

Plenary meeting (London)

08.09.03



Sustainable
Development Commission

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

PLenary Meeting, 8th & 9th September 2003, Edinburgh

Present:

Jonathon Porritt (Chair)
Maria Adebowale
Rod Aspinwall
Maureen Child
Ed Crooks
Lindsey Colbourne
Anna Coote
Valerie Ellis
Brian Hanna
Alan Knight
Walter Menzies
Tim O'Riordan

Derek Osborn
Anne Power
Charles Secrett
Richard Wakeford
Jess Worth
Raymond Young

Apologies:

Rita Clifton
Nicky Gavron
Graham Wynne

1. Conclusions and actions from the July plenary

Accommodation: Jonathon reported that the SDC had been offered offices at 9 Millbank. The Secretariat was exploring the scope for SDC email addresses.

Engagement: We still needed to include business in the engagement strategies.

Actions

- *Secretariat to continue to pursue options for accommodation and email.*
- *Rod to consider how to include business in the engagement strategies.*
- *Richard to ask Norman Glass whether he would be prepared to help us prepare for Spending Review 2004. [Note: He did and he would.]*
- *Philip & Anne to prepare a protocol on external members of steering groups.*
- *Philip to chase ODPM for access to a draft of Planning Policy Statement 1.*
- *Neil to circulate Patricia Hewitt's speech to the Green Alliance.*

2. Sustainable Development in Scotland

Sandy Cameron and George Burgess, from the Scottish Executive, outlined the framework for SD activity within Scotland and briefly described some specific activities.

The Scottish Executive's *Meeting the Needs ... Priorities, Actions and Targets for Sustainable Development in Scotland* included the Executive's three selected priority areas – resource use, energy and travel (RET) – and 24 indicators to monitor progress in these areas. The joint statement by the Leaders of the Scottish Labour Party and the Scottish Liberal Democrats – *A Partnership for a Better Scotland; Partnership Agreement* – set out their political vision for Scotland, including many references to the environment and SD.

Key implications of these two documents for the Executive itself included developing a policy-makers' checklist to ensure SD was flagged up in submissions to Cabinet; placing a statutory duty of best value on local authorities (and a non-statutory duty of SD); and the Executive's SD Unit supporting the Parliament's various committees with SD-related interests. Wider developments in which the Executive had an interest included the establishment of Scotland's SD Forum and (funding) Forward Scotland.

In discussion, the following points were made:

- Jonathon had met Jack McConnell (earlier on 8th September) and had said that the partnership paper was ambivalent between references to the environment and SD, and that SD was clearly not yet the central organising principle.



- Scotland was still considering whether to contribute to the preparation of a revised UK-wide SD Strategy, or whether to draw up a separate one.
- The Commission remained of the view that the focus on RET, whilst perhaps useful as a communications tool, was not an adequate basis for a full-blown SD strategy for Scotland.
- The Scottish SD Forum had provisionally adopted the SDC's six principles of SD. The Forum still had to clarify its role; the Executive was keen that other stakeholders should take responsibility for developing it.
- The Committees of the Scottish Parliament played a very important role; SDC should consider making contact with some of them, and with the Cabinet Sub-Committee on SD.

3. Review of the UK's Sustainable Development Strategy (03/6/1)

It was agreed that we encourage Defra to evaluate the delivery of the current strategy; we should offer to do this on their behalf. Setting objectives for the next strategy should be seen as a separate exercise, following from the evaluation.

Action

- *Jonathon, Derek and other interested Commissioners to revise the paper in the light of discussion and submit it to Defra. [Note: Jonathon prepared a memorandum to Margaret Beckett on this topic. He and Derek agreed to work up the more detailed proposals in the light of the response to that.]*

4. Sustainable Communities Plan (03/6/2)

Commissioners endorsed Anne's paper and agreed that we should publish it. The Regeneration Steering Group should consider how it tied in with the report that it was preparing. And we should build on contacts with the Egan review of the skills needed for implementing the Communities Plan.

Actions

- *Commissioners to let Anne have their further comments on the contents and/or structure of her paper.*
- *Anne to revise the paper and arrange for it to be edited for publication.*
- *The Regeneration SG to consider how Anne's paper ties in with its own report.*

5. A vision of a sustainable society

Lindsey facilitated an exercise to identify our ideas about possible developments by 2010 which would demonstrate that, by then, we had reached a 'tipping point' towards a sustainable society.

Action

- *Lindsey to discuss these ideas with Rita and Vision Group, to prepare advice for November plenary on how to proceed with developing a vision.*

6. Bids for funding from Devolved Administrations and Whitehall Departments

Scotland: A bid had been submitted to the Scottish Executive for £100,000 to fund a Secretariat post in Scotland; we were awaiting a response. Commissioners discussed ways in which the bid could be strengthened.

Wales: Rod had submitted a bid to the Welsh Assembly Government for a person to liaise between them, the SDC and the Welsh SD Forum. Commissioners were concerned that, if funds were available for SD work, there might be political pressure to invest it in Wales alone, rather than in links with the rest of the UK.

Defra: Commissioners agreed that, in our bid for further funding from Defra, we should include the fact that we will help build good relations with the devolved administrations, which would be to Defra's benefit. We should also clarify how much would be spent on work in England, and how much on UK-wide work. Defra had indicated that additional funds might become available for the SDC in the current financial year; it was suggested that some of this could be spent on projects in the devolved areas, to demonstrate our value to them.



ODPM (03/6/3): It was agreed that our bid should make more of the help we could offer ODPM in meeting their obligation to promote SD. Jonathon asked the Secretariat for a brief note setting out how we would engage with ODPM over this bid, including through his meeting with Mavis Macdonald on 24th.

DTI (03/6/4): Commissioners agreed that the bid should set out how we could build on our current engagement with a range of issues relevant to DTI, not only the promotion of a low-carbon economy. It should take account of DTI's SD Strategy, Patricia Hewitt's interest in the social dimensions of SD and the opportunity for the UK to offer global leadership on business-related issues of SD.

DfES: Jonathon had submitted comments on the DfES SD Action Plan, which would be published shortly. Following that, he would prepare a bid for funding, offering help with capacity building within DfES and engagement with key stakeholders.

FCO: The FCO had invited us to comment on a draft SD Strategy; it was with Tim, Charles and Derek, and a few outside people, for advice. This advice would be followed up by a meeting with Bill Rammel. But we would not offer to do any further work unless funding was available to support it.

DCMS: We had submitted further comments on DCMS's draft SD Strategy and were awaiting the final version.

Actions

- *Secretariat to continue to work on bids to Defra, ODPM and DTI, with interested Commissioners.*
- *Secretariat to prepare note on engagement with ODPM on bid.*
- *Jonathon to raise issue of funding in his meeting with Mavis Macdonald.*
- *Jonathon, with Jess and Val, to develop funding proposal to DfES.*
- *Tim, Charles and Derek to advise on FCO SD Strategy; Scott to pull together.*

7. Sustainable Consumption and Production (03/6/5)

Jonathon would be meeting Elliot Morley on 10th September to discuss, *inter alia*, sustainable consumption and production; he would offer to continue to work with Defra and DTI in helping develop the sustainable consumption debate. ACCPE was to publish a report *Towards Sustainable Products*, also on 10th September.

The Commission agreed to publish a commentary on the Government's SCP framework, to coincide with its launch on 25th September. We would publish our consultants' report a week ahead of that, with some views of our own drawing on that report and on *Redefining Prosperity*.

Commissioners made various suggestions for a 'hook' on which to hang our views: London Fashion Week, implications for household and business budgets (including household debt), climate change and food. But they agreed there were also potential problems in getting our message across in the media.

Actions

- *Jonathon, Secretariat and Amazon to develop a media pack based on agreed approach, including suggested timings; and to consider approaching Ed's contacts for advice on best form of media package.*
- *Alan to let Victoria have copies of ACCPE report, for circulation to Commissioners.*

8. Secretariat and Commissioners' report (03/6/6)

Communications: The Secretariat were tendering for a new design contract; Commissioners were invited to help review the tenders on 24th September. Esther asked Commissioners to let her know if they were aware of any good communications work on sustainable development.

Food: Richard and Charles would be giving oral evidence to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee on 15th September, as part of its enquiry into biofuels.

Pioneers: Rod would be addressing cement manufacturers in December.



Local issues: Fay now expected that the report of her work for us and JRF could be published at an IDEa conference in January 2004.

Regions: Referenda on Elected Regional Assemblies would be taking place in the North West, North East and Yorkshire & Humber. Jonathon would shortly be speaking on SD in the NW; it would be good if he could do the same in NE and YH.

Regeneration: The Steering Group would meet after the plenary to take forward its report on sustainable regeneration, for consideration at the November plenary; they would link it with Anne's paper on the Communities Plan.

Olympics: It was agreed that any further SDC work on the Olympic bid should be in conjunction with the London SDC; for instance, we could seek a joint meeting with Tessa Jowell and/or inspire a Parliamentary Question on what is being done to ensure that SD is at the heart of the bid.

Future meetings: It was again agreed that all steering groups would meet on the same day, with a short plenary meeting at the end. But each group should expect to meet for only part of the day, so as to enable Commissioners to attend more than one group. A list of dates for plenary and steering group meetings in 2004 was tabled; it is attached.

Actions

- *Commissioners to let Esther know if they are interested in reviewing design tenders on 24th September, and if they are aware of any good SD communications work.*
- *Neil to pursue links with Sustainability First.*
- *Neil to explore next steps on the Olympic bid, with LSDC.*
- *Philip to prepare a timetable for steering group meetings on 1st October.*

9. Other business

Commissioners made suggestions of people who might be interested in the advertised posts of: Vice Chair, Whitehall; Vice Chair, Scotland; Chair, Energy and Transport Steering Group; and Chair, Economics Steering Group. Applications were required by 15th September.

Action

- *Jonathon to consider these suggestions urgently, with Scott, and ask Defra to encourage some to apply.*



Sustainable Development Commission Dates for Meetings 2004	
January Wed 28 th : 1 day Steering group meeting in London	July Wed 21 st : 1 day Steering group meeting in London
February Tues 10 th /Wed 11 th : 2 Day Plenary in Belfast	September Wed 15 th /Thurs 16 th : Day 1 dinner day 2 Plenary in London
April Tues 27 th : 1 day Steering group meeting in London	October Thurs 21 st : 1 day Steering group meeting in London [date subject to review]
June Tues 8 th /Wed 9 th : 2 day Plenary in Wales	December Wed 1 st /Thurs 2 nd : 2 day Plenary in Scotland