

## PREFACE BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Communities which have suffered the worst impact of the troubles, must not lose out on the social and economic benefits that the 'peace dividend' has brought for many of our citizens.

In Northern Ireland we are committed to tackling deprivation by continuing the work of the Executive as evidenced in the Programme for Government. The latter recognised that 'poverty has for too long blighted the lives of individuals and whole communities'. I took forward this commitment, contained in the draft 2002 Programme for Government, in my 'Building on Progress', Priorities and Plans 2003/06 document. This commitment is underscored by the April 2003 Joint Declaration by the British and Irish Governments which contains a commitment to bring forward a strategic and integrated approach aimed at regenerating areas of greatest disadvantage, particularly those that have suffered the worst impact of the troubles.

Tackling disadvantage and deprivation will not be easy. Problems combine and work together to create a vicious cycle of decline. Breaking this cycle requires Government and the wider public sector to work together with local people, in partnership with the community and voluntary sector, and with input from the private sector.

I am determined that all parts of Government will place the needs of the most deprived people and places at the heart of their work and that all parts of Government will work together to support the implementation of this Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. My Ministerial colleague with responsibility for Social Development has built on the work of the Executive in committing that Department to the task of regenerating our most deprived neighbourhoods and of co-ordinating the work of other Departments in this regard. In support of this I commit other Departments and their public agencies to assist in delivery of the strategy, to ensure that the vicious cycle of decline and deprivation is broken.



**PAUL MURPHY MP**

**SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**