



(Draft) SDRN ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Thursday 17th January, 2008
University of Westminster, London

Present: Roland Clift (CES, University of Surrey); Tanya Burdett (CLG); Andrea Collier (Defra); Faith Culshaw (NERC); Andy Dobson (University of Keele); Isabella Earle (Defra); Paul Ekins (King's College London); Gary Grubb (ESRC); Karen Lucas (University of Westminster); Eileen Mortby (Defra); Daniel Osborn (NERC); Hilary Salter (SDRN); Kate McGeevor (SDRN); Priscilla Netto (WAG); Tanya Pless-Mulloli (University of Newcastle); Ben Shaw (SDRN); Jonathan Wentworth (OST)

Apologies: Mark Davis (CLG); Malcolm Eames (Brunel University); Louise Every (Environment Agency); Peter Hedges (EPSRC); Gary Kass (Natural England); Simone Sharpley (CLG); Evan Williams (SEPA)

1. Welcome

Roland Clift welcomed members of the Advisory Committee and guests. He relayed the sad news that Professor Sir Howard Dalton, former CSA at Defra, and a personal friend of his, had died a few days before. Professor Dalton had been a keen supporter of the work of SDRN (and had given the keynote speech at the 2007 Annual Conference) and this was a great loss to the Network.

2. Minutes from last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting, held on 10th October, 2007, were approved. There were no matters arising.

3. Progress to date

- **Communications**

Kate McGeevor reported that SDRN was continuing to work with Amazon PR and they would be seeking media coverage in the trade press for outputs of the Sustainable Transport and Spatial Planning workshops. Network membership had reached 2250. The 2008 Annual Conference would be held on 11th September at the RSA.

- **Liaison with Policy-makers**

Ben Shaw reported that SDRN had worked with DfT, CLG, the Scottish Government, SEPA and the Welsh Assembly Government in recent months.

Also DH, DCSF and DCMS had been invited to the Health and Environment workshop in Edinburgh. Given the Royal Commission have recently highlighted the importance of greenspace for children, it was suggested that Victoria Saunders, DCSF lead on obesity, should be invited to the workshop. Stephen Holgate's (RCEP/Southampton) interest in this area was also mentioned and it was suggested that a break-out group at the workshop could focus on this theme.

- Research into Practice Workstreams

- i) *Sustainable Transport*

DfT had been pleased with the attendance at and the outputs from the first workshop - '*Developing a Transport Strategy for Climate Change Adaptation*'. TRL's initial draft report had been substantially altered, with the conclusions and recommendations being tightened up. The theme for the second workshop would be decided shortly, with the possibility of a follow-up seminar being considered.

The first event mainly attracted practitioners and policy makers and there was a discussion about how to make a second event appeal to researchers and how to engage NGOs more actively. It was suggested that the chair, Professor David Banister (Oxford University) and also Prof John Whitelegg (SEI, York) should be contacted to ask whether they thought issues had been adequately raised and how a follow-up workshop might be structured to achieve different objectives. Karen Lucas also suggested that outputs from the seminars should be promoted at conferences on transport and spatial planning, which would then reach transport researchers. Kate said that Amazon are dealing with the dissemination & she would talk to them to ensure that academics were included in this. It was also suggested that the current workshop report should have more information in the introduction about the Research into Practice theme - and the fact that the workshop represented the first event in this new SDRN workstream.

Work will begin shortly on scoping the next workshop. Roland Clift suggested details of the next seminar be circulated to the Advisory Committee before the next meeting. Priscilla Netto also suggested that DfT's social researchers should be invited to the next workshop.

- ii) *Spatial Planning and Development*

The draft *Sustainability Appraisal in the UK* literature review, undertaken by Land Use Consultants and the RTPI, had gone out to consultation and been circulated to Advisory Committee members. The consultation would feed into the forthcoming workshop, which had 60 attendees. Committee members discussed the psychological and sociological elements of appraisal and the difficulties in getting practitioners to make SD part of the decision-making process, rather than just 'going through the motions' at the end. It was suggested that Land Use / RTPI consider the ecosystems approach work of Jim Petre (Sydney). Karen Lucas mentioned that CfSD had undertaken a study for Defra's Central Analytical Directorate looking at organisational change and how to overcome institutional barriers and enable a change in practices amongst policy-makers. It was mentioned that other government

departments had used the social marketing approach to enable an incremental change in organisations. Tanya Burdett suggested that the next phase of the work should be trying to encourage capacity building and good practice.

iii) *Engineering and Sustainable Development*

Roland Clift would be progressing the theme of engaging the engineering profession in SD, which members of the Council of the Royal Academy of Engineers have already expressed an interest in pursuing.

iv) *Business Resource Efficiency*

Ben Shaw reported that AEA Technology was working on ideas for this theme. Jonny Wentworth mentioned that the House of Lords held a waste enquiry and organisations such as NISP, Envirowise, WRAP and BSI had given evidence, so this would be a source of information. However, the problem was in getting people to change their behaviour and intervene practically. Priscilla Netto mentioned global action plan, with facilitated community-based interactions, in an attempt to encourage more environmentally sustainable behaviours.

- Rapid Research and Evidence Reviews

i) *Sustainable Procurement*

Ben Shaw reported that the Centre for Research in Strategic Purchasing and Supply (University of Bath) had started work on this review, looking at mainstream sustainable procurement. A (draft) report was due at the end of February and will be circulated to the Advisory Committee, with the final report delivered to a small workshop at the end of April.

ii) *Health and the Environment*

Kate McGeevor reported that the Scottish Government and Scottish Environment Protection Agency were co-hosting a workshop in Edinburgh in February. PSI had been working closely with Prof. Michael Depledge (Peninsula Medical School) on the programme and had consulted widely on the invitation list. It was hoped that the workshop would scope out research areas and act as a catalyst for a bigger piece of research work and it was also suggested that it would be useful to approach MRC, a key funder of work in this area. There were suggestions that it would be useful to holds sessions on joint health and environment across government and also on procurement and food safety (perhaps with the Food Standards Authority).

Additional suggested invitees were: Jon Fairburn (Staffs), Pamela Kempton (NERC) and a representative from the MRC (Stephen Holgate/ Mike Depledge to approach).

It was mentioned Defra's new edition of SDScene will focus on health and the environment, with interviews and case studies. Kate McGeevor agreed to circulate this to the Committee.

4. Research Council Updates

- Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) Strategy
Faith Culshaw introduced the NERC Strategy 2007-2012, which set out NERC's strategic and scientific priorities. The strategic scientific themes were climate systems; biodiversity; sustainable use of natural resources; earth system science; forecasting and mitigation of natural hazards; environment, pollution and human health; and technologies. Theme leaders, academics who would still be continuing their own research, had been appointed to deliver the strategy. Organisational challenges were concerned with responsive funding; knowledge; people; research facilities and equipment; partnerships; and delivering the strategy.

With regard to the responsive funding theme, one aim was to improve mechanisms to support multidisciplinary research and there would also be additional financial support for knowledge transfer activities. Under the knowledge theme, the importance of stakeholder engagement was emphasised, with an increase in strategic partnerships with major users and building on getting science into policy. In this respect, there was a new policy of seconding academics to government departments. For instance, Caroline Fenwick (who had previously given a presentation to the Committee) was currently seconded to Defra, looking at how the Department sourced its science.

There were currently five cross-council research programmes - Living with Environmental Change; Energy; Terrorism and Global Conflict; Ageing; and Nanotechnology, the first of which was the subject of the following presentation.

- Living With Environmental Change (LWEC) initiative
Dan Osborne outlined the Living with Environmental Change initiative, a major interdisciplinary research and policy partnership to tackle environmental change. The research would cover a wide range of issues including climate change; environmental change and human health/wellbeing; water; biodiversity; sustainable food production; air quality; waste management; methods for integrated assessment incorporating the economic, social and environmental value of ecosystem services; changes to the built environment and to planning systems to respond to climate change; interactions with transport, leisure and tourism with the environment and public attitudes, perceptions, changing behaviours and collective action in the face of environmental change and its associated uncertainties. The partners were in the process of agreeing strategic objectives to develop and implement a research strategy based on policy needs and research strengths.

The programme would run for 10 years, with a budget of £1bn over the first five years, of which the research councils were putting in £350m. In view of the perceived importance of LWEC to SDRN, it was suggested that a more detailed review of how LWEC and SDRN can collaborate should be scheduled for a future Advisory Council meeting (once LWEC's Director and Secretariat

are appointed). Kate and Ben are to put together a short briefing paper prior to this, setting out how to take the work forward.

- Defra/ESRC Sustainable Behaviours Research Centre

Gary Grubb and Andrea Collier explained that Defra and ESRC were partners in this initiative but also partners in the LWEC initiative. The Sustainable Behaviours Research Centre will build upon recommendations made in the 2005 ERFF report on research needs. Gary said that they had circulated details of the consultation in the SDRN newsletter and received a good response, which they were now analysing.

The broad aim of the Centre was to inform the moving of UK society to act more effectively in terms of pro-environmental behaviours. The virtual Centre would be multi-disciplinary and there would also be provision for a physical meeting place. There was an issue of networking, how the Centre fitted in to the broader research community, and how to link hubs of knowledge. It was hoped that the Centre would look at broad SD issues and attract the non-academic community as well as academics. Advice from SDRN on how to achieve this would be welcomed. The bid would be for £5m over five years. A call for outline proposals and for co-ordinating the Centre would be issued in the next few weeks. Karen Lucas said that from previous experience, only heavyweight institutions had the time, energy and resources to build a bid and she asked what guarantees there were to ensure a competitive process for the bid. Gary responded that they were looking at multiphase commissioning, with the initial establishment of a centre and then further phases. He recognised, however, that in this particular area, expertise was very distributed across the UK and across departments. They were trying to see how to draw in this expertise and bring it together. Karen said that would help if there was some sort of remuneration for the proposal development process, to buy out teaching or research time.

Gary said that an institution which is awarded the contract to set up the Centre could bring in other expertise, including that of the non-academic sector. It was decided to defer further discussion of the Centre until a later meeting when the calls had been issued.

5. Discussion

Agreement of decisions made:

- Re: DfT workshop, contact David Banister and John Whitelegg regarding post-event evaluation.
- Circulate progress report on second Transport workshop, prior to next Advisory Committee meeting
- For the Spatial Planning workshop / review to consider the social and psychological aspects of SA, and to consider Jim Petre's work.
- To consider feasibility of having a cross-government session at the Health and Environment Workshop and possibly a session focused on children's health
- For details of the HoL Waste Enquiry evidence to be circulated

Possible topics for next meeting

- Living with Environmental Change, for the Committee to discuss how best to engage with this. Dan Osborne to speak with Kate regarding producing a 1-page note about it.
- Science into Policy (Caroline Fenwick)
- Influencing behaviour (Andrew Darnton, to discuss work for HMT)
- Presentation by one of ESRC academic fellows, currently placed in Defra.

6. Time and date of next meeting

14th or 17th April, 2008 (members to be consulted and lunch to be provided)

7. AOB

Tanya Pless-Mulloli said that the theme for the 2009 International Society for Environmental Epidemiology Conference (Dublin) was Food, Environment and Health and she suggested that SDRN put on a session, linking with research councils and government departments.