

Agenda 2003: Where next for Sustainable Development?

19.02.03



Sustainable
Development Commission

The Sustainable Development Commission's mission is to inspire government, the economy and society to embrace sustainable development as the central organising principle.

Our principles for sustainable development are:

- **Putting sustainable development at the centre**

Sustainable development must be the organising principle of all democratic societies, underpinning all other goals, policies and processes. It provides a framework for integrating economic, social and environmental concerns over time, not through crude trade-offs, but through the pursuit of mutually reinforcing benefits. It promotes good governance, healthy living, innovation, life-long learning and all forms of economic growth which secure the natural capital upon which we depend. It reinforces social harmony and seeks to secure each individual's prospects of leading a fulfilling life.
- **Valuing nature**

We are and always will be part of Nature, embedded in the natural world, and totally dependent for our own economic and social well-being on the resources and systems that sustain life on Earth. These systems have limits, which we breach at our peril. All economic activity must be constrained within those limits. We have an inescapable moral responsibility to pass on to future generations a healthy and diverse environment, and critical natural capital unimpaired by economic development. Even as we learn to manage our use of the natural world more efficiently, so we must affirm those individual beliefs and belief systems which revere Nature for its intrinsic value, regardless of its economic and aesthetic value to humankind.
- **Fair shares**

Sustainable economic development means "fair shares for all", ensuring that people's basic needs are properly met across the world, whilst securing constant improvements in the quality of peoples' lives through efficient, inclusive economies. "Efficient" simply means generating as much economic value as possible from the lowest possible throughput of raw materials and energy. "Inclusive" means securing high levels of paid, high quality employment, with internationally recognised labour rights and fair trade principles vigorously defended, whilst properly acknowledging the value to our well-being of unpaid family work, caring, parenting, volunteering and other informal livelihoods. Once basic needs are met, the goal is to achieve the highest quality of life for individuals and communities, within the Earth's carrying capacity, through transparent, properly-regulated markets which promote both social equity and personal prosperity.
- **Polluter pays**

Sustainable development requires that we make explicit the costs of pollution and inefficient resource use, and reflect those in the prices we pay for all products and services, recycling the revenues from higher prices to drive the sustainability revolution that is now so urgently needed, and compensating those whose environments have been damaged. In pursuit of environmental justice, no part of society should be disproportionately impacted by environmental pollution or blight, and all people should have the same right to pure water, clean air, nutritious food and other key attributes of a healthy, life-sustaining environment.
- **Good governance**

There is no one blue-print for delivering sustainable development. It requires different strategies in different societies. But all strategies will depend on effective, participative institutions and systems of governance, engaging the interest, creativity and energy of all citizens. We must therefore celebrate diversity, and practise tolerance and respect. However, good governance is a two-way process. We should all take responsibility for promoting sustainability in our own lives and for engaging with others to secure more sustainable outcomes in society.
- **Adopting a precautionary approach**

Scientists, innovators and wealth creators have a crucial part to play in creating genuinely sustainable economic progress. But human ingenuity and technological power is now so great that we are capable of causing serious damage to the environment or to people's health through unsustainable development that pays insufficient regard to wider impacts. Society needs to ensure that there is full evaluation of potentially damaging activities so as to avoid or minimise risks. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage to the environment or human health, the lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason to delay taking cost-effective action to prevent or minimise such damage.



To comment on this report please contact:

Felicia Kemp, Sustainable Development Commission, 5th Floor, Romney House, Tufton St, London SW1P 3RA Telephone: 020 7944 4964
Email: sd.commission@defra.gsi.gov.uk

www.sd-commission.gov.uk



Sustainable
Development Commission

agenda

**Where next
for sustainable
development?**

agenda

Where next for sustainable development?

Commissioners

Jonathon Porritt (Chairman) Director of Forum for the Future; **Maria Adebowale** Director of Capacity; **Rod Aspinwall** Deputy Chairman of the Enviro Group and Professor of Environmental Management at Cardiff University; **Councillor Maureen Child** Lead Member for Finance, Edinburgh City Council; **Rita Clifton** Chairman of Interbrand; **Lindsey Colbourne** Coordinator of InterAct; **Anna Coote** Director of the Public Health Programme at the King's Fund; **Ed Crooks** Economics Editor, Financial Times; **Valerie Ellis** Member of the Trade Union Sustainable Development Advisory Committee and until recently Assistant General Secretary of Prospect; **Nicky Gavron** Deputy Mayor of London and the Mayor's Advisor on Planning and Spatial Development; **Brian Hanna** President of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health; **Alan Knight** Head of Social Responsibility, Kingfisher; **Walter Menzies** Chief Executive of the Mersey Basin Campaign; **Tim O'Riordan** Professor of Environmental Sciences at the University of East Anglia and Associate Director of the Centre for Social and Economic Research on the Global Environment; **Derek Osborn** Chairman of the Stakeholder Forum for our Common Future; **Anne Power** Professor of Social Policy at the London School of Economics and Deputy Director of the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion; **Charles Secrett** Executive Director of Friends of the Earth; **Richard Wakeford** Chief Executive of the Countryside Agency; **Jess Worth** Campaigner with People and Planet; **Graham Wynne** Chief Executive of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds; **Raymond Young** Board member of Forward Scotland. **Helen Browning**, **Chris Gibson-Smith** and **Deirdre Hutton** resigned as Commissioners this year. We have been grateful for the contributions they made to the work of the Commission.

contents

2	introduction working with the willing and rousing the rest	16	health healthier, wealthier and more sustainable
4	economics for richer, for poorer, for happier	20	regeneration future foundations
8	communicating sustainable development say it large and keep it real	24	climate and energy power for the people
12	food and farming a lot on our plates	28	the sustainable development commission's activities and publications

“We know the problems... and we know the solution; sustainable development. The issue is the political will.”

Tony Blair, Prime Minister, Mozambique, September 2002

foreword

The Prime Minister’s conclusion that sustainability stands as the singular goal, for leaders and decision makers at all levels, was a turning point for advocates of a more sustainable future. Sustainable development entered the political mainstream as never before in 2002. It was debated in the media and became a driving force internationally; it influenced the boardroom agenda and the public sector. The year ahead must be the year in which leaders across all sectors get serious about achieving the mutually reinforcing economic, social and environmental benefits that sustainable development offers: 2003 is a year for action, and for positive change.

As the independent advisor on sustainable development to the Prime Minister and the leaders of the Devolved Administrations, it is the Sustainable Development Commission’s job to act as “critical friend”, praising more sustainable approaches, criticising missed opportunities and offering new suggestions for improving our society’s quality of life.

Agenda is aimed at leaders from all sections of society, not just government. This report offers those with the power to effect change an informed briefing on the key sustainable development issues facing the United Kingdom. *Agenda* also outlines the Sustainable Development Commission’s continuing work on these issues to help achieve progress in the public, private and voluntary sectors.

This is our agenda and a call to action. The next steps we take together. Send us your comments on this report and on our activities (contact details on the back cover). We want to work with you to bring the sustainable development agenda to life.

The Sustainable Development Commission January 2003

working with the willing

Is the glass half full, or half empty? When one of the principal conclusions of a global summit is that there should be no more summits of a similar kind for the foreseeable future, this is the kind of question that springs to mind. So it was with the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in September 2002: some concluded that it was a great success; others claimed it barely maintained the ground that had been won 10 years earlier at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. Andrew Rawnsley summed it up admirably in *The Observer*:

“Yes, the noble platitudes about “our common earth” jar with the self-interested scrapping around the bargaining tables. Yes, the agreements that are reached will often seem trivial compared with the awesome scale of the human and environmental degradation around the globe. Yes, many of the promises made at this summit will be broken. Yes, none of it is terribly edifying. No, none of that makes the Earth Summit a complete waste of space.”

Whatever conclusions you draw, **the truth is that the nineties was a wretched decade, in the round, for sustainable development.** And there was nothing that

Johannesburg could have done to put that to rights. Breakthroughs in Rio on climate change, biological diversity and Agenda 21 – that amazing catch-all document laying down the rudiments of sustainable development for business, local government, trade unions, young people and so on – have been neglected, watered down, or blocked by backsliders’ vested interests. **We all know that progress on many of these things is likely to be slow given the scale of change required, but there’s slow and then there’s death-march slow.**

Hence the emergence at Johannesburg of some so-called “coalitions of the willing”: groupings of governments, businesses and NGOs who’ve come to the conclusion that the UN process (with unanimity required on every last semi-colon, let alone policy proposal) can’t possibly get the job done fast enough.

Which is pretty much where we find ourselves here in the UK. In every sector (Government departments throughout England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, local authorities, business, Regional Development Agencies, voluntary organisations and so on), there is a mixture of leaders and first-movers; the

“make-up-the-numbers” brigade; and a rump of foot-dragging failures, people who will only stir when forced to by somebody else. **It’s increasingly important for the Sustainable Development Commission to work in partnership with the leaders (the “willing”) to reinforce the indirect pressure on those lagging behind.**

Take the whole area of urban regeneration. The Deputy Prime Minister’s Urban Summit in November 2002 did a good job in banging home the message that the next wave of large-scale regeneration projects must deliver genuinely sustainable benefits – economic, social and environmental. And the Commission launched its own vision of sustainable regeneration (see page 20) to help people understand what that really entails – in practice, not just in theory!

So far, so good; but when the RICS (Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors) Foundation carried out a survey amongst regeneration practitioners in the run-up to the Urban Summit, it showed that built-environment professionals “remain sceptical, suspicious or unaware” of sustainability, considering performance indicators in this area to be an irritating intrusion into normal

matter, how clued up are the key players in every other area where practice on the ground must be informed by a more integrated and sustainable approach?

One problem is that the vast majority of senior professionals in the UK acquired their qualifications when sustainable development was seen to be the preserve of woolly-hatted, tree-hugging weirdos for whom most professionals had a profound aversion. Now, the inherent conservatism of many of their professional bodies and institutions is one reason for their failure to keep up with the mainstreaming of sustainable development and its centrality in dozens of public policy areas. A major education job is required.

There's not a lot government can do to mandate increased capacity as such, but what it can do is change other peoples' behaviour by ensuring that not a pound of public money is spent unless it simultaneously contributes to the Government's own Sustainable Development Strategy rather than continues to work against it. Defra is certainly seized by the importance of this, and one of the first things Margaret Beckett did was to set up a group looking at sustainable procurement.

For the Commission, working with central government and the Devolved Administrations, sustainable procurement is likely to become a key priority. We want the guidelines for Private Finance Initiative projects to be re-written to incorporate sustainable construction practices; we'd like to see all large, public sector bodies (particularly in health and education) move towards sourcing far more of the food

How clued up are the key players in every sector where practice on the ground must be informed by a more integrated and sustainable approach?

A new kind of leadership

The other critical element is leadership. The Commission had cause to be highly critical of the lack of high-level UK political leadership at the time of the Johannesburg Summit, last year. It's all been so patchy since 1997, with much slower progress on a host of different policy fronts than might reasonably have been expected.

Without being naïve about it, there have been some important indications since the World Summit that this may be about to change. The Prime Minister's commitment in Johannesburg ("We know the problems... and we know the solution: sustainable development. The issue is the political will.") sent the clearest possible signal both to his own Ministers and beyond.

This was powerfully reinforced by a groundbreaking speech from the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the Urban Summit in November 2002, where he aligned the Treasury's core preoccupation about economic

and rousing the rest

working practice. As Jon Fletcher of the RICS Foundation put it: "In those circumstances in which firms do make reference to sustainability, claims often fail to match reality, and simply serve as a marketing tool. Practitioners have yet to accept that local changes can have local benefits, and that it is the sum total of these local improvements that will make for a more sustainable planet." And there are others like them.

The capacity for change

So what planet is it that these people are living on? It isn't as if the information about today's social and environmental problems is still missing. The concept of sustainable development has been around long enough to be accessible even to bears of very little brain. Indeed, the one breakthrough manifestation of the Johannesburg Summit back here in the UK was the media coverage, generating more references to sustainable development in a month than in the preceding couple of years.

There's a big question here about capacity: just how well equipped are today's key players in regeneration to get on top of the sustainability challenge? Or for that

they use locally – and more sustainably; we'd like to see a commitment from Ministers in all departments to meet their energy demand from renewable energy sources by 2020; and we'd like to see the Green Ministers Committee championing sustainable procurement with a great deal more vigour – and old-fashioned stropiness! We need to see progress in removing perverse subsidies – such as those paid to farmers for unsustainable practices or the VAT rules that encourage new building rather than the reuse or adaptation of buildings we have already got.

As ever, we come back full circle to the role of government. It's true, of course, that every sector has to shoulder part of the overall responsibility for accelerating the transition to a sustainable society, and, sadly, for most British companies "business as usual" remains the norm. But it's government that shapes the marketplace through regulation, fiscal instruments, incentivisation schemes and so on. "Walking the talk" (in terms of the government doing nothing less than it expects of the private sector, and wherever possible, doing rather more) is a critical part of their engagement.

growth with an unprecedented (and enormously welcome) prioritisation of sustainable development. In reference to the Treasury's long-standing commitment to stable levels of growth and employment he said that "with the understanding we have now, I believe that these objectives are better expressed as high and stable levels of growth, employment and sustainable development."

If that doesn't wake up some of the dozier Government departments (with an eye to the 2004 Spending Review), then it's hard to know what will, and we'll certainly be playing our part to amplify that message.

Jonathon Porritt

Chairman, Sustainable Development Commission
January 2003

What if politicians and economists came to the conclusion that economic growth was no longer their most important priority? That a better quality of life is not inextricably linked to ever-higher levels of GDP?

for richer for poorer for happier

How is it that Generation X can be both richer and unhappier at the same time?

It's official: young people are not getting any happier. In November last year, a report from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation¹ compared 10,000 people born in 1958 with 10,000 born in 1970. Whilst in their mid-twenties, both groups were questioned about their mental health. Amongst the post-war generation, just seven per cent of those questioned had a tendency to non-clinical depression; amongst those born in 1970 the figure had doubled, to 14 per cent.

The Joseph Rowntree report advances a range of possible reasons for this worrying trend in mental health, the most likely of which is the relatively unstable nature of employment conditions today and the poorer career prospects for those with inadequate educational qualifications.

What the report does not examine in any depth is the fact that average earnings for young people born in 1970 are significantly higher, in real terms, than for the group born in 1958. How can it be that this group – labelled elsewhere as Generation X – can be both richer and unhappier, at the same time?

This is just one of the conundrums that challenge today's received wisdom regarding the benign power of economic growth. For the Sustainable Development Commission, **the time has come to re-examine that pivotal, post-war economic paradigm, that higher economic growth leads automatically to a happier, more contented population.**

The political consensus that higher Gross Domestic Product (GDP) leads to more wealth trickling down,

which in turn leads to more money in our pockets, more consumption and greater happiness all round, is so well entrenched in recent times that it is taken as read by most politicians. **Parties today don't compete against each other to see who can make us happier, or more contented: they offer us higher levels of economic growth.**

In this world of political expediency, more money has mistakenly become a proxy for an improved quality of life, greater wellbeing or higher levels of happiness.

But what if this particular Emperor not only has no clothes, but has in fact been shivering naked in the pantheon of policy-making for decades without anyone noticing? How many counterintuitive anomalies do we need to unearth in order to open up a long overdue debate about the real value of economic growth? After all, as the Prime Minister himself put it in the Foreword to the Government's first Sustainable Development Strategy, **"Real progress cannot be measured by money alone. We must ensure that economic growth contributes to our quality of life, rather than degrading it."**

Breaking down the paradigm

Surveys regularly show that there is no straightforward connection between levels of affluence and personal happiness. A host of studies in the US echo the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's findings, charting a decline in people who describe themselves as very happy since the late fifties, in spite of a doubling of personal

income in that time. Here in the UK, the latest study² from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) on employment trends reveals a rising dissatisfaction with working life. Clinical psychologist Oliver James has also recently summarised a mass of research on the psychology of affluent societies, concluding that rates of depression, suicide and drug dependency are increasing because the competitive pressures of modern life combine to produce unhappy, tense and rancorous personalities.

No-one is suggesting that our wellbeing is completely unrelated to our income. And it's

shamefully clear that there are still pockets of severe deprivation in the UK, where revitalising local economies – sustainably – remains a vital challenge (see *future foundations* page 20).

However, a body of evidence is growing which strongly suggests that conventional growth brings with it a host of unwanted side effects and is subject to a law of diminishing returns. Whilst it would be premature to associate GDP growth directly with a decline in overall quality of life, it is clear that there are distinct limits to the satisfactions that can be gained from many forms of growing consumption.

So the case for economic growth as the route to wellbeing and happiness is looking weaker and less certain. What *is* certain is that it generates ever-worsening environmental damage, prompting world leaders at the Johannesburg World Summit to agree to develop a 10 year programme for sustainable consumption and production. Politicians may quibble about the scale or the speed at which this damage will degrade our quality of life, but no-one seriously disputes any more the inherently unsustainable nature of our current model of growth-driven progress. And if economic growth – that most sacred of political cows – is to be retained as a key goal, then **an essential way to maintain high and stable levels of growth without severe social or environmental damage is to improve our resource productivity.** Put simply, this means we have to reduce the inputs of raw materials and energy required for each unit of output in our economy. **Getting more from less.**

Resource productivity is one area where we have made some gains. Since 1970, many polluting emissions such as sulphur dioxide, ozone-depleting gases, nitrous oxides, and carbon monoxide have been substantially cut (though some are starting to creep up again, albeit from a much lower base level). The picture on overall resource consumption is also encouraging. A recent report from the Wuppertal Institute in Germany compared resource efficiency across the European Union and placed the UK amongst the top five countries. The report showed that the UK's "total material requirement" grew by just 12 per cent between 1970 and 1999, whilst GDP had increased by 88 per cent over the same period – a decoupling of economic growth and resource use that has surprised many commentators given the enormous difficulties the UK has had in implementing effective waste policies.

But the good news stops there. As the Sustainable Development Commission's own research on climate change has shown (see page 24), **efficiency improvements in the UK are barely keeping pace with increased levels of consumption.** The ratio between efficiency improvement and growth has, over the last 30 years, been very close to 1:1. Over the next 30 years resource productivity must improve by a factor of at least four but ideally 10, if we are to achieve sustainability. **There are few signs that these step changes in efficiency are in the offing, or that they will come to pass if government policy does not radically shift to drive our nation's resource productivity forward.**

Getting back to basics

If the understanding that economic growth does not automatically deliver wellbeing is still absent amongst senior decision makers, and if policies to bring about major improvements in resource productivity are not in place, then the inclusion of "high and stable levels of economic growth" as one of the four basic tenets of the Government's Sustainable Development Strategy appears at best to be sloppy wishful thinking and, at worst, a direct deception. It's not easy, particularly since high and stable levels of employment are essential, but **we believe it's time to trash the taboo and tackle head-on the debate about the true nature of economic growth and its compatibility – or incompatibility – with sustainable development.**

This surely must be manageable territory for our politicians. What can possibly be blocking this timely and crucial debate? Complacency? A lingering sense that the only policy options are the polarised positions of "gung-ho, growth at all costs", or the zero growth demands as espoused by fundamentalist greens in the 1970s? Is it an unthinking, dozy adherence to the belief that "if it ain't broke, don't fix it"?

Even the most cursory examination of our current situation reveals just how "broke" our dependency on conventional, GDP-driven economic growth really is. The Government is due to review its Sustainable Development Strategy over the course of the next year or so. **Even though the relationship between economic growth, wellbeing and human happiness is tricky territory, it is territory that should no longer be avoided, if richer no longer means better, or even happier.**

What next for government?

It's time to review the fourth objective of the Sustainable Development Strategy – achieving high and stable levels of economic growth – in the light of the growing body of evidence that shows the lack of compatibility between increased GDP and a better quality of life.

What next for business?

Businesses have a crucial part to play in decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation, aiming for factor four or factor 10 increases in resource productivity.

¹ *Young People's changing routes to independence* Bynner, Elias, McKnight, Pan, Pierre, Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2002

² *Poverty, riches and social citizenship* Hartley D and Melrose M, Macmillan 1999

Real life

City Couriers



The potential exists for all business to benefit from adopting

sustainable business practices such as resource productivity. It's not just the large corporations that stand to gain but the small and medium sized companies too. One such small business is City Couriers. An Edinburgh based provider of environmentally friendly courier services using pedal power as well as gas powered vans, City Couriers was started by Adam Syme in 1991. It was positioned as an unique alternative courier service providing urgent local deliveries in a congested city centre, operating with reduced costs and doing its bit for the environment. As Syme confirms, "When our business viability plan was first drawn up, I recognised then that major changes in government's handling of transport were inevitable and that it would need to encourage greener fuels to help combat rising congestion and pollution."

For the first five years, City Couriers was a bicycles-only courier but has since expanded to seven commercial vehicles; using LPG or compressed natural gas instead of diesel or petrol saves approximately 50 per cent on fuel. Their eco-friendly profile has also brought them business they might not otherwise have secured. The company has shown that the bottom line benefits of a commitment to sustainable development are significant – reduced waste, savings on running costs and new business from responsible customers. City Couriers is enabling their clients to actively demonstrate their own commitment to pollution prevention.

In August 2002, the company was awarded ISO14001 (a certified environment management system) accreditation. Staff morale has improved and job satisfaction has increased with the introduction of environmental awareness training. City Couriers' latest project is an 18 month trial of a new generation electric car intended for use throughout Edinburgh's city centre. City Couriers may not be large and they may not be new to sustainable business practices but they contribute positively to overall resource consumption and continue to strive for improved working practices – the result, lower running costs, higher staff morale and better productivity.

say it large and keep it real

What if we all stopped squabbling over terminology and about how the media doesn't care? What if we got on with communicating sustainable development by showing that it works, by explaining it in "real life" terms and presenting it as a positive, exciting opportunity to improve society's quality of life?

Communicating sustainable development means engaging everyone in a radically different way of thinking and acting.

As mission statements go, ours is right out there. The Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) is working to ensure that sustainable development is the central organising principle of our society; a necessity if we are to achieve the quality of life we all want for our children and ourselves. And how are we to achieve our ambition? By connecting the language, policies and necessary behaviour for sustainable development with real life examples, by putting our case in a way that places it right where it needs to be, central and looming large in everyone's preoccupations and decisions.

Positioning sustainability at the heart of things presents the SDC with two key challenges. The first is how to tackle the problems of communicating sustainable development per se; the second concerns the importance we place on communicating our own work and agenda. Clearly, these purposes overlap, primarily because without a wider understanding of the term "sustainable development" and the principles that lie behind it, the SDC will face an uphill task in communicating its own goals, objectives and successes.

According to the Government's own statistics,¹ around a third of the general public claim to have heard of the term "sustainable development". Probe a little deeper, however, and it quickly becomes obvious

that awareness of the term is no indication of comprehension or action. In fact, more detailed research suggests that just seven per cent of people understand what it actually means.

More often than not, sustainable development gets reduced into primarily environmental factors, as shown by the general media coverage of the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development.

Then take a look at the definitions of sustainable development, from the Brundtland Report – "Development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" – to the Commission's own words: "What we need now is a different kind of development... to be sustainable, we must take full account of the social, economic and environment impacts of our decisions, over the long term". It is clear that snappy descriptors and impactful words have so far eluded the protagonists of sustainability.

It's not as if getting more people to memorise a definition is the only communications challenge sustainable development faces – and it's certainly not the answer. Communicating sustainable development means engaging everyone in a radically different way of thinking and acting.

Real life

Brighton & Hove City Council's *ninelives* campaign

"Nine people...nine weeks...nine ways to change your life."



That's how
Brighton & Hove
City Council

launched its innovative campaign to communicate sustainable development in action: real people sharing what they found easy, hard, exciting, fun and challenging about adopting a more sustainable lifestyle.

Following a rigorous selection process, nine local residents, aged 21 to 77 and from very different backgrounds, made a very public commitment to change their lives. From giving up smoking to taking up IT classes, from slimming their bins to cycling more and stressing less, each person's progress was charted through video diaries on a state of the art website, www.ninelives.tv. The website also provided information on nine "skills for sustainability", with holistic action plans covering economic, environmental and social issues such as personal finance planning, careers guidance, energy efficiency and health.

As the nine individuals became local celebrities in the best *Big Brother* tradition, the council was achieving some serious coverage for sustainable development, including 10 x 30 minute BBC radio slots, 11 double page spreads in the local daily newspaper, and three slots on regional TV. At the end of the nine weeks, research indicated that a quarter of Brighton & Hove's 250,000 citizens knew about the campaign.

The nine agreed it had been a positive experience, with Dudley, the oldest participant, concluding "I think *ninelives* has made me a better person...I've realised that if we all pull together for the good of the community we can make a big difference."

The campaign has won numerous national awards from the Institute of Public Relations, the *New Statesman*, *PR Week* and WWF. As Nicolette Fox, who developed and ran the campaign, confirms, "*ninelives* showed us that sustainable development can capture the public and the media's imagination if presented in a way that has meaning to people's lives. By adding a green twist to the popularity of reality and make-over TV, and telling the inspiring stories of nine individuals, we made sustainable development come to life in a fun and exciting way."

There is still much debate about how best to use the term itself – sustainable development. As with all communications conundrums, this depends on the audience. "Sustainable development" is the only term to use in some contexts; it has an essence (mutually reinforcing economic, social and environmental benefits), which never changes, whatever definition you choose. It is also a legal requirement for public bodies such as the Welsh Assembly and Regional Development Agencies and is a policy commitment of this Government.

When communicating with other audiences, particularly the general public, it's understandable that other terms may prove to be easier to grasp, quicker to say. The Government itself, in its annual, indicators focused, report on sustainable development,² uses the term "quality of life", defining sustainable development as "...ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come".

Everyone would agree that they wanted better "quality of life"; it's central, relevant and looms "large" in people's lives. At the moment, that can't be said

about “sustainable development” – not only because they are not sure what it means, but because for some it sounds somewhat dour and bureaucratic.

Sell the benefits and deepen the debate

So “quality of life” may help us get people’s attention, but just as you might ask “what is sustainable development?”, so you might equally ask “what is quality of life?” In many respects, it’s an even vaguer concept, and fails entirely to open up the debate about economic growth and environmental sustainability covered in the preceding chapter. But in the marketing world, it is hammered into young recruits that you must “sell the benefit” rather than drone on about the process and technical features of your product or service. It is not hard to see how we have the equivalent here in our work on sustainability. The *benefit* we are offering is a better quality of life for everyone, over time, and the *process* to achieve it is sustainable development.

Clearly, the SDC has its work cut out to explain sustainable development and to make and communicate a distinctive contribution to it. Following our successful *Telling Stories* event during the World Summit, we launched *Combust* (www.combust-network.org.uk), a learning network to support those charged with communicating sustainable development, whether to local communities, shareholders or the media. The website offers the opportunity to engage in debate and seek peer support both online and face-to-face.

One of the findings of *Combust* is that **the visual is a tremendously powerful medium and one that is still neglected in this area**. For our part, we have steered clear of the clichéd, largely environmental imagery still prevalent in sustainable development communications materials. No idyllic children smiling in green fields for us! We have “kept it real” by using contemporary, quirky, real life images, with a focus on people rather than the physical environment.

But above all, we have tried to focus our communications and initiatives on achieving changes in public policy through personal engagement. It is our strong belief that, while both business and the general public are critical to make sustainable development happen in practice (and there are numerous examples of business breakthroughs in this area), the highest responsibility to demonstrate commitment and action on these issues lies with the government.

Spreading the message

It would make an enormous difference if government itself was to take on the challenge of ensuring that sustainable development becomes society’s “central organising principle”. If it doesn’t, we may well see yet more fuel-tax protests, more complaints from the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) about the “intolerable burden” of environmental legislation, and more confusion about sustainable food and farming.

Defra and its counterparts in the Devolved Administrations must therefore be given the resources to fulfil their roles as champions of sustainable development across all other government departments and with the general public. We look forward to working closely with Defra as it develops and implements its sustainable development communications strategy through 2003.

It’s not just government that needs to take on that communications challenge with “the general public”. Both the business and voluntary sectors have real opportunities to use sustainable development as a refreshing way to reshape and deepen familiar messages, not by rolling out academic definitions or PR greenwash, but by acknowledging the complex issues at stake and highlighting their positive efforts for change. **All organisations grappling with sustainable development have a duty to engage their staff and customers in practical and positive ways**, as it relates to their work and their purchases. This includes educational institutions and professional bodies. There’s an unprecedented opportunity for all sectors, but particularly the UK Government and Devolved Administrations, to demonstrate leadership in this area. Communicating sustainable development isn’t easy, as we’ve seen, but that’s no excuse for not getting better at it.

What next for government?

Defra and the Devolved Administrations must fulfil their roles as champions of sustainable development across the public sector. Budgets for campaigns targeting the general public must be maintained, but allocated more creatively eg. to NGOs for maximum effectiveness.

Increasing levels of understanding about sustainable development has to start as early as possible. Education departments should support the participation of the Eco-schools programme of all primary and secondary schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland by making it a Performance Indicator for action on sustainable development and citizenship, similar to the way it is being used in schools in Scotland.

¹ *Survey of public attitudes to quality of life and the environment – 2001*, Defra, October 2002

² *Achieving a better quality of life: Review of progress towards sustainable development – Government Annual Report 2001*, Defra, March 2002

The *benefit* we are offering is a better quality of life for everyone over time, and the *process* to achieve it is sustainable development.

a lot on our plates

What if the food we were eating wasn't better travelled than we were? What if the food industry and consumers offered farmers a living wage by rewarding more environmentally friendly practices? What if trade agreements and regulation didn't stand in the way of real reform?

All too often the food on our plates really has clocked up a huge number of air and road miles. An average meal of, say, chicken, potatoes and greens could have travelled over 24,000 miles to get to our plates. That's equivalent to going once round the world. Often, in fact, more energy, in the form of fossil fuels, goes into transporting food than we get out in the form of calories.¹

"Food miles", as they are known, are only part of the problem. There are a host of other social and environmental impacts associated with food production that we need to tackle immediately. Overall one vital question needs answering: who is ultimately responsible for sustainability in what's known as the food chain?

Current practices in the food and farming industry fail several, if not all, of the six principles for sustainable development established by the Sustainable Development Commission (see back cover). Over the last 50 years intensive agriculture has changed our landscape. More homes are at threat of flooding because better-drained farms deliver storm water and soil run-off more quickly into rivers. In 2000, farming activity caused one quarter of serious and significant water pollution incidents and farming was responsible for three quarters of nitrate pollution. Farming emits greenhouse gases, such as methane from cattle and nitrous oxide from fertiliser use.

Food processing and distribution can also be energy intensive. The food chain is estimated to account for around 30 per cent of all UK road freight, creating

pollution, accidents and intrusion, as well as pressure for new and wider roads. The amount of air freighted food consumed in this country has increased dramatically, but the "polluter pays" principle hardly applies to air freight at present, so the price of food flown to the UK does not reflect the true costs of the associated pollution.

So there is a real problem here – right through the food chain, from farmer to consumer. To quote last year's report of the Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food,² "the farming and food industry is on a path that cannot be sustained in the long term". Government, food producers, food processors, food purchasers and all those involved in the food chain must move to another, more sustainable, path.

Simplicity itself

A sustainable food chain is a simple concept. It's about a market in which those who grow food can earn a reasonable livelihood, without destroying the environment and soil for future production. It means food production and processing that support local employment and provide viable livelihoods; in which animals enjoy reasonable welfare standards; and in which food is delivered in the most energy efficient way. A sustainable food chain is one in which people's decisions about what they eat are adequately informed so that they can obtain nutrition and taste while sending signals back through the food chain to influence retailers, processors and producers to improve social and environmental practices, both in Britain and overseas.



Who's responsible for delivering all this? A whole series of individuals and organisations. But who influences it? Who holds the key to an overall sustainable food chain from field to plate? This is where "good governance" – another of our core principles – comes in. The impact of different governments on the food chain is complex.

At the global level, governments have reached agreements that promote free trade – and the goal is to go further. Yet the consequence is regulations that apparently take no account of animal welfare, social or environmental standards. **At the European level successive reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy, (CAP), have left a perverse series of incentives to producers that damage the European environment and undermine the ability of developing countries to pursue sustainability and become less dependent on the developed world.**

CAP reform has been discussed for so long; it is now high time some real progress was made. While we must accept that responsibility lies with the EU, the EU is not some remote third party. The UK is a significant member of the club and must take a lead in creating a consensus for a more sustainable

Europe-wide policy. The UK must work within the European framework to move towards the removal of distorting subsidies, which simply encourage higher volumes of production and hinder reconnection between farmers and the market.

Resources need to be shifted from production-related payments to more targeted purchase of the public benefits that farming provides.

Back at home, national, regional and local government can do more to give a lead and use their own procurement, in schools and hospitals for example, to demonstrate how quality food from local sources can contribute to a healthy and well-educated local population.

Defra's new strategy for sustainable farming and food³ in England is a good start. It goes some way to achieving our first principle for sustainable development: "putting sustainable development at the centre". The strategy sets out a clear vision (which can be applied to the whole of the UK) – with sustainable development at its core – where rural communities are "diverse, economically and environmentally viable, and socially inclusive", where "the food, fishing and farming industries... are not dependent on output-

related subsidies to produce safe, nutritious food", where "the land is managed in such a way as to... seek to promote biodiversity", and where "the promotion of animal welfare and protection against animal disease is at the core of the way in which we farm and live". The Scottish Executive set out a similar vision in *Custodians of Change*, published in June 2002.

But of course, a government strategy on its own is not enough. We need to see delivery of the promises set out in Defra's strategy. The Government's principles for a sustainable food chain, drawn up in conjunction with the SDC, need to be realised in practice.

Government departments and agencies across the UK must seek to apply the principles to the whole food chain, that is, the food we import from abroad as well as the food we produce here. If we do not take the concept of a sustainable food chain forward in a comprehensive way, tighter controls and higher animal welfare and environmental standards here won't deliver much. Retailers and other large food purchasers will simply buy cheaply produced imports and we will effectively be exporting low standards and environmental pollution elsewhere, while undermining the economic viability of those who manage our landscape and contribute to our rural economy.

Leading the way

Of course, it's not all down to government; every element of the food chain – farmers, producers, processors, distributors, retailers and consumers – has a part to play. Public bodies are some of the largest purchasers of food. Schools, hospitals, government departments and agencies have a huge purchasing power and their practices can make a massive difference to the farming industry, here and overseas. The SDC will build on its work with the NHS (see page 16) to encourage all public bodies to play their part in providing healthy, nutritious, ethical food. It's disappointing that Defra's new farming and food strategy does not give strong leadership on this, and does little to encourage government and other public bodies to explore the sustainability of their food procurement practices.

The SDC's recent study on the sustainability of sugar supply chains⁴ set out a checklist for procuring sugar more sustainably and we will be developing this checklist into a more generic framework for sustainable food procurement. Sir Donald Curry's Commission on the Future of Farming and Food recommended that the "Red Tractor" assurance scheme should be extended to cover environmental standards and the SDC wants to see it covering sustainability – all the issues addressed in our checklist – as well.

We can also learn from what is going on elsewhere in Europe. New laws in Italy, for example, oblige local authorities to include organic and traditional food

products in the school and hospital menus. Closer to home, the Rural Development Minister for Wales, Michael German, has announced a new set of initiatives designed to help small and medium sized food producers and processors win local public sector business, such as in schools and hospitals. These examples clearly demonstrate that the EU procurement directives – which are so often used as an excuse for unsustainable practices – don't deny all the options for sustainable procurement.

Supermarkets are beginning to act too. Sainsbury's now buys only British poultry, eggs and dairy produce and is trying to sell produce closer to its place of origin, for instance, by supplying the south of England with vegetables grown in the southern counties. Tesco is also sourcing 97 per cent of its own brand meat within Britain.⁵ Now they need to apply the same principle to packaged food, such as ready-meals and sandwiches, where the source of the contents is often impossible for the purchaser to deduce. Other retailers and wholesalers need to follow this lead and do more to enable consumers to make more informed purchasing decisions – by providing clear and accurate information about where and how food on their shelves was produced.

Supermarkets and other retailers can also help promote fair trade products, whereby suppliers do business directly with producers in the developing world, ensuring that the maximum profit is returned to them. For example, the Co-op supermarket chain announced in November 2002 that it would source all the cocoa for its own brand chocolate bars from fair trade programmes in Ghana, ensuring that the growers receive a fair price for their harvest, which covers the cost of production and a basic living wage.

But over one third of all meals are now eaten outside the home,⁶ so when consumers eat in restaurants or canteens, or buy sandwiches and snacks from cafés or bars, it's just as important that they are given information about what they're buying and its country of origin. This provision of information has to be driven by the catering supply businesses and the SDC looks to them to follow the lead of the supermarkets.

The success of more sustainable practices by retailers and wholesalers is largely dependent on consumer decisions. This is where we all have a part to play. The choices we make as consumers will send signals back to the retailers, producers and caterers about the type of products we want to buy and the type of supply chains we want to see more of. All of us can look for fair trade coffee, tea, chocolate and other products. We can all seek to buy domestically produced food whenever possible (from retailers and when we eat out), and reward organic producers for the efforts they make to create a sustainable farming industry. All of us can complain when we don't see what we want. And we can support the 400 local farmers'

markets in Britain – choosing seasonal produce from local markets could reduce the total distance that the average meal has travelled to 376 miles.⁷ That's equivalent to driving from London to Edinburgh – a huge improvement on going once round the world!

The food chain is the most fundamental part of everyone's life and, whilst we look to others to provide guidance and leadership, ultimately we must all take responsibility for ensuring its sustainability. The way we manage our food chain has an impact both globally and locally, so we must get it right.

What next for government?

The Government must continue to give strong leadership in the World Trade Organisation and the European Union (EU), to remove obstacles to more sustainable agriculture and food production. But it must practise what it preaches and, in particular, ensure that the £1.8 billion spent on food purchases for the health, education, social and military sectors is directed towards more sustainable food supplies. A similar approach must be taken in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

What next for business?

Farmers can deliver sustainable land management, but retailers, wholesalers and caterers have a major role to play, particularly in helping consumers make more informed decisions about the food they buy, and by paying fair prices for produce.

What next for consumers?

We, as consumers, have a responsibility to reward farmers and producers who do act more sustainably, by making more informed, ethical and sustainable food purchases.

¹ *Eating Oil: Food supply in a changing climate*, Sustain, December 2001

² *Farming and Food – a sustainable future*, Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food, January 2002

³ *Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food: Facing the Future*, Defra, December 2002 (www.Defra.gov.uk/sustain).

⁴ *Sustainability Analysis of Sugar Supply Chains*, SDC, Jan 2003

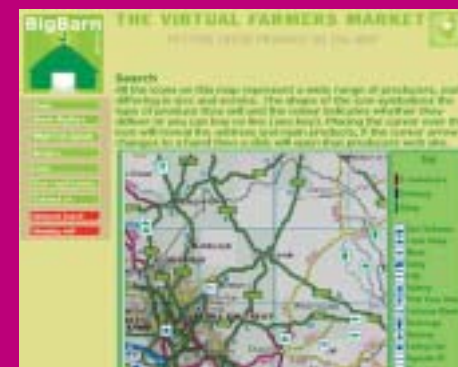
⁵ Planet Ark, 15 October 2002, www.planetark.org.

⁶ *Relocalising the Food Chain: The Role of Creative Public Procurement*, K Morgan and A Morley, Cardiff University, October 2002.

⁷ *Eating Oil: Food supply in a changing climate*, Sustain, December 2001

Real life

BigBarn



BigBarn was established in November 2000 by Anthony Davison, a farmer from Bedfordshire. Anthony was aware of increasing concern among consumers about where the food they were buying had come from, and the consequent increasing popularity of local produce and local farmers' markets. So he set up www.bigbarn.co.uk, a "virtual farmers' market", that he describes as "a fresh way of looking at fresh food".

Using the site is easy; you simply type in your postcode and the site offers you a map of your area showing where food producers are, what they sell and how they can be contacted. Reconnecting producers and consumers in this way means that food is consumed much closer to its source than would otherwise be the case – making it fresher and often tastier – and of course the producers get a better price by selling direct.

The service has been very well received – 4000 farmers across England, Wales and Scotland are now registered with BigBarn. The site gets over 12,000 hits a day, and the customers are happy too. One customer recently commented: "Thanks very much, BigBarn. I now buy nearly all my meat, fruit, veg and even dairy produce fresh from my local farmers. I am happy to get better food and at the same time support my local community".

And that's why BigBarn is such an excellent example of sustainable development in action; it's not just about fresher food and better incomes, it's also about making people-to-people connections and encouraging people to take an interest in their local community and do what they can to strengthen it.

What if the ultimate corporate citizen isn't Shell or Rio Tinto, but the NHS? What if the largest single organisation in the UK became a model for sustainability?

healthier, wealthier and more sustainable

Demand is on the rise and resources are limited. Doctors, nurses and consultants are in short supply. The queues are too long and the available beds too limited. More than half a century after it was established, our National Health Service (NHS) finds itself stretched and struggling to deliver a free, universal service to the British people.

True, new investments have been made and reforms put in place, but one thing is undoubtedly clear: **sustainable development could have a central role to play in stemming that rise in demand. What's more, it could also help the NHS achieve a new level of efficiency and quality.**

If the NHS – and by “NHS” we mean health services across the UK – were to fully embrace sustainability the effects would be felt well beyond the wards, surgeries and consulting rooms. It is the largest single organisation in the UK, if not Europe. It employs more than one million people and buys goods and services that each year total £11 billion. The NHS generates 600,000 tonnes of waste each year, and spends a massive £42 million on waste disposal.¹ In environmental, social and economic terms, its impact is vast.

Its role as a provider of health services is, of course, vital; but **as a major and powerful institution the NHS could lead the public sector in promoting and implementing sustainable development.** As it becomes an ever-larger corporate citizen, with huge responsibilities as an employer, purchaser, manager of energy and transport, generator of waste and commissioner of new buildings, the NHS has an unprecedented power to harm, protect or improve our lives and those of future generations.

Sustainability on the menu

Let's start with food. Putting meals on the plates of its patients, staff and visitors is no small undertaking in the NHS, and it represents an unparalleled example of how the NHS could make huge gains in efficiency while improving health and its environmental and social impact.

The annual food bill for the NHS comes in at £500 million, as it serves 300 million meals across 1,200 hospitals. **The shopping list includes 55,000 gallons of orange juice, 2.5 million pounds of butter and 1.3 million chicken legs.** NHS Trusts spend about half of their annual food budget through national framework contracts and the rest on contracts negotiated locally. Average spending on food and drink ranges from £2.20 to £3.70 per patient per day.²

Is this money being well spent at present? Not completely. The Audit Commission has recently estimated that food wasted from unserved meals alone costs the NHS in England and Wales £18 million a year.³ The value of all hospital food wasted annually in England is £45 million, and if labour and overheads are added, then the cost rises to £144 million.⁴ Whilst food requirements in hospitals can often be unpredictable (due to factors such as clinical procedures, patients being discharged, and loss of appetite), improved food quality should help reduce the amount of food wasted.

Health opportunities are wasted, too. Diet, nutrition and food safety issues are central to good health, with healthy eating offering faster patient recovery and a lower level of illness among patients and staff, yet many patients can actually suffer from malnutrition

The NHS shopping list includes 55,000 gallons of orange juice, 2.5 million pounds of butter and 1.3 million chicken legs.

Real life

Community food manufacturing in Cornwall



The “Community Food Manufacturing Study” in Cornwall began in early 2001, stimulated by a concern over

the amount of food being transported out of the county for processing and by the idea of using more local produce. The study, which received EU Objective One funding, examined working practices and food purchasing policies in hospitals within Cornwall and explored the potential benefits of sourcing locally.

Led by the Catering Manager and his team at the Royal Cornwall Hospital, the study concluded that local sourcing of food could have a positive impact not only on patient health, but also on the health of the wider community. Local purchasing leads to a reduction in transport of food, thereby reducing pollution levels, and it generates more local employment opportunities by supporting local producers.

The catering departments in Cornwall’s NHS Trusts have huge purchasing power and there is a need to expand catering services for the county’s hospitals. The study has identified an opportunity to turn both this spending power and this demand for further facilities into benefits for Cornwall’s economy, through the creation of a central production unit (CPU) which will provide meals for all patients and staff in healthcare establishments in Cornwall, using local labour and local commodities.

Nathan Harrow, the study’s project manager, commented: “Increasing the amount that NHS catering departments spend within Cornwall to 80 per cent, rather than the current figure of just 50 per cent, will have a major effect on local sustainability.

“Whilst we are based in Cornwall, this work has the potential to be a national initiative and we hope that once we get off the ground here, other NHS trusts will follow. Our view is that health care organisations should be promoting the health of their local communities through all their working practices. And by health I don’t just mean physical wellbeing; this initiative is also about creating a healthy environment, a healthy economy and a healthy society where local employment and local markets are real possibilities.”

The NHS must wake up to the fact that sustainable development is actually a route for health improvements.

while they are in hospital. Of course some patients arrive malnourished – but that makes it all the more important to ensure that, during their stay, patients eat healthily and are educated about the importance of such healthy eating.

Changes clearly need to be made. The NHS can use its purchasing power to improve the diets of patients and staff, promoting faster patient recovery and a healthier workforce. It could buy more food from local suppliers to help stimulate local enterprise and reduce freight transport, which damages the environment. It could encourage its suppliers to produce and process food in ways that enhance nutritional goodness, while safeguarding the environment and promoting sustainable agriculture.

A fresh start for the NHS

NHS leaders and managers are increasingly aware of these opportunities and many are working hard to introduce sustainable practices. A few UK Trusts have begun to think more adventurously about food procurement. After supplies from a national distributor were delayed in snowstorms, two hospitals in Powys began buying fruit, vegetables, bread and meat locally. Though they found they were paying a higher price for the meat, they got better quality with immediate nutritional benefits for patients and less waste on the wards. The local suppliers were flexible and offered faster delivery, reducing the need for storage and the risk of overstocking.

Other signs of progress on food procurement include the Government’s recently commissioned *Better Hospital Food Plan*. Costing £40 million and led by Loyd Grossman, this plan aims to improve the range, quality and nutritional value of meals served to patients in hospital, with a special focus on the links between nutrition and patient recovery.

So signs of improvement do exist, but progress is slow and patchy. The Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) has been working alongside the NHS to help it develop a more sustainable approach; three main messages are emerging.

The first is that **the NHS could do much more to promote sustainable development through all its corporate activities**. What is becoming increasingly clear is that managers are not unwilling or unconcerned when it comes to sustainability, but that

incentive structures point in other directions. Secondly, **the NHS has to wake up to the fact that sustainable development is actually a route to health improvement, which is a primary purpose of the NHS**. The third message is that sustainable development and health improvement are essential to the long-term viability of the NHS. If the largest organisation in the country uses its unparalleled corporate powers to promote social, economic and environmental wellbeing, it will reduce risks to health that would otherwise lead to people getting ill and needing treatment and care.

Last year the SDC commissioned a study on NHS food purchasing from John Moore’s University Liverpool to back up these messages with hard facts and findings. This became part of a report produced in partnership with the King’s Fund, entitled *Claiming the Health Dividend*. The report explored eight key areas of NHS corporate activity: employment; purchasing policy; childcare; food; waste; travel; energy and the commissioning of new buildings. In each area current policy and practice was considered and ways were identified for the NHS to make better use of its resources.

The report was launched at a major conference in May 2002 and the work by John Moore’s University was then extended to form the basis of a report on sustainable food purchasing in general, which was published by the SDC and submitted to the Government’s Sustainable Procurement Group. A series of meetings was held with senior NHS officials to discuss ways of promoting sustainable development and we have since been invited to discuss sustainable development with NHS audiences at meetings across the country.

A recent survey of NHS buyers and suppliers showed that most were sympathetic to the idea of sustainable purchasing but lacked the knowledge, skills and incentives to implement it. **Another challenge the NHS faces is that their choices are constrained by European laws intended to safeguard fair competition**, though large national contracts brokered by the central Purchasing and Supply Agency (PASA) of the NHS, do not present insuperable barriers to sustainable purchasing and could be redrafted to promote sustainability.

Taking sustainable development wider

Of course, this goes much wider than serving better food from more sustainable supply chains; there are plenty of other opportunities for the NHS to embrace the concept of sustainable development. For example, NHS investment in construction has the potential to have enormous impacts on the local environment and economy; a new hospital can create large numbers of local jobs, both during construction and once it has been opened. This

investment must be linked to other initiatives for tackling regeneration and health inequalities in deprived areas.

In Northern Ireland, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety's framework for a new health strategy – *Investing for health* – takes a multi-disciplinary approach to improving the health of people in Northern Ireland. For example, it looks at how health can be improved through improving local environments and education and tackling social inequalities. In other words, it looks at prevention, rather than just cure.

And in England, we look forward to the publication of the Department of Health's Sustainable Development Strategy later this year. This document should help ensure that sustainable development is embedded at the heart of work of the department.

The NHS as a positive force for change

Few would dispute the case for promoting sustainable practices within the NHS and, officially, health improvement and sustainable development are central NHS goals. However, many health trusts say they lack the capacity, in terms of personnel, skills, time, energy and motivation to pursue these goals effectively. What some term "initiative fatigue" is a problem, too. Most NHS managers give a higher priority to other matters,

such as meeting targets for reducing waiting lists, without realising that the sort of measures outlined above can help them achieve those targets.

So what should change? First, the NHS must build a strong evidence base of how its corporate activities affect health improvement and sustainable development, either positively or negatively. This means investing in more research and analysis around these issues, reviewing scientific data as well as practical experience in the UK and elsewhere.

Second, the NHS must accept the logic of investing in health improvement and sustainable development so that it can meet future demands. This means taking a more rounded, long-term approach to cost accounting.

Third, it must build its capacity to put policy into practice by developing know-how and skills, by fostering strong leadership on sustainability and by adapting performance management systems to ensure these goals are vigorously pursued.

If the NHS, with the help of government, suppliers and bodies like the SDC, succeeds in transforming itself into a sustainable, responsible corporate citizen then the results would speak for themselves in terms of better health for all and greater efficiency. Such a transformation would also send out a clear message to others across the public sector. For local councils and

schools to prison services or the police, there would be a challenge to follow the example of the NHS, and make sustainable development a central organisational principle in delivering high quality public services.

What next for health services?

Health services must tackle the three areas for action outlined above. They need to build a strong evidence base of how their corporate activities affect health improvement and sustainable development; they must then accept the logic of investing in health improvements and sustainable development in order to meet future demands for health services; and finally they must build their capacity to put policy in practice.

What next for government?

The Government and the Devolved Administrations need to back up action on sustainable development by the NHS, with a requirement related to funding.

¹ *Claiming the health dividend: unlocking the benefits of NHS spending.* King's Fund, 2002

² *Ibid*

³ *Hospital catering report.* Audit Commission, 2001

⁴ *Claiming the health dividend: unlocking the benefits of NHS spending.* King's Fund, 2002

future foundations

What if we moved beyond the buzzwords and made regeneration truly sustainable?
What if people *and* places were central to the regeneration of deprived communities?

Much of what has been called sustainable regeneration is far from that, because it addresses only economic and social issues.

The face of regeneration is set to change, dramatically. Many past regeneration programmes have been unsustainable and have failed at enormous social, economic and environmental cost. A new debate has been sparked off, particularly by the Deputy Prime Minister's Urban Summit in November 2002, and all the signs are that **the process of turning our most deprived local communities around is set to be reinvented to include environmental, as well as economic and social, renewal.** The Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) is playing a key part in the effort to broaden the scope of regeneration.

You know something big is on the horizon when the dry economists at the Treasury begin to take an interest in something as "soft" as the environment. Addressing the Urban Summit, Gordon Brown declared that "modern regeneration... can best be met by protecting and enhancing the local environment." Scotland's First Minister, Jack McConnell, went even further, stating that the combining of "economic progress with social and environmental justice" would be the greatest challenge for the 21st century.

Regeneration programmes have become more sophisticated in recent years, acknowledging that it's not enough simply to build new houses or create new jobs if the complex and underlying causes of community decline are not addressed. There has also been a move to develop greater levels of community

ownership when it comes to regeneration solutions: **the people living in deprived communities and the organisations that represent them must be involved in developing these solutions themselves.**

Attitudes are changing and improvements are being made, but it is still the case that much of what has been called sustainable regeneration is far from that, because it still addresses only economic and social issues. Little or no attention is paid to the environment, despite compelling evidence that the local environment is of pressing concern to those that live there: for example, people living in the 44 most deprived areas in England stated pollution, poor public transport, and appearance of the estate as major issues for their local neighbourhood.

The SDC and others believe that it is time for environmental justice to be brought centre stage. **All people, regardless of their race, income, class or socio-economic status deserve "equal access to a clean environment and equal protection from possible environmental harm".¹** We have our work cut out for us. The most deprived 10 per cent of communities in England, for example, are subjected to 66 per cent of carcinogenic (cancer causing) pollution from factories. These communities are also home to more people from ethnic minorities, linking racial equality with the need for a greater level of environmental justice.

Policy makers have been given a clear signal by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, No.10 and the Treasury, that a more sustainable approach to regeneration is imperative.

Environment: the missing link

The SDC's vision and principles for sustainable regeneration were launched at the Urban Summit in November 2002 under the title *Environment and poverty: the missing link?* The key features of this vision include eradicating poverty whilst respecting natural systems and resources, developing nations and future generations, and enabling all local people to take control of local environmental decision making.

The SDC wants to see a new approach that takes a longer-term perspective, achieving mutually reinforcing social, economic and environmental benefits for communities and recognising the links between quality of the local environment and poverty. This doesn't necessarily require new initiatives, but means getting the various programmes already in place to work together and work better. In England, most Local Strategic Partnerships and Community Plans, for example, tend to place environmental issues at the periphery of their thinking – if they engage at all – and will therefore have unsustainable outcomes.

In some key areas of regeneration activity, such as housing, there are mutually reinforcing benefits waiting to be realised. **Tackling fuel poverty from a sustainable development perspective, for example, improves the health and finances of poor people, whilst reducing carbon emissions and creating local jobs in insulation and related areas.** Green transport plans are another good example, as they aim to improve public transport services, cycling and walking facilities and offer better links to local employment, leisure facilities and other local services. They also address exclusion from key public services in areas where car ownership is especially low. Home Zones work well, helping to build community capacity, and promote local environmental improvements and new public spaces by bringing the community together to determine how to make urban living more attractive.²

Building better solutions into the system

The SDC has been working with a range of partners on proposed reforms to the planning system in England and Wales, to show that **sustainable development offers the only framework that can deliver a planning system that hits environmental, social and environmental targets while still meeting the needs of present and future generations.** Key elements in a successful and sustainable planning system would include high levels of participation, effective governance, prudent use of resources in land use and regeneration plans that cause minimal environmental damage. Plans and strategies at all levels should also contain a statement of purpose to promote sustainable development and specify how it will be achieved. The SDC also advocates sustainability appraisals for all strategies and plans, as well as major planning applications; a need which is particularly acute in areas like the Government's aviation policy, which promotes airport expansion for economic reasons, whilst ignoring the significant negative environmental and social impacts.

The SDC reviewed the proposed planning reforms with a number of organisations. Our partnership welcomed some proposed changes, such as the new local development frameworks and neighbourhood action plans, with their sharper, more local focus and requirement for community involvement. We urged the Government to make sustainable development the statutory purpose of planning.

From the national to the neighbourhood levels, the SDC will continue to push sustainability up the planning agenda in the name of a more holistic, sustainable approach to regeneration. Some details are still to be worked out, particularly concerning how the aspirations

of these plans can filter up to sub-regional, regional and even national levels and how local people can get involved: this still remains vague.

During 2002, the SDC's regeneration group visited a number of projects across the UK, including Shettleston Housing Association's Glenalmond Street project that uses geothermal energy supplemented by solar panels; the Peabody Trust's zero energy BedZED project combining workspace and housing; the Taff Bargoed Community Park, South Wales, once an abandoned colliery site and now home to the Welsh International Climbing Centre; and Mount Vernon in Belfast, where Groundwork Northern Ireland helped to develop safer community relations by engaging residents in local environmental improvements.

Each of these projects integrated social, economic and environmental considerations, practical examples of our vision for sustainable regeneration on which we consulted around 80 organisations. This work formed the basis of our popular session at the Urban Summit, which brought together our programmes on climate change and regeneration.

At the Urban Summit we also announced our intention to work with the nine Pathfinder areas in England tackling severe low demand and abandoned housing. The aim is to help them develop projects that take a fully integrated approach to the regeneration of their areas, addressing equally social, economic and environmental needs and opportunities.

Justice will be done

It's time for decision makers at all levels concerned with regeneration to rethink the way they do business and embrace environmental justice as a fundamental part of sustainable regeneration. At the national, regional and local levels policy makers have been given a clear signal by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), No.10, and the Treasury, that a more sustainable approach to regeneration is imperative.

What drives the SDC, particularly after a year in which we've seen first hand sustainable regeneration in practice, is the realisation that only by **unearthing people's visions for their neighbourhoods and giving them the power to achieve those visions will sustainable regeneration become a reality.**

What next for government?

The ODPM should ensure that sustainable development is written in at the heart of the Planning Bill (as the principal purpose of land use planning), and as one of the overarching objectives of the new, directly elected Regional Assemblies.

In promoting "sustainable communities" the ODPM should announce an action plan to ensure that every single new home to be built in the next decade (and every existing home that is being refurbished) should meet the highest standards of sustainable design and construction, including more effective measures to meet the demand for affordable (and sustainable) housing in both urban and rural areas. A similar approach should be taken in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

¹ *Race, class and environmental justice*, Cutter, *Progress in Human Geography*, vol. 19, no. 1 pp. 11-22, 1995

² *Planning and designing "home zones"*, Biddulph, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2000.

Real life

Fairfield Housing Co-operative



How do you turn an estate with 200 people wanting to get out into one with 300 people wanting to get in? Fairfield housing co-operative in Perth has the answer.

In 1981, Hunter Crescent, as it was known then, suffered the highest level of multiple deprivation in Scotland. Over 20 per cent of residents were in the "seriously disadvantaged" category, more than 100 houses were boarded up and residents were desperate to leave. The Scottish Development Agency asked Gaia Architects to run a series of community consultation exercises, leading to a radical action plan to be implemented by a new residents-run housing co-operative.

With its mutually reinforcing economic, social and environmental benefits, Fairfield is now an excellent example of sustainable regeneration. The whole estate is managed according to an urban design masterplan, with a "pedestrian first" layout. Housing was renovated rather than demolished, using well-chosen materials to improve energy efficiency and keep damp and mites at bay. This in turn led to economic and health benefits: a massive reduction in fuel poverty and far less asthma and fewer damp-related illnesses. The estate became a desirable place to live, helping enhance residents' employment prospects; unemployment has plummeted from 86 per cent to 12 per cent.

According to Grant Ager, director of Fairfield, the estate demonstrates some important lessons about sustainable regeneration. "The first, small is beautiful; massive scale regeneration programmes are often hard to manage effectively. The second, it takes time; we've been working on this for 17 years. Yes, it requires more investment upfront but the long term paybacks are massive. And finally, the people factor is vital. Not everyone wants to be deeply immersed in every decision, but we've given all residents the opportunity to get involved if they want to. We produce a newsletter every six months and consult regularly on everything from house painting to traffic-calming. Everyone knows my name and I know theirs; the whole atmosphere of the estate has changed for the better."

power for the people

What if a rainy day meant more car fuel and every home was a mini power plant? What if we chose to invest in a low carbon energy future and made the most of a major new market?

Sustainable development thrives in South Wales. In the Rhondda Valley, the Arts Factory (see *Real Life* below) is developing low energy, community-led solutions, including an eight-turbine wind farm, to challenging environmental and social problems. This community-owned Development Trust aims to generate money to fund services and facilities needed by the local community.

Arts Factory isn't an isolated example. In Surrey is BedZED, the Beddington Zero Energy Development Project. It's the UK's largest eco-village and its 82 homes and offices have been designed to use just 10 per cent of the energy of their conventional counterparts. It uses locally sourced, reclaimed construction materials and includes rainwater collection and a car club.

Liverpool Housing Action Trust and English Partnerships' Millennium Village at Greenwich are similarly busy integrating energy efficiency and renewable energy sources into their developments.

The Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) has visited the Arts Factory and BedZED as part of a fact-finding tour examining projects that showcase state-of-the-art solutions to the challenge of climate change. **These projects stand as a testament to the integration of low carbon innovation, renewable energy and sustainable construction with other major concerns such as regeneration, health, the rural economy and transport. They represent "joined-up" thinking, in action.**

All these projects embrace the SDC's vision of a low carbon, sustainable energy economy. Rooted in our six principles for sustainable development (see back

cover), developments such as these integrate energy efficiency with green electricity in its many forms (generated from renewable/climate change levy-exempt sources, including wind and hydro). In the longer term, the SDC envisages a micro combined heat and power (CHP) plant in every home.

These small-scale solutions are very much part of the bigger, climatic picture. The business case for energy generation that is free from greenhouse gas emissions is being made ever more powerfully. For example, more than £1 billion of investments are already planned for offshore wind energy developments before 2005, demonstrating a serious commitment by the developers lining up to participate in a major new industry. There are also encouraging signs within the motor industry, with significant investments being made in hydrogen-powered vehicles.

More than £1 billion of investments are already planned for offshore wind energy developments before 2005, demonstrating a serious commitment by developers lining up to participate in a major new industry.

Real life

The Arts Factory



The Arts Factory, in the Rhondda Valley, was established in 1990 in order to increase the range of local

work opportunities and to involve local people in the regeneration of their community. It's a not-for-profit organisation which runs various enterprises and reinvests the profit to provide a wide range of facilities for the local community, such as a job-search programme, youth work, arts and crafts classes, music workshops and graphic design courses.

In addition to all this, one of the Arts Factory's current major projects – Power Factory – is an eight turbine wind farm in the Rhondda which will generate green electricity. The wind farm will be operational in 2004 and it will provide 10.4 megawatts of electricity – that's enough to power 6,300 homes, equivalent to 21 per cent of homes in the Rhondda.

But this isn't just about providing a source of renewable, clean energy. The Arts Factory will use 50 per cent of the profits from the wind farm (likely to be a six figure sum) to pay local people to deliver more free services in the area, such as parent and toddler groups, advice surgeries, a cinema and a wide range of free classes.

This project is a joint venture with United Utilities Green Energy, so it's also an excellent example of how the private and community sectors can work together for the benefit of the environment, the local area and, of course, the lives of local people.

Mike Gulley, a long-standing volunteer, said, "I really believe in the work that Arts Factory does in the community – it really makes a difference. We are all excited by plans to create Wales' first community-owned wind farm. Power Factory shows that we can create projects that will reduce global warming and lead to real community benefits. Why should Rhondda not lead the way?"

Our ultimate goal should be reducing carbon dioxide emissions by at least 60% from current levels by about 2050.

Ford, for example, is investing around £400 million in a "third generation" hydrogen car. With the most likely source of hydrogen in large quantities being the splitting of water molecules with electricity, there is another reason to use renewably-sourced electricity.

And what of oil, gas and nuclear? A glance at our six principles for sustainable development shows that they don't score as well as renewables, CHP or energy efficiency. All three have significant environmental impacts: oil and gas principally from the effects of their emissions from combustion and depletion of non-renewable sources; nuclear because of the impact of its long and complex fuel cycle, some of whose costs are met by the taxpayer, not business. So, new-build nuclear is not the choice for meeting future electricity demand. Any further consideration of nuclear should ensure all its costs are internalised, and that it operates on a level playing field with other energy sources.

Reducing carbon for a better quality of life

For the SDC, action on climate change and the promotion of sustainable energy supplies integrate well with our vision of a better quality of life: greater environmental justice for all can be enhanced through programmes that mitigate the effects of climate change; fuel poverty can be reduced through greater energy efficiency leading to lower energy bills; we could be freeing up resources through fewer inefficiencies in the system.

But we need to be bold, as well as visionary. Reducing the demand for energy, for example, goes way beyond turning down the domestic thermostat and donning another chunky jumper.

Take transport, for example. It's the UK's third largest

and fastest growing source of greenhouse gas emissions and a notoriously tough political nut to crack: time for more of that "joined-up" thinking. Our view is that smart planning and sustainable solutions could mean that demand management can be achieved through measures that focus principally on quality of life improvements. HomeZones are an excellent example; groups of residential streets, usually in deprived areas, that are made more attractive with trees, landscaping and street furniture. Vehicles are encouraged to travel slowly, encouraging cycling and walking and greater environmental justice through a healthier balance between the interests of motorists with other road users. Slower speeds reduce the likelihood of road accidents, especially those involving children, with consequent savings to the health services.

A compelling business case

For business, the step change to a "low carbon" or "no carbon" economy is a huge challenge but we are convinced that there will be massive benefits for nations and regions adopting a "first mover" position. Decarbonising the UK will drive investment, stimulate new financial and social models, and trigger scientific and technological innovation. The impact of this will be at least as significant as the transition from coal to gas or oil over the last 30 years. It is an energy revolution, pure and simple, but as with other major economic shifts, the decline of "sunset" sectors and industries must be responsibly managed, with full consultation.

The SDC sees a vital leadership role for the UK Government in helping stimulate businesses to adopt a "low carbon" route. If you take the "carrot and stick" approach to climatic concerns, there is great merit in a carbon tax that forces organisations to pay for the environmental damage created by their operations (which often isn't the case at present) and to offer tax credits to encourage them down the path of sustainable development. This would build on the approach already being pioneered by the Climate Change Levy package and the Emissions Trading Scheme.

Sounds harsh? Actually, this could be our industrial salvation. Over time the economy must become less

carbon intensive, as capital and investment flows preferentially into sectors and activities that do not incur a carbon penalty. And who should pay for this great transition? Well, there will be financial cost, but actually it is quite small: a recent Government report¹ assessed that “In terms of overall costs to the economy, moving towards a carbon-free generation system by 2050 could cost between -0.1 per cent and +0.2 per cent of GDP (with GDP having grown threefold by then).” Great news for the bean counters, but what about employees? A low carbon economy requires different types of jobs, and the government, energy industry, trade unions and others must ensure minimum labour market disruption and maximum job opportunities and competitiveness.

The SDC is committed to a new energy future for the UK and has developed a detailed input (available online at www.sd-commission.gov.uk) to the Government’s Energy White Paper. Fundamentally, our response calls for a sustainable energy policy that is geared to helping stimulate a low carbon economy. The UK Government can and should set the economy on a clear and unambiguous low-carbon trajectory, a move that would enhance competitiveness and satisfy the demand of UK businesses for energy. **Our ultimate goals should be: first, reducing carbon dioxide emissions by at least 60 per cent from current levels by about 2050, as similarly recommended by the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution;**² second, to increase our levels of energy from renewable sources to 25 per cent by 2020.

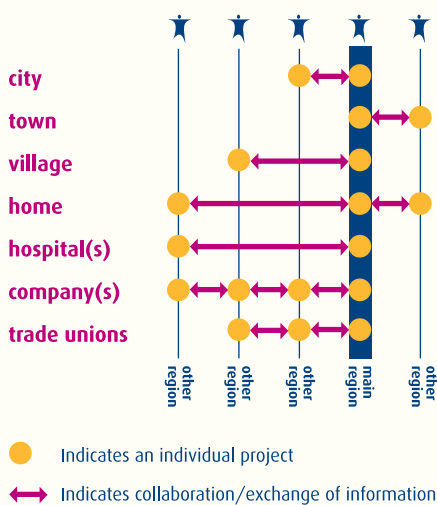
We have also proposed: a powerful Sustainable Energy Agency, to oversee, direct and ensure the implementation of the White Paper; the inclusion of low carbon and energy efficiency provisions in all Private Finance Initiative projects; and an ambitious and innovative communications strategy that focuses on the benefits of sustainable energy.

The Government has set out a programme for tackling climate change in the UK.³ We have carried out an audit of this programme, to judge whether it will achieve its goals and meet the wider, long term requirements of sustainable development and deeper cuts in greenhouse gas emissions. We will publish our findings in Spring 2003.

dCARB-uk: creative carbon-cutting

Finally, the SDC has launched **dCARB-uk**, an ambitious programme to discover how we can meet carbon reduction targets at regional, local, institutional and household levels across the UK, overcoming obstacles and comparing results across different projects (see figure one). With partners who currently include Carbon Trust, Environment Agency, English Partnerships, the Energy Saving

figure one: relationships within dCARB-uk



Trust, ESRC and EPSRC, **dCARB-uk** will begin to assemble in one or two pilot UK regions a diverse group of partner organisations to identify the best ways to reduce and reform energy use. It will then match these lessons to regional data on greenhouse gas emissions so that a robust plan for a low carbon economy and society can be mapped out.

dCARB-uk is being carried out in three phases: first, we will research existing work, and propose key success factors and a framework for further development; then we will trial a toolkit of data collection, analysis and dissemination products; finally we will use this toolkit to collect and collate data that builds an in-depth picture of carbon reduction achievements and aspirations in the selected region and sectors. Throughout the project **we aim to discover and communicate what everyday life will be like in a low carbon economy and society.**

What next for government?

The Government’s Energy White Paper will be published just a few months after the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and the eyes of the world will be watching how it translates rhetoric into action. We believe the Energy White Paper must put the UK on the path to reducing carbon dioxide emissions by at least 60 per cent from current levels by 2050, prioritise energy efficiency and increase levels of energy from renewable sources to 25 per cent by 2020.

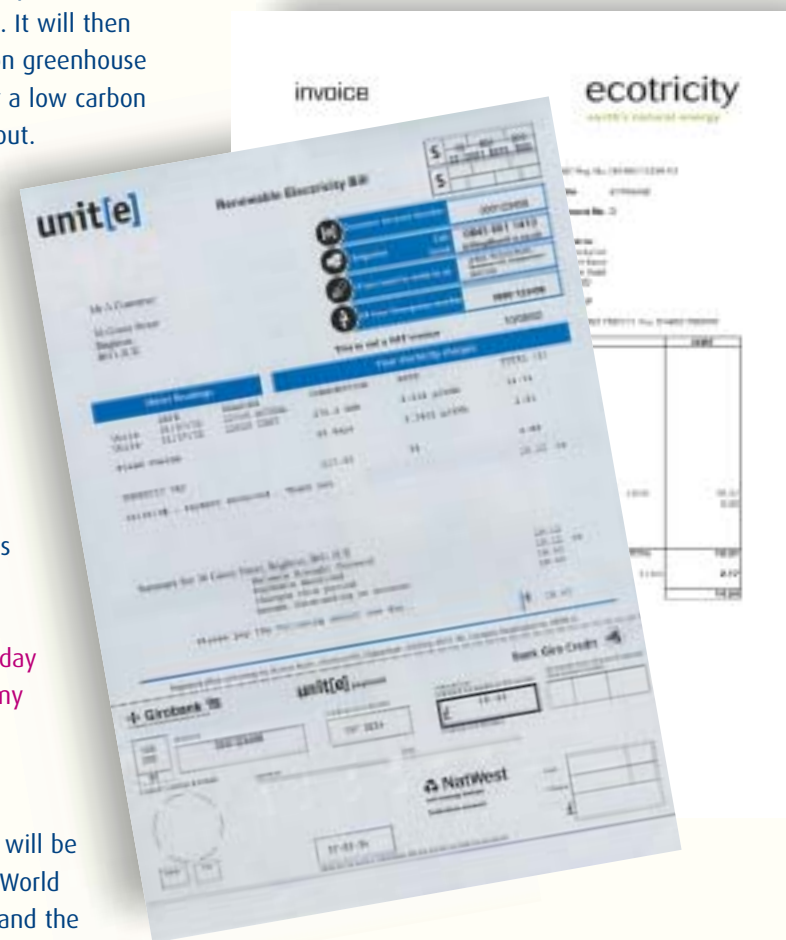
Where we live and how we travel have major climate change impacts. Policy makers in the Department for Transport, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister must therefore

acknowledge that climate change, transport and regeneration are inextricably linked, and work more closely together to ensure that mutually reinforcing economic, social and environmental opportunities are maximised. Their counterparts in the Devolved Administrations have an equally vital role to play.

What next for the rest of us?

We all have a part to play in being energy efficient and supporting renewable energy suppliers, in order to reap the benefits of a low carbon economy and society.

¹ <http://www.dti.gov.uk/energy/greenhousegas/greenhousegas.pdf>
² *Energy – The Changing Climate* <http://www.rcep.org.uk/newenergy.html>
³ *Climate change: The UK Programme* Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 2000



Moving towards a carbon-free generation system by 2050 could cost between -0.1 per cent and +0.2 per cent of GDP (with GDP having grown threefold by then).

the sustainable development commission's activities and publications

We are committed to working in an open and accessible way, analysing issues, offering advice, and engaging in dialogue with those responsible for policy and action, in government and outside. Here's a snapshot of our activities since February 2001.

Food and farming

In the wake of foot and mouth disease and a plummeting rural economy, farming and food have been high on the policy agenda and we have worked closely with Defra on its major review of agriculture and food policy. Three SDC Commissioners were members of the Policy Commission chaired by Sir Don Curry; we published our own vision for sustainable agriculture and reviewed the submissions of others against our sustainable development principles (see back cover). More recently, we have made a significant contribution to Defra's *Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food*, assisting the development of their own principles. Tapping into the growing interest in sustainable procurement, we have looked at the sustainability of national and global sugar supply chains in order to identify how both could be made more sustainable. We plan to expand on this with retailers, wholesalers and caterers, to help them procure food more sustainably.

The following publications are available on our website or in hard copy:

- *A vision for sustainable agriculture* (October 2001)
- *Sustainability appraisal of policies for farming and food* (December 2001)
- *From vision to action: the SDC's perspective on the work of the Curry Commission* (March 2002)
- *The sustainability of sugar supply chains* (forthcoming)

contact: victoria.read@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Communications

The Commission believes strongly that communication and engagement are key to making sustainable development a practical reality. At our *Telling Stories* event, we launched the Combust network and website (www.combust-network.org.uk), a learning network to support those charged with engaging others – whether local communities, business or the media – on sustainable development. The website hosts a discussion forum and a digital archive of sustainable development communication materials.

Whilst it is not our role to mount campaigns targeting the general public, the importance of this audience is clear and we commissioned the following reports to help stimulate the debate:

- *How the public learns about sustainable development: an audit of key campaigns, TV and newspapers* (February 2001)
- *Public attitudes towards sustainable development* (February 2001)

contact: esther.maughan@defra.gsi.gov.uk or kay.west@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Health

We are working with the NHS to leverage its immense potential to promote health through sustainable development initiatives, initially through sustainable food procurement. In conjunction with The King's Fund, we developed a conference and book, *Claiming the Health Dividend*, which led to our submission to the Government's Sustainable Procurement Group. We look forward to working with the Department of Health to help implement their forthcoming Sustainable Development Strategy. We have published the following:

- *Food procurement for health and sustainable development: a submission to the Sustainable Procurement Group* (May 2002)
- *Sustainable food procurement in the NHS* (our report May 2002, consultants' report June 2002)

contact: victoria.read@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Regeneration

We published our vision for sustainable regeneration, *Environment & poverty – the missing link* (June 2002 & October 2002), which promotes environmental justice as an essential component for all regeneration programmes. We shared our vision and received widespread support; we are following this up with a series of interviews, case studies and visits to explore how to put this vision into practice. We ran a workshop on sustainable regeneration at the Urban Summit in November 2002, and held another workshop to map out next steps for environmental justice. We are beginning to work with the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder areas to find practical ways to achieve mutually reinforcing economic, environmental and social benefits for those communities.

We have also contributed to the Government's review of planning by publishing *Planning for the*

future! The SDC's response to the Planning Green Paper (March 2002) and convening a cross-sector working party to help develop a statement of sustainable development as the statutory purpose of planning. This is a matter of vital importance and we are following it up with ODPM.

contact: janine.wigmore@defra.gsi.gov.uk or laura.evans@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Energy and climate change

We have made considerable input into the energy policy review conducted by the Performance and Innovation Unit and the preparation of the Energy White Paper (due Spring 2003). We commissioned research from consultants, had one-to-one meetings with policy makers and held workshops and discussions with stakeholders. In connection with that work, we have published:

- *Forging an energy policy for sustainable development* (October 2001)
- *Sustainable Energy – Response to the Government's "Energy Policy: Key Issues for Consultation"* (November 2002)

In addition, we have undertaken an audit of the Government's Climate Change Programme; the results will be published in Spring 2003.

In partnership with a cross-sector group, we have launched *dCARB-uk*, a major project exploring how to make deep cuts in carbon emissions on regional and other levels. If you are involved with creative carbon-cutting, please join our project! A preliminary report on *dCARB-uk* was published as:

- *Low carbon spaces: area-based carbon emission reduction – a scoping study* (June 2002)

contact: neil.hornsby@defra.gsi.gov.uk or duncan.eggart@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Economic growth

One of the hardest nuts to crack is the general belief that Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is a useful and accurate reflection of society's quality of life. What kind of economic growth is compatible with the Government's sustainable development objectives? We are continuing to develop our ideas on these key issues and will discuss them with HM Treasury and more widely.

contact: philip.dale@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Devolved Administrations and the English regions

Our work at these levels has included contributing to Scotland's consultation on sustainability indicators for waste, energy and travel; assisting in the continuing development of a sustainable development strategy for Northern Ireland; and reviewing how far the English Regional Development Agencies are taking account of sustainable development in their Regional Economic Strategies. We have published:

- *Sustainability indicators for waste, energy and travel for Scotland* (October 2001)
- *Summary of findings of SDC visits to the regions* (January 2002)
- *Revision of the RDAs' Regional Economic Strategies and the integration of sustainable development – summary report* (September 2002)
- *Putting sustainable development at the centre in Northern Ireland* (October 2002)

contact: scott.ghagan@defra.gsi.gov.uk or
neil.hornsby@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Local issues

In 2003 we have begun to look at practical ways to ensure sustainable development is a reality at local level.

contact: fay.blair@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Business

We have worked with partners in business, DTI, and Defra to encourage trade associations and other professional bodies to develop and implement sustainable development strategies for their sectors. This work has led to the following publications:

- *Pioneering – the strategic route to sector sustainability* (May 2002)
- *Sectoral sustainable development strategies: a self-assessment guide* (May 2002)

We also responded to the Company Law Review (October 2001).

contact: neil.hornsby@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Aviation

Aviation has major impacts on climate change, and is a critical test of sustainable development. We submitted our views to the Government review of air transport policy and subsequent consultation on airport capacity. These were published as:

- *Aviation and sustainable development* (April 2001)

- *Air transport and sustainable development – a submission from the SDC* (November 2002)

We are following up these publications in discussion with Government.

contact: duncan.eggar@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Sustainable development at an international level

Early in our work, we contributed to the development of the European Union's Sustainable Development Strategy, and we have recently begun to follow this up through the network of European Environmental Advisory Councils.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development was a key event in 2002, and we submitted evidence to the Environmental Audit Committee's inquiry into UK preparations for it. During the Summit itself, we sought to focus attention on sustainable development issues in the UK, which subsequently culminated in *Seize the moment!* (October 2002), a list of key challenges for many UK Government departments. We have had many useful discussions with Government on these challenges and look forward to more. Our international work led to the following publications:

- *Sustainable development in Europe* (March 2001)
- *Environmental Audit Committee – preparations for the Johannesburg Summit* (March 2002)
- *World Summit on Sustainable Development – input from the SDC* (October 2002)

contact: philip.dale@defra.gsi.gov.uk or
scott.ghagan@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Our new work programme

We are currently mapping out our next work programme to start in April 2003. For an update, email sd.commission@defra.gsi.gov.uk

contact: scott.ghagan@defra.gsi.gov.uk or
philip.dale@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Our publications are on our web-site at:

<http://www.sd-commission.gov.uk/pubs/index.htm>

Copies of our press releases are available at:

<http://www.sd-commission.gov.uk/events/index.htm>

Credits and acknowledgments

Photo Credits

Front cover, Page 5, Page 19, Page 21: Martin Parr, Magnum Photos
Page 2: Kent Klich, Magnum Photos
Page 4: Taxi
Page 8: John Birdsall Photolibrary
Page 10, Page 12, Page 15: PhotoDisc
Page 11, Page 14: Zefa Pictures
Page 17, Page 20, Page 23, Page 24: Alamy Images
Page 13: Chris Steele-Perkins, Magnum Photos
Page 16: Roy Peters, Report Digital
Page 25: Creatas

Design by Positive2

Acknowledgments

The Sustainable Development Commission is grateful to the following for their assistance with the production of *Agenda*:

Steve Connor, Creative Concern
Chris Church
Professor Paul Ekins, Policy Studies Institute
Lloyd Grossman
Vicki Hird, Policy Director, Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming
Professor Jules Pretty, University of Essex

Grant Ager, Fairfield Housing Co-operative
Arts Factory
BigBarn
Ecotricity
Nicolette Fox, Brighton & Hove City Council
Nathan Harrow, Royal Cornwall Hospital
Adam Syme, City Couriers
Luq Toefy
Unit[e]

However, the views expressed are those of the Sustainable Development Commission.

Glossary

CAP	Common agricultural policy
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CHP	Combined heat and power
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
EPSRC	Engineering & Physical Sciences Research Council
GDP	Gross domestic product
PASA	Purchasing and Supply Agency
PFI	Private finance initiative
RICS	Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
SDC	Sustainable Development Commission
SD	Sustainable development
UN	United Nations
WSSD/Johannesburg Summit	World Summit on Sustainable Development 2002