

**SDRN Advisory Committee Meeting
8th November 2005
Defra, London**

Minutes

Attendees: Richard Munton (Chair), UCL; Stephen Bass, Defra; Heather Blake, Defra; Phil Callaghan, Forum for the Future; Angela Coulton, Defra; Andrew Dobson, Open University; Helen Doran, English Nature; Malcolm Eames, SDRN; Isabella Earle, Defra; Gary Grubb, ERSC; Michael Harrison, Defra; Joe Heywood, Defra; Terence Illott, SDC; Hazel Jeffery, NERC; Bronwen Jones, Defra; Aphrodite Korou, DTI; Gary Kass, POST; Kate McGeever, SDRN; Tanja Pless-Mullooli, Newcastle University; Caroline Season, Defra; Jim Skea, UKERC; Gordon Walker, Lancaster University.

Apologies: Phil Burnell, EPSRC; Paul Burrows, BBSRC; David Calpin, Defra; Helen Clayton, NERC; Roland Clift, CES; James Curran, SEPA; Philip Davies, Cabinet Office; Keith Goulding, Rothamstead Research; Karen Lucas, CfSD, University of Westminster.

Annex 1: Agenda

Annex 2: E&IS Presentation (pdf)

Annex 3: SCP Presentation (pdf)

1. Minutes

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the last AC meeting (16/12/04). The minutes were passed.

2. Research Funders & Policymakers updates

Presentations:

Defra Evidence and Innovation (E&I) Strategy consultation

Michael Harrison presented to the group on the newly-launched Defra Evidence and Innovation Strategy consultation (Annex 2). Having agreed on the goals of the Strategy with Defra management, work on the Strategy began a year ago. The Strategy aims to take a fresh look at Defra's science activities and needs, with the twin goals of ensuring access to both a broad knowledge base and to the analytical and deliberative capabilities needed to underpin policy making and manage risk; and the use of innovation strategically to achieve Defra's policy priorities and key outcomes. A strategic process was used to identify science needs across the department, based on a logical framework which encourages an interdisciplinary approach and relates E&I needs to policy objectives. The Strategy identifies a number of generic research needs (Social and opinion research; Multi-disciplinary analysis and assessment; Evaluation of issues and solutions; Interpretation and advice from research providers), as well as more specific needs. Having completed the identification of E&I needs for strategic outcomes, an evaluation process is now underway to look at where E&I makes the most impact. Future work will look at the constraints on E&I investment strategies and will aim to prioritise the areas in which E&I resources add the most value.

The item was opened up to discussion:

Clarification was requested as to how exactly it is possible to measure 'what makes the most impact'. Michael explained that a 'Prospective Impact Analysis' was used, which attempted to calibrate across Defra's activities, together with more conventional policy analysis, which interpreted the impact in a qualitative way.

Each Defra department was essentially responsible for identifying their own needs, so there has only been limited cross-departmental coordination so far. All departments are now involved in the consultation process.

The E&IS refers to the exploitation of new ideas, but focuses less on the generation of these new ideas. The strategy does recognise the need for this generation and there have been some attempts to identify areas where innovation is needed, e.g. through the IBM Innovation Centre.

Although the strategy is dated 2005-08, it is roughly a 5 year strategy. The strategy does not draw on the horizon scanning that has taken place to date, though the forward look document attempted to do this.

- *Members were encouraged to respond directly to the Defra E&IS consultation by the closing date of the 12 January 2006. Details of how to do this are available at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/science/how/strategy.htm>*
- *The SDRN will also submit an organisational response. Given the breadth of the consultation these will focus in particular on the questions raised in Part I of the document. However, where members identify key issues or research gaps with respect to the strategic outcomes listed in Part II of the consultation, we will also seek to reflect these in the SDRN's comments. **Input for the SDRN comments should be sent to Malcolm Eames (m.eames@psi.org.uk) by 10 December 2005 at the latest.***
- *AC members wishing to participate in the proposed Defra seminar mentioned by Michael Harrison, to discuss the science policy lessons learnt from the E&IS process, should contact him directly (michael.harrison@defra.gsi.gov.uk)*

Defra Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) research

Angela Coulton updated on Defra's SCP research (Annex 3). SCP evidence needs are identified in the E&IS on pages 66-73. Unlike most other areas of policy, SCP does not have a strong existing evidence base. Since April 2004, work has been concentrating on the development of such a base and, together with the Science Directorate, on the identification of science needs. Current work streams are focused on:

- Research and evidence building
- Encouraging more sustainable products
- Stronger partnerships with key business sectors
- Supporting innovation
- Sustainable consumption
- Sustainable procurement in the public sector

SCP received no R&D funding for 2004/05 but a small amount was made available from the Science Directorate. This was used to commission a review of eco-footprinting methodologies (carried out by BRASS, Cardiff University) and a report looking at sustainable consumption and production at the household level. The R&D budget for 2005/06 is £750,000 for 2005/06 but it is hoped this will be doubled next year. 13 research projects, under 6 themes, are currently underway (to be completed March 2006). All projects are reviews. Further details of the SCP evidence programme are available at <http://defraweb/environment/business/scp/index>

The SCP Advisory Group, which is chaired by Sir Brian Heap with two vice chairs Dr Miles Parker (Defra's Director of Science) and Dr Malcolm Eames (SDRN), are responsible for overseeing the quality control of research. The first meeting of the group took place on the 28th September, where the need to identify a long-term evidence strategy was recognised.

The item was opened for discussion:

It was acknowledged that, with the exception of waste, most Defra research areas fail to recognise how they link to SCP, and addressing this needs to be one of the main aims of the SCP team

The SCP team see one of their main tasks as encouraging links between research and policy. SDRN's experience of working at this boundary will be able to inform this.

Research Council activities

Hazel Jeffrey, NERC: NERC are currently funding 6 major projects:

1. Flood Risk from Extreme Events (FREE) programme
2. Quantifying and Understanding the Earth System (QUEST)
3. Aerosol impact on earth atmospheric systems
4. Environment and Human Health – looking at Pathogens, Pollutants and Pathways
5. Soils workshop - Defra, NERC BBSRC in discussion about holding this early next year
6. Emphasis on encouraging science into policy (Looking for funding for a facilitator, initially for 1 year)

Gary Grubb, ESRC: The ESRC has recently published a new Strategic Plan 2005-2010, with four key objectives; Capacity building; Cross-cutting Research; Engagement; and, Performance. The council is placing an increased emphasis on a responsive mode, as opposed to a directive mode, and is currently developing a number of capacity-building schemes with key departments, e.g. ODPM Joint studentships. This year's research centres competition has now closed. The competition had a steer towards environment and 6 entries have now been short listed. A decision is expected by April 2006. A third call for the Rural Economy and Land Use (RELU) programme has been announced, and the council is funding new work on energy issues in light of climate change (e.g. a scoping study on fuel poverty).

Other departmental activities

Aphrodite Korou, Department for Trade and Industry: The deadline for the DTI Sector Sustainability Challenge has now passed. The challenge is a joint Defra/DTI initiative that aims to support a limited number of sectoral or supply chain initiatives promoting Sustainable Consumption and Production. It was open to all sectors and encouraged cross-sectoral proposals. A very significant number of proposals were received and evaluated by SDC, DTI and Defra. 6 were successful, securing a total of £100,000. The contracts have yet to be finalised, but successful proposals cover a number of broad areas, looking at supply chains, specific sectors (e.g. metal) and were received from academics/services/ business sectors

Heather Blake, Defra Sustainable Land Use (SLU): The SLU has recently commissioned a programme of six studies. One of these, a horizon-scanning project looking at trends for the natural environment, is now completed and another, looking at the need for an inventory of the natural environment, is in its closing stages. This second project has reviewed existing data sets and the use of data, concluding that there are many examples of evidence being used well, but also still opportunities for better use. The further four projects are all scoping studies, looking at the issue of pressure on the natural environment; the definition of environmental 'limits' and the methods used for identifying limits; the valuation of the natural environment; and, the strengths and weaknesses of the current policy framework.

- *Following a series of stakeholder workshops earlier this year, Defra has developed a draft vision for the natural environment. The consultation deadline for the SLU's new vision has now been extended until 18 November 2005. The online forum can be found at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/natres/forum.htm>. Any members wishing to contribute are urged to do so as soon as possible*

Caroline Season, Defra - Behaviour change: A number of Defra projects on behavioural change have been commissioned to help inform the work of the Behaviour Change Forum, all are due to be delivered by end March 2006:

1. Influencing Changes in Behaviour: Existing Evidence to Inform Policymaking Building on the 2004 Defra-commissioned literature review of Andrew Darnton, a research project has been commissioned to look at the practical implications for policymakers, and overviewing applied research and case studies of what has and has not

worked in practice. The project will end in March 2006 and is being delivered by a consortium including Dr Karen Lucas, Mike Brooks, Jake Elster Jones and Andrew Darnton, all based at the Centre for Sustainable Development (CfSD) at the University of Westminster.

2. Learning from opinion formers and leaders. Unfortunately no formal bids were received, so project is temporarily on hold.

3. Innovative methods for influencing behaviours. Six short projects, generating new ideas and approaches, are about to be let, these include:

- i) Choice matters - making sustainability an automatic part of the consumer choice process
- ii) Using a brand marketing approach to deliver more sustainable behaviour
- iii) Enhancing sustainability at farm level
- iv) Collective action theory and how it could be applied to behaviour change
- v) Bringing innovation to existing approaches to change the behaviour of small businesses
- vi) Nudging the s-curve - fleshing out mindmap analysis to generate possible interventions that might nudge a behaviour change system a long an S-curve development path.

3. Current Network Activities

SD Research Prospectus report to ERFF

Malcolm Eames updated the committee on progress with the ERFF research prospectus. The recommendations in the prospectus have been informed by a SDRN/ERFF research priorities workshop, which was held on 9th September with good representation from academia, funders and policy-makers. The workshop recognised that progress has been made on cross-cutting work (for example TES, UKERC, SUPERGEN, RELU, Tyndall) and that Defra is internally committed to applied and policy SD Research. However, there was concern that cross-cutting and strategic SD research is continuing to 'fall through the gaps'. The report identifies two key themes that link the UK's SD research needs: i) *Consumption, socio-technical innovation and behaviour change*; ii) *Environmental limits, values and equity*. The report also presents a number of recommendations, under five main headings: *Strategic Research Priorities*; *Future funding for strategic and cross-cutting inter-disciplinary SD research*; *Better use of existing research and evidence in policymaking*; *Training and capacity building*; and, *Overcoming institutional barriers to interdisciplinary SD research*.

Malcolm has recently presented the draft report to ERFF, and feedback from this had suggested the report needs to: consider an international context; cost out recommendations and identify lead organisations; better reflect Theme ii) (Limits etc) in the recommendations; and, give examples of the types of projects that the Challenge fund might support. There is already some interest in ERFF commissioning a review of interdisciplinary funding programmes.

The item was opened up for discussion. It was noted that

The report still needs 'fleshing out'. The issue of scale needs addressing more explicitly, to make it clear at exactly what level the issues are being looked at. More case studies, examples and references to existing work are needed to illustrate and contextualise the suggestions. The sequencing of recommendations to indicate priority was suggested.

It was suggested some debate about how change is achieved could also be included, with more focus on 'values' in order to bring out the contradictions between values and behaviour change. Given that innovation is essentially a question of changing behaviour, the report could draw on innovation more. The term 'socio-technological change' could also be used, rather than 'behaviour change'.

It was also noted that the report is a SDRN/ ERFF joint report, so it is acceptable if some recommendations (for example, cross-council funding) can not easily be implemented.

- *Members were strongly encouraged to provide written comments and feedback on the Draft SDRN/ERFF Research Priorities report. These should be sent to Malcolm Eames by 1 December 2005. Input on sections 5 and 6 of the draft report would be particularly welcome.*

- *Suggestions of ways in which the report can be 'fleshed out', for instance with examples of what exactly the suggested Challenge Fund (p. 20) could be spent on, or proposed costings, are also particularly welcome.*

Wellbeing Project

SDRN's wellbeing project, comprising a briefing paper, an experts list and an annotated bibliography, is nearing completion. Malcolm Eames explained that the project that has been developed since the last AC meeting in December and apologised for the limited AC input this necessarily entailed. The project is a result of the SD strategy's focus on wellbeing. Initial scoping work for the project was undertaken by Professor Tim Jackson, and the bulk of the work is being carried out by Fiona McAllister, a freelance social researcher. The scoping work concluded that, because a number of reviews/synthesis on wellbeing literature already exist, a SDRN research review would not be appropriate. Instead, a paper briefing policy-makers on methodologies, key issues etc was considered more appropriate. The paper is not intended to be a comprehensive but it is hoped it will help inform the work of the Whitehall Wellbeing Working Group (W3G). In addition, an annotated bibliography of 30-35 key documents is being compiled, for use as a live resource on the SDRN website, together with a list of wellbeing experts.

- *Any comments on the draft outputs from the SDRN Wellbeing project (Briefing paper, Annotated bibliography, Expert List) were requested to be sent to Malcolm Eames by 18 November. Copies of these were circulated prior to the meeting. Anyone requiring further copies can contact Kate McGeevor (k.mcgeevor@psi.org.uk)*

Isabella Earle informed the group about further, ongoing wellbeing activities and the W3G. The group is chaired by Jill Rutter and involves representatives from all key departments, together with IDEa, the Environment Agency, Sustainable Development Commission, and SDRN. The Group aims to advise on how to take forward the wellbeing work and to share information on existing approaches to wellbeing in policy making. The next W3G meeting will be on the 11th November, where the SDRN paper will be presented and discussed. The first call of E.o.I. has now been issued for four wellbeing projects. These will look at:

- 1) Review of international evidence on the effectiveness of wellbeing focused policy interventions
- 2) Review of research on the influences on personal wellbeing and its application to policy making
- 3) Exploration of the relationship between wellbeing and sustainable development
- 4) Wellbeing in UK policy practice and evaluation

4. Proposed Activities for 2006

Next rapid research review

At present, the favoured topic for the next SDRN rapid research review is a review project on novel approaches for valuation and appraisal. Such a project would build on the presentations by Sigrid Stagl and Arlid Vatn at the SDRN's 2005 Conference. Sigrid could be approached to work with the SDRN on this. Despite ongoing work, such as that by the SLU, there are still gaps that SDRN could fill. Paul Johnson of the Treasury has expressed interested in working with SDRN on this. The EA, Heterodox Economics Network and Friends of the Earth (Simon Bullock) were also mentioned as having interests in this area. The work would need to consider the work of the NAO, and it would be essential that any work could be utilised by policy-makers. It was agreed that the Network Coordinator and SDU should arrange a scoping meeting with a group of policy customers to take forward this project.

Defra SD Research Day

In order to facilitate the more effective utilisation of the increasing number of (SD) research and synthesis reviews being commissioned across the department it was suggested that Defra should consider holding a research day. Authors of research would present their work in order to facilitate cross-departmental learning.

SDRN Lecture Series

RICS have provided tremendous support for the current RICS/SDRN evening lecture series, but if they are to be involved in the future the lectures would need a greater focus on RICS' area of work. Defra's SCP programme is very keen to be involved in developing a joint lecture series with the SDRN. The Royal Society, the RSA and the Design Council all considered possible sponsors. It was suggested that the Royal Academy of Engineering should also be approached.

SDRN Annual Conference

Next year's Annual SDRN conference will be held at the IEE, London on September 21st 2006. Possible themes and speakers will be discussed at the next AC meeting.

Addressing Environmental Inequalities Seminar Series

Funding for the series has been secured and seminars will run around the country at six different locations, including a final dissemination meeting at Defra in London. In addition, the possibility of organising a special seminar on environmental justice and policy, which will link in with the series, at the RGS-IBG September 2006 Annual Conference was also being investigated.

5. Defra Review of Advisory Committee and SDRN contract

Isabella Earle tabled a paper on the forthcoming review of SDRN. The Sustainable Development Unit (SDU) will conduct the review, which will begin in December and conclude by the end of March 2006. The review will inform a decision regarding the possible two year extension of the contract or the launch of any new contract, and will include a review of the role and effectiveness of the SDRN Advisory Committee. This will cover questions about how the AC is structured and supported, and how its effectiveness might be enhanced.

- *Committee members are invited to comment on the scope the review. Comments should be sent to isabella.earle@defra.gsi.gov.uk*

6. SDRN Annual Report 2004-05

This year's SDRN Annual Report was tabled for AC members attention. Any comments/changes were requested to be sent to Kate McGeevor (k.mcgeevor@psi.org.uk) by 18 November 2005.

7. Time and date of next meeting

The next AC meeting will be held in the second half of March. Members are requested to email Kate McGeevor (k.mcgeevor@psi.org.uk) by 18 November 2005 to confirm their current availability for the following dates: the **21, 22, 23, 28 and 29 March 2006**.

8. A.O.B.

No other business.

Annexe 1. Agenda



AGENDA

SDRN ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

8 November 2005, 12.30 – 4.30 pm

**Defra, 3-8 Whitehall Place West (lower-ground floor), London,
SW1A 2HH**

1. Minutes of December 2004 meeting
 - Matters Arising
2. Research Funders & Policymakers updates
 - *Presentations*
 - Defra Evidence and Innovation Strategy consultation (see: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/science/how/strategy.htm> for copy of consultation document)
 - Defra Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) research
 - Research Council activities
 - Other departmental activities
3. Current Network Activities
 - SD Research Prospectus report to ERFF (*circulated previously*)
 - Wellbeing project update (*draft discussion paper, experts list and example entries for annotated bibliography attached*)
4. Proposed activities for 2006
 1. Review project on novel approaches for valuation and appraisal
 2. Defra SD research day
 3. Lecture series
 4. SD Research Conference 2006
 5. Addressing Environmental Inequalities Seminar Series
5. Defra Review of Advisory Committee and SDRN contract (*paper attached*)
6. SDRN Annual Report 2004-05 (*attached*)
7. Time and date of next meeting
8. A.O.B.

Annexe 2: E&IS Presentation (pdf) attached

Annex 3: SCP Presentation (pdf) attached