



Response to Consultation

Date: 15 January 2010

Consultation: Everyone's Involved - Public Consultation on Sustainable Development Strategy

Introduction

The Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA) represents registered and non-registered housing associations in Northern Ireland. Collectively, our members provide 30,000 good quality, affordable homes for renting or equity sharing. Further information is available at www.nifha.org

Background

Our members within the Housing Association movement in Northern Ireland are committed to sustainability and would welcome a sustainable development policy which provides details of achievable strategic objectives. Registered housing associations are at the forefront of sustainable house-building in Northern Ireland. The Housing Association grant from the DSD, requires their homes to be designed and built to robust environmental standards.

The Minister for Social Development has made a commitment that “the bar will continue to be raised” until all Housing Association development is carbon-neutral. Registered Housing Associations are continuing to work towards this objective and since June 2008 have been required to achieve at least code level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes in their planned developments.

General Comments

The Housing Association movement in Northern Ireland has extensive experience of developing sustainable homes. They use:

- high-quality insulation
- renewable heating systems (e.g. solar water heaters, photovoltaic cells, heat pumps, wood-chip boilers)
- rainwater harvest systems (to flush toilets, wash cars, water gardens etc)
- timber from sustainably managed forests
- CFC free paint – to reduce harm to the ozone layer
- site management techniques to minimise construction waste.

In this context it should be recognised that the Housing Association movement encourages and promotes sustainable development throughout its industry.

Specific Comments

NIFHA welcome the development of a sustainable development policy that outlines our government's vision and the actions it plans to take to achieve this vision. We also welcome that an implementation plan will be available and hope that it will clearly show the processes and timescales for the delivery of the strategy. However, commitment 8 states that the plan

working together for better housing

will be issued in 2009 before the closure of the consultation period has closed. To date NIFHA have not received the implementation plan and therefore cannot comment on how they may view its effectiveness. It would have been helpful if definitive target dates had been set against each of the strategic objectives in the body of the paper with the implementation plan as an appendix.

The consultation document does not set the context of current performance and does not show a baseline measurement of how well we are presently meeting the strategic objectives. Will improvements be measured from both a qualitative and quantitative aspect and how will this be done?

There is a viewpoint from some of our members that sustainability in development should encourage repair and adaptation of buildings and recycling of building materials. This would then lead to reductions in the transportation of building materials together with the energy and other resources that are required in their construction.

I hope you find these comments useful.

Submitted on behalf of NIFHA by:

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