An Inquiry into the Possibility of a Programme of Co-operation between Scotland and Ireland

Evidence received by 26 April 2006

1. To date evidence (both email and formal submissions) has been received from the following:

   1) Colmcille (not published at request)
   2) Northern Lighthouse Board
   3) Newry and Mourne Council
   4) Sarah Gundry
   5) John Purvis MEP
   6) Chambers Ireland
   7) Mr Stephen Joyce
   8) North Lanarkshire Council
   9) Rody Gorman
  10) Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council
  11) Mr Ian Provan
  12) Dick and Meg Gannon
  13) Scottish Crofting Foundation
  14) COMET
  15) Michael Bartlett
  16) Cllr. Ken Robinson, East Antrim MLA
  17) Comunn na Gàidhlìg
  18) Donegal County Enterprise Board
  19) Belfast City Council
  20) Dr Cathal McCall
  21) Stirling Council
  22) Centre for Cross Border Studies
  23) Ulster Scots Agency
  24) North West Ireland Tourism (Email sent but not published at request – more detailed evidence to follow)
  25) Scottish Enterprise
  26) Dumfries & Galloway Council
  27) Argyll and Bute Council
  28) North East Partnership
  29) South Ayrshire Council
  30) Special EU Programmes Body
  31) North West Region Cross Border Group
  32) Pan Celtic
  33) Here We Are
  34) North/South Ministerial Council
  35) Donegal County Council
  36) Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
  37) Glasgow City Council
  38) South Lanarkshire Council, Enterprise Resources
  39) Department of Finance and Personnel of Northern Ireland
  40) James H Allister QC MEP
  41) Professor Cairns Craig, FRSE, FBA
  42) European Commission, DG Regional Policy
  43) Peadar É Ó Donnghaile
  44) Mr Jim Nicholson MEP
  45) The Scottish Objective 3 Partnership
46) Udaras na Gaeltachta
47) The Scottish Council for Development and Industry
48) Jim Nicholson MEP
49) Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport, dated 6 April 2006
50) Donegal Local Development Company Limited (awaiting electronic copy – will publish when received)
51) Deputy First Minister and Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning, on behalf of Scottish Ministers, dated 27 April 2006
52) First Minister, dated 17 May 2006
Evidence from the Northern Lighthouse Board

Reference KC/DMG/30-05

25th November 2005

Dear Sir

European Committee Inquiry into the Possibility of a Programme of Co-operation between Scotland and Ireland

The Northern Lighthouse Board is pleased to respond to the European Committee’s call for evidence on its Inquiry into the Possibility of a Programme of Co-operation between Scotland and Ireland.

The Commissioners of Northern Lighthouses, known as the Northern Lighthouse Board (NLB), are vested with the superintendence and management of all lighthouses, buoys and beacons throughout Scotland and the adjacent seas and islands and the Isle of Man under Section 195 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995. The subject matter of that Act is a reserved matter under Section 30 of and Schedule 5 to the Scotland Act 1998 and in terms of Section 29 of the Scotland Act 1998.

The Commissioners, within the area of jurisdiction for which they are the General Lighthouse Authority, have various powers and responsibilities in connection with the provision, maintenance, alteration, inspection and control of lighthouses, buoys and beacons, and also have wreck removal powers.

We are responding, in particular, with corrective information in relation to the statement in the Inquiry press release which indicates that ‘the Committee is not currently aware of any European Commission Interreg-funded project that has involved Scotland and Ireland’

In fact, the Northern Lighthouse Board, along with the South West Regional Authority in Ireland, are partners in the Atlantic Lighthouses (At Lights) Project under Interreg IIIB Atlantic Region. Other partners are from Spain, Canary Islands, France and England. The project involves tourist bodies, environmental organisations, local authorities and Lighthouse Authorities, and its aim is to facilitate the sharing of experiences in relation to utilising surplus lighthouse property (for tourism purposes, for example).

The project functions to enable information, ideas and experiences to be exchanged, with the specific objective of exploring ways to secure the long term future of our valuable maritime architectural heritage by developing alternative cultural, social, tourism or business uses for lighthouses. The broader context of this focus engages such issues as regional tourism/business development, rural economies, and environmental and social impact assessment.

The Northern Lighthouse Board hosted a study visit for the other partners in September 2004. The visit included a project meeting in Edinburgh and a visit to lighthouses in Dumfries and Galloway (Mull of Galloway lighthouse on 14 September, and the Killantringan and Corsewall lighthouses on 15 September).
It may be of further interest to the Committee to know that the NLB has long-standing co-operation arrangements with the Commissioners of Irish Lights, the General Lighthouse Authority for Ireland - the most visible sign of which is a ship sharing agreement; i.e. ship inter-changes between Scotland and Ireland.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like further information on our experience of working on the At Lights project, or on any other aspect of our co-operative work with organisations in Ireland.

Yours faithfully

Douglas Gorman
Email from Newry and Mourne Council

I refer to the above and would confirm that for a number of years a Tripartite Agreement has been in existence between the following parties:

- Newry and Mourne District Council (N.Ireland UK)
- Clare County Council (Ireland)
- Western Isles Council (Scotland).

The constituent parties would welcome the introduction of a Scotland-Ireland Interreg Programme as a means of supporting and developing further these relationships.

Regards,
Gerard McGivern
Director of District Development
Evidence from Sarah Gundry

Dear friends,

I am writing to you with my views on strengthening connections between Scotland and Ireland. There are many Irish people living in Scotland today and many Scots have gone to Northern Ireland and to the Republic in the past. The two countries are close geographically and the Celtic ties between the countries are very strong as regards language, history and culture.

In the Gaelic world this can be seen from the Columba Initiative (Iomairt Cholm Cille) – established in 1997. They support Gaelic through promoting and strengthening ties between the Gaelic speakers of Scotland and Ireland. This initiative has been very successful in promoting the Scottish and Irish Gaelic communities in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland through projects connected with the arts and the language. These projects have given people in the communities the opportunity to take part in arts such as music, drama, dance, the visual arts and literature and have encouraged understanding, friendship and the use of our own languages.

I believe that there will be more opportunities for working together on Gaelic/Irish projects as Gaelic speakers in the two country speak almost the same language: education (such as language courses, competitions e.g. debates between Scottish and Irish students, Pàrlamaid nan Oileanach – the Students’ Parliament for Gaelic and Irish speaking students etc.)

It is important that we keep both languages alive and that children have the opportunity for Gaelic education at every level (e.g. primary, secondary, adult education and university – immersion and part time).

I have participated in Pàrlamaid nan Oileanach twice, as part of the steering group, which was a cultural educational exchange, where there was co-working and debating with students from Scotland, N.I and the Republic.

There were also further benefits for the local communities where these Parliaments were held: cultural, tourism, social and economic. Amongst the benefits for the students were learning about values, beliefs, cultures and the encouragement which it gave people to use their minority language.

With this project, I saw the benefit which came from European funding and I believe that the Scottish Executive and the Irish Government should work together to use these opportunities and this funding to encourage cross border activity.

The Irish tourism advertisements are very attractive and lively and they advertise the people, the view, the language and the culture. We could learn from this.

I am not as knowledgeable about the Irish cultural policy but we could learn from many of the good things happening there such as the Irish Arts Council (which works cross border) and from the things which weren’t as helpful or changed the nature of the culture such as American funding.

I believe that we should strengthen the links between Scotland and Ireland and believe that the English language world could learn from the Gaelic language world.
With best wishes,

Sarah Gundry
Email from John Purvis MEP

Dear Dennis

I see that you are Reporter for an investigation of Irish /Scottish projects and possible European funding. One suggestion might be to upgrade the road from Stranraer/Cairnryan to the M77 to motorway standard in order to encourage Irish transport to use the Rosyth-Zeebrugge ferry. This has just been reduced to 3 sailings a week for lack of sufficient freight transport. I have noted that usually there are a significant number of Irish/Northern Irish trucks on this service. I feel sure this could be further increased if there was a clear link between the two ferry routes. Incidentally it should also entail the closing of the M80 gap at Cumbernauld and completion of the new Kincardine Bridge and link from there to the M90 at Rosyth. Such a development would benefit both Ireland/Northern Ireland and Scotland.

As this encourages short sea crossing traffic versus long distance road and could be a TransEuropean Network Route, it could well benefit from EU funding. Worth investigating at least.

Yours

John
Evidence from Chambers Ireland

I received a copy of your inquiry into the possibility of a programme of co-operation between Scotland and Ireland under Interreg and its future replacement. Chambers Ireland would be interested in participating in such a programme and I understand that my colleague Stuart Duffin, who is a native of Scotland, has been in contact with your office in this regard.

Chambers Ireland is a representative body for 60 affiliated chambers in Ireland based on both sides of the border. We have over 12,000 business members making Chambers Ireland's largest business representative body. We are also one of the recognised bodies in Ireland's social partnership process - a process that many would credit as a key driver of Ireland's economic turnaround over the past 15 years.

For some years we have been engaged in SME capacity building, utilising primarily EU money to develop innovative solutions to practical problems faced by SME's. Models include blended learning which combines traditional learning processes of face to face and workshop training with on-line training which can be accessed by owner managers at their own time from the comfort of their own office.

Our programmes have ranged from practical issues such as compliance with Health and Safety legislation to the OHSAS 18001 standard to programmes aimed at the re-employment of older workers primarily those from traditional industries who find that their original skills are redundant in a more technology driven services environment. We have worked to overcome these employees' sense of insecurity to the point where they can be upskilled and re-skilled thus enabling them to maximise the potential offered by the Celtic Tiger Economy.

Needless to say, the projects and programmes that we have been engaged in have often been conducted in partnership with other organisations both in Ireland and abroad.

In short we are very interested in co-operating with you on this. We would welcome the opportunity of discussing further what your requirements are and how we can help you advance your objectives. We can discuss our programme of activities to date and work with you on developing programmes of activities to the mutual benefit of all of our citizens.

I trust that the above will be of interest to you and look forward to hearing from you in due course.

With best regards,

Richard Guiney.
Evidence from Mr Stephen Joyce

Submission for Mutually-Beneficial Co-operation between Scotland and Ireland

1. Submission from: Mr Stephen Joyce.
2. Companies represented:
   - Pride of Scotland Media and events
   - Inishscot Publications
   - Abc Educational promotions
3. Relevant Background Information
   - Mr Stephen Joyce M.A.
     - Currently:
       - Publisher/ Media Adviser/ Educational Writer
     - Previously:
       - Acting Head Teacher,
       - College Lecturer,
       - European Citizenship Unit Director,
       - Officer RNR.

One: Introduction

Any new Scots - Irish co-operation programme should now respond to the current European Union Strategy Guidelines 2007 - 2013 and should be innovative, cross border and transnational.

The partnership programme should clearly aim to promote balanced, sustainable and harmonious development with the fundamental aim of: improving the quality of life of the citizens of Scotland, Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The programme must also show that it will contribute to sustainable economic growth and the creation and sustaining of jobs and community life.

The programme should also be a clearly co-operative one by which the countries involved will mutually benefit from cross border sharing of resources, best practices and approaches to dealing with common issues and opportunities to enhance the lives of individuals and groups in communities.

Some examples of areas for a sharing of approaches might be to do with:

- Identification of common opportunities for improvement
- Responses to change and innovation in rural and small town communities
- Proven good practice in dealing with key development issues and problems
• Participation by local, regional and other public bodies
• Promotion of social cohesion

In particular, any new Scots-Irish Programme should show that it can strengthen economic and social development by sharing good practice. It will allow for the opportunity to work together in common projects and especially develop working, pro-active networks of co-operation.

In this context, it would be imperative that any proposed Scots-Irish Programme would improve the effectiveness of regional development policies in areas such as:

Community enhancement
Tourism and Culture
Rural Development
Economic regeneration

The Programme should also show the value of sharing experiences, approaches and policies in a structured, targeted and focused way.

Co-operation to date

Throughout 2005 there has been regular co-operation on an informal scale which might form the basis – or indicate possibilities – in any Scots-Irish Partnership Programme.

This co-operation has been initiated and sustained by the working relationships between the following people, their colleagues and advisers.

Mr Andrew Ward, Manager (Inishowen Rural Development, Donegal Ireland)

Mr Dennis Canavan MSP (Member of Scottish External Relations Committee)

Ms Kate Burns (Chief Executive ICBAN – Northern Ireland)

Mr Stephen Joyce, Managing Director (‘Pride of Scotland Media and Events’)

This initiative resulted in two Irish delegations coming to fruitful exploratory meetings at The Scottish Parliament and The Scottish Executive with the following general aims in mind:

• To initiate a mutually valuable dialogue about the potential of a Scots-Irish partnership in relation to community enhancement through our shared cultural, historical, rural, tourist and maritime connections.
• To explore and learn from Scottish successes and best practices in community enhancement, particularly in relation to rural, marginalised, and disadvantaged groups.
• To explore and share Scotland’s outstanding success in Eco-Tourism within the European Union
• To share information on approaches to dealing with key community issues, challenges and opportunities at the start of the 21st Century.
To explore opportunities to work together on a cross border basis so that objectives and strategies are co-ordinated and maximised

To share information on how Inishowen Rural Development have tackled common issues in relation to rural and community development, tourism, cultural and maritime challenges.

To identify a specific project in which the Scots-Irish partnership could co-operate to explore the value of working together on common issues.

Two: SCOTS-Irish Partnership A Scottish Perspective

Areas of Common Concern?

A Scots–Irish Partnership could also beneficially focus on major areas of concern and challenge in relation to sustainable development.

It is clear that the communities and small towns along the common coastlines and rivers are experiencing serious ecological and environmental challenges which impact on their development— as well as on all the economic, community and cultural life of these communities.

The following ideas specifically focus on some of the negative developments which might be addressed in a trans national programme. Many of these issues, problems and challenges are common to Scotland, Ireland and Northern Ireland - and a cooperation programme to address these issues - and share findings and examples of good practice - would be beneficial to all countries and regions in the project.

For Example:

Recent media reports and studies in Scotland and Ireland have drawn attention to the following common challenges which if addressed through a Scots-Irish programme could benefit the quality of life of the people who live in and people who are attracted as visitors to the tourist areas.

Some problems identified are:

- Contamination of coastlines and rivers
- Global warming impact on fauna and flora of common coastlines and waterways
- Traffic congestion in rural areas due
- Negative Impact on general life of influx of tourists, particularly in relation to noise, rural lifestyle, heritage, property prices etc

I think it could be important to address a variety of negative issues brought about when new plans are being put into place to increase sustainable developments - so that the maximum positive value is gained by the area. This could result across the three countries in increased visitor returns and minimal damage to the natural beauty, landscape, culture and heritage of the tourist areas.

Three: Example of Cooperation

Scots–Irish Tourism and Culture Programme

This could be an important starting point for a Programme which aims to improve the quality of life of communities through co-operation in the promotion of tourism and culture.
As is now established, culture and tourism are integral components of the European Union’s wealth and stability. Culture and Tourism is also a key sustainer of the particular identity of regions within the European Union and an important source of economic activity, job creation and enhancement of the local economy.

According to current figures, Tourism and Culture account for 5.5% of the European Union’s GDP and offers employment opportunities to 9 million people, many of them young people who will be the future entrepreneurs and managers.

The starting point for any Scot - Irish programme in this area therefore should be the acceptance that Tourism and Culture a have a significant role to play in the European Union’s structural aims and objectives for the period 2007 -13.

Part of this emphasis is particularly relevant to a Scots - Irish Programme as it would give a structured opportunity for the countries involved to identify, develop and maximise the importance of a shared Celtic heritage as the central platform of a Scots - Irish innovative approach.

In this context, The European Union stresses the importance that should be put on regions building cooperative projects, networks and approaches which build on the theme of regional identity.

**FOUR: Current working partnership**

The Inishowen Initiative

Any new Scots Irish proposed partnership could look to the success of a current partnership which has identified the value which can be gained by Scots – Irish co-operation.

The Inishowen Initiative is the result of the work undertaken by Mr Andrew Ward, Manager of Inishowen Rural Development, Ireland who has worked tirelessly over the last year to encourage Scotland to become an active partner in a joint project which would be mutually beneficial to Scotland and Ireland.

Mr Ward’s initiative was imaginatively taken up by Mr Dennis Canavan, MSP, Convenor of the External Relation Committee at the Scottish Parliament, and he has done everything he could to encourage other MSPs and Government Ministers to look at the potential in pursuing the IRDL Initiative at a more formal level – particularly in relation to the INTERREG Strategy Guidelines 2007 -2013.

As a result of a number of initial meetings, the partnership initiative is pleased that The Scottish Minister for Tourism was prepared to meet with the Irish delegation, a number of MSPs and Mr Ron McGale and colleagues of the European Structural Funds Division.

Inishowen Example:

IRDL is a dynamic development agency in a peripheral area of Ireland and has suffered economically, socially and in regional development potential - due particularly to its distance from the seat of national government and also because it is a border county to Northern Ireland.
There is factual documentation that the Inishowen area of Donegal has suffered due to the protracted military conflict in Northern Ireland, particularly in relation to the regeneration of communities and the development of the areas tourist and cultural potential.

The recent positive activities of IRDL have helped to raise the status and profile of the peninsula, not just in relation to the government in Ireland, but also in relation to its inter-relation with Northern Ireland, particularly County Derry, the City of Derry and the North Antrim Coast and Scotland.

An example of a specific cross border regional success here is the successful joint funding with Northern Ireland of a Celtic European festival of The Sea which will be a major cross border maritime event in 2006.

Over and above this, Inishowen through IRDL and its local partners has sought to maximise on the peace process by identifying and promoting ‘sustainable eco-tourism’. The work of IRDL is based on making Inishowen a gateway to tourists from Northern Ireland and Scotland who share and can have their communities enhanced by their shared Celtic culture and heritage.

IRDL and ICBAN share the Scottish executive’s objectives to ensure the development of sustainable communities which will help to regenerate the economy of an area and enhance the lives of the individuals and groups in these communities.

A key part of this strategy, which also reflects developments in Scotland, is the need to ensure that the natural beauty of an area and its natural resources and heritage are protected in development plans and activities.

IRDL have also met with the following government organisations and their representatives - and all fully endorse the Scots - Irish proposed partnership and are willing to lend any support possible:

Local County Donegal Councillors,
Donegal County Council County Manager
Director of Community & Enterprise Donegal
CEO of the Border Midland and Western Regional Authority.

They also gave a report on developing tourism and community enhancement to the Sub-committee on Tourism in the Dáil in Dublin which highlighted the opportunity and mutually beneficial potential Scots / Irish links can have.

IRDL in Donegal, NWRD and in Northern Ireland have developed a successful track record in bringing together peoples of all social, political, cultural and religious persuasions together - and feel Scotland has strong links with all sections of our community. We feel it is very appropriate in this context that we can share expertise and work together to build on these connections.

The East-West Strand of the Belfast Agreement is another area for consideration in developing Scots / Irish links, developing this strand beyond civil service / political levels of interaction into community action.
**Five: Scottish Participation to Date**

The Irish delegations and local and government officials in Ireland have been very encouraged and stimulated by the Scottish reactions and responses to date. This supportive encouragement from Scotland has helped immensely to help take the initial exploratory meetings and discussions to a more formal level.

In particular, the positive discussions and recommendations from the Cross-Party Group brought together by Mr Dennis Canavan MSP have been a major factor in showing that there is a genuine desire across the political parties to take the discussions to a Ministerial level.

On the Executive side, the positive reaction from the Minister of Tourism, Patricia Ferguson, has also been highly significant in encouraging the Scots-Irish dialogue to try and establish a specific project on which a mutually beneficial partnership could be based. Currently, through her Private Secretary Calum Stanners, the Minister’s officials are considering specific responses and ways forward in response to the Irish initiative to work in a formal partnership with Scotland from a Tourism and Cultural approach.

Very important in this context of Scottish – Irish co-operation is Mr Jack McConnell’s and the Scottish Executive and Parliament’s desire to present Scotland as an inclusive, outward-looking dynamic country.

This has been of great encouragement to the Irish and Scottish officials and politicians who have been involved in the early discussions. Similarly, through his Private Secretary Mr Martin Ritchie and appropriate officials, the reports on the initial discussions and information provided to date are being studied with a view to a report being made to the First Minister.

At an Advisory level, the positive responses of Dr Ingrid Clayden and Mr Iain Matheson from the Department of Rural Affairs have also been very encouraging.

On a practical level, an initial Scottish link has now been established with the city of Glasgow with a view to the city’s formal involvement in the **Celtic European Festival of the Sea** which will take place in Northern Ireland and Donegal in 2006. This link has been established as a result of discussions between Councillor Alex Mosson, Chairman of Glasgow City Council Events Committee and key Glasgow Events staff.

The inaugural **Celtic European Festival of the Sea** between the dates of 22nd May / 4th June 2006 and the event will take place along the North coast of Ireland and will actively seek to include feeder and exit events in Scotland, Isle of Man, England and Wales.

In this context, Glasgow City Council will collaborate in a number of mutually beneficial promotional activities both with the inaugural event and for those to follow.

- Glasgow City Council have agreed to attend key locations during the 2006 event with a promotions team to promote Glasgow and Scotland as a tourist destination.
- Glasgow City Council will promote the concept of participants in the European Festival subsequently travelling to Glasgow to be part of the city’s own “Festival of the River” - to showcase Glasgow as a major international events venue.
- Glasgow City Council will promote the possibility of the **Celtic European Festival of the Sea** being promoted in Glasgow on a bi-annual basis.
• NWRD will provide Glasgow City Council with all intelligence and data bases including the on the ground arrangements for their promotions team to attend in 2006.
• NWRD will promote the concept of travelling on to the Festival of the river to participants in 2006.
• NWRD will make approaches to Derry City Council and Donegal County Council to develop the strong immigration links between Scotland and Ireland as a catalyst for tourist, maritime, business and cultural activities.

Both parties agree with the completion of this understanding that there will be genuine attempts to collaborate and share data bases, to develop the shared heritage links and to positively exploit the potential for the creation of visitor packages.

Scots – Irish schools reading project

This project is in the process of being organised on a voluntary basis by Mr Stephen Joyce of Pride of Scotland Media and Publications.

It is a practical example of how Scottish and Irish schools can co-operate to help youngsters in Scotland and Ireland benefit from studying their shared Celtic Culture.

Schools in Scotland and Ireland have already been contacted by Mr Joyce and they have responded very positively.

Mr Joyce has now agreed - in conjunction with the Scottish and Irish Curriculum Development Councils - to prepare:

Teachers’ Resource Materials

Pupil Activity Booklets

Proposed Pupil Exchange itinerary

The first stage of this project is being organised by Mr Joyce to take the form of a Scots - Irish Seminar to be held in Donegal at Easter 2006.

The aim is to bring representatives of Scottish and Irish Curriculum Development Councils to meet and share best practices and approaches to the Scots - Irish Reading Project.

A particular emphasis in the project will be to address the needs of dyslexic pupils and those who are under-achieving and disadvantaged.

The general aims of the Scots – Irish Schools’ Reading Project on shared Celtic Culture is to help pupils in both Scotland and Ireland gain deeper understanding and awareness of the importance of the following:

sharing interest in cultural heritage

gaining a deeper awareness of their own culture

developing an awareness of – and respect for – cultural diversity

and multi-cultural communities
developing an appreciation of positive citizenship

understanding the negative implications of stereotyping and racism

developing personally and socially and relating and responding to others with understanding and respect.

Mr Stephen Joyce MA
Email from North Lanarkshire Council:

I note the proposed replacement for INTERREG and welcome your efforts to secure a cross border co-operation programme between South-West Scotland and Ireland under the new Co-operation objective.

It is understood that this measure only applies to coastal communities in Scotland. It is only relevant to Argyll, Western Isles, S Ayrshire and Dumfries & Galloway.

The authorities are looking to use INTERREG as a means of funding collaboration between countries on the basis of shared problems and opportunities in coastal communities.

At this stage, from North Lanarkshire Council's ineligible perspective, it is only possible for us to be supportive of your efforts. Depending on the economic initiatives which could be pursued, which include transport, we may have some engagement as I am aware a number of companies in North Lanarkshire make use of the ports on the Ayrshire coast. If the initiative was to look at expanding port activity and exploiting trading links between Ireland and the central belt, it may be necessary to extend inland. North Lanarkshire Council would be happy to engage.

Alex Gardiner
Corporate Policy and Performance Manager
Chief Executive's Office
Email from Rody Gorman:

I work in a professional capacity as a translator into and from Scottish Gaelic and Irish Gaelic for various bodies including the Scottish Parliament, the Scottish Executive and the Irish Government and their departments and agencies.

I am also a published author in both languages – I attach literary CV – and publisher and editor of the annual anthology of contemporary poetry in Scottish Gaelic and Irish Gaelic, *An Guth*.

I would like to see the establishment of a fund for the specific purpose of supporting the translation of literary, educational and other texts in the two languages.

Rody Gorman
December 2005
Evidence Submitted by Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council:

Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council have many links with councils on a cross border nature developing networking with councils from Republic of Ireland.

One such program of work was South Tyrone/Donegal Exploring Diversity Initiative in which we addressed the diverse traditions across all communities. Indeed within this we linked with Angus council in Scotland where we brought different styles of Traditional and Pipe Band music and presented them to the general public at the Forfar Festival.

Such links and exploration of the diverse cultures within all our societies is immeasurable in facing the issues of peace and reconciliation within our island. Unfortunately, our European funders have declined to fund phase II of this project and thus made it impossible for us as a partnership with Donegal County Council to further develop this link. We had in various discussion with Angus Council officials proposed the idea of linking the Forfar Food Festival with our own very distinctive Good Food Circle. There are many ways in which further links such as this could be developed with funding and these programs would certainly enhance future social and economic benefits.

With European travel at such low costs, we as an isolated and rural region like the region of Scotland need to explore and promote the indigenous quality within our areas and propel this strategy to increase visitors and therefore add to the social and economic profile.

We as a council in partnership with Donegal County Council are preparing to celebrate the 400 year anniversary of “Flight of the Earls” and the beginning of the “Plantation of Ulster” which marks the historic occasion of the end of the Gaelic Chieftains in Ireland and the beginning of the development of towns through the Plantation.

Surely the funders must realise that this is a tangible link to Scotland and develop funding to create a passage-way which will benefit a much maligned corridor both socially, culturally, politically and economically.

Oliver Morgan
Cultural Diversity Officer
Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council
Email from Ian Provan:

The Clerk
European and External Relations Committee
The Scottish Parliament

In 2000 the Mid Argyll Gaelic Partnership hosted a celebration of 1500 years of the kingdom of Dal Riata, linking both Argyll and Antrim. Despite the lack of a ferry connection between Campbeltown and Ballycastle at the time, the conference demonstrated the desire and need for cultural and tourist development between Ireland and the west of Scotland.

In order to further this development it is considered vital that the ferry connection be re-introduced as soon as possible, notwithstanding the recent lack of tendering for the service.

Ian Provan
Email from Dick and Meg Gannon:

Dear Mr Canavan,

It is with great interest that we note your letter in the "Campbeltown Courier". As the owners of the now well known wee isle of Sanda and its famous and award winning hostelry the Byron Darnton Tavern, we are greatly interested in your comments regarding the co-operative objectives. We have for some time promoted our venture as the cultural link between Ireland both north and south and Scotland, Kintyre and Ayrshire included. We bridge, what can culturally be a significant difference between our two nations and feel that in our small way we have already linked together many across the waves, bringing greater understanding and enjoyment to all. We have for some time held a dream, to build a Cultural Centre of excellence where the former links of the predominant clan Macdonald of Kintyre and the Macdonnells of The Glens of Antrim could be re established and fostered in a meeting, forum and business conferencing centre.

We feel that such a centre on Sanda would indeed foster our EEC member state objectives and as Scotland is very much the poor relation at present any grants that may be accessible with regards to any infrastructure needed in the way of pontoons, landing facilities and the centre itself would assist us all in going forward and realising a dream.

Hoping this is the type of project you see as part of your bigger picture,

Regards, Dick & Meg Gannon
Email from the Scottish Crofting Foundation:

Dear Dennis,

Crofting communities would certainly be interested in forming links with Ireland. Please let us know how we can be involved. The 150km rule is a bit restricting but certainly some of the crofting counties come within this.

Best wishes

Patrick Krause
Chief Executive
Scottish Crofting Foundation
www.crofting.org
Dear Mr Canavan

Please find enclosed a response to your Inquiry on behalf of the Comet Interreg Partnership. This Partnership represents the Council areas of Belfast, Lisburn, Castlereagh, Carrickfergus, North Down, and Newtownabbey, i.e. the Greater Belfast Metropolitan Area.

As Secretariat for the Board, I would welcome a meeting with you at your convenience and extend an invitation to you to meet the Board.

I will be on leave until the 13th February and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely
Laura Leonard
European Manager, Belfast City Council
Comet Secretariat

Comet Response to an Inquiry into the Possibility of a Programme of Cooperation between Scotland and Ireland

January 2005

Introduction

The Comet Shadow Interreg Partnership welcomes the opportunity to respond to the above mentioned inquiry led by the Scottish Parliament. Given the short timescale for responding, the Partnership can only submit an informal officer response as opposed to one formally ratified by the full Shadow Board.

Background to the Comet Response

Local councils in NI have been proactive in the delivery of EU Structural Funds since being given local economic development powers in 1992. Each of the 26 Councils in NI has delivered local economic development programmes supported by ERDF and ESF funds since this time.

In addition, many councils have secured and delivered programmes of activity supported by Peace I and II, Equal, Urban I and II, Leader, former Interreg programmes, as well as a wide range of other EU financial instruments.

The Comet Shadow Interreg Partnership evolved from proactive work undertaken by the councils of the Belfast metropolitan region hereafter referred to as Comet (namely Belfast, Lisburn, Newtownabbey, North Down, Castlereagh and Carrickfergus)

The Council network was established in September 2002 as an economic collective to maximise opportunities to secure funding for urban regeneration initiatives and affect policy at all possible levels.

In June 2004, Comet was offered a first tranche of Interreg IIIA Technical Assistance by the NI Special EU Programmes Body (set up under the 1998 Good Friday Agreement) to
establish a Shadow Comet Interreg Partnership Board. Comet was also asked to develop a sub regional development plan to raise awareness of the Interreg IIIA Programme and attempt to secure remaining funds under the Interreg IIIA Programme for the 12 Counties (NI and border). Until this point very little of the 179 Million Euro of Interreg IIIA funding had been allocated to the Greater Metropolitan area of Belfast and there was very little awareness of Cross Border opportunities in the sub region.

With respect to Interreg IIIB and IIIC, there exists two IIIC programmes in NI as a whole, both led by Belfast City Council and Quartiers en Crise Belfast but no IIIB funded projects exist.

By the 19th April 2005, the Comet Shadow Interreg Partnership was launched with a membership of 12 Elected Members (representing the 6 councils) and 12 Social Partners from across the region. Further Technical Assistance was secured from the Special EU Programmes Body and presently the Partnership via the Board and the Secretariat (Belfast City Council), is recruiting support staff, supporting regional bids for the last Call under IIIA and raising awareness of the regions priorities with local, regional, national and European players, to position Comet for the next Territorial Cooperation Programme 2007-2013.

This activity is being undertaken in parallel to similar activity by the North East Partnership which covers 8 local Council areas, namely Ballymena, Ballymoney, Carrickfergus, Newtownabbey, Foyle, Coleraine, Antrim and Larne.

Both the Comet and North East Partnership are designated as “Shadow” Partnerships as they do not have members from across the border with the Republic of Ireland, unlike the three Partnerships situated on the Border (East Border, ICBAN and North West). These Partnerships have been in existence for a significant number of years prior to Interreg IIIA, and are actual implementing agents for Priority One of the Programme.

**Territorial Cooperation 2007-2013**

The Comet Shadow Interreg Partnership is currently planning a range of Thematic Information Seminars across the Belfast metropolitan area to determine the priorities for Cross Border, inter-regional and transnational cooperation in this sub-region. A further objective of this exercise is to identify where current natural linkages and synergies exist within the various sectors ranging from business to tourism, rural development, environment, community development, culture, heritage and leisure.

As this process is only at planning stage, Comet can only offer its development plan as an overview of the social economic profile of the region and an early indication of priorities for engaging in a future Territorial Cooperation Programme.

**Scotland/Ireland Programme**

It is clear that many synergies exist for Scottish/Irish cooperation, particularly given the close proximity of Scotland to Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Obvious suggestions would include:

- Joint tourism marketing programmes with thematic products such as; fly drive, ferry packages, fishing, golfing, heritage trails
- Tourism trails e.g. The Dawn of the Ulster-Scots, The Hamilton and Montgomery Settlement of 1604, The Plantation of Ulster, the Covenanters, Robert Burns and the Ulster weaver poets, minority languages and Christian heritage. These could
also become the basis of joint events, educational programmes and even summer schools
- Seaside tours networks
- Cultural exchanges – there is already a significant level of cooperation e.g. Scottish pipe bands from the 3 areas regularly compete against each other and the Northern Ireland branch of the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association is the largest in the world. There is also a resurgence of Scottish highland dancing in Ulster including the border counties of the Republic. Organisations such as the Belfast Burns Association and the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society (Belfast Branch) are already members of parent organisations in Scotland.
- SME Programme Development
- Coastal town connections
- Maritime themes
- Port developments
- Joint work on city planning, community planning, community relations, economic development and tourism

Current Linkages

- Belfast City Council as a Capital City regional driver already has a well established relationship with the City of Glasgow. This stems from the Cities of the Isles (formally Irish Sea Partnership) involving Belfast, Glasgow, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Liverpool and Dublin. The cities meet each year at an annual conference to share best practice in approaches to urban regeneration and the key areas of city and regional development delivered or spearheaded by the local authorities.

- Belfast City Council equally engages with Glasgow and Edinburgh through the Eurocities initiative, particularly through its economic development forum which is currently chaired by the City of Glasgow.

- Newtownabbey has existing links with Dumfries and Galloway

Conclusion and Recommendation

Having had limited time to consider the wide ranging possibilities and benefits arising from a future Scotland/Ireland Interreg Programme, the Comet Interreg Partnership can only offer a draft informal but positive response. The Board and its Constituent members are very keen to explore a future programme, potential cooperation elements and joint structures. Indeed Comet would very much welcome a key role in the design and delivery of such a programme.

Comet therefore wishes to thank the Inquiry for considering the Interreg Board as a Consultee and would request an opportunity to meet either in Belfast or Edinburgh to further formally explore this exciting potential programme and to support in any way a lobby to secure EU funding for a Scotland/Ireland programme.

Useful Reference points

- Comet Shadow Interreg Development Plan
- www.seupb.org Special EU Programmes Website (Interreg IIIA managing authority) –
- www.eugrants.org (NI EU funding info source)
Email from Michael Bartlett:

Re: article in An Gaidheal Ur; January, 2006.

Dear Mr Canavan,

As you know, in N Ireland there is great Protestant suspicion of the Irish language. It is seen as a Catholic shibboleth. It would be good to motivate the Calvinists of the Isle of Lewis to bring over some Northern Irish Evangelicals to learn some Scottish Gaelic in a society that is thoroughly evangelical in its religion. The intimate connections between Scottish and Irish Gaelic would be made plain. Gaelic would be seen as a language in which it is possible to be passionately Calvinist. Tensions in N Ireland could be lessened.

Michael Bartlett
28th January 2006

Dear Sir

I have just been made aware of the Inquiry into the Possibility of a Programme of Co-operation between Scotland and Ireland. I am delighted to note that you have been appointed Reporter for the Committee’s Inquiry into this matter. It is an issue that has interested me for some time and one which could generate a great deal of economic, transport, tourist and cultural activity on both sides of the water if properly assessed and pursued.

In Northern Ireland we have good reason to be grateful for the funding provided over many years by ERDF and EDSF schemes and under other European funding initiatives. These have been most generous and have acted as the catalyst for many worthwhile schemes designed to help this community make up for the deficits caused by 30 years of unprecedented terrorism. There is however a glaring omission that has not been addressed during that period. I refer to the lack of any coherent policy to address the serious issues confronting South West Scotland, N Ireland and to some degree the Cumbria region in England.

During the life of the N Ireland Assembly I was a member of the EU sub Committee of that body. I was also fortunate enough, as an MLA for East Antrim, to attend meetings of the North Channel Partnership. This latter body involved initially representatives from East Antrim and Dumfries and Galloway meeting to discuss issues of mutual benefit or concern. In its later stages it had expanded to include representatives from South Ayrshire and Cumbria. One common theme was the woefully inadequate Trunk Road System in Scotland as represented by tortuous stretches of the A75 and A77. The negative impact upon commercial life, and tourism as well as concerns regarding the safety and quality of life for residents living adjacent to these roads was discussed. I should like to think that the limited improvement schemes on these routes over recent years owe, at least, part of their emergence to these productive deliberations.

It is, however, critical that this issue is addressed in a coherent manner. Hundreds of jobs on both sides of the North Channel are dependant upon the ferry links and the transport industry that complements them. I feel that, given the major threat posed to these northern routes by the substantial motorway building programme from the border with the Republic of Ireland towards Dublin Port, it is imperative that the A75 in particular must be dramatically improved. It currently takes over two to hours negotiate this twisting route before arriving on the M6 motorway at Carlisle. However, it now takes less than two hours for a lorry to leave many parts of N Ireland and access Dublin Port via a new motorway. If we add the current commercial takeover activity centring around a company
that has both portside and shipping interests on the Irish Sea routes, the future patterns of trade between N Ireland and SW Scotland could become fluid.

From a commercial aspect the Northern route into Europe via the port of Hull and onward to Rotterdam and Zeebrugge represent an important access/entry point. This is especially important when trading with the Baltic States, Northern Germany and the emerging Polish Market with its large population and great potential. The A75 is a vital stretch of this TEN system for hauliers and producers in N Ireland including Donegal and those based in SW Scotland if they intend to grow their market share of EU focussed exports.

The increasing numbers of tourists visiting the Galloway and Ayrshire coastal circuit bring a welcome and expanding market for the leisure industry based in the region. It is also apparent in figures available through the N Ireland Tourist Board that the number of visitors arriving in N Ireland via Scotland is increasing. It is also possible to grow the potential number of tourists, many from the USA and Canada who come to Ireland for genealogical reasons and who, upon discovering its proximity to Scotland, wish to visit there too. I believe that there is a substantial two-way exchange potential of such visitors who often come for golf, genealogy or other specific interests and who could be persuaded to geographically widen their “visitor’s footprint”. In this context the Ballycastle-Campbelltown ferry service, if properly marketed, could provide an attractive round trip experience to the benefit of both Kintyre in Scotland and the Antrim Coastal area.

The current rather tenuous rail link between Stranraer and Glasgow is an area that is less attractive to many travellers, especially those in the increasingly short break market, than it could be. Recent upgrading of the Belfast to Larne Harbour rail line in N Ireland and improvements to through services from Londonderry and Dublin have been completed. These would develop more quickly if a matching rail service was available for those wishing to travel onwards to Glasgow, Edinburgh and other destinations in Scotland.

Unfortunately, the current political stalemate in N Ireland has robbed me of the opportunity to state a case for closer co-operation as potentially outlined in the new Co-operative Objective. I am however certain that, given the make-up of our former EU sub committee at Stormont, there exists a cross party willingness to enhance and develop the co-operative working practices that would support progress across all the areas referred to in your aims and objectives.

I would be more than willing to meet with you to explore these issues should your Parliament’s EU and External Relations Committee visit Parliament Buildings in Belfast as part of its deliberations.

Yours faithfully

Cllr Ken Robinson MLA
Evidence submitted from Comunn na Gàidhlig:

INTRODUCTION

1 Comunn na Gàidhlig (CnaG) welcomes the opportunity to make representations to the Committee as part of its Inquiry into the possibility of a programme of co-operation between Scotland and Ireland.

2 As the main Gaelic development agency with a remit to promote the Gaelic language and culture CnaG has been actively involved in a number of initiatives involving links between Gaeilge speaking communities in both Northern Ireland and Eire, over the years. We, therefore, welcome the opportunity to examine the scope for incorporating these into any future programme of co-operation or to identify areas where additional joint co-operative projects could be considered.

EXISTING LINKS AND INITIATIVES

3 Existing links and initiatives involving Gaelic and Gaeilge include:

- The establishment of **Iomairt Chaluim Chille** in 1997 was designed to foster and support the Gaelic language and develop links between Gaelic Scotland and Ireland (Eire and Northern Ireland). It receives funding from the Scottish Executive, the Northern Ireland Office and the Dublin Government to and provides financial assistance towards projects which promote the language, arts and culture of the respective communities. It is also involved in providing cultural exchanges and an annual youth parliament.

- **Pròiseact nan Ealan**, have co-ordinated the widely acclaimed **Leabhar Mòr na Gàidhlig** (The Big Book of Gaelic), which contains 100 poems in Gaelic and Gaeilge, translated into English and has over the past 18 months been exhibited in many towns and villages in Ireland and Scotland.

- **Comunn na Gàidhlig** has over the years been involved in joint initiatives involving young people from Gaelic speaking areas in Northern Ireland and Eire gathering with their Gaelic speaking counterparts in Scotland for debates, quizzes, sports and visits to places of interest. These visits take place in alternate years in Scotland and Ireland. The last gathering of "Rì cheile" took place in Armagh in October 2005. CnaG has also been closely involved with Gaeilge bodies in Eire and Northern Ireland for information exchange, attending meetings and seminars on language matters.

- Over the years a number of co-production programmes on both television and radio using Gaelic and Gaeilge have been produced. These have involved the BBC, RTE and the Gaelic Media Service.

- There has been close liaison between the only Gaelic newspaper in Scotland, An **Gaidheal Ur and Foinse** in Northern Ireland.

- At local authority level, formal twinning links have been established between **Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Newry and Mourne Council and Clare County Council** with a view to developing closer links with language, culture and tourism initiatives.
CURRENT INITIATIVE BEING CONSIDERED

4 CnaG has, this year, been endeavouring to set up an exchange scheme involving *Gaelic speaking graduate placements* from Scotland undertaking placements with similarly placed graduates employed with Gaeilge organisations in Eire. However, it has not been possible to progress this initiative, so far, because of the lack of information about such schemes in Eire. Funding for this initiative has been secured from Iomairt Chaluim Chille and we are continuing to pursue the possibility of identifying relevant organisations who may be in a position to help. Should a programme of co-operation be drawn up, following any recommendations from the European Committee, we would be happy to include this initiative as part of such a programme.

TRANSPORT LINKS

5 *Improved transport links* between Ireland and Scotland with the recent Easyjet air service between Inverness and Belfast opens up the potential for cultural tourism being strongly promoted on both sides of the Irish Channel making the most of our historical links, our common languages, culture and heritage. Should a ferry service be re-introduced between Northern Ireland and Argyll, the potential of exploiting the common bonds between the communities in Ireland and Argyll could be of significant economic, social and cultural benefit to both countries.

CELTIC LINKS INFORMATION BUREAU

6 We firmly believe considerable scope exists for promoting and developing joint initiatives which would be of immense economic, social and cultural benefits for Scotland and Ireland. A co-ordinating and funding mechanism is needed to promote the concept and it may be that the model which has already been established through Iomairt Chaluim Chille in relation to language and cultural links should be built on and adopted. This could be done, for example, by establishing a **Celtic Links Information Bureau** to provide information, advice and identify funding sources to organisations wishing to participate in joint Scottish/Irish projects.

7 We hope that you will find this submission helpful in your consideration of the matter. Should you require any further information or clarification on the submission, please let me know.

*Donald Martin*
*Chief Executive*
*Comunn na Gàidhlig*
*Stornoway*
*30 January 2006*
Evidence submitted by Donegal County Enterprise Board:

1. Introduction.

County Donegal in the north-west of the Republic of Ireland has had a long history of traditional links with Scotland whether as a result of economic, social or political upheavals. The two areas have also strong cultural linkages through their native Celtic languages, shared music and singing traditions and folk tales. It is therefore reasonable that should an opportunity exist for both regions to work together in pursuit of common themes and objectives that they should seek to maximise their shared resources and backgrounds.

Donegal County Enterprise is particularly interested in engaging in the area of enterprise/entrepreneurship promotion and development and small business development.

2. Objectives.

Our objectives in seeking to establish links to and with Scotland and agencies in Scotland are:

- To learn from the sharing of best practice in the areas of small business development and enterprise promotion, thus enhancing our capabilities,
- To establish strategic partnerships with other agencies in Scotland that will have the capacity to add to our capabilities and provide knowledge and market channels for our local businesses,
- To develop a range of inter-regional small business development programmes aimed at increasing the both the number of small businesses in our respective regions and the sustainability of existing businesses in both areas.

3. Donegal County Enterprise Board.

Donegal County Enterprise Board is the statutory development agency for enterprise promotion and small/micro business development in county Donegal (www.donegalenterprise.ie). It is one of 35 enterprise boards in the Republic of Ireland and is funded by and reports to the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment. The Board is made up of directors which are representative of the social partners (trade unions, farming and employers), economic development agencies, elected representatives and community and private business interests and is chaired by Mr Michael McLoone, Manager of Donegal County Council.

Donegal County Enterprise Board engages in a range of activities to stimulate enterprise in the county and provides a range of services in support of local small and micro businesses in county Donegal. These include:

1. The provision of one-to-one business advice and guidance from Executives of the Board to both individuals who may be considering setting up in business to existing owner managers.
2. The provision of a comprehensive business information service to individuals and businesses in the county through its Business Information Service. This service is
resourced by both a range of current publications, periodicals, research journals and sector-specific market information as well as a free on-line research facility.

3. The delivery of a range of support services to secondary schools in the county with the overall objective of stimulating enterprise within the students and encouraging schools to embrace enterprise as a part of their curriculum.

4. The development and delivery of a range of activities to highlight and promote enterprise in the county such as the Enterprising Donegal Week held in March 2005 to which over 1,100 individuals and business attended, the production of a book and DVD featuring local small business case studies and ongoing local press articles featuring local businesses.

5. The provision of functional training programmes to both owner managers and their staff in such areas as Start Your Own Business, financial management, computerised accounts, understanding accounts, IT for small business, Visiontrack.


7. The provision of grant aid to new and expanding micro businesses in the county. Grant aid may be by way of Feasibility Study grants, Capital grants, Employment grants, Repayable grants or Preference Shares.

8. The provision of one-to-one Mentoring to small and micro businesses through the Boards Mentor panel.

9. Developing and delivering a number of sector-specific development programmes, such as the 315 regional food programme with the CEBs in Sligo, Leitrim and Cavan, the E.business programme for Small Businesses and the Women in Enterprise Programme. Most of these programmes are developed with additional funding being accessed from such programmes as INTERREG, Peace II, the IFI and the SEUPB.

10. Developing, engaging with and delivering on a range of cross-border programmes with NI partner agencies in support of micro businesses. These programmes are additional to supports from the Board and examples of such programmes in 2005 are the Trade links programme which involves all border CEBs and all Local Enterprise Agencies in NI, the SPARK craft development programme with partners in Dungannon & South Tyrone, the i2 sales programme with TEDI, Omagh, the Green Entrepreneurs Programme with Lisburn District Council, the Female Business Incubation programme in partnership with Roe Valley Enterprises in Limavady as well as the all-island Microtrade programme. Again these programmes are resourced through applications to other funding sources.

As an indication of the level of activity of the Donegal County Enterprise Board in 2005 the following outputs under the activities outlined above were achieved by the Board:

1. 25 projects were approved for grant aid - 11 capital grant, 6 employment grants and 7 feasibility grants. Of the projects approved 11 were new start-ups with four projects having the potential to become HPSUs. Four of the feasibility study approvals were to promoters who participated on the Boards Visiontrack programme - a programme
aimed at assisting promoters develop projects based on new knowledge/technologies. An anticipated 80 new jobs will result from the approvals.

2. Some 270 individuals/owner manager were met by executives of the Board during the year and provided with one-to-one advice and business counselling.

3. 497 contacts were received and responded to through the Business Information Service of the Board during the year. Some of these contacts would have been prior to one-to-one meetings with CEB executives.

4. 20 of the 25 secondary schools in the county participated on the Boards Schools Enterprise Programme “Lets Do Business”. A total of 702 students and 45 teachers participated on the programme.

5. 103 businesses/promoters were provided with one-to-one mentoring during the year.

6. 427 participants took part in management development and training programmes of the Board- 63 on management development programmes and 364 on training programmes.

7. The programme ran three sector specific programmes during the year- the SPARK craft programme with 34 local craft members, the 315 regional food programme with 15 Donegal businesses and E.business with 55 participants.

8. The Board engaged on 9 cross border programmes during 2005 with 120 businesses/promoters engaging on these programmes during the year. It is anticipated that while a number of these programmes concluded in 2005 that the Board will be involved in a number of new and additional cross-border programmes in 2006/2007.

4. Conclusion.

From the brief outline above it can be seen that Donegal County Enterprise Board is both a significant and active agency in the promotion and development of enterprise in Donegal at all levels. The Board through its CEO, Mr Michael Tunney also plays a lead role in the County Development Board through his co-chairing of the Economic Development Sub-committee and through his active pursuit of the economic agenda in the CDB process.

As can also be seen the Board seeks at all times to identify new opportunities both for its own development and in particular for its client base- local small businesses. The Board is therefore keenly interested in being part of a strategic link with partners in Scotland that have the potential to add to its capability, provide new strategic relationships and new opportunities for learning and trade for its clients.
Email and evidence from Belfast City Council:

In response to the advert in the Shankill Mirror, January 2006, I'm writing in the hope that a partnership could be formed between any of the Scottish Cities and Belfast as a legacy left by the Celebrate Belfast 2006 programme. Details of Celebrate Belfast 2006 programme and event listing are attached. Belfast City Council has formed a concrete partnership with Cork as part of Cork’s European Capital of Culture Celebrations in 2005. Partnership has also been achieved with Liverpool. Celebrate Belfast 2006 aim to form 5 national and international partnerships as part of it's objectives for 2006 and a Scottish partnership is important to reflect the Ulster Scots community in Belfast and achieve a balance. If you would like to discuss proposals further, please do not hesitate to contact me, details below. In the meantime, I'd be grateful if you could review the Celebrate Belfast 2006 programme attached (web details below also) and consider it for inclusion in your report.

Best wishes

Marbeth Hutchinson
Events Officer
Belfast City Council
Development Department

www.belfastcity.gov.uk/events
www.belfastcity.gov.uk/belfast2006

CELEBRATE BELFAST 2006

The Celebrate Belfast programme grew out of Belfast City Council’s commitment to showcase the excellence of Belfast’s culture following its bid for European Capital of Culture three years ago.

In 2003 the Council’s Development Committee agreed to take the lead in organising a major celebratory year as a testimony to the cultural wealth of talent existing in Belfast. The fifteen-month programme will be integral to the Centenary of the City Hall year in 2006.

‘Celebrate Belfast’ is the generic title of the programme encompassing the broader cultural programme and including the Centenary of City Hall festivities. The celebratory year will commence in October 2005 and extend through to December 2006 to cover the entire Centenary programme.

While some elements of the schedule and funding package are still being finalised, around four hundred events are already confirmed and all scheduled relevant events that pre-dated Celebrate Belfast will be expanded as a result of the additional funding provided under the initiative.

The overarching aim of the Celebrate Belfast Programme is to help stimulate economic activity and contribute to the Cultural life in Belfast in the following ways:

- Increase arts activity
- Increase tourism and economic activity
- Increase community activity
• Change perception of Belfast as a place to live and visit

External funding for the initiative has been secured from the Millennium Commission’s Urban Cultural Programme and the Arts Council for Northern Ireland’s Art of Regeneration Funding, which complements the Council’s own specific budget allocation for this special initiative.

Such an initiative will have both social and economic impacts upon both the city and the rest of Northern Ireland and the Council wishes to maximise and assess these impacts in the interests of ensuring that value for money is obtained.

A more detailed list of key objectives of the programme is stated below. The objectives are in line with external funding from the Millennium Commission and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, with each of these highlighted within the objectives.

2 OBJECTIVES

2.1 To showcase Belfast as an international cultural destination with the capacity to host world-class events.
2.2 To develop a Capital Celebrations programme that will connect to every citizen of the city and attract significant numbers of visitors.
2.3 To develop the Capital Celebrations programme that will incorporate cultural diversity and single community events that celebrate different cultural traditions.
2.4 To use the Capital Celebrations programme as a tool to harness the power of culture and act as a mechanism for Belfast’s social and economic regeneration.
2.5 To further develop the creative clusters through the showcase of Cultural Quarters.
2.6 To use Celebrate Belfast to provide significant opportunities for widespread community involvement and creative learning and development.
2.7 To enhance existing events and integrate new commissions encompassing the four main streams of the year - Festivals, Cultural Quarters, Sport and Centenary.
2.8 To showcase City Hall as a cultural venue and to make it more accessible to a greater number of visitors.
2.9 To strengthen the cultural infrastructure of the city by establishing domestic, national and international partnerships.
2.10 To act as a conduit for increased tourism in Belfast.
2.11 To leave a cultural legacy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Proposed Date(s)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Titanic At Home Exhibition</td>
<td>Photocall at W5, Odyssey</td>
<td>Thursday 23rd February 2006, 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titanic At Home Exhibition</td>
<td>A celebration of shipbuilding that made Belfast the biggest port in the world. Held in W5.</td>
<td>10th March-1st May 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFEA European Conference</td>
<td>The International Festival &amp; Events Association will hold their annual European conference in Belfast for the first time. To be held in the WFH.</td>
<td>Wednesday 15th-Friday 17th March 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Patrick’s Day</td>
<td>Press photocall</td>
<td>tbc, 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Patrick’s Day (WFH)</td>
<td>BCC will sponsor via Good Relations Funding an evening concert at the Belfast Waterfront</td>
<td>Friday 17th March 2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Proposed Date(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>St Patrick’s Day Parade &amp; Concert</td>
<td>Carnival parade from City Hall to Custom House Square followed by a 2 hour world music concert</td>
<td>Friday 17th March 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Irish Dancing Championships</td>
<td>Press photocall at Waterfront Hall</td>
<td>Tuesday 28th March 2006, 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titanic Made in Belfast Festival</td>
<td>Photocall at City Hall</td>
<td>Thursday 30th March 2006, 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Irish Dancing Championships</td>
<td>Over 12,000 people will attend the biggest event in the Irish Dancing calendar which will be held at W/front</td>
<td>9th-16th April 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Brass Band C’ships</td>
<td>Press photocall at Waterfront Hall</td>
<td>Tuesday 11th April 2006, 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titanic Made in Belfast Festival</td>
<td>A week long festival of Titanic tours and special exhibitions held in city Hall</td>
<td>Saturday 15th-Saturday 22nd April 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Brass Band C’ships</td>
<td>Hundreds of bands from all over Europe will compete at the Waterfront Hall</td>
<td>Wednesday 26th-Sunday 30th April 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord Mayor’s Carnival</td>
<td>Photocall at City Hall</td>
<td>Thursday 11th May 2006, 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord Mayor’s Carnival</td>
<td>A colourful carnival through the city centre celebrating the end of the Lord Mayor’s term in office</td>
<td>Saturday 27th May 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord Pirrie Plinth Installation</td>
<td>Installation of the Pirrie Plinth in the City Hall grounds photo opportunity</td>
<td>Wednesday 31st May 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maritime Festival</td>
<td>Photocall – tbc</td>
<td>tbc</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opera in the Park</td>
<td>Photocall at Botanic Gardens</td>
<td>Tuesday 27th June 2006, 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maritime Festival</td>
<td>A celebration of Belfast’s maritime heritage with visits from tall ships, sailing vessels and lots more on the</td>
<td>Saturday 1st &amp; Sunday 2nd July 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opera in the Park</td>
<td>The Royal Opera’s production of ‘Turandot’ via Live Screen Relay in Botanic Gardens</td>
<td>Friday 7th July 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy Birthday City Hall</td>
<td>A celebration of the official Centenary of the City Hall – picnic on the lawn</td>
<td>Tuesday 1st August 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden Gourmet</td>
<td>Photocall at Botanic Gardens</td>
<td>Tuesday 5th September 2006, 11 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last Night of the Proms</td>
<td>Classical music broadcast from City Hall to the UK and linked to the events throughout the UK</td>
<td>Saturday 9th September 2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>Garden</td>
<td>BCC Parks and Events Units join</td>
<td>Saturday 16th &amp; Sunday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Proposed Date(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gourmet</td>
<td>together to host a feast of flowers, food &amp; drink at Botanic</td>
<td>17th September 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halloween</td>
<td>Press photocall &amp; release</td>
<td>Tuesday 17th October 2006, 11 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halloween</td>
<td>A civic celebration of Halloween at Odyssey</td>
<td>Tuesday 31st October 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulster Irish Dancing</td>
<td>Press photocall at Waterfront Hall</td>
<td>tbc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulster Irish Dancing</td>
<td>Waterfront Hall – the biggest provincial Irish dancing competition on the island of Ireland</td>
<td>tbc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas 2005</td>
<td>Press Photocall Remembrance Sunday 13th November</td>
<td>Tuesday 14th November 2006, 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas 2005</td>
<td>Installation of City Hall Trees outside City Hall</td>
<td>Tuesday 14th November 2006, 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas 2005</td>
<td>Installation of internal City Hall and CWB trees</td>
<td>Thursday 16th November 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas Lights</td>
<td>The switching on of festive lighting at City Hall</td>
<td>Tuesday 21st November 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas Tea Dances</td>
<td>Four tea dances for senior citizens will take place in the Ulster Hall</td>
<td>tbc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamplight Procession</td>
<td>A carol procession from St Anne’s Cathedral to City Hall. This carol parade will be illuminated by lanterns lead by the LM.</td>
<td>Tuesday 5th December 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS Lewis Festival</td>
<td>Press Photocall – tbc</td>
<td>tbc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS Lewis Festival</td>
<td>Exhibitions; CS Lewis guided tours and trails, lantern parades, storytelling, workshops, theatre and film performances and other fun-filled family and community activities.</td>
<td>tbc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools carol singing</td>
<td>Schools choir will perform at Continental Market at City hall</td>
<td>tbc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continental Market</td>
<td>City Hall grounds run BCC Markets Unit</td>
<td>tbc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Carol Service</td>
<td>BELB will host two days schools carol singing in the Ulster Hall</td>
<td>tbc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St George’s Christmas Fair and Market</td>
<td>Operated in conjunction with the Council’s Markets Unit and a private craft fair manager this is a popular and successful</td>
<td>Friday 15th – Sunday 17th December 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Proposed Date(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christmas event</td>
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PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS IS A WORKING DOCUMENT, PLEASE MAKE CHANGES AND SAVE AS NEW VERSION
Evidence submitted by Dr Cathal McCall:

Submission to Inquiry into the Possibility of a Programme of Co-operation between Scotland & Ireland

Cross-border Cultural & Educational Exchange: Developing North/South & East-West Frameworks of Co-operation

Dr Cathal McCall
School of Politics, International Studies and Philosophy
Queen’s University
Belfast, BT7 1NN

Proposal for the inclusion of Scotland in the cross-border priority of the EU Peace III programme (2007-13), particularly in measures dealing with cultural and educational exchange, with a view to integrating a specific Scotland/Ireland programme into the British/Irish intergovernmental strategy for cross-border co-operation.

In December 2005, the British presidency of the European Union (EU) recommended €200 million for a Peace III programme for Ireland (2007-13). In addition, the British and Irish governments have earmarked €80 billion for building the island’s infrastructure over the next 10 years. An Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, has linked this investment directly to the development of cross-border co-operation and building peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. Successful public, private and Third sector projects funded under the cross-border priority of Peace III are likely to come under close intergovernmental scrutiny with a view to their mainstreaming. Therefore, Peace III offers an opportune entry point for the inclusion of Scotland in British/Irish intergovernmental plans for cross-border co-operation.

The case for involving Scotland in cross-border co-operation under the auspices of the EU Peace programme, with possible long-term, sustainable benefits for local ‘grassroots’ communities through additional British/Irish intergovernmental support, is made on the basis of the intimate geographical, social and cultural links between Scotland and Ireland, North and South. The case for integrating Scotland into an overall British/Irish intergovernmental strategy for cross-border co-operation is structurally underpinned by the 3-strand structure of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement with its Northern Ireland, North/South and East-West pillars. The British-Irish Council, in which Scotland is strongly represented already, supports the East-West pillar institutionally. The inclusion of Scotland in the cross-border co-operation priority of Peace III would give Scotland a vital foothold in the development of British/Irish intergovernmental cross-border plans.

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1 www.eu2005.gov.uk
2 Interview in The Times, 24 April 2005.
Measure 5.3 of Peace II (2000-6), a measure designed for ‘developing cross-border reconciliation and cultural understanding’, funded projects that have been predominantly engaged in a variety of cross-border/cross-community educational and cultural exchanges, community arts training initiatives, multi-media projects and recreational programmes for increasing cultural understanding. The emphasis of the project providers has been on the acceptance of difference and the promotion of diversity rather than on attempting to narrow political and cultural differences. This emphasis is important because attempting to narrow these differences, especially where they are small, as in the case of Northern Ireland, risks causing further retreat into communal shells, particularly by Ulster unionists and loyalists who have highly sensitised perceptions of political and cultural threat. Cross-border/cross-community projects are preferred by some unionist/loyalist groups rather than cross-community projects with neighbouring groups in Northern Ireland. For these groups, the cross-border aspect has provided a useful gateway to building better cross-community relations in Northern Ireland. A cross-border/cross-community Scotland dimension would help to increase the appeal of this gateway for such groups. It would also help to build on the campaign to tackle sectarianism in Scotland.

In the context of designing Peace III it has been proposed that the cross-border priority of the Peace programme be expanded to a Europe-wide context (applicable to Cyprus, Latvia, Hungary, Kaliningrad and the Balkans, as well as Ireland) and command 25% of the funding with the proviso that 15% go to the Irish border. While admirable in theory this proposal would be unworkable in practice, especially in light of the limited funds available for Peace III. Nevertheless, the European Commission is always interested in proposals that promote and develop cross-border co-operation and transnationalism wherever the opportunity arises. Extending the cross-border priority of Peace III to include Scotland, especially in measures dealing with cultural exchange and education, is a more realisable goal with obvious potential to contribute to understanding and accommodating cultural diversity.

It may be argued that a Peace III cross-border priority which includes Scotland will provide effective measures that can stimulate overlapping networks of interaction across Ireland, Northern Ireland and Scotland for the purpose of addressing territorial and cultural conflict issues. There is clear scope for the development of a triangulated approach to conflict resolution that can help to overcome ingrained territorialism and sectarianism, downgrade the antagonistic significance accorded to ‘the Other’ and lead to the articulation of cultural difference in a more constructive way.

Institutional support for this proposal may be sought from the British-Irish Council, as well as the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) which is the transnational North/South

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3 PEACE II has five priority areas including:
- Economic Renewal;
- Social Integration, Inclusion and Reconciliation;
- Locally Based Regeneration and Development Strategies;
- Outward and Forward Looking Region;
- Cross-border Co-operation

The measures of the Cross-border Co-operation priority include:
5.1 Increasing Cross-border Economic Development Opportunities (ERDF);
5.2 Improving Cross-border Public Sector Co-operation (ERDF);
5.3 Developing Cross-border Reconciliation and Cultural Understanding (ERDF);
5.4 Promoting Joint Approaches to Social, Education, Training and Human Resource Development (ESF);
5.5 Cross-border School and Youth Co-operation (ERDF);
5.6 Rural Development Co-operation (EAGGF);
5.7 Cross-border Fishing and Aquacultural Co-operation (FIFG).

Implementation Body that manages the Peace and INTERREG programmes and, at the behest of the Commission, is involved in their design. The SEUPB will lead the Peace III consultation process. The case would also receive widespread cross-community support at ‘the grassroots’, especially from Third sector groups involved directly in tackling sectarianism, as well as those which promote Gaelic and Scots/Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture.
Email from Stirling Council:

Dear Mr Canavan,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed INTERREG programme between Scotland and Ireland. As mentioned in the terms of reference there may be scope for joint tourism, environmental or educational initiatives, although Stirling would only be eligible if the area of Scotland mentioned in the document is extended. I do not imagine that this would be a problem as previous and current INTERREG programmes cover very large geographic areas.

An issue that is not specifically mentioned in the Terms of Reference, but which could be of value, given that there are already economic, cultural and educational links between our two countries, could be to develop best practice in equalities work to consider how to deal with sectarian/diversity/xenophobic issues. This may also fit in with EU and national agendas on anti-racism, promoting tolerance etc. I notice that the current INTERREG III programme at a European level does include some work on gender equality but am not aware of Scotland playing any significant role in this.

Another area for investigation could be on environmental/energy issues given that in EU terms both Scotland and Ireland are geographically 'peripheral' and potential locations for new environmental energy resources (wind, nuclear, etc). In this regard it might be worthwhile also devoting resources to look at the educational aspects of the sustainability agenda: Stirling has developed excellent work under the Eco-Schools banner and I understand that Ireland has a similar programme called Green Schools. Involvement of young people and educators, possibly using new technologies to minimize environmental impacts would be an excellent model of interregional co-operation.

The scope for joint working is potentially endless and I am sure that if a Scotland-Ireland strand for the new Interreg programme is developed then Stirling Council would be willing to consider possible initiatives in more detail. However, as funds would presumably only be available on a 'matched basis' the extent to which we could take advantage would depend on our existing financial priorities, as is the case with all external funding opportunities being considered by Stirling Council.

Also, it may be appropriate to also specify 'partnerships' as potential participants and beneficiaries, where this is the preferred local delivery mechanism, with local government as a partner to ensure the appropriate democratic focus. Such partners could be tourism providers, universities, research institutes, community planning forums etc. Such an approach may facilitate matched funding.

Another potential strand of work could be academic research on citizenship and participation in democracy and the relative experiences of devolution in both countries.

Stirling Council would welcome the opportunity for funds to be made available for enhancing interregional co-operation between Scotland and Ireland as we have a significant track record in working on both EU funded initiatives and also with Ireland, provided such opportunities aligned with and add value to our own corporate priorities. Please feel free to contact me should you wish to discuss any of these ideas further.

Keith Yates
Chief Executive
Stirling Council
Evidence submitted from the Centre for Cross Border Studies:

Dr Eoin Magennis
Centre for Cross Border Studies
39 Abbey Street
Armagh BT61 7EB

The proposal is for the inclusion of Scotland in the Ireland/Northern Ireland INTERREG ‘IVa’ programme (2007-13), with a particular focus on inter-regional development and civil society measures. These would be undertaken with a view to encouraging greater inter-regional and transnational Scottish/Irish East-West cooperation.

The possibility of a programme of cooperation between Scotland and Ireland in the to-be-designed INTERREG ‘IV’ may prove a natural development due to a number of factors:

- The strengthening of transnational and inter-regional approaches under the INTERREG IIB and IIC programmes. Take-up in Ireland and Scotland has been less than expected in both these programmes so an integral Ireland/Scotland component to a future programme would offer more opportunities for networking.

- The provision of a framework for institutional East-West cooperation in the Good Friday Agreement which is represented by the British-Irish Council. There have been questions over the effectiveness of this Strand Three and an Ireland/Scotland programme would offer a more concrete form of cooperation.

- The extension of the INTERREG IIIa programme to include all of the six counties of Northern Ireland and the six Southern Border Counties. This has led to the development of two new local INTERREG partnerships within Northern Ireland, the COMET Partnership for Greater Belfast (COMET) and the North-East Partnership. These are somewhat geographically removed from the Irish Border and would, in all sorts of ways, prove potential partners to link North/South and East-West cooperation.⁵

If adopted the transnational approach involving Scotland and Ireland offers the potential to develop specific actions under any new INTERREG programme. Some suggested areas for collaboration include:

- The development of North/South/Scotland networks in areas such as indigenous industry and tourism. In the first place some of the traditional sectors which are suffering from cost factors and need to ‘move up the value chain’ might be open to networks which provide opportunities in innovation or supply chain collaboration. Sectors such as textiles, furniture, construction and crafts, to name three, are some which might benefit from this approach. The same principle ought to apply to tourism with the extra potential for ‘cultural heritage’ packages which can adopt Scottish/Irish connections in language, religious heritage or music.⁶

- Placing an emphasis on infrastructure and more evidence-based spatial planning. This will provide opportunities from collaboration between Scotland and Ireland in

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⁵ What has become apparent under the INTERREG IIIA Ireland/Northern Ireland programme was that areas in the north-east of Northern Ireland were not taking part to any large degree in the programme. The inclusion of Scotland may provide a way to redress this imbalance although this could not be justified as the sole goal for such a programme.

⁶ There is also an opportunity here to attempt cross-community as well as transnational approaches with the Ulster-Scots and Gaelic (Scots/Irish) connections.
an area such as the energy market is one with past connections. There are others
where joint work might be adopted – catchment management and air access to
name two.

• Encouraging the involvement of civil society organisations to develop joint
approaches to particular problems and opportunities shared by Scotland and the
Irish Border region. Some examples include the rapid decline in agriculture or the
increase in migrant workers and asylum seekers in both areas. The programme
could explore through projects the policy challenges these issues throw up and
the potential for joint East-West approaches to tackle the challenges.

• Other areas of previous programmes including education and training or health
and well-being. As above, these cast up shared difficulties in areas such as
obesity, skill shortages or weak community infrastructure.

There are several challenges associated with such a possible programme of cooperation.

• In the first place, it would be important to identify areas of work which would
encourage beneficial partnerships between Ireland, North and South, and
Scotland.
• Secondly, some thought would have to be given to the best sort of delivery
mechanism for any proposed programme (i.e.: whether through government
departments or an intermediary body).
• Finally, there is the issue of what the expected outcomes of such cooperation are.
The point was made above about imbalances within Northern Ireland in terms of
funding but what is more important is the added capacity and capabilities that
potential Scottish partners would bring to both government and civil society
organisations within the Irish Border region.
Evidence Submitted by the Ulster Scots Agency:

I am delighted to have this opportunity on behalf of the Ulster Scots Agency to make this submission as this is an area that the Agency believes to be vitally important and is deserving of careful and detailed consideration.

The Ulster Scots Agency is part of the North / South Language Body one of six cross border Bodies established by the Belfast Agreement signed on Good Friday 1998. The Body comprises two Agencies the other being Foras Na Gaeilge who has responsibility for the development of the Irish (Gaelic) Language.

The Agency has a legislative remit of “the promotion of greater awareness and use of Ullans and of Ulster Scots cultural issues both within Northern Ireland and throughout the island” Ullans is the name commonly given to the Ulster Scots language which of course has its roots in the “mother tongue”- Scots. The aim of the Agency as expressed in its Mission Statement is to promote the study, conservation, development and use of Ulster Scots as a living language, to encourage and develop the full range of its attendant culture; and to promote a wider awareness and understanding of the history of the Ulster Scots.

The Agency is funded by the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure in Northern Ireland and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in the Republic of Ireland. Our headquarters is in Belfast with a regional office in Raphoe County Donegal.

Through the Agency’s work in the community we interact with over 300 community groups and this is a feature of our work in which we place tremendous importance.

The Agency is therefore uniquely placed to appreciate the common ground across the three countries and the potential for cooperation between the two parts of this island and Scotland.

For centuries the narrow piece of water between Ireland and Scotland has been viewed as a channel of communication and facilitated rather than hindered the movement of peoples between the two areas ensuring that both have much in common. We should view the current situation in a similar vein to maximise the potential that exists for shared projects. The opportunities for cooperation in areas such as cultural tourism, transport, education etc are considerable and should be realised to mutual benefit in both social and economic terms.

The Agency is specifically engaged in work in the education sector and there are opportunities for a coordinated approach utilising the facilities and resources available for mutual benefit in both Scotland and Ireland. We are currently engaged with Stranmillis University College (Belfast) on the production of schools material and our partners in the publication of these materials include the Department of Education and the Council for Curriculum and Examination Assessment in Northern Ireland. We are currently assessing how this might be carried into the educational system in the Republic of Ireland and we have made a submission on the potential for cross border work in schools. The model could also be used in an east - west link. A new body is currently being established which will have an education remit, the Ulster Scots Academy and undoubtedly they will have a role to play in future development and I am sure will be open to discussion on possible projects.

The area of cultural tourism is something that must be fully explored. The Ulster Scots Agency has been working with our colleagues in Tourism Ireland to develop the potential
particularly in North America (but also in many other areas) in respect of this. Conservative estimates suggest there are in the region of 27 million people in the United States of America who have an Ulster Scots (they would use the term Scots / Irish) heritage. Joint tourism initiatives may be beneficial and certainly a heritage trail encompassing both (the 9 county province of) Ulster and Scotland deserves urgent attention.

It is significant that this year we commemorate the 400th anniversary of the first major organised settlement of North East Ireland, specifically Counties Antrim and Down by Scots. In 1606 two Ayrshire Lairds, James Hamilton and Hugh Montgomery pioneered a massive settlement from the lowlands of Scotland. Commencing in May of that year over 10,000 Scots made the short journey across the North Channel into Antrim and Down. The success of that settlement prompted James I and VI’s Virginia Plantation of 1607 and the Ulster Plantation of 1610. The Agency is engaged with key stakeholders in looking at this entire period in sensitive and factual context. It is appropriate that the Scottish element be properly recognised and the Agency has identified relevant sites in Ayrshire which could form part of a Hamilton and Montgomery Heritage Trail. Tourism Ireland has recognised the potential for this and a mail drop has gone out to Americans with either surname extolling the virtue of a visit to their homeland in Ulster.

These represent a few initial thoughts and can be expanded upon. Equally there are a number of other issues which could be explored and the Ulster Scots Agency is very willing to play its part in progressing what we consider to be a significant and timely initiative. We would be pleased to meet with representatives from the Committee of Inquiry or their colleagues in pursuit of this.

George Patton
Chief Executive
Ulster Scots Agency
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10 – 12 Brunswick Street
Belfast
BT2 7GE

info@ulsterscotsagency.org.uk
www.ulsterscotsagency.com
Scottish Enterprise (SE) welcomes the European and External Relations Committee's interest in the possibilities for co-operation between Scotland and other regions of the European Union, through the new Territorial Co-operation funding programmes for 2007-13, and specifically the scope for co-operation between Scotland and Ireland.

SE has been tracking the development of proposals for new European Union funding programmes for 2007-13, and begun evaluating the best opportunities for Scotland to achieve maximum impact from the funds available. In the context of an anticipated decline in ERDF and ESF funding coming to lowland and upland Scotland under the Competitiveness and Employment Objective, we feel it is important to look at other funding streams, including Territorial Co-operation and the Framework Programme for Research and Development.

In October 2005, Scotland Europa organised a seminar to examine the scope of the new Territorial Co-operation programme, with input from the Scottish Executive European Funds Division and case studies of successful co-operation projects.

We have agreed to work with the Scottish Executive to help develop the new Territorial Co-operation programmes in which Scotland will have an interest, including the potential Cross-Border programme with Ireland.

We have also encouraged the Executive to take forward a Scottish forum, to bring together key organisations to influence the content of the programmes and develop strategic approaches and projects to make use of the funds available. We understand that the European Funds division will be holding a first event in March.

In general terms, we feel future benefits to Scotland through the Territorial Co-operation programmes could be increased by adopting a strategic, pro-active, partnership based approach and the SE Network would seek to play an active role in this.

We feel there are many benefits to be obtained from working with partners in other parts of the EU, from sharing best practice through to piloting new approaches and developing more ambitious joint strategies and initiatives.

In terms of the Cross-Border programme between Scotland and Ireland, firstly we would wish to support this proposal and offer any assistance in ensuring that it is taken forward. There are clearly opportunities to build on geographical proximity, historic and cultural links to maximise the economic linkages between Scotland and Ireland and build real, productive co-operation. The availability of EU funding can provide a focus for such activity and help develop the structures and provide the resources for joint working.

Secondly, we would welcome clarification on the coverage of the programme, including the application of the 150km limit to selection of areas. It is understood that this would encompass as a minimum Dumfries and Galloway and South Ayrshire, and we would
suggest that maximum flexibility should be exercised to ensure that the whole of Ayrshire is fully eligible under the programme. We would also welcome clarification on the possibility of including other areas around the Firth of Clyde, specifically Renfrewshire and Dunbartonshire.

Should this not be feasible, we would suggest that the flexibility to spend 20% of the programme budget outside the programme area could be used to support projects which include these areas e.g. relating to the developing Clyde Estuary Strategy.

In a similar vein, there are strong linkages between Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders, and we would like to see some of the potential benefits of co-operation projects extend across the south of Scotland area.

Indeed, we would hope that, although geographical eligibility for the programme is likely to be quite limited, there will be potential economic benefits across Scotland. We would see the Territorial Co-operation programme as one way of supporting projects emerging from increased joint working across the Scottish Enterprise network and in the context of the Metropolitan Region strategies.

In terms of the potential for co-operation projects, our comments will focus on economic development, although we recognise the importance of other areas of co-operation and of an integrated approach to the rural development which encompasses social and environmental sustainability.

We would see the main opportunities arising from the following areas:

- trade development: inter-agency co-operation to improve support for exporting, market diversification and internationalisation of SMEs; networking between organisations and businesses; identification of opportunities for increased trading between Scotland and Ireland and building on links to improve the global competitiveness of the two regions; support for collaborative projects
- innovative approaches to economic development, including support for R&D, innovation and development of the knowledge economy
- sectoral initiatives in key industries such as food and drink, farm diversification, tourism, culture, manufacturing, forestry and energy
- skills development for businesses and individuals, including the use of ICT in training delivery and joint initiatives, exchanges of learners and personnel between the partner regions
- collaborative working between higher and further education and research institutions, including increased interaction with businesses
- tourism development and joint marketing initiatives relating to common cultural heritage, rural and urban tourism, maritime heritage and activities such as sailing
- strategic transport initiatives, improving communications between Scotland and Ireland and links to mainland Europe
- joint strategies for management of the coastal and maritime environment and sustainable management of its economic potential
- addressing environmental efficiency of businesses and opportunities for green job creation
- demonstration of renewable energy technologies, including biomass, and associated economic development opportunities
- sustainable, integrated rural development strategies

Co-operation could take a number of forms:
• exchange of ideas and best practice
• joint development of new ideas, research and feasibility studies, strategies and action plans
• piloting of new approaches, scaling these up and disseminating to other areas
• joint initiatives and service delivery
• networking, strategic alliances and operational partnerships between agencies, business organisations and individual businesses

In conclusion, SE very much welcomes the opportunity for closer working with partner regions in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. We have begun to explore ideas for projects and joint working, and would welcome the support of the Scottish Parliament in ensuring that the proposal for an EU funded Cross-Border programme is realised and taking forward a strategic, partnership approach in Scotland.
1.1 Dumfries & Galloway is one of the most sparsely populated regions in the UK and the EU. Our maritime and rural landscape is home to small market towns, which act as service centres for local communities and rural hinterlands. The economy is reliant on traditional manufacturing and land-based industries, but is home to a growing number of entrepreneurs who recognise the value of the local workforce and the potential for high quality of life.

2.1 We welcome this opportunity to contribute to Committee thinking on European co-operation, specifically between Scotland and Ireland.

2.2 Economic activity does not stop at borders. Dumfries & Galloway is tied into Ireland through culture, history, business and family. Belfast, for example, has always been a particularly popular shopping centre for Stranraer, and a substantial number of Northern Irish farmers have invested in property in Wigtownshire. Loch Ryan is a vital gateway for access to Scotland with only Glasgow and Edinburgh airports handling more passengers from the rest of the UK. In 1999, 34% of all passengers and 24% of all freight crossing the Irish Sea used Loch Ryan.

2.3 Dumfries & Galloway Council co-operate with organisations from Eire and Northern Ireland through European funded Leader+ and Interreg projects and through the North Channel Partnership and other project based opportunities.

2.4 Dumfries & Galloway Leader+ Local Action Group (LAG) is co-operating with the Northwest Leader+ groups (Coleraine Local Action Group for Enterprise Ltd, Roe Valley Rural Development Ltd, Rural Area Partnership In Derry Ltd and Inishowen Rural Development Ltd) to consider the economic potential of motorbike tourism to both areas. This work will outline the current impact and future potential of motorbike tourism and identify ways to add value to our tourist product. This work has obvious synergies with all outdoor sports for which both Dumfries & Galloway is world famous.

2.5 Dumfries & Galloway also participates in a €2.8million Interreg IIIB project called AGATE (Agriculture Agglomération Atlantique et Territoire). The AGATE project aims to involve local people in identifying issues related to food production, marketing and living with the land in Annandale and Eskdale area. Partners include Westmeath Community Development Ltd (Ireland), as well as partners from France, Spain and Portugal. The project runs from 2004 until June 2006.

2.6 Dumfries and Galloway Council and its partners in the North Channel Partnership seek to secure a strategy and investment programme for landward transport links to the Irish Sea ferry ports of Stranraer, Cairnryan, Belfast and Larne. The partnership is a grouping of key public and private concerns on both sides of the
Irish Sea. The main issues for the partnership are upgrading of A75, A77 in Scotland, A8 in Northern Ireland and improvements to rail links. A75 and A8 feature in the high priority "Essen 14" group of Trans European Network projects, as part of the Ireland - UK - Benelux upgrading project.

2.7 Dumfries & Galloway Council and Scottish Enterprise Dumfries & Galloway are further working to deepen trade links between Scotland and Ireland and improve Business-to-Business links between Dumfries & Galloway and Irish regions.

FUTURE CO-OPERATION POTENTIAL

3.1 For the first time Dumfries & Galloway, along with Argyll & Bute (and other Scottish south-western areas) becomes eligible for Strand A (Cross Border) programmes in the new European Structural Funding Programme period 2007-13 as well as strands B – Transnational and C – Interregional.

3.2 There are various opportunities for our regions to cooperate.

3.3 Following the decision by Stenaline to relocate from Stranraer to Cairnryan, the redevelopment of Stranraer Waterfront has become an economic development priority for Dumfries and Galloway. This development offers exciting opportunities to co-operate on business/economic development, human resource development and skilling, harbour and waterfront infrastructure as well as renewable energy development and cutting edge ecological design and construction.

3.4 Community Economic development across the regions is an important aspect of social inclusion for all ages and communities, to encourage full participation in learning, skills development and active citizenship. Support for social economy projects that can contribute to long-term sustainability and income generation in communities is particularly important and enhances the benefits from housing regeneration and neighbourhood renewal through its contribution to a wider action agenda.

3.5 Accessibility for both our countries is vitally important. Therefore it is necessary on upgrading the weaker links of the Trans-European Network across our region, by improving and innovating on transport solutions for small far flung communities and improving accessibility from small towns which act as localised development poles to larger centres.

3.6 Maximizing economic potential of our natural heritage through Inland and Coastal development. There are a number of approaches including e.g. development of renewable energy facilities; developing local skills bases and capacity to service these facilities; promotion of energy efficiency and energy saving, ecologically friendly design and construction; facilitation of Integrated Coastal Zone Management Projects; sustainable use of fisheries and harvesting the sea; encouragement of sustainable tourism based on our common natural assets as well as outdoor tourism potential created through opening up the countryside under tourist infrastructure (e.g. for long distance cycling via National Cycle Networks in Scotland and Northern Ireland across the Irish sea ferry ports, currently being developed by Dumfries & Galloway Council and partners including the national cycling charity Sustrans. Similar opportunities exist in respect of walking routes).
3.7 Improve the local Research & Development base by fostering an enabling environment for innovation and knowledge transfer between all economic sectors (i.e. public, private, voluntary sectors) e.g. by new ways of promoting e-solutions, improving networking and cooperation, support for linkage of common public services and upgrading of facilities to allow these linkages to take place. There are also opportunities to develop a rural dimension to the knowledge economy especially maximizing the role of universities and research in rural development.

3.8 Understanding, supporting and maximizing economic contributions by our fellow Europeans to regional competitiveness can be achieved through development of lifestyle portfolios that will support, attract and retain people.

**ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN**

4.1 Border (land or maritime) and peripheral areas have capacity needs that may not be required in infrastructure/transport rich central areas. We urge the Scottish Parliament and its Executive to take account of governance capacity, which is directly related to human resources (or lack thereof). Being able to develop and implement high quality projects is partly a function of administrative burden. We would urge the Parliament to enable capacity by using its own capacity to cut out bureaucracy, consider centralising those administrative burdens that can be met more efficiently centrally, and encourage an entrepreneurial attitude to co-operative working.

4.2 Any future Scottish – Irish cooperation programme should avoid being output driven. Programmes should allow innovation in scope, process and practices (and allow ‘failure’) so that allow projects to focus on the unique strengths of local areas.

4.3 Actions under any future Scottish – Irish co-operation programme should be outcome based rather than output driven must, so that work does not merely seek to meet ‘targets’ but drive real change.

4.4 We would urge that co-operation with Ireland through European funding seek synergy with other funding streams by either matching at source or joining up national funds to European objectives so that projects can achieve practical and real outcomes.

4.5 We suggest an Irish-Scottish conference between civil service departments and key local authorities to explore opportunities and areas of interest for project development to be held in Stranraer and hosted by Dumfries & Galloway Council on behalf of Community Planning Partners in Dumfries & Galloway.

**CONCLUSION**

5.1 Dumfries & Galloway continues to cooperate with Ireland in a number of practical and economically beneficial ways.

5.2 The changes to the Co-operation strand of the new Structural Funds programme offers further opportunities to expand co-operation.

5.3 We seek support from the Parliament and the Scottish Executive so that cooperation will benefits the economic development of not only our regions, but also our nations.
5.4 We would be keen to give oral evidence having so served Scottish Parliamentary Committees in the past.

5.5 We are the Network Coordinator for Local Government Rural Network (www.localgovernementruralnetwork.net) and enclose a copy of recently commissioned research which has been used as one of the reference documents for this submission.

References:
South of Scotland Competitiveness Strategy 2005; Dumfries & Galloway Community Plan 2004, Rural Areas & Regional Competitiveness 2005
1.0 Introduction

1.1 The opportunity to respond to the Scottish Parliament’s European and External Relations Committee inquiry into co-operation with Ireland is welcomed.

1.2 Argyll and Bute Council views the opportunity to co-operate with Ireland as part of a Cross Border Programme as an important tool in developing existing relations with Ireland into specific activities which will benefit the long term regional development of the two areas. Argyll and Bute shares many historic and cultural links with Ireland and is now experiencing many of the same challenges facing areas with small towns, remote rural settlements and islands, which have issues of transportation, services and access. Changes to the primary sector, tourism and environmental landscapes also present us with shared opportunities for development and the Council is interested to learn from lessons learnt elsewhere.

2.0 Current European funded co-operation activity

2.1 Argyll and Bute is involved in on-going co-operation activities with Ireland, which reflect some of the shared development issues as identified above. The Council has found these projects to be extremely useful in raising awareness of development and management issues in remote and island areas. Excellent working relationships have been developed with the partners in these areas, particularly from Ireland:

INTERREG IIB North West Europe – Project ISLA
Argyll and Bute Council, in partnership with the Bere Island Projects Group (West Cork), Shetland Amenity Trust, Conservatoire du Littoral, France and DLG in the Netherlands are partners the ISLA project. The aim of the ISLA project is to provide best-practice solutions for the sustainable spatial development of islands.

INTERREG IIIC - ESIN IIIEP
The Argyll small islands are participants in the ESIN (European Small Islands Network) Inter Island Exchange Programme (IIIEP) project led by the Irish Islands Federation and including partners from island networks in Sweden, Finland, Denmark and France. The project enables community representatives from small islands to undertake a series of exchange visits to other islands on specific themes, such as housing, coastal development and renewable energy. The participating islands are of the view that the problems associated with islands (remoteness,
transportation, depopulation etc) are experienced most severely on small islands.

**LEADER +**
Co-operation activity is taking place under the Whelk LEADER + programme. A recent project saw communities in Loch Fyne and Donegal develop a film on the issues of remote living. Other themes of co-operation include eco-tourism, tourism related training and joint marketing, biodiversity and renewable energy companies.

### 3.0 Other Existing Links

#### 3.1 Argyll and Bute has a number of formal civic links with Ireland, which it is seeking to strengthen:

**Oban – Gorey, County Wexford**
Oban has been formally twinned with Gorey in county Wexford since 1997. There has been recent agreement between Argyll and Bute Council and Gorey Town Council to develop and strengthen the existing links. Activities in the past have included youth forum exchange visits as well as educational, cultural and sporting links. Future economic interest lies in the areas of tourism, joint marketing activity and other commercial linkages. With a view to future cultural activity, there will be efforts made to enhance literature, music, drama and language connections as well as the creation of sporting links.

**Mid Argyll, Kintyre and Islay - Moyle**
A Deed of Partnership exists between mid Argyll, Kintyre and Islay and Moyle. The aims of the partnership are to cultivate and intensify human, cultural, educational and commercial relations. There have been frequent regular meeting between local Council members and Moyle council during on-going discussions about the Campbeltown to Ballycastle ferry.

### 4.0 Potential co-operation activity

The cross border Interregional co-operation programme proposed between Scotland and Ireland from 2007-13 offers a unique opportunity to explore and develop areas of co-operation which could have economic, social and cultural benefits for both countries. As well as expanding and strengthening existing co-operation projects, a number of ideas exist for future co-operation between Argyll and Bute and Ireland:

- **Transportation**
  Transportation is a key issue for both Argyll and Ireland. With 25 inhabited islands and over 55% of all Scottish ferry journeys ending or beginning in its area, Argyll and Bute is particularly interested in exploring fast and efficient methods of transport. The potential to explore fast ferries using alternative routes is of significant interest.

- **Campbeltown-Ballycastle Ferry**
Argyll and Bute Council has been committed to re-establishing the ferry connection between Campbeltown on the Kintyre Peninsula with Ballycastle, in the Moyle district. The recent restricted tendering process for a ferry operator did not result in any bids. However, their remains strong belief that the route has economic potential. The potential for a ferry operator to tender for this route will be strengthened if there is support for other forms of formal co-operation between the two areas.

- **Tourism**
  Tourism is one of the identified areas of growth in Argyll and Bute. This could be developed and strengthened with good links to Ireland. As well as a main ferry link, there is potential for tourism development around water based tourism and golf. The development of small harbours, piers and pontoons along key coastal areas could encourage new traffic as well as capitalise on existing traffic. The joint development and marketing of coastal tourist trails offers economic potential and is something that could be explored and developed.

- **Culture and Heritage**
  Scotland and Ireland have strong cultural and heritage assets, many which share a common history, dating back to 563AD when St Columba came from Connaught to Iona. Development of culture and heritage could be explored through language, music and art linkages, whilst further underpinning tourism activities.

- **Coastal Zone Management**
  Coastal zone management is identified as a key component in the Argyll and Bute Structure plan and is the subject of intensive partnership working in areas such as Loch Fyne and the Firth of Lorn. Future co-operation with Ireland in this area provides an opportunity to widen the geographic scope of the existing and planned activities, while sharing knowledge and developing best practice in sustainable coastal management.

- **ICT and Communications**
  The South Kintyre area is a remote area within Scotland. It suffers from a weak mobile phone signal in parts, and has less than ideal broadband connections. Technical solutions to these connectivity issues could be explored through connections to Northern Ireland.

- **Sustainable Communities**
  Many of the communities in remote areas of Ireland and the west of Scotland face challenging issues of depopulation, out-migration of the economically active, second homes and housing affordability and general long term economic and social sustainability issues. As one of the key aims of Community Planning, Argyll and Bute is actively seeking solutions to these issues and could learn from lessons learnt in Ireland.

5.0 Conclusion
5.1 Argyll and Bute Council is very interested in participating in the development and implementation of a cross-border programme between the West of Scotland and Ireland. Opportunities such as those presented by cross border co-operation programmes offer a unique opportunity for exploration of activities which may reap future social and economic benefits. There are many synergies between the two areas and a significant number of common themes and purposes which could lead to practical projects to improve the areas’ respective social, environmental and economic well-being.

5.2 The Council would welcome the opportunity to give written evidence to the Committee on the future potential of a cross border programme with Ireland.

5.3 The Council would welcome being an active partner in the preparation of a cross border programme.

5.4 The Council would welcome consideration by the Committee of the availability of match funding and administrative assistance for the programme. It is recognised at a European level that arrangements for transnational working can be complex and as a result, can find difficulty in attracting funding. The Council’s experience of participating in transnational projects has been positive, but resource intensive particularly in terms of staff. The availability of match funding will be a fundamental issue in the successful delivery of a cross-border programme.
Evidence submitted by the North East Partnership:

January 2006

Introduction

The opening sentence in the inquiry Terms of Reference identifies that “Over the centuries, migration in both directions between Scotland and Ireland has forged strong links between two countries which are geographically close and have much in common.”

Nowhere is this fusion more evident than in the northeast corner of the island of Ireland. The fact that at its shortest distance the respective coastlines are only fifteen miles apart has meant that Antrim has traditionally formed an important bridgehead between the two countries, a fact that remains to this day. Historians will be aware that the Gaelic ‘Sea Kingdom’ of Dalriada was formed by Irish clan chieftains in the 5th century AD, extended on both sides of the North Channel and composed the northern part of the present County Antrim and part of the Inner Hebrides and Argyll, in Scotland. Indeed it is from these early migrations that Scotland got its name as until the 10th century “Scotia” denoted Ireland, and the inhabitants of Ireland were known as "Scotti."

The Plantation of Ulster by Scottish migrants in the 17th century (1609-1625) is perhaps the one of the better-known chapters in Scotland’s long relationship with Ireland. However it is widely known that the Scots had been drifting across the narrow waters of the Irish Sea into Antrim and Down for a generation or more beforehand and moreover, a much larger influx of people crossed the channel three generations later, in the 1690s, after famine and other disruptions beset Scotland. In turn the aftermath of this period led the distinct ‘Ulster-Scots’ heritage of the North East region still prevalent, not only in the North of Ireland but in North America where many Ulster Scots went on to settle. The NE region also has a rich agricultural, industrial and maritime tradition, which it shares with the South and West of Scotland.

We are aware that the Scottish Executive has already met with representatives from ICBAN and Inishowen Rural Development Ltd to discuss future cooperation opportunities. We are obviously supportive of this discussion as future cooperation initiatives are likely to be mutually beneficial. This response provides an ideal opportunity to identify some of our own broad thinking and significantly an opportunity to highlight our desire to be fully involved in discussion leading up to the development of any future programme

a) To assess the potential for a programme of co-operation projects between Scotland and Ireland and the resultant social and economic benefits.

Formally established in 2004 the North East Partnership represents a partnership between the statutory and social partners in the NE region of Northern Ireland. As the map below highlights the Partnership covers eight local authority areas, and is one of five regionally based Partnerships with a remit of encouraging and facilitating cross border and trans-national
cooperation. All five partnerships are involved in the delivery of the European Union INTERREG IIIA Ireland/Northern Ireland Programme, the main difference being that 3 out of the 5 have cross border membership i.e. those regions that straddle the border with the six eligible counties in the Republic of Ireland.

### REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

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<th>REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS</th>
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The INTERREG IIIA Ireland/Northern Ireland Programme 2000-2006 valued at circa €182m is the third and most significant cross border cooperation programme between Northern Ireland and the six border counties of the Republic of Ireland. Since the late 1980’s these programmes has helped stimulate a range of investment in cross border initiatives targeting a broad range of economic, socio economic and environmental cooperation. For a variety of reasons this investment has largely focused on the immediate border corridor, while application and participation from NE partners has been relatively low. Hence resulting cross border contact and investment in the NE has been minimal.

The North East Partnership and the organisations we represent or have consulted with agree that a future programme of co-operation between Scotland and Ireland can deliver enormous social and economic benefits. This is not only because of the close historic linkages between the south and west of Scotland and the North East region but also because it will also facilitate greater opportunity for involvement in North-South projects and initiatives. Given the geographic, political and cultural differences between the North East and Southern Ireland the development of a Scotland/Ireland programme can help create a positive framework for cooperation. The basic fact that both Northern Ireland and Scotland are in the same jurisdiction will mean that potential applicants will need to seek partners from the eligible area in the Republic of Ireland. The NE Partnership paid a visit to the Dumfries & Galloway region in the summer of 2005 in order to discuss potential
opportunities. The following headings identify some of the key areas that could apply across the entire eligible area.

**Coastline/Maritime:** The coastline of the NE region stretches over 100 miles from Whiteabbey on the outskirts of Belfast to beyond Castlerock in the Coleraine Borough. There are significant marina facilities at Carrickfergus, Ballycastle and Coleraine, while the Port of Larne is one of the busiest commercial ports on the island of Ireland. Furthermore it is hoped that the Ballycastle to Campbelltown ferry service will be reinstated in the near future. In short we feel that this coastline offer much potential scope for a range of coastal/maritime based cooperation initiatives involving Scottish and ROI partners e.g. coastal management. It is interesting to note that there is currently a touring museum exhibition centred on the East Antrim maritime tradition (www.seabritain2005.com)

**Tourism:** The NE region is a major gateway to the island through the International Airport near Antrim and the ferry link from Larne to Cairnryan. The Giants Causeway near Bushmills a natural geology phenomena myth logically known as Finn McCools land bridge to Scotland is one of Northern Irelands most important visitor attractions. It is also suggested that both the Ulster Scots as well as the Dalriada ‘sea kingdom’ traditions offer much scope for cultural tourism. Other areas of cooperation could focus on the development on the Antrim Coast Road touring route and its wider connections to Scotland and Donegal or on the development of the National Cycle Network from Dumfries to the Antrim Coast Road at Larne.

**Rural Development:** The NE region shares many similarities with south and west of Scotland and indeed Donegal in terms of rural development opportunities centred on a broad range of economic and socio-economic needs. For example this could centre on cooperation on a range of health or education services and initiative on the inhabited offshore islands such as Rathlin, Tory, Aranmore and the many Scottish islands.

**Industry & Commerce:** This is a significant sector where increased cooperation can help open up new opportunities and markets. The North East Partnership has had some preliminary discussions with organisations such as the Local Enterprise Agencies in the NE region, Enterprise Scotland, Intertrade Ireland and Donegal County Enterprise Board. Again the general perception is that an Ireland/Scotland cooperation programme can offer much scope across a wide range of economic development initiatives ranging from education and training to SME development.
b) To investigate the possibility of European Union funding for such projects.

The North East Partnership is a strong advocate for the resourcing of a future EU funded Ireland/Scotland cooperation programme. As previously identified such a programme would make it easier for the North East Region to engage in cross border cooperation initiatives on a north-south and east-west basis. To this end both the NEP and our sister organisation COMET (Greater Belfast Partnership) recently held positive meetings with two of Northern Ireland’s MEP’s Jim Nicholson and Jim Alister to voice our interest and concerns. We are also hoping to meet with our third MEP Barbara DeBruin.

There are a number of EU strands where resources for future cooperation can hopefully be obtained;

- **Cross-border** e.g. a new dedicated cross border programme between NI/ROI and South and West of Scotland. Under the present round of EU funding there were 52 cross border programmes e.g. these include ROI/NI and ROI/Wales. A Scotland Ireland programme would hence be feasible in the 2007-2013 period
- **Trans-national** – Under the current EU Interreg funding programme there were several trans-national programmes. A number of these programmes included Scotland and Ireland e.g. the North West Europe which also covering all of the UK and lowland countries in the EU mainland and were well resourced (NWE = €300m). Typically partners from several member states in the eligible transnational region partnered on projects that averaged between €3m and €5m. Unfortunately the level of participation from Ireland as a whole was somewhat limited.
- There are also a number of other EU funding channels that can be used to enable cooperation. These range from networking opportunities afforded under the Rural Development Leader + Programme to the key infrastructure projects supported under the Trans European Networks (TENS) or Motorways of the Seas programmes.

c) To make recommendations about what action should be taken, particularly by the Scottish Executive and the Scottish Parliament, to develop such a programme of co-operation.

The NEP appreciates being given the opportunity to respond to Scottish Parliament enquiry. We had hoped to have been provided with an opportunity to meet with Mr Canavan as part of the enquiry and previously offered such an invitation if he was in Northern Ireland or Ireland as part of his investigation.

The enquiry terms of reference highlights the need for immediate action if those in favour of a Scotland/Ireland programme are to be successful in having this incorporated as a Programme under the EU Cooperation measure.

We are also aware that there are constraints on the EU budget with the accession of 10 ‘poorer’ states and that Ireland and Scotland will no qualify for
the substantial EU structural funding they have received over the past thirty years.

There is obviously need for a clear cut process in lobbying for this future programme that involves the respective National Governments, National Assemblies, MEP’s, Regional Bodies, etc. However, firstly there also needs to be a clear rationale demonstrating the need for such a programme and this should involve consultation between all the potential regions.

Unfortunately the North East and Greater Belfast regions were not fully involved in the planning for the current INTERREG IIIA Programme even though they were part of eligible area and hence they had little or no role in determining delivery structures, inputting to cross border themes etc. The North East partnership seeks to ensure that this does not happen in the context of the planning for the 2007-2013 period and enters the crucial negotiating period on a positive frame of mind.

There are a number of tiers of existing strategic planning platforms where joint actions can be developed;

Top Tier – National Planning Framework for Scotland (www.scotland.gov.uk)

National Development Plan for Ireland (www.ndp.ie)
Regional Development Strategy for NI (www.drdni.gov.uk)

However while we feel that while it is important that various Government Departments involved in this ‘top tier’ prepare to cooperate on areas of mutual or strategic benefit, regionally based organisations such as the NE Partnership should be given a role in the planning and delivery of joint actions.

The Ireland/NI Programme has demonstrated that if properly structured on a regional and or cross border basis broad based partnerships can prove both a successful and democratic model. Indeed, they can be the drivers for practical cooperation projects involving local communities and organisations on a cross border basis.

In closing we would be only to willing to meet with the inquiry team to further discuss and expand on the topics, issues and opportunities identified.
Evidence submitted by South Ayrshire Council:

South Ayrshire Council is pleased to be given the opportunity to input to the inquiry into the possibility of a programme of co-operation between Scotland and Ireland.

South Ayrshire Council is currently the lead partner in an Interreg IIB project in which two NGOs from the Cork area of Ireland are partners. (We would refer the Inquiry to www.interreg-dart.com for further details of this project). The Inquiry’s terms of reference are therefore in error when they state that there has never been an Interreg project involving Ireland and Scotland.

Our current project involves 14 partners from Ireland, Germany and Scotland covering both Government and non-governmental agencies. Although we are the only Scottish partner, our involvement of the private sector is a feature of the project and we have already successfully developed linkages between small businesses in Ayrshire and Ireland and between small businesses in Ayrshire and Germany. These contacts have already led to business being done without the further assistance of our programme and prospects for the survival of these linkages are good.

The proposed cross-border strand of the successor to Interreg does indeed provide opportunities to Scotland and to the West of Scotland in particular, although these are more limited than those likely to be available to some states in mainland Europe. We agree that opportunities for co-operation with Ireland should be fully explored and appropriate initiatives facilitated as much as possible. The bureaucracy and complicated application procedures which are a feature of the current Interreg programme should, however, be avoided, although this may be beyond the control of Scottish or Irish governments. South Ayrshire is currently the lead partner in its Interreg IIIB project and as such has developed significant experience of the very onerous financial responsibilities which the current programme imposes on lead partners. A similar level of responsibility in the new cross-border programme may limit the number of organisations willing to adopt this role. It is unlikely that any NGO would expose itself to the financial risks associated with being a lead partner. (It can be noted that, despite extensive involvement in trans-national European funded projects, few Irish partners perform the role of lead partner.) This would be unfortunate since the greatest opportunities for co-operation are likely to come from non-governmental bodies. We would suggest that cross-border co-operation could be greatly facilitated if the lead partner’s financial responsibilities to Europe were underwritten by National Government.

Ultimately, successful co-operation will depend on identifying projects which are mutually beneficial and which have demonstrable, worthwhile outputs and outcomes. In many trans-national European assisted projects significant value can be accrued from the sheer process of participation – the experience of working and learning from new and different cultures, business processes and attitudes has intrinsic value regardless of the ‘hard’ outcomes of any project. Our experience is that these benefits are fewer when working with Irish partners simply because of the historical and current linkages which are so well established between the West of Scotland and Ireland. Perhaps
perversely, the very synergies and ‘celtic connections’, which are already so strong, work to reduce some of the accrued benefits of joint working in the European context. This is not to dismiss the potential benefits to be derived from joint working but to reinforce the importance of project-specific shared goals and mutually beneficial outcomes.

Raising awareness of the opportunities offered by such co-operations would be a vital role for the Scottish Executive. Our current relationships in Ireland are with NGOs and our Irish experience is therefore limited to that sector. That experience, however, suggests that NGOs in Ireland are now very familiar with European funding opportunities and are comfortable in trans-national working. It could be argued that they have developed an expertise second to none in such matters. There is also an easily recognised acknowledgement in the Irish community of the benefits of transnational partnership working. This acknowledgement is lacking in Scotland and indeed the necessary travel and networking associated with such projects is often criticised and perceived as being of negative value. This traditional Scottish view of how our public and voluntary sector organisations should interact with European counterparts is currently not conducive to successful cross-border or trans-national working.

The likely reduction in European Regional assistance (ERDF) available to Scotland from 2007 onward will mean that European Union funding toward projects will increasingly come from cross-border and trans-national working and there is no doubt that Scottish expertise in these areas will be further developed over time. Co-operation with Ireland affords us easy access to considerable existing expertise which, if exploited, could shorten the learning period for Scottish participants.
Evidence submitted by the Special EU Programmes Body:

Our Ref: Scottish Enq-DC-PC_1_2_06
Your Ref: 

1 February 2006

Scottish Parliament Inquiry – Programme of Co-operation between Scotland and Ireland

Dear Mr Canavan

In response to your email of 11th January, I am enclosing a submission document for the Inquiry.

Apologies for missing the 31st January deadline, we were awaiting a note from the Minister’s office.

I am happy to be of any further assistance if required. Please feel free to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Pat Colgan
Chief Executive

Enc
SEUPB, in its capacity as the designated Managing Authority and Paying Authority for the Ireland/Northern Ireland INTERREG IIIA Programme for 2000-2006, wishes to submit the following briefing note in response to the open call for written evidence from Mr Dennis Canavan MSP relative to the Inquiry into the Possibility of a Programme of Co-operation between Ireland and Scotland.

1. The Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) is the Implementation Body for European Programmes for Ireland/Northern Ireland. It was established under the Good Friday Agreement and given effect by the British-Irish Agreement Acts, 1999 and the North/South Co-operation (Implementation Bodies) (Northern Ireland) Order 1999.

2. SEUPB has management responsibility for:
   - The INTERREG III programme (Managing Authority and Paying Authority)
   - The EU programme for Peace and Reconciliation (currently PEACE II)
   - Cross border elements of other Community Initiatives (LEADER+, URBAN II and EQUAL)
   - Monitoring and promoting the Common Chapter of the National Development Plan for the Republic of Ireland (2000-2006) and the Northern Ireland Structural Funds Plan (2000-2006)
   - Advising the two Member States and preparing for their approval detailed programme proposals for new EU programmes.

3. The INTERREG IIIA programme in Ireland/Northern Ireland is part of the EU INTERREG Community Initiative, which aims to strengthen economic and social cohesion by promoting cross-border, transnational and inter-regional cooperation and balanced development. The programme for 2000-2006 is worth EURO 183 million, which includes EURO 137 million of ERDF funds. 250 projects have been approved to date.

4. The overall aim of the Ireland/Northern Ireland INTERREG IIIA programme is to promote sustainable integrated regional development across the eligible region by building on the progress made under previous INTERREG programmes and by concentrating on the strategic dimension of cross-border development which benefits local communities. This overall aim translates into four specific aims at Priority level:
   - Integrated local development strategies
   - Supporting physical infrastructure and the environment
   - Civic and community networking
   - Technical assistance.
5. The programme is implemented through Government Departments working together on a North/South basis and through local partnerships. The partnerships add value to the programme by bringing local knowledge and expertise and ensuring a high level of engagement for local community networks. There are currently three such partnerships: Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN), Eastern Border Region Committee, and North West Region Cross Border Group. SEUPB supports the formation of two additional partnerships, the North East Region Partnership and the COMET partnership of six Belfast area councils.

6. The European Commission has proposed a European Territorial Cooperation Objective for the European Regional Development Fund for 2007-2013 that will be, in effect the successor programme for INTERREG III.

7. Like INTERREG III the Cooperation objective for 2007-13 will have three strands – Cross Border Co-operation, Transnational Co-operation and Inter-regional Co-operation. Within the Cross Border strand Article 7 of the Draft General Regulation provides for the first time that regions along maritime borders separated, as a general rule, by a maximum of 150 kilometres will be eligible for cross border cooperation financing. It is this provision that creates the possibility of a Cross Border Co-operation Programme between Ireland and Scotland. On its own this would be a relatively small Programme and the European Commission have proposed that eligible areas within Scotland be included in the Ireland Northern Ireland Cross Border Programme.

The inclusion of an Ireland/Scotland dimension within a future Territorial Cooperation programme is a matter for the two Member States. SEUPB is currently in discussion with the Member States through the Department of Finance in Dublin and the Northern Ireland Department of Finance and Personnel about the possibility of including an Ireland/Scotland component in any future Territorial Cooperation programme.

8. Any Ireland/Scotland territorial cooperation, if agreed and approved by the two Member States, would conform to Article 6 of the ERDF Regulation, which states that European Territorial Cooperation Objective shall focus its assistance on the following areas of cross-border economic and social activities:

- Encouraging entrepreneurship and SME development
- Protecting and managing the environment
- Improved access
- Cooperation and collaboration
- In addition, contributing to promoting the integration of cross-border labour markets, local employment initiatives, equal opportunities, training and social inclusion, and sharing of human resources and facilities for R&TD.
9. SEUPB, at the request of the two Member States, has commenced work in preparing the priorities, procedures and processes to be put in place for an Ireland/Northern Ireland programme for 2007-2013 under the Territorial Cooperation Objective and, as part of this, will be consulting widely with regional authorities and social partners.
Evidence Submitted By the North West Region Cross Border Group:

NORTH WEST REGION CROSS BORDER GROUP

The North West Region Cross Border Group is supported by the EU INTERREG IIIA Programme for Ireland/Northern Ireland
Response on behalf of the North West Region Cross Border Group (NWRCBG) To the Scottish Parliamentary Inquiry Programme of Co-operation between Scotland and Ireland

North West Region Cross Border Group

Introduction

The North West Region Cross Border Group welcomes the opportunity to make this submission in response to the Scottish Parliamentary Inquiry - Programme of Co-operation between Scotland and Ireland

The Group has experience as both project promoter and implementing agent for the current INTERREG IIA Programme and therefore makes this submission on the basis of the benefits a joint programme could bring and also from the perspective of our region as a partner in any future collaboration.

Background

The North West Region Cross Border Group comprises Derry City Council, Donegal County Council, Limavady Borough Council and Strabane District Council and represents a population in excess of 300,000 constituents. The Group has been in existence for over twenty-five years and, since 1993, has had a full time secretariat funded by the INTERREG Programme.

The present structure of the Group is a board comprising elected representatives, the respective Chief Executives / County Manager from each of the four constituent Councils and the Group Development Officer. Specialist Task Teams again comprising officers from each of the Councils and the Development Officer implement the various activities of the Group.
The NWRCBG is established for the public benefit for the following purposes in the Region encompassed by the administrative areas of the following local authorities: -

1. Derry City Council
2. Donegal County Council
3. Limavady Borough Council
4. Strabane District Council

The aim of the Group is: -

“To strengthen and develop the local economy so that general living conditions of the area (North West Region) improve”.

The Group will achieve this by: -

- Fulfilling the role of a lead organisation in facilitating partnership between the various organisations in the Region
- Co-ordination with all relevant parties in the Region.
- Improving the quality of life and well being of all inhabitants of the Region through tackling, in partnership with statutory, private and community groupings, those issues that create barriers to economic growth.
- Providing a targeted response to the needs of the Region and to exploit the said regions strengths in pursuit of economic development by promoting business development, inward investment, tourist development, community economic development, human resource development and infrastructure throughout the Region.
- Enhance the potential for socio-economic development within the Region primarily by assisting local groups to create sustainable projects by raising local awareness about options and potential for socio-economic activity.
- To secure, source and attract funding under the INTERREG, Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, International Fund for Ireland and other relevant funding sources.

To this end the NWRCBG endeavours to operate in a way that is complimentary to other development programmes or activities.

The North West and Scotland

Since the 6th century when St. Colmcille left these shores for Iona, and the later emigration from the West Donegal and North West to Scotland, there have been strong links with the North West of Ireland and the West coast of Scotland.

As a prosperous commercial port, the port of Derry has been an integral part of the Derry city’s economic and social history. Historically the port and city was one of Ireland’s most important embarkation points for Irish emigrants to Scotland and North America.
Today, third generation emigrants return to the North West of Ireland from Scotland to renew their links to this region. These natural links present the opportunity for increased tourism and economic development between out two regions.

**Potential for Co-operation**

There is a synergy historically, economically and socially for the two regions to further develop these links and expand on the cooperation in the areas of tourism, commerce and environment to name but a few.

Accepting that the proposed programme has yet to be written it is nevertheless appropriate that some potential areas of co-operation should be identified. The following list is indicative and not exhaustive, however, it illustrates the “potential” that could be harnessed by the North West Region and Scotland should such a programme become available.

- Tourism
- Marine and Coastal activity
- Islands
- Fishing
- Heritage and Culture
- Social and Economic Development

The North West Region Cross Border Group and our region has a strong history and ethos of cooperation. The natural linkages with Scotland, we believe, will make this region a strong and valuable partner in any new programme. The creation and strengthening of networks of cooperation, and the exchange of the experience we have gained, both as implementing agents and project promoters, will bring added value to any future cooperation that a proposed programme might offer.

In the event that the proposed programme is offered, the North West Region Cross Border Group, it’s councils and social partners will look forward to playing a full and active role.

We trust that you find this submission helpful and wish you well with this inquiry.

____________________
Eamon Molloy

For further information please contact:

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Development Officer
North West Region Cross Border Group
Exchange House
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Derry
BT48 7AS
Mr Dennis Canavan, M.S.P.
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Dear Mr Canavan,

I was encouraged to read in the W.H.F.P. your letter confirming your appointment as Reporter for the Committee inquiring into the possibility of co-operation between Scotland and Ireland.

I wish to register our interest in the project particularly in qualifying for European Funding through the proposed Co-operation Objective scheme.

For 34 years the Pan Celtic movement has been engaged in fostering close cultural relations with Ireland. Those close ties were maintained during the troubles at the time despite difficult and risky travelling times in Northern Ireland. I have personally been working in an entirely voluntary capacity for 17 years to maintain the strong inherent links we share. In that time Scottish attendance at the festival has increased from a lowly seven to an expected six hundred this year. In that time, lasting friendships and great understanding between our nations has developed. Shared musical and sports ideas have also clearly shaped and improved performance styles.

Our greatest problem is seeking adequate funding. This can be a highly stressful matter when you have so much organising activity on your shoulders. We are annually put in a position where your personal financial situation is jeopardised through needing to make solid commitments before funding can be guaranteed. Whatever in the end is provided is generally an inadequate amount from Gaelic agencies. Therefore, for example, as matters exist, it is difficult to maintain this vital cultural link.

Being within the maximum 150 kilometres between coastlines we are seeking dedicated European Union funding to enable us to further develop the undoubted benefits that such relationships have already engendered. We are also looking to develop Pan Celtic Centres in both Scotland and Ireland. These Centres would serve as archives illustrating our common history, tourist development and incorporate educational and cultural programmes.

Yours sincerely,

Allan MacColl
Director,
Pan Celtic Alba.
Evidence submitted by Here We Are:

Re Programme of Co-operation between Scotland and Ireland

We attach a report on the Leader + funded film we made “To See Ourselves As Others See Us” comparing Ballyliffin in Donegal, with Cairndow, in Argyll.

We also attach a letter re the film and our collaboration, from Andrew Ward of IRDL.

It will be seen that this project is considered a success.

The communities here in Carindow and in Ballyliffin are keen to build on our initial success and develop further projects. With some support we have every confidence we can do this and be an example to others.

A copy of the DVD of the film has been sent to Mr Dennis Canavan MSP, we would like to think that the attached along with the film will be considered as a case study appropriate to the inquiry.

Please let us know if you need any further information, and we would like to know the outcome.

Christina Noble
Project Director

________________________________________________________________________

AS OTHERS SEE US

REPORT OF A SEMINAR ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Cairndow, Argyll – 18 January 2006

Background

1. “Here We Are” is a community enterprise, situated at Cairndow at the head of Loch Fyne in Argyll, in the south-west Highlands of Scotland. It has its origin in 1997 when Christina Noble, a local resident, identified the need for a facility where both visitors and local people could find and exchange information on the working life of a community. Whereas heritage centres look to the past and tourist information centres focus on things to do in the next hour or two, the aim of “Here We Are” was to explain how a small rural community,
while loyal to its roots, goes on making its way in the modern world. Its subject matter would be people in a place – and hence its title.

2. The visible end product of this vision, translated through many years of community effort and fund-raising, is a smart modern building, on a busy site much favoured by visitors to Argyll for its shops and restaurant. The “Here We Are” centre contains displays and exhibitions about the living community and its surroundings, with local people on hand to meet and talk to visitors. It also provides residents with a source of information about the area’s past and its plans for the future, as well as offering them opportunities for more formal education as one of the learning facilities linked to Argyll College.

3. But just as important as the visible building has been the positive impact of the “Here We Are” concept on the self-confidence and motivation of the local community, living in and around the village of Cairndow itself. Although this was already in important respects a successful rural community, the establishment of “Here We Are”, with the fresh light it shone on the life and work of the area, provided a new impetus for its people to try to shape their own future. It also helped to spark a curiosity about the life of other modern rural communities, in Scotland and elsewhere across Europe. Are they facing similar challenges? What solutions have they found? And might the “Here We Are” concept prove to be transportable to other communities, as a means of increasing mutual understanding between those who visit the countryside and those who live and work there all year round?

The Film

4. With the encouragement and support of the European Union’s Leader+ programme, it was decided to arrange for representatives of the “Here We Are” committee and of a community in Donegal, in the far north of Ireland, to visit each other and to discuss together their experience of rural life in the 21st century. Better still, the funding was assembled for a film to be made about the visits, the places, the people and the issues, so that their story could be told to a much wider audience – to other rural communities, but also to the politicians and policy-makers who have such an influential role on the economic and social conditions of life in the modern countryside.

5. The visits took place during 2005, when three people from Ballyliffin travelled to Cairndow and three people from Cairndow went to Ballyliffin. The film of their visits and their discussions was made by Donald Coutts, who had spent part of his childhood in Argyll. Entitled “To See Ourselves as Others See Us – a tale of two villages”, it had its premier showing as the centre-piece of a seminar on rural development held at Cairndow’s Stagecoach Inn in on Wednesday 18 January 2006.

The Seminar

6. The seminar, which was attended by some 40 people (see Appendix A), was supported financially by Argyll and Bute Council and by the
Leader + programme. The morning session consisted of a showing of the film, followed by initial audience reaction and a plenary discussion to tease out the main issues it highlighted. In the afternoon session two workshop groups investigated the issues in greater depth, before getting together to agree action points. Facilitation for the day was provided by Robin Lingard of Kinnairdie Consulting, who had been involved with “Here We Are” since its inception.

Initial Reaction and Plenary Discussion

7. It was noted that the film brought out many similarities between Cairndow and Ballyliffin –

- Both could be described as economically successful communities, looking positively to the future.
- Both are rooted in a rural economy which has undergone significant change in the past decades, reducing the role of agriculture.
- Both are characterised by vigorous individuals well able to represent their community to visitors (for whom they are popular locations) and to the outside world.
- Yet both also feel remote, in their own way, from the seats of power and from the thinking of those who guide policy for rural areas.

8. Some significant differences were also apparent –

- Cairndow and Ballyliffin have a very different population base – 170 against 3,500, a twenty-fold disparity. Large scale volunteer-based projects are much easier to arrange and implement in Ballyliffin as a result.
- The roots of their current economic fortunes are different. The modern Cairndow can trace much of its current success back to the enterprising diversification of the local estate (Ardkinglas) under the late Johnnie Noble. The modern Ballyliffin (in what was formerly one of the poorest parts of Ireland) has enjoyed the benefits of significant national government and EU development funding, supported by the establishment of a local development agency, Inishowen Rural Development Ltd (IRDL).
- House-building is booming in Ballyliffin and young people are returning to live and work in the community. In Cairndow, by contrast, there is a great struggle to find land for new housing and much of the existing property is being sold at prices which local residents cannot match. This makes it difficult to attract labour for local businesses (over 200 people work in Cairndow/Clachan, compared with the 170 who live there) and to retain young people or attract them back.
- The ownership of land is diverse and less concentrated in Ireland than in Argyll, for reasons of history and policy. This increases the options available for locating new housing in Ballyliffin, as compared with Cairndow.
The people of Ballyliffin feel that the speed of their local development may have been at the expense of their environment and heritage. These, they think, have been safeguarded better in Argyll. Yet the view from Cairndow is that UK planning restrictions can sometimes give the interests of people lower priority than the interests of the landscape in which they live.

Ballyliffin’s economy is heavily geared towards tourism and leisure. Cairndow has a broader economic base, including the production and processing of food and drink.

In Ballyliffin, people feel they are very much part of Europe and they are well aware of benefits of EU membership to their community and nation. That does not seem to be the case in Cairndow.

9. A series of events had conspired against attendance at the seminar by any representatives of the Ballyliffin community. However, some valuable further impressions of the similarities and contrasts highlighted in the film were provided in a letter from Andrew Ward, Manager of IRDL. This is attached as Appendix B to this report.

10. From the plenary discussion at the seminar a total of 27 issues was identified as emerging from the film and requiring further debate. These are set out in Appendix C attached.

Workshop Discussions

11. Two Workshop Groups explored these issues in more detail in the afternoon session. Group 1 concentrated on issues of housing, planning and the community. A summary of their discussion is attached as Appendix D. Group 2 took as their main focus the issues of economic development. A summary of their discussion is attached as Appendix E.

Three Key Issues

12. It was clear from the discussions in both Groups that the supply of housing – particularly affordable housing – is now seen as the most important issue affecting the development of the rural community in and around Cairndow. For one Group it had been allocated as the main topic of debate, but it also proved to dominate much of the discussion in the other Group, whose main concern was economic development. What also emerged from the Workshop Group discussions, however, was that there is no easy solution to the problem and no ready consensus among residents and officials about what should be done. This was illustrated by the fact that equally strong arguments were advanced for and against discouraging the sale of local property to people from outside the area as second homes. (It was noted from the film that the community in Ballyliffin seems to have similarly divergent views about second homes in their midst.)

13. From the plenary discussion the main points made were that –
The supply of affordable housing is a problem currently affecting communities in most rural areas of Scotland, so Cairndow and Argyll are not alone in facing it. That suggests that other areas may have practical hints to offer on how to alleviate the situation.

Planners seek to reflect public perceptions and priorities in zoning land for various purposes, as well as (together with other agencies) working to protect sensitive areas of the natural and historic heritage – with positive results noted by the visitors from Ballyliffin. However, current planning assumptions may be out of line both with changing patterns of housing demand and with community views about the need for more development.

The cost of installing infrastructure for housing tends to be high in rural Scotland, while in some places the constraints on the capital programme of Scottish Water prevent new housing developments from going ahead even where land is available. However, the technology for “infrastructure free” modern housing is now well established and – with a fair wind from planners – could increase significantly the availability of effective land for housing in rural areas.

Housing supply and demand reflect the operations of a UK-wide (and even European) market, making it difficult to prevent prices rising beyond the reach of local people when demand is buoyant. However, housing development schemes beyond a certain size are now required to include a proportion of affordable housing. In addition, some rural housing associations are piloting methods to permit preference to local buyers at capped prices.

Housing supply in rural Scotland is now as much an economic issue as a social issue – and it should be regarded as such by development agencies, local authorities and the Scottish Executive. In the longer run, higher wages and salaries earned by those working in the rural economy should help reduce the national disparities which have fuelled the current rise in house prices in the countryside.

14. A second major theme from the Group and plenary discussions was the importance of encouraging an attitude of enterprise within rural communities. Both Cairndow and Ballyliffin had, in their own ways, established a tradition of “go out and do it”, without waiting for central authorities to get round to helping. (As the latest example, the managing committee of “Here We Are” is now looking seriously at branching out into community-owned renewable energy projects.) On this theme it was noted that –

- The culture of enterprise and self-confidence is not always developed sufficiently through the Scottish education system.
- Success in business depends on understanding and responding to the market. In the case of rural enterprise, the best prospects of success lie in niche markets – high quality food and drink, in the case of Cairndow, or the creation of “Ireland’s Gretna Green”, in the case of Ballyliffin’s hotels.
There is a potentially difficult but symbiotic relationship between town and countryside in all rural areas. The more confident and strong the rural economy is, the better its communities will be able to maintain their distinctive identity, rather than become just a playground for town-dwellers. Local people then come to regard tourism in a positive light.

While older people can contribute greatly to the economic life of a rural community, current demographic trends bring the risk that an ageing population will not be as well placed to take bold initiatives in future. The emphasis by HIE and others on encouraging in-migration to the Highlands and Islands is designed not just to offset a fall in total population but also to bring in enterprising individuals and their families, attracted by the high quality of life.

Local enterprise and initiative can be stifled by policies or attitudes from central government which fail to recognise the different impact on rural communities or seem to assume that urban solutions fit all situations. Bottom-up approaches to policy-making are welcomed in theory by those in authority (as in the concept of Community Planning) but the instinct towards top-down decisions remains strong.

The third main theme from the discussions – appropriately, given the focus on the film – was the need for rural communities to communicate more effectively, both with their own central authorities and with each other. It was noted that –

The mechanisms for exchanging experience and good practice between rural communities are not well developed in Scotland, though programmes such as Leader + should help to fill the gap. Too often, small groups come to feel seriously alone, struggling with what they think are unique problems, not knowing that another community has gone through the same struggle and developed solutions which would be relevant to both of them.

Rural communities tend not to know how to get through the tangle of departments or parliamentary committees so as to find the right person to talk to. It is easy to feel rebuffed or ignored in those circumstances.

Case studies, about the impact of policies on individuals or businesses, tend to be a most effective means of getting a story across to decision-makers and helping them understand issues affecting rural communities. But professional help may be needed to write them up and present them.

The different attitudes to and knowledge of the EU in Ballyliffin, as compared with Cairndow, suggest that there is a need for MEPs to raise both their own profile and the awareness of Europe and its development funding across rural Scotland.

The success of the film in presenting Cairndow and Ballyliffin to each other and, potentially, to a much wider audience would seem to point to the case for more films to be made on similar
lines, featuring other exchanges of information and experience between rural areas of Europe.

Points for Action

15. It was agreed at the start of the seminar that the aim of the day should be not just to discuss and identify the issues of rural development highlighted by the film. If possible, there should also be a commitment to specific action on those issues. The final session was therefore used to agree action points and to suggest who might be responsible for taking them forward.

16. Both Cairndow and Ballyliffin have demonstrated that, although the levers of power often seem very distant from small communities, it is through local and small-scale initiatives that people can start to shape their own future. It was therefore very fitting that the first action all were able to commit themselves was essentially personal. Having received the report from the seminar, everyone who attended it should secure a copy of the DVD of the film, show it to friends, colleagues and neighbours, use it to stimulate a wider debate on the factors affecting rural development in modern Europe, and encourage appropriate action at the local level.

17. The second area for action was, inevitably, concerned with housing. Although the earlier discussions had demonstrated that there are no ready-made formulae for providing sufficient, affordable houses for rural communities like Cairndow, the debate had also provided plenty of evidence that eventual solutions will only emerge from “joined-up thinking” between all the parties concerned, working towards a convergence of their different interests. The seminar therefore recommended that one of the key partners in Argyll (preferably Argyll and Bute Council) should act urgently to take the lead in bringing together these different interests (including public agencies, estate owners, housing associations, builders and community representatives) to review the housing supply issues raised in the seminar and the film and to agree a mechanism for resolving problems and proposing solutions at local level in future. (It was suggested that the Highland Council’s Local Housing Development Forums might offer a precedent to follow.)

18. The third area for action was agreed to be the encouragement and maintenance of a spirit of enterprise in rural communities. Here the need is not so much for additional business support services as for more awareness by central and local government of the impact of their policies on the environment for economic activity in rural areas. With a genuinely “level playing-field”, the natural enterprise to be found in so many rural communities would flourish as it should. There is also a tendency to identify rural development too narrowly with diversification of the agricultural sector, betraying an outdated view of how the modern rural economy works. It was noted that the Irish government has established a new Department to deal with Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, whereas in Scotland the effective responsibility for
the development of the rural economy appears to be spread over a number of departments and agencies, leading to a lack of focus. Although the seminar was not in a position to call for a reorganisation of responsibilities in Scotland, it did recommend strongly that the Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department (SEERAD) should introduce a system of “rural proofing” of the Executive's policy and legislative proposals, on the lines of the Irish model, to ensure that negative impacts on rural enterprise and the rural economy are avoided in future.

19. The fourth and final area for action was in the field of communications, where a number of action points were agreed –

- **SEERAD and the EU Leader + programme (with others, probably including the HIE Network) should review and seek to improve the mechanisms available for the effective exchange of good practice, local initiatives and mutual support between rural communities across Scotland.**
- **A sympathetic MSP should be asked to arrange a showing of the film at the Scottish Parliament, in the context of a discussion about the future of rural communities.**
- **“Here We Are” should work with others (perhaps including Senscot, the Leader + programme and the UHI Policy Web) to prepare a small number of case studies linked to the issues arising from the film, which would illustrate aspects of modern life in rural Argyll and demonstrate the need for policy changes or practical reforms.**
- **The MEP for the area should be sent a copy of the film and asked to use it to initiate a discussion within Argyll on how to raise community awareness of the benefits of EU membership to the rural economy.**
- **Through the Leader + programme, other rural communities in Scotland should be encouraged to organise and film well-targeted exchange visits within Europe, on the model of the Cairndow/Ballyliffin initiative.**

**A Final Thought**

20. One of the closing remarks to the seminar may be worth recording here as the conclusion to this report. At a global level, human society is facing unprecedented threats and challenges, many linked to climate change and the overuse of natural resources. The lessons of sustainable development are not yet widely understood, yet will have to be learnt quickly. While nations and governments have a critical role to play in leadership and policy change, a large number of the practical solutions seem likely to be small-scale and local. In these circumstances, enterprising and self-confident rural communities (like
Cairndow and Ballyliffin) may be far better placed to respond and thrive than urban-based societies. For this reason, if for no other, we should all share a responsibility to cherish and support them in the years ahead. And - coming back from the global to the local - that thought echoes exactly the message about living communities which “Here We Are” was set up to deliver

Robin Lingard
Kinnairdie Consulting

27 January 2006

APPENDIX B

To See Ourselves As Others See Us
a tale of two villages

I would like to say I am extremely disappointed that I am unable to be with you on the 18th.

The production reaches and surpasses the high expectations I had since meeting Here We Are, the WHELK Team and Donald and his team from Move on Up.

The film asks questions of us all. From an Inishowen perspective we feel we have to learn particularly in the area of “added value to local produce”. In Cairndow you have very successfully exploited your marine and local resources.

Planning is probably the most contentious area in all-rural communities. Leader strongly believes in the ethos of the Cork declaration on rural development and its message of “A living countryside”. The need for young people to live and work if they choose within their rural communities should in my opinion be non-negotiable. In Ireland, the Government have set up a separate Department to deal with Community, Rural and Gaeltacht (Irish language) Affairs.

All legislation has to also be rural proofed to see how it will effect the rural community. In reality the new Department is a major advance while rural proofing seems cosmetic. There is also a Policy of de-centralisation taking most Government Departments out of Dublin.

Some planning decisions in Inishowen are hard to understand. I feel we can learn from Scotland in your regard for heritage and culture.

Ballyliffin is going from strength to strength. The new Spa & Lodge Hotel has officially opened and its facilities are outstanding. The result is 2 local hotels the Ballyliffin and the Strand have just started major re-fits. It’s great to see the beneficial effect of the standards being raised. Ballyliffin’s reputation is further enhanced by the re-designing of the old links by Nick Faldo and Donegal in general by Jack Nicklaus, designing two new links in the adjacent
Fanad peninsula. I am meeting the hotels and golf course people next week on two issues, one is developing a seafood cookery school in Ballyliffin (specialist tourism particularly in winter months and secondly they want to jointly market, secure services (laundry, pre-prep etc).

The community who originally secured grant aid for the development of the golf course have signed their rights back to the members. The local communities have special lower rates of membership. The Famine Village is reported to have 38,000 visitors in the month leading up to Christmas – a record for the village. Ballyliffin’s biggest asset is its spirit of community, which transcends itself into business opportunities. From a Leader perspective it makes working with them a pleasure.

Since I received the DVD I have met with the Producers of RTE (Ireland’s BBC) Nationwide Programme. They produce a highly popular programme every Monday after the main evening news. Nationwide are planning a special on Irish-Scottish Links and I am due to contact them again in the coming days. I am hopeful of getting the film aired shortly and several media contacts are working towards this.

I feel people in Cairndow and Ballyliffin would view the E.U. differently. How has it impacted on rural areas? Has it made a greater impact on Inishowen? How can rural Scotland maximise its European dimension? These are, in my opinion important questions for the future.

Ireland and Scotland are extremely close neighbours, 33 miles from Inishowen head to the South tip of Islay. The film shows how that short stretch of water had led to different, I believe complementary means of development. I have no hesitation in saying we need quickly to learn some of the lessons you in Scotland have mastered. Our regard for our historical sites and special places is lamentable. Our ability to add value to high class local produce is also poor. I have to say I believe especially the young in Inishowen have more community support, a sense of a bright future and an ability if they desire to live in their villages.

I must especially thank Christine Noble, Sheila Mc Clean, Donald Coutts and Lorna Elliott for driving this project forward, and I would ask those interested in exploring links between us, to respond to the inquiry being held by the external relations committee of the Scottish Parliament into possible links between Scotland and Ireland.

I believe we should develop these links. I believe it is to both our mutual benefits. Rural areas must never be just holiday material for urban folk. It must determine its own future. This film helps clarify in a living history a moment in time. I believe we are at a crossroads. Its up to us to shape our future. Our contact with Cairndow has helped us. I believe the proposed Seafood School is a direct consequence of your innovative use of local produce. I look forward to hosting an event in Ballyliffin to highlight issues in this film. The litmus text for survival of a living countryside is the ability of its children to live and bring up a family in the countryside. Landownership is a huge issue in this regard. I believe that is our biggest difference. It is not an easy issue – then living in the country never was.
Kind Regards

Andrew Ward
Manager IRDL
Mr Dennis Canavan MSP
Member of European and External Relations Committee
TG.01
Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP

30 January 2006

Dear Mr Canavan

PROGRAMME OF CO-OPERATION BETWEEN SCOTLAND AND IRELAND

Thank you for your letter of 9 January requesting information into the possibility of a Programme of Co-operation between Scotland and Ireland.

This matter is being taken forward at Ministerial level and I understand that a reply will be forwarded to you soon.

Yours sincerely

MARY BUNTING (Mrs)
Donegal County Council
Comhairle Chontae Dhun na nGall

An Inquiry into the possibility of a Programme of Co-operation between Scotland and Ireland

SUBMISSION PRESENTED BY:-

DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL
AND DONEGAL COUNTY DEVELOPMENT BOARD

January 2006

1. INTRODUCTION

Donegal County Council welcomes the inquiry into the possibility of a programme of co-operation between Scotland and Ireland. This document sets out the fundamental issues of a Programme of Co-operation as it pertains to County Donegal. The consideration and preparation of this
Submission was informed and facilitated by the ongoing work of Donegal County Council, in association with Donegal County Development Board. The Research and Policy Unit, Donegal County Council compiled socio-economic information for the preparation of this submission.

The contents of this submission are set out under five key headings as follows:

- Profile of County Donegal
- Brief outline of proximity of County Donegal and links with Scotland
- Profile of Donegal County Council and Donegal County Development Board
- Experience of co-operation to date
- Declaration of intent

2. PROFILE OF COUNTY DONEGAL

Physical location

County Donegal is situated in the Northwest of Ireland, at a distance of approximately 220 km from Dublin. The county is bounded almost exclusively by Northern Ireland with 93% of its land boundary shared with the Counties of Derry, Tyrone and Fermanagh and the remainder shared with County Leitrim to the south. The county boasts the longest coastline in the country (1134km).

The total land area of County Donegal is 486,091 hectares, which represents 6.9% of the total area nationally. County Donegal is a sparsely populated rural county with a population density of 28.3 persons per square kilometer in 2002 (National average is 56 persons per square kilometer). The higher population densities are located around the main urban areas of Letterkenny, Buncrana, Ballybofey-Stranorlar, Donegal Town and Killybegs.

County Donegal is located in the NUTS III Border Region. The 4th largest City of the Island, Derry is situated on the Border with County Donegal.
County Donegal also has the largest Gaeltacht area in Ireland. The population of the Donegal Gaeltacht in 2002 was 23,728, covering a total area of 1,770 sq. km, which is one third of the land area of County Donegal. The main population centres in the Donegal Gaeltacht in 2002 were Bunbeg / Derrybeg (1,388), Dungloe (946) and Falcarragh (852).

Demographics

The total population of County Donegal in 2002 was 137,575 persons. This represented an increase of 5.8% over the period 1996-2002. Much of the population growth in recent years in County Donegal has occurred in the urban centres, mostly located in the east of the county and in particular in the town of Letterkenny. In total, there are 56 towns with a total population of 58,353, representing 42% of the entire population of County Donegal. Despite what appears to be a large number of urban settlements, 49 towns have populations below 1500. Of the 7 remaining towns, only Letterkenny and Buncrana have in excess of 5000 people residing there.

Source: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy](http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy)

\(^7\) Donegal County Profile 2002
In 2002, 23.4% of the total population were aged 0-14 years, while 5.9% of the total population were aged 75 years and over. In 2002, 36% of the population in County Donegal were considered to be age dependent. Over the period 1996-2002 all Gaeltacht Areas in Ireland experienced a decline in the percentage of its population, 3 years and over, that could speak Irish - from 76.3% to 72.6%- County Donegal was no exception. In 1996, approximately 78.1% of the population, aged 3 and over, in Gaeltacht areas in County Donegal could speak Irish, compared to 74.9% in 2002.

**Educational attainment**

In 2002, approximately 35.3% of the population in County Donegal, whose full time education had ceased, had left school at 15 years of age or younger. A total of 33.7% of the population in County Donegal, whose full time education had ceased, had no formal or primary education. This figure is considerably higher than the National Average of 22.2%.

The Economic Dependency Ratio in County Donegal in 2002 was 1.8 and the National Average is 1.4, indicating a larger number of inactive populations to the active population in County Donegal and further highlighting the degree of poverty and deprivation in the county.

**Economy**

Over the period 1996 – 2002 there was a significant shift in the pattern of sectoral employment in County Donegal with a decline in the traditional low value added sectors accompanied by a growth in service sector employment. Agriculture has historically been a key sector within County Donegal. The Census of Agriculture conducted by the National Central Statistics Office, in June 2000 states that the number of farms in County Donegal had decreased by 14% (2,228) over the period 1991-2000.

Tourism is an important contributor to the local economy. County Donegal accounted for 35% of overseas visitors revenue and 38% of all overseas visitor numbers to the North West Region in 2000. Although overseas tourist numbers to the county decreased by 82,000 and revenue decreased by €20.7 million, over the 2000-2004 period, County Donegal is attracting a

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8 The percentage of the population who are either under 15 years of aged and over 65 years of age.
9 This is the ratio of the total inactive population (i.e. children under 15, unemployed, first time jobseekers, home duties, retired, students, unable to work) to those at work
10 Total number of overseas visitors to County Donegal in 2000/Total number of overseas visitors to North West in 2000
11 Total revenue from overseas visitors to County Donegal in 2000/Total revenue of overseas visitors to North West 2000
12 Sligo, Cavan, Leitrim, Monaghan and Donegal
larger share of overseas visitors numbers to the North West Region (from 38% in 2000 to 43% in 2004).

**Employment**

The total labour force\(^{13}\) in County Donegal in 2002 was 57,319. Although the labour force participation\(^{14}\) rate has increased from 52.8% to 54.4%, over the period 1996-2002 it is still lower than the national average (58.3%). Over the period 1996-2002, the female labour force participation rate\(^{15}\) increased from 37% to 42.4%, while the male labour force\(^{16}\) participation rate decreased from 68.7% to 66.6%.

The total number employed in County Donegal in 2002 was 48,379. Between 1996 & 2002, County Donegal experienced a decrease in the number of persons 15 years and over at work in the following industrial groupings:

- Textile, Clothing and Leather (-64%) (From 3571 in 1996 to 1271 in 2002)
- Farming, fishing and forestry (-27%) (From 5218 in 1996 to 3797 in 2002)
- Food Drink and Tobacco (-6%) (From 1209 in 1996 to 1131 in 2002)
- Other Manufacturing workers (-6%) (From 1759 in 1996 to 1646 in 2002)

The greatest growth in employment was experienced in:

- Computer software occupations (+213%) (From 151 in 1996 to 473 in 2002)
- Scientific and technical occupations (+105%) (From 493 in 1996 to 1009 in 2002)
- Social Workers and related occupations (+101%) (From 147 in 1996 to 296 in 2002)
- Building and construction workers (+92%) (From 2609 in 1996 to 4998 in 2002)
- Managers and executives (+72%) (From 985 in 1996 to 1695 in 2002)

Over the period 1996-2002 the unemployment rate\(^{17}\) in County Donegal had decreased from 22% to 15.6%. Considering that the national rate of unemployment in 2002 was 8.8%, we are well above the average and have the highest level of unemployment in the country.

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\(^{13}\) Comprising of the ‘population at work’, the population of first time job seekers and the unemployed

\(^{14}\) Total Labour force as a percentage of the population aged 15 years and over.

\(^{15}\) Total Females in the Labour force as a percentage of the female population aged 15 years and over

\(^{16}\) Total males in the labour force as a percentage of the male population aged 15 years and over

\(^{17}\) Unemployed plus 1st Time Job Seekers as a percentage of the Labour force
Deprivation

The Haase-Pratschke Relative Deprivation Scores\(^{18}\) indicates that the deprivation score for County Donegal in 2002 was \(-9.6\%\), which was well below the average deprivation score for the State \((+2.2\%)\). It is important to highlight that this figure further disguises pockets of even greater deprivation at sub county level. The Donegal Gaeltacht area \((-16.6\%)\) and Inishowen \((-12.0\%)\) rank as the most disadvantaged areas within the County. The majority of electoral divisions in Donegal are located in what are described, as “disadvantaged areas” and a number are “extremely disadvantaged”.

3. BRIEF OUTLINE OF PROXIMITY OF COUNTY DONEGAL AND LINKS WITH SCOTLAND

The traditional links between County Donegal and Scotland are well documented. These links include the historic cultural and heritage ties, tourism flows between the two regions and evidence of migrant workers travelling to Scotland for employment. The map\(^{19}\) below highlights the geographical proximity of County Donegal to Scotland.

![](image)

There follows some examples of the nature of linkages, past and present, between Scotland and County Donegal.

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\(^{18}\) This index takes account of three dimensions of social disadvantage (including demographic decline, social disadvantage and labour market deprivation). The Relative Deprivation Scores is the absolute score after removing the underlying national trend of 15.2495 %.

\(^{19}\) Lonely Planet
Cultural Linkages

Cultural affinities between Ulster and the western coasts of Scotland probably extend back to at least 8000BC, when the hunter-gatherers who were the first inhabitants of the north coast of Ireland arrived across the North Channel, which was even narrower then than its current 12 miles.

Columba (also known as Columb or Colmcille: ‘The Dove of the Church’) was himself an example of the significance of continued ties between Ulster and the land, which was in the process of becoming Scotland. Originally from Donegal, Columba had founded the monastic settlement at Doire (Derry), where the Church of Ireland cathedral still bears his name. The movement of the Gaelic Scots of Ulster in the 5th and 6th Centuries preserved this link. This migration gave Scotland its name, its initial experience of Christianity and its ancient language, which still survives today, in the North and West of Scotland.

Migration

The ‘Flight of the Earls’ in 1607 made much greater areas of land available, and this led to the whole of Ulster receiving a significant number of immigrants. The establishment of the estates in Ireland under James VI reversed the migration and Calvinist workers from the lowlands moved with their landlords to their new lands in Ulster.

The migration reversed again in the latter half of the 18th century with the improvements in Scottish lowland agriculture and the need to feed the growing populations in the expanding industrialised towns. The introduction of cheap crossings between Ulster and Scotland in the 1820’s and the attraction of plentiful and comparatively well-paid work attracted many workers from the poorer areas of Ulster, and in particular Donegal. The migration was fuelled by the potato famine, the subdivision of family land and the mass evictions during the land wars of the 1880’s.

Ulster-Scots

Today the Scots still make a significant contribution to the populace and economy of Donegal and the music and dance traditions of the North West have developed with this Scottish influence to produce a tradition that is unique in Ireland.  

20  http://www.gannetschool.it/leggendoquaela16in.htm ; http://www.qub.ac.uk
In 2002, there were 4,897 persons in the three Ulster counties in the Republic of Ireland (Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan) who are usually resident in Ulster but born in Scotland, of these 4,495 were living in County Donegal.  

It was as a result of these population movements that Ulster-Scots became the dominant tongue in those areas that had received the heaviest Scottish settlement, as well as influencing the English spoken throughout the province.

**The Gaelic Landscape**

Scotland, Ireland and the Isle of Man contribute to the Gaelic world and the Gaelic language. Gaelic speakers in these countries share the same language in the broader sense and the term Gaelic is used to cover the language in all three areas.

The Celtic tongues are divided between two branches each comprising three languages: the Brythonic branch (Welsh, Breton and Cornish) and the Goidelic branch (Irish, Scots and Manx Gaelic). Welsh, Breton, Irish and Scots Gaelic (each with a little more than 250 000, 1,000,000, 30,000 and 80,000 native speakers respectively) are all in slow retreat pushed back by English or French. Cornish, which ceased to be a medium of spoken communication around 1800, is in a somewhat different position as it has been revived during this century and is slowly gaining speakers.

Census figures show large numbers having some knowledge of Irish. 1.57 million people claimed to speak Irish at the 2002 census. 72,834 aged 20+ used it on a daily basis, 59,768 of these outside Gaeltacht regions.

**Tourism linkages**

There are many tourism initiatives which encourage co-operation and partnership, working between Ireland and Scotland, and in particular County Donegal.

*Sli Cholm Cille* is a partnership between Donegal County Council, Donegal County Museum and the Columba Initiative. The initiative was founded in 1997 to foster exchange between Gaelic Ireland and Scotland. Its activities include community exchanges, cultural exchange events, language courses and an annual youth parliament. This project encourages networks and ongoing east-west, north-south co-operation on the role of Scottish and Irish Gaelic in museums and in the heritage service.

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21 www.cso.ie  
22 www.colmcille.net / http://homepages.enterprise.net/kelly/FRONT/INFO/oml/sketch.html
The *Pan Celtic Festival* will be held in County Donegal in April 2006. The aim of the festival is to promote and strengthen Celtic languages, culture, music, song and sport and to encourage inter-Celtic tourism, trade and commerce, and exchange of information. The Pan Celtic idea first originated in 1970, and the first Pan Celtic Festival was held in Killarney in 1971. Pan Celtic has also established strong ties with An tOireachtas, Ireland’s premier Gaelic Festival, and Am Mod Náiseanta Rioghaí in Scotland. This co-operation has developed into a new Scottish/Irish Gaelic organisation, under the title Comhnasg na nGael.

Tourism promoters in Ireland have held several workshops in Glasgow aimed at the tourism trade to promote Donegal and the Northwest. An officer is also employed at Donegal Airport by Údaras na Gaeltachta, to market fly drive packages for Donegal in Scotland.

### 4. PROFILE OF DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL AND DONEGAL COUNTY DEVELOPMENT BOARD

This submission is presented by Donegal County Council in association with Donegal County Development Board. Within this context, it may be useful to highlight the role and function of each body, and consequently the potential implications of the introduction of a programme of co-operation between Ireland and Scotland.

**Profile of Donegal County Council**

Donegal County Council as the Local Authority for County Donegal (exclusive of three Town Council areas) provides an extensive range of infrastructure services in the County. The Council plays a proactive role in the social, economic and cultural development of the County.

The core strategic objectives being pursued by Donegal County Council are to:

1. Maintain and improve the services, goods and infrastructure that the Council provides.
2. Make major improvements in physical and economic infrastructure to cater for existing and new development and to promote further growth in the County.
3. Modernise the management of Council services so as to deliver higher quality, value for money and encourage joined-up Public Services.
4. Promote the economic, social and cultural development of the County in socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable way.

Donegal County Council has also produced a Corporate Plan for 2004-2009, which sets out how the Council will continue to respond to local needs in a constantly changing operating environment.

In conjunction with Donegal County Enterprise Board, the Council assists in consolidating and, where possible, growing the economic welfare of County Donegal in an effort to make the County a better place in which to reside, work, relax and invest.

Donegal County Council is also the vehicle of delivery of various aspects of Local Government for matters including Planning Control, the provision of Social Housing, the upkeep and improvement of Roads, Pollution Control, Fire Services, Library Services and Sanitary Services. The budget for revenue purposes for 2006 is €150.162m; the capital budget for the year is €290m.

The headquarters of Donegal County Council are located in Lifford. Donegal County Council has decentralised services to a network of Public Service Centres (one in each Electoral Area) around the County. The intention is that these Public Service Centres will become the focal point for customers who want to access public services through the walk-in channel and that the Centres can also support the development of virtual or actual contact centres for customers who choose to use the telephone channel. This is being developed on a partnership basis with a range of agencies including the Health Services Executive, the Department of Social and Family Affairs, FAS (educational and training body) and Comhairle.

The Council also prides itself in its involvement with the many Community and Voluntary Groups that seek to improve the quality of life through Community and Environmental initiatives.

**Donegal County Development Board**

Since 2000, each Local Authority area in Ireland has established a City or County Development Board (CDB). These Boards have been put in place as part of the process to bring about an integrated approach to the delivery of both State and local development services at local level. Local Authorities were given the lead role and responsibility for the establishment of the CDBs.

CDBs are responsible for the coordination of all development and public service delivery in each County.
Donegal County Development Board (CDB) held its first meeting in March 2000 and currently has 40 members. Membership is drawn from the following pillars:

- Local Government
- Local Development
- State Agencies
- Social Partners, and the
- Community & Voluntary Sector

Appendix 1 illustrates all Donegal CDB member agencies.

In April 2002, Donegal CDB launched “An Straitéis” an Integrated County Strategy for Social, Cultural and Economic Development in County Donegal. This document is the blueprint for development and public service delivery in the county for the period 2002 – 2012. Donegal CDB has established a range of implementation arrangements to assist in the implementation of development priorities in the County and region.
The current structure of the County Development Board is shown below:

Donegal County Development Board
Bord Forbartha an Chondae

CDB Working Groups
Grupaí Oibre BFC

CDB Sectoral Fora
Fora Earnála
BFC

Community Fora
Fora Pobail

- SIM Working Group
- CDB Peace II Task Force
- County Childcare Committee
- Donegal Local Sports Partnership
- Local Music Education Service Partnership

- Economic Development Forum
- Environmental Sectoral Forum
- Lifelong Learning Forum
- Grupa Earnála na Gaeilge
- Tourism Sectoral Forum
- Cultural Development Forum
- Transport Sectoral Forum
- Forestry Sectoral Forum
- Agricultural Sectoral Forum
- Health Sectoral Forum

- County Community Forum
- Foram Pobail na Gaeltachta
- East Community Forum
- South Community Forum
- North Community Forum
- Inishowen Community Forum

Donegal CDB sees its role as being in the following areas:

- Observation / Monitoring: identifying baselines, monitoring trends, planning contingencies;
- Diagnosis: of needs, opportunities, threats and spatial patterns;
- Co-ordination: providing a link point between all of the elements of the local community and its service providers;
- Facilitation: of joint planning and actions between bodies;
- Evaluation: of its effectiveness;
- Initiation: of key strategic actions;
- Implementation: of projects where appropriate;
Brokering: of alliances between different sectors and stakeholders; 
Informing: communicating with the community, sectoral groups, local government, statutory central government and key agencies.

The Community, Culture and Enterprise Directorate

The Community, Culture and Enterprise Division of Donegal County Council provide the secretariat for the day-to-day management and operation of the CDB. There are many collaborative initiatives being advanced by this Directorate of Donegal County Council in a CDB context in the areas of forestry, economic development, housing, health, tourism, marine and water leisure, culture etc. and these initiatives are responding to a recognised need within the region.

This Directorate is involved in a local authority context, in economic development, community development, social inclusion, cultural development, research and policy work, strategic planning, environmental work, natural resource development as well as the management of a range of funds, (and specific projects relating to the areas listed in the first paragraph). It is also responsible for libraries, County museum, county theatre, archives, Arts promotion, arts centre and County Heritage office.

5. EXPERIENCE OF CO-OPERATION TO DATE

Over the last number of years, Donegal County Council and Donegal County Development Board have had extensive experience of working in cooperation with many EU funding programmes, and in particular in relation to the Interreg programme.

At local level, Donegal County Council and Donegal County Development Board participate in two cross-border local authority networks, which have responsibility for administering a proportion of the Interreg III programme. These networks are the North West Region Cross Group (NWRCBG) and Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN).

The NWRCBG comprises Derry City Council, Donegal County Council, Limavady Borough Council and Strabane District Council and represents a population in excess of 300,000 constituents. The Group has been in existence for over twenty-five years and, since 1993, have had a full time secretariat funded by the INTERREG Programme. The aim of the Group is to strengthen and develop the local economy so that general living conditions of the area (North West Region) improve.
The **ICBAN** is a cross-border grouping of ten local authorities – five councils in Northern Ireland and five in the Republic of Ireland. ICBAN was established in 1995 and became a company limited by guarantee in 2001. Since its formation in 1995, **ICBAN** has received core funding from the ERDF under the INTERREG II Community Initiative, with member councils contributing match funding, to promote co-operation between its member councils on a variety of issues ranging from transportation infrastructure and SME development to tourism and regional strategic planning.

Both cross-border networks are implementation bodies for the Interreg Programme for Ireland / Northern Ireland. Donegal County Council (at political and executive levels) and Donegal County Development Board are represented on the Interreg partnership committees. The cross border networks were collectively responsible for the administration of up to €50 million along the border corridor under Priority 1 of the Interreg Programme. The Map below highlights the various District Councils in Northern Ireland and County Councils in Ireland who are co-operating in the cross-border local authority networks.

In addition to co-operation with the cross-border networks, there is ongoing co-operation with the Special EU programmes Body (SEUPB) in Northern Ireland and several projects have received funding under various measures administered by the SEUPB. The SEUPB manages certain EU Structural
Funds, which support a range of development and regeneration programmes in the North and South of Ireland. These include:

- The Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (PEACE II),
- The INTERREG IIIA Programme
- Other EU initiatives such as the LEADER +, URBAN and EQUAL programmes

**INTERREG Programme – Outline of experience of Donegal**

County Donegal has benefited from €27mn in funding for projects under the Interreg programme to date

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fund</th>
<th>No. of Projects funded in or directly impacting on the County</th>
<th>Approximate Total Amount of Funding for Projects in the County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTERREG PROGRAMME</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>€27,263,261</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Research and Policy Centre, Donegal County Council

The table below illustrates some examples of projects which have been funded by the Interreg programme and which are currently being implemented by Donegal County Council and the County Development Board.
### Examples of Interreg Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fund</th>
<th>Project Title</th>
<th>Amount of Funding</th>
<th>Project Aims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interreg IIIA Programme 2000 – 2006</td>
<td>NS Share Project (North South Shared Aquatic Resource)</td>
<td>€7.47 million (@ 100%)</td>
<td>The overall objective of the project is to strengthen inter-regional capacity for environmental monitoring and management capacity at river basin district level, to improve public awareness and participation in water management issues and to protect and enhance the aquatic environment and dependent ecosystems. Partners DoEHLG (ROI) EHS (NI).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interreg IIIA Programme 2000 – 2006</td>
<td>Regional Culture Centre</td>
<td>€600,000 @ 100% (stand alone component)</td>
<td>The Regional Cultural Centre will establish a cross-border network of all the statutory, community and arts organisations that play a role in arts and cultural development in County Donegal and neighbouring cross-border counties in order to develop joint projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interreg IIIA Programme 2000 – 2006</td>
<td>ICZM (Integrated Coastal Zone Management)</td>
<td>€37,800 @ 100%</td>
<td>To consult with all relevant stakeholders to gain information on perceived needs of ICZM in the NW and to encourage support for an appropriate ICZM facility. Partners include University of Ulster (Coastal Research Group), BIM, IRDL, Buncrana Town Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interreg IIIC Programme 2000 – 2006</td>
<td>REVOS</td>
<td>€29,500 @ 75%</td>
<td>The aim of the project is a Pan European Voluntary service Network. Partners include several European Partners Including ROI, NI The UK &amp; Spain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Interreg IIIB Programme 2000-2006</td>
<td>Econnect</td>
<td>€20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The aim of this project is the development of a European Consultation system. Partners include across Europe including ROI, France, Spain, UK, Finland.
Links with other relevant bodies

Donegal County Council also liaises with several other funding and policy related bodies at EU level. Among these are the NASC Partnership and the Committee of the Regions.

The NASC partnership was established in 1992. It brings together organisations for which the conservation of the cultural fabric of the Gaeltacht, including its distinct linguistic heritage, is a shared objective. The NASC partners believe that this objective is best achieved in a context of Europeanisation and in tandem with the implementation of integrated socio-economic development programmes that provide the job opportunities, facilities and services to which the regions' communities aspire. The partners (including Donegal County Council) have established a European Liaison Office in Brussels, which has been operational since 1993.

The Committee of the Regions (COR) is a consultative body, established in 1994 under the provisions of the Maastricht Treaty in order to give regional and local authorities a say in shaping EU policy and legislation. Ireland has 9 members (and 9 alternates) out of a total membership of 317 from the 25 Member States of the EU. Members of the Committee of the Regions are organised in political groups and national delegations. Cllr. Patrick McGowan has been nominated to represent Donegal County Council on this Committee.

The promotion of ongoing co-operation and networking at local, regional and EU levels is very important, in ensuring that the CDB and the County Council are informed about, and contributing to, relevant EU policy-making and programme making processes at all levels.

6. DECLARATION

Donegal County Council and Donegal County Development Board welcome the inquiry into the possibility of a programme of co-operation between Scotland and Ireland. We are anxious to arrange a meeting with your representatives and our elected members and Officials as soon as possible to discuss further the issues of particular relevance to our region, and we look forward to continuing co-operation in this regard.
## APPENDIX 1

### Donegal County Development Board Member Agencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pillar</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local Government Sector</strong></td>
<td>Chair Roads SPC, Donegal County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chair of Corporate / Community, Culture and Enterprise SPC, Donegal County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bundoran Town Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ballyshannon Town Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cathaoirleach, Donegal County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chair Water and Environment SPC, Donegal County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chair Housing SPC, Donegal County Council, Chair CDB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Donegal County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Buncrana Town Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chair Planning SPC, Donegal County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>State Agency</strong></td>
<td>Department Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíocht</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional Manager, D.S.F.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Training Services Manager, FAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional Manager, I.D.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bainisteoir Réigúnda, Udarás na Gaeltachta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Príomh Fheidmeannach, Coiste Ghairmoideachas Dhún na nGall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional Manager, Health Service Executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Príomh Oifigeach, Teagasc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional Executive N.W. Regional Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional Executive Enterprise Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An Garda Siochána</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Udaras na Gaeltachta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local Development Sector</strong></td>
<td>Health and Social Policy Officer, Health Service Executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Policy Analyst, Western Development Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Donegal County Enterprise Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chairperson DLDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manager Inishowen Rural Development - I.R.D.L.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manager, Inishowen Partnership Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bainisteoir, Meitheal Forbartha na Gaeltachta Teo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comhdail na Oileán</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CEO, Donegal County Enterprise Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Partners</strong></td>
<td>Managing Director, Prumerica Systems Ireland Ltd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bord Iascaigh Mhara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ICMSA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional Officer SIPTU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Director Letterkenny Institute of Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>International Fund for Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chairperson Donegal Childcare Committee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 2

Map of County Donegal

Source: www.countydonegal.com
INTRODUCTION

The original links between Scotland and Ireland are shrouded in the mists of time but there is strong historical evidence that ties between the two countries were strengthened considerably by St. Columba or Colm Cille (521-597AD) who spread Christianity to Scotland via his missionaries and monasteries. Another more specific example of the close relationship that existed between the Western Isles and Ireland is to be found in the story of the famous Blind Harper. Roderick Morrison (Ruadhri Maclain mhic Ailein) or the Blind Harper, as he was commonly known, was born on the west side of the Isle of Lewis about 1656, and after spending a considerable period in Ireland learning how to play the harp, obtained employment in Skye as harper to John MacLeod of Dunvegan Castle. The original linguistic and religious connections were strengthened over the centuries and, added to these were culture and arts links which remain strong to this day.

LINKS BETWEEN COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR AND IRELAND

In September 2000 Comhairle nan Eilean Siar formally established a Twinning partnership with Newry and Mourne District Council and Clare County Council. The Comhairle was the first Council in the UK to establish formal links with Councils in Northern and Southern Ireland. The primary aims of the partnership are to promote and foster friendship and understanding within the three communities and develop social, cultural, linguistic and economic links.

WHY A TWINNING PARTNERSHIP?

There are many reasons for twinning links or twinning partnerships not least because of their direct relevance and contribution to the domestic agenda, service delivery and corporate care values of the three Councils. There is also much to be gained by encouraging all members of the community to become involved in twinning, as it often expands and broadens into diverse new areas.

Exchange visits can provide a unique experience and insight into the contemporary lifestyles and environment of another community, with the opportunity for contact with people in a variety of fields.

Twinning links between Authorities can forge links between communities of different countries and cultures, increasing understanding of the regions, broadening horizons, and helping to combat insularity. Between the communities involved, it can promote tolerance and respect for others, combating racism, sectarianism and xenophobia.
As twinning is an activity that can involve everyone, it provides an opportunity to bring together the whole community, regardless of age, ethnic or religious background, gender, disability, social or economic status. It can contribute to breaking down barriers and increasing understanding within the home community, as well as between the regions.

As well as the general benefits offered through twinning links, they also provide an opportunity for the Councils to forge partnerships with members of the wider community, such as central Government Departments. They can also be an effective conduit for establishing links between commercial organisations, voluntary bodies and the non-governmental sector.

**TARGETING MINORITY GROUPS**

Local Government is charged with promoting social inclusion and twinning partnerships can motivate key sections of the community, such as ethnic minorities, women, young people and disadvantaged groups, who may not always be involved in local authority activities or have contact with other communities.

The Councils can stimulate local interest and facilitate links with their counterparts involved in the partnership. By encouraging links, Councils can help their communities to look outwards at other communities and encourage them to look more closely at their own environment and social structures. This, in turn, can increase civic pride, self esteem and confidence.

**YOUNG PEOPLE**

Young people play an important role in our communities and twinning partnerships can give young people their first experience through youth exchange to explore social and political issues, with their counterparts deepening their awareness and understanding and increasing self-confidence.

As well as offering young people the opportunity to explore social and political issues, the twinning experience can be an enjoyable one for young people encouraging them to become more actively involved in sporting and arts, music, education and other activities. Such opportunities for young people can increase practical skills enabling young people to compete successfully in the global workplace and enable them to become more active citizens in their own communities.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The major benefit to Councils for future economic development can be achieved through the partnership by providing an opportunity for small and large scale organisations, in both public and private sectors, to explore potential economic benefits. This may lead to commercial transactions and trading or to the exchange of technical knowledge to improve business efficiency and service delivery.
Opportunities can also be developed in the tourism sector through the promotion of the regions. The twinning partnership can offer the opportunity for greater co-operation and collaboration between the local authorities and the private sectors. Common themes such as rural based natural resource tourism can be explored and developed by sharing expertise, knowledge and problem solving.

**PAST TWINNING PROJECTS**

During the past few years there has been a constant traffic flow of various groups, teams and individuals between the Western Isles and Ireland. Social, cultural, linguistic and economic links have been forged in the fields of music, culture, poetry, football, tourism, economic development, broadcasting and the arts. Two successful community events in the Western Isles, Ceol Nis and Ceolas, have been developed using Irish templates following on from much interaction and discussion between the organisers. Strong links have also been established between Alt naveigh House in Newry and Taigh Dhonnchaidh in Ness which have similar aspirations in the arts, music and cultural fields. School choirs, drama groups, musical groups, football teams and individual singers and musicians have visited the north and south of Ireland on numerous occasions and have always enjoyed a warm Irish welcome wherever they were based. The Western Isles in turn has hosted many Irish visitors including President Mary Robinson and Eamonn O’Cuiv from the Irish government.

Although many of these twinning projects have not been initiated by the Councils, groups and individuals travelling to and from our areas, inevitably approach the Councils for financial assistance to help with travel costs which have always been an inhibiting factor in the development of Twinning projects.

**ONGOING TWINNING PROJECTS**

In recent years a number of groups representing the fishing and agriculture/horticulture sectors from both the Western Isles and Ireland have undertaken fact-finding trips in order to look at innovative initiatives in these sectors and assimilate new ideas to the mutual benefit of all those involved. Much can still be done to enhance the economic effectiveness of these important economic sectors by pooling knowledge and sharing ideas and developing ongoing programmes of exchange visits which have and will generate beneficial outcomes.

On the maritime leisure front, An Sulaire Trust in Lewis, which is responsible for the traditional sailing boat called An Sulaire (The Gannet) has made many contacts with traditional sailing boat enthusiasts in the north and south of Ireland. The most recent interaction between An Sulaire Trust members Irish traditional sailing boat enthusiasts took place at the Royal National Mod in Stornoway in October 2005 when a party from Co.Kerry travelled to Lewis, complete with two curraghs, musicians and farmers for a Hebridean/Irish sailing day and a bit of ol, ceol and craic.
Our Irish Twinning partners have also been extremely helpful in providing assistance and advice in setting up the Western Isles Credit Union. Input in establishing and developing a Credit Union in the Islands was received from long established and highly successful credit unions in Clare and Newry and also from the Irish League of Credit Unions Foundation. The main purpose of the visits to Irish Credit Union projects was to identify best practice in terms of credit union development and growth and once again this demonstrated the practical benefits that Twinning Partnerships bring to their communities.

**FUTURE PROJECTS**

Presently, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and partners are working on joint projects to produce a musical CD featuring talented young musicians from the three areas, a joint publication about the three communities, and a student exchange scheme. Links between organisations representing the Royal National Mod, the Ulster Fleadh, the Pan Celtic Festival and the annual Hebridean Celtic Festival in Lewis are also being strengthened and hopefully there will be increased participation and musical exchanges between these organisations.
Letter from Glasgow City Council, Development & Regeneration Services:

Dear Mr Canavan,

Thank you for your email of 12 January relating to inquiry by the European and External relations Committee into the possibility of a programme of co-operation between Scotland and Ireland.

You may be interested to know that Glasgow has regular connections with both Dublin and Belfast through the Cities of the Isles (COTI) network (together with Edinburgh, Liverpool and Cardiff). The next annual conference of COTI will be held in Glasgow, on 5 and 6 October this year, and your email will be considered by the next organising committee meeting, which will be held on 17 February.

At the same time, you may also be interested to know that Glasgow City Council will consider the issue of possible co-operation with Belfast and a council or councils in the border area of the Republic of Ireland. To this end, Glasgow and the West of Scotland European Consortium (WOSEC) will have been invited by Belfast and the COMET group of Councils to discuss future projects (possibly in the COTI framework) which could attract funding under the EU Interreg programme or its successor.

I hope that this information is of interest to you, and that it will be of assistance to your Committee of Inquiry.

Yours sincerely

STEVE INCH
Director
An Inquiry into the possibility of co-operation between Scotland & Ireland

In responding to your invite to comment on the scope for increased co-operation between Scotland & Ireland, South Lanarkshire Council very much welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the Scottish Parliament's European & External Relations Committee Inquiry in this regard. With an enviable track record in accessing both EU Structural Funds & EU Community Initiatives, my Council has considerable first hand experience of being involved in transnational activities & readily acknowledges the wider economic, social & cultural benefits of participating on such programmes.

Currently, for example, we are working with partners from Dublin, Spain & Poland under Equal Theme F in respect of a work/life balance project & have recently been awarded funding support from the Equal Programme to work with other transnational partners in respect of farm diversification issues; both of which are reaping dividends in terms of project delivery.

As a direct consequence, my Council would be keen to add its weight to any campaign designed to encourage new Territorial Co-operation Programmes between Scotland & Ireland particularly given the close historical, cultural & trading links that obviously exist between both countries.

Equally, in terms of the potential for co-operation projects, my Council would be willing to consider a raft of initiatives as part of an integrated approach to territorial co-operation between both countries. In particular, we would like to “flag up” the following broad project development categories that could form the basis for any new Territorial Co-operation Programme between both countries viz:-

- sectoral initiatives in key industries such as tourism, manufacturing, agricultural diversification, renewable energy, & construction;
- labour market/re-skilling initiatives linked to local “Fresh Talent” type project opportunities;
- sustainable community-led projects based on an integrated LEADER type approach to rural development; &
• business support initiatives that improve the global competitiveness of SMEs within respective countries.

In operational terms, the above list is clearly not exhaustive but rather indicative of the potential for increased project collaboration in the event of any new Cross-Border Programme being established between Scotland, Northern Ireland & the Republic of Ireland. As in other transnational programmes, actual co-operation could span a range of activity including “best practice” cultural exchange/knowledge transfer, joint action planning/strategy preparation, piloting of new initiatives/service delivery mechanisms as well as strategic alliances between key agencies, business organisations & individual SMEs.

As noted earlier, my Council is already heavily involved in such cross-border networking & is alert to the considerable benefits that can be achieved from an economic development perspective. Time is particularly ripe to consider new funding streams given the anticipated decline in EU Structural Funds post 2006 & we would welcome any move to explore new funding streams that would help address the development needs of South Lanarkshire over the period 2007-2013.

In terms of geographical eligibility, therefore, my Council would also welcome clarification on the likely coverage of any new Territorial Programme covering parts of Scotland, Northern Ireland & the Republic of Ireland. In particular, my Council would respectfully suggest that the 150km limit to the selection of areas be exercised with maximum flexibility to ensure that not just Dumfries&Galloway and South Ayrshire qualify but that other adjoining areas such as South Lanarkshire are wholly included on account of its close cultural association/trading links with Ireland.

By way of conclusion, therefore, I would like to re-iterate my Council’s unequivocal support for a new transnational programme between Scotland & Ireland & in particular our strong desire to be eligible in terms of geographical coverage.

With this in mind, I look forward to hearing from you on the outcome of the above Inquiry.

Yours sincerely

Iain Urquhart
Executive Director
Letter from the Department of Finance and Personnel for Northern Ireland:

Dear Dennis,

Thank you for your correspondence of 11th January 2006, seeking an input into your inquiry into the possibility of a programme of cooperation between Scotland and Ireland. You also wrote to the Ministers responsible for the other NI Government Departments on the same issue and I am also replying on their behalf.

The Special EU Programmes Body is a North South Implementation Body established under the North/South Co-operation (Implementation Bodies) (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 and has responsibility for the managerial functions of the current North South EU INTERREG III Programme. It reports to me on this work as Minister of Finance and Personnel in Northern Ireland as well as to my counterpart in the South. In this capacity I have seen the input to your inquiry provided to you by Pat Colgan, Chief Executive of the SEUPB and would agree with all that has been said there.

As Pat Colgan has said however the final determination of what future co-operation programmes are put in place will be for member States. The lead role for the UK is the Department of Trade and Industry. Northern Ireland like Scotland inputs to the UK’s policy making process and we are keen that the possible inclusion of parts of Scotland in a further Ireland/Northern Ireland Programme is explored fully. Significant co-operation already exists across a broad range of policy areas and our hope would be that that could be developed further in such a Programme. We are currently exploring how that might be done within the context of the North South Co-operation (Implementing Bodies) Northern Ireland legislation.

I hope this is helpful and wish you well with your Inquiry.

Jeff Rooker
Evidence Submitted by James H Allister QC MEP:

“WORKING TOGETHER FOR A COMMON GOOD”

The prospects for east-west co-operation

James H Allister QC MEP
Introduction

Northern Ireland and Scotland have long established and well-documented links. Common Ulster surnames such as Hamilton, Douglas and Frazer demonstrate the strong historical influence that people who originally came from Scotland and their descendants have had in shaping society here. The burgeoning Ulster-Scots revival which is taking place in Northern Ireland is reflective also of a new consciousness of the closeness in relations and similarity in character of our two countries.

The nature of our economic circumstances also makes the case for increased co-operation between the two countries. Problems afflicting the economic situation in Northern Ireland are common with Scotland. The decline of ship-building and textiles, lack of transportation infrastructure and underdeveloped tourism opportunities in some sectors are shared economic handicaps between the two countries. In such a context the case for increased co-operation between Scotland and Northern Ireland through the revised structures of the INTERREG programme is irrefutable.

The re-structuring of the programme to allow for more formalised co-operation between Scotland and Northern Ireland on an East-West basis is an exciting and long overdue development. Although both countries belong in the Union, there is in our view significantly more advantage to be reaped for the development of Northern Ireland’s economy from fostering strong east-west links as opposed to the emphasis that has been contained in the programme heretofore.

This paper is intended to highlight areas of the new INTERREG programme where co-operation and mutual aid can be developed to the shared advantage of the people of Scotland and Northern Ireland respectively.

Tourism

The potential for expanding the tourism sector between Scotland and Northern Ireland is great. We see the exploitation of this potential as being an essential feature of any future programme of co-operation between the two countries. The long-established linkages between Ulster and Scotland are a matter of historical fact. As the Ulster Scots Heritage Council and other similar bodies have documented repeatedly, we have much in common: the DUP wants to see that commonality and closeness turned to our mutual advantage.

Writing in 1796, the French Royalist émigré, de Latocnaye claimed “Belfast has almost entirely the look of a Scotch (sic) town and the character of its inhabitants has considerable resemblance to that of the people of Glasgow”. A century later Paschal Grousset commented Ulster is a neighbour to Scotland and belongs to the same geological, ethnological, commercial and religious system”. It is a matter of sadness therefore that while up until now central government has been pushing the North-South element of Interreg, the most natural and proper form of co-operation, namely on an east-west basis has been largely sidelined and ignored.
The potential for tourism development between the two countries is therefore significant. There exist a number of key areas were we feel that this needs to be expanded:

1. **Musical exchanges**

Ulster has the highest number of pipe bands anywhere outside Scotland. The annual pipe bands contests throughout the province attract large crowds and have a significant following among the population as a whole. It is our opinion that more should be done to market these events to a Scottish audience and similar events in Scotland to an Ulster market.

The realm of pipe band music is one which has been largely insulated from the problems associated with 35 years of violence in Northern Ireland. They represent events which both sides of the community in Ulster enjoy and participate in and should be seen as a major positive force in tourism development. Up until now this has not been the case.

2. **Family Roots/Historical Exploration**

Many people from Northern Ireland have strong family connections with Scotland and vice-versa. The exploration of these roots has the potential to represent a significant tourism asset if properly exploited in a future programme. One need only think of the massive influx of American visitors to the Republic of Ireland exploring their roots to see how this is the case. Between Scotland and Northern Ireland and jointly on an international level, there is huge tourism potential in opening up this type of activity to a greater degree.

If one considers that at least 13 Presidents of the United States came from an Ulster-Scottish background one does not have to look very far for salient selling points to an international audience.

3. **Natural Scenery**

The scenery of Ulster’s North East coast is some of the most renowned in the United Kingdom. Similarly the rugged scenery of Western Scotland is extremely popular with cyclists and hikers: in order to develop the potential for tourism co-operation in the exploitation of this natural asset we support the development of the Antrim Coast Road touring route and its wider connections to Scotland. We are also in favour of the development of a National Cycle Network from Dumfries to the Antrim Coast Road via Larne.

4. **Leisure Ports**

An area of tourism potential that has not been exploited to full effect centre upon pleasure cruising/sailing. We have many areas in the North Coast of Ulster who would benefit from the provision of modern small-scale facilities which would enable the expansion of the particular sector. The most obvious
example which springs to mind is that of Cushendall, a small rural community which could reap enormous benefit from the provision of facilities to enable the expansion of leisure tourism. Any future programme should address this as a matter of urgency.

**Addressing the legacy of the conflict**

The thirty-five year conflict in Northern Ireland has been the defining event of the Province’s recent history. As a result of the conflict and associated civil strife in the province many thousands of people, particularly from South West Ulster fled the province and went to live in Scotland. These émigrés are a unique group who we believe should be encouraged to return to their homeland. Any future Interreg programme of co-operation between the two countries should reflect this as a priority.

Grants should be made available for Ulster families living in exile to visit the Province, renew old acquaintances, and re-connect with former communities with an ultimate view to returning home.

The righting of the historical wrong: whereby long-established families who had lived peaceably in Northern Ireland – some of them for hundreds of years, were forced, because of violence to leave, would represent a lasting and durable achievement of any programme of co-operation long after the programme funding had run its course.

**Transport**

Northern Ireland’s transport infrastructure is desperately under-developed. Over the course of the last thirty-five years we haven’t seen a single mile of new motorway built in the Province. A lasting legacy of Northern Ireland being unable to qualify for Cohesion Funding is found in the fact that the Republic of Ireland’s transport system has witnessed enormous qualitative changes in roads, rail, ports and airports, while the transport system in Northern Ireland has been the object of continued stagnation and decay.

Any Interreg programme of cooperation between our two countries should reflect the formulation of an integrated Scotland-Ulster transport strategy, aimed at improving the transport infrastructure in Western Scotland and the Province.

Priorities should include: the development and enhancement of the Ballycastle to Campbeltown ferry service in order to provide a more regular service and a viable financial enterprise, the enhancement of the Larne to Stranraer ferry service with necessary improvements to roll-on-roll-off berth in the port of Larne. The opening up of a greater number of cheap flight destinations in Scotland should also be encouraged as a means of encouraging tourism and promoting stronger business links.
If properly addressed, these priorities have the capacity to make transacting business, the development of tourism and the promotion of greater contact between our people an achievable realistic aim.

**Conclusion**

The Democratic Unionist Party welcomes the opportunities presented by the development of a programme of co-operation between Scotland and Northern Ireland. We believe that for too long government has encouraged un-natural north-south co-operation to the detriment of our most natural and positive area of co-operation and mutual benefit, namely on an east-west basis. We look forward to the development of an exciting east-west programme of co-operation between our two peoples and are grateful for the opportunity to help in shaping that programme.
Email sent by Professor Craig of Aberdeen University:

Dear Dennis Canavan,

We have been informed about your inquiry about the possibility of a programme of co-operation between Scotland and Ireland.

It may be useful for you to be aware that this is a central area of research in the University of Aberdeen. The leading-edge nature of the research has been acknowledged by two major awards from the Arts and Humanities Research Council: over £800k in 2001 for a five-year research programme in the histories, literatures and diasporas of Ireland and Scotland, and a further award of £1.34m for a second phase of the research, which has just commenced. This is a particularly significant award, since only two of the original ten AHRC Centres gained a second round of funding.

Our programme of research involves significant collaboration with scholars in Queen’s, Belfast and in Trinity, Dublin. This has grown out of a larger network known as the Irish-Scottish Academic Initiative (ISAI), which commenced in 1997 and which also involves the universities of Strathclyde and Edinburgh. The purposes of ISAI are the encouragement of the comparative study of Irish and Scottish cultures, and the provision of support for postgraduate researchers through shared supervision between institutions. ISAI has held a series of major conferences in Glasgow, Dublin, Belfast and Edinburgh (the late Donald Dewar was a speaker at the Dublin conference in 1999).

The programme of the AHRC centre at Aberdeen includes a symposium known as the Irish-Scottish Forum. This brings together academics, journalists, civil servants and politicians from Ireland and Scotland to discuss areas of mutual interest. Its next meeting will take place in 2007 and will be focused on the meaning of Union in the modern world.

Information on many of these activities can be found on our website – www.abdn.ac.uk/riiss. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you think we can be of any assistance to your inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Cairns Craig, FRSE, FBA
Letter Submitted by the European Commission:

European Commission
Directorate-General
Regional Policy
Territorial co-operation, urban actions and outermost regions
The Director

Brussels, 13.02.2006
REGIO.D1/AB D (2006) 410115
01418

Subject: An inquiry into the Possibility of a Programme of Co-operation between Scotland and Ireland

Dear Mr Canavan,

Thank you for your letter of 9 January 2006 inquiring about the possibility of a programme between Scotland and Ireland.

The proposal for a Council Regulation laying down the general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund stipulates in its Article 34.3 that operational programmes for cross-border co-operation “shall be drawn up, as a general rule, for each border or group of borders by an appropriate grouping at NUTS III level....”.

The draft Structural Fund regulations introduce a number of changes compared to previous programme periods which could have a significant effect on cross-border programmes and implementation, if they are retained in the regulations at the time of adoption. In particular, the inclusion of coastal areas within the 150 km of another country has significantly expanded the list of eligible areas, with an inevitable impact on certain Members States and on certain programme structures. The extract from the draft General Regulation referred to above is an indication that a major effort should be made to reduce the number of programmes along some borders.

According to the novelty of 150 km rule, a co-operation programme between Scotland and Ireland is eligible for co-operation. However, given the small number of areas eligible and the low eligible population in Scotland, integration of the newly eligible areas in Scotland into the existing INTERREG IIIA “Ireland/Northern Ireland” programme could be a possible option. A specific maritime priority axis could be included in the programme. However, discussions have not yet been concluded with the concerned Member States.

Yours sincerely,

Elisabeth Helander

Copy: Mr O. Brunet, Unit A 01
Evidence Submitted by P.E. Ó DONNGHAILE:

TRANSLATION FROM THE ORIGINAL GAELIC

15 February 2006

ENQUIRY INTO POSSIBILITY OF A PROGRAMME OF CO-OPERATION BETWEEN SCOTLAND AND IRELAND

NEACH AITHISG (REPORTER): DENNIS CANAVAN

TAGRADH (SUBMISSION):

Co-operation between Scotland and Ireland on Green Energy through the medium of Gaelic/Irish.

BASIS OF THIS SUBMISSION:

• RENEWABLE WIND ENERGY IN THE MOST STRONGLY GAELIC AREAS OF SCOTLAND AND IRELAND.
  o The Gaidhealtachd (Gaelic speaking area) of Scotland and the furthest west areas of Ireland are the areas of Europe where there is the greatest potential for wind power.
  o In both countries, the areas where the wind is most powerful are the most Gaelic in terms of language and culture.
  o Wind farms in the West of Ireland create three times as much power as farms of the same size and type in Denmark.

• THE DEVELOPMENT OF TECHNOLOGY ALONGSIDE THE RENEWAL OF THE LANGUAGE.
  o It is suitable and appropriate that a new engineering-school and understanding of technology is developed in the Gaidhealtachd areas of Scotland and Ireland and that this should be linked to language development.
  o The language itself is the foundation of the international culture of the Gael.
  o Lord Ashby noticed the importance of linking culture and technology when he recommended in the report “Technology and the Academics”(1943?)
    “......making specialist studies the core around which are grouped liberal studies which are relevant to these specialist studies. But they must be relevant: the path to culture should be through a man’s specialism not by-passing it”.
    “A student who can weave his technology into the fabric of society can claim to have a liberal education; a student who cannot weave his
technology into the fabric of society cannot even claim to be a good technologist”.

- The challenge in the Gaelic areas is to find a way to use technology which does not shun / damage the language and culture.

- THE CREATION OF AN ENGINEERING AXIS BETWEEN THE SCOTTISH GAIDHEALTACHD AND THE GAELTACHTS OF IRELAND
  - There is a great need in both Gaidhealtachds of many engineering businesses focussed on green energy and using Gaelic as a fundamental part of their work (not just using a little with the aim of giving a “Gaelic” appearance to visitors/outsiders) and naturally it would be assumed that there would be cross working between Scotland and Ireland.
  - Economic history has proved time and again that it is the concentration of businesses together in the same area which will create joint working and growth. In the present day, through electronic means of communication there is the opportunity to gather businesses together which use a common language.
  - If this is possible, it will give a larger number of Gaelic speakers to earn a livelihood in Gaelic speaking areas and to do so at a higher level than ever before.
  - While not many of those wishing a “career” would be able to live in the same area for their whole lives, there would be the opportunity for them to move from position to position within the “Greater Gaidhealtachd” including both Ireland and Scotland.
  - An “axis” like this would have a great effect on the economy and culture of the fringe.

- COMPARISON BETWEEN SCOTLAND AND IRELAND AS REGARDS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE GAIDHEALTACHD AREAS
  - In Ireland, the body “Údaras na Gaeltachta” has the responsibility to develop the economies of the Gaeltachts while also reviving the language. However, the Irish authorities have not given much support to the wind power industry to date.
  - The Scottish authorities have given more support to the development of green energy but they have not as yet made a connection between the development of this technology and the development of the language and culture in these areas.

MAIN RECOMMENDATION:
That an all-Gaelic/Irish Research campaign be established, with three aims:
1) To bring green energy technology into the Gaelic world.
2) To equip the Gaels themselves, as Gaels, to develop the natural resources in their own areas in the future.
3) In connection with (2) To develop the national green energy capacities in both countries.

DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **FORMAT**
  - A double research project, with a centre in Scotland and a centre in Ireland.

- **FINANCE**
  - Initial funding for a 3 year period.
  - £5M funding over 3 years, (with the anticipation that £3M will go to the Scottish Gaidhealtachd = 5 researchers +1 administrator/facilities officer, £2M for the Irish Gaeltacht = 3 researchers and 1 administrator.)
  - Scottish Funding to come from the national budget for green energy.

- **RESPONSIBILITIES**
  - To be an all-Gaelic research centre.
  - Delivering research work through Gaelic
  - Delivering development work through Gaelic
  - Publishing papers and reports in Gaelic.
  - Encouraging the engineering capacity in the Gaelic/Irish communities.

- **TASKS/ABILITIES**
  - Establish a workshop.
  - Do basic engineering research:
    - Research projects could be undertaken for national authorities, e.g. “RenewablesAgency” in Aberdeen, which don’t deal directly with Gaelic.
  - Assess, plan and develop community schemes.
  - Develop and pilot machinery and equipment suitable for community schemes.
  - Examine and take advice on developments suited to the environment.
  - Offer advice to business people.

- **JOINT WORKING**
  - Create formal and informal links with:
  - Groups and individuals who are involved in Gaelic related activities / businesses. E.g.
    - An Roth [a division of EngineersIreland which represents Irish speaking engineers.)
    - Iomairt Caluim Chille
    - Sabhal Mor Ostaig
• Údarás na Gaeltachta
• Bord na Gaidhlig

- With National Officers for green power
- With Gaelic speaking professionals
- With engineering schools in both countries. Especially where there are students or teachers who speak Gaelic and are ready and willing to apply their technology to the Gaelic world.
- With previously established engineering businesses in the Gaidhealtachs.

**SUPPORT / ESTABLISH**
- Businesses established with a fully Gaelic/Irish speaking workplace and administration fully in Gaelic/Irish.

**TRANSLATION**
- This project would not be involved in translation except to the degree to which this would be necessary in the first place to translate basic texts into Gaelic as a resource for the researchers who will be creating new work through Gaelic.
- This enterprise wouldn’t, as a matter of principle, be involved in translating its own research from Gaelic/Irish to English. Therefore, if national authorities required the reports in English, this would be done outwith the research centres.
- *It is essential to recognise that the translation of the final reports are only a very small share of the costs involved in research work. External translation (to/from English) would essential to effective working in an all-Gaelic/Irish joint project between Scotland and Ireland at this point.*

This concludes my submission.

Is mise le meas

P.E. Ó DONNGHAILE B.Sc. , M.Sc. AMIEI
Evidence submitted by Jim Nicholson MEP:

Evidence submitted to the Scottish Parliament's European and External Relations Committee of Inquiry into the Possibility of a Programme of Co-operation between Scotland and Ireland by Jim Nicholson MEP.

Dear Sir,

I am delighted to have this opportunity to make a submission to the Committee on this issue, which I believe is vitally important to future economic growth and social cohesion in Northern Ireland and Scotland.

The INTERREG IIIA programme was an EU initiative designed to support cross border co-operation, social cohesion and economic development between regions of the EU. The delivery of the INTERREG IIIA programme in Northern Ireland focused on North/South co-operation meaning that areas in the North East of the Province and Belfast did not benefit in the way that they should have from the programme.

However, new opportunities exist through the revised INTERREG programme for Northern Ireland to explore potential areas of co-operation with Scotland, which the Scottish Parliament's European and External Relations Committee is looking into at this present moment.

While most Unionists generally support and are in favour of North/South cooperation, in areas where it is mutually beneficial, we believe that a more natural framework of cooperation should encompass the entire British Isles – hence the provision, back in 1998 of a framework for East – West cooperation in Strand 3 of the Belfast Agreement. A joint Northern Ireland/Scotland INTERREG programme would contribute immensely to this area and cement a more concrete and tangible form of cooperation than has existed in the past.

The cultural, historical and social bonds between Northern Ireland and Scotland are obvious. Sometimes enough isn't made of these strong, shared ties but out of all the regions in the United Kingdom, we have the most in common and the most to gain from increased territorial cooperation with Scotland.

The rich agricultural, industrial and maritime tradition, which Northern Ireland shares with Scotland opens up a range of opportunities for closer cooperation
on tourism issues, economic development, greater social cohesion, energy and the environment, transportation links and rural development.

Given that both Scotland and Northern Ireland are on the periphery of Europe and have similar natural environments, both regions are well placed to look at joint approaches to renewable energy. Especially in how this area could be expanded in terms of research and development and educational programmes, which could raise public awareness of the potential of renewable energy.

Improving transport links with Scotland would significantly boost tourism and help economic growth. Flights from Belfast international to Glasgow, Edinburgh and Inverness have helped greatly but we must also look at expanding our ports for leisure and industry and improving the road and rail infrastructure on both sides of the sea. The development of Prestwick and Eglinton airports would open up new economic and tourism opportunities for Northern Ireland and South West Scotland.

We must also look at ways of boosting tourism, especially cultural tourism. Northern Ireland and Scotland’s shared cultural heritage makes this area particularly attractive. Certainly with southwest Scotland and east Ulster there’s enormous potential for mutual exchange of tourism, potential tours, trips, heritage-themed holidays which is completely untapped, and there are major funding sources waiting to be called on.

Identifying areas for increased trade between Scotland and Northern Ireland would significantly boost economic growth in these areas. We need collaboration on research and development and a joint approach to developing a knowledge based economy.

To a large extent the problems Northern Ireland has had with its agricultural industry and rural development are shared with Scotland. Both regions have a lot to learn from each other in terms of how to build sustainable rural communities for the future.

Increased cooperation between Northern Ireland and Scotland can have a lasting impact capable of building stronger communities in both areas with greater economic growth and more social cohesion. The opportunity under the revised INTERREG programme to build a shared future for Scotland and Northern Ireland in the UK cannot be missed.

These represent a few initial thoughts and can be expanded upon later. There are also a number of other issues, which could be explored and developed and I, with my colleagues in the Ulster Unionist Party, are willing to play our part in this initiative, which I believe is long overdue. I and my colleagues would be more than willing to meet with you to explore these issues further.
Scotland and Ireland have long shared an entwined relationship. The proximity to each other's shores has resulted in the development of a shared Celtic culture. For generations language, songs, sport, stories and most importantly people have travelled both back and forth between Ireland and Scotland for both cultural and economic reasons.

The links which have forged our cultures so similarly have also ensured that as well as the many positive similarities which we share, we also face many of the same issues and problems in relation to economic, social and environmental development. An obvious link which can immediately be drawn is that of the geographical similarity. Both Scotland and Ireland have large rural area's, which in many instances suffer from problems such as poor infrastructure links and a reduced accessibility to various provisions which may be available in urban towns. It is often the case that settlements take the form of market towns and small villages, indeed aside from the Nordic Countries, both Ireland and Scotland have some of the lowest population density figures in Europe. However it is often the geography, coupled with the history of both countries which lends themselves to tourism, an area which has benefited extensively from European Structural funds in both Ireland and Scotland. Many of the Social Inclusion issues which present themselves in both Ireland and Northern Ireland are also common to Scotland. For example the upskilling of labour forces in Ireland has lead to a major national project in collaboration with the National Qualification Authority of Ireland which outlines its key priorities as the wide recognition of outcomes of learning and the improved access for learners to quality learning opportunities, these objectives reflect the Scottish Objective 3, Priority 3's purpose well. The Northern Irish ESF funding is delivered under a programme called Building for Sustainable Prosperity. Its objectives are;

“Economic growth, employment, urban and rural revitalisation, agricultural and rural development, forestry, fisheries and the environment”

Again it can be noted that its objectives are all reflected in the activity of the Scottish ESF projects. It would be impossible to pick out too many specific examples of shared interest, but one aspect which has been highlighted as an issue in both Ireland and in Northern Ireland is that of gender imbalance in the labour market. In Ireland a national gender project was conducted which examined gender related data on issues such as housing, transport and employment. The study uncovered many similarities to the socio-economic gender related statistics in Scotland, indeed Scotland had originally faced some particular problems in promoting gender based projects. The Irish study revealed that 73% of Irish men were in employment in relation to only 50% of females. Gender balance has also been an issue in Northern Ireland and is
reflected in a separate priority, the outline below reflects a sample project under way;

**WISE (Women into Self-Employment)**

This programme has been designed to encourage women to develop an entrepreneurial perspective and consider self-employment, or working in the small business sector and will help develop a positive entrepreneurial culture and assist employability.

The Project's aims and objectives are to:

- Develop lateral thinking.
- Provide students with an insight into the options open to them in their own lives.
- Highlight the opportunities to be creative and enterprising in a range of settings.
- Develop their entrepreneurial and enterprising skills.
- Assist with issues relating to Signposting and Networking.
- Develop self-confidence and assertiveness.

Being a programme specifically for women it will also be able to address some of the particular barriers faced by women in entrepreneurship.

A major element within delivery will be hearing directly from existing successful entrepreneurs and from the support agencies which exist to help.

Scotland has however been fairly successful and proactive in promoting gender equality through ESF, it has fully committed all of its funds in this measure and has produced some particularly strong results, especially in regards to self employment, again there is potentially the scope for some positive exchange of lessons learned in this area.

The current call for evidence clearly outlines particular areas of both Scotland and Ireland which would be eligible for possible cross boundary work, and the case studies which are provided below are all in operation within the designated areas in Scotland.

However it should be stressed that ESF in Scotland will in reality have an even closer understanding of issues in Northern Ireland and Ireland through the knowledge and lessons which have been learned throughout the wider Objective 3 ESF area in Scotland. This would include information which has been gained in urban cities such as Glasgow and Edinburgh, which would also in many instances be transferable to any trans-national partnership work (particularly in relation to Belfast etc..). Additionally this would be particularly relevant when considering that many of the areas which are eligible in Scotland could actually be considered as travel to work areas, or part of the city region areas of either Glasgow or Edinburgh.

It should be remembered that the European Structural Funds in both Ireland and in Northern Ireland are administered in a different manner to each other and to that of Scotland, or that cross border within Ireland brings a whole new
element of European Funding through the PEACE II initiative. Nor should it be forgotten that much of Ireland has been considered an Objective 1 area.

The possibilities of joint work will mainly lie with Northern Ireland and with Donegal in Ireland. Trans-national border work in respect to European Structural Funds is not new to Ireland, indeed they have already undertaken projects between the South East of Ireland and Wales, therefore Scotland may already have some trans-national lessons to learn from Ireland. Also the economic growth which inspired Ireland to be labelled as the Celtic Tiger may hold some key pointers from which Scotland could also develop.

Another element where Scotland and Ireland could learn from each other would be in respect to labour market intelligence. In areas of Scotland, and in particular the South, various pieces of thematic work have examined the needs and the future skill requirements and aspirations of areas and communities which may be demographically similar to many Irish communities. Work of this nature is also underway in Ireland, it may be particularly beneficial to pool studies and their findings together between Scotland and Ireland too.

Finally it could be noted that due to the similarity of Scotland and Ireland in cultural terms it should be fairly easy to establish healthy and informative working links together in order to learn from each others best practice and experience. As outlined briefly above there are many areas of interest which overlap between the countries. However the countries have taken different approaches to implementing the structural funds which may have resulted in different lessons being learned, and possibly with different degrees of success. Given the similar backgrounds of the countries, a collective pulling together of Irish and Scottish programmes to engage in trans-national work may offer an opportunity to develop better more informed projects and programmes, offering real added value theme across common sectoral niches or specific geographical areas. John Batchler, an academic expert on Structural Funds based at Strathclyde University, has outlined that Added Value will be a key factor of the new Structural Funds programmes by commenting that;

“Improving the ‘added value’ of the Structural Funds has become a key objective for reforming EU regional policy after 2006. Whatever views are held about budgetary issues, regional eligibility or policy priorities, there is common ground among many Member States, European institutions and regional interest that a future EU regional policy must seek to maximise the added value of interventions.

Added value is not a simple concept. It attempts to capture both the quantitative impact and qualitative effects of the European Community contribution to regional development through the Structural Funds... As such, it entails considerable subjectivity Different actors, working within or outside EU regional policy at different levels, may perceive and interpret the added value of Structural Funds in different ways.”
Trans-national partnership working may be a large step forward in the development of added value on a European level. It would make sense to act in partnership and pull aspects of similar regional knowledge together as soon as possible in order to maximise potential impacts and assist added value. Partnership working in the European Structural funds in Scotland alone has been very successful. Indeed both the ESF Objective 3 programme has established strong working links with the regional Objective 2 partnerships. It’s also clearly the case that very positive added value outcomes have arisen in instances where both ESF and ERDF programmes have worked together in Scotland, an example of such work can be located in the project annex.

**Project Annex**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority 1 - Kilmarnock College – Barriers to Employment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This project will provide vocational training, counselling and guidance to 150 unemployed people with literacy/numeracy difficulties. The project aims to help reduce the levels of exclusion experienced in the target groups and provide beneficiaries with the opportunity to acquire transferable skills necessary for sustainable employment in a flexible labour market.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Priority 1: The Wise Group – Into Work Ayrshire ILM</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESF funding contributed to an ILM package of vocational and non-vocational training, work experience, core and transferable skills. The project offered 64 places to 127 unemployed eligible beneficiaries within several sectors including housing/construction, administration and services more generally. The ESF grant was vital for the project by allowing for additional support measures such as an enhanced training allowance, childcare, travel allowance, protective clothing, etc. Support also encouraged beneficiaries to take the step from benefits to a wage by providing advice on family tax credits and in partnership with Lloyds TSB help clients open bank accounts.</td>
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<th>Priority 3: SALP - Partners in Learning</th>
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<tr>
<td>This project aimed to develop innovative engagement strategies to attract new learners to local learning provision across lowland Scotland partnership area. It resulted in the establishment of 100 ICT focused Careers Information Access Points in public libraries across the SE Network Area. It was anticipated that this would ultimately encourage and support target groups to appreciate the importance of and participate in lifelong learning.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Priority 4 – Kilmarnock College – Learning Strategies for SMEs</th>
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<tr>
<td>This new project will provide awareness raising activities and support mechanisms to assist SME's to identify, implement and evaluate workplace learning strategies. The project will assist 100 companies to identify and develop workplace learning strategies which support the needs of the individual and contribute to business objectives. The project will offer a comprehensive package of support including:</td>
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<tr>
<td>* encouraging business-to-business networking(both informal/formal)</td>
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<tr>
<td>* promoting action/experiential learning to support exchange of best practice</td>
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</table>
support the introduction and implementation of workplace training systems
courage organisations/individuals to identify training solutions to meet individual/business objectives
promotion of new approaches to training, including APL/online learning
provide support measures for accreditation of workplace learning

Priority 4: Barony College – Work-based Qualifications for the future of land-based sectors

This project aimed to promote and provide access to work-based vocational training for individuals employed in land-based and animal care industries. The project encouraged career development for new entrants and semi-skilled employees with no formal vocational qualifications, and foster a culture of lifelong learning. It promoted the benefits of vocational training to SMEs, demonstrating how a skilled and qualified workforce can increase profitability and contribute towards sustainable development.

Priority 5 - Fair Play Scotland – “Gender Equality Matters

The project will carry out in-depth gender work with 35 small/medium sized companies across Scotland, including training and awareness raising on equality issues and the impact that effective practice can have on business efficiency. The emergent activity will act as a demonstration project which facilitates the development of diagnostic tools and case studies for dissemination across the SME sector. Specific action areas will include the development or updating of equal opportunities policies; providing guidance on existing policies including equal pay, maternity and harassment; tackling issues around an Equal Pay Audit and developing an action plan; assisting in accessing and providing childcare facilities for employees; providing development of practices necessary to comply with contract tender regulations; advice on legislation such as the Equal Pay Act, Sex Discrimination Act, etc; Exploring the application of flexible working across the workforce.

The following example demonstrates the added value demonstrated in an Scottish Objective 2/ Objective 3 project. The theme of rural tourism would be particularly transferable to Ireland.

Rural tourism

Tourism will be a challenging area to develop in future programmes, not least because it is clearly an area that will feature less prominently in eligible activities. The experience from current programmes underlined that high value-added tourism projects tended to result from a planned, integrated and flexible approach in the projects.

However, there can be a risk of supporting large-scale tourism investments which do not generate sufficient demand. This further underlines the
importance of developing a niche approach to tourism development and the importance of good project design.

**Key points**

- Although more difficult to support in future, rural tourism could remain an important source of value added activities in the Structural Funds.

- Tourism projects are most successful when they focus on niche sectors and have been developed on a strong evidence base.

**Example 3: Investment in forestry cluster**

**Background**

Clustering in rural areas usually takes one of two forms:

- The development or adaptation of industries which have been important to the local economy for many years, such as food processing, textiles or forestry.

- The development of brand new emerging sectors, such as renewable energy.

**Scottish Forest Industries Technology Centre, Barony College**

Barony College, near Dumfries is one of Scotland’s foremost colleges serving the land based industries. Forestry and wood processing industries play an important role in the economy of the Scotland, contributing around £800 million to the Scottish Economy each year and employing an estimated 10,000 people. The South of Scotland is one of the most densely afforested regions in the UK. The forestry and wood processing sector accounts for around 2,000 jobs in the South of Scotland and contributes around £60 million to the GVA of the region each year. However, the forestry industry is an international, highly competitive and rapidly changing one in which businesses must be at the cutting edge to prosper.

ERDF investment has helped develop the £620,000 Scottish Forest Industries Technology Centre. This centre, which benefited from an ERDF investment of over £156,000 boasts an impressive timber built technology suite incorporating a virtual reality simulator where students can learn to operate forest machines as well as an expansive modern workshop where mechanical skills are taught.

Complementary investments from ERDF and ESF have been made in training infrastructure and actual training provision in the forestry sector in the South of Scotland.

**Added value through Structural Funds**
The forests of the South of Scotland which were planted after the Second World War are now reaching maturity, providing a valuable asset for the region. Targeted ERDF investment and complementary ESF funding as well as the development of the Scottish forestry industries sector has enabled the region to stay at the forefront of training in the forestry industries. As a result of the coordinated European funding a readily available skilled workforce is available to harvest timber efficiently and hence compete in a global market place. Consequently the region is benefiting from more added value processing, including Stephen’s Croft Industrial Estate at Lockerbie (established with investment from the 1994 – 1999 Dumfries & Galloway Objective 5(B) Programme), which is home to a number of wood processing companies, each using different elements of the tree. In addition, recently it was announced that a wood burning power station is to be built on the same site, making use of waste products from other processors. ERDF investment has therefore provided the seed-corn to enable an industry to adapt to ever increasing international competition and to enable jobs to be maintained in the area.

Lessons to learn

The economy of rural areas tend to be reliant on a number of key traditional sectors. Many of these sectors have been experiencing difficult economic conditions over recent years, including agriculture, fishing, textiles and forestry. Increased mechanisation has resulted in reduced demand for labour but has also led to changing skills needs. To improve the economic performance of rural areas the European Commission has stressed the need to focus on increasing local added value processing. This case study is a good example of this. ERDF investment can act as a catalyst for considerable investment in a range of non-ERDF supported initiatives. This case study has brought in private investment to an area which is gaining a reputation as the centre for the production of wood products in the country.

Tourism forms an important element of the economy of rural areas, particularly those which are more remote and where other economic opportunities are often limited. Successful tourism promotion depends on the necessary infrastructure being in place to retain visitors and encourage them to return. ERDF investment in the rural South of Scotland have supported both tourism promotion and infrastructure, helping to provide an integrated approach to visitor attraction and retention in the region.

The following Case study example offers some detail on how ESF in Scotland has managed to target a specific group successfully and produce added value through partnership working.

1. Details

Activate Career Planning and Employability Programme is a transitional support programme sponsored by Careers Scotland under the Objective 3
Programme, measure 2.1. Activate was a pilot project funded by ESF and Careers Scotland which ran from June 2004 to May 2006.

The programme was delivered across 75 secondary schools throughout lowland Scotland, targeting S4 and S5 students who may have struggled to make a smooth transition from school into education, employment or further education. The target client group faced a number of issues such as low self-esteem, lack of confidence, poor communication skills and basic skills problems.

2. Brief Project Description

Activate is an early intervention programme that aims to work with young people to support their post school transition. Advisors deliver a variety of activities that include careers guidance and planning, personal development such as team building and advice with regards to interview and application techniques as well as individual mentoring and referrals to other specialist organisations.

The Activate programme was intended to reach a target of 1,500 participants, through two cohorts, aimed at winter and summer school leavers, each with around 750 beneficiaries taking part. A positive outcome rate of 65% was expected for those taking part in the programme, defined as school leavers going on to college, into training or entering employment. A further 24% were expected to return to school, with the remaining 11% of participants expected to be unemployed on leaving the programme.

The Activate intervention was expected to increase the positive outcome rate normally associated with this more vulnerable group of young people by around 25%. It was envisaged that the programme would have a major impact in terms of reducing the numbers of young people who leave school and become “NEET” i.e. not in employment or training. With no intervention, it was estimated that around 30% of this targeted group of young people may fall into the “NEET” category on leaving school, more than double the national average figure of 13% of school leavers. With the intervention, this figure was targeted to fall to just 11% of the targeted group.

3. Areas of good practice/innovation

A key area of success in the delivery of the programme was the experience and knowledge that the advisers gained from the On Track programme (that helps young people into employment, training or further education). Staff were highly trained and worked well as a team, particularly with regards to the sharing of information; they make frequent visits to local FE institutions to gather information on the labour market and opportunities available for the young people. A Coordinators Forum was formed to enable project managers of various ESF supported projects to discuss common issues and share information and good practice. Development days were held, involving sessions where staff could share information, resources, gain support and develop materials. This positively impacts on the quality of delivery.
The post school support offered by Activate was a key element of the programme. On leaving school, participants are offered the ongoing support of an advisor for one year, at a point they most need support to avoid becoming unemployed.

The Activate programme is in the early pilot stages and there have been initial problems with the tracking system, data input and internal recording systems. Therefore, a large amount of information on the outcomes of participants is incomplete. This monitoring failure is an issue that it is anticipated to be addressed in future following the pilot phase of the programme to ensure more meaningful analysis of the project can be attained in the future.
4. Performance and effectiveness

The March 2005 independent interim evaluation of the Activate Programme carried out by Smart Consultancy and Eddy Adams Consultants identified the following project outcomes for the 573 young people that had taken part as of Christmas 2004:

- 42 (7.3%) had gone on to college;
- 59 (10.3%) had progressed into training; and
- 23 (4%) had entered employment.

Accumulation of the above outcomes represented a positive outcome rate of 21.6%. The remaining 449 (78.4%) were recorded as unknown due to monitoring system failures previously discussed, however the majority were believed to have remained at secondary school.

Consequently the Activate programme has performed quite well to date against its targets in terms of the number of beneficiaries participating. Unfortunately, almost 80% of the outcomes were unknown, indicating that the recording system is less than effective and needs to be improved to provide more robust information.

Further positive impacts of the Activate programme to date have included the holding of celebration events with the young people, school staff and Communities Scotland advisors. This has been an effective method of confirming positive affirmations, building motivation and confidence as well encouraging the young people to celebrate their success. Such events have positively contributed to the organisation as a whole by strengthening the project team, bringing together ideas on good practice and allowing the introduction of a new national project.

The ESF funding allowed the pilot to be introduced, a key stage in the longer term development of the Active programme as it allowed key problems and issues to be highlighted. As a result of the pilot phase Activate it is now being adapted in order to introduce it as a self-sustaining mainstream Careers Scotland programme.

A critical success factor of the programme was the funding provided by ESF that allowed the staff to be employed and the materials for the project to be purchased. The motivation, skills, dedication and team-working ethic of the advisors were a key strength and contributed to the project’s success.
## 5. Key lessons

A number of informative key lessons were taken from the pilot phase of the Activate programme:

- the value of learning from previous projects, building on past expertise and experience;
- sharing of information on project management and delivery as well as good practice;
- the importance of team working and the benefits attributable to projects with a strong team working ethos;
- adaptive to external factors – ensuring the project is flexible enough to tackle changing external factors which may negatively impact project outcomes;
- responsive to beneficiary needs – adopting innovative and flexible practices to address any barriers faced by beneficiaries and in turn help to ensure the longer-term success and impact of the programme is maximised;
- the importance of ensuring appropriate monitoring systems are in place for analysing project outcomes so that projects can be effectively measured, success can be demonstrated or any shortcomings identified and addressed.
Letter Received from Udaras na Gaeltachta:

6 Máirt 2006

Donnchadh Mac Fhionnlaioich Uasal T.D.,
Machaire Loisce,
An Bun Beag,
Leitir Ceannainn.

A Theachta,

Ábhar: A programme of co-operation between Scotland and Ireland

Go raibh maith agat as ucht do litir agus an comhfhleasgaras faoin ábhar thuais. Bhcadh suim again bunadh leis an fheisire Dennis Canavan nuair a thig sé go Dún na nGall agus bhíodh suim faoi leith again go dtí bhátharfhadh sé cuairt ar an taobh seo tire. Tá a fhios agat féin an ceangail agus an caidreamh atá cothaithe idir Dún na nGall agus Albain leis na cinta.

Bhí roinnt cruinnithe ag easraí fhobartha sa chontae, ina measc Bord Forbartha Chontae Dhún na nGall, faoin ábhar seo agus tá roinnt moltaí a gcur le chéile. Chomh luath is atá ár moltaí féin ullamhaithe beidh mé i dheagmháil leat.

Lofonn an ábhar seo le ról trasnáisiúnta lomairt Cholmcille agus tá an choincheap luaite leo le tamall anuas.

Is cinnit go bhfuil deiseanna forbartha sa chlár seo.

***************

Thank you for your letter and correspondence in relation to the above. I would be happy to meet with Denis Canavan M.P. when he visits Donegal and I would welcome his visit to this part of the county. As you are aware there is an ongoing connection between Scotland and Donegal.

There were a number of meetings between the various development organisations in the County on this subject and a number of recommendations will be forthcoming. The County Development Board have discussed the programme and have made a submission. An tUdarás will follow up with some thoughts and programme ideas.

This project also fits in with the role of lomairt Cholmcille and we have informed them of this initiative.

Undoubtedly there are possibilities for development in both countries with this project.

Le gach dea ghui,

Cathal Mac Suibhne
Bainisteoir Réigiúinach
Evidence submitted by SCDI:

The Scottish Council for Development and Industry (SCDI) is an independent membership network, which strengthens Scotland’s competitiveness by influencing Government policies to encourage sustainable economic prosperity. Amongst its broad range of activities, SCDI has a long history of involvement in international trade development, having organised more than 300 trade missions since 1960, to some 50 markets worldwide.

SCDI has taken an active interest in the Scottish-Irish business relationship over recent years, and is pleased to contribute views to the Scottish Parliament’s European and External Affairs Committee inquiry into Co-operation with Ireland. This follows discussion of the subject with Dennis Canavan MSP, as rapporteur to the inquiry, with members of SCDI’s International Business Committee.

1. Background

1.1 SCDI was co-organiser of a major business conference “Ireland – Scotland: Business Partners in the 21st Century”, which took place at the Royal Concert Hall in Glasgow in June 2001 and was attended by over 300 business delegates from Scotland and Ireland. The Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, was guest of honour at this event. Other agencies involved in this initiative were the Irish Consulate, Enterprise Ireland, the Scottish Executive and the Scotland Office. At that time interest was expressed in a Scottish-Irish Business Forum to pursue the shared business agenda of the two countries.

1.2 SCDI maintains a good relationship with Enterprise Ireland through its Glasgow-based Scottish presence. The two organisations collaborated on a Business Link initiative in the early 1990s. This resulted in two-way trade missions to assist SMEs, representing a wide range of sectors, in developing business outside their own markets.

1.3 Most recently, SCDI organised a series of Irish Business Breakfasts in 2005, in association with Enterprise Ireland and Allied Irish Bank, providing a platform to exchange experience between the two countries in the areas of economic development, tourism and entrepreneurialism.

2. Common Agenda

2.1 With our close geographical proximity, Scotland and Ireland share many common threads in our history and culture. As small, developed countries on the periphery of Europe, we also face similar challenges in the 21st century global economy. Whilst our economies have undoubtedly been competitors on many occasions, for example in the attraction of inward investment or tourism, it also now makes sense to work together to achieve a greater scale on the global stage.

2.2 The economies of Scotland and Ireland have experienced major transformations in recent decades, from heavy manufacturing and agricultural
traditions respectively. Both encompass large rural communities which are often vulnerable in terms of economic sustainability. Both have been successful in attracting international investment, but are now seeking to focus on fostering the growth of indigenous businesses able to operate successfully in global markets. Both countries are dependent on the performance of the small and medium-sized enterprises which dominate the economic landscape. Key differences lie in the higher economic growth recorded by the Irish economy in recent years, and the more positive demographic backdrop enjoyed by Ireland’s younger and growing population.

2.3 One of the most cogent reasons for working together more closely is that we can assist our respective economies to build scale and to pursue co-operative internationalisation. Where EU Co-operation funding programmes are available to lever investment in such co-operation, SCDI believes that Scotland should move swiftly to maximise such opportunities – particularly in building on the already successful experience of such cross-border co-operation between the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland.

2.4 However, SCDI also takes the view that there are clear benefits in moving towards such collaboration, whether we are able to secure funding from specific EU Co-operation programmes or not. Scotland and Ireland are already key trading partners, and there are distinct opportunities to deepen the economic relationships between Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic to our mutual benefit.

3. Business Opportunities

3.1 Through greater collaboration, Scottish and Irish SMEs can achieve the necessary scale, for example in bidding for large-scale government procurement contracts. Collaborative R&D projects, whether between businesses or universities, would further our respective aims to develop our knowledge economies. Renewable energy is a sector in which Scotland has a lead, and Ireland seeks to develop a capability. Both economies have a strong biotechnology sector. Ireland’s National Development Plan has fuelled domestic and commercial building on a major and continuing scale, offering opportunities in the construction and allied sectors. Business and financial services sectors have grown significantly, offering potential for further trade and co-operation. Our rural economies provide opportunities for sectoral initiatives in food and drink, farming and forestry. In tourism, there may be benefits in specific examples of dual-destination marketing.

3.2 For small Scottish businesses, it is easy to identify in Ireland a cultural affinity, a similar Celtic identity, a common language and perspective, and a familiarity in ways of doing business. At the same time, the Irish Republic is undoubtedly a different market – often the first experience of an “export” market, with its own legal and political framework, a different currency, and issues of access/transport/freight to consider. In encouraging our small and less experienced businesses to take the initial steps towards internationalisation, Ireland is an ideal partner for Scotland. This is particularly true in peripheral rural economies, such as Dumfries and Galloway, and Argyll
and the Isles, where the issues of remoteness and transport connections to “export” markets are often acute.

4. Transport connections

4.1 Transport connections are a major issue for businesses in both economies. With the UK representing the Irish Republic’s largest market, the transportation of goods through the Dumfries and Galloway nexus is a major economic activity in its own right. Much of that traffic is routed immediately south into England, and there must be opportunities for Dumfries and Galloway to capitalise to a greater extent on its gateway location.

4.2 It is readily accepted that transport connections can themselves act as an economic stimulus, and SCDI hopes that this would be a key driver in any programme initiated to foster closer collaboration between Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic. For example, the recent announcement that leading Irish airline Aer Arann is to launch the first regular direct service between Dublin and Inverness (adding to its Prestwick and Edinburgh services) must be welcomed as an opportunity for the Highlands and Islands economy to benefit from two-way business activity. This will be a boost to maximising tourism potential, but the benefits will go beyond this sector into all areas of economic activity. This represents another success for the Scottish Executive’s Route Development Fund, which SCDI believes can work proactively as an economic lever to help Scottish businesses develop commercial links beyond the home market.

4.3 Other direct air links to some of the smaller regional airports, particularly in the islands, would be welcome. It is, of course, necessary to build the economic case in order to persuade commercial operators to introduce services. The same is true of direct ferry services, as has been the recent experience in seeking operators of the Campbeltown-Ballycastle route. However, if there are serious attempts to foster greater economic collaboration between Scotland and Ireland, SCDI believes the issue of transport connections should be integral to this.

4.4 In developing freight traffic, there is the potential for Scotland to handle more transshipment of Irish products to/from European and global markets, for example road hauliers connecting with the Rosyth-Zeebrugge ferry service, and the use of airfreight services through Prestwick and Glasgow. The development of deep sea container port facilities at Hunterston can also be considered in this context.

5. European-Funded Co-operation Objectives

5.1 SCDI understands that future EU-funded cross-border and transnational projects between Member States’ regions will focus on objectives of competitiveness and innovation; sustainable development; and convergence. Possible themes will incorporate SME development and networking; tourism; culture; environmental protection; R&D/innovation; links between urban and rural areas; improved access in transport and ICT; joint use of infrastructure;
maritime co-operation and coastal zone management. There may also be opportunities to address issues of peripherality and areas of sparse population.

5.2 In all of the areas mentioned, there are not only opportunities for co-operation between Scotland and Ireland, but there is already an economic case for pursuing joint strategies. Projects which address business, transport, tourism, cultural, educational, and sporting links can all contribute to fostering productive economic benefits for all parties, especially as the inter-dependence between these spheres continues to become evident.

5.3 A further area in which Scotland might learn from the Irish experience is in raising funds from its own diaspora, an experience in which Ireland is particularly rich. The Scotland Funds is a recent innovation, and has been established for this purpose, seeking to attract funding from the Scottish diaspora (and, indeed, perhaps the Scots-Irish diaspora) for the delivery of projects across a broad range of issues, including education, cultural development and economic regeneration in Scotland.

5.4 As the criteria of the EU Co-operation schemes focus on geographic proximity, SCDI would endorse the benefits of exploring appropriate linkages for areas such as Dumfries and Galloway, Ayrshire, the Clyde, Argyll and the Isles. As timescales are also pressing in order to capitalise on existing co-operation arrangements between the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland, SCDI would urge that action is taken to use this window of opportunity.

5.5 Beyond this immediate horizon, SCDI believes that there is a greater opportunity to address the benefits of Scottish-Irish co-operation, which may go further than the prospects of EU-funded programmes. While there is, quite rightly, a current focus on development of links with major emerging economies such as China and India, Scotland needs at the same time to maximise the opportunities of closer links on its own doorstep. For this, appropriate structures need to be in place to act as a catalyst to greater business co-operation. There needs to be a focus to allow long-term development of activities, otherwise the economic advantages of cultural and other exchanges will be lost.

5.5 SCDI hopes that the new EU Co-operation Funds regime will assist this to happen, but would also encourage the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Executive to consider the creation of some home-grown structures to facilitate this objective.

Scottish Council for Development and Industry
March 2006
Evidence submitted by Jim Nicholson MEP

Please accept my sincerest apologies for not being able to attend today’s meeting in Belfast. However, I would like to take this opportunity to build upon some of the themes and issues I outlined in my original submission.

May I first of all endorse wholeheartedly the assertion in your interim report that this matter must be pursued as a matter of urgency. Any stalling or internal bureaucratic wrangling by anyone would be a disaster. Time is of the essence. The opportunity under the revised INTERREG programme to build a shared future for Scotland and Northern Ireland in the UK cannot be missed.

The absence of a devolved administration in Belfast places Northern Ireland at a significant disadvantage and leaves us, more often than not, playing catch up. However, I am determined to see a programme of cooperation between Scotland and Northern Ireland succeed and deliver results. You have my full support and can be rest assured that I will be raising the matter with the Minister and his officials in Belfast to ensure they are doing all they can to assist the development of such a programme of cooperation.

Everyone agrees that a programme of cooperation between Scotland and Northern Ireland would bring great social, economic and environmental benefits to both areas. However, what has been overlooked in some of the submissions is that a programme of this nature would cement a more concrete and tangible form of East/West cooperation within the British Isles, than has existed in the past and which was provided for back in 1998 in Strand 3 of the Belfast Agreement.

The delivery of the INTERREG IIIA programme in Northern Ireland focused on North/South co-operation meaning that unfortunately areas in the North East of the Province and Belfast did not benefit in the way that they should have from the programme. There is a unique opportunity now to address this.

As you are probably aware Eastern areas of the Republic of Ireland and Western areas of Wales have benefited significantly from an Interreg 3A programme of cooperation. Many worthwhile projects, which have benefited both areas significantly, have been developed and no doubt Wales and the Republic of Ireland will build upon this in the future.

In expanding upon some of the areas, which I mentioned in my original submission I will refer to some of the projects pursued under the Ireland/Wales programme of cooperation to highlight how similar programmes could work between Northern Ireland and Scotland.

1) The Environment:

The seas and coastal areas of Northern Ireland and Scotland are a unique resource, which bring many socio-economic and environmental benefits and present a range of opportunities.
It is essential that these opportunities are promoted and developed in ways which are environmentally sustainable, to ensure that they can continue to be enjoyed by existing and future generations.

Northern Ireland and Scotland should be promoting the integration of environmental sustainability with marine and coastal resource use in the Irish Sea area in ways that encourage community involvement. Increasing knowledge and understanding should underpin strategic planning for sustainable development in these areas.

Northern Ireland and Scotland should consider developing joint approaches in:

- The promotion of tools and techniques (such as integrated Coastal Zone Management) to promote sustainable resource use.
- Action with key sectors (such as fisheries, minerals, renewable energy and tourism) to promote a sustainable approach to development.
- Action to promote education and training, and ensure accessibility to environmental data, in support of the above.
- Joint networking, exchanges and study visits.
- Action to develop community participation in the management of the environment.
- Action to develop projects which develop the capacity of renewable energy, which if realised can contribute significantly to economic growth and environmental sustainability.

The Republic of Ireland and Wales have already established a benchmark for cooperation in this area with the Interreg funded ‘Clean Coasts’ project run by Keep Wales Tidy. This project received almost £340,000 of Interreg funding with the aim of improving the value of the Welsh and Irish coastlines by restoring their aesthetic appeal and increasing their amenity and economic value to the community and visitors. They did this by:

1. Running an environmental award scheme for rural beaches.
2. Involving local communities in beach management.
3. Raising awareness to the problems of waste in marine environment.

The case for Scotland and Northern Ireland working together in this area is irrefutable.

2) Rural Development and Agriculture

Both Northern Ireland and Scotland have large rural communities, which have experienced almost identical problems in recent years. Traditionally, agriculture sustained both economies but major shifts in recent years have transformed the nature of their local economies.

While it will continue to be the main generator of economic activity in these areas, the accelerating trend is for its relative significance to decline, particularly as a provider of jobs and economic growth. An Interreg
Programme is in a unique position to address the problems of rural communities in Northern Ireland and Scotland and introduce innovative concepts to increase quality of life in rural areas and maintain the social fabric of the communities in both areas.

The development of alternative skills is an important consideration which will enable rural communities to avail themselves of emerging new sources of income arising from off farm activities such as indigenous industries, SME development, retention of young people and farm diversification into renewable energy.

Northern Ireland and Scotland should consider joint approaches in:

- Diversification to complement agricultural activities both on and off farm to provide alternative incomes.
- Employment activities to reduce the out-migration of young people from the rural area.
- Rural tourism and craft activities aimed at enhancing the rural economy and marketing initiatives to promote local products and places.
- Support for community led ICT initiatives.
- Improving the management of countryside-access to protect the environment and to promote awareness of rural and countryside issues.
- Assistance for innovation and adding value to local agricultural, forestry, fishery and other land based products.
- Support services for rural communities, including indigenous SMEs, encouraging entrepreneurship and taking account of equal opportunities and social exclusion.
- Identification and support for care needs in respect of the elderly, childcare and dependents.
- Identification and support for re-skilling in rural areas.
- Skills to manage and develop rural businesses.

Again, the Republic of Ireland and Wales have already established a benchmark for cooperation in this area with the Interreg funded ‘AGRI - net WORKS’ which supported the rural communities of West Wales and South East Ireland by developing a unique programme of conventions, events and seminars aimed at rural/ agricultural business development in order to encourage networking and exchange of best practice between the regions.

3) Business Opportunities
As I have said both Northern Ireland and Scotland are comprised of rural communities and sparsely populated areas, which are at risk of being marginalised in the globally competitive environment of today.

There is potential for greater economic benefits for the whole area as a result of the joint co-operation in business ventures and common business activity. There is a substantial Higher Education resource in the area and joint activity could better inter-link with the business sector to generate greater innovation and expertise in SMEs.

ICT should be an integral part of business competitiveness in today’s world and a programme of cooperation could assist in promoting best practice in this area and also look further to the next generation of ICT.

Northern Ireland and Scotland should consider joint approaches in:

- Improving the competitiveness of SMEs and social economy businesses, for example by building links between business development agencies, trade organisations (e.g. Trade associations, Chambers of Commerce) and local authorities.
- Assisting companies, which improve environmental performance/reducing environmental impacts and cost.
- Sectoral development of companies operating in the energy, environmental goods and services sectors.
- To develop links between the business sector and the Further and Higher education sector (Third level institutions) and research bodies.
- To facilitate the business sector in maximising the benefits arising from the utilisation of ICT.
- Joint marketing of cultural tourism opportunities.

Yet again the Republic of Ireland and Wales have already established a benchmark for cooperation in this area with the Interreg funded ‘Rhyl/Athy’ regeneration project, which had the aim of encouraging the regeneration of business and enterprise in the towns of Rhyl and Athy.

The cultural, historical and social bonds between Northern Ireland and Scotland are obvious. Sometimes enough isn’t made of these strong, shared ties but out of all the regions in the United Kingdom, we have the most in common and the most to gain from increased territorial cooperation with Scotland. Thank you for taking the time to come to Belfast today and I look forward to a speedy and successful outcome to your deliberations.
Thank you for your letter of 9 March requesting an update on the progress made since our meeting with the Inishowen Rural Development Limited and Irish Central Border Area Network on 14 September 2005.

We are actively promoting the new programme. Over the past three months we have held stakeholder events for all European Structural Fund programmes for 2007-13 and recently held one specifically for the co-operation objective in Glasgow. This was well attended and there is a great deal of interest from local enterprise companies and local authorities into possible projects involving cross border co-operation with Ireland. The European Commission’s new funding proposals allow for the eligibility of maritime borders for the first time, hence the extension to Scotland.

Officials in Central Government have also held meetings to develop proposals for the new programme of funding. They are continuing to work with their Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland colleagues on options for programme structures, priorities and delivery arrangements.

Previous Interreg project organisations are exploring a number of possible projects. If this future funding comes to fruition they ought to be in the best position to apply for support in the first rounds. Work to develop Scottish-Irish links in a number of areas including culture and tourism is also continuing.

I hope this is helpful.
Thank you for your e-mail of 8 February 2006 about the European and External Relations Committee Inquiry into the possibility of a programme of co-operation between Scotland and Ireland. You also wrote to Ross Finnie. Please accept this letter as covering both our interests.

I attach a paper which deals, in particular, with potential funding opportunities for Scotland under the Territorial Co-operation Objective of the proposed new Structural Funds Regulations.

As you will see from the Scottish Structural Funds Forum paper, which is also attached, officials are working extensively to formulate the future European Funding Programme for 2007-13.

I hope your work progresses positively and look forward to the Committee’s conclusions.

Programme of Co-operation between Scotland and Ireland

Introduction

Scotland and Ireland have longstanding links and much in common, both culturally and historically. The Irish Consul General in Edinburgh, Cliona Manahan, who took up her post in August 2005, intends to build on the strong links between the two countries. Since arriving in Edinburgh she has been very keen to meet all Scottish Ministers, and meetings are still ongoing. She identifies several areas where Scotland and Ireland confront similar challenges and therefore also a potential for further co-operation or idea-sharing, for example in the areas of agriculture, fisheries, enterprise, culture and tourism. Particularly successful was the First Minister’s visit to Dublin in August 2004, where he had the opportunity to discuss the Irish experience of the implementation of the smoking ban prior to the introducing a smoking ban in Scotland. Contexts for the Committee’s study might include also the sharing and collaboration carried out within the British Irish Council and any opportunities that might be created under any of the strands of the forthcoming EU Financial Perspectives 2007-2013.

European Structural Funds

Opportunities to bring European Funds to support co-operation between Scotland and Ireland already exist to an extent under current programmes and it is envisaged that the new funding round for 2007 – 2013 will also provide scope for joint working.

The European Commission has proposed to continue the three strands of ‘territorial co-operation’:

• Cross border co-operation
• Trans national co-operation, and
• Inter regional co-operation

Cross-Border

Opportunities for a Scotland – Ireland Cross-Border programme of co-operation have not previously existed. The (European) Council Regulation governing territorial co-operation currently restrict cross-border programmes to land borders between different Member States and limited maritime borders (e.g. Wales – Ireland). The distance between Ireland and Scotland was too great for this flexibility.

However, Commission proposals for 2007 – 2013 extend cross-border co-operation to maritime borders where the countries concerned are up to 150 kilometres distant. This potentially provides for the first time sufficient geographical scope to include parts of Western Scotland (Dumfries and Galloway, South Ayrshire, Argyll and the Isles and provisionally North and East Ayrshire). In addition, although not specifically included, it may also be possible to extend some project activity to adjacent areas such as the Western Isles.

The most practical approach is likely to be to develop the existing Ireland – Northern Ireland programme for the next round of funding. Scottish Executive officials are working with their Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland colleagues on options for programme structures, priorities and delivery arrangements. Discussions are at a relatively early stage but momentum will pick up over the next few months with a view to agreeing a basis on which to submit a draft programme to the European Commission around the end of the year.

Trans-National

Scottish and Irish partners can already participate in INTERREG III B trans-national programmes. Relevant programmes cover North West Europe and the Atlantic Coast. Although only limited use is made of such opportunities at present, there are some Scottish and Irish partners in projects. This is not bi-lateral co-operation however as these programmes require participants from at least three countries in the programme area.

European Commission proposals are to maintain the Atlantic Coast and North West Europe programmes for 2007 – 2013. The commission has also proposed, with our encouragement, inclusion of parts of Northern Ireland and the Republic with additional parts of Scotland in the next Northern Periphery Programme.

Inter-regional

This strand is less structured than the other two and is not based on strictly defined geographical areas. Resources are relatively limited and this IIIC strand tends to support exchange of experience and networks. Again the
Commission proposes to continue this type of activity from 2007. Details on implementation are still being worked out.

Conclusion

Existing opportunities to use European Funding to support joint working between Scotland and Ireland are fairly limited. The proposals for the new programming period (2007 – 2013) are more promising and, subject to approval by the Council of Ministers, there may be new and wider opportunities to use European Structural Funds to encourage co-operation between Scotland and Ireland.

A paper on emerging proposals as they affect Scotland was tabled at the recent meeting of the Scottish European Structural Funds Forum. Although this goes beyond Scotland – Ireland links, it does help set the wider context on European funding for co-operation. This is attached at Annex A as background.

Annex A
Meeting Date: 30 January 2006
Paper Number: 3
Agenda Item Number: 6

For Discussion
Agenda Item: Planning for the Co-operation Objective

SCOTTISH EUROPEAN STRUCTURAL FUNDS FORUM

UPDATE ON PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE CO-OPERATION OBJECTIVE

Background

1. The European Commission’s proposals for the 2007–13 Structural Funds include co-operation on projects amongst Member States (and some non – Member States) much more explicitly. Co-operation now features as an ‘objective’ in its own right in the draft regulations. Although the budget agreement concentrates resources on cross-border co-operation, there is sufficient flexibility and potentially sufficient resource broadly to maintain current trans-national budgets. Three strands are proposed:

• Cross-border co-operation
• Trans national co-operation, and
• Inter regional co-operation

2. There may also be flexibility to use programme funds outwith the immediate programme area. Potential Scottish Participation 3. We have now seen in some detail how the Commission proposals are likely to materialise in programme terms. From a Scottish perspective we can expect:
 Participation for the first time in a cross-border programme due to more flexible criteria around ‘maritime’ borders. Parts of Scotland (Dumfries & Galloway, South Ayrshire, Argyll and the Isles, and provisionally East and North Ayrshire) would be covered by an extended Republic of Ireland – Northern Ireland programme.

Continued participation in 4 transnational programmes with programme geography remaining much the same as at present for:

- North Sea (Scotland’s east coast, including Highland and Northern Isles))
- North West Europe (all Scotland)
- Atlantic Area (Scotland’s west coast, including Highland and Western Isles). The UK has argued for sub-zones within the programme to allow a degree of concentration around the Irish Sea and potentially complement Scotland – Ireland (and Wales – Ireland) Cross-border Programmes.

And extended coverage for:

- Northern Periphery where proposals include the rest of ‘rural’ Scotland (with an emphasis on Highlands & Islands), ‘rural’ Northern Ireland and parts of the Republic of Ireland. ‘Rural’ has still to be defined though this will almost certainly be left to participating countries’ discretion. Our aim is to work with partners here and other partner countries in the programme on how best to reconcile the potential increased coverage without compromising the fundamental principles behind this programme and our participation in it – peripherality, sparse population, distance, mountains and islands – and maintaining a reasonable balance between demand and resources available.

Scope also exists to participate in interregional projects where programmes are not strictly geographically defined.

While the potential coverage for Scotland is welcome, it would be better for partner organisations to concentrate efforts around particular areas, potential partners or themes. For example, and mindful of the European and External Relations Committee’s inquiry into ‘the Possibility of a Programme of Co-operation between Scotland and Ireland’, one key issue would be how best to focus on opportunities in the potential cross-border and trans-national programmes involving Scotland and the Republic of Ireland.

Budget

4. Budgets at programme level depend firstly on allocations to Member States for each of the respective strands. These are then assigned to the respective programmes by the various Member States. There is some flexibility at Member State level between the strands and on how much is allocated to individual programmes. Based on the budget settlement, transnational programmes would have about the same overall levels of funding as now. Very tentative figures based on current programme funding and performance suggest roughly €100 million (c.£67 million) for Atlantic Area,
€250 million (c.£167 million) for North West Europe and €180 million (c.£120 million) for North Sea. Northern Periphery is more problematic as the area is increasing in size but Finnish and Swedish resources will be under pressure if trans-national shares are kept low. The total may perhaps be somewhere in the region of €25 million to €30 million (c.£17-20 million). Cross-border is more difficult as we have not previously participated. However, there could be around €80 million (c.£53 million) for the Scotland-Northern Ireland-Ireland programme, though the bulk would probably be spent between Northern Ireland and the Republic.

5. These figures could be wide of the mark however if Member States alter their respective priorities and allocations across programmes.

6. There are no explicit shares within programmes to participating countries. In principle, all ERDF is available to support eligible projects regardless of partner make-up or lead partner nationality. Within the UK we have previously worked on single allocations to the respective programmes and avoided sub-division between England and the Devolved Administrations. This has tended to work in our favour. Although there are no explicit shares, Scotland tends to attract a greater than proportionate share, based on population.

Programme Preparation

Cross-border

7. We are currently considering with officials in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland options for developing the proposed cross-border programme. While content is bound to be strongly influenced by the current Northern Ireland–Republic programme, we will work with potential Scottish interests (local authorities and the Enterprise Networks principally) on the Scottish aspect.

Trans-national

8. Overall responsibility for co-operation programmes in the UK rests with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. The Scottish Executive leads for Northern Periphery. We are in close touch with UK colleagues to ensure that we contribute to discussions on allocations to the various programmes. We will also work closely with trans-national programme secretariats to ensure that programme proposals can help support Scottish Executive priorities and partner organisations’ aspirations. This can be secured most effectively in Northern Periphery and North Sea where we are members of the Monitoring Committee and able to contribute directly to programme development. For Atlantic Area and North West Europe, we will contribute to UK input on these programmes.

9. Some of this process will be informed by a stakeholder event which took place in Inverness on 9 December, with a second planned for Glasgow.
for early March (7 or 8) and direct contact with partner organisations to establish broad preferences on themes and/or programmes.

Content

10. We can probably expect a reasonable degree of continuity between existing and new programmes. Priorities will also be influenced by the themes set out in the ERDF regulation. Some early thoughts on themes are set out at Annex A, though this is essentially Commission thinking at this stage. There is potentially scope beyond the themes now if the current draft survives with the key word ‘primarily’.

Building on Positive Experience

11. Continuity between programming periods would be welcome. Although experience varies across the current trans-national programmes, participation by Scottish partners is relatively strong and benefits quite tangible. Project examples are at annex B. We are looking at current Scottish participation as a basis for project ideas for the future. Early impressions are that, when grouped into broad themes, there is a reasonable fit between current activity and future themes. It may also be possible to use opportunities under the new round of programmes to look more closely at experience with ‘spatial planning / development’ in partner countries to inform development of the (Scottish) National Planning Framework.

Timing

12. It is almost inevitable that priority will be given to Convergence and Competitiveness programmes. Nevertheless, cross-border and trans-national programmes should be aiming to have drafts ready in the autumn to go out to consultation. North Sea and Northern Periphery have made a tentative start. We are not aware of any start yet being made on Atlantic Area or North West Europe.

Conclusion

14. Commission proposals for the next round of co-operation programmes are now reasonably firm and have the broad support of Member States – although this has still to be tested formally in Council. Stakeholder events provide an opportunity to inform and consult potential partner organisations and bring a more local perspective to our input to programme development. We are in a particularly strong position to influence Northern Periphery and North Sea programme preparation to ensure Scottish priorities are taken into account, though we clearly have to work within a broad consensus across a number of partner countries.

Scottish Executive
European Structural Funds Division
January 2006
CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE FIRST MINISTER, DATED 17 MAY 2006

Thank you for your letter of 13 March 2006. I understand you have written in similar terms to my Ministerial colleagues, so please accept this as our collective response. Please accept my apologies for the delay.

As you are aware, Scottish Executive officials are working closely with the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland colleagues to take forward arrangements for the cross border programme under the co-operation objective in the next round of European Structural Funds.

Scottish Ministers welcome the interaction that is taking place and are aware of the potential benefits to each of the countries that the new European Structural Fund regulations for 2007-2013 could bring. Officials are considering how best to maximise the benefits to Scotland from the proposed regulations.

While it would be premature to meet at present as regulations are still in the development phase, my Ministerial colleagues would welcome discussions at the appropriate time.

I will ensure that you are kept informed of progress in your role as reporter to the European and External Relations Committee. Indeed, the Deputy First Minister intends to provide a paper to the committee explaining emerging opportunities for joint working between Scotland and other partner countries including the prospects for co-operation between Scotland and Ireland.