

Comhar SDC Terms of Reference

(1) The Terms of Reference of Comhar SDC are to advance the national agenda for sustainable development, to evaluate progress in this regard, to assist in devising suitable mechanisms and advising on their implementation, and to contribute to the formation of a national consensus in these regards. Comhar SDC will:

- (A) Have a specific focus on:-
 - Consideration of policy proposals and issues relating to the environment and sustainable development, and advice to Government on them;
 - Researching and making recommendations, tailored to national conditions, on specific approaches to, or instruments for, environmental management and protection, employment creation in the environmental sector, environmental performance in economic sectors;
 - Reviewing the implementation in Ireland of Agenda 21 and the other Rio Agreements, and contributing to annual national reports to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development;
 - Reviewing/responding to national data on environmental quality trends;
 - Recommending mechanisms for greater integration of environmental and sustainable development considerations into the development and implementation of all Government policies;

- Promoting information exchange, dialogue and consultation on environmental policy and sustainable development among the social partners and non-governmental organisations;
- Advising on means of raising public awareness of sustainable development and environmental issues, and encouraging positive behaviour at individual, community and sectoral levels.

(B) Examine and make recommendations on other issues related to environment and sustainable development.

(C) Review and monitor the implementation of our recommendations and if necessary make further recommendations; and

(D) Examine and report on relevant matters referred to it by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government or any other Minister.

(2) Comhar SDC may consider sustainable development issues on its own initiative or at the request of a Minister of the Government.

(3) Comhar SDC will work in three year cycles and will inform Government, through the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, of its programme of work within three months of the beginning of each cycle.

(4) In drawing up its work programme, Comhar SDC will take account of the role and functions of other bodies in areas related to sustainable development (environmental, social and economic) such as the NESCS, the NESF, the EPA and the Heritage Council to ensure complementarity.

(5) Comhar SDC may be invited or designated by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to attend relevant international fora, including the UN Commission on Sustainable Development.

(6) Comhar SDC may invite Ministers, Public Officials, Comhar SDC members, and outside experts to make presentations and to assist us in our work. Comhar SDC may also constitute appropriate subsidiary, consultative fora to assist in our work.

(7) Comhar SDC will publish and submit all its reports (which shall include annual reports on progress) to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, who shall bring them to Government; to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Environment and Local Government; and to such Government Departments and bodies as may be appropriate.

(8) The Partnership will be drawn from five broad pillars:

- State/public sector;
- Economic sectors;
- Environmental NGOs;
- Social/community NGOs;
- Professional/academic sector.

(9) Bodies designated by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government under these five pillars shall nominate candidates for Comhar SDC, and the Minister shall appoint no less than three of the nominees from each pillar to Comhar SDC. Where a nominated person is appointed to Comhar SDC, the second nominee from the same body will be designated as the alternate and may substitute for the member from time to time.

(10) Comhar SDC will have an independent Chairperson appointed by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. The

Chairperson's term of office shall be five years, and may be extended by the Minister.

(11) The term of office of members will be three years, with the exception of 10 members (two from each pillar) appointed in 2002, who will serve a four-year term, at the end of which the term of office of all members will revert to three years. The 10 members concerned shall be chosen by lottery within each pillar at the first meeting of Comhar SDC in 2002. Casual vacancies will be filled by the Minister for the Environment and Local Government from among the original nominees within the relevant pillar and members so appointed shall hold office until the expiry of the current term of office of the vacating member(s). The size of the membership may be varied by the Minister for the Environment and Local Government on the approval of the Government.

(12) The Chairperson of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Environment and Local Government shall be an ex-officio member of Comhar SDC.

(13) Comhar SDC is under the aegis of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and is funded through a Grant from that Department. This Grant is part of the overall estimate for the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

