



**SDRN Advisory Committee Meeting  
27th April 2006  
University of Westminster, London**

**Minutes**

**Attendees:** Richard Munton (Chair), UCL; Mary Barkham, ERFF; Phil Callaghan, Forum for the Future; Roland Clift, CES; Ruth Coward, Defra; Faith Culshaw, NERC; James Curran, SEPA; Paul Ekins, PSI; Malcolm Eames, SDRN; Isabella Earle, Defra; Keith Goulding, Rothamstead Research; Gary Grubb, ESRC; Michael Harrison, Defra; Bronwen Jones, Defra; Gary Kass, POST; Aphrodite Korou, DTI; Karen Lucas, CfSD, University of Westminster; Kate McGeevor, SDRN; Tanja Pless-Mullooli, Newcastle University; Caroline Season, Defra; Gordon Walker, Lancaster University.

**Apologies:** Helen Clayton, NERC; Angela Coulton, Defra; Philip Davies, Cabinet Office; Andrew Dobson, Open University; Andy Flynn, BRASS; Jim Skea, UKERC; Phil Burnell, EPSRC; Paul Burrows, BBSRC; Tim Jackson, CES; Andy McLeod, CECS; Pat Mandeville, DCMS.

**Annex 1:** Agenda

**Annex 2:** Summary of Responses to E&IS Consultation Document

**1. Minutes of November 2005 meeting  
- Matters Arising**

For a second time, Jacqueline McGlade of the European Environment Agency has cancelled her SDRN/RICS lecture, scheduled for June 6<sup>th</sup> 2006. Kate McGeevor informed the Committee that there are three possible solutions; to make the forthcoming May 16<sup>th</sup> lecture with Philip Lowe the final in the series; to find a replacement speaker for June 6<sup>th</sup>; or to reschedule Jacqueline McGlade's lecture to July 13<sup>th</sup>. The Committee were asked for suggestions for replacement speakers for June 6<sup>th</sup>. Fred Steward (Sustainable Technologies Programme), Tim Jackson (CES), and representatives from DG Environment were all suggested.

**2. Defra Review of SDRN contract and interim arrangements for completion of current contract**

Isabella Earle provided feedback on the SDU's review of SDRN, which was now largely complete. Overall, SDRN is still seen as successfully contributing to its broad objectives, and it has built a reputation for excellence. It has influenced policy and research in Defra, especially the UK SD Strategy, and it fills a gap that is not filled by other organisations. Key points to emerge from stakeholder feedback included a need to engage other government departments more; the potential to engage the wider membership more actively; and, the possibility of more regional activity. Feedback on the AC was that the SDRN AC could become smaller and more focussed. SDU have provisionally concluded that SDRN should continue for 3-5 years, in a form that reflected both the review's key points and the Defra E&IS. A short (3-6 month) contract extension will be granted to PSI, with tenders invited in the Autumn for a new phase of SDRN beginning sometime in early 2007.

The committee discussed whether SDRN was too 'Defra-focussed'. It was agreed that achieving cross-departmental engagement is difficult and that departments will only engage if SDRN activities are explicitly related to their work. Previous SDRN work (like the 'Environment and Social Justice' Review) has generated good input from other departments. It was suggested the Environment Agency's new Sustainable Development Unit may provide further opportunities for work with the Agency.

In the past, SDRN subscribed to the principle that its work would always cover at least two of the three pillars of SD. A similar principle could be applied to departments (i.e. always ensure SDRN's work is relevant to two or more gov. departments). Sponsorship and financial involvement are essential to ensure departmental buy-in, and the involvement of Chief Scientific Advisors should also be sought in the future.

It was suggested that the AC could be restructured, into a smaller strategic executive committee and a wider pool of experts and advisors. It was agreed that strategic decision-making is better informed with a wider group, but that it is difficult to make 'day to day' decisions with a large group. To some extent, the existing, quarterly SDRN/SDU management meetings already serve as a smaller decision-making committee.

It was agreed that both time and resource limitations would make managing an interactive forum on the SDRN website difficult. Keeping IT and other bureaucratic costs low allows more money for projects, conferences etc. It is important that research remains the core function of SDRN.

There was some discussion about the extent to which SDRN is perceived as London-focussed and whether more regional activity is desirable. It was suggested the annual conference could move, but that it would be difficult to draw policy-makers outside of London. It was suggested that links could be formed with the Scottish SD Forum, or that match funding could be sought to repeat events in Scotland and Wales.

Paul Ekins reported back on changes to the current SDRN contract until the end of September, following the departure of Malcolm Eames to Brunel University at the end of May. Kate McGeevor will take over coordination of the network, while Malcolm will become a senior advisor to SDRN.

### **3. SD Research Policy**

- *SDRN Report to ERFF, Securing the Future: The Role of Research* (Available from [www.sd-research.org.uk/documents/StF-TheRoleofResearch\\_v2.pdf](http://www.sd-research.org.uk/documents/StF-TheRoleofResearch_v2.pdf))

Malcolm Eames updated the committee on the progress of the SDRN Report to ERFF. James Curran explained the make-up of ERFF and introduced the Forum's aims and objectives. ERFF identified a need to look at interdisciplinary research and approached SDRN to carry out scoping work to identify where research was needed. The Report, '*Securing the Future: The Role of Research*', was presented to ERFF in February and it is hoped that a final response will be ready by the end of April. At present, a response from Howard Dalton, ERFF's Chair, has been prepared, summarizing the feedback of ERFF's working groups. All of the reports recommendations were broadly supported by ERFF, although it is unclear who should take on the leadership of such a programme of research.

- *Defra E&IS update*

Michael Harrison updated the committee on Defra's Evidence and Innovation Strategy (E&IS). He thanked Malcolm Eames for the SDRN response to the Strategy. See Annex 2 for an interim summary of responses to the E&IS. A full summary of responses is expected soon, with a final strategy document expected by the end of July.

### **4. Current and Forthcoming SDRN Activities**

- *Addressing Environmental Inequalities Seminar Series*

Gordon Walker informed the committee that the first NERC/ESRC Environmental Inequalities seminar had taken place in Lancaster earlier in the month. A discussion paper on the

seminar, which focussed on the cross-cutting themes of environmental inequalities, will be produced and circulated soon. The second seminar in the series will take place at CSERGE, UEA and will focus on sustainable consumption and production. It is hoped that a book will be produced out of the UEA event, and that a book will also follow from the seminar series.

- *Rapid Research and Evidence Review on Emerging Methods for Sustainability Valuation and Appraisal*

Malcolm Eames told the committee that the next SDRN rapid research and evidence review is underway. Sigrid Stagl of SPRU will undertake the review, which has an increased budget of £20k. A successful scoping meeting was held for the review in March, and achieved good representation from a broad range of organisations. More direct engagement is still required by both the Cabinet Office and the Treasury. A draft review of the report will be circulated in the summer. ME will continue to steer the project until the end of September.

- *Annual SD Research Conference 2006*

Malcolm Eames introduced a planning note on the 2006 SD Research Conference, outlining possible themes for the conference. SDU are keen to use the conference to showcase Defra-funded research, while Defra's SCP and NRP research programmes, Defra's E&IS, and the Sustainable Communities agenda could also feature. The committee were asked for their input.

Evidence that addresses current policy conflicts was suggested as a possible theme (e.g. Scottish re-population strategies; Reconciling increased mobility and the need to reduce emissions), as was 'Cross-departmental challenges' (For example, water in the South East or aviation). The contribution of research to sustainable development goals was agreed on as a good theme, provided it encompassed more than just the content of research - knowledge transfer, research into policy, and practice into research/policy should also feature. It was suggested that the Olympics could provide a useful SD case study to discuss. Organisational behaviour, International Development, and DTI's Innovation and Technology Strategy were also suggested.

Suggested speakers included: Avner Offer (Author 'Challenge of affluence'; links to wellbeing); Prof. Callum Thomas (Prof. of Sustainable Aviation, Centre for Air Transport and the Environment (CATE), Manchester Metropolitan); Allan Jones (Chief Dev. Officer, London Climate Change Agency / Woking Borough Council), Mavis Jones (Policy Transfer in Genetics); Tyndall Centre (Transport).

It is likely that there will be space at the conference to hold a poster session, although capacity and time constraints will make it difficult to review abstracts. The importance of attracting young researchers was agreed on. Karen Lucas and Richard Munton agreed to review abstracts once a call has been put together. Ade Kearns, Director of ESRC/ODPM Postgraduate Research Programme, was suggested as a contact.

## **5. Research Funders & Policymakers Updates**

- *Research Council activities*

### **ESRC**

Gary Grubb reported that the ESRC Centres competition entries are currently being judged, and that the winner will be announced next month. NERC/ESRC studentships are continuing and pilot EPSRC/ESRC studentships are also underway. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Tyndall Phase is due to launch next week.

### **NERC**

Faith Culshaw informed the committee that NERC is currently working on a new Strategy, to be finished early 2007. A two-phased consultation is underway. The Strategy has identified seven science themes (Forecasting and mitigation of natural hazards; Environment, pollution and human health; Biodiversity; Climate systems (prediction and adaptation); Sustainable use of natural resources; Earth System Science; and, Technologies) and an additional four non-

science themes (Knowledge, Scientific infrastructure and delivery mechanisms, People, and, Organisation).

A new Science into Society Facilitator (Caroline Fenwick) has been appointed and is developing a work plan. The Facilitator will forge links between scientists and policy-makers, and will act as a point of contact for policy-makers.

- *Departmental activities*

#### **SEPA**

James Curran reported that SEPA are about to publish guidance for regulators on the precautionary principle. SEPA are also looking into work on carrying capacity and the regulatory system, and are considering a large, 3 year+ study looking at regulation and climate change across the entire Scottish regulatory system.

#### **POST**

Gary Kass updated on activities at POST, where the horizon-scanning centre are about to release the results of 2 major scanning projects: Delta Scan and Sigma Scan. A future programme on engagement and the implications of scanning is also planned.

#### **SCP**

Ruth Coward updated on Defra's SCP programme, which has now completed its first year of research. 19 projects are all currently under review, with the first (on Environmental regulation and competitiveness) due for publication next week.

### **6. Time and date of next meeting**

The next SDRN AC meeting will take place in early July (date t.b.c.)

### **7. A.O.B.**

On behalf of the Advisory Committee and the wider SDRN, Richard Munton thanked Malcolm Eames for all of his hard work over recent years. Malcolm will be leaving PSI at the end of May to take up a Professorship in Innovation and Sustainable Development at Brunel University.



**DRAFT**

**AGENDA**

**SDRN ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**

**27<sup>th</sup> April 2006, 12.30 – 4.30 pm**

Main Board Room, University of Westminster Regent Street Campus,  
309 Regent Street, London, W1B 2UW (see map attached)

1. Minutes of November 2005 meeting (attached)
  - Matters Arising
2. Defra Review of SDRN contract (paper to follow) and interim arrangements for completion of current contract
3. SD Research Policy
  - SDRN Report to ERFF, *Securing the Future: The Role of Research* (circulated previously & available from [www.sd-research.org.uk/documents/StF-TheRoleofResearch\\_v2.pdf](http://www.sd-research.org.uk/documents/StF-TheRoleofResearch_v2.pdf))
  - Defra E&IS update (paper to follow)
4. Current and Forthcoming SDRN Activities
  - Rapid Research and Evidence Review on Emerging Methods for Sustainability Valuation and Appraisal
  - Annual SD Research Conference 2006 (discussion paper to follow)
  - Addressing Environmental Inequalities Seminar Series
5. Research Funders & Policymakers Updates\*
  - Departmental activities
  - Research Council activities
6. Time and date of next meeting
7. A.O.B.

\* Where possible departmental and RC representatives are requested to provide short written summaries of relevant activities in advance in order to maximise time for discussion at the meeting.