

CHAPTER 4: POLITICAL & SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

This chapter considers how political and social factors influence the pattern and nature of waste arisings and disposal within the arc21 Region, and the choices and locations for future waste management systems.

INTRODUCTION

- 4.1 The update of the Waste Management Plan has been developed within a changing political climate and rapidly changing socio-economic context. Key issues which will affect future waste management decisions include:
- Political developments, in particular the suspension of the Assembly and the restoration of direct rule since 2002;
 - The level of cross border co-operation with local authorities in the Republic of Ireland;
 - The proposed restructuring of local government within Northern Ireland;
 - Community issues, including the impact of human rights and equality issues, and the need for social cohesion;
 - Lifestyle trends & population changes; and
 - Economic health & technological changes.
- 4.2 The overarching socio-economic strategic framework for Development Plans, including the Waste Management Plan, is provided in *Shaping Our Future*, the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025. The document contains Strategic Planning Guidelines for supporting economic development, developing transport, tackling deficiencies in infrastructure, rejuvenating urban centres, strengthening social cohesion and for the protection and enhancement of the physical, natural and man-made environment. It takes account of key driving forces such as population growth, the increasing number of households, transportation needs, economic changes, and the spatial implications of population distribution.
- 4.3 Proposals included in the Waste Management Plan pay regard to these Strategic Planning Guidelines and the objectives of achieving sustainable development, social cohesion and a high quality of life for all citizens in the arc21 Region.

POLITICAL CONTEXT

Political Structures

- 4.4 The Good Friday Agreement resulted in significant changes to the way Northern Ireland is governed. Between, 1999 and 2002 the Northern Ireland Assembly provided the opportunity for local politicians to have direct control over local affairs. The arrangements also put in place structures for increased cross border co-operation with the Republic of Ireland and formal structures with Britain.
- 4.5 The Assembly was suspended in October 2002 and direct rule from Westminster was implemented. Since the suspension the Secretary of State, assisted by the Northern Ireland Office has assumed responsibility for the direction and control of the Northern Ireland Departments, such as Environment, Education, Regional Development and Social Development. Following its suspension, legislation being considered by the Assembly was processed instead through Westminster, where it took the form of Orders in Council.
- 4.6 Although new elections were held for the Assembly in late 2003 it remains suspended indefinitely.

Restructuring of Local Government

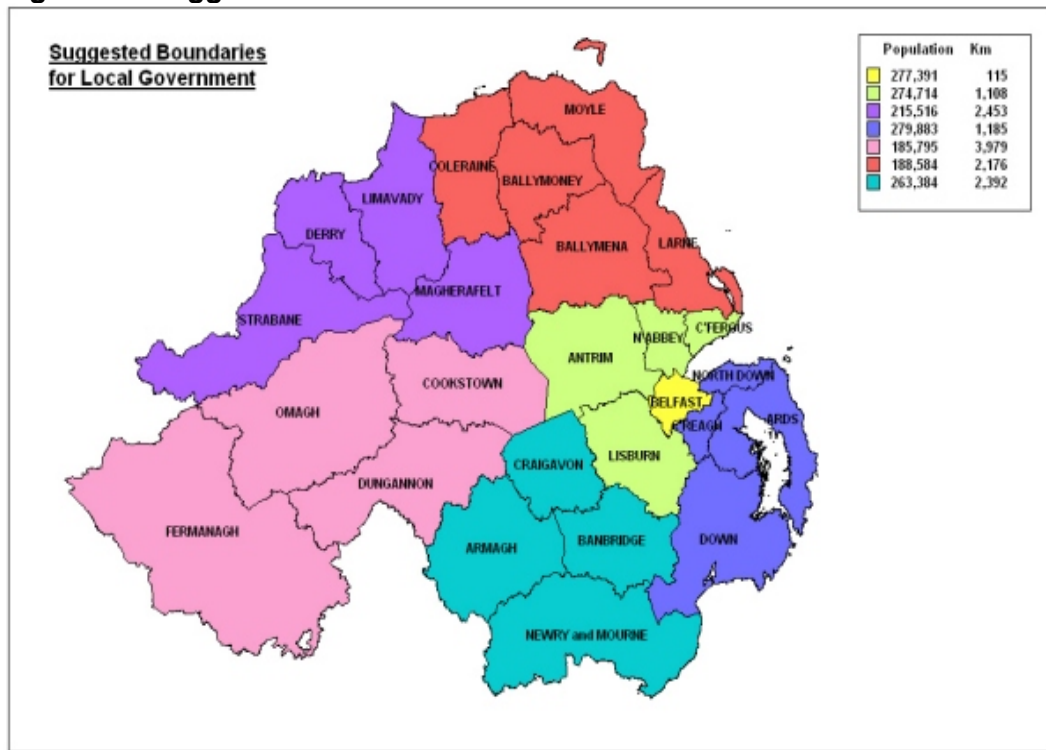
- 4.7 In 2002 the Review of Public Administration (RPA) was established. This body was formed to undertake a comprehensive and strategic examination of all parts of the public sector in Northern Ireland including the administration of health, social services, education, housing, local government and quangos.
- 4.8 The RPA 'Further Consultation' was published on 22 March 2005, containing detailed information and an initial consideration of equality, social need, good relations and rural issues. Views were sought on these issues. The RPA 'Further Consultation' document set out a range of proposals for a two-tier model of public administration which proposed a restructuring of local government that would lead to the 26 current local Councils being reduced to seven. This has potential to affect municipal waste management arrangements and delivery of services in particular.
- 4.9 The consultation period ended on 30 September 2005. A total of 1032 responses were received from organisations in the public, private and voluntary and community sectors and from private individuals.

4.10 In November 2005 the RPA published a report based on the consultation, and provided proposals for the new structure and administrative boundaries of local government. They proposed that a Local Government Boundary Commissioner would be appointed as soon as possible. The Boundary Commissioner will be asked to use the following configurations as a starting point for the boundary review:

- Belfast
- North East: Coleraine, Moyle, Ballymoney, Ballymena and Larne
- Antrim: Carrickfergus, Newtownabbey, Antrim and Lisburn
- Down: North Down, Newtownards, Castlereagh and Down
- South: Craigavon, Armagh, Banbridge, Newry and Mourne
- North West: Derry, Limavady, Strabane and Magherafelt
- South West: Fermanagh, Omagh, Cookstown and Dungannon and South Tyrone.

These configurations of revised Councils are detailed in figure 4.1. The revised boundaries have the potential to impact on a number of decisions taken as part of this Plan and in particular waste collection and waste treatment solutions for Councils within arc21. Considerable progress within a short timescale must be achieved to avoid heavy landfill diversion fines and it is important that momentum already gathered in implementing new waste management structures be continued. Therefore arc21 will continue to procure solutions for managing wastes arising in the region. The way forward with regards contractual arrangements entered into by Councils as part of arc21 will be dealt with by use of a Territory Clause in contract documents.

Figure 4.1 Suggested Boundaries for Local Government¹



4.11 Government policy is also looking increasingly to the involvement of the private sector in major capital and revenue projects. Waste management is regarded as an ideal area for public and private co-operation. Further details of financing arrangements will be considered and developed separately in the arc21 procurement strategy.

Best Value

4.12 In 1997 the Government published proposals for the introduction of a *Best Value* regime for council services. Best Value is designed to promote local accountability and continuous improvement in service performance in order to achieve efficient, economic and effective service delivery. It requires councils to determine local priorities and standards of service and to seek to improve performance on a continuing basis. The Local Government (Best Value) Act (Northern Ireland) 2002 came into force on 1 April 2002 and places a duty of Best Value on councils in Northern Ireland.

¹ Review of Public Administration NI, Nov 2005

- 4.13 The aim of Best Value is to ensure that Councils seek to achieve continuous improvement by having regard to the efficiency, effectiveness and economy of their service delivery. The Best Value concept is important for the selection and procurement of a practical and affordable solution for the management of municipal wastes in the arc21 Region.

Responsibility for Implementation of Waste Management Policies

- 4.14 The Government agency responsible for waste management planning and development control is the DOE, whilst responsibility for waste management operation and implementation remains largely at local council level. The introduction of the *Waste and Contaminated Land Order* (see Chapter 2) has transferred the regulation of waste management facilities away from the local authorities and it is now the responsibility of the DOE (EHS).
- 4.15 The Planning Service in Northern Ireland has responsibility for approving and controlling development in the region. They produce Planning Policy Statements (PPS) which contain policies on land-use and other planning matters. The key PPS in relation to the Waste Management in Northern Ireland is PPS 11 "*Planning and Waste Management*". This was produced in December 2002. Other recent PPS which will also have an impact on waste management strategies include, PPS 13 "*Transportation and Land Use*" produced in February 2005 and PPS14, Sustainable Development in the Countryside produced in June 2004.
- 4.16 EU Directives on waste policy and environmental controls and the NI Waste Management Strategy are designed to promote a shift away from landfill in favour of options that seek to recover the resource potential of waste (see Chapter 2). The initial emphasis has been on controls on municipal waste, as this is where the statutory targets are focused. Other priority waste streams, such as packaging waste, WEEE and fridges and freezers are increasingly being targeted under producer responsibility legislation. The Hazardous Waste Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005, which came into force in July 2005, increased the scope of waste that came under the hazardous criteria and has increased the stringency of the disposal methods required for them. This will have cost implications for each of the local authorities.
- 4.17 The greatest challenge to the arc21 Region will be meeting these targets and addressing the planning implications of new capacity requirements. The planning of future waste management facilities must also have regard to the planning framework under the *Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991*. The Waste

Management Plan takes into account the potential polluting effects of waste management facilities and the sensitivity of land and land uses to pollution. Strategic principles are set out in the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025.

SOCIAL CONTEXT

- 4.18 Population trends, housing trends, lifestyle and consumer habits are major areas of growth and change and all are factors that influence waste production and management. The Eastern Region is recognised as a growth area, resulting in increased rather than decreased levels of waste production unless appropriate measures and initiatives are put in place. Even if waste generation per household can be stabilised there will still be a significant increase in waste arisings by 2020 due to the projected growth in population and number of households.

Population trends

- 4.19 Population projections to the year 2013 provided by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency shown in Table 4.1² show an increase in all arc21 Region areas apart from Belfast. Key population trends include:
1. Northern Ireland has one of the youngest populations within the UK with one quarter of the population under the age of 16 and 28% under the age of 18. The mean age in Northern Ireland is 35.8.years.
 2. Northern Ireland marriage rate (at its peak of 18.2 marriages per 1,000 in the late 1920s), has now declined to 4.6 marriages per 1,000 population (1998);
 3. Northern Ireland death rate has fallen from 78.8 per 1,000 population in the late 1920s to the lowest level on record in 1998 of 8.9 per 1,000 population.
 4. In 2004, there were 22,318 births to Northern Ireland mothers, an increase of 670 births or 3.1 per cent on the 2003 figure. This is the largest annual percentage increase since 1979. This increase was preceded by a steady decline over the previous two decades. Births in 2004 were well below corresponding levels of the mid-1980s, when almost 27,500 births were registered in 1984.

² NISRA,,October 2000

Table 4.1 Population Projections for arc21 Region 2008-2013

Council Area	1998	2003	2008	2013	% change 1998-2013
Antrim	50,200	52,700	54,800	56,200	+11.8
Ards	70,600	73,400	75,300	76,300	+8.1
Ballymena	59,100	60,000	60,800	61,300	+3.7
Belfast	287,500	279,500	275,100	274,100	-4.7
Carrickfergus	37,700	39,800	41,100	41,600	+10.5
Castlereagh	66,600	68,800	69,700	69,600	+4.6
Down	62,900	65,300	67,400	69,000	+9.7
Larne	30,700	31,000	31,200	31,300	+2.1
Lisburn	111,500	116,000	119,400	121,800	+9.2
Newtownabbey	80,900	82,900	84,100	84,600	+4.6
North Down	75,800	76,300	76,500	76,300	+0.6

Source: Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency October 2000 (based 1998 mid-year population)

Housing Trends

- 4.20 Housing is one of the major areas addressed in *Shaping our Future*. Within the arc21 Region, the proposed Spatial Development Strategy includes a compact and thriving metropolitan core centred on Belfast, supported by the major urban centres of Bangor, Carrickfergus and Lisburn and the Castlereagh and Newtownabbey urban areas (the larger traditional market towns with a population of 10,000 - 30,000+). Antrim and Ballymena are identified as main service centres for urban and rural communities (which account for approximately 100,000 residents), whilst Downpatrick, Larne and Newtownards are mentioned as key service centres accommodating local growth. To the south west of the arc21 Region is Craigavon which is identified as a focus of major employment and housing growth with considerable long term capacity and potential. Attention is also drawn to the growth of commuter villages such as Hillsborough, Crawfordsburn and Greenisland.

- 4.21 The spatial strategy was refined to describe a wider Belfast Travel to Work Area and its relationship with the rest of Northern Ireland. *Shaping Our Future* considers a balanced approach to Northern Ireland regional growth across the network of regional towns, where future housing growth reflects the need to maintain the buoyancy of the east of the arc21 Region, while at the same time encouraging a measure of decentralised growth elsewhere. It also encourages revitalisation of local rural centres.
- 4.22 *Shaping our Future* identifies significant growth in housing between the end of 1998 and 2015 to meet regional housing needs. Household projections for each of the council areas within the arc21 Region to 2020 are given in Table 4.2².

Table 4.2 Household Projections for arc21 Region

Cumulative Household Projections 2000 - 2020					
Council Area	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Antrim	18,102	20,112	22,122	24,132	26,142
Ards	29,542	31,252	32,962	34,962	36,382
Ballymena	24,286	26,516	28,546	30,576	32,606
Belfast	124,885	129,760	134,635	139,510	144,385
Carrickfergus	14,846	15,684	16,504	17,324	18,144
Castlereagh	28,267	30,177	32,120	33,997	35,907
Down	22,382	24,237	26,092	27,947	29,802
Larne	12,435	13,255	14,075	14,895	15,715
Lisburn	40,769	43,899	47,092	50,159	53,289
Newtonabbey	31,222	33,332	35,442	37,552	39,662
North Down	31,920	34,020	36,120	38,220	40,320
Regional Total	378,674	402,244	425,647	449,274	472,354

Source: NISRA October 2000

Table 4.3³ shows the growth in the number of households in the arc 21 region between 2001 and 2004. The table illustrates that growth rates increased by a consistent amount in each year of this period.

Table 4.3 Household Growth in the arc21 Region

Year	arc21 Total	Change	% Change
2001	360,900		
2002	363,700	2,800	0.8%
2003	367,000	3,300	0.9%
2004	370,300	3,300	0.9%

Table 4.4³ shows the predicted growth in the number of households in the arc 21 region between 2005 and 2015. The table illustrates that the growth in households is predicted to increase by approximately 1% per annum until 2015.

Table 4.4 Predicted Household Growth

Year	arc21 Total	Change	% Change
2005	373,700	3,400	0.9%
2006	377,200	3,500	0.9%
2007	381,000	3,800	1.0%
2008	384,700	3,700	1.0%
2009	388,400	3,700	1.0%
2010	392,200	3,800	1.0%
2011	396,100	3,900	1.0%
2012	400,200	4,100	1.0%
2013	404,000	3,800	0.9%
2014	407,800	3,800	0.9%
2015	411,400	3,600	0.9%

- 4.23 There are further sources of statistics in relation to household numbers and these are briefly acknowledged in Chapter 5.

Lifestyle Changes

- 4.24 The health and social well-being of the arc21 population has improved steadily throughout the twentieth century. The arc21 Region is typical within the UK in exhibiting a number of well established lifestyle and consumer habits which have led to an increase in the amounts of waste produced. Trends include:

³ Household Projections for Northern Ireland: 2002 – 2025. January 2005. Robert Barry, Robert Beatty, David Donnelly and David Marshall. A National Statistics Publication

- Increasing home ownership and an increasing number of single households;
 - More meal occasions outside the home;
 - Increase in consumption of ‘fast food’ in disposable packaging;
 - More take away and home replacement meals; and
 - Increased use of attractive and excessive packaging as part of the marketing mix.
- 4.25 Increasing car ownership and use, has also facilitated the dispersal of housing and economic activity. The UK Transport Department states that in 2003, 72% of households in the UK owned at least one car. This in turn affects accessibility and transportation opportunities for future waste management planning.
- 4.26 Although these lifestyle changes are generally unfavourable in terms of waste, reduction there is also a growing recognition in society of ‘green’ issues. Concern over global environment and health issues has led to greater emphasis on protection of the environment and the concept of sustainable development. Increasing media coverage of waste and environmental issues has raised public awareness of waste and associated environmental issues. As a result there is a growing demand for “environmentally friendly” products from the general public.

Social Cohesion and Equality

- 4.27 Achieving a more cohesive society in the arc21 Region is a core guiding principle within *Shaping Our Future*. Social cohesion is based on the need for equality of opportunity and treatment, the strong interdependence between parts of the arc21 Region and a partnership approach to waste management. One of the development plans stated objectives is,
- “Together to create an outward-looking, dynamic and liveable Region with a strong sense of its place in the wider world; a Region of opportunity where people enjoy living and working in a healthy environment which enhances the quality of their lives and where diversity is a source of strength rather than division”.
- 4.28 In a healthy society, development must be linked to fairness, inclusion and to a more equitable access to the assets of the arc21 Region for all communities. Issues of fairness and equality are particularly pertinent in the context of Northern Ireland as a deeply divided and polarised society.

- 4.29 Social and Equality needs are recognised through the equality categories as defined by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998). This places an onus on all public authorities in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:
- Persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
 - Between men and women generally;
 - Between persons with a disability and persons without; and
 - Between persons with dependents and persons without.
- 4.30 Social needs are also being addressed through Government initiatives such as *New Targeting Social Need* (New TSN) launched by the Secretary of State in July 1998. This reaches across all Government departments, each of which has to produce and deliver special action programmes for New TSN implementation. European funded initiatives such as the Urban II programme aim to develop physical, social and human resources in areas where equality issues have created past problems.
- 4.31 Any proposals which are to be implemented must have due regard to these equality issues, which may influence decisions on the type and location of future waste management facilities appropriate for the arc21 Region.
- 4.32 The interdependence and complementary aspects of the arc21 Region are relevant factors in the current provision of waste services and this is recognised in the Waste Management Plan. Different parts of the arc21 Region will have different needs and the choice of waste management facilities must aim to achieve a reasonable balance of development across the arc21 Region.
- 4.33 A strong partnership approach, recognising the value of local co-operation and different parts of the arc21 Region and between different communities, has under-pinned the progress that has been made in delivering higher quality and more integrated waste services. Partnership is particularly relevant to the implementation of future collection and recycling measures incorporated into the Waste Management Plan.
- 4.34 The effects of the above on the waste management proposals are discussed further in Chapters 10 to 12.

ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Economic Growth and Employment

- 4.35 The economic forecast for Northern Ireland has been positive for several years and the outlook continues to remain positive for the forthcoming years
- 4.36 In Northern Ireland manufacturing output has tended to outperform the UK and the latest quarter's results show this trend continuing. Northern Ireland experienced a quarterly increase of 2.5% to the fourth quarter of 2004 and a yearly increase of 2.3%. For the same period, the UK experienced a quarterly increase of 0.3% and a yearly increase of 0.6%.
- 4.37 Manufacturing exports from Northern Ireland were estimated to be worth £4.2 billion in 2003/04, this represents an increase of 9.4% over the year. The electrical and optical equipment sector accounted for the largest share of exports (23.2%) followed by food, drink and tobacco (16.3%) and transport equipment (15.3%).
- 4.38 Government policy is encouraging a further shift away from the traditional manufacturing and agriculture sectors to a more knowledge based economy. This swing will have implications on the level and type of industrial waste that is produced within Northern Ireland. Recent trends also emphasise the importance of adopting 'cleaner' technology as part of the manufacturing process which will impact on the nature and quantity of waste produced by industry as well as other emissions to the environment.
- 4.39 The Northern Ireland economy has been adversely affected in the past by the unsettled political situation and the restoration of a peaceful society will undoubtedly yield economic benefits. Over the last five years Northern Ireland economic growth has been at a higher rate than for the rest of the UK. This fast rate of increase is reflected in numbers employed and the rate of growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita and in the greatest fall in unemployment.
- 4.40 Unemployment in Northern Ireland has fallen from 5.5% in November 2002 to 4.6% in November 2005. The average rate of unemployment in the UK in November 2005 stood at 5%.

Table 4.5⁴ illustrates the changes in unemployment in each of the arc 21 districts between December 2004 and December 2005.

⁴ NISRA statistics updates Jan 06

Table 4.5 Change in Unemployment between December 2004 and December 2005

Council	% Change in Unemployment
Antrim	22.9
Ards	- 4.1
Ballymena	11.6
Belfast	-1.7
Carrickfergus	-13.9
Castlereagh	11.0
Down	8.1
Larne	11.6
Lisburn	1.7
Newtownabbey	3.0
North Down	0.4

- 4.41 Although the unemployment level for Northern Ireland as a whole has fallen between December 2004 and December 2005, in several of the arc 21 District Councils, most notably Antrim (22.9%), Ballymena (11%) and Castlereagh (11%) have actually shown rises in unemployment.
- 4.42 Northern Ireland's GDP has grown consistently in recent years. In 2003 it grew by 2.5%, by 3.0% in 2004 and by 3.0% in 2005. Approximately 70% of Northern Ireland's GDP is from service industries. This will have a clear impact on the types and volume of wastes be generated.

Programme for Government

- 4.43 Economic policy within Northern Ireland rests primarily with two Departments: the Economic Policy Unit (EPU) which is part of the Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister, and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI). The EPU has a broad range of responsibilities. In conjunction with the Department of Finance and Personnel, it brings together work on the administration's Priorities and Budget and the effectiveness programmes. The unit is responsible for the development of Public Private Partnerships (PPP) policy and also for providing advice on a range of economic issues, particularly those of a central or crosscutting nature. EPU also has responsibility for the development and strengthening of policy capacity across the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

The DETI's responsibilities include economic policy development, energy, tourism, mineral development, health and safety at work, Companies Registry,

Insolvency Service, consumer affairs, and labour market and economic statistics services. It also has a role in ensuring the provision of the infrastructure for a modern economy.

- 4.44 The Secretary of State via the Northern Ireland Office produced a document containing final priorities and plans for public expenditure in Northern Ireland. This document "The Priorities and Budgets Document 2006-8" sets out both policy and spending priorities for the years ahead. The document explains the policy context, the budgetary proposals and the key commitments being made by government, which fall within the remit of the suspended devolved institutions. This document specifically highlights the key strategic priority outcomes agreed by Ministers and included in departmental Public Service Agreements (PSAs).
- 4.45 In 1999 a 'blueprint' for economic development entitled *Strategy 2010* was developed through the auspices of the Northern Ireland Growth Challenge. *Strategy 2010* sees the future for Northern Ireland in capitalising on the education and skills of its people to leverage new technologies and accelerate the shift out of the struggling traditional industry sectors such as agriculture, textiles and ship building.

Waste Funding

- 4.46 The government confirmed in January 2006 that for the year 2006/7 the funding allocation of £10 million available to Northern Ireland Councils for waste management will be cut to £7 million. In addition 100% of this 2006/07 funding is for new capital projects, rather than for costs involved in maintaining established infrastructure and services. It was also confirmed that the grant scheme would close in March 2007.
- 4.47 Funding changes will clearly impact on the future aims and objectives for development and implementation of waste management services in the council districts. Accordingly they will need to be carefully considered by arc21.

Technological Change

- 4.48 The document 'Think/Create/Innovate - the Regional Innovation Strategy for Northern Ireland' was published in June 2003 by an Inter-Departmental Working Group (IDWG) comprising all NI Government Departments and Invest NI. The vision of the Strategy is to create a culture and environment within which Northern Ireland will prosper by using its knowledge, skills and capacity to innovate.

- 4.49 The Department of Trade and Industry operate a bi-annual “Technology Programme” where funding is available for to develop new technologies. Launched in October 1994, the programme has resulted in the establishment of 18 centres of excellence through investments totalling £34 million of which £20.5 million has been contributed through the European Regional Development Fund. Over £240m has been allocated through previous programmes and grants awarded range from £30k to £2.2m across 16 key technology areas. £100 million was available through the latest programme launched in 2005.
- 4.50 In addition the *Strategy 2010* set out a vision for the Northern Ireland economy as “*a fast growing, competitive, innovative, knowledge-based economy where there are plentiful opportunities and a population equipped to grasp them*”. The Strategy is aimed at achieving the switch from traditional manufacturing and agricultural sectors to a knowledge-based economy, as traditional *manufacturing is vulnerable to low-cost competition from abroad*. The Information Age Initiative within Northern Ireland is already operational. Its objectives are to encourage the greater use of IT throughout Northern Ireland business, commercial and domestic life.
- 4.51 Technological advances, the adoption of cleaner technology and the Information Age initiative have the potential to impact positively in terms of waste prevention by reducing the nature and types of wastes that are produced. Advances in waste management mean that alternatives are available from which appropriate solutions and treatment technologies can be identified. Improvements in infrastructure and recent investments mean that these technologies can now be readily available across the arc21 region.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- 4.52 The socio-economic factors described above may be summarised in the Government’s sustainable approach to development which is based on five principles:
1. Living within environmental limits.
 2. Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society.
 3. Achieving a sustainable economy.
 4. Promoting good governance.
 5. Using sound science responsibly .

- 4.53 These five principles were a core element of the UK Government's new strategy for sustainable development, "*Securing The Future*", launched in conjunction with a [Strategic Framework](#) on 7 March 2005.
- 4.54 In the consultation for the new Sustainable Development Strategy the government made commitments to produce a UK strategic framework for sustainable development covering the period up to 2020. This has been agreed by the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, to provide a consistent approach and focus across the UK.
- 4.55 Climate change is an issue that is playing an increasingly important role in government development of policies and strategies. The UK's Climate Change Programme was published in November 2000 and a review was launched in 2004. It details the policies and measures which the UK is using to cut its emissions of greenhouse gases. It also explains how the UK plans to adapt to the impacts of climate change.
- 4.56 The Government's approach to climate change is underpinned by the Energy White Paper which contains the ambitious goal of reducing the UK's carbon dioxide emissions by some 60 per cent by 2050. It aims to promote energy efficiency and a growth in the use of renewable energy.
- 4.57 These factors play a strong role in the planning and development of new waste management facilities as discussed in Chapter 7.