

# **THE NORTHERN IRELAND FEDERATION OF HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS**

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28<sup>th</sup> April 2006

**Belfast Capital City Consultation  
Policy and Research Unit  
Development Department  
Belfast City Council  
Cecil Ward Building  
4 – 10 Linenhall Street  
BELFAST  
BT2 8BP**

To Whom It May Concern:

**Re: Belfast: Capital City II**

I refer to the above document and would like to thank you for allowing an extension of time, due to the postal strike, in affording us the opportunity to contribute to the consultative process.

The Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA) represents 44 independent voluntary organisations, which benefit the community by providing affordable accommodation and related housing services. Our members manage almost 30,000 units of accommodation and are currently building in the region of 1,500 dwellings per annum. In the last twenty-five years housing associations have undertaken a diverse range of projects responding to the needs of an evolving society.

A large proportion of our members provide accommodation within the Belfast area and share Belfast City Council's commitment to provide a high quality environment in which people can live. We would like to draw attention to the following points:

- NIFHA welcomes the role for social housing in this programme, although we believe that it could be given greater prominence. The capital city programme should consider establishing a group of stakeholders to work in partnership, which must encompass representation from social housing providers, including housing associations.
- There should be greater emphasis on the promotion of cultural diversity in Northern Ireland, demonstrating that Belfast is a place for all sections of the community. This should not focus specifically on religious conflict and must contribute towards combating fear and hate crime, which has consequences for people from all backgrounds who are living and/or working in the city.

***Representing and promoting housing associations in Northern Ireland***

**Chairperson: Mr Arthur Canning Dip (Est Man) MBEng Chief Executive: Mr Chris Williamson MCIH**

**VAT Registration No: 311 2120 40**

- All stakeholders have a responsibility to encourage community cohesion, which should include the integration of private and social housing. In this respect, the programme must address the need to provide affordable purchase options for those who want to live in the city centre. Future planning must allow for the provision of different types of housing as well as apartments e.g. family type accommodation and flats above commercial premises. This creates more opportunities and choice for the citizens in terms of where they work and live.
- The programme must recognise that housing associations are already committed to building cohesive communities and provide community centre facilities in schemes, which can benefit the wider locality as a whole.
- We recommend that, in particular, the fringes of Belfast city centre be given priority in the development of a capital city plan. In this respect the plan should aim at developing networks to help address underlying issues such as unemployment, deprivation, lack of educational facilities and urban regeneration. Such projects have already been piloted by some of our members and should be given serious consideration and support on a wider scale.
- Belfast City Council should consider the growth of the social economy as part of this plan and create an opportunity for new and community oriented businesses to develop and flourish.
- It is important that this plan is sufficiently flexible and able to be adapted to a future changing social, economical or political climate.

I trust that you accept the above comments as useful. Should you wish to discuss any of the points above in more detail, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



DONALL HENDERSON  
HOUSING POLICY AND RESEARCH MANAGER

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