



**Sustainable Development Research Network  
Annual Report: November 2005 – January 2007**

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## **1. Introduction**

The Sustainable Development Research Network (SDRN) is a UK wide initiative, coordinated by the Policy Studies Institute (PSI) in London. SDRN was established in April 2001 with funding from the DETR and subsequently from Defra. In October 2003, PSI's contract to coordinate the Network was renewed for a further three years and in September 2006 the contract was extended further until January 2007.

This report describes SDRN's activities during the period between November 2005 and January 2007, and the contribution that the Network has made to sustainable development policy in the UK.

## **2. Aims and Objectives**

The SDRN aims to facilitate and strengthen the links between providers of research and policymakers across government, in order to improve evidence-based policymaking to deliver the UK government's objectives for sustainable development.

Its specific objectives are to:

- Facilitate the provision of research and evidence to policymakers;
- Engage government policymakers, scientists and members of the research community;
- Promote sustainable development in the research and academic communities;
- Work with funding bodies to encourage relevant research; and
- Advise the Defra Sustainable Development Unit on sustainable development research issues.

## **3. Network Activities**

### **a. Research and Evidence Reviews**

The Network organises a rolling series of short projects (two per year) based around rapid research and evidence reviews. These projects are intended to function as a clearly structured, rapid, and cost-effective way of improving the transfer of evidence, and facilitating links between researchers and policymakers.

The projects are chosen in consultation with the Network's Advisory Committee. During the past eighteen months, three projects have been completed. Two further projects, entitled *Motivating Sustainable Consumption* and *Environment and Social Justice*, were completed prior to November 2005. Details of each of these, including the contribution that the completed projects have made to the evidence base of the UK, are given below.

### **i. Emerging Methods for Sustainability Valuation and Appraisal**

In March 2006, Dr Sigrid Stagl of SPRU, University of Sussex, was commissioned by SDRN to carry out a review of Emerging Methods for Sustainability Valuation and Appraisal. The review aimed to -

- (1) provide an accessible introduction to the theoretical background and underpinnings of recently developed multi-criteria, participatory and deliberative methods;
- (2) provide practical case-studies of the use of these new decision support tools; and
- (3) explore the utility, relevance and limitations of such approaches for sustainability valuation and appraisal in the UK context.

An initial start-up meeting was held in April, bringing together some twenty policymakers to discuss the scope and content of the review. Following the production of an interim report in October 2006, an Experts' Workshop was also held to feed into the Review. In addition to this, to inform the third of the Review's aims, 18 stakeholder interviews were carried out with key policy-makers.

The report covers the following six hybrid, deliberative methods:

- Deliberative monetary valuation
- Social multicriteria evaluation
- Three-stage multicriteria analysis
- Multicriteria mapping
- Deliberative mapping
- Stakeholder decision / dialogue analysis.

The Review was launched at a well-attended event at Defra in January 2007, and copies of the full Review have been circulated widely. The commissioning of the Review was particularly timely given the Better Regulation Review being carried out in early 2007, and the Review will continue to be publicised within relevant government departments.

### **ii. Wellbeing Bibliography and Briefing**

The UK Sustainable Development Strategy (2005) included a commitment to '*sponsor cross-disciplinary work to bring together existing research and international experience*' on well-being and to '*explore how policies might change with an explicit well-being focus*', as well as committing the Government to developing wellbeing indicators '*as supported by the evidence*'. To aid this task, SDRN commissioned Fiona McAlister, an independent social policy researcher, to prepare a short introductory briefing and annotated bibliography on the subject of wellbeing.

- **SDRN Wellbeing Concepts and Challenges Briefing**

This introductory Briefing provides an accessible introduction to the different definitions and conceptualisations of wellbeing (objective, subjective, psychological, social, hedonic, eudemonic, etc), the types of research approaches employed and their main strengths and weaknesses. The Background Paper, which was published in December 2005, serves as an introduction for policymakers and others new to the field. The Paper also highlighted key areas for further wellbeing research; recommendations which fed directly into the commissioning of wellbeing and SD research by Defra. In addition to both the Paper and Briefing, a Wellbeing Experts List was compiled, listing both UK and non-UK experts, together with Wellbeing Policy Contacts within all relevant Government departments and agencies. The list helps policymakers more easily access expertise in the academic and wider research community (and vice versa), and is available to download from the SDRN website.

- **Annotated bibliography**

The annotated bibliography is an online, live resource which provides concise, accessible summaries of key selected texts on wellbeing. In so doing, it contributes to the wider task of bringing together and making accessible the evidence base for the development of wellbeing policy. The bibliography is hosted on the SDRN website and allows users to submit suggested additions via an online form. The bibliography's focus is limited to: secondary sources (reviews, synthesis, books etc.); policy reports (Commissioned by or produced within government, and produced by NGOs and think tanks); and seminal journal articles. Most have been published in the last 3-5 years, although earlier sources are included where appropriate.

**iii. SDRN report to the Environmental Research Funders Forum (ERFF) - *Sustainable Development: Needs and Priorities for Crosscutting, Interdisciplinary and Strategic Research***

Completed in the summer of 2006, this 'research prospectus' was intended to provide an input into the ERFF's research coordination and planning processes, and those of its member organisations, in the run up to the 2007 Spending Review (SR07). Key aims of the prospectus were to:

- Review emerging research needs and priorities flowing from the UK Framework and SDS
- Identify key research gaps and strategic opportunities
- Promote coordination between research funders, policymakers and the research community in order to better contribute to achieving the UK's goal, priorities and commitments for sustainable development
- Identify specific issues with respect to support for cross-cutting and strategic research SD research under SR07

- Make recommendations to the ERF (and where appropriate to other bodies) regarding interdisciplinary, cross-cutting and strategic research needs and priorities to support the implementation of the UK strategic framework and sustainable development strategy.

In September 2005, a joint SDRN/ERF Sustainable Development Research Priorities and Coordination Workshop, was convened to input directly into the Report, which was subsequently published in February 2006.

A number of the Report's recommendations have already been taken on board by ERF and its members. For example, two of the Report's recommendations on training are under consideration; ERF are currently looking into facilitating a post-graduate placement programme (to take forward the Report's recommendation for a Masters Placement programme); and in October 2006 a joint ASC/ESRC initiative issued a call for research proposals addressing priority issues relating to the development of skills and knowledge for sustainable communities. The ERF report has also been cited by ERF's Chair Howard Dalton in a letter sent to the Treasury in response to Treasury Challenge 5.

#### **iv. Environment and Social Justice**

The second project undertaken by the Network was a rapid review of research and evidence on environment and social justice, commissioned as part of the background work to underpin the development of the new UK Framework and Strategy for Sustainable Development. The Review summarises the evidence for environmental inequalities and injustice in the UK in relation to 21 topic areas identified as relevant by Defra. The review was undertaken by small team, led by the SDRN Coordinator Dr Malcolm Eames together with Professor Gordon Walker of the IESR at Staffordshire University and Dr Karen Lucas of CfSD at the University of Westminster, and was completed between June and September 2004. Additional support was provided by an expert working group established by the Network to assist with this task.

The review fed directly into the work of the interdepartmental working group responsible for the environment and social justice theme of the *Taking it on* consultation and strategy review, in turn contributing to Chapter 6 (*From Local to Global: Creating Sustainable Communities and a Fairer World*) of *Securing the Future*.

#### **v. Motivating Sustainable Consumption**

The SDRN's Motivating Sustainable Consumption review was undertaken by Professor Tim Jackson, of the Centre for Environmental Strategy at the University of Surrey and drew extensively on Professor Jackson's research fellowship on the 'social psychology of sustainable

consumption', funded by the ESRC's Sustainable Technologies Programme. The review made a significant policy contribution to the UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy published in March 2005, inputting directly to both Chapter 2 of the report (*'Helping People make Better Choices'*) and Chapter 3 (*"One Planet Economy": Sustainable Consumption and Production*). In addition, the report has helped to underpin the work of the newly established SDC/NCC Roundtable on Sustainable Consumption.

#### **b. 2006 SDRN Annual Sustainable Development Research Conference**

For the third year running, the SDRN Annual Sustainable Development Research Conference returned to the Institution of Electrical Engineers, in London, on September 21st 2006. The announcement of the Conference generated an unprecedented response from those wishing to attend and attracted nearly 130 delegates. The conference sought to:

- Provide a platform for the dissemination of policy relevant research directly informing the implementation of the UK SD Strategy
- Promote critically informed discussion of the longer-term challenges and conflicts inherent in attempting to achieve sustainable development for the UK
- Explore current opportunities for improving knowledge transfer at the SD research-policy-practice interface

Details of the conference programme are briefly outlined below. Further details and copies of the conference presentations are available at: <http://www.sd-research.org.uk/events/>. Additional funding for the conference was provided by the DTI, EPSRC, Scott Wilson, AEA Technologies, C4S consultants, Best Foot Forward, Eftec, Futerra Communications and Earthscan Publications, many of whom had stalls at the conference.

#### **Keynote Opening Speech: *Research into Policy and Practice***

- Prof. Howard Dalton, Chief Scientific Advisor, Defra

#### **Plenary Sessions**

##### ***Just sustainability: a US/UK comparison***

This session explored the increasing prominence of environmental inequality as a cross-cutting theme in UK policy, and compared recent developments in the UK with the emergence and experience of the US environmental justice movement.

*Speaker:*

- Dr. Julian Agyeman, Associate Professor of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning, Tufts University

*Respondent:* Sandy Cameron, Head, Environmental Futures Division, Scottish Executive

### ***The Urban Environment: Building Sustainable Infrastructure and Communities***

Beginning with a presentation from Professor Judith Petts, the closing session of the conference aimed to critically explore the challenges of creating genuinely sustainable urban environments and communities, and the research challenges for policy.

- *Speaker:* Professor Judith Petts, Deputy Director, Centre for Environmental Research & Training, University of Birmingham

#### *Discussants:*

- Prof. Michael Kelly, Chief Scientific Advisor, DCLG
- Dr Andrew Cripps, Sustainability and Alternative Technologies, Buro Happold
- Neil Thornton, Defra

### **Themes for Parallel Sessions**

#### ***Sustainable aviation***

This session examined the conflicts and challenges posed by the current expansion of air travel. It considered the role of aviation in a sustainable transport future and the ways in which the environmental impacts can best be managed.

#### *Speakers:*

- Dr Paul Hooper, Centre for Air Transport and the Environment (CATE), Manchester Metropolitan University
- Dr Paul Upham, Tyndall Centre
- Joe Hague, Health, Safety and Environment Systems Manager and Auditor, BAA Gatwick Airport

*Respondent:* Alison Pridmore, Sustainable Development Commission

#### ***Creating change: organisations, individuals and lifestyles***

Promoting positive behaviour change lies at the heart of the UK approach to sustainable development. This session explored theoretical and practical insights from current research in order to better understand the opportunities and challenges for individuals, organisations and communities.

#### *Speakers:*

- Dr. Karen Lucas, Centre for Sustainable Development, University of Westminster
- Ian Christie, Centre for Environmental Strategy, University of Surrey
- Prof. Martin White, Director, Public Health Research Group, Newcastle University

*Respondent:* Tony Pike, Central Analytical Department, Defra

### ***Footprinting Consumption and Resource Use***

This session explored the practical uses of eco-footprinting and resource flow methodologies and their contribution to informing policy for sustainable consumption and production (SCP).

#### *Speakers:*

- Stuart Bond, Ecological Footprint Programme, WWF-UK
- John Barrett, Senior Research Associate, Stockholm Environment Institute
- Dr. Simon Bilsborough, Sustainable Development Advisor, Welsh Assembly

*Respondent:* Terence Ilott, Head of Environment, Business and Consumers Division, Defra

### ***Wellbeing and Sustainable Development***

Featuring presentations from two of Defra's recently commissioned projects on wellbeing, this session focused on the relationship between sustainable development and wellbeing, drawing out the tensions between, and the complementarities of, the two agendas. The relevance of the research at a local level was considered, with South Tyneside providing a valuable example of the implementation of a local wellbeing policy agenda.

#### *Speakers:*

- Prof. Paul Dolan, Professor of Economics, Imperial College London
- Nic Marks, new economics foundation

*Respondent:* Irene Lucas, South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council

### **c. SDRN/RICS Sustainable Development and Quality of Life Lecture Series**

2006 marked the conclusion of a highly successful series of lectures, organised by SDRN and co-sponsored by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS). The lectures, which were held at RICS' Great George Street venue in London, were intended to introduce innovative and challenging thinking from current research to a wider policy audience. All lectures were open to the public, but were primarily attended by policy-makers, together with leading representatives from the academic, business and NGO community. The series consisted of eight lectures in total, which all attracted large audiences and were very well received.

- 15 February 2005: **Citizenship & the Environment: Towards Sustainable Development**  
Professor Andrew Dobson, Open University
- 10 May 2005: **Deliberate Futures: Precaution and Progress in Technology Choice**  
Dr Andrew Stirling, SPRU; University of Sussex

- 26 July 2005: **Sustainability Science**  
Professor William Clark, Harvard University
- 8 November 2005: **How can Corporate Social Responsibility Better Contribute to Sustainable Development?**  
Professor Jeremy Moon, International Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility, Nottingham University Business School
- 7 February 2006: **The Role of Cities and Regions in Delivering Sustainable Development**  
Professor Simon Marvin, SURF, Salford University
- 16 May 2006: **Sustainable Rural Economy**  
Professor Philip Lowe, Director, Rural Economy and Land Use Programme (RELU)
- 6 June 2006: **Technology, Innovation and Sustainability - Hopes for a Green Revolution?**  
Professor Fred Steward, Director, ESRC Sustainable Technologies Programme
- 12 December 2006: **Sustainability and the Built Environment: Reassessing the Role of Planning in Delivering Sustainable Development**  
Professor Yvonne Rydin, Bartlett School of Planning, University College London

Several of the lectures were accompanied by four page summary policy briefs, produced by RICS. Briefs from these lectures, together with slides, attendance lists and speaker biographies are all available on the SDRN website: [www.sd-research.org.uk/events/SustainableDevelopmentandQualityofLifeLectureSeries.php](http://www.sd-research.org.uk/events/SustainableDevelopmentandQualityofLifeLectureSeries.php)

#### c. Defra/SDRN Workshop: Measurement Methods and SCP

On December 4th 2006, SDRN and Defra held a joint workshop to review the current theory and practice of material flow analysis (MFA) and its application to policy-making in the areas of sustainable consumption and production. Under the title '*Measurement methods to inform SCP policy-making: What have we got and what do we need?*', the workshop brought together over forty representatives of the MFA community, including academics, policy-makers and representatives from other agencies.

The workshop, which was held at the RSA, aimed to contribute to the development of a shared set of research priorities to inform Defra's future SCP research. Feedback from the event suggests it significantly improved Defra's understanding of the current state of MFA research. Presentations and papers from the workshop are available on the SDRN website.

#### **d. Defra Science Forum**

In November 2006, SDRN attended Defra's 2nd Biennial Science Forum. With the theme 'Science into Evidence', the Forum brought together scientific staff working in core Defra and executive agencies. SDRN produced two posters for the event. The first presented an overview of the research activities of the Network, while the second detailed the report that SDRN undertook on behalf of the Environmental Research Funders Forum (ERFF). Both posters are available to download on the SDRN website.

#### **e. ESRC/NERC Addressing Environmental Inequalities Seminar Series**

In the summer of 2005, funding was secured from the ESRC/NERC Transdisciplinary Seminars Competition to run a series of seminars under the title 'Addressing Environmental Inequalities'. The overall aim of the seminar series is to promote interdisciplinary collaboration and capacity building to better equip the researchers, policymakers and practitioners to address the challenges of addressing environmental inequalities in the context of the UK SD strategy. In particular, the series will:

- Establish a network of interdisciplinary scientists, policymakers and practitioners concerned with addressing environmental inequalities
- Map and review the current state-of-the-art of environmental inequalities research in the UK
- Promote the exchange of information about current research both within the UK and with selected international colleges
- Improve the conceptual, theoretical and methodological basis for future basic, applied and policy research
- Identify opportunities for strengthening the research base through future interdisciplinary collaboration and capacity building

Prof. Malcolm Eames, Brunel University, and Prof. Gordon Walker, Lancaster University, coordinate the seminars, of which four have so far been held:

#### **1. Environmental Inequalities: meanings, themes and implications - scoping the interdisciplinary research agenda** 4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> April 2006

Lancaster Environment Centre, Lancaster University

**2. Inequality and Sustainable Consumption** 4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> July 2006

The Centre for Social and Economic Research on the Global Environment (CSERGE), The University of East Anglia, Norwich

**3. Inequalities, Flooding and Climate Change Impacts** 24<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> October 2006

The Centre for Environmental Strategy (CES), University of Surrey

**4. Inequalities, Pollution and Health** 16<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> January 2007

Institute for Research on Environment and Sustainability, University of Newcastle

Future seminars in the series:

**5. Sustainable Communities and Environmental Inequalities** 18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> April 2007

School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Birmingham

**6. Inequalities, Green Space and the Natural Environment** June 2007

Centre for the Study of Environmental Change and Sustainability, University of Edinburgh

**7. Synthesis and Dissemination Meeting** October 2007

Hosted by Defra, London

**f. Membership and Information Services**

Membership of the Sustainable Development Research Network is free and open to all those with a professional interest in sustainable development research. Members receive a free fortnightly email newsletter, the *SDR-Network Mailing*, which provides a current awareness and information service on SD research and policy developments. The Network currently has almost 2000 members who receive the SDR-Mailing.

**4. Website**

The SDRN's website ([www.sd-research.org.uk](http://www.sd-research.org.uk)) was redesigned and re-launched in February 2004 and visits to the site have continued to increase substantially. The website provides visitors with information about SDRN events, including lectures, seminars and workshops, and enables both members of SDRN and the wider general public access SDRN publications.

**5. Guide to UK Sustainable Development Research Centres and Evidence Providers**

In October 2004, the Network published its online *Guide to UK Sustainable Development Research Centres and Evidence Providers* ([www.sd-research.org.uk/sdrguide/](http://www.sd-research.org.uk/sdrguide/)). This is intended to assist

policymakers identify key 'knowledge hubs' outside of government upon which they can draw to assist them in the development of an integrated approach to sustainable development in the UK. It identifies the main UK academic departments, institutes and research groups undertaking cross-cutting sustainable development research and their relevant areas of expertise. Details of key organisations from outside of the academic sector (such as voluntary sector organisations and consultancies) are also included where appropriate. The Guide is organised under fifteen diverse themes, including Environmental Justice, Citizenship and Participation; Sustainability Appraisal and Assessment; Globalisation, Trade and Environment; and, Sustainable Cities, the Urban Environment and Regeneration, and can be searched by either theme or institution. The Guide is maintained regularly, on an ad hoc basis.

#### **6. *SDRN Advisory Committee***

The SDRN coordinating team at PSI is supported by the broadly-based Advisory Committee comprising leading academics, research funders, government policymakers and other stakeholders. The SDRN Advisory Committee meets twice a year and is chaired by Professor Richard Munton of UCL.

Details of the Committee's terms of reference and membership are available via the SDRN website, together with the agendas and papers for its meetings (see: <http://www.sd-research.org.uk/about/advisorycommittee.php>).

The full SDRN Advisory Committee, as of December 2006, is:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
<b>Chair:</b> Professor Richard Munton	UCL
Bronwen Jones	Defra, SDU
Michael Harrison / Louise Shaxson	Defra, Science Directorate
Philip Davies	Cabinet Office
Jane Leavens / Aphrodite Korou	DTI
David Calpin	Defra
Terence Illott	Defra
Patricia Mandeville	DCMS
Helen Doran	English Nature
Dr Gary Kass	OST
Evan Williams	SEPA
Hazel Jeffery / Helen Clayton	NERC
Gary Grubb	ESRC
Phil Burnell	EPSRC
Paul Burrows	BBSRC
Katharine Knox	JRF
Professor Jim Skea	UKERC
Professor Roland Clift / Tim Jackson	CES Surrey
Professor Andrew Dobson	Open University
Dr Tanja Pless-Mulloli	Newcastle University
Dr Andrew Flynn	BRASS, University of Cardiff
Dr Karen Lucas	CfSD, University of Westminster
Professor Gordon Walker	Lancaster Environment Centre, University of Lancaster
Dr Andy McLeod	CECS, University of Edinburgh
Professor Keith Goulding	Rothamsted research
Phil Callahan	Forum for the Future

## **7. *SDRN Coordinating Team***

The SDRN is coordinated by Kate McGeevor, with senior advice from Prof. Paul Ekins and Ben Shaw and support from the administrative and communications staff at PSI.

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