of a consortium of public and private sector organisations will bring benefits to our environment, society and economy. People will also need to be educated in the benefits of embracing these technologies.
- **Improve the energy efficiency and adaptability of buildings.** Almost half of the per capita carbon footprint is generated by how homes and other buildings are used. Around 75% of the current building stock will be standing in 2050. Improvements should be made to buildings to minimise energy use and encourage zero carbon emissions, while ensuring that the character of buildings of architectural or historic interest is maintained. Planning authorities determining, and developers proposing, new housing should consider how they could be flexibly used over the lifespan of the building.
- **Increase the use of renewable energies.** Energy production from fossil fuels is a major source of greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants. Northern Ireland is largely dependent on fossil fuel combustion for electricity generation. Energy efficiency along with decarbonisation of the power sector is the key to achieving emissions reduction targets. The Strategic Energy Framework for Northern Ireland 2010 sets a target of 40% of electricity consumption from renewable sources by 2020 as well as achieving 10% penetration of renewable heat. This will require increasing numbers of renewable electricity installations and the grid infrastructure to support them. These must be appropriately sited to minimise their environmental impact.
- **Utilise local production of heat and/or electricity from low or zero carbon energy sources.** In addition to the carbon benefits, increased use of micro-generation plays an important part in diversifying our energy mix and ensuring

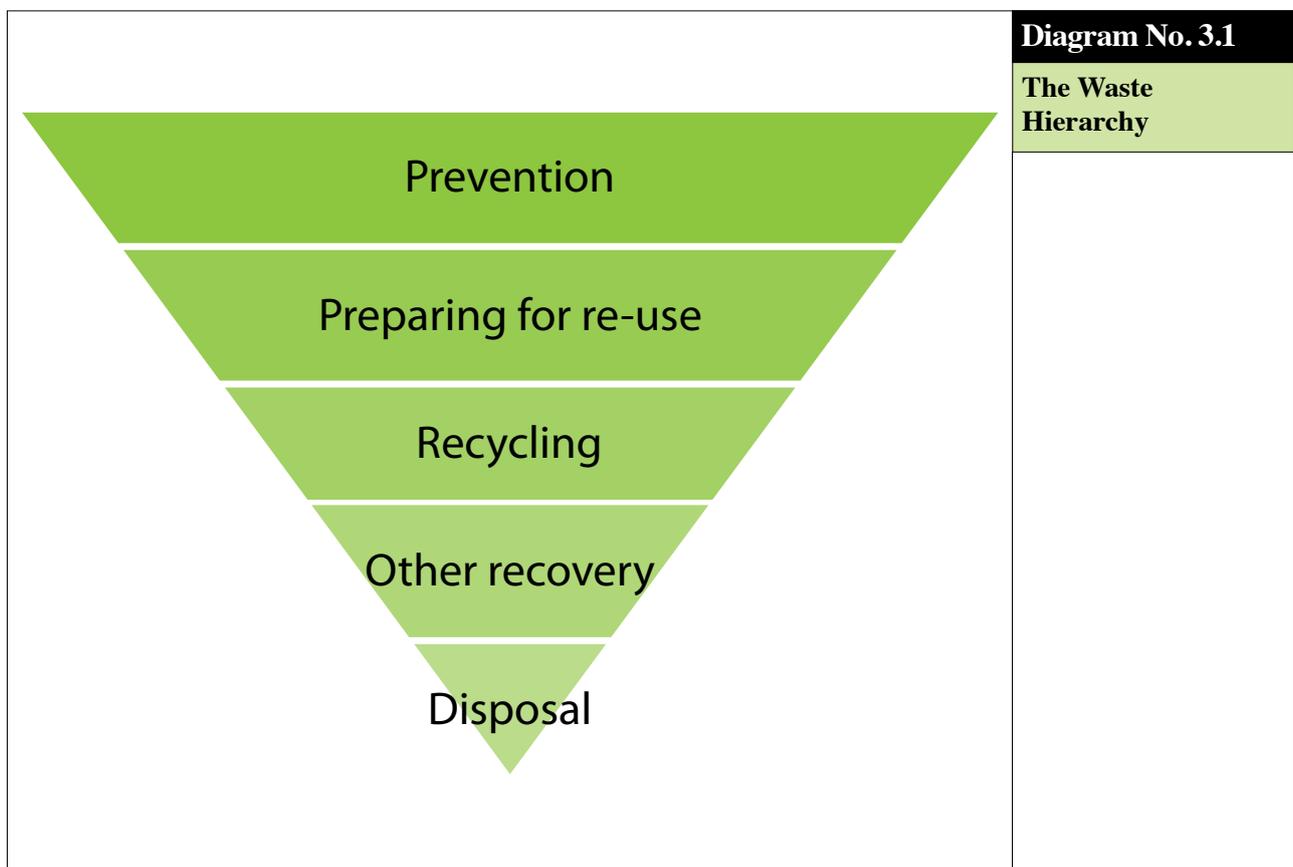
security of energy supply. It can allow energy to be produced and consumed locally, help alleviate fuel poverty (especially in off-gas network areas) and play a part in meeting renewable energy targets. Passive Solar Design (PSD) refers to the use of solar energy for the heating and cooling of buildings. Using this approach, the building itself or some part of it will take advantage of the natural energy in materials and air created by exposure to the sun.

- **Develop strong linkages between policies for managing air pollution and climate change.** Climate change and air pollutants share common sources. Greenhouse gases are most active high up in the atmosphere, whereas the most important factor for air quality is the concentration of pollutants nearer the earth's surface.
- **Protect Air Quality Management Areas.** In order to improve air quality for all citizens in Northern Ireland local authorities are responsible for reviewing the state of air quality in their district. To assist them with this process an Air Quality Strategy has been devised for the UK. This sets down standards and objectives for the air quality pollutants causing the problems and allows local authorities to review air quality in their area against these. Where local air quality fails to meet the required standard, the local authorities must declare an air quality management area (AQMA), covering the geographical area where a problem has been identified for the pollutant that exceeds its permitted standard. Development should be consistent with the AQMA action plans. NI departments also have a responsibility to ensure limit values, target values and alert thresholds for specified pollutants are not exceeded.

### 3.27 Adaptation

- **Re-use land, buildings and materials.** The use of previously developed land for new build and the adaptation and re-use of older buildings will help alleviate the pressure on open space. The retention and retrofitting of existing dwellings, the re-use of vacant homes and the provision of 'living over the shop' accommodation create the most sustainable form of housing. The potential for some under utilised land and buildings to support protected species needs to be considered when planning their re-use. The use of recycled building rubble should be encouraged to reduce the depletion of natural resources and to limit transportation of such materials.
- **Adopt grey water recycling.** Recycling waste water from activities like dish washing, bathing and laundry saves on water treatment costs and reduces demand for drinking water for non-drinking purposes. As grey water may contain nutrients and pathogens, and is often discharged warm, it is very important that it is properly treated and stored before use for irrigation.

- **Minimise development in areas at risk from flooding from rivers, the sea and surface water run-off.** Flooding is a natural phenomenon that cannot be entirely prevented. A precautionary approach to development in areas of flood risk should be exercised using the latest flood risk information that is available. We need to develop our town and cities in a manner that avoids the risk where possible. Developments in areas, even those outside flood risk areas should incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS).



- **Protect soils.** A fully functioning soil reduces the risk of flood and protects underground water supplies by neutralising and filtering out potential pollutants. Development leading to soil sealing, loss of biodiversity and deposition of processed materials represent significant threats to soils. Soil acts as a significant means of capturing and storing carbon thereby reducing the impact of climate change. Therefore, there is a need to manage soil, protect peat habitats, and safeguard soils in urban areas.
- **Protect and extend the ecosystems and habitats that can reduce or buffer the effects of climate change.** Many ecosystems and habitats (such as peat bogs) act as sinks or stores for carbon if undisturbed. Other habitats such as salt marsh may provide protection against some effects or allow for adaptation to those

changes (e.g. effects with sea-level rise). These areas should be protected and where possible extended.

- **Identify key assets and areas that are at risk through climate change.** In adapting to climate change it is essential that we maintain accurate and reliable information about key assets. These include impacts on species and habitats and on health through the impacts of warmer temperatures, storms, floods, rising sea level, coastal erosion and the coastal squeeze caused by habitats that are trapped between a fixed landward boundary, such as a sea wall and rising sea levels.

#### **RG10: Manage our waste sustainably**

3.28 Managing waste is a significant part of how we treat our environment. If waste is not managed safely then it can become a serious threat to public health, and cause damage to the environment as well as being a local nuisance.

- **Apply the Waste Hierarchy principles.** The revised Waste Framework Directive introduces a 5-step waste hierarchy. The waste hierarchy aims to encourage the management of waste materials in order to reduce the amount of waste materials produced, and to recover maximum value from the wastes that are produced. It is not applied as a strict hierarchy however as a guide, it encourages the prevention of waste, followed by the reuse and refurbishment of goods, then value recovery through recycling and composting.

The next option is recovery, including energy recovery, an important level in the hierarchy as many materials have significant embedded energy that can be recovered. Waste prevention, reuse, recycling and recovery are collectively defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as waste minimisation. Finally, waste disposal should only be used when no option further up the hierarchy is possible. The less waste we introduce into the waste stream, the less harm we inflict on our environment

- **Apply the Proximity Principle.** This will emphasise the need to treat or dispose of waste as close as practicable to the point of generation to minimise the environmental impacts of waste transport.

#### **RG11: Conserve, protect and, where possible, enhance our built heritage and our natural environment**

3.29 The environment, both in terms of natural and built heritage, is one of Northern Ireland's most important assets. Effective care of the environment provides very real benefits in terms of improving health and wellbeing, promoting economic development

and addressing social problems which result from a poor quality environment. It is a basic premise of the environmental justice agenda that everyone should have the right to, and be able to live in, a healthy environment, with access to sufficient and appropriate environmental resources for a healthy life. However, the importance of the environment goes far beyond the immediate benefits it can provide. Northern Ireland's environment is a unique asset; sustaining its landscape and biological diversity also makes a small but significant contribution to protecting a much wider ecosystem which sustains life on earth. We therefore have a responsibility to protect and enhance this asset for the benefit of future generations.

## **Built Heritage**

3.30 The Region has a rich and diverse built heritage which contributes to our sense of place and history. It is a key tourism and recreational asset and sustainable management of the built heritage makes a valuable contribution to the environment, economy and society. The built heritage embraces many sites of local and international interest which once lost cannot be fully replaced.

- **Identify, protect and conserve the built heritage, including archaeological sites and monuments and historic buildings.** Northern Ireland's archaeological sites and monuments provide a tangible link to the distant past, as well as more modern remains. For example, the suite of historic monuments in State Care in the Region ranges from the earliest known dwelling-sites and burial monuments through to twentieth-century fortifications. New discoveries are made every year that contribute to our understanding of the past and its place in the future landscape. Continuing work to identify these built heritage assets, on land, along the coast and within coastal waters helps inform future decisions about development and land-use change.
- **Identify, protect and conserve the character and built heritage assets within cities towns and villages.** Historic buildings and monuments are key elements of our historic townscape, Conservation Areas, key civic and publicly-accessible buildings, as well as everyday dwellings and shops. If these assets are recognised and managed they can make a positive contribution to regeneration. This will allow the maintenance of craft skills, and the development of a sense of place that can be respected by future development.
- **Maintain the integrity of built heritage assets, including historic landscapes.** Historic sites, buildings and landscapes do not exist in isolation. Their appropriate management and wider integration with their surroundings will help contribute to local character, and ensure that these assets continue to make a valuable contribution to our tourism economy.

## Natural Environment

3.31 The natural environment directly supports all life and is essential to well being. Human impacts on landscapes over the last century, as the result of increased development, have adversely affected biodiversity. There has been a substantial reduction in the total area of semi-natural habitats due to ongoing land use intensification from agriculture and urbanisation.

- **Sustain and enhance biodiversity** in line with the objective of the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy to halt the loss of indigenous species and habitats. By protecting existing, or creating new, ecological or wildlife corridors particularly in our cities and towns we can provide valuable help to arrest the decline in biodiversity.
- **Identify, establish, protect and manage ecological networks.** Ecological networks, including the protection of priority species, are needed to maintain environmental processes and help to conserve and enhance biodiversity. A well established ecological network, including designated sites, should provide the habitats needed for ecosystems and species populations to survive in an increasingly human dominated landscape. Such networks could also be of amenity value if linked to the green infrastructure provided by walking and cycle routes to heritage and other recreational interest.
- **Protect and encourage green and blue infrastructure within urban areas.** Urban areas generate, absorb and store a lot of heat energy which could be a big problem for people living there. Local hot spots are generated when solar power absorbing plants (trees, grass, soil, lakes, etc.) are replaced by high thermal inertia concrete, asphalt and highly reflective glass. The situation is made worse when this is combined with an impermeable surface where not even water can trickle into the ground. Green infrastructure such as parks, green spaces and street trees can be used to moderate the effect as can blue infrastructure such as ponds, streams and lakes
- **Protect and manage important geological and geomorphological features.** Northern Ireland has a remarkably diverse range of rocks and geomorphological features. While selected sites require protection for their scientific, educational and research value, other topographical and geological features, if sensibly managed, can play an active role in economic development.
- **Protect enhance and manage the coast.** The quality of coastal waters needs to be raised. Coastal areas need to be protected from coastal squeeze, to safeguard against loss of distinctive habitats and to help adaptation to climate change. The landscape setting of features should be conserved. The Marine Policy Statement (March 2011) and subsequent Marine Plan(s) will provide spatial guidance and

detailed policy where appropriate for the terrestrial/marine interface and the marine environment. This will be complemented by work to advance integrated coastal zone management.

- **Protect, enhance and restore the quality of inland water bodies.** Rivers and lakes support habitats and species of national and international importance. The quality and the ecological status of the water environment should be improved through fulfilment of statutory obligations. The Executive's first cycle of River Basin Management Plans (2010-15) outline the current measures being taken to improve the quality of our coastal, inland and ground waters and achieve the Water Framework Directive's aim of good ecological status.
- **Recognise and promote the conservation of local identity and distinctive landscape character.** Landscape character is what makes an area unique. It is defined as "a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements, be it natural (soil, landform) and/or human (for example settlement and development) in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse". We can only make informed and responsible decisions on the management and planning of sustainable future landscapes if we pay proper regard to their existing character. By understanding how places differ we can also ensure that future development is well situated, sensitive to its location, and contributes to environmental, social and economic objectives. The Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment 2000 provides valuable guidance on local landscape character and scenic quality.
- **Conserve, protect and where possible enhance areas recognised for their landscape quality.** Protected landscapes should continue to be managed through a partnership approach involving central and local government and the local communities.
- **Protect designated areas of countryside from inappropriate development (either directly or indirectly) and continue to assess areas for designation.** Designating special areas for protection is an effective way of ensuring our wildlife and natural landscapes retain their individual characteristics. Some areas are deemed of such importance that they are formally designated under various pieces of national and international legislation.
- **Consider the establishment of one or more National Parks.** This would conserve and enhance the natural, built and cultural heritage of areas of outstanding landscape value while promoting the social and economic development of the communities they support.

**RG12: Promote a more sustainable approach to the provision of water and sewerage services and flood risk management.**

3.32 Changes in population distribution, household formation, urban development, and our lifestyles continue to put increased pressure on our water resources and drainage systems. Climate change will also have an impact on our water environment. Without action there are expected to be discrepancies between water demand and availability leading to the potential for water stress in some areas, more water quality problems in the natural environment and increased flood events from drainage systems, rivers, the sea and surface water run-off. The planning for the provision of water and sewerage infrastructure and treatment facilities is both a practical and environmental necessity for regional development.

- **Integrate water and land-use planning.** Land-use planning should be informed by current water and sewerage infrastructure and future investment programmes. This will involve close cooperation between planning authorities and the water industry in the preparation of local development plans and long-term water strategies.
- **Manage future water demand.** Reducing water consumption by reducing waste can lead to a lower carbon footprint as less water will need to be abstracted, treated and pumped. There will also be significant economic benefits through reduced energy and chemical costs. To help manage future water demand in new developments, consideration should be given to including measures such as grey water recycling and rainwater harvesting.
- **Encourage sustainable surface water management.** Greater use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) should be encouraged, particularly as part of significant development proposals. SuDS provide a water quality benefit and if designed appropriately can help control flows into rivers and drains thereby reduce the risk of flooding. All new urban storm water drainage systems should incorporate measures to manage the flow of waters which exceed design standards (exceedance flows) in order to help protect vulnerable areas.

## Spatial Framework Guidance

3.33 The Spatial Framework guidance relates to the 5 key components of the Spatial Framework.

- **The Metropolitan Area centred on Belfast.**
- **Londonderry principal city of the North West**
- **Hubs and Clusters of Hubs**
- **The rural area**
- **Gateways and corridors**

### The Metropolitan Area Centred on Belfast

3.34 **The Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area (BMUA)** which is defined in the glossary has a fairly static population of around 575,000 or 32% of the total population in Northern Ireland. Outside Belfast City there are significant areas of deprivation particularly around Collin Glen, Twinbrook, Kilwee, Poleglass and Old Warren in Lisburn and Dunanney and Monkstown in Newtownabbey.

3.35 The BMUA has a significant natural setting bounded by Belfast Lough and Hills with the Lagan Valley running through it. Topographical features constrain the direction of future growth and limit the potential of greenfield expansion. It also has many protected areas of high scenic value and designations.

3.36 The BMUA is the major conurbation in Northern Ireland with a thriving retail, service, administration, cultural and educational centre in the City of Belfast. It is the Region's largest employment centre.

The urban area of **Lisburn** benefits from its location at the meeting point of the Belfast/Dublin economic corridor and the East/West transport corridor. In 2008 it had a population of approximately 72,500. Lisburn has a vibrant city centre with a strong focus on leisure provision, sports and the arts. Potential exists to grow the retail offer and create high quality office offer through the creation of employment in business services. Potential also exists to generate a new driver for the night-time economy and to provide a range of flexible commercial accommodation and business parks at development locations such as Blaris and the Maze/Long Kesh.

**Bangor** with a population of around 60,000, many of whom commute to Belfast to work, is an important retail and commercial centre. The potential for Bangor's development centres on its modern marina and creating activities around the promenade area.

**Carrickfergus** with a population of around 29,000 benefits from its position on the estuary of Belfast Lough. With a vibrant new marina, waterfront development and historic castle it has good transport links with Belfast and Scotland via Larne.

The BMUA is at the centre of the regional transport network and the major gateway for national and international trade. It has a major role in the European network of City Regions with vital links to Dublin, Britain and continental Europe. Belfast's airports and sea port serve the Region as gateway links to the world.

3.37 **Belfast City** is the capital of Northern Ireland; it has a population of 268,000 which has been in decline. A sustained approach to regeneration has changed the city centre and brought dramatic improvements. The last decade has seen significant economic growth and around 26,000 jobs have been created in the Belfast City Council area. The evidence is however that over 50% of those who work in Belfast live outside it.

3.38 Many of those living in Belfast have not benefited from the economic growth. There are pockets of deprivation and significantly almost 35% of the population of Belfast City Council (around 95,000 people) experience deprivation.

3.39 Deprivation levels in Belfast vary considerably. The majority of deprived areas are situated in the west and north of Belfast. The Whiterock area is the most deprived in Belfast and Northern Ireland. In contrast, Belfast also has some of the least deprived areas, located mainly in the east and south of Belfast.

3.40 The population of the Council area fell by around 15% between 1981 and 2009 however the decline was not uniform. There has been a wedge of growth emanating from the City centre in parts of the Falls, Shaftesbury and Duncairn wards as well as the Mount and Island in East Belfast. The main driver of growth in those areas was the young working age population. Other growing areas were located mainly on the periphery of the City, including Legoniel, Highfield and Glencolin in the North and West, and Rosetta in the South. Some areas close to the central area of the city have declined and there are now significant pockets of under-used and derelict land in key locations.

**SFG1: Promote urban economic development at key locations throughout the BMUA and ensure sufficient land is available for jobs**

3.41 Significant investment will be required to sustain and grow the BMUA. Employment opportunities should be planned in a way that recognises the roles that the component parts play; builds on planned regeneration initiatives and maximises the use of existing and planned infrastructure provision, including public transport.

- **Identify and protect key locations for economic growth.** This will strengthen the role of the BMUA as the regional economic driver. Major employment/industrial locations in Belfast Harbour Area, (including Titanic Quarter), West Lisburn/Blaris, Purdysburn. and Global Point/Ballyhenry being connected to public transport will support the drive to provide a range of opportunities for job creation.
- **Enhance Lisburn City as a major employment and commercial centre.** Research shows that in the 10 years between 1998 and 2008, 5% of the increase in Northern Ireland's employment levels was in the Lisburn District Council area. Lisburn is strategically located at the meeting of key transport corridors and has high development potential and the scope to generate additional jobs. Projections suggest that between 2008 and 2028 Lisburn District Council will account for nearly 10% of the total increase in employment. Lisburn has a vibrant city centre with a strong focus on retail provision, sports and the arts. Potential exists to grow the leisure offer and create high quality office offer through the creation of employment in business services. Sprucefield will continue to retain its status as a regional out-of-town shopping centre.
- **Promote the regeneration of the town centres of Bangor and Carrickfergus.** Bangor and Carrickfergus have significant housing catchment areas. It will be important that they extend their employment and retail base to serve their catchments. Both towns have important complementary roles to play within the BMUA. While Belfast City will continue to provide job opportunities for many of the residents, it will be important for Bangor and Carrickfergus to widen their economic base as a means of reducing their roles as dormitory towns.
- **Direct mixed use development towards sites which will enhance local regeneration initiatives.** Regeneration of sites such as Titanic Quarter, Crumlin Road Gaol, the North Foreshore, and Belfast Harbour area will act as catalysts for regeneration. The Port of Belfast occupies approximately 19% of the City Council area. It is already a key centre for industry and trade. This role will grow further as the residential, commercial and leisure potential of the Titanic Quarter lands are realised.

## **SFG2: Grow the population of the City of Belfast**

3.42 The population of Belfast is forecast to fall over the next two decades; therefore population decline needs to be reversed in order to have a strong capital city which is the economic driver of Northern Ireland. The aim is for the population of Belfast City to be 300,000 by 2021 which was the level achieved in the 1980s. Key to population growth will be the provision of housing to meet the full range of need. The Housing Growth Indicators in Appendix B have been calculated on the basis of growing the population of Belfast, not on the projected population decline.

3.43 An efficient public transport system will provide the connections to jobs, services and amenities. This will provide an attractive urban environment for those who live and work in the City. However, there are a number of internationally important nature conservation sites that could be affected by the expansion of Belfast's population. Housing growth must be appropriately managed to avoid adverse effects on these sites. Increased recreational use could put pressure on nearby sites e.g. Belfast Lough. There could also be increased demands on water resources and waste water disposal. It will be necessary when planning the location and phasing of development that there is sufficient capacity in the existing water supply and waste-water treatment infrastructure or that this can be provided ahead of development without harming the environment.

3.44 There are significant opportunities for more jobs to be created and it will be important to have a wide variety of house types for those wishing to live and work in the City. It is estimated that 22,000 jobs could be created between 2008 and 2028. Most of these jobs will be in the service and office sector and they will be attracted to the City by the availability of a skilled workforce and the quality of life which the City has to offer.

- **Support a drive to provide additional dwellings.** These additional dwellings will be provided on land already zoned for housing and on windfall sites which become available for development. Assessment is also needed of the scope for higher densities in appropriate locations, particularly at gateway sites into the City Centre, on arterial routes and at transport interchange areas. It will require imaginative and innovative high quality design, including mixed use schemes, to ensure that they link into the existing urban fabric. The provision of these additional dwellings must take account of environmental capacity studies to ensure that their delivery can be sustainably managed.

**SFG3: Enhance the role of Belfast City Centre as the regional capital and focus of administration, commerce, specialised services and cultural amenities**

3.45 Belfast City Centre will continue as the primary office location in Northern Ireland. Growth in the business and service sectors will be the main driver for new offices and while most will locate in the City Centre, some business uses assist regeneration initiatives particularly in areas of deprivation beyond the City Centre.

3.46 The regeneration of inner and middle city communities will be strongly influenced by the focus on enhancing existing commercial centres and properties on arterial routes that provide a range of facilities for local needs. Proposals for development of these centres/properties should continue to take account of their impact on the city centre shopping area as a whole.

- **Support and strengthen the distinctive role of Belfast City Centre as the primary retail location in Northern Ireland.** Belfast City Centre has developed its regional shopping offer. A precautionary approach needs to be continued in relation to future major retail development proposals based on the likely risk of out of centre shopping developments having an adverse impact on the city centre shopping area.
- **Enhance the employment potential of Belfast City Centre.** Belfast has a key role to play as the centre of regional administration and providing business services. This role will grow further as the residential, commercial and leisure potential of the Titanic Quarter lands area is realised. The international environmental importance of Belfast Lough must be taken into account when development is being considered. The City Centre will continue to be the first choice for major office developments.
- **Close the gap in quality of life for those living in deprived areas.** Sustain urban regeneration measures, targeting social need and community disadvantage across the city and help tackle community division.
- **Develop the City of Belfast as Northern Ireland's cultural and arts centre and enhance the public realm.** High quality urban environments and distinctive cultural and arts facilities have a significant influence on investment in new business. Regeneration initiatives in areas such as in the Cathedral Quarter, and around the Waterfront Hall, together with the significant investment in the arts and culture infrastructure in the city, have significantly enhanced the quality of the urban environment and emphasised the cultural diversity on offer. An integrated approach is required for a further step change in the pedestrian environment in

the city centre, along arterial routes, to enhance the 'urban villages' for community living and cultural events.

#### **SFG4: Manage the movement of people and goods within the BMUA**

3.47 The Strategy recognises that transport has a key role to play in developing competitive cities and regions. An efficient transport infrastructure is not only important for a successful economy but it can also help promote social inclusion by providing an affordable alternative to the private car.

- **Manage travel demand within the BMUA.** The Strategy recognises the environmental, social and economic benefits of an efficient public transportation system. As congestion continues to rise more radical steps will need to be taken to encourage a modal shift in travel from cars to public transport. One factor which may be influencing journey choice is the relative availability of car parking space. A range of initiatives need to be taken to address this such as reducing the supply of long term car parking spaces in Belfast City Centre, pricing policies, land use measures and innovative work practices. These measures need to be planned in a timely way to coincide with improvements to public transportation.
- **Improve the public transport service.** Over reliance on the car has resulted in increased congestion levels which have had an effect on journey times and emissions. Belfast has benefited from significant public transportation investment but further measures will be required to provide a real alternative to the car. A well maintained high quality public transport will attract greater use and a feeling of safety and security. It will include innovative route and service options, rail feeder services, integrated transport facilities and orbital urban services.
- **Integrate Land Use and Transportation.** Planned improvements to the public transport network including a rapid transit system should be developed to ensure integration with land uses. This will help reduce congestion levels and ensure better access to employment opportunities. The siting of new developments in locations well served by public transport will provide a sustainable choice of transport.
- **Introduce a Rapid Transit system.** This will offer improved speed, reliability, comfort and access and will provide connection to the wider key transport network within the BMUA.
- **Manage the efficient movement of freight.** The strategic road network should take account of the need for the efficient movement of freight, especially managing access to the motorway system and the gateway lands at the Harbour Estate.

- **Improve facilities for walking and cycling which is co-ordinated with infrastructure investment.** Environmental street improvements will assist in making streets safer and more user-friendly for cyclists and pedestrians.

**SFG5: Protect and enhance the quality of the setting of the BMUA and its environmental assets**

3.48 The BMUA has a significant natural setting surrounded by hills. It is important to recognise the significance of the existing environmental assets and protected areas of high scenic value.

- **Protect areas of high scenic value, undeveloped coast line, Belfast Lough, the Lagan Valley Regional Park and the hills around the BMUA from development.** The attractive natural setting of the BMUA reinforces its uniqueness and brings benefits to the economy and society. These areas should be safeguarded, but opportunities should be sought where appropriate, to increase access to them for residents and tourists, consistent with protecting their integrity and value.
- **Protect and enhance the network of open spaces in the BMUA.** The network consists of country parks, landscape wedges, parks and forests and community greenways. They are important recreational facilities which help to define a sense of place and character for urban communities. Opportunities should be taken for connections to an enhanced network of pedestrian paths, cycle-ways and ecological corridors. These have the potential to support biodiversity by linking existing ecological areas creating a network of green spaces throughout the BMUA.
- **Make use of green space to help manage access to important wildlife sites and minimise the potential for damage due to visitor pressure.** Increasing access to the scenic and natural sites around the city could result in disturbance effects. It is important to ensure that visitor pressure and increased access does not further damage any important wildlife sites.

## The North West Centred on Londonderry

3.49 **The North West** is defined as the council areas of Derry and Strabane and also extends into County Donegal. The population of these two Northern Ireland council areas is around 150,000 with the urban centres of Londonderry, and Strabane accounting for approximately 72% of that population. There are severe pockets of deprivation particularly around the Ballycolman and East wards in Strabane. People in the Derry local government district experience the highest level of income deprivation with around 38% classified as income deprived compared to the Northern Ireland figure which is 25%. There is also a high percentage of long term unemployed. The majority of those working in Derry City Council area also live there. Median gross weekly pay for full time jobs is around 9% lower than that for Northern Ireland as a whole.

3.50 The North West has a significant natural setting that includes coastline, Lough Foyle and river valleys. The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) identifies Letterkenny-Londonderry as a linked gateway to the North West and recognises the importance of further development of this core area and its economic social and other relationships and functions in strengthening the wider North West region.

3.51 **Londonderry** sits naturally as the core settlement and regional gateway city for the North West. As the principal city of the North West, with a University, it is a key cross-border and international gateway providing access by road, rail and sea to the North West Region. Unlike Belfast the population has been growing. The pattern of growth has been away from the city to less densely settled surrounding areas. The total population for the District is forecast to increase by around 6% to 116,000 by 2023.

3.52 **Strabane** has a close cross-border relationship with Lifford which is an administrative centre in Donegal County Council. Both can benefit from sharing services and functionality and their locational advantage will be further strengthened when the A5 linking Dublin and Omagh to Strabane and Londonderry is improved. This will create the potential for an economic corridor from Aughnacloy to North Donegal. Strabane has the potential to benefit from its industrial resource offering a range of employment opportunities and development programmes. The Strabane Town Centre Masterplan sets out the blueprint for further enhancement of the town.

### SFG6: Develop a strong North West

3.53 Planning for physical development, social infrastructure, physical infrastructure and economic development is central to the development of a strong North West. Londonderry is well suited to provide a regional level of service to much of the western part of Northern Ireland and to a substantial part of County Donegal.

3.54 Due to the geographic peripherality of the North West, transport, energy and telecommunication connections are important to the economic and social fabric of the Region.

- **Continue the high levels of co-operation** between Letterkenny and Londonderry and Strabane as evidenced by the creation of the North West Partnership Board. Such co-operation can help unlock the potential of the North West and especially the Londonderry ~ Letterkenny Gateway. It can consider opportunities for improved public services in areas such as health and education through co-operation between statutory agencies and other institutions.
- **Enhance the role of Strabane.** Strabane performs an important role in providing services to local communities. It could capitalise on its location close to the Sperrins and Donegal to expand its tourism offer by working with its cross border neighbours.
- **Improve the energy infrastructure** across the Region to ensure that the North West, in particular, has access to reliable sustainable energy supplies to support economic growth and connectivity and to maximise the North West's significant renewable energy resource.

### SFG7: Strengthen the role of Londonderry as the principal city for the North West

3.55 Securing a strong and vibrant city is important to the economic and social wellbeing of the North West. The physical transformation of this historic walled city to reflect its economic status and profile will enhance its urban character and promote neighbourhood recovery. The creation of imaginative new housing, the management of parks and open spaces and making streets safe and attractive will encourage the regeneration of the city.

- **Continue to regenerate the city of Londonderry.** The City should be the focus for administration, shopping, commerce, specialised services, cultural amenities and tourism within the North West. Key locations have been identified for regeneration in the 'One Plan'. Sites such as the former security bases of

Ebrington and Fort George will add some 17 hectares of development land to the city's land stock and provide a major opportunity for boosting economic development and regeneration of the area.

- **Meet the housing needs of the area.** It is expected that the need for housing in the City will continue to increase. These additional dwellings will be provided on land already zoned for housing and on windfall sites which become available for development. Assessment is also needed of the scope for higher densities in appropriate locations. It will require imaginative and innovative design, including mixed use schemes, to ensure that they link into the existing urban fabric.
- **Maximise the tourism potential of the city.** Continue the regeneration of the City while respecting its heritage assets, exceptional landscape setting and unique walled core through sensitive development. The city should be promoted as a major tourist destination in its own right and as a gateway to Donegal, the Foyle valley, the Sperrins and the Causeway Coast. The city has an opportunity to maximise the benefits from its 'UK City of Culture 2013' designation.
- **Close the gap in quality of life for those living in deprived areas.** Sustain urban regeneration measures targeting social need and community disadvantage across the city and help tackle community division.

#### **SFG8: Manage the movement of people and goods within the North West**

3.56 The Strategy recognises that transport has a key role to play in developing competitive cities and regions. An efficient transport infrastructure is not only important for a successful economy but it can also help promote social inclusion.

- **Enhance transport linkages** across the Region particularly between Londonderry, Strabane and Donegal, to and from the air and sea ports and the distribution of traffic from and between transport corridors.
- **Manage travel demand within the North West** The Strategy recognises the environmental, social, and economic benefits of an efficient public transportation system. As congestion continues to rise more radical steps will need to be taken to encourage a modal shift in travel from cars to public transport. A range of initiatives are needed to coincide with the improvements to public transportation.
- **Improve the public transport service.** There has been reliance on the car and consequently congestion levels have been increasing. This has had an effect on journey times and emissions. A well maintained high quality public transport will attract greater use and a feeling of safety and security. This will include innovative route and service options, rail feeder services, integrated transport facilities and orbital urban services.

- **Integrate Land Use and Transportation.** Planned improvements to the public transport network should be developed to ensure that there is integration with land uses. This will help reduce congestion levels and, with a portfolio of travel demand measures, will ensure better access to employment opportunities. The siting of new developments in locations well served by public transport will provide a sustainable choice of transport.
- **Manage the efficient movement of freight.** The strategic road network should take account of the need for the efficient movement of freight, especially managing access to the motorway system and the gateway lands at the Port.
- **Provide better accessibility to the central area of the city.** There is a need to improve the main radial routes for public transport and improve the interchange facilities between bus and rail. Environmental street improvements will assist in making streets safer, improving facilities for walking and cycling.

**SFG9: Protect and enhance the quality of the setting of Londonderry City and the North West and its environmental assets**

3.57 Londonderry and the North West Region have a significant natural setting with its northern coastline, the Faughan Valley, the Sperrins and the banks of Lough Foyle and its tributaries. It is important to recognise the significance of the existing environmental assets in and around the North West and the City. The North West also has many protected areas of high scenic value and designations. These areas should be safeguarded, although opportunities should be taken to increase access to these natural assets for residents and tourists, where this is appropriate to the area and consistent with protecting their integrity and value.

- **Protect areas of high scenic value, undeveloped coastline and wetlands from development.** The attractive natural and historic setting of the City reinforces its uniqueness and brings benefits to the economy and society.
- **Protect and enhance the network of open spaces in the North West.** The network consists of open countryside, country parks, urban parks, forests and community greenways. They are important recreational facilities which help to define a sense of place and character for urban communities. They provide opportunities for healthy lifestyles. Opportunities should be taken for connections to an enhanced network of pedestrian paths, cycle-ways and ecological corridors. These have the potential to support biodiversity by linking existing ecological areas creating a network of green spaces throughout the North West.

- **Make use of green space to help manage access to important wildlife sites and minimise the potential for damage due to visitor pressure.** Increasing access to the scenic and natural sites around the city could result in disturbance effects. It is important to ensure that visitor pressure and increased access does not further damage any important wildlife sites.

## Hubs and Clusters of Hubs

3.58 The Hierarchy of Settlements and Related Infrastructure Wheel described in Chapter 2 shows that there is a strong relationship between settlement size and the levels of service that can be supported.

3.59 In Northern Ireland the 'Report on Settlement Service Classification' prepared by the Settlement Information Classification and Analysis Group (SICAG) shows that a mixture of geography and historical growth patterns mean that some of our district towns are providing services at a higher level than their size might suggest.

3.60 The Spatial Framework recognises this and identifies Main and Local Hubs based on the SICAG report. These are the same Hubs as were identified in the 2001 RDS.

3.61 In times of economic downturn places cannot afford to compete with each other. Co-operation is important to reduce unnecessary duplication of services and facilities. The European Spatial Development Perspective states:

**'The creation of networks of smaller towns in less densely settled and economically weaker regions is also important. In these areas, co-operation between urban centres to develop functional complementarities may be the only possibility for achieving viable markets and maintaining institutions and services which could not be achieved by the towns on their own.'**

3.62 The Framework therefore promotes co-operation between places and encourages clustering of Hubs so that services do not need to be duplicated but rather shared. The following paragraphs describe the Hubs and where appropriate their potential to cluster. As well as the main towns identified in each cluster there are other smaller urban settlements in the surrounding rural areas that can perform some of the functions of the larger towns.

3.63 **Enniskillen** is the principal town of Fermanagh District Council with a population of around 14,000. Its location on the banks of Lough Erne, landscape and associated features such as the Marble Arch Caves and lakelands make it a tourist destination. Enniskillen is fairly remote from the principal cities in Northern Ireland, being around 1 hour 30 minutes drive from Londonderry or Belfast. It is the location for a new acute hospital for the south west. The closest large town is Omagh which is approximately 27 miles away with little opportunity to cluster. Enniskillen has an inter-regional gateway function

being only 1 hours drive to Sligo on the main transport route and offering a growing private aviation facility at St Angelo airport. There are opportunities for Enniskillen and Sligo to work together to provide services on a cross-border basis.

3.64 **Omagh** is the principal town in Omagh District Council with a growing population of around 21,500. It is a major administrative centre with a high proportion of public sector jobs. Omagh, like Enniskillen is less able to cluster with other towns due to its remote location, however, it is situated on the Western Economic Corridor that connects Omagh northwards to Londonderry and southwards to Dublin. There has been extensive upgrading of the public realm in Omagh including, environmental improvements along the Strule riverbank, a new arts centre and a new sub-regional campus for further education. The strengthening of Omagh as a skills and knowledge based economy is underpinned by the lead role of the South Western College – Omagh Campus. There is the opportunity to expand this contribution through additional education provision in the Lisanelly and St Lucia barracks land. There remains a need to continue to build a strong Small and Medium Enterprise base extending across manufacturing, services and construction.

3.65 **Coleraine** is the principal town in Coleraine District Council with a fairly static population of around 24,500. It is situated close to the tourist destination the Giants Causeway and Causeway Coast World Heritage Site. It performs a strong district function with a wide range of services including an acute hospital and a university campus. Coleraine is well connected by road and rail to both Belfast and Londonderry.

3.66 **Ballymoney** with a population of around 10,500 is the administrative, commercial and educational centre for the rural hinterland. The town is straddled to the west by the River Bann and to the north by the River Bush and part of the Borough lies within the Antrim Coast and Glens Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Lower Bann Valley with numerous opportunities for outdoor recreation. Ballymoney benefits from being on the main link road to the northwest and on the Belfast to Londonderry railway line. Agriculture, manufacturing and the availability of commercial sites are important to the local economy.

3.67 **Ballycastle** with a population of nearly 5,500 is a small coastal town between the Giant's Causeway and Causeway Coast World Heritage Site and the Glens of Antrim. The town's historic built form, seafront and landscapes all need to be protected and enhanced.

3.68 **Limavady** has a population of over 12,500 and with thirteen areas of special environmental designation in its hinterland tourism is increasingly important. Culture and

Arts play an important part in the town's life, and its new Arts and Cultural Centre is both a physical and cultural regenerator for Limavady.

3.69 The towns of **Coleraine, Ballymoney, Ballycastle** and **Limavady** have the potential to cluster. The cluster is reasonably well connected with journey times between centres ranging from 20 minutes to just under an hour. The journey times to both Belfast and Londonderry increases the need for this cluster to be able to provide all the level 3 services.

3.70 **Ballymena** is the principal town in Ballymena District Council with a population of close to 30,000. Ballymena benefits from an excellent location on the edge of the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area, with easy access to the International and City Airports and the Ports of Larne and Belfast. The town is a significant retail centre which is complimented by nearby tourism attractions, including the Causeway Coast and Glens and historic features such as Slemish Mountain. With a targeted investment strategy the town aims to become a leading cultural and visitor centre.

3.71 **Antrim** has a population of around 22,000 and has an acute hospital. It offers accessibility as a strength being the largest town close to Belfast International Airport and the tourism potential associated with its proximity to Lough Neagh and its tributary rivers which provide opportunities for water-sports, scenic walks and angling. Antrim has excellent healthcare provision and an expanding retail offer. Economic drivers revolve around construction, distribution, transport and hospitality. The area's principal strength literally revolves around a well developed transport infrastructure that provides easy access to all the main external gateways for Northern Ireland, as well as easy access to all parts of the Province. Antrim town lies on two of the main transport corridors, the Belfast – Londonderry corridor and the Southern corridor. The importance and benefit of Antrim's central geographical location is emphasised by the strong interest shown by potential investors.

3.72 **Larne** is situated in a strategic coastal location with a natural harbour and is the second largest port in Northern Ireland. Its unique position provides strong linkages with south-west Scotland and its road and rail links form part of the Trans-European Networks (TENs) Route from Cork through Dublin and Belfast to Stranraer in Scotland. Larne's position on the Causeway Coastal Route has the potential to create a centre for tourism and with regeneration of the townscape to increase the vitality and prosperity of the town centre.

3.73 The towns of **Ballymena, Antrim and Larne** are well connected with a drive time of less than 20 minutes between them and have the potential to cluster. This coupled with a rail link and proximity to the International Airport gives this cluster a potential advantage in attracting business.

3.74 **Cookstown** with a growing population of around 12,000 is centrally located in Mid Ulster within an hours drive to Belfast and Londonderry. With an emphasis on manufacturing, construction and retail sectors this traditional market town provides services to a wider rural hinterland. In addition to a range of cultural and leisure amenities Cookstown has an agricultural college and will be home to a new Public Service Training College.

3.75 **Dungannon** has a population of over 14,000 and is well situated on the South Western Transport Corridor. Its position close to both Lough Neagh and the Sperrins offers opportunities for tourism investment. It also provides specialist retail provision with the Linen Green complex at Moygashel which draws some 30% of its customer base from across the border. Dungannon offers specialist health and social care services for the surrounding area and there is a commitment to town centre public realm investment.

3.76 **Magherafelt** has a population of around 9,000 and is strategically located mid way between Belfast and Londonderry close to the North West Key Transport Corridor. It has a compact town centre which boasts an excellent independent retail offer and a strong entrepreneurial culture with a high rate of business start up. Magherafelt has the potential to continue to grow a strong retail and commercial centre and to build upon its existing leisure and entertainment sector. These towns are well connected to each other with both Dungannon and Magherafelt within around 10 miles of Cookstown.

3.77 **Cookstown, Dungannon and Magherafelt** have the potential to form a cluster. Each of the towns act as important centres for retailing, commerce and business and serves a substantial number of dispersed smaller settlements. This cluster is well positioned on two Key Transport Corridors connecting it to Belfast, Londonderry and Enniskillen. Its position close to both Lough Neagh and the Sperrins provide opportunities in the Tourism sector.

3.78 **Craigavon urban area** is made up of the three centres of Lurgan, Portadown and Central Craigavon with a growing population of around 65,000. It is the third largest centre of population in Northern Ireland and performs a strong sub-regional function offering a wide range of services and facilities including an acute hospital. Central Craigavon is a unique town centre with a built form that dates back less than 40 years. It has a well

established retail function, a strong manufacturing and industry base and benefits from a lakeland setting with leisure and tourism functions. It is well connected to both Belfast and Dublin. Lurgan benefits from its location on the rail line and easy access to the M1 Motorway. Much of the town centre is within a Conservation Area designation and Lurgan Park, the largest urban park in Northern Ireland is located immediately adjacent to the town centre. Oxford Island National Nature Reserve is situated on the outskirts of Lurgan and incorporates the Lough Neagh Discovery Centre offering a unique leisure and tourism facility. Portadown benefits from its drive time to Belfast of around 30 minutes and a stop on the Belfast to Dublin Railway line. Portadown's potential for a rediscovered and rejuvenated riverside area will lead it to become a location for modern mixed use development area centred around leisure and town centre living.

3.79 **Banbridge** has a good quality natural and built environment, excellent sports and leisure facilities, an abundance of parks and open spaces and a robust telecommunications infrastructure. The sectors with the strongest employment are manufacturing, construction and retail. The economic development of the district in recent years has been mirrored by significant investment in wider social and environmental improvements. Banbridge benefits from its strategic location on the Belfast Dublin Corridor and will continue to have a key role as an important retail and commercial centre within the cluster.

3.80 **Armagh City** with a population of around 15,000 has a unique sense of place in Ireland with a significance and influence felt across the island for 6500 years. It has been the spiritual capital of Ireland since around 445AD. Armagh is a rich heritage and tourism destination with an abundance of cultural product – the rich Georgian architecture, cathedrals, museums, planetarium and Navan Fort. Armagh's potential in tourism terms relies largely upon strategic improvements to the transport corridor around the city.

3.81 **Craigavon, Banbridge and Armagh** have the potential to cluster and to capitalise on their strategic position on the Belfast/Dublin and Belfast/Enniskillen/Sligo economic corridors.

3.82 **Newry** city, is the main settlement in the Newry and Mourne District Council and has a population of around 30,000. Its setting close to the Mourne Mountains makes it an attractive tourist destination. Newry is a significant employment centre with a strong retail offering and an acute hospital. It is well connected to both Belfast and Dublin being on the main road and rail links.

3.83 Newry is the South Eastern City gateway due to its proximity to the land border and

the major port of Warrenpoint. It has the potential to cluster with Dundalk. They are both strategically located on the Belfast-Dublin corridor which has the potential to become a significant axis of development within the wider European context. This has provided the impetus for joint working to develop their roles as regional Gateways and to develop the wider eastern seaboard corridor. In recent years Newry and Dundalk have benefited from strong co-operation in both the public and private sectors. The Newry/Dundalk Twin City Region Framework for Co-operation is such an example. A joined-up approach assists in creating a critical mass to compete in the global economy and will support efforts to attract funding for wider regional infrastructure and regeneration initiatives. Such an approach to the strategic planning of the twin city will enable Newry-Dundalk to promote the development of a progressive and competitive centre and promote a self-sustaining and energy efficient pattern of development. Developing two strong sustainable centres will play a key role in regeneration strategies, efficient public transport, job creation and academic co-operation.

3.84 Newry & Mourne Council and Louth Local Authorities signed a 'Memorandum of Understanding' (MOU) committing the region to increased cross border co-operation. This MOU is the first of its type in Europe and underpins the pivotal role of the greater Newry region. It sets out the detailed workings of the strategic alliance between these bodies and seeks to support and promote the economic development and competitiveness of the region. This relationship will see them work collaboratively together and share key services.

3.85 **Downpatrick** is a medium town within the Belfast catchment, it is however quite isolated and does perform a higher order role than might be expected by its size. Downpatrick is the main town in Down District Council with a population of around 11,000 and it is the main location for second level education and retail provision for the surrounding area. It is of regional significance for its historical and archaeological interest, largely connected with Saint Patrick and is a key tourism centre. Down District Council is working with other stakeholders to develop a masterplan for Downpatrick and in developing new branding to better reflect its historic status and future potential. Downpatrick provides the retail, health and social facilities for a wide rural area however there are no other larger towns in the area for Downpatrick to cluster with.

3.86 **Newcastle** is a small town with around 8,000 of a population about 25 minutes by road from Downpatrick and 35 minutes from Banbridge. It is situated at the foot of Slieve Donard with the spectacular backdrop of the Mourne mountains. It's position between two Special Areas of Conservation, the Eastern Mournes and Murlough National Nature Reserve, means that any development in the town needs to take particular account of potential environmental impact. The town with its natural landscape has year round

activity based tourism opportunities for walking, climbing, fishing, cycling and golf. The town has benefited from a significant regeneration project, which has completely transformed its popular promenade and coastal walk further enhancing its tourism offering. There is potential for **Downpatrick** and **Newcastle** to cluster. Each of the towns act as important centres for retailing, commerce and business and serves a substantial number of dispersed smaller settlements

3.86 **Newtownards** is a market town and the main town in Ards District Council with a population of around 28,500. It is a key commuter town to Belfast and due to its proximity and accessibility to the city plays a growing role in the functioning of the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area by attracting commuters, tourists and businesses and as such has the potential to cluster with **BMUA**. The Ards Borough is a mixture of the rural and the urban, and given the area's scenic beauty and historical interest, tourism is a significant and growing part of the local economy. While traditional industries have declined dramatically, Ards is establishing a diverse economy, particularly in the added value food and engineering sectors. Newtownards, the Borough's capital town, has a long established reputation as a prime retail destination, with a vibrant mix of high street and independent shops.

**SFG10: Identify and consolidate the roles and functions of settlements within the clusters**

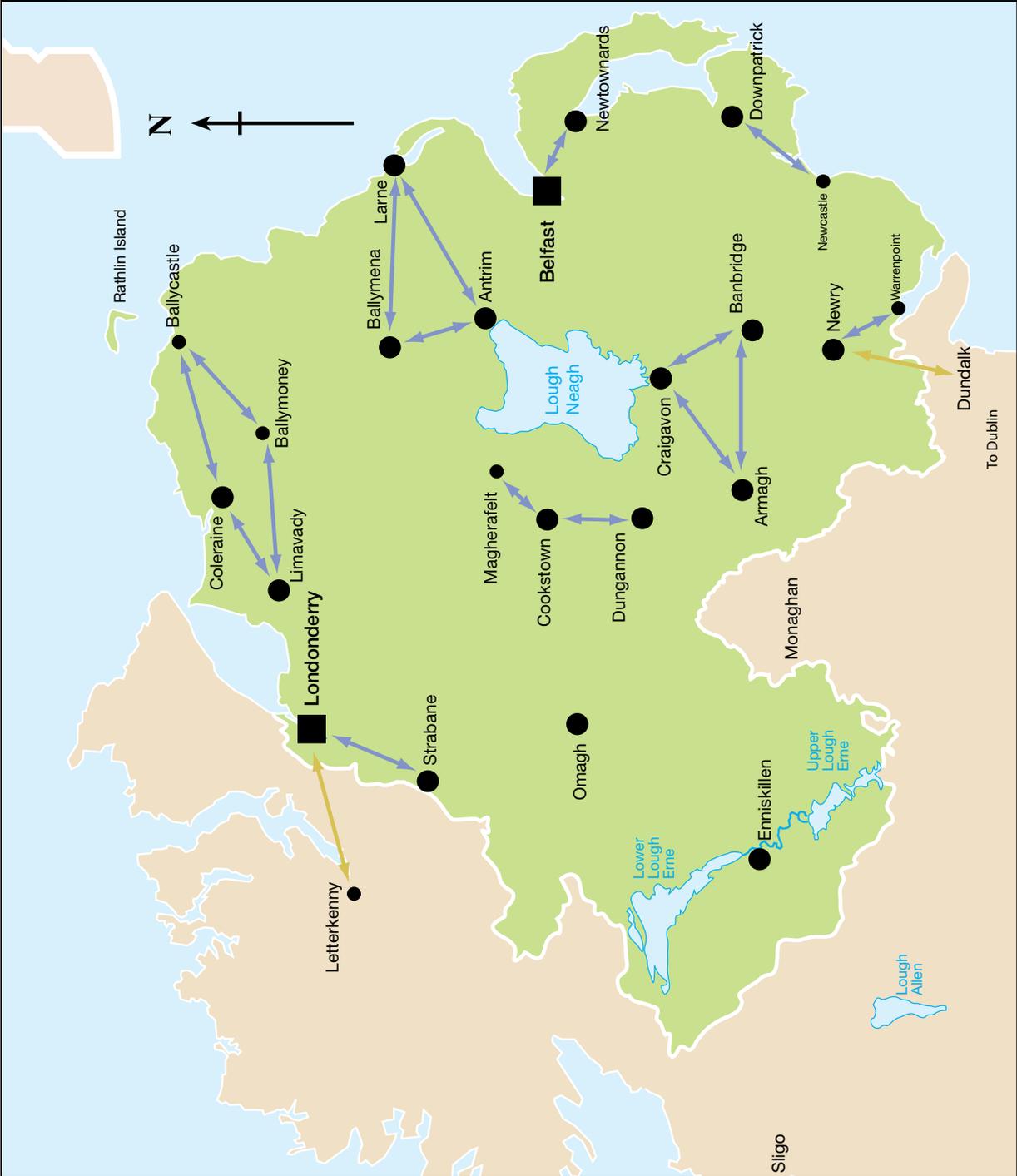
3.87 Even though some places have been identified as Hubs, the towns/cities close by often already offer services that might be expected to be provided. By understanding the existing function of each settlement within a cluster those preparing development plans can ensure the best use of resources.

- **Assess the roles and function of settlements.** When development plans are being prepared an assessment of settlements and surrounding rural areas will assist in identifying their roles and functions. The work of the Settlement Information Classification Analysis Group (SICAG) on settlement service classification (Appendix A) will be an important reference in the preparation of these assessments.
- **Build and strengthen existing cluster settlements.** Use the Development and Community Planning processes to ensure that the existing roles of the settlements are enhanced. Future development will require recognition of the complementary roles of each of the settlements within a cluster in order to provide the capacity needed to deliver quality services.
- **Use the Hierarchy of Settlements and related Infrastructure Diagram** (Diagram 2.1) to help identify the level of appropriate services and facilities.

### Diagram No. 3.2

#### Hubs and Clusters of Hubs

- Principal Cities (represented by a black square)
- Main Hubs (represented by a large black circle)
- Local Hubs (represented by a small black circle)
- Clusters of Main Cities/Towns (represented by a blue double-headed arrow)



### SFG11: Promote economic development opportunities at Hubs

3.88 To compete successfully at a global level Northern Ireland's private sector needs to grow. This will lead to an increase in productivity and to an enhanced market share in products and services. This in turn will result in better employment opportunities and reductions in economic inactivity and unemployment. Inward investment needs to be attracted and local firms encouraged to grow.

- **Promote and exploit the potential for economic development.** Hubs are all performing economic roles and have potential for further economic expansion. Small businesses and service sector offices could locate in these towns.
- **Consider Hubs and clusters of Hubs first.** When new development is being considered, the relationship and benefits between towns/cities in the clusters should be taken into account. The Hub and the higher performing town/city in the cluster should be considered first in the decision process.

### SFG12: Grow the population in the Hubs and cluster of Hubs

3.89 While official forecasts are for the population of Northern Ireland to grow by 10% by 2023, this will vary across the Region. The evidence is that over the last 10 years there has been a disproportionate amount of growth in smaller settlements (Appendix B). If this pattern were to continue, it could affect the role of larger settlements and be contrary to the objectives of the Strategy for strong growth in larger urban areas.

- **Provide additional housing in the Hubs and cluster of Hubs across the Region.** Key to population growth and the associated regeneration of urban centres is the provision of additional housing. This will require sensitive design, including mixed use schemes and integration with green-space, to ensure that they link into the existing urban fabric. It will also be important to phase and manage housing growth taking account of capacity (including water supply and waste-water treatment infrastructure) or if it can be provided ahead of development without environmental harm. Regional Guidance No. 8 (RG8) sets out the process for allocating the housing figure.

## The Rural Area

3.90 Different service providers use different definitions of rural depending on the service they are delivering. For the purpose of this spatial framework those places outside the Principal Cities, the Main and Local Hubs are identified as constituting the rural area. The population living in these places is around 40% of the total population of Northern Ireland. Recently the rural community living in small towns, villages, and small settlements in the countryside, has experienced the fastest rate of population growth. This reverses a long-term trend of population decline.

3.91 It is widely accepted that there can be a great deal of difference between, and within, rural areas; for example not all rural areas suffer the same degree of disadvantage in terms of accessing services and isolation. The areas around Coalisland and Castlederg are ranked within the 100 most deprived parts of Northern Ireland as measured by the Multiple Deprivation Measure.

3.92 The notion of the degree of rurality – accessible and remote - can therefore be an important concept, especially for rural communities. The relatively small geographic scale of the region and our dispersed settlement structure means that arguably few areas could be regarded as truly ‘remote’ as compared to some other parts of the EU. It is recognised that Rathlin Island is unique as it is the only inhabited off-shore island in Northern Ireland. The challenges faced by such an island community are different from those on the mainland and there is a need for a co-ordinated approach to its development. This has already been progressed by the Ministerial Forum established by the Executive in 2010.

3.93 We live in a relatively small geographical island and rely heavily on linkages to our cities and urban centres. The majority of people live within 15 miles of a Hub and within 8 miles of a cluster where they can access most of the services they need. Smaller towns, villages and hamlets perform an important function for rural communities. It is these settlements that can sustain infrastructure as identified at level 2 and level 1 of the Infrastructure wheel in Diagram 2.2.

3.94 We must also strive to keep our rural areas sustainable and ensure that people who live there, either through choice or birth, have access to services and are offered opportunities in terms of accessing education, jobs, healthcare and leisure.

3.95 Agriculture is the largest business category in rural areas. Other sectors include Construction, Property and Business Services, Retail and Production. People from rural areas are required to travel longer distances than their urban counterparts in order to

access job opportunities. This is particularly true for higher value/paid jobs which tend to be urban located. Mobility of rural dwellers is of the utmost importance so that they can access and benefit from employment opportunities both locally and at a wider regional level.

3.96 To sustain rural communities, new development and employment opportunities which respect local, social and environmental circumstances are required. This means facilitating the development of rural industries, businesses and enterprises in appropriate locations, and ensuring they are integrated appropriately within the settlement or rural landscape. The expansion of rural tourism and associated development that is both sustainable and environmentally sensitive should be encouraged.

3.97 Accessibility to services can be difficult in rural areas and there are wider implications for both transport to services and the provision of a core set of essential services. In the border area, “back to back” planning decisions can lead to access problems to services for rural communities. Opportunities exist for co-operation between jurisdictions to ensure this is not the case. Advancements in the use of technology and telecommunications will enable a more innovative approach to service delivery.

### **SFG13: Sustain rural communities living in smaller settlements and the open countryside**

3.98 The distinctive settlement pattern of main and small towns, villages and dwellings in the open countryside is unique within these islands. Many people working on the land are conscious of continuing a cultural tradition. They have a strong interest in sustaining that tradition, the land itself and the living that it provides. It is important that development is sensitive to these issues. The rural community is the custodian of our exceptional natural and built environment. In rural areas, the aim is to sustain the overall strength of the rural community living in small towns, villages, small rural settlements and the open countryside.

3.99 Rathlin Island is unique as it is the only inhabited off-shore island in the North. The challenges faced by such an island community are different from those on the mainland and there is a need for a co-ordinated approach to its development.

3.100 It is recognised that there are wide variations across Northern Ireland in terms of economic, social and environmental characteristics of rural areas. There is therefore a need for local development to reflect these regional differences. Such approaches should be sensitive to local needs and environmental issues including the ability of settlements

and landscapes to absorb development. Key considerations will be the role and function of rural settlements and accessibility to services. These approaches should also reflect and complement prevailing regional planning policy.

3.101 A strong network of smaller towns supported by villages helps to sustain and service the rural community. A sustainable approach to further development will be important to ensure that growth does not exceed the capacity of the environment or the essential infrastructure expected for modern living.

- **Establish the role of multi-functional town centres.** These should be the prime locations for business, housing, administration, leisure and cultural facilities both for urban and rural communities.
- **Connect rural and urban areas.** This is necessary to widen the economic base of town, village and countryside. Provide support and networking opportunities to encourage the formation of local alliances to exploit complementary resources and facilities.
- **Revitalise small towns and villages.** This is particularly relevant to those towns and villages which have been static or declining and contain areas of social need. Deprivation happens in different ways in different places. An integrated approach between government departments, agencies and communities will ensure that regeneration plans reflect the specific needs of each community.
- **Facilitate the development of rural industries, businesses and enterprises in appropriate locations.** Farming plays a major part in sustaining rural community networks, as employers, consumers and producers. Forestry and fishing also contribute to communities, in employment and commercial terms, as well as in terms of recreation opportunities. Other industries such as tourism and renewable energy can provide further jobs and opportunities in rural areas as long they are integrated appropriately within the settlement or rural landscape.
- **Encourage sustainable and sensitive development.** The expansion of rural tourism and development which is both sustainable and sensitive to the environment should be encouraged. This includes the ability of settlements and landscapes to absorb development.

#### **SFG14: Improve accessibility for rural communities**

3.102 Rural communities can be disadvantaged by virtue of their remote location from a range of facilities and essential services. This disadvantage can be lessened by innovative use of existing services and the application of new and developing technologies.

- **Improve the overall connectivity of rural communities to services and other parts of the Region by exploring innovative ways of bringing these services to the communities.** Using the community hall, local school or church hall for visiting service providers will help keep people living in rural areas connected. Different service delivery approaches could include outreach and mobile services or increased use of Information Communication Technology.
- **Integrate local transport.** Promoting integrated rural transport initiatives which meet the needs of those living in isolated areas and in particular elderly and disabled people.

## Gateways and Corridors

3.103 To compete globally Northern Ireland needs to be well connected both internally and with the rest of the world. Gateways are strategically important transport interchanges which are important for economic development, freight distribution activities and additional employment generation. The quality of connection from the air and sea ports to the internal transport network is crucial for economic competitiveness and the convenience of the travelling public. Economic and social development depends on modern, efficient infrastructure. The internal connection linking the principal cities, centres of industry and the gateways is the Regional Strategic Transport Network (RSTN).

3.104 Northern Ireland has a number of important gateways through which both people and goods travel.

The **Gateways** are:

- **Belfast** - The major Regional City Gateway with the principal sea port of Northern Ireland and a city airport. In 2009 the sea port handled approximately 1.3 million passengers and 12 million tonnes of goods whilst the city airport handled around 2.6 million passengers.
- **Belfast International Airport** – In 2009 the main airport of Northern Ireland handled around 30,000 tonnes of freight and 4.5 million passengers.
- **Larne** - The second largest sea port of Northern Ireland behind Belfast handled 0.9 million passengers and 4.3 million tonnes of goods in 2009. It is also an important location for power generation and for gas and electricity interconnectors with Scotland.
- **Londonderry** - The North West City Gateway with a sea port, a regional airport and strategic links to Letterkenny and Donegal. The airport handled just under 0.4 million passengers in 2009 while the port handled around 1.6 million tonnes of goods.
- **Newry** and **Warrenpoint** form the South Eastern City Gateway with a Harbour and strategic links to Dundalk and on to Dublin.
- **Enniskillen** - The South West gateway with strategic links to Sligo.

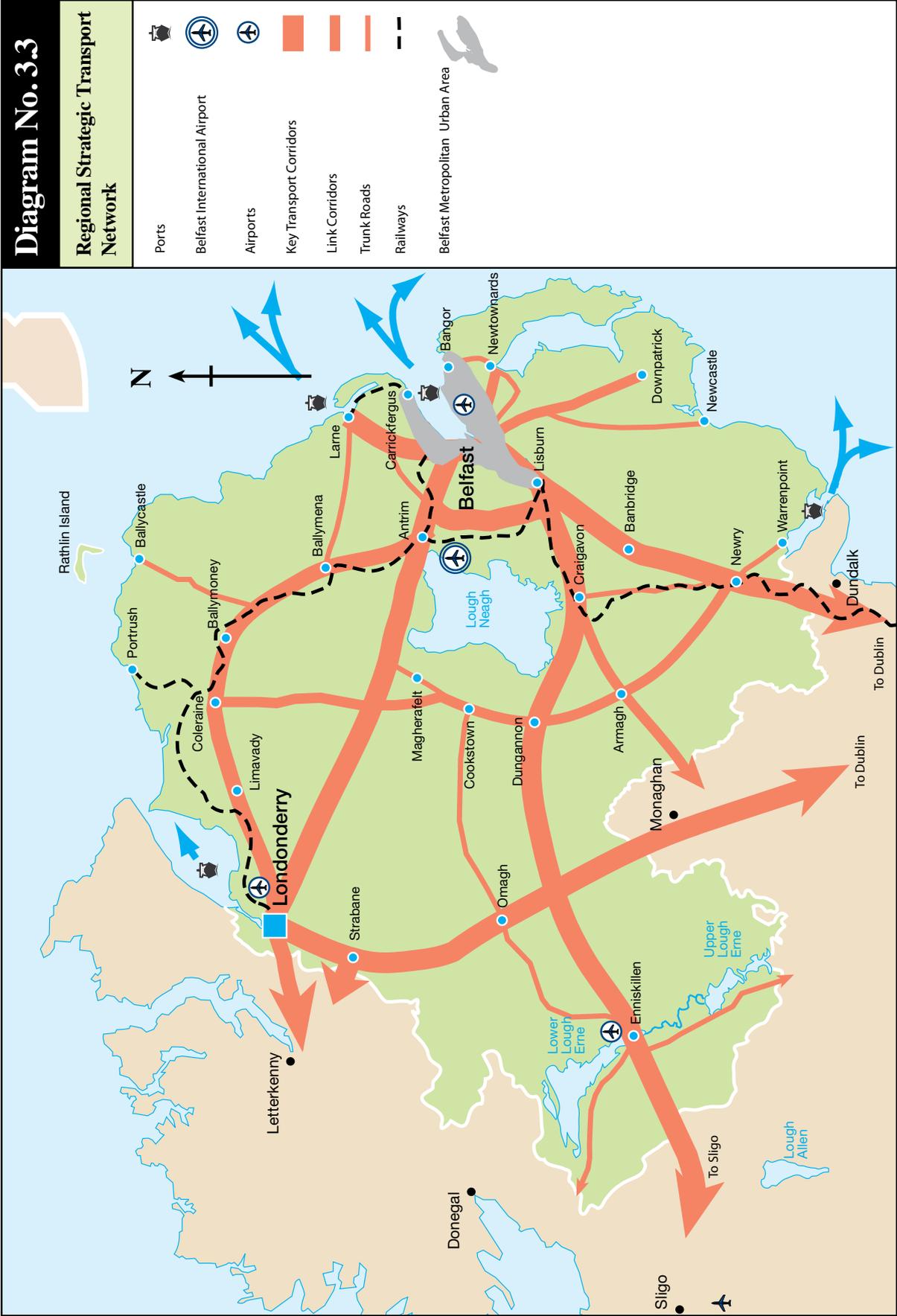
3.105 **Economic corridors** have been identified based on the RSTN. This Network has a fundamental role to play in regional growth. It can help strengthen economic competitiveness, increase the attractiveness of Belfast and Londonderry and provides access to the air and sea ports. Rapid intra-regional connections, particularly between main towns, are key to economic activity. The Network also increases the potential to incorporate a strong public transport element and to accommodate infrastructure necessary to improve Northern Ireland's energy and telecommunications. The key and link transport corridors, as defined on the RSTN (Diagram 3.3) are also essential for providing access to the gateways.

3.106 Economic Corridors connect Belfast and Londonderry and main centres of economic activity and the external gateways. Accessibility of the road network between cities and towns will open up opportunity for economic development across Northern Ireland to support regional growth. Cross-border co-operation and collaboration provide opportunities to boost the economic performance and competitiveness across the island.

#### **SFG15: Strengthen the Gateways for Regional competitiveness**

3.107 Gateways should be able to deal with goods and passenger traffic efficiently and be considered as an asset by potential investors and local firms. Many of the gateways are intrinsically linked to important nature conservation sites or the aquatic environment and their development must be appropriately managed to take account of this.

- **Provide high quality connections to and from the air and sea ports.** As the economy grows, the demand for better connections to the air and sea ports is likely to increase, particularly from the business, tourist and freight markets. Development must be appropriate to ensure no adverse effects on nature conservation sites or the aquatic environment. It must have regard to the Marine Policy Statement and be in accordance with a future marine plan when adopted.
- **Enhance Gateways and their environmental image.** The image of any Region is set within the first few minutes of arrival and is difficult to change once established. Entry points at Gateways should have welcoming arrival areas, be user-friendly and be of a high environmental quality for both the built and natural environment.







CHAPTER 4  
*Regionally Significant Economic  
Infrastructure*

## 4.0 Regionally Significant Economic Infrastructure

4.1 The Executive's top priority is growing a sustainable economy and investing in the future by improving competitiveness and building a larger more export-driven private sector. Balanced regional growth is an underlying principle to rebuilding and rebalancing the economy as are the principles of equality and sustainability.

4.2 Spatial planning and related infrastructure development is essential to enable a working economy. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) highlights the link between good physical infrastructure and economic output. This is also recognised in the Independent Review of Economic Policy in Northern Ireland and is a key theme in the emerging new Economic Strategy.

4.3 The Institute of Civil Engineers Infrastructure 2010 report on Northern Ireland reviewed our transport, energy, water and waste infrastructure and concluded that:

**“A sound functioning infrastructure has the capability to deliver economic and social aspirations. It is the resilience of our infrastructure which will determine our economic competitiveness, our effectiveness for investors and visitors.”**

4.4 Strategic Projects which will contribute to economic infrastructure development are considered to be those that:

- deliver strategic improvements in external and internal communications, including transport and telecoms;
- contribute to the achievement of renewable energy targets;
- contribute to the achievement of waste management and climate change targets;  
or
- raise issues of regional or more than regional importance.

## Strategic improvements in external and internal communications

### Transport

4.5 Being part of an island, air and sea ports and land gateways are of fundamental importance to the region. Our gateways should be able to cope with the volume and variety of traffic passing through them. They should also aim to accommodate businesses that benefit from proximity to the point of entry/departure.

4.6 Gateways are where first impressions are formed and should provide a high quality experience for the traveller.

4.7 **Transport linkages** to and from the air and sea ports should be of the highest quality. The movement of people and goods is important for the future growth of the economy and given Northern Ireland's geographical position, connectivity to the air and sea ports is a key infrastructure component to achieving that objective.

4.8 Improving **key transport corridors** enhances accessibility to regional services and reduces peripherality. This means high quality road and, where available, rail links.

4.9 The transportation networks help to deliver **balanced economic growth**. The five key transport corridors link people and freight to Northern Ireland's main cities, air, and sea ports. They provide a framework around which economic corridors can develop. The Key Transport Corridor comprises 3% of all Northern Ireland's roads, but carries 26% of the traffic. Investment in the Key Corridors and in the rail infrastructure is desirable to ensure the efficient movement of goods and people. Specific programmes will be dependent on the availability of resources and the strategic direction of the new RTS.

4.10 As one of Northern Ireland's economic drivers, **an efficient transport system in Belfast** is essential to allow people and goods to move quickly around the City and to commute to and from it. High quality public transport for Belfast is therefore necessary for regional prosperity.

4.11 A heavy reliance on the car and associated increased congestion levels in Belfast has had an adverse impact on journey times and emissions. Belfast has benefited from significant public transportation investment with the introduction of new bus and rail vehicles, Quality Bus Corridors, Park and Ride facilities and the extension of

concessionary fares, etc. This has resulted in increased patronage on public transport services.

4.12 Schemes like Rapid Transit offer a distinct opportunity to create a new dynamic transportation system which reflects Belfast as a 21<sup>st</sup> Century city. This will improve connectivity with additional regenerative benefits that will positively contribute to the economy, environment and people's general quality of life.

### Telecomms

4.13 All over the world massive investments are being made in the infrastructure needed to deliver the next generation of **telecommunication services**. This is driven by ever-increasing demand by both households and businesses for broadband but also the opportunities presented by the move from analogue television broadcasting to digital throughout Europe in 2012.

4.14 The Executive recognises the need for a modern efficient telecommunication infrastructure. The draft Telecommunications Action Plan (2011-2015) aims to ensure that a comprehensive range of next generation telecommunications services and data rich applications are made as widely available as possible across the region. The most common way of delivering both voice and broadband is via copper lines, often suspended overhead using wooden poles. However, these are increasingly being delivered using alternative technologies including fibre optics, cable and wireless (including mobile). Installing new ducts and cables in the ground is expensive. Incorporating telecommunications ducts with publicly funded infrastructure projects has been used very successfully in Sweden. It now has the highest availability of fibre optic service (including rural areas) in Europe.

### Renewable Energy

4.15 Development of Northern Ireland's **renewable energy sources** is vital to increase its energy security, help combat climate change and achieve the renewable energy targets. The Strategic Energy Framework sets a target of 40% electricity consumption from renewable sources and a 10% renewable heat target by 2020, in line with mandatory EU renewable targets. This is likely to mean an increase in the number of wind farms both on and off shore and the need to diversify renewables to include electricity from other sources such as tidal stream and bio-energy sources. A renewable heat strategy is likely to require new renewable heat infrastructure to support it.

4.16 To facilitate the provision of additional renewable power generation, primarily from on-shore wind energy, and a need to address current areas of weakness in the grid, it will be necessary to **strengthen the electricity grid** in many parts of Northern Ireland. Grid upgrading will also be needed to ensure that proposed tidal stream and off-shore wind developments are planned for properly. This will involve a significant programme of investment in grid strengthening, in the north and west, of the region.

4.17 Increased electricity **interconnection** capacity, allowing for the export and import of power, will help to ensure security and stability of electricity supply. It will provide increased opportunities for competitive trading in wholesale electricity, encourage new investment in generation and supply and enhance Northern Ireland's security of supply. It is also important to facilitate the growth in power generation from renewable sources, while managing the challenging network management issues that increasing amounts of renewable integration onto the grid brings.

4.18 Work undertaken at Harland and Wolff in the construction of wind turbines illustrates the job creation benefits of such developments. In addition, while **natural gas** is not a renewable energy source, opportunities exist to improve Northern Ireland's position in terms of self sustainability and security of supply through gas storage and extension of the natural gas network.

## **Waste and Climate Change**

4.19 Northern Ireland currently produces some one million tonnes of municipal waste annually, of this, 33% was sent for recycling in 2009/10. The majority of the remaining municipal waste was sent to landfill (66%), with a very small amount reused. The percentage of municipal waste landfilled has decreased over the years, falling from 91% in 2002. In 2009/10 around 875,000 tonnes of household waste was collected and nearly 36% of this was sent for recycling. The EU Landfill Directive sets a series of increasingly strict limits on the amount of biodegradable waste that can be sent to landfill until 2020 to reduce the total land filled to 35% of 1995 levels by 2020.

4.20 Meeting the targets through the diversion of waste from landfill to other treatment methods will require the development of **significant new waste management infrastructure**.

4.21 While landfill has traditionally been a low-tech, low-cost approach to waste management, the alternatives tend to be more complex and more expensive. Providing the new infrastructure is a challenging and costly process which will take considerable

time to deliver. A substantial programme of investment will be required if the aims set out in Strand 3 of the NI Waste Management Strategy 2006-2020, are to be achieved.

4.22 Central Government is working closely with local government in the development of new waste facilities to ensure that Northern Ireland's long term needs for all waste streams are met. These will be developed at a limited number of key sites, convenient to the major centres of waste production.

4.23 Research suggests that to meet the Landfill Directive targets, Northern Ireland will require a combination of up to seven Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT) and three 'energy from waste' plants. This includes both incineration and gasification plants, to deal with the residue from the MBT process.

4.24 Tackling waste management and increasing the use of renewable energy sources will help address **climate change** targets. More needs to be done however, particularly in the transport sector to reduce emissions and encourage alternative forms of transport. New infrastructure may be required to facilitate alternative forms of transport.

4.25 The Executive's Sustainable Development Strategy, recognises that concentrated efforts across all sectors will be needed to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions in order to address the challenges presented by climate change and the need for sustainable development.

4.26 No regional strategy can anticipate every major development requirement, technological advance or new entrepreneurial initiative. The RDS is intended to be sufficiently flexible to allow the private sector to bring forward innovative development proposals which are of significance to the whole or substantial part of Northern Ireland and create employment, wealth and important assets for the Region. Similarly, major economic development proposals which contribute to meeting local needs and provide wider public benefits may also be acceptable.

### **Issues of regional or more than regional importance**

4.27 This approach should enable the private sector to present a significant development project, or put together a major development package, which meets their entrepreneurial objectives and at the same time delivers wider public resource by providing, for example, desirable improvements to regional infrastructure and community services.

4.28 An example of a site of regional significance is the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration site, which remains entirely in public ownership. The draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan designates the site as a strategic land reserve of regional importance. Consistent with its status within the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan, a mix of uses that will enable a major physical, economic and social development package of regional significance to come forward will be promoted.

4.29 Any proposal for economic infrastructure will normally require planning permission. DOE, as the planning authority, will determine whether a particular development proposal should be determined under Article 31 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 as a major planning application. The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, when fully commenced, provides for a two-tier planning system with the majority of planning decisions made by district councils. The Department (as opposed to councils) will deal with regionally significant development.





CHAPTER 5  
*Implementation*

## 5.0 Implementation

### The Planning Process

5.1 The RDS is a key document within the planning system. It sets out strategic guidance which is used in the preparation of development plans, planning policy statements and urban regeneration initiatives. The relationship with planning documents is set out below.

5.2 As explained in Chapter 1, the current (July 2011) legislative requirement is that development plans, planning policy statements and development schemes are required to be “in general conformity with” the RDS. There is also a requirement for DRD to issue statements to DOE as to the general conformity of plans at two stages in the development plan process.

5.3 Changes to the legislative requirements will be made under the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. The bulk of the Act will not come into force until planning powers transfer to councils at a time to be decided by the Northern Ireland Assembly. When planning powers transfer the DOE will continue to be responsible for planning policy and guidance. The requirement for these policies to be in general conformity with the RDS will remain.

5.4 Responsibility for the preparation of development plans and development schemes will transfer to local councils, these must ‘take account’ of the RDS. Development plans will consist of a Plan Strategy and a Local Policies Plan. The proposal is that Councils must submit the development plan to DOE for independent examination. The purpose of this examination is to test the soundness of the Plan Strategy and the Local Policies Plan. This soundness test will include the extent to which the Council has taken account of relevant guidance in the RDS.

5.5 DRD will work with DOE to develop guidance for new Councils which will set out and explain relevant central Government policies and strategies. This guidance will be relevant in the consideration of the soundness of the development plan.

5.6 New plans and policy introduced subsequent to the publication of the RDS must fulfil the statutory requirement to take account of, or be in general conformity with, the strategy. The RDS is material to the processing of planning applications and it **may** take

precedence over existing development plans and policies particularly where the new guidance is materially different and of significance to a development proposal.

## **DELIVERY MECHANISM**

5.7 As the spatial strategy of the Executive the RDS complements the key objectives of the Programme for Government and seeks to influence both it and the Investment Strategy. Because of its cross-cutting nature a number of stakeholders will be involved in delivery. Many of the policies can only be implemented through individual departments and their strategies. DRD propose to set up formal structures to help stakeholders take account of the guidance.

### **Central Government**

5.8 Whilst all government departments must take account of the RDS there are three which have the potential to make the biggest impact on the region. DRD propose to set up a Ministerial sub-group, chaired by the Minister for Regional Development, with the Ministers for the Environment and Social Development. This sub-group will meet as necessary to discuss departmental plans to ensure that they are taking account of the guidance within the RDS.

5.9 The inter-departmental group of senior officials which assisted in the preparation of the strategy will continue to meet under the chairmanship of DRD. This group will meet periodically to oversee the implementation of the strategy across all departments and will report to the Minister for Regional Development.

5.10 The Minister for Regional Development will, after consulting other departments, provide the Committee for Regional Development with a progress report triennially.

### **Local Government**

5.11 Given the proposal in the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 to transfer planning powers to local councils it is important that Local Government is fully and formally engaged in the delivery process. We propose to set up a forum, chaired by DRD with representatives from local and central government, to help put in context the guidance in the RDS and how that guidance should be used.

5.12 The Strategy encourages collaboration rather than competition between places. Many local councils are already collaborating in areas such as waste management and

tourism promotion and are considering other opportunities in line with the Improvement, Collaboration and Efficiency programme.

## **WORKING WITH NEIGHBOURS**

5.13 The region can benefit from collaboration with its neighbours on both a North/South and East/West basis.

### **North/South**

5.14 The area around the border can gain significantly from a joined-up approach to spatial planning. Cross border co-operation and collaboration provide opportunities to boost the economic performance and competitiveness across the island.

5.15 Certain key infrastructure, such as sea and air ports, road and rail, energy and telecommunication connectivity brings mutual benefit to all parts of the island. Co-operation at strategic planning level ensures that the greatest added value is extracted from investment in shared infrastructure.

### **East/West**

5.16 Whilst separated by sea, the linkages with Scotland, Wales and England are no less important. With strong cultural ties and trade links, what happens in Scotland, Wales and England can impact on the island of Ireland, both north and south.

5.17 The ferry routes from Belfast and Larne to various Clyde and Loch Ryan sea ports are key links in the transportation network. So the land transport network connections to the sea ports in Scotland are important in maintaining the quality and efficiency of this network. The connection to Liverpool gives access to one of the largest sea ports in Europe and North European Trading

5.18 Working together at a strategic level whether North/South or East West, in line with relevant EU Directives, can assist in meeting climate change targets. It will also help to conserve and enhance energy resources and shared natural, cultural and landscape assets, and ensure a co-ordinated approach to emerging areas of interest such as the potential for marine spatial planning.

## **MONITORING AND REVIEW**

5.19 DRD will set up a monitoring group to develop appropriate monitoring procedures. Indicators will be agreed to enable progress to be measured in implementing the strategy. The monitoring and evaluation reports will be presented to the Executive on an annual basis.

5.20 The Department will analyse progress on a three yearly basis in order that the Strategy continues to be of relevance and to inform the PfG and ISNI cycles along with the Comprehensive Spending Reviews. A decision on the timing of a more comprehensive review will be made on the basis of progress made.

APPENDICES  
GLOSSARY  
BIBLIOGRAPHY



## Appendix A

# Identification of Hubs and Associated Clusters

The methodology for identifying the Hubs and clusters named within the RDS used the two sources of information below and the theory associated with the Hierarchy of Settlements and Related Infrastructure Wheel described in paragraph 2.15.

1. **The Report of the Inter-Departmental Urban-Rural Definition Group on Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements** published by NISRA in February 2005 contains a statistical classification of settlements based on 2001 census data on the population and number of households within settlements. This analysis informed the production of eight bands of settlements ranging from Band A, the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area thorough to small villages, hamlets and the open countryside at Band H.
2. The November 2006 **Settlement Information Classification and Analysis Group (SICAG) Report** published by NISRA determined that the level of services provided by a settlement cannot always be judged from its population size. It attempted to group settlements on the basis of their service provision. SICAG collated data to determine a hierarchy of service provision and to identify locations which would constitute as 'service centres' for Northern Ireland. The report identifies 26 service centres here and the service classification is listed as 1-5, with 5 being the highest levels of service provision and 1 the lowest.

**Table A1: 26 Service centres with their Settlement Bands and Service Class**

Service Centre	Settlement Band	Service Class
BMUA	A	5
Derry Urban Area	B	5
Craigavon Urban Area	C	4
Ballymena	C	4
Newry*	C	4
Coleraine	C	4
Newtownards	C	4
Omagh	C	4
Antrim	C	4
Larne	C	4
Enniskillen	D	4
Armagh City	D	4
Banbridge	D	4
Dungannon	D	4
Downpatrick	D	4
Limavady	D	4
Cookstown	D	3
Strabane	D	3
Ballymoney	E	4
Magherafelt	E	4
Ballycastle	E	4
Newcastle	E	4
Kilkeel	E	3
Portrush	E	3
Ballyclare	E	3
Lisnaskea	F	3

\* Warrenpoint is included in the Newry cluster as a Local Hub in line with its Port function.

3. Research suggests that the optimal natural catchment to support services identified at level 3 in the Hierarchy of Settlements and Related Infrastructure (Diagram 2.1) should be around 100,000. This would suggest a small number of Regional towns/ groups of towns (circa 9 or 10) should be designated to perform that role.

4. In examining table A1, it is clear that in Northern Ireland we already have a large number of towns that provide services just below that of the two principal cities i.e. service class 4. There are also towns where the service class is below what might be expected in places of that size band. This can be due to being close to larger places or that co-operation and collaboration is already taking place.

## **HUBS**

5. The 2001 RDS identified 16 main Hubs and 5 Local Hubs. The Key Settlement Study concluded that this had been a useful strategic framework. The Main Hubs equate to those identified in Table A1 as having a settlement band of C and D. The Local hubs equate to those 4 places which have a settlement band of E and service class of 4.

6. It is considered appropriate to continue with this designation of Main Hubs and Local Hubs. The Key Settlement Study also recommended that the hubs should not compete for scarce resources. To ensure that there is not unnecessary duplication of higher order services and that these services remain viable with adequate catchment populations the revised RDS recommends co-operation between places where they are geographically close to each other.

## **CLUSTERS**

7. Diagram 3.2 shows the 21 hubs. It is clear that many hubs are close to each other and form natural clusters and indeed in many cases the proposals under the Review of Public Administration (RPA) places these hubs in the same new council area.

8. The hubs which have the most potential to cluster are considered to be ;

- Limavady, Coleraine, Ballymoney and Ballycastle
- Dungannon, Cookstown and Magherafelt
- Craigavon, Armagh and Banbridge
- Newry and Warrenpoint and cross border with Dundalk
- Downpatrick and Newcastle
- Ballymena, Antrim and Larne

9. Further, **Newtownards** has the potential to cluster with the **Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area** being 10 miles from Belfast city and 5 miles from Bangor.

10. Likewise, **Strabane** has the potential to cluster with **Londonderry** as part of a North West region which stretches cross border to Letterkenny.
11. Due to their remoteness Enniskillen and Omagh have less potential to cluster.
12. Whilst the RDS has identified potential clusters there is nothing to prevent other towns working together in clusters and indeed this should be encouraged.

# Appendix B

## Housing

One of the aims of the previous RDS was to maintain a balance of growth between the BMUA and its hinterland and the rest of the region. It therefore proposed that the distribution of future housing provision should be 52% in North, South and West of the region and 48% in the BMUA districts and hinterland.

The actual number of houses built over the 10 years between March 1998 and March 2008 was 131,554. The distribution was 57% in North, South and West with the remaining 43% in the BMUA districts and hinterland. It is not surprising that the 52/48 split was not achieved as many extant development plans pre-date the guidance.



**Housing Growth Indicators (HGIs)** have been produced as a guide for those preparing development plans. The figures are an estimate of the new dwelling requirement 2008-2025 for each of the existing 20 District Councils outside the BMUA and its hinterland and for the 6 BMUA Council areas. It is considered appropriate to maintain the previous 52/48 split given the objectives of this RDS and the timeframe for preparation of development plans.

The starting point for the 2008-2025 set of HGIs is the previously published 1998-2015 figures. The total requirement over that 17 year period was 208,000. This was derived from examining household projections, existing stock, vacancies etc.

The total requirement for the period 2008-2025 was calculated on the same basis as for 1998-2015 as described in Appendix 3 of the Review of the Regional HGIs consultation document published in January 2005 but with updated data (see table B1). This total was rounded up to the nearest 1,000 houses and then distributed in the same proportions as those used for 1998-2015 HGIs. The result is set out in table B2.

**Table B1: Estimate of total housing need 2008-2025**

	Variable	Year of data	Value	Source
(A)	Number of households	2025	826,500	2008 based NISRA household projections
(B)	Second homes	2025	8,300	1% of occupied housing stock. Derived from 2006 NIHCS and expert consultation.
(C)	Vacant stock	2025	50,500	5.7% of total housing stock. Derived from 2006 NIHCS and expert consultation.
(D)	Net conversions/ closures/ demolitions	2008 to 2025	34,000	2,000 losses per annum. Derived from 2006 NIHCS and expert consultation.
(E)	New stock estimate	2025	919,300	Sum of (A), (B), (C), & (D)
(F)	Total stock	2008	729,800	DSD Statistics and Research
(G)	Projected new dwelling requirement	2008 to 2025	<b>189,500</b>	(E) minus (F)

**Table B2 Housing Growth Indicators 2008-2025**

	HGI
	2008-2025
BMUA	50100
BMUA Rural Hinterland	10700
<b>BMUA Districts Total</b>	<b>60800</b>
Antrim	7300
Ards	9600
Down	9600
Larne	3900
Armagh	5500
Ballymena	6400
Ballymoney	3500
Banbridge	5500
Coleraine	6900
Cookstown	3700
Craigavon	10300
Derry	13700
Dungannon	5000
Fermanagh	6800
Limavady	3900
Magherafelt	4600
Moyle	1800
Newry and Mourne	11200
Omagh	6100
Strabane	3900
<b>Regional Total</b>	<b>190000</b>

## Housing Need Assessment

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive is moving to a system of Housing Market Analysis that will aim not only to identify social housing need but also to provide a solid evidence base on which available land can be zoned for housing by planners. There is a growing consensus that there needs to be a broader approach to assessing housing need; one that aims to understand the workings of the wider housing market and that will look holistically at infrastructure, planning, the socio-economic context, regeneration needs, health, education etc.

Councils will be able to use the Housing Growth Indicators as baselines or starting points which can subsequently be adjusted in the light of the Housing Market Analysis for their area.

The new Housing market Analysis will help to develop a comprehensive evidence base to inform decisions about the policies required in housing strategies and the development of area plans. It will assist policy development, decision-making and resource allocation by:

- enabling the appropriate authority to develop long-term strategic views of housing need and demand to inform housing strategies and development plans;
- enabling planners to think spatially about the nature and influence of the housing market in respect to their local area;
- providing robust evidence to inform policies aimed at providing the right mix of housing across the whole housing market (both market and affordable housing);
- providing evidence to inform policies about the level of social and affordable housing required, including the need for different types and sizes of social and affordable housing;
- supporting authorities to develop a strategic approach to housing through consideration of housing need and demand across all housing sectors and assessment of the key drivers and relationships within the housing market; and
- drawing together the bulk of the evidence required for authorities to appraise strategic housing options including housing supply targets, social housing allocation priorities, the role of intermediate housing products, stock renewal, conversion and transfer.

The Housing Executive has already developed functional boundaries for functional housing market areas in Northern Ireland and future area plans/strategies are likely to be based on these areas. These functional boundaries are based on the principle of self-contained socio-economic areas and will not be exactly co-terminous with the new

district council administrative boundaries. As such, new councils will need to work closely together when making strategic planning decisions.

### **Urban/rural balance**

Between 2001 and 2008 the population of Northern Ireland increased by 5.1 per cent however the growth was unevenly distributed. The fastest growing areas tended to be located in suburban areas within commuting distance of major urban centres. There was a shift from the most densely-populated urban areas of Belfast and Londonderry. Large, medium and small towns grew slightly faster than the NI average. The fastest rates of growth were seen in villages (+13 per cent) and intermediate settlements (+11 per cent). Small villages, hamlets and open countryside areas registered growth of 9 per cent on average.

An important step in the development plan process is allocating land for housing use. In this process judgements will be made to ensure that a complementary urban/rural balance is achieved having regard to the population growth patterns in the range of settlements within the plan area and the need to reinforce the Hubs and clusters of Hubs. Table B3 will be of assistance when making this judgement.

**Table B3 District Population Balance comparison 2008 with 1998**

District	District Pop 2008	Principal Urban Centre	Pop 2008	% District Population in urban centre 2008	% District Population in urban centre 1998
Craigavon	90843	Craigavon	65136	72	68
Larne	31292	Larne	18323	59	58
Ballymena	62738	Ballymena	29782	47	49
Coleraine	57006	Coleraine	24455	43	42
Antrim	53243	Antrim	21819	41	45
Omagh	52115	Omagh	21297	41	43
Limavady	34117	Limavady	12669	37	37
Ards	77614	Newtownards	28437	37	38
Strabane	39614	Strabane	13875	35	34
Ballymoney	30106	Ballymoney	10355	34	34
Banbridge	46966	Banbridge	15989	34	37
Moyle	16876	Ballycastle	5480	32	28
Cookstown	35944	Cookstown	12006	33	34
Newry and Mourne	97289	Newry	29946	31	34
Armagh	58173	Armagh	15020	26	28
Dungannon	55386	Dungannon	14380	26	23
Fermanagh	61966	Enniskillen	13757	22	22
Magherafelt	43844	Magherafelt	8881	20	20
Down	69816	Downpatrick	10737	15	17

Average % of district population in principal urban centre

37%

36%

Does not include BMUA or Londonderry

Source 2008 Mid Year Estimates and DRD estimates

## Glossary of Terms

<b>Affordable Housing</b>	Comprises the social rented sector, housing benefit funded private rented and that part of the low cost owner occupation market which can be purchased utilising 30% or less of gross household income.
<b>Areas of Outstanding Beauty</b>	Large areas of landscape of distinctive characteristics and special scenic value which have been designated AONB under the 1965 Amenity Land Act and the 1985 Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands Order.
<b>Areas of Special Scientific Interest</b>	ASSIs are defined in the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (NI) Order (NCALO) 1985 (with 1989 amendment). Where the Department is satisfied that an area of land is of special scientific interest, by reason of its flora, fauna or geological, physiographical or other features, and accordingly needs to be specially protected, the Department shall make a declaration that the area is an area of special scientific interest.
<b>Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area</b>	The Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan identifies the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area (BMUA) to define the development zone. To be consistent with the statutory plan the BMUA is defined as the continuous built up area centred on Belfast with an arc from Jordanstown to Knocknagoney and includes the city of Lisburn and towns of Bangor, Carrickfergus and Holywood.

<b>Brownfield Land</b>	<p>This is sometimes referred to as Previously Developed Land being land that is, or was occupied by a permanent structure within a defined settlement limit. The term may encompass vacant or derelict lands, infill sites, land occupied by redundant or underused buildings, a piece of industrial or commercial property that is abandoned or underused and often environmentally contaminated. The following are excluded from the definition of previously development land:</p> <p>open space of public value as defined in Planning Policy Statement 8 ‘Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation’; and</p> <p>the gardens of dwellings and apartments (broadly defined as those areas within the curtilage of a dwelling not containing buildings).</p>
<b>Clusters</b>	<p>Cities and towns which can work together to create a critical mass to attract economic development and deliver services.</p>
<b>Density</b>	<p>Measure of the number of dwellings per hectare.</p>
<b>Economic Corridors</b>	<p>These are based on the Regional Strategic Transport Network and connect Belfast and Londonderry and main centres of economic activity with external gateways.</p>
<b>Gateways</b>	<p>Strategically important transport interchange points which connect ports and airports to the internal transport network.</p>

**Mixed Use Development**

A new development that makes provision for a variety of uses e.g. residential, retail, business and industry.

**Planning Policy Statements**

The Department of the Environment (DOE) administers the planning system in Northern Ireland and is responsible for regulating development and land use in the interests of the community. Planning Policy Statements set out DOE policy on particular aspects of land use planning. Their content is taken into account in preparing Development Plans and individual planning applications and appeals.

**Ramsar Sites**

The Ramsar mission is “the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local, regional and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world.” The convention covers all aspects of wetland conservation and wise use, recognising wetlands as ecosystems that are extremely important for biodiversity conservation and the well-being of human communities.

**Regional Strategic Transport Network**

A core transport network made up of the rail system, five key transport corridors, four link corridors and the Belfast Metropolitan Area transport corridors, along with the remainder of the trunk road network.

**Renewable Energy**

Energy flows that occur naturally and repeatedly in the environment e.g. from sun, wind, wave or fall of water. Plant and some waste materials are also potential sources.

<b>Rural</b>	As determined by the DARD Inter-Departmental Urban- Rural Definition Group Rural encompasses Settlements with a population of 4,500 or less. On the basis of this definition, approximately 65% of the 1.7 million inhabitants live in urban areas and 35% in rural areas.
<b>Settlement Limits</b>	These are the boundaries normally defined in a Development Plan proposals map beyond which the local planning authority proposes that a settlement such as a village, town or city should not be allowed to extend.
<b>Social Housing</b>	Housing provided by registered Social Landlords for rent. Such housing is allocated by reference to an approved (Department for Social Development) Common Waiting List and allocation system.
<b>Spatial Strategy</b>	A coherent long-term policy framework to guide and influence future development. It aspires to guide future development in an orderly, economic and sustainable manner.
<b>Special Areas of Conservation</b>	SACs are areas which have been given greater protection under the European legislation of The Habitats Directive. They have been designated because of a possible threat to the special habitats or species which they contain and to provide increased protection to a variety of animals, plants and habitats of importance to biodiversity both on a national and international scale.

<b>Special Protection Areas</b>	SPAs are designated under the European Commission Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (The Birds Directive). All European Community Member States are required to identify internationally important areas for breeding, over-wintering and migrating birds and designate them as Special Protection Areas.
<b>Sustainable Development</b>	Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
<b>Urban Footprint</b>	The urban footprint for towns and cities throughout Northern Ireland is defined as the continuous built-up area of the settlement. The boundary will be represented by an uninterrupted line, often lying inside the planned settlement limit. The urban footprint contains land which has a formal urban use including land on the edge of the settlement where it forms part of the curtilage of a building. However, this does not necessarily imply that gardens are acceptable for housing development. Undeveloped zoned land at the edge of the settlement will be excluded. Urban footprints have been identified and set as a baseline as of January 2001.
<b>Windfall Sites</b>	Housing sites that were neither zoned nor anticipated during the formulation of the development plan but which have become available during the lifetime of the plan.

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