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## **Introduction**

### **Editorial**

Welcome to the eleventh issue of the policylink bulletin!

We have introduced a 'special feature' section to the bulletin. In this edition, Lindsay Hodges from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development writes about rural proofing and how rural issues should be taken into consideration in new policies and policy reviews.

The bulletin also has a new section giving details of recent conferences or seminars. This is a good opportunity to get a flavour of an event which you didn't have the chance to attend.

There is also a special section on 'Skills', including summaries of recent conferences and information on the revised NI Skills Strategy. Additionally, this section includes a summary of a paper by Geoff Mulgan, Director of the Young Foundation, which focuses on 'the growing mismatch between what is provided by the training and education system and what is needed'. And a study which examines 'the geography of poor skills and access to work'.

As usual, this edition includes details of:

- official reports and publications;
- current and forthcoming consultations;
- articles from research institutions;
- conferences and seminars; and
- policy reviews coming up.

Hopefully there is something of interest for everyone! As always, you can email us at [policylink@ofmdfmi.gov.uk](mailto:policylink@ofmdfmi.gov.uk) with your views or suggestions.

### Rural Proofing

[www.dardni.gov.uk/](http://www.dardni.gov.uk/)

[equalityandruralproofing](#)

Contact: Lindsay Hodges by email at [lindsay.hodges@dardni.gov.uk](mailto:lindsay.hodges@dardni.gov.uk)

### Rural Proofing

In recognition of the reality that the needs of rural people and communities are often very different from those of urban dwellers, the process of rural proofing was developed to consider the impact of government policy on rural areas. The process was a Programme for Government commitment in 2002, designed to ensure that the rural dimension was routinely considered as part of the making and implementation of policy.

Responsibility for ensuring that the rural proofing initiative is effectively developed and that Departments have adequate guidance for rural proofing lies with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD). However each Department must apply the process of rural proofing to its own policies. A Rural Proofing Guide for Departments was published in November 2002 and is available on the DARD internet at <http://www.dardni.gov.uk/publications/pubs0102.htm>

The aim of effective rural proofing is that all new and reviewed policy proposals, consultative papers and proposals for new legislation which are submitted to Departmental Ministers for endorsement, specifically identify any likely impact which that policy might have on rural areas or communities. Where necessary, policy adjustments should then be made to reflect specific rural needs and to ensure that as far as is possible all public services are made accessible on a fair basis to the rural community.

Many Departments had already been taking steps over the years to consider rural needs and the rural proofing process for some is simply a formalising of existing good practice and enhancement of policy development. However at times DARD is still considered as the custodian of 'all things rural', regardless of individual policy responsibilities. Rural proofing, therefore, strives to make rural a shared responsibility and showcase rural-friendly policies.

Some of the key differences between urban and rural areas are discussed in the Rural Proofing Guide, with some potential solutions mentioned that might redress inequality in provision of service, including:

- Limited access to services
- Higher service delivery costs
- Greater travel needs
- Fewer information points
- Smaller economic markets
- Weaker infrastructure – roads and telecommunications
- Small firm economy
- Land-based industries
- Wider dispersal of need
- Different types of need – especially in terms of access to services
- Low institutional capacity
- More difficulty with planning developments at village / community level
- Landscape quality and character

Rural Proofing should start with a clear definition and understanding of the policy, then consideration of on whom and where the policy impacts. Departments should consider if there is an urban/rural difference to their policy and if the rural impact is negative, how can this be redressed or what mitigating measures can be introduced. The following three questions should always be considered at the outset of every policy development process:

- Is there a specific rural problem that needs to be addressed?
- Does our service need a different approach in rural areas?
- Do differences in our performance warrant a distinctive rural approach?

DARD reports on progress in implementing the rural proofing process through an Annual Report, the first of which was published in September 2004. It was generally welcomed as a positive first step in including the needs of rural communities into policy development. However some media-reported comments suggested that the report was more a list of what Departments were responsible for as opposed to showing demonstrable rural actions. Some members of the public also contacted DARD regarding specific policies where no mention had been made of rural proofing. Such commentators considered that the report did not show how policies had actually been changed as a result of rural proofing.

The Second Annual Report (published July 2005) recognised the need for greater and more structured guidance for policymakers on how to undertake a rural proofing assessment. In 2005 DARD engaged the Rural Development Council to develop a rural proofing checklist that examines some of the issues mentioned above and encourages policymakers to think through the impact of their policy in a step-by-step process where the effects can be gauged and possible remedies considered. This checklist is contained in the Second Annual Report, available at <http://www.dardni.gov.uk/equalityandruralproofing/erp0011.htm>

Several additional versions of checklists and case studies were also included as good practice examples, including work presented by the Countryside Agency (England) and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, which offer structured, detailed advice on how to assess potential rural impacts. The Second Report also offered a more focused assessment of the rural proofing work carried out by Departments in 2004/05 and reflected the important and valuable views of rural groups.

While some progress has been made, the evidence suggests that for many policymakers, the implementation of rural proofing is still a process in development, where some variation in approach exists in both formally documenting rural proofing assessments and in achieving a positive outcome.

DARD now intends to strengthen and enhance the rural proofing process and is currently considering how this can be taken forward alongside its overall review of rural policy. While DARD will still continue to provide advice, guidance and develop 'tailored'

training for Departments on request, the responsibility for implementing the process still rests with individual policymakers and their Departments. It is hoped that in future there will be consistency of approach in completing the recommended Rural Development Council checklist, thereby building up a detailed evidence base on the outcome from rural proofing and in the process targeting a greater end-product in increased access to or provision of services for people in rural areas.

Further information can be provided by contacting Lindsay Hodges in DARD's Equality & Rural Proofing Unit on (028) 90525057, via e-mail to [lindsay.hodges@dardni.gov.uk](mailto:lindsay.hodges@dardni.gov.uk) or by using the Department's textphone on (028) 90524420. Valuable sources of information and research can also be found on the NISRA website and from both the Rural Development Council and the Rural Community Network.





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## **New official publications**

### **Summary**

February 2006

#### **Post-consultation report on rate reliefs for business in Northern Ireland**

<http://www.nics.gov.uk/ratingpolicy/pdfs/hardshipguidance.pdf>

(PDF 100 KB)

This recently published post-consultation report summarises the views expressed during the public consultation on proposed rate reliefs for business carried out in 2005. The report sets out the Government's response to the reliefs proposed and the next steps to give effect to those measures being taken forward.

Mid-March 2006

#### **Employment relations survey report**

Contact: Lynne Taylor by email at [lynne.taylor@delni.gov.uk](mailto:lynne.taylor@delni.gov.uk)

'Baseline' research was carried out in early 2005 on a variety of employment rights-related issues, including the resolution of disputes at work, sources of employment relations advice, recruitment, working from home and trade union membership. This report provides an analysis of the attitudes of both employers and employees on these issues.

24 March 2006

#### **10 year over-arching strategy for children and young people**

[www.allchildrenni.gov.uk](http://www.allchildrenni.gov.uk)

The strategy will set out what will be done across the Northern Ireland administration over the course of the next ten years to bring about improvements in the lives of Northern Ireland's children and young people. It is intended to be a high level framework, expressed in terms of a common vision, underlying values and principles, with a focus on high level outcomes for children and young people and effective measures and indicators of progress.

March 2006

**Revised Code of Practice on industrial action ballots**

Contact: Jeff Ard by email at [jeff.ard@delni.gov.uk](mailto:jeff.ard@delni.gov.uk)

This Code provides guidance to trade unions and employers on good practice in the conduct of trade union industrial action ballots. It revises an existing Code in line with amendments made by the Employment Relations (NI) Order 2004.

March 2006

**Revised Code of Practice on access and unfair practices during recognition and derecognition ballots**

Contact: Jeff Ard by email at [jeff.ard@delni.gov.uk](mailto:jeff.ard@delni.gov.uk)

This Code provides practical guidance on both access to workers and unfair practices during ballots for trade union recognition and derecognition. This document revises and supercedes an existing Code in line with amendments made by the Employment Relations (NI) Order 2004.

March 2006

**MAGNI accounts and annual report 2002/03 & 2003/04**

Contact: Kerry Savage by email at [kerry.savage@dcalni.gov.uk](mailto:kerry.savage@dcalni.gov.uk)

Annual reports and accounts of National Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland (MAGNI) for 2002/03 and 2003/04 are due to be published during March 2006.

March 2006

**Recruitment and retention of teachers in post-primary schools in Northern Ireland**

Contact: Christine Bowden by email at [christine.bowden@deni.gov.uk](mailto:christine.bowden@deni.gov.uk)

This research examines patterns of teacher recruitment and retention in post-primary schools in Northern Ireland.

March 2006

**Review of pre-school education in Northern Ireland**

Contact: Louise Warde Hunter by email at [louise.wardehunter@deni.gov.uk](mailto:louise.wardehunter@deni.gov.uk)

In June 2004, the then Minister with responsibility for Education, Barry Gardiner MP, considered it a suitable time to reflect on how pre-school provision has developed over the past six years of the Pre-School Education Expansion Programme and what has been learned. The review is seen as an opportunity to look to the future to see how the delivery of pre-school education might be improved for the benefit of all those involved. The focus is on how best to meet the needs of young children. The outcome of this review will be published shortly after the announcement of the Children and Young People's funding package which is currently scheduled for early March 2006.

March 2006

**Making a big purchase?**

Contact: Carol Edwards by email at [info@gccni.org.uk](mailto:info@gccni.org.uk)

An advice leaflet for people making large purchases will be published by the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland during March 2006.

March 2006

**Money tips for parents**

Contact: Carol Edwards by email at [info@gccni.org.uk](mailto:info@gccni.org.uk)

A leaflet for parents containing advice and tips on teaching their children about managing money and budgeting is due to be published by the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland during March 2006.

March 2006

**Consumer A-Z**

Contact: Carol Edwards by email at [info@gccni.org.uk](mailto:info@gccni.org.uk)

The ultimate guide to consumer information and organisations in a handy alphabetical handbook is due to be published by the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland during March 2006.

March 2006

**In control?**

Contact: Joanne Gamble by email at [info@gccni.org.uk](mailto:info@gccni.org.uk)

An investigation into the patterns of use and level of self-disconnection by gas and electricity users in Northern Ireland is due to be published during March 2006.

March/April 2006

**Report on responsible consumerism**

Contact: Dr Sinead Furey by email at [info@gccni.org.uk](mailto:info@gccni.org.uk)

A report on the plenary and workshop sessions from the General Consumer Council's 2005 keynote annual event will be published during March or April 2006.

1 April 2006

**Development of a draft strategy for voluntary and community sector support services**

Contact: Geoff Beattie by email at [geoff.beattie@dndni.gov.uk](mailto:geoff.beattie@dndni.gov.uk)

The support strategy will build on the work of the Task Force and the actions presented in Positive Steps. The strategy will set out to deliver an infrastructure which is in keeping with the outcome of the Review of Public Administration, is sustainable, provides a model for Government and other funding, and complements the differing and equally valuable roles of local and central government, and voluntary and community sector organisations.

April 2006

**Salmon and inland fisheries annual report 2004**

Contact: David Houston by email at [david.houston@dcalni.gov.uk](mailto:david.houston@dcalni.gov.uk)

A report on the activities of the Inland Fisheries Branch is due to be published during April 2006

April 2006

**Employment Agency standards – general enforcement guidance**

Contact: Jeff Ard by email at [jeff.ard@delni.gov.uk](mailto:jeff.ard@delni.gov.uk)

This guide will assist officers in carrying out inspections of employment agencies and businesses in order to ensure compliance with legislative requirements.

Spring 2006

**Report by the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation (IRRV) on 'The Operational Implications of the Northern Ireland Rate Relief Scheme'**

Contact: Ivan Millen by email at [ivan.millen@dfpni.gov.uk](mailto:ivan.millen@dfpni.gov.uk)  
<http://www.nics.gov.uk/ratingpolicy/>

The report examines how the new rate relief scheme (to be introduced from April 2007 along with a new capital value rating system) could operate in practice. It sets out recommendations in relation to how the relief scheme could be targeted, potential claimant numbers and the associated revenue implications of this. The report also makes recommendations in relation to administration of the scheme, necessary legislative changes and future take up campaigns to ensure that as many eligible households as possible receive assistance.

May 2006

**MAGNI accounts and annual report  
2004/05 Contact:**

[kerry.savage@dcalni.gov.uk](mailto:kerry.savage@dcalni.gov.uk)

Annual reports and accounts of National Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland (MAGNI) for 2004/05 are due to be published during May 2006.

May 2006

**Summary of Health and Personal Social  
Services (HPSS) expenditure**

Contact: Frank Williamson by email at [frank.williamson@dhsspsni.gov.uk](mailto:frank.williamson@dhsspsni.gov.uk)

This publication provides information on 2004-05 actual expenditure by Boards and Trusts analysed by Programme of Care, key services and category.

May 2006

**Equine strategy report for Northern  
Ireland final draft**

[www.dardni.gov.uk/ruralstakeholder/  
rursta04.htm](http://www.dardni.gov.uk/ruralstakeholder/rursta04.htm)

Contact: Alasdair MacInnes by email at [alasdair.macinnes@dardni.gov.uk](mailto:alasdair.macinnes@dardni.gov.uk)

Consultants have worked with the Equine Sub Group of the Rural Stakeholder Forum to develop a long-term industry-led strategy for the equine sector in Northern Ireland. The draft document identifies key aims and makes suggestions on the actions the industry needs to take to achieve those aims. The draft report was published in November 2005. It is hoped that the strategy will be finalised by May 2006. Thereafter, various Departments such as the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Department of the Environment, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and the Department of Finance and Personnel are likely to be approached by equine representatives for assistance on some of the issues.





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## **New from research institutes and think tanks**

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#### **Attracting and retaining families in new urban mixed income communities**

[www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/housing/0026.asp](http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/housing/0026.asp)

Government across the UK is promoting 'mixed and balanced' communities, and mixed income new communities (MINCs) are now being built in most cities, either to regenerate low-income areas or to ensure social housing is provided alongside market-rate homes in new private developments. Better-off families have an important role to play in renewal, particularly if the goals include improving schools and other opportunities for low-income children. This study, by the Institute of Education and the London School of Economics, investigated whether families were living in private sector homes and their motivations for doing so.

#### **Implementing new powers for private sector housing renewal**

[www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/housing/0685.asp](http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/housing/0685.asp)

The Regulatory Reform (England and Wales) (Housing Assistance) Order 2002 (the RRO) has radically changed the way in which government seeks to encourage private sector home improvement in England and Wales. The RRO swept away much of the prescriptive nature of previous legislation, instituting a general power on local authorities to provide "assistance" "in any form" "to any person", to improve, repair, adapt or rebuild residential premises. This study, by Rick Groves and Sian Sankey at the University of Birmingham, was commissioned jointly by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, ODPM and the Welsh Assembly Government. The work examined the experiences of local authorities seeking to implement these new powers. The initial response of local housing authorities to the RRO was generally favourable. However, there is currently a major contrast between the expectations of the policy reforms of central government and the capacity of local authorities to deliver these programmes.

#### **User perceptions of occasional and controlled heroin use**

[www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/0695.asp](http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/0695.asp)

While it is recognised that heroin is a dangerous drug causing considerable damage to individuals and communities, there are some people who appear to be able to control their use of the drug. A study by the Institute for Criminal Policy Research, King's College London, focused on a population of non-dependent and controlled-dependent heroin users who saw their use as relatively problem-free.

**Inclusion of disabled children  
in primary school playgrounds**

[www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/  
findings/socialpolicy/0016.asp](http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/0016.asp)

In recent years the trend has been to educate children with disabilities in mainstream schools, partly as a response to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001). One of the themes of Every Child Matters (2004) is that children should enjoy and achieve, and this applies to the educational context. Based on qualitative research focusing on disabled children, this study investigated the play in playgrounds of six schools in Yorkshire. It reveals how children with disabilities were included in play and identifies both organisational, social and physical barriers and good practice to the inclusion of these children in play at both playtimes and lunch-times.

**Community consultation and  
the 'hard to reach'**

[http://www.sisr.net/cag/  
projects/community.htm](http://www.sisr.net/cag/projects/community.htm)

The Institute for Social Research (ISR), Swinburne University of Technology, recently published a report which discusses various models of community consultation and documents why there is currently such enthusiasm for community consultation at the local and state level in Victoria, Australia. The report also includes new research about practical approaches in Victoria to reaching people who may be disengaged, disinterested or facing barriers to public participation.

**Work-life balance and productivity**

[http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/  
ESRCInfoCentre/PO/releases/2006/  
january/worklife\\_balance.aspx?  
ComponentId=13397&SourcePageId=96](http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/PO/releases/2006/january/worklife_balance.aspx?ComponentId=13397&SourcePageId=96)

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) announced the publication of a report "Work-life balance, management practices and productivity", which says that companies which are bigger, more globalised and better managed provide a better work-life balance for their employees. Moreover, tough product market competition improves management practices but without any detrimental impact on work-life balance. At the same time, the researchers find no evidence that firms with good practices on work-life balance – shorter hours, flexible working, family-friendly policies, etc – have higher productivity. The study uses an innovative survey tool on over 700 manufacturing firms in France, Germany, the UK and the United States to ask questions about management practices and work-life balance.

**Better Humans? The politics of  
human enhancement and life extension**

[www.demos.co.uk/catalogue/  
betterhumanscollection/](http://www.demos.co.uk/catalogue/betterhumanscollection/)

Advances in biotechnology, neuroscience, computing and nanotechnology mean that we are in the early stages of a period of huge technological potential. A new set of possibilities is opening up. Paul Miller and James Wilsdon, at Demos, have put together a collection of essays by leading scientists and commentators exploring the implications of human enhancement technologies. They ask how citizens and policy-makers should respond.

**Eurostudent Survey II: Irish report  
on the Social and Living Conditions  
of Higher Education Students 2003/2004**

[http://www.esri.ie/advsearch.cfm?  
t=Find%20Publications&mId=2&detail=  
1&id=2327](http://www.esri.ie/advsearch.cfm?t=Find%20Publications&mId=2&detail=1&id=2327)

This report explores the experiences of students in higher education institutions in Ireland. The majority of higher education students are found to be broadly 'satisfied' with their material well-being, accommodation and workload. However, the experiences of full-time and part-time students vary notably. Part-time students are more likely to be 'satisfied' with their material situation compared to full-time students, which could be explained by higher incomes among the former.

### **'Football for all: a baseline study'**

[www.democraticdialogue.org/documents/FootballForAlldoc\\_000.pdf](http://www.democraticdialogue.org/documents/FootballForAlldoc_000.pdf)

The Irish Football Association commissioned Democratic Dialogue to assess the impact of its 'Football for all' campaign against intolerance and for wider participation in the sport. The report shows remarkable progress, particularly in addressing sectarianism at home internationals, and offers valuable lessons for how government departments can implement A Shared Future.

### **'The operation of the North-South implementation bodies'**

[www.democraticdialogue.org/documents/North-Southpaper.pdf](http://www.democraticdialogue.org/documents/North-Southpaper.pdf)

As part of a broader 'Mapping Frontiers' research project involving Queen's University, University College Dublin and Democratic Dialogue, Professor John Coakley and Brian O Caoindealbháin of UCD and Robin Wilson of Democratic Dialogue presented a paper to an end-of-project conference in Armagh. The paper represents the first attempt to evaluate the performance of the implementation bodies, against an historical survey of north-south co-operation since partition. It is of particular interest as both current governments on the island are now placing such emphasis on this arena.

### **'From the Belfast Agreement to stable power-sharing'**

[www.democraticdialogue.org/wilfordwilsonerrpol.pdf](http://www.democraticdialogue.org/wilfordwilsonerrpol.pdf)

Professor Rick Wilford of Queen's University and Robin Wilson of Democratic Dialogue kicked off a major conference in Belfast on devolution, organised by the Political Studies Association and the Economic and Social Research Council, with a paper accumulating their conclusions from a research project monitoring the outworking of devolution in Northern Ireland, which they have led since 1999. Against the backdrop of public pessimism about renewed efforts to restore devolution, the paper charts a way ahead in light of the lessons learned.

### **'Messages from Macedonia'**

[www.democraticdialogue.org/documents/BelfastOhridCompared\\_000.pdf](http://www.democraticdialogue.org/documents/BelfastOhridCompared_000.pdf)

Three years after the Belfast Agreement, the Ohrid agreement between Slav Macedonians and ethnic Albanians renewed power-sharing after the civil conflict in Macedonia. The institutions created by the Belfast Agreement are in cold storage, whereas the Ohrid agreement is working. This Democratic Dialogue paper by Ariane Decramer identifies subtle but significant differences in approach, which have important implications for Northern Ireland policy-makers.

### **Devolution monitoring reports**

[www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit/research/devolution/devo-monitoring-programme.html](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit/research/devolution/devo-monitoring-programme.html)

Funding for the UK-wide devolution-monitoring project co-ordinated by the Constitution Unit at UCL has been renewed, with support from government in London, Edinburgh and Cardiff. The first report in the new format covers the (now-withdrawn) Northern Ireland Offences Bill and government announcements on the Review of Public Administration, following the September riots in Belfast and the arms-decommissioning move by the IRA. The next report will be available in May and can also be accessed via the weblink on the left. The previous 23 reports can all be browsed at [www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit/publications/devolution-monitoring-reports/index.html](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit/publications/devolution-monitoring-reports/index.html).





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**Skills**

**Learning to serve: the toughest skills challenge for public services and government and what can be done about it**

[www.youngfoundation.org.uk/?p=251](http://www.youngfoundation.org.uk/?p=251)

### Summary

This recent paper, by Geoff Mulgan, Director of the Young Foundation, has written an article on the 'growing mismatch between what is provided by the training and education system and what is needed'. The paper focuses on four distinct but interrelated challenges:

- Improving the employability of a large proportion of the population who continue to miss out on the benefits of an often dynamic economy;
- Ensuring the continued evolution to a service economy in which services truly serve their customers;
- Improving quality in public services; and
- The problems of a diverse society struggling to live together well.

**The geography of poor skills and access to work**

[www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/0046.asp](http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/0046.asp)

Despite employment growth, high levels of worklessness persist for some people. Substantial investment has been made to raise the skills levels of those who are most disadvantaged and skills policy is being embedded in regional and local economic development strategies. This study, by Anne Green and David Owen of the University of Warwick, analyses statistics from the 2001 Census on access to work for people with poor work skills in the context of important changes in the industrial and occupational profile of employment and the location of jobs.

### **Northern Ireland Skills Strategy**

Contact: Ruth Court by email at [ruth.court@delni.gov.uk](mailto:ruth.court@delni.gov.uk)

Consultation on the Northern Ireland Skills Strategy has been completed and the responses analysed and published on the Department for Employment and Learning website. The revised Skills Strategy was announced by the Minister, Angela Smith, at the recent Skills conference which took place on 28 February 2006.

### **Skills and science funding package**

Contact: Dale Heaney by email at [dale.heaney@delni.gov.uk](mailto:dale.heaney@delni.gov.uk)

The Skills and Science Funding Package was launched by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on 21 February 2006 at Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education (Millfield). As one of three new priority funding packages, the package will focus resources specifically on new areas and new policies designed to improve the life chances of the next generation and those who need more help to find a job. Total funding is £35m over the next 2 years.

### **Skills Expert Group**

Contact: Kieran Mannion by email at [kieran.mannion@delni.gov.uk](mailto:kieran.mannion@delni.gov.uk)

The inaugural meeting of the new Skills Expert Group met on 27 February 2006. The Group will advise and make recommendations to the Department for Employment and Learning, and other government departments and agencies, on matters affecting the Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland and the development of a Regional Employment and Skills Action Plan.

### **Northern Ireland Skills conference**

Contact: Kieran Mannion by email at [kieran.mannion@delni.gov.uk](mailto:kieran.mannion@delni.gov.uk)

This conference, for the Department for Employment and Learning and partners, focused discussion on the nature and value of skills in a small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) economy. The conference took place on the 28th of February 2006.





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## Newly announced policies and strategies

### **Policy on architecture and the built environment for Northern Ireland**

Contact: Richard Lutton by email at [richard.lutton@dcalni.gov.uk](mailto:richard.lutton@dcalni.gov.uk)

### **Summary**

The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) is leading an interdepartmental group in the development of government policy on Architecture and the Built Environment for Northern Ireland. It is intended that the policy, to be published in 2006, will support commitment to the achievement of the highest standards of design in publicly funded construction projects.

### **Northern Ireland's libraries: A framework for change**

Contact: David Polley by email at [david.polley@dcalni.gov.uk](mailto:david.polley@dcalni.gov.uk)

After the conclusion of consultation, the 10-20 year direction for the Northern Ireland Public Library Service is likely to be published during May 2006.

### **Northern Ireland forestry – A strategy for sustainability and growth**

[www.forestserviceni.gov.uk](http://www.forestserviceni.gov.uk)

Forest Service has reviewed forestry policy in Northern Ireland including two rounds of public consultation. A policy statement and delivery strategy (on the twin themes of forestry expansion and sustainable forest management) are expected to be made during March or April 2006.

### **Northern Ireland aquaculture strategy**

Contact: Averil Gaw by email at [averil.gaw@dardni.gov.uk](mailto:averil.gaw@dardni.gov.uk)

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development is working to produce a strategy for the sustainable development of aquaculture in Northern Ireland by December 2006.

**Planning Policy Statement 17: Control of outdoor advertisements**

Contact: John Linden by email at [john.linden@doeni.gov.uk](mailto:john.linden@doeni.gov.uk)

This Planning Policy Statement sets out the Department of the Environment's planning policy and guidance for the control of outdoor advertisements. It complements the Government's commitment to securing a competitive economy whilst affording appropriate protection to amenity and public safety. It is anticipated to be released by end of March 2006.

**Planning Policy Statement 15: Planning and flood risk**

Contact: John Davison by email at [john.davison@doeni.gov.uk](mailto:john.davison@doeni.gov.uk)

This Planning Policy Statement sets out the Department of the Environment's planning policies to reduce flood risk to people, property and the environment. It embodies the Government's commitment to sustainable development and the conservation of biodiversity. It adopts a precautionary approach to decision-making taking account of climate change, and promotes an approach to development supportive to the wellbeing and safety of people. It is anticipated to be released by end of March 2006.

**Labour Relations Agency Code of Practice on the Disclosure of Information**

Contact: Brian Patterson by email at [brian.patterson@delni.gov.uk](mailto:brian.patterson@delni.gov.uk)

The Code provides guidance on good practice in the area of disclosure of information to allow for effective collective bargaining between employers and trade unions. Commencing in March 2006, this is intended to revive an existing Code in line with legislative amendments.

**Targeting of domestic rate relief**

Contact: Ivan Millen by email at [ivan.millen@dfpni.gov.uk](mailto:ivan.millen@dfpni.gov.uk)  
<http://www.nics.gov.uk/ratingpolicy/>

The domestic rate relief scheme will target those on low incomes and just above the housing benefit threshold or on partial housing benefit. The scheme will sit above the current housing benefit scheme but will take on the characteristics of that scheme. The way in which low income households will be targeted is under consideration to ensure the most effective use of resources available.

**Preparation for Employment Programme (PEP) Pilot for 50-59 year olds**

Contact: Maureen Gillespie by email at [maureen.gillespie@delni.gov.uk](mailto:maureen.gillespie@delni.gov.uk)

Northern Ireland will pilot New Deal 25+ provision for 50-59 year olds in receipt of Job Seekers' Allowance, addressing the unemployment rate within this age group. The pilot is due to commence in April to May 2006.

**Quality Improvement Strategy**

Contact: John Baird by email at [john.baird@delni.gov.uk](mailto:john.baird@delni.gov.uk)

A Quality Improvement Unit has been established within the Department for Employment and Learning, with a remit to develop a Quality Improvement Strategy. The Strategy will aim to enhance the quality of education and training programmes funded by the Department for Employment and Learning. It will aim to ensure that quality criteria are defined and benchmarked across the Department's provision; that the key findings identified in inspection reports are addressed appropriately and coherently; and that a range of support and capacity building activities aimed at improving quality and performance are provided in an appropriate manner. This work commenced in October 2005.





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## Conferences and Seminars Coming Up

### Summary

13-14 March 2006;  
Stormont Hotel, Belfast

#### **Changing the culture**

[http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/  
healthcare\\_associated\\_infection\\_  
conference.pdf](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/healthcare_associated_infection_conference.pdf)  
(PDF 214 KB)

Contact: Theresa McCullagh by email at  
[changingtheculture@conference](mailto:changingtheculture@conference)

[2006.net](http://2006.net)

This is a major conference to address a spectrum of issues in relation to the prevention and control of healthcare associated infection. It is jointly hosted by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, the Northern Ireland Healthcare-associated Infection Surveillance Centre and the Royal Hospitals, Belfast. Distinguished international speakers will be joined by UK experts for a programme which will educate, inform and share information on all aspects of infection prevention and control.

15 March 2006;  
The Nerve Centre, Derry,

#### **Launch of 'Buy Rights, Have Your Say' DVD**

Contact: Philippa McKeown by email at  
[info@gccni.org.uk](mailto:info@gccni.org.uk)

This year's World Consumer Rights Day will be marked with the launch of an innovative short film to help young people feel more confident and informed about their rights. Attendance is by invitation only.

23-24 March 2006;

Radisson Roe Park Hotel, Limavady

**2006 University of Ulster's Northern Ireland Centre for European Co-operation (NICEC) conference**

[www.nicec.ulster.ac.uk/events.html](http://www.nicec.ulster.ac.uk/events.html)

The 2006 NICEC conference will focus on 'What Shared Futures? – Local and European Challenges in Diversity and Conflict Management'. The conference will be a meeting point for policy-makers, practitioners and politicians, and major international and local speakers will be in attendance.

A selection of briefing and information papers from NICEC conferences, workshops and activities are available on the NICEC web site at [www.nicec.ulster.ac.uk/publications.html](http://www.nicec.ulster.ac.uk/publications.html)

28 March 2006;

Hilton Hotel, Belfast

**International conference on intercultural service provision**

<http://www.nccri.ie/events.html>

The conference will launch the findings from research which was commissioned by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) on how public authorities provide services for minority ethnic groups within Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and Scotland. The conference is organised by the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) and sponsored by OFMDFM.

29 March 2006 ;

Institute of Directors (IoD), 4 Royal Avenue, Belfast

**Breakfast Briefing – John Mawhinney, Energia**

[www.iod.com/northernireland/events](http://www.iod.com/northernireland/events)

John Mawhinney, Head of Sales and Marketing with Northern Ireland 's first independent energy supplier, Energia, will outline the challenges faced by the energy industry with the forthcoming single all-island market opening next year. He will also explore how this will impact on businesses and users, what it means in terms of regulation and what impact this will have on prices. The cost of attendance is £16 including VAT.

29-30 March 2006 (provisional);

Belfast and Dungannon

**Neighbourhood Partnerships networking seminars**

Contact: Brian Mullan by email at [brian.mullan@dsdni.gov.uk](mailto:brian.mullan@dsdni.gov.uk)

The proposed networking seminars are intended to support the Neighbourhood Partnerships established in Neighbourhood Renewal areas and promote effective networking and the sharing of good practices.

31 March 2006;  
Conference Room, James House, Belfast

### **Seminar on social capital**

Contact: Chris Morris by email at [chris.morris@dsdni.gov.uk](mailto:chris.morris@dsdni.gov.uk)

This seminar will be looking at factors affecting social capital, and at monitoring levels of social capital at the area level. Speakers include: Tom Healy, Mike Morrissey and Kat Healy.

31 March 2006;  
Malone Lodge Hotel, Belfast

### **Securing the future: Patterns and causes of crime – Democratic Dialogue and Probation Board for Northern Ireland round table**

Contact: Robin by email at [robin@democraticdialogue.org](mailto:robin@democraticdialogue.org)

Democratic Dialogue and the Probation Board for Northern Ireland are organising a series of round tables about crime and justice issues. The aim is to stimulate a broader debate with an eye to the eventual restoration of devolution and, in that context, devolution of policing and justice. A second round table follows on 8 June 2006. For more details about the project, contact Robin at Democratic Dialogue by email at the address provided.

31 March 2006;  
Belfast

### **Westminster Briefing 'Putting the Licensing Act into practice: striking a balance'**

[http://www.westminster-briefing.com/events\\_b/Licensing\\_Act.htm](http://www.westminster-briefing.com/events_b/Licensing_Act.htm)

This Westminster Briefing will be hosted in Belfast by *The House Magazine*. The Government hopes to modernise and reform the current system of liquor licensing in Northern Ireland. This Westminster Briefing will provide the opportunity to discuss the best way to make sure that the licensing system is efficient, effective and responsive to the needs of all.

4 April 2006;  
Institute of Directors (IoD),  
4 Royal Avenue, Belfast

### **Technology forum with Oracle**

[www.iod.com/northernireland/events](http://www.iod.com/northernireland/events)

A recent Oracle/IoD Technology Survey identified a number of common themes as topics for our Technology Forum in 2006. As a result, we will be discussing these themes at the first Technology Forum on 4 April. The cost of attendance is £15 including VAT. A speaker from Oracle will facilitate the discussion covering such issues as:

- Collaborative working environments
- Business Continuity
- Business Intelligence
- Centralised Data Management
- Mobile Computing
- Security

25 April 2006;  
Institute of Directors Headquarters, 116  
Pall Mall, London

### **Celtic fringe dinner**

[www.iod.com/scotland/events](http://www.iod.com/scotland/events)

This is a joint dinner with Institute of Directors (IoD) Northern Ireland, IoD Wales and IoD Scotland and a guest speaker. Compere is Gavin Hastings, from Scottish rugby. The cost of attendance is £75 including VAT.

25 April 2006;

OSNI Headquarters, Colby House,  
Stranmillis Court, Belfast

**Northern Ireland Best Practice seminar  
– Business planning using the  
Strategy Map and Balanced Scorecard**

[www.bestpracticeni.gov.uk](http://www.bestpracticeni.gov.uk)

Contact: Stephen Girvan by email at  
[stephen.girvan@dfpni.gov.uk](mailto:stephen.girvan@dfpni.gov.uk)

The Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland (OSNI) is one of eight organisations who were successful in the Northern Ireland Best Practice Scheme. OSNI will host this seminar on the use of the Strategy Map and Balanced Scorecard approach to business planning. The scheme is being sponsored by the Public Service Delivery Improvement Team in the Department of Finance and Personnel, as part of the Government's strategy for reforming and modernising public services. Its aim is to highlight and share good practice within the public sector. This learning/benchmarking opportunity is open to all public sector and voluntary/community sector organisations in Northern Ireland.

26 April 2006;

Malone Lodge Hotel, Belfast

**A picture of health? Public health and  
health inequality – Democratic Dialogue  
and Stratagem round table contact**

Robin by email at  
[robin@democraticdialogue.org](mailto:robin@democraticdialogue.org)  
or Quintin by email at  
[quintin@stratagem-ni.com](mailto:quintin@stratagem-ni.com)

Democratic Dialogue and Stratagem, supported by Pfizer, are mounting four round-table discussions of fundamental health problems in Northern Ireland focusing, not on the mediogenic issue of acute-hospital rationalisation, but on the pathogenic issues of inequality and poor public health. The project will investigate the need for a continuing health policy forum in Northern Ireland. A further event will take place in May, on a date to be confirmed. For more information contact Robin at Democratic Dialogue or Quintin at Stratagem by email at the addresses provided.

26 April 2006;

Royal Albert Hall, London

**Institute of Directors annual convention**

[www.iod.com/northernireland/events](http://www.iod.com/northernireland/events)

The Institute of Directors (IoD) annual convention involves guest speakers including Doug McCallum, MD of eBay UK, Steve Ballmer, CEO of Microsoft Corporate, and Todd Stitzer, CEO of Cadbury Schweppes. The cost of attendance is £400 including VAT.

27 April 2006;

Belfast City Hall

**Business of Art in association with the  
WAVE ART Exhibition**

[www.iod.com/northernireland/events](http://www.iod.com/northernireland/events)

Speakers on buying art as an investment will include leading Irish artist, Terry Bradley, and Lord Harry Dalmeny, Chairman of auction house, Sotheby's Olympia. You can view an eclectic selection of artworks for sale in aid of charity, including works from artists such as Damien Hirst, Tracey Emin, Jim Lambie and Irish artists Terry Bradley, Rita Duffy, Barry Flanagan, Ross Wilson and Carole Graham. The cost of attendance is £25 including VAT.





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## Current Consultations

Consulation start date/period	Summary
<p>1 November 2005 to 25 January 2006</p> <p><b>Consultation on a breeding programme for rare breeds of sheep</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.dardni.gov.uk/consultations/con05029.htm">http://www.dardni.gov.uk/consultations/con05029.htm</a></p>	<p>Commission Decision 2003/100/EC requires Member States to introduce a compulsory breeding programme for scrapie resistance in sheep. Consultation was required on the various options available for implementing a breeding programme specifically for rare breeds of sheep to ensure that they would not be adversely affected by the breeding programme.</p>
<p>15 December 2005 to 9 February 2006</p> <p><b>Review of rabies import policy throughout the UK</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.dardni.gov.uk/consultations/con05034.htm">http://www.dardni.gov.uk/consultations/con05034.htm</a></p>	<p>A review of the policies relating to the import into the UK of rabies-susceptible animals. The review will assess the risk of introduction of rabies and other exotic diseases into Northern Ireland under current rabies policies and under alternative policies and make appropriate recommendations.</p>
<p>16 December 2005 to 10 March 2006</p> <p><b>Proposals for licensing of stretched limousines in Northern Ireland</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.doeni.gov.uk/foi/search/details.asp?docid=3168">http://www.doeni.gov.uk/foi/search/details.asp?docid=3168</a></p>	<p>American style stretched limousines do not meet the current PSV requirements for taxis or buses. It is proposed to regularise the licensing position in relation to the operation of these, and other special occasion vehicles, used for hire in Northern Ireland.</p>

22 December 2005 to 31 March 2006

### **EC Marine Thematic Strategy**

[www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/water/marine.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/water/marine.htm)

Contact: The Environmental Policy Division by email at [water-naturalheritage.epd@doeni.gov.uk](mailto:water-naturalheritage.epd@doeni.gov.uk)

The European Commission's Marine Thematic Strategy package was published on 26 October 2005. It contains proposals for a draft Marine Strategy Directive modelled on the EU Water Framework Directive. It establishes a framework for the development of Marine Strategies by Member States designed to achieve Good Environmental Status for Europe's marine environment by 2021. The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), on behalf of the UK Government and the devolved administrations, are inviting comments on the Marine Thematic Strategy to assist in developing the UK's position ahead of negotiating the draft Directive.

December 2005 (undefined consultation period)

### **Ilex draft Regeneration Plan**

<http://www.ilex-urc.com/default.asp?c=39>

Ilex was established in July 2003 by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister and the Department for Social Development to ensure greater partnership in developing a strategic social and economic regeneration programme for the Derry City Council area. The company launched a draft Regeneration Framework in December 2005 which will be the driving force behind the future regeneration agenda for the area and will form the framework for the company's future work. This is currently out for consultation.

16 January to 7 April 2006

### **Department for Social Development strategy for supporting delivery of voluntary advice services to the community**

[http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/consultation\\_results\\_current?description=Strategy%20for%20supporting%20delivery%20of%20voluntary%20advice%20services%20to%20the%20community](http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/consultation_results_current?description=Strategy%20for%20supporting%20delivery%20of%20voluntary%20advice%20services%20to%20the%20community)

This is a long term Departmental Strategy to put in place a strategic framework around which future decisions about provision of advice services can be made. The strategy sets out a model for an advice and information infrastructure, identifies the appropriate resource base and establishes a series of objectives to implement the plan. It defines the different types of information and advice available and identifies the most effective ways in which future advice and information services can be delivered.

18 January to 12 April 2006

### **Proposed Amendment of the 1951 County Borough of Belfast By-laws Relating to Motor Hackney Carriages (Taxi-cabs)**

<http://www.doeni.gov.uk/foi/search/details.asp?docid=3212>

The By-laws are out of date and in need of revision. The proposed amendments include:

- setting the maximum penalty for breach of any of the By-laws at level 2 on the standard scale on summary conviction (currently £500);
- providing, in certain circumstances, for the charging of a fare less than the metered public hire fare; and
- providing for the determination of the fare in the event that a taximeter is defective or has not been engaged.

10 February to 5 May 2006

### **System of administrative penalties for certain fisheries offences**

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/fishoffence-penalties/consultdoc.pdf>  
(PDF 71 KB)

The four UK fisheries administrations are consulting with the fishing industry on proposals for a system of administrative penalties for certain fisheries offences.

13 February 2006 to 30 September 2006

### **Northern Ireland Community Festivals Policy and Guidance Framework**

[http://www.dcalni.gov.uk/Contman/includes/upload/file.asp?ContentID=1206&file=c\\_24](http://www.dcalni.gov.uk/Contman/includes/upload/file.asp?ContentID=1206&file=c_24)

The Northern Ireland Community Festivals Policy and Guidance Framework will ensure:

- a co-ordinated approach that will not disadvantage smaller or emerging festivals;
- a clear and co-ordinated single source of advice for festival organisers on the availability of funding and support services and the criteria and timescales for assessing them;
- the co-ordinated collection of information on festivals and its use in evaluation; and
- capacity building and development for festivals building on existing strengths.

13 February to 7 April 2006

### **Draft Rural Strategy 2007-2013**

<http://www.dardni.gov.uk/consultations/con05035.htm>

The consultation document on the strategic policy review proposal has been based on an in-depth 'Study of Rural Policy' and comments received from initial consultation on the study.

14 February 2006 to 11 April 2006

### **Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 – Draft Plan Amendments**

[http://www.planningni.gov.uk/AreaPlans\\_Policy/Plans/BMA/BMAP\\_Home.htm](http://www.planningni.gov.uk/AreaPlans_Policy/Plans/BMA/BMAP_Home.htm)

The Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 is a development plan being prepared under the provisions of Part III of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 by the Planning Service, an Agency within the Department of the Environment. The Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 Draft Plan (BMAP) was published in November 2004 with a consultation period ending on 25 January 2005. In order to reflect changes in the planning context and to address a number of omissions and inaccuracies identified in BMAP, the Department is publishing a Plan Amendment. The Plan Amendment consists of addenda and revisions.

20 February to 19 May 2006

### **Consultation on EC Directive on Indirect Vision (mirrors)**

<http://www.doeni.gov.uk/foi/search/details.asp?docid=3288>

This is a consultation on a legislative change to implement EC Directives 2003/97/EC and 2005/27/EC. These Directives impose requirements for additional mirrors to be fitted to new goods vehicles and cars so as to increase the driver's field of vision and reduce blind spots.

February 2006 to 28 April 2006

**Consultation on the Implementation  
Plan for the recommendations of the  
Report of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group  
on the Operation of NHS Research  
Ethics Committees**

[http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/  
showconsultations?txtid=14603](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/showconsultations?txtid=14603)

This is a consultation on the recommendations of the Warner Report published in June 2005. The implementation plan was prepared to take the recommendations forward and then form the basis for the public consultation.





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## Forthcoming Consultations

March 2006

### **Legislation introducing the compulsory breeding programme for scrapie resistance in sheep**

Contact: Andrew Kelly by email at [andrew.kell@dardni.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.kell@dardni.gov.uk)

Commission Decision 2003/100/EC permitted Member States to introduce a voluntary breeding programme for scrapie resistance in sheep. Consultation on the necessary legislation is required to implement the EU breeding programme requirements on a compulsory basis. Northern Ireland legislation is being prepared for anticipated consultation from March 2006.

March 2006

### **Environmental Impact Assessment (Agriculture) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006**

Contact Maureen Emerson or John Gamble by email at [eia@dardni.gov.uk](mailto:eia@dardni.gov.uk)

A consultation will shortly get underway on new Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations:

- to subsume the current Uncultivated Land and Semi-Natural Areas EIA Regulations;
- to introduce new rural restructuring rules; and
- to introduce changes arising from a review of the current regulations.

March 2006

### **Proposals for updating of Department for Social Development urban regeneration legislation**

Contact: Beverley Bigger by email at [beverley.bigger@dsdni.gov.uk](mailto:beverley.bigger@dsdni.gov.uk)

This consultation document puts forward recommendations to update current urban regeneration legislation, in order to ensure the Department for Social Development has the necessary legislative powers to implement all urban regeneration policies, strategies and programmes and to delegate certain urban regeneration functions to local councils under the Review of Public Administration.

March 2006

**Proposals for a UK Marine Bill**

[www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)

The aim of the Marine Bill is to create a fit-for-purpose framework founded on the principles of good regulation and modern government to regulate marine activities, to ensure sustainable use and protection of our marine resources and to safeguard clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas.

The UK Government and the devolved administrations are working together to achieve the best means for managing the marine environment and the consultation package is designed to stimulate ideas to achieve that aim. Consultation will be on a UK-wide basis; however the outcome will respect the devolution process and it will be for the individual administrations to decide the most appropriate way to take forward the proposals in their respective countries.

March to May 2006

**E-learning proposals for the Further Education sector**

Contact: Marian Cree by email at [marian.cree@delni.gov.uk](mailto:marian.cree@delni.gov.uk)

The Department for Employment and Learning will issue a consultation document outlining its proposals to introduce an e-learning strategy for the Further Education sector to support the implementation of the recommendations outlined in its Skills and FE Means Business Strategy documents.

Late March 2006

**Ports policy review**

Contact: Sam Williams by email at [sam.williams@drdni.gov.uk](mailto:sam.williams@drdni.gov.uk)

The Department for Transport is currently undertaking a review of ports policy for the United Kingdom, and hopes to issue a consultation paper by the end of March 2006. A short consultation paper focusing on issues specific to Northern Ireland will be published in parallel, to supplement the UK consultation. It is likely that the consultation period will be twelve weeks.

Late March 2006

**Consultation on draft work and families legislation and policy**

Contact: Lynne Taylor by email at [lynne.taylor@delni.gov.uk](mailto:lynne.taylor@delni.gov.uk)

Following public consultation in 2005, the Secretary of State agreed to the preparation of a draft NI Order in Council corresponding to the provisions of the GB Work and Families Bill currently before Parliament. Further Northern Ireland consultation will take place this spring on the associated draft regulations which will introduce changes to current legislation regarding maternity leave, adoption leave and flexible working. Consultation will also take place to inform final policy in respect of Additional Paternity Leave provisions. It is anticipated that further consultation on additional measures contained in the draft Order will take place later in the year.

31 March 2006

### **Draft Sub-Regional Transport Plan**

Contact: The Sub-Regional Transport Plan team by email at [srtp@drdni.gov.uk](mailto:srtp@drdni.gov.uk)

The Sub-Regional Transport Plan (SRTP) is the last of three Transport Plans developed to assist in the delivery of the Regional Transportation Strategy 2002–012 (RTS). The SRTP is concerned with the main towns and cities outside the Belfast Metropolitan Area and the rural areas. The purpose of the SRTP is to identify, on a local basis, what transport measures are required, where they should be located, and the improved outcomes that will result. Overall guidance, in terms of total spend and types of transport measures, has been provided by the RTS.

March/April 2006

### **Review of identification of Northern Ireland - bathing waters 2006**

[www.doeni.gov.uk/epd](http://www.doeni.gov.uk/epd)

This consultation paper invites views on the following proposals by the Department of the Environment to protect and improve water quality in Northern Ireland, thereby contributing to the objective of sustainable development, by:

- reviewing the identification of bathing waters in NI;
- nominating seven candidate bathing waters for identification and one existing site for de-identification; and
- developing a sustainable identification policy.

In addition, the Department wishes to take this opportunity to provide early information to consultees on the provisions of the new Bathing Water Directive.

March/April 2006

### **Consultation on the Transposition of the Avian Influenza EU Directive**

Contact: Colette McMaster by email at [colette.mcmaster@dardni.gov.uk](mailto:colette.mcmaster@dardni.gov.uk)

The consultation covers the legislative requirements necessary to implement Council Directive 2005/94/EC. The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development is also consulting on additional legislation, not required by the Directive but considered essential for the control of disease.

March/April 2006

### **Collective redundancies – small amendment to Employment Rights (NI) Order 1996**

Contact: Andrew Dawson by email at [andrew.dawson@delni.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.dawson@delni.gov.uk)

The European Court of Justice (ECJ) judgement in the case of *Junk v Kuhnel* has clarified a specific requirement of the European Directive on Collective Redundancies (i.e. where 20 or more employees are to be made redundant) relating to the timing of notification to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment. The ECJ decision requires notification to authorities to take place before redundancy notices are issued (current legislation allows for notification after redundancy notices are issued). As such, a small amendment to the Employment Rights (NI) Order 1996 will be required to be made later in 2006 and a twelve week consultation will commence in the spring, in line with a similar exercise in GB.

2 nd Quarter of 2006

**Planning Policy Statement 14 – Sustainable development in the countryside**

[www.drdni.gov.uk/shapingourfuture](http://www.drdni.gov.uk/shapingourfuture)

Contact: Jim Hetherington by email at [jim.hetherington@drdni.gov.uk](mailto:jim.hetherington@drdni.gov.uk)

The Department for Regional Development (DRD) is producing Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 14 "Sustainable development in the Countryside" to assist in the implementation of the Regional Development Strategy. PPS 14 sets out the planning policy in relation to achieving sustainable patterns of development in the countryside. In particular it will contain policy for houses in the countryside and agricultural/forestry development. It will supersede a number of extant planning policies contained within "A Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland" which was published in 1993 by The Department of the Environment Planning Service. The PPS will be accompanied by an Equality Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment. All three documents will be subject to a period of public consultation.

April to June 2006

**Taxis (NI) Order 2006**

Contact: John Brogan by email at [john.brogan@doeni.gov.uk](mailto:john.brogan@doeni.gov.uk)

The aim of the Taxis (NI) Order 2006 is to have in one dedicated statute, the primary powers to deal with a wide range of matters relating to the regulation of taxi operators, drivers and vehicles in Northern Ireland. This follows a comprehensive review of taxi regulation that led to the extensive public consultation exercise carried out in March to July 2005.

April to July 2006

**Taxi passenger alongside driver**

Contact: Adele Willis by email at [adele.willis@doeni.gov.uk](mailto:adele.willis@doeni.gov.uk)

Consultation is due to commence in April on a proposal to amend Regulation 36 of the Public Service Vehicles Regulations to make it more specific in allowing a passenger beside the driver.

April 2006 – July 2006

**Taxi operation of a sliding door**

Contact: Adele Willis by email at [adele.willis@doeni.gov.uk](mailto:adele.willis@doeni.gov.uk)

Consultation is due to commence in April on a proposal to amend Regulation 39(2) of the Public Service Vehicles Regulations to facilitate the use of sliding doors in taxis.

Spring 2006

**European Co-operative Society (ECS) – Employee Involvement Directive**

Contact: Andrew Dawson by email at [andrew.dawson@delni.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.dawson@delni.gov.uk)

The European Co-operative Society (ECS) regulations, to be implemented by August 2006, create a framework for the creation of a new 'co-operative' enterprise by businesses operating in more than one EU State. The related involvement Directive provides employees with rights to information, consultation and participation in relation to the 'co-operative' entity. In Northern Ireland, the Department for Employment and Learning and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment are responsible for employment and company law respectively and will implement jointly in the event that implementation is not conducted on a UK-wide basis by the Department of Trade and Industry and HM Treasury.

May 2006

**Renewable energy strategy**

[www.dardni.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.dardni.gov.uk/consultations)

A needs-based strategy for the use of agriculture and forestry resources to assist in the development of renewable energy sources is expected to issue for consultation during May 2006.

May 2006

**Draft Charities (NI) Order**

Contact: Seamus Murray by email at [seamus.murray@dndni.gov.uk](mailto:seamus.murray@dndni.gov.uk)

Draft legislation is expected to launch for consultation during May. This follows public consultation in 2005 on the review of Charities Administration and Legislation in Northern Ireland .

May to June 2006

**Housing (Amendment) N.I Order**

Contact: Allison King by email at [allison.kingsmill@dndni.gov.uk](mailto:allison.kingsmill@dndni.gov.uk)

The following amendments will be subject to consultation:

(a) The power to pay out Housing Association Grant to Housing Associations will transfer from the Department of Social Development to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

(b) Amendment to current legislation covering appointments to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive Board. This will increase the number of statutory appointments from the Housing Council to the Board from three to four.

May 2006

**The Environmental Impact Assessment and Habitats (Extraction of Minerals by Marine Dredging) Regulations 2006**

[www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk)

The proposed Regulations will transpose the requirements of the EC Directives on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment and the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora with respect to the extraction of minerals by marine dredging. In general terms they provide a statutory basis for the control of the extraction of minerals by dredging in marine waters. Consultation will be on behalf of England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Scotland will be consulting separately.

9 May 2006

**Draft Northern Ireland sustainable development strategy**

Contact: The Environmental Policy Division by email at [epd@doeni.gov.uk](mailto:epd@doeni.gov.uk)

The sustainable development strategy will seek to integrate and provide a better balance between economic, environmental and social progress. The strategy will provide the overarching vision and identify the priority areas and key objectives specific to Northern Ireland. Delivery of the strategy will be through a series of implementation plans. The public consultation will be supported by several public events aimed at a range of sectors from within the wider Northern Ireland society.

May 2006 (provisional)

**Consultation on EC Directive to implement Euro IV/V HGV requirements**

Contact: Christopher Taylor by email at [christopher.taylor@doeni.gov.uk](mailto:christopher.taylor@doeni.gov.uk)

This consultation will be on the implementation of EC Directives 2005/55/EC and 2005/78/EC. These Directives will require amendments to the Northern Ireland Construction and Use regulations in relation to emissions requirements on design, construction and use of vehicles.

Late Spring 2006

**Proposed new District Council Good Relations Challenge Programme (DCGRCP)**

Contact: the Community Relations Unit on 02890 522658 or visit the website [www.asharedfutureni.gov.uk](http://www.asharedfutureni.gov.uk)

As part of the Shared Future Policy, the proposed new District Council Good Relations Challenge Programme (DCGRCP) will be subject to a three month consultation exercise with key stakeholders, provisionally planned to begin in late Spring.





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## Policy reviews coming up

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April 2006

#### **'A Shared Future – the Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland'**

Contact: the Community Relations Unit, in the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister on 028 905 22658 or visit the website [www.asharedfutureni.gov.uk](http://www.asharedfutureni.gov.uk)

To coincide with Community Relations Week in April 2006, there is likely to be a set-piece on high level headline actions that Departments will be taking forward as part of the implementation of A Shared Future under the Triennial Action Plan.

2nd Quarter of 2006

#### **5 Year Review of the Regional Development Strategy**

[www.drdni.gov.uk/shapingourfuture](http://www.drdni.gov.uk/shapingourfuture)

Contact: Ian Raphael by email at [ian.raaphael@drdni.gov.uk](mailto:ian.raaphael@drdni.gov.uk)

The purpose of review is to consider the need for any minor adjustments to the Regional Development Strategy.

March 2006

#### **"Futuresearch" Review of Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (Policy and Practice) and Careers Education**

Contact: John McKeown by email at [john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk](mailto:john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk)

A wide range of key stakeholders from education, training, employment and voluntary/community sectors will join with young people and adults in determining a coherent and high quality approach to Careers Education and Guidance services (all ages) for the future.

February 2006

**Review of the Further Education Curriculum Policies**

Contact: Marian Cree by email at [marian.cree@delni.gov.uk](mailto:marian.cree@delni.gov.uk)

The review of the Further Education (FE) Curriculum Policies will assess to what extent the current curriculum in the FE sector is economically focused and meets the needs of employers and learners, as outlined in 'FE Means Business' publication and the Skills Strategy.

15 December 2005

**Review of Strategic Partnerships – Access and Engagement**

Contact: Richard Kenny by email at [richard.kenny@delni.gov.uk](mailto:richard.kenny@delni.gov.uk)

The main aim of the project is, by September 2007, to develop and introduce a policy framework to permit formal collaboration between colleges and other education and training organisations, in order to encourage the development of occupational skills by those who are unemployed, socially excluded/disengaged, or otherwise reluctant to make use of conventional Further Education provision.

15 December 2005

**Review of Further Education Economic**

Engagement Contact: Richard Kenny by email at [richard.kenny@delni.gov.uk](mailto:richard.kenny@delni.gov.uk)

Contact: Denise Ferguson by email at [denise.ferguson@dsdni.gov.uk](mailto:denise.ferguson@dsdni.gov.uk)

The main aim of the project is, by March 2007, to have engaged with relevant stakeholders to consider how best the restructured Further Education sector can discharge its revised role in supporting economic development through engagement with business and industry, including a review of the Centres of Excellence initiative, and to have developed draft proposals on the way ahead.

November 2005 – December 2006

**Review of Inshore Fisheries Management in NI**

Contact: Eileen Sung by email at [eileen.sung@dardni.gov.uk](mailto:eileen.sung@dardni.gov.uk) or Paddy Campbell by email at [paddy.campbell@dardni.gov.uk](mailto:paddy.campbell@dardni.gov.uk)

A review of inshore fisheries management in Northern Ireland is being undertaken as part of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development contribution to the UK Fisheries Administration joint response (Securing the Benefits

<http://www.dardni.gov.uk/>

[fisheries/file/fish133.pdf](http://www.dardni.gov.uk/fisheries/file/fish133.pdf) (PDF 1,217 KB)

to the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit report on UK Fisheries (Net Benefits

[http://www.strategy.gov.uk/work\\_areas/fisheries/index.asp](http://www.strategy.gov.uk/work_areas/fisheries/index.asp))

The review will consider structures and actions needed for future sustainable development inshore fisheries.

November 2005

**Evaluation of Into Employment Pilot**

Contact: Martin Boyd by email at [martin.boyd@delni.gov.uk](mailto:martin.boyd@delni.gov.uk)

An external evaluation of the Into Employment points scoring system, which recognises performance for helping people in priority client groups to find jobs, has been commissioned. The evaluation will be undertaken by BDO Stoy Hayward and a report is expected by the end of March 2006.

September 2005

**Ongoing Review of Jobskills**

Contact: Roy Bell by email at [roy.bell@delni.gov.uk](mailto:roy.bell@delni.gov.uk)

External evaluation of the Access and Traineeship strands of the Jobskills Programme will feed into the fundamental review of the Programme, focusing on quality and effectiveness.

**Maze/Long Kesh Site Regeneration Framework**

[www.newfuturemazelongkesh.com](http://www.newfuturemazelongkesh.com)

Contact: Alan Maitland by email at [alan.maitland@ofmdfmi.gov.uk](mailto:alan.maitland@ofmdfmi.gov.uk)

An expert team of Masterplanners has been appointed to develop a regeneration framework for the Maze/Long Kesh site based on recommendations made by the Maze Consultation Panel. The Masterplanners are due to report by Spring 2006.





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## Summary of key past events

### Summary

5 October 2005

**Joint Department for Social Development  
Voluntary and Community Unit, Neighbourhood  
Renewal Unit and Churches Community Work  
Alliance workshop**

Contact: Denise Ferguson by email at [denise.ferguson@dsdni.gov.uk](mailto:denise.ferguson@dsdni.gov.uk)

This workshop was to explore how Government and churches can work better to improve life within the most deprived neighbourhoods of Northern Ireland.

24 October 2005

**Briefing of MPs and MLAs on draft Rates (Capital values, etc) (NI) Order 2006**

Contact: Brian McClure by email at [brian.mcclure@dfpni.gov.uk](mailto:brian.mcclure@dfpni.gov.uk)

<http://www.nics.gov.uk/ratingpolicy/>

The purpose of this briefing was to advise MPs and MLAs on the draft legislation published for consultation in October to pave the way for the introduction of the new domestic rating system in April 2007 by enabling the publication of the capital values of every domestic property in Northern Ireland. It also covered the Government's intention to fully exempt community halls from rates (subject to certain conditions), and to increase the level of sport and recreational rate relief from 65% to 80% from April 2006 onwards.

24-26 October 2005

**Creative Clusters conference**

[www.creativeclusters.com/modules/eventsystem/?fct=eventmenus&action=displaypage&id=171](http://www.creativeclusters.com/modules/eventsystem/?fct=eventmenus&action=displaypage&id=171)

Contact: Valerie Dixon by email at [valerie.dixon@dcalni.gov.uk](mailto:valerie.dixon@dcalni.gov.uk)

Creative Clusters is the international conference, network and events programme for people working in the development of the creative economy. They are interested in development and regeneration projects that deliver outcomes in both cultural and economic terms. Their goal is to help people engaged in the development of the creative economy to communicate and share resources with one another. A full report on the conference is available at the web link provided.

23 November 2005

**Launch of joint Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland new anti-drink driving campaign**

Contact: Pauline Moore by email at [pauline.moore@doeni.gov.uk](mailto:pauline.moore@doeni.gov.uk)

The new campaign, launched on 23 November 2005, provided an opportunity to reinforce the anti drink-drive message in drivers' minds and raise the issue in the public agenda. The first run of the new TV advertisement ended on 6 January 2006 and the campaign was supported by Police Service of Northern Ireland enforcement activity.

5 December 2005

**Rating reform conference run by the Institute of Revenues, Rating & Valuation (IRRV)**

Contact: Brian McClure by email at [brian.mcclure@dfpni.gov.uk](mailto:brian.mcclure@dfpni.gov.uk)  
<http://www.nics.gov.uk/ratingpolicy/>

This one-day conference highlighted the proposed rating reforms and discussed and debated the issues and related matters, including paying for water and the Review of Public Administration. The conference was attended by over 120 delegates.

18 January 2006

**Joint Department for Social Development Neighbourhood Renewal and Social Economy Agency workshop**

Contact: Denise Ferguson by email at [denise.ferguson@dsdni.gov.uk](mailto:denise.ferguson@dsdni.gov.uk)

This workshop was to explore how Government and the social economy sector can work better to improve life within the most deprived neighbourhoods of Northern Ireland.

6 February 2006

**Cultural diversity dissemination event**

Contact: Richard Kenny by email at [richard.kenny@delni.gov.uk](mailto:richard.kenny@delni.gov.uk)

The Department for Employment and Learning provided financial support to three Cultural Diversity pilot projects, which were completed in March 2005, in the Further Education (FE) sector. The purpose of these pilots was primarily to promote "Good Relations" in the FE sector, by providing opportunities for students and staff from differing identities, backgrounds and traditions to develop and enhance relationships of trust and understanding, and promote mutual respect in every aspect of college life. The lessons learned from the pilot initiatives will be a useful contribution to the sector's development of its equality agenda. Accordingly, the Department arranged an opportunity for sector representatives to hear at first hand about the experiences of the Colleges involved, and to consider how cultural diversity might be promoted better throughout

the sector. This event was attended by Principals, Governor Nominees and the Senior Management Team from all FE Colleges and Institutes.

8 February 2006

**Quality Improvement Summit**

Contact: John Baird by email at [john.baird@delni.gov.uk](mailto:john.baird@delni.gov.uk)

A Quality Improvement Summit, attended by key personnel from the four home nations tasked with developing, implementing and supporting quality improvement in post-16 education and training was hosted by the Department for Employment and Learning on 8 February 2006. The delegates, drawn from key Government Departments and Quality Improvement Agencies, had the opportunity to discuss a wide range of issues, and understand more fully the context in which each of the four nations are working currently in terms of quality and performance.





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