



**Strabane**  
District Council  
Comhairle Ceantair  
an tSraitha Báin  
Stràbane Destrìck Council

**Draft consultation response on the  
review of domestic rating;  
proposed green rebates on domestic rates**

September 2008

## **Section 1: Introduction**

1.1 Strabane District Council welcomes the consultation on green rebates for domestic rates and thanks the Department of Finance and Personnel for including Council on the list of consultees. Following consideration of the document, Council has provided responses to the questions posed therein. Please find them detailed below. Council trust that our comments and suggestions will be considered seriously by the review team and the Northern Ireland Executive.

## **Section 2: Energy efficient homes**

2.1 Strabane District Council is committed to promoting sustainable development and is supportive of any methods which will encourage energy efficiency in homes. The rising cost of oil has created a real concern regarding fuel poverty locally. Policies which promote or enhance energy efficiency are welcomed by the Council because of the benefits that they have on the environment and on our ratepayer's pocket.

Council would welcome further information on the estimated financial impact this policy will have on local government revenue generation prior to coming to a qualified decision. It is unclear whether this rebate will be taken from the district or the regional rate. Council have worked on the assumption that the rebate will be taken from the overall domestic rate meaning that there will be a cost implication for council. Strabane District Council would therefore welcome further information in this regard.

2.2 Strabane District Council recognises that the public sector has to work closely in partnership with the private sector in order to be efficient. Council understand why NIE Energy have been directly suggested as a suitable partner for delivery of the scheme given the lack of competition regarding electricity

supply in Northern Ireland and the similarity with the existing cash back schemes that they promote. Council would suggest however that any long standing agreement or contract with NIE should be avoided given the potential for difficulties in the future.

3.3 Strabane District Council would be supportive of offering a rate rebate scheme to owner occupying households only and recognise the rationale for doing so. Council note with interest that the same scheme offered by NIE are for means tested households and it is somewhat ironic that the private sector is seen to be supporting the socially excluded whilst the public sector scheme is set up to address those in gainful employment (given, perhaps “the working poor”). Council would suggest that an arrangement the other way around would be more compliant with the principles and ethos of the public sector.

3.4 Strabane District Council suggest that any decision regarding a higher rates rebate should be taken into consideration with the impact this loss of revenue will have on public sector provision. Council would only support this if sufficient information is given to local government regarding the potential impact this policy would have on local revenue.

### **Section 3: Zero carbon homes**

3.1 Strabane District Council would support the principle to introduce initial exemption for new zero carbon homes. Again, Strabane District Council would welcome further information on the estimated impact this policy would have on local government revenue generation before issuing qualified support.

3.2 Council would suggest that older properties which have been upgraded to zero carbon rating should also be included within this policy. Council would assert that the policy would perhaps favour the construction of new properties and perhaps lead to a reduction in the maintenance and desirability of older

housing stock. Notwithstanding the above comments, Council would be supportive of providing this initial exemption to the first residents, rather than the first purchaser of such homes so that self-builds and buy-to-lets are included.

3.3 Strabane District Council is committed to promoting sustainable development and welcomes DFP's approach to the definition of 'zero carbon'. Council recognises the difficulties encountered in gaining clarity in this important area and is supportive of moves to regulate and define measurement of same.