

# **IPH response to Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the Department for Regional Development Spatial Strategies**

11 Apr 2011

Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the Department for Regional Development - Spatial Strategies on the Island of Ireland: Framework for Collaboration

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The Institute of Public Health in Ireland

The remit of the Institute of Public Health in Ireland (IPH) is to promote cooperation for public health between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in the areas of research and information, capacity building and policy advice. Our approach is to support Departments of Health and their agencies in both jurisdictions, and maximise the benefits of all-island cooperation to achieve practical benefits for people in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

As an all-island body, the Institute of Public Health in Ireland particularly welcomes that the Framework for Collaboration has been co-produced by the Department for Regional Development and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. In addition the Institute of Public Health welcomes a more holistic approach to spatial planning that takes into account the environment and sustainable economic development. A clean environment and a more equitable distribution of prosperity have associated health benefits, as outlined in the IPH's Active travel – healthy lives (2011) and Health impacts of the built environment- a review (2006).

## **Key points**

- It is encouraging that the Regional Development Strategy and the National Spatial Strategy both recognise the importance of health and environmental quality in undertaking any developments, and the Institute for Public Health would hope that this approach would be maintained over the lifetime of these strategies and would not be given less attention in light of the current economic climate.

- The IPH is encouraged that the unequal distribution of economic benefits across the island of Ireland is recognised in the Framework, and that working across the Border to optimise opportunities for both populations is to the forefront of this document. It should also be recognised that there can be a disproportionate burden of ill-health within communities. Within a local population some may be benefiting more than others from increased prosperity, and those who are benefiting least may also be experiencing negative health impacts associated with increased industry; for example, reduced air and water quality, increased noise and accidents - associated with traffic. Frameworks should ensure there are no unintended distributional impacts.
- The Framework clearly recognises that environmental degradation is borderless, and it is essential that collaborative work in this regard is undertaken. This is recognised already at an EU level in terms of greenhouse gas emission targets for reduction. North/South coordination of self-imposed targets should be maximised to encourage the other jurisdiction to match these targets for the benefit of all on the island and beyond.
- The Institute of Public Health in Ireland has already established cross-border data comparison tools on its Healthwell site ([www.thehealthwell.info](http://www.thehealthwell.info)) that could serve as a good model for similar data coordination as outlined in the document.
- The Institute of Public Health in Ireland has considerable experience in cross-border research programmes and capacity building which could be useful to the Departments as outlined in 4.22.
- The Institute of Public Health in Ireland would recommend that the North/South energy interconnector project should have an independent Health Impact Assessment undertaken to establish if some of the local population's fears are legitimate.
- The Institute of Public Health in Ireland would recommend that the two year review of the Framework and associated report are undertaken by an independent evaluator.

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