
EUROPEAN UNION STRUCTURAL FUNDS

URBAN II Programme 2000 – 2006 for
Northern Ireland

Consultation Document

Starting the Debate

Table of contents

1 INTRODUCTION

2 THE SCOPE OF THE DOCUMENT

3 URBAN II GUIDELINES

4 NORTHERN IRELAND URBAN POLICY CONTEXT

5 HOW DID URBAN I PERFORM IN NORTHERN IRELAND?

6 IDEAS FOR DISCUSSION

- Idea 1 Rebuilding high conflict areas
- Idea 2 Rebuilding marginalised housing estates
- Idea 3 Gateway urban areas
- Idea 4 De-industrialised landscapes

7 PROGRAMME CONTENT

8 HOW TO IMPLEMENT URBAN II

9 RESPONSES AND TIMESCALES

1. INTRODUCTION

The European Union's (EU) URBAN Initiative started in 1994. The first URBAN Programme in Northern Ireland ran from 1994 – 1999. Across the EU 118 cities participated in the first round of the URBAN Programme. Disadvantaged areas of both Belfast and Derry/Londonderry participated in the Northern Ireland URBAN Programme. The URBAN II Programme will cover the period 2000 – 2006.

The URBAN Initiative focuses on achieving

- coordinated physical, economic and social action in urban areas of high disadvantage, and
- exchange of experience and best practice from participating cities across the European Union.

The first URBAN initiative is now complete and the European Commission has issued Guidelines for the URBAN II Initiative that will apply across the EU for the period 2000 – 2006. Under these Guidelines, Northern Ireland – like other eligible EU regions – is required to submit a proposed strategy for URBAN II to the European Commission by October 2000.

Given the overall allocation to the United Kingdom it is likely that Northern Ireland will be able to attract one programme in the current round. The URBAN II Guidelines state that each programme should deal with a single issue in a single urban area. Under the Guidelines, but in exceptional circumstances a special case can be made to extend the Initiative to more than one urban location in Northern Ireland.

The Department for Social Development (DSD) wishes to initiate a consultation process to identify the priorities for URBAN II in Northern Ireland. This consultation will lead to decisions on the issues and areas to be addressed in the Northern Ireland URBAN Programme 2000 – 2006.

The Programme will need to be developed on the basis of :

- policy priorities and needs of urban areas in Northern Ireland,
- the URBAN II Guidelines published by the European Commission, and
- the proposed priorities for the wider application of the European Structural Funds in Northern Ireland over the period 2000 – 2006. In particular, the URBAN II Programme needs to be distinctive from, but complementary to, the Northern Ireland Transitional Objective 1 Programme 2000– 2005 and the Peace II Programme for Northern Ireland and the Border Counties of Ireland 2000 – 2004.

This document is intended to facilitate the consultation process, which will be as wide and inclusive as possible. The document is intended to provide a framework for an informed and realistic discussion of options and priorities.

The consultation document is structured into nine parts.

- **Section 2** describes the scope and content of this document. Our aim is to provide background analysis, present ideas and ask questions relevant to a high quality and well-informed consultation process.
- **Section 3** provides a brief summary of the URBAN II Guidelines which were published by the European Commission in May 2000 and assesses their implications for the preparation of the URBAN II Community Initiative Programme for Northern Ireland.
- **Section 4** sets out the urban policy context.
- **Section 5** reviews the performance of the first URBAN Initiative as a basis for the development of the new Programme.
- **Section 6** sets out a number of possible alternative but overlapping ideas for URBAN II in Northern Ireland. Each idea is considered within the context of the three dimensions discussed above namely the policy relevance, the experience of URBAN I and the new EU Guidelines.
- **Section 7** looks at possible content of the themes within the context of each defined spatial problem.
- **Section 8** raises issues relating to the implementation of URBAN II, and
- **Section 9** suggests a format for responses to the consultation process.

2. THE SCOPE OF THE DOCUMENT

Consultation documents often suffer from two weaknesses. First, they can provide too much information and second, they can provide too little. In the first case, the approach seems to have been pre-determined and the purpose of the consultation questionable, in the eyes of people wishing to inform the direction of a policy or programme. In the second, the consultation is too vague so that it provides a limited opportunity to have an informed debate about the issues and alternatives that are relevant to the development of an initiative. It also allows some submissions to be easily dismissed because they could have been developed without the appropriate information needed to make a relevant case.

This document attempts to strike a balance between these two positions. It provides background information on the Guidelines, the performance of URBAN I and the aspects of policy relevant to the development of the new Community Initiative. URBAN II will not be prepared on a blank sheet but must be developed within these constraints.

Because of this, some preliminary ideas have been developed that show how URBAN II might be prepared. **It should be emphasised that NO relevant area nor idea submitted will be excluded from proper consideration in this consultation.** The four ideas presented here are set out in order to create an informed, high quality debate about the future of URBAN II in Northern Ireland. You will see a list of questions posed in section 9 in which respondents are asked to evaluate each idea but are also invited to submit **NEW** ideas and programme themes. This document, background information as well as the layout of ideas are designed to help you in this task.

The period for the preparation of URBAN II is limited and it is important that, if we are to have a quality, focused and open engagement about the Initiative, then we should all present our ideas, arguments and claims in a well-informed and positive consultation process. The ideas are presented in order to stimulate thinking about the approach, they are explicitly not exclusive nor agreed priorities for URBAN II. This document is about ***starting the debate.***

3. URBAN II GUIDELINES

The URBAN II Guidelines were published by the European Commission in May 2000. This Section summarises some of the main themes and issues arising from the Guidelines. For a more detailed treatment reference should be made to the Guidelines themselves.

Overall, the URBAN Community Initiative has two objectives:

1. To promote the formulation and implementation of particularly innovative strategies for sustainable economic and social regeneration of small and medium sized towns and cities or of distressed urban neighbourhoods of larger cities;
2. To enhance the exchange of knowledge and experience in relation to sustainable urban regeneration and development in the European Union.

The population coverage of each area should, as a general rule, be at least 20,000 and each bid must present a single problem to be tackled within a coherent geographical area. It will be highly exceptional for a member state to advance more than one area within a programme and this should be recognised in the responses to this consultation document. The selected area should experience high levels of economic, social, educational and physical disadvantage and the Programme must closely involve local people in its design and delivery.

It is therefore important to recognise two important constraints on the development of an Operational Programme for Northern Ireland. The first is that areas must have a contiguous population of 20,000 people with a defining urban problem. Moreover, member states are to ensure that a minimum of Euro 500 per inhabitant of total expenditure is attributed to each eligible area. In other words we must make sure that, whatever area is selected, the amount of expenditure within the programme must, at least, total Euro 500 per head of population living there. An indicative allocation of 16.661 Million euro has been awarded to Northern Ireland. This threshold has implications for how the money is allocated and, as a rule, is likely to limit the selection of more than one target location.

A traditional EU regional policy concern has been with vertical and horizontal integration and the production of synergy in local development. **Horizontal integration** emphasises the relationship between URBAN II and other regeneration programmes. **Vertical** integration relates to the way in which URBAN II fits the regional policy context and problems on the ground. Where both horizontal and vertical integration is found, the Programme is likely to have a synergistic relationship to other Programmes and policies. **Sustainability** is another key theme running through contemporary EU policy vocabulary. It is important that the strategy develops projects that are socially, environmentally and economically sustainable.

The Guidelines emphasise the importance of transnational exchanges of experience. The first URBAN Programme in Northern Ireland has demonstrated that the Northern Ireland Programme had much to offer to other areas in terms of best practice, policy thinking and ideas on delivery. It is important that the ideas developed in URBAN II take account of the possibility to both learn from, as well as contribute to the experience of other towns and cities.

The Guidelines include a list of eligible measures under seven broad headings. These suggest the type of projects that might be funded through the URBAN II Initiative and include:

- Mixed use and environmentally friendly brownfield redevelopment;
- Entrepreneurship and employment pacts;
- Integration of excluded persons and affordable access to basic services;
- Integrated public transport and communications;
- Waste minimisation and treatment: efficient water management and noise reduction, reduction in consumption of hydrocarbon energies;
- Development of the information society technologies, and
- Improvements in governance.

4. NORTHERN IRELAND URBAN POLICY CONTEXT

The second broad consideration for the development of URBAN II in Northern Ireland is the local urban policy context.

It is vital that the proposals for the URBAN II Programme in Northern Ireland are complementary to the Transitional Objective 1 Programme for Northern Ireland 2000 – 2005 and the Peace II Programme for Northern Ireland and the Border Counties 2000 – 2004, both of which will operate under the overall Northern Ireland Community Support Framework 2000 – 2006.

The proposals for both Programmes include an emphasis on the importance of tackling urban issues and promoting regeneration and social inclusion. Clear linkages will need to be forged between URBAN II and Priority 3 (Urban and Social Revitalisation) of the proposed Transitional Objective 1 Programme and Priority 3 (Locally-Based Regeneration and Development) of the proposed Peace II Programme. These Priorities emphasise the reuse of land blighted by violence and economic change, the reconstruction of community capacity and the involvement of social partners in local planning.

These policy objectives are also reflected in the content of both the Londonderry Initiative and Making Belfast Work. The widening of urban policy beyond physical development to include issues such as children, families and community relations is reflected in both strategies as well as in the respective *Vision* statements for both cities. Some of these ideas have been combined in the *Shaping Our Future: Regional Strategic Framework for Northern Ireland*, which has identified the two regional cities, major service centres and key service centres for social, economic and physical renewal.

Cutting across these spatial policies is a concern to promote equality of opportunity and respect for community traditions which were underscored in the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and duties to promote fair treatment and good community relations within government policies and spending programmes. This has been emphasised in the *Partnership for Equality White Paper (1998)* and *NEW TSN (Targeting Social Need) Action Plans*. The Department for Social Development has included URBAN II in their draft *Equality Scheme* and intends to evaluate its impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity. The *NEW TSN Action Plan* emphasised the need for co-ordinated actions in areas of highest social, economic and physical disadvantage. It is crucial that URBAN II is consistent with these strategic priorities and equity and fair treatment will need to be addressed explicitly in the preparation and final design of the Northern Ireland URBAN II Community Initiative Programme.

5. HOW DID URBAN I PERFORM?

The experience of the first URBAN Initiative in Northern Ireland is now undergoing a detailed formal evaluation. The results of that evaluation are not yet available. However, based on the mid-term assessment of the Programme, monitoring reports and case studies it is possible to review the progress and impact of the Initiative as the third input into the development of URBAN II.

The first phase of URBAN Programme funding in Northern Ireland was problem-focused, in that, it was concentrated in areas of high socio-economic disadvantage and physical dereliction in both Belfast and Derry/Londonderry. Moreover, in a variety of ways, the Initiative engaged local communities in the design and delivery of projects. Whilst experience varied across the areas, one of the lasting impacts was the development of experience, community competencies and infrastructure in relation to the management of local programmes. Specific organisations were tasked to manage the Shankill and Upper Springfield Initiatives in Belfast. In Derry/Londonderry a sub-programme was administered by the Londonderry Development Office and individual community groups and neighbourhood partnerships were responsible for project implementation. The transnational element of the Initiative worked effectively at both a local and European level. The sharing of ideas and experiences and the possibility of new joint projects were some of the definitive outputs from the Initiative. The Initiative also achieved good linkages with related programmes in Derry/Londonderry and with target communities, especially in Belfast.

Although the Programme benefited from the involvement of the target communities in the design of local strategies, there was some evidence that this was not extended to the implementation of projects. There was a concern raised by groups in Derry/Londonderry that the process of project funding was too cumbersome and protracted with onerous requirements for business plans, investment appraisals and feasibility studies to support applications. Whilst the Initiative has developed community infrastructure and specific management skills, there remains some uncertainty about how to develop or mainstream these ideas.

The transferability of the Initiative to other areas, problems or policies has been an important learning outcome from the first URBAN Programme in Northern Ireland. The spatial focus on inner-city areas leaves scope to bring the methods of intervention to a range of new places. The experience of integrating URBAN I into mainstream policy initiatives is particularly vital given the fragmentation of local programmes, governance arrangements and now, central Departments, within Northern Ireland.

The current identification of Northern Ireland as a 'Transitional Objective 1 Region' reflects our decline as a European spending priority. As we slide down the regional spending order other regions and new countries will make greater claims on limited structural funds. Yet, in the context of peace, a range of new social problems including drugs, crime and youth alienation are emerging with greater intensity. It is vital that limited resources are used effectively and that local competency can be demonstrated in the management of European programmes and in particular the URBAN II Community Initiative.

6. IDEAS FOR DISCUSSION

The new Guidelines, local policy context and experiences of the first URBAN Programme in Northern Ireland provide the essential context for the development of the URBAN II Community Initiative Programme.

In order to structure the formulation of a relevant and effective set of proposals, a series of preliminary ideas are discussed below.

The Department for Social Development is not suggesting that the Programme will necessarily be based around one of these ideas. Indeed, the Department would welcome suggestions for additional or alternative approaches. However, it is important that the Initiative concentrates on a single problem in one urban location. Only in highly exceptional circumstances will the European Commission consider proposals to address the needs of more than one area.

Four initial ideas are set out for consideration:

- Idea 1 Rebuilding high conflict areas
- Idea 2 Rebuilding marginalised housing estates
- Idea 3 Gateway Urban Areas
- Idea 4 De-industrialised landscapes

A brief rationale is set out for each idea.

The three elements of the experiences of URBAN I, the policy context and the 'fit' with the URBAN II Guidelines are considered for each approach. The item on Guidelines quotes directly from the list of eligible Measures and are likely to form the substance of the Programme actions under that particular idea.

IDEA 1 REBUILDING HIGH CONFLICT AREAS

Rationale

Rigid patterns of religious segregation have long been a feature of Northern Ireland's urban areas. 'Contested territory' is expressed in how we use services and facilities, where we work and in physical divisions such as peace-lines. These areas have also been the setting for some of the worst community violence, deaths and fear. The logic of this idea is to focus on an area blighted by thirty years of violence and to help it to develop its physical, social and economic structures.

Reflections on URBAN I

The focus on the Fountain in the Derry/Londonderry Sub-Programme attempted to address the isolation of the small Protestant community on the Cityside and to help restore confidence in its long-term viability. Similarly, in Belfast, separate initiatives were tailored to the distinctive needs of the communities in the Shankill and Upper Springfield respectively. A notable success of URBAN I has been the local cross-community exchange of experiences, ideas and joint project work.

Policy context

The last three years have seen the emergence of a significant policy debate on the spatial problems created by segregation and territoriality.

The Belfast Agreement highlighted the importance of safe living environments as well as developing and promoting integrated communities.

Some of these ideas have been developed in Strategic Planning Guidance 3 of the *Shaping Our Future Regional Strategic Framework for Northern Ireland*, which identified the respect for segregated living, and the promotion of integrated housing as twin policy priorities.

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive also addressed the problems created by increasing segregation, chill factors and intimidation in creating viable communities in its *Towards a community Relations Strategy* consultation document.

The URBAN II Programme could also draw on the experiences of the Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (Measure 2A on Urban Regeneration) and could contribute to the emerging European agenda on urban sustainability and racial differentials.

However, there is some potential overlap with Priority 3 on 'Local Development' of the proposed Peace II Programme for Northern Ireland and the relationship between these two elements of the proposed Structural Funds support to Northern Ireland in the period 2000 – 2006 would need to be made very explicit.

The fit with URBAN II Measures

The eligible measures contained in the Guidelines that might be prioritised under this approach could include the following:

- Mixed use and environmental friendly brownfield development
- Reclamation of derelict sites and contaminated land
- Rehabilitation of public spaces including green areas
- Increasing security and preventing criminality
- Integration of excluded persons and affordable access to basic services
- Improvement in governance
- Entrepreneurship and employment pacts

Conclusion

The areas that suffered most in the Troubles form an important and legitimate focus for URBAN II. Reconstructing land blighted by sectarian divisions, communities scared by fear and isolation and infrastructure to ensure balanced development in highly contested territory are vital elements of locally relevant urban policy.

IDEA 2 REBUILDING MARGINALISED HOUSING ESTATES

Rationale

One of the difficulties of urban management is that spatial problems are no longer confined to the inner city and new, more complex forms of malaise are to be found in suburban and out-of-town housing estates. As the physical environment in such estates becomes less attractive, problems of high rates of unemployment and benefit dependency and multiple deprivation that often exclude women, children and young people from the benefits available to mainstream society have grown. Employment opportunities are limited and weak community capacity reduces the extent to which self-supported regeneration can be developed or sustained on these estates.

Reflections on URBAN I

There were a number of aspects to the design and implementation of URBAN I that reflected new forms of deprivation and alienation. These included the concern in the Shankill for the role of family in the fabric of the community and in Upper Springfield about creating employment opportunities for young people. In Derry/Londonderry, the Sub-Programme included projects on drug and alcohol abuse, community health and advice on benefits in areas of high disadvantage. A limitation of the scope of URBAN I, however, was its concentration on older, more established inner-city communities in both Belfast and Derry/Londonderry. There is an opportunity for URBAN II to consider a new spatial target for intervention.

Policy Context

There has been recognition of the widening complexity of urban problems at the European, national and local level. In, *Towards an Urban Agenda in the European Union (COM(97)197)*, the Commission highlighted the importance of 'suburban sickness' in reducing the prospects for urban sustainability. The broadening of the Single Regeneration Budget in Great Britain to include a significant social dimension is reflected in a number of developments in Northern Ireland programmes, including the Londonderry Initiative and Making Belfast Work. The report by the Social Exclusion Unit on a *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* emphasises the need for a sharper focus on unpopular housing estates. Indeed, the Housing Executive's *Estate Based Strategy* approach aims to coordinate housing, environmental and community regeneration in the most depressed estates in Northern Ireland. The Department for Social Development's New TSN Action Plan also stresses the priority to target resources more effectively at areas of concentrated need.

The fit with URBAN II Measures

The eligible measures contained in the Guidelines that might be prioritised under this broad theme could include the following:

- Entrepreneurship and employment pacts
- Provision of crèche and nursery facilities
- Development of the potential of information society technologies
- Mixed use and environmental friendly brownfield development
- Reclamation of derelict sites and contaminated land
- Rehabilitation of public spaces including green areas
- Renovation of buildings to accommodate economic and social activities in a sustainable and environmentally friendly manner
- Integration of excluded persons and affordable access to basic services
- Improvement in governance

Conclusion

This idea relates closely to current EU urban regeneration priorities and offers an opportunity to concentrate on an area that has not always received either significant attention from policy makers nor programme resources. However it faces a number of problems related to the selection of a single contiguous area, how to engage communities which often lack well developed organisational structures and how to integrate the efforts of agencies such as the Housing Executive, local Councils and neighbourhood partnerships in the management of the programme.

IDEA 3 GATEWAY URBAN AREAS

Rationale

Smaller urban places along Northern Ireland's border have often been adversely affected by restricted local catchments, variations in exchange rates and physical damage in the conflict. But they now have distinctive opportunities in the context of the peace process and the Single European Market. The programme could concentrate on physical and economic developments to improve the capacity of a strategic urban border gateway in Northern Ireland.

Critical reflections on URBAN

URBAN II provides scope in its Guidelines to include smaller settlements than in the first phase of the Initiative. Smaller settlements tend to be missed in the major urban initiatives yet 30% of Northern Ireland's population live in District Towns. Moreover, there has been little support for the distinctive problems of border towns. The recent problems with exchange rate fluctuations emphasise the precarious and uncontrolled futures for communities living on an international boundary. The opportunity exists to transfer the experiences of URBAN I to an urban gateway.

Policy context

The *Shaping Our Future: Regional Strategic Framework for Northern Ireland* specifically identified 'gateways' as a major development opportunity for Northern Ireland. As borders become less significant as a result of EU cohesion policy, the opportunities for border towns could be maximised. The programme could help them adjust to the spatial realities of the new Europe and recover their position particularly in the context of cross-border structures and implementation bodies. This approach could also develop the experience of programmes such as CRISP and CERS in a border setting.

The fit with URBAN II Measures

The eligible measures contained in the Guidelines that might be prioritised under this approach could include the following:

- Mixed use and environmental friendly brownfield development
- Preservation and enhancement of historic and cultural heritage
- Renovation of buildings to accommodate economic and social activities in a sustainable and environmentally friendly manner
- Reclamation of derelict sites and contaminated land
- Rehabilitation of public spaces including green areas

- Integration of excluded persons and affordable access to basic services
- Improvement in governance

Conclusion

This theme would address a definite and complex problem in a town over-looked by mainstream urban policy. How this approach to URBAN II links with the INTERREG III Community Initiative would need to be clearly articulated. But this idea emphasises the importance of thinking as widely as possible about the nature of urban problems in Northern Ireland in order that the consultation process does not exclude legitimate problems or areas.

IDEA 4 DE-INDUSTRIALISED LANDSCAPES

Rationale

This idea concentrates on an area that has experienced the worst effects of economic change and de-industrialisation. In particular, inner-city communities have been disproportionately affected by the loss of traditional engineering, textiles and clothing employment and have found it difficult to adjust to new global economic realities. The mis-match of skills, long-term and inter-generational unemployment and urban blight are features of these locations.

Critical reflections on URBAN

The main spatial focus of URBAN I has been on traditional inner-city areas that have experienced varying degrees of economic change. In the Shankill area of Belfast, the loss of heavy engineering and shipbuilding has had profound effects on community stability and solidarity. The emphasis on supporting the family unit is a reflection on the depth of the social as well as the economic costs of change. In Derry/Londonderry the decline of the clothing and textile industries and sustained competition from cheaper production centres has exacerbated economic problems.

The dependence of the local economy on a small number of largely institutional employers and de-skilling of the workforce are a consequence of these trends. The reuse of old industrial land, vacant factories and workspace provision could form an important element of this version of the programme.

Policy context

The problems of economic adjustment in declining industrial regions are well recognised at a European level. In their report, *Employment in Europe: Confidence Amidst Uncertainty*, the EU emphasised its commitment to

- promoting SMEs, particularly in the service sector,
- improving the quality of the labour force through training, and
- exploiting business innovation to help regions dependent on declining industries to adjust.

In Northern Ireland, the draft *Economic Development Strategy 2010* emphasises the need to develop a competitive outward looking economy that reduces its reliance on its traditional primary industries. The Enterprise Partners including LEDU and the District Councils are devising local economic strategies that encourage indigenous and high technology industries as a basis for future growth.

The fit with URBAN II Measures

The eligible measures contained in the Guidelines that might be prioritised under this theme could include the following:

- Entrepreneurship and employment pacts
- Support for business, commerce, cooperatives, mutual associations and services for SMEs, business centres, technologies, technology transfer
- Training for new technologies, e.g. computer based production for commercial and green technologies
- Provision of cultural leisure and sports amenities, when they contribute to creating sustainable jobs and social cohesion
- Provision of nursery and create facilities
- Integration of excluded persons and affordable access to basic services
- Mobile units for employment and training advice
- Investment in education and health facilities
- Promotion of customised training for the reintegration of marginal people

Conclusion

There has been considerable emphasis at the local, national and European level on regions suffering from a loss of traditional industries. This remains a stubborn problem requiring innovative responses. In this context, URBAN II must set out how it will add to the initiatives already attempted in these areas, particularly in the context of proposals for the Transitional Objective 1 Programme for Northern Ireland and the Peace II Programme, both of which emphasise the need to develop improved mechanisms for managing industrial change.

7. PROGRAMME CONTENT

It must be remembered that a key task in the preparation of URBAN II is to define a problem spatial area to be targeted. As we can see, even from the presentation of these preliminary ideas, that there are wide range of settings for the Initiative to impact on. This section extends this analysis by exploring the potential content of the individual programmes. Again, these are not exclusive but suggest how we might respond to different problem areas.

Both the Government and the EU have prioritised **Communications and Information Technology** (CIT) as a key training, educational and employment thrust. This has the potential to connect disaffected individuals and communities to new technological opportunities in key growth sectors. If disadvantaged urban areas do not develop skills in the use of CIT they might be further handicapped in their economic and social development. This approach could emphasise training for tele-working, promote access and the use of telemetric services and support the use of information and communication technologies for training, employability, education and culture.

The lack of skills in community management and competencies in local development is a major impediment to urban regeneration. This becomes a more serious problem as urban policy has increasingly emphasised the engagement of communities in local decision making, project implementation and in neighbourhood partnerships. Therefore, there is a need to concentrate on **Capacity Building**, i.e., the development of community knowledge, skills, partnership structures and leadership in the field of physical, social and economic development.

The informality of labour and its potential integration into the economic mainstream is a key challenge in highly deprived urban areas. Informal or intermediary labour markets in the **Social Economy** could be targeted in order to maximise their full economic potential. This would include opportunities such as culture and leisure services, childcare, improving the environment and in the development of local community facilities. Local sourcing of goods and services, the development of business clusters and improving job readiness might also be encouraged.

The URBAN II Guidelines also highlight the potential of innovative **Public Transport** systems particularly in peripheral areas where mobility is a problem for a range of groups including those on low incomes, women, families with children and people with disabilities. The development of flexible, low cost or environmentally friendly transport alternatives could link disadvantaged groups to wider economic and social opportunities.

An emphasis in URBAN I and in the current Guidelines is the **Reuse Of Derelict Buildings and Land**. The potential to regenerate communities blighted by economic, social or ethnic change might be prioritised particularly in areas of high deprivation. Major infrastructure schemes could be targeted at concentrated areas of dereliction and decay as a catalyst for urban renewal.

Again, we need to emphasise that these ideas are not exclusive but are likely to form the sorts of programmes that could be sustained under URBAN II. Respondents are asked to concentrate, not just on the rationale for the inclusion of an area, but are encouraged to tie specific programme ideas to the identified problem.

8. HOW TO IMPLEMENT URBAN II?

As part of the consultation process we are particularly interested in your opinions on the implementation of the Northern Ireland URBAN II Programme. The implementation issues which need to be considered include:

- Who should take the lead in implementation? Government Departments, District Councils, or EU District Partnerships? It is important that the principles of partnership governance are built into any proposed mechanisms.
- Is there a need for new structures to be developed at the local level?
- What role might neighbourhood partnerships play?
- How should individual communities and local development interests play a role in the development and implementation of locally relevant strategies?
- What arrangements should be made to ensure that URBAN II can be effectively monitored?

Again this list of issues is not exhaustive and we welcome new thinking and innovative ideas about how to maximise the potential of the resources available.

9. RESPONSES AND TIMETABLE

Please reply to this consultation document by writing to:

*Project Planning International
Montalto Estate
Spa Road
Ballynahinch
BT24 8PT*

All written submissions must be returned by Friday 23rd August 2000.

Interested parties should, as far as possible, structure their submissions around the broad issues set out below. This is not meant to be restrictive but should ensure some consistency through the consultation process and the treatment of the various submissions.

- The ideas set out in the document interpret the Guidelines, policy priorities and local problems. Are the ideas appropriate or are there additional or alternative approaches which merit consideration?
- What, if any, idea do you feel needs to be prioritised?
- Are there any combinations of ideas that might work together to form a coherent single Programme?
- Are there ideas that you feel should not be prioritised in the final submission? We are interested in refining the objectives and content of the Programme, as far as possible, through the consultation process.
- What geographic area should be considered for inclusion in the Programme? How do you justify the inclusion of this area as a priority?
- If you feel that more than one area should be included please state your justification for this.
- What actions should the programme concentrate on in relation to the problem area identified?
- How should URBAN II be delivered?
- What arrangements should be made to monitor and evaluate URBAN II in Northern Ireland?

The publication of the final URBAN II Guidelines in May 2000 is the first stage in the preparation of the proposals for the URBAN II Programme for Northern Ireland. The proposals must be submitted to the European Commission by late October 2000.

This consultation document aims to facilitate the effective and efficient preparation of the Northern Ireland bid within that time-scale.

The European Commission has a further 5 months in which to negotiate with the Northern Ireland authorities. This means that an agreed framework for the Programme will be in place by around early Spring 2001. At that point the details of the Programme will be finalised by discussion and negotiation in the Programme Monitoring Committee, leading to the production of a detailed Programme Complement and a further 3 months is allowed for this process.

The preparation of the Community Initiative Programme must be accompanied by an *ex ante* appraisal. That appraisal sets out a reasoned justification for Northern Ireland's inclusion in the URBAN II and the problems it might seek to tackle.

This timetable suggests that the first commitments of expenditure under the approved Programme would occur in late Spring or early Summer 2001.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The URBAN Community Initiative

URBAN II is one of the European Union's Community Initiatives which deal with a range of issues which are of concern across the European Union. The URBAN Initiative focuses on achieving coordinated physical, economic and social action in urban areas of high disadvantage, and exchange of experience and best practice from participating cities across the European Union.

Other Community Initiatives are the INTERREG III Programme, LEADER III and the EQUAL Programme. Each of these Programmes will apply in Northern Ireland in the period 2000 – 2006 and separate consultations will be held in relation to the priorities for these other Community Initiatives.

The URBAN II Community Initiative Programme (CIP)

The URBAN II Community Initiative Programme for Northern Ireland 2000 – 2006 is the document agreed between the Northern Ireland authorities and the European Commission which will govern the implementation of URBAN II in Northern Ireland.

The Guidelines

The Guidelines set out the terms of reference for the URBAN II. They explain the objectives of the Initiative, its rationale and the rules governing approved funding. The Guidelines for the URBAN II Programme were published in May 2000. The URBAN II Guidelines, like those for other Community Initiatives are published under the authority of the Structural Funds Regulations which govern the operation of the Structural Funds operations of the European Union.

Eligible Measures

The Guidelines for eligible measures suggest a range of activities and operations which are appropriate for the URBAN II Programme.

The Transitional Objective I Programme for Northern Ireland 2000 - 2005

This Transitional Objective 1 Programme for Northern Ireland is the main form of Structural Funds support to Northern Ireland. Proposals for the Programme have been submitted to the European Commission and are now the subject of negotiation.

Peace II Programme for Northern Ireland and the Border Counties of Ireland 2000 - 2004

The Peace II Programme builds on the Special EU Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties in Ireland, which came to an end in 1999. The Peace II Programme's proposed operations in Northern Ireland will complement the Transitional Objective 1 Programme for Northern Ireland. Proposals for the Peace II Programme have been submitted to the European Union and are now the subject of negotiation.