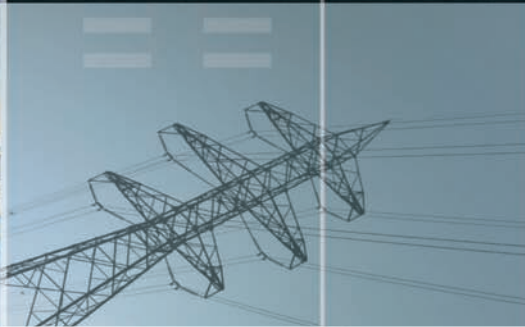


chapter 5



All-Island Co-Operation

All-Island Co-Operation

Introduction

Since the Good Friday Agreement, there has been a transformation in Northern Ireland and in North/South co-operation. This Plan seeks to build on that transformation and to seize the unprecedented opportunities presented over the period to 2013.

This Chapter sets out in detail a range of existing and planned North/South projects that have already been agreed with the current Northern Ireland administration and are being implemented.

It also sets out, for the first time, proposals for Irish Government investment in North/South projects and initiatives for mutual benefit. The Government wishes to agree and implement these with the British Government and a restored Northern Ireland Executive in the period 2007-2013.

These projects and initiatives will benefit the entire island of Ireland. Importantly, they will also benefit the entire community in Northern Ireland on the basis of sound economic principles and equality.

This Plan therefore includes a comprehensive statement of future Government policy on North/South co-operation. While this policy statement is an integral part of the Plan, it is of course subject to discussion and agreement with the Northern Ireland authorities.

These proposals are complemented by an ongoing and expanding programme of East/West co-operation.

Key Areas for Co-operation

The Plan seeks to realise the opportunities offered by strengthening North/South co-operation across a wide range of areas as follows:

- Infrastructure provision and spatial planning;
- Science, technology and innovation;
- Trade, tourism and investment;
- Human capital;
- Enterprise promotion;
- The provision of public services (health and education);
- Environment;
- Agriculture and fisheries;
- Sport, culture and heritage; and
- Social inclusion.

Benefits of All-Island Co-operation

Although the economies, North and South, are different in many respects, both face common challenges. These have been identified and agreed by the two Governments in the context of the Lisbon Agenda:

- To continue to grow employment and employment rates;
- To increase productivity;
- To build world-class infrastructure;
- To promote and to develop the role of science, technology and innovation;
- To enable people to acquire and maintain the skills needed for a modern, dynamic knowledge economy and to adapt to changes over their working lives;
- To promote enterprise and entrepreneurship and to provide a positive climate for business, including through better regulation;
- To remove barriers to physical, labour and academic mobility as part of the completion of the European single market;
- To promote social inclusion; and
- To maintain the highest standards of environmental protection.

All-island collaboration offers a unique and relatively unexploited source of competitive advantage for both the North and the South. Throughout the life of this Plan, the Irish Government will pursue collaborative actions to address the competitive challenges facing both parts of the island and the economic problems that persist as a result of the border. Collaborative actions will be pursued on the basis of cost-effectiveness and the delivery of benefits to the North and the South. Meeting these common challenges means building competitive strengths, particularly in the areas of infrastructure, Science Technology and Innovation and skills formation which will provide the edge in securing a strong position in the knowledge economy of the future.

Co-operation in developing infrastructure will help ensure more efficient planning and joined-up delivery of key infrastructure projects, resulting in better Value for Money, economies of scale in public investment and better deals from financial markets.

Through collaboration, the two Governments can deliver more efficient and effective public services, for example, in the health and education sectors. Greater co-operation in these sectors can result in more efficient use of facilities, better Value for Money and improved access to services and facilities throughout the island.

Both North and South face a particular challenge arising from the existence of the border. The border causes natural markets to fragment along territorial lines, reducing economic interaction and the opportunity to develop economies of scale and strong indigenous industries is lost. Firms tend to shun border regions and infrastructural links are not developed, resulting in unbalanced economic growth. Taking an all-island approach will help deliver more balanced regional development and address the negative effects of the border.

Both North and South will have to ensure that they have flexible, well-trained, well-educated and adaptable workforces and a world-class infrastructure to enable them to compete in the global economy. This will require investment in research and development and innovation. Making the island attractive to skilled labour and investment will be important. Cross-border co-operation in research and development offers real opportunities to add value and generate economies of scale.

The dynamic of the all-island economy can strengthen competitiveness through: inter-firm co-operation and collaboration, joint ventures and trade promotion; the opportunity to address a larger domestic market; exposure of products and services to a wider range of demanding customers; and exploiting international opportunities and improved supply-side characteristics.

Significant developments in North/South co-operation have been effected at the level of local authorities, non-governmental organisations, the voluntary, community and business sectors and by central government. The employer, trade union and social partner organisations, North and South, have also made an important contribution to the formulation of policy on developing North/South and East West co-operation.

In October 2006, the British and Irish Governments agreed an agenda for strengthening all-island economic co-operation. The Comprehensive Study on the All-Island Economy sets out the high level goals and initiatives for taking forward co-operation. The Irish Government will work to pursue these goals over the period of this Plan.

All-Island Infrastructure Co-operation

The Government will work closely with Northern authorities to maximise the impacts of investment in infrastructure during the period of the Plan.

This presents both administrations with an unprecedented opportunity to develop a world class infrastructure on the island. To achieve this, the two Governments have agreed to work together on:

- Sharing information/learning from best practice;
- Shared research and analysis;
- Planning co-operation/joint planning;
- Getting best deals from financial markets; and
- Joint implementation/joint projects

The Government will make significant investments in key cross-border and all-island infrastructure projects over the period of the Plan.

Co-operation in Border Regions

In seeking to prioritise more balanced regional development, a particular focus will be on enhancing cross-border links with the North and developing infrastructure in the border region.

Three of the National Spatial Strategy Gateways (Dundalk, Letterkenny and Sligo) are located in the Border Region. A common interest for all these Border Region Gateways will be working together with corresponding areas in Northern Ireland.

In the Dundalk Gateway, key development issues and investment requirements have been identified and will be taken forward consistent with the strategy in Chapter 3 and as appropriate in collaboration with Newry. The Government will also continue to support improvements to the Dublin-Dundalk-Newry-Belfast corridor. The development of the road and rail links along this corridor actively supports the development of the Dundalk Gateway. The upgrading of the entire Dublin-Belfast road to Motorway/Dual Carriageway status in the coming years will ensure that this corridor will form a major axis for economic development on the island.

The Letterkenny-Derry Gateway is the critical Gateway for the North West region. The Government will continue to pursue opportunities to underpin the development of this Gateway through cross-border co-operation under the North West Gateway Initiative. Priorities include: the implementation of an integrated

spatial planning strategy for the Gateway; further improvement in road links to the region; enhancing the capacity and resilience of energy support networks; strengthening telecoms infrastructure throughout the region; development of the City of Derry airport; cross-border collaboration in the development of the skills base in the region; and improvements in access to health and educational services on a cross-border basis.

The development of strategic cross-border road links generally in border regions will be a priority for the Government over the period of the Plan. The Government is also moving ahead to re-open the remaining few cross-border roads closed as a result of the Troubles.

EU funding for territorial co-operation over the period of the plan 2007-2013 will enhance the development of strategic cross-border projects in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties. Funding will be available from the EU and the British and Irish Governments to support this co-operation, including for the first time, projects involving western parts of Scotland. The International Fund for Ireland will also continue to promote economic and social development in the border region.

Co-operation on spatial Strategies and Planning

Close co-operation between North and South in planning infrastructure development will help ensure more efficient delivery of integrated all-island networks.

The Government will pursue the development of a new framework for collaborative action between the two spatial strategies on the island. The collaborative framework will build on existing co-operative progress and take a shared high level and non-statutory view of how to better co-ordinate the implementation of spatial planning policies on the island of Ireland. This will include, for example, ensuring that the considerable capital investment expenditure anticipated over the coming years is better integrated both between North and South and with spatial planning objectives.

The collaborative framework will also be based for the first time on new all-island data sets and thematic mapping which will greatly enhance evidence-based policy and strategic decision-making on an all-island basis.

This framework will include elements such as:

- A commitment to encourage the development of a focussed range of regional and local spatial planning initiatives for key development areas identified in both spatial strategies;
- Identification of certain highly strategic and targeted investments that would be vital in supporting key aspects of both spatial strategies such as improved accessibility to areas identified for accelerated growth in the strategies; and
- A commitment to develop an ongoing programme of spatial planning research to further deepen understanding of development patterns, trends and their drivers on an all-island basis. This will include the development, for the first time, of a comprehensive all-island statistical database.

The collaborative framework is being developed alongside the highly complementary and parallel work at regional Gateway level. The introduction of non-statutory development frameworks between parts of the North and the South will also be an important element in implementing a framework for collaboration between the NSS and the Northern Regional Development Strategy (RDS). Consideration will be given to the development of financial and operational mechanisms in a cross-border and EU co-funding sense to encourage and support the preparation and development of these frameworks.

By improving the strategic context for planning on the island, the Government, in co-operation with the Northern Ireland authorities, can deliver a clearer spatial policy framework for the island. Within this framework all the key infrastructure providers clearly understand what the strategic development objectives are and the need for strong linkages and co-ordination between sectoral policy approaches. Co-operation

also provides a continuing impetus to create enhanced, globally competitive and dynamic economic conditions on the island of Ireland. This will be supported by the co-ordinated implementation of strategic, forward looking planning frameworks and investment in infrastructure of the type and scale necessary to sustain these conditions.

Transport

Efficient, competitive and integrated public and private transport services on the island are critical to the development of trade, inward investment and tourism and the provision of equality of access to employment opportunities through improved labour market mobility. They are particularly important in sustaining rural communities.

Strengthened cross-border transport infrastructure will enhance the potential for major economic and social gains for the whole of the island, and for that reason, the Government will continue to ensure very close cross-border co-operation in the implementation of transport services.

Roads

Working together on roads that serve communities and business on both sides of the border will be a key priority for a joint approach.

Enhancing key routes between the major urban centres on the island will continue to be a priority for the Government. A key focus has been the development of the Dublin-Dundalk-Newry-Belfast road corridor. This project will be completed in the early years of the Plan, allowing rapid movement of people and goods between the two cities. It will facilitate access for the North to the motorway network connecting other cities in the South which will be completed by 2010.

The continued upgrading of road links with Northern Ireland is one of the principal objectives of the *Transport 21* roads Sub-Programme. This investment is a key prerequisite for the development of thriving cross-border economic corridors, especially in those parts of the island that have historically enjoyed less economic success, such as the border counties and the North West.

Key strategic cross-border routes include:

- Dublin-Belfast;
- Dublin-Derry/Letterkenny;
- Derry/Letterkenny-Belfast;
- Sligo-Enniskillen-Belfast; and
- Sligo-Enniskillen-Dundalk.

Public Transport

An integrated bus and rail network throughout the island can further underpin economic growth.

As part of the Government's major focus on the provision of enhanced services on inter-city routes over the period of the Plan, the Government is committed to working with the Northern authorities to review both the frequency of services and journey time of the Dublin-Belfast Enterprise rail link as part of the strategic rail network serving the island.

Integrating the Enterprise fully into the urban transport networks will further enhance the service, reduce journey times and minimise delays for travellers. Both Governments are working to do this in Dublin and Belfast. In Dublin this will focus on integration with other rail and light rail services including, in due course, integration with the proposed METRO to Dublin Airport, as well as with the bus networks.

Co-ordination of this service with other inter-city bus and rail links will develop the service's contribution to regions throughout the island. This includes, in particular, further alignment with the Dublin to Cork route. Upgrading the Belfast-Dublin-Cork Trans European Network (TENs) link route through the removal of speed restrictions has been identified as a priority by both Governments. Alignment with the Belfast to Derry route will be important in ensuring regional economic growth.

Airports

In March, 2005, the Government approved a decision in principle to provide a total of €7.55 million to assist developments at City of Derry Airport on a joint funding basis with the British Government. This investment has EU state aid approval and is currently being finalised.

City of Derry Airport is a prime example of transport infrastructure serving both sides of the border. The agreement of the two Governments to provide capital funding for the this airport has the potential to make a significant contribution to the economic development of the entire North West region of the entire island and demonstrates how North/South co-operation between both Administrations can be advanced to mutual benefit.

Ports

Improved access to ports on the island will derive from the major investments in road transport, both North and South. Competition between ports on the island, especially between Larne, Belfast and Dublin, has proved beneficial and the two Governments have been working together in identifying the future capacity needs on the island. The broad conclusions of a capacity study in the South have recently been published. One of these is that the port sectors in the South and Northern Ireland are complementary, in that a RoRo capacity surplus exists in the North and a LoLo capacity surplus in the South. In addition to helping to define future capacity needs, the findings could be used to inform spatial planning considerations and strategic transportation investment needs.

Energy

Both North and South face an increasing challenge to provide a reliable, sustainable, secure and competitively priced energy supply on the island. Developing this supply will be crucial to maintaining and enhancing competitiveness and economic growth.

All-Island Energy Market

The development of an All-Island Energy Market is a good opportunity to maximise market size on the island and to create economies of scale in the energy sector to the benefit of consumers and business on both sides of the border. This co-ordinated approach is set in the context of continuing co-operation between both Governments on common energy issues in line with the development of the European Union internal market for electricity and gas and the growing regionalisation of markets.

Over the period of the Plan, the two Governments will continue to work together on a range of areas including electricity, gas, sustainable energy and research as set out in the All-Island Energy Market Development Framework, jointly published in November 2004. The Development Framework sets out the commitment of the two Governments to the creation of an All-Island Energy Market.

Single Electricity Market

The key short-term priority is the introduction of the Single Wholesale Electricity Market by November 2007. Both Governments are fully committed to ensuring that the necessary, similar legislation needed to underpin the new market is enacted in both jurisdictions by Spring 2007 to allow the market to proceed. The larger market will provide an improved base for the entry of new market participants and thereby improve the security and reliability of electricity supplies throughout the island. This market dynamic should also serve to increase the competitive pressure on prices while providing economies of scale for market participants.

It will, therefore, deliver the cost-efficiencies, transparency and investments needed to promote an efficient electricity market that will contribute positively to competitiveness on the island.

Electricity interconnection

A key enabler for an All-Island Energy Market is the removal of existing gaps and bottlenecks in electricity or gas infrastructure that adversely affect cross-border trade. The planned second North-South electricity interconnector, which will be operational by 2012 at the latest, will underpin the Single Electricity Market. It will enhance security of supply and double the existing cross-border electricity transfer capacity to over 600MW. This will contribute to a more robust electricity network capable of delivering long-term benefits to both economies.

Gas

The All-Island Energy Market Development Framework will also continue to build on the existing high level of cross-border co-operation in the gas area. The South-North gas pipeline from Gormanstown to Belfast, which was completed in 2006, will support the development of the gas network on an all-island basis. Another important gas initiative is a jointly commissioned study to assess the medium to long-term security of supply on an all-island basis, including the scope for a common approach to gas storage on the island and Liquefied Natural Gas facilities. With the recent volatility in international gas markets and our co-dependence on imports via the UK, which itself is increasingly reliant on imports, the development of storage facilities on the island is a strategic issue.

Renewable Energy

Ireland is rich in existing and potential renewable energies and there is continuing co-operation to develop an all-island approach to sustainable energy. This will include the development of a long-term “2020 Vision” for all-island sustainability in energy supplies, with a particular focus on renewable electricity. The focus is on accommodating a significant growth in renewable electricity generation into the grid systems. As part of the process of developing a joint strategy going forward, the two Governments are laying the groundwork by undertaking an innovative All-Island Grid Study. This study, which will be completed in mid-2007, will inform the long-term development of the grid systems on the island to enhance sustainability and support renewable electricity generation.

Energy Efficiency

Increasing energy efficiency will be key in reducing demand across the island and decoupling economic growth from increased energy demand. It will contribute to a reduction in carbon emissions, thereby contributing to both Governments’ objectives in terms of sustainable development and climate change. By pooling resources and information, the two Governments can have greater impact in promoting efficiency. The Government will continue to work with the Northern authorities to develop opportunities for co-ordinated action in this important area.

Research and Innovation

The recently established Irish Energy Research Council has an all-island dimension, as reflected in its membership, and will help co-ordinate energy research technological development and innovation activities on the island. The Charles Parsons Energy Research Awards, aimed at stimulating a significant increase in the number of energy researchers, are open to researchers throughout the island. The North/South aspect of these awards will result in enhanced research collaboration on the island.

Communications

The Government is working with Northern authorities to ensure that throughout the island there is access to the world-class telecommunications infrastructure needed to overcome the island’s physical peripherality and be competitive in the global economy.

As the Government works to achieve nationwide broadband coverage by the end of the Plan, it will be working closely with Northern Ireland, where 100% broadband availability has been achieved.

Increasing access to high speed telecommunications services will be particularly important for border and rural areas in tackling relative peripherality and stimulating more balanced regional growth.

Working together, the two Governments can stimulate competition and investment in telecoms on the island. This will help deliver:

- Improved interconnection between telecoms networks, improving their efficiency and reliability;
- Increased consumer and business access to competitively priced, high speed broadband facilities; and
- Increased availability of telecoms services (voice, mobile and data) in border areas.

Against that background, the high level goals in the North/South context are:

- To promote competitively priced cross-border telecommunications services;
- To improve accessibility in all areas to advanced communications and information technologies, but with particular attention to rural and marginalised communities;
- To encourage closer relationships between research and development institutions in the South and North where telecommunications services can increase productivity of research activities; and
- To encourage the development of regulatory regimes and practices that would facilitate the use of infrastructure on a cross-border basis.

Wireless Spectrum Licensing

The two Governments are taking an all-island and co-ordinated approach to license wireless spectrum on an all-island basis from Summer 2007. This spectrum could potentially be used for broadband or other communications services, which could be of particular relevance to less developed remote and rural areas.

Mobile Roaming Charges

The Government has already proven the effect that a joint approach with the British Government can have by working together to address mobile roaming charges on the island. Jointly encouraging regulatory co-operation and stimulating consumer interest in this issue resulted in a number of mobile operators significantly reducing roaming charges on the island.

Science, Technology and Innovation

Recognising the critical importance of making the knowledge economy a reality on the island, the Government will work closely with Northern authorities to increase the quantity and quality of research and enhance the contribution of research to economic and social development on the island. The Government will in particular work closely with the Northern Ireland authorities in fully implementing the Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation in the period to 2013.

The benefits of collaboration in research and development are widely recognised. Under the Plan researchers will be encouraged to develop collaborative cross-border relationships, which will help offset the limitations of scale in both jurisdictions and provide a stronger base from which to develop international contacts.

The British and Irish Governments have agreed to co-operate in stimulating science, technology and innovation in a number of areas. Competitive schemes for funding have proven to be an effective instrument

for driving the search for excellence in research and development. Operating such schemes on an all-island basis could further enhance the quality of research on the island.

One of the Government's most significant programmes to help develop world class research on the island is the Centre for Science, Engineering and Technology. To help stimulate the highest quality of research, it is envisaged that the Government's next call for proposals for the establishment of a new Centre for Science, Engineering and Technology will be made on an all-island basis.

The EU Framework Programme (FP) remains a central focus of the Government's attention and in promoting Irish engagement particular emphasis will be placed on working with our Northern Ireland colleagues. New support structures will be established to ensure maximum uptake of FP opportunities across all areas of the National System of Innovation. For example, a new all-island scheme will be initiated to encourage established and successful research groups to collaborate on a cross-border basis for the mutual enhancement of the drawdown of EU funds. SME involvement will be facilitated through fostering linkages with these strong and experienced players. The Government will jointly undertake with the North an all-island mapping study of the research institutes on the island. This will facilitate the development of greater collaboration between institutions, including technology and knowledge transfer. The Government will also continue to support the US-Ireland R&D Partnership which is an excellent example of the benefits of cross-border collaboration in forging international contacts.

To provide a greater degree of policy coherence between North and South in relation to science, technology and innovation, the Government will encourage co-operation between the island's advisory panels and policy makers. Co-operation in sectoral research, such as in energy research, will also be taken forward.

Enterprise Promotion

Developing all-island business networks and clusters can help stimulate greater innovation. Opening up such networks, such as training networks, can help, linking businesses and academics throughout the island.

In Northern Ireland, the authorities face a particular challenge to grow the private sector and stimulate entrepreneurship and start-ups. Through all-island business/SME support programmes, both North and South can work together to achieve this, benefiting the competitiveness of the island as a whole.

InterTradelreland, the all-island trade and business development body, will help implement much of this. InterTradelreland will be proactive in promoting the culture of entrepreneurship on an all-island basis over the period of this Plan. It will drive the creation, development and exploitation of all-island business knowledge resources and will enhance the global competitiveness of the all-island economy through initiatives such as encouraging the growth of North/South trade and business development networks that will be supported and facilitated by knowledge-based network enabling tools.

The enterprise development agencies will enhance co-operation on issues of mutual interest with their counterparts in Northern Ireland and with InterTradelreland.

Human Capital

The most important economic resource for the all-island economy, as it strives to remain globally competitive in an increasingly knowledge based economy, is its people. The adequate provision of a skilled workforce is a central tenet of a globally competitive economy. An efficient all-island labour market requires demand to be quantified and then met through appropriate supply side initiatives. This can be achieved through a mix of policy measures.

The changing nature of the global economy means that significant further investment is needed in the island's human capital. While much of this investment will be undertaken independently, North and South,

there are areas where a co-ordinated response will enhance the efficiency of the island's labour market and ensure that sufficient and appropriate skills are in place to encourage sustained growth. The Government will work with Northern authorities to develop greater policy coherence, underpinned by all-island skills mapping and forecasting, through, for example, both skills expert groups working together to ensure that the evidence is available to underpin policies which will deliver the necessary workforce skills across the island. The Government will maximise opportunities for co-operation in further and higher education programmes on a cross-border basis.

Trade, Tourism and Investment Promotion

North and South, we will work together in seeking new markets for the products and services the island produces, exploiting opportunities for investment abroad so as to grow companies of international scale and persuading global companies, particularly those in leading edge technologies, to invest in the economy.

Recognising the benefits of pooling resources to support companies on the island in foreign markets, trade missions and the services of Enterprise Ireland and Invest NI overseas offices are being opened up to companies across the island.

Tourism Ireland Ltd., the North/South body set up to market the island of Ireland abroad, provides a good model of a productive joint marketing approach, whereby the attractiveness of the island of Ireland as a destination has been enhanced. There have been important efficiencies gained as duplication is avoided and the island's tourism assets are exploited to maximum effect. The co-operative approach to tourism promotion embodied in Tourism Ireland has helped lift visitor numbers to the island from 6.3 million in 1998 to an estimated 8.8 million in 2006. The Government will continue to support Tourism Ireland to achieve its international marketing objective of increasing tourism revenue and visitor yield over the life of the NDP.

This joint marketing approach could add value in certain other sectors. Both the IDA and Invest NI are co-operating in promoting the island for inward investment, with an initial focus on collaboration around the business operating environment so as to enhance the attractiveness of the island for Foreign Direct Investment and other areas with potential for mutually beneficial collaboration, such as research, identifying best practice and sharing market information.

Health Services

Co-operation on both the planning and delivery of health services and facilities will help deliver more efficient utilisation of valuable new infrastructure, better Value for Money in terms of public funding, a more balanced regional development, particularly in terms of addressing border effects and improved access to health facilities and treatment.

North and South, we can achieve these mutual benefits by working together across a range of areas, including:

- Working together for more effective health promotion. There is good deal of co-operation between North and South already taking place, for example in the area of suicide prevention;
- Collaboration on research and development, where the benefits of such collaboration can be already seen in the work of the Ireland-Northern Ireland-US Cancer Consortium; and
- Jointly improving access to health services in border areas. The existence of the border has fragmented access to health services in border areas. The Co-operation and Working Together (CAWT) cross-border initiative is bringing together service providers along the border to improve access. For example, work is ongoing to establish a new GP out of hours service in the north west, giving people in Inishowen and Derry access to GPs on either side of the border when this is required.

One of the key recent developments in this sector has been the sharing of radiotherapy services at the new Belfast Cancer Centre, which patients from Donegal can now access in addition to similar services available to them in the South. This level of cross border co-operation is delivering a vital service on a more effective basis than would have been possible previously. This model serves to illustrate the potential for further co-operation between North and South, both in terms of access to health services and facilities and also on planned infrastructure projects. Similarly, it could be possible to plan and provide hospital services on an all-island context. Other potential areas are:

- Addressing regulatory and professional issues that may be acting as a barrier to accessing health services or to mobility of health professionals on the island;
- Co-operation on provision of high technology medical care: given the high costs of medical technology, for example in paediatric cardiology, there is potential for co-operation between North and South to share costs; and
- Population based approach to health service delivery on the island. On an island of just under 6 million people, a rational approach to the provision of health services should be based on an approach which seeks to address the needs of the island's population as a whole.

A further example of constructive co-operation is that the Food Safety Promotion Board will run the all-island safe food campaign.

Education

The level of ongoing collaboration between third level institutions, North and South, has been good. All courses within the third level sector in the South are open to applicants from Northern Ireland. For example, in the case of Apprenticeship Training, the Department of Education and Science in the South continues, with the Institute of Technology Sligo and the Fermanagh Institute of Education, to provide Phase 4 apprentice courses in carpentry and joinery. The possibility of further expanding this link to include other trades is under examination. In 2003 a North/South Programme for Collaborative Research in education was launched.

The Government will seek to enhance collaboration between Institutes of Technology, particularly those in Dundalk, Sligo and Letterkenny, and their Northern counterparts.

National Framework of Qualifications

Agreement has already been reached on how the levels of qualification in Ireland best align with those in Northern Ireland, England, Wales and Scotland. A North/South/East/West network of quality assurance and certification bodies has been established and continues to share best practice on issues of mutual interest. The scope and necessity for further mutual recognition agreements is being explored, particularly in relation to apprenticeships. All these measures are converging towards the development of a European Qualifications Framework, in which Irish and UK stakeholders are playing an active role.

Curriculum Reform and Professional Development

A network of curriculum and quality assurance agencies linking all parts of the island has been established. The intention is to continue to progress co-operation in education at all levels, to identify new areas for specific focus and, in particular, to achieve progress in relation to the Middletown Centre for Autism and the North/South Exchange Consortium.

The Government will continue to support North/South research collaboration through the Department of Education and Science (DES). DES initiatives have enabled collaboration between 116 researchers from 11 institutions North and South of the border, paving the way for an all-island research knowledge base. This commitment to cross-border research is recognition of the benefits to be gained by the whole island by having an agreed strategy and joint programmes in a variety of areas of interest to the economy and society.

Environment

North and South on the island face the challenge of maintaining the highest standards of environmental protection. The Government will be pursuing co-operation with Northern authorities in the development of the Plan's environmental services programme in the areas of water supply, waste water, waste management and climate change.

Jointly funded projects aimed at addressing environmental challenges, on a North/South, cross-border and all-island basis as appropriate, will be undertaken during the period of the Plan in such areas as:

- Environmental research and development;
- Environmental policy and sustainable development strategies and delivery mechanisms;
- Waste management;
- Water quality management ;
- Environmental services including water and waste infrastructure; and
- Natural heritage/biodiversity.

Co-operation and linkages between the Administrations of the British-Irish Council on nuclear safety issues, sustainable development strategies, environmental research and protection, climate change, waste management, water and air quality will also be facilitated and developed during the period of the Plan.

The EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) came into force on 22 December 2000 and requires the protection of all waters against deterioration and, where necessary, their improvement to achieve at least "good status" for all waters by 2015. A high degree of North/South technical co-ordination will be required for implementation of the Water Framework Directive in relation to shared river basins. This co-ordination will be demonstrated by the establishment of a total of eight River Basin Districts (RBDs) on an agreed basis for the whole island (of which three are international RBDs in relation to shared waters), the co-ordinated transposition of the Directive into domestic law in both jurisdictions, the typology and characterization of water bodies and in the necessary reporting to the EU Commission on implementation measures.

Work is continuing on the development of water quality classification systems and other technical outputs required for the adoption of River Basin Management Plans by 2009. Co-ordination measures are being pursued by Ireland and the UK generally in relation to transitional (estuarine) and coastal waters.

Agriculture and Fisheries

Agriculture and rural development continue to play a major role in the economies of both parts of the island, and make an essential contribution to maintaining the viability of rural communities. Close co-operation already exists in a wide range of agriculture, fisheries, forestry and related activities. Both administrations will continue to seek ways to strengthen and enhance this co-operation in the future, particularly in areas such as CAP related issues, animal and plant health policy and research, rural development and agri-food research, education and technology transfer. The two Governments attach major importance to promoting and reinforcing vigorous measures to advance rural development. There is considerable scope for synergy and mutual learning in this regard. A cross-border steering committee on Rural Development has been established to encourage and oversee progress on cross-border rural development and to co-ordinate official responses to joint plans developed by cross-border community groups. Teagasc has developed close links with the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) with a view to enhancing co-operation on research and training. Bord Bia will liaise with Invest NI on joint marketing and promotion initiatives including market research and attendance at Trade Fairs.

The two Governments will co-ordinate the development of the aquaculture industry in the Carlingford and Foyle Loughs through the North/South Loughs Agency.

Culture, Heritage, Languages and Sport

Both administrations and their respective cultural promotion agencies will continue to work proactively together in the area of culture. In particular, they will work together to support the commemoration of important anniversaries in our shared history.

The enhancement of the facilities of the major cultural institutions that will take place under this Plan will contribute to the celebration of such anniversaries in a fitting manner. The funding included in the Culture Sub-Programme of this Plan will facilitate enhanced co-operation with the cultural institutions in Northern Ireland in areas of common interest, including digitisation.

The scope for North/South co-operation in the development of complementary sporting infrastructure on the island of Ireland is currently being assessed. This is expected to contribute to cooperation and joint projects in the area of sport over the next seven years.

Support for both the Irish and Ulster-Scots languages will continue, through the medium of An Foras Teanga, the North/South Implementation Body comprised of Foras na Gaeilge and The Ulster-Scots Agency/The Boord o Ulstèr-Scotch.

Waterways

Restoration and development of the waterways is an area of practical co-operation between North and South, through Waterways Ireland, a North/South Implementation Body. The restoration of the Shannon-Erne waterway is a very practical demonstration of how North/South co-operation can be of mutual benefit, as shown by the resurgence and diversification of the surrounding rural economy. The creation of an integrated all-island waterways network could enhance the attractiveness of Ireland's waterways to tourists and help to maximise their contribution to the tourism and recreational industries, North and South. In this context, work is already underway to explore the possibility of restoring the Ulster Canal to provide a major inland waterway for the border region.

Social Inclusion

A National Strategy for Social Protection and Social Inclusion (NSSPI) covering the period 2006 to 2008 was submitted to the EU by each Member State in September 2006.

The UK and Irish NSSPIs contain common text outlining how the UK and Irish Governments are committed to developing and promoting co-operation in relation to combating poverty and social exclusion. The common text also appears in the UK, Northern Irish and Irish National Action Plans for Social Inclusion.

The common text acknowledges that poverty and social exclusion affect the quality of life of families and communities across the island of Ireland. Creating a more inclusive society by alleviating social exclusion, poverty and deprivation is a continuing challenge for administrations in Northern Ireland and Ireland. The text points out that there are strong commonalities shared by both communities which have facilitated the establishment of a number of areas of North/South co-operation.

The Irish and UK Governments are committed to developing and promoting further North/South consultation, co-operation and common action concerning policies on poverty and social exclusion. Both administrations agree that there is further potential to promote co-operation between the two jurisdictions in relation to social inclusion. The common text commits both jurisdictions to preparing a report on areas of existing and ongoing North/South work which will include the contribution of the voluntary and community sector in promoting North/South social inclusion, equality and reconciliation. This process will be used to determine

where further work is required and to ensure that new work will complement work already in progress. The report will also describe how work on the potential areas may be progressed with the agreement of the relevant Ministers in both jurisdictions and within existing institutional structures.

Areas for potential co-operation which could deliver mutual benefits will be explored. These may include:

- The compilation and sharing of data and information in relation to areas of common interest and/or;
- Specific topics of common interest for research and analysis; and
- Areas where joint approaches should be developed.

The findings of such work will inform policy development in both jurisdictions.

Both jurisdictions are currently working to introduce an all-Ireland Free Travel scheme for pensioners resident in both parts of the island of Ireland. This scheme will extend the current arrangements to enable pensioners resident in either jurisdiction to travel free of charge on all eligible bus and rail services within the other jurisdiction. Arrangements for implementing the scheme are being finalised by officials of the Department of Social and Family Affairs and their counterparts in Northern Ireland so that the scheme can be introduced in the first quarter of 2007.

EU Context and Programmes

There will be two cross border EU programmes under the 2007-2013 Financial Perspectives — the PEACE III Programme and the Ireland/Northern Ireland/Scotland Territorial Co-operation Programme. The Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) will be the managing and paying authority for both programmes. The SEUPB is a North/South body set up under the Good Friday Agreement.

Since 1995 the EU has supported the PEACE and Interreg Programmes and provided funding of some €1.4 billion North and South to underpin the Peace process by promoting peace and stability and general economic and social development.

PEACE III

The European Union has provided €225 million towards the PEACE III programme and both Member States will supplement this with national co-funding.

The PEACE III Programme will continue the work of PEACE I and PEACE II, with the overall objective of reinforcing progress towards a peaceful and stable society and promoting peace and reconciliation. The eligible area for the programme will continue to be the whole of Northern Ireland and the six Border Counties (Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan and Sligo). The focus of PEACE III will be on the development of reconciliation and promoting social and economic stability in the eligible area by actions to promote community cohesion. This may include activities under the following headings:

- Building positive relationships: actions will contribute to the following priorities of a shared future: tackling sectarianism and racism; shared communities; and good relations and community development;
- Acknowledging and dealing with the past: acknowledging the hurt, truths and suffering of the past is an important part of reconciliation; and
- Contributing to a Shared Society: actions will contribute to the following priorities: reclaiming shared space; reducing tension at interface areas; and building institutional capacities for a shared society e.g. shared services and shared education.

Ireland/Northern Ireland/Scotland Territorial Co-operation

This programme will be the successor to the 2000-2006 INTERREG Community Initiative in the 2007-2013 programming period. EU funds all come from the European Regional Development Fund. €53 million of EU funding is available to Ireland for this cross border programme with €140 million of EU funding provided to the UK making €193 million in all. The Ireland/Northern Ireland/Scotland Territorial Co-operation Programme (successor to the Ireland/Northern Ireland Programme INTERREG IIIA) will continue to strengthen and deepen networks and structures for co-operation across the border that have emerged from previous INTERREG Programmes. For the first time, the eligible area will include parts of the West of Scotland in addition to the eligible areas of Northern Ireland (excluding Belfast) and the Border Counties of Ireland. In both this and the PEACE III Programme, the preparation process has involved extensive consultation with social partners and other key stakeholders in the eligible area.

The Territorial Co-operation Objective will be targeted at key sectors to drive the Lisbon and Gothenburg Agendas and at geographic regions, in particular the North West. Eligible activities include the development of cross-border economic, social and environmental activities through joint strategies for sustainable territorial development, and primarily:

- **Enterprise** — By encouraging entrepreneurship, in particular the development of SMEs, tourism, culture, and cross-border trade;
- **Environment** — By encouraging and improving the joint protection and management of natural and cultural resources as well as the prevention of natural and technological risks;
- **Linkages** — By supporting links between urban and rural areas;
- **Access** — By reducing isolation through improved access to transport, information and communication networks and services, and cross-border water, waste and energy systems and facilities;
- **Collaboration** — By developing collaboration, capacity and joint use of infrastructures in particular in sectors such as health, culture, tourism and education; and
- **Co-operation** — In addition, the ERDF may contribute to promoting legal and administrative co-operation, the integration of cross-border labour markets, local employment initiatives, gender equality and equal opportunities, training and social inclusion, and sharing of human resources and facilities for R&D.

International Fund for Ireland

The work of the International Fund for Ireland, to which the EU has been a significant contributor and to which it is committed to supporting to the end of 2010, is also of particular relevance to cross-border co-operation. An international organisation established by the Irish and British Governments in 1986, with an independent Board appointed jointly by the two Governments, its objectives are to promote economic and social advance and to encourage contact, dialogue and reconciliation between nationalists and unionists throughout Ireland. Its founding Agreement requires the Fund to spend about three quarters of its resources in Northern Ireland and about one quarter in the South (essentially the 6 Southern Border Counties). To date the IFI has invested over €750 million in a range of programmes and projects.

The strategic framework for action 2006-2010 adopted by the Board of the International Fund for Ireland in September 2005, anticipates that international involvement with and contributions to the IFI will cease at the end of 2010. The strategy therefore prioritises sustainable, focussed programmes and projects centred on reconciliation and addressing the most disadvantaged communities in Northern Ireland and the Southern Border Counties. The EU will continue to provide €15 million per annum to the Fund until 2010.

A New Programme of Investment in North/South Co-operation

For the first time, this Plan contains proposals for significant Irish Government investment in North/South projects and initiatives for mutual benefit. The Government wishes to agree and implement these with the British Government and a restored Northern Ireland Executive in the period 2007-2013.

These projects and initiatives will benefit the entire island of Ireland. They are based on the key drivers of economic prosperity and an analysis shared by the Irish and British Governments.

They seek to take into account the views of the Northern Ireland parties, as expressed through reports of the Programme for Government Committee of the Transitional Northern Ireland Assembly. Importantly, the proposals are designed to benefit the entire community in Northern Ireland on the basis of sound economic principles and equality.

The proposed investment is additional to current planned investment and projects.

This Plan therefore represents a comprehensive statement of future Government policy on North/South co-operation. It is of course subject to discussion and agreement with the Northern Ireland authorities.

The proposed package, which will be funded from within the overall Plan envelope, includes two new, innovative elements:

- Joint investment in new strategic projects to benefit North and South; and
- The opening up of access to existing development funds on an all-island basis, and/or the introduction of new, agreed joint funding measures with the British Government (and Northern Ireland Executive on restoration).

New Strategic Projects

The Government's priorities for agreement on joint projects with Northern Ireland include:

- The completion by 2013 of a high quality road network on the inter-urban routes linking the major population centres of Dublin, Belfast and the North West (especially the Letterkenny-Derry Gateway);
- The future development of the Dublin-Belfast rail line as part of an integrated rail network serving other major population centres, North and South;
- Improved access for tourism and other opportunities along the Eastern corridor, including better links between Co. Louth and Co. Down in Northern Ireland;
- A significant upgrading of higher education capacity in the North West and the border region through strategic alliances between the educational institutions, North and South;
- New schemes to promote graduate mobility, graduate retention and access for people from disadvantaged areas to higher education;
- A comprehensive study on education co-operation to be overseen by the responsible Departments, North and South;
- A comprehensive study on health co-operation to be overseen by the responsible Departments and agencies, North and South;

- Maximising the potential for cross-border cancer services, building on the project to provide services for Co. Donegal; and
- Examining the possibility of restoring the Ulster Canal.

Development Funding

The Government proposes to develop all-island funding within the overall Plan envelope in the following areas, subject to agreement with the British Government (and the Northern Ireland Executive on restoration):

- Education, skills, science and innovation;
- Energy research, including renewable and sustainable energy;
- Regional development;
- Tourism development; and
- Poverty, social inclusion and community infrastructure.

These areas address the long-term challenges that both Governments agree need to be tackled in the modern, global economy. Funding will be awarded on a competitive basis, thereby rewarding innovation and collaboration and ensuring funds are allocated to the best projects.

Criteria for the award of funding and other reciprocal arrangements would be agreed to reflect shared objectives and to encourage North/South collaboration (as well as potentially on an East/West basis).

Cost

In some cases, these proposals involve more effective use of existing funding on an all-island basis. Other projects will involve a significant investment by the Irish Government. The Government is providing sufficient funding within the overall NDP envelope to provide for that investment. The details will be finalised in discussion with the British Government and the Northern Ireland Executive on restoration.

Conclusion

This Chapter has set out a substantive agenda for all-island co-operation. Apart from the need to deepen economic co-operation generally it has also signalled the agenda for the various sectoral areas. The key will be to ensure delivery on this agenda. The Plan reporting and monitoring arrangements referred to in Chapter 13, which will be based on a detailed template to be developed after publication of the Plan, will incorporate a dedicated section on all-island co-operation. The focus of the reporting will be specific outputs — projects and programmes being advanced via Plan investment areas.

Throughout all of this agenda, there is an essential need for agreement on project selection, funding, management and implementation arrangements between the respective institutions and agencies, North and South.

