



**SDRN Advisory Committee Meeting  
12<sup>th</sup> December 2006  
Defra, London**

**Minutes**

**Attendees:** Richard Munton (Chair), UCL; Mary Barkham, ERFF; Ruth Coward, Defra; Arik Dondi, Defra; Andrew Dobson, Open University; Paul Ekins, PSI; Isabella Earle, Defra; Caroline Fenwick, NERC; Helen Griffiths, DTI; Gary Grubb, ESRC; Bronwen Jones, Defra; Gary Kass, POST; Karen Lucas, CfSD, University of Westminster; Kate McGeevor, PSI; Sarah Moon, Defra; Tanja Pless-Mulloli, Newcastle University.

**Apologies:** Stephen Bass, Defra; Phil Burnell, EPSRC; Paul Burrows, BBSRC; Helen Clayton, NERC; Roland Clift, CES; Angela Coulton, Defra; Faith Culshaw, NERC; Malcolm Eames, Brunel University; Andy Flynn, BRASS; Keith Goulding, Rothamstead Research; Tim Jackson, CES; Pat Mandeville, DCMS; Ben Shaw, PSI; Lousie Shaxson, Defra; Gordon Walker, Lancaster University.

**Annex 1:** Agenda

**Annex 2:** EPSRC SUE Programme

**Annex 3:** SCP Evidence Base Research Programme

**Annex 4:** SDRN Phase III Proposal

**1. Minutes of April 2006 meeting  
- Matters Arising**

Gary Kass referred to the OSI update in April in which he stated that the release of OSI's two horizon scans were 'imminent'<sup>1</sup>. The scans have not yet been released but are due very soon. Andrew Dobson drew the Committee's attention to a new ESRC Seminar series being hosted by Keele University, entitled '*Sustainable Development as a Competitive Advantage in the HE Sector*'.

**2. Outcome of Tender for SDRN Phase III**

Paul Ekins introduced PSI's project team and sent apologies on behalf of Ben Shaw, who was in Tokyo. Kate McGeevor introduced PSI's proposal for the third phase of SDRN III (see Appendix 3). She told the Committee that PSI proposed to build on the existing success of SDRN, while taking into account feedback received during the review of the Network earlier in the year. A professional communication company, Amazon PR, will work closely with PSI to draw up a Communications Strategy for the Network, to improve the regional focus of SDRN and to broaden the membership to include more representatives from the corporate sector. Evidence and Research Reviews will take place once a year, as will the Annual Conference and a new lecture/seminar series. In addition to the continuation of existing activities, four new 'Research in Practice' workstreams will engage with sustainability practitioners at a local level. Each workstream will be led by a partner(s), who is a leader in their respected field: Sustainable Transport (TRL); Engineering and SD (Centre for Environmental Strategy, University of Surrey); Spatial Planning and Development (Land Use Consultants and RTPi); Business Resource Efficiency (AEA Technology).

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<sup>1</sup> Post-meeting note: The horizon scans were published on 20th December 2006 (see <http://www.sigmascan.org> and <http://www.deltascan.org>). SDRN members are invited to access them.

Bronwen Jones reported that there had been a very good response to the tender and that it was felt PSI's proposal met the needs of the SDRN review. She also recorded her thanks to Isabella Earle, who had managed the tendering process within very tight deadlines. Paul Ekins reiterated that the three key points of PSI's proposal were an increased focus on working with other government departments, a more regional focus, and business engagement. AC members were invited to comment on three areas of the proposal in particular:

#### *Academic Reviews*

PSI's proposal includes a number of possible themes for Reviews, including Innovation; Climate Change and Adaptation; Sustainable Procurement and Waste/Resource Flows. It was agreed that themes should be identified by the government departments with which SDRN is looking to engage; it is the responsibility of PSI to sit down with government departments and identify them. The Network should consider ongoing work, e.g. Defra's work on pro-environmental behaviour, and be careful to avoid duplication. It is also important to maintain the focus on interdisciplinary sustainable development issues and not to focus on something that could be perceived as a single issue (e.g. energy security). The Reviews consolidate existing data, but also must be policy-relevant. One suggested theme was leadership for sustainable development and championing in the context of institutional change; there have been no thorough reviews of organisational / systems change theory.

PSI's full SDRN III proposal is to be circulated to all SDRN AC members for further feedback and comment.

#### *Lectures*

The SDRN Review received varied comments about the lecture series, which many members find difficult to get to because of the location and timing. It was agreed that the aim of the lectures needs to be better defined. If they are intended to raise the profile of the Network, then an evening schedule and high profile speakers are appropriate. If they serve to be educational, the Network could consider more lunch time events, seminars etc. The SDRN communications strategy should address this. It was suggested that a future series could be 'regionalised' electronically, by putting the lectures online.

#### *AC Structure*

In order to guarantee attendance and engagement, members / attendees at AC meetings need to feel the meetings are worthwhile, so the Network needs to consider how they can be beneficial to both policy-makers and academics/researchers. Non-Defra departments have to see attendance as worthwhile. The Committee's terms of reference should be set out in communications strategy, stating clearly who we want to engage with and how. At present the committee has managerial and 'think tank' functions; it was suggested that it needs to focus on one or the other of these.

### **3. SD Research Activities**

#### *- SDRN Report to ERFF Update*

(Report available from [www.sd-research.org.uk/documents/StF-TheRoleofResearch\\_v2.pdf](http://www.sd-research.org.uk/documents/StF-TheRoleofResearch_v2.pdf))  
Mary Barkham updated the Committee on the progress of the ERFF report. 4 working groups responded to the report, which was considered by ERFF in June. ERFF would like to see Defra taking the lead on the report's recommendations, with other partners also contributing.

Mary discussed a number of recommendations set out in the report. With regard to training, there are a series of interdisciplinary programmes going on and a working group is focusing on this. An ASC/ESRC joint initiative had recently issued a call for proposals and 30+ small grant applications are under consideration. ERFF has been considering the proposal for a Post-graduate (Masters and PhD) Project Placement scheme. It is hoped that ERFF could act as a facilitator to post-grad placements, which Committee members felt would be very helpful. At present, university bureaucracy makes it difficult to place students. The independent verification of organisations, by a body like ERFF, would make the process much easier for

universities. The ERFF report had been cited by Howard Dalton in a letter sent to the HMT in response to Treasury Challenge 5.

- *SCP Evidence Base*

Ruth Coward provided an update on the development of Defra's SCP Evidence Base. 19 projects were completed at end of first year (See Annexe 3). The long awaited 'shopping trolley' project, on the environmental impact of commonly purchased food products, is about to report and looks likely to be well taken up within Defra. A new review of ecofootprinting methodologies is underway (by RPA Ltd), building on the previous review with an update of literature review and the inclusion of latest developments. A large social programme has been launched, with focus group studies replacing the originally planned deliberative forum. A note listing all projects will be circulated.

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

*Defra / SDRN Materials Flow Analysis (MFA) Event*

A joint SDRN/Defra workshop was held in early December on Material Flows Analysis as part of the SDRN contract extension. The workshop was very well attended by policy-makers and researchers, who came together to discuss current thinking on MFA. The workshop was initiated by Defra's SCP evidence base team, who found the workshop useful.

*SDRN Review*

The final draft of Sigrid Stagl's Review of 'Emerging Methods for Sustainability Valuation and Appraisal' has been circulated for peer review and to AC members for comment. The Review will be launched at an event at Defra on January 15<sup>th</sup>. It was agreed that the Review is very timely given the BRE's review of regulation, and efforts should be made to ensure the BRE are present at the launch. It was felt that the choice of tools in the Review needs to be expanded on and justified more, and it needs to be made clear whether the Review is intended to map current thinking or as a more practical 'tool kit'.

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

- *Research Council activities*

##### **NERC**

Caroline Fenwick introduced herself as NERC's new Science into Policy Facilitator. She will act as a focal point for the whole NERC community, working with policymakers and researchers to identify policy research needs and ensure NERC's research outputs are better communicated to relevant policymakers. She is currently developing a series of active briefing days and a database of case studies; the latter will provide examples of successful transfer of NERC science to policymakers. Caroline works closely with other recent additions to the Swindon team: Professor Dan Osborn (Strategic Partnerships Broker) and Dr Richard Blackmore (Director of Knowledge Transfer).

NERC is currently developing its new strategy, which includes seven science themes and four non-science themes. The Strategy, which will shape NERC's research over the next 5 years, will be open for a second round of consultation during February.

NERC is leading on the interdisciplinary Living with Environmental Change (LWEC) initiative, which has various partners from amongst the Research Councils, Government, business and other stakeholders. LWEC will take a whole system approach to prediction and analysis of climate and environmental change, seeking to inform choices on mitigation and adaptation, on local and seasonal-decadal scales. It was agreed that it will be important to ensure that NERC engages with the SDRN valuation review.

## **EPSRC**

Claire Tansley, programme manager for the EPSRC's Sustainable Urban Environment (SUE) Programme, provided an EPSRC update. The EPSRC are developing a knowledge-transfer (K-T) strategy and a number of industrial sector teams, each aligned with different sectors, are engaging with business and industry.

Consortia within the SUE Programme are all developing decision-making tools, metrics etc. which the EPSRC need to ensure are taken up. To this end, they have awarded a k-t award to ensure the outputs of the programme are fed into policy.

## **ESRC**

Gary Grubb updated the Committee on ESRC activities. The Council are funding a Joint Transport Research Centre, the outcome of which will be announced by the end of April. A new NERC/ESRC call has been made looking at ecosystem services (deadline Feb 8<sup>th</sup>) and a third RELU Call is about to be announced, as are new career fellowships.

### *- Departmental activities*

Sarah Moon reported on Defra's continuing work on ecosystems services, which is aiming to join research (e.g. into soil, water etc) at a policy level and deliver natural environment priorities in a mainstreamed way. A series of policy seminars have been organised. The team are considering policy frameworks and how these can contribute to the development of an ecosystems approach, and Prashant Vaze is currently rewriting a guide for policy appraisal and guidance.

Isabella Earle reported that two of the four wellbeing research projects commissioned by Defra have now published, one was due to be published the following week and one in the future. Ministers are considering the possibility of Defra continuing to take a cross-Government co-ordination role on wellbeing. Stephen Hall is leading a specialist cross Government group that is developing a set of wellbeing indicators, due for publication in July 2007.

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

To be confirmed

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

PSI is leading a consortium reviewing sustainable development in higher education in England for HEFCE. The strategic review aims to establish a baseline of SD in HEIs. The Review, and respective lead partner organisations, will look at: teaching (led by the Centre for Research in Education and the Environment (CREE), University of Bath); research (PSI); estates management (PSI) and change management (PA Consulting).

Gary Kass reported that he would be returning to POST from his DTI secondment after Easter. Gary will be looking to develop a forward work plan in the environment/energy area, and would welcome input from SDRN to help shape that plan.

On behalf of the Advisory Committee and the wider SDRN, Richard Munton thanked Bronwen Jones for her contribution to SDRN, and for her commitment to and presence at Advisory Committee meetings. Bronwen will be leaving the SDU to take up a new post engaging with the food industry and developing an OP food strategy. She thanked the Chair and the Committee for their work and wished SDRN success in the future. Isabella Earle and Arik Dondi will be Defra's main contacts for the Network, and Eileen Mortby will be reporting to Jill Rutter.

## Annex 1: Agenda



### AGENDA

#### SDRN ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

12<sup>th</sup> December 2006, 12.30 – 4.30 pm

Room LG06, Defra, 1a Page Street, London **SW1P 4PQ**  
(see map attached)

8. Minutes of April 2006 meeting (attached)
  - Matters Arising
9. Outcome of Tender for SDRN Phase III
10. SD Research Activities
  - SDRN Report to ERFF Update
  - SCP Evidence Base
11. Network Activities
  - Feedback from past events (Conference, SCP Event)
  - Rapid Research and Evidence Review on Emerging Methods for Sustainability Valuation and Appraisal
12. Research Funders & Policymakers updates\*
  - Research Council activities
  - Other departmental activities
13. 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.

**Note: An informal sandwich lunch will be provided from 12.30 am prior to the formal meeting beginning at 1.00 pm sharp.**

## Annex 2: Research Council Updates

### EPSRC SUE Programme

Links to EPSRC/research council activities:

Details on the SUE programme can be found at:

<http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/ResearchFunding/Programmes/InfrastructureAndEnvironment/Initiatives/SUE/default.htm>

The Knowledge Transfer grant for the SUE programme was awarded to Professor Paul Jowitt at Heriot Watt. The abstract can be found by searching for Professor Jowitt under 'researcher' on the EPSRC grants on the web facility:

<http://gow.epsrc.ac.uk/>

The Energy Programme web pages are at:

<http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/ResearchFunding/Programmes/Energy/default.htm>

The call for Future Integrate Transport Systems has now closed, but details of the initiative can still be found at:

<http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/ResearchFunding/Programmes/InfrastructureAndEnvironment/Initiatives/FITS.htm>

Details of the EPSRC's Sector Work can be found at:

<http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/IndustrialCollaboration/IndustrialSectors.htm>