



Sustainable
Development Commission

On the move

Review 2005 - 2006

Plus... Glass full or empty?

Jonathon Porritt gives his verdict

Personal insights: 12 of our Commissioners tell their story

More radical: your thoughts on our work
Top targets for government action

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Stock take: "Making energy sustainable is likely to be the critical determinant of just how serious the Government is about sustainable development" **Jonathon Porritt, page 03.** **Old homes for new:** Most buildings leak like sieves, providing huge potential to reduce – relatively painlessly – our carbon quotient in **How we will live, page 06.** **Good corporate citizenship:** "Few NHS managers are thinking this way yet" Anna Coote on hospital spending, **page 13.** **National wellbeing:** The Chancellor and the green briefcase in **How we will prosper, page 20.** **Meaningful debates:** "We need to create an active engagement on politically difficult choices, so they are openly faced" **Lindsey Colbourne, page 26.** **The way ahead – your views:** Julian Rush, Channel 4 News, challenges the Commission to be 'less timid' **page 27.** **In Northern Ireland:** "I would describe myself as a pioneer" **John Gilliland page 29.**

UK tomorrow

What kind of society do we want to live, work and raise our children in? It's a question every generation asks itself. But rarely have the choices been as stark, or the stakes as high as they are today.

If we follow a business as usual path, we will create a future of widening inequality, soaring material demands and runaway fossil fuel consumption. The UK will fail to meet its targets on climate change, possibly the biggest threat facing the world today.

In this annual publication, the SDC puts forward an alternative vision, the path to sustainability. We present snapshots of a not too distant future in which the UK's governments, consumers and businesses have taken significant steps to make our society sustainable. Schools are carbon neutral while hybrid cars are common. Energy use from buildings has been halved, slashing utility bills for householders and businesses. A citizens' Council for the Future provides a national, televised platform for the public's views on countering climate change. In each chapter, we work backwards from this hopeful future, examining how to get from here to there, analysing progress (or lack of it) and exploring the biggest barriers to its realisation. While we do not underestimate the challenges ahead, the SDC believes that

every scenario we present is achievable. The technologies already exist and political will in the UK nations is strengthening – as our chairman Jonathon Porritt acknowledges in his Preface. The biggest challenge will be to bring the majority of citizens on board, so that politicians and civil servants feel empowered to follow through on their commitments.

The SDC's Commissioners have a critical role to play in meeting this challenge. They provide our public face, act as our ambassadors to government, and drive our work and vision. In interviews spread throughout this publication, 12 of them describe how their varied backgrounds inform their passion for sustainable development and describe their aspirations for the Commission in the critical months and years ahead.



The top ten targets

- 1 Massive home energy cuts**
Heating and electricity use in homes falls by 60% by 2050 through greater efficiency
- 2 Carbon neutral public sector**
National and local government, hospitals, schools, prisons and the rest of the public sector make zero contributions to climate change
- 3 Hospitals perform to sustainability standards**
NHS performance is measured by the improving health and fitness of local communities by 2010
- 4 Schools showcase sustainable practice**
Schools, universities and colleges are beacons of sustainable development teaching, practice and community engagement by 2020
- 5 Car efficiency is financially rewarded**
Vehicle tax discs are radically re-banded to shift consumer demand towards energy efficient cars by 2009
- 6 Government is held to account on wellbeing**
National wellbeing is measured by the Government, alongside GDP by 2008
- 7 Local authorities audited for sustainable practices**
By 2010, local authorities across the UK are audited for their sustainable development performance, and tax payers money is awarded accordingly
- 8 A public platform for all citizens**
Long term political problems, and potential solutions, are informed by a UK-wide citizens' council
- 9 Carbon trading for individuals**
A full scale pilot and risk assessment on extending carbon emissions trading to individuals and small businesses is put in place before 2010
- 10 The public sector buys only food produced sustainably**
By 2008, UK nations lead the world in the proportion of fresh, locally produced, greener food that is purchased for the public sector

Half full, or half empty

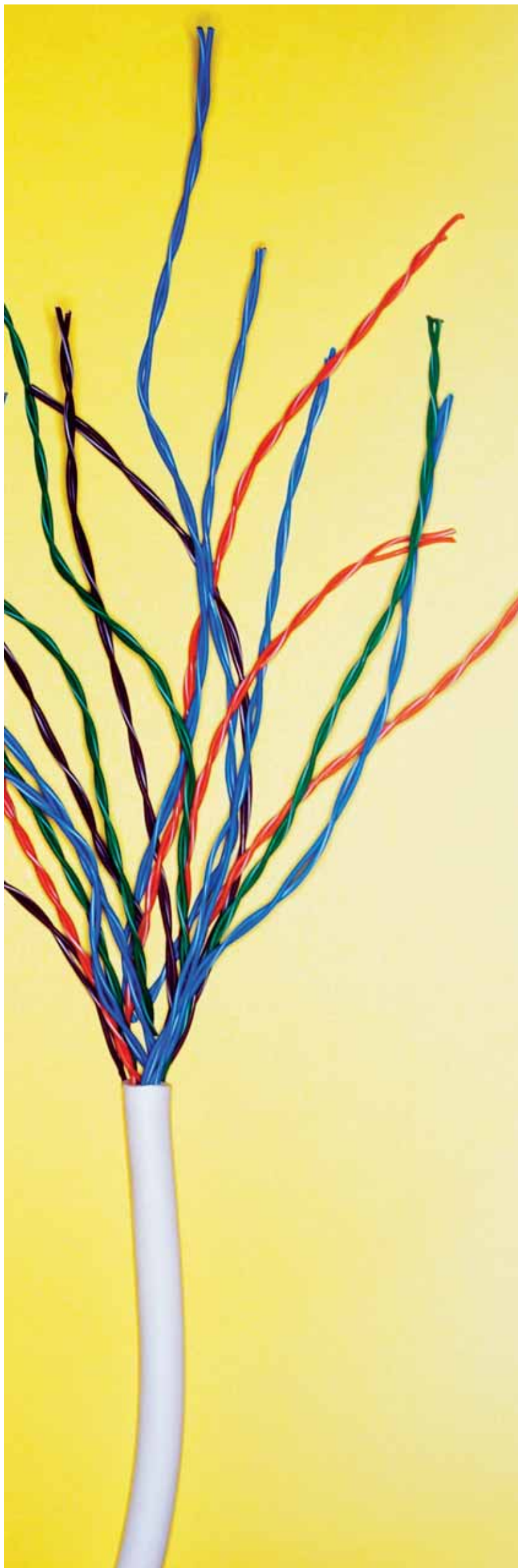
Our Chairman, Jonathon Porritt, comments on 2005, a year of contradictions

What a perplexing series of contrasts, earlier in the year, as we moved from the publication of the new Sustainable Development Shared Framework and UK Strategy in March, to the General Election in May, to the G8 Gleneagles Summit in July.

Both Framework and Strategy are serious, representing an encouragingly ambitious attempt by UK governments to get the practice of sustainable development embedded in every aspect of the public sector. Strong on implementation, and mercifully sparing in their use of over-hyped rhetoric, the documents are absolutely clear about the priorities for the next five years, with the UK Strategy establishing a new role for the Sustainable Development Commission itself – to which I shall return later.

The General Election campaign went to the other extreme, totally ignoring the environment, paying only lip-service to mega-issues like climate change, and making few if any connections between the economy, social justice, quality of life and individual wellbeing – the heartland of sustainable development. Devotees of conspiracy theories might almost conclude that the major parties conspired to keep this whole agenda out of sight and mind – notwithstanding very high levels of public interest and concern.

And then the pendulum swung back again at the Gleneagles Summit – the first G8 Summit to take issues like international poverty, debt relief, fairer trade and climate change as seriously as they now need to be taken. In the face of massively irresponsible and self-serving obstinacy from the Bush Administration, little was achieved on climate change apart from a new process to at least keep United States talking. But on both debt and aid, there were real breakthroughs – just so long as these agreements can be made to stick.



Lack of connections

Bizarrely, there were few connections made between the two agendas.

Although the report of the Commission for Africa acknowledged the devastating impact that climate change might have in exacerbating already chronic environmental and social pressures, it drew few conclusions from that analysis and made even fewer recommendations. For instance, the role that renewable energy can play in alleviating poverty and securing sustainable livelihoods throughout rural Africa is still treated as a “nice-to-have” add-on rather than the foundation of prosperity for the entire continent. To make poverty history, make energy sustainable.

Right now, making energy sustainable is likely to be the critical determinant of just how serious the Government is about sustainable development. The UK is lagging badly on its target of reducing CO₂ emissions by 20% on 1990 levels by 2010, and the Review of the Climate Change Programme (due this winter) will be pretty much make or break as far as getting back on track is concerned. The barriers

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Right now, making energy sustainable is likely to be the critical determinant of just how serious the Government is about sustainable development.

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to achieving that are substantial, but nothing like as substantial as some in government make out. Indeed, both our report on *“Wind Power in the UK”* earlier in the year, and the work we’re currently engaged in with ODPM on improving England’s existing housing stock, have demonstrated the huge opportunities available to policy makers if they get serious and stay serious about engineering a transformation in the way we both generate and use energy.

Half full and half empty

And that’s the psychological rub as we see it today. When it comes to international leadership and diplomacy, the Westminster administration is very much a “glass half full” government; when it comes to designing, enacting and implementing the policies to get the job done, the glass invariably seems to be half empty. There simply aren’t enough people in DTI and ODPM – let alone the Treasury – who are fired up about the opportunities entailed in a sustainable energy strategy: opportunities for UK PLC in terms of increased competitiveness and future export earnings; opportunities for “the fuel poor” in terms of eliminating the scourge of fuel poverty a great deal earlier than the sadly unambitious date of 2016; opportunities for individual home owners in terms of providing improved energy services at a lower cost.

It is of course the responsibility of policy makers to be cautious, to rely on robust scientific evidence, to ensure that proper cost or benefit analysis underpins every recommendation. But there’s something so downbeat and crabbily modest about the way we’re addressing the climate change challenge as to crush creativity and to deny both to business and individual citizens the unambiguous clarity and purposefulness that is needed to transform energy markets.

And it’s not just advisers like ourselves saying that: business leaders are increasingly liberating themselves from the negative scare-mongering of the CBI and urging the Government to frame long-term markets in such a way that a 60% reduction in CO₂ emissions by 2050 becomes a commercially advantageous reality rather than a bit of aspirational grandstanding.

That requires a level of cross-UK and cross-departmental co-ordination which has until now remained extremely elusive. Sometimes the political will just isn’t there; sometimes the tools aren’t. One of the Commission’s most interesting areas of engagement this year has been with the Department of Health and the Welsh Assembly Government, developing a self-assessment model for the National Health Service in England and Wales intent on making “good corporate citizenship” (a more or less acceptable synonym for sustainable development) a key part of what they’re delivering on behalf of users of health services and tax payers. Few organisations set out explicitly to behave unsustainably as a part of their commitment to quality, excellence or value for money – it’s just that they don’t feel confident about delivering on all of these things in more sustainable ways. Hence the overwhelming need to build capacity inside every Whitehall department, within the Scottish Executive, the Welsh Assembly Government and Northern Ireland Administration, and in every single public sector body.

Waking up to the challenge

As part of the new Strategy, the Sustainable Development Commission has been charged with the task of acting as “watchdog” on overall progress on sustainable development.

That’s a huge task, and we are still working out the details of exactly how this will be done and resourced. There are many bodies already commenting on government performance on environmental issues – including the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee, the National Audit Office, the Audit Commission, and so on; our first task has been to work out how all these pieces of the overall “accountability jigsaw” fit together, and what the SDC’s role should be in that context.

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The UK Shared Framework is by no means the last word on making sustainable development a reality across the whole of the UK, but it’s a huge improvement on anything we’ve had before.

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One area we’ll certainly be monitoring closely is the effectiveness of government engagement with the general public. The kind of transformation in consumer behaviour and lifestyle that is now required cannot be engineered by government bodies without the willing (enthusiastic, even) participation of people – acting both as consumers and as citizens. And on that particular score, the glass really is half empty. Survey after survey reveals substantial majorities of people feeling either confused or disempowered – and those are the ones who care enough about this stuff to know that they’re confused or disempowered!

The Government has just started to wake up to this challenge, and has set aside a chunk of money to start “raising awareness about climate change”. It’s been a pretty tortured process so far, and there’s clearly a very long way to go before any part of government (in Whitehall or the Devolved Administrations) can claim to have developed a consistent, long-term strategy for enabling people to become committed agents of change rather than marginalised bystanders.

On the whole, however, the Commission is feeling more optimistic about things now than we did this time last year. The UK Shared Framework is by no means the last word on making sustainable development a reality across the whole of the UK, but it’s a huge improvement on anything we’ve had before. And with the right kind of political will and leadership, we could at last see sustainable development entering into the mainstream of UK politics.

viewpoint



Resilient and determined

Jonathon Porritt

As the public face of the Sustainable Development Commission, Jonathon Porritt is often described as “Britain’s foremost environmentalist”. But this is not quite how the former English and drama teacher at a London comprehensive sees himself.

“I don’t call myself “an environmentalist”. Though it’s a bit of a mouthful, “sustainable development activist” is what I prefer! And that’s because my passion for the natural world is just one part of a broader commitment to a better world – in terms of social justice, sustainable communities and so on. And I came to all that through teaching – developing these ideas with and through young people.”

“My passion for the natural world is just one part of a broader commitment to a better world – in terms of social justice, sustainable communities and so on.”

In his work today, especially for the Commission, Jonathon finds many parallels with his former career. “Achieving sustainable development is really an enormous capacity-building or teaching exercise, aimed at politicians and the public. As Commissioners, our job is to make visible what’s invisible – to relate issues like climate change to people’s everyday lives and lifestyles.”

Resilience is another useful quality he gained from teaching teenagers – not to mention seven

failed efforts to win elections as an Ecology Party candidate – which still serves him well today. “You have got to be unusually resilient and determined to be in this field; progress can be pretty slow.”

That said, he is upbeat about the Commission’s progress in its first five years and about its future. “We get good feedback that the Commission is doing its job in terms of helping government develop policymaking, and we are currently achieving that with very limited resources. But what we have not been able to do so far is take on a broader watchdog role, combining improved public outreach with a more critical eye on government.”

That may soon change, however, as the SDC adjusts to its new watchdog role, mandated by the new UK Sustainable Development Strategy, *Securing the Future*.

“We are getting more teeth as an organisation at a really important time. We have a third Labour Government term of office and the opportunity to really deliver sustainable development on the ground, across the UK, by implementing the commitments in the Shared Framework and in *Securing the Future*”. Keen to avoid any confusion here, he adds: “These are not the Commission’s strategies – we would have produced something more radical! – but they provide an ambitious set of commitments and a good plan of action. If we meet these targets and objectives within the next five years, it will make a major difference to sustainable living in the UK.”

Jonathon Porritt is Director of Forum for the Future and has chaired the Sustainable Development Commission since it was established in 2000.

“Jonathon Porritt said... that the role of the Commission is to serve on the boundary between radicalism and pragmatism. But I think it’s very important... that the Commission always asks itself, is it going forward enough here, or has it allowed its expectation of a conservative response from others to make the Commission itself conservative?”

Craig Bennett, Head of the Corporate Accountability Campaign, Friends of the Earth

opinion

How we will live

If the UK achieves a successful transition to a sustainable society, what will it look like? How will our homes and offices, travel habits, energy use and household purchases differ from today?

In the UK Shared Framework for Sustainable Development *One Future – Different Paths*, the governments in London, Cardiff and Edinburgh and the Belfast Administration present a common vision for 2020, based on five guiding principles.

These principles form the basis for all future sustainable development policy. They will also guide our efforts to counter climate change and meet the Government's carbon emissions reduction targets for 2010 and 2050. Yet the 64 million dollar question remains. How will these fine words translate into practical measures which change the wasteful, unsustainable ways in which we live, work, travel and power our society today?

Business as usual is not an option. The Government has explicitly acknowledged that without measures to make our communities, services and industries more resource-efficient, the UK will overshoot its 2010 CO₂ reduction target by around ten million tonnes of carbon a year. Efforts to develop sustainable communities are also being hamstrung by the emphasis on

new settlements in the South East, which is diverting resources away from urban areas blighted by poverty, ill-health and poor services.

Encouragingly, *One Future – Different Paths* recognises the deficiencies of current policies and identifies creating sustainable communities (including giving citizens more say over local decisions) as one of four priority areas for immediate action. So how do we make this happen?

While we certainly don't have all the answers, the SDC has made recommendations which we believe could close the gap significantly between today's reality and the 2020 vision. Some would require significant behaviour changes by consumers or business; but there would also be many positive payoffs.

Living within environmental limits

Respecting the limits of the planet's environment, resources and biodiversity – to improve our environment and ensure that the natural resources needed for life are unimpaired and remain so for future generations.

Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society

Meeting the diverse needs of all people in existing and future communities, promoting personal wellbeing, social cohesion and inclusion, and creating equal opportunity for all.

Achieving a Sustainable economy

Building a strong, stable and sustainable economy which provides prosperity and opportunities for all, and in which environmental and social costs fall on those who impose them (polluter pays), and efficient resource use is incentivised.

Promoting good governance

Actively promoting effective, participative systems of governance in all levels of society – engaging people's creativity, energy, and diversity.

Using sound science responsibility

Ensuring policy is developed and implemented on the basis of strong scientific evidence, whilst taking into account scientific uncertainty (through the precautionary principle) as well as public attitudes and values.

Old Homes for New

Some of our solutions are strikingly simple. Buildings and their occupants generate half of all energy demand in the UK. Yet most buildings leak like sieves, providing huge potential to reduce – relatively painlessly – our national carbon quotient. While zero emission buildings are not going to be achieved quickly, simple improvements such as deeper loft insulation, insulating walls, double glazing, efficient heating systems and controls would significantly increase energy efficiency in homes, public buildings and business premises.

To encourage such activity nationwide and on the required scale, the SDC believes the Government must do two things: set a target to more than halve energy use in all existing buildings and shift its major policy emphasis from new communities in England to investing in improving the homes and buildings in existing cities and towns. (See also Anne Power opposite).

Our submission to the Government's 2005 Climate Change Programme Review (CCPR) suggests kick-starting this process by equalising VAT on housing refurbishment and new build, and requiring housing growth areas to be carbon neutral through a combination of efficient new build and retrofitting existing homes in the region. This would level the playing field currently skewed in favour of VAT-free new build. (Two million new homes are planned in England by 2016, while 730,000 houses stand empty).

“**More action is also required to propel a UK-wide home energy efficiency revolution.**”

To achieve carbon neutrality for planned growth areas such as the Thames Gateway, the SDC is proposing innovation-led partnerships between developers, energy suppliers, the energy efficiency industry, local authorities and community groups. New settlements would be built only if schemes were in place to offset their projected emissions with carbon savings from homes elsewhere in their region. Our main focus is on regenerating and building new homes within existing communities.

The SDC is evaluating the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan for England. We will urge that all new developments are designed with enough density to support low carbon lifestyles, sustainable transport and the use of home-based or district scale renewable energy and Combined Heat and Power (CHP) micro-generation. Modernising the 17 million poorly insulated existing homes is a major focus. We are also working with Communities Scotland on policies to mainstream sustainable regeneration north of the border, whilst in Wales, we are contributing advice to the Heads of the Valleys scheme, a major regeneration effort for the poorest area of the country.

More action is also required to propel a UK-wide home energy revolution. The Energy Efficiency Commitment, which requires energy suppliers to offer householders incentives for energy reduction measures such as loft insulation, has been a success and the Commission is urging its expansion. However, the programme needs additional incentives to boost householder take up, cut bills and ameliorate fuel poverty.

In our submission to the UK's Climate Change Programme Review, we also signalled our support, longer term, for the introduction of personal carbon credits, or Domestic Tradable Quotas (DTQs). We believe this will prove the most equitable market-based mechanism for giving individuals personal control and responsibility over allotted emissions quotas if and when such measures become necessary to meet the UK's climate change targets. In the meantime, we would like to see pilot schemes developed and funded by government.

Low carbon economy

The required transition to a low carbon economy will change our landscapes – putting solar panels on roofs, wind farms on hillsides and energy crops in fields – and alter our lifestyles – encouraging more use of public transport, hybrid cars and backyard micro-generation electricity and heating systems. It will also bring major benefits: reduced running costs for homes and businesses, an end to fuel poverty, cleaner local environments and improved public health.

In our CCPR submission, the SDC laid out a range of practical pathways and options to meet the UK's projected 10M tonnes of carbon shortfall by 2010, including:

- > **A major expansion of the EU Emissions Trading Scheme from 2008**
- > **Development of carbon capture at coal-fired plants and the capture and extensive use of methane emissions from coal mines**
- > **Incentive-driven development of highly energy efficient Combined Heat and Power systems to power both industry and homes**
- > **A new mandatory UK Emissions Trading Scheme for medium-sized businesses not in the EUETS**
- > **A commitment to a carbon neutral public sector by 2020**
- > **Supply chain improvements to help energy crops compete in fuel markets**
- > **Investment of revenue from the Non Fossil Fuel Obligation in a new Climate Change Challenge Fund to support local authority carbon-saving projects**
- > **Radical measures to cut transport emissions, described in Chapter 3**

Beyond 2010, achieving a low carbon society will be close to impossible without significant development of renewable energy sources. In 2005, the Commission launched well-publicised reports highlighting the practical potential of wind power across the UK and of wood fuel for heat in Scotland. We will use the latter – which

viewpoint



Urgent necessity not choice

Anne Power

Anne's 40-year crusade to improve life for the urban poor began with a 1966 visit to the Chicago neighbourhood where Martin Luther King launched his End Slums campaign. "I was visiting a student friend and I had never seen poverty and

"I watched 45 children from six houses playing in a tiny opening on to the main road. Behind our homes was an empty ten acre demolition site."

degradation like it," she recalls. "Living conditions in Tanzania, where I had been previously, seemed vastly superior."

She joined King's campaign and worked in Chicago and in New York on housing and urban policy, before returning to the UK. Again, her surroundings influenced her work. "We lived on a terraced street in Holloway, North London, and I watched 45 children from six houses playing in a tiny opening on to the main road. Behind our homes was an empty ten acre demolition site, so I asked the Council for permission to turn it into a summer playground and they immediately agreed."

In the years since, Anne Power has applied such practical lessons in rehabilitating run-down inner city estates across the country, working for both government and tenants' organisations. For the Commission, she applies her expertise to developing practical recommendations to government on making our cities more liveable and sustainable.

"The reasons such obvious actions as building that summer play area are not taken is because they are not part of a formal bureaucratic approach. They also require a lot of local involvement and many small-scale organisational efforts," she says. "Government traditionally works in a big-brother way on a large scale, and I'm afraid some of these lessons, although learnt, are not applied."

Sustainability lessons, too, are far from being learned in her view. "By far the biggest contribution to climate change, environmental impact and social problems, is the way we run and organise our cities." Major barriers to urban sustainability, she says, include high subsidies to build outside cities, VAT charges on inner city renovations and "most importantly, the assumption that we can continue to consume large amounts of energy and produce large amounts of waste to push our housing and car ownership standards ever higher." New build housing, she points out, escapes VAT altogether.

Anne's key objectives for the Commission are to equalise VAT on existing and new homes, and persuade government and developers to prioritise improving existing homes and neighbourhoods over new build.

Such action, she emphasises, is a matter of urgent necessity not choice. "Though the picture across the UK is variable, overall we are a crowded and densely populated island with a lot of unnecessary sprawl and road congestion. We have no choice but to live within our limits, and figure out how to make it all work better."

Anne Power is Professor of Social Policy at the London School of Economics and heads the SDC's work on housing and communities.



A bit of a contradiction

Hugh Raven

Hugh lives in the most sparsely populated area in the European Union south of the Arctic Circle. His family's home in North Argyll is three miles from the nearest village, on a 320 square mile peninsula which boasts a population of one per square mile.

"Some people say it's a bit of a contradiction working on public policy issues and living in the back of beyond," he says. "But in some ways it's absolutely logical, because where better to think about sustainability and human habitation issues than surrounded by wilderness and natural resources?"

As in much of rural Scotland, says Hugh, people in North Argyll are highly attuned to the natural elements around them and open to engaging in the sustainable development debate. "If you're thinking about the future in areas like this, you have to look at what sustains human settlement, and that means productive land and seas and using natural resources to generate energy."

"Where better to think about sustainability and human habitation issues than surrounded by wilderness and natural resources?"

This kind of thinking has led the SDC's two Scottish Commissioners, he and Maureen Child, an Edinburgh city councillor, to focus their efforts on targeted initiatives which can offer practical outcomes and improvements for communities.

"The SDC in Scotland has done work on sustainable regeneration and on how local government can provide best value and practice to communities. We have recently produced a major report on how wood fuel can generate renewable, affordable warmth, jobs and income in rural areas which could have a tremendous impact in small communities," says Hugh. "With our very limited resources, the Commission can't shadow every policy the Scottish Executive pursues. We need to be clever about making targeted, strategic interventions which could make a disproportionately large contribution to sustainable practice in Scotland."

"Scotland has a great opportunity to contribute disproportionately to the UK-wide renewable energy target."

Renewables is one key area where the Scottish Executive must do better and the Commission must continue to direct its energies, he says. The devolved government has set challenging targets of producing 18% of the country's electricity from renewable sources by 2010, rising to 40% by 2020. "Scotland has a great opportunity to contribute disproportionately to the UK-wide renewable energy target through wind, wave and wood power. We need to keep the pressure on the Executive as to how it is going to meet these targets."

Hugh Raven is a rural and food policy expert and Soil Association consultant. He is one of two Commissioners for Scotland.

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Without measures to make our communities, services and industries more resource-efficient, the UK will overshoot its 2010 CO₂ reduction target by around 10 million tonnes of carbon a year.

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estimates that rural households using wood fuel could slash their heating and hot water bills while cutting emissions by 96% – to influence the Scottish Executive's policies on forestry, energy and climate change. In Wales, the Commission contributed to the Assembly's Energy Route Map consultation, urging renewables development as a centrepiece of a low carbon economy. We strongly support further development of the micro-power industry across the UK, so that roof top wind turbines, solar hot water heaters and photovoltaics become commonplace sights a few years from now. (See also Hugh Raven, opposite; Bernie Bulkin, page 19).

Whether the Government will embrace all or any of the approaches we advocate will become clear when the new UK Climate Change Programme is published later in 2005. What is clear already is that without strong action and firm leadership the targets simply won't be met and the UK will lose its claim to lead the world on developing responses to counter climate change and its potentially devastating impacts.

Trendsetters & Cheerleaders

Delivering sustainable communities will also require both vision and strong leadership from central and local governments across the UK. Policies on regeneration, land use, transport planning, service provision and job creation will all need to be connected to one central purpose – delivering lifestyles governed by minimum energy use, strong local economies and improved quality of life.

Much of the day to day planning and implementation will fall to local authorities, and the Commission wants to see their actions and spending audited according to sustainability criteria across the UK. Progress has already been made: in Scotland, the Commission is working with the Sustainable Scotland Network to develop guidance on the existing Best Value or Sustainable Development duty, while in Wales, local government policies on sustainable development are under review by Audit Wales. In Northern Ireland, the Commission is working with the Review of Public Administration to ensure that sustainable development is embedded

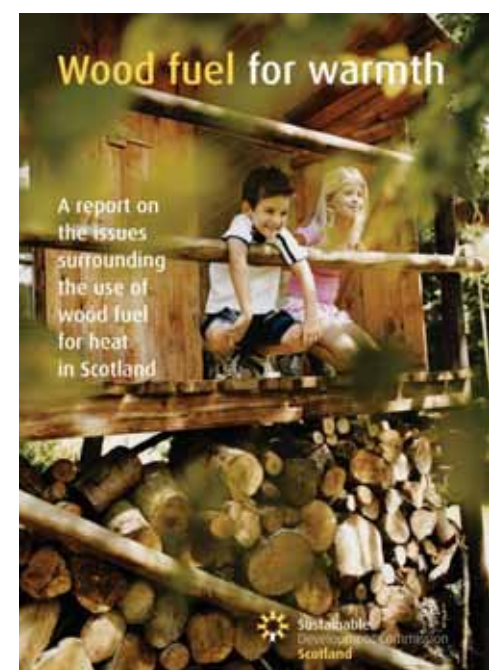
comment

Wood fuel heating – our advice

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at the heart of new plans for restructuring local authorities.

At the regional level in England a bigger shake-up is needed to inject sustainable development in government policy and service delivery, especially on planning, transport and health. A 2005 SDC review of decision-making and delivery processes for sustainable development at the regional level found that government sustainable development priorities are not yet being seriously addressed. To put this right, we recommended creating independent, inclusive and influential partnership bodies to champion progress in each region. We also urged that regional Government Offices be charged with delivering specific sustainable development responsibilities and plans.

The role of national governments – as both trendsetters and cheerleaders – is most important of all and 2005 has brought encouraging signs of leadership.

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The new Sustainable Development Strategy commits the UK Government to lead the way on sustainable procurement among the EU's 25 nations by 2009.

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The new Sustainable Development Strategy commits the UK Government to lead the way on sustainable procurement among the EU's 25 nations by 2009. This welcome move provides a major opportunity for the government to use its £13bn in annual direct purchasing power to engage business, transform markets and reduce carbon emissions.

The Strategy also commits the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), the Department for International Development and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to offset carbon dioxide emissions generated by official air travel. This marks a good first step towards a carbon neutral government, whereby all energy emissions from government buildings and activities would be cancelled out by carbon savings in other areas. The FCO, in particular, has shown strong leadership on sustainable development, publishing a robust departmental strategy in April 2005, just a month after the new UK Sustainable Development Strategy was launched. We would like to see this lead and sense of urgency replicated across Whitehall.

Internationally, the Prime Minister courageously used the G8 summit in Gleneagles to confirm the UK's intention to lead global efforts to combat climate change. Yet there is a striking gap between the Prime Minister's vision of sustainable development and the business

as usual approach of some government departments. Political resistance to curb rising road and air emissions acts against the urgent need to control climate change, while the massive push for new house building in the South East lies uneasily with efforts to create sustainable communities.

The 1999 Sustainable Development Strategy was largely unimplemented due to its lack of cross-governmental support. The SDC will be urging the Prime Minister to exert his authority to ensure a swift and coordinated effort across Whitehall to successfully implement its successor.

Welcome signs of deepening political commitment are also emanating from Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast. The Scottish Executive will soon publish a new sustainable development strategy, while the Welsh Assembly Government is in the process of implementing its second Sustainable Development Action Plan. The Northern Ireland Executive is also aiming to publish its first sustainable development strategy next year. (For interviews with Welsh, Scottish and Northern Ireland Commissioners, please see page 28).

Meanwhile, the Commission applauds the Scottish Executive's Greening Government Policy and its efforts to lead by example on procurement. All the electricity used to power the Executive's buildings is now renewable, for example, while of 162 government vehicles, 130 run on alternative fuels. In Wales, too, encouraging efforts are under way to expand sustainable public purchasing via the new Value Wales initiative.

In touch with the public

Governmental leadership, however, will only get us so far in transforming society.

As Tony Blair notes in the preface to *Securing the Future*: “we will only succeed if we go with the grain of what individuals and businesses want and channel their creativity to confront the environmental challenges we face.”

The UK Government's Strategy's Community Action 2020 – Together We Can initiative, which seeks to reinvigorate community initiatives on recycling, waste management, transport, neighbourhood planning and other bread and butter sustainability issues, is a welcome step in this direction. So is the recently launched Climate Change Communications Campaign which will use upbeat messages and positive examples to stimulate new thinking and buying habits among consumers across the UK.

The Big Lottery Fund, which supports local initiatives by charities and voluntary groups as well as larger environmental, education and health regeneration projects, will play an important role in linking national policy with local action on sustainability. The SDC is working with the Fund to ensure it carries through its commitment to deliver sustainable development both in its own practice and through its project appraisal process.

As we explore more fully in Chapter 6, tapping into the common sense and creativity of local communities offers new horizons both to further the sustainable development agenda and to re-connect citizens across the UK with their governments.

Carwyn Jones, Welsh Assembly Environment Minister, speaking at the SDC Celtic Conference in March 2005



Portobello High School



opinion

“The success or otherwise of sustainable development initiatives will depend to a significant degree on the extent to which they can become part of a debate in the workplace, particularly between employers and unions.”

Paul Noon, General Secretary, Prospect and co-chair, TUSDAC

How we will feel

An NHS Wales manager celebrates her promotion after obesity rates show a sustained decline in her county. Upward trends in healthy eating habits and exercise have been directly linked to a public health campaign she devised, based on collaboration with GPs, community health workers, local councillors and the media. Her colleagues are happy too. Their budget will be safe for another year.

It's 2010, and a key measure of performance for NHS organisations is improving community health. Reducing the persistent rich-poor health gap between the UK's richest and poorest areas has become a top priority. The careers of GPs and health service managers largely depend on demonstrating that they have shifted resources from diagnosing and treating patients to preventing physical and mental illness in the first place.

Hospitals and primary care centres now exert enormous influence as 'good corporate citizens' – using their power as employers, purchasers, landholders, commissioners of new buildings, and managers of energy, waste and transport to promote sustainable development. A sustainable NHS, modelled along these lines, is a key Sustainable Development Commission objective.

Already, pioneering health centres and NHS Trusts in Wales and England are moving in this direction, particularly by adopting good corporate citizenship as a key organising principle. Cardiff and Vale NHS Trust, for example, has introduced an award-winning environmental management system which includes investment in energy efficient technologies, an environmental procurement policy, waste reduction schemes and promotion of cycling and public transport. With the Welsh Assembly Government's backing, the SDC is supporting NHS Wales' efforts to promote sustainable development.

In England, our vision moved a step closer to reality with the publication of the Public Health White Paper Choosing Health: Making Healthy Choices Easier, which embraced much of our

advice and thinking. Choosing Health takes a markedly more holistic approach to public health than past policy, emphasising the promotion of healthy habits such as exercise and nutritious school meals to prevent ill-health, and committing the NHS to improved employment practices including smoke-free premises. It also charges NHS organisations to "make a significant contribution to the health and sustainability of the communities they serve."

A thousand pounds every second

The NHS's reach is enormous. The largest UK employer, it spends a thousand pounds every second and its demand for food, goods and services makes up to 10% of some UK regional economies. Recognising the huge opportunities this presents, the White Paper unveiled plans for a partnership between the SDC and the Department of Health to develop good corporate citizenship in NHS organisations across England.

Our Healthy Futures team has since developed a best practice assessment model for NHS chief executives and managers, covering sustainable procurement and resources, employment practices, new buildings, waste management, community engagement and transport. Five pilots with NHS Trusts around the country have produced encouraging results. The University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust,

for example, responded with plans to streamline deliveries and reduce packaging; set up a Patient Information Resource Centre and Young Person's Council to improve communication; and establish a central team to consolidate and coordinate good practice across the Trust. The final, web-based assessment model will be launched in January 2006.

Another key area where the NHS can make a difference is in its massive capital building and infrastructure programme. By 2010, in England alone over £11 billion will have been invested in 100 new hospitals, and over £1 billion in new primary care buildings. In Scotland, £2.1 billion has been earmarked for health infrastructure between 2005 and 2008. In Wales, infrastructure investment is predicted to rise to £309 million per annum from 2007.

This provides a huge, UK-wide opportunity, which the SDC hopes will not be wasted, to improve public health, benefit local communities and, in so doing, reduce demand for health services (See also Anna Coote page 13). Healthy Futures: Buildings and Sustainable Development, the latest of our popular publications for NHS managers, provides a checklist for a sustainable NHS building and highlights the many knock-on benefits which result. A Welsh language version is also in production.

Despite these positive steps, however, the overall UK health picture remains bleak. Rich-poor health inequalities and the burden they create on the NHS continue to grow alongside rates of obesity, diabetes and other illnesses related to unhealthy lifestyles. In 2003, residents of the wealthiest neighbourhoods in England

“

Choosing Health takes a markedly more holistic approach to public health than past policy, emphasising the promotion of healthy habits such as exercise and nutritious school meals to prevent ill-health.

”

Barts and The London NHS Trust's Private Finance Initiative (PFI) development.

See all the case studies on the SDC website at www.sd-commission.org.uk

opinion

“The one thing that usually binds different groups of people, different businesses, different governments together is wanting to create a better life for their children and their grandchildren. Is there a marketing opportunity here to promote sustainable development as the best way of improving future lives? Just as the idea of “thinking global, but acting local” is a good soundbite how about: “today's decisions for tomorrow's children?”

Dr Simon Lenton, Consultant Paediatrician, Bath and North East Somerset NHS





Gwent Healthcare NHS Trust (GHT): Energy Management Pilot



At Grangemouth and Bo'ness, a Health Walk project and a GP Referral Scheme have teamed up to encourage patients to adopt physical exercise as part of an holistic approach to recovery.

See all the case studies on the SDC website at www.sd-commission.org.uk



A LIFT scheme to develop a new 'one-stop shop' health facility in South Manchester, which integrates health and social care with education, employment and leisure facilities.

See all the case studies on the SDC website at www.sd-commission.org.uk



Bronllys Hospital, Powys is the first UK NHS hospital to generate electricity from sunlight. A 60.62 kW photovoltaic array reduces the hospital's need for fossil fuels.

Benefits of NHS Good Corporate Citizenship

- > **78% of Directors of Nursing in England say hospital design affects staff recruitment**
- > **Well-designed hospitals can shorten patient stays and reduce painkiller use**
- > **Hospitals accessible by public transport, walking or cycling help poorer citizens receive care; 1.4m people a year fail to seek medical help because of transport problems**
- > **Accessible hospitals can recruit more easily and fairly; two out of five jobseekers say lack of transport is a barrier to getting a job**
- > **Energy used by the health sector in England alone produces about 3.47m tonnes of carbon dioxide a year**
- > **The NHS in Wales annually produces 20,744 tonnes of waste. The total cost of disposal of this waste is £3.84 million**

and Wales lived on average 7-8 years longer than those in the poorest; the death rate among children born into the poorest fifth of families was a startling 19% higher than the general population.

Such shocking disparities are neither acceptable nor sustainable. The SDC welcomes the emphasis on reducing health inequalities in the UK Government Public Health White Paper and we will continue to work closely with all UK governments to promote healthy, sustainable communities. In so doing we will emphasise the urgent need for policymakers to join the dots between healthy bodies and minds and wider social issues, including decent housing conditions, good schools, local job opportunities and liveable neighbourhoods. By taking a holistic approach to such problems, governments will deliver sustainable development, improve public health and reduce inequalities.

By 2010, in England alone over £11 billion will have been invested in 100 new hospitals, and over £1 billion in new primary care buildings

In Scotland, £2.1 billion has been earmarked for health infrastructure between 2005 and 2008

In Wales, infrastructure investment is predicted to rise to £309 million per annum from 2007

Healthy Futures #3 Buildings and Sustainable Development.

Download free online

Your thoughts?

Publications, news and case studies from the Healthy Futures Team.

Sources:

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comment



The food ‘CZARS’

One key area for improving health and tackling inequality is to encourage a healthy, balanced diet, beginning with the eating habits of children.

To this end, the Commission has applauded the efforts of Scottish Food and Health Co-ordinator Gillian Kynoch in Scotland and of celebrity chef Jamie Oliver in England to raise the profile and practice of healthy school meals. Ms Kynoch, Scotland’s government-appointed “food czar”, is helping implement a £63.5m three-year initiative, Hungry for Success, to put healthy ingredients back into school food and take fat and sugar out. The Commission is now working with her to explore opportunities to supply Scottish schools with locally sourced fresh food. We are also tracking new initiatives in England created in the wake of Jamie Oliver’s campaign, including the School Food Trust.

However, our main work in this area is on public sector food procurement. Food procurement amounts to £60 million a year in Wales and £1.8 billion a year in England.

The key challenge is embedding sustainable food supply throughout the UK public sector. While some NHS Trusts and schools are leading the way – shifting away from long distance cook-chill food to locally-sourced fresh cooked meals – they remain oases in a desert of poor nutrition.

In England, the SDC is working with the Defra on rolling out its Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative, launched in August 2003. In Wales, we support the Welsh Procurement Initiative, which aims to embed sustainable purchasing policies in the public sector. Already, four in ten such organisations use their sustainable procurement self assessment tool, including seven NHS Trusts.

“**While some NHS Trusts and schools are leading the way – shifting away from long distance cook-chill food to locally-sourced fresh cooked meals – they remain oases in a desert of poor nutrition.**”

The potential rewards are well worth the effort. If local and central government, hospitals, schools and prisons invested this income in fresh local produce the impacts would be far-reaching. Benefits would be felt not only in public and patient health, but in local economies and by agriculture, landscapes and biodiversity.

viewpoint



On physical health and happiness

Anna Coote

Anna’s career has led her in many directions – as a journalist, an academic, and a health and social policy analyst at the Institute of Public Policy Research and the King’s Fund. Sustainable development, however, was not among them.

“A lot of what the Commission does involves innovation. We focus on new policy areas and bring in new constituencies.”

“I’ve always been a keen environmentalist in my personal life,” she says, “but when I was asked to join the Commission I had no background in environmental work, so it was both an opportunity to learn and an interesting challenge.”

Her response has been to focus on connecting health issues to the broader sustainable development agenda, disseminating the findings through recommendations to government and practical advice to NHS practitioners. “A lot of what the Commission does involves innovation. We focus on new policy areas and bring in new constituencies by making connections between the different aspects of sustainable development and other policy agendas including health, education and food,” she explains. “For many government departments across the UK – health included – sustainable development has been a low priority; changing that perception is an important part of what we do.”

Looking ahead, Anna wants the SDC to bolster its arguments for sustainable NHS design, building and procurement policies,

with eye-opening research quantifying “the huge difference NHS corporate activities can make to improve public health.” For example the central goal for the major NHS building programmes now underway, she says, should be to deliver “sustainable and health-enhancing” new hospitals and health care centres.

“Do they provide a healing environment? How accessible are they? Is there natural, renewable heating and lighting? Is the timber used from sustainable sources? Will the food be fresh, nutritious and locally procured? How are local jobs being generated? This may all seem like common sense, but very few NHS managers are thinking this way yet.”

Another priority will be to try and quantify the links between physical and mental health and happiness and well-being,

“For many government departments across the UK – health included – sustainable development has been a low priority; changing that perception is an important part of what we do.”

drawing on the Commission’s work in the field of sustainable consumption. “We want the government and public to think in a connected way about these issues and we need to do the same with our work programmes within the SDC.”

Anna Coote is Head of Engaging Patients and the Public at the Healthcare Commission and leads the SDC’s health programme.

How we will learn

Portobello High School in Edinburgh has once again received an Eco School Green Flag. One of the first UK schools to address sustainability issues outside the classroom, it now boasts rooftop wind turbines, on-site recycling, a new gym built with energy efficiency savings and school meals prepared on site from fresh local produce.



It is 2020 and Portobello High, along with the rest of the UK education sector, is carbon neutral. Schools, colleges and universities are community showcases of sustainable development, inspiring copycat measures by businesses and households to use renewable energy, minimise waste and buy fair trade products.

Lower energy bills have freed up a lot more money to spend on textbooks, teachers and new equipment and some educational providers are even selling excess power back to the grid. Sustainable development is embedded across the curriculum and bullying incidents and pupil exclusions have declined dramatically.

Back in 2005, Portobello High School and its 1450 pupils are well on the way to fulfilling this scenario. Enthusiastic staff and pupils have developed their school grounds, introduced a green transport plan, and are now focusing their efforts on water conservation and collection. The school boasts litter monitors, a junior school Environment Club called 'Porty Planeteeers', paper and kitchen waste recycling schemes, science lessons on the uses of solar kits and energy crops, a pupil-teacher environment council to monitor school-wide progress, and a newsletter and website.

Scotland currently leads the way on sustainability education among the UK nations. Not only are 65% of Scottish schools registered as EU Eco-schools, compared with about 15% UK-wide (4,500 Eco-schools among a total of 30,000.) But the Scottish Executive has embarked on a curriculum review which will embed Sustainable Development across the curriculum.

In England, where most UK schoolchildren live, the key role education must play in forming positive habits for a lifetime of sustainable working and living is highlighted in the new Sustainable Development Strategy. Yet, despite the Government's commitments on paper to sustainable schools, there is simply not enough follow through to make pioneers like Portobello High a common picture across the UK.

The need to correct this is urgent. The SDC wants to see all UK schools equipping young people for an insecure, rapidly changing world and acting as catalysts to identify local solutions to social and environmental problems. The path to a secure future for all of us lies in active global citizenship, community involvement, social inclusion, good corporate practice and lifelong learning – the foundations for all of which can be laid at school.

Sustainable Schools: The Benefits

- > **Good building design, nutritious school meals and walking and cycling to school increase pupils' focus and attentiveness**
- > **Hands-on learning results in better motivated pupils**
- > **Schools with motivated pupils have fewer problems with behaviour, attendance and exclusions**
- > **Energy efficiency improvements free up money to spend on books and teachers**
- > **Projects involving the community foster good relations between schools, parents and other local stakeholders**
- > **Children are prepared for a lifetime of good living and working habits**

In January 2005, the Commission began a two year collaboration with the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). The aim is to persuade Ministers to take a lead in embedding sustainable development policy and practice across schools, higher education and lifelong learning institutions. At present sustainable development is simply not a mainstream concern in either the Department's policies or its delivery networks in schools. However, the expiry of the Department's current Sustainable Development Action Plan, in September 2005, provides an opportunity for the Commission to press for improvements in existing policies and targets. We will also work to ensure that the DfES puts sustainable development into practice among its own buildings and employee practices, leading schools, teachers and governors by example.

The education sector is also letting a major opportunity slip by to embed sustainability principles and practice in the huge schools capital building programme now underway. To address this, the SDC has urged the government to redesign its Building Schools for the Future

Portobello High School



opinion

“I was struck tonight by how many good ideas there are. They make a lot of sense and I think what's interesting is why aren't they happening? What are the barriers? Where's the inertia coming from and how do we move forward?”

Bronwen Jones, Head of Sustainable Development Unit, Defra



“We can be very critical, we don’t shy away from that”

Becky Willis

When she sits down with Ministers to discuss overcoming the barriers to greening England’s education system, Becky comes armed not only with facts, figures and reasoned arguments, but with frontline experience.

As a governor of Goose Green Primary in southeast London, she has firsthand knowledge of both the opportunities and frustrations encountered by schools trying to make a difference.

“If a school like ours wanted to install solar panels, for example, it would probably have to spend less on teachers, which is no choice at all.”

“I live in a very diverse neighbourhood and a lot of what the school is about is teaching citizenship – getting children to take part in their community and society. We have a very dedicated staff, enthusiastic pupils and a headteacher who sees clearly how environmental measures could provide a great learning opportunity for the kids and save the school some money. But the sums we can tap into to implement sustainable practice are tiny. If a school like ours wanted to install solar panels, for example, it would probably have to spend less on teachers, which is no choice at all.”

With her encouragement, Goose Green is taking some simple, cheap energy efficiency measures which will save on heating bills. But the fulfilment of more ambitious ideas will have to wait until the school navigates

the complexities of government and other funding sources for education sustainability projects.

Government short-sightedness in failing to mainstream sustainability in schools leaves Becky deeply frustrated. Not least because of the crucial role schools and colleges could play, not just in educating pupils about sustainable lifestyles, but in influencing the thinking and habits of wider communities.

“There is now wide public acceptance in Britain, for example, that we’re going to have to take action on climate change,” she says. “But people are not sure how to go about it in their own lives. One obvious way of closing this gap is through making the education sector a beacon of sustainability teaching and learning and of best practice, especially with such a big school building programme underway.”

Pressing home this message is what Becky Willis does on a day to day basis, both as a consultant and for the Commission, which she joined in 2004. “This is a really interesting organisation to be part of because of our unique role as critical friend. We can work on the inside track with ministers and officials and help them draw up a road map for action. Yet because we are not part of government we can be very critical when we need to be – and we don’t shy away from that.”

Becky Willis, a sustainability consultant and Green Alliance associate, is the Commission’s Vice Chair for Whitehall. She currently leads on the Commission’s work on education.

refurbishment programme for England’s 3,500 secondary schools around sustainability (particularly energy efficiency) and to double its investment. While upfront building expenditure may increase, future savings in running costs would be much greater. Schools spend almost £400m a year on heating and lighting alone, and the least efficient use more than three times more energy, per pupil, than the most efficient.

More can also be done to improve the DfES’s minimum environmental building work standards for schools. The SDC is arguing for updated guidance to require the installation of Combined Heat and Power systems and renewable technologies, low energy appliances and lighting, recycling and other waste minimisation measures, and water efficiency initiatives.

The Prime Minister clearly shares our vision for schools, stating in September 2004: “Sustainable development will not just be a subject in the classroom: it will be in its bricks and mortar and the way the school uses and even generates its own power. Our students won’t just be told about

“

Sustainable development will not just be a subject in the classroom: it will be in its bricks and mortar and the way the school uses and even generates its own power.

”

sustainable development, they will see and work within it: a living, learning place in which to explore what a sustainable lifestyle means.”

Experience shows that schools already following this path, such as Portobello High, are reaping real benefits. According to Ofsted, school inspectorate for England and Wales, in its 2003 report “Taking the first steps forward”, sustainability pioneers were lowering costs, producing motivated and better-behaved pupils and achieving higher academic results, improved staff morale and stronger community relationships.

The conclusion to be drawn is simple. In education, more so than in other areas of national life, there is a clear and straightforward path to sustainability. We will hold the UK Government to the Prime Minister’s vision.

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comment

The Scottish Seabird Centre was built with a strong ‘ecological agenda’ and local community support. Is it truly sustainable?

Your thoughts?

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How we will travel

It's 2012, and Matthew Brown finally stops for petrol after driving 500 miles in his petrol-electric Toyota Prius, Britain's fastest-selling car. His destination is a walking holiday in Northern Ireland, paid for in part by the big savings he made by switching from a big-engine four wheel drive petrol car to a hybrid. Thanks to the banded VED system which rewards energy-conscious motorists, his annual tax disc payment fell from £1800 a year to £300. He also considered buying a car powered by one of the new government-subsidised bio-fuels, whose pump price is 66% less than unleaded petrol.



As he approaches Belfast, to see some friends, Matthew lets his speed fall below the 60mph motorway limit, so that he'll enter the city after rush hour, when congestion charges peak. As in other cities, public outcry at such traffic reduction measures has been mitigated, due to sustained public investment in rail, bus and rapid light transit services and in cycle lanes. Several of Matthew's friends, who don't own cars, have benefited from these measures, while others, fed up with congestion charges and motorway tolls, have forsaken driving altogether for cheap and efficient public transport.

The SDC believes this could be a realistic description of everyday UK travel in the near future. While the Department of Transport often presents reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the sector as 'mission impossible', we believe the opposite is true.

The technology needed to make the kind of shift in demand management and consumer behaviour described above is already available. The International Energy Agency, for example, has estimated that installing more efficient components in new cars, hybridising 75% of light vehicles and using advanced biofuels to provide 20% of road transport fuels could cut worldwide fuel use by cars – and their greenhouse gas emissions – by 50% by 2050 (1). What is lacking is political will and public buy-in.

The SDC does not underestimate the difficulties involved in challenging the UK's deeply ingrained car culture, or in persuading Ministers to push through policies likely to be unpopular with voters. But sticking with our current travelling habits is simply not an option.

Road transport already accounts for 24% of UK carbon emissions and is expected to rise a further 9% by 2010. Without radical solutions the UK simply will not meet its greenhouse gas reduction target in 2010 or 2050. Nor will the public find relief from traffic congestion, air pollution-related illnesses or – in the case of car-less households – inequitable access to jobs, healthcare, supermarkets and other services.

In our submission to the 2005 Climate Change Programme Review, the SDC called for an ambitious 50% cut in CO₂ emissions from UK road transport by 2025. To achieve this, we laid out concrete policy measures which would save at least 3 million tonnes of carbon a year and bring about the kind of future scenario envisaged above.

First, we urged the Governments to implement clear national traffic reduction strategies, embracing congestion charging in towns and cities, increased spending on good public transport, walking and cycling facilities and strong guidance to local authorities to prioritise behavioural change and promote non-driving options in Local Transport Plans.

Second, we proposed a banded Vehicle Excise Duty, reaching £1800 a year for the biggest, most fuel-hungry vehicles and falling by £300 a band, depending on fuel efficiency, down to £0 for vehicles with emissions below 100g/km of CO₂ a kilometre. We believe rewarding drivers for energy-conscious behaviour would dramatically increase consumer demand for hybrids and other highly fuel efficient vehicles.

Third, we urged government to assess the extent to which adjusting speed limits on all types of road could reduce emissions, and to boost the nascent bio-fuels industry by aiming for plant-based fuels to make up 5% of total supply.

Zero Sum Game

Government Action

Estimated Annual Carbon savings

National traffic reduction strategy based on encouraging behavioural change

0.5MtC

Radical re-banding of Vehicle Excise Duty (£1800 to £0)

0.4-0.8MtC

Biofuels = 5% of all road transport fuels

0.6-1MtC

Enforced speed limits

1.5MtC

3.0MtC - 3.8MtC

Source:

(1) Climate Change Programme Review: the submission of the Sustainable Development Commission, May 2005. Note: There may be some double counting of savings as some measures will cross over in their impacts.

opinion

“The knowledge economy is the economy we are in and moving into. The UK is investing more in its ICT infrastructure than the Government is investing in new roads. Surely we must be able to use that, thinking ahead, in terms of addressing the transport problem?”

Chris Tuppen, Head of Sustainable Development & Corporate Accountability, BT

While these are radical solutions, the SDC believes they are justified by the social and environmental costs of rising road transport emissions. It may even be that, with hybrid cars increasingly popular, and public concern surging over the impacts of climate change, such measures may not prove as unpopular as the Government fears. An ICM poll in June 2005 reported that 75% of people questioned anticipated restrictions on private vehicle use to counter climate change, and 51% agreed that air travel rationing will be necessary in future.

The Government's timidity over challenging travelling habits was clearly reflected in the new UK Sustainable Development Strategy which we described in our official response as "particularly weak on comprehensive measures for tackling the negative impacts of transport".

This failure was particularly glaring in aviation – the fastest growing sources of UK carbon emissions – as in road transport. While *Securing the Future* states that a 60% reduction in UK CO₂ emissions by 2050 "remains necessary and achievable", the Government is simultaneously planning several new airports to satisfy unsustainable future demand. (On present trends, the DfT predicts annual air passenger numbers will rise from 160m in 1990 to 400m by 2020).

The SDC recognises the benefits of cheap air fares, but we believe current distorted price structures encourage air travel at the expense of rail, and fail to reflect the environmental costs of flight. It is absurd, for example, that a London to Edinburgh airfare can be several times cheaper than a train ticket.

The Commission applauds the Government's commitment to use its 2005 EU presidency to pave the way for aviation emissions to be included in the EU Emissions Trading Scheme by 2012. But this alone will not do the job. We have called on the Government to lead the way in Europe by imposing a fuel emissions charge on all internal UK air travel, to be extended to international flights at a later date.

Pressing for this and for an urgent national debate on airport expansion will provide a major focus for the Commission in 2006. Another priority will be researching emerging biofuels technologies which we believe can play an important role in achieving low carbon travel.

We will also be lobbying for more attention to carbon and traffic reduction measures in the pending Welsh Transport Bill. Traffic growth is higher in Wales than anywhere else in the UK, though rail and bus use also rose rapidly in 2004-5. In Northern Ireland, we will work to ensure that all transport projects resulting from the forthcoming ten year, £16 billion capital infrastructure programme, will be grounded firmly in sustainability criteria. In Scotland, SDC will be represented on the National Transport Strategy Reference Group.

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- (1) A Different Energy Future, International Energy Agency Governing Board and Management Committee, April 2005.

“We believe current distorted price structures encourage air travel at the expense of rail and fail to reflect the environmental costs of flight. It is absurd, for example, that a London to Edinburgh airfare can be several times cheaper than a train ticket.”

viewpoint



On nuclear, wind power and transport

Bernie Bulkin

Many of the SDC's Commissioners juggle a diverse portfolio of influential jobs and activities, but probably none more so than Bernie.

"I try to keep busy with a mix of business activities, government advisory roles and educational and charitable work," says BP's former chief scientist, who "retired" in December 2003. "In all, I have ten or more different roles; sometimes I work on four or five in a single day."

“We decided to focus on wind power because if we fail to make a breakthrough there it is hard to see how renewables can become a significant part of the UK energy mix.”

Despite his many commitments, Bernie says joining the Sustainable Development Commission was too good an opportunity to pass by. "Sustainable development is all about building for the future; about integrating economic development, social progress and environmental protection. Developing options for building a sustainable society in five, ten or 15 years from now is a very exciting challenge and the Commission is a place from which one can nudge government policy in the right direction, which I found very attractive."

Bernie's many years spent working on transport and energy issues for big business informs his perspective as he leads the Commission's efforts to formulate

practical recommendations to government.

He explains his approach as "taking the principles of sustainable development, which I think are very sound, and using them as a lens through which to address climate change, energy and transport issues." Given the limited resources available, he has focused on "a few key areas" to press government, including wind power development and how to meet the UK's climate change targets.

"We decided to focus on wind power because if we fail to make a breakthrough there it is hard to see how renewables can become a significant part of the UK energy mix," he says. "Our 2005 wind report was an all-time bestseller for the Commission. It featured on 11 radio news broadcasts and five TV bulletins in one day." Other priorities, in the months ahead, will include a review of the SDC's position on nuclear power, the potential of bio-fuels to replace fossil fuels in transport and the politically fraught problem of how to make aviation more sustainable.

"There is a view in government that transport issues are too difficult and can't be solved. Yet if we don't make a step change in reducing transport emissions it is very hard to see how the UK can meet its short or long term climate change goals. Our job is to show them how it is perfectly possible, using existing technologies, to get from here to there."

Bernie Bulkin is a Fellow of New Hall, Cambridge where he heads the New Hall Centre for the Environment, and is Chairman of AEA Technology. He leads the SDC's work on climate change, energy and transport.

comment

Climate change

What should Government be doing? Read our full submission to the Climate Change Programme Review.

Your thoughts?

Join our series of online debates on cutting edge issues.



How we will prosper

It's Wellbeing Day 2007. The Chancellor emerges from Number 11 to greet the assembled press, holding up a newly-christened green briefcase.

Inside are plans to put quality of life improvements at the heart of UK policy, and to launch a National Wellbeing Indicator to be published annually alongside GDP.

The groundbreaking agreement to develop Wellbeing Accounts, based on measurements of non-monetary factors such as citizens' reported mental health and happiness, has been negotiated between the Treasury, the

rest of Whitehall, the Welsh Assembly Government, Scottish Executive and Northern Ireland Administration.

The objective is to develop authoritative, cross-departmental datasets that will inform future policy-making and engagement with UK citizens and media as powerfully as GDP affects economic policy and the annual Budget process today was in 2005.



Of all our scenarios for a near-future UK, this is the closest to fulfilment. In their 2005 UK Shared Framework on Sustainable Development, the governments of the UK nations pledged to develop a Wellbeing Indicator, measuring quality of life other than income. They also named sustainable consumption and production one of four priority areas for immediate UK-wide action.

The SDC warmly welcomed this commitment to rethink how we define progress and to explore how to organise our economy on more sustainable lines. The governments' actions suggest they have taken on board the evidence that more income does not necessarily translate into greater happiness, and have registered public dissatisfaction with the costs of high pressure modern lifestyles.

We also applauded the new economic guiding principle adopted in the Shared Framework which replaces the old emphasis on economic growth with a commitment to "building a strong, stable and sustainable economy."

Radical refocus

This shift was a major success for the Commission, which worked hard to secure the new wording, feeding input from dozens of experts into the Government's review process. We have long called for national priorities to be radically refocused on achieving only such economic growth as supports high employment, social progress and living within environmental limits.

How would such an economy work in practice? As the Government acknowledges in *Securing the Future*, achieving sustainable consumption and production will require us to achieve a lot more with a lot less. Business innovations and technologies which reduce environmental impacts and enable use of renewable resources must be developed and commercialised on a fast track basis. Government will need to play its part, using incentives and penalties to encourage the speedy mainstreaming of clean technologies and products. Consumers will need prodding to ensure dominant markets for sustainable products (for example, as the SDC has proposed, by paying between £1800 and £0 for a tax disc, depending on your vehicle's fuel efficiency).

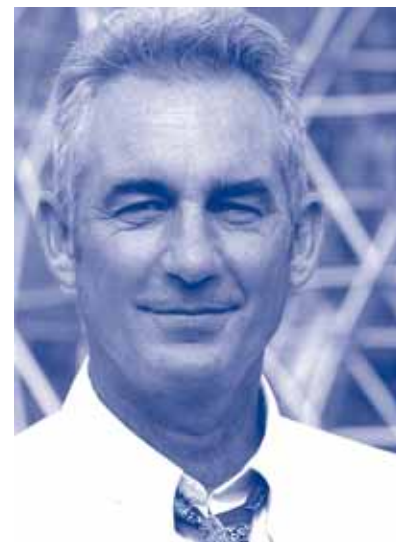
The 2005 UK Sustainable Development Strategy makes an encouraging start on all these fronts.

Environment Direct, the Government's planned, web-based advice service on product sustainability for consumers and procurement professionals, will fill a major information gap when it is launched in 2006.

The Strategy's objective of leading EU governments on sustainable procurement by 2009 provides a key opportunity for Whitehall to lead by example and transform markets through its £13 billion a year shopping list for goods and services. (However, the SDC would like to see this followed up with a 2020 target for a carbon neutral public sector across the UK in the new Climate Change Programme).

The requirement on all UK government departments to produce Sustainable Development Action Plans in 2005, setting out how they intend to implement the Strategy's commitments and report on progress, also

viewpoint



The materialistic nature of our society

Tim Jackson

In 'Death of an Altruist', his well-received play for BBC radio, Tim's materialistic central character undergoes a profound change of heart and gives away all his possessions.

It's a theme – the materialistic nature of our society – which echoes in his work for the SDC, analysing what drives modern consumerism and lobbying for government policies to make consumption sustainable.

"Play writing is a powerful way of exploring these very complex issues facing society."

"Play writing is a powerful way of exploring these very complex issues facing society about how and why we are so embedded in materiality, and what we can do about it," he explains. "I can play out the dynamics and the tensions involved through characters, which adds a valuable human dimension to my thinking on sustainable development. Writing also helps keep me sane!"

Over the last twelve years, Tim has pioneered the development of a 'green GDP' monitoring system for the UK, to sit alongside traditional measures of economic growth. This work, together with his academic research on what drives consumer behaviour, informed the SDC's successful efforts to persuade government to adopt a sustainable formula for future economic growth, and to explore a new national indicator to measure public wellbeing.

"My university work has led me naturally to the Commission as the place to take these findings and ideas forward with

government," says Tim. His next challenge, on the Commission's behalf, will be to help Whitehall to follow through the commitments made in *Securing the Future* on influencing citizen and consumer behaviour.

"There's lots of hard work to be done identifying ways that will enable government to give people choices to live more sustainably, while still fulfilling their needs and aspirations. All the evidence shows that where there is a genuine alternative, people want to act responsibly. So what can the Government usefully do to promote the cultural and spending shifts that will conserve natural resources and reduce our impact on climate?"

We also need to press home the crucial importance of involving communities of all kinds – local groups, business, civil society – in negotiating the profound societal change required if we are to become a sustainable society."

Tim Jackson is Professor of Sustainable Development at Surrey University's Centre for Environmental Strategy, chairs the SDC's Economics Steering Group.

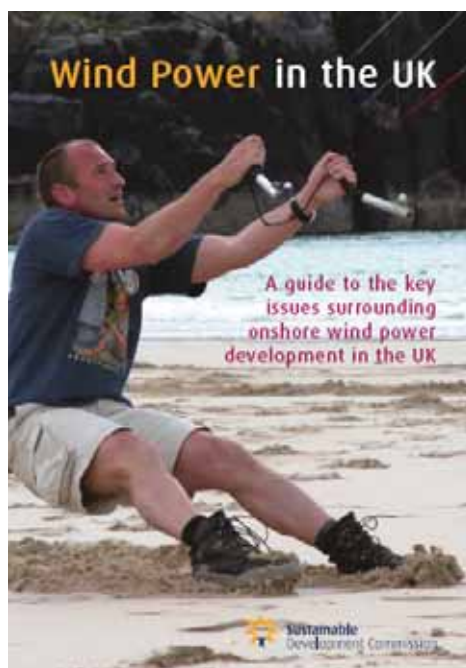
comment

Wind Power in the UK
"A breakthrough"
– Observer

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ECO2



opinion

“I was interested in the arguments around sustainable products within the home. It raises interesting debates about what a company wants to do commercially and what’s right for the environment and how we, as the champions of the subject, sell that to our managing directors who want to do something completely different. So, I thought Alan Knight’s idea of a product lobby might be useful, if it was targeted at chief executives to get them to do their products differently.”

Kay Allen, Public Affairs Team, BSKyB

suggests that the government means business. To ensure effective follow through, the SDC would like to see Cabinet Ministers made personally responsible for progress on these Actions Plans.

However, these are first steps on a long and difficult road to alter radically UK business models and buying habits. A key measure of the Government’s resolve will be its reaction to the report of the Sustainable Consumption Roundtable due in March 2006. Co-hosted by the SDC and the National Consumer Council, the Roundtable has brought together a small group of leading experts in consumer policy, retailing and sustainability to advise the Government on practical steps they should take to help people reduce their environmental footprint.

Market tipping points

Its report will present the Government and business leaders with a powerful case and practical vision for embracing sustainable consumption. It will also identify market tipping points for successful green products such as energy efficient washing machines and the Toyota Prius, to inform future government policy and influence corporate behaviour.

The Government has promised an updated Action Plan on sustainable consumption and production next year, taking into account the Roundtable’s recommendations. It will also convene a new Sustainable Consumption and Production Business Task Force to develop practical actions for business. The SDC will seek to build policy momentum around these developments and is appointing two new Commissioners, one to focus on the interface

with business and one to focus on work and skills issues, who will help us further this agenda. (See also Alan Knight opposite).

The stakes are high. UK production patterns and spending habits will have to shift profoundly if we are to meet our climate change targets, minimise waste production and play our part in protecting the world’s dwindling natural resources.

The Treasury’s announcement that climate change and natural resources will be among the areas Gordon Brown will focus on in a review of long-term spending priorities is a welcome sign that the Chancellor understands the seriousness of the situation. The SDC hopes he or his successor will be holding aloft a green briefcase full of Wellbeing Accounts sooner rather than later.

Sustainable Lifestyle Shifts

- > **Cycling in London has risen by 30% since the congestion charge was introduced; morning rush hour bus use has risen by 29%**
- > **New fridges sold in the UK today use 50% less energy, on average, than those sold just eight years ago**
- > **The cost to UK manufacturing industry of wasted natural resources equals 7% of annual profit**
- > **Environmental technologies already command a global market worth over \$500 billion**

Source:

Securing the Future, UK Sustainable Development Strategy London, 2005, pps 24, 42, 44.

Sustainable Products Panel

As the Chancellor gives a televised Wellbeing Day speech, the CEO of a digital TV manufacturer in Belfast is celebrating.

The company has won its largest order yet for its lead brand digital television, secured because of the low environmental impact of its televisions. Most major retailers now track the life cycle of their products as an integral part of their corporate social responsibility agendas. As a result, the UK supply chain is increasingly green, with forward-looking manufacturers reaping the benefits.

To help this process along and provide designers, manufacturers and consumers with information they can trust, a new Products Panel has been established to provide independent environmental and ethical information on goods for sale. The Panel works voluntarily with industry sectors to identify and encourage consumer “tipping points” that will turn niche products into mass-market sellers. Manufacturers and retailers have been encouraged to work with the Panel by the popularity of the Government-run consumer information website Environment Direct.

The SDC believes a Products Panel along these lines, or some kind of similar body, could play a useful role in bringing green and ethical consumerism from the margins into the mainstream of UK life. It is among the scenarios we will explore in our ongoing discussions with government, business and trades unions.

“

The stakes are high. UK production patterns and spending habits will have to shift profoundly if we are to meet our climate change targets, minimise waste production and play our part in protecting the world's dwindling natural resources.

”

viewpoint

The “so-called green consumer”

Alan Knight

Alan has seen firsthand the often devastating environmental and social impacts involved in delivering everyday household products to UK homes.

From 1990 – 2000, as B&Q's Head of Sustainability, he spent four months a year following the company's DIY products back up the supply chain to their sources worldwide.

“In Borneo's tropical forests, I visited the factory making our products, then traced the wood back, on a canoe, to the forest which was supposed to be supplying us. I had no idea if our timber was even coming from there, and many of the forests I saw on my way were very badly managed. In India, the problems were more social. I discovered awful working conditions in factories supplying us with basic products like door knobs – of which we sold millions a year.”

This groundbreaking work led B&Q to adopt environmental and social supply chain policies, boosting the company's reputation and competitive advantage. Today, in his work for the Commission, Alan Knight remains motivated by the lesson he learned crisscrossing the globe: “the realisation that modern consumers and the big companies that service them, have lost the connection between the things they buy and use and the natural world they come from.”

Alan sees his SDC role as “trying to re-make these connections and bring this kind of sustainability thinking into the mainstream. I try to advise government on creative ways to approach the business sector.”

Government is missing a trick, he says, by failing to recognise fully the influence of retailers, both in the marketplace and on the supply chain. Instead of negotiating with conservative-

minded trade associations, he wants to see government working with pioneering companies to spread sustainability good practice.

As an example, he cites Marks & Spencer, who decided to sell only free range eggs without a big push from customers or an obvious competitive incentive. “The SDC wants to see more work done with first movers such as M&S to find ways to bring everyone else along more quickly. Government also needs to find ways – including policy interventions – to help first mover companies gain maximum competitive advantage and benefit from what they are doing.”

“I discovered awful working conditions in factories supplying us with basic products like door knobs – of which we sold millions a year.”

Alan says the Sustainable Consumption Roundtable will publish research on “tipping points” for greener markets, which he hopes will help inspire government confidence to show greater leadership in influencing the product ranges companies choose to offer.

“I believe the roundtable will demonstrate that most green product success stories were created by government or business interventions, and not demand from the so-called green consumer,” he explains.

“There has been much policy talk about investing in consumer campaigns on green issues to mobilise more green consumers. What consumers



really want is value, quality and choice. They also expect that the product choices offered are safe and most people are now happy to see that ethos extended to being offered only products that are also safe for the environment and for people along the supply chain.”

Alan Knight is head of Corporate Accountability at SAB Miller. As an SDC Commissioner, he co-chairs the Sustainable Consumption Roundtable.

What we will say

Four members of the Council for the Future (CfF) are appearing on Newsnight to broadcast its recommendations on how to counter climate change. None are politicians, two are in their 20s. A record number of viewers tune in, and text message their comments and action pledges after the programme.



It is 2007 and the Cff, established in the wake of concern over low voter turnout in 2005, has revitalised national debate and injected a much needed long-term perspective into politics.

Set up with all-party and media backing, and drawn from a representative cross section of 2,000 UK citizens, the Council has formulated an agenda for individuals, households, business and government to reach the Government's frail-looking carbon reduction targets for 2050.

Political, business and social leaders, including the Prime Minister and Chancellor and the First Ministers of Scotland and Wales, will make televised responses to this, its first report. The BBC will follow with a week of related programmes and features. An international dimension is provided with links to similar initiatives in the US and the Netherlands.

The Cff's conclusions drew on the results of local Councils for the Future, set up in 2006 following negotiation between Whitehall, the Welsh Assembly Government, Scottish Executive and

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We believe active participation by citizens in deciding new policies as well as in changing behaviour, will be absolutely critical if the UK is to create the permission and political will to achieve sustainable development.

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Northern Ireland Administration. Next year, the Council will tackle another long term “state of the future” issue – probably pensions or transport.

From a 2005 standpoint, this may seem an unlikely scenario. But such ideas are gaining currency as concern grows over public disaffection with politics. Only 61.5% of those eligible to vote in 2005 did so, falling to 37% among 18-24-year-olds, while a 2003 poll found that 56% of people felt they had “no say in what the Government does.” (1) A consensus is emerging – which the SDC endorses – that in order to reverse this trend, we must create a more engaged politics through which government and citizens work together more closely for change.

Such participation is especially crucial when addressing the so called ‘wicked issues’ – complex subjects that demand a UK-wide consensus and will not be solved by short-term thinking or adversarial politics. The pension crisis is one obvious candidate. Sustainable development offers many more – including climate change, transport, the future of nuclear power and sustainable consumption and production.

The SDC has not endorsed a specific model of citizen engagement. However, we believe active participation by citizens in deciding new policies as well as in changing behaviour, will be absolutely critical if the UK is to create the permission and political will to achieve sustainable development.

We applaud the UK Government's planned £12m Climate Change Communications Campaign as a first step towards engaging householders in carbon-saving efforts required to meet national emissions reduction targets. Also highly welcome are Defra's plans to convene a public deliberative forum to examine how the UK can achieve the objective of a “single planet economy” and the Department of Health's national deliberative forum on the future of health care, which will engage 1,000 citizens in a one day debate.

Our own Communications Programme is increasingly focused on ways to expand the national conversation on complex sustainability issues which often involve future uncertainties and difficult individual choices. To enable more

people to inform our advice to government, we run regular electronic consultations that feed into our policy development. We host two electronic discussion forums, and have a growing network of online contributors who post and comment on sustainable development case studies.

In January 2006, in partnership with the communication consultancy, Futerra, we will be launching our online learning network for sustainable development communications professionals who want to swap information, ideas and success stories and to work together on key challenges in a safe environment.



comment

The Compass Network

Our new learning network for communicators of sustainable development in partnership with Futerra.

Your thoughts?

Join the network – launch January 2006.

opinion

“There is one key issue which is how do we get the public interested and excited by this rather than it remaining within Government and about Government policies? We need some thing that really captures people's imagination... because [this issue will] never move without a rocket behind it.”

Stewart Wallis, Director, New Economics Foundation



Meaningful debates

Lindsey Colbourne

Lindsey believes passionately in the power of people working together to effect change for the better.

At the age of 25 she set up Vision 21, the first voluntary sector-led Local Agenda 21 network in the UK. Eventually growing to 1500 Gloucestershire residents, the network engaged volunteers, local councils and disparate interest groups in more than 60 successful community-based sustainability projects. Since then she has worked with a wide range of UK and overseas organisations, including house-builders, fisheries, farmers, local councils and the World Bank, seeking active community input for often controversial developments.

“We need to create an active engagement on politically difficult choices, so they are openly faced”

“In my experience, bringing a wide range of people together to work on an issue results in robust and imaginative outcomes and a much greater level of trust and will for change,” she says.

“In 12 years of working as a neutral facilitator I have never stated that sustainable development is the preferred outcome. Yet the results – no matter what the background of those involved or the issue being worked on – consistently map out a sustainable way forward.”

On the Commission’s behalf, Lindsey is now working to persuade the Government to engage the public in meaningful nationwide debates about key sustainability issues such as climate change, road pricing and the future of nuclear power.

“We need to create an active engagement on politically difficult choices, so they are openly faced and collectively addressed by politicians, citizens, stakeholders and the media. It’s an exciting time – with policymakers starting to consider deliberative public engagement as a serious method for finding answers to even the biggest challenges,” she says.

While welcoming the Government’s recent public outreach initiatives on communicating climate change, the future of health care and “one planet living”, she emphasises that public engagement must shift from policy-making’s fringes to its heart.

“We have known for a long time what is needed to make the UK more sustainable, but these measures will simply remain politically unacceptable unless we find ways to negotiate the profound transitions required with citizens. My end goal at the Commission is to persuade and help the Government to build constructive new relationships with the public. Relationships which will enable us to think, talk, learn and decide together about the critical issues facing us today.”

Lindsey Colbourne is a public engagement specialist and Director of InterAct. She leads the SDC’s communications work.

In summer 2006, we will launch a major new communications initiative, the Sustainable Development Panel (SDP). An electronic forum, it will draw on the expertise of up to 1,000 invited sustainability practitioners working at local, regional, national and UK level. The SDC will set up interactive discussions with the aim of informing national debate and thinking on key sustainability issues. The results will be compared to the views of members of the public both before and after they have a chance to ‘deliberate’ on the issues. In this way, we hope to develop a clear consensus on agendas for action.

We expect the Panel’s work will also inform the SDC’s wider work programmes and help us to scrutinise public sector delivery on sustainable development, in line with our new watchdog role. Looking ahead, we envisage the SDP could provide a complementary role as expert advisor to a Council for the Future or other similar body, should one be appointed.

By 2008, another General Election will be looming, and before that elections in Scotland and Wales. It is not difficult to imagine a Council for the Future leading a primetime TV debate on – for example – whether the winning party should introduce congestion charges in all city centres. It’s likely, given modern technology, that this debate could involve 5,000 people at simultaneous events in London, Cardiff, Edinburgh and Belfast, with millions of viewers calling in or text messaging their views and action pledges.

References:

- (1) *The Causes of Decline in Electoral Activity in Britain: a Literature Review*, p14. Commission research briefing paper.

“**Our own Communications Programme is increasingly focused on ways to expand the national conversation on complex sustainability issues.**”

Conclusion. Building Tomorrow, Today

The UK is at a crossroads

One path forward will take us into a future where material demands continue to soar, the rich-poor gaps in income, good health and mortality continue to widen and our fossil fuel consumption rises beyond the point where the 2010 and 2050 emissions targets have any hope of being met. This is the business as usual route.

The alternative path, the path to sustainability, demands changes in consumer behaviour, business models and government policy. It would involve some sacrifices (super-cheap air fares) but also bring many benefits (lower utility bills, cleaner air and safer streets).

This path, partially mapped out in this publication, is not as difficult as many people claim. As we have demonstrated in these pages, much of the technology, expertise and even infrastructure to get us from here to there is already in place. But what it will require is a collective will and imagination currently lacking in the national conversation about the UK's future.

Most people – including many in government – have not yet made, or accepted, the connection between the disparate policies which add up to sustainable development and a better future. Yet many of the things people most value in life – good health, schools and public services, safe and neighbourly communities, clean streets and air, green spaces – sustainable development can deliver. It is also the only way to address what is probably the greatest challenge facing the world today – climate change and its unpredictable consequences.

In their UK Shared Framework on Sustainable Development, the governments in London, Edinburgh and Cardiff and the Northern Ireland Administration set goals for “living within environmental limits and a just society”, to be achieved “by means of a sustainable economy, good governance, and sound science.” The new

UK Sustainable Development Strategy, the Welsh Assembly Sustainable Development Action Plan and the (soon to be published) sister strategies for Scotland and Northern Ireland, provide a reasonable road map to reach these ends.

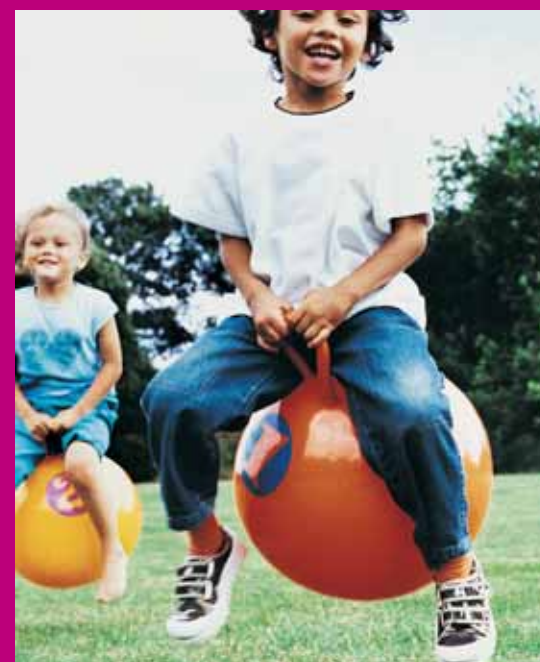
The emphasis now is all on action. During the lifetime of the current governments in London, Edinburgh and Cardiff, there is a real opportunity to lay the building blocks for a sustainable society and economy.

The Sustainable Development Commission will do all it can to ensure that UK governments follow through on their commitments, some 250 of which are made in *Securing the Future* alone. In 2006, we will also be expanding our work programme into new areas critical to achieving sustainable development including engaging the business sector and tackling the critical agenda surrounding the future of work and employment in a sustainable, 21st century society. In the following pages, our lead Commissioners for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland give their views on the way ahead.

In June 2005, the SDC staged a conference at which we floated our ideas about what a sustainable Britain might look like to a well-informed audience. Some of the views expressed are featured throughout this publication.

We also welcome feedback from readers on any of the ideas and proposals put forward in this report. Please send comments to harriet.festing@sd-commission.org.uk

**> Be part of the debate.
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sd-commission.org.uk**



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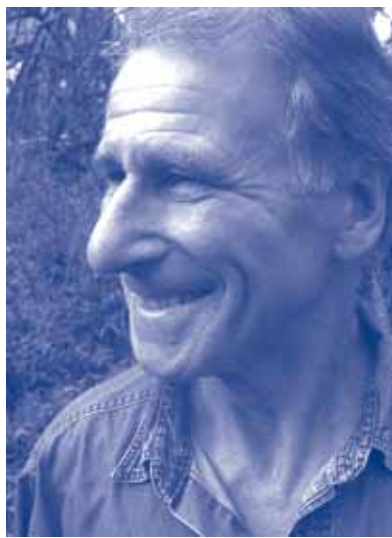
The emphasis now is all on action.

”

comment

“When Jonathon Porritt... talks about changing the process of government to make the whole idea of sustainable development really part of government, he made an absolutely crucial point. The Commission has got to do a lot more to push that through, to change the processes, to be less timid. Otherwise, nothing will happen, it will be too late”

Julian Rush, Science Correspondent,
Channel 4 News



Ahead of the environmental game

Rod Aspinwall

Rod has always been ahead of the environmental game. A geologist by training, he set up the UK's first home-grown environmental management consultancy in 1972, long before it became a mainstream career option. "I realised that properly addressing environmental issues required a multidisciplinary approach, so I set up my own company and brought in talented people from many different disciplines."

His company thrived, growing from a tiny operation based at the Aspinwall home on the Welsh borders into an international consultancy. Thirty years on, its founder was attracted to the Sustainable Development Commission because it again offered the opportunity to test powers of foresight.

"Wales has a formal duty to promote sustainable development in all its plans and policies which is almost unique in the world."

"It was made clear that the Commission was seeking people who were expected to think out of the box about sustainable development. Another strong motivation for me was the fact that Commissioners were appointed by the Prime Minister and the First Ministers of the Devolved Administrations, which meant

that this was a body with top political backing. Working for the Commission offered the possibility of addressing the really crucial agendas facing our society and the world today."

A grandfather and organic farmer, Rod cites "inter-generational responsibility" as a powerful personal motivator for his work both with the SDC and as chairman of Cynnal Cymru (the Sustainable Development Forum for Wales), which promotes capacity-building among civil society, politicians, business leaders and local government.

As SDC vice-chairman, Rod views his key priority as assisting and, where necessary, prodding the Welsh Assembly Government to implement its pioneering Sustainable Development Action Plan. "Wales has a formal duty to promote sustainable development in all its plans and policies which is almost unique in the world. My aim is to make sure the government follows through – that there isn't a political mismatch between the high-flown rhetoric and real action on the ground."

A professor of environmental management at Cardiff University, Rod stresses that the Commission must base every recommendation and argument it makes on solid evidence. He has commissioned university research to review all Welsh Assembly Government policies and actions against the principles and commitments in the UK Framework. "We will use this research, in presentations

to senior civil servants and ministers, to applaud progress, critique lack of action, and warn about targets that may be missed."

"It was made clear that the Commission was seeking people who were expected to think out of the box about sustainable development."

A second priority, he says, will be to keep a watching brief on the new Government of Wales Act, due to come before Parliament in 2006, and resist any attempts to "water down the language on Wales' sustainable development duty."

Rod Aspinwall is Professor of Environmental Management at Cardiff University and chair of the Sustainable Development Forum for Wales. He is SDC Vice-Chairman for Wales.



comment

Imagine the scenario? It is 2015 and you are buying fuel for your hybrid car.

Your thoughts?

Carbon trading for individuals – read the online debate



viewpoint Northern Ireland



Persuading, cajoling and coercing

John Gilliland

The SDC's newest Commissioner, John Gilliland, is a fifth generation family farmer with a mission. "I would describe myself as a pioneer, looking outside the box for alternative land uses to sustain my family business, which is land."

This quest has led him to convert his 250 hectares of cereals on the outskirts of Londonderry into a willow tree farm. The crop is used to provide either heat only, or heat and power to local homes and businesses, while being multifunctional through its use for waste management as a biological filter. Last year his company established a willow-based biological filtering system for all the sewage sludge generated by Londonderry's treatment works.

"Northern Ireland has really started late on this agenda, partly due to the lack of political progress."

John describes the challenges he faces in developing his farm as "absolutely a mirror of" those facing Northern Ireland and the UK in addressing the three pillars – environmental, economic and social – of sustainable development. "Whatever I do as a land manager will have positive or negative environmental effects. I also have to get the economics right or there will be no farm. And if I mess the whole thing up, I won't

be able to pass the land on to the next generation in better shape."

This hands-on land management experience, together with a stint as president of the Ulster Farmers' Union, strongly informs John's efforts on the SDC's behalf. "Half Northern Ireland's population live in the rural community and the agrifood industry is the largest private employer. If we are to develop new sustainable economic activities, while generating jobs and wealth, efforts will also have to focus on rural areas."

His priorities as a Commissioner include "persuading, cajoling and coercing" key government departments whose responsibilities include energy, waste disposal, transport and health, to raise sustainable development up their agenda. Communicating sustainable development to the public and business community is also vital, he says, as is seeking more funds for the under-resourced Department of Environment, which leads on sustainable development issues.

The Northern Ireland Sustainable Development Strategy, due next year, and a 10-year £16 billion capital infrastructure programme both provide opportunities, he believes, for the province to play catch-up in embracing sustainable policies and practice. "Northern Ireland has really started late on this agenda, partly due to the lack of political progress. But if we can get support for the strategy and ensure

that this huge building programme is implemented in an innovative, sustainable manner – by investing in appropriate public transport, for example – then we could actually leapfrog the other parts of the UK."

"If I mess the whole thing up, I won't be able to pass the land on to the next generation in better shape"

John Gilliland is a farmer and director of Rural Generation, a research and development agri-business. He leads the SDC's work in Northern Ireland and co-chairs the UK Rural Climate Change Forum.

comment

Rhetoric or reality
– how sustainable is development in government?

Your thoughts?

View the report and join our debate online



Winning over hearts and minds

Maureen Child

Maureen Child has a job unique in the United Kingdom. The first elected councillor to combine the political portfolios of finance and sustainable development, she is pioneering a local government model which she hopes will be copied around the UK.

“It became clear to me soon after I joined Edinburgh Council in 1995 that sustainable development should be the central organising role for government,” she says.

“Making the connection with finance was the natural next step. I realised we needed to make sustainable development the guiding principle behind what we spend and how we assess risk. Instead of working on an annual financial basis, we needed to think long term to achieve sound financial management.”

“Making the connection with finance was the natural next step.”

While some were sceptical at first, her fellow councillors are catching on, she says. “Our city plan states that we want to be the most sustainable and successful city in northern Europe by 2015; that’s a good starting point to get people thinking long term about our city’s future and finances.”

One major victory she has already scored is to make the Council’s new headquarters a model sustainable building, with a brownfield location, locally sourced materials, grey water recycling, eco-friendly

furniture and car parking limited to 40 spaces.

Maureen’s commitment to sustainable development grew via a roundabout route that included training in biology and animal behaviour, and employment as a community activist, child psychologist and counsellor to adults with severe learning difficulties.

“We need a real cultural change in our approach to consumption and quality of life.”

“My training in biology gave me a holistic view of how the world works which I think is helpful when you’re trying to implement sustainable development. Many people have real difficulty grasping the concept of unsustainable human activities and their impacts, because the way we’ve been taught to think is all about short-termism and individual advancement.”

Winning over hearts and minds, she says, will be a key priority for the SDC in Scotland, along with promoting major investments in energy efficiency and renewables and in urban public transport. “We need a real cultural change in our approach to consumption and quality of life. For example, the fair trade movement has really caught on in Scotland. I think there is tremendous potential to expand this beyond

the focus on developing countries to include fair trade local communities – built on local jobs, local resources, low impact lifestyles and so on.”

The SDC, she says, will press the Scottish Executive to act on such opportunities and on its own commitments, including the Green Jobs Strategy and the new Scottish Sustainable Development Strategy, due by the end of 2005. “Follow through and implementation will be the key to whether these strategies succeed,” says Maureen. “We are hoping for clear targets and actions across the functions of the Scottish Executive.”

Maureen Child is the City of Edinburgh Council’s Executive Member for Sustainability and Finance and was the SDC Vice-Chair for Scotland until Autumn 2005.



Who we are

Our 2005 – 2006 board of 14 Commissioners play a central role to the SDC, developing and steering our work programmes. Commissioners include the SDC Chair, Jonathon Porritt, and three Vice Chairs who focus on developing relationships across Whitehall and with Scotland and Wales. Five steering group chairs guide our programme areas.

Commissioners are selected to provide a wide range of expertise and experience, and are drawn from commerce, youth work, academia, trade unions, politics and government, non-profit, and grassroots action.



Jonathon Porritt
Chair



Rod Aspinwall
Vice Chair



Bernard Bulkin



Lindsey Colbourne



Anna Coote



John Gilliland



Tim Jackson



Alan Knight



Tim O'Riordan



Derek Osborn



Andy Rowland

comment

"I have been the manager of ecodyfi (the Dyfi Eco Valley Partnership) since June 1998."

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sd-commission.org.uk

Your story?

you can join our online community of contributors



Alice Owen



Anne Power



Hugh Raven



Rebecca Willis
Vice Chair

“On the Move is a powerful challenge to current public attitudes on lifestyle issues, which are marked, as the conclusion says, by a lack of ‘collective will and imagination’. The report’s practical recommendations are UK directed but have a global significance, not only on the problem of global warming. Absent entirely however, is any reference to the damage done to both development and the environment, UK and worldwide, by the militarism on which the world spends over a thousand billion dollars a year.

This is the elephant in the world kitchen that we regularly ignore.”

Bruce Kent

“Climate change is the most serious and pressing challenge the world has ever faced. It is time to get real – and much more focussed... Now is the time for the ‘Government watchdog’ to show its teeth. The UK has failed to live up to its own rhetoric and to even meet the carbon targets it set for itself. There is no disguising the fact that our policies and programmes are simply not good enough and that our entire environment is seriously at risk. The irony is that the Government probably could attract support rather than losing it, if it is honest about the challenge we face and initiates radical action. The other irony, is that we have a real chance to become a world leader in these new technologies and to develop economic advantage too. We now need bold leadership from Government – and from all those that advise and support it.”

Ted Cante, Associate Director, IDeA

“With its practical visions of a sustainable society, On the Move demonstrates that the SDC has lived up to its claim of being on the borderline between radicalism and pragmatism. Of all the challenges identified by the Commission, two stand head and shoulders above the others. First, the need for government to plug the credibility gap between rhetoric and reality in its own activities. Second, the need for more popular engagement to show that, far from being an exotic extra that we can ill-afford, sustainable development can enrich the quality of everyday life, especially the way we live, work, travel and power our society. By providing us with a feasible route map to a more sustainable society, On the Move makes hope practical.”

Professor Kevin Morgan, Cardiff University

“...builds a wonderful bridge between idealism and pragmatism. If these practical proposals presented in the review were to be implemented a firm foundation would be laid for a sustainable future... If we wish to combat global warming a swift transition from global trading to local trading and from petroleum energy to renewable energy has to become a sustainability imperative. ‘On the Move’ implicitly and explicitly implies that...”

Satish Kumar, Editor, Resurgence Magazine

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“You should not need a crystal ball to know that soon you could heat your house for half the money, run your car more cheaply, eat food that is good for both the body and the soil, shop and cut the waste by half, live a life that’s fit and fairer for all and make a climate that is safer for the world. The Sustainable Development Commission shows with authority and urgency that all this is practically possible! If we (as voters and consumers, government and business) don’t get our act together and do it, we will not want a crystal ball to see what will happen to the earth”.

† James, Bishop of Liverpool

“What kind of society do we want to live in? Certainly one where fresh, local and healthy food is always on offer in schools and hospitals. Good food should be a hallmark of a good NHS hospital, and the Commission’s work on good corporate citizenship, featured here in On the Move, very much helps to drive this message home.”

Loyd Grossman

“This review is excellent on citizen engagement. The Commission really does understand how vital it is to get citizens involved in the day to day delivery of sustainable lifestyles... does joined up like no one else I know in Government.”

Philip Selwood, Chief Executive,
Energy Saving Trust

“The SDC has hit the nail on the head in identifying that the path to sustainability is not too difficult; the real challenge is galvanising the UK’s collective will and imagination to go down that path. That is where the focus of effort must be.”

Sir John Harman, Chairman, Environment Agency

“‘On the Move’ provides a welcome vision for our country’s future, one which we must all strive to deliver today. A crucial challenge in this will be to recognise the benefits a healthy and wildlife-rich environment can bring – to our urban communities, to our children’s education, to our health and to our economy. A key issue that needs to be tackled now is ensuring we properly value biodiversity and the natural environment in all planning and decision making. This needs to go beyond our shores to make sure our actions and lifestyles don’t destroy or damage other parts of the world.”

Graham Wynne, Chief Executive, RSPB

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