



Department for  
**Social  
Development**  
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**From: Mark O'Donnell  
Acting Director, Belfast Regeneration Office**

**Date: 1 March 2010**

**Ian Maye  
Deputy Secretary  
Department of the Environment**

## **STRATEGIC REGENERATION FRAMEWORKS FOR BELFAST**

Thank you for agreeing to meet with DSD officials and Joint Team colleagues from the Belfast City Council and the Belfast Area Partnerships to discuss your Department's response to the Strategic Regeneration Frameworks (SRFs) for Belfast.

In advance of our meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> March I am writing to outline in further detail how the SRF proposals relate to the remit of the Department of the Environment. The proposals are broadly in line with DoE policy direction but in some areas they appear to present a challenge to existing plans or practice.

### **Sustainable settlements**

The SRFs are in line with housing policy set out in the Regional Development Strategy and draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan in calling for balanced communities, diversity of tenure and housing types, increased residential density in inner city areas and the promotion of the city centre as an attractive sustainable place to live.

There is a call to adopt an integrated approach to housing development which ensures that adequate infrastructure and facilities are in place to support communities. This is in line with the recent proposals from your Department to take forward cross-Departmental work on reforming the system of developer contributions to support the delivery of infrastructure.

The SRFs challenge current policy to more explicitly address the shared future agenda in planning– e.g. through design guides focusing on interface areas which would aim to ensure that these divisions are not recognised as permanent features and that future development does not reinforce the dividing lines between different communities.

In general the SRFs support the use and enforcement of design guides and call for a number of area specific design guides to be created: an integrated urban design strategy for key city spaces; an urban design study of Shaftesbury Square and Bradbury Place and; an architectural and urban design guide for the Greater Shankill;

### **Greenways**

The SRFs all support the concept of Community Greenways and the proposals contained in draft BMAP in this area. The integration of Greenways with new and improved cycling and pedestrian routes is supported. The SRFs link the development of Greenways to a range of other regeneration projects in their respective areas.

### **Access to/Management of Belfast Hills**

There is support for the development of the new access points to the Belfast Hills identified in draft BMAP. It is proposed that options should be explored further by the Belfast Hills Partnership. The Environment and Heritage Service is asked to promote the development of the 'Divis–Dixon Link', (the development of

pedestrian access from the top of Divis Mountain to Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park). Another proposal is the expansion of the Saffron Project to include Divis Mountain and other hills towards Lisburn (this project currently focuses on developing a section of the Black Mountain in line with current environmental policy: involving development of a nature reserve, conservation and development of habitats and construction of nature walks). The EHS is also asked to participate in a working group to identify dormant quarry sites in the Belfast Hills which can be restored to promote environmental regeneration

### **Transport**

The SRF proposals generally endorse the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan, (particularly in terms of improvements to pedestrian and cycling routes and investment in public transport) and call for the investment of the necessary resources to continue to implement this plan. This also aligns with the Transport policies set out in draft BMAP. The importance of improving connectivity between inner city areas and the city centre and between those areas and major employment locations is emphasised.

### **Regeneration**

The SRFs provide an endorsement of the Draft Physical Regeneration Concept Masterplans for 5 inner city areas of Belfast and proposals also broadly align with the work of the Belfast City Centre Regeneration Directorate. The SRFs call for substantial additional investment in the public realm, particularly along arterial routes and at identified gateways between the city centre and adjacent communities.

I hope the above is useful in helping you understand the relevance of the SRFs to your Department. It would be very useful if, following our discussion, DoE could provide a short formal response setting out how the priorities expressed in

the SRFs align with, or indeed challenge your set of priorities. I look forward to our discussion on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark O'Donnell', written in a cursive style.

**MARK O'DONNELL**

**Copy distribution:**

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