

File note:

## **Meeting on 12 March 2010 with DARD on the Belfast SRFs**

Present: David Porter  
Mark O'Donnell  
Maggie Andrews  
Siobhan Watson  
Geraldine McAteer  
Bébhinn Ni Bhriain

Mark outlined the background to the development of SRFs and the process of engagement being undertaken with the range of government Departments. He described the timetable we're working within and the expectation of preparing a paper (the Belfast 'Package') for discussion by the Executive in June 2010. He explained that the SRFs related more strongly to the remit of Departments like health, education, regional development and enterprise and had relatively few proposals which directly linked to DARD's policy areas, an exception being proposals around the use of rivers or riverside development related to greenways

David outlined the role of the River's Agency and where he saw scope to play a role in regeneration projects. The Rivers Agency is primarily a 'flood defence agency' with limited staff and budgets. They have limited capacity to contribute funds to projects or undertake significant works. In addition there is a broadly rural emphasis within DARD and significant investment in urban areas needs to be strongly justified in flood defence terms.

There is scope for the Agency to adapt its practices to meet regeneration objectives, e.g. in relation to Greenways. Maggie confirmed that the Agency has been a very constructive partner in the Conswater Greenway (this was made easier by the east Belfast flooding of August 08).

Belfast generally is a relatively high risk flood area (a strategic flood map is available online). The Agency can become involved either as a funder or even as a contractor

(for works in the water course) on regeneration projects which contribute to flood management.

Certain works (e.g. culverting) require the Agency's permission (covered by the 1973 Drainage Order). At a minimum the Agency can offer advice and is willing to take on a formal advisory role in relation to future Greenway projects (similar to what it has done for Connswater).

David said that the SRFs could potentially be useful to the Agency in drawing up its prioritised list of capital works (annual budget £5-6 million) provided that proposals fall within strategic flood risk areas.

It was agreed that no formal response was required from DARD. Mark offered to share the draft Belfast Package when it was finalised.

David concluded by telling Geraldine and Maggie about work which the Agency is doing to develop a Belfast flood management plan (in compliance with EU Floods Directive). They are working with BCC and David suggested there should also be a representative from the BAPS (one to cover 5). They will take this forward separately.