

## ***Response from Southampton City Council Sustainability Team***

***1 November 2007***

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the CAG's Context and Issues paper on Reducing the South East's Ecological Footprint.

Southampton City Council broadly supports the observations and direction of travel suggested in the CAG report, with some specific comments as outlined below. An overarching comment is that if ecological footprinting is adopted then a common understanding of what this is and its relationship to carbon footprinting needs to be established as most Councils are likely to be concentrating their limited resources on CO2 emissions monitoring and reduction.

The ecological footprint for the South East is 6.3 global hectares per capita (the highest in the UK). The world average ecological footprint is 2.2 global hectares per person, although there are global inequalities in consumption levels between developed and developing countries.

South East Plan policy CC3 seeks to stabilise the South East's footprint by 2016, and to reduce it between 2016 and 2026. The South East Regional Economic Strategy seeks to reduce the rate of increase of the region's ecological footprint, stabilise it and reduce it by 2016.

These documents are also supported by the draft Regional Sustainability Framework for the South East and the Climate Change Implementation Plan for the South East.

### *Part A - The Context*

The South East footprint breaks down into the following categories (in descending order of contribution):

- Housing (mainly electricity and gas use)
- Food
- Transport (all modes)
- Consumer items
- Private services (private health care, water supply, insurance etc)
- Public services (public sector health care, education etc)
- Capital investment

The components of the South East footprint at the highest level when compared to other regions are: transport, consumer items and private services. Transport is a particular issue as it is 50% higher in the South East than in the region with the lowest transport footprint. Looking at the national footprint, transport shows a worrying trend of growth, most of which is related to aviation.

### **Are these the right priorities for reducing the South East's footprint: home energy use, transport, and food?**

The South East has been praised for moving forward with an implementation plan. The points made by the WWF report (section 6.6) are correct in suggesting that coordination must be achieved across sectors, with environmentally sustainable

policies being integrated within the RSS. It is also important to ensure that targets set out in the RES are not an add-on to unsustainable economic activity overall.

The priorities for reducing the South East's footprint are welcomed. In particular, the need to address home energy use is a key priority for Southampton City Council as part of our climate change agenda.

### *Part B – The Key Themes for Reducing the Footprint*

#### HOME ENERGY USE

Consumption of gas and electricity represent 18% of the entire footprint. Most of this is generated by existing housing.

As a planning authority, Southampton City Council is currently developing development plan policies that require energy efficiency standards above the level set by building regulations. This has been done through adopting the approach as set out in the government's Code for Sustainable Homes. SCC also seeks to promote the city centre CHP scheme and seeks opportunities for its expansion. Connection of a number of major developments to the scheme has enabled the city to develop a viable decentralised energy system that achieves measurable reductions in carbon emissions. SCC also promotes other business opportunities in sustainable energy by encouraging feasibility studies for new projects in relation to development in the city.

We welcome the proposed actions set out (section 9.14) to further efforts on reducing energy use. In particular, the energy efficiency of existing buildings is recognised as an area which could potentially have an influence on the ecological footprint. Regional organisations need to provide support and resources to local authorities and other organisations to enable them to work in collaboration to make real progress in this area.

#### **How can the highest energy efficiency be achieved in new house building?**

In order to effectively address energy use in housing, there needs to be greater clarity and consistency of approach by government. For example, the recent debate over the Merton rule has demonstrated a lack of serious commitment by government to enabling local planning authorities to drive forward real policies on energy efficiency in new developments. In order to make progress in this area, local authorities need the support of robust national policies.

#### **What is the most cost effective way of achieving major improvements in the energy efficiency of existing buildings in the South East?**

Targeted awareness campaigns supported by an extension of the interest free loans scheme currently operated by the Carbon Trust to all businesses and possibly targeting households via local authority schemes? There may be an opportunity here to utilise the upcoming and operational energy performance certificates in business and households properties.

#### TRANSPORT

Transport contributes about 17% to the South East's footprint and is growing strongly as other elements of the footprint are predicted to stabilise. Reducing the impact of

personal travel requires a package of measures, such as those set out in section 10.14. However, in light of the trend of growth in personal travel impacts, the solution will not be a piecemeal approach, but one of large-scale and high-impact initiatives.

For ports in the SE it should not be forgotten that emissions from shipping, particularly those 'hotelling' in port can be significant. Air quality action plans and spatial plans will need to take account of these emissions and cross boundary approaches to monitoring may be required.

**How could a significant reduction in the environmental impact of travel in the South East best be achieved?**

Building on the idea of Sustainable Travel Towns, the policy framework and funding should be available to support each major city/town in the region in developing a flagship sustainable travel solution.

**FOOD CONSUMPTION**

The total ecological footprint of food is about 20% of the overall footprint of the South East. Aside from the transport impacts of food production, reducing the impact is largely down to behaviour change and consumer awareness.

**What are the best ways of influencing consumer choice in the South East towards lower-impact, local food – and would carbon labelling help?**

There has been recent success in the national healthy eating campaign. This approach should be used to broaden understanding of other issues such as ethical purchasing and the environmental impacts of food production and packaging. Carbon labelling would help, but it would require a robust education campaign to engage a wide enough audience.

*Part C – Overarching Issues*

**How can small and medium sized businesses in the South East be encouraged to reduce their environmental impact?**

By encouraging local Chambers of Commerce/Trade to establish mentoring programmes between large and small SME's. Through or by the establishment of the network of sustainable business clubs linked to local energy/environmental centres.

**What are the best ways to encourage significant change in people's behaviour to reduce the South East's ecological footprint, and how should the regional bodies support this?**

Through all SE regional public bodies leading by example, and for this approach to be fed into the targets of all relevant LAA's and MAA's. By making it easy for people to get advice and guidance on what local initiatives are in place and for this information to be consistent across the region.

**How can examples of good practice on reducing the South East's ecological footprint be shared more effectively within the region, and what role should the Sustainable Futures Group play in this?**

By introducing ecological footprinting objectives into LAA's, MAA's and Community Strategies.

**How should partners in the region work together to address the challenge of ecological footprint reduction, particularly in light of the proposals in the Government's Review of sub-national economic development and regeneration?**

South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA)  
Select Committee on reducing the South East's Ecological Footprint  
Context and issues paper for consultation

The Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) offers a good case study on how partners can work together to establish a common, and robust approach to achieving sustainable development.

***Document ends***