

# Advancing Rural Development

The Northern Ireland  
Rural Development Council  
**Strategic Framework 2007-2013**

Our Vision:

A living,  
working,  
sustainable,  
shared,  
countryside.



# Foreword

I am delighted as Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to write this foreword to the Rural Development Council's Strategic Framework for 2007 - 2013.

The Rural Development Council has been at the forefront of rural development since the early 1990's and has been an important partner to the Department over these years.

The Council has consistently advocated the needs of rural communities and has proven to be a key source of information in respect of the lives our rural people lead. It has provided government with evidence based policy responses, tailored research detailing the specific needs of rural communities and delivered a range of programmes and services on the government's behalf.

Our rural communities continue to face many challenges. I have no doubt that the Rural Development Council will continue to successfully support these communities and help to develop and regenerate our rural areas.

As Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development I will continue to listen to the needs of rural communities and champion their concerns in government. I want to work in partnership with all stakeholders to ensure

that rural communities have a just and sustainable future. In taking forward this new strategy, and with its wealth of experience and expertise, I am sure that the Rural Development Council will have an important role to play in this partnership.

It is appropriate that the title of this document is "Advancing Rural Development" in that it clearly articulates the services that the Rural Development Council can offer to rural communities to ensure that rural people can live quality lives. This document also establishes the independence of the Council and clearly maps out its future role in our community.

I would like to thank the Rural Development Council for its support to date and wish it well for the future as it enters a new period of rural development.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michelle Gildernew'.

**MICHELLE GILDERNEW MP MLA**

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development

# Towards a New Vision

The launch of this strategic framework marks a culmination of over two years sustained effort that has been building towards a significant change in our structure. After 16 years of being identified as an agent of Government we are now moving to become an independent company in our own right.

This will not impact on our enthusiasm and energy for rural development. Instead it will open new opportunities for us to work with others and to take forward new actions designed to make rural life better. Some of these opportunities have already been realised as we confirm our new role as development agent for the International Fund for Ireland. This new contract strengthens our relationship with the Fund and offers potential opportunities for communities engaging in reconciliation and peace building to access funding and support.

We will also continue to deliver grant and implementation support to the 395 rural projects under existing contracts taking us into the 2009/2010 operating period.

We have combined our skills and expertise in developing this new strategic framework and are very clear on what it is we will do.

Our framework centres on three things; to deliver objective analysis; to provide practical actions and solutions and to identify and share best practice.

We will do this so that the value of rural is clear and prioritised, so that people can live quality lives in a modern rural society and so that our lessons and the lessons of others can lead to future success. All our activities will relate to these three principle areas of work.

We expect to be measured on the outcomes we achieve. This strategic framework will be supplemented by an annual operational and business plan helping to ensure

we remain on target, are effective and operate to the highest standards of efficiency.

We are excited by the opportunity of change and look forward to working with the new devolved administration, DARD, other Departments, local government, rural stakeholders, communities and individual rural dwellers in promoting positive and sustainable change and in helping to develop and regenerate rural areas.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. McDonald'.

Martin McDonald **Chief Executive**



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Caroline Breakey'.

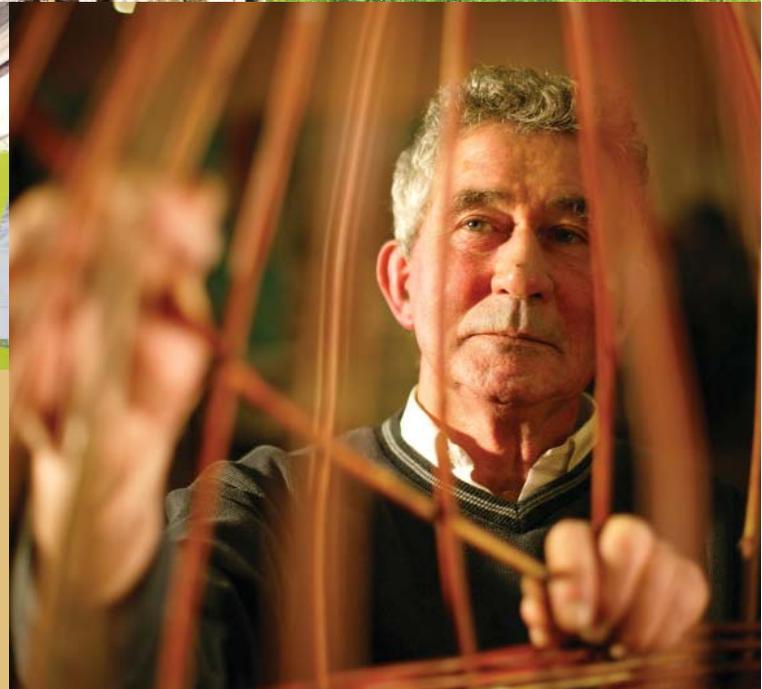
Caroline Breakey **Chair**



# Shared Liv Working



● Sustainable  
**ing**  
Countryside



# Who We Are

## **We are a rural development organisation**

Our job is to promote positive and sustainable change helping to develop and regenerate rural areas for the better.

## **We are a Council of rural stakeholders**

Our job is to bring together, organise and structure the different and often competing interests of rural development so that the collective needs and opportunities in rural areas can be realised.

## **We were established in 1991**

We have a recognised track record in rural development. We have worked with and supported the community, voluntary, private and public sector through a range of economic, social, cultural and environmental projects and programmes. We have developed an expertise in gathering and analysing data, research and information from a range of sources, testing and developing rural solutions, sharing information and building effective partnerships.

## **We are an independent organisation**

We trade on our reputation and our ability to deliver real value.



# What We Do

**We provide objective analysis so decisions can be based on clear evidence.**

**This means we will:**

- Support stakeholder discussions
  - An annual series of stakeholder workshops
- Deliver evidence based policy responses
  - An annual statement of rural change
- Promote ‘think rural’
  - Continue to support a ‘rural proofing’ agenda
- Develop a robust information base
  - Expand and promote our GIS mapping capability
  - Rolling programme of funded research

**We will do this:**

So the value of rural is clear and prioritised.

**We deliver practical actions and solutions.**

**This means we will:**

- Take forward projects and programmes that benefit rural people
  - Implementation of 395 projects funded by the EU Programme for Building Sustainable Prosperity; EU Peace Programme and International Fund for Ireland
- Focus our efforts on where we are best placed to add value
  - Identify opportunities to test out and pilot rural solutions at the regional level
  - Provision of technical and development support services as an agent for the International Fund for Ireland

**We will do this:**

So that people can live quality lives in a modern rural society.

**We identify, promote and share best practice.**

**This means we will:**

- Promote rural development
  - An annual communications and influencing plan
- Develop and share best practice
  - Package, promote and expand our range of resources
- Offer advice, support and guidance
  - Develop and promote our technical support services

**We will do this:**

So our lessons and the lessons of others can lead to future successes.

# How We Operate

We recognise that the environment in which we work is changing. This will mean change for us as an organisation. We will continue to develop the skills of our Council and staff and maximise their potential as an **'Investor in people'**.

We believe in developing a clear set of processes in support of our strategic and business objectives. Our business systems need to be **efficient and effective**. These are, and will be subject to review through mechanisms including audit and best practice reviews. We pride ourselves in high standards of **corporate governance**.

We will promote an **open and honest culture** that **respects and values difference**. We will ensure equality in our work and continue to equality proof our policies and practices as part of our commitment to the equality agenda.

We will always be focused on the delivery of outcomes, real tangible **outcomes** that can be seen, experienced and measured. As an organisation we expect to be judged on our reputation, performance and quality and we will work to ensure the **highest standard** of outcomes are delivered.

We will be **objective** in our responses and **solutions orientated**. We will always explain our position clearly and we will base our comments on the best available **knowledge, information and evidence**.

We will bring **creativity and innovation** to our work and finally we will be **passionate and committed** in bringing about **positive change**.



## Contact Us:

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# Getting Involved

We have written this framework to let you know who we are and what it is we do.

We are always interested to hear from rural stakeholders and welcome your views on how we can collectively work to advance rural development.

Our vision for rural areas is more challenging than we can ever deliver on our own. We do recognise and are clear about the contribution other stakeholders make to achieving a better rural society for all. We will be the first to celebrate the difference our collective contributions can make to rural life.

If you are interested in joining with RDC as part of a wider stakeholder forum please contact us on 028 8676 6980 or email [tcanavan@rdc.org.uk](mailto:tcanavan@rdc.org.uk)

By working together we can make a difference.

# [www.rdc.org.uk](http://www.rdc.org.uk)

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INVESTORS IN PEOPLE