

Building a Cross-Border, Cross-Sectoral Agenda

The North West Partnership Forum Action Plan



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha
agus Trádála
Department of Foreign Affairs
and Trade



International Centre for Local and
Regional Development

North West Partnership Forum Action Plan

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Glossary of Abbreviations

4CNW - Creative Challenge Celtic Crescent North West
AIRO – All-Island Research Observatory
CDB - County Development Board
DEC – Display Energy Certificate
DoECLG – Department of Environment, Community and Local Government
DETI - Department of Enterprise, Trade & Investment
DFAT – Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DOE – Department of the Environment
DRD - Department for Regional Development
EPC – Energy Performance Certificate
ERNACT - European Regions Network for the Application of Communications Technology
EU – European Union
FDI – Foreign Direct Investment
GHDI - Gateway and Hub Development Index
HSE – Health Service Executive
ICBAN – Irish Central Border Area Network
ICLRD – International Centre for Local and Regional Development
LCDC - Local Community Development Committee
LDP – Local Development Plan
LECP - Local Economic and Community Plan
LEO – Local Enterprise Office
MOU – Memorandum of Understanding
NI – Northern Ireland
NIRSA – National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis
NSMC - North South Ministerial Council
NSS – National Spatial Strategy
NWGI - North West Gateway Initiative
NWPB/NWPF – North West Partnership Board/Forum
NWRCBG – North West Region Cross-Border Group
OECD – Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OFMDFM – Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister
RDS – Regional Development Strategy
RoI – Republic of Ireland
RPA – Review of Public Administration
SAC – Special Area of Conservation
SEUPB – Special European Union Programmes Body
SMEs – Small and Medium Sized Enterprises
SPA – Special Protection Area

SPACEial - Spatial Planning and Collaborative Exchange of information and learning in the
North West Region Cross Border Area
SPPS - Strategic Planning Policy Statement

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Executive Summary

The International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD), members of the North West Partnership Forum (NWPF) and associated working groups have been collaborating to develop an action plan to guide the future activities of the NWPF. It becomes evident when reviewing the work done to date by different groupings in the North West that *'a lot is in place and a lot is in play'*. This action plan for the NWPF reflects this by building upon existing policies and frameworks as they relate to regional assets, including the (evolving) capacity of local governments and the interests of cross-border agencies and central government departments in Dublin and Belfast. The resulting action plan also recognises that flexibility will be required given the substantial reform in local government that is occurring on both sides of the Irish border.

In this regard, the action plan focuses on setting a direction for the core activities of the NWPF and associated working partnerships, and the plan itself should be viewed as a working document that will be updated, especially in regards to specific activities.

The reform of public administration in both jurisdictions offers an excellent and timely opportunity to develop an action plan for the North West Partnership Forum (NWPF) and identify synergies among key stakeholders - statutory, political and civic.

- Within nine months, Derry/Strabane will be operating as one council area under a single executive with new statutory competencies that will align functions with County Donegal;
- *Putting People First* in the Republic of Ireland (heretofore referred to as *Ireland*) and accompanying planning legislation has introduced new structures and plans at national, regional and local levels including local community and economic development strategies that offer opportunities to identify cross-border synergies;
- The *Framework for Cooperation: Spatial Strategies of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland* and its recommended focus on working at two levels of government (central and local) offers an opportunity to strengthen regional activities in the North West.
- The North West Gateway Initiative (NWGI) provides a key focal point for energising central and local government programmes in the designated Letterkenny/Derry joint-gateway. The on-going consultation on the NWGI presents an opportunity to feature the North West in the wider political and regional development agenda.

Maintaining a joint regional focus on the NWGI will be important in obtaining and coordinating attention among central government programmes in Ireland and Northern Ireland. A concerted approach can also maximise internal resources (staff and funding) within the region and leverage important external resources through programmes with government and European funding to further develop the North West region.

The aforementioned reform of local government across the island of Ireland, together with ongoing consultations on the future direction and focus of EU funding programmes, has also meant that existing and well-established bodies in the region have had to undertake internal reviews. The North West Region Cross Border Group (NWRCBG), for example, has gone through a process of evaluating its mission, functions and membership in light of new

council mergers under Northern Ireland's Review of Public Administration (RPA). An opportunity now exists to develop synergies between statutory and coordination functions of local councils, as currently represented by the NWPF, and the important role of elected members in the NWRCBG.

Thematic Action Plans

Following a review of the key policy documents of the member organisations of the NWPF (council, education, health, business and community bodies) as part of the action plan process, four thematic working groups were established. They were:

- *Culture and Creative Industries* (Culture and Social and Digital Media);
- *Renewables and Green Economy*;
- *Health Innovation* (which has two strands: Strategic Innovation - Centres of Excellence, as drivers of economic development; and Well-Being and Quality of Life with a focus on social inclusion and well-being); and
- *Tourism*.

The four Expert Working Groups, composed of citizens and specialists with a particular thematic or local expertise, were charged with identifying where local governments (both existing and post-April 2015 reform) could begin to coordinate and, where appropriate, link their activities. Two of the groups - Renewables/Green Economy and Tourism – have made significant progress towards identifying both short- and medium-term projects. The two other groups, Health/Well-Being and Culture/Creative Industries, represent emerging priorities and strong potential for strengthened cooperation.

Spatial Planning

In both cross-border jurisdictions, there is a strong community planning focus where local authorities will have substantially increased and similar responsibilities in linking land-use planning to social, economic and environmental policies and programmes. In Derry/Strabane this will occur through the new *Derry/Strabane Community Plan* and the subsequent *Local Development Plan* (LDP). In Donegal this will occur through the combined *Local Economic and Community Plan* (LECP) and any subsequent alignment that will occur with the *Donegal County Development Plan*. It is recommended that members of the NWPF identify evident synergies during the development of these plans. This work has already commenced in the three cross-border councils of Donegal, Derry and Strabane.

At the regional level, new planning frameworks in both jurisdictions will focus on local and regional attributes that influence the quality of the environment; economic infrastructure including transport, land use, energy, communications, and waste management; and social and cultural facilities. This is an excellent entry point for coordination among central government departments and a potential coordination mechanism for the North West Gateway Initiative (NWGI) that was not previously available (see Section 3 on New Spatial and Community Planning Functions).

For example, the development of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the new Connacht-Ulster Regional Assembly in Ireland offers an opportunity to highlight areas

for cross-border central government cooperation, especially if informed by the *Derry/Strabane Local Development Plan* and the *Donegal County Development Plan*. Given that both local planning strategies will be closely linked to their respective national planning strategies this provides a natural coordination mechanism for the NWGI. These new planning instruments are important in that they can provide effective feedback loops among central, regional and local strategies, and opportunities for engagement by key stakeholders.

The NWPF can play a key role in linking these new planning processes and given the strong strategic and community planning capacity in the respective councils, the region can serve as a pilot for more effective cross-border planning. Strengthening the effective use of local and regional capacities will be important given the shifting of responsibilities for planning and service delivery to local government in both Ireland and Northern Ireland. This shift implies that at central government level, departments will move towards a facilitation and oversight role - reflecting that they do not have the same type of staffing resources as in the past.

Rebranding and Membership

The original naming of the North West Partnership Board was based on the core objective of bringing greater cooperation between the Donegal County Development Board (CDB) and the Derry City Strategy Board. Given that the group is functioning as a non-statutory strategic and coordinating forum, it has been agreed, in principle, that this body should be renamed the North West Partnership Forum (NWPF).

As a link between the future local development strategies of Derry/Strabane and Donegal County Councils, the strength of the current Forum to provide both an informal and formal venue for multi-sectoral coordination should be maintained. The current links with elected Council Members will need to be (re)evaluated and strengthened as the new Council structures are put in place - and their responsibilities grow - in order to provide important policy directions.

Future Focus

Cross border and inter-jurisdictional cooperation works best when similar processes and structures are in place within the cooperating jurisdictions. This is increasingly becoming the case in the North West region. It is suggested that the Forum will:

- Strengthen strategic and operational cooperation between the respective local development strategies; and
- Link to regional and central government through new planning mechanisms that will accompany respective local government reforms in both jurisdictions.

This dual focus on coordination at the local government level and linkages to central government policies mirrors the levels of engagement proposed in *The Framework for Cooperation: Spatial Strategies of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland* (DoECLG & DRD, 2013).

Partnerships

The emerging activities of the NWPF and current activities of the North West Region Cross-Border Group (NWRCBG) are linked and complementary. The Review of Public Administration (RPA) and associated reorganisation of the Northern Councils have resulted in changes in the NWRCBG's membership. As the Councils in the North West explore and reaffirm working arrangements for cooperation and investment, it is possible to see where there is existing capacity for some of these key activities to be jointly progressed (these are highlighted in Section 5.4).

The NWPF will need to access staff and resources to either undertake or commission studies. This, in turn, requires that it expands its secretariat's functions. It will be for the Council Members and Executives working together to agree best working arrangements for the future. This will guarantee that the North West region continues to lever added value to local development priorities through a strategic regional cooperation approach.

Working Groups

The four working groups established as part of the action plan development process provided an excellent opportunity to tap both regional expertise and civic networks and to identify, develop and strengthen partnerships. It is recommended that these groups continue in the future, and possibly be expanded to include new members that represent clusters of interests around particular themes. The working groups also provide an opportunity to link the respective community planning strategies of Derry/Strabane and Donegal Councils. In addition, consideration should be given to developing new working groups around emerging priorities and existing cross-cutting themes; for example on spatial planning and evidence-informed planning - with the latter using the SPACEial NW project developed by the NWRCBG.

Enabling Agreement

The NWPF has discussed the benefit of an enabling agreement upon which collaboration can be advanced in public service delivery, infrastructure investments and planning in the region. The respective Councils and the NWPF, in preparation for enhanced local government responsibilities post-April 2015, should explore the content and structure of such an agreement. The development of this action plan has illustrated the need for, and the benefit of, undertaking an audit of the existing policies, resources and staff of the councils who are currently involved or could be involved in activities that benefit cross-border cooperation. This audit could also highlight the potential for shared services on both a cross-border and cross-sectoral basis.

Cross-Border Evidence-Informed Planning

The SPACEial NW project - which stands for *Spatial Planning Analysis and Collaborative Exchange of information and learning in the North West Region Cross Border Area* - has developed a capacity to integrate cross-border census and other data that can be used by

local authorities to develop and monitor their respective strategies. This capacity can evolve as a shared service and should continue to be developed and strengthened to support specific strategies, plans and thematic initiatives. The NWPF has previously discussed the potential benefits of a joint gateway development index in association with the current Border Midland and Western Regional Assembly (soon to be reconstituted as the Connacht-Ulster Regional Assembly). The Forum can also seek partnerships with research institutes such as the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO) and other university researchers to explore opportunities for introducing scenario planning.

Next Steps

The timing and complexity of the transition within local government in both jurisdictions suggests an incremental two-stage process for linking and strengthening the working relationships among the NWPF members with other partners:

- Stage 1 - to be implemented within the next year - focuses on positioning the working relationships between Derry/Strabane Council and Donegal County Council (both elected members and officials) for post-April 2015 cooperation.
- Stage 2 - allows the NWPF and related partners to pursue a longer-term agenda and working relationships based upon governance arrangements that emerge from the experience of implementing new governance structures under the reform agenda.

The combination of the redrawing of council boundaries in Northern Ireland with the transfer and reorganisation of local competencies in both jurisdictions presents an opportunity to create synergies that have been difficult to develop to date:

- The **Gateway focus on Londonderry/Derry/ Letterkenny can be strengthened** and will now represent two adjoining local governments (**Derry/Strabane and Donegal**);
- The **competencies of both Councils** on a cross-border basis, and applied to a functional region, will be similar in areas such as: **local development planning, regeneration, community planning, economic development, and tourism** among others;
- The **geographic focus** between the **NWPF** and the **NWRCBG**, focusing on Derry/Strabane and Donegal, can now be **aligned**.

1. Propositions

Building a proactive regional approach in the North West region that strengthens both functional relationships and institutional coordination must acknowledge both the work that has been done to date by different organisations, and the opportunity presented by major reforms of local government in both Ireland and Northern Ireland. The following propositions are offered to frame the development of the action plan for future NWPF activities and working relationships with other partners in the region.

Propositions

- There is a clear understanding by stakeholders and the political leadership in the North West that the economies of both jurisdictions are closely interrelated and that connectivity between certain locations is vital to ensure the sustainability and improvement of these economies.
- Coherent voices in the region can make the best case; this requires the creation of spaces to bring together voices from the community, the private sector, the education sector and political and local authority leadership.
- The RDS and the NSS have designated Gateway status between Letterkenny and Derry/Londonderry in recognition of the spatial linkages in the region. The *Framework for Cooperation* (2013) between the two governments offers opportunities for cooperation at central and local government levels.
- There is a strong asset base in the region with current and emerging strengths having been well documented through numerous studies.
- Local Government Reform in regards to the Review of Public Administration (RPA) in Northern Ireland and *Putting People First* in Ireland should underpin the strengthening of cross-border cooperation in the North West.
- Under reform there will be a convergence of economic development and planning functions among local authorities. Maximising the potential benefits of this will require stronger cooperation and joint initiatives, and the funding of studies from within the region.
- Driving cooperation in the North West region can benefit from strategic and coherent regional priorities drawing on local knowledge, expertise, local government competencies and political cooperation.
- Future cooperation will benefit from a paradigm shift in partnerships, working to take advantage of a limited window of opportunity with reform processes, recognising that a new approach will demand new skills from all regional participants.

2. Introduction

This Action Plan for the North West Partnership Forum (NWPF) has been prepared to:

- Guide short- and medium-term activities of the Forum and its associated working groups;
- Present options regarding its future focus and structure; and
- Offer suggestions on how the Forum can work with different stakeholders within and outside the North West region.

As part of the review of its originating role and function as a *non-statutory forum* to promote cooperation between spatial planning and related functions among local governments in the North West region, it was suggested that the group, originally named the North West Partnership Board (NWPB), be renamed the North West Partnership Forum (NWPF). For the remainder of the action plan, the text will refer to the group as the NWPF with some exceptions from quoted text.

- *The action plan for the NWPF should be flexible in nature; agreed priorities should not prohibit growth in any of the focus areas.*
 - *Councils will be at the forefront of community planning and new plans will need to have a cross-border and regional dimension.*
 - *The action plan should be about maintaining and strengthening working relationships, not about authority.*

Comments from NWPF Members regarding the Action Plan

The action plan for the NWPF draws upon existing reports and briefing notes in regards to the initial activities of the Forum, and outlines the potential implications of new programmes and council structures that will come about in the near term as part of local government reform in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

2.1 Background

In May 2006, at the British-Irish Inter-Governmental Conference, both governments committed themselves to further cooperation to maximise the potential of the North West region. The launching of the North West Gateway Initiative (NWGI) represented a new joint approach among central government departments, in cooperation with regional stakeholders, to promote a development strategy for this important cross-border region. Areas of focus included trade and investment promotion, tourism, skills/training, further and higher education, innovation and business development and supporting infrastructure development.

To support the NWGI, a non-statutory sub-regional plan was drafted to raise the profile of the region and provide a guide for strategic actions among different operational bodies at both the central and local government level. The purpose of this non-statutory plan was to *'complement and integrate the policies'* of the Northern Ireland *Regional Development Strategy* (RDS) and provide *'strategic guidance on long-term development and investment'* for the region as outlined in the *National Spatial Strategy* (NSS) for Ireland (see Annex 1 for a short profile of the North West region).

In 2011, a locally-based initiative included the formation of the North West Partnership Board (recently renamed the North West Partnership Forum or NWPF) to promote *'closer and more integrated cross-border cooperation to realise the aspirations of the North West Gateway Initiative'*¹ with a particular focus on coordinating and supporting the spatial planning and regeneration functions undertaken by Donegal CDB, Derry Strategy Board, Strabane District Council and Limavady Borough Council.

The NWPF, as originally constituted, was viewed as a multi-sectoral regional platform that reflected the broad scope of the NWGI in areas such as economy, culture and social development. Linkages with other statutory bodies and cross-border organisations were envisioned from the outset, including with the North West Region Cross Border Group (NWRCBG).

In 2013, the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) secured funding, with the support of key agencies such as the Department for Regional Development (DRD), Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (DoECLG) and ILEX, to assist the NWPF to develop an action plan for its future activities and also explore linkages to other cross-border organisations working in the region.

2.2 Initial Role of the NWPF

The need to coordinate the local development plans and strategic initiatives of the Councils, and their subsequent linkages to the NWGI, informed the originating role and function of the NWPF as:

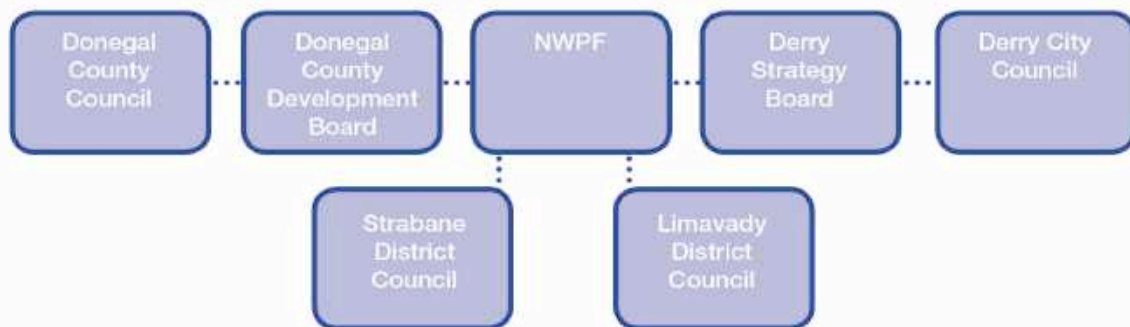
*'A North West Partnership Board with equal representation from the Strategy Board and the County Development Board. This forum would effectively produce the key components of the Gateway Initiative moving forward and with local political endorsement, linking with the North West Region Cross Border Group, would submit to Government through the parent Departments the programme of strategic priorities for the North West'*².

The NWPF was seen as adding value to the existing cross-border and single jurisdictional political structures and statutory community agencies in regards to the implementation of government policies impacting the NWGI, as well as concerning the coordination of public service delivery on cross-cutting developmental activities (social, cultural, educational, economic and environmental).

¹ 2012 INTERREG application for project support funding.

² IBID

Not unlike coordinating mechanisms in other regions, the origins of the NWPF lie in a need to strategically link regional spatial planning and related development initiatives in the North West region. Its founding organisational structure reflects the statutory functions of spatial planning of both Donegal County Council and the Donegal CDB, and the regeneration focus of the Derry City Council Strategy Board (see below). The linkages to the wider functional region led to the inclusion of Strabane District Council and Limavady Borough Council on the NWPF at an early stage in its evolution.



The responsibilities of these respective Boards in both County Donegal and Derry City are similar. In the case of the Donegal, the CDB coordinates all development and public service delivery in the County, while the Derry City Strategy Board provides the overall organisational and strategic framework for the preparation, recommendation and monitoring of Regeneration and Investment Plans. Both Boards are organised around a range of sub-committees and working groups.

2.2.1 Membership

The NWPF's focus has been primarily oriented towards the executive and statutory functions of local authorities in regards to their regeneration/development functions. To date, the NWPF has functioned as a strategic coordinating body and operates without dedicated staff and with a secretariat provided by Donegal County Council.

The NWPF function, while seemingly very broad in terms of the issues that have been considered, is derived from the inter-disciplinary/inter-sectoral nature of spatial planning. The current membership of the NWPF also reflects its origins as a multi-sectoral body with representatives from local government, the private sector, institutions for higher education and the community sector. Importantly, the Board includes political and official representation from Donegal CDB, Donegal County Council, Derry Strategy Board, Derry City Council, Strabane District Council and Limavady Borough Council. Other members include HSE West, ILEX, Letterkenny Institute of Technology, University of Ulster,

Letterkenny Chamber of Commerce, Derry Chamber of Commerce, Industrial Development Agency Ireland, and the North West Community Network.

Members attending the Forum have noted that the meetings provide an important venue for bringing together elected members, officials, educational institutions, private sector and civic society, among others, to discuss and review strategic approaches that link organisations involved in their respective development plans and strategies.

2.2.2 The Context is Changing for Cross-Border Cooperation in Spatial Planning

With the introduction of the reforms of public administration programmes in both Northern Ireland and Ireland (RPA and *Putting People First* respectively), there will be significant changes occurring in regards to the consolidation of councils in Northern Ireland and the restructuring of the Donegal CDB. The combination of the redrawing of council boundaries in Northern Ireland and the transfer and reorganisation of local competencies in both jurisdictions presents an opportunity to develop cross-border synergies that have been difficult to foster to date. (See Annex 2 for a short synopsis of local government reform and its implications for cooperation).

International good practice has shown that asymmetrical governance structures and responsibilities is one of the most common challenges for inter-jurisdictional cooperation. The emergence of like-with-like functions, and statutory requirements of councils regarding land-use and economic and community planning, can be a powerful enabler for effective cooperation on mutually agreed priorities. The NWPF can play an important role in this regard, as will be outlined in the remainder of this action plan.

3. New Spatial and Community Planning Functions

3.1 Spatial Planning

Based on the new 2014 legislation in both jurisdictions, spatial planning in Northern Ireland and Ireland is undergoing a major transition that will provide opportunities for the North West to substantially increase coordination and cooperation in local and regional cross-border development. Based on the new legislation in Ireland, a new spatial planning structure and process is being introduced that can be summarised at three spatial scales:

- A new and possibly renamed national spatial framework will replace the current *National Spatial Strategy* (NSS) by 2016;
- A new 12-to-20 year Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Connacht-Ulster Regional Assembly to be in place by 2015/16; and
- A new six-year Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) for Donegal to guide both economic objectives and community development; this is due to be in place by 2014/15.

In Northern Ireland, there is a significant shift in planning competencies occurring primarily at the local council scale including:

- The introduction of community planning which will significantly influence how services are delivered and coordinated between councils and central government departments; and
- The transfer of plan-making and planning competencies to the Derry/Strabane Council; this will include the drafting of a new Local Development Plan (LDP) that will be largely informed by the community plan.

3.1.1 Local Area Planning

At the scale of the local council, local governments will have substantially **greater accountability** for linking land-use planning to social, economic and environmental policies. This is especially so in Northern Ireland.

In County Donegal, the process for developing the new **Local Economic and Community Plan** (LECP) has started, and is scheduled for completion by December 2014. Based on the 2014 legislation the process will consist of two tracks:

1. **An Economic Plan** developed by Donegal County Council's Economic Development Committee that focuses on 'creating and sustaining jobs and promoting the interests of the community' in:
 - a. Enterprise and economic development including FDI (Foreign Direct Investment), indigenous industry, tourism and business at different scales;
 - b. Local attributes such as 'the quality of the environment and the built environment' and related economic infrastructure such as transport, water

-
- services, energy, communications and waste management together with social and cultural facilities; and
 - c. Local innovation capacity including R & D capacity, technology transfers, up-skilling and re- skilling.
2. The **Local and Community Development Plan**, to be developed by the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) of 19 members in Donegal, sets out to enhance the quality of life and well-being, and measures aimed at:
- a. Tackling poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion through support for basic services as well as supporting training and up-skilling;
 - b. The provision of infrastructure and investment in physical regeneration and environmental improvements; and
 - c. Development of local assets, and promoting and facilitating community involvement in policy development and decision-making processes related to the planning, development and delivery of services.

Donegal County Council will subsequently bring together the economic and community tracks of the plan and ensure that the LECF is consistent with the Core Strategy and objectives of the County Development Plan. A Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) that includes external stakeholders will oversee its implementation.

The Derry/Strabane Shadow Council is also starting the process of drafting its **Community Plan**; this will build upon the community-oriented planning process undertaken to develop the *One Plan*, as well as the planning activities in Strabane that include a focus on regeneration of the town centre as well as responding to the needs of rural communities. The focus of the Derry/Strabane Shadow Council efforts from July 2014 onwards will be to start meeting with community organisations to define the structure and process of developing the Community Plan. It is anticipated that this initial work will be completed by the end of 2014.

The development of the new **Local Development Plan** for the Derry/Strabane Council will be guided by the four-stage process outlined in the *Draft Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland* (SPPS) as published in February 2014. This could take up to 40 months to develop and adopt.

1. Stage One - Draft 'preferred options' paper (4 months)
 - a. As noted in the SPPS, this provides the Council with an opportunity to 'front-load' community involvement when outlining preferred options for the overall pattern of new development, planned growth of main settlements and major infrastructure projects.
2. Stage Two - Draft Plan Strategy (8 months) with a subsequent Advisory Report to Central Government for review (9 months) leading to an Adopted Plan Strategy by month 22.
3. Stage 3 - Draft Local Policies Plan (3 months) with subsequent Advisory Report to Central Government (13 months) leading to an Adopted Local Policies Plan by month 40.
4. Stage 4 - Annual Monitoring Report with review every five years.

The initial three stages of the process for developing the local development plan offers opportunities to identify regional and local priorities and coordination with central government policies and programmes, as well as the RDS 2025 and other policy and advisory issues as noted in the following extract from the SPPS. A diagram outlining the process can be found in Annex 3.

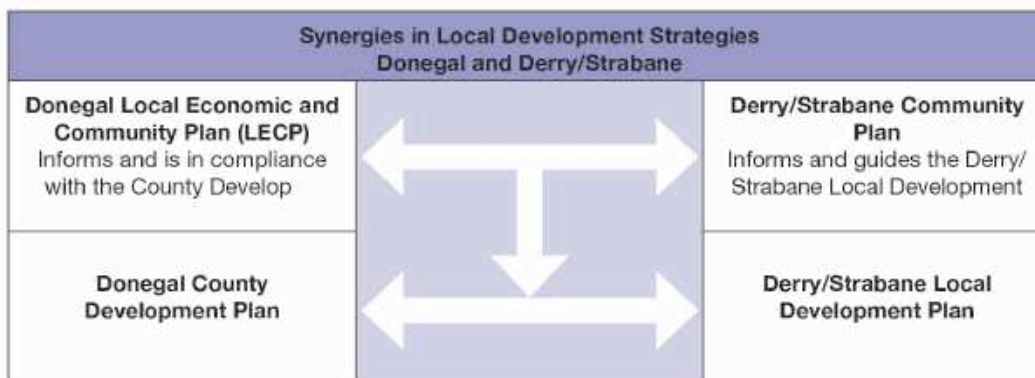
In preparing LDPs, councils must take account of the RDS 2025, the Sustainable Development Strategy for Northern Ireland, this SPPS and any other policies or advice in guidance issued by the Department such as landscape character assessments and conservation area design guides. In addition, other relevant matters may need to be considered, for example, neighbourhood action plans; regeneration projects, or a marine plan, where appropriate. Indeed, the need for interaction between the marine and terrestrial planning systems is recognised and the requirements to work effectively together to achieve harmonisation between the two interrelated planning systems is acknowledged.

(Source: Section 4.5, Page 21, a Strategic Planning Policy for Northern Ireland Consultation Draft)

3.1.2 Cross-Border and Regional Linkages

In the drafting of the respective local planning strategies in Donegal and Derry/Strabane both local governments can proactively identify potential synergies and practical opportunities in regards to regional and cross-border cooperation.

- The Donegal Local Economic and Community Plan and Derry/Strabane Community Plan will:
 - Identify synergies among their respective community and economic plans that reflect similar objectives including: economic development, regeneration and tackling poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion through support for basic services;
 - Strengthen the identified cross-border policy linkages in the respective Donegal Local Economic and Community Plan and the Derry/Strabane Community Plan through policy statements, potential programmes and projects.
 - Explore opportunities for shared services and approaches.
- The Derry/Strabane Local Development Plan and the Donegal County Development Plan will:
 - Identify mutually supportive development policies and land-use goals that influence regional development including: transportation, communications, renewable energy, development corridors, and marine planning, among others.



The NWPF can be an important forum in identifying synergies for non-statutory cross-border cooperation among these four local development strategies at the local and regional spatial scales. The *Framework for Cooperation* supports this by providing a two-tier process for cooperation - at a local level and among central government departments. The NWPF can:

- Identify activities, plans and monitoring that have a regional and cross-border element, particularly where the drivers for cooperation are primarily local council and stakeholder activities; and
- Identify activities, plans and monitoring that have a regional and cross-border element where the drivers for cooperation are primarily central government departments.

In summary, by the end of 2014 the new Donegal **Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)** will be drafted and the structure and process will be in place for drafting the new **Derry/Strabane Community Plan**. This presents a real opportunity for the councils to review the timing for the development of the plans, and identify entry points for coordination.

3.2 Regional and Central Government Cooperation

In Ireland, the newly designated Connacht–Ulster Regional Assembly will be developing a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) that will replace the current regional planning guidelines for the Border Region. The 2014 legislation outlines a process whereby the new regional assembly will be responsible for developing the RSES which can be made for the entire region or for one or more parts. This brings up the interesting question of exploring a sub-regional plan for the border region that could draw upon the considerable work done to date.

To develop the Connacht–Ulster RSES, the legislation outlines a considerable level of consultation that will be required with public bodies and central government departments. This implies a considerable amount of sectoral cooperation among public bodies within the

new Connacht–Ulster Region as well as the potential for cross-border cooperation in key sectors identified in the respective national spatial strategies.

The content of the regional strategy as outlined in the legislation considers a regional economic strategy with a focus on FDI, indigenous industries and SMEs, tourism, agricultural, forestry, marine and other natural resources. There is also an emphasis on building upon regional attributes such as the quality of the environment, cities, towns and rural areas, and the location of supporting infrastructure including transport, housing, retail and commercial development. Furthermore, an emphasis is placed on the provision of educational, healthcare, sports and community facilities and the preservation and protection of the environment, including architectural and natural heritage and the landscape with regard to the European Landscape Convention (2000).

In Northern Ireland, the *Regional Development Strategy* (RDS) establishes the overall spatial framework with an aim to promote

‘the economic potential of the strategic network of urban hubs, key transport corridors and regional gateways and to provide for a diversified and competitive rural economy.’ (SPSS, page 44).

The North West and the role of Derry/Londonderry as a regional urban centre feature strongly in the RDS.

As highlighted in the Ministerial Foreword, the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) draft sets out the core planning principles to underpin the delivery of the reformed two-tier planning system, which will direct the operational policies that the new councils will adopt within their future local development plans.

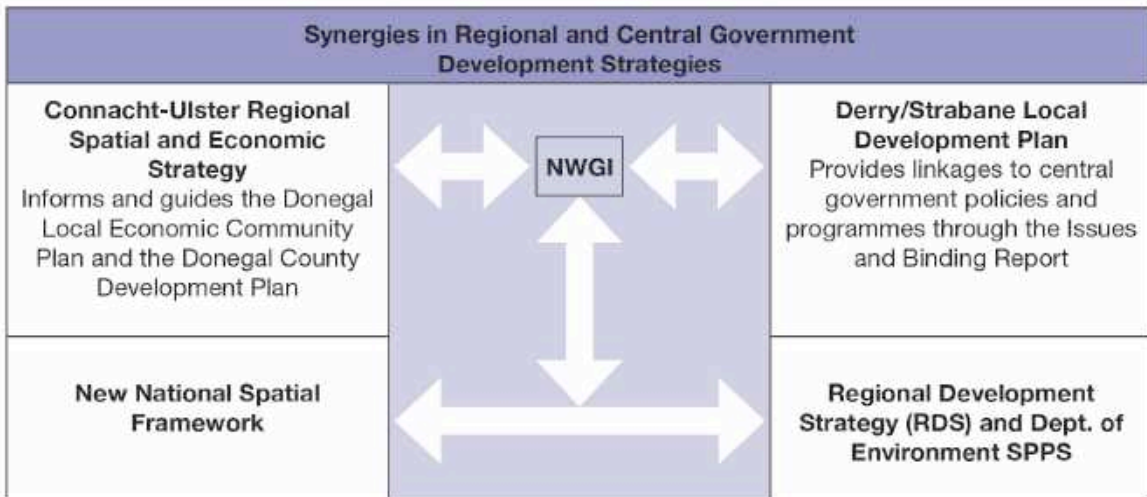
‘The aim of the SPPS is to facilitate the economic development needs of Northern Ireland in ways that are consistent with the protection of the environment and the principles of sustainable development’. Within the timeline for developing the LDP, a considerable amount of time is dedicated to reviewing and aligning central government and local council priorities and plans through the ‘Soundness Based Independent Examination’ and the ‘Central Government Binding Report to District Councils’
(see <http://planningni-consult.objective.co.uk/portal> for further details).

3.2.1 Cross-Border and Regional Linkages

Given the strong role for sectoral cooperation among central government departments and other public bodies, a real opportunity now exists for the North West region to proactively identify regional policy and programme linkages between the existing Northern Ireland RDS and the new SPPS, and between the RDS, the future Connacht–Ulster RSES and the new national level spatial framework (formally NSS). In addition, as the new national spatial framework in Ireland is drafted, the entry points for strategic cross-border cooperation that link to the NWGI can be identified.

The *Framework for Cooperation* between the two respective spatial strategies on the island of Ireland offers a vehicle for this strategic cooperation including North/South central

government cooperation on a strategic level through the NWGI. The recent consultation process and review of the NWGI (see diagram below), undertaken by the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC), offers a timely opportunity; both administrations have noted their commitment to the NWGI and will undertake a further review with central government departments based on comments received during the consultation process. This will be confirmed in a forthcoming NSMC plenary meeting among Ministers where the NWGI paper can be formally adopted.



Strong cooperation at the regional level will benefit from a dynamic process of relating the local plans to regional and central government policies and programmes within both administrations. This regional cooperation will bring in additional regional stakeholders and cross-border bodies such as the NWRCBG within the North West region and the North South Ministerial Council in its role as a secretariat/chair for the NWGI between the offices of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister in Belfast and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Dublin. In addition, three key central government departments will play a key role in regards to the spatial strategies: the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government in Dublin and the Departments for Regional Development (DRD) and Environment (DOE) in Belfast.

4. Action Plan for the North West Partnership Forum

4.1 The Four Core Themes

As part of developing the NWPF Action Plan, the ICLRD undertook a review of past and current documents related to regional and local development generated by the key stakeholders involved in the Forum. The objective of the review was to identify strategic themes that reflected cross-border priorities for the North West region. The following four thematic areas emerged as important regional development themes for the members of the NWPF:

- *Culture and Creative Industries* (Culture and Social and Digital Media);
- *Renewables and Green Economy*;
- *Health Innovation* (which has two strands: Strategic Innovation - Centres of Excellence, as drivers of economic development; and Well-Being and Quality of Life with a focus on social inclusion and well-being); and
- *Tourism*.

The four themes are strongly reflective of Derry City Council's *One Plan* (2011-2020), the *Donegal County Development Plan* (2012-2018) and other strategy documents emanating from, amongst other, Derry, Donegal, Strabane and Limavady Councils, Letterkenny Institute of Technology, IDA Ireland, and HSE West for the North West region.

Working groups were established by members of the NWPF for three of the themes - namely Renewables and Green Economy, Tourism, and Culture and Creative Industries - with the Health Innovation theme drawing upon a literature review and discussions with members of the NWPF.

What has emerged from the working groups is that two of the themes - Renewables and Green Economy and Tourism - are well-developed and reflect a considerable level of activity currently underway. The two other themes - Culture and Creative Industries and Health Innovation/Well-Being - are emerging areas of importance for the region.

The working groups demonstrated the value of bringing together regional expertise around different thematic specialisations. In addition, the exercise of mapping cross-border activities within each theme has allowed for the identification of synergies at both the strategic and operational levels.

The working groups, functioning as teams of experts and regional and/or local specialists, presented opportunities for important formal and informal linkages among: council staff involved in the particular theme; topical experts within the region, including those from educational institutions; and community and private sector participants. In addition, the presentations made by the working groups to the NWPF provided an important opportunity for members, and other participants attending the meeting, to identify opportunities for linkages.

In committing the action plan to paper, members of the NWPF emphasised that the Action Plan should be about maintaining and strengthening working relationships, and that flexibility is needed until the handover to new councils in Northern Ireland in April 2015. Members also stressed the importance of focusing on the first year (i.e. short-term actions) to guide joint activities and set the stage for longer-term cooperation.

For short-term actions, this implies a particular focus on initiatives that fall within the remit of the key stakeholders. The following sections provide a short synopsis of each of the working groups and their emerging contributions to the action plan for the NWPF.

4.2 Renewables and Green Economy

This working group, facilitated by Dr. John Doran of Letterkenny Institute of Technology, has set out a *North West Regional Energy and Awareness Strategy*, with a vision for the North West to be a champion in the development of a low-carbon region by using energy efficiently and by utilising local sustainable energy resources.

Underpinning this vision is the development and implementation of an energy and awareness strategy that involves the larger North West community and is built around two main pillars:

- Efficiency in energy management leading to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and reduced energy consumption; and
- Securing energy supply through broader macro-economic energy policies, leading to reduced reliance on imported fossil fuels.

The strategy sets out to foster a low-carbon region through a coordinated and sustainable economic, energy and environmental strategy that complies with or exceeds all current legislation, including EU and government targets (see Table 4.1). This strategy seeks to develop programmes and projects that will:

- Invest to reduce energy consumption and expenditure;
- Reduce reliance on fossil fuels and increase reliance on renewable energy resources;
- Introduce an energy monitoring and targeting strategy; and
- Facilitate a leadership role by key stakeholders in the North West region through a consultation and communication strategy.

The strategy also seeks to create a Regional Renewable Energy Hub where local case studies, regional activities and business opportunities can be made available. To drive this process, the appointment of a Regional Energy Strategy Coordinator will be important. Once appointed, the coordinator can begin working with the appointed energy officers in each of the councils (Derry/Strabane and Donegal) on the priority elements of the strategy, including the short- and medium-term actions as outlined below.

Short-Term Actions

1. Seek funding for and appoint a Regional Energy Strategy Coordinator for the North West region to work with energy officers in each of the councils;
2. Agree, in principle, on common themes for an energy strategy among regional partners leading to an energy vision for the region that is based on an assessment of current use and targets for reducing consumption and increased use of regional renewable energy;
3. Audit the public building stock in each council area to set a benchmark for energy efficiency and energy reduction measures;
4. Explore an energy monitoring, efficiency and fuel poverty project with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) and Donegal County Council housing section;
5. Agree to widen the terms of reference for the ILEX study on the 'regional energy sustainability/security' aspect of the *One Plan's* 'Eco-City' catalyst programme to include Donegal; and
6. Review energy policies and programmes in the respective development strategies and seek alignment where possible.

Medium-Term Actions

1. Establish a Regional Renewable Energy Hub;
2. Develop a communications strategy for the region on renewable energies to increase public awareness, including through social media;
3. Increase awareness among public representatives of the opportunities that exist within the renewable energy sector in terms of revenue generation and job creation;
4. Commission studies and projects including:
 - a. Socio-economic study into the potential benefits of a Regional Energy Strategy;
 - b. Develop and roll-out an education programme for schools and communities; and
 - c. Develop and promote strategies for the use of green technologies in clean transport;
5. Members of the NWPF to collaborate through projects to support energy efficiency;
6. Members of the NWPF to collaborate through projects to increase the use of renewable energy (and where relevant/necessary, this can be extended to include other agencies); and
7. Identify actual renewable energy resources in the partnership area, with reference to marine and bio-energy alternatives and the potential benefits to the area, including job creation.

Table 4.1: NWPF Action Plan on Renewables and Green Economy - A Working Paper

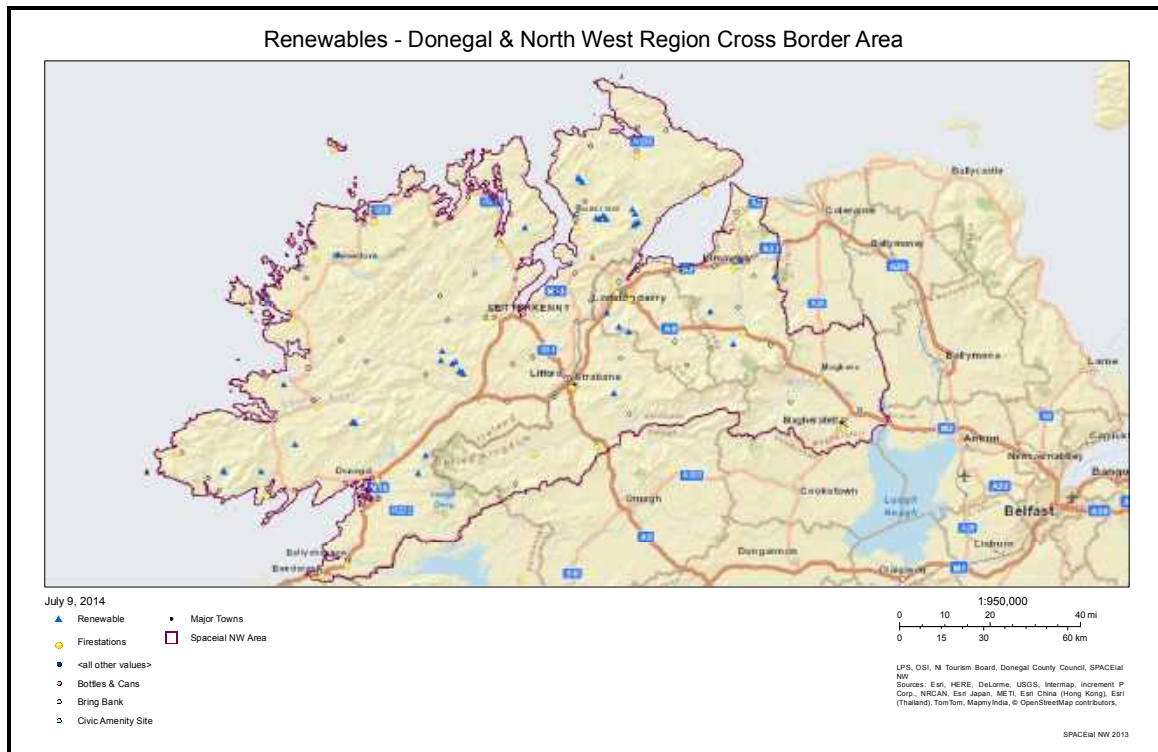
Renewables and Green Economy Action Plan			
What	Who	When	Estimated Cost
Energy Strategy for Regional Partners	Energy and Renewables Working Group and NWPF	Within 6 months	NA
Funding for Regional Energy Coordinator	All Partners Donegal taking lead in identifying potential funding	Within 6 months	TBD, possibly via external funding
Energy Audit of public buildings	NWPF Derry City Council Donegal County Council	Link into on-going	TBD, possibly via external funding
Expand the <i>One Plan</i> 'Eco-City Catalyst' programme to include Donegal	NWPF Derry City Council Donegal County Council	On-going research, explore options for widening Terms of Reference OR to include Donegal	TBD
Joint energy monitoring and fuel poverty	Donegal County Council and Northern Ireland Housing Executive	Within 1 year	TBD
Review Energy Policies in the respective Development Strategies	NWPF, Energy and Renewables Working Group	Within 6 months	NA, support by respective Councils
Identify collaborative projects to support energy efficiency	All plus Central Government	Year 2	Potential to integrate into regional strategies
Identify collaborative projects to increase use of renewable energy	NWPF and Partners	Year 2	TBD
Draft Regional Investment Programme for Energy and Renewables	NWPF and Partners	Year 2	TBD
Communications Strategy for the region	NWPF, Energy and Renewables Working Group and external partners	1-2 years	TBD
Commission Studies: -Socio-Economic benefits of Regional Energy Strategy -Education Programme for Schools and Communities -Green Technologies for Clean Transport	NWPF and Partners	1-2 years	TBD
Identify marine and bio-energy projects and benefits to the North West region including job-creation	NWPF and Partners	1-2 years	TBD
Establish Regional Energy Hub	NWPF and Partners	Within 3 years	TBD

As illustrated by this emerging action plan for renewables, the North West region is, in accordance with EU and Government targets, committed to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and reduced energy consumption. The NWPF's long-term objective of developing a low carbon region by using energy efficiently and by utilising local sustainable energy resources will not only benefit the environment, but also local communities, and will play a significant role in attaining energy security for the island of Ireland.

4.2.1 Managing the process

The NWPF Renewable and Green Economy Expert Working Group has indicated its interest in continuing to coordinate a more detailed strategy and support its initial implementation through partner organisations. In addition, the appointment of a Regional Energy Strategy Coordinator to work with locally-appointed council energy officers will be critical for undertaking the following institutional activities:

- Monitor progress in achieving the objectives of an energy management implementation plan;
- Monitor and set targets for energy and water consumption, as well as develop strategies for the reduction of energy and water use;
- Develop an investment programme for implementation of renewable energy projects and energy efficiency supported by grant and investment funding;
- Develop and champion the concept of a low-carbon region;
- Liaise with stakeholders, consultants and other interested organisations to identify and implement energy efficiency projects and energy efficiency measures for new buildings and refurbishment projects;
- Develop strategies for the implementation of renewable energy sources within the region's building stock;
- Assist with developing strategies for the use of green technologies for clean transport;
- Reduce the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) and Display Energy Certificate (DEC) ratings of buildings to exceed current EU and central government recommendations;
- Promote energy efficiency throughout the region by raising end-user awareness; and
- Maintain records and produce regular reports on consumption and the end-use of renewable energy.



(Source: Image and Text: SPACEial 2014)

As noted by the Working Group, the innovative nature of this work programme is its collaborative nature. Its successful implementation and delivery is dependent on constant and reliable information exchange between local/regional government, business and residential communities as well as with relevant national Government and EU institutions. For example, County Donegal has one of the highest wind resources in Western Europe; with Donegal and Derry accounting for 396MW or 17.3% of all capacity on the island or Ireland (see Map 4.1).

4.3 Tourism

According to the ILEX baseline report, 45% of people under the age of 45 worked in the tourism accommodation sector in 2010. In a region where almost half of the population is under 34 years old (NISRA, 2010), the value of this finding cannot be overstated. Tourism has been identified as a key economic driver for the North West region.

The Tourism Working Group, facilitated by Mr. Stephen Gillespie of Derry City Council, undertook a mapping exercise with a range of partners that identified preliminary opportunities for the NWPF Tourism Action Plan. These included the following activities among the local partners.

Table 4.2: Proposed Activities for inclusion in tourism Action Plan

Tourism Action Plan	
<i>Location</i>	<i>Activity</i>
Donegal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wild Atlantic Way linking to Causeway Coastal Route • Greenway Extension • Cruise and Sail • Food Tourism • Eco-Tourism • Digital Strategies • Flagship Projects (e.g. Malin, Fanad Lighthouse, Sliabh Liag)
Strabane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Tourism Focus (the new council post-RPA will be 33% rural) • Develop former railway lines as cycle paths • Hill and riverside walking • Angling • The International Appalachian Trail • Greenways • Food and Crafts • The O'Neill and Ulster Scots Story • Industrial Heritage • Water-based offers such as canoe trails and festivals
Derry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wild Atlantic Way linking to Causeway Coastal Route • Food Tourism • Marine Tourism • Prehen Boathouse • Greenway Extension • Cruise and Sail, Maritime Museum • Columban Heritage • Festivals and Events • Signature Attractions • Diaspora, Cultural Tourism
Limavady	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wild Atlantic Way linking to Causeway Coastal Route • Forest Trails • Danny Boy • Binevenagh • Benone Beach

In addition the Loughs Agency, which impacts all four councils above, identified the following opportunities: Marine Tourism, Angling, Marine Usage, Education and Eco-Tourism

Subsequently, the Tourism Working Group identified potential partnership projects and themes for regional and cross-border cooperation.

Partnership Projects: Outdoor and adventure tourism, Sculpture Trails, Myths and Legends, Internationally Recognised Walking and Cycling Trails (including cross-border greenways) and Social Media.

Themes: Joint Marketing with CODA, Better Signage, Events Communication, Capacity Building, Languages and New Ways of Generating/Accessing Funding.

4.3.1 Proposed Projects for the NWPf Tourism Programme

As outlined in Map 4.2 below, the region has a unique and rich cultural landscape, extensive coastline and marine resources, and important bio-diversity and eco-system services that should be appropriately managed and developed.



(Source: Image and Text: SPACEial 2014)

Based on the working group's analysis, a series of short-, medium- and long-term projects were identified as the key elements of any action plan to be pursued by the NWPf in the area of tourism.

Short-Term Actions

- Baseline research;
- Development of an integrated marketing and communications plan;
- Creation of an image bank; and
- Development and promotion of food tourism.

Short- to Medium- to Long-Term Actions

- Marine Tourism (short- and medium-term)
- Columban Heritage (short- and medium-term)
- Heritage, Culture and Events (short- and medium-term)
- Digital Orientation (on-going)
- Diaspora and Roots Tourism Flagship Product Development (short-, medium-, and long-term)
- Outdoor Recreation, Slow and Activity Tourism (medium- and long-term)

These actions are further elaborated on in Table 4.3 in terms of who should take the lead in the delivery of each action and the estimated cost of each.

Table 4.3: NWPF Action Plan on Tourism - A Working Paper

Tourism Action Plan			
What	Who	When	Estimated Cost
Commission Baseline Research for the Region	Commissioned to external experts Steering Committee of all partners	Within 1 year	Sterling 80k
Integrated Marketing and Communications Plan	Commissioned to external experts through Institute of Marketing Steering Committee of all partners	Within 1 year	Sterling 160k
Digital Orientation & Interpretation	Donegal to lead, in partnership with ERNACT	1-2 years	Sterling 240k
Marine Tourism	Partners involved in Sail West	3 years	Sterling 150k
Diaspora / Roots Tourism	All	2-3 years	Sterling 1.8 m with contribution from the private sector
Columban Heritage	Derry/Donegal	3 years	Sterling 1.8 m
Food Tourism	All	1-2 years	Sterling 3000k
Heritage & Events Programme	All	1-2 years	Sterling 2 m

The working group also identified cross-cutting themes and activities for consideration including: green tourism; heritage and cultural events and experiential/participative opportunities. A joined up focus on both delivery and the identification of funding was also viewed as important especially given that tourism is unlikely to be a funding stream in the forthcoming EU-funding programmes, INTERREG VA and PEACE IV.

4.3.2 Organisation and Delivery

The Tourism Working Group was fairly detailed in its proposals for project management, including the identification of project risks, milestones and critical deliverables. The working group will be detailing these in a forthcoming project plan that will identify a programme of delivery. Significantly, they have indicated the importance of framing the programme with SMART objectives that are outcome-focused and identifying lead partners for each project element based on consensus. Other aspects of a programme for delivery that the working group identified included:

- *Monitoring and Evaluation* – Baseline research should be undertaken to establish the current status quo, followed by on-going monitoring and end of project evaluations to address key issues such as legacy, sustainability and exit strategy. An independent baseline and summative evaluation is also recommended for credibility.
- *Management*: The working group suggests that a Cross-Border Management Team³ be established with lead partners for each project. There is an acknowledgement that staffing resources are key and there is a need to identify key project officers and administrative staffing requirements. Consultancy and agency support will also be critical to successful delivery and can include design agencies, marketing support and mentoring. This will also need to be laid out under a staffing/resource plan.
- *Financial Management*: The tourism programme is based on cross-border connections through joint actions. The working group proposes an exchange of good practices and an exploration of how procurement and centralised delivery offers value, synergy and shared resources. Financial management will ensure transparency and accountability.
- *Partnerships*: The programme will need to establish and maintain strong networks and partnerships and put aside competitive campaigns in order to work together and support each other on a cross-border basis. Partners collaborate on the basis of shared need, interdependence and interrelationships of the geographic region.

The formation of a Cross-Border Tourism Forum could be considered in the future to link programme delivery and capitalise on networks and existing partnerships involved in various tourism initiatives such as: the North West Cross-Border Group, operational since 2007; the Western Regional Tourism Partnership; the Sail West/Malin Waters project; and the newly formed Tyrone & The Sperrins Working Group, established in 2013.

³ Under the MOU between Newry and Mourne District Council and Louth Local Authorities, there was an initiative to 'share' staffing in regards to tourism initiatives.

4.4 Health Innovation and Well-Being

A specific NWPF working group was not formed for this theme given the breadth of the subject matter - ranging from the establishment of the region as a Centre of Excellence to general quality of life and well-being. In respect of the latter, there exists a specific challenge for the new councils in understanding the implications of the Power of Wellbeing; a new function of local government being introduced as part of the reform process. The NHS change programme, for example, requires comprehensive networks of community-based supports to promote and maintain the wellbeing of people of all ages. This represents a shift from greenway, cycle track and playpark development to care and interventions that have been hitherto delivered in an Acute Hospital or Secondary Care Setting. This shift does not in any way negate the importance of initiatives centred around greenways, blueways and parkways - indeed their relevance to this theme as well as the tourism theme points to the need for cross-collaboration among those working in these fields.

The Councils in the North West have, in recent years being actively engaging in the agenda of well-being; through the promotion of age-friendly strategies, health impact assessment, healthy town initiatives, active ageing programmes, and mental health road shows to name but a few. These initiatives are often undertaken in partnership with other stakeholders in the region - health professionals, community forums, youth councils, policing committees.

In terms of health innovation, a key proposal under consideration is the establishment of the North West Health Innovation Corridor which complements the new connected health initiative emerging from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI). It also plays to the region's local strengths and widens the remit beyond just connected health. Focusing on the whole of the North West region, the initiative includes Sligo, Letterkenny, Derry and Coleraine⁴. The Health Innovation Corridor is seen as a partnership among industry; the purpose being to strategically promote, support and strengthen healthcare innovation and enterprises in the cross-border region of the North West. Health innovation is viewed as an emerging sector that has a range of potential benefits for the region - from the economic benefits deriving from employment and business creation to addressing health inequalities and the delivery of health support within communities. The work plan developed for the Health Innovation Corridor would facilitate networking and knowledge sharing and increase collaborative research and business opportunities in healthcare-related manufacturing, service delivery and funding opportunities across the North West.

In addition, other projects that have been referenced by the NWPF and should be further explored include: a Clinical Research Academy (involving NUI Galway, Letterkenny IT and University of Ulster); Medical Science Devices ('M2D2' with the University of Ulster, Letterkenny IT and University of Lowell, Massachusetts); a Healthy Living Programme in Strabane that includes training and support in gardening programmes; links to international centres of excellence; and the North West Science Park.

⁴ Stakeholders include: University of Ulster at Magee (Derry) and Coleraine, LyIT, Sligo IT, InvestNI, Enterprise Ireland, the health boards and other health professionals such as CAWT, community sector representatives, local councils and private sector representatives.

Table 4.4: NWPF Action Plan on Health Innovation & Well-Being - A Working Paper

Health and Well-Being Action Plan
1. Review NW Health Innovation Corridor Initiative, identify linkages to community planning and LECs
2. Identify funding for a full-time coordinator
3. Strabane Healthy Living
4. Active Ageing / Healthy Towns
5. Clinical Research Academy
6. NW Science Park
7. Medical Devices 'M2D2'

These initiatives - either as proposed or currently under way - form the basis of an action plan for the region (see Table 4.4). They recognise the value in collaboration and complementarity in cross-border partnerships. There are two important points to consider when exploring how health innovation and well-being are related to current and future development strategies:

- Area-based focus on local development strategies and land-use plans for supporting and facilitating innovation, research, employment and economic development; and
- Community planning and the power of well-being with links to greenways, parks, and shifts in the health-care industry that will have implications for community planning and local service delivery.

The vision for the Health Innovation Corridor is that by 2020 the North West will be internationally recognised as a health and social sciences research and innovation zone that will contribute to generating local employment and creating improvements in health and social well-being to address health inequalities. In regards to community planning, service delivery and initiatives that address the general well-being theme, Strabane District Council and Limavady Borough Council are undertaking a range of activities that illustrate the growing importance of this theme. These include for example; the active ageing/active communities programmes; walking festivals, marathons and cycling events; and the North West Healthy Living Community Garden Programme.

4.4.1 Managing the Process: Next Steps

The proposal for the Northwest Health Innovation Corridor outlines a very detailed action plan distributed among seven subgroups with the majority of the activities to be undertaken from 6 months to 1 year in areas such as:

- Structure;
- Innovation;
- Marketing and unique selling point;
- Funding; and
- Skill development.

In addition, there are lead persons designated to develop these activities. It is recommended that a meeting be arranged with these designated leads and members of the NWPF to

identify linkages to community planning and LECs, and cross-border opportunities for cooperation. In addition, linkages to existing programmes can be identified, for example the Strabane Healthy Living and Limavady Healthy Towns programmes, in regards to well-being Initiatives. It is further recommended that core members from across the existing programmes be convened into an expert working group in order to develop a more detailed action plan for the NWPF.

4.5 Culture and Creative Industries

‘Culture and the Creative Industries’ has been identified as a key theme by the NWPF and is increasingly being recognised as an important component of the local economy that contributes to broader urban and social regeneration. The benefits of the City of Culture for Derry/Londonderry and the wider region, for example, have been well documented through studies undertaken by ILEX.

As initially identified by the working group, facilitated by Ms. Aideen Doherty of Donegal County Council, a characteristic of the creative industry is that it spans a range of artists and professions and is geographically dispersed with urban and rural distinctions. The working group further noted that clusters, such as digital hubs, do exist in some places. However, a persistent challenge for this sector is the lack of opportunities to network given its dispersed nature within the region, as well as urban and rural differences marked by digital media and video game development concentrated within the urban areas (Derry/Londonderry) and craft and arts characterising rural areas (Donegal).

As noted by the working group, in the past few years, rural arts and cultural organisations have been dismantled in favour of larger, urban ones. This is an issue for many artists in the North West, who are based in rural areas and draw their inspiration from their landscape. This in turn leads to isolation and a lack of cooperation among artists in Donegal and in a cross-border context. Smaller craft groups and those in the cottage industry cannot afford to be located in city centres. In the case of Donegal, a rural network could be set up with the introduction of a virtual network that could help overcome the isolation of rural artists. The Creative Edge website (www.creative-edge.eu) was mentioned as a resource for creative businesses and one that has been useful for artists from the west of Ireland.

4.5.1 Proposed Projects for the NWPF Culture and Creative Industries Programme

The Culture and Creative Industries Group has identified some initial priorities as well as the need to identify champions that can help drive the agenda and networking (see Table 4.5). Importantly, the respective staff in Donegal County and Derry City Council involved in promoting this sector within their respective councils will be meeting in August/September 2014 to further develop a joint action plan that reflects the distinctive aspects, including urban- and rural-based activities, which will be important to not only Strabane District Council but also education and business bodies. A key question for the group as this action plan evolves is what can local authorities do to support both the rural and urban creative industry sectors?

Table 4.5: NWPF Action Plan on Culture and Creative Industries - A Working Paper

Culture and Creative Industries Action Plan
1. Best Practice in the reuse of space and use of municipal assets to support digital, arts and crafts community
2. Baseline Study on needs of Culture and Creative Industries in the region; identify distinct needs of rural and urban sectors
3. Organise a 'digital day' to link digital media talent and artists to develop virtual network.
4. Establish a Mentor Bank drawn from retired business professionals to provide business support to artists.
5. Identification of EU good practices in supporting Arts and Creative Industries
6. Skills Audit to support Digital and Creative Industries

The previous cultural network - the 4CNW Project (Creative Challenge Celtic Crescent North West) - was a business innovation support programme involving Donegal County Council which demonstrated how public authorities can stimulate business innovation take-up and increase enterprise, through a unique service innovation that partners creative professionals with businesses in the wider economy (for further details see <http://www.creativestatenorthwest.com/about/article/4cnw>). There is much scope to build on the success of this initiative which concluded in 2013.

This working group has committed to identifying a core group that represents the wider community of rural and urban-based artists and digital professionals, and involving them in the finalisation of the action plan. In preparation for these meetings, it is recommended that a written brief be developed that outlines:

- The working definitions of 'Culture and Creative Industries' and who is involved from the urban perspective of Derry/Londonderry and the rural areas of Donegal and Strabane;
- Preliminary identification of different needs and issues among the clusters such as:
 - Space requirements for artisans and craft makers to convene or to show their work;
 - How to link potential markets, both domestic and international to the tourism market;
 - Digital media needs for support/incubation within Derry/Londonderry, Strabane, and Donegal, including cross-border elements;
- The importance of identifying voices and champions from within the industries that can help set and drive a North West regional agenda for the industry;
- The range of skills required in the culture and creative industries sector and an audit of their presence in the region;
- Undertake preliminary research to identify how the creative sector in rural and urban areas are supported in Europe, and best practices that relate to the North West context;
- Consider how the digital media talent in Derry/Londonderry can help to develop a virtual network among artists for the region, with the possibility of having a 'digital day' to link up the groups;
- Clarify linkages and close gaps in the understanding between central government documentation on the creative sector in Ireland and Northern Ireland, and articulate their specific roles in the North West region; and

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- Consider how municipal assets and centres can and do contribute space, including the contribution of development strategies.

4.6 North West Partnership Forum: Focusing on the Short-Term

The ICLRD is recommending that the NWPF undertake a two-stage process (outlined in Section 5); with Stage 1 focusing on the short-term activities that position the region as a leader in cross-border community and spatial planning. In summary, this will involve:

1. Continuing to provide a forum for the expert working groups and facilitate joint actions recommended by the working groups;
2. Identifying what can be done within the respective councils individually and/or together, and what other partners within and outside the region can do. Consider undertaking an audit of existing policies and potential resources that can contribute to cross-border cooperation;
3. Developing a terms of reference and timetable for how the respective local strategies link up (*Local Economic and Community Plans* for Donegal and the *Community Plan* for Derry/Strabane); and
4. Reviewing and recommending core membership and institutional partnerships for the NWPF, as well as other stakeholders who can participate as needed.

During Stage 1 it will be important for the NWPF and its working groups to meet on a regular basis; assuming quarterly meetings, the group can meet a minimum of three times before April 2015, a key date in the transition of governance in the region with the formal introduction of the Derry/Strabane Council. One suggestion is to set agendas ahead of time to give time to develop proposals, projects and updates. Suggested agenda items and areas of focus for these proposed meetings include:

- Agreement in principle on the North West Partnership Forum (NWPF) Action Plan;
- Updates from the four working groups on their respective action plans, catalyst project(s), partnerships and funding opportunities;
- Identification of other emerging sectors and new issues among existing themes;
- With other partners, including NWRCBG, identify joint priorities of the respective development strategies for input into the NWGI consultation, EU funding programmes, respective programmes for Government, and the Connacht-Ulster Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy;
- Suggested actions for linking the development and updating of respective spatial and economic strategies;
- Update on the NWGI and proposed joint actions with other partners, such as the NWRCBG; and
- Presentation of a roadmap for cooperation (Stage 2) over the next year for NWPF and partners; including considering opportunities for shared services.

For each of the working groups, the short-term focus is to build working relationships and identify internal and external support and funding.

5. Structuring Cooperation

A 2014 review paper by the OECD on European metropolitan regions and their governance structures notes two important points that relate to cross-border and regional cooperation in the North West:

- “The data clearly confirms the importance of three policies of metropolitan governance: regional development, transportation and spatial planning” (p.21); and
- “In the majority of cases, the organisations that have been created in these metropolitan areas have few formal powers and serve mostly as institutionalized forum for policy makers to exchange and coordinate policies.”

The new economic and spatial planning structures in both Ireland and Northern Ireland outlined in Section 3 offer an opportunity to significantly coordinate in the three policy areas of regional development, spatial planning and transportation.

As noted earlier, in Northern Ireland after April 2015, planning, regeneration and development functions, and capital investment planning will be devolved to the new Derry/Strabane Council, creating a stronger similarity in responsibilities and functions with their cross-border neighbour, County Donegal. In addition, as noted earlier, the stronger economic development and community planning functions being integrated in Donegal County Council as part of *Putting People First* will also provide opportunities to identify regional and cross-border synergies. Building on the potential of this alignment in responsibilities will require both strategic and operational cooperation of which the NWPF can play an important role.

5.1 Membership and Potential Rebranding

The respective City of Derry Strategy Board and the Donegal County Development Board (to be reorganised to reflect the dual functions of the economic development and community development) include wide memberships and are organised as social partnerships among civic and statutory bodies. The NWPF can create strategic cross-border linkages among these existing groups, especially in regards to the local development strategies outlined previously. These strategic areas of cooperation can set the stage for coordination of local service delivery, planning and sectoral cooperation.

The future membership of the NWPF, as a non-statutory coordinating group linking local, regional and central government planning functions, can provide a forum for cooperation across statutory functions that will increasingly be similar. The membership can also provide a multi-sectoral platform that links statutory functions to strategic regional agendas.

In terms of what this non-statutory coordinating group should be called, the original naming of the North West Partnership Board (NWPB) was based on the core objective of

bringing greater cooperation between the Donegal County Development 'Board' and the Derry City Strategy 'Board'. In mid-2014, as part of the action plan development process, it was suggested and agreed in principle that the group should be renamed the North West Partnership Forum (NWPB). This recognises that the group is functioning as a non-statutory, strategic and coordinating body as opposed to a statutory board. The multi-sectoral nature of the Forum means it can also act as a linkage between the statutory local council functions of planning and development. This is in keeping with the previously mentioned OECD findings on regional or metropolitan cooperation.

5.2 Key Roles

What has changed since the formation of the NWPB in 2011?

The initial focus of the NWPB was to create a forum that brought together equal representation from the Derry Strategy Board and the County Donegal Development Board.

'This forum would effectively produce the key components of the Gateway Initiative moving forward and with local political endorsement, linking with the North West Region Cross-Border Group, would submit to Government through the parent Departments the programme of strategic priorities for the North West⁵'.

With the introduction of the new planning and governance legislation in both jurisdictions, the development and implementation of spatial plans and economic, social and environmental policies and programmes reflect an increased emphasis on regional and locally generated programmes shaping local agendas. In this new governance context, the role of the re-named NWPB in linking the strategies, outlined in Section 4, is even more crucial than in the past when the NWGI was focused primarily on locally coordinating programmes that are funded and managed at the central level.

This new governance arrangement, which will create a different relationship between central and local government, will have an impact on the delivery of the North West Gateway Initiative (NWGI) which itself is currently under review. The ongoing consultation on the NWGI, coordinated by the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) on behalf of the Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) is timely. A paper has been prepared for discussion at the next plenary meeting of the NSMC where it is expected that the importance of the NWGI will be confirmed, and a commitment made by both administrations to review and address previous shortcomings as noted in the responses to the consultation.

In developing the action plan for the NWPB, it is suggested that the focus of the Forum will be to:

- *Strengthen strategic and operational cooperation between the respective local development strategies, related sectoral policies and land-use where appropriate.*

⁵ Undated document outlining the formation of the NWPB

County Donegal	Derry/Strabane
Local Economic and Community Plan	Community Plan
County Development Plan & Development Board Strategy	Local Development Plan

- *Link to regional and central government planning including the NSS and RDS and related sectoral organisations responsible for implementation among the respective central government departments.*

County Donegal/Connacht-Ulster Region	Derry/Strabane
Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy County Development Plan	Local Development Plan (with central government department issues and binding report)
Revised National Planning Framework	Regional Development Strategy 2025 and SPPS of 2014

This dual focus on coordination at local government level and the linkages to central government policies mirrors the levels of engagement in the *Framework for Cooperation: Spatial Strategies of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland* (DRD & DoECLG, 2013). Key roles the Forum can play include:

- Facilitating cross border cooperation on relevant strategies, plans and strategic projects;
- Coordinating staff resources contributing to priorities as reflected in the respective strategies;
- Identifying opportunities for coordinating service delivery across different sectors;
- Providing important linkages to central government programmes for government; and
- Providing policy and operational linkages to other cross-border bodies, including the NWRCBG.

The NWPF can, and should, work with regional stakeholders to identify and support opportunities that also exist for external funding in cooperation with others, for example the NWRCBG.

One example of where such an approach has been very successful is that of Newry and Mourne District Council and the Louth Local Authorities who, through a Memorandum of Understanding have successfully worked in partnership with their existing cross-border network (the East Border Region Ltd.) and other stakeholders to obtain external funding.

NWPF - Emerging Focus

- Function as a non-statutory multi-sectoral forum with a particular focus on priorities emerging from Development Strategies and Community Planning.
- Provide guidance on cross-border policies and practices coming out of the respective plans;
- Provide a forum for expert working groups to identify cross-cutting linkages and synergies; and
- Link planning and development on a cross-border basis.

5.3 Partnerships

Previous research by the ICLRD and others has emphasised the importance of reviewing cross-border and inter-jurisdictional cooperation in terms of functional integration of the territory and the institutional coordination that brings mutual benefits to a region. Some functional relationships around which the building of regional institutional cooperation and partnerships can be built include:

- Shared environmental assets such as river basins, coastal areas and landscapes that benefit area residents and tourism through recreational and economic opportunities;
- Shared energy resources such as wind, wave and distribution infrastructure;
- Economic development linked to a mobile and skilled workforce that seeks jobs and provides skilled labour within the region; and
- The clustering of educational institutions and, more importantly, their specific educational and research programmes that build on and reinforce regional assets.

The EU 2020 strategy sets out a vision for Europe in the 21st century that is grounded in the achievement of a “smart, sustainable and inclusive economy delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion” (European Commission, 2010). EU funding programmes recognise the cross-administrative and/or cross-jurisdictional nature of territorial cohesion policies and programmes and the need for imaginative solutions and the sharing of resources and expertise.

Different partnerships are already in place in the North West which are building on this emerging vision, some of which were discussed within the working groups. In the context of the NWPF, the activities of the NWRCBG are closely linked in various ways (see below). There are other institutional partnerships that are emerging and influencing spatial planning and local strategies, such as the recently completed Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) *Regional Strategic Framework* (2013). In addition, there are emerging partnerships around the Border Development Zone/Corridor - a concept being jointly explored by both the Centre for Cross Border Studies and the ICLRD with INTERREG IVA funding - and the particular sectors it addresses (see <http://www.crossborder.ie/?p=3639> for a full description).

As noted in previous ICLRD research, the presence of these different agencies offers municipalities the opportunity to link into networks that answer particular needs reflecting regional and local priorities (Creamer *et al*, 2008: ICLRD, 2010).

5.3.1 North West Region Cross-Border Group

The North West Region Cross-Border Group (NWRCBG) is one of three cross-border networks established by constituent Local Councils in the Irish border region. Similarly to the other border networks, the NWRCBG has evolved from its early purpose of facilitating collaboration among local authorities within the North West cross-border region and lobbying on behalf of the region to acting as a secretariat and access mechanism for INTERREG funds for specific projects in the North West cross-border area.

The Board of the NWRCBG is comprised of elected members of its constituent Councils. The CEOs of the Northern member councils and Donegal County Council, and the Manager of the NWRCBG are integral to the network's operations structure that includes: a secretariat, a CEO/County Manager Advisory Team and the task teams that manage specific projects with a participating council as a lead.

The Review of Public Administration in Northern Ireland and reform of local government in Ireland, and the associated functional changes and reorganisation of the Councils, have resulted in changes to the original membership of the cross-border group; the NWRCBG now includes Donegal, Derry and Strabane Councils as the core members with Limavady and Magherafelt now noted as affiliated councils.

As the Councils explore future working arrangements for cross-border cooperation which reflect area-based development priorities and a North West regional focus for investment and added value, it will be valuable to reflect on how existing arrangements can adapt and complement each other within an agreed regional framework. Based on existing capacity of arrangements within the region, with more thorough capacity analysis required, below are suggested indicative competencies, mapped to existing functionary bodies, which represent some key functions which may be required - in the context of cross-border working arrangements - to underpin some of the development priorities mentioned elsewhere in this report. These functions may change or grow in the future as the organisation of the new Councils in Northern Ireland takes form, and the operational status and funding of the cross-border bodies, including access arrangements for INTERREG V funding, are clarified.

In addition to the cross-border networks involvement in EU funding programmes, some local authorities, including Donegal County Council and Derry City Council, have established or considered special EU units to pursue funding lines that may not necessarily be pursued through the border networks. Donegal County Council developed an EU Policy and Funding Unit in January 2010 to identify funding that is geared towards local authorities; in 2013 Derry City Council established a similar unit.

The activities listed in the following table are indicative, and could expand in the context of exploring what might be required for the North West region to not only have robust intra-regional cooperation but to function and represent itself effectively in terms of streamlined working partnership with central governments and other international stakeholders.

Table 5.1: Potential Roles for the NWPF, NWRCBG and Others in Developing the North West

Regional Activities	NWPF	NWRCBG	Other
-Coordinate statutory regional body functions, statutory and non-statutory plans, land-use documents, community planning in Derry/Strabane and the Local Economic and Community Plan in Donegal	X		
-Provide political leadership on regional coordination		X	
-Jointly agree on a regional agenda	X	X	
-Lobby and acquire funding for programmes and projects	Via statutory	Via political	
-Undertake joint studies for the region including on behalf of NWPF	X	X	
-Facilitate cross-border cooperation on relevant strategies, plans and projects through a joint approach	Via statutory	Via political	
-Identify opportunities for coordinating service delivery and shared services including shared projects/staff	X	X	X
-Provide linkages to government policies and programmes such as the NWGI	Via statutory	Via political	
-Serve as a point of information regarding EU programmes		X	X
-Serve as a point of information and a regional contact for statutory agencies, regional and sectoral departments, and other multi-disciplinary partnerships	X		

5.4 Organisation

As noted earlier, the NWPF has functioned as a strategic coordinating body and does not currently have the staff and resources to undertake/commission joint studies for the region or implement projects. This remains a challenge that needs to be addressed. Currently, it is difficult for the respective councils to undertake or commission work that is beyond their remit.

Funding this cross-council support was the focus of an INTERREG application in 2012 to put in place staffing, provide local technical capacity to undertake necessary studies and expand the NWPF's secretariat function⁶. While the funding application was not successful, the interest in the joint submittal reflected the need for additional regional capacity to augment existing arrangements within the councils where members implement specific projects or take the lead in a collaborative approach.

To support and drive cooperation and a targeted set of actions, the NWPF will need to access resources or develop an agreement among key members to 'provide' or commission studies and/or provide organisational coordination. This includes the local councils undertaking joint work using existing technical capacity within the respective local authorities and commissioning studies using external consultants. A recent example is the potential for a common analysis of particular aspects of the regional renewable programmes as identified by the Renewables and Green Economy Working Group.

The aforementioned MOU between Newry and Mourne District Council (and now Down District Council) and the Louth Local Authorities offers an example of how cross-border councils can organise their cooperation. The two local authorities have, for example, assigned dedicated staff resources and have jointly commissioned studies such as the *Dundalk-Newry Economic Zone 2011*. There is also a collective focus on tourism, economic cooperation, energy and renewables developed in close cooperation with the East Border Region Network. Three additional elements provide opportunities for strategic, policy and operational cooperation among these councils:

- A senior management group for strategic and operational coordination between councils that meets four times a year;
- A Joint Committee of Elected Members that meets two times a year; and
- A good working relationship with the East Border Region for links to EU-funded and other programmes.

5.4.1 Secretariat to the NWPF

Secretariat functions to the NWPF - which include the organisation of meetings, reporting on activities and developing short position papers on regional priorities - are currently provided by Donegal County Council.

During the local government reform transition period, the local authorities will need to work together closely to lay the groundwork for strategic and operational coordination. This will require active engagement with other key stakeholders in the region given the range of new functions of local government. The attendance of the Manager of the NWRCBG at the NWPF meetings has been beneficial in this regard. Consideration of a joint secretariat in the future would foster the important exchange between the strategic planning and technical analysis/reporting of the multi-sectoral NWPF, and the political and civic representation of the NWRCBG as the reform process takes hold. Furthermore, cooperation

⁶ See ICLRD case study on *The Basel Metropolitan Area: Three Borders – One Metropolitan Area* (December 2010) for example of how EU funding of regional planning studies led to consolidation of cross-border metropolitan activities and focused cooperation among the metropolitan association representing local authorities.

in selected areas will benefit from coordinated efforts to leverage funding for the North West region - especially in the near term⁷.

The longer-term staffing, functions and activities of a secretariat can be explored after the reform process has been embedded and there is clarity regarding new roles and functions at both the statutory and political levels. As local government reforms are put in place and there is more certainty regarding future funding opportunities, the resources and form for such a secretariat can be reviewed and agreed upon by Derry City & Strabane District Council and Donegal County Council - as the two emerging councils covering the core areas of the North West Region. This should be in keeping with the principle of form following agreed function, and purpose of future working arrangements for cooperation within the North West Region and between the North West Region and key external entities and stakeholders whose involvement or investment is key to the region's growth and development.

5.4.2 Expert Working Groups

The four working groups established at the outset of developing the NWPF Action Plan have shown the value of identifying a strategic theme for the region and creating a space to bring together key stakeholders and particular expertise. These expert groups have, to date, brought in a wider circle of council staff, educators and researchers, and private and community sector expertise to discussions on the future role/work programme of the NWPF. These groups can, going forward, continue to provide expert and impartial advice and help to identify regional synergies.

The NWPF, as such, can act as an incubator for expert groups representing different themes that come out of the respective development strategies and community plans. The Forum can continue to draw upon the expertise of these working groups to provide information, working papers and identify potential synergies. In saying this, the working groups should not be necessarily viewed as permanent groups. Rather, they could evolve over time as the programmes and projects they have identified move towards implementation. Given the forthcoming changes under the reform of local government, there may be opportunities for further *ad hoc* working groups on:

- Strategic and operational links, focused on selected themes and pillars in the new Community Plan for Derry/Strabane and the Local Economic and Community Plan for Donegal;
- Spatial Planning, with the potential for a planners' forum similar to that developed by ICBAN as part of the *Regional Strategic Framework* process; and
- Regional evidence-informed studies (building on SPACEial) that provide training in data, and help to engage a broad group of stakeholders in generating information on the region.

As an example of emerging good practice, the Louth Economic Forum Model demonstrates how a thematic approach can be used to bring together diverse regional stakeholders to

⁷ The Operation Programme is scheduled for approval in September 2014 with earliest calls for applications in March/April 2015 (SEUPB website).

further develop/strengthen regional agendas using expert task groups. For further information see http://www.louthcoco.ie/en/Services/Business_Support_Unit/Louth_Economic_Forum/

5.5 Enabling Agreement

The NWPF has previously discussed the benefit of an enabling agreement upon which collaboration can be advanced in public service delivery, infrastructural investment and planning in the region. Were it pursued, such an agreement among key local stakeholders could play a role in confirming priorities, identifying actions/initiatives, solidifying working relationships, and structuring mechanisms for engagement including the potential for shared services.

Such an agreement, if adopted, allied to the capabilities of the local authorities and key stakeholders as the local government reform process is implemented in both jurisdictions, could help bridge the gap between the North West Gateway Initiative (NWGI) concepts and implementation on the ground.

5.6 Supporting Evidence-Informed Planning and Cooperation

The North West region, through the completed INTERREG-funded SPACEial NW Project, is now in an excellent position to identify and present trends in the region, and provide access to spatial data-sets for this cross-border region. SPACEial has developed a website to be

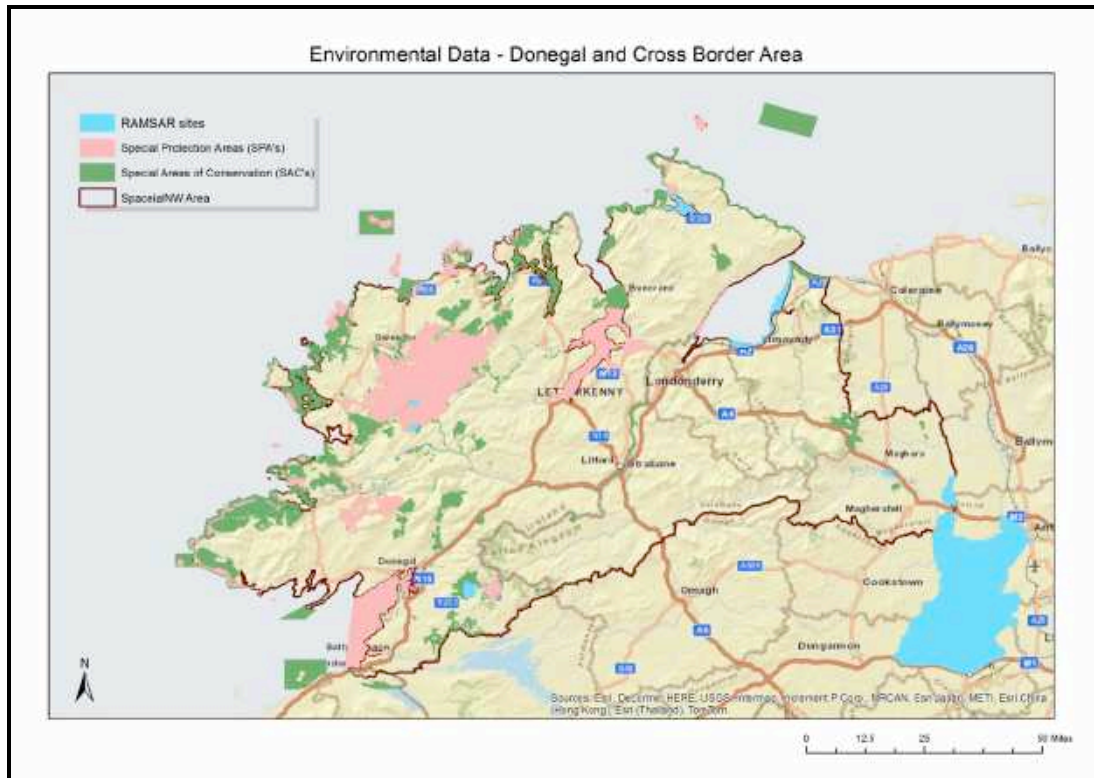
'a key resource for any person or body wishing to make business or investment related decisions; to develop and review strategic policies and plans; to visit the region or to make simple everyday decisions like deciding where they send their children to school or where to avail of local sporting facilities' (SPACEial website - <http://www.spaceialnw.eu/>).

In addition, the work undertaken by the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO) and the ICLRD on linking and mapping compatible data-sets from the respective 2011 censuses from Ireland and Northern Ireland is now available to local governments and other stakeholders in the region. As these resource tools have been developed, AIRO and SPACEial have organised joint training seminars to build the capacity of local stakeholders to access and use this regional data.

Short-term actions for the NWPF in the area of evidence-informed planning and cooperation include reviewing available data (type and scale) that can be used to support:

- The drafting of the Community Plan for Derry/Strabane and the Local Economic Community Plan for Donegal;
- The drafting of funding applications;
- The drafting and roll-out of policies as they relate to specific initiatives and/or themes; for example, renewables and tourism; and

- The mapping of key cross-border environmental data, especially information related to EU environmental directives.



(Source: SPACEial Map - showing RAMSAR wetland sites, Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in the North West).

In the medium-term, the NWPF also have a role to play in identifying the need for, and reviewing, data in the following strategies and plans:

- The *Local Government Reform Act 2014* for Ireland notes that Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs) will include a monitoring and review process under the auspices of the local council, and include benchmarks and indicators for the economic elements of the Plan;
- The Local Development Plan (LDP) for Derry/Strabane will also include key indicators such as housing provision and economic development with annual reporting;
- At the regional scale, the reporting on the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Connacht-Ulster Regional Assembly will occur every two years and will provide an opportunity for identifying regional cross-border indicators. In preparation for this, the Border, Midland & Western Regional Assembly has presented the idea of extending the newly developed Gateway and Hub Development Index (GHDI) for Letterkenny to the cross-border region; and
- Identify opportunities for cross-border collection and display of land-use information as currently available at www.myplan.ie, an initiative of the

Department of Environment Community and Local Government (DoECLG), especially in regards to cross-border planning for functional planning zones.

Taken together, this raises the question as to whether there is an opportunity to identify regional cross-border indicators? And who should be responsible for developing and maintaining such indicators? Sharing information can increase the understanding of the cross-border implications of potential projects.

In addition to capturing past and current trends, it would also be very helpful for the region to partner with academic and research organisations to undertake scenario planning on different topics to support strategic initiatives. For example, researchers at University College Dublin have used the MOLAND model to simulate four scenarios of possible future settlement patterns for the Greater Dublin Area and evaluate these trends (Williams et al, 2013). For the North West region, building regional capacity to undertake these different initiatives would benefit from a joint approach in identifying opportunities for using and updating information coming out of the respective planning processes.

To this end, it is recommended that an evidence-informed planning group be formed to build on the excellent work of the SPACEial NW Project and outline a regional approach to data-capture. Such a group would also explore how best to form connections with existing evidence-informed planning efforts. These include the data profile developed for the ICBAN region that is currently available through the ICBAN central data portal (see <http://www.icban.com/Data-Central/Overview>) and the broader cross-border and all-island approach pioneered by AIRO.

5.7 Next Steps - A Two-Stage Process

The timing and complexity of the transition within local government in both jurisdictions presents important dynamics that will need to be addressed in building cross-border and North West regional cooperation. Newly elected members, for example, who will be overseeing the introduction of new competencies and responsibilities should also play a key role in shaping regional cooperation. This includes informing the direction and activities of the action plan for the NWPF which is 'a work in progress'.

In Northern Ireland, the transition formally began with the May 2014 elections and the coming into being of the new eleven shadow councils and subsequently the appointment of the Chief Executives for these new council structures. For the new Derry/Strabane District Council, which will formally begin operations on 1st April 2015, 40 councillors were elected to serve a four-year term. In Donegal, 37 councillors were elected from five electoral divisions for a five-year term of office⁸.

For the new Derry/Strabane Council, during the run-up to April 2015, a considerable amount of effort will be going into establishing the operations of the new council and incorporating its new mandates in development and community planning. This includes the development of new Local Development Plans and the introduction of community planning.

⁸ Under *Putting People First*, the local elections in Ireland - also held in May 2014 - resulted in the abolition of Town Councils. In County Donegal, this has resulted in the abolition of Ballyshannon Town Council, Bundoran Town Council and Letterkenny Town Council.

In Donegal, the establishment of Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) and Local Economic Development Committees - with the responsibility for enterprise development shifting to Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) - will change the nature of how planning will be undertaken. For example, the new Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs) will be developed for a six-year period and must be consistent with City/County Development Plans which, in the case of Donegal, covers the period 2012-2018. Given that this is a new process, it can be assumed that amendments will be required to the existing County Development Plan to ensure consistency in both policy and practice.

Importantly, the NWPF can link these two processes which are still uncharted in terms of process, product and who will be involved. Both councils have a strong strategy and planning capacity to lead, and could serve as a pilot demonstrating how community planning can align and link-up on a cross-border basis. During this transition year on both sides of the border, a valuable opportunity exists for the NWPF to provide an active linkage and set the stage for longer-term cooperation - not only between the councils but also with a range of other key local and regional stakeholders (many of whom are already active members of the NWPF).

The timing of the transition process also provides an important opportunity to develop working relationships among both officials and councillors on a cross-border basis around practical interventions.

Following joint discussions between the ICLRD and NWPF as part of the action plan development process, there is a consensus that the next steps in regards to building on and developing this action plan should be framed in two stages:

- **Stage 1** - For the next year, as the previously outlined local government reform process becomes embedded in both jurisdictions, the NWPF will focus its activities on positioning the working relationships between Derry/Strabane District Council and Donegal County Council to concentrate on identifying links between community planning in Derry and Strabane and the Local Economic and Community Plan in Donegal. In addition, the NWPF should explore and agree upon structure and governance arrangements that are firmly based on functional linkages to regional partners, cross-border bodies and central government departments. Recognising the need to keep all stakeholders - locally, regionally and nationally - informed of the work programme of the NWPF, it was agreed that a communications plan can be subsequently developed for post-April 2015 cooperation.
- **Stage 2** - After April 2015, the NWPF will begin working under mutually agreed structure and governance arrangements and further explore different models for coordinating cross-border activities locally and regionally.

This two-stage approach aligns with comments from the meetings of the NWPF that the action plan should be about maintaining and strengthening working relationships, not about authority, and that those actions noted within the emerging plan can, in a coordinated manner, and where possible, be driven forward using each organisations' own resources.

Annexes

Annex 1. Profile of the North West

There are different snapshots and spatial definitions of the North West region that can be summarised from reports published by the Department for Regional Development (DRD), the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (DoECLG) as well as by agencies within the region. As noted by other research into cross-border cooperation, the definition of a region can and should be flexible and reflect the type and spatial scale of interactions among different sectors (tourism, economic development, recreation, energy, transport, communications etc.). Current literature on spatial planning characterises these interactions as occurring in a soft space with fuzzy boundaries (Walsh et al, 2012).

According to the 2013 DRD/DECLG working paper, the North West is defined as the council areas of Derry and Strabane and also extends into County Donegal. The population of the two Northern Ireland council areas is around 150,000 with the urban centres of Londonderry and Strabane, accounting for approximately 72% of that population. The recently published *SPACEial Northwest Project Conference Report 2014* provides a broader definition of the North West to include Londonderry/Derry, Limavady, Strabane, Donegal and Magherafelt.

Table 1, taken from the above mentioned *SPACEial* report, shows the population for these councils in 2001/02, 2011 and projected growth through 2022/23. What is noticeable in these population figures is the consistent growth of all the local councils from the 2001/02 census through the 2011 census and a projection of this trend through 2022/23. These trends have helped to shape the growth of the region, and will continue to do so regardless of defining the area more narrowly as the North West Gateway Initiative (NWGI) does, or more broadly.

Table 1: 2001/02, 2011 and Projected 2022/23 Population

	2001/02 Pop.	2011 Pop.	% Growth 2001/02-2011	Projected Growth 2022/23	Projected Population 2022/23	% Growth Projected 2011-2022/23
Donegal	137,575	161,137	17%	23,313	184,450	14%
Derry	105,066	107,900	3%	8,159	116,059	8%
Strabane	38,248	39,800	4%	3,116	42,916	8%
Limavady	32,000	33,500	3%	1,725	35,225	5%
Magherafelt	39,800	45,000	13%	5,958	50,958	13%
NWRCBA	353,089	387,337	10%	42,271	429,608	11%
Northern Ireland	1,685,300	1,810,900	7%	134,942	1,945,842	8%
RoI	3,917,203	4,588,252	17%	786,948	5,375,200	17%
Island of Ireland	5,602,503	6,399,152	14%	921,890	7,321,042	14%

(Source: *SPACEial Northwest Project, Conference Report 2014*, p. 73. Data based on RoI Census 2002 & 2011; *Border Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022*; Northern Ireland Census 2002 & 2011; *Regional Development Strategy NI 2008-2035*).

In regards to physical growth in the North West Gateway region, the SPACEial report summarises the characteristics of this growth as follows⁹:

- The joint gateway grew in area by 27% from 2000 to 2010 with this growth 'visibly and statistically more apparent in the earlier part of the decade'. This growth benefited from extensions to their existing boundaries rather than the emergence of new outlying areas;
- Letterkenny's growth is composed mostly of suburban housing (71.8%) followed by industrial and commercial units (20.5%), with sports and leisure representing 7.8%. The expansion of the urban area was into agricultural, forestry and wetland areas;
- Derry/Londonderry urban areas experienced a positive growth of 23.1% from 2000 to 2010; this is primarily attributable to residential suburban development, followed by industrial and commercial areas, while sport and leisure featured strongly from 2006 onwards;
- In regards to industrial and commercial areas, these increased significantly by 59% from 2000 onwards with expansion of FDI industries in Letterkenny. In Derry/Londonderry there was a recorded growth of 31% since 2000.

Based on these findings, the SPACEial NW Project concludes that 'The findings presented suggest that the scale and level of growth within industrial and commercial areas are very favourable within the joint gateway'.

⁹ See page 70 of the SPACEial NW Project Conference Report published in 2014.

Annex 2. Positioning the North West Region in a Changing Reform Process

Under local government reform, there are significant changes occurring that will inform the action plan for the NWPF. These include, in brief:

- In Northern Ireland
 - The merging of Derry City Council and Strabane District Council by April 2015;
 - The merging of Limavady District Council into the Causeway Coast and Glens District by April 2015;
 - The merging of Magherafelt District Council into the Mid-Ulster District by 2015;
 - The transfer of competencies to the new local councils including the preparation of Local Development Plans and associated control and enforcement; community planning with a particular focus on integrated service delivery; urban regeneration; local economic development; and tourism; and
 - The (potential) implications of these reforms on the make-up and working of the NWRCBG.

It is worth noting that the introduction of Community Plans and related Local Development Plans (LDPs) will be informed and guided by community plans process.

- In Ireland
 - The phasing out of the City and County Development Boards (CDBs) in 2014 and the introduction of Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) with responsibility for the planning and oversight of local/community development actions at local level;
 - The introduction of Local Economic Development Committees (LEDCs) and increased responsibility for enterprise support through the newly established Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) within the local authorities¹⁰;
 - The introduction of a local property tax to fund local services;
 - The introduction of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the new Connacht-Ulster Regional Assembly; and
 - The introduction of a new national spatial planning framework to replace the current *National Spatial Strategy* (NSS).

As noted in Section 1, the combination of the redrawing of council boundaries in Northern Ireland with the transfer and reorganisation of local competencies in both jurisdictions presents an opportunity to create synergies that have been difficult to develop to date. These include:

¹⁰ Dept. of Environment Community and Local Government website
<http://www.environ.ie/en/Community/AlignmentofLocalGovtLocalDev/CityCountyDevelopmentBoards/>

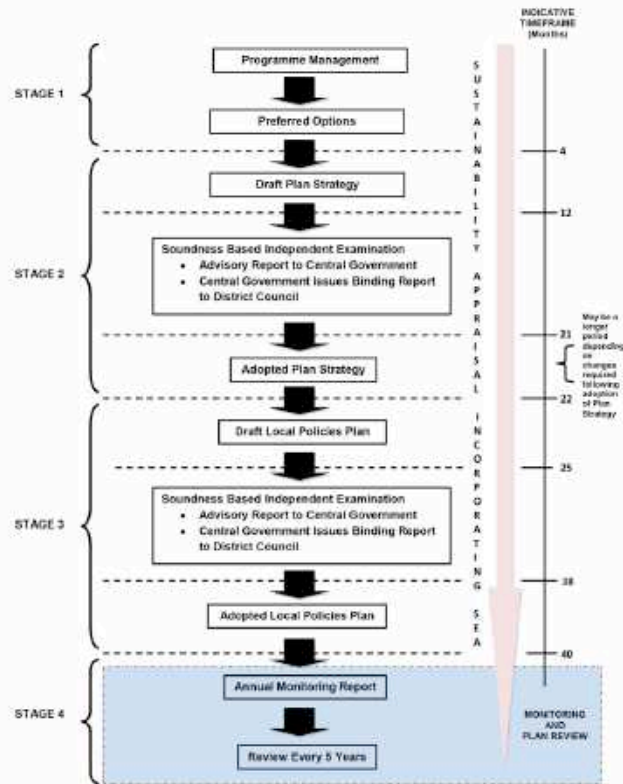
-
- The Gateway focus on Derry/Londonderry and Letterkenny can be strengthened and will now represent two adjoining local governments (Derry/Strabane and Donegal);
 - The stronger coherence and alignment of competencies of adjoining local governments on a cross-border basis will be similar in areas such as: local development planning, regeneration, community planning, economic development, and tourism among others; and
 - The potential alignment of geographic focus between the NWPF and the NWRCBG focusing on Derry/Strabane and Donegal.

This alignment of responsibilities on a cross-border basis and the potential to undertake joint initiatives will require a strategic, common understanding of opportunities for cooperation in the North West. Such opportunities should be reflected in the action plan for the NWPF.

Annex 3. The Local Development Plan Process in Northern Ireland

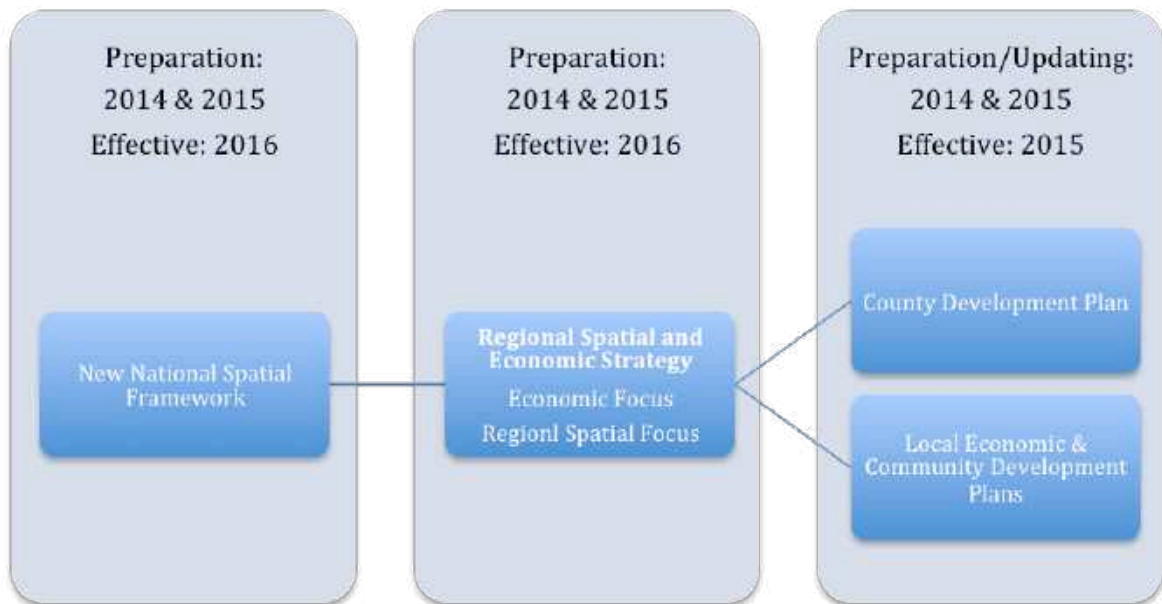
Local Development Plans 4

Diagram 1 - The New Local Development Plan System



(Source: A Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland. Consultation Draft 25)

Annex 4. Emerging New Planning Framework in Ireland



(Source: ICLRD based on DoECLG presentation at Joint Co-operation Ireland / ICLRD Conference in Armagh - June 2014).

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