

# **Report on Stakeholder Engagement Events on Review of Draft PPS 14 - Sustainable Development in the Countryside**

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## **1. Introduction**

Draft Planning Policy Statement 14 - Sustainable Development in the Countryside (draft PPS 14) was originally published by Direct Rule Ministers in March 2006. Following restoration of devolution the Executive agreed that it should be reviewed and established a sub-committee to carry out the review. As part of the review process the sub-committee agreed that there should be engagement with stakeholders. Community Technical Aid (CTA) was appointed to independently facilitate and report on a series of eight stakeholder engagement events.

This is CTA's report of the discussion at the events. While it would not be possible to present all of the views expressed by approximately 300 participants during over 20 hours of meetings the report aims to capture and summarise the key issues across all eight events. The report presents these issues in the order they appeared in the Emerging Findings Paper.

## **2. Methodology**

The eight Stakeholder Engagement Events were held between 15 February 2008 and 22 February 2008 (see Appendix 1 for details of locations and times). Invitations to stakeholder organisations were issued on 18 January 2008 with a reply date of 6 February 2008. In some cases organisations sought more time to reply and/or more places at the events. These requests were facilitated. One organisation representing farming interests stated that the timings of the events (9.30 am; 3.00 pm and 6.00 pm) did not suit farmers. There were comments from quite a few participants welcoming the proactive engagement of stakeholders during the early preparatory stage of policy formulation.

Just over 270 people pre-registered for the events. Some did not attend while a few other people arrived without pre-registering. The list of participants is at Appendix 2.

An electronic copy of the Emerging Findings Paper was sent on 12 February 2008 to those who had pre-registered and hard copies were provided at the events. The format for each event was:

- introduction to background, purpose and structure of the event (by CTA representative);
- presentation on Emerging Findings Paper (DoE representative);
- question and answers; and
- small group discussions on Emerging Findings Paper.

The CTA team took notes of the question and answer sessions and recorded the group discussions on flipcharts for all participants to see. The group discussions first addressed the six questions posed by the Department and then any and all issues raised by participants. The group discussions lasted between one and a half and two hours at each event.

### **3. A Balanced Policy - Greenbelts and Countryside Policy Areas**

The Emerging Findings Paper stated that the Executive sub-committee's view was that it would be desirable to maintain a more restrictive approach in Greenbelts and Countryside Policy Areas (CPAs) and to allow limited relaxation in other areas. Participants at the events were asked for their views on this balanced approach.

There were many comments at most of the meetings in favour of providing a higher level of protection from development in those parts of the region which merit it. There were also many views expressed on how Greenbelts and CPAs are identified, on the need for a more localised approach, on the types of housing developments which should be allowed in protected areas and on the difficulties caused by the designation of protected areas.

Those favouring protection of the Greenbelt and CPAs included some participants who said that there should be a greater level of protection. In this context it was suggested at one event that there should be a presumption against development within such areas and a presumption in favour of development elsewhere. Questions were also asked about whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the new policy will be undertaken.

Difficulties caused by a greater level of protection in Greenbelts and CPAs were suggested by some participants. These included:

- only wealthy people are able to afford houses in Greenbelts and CPAs;
- young people are moving out of these rural areas due to affordability pressures;
- buildings are being left to become derelict; and
- there are too many restrictions which work against the continuation of farming in these areas.

The process for designating Greenbelts and CPAs through Area Plans was criticised for taking in very large areas of the countryside. There were thus calls at a number of meetings for a more localised and focused approach with greater community involvement in identifying areas. It was also felt that designations should reflect the distinct characteristics of each protected area and that policies should take account of these variations (which in some places would include existing overdevelopment). There were requests for greater clarity in implementation of the policy for Greenbelts, CPAs and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). The impact of development on habitats and wildlife was raised and the Emerging Findings Paper criticised for not addressing this issue.

Discussion on the Greenbelts and CPAs overlapped with other areas of debate. These are reported elsewhere in this document and include: the need to facilitate viable and vital rural communities; environmental conservation and protection issues; provision for replacement and retirement buildings; and retaining the tourism aspects and assets of the open countryside.

#### **4. A Policy for the Whole Rural Community**

The Emerging Findings Paper stated that the Executive sub-committee was seeking to address the needs of both farming and non-farming rural dwellers. The Paper also said that in the view of some Ministers it would be difficult to cater for the needs of both without leading to over-development. The issue of developing a policy for non-farming rural dwellers was the focus of much of the discussions at all of the events. It produced significant disagreement between participants and posed real challenges in terms of identifying solutions and proposals.

Many participants at all of the events stressed that, in their view, planning policies must recognise that non-farming rural dwellers make an essential contribution to the vibrancy and sustainability of rural communities and their housing needs should be facilitated by such policies. Similarly they argued that the rural economy is and must continue to be wider than agriculture and the social fabric of many rural areas is heavily dependent on the contribution of the non-farming population. The view was also expressed that established rural businesses should be supported with housing provision.

Some participants called for a distinction to be made between the need to live in the countryside and a desire to do so. They argued that the absence of such a distinction would lead to unsustainable overdevelopment and higher costs for wider society. Those holding this view said that existing hamlets and villages could provide residential locations for non-agricultural people who work in rural areas. They thus called for actions to sustain villages and make them more attractive places to live and for development to be concentrated in existing settlements. A few people used their evaluation form to state that in their view the current draft PPS 14 should not be altered. Similarly some emphasised in their completed forms that sustainability policies and principles were not being applied in the new proposals.

Participants in favour of housing development in the open countryside argued that re-use of brownfield sites and buildings, focusing new building on farmyards, and making more use of existing developed sites would all contribute to a sustainable development approach. They welcomed the review of draft PPS 14 which they argued is having a hugely detrimental impact on rural communities. Some participants expressed a strongly held view that anyone who owns land in the countryside has a right to build a home for their children. On a similar theme some participants at most events argued that this is a rural region with a strong tradition of people living in the open countryside and that there is a different pattern of land ownership here compared with other jurisdictions. Some suggested that new and emerging technologies for waste, energy renewables etc are making this pattern of development in the countryside more environmentally sustainable. Others argued that there is already too much development in the open countryside and that the region's tourism asset is being undermined and its environment polluted with septic tank overflows.

Some participants at a few events argued that in their opinion inaccurate and erroneous information on the level of house building in the countryside was influencing the debate. The link with affordability was drawn by those who explained that the availability of family owned land is often the only way young rural people are able to build a house for themselves. Some saw the issue of affordability being

driven by an inflated housing market which, they said, is now in reverse. In their view these heightened market conditions have distorted the housing issue in rural areas.

There was substantial consensus on the aim of preventing inappropriate development and displacement from urban areas. This consensus did not extend to how or where to strike a balance with very many participants arguing that rural people beyond the farming community should be facilitated to live in the open countryside. A range of suggestions was made on how this might be facilitated including:

- **kinship test** - some suggested that people who are born and grow up in the countryside should have a right to live there. There were no suggestions about how to define kinship more closely (apart from a few who suggested one generation) nor how many years someone should live continuously in an area to qualify under this criterion. It was pointed out by some that the European Union is challenging similar provision in the Republic of Ireland.
- **community contribution** - this proposal envisages that key workers (eg teachers, doctors, nurses, business people) would be given planning permission to build in the countryside. This criterion, it was argued, would help sustain the vibrancy of rural areas. Some questioned why key workers needed to live in the open countryside rather than hamlets or villages.
- **social and environmental fabric** - there was a suggestion that where people demonstrate a track record of responsible contribution to the development of the rural social fabric and care of the rural environment they should be facilitated to live in the countryside.
- **restrict size of new houses** - at all events the view was expressed that large "hacienda" style houses are not in keeping with the region's countryside. There was thus a suggestion from some that there should be a cap on the size of new houses (see also Section 12 on design).
- **occupancy conditions** - many participants expressed the view that to avoid abuse of planning approvals for new houses in the countryside occupancy conditions should be used. It was noted by some that occupancy conditions can be a source of difficulty if family or financial circumstances change. Occupancy conditions were also seen by some as a means of preventing the over-development of second and/or holiday homes in some areas. There was also a suggestion that "second home" should become a use class for planning approval.
- **siting criteria** - several participants argued that siting and design should be the key criteria while a few proposed that planning approvals should only be given for sites in the open countryside which are serviced by sewage and other infrastructure, close to existing settlements and well integrated into the landscape. Those favouring this latter approach argued that the criteria should not be about who (apart from farmers) should have a right to live in the open countryside but rather about requiring a more sustainable form and pattern of development.

- **traditional settlement patterns** - it was argued that Area Plans should recognise traditional settlement patterns in the countryside and facilitate their development where they are still intact. In this regard the transfer of planning to new local councils was seen as an opportunity for more flexible and localised approaches.
- **localised planning approach** - the case was put by some participants at most of the events that a new locally focused approach to planning would be the best way forward. Proponents of this view argued that local people should have greater responsibility for determining which parts of the countryside should be developed and which protected. Thus there should not be a "one size fits all" policy it was suggested. Again the transfer of planning functions under the RPA was seen as an opportunity for a new approach.
- **economic development nodes** - it was suggested at one meeting that economic development nodes could be identified in the countryside where housing development would be facilitated.

## 5. Dispersed Rural Communities

The Emerging Findings Paper explained that the Executive sub-committee's view was that it might be appropriate to allow for the development of "clachans" outside of Greenbelts and Countryside Policy Areas (CPAs). The Paper suggested that these groups of houses could be developed in areas designated as Dispersed Rural Communities (DRCs).

Many of the participants gave a general welcome to the DRC proposals with some of these making suggestions on identification of areas and other process and procedural issues. The proposals were not welcomed by some who either felt there was no need for a DRC in their part of the region or that DRCs would be open to abuse. Some suggestions for safeguards were made.

The views expressed in favour of DRCs included:

- a better and more sustainable approach than single houses in open countryside;
- will facilitate shared use of services and infrastructure;
- offers potential for local solutions to localised issues;
- a means of recognising sense of belonging and of strengthening social fabric;
- a way of meeting the needs of non-agricultural rural people who make a contribution to their communities;
- an opportunity to develop good practice in design, layout, integration, energy efficiency etc and create models of sustainable development.

Suggestions for improving DRCs were given by some of those who welcomed them. These ranged from maximising local involvement in determining the areas to

ensuring good public transport links and public services are provided and from introducing measures to ensure only local people avail of the houses built to restricting the size and price of houses built to provide affordability.

Opposition and reservation expressed by some participants was on the grounds that in their view:

- DRCs will introduce housing estates into the countryside.
- Villages and hamlets are also part of the countryside and should be developed before any consideration is given to DRC designation as this is a more sustainable approach.
- Needs criteria for DRCs should be clear and well developed and they currently are not.
- DRCs will be abused by developers who will sell to the highest bidders thus attracting people from urban settlements and/or creating second homes beyond the affordability of local people.
- DRCs should only be developed by Housing Associations or other not-for-profit community organisations.
- Without a mechanism for purchasing the land at focal locations it will not be possible to develop clachans to meet local need.
- Without integrated planning by all service providers "clachans" will add to environmental problems and reinforce rural social isolation from public services.
- In practice clachans will become single identity developments thus undermining good relations and a shared future.
- Unless occupancy conditions are attached there will be a risk of abuse through sell-ons in the open market.

A few participants asked for DRC provision inside of Greenbelts and CPAs. At some events some participants said they could see no need for DRCs in their part of the region. There were some comments to the effect that the term 'Dispersed Rural Community' may not reflect the aim of the concept. One suggestion was that it be renamed 'townland community'. There were some suggestions that a DRC should not always involve a group of houses and among those who welcomed the proposal there was a general consensus that focal points (churches, schools, community halls, shops etc) should provide the locations for clachan developments.

## **6. Affordable and Social Housing**

The Emerging Findings Paper proposed that where the Housing Executive identifies a need for social and affordable housing which cannot be met in a settlement groups of up to eight dwellings (in Greenbelt and CPAs) and 14 elsewhere could be provided.

This proposal was generally welcomed at all the events with a few reservations expressed. Some participants said most young people would rather build and own a house than rent one and that social provision is the option of last choice in rural areas. Practical questions such as how Housing Associations would be able to acquire land, whether eight units is a financially viable size and whether Associations have the capacity to deliver were posed. The possibility of farmers working in partnership with Housing Associations to develop schemes and/or diversifying into developing co-ownership projects was raised.

It was proposed that clusters could be facilitated by the Housing Executive providing 'serviced sites'. Individual plots could then be sold to individuals (at an affordable price) for them to design and develop their own house.

It was suggested that private developers should be required to provide a percentage of affordable housing. At a couple of the events there were views exchanged on the factors influencing the rural housing market. The view most often expressed was that draft PPS 14 has increased the price of sites. Other views were that prices have been increased by developers "land-banking" and by low interest rates. It was also noted that the price of new houses in villages has increased significantly which has had a knock-on effect in the open countryside.

As with the DRC proposal it was suggested that high environmental standards should be applied to dwelling construction, that public services and public transport should be provided and accessible and that the local community should be proactively engaged. It was argued that this engagement should be at the needs/latent demand assessment stage and during the planning and designing of clusters. The point was made that if sheltered/supported housing for older people was provided this would free up houses for others and reduce social isolation.

On the subject of provision in Greenbelt areas different views were expressed. Some people said there should be no provision for social and affordable housing in Greenbelts while others said up to 14 units should be allowed where the need has been identified.

## **7. Health and Personal Circumstances**

The Emerging Findings Paper suggested there could be merit in reintroducing the policy which provided for a dwelling where there are compelling personal, health or domestic circumstances which require someone to live on a specific site and where genuine hardship would be experienced if they could not do so. The Paper did not suggest this should be restricted to Greenbelt or CPAs (as was the position prior to draft PPS 14).

Most of the participants at each event welcomed this proposal. Reservations related to reports of abuse of this provision in the past and the need for careful scrutiny of applicants' circumstances and needs. In the main suggestions and comments focused on how the provision should be put into practice. These included:

- adaptations and extensions to existing properties should be the first option;

- there should be clear medical evidence of need - preferably from a consultant;
- there should be an independent medical board to assess need and hardship;
- occupancy conditions should be attached to approvals;
- the needs of an elderly person for care from family members should be included; and
- some disabled people need to be near carers and want to exercise their right to independent living so the planning policy needs to recognise this.

Finally it was suggested that discussions should now be held with voluntary organisations which represent the views of disabled people.

## **8. Replacement, Re-use and the Abandonment Test**

The Emerging Findings Paper suggested non-residential buildings could be restored for use as single dwellings. It also suggested that the "abandonment" test is too restrictive and that some buildings currently classed as abandoned could be replaced where siting, design, access and service requirements are met (as detailed in the current policy). The Paper suggested that any new provision should not extend to buildings which are in ruins.

The proposal on re-use of non-residential buildings was welcomed by all who commented on it. There were one or two comments that re-use should not be limited to a single dwelling if a building is suitable for conversion into a number of dwellings. The proposal was seen as making best use of buildings which have been part of the rural environment for many years. It was recognised that requirements relating to access and design would apply.

The issues of replacement and abandonment generated lively and detailed debate. On abandonment many agreed that where there are four walls remaining a building should be eligible for replacement. A few others said there should be a roof or the structure should be able to support a roof. Suggestions for a lower threshold were made including: evidence of a previous dwelling (eg from Ordnance Survey maps); footprint of a building in place; two walls should suffice. Similarly there were suggestions for a higher threshold including: the building should be waterproof; the building should be structurally sound and only require minor works.

Some people made the point that where a building is in poor condition other factors should be paramount. These factors included: suitable and accessible locations; site boundaries and integration with the landscape; good design; availability of services infrastructure; retention of natural habitat where a building is to be developed.

Debate also focused on whether the existing site should be used for a replacement, on size of replacement dwellings and on whether restoration should always be required. On the issue of site the comments ranged from the original site should always be used to provision should be made for new build replacements on better

located nearby sites. On size the comments ranged from "like for like" to the replacement dwelling should meet modern family requirements.

The cost and feasibility of restoring abandoned dwellings was also debated by participants. Some argued that modern restoration techniques facilitate restoration while others said that restoring old houses is both too expensive and unsuccessful over the longer term. The imposition of VAT on restoration was frequently cited as a major disincentive. The importance of retaining vernacular buildings was raised by some people at a number of the events. They argued that the environmental heritage should be respected and old buildings retained in whole or in part. Those who opposed this approach on financial grounds said that grant aid incentives should be provided if retaining all or part of an existing building became a planning requirement. Where it is not financially or technically viable to restore a dwelling some argued that replacement with a new building should be permitted on or near the site provided suitable design, siting and access conditions are met.

There was consensus that new criteria for replacement dwellings should be clear, unambiguous and applied consistently across the region. Similarly the need for safeguards against abuse was stressed. Possible types of abuse identified ranged from building up a ruin to meet any structure requirements to reducing the existing structure to meet any provisions permitting demolition and new build.

## **9. Ribbon Development**

The Emerging Findings Paper suggested that, outside of Greenbelts and CPAs, two dwellings should be allowed in an infill gap in a ribbon (provided the dwellings are of a similar size and character to the existing). The Paper also suggested one dwelling should be permitted within a Greenbelt or CPA and that the policy on preventing the creation or extension of a ribbon should remain in place.

The proposals on ribbon development were welcomed by most of those participants who expressed a view. Some questioned the need for the proposals and commented on the cumulative impact of increased traffic. There were also comments on the definition of ribbon development and the need for clarity and consistency of interpretation across the region.

The local nature and historical reasons for ribbon developments were referred to. An example cited was the shores of Lough Neagh. It was reported that ribbons have developed here traditionally because of fishing and other economic activities associated with the Lough. It was suggested that planners should take a 'bird's eye' view of areas where ribbon development is traditional and take account of the historical reasons for their appropriateness to the local environmental conditions and land use patterns. There was also a suggestion that in some cases ribbons could provide suitable locations for clustering of new development and that in other situations where a ribbon is circular rather than linear the "circle" could accept infill development.

## **10. Businesses in the Countryside**

This element of the Emerging Findings Paper did not generate a lot of debate. Issues which were referred to focused primarily on the need for 'joined-up' decision making. There were thus calls for:

- the better alignment of DARD grant aid for diversification and the processing of associated planning applications;
- priority being given to applications for projects (community, rural development etc) which are in line for public finance; and
- co-ordination between planning policy which would encourage energy renewables and the availability of grants from Government.

The view was expressed that rural business developments should be suited to the rural environment (examples given were rural/farm supplies) and not industrial estates. The availability of adequate roads should be a planning consideration.

## **11. Agriculture and Farm Viability Test**

The Emerging Findings Paper sought views on replacing the farm viability test and on altering the current retirement dwellings policy to allow either the retiring farmer or the new/incoming farmer to apply for planning permission for a new dwelling.

The discussions on a replacement for the farm viability test raised issues which overlap with and are presented in the sections on health, replacement and a policy for the whole rural community (see Sections 7, 8 and 4 above). These issues essentially centered on: the need to retain young people in the countryside; the perceived right of rural people to build on their own land and/or remain in the countryside; attachment to townlands and parishes; the need to sustain some rural areas by attracting people to return; and family caring responsibilities.

The current viability test was seen by many as being too restrictive and not reflecting today's rural reality. This view was not shared by all with a few calling for its retention and others questioning whether there is a real need for a new dwelling to support part-time farming and/or all diversification activities. Those sharing this latter view argued that in many instances it would be feasible to live in a village near the part-time farm.

On the question of what should replace it many argued that part-time farming must be facilitated and that farm diversification and off-farm incomes were now vital to the continuation of farming in many areas. Suggestions put forward at most events for the type of evidence that could be used in place of the DARD viability test included:

- farm business number;
- IACs (Integrated Administration and Control System ) number;
- receipt of Single Farm Payment;
- evidence of farm generated income;

- the income generated from farming and diversification activities should be treated as one economic unit;
- existence of a herdbook/livestock numbers;
- evidence of a period of farming related occupancy; and
- Inland Revenue returns.

There were suggestions that whatever evidence test is used there should be a requirement to provide this evidence over a period of years to demonstrate a farm is operational and established. Those who supported replacement of the viability test considered that DARD holds enough information to provide evidence of genuine farming activity. They called for this information to be used as a "passport" for planning permission. There was a consistently expressed view that specific and clear criteria should be used so that planners do not have to make assessments of the level of farm activity.

Difficulties associated with many of these suggestions were identified. These ranged from whether there should be a minimum level of income to possibilities of abuse by people who rent land (and do not own the farm) or generate income only from letting their land. It was said that Single Farm Payment farms require a declaration of land ownership title and this could be used as evidence to support a planning application.

Finally on the issue of evidence it was proposed that the planning system should use the "primary occupation criteria" established by the Lands Tribunal in 2006. It was explained that these criteria provided a means of assessing the balance of incomes from farming and non-farming activities.

At each meeting views were expressed by some participants in support of siting, size or occupancy conditions being applied to any planning permissions for dwellings to facilitate farm retirement and farming families. These included:

- a new dwelling should be sited on the farmyard to both reduce visual impact and deter abuse through the sale of approved sites;
- a new dwelling should be close to and integrated with the existing farm dwelling;
- size restrictions could be established to avoid abuse of a new provision;
- occupancy conditions should be attached to ensure a new dwelling is supporting the farm activities (periods of up to ten years were suggested);
- conditions should be attached to prevent re-sales for a period of years;
- there should be evidence that the retiring farmer has or will transfer ownership to the person who is going to carry on the farming activity;
- following the granting of an approval for a new dwelling there should be a period of years before any further application for planning permission can be made.

There were some reservations and cautionary views expressed about the above suggestions. On siting within the farmyard it was mentioned that the health and

safety needs of children on a working farm should be taken into account and a comment that rural families do not like to live close to each other. On the issue of occupancy and time lapse conditions it was stated that family circumstances can change and farms can cease to be viable so there needs to be the possibility of conditions being removed in such circumstances.

The discussions on building on farmyards brought forward a few suggestions that they could be treated as suitable locations for clustering. This, it was argued, would minimise visual impact and make best use of access, services and infrastructure while also providing the opportunity for family members to remain in the countryside. In response to this idea there were comments that it would be difficult to set limits on the extent of a farm cluster and/or the number of generations which could avail of this opportunity. Difficulties in preventing abuse through re-sales were also mentioned. There was also a comment that it may be difficult to justify providing extended opportunities like this to farming families if they are not similarly available to others who now have businesses in the countryside.

## **12. Rural Character, Vernacular Buildings and Design**

The Emerging Findings Paper explained that the sub-committee's view was that the visual impact of any development should be positive and that development ought to be well integrated with the landscape with size, design and materials appropriate to the environment. In addition the retention of vernacular buildings was favoured by the sub-committee and it advocated that new designs should take account of local vernacular styles. The Paper sought views on these issues and on a proposal that the Design Guide for Rural Housing be revamped.

While there was a range of views expressed about the content and role of a design guide those who voiced an opinion favoured the revamping proposal. The Cork and Kildare guides were referred to as examples of good practice which establish principles while reflecting local variations of style and providing flexibility for interpretation. Many participants expressed the opinion that the current guide is not effective. They evidenced this with reference to examples of large new dwellings (some with high surrounding walls etc) which are seen as being completely out of character with the open countryside.

There was a range of opinions on the weight which should be given to a Design Guide. A few participants said it should limit the size of new homes (to 2,000 ft<sup>2</sup> was one suggestion), that large windows should not be allowed, that some colours should not be allowed and that existing trees and habitat should be protected. There were more voices in favour of a flexible approach with modern design permitted, room for flair and innovation, mediocrity (and "cloning") avoided and encouragement for modern approaches which respect local vernacular and traditional styles. The introduction of a requirement for design statements was seen as an opportunity to improve design standards. It was suggested that statements should demonstrate how the principles of a revamped design guide have been incorporated in proposals for new dwelling. This, it was suggested, should include issues such as site assessment and integration.

Apart from references to cost factors there were few dissenting voices on views expressed in favour of a design guide encouraging measures to reduce the carbon footprint of new dwellings (through energy efficiencies and renewable; re-use of materials; use of local materials etc). On a similar note there were calls for greater monitoring of the use of septic tanks, stricter controls on their siting and encouragement of alternative and of more effective waste treatment systems.

Doubts were expressed about the current capacity of the Planning Service to assess design issues. Suggestions were made on: involving the architectural profession in the preparation of a new design guide; employing architects within the Planning Service; seeking architectural views on the design proposals for major building projects; and training planning staff in design assessment (with particular reference to issues of rural character and the vernacular).

Other comments on design matters ranged from the perceived poor quality of schemes in villages and the design of commercial buildings to the need for better enforcement and checking that what is built is the same as the plans that are approved. On this latter point the introduction of planning completion certificates was suggested.

### **13. Issues Relating to the Planning System**

In the course of the discussions at the events issues relating to the wider planning system and processes were raised. For completeness these are presented here. The issue of enforcement was raised at many of the events. Participants said that the Planning Service should devote more resources to ensuring that the plans approved are what is actually built. The introduction of Planning Completion Certificates and the involvement of Building Control officers were suggested as measures for addressing this issue. Some participants said it is unreasonable for the Planning Service to in practice rely so much on people reporting abuses of planning approvals and building works without planning permission. This, it was reported, puts people in a difficult position and it was said these are examples of people being put under pressure by developers when they report unauthorised works to the Planning Service.

The need to involve young people in discussions and consultations on planning policy developments was referred to. A few people made the point that planning policies have long-term impact and that younger people should be proactively engaged because they are the stakeholders of the future.

The introduction of a provision for Third Party Appeals was sought by a few participants. Their view was that where planning decisions have a significant impact on people living near the sites involved there should be the opportunity to challenge those decisions.

Planning policies both for villages and tourism development were referred to. A number of participants commented that the quality of village environments and developments needed to be improved through more effective planning policy. Some participants argued for more flexibility and encouragement (through planning and other policies) for tourism initiatives and developments in rural areas.

Delays in the processing of planning applications and hearing appeals were referred to. Participants said that improvements are required and referred to both the transfer of planning to new councils and the review of the planning system as opportunities for introducing changes.

## 14. Evaluation of the Events

Evaluation forms were distributed with the agenda and discussion group questions to each participant upon arrival at each event. Out of a total of 276 participants, 169 (61%) returned the form. Below is a summary of the evaluation:

### Purpose of the Event

- **93%** of participants said the purpose of the events was clear to them from the invitation they received.
- One participant mentioned that an agenda in advance of the event would have been helpful.

### Opportunities to Express Views

- **93%** said that the event they attended provided them with adequate opportunities to express their views.

*"workshop was excellent, good information, debate and discussion - well done!"*

*"the group discussion was controlled in an excellent and efficient way and the recording of comments excellent"*

*"our facilitator was excellent and the best experience of group discussion I have had in years"*

- A few participants mentioned that more time should have been allocated for the discussion groups and that there should have been fewer people in them. A few also mentioned that the event they attended was dominated by input from councillors during the question and answer sessions.

### Presentation on the Emerging Findings

- **94%** said the presentation on the Emerging Findings was informative.
- A few commented that the presentation did not give them any more information that they already had in the Paper issued to them in advance and that the presentation could have provided more detail. A couple of participants mentioned that the presentation was too long.

## **Other Comments**

Many participants took the opportunity to express their appreciation of the event they attended:

*"excellent event - good opportunity for discussion"*

*"excellent consultation - well organised and delivered"*

*"a very good session - excellent mix of debate and opinion"*

## **Appendix I - Consultation Events - Locations and Times**

<b><u>Date</u></b>	<b><u>Location</u></b>	<b><u>Time</u></b>
1 Friday, 15 February 2008	- Armagh City Hotel, <b>Armagh</b>	: 9.30 am
2 Friday, 15 February 2008	- The Saint Patrick Centre, <b>Downpatrick</b>	: 3.00 pm
3 Monday, 18 February 2008	- Loughry College, <b>Cookstown</b>	: 6.00 pm
4 Tuesday, 19 February 2008	- Everglades Hotel, <b>Derry/Londonderry</b>	: 6.00 pm
5 Wednesday, 20 February 2008	- Silverbirch Hotel, <b>Omagh</b>	: 9.30 am
6 Wednesday, 20 February 2008	- Manor House Hotel, <b>Enniskillen</b>	: 3.00 pm
7 Thursday, 21 February 2008	- Flowerfield Arts Centre, <b>Coleraine</b>	: 12 noon
8 Friday, 22 February 2008	- Hilton Hotel, <b>Templepatrick</b>	: 9.30 am

## **Appendix 2 - Participant List**

Brendan Adams - Northern Ireland Housing Executive  
Chris Allen - Royal Society of Ulster Architects  
John Anderson - Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside  
Iona Andrews - Historic Buildings Council  
Peter Archdale - Ulster Wildlife Trust  
Clare Armour - Friends of the Earth  
Billy Armstrong MLA - Ulster Unionist Party  
Alex Baird - Fermanagh District Council  
Michelle Baird - South Antrim Rural Network  
William Ball - Newtownabbey Borough Council  
David Baxter - Omagh District Council  
Alistair Beattie - Presbyterian Church in Ireland  
Jack Beattie - Castlereagh Borough Council  
Sean Begley - Omagh District Council  
Eric Bell - Member of Public  
Murray Bell - Royal Society of Ulster Architects  
Robin Bigger - Royal Society of Ulster Architects  
Stephen Bill - Northern Ireland Tourist Board  
Ian Binnie - Causeway Coast Communities Consortium  
Betty Birney - Federation of Women's Institutes  
Lucinda Blakiston Houston - Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside  
Claire Blaney - North Eastern Education and Library Board  
Seamus Blaney - Moyle District Council  
Cathal Boylan MLA - Sinn Féin  
Barry Boyle - Fermanagh Rural Community Network  
Tom Boyle - Fermanagh GAA  
Keith Bradford - Friends of the Earth  
Martin Bradley - Strabane District Council  
Bob Brown - Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside  
Edward Bruce - Farmers for Action  
Tom Bryans - Presbyterian Church in Ireland  
Patricia Buckley - Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network  
Robert Buick - Presbyterian Church in Ireland  
Roger Burton - NILGA Planning Working Group  
Paddy Butcher - Limavady Borough Council  
Jim Calderwood - Covenanter Residential Association Limited  
Anthony Cameron - Member of Public  
Geraldine Cameron - Member of Public  
John Campbell - Armagh City and District Council  
Michael Carr - Royal Society of Ulster Architects  
Angus Carson - Ards Borough Council  
Michael Carten - Limavady Borough Council  
Peter Cassidy - Cookstown District Council  
Robin Cherry - Ballymena Borough Council  
Charlie Chittick - Omagh District Council  
Esther Christie - Northern Ireland Housing Executive  
Michael Clarke - Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers Association  
Sean Clarke - Cookstown District Council  
Alan Clements - Newtownabbey Borough Council

David Cole-Baker - East Down Rural Community Network  
Ben Collins - Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (NI)  
Breige Conway - North Antrim Community Network  
Mary T Conway - Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network  
Michael Conway - Northern Ireland Housing Executive  
Mickey Coogan - Down District Council  
Florence Cooper - Friends of the Earth  
Ursula Cooper - T2E  
Conor Corr - Cookstown and Western Shores Area Network  
Marion Coupe - Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network  
Cecil Cousley - Presbyterian Church in Ireland  
Monica Coyle - Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network  
Raymond Craig - Oakleaf Rural Community Network  
Peter Craig - Down District Council  
Alec Crummy - Department of Agriculture and Rural Development  
Leslie Cubitt - Limavady Borough Council  
Alastair Curran - Belfast City Council  
Dermot Curran - NILGA Planning Working Group  
Stephen Daye - Carrickfergus Borough Council  
Anne Devlin - Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network  
Colin Devine - North West Community Network  
May Devlin - Cookstown and Western Shores Area Network  
Anne Doherty - Belfast City Council  
John Donnell - Strabane District Council  
Frankie Donnelly - Fermanagh Rural Community Network  
Frankie Donnelly - Omagh District Council  
John Doris - Down District Council  
Tony Elliot - Social Democratic and Labour Party  
Rosemary Evans - Historic Monument Council  
Gretta Farmer - Boho Community Association  
Ryan Feeney - GAA (Ulster Council)  
George Ferguson - Royal Society of Ulster Architects  
Miriam Ferguson - Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network  
Claire Ferry - Royal Society for the Protection of Birds  
John Finlay - Ballymoney Borough Council  
JB Fitzgerald - Historic Buildings Council  
Sean Fitzpatrick - Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers Association  
Liam Flanagan - Limavady Borough Council  
Seamus Flanagan - Royal Society of Ulster Architects  
Muriel Fleming - Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network  
Paul Fleming - Derry City Council  
Gerry Gallagher - Fermanagh District Council  
Seamus Og Gallagher - Northern Ireland Environment Link  
Samuel Gardiner MLA - Ulster Unionist Party  
David Gillespie - Larne Enterprise  
William Gilpin - Young Farmers Clubs of Ulster  
Maurice Girvan - Presbyterian Church in Ireland  
Samuel Glasgow - Cookstown District Council  
Justine Goodall - Belfast City Council  
Louise Gordon - Killinchy Rural Preservation Group  
E Gray - Federation of Women's Institutes

Lorraine Griffen - COSTA Rural Support Network  
Katherine Hall - Friends of the Earth  
John Hanna - Banbridge District Council  
Brian Hanvey - Castlereagh Borough Council  
Rita Harkin - Ulster Architectural Heritage Society  
Gareth Harper - Rural Community Network  
Raymond Haslett - Presbyterian Church in Ireland  
Ann Henning - Federation of Women's Institutes  
Maura Hickey - Coleraine Borough Council  
Mervyn Hill - Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside  
Robert Hill - Newtownabbey Borough Council  
Nigel Hill - Countryside Access and Activities Network  
Heather Hoffman - The British Horse Society  
Eunice Holland - Cookstown and Western Shores Area Network  
Isobel Hood - Mourne Heritage Trust  
Bonnie Horsman - Friends of the Earth  
Aisling Irvine - Disability Action  
Jim Jackson - Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside  
ML Jackson - Killinchy Rural Preservation Group  
Anita Kelly - Cookstown and Western Shores Area Network  
Kieran Kelly - Royal Society of Ulster Architects  
Peter Kelly - Omagh District Council  
Sean Kelly - Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action  
Eileen King - Farmers for Action  
Pat King - Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network  
William King - Omagh Presbytery  
Eddie Kirk - Presbyterian Church in Ireland  
Simon Lloyd Lavery - Ulster Unionist Party  
Alastair Law - Antrim Borough Council  
William Leathem - Lisburn City Council  
Stephen Leighton - Church of Ireland  
Claire Linney - Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council  
Basil Little - Ulster Farmers' Union  
Violet Little - Federation of Women's Institutes  
Mel Lucas - Antrim Borough Council  
Eric Lyndsey - Farmers for Action  
Eamonn Mac Con Midhe - Down District Council  
Andrew Mackey - Farmers for Action  
Lyle Mackey - Farmers for Action  
Leeann Madden - Flax Housing Association  
Flora Magee - Derry and Raphoe Action  
Gerry Maguire - Disability Action  
Tommy Maguire - Member of Public  
Marcus Malley - Craigavon Borough Council  
Jim Manley - Friends of the Earth  
Robbie Marshall - Ulster Angling Federation  
Margaret Matthews - Disability Action  
Wilbert Mayne - Ulster Farmers' Union  
Ciara McAlea - Member of Public  
Patrick McAleenan - Banbridge District Council  
John McBride - Royal Society of Ulster Architects

Brian McCaffrey - Fermanagh District Council  
Malachy McCamphill - Ballymoney Borough Council  
Smyth McCann - Young Farmers Clubs of Ulster  
Maria McCarthy - Social Democratic and Labour Party  
Ciaran McClean - Friends of the Earth  
Tom McClelland - Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (NI)  
Robert McCloy - Ulster Farmers' Union  
Andrew Price McConaghy - Moyle District Council  
Eamon McCotter - Limavady Borough Council  
Miceal McCoy - Leader Network for Northern Ireland  
Marion McCracken - Federation of Women's Institutes  
Nicholas McCrickard - East Down Rural Community Network  
Cara McCusker - Larne Borough Council  
Martin McDonald - Rural Development Council  
Pat McDonnell - Omagh District Council  
Gary McFarlane - Chartered Institute of Environmental Health  
Stephen McGeehan - GAA (Ulster Council)  
Colm McGinn - Friends of the Earth  
Anthony McGonnell - Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council  
Claire McGreevey - Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network  
Michael McGuckin - Cookstown District Council  
Sean McGuigan - Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council  
Paddy McIvor - Cookstown and Western Shores Area Network  
James McKay - North Antrim Community Network  
Colin McKenna - Countryside Access and Activities Network  
Jonathon McKernaghan - Marcus Kerr Design  
James McKerrow - North Down Borough Council  
Karen McKeivitt - Newry and Mourne City Council  
Sean McKeivitt - Regeneration of South Armagh  
Liam McKibben - Department of Agriculture and Rural Development  
Theresa McLaverty - Social Democratic and Labour Party  
Frank McLean - Regional Access Committee Disability Action  
Siobhan McManus - Leader Network for Northern Ireland  
Margaret McMillan - Federation of Women's Institutes  
Isobel McNally - Presbyterian Church in Ireland  
Sean McPeake - NILGA Planning Working Group  
Fergus McQuillan - Fermanagh District Council  
Catharine McWhirter - Castlereagh Borough Council  
Vera McWilliam - Newtownabbey Borough Council  
Eamon Monaghan - Keys and Monaghan Architects  
Anne Montgomery - Federation of Women's Institutes  
Elizabeth Moore - Member of Public  
Barbara Morrison - Farmers for Action  
Samuel Morrison - Farmers for Action  
Keith Morrison - Department of Agriculture and Rural Development  
Sharon Morrow - Friends of the Earth  
Sam Morrow - Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside  
Robert Mulligan - Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council  
PJ Mulryne - Northern Ireland Housing Executive  
Brian Murphy - Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside

Majella Murphy - Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network  
William Murphy - Co Down Grand Orange Lodge  
Ian Murray - Friends of the Earth  
Miriam Murray - Friends of the Earth  
Ron Murray - Regeneration of South Armagh  
Malcolm Mutch - Farmers for Action  
William Neill - Co Down Grand Orange Lodge  
Hubert Nicholl - Ballymena Borough Council  
Cathal O hOisin - Limavady Borough Council  
Brian O'Brien - Strabane and District Community Network  
Sharon O'Connor - Down District Council  
John O'Donnell - Royal Society of Ulster Architects  
Angela O'Hagan - Loughiel Community Association  
Ciara O'Hanlon - Disability Action  
Teresa O'Hare - Friends of the Earth  
Anne Olpherd - Member of Public  
Mark Olpherd - Member of Public  
Dennis O'Neill - Royal Society of Ulster Architects  
Eamonn O'Neill - Social Democratic and Labour Party  
Cara Patrick - Omagh Forum for Rural Associations  
Margaret Patrick - Southern Education and Library Board  
Desmond Patterson - Down District Council  
Gwen Patterson - Federation of Women's Institutes  
Agnes Peacocke - Historic Buildings Council  
Kevin Pettigrew - Disability Action  
John Quinn - Arc 21  
Allan Rainey - Omagh District Council  
Joyce Rankin - Causeway Coast Communities Consortium  
Kenneth Rankin - Rural Development Council  
Mervyn Rea - Antrim Borough Council  
Cecil Redmond - Presbyterian Church in Ireland  
Evelyn Robinson - Ballymoney Borough Council  
Frank Robinson - Historic Buildings Council  
Noel Robinson - Southern Education and Library Board  
Diane Ruddock - The National Trust  
Jane Russell - Friends of the Earth  
Joan Shanks - Federation of Women's Institutes  
Jim Shannon - Ards Borough Council  
Karena Shaw - Young Farmers Clubs of Ulster  
Seamus Shields - Omagh District Council  
James Simpson - Ballymoney Borough Council  
Arthur Sloan - Disability Action Regional Access Committee  
Diane Smyth - Young Farmers Clubs of Ulster  
Karen Smyth - NILGA Planning Working Group  
Nora Smith - Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network  
Jim Smyth - Craigavon Industrial Development Organisation  
Craig Sneddon - South Eastern Trust  
Eric Speers - Armagh City and District Council  
Gerald Sproule - Presbyterian Church in Ireland  
Robin Swann - Young Farmers Clubs of Ulster  
Bernice Swift - Fermanagh District Council

William Taylor - Farmers for Action  
Avril Thompson - Federation of Women's Institutes  
Margery Thompson - Federation of Women's Institutes  
Brian Timmons - Belfast City Council  
Stephen Toal - Lisburn City Council  
Don Tomb - Presbyterian Church of Ireland  
K Twyble - Craigavon Borough Council  
Adrian Walmsley - Construction Industry  
Jonathan Walmsley - Federation of Small Businesses  
Una Walsh - Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network  
Michael Watterson - North Eastern Education and Library Board  
Christopher Williamson - NI Federation of Housing Associations  
John Williamson - Presbyterian Church in Ireland  
Trevor Williamson - Presbyterian Church in Ireland  
Bert Wilson - Omagh District Council  
Catherine Wilson - Killinchy Rural Preservation Group  
Ian Wilson - Lisburn City Council  
Ruth Wilson - Antrim Borough Council  
Sandy Wilson - Oakleaf Rural Community Network  
John Wright - Friends of the Earth

## Appendix 3 - Letter of Invitation to Stakeholders

Dear

### Review of Draft PPS 14 - Stakeholder Engagement on Emerging Findings

The Minister of the Environment, Arlene Foster MLA, is chairing an Executive Subcommittee which is reviewing draft Planning Policy Statement 14 (dPPS 14) - Sustainable Development in the Countryside. A revised draft policy will be published in April and will be subject to full public consultation.

As part of the review process the Minister has decided that there should be a series of stakeholder engagement events. Each event will include a presentation by a Departmental official on emerging findings followed by discussion of key questions in small groups.

The Department of Environment has appointed Community Technical Aid to facilitate the events and has identified key stakeholders. Details of the dates and venues of the events are enclosed. Tea and coffee will be provided at each event and sandwiches will be provided at the beginning of the mid-day and evening events.

As a stakeholder interested in planning issues in the countryside you are invited by the Department to **INSERT**. Please complete the enclosed confirmation form for each person and return it to us by Wednesday, 6 February 2008. The Department's aim is that each event will provide an opportunity to obtain a wide range of views from key stakeholders. To help achieve this we would ask that you indicate a first and second preference on the form. We will email papers prior to the event.

Yours sincerely

Colm Bradley  
Director

Enc

## **Appendix 4 - Questions Prepared by the Department of the Environment for the Events**

### **Question: Abandonment**

The Sub Committee considers the existing “abandonment” test for abandoned dwellings is too restrictive. What physical structure or criteria do you consider should be in place to consider such proposals in the future?

### **Question: Farm Viability**

The Sub Committee considers the current viability test does not sit comfortably with modern farming conditions. Do you have any views on any alternative to the existing test to determine when a new dwelling is needed on an established operational farm? What should constitute an established and operational farm?

### **Question: Non Farming Rural Dwellers**

How can rural policy cater for the needs of non farming rural dwellers without leading to over development in the countryside?

### **Question: Dispersed Rural Communities**

The Sub Committee considers the option exists to reinstate Dispersed Rural Communities. What are your views?

### **Question: Greenbelt CPA**

The Sub Committee thinks it would be desirable to maintain a more restrictive approach in the Greenbelts and CPAs and to allow limited relaxation of some policies elsewhere. What are your views on this?

### **Question: Integration Design and Rural Character**

What do you think of the proposal to revise the existing design guide to take account of contemporary design and materials drawing upon local building traditions and styles?

Community Technical Aid  
2 Downshire Place  
BELFAST BT2 7JQ

Telephone - 028 9023 9444  
Fax - 028 9023 1411  
Email - [info@communitytechnicalaid.org](mailto:info@communitytechnicalaid.org)  
Website - [www.communitytechnicalaid.org](http://www.communitytechnicalaid.org)

