



## SDRN ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

**Wednesday 10 October, 2007**  
University of Westminster, London

**Present:** Roland Clift (CES, University of Surrey); Mark Davis (CLG); Malcolm Eames (Brunel University); Louise Every (Environment Agency); Peter Hedges (EPSRC); Gary Kass (Natural England); Larissa Lockwood (SDC); Julie Newton (BRASS, Cardiff); Kate McGeevor (SDRN); Eileen Mortby (SDU, Defra); Tanja Pless-Mulloli (University of Newcastle); Alan Paterson (CSA Unit, DfT); Hilary Salter (SDRN); Ben Shaw (SDRN); Jonathan Wentworth (OST); Colleen Williams (DH)

**Apologies:** Arik Dondi (Defra); Paul Ekins (PSI); Karen Lucas (University of Westminster); Stuart Wainwright (Defra); Evan Williams (SEPA)

### 1. Welcome

Roland Clift welcomed members of the Advisory Committee and guests.

### 2. Minutes from the last meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the last meeting, held on 6 July, 2007 were approved.

a) Defra's proposed new knowledge hub focusing on cross-cutting small group research had been put on hold. SDRN will continue to monitor the development of this and invite Defra to AC meetings if appropriate.

#### b) SCP Evidence Base Update:

i) Defra had established a new environmental behaviours unit, with the roles of developing and translating the evidence base related to pro-environmental behaviours and working within Defra and with external stakeholders to inform the design and implementation of policy interventions.

ii) Five qualitative projects from the 06/07 research programme on the public understanding of sustainable behaviours would be published shortly and a dissemination event was tentatively planned.

iii) The 07/08 Social Science Programme was focusing on three key areas - public knowledge and emotional engagement around the issue of SCP; the precursors to pro-environment behaviour; and how to engage and motivate pro-environmental

behaviour. Seven new projects had recently been advertised under the programme and it was expected that a second wave of projects would be commissioned under the programme in due course.

iv) Defra was working closely with ESRC and other potential funders to investigate the possible commissioning of a Collaborative Research Centre on Environmentally Sustainable Behaviours. Nothing had been finalised but a consultation document would be available shortly and Kate McGeevor agreed to circulate this to the Advisory Committee. Kate highlighted that the establishment of such a Centre draws directly on recommendations in the SDRN/ERFF report.

Gary Kass stated that ERFF are aware that they have not followed up recommendations in the report to the extent that they could have.

c) The SDRN/RICS evening lecture series, which had been due to commence on 4<sup>th</sup> October, had been put on hold because RICS' main lecture theatre was being refurbished.

d) Mark Davies reported that CLG's policy on zero carbon homes formed part of the Housing Green Paper, which was issued in July 07. The sub-national review, looking at an integrated regional strategy under RDAs, had been published and there would be a later consultation on how this could be done. CLG had taken part in a Defra-led session with RCEP. CLG was considering various ideas for future research topics including the funding of infrastructure and urban green space and its role in tackling climate change and getting people involved in this. Mark Davis expressed interest in the CLG issues that were discussed at the last Advisory Committee meeting and hoped to spend more time discussing this with colleagues before the next meeting. The SDRN Secretariat will discuss this with Mark and possibly hold a meeting to discuss options.

e) Gary Kass highlighted that as a result of the reorganisation of government departments Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills may be more interested in innovation and SD issues.

### **3. Progress to date**

- **Communications**

Kate McGeevor reported that SDRN was continuing to work with Amazon PR on developing the communication strategy. Amazon had intended to help promote the SDRN Conference but there had not been much that they could help with or that they had felt was newsworthy. Kate would be working with them to focus on another SDRN event in the future.

- **Liaison with Policy-makers**

Ben Shaw said that a small part of the SDRN budget had been spent interacting with other government departments, e.g. DfT (Research into Practice workstream); CLG (SDRN Conference session); DH (SDRN Conference session); Office of Government Commerce (potential involvement in a rapid review of sustainable procurement) and DCMS (however the scoping study on the effect of climate change on cultural and sporting assets had not been taken forward).

Peter Hedges suggested that Ben contacted the New Technology Strategy Board (TSB), who could prove a useful third party contact for SDRN. TSB will be holding their annual conference 'Innovate' in November, where they are due to issue a call for tenders. There was a new innovation partnership with CLG/Defra on low impact buildings. DfES might potentially be involved too in view of its schools programme. In addition there was a Living with Environmental Change programme and ERFF was part of this. Peter also suggested that SDRN look at the HMT website for recent news on the outcomes of the Comprehensive Spending Review. New PSAs and, the Strategic Objectives underlying these, are useful indicators of future departmental priorities.

- Research into Practice Workstreams

Ben Shaw reported that there were two possible events proposed under the Sustainable Transport theme - a) climate change adaptation and transport and b) the impact of non-transport policies on transport. However, there had been a series of delays and it appeared that the consultants had not been driving these forward. The first event, which will involve practitioners and policy-makers, was due before December. Alan Paterson mentioned that the DfT had been reorganised in April and that there was now an environment directorate.

With regard to the Spatial Planning workstream, a session had been held at the SDRN Conference, in addition to the work already done. A literature review was being undertaken now and a dissemination event would be held shortly.

The Business Resource Efficiency workstream was at the planning stage. Ben said that the Environment Agency might be interested in this theme. It was indicated that the EA had worked with ERM on resource efficiency in different UK industry sectors and Louise Every/Naomi Savoury would be the contacts for following this up and they may be planning an event on this issue.

Some work has also been done on the Engineering and Sustainable Development workstream (this is discussed under A.O.B.).

- Rapid Research and Evidence Reviews

It had been agreed at the last meeting to take forward work on Sustainable Procurement and Ben had met Andy Davy (Defra) to work up an outline brief. CRISP (Bath) would be interested in working on it and they were looking for funding - possibly from Defra and OGC. The focus was to try to ascertain whether sustainable procurement was a factor in making businesses successful and also whether it was a means of transmitting values through an organisation. Members of the Advisory Committee were aware of several studies on the topic already and asked about the breadth of the study. Alan Paterson also requested the review include case studies and examples. Malcolm Eames said that it would be helpful for the Committee to look at the terms of reference of the reviews and information about what they intended to look at, and also stated that he had colleagues at Brunel that specialise in this area. Ben responded that he had drafted a brief, which he had sent to CRISP. When their comments had been received, he would circulate the revised draft to the Committee. He said that the objective of the study would be to look at the literature, identify what referred to the public sector

and highlight transferable lessons. Tanja Pless-Mulloli said that she thought that policy-makers should be actively engaged in formulating the brief. Ben suggested a steering group made up of representatives from Defra, OGC and the Advisory Committee (Peter Hedges. Tanja also suggested including a representative from the NHS Confederation. It was suggested that steering groups be established for all the reviews.

#### **4. Annual Conference - feedback and discussion paper**

Kate McGeevor's discussion paper on the SDRN Annual Conference posed a number of questions, which were addressed by the Advisory Committee. The matter of non-attendance was considered and the suggestion of charging delegates a fee to attend but it was felt that the administrative costs involved would not make this beneficial and it would also be a discouragement to policy-makers. There was a discussion about the target audience and whether the conference was aimed at the wider audience of the Network or just academics and/or policy-makers. There was an acknowledged difficulty in trying to meet multiple needs - and supplying both an in-depth research agenda and also overarching themes. However, it was agreed that the SDRN Conference was unique in this respect and that to change this, for example by restricting the audience or issuing a call for papers would just duplicate other academic conferences.

The Committee advised continuing to hold the annual conference in London, since it was believed that this was relatively easy for most people to get to and also because it was felt that the drop-out rate would be higher if it was held elsewhere.

The innovation of live broadcasting of the conference and placing recordings on the SDRN website was broadly approved, although there had been an issue of a potential speaker withdrawing because the conference was not being held under Chatham House rules and there was the possibility that some participants, particularly policy-makers, might be unwilling to participate or restrict the comments they might make. There had been instances in past events where policy-makers had been subjected to very forceful interventions by confrontational respondents or speakers. However, it was also agreed that SDRN operates in an area of contested knowledge and such confrontation should not necessarily be restricted.

Malcolm Eames suggested the Committee should think carefully of the culture of the meetings SDRN wished to facilitate and whether these should continue to be ones of open discussion and a mixed audience forum. This brought one back to the target audience and what the Network was about. There needed to be a clear understanding of the role of the Network - one of bridging research and policy - and to consider how big it was desirable for the conference to become, what the key focus should be, who the key audience was and how to serve their needs effectively. Roland Clift suggested that there might in future be parallel sessions with one under Chatham House rules and the other broadcast.

It was suggested that next year's conference could focus on SDRN's four Research into Practice themes, and also that each session could be organised with input from

a theme-organising committee, to ensure the needs of all audiences (esp. policy-makers) are met.

The new poster session was thought to be a success. Suggestions for improving this included linking the poster competition to the themes of the conference, displaying the posters on the SDRN website prior to the conference and also allowing some time during the conference for poster competitors to give a five minutes' presentation on the theme of their posters. This would allow them to engage more with policy-makers. There was some discussion on the question of whether to restrict entries to those within the UK, the EU or to have no restrictions. One constraint was travel mode and costs in that speakers were discouraged from flying and so it would be difficult then to pay flight costs for an overseas competitor. Roland Clift suggested putting a standard limit on expenses, irrespective of where the competitor originated from.

## 5. Next Rapid Research and Evidence Review

Julie Newton (BRASS, Cardiff) presented work on the project *Wellbeing and the Natural Environment: Green Spaces*, which she had undertaken for Defra whilst on a placement from Bath. It highlighted that there was very little research looking at the links between the natural environment and wellbeing. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment looked at ecosystem services and determinants and constituents of wellbeing but overlooked how people think and feel and many mental health dimensions. There was mounting evidence of positive wellbeing benefits of green spaces: particularly mental and physical but there was less known about the social wellbeing benefits, and particularly how these benefits vary across different social groups. There was also a lack of studies in the UK context and a tendency to discount in-depth qualitative studies. There is a need to combine qualitative and quantitative research. Among the specific areas requiring more analysis was the social wellbeing impact (including the negative effects such as the fear of crime) and the impact on children's development. Julie was working on a programme concerning sustainable communities, looking at what is needed to become more sustainable - focusing on food, energy, transport and home. The challenge of the wellbeing debate was to join up the research across the many disciplines and practitioner networks and promote the goal of sustainable development: particularly pro-environment behaviour.

Larissa Lockwood (Health Policy Analyst, SDC) described the SDC's health programme, which was initially set up in 2000 to help the NHS become more sustainable. This was now branching out, building on the work of the Healthy Futures NHS programme and the SDC's recent Watchdog review of the Government's Sustainable Communities Programme. The new workstream will be concerned with how the natural and built environment can improve health outcomes through a sustainable development approach. Possible opportunities to deliver health improvement through the natural/built environment included through CLG, the Academy for Sustainable Communities and the government's work on health inequalities. The Environment Agency was mapping environmental inequalities.

Tanja thought this was an interesting report but was also surprised at the divergent vocabulary between the social science/environmentalists' view of health and that from the environmental public health viewpoint. There should be a shared understanding of 'health' and 'environment'. She said that wellbeing was an important addition to the debate on environment and health but wanted to ensure that measuring environment and health outcomes was included. Roland thought that health and wellbeing was a good topic for a review, one which was timely and needed.

Advisory Committee members advised of a number of related projects; these are summarised in the 'Health and the Environment Review: Next Steps' paper which accompanies these minutes.

## **6. Discussion**

### **Agreement of decisions made**

- The SDRN team are to contact Mary Barkham at ERFF to follow up recommendations in the ERFF report.
- The consultation document on the proposed Defra/ESRC Collaborative Research Centre on Environmentally Sustainable Behaviours is to be circulated to the Committee once available.
- The SDRN team are to talk to Mark Davies re: future CLG research topics
- Kate to include details of new departmental PSAs and strategic objectives (resulting from CSR) in next SDRN mailing, together with details of Innovate conference
- Ben is to circulate a brief for next rapid research & evidence review on Sustainable Procurement to the Committee
- Steering groups are to be established to advise on both of the rapid reviews (Procurement and Health)
- Tanja, Ben and Kate to meet to discuss her mapping of the themes important to a Health and the Environment review.
- The 2008 SDRN Annual Conference to be held in London and entry should remain free. A venue that can provide suitable AV facilities should be reserved.
- Roland Clift is to approach Richard Dodds and Peter Guthrie about a kick-off meeting for the Research into Practice Engineering & SD workstream.

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

- Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2008

## **8. AOB**

### **a) SDRN Engagement with Engineering Community**

Roland Clift said that he was interested in getting more engagement with the engineering community and to this end, he had held two constructive meetings with engineering bodies - the Royal Academy of Engineering and the Institute of Chemical Engineers. The Royal Academy of Engineering wants to take forward

joint activity with SDRN. He suggested a meeting with Defra and other government departments to consult on where they would see how engineering's role in SD and to discuss emerging priorities, e.g. 'environmental security', techno-engineering, biomaterials, the delivery of ecosystem services. There could also be an area around the citizen engineer - enabling engineers to see what role they play in society, rather than pigeon-holing them as technology providers. Roland suggested setting up a meeting with the Environment Agency, Richard Dodds, Peter Hedges (EPSRC) and Defra. Peter suggested that EPSRC might be in the position to provide funding to encourage the dialogue. In addition, it was suggested that engineers should be approached to give presentations, e.g. Peter Guthrie, Cambridge Chair of Sustainable Engineering, the head of sustainability at ARUP, Buro Happold.

#### b) Natural England - New Strategic Direction

Gary Kass said that in February 2008 Natural England would be starting an external consultation regarding a new strategic direction and he enquired whether SDRN would respond to it. He suggested that it could be an agenda item for the next meeting.

#### c) International Society for Environmental Epidemiology Conference, Dublin 2009

Tanja said that the Society's 2009 Conference was on 'Food, Environment and Health' and she suggested that SDRN considered running a symposium on the subject. This could be an agenda item for the next meeting.