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URBAN REGENERATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND

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Urban regeneration aims to improve the physical, economic, community and social environment of neighbourhoods, towns and cities with a particular emphasis on tackling disadvantage. This paper identifies the urban regeneration programmes and measures which the Department for Social Development has in place to achieve these aims. The paper also addresses the assessment of impact and evaluation of urban regeneration initiatives.

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SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

Urban regeneration aims to improve the physical, economic, community and social environment of neighbourhoods, towns and cities with a particular emphasis on tackling disadvantage. This paper identifies the urban regeneration programmes and measures the Department for Social Development ('the Department') has in place to achieve these aims.

The framework of programmes and measures include:

- ❑ Urban Development Grants in city centre areas to encourage inward investment and environmental improvement in priority areas by utilising vacant, derelict or under-used land or property.
- ❑ Comprehensive Development Schemes which allow the Department to acquire land for planning and regeneration of selected areas in towns and cities.
- ❑ Environmental Improvement Schemes to improve the physical appearance of towns and cities.
- ❑ Public Realm Works is an extension of Environmental Improvement Schemes to enhance public access areas in Belfast and Londonderry/Derry.

Reinvigoration of town centres addresses a range of social and economic issues:

- ❑ town centre marketing promotion;
- ❑ physical environment;
- ❑ local economy; and
- ❑ leisure facilities.

City centre regeneration in Belfast and Londonderry/Derry illustrates a different emphasis in urban regeneration schemes. In Belfast a major scheme involves private retail investment in Victoria Square, while Ilex, the only Urban Regeneration Company in Northern Ireland, is developing two former military sites for mixed use development in Londonderry/Derry.

European Union funding has played a significant role in social and environmental regeneration in Northern Ireland. The Neighbourhood Renewal programme is a move away from local project based funding to a long term co-ordinated approach, with the Department in the lead role. The strategy is a long-term cross-departmental regeneration programme linking major government strategies and policies. It focuses on 36 of the most deprived areas in Northern Ireland with four interlinking strategic objectives for renewal; community, economic, social and physical.

This research paper looks at urban regeneration schemes underway in cities and towns throughout Northern Ireland and concludes with a look at the evaluation of urban regeneration initiatives and a recent Department publication 'Vital and Viable' (August 2007) that provides key priorities for the regeneration of towns and cities outside Belfast and Londonderry/Derry.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Prior to the establishment of the Department for Social Development (the Department) in December 1999, the Department of the Environment (DOE) had responsibility for urban regeneration while the Department for Health and Social Services was responsible for community development. These functions were brought together under the Department's Urban Regeneration and Community Development Group (URCDG). URCDG's main business is the establishment of policy and strategy and the implementation of programmes targeting social need by addressing the social, economic and physical regeneration of cities, towns and villages in Northern Ireland. The table below illustrates programmes in place throughout Northern Ireland.

Table 1: Urban Regeneration Programmes

	Town Centre Regeneration	City Centre Regeneration	
		Belfast	L/Derry
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Comprehensive Development Schemes ❑ Town Centre Re-invigoration (only open to Councils)* ❑ Building Sustainable Prosperity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Urban Development Grants ❑ Urban 2 ❑ Victoria Square ❑ Laganside ❑ Building Sustainable Prosperity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Urban Development Grants ❑ Ilex Urban Regeneration Company ❑ Building Sustainable Prosperity
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Peace 2 ❑ Neighbourhood Renewal** ❑ Building Sustainable Prosperity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Peace 2 ❑ Neighbourhood Renewal** ❑ Urban 2 ❑ Laganside ❑ Building Sustainable Prosperity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Peace 2 ❑ Neighbourhood Renewal** ❑ Building Sustainable Prosperity
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Environmental Improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Environmental Improvement & Public Realm Works ❑ Regeneration of Cathedral Area* ❑ Urban 2 ❑ Laganside ❑ Belfast Streets Ahead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Environmental Improvement & Public Realm Works

*Measure 2:11 Area Based Regeneration – Belfast, L/Derry and Regional Cities and Towns is an ERDF Measure with 3 strands:- i) Neighbourhood Renewal ii) Regeneration of the Cathedral Quarter of Belfast iii) Town Centre Reinvigoration (only open to applications from Councils)

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2.0 URBAN REGENERATION POLICY FRAMEWORK

The major themes in urban regeneration are set out below¹ and illustrate its inter-departmental nature:

- Economic Regeneration and Funding
- Physical and Environmental Aspects
- Social and Community Issues
- Employment, Education and Training
- Housing

The policy framework within which the URCDG operates is determined by a number of government strategies and programmes including:

- Sustainable Development Strategy (May 2006);
- Shaping Our Future – Regional Development Strategy (September 2001);
- A Shared Future (March 2005);
- Area Development Plans;
- The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy; and
- Living Over the Shops – Town Centre Living Initiative Areas.

[Shaping Our Future: Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025](#)² (‘the RDS’) guides all development of the ‘region’ until 2025. All planning policies and development plans prepared by DOE Planning Service and all development schemes prepared by the Department have to be in general conformity with the RDS³. The Department for Regional Development’s (DRD) public consultation on Draft Planning Policy Statement 5 ‘Retailing, Town Centres and Commercial Leisure Developments’ closed on 3 November 2006.

3.0 DSD POLICY OBJECTIVES

DSD’s policy objective for regeneration, in pursuance of its statutory authority, is to promote and implement a comprehensive approach to tackling social, economic and physical regeneration and to redress disadvantage in towns and cities across Northern Ireland.

All of DSD’s urban regeneration activity is directed at supporting both people and the places where they live, work and socialise. It therefore includes a wide range of physical, community, social and economic initiatives⁴.

¹ Regeneration: A Handbook; British Urban Regeneration Association (BURA)
<http://www.bura.org.uk/publications/handbook/handbookcontents.htm>

² Shaping Our Future: Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland (September 2001) DRD available at: <http://applications.drni.gov.uk/publications/document.asp?docid=5567>

³ The Planning (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003.

⁴ Clooney Regeneration Masterplan (October 2006) DSD.

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Urban regeneration schemes are the responsibility of Belfast Regeneration Office (BRO), North West Development Office or Regional Development Office, depending on their location. These offices work up schemes in conjunction with Roads, Planning & Construction Services and also with District Councils.

DSD BUDGET

The Department has a total of £135.4 million 2007-08 for Urban Regeneration/Community Development. In addition to resources for 2007 – 2008, the Department has been allocated £15.1 million for Urban Regeneration Non-Cash Costs.⁵

The Department's Business Plan for 2007 – 2008⁶ shows the following budget and targets set for urban regeneration to meet Strategic Objective 3 '*to improve the physical, economic, community and social environment of neighbourhoods, towns and cities in Northern Ireland with a particular emphasis on tackling disadvantage*'.

Table 2: City and Town Centre Regeneration

PSA Target	Budget
Continuing to progress a major development project in Victoria Square, Belfast and at least 20 schemes to assist in the physical, economic and social reinvigoration of towns and cities.	Resource: £22.073m Capital: £56.174 Total: £78.247
Targets	
To have brought Victoria Square to practical completion by 31 March 2008.	
To have reached Heads of Agreement in respect of Development Agreements for North East Quarter of Belfast, Coleraine, Enniskillen, Bangor and Holywood.	
To have initiated and progressed work in the development schemes in towns and cities.	
To have progressed opportunities for the alternative use of redundant military and police sites in agreement with a disposal programme by the MoD and the PSNI.	
To have progressed Londonderry/Derry City Centre Public Realm Scheme.	
To have developed Masterplans which will provide a framework for the promotion implementation and timing of urban regeneration initiatives for 6 towns and cities.	
By March 2008 to have developed physical regeneration Masterplans for 5 areas of Belfast as referred to in <i>Renewing Communities</i> .	
By March 2008, through the Urban Development Grant Scheme, to have ensured an average of £3 private sector funding for every £1 public expenditure on capital projects.	
By 31 March 2008 to have completed 18 schemes and to have progressed a further 18	

⁵ DSD Corporate Business Plan 2007 – 2008 Appendix 2.

⁶ www.dsdni.gov.uk

schemes, in agreement with District Councils and other statutory agencies to at least design and appointment of contractors.

By March 2008 to have progressed a programme for the promotion and marketing of 17 towns and cities to attract more retail service sustainability.

By March 2008, to have sold 14 acres in new town lands.

By 31 March 2008 to have completed 4 capital build projects and commenced 5 others, and to have progressed a range of other measures in 29 towns and villages.

By 31 March 2008 to have taken forward a programme of land acquisition and disposal along targeted arterial routes, to enhance the vitality/economic prosperity of main routes into Belfast City Centre.

4.0 DSD PROGRAMMES AND MEASURES

This section of the paper looks at city and town centre regeneration programmes. The paper focuses first on programmes and measures in Belfast and Londonderry/Derry and this is followed by measures available for the reinvigoration of regional town centres.

Measures focusing on Belfast and Londonderry/Derry include:

MAKING BELFAST WORK

This initiative was launched in July 1988 to address the economic, educational, social, health and environmental problems facing people living in the most disadvantaged areas of Belfast. It targeted 32 wards in Belfast, allocating £275m to support over 350 projects and was additional to mainstream programmes of departments and public bodies. The initiative was delivered by government departments working with appropriate public bodies, voluntary agencies and community groups. Making Belfast Work is no longer in existence and the administration of projects has passed to Belfast Regeneration Office (BRO).

LONDONDERRY REGENERATION INITIATIVE (1988 – 2004)

This initiative was introduced in 1988 providing opportunities to directly address social disadvantage. Funding was distributed through Health, Education and Employment Agencies to support "extra" projects or programmes. Following a review of the initiative in 1995-96 more resources were delivered directly through the Community Sector. Between 1998 and 31 March 2004, the Londonderry Regeneration Initiative provided just under £42m to a wide variety of programmes and projects through a Town Centre Development Programme, a Promotion Programme and a Community Development Programme. Implementation of the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, which

commenced on 1 April 2004, will build on and complement the work of Londonderry Regeneration Initiative⁷.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT AND PUBLIC REALM WORKS

The largest single scheme carried out in Belfast was the Donegall Square Environmental Improvement Scheme. The scheme, which was completed in 1996, cost £1.76m of which the Department contributed £1.18m, the balance being funded by Belfast City Council.

In Londonderry/Derry, North West Development Office provided funding of £10,000 towards the development of public art pieces on the waterfront to mark local events of interest including the famine emigration. The art pieces are formed from original wooden piles reclaimed from the old quays at Lisahally where the U-boats were berthed following their surrender at the battle of the North Atlantic.

Public Realm Works are an extension of Environmental Improvement schemes for the development of high quality city centre spaces and involve the development of promenades, boulevards and squares for public attractions. The aim is to create neutral spaces for both visitors and those working and living in the area to meet and relax⁸.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

Urban Development Grants are discretionary grants used for promoting job creation, inward investment and environmental improvement, by developing vacant, derelict or underused land or buildings in priority areas. Priority is given to schemes within the Belfast Regeneration Office Team areas in Belfast and within the City Centre and Waterside Business Districts in Londonderry/Derry. There is also flexibility to respond to urgent needs outside priority areas. Increasingly, grants will be directed towards Neighbourhood Renewal areas. A range of physical development projects that may attract Urban Development Grants include inner/middle city housing, retail, commercial and light industrial.

For physical development projects, the amount of grant offered will be the minimum necessary to trigger a scheme. This will usually take the form of a cash grant to cover the funding gap or shortfall between the cost of the development and its value on completion. In Belfast a shortfall of up to a maximum of 40% of total development costs may be applicable for speculative schemes i.e. for selling or renting on completion. In Londonderry/Derry this figure is 30% of total development costs. Projects undertaken on an owner/occupier basis may attract grants of up to 40% of eligible costs on refurbishment works and 30% on new build works. All grant offers are subject to an appropriate sharing of risks and benefits with the applicant⁹.

⁷ http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/urcdg-urban_regeneration/programmes_measures/special_measures_focusing_on_belfast_and_londonderry/lr_i.htm

⁸ First Day Brief.

⁹ http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/urcdg-urban_regeneration/programmes_measures/special_measures_focusing_on_belfast_and_londonderry/udg.htm

5.0 REINVIGORATION OF TOWN CENTRES

Schemes for town centre regeneration throughout Northern Ireland are highlighted below. In a later section of the paper, current urban regeneration schemes taking place in regional towns, Belfast and Londonderry/Derry are highlighted.

KEY PRIORITIES

- City and town regeneration must address the following priorities:
- Sustainability – taking account of social inclusivity, environmental impact and economic health;
- Design – of a high quality linked with the provision of public realm¹⁰;
- Retailing – seen as key to successful town and city centres in projecting a unique identity in the face of an increasing dominance of national retailers and out-of-town shopping centres; and
- Variety – leisure, entertainment, sporting and recreational pursuits¹¹.

COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES

Comprehensive Development Schemes have vesting powers under the Planning Order 1991 where the Department considers it expedient that any area should be developed, redeveloped or improved as a whole. Comprehensive Development Schemes allow the Department to acquire and dispose of land for the planning and regeneration of selected areas of towns and cities¹². This is done following public consultation and in accordance with plans for the regeneration of the area. Schemes are identified for the programme through a variety of sources; through the Department identifying an area in need of intervention or requests from politicians, developers and planners¹³.

Comprehensive development projects can be complex and involve processes in respect of large sites and key buildings. Typically these involve selecting a private sector partner contracted by the Department to carry out the work through a development agreement. The Department's role could involve securing the overall sit assembly through vesting including its own land and other Departments' land. This involves ensuring good design in developments, compliance with other policy and planning requirements, suppressing roadways, providing complimentary environmental improvement and public realm work to finish the scheme.¹⁴

The detailed process schemes are taken through involves:

- Economic Appraisal;
- Identification of property owners;
- Preparation of draft Vesting Order and Development Scheme;
- Consultation with the local District Council;

¹⁰ 'Public realm' develops high quality city centre spaces.

¹¹ 'Vital and Viable: A good practice guide for breathing new life into cities and towns' DSD August 2007.

¹² Under the authority of the Planning Order 1991.

¹³ www.dsdni.gov – Urban Regeneration.

¹⁴ Department's First Day Brief.

- Publication of Vesting Order and Development Scheme;
- Negotiation with objectors;
- Arranging Public Inquiry, if necessary;
- Making Vesting Order and adopting Development Scheme;
- Becoming owner of all properties within the CD area and taking responsibility for their future management and repairs;
- Settlement of compensation for each property vested;
- Co-ordinating arrangements for relocation of existing occupiers of vested properties;
- Site clearance, demolition, infrastructure, environmental improvement work;
- Disposal of sites in accordance with the Development Scheme either directly to the public sector, agencies or to the private sector by way of a Developer's Brief¹⁵.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES

Environmental Improvement Schemes are used to improve the appearance of towns and cities and to regenerate the area by restoring confidence and attracting new investment. Public Realm is an extension of this work to develop high quality city centre spaces, through the development of promenades, boulevards and squares for public attractions¹⁶.

Public Realm Works form part of environmental improvement in areas where the public has access including streets, parks and squares. It encompasses street furniture, signage and lighting and may include art work and sculptures¹⁷.

In Belfast, Environmental Improvement Schemes are co-ordinated and funded by Belfast Regeneration Office. In February 2005 the Department published a Public Realm Strategy¹⁸ for Belfast City Centre outlining key projects and principles for the public realm to be developed. In Londonderry/Derry schemes are the responsibility of the North West Development Office and elsewhere they are co-ordinated by the Regional Development Office. These offices work up schemes in conjunction with Roads, Planning & Construction Services and also with District Councils.

LANDS SERVICE

The Lands Service promotes physical regeneration and development in the former 'New Towns' and manages the interim estate until it is required for a scheme. Land formerly acquired for the 'New Towns' of Craigavon and Antrim/Ballymena is now being sold in a phased programme to the private sector for development. This brings in extra receipts for Government as well as increasing the rateable values for the three Council areas concerned. Management of the Interim Estate is land and property acquired for future roads and Comprehensive Development Schemes, which is managed until the scheme is completed.

¹⁵ <http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/urcdg>

¹⁶ Department's First Day Brief.

¹⁷ Belfast City Centre Public Realm Masterplan Report, DSD January 2006

www.dsdni.gov.uk/pr-masterplan06

¹⁸ http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/people_and_place_public_realm_strategy_for_bcc.pdf

6.0 EU STRUCTURAL FUNDS PROGRAMME

The Department has a further £1 million through the EU Peace Programme¹⁹. These programmes address community, economic and environmental issues throughout Northern Ireland.

PEACE 2

The Peace 2 programme is a distinctive European Union Structural Funds Programme aimed at reinforcing progress towards a peaceful and stable society and to promote reconciliation. It will carry forward the distinctive aspects of Peace 1, which came to an end in 1999, but with a new economic focus. The Peace 2 Programme's operation for Northern Ireland will complement the Building Sustainable Prosperity Programme for Northern Ireland and the Urban Community Initiative focused on North Belfast. EU assistance of up to 75% of funding is available and Government may make up the balance of the project costs.

The Department is responsible for overseeing delivery, by the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland (formerly NIVT), of the following Measures:

- Measure 2.3 - Building the Social Economy (European Social Fund [ESF]) An Intermediary Funding Body (IFB) consisting of a partnership between the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland and the Social Economy Agency will deliver this measure
- Measure 2.4a -Pathway to Inclusion (ESF)
- Measure 2.6 - Promoting Active Citizenship (European Regional Development Fund (ERDF))
- Measure 2.7 - Developing Community Infrastructure (ERDF)
- Measure 2.8 - Accompanying Infrastructure Support (ERDF)

The Department is also responsible for the implementation of Measure 2.11 (Area Based Regeneration - Belfast, Londonderry/Derry and Regional Cities and Towns). This ERDF Measure has 3 distinct strands:

- Neighbourhood Renewal
- Regeneration of the Cathedral Quarter area of Belfast
- Town Centre Reinvigoration (only open to applications from Councils)

£2.6m has also been earmarked for projects that will create social and economic regeneration benefits in the Cathedral Quarter area of Belfast and provide a range of services to develop the area as a focus for artistic and cultural activity.

A £2m package will help town and city centres in Northern Ireland that have suffered seriously from the violence of the past 30 years. The package will support projects, promoted by local councils, in Belfast, Londonderry/Derry, Antrim, Dungannon,

¹⁹ DSD Corporate Business Plan 2007 – 2008 Appendix 2.

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Omagh, Strabane, Newry, Warrenpoint, Kilkeel, Crossmaglen, Enniskillen, Armagh, Lurgan, Limavady, Dungiven, Ballykelly and Coleraine²⁰.

URBAN 2 - COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

The European Union's Urban Initiative started in 1994. Belfast and Londonderry/Derry, along with 113 other European cities participated in the first Urban Programme which ran from 1994-1999.

Urban 2 aims to build on the successes of the Urban 1 Programme and the Programme focuses on disadvantaged urban areas within Inner North Belfast. Urban 2 complements the Peace 2 programme and the Building Sustainable Prosperity Programme for Northern Ireland.

The Urban 2 programme is a European Structural Fund which is worth in excess of £10.5 million pounds to the Inner North Belfast Area. Belfast Regeneration Office acts as the Managing Authority for this Fund. This high profile programme is wide-ranging and aims to address a diverse range of issues such as unemployment, transport and community relations.

The Urban initiative focuses on achieving:

- co-ordinated 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

To date a wide range of projects have benefited from Urban 2 funding. Notable high profile success stories include:

- The Mount Sports Zone: Urban 2 funding contributed to the construction of a new multi purpose sports centre in the Tigers Bay Area of North Belfast;
- The 123 House Makeover: Funding enabled the refurbishment of the 123 House community centre; and
- The Cancer Lifeline: Funding enabled the Cancer Lifeline project base to be refurbished and to allow the charity to continue to provide support to those in the community who are dealing with cancer²¹.

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY²²

The Northern Ireland Programme for Building Sustainable Prosperity (BSP) has as its main objective *'to move Northern Ireland to a state of sustainable prosperity in a competitive modern economy by focusing on the restructuring of it's businesses and the key skills development of it's people while maintaining a quality environment'*.

²⁰ http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/urcdg-urban_regeneration/programmes_measures/european_union_structural_funds_programme/peace2.htm

²¹ http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/urcdg-urban_regeneration/programmes_measures/european_union_structural_funds_programme/urban2.htm

²² http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/urcdg-urban_regeneration/programmes_measures/european_union_structural_funds_programme/bsp.htm

The Department has responsibility for:

- ❑ Measure 3.1- Urban Revitalisation, (not open to the public for application as it utilises existing Government expenditure programmes)
- ❑ Measure 3.2 - Advice and Information Services, and
- ❑ Measure 3.3 - Community Sustainability.

INTERREG 3A - COMMUNITY INITIATIVE²³

This is a Community Initiative programme run jointly with the Border Region of Ireland. The primary objective of the 2000 to 2006 phase of Interreg was to strengthen economic and social cohesion in the community by promoting cross-border, trans-national and interregional co-operation and balanced development of the community territory. Within this context the overall aim of the Northern Ireland / Ireland Interreg 3A programme was to promote sustainable integrated regional development across the eligible region by building on the progress made under previous Interreg programmes and by concentrating on the strategic dimension of cross-border development which involves and benefits local communities.

This programme had four priorities:

- ❑ Integrated Local Development Strategies
- ❑ Supporting Physical Infrastructure & the Environment
- ❑ Civic & Community Networking
- ❑ Technical Assistance

The Department has responsibility for delivery of Interreg 3A in Northern Ireland. In conjunction with the Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs, they are responsible for 50% of the funding in Measure 3.1: Social & Community Infrastructure. The actual implementation is carried out by Co-operation Ireland in conjunction with Area Development Management and Combat Poverty Agency (both Southern organisations). All projects must be genuinely cross-border.

The Programme has until 2008 for closure. Currently projects already running are being administered. The Interreg 4 programme is with the EU Commissioners for approval²⁴. There is no specific Urban Regeneration element, but if public sector bodies come together to submit a proposal for an urban regeneration project it will be assessed for funding.

NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL²⁵

In June 2003, Government launched its *People and Place – A Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal*. The strategy seeks to target those communities throughout Northern Ireland who are suffering the highest levels of deprivation. It is also about bringing together the work of all Government Departments in partnership with local

²³ http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/urcdg-urban_regeneration/programmes_measures/european_union_structural_funds_programme/interreg3a.htm

²⁴ EUSPB telephone enquiry 3.9.2007.

²⁵ http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/urcdg-urban_regeneration/neighbourhood_renewal.htm

people to tackle disadvantage and deprivation in all aspects of everyday life. The total population affected by deprivation throughout Northern Ireland is approximately 280,000 – an average of one person in six.

A key element for the strategy is the establishment of Neighbourhood Partnerships in each Neighbourhood Renewal Area as a vehicle for local planning and implementation. Each Neighbourhood Partnership should include representatives of key political, statutory, voluntary, community and private sector stakeholders. Together, they are expected to develop long term visions and action plans designed to deliver improvements to the area.

The key principles of the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy are that it:

- Focuses on the worst levels of deprivation;
- Puts public services at the centre of regeneration; seeks more effective co-ordination of services, funding and activities at a local neighbourhood level;
- Supports local people to drive forward regeneration;
- Depends on partnership working between communities and Government, with Government working in a joined-up way; and
- Provides a long-term commitment; the strategy covers a 7-10 year period²⁶.

'AREAS AT RISK PILOT PROGRAMME'

The 'Areas at Risk Pilot Programme' was launched in June 2006. It has a budget of £3 million over two years (2006/07 and 2007/08) and will target 10 areas outside the Noble 10% (Neighbourhood Renewal areas), but deemed to be at risk. The programme focuses on building social cohesion within the area and with neighbouring areas to promote a wider sense of belonging.

7.0 CURRENT SCHEMES

The section of the paper which follows provides information on current schemes which are highlighted in the DSD Business Plan 2007 – 2008 and for which a total spend of £78.2 million is indicated.

BELFAST CITY CENTRE²⁷

*The Department, with its remit for physical, economic and social regeneration, has a major responsibility to ensure the implementation of New TSN objectives within regeneration schemes it supports. Maximising the accessibility of Belfast City Centre from all parts of Belfast will be a key requirement of any regeneration initiatives supported by the Department*²⁸.

²⁶ First Day Brief.

²⁷ All information on Belfast City Centre regeneration taken from DSD First Day Brief unless stated otherwise.

²⁸ Belfast City Regeneration Policy Statement: paragraph 4.

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In April 2004 the Department published the Government's Regeneration Policy Statement for Belfast City Centre. The Regeneration Policy Statement provides the direction needed to guide and maximise the regeneration potential of investment in the City Centre for the benefit of Belfast and the wider Northern Ireland region.

The Regeneration Policy Statement takes cognisance of policy and guidance set down in the Regional Development Strategy and Regional Transportation Strategy. It also reflects Government's priority support for a significant retail led development scheme at Victoria Square. It sets a high but attainable vision for Belfast, establishing it as a premier City for the 21st century. There are five priority-guiding themes at the heart of this transformation set out in the Regeneration Policy Statement.

The five priority guiding themes for Belfast City Centre are:

- Retail
- Office/Business
- Tourism/Leisure
- Connectivity/Public Realm
- Reinforcing City Communities²⁹

RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

Mixing retail led development with leisure, residential and office uses is important in generating a 24-hour economy. The location of retail development is carefully considered by the Regeneration Policy Statement which gives priority to the Victoria Square Scheme along with complimentary retail development in the North East Quarter and North West Quarter of the Shopping Core, reflecting the significant regeneration benefits that appropriate development in these locations will bring to the City as a whole.

VICTORIA SQUARE

The largest single investment of its kind ever made in Belfast, the Victoria Square Scheme is expected to provide 3,000 jobs during the three year construction period and another 3,000 permanent jobs, not all additional, in businesses in the Victoria Square Development when it opens. The demolition of the existing buildings in Victoria Square commenced in early 2004 and it is expected to open its doors in March 2008.

PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY

The Public Realm Strategy³⁰ outlines key projects and principles that should be adhered to in order that the public realm can be developed cohesively. The Public Realm Strategy for Belfast published 2005/06 had a capital investment programme of £14 million³¹. However, DSD Corporate Business Plan 2007-2008 states there is a £11.7 million Capital Investment Programme whose *'key aim is to create neutral centres that are accessible to all sections of the community, contributing strongly to the goals of A Shared Future.'*

²⁹ Belfast City Centre Regeneration Policy Statement (April 2004) DSD.

³⁰ http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/people_and_place_public_realm_strategy_for_bcc.pdf

³¹ DSD Corporate Plan 2006 - 2008

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BELFAST STREETS AHEAD

Belfast Streets Ahead is part of Belfast Regeneration (responsibility of Belfast Regeneration Office). DSD's 'Belfast City Centre Public Realm Improvement Strategy' (2004) set out the vision for improving Belfast's streets. An Action Plan (2006) has been taken forward by a steering group³².

A DSD press release 12 June 2007³³ announced the start of a £16m programme involving the transformation of fourteen of Belfast's main streets and public places. The work is to be completed in 2009. An important element of the programme will involve an investment of £500,000 to commission new art works to compliment the 'new streets'³⁴. An artist's impression of how Belfast may look is also available³⁵.

LAGANSIDE³⁶

The Department has taken over the legacy of the Laganside Corporation. Laganside Land Holdings, Development Agreements and statutory responsibilities have transferred to the Department and will be managed by Belfast City Centre Regeneration Directorate which will also administer Laganside funding for the arts and community sector, this includes:

- The bed and soil of the River Lagan Impoundment;
- Lagan Weir and Lookout;
- River management, operational and navigational responsibilities within the designated area;
- Public areas including walkways, squares and public art;
- Three managed workspace buildings; and
- The Laganside Grants Scheme for Community and Arts based regeneration.

LONDONDERRY/DERRY

The 'Londonderry Regeneration Initiative' was introduced in 1988 providing opportunities to directly address social disadvantage. Funding has been distributed through Health, Education and Employment Agencies to support "extra" projects or programmes. Following the review of Londonderry Regeneration Initiative in 1995-96 priorities and targets were refined and many more resources delivered directly through the Community Sector. The initiative consisted of three main elements:

- A Town Centre Development Programme,
- A Promotion Programme, and
- A Community Development Programme.

The initiative operated until 31 March 2004 and provided funding of almost £42m to a wide variety of programmes and projects in some of the most disadvantaged areas of Londonderry/Derry. Implementation of the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy

³² Belfast Streets Ahead Action plan steering group; DSD, Belfast City Council, Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce, Belfast City Centre Management Company, Translink, PSNI, Planning Service and Roads Service.

³³ http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/news_items/major-makeover-belfast.htm

³⁴ Announcement by Minister at launch of Belfast Streets Ahead 12 June 2007.

³⁵ www.dsdni.gov.uk/streetsahead-pics.htm

³⁶ http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/urcdg-urban_regeneration/laganside.htm

commenced on 1 April 2004 and will build on and complement the work of Londonderry Regeneration Initiative.

ILEX URBAN REGENERATION COMPANY

Ilex is the only regeneration company in Northern Ireland, and was established in 2003 by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) and the Department to plan, develop and sustain the economic, physical and social regeneration of the Derry City Council area and the North West region. It is funded by OFMDFM and the Department under the Reinvestment and Reform Initiative. Ilex's principal aim is to engage the public and private sector in a sustainable regeneration strategy.

Urban Regeneration Companies (URCs) are a formal partnership of key representatives of the public and private sector who deliver physical and economic regeneration in specific areas. Having provided a strategic overview of the needs of an area to guide investment decisions by the public and private sector, they involve stakeholders and local businesses and engage with local communities in delivering agreed strategic objectives.

URCs have been operating successfully in Scotland, England and Wales. The Scottish Executive website states:

Early evaluation of the URC programme in England shows strong evidence that the confidence of the private sector to invest in an area has increased and the programmes themselves are making significant progress in delivering their objectives. This is attributed to the perception of a well-managed area, a commitment from key decision takers to work together and publicly funded early actions to set favourable conditions for growth.

There are currently five Pathfinder URCs in Scotland with the intention to establish a sixth. Each Pathfinder will operate for a period of 10-20 years with funding from the Scottish Executive from 2004 – 2008 of £66 million³⁷.

A Summary Report based on a consultation in Scotland on URCs and published in June 2004 found that:

This consultation process has confirmed that there is general support in Scotland for the establishment of URCs set firmly within a national policy framework and the community planning process. It is clear though that a "one size fits all" approach is not supported and URCs are not seen as a panacea for all regeneration activities but should be considered as one of a selection of tools which can be used to accelerate growth and deliver regeneration. An URC should only be considered where it adds value, there is strong local support and clear agreement amongst partners on outcomes³⁸.

³⁷ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Housing/regeneration-/17735>

³⁸ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/consultations/rural/urcsr-00.asp>

THE ILEX REGENERATION PLAN

In 2003 the Department published an urban design strategy 'The Heart of the City' Derry. The Ilex Regeneration Plan is supported through programmed expenditure by the Department and commits to the development and enhancement of Londonderry/Derry's public realm. This includes linking Ebrington Barracks to the city side by a new pedestrian/cycle bridge³⁹.

The Regeneration Plan's primary purpose is to articulate a focused and visionary, integrated regeneration strategy for the Derry City Council area and to provide a platform for the delivery of critical economic and spatial interventions by all the public executive bodies and Ilex in an operational partnership. While the spatial focus of the Plan is on the geographic core of the city, it is not intended to be a comprehensive or detailed integration of all spatial planning for the area. The Plan proposes critical, high impact interventions within the context of a focused economic development strategy⁴⁰.

Ilex has been specifically tasked with the development of two former security bases, Ebrington and Fort George. Together, the sites add 40 acres of development land to the city's land stock and provide a major opportunity to boost economic development and regeneration. Mixed-use development of both sites is envisaged to maximise their potential in education, tourism, retail and residential development. The revitalisation of the riverfront is a key objective of the company and apart from developing the sites of Ebrington and Fort George, Ilex works in collaboration with a broad range of public and private sector partners in a sustainable regeneration strategy to exploit the strengths and opportunities of the Derry City Council area⁴¹.

In December 2005 funding of £8 million was announced for a public realm scheme running from Waterloo Place through Guildhall Square and linking to the new development at the Old City Hotel site in Foyle Street. This will complement the £10 million Walled City Signature Tourism Destination project led by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board.

INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT FUND (IDF)

Ilex is the coordinating body for IDF which is channelling some £33 million into regeneration projects in tourism, education, enterprise, entrepreneurship, arts and culture, built heritage and infrastructure.

NORTH WEST CHALLENGE FUND

In recognition of the importance of Arts & Culture within regeneration a total of £4 million has been earmarked by the North West Challenge Fund. £3.2 million is being spent on capital projects in seven venues in L/Derry and the remaining £800,000 has been set aside to commission a public artwork within the city. This will be the largest public art commission ever held in the island of Ireland.

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³⁹ DSD First Day Brief

⁴⁰ <http://www.ilex-urc.co.uk/index.cfm/do/about-ilex>

⁴¹ <http://www.ilex-urc.co.uk/index.cfm/do/about-ilex>

In Northern Ireland the Regional Development Office of the Department is the lead agency for urban regeneration outside of Belfast and the North West. The working definition of urban is greater than 4,500 residents⁴². Although this paper is concerned with Urban Regeneration Programmes, it should be noted that Rural Development Programmes are also running throughout Northern Ireland⁴³.

TOWN CENTRE PROMOTIONS AND MARKETING SCHEMES

Town centre promotions and marketing schemes are to encourage local residents and visitors to use retail and other facilities in regional town and city centres⁴⁴.

COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES

Schemes being progressed include £150 million schemes in Bangor and Coleraine and a £20 million scheme in Enniskillen⁴⁵. The Department has set a target to continue using its land acquisition and development powers to tackle areas of underutilised land in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas⁴⁶.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

The Urban Development Grant programme has been running in Belfast and Londonderry/Derry for many years and has recently been extended on a pilot basis to five regional towns; Strabane, Lurgan, Ballymoney, Larne and Dungannon.

PUBLIC REALM AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

Public Realm Work in support of physical town centre regeneration has commenced in Armagh and Newcastle. Schemes have also been undertaken in Londonderry/Derry and many of the district towns such as Armagh, Bangor, Cookstown, Coleraine, Downpatrick, Enniskillen, Lisburn, Magherafelt, Portadown, Omagh, Strabane Portrush, Tandragee and Warrenpoint⁴⁷.

Major schemes completed within the past year include Omagh town centre (£1.8 m) and Enniskillen (£1.2 m). In addition a £3.1m Environmental Improvements scheme to compliment a new Arts Centre in the Omagh Riverside area will be completed later this year.

Work has commenced in Newcastle on the promenade and Main Street (£3.7m) and will be phased over an 18-month period until May 2008. The regeneration scheme currently being undertaken in Newcastle was awarded the Northern Ireland Public Realm Award sponsored by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland in recognition of its significant and beneficial impact on the appearance and enjoyment of Newcastle.

⁴² http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/rdo_areas_we_deal_with.pdf

⁴³ <http://www.dardni.gov.uk/index/rural-development.htm>

⁴⁴ Department's First Day Brief.

⁴⁵ DSD Corporate Business Plan 2007 – 2008.

⁴⁶ DSD Corporate Business Plan 2007 – 2008 Appendix 2.

⁴⁷ http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/urcdg-urban_regeneration/programmes_measures/reinvigoration_town_centres/environmental_improvement_schemes.htm

In Armagh a Public Realm Scheme is due to commence later this year as part of the Armagh City Centre Integrated Development Plan and will take up to 3 years to complete at a total cost of £6m.

Other major scheme proposals are being worked up for Lurgan, Portadown, Dungannon, Lisburn and Carrickfergus.

Neighbourhood Renewal

The worst 10% of deprived neighbourhoods across Northern Ireland was identified using the New Noble Multiple Deprivation Measure. Following extensive consultation, this resulted in a total of 36 areas being targeted for action. The areas include:

- 15 in Belfast,
- 6 in Londonderry/Derry, and
- 15 in other towns and cities across Northern Ireland.

Communities in Belfast, Londonderry/Derry, Strabane, Downpatrick, Coleraine, Craigavon and Ballymena will each receive up to £1m to tackle the legacy of the conflict, reconciliation difficulties and high levels of deprivation. The money is delivered through local partnership structures and based on a community led assessment of the needs of each area. The 12 neighbourhoods selected for assistance are:

Belfast:

Short Strand, Lower Newtownards Road, Albertbridge Road, The Mount; Lower Springfield, Cavendish and Beechmount/Ainsworth; Donegall Road/Roden Street and Rockmount; The Markets, Lower Ormeau, Donegal Pass

Londonderry/Derry:

Brandywell/The Fountain; Gobnascale/Irish Street; Tullyalley/Curryneirin

Strabane:

Strabane East Ward incorporating Fountain Street and Springhill Park.

Downpatrick:

Model Farm, New Model Farm, Flying House

Coleraine:

Ballysally

Craigavon:

Ardowen, Legahory, Burnside, Parkmore, Drumellen

Ballymena:

Ballykeel

The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy has four interlinking strategic objectives:

- Community Renewal – to develop confident communities that are able and committed to improving the quality of life in their areas.
- Economic Renewal – to develop economic activity in the most deprived neighbourhoods and connect them to the wider urban economy.

- Social Renewal – to improve social conditions for the people who live in the most deprived neighbourhoods through better co-ordinated public services and the creation of safer environments.
- Physical Renewal – to help create attractive, safe and sustainable environments in the most deprived neighbourhoods.

The DSD Business Plan for 2007 – 2008⁴⁸ shows the following budget and targets set for the Community Development Group to meet DSD's Strategic Objective 3; to improve the physical, economic, community and social environment of neighbourhoods, towns and cities in Northern Ireland with a particular emphasis on tackling disadvantage.

Table 3: Neighbourhood Renewal

PSA Targets	Targets	Budget
By 2010 in conjunction with other government departments, agencies and public bodies, implement the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, which aims to close the gap between the quality of life for people and marginalised groups in the most deprived neighbourhoods and the quality of life in the rest of Northern Ireland.	Neighbourhood Action Plans to be in place in all 36 Neighbourhood Renewal Areas by the end of September 2007.	Resource £12.4m
	In each of the 36 area to have taken at least 4 actions to address key priorities by March 2008	Capital £2m
	Throughout the year to have taken forward a programme of land acquisition and disposal in targeted Neighbourhood renewal Areas to bring derelict/underused land back into meaningful use.	Total £21.4m

8.0 MEASURING SUCCESS

This section of the paper looks at the evaluation and measurement of impact of urban regeneration schemes. The section covers, firstly, the British Urban Regeneration Association's (BURA) findings based on research to discover what constitutes successful regeneration projects. There is also a brief look at a methodology for evaluation of regeneration in Cathedral Quarter and Laganside published in 2004. The paper then moves on to a recent publication from the Department on key priorities for regeneration in towns and cities where there has not been a specific regeneration strategy. Finally, the paper cites a report commissioned by the Department in 2001 on evaluating the impact of urban regeneration policy in Northern Ireland.

The British Urban Regeneration Association (BURA) used its experience of project evaluation to learn from problems encountered by projects and use them to identify criteria for success. BURA presents annual awards to projects that meet the following six key criteria:

⁴⁸ www.dsdni.gov.uk

1. Demonstrate best rather than good or average practice – encapsulating qualities of innovation, imagination, inspiration and determination and strong partnership working.
2. Act as a catalyst for further regeneration and development in the area, creating a self-sustaining momentum with long-term benefits.
3. Make a positive economic contribution to the overall regeneration of the area, contributing to local employment and being financially viable.
4. Contribute to community spirit and social cohesion by raising levels of confidence in the long-term living and working environment of the local community and building the capacity of local people to determine their own lives.
5. Contribute to the environmental dimension of sustainable development through the preservation and enrichment of natural resources plus good urban and landscape design. Examples of this include energy efficiency, waste management, use of sustainable building materials and brownfield sites.
6. Have been completed to the point where there is a track record of success (in the case of schemes with long time horizons it is possible to consider stages or phases of such schemes provided the entry makes clear what has been achieved).

BURA conducted a research project re-visiting and tracking a selection of BURA's previous award winners⁴⁹. The findings focused on making regeneration work for the entire community, identifying lasting solutions and lessons learned. It was found that successful urban regeneration schemes could stimulate and support other initiatives and while the cross-cutting themes of the projects were hard to disentangle, the following were found to be the most important elements for success:

- Creation of new economic activities and employment opportunities;
- Opportunities for training and management of local people in jobs created through urban regeneration initiative;
- Importance of support for community based organisations that can contribute to urban regeneration and the creation of lasting community capacity;
- Promoting culture, leisure and tourist activities as part of the urban regeneration programme, especially if this involves creating jobs, and creating multiplier effects;
- Value of partnerships and the need to promote collaboration for effective planning of urban regeneration;
- Effective management of land and property resources by recycling brownfield sites and ensuring initiatives are designed and implemented in accordance with best practice of environmental management;
- Encourage re-population of central urban areas as residential locations and of creating or improving residential neighbourhoods;
- Need for urban regeneration to be guided by a clear strategic plan and be a managed process – strategy is an essential pre-condition.

Three key findings emerge from the research:

⁴⁹ Burwood, S. and Roberts, P. (2002) 'Learning From Experience: The BURA Guide to Achieving Effective and Lasting Regeneration' Office of the Deputy Prime Minister; London.

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1. That successful urban regeneration is essentially a product of a broad based partnership that allows a particular initiative to be linked to the long-term delivery of mainstream activities and services; this implies that it is important to embed an urban regeneration scheme or project in the regular local institutional structure as soon as possible.
2. Most successful regeneration initiatives help to deliver a range of environmental, social and economic objectives and, as such, it is reasonable to suggest that urban regeneration can act as a unifying force that can be used to help design and implement sustainable development.
3. Whilst towns and cities can learn much from the experience of urban regeneration elsewhere, it is essential that each individual scheme or project is tailored to fit the individual locality in which it will be implemented.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

An indicator based methodology for measuring the success of regeneration projects⁵⁰ was designed and tested on regeneration projects in Belfast (Laganside and Cathedral Quarter), Dublin (Docklands and Templebar) and Barcelona (Ciutat Vella or Old City and the Olympic Village)⁵¹. The rationale for the case studies was to compare, in the case of Belfast and Dublin, regeneration projects incorporating waterfront and cultural aspects. Five separate indicator sets were used to score regeneration projects which included economy and work, resource use, buildings and land use, transport and mobility and community benefits. The conclusion was that while all the case studies overall fell within the 'good' practice category for urban regeneration, Belfast's scoring would improve as the scheme reached maturity.

Belfast scored poorly on the 'community benefits' key performance indicator. The low score indicated an emphasis of physical development, especially in the early stages of the project and it was concluded that more attention needed to be paid to improving community relations at the outset of regeneration schemes rather than 'being slowly addressed at later phases.'

KEY PRIORITIES FOR URBAN REGENERATION

A good practice guide, 'Vital and Viable' (August 2007)⁵² contains 'Critical Success Factors for Regeneration' and is published by the Department. It is intended for use outside Belfast and Londonderry/Derry and in the reinvigoration of city and town centres where there is no specific development strategy. It states:

⁵⁰ 'An Indicator-based Approach to Measuring Sustainable Urban Regeneration Performance: Part 1, Conceptual Foundations and Methodological Framework' Lesley Hemphill, Jim Berry and Stanley McGreal, Urban Studies, Vol. 41, No.4, 725 – 755, April 2004.

⁵¹ 'An Indicator-based Approach to Measuring Sustainable Urban Regeneration Performance: Part 2, Empirical Evaluation and Case Study Analysis' Lesley Hemphill, Stanley McGreal and Jim Berry, Urban Studies, Vol. 41, No.4, 757 – 772, April 2004.

⁵² Vital and Viable: A Good Practice Guide For Breathing New Life Into Towns and Cities (DSD) August 2007.

Development plans for cities and towns must articulate clearly their contribution to the overall policy framework for the regeneration of urban areas.

The document goes on to list factors for the success of schemes which are:

- Maximising potential – ensuring strategic long-term development within the Regional Development Strategy.
- Addressing key priorities for regeneration – greater focus on sustainability, design and retailing issues.
- Joined-up Government – working together in agencies and local councils to maximise opportunities.
- Local planning and delivery – town centre health checks, strategic plans with effective town centre management.
- Private sector role – complimenting private sector investment by targeted public sector spending.
- Widening markets – providing safer environment, daytime and evening attractions.

'Vital and Viable' states that plans for successful regeneration of cities and towns must also address the following key priorities:

- Sustainability – For city and town centres this means that social inclusivity, environmental impact and economic health must be taken into account when plans are prepared, development is proposed and government support is considered.
- Design – High quality building design is a key success factor, linked with the provision of public realm to an equivalent standard. The creation of new iconic buildings or the re-development or preservation of landmark buildings, coupled with sensitive design, can create a real sense of place.
- Retailing – The retail offering remains key to the vast majority of successful city and town centres and is being influenced by the increasing dominance of national retailers and international brands coupled with the growth of out-of-town shopping centres. The challenge for cities and towns is to project a unique identity and preserve the local retail offering in a way which is easily accessible.
- Variety – Leisure, entertainment, sporting and recreational pursuits in city and town centres provide other uses for town centres for the local community and visitors to the area. Evening and night time economies are now an integral element contributing to the vibrancy of towns and can work supportively with town centre living⁵³.

Policy Impact Measurement

⁵³ Vital and Viable: A Good Practice Guide For Breathing New Life Into Towns and Cities (DSD) August 2007 (p.4).

In 2001 the Department appointed Cambridge Economic Associates (CEA) to examine existing measurement of urban regeneration policy and make recommendations for future measurement of the new urban regeneration strategy. The subsequent report⁵⁴ referring to Public Service Agreements and Service Delivery Agreement targets to aid accountability and performance management states:

...targets need to be capable of being precisely monitored in terms of which reflect the potential effectiveness of the policy intervention in question. The key to successful target-setting will be to ensure that whatever targets are selected are clearly nested within a “theory of change” or logic chain which relates public expenditure inputs achieved to an anticipated contribution to positive enhancement to economic, social and environmental conditions in the neighbourhood, district or Northern Ireland level.

The report's authors argue in favour of 'bottom up' performance measurement with a clear need for baseline figures to measure improvement. There also needs to be a clear understanding of what economic, social or environmental outcomes can be reasonably expected from a programme before targets can be set.

Conclusion

This paper shows the broad spectrum of programmes available to promote urban regeneration in Northern Ireland. It gives an indication of the different approaches employed to address the social, economic and environmental issues involved. Each geographic area has unique needs and resources and therefore direct comparisons between cities or towns are difficult. In the same way a programme being implemented in several geographic areas may place a different emphasis on certain aspects depending on local needs and existing resources.

⁵⁴ 'People and Place A Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, Working Paper 2:Urban Regeneration in Northern Ireland – Policy Measurement' (2002) DSD

http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/people_and_place_workingpaper2.pdf

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