



The role of strategies and tools for evidence-based spatial planning - An elected member view

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Context

- Local government in Northern Ireland is facing a huge change programme, including transfer of Planning functions
- The system we inherit must be fit for purpose
- We must continue to develop a best practice approach
- We must address challenge – through knowledge, experience and scrutiny



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The Shift to Spatial Planning

- There has been a shift to a spatial planning approach in modern planning practice
- We need to co-ordinate and integrate government strategy at local level, to achieve a physical form for the vision for Northern Ireland set out by the Assembly, with a complementary local vision delivered locally.
- How to address the tensions between different strategies and policies?



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Key needs

1. We need to be objective, and have accurate, relevant information at our disposal, on which to base our decisions.
2. We need to identify short, medium and long term objectives, and local strategies that complement and further develop regional and national policy.
3. We need to engage our businesses and communities, to develop a shared understanding of the needs of the local areas, and a shared vision for the future of those areas.



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Key needs

4. We need to make sure that the community plan is a robust, evidence-based driver for the area plan –it is agreed that there should be a statutory connection between the two.
5. We need to take a lead role in encouraging the public service providers in our areas to work better together, for the benefit of the citizen.



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Tools for the job

- Local knowledge is essential, but it is not enough
- Use the information we have to hand – e.g. Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency Neighbourhood Information Service – to develop an evidence base for our areas:
 - Newry and Mourne DC is working locally with partners
 - Councils in the Border regions are working over a wider area (NWRCBG SPACE-ial project, ICBAN spatial planning initiative)
- Learning from academics and others



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Facing the challenge

- Eating the elephant one chunk at a time!
- Build our capacity
 - Technology
 - Techniques
 - Skills
- Gather the information needed to plan
- Engage the community, neighbouring councils, government
- Work to achieve the right balance.

- **Plan for success!**



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Thank You