



NORTHERN IRELAND

GROUNDWORK NORTHERN IRELAND

STRATEGIC PLAN 2009-2012

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1 Chairperson's Foreword

The Groundwork NI Strategic Plan for 2009 – 2012 sets out the broad context within which we seek to fulfil our vision over the next three years. In this time of unprecedented change, this strategy is about seizing the possibilities and opportunities, providing a framework allowing us to be flexible and able to respond to new and emerging needs.

The Programme for Government for 2008-2011 acknowledges that the political community alone cannot address the challenges ahead – ¹*“Government can provide a lead, it cannot, however, address the challenges we face alone. All sectors, including business, the trade unions, academia, the voluntary and community sectors and individuals must play their part. As an Executive, we are committed to open and accountable government, and as we move forward we want to draw on the energy and expertise of those outside government to tackle the challenges and the opportunities open to us.”*

Clearly, there is a huge responsibility on Executive Ministers to make all functions of Government work and to make a real difference to the lives of all people. Equally, there is a responsibility on the voluntary & community sector to develop creative solutions and deliver maximum impact in our work.

In developing this strategy, we have engaged with a diverse range of stakeholders, gaining their insight and expertise on the way ahead for Groundwork NI. In doing so we have developed an ambitious, demanding and significant agenda, though one which we are confident that we will achieve in collaboration with others.

This agenda reflects that the world around us is changing and therefore the needs of people and place are changing. Groundwork NI is cognisant of this and we are committed to building on our strengths of quality delivery, partnership working and innovation. Our goal by 2012 is that Groundwork NI is recognised as an organisation, which has a transforming impact on people's lives and the places that matter to them. We will remain true to our purpose of *“Changing Places, Changing Lives, Changing Minds”*.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Gerry Crossan'.

Gerry Crossan
Chairperson, Groundwork Northern Ireland

¹ Office of the First Minister, Deputy First Minister *Programme for Government 2008-2011* p23

2 Groundwork NI: Vision, Purpose and Values

Groundwork NI is part of the Groundwork UK Federation of Regions in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

In Northern Ireland we deliver programmes and services through partnership and influence policy through practice. We engage and motivate people to improve their quality of life by investing in people and place through supporting community-led regeneration.

Our approach and model brings about concurrent social, economic and environmental benefits, providing the synergy to address fundamental societal issues – the sense of powerlessness to change the environment and tackle key issues both in terms of the physical landscape but more importantly, the needs of local people.

Our clients and partners say we are:

- *“An approachable honest broker between communities and public agencies and authorities”.*
- *“A bridge builder within and between divided communities”.*
- *“Practical, with a track record of helping communities plan and deliver environmental projects in their areas”.*
- *“Dedicated to community development principles and community dialogue”.*

Our Vision – the kind of world we want to live in

Our vision is of a peaceful and inclusive society made up of vibrant, healthy and safe communities, which respect the local and global environment and where people and enterprise prosper.

Our Purpose is – “*Changing Places, Changing Lives, Changing Minds*”.

Our Values – what we stand for

Wherever we work and whatever we do our brand will be associated with a consistent set of priorities and values.

- **local delivery:** our role as a local regeneration and delivery organisation remains paramount and we maximise investment in the delivery of local projects and services – our work starts and ends with communities.
- **social justice:** we deliver change in disadvantaged communities by: improving open spaces; providing a pathway out of poverty and encouraging active citizenship; doing our part in enabling the transformation of a society coming out of conflict.
- **environmental sustainability:** we deliver social and economic regeneration in a way which promotes environmentally responsible behaviour among individuals, communities and organisations.
- **partnership:** we will continue to work in collaboration, recognising the strengths of other organisations, contributing to and promoting the ethos of

partnership working at a local, regional, national and trans-national level to enable the most effective and efficient delivery of policy and practice.

- **equality:** we respect different opinions and take into account the diverse needs of the individual, communities and organisations that we work with.
- **quality & professionalism:** we are committed to building upon our quality processes and frameworks with the purpose of delivering the best programmes and services possible and maintaining our professional standards.
- **innovation & learning:** we are an organisation that learns from itself and others and that successfully translates the lessons from what works into practical policy and delivery recommendations.
- **passion:** we are committed to improving lives and places and will encourage creativity, innovation and dynamism in all that we do.

We will be an outcome-driven organisation and we aim to provide:

Open Spaces or physical assets that:

- Involve communities in their design
- Encourage social interaction towards vibrant communities
- Contribute to achieving quality of life for disadvantaged communities
- Contribute to improvements in health and wellbeing
- Underpin sustainable communities
- Are shared spaces

Community Engagement that:

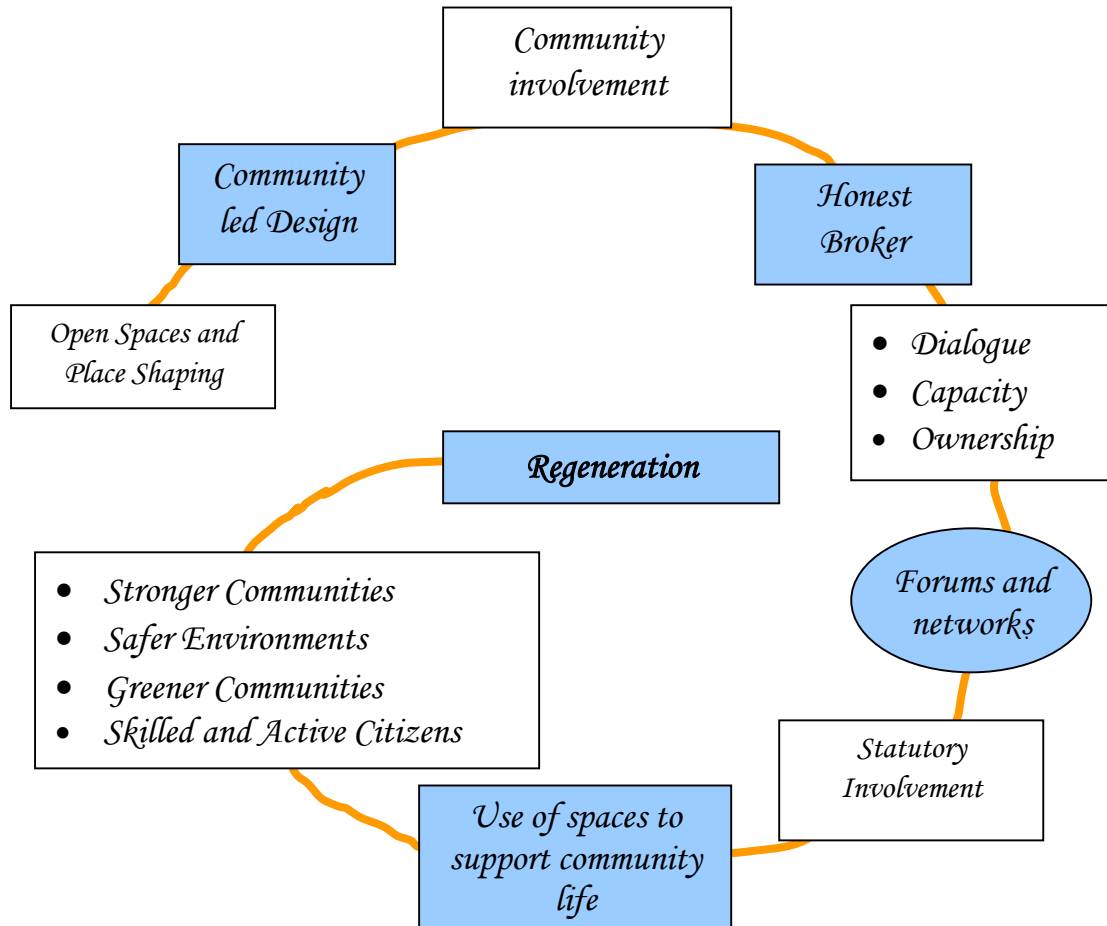
- Builds ownership of place
- Empowers people to engage in local decision making
- Encourages inclusion and interdependence
- Builds capacity and sustainability
- Provides individuals with skills and pathways to employment
- Encourages people to live in ways which are healthier, more civic minded and more respectful of the natural environment

Community Relations that:

- Builds relationships at the local level, encouraging mutual respect and understanding
- Supports communities and groups in transition
- Contributes to greater community cohesion
- Encourages people to deal candidly with sectarian & racist attitudes and behaviour
- Creates a collaborative approach to developing a shared future

Our Work – how we do things

The blue boxes show Groundwork services or tools. White boxes show the ingredients of sustainable communities being built up through the process.



3 Strategic Themes for Action 2009 – 2012

Theme 1: Partnerships and Programmes

The environment within which we operate is becoming more complex and competitive. We are aware of the challenges – particularly the demise of various funding streams, the reduction in public sector spend and the current global recession.

It is increasingly important that Groundwork NI is clear about the programmes and services we offer to our partners and customers, and the value these bring, and that the programmes and services we offer meet emerging needs that are critical to the communities we serve.

Groundwork NI will continue to build on existing collaborations and forge new ones, engaging across all sectors. We will use the Groundwork Federation to draw on the significant experience of regeneration practitioners from across England and Wales. We will use these strong links to evolve our portfolio of work with a growing emphasis on helping the hardest to reach and providing a pathway out of poverty.

We will play a full role in the Groundwork Federation by collaborating with both Groundwork UK and the other Groundwork Regions in creating a more cohesive identity for the Groundwork organisation.

The outworking of the Review of Public Administration in Northern Ireland and the devolution of significant powers to the eleven new local authorities will provide a real opportunity to reframe governance in a way that brings local solutions to local issues.

Groundwork NI will be at the forefront of developing new collaborative working practices, creating new frameworks and processes for effective and efficient service delivery. It will be imperative that communities are at the heart of such decision-making processes.

To achieve this, we will focus on the following priorities over the next three years:

1. We will develop our reputation for delivering high quality community development and community relations programmes with the purpose of improving the contribution we make to tackling disadvantage & inequality, encouraging active citizenship and transforming a society coming out of conflict.
 - (i) ***Groundwork NI will change places, lives and minds by targeting the delivery of at least 80% of our work in the top 20% most disadvantaged Northern Ireland Super Output Areas, as identified in the 2005 NI Multiple Deprivation Measures. We will also continue to extend our work and build our profile in the Republic of Ireland, particularly in the Border Counties.***
 - (ii) ***Groundwork NI will aim to increase active citizenship in our programmes of work by an average of 10%. We will do this by***

providing further opportunities for volunteering and training on our programmes.

2. We will build our capacity and competency, and that of others, by providing a Resource Centre for those involved in regeneration and peace building. Groundwork NI, in collaboration with partners, will implement a training and development programme, ensuring that policy makers and regeneration practitioners from the public and voluntary & community sectors have the capability required to build sustainable communities.

- (i) *Groundwork NI, in collaboration with others, plans to deliver the Peace III funded “Democratising Governance in Transition” programme, the outcome of which will be a model of delivering modern, high quality and efficient public services through local area agreements in three areas, two in Belfast and one in Derry/L/Derry.*

3. We will animate people and communities around the value of regenerating open spaces to provide societal benefits. Through programmes we will maintain and develop our focus on the transformation of derelict and contested space but also demonstrate the value of utilising open spaces for improving health and helping to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

- (i) *Groundwork NI will deliver the Peace III funded “Reconciling Communities through Regeneration” in ten locations across Northern Ireland and the Border Counties of the Republic of Ireland. The outcome will be the creation of vibrant and shared open spaces for everyone.*

- (ii) *Groundwork NI will, in addition to the above, aim to deliver projects in partnership with four Peace III council clusters, three Local Action Groups, which are responsible for rural development, and in each of the 36 Neighbourhood Renewal areas, working directly with at least ten of the Partnerships. Our purpose will be to improve the quality of life of those living in disadvantaged communities by delivering physical environmental improvements that contribute to regeneration and build on community assets.*

4. We will promote positive environmental behaviour in schools and communities by expanding and developing more practical programmes and services to help tackle climate change and other environmental issues.

- (i) *Groundwork NI will continue to engage with the next generation through delivering the “Eco Schools” initiative, helping at least 6 schools become models of sustainability and to improve biodiversity.*

- (ii) *Groundwork NI will work with at least 6 communities to transform appropriate sites to landscapes that promote better health & well-*

being and encourage more sustainable living through local food production

5. We will develop more creative multi-agency partnerships and alliances so that we are stronger and more competitive in winning both public and private sector contracts, and by doing so we will extend the impact of our programmes and services with communities.
 - (i) *Groundwork NI will aim to increase the proportion of our income derived from winning commissions or contracts by 10% over the next three years, from 64% in 2008/09 to 70% in 2011/12.*
 - (ii) *Groundwork NI will build new partnerships with organisations and, where appropriate, develop Memorandums of Mutual Understanding with the purpose of amalgamating skills and expertise to offer a creative and holistic approach to enable us to deliver our strategy.*

6. We are committed to working in partnership with communities and other key stakeholders to provide meaningful opportunities for people to build confidence, skills and access to employment through volunteering, practical work experience and other personal development challenges and opportunities.
 - (i) *Groundwork NI, as part of the Federation, will support the development of policy and research to identify the skills required in a low carbon economy to understand how such skills development could support regeneration objectives in areas of deprivation.*
 - (ii) *Groundwork NI will prioritise the development of capacity within the organisation and develop a business case to ensure there is a relevant and quality “welfare to work” offer to those already furthest removed from the labour market.*
 - (iii) *Groundwork NI will deliver a pilot initiative in two areas, developing a programme with the specific purpose of building skills and employability.*

7. We will develop partnership models with private sector companies, connecting local community delivery with clear business benefits and seeking new opportunities to work as a social and environmental partner of private sector contractors.
 - (i) *Groundwork NI will continue to invest in a programme of work designed to improve our ability to act as a social partner of private sector companies, the target is to be part of at least three successful short-listed bids for major public sector contracts.*

Theme 2: Generating Influence and Support

With the return of devolved legislature to Northern Ireland this means that decisions about policy, strategic direction and budget are influenced and decided by locally elected politicians, grounded in their constituencies and with a desire to be responsive to local needs.

In November 2008, Junior Ministers Gerry Kelly and Jeffrey Donaldson challenged the voluntary and community sector to work with the Northern Ireland Executive to help shape policies. Jeffrey Donaldson MP MLA said: ²*“We see the sector as partners, not rivals to government – to work with the Executive and Assembly, to help constructively shape policies for Northern Ireland, provide information and evidence to the Assembly Committees and help us, as democratically elected representatives, to deliver the Programme for Government – a shared and better future for all our people.”*

Clearly there is both the necessity and opportunity for Groundwork NI to further build our reputation and profile in order to generate support for our work, not just with elected politicians but also with existing and new partners in national and local government.

Our strategy will be to deepen our existing relationships with those who support our work and to build new strategic relationships and alliances in all sectors.

To achieve this, we will focus on the following priorities for the next three years

1. We will prioritise our relationship with the Northern Ireland Assembly with the purpose of positioning Groundwork NI as a deliverer of Government objectives and programmes that align with our strategy and values.
 - (i) *Groundwork NI will focus on securing a continued commitment for our work from the Department for Social Development beyond the timeframe of this strategy, through negotiating a three-year resourced framework agreement.*
 - (ii) *Groundwork NI will focus on securing support for our programmes from the Office of First Minister & Deputy First Minister, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Department of Environment and the Department of Education and Learning.*

² Office of the First Minister, Deputy First Minister News Release, 21st November 2008 *Kelly and Donaldson invite Community and Voluntary Sector to work with Government*

2. We will position ourselves to be a strategic partner with the eleven new local authorities, contributing to partnerships and delivering programmes and activities in support of local area frameworks, both in an urban and rural context.
 - (i) *Groundwork NI, in recognition of the consequences of the Review of Public Administration, and the challenges and opportunities offered by the devolution of responsibility for regeneration, will build on our experience, and that of the Federation, of working closely with local government, to secure framework agreements with each of the eleven new local authorities.*
 - (ii) *Groundwork NI will apply the learning and practice from our “Democratising Governance in Transition” programme to provide opportunities for local people to engage in project decision-making.*

3. We will develop and drive forward a Marketing and Communications Strategy with the purpose of communicating the scope and value of our work to key stakeholders in order to deliver the vision and priorities of this strategy.
 - (i) *Groundwork NI will focus on identifying the stakeholders who are our priority target audiences and developing the key messages and methods by which to raise the profile of our organisation. The target is to achieve at least 90% brand recognition among our project partners.*

4. We will improve our ability to demonstrate the impact of our work and use this evidence as a platform for engagement with other government departments and development agencies - both public and voluntary & community sectors.
 - (i) *Groundwork NI, as part of the Federation, will establish a stronger evidence base to demonstrate the impact of our work among our partners, as measured by achieving a project impact score of at least 80%, through our project evaluation surveys.*
 - (ii) *Groundwork NI will commission independent evaluations of our key programmes with the purpose of understanding and successfully translating the learning from what we do into practical policy and delivery outcomes and we will share that with others.*

5. We will utilise our policy links with the Groundwork Federation and other partners, with the purpose of informing and growing our capacity to constructively influence and implement regeneration policies in Northern Ireland.

- (i) *Groundwork NI will work collaboratively with the Federation by contributing to the policy and development network of regions and trusts in order to strengthen our responses to public sector strategy consultations.*

Theme 3: Managing our Business

We have the capability to transform lives and places wherever there is a need and an opportunity within both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. In order to continue to achieve this we need to be a financially secure, consistent, high-quality, effective and efficient organisation, which is able to act both independently or collectively as part of the national Groundwork Federation, where this brings economic or environmental advantages.

We recognise the need to be flexible and responsive, so that we can build our capacity to deliver our services and products in new ways and in new markets, both in order to meet the changing needs of our society and to sustain a stable and healthy financial position for the organisation. We will also meet the requirements of the new Charity Commission, which is due to be introduced and set standards for Northern Ireland charities during 2009-10, in order to maintain the confidence and support of our key funders and partners.

To achieve this, we will focus on the following priorities over the next three years:

1. We will become a more client-focused organisation.
 - (i) *We will continue to develop, refine and report our own customer feedback and evaluation procedures and results; we will aim to achieve an average customer satisfaction rating of above 90%.*
 - (ii) *We will ensure that we have appropriate and effective lines of communication in place with key clients through developing a relationship management strategy.*
 - (iii) *We will fully implement a fast and effective response process for customer comments or complaints, with a target of resolving 90% of complaints within 30 days.*

2. We will develop our quality, financial & administrative structures and processes to achieve our business objectives.
 - (i) *We will fully integrate the Groundwork Project Management System (GPMS) with the Trust accounting system, so that all projects are managed using the GPMS.*
 - (ii) *We will continue to implement defined and consistent processes, which meet both our needs and the appropriate standard to retain ISO 9001 accreditation.*

- (iii) *We will build on our success in the 2007 & 2008 N. Ireland Quality Awards by continuing to update and implement the Quality Improvement Action Plan through a process of continuous improvement in standards and the updating of our organisational structure.*
 - (iv) *We will achieve and retain BS8555 level 3 accreditation.*
3. We will develop our people in line with our business strategy. Where the need arises, we will continue to recruit staff with specific skills to strengthen the organisation.
- (i) *We will complete individual training needs analyses, personal development plans and the current Good Relations Competency training programme for all staff; we will deliver the training identified to complete all staff personal development plans.*
 - (ii) *We will continue to undertake further comprehensive staff awareness and satisfaction surveys. We aim to achieve average staff satisfaction of over 80% and an annual staff turnover of less than 20%.*
4. We will continue to strengthen governance and accountability within Groundwork NI.
- (i) *We will complete the ongoing review of Groundwork NI's current Corporate Governance structures and put in place any required changes or new procedures identified.*
 - (ii) *We will continue the process of externally auditing and accrediting all of our financial and corporate procedures.*
 - (iii) *We will achieve the new Charity Commission standard when it is introduced to N. Ireland.*
 - (iv) *We will develop a comprehensive risk register, complete a risk assessment and minimisation process and ensure that it is annually updated and applied to new projects.*
5. We will continue to apply the highest standards in the operation of our financial systems and reporting procedures, including SORP 2005, to give assurance to our funding partners.
- (i) *We will maintain and annually update a three-year rolling strategic planning cycle, along with an annual Business Plan. This will continue to include an annual Board residential planning meeting.*

- (ii) *We will continue to follow the SORP 2005 standard guidelines as best practice in preparing the Trust's annual accounts.*
 - (iii) *We will take the actions necessary to retain our "low risk" financial category rating from DSD, an "unqualified" Annual Accounts report status from our auditors and our "green" (most financially secure) category status from Groundwork UK.*
6. We will continue to diversify our income streams and explore a broad range of revenue generating opportunities to ensure the long-term viability and sustainability of Groundwork NI. We will continue to invest in our ICT infrastructure to provide the required ICT capabilities needed to support the delivery of this strategy.

By 2011-12 -

- (i) *We will source at least 85% of our income from non-core grant sources.*
- (ii) *No individual source of funding will represent more than 20% of the Trust's annual turnover.*
- (iii) *We will acquire the skills and capabilities to improve the quality of our bids; such as investing in GIS software, 3-D AutoCad design.*

4 Measuring Progress: 2009-2012

This framework strategy and priority action plan sets out a high level strategy for Groundwork NI and will inform all our planning processes over the next three years. We will measure our progress in achieving results through a number of headline indicators, which will be tracked annually and used to inform planning and investment decisions in the organisation.

The table below sets out headline indicators alongside an analysis of current activity to measure performance in these areas plus targets where these are relevant.

Indicator	Comment	Target by 2012
The percentage of our combined resources invested directly in local community projects and not on administration.	We currently spend between 80 & 88% of funding directly on individual projects.	More than 85% for each project.
The level of brand recognition among our target audiences.	We have begun to measure awareness and recognition of Groundwork NI through project evaluations and direct surveys among the communities in which we work. M C plan	Aggregate recognition of at least 90% among project partners
The level of stakeholder satisfaction in our work and our ability to respond to emerging need and opportunities.	We have begun to measure stakeholder satisfaction directly through post-project surveys as well as independent evaluations	Aggregate stakeholder satisfaction to be at least 80%.
The level of local impact we achieve in terms of project performance.	We already measure impact in individual communities where we have delivered projects, through both our own internal evaluations and independent project evaluations.	Aggregate project impact score to be at least 80%.
The extent and quality of our relationships with the NI Assembly and government departments, local authorities and partners in other sectors.	We will measure the number and satisfaction level of our relationships with statutory bodies.	To have achieved a good “working relationship” with all 11 new NI local authorities after RPA, plus 1 key Government Departments (DSD)

<p>The amount of income we generate from fee-earning and other non-grant activities such as service contracts and / or public procurement.</p>	<p>We measure and report the amount of income arising from non-core grant sources on a quarterly basis.</p>	<p>Our target is to achieve at least 85% of our income from non-core grant sources.</p>
<p>Our level of business performance and viability measured against a set of agreed standards.</p>	<p>We already measure our performance through a range of financial and operational performance indicators and use the EFQM model to gain an overall picture of our performance.</p>	<p>Our target is to achieve an EFQM score of more than 400 (EFQM 4 star level) by 2012.</p>
<p>Our performance in improving the retention, progression and satisfaction of staff.</p>	<p>We are already measuring staff satisfaction, retention and progression on an annual basis. Detailed measures will be included in the Quality Plan</p>	<p>Average staff satisfaction to be over 80%; annual staff turnover to be less than 20%.</p>
<p>The environmental impact of our business</p>	<p>We are working to achieve BS8555 accreditation in 2009. This will give us baseline information to allow us to set specific environmental targets for the next three years</p>	<p>Achieve BS8555 Part 3 accreditation by March 2010; meet set targets by 2012.</p>