

Draft Framework for Sustainable Development for Ireland Published for Public Consultation

The Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, Mr. Phil Hogan T.D., today (23 December 2011) published a new draft *Framework for Sustainable Development for Ireland* for public consultation.

Sustainable development is a continuous, guided process of economic, environmental and social change aimed at promoting wellbeing of citizens now and in the future. While considerable progress has been made in integrating sustainable principles into public policy making in Ireland since the first national strategy in this area was published in 1997, significant gaps remain across a range of economic, social and environmental policy areas. Drawing on the model established by the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, the draft Framework for Sustainable Development concentrates on gaps where limited progress has been made and which still present formidable challenges.

“Decoupling economic growth from resource use is just one example of where further progress is required. This Framework for Sustainable Development will facilitate implementation of a comprehensive set of measures to effectively tackle this and other identified gaps and to further advance sustainable development in Ireland”, the Minister said.

It is widely recognised, at both UN and EU levels, that it is not possible to achieve sustainable development goals without advancing the green economy, a fact which has also been highlighted consistently by the OECD. *“The ‘business-as-usual’ model is no longer fit for purpose if we are to put Ireland on a low carbon, climate resilient and economically competitive path. We need to craft a new vision for Ireland for the future, thinking beyond our current economic challenges and coming up with measures that will be both effective and implemented in a joined-up way. A central plank of Ireland’s economic recovery will centre on the development of a green economy that is alive to the opportunities for investment and employment creation in emerging sectors such as renewable energy, energy efficiency and waste and water management, and recognises how this sustainable approach to economic development complements the core strengths of the economy in the use of natural resources. This framework will provide a means for advancing the green economy agenda in Ireland, taking account of the three pillars of sustainable development – economic, environmental and social”,* the Minister added.

The Framework will form a central element of Ireland’s contribution to the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) which takes place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June 2012. This major conference marks the 20th anniversary of the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (the Earth Summit).. The objective of the conference is to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development, assess the progress to date and identify the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development.

The delivery of the measures outlined in the Framework will require a collective approach involving partnership with all key sectors and civil society. Minister Hogan added that *“the achievement of sustainable development depends on people acting together. Key stakeholders including Government Departments, the key economic sectors, community-based organisations and other civil-society groups must all play their part.”*

Encouraging all interested parties to submit their views, the Minister announced that a special seminar on the draft Framework would be held on 24 January next. *“As stakeholder buy-in is critical to the*

successful implementation of the Framework, it is important that all of the relevant stakeholders study the draft now being released for consultation and submit their comments. This will provide very valuable input into the process of finalising the Framework which I expect to conclude in the second quarter of 2012”.

The draft Framework for Sustainable Development in Ireland is now available for public consultation and may be downloaded on the webpages of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (www.environ.ie).

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Editors Note:

The objectives of the draft Framework are to identify and prioritise policy areas and mechanisms where a sustainable development approach will add value and enable continuous improvement of quality of life for current and future generations and set out clear measures, responsibilities and timelines in an implementation plan.

This draft Framework broadly follows the thematic approach of the *EU Sustainable Development Strategy* and includes:

- Sustainability of public finances and economic resilience
- Sustainable consumption and production
- Conservation and management of natural resources
- Climate change and clean energy
- Sustainable agriculture
- Sustainable transport
- Social inclusion, sustainable communities and spatial planning
- Public health
- Education, communication and behaviour change
- Innovation, research and development
- Skills and training
- Global poverty and sustainable development

While a wide range of initiatives fall within the scope of sustainable development, this Framework will ensure that we improve synergies across this very broad agenda, and identify and tackle policy conflicts and trade-offs as part of a coherent, joined-up approach to policy making on sustainable development.

The priorities for action cut across many key challenges and include:

- An effective framework for transition to an innovative, low carbon and resource efficient society.
- Identifying and adopting policies that can help achieve a shift towards a green economy, while maintaining fiscal stability and ensuring and ensuring sustainable public finances into the future..

- Protecting and restoring our biodiversity and ecosystems so that benefits essential for all sectors of society will be delivered.
- Securing health and social well being to enable full participation in society and economic development.
- Effective governance arrangements to ensure delivery of sustainable development
- A partnership approach to implementation of the strategy.
- Developing a set of indicators to measure and report on progress.