

Plenary meeting (London)

03.11.03



Sustainable
Development Commission



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Conclusions and actions from a Plenary meeting held on 5 & 6 November 2003 in Romney House, London

Present: Jonathon Porritt (Chair) Rod Aspinwall Maureen Child Rita Clifton (5 th only) Lindsey Colbourne	Present (cont.): Brian Hanna Alan Knight Walter Menzies Tim O'Riordan Derek Osborn (5 th only)	Present (cont): Raymond Young (6 th only) Also present: Ken Peattie, BRASS (6 th only)
Anna Coote Val Ellis	Anne Power Jess Worth	Apologies: Richard Wakeford

1a. Conclusions and actions from the September plenary

Review of the Sustainable Communities Plan: Copies of the final, edited text of Anne's Review of the Plan were available. Anne thanked Richard, Anna, Maria and Walter for their input. Jonathon had written to John Prescott, seeking a meeting about the Review; Philip had sent it to Mavis McDonald (Permanent Secretary, ODPM); Anne would send it to Richard McCarthy and other ODPM officials. It was agreed that we should publish it jointly with LSE's Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, but not until after Jonathon and Anne had met John Prescott.

Spending Review 2004: Derek would continue to keep the Commission up to date with the work that Green Alliance were doing with HM Treasury on SR2004. Richard had proposed to Brian Bender that Defra should second an official to the SDC, who would then work with the Treasury on behalf of the Commission, throughout the spending review process. This person would work with Norman Glass, who had already agreed to do some work for the Commission on the spending review. The Treasury had accepted this proposal, and Margaret Beckett had agreed to it in her meeting with Jonathon. Jonathon would write to Brian Bender to follow this up.

Other actions arising from the September plenary were covered later in the agenda.

Actions

- *Anne to send the Review of the Sustainable Communities Plan to ODPM officials.*
- *Anne to arrange joint publication of the Review with LSE, with SDC support from Kay, after the meeting with John Prescott.*
- *Derek to keep the Commission informed of the Green Alliance's work on the spending review.*
- *Jonathon to write to Brian Bender (copied to Margaret Beckett) to thank him for agreeing to second someone to the Treasury and to encourage him to move this forward urgently.*



1b. Conclusions and actions from the October Steering Group day

It was agreed that having all steering group meetings on the same day had worked well. Meetings should continue to be staggered, as they were on 1st October, to allow Commissioners to attend more than one meeting. Groups should consider how best to ensure that the interests of the Devolved Administrations were represented in their work, and whether to invite external members, in particular from the DAs.

Action

- *All Steering Groups to consider how best the interests of Devolved Administrations should be represented in their work.*

2. Report back on meetings with the Prime Minister and others

Jonathon's report on his meeting with the Prime Minister had been circulated. They had discussed, amongst other things, the contribution of SD to civic renewal and the reform of public services.

Action

- *Commissioners to discuss civic renewal over dinner and as an additional agenda item (15).*

3. Review of the UK Sustainable Development Strategy

As agreed at the September plenary, Derek had prepared a paper about the review of the UK SD Strategy, including a possible role for the Commission. Jonathon had written to Margaret Beckett about this, but had not yet received a reply. It was important that the Devolved Administrations should prepare strategies of their own, but within a UK framework; Jonathon and Rod would make this point to Carwyn Jones (WAG) when they met in December. There should also be a strategy for England. The stakeholder consultation process should be comprehensive, to include (for example) ethnic minority groups as well as SD NGOs etc.

Derek's paper had proposed two stages to the review process: a review of how well the current strategy had worked and advice on what a new strategy should look like. Jonathon had raised this in his meeting with Margaret Beckett, who had agreed that the Commission should carry out a short retrospective review, with funding from Defra, and should work with the SDU on the consultation process throughout 2004. Jonathon was trying to get a secondee from WWF to help with this work. We should publish the report of our retrospective review.

Actions

- *Jonathon and Rod to encourage Carwyn Jones to review Wales's SD Scheme within a UK framework.*
- *Jonathon to write to Brian Bender to seek confirmation of funding for our review work, and that it would be continued to the end of the next financial year.*
- *Derek to seek a meeting with Robert Lawson about the review and our role in it.*
- *Derek to convene an ad hoc SDC Steering Group to co-ordinate the Commission's input to the review process*
- *Philip to advise SDU that Walter and Derek will serve on the regional and local reference groups.*



4. Rural Delivery Review

The Haskins report on rural delivery would be published shortly. Jonathon had suggested to Margaret Beckett that she make a formal request to the Commission if she wanted our help in taking forward the rural delivery work, but she had not yet taken up this offer.

Actions

- *Secretariat to make available copies of the Haskins report when published.*
- *Jonathon and other interested Commissioners to share views on whether the proposals were positive for sustainable development.*

5. Sustainable Consumption; Proposals for a Round Table

Commissioners considered the paper's two optional approaches for scheduling the work of the Round Table (RT). They decided to recommend to Government that the RT aim to submit its principal output by May 2005, but that funding should be provided to enable it to continue its work until December 2005. This would enable the Government to draw on the report's recommendations at the G8 meeting in July 2005, and during the period of the UK's Presidency of the EU in the second half of 2005. But the Government also intended to develop its thinking on sustainable consumption and production in time to influence the review of the UK SD Strategy during 2004; the RT should therefore also contribute to that process.

Commissioners considered that the RT work should address the relationship between public policy and consumers. They therefore welcomed the National Consumers Council's willingness to partner us in this, but the Consumers' Association should also be invited to play a part. ACCPE's work had focused on sustainable production, and was expected to feed into, and converge with, European IPP activity.

Action

- *Jonathon, Alan, Scott and Neil to develop the detail of the Round Table's modus operandi.*

Post meeting note: in furtherance of this action, it was agreed that:

- *Jonathon would suggest to Ed Mayo that Alan co-chair the Round Table with Ed; and, through Alan, Jonathon would consult the Kingfisher Board about this.*
- *Alan, Scott and Neil would discuss widening the Round Table's remit, to include a work programme.*
- *Membership should include Alan, the new Chair of the new Economics Steering Group, and (if she is willing) Rita.*

6. Communications

SD Vision: The SD Vision project group had come to the conclusion that the 'vision' should be compelling for public policy, should give evidence, support and ammunition to current SD advocates, and should be in written form. It would identify the 'tipping points' for achieving a sustainable society, and the public policy actions needed to reach them. This work would also identify gaps in the current UK SD Strategy and so could help with the review process.



Commissioners discussed how to develop the indicators suggested in the paper; they agreed to each consider, over the next week, how to develop these into 'tipping points' (not 'end goal') indicators, and send suggestions to Jonathon and Rita.

Action

- *All Commissioners to work on developing 'tipping point' indicators, and send suggestions to Jonathon and Rita by 14th November.*

Communications staff: Lindsey thanked Esther for her work with the Commission. As Esther would now be with us for only one day a week, Lindsey asked about the next steps in recruiting a new Head of Communications. Scott reported that he had interviewed one candidate and would be seeing another shortly. He and Jonathon agreed to develop the job description and place adverts urgently.

Rita reported that she had approached four companies about seconding someone to the Secretariat's communications team; whilst all had been enthusiastic about the idea, none was able to second anyone. It was agreed that this should be kept on hold until the Head of Communications was appointed.

Jonathon and Esther reported their discussion with Lucian Hudson, Defra's Director of Communications. The prospects for funding from his budget for an SDC Communications Officer Post, and for SDC-Futerra collaboration, were not good.

Actions

- *Jonathon and Scott to finalise the job description for Head of Communications by 14th November and place the adverts as soon as possible.*
- *Jonathon to write to Lucian Hudson, following up issues discussed at their meeting.*

Agenda 2: Commissioners agreed that we should aim to produce our third flagship publication this financial year, possibly as an insert into a broadsheet, and perhaps in a smaller size than *Review* and *Agenda* (but not A4). Jonathon and Scott would talk about how to take this forward alongside their discussions about the Head of Communications (see above). It was suggested that civic renewal could be a possible central theme for the publication.

Actions

- *Jonathon and Scott to consider how to move forward with Agenda 2.*
- *Commissioners to contact Esther if they would like a copy of Futerra's report 'Selling Sustainability'.*

7. Health Update and Discussion

Anna reported that the health team had established and developed links and contacts for best practice, organised regional visits and raised awareness of the programme through the *Healthy Futures* publication and articles in three journals. They had also responded to three consultations promoting SD within new DH policy. They were working in partnership with the Kings Fund and the NHS Alliance on discrete projects. They had made links with ongoing work on the NHS's ecological footprint and were pursuing opportunities for linking in to existing meetings to

deliver SD learning events in the health sector. SDC had been invited to become a self-regulating body for the NHS Gateway mechanism (which controls information going to NHS Chief Executives); Val would be the Gateway lead Commissioner.

Patient Forums were being set up by the Commission for Patient and Public Involvement, who were looking to attract membership from those with an interest in SD.

Actions

- *Commissioners interested in promoting membership of Patient Forums in their own organisations to contact Susannah for further information.*
- *Commissioners to let Susannah and Victoria know of any best practice in the areas of food and new build in the NHS.*

8. Bids for funding from Whitehall Departments and Devolved Administrations

Jonathon reported on bids for funding as follows:

- He had sent the DTI bid to Robin Young and Brian Bender for comments before sending it to Patricia Hewitt.
- Michael Stevenson, Director of Strategy and Communications at DfES, had responded favourably to the idea of funding an SDC work programme on education, on a similar basis to the DH funding. Jonathon would develop a formal proposal (for £75-£80k) after his meeting with Charles Clarke. It was important to engage with the NGOs in this sector such as WWF and Forum for the Future; Jess offered to ask the NGO Policy Forum and the Council for Environmental Education what role they would like to see the SDC play.
- Jonathon would submit a bid to ODPM after his meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister.
- We would need a follow up bid to DH to secure funding for a three year period.
- Jonathon was due to meet Bill Rammell (FCO) but did not expect to make a bid for funding from the FCO.
- He had commented on DCMS's draft SD strategy, and had offered to discuss it with Estelle Morris
- He had had a positive meeting with David Rowlands, Permanent Secretary of the DfT, and was due to meet Tony McNulty. He had also been invited to address the DfT management board.
- Signs were positive that funding would be available from both Scotland and Wales, with funding at least for one dedicated post for each being made available from the new financial year. However, neither yet had formal agreement and more work was needed to finalise the Welsh bid.
- The SDC hoped to have an additional £300-400k in the budget for 2004/05. The bidding process had been facilitated by a letter from Andrew Turnbull to all UK Government Department Permanent Secretaries, stating that he hoped they would respond positively to SDC funding bids.
- It had been made clear to Defra that this projected increase in funding from other sources did not mean that the current SDC budget could be cut.

Actions

- *Secretariat and relevant Commissioners to continue work on bids.*
- *Jess to address SDC's role in DfES with CEE and NGO Policy Forum.*



9. Wales

Rod reported that the Welsh Assembly Government was reviewing the *Sustainable Development Scheme and Action Plan*, with a view to announcing a new Action Plan in March. They had also recently published for consultation a draft spatial plan, *People, Places, Futures*, which had SD issues embedded in it; the consultation for that was due to end in January. These two processes were running in tandem. The SD Forum for Wales was taking a leading role in the review and hoped that the SDC would contribute to both the spatial plan and the review.

Commissioners agreed it was important to contribute to the review of the Scheme and the Action Plan. We could attempt to bring forward WAG's financial contribution to the SDC and use it to appoint somebody in the Secretariat to work with Commissioners – Rod and Lindsey were suggested – to do this. But we had no precedent of contributing to a spatial plan and, given the time and resource constraints, it was not feasible to contribute to this one.

Actions

- *Secretariat to help Rod finalise a bid for funding and for a short-term resource to help prepare the Commission's input to the review.*
- *Rod and Lindsey to work with the Secretariat to input into Welsh review of the SD Scheme and development of the new Action Plan.*

10. SDC Publication Scheme

Members agreed the SDC Publication Scheme.

11. Mainstreaming Sustainable Regeneration

Commissioners welcomed the Regeneration report as an important and potentially influential, evidence-based piece of work. The recommendations were endorsed; but they should include explicit reference to the business community and they should all be cast in a similar style. A separate recommendation was needed, addressed to the Audit Commission. The draft report was consistent in content with Anne's review of the Communities Plan, though some of the wording could be more closely aligned.

It was agreed that an engagement and dissemination strategy covering the launch and the post-launch activities would be needed to ensure maximum impact.

Actions

- *Raymond and Philip to revise the report to reflect the points made in discussion.*
- *Raymond and the Secretariat to work up a long-term engagement and dissemination strategy, identifying the resource needed. They should consider involving the LGA, regional Centres of Excellence, and next year's Urban Summit.*

12. Business and the BRASS Report Card project

Ken Peattie (BRASS) outlined the aims and objectives of the Report Card project. Commissioners discussed whether the SDC work programme should include a greater business element and how to respond to the the BRASS Report Card. They recognised the important place of business in Commission work-streams, notably



that on sustainable consumption and production; and they agreed to develop 'business proofing' ideas, such as ensuring there was at least one business person on each Steering Group. They did not wish to offer support or co-branding to the Report Card project, but agreed that a useful link could be made between the project and the Pioneers scheme.

Actions

- *Alan, Rod, Rita and Jonathon to consider possible methods of 'business proofing' the SDC work programme.*

13. European Environmental Advisory Councils

Commissioners approved the paper and agreed its proposals. In particular, they agreed that the Commission should make a financial contribution to the EEAC project comparing experience of national SD strategies, and should host a visit of the person carrying out the study.

Action

- *Derek/Philip to confirm to the EEAC's SD Working Group that SDC will contribute to the 'Sustaining Sustainability' project.*

14. Protocol for external membership of steering groups

Commissioners agreed that, in most cases, external members should be invited onto a steering group as individuals, rather than as representatives of an organization; but in certain cases, a steering group might want to invite a particular organisation to be represented. This was the case for the Health Steering Group, where DH was represented because it had provided funding for the project. As agreed earlier, each group should aim to include at least one business person. The steering group chairman should decide whether to invite external members to meetings with others (e.g. Ministers), being careful not to jeopardise our 'inside track'.

Actions

- *Philip to amend the protocol to reflect the points made in discussion, and to circulate to Commissioners and Secretariat.*
- *Secretariat to ensure that external members are made aware of the protocol when they are invited to join steering groups (under cover of a letter from Jonathon), and to circulate the protocol to all existing external members.*

15. Civic Renewal

Further to the previous day's discussions, Commissioners agreed to prepare advice for the Prime Minister on how the framework of SD could contribute to civic renewal. The advice would be 'outcome-focused' and would address a wider agenda than just public sector reform: it could include, for example, community involvement and the messages of *Redefining Prosperity*. The work would be undertaken in two stages: an outline of a recommended approach (based on a consultant's report), to be provided to No. 10 by Christmas; to be followed by more substantive advice.

Action

- *Jonathon, with Fay, Anna and Tim, to prepare and circulate a brief note on the scope of a consultant's report.*



16. Secretariat and Commissioners' reports

Energy and Climate Change: Commissioners noted the Steering Group's plans to draw up a list of the key issues affecting the rate of the White Paper's implementation, for a meeting with DTI and Defra. The list should flag up where the SDC considers HMG had not yet met its delivery expectations. They also noted the Group's intention to commission a comparative study of Building Regulations in Scandinavia, Scotland, and England & Wales.

Duncan reported that he was developing recommendations to the *dc*CARB-uk Project Group about submissions received on participating in phase 2 of the project.

EAC Report on WSSD: Commissioners agreed that there was little value in reviewing UK progress against the Johannesburg commitments; the Commission should take no action in response to the EAC's recommendation on this.

PFI: In response to the Green Alliance's invitation for the SDC to become involved in its project on building sustainability into the PFI, Commissioners agreed that we should ask for observer status only; this would allow us to take the study's findings forward in our own way.

Actions

- *Energy and Climate Change SG to consider approaching NGOs for their views on the rate of progress with the Energy White Paper implementation.*
- *Philip to advise Green Alliance of our interest in having observer status in the PFI project.*

17. Other business

Commissioners were concerned not to have received letters of reappointment; their initial periods of appointment had expired on 17 October.

Action

- *Secretariat to chase up Commissioners' reappointment letters with SDU.*