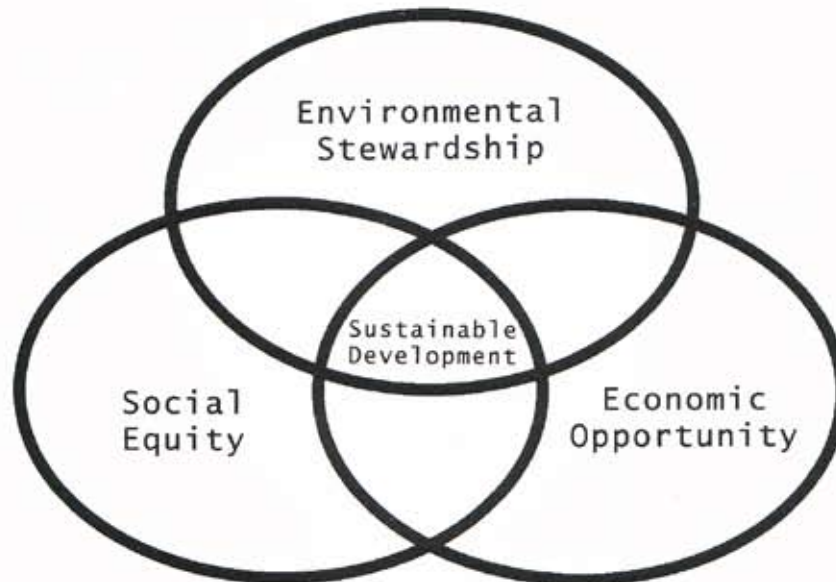


Northern Ireland Sustainability Indicators 1997



21 MEASURES OF A SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY



The UK government adopted the principle of sustainable development when it signed up to the treaties at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. In 1994 it produced strategies on how it would implement those treaties. It is now over five years since those treaties were signed. What progress has been made in that time? Is the UK now a more sustainable country than it was?

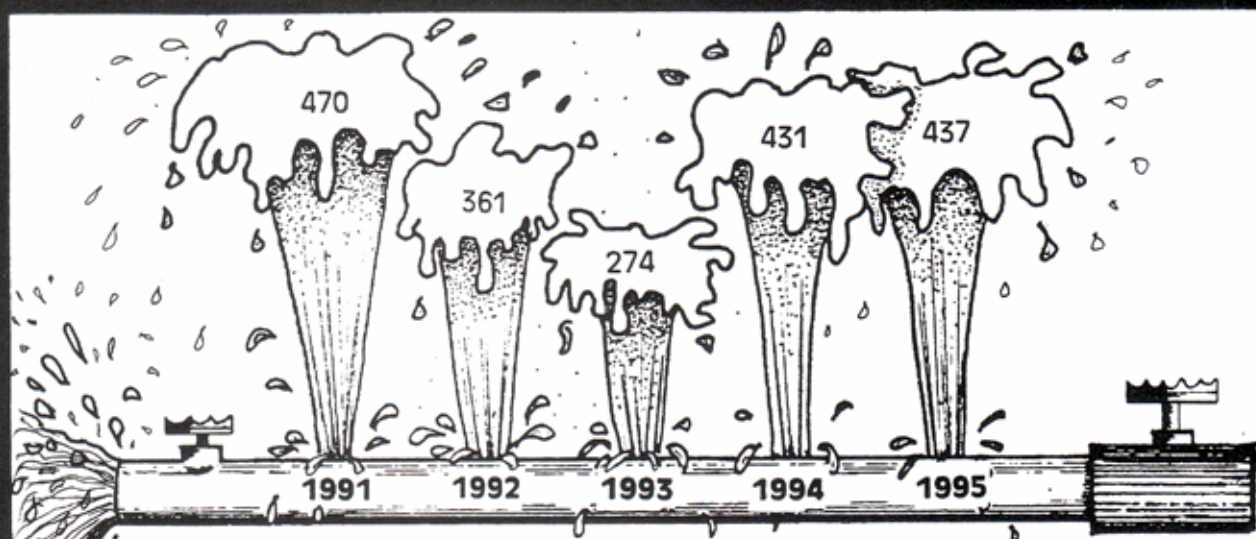
Local Agenda 21 is the local implementation of sustainable development policies. It is led by the Local Authorities, but all sectors of the community, from individuals to central government, have major roles to play. This is particularly true in Northern Ireland where central government takes on many of the functions assigned to the local authorities elsewhere in the UK. It is useful

but not sufficient to know how other regions of the world or of the UK are progressing in promoting sustainable development. We also need to know how we in Northern Ireland are doing.

One way to assess progress on sustainability is to look at changes in a range of areas. It is only by knowing how we are doing that we can determine areas for future action. Accordingly, we have selected a set of Indicators of Sustainable Development in Northern Ireland. They look at progress in the three main areas of sustainable development; the environment, society and the economy; and try to determine whether we are moving towards or away from sustainability.

We have selected data in 21 areas which we feel meet the criteria for good indicators; that they are quantifiable, robust, relevant and easily understood. Unfortunately, appropriate data are not always available. The ones we have selected are not perfect, but they are a starting point. Included here is a selection of these indicators and a summary of the others.



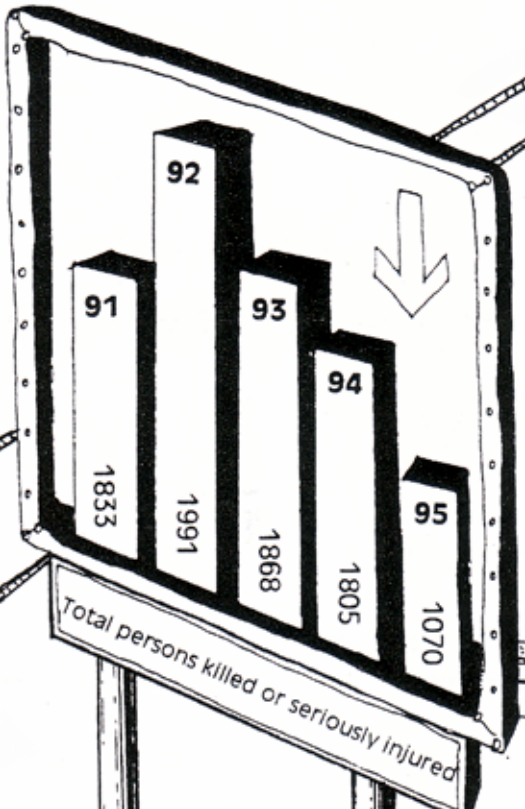


Number of pollution incidents

WATER POLLUTION In recent years there has been a rise in the number of recorded pollution incidents throughout Northern Ireland, leading to a decline in the number of rivers officially classed as 'Good' or 'Very Good'.

ROAD SAFETY

Over recent years progress has been made in reducing the number of fatal and serious injury accidents on our roads. Hidden in the figures is the vulnerability of pedestrians and cyclists who make up a third of all casualties on the roads. There is also a disproportionate level of young and elderly people becoming victims of traffic accidents.



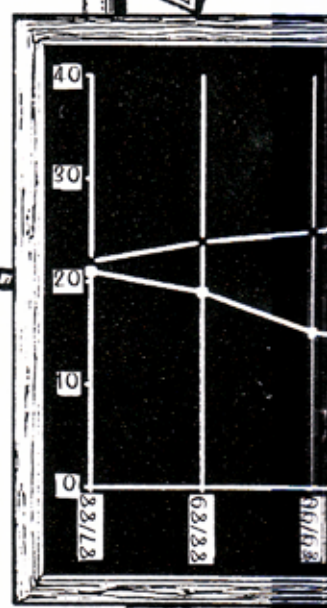
Total persons killed or seriously injured



WASTE Northern Ireland produces twice as much household waste as the rest of the UK. A key factor is the low level of recycling; only 21% of the population of Northern Ireland regularly returns waste for recycling compared to 35% in Great Britain. It is estimated that at least 50% of all household waste is potentially recyclable.

EDUCATION

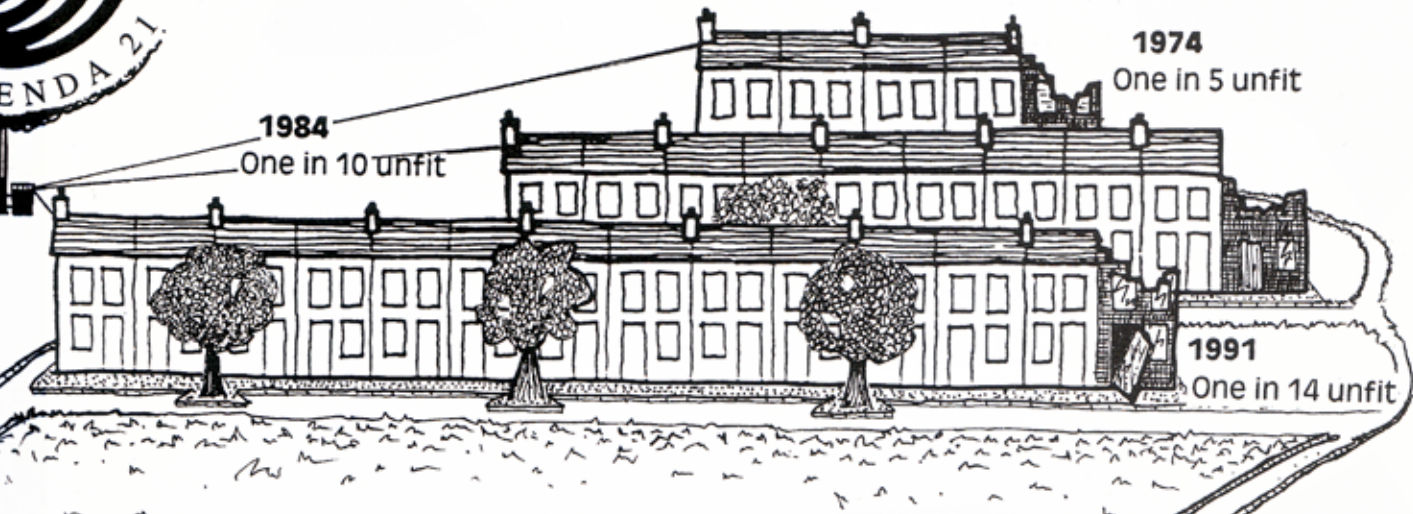
In Northern Ireland the proportion of school leavers with two or more GCE 'A' levels has steadily increased over recent years. At the same time the proportion of school leavers with no qualifications has fallen consistently. Addressing educational disparity between different income groups should become a priority within a sustainable society.





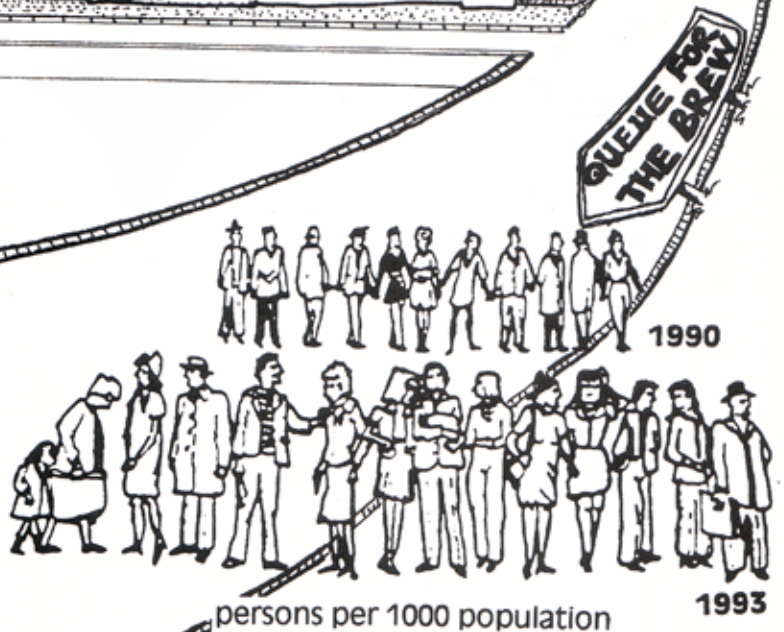
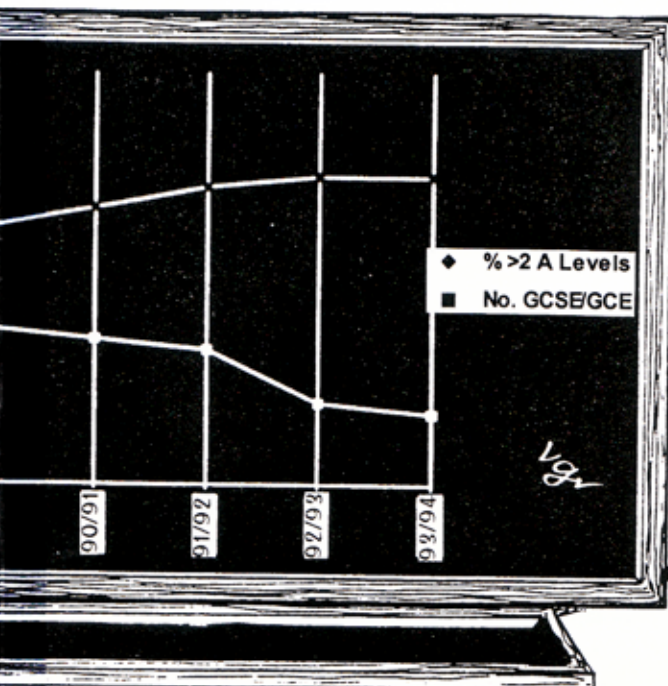
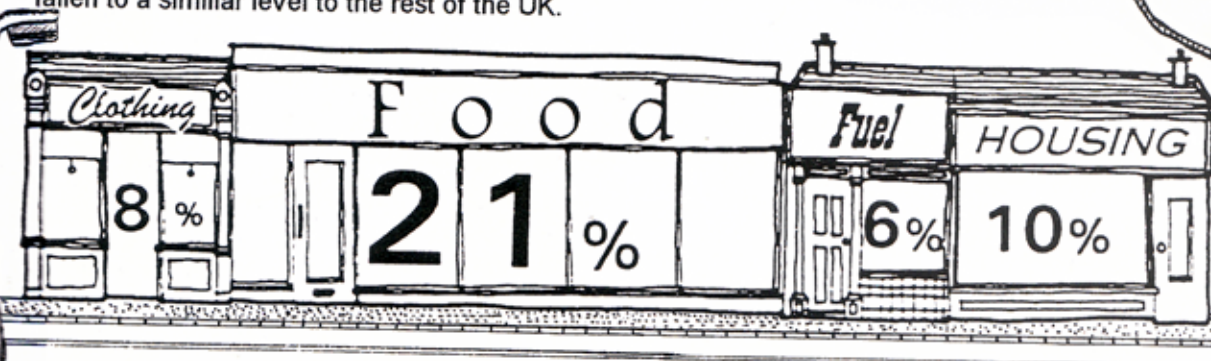
HOUSING

Over the past 25 years considerable improvement has been made to the quality of the housing stock throughout Northern Ireland, largely due to the work of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Recent figures state that the level of unfitness in the local housing stock (7.5%) is comparable to the rest of the UK (6%), though regional variations exist.



FAMILY EXPENDITURE

Over the last five years the percentage of family expenditure put towards essential services such as shelter, heat, food and clothing has fallen to a similar level to the rest of the UK.



POVERTY

Income support in Northern Ireland has increased throughout the 1990's to almost 14 cases per 1000 of the population. Incidences of poverty and deprivation vary considerably between different geographical areas.

On the basis of these indicators Northern Ireland is doing well in some areas, but not so well in others. This is the case for most areas in the United Kingdom. Throughout the UK local authorities have developed suites of indicators to help them in their Local Agenda 21 activities. By assessing the progress that they are making in these specific areas it is hoped that they can gain a general impression of the progress the region is making towards sustainability.

We hope that these indicators are of use to you and stimulate you to think about new and better indicators that are of particular relevance to your work. Copies of the more detailed indicators document are available from Northern Ireland Environment Link. We would like to hear your comments on these indicators, especially suggestions you may have on their improvement and use. We hope that this document may encourage you to think about compiling indicators that are specifically designed for your purposes or specific to your area.

The Sustainable Northern Ireland Programme has been set up to promote and support Local Agenda 21 initiatives in Northern Ireland. If you require assistance in the development of indicators, or in any aspect of your process, please contact us. Tel / Fax: (01232) 327705.

If you would like a copy of the full Indicators document with details on all 21 indicators please contact:
Northern Ireland Environment Link
77 Botanic Avenue, Belfast BT7 1JL
Tel: (01232) 314944
Fax: (01232) 311558

...the other indicators...

Urban Sprawl	☹	Private house building on greenfield sites
Energy	☹	Domestic energy use and level of renewable energy supply
Wildlife Habitats	☺	Number and area of designated ASSI's
Air Pollution	☹	Urban concentrations of sulphur dioxide and smoke
Transport	☹	Level of public transport use
Regional Economy	☺	Gross domestic product as a percentage of UK level
Jobs	☺	Percentage of workforce employed in the public sector
Unemployment	☺	Level of long-term unemployment
House Prices	☺	Average house prices
Environmental Costs	☹	Public attitudes to the cost of protecting the environment
Health	☺	General mortality and infant mortality rates
Places and Spaces	☺	Conservation Area designations and protective listing of buildings
Security	☺	Number of burglaries and perceptions of outdoor safety
Community Relations	☺	Level of sectarian segregation and perceptions of community relations