

SUSTAINABLE FUTURES GROUP SOUTH EAST

NOTE OF MEETING - 20 DECEMBER 2007

Present:

Ian Christie (Chairman)	Advisor to CLG & SDC
Patrick Feehily	South East England Regional Assembly
Greg Pitt	South East England Regional Assembly
Catriona Riddell	South East England Regional Assembly
Paul Bevan	South East England Regional Assembly
Ian Coates	Government Office South East
Oona Muirhead	SEEDA
Douglas Horner	CBI / Economic Partners
Yvonne Arthurs	NHS South East Coast
Jacinta Thorley	RAISE
Andy Brown	English Heritage
Howard Davidson	Environment Agency

1. Apologies for Absence & Introductions

- 1.1 The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees, thanking them for their attendance.
- 1.2 Apologies were received from Candy Morris, Mike Daly, Richard Simmons, Alan Law and Rob Jones. Chris Corrigan also sent his apologies due to illness and the Chairman passed on his best wishes and also his thanks to Chris for chairing the last meeting.
- 1.3 A round table introduction took place and the Chairman welcomed Yvonne Arthurs to the meeting who attended on behalf of Candy Morris and Mike Daly.

2. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 7 August 2007

- 2.1 An update was given on point 5.2 by Patrick Feehily. Following our recommendation that a Sustainability Appraisal of the Regional Health Strategy be completed, Patrick is pleased to inform the group that this has happened using the RSF framework.
- 2.2 The minutes were agreed as a true record of the meeting and approved without amendment.

3. RSF Consultation

- 3.1 The group was informed that the RSF Consultation had been completed successfully having reached a wide range of stakeholders through the well attended workshops and the online questionnaire.

Nearly 100 responses in the form of completed questionnaires and written comments via email and letter were received. 177 responses were also received from the Youth Parliament. Recommendations from the high level appraisal of the RSF were also considered and a question on this was part of the Consultation. The findings and resulting proposed changes following the Consultation have been made to the draft RSF, a copy of which the group all now have.

3.2 The group was informed that the feedback and subsequent changes to the draft RSF can be organised in to two broad types.

3.3 The first set of responses relate to the structure of the framework; what it's about and who it's aimed at and specifically what the priorities are for. It appears there may be a misunderstanding on what the priorities are about. People felt there should be parity between social, economic and environmental priorities. They didn't really understand that they are areas which we have identified as under performing and are areas that require urgent action to achieve the two over-arching goals. People weren't sure of the relationship with the SFG in terms of keeping the priorities under review and how the framework should be monitored.

- Feedback also ranged from confusion over the purpose of the framework and whether the targets are stretching enough.
- There were responses about whether the RSF should be more of an action plan - setting out who should be delivering what and when.
- Support for the inclusion of more case studies within the region was given - i.e. more examples of successes.

Resulting changes include:

- A new, simplified structure has been introduced. For example the monitoring report has been retained but has now moved to Annex 1 of the document.
- A diagram has been added to explain the layout of the document and the meanings of the priorities.
- The priorities now have targets which are drawn from the RSF objectives. We have avoided setting new targets although have added a caveat to state they are always under review.
- Annex 2 sets out the key links between the priorities and the strategy. Patrick suggested that the group may wish to consider whether Annex 2 adds any value.
- A number of additional case studies have been added to illustrate what success might look like.

- 3.4 The second set of changes are more specific and have been helpful in improving the robustness of nearly all elements of the framework.
- Issues with the robustness of ISEW data mean that the targets have been removed for the two regional goals although the ecological footprint target has been retained in objective 21. One of the unforeseen consequences of this change is the removal of one layer of the document. This responds to the feedback that the document had too many layers.
 - Another key issue that has emerged is the priority on Sustainable Resource Use. This has been amended to include Sustainable Resource Use and Management. This reflects the fact that a number of consultees felt that landscape quality and biodiversity should be pulled into that priority. The group are requested to consider whether they warrant being included in that way.
 - The term carbon footprint has been abandoned and replaced with 'reducing emissions of greenhouse gasses associated with the region'. This reflects confusion over how carbon footprint is measured.
 - Priority 4 has been changed slightly to be targeted more at deprived people.
 - A specific number of changes to the objectives, some of which have been changed following the recommendations of the high level appraisal.
 - Briefly, two key points include splitting the climate change objectives into separate mitigation and adaptation objectives and the resource efficiency objective now focuses more on resource consumption.
 - The group was also asked to consider whether countryside and heritage should be two separate objectives as recommended by the heritage community.
 - The indicators are now reconciled with LAA indicators which enables us to have a more consistent sub-set of indicators at both regional and local level.
- 3.5 Patrick advised that subject to the changes, we are now looking to sign off the RSF. The Assembly aims to take the RSF to the Regional Planning Committee meeting at the end of January. It would be useful to hear from the group what boards and dates of the other organisations represented we need to work towards taking the RSF to.
- 3.6 The chairman expressed to the group that the framework has got to do a number of things and it is easily mistaken for a strategy in which all sorts of things can be included. This has to be a framework of principles and give guidance to other strategies that might be produced. It needs to be a living document and be flexible enough to do lots of things; it can't absorb every specific point that people might want to add in.

- 3.7 The group entered into a lengthy discussion regarding various aspects of the RSF.
- 3.8 The group felt that the audience need to know more succinctly who should use the RSF. This should be divided into three strands - Government (all levels), the third sector, and business. The group heard that for business the RSF adds value by setting out the direction of travel at a confusing time with many changes going on.
- 3.9 Linked in to the above comment, it was suggested that it is good to see the LAA indicators in the diagram / chart, but the relationship with Sustainable Community Strategies and LAAs should be added more clearly in the main text.
- 3.10 It was agreed that the RSF is a complex and high level document and as such should aim to influence the influencers. The group's task is to turn our stakeholders in to champions of SD who will, in turn, cascade the information down to others.
- 3.11 The group agreed that Annex 2 is useful and should be kept in the document but what would also be useful to have a paragraph in 2.5 to 2.7 to outline that the framework is targeted at the level of people who are influencers in policy and decision makers.
- 3.12 Yvonne Arthurs shared with the group her thoughts that the discussions taking place are similar to those that took place during the work on the Regional Health Strategy (RHS). Yvonne advised the group of the importance of setting direction through indicators and targets. The document should be just as much an expression of leadership as it should be an influencing document.
- 3.13 Yvonne asked the group if an equality impact assessment was carried out. The group were advised that the high level appraisal tested the framework against questions regarding equality and rural issues so that these areas were essentially covered.
- 3.14 The group reflected over the fact they have discussed the detail and purpose of the RSF on many previous occasions and that those discussions should now draw to a close.
- 3.15 Following discussion it was agreed that a punchier statement - a communiqué - to promote the RSF; what it's about, who it's aimed at, what it will do etc. and how it fits with the role of the SFG is something that should accompany the launch of the RSF.
- 3.16 One final method suggested to 'de-clutter' the document further is removing the two regional goals in paragraph 1.4 whilst retaining the supporting text on page 9.
- 3.17 Clarification was requested regarding priority 4 as it wasn't felt that it reflected the discussion that took place at the last meeting. The word 'everyone' has been removed and now highlights 'deprived people'. The group heard that following the consultation and the workshops the priority had been amended to focus on deprived people as this was the area of poor performance that urgently required action.

- 3.18 The question was asked whether we had resolved the issue about the mix of regional intra regional and national comparators for the indicators and that it would be worth adding why we chose the different levels of indicators and comparators. This point was noted.
- 3.19 It was recommended that within paragraph 2.13 some text is added to explain how these issues fit within the rest of the framework.
- 3.20 A detailed discussion took place regarding performance of objectives 19 and 20 (countryside, landscape, environment and biodiversity) and whether their performance warranted their being included within the first priority. It was felt that issues such as the landscape, the countryside and the historic environment should be recognised but referenced in a new section that reflects on the need to adapt to potential future pressures. This links into the role of the SFG to keep the priorities under review. Such a new section could include references to pressures on the economy (of diminishing resources and an increasingly globalised competitive market).
- 3.21 The chairman requested that wholesome thanks to Patrick Feehily and Greg Pitt be recorded for their hard work on the RSF.

4. SNR

- 4.1 The Chairman introduced this item and informed the group he feels it is important to discuss and gain the group's views on the SNR. The following points were noted.
- 4.2 It was generally the impression that the SNR's and the proposed single regional strategy's focus on economical targets is an oversight and not something that, in practise, we will see. The group heard that work had been ongoing between a small steering group containing the Assembly and SEEDA with CLG on the format and content of the new single regional strategy. It is felt that, from discussions that have taken place, any RSF and the other regional strategies will become integrated in the single regional strategy.
- 4.3 It is essential to recognise the importance of champion bodies and it is important that a clear statement on the role of champion bodies should be made.
- 4.4 The message to Government is that whatever they do, it must work all the way up and down and all these different elements / strategies / processes need to be properly tied in together.
- 4.5 The idea of integrating a sustainability framework and the relevant principles in to a regional strategy is an obvious one. We would hope that the front end of the new strategy is similar to the RSF.
- 4.7 The group are conscious of the gaps in the SNR as far as joining everything up is concerned. It is felt that it's critical to keep all stakeholders involved during the transition period. The voice and actions of the SFG here are absolutely critical. We need to look forward to 2010 in a different way to make that transition easier and more fruitful. Our action plan is critically important.

- 4.8 Patrick Feehily informed the group that he recently attended a meeting of the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) for champion bodies similar to this one to discuss the SNR. Patrick reported that the SDC's position is that we must not lose any ground on the work we have already done. Champion bodies must retain their critical friend role and frameworks such as the RSF should provide the principles upon which the single regional strategy is based. Patrick expressed to the group that it was interesting to hear other regional bodies speak of their position on the SNR. Some groups don't feel it's an issue, others weren't fully informed of the issues and others who were more informed of the issues have serious concerns. The SDC appear more positive than they were before - the group were informed that they have tested the SNR against the 5 Government Principles of Sustainable Development and a report has been produced with the findings.

ACTION - Ian Christie agreed to share a copy of this report with the group if available.

5. Working Group Terms of Reference (TOR)

- 5.1 The item was introduced and the group were informed that these TOR replace the current TOR for the IRF Working Group. The most obvious change is the new name: the Sustainable Development Advisory Group (SDAG). The TOR for the SDAG complements the TOR for the SFG and sets out the much stronger relationship between the two groups. The TOR anticipates the working group having a hand in development the work programme, producing papers and developing research where necessary on behalf of the SFG. It has been left open that the group are able to complete work for the region, but their primary focus is work for the SFG.
- 5.2 It suggested there is a continued need to look at the risks the region faces, and then feed this in to the prioritisation work; like an ongoing gap analysis function - is this in the TOR? A second point was made regarding the links between this group and the role of building up a group / network of influencers. It was agreed that as a group this would be beneficial but it should not be down to the individual members of the group.
- 5.3 Clarity was requested over whether the working group will be developing / identifying work programme possibilities and presenting it to the SFG or whether they will be presenting the work programme to the SFG.
- 5.4 The Chairman suggested that once we have agreed a draft work programme; the working group will be able to put together a more detailed, working document to present to the group.
- 5.5 A member of the group asked how much work the SDAG members are expected to do and how much resource they are expected to provide. Patrick Feehily confirmed it will be attendance at the meetings and playing an analytical role. Catriona Riddell reminded the group that this isn't an Assembly group - the Assembly play a coordinating role. Therefore all partners are expected to offer resource to ensure the tasks / duties required are completed.

- 5.6 The group agreed that a form of advocacy is needed - the group need to have a known way of influencing the influencers.
- 5.7 It was agreed that the communiqué suggested earlier in the meeting is very important.
- 5.8 It was suggested that perhaps in Section I, something could be added regarding measurable deliverables. After some discussion it was agreed that the TOR should be updated to reflect that the working group will support the SFG in delivering their work programme.

6. Future Work Programme

- 6.1 Patrick Feehily advised that the working group have discussed the idea of a joint workshop between the working group and the SFG and put forward the idea to the SFG. This was well received and it was agreed that the Assembly should look in to setting this up. It was agreed that the workshop would be for approximately 25-30 people and may require facilitation. Following the earlier suggestion of putting together a communiqué, the Chairman advised that he will work with the Assembly to draft this document.
- 6.2 Patrick Feehily gave the group background information on the Defra funded work programme; advising that, in response to the recommendations from the SDC, Defra have provided match funding for certain projects to be led by regional championing bodies. Unfortunately, the funding will run out at the end of this financial year. We think there is scope for this group to champion some of the outputs from the projects. Current projects include:
- Delivering training for LSP's (Sustainability Appraisal training) using the IRF.
 - Climate change summit.
 - The Climate Change Partnership business awareness project.
 - Working with SEEDA in developing a route map to achieving ecological footprint reduction targets.

The following are other suggestions that the group could cover in the next financial year:

- First review of the South East Plan - a role in the Sustainability Appraisal of this and getting involved in issues as they arise.
 - Scrutiny report on ecological footprint.
 - Looking at the LAA's processes - ensuring the priorities are delivered through these.
 - Consultation on the SNR
 - Planning White paper.
 - Housing Green paper.
- 6.3 The group heard details of the different ways in which other independent SD 'champion bodies' are structured. The group were keen to know what others have done so this group can learn from them.

ACTION - The Assembly agreed to circulate a document (put together by East of England) containing a comparison of the different models of other championing bodies. This is to include information on how these are funded.

- 6.4 In terms of agreeing the work programme, Paul Bevan asked the group to be realistic in terms of resources. He reminded the group how much resource the Assembly already has provided, and continues to provide, to the SFG. Commitment is needed from all organisations around the table to play a part. Patrick informed the group of examples of the funding arrangements of other champion bodies
- 6.5 The group reflected that case studies are a really good way of promoting what we do and celebrating our achievements, but are interested to know whether there is a stronger link that could be made between the work programme and the things we have already achieved.
- 6.6 Catriona Riddell informed the group that the Assembly have recently run workshops and events for Local Planning Authorities; two examples have been a Health event and Housing workshops. The Assembly are considering running a new event in the summer on Sustainability Appraisals; once the RSF has been adopted. The event will also be about promoting the RSF and providing information on when & how to use it. Catriona suggested that it might be worthwhile being sponsored by this group.
- 6.7 It was suggested that the work programme should focus on “influencing the influencers” - especially if our resource is limited.
- 6.8 Another suggestion was whether the group have a role in scrutinising the proposed changes of the South East Plan, in terms of its sustainability.
- 6.9 The discussion was concluded and the following points were summarised regarding influencing, the priorities and roles we might focus on:
- Ensuring the confusion surrounding the SNR doesn't lead to slippage in relation to our agenda. Reducing confusion by cutting through knots that might be binding or confusing people.
 - Celebrating the opportunities and achievements we've already got and gradually changing the image of sustainability for this region from an added cost to an investment opportunity.
 - Raising our ambitions using our respective networks to put weight behind the influencers to encourage change and the development of new initiatives.
 - The work of the group should in the first instance be organised around the priorities set out within the RSF.

6.10 A final point was made that it might be worthwhile the group reviewing other strategy documents and finding out if there has been any difficulty in getting things done. Did these other strategies achieve what they needed too? It was noted that this would not be a scrutinising role, merely a learning exercise.

6.11 This item was drawn to a close and the Chairman made the following closing remarks:

- Anyone with further points / suggestions regarding the work programme to email the Chairman and the Assembly.
- The Assembly and the Chairman will produce a draft communiqué and work programme and circulate it to the group for comments.
- As previously mentioned, the work programme will form the basis for discussion in the joint workshop with the working group.

7. **AOB**

7.1 No other business was declared.

8. **2008 Meeting Dates**

8.1 The group were given the suggested dates for the 2008 meetings and asked to agree them.

8.2 It was noted that Chris Corrigan will be unable to attend the February meeting. The Chairman and the Assembly will therefore arrange a separate meeting with Chris.

8.3 The dates were agreed as:

- 19 February
- 7 May
- 7 August
- 6 November

ACTION - As a matter of importance; the group are requested to contact Julie Drayton at the Assembly (01483 555217 or juliedrayton@southeast-ra.gov.uk) if they have any issues with these dates.