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Des McKibbin

Regional Development Strategy 10 Year Review

1 Introduction

The Department for Regional Development (DRD) is responsible for preparing the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) in consultation with other Executive Departments.¹ The RDS is the spatial and long term development strategy of the Executive and its purpose is to provide a spatial framework that will lead to balanced and equitable development across Northern Ireland. It complements and influences the Programme for Government; the Investment Strategy (ISNI); and guides the investments of Executive Departments, local Councils and Investment by the private sector²

The first RDS “Shaping our Future” was published in 2001 (RDS '01) and identified guidance for development over a 25 year period. Although the RDS is a long term strategy it is not a static document. A commitment was given in the RDS '01 to carry out reviews after 5 and 10 years. It was reviewed (in 2006) and subsequently ‘adjusted’ in 2008.

¹ Under the Strategic Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1999

² DRD (2010) RDS 10 Year Review (Consultation) Page 1 (para 1.1)

This paper will provide an overview of the latest [10 year] review which was seen as an opportunity to adapt to new trends and circumstances.”³ The major trends identified include the rising carbon footprint for Northern Ireland which is accelerated by a population dependent on the private car as well as the ongoing financial crisis. This paper will examine the major changes made to the RDS which the DRD believes have resulted in a strategy “...more focused and better placed to serve the needs of the region.”⁴ These include:

- A significant revision of the Spatial Framework;
 - A ranking or hierarchy of settlements;
 - An effective downgrading of a number of regional towns;
 - A proposal for greater [complementarity] shared services and facilities through clustering of settlements; and
 - A cross border cluster with Newry and Dundalk
- A refocusing of the strategic guidelines;
 - To focus on the new Spatial territories; and
 - To integrate the three pillars of sustainability into all future development

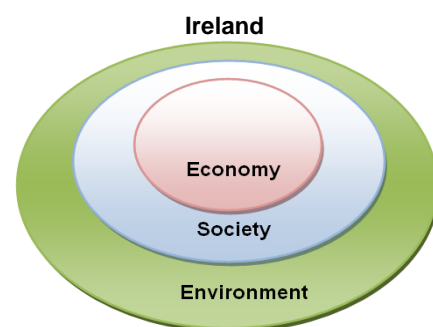
2 Why a new RDS

2.1 Environment

RDS '01 emphasised the need to deliver sustainable patterns of development and this was reflected in the Programme for Government (PfG) strategic priority to protect and enhance our environment and natural resources.⁵ Since 2001 a number of Government strategies have been published including the Sustainable Development Strategy, the Biodiversity Strategy, the Waste Management Strategy as well as Regulations such as the EU Water Framework Directive that contain a range of indicators and targets designed to satisfy the PfG priorities. These strategies were identified in the five year review and led to adjustments to the RDS as part of that review process.

As stated, the rationale for this 10 year review was to identify if there are any significant trends that require a change of direction; the revised RDS (RDS '11) does this. It recognises that climate change; increasing levels of municipal waste; significant rises in vehicles on roads which result in continuously rising emissions, and high levels of congestion are unsustainable; and huge barriers to achieving the executive's goals.

Figure 1: Forces driving change in Northern



³ DRD (2001) “Shaping our Future: Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025” [online] see: <http://nia1.me/2t>

⁴ DRD (2010) RDS 10 Year Review (Consultation) Page 3 (para 1.11)

⁵ NI Executive (2008) “programme for Government 2008-11” [online] see: <http://nia1.me/2u>

2.2 Society

Source: DRD (2011)

From a social point of view, one of the most significant trends of the last ten years has been the growth in the rural population; between 2001-08 there was a 71% growth in rural areas. This has contributed to the rise in vehicle numbers and congestion⁶ as more people now have to commute to Belfast which provides almost 30% of the total employment in Northern Ireland (this figure rises to 50% in the Belfast Metropolitan Area)⁷. Current projections are that by 2023 the majority of the population will be living outside the BMA and its hinterland (53%).

This counterurbanisation has been driven by both the perceived amenity value of the rural environment and issues of house price affordability.⁸ It is a trend which presents a significant challenge to planners as a dispersed population will inevitably place a greater strain on resources and counterurbanisation has often been linked to a decline in the character of rural areas despite suggesting the opposite.

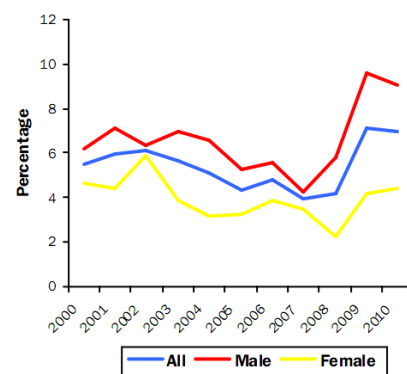
Since 2001 methodological changes to the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure, which identifies spatial concentrations of deprivation, have served to highlight that the most deprived areas are largely concentrated in Belfast and Derry with 35% of the Belfast population (95,000 people) and 22% of Derry population living in the worst 10% deprived areas.

RDS '01 predicted the population would reach 1.835 million by 2025, but growth has been faster. It is now expected to reach 1.839 million by 2013, 1.946 million by 2023 and to exceed 2 million in the early 2030s. The demographics of the population are also changing; while RDS '01 looked at the implications of one of the EU's most youthful populations, RDS '11 is more concerned with the implications of the ageing population.

2.3 The Economy

When the original RDS was published (2001) Northern Ireland had the fastest improving regional economy in the UK⁹, however, this review has taken place in the context of the ongoing financial crisis which has seen some 33,000 job losses since 2008¹⁰ resulting in the unemployment rate almost doubling from the record low of 3.7%¹¹ recorded in 2007, to the current level of 6.8% (See figure 2¹²).

Figure 2: Unemployment rate in NI 2000 – 2010



Source: DETI (2010)

⁶ DRD (2010) RDS 10 Year Review (Consultation) Page 15 (para 2.5)

⁷ Belfast City Council (2008) "Belfast: A Profile of the City 2008-2009". [online] see: <http://nia1.me/4w>

⁸ Gkartziros, M., and Scott, M. (2010) "Countering Counterurbanisation: Spatial Planning Challenges in a Dispersed City-Region, the Greater Dublin Area, Town Planning Review, Vol. 81, (1), 23-52
52, copies available from the authors, School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Policy, University College Dublin, Abstract available at

⁹ DRD (2001) "Shaping our Future: Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025" [online] see: <http://nia1.me/2t>

¹⁰ DRD (2010) RDS 10 Year Review (Consultation) Page 16 (para 2.6)

¹¹ NI Executive (2007) "Unemployment falls to lowest level on record" [online] see: <http://nia1.me/2j>

¹² DETI (2010) "Northern Ireland Labour Force Survey: July to September 2010" [online] see: <http://nia1.me/2i>

Although the unemployment rate is currently the fourth lowest in the UK,¹³ the employment rate is significantly lower than the UK's due to high levels of economic inactivity. Oxford Economics suggest that the low employment rate, as well as the consistently low level of GVA per head in Northern Ireland, is symptomatic of "persistent structural economic weaknesses".¹⁴ In 2009, Northern Ireland's GVA per head of population was 21% below the UK average, making it the third worst performing UK region behind Wales and the North East,¹⁵ and despite a strong economic performance in recent years it has remained at around 80% of the UK average since the 1990s.¹⁶

RDS '11 highlights the Executive target of halving the gap in GVA by 2015. Given that this level has stagnated for the past 20 years, including through a so-called economic boom, it is clear this will not happen. In terms of employment, the target is 75% by 2020; this currently stands at 61.6% and is the lowest of the 12 UK regions.¹⁷

2.4 Vision and aims

Although there have been wide scale environmental changes in Northern Ireland, the vision outlined in the or RDS '01 remains the same 10 years on, it is for the RDS to produce:

"An outward-looking, dynamic and liveable Region with a strong sense of its place in the wider world; a Region of opportunity where people enjoy living and working in a healthy environment which enhances the quality of their lives and where diversity is a source of strength rather than division."

This vision is augmented by eight new Aims, these are to:

1. Support strong, sustainable growth for all parts of the region;
2. Strengthen Belfast as the Regional economic driver and Derry as the capital of the North West;
3. Support our towns, villages and rural communities to maximise their potential;
4. Promote development which improves the health and well-being of communities;
5. Improve connectivity to enhance the movement of people, goods, energy and information between places;
6. Protect and enhance the environment for its own sake;
7. Take actions to reduce our carbon footprint and facilitate adaption to climate change;
8. Strengthen links between north and south, east and west, with Europe and the rest of the world

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Oxford Economics (2009) "Forecasting Future Skill Needs in Northern Ireland" [online] see: <http://nia1.me/2l> (page V.)

¹⁵ ONS (2009) Regional, sub-regional and local gross value added 2009 [online] see: <http://nia1.me/2k>

¹⁶ DRD (2010) RDS 10 Year Review (Consultation) Page 16 (para 2.6)

¹⁷ DETI (2010) "Northern Ireland Labour Force Survey: July to September 2010" [online] see: <http://nia1.me/2i>

2.5 Options for 2011 RDS

In both retaining the existing vision for RDS '11 and introducing eight new aims, consideration was given to forces driving change in Northern Ireland and the best way in which to deal with these. Four options for the RDS '11 were considered, these included (option 1) continuing with the guidance of the 2001 publication, or developing a new plan which promotes a more balanced regional development. When compared to the new overall aims of the RDS, option 4 was found to be the most suitable (see: figure 3).

Figure 3: Evaluation of RDS alternatives against RDS aims

RDS aims	Option 1 Continue with existing RDS 2001 guidance as amended by the 5 year review	Option 2 Promote development outside Belfast	Option 3 Promote development in Belfast and Derry with natural growth elsewhere	Option 4 Promote development in Belfast, Derry and in identified clusters of key settlements	Key
Support strong, sustainable growth for the benefit of all parts of the Region	+	+	++	+	++/+
Strengthen Belfast as the regional economic driver and Derry as the capital of the North West	+	--	+	++	Positive correlation
Support our towns, villages and rural communities to maximise their potential	+	+	++	++	Neutral correlation
Promote development which improves the health and well-being of communities				+	Neutral correlation
Improve connectivity to enhance the movement of people, goods, energy and information between places	+		+	+	- / -
Protect and enhance the environment for its own sake	+			++	Negative correlation
Take actions to reduce our carbon footprint and facilitate adaptation to climate change		-		++	Negative correlation
Strengthen links between north and south, east and west, with Europe and the rest of the world	++		+	++	Negative correlation

Source: RDS (2011)

3 Spatial Framework

The Spatial Framework is the crux of the RDS; it “...enables strategic choices to be made in relation to development and infrastructural investment.” In RDS '01 the Spatial Framework was based on urban HUBS and CLUSTERS, key and link transport CORRIDORS and the main regional GATEWAYS of ports and airports. The aim of the hub, corridor and gateway approach was to give a strategic focus to future development and achieve balanced growth within the Region.¹⁸



In June 2008, the DRD commissioned Experian to carry out a study of the key settlements in Northern Ireland.¹⁹ RDS '01 had identified sixteen main and five local hubs (see figure 4); the aim of the research was “to examine the recent performance of the hubs against the drivers of urban economic competitiveness and identify their future roles, having regard to Northern Ireland’s strategic policy context”.²⁰

Figure 4: The Spatial Development Framework from Original RDS (2001)



Centres with Strategic Role for Employment and Services







Major Regional Cities

- Belfast Metropolitan Area 
- Londonderry – City of the NW 








The Towns

- Main Hubs 
- Local Hubs 

Regional Gateways

- International/European Port 
- Ports 
- Belfast International Airport 
- Airports 
- Major Inter-Reg. Gateway Route 
- Development Linkages and Opportunities 

Regional Strategic Transport Network

- Key Transport Corridors 
- Link Corridors 
- Trunk Roads 
- Railways 
- Strategic Natural Resource 
- Major Tourism Potential 
- Belfast Met. Green Belt 

¹⁸ DRD (2001) “Shaping our Future: Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025” (page 43)

¹⁹ Experian (2008) “Northern Ireland Key Settlement Study” [online] see: <http://nia1.me/31>

²⁰ Ibid

The Experian report concluded that the Hub, Corridor and Gateway approach provided a “useful strategic framework”, however, it recommended that a “...clearer and more specific identification of the roles of individual hubs may help provide a clearer framework for the future prioritisation of investment”.

What was being suggested was not a massive departure from original policy; it is more a reinterpretation. The European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) that shaped so much of RDS '01 called for polycentric development based on “*a graduated city-ranking*” which it suggested was “...*an essential prerequisite for the balanced and sustainable development of local entities and regions.*”²¹ While RDS '01 did this to an extent, there were too many Hubs of, theoretically equal standing, therefore Experian recommended a more hierarchal and functional typology should be adopted than the one currently in use, further suggesting specialisation among the hubs would “...*provide a clearer steer for private and public investment and help assure the country's distinct economic offer*”.

In effect this means that rather than competing for resources, towns could specialise in a particular industry, and share complementary resources and services with other towns.²² This is a pragmatic suggestion, particularly when consideration is given to the population of Northern Ireland; it is clear in a relatively small place that such a large number of hubs competing with each other to offer the same level of service is unsustainable. However, it also poses questions, such as: who decides on where specialisations should be allocated? And what happens to that area if the industry collapses?

3.1 Complementarity

In order to support such an approach complementarity must be promoted among the communities, towns, local authorities et cetera, involved. The concept of complementarity is another feature of the ESDP. It means that “...*different settlements or regions can fulfil different and mutually beneficial roles, through simultaneously embracing the advantages of competition but also overcoming the associated disadvantages*”. Complementarity can be about the whole range of urban functions, not just business and economic development, however, it is built upon the voluntary co-operation of partners who have equal rights which can make it complex.²³

The involvement of different actors can often bring different agenda's to the table. If such a policy is to be pursued, discussion will need to take place about the type of instrument which will facilitate such an arrangement as regional co-ordination is vital to success. Without such regional co-ordination to facilitate co-operation, debate, negotiation and decision-making on spatial development, including mechanisms to reconcile different interests, it is hard to overcome competition.²⁴

²¹ European Commission (1999) European Spatial Development Perspective (page 24)

²² Experian (2008) “Northern Ireland Key Settlement Study” [online] see: <http://nia1.me/31>

²³ European Commission (1999) European Spatial Development Perspective (page 24)

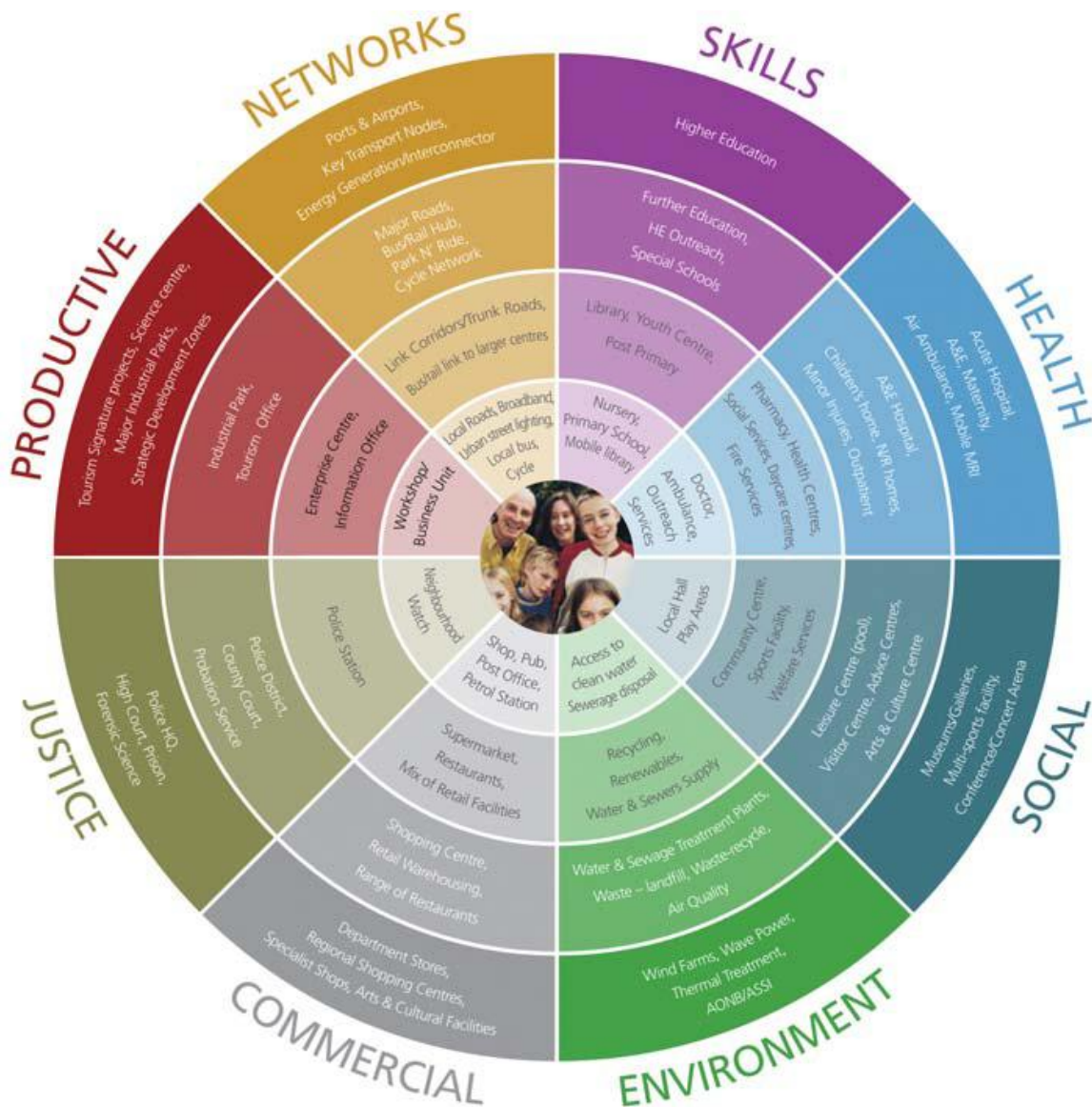
²⁴ Meijers, E. (2006) “The notion of complementarity in urban networks: definition, value, measurement and development.” Paper presented at the 10th UNECE Conference on Urban and Regional Research, May 22-23, 2006, Bratislava.

3.2 Hierarchy of Settlements in RDS '11

3.2.1 Hierarchy of settlements wheel

The hierarchy of Settlements and Related Infrastructure wheel (figure 5) is a useful conceptual tool to demonstrate how the process of ranking settlements occurs. What this diagram is designed to do is show the relationship between settlement size and the levels of service that can be supported. It identifies four levels in the hierarchy from village (level 1) to principle cities (level 4) and basically shows that more specialised services or resources, for example, an acute hospital or university are only required, or are justifiable in the principle cities. Services such as a doctor, pharmacy and primary school will be required and can remain viable in even the smaller towns and villages of Northern Ireland.

Figure 5: Hierarchy of Settlements and Related Infrastructure wheel



Source: DRD (2011)

While the wheel is useful for guidance purposes, cognisance of the distinct characteristics of Northern Ireland must be retained. For example, to base planning in NI solely on population will not work, as issues such as proximity and catchment must be taken into account.

For example, while it would be reasonable to assume that population density would be reflected by the level of service provision in an area, it is not the case. Places such as Antrim and Larne (with about 120-130 shops each) are radically underserved for their population of 18-20,000, compared with Enniskillen (185 shops and 14,000 population), the difference being that Antrim and Larne are close to Belfast and Ballymena, where as Enniskillen has a much bigger and more isolated hinterland to service.²⁵ This point is recognised in the distribution of sub regional centres within the spatial framework.

3.2.2 Principle cities

Belfast and Londonderry are now referred to as the principle cities within the RDS '11, having been the main regional cities in RDS' 01. Based on the hierarchal approach these will be the locations of the most specialised services and the first areas considered for major development.

3.2.3 Sub Regional Centres

Sub-Regional centres are defined as

*“...the main settlements that have the greatest potential for economic growth. These provide a range of accessible centres for the concentrated development of industrial, commercial, health, education and community services”.*²⁶

Their distribution throughout Northern Ireland was, as discussed, not based solely on population, but also on:

- Natural catchment,
- The degree to which catchments are exclusive/overlap with others; and
- The extent to which they contribute to good geographical coverage across the region.

This particular concept is a new feature of the RDS 2011, and replaces the HUB framework applied in the previous strategy. As suggested previously, it is more a refocusing of the original concept rather than a significant shift in policy. The proposal is for nine sub-regional centres which according to the consultation document, would mean that the majority of the population are no more than 15 miles from one, while nowhere in Northern Ireland is more than 30 miles away. The proposed sub regional centres are shown if figure 6.

²⁵ DSD (2006) “Settlement Service Classification: Technical Report”. [online] see: <http://nia1.me/33>

²⁶ DRD (2010) RDS 10 Year Review (Consultation) Page 89 (para 5.24)

Figure 6: Potential sub-regional centres and their catchment areas



KEY

● Other towns	■ Coleraine
● Potential sub-regional centres	■ Cookstown
■ Ballymena	■ Craigavon
■ Belfast	■ Londonderry
■ Enniskillen	
■ Newry	
■ Omagh	

Source: DRD 2011

3.2.4 Clusters of cities and towns

Clustering is promoted in the framework as a way for smaller places to complement larger urban centres [the sub-regional centres] and provide the range of services needed by their catchments. As well as the main towns identified in each cluster there are other smaller urban settlements in the surrounding rural areas which can perform some of the functions of the larger towns. The consultation suggests that the overlap and proximity of the following places suggests that they are best placed to co-operate or cluster with each other:

- Coleraine, Ballymoney and Ballycastle
- Cookstown Dungannon and Magherafelt
- Craigavon and Banbridge and possibly Armagh
- Ballymena and Antrim
- Newry and cross border with Dundalk

According to the RDS '11 clustering will lead to greater economic prosperity for those involved as it will provide the critical mass to attract investment. From a planning perspective an implication of this structure will be when new developments are being considered, the facilities shared within the cluster will be taken into account, for example, if a new leisure centre is proposed for Cookstown, then consideration would be given to whether or not the other towns in the cluster already have a suitable facility. The relationship in the cluster is hierarchal, and the RDS states that the sub-regional centre or principal city in the cluster should be considered first for major projects. Again the issue of shared futures and ownership will come up; selling the idea that another town is getting huge investment designed to be shared will not be easily sold to either decision makers or citizens and therefore the process which will allow for such decisions to be made will require further scrutiny.

The biggest implication of this proposal is likely to be what is in effect a downgrading of a number of towns. All of the former main hubs do remain as either a sub regional or main centres but towns such as Dungannon, Banbridge, Armagh [City] may be aggrieved that they no longer hold an equal status as other similar sized towns (see annex 1). A potential anomaly exists in South Down where the former local hubs of Warrenpoint and Newcastle have been completely removed from the Spatial Strategy.

According to the Settlement Information Classification and Analysis Group (SICAG) Newcastle provides a level of service comparable to other towns in its settlement class including Ballymoney, Ballycastle and Magherafelt who all feature in the new spatial framework as Main Centres, and as part of clusters. In terms of Warrenpoint it has a Port, but is not considered a Gateway despite the fact it carries more freight [tonnage] than Londonderry.²⁷ Newry is considered the South Eastern City Gateway as it has "...links to Warrenpoint Harbour and strategic links to Dundalk and on to Dublin". Therefore it could be suggested that this level of complementarity may warrant a cluster. Figure 7 (below) shows the proposed clusters within the revised Spatial Development Strategy for Northern Ireland.

²⁷ DRD (2010) RDS 10 Year Review (Consultation) Page 165 (Table H.21)

Figure 7: Clusters of cities and main towns



KEY

Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area

Londonderry

Sub Regional Centres

Main Centre

Clusters of Main Towns



Source: DRD (2011)

3.2.5 Cross Border Cluster

Although in the previous strategy, the potential for cross border linkages was identified, this proposal is a true integration of the two spatial strategies on the island of Ireland; the RDS and the Irish National Spatial Strategy (NSS). Both these documents highlight the importance of cross border strategic planning and in particular, the potential of the gateway regions; Letterkenny-Derry, Sligo-Enniskillen, and Dundalk-Newry as cross-border corridors. The integrated approach adopted in preparing both these documents owes much to the rhetoric of the ESPD which suggests regions can increase their competitiveness and development potential through co-ordinating their spatial planning policies. The island of Ireland in particular is small and collaboration and cooperation offers an opportunity to be more competitive in European and global terms²⁸ while it also offers a means of achieving value for money as The RDS '11 notes: *“Co-operation at strategic planning level ensures that the greatest added value is extracted from investment in shared infrastructure”*.²⁹

3.2.6 Newry and Dundalk Twin City Region

The concept of cross border cooperation, in the form of a cross border ‘mini metropolis’ incorporating the border towns of Newry and Dundalk was introduced at the third Annual Ireland – Harvard Conference, which took place in Newry in September 2003. The respective local authorities: Newry and Mourne District Council (NMDC), Louth County Council and Dundalk Town Council (LLA) then commissioned a study to explore the concept further. The study presented a strong strategic case for a twin city region which was well placed to exploit its large skilled population, a spectacular natural environment and its strategic position at the centre of the Belfast/Dublin corridor. Given the positive outcome of the ICLRD scoping study, NMDC and LLA then commissioned ICLRD to assist in developing a Strategic Alliance, aimed at building on existing areas of cooperation; providing an enabling framework to more effectively promote the region for inward investment; and open up further opportunities for the sharing of services and joint management of key resources.

A number of options were considered to make the agreement legal and following consideration the ICLRD report, published in December 2010, recommended a practical, ad-hoc agreement in the form of a bilateral, legally non-binding Memorandum of Understanding between NMDC and the LLA which “will be signed in the very near future.”³⁰ The Memorandum of Understanding encompasses the establishment of a number of cooperative structures including a joint Committee of Elected Members; a joint Senior Management Group; an Advisory Forum; and a number of Project Teams as deemed appropriate. Discussions have taken place with InterTrade Ireland which has the legislative role of promoting economic development on the island of Ireland to act as secretariat to the forum and to be the interface between Central and Local Government.³¹

²⁸ ICLRD (2009) “The Newry-Dundalk Twin City Region” [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/37>

²⁹ DRD (2011) “Shaping Our Future: Regional Development Strategy 2025” [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/3e> (page 40)

³⁰ Correspondence with Gerard Mc Givern, Director of District Development, Newry and Mourne District Council 14/01/11.

³¹ ICLRD (2010) “Developing a Strategic Alliance between Newry and Mourne District Council and the Louth Local Authorities.”

Figure 8: The Spatial Development Strategy for Northern Ireland



KEY

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|--|----------------|--|
| Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area | | Clusters of main towns | | Link Corridors | |
| Londonderry | | Ports | | Trunk Roads | |
| Gateways | | Belfast International Airport | | Railways | |
| Sub Regional Centres | | Airports | | NSS Gateway | |
| Main Centres | | Strategic Natural Resource | | NSS Hubs | |
| Key Transport Corridors | | | | | |

4 Strategic Guidance

4.1 The original RDS

The Strategic Guidance chapter of the RDS sets out the “long term policy directions” of the Executive. In RDS '01 the guidelines were referred to as Strategic Planning Guidelines (SPG); there were 43 SPGs spread across three sections and eight different chapters.

The section on strengthening regional cohesion in a global context had 3 SPGs; the Spatial Strategy contained 12 SPGs, these applied to the Belfast Metropolitan Area (5), Londonderry and the North West (2) and Rural Areas (5). The SPGs in the RDS section were spread over four chapters which covered:

- Meeting Housing Needs (6)
- Supporting Economic Development (11)
- Developing a Regional Transportation System (4)
- Caring for the Environment (7)

The fact the SPGs were spread so widely is an indication of the level of detail that was included, as each topic had an accompanying list of measures. These were intended to provide more detailed strategic planning guidance to assist implementation of the Regional Development Strategy³² while they also provided a basis on which the success of the implementation of the strategy could be measured.

4.2 Revised RDS

As has been discussed in this paper, a lot has changed in the ten year period since the RDS was first published, and this is reflected in the strategic guidance. The structure of the guidance is now much clearer as it focuses on geographical areas i.e. Belfast, Derry, Sub-regional centre, et cetera. In addition there are three cross-cutting themes which are the pillars of sustainability – the environment, society and the economy.

1. The Metropolitan Area centred on Belfast (5)
2. Derry City the hub of the North West (3)
3. Sub-regional Centres (2)
4. Clusters of Cities and towns (2)
5. The Rural area (2)
6. Gateways and corridors for economic growth (1)

7. Environment (4)
8. Society (3)
9. Economy (5)

The strategic guidelines in RDS '11 are shown in figure 9:

³² Original Page 20

Figure 9: Strategic Guidelines for Revised RDS

1. The metropolitan area centred on Belfast

SG1: Promote urban economic development at key locations throughout the BMUA and ensure sufficient land is available for jobs

SG2: Manage the movement of people and goods within the BMUA

SG3: Protect and enhance the quality of the setting of the BMUA and its environmental assets

SG4: Grow the population of the City of Belfast

SG5: Enhance the role of Belfast City Centre as the regional capital and focus of administration, commerce, specialised services and cultural amenities

2. Derry City hub of the North West

SG6: Develop a strong North West

SG7: Strengthen the role of Derry as the capital city of the North West

SG8: Protect and enhance the environmental assets of Derry City and the North West

3. Sub-Regional Centres

SG9: Promote economic development opportunities at Sub-Regional Centres

SG10: Grow the population in the Sub-Regional Centres

4. Cluster of cities and towns

SG11: Identify and consolidate the roles and functions of settlements within the clusters

SG12: Use the Hierarchy of Settlements and related Infrastructure Diagram, to help to identify the level of appropriate services and facilities

5. The Rural Area

SG13: Sustain rural communities living in smaller settlements and the open countryside

SG14: Improve accessibility for rural communities

6. Gateways and corridors

SG15: Strengthen the Gateways for Regional competitiveness

7. The Environment

SG16: Reduce our carbon footprint and facilitate mitigation and adaptation to climate change whilst improving air quality

SG 17: Manage our waste sustainably

SG18: Conserve, protect and, where possible, enhance our built heritage and our natural environment

SG19: Deliver a sustainable and secure energy supply

8. Society

SG20: Strengthen community cohesion

SG21: Support urban and rural renaissance

SG22: Manage housing growth to achieve sustainable patterns of residential development

9. Economy

SG23: Ensure adequate supply of land to facilitate sustainable economic growth

SG24: Promote a balanced spread of economic development opportunities across the Region focused on the BMUA, Derry, Sub-Regional Centres and Clusters, as the main centres for employment and services.

SG25: Manage the use of road space for the movement of people and goods

SG26: A balanced approach to telecommunications infrastructure that will give a competitive advantage

SG27: Promote a sustainable approach to the provision of tourism infrastructure

5 Regionally significant Economic infrastructure

The RDS recognises that the planning process in Northern Ireland is under review and has identified a policy with regards to unforeseen major infrastructure projects. Under the new draft planning legislation development will be identified as major or local; the DoE will have the power to decide on this. In considering whether or not plans fit within the strategy the DoE will have to consider if the project is of strategic significance and able to contribute to economic development. They will have to consider if it will be able to:

- deliver strategic improvements in external and internal communications;
- contribute to the achievement of renewable energy targets;
- contribute to the achievement of waste management and climate change targets;
- and
- raise issues of more than regional importance.

Other areas where a need for investment has been identified are Transport; waste management and climate change; and Renewable Energy.

6 Summary and conclusions

The RDS is the spatial strategy of the Executive. It complements the key objectives of the Programme for Government and seeks to influence it and the Investment Strategy. This paper examined the 10 year review which has given the DRD an opportunity to assess how successful its policies have been to date and what changes are required given the very different environment which exists today.

This strategy has had to take account of Northern Ireland's ever increasing carbon footprint and as such the environment and sustainability are central themes of this document.

In terms of the Spatial Strategy this revised RDS not only maintains, but expands on the principles of the ESDP. There is greater cognisance of the size of the region and the need for greater planning and cooperation in order to achieve critical mass and benefit from economies of scale, which while driven by tough economic times appears especially pragmatic.

The strategic guidelines too, have been rationalised, and these have been identified according to the [hierarchy of] settlements in spatial framework, which gives clarity. These are then complemented by cross cutting strategic guidelines which come under the pillars of sustainability; society, economy and environment.

Annex 1: Change in status of settlements RDS '01 - RDS '11

	Status in RDS '01	Status in RDS '11	In a Cluster?
Belfast	Major Regional City	Principle City and sub regional centre	
Derry	Major Regional City	Principle City and sub regional centre	
Limavady	Main Hub	Main Centre	✓
Coleraine	Main Hub	Sub-regional centre	✓
Ballymena	Main Hub	Sub-regional centre	✓
Antrim	Main Hub	Main Centre	✓
Larne	Main Hub	Main Centre	
Newtownards	Main Hub	Sub-regional centre	
Downpatrick	Main Hub	Sub-regional centre	
Banbridge	Main Hub	Main Centre	✓
Craigavon	Main Hub	Sub-regional centre	✓
Armagh	Main Hub	Main Centre	✓
Newry	Main Hub	Sub-regional centre	✓ ³³
Dungannon	Main Hub	Main Centre	✓
Cookstown	Main Hub	Sub-regional centre	✓
Omagh	Main Hub	Sub-regional centre	
Strabane	Main Hub	Main Centre	
Enniskillen	Main Hub	Sub-regional centre	
Warrenpoint	Local Hub	NONE	
Newcastle	Local Hub	NONE	
Magherafelt	Local Hub	Main Centre	✓
Ballymoney	Local Hub	Main Centre	✓
Ballycastle	Local Hub	Main Centre	✓

³³ Cross Border cluster with Dundalk