

Inspiring a sustainable local future:

a report on a Cross-Government masterclass & workshop
on communicating clear sustainable development messages to
local government, held on 1st December 2005



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1 Introduction

On 1st December, the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) and Defra held a cross-government workshop and masterclass on communicating clear messages to local government on sustainable development – ‘*Inspiring a sustainable local future*’. The purpose of this paper is to provide a report of the workshop. In particular, the paper aims to:

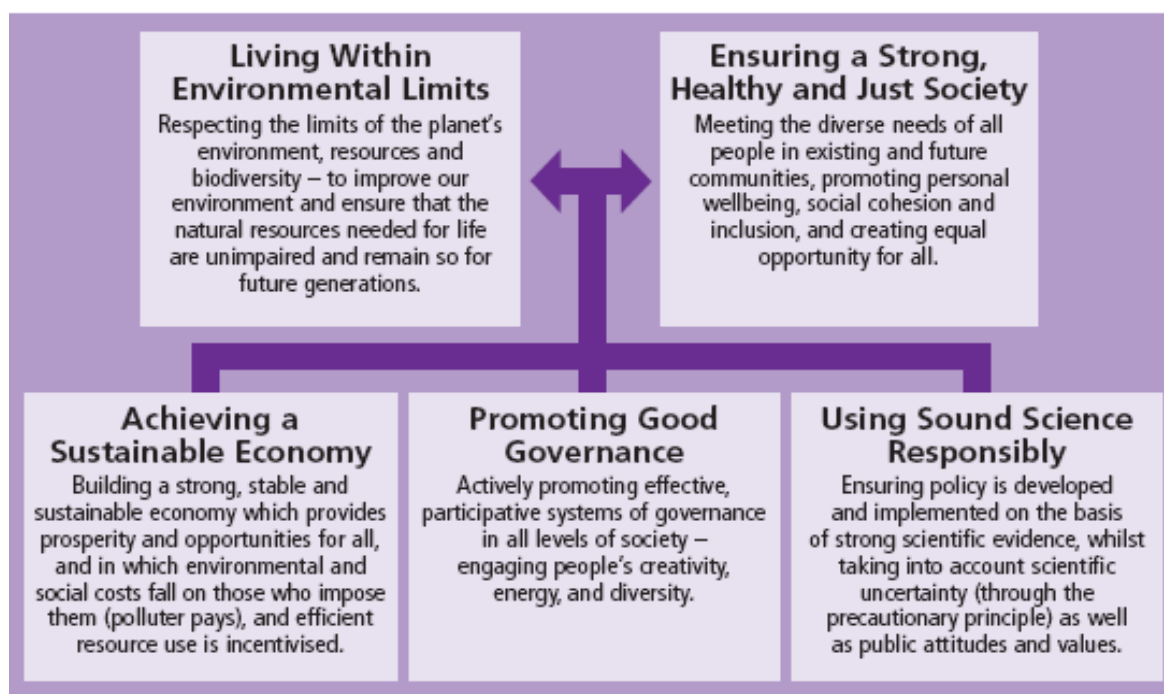
- convey the messages of the workshop to the workshop participants
- inform an Defra-SDU publication aimed providing advice to policy-formers on communicating sustainable development to local government

- inform the SDC’s future work programme
- make recommendations for improving communication of sustainable development between central and local government.

2 Background

2.1 *Securing the future*

The UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy, *Securing the future*, set out that “the goal of sustainable development is to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life, without compromising the quality of life of future generations”.¹ To achieve this goal, it set out five principles which would form the basis for *all* policy in the UK:



¹ HM Government, *Securing the future: delivering UK sustainable development strategy*, March 2005, p16.

Securing the future outlines that these principles will form the basis for policy in the UK, and that the Government wants “to achieve [its] goals of living within environmental limits and a just society, and [it] will do it by means of a sustainable economy, good governance, and sound science”.²

The Strategy also sets out four priority areas for immediate action across the UK:

- sustainable consumption and production
- climate change and energy
- natural resource protection and environmental enhancement
- sustainable communities.

One of the key challenges for the UK Government is to enable delivery of sustainable development at the local level. As such, *Securing the future* recognises that “local authorities and their partners ... are pivotal to delivering sustainable communities”.

2.2 The Central Local Partnership

The Central Local Partnership (CLP) brings together Ministers from across Central Government and the Local Government Association in order to help develop and implement policy at the local level.

Through the CLP’s Sustainable Development Working Group, the Government developed an action plan to ensure delivery of sustainable development at the local level. The action plan, reiterated in *Securing the future*, includes the commitment that:

“In 2005 the Government will hold a cross-departmental workshop to

² HM Government, *Securing the future: delivering UK sustainable development strategy*, March 2005, p17.

explore ways of improving its communication of consistent messages on sustainable development and sustainable communities to local government”.³

2.3 Workshop aims

Defra approached the SDC to help deliver on the above commitment. As a result, the SDC and Defra held a masterclass and workshop - “*Inspiring a sustainable local future: Communicating clear messages to local government*” - on 1 December 2005. The event, facilitated by Futerra, had the following aims:

1. To harness Departmental expertise on ways of communicating their priorities and sustainable development commitments to local government
2. To support central Government in sending consistent and accurate messages to local government on the relevance and importance of sustainable development
3. To introduce individuals in Government Departments to improved means of communicating sustainable development.

The workshop was aimed at UK Government policy-makers and communications officers who work with local government. The full programme of the event can be found at Annex A. An attendees list is at Annex B. Annex C contains some tips from Futerra on communicating effectively to local government. The workshop presentation slides are at Annex D.

³ HM Government, *Securing the future: delivering UK sustainable development strategy*, March 2005, p161.

2.4 The Sustainable Development Commission

The SDC is the Government's independent advisory body on sustainable development. We report to the Prime Minister and the First Ministers of the Devolved Administrations. Chaired by Jonathon Porritt, with Commissioners drawn from academia and the private, public and not-for-profit sectors, the SDC works across many areas of policy and practice, including energy, transport, climate change, health, local and regional governance, education, consumption and economic growth.⁴

The SDC has actively participated in the CLP, especially the CLP's Sustainable Development Working Group. The SDC has supported this group in two areas:

- On encouraging a debate about the extent to which the Shared Priorities reflect sustainable development, and
- On putting into place ways of promoting consistent messages to local government about sustainable development and the value attached to it across Whitehall departments.

2.4.1 *Promoting Consistent Messages about Sustainable Development to Local Government*

Taking forward this second area, the ODPM funded research on the challenges for central to local communications on sustainable development. The research and accompanying report was completed by Kath Johnson in Nov 2004, and the SDC supported a number of recommendations within the report.

Promoting Consistent Messages about Sustainable Development to Local Government (Kath Johnson, Nov 2004) generally considered that whilst there was a range of good practice occurring on the initiative of individual Departments, there was limited co-ordination or central design taking place. The research findings of particular relevance to the workshop were:

1. The UK Government's 5 SD principles should be understood and communicated clearly and consistently by each Department, whatever specific policy and programme terminology that Department's choose to use
2. Departments should identify opportunities to embed messages on the SD priorities into other communications to local government. For example, in their delivery on the Shared Priorities
3. Channels of communication should be rationalised to ensure consistency and quality of SD communications from central to local government
4. SD needs to be embedded through training and capacity buildings as a core skill across the civil service in order to maximise opportunities for communicating SD out to local government.

As we explore below, these findings support and reinforce many of findings of the SDC/Defra communications workshop.

⁴ Go to www.sd-commission.org.uk for more on the SDC.

3 Communicating sustainable development to local government: barriers

The focus of the workshop was broadly split into two. In the first half, participants explored the **barriers** to effectively communicating sustainable development to local government. The workshop then looked at identifying potential **solutions** for overcoming these barriers. This session also raised a number of further future **challenges**.

3.1 Practical barriers

Workshop participants were asked to identify barriers to communicating sustainable development to local government. We have split these into two broad categories (although some fall into both):

- Structural barriers
- Behavioural barriers

These are set out below in table 1.

Structural barriers	Behavioural barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silos • Inconsistency • Language (too much) • Skills • KPIs not about SD • Short-termism eg. in budgeting • Different local authority (LA) structures • No effective feedback mechanism • Lack of sustainable development champions • Local action vs. global impact • Time • Conflict of interests • Local / National impacts • Communications within LA • Local political agenda • Lack of buy-in from LAs • Lack of prioritisation • Uniqueness of LG audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time • Skills and knowledge on sustainable development could be stronger • Language (too much) • Short-termism

Table 1. Barriers to communicating sustainable development to local government

3.1.1 Structural barriers

The majority of barriers identified by participants were 'structural' in that they are a result or sign of inadequate structures or processes in central and local government.

Some of these signify that **central government is not 'joined-up' enough**. Participants, for example, cited "silos", both within and between government departments, as well as "inconsistency" in language, messages and communications from central government as barriers.

A number of the barriers suggested that **sustainable development is not being integrated effectively into central government policy-making**. Such barriers included: "KPIs [Key Performance Indicators] not about SD"; assessing how to balance "local actions versus global impact" and "local/national impacts"; insufficient value ("time") being given to sustainable development issues within departments; "language", meaning that there are too many, often confusing, used around the sustainable development agenda; a lack of long-term thinking ("short-termism e.g. budgeting"); and "conflicts of interests" between departmental agendas and the wider sustainable development, as well as between central government priorities and local government priorities.

Participants felt that **central government is not equipped effectively to communicate sustainable development to local government**, citing: a lack of "skills" within departments to effectively address sustainable development; and a "lack of champions" within departments for sustainable development. This supports the findings of Kath Johnson's report that

"sustainable development needs to be embedded through **training and capacity-building** as a core skill across the civil service".

A number of the barriers also reflected that **there is a lack of understanding within central government of the way in which local government works**, a problem that was brought out throughout the workshop. Participants cited all the following as barriers: "communications within Local Authorities"; "local political agendas" which can be in conflict with central government priorities; a "lack of buy-in from Local Authorities"; a "lack of prioritisation" of sustainable development at the local level; and the "uniqueness of the local government audience", including "different local authority structures" (county, district, borough and unitary authorities). Linked to this, ineffective communication and political channels between central and local government ("no effective feedback mechanism") was also a barrier. This lack of understanding can lead to a perception that local government is itself a barrier.

3.1.2 Behavioural barriers

Some of the barriers identified by participants can also be attributed to, and be a result of, individual behaviours. Many of these barriers overlap with those highlighted as structural barriers. So, for example, developing skills for communicating sustainable development, thinking long-term, using language carefully and consistently, or championing sustainable development can be all be done at the individual level as well as by departments and government as a whole. They reinforce the need for improved capacity-building and training aimed at both increasing sustainable development knowledge

and skills, as well as developing understanding about the way local government.

Participants found that at an individual level, communicating to local government involved a number of challenges. Some of these were thought to be more difficult than others (see table 2).

Of the 'easy' side of the table, participants recognised that 'playing devil's advocate' could be particularly useful. They found that by putting

themselves in the shoes of their potential audience (local officials, councillors, other stakeholders), they had a better understanding of their audiences' needs and their possible reaction to new policy communications. Of the others, talking to local government officials and councillors on a one-to-one basis was considered too impractical because of the numbers of conversations this would require. 'Agreeing shared agendas' was also problematic as this involved more consensus.

EASY	DIFFICULT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One to one (but how practical is that)? ▪ Playing Devil's Advocate ▪ Agreeing shared agendas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sense of perspective (central vs. local) ▪ Trying to be a one stop shop ▪ Understanding why am I talking to you? ▪ To avoid undermining what's already being done. ▪ Everything is a top priority! ▪ Agreeing appropriate pace of change ▪ Convincing local government that this is a long term aim / policy

Table 2. Challenges for improving central-to-local communications at an individual level

The more 'difficult' section reinforces the conclusions made above that:

- Central government needs to be better 'joined-up' ('to avoid undermining what's already being done', 'everything is a top priority!', 'trying to be a one stop shop'), and
- Central government policy-makers would benefit from an improved understanding of local government ('sense of perspective (central vs. local)', 'understanding why am I talking to you?').

3.1.3 Conclusions

Participants identified a wide variety of barriers to communicating sustainable development to local government. Most of these were 'structural', suggesting that current government structures and processes do not facilitate effective sustainable development policy and communication. Some barriers can also be classed as 'behavioural' in that they also apply at the individual level.

The workshop outcomes suggest that the key barriers to communicating

sustainable development to local government are that:

1. Central government is not 'joined-up' enough. This can lead to confused messages on government priorities
2. Sustainable development is not being integrated effectively enough into central government policy-making
3. Central government skills and knowledge on sustainable development could be stronger in order to effectively communicate sustainable development to local government
4. There needs to be a better understanding within central government of the way in which local government works.

Some participants in the workshop felt that these contribute to the perception that sustainable development is not yet the priority in either central or local government that it should be.

4 Communicating sustainable development to local government: solutions

The workshop threw up a wide range of potential solutions to overcoming the barriers identified above. This section outlines, expands on, and discusses the solutions identified in the workshop.

Section 6 then uses a number of these solutions as the basis for a suite of possible ways forward to improve sustainable development communications to local government.

4.1 Joining-up central government

4.1.1 *Joining-up government policy*

One of the key messages from the workshop was that local government policy agendas across government departments needed to be joined-up. A number of ideas were explored by participants to address this problem, including:

- **Clarifying the role of Government Offices.** Participants suggested that Government Offices should have a clear cross-government mandate to support sustainable development delivery in local government. This could be done through having sustainable development as their core purpose and / or by having an overarching sustainable development framework within which departmental priorities are delivered
The Government is responding to a similar recommendation made in the SDC's report on sustainable development in the regions. (see also recommendation 1.1.1 in section 6)
- **Government should be assessed** on how well it is joining-up sustainable development policy. Capacity for doing this was strengthened in *Securing the future*, which committed the Government to strengthen the SDC and expand its role to act as an independent 'watchdog' looking at Government's progress on the Strategy. This role formally begins in April 2006 (see also 1.1.2, section 6)
- **Guidance** on how to integrate and embed policy across government. This could be linked to the Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) process, which

requires departments and their agencies to assess all initiatives for their economic, social and environmental impacts. *Securing the future* committed the Government to strengthening this process in relation to sustainable development (see also 1.1.3, section 6)

- **Identifying 3-5 cross-government initiatives** and working with the SDC to ensure sustainable development is fully integrated into them. Indeed, the SDC will itself be identifying 2-3 topics for 'thematic' review each year as it moves into its watchdog role.

4.1.2 Joining-up government communications

Participants also identified the need to **coordinate sustainable development communications across government**. Suggestions included:

- establishing a gateway to improve, advise and influence sustainable development communications, and to co-ordinate messages and priorities (see also 1.2.1, section 6)
- creating a cross-departmental thematic database to check what other departments are doing on / 'mapping' communications to local government (see also 1.2.2, section 6)
- producing a practical guide and/or toolkit for central government officials for communicating sustainable

development to local government (see also 1.2.3, section 6)

- establishing a cross-government local government communications group to exchange ideas and good practice (see also 1.2.4, section 6)
- cross-government campaign to 'sell' local sustainable development i.e. making it 'sexy' – could involve the SDC (see also 1.2.5, section 6).

Of these, the most popular was to have a **local government communications 'gateway'**. The main purpose of a gateway would be to act as a 'filter' or 'quality control' check to ensure that all communications from departments and NDPBs provided clear messages on sustainable development, consistent across government.

A gateway could be organised in several different ways but would essentially be underpinned by a set of principles that would guide, and act as a check for, communications from central to local government. A gateway could either be located in each department or centrally from one department, such as ODPM. It was also suggested that other bodies, such as the SDC, the LGA and Government Offices might also be involved in this process.

Case Study: the NHS Gateway

The NHS Gateway is controlled by the Department of Health. The Gateway was established with three key aims:

- Reduce the planning burden placed on the service (regulatory and non regulatory)
- Limit the number of new targets introduced to the service and ensure the focus is on the core priorities, and
- Manage down the volume and influence the style of 'guidance' issued to the service.

The Gateway covers all relevant initiatives, communications or data requests from government departments and their agencies (including arm's length bodies) going to NHS staff. A set of underlying principles are used to assess cases for Gateway approval and to guide the nature of the content and distribution of materials disseminated through the Gateway.

4.2 Integrating sustainable development at the departmental level

4.2.1 *Integrating sustainable development at the departments' local government policy*

Participants identified a number of solutions to ensure that sustainable development is integrated effectively into central government policy-making:

- Sustainable Development Action Plans (SDAPs)⁵ need to target / identify key opportunities to embed sustainable development into cross-government delivery programmes (see also 2.1.1, section 6)
- SDAPs should also be used to ensure sustainable development is integrated effectively into all

departmental policies concerned with local government (see also 2.1.1, section 6)

- Rationalise key performance indicators to support sustainable development objectives (see also 2.1.2, section 6)
- All policies should be reviewed to assess how far sustainable development is integrated into them. As above, there could be links here to the RIA process (see also 2.1.3, section 6)
- Long-term, strategic planning
- Work with local government on initiatives (see also 2.1.4, section 6)
- Improve departmental linkages to SDC e.g. through secondments etc.

4.2.2 *Improving departmental communications to local government*

As well as ensuring the sustainable development communications should be coordinated across government, workshop participants also came up with ideas to improve that each

⁵ *Securing the future* committed all central government departments and their agencies to produce SDAPs focussed on the Strategy by December 2005 and report on their actions by December 2006 and regularly thereafter.

department's communications to local government.

- ensure messages to local government are short, simple and clear
- formal 'sustainable development-proofing' of communications. This could be through the gateway idea discussed above
- sustainable development should be incorporated into departmental branding and ethos (see also 2.2.1, section 6)

Some of these relate or overlap with those discussed in section 4.1.2.

The most popular idea from the workshop was to produce **a practical guide to communicating sustainable development to local government**. Participants suggested that this might be linked to a communications gateway and / or a practical guide to understanding local government. Workshop feedback suggests that such a guide might cover the following areas:

- Local government as an audience – the challenges and opportunities
- The importance of good communications
- Central Government's SD commitments
- How to outline your business case i.e. what benefits are there for local government
- How to take into account other local agencies, such as those on Local Strategic Partnerships

- The importance of communicating consistent messages on SD
- Good tips for communicating SD to local government (e.g. how to play 'devil's advocate') (see also 1.2.3 / 2.2.2, section 6).

4.3 Capacity-building for sustainable development

The capacity of central government to address sustainable development issues, especially in relation to local government, was a key issue from the workshop. Participants felt that central government often lacks sufficient skills and knowledge. As such, a number of solutions were suggested:

- Training for high-level officials to increase awareness and understanding of sustainable development e.g. Government Office board members (see also 3.1.1, section 6)
- SD-proofing / local government-proofing training for policy officials (see also 3.1.1, section 6)
- Collating and sharing good practice
- 1:1 contact with local government officials and councillors, perhaps through mentoring for central government officials (see also 3.1.2, section 6)

Defra is currently working with the National School of Government to ensure that sustainable development training is provided to civil servants.

Existing good practice

Participants were also asked to identify examples of good practice in communicating sustainable development to local government. These included:

- Planning (ODPM) – statutory responsibility to deliver SD through planning
- Audit Commission – CPA framework and the Quality of Life indicators
- DfT - sustainable travel work
- ODPM - Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Guidance
- Home Office – social dimension of policing
- Local Area Agreement (LAA) Guidance – addition of sustainable development outcomes

All of the above were deemed to exhibit the following characteristics:

- Clear, targeted, focused objectives
- Consistency and continuity with previous policy agendas
- Charismatic leadership (eg. individuals)
- Links to funding
- Something in it for listener (eg. LAs)

4.4 Improve understanding of local government

One of the key findings of the workshop was that central government understanding of local government could be improved and was a major barrier to effective communications. Workshop participants came up with a number of suggestions, including:

- involving local authorities at the start of the process of developing policy and communication materials
- improve feedback / two-way dialogue mechanisms from local government: this could be through the Local Government Association (LGA), through Government Offices, or a new forum (see also 4.1.2, section 6)
- establish secondment arrangements to and from local government (see also 4.1.3, section 6)

- establishing local government 'practitioner pools' to bounce ideas off (see also 4.1.4, section 6)

A popular suggestion was for Government to produce a **practical guide on what local government is**. – this could be linked to the a guide to communicating to local government (see above). This would be aimed at UK Government officials and policy-makers, and could incorporate many of the findings from the workshop. This could help to address the a lack of understanding of local government in central government, as well as to help to make messages to local government more consistent.

Feedback from the workshop participants suggested that such a guide might contain:

- A practical introduction to local government

- Local government as an audience – the challenges and opportunities
- An introduction to other key local agencies (see also 4.1.1, section 6)

What is local government?

Feedback from the workshop suggested that understanding the nature of local government was a key issue. Participants identified some of the unique features of local government as:

- Provides delivery of services 'on the ground'
- Is a political creature – councillors want to be re-elected
- Is uniquely placed to understand local needs
- Has seen *many* (often similar) Government initiatives
- Audiences are quite different – officials / councillors, country / district / unitary authorities

5. Future challenges

The workshop helped to identify a number of future challenges.

The most significant of these issues was that Government should consider ways that it can enable and encourage local government to further improve delivery of sustainable development. Ideas included:

- Facilitating local government good practice-sharing
- Rewarding good practice e.g. Beacon Council status
- Benchmarking and league tables on performance
- Providing financial incentives e.g. through Local Area Agreements (LAAs)

Other challenges raised included:

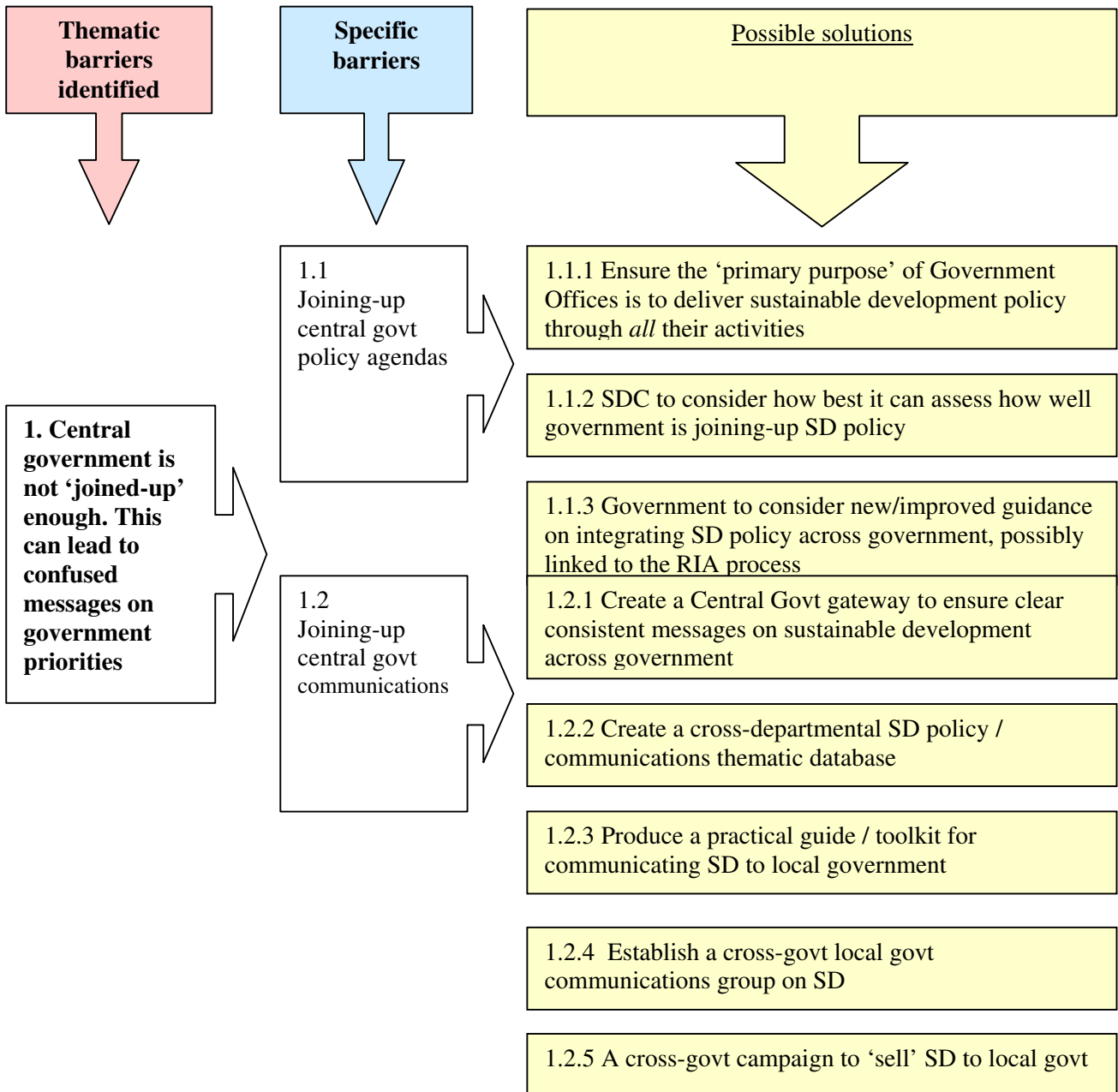
- ODPM/Audit Commission need ensure that sustainable development is integrated into the Audit Commission's work
- Sustainable Communities agenda: Government needs to consider whether its sustainable development focussed enough

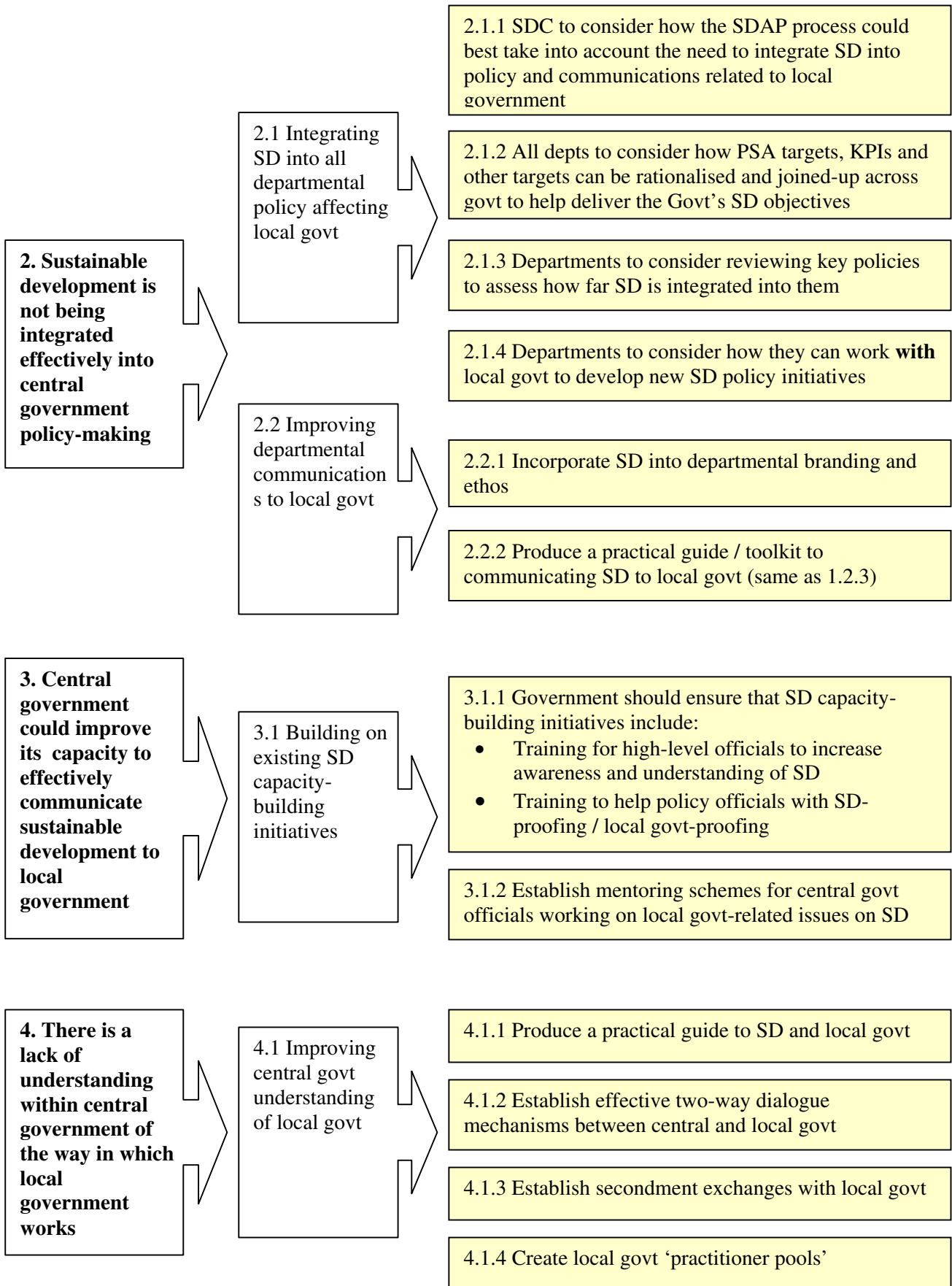
- How can local government best communicate with / feedback to Government?

6. Conclusions and recommendations

Workshop participants explored a wide range of barriers (see section 3) in communicating sustainable development to local government and an even wider range of solutions (see section 4). These are summarised in table 3 below. The left-hand and centre columns set out the key barriers identified from the workshop. The right-hand column meanwhile puts forward a suite of recommendations, based on the workshop outcomes, for improving sustainable development communications to local government.

Table 3. Summary of workshop conclusions and recommendations





Annex A: Workshop Programme

Inspiring a sustainable local future:
Communicating clear messages to local government

Event Details & Script

Date & Time 1 December 2005, 09.30-13.30pm

Venue Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
12 Great George Street, Parliament Square, London SW1P 3AD

	Speaker / Presentation	Facilitated Masterclass / Discussion
09.30	Registration & Refreshments	
09.40	Welcome Derek Osborn (Chair), SDC Commissioner	
Purpose	<i>Welcome. Outline of the day's aims. Introduction to SDC.</i>	
09.45	Background Sara Eppel, Director of Policy, SDC	
Purpose	<i>Building on the work of Central Local Partnership & providing a sense of continuity / progress. SDC angle re: embedding SDAPs across Dept. structures.</i>	
09.50	Opening Keynote: A local future is a sustainable future Neil Gibson, Strategic Director for Planning & Transport, Buckinghamshire County Council	
Purpose	<i>Defining the importance of local government and its role in delivering sustainable development / sustainable communities. Outline of where Whitehall comms are helping / hindering SD in local government. Good local examples. Future opportunities for embedding SD eg. LAAs.</i>	
10.00	The UK Government & Sustainable Development Jill Rutter, Director of Strategy & Sustainable Development, Defra	
Purpose	<i>The Government's SD Strategy & priorities. Driving Sustainable Development across Government. The importance of mainstreaming SD and the critical role of Departments.</i>	
10.10	View from the Frontline Doug Jones, Programme Director, LGA Eddy Taylor, Environment & Sustainability Manager, London Borough of Croydon	
Purpose	<i>Real world delivery of sustainable development by local government. Overview of challenges inc. good and bad examples of central to local SD communications. The Shared Priorities & building constructive and effective relationships between central and local government.</i>	

10.30	Masterclass Part I: Communicating sustainable development to local government Ed Gillespie, Managing Director, Futerra
Purpose	<p><i>Outline of objectives for the morning, including aims for the masterclass (for example, generating ideas and/or recommendations).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Where we are now? Outline of current good practice, including 3 x 2 minute Departmental sketches on SD comms to local government, covering: climate change, procurement, health services.</i> <p><i>Examples of barriers to effective SD comms to local government (to include key findings from analysis of Kath Johnson's research). What's different about 'local government' as an audience. Session includes facilitated group work discussing current practice & barriers. To generate discussion around Departmental communications with local government.</i></p>
11.20	Refreshments
11.35	Masterclass Part II: Exploring Opportunities for Improvement Ed Gillespie, Managing Director, Futerra
Purpose	<p><i>Moving forward with our SD comms to local government. Overcoming barriers. A framework for communicating SD to local authorities, covering explicit (linked to Dept's SD commitments) and implicit messages (linked to the 7 Shared Priorities), communication channels, targeting the right audience, for example. How Dept's can set an example.</i></p> <p><i>Exploring & identifying opportunities for improving communications. Deliberative and interactive process generating recommendations for improvement and buy-in to the overall process.</i></p>
12.25	Effective Communications & Identifying Ways Forward Ed Gillespie, Managing Director, Futerra
Purpose	<i>Taking our recommendations forward. Headline messages on the importance of communicating effective and consistent sustainable development messages to local government. Delivering improvements in communication. General hints and tips about communicating SD to local government audience. The importance of consistent communications to local government on SD.</i>
12.50	Concluding Comments Derek Osborn (Chair), SDC Commissioner
Purpose	<i>Embedding and championing SD as part of our core business. Thanks.</i>
13.00	Lunch & networking
13.30	Close

Annex B: Workshop attendees

Rachel	Bainbridge	Home Office
Ian	Ball	ODPM
Penny	Bramwell	Government Office for London
Richard	Brewin	MOD
Duncan	Buchanan	Sustainable Development - Rail Freight, DfT
John	Cole	MOD
David	Cooper	Head of Regional, Local and Community SD policy, Defra
Lynn	Cooper	Economy and Labour Market Division, DWP
Chris	Drew	GOSE
Tom	Elliott	Communications, DfT
Jenny	Ellis	Local Government Strategy Team, DWP
Richard	Emmens	GOSE
Sara	Eppel	Sustainable Development Commission
Martin	Gibbs	Local Government & Communities Manager, Department of Health
Ed	Gillespie	Creative Director, Futerra
Denny	Gray	Sustainable Development Commission
Fiona	James	Head of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, HM Treasury
Doug	Jones	Programme Director - Environment & Sustainable Communities, LGA
Rob	Keeling	Corporate SD Policy, ODPM
Tricia	Kilsby	Local & Regional Division, DCMS
Suzanne	Lunn	Local Change Division, DfES
Pat	Mandeville	Strategy, Policy & Delivery Division, DCMS
Richard	Meakin	ODPM
Hannah	Moore-Barton	MOD
Angel	Mulligan	Housing Costs, DWP
Gavin	Musk	Sustainable Development Commission
Steve	Newby	Home Office
Derek	Osborn	Commissioner, SDC
Andrew	Osborne	Local Environment Quality Division, Defra
Chris	Pease	Publicity Officer, Strategic Communications Advice, Defra
Liz	Randall	Schools Food Team, DfES
Nina	Robinson	Cabinet Office
Jill	Rutter	Director of Strategy & SD, Defra
Mariam	Saleemi	Sustainable Development Commission
Susannah	Senior	Sustainable Development Commission
Martyn	Smith	PSA1 Programme Co-ordinator, Defra
Kate	Stevenson	Defra
Eddy	Taylor	Environment & Sustainability Manager, LB of Croydon
Ruth	Thomas	MOD
Harris	Vallianatos	Sustainable Development Commission
Amba	Wade	ODPM
Katie	Weeks	ODPM
Kay	West	Sustainable Development Commission
Sarah	Wooller	Lead of Partnership Improvement Unit, Defra

Annex C: Effective Communication of Sustainable Development – Identifying Ways Forward – Tips from Futerra



“Say it loud, say it proud from here on in!”

Explicit Messaging

We tend to focus on explicit messages, i.e. those that actually use the terminology of sustainable development: Who in Government is actually using sustainable development vocabulary? Well, understandably Defra is (something to do with their PSA target!), but perhaps there is still an argument that Defra as an ‘environmental’ department still has an issue in that the SD function ends up as primarily environmental.

Other Departments tend to use SD only to fulfil a requirement, though the need to produce Sustainable Development Action Plans is changing this. Beyond Central Government, IdeA is using SD explicitly in its mainstream policy agenda and at the Local Government level SD is getting into the corporate core, but is still attached to one department (usually environment) in many cases.

What other terms are being used that could arguably be described as SD?

DTI – ‘Prosperity for all’

DfT – ‘Accessibility’

Home Office – Civil renewal’ ‘Respect Agenda’

ODPM – ‘Sustainable communities’

Challenges...

There is still a predominantly ‘green’ or ‘environmental’ focus. We still adopt an ‘either/or’ approach to social, economic or environmental considerations. There is a general failure to integrate SD due to PSA target driven approaches (and PSAs not integrated!). The use of other terms and agendas above causes confusion. Finally there are issues around the use of ‘Sustainable’ branding on things that are patently not!

What’s ‘heard’ at the local level?

A plethora of jargon! *Liveability, quality of life, wellbeing, sustainable communities & sustainability*. 16 different terms altogether (mainly from ODPM, Defra). The main element missing is the global perspective/context. The number and diversity of these terms causes confusion, complacency and problems at the corporate level r.e. prioritisation/rationalisation.

Implicit Messages

Delivery is obviously more important than terminology! We want to see action regardless of how it may be branded and as such implicit messages are absolutely CRUCIAL to achieving consistency of SD communication. At present the implicit messaging is all over the place and often counter-productive to, or undermines the SD agenda.

What Channels are being used to communicate between Central and Local Government?

Most Departmental messaging on SD is through the ODPM Local Government Gateway in order to co-ordinate/rationalise messages. Regionally you can use the Government Offices? But there may be questions over the effectiveness of this approach? There is also considerable SD potential in the use Local Area Agreements. Intermediary bodies may also be useful such as the LGA, Solace, IDEa etc.

The overall picture however is of patchy coverage, limited capacity and whilst content may be relatively consistent, delivery certainly isn’t!

The 10 Rules of Sustainable Development Communication

1. **Big picture:** Make connections to the wider National or Global context, demonstrate long term thinking or planning and endeavour to dispel myths about social, economic and environmental trade-offs.
2. **Technically correct:** Use robust evidence, real tangible facts and be transparent around claims for potential benefits and negative consequences of inaction.
3. **Be cool:** Be exciting, actively engage and inspire people without being patronising, don't be afraid to be bold and visionary.
4. **Belong:** Emphasise the fact that your initiative or work is part of a massive global change, encourage people to positively contribute and join what will inevitably be a successful revolution.
5. **Only stories work:** Use compelling tales, anecdotes and examples of successful efforts to grab and hold people's attention and help them relate logically and emotionally to what you are trying to achieve.
6. **Optimism:** Stress the fact that this is all achievable, don't burden people with too much guilt, instead promote the triumph of the possible.
7. **Glory button:** Make people feel good about themselves, use sustainability to promote people's sense of self-esteem.
8. **Change is for all:** This is not a restricted agenda, confined to white, middle class professionals only or Swampy. It is an all encompassing, all inclusive challenges to be owned and delivered by everyone collectively.
9. **We need more heroes:** Celebrate the icons, the leading pioneers the everyday folk doing extraordinary things and show that people can aspire to be and act like them.
10. **Personal circle:** Show that sustainability starts right within your own personal circle of influence and includes everything from the mundane daily tasks of normal life through to where you go on holiday and what you do all day at work.

If not you, who? If not now, when?

Annex D: Workshop presentations

Communicating sustainable development to local government

Cross-Government Masterclass
1 December 2005

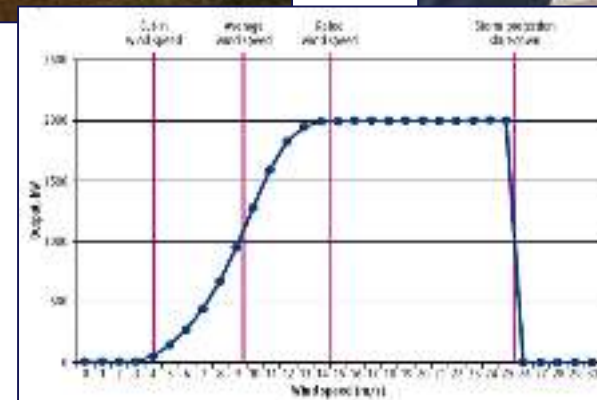
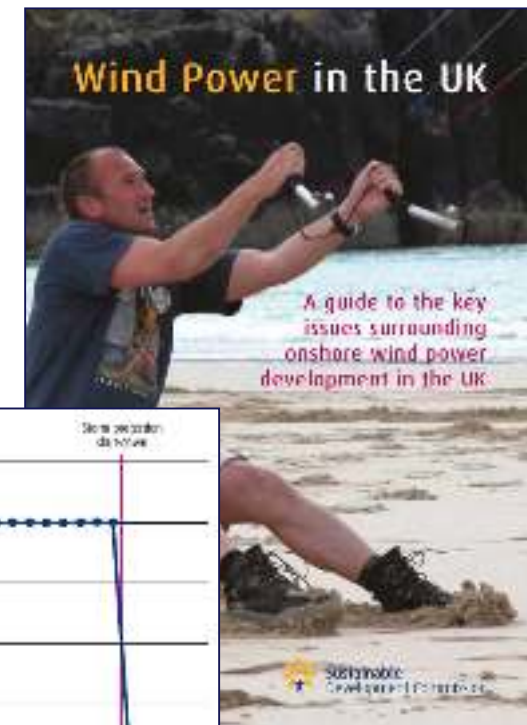


Communicating sustainable development to local government

Chair's Welcome

Derek Osborn
SDC Commissioner

The Sustainable Development Commission



Derek Osborn
Commissioner,
Sustainable Development Commission

1 December 2005
Communicating sustainable development
to local government

The Sustainable Development Commission



Derek Osborn
Commissioner,
Sustainable Development Commission

1 December 2005
Communicating sustainable development
to local government

Masterclass Aims

1. To harness Departmental expertise on ways of communicating their priorities and sustainable development commitments to local government.
2. To support central Government in sending consistent and accurate messages to local government on the relevance and importance of sustainable development.
3. To introduce individuals in Government Departments to improved means of communicating sustainable development.

Communicating sustainable development
to local government

Background to the Masterclass

Sara Eppel
Director of Policy, SDC

Background to the Masterclass

The Central Local Partnership

- Established to promote closer understanding
- Action plan on local delivery, two particular strands:
 1. Shared Priorities and sustainable development.
 2. Promoting consistent messages
- 2004, ODPM funded research on the challenges for central to local communications on sustainable development

Background to the Masterclass

Communicating Consistent Messages

- Key themes from 2004 research:
 1. Communicating consistently to local government on Government sustainable development principles.
 2. Importance of implicit communications on sustainable development.
 3. Creating effective communication channels for messages to local government on sustainable development.
 4. Training & capacity building for Departmental sustainable development awareness.

Sustainable Development Action Plans

- Importance of communicating consistent SD messages to stakeholders, including local government.



Communicating sustainable development
to local government

A sustainable local future

Neil Gibson
Strategic Director
Buckinghamshire County Council

A Local Future is a Sustainable Future

Local Government

- My Experiences
- Past, Present & Future
- Big “Local” Businesses
- Making a difference
- Working together
- And Don't Forget...



A Local Future is a Sustainable Future

Local Government -- My Experiences

- The Single Regeneration Budget
- Capital Challenge Pilot
- PFI in Health - LIFT
- New Local Governance Arrangements
- Local Agenda 21
- Establishment of NW RDA
- LSVT
- Neighbourhood Regeneration Pathfinder
- LSPs/CDRPs



A Local Future is a Sustainable Future

Local Government - Past, Present & Future

Past?

- Service provider
- Inefficient and unresponsive

Present?

- Over regulated agent of Government
- Mixed Enabler and Provider
- More efficient & responsive to needs

Future?

- Commissioner and Co-ordinator



II A Local Future is a Sustainable Future

Local Government – Big “Local” Business

- 468 Council's in UK
- Spend £80b pa on services
- Quarter of all public expenditure
- 20,000 elected councillors
- Employ over 2m people
- Deliver 700 different services
- Buckinghamshire County Council



II A Local Future is a Sustainable Future

Local Government – Making a Difference

- Democratically accountable
- Commissions/Provides Services
- Community Leadership
- Local Visionary
- Engage stakeholders



II A Local Future is a Sustainable Future

Local Government – Together We Can

- Promote Local Government
- Team work
- Greater flexibility & Trust
- Make the jig saw easier
- Medium Term Stability



II A Local Future is a Sustainable Future

Local Government – And Don't Forget...

Every Council is Different

- Capacity
- Finances
- National/Local tensions
- Local Government at least 2 tier
- Lead in times



II A Local Future is a Sustainable Future

Who's who? The decision-makers



Name: Cllr Letheren
Colours: Conservative
Cabinet Member



Name: Cllr Mohammed
Colours: Conservative
New Member



Name: Cllr Willetts
Colours: Lib Dem
Scrutiny Member



II A Local Future is a Sustainable Future

Who's who? The decision-makers



Name: Ian Trenholm
Strategic Director
Resources



Name: Dean Taylor
Strategic Director
Community



Name: Sue Imbriano
Strategic Director
Schools



Communicating sustainable development
to local government



Jill Rutter
Director
Strategy & Sustainable Development, Defra

Cross-Govt Strategy Launch 7th March 2005

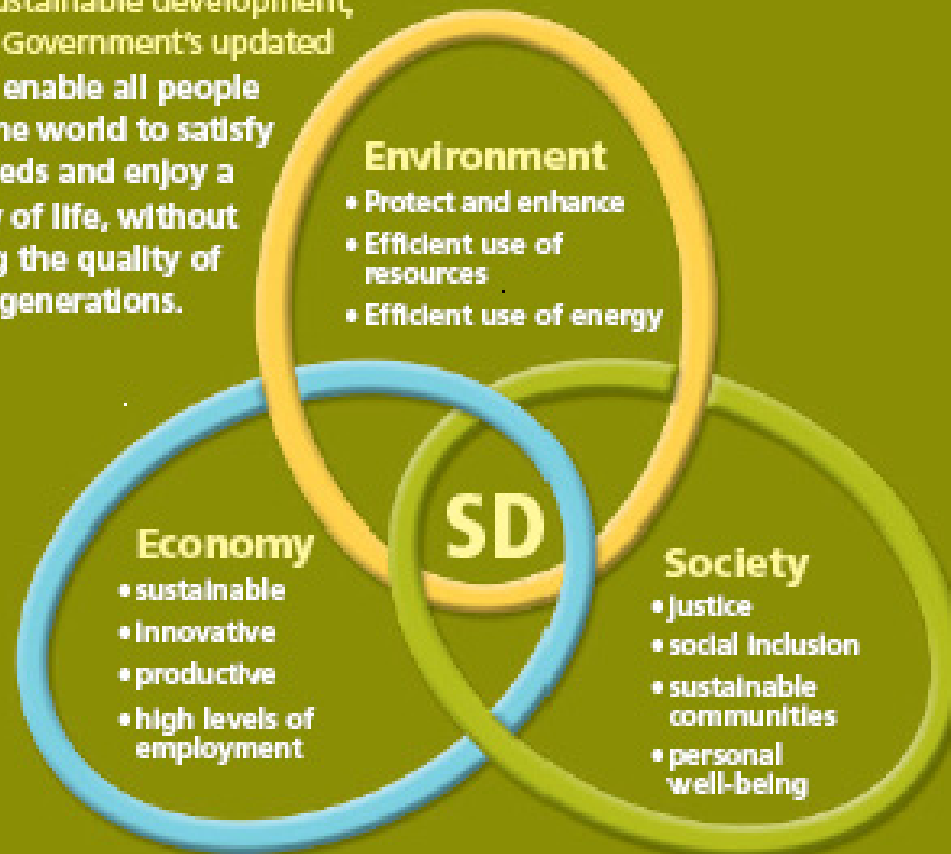


Jill Rutter
Director of Strategy & Sustainable Development,
Defra

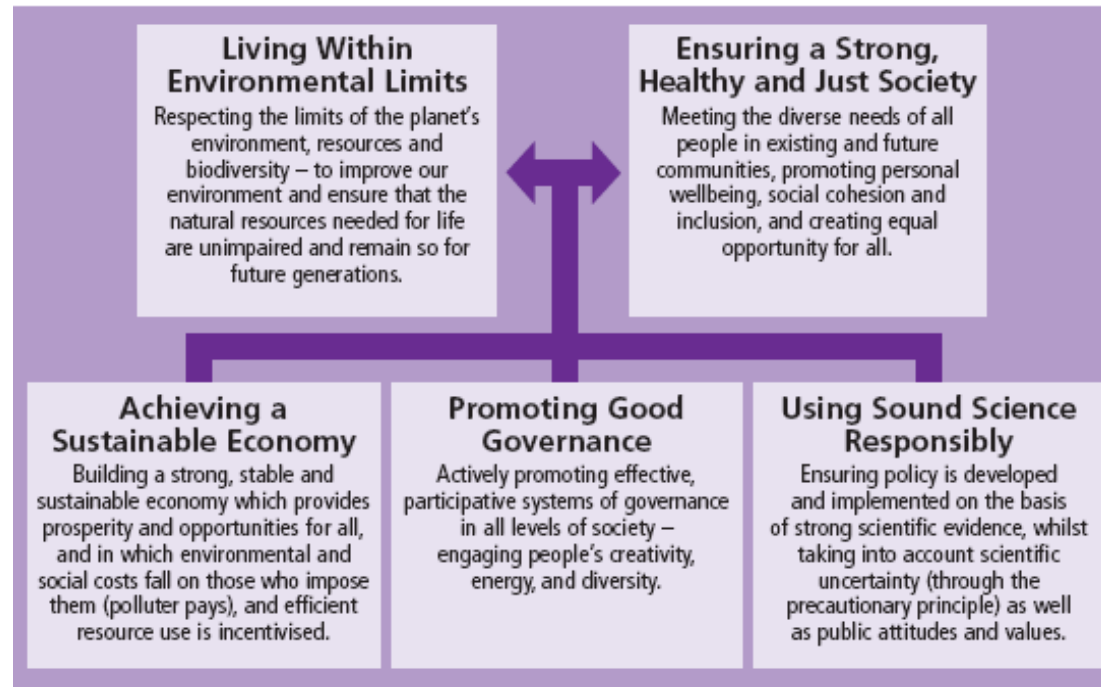
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to local government

UK sustainable development goal

The goal of sustainable development, set out in the Government's updated strategy, is to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life, without compromising the quality of life of future generations.



Five new guiding principles



We want to achieve our goals of living within environmental limits and a just society, and we will do it by means of a sustainable economy, good governance, and sound science.

Four priority areas for action

- Sustainable consumption and production
- Climate change and energy
- Protection of natural resources and environmental enhancement
- Creating sustainable communities

And three key themes.....

- *Involving people*
- *Government leading by example (e.g. SDAPs)*
- *Getting serious about delivery*

SD Strategy consultation

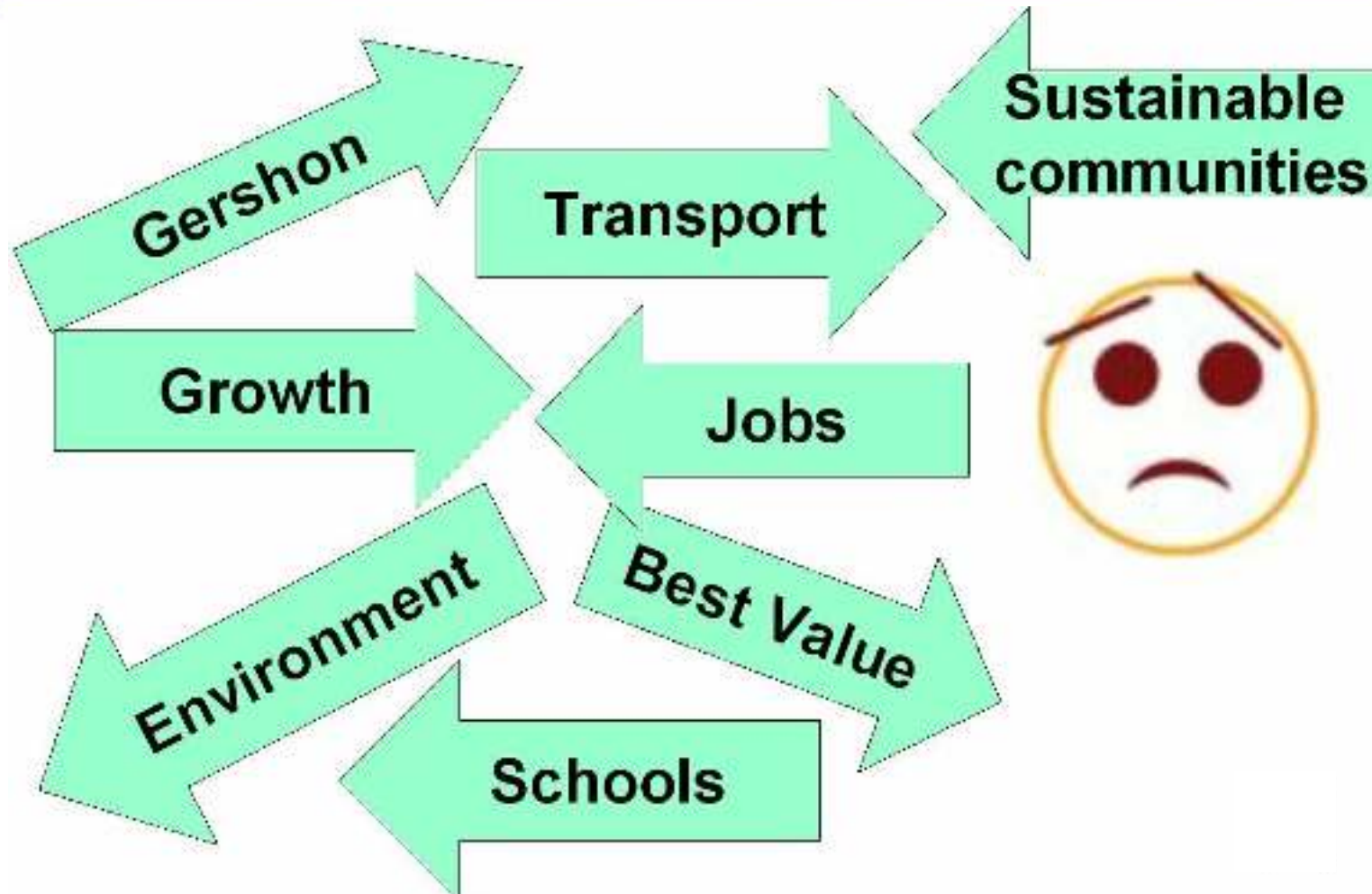
- Consultation on local delivery
- 221 paper and email responses
- 624 on-line responses
- Over 100 individual local authorities
- Key message

“need joined-up messages from Government on importance of sustainable development and local government role in delivering it”

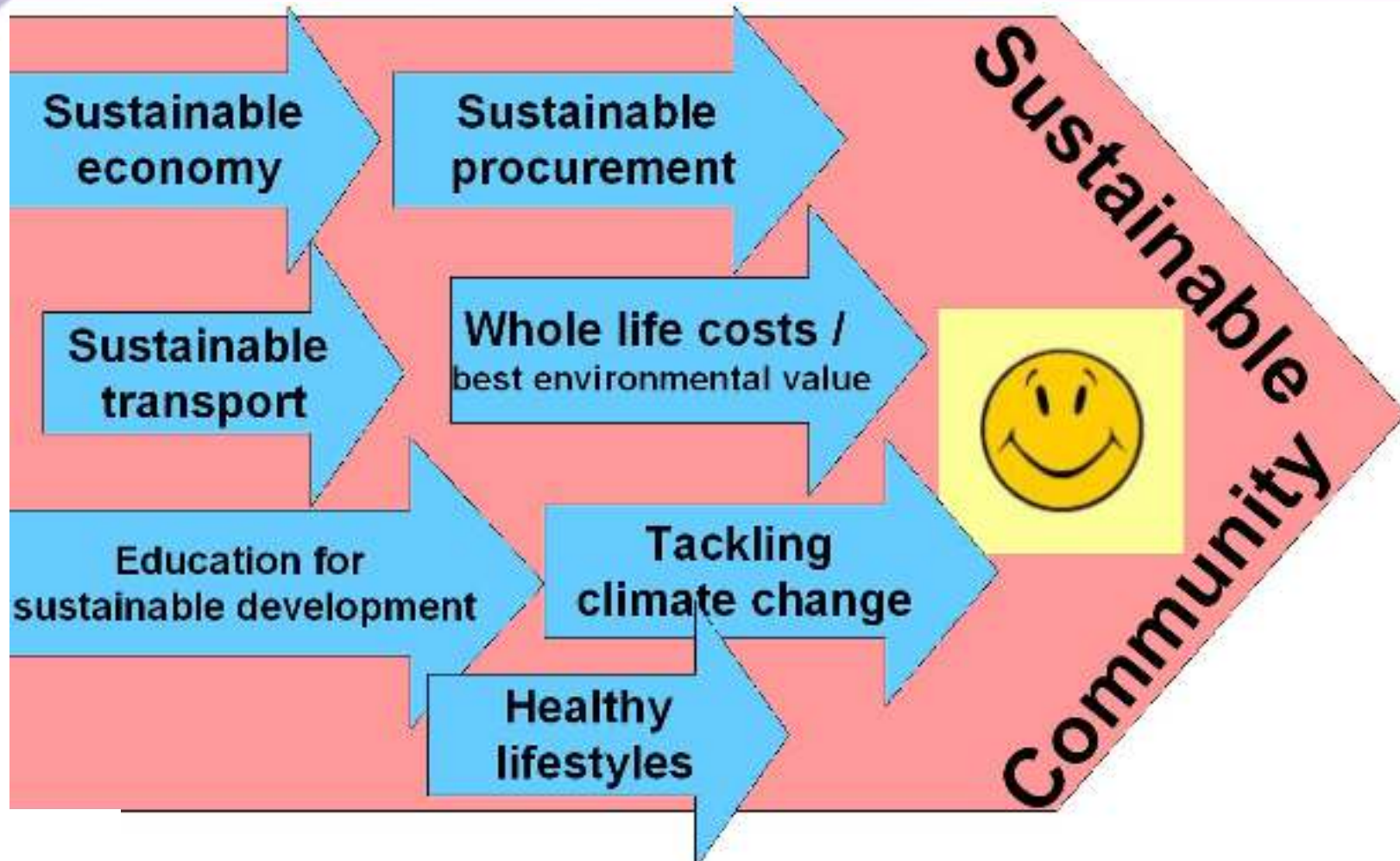
Local authorities critical to SD delivery

- Purchasers / Commissioners: spend £40 bn per year on goods and services
- Influencers: Run over 300 Local Strategic Partnerships with hundreds of public, private, voluntary stakeholders
- Community leaders: shaping opinion and lobbying upwards
- Decision makers: future growth, local services and investment

Speaking in different languages



Pointing in same direction (Joined-up !)



Joining-up our stories - speaking same language

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

- Sustainable communities as 'big picture'
- Golden thread linking policies

Communicating sustainable development
to local government

View from the Frontline: LGA

Doug Jones
Programme Director
Local Government Association

View from the Frontline: LGA

The Local Government Association



The Central Local Partnership (CLP)

- Ministers & Local Government Leaders
- Work together on focused set of priorities
- Reducing targets : 'deal for devolution'
- Identified theme for today
- New focus soon?

IDeA

- Improvement and development
- Sustainability is a priority
- Works with some Government Departments
- Communications channels

View from the Frontline: LGA



Local Government Association

Local Authorities

- Community leaders
- Local autonomous bodies
- Councillors and officers
- Addressing the same challenges as you
- Everywhere is different: local priorities

What Councils see / feel

- Lack of consistent messages
- Fragmented messages, to different people
- Confusing or misleading terminology
- Not just from Departments, Agencies too
- "What's in it for me?"

View from the Frontline: LGA



Local Government Association

Some current LGA initiatives

- Work around Reputation
- 'Greening Communities' campaign
- Better advice and support: a hub?

Not just communications, but:

- Joint guidance (eg Sustainable Community Strategies)
- Involvement in the policy development loop
- Training / capacity building
- Funding / balance of funding

Communicating sustainable development
to local government

View from the Frontline: Croydon

Eddy Taylor
Environment & Sustainability Manager
London Borough of Croydon

Croydon – ‘The Frontline’...

- 330,000 population
- 83% Private Sector Housing
- 36% BME
- Largest commercial retail centre in the south-east outside central London
- ‘Cleaner, Safer, Greener’

**CROYDON
COUNCIL**
Cleaner. Safer. Greener.

Eddy Taylor
Environment & Sustainability Manager
London Borough of Croydon

1 December 2005
Communicating sustainable development
to local government

Croydon: The 'Frontline' Perspective?

- ... Or the 'Middle Manager's Moulded Mindset'?
- The reality of the day job:
 - Focus on project delivery and staff
 - 'Interest in' but not 'focus on' national govt initiatives
 - More likely to notice obstacles/mixed messages than national govt opportunities
- LGA Communications are helpful
 - Are they read by the right people?

**CROYDON
COUNCIL**
Cleaner. Safer. Greener.

Croydon – What gets missed out the most?

- Do Chief Execs see 'Sustainable Development' as their responsibility?
 - If not, why not? (Assuming we want them too!)
- Local Government is not just about immediate local issues:-
 - Non-local impacts
 - Future impacts
- Neighbourhood renewal & floor targets
- Suggestion: A simple and consistent element in all govt initiatives to integrate best practice on: energy, waste, sustainable materials, water, transport?

Croydon – Sustainable Development Initiatives

1. Regeneration

- Planning (Renewable Energy, EcoHomes...)
- ENVIBE (Environmental Business Excellence)

2. Tackling Fuel Poverty

- PCT, Soc Services, Energy Advice Centre

3. Energy Efficiency in Council Property

- 'Invest to Save' Principle

4. Procurement Processes

- Corporate Approach

**CROYDON
COUNCIL**
Cleaner. Safer. Greener.

Communicating sustainable development to local government



**Sustainable
Development Commission**



Communicating SD to Local Government Workshop



“Implicit, explicit, anyway you like it baby”

Ed Gillespie – Futerra Sustainability Communications Ltd

Introduction

- Master class 1 - Communicating SD to a local government audience
- Master class 2 - Exploring opportunities for improvement
- Presentation

The Shared Priorities

- LGA 'Partnership for Ambition' Nov 2001
- July 2002 - Shared public service delivery priorities agreed by LGA and CLP
- Local Public Service Agreements (LSPAs) and Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) form the framework
- Some are 'pathfinders' others build on existing initiatives...

The Shared Priorities

- Creating safer and stronger communities
- Improving the quality of life of older people, children, young people & families at risk
- Meeting transport needs more effectively
- Promoting healthier communities and narrowing health inequalities
- Promoting the economic vitality of localities
- Raising standards across our schools
- Transforming the local environment

Delivery of SD is inhibited by...

1. Inconsistent messages
2. Communication barriers between national and local govt



Other issues...

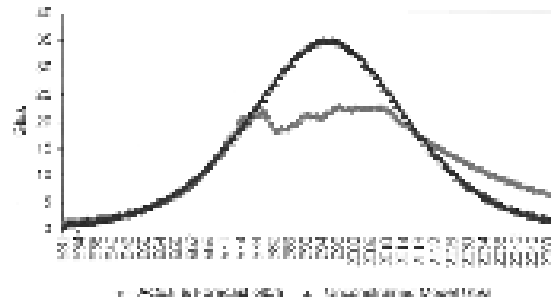
- SD perceived as ‘marginal agenda’ not mainstream policy (at all levels)
- Confusion r.e. ‘Sustainable communities’ & similar terms
- Hard to rationalise/prioritise agendas
- Cannot be seen in isolation from wider, long term and global impacts
- Implicit messages vital (central govt agendas undermine SD)
- Co-ordination and consistency between layers of govt r.e. SD communications

Good news is...

- Perception at central govt level that progress at local level is good
- Indicators also suggest this
- Improvements in partnership working
- Community strategies delivering
- Integrated approach, common local vision

Environmental problems are really social problems – caused by people, people as victims (e.g. fuel poverty)

WORLD OIL PRODUCTION, PAST & FUTURE



Masterclass 1 – Where are we now?

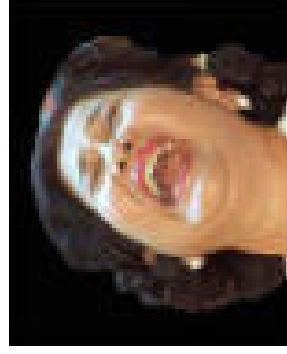
- What are the barriers to effective communication of SD to local government?
- What is unique/special about the local government audience?

Masterclass 1

- Delegates pair off
- One will represent their Department, the other LG *councillors or officers?*
- Departmental person to explain to LG person why SD is important to something YOUR department is asking them to do...
- Councillor/officer can then challenge and ask questions
- 5 minutes then swap positions

- **Thoughts?**
- **Feelings?**
- **Questions?**
- **Comments?**
- **Next steps...**

Plenary



3 Principle Drivers for SD

1. The business case for SD:

- save money
- gain efficiencies
- enhance reputation and trust
- connects with residents concerns
- reduce future risks



3 Principle Drivers for SD

2. Statutory Requirement:

- Community Strategy Duty
- Local Strategic Partnerships
- Section 2 Local Government Act 2000 (well-being)
- Enables but does it ensure?
- Need courageous leadership, rigour, more statutory requirements



3 Principle Drivers for SD

3. Moral imperative:

- Equity - allowing people to meet own needs
- Environmental justice
- Inter/intra generational equity
- Stewardship



Key Govt Agendas affecting SD delivery at the local level

- SD agenda (Defra)
- Sustainable Communities (ODPM)
- Civic renewal/Community capacity building (Home Office)
- Regional SDF (ODPM, Defra, DTI)
- 10 year vision for local government (ODPM)

Core principles of SD:

1. Plan for long term
2. Consider impacts beyond UK
3. Integrate policy & delivery
4. Involve local communities

(note to self...these must be applied *together*)



Other themes used by Departments:

- **Planning for the long term:** horizon scanning
 - Short term cost increases?
 - Political cycle and short-term results?
 - Local Government similar (lack of long term follow through, short term funding)
- **Impacts beyond UK:** Usually other way round!!!!
- **Integration of policy/delivery:** Inter-departmental committees, good but competing political agendas?
 - Some PSA target pressure...but from Local Govt perspective diff. govt. dept. agendas confusing
- **Involve local communities:** perceived as 'tickbox' consultation by Local Government

Masterclass 2 – What are we going to do?

- In Departmental groups?
- What does your Department need to do to integrate SD more effectively into their communications?
 - 3 things that need to happen in your Department (specifically)
 - 3 things that need to happen across Govt (generally)
 - Compare and contrast
 - Feedback and plenary
 - Recommendations

Effective Communications & Identifying Ways Forward



“Say it loud, say it proud from here on in”

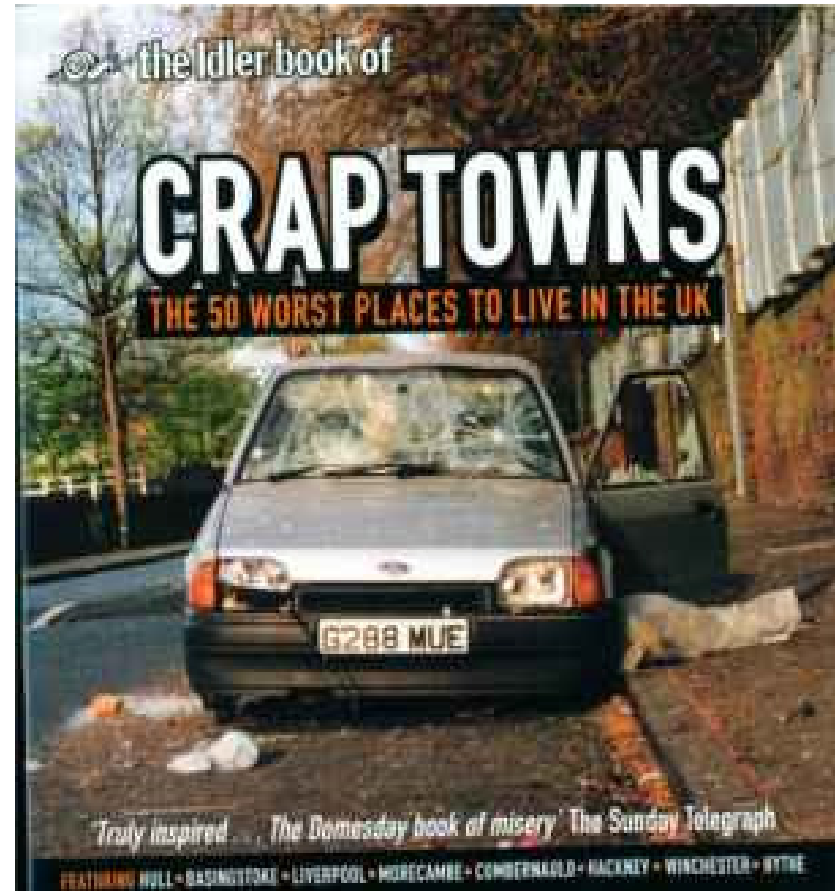
Ed Gillespie – Futerra Sustainability Communications Ltd

Explicit Messages: Who uses...‘SD’?

- Defra (PSA target!) - SD function ends up as primarily environmental
- Other Depts – only to fulfil a reqt
- IdeA – used explicitly in mainstream policy agenda
- Local Govt – SD into corporate core, not attached to one department (usually env.)

Other terms

- DTI – prosperity for all
- DfT – accessibility
- Home Office
 - civil renewal
- ODPM – sustainable communities



Challenges...

- Still 'green' or 'environmental' focus
- 'Either/or' approach to social, economic or environmental considerations
- Failure to integrate due to PSA target driven approaches (PSAs not integrated!)
- Confusion around other terms
- 'Sustainable' branding on things that are patently not!

What's '*heard*' at the local level?

- Liveability, quality of life, wellbeing, sustainable communities & sustainability
- 16 different terms altogether (mainly from ODPM, Defra)
- Main element missing is global perspective/context.
- Plethora of terms causes confusion, complacency and problems at corporate level r.e. prioritisation/rationalisation

Implicit Messages

Delivery is obviously more important
than terminology!



How to assess?

Implicit messages **CRUCIAL** to achieving consistency of SD communication

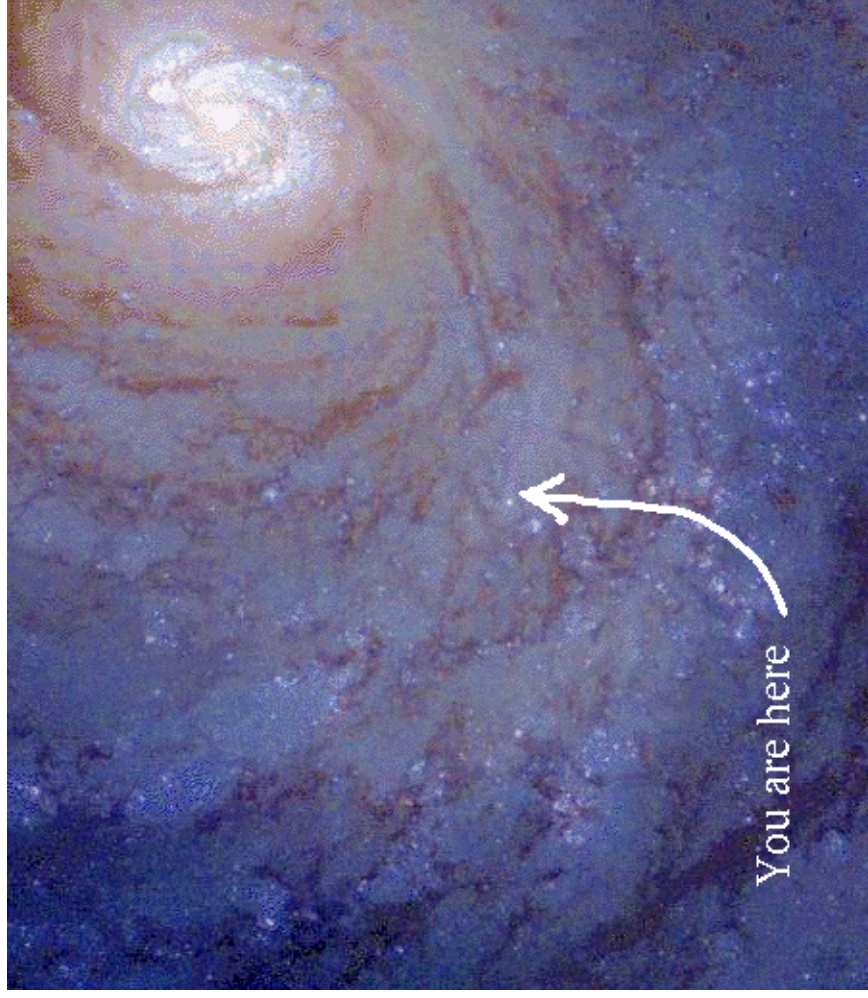


Channels

- Departmental - majority use ODPM Local Government Gateway to co-ordinate/rationalise messages
- Regional - Government Offices? Effective? Use Local Area Agreements?
- Intermediary - LGA, Solace, IDeA etc.
 - Patchy coverage, limited capacity
 - Content consistent, delivery inconsistent!
 - Mixed bag...

1. **Big picture**
2. **Technically correct**
3. **Be cool**
4. **Belong**
5. **Only stories work**
6. **Optimism**
7. **Glory button**
8. **Change is for all**
9. **We need more heroes**
10. **Personal circle**

1. Big picture



1. Big picture
2. Technically correct

**ICY
CONDITIONS
DO NOT
EXIST**

1. **Big picture**
2. **Technically correct**
3. **Be cool**



1. **Big picture**
2. **Technically correct**
3. **Be cool**
4. **Belong**



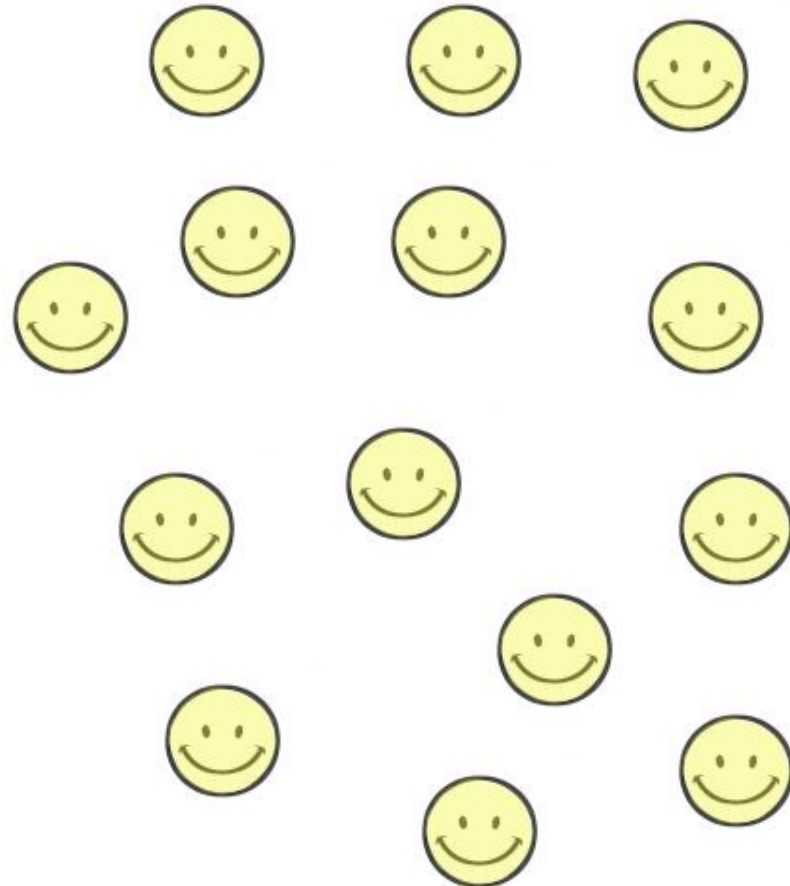
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sustainability communications

1. Big picture
2. Technically correct
3. Be cool
4. Belong
5. Only stories work



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4. **Belong**
5. **Only stories work**
6. **Optimism**



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5. Only stories work
6. Optimism
7. Glory button



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