

1. This survey requires you to provide your name and postal address. This is for verification purposes and to prevent multiple responses from the same person or organisation. No anonymous responses will be considered.

I am responding on behalf of my organisation and I do not wish the details of the organisation to be published.

***2. Are you responding on the behalf of an organisation or as an individual?**

Organisation

3. Name and address: Please note, surveys submitted without names and addresses will not be considered

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4. Which of the following best describes you? (Select as many as applicable)

I would like to get involved with this PEACE PLUS Programme

5. Below are a list of indicative actions for achieving Peace and Reconciliation. Please rate the relevance of each type of action as a means to achieve Peace and Reconciliation.

4
4
4
4
4
4

Please explain why you have given the rating above

Sustainable Northern Ireland (SNI) believes that raising a person's quality of life and the overall standard of living for any given population, alongside measures to increase social integration and cohesion, is vital to achieving lasting peace and reconciliation.

This should be done in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The Goals are underpinned by five key elements: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership.

6. If there are other types of action not covered by the table in Question 4 that you think are relevant for achieving Peace and Reconciliation in your local area, please describe them below.

SNI believes that the natural environment is a neutral space which can be used for the benefit of all, regardless of age, gender, religious, political or racial background.

Our outdoor spaces - parks, forest, rivers, hills and beaches are considered to be shared spaces which belong to everyone. These spaces are used on a daily basis for recreation, exercise, events and social gatherings. Our natural environment is something which we all have in common, and there is a collective responsibility for its conservation and improvement so that it may be enjoyed for future generations.

We are pleased to see that the new PEACE PLUS programme will fund activities that contribute to North / South "environmental development in the region..." The island of Ireland and its surrounding seas represent a single biogeographic unit with shared land and sea borders. Environmental issues do not respect political borders, so cross-border collaboration on the protection and management of the environment on the Island will be of great significance to all who live here.

SNI would welcome an increased allocation of funding support for environmental projects, in recognition of the important social and economic benefits that the natural environment provides. Environmental projects can provide a host of benefits, including for tourism, physical and mental health and wellbeing, jobs, recreation and biodiversity.

There is significant scope for delivery of projects and programmes which integrate environmental and social cohesion benefits, such as cross-community environmental regeneration initiatives.

7. What are the main challenges and opportunities for greater Peace and Reconciliation (previously addressed under the PEACE programme)?

SNI was not directly involved with any previous PEACE funding delivery, so is unable to comment.

8. Please list any ideas for initiatives or projects that could address the challenges/opportunities identified in Question 6.

It would be beneficial for communities from different backgrounds to be encouraged to work together in the development and delivery of local projects, and to feed into local democratic decisions which affect their community. This would help improve social cohesion and help break down barriers between communities. The Community

Planning process would be an excellent platform to facilitate this as it provides a neutral space for community-led planning and project delivery.

As mentioned earlier, the natural environment could be utilised as a place to bring different communities together. Projects which support environmental improvement - tree planting, peatland restoration, invasive species clearance, beach cleans etc are great ways of promoting social interaction, team work and galvanising civic pride.

Equally larger-scale projects which seek to address social and economic issues such as fuel poverty, ill health, flooding etc, help to improve wellbeing and address environmental issues such as the climate and ecological breakdown.

SNI would like to see greater uptake of PEACE funds by NGOs and community groups, as well as local authorities. Some projects identified in Community Plans, for example, require a relatively small amount of funding but could deliver significant impact - this could be reflected within both application scoring and reporting requirements.

Unfortunately, the bureaucracy of the application and reporting processes of the PEACE and INTERREG programmes in the past has deterred smaller organisations from taking part. We are pleased to see within this consultation a commitment to "reduce the administrative burden for applicants and to increase the result orientation of the programmes."

9. Rate the relevance of Policy Objective 1: A SMARTER EUROPE

6.

SNI would endorse measures to increase the uptake of advanced technology where it may present opportunities for decarbonisation. In this context, advanced technology should include zero or low carbon energy solutions, energy efficiency measures and smart metering to enable better use of energy.

Measures could also include identifying and supporting smarter ways of working, to achieve growth and competitiveness in the SME sector in a way that is compatible with sustainable development goals.

SNI notes that a Smarter Northern Ireland is also about becoming more resilient to global and local resource shortages and to changing climate conditions. Innovation and technology will be needed to support the development of indigenous food, energy and water systems that are capable of withstanding more extreme weather conditions brought about by climate change.

10. Rate the relevance of Policy Objective 2: A GREENER, LOWER CARBON EUROPE

7 – Extremely Relevant

SNI is very supportive of all the actions listed under Policy Objective 2.

As mentioned earlier, Ireland is a single biogeographic unit, and so, what happens in either jurisdiction can have an impact upon the other. This is particularly true for marine and river pollution incidents, as well as emissions from agriculture, industry, transport, which can be carried north or south depending on the weather conditions. As such, good land management practices, sustainable water management, rapid decarbonisation and climate resilience need to be progressed on a cross-border basis. To this end, PEACE PLUS should support efforts to address these issues.

SNI would welcome funding to support projects which seek to develop local authority-led carbon reduction planning. Local authorities are well placed to lead local level action on climate change, be it through community planning, local development planning, building control, tourism or economic development. Almost half of local councils in Northern Ireland have declared themselves in climate emergency, however, some are better equipped than others to respond. Councils require support to cut local area emissions in line with climate science and the UN Paris Agreement. Extra capacity will enable local authorities to identify the most carbon-cost effective actions and measures, as well as capital funds to deliver them.

Local Authorities in the Republic of Ireland are well placed to assist a Northern Ireland local government carbon reduction programme, as the Climate Change and Low Carbon Development Act (2015) placed a requirement on Irish councils to bring forward local climate change mitigation and adaptation plans. It would be useful to utilise the knowledge and experience of councils in the border counties, and progress local authority climate change planning on a cross-border basis.

SNI would also welcome funding to support projects which seek to tackle river basin management and flooding. Implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD), with its requirements for good ecological status, has resulted in the formulation of River Basin Management Plans. Three of these Plans operate on a cross-border basis because of shared catchments. In 2018, only 31.3% of NI river water bodies were classified as having 'good' ecological status, much lower than the European average. While some funding may understandably be directed towards improving water and waste treatment infrastructure, support needs to be made available for wider catchment activities such as tackling diffuse pollution and soil erosion.

11. Rate the relevance of Policy Objective 3: A MORE CONNECTED EUROPE

7 – Extremely Relevant

Under previous funding programmes, European investment has been instrumental in the rollout of improved public transport services for Northern Ireland. SNI would welcome additional funding for zero and low-carbon methods of transport. This may include financial support for cycle infrastructure, EV or hydrogen-powered buses, reopening the old railway network, electrification of railway lines, or the rolling out of rapid charge points to encourage the uptake of ULEVs. These measures will help reduce carbon emissions and travel time, whilst improving connections between the North and South.

SNI would also advocate for improvements to ICT infrastructure insofar as it can enable remote working and working from home. This will have a positive knock-on effect for transport emissions as fewer people will be required to travel to and from their places of work. Furthermore, improved ICT infrastructure could create more opportunities for online and distance learning, as well as low-carbon networking via conference calls, webinars etc which negate the requirement for workers to be "physically present" at events or meetings.

12. Rate the relevance of Policy Objective 4: A MORE SOCIAL EUROPE

5.

See response to Q1 and Q2.

13. Rate the relevance of Policy Objective 5: A EUROPE CLOSER TO ITS CITIZENS

7 Extremely Relevant

SNI supports activities to boost tourism provided that projects funded under PEACE PLUS are sustainable.

The World Tourism Organisation (WTO) defines sustainable tourism as "tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities." Tourism which degrades the natural or built environment would be to the detriment of the activity of the environmental NGO sector as well as the environmental objectives of the PEACE PLUS programme.

SNI supports measures to progress more sustainable models of tourism in Northern Ireland, predicated not on the quantity of visitors but on the quality of the visitor experience, maximising local social, economic and environmental benefits. SNI believes there is significant opportunity to increase 'agricultural tourism' in Northern Ireland, which, following Brexit, would be a possible route to ensuring the means for many small farms' survival. By diversifying business operations, farm operators would be able to ensure a more stable income whilst offering a novel visitor experience which encourages more overnight stays and greater economic benefit to local communities.

SNI supports measures to promote cultural heritage, including support for the built environment. Our historic buildings, monuments and sites provide opportunities for tourism, employment, provide a sense of place and instil civic pride. They also help us to understand and give context to our shared history. The PEACE PLUS programme should seek to support projects which promote (and enhance) the built environment.

14. What are the main challenges and opportunities for the wider economic and territorial development of the programme area (previously addressed under the INTERREG programme)?

The UK's decision to exit the European Union presents a considerable challenge for the future of the PEACE PLUS programme as it is dependent on funding and support from the EU, the Irish and UK governments. Regardless of the outcome of Brexit, SNI is strongly supportive of PEACE PLUS and its continuation to 2027 under the proposed programme. Much of the good work supported under previous programmes would not have been possible without this funding.

15. Please list any ideas for initiatives or projects that could address the challenges/opportunities identified in Question 13.

National Park designation:

While there are 14 National Parks in Great Britain, and 6 in Ireland, Northern Ireland does not yet have any, despite having some of the most breath taking scenery in the British Isles. As well as providing much needed legal protection for wildlife and habitats, a national park would also create tourism and commercial opportunities for the local area. The breath taking Mourne Mountains covering the area from Slieve Croob to Newcastle and Carlingford Lough, would be the ideal setting for a national park in Northern Ireland.

In anticipation of fears among the local community about its impact on their lives, PEACE PLUS funding could be used alongside designation to National Park status to reduce negative ramifications and enhance benefits for local communities.

Two ideas for PEACE PLUS funding, compatible with but not uniquely applicable to the creation of a National Park, include:

Peace Forests:

Northern Ireland has the least woodland cover in Europe. Whilst tree planting alone can't solve the climate crisis, it constitutes a viable and cheap solution to offsetting present day emissions while plans are developed to reduce the emissions of tomorrow. Trees offer a myriad of benefits to society not just in terms of their ability to sequester and store carbon, but also by improving air quality, water quality, mitigating flood risk, habitat for biodiversity and recreational space for health and wellbeing.

As companies increasingly look for ways to offset their emissions, it is important that forest creation and expansion is regulated and that trees are planted in ways that are sustainable and maximise benefits to local communities and the environment. Consideration should be given to the species planted (e.g. native woodland), where they are planted (e.g. upland areas to maximise potential for flood water retention) and who does the planting (e.g. socially disadvantaged communities and communities affected by conflict). Social cohesion requirements could be included in the design of large scale

tree planting projects through the idea of "Peace Forests" i.e. cross-community planting of trees.

In addition, most of the peatland in Northern Ireland is emitting carbon instead of storing it. Scotland has invested £200m in peatland restoration, however Northern Ireland is yet to allocate funding for this. There is significant scope to carry out similar environmental regeneration with respect to natural wetland restoration and expansion projects.

Eden Project:

The Eden Project in Cornwall is a beacon of cultural and sustainable tourism and has been a successful economic strategy for the region, creating 4000 jobs and attracting 75,000 tourists annually. However, it has been criticised for negatively impacting on the local environment and the wellbeing of local residents due to the air and noise pollution created by visiting cars.

Northern Ireland could work with border counties to create a tourist attraction based on the Eden Project in Cornwall, using a brownfield site close to the Mourne Mountains that is connected to the public transport network. The project could expand on the scale and ambition in the 'Eden Project Foyle' to include a sustainability and environment learning and activity centre or an eco-business hub. The site could be linked to a Peace Forest and Mourne Mountains which could provide the backdrop for a range of outdoor sports and recreations such as climbing, walking and cycling.

16. To what extent would the greater use of flat rates further simplify management and implementation of projects?

I don't know.

17. To what extent would the greater use of unit costs further simplify management and implementation of projects?

I don't know.

18. Please explain why you have given the ratings in Questions 15 and 16.

19. Please detail any measures that would further simplify management and implementation of projects that are not listed above?

As mentioned earlier in our response, we are supportive of efforts to reduce the administrative burden for applicants and to increase the impact focus of the programme.

20. Below is a list of examples of measures that could provide project development support. Using the scale below, please rate how beneficial each of the following examples would be while applying for funding.

7
7
7
7

Please explain why you have given the ratings above.

SNI believes all of the above elements are useful to prospective applicants, particularly first time applicants who may be unfamiliar with the requirements of the PEACE and INTERREG programmes.

21. Please detail any measures you can suggest that would be beneficial to potential applicants during Project Development that are not listed above?

22. Should the current arrangements to source match-funding continue, or should some or all of match-funding be provided by the applicant (public or private)? Please explain your answer. If you would consider applying to PEACE PLUS, please state in your answer whether you would be willing to provide some or all match-funding?

SNI would support 100% funding for prospective applicants. We believe that a match-funding requirement can serve as a deterrent for some organisations within the voluntary and community sector, particularly smaller organisations with modest income and / or reserves.

23. Please make any additional comments about a future PEACE PLUS Programme that have not already been included in previous questions.

No further comments.

24. If you know of any reports that can inform the future PEACE PLUS programme development, please attach them here:

END