



About Comhar Sustainable Development Council

Comhar was set up in 1999, as Comhar the National Sustainable Development Partnership. It is now known as Comhar, the Sustainable Development Council (SDC). Comhar SDC is the forum for national consultation and dialogue on all issues relating to sustainable development. Its mandate is to:

- Advance the national agenda for sustainable development.
- Evaluate progress on achieving sustainable development in Ireland.
- Research and make recommendations, tailored to national conditions, on specific approaches to, or instruments for sustainable development,
- Advise on means of raising public awareness of sustainable development and environmental issues, and encouraging positive behaviour at individual, community and sectoral levels.
- Contribute to the formation of a national consensus on sustainable development.

Comhar's Terms of Reference for the period 2009 to 2012 are set out in Appendix 1. Comhar SDC works in three-year cycles and began its fourth term in January 2009. This annual report covers the first year of the Comhar's fourth term under the Chairmanship of Professor Frank Convery.

Comhar SDC is comprised of 25 members who are drawn from five pillars: the State sector, the economic sector, environmental NGOs, social/community NGOs and the professional/academic sector. The full list of members for the second year of Comhar SDC's fourth term is given in Appendix 2. The broad representation helps Comhar SDC to arrive at informed and balanced conclusions. Comhar SDC is supported by a full-time Secretariat, which undertakes evidenced based policy analysis and research, and is based in the Irish Life Centre, Dublin 1.

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Chairman's Foreword

Sustainable development is about working towards a balance between the way we run our economy, our social life and our life support systems so that our society is relatively peaceful, keeps nature's life support systems in good running order, and provides employment to most of us who want to work.

Advancing this agenda is the mission of Comhar Sustainable Development Council. But these aspirations must be addressed against a backdrop of sharply rising unemployment and serious fiscal imbalance that limits government expenditure options. Our activities and proposals were designed to reflect this reality, and to help design policy that will both protect the environment and strengthen the economy.

In 2009 we made progress along a number of fronts. 'What doesn't get measured doesn't get done'. We acted on Ballmer's comment by developing our Sustainable Development Indicators to measure performance over time. We need an economy that 'automatically' uses our planet's resources parsimoniously. We promoted the use of a carbon tax that would reflect the scarcity value of the planet's capacity to absorb greenhouse gasses, and integrate economic and climate change performance; this was introduced in December 2009. We proposed that government policy be directed in part towards supporting economic activity that would simultaneously help us meet our very demanding legally binding obligations as regards reducing greenhouse gas emissions, increasing renewables, improving energy efficiency, and protecting nature, water and biodiversity generally. As the vehicle for making a virtue out of necessity, we suggested a 'Green New Deal' and outlined how it might work. With the biodiversity forum we worked at giving nature parity of esteem with the rest of the economic and environmental agenda.



Professor Frank Convery

None of our progress would have been possible without our staff led by Noel Casserly, who give of their time and talent way beyond the call of duty. And our Council members provide the essential ground truthing that keeps us relevant, and ensures that Council meetings are not boring.

I am deeply grateful to both groups for acting so generously in helping find a better way of living on the planet.

Finally, it was with great sadness that we learnt, in December 2009, of the untimely passing away of Donal Buckley, Assistant Director of IBEC and Comhar council member. He will be greatly missed.

Professor Frank Convery

Chairman

The Work of Comhar SDC in 2009



1 Introduction and Overview of Work

Comhar SDC works in three-year cycles and began its fourth term on January 1st 2009 under the Chairmanship of Professor Frank Convery. This annual report covers the first year of Comhar SDC's fourth term, the twelve-month period up to the end of December 2009.

Comhar SDC's terms of reference provide a broad scope for its work programme. The organisation has discretion in designing its own agenda or, alternatively, it may be asked by the Minister for the Environment Heritage and Local Government, or by any other Minister, to examine and report on relevant matters with regard to sustainability. Comhar SDC's publication – Principles for Sustainable Development – provides its overall guiding philosophy.

The current Comhar SDC Work Programme sets out the broad parameters of Comhar's work. However, there is a degree of flexibility to allow for adjustment, if necessary, in the light of experience or to take account of new issues arising over the three-year period. The work programme for the period 2009-2012 is available at Appendix 3.

Comhar SDC publishes its reports, opinions, and other products, using a range of relevant means for their dissemination, including electronic media. It also submits its Reports to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, for appropriate referral to Government, to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, and to relevant government departments and other bodies.

During 2009, Comhar SDC engaged with the National and European policy agendas, as well as with outreach and awareness raising activities. As in previous years, four plenary meetings of Comhar SDC were held during the twelve month period. Significant highlights of the year included:

- In response to the Government's 2008 Strategy "Building Ireland's Smart Economy: A Framework for Sustainable Economic Renewal", Comhar SDC published a Report in 2009 calling for a Green New Deal (GND) for Ireland to commence the required move away from fossil-fuel based energy production. This Report sets out the Comhar SDC's position on what a GND should entail and put forward concrete recommendations for action. Comhar hosted two workshops on the theme of the GND in 2009.
- The Biodiversity Forum and the Northern Irish Biodiversity Group (NIBG) held a joint conference on "Biodiversity and Planning: Building Connectivity for Sustainability". The initial research findings of commissioned research on Green Infrastructure were presented at the conference which was attended by a wide range of sectors including government, local government, nature conservation, tourism, agriculture, forestry, planning, landscape architects and ecologists.
- Comhar SDC identified three key priorities for the Budget 2010 and made specific proposals to the Department of Finance on –
 - Carbon Tax and Climate Change Law;
 - Moving from the National Development Plan to a Green New Deal Development Plan, and
 - Moving from the perception of Biodiversity (Nature Conservation) as a problem to an opportunity.
- Comhar SDC made recommendations to the Regional Authorities in the Greater Dublin Area for the Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 to 2022.
- Comhar SDC made a series of recommendations to Government, and on Education for Sustainable Development training for local authorities.
- The Comhar Biodiversity Forum made a series of recommendations on how biodiversity can adjust and adapt to the impacts of climate change for the benefit of the economy and society. The recommendations seek to strengthen the knowledge base on the climate change-biodiversity nexus by integrating an increased research effort with long-term monitoring linked to ecosystem assessments and valuation.
- Comhar SDC made recommendations to Government noting a number of key proposals in the Report by An Bord Snip Nua that should undergo a Sustainable Impact Assessment as they may lead to unintended longer term costs.



Jackie Maguire, Comhar SDC member; Professor Frank Convery Chairman of Comhar SDC and Noel Casserly, Director Comhar SDC.

- In September 2009 Comhar SDC approved recommendations for a conceptual framework, a headline set of indicators for annual publication and the development of Sustainable Development Indicators website.
- Comhar SDC published a series of newsletters entitled “Local Sustainability Newsletter” to inform readers on sustainable development issues at local, national and international levels.
- Comhar SDC Chairman, Professor Frank Convery, published a bi-monthly commentary which focused attention on the sustainability dimension of emerging issues.
- The Comhar Sustainable Development Media Fund 2009 offered funding for media projects focusing on sustainable development building on the work that commenced in 2008. The fund is open to all Irish media, and is aimed at promoting more and better coverage of sustainable development issues.
- An Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Conference was held in Dublin Castle in November 2009. Comhar SDC recognises the role of Education for Sustainable Development in moving towards a greener and fairer society and is collaborating with other stakeholders to produce a civil society vision for ESD.
- In 2009 Comhar SDC sponsored several awards/ events including the -
 - Tidy Towns Sustainable Development Award,
 - Young Environmentalist Sustainable Development Award,
 - Fashion Evolution Industry Roundtable,
 - Cultivate events,
 - Peat Extraction Remote Satellite Sensing Scoping Study.
 - Feasta’s New Emergency Conference
- In 2009 Comhar SDC participated actively in the European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils Network and strengthened links to similar Councils in other European countries.
- Comhar SDC was represented at the 17th session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development in New York.

2 Comhar SDC Working Groups

Many of the issues highlighted in the Work Programme were actively pursued in 2009 through Comhar SDC's working groups. The working groups for the first year of Comhar SDC's fourth term focused on specific issues such as Green New Deal, Biodiversity, Sustainable Development Indicators and Education and Awareness.

The working group membership comprised Comhar council members, secretariat staff members and other interested stakeholders, where appropriate. In addition, ad hoc groups may be established from time to time to address particular items.

2.1 Biodiversity Forum

The Biodiversity Forum was established under the auspices of Comhar SDC in 2006 to provide a mechanism for consultation and input from

stakeholders on biodiversity policy. The Forum has been asked to report on the implementation of actions identified in the National Biodiversity Plan, as well as ensure ongoing input into the development of national strategies to promote biodiversity conservation. It also oversees independent monitoring of progress in the continuous implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Ireland, highlighting progress and bottlenecks. The Forum has an important all-island dimension with representation from Northern Ireland biodiversity interests.

In 2009, the Forum published a Policy Statement on Biodiversity and Climate Change and also advanced work on Green Infrastructure and ecological connectivity. See paragraph 3.4.

The Biodiversity Forum members in 2009 were;

Chair	Dr. Ken Whelan (Marine Institute)
Pillar	
State	Dr. Liam Lysaght (National Biodiversity Data Centre) Cliona O'Brien (Heritage Council) Dr. Peter Wyse Jackson (National Botanic Gardens) Shirley Clerkin (Heritage Council)
Economic	Robert O Shea (IBEC) Ruaidhri Deasy (IFA)
Environmental NGO	Anja Murray (An Taisce) Siobhan Egan (Birdwatch Ireland) Karin Dubsky (Coastwatch)
Social and Community	Ornagh Darcy, (Irish Rural Dwellers Association) Sean Healy (CORI)* Seamus Boland (Irish Rural Link)*
Professional and Academic	Ethna Diver (Directors of Institutes of Technology) Dr. John Coll (Irish Rural Link)
Northern Ireland	Dr. Bob Browne (Northern Ireland Biodiversity Group) Ken Bradley (Department of Environment Northern Ire.) Dr. Mike Meharg (NIEA)
Others:	Dr. Ciaran O' Keeffe, NPWS Jack Golden, NPWS
Ex-officio	Dr. Cathy Maguire, Comhar SDC Noel Casserly, Comhar SDC

*Observer corresponding member



Education for Sustainable Development Seminar, Dublin Castle, November 2009.

2.2 Working Group on Awareness Raising and Education for Sustainable Development Communication

The working group was established to make recommendations on developing outreach activities. The working group recognised that there are major challenges to communicate sustainable development in a manner that is meaningful and understandable to the general public. The group worked very closely with the Regional Centre for Expertise (RCE). The RCE is a UN accredited hub for research and advocacy on Education for Sustainable Development.

The main aims of the group included:

- Making policy recommendations, as appropriate, to advance Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland including on the adoption and implementation of a national strategy for Education for Sustainable Development.
- Identifying awareness raising opportunities for Comhar SDC, and as necessary, in collaboration with the RCE for Education for Sustainable Development and making arrangements for hosting an annual event on Education for Sustainable Development.
- Providing input to research projects identified in the Comhar work programme for 2009 -2012 and, where appropriate, research undertaken by the RCE.

- Assisting with dissemination of working group and Comhar Council outputs.
- Providing progress reports to the Comhar Council as appropriate.

In 2009, Comhar in partnership with the Regional Centre of Expertise (RCE) organised an Education for Sustainable Development event on the 26th November in Dublin Castle.

The members of the working group in 2009 were;

Mags Liddy	Ubuntu Network
Roland Tormey	University of Limerick
Elaine Nevin	Eco-unesco
Nancy Serrano	University of Limerick
Mathias Fiedler	Irish Development Education Association
Noel Casserly (chair)	Comhar SDC
Niamh Kirwan	Comhar SDC

2.3 Working group on Green New Deal

The Green New Deal Ad-Hoc Working Group was set up to:

- Seek to add value to the policy debate on the Green New Deal and facilitate the elaboration of stakeholders' views.
- Provide a forum for the exchange of information and research findings.
- Organise meetings with national and international experts to introduce relevant research and best practices,
- Act as a focal point for the communication of views to Government, especially the Department of Taoiseach but also other relevant Government departments.
- Produce written interim reports, ad-hoc papers and commentaries, and a final report containing detailed recommendations to Government.

Ireland faces strong challenges over the next few years relating to the sustainability of the economy, our natural environment, and the well-being of society. Green New Deal is the term that has been developed that proposes to deliver a programme to

address both economic and environmental problems, leading to improvements in overall well-being of the population. Comhar SDC is uniquely placed to provide expertise through evidence-based research and consultation with stakeholders to create recommendations for a new green society.

In 2009, Comhar published a report on the Green New Deal, which was launched by the Minister of Environment, Heritage and Local Government at the start of October. Comhar SDC held a series of workshops during 2009 and the findings from these were incorporated into the final report.

The members of the working group in 2009 were;

Peter Brennan	EPS Consulting Ltd
Bartley O'Connor	Price Waterhouse Coopers
Hugh Campbell	Price Waterhouse Coopers
Valerie Mulrooney	Price Waterhouse Coopers
Eoin McLoughlin	Comhar SDC
Cathy Maguire	Comhar SDC
Noel Casserly	Comhar SDC
Frank Convery	Comhar SDC
Niamh Kirwan	Comhar SDC
Gabrielle Garland	Enterprise Ireland
Niamh Roody	Enterprise Ireland
Eoghan O'Brien	Forfás
Paul Harris	Bank of Ireland
Donal Murphy	Bank of Ireland
Louise Fennelly	Bank of Ireland
Pat Finnegan	Grian
Alex Hobbs	Dublin Business Innovation Centre
David Korowicz	FEASTA
Neil Walker	SEI
Matthew Kennedy	SEI
Peter Daly	Clean Tech Network
Tony Owens	Clean Tech Network
Tom Wall	ICTU
Mark Bennett	Dublin City Council

2.4 Working Group on Sustainable Development Strategy and Indicators

The Working Group on Sustainable Development Strategy and Indicators was set up to:

- Make recommendations on the revision of Ireland's national sustainable development strategy as required.
- Make recommendations on the development and use of appropriate mechanisms for measuring progress on sustainable development including indicators and assessment methodologies.

The aim of Comhar SDC's indicator work is to further develop Sustainable Development Indicators (SDIs) to provide an objective means of benchmarking performance and measuring progress and to provide information on sustainable development to the public in an accessible way.

There are five elements to the SDI work, namely, the development of proposals for headline, national and local indicator sets, as well as a set of recommendations on governance arrangements and proposals for Sustainable Development Indicator communications. In 2009, Comhar Council approved recommendations for the conceptual framework, a headline set of indicators for annual publication and the development a SDI website. This work will continue into 2010.

Working Group on Sustainable Development Strategy and Indicators.

The members of the working group in 2009 were;

Member		Corresponding Member	
Claire Penny	BITC	Elaine Nevin	National Youth Council
Sue Scott	RIA	Shirley Clerkin	Heritage Council
Finola McDonnell	IBEC	Deirdre McGrath	Royal Town Planning Institute
Richard Moles	RIA	Sean Healy	CORI
Frances Fahy	NUI Galway	Magnus Amajirionwu	EPA
Breda Bailey	DOEHLG		
George Hussey	DOEHLG		
Frank Corcoran	IEN		
Bernadette O' Regan	UL		
Joanne Mulholland	Combat Poverty Agency/ Office for Social Inclusion		
John Bartlett	Sligo IT		
Pat Fanning/Mark Davies	CSO		
Cathy Maguire	Comhar SDC		
Noel Casserly	Comhar SDC		
Niamh Kirwan	Comhar SDC		

2.5 Working Group on Climate Change, Energy and Transport

The Climate Change, Energy and Transport Working Group was set up to:

- Make recommendations to Government on the development of national policy in these areas.
- Assist with Comhar inputs to the review of policy in these areas.

The members of the working group in 2009 were;

Pat Finnegan	Grian
Niamh Garvey	Dochas
Emer Dunne	Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association
David Korowicz	Irish Environmental Network (Feasta)
Seamus Boland	Irish Rural Link
Sue Scott Royal	Irish Academy (ESRI)
Erick O'Donovan	IBEC
Jackie Maguire	OLAM (Leitrim C. Manager)
Frank Convery	Comhar SDC
Noel Casserly	Comhar SDC
Shirley Kilcullen	Comhar SDC
Stephen Flood	Comhar SDC

3

The Work of Comhar

3.1 Recommendations for Budget 2010

Comhar SDC identified three key priorities for Budget 2010 and made specific proposals to the Department of Finance in October 2009. Comhar advised that several levels of policy measures are needed to reduce Irish greenhouse gas emissions.

The first priority relates to Carbon Tax and Climate Change Law. The carbon tax, as recommended by Comhar SDC in earlier Budget submissions and subsequently by the Commission on Taxation, should be implemented immediately in the non-ETS sectors to provide the right signals to emissions reduction activities. Initially the carbon levy should be set at the same price as the ETS market price to encourage least cost reductions. This would imply a levy which would translate to roughly 5c per litre of petrol. It should be clearly marked on receipts to raise awareness of the carbon implications of purchases. The carbon levy revenue should be ring-fenced for specific activities. For example, in the residential sector carbon levy funds could be used to eliminate fuel poverty, provide grants to increase alternative fuel use in homes, give tax credits to spending on energy efficiency measures, such as home insulation and continue grants for renewable heating and electricity systems. In addition to a carbon levy, targeted policy measures are needed to encourage emissions reductions in the non-ETS sectors, especially the most intractable – transport and agriculture. Some of these will require funds, which can be paid from the carbon levy revenue.

Comhar SDC welcomed the Government commitment to publish the heads of a new Climate Change Bill by the end of 2009. Putting our long-term emissions targets into law will give certainty to businesses and households. A law is the best way to make sure all departments, agencies and local authorities take climate change seriously and take action consistently.

The second priority is that the Government should commit to re-casting the National Development Plan to comprise a 'Green New Deal' development plan in line with Comhar SDC's recent report and recommendations for a Green New Deal for Ireland.

This means ensuring that all prospective investments in infrastructure are tested to ensure that they make a real contribution to economic, social and environmental sustainability. These aspects should be monitored as implementation and operations proceed. Comhar SDC believes that if we are to meet climate change targets, while creating jobs and getting the economy moving again, at minimum, Ireland will need to invest €7 billion into green stimulus packages, approximately 2% of GDP. This is significantly less than the amount of taxpayers' money that was used to recapitalise Ireland's banking system, and is almost the same as our annual fossil fuel bill. While finding the money is a short-term challenge, a green stimulus package would create jobs and save on our carbon bill into the future.

The final priority is that the Government should complete and publish the revised National Biodiversity Plan in early of 2010 and ensure it reflects the different functions and value of ecosystem goods and services in its actions. Adequate resources must be provided for the implementation of the Plan. Biodiversity and climate change policies should be integrated through the National Adaptation Plan and the cross-sectoral actions identified during 2009. The implementation of current policies should also be supported as postponing action would be to the detriment of biodiversity and hence the future economic, social and environmental welfare of Ireland.

3.2 The Case for a Sustainability Impact Assessment

Comhar SDC published a set of recommendations based on the report of the special group chaired by Colm McCarthy (An Bord Snip Nua). The Comhar recommendations recognise the An Bord Snip Nua report provides a very useful audit of public expenditure upon which proposals for expenditure reduction can contribute to stabilisation of the public finances. However, decisions taken now could easily lead to unintended outcomes that have the potential to cost more in the long run. Comhar makes the case for a Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA) so that policies are based on evidence of short term and long term benefits as well as cost effectiveness.

Key proposals in the An Bord Snip Nua report that should undergo an Sustainability Impact Assessment, as they may lead to unintended longer term costs include:

- **Transport:** There are proposals to discontinue the school transport scheme, rural transport programme and green schools initiative, which all facilitate changes in transport behaviour and modal shift. The alternative given in the report is primarily private car travel which will increase car travel and transport greenhouse gas emissions from private cars when decreasing private car use, car dependency and transport greenhouse gas emissions are the current policy objectives.
- **Energy:** The termination of energy efficiency and energy awareness schemes may have the unintended effect of increasing fuel poverty and reducing the pace of efficiency gains. The report states that a carbon tax will have the same results; however a carbon tax on its own will not deliver the required reductions. Undertaking a Sustainability Impact Assessment may enable a more considered approach to be taken such as funding schemes that result in action rather than just increased awareness.
- **Biodiversity:** Many of the recent European Court of Justice cases have related to the Habitats Directive. A reduction in the capacity of the National Parks and Wildlife Service at this time will reduce the ability to take the actions necessary to prevent further cases.
- **Environment Fund:** Eliminating hypothecation and redirecting the proceeds of the Environment Fund to central exchequer funding could severely hamper implementation of environmental policy objectives and delivery of environmental infrastructure.
- **Procurement:** Procurement has an important role to play in supporting the transition to a low carbon, resource efficient society. Sustainability



Dr. Ken Whelan, Chairman Biodiversity Forum and Dr. Cathy Maguire, Director of Research, Comhar SDC.

Impact Assessment can be used to optimise the proposal so that the opportunities offered by reform are realised.

3.3 Biodiversity and Climate Change

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

In 2009, the Forum published a Policy Statement on Biodiversity and Climate Change which recommended that immediate and urgent action is essential to enhance the protection of biodiversity and hence the future economic, social and environmental welfare of Ireland. This included a recognition of the role that biodiversity has to play in mitigating the effects of climate change. In order to increase and maintain ecosystem resilience the statement argues for a strong policy steer which will deliver a committed buy-in from a wide range of key sectors including: agriculture, finance, transport, spatial planning, fisheries, forestry, and tourism. The policy statement and recommendations were informed by Comhar SDC commissioned research undertaken by NUI Maynooth in conjunction with Enviro Centre in 2008.

These recommendations need to be addressed with urgency as many of the actions carry long lead-in times before benefits may be felt. The main policy recommendations were the following:

- Biodiversity and climate change policies should be integrated through the National Adaptation Plan and the cross-sectoral actions identified.
- The revision of the National Biodiversity Plan should incorporate measures to address the impact of climate change on Irish biodiversity and be harmonised with the National Adaptation Plan

- Adaptation policies should be harmonised on an all-island basis.
- Existing biodiversity policy should be implemented to promote resilience in populations of species in healthy habitats.

The Forum also made a number of recommendations relating research, monitoring, Sites and Species, Planning, Renewable Energy, Governance and co-ordination.

3.4 Biodiversity and Planning

The Biodiversity Forum and the Northern Irish Biodiversity Group (NIBG) held a joint conference in National Botanic Gardens Glasnevin, Dublin on the 11th of November 2009 entitled "Biodiversity and planning: Developing Connectivity for Sustainability".

In 2009, the Biodiversity Forum prioritised work on Green Infrastructure and ecological connectivity to explore how such an approach can address fragmentation, which will have the dual function of enhancing biodiversity and improving resilience and adaptation to climate change. Comhar Sustainable Development Council (SDC) commissioned research on Green Infrastructure to contribute to the evidence base for policy and decision making in this area¹.

The initial research findings regarding Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity and Planning were presented at the joint conference in the National Botanic Gardens which was attended by a wide range of sectors including government, local government, nature conservation, tourism, agriculture, forestry, planning, landscape architects and ecologists. There was a widespread support and interest in Green infrastructure and a second workshop was held with key stakeholders to consider the research findings in detail and ensure stakeholder input informed the approach and recommendations. The research was completed and report published in 2010.

¹ A consortia led by Compass Informatics Limited in partnership with Mary Tubridy & Associates, Keith Simpson & Associates and Cunnane Stratton Reynolds were engaged to undertake the research.

3.5 Recommendations on Green New Deal

In October 2009, Comhar SDC published a report calling for a Green New Deal (GND) to be implemented in Ireland. Such a deal proposes to deliver a programme that not only responds to the current economic situation in Ireland but also addresses key environmental and social problems, thereby leading to improvements in overall well-being of the population. Fundamentally, it involves realigning policy with overarching sustainable development goals at all levels of society. The report recognised seven priority areas in terms of a GND for Ireland:

- Improving the energy efficiency of existing housing stock
- Renewable Energy
- Transforming the National Grid
- Delivering Sustainable Mobility
- Public Sector Investments
- Skills and Training
- Green Infrastructure

The report contained the following recommendations:

- Bottlenecks need to be identified for these priority areas, particularly in the building sector. Well-targeted policy instruments and interventions should be used to overcome existing barriers and release current capacity. It is also important to ensure that schemes and incentives already in place deliver to their full potential. One option would be for the Government to establish a task force of key stakeholders to identify how best to advance a national programme of upgrading the existing building stock while reducing unemployment.
- For Ireland, as in many other countries, there is a clear need to bridge the gap in terms of linking R&D and emerging technologies to commercialisation. The country should be looking to develop an export market in green technologies and use our traditional skills base as the foundation for making the transition. The IDA should also have a focus in attracting foreign direct investment to Ireland in this area.

- Priority should be given to maximising the potential of our resources in sectors where we already have inherent advantages such as wind and wave energy. The agriculture resource in Ireland should be used towards supporting the implementation of a Green New Deal and at the same time enhancing rural development. This includes investing in such activities as afforestation, renewable energy production and environmental protection. Agri-food and tourism sectors are important for the economy and offer significant potential for green jobs.
- In order to move the idea of a Green New Deal for Ireland from concept to reality, concrete policy instruments are required that can unlock the door and mobilise the transformation to a more sustainable and resource efficient society.
- Skills and training should be targeted at different groups such as the unemployed, employed and third level sector and should be linked to incentives for industry to engage in schemes. Proposals on the potential role skills and training can play in delivering the Green New Deal objectives in each of the priority areas should be developed.
- A gradual shift of the tax base away from taxing what we want more of, such as investment and labour, towards taxing what we want less of, such as pollution, would also help contribute to a resource efficient and smart green economy. A tax base that derives a greater proportion of revenues from consumption and less from labour will also provide a wider and expanding tax-base than present, thereby contributing to the response needed to offset the tax implications of a declining workforce and an ageing society. In conjunction, existing subsidy schemes in Ireland should also be aligned with sustainable development goals with fossil fuel subsidies being phased out.
- The use of public and private finance mechanisms have a pivotal role to play in providing the necessary funding to make the transition to a resource efficient economy.
- Set up an effective financial institutional framework to provide the foundation for focused investment in the Green New Deal.



Education and Awareness Working Group: Nancy Serrano, Roland Tormey, Niamh Kirwan, Mags Liddy and Elaine Nevin.

Comhar SDC held a series of workshops during 2009 focusing on the theme of a Green New Deal for Ireland

- On 16th June 2009 Comhar SDC hosted a half-day workshop on the theme of “Green New Deal”. The purpose of the workshop was to facilitate a discussion with stakeholders and experts on the elements for creating a Green New Deal, and to help Comhar SDC formulate policy recommendations to Government in relation to a Green New Deal for Ireland.
- A Workshop on Financing the Green New Deal was held on 17th July, 2009 at Comhar SDC offices addressing financial aspects of the GND including the role of venture capital in financing a green economy, carbon finance and domestic offsetting scheme, equity investments in clean energy and energy efficiency, and asset-based finance and community level projects.

3.6 Greater Dublin Area Regional Planning Guidelines Recommendations

In March 2009, Comhar SDC made recommendations on the Greater Dublin Area Regional Planning Guidelines, which aim to direct the future growth of the Greater Dublin Area over the medium to long term.

Comhar’s recommendations to the Regional Authorities in the Greater Dublin Area includes a recognition that the over-arching goal should be to achieve a good quality of life for all though the

planning process. The first important step for the Greater Dublin Area Regional Planning Guidelines should be to ensure that a strong cohesive long-term vision for the sustainable development of the region is established. It is essential to appraise the critical elements involved in ensuring sustainable and good planning in the right places, and protect sensitive or environmentally important locations.

3.7 Education for Sustainable Development for Local Authorities

In August 2009, Comhar SDC made recommendations on Education for Sustainable Development for Local Authorities. Comhar SDC recognises the role of Education for Sustainable Development in moving towards a greener and fairer society. Local authorities play an important role in moving Ireland down a more sustainable pathway and are responsible for many key functions that will come under stress from climate change and declining energy supplies. They will also play a major part in implementing the revised National Sustainable Development Strategy, when it is published. Comhar believes that it is essential that local authority staff and elected officials, understand the concepts of sustainable development and their role in advancing this agenda. Comhar SDC considers that the following considerations are relevant to integrating sustainable development into existing training programmes:

- Sustainable development (including in relation to financing and procurement) should be integrated into local authority training programmes.
- The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, together with County and City Managers Association, should play a lead role in implementing this objective.
- Local authorities should integrate a sustainable development component into their own internal training and induction programmes for local authority staff and elected representatives.
- Training programmes for local authority staff and elected representatives should embed the core principles of sustainable development.



Niamh Kirwan and Elaine Nevin.

- The EPA, Comhar SDC, other relevant stakeholders and training bodies, such as, but not exclusively, the Institute of Public Administration (IPA), should work towards identifying the relevant opportunities and means of delivery of such training. In the long term, sustainable development should be embedded in all local authority certificate, diploma, degree and masters courses.
- The IPA should consider including sustainable development as a cross-cutting issue in conferences aimed at specific staffing groups within local authorities, e.g., Directors of Service.

- Efforts should be directed at training that provides specific practical application for local authority staff and elected officials. Training should be targeted for different levels and different sectors.
- Embedding sustainable development into local authority training requires both short and long term objectives.
- The revised NSDS should set short and longer term targets for delivery of appropriate training and education programmes for local authorities.

3.8 Regional Centre for Expertise

The Regional Centre of Expertise – Ireland (RCE – Ireland) is an action and research network consisting of higher education institutes, public sector bodies and NGOs. RCE-Ireland aims to promote and support activities and research that result in effective integration of Education for Sustainable Development principles and practices into formal, informal and non-formal education in Ireland. Comhar SDC is an active member of the RCE network. In May 2009, Comhar SDC sponsored the publication of a booklet on activities of the RCE.

Comhar hosted a one day conference on Education for Sustainable Development on 26th November 2009, in the Coach House, Dublin Castle. The event consisted of two sessions. The first session of the day focused on the Stakeholder Vision for Education for Sustainable Development. The context for this work is that a national Education for Sustainable Development Strategy has not been published. The RCE and partners have decided to produce a framework to set out what they think an Education for Sustainable Development strategy should look like and drive progress on the matter. Micheal Ewing, of the Environment Pillar in Social Partnership, facilitated the discussion and feedback, which fed into the document. The second session focused on the role of the media. A group of diverse media practitioners participated on the panel discussion chaired by broadcaster and historian, Dr. John Bowman.

3.9 Sustainable Development Indicators

The aim of Comhar SDC's indicator work is to further develop Sustainable Development Indicators (SDIs) to provide an objective means of benchmarking performance and measuring progress and to provide information on sustainable development to the public in an accessible way.

There are five elements to the SDI work, namely, the development of proposals for headline, national and local indicator sets, as well as a set of recommendations on governance arrangements and proposals for Sustainable Development Indicator communications. In 2009 Comhar Council approved recommendations for the conceptual framework, a headline set of indicators for annual publication and the development a SDI website. This work will continue into 2010.

3.10 Rural Transport Report

In 2009, Comhar SDC commissioned research on rural transport. The purpose of this research is to provide a comprehensive overview of the challenges to developing more sustainable travel patterns for those living in rural areas while not increasing transport-related social exclusion, and to provide a range of policy proposals for how these challenges can be overcome or minimised. The kernel issue faced by policy makers involved in rural transport centres on the absolute necessity of having a car. Even in less isolated rural areas the car is essential.

This dependency derives from a lack of viable alternative modes of transport (public transport). It is considered that an appropriate policy should aim to combine a transport network which adequately serves the social excluded (who depend on this service) with a reversal of the reliance on the use of the personal car. This will help overcome our environmental commitments as well as building social capital in order to create sustainable rural communities

4 Outreach

4.1 Comhar SDC Media Fund

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

The successful applicants in 2009 were selected by a judging panel comprising

- Noel Casserly (Director, Comhar SDC),
- Duncan Stewart (Environmentalist and TV broadcaster),
- Elaine Nevin (Director, ECO- Unesco),
- Martina Quinn (DHR Communications) and
- Niamh Kirwan (Policy Analyst Comhar SDC)

The maximum level of funding per successful applicant was €2,500. The award recipients were:

Recipient of Award	Description of Project
Barry Caslin Bioenergy Specialist Teagasc	“Bioenergy reduces green houses gases”: A print media project that examined anaerobic digestion, bioenergy policy and carbon sequestration through energy crops. The articles gave farmers and industry an insight into non-conventional agriculture and the potential to generate incomes by growing energy crops or investing in technologies such as biogas plants.
Nodlag Houlinhan Producer, Zucca Films	“Transition Tweens”: Four-part TV series broadcast on Cork Community Television. Each programme lasted for three minutes and was aimed at the under 12 age group. With snappy visuals and a hip-hop soundtrack, three children from Kinsale tell us what it is like to live in a transition town and how they’re preparing for a future without oil. The 3 episodes dealt with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Food (advantages of growing and eating local food rather than imported food), ■ Energy (saving energy in the home and renewable energy sources) and ■ Transport (alternative ways to travel to school and reducing your parent’s car usage)
Frank McDonald Environment Editor, The Irish Times	“Paradise in a perilous state”: Frank McDonald, Environment Editor with The Irish Times, received funding to assist in researching and producing an article on the impact of climate change on the Maldives for publication in The Irish Times
Maud Hand Independent Multimedia Producer	“Multimedia project”: TV Producer Maud Hand received funding for a multimedia project on sustainable communities. The project focuses on the community based at the foot of Cnoc Meadh and the Headford Hinterlands, in particular around Campbell’s Tavern in Cloughanover, about 16 miles from Galway City. The project outputs included a website, a programme on Galway Bay FM and a feature article in the Connacht Tribune

Recipient of Award	Description of Project
Clare Taylor Project Coordinator, Researcher and writer	“Waste of Space”: Freelance journalist Clare Taylor received funding towards a project exploring the impact of empty housing developments on local communities, that was published in the Irish Independent
David Clarke El Zorrero Films Ltd.	“An Bealach Glas”: 'An Bealach Glas' was a series of four documentaries exploring issues of sustainable development in Ireland. Each documentary portrayed one individual who lived some aspect of their life in a sustainable way. By highlighting the unique lifestyles which these characters inhabit the audience gets an entertaining insight into some of the ways in which ordinary Irish people are making a difference through sustainable methods.
Eileen O’Leary Freelance Photo - journalist	“Recycle in Lesotho”: Freelance photo-journalist Eileen O’Leary received funding towards a media project exploring sustainable development initiatives in Lesotho.

4.2 Chairman’s Commentary

Comhar SDC aims to engage effectively with key sectoral commercial and political interests and the general public to promote and deliver so that there is widespread understanding of sustainability issues. As part of this objective, Comhar SDC Chairman, Professor Frank Convery, publishes a bi-monthly commentary which focuses attention on the sustainability dimension of emerging issues. The following commentaries were published in 2009:

- Professions and Sustainability – looks at how various professions can contribute to sustainable development.
- Coping with the Recession – gives some tips on how to survive the economic downturn.
- Universities and Sustainability – how to make the best use of a university’s teaching resources through co-operation.
- Habits and Sustainability – looks at the relationship between habits and sustainability.
- Green Infrastructure – guest commentator Dr. Gerry Clabby – Heritage Officer with Fingal County Council – discusses the benefits of green infrastructure and the pressing need to integrate such infrastructure into the planning and development process.
- Salaries and Sustainability – reflects on how modern salaries rose to unsustainable levels in certain sectors in Ireland.
- Poetry and Sustainability – looks at how poetry can help to keep us rooted and amused during these difficult times.
- Gaia and Sustainability – reflects on the views of James Lovelock, the English scientist who fears that we have set our planet on an eminent and irreversible warming course.
- Sustainability in Sub-Saharan Africa – looks at sustainability in sub-Saharan Africa and argues that a Peace Forum is necessary to ensure the future stability of the region.
- Place, Identity and Sustainability – suggests that Seanad Éireann should be replaced by a new institution of parliament with eight Senators directly elected along provincial lines.
- Climate Change and the United States – guest commentator Thomas Legge argues that no country is more important in the politics of climate change than the United States.
- The Dutch and Sustainability – argues that Dutch expertise in marine and water engineering will prove invaluable in demonstrating to other countries how to cope with climate change and associated rising sea levels in the year ahead.

- Sustainability and Cutting Public Expenditure – looks at Ireland’s economic sustainability.
- Incentive Mapping and Sustainability – argues that policy measures aimed at making Ireland a more environmentally-friendly country need to contain incentives to ensure that members of the public willingly comply.
- Global Climate Change Policy: from Kyoto to Copenhagen- a European perspective and prognosis on what should follow the Kyoto Protocol.
- From Bad Banks to Good Development – Sustainable Development and the National Asset Management Agency.
- Committees, Commissions and Sustainability – outlines seven steps to making a committee more efficient and sustainable.
- The Green New Deal and Local Communities – Noel Casserly, Director of Comhar SDC, looks at how local communities – and, in particular, local authorities – can contribute towards making the Green New Deal proposals a reality.
- Sustainability and Posterity – looks at the impact of human activity on our planet and its consequences for future generations.
- Adapting to the Carbon Tax – looks at the introduction of taxes a carbon tax.
- Spruce and Sustainability – argues that at a time when farming is struggling and public funds are in short supply another look is proposed at the patchwork of forestry and farm policies that have developed over recent years to assess if we can maximise the overall contribution of forestry to benefit us all.
- National Education Strategy – Education for sustainable development can play a crucial role in strengthening the capacity of individuals, communities and governments to make judgments and decisions that favour environmental protection and a fairer society. Thus education for sustainable development needs to be embedded at every level of the education system.
- Budgets and Sustainability: ‘Smart’ Taxes and Budget 2010 – looks at ‘smart’ taxes that have been introduced by the Government in recent years, and in the 2010 Budget. VRT, carbon tax and water charges are all ‘smart’ taxes, as they make it easier for us all to do the right thing in relation to protecting the environment.
- Climate Change After Copenhagen – Where Do We Go From Here? – discusses the achievements and failures of the Copenhagen Accord.

4.3 Newsletter

Comhar SDC publishes a Local Sustainability Newsletter. The first edition of the local sustainability newsletter was issued in September 2009. The Newsletter is designed to provide a platform for information sharing for local authorities and communities on best practice on local sustainability. With increasing financial and other constraints due to the current economic climate, effective information sharing avoids duplication of work and provides a selection of tried and tested projects that local authorities and communities can assess to meet their objectives. The newsletter is disseminated through an extensive mailing list and through the Comhar website.

4.4 Sponsorship

Comhar occasionally sponsors events and publications which help to support key objectives in the Comhar work programme, particularly where such sponsorship promotes a better understanding of sustainable development amongst stakeholders and the general public. Comhar SDC continued its programme of sponsorship for special sustainable development in the Tidy Towns, and the Young Environmentalist competitions.

4.4.1 Feasta

Comhar SDC sponsored a conference event on “Managing Risk and Building Resilience in a Resource – Constrained World” organised by Feasta. This conference marked the tenth anniversary of Feasta. The purpose of the conference was to analyse the systems and the mindsets that steered

the world onto its unsustainable current path. Discussions focused on new systems (financial, energy, food) and ways of thinking that Feasta believe are urgently required to correct the situation and bring about a rapid transition to a more secure future.

4.4.2 Award in Tidy Towns Competition

Since 2004, Comhar SDC has sponsored an award in the Tidy Towns competition. The award has been for the town or village where a space has been improved in a manner consistent with Comhar SDC's Principles for Sustainable Development. For the first time, in 2009, Comhar adjudicated the awards. The prize-winners, announced at the national award ceremony in Dublin Castle in 2009, were:

Comhar SDC sustainable development National Award

- Glen Theatre, Banteer, Co. Cork.

Highly Commended Awards;

- Castle Leslie – Integrated Constructed Wetlands – Sammy Leslie
- Royal Canal Restoration Project – Enfield Environment Group
- Meals on Wheels – Keash, Ballymote, Co. Sligo

4.4.3 Young Environmentalist Award

Each year ECO-UNESCO runs the, 'Young Environmentalist Awards' a national competition rewarding environmental projects that raise awareness and demonstrate how to protect and improve our environment. In 2009, the Comhar Sustainable Development award went to St. Killian's Community School, Bray, Co. Wicklow for their project 'Grow Your Own'. The overall Junior Young Environmentalist Awards 2009 went jointly to students from Banbridge High School for their project 'Food Miles' and St. Catherine's College, Armagh for their project. The overall Senior Young Environmentalist Awards 2009 went to students from CBS Secondary School, Charleville, Cork.

Further information is available at www.ecounesco.ie

4.4.4 Fashion Evolution

In April 2009, Comhar SDC sponsored industry roundtable talks as part of Fashion Evolution. The aim of the seminar was to provide the tools for industry players, (including designers, buyers, retailers and press and both educators and students) to move towards more sustainable production and more environmentally friendly practices. The industry café conference took

Place on the 28th April 2009 and engaged over 60 Irish industry players in active discussion around sustainable fashion.

Further information is available at www.re-dress.ie

4.4.5 Cultivate

Over a number of years, Comhar SDC has sponsored events and activities undertaken by the Cultivate Sustainable Living Centre in Dublin. Comhar SDC has provided funding for educational events and activities which are complementary to the work of Comhar SDC and which engage with a wide range of sectors and local communities. Comhar SDC contributed to the cost of Cultivate main conference, 'Rethinking the City' which took place in Thurles on the 24th April 2009. This conference brought together stakeholders from a wide variety of sectors to explore solutions for today's energy, climate and economic crises.

Further information is available at www.cultivate.ie

4.4.6 Congolese Anti-Poverty Network

Comhar SDC, provided funding for an event which was held on the 26th November, Wynn's Hotel, Dublin 1. The event provided a platform for Congolese young people artists to nurture and promote a greater understanding between Congolese young people and the host community to;

- work towards the goal of active civil participation
- positive community learning exchange
- meaningful activity towards social cohesion

4.4.7 Involvement with British Council Challenge Europe Project

Challenge Europe (<http://challengeurope.britishcouncil.org/>) is a three year project managed on the island of Ireland by the British Council in collaboration with Arena Network, Business in the Community NI, Comhar, Cultivate and the Northern Ireland Sustainable Development Commission. The project aspires to make a definite and lasting impact on the climate change debate. It brings together young influencers from 15 countries across Europe to work together as Climate Advocates to develop concrete ideas to reduce carbon use in their countries.

4.4.8 Peat extraction remote satellite sensing scoping study

Comhar SDC, has provided funding for a 'remote satellite sensing scoping' study of peat extraction undertaken by Friends of the Irish Environment in collaboration with UCC. The deliverable from the proposed national element of this pilot project will be the 'most up-to-date, image derived, medium resolution, national map of the location of exposed peatland in Ireland currently available.



Ethna Diver, presenting the Comhar SDC award at the Regional Tidy Town Awards in Letterkenny.

5 International Dimension

5.1 Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC)

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

The EEAC annual conference was held in Dubrovnik, Croatia in October 2009 and participating councils adopted a statement on Towards Sustainable European Infrastructure. The theme of the conference was to discuss the principles for, and essential elements of, a system transition towards a low-carbon future. The fourth IPCC report concludes that industrial nations should reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 80% to 95% until 2050. This is the benchmark for the transition of our mobility and energy systems which will need new types of infrastructures. Policies on transport, energy and biodiversity networks are interlinked and need a more coordinated approach. During the conference they discussed how we can work towards this objective in Europe.

Noel Casserly, and Cathy Maguire attended the conference and contributed to drafting of the EEAC statement on Sustainable Infrastructure for Europe and in particular recommended the inclusion of green infrastructure.

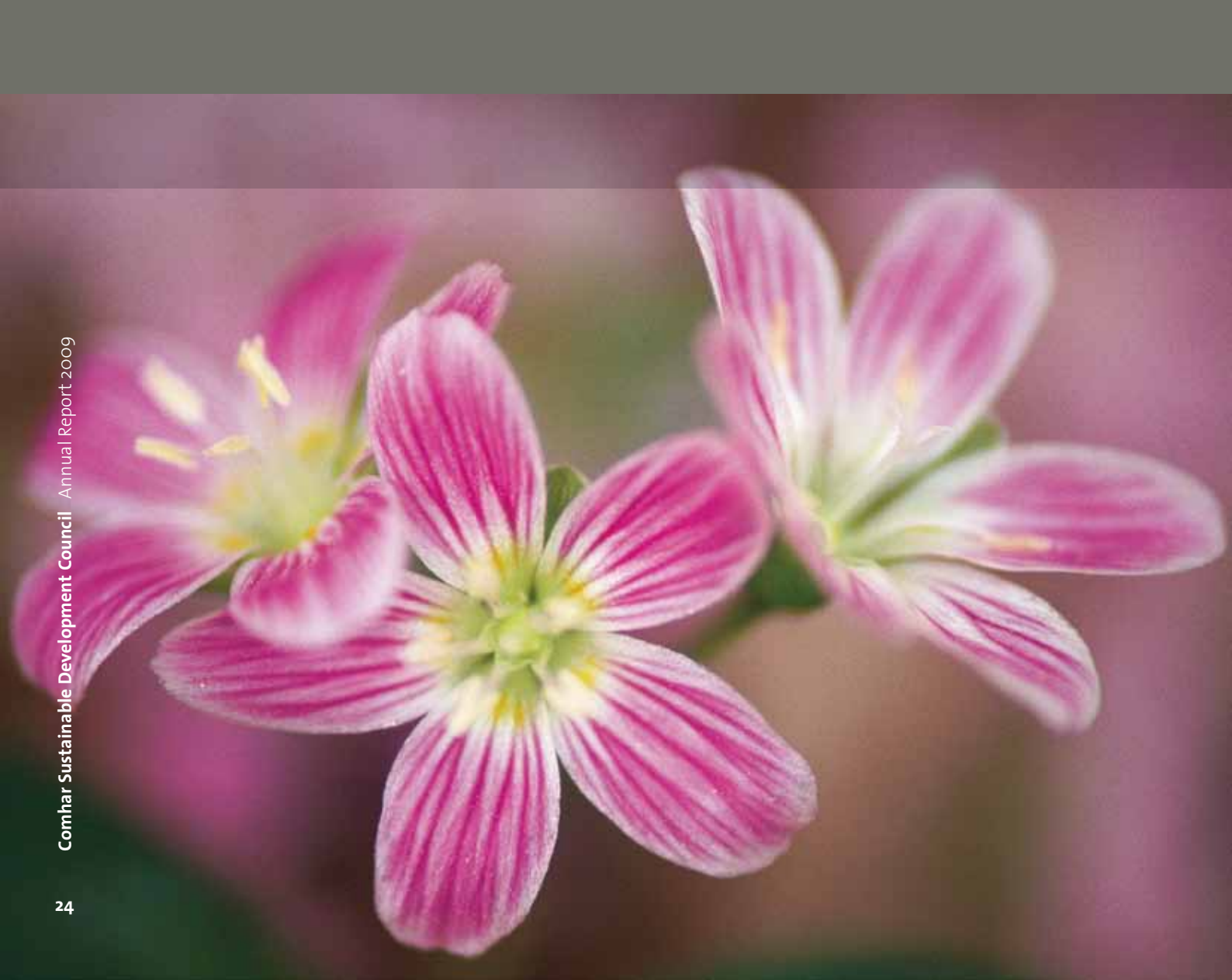
Further information on the EEAC is available at www.eeac-network.org

5.2 UN CSD – 17th Session

The 17th Session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) took place at UN headquarters in New York, from 14-15 May 2009. CSD 17 focused on the thematic cluster of agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification in Africa. The CSD meets annually in two-year “Implementation Cycles,” with each cycle focusing on one thematic cluster alongside cross-sectoral issues. This approach was outlined in a multi-year programme of work (2004-2017) adopted at CSD 11 in 2003.

During the CSD 17 the delegates engaged in dialogue on the food crisis, a sustainable green revolution in Africa, and integrated management of land and water resources for sustainable agriculture and rural development. A text was adopted and there was dialogue between major groups, policy and research communities which included rising food prices, ongoing negotiations in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) on the Doha Development Round, and an international focus on the climate change negotiations under the auspices of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. There were also side events and a learning centre, which allowed the exchange of experience on best practice. Noel Casserly represented Comhar SDC as part of the Irish delegation.

Appendices



Appendix 1

Comhar SDC Terms of Reference 2008 – 2012

(1) The Terms of Reference of Comhar SDC are to advance the national agenda for sustainable development, to evaluate progress in this regard, to assist in devising suitable mechanisms and advising on their implementation, and to contribute to the formation of a national consensus in these regards. Comhar SDC will:

(A) Have a specific focus on:

- Consideration of policy proposals and issues relating to the environment and sustainable development, and advice to Government on them;
- Researching and making recommendations, tailored to national conditions, on specific approaches to, or instruments for, environmental management and protection, employment creation in the environmental sector, environmental performance in economic sectors;
- Reviewing the implementation in Ireland of Agenda 21 and the other Rio Agreements, and contributing to annual national reports to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development;
- Reviewing/responding to national data on environmental quality trends;
- Recommending mechanisms for greater integration of environmental and sustainable development considerations into the development and implementation of all Government policies;
- Promoting information exchange, dialogue and consultation on environmental policy and sustainable development among the social partners and non-governmental organisations;
- Advising on means of raising public awareness of sustainable development and environmental issues, and encouraging positive behaviour at individual, community and sectoral levels.

(B) Examine and make recommendations on other issues related to environment and sustainable development.

(C) Review and monitor the implementation of our recommendations and if necessary make further recommendations; and

(D) Examine and report on relevant matters referred to it by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government or any other Minister.

(2) Comhar SDC may consider sustainable development issues on its own initiative or at the request of a Minister of the Government.

(3) Comhar SDC will work in three year cycles and will inform Government, through the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, of its programme of work within three months of the beginning of each cycle.

(4) In drawing up its work programme, Comhar SDC will take account of the role and functions of other bodies in areas related to sustainable development (environmental, social and economic) such as the NESF, the EPA and the Heritage Council to ensure complementarity.

(5) Comhar SDC may be invited or designated by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to attend relevant international fora, including the UN Commission on Sustainable Development.

(6) Comhar SDC may invite Ministers, Public Officials, Comhar SDC members, and outside experts to make presentations and to assist us in our work. Comhar SDC may also constitute appropriate subsidiary, consultative fora to assist in our work.

(7) Comhar SDC will publish and submit all its reports (which shall include annual reports on progress) to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, who shall bring them to Government; to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Environment and Local Government; and to such Government Departments and bodies as may be appropriate.

(8) The Partnership will be drawn from five broad pillars:

State/public sector;

Economic sectors;

Environmental NGOs;

Social/community NGOs;

Professional/academic sector

(9) Bodies designated by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government under these five pillars shall nominate candidates for Comhar SDC, and the Minister shall appoint no less than three of the nominees from each pillar to Comhar SDC. Where a nominated person is appointed to Comhar SDC, the second nominee from the same body will be designated as the alternate and may substitute for the member from time to time.

(10) Comhar SDC will have an independent Chairperson appointed by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. The Chairperson's term of office shall be five years, and may be extended by the Minister.

(11) The term of office of members will be three years, with the exception of 10 members (two from each pillar) appointed in 2002, who will serve a four-year term, at the end of which the term of office of all members will revert to three years. The 10 members concerned shall be chosen by lottery within each pillar at the first meeting of Comhar SDC in 2002. Casual vacancies will be filled by the Minister for the Environment and Local Government from among the original nominees within the relevant pillar and members so appointed shall hold office until the expiry of the current term of office of the vacating member(s). The size of the membership may be varied by the Minister for the Environment and Local Government on the approval of the Government.

(12) The Chairperson of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Environment and Local Government shall be an ex-officio member of Comhar SDC.

(13) Comhar SDC is under the aegis of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and is funded through a Grant from that Department. This Grant is part of the overall estimate for the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

Appendix 2

Comhar SDC Membership 2009

Chairman: Prof. Frank Convery

Pillar 1 – State/Public Sector

Noel Keyes

The Heritage Council

Shirley Clerkin

County and City Managers' Association

Tom O'Mahony

Environmental Network of Government
Departments

Michael O' Cinneide

Environmental Protection Agency

Ms Jackie Maguire

Organisation of Local Authority Management

Pillar 2 – Economic Sectors

Dr Clare Penny

Business in the Community Ireland

Finola McDonnell

Irish Business and Employers' Confederation

Liam Berney

Irish Congress of Trades Unions

Emer Dunne

Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association

Ruaidhrí Deasy

Irish Farmers' Association

Pillar 3 – Environmental NGOs

David Korowicz

Irish Environment Network

Frank Corcoran

Irish Environment Network

Pat Finnegan

EENGOFCF

Anja Murray

EENGOFCF

Jack O'Sullivan

Irish Environmental Network

Pillar 4 – Social/Community NGOs

Judy Dunne

Consumers' Association of Ireland

Fr. Sean Healy

Conference of Religious in Ireland (CORI)

Niamh Garvey

Dochas

Elaine Nevin

National Youth Council of Ireland

Seamus Boland

Irish Rural Link

Pillar 5 – Professional/Academic Sector

Richard Moles

Environmental Science Association of Ireland

Sue Scott

Royal Irish Academy

Eithne Diver

Council of Directors of the Institutes of Technology

Deirdre McGrath

Royal Town Planning Institute

Pro Vincent O'Flaherty

Royal Irish Academy

Appendix 3

Comhar SDC Work Programme 2009 – 2012

1. Introduction

Comhar Sustainable Development Council (SDC) was established in 1999 as the forum for national consultation and dialogue on all issues relating to sustainable development. Comhar SDC works in three-year cycles and completed its third term at end of December 2008, under Chairman Professor Frank Convery. This Work Programme covers the period of Comhar SDC's fourth term, 2009 – 2012.

The Government's national policy commitments on sustainable development arise largely from obligations under EU and UN inter-governmental processes. The policy agenda is integrated and cross-cutting across all levels of government, economy and society. Implementation of sustainable development can only be delivered with active participation of all the key stakeholders and sectoral interests. Comhar SDC is the key institutional mechanism providing for this sectoral and stakeholder engagement on implementing sustainable development.

The national policy context is set by Ireland's National Sustainable Development Strategy (currently under review) and other related policy statements such as the National Climate Change Strategy, the National Development Plan 2007-2013, Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future, and the National Biodiversity Plan. The Agreed Programme for Government (2007)² and Building Ireland's Smart Economy – a Framework for Sustainable Economic Renewal (2008)³ also determine the policy landscape in which Comhar SDC must shape its work programme.

Comhar SDC is required, by its terms of reference, to prepare a new three-year work programme following the appointment of a new Council by the Minister. Following the publication of the Agreed Programme for Government in 2007, Comhar SDC prepared a Strategy for the period 2007 to 2012.

Comhar SDC's new work programme for the period 2009-2012 represents an update of that document. The Comhar Council membership has agreed and approved this work programme which reflects the Council members' discussion at the plenary meeting on April 8th-9th 2009 and further inputs following that meeting.

Comhar SDC's terms of reference are to advance the national agenda for sustainable development, evaluate progress in this regard, to assist in devising suitable mechanisms and advising on their implementation, and to contribute to the formation of a national consensus in these regards.

Comhar SDC's 25 members are drawn from five pillars: the State sector, economic sectors, environmental NGOs, social/community NGOs and the professional/ academic sector. Comhar SDC is supported by a full-time secretariat, which undertakes evidenced based policy analysis and research aimed at informing the advice and recommendations of the Comhar council. Comhar SDC publishes its reports, opinions, and other products, using a range of relevant means for their dissemination, including electronic media.

These terms of reference provide a broad scope for Comhar SDC's work programme and allow a reasonable amount of discretion for the council to design its own agenda. Comhar SDC might be invited by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, or by any other Minister, to examine and report on relevant matters.

2. Delivery of Work Programme and Engagement with Key Stakeholders

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

The following criteria are particularly relevant in defining the work programme:

- adding value to existing work by avoiding duplication of work being carried out by other bodies;

² See: Agreed Programme for Government – a Blueprint for Ireland's Future 2007-12 http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/attached_files/Pdf%20files/AgreedProgForGovernment.pdf

³ <http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/index.asp?loclD=601&docID=4147>

- assessing the policy relevance of issues, with a view to positioning itself at the developmental end of policy or identifying policy gaps;
- proposing cost-effective solutions;
- identifying potential for public engagement; and
- using its unique nature and the strength of its broad representation to come to informed and balanced perspectives and recommendations.

In delivering on its work programme, Comhar SDC will give careful consideration to the most appropriate vehicles to disseminate its message. In this regard, its work and outputs may take a number of forms, as appropriate to particular issues, including:

- advice to Ministers, to specific sectors, or to the general public;
- opinions on critical issues in relation to the environment and sustainable development;
- recommendations on policy development;
- concrete proposals to policymakers and the public for action;
- research and preparation of reports; and
- sponsorship, conferences/seminars or other means to raise awareness.

Comhar SDC publishes its reports, opinions, and other products, using a range of relevant means for their dissemination, including electronic media. It also submits its reports to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, for appropriate referral to Government, to the Oireachtas Committee on the Environment and Local Government, and to relevant Government Departments and other bodies.

Engagement with stakeholders

Communication and engagement with stakeholders is a key part of Comhar SDC's mandate. The aim is to engage effectively with key sectoral and representative interests and the general public to promote a better understanding and engagement of the public in implementing of sustainable development. Comhar SDC will endeavour to produce clear recommendations that can be easily translated into actions.

At the first Comhar SDC plenary meeting of its fourth term in April 2009, members recommended that members themselves could make greater use of their own networks to promote Comhar SDC and its key messages.

Key elements of Comhar SDC's work on communication and engagement with key stakeholders are:

- Conferences and periodic workshops
- Publication of commissioned research and briefing papers
- Chairman's commentary
- Sustainable development media awards
- Website
- Occasional Sponsorship

Conferences and periodic workshops

Since 2006, Comhar SDC has hosted an Annual Conference focused on key sustainability challenges and aimed at engaging key stakeholders in devising appropriate policy responses and actions across the various sectors:

Towards Sustainability in the National Development Plan 2007-13 – 4th to 6th October 2006, Davenport Hotel, Dublin 2.

Making it happen – towards a sustainable Ireland – 7th & 8th November 2007 – Radisson SAS St. Helen's Hotel, Stillorgan Road, Dublin

Implementing Sustainable Development: Empowering Local Communities – 11th and 12th November 2008, Radisson Hotel, Stephen Street, Dublin 2.

Comhar SDC also hosts periodic workshops on specialist issues linked to thematic priorities in Comhar SDC's work programme, e.g., the series of seminars on sustainable transport, during 2007 and 2008, which helped to inform the Comhar SDC input to consultation on the sustainable transport action plan prepared by the Department of Transport.

Comhar SDC has reviewed its decision on whether to host a national conference every year. Comhar SDC will continue to host periodic stakeholder workshops

and contribute to conferences organised by others. In 2009, Comhar SDC, through the Biodiversity Forum, will be involved in the preparation of an all-island conference on biodiversity in November 2009. Such conferences are becoming an important dimension in the work of the Biodiversity Forum in collaborating with its Northern Ireland counterpart, the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Group (NIBG). Earlier all-Ireland biodiversity conferences were held in Athlone (2007) and Newry (2008) and coincided with joint meetings of the Forum and NIBG.

Publication of commissioned research and briefing papers

Comhar SDC commissions research and briefing papers on thematic issues addressed in the work programme or to inform its conference proceedings. Recent topics have included Cap and Share (personal carbon trading), Sustainable Transport, Climate Change and Biodiversity, Governance and Sustainability – the role of County and City Development Boards, Sustainable Development Indicators, and Sustainable Consumption and Production. The engagement of additional policy analysts by the Comhar Secretariat in 2008 has increased capacity to undertake in-house research but the need may still arise occasionally to commission outside research or briefing papers. The decision to commission such briefing papers will be dependant on resources available and degree of priority of the topic in the context of the overall work programme. Research outputs will be published not only as detailed reports but also as shorter pieces suitable for wider communication or to be used as tools for action.

Chairman's Commentary:

The Chairman's Commentary is issued bi-monthly to an electronic circulation list by Comhar SDC's communications consultants (DHR). The commentary focuses attention on the sustainability dimension of emerging issues and has helped to raise Comhar SDC's profile. Commentaries alternate between a more in-depth analysis of current issues and shorter more media friendly versions primarily aimed at local media. Guest commentators are occasionally invited to contribute. All the commentaries are on the Comhar SDC website.

Sustainable Development Media Awards

The funding scheme for media projects was launched in 2008 and open to all Irish media (broadcast, print, and digital). The scheme was run in conjunction with DHR and was aimed at promoting more and better coverage of sustainable development issues. Any media organisation, media professional or media student could apply for funding. Applications for print or broadcast projects, as well as for photographic and new media projects were accepted. Applications that involved crossover between, or the integration of, a number of different media outlets were welcome. Nine projects were selected for funding by a judging panel from a total of fourteen applications received. The maximum level of funding for individual projects ranged from €400 to €2,000. The scheme was run again in 2009, with the maximum award being increased to €2,500; the closing date for receipt of applications was 19th June 2009.

Sponsorship and occasional support for national sustainability events

Comhar SDC occasionally sponsors events and publications, which are consistent with the objectives in Comhar SDC's work programme and help to promote a better understanding of sustainable development amongst stakeholders and the general public. Examples of such activities in 2008 are:

- Cultivate Centre – Rethinking The City Conference – April 2008
- Re-dress – event on sustainable clothing “Fashion Evolution”
- Cultivate Centre – Further development and the progressing of FETAC accreditation of the Powerdown Course
- Gavin Harte – Occasional Lecture Series on Education for Sustainable Development in third level colleges.
- Seminar on “Principle 10” – access to environmental information, public participation and environmental justice, Sligo IT, November 2008
- Network meeting of Regional Centres for Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development in University of Limerick – December 2008.

These are not organised by Comhar SDC, but are consistent with Comhar SDC's overall objectives.

During its fourth term, Comhar SDC will continue to consider requests for funding of events and publications, which are consistent with the objectives in Comhar SDC's work programme and help to promote a better understanding of sustainable development.

Website

The Comhar SDC website was redesigned in 2007 and is the main vehicle for disseminating latest news on Comhar SDC, recent publications and the Chairman's commentary. Comhar secretariat will endeavour to continuously improve and update the site to increase accessibility and its quality.

3. Agreed Programme for Government and Building Ireland's Smart Economy

Comhar SDC was given a new mandate in the 2007 Agreed Programme for Government. These commitments include:

Increasing the resources available to Comhar, in particular with a view to enhancing its capacity to undertake analysis of policy issues and policy performance.

Linking its work to the broader analytical and deliberative mechanisms of social partnership, Comhar will be established as a body within the National Economic and Social Development Office.

Additional resources made available to Comhar SDC in 2008 allowed for the engagement of three additional policy analysts on contractual arrangements with relevant universities (TCD, UCD and Queens Belfast). This enhanced policy analysis and research capacity will help Comhar SDC to meet its commitments set out in the Programme for Government through the delivery of its own work programme.

The institutional links with NESDO have not yet been advanced over the last eighteen months but need to be taken into account in the formulation and delivery of Comhar SDC's work programme.

Building Ireland's Smart Economy – a Framework for Sustainable Economic Renewal published in December 2008 sets out the Government's vision for addressing the severe economic situation now facing Ireland. The focus is on restoring stability to the public finances and returning to competitiveness. A key part of the programme will be the implementation of a "green new deal" to move Ireland away from fossil-based fuel energy production through investment in renewable energy and the promotion of the green enterprise sector and creation of "green collar" jobs. This presents an opportunity to make the transition to a sustainable society and Comhar SDC will be at the forefront of this endeavour. Comhar SDC will contribute to the development of the Green New Deal idea for Ireland and promote the alignment of the renewed National Sustainable Development Strategy in 2009 with these principles. Comhar SDC will host a workshop in 2009 to begin this initiative that will clarify the meaning of Green New Deal for Comhar SDC and identify areas where Comhar SDC can contribute.

4. National Sustainable Development Strategy and longer-term perspective

Ireland's Sustainable Development Strategy is the template for ensuring that our economic and social development can continue into the future in conjunction with the protection and enhancement of the environment. Ireland published its first National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) in 1997 (revised in 2002 in the run-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa). Following the adoption by the European Union of a revised EU Sustainable Development Strategy (EUSDS) in June 2006, Ireland commenced the development of a renewed NSDS and the Government is expected to complete this in 2009.

In the autumn of 2007, Comhar SDC submitted recommendations to Government on the themes and content of Ireland's renewed NSDS. The recommendations were informed by feedback from three workshops (held in Dublin in April 2007 and in Cork & Sligo in July 2007).

Comhar SDC's new work programme needs to address the implementation and monitoring of the new NSDS and it would be appropriate for Comhar SDC to finalise its work on a set of national sustainable development indicators to include in the strategy as communication and monitoring tools.

Comhar SDC participates in the network of European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC) which provides a useful mechanism for Councils similar to Comhar SDC for exchange of ideas and best practice as well as collaboration on shaping the European agenda for sustainable development. In 2008, councils on the EEAC network collaborated in the preparation of a statement on *Sustaining Europe for a Long Way Ahead: Making long-term sustainable development policies work*⁴. This statement proposed a vision based on a European social and economic model as a framework for resilience that creates both prosperity and a fundamental sense of personal and collective wellbeing not only for all citizens alive today, but all generations to come. This statement has been endorsed by Comhar SDC and serves as a useful benchmark for longer-term policy recommendations. Comhar SDC will continue its engagement with the work of the EEAC in order to maintain its links to wider European policy processes.

5. Priority areas

In 2009 it is clear that Ireland is in a state of flux, where the economy is in recession, and it is necessary to move from the unsustainable path of recent years to a more sustainable society. This provides an opportunity to transform Ireland to a sustainable model with investment in green jobs and longer-term sustainable development. Transformation for sustainability can be supported by Comhar SDC in building the evidence base and cross-sectoral support for change through analysis, stimulation of debate and development of creative approaches and solutions. A transformation theme will inform research, information provision, stakeholder engagement and advocacy of this work programme and will position Comhar SDC as an

organisation that makes a unique contribution through partnership to sustainable development.

The Comhar SDC 2007-2012 strategy identifies the promotion of the integration of environmental considerations in policy formulation as key, involving three elements – communication, incentives and information. Communication of the options, impacts and implications of policies to the right audiences is paramount to the better integration of the environment into national policy. Communicating complex environmental challenges/issues is important so that policy-makers can understand the important environmental implications of their policies and the public can engage with the perhaps difficult solutions. Sustainable development incentives should represent a fundamental part of most policies so that businesses and citizens are encouraged to choose environmentally benign products and behaviour over bad. The third element, availability of information, ensures that (a) consumers can make informed choices regarding the sustainability of their products, that (b) policymakers can have full regard to the impacts of policy decisions, and that (c) researchers can model and predict future sustainability of the economy. These three elements should be central to all themes in the 2009-2012 work programme.

The general approach and principles to work are set out in the Comhar SDC Strategy 2007-2012. Comhar SDC work over the period 2009-2012 may be categorised into four thematic areas and each is described in brief in the next sections. However, four cross-cutting projects are also suggested during 2009:

- Green New Deal – recommendations for implementation
- Green Infrastructure recommendations and communication
- Recommendations to the National Climate Change Adaptation Plan
- Development and communication of Sustainable Development Indicators – headline and local level

4 <http://www.eeac-net.org/>

- Green Procurement – recommendations to Government, concrete guidelines for public and private sectors.

The work programme priority areas proposed for 2009-2012 are:

A. Natural Resources, Biodiversity, Agriculture and Waste

The overall objective of policy on sustainable use of natural resources is to break the link between economic growth and resource use and resource use and associated environmental impact – a double decoupling. The European Commission defines natural resources to include: raw materials (e.g. minerals, fossil energy carriers, biomass), environmental media (e.g. air, water, soil), flow resources (wind, geothermal, tidal and solar energy), and space (land use for human settlements, infrastructure, industry, mineral extraction, agriculture and forestry)⁵. Comhar SDC will undertake research that contributes to the development of the evidence base in natural resource use policy and make contributions to the policy responses aimed at particular sectors or resources and wider sustainable consumption and production (SCP) policy. Comhar will best add value by focusing in the areas where the team has specialist skills such as resource accounting to develop the evidence base for policy and policy development in areas such as SCP and waste.

Comhar will review the previously commissioned research on SCP and update its recommendations on a National SCP plan in light of the EU developments and the review carried out by Forfás on the environmental goods and services sector in Ireland and the opportunities and challenges associated with growing the sector⁶. Green procurement provides one mechanism in the category of sustainable consumption and

production to create green jobs and improve sustainability simultaneously and this will be a cross-cutting project across thematic areas. A project focused on food and drink offers the potential to undertake development of the evidence base leading to policy recommendations in an area that will have resonance with the public. The National Waste Prevention Committee (NWPC) will include a representative from Comhar SDC to sit on the Committee. Once the review of waste policy is published, Comhar will respond to the recommendations in the review and develop recommendations on waste policy in the latter half of 2009 with additional work in 2010 depending on the outcome of the review.

The outputs of previous Comhar SDC commissioned research on sustainable development indicators (SDI) will be further developed into proposals for a comprehensive and integrated SDI set for Ireland^{7,8,9}. This will integrate the recommended national and sub-national sets and provide further assessment of inter-linkages between thematic indicators. Comhar SDC will select a headline set of indicators as a recommendation to the renewed NSDS which it will publish annually along with a commentary on progress on sustainable development. Such a commentary if put in the context of wellbeing or 'beyond GDP' will be a valuable communication tool and outreach exercise as well as monitoring policy performance.

Research and policy analysis in biodiversity will focus on the drivers of biodiversity loss such as habitat destruction, invasive species and climate change. With the revision of both the Biodiversity Forum membership, the Biodiversity Strategy and the imminent renewal of the Irish Platform for Biodiversity Research there is uncertainty around the policy context and research agenda. Comhar SDC will provide research capacity to the Biodiversity

5 Thematic Strategy for the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources. Communication by the Commission. COM (2005) 670. Brussels.

6 Forfás and InterTradeIreland (2008) Environmental Goods and Services Sector on the Island of Ireland. Enterprise Opportunities and Policy Implications.

7 Maguire, C. and Curry, R. (2007a) Counting What Counts. Comhar Working Paper.

8 Maguire, C. and Curry, R. (2007b) Measuring Ireland's Sustainability. Comhar Working Paper.

9 Amajirionwu, M. and Bartlett, J. (2008) Sub-national Sustainable Development Indicators. Comhar Working Paper.

Forum on a range of topics by the preparation of briefings for Forum members to support the development of policy recommendations. The consideration of biodiversity will be an important feature of the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (to be released in 2009) and the continued participation in the Invasive Species Ireland project will also feed into all-island initiatives and the joint work of the NIBG-Biodiversity Forum. In summary, the priorities proposed for the work programme in this thematic area are:

- Development of the integrated SDI set (Q2-3 2009)
- Biodiversity in the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (Q2-4 2009)
- SCP – Recommendations on SCP action plan, green procurement, food industry (Q2 2009 – 2010)
- Comhar SDC representation on NWPC (ongoing)
- Support for the work of the Biodiversity Forum (ongoing)

B. Climate Change, Energy and Transport

As discussed above in the context of biodiversity, the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) will publish Ireland's first National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy in 2009. Comhar SDC will draw together research across several thematic areas to provide evidence-based recommendations to Government on adaptation policy building on work from previous years in local adaptation policy and biodiversity^{10,11}. Research into systemic risk management will be needed to complement this work. The two most pressing climate change policy matters for Government undoubtedly will include the introduction of a carbon levy and the conclusion of international negotiations on a post-Kyoto framework deal leading to a new National Climate Change Strategy. Comhar SDC will investigate the best use of revenue from a carbon levy and the future emissions trading allowance auctioning in investments to make the transition

to a green economy, in line with policies such as the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (released in 2009) and international justice issues. Assessment will be carried out of the potential for investment of revenue from the levy in different sectors that achieve the dual goals of transformation to a sustainable society and generation of green employment.

Since 2007 the Government has committed to presenting a carbon budget as well as a financial budget. To date it has comprised a report on total greenhouse gas emissions and the policies currently in place to mitigate emissions. Comhar SDC proposes to make recommendations on the design of the annual carbon budget, which should follow more closely the architecture of the financial budget with expenditure and longer term forecasts policies included. Comhar SDC will also monitor and provide a response to the annual carbon budget based on our evidence base. Ireland is unique in Europe with agriculture as a sector representing a higher share of total greenhouse gas emissions than in any other country. Comhar SDC will assess potential fiscal measures to reduce this challenge, in light of the REPS schemes, CAP reform and the potential for domestic offsetting projects. This work will link strongly with the cross-cutting issues of transforming to a sustainable society and the protection of the most vulnerable in society.

In transport policy the Government's publication "Smarter Travel – a Sustainable Transport Future" lists 49 actions for the achievement of a sustainable transport vision for Ireland. This document and the National Cycling Plan will provide the framework for Irish transport policy for the foreseeable future. Comhar SDC will provide recommendations on some of these actions in more detail with particular focus on the use of fiscal measures to improve the sustainability of transport – specifically road pricing, vehicle taxes, and incentives for advanced fuels and vehicles and the wise use of the associated revenue. Comhar SDC will continue research in this area and will examine how vulnerable groups can be protected. Good spatial planning is also a key determinant for a sustainable transport system. Work will continue to devise rural transport

10 Coll, J. and C. Maguire, J. Sweeney (2009) Biodiversity and Climate Change in Ireland.

11 Kirwan, K. and S. Flood (2008) Adapting to Climate Change: The Challenge Ahead for Local Government.

recommendations as without an alternative mode of transport to the car, people in rural areas are severely limited in their options to improve the sustainability of transport.

A summary of the projects proposed for 2009 in climate, energy, and transport are:

- Use of Carbon Tax and ETS Revenue Recycling (Q1-3 2009)
- Use of Market Based Instruments for Agriculture – recommendations on fiscal incentives for agriculture sector to reduce climate change and biodiversity impacts (Q2 2009 – 2010)
- Guidelines for the architecture of a carbon budget, monitor Government's progress, devise projected expenditure/emissions (Q3 2009)
- Development of recommendations for a rural transport policy for Ireland (Q1-4 2009)
- Analysis of fiscal instruments for Irish transport – vehicle tax, new technologies, infrastructure, and road pricing (Q2-4 2009)
- Research into systemic risk management (Q3 2009 – 2010).

C. Governance, Built Environment/ Infrastructure and Spatial Planning

This work strand will focus on the improvement of communication, engagement, and implementation of sustainable development policy at local level, particularly in relation to local and regional authorities. Best practice in innovative sustainable communities, such as Cloughjordan, Kinsale or other local projects will be examined and guidance documents for implementing sustainable development at local level will be produced, including the issues of sustainable infrastructure, planning, and governance. Toolkits and case studies will be examined and recommendations will be made on what can be used in training courses run for local authorities, by for example the IPA, and applied to other communities. A database of those responsible within local authorities for sustainable development activities will be compiled and updated.

The concept of green infrastructures will be examined and an inventory of relevant current

policies compiled. Comhar SDC will communicate and promote green infrastructures to local authorities and other related policymakers. This work should feed into the development of new regional guidelines ensuring an integrated approach.

In summary, the priorities proposed in this area in order of execution are:

- Development of database of local authorities contacts (Q2 2009)
- Facilitate the development of a Local Authority Network (Q3 2009)
- Green infrastructure guidance and communication to local authorities (Q2-4 2009)
- Creation of a toolkit describing sustainable development suitable for training purposes and provision of guidance for local authority training bodies such as IPA on sustainable development (2010-2011)
- Draft guidelines for best practice for communication of sustainable development at local level (2010)

D. Awareness and Education

The Comhar SDC work programme will prioritise communication and awareness-raising of sustainable development with the public and stakeholders. This work is crucial to increasing the probability of implementation of sustainable development principles by policymakers and acceptance by the public once proposed. European governments are required to prepare a national strategy for education for sustainable development (ESD)¹² The Department of Education and Science retains the overall coordinating role for policy development and implementation for ESD. Comhar SDC participates in the steering group overseeing preparation and implementation of the strategy. Proposals for a draft strategy were presented to a stakeholder workshop in Croke Park in December 2007 and the final strategy is expected in 2009.

Comhar SDC will continue to provide logistical support for, and participate in, the work of the Regional Centre for Education for Sustainable

¹² <http://www.unecce.org/env/esd/welcome.htm>

Development in University Limerick which acts as a focal point for research and best practice on ESD.

Comhar SDC will improve its communication tools through the better use of its website and in consultation with its communications consultants DHR.

The main priorities proposed for this area are summarised as:

- Improvement of communication with stakeholders and the public on sustainable development through the Comhar SDC website and publications;
- Continued engagement with finalisation and implementation of the national strategy for ESD and support for work at RCE ESD in development of promotional materials for education for sustainable development.

6. Working Groups

As in previous terms, many of the work programme objectives can be delivered through the mechanism of working groups. The working groups can develop more detailed terms of reference in each area, which will define and guide the work and establish more specific timetables and targets for each issue.

Experience during the first three terms suggests that focusing on a few major tasks a year is the most efficient way of working with task-based working groups, rather than standing groups. The proposed working groups for the fourth term of Comhar SDC are:

- Biodiversity Forum
- Awareness, Education and Communication
- Climate Change, energy and transport
- Sustainable development strategy and indicators
- Governance, planning and infrastructure
- Sustainable consumption and production

In addition it is proposed to form an ad hoc working group on the subject of Green New Deal that will produce a document in 2009 based on stakeholder consultation outlining the Comhar SDC interpretation of the Green New Deal idea and recommendations for action.

Systemic risk management will be considered as a cross-cutting issue by the groups on Climate, Energy & Transport, and Green New Deal.

It is desirable to draw members from at least three pillars of Comhar SDC in each group. It may also be appropriate to co-opt members from outside the Comhar membership where such stakeholder representation brings added value, e.g as in the case of the Biodiversity Forum.

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

A fixed duration commitment for members joining the group, which might help to keep them involved/active in the group;

The opportunity for members to participate in a number of working groups over Comhar's term of office, without duplicating the time commitments involved. This might also increase the number of members contributing to each area of Comhar's work.

Task-based, fixed term groups with clear work plans can be better supported/resourced.

7. Annual Budget

The overall expenditure for Comhar's first year of its fourth term was €465,332 (excluding some of the staffing costs of the Comhar Secretariat).

8. Review and Annual Report

The Work Programme aims to provide a flexible framework for the three-year period, enabling, where appropriate, an annual review of work priorities under the direction of the *Comhar* Bureau. Regular updates and discussion on the delivery of the work programme objectives are provided for at meetings of Comhar plenary.

Comhar is required to report annually on its progress and activities. Its work will therefore include the preparation and publication of an annual report, which will, *inter alia*, include an update on the work programme.

Appendix 4

Quality Customer Service

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

Our Customers

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

Our Aim

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

Our Commitment to our Customers

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

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

Telephone Enquiries

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

Written Communications

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

Personal Callers

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

Equal Status Policy

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

Service in Irish

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

Customer Complaints

If a customer has a complaint about the service we have provided they should either ask to speak to Sheila Hynes who will investigate the complaint, or write to Comhar, Floor 2, Block 7, Irish Life Centre, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1. We will acknowledge complaints within 5 working days and try to deal with them within 10 working days. If we need to carry out further investigations we will let the customer know and will try to have this completed within 20 working days. If the customer is still not satisfied with the outcome they can write to the: Office of the Ombudsman, 18 Lower Leeson Street, Dublin 2. Telephone + 353 1 6395600; LoCall 1890 22 30 30; email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.ie

Contact Point/Phone Numbers

Tel: 01 8882012

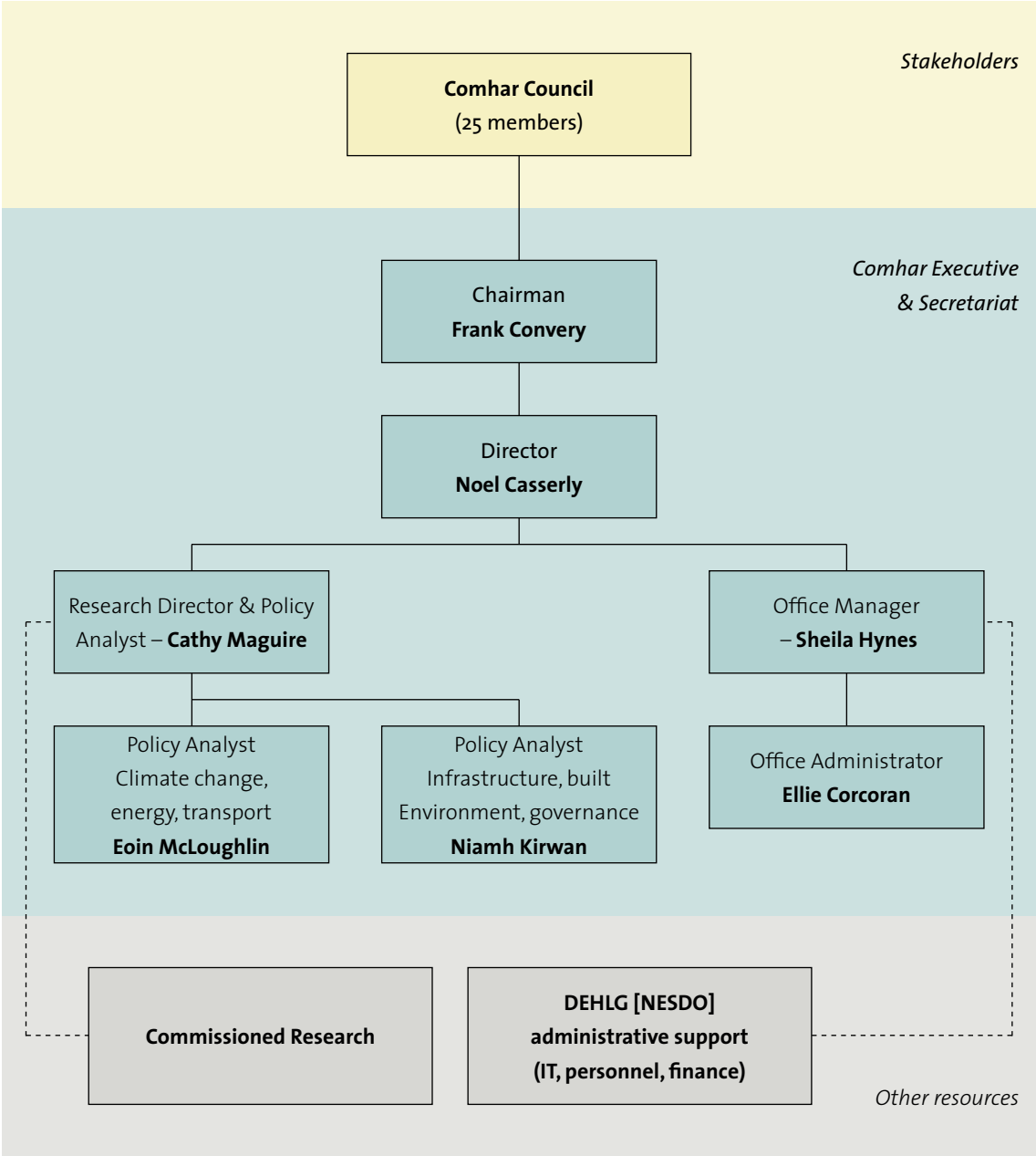
Fax: 01 8882207

Website: www.comharsdc.ie

Email: comhar@environ.ie

Comhar, Sustainable Development Council,
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Appendix 5 Staff Organisation Chart





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