

PRESS RELEASE  
Department for Regional Development

29 November 2004

**MINISTER LAUNCHES THE NEXT PHASE OF CONSULTATION ON  
WATER REFORM**

Minister of State John Spellar MP today announced the commencement of a further period of consultation on Government's proposals for the reform of water and sewerage services in Northern Ireland. The Minister said:

**“ I have today published for public consultation an Integrated Impact Assessment on the various proposals for the reform of water and sewerage services which I have announced over recent months. ”**

The Minister explained that the Integrated Impact Assessment analyses how the emerging policy proposals align with the Government's wider policy objectives as well as its statutory obligations. The consultation document includes an assessment of the impacts of the various elements of the Water Reform Programme in respect of equality of opportunity, on businesses and the rural community.

The consultation papers also explain why the government considers it essential that the Water Reform Programme moves forward at this time.

The Minister commented. **“We are seeking to achieve an early return of devolved government, so that locally elected Ministers can address the challenges of the reform agenda. It is, however, vital that we continue**

**the work necessary to enable the delivery of efficient and effective water and sewerage services at a fair and affordable price, and without depriving other public services of necessary funding. Delay would impose costs on the Northern Ireland budget that we naturally want to avoid.** The Minister explained that he had set a 14 week period for consultation on the Integrated Impact Assessment ahead of the publication of legislation to implement the final package of reforms during the first half of 2005.

**“I encourage all to consider very carefully the detailed evidence and analysis presented in this documentation. I will consider all views received before finalising my proposals for Water Reform to be brought forward in draft legislation in early 2005”** the Minister concluded.

The consultation period on the Integrated Impact Assessment closes on Friday, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2005.

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

1. In developing policy, Government must consider the wider impacts of its proposals. For example, there are statutory obligations to assess impacts in respect of equality of opportunity, and human rights. Other assessments are performed in respect of the impact in rural areas (“rural proofing”) and on businesses (“regulatory impact assessment”).
2. The Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) is a methodology tool to enable Northern Ireland Government Departments to perform the various assessments in a co-ordinated way, and by gathering these in draft form into one place, to facilitate public consultation.
3. The IIA is presented in a suite of documentation: (a) Policy Proposals Paper: setting out the rationale underpinning reform; (b) IIA Overview: an assessment as to how the Water Reform proposals align with key

over-arching Government policies; (c) An Equality Impact Assessment: considers the impact on equality of opportunity of the chosen domestic charging regime; (d) Regulatory Impact Assessment : assessing the financial implications for the business, voluntary and agricultural sectors of changes to the non-domestic charging arrangements; (e) Summary and response form.

4. The various impact assessments are issued in draft form for public consultation before a Final Integrated Impact Assessment is produced.
5. The outcome of the IIA consultation will inform the development of the new legislation that will be required to implement the proposals for Water Reform. It is anticipated that consultation on the draft legislation to implement Water Reform will take place during the first half of 2005.
6. All IIA documentation is available on the Water Reform website: [www.waterreformni.gov.uk](http://www.waterreformni.gov.uk)

: