

Digital digest

10.10.03



Sustainable
Development Commission



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Digital Digest

| SDC | DIGITAL DIGEST | 260903

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Welcome to our Digital Digest. This email briefing is the first in what we intend to be a regular series of despatches from the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC). Covering our current activities and giving a 'heads up' on what we've got planned in the future, the SDC Digital Digest brings to your inbox bite-sized summary reports of our work, as well as hyperlinks to further information on the [SDC website](#).

I hope you find our update useful, and that you get a glimpse of the fresh thinking and energy we're putting into our work. Please do take the time to feed back to us any comments or suggestions for future Digital Digests - they'll be gladly received. To feed back, click [here](#) or email esther.maughan@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Kind regards

Jonathan Porritt, Chairman
Sustainable Development Commission

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| **SDC Factfile**

The Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) is the Government's independent sustainable development advisor, reporting to Tony Blair and to leaders of the Devolved Administrations.

The SDC exists to act as an advocate for sustainable development across all sectors in the UK, to review progress towards sustainability, and build consensus on the actions needed for further progress.

The SDC is currently working in the areas of climate change and energy, economic growth, health, food and, regeneration and communications. The SDC's six principles for sustainable development are:

Putting sustainable development at the centre
Valuing nature
Fair shares
Polluter pays
Good governance
Adopting a precautionary approach

Want to know more? Click here to visit the [SDC website](#).



| Sustainable production & consumption

How many planets would we need if the world's population consumed as much as we do in the UK? Can we continue our addiction to stuff if we produce it more efficiently, and why do we need so much stuff in the first place?

Yesterday saw the launch of the Government's new Sustainable Consumption and Production Framework, a welcome first step to tackling these issues. In [response](#), the SDC called for a more robust and immediate focus on consumption issues, and proposed the creation of a Sustainable Consumption Roundtable, jointly hosted by the SDC and the National Consumer Council.

In the run up to the Framework launch, the SDC published a report, 'Policies for Sustainable Consumption', concluding that production and consumption can only be sustainable if we address global inequality of consumption opportunity, environmental degradation/resource efficiency and the relationship between consumption and wellbeing.

To view the full report click [here](#) or email [Neil Hornsby](#) at the SDC Secretariat by clicking here.

| Prosperity, redefined

People may be getting richer, but all the evidence suggests that they're not getting any happier.

A recent report from the SDC has called on the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer to focus on improving true quality of life for all citizens, and to rethink the dominance of economic growth as the principal driving force in modern politics.

The [report](#) - Redefining Prosperity - makes the case for doing away with our growth-obsessed model of progress in favour of real, tangible improvements in quality of life and personal wellbeing.

To be followed soon by a series of seminars and workshops, [Redefining Prosperity](#) shows that income growth and a sense of satisfaction do not go hand-in-hand, and sets out a strategic challenge for Government as it reviews the national Sustainable Development Strategy. The SDC will also be working with HM Treasury to explore the implications of this work for the forthcoming spending review.

To find out more about Redefining Prosperity click [here](#) to email Philip Dale of the SDC Secretariat or click here to view the report on the SDC website.

| Flight plans and airborne problems

Emissions from aircraft are an increasingly significant contributor to climate change. At present there is no attempt to make the aviation industry and its customers pay for the pollution they cause. It's time to tackle this with economic instruments, said the SDC in a paper published as part of the Government's consultation on a new Air Transport White Paper.

The [paper](#) urges Government to break the link between economic growth and air traffic and show an international lead. Though economic and social benefits may well spring from increased air travel, problems such as congestion, noise and air pollution around some airports are a serious concern, and emissions from aircraft are a major contributor to climate change.

Potential solutions being put forward as part of the consultation - and in the SDC paper - include a tax on aviation fuel, emissions trading schemes and raising revenue to provide improved air traffic control that will lead to reduced fuel consumption.

To view the full paper click [here](#) or email Duncan Eggar at the SDC Secretariat by clicking [here](#).

| The power of Pathfinders

The SDC has joined with four other organizations to publish 'Building Sustainable Communities: Actions for Housing Market Renewal'. The agenda was launched at the Chartered Institute of Housing conference in Harrogate on 19 June by a partnership of CABI, Environment Agency, the Commission for Integrated Transport, English Heritage and the SDC.

The published report identified seven key actions upon which successful housing market renewal would rely: a realization of the scale of both the task and the opportunity; a positive move to address heritage as an asset; proposals to create places of distinction that make sense as a network of settlements; a recognition of the role of good design in renewal; the development of tools and strategies to deliver that good quality design; a need to place sustainable development at the heart of action and thinking on urban renewal; and finally a need to get ready for the challenges ahead by developing skills and capacity for those delivering housing market regeneration.

If you'd like to find out more about this report then visit the CABI website by clicking [here](#).

| Road to Wellbeing

It's a tried and tested slogan for sustainability - think global and act local. Now the SDC has started work on a new programme that focuses in on local governance, with the aim of re-energising sustainable development at the local level.

A series of workshops - including our successful 'Beyond the Power of Well-Being' - have been conducted, suggesting as an early action point the need to set up a central-local task force dedicated to the issue. We are further exploring this with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, the Local Government Association, the Improvement and Development Agency, and the Audit Commission.

The SDC is also supporting the Scottish Executive on developing guidance on sustainable development and Best Value and other aspects of the Local Governance in Scotland Act 2003.

For more details on this area of our work, please email Fay Blair by clicking [here](#).

| dCARB-uk now online

Just what will a low-carbon society actually look like? How will plans and strategies for cutting out carbon affect our lives?

In July 2002 the SDC completed phase 1 of its dCARB-uk project. The reports can be found on the recently launched dedicated dCARB-uk website. The website will, over time, outline the cutting edge thinking and creative climate solutions we'll need across industrial sectors, regions and local communities.

We are now seeking phase 2 partnership proposals from interested bodies including the Devolved Administrations, Regional Development Agencies and Government Offices

To find out more click [here](#) to email Duncan Eggar of the SDC Secretariat or click [here](#) to visit the dCARB-uk website.

| Energy indicators



Innovation was the name of the game in the SDC's work on DTI's indicators for the implementation of the Energy White Paper.

Following a consultation period that concluded in June, the SDC has encouraged DTI to develop a matrix of indicators that match the four key goals of the White Paper (cutting CO₂, maintaining reliable energy supplies, promoting productivity and ensuring that every home is heated) with the six principles of the Sustainable Development Commission (putting sustainable development at the centre, valuing nature, fair shares, polluter pays, good governance and adopting a precautionary approach).

The SDC envisages that the resulting 24 indicators of progress will be used to monitor the delivery of the Energy White Paper. To find out more contact Neil Hornsby at the SDC by clicking [here](#).

Making the most of food purchasing

The public sector spends nearly £2 billion on food every year. Impacts on the environment, communities, individuals and the economy occur at every point in the production, processing, distribution and use of all this food.

The SDC has been working with Defra to look at the potential for public sector food purchasing to make a more positive contribution to sustainable development. The Sustainable Food Procurement Initiative was launched by Defra on 26th August to encourage the public sector to procure food in a manner that promotes sustainable development and does not discriminate against UK suppliers. The initiative is being overseen by an implementation group with representatives from central and local government, including the SDC.

Defra are holding a national conference on 26th November to kick-start the initiative, consider future priorities for public sector food procurement and explore some successful case studies. More information can be found at www.defra.gov.uk/farm/sustain/procurement/index.htm.

Healthy Futures

As the nation's provider of health services, a huge employer, a major purchaser and consumer of energy, a cause of travel and a commissioner of buildings, the NHS has the potential to make a significant contribution to sustainable social, economic and environmental development.

The SDC's exciting new Healthy Futures project will explore ways of helping the NHS maximise its contribution sustainable development and look at the benefits this approach offers the NHS. In particular we will help the NHS explore how its food purchasing policies and capital development programme can promote improved health, stronger communities and sustainable development. For more information keep an eye on the Healthy Futures pages on our website.

We are currently looking for examples of good practice, particularly in relation to NHS food procurement and the NHS building programme. If you would like to share your experiences with us, please contact either [Susannah Senior](#) or [Victoria Read](#).

| On the radar

The bite-sized bulletins above will have given you a glimpse of how pro-active the SDC is going to be in the months and years ahead as it. Future Digital Digests will bring you even more news on our work programmes so keep your eyes peeled for updates on: the conclusion of our study into sustainable regeneration; our work on health and the NHS; a corporate social responsibility project launch with BRASS centre Cardiff University; and updates on the review of the UK's Sustainable Development Strategy.



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And remember, this is our first Digital Digest, we want future bulletins to be of even more use to our partners and stakeholders in a sustainable future. Click [here](#) to email us and tell us what you'd like to see in future editions! Click [here](#) to unsubscribe from our Digital Digest mailing list.