



**MINISTERIAL ADVISORY GROUP**  
FOR ARCHITECTURE AND THE BUILT  
ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

**MAG RESPONSE TO NORTHERN IRELAND  
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE ON THE  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION BILL**

**Nov 2013**

**MINISTERIAL ADVISORY GROUP FOR ARCHITECTURE AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT  
RESPONSE TO NORTHERN IRELAND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE  
ON THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION BILL**

**INTRODUCTION**

The Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) advises the Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure in the role of Design Champion allocated in the Policy for Architecture and the Built Environment, 2006.

**INTEREST**

MAG's main interests in the Bill are the opportunities to improve people's quality of life through the introduction of **community planning** and the proposed powers to act to promote **well-being** – which it seems is to be known as "**competency**".

**WORDING**

"Well-being" is descriptive and easily understood. The word "competency" is difficult to understand and does not readily describe the concept. Well-being is better.

**"TOO MANY PLANS"**

When we introduce Community Plans, we may have "too many plans" unless we know how to turn them from plans into actions – the only way to do this is to make them real and exciting to people.

".....there are too many plans, there are between 70 and 80 recognisable plans for Derry ..... if I was ever to criticise some of the plans in the past in Derry, I think the biggest failing of all is that they never got delivered."

*Sir Roy McNulty CBE, Chairman of Ilex URC*

Keynote Speech at The Business of Peace, Working for a better future:

Community Relations, Stability and the Economy

Policy Development Conference

Corr's Corner, Newtownabbey

**Community Relations Council 30 April 2009**

"We have too many strategies, too many policies and too many action plans, many of which refer to work already proposed or under way and do not add real value."

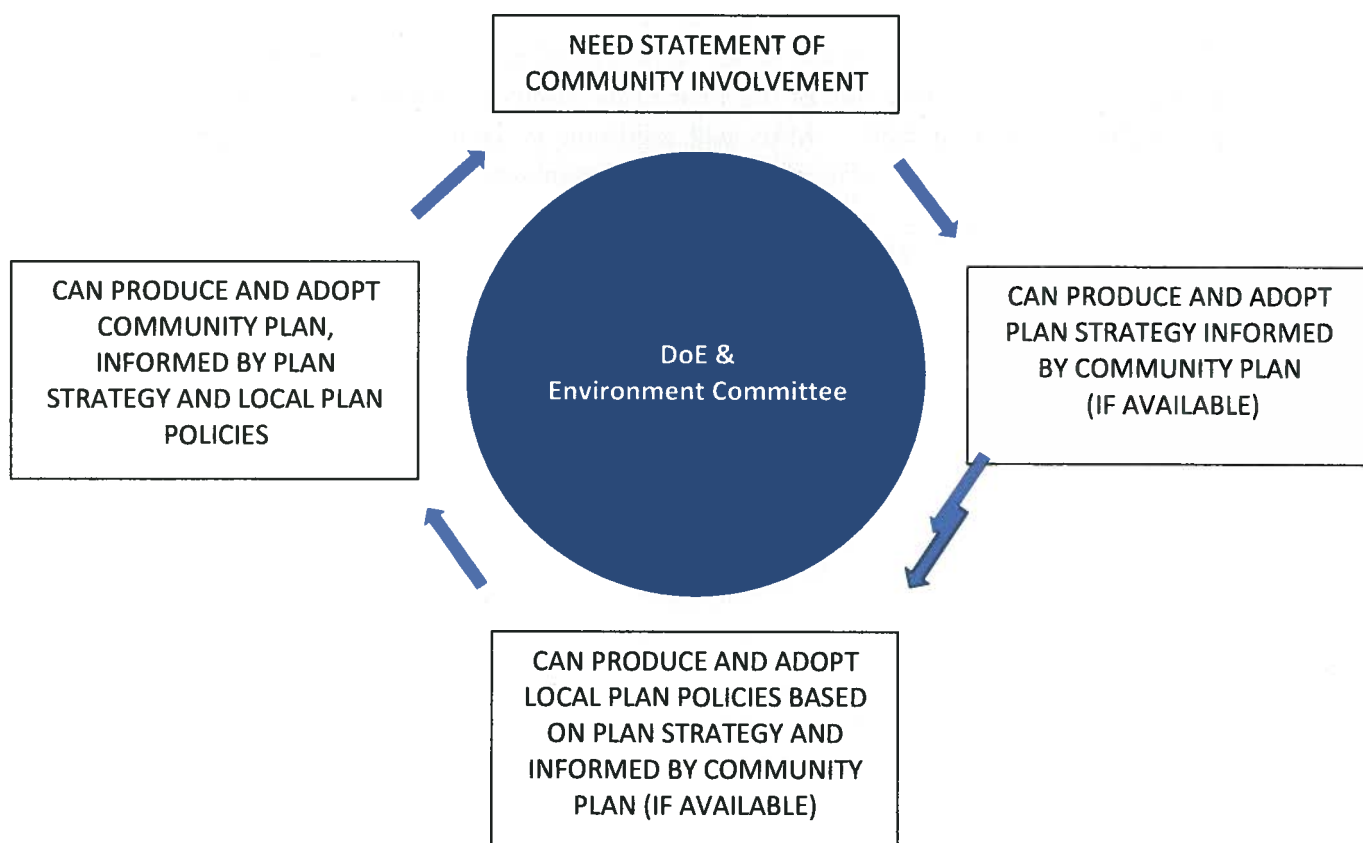
*Peter Robinson MLA, First Minister*

Launching the Programme for Government,

**Northern Ireland Assembly 12 March 2012**

### THE POTENTIAL PROBLEM OF A “DO NOTHING” CIRCLE?

The new legislation may create a “do nothing” circle where nothing can seem to be done until something else is finished. Planning Legislation has required DoE to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement for many years but it seems that this has never been switched on.



### STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

DoE could set an example now by preparing its Statement of Community Involvement without delay. The DoE Statement of Community Involvement could include guidance on how to genuinely involve people in a real way over the long term – there are proven ways to do this – and have fun doing it.

### FRIENDS, NEIGHBOURS and SERIOUS FUN

Community Involvement should not be a chore – it should be a pleasure. We all know good neighbours and good friends of places and of each other. There are many excellent examples internationally and locally of “Friends of” places such as the Grand Opera House, the Belfast Hills, Belmont Park and Bangor Castle Walled Garden. Others will come to mind.

Some of the best neighbours and friends are not the richest or most educated – they are just good at it and love doing it. Introducing a “friends and neighbours” approach to places and to each other will make the Statement of Community Involvement real and practical, increasing genuine involvement of people with places and things for good relations, sharing, well-being and fun as well as environmental and social improvement. And “fun” makes places attractive and worthwhile to be in. That attracts economic development and investment.

### **CREATIVITY AND DESIGN**

Creativity is a natural part of the life of a designer. Design skills are available to all government departments through MAG; some departments already link closely with MAG’s creative approach. Twenty two of the twenty six councils have taken part in days of action-learning during the summer. MAG will continue to provide “follow-up” activities with Councils and looks forward to working with all government departments.

### **THE FUTURE LOOKS GOOD**

MAG looks forward to continuing the work and inspiring the action – the “delivery”, or the implementation, of the plans rather than creating more plans for their own sakes.

Arthur Acheson  
Chair of MAG  
3 November 2013