

# THE ROYAL TOWN PLANNING INSTITUTE

## WELSH INTERNATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK CONSULTATION

Memorandum of observations to the Welsh Assembly Government on  
the consultation paper

**March 2006**

### **GENERAL COMMENTS**

1. The RTPI welcomes the launch of the first consultative paper on this topic by the Welsh Assembly Government, and looks forward to a continuing dialogue in advancing this agenda.
2. The commitment within the Welsh Assembly Government Sustainable Development Action Plan to work with NGOs in the development sector to identify a positive Welsh contribution to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is welcomed by the RTPI. As an NGO in the development sector with members working in the international development field, the RTPI shares the determination to raise the profile of the International Sustainable Development agenda, and the role which Wales can play within it.
3. Wales has a strong and growing skills base in regeneration and sustainable development, which has the potential to play a significant role in enhancing links between Wales and developing countries. This applies in particular to the transfer of knowledge, skills and expertise to locations where they are most needed in the world. Sustainable progress in delivering the MDGs will be dependent on the development of a broader regeneration agenda in developing countries, which will enable the economic performance of local communities to be raised in ways that will also contribute to achieving social and environmental objectives. This will inevitably be dependent on capacity building within those communities themselves.
4. In recognition of the need for cross-cutting skills in delivering sustainable regeneration, the RTPI has been working with other development orientated professional bodies in Wales to establish a Regeneration Skills Collective. These arrangements have the potential to provide a valuable resource in developing the role of Wales as a source of knowledge transfer for developing countries.

### **DETAILED COMMENTS**

#### **Geographical and Thematic Priorities**

5. An immediate challenge for the Welsh Assembly Government in developing its own organisational role is to formulate an understanding of the level of current activity by governmental and non-governmental organisations in the international sustainable development field from within Wales. The RTPI welcomes the initiative taken by the Welsh Assembly Government to fund a co-ordinating post, and would regard an audit of current activity as an early priority for the individual concerned. This would provide a stronger information base against which to consider the consultation questions within the paper. Understanding the links

between Wales and other parts of the developing world, both longstanding and more contemporary, must be a first stage prior to defining global geographical priorities for Wales. Clearly, the existence of established links will facilitate the effective use of those resources which are able to be made available for these purposes.

6. The consultation paper identifies particular expertise in the fields of education, health, gender and language, and the strength of our civil society, as competences which might determine the selection of thematic priorities for the framework. The RTPi believes that Wales possesses a broader range of relevant skills linked to the processes of regeneration and development, with competences extending across a broad range of fields including:
  - land use and transport planning
  - architecture
  - civil engineering
  - community regeneration
  - economic development
  - housing
  - landscape design and management
  - project management
  - property development
  - sustainable development
  - tourism
7. Ultimately, it will be the organisational skills which enable these professionals to work effectively together, that will determine the success of regeneration programmes. This applies in Wales no less than in developing countries. These are perhaps the critical competences that could be made available.

#### **Responding to International Disasters**

8. Recent international disasters have focused world attention on the relief and development needs of many of the world's poorer communities. Clearly, humanitarian professionals have a key role to play in ensuring that immediate needs are met. Thereafter, however, the broad range of regeneration skills outlined above, are required to ensure that communities can progress their recovery to a position where they can become increasingly self-sufficient.

#### **Wales' Contribution to International Development**

9. Clearly capacity building is the key to finding solutions to short term disasters and longer term regeneration. Inevitably, however, this takes time, and the use of secondments can also help to fill short-term skill deficits. In the longer term, programmes of placements, exchanges and training will be needed. If these are to be meaningful, they need to operate within a strategic framework, and be seen as components of a long term programme. There is an essential role for the Welsh Assembly Government in building a long term programme, and developing a strategic framework, within which it can help to facilitate the creation of formal links between organisations in Wales, and their counterparts in developing countries.