Vision for sustainable regeneration, environment & poverty - the missing link

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Sustainable
Development Commission

Vision for sustainable regeneration

There has been much debate on the impact of regeneration funding programmes, often without clear answers. In entering this busy arena, the Commission aims to review how regeneration programmes are contributing towards the achievement of 'sustainable regeneration' – those projects that can demonstrate lasting improvements to a community through a more integrated approach addressing equally the social, economic and environmental problems of deprivation.

Sustainable regeneration, therefore, argues for a new approach which considers not only social and economic inequalities within society, but also environmental inequalities and the link between quality of the local environment and poverty. It also requires a longer-term perspective to regeneration which considers how communities can help themselves through increased ownership of their local environment.

This link between the environmental and the social and economic goals of regeneration has been overlooked in recent regeneration policy. It provides the final piece of the jigsaw in creating successful and sustainable forms of regeneration. Only through applying this approach can lasting improvements to the quality of life of communities be achieved which address the complex causes, and not just the symptoms, of deprivation.

This paper sets out our vision for sustainable regeneration, based on a review of existing literature, policy developments and initiatives.   We recognise that there is a growing political will and commitment to address environmental inequalities as part of current regeneration thinking. A number of initiatives and approaches which aim to do this are documented here.

Based upon a review of these initiatives, we have identified a list of principles or key characteristics of sustainable regeneration programmes. Some of these are general and should apply to all projects, while others are more specific.   In the next stage of this work we are exploring with regeneration practitioners the barriers to achieving this vision of sustainable regeneration and how they can be overcome.

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Who are we?

The Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) is the Government's independent sustainable development adviser reporting to the Prime Minister and the First Ministers for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Our mission is to inspire government, the economy and society to embrace sustainable development as the central organising principle. We comprise 21 Commissioners (listed on the back of this report) from a range of backgrounds, supported by a cross-sectoral secretariat.

Regeneration forms one of the four cornerstones of our work programme, complementing that of food and farming, rethinking the relationship between economic growth and consumption and, especially, climate change. The Commission recognises the vital role that regeneration plays in meeting the UK and devolved governments' sustainable development objectives: social progress which meets the needs of everyone; effective protection of the environment; prudent use of natural resources; and maintaining high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

By focusing on regeneration activities where the local environment is the driver of change, we aim to add value to wider policy thinking on regeneration and develop understanding of how to achieve sustainable regeneration. This links in closely with the Commission's climate change work programme and the role of the built environment in contributing to climate change

1. Introduction: The missing piece of the jigsaw

Purpose of the paper

This paper sets out our vision for sustainable regeneration, based on a review of existing literature, policy developments and initiatives.
In doing so we have argued for a new approach to regeneration which not only considers social and economic inequalities within society, but also environmental inequalities and the link between quality of the local environment and poverty.

We are developing this vision further through a study of the lessons and barriers to delivering sustainable regeneration within the UK, as well as identifying good practice examples of where these barriers have been overcome.

Changing face of regeneration

Over time the term 'regeneration' has taken various forms.   In the early 20th century, the imperative for regeneration was to address the huge environmental problems of the industrialised cities of the UK. The 'Garden City' movement was testament to this drive to create cleaner, greener living conditions.

More recently, regeneration in the late 1970's and 1980's has been characterised by the pursuit of economic goals – through large-scale infrastructure redevelopment, fuelled by increased private sector involvement[1] (for example the London Docklands or Tyneside Corporations). This has been followed, in the 1990's, by an emphasis on a more targeted, needs-based approach. Based on competitive bidding and focusing more on the specific needs of different communities this approach emphasised the need for widening community participation[2].

Consequently, there prevails a focus in current regeneration programmes on addressing social and economic inequalities, with scant reference to environmental concerns. Where the environmental agenda is included in regeneration programmes it is confined to narrow outputs such as reclaimed or improved land, refurbishment of listed buildings and visual improvements to the physical infrastructure in order to bring investment to an area[3].

We argue that this trend should come full-circle to ensure that environmental concerns are placed at the heart of regeneration activities in tandem, and building bridges with local social and economic needs.

Sustainable regeneration in funding programmes

The concept of sustainable regeneration has begun to make noises at the periphery of regeneration policy-making but has rarely been seen as central to regeneration programmes. The term was given formal recognition in England and Wales in the fourth round of the Single Regeneration Budget Challenge Fund (SRB), albeit as an annex rather than a central objective.

Some guidance and research on sustainable regeneration has emerged from central Government and research bodies such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF). In 1998, the DETR produced a 'Sustainable Regeneration Good Practice Guide'[4]. This set out a series of 'sustainable outcomes'

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[1] Harding, A and Garside, P 1995: Urban and Economic Development in Stewart J and Stoker, G (eds) Local Government in the 1990s, London: Macmillan.

[2] Robson et al, 1994 An Evaluation of Urban Policy, HMSO

[3] Voisey, H & Hewett, C 1999 Reconciling social and environmental concerns, JRF

[4] DETR, 1998 Sustainable Regeneration: Good Practice Guide, HMSO

regeneration partnerships should emphasise in the preparation of projects.   These included:

- Recycling and re-use of local resources (be it land and buildings or human resources);
- Ensuring long term management of area (exit or forward strategies for when funding ends);
- Internally generated income (e.g. community enterprises) to enable communities to help themselves;
- Use of local labour, skills and supplies wherever possible;
- Capacity building and community stability through local ownership and empowerment (e.g. Community Trusts);
- Create dynamic and flexible communities, able to adapt to changing circumstances and anticipate change.

The guide also produced a checklist for assessing the sustainability of regeneration projects. Although useful, it is not clear how this was taken forward in assessing subsequent rounds of SRB bids.

The single pot arrangement (which is replacing SRB in England and Wales), despite proposing an integrated appraisal framework for major projects, gives low priority to sustainable development and adopts only a very narrow definition of sustainable development (largely environmental sustainability).

The predominantly economic remit of the RDAs who will allocate this funding may raise some concern over the extent to which environmental inequalities will be addressed through mainstream regeneration funds.

In Scotland, the Social Inclusion Partnerships, which are leading regeneration, are beginning to consider the environmental agenda, but again they remain focused on social and economic inequalities.

Linking economic and environmental concerns

Some progress has been made in reconciling economic and environmental concerns through regeneration, for example following the DoE good practice guide on the 'Impact of Environmental Improvements in Urban Regeneration' (1995). These largely relate to initiatives for greening the economy (e.g. creating employment opportunities in 'green' technologies).

Linking social and environmental concerns - environmental justice

However, the bridge between social and environmental concerns remains vague. This remains the final piece of the jigsaw.   How the quality of the local environment impacts on the experience of poverty is only now beginning to be explored. There has been a lack of regard for the environmental concerns of disadvantaged communities, based to some degree on the presumption that the environment is a 'middle-class' issue. However, local environmental concerns – litter, vandalism, air quality etc – are very much central to the needs of these communities[5]. Indeed, people living in the 44 most deprived areas in England stated that pollution, poor public transport, and the appearance of the estate were the major issues facing their communities[6].

Much of this comes under the banner of environmental justice. This can be defined as *"equal access to a clean environment and equal protection from possible environmental harm irrespective of race, income or class or any other differentiating feature of socio-economic status"*. A justice-based approach focuses on the 'rights and responsibilities of all people in society to have a healthy environment.

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[5] Burningham, K & Thrush, D (2001) Rainforests are a long way from here: The environmental concerns of the disadvantaged. York. JRF
[5] Capacity

[7] Cutter, 1995 Race, class and environmental justice', Progress in Human Geography, vol. 19, no. 1 pp. 11-22

It also provides the international and inter-generational dimensions which characterise sustainable development. Firstly, many countries (namely developed countries such as the US and UK) commit environmental injustices against other countries through overuse of their natural resources and, secondly, if everyone should have access to a healthy environment, this includes future generations.

A term coined in America, environmental justice has traditionally been confined to the disproportionate impact of pollution sources on poorer communities. However, the term is now being widened to include less tangible aspects of quality of life including community confidence, cohesion and safety, civic pride, empowerment and environmental education.

Opportunity to widen the debate

Environmental justice adds the final piece in the jigsaw of sustainable regeneration and is growing in importance through political recognition and commitment. This therefore provides a timely opportunity to widen the debate on regeneration to ensure that it not only considers the link between economic prosperity and social progress but also that of environmental justice.

This sentiment is echoed in a speech by Jack McConnell, First Minister for Scotland:

> *'In the late 20th century the big political challenge – and the greatest success I believe – for democrats on the left of centre was to develop combined objectives of economic prosperity and social justice. I believe the biggest challenge for the early 21st century is to combine economic progress with social and environmental justice'.*

The next section will discuss in more detail the links between poverty and the environment and the growing significance of environmental justice in achieving sustainable regeneration.

2. Do environmental injustices exist?

The relationship between the quality of the local environment and poverty is complex and manifests itself in a number of ways. A recent report by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Global Environmental Change Programme[8] groups these as:

- *Uneven distribution of environmental impacts*
- *Access to environmental goods*

Uneven distribution of environmental impacts

There is a growing body of evidence to suggest that poorer people live in the worst environments. Friends of the Earth have identified a strong correlation between the location of polluting factories and income. Of the 11,400 tonnes of carcinogenic chemicals emitted into the air from large factories in 1999, 82% were from factories located in the most deprived 20% of local authority wards[9].

If poorer people do live in the worst environments, this may also suggest a racial dimension as 70% of all people from ethnic minorities live in the 88 most deprived local authority districts[10]. Research also shows a statistical bias towards 'hazardous substances consent sites' being located in wards with a higher proportion of ethnic minority populations[11].

Transport-related ill health has also been identified as income-related. Respiratory problems in London are concentrated in the poorest areas and correlate with high traffic levels[12]. Yet, ironically, these poorest areas generally have lowest levels of car ownership - those communities who are less polluting therefore pay the highest price for pollution.

A link has also been identified between road accidents and poverty. Children from Social Class V (poorest) are five times more likely to be knocked down than children in Social Class 1 (wealthiest). The reasons for this may relate to higher volumes of traffic, poor quality urban design or lack of play areas placing those children in close proximity to busy roads[13]. This too reflects a ethnic dimension as Asian children have been shown to be more likely than white children to be injured in road accidents[14].

[8] ESRC Global Environmental Change Programme, 2001 Environmental Justice: Rights and means to a healthy environmental for all. Special Briefing No.7, University of Sussex.

[9] Friends of the Earth, 2001 Pollution and Poverty – Breaking the Link. London FoE.

[10] Social Exclusion Unit, 2001 A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal: National Strategy Action Plan.

[11] Walker, Fairburn and Bickerstaff, 2000 Ethnicity and risk: the characteristics of populations in census wards containing major accident hazard sites in England and Wales. University of Staffordshire.

[12] Stevenson et al, 1999 Examining the inequality and inequity of car ownership and the effects of pollution and health outcomes such as respiratory disease. Epidemiology Vol. 9

[13] Robert I, and Power, C, 1996 Does child injury mortality vary by social class? A comparison of class specific mortality in 1981 and 1991. British Medical Journal, 313 pp. 714-786

[14] DETR, 2001 Road accident involvement of children for ethnic minorities. London HMSO.

Access to environmental goods

The ESRC has defined access to environmental goods as three-fold:

- Physical needs – shelter, food, clean air and water
- Economic needs – transport, infrastructure, shops, work
- Aesthetic needs – mental and spiritual needs, green spaces, access to countryside.

Restricted access to environmental goods has been shown to have a detrimental impact on health, prosperity and quality of life, as illustrated in the following examples:

i) Fuel poverty

There has been a great deal of research into quality of housing stock and levels of health. In particular, fuel poverty has been an area which presents both environmental and social concerns and is strongly related to housing conditions. Fuel poverty – defined as the need to spend more than 10% of income on heating to achieve an adequate level of warmth[15] - is caused by a combination of poorly insulated or inefficiently heated housing and low incomes. Those with the least energy efficient homes face heating costs two or three times higher than those of more affluent households for the same level of comfort[16].

Fuel poverty is estimated to affect 4.5 million households in the UK. It harms the quality of life and health of individuals and households, as well as imposing wider costs on the community. Cold homes increase the likelihood of ill health, such as influenza, heart disease, and strokes, as is the growth of fungi and numbers of house dust mites (linked to asthma). Fuel poverty is also linked to higher levels of winter mortality, and there is an average of over 30,000 unnecessary extra winter deaths per year as a result[17].

ii) Food poverty

Food poverty presents another socio-environmental consequence of poverty. In the UK, it is estimated that 20% of the population suffers from food poverty. This is defined as being unable to afford healthy food, especially where fuel and other basic needs take priority. Food poverty is exacerbated by lack of access to shops selling healthy food, disproportionately affecting poorer communities less able to travel to out-of-town superstores[18]. In addition, low-car communities may have to shop in more expensive local shops.

iii) Access to public spaces

Restricted access to environmental assets such as parks, green spaces and the countryside are also reported to be damaging to mental health and well-being. A recent assessment of public parks in the UK by the Urban Parks Forum[19] concluded that too few parks are considered to be in good condition and that many of the lesser parks are in decline. This report also acknowledged the importance of public parks as true community areas critical to creating sustainable, liveable cities.

Research by the Commission for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) has also found that this problem is not only confined to urban areas, as 'tranquil areas' in the countryside are coming under

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[15] DETR (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions) (2001), UK Fuel Poverty Strategy, Consultation Draft, February as cited in Sustainable Development Commission: Forging an energy policy for sustainable development.
[16] DETR (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions) (2000), The UK Climate Change Programme.

[17] National Statistics, 2000 Mortality Statistics. London. Stationary Office.
[18] DETR, 1998. The impact of large foodstores on market towns and district centres. London. DETR
[19] Urban Parks Forum (2001) Public Parks Assessment. London. DTLR.

increasing pressure, mostly as a result of traffic growth[20].

Indirect impacts

The indirect impacts from these environmental inequalities are clear, although harder to quantify. The psychological effects of a poorly maintained, vandalised, littered or derelict environment can be great, creating fear and insecurity[21]. Environmental injustice compounds the problem of deprived communities, resulting in a spiral of decline through neglect and abandonment. There is a direct link between physical and environmental decay, fear of crime and social breakdown.

In section four, we discuss how some of these inequalities are beginning to be addressed and how improvements to the local environment can provide a catalyst for , rather than be a hindrance to regeneration.

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[20] CPRE, 1999. Traffic, trauma or tranquillity. London. CPRE.
[21] Home Office 1998 Concern about crime – findings from the 1998 British crime survey Research Findings no. 83 Home Office, Home Office 2000.

3. Catching the wave: Growing political commitment

Environmental justice and sustainable regeneration are slowly creeping their ways up the national and international political agendas. They have yet to emerge as firm policy, but political speeches, events and initiatives have signalled a growing wave of interest.

- *'Our commitment to regenerating deprived communities must also take account of the need to address environmental deficits ... For the long term in Scotland, economic progress and environmental justice must go hand in hand too. That is the challenge for the 21ˢᵗ century and this government will take that lead'*
  Jack McConnell, First Minister for Scotland, Feb. 18ᵗʰ 2002[22].

- *'We need stronger local communities and improved quality of life ..... where the environment in which we live fosters rather than alienates a sense of local community and mutual responsibility...For neighbourhood renewal to succeed, individuals have also to take responsibility for the environment they live'.*
  Prime Minister Tony Blair, April 2001[23]

- *Historically, environmental awareness in Britain has not been much of a civil rights matter. Instead it has largely been focused on conservation....but we need to address the broader debate. We need to address the issue of environmental equity'*
  Michael Meacher, Minister for the Environment, January 2002.

- *'A small number of people tend to pay most of the price for production in terms of*

pollution. It is true that access to environmental benefits depends substantially on income'
Sir John Harman, Chairman of the Environment Agency, September 2000.

European human rights legislation

European legislation has been a driving force in raising awareness of environment and social justice issues. Two milestone events have been the Aarhaus Convention and Human Rights Act. The Aarhaus Convention 1998, imposed upon governments a number of obligations regarding access to information, public participation and justice.

Interpreting human rights as inclusive of both social justice and environmental protection, because *'acts leading to environmental degradation may constitute an immediate violation of internationally recognised human rights'*[24], could provide communities with a powerful tool for addressing environmental injustices. However, unless deprived communities have access to the information and resources to challenge existing decisions and structures this legislation will not, in itself, suffice.

Liveability

The UK Government's commitment to improving quality of public spaces, largely through the liveability agenda, also offers scope for including local environmental concerns into regeneration. Speaking at a Groundwork conference in April 2001, the Prime Minister urged communities to come down hard on crime, anti-social behaviour and vandalism. The speech established a number of initiatives including the Street Warden scheme, a further boost to Home Zones (introduced as part of

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[22] Jack McConnell, First Minister for Scotland speaking on the Scottish Executive's environmental policy at Dynamic Earth, Edinburgh, 18 Feb 2002.
[23] PM, Tony Blair speaking at the Groundwork Conference, Croydon April 2001.

[24] Anderson, M. (1996) Human Rights Approaches to Environmental Protection: An overview of human rights approaches to environmental protection. A. Boyle and M. Anderson (eds) Oxford University Press.

Local Transport Plans) and the introduction of 'liveability' as a cross-cutting theme in the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review.

It acknowledged that low-level crime and environmental degradation contribute to the declining quality of life faced most frequently within deprived communities. The Government commitment shows a recognition of how the small aspects of our daily experiences add up to make a bigger picture.

Social exclusion and neighbourhood renewal

The National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal sets out a more integrated approach to regeneration. Focusing on social exclusion, this strategy emphasises the need for joined-up delivery. Whilst strong links have been identified between the social and economic aspects of social exclusion, the link between social and environmental aspects is significantly less clear.

The Social Exclusion Unit is beginning to consider this link, for example its recent study on social exclusion and transport. The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) is now discussing the possibility of a Policy Action Team (PAT) style study, similar to those which prelude the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal into Environment and Poverty (or environmental justice) in deprived neighbourhoods. Referred to as the 'missing PAT', the Commission's own work on poverty and the environment can play an important part in this work.

4. Finding the links and breaking the chains

As section 2 discussed, Britain's poorest communities face environmental as well as social and economic inequalities. In developing successful and sustainable approaches to regenerating these communities, we must therefore find integrated solutions which address all inequalities simultaneously without producing trade-offs.

Indeed, research is beginning to show how social and environmental concerns can be reconciled positively to produce additional benefits. Discussed below are a number of ways in which local programmes can contribute to sustainable regeneration and create mutually reinforcing benefits.

Energy efficiency in construction – fuel poverty

Noted earlier, fuel poverty is a major issue facing poorer communities. Poor energy efficiency in homes is also a major contributor to the UK's carbon dioxide emissions (around 30% of total fuel use)[25]. In light of the Kyoto Protocol targets and expected increases in number of households in the UK, this topic has received much attention, including the creation of a UK Fuel Poverty Strategy (2001).

Under the UK Climate Change Programme (2000) the Government has made a series of further commitments to promote and stimulate energy efficiency in the domestic sector, including:
Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES) - £613 million budget for 2000-2004[26].

- Reduction of VAT on the installation on energy saving materials for all households from 17.5% to 5% from 1 April 2000. This covers the supply and installation of insulation, draught stripping, hot water and central heating system controls and solar panels.
- The Warm Homes and Energy Conservation Act 2000 (England). The Act requires the Secretary of State for England and the National Assembly for Wales "to publish and implement a strategy for reducing fuel poverty and set targets for its implementation".
- The Community Energy programme. A programme promoting community heating through grants to install new schemes and refurbish obsolete infrastructure and equipment; £20m in 2002/03 and £30m in 2003/04[27].

Where a regeneration project involves new build, this should be assessed in terms of the sustainability of construction materials and design. By choosing the correct aspect and materials at design stage you can maximise the solar heat gain, thereby reducing the amount of energy required to heat a building, essential in tackling fuel poverty.

It is also possible to minimise the use of resources by installing low flush toilets, grey water recycling systems and energy efficient boilers.   A number of sustainable housing and construction good practice guides are already available and regeneration programmes should adhere to these, e.g the Scottish Homes/Scottish Natural Heritage guide-book '*Sustainable Housing Design Guide for Scotland*'.[28] Companies may want to consider sourcing as many local materials and tradesmen as possible, which will have benefits to the local economy. For example, the BEDZED development in Sutton source

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[25] DETR (2000, Housing Research Summary, English House Condition Survey 1996, Energy Report (2000).
[26] DETR (2000) Climate Change: The UK Programme. Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, The Stationery Office.

[27] DEFRA Press Release, 26 April 2001, http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/energy/commun en.htm
[28] Stevenson, F & Williams N (2000) *Sustainable Design Guide for Scotland*, The Stationery Office

as many materials locally as possible, although certain materials such as high specification windows and solar panels were not available locally and had to be purchased from abroad.

Community energy generation schemes are also a more efficient way of generating electricity. A number of projects have illustrated the value of using innovative local energy supplies, for example Shettleston Housing Association in Glasgow generated heat from geo-thermal energy from local mining shafts, or the BEDZED Combined Heat and Power plant. Projects should consider what scope there is to generate local energy supplies through innovative design.

Job creation and community re-investment through local environmental action

Several initiatives have identified local employment and community re-investment opportunities through local environmental action. Recycling and waste management programmes provide skills and employment to disadvantaged groups. Local Exchange and Trading Schemes (LETS) provide other forms of community re-investment through trading goods locally through use of credits rather than cash.

These initiatives bring wider benefits than economic prosperity in terms of strengthening social networks and providing services which otherwise would not exist. Some of these initiatives have gone on to become community enterprises, selling reclaimed rubbish such as paper or cans or used recycling furniture back into the community. They are led by the community and can further community re-investment back into the area. If established widely it has been estimated that local recycling schemes could generate 40,000 – 55,000 jobs across the UK[29].

The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit's proposals to employ local residents to become neighbourhood or street wardens is another good example of job creation. In Scotland some of the Social Inclusion Partnerships have also been applying this approach through the New Deal Environmental Task Force.

This type of project can therefore have a four-fold benefit: creating employment opportunities; enabling community re-investment; providing local services; and improving the local environment.

Sustainable regeneration programmes should therefore illustrate that they can create local employment and community re-investment opportunities through local environmental action.

Green Transport Plans & Home Zones

Transport has featured as a key environmental concern of disadvantaged communities in terms of pollution, safety and access to environmental goods. The DTLR has encouraged local authorities to develop Green Transport Plans as part of their Local Transport Plans. These aim to improve public transport services, cycling and walking facilities and links to local employment, leisure facilities and other local services. Their focus is on the poorer connected communities also aims to address social exclusion from services where car ownership is especially low.

The DTLR has also created Home Zones – areas where the living environment predominates over provision for traffic. These show how streets can be used for people rather than just cars. They offer community capacity, local environmental improvements and new public spaces by bringing the community together to determine how to make their urban living more attractive[30].

Similarly in Scotland the Public Transport Fund aims to provide nearly £12 million over three years for

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[29] Murray, R (1999). Creating wealth from waste. London. Demos.

projects that encourage walking, cycling and safer streets.

Improving cycle and walk routes can therefore offer a range of social, economic and environmental benefits and transport concerns should be an integral part of sustainable regeneration.

Creating shared spaces

As discussed in section 2, initiatives which improve or create public spaces bring both environmental and social benefits and are most beneficial to those often excluded from society (e.g. the elderly and young families). They also offer a neutral space for sometimes disparate or even conflicting communities.

The process of improving or creating these spaces can in itself support community cohesion. Organisations such as Groundwork have employed this approach when working in areas of social unrest, such as Bradford and Mount Vernon in Belfast.

Improving the quality of a community's natural environment by creating valuable 'green lungs' in urban areas can also bring far-reaching social, health and economic benefits. The potential of derelict and neglected land can often be harnessed to provide good habitats for wildlife and recreational facilities for people, creating spaces and places rich in local and distinctive identity.

The New Opportunities Fund, one of six National Lottery Funds and accounting for 33% of all National Lottery Funds, provides grants to help communities develop local environmental projects.   This programme aims to support sustainable projects that will improve the quality of life of people throughout the UK; address the needs of those who are most disadvantaged in society; encourage community

participation; and complement relevant local and national strategies. It aims to promote sustainable communities in many ways from encouraging healthy living centres (e.g. supported a £900,000 project for healthy eating in the Gorbals, Glasgow) to promoting local renewable energy projects.

Land use planning and the urban renaissance

The calls for brownfield over greenfield development are supported by strong environmental arguments which the Government accepts: loss of countryside, urban sprawl and increased travel demand etc. Consequently, steps have been taken towards addressing this issue through landuse planning (national brownfield targets, sequential approach to retail etc). However, the link between these environmental arguments and the social costs of sprawl ('flight' of the middle classes, abandonment of the inner-cities, social polarisation and ghettoisation) has been less well addressed.

Greater emphasis must be placed on how the planning system can support sustainable forms of housing development: mixed-uses (combined rental, shared ownership and outright ownership) and mixed-tenure (rental, private ownership, affordable), as well as links with transport and other services including workplaces. Projects, such as the Greenwich Millennium Village, illustrate how these principles can be applied to the practice of creating sustainable communities. However, applying these principles across the board is unlikely to happen overnight.

The housing market and the 'predict and provide' approach to planning have been key drivers for polarisation between rich and poor. The Planning Green Paper[31] provides little guidance on how sustainable communities can be created in the proposed new planning system and fails to

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[30] Biddulph, M (2000) Planning and designing 'home zones', Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

acknowledge how this contributes to the Government's targets on brownfield development or energy consumption.

The focus on process (restructuring the level at which planning decisions are made, improving community involvement and making greater links with other local strategies, namely Community Plans etc) is welcomed. But it fails to illustrate how outcomes such as resource efficiency, environmental protection, social inclusion and job creation could be enhanced under the proposed reform. This lack of connection between process and outcomes is the major shortfall of the Green Paper and needs to be addressed through greater focus on the purpose of planning and the application of national policy guidance, most urgently on Major Infrastructure Projects, business investment and refocusing on urban land opportunities.

Emerging policy developments do offer more hope for the creation of sustainable communities. Policies for a proportion of affordable housing in new housing developments (up to 50% in some areas of London) provide a counter-force to the housing market. But, we also need as strong a lead on restricting greenfield building, thereby creating more demand for inner city land and property around the rest of the UK, as has already happened in London. These policies need to backed up by the right incentive structure and strong political commitment.

The Urban White Paper also lists a series of proposals for encouraging re-investment back into under-utilised urban areas e.g. tax relief for property owners to convert redundant space over shops into flats[32].

Despite the Government's calls for an urban renaissance, large tracts of inner-city areas remain vacant or under-developed and communities remain

divided. More incentives to encourage re-development and re-investment in inner-city areas need to be set in place. The reform of the planning system will be central to achieving this and energy targets in planning need greater consideration. The enforcement of the sequential approach to development (applied so effectively to retail) should be widened for all types of regeneration. New development must also consider how it can create sustainable communities which are socially mixed through creating varied and environmentally sustainable forms of development.

Re-investment vs. re-development

At the same time as the Government is encouraging communities to move back to city living, large proportions of housing stock (largely local authority) are being bulldozed in the inner cities. During the six years to 1997, demolition of local authority housing nearly doubled, with over 40,000 homes demolished. A further 10,000 homes were awaiting demolition at April 2000. Often the housing stock itself was not the problem, but rather the factors that made the place so unpopular: the neglect, vandalism and petty crime[33].

The economic case for such activity is in itself wrong, often costing more to demolish and re-house than provide necessary repairs. The social costs of breakdown and upheaval of communities and the enormous environmental impacts of new development and wasted resources from demolition are not even included in this calculation.

Small scale environmental improvements and investment in infrastructure, including CCTV, can have far longer-lasting positive benefits with lower economic, social and environmental costs. Where these improvements can be community-led (providing local employment, community

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[31] DTLR (2002) Planning: delivering a fundamental change.

[32] DETR (2000) Our towns and cities: the future. Delivering the urban renaissance. London. DETR.

engagement and cohesion) the positive impacts can be even further-reaching and lasting. Where renovation of existing stock takes place it will be important to ensure the same standard of insulation and energy efficient techniques is provided as new build.

Sustainable regeneration projects must therefore consider improvement and renovation of existing development over new development. Repair at a much higher level will be crucial to achieving sustainable regeneration.

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[33] Mapstone, A (2001) Don't pull the plug in Housing. July/August 2001.

5. Delivering the shared agenda – principles for sustainable regeneration

Following the discussion set out in section 4, there would appear to be a number of key criteria or principles which a regeneration project should follow to be sustainable. These have been grouped as 'overarching' principles which apply to all aspects of regeneration, and 'specific' principles which refer to particular features of regeneration programmes, e.g. transport, construction, job creation schemes etc.

Sustainable Regeneration

Overarching

- Combines social and environmental justice with economic progress in such a way as to create mutually reinforcing benefits.
- Responds to the specific environmental concerns of local communities and recognises how the physical environment affects social behaviour.
- Encourages all regeneration activities to have neutral or positive impacts on resource use and natural systems
- Ensures strong community leadership in defining project goals and community ownership over the means of achieving them (e.g. creation of community enterprises).
- Addresses the causes rather than the symptoms of environmental injustices, leading to sustainable outcomes rather than 'quick-fixes' e.g. creating employment opportunities, supporting community cohesion and civic pride and raising environmental awareness and well-being.
- Applies more integrated measures, such as quality of life indicators or sustainability/health impact assessments, to its evaluation process, focusing on outcomes rather than outputs.

Project Specific

- Makes prudent use of resources and incorporates environmental protection in building design and construction (e.g., in the choice of construction materials, local sourcing, and community energy generation schemes).
- Creates local employment and community re-investment opportunities through local environmental action (e.g. recycling, street wardens and community enterprises).
- Enhances access to 'environmental goods' (e.g. health services, food, green spaces) through environmentally sensitive local transport networks.
- Creates public spaces where precedence is given to people rather than cars (e.g., Home Zones)
- Uses the local environment as a focus for strengthening community cohesion, boosting civic pride, and furthering the capacity of communities to help themselves.
- Encourages urban renaissance through building design which makes high density living more attractive, and contributes to creating 'sustainable communities' which are socially diverse, vibrant and self-supporting (e.g., encourages mixed use developments, provides local services and facilities).
- Considers re-investment and repair of housing over demolition and dispersal of communities.
- Ensures effective participation of local environmental and sustainable development groups in regeneration partnerships.

6. Next steps 'Regeneration Uncovered'- barriers and good practice in sustainable regeneration

This vision for sustainable regeneration, combining economic prosperity with social and environmental justice, can provide new tools for delivering sustainable regeneration at neighbourhood level. Local environmental action in itself will not suffice, unless it clearly delivers social and economic benefits such as employment, community re-investment, community cohesion and ownership. Only through this approach can we address the deep-rooted causes of deprivation - unemployment, ill-health, community disorder - of which these environmental concerns are partially symptomatic.

We are now looking at projects to identify good practice to see what is working, as well as what is not working and why.   We are keen to hear about projects which have managed to combine social, economic and environmental goals, and how projects may have incorporated the principles outlined in this paper.

We are also interested in hearing from practitioners who have tried but been unsuccessful in delivering more sustainable forms of regeneration, in order to explore the barriers and identify possible solutions. Based on this work, we aim to put forward a series of recommendations to Government; the Devolved Administrations; Regional Development Agencies; local authorities; developers; and community organisations on how sustainable regeneration could be better achieved

We would therefore like to invite regeneration practitioners to share with us their experiences in implementing sustainable regeneration programmes, demonstrating how barriers can be overcome and how integrated solutions can be delivered.

If you would like to share your experiences with us, contact Janine Wigmore of the SDC secretariat on 020 7944 4150 or janine.wigmore@defra.gsi.gov.uk

![Sustainable Development Commission logo]

Appendix 1 – background on the Sustainable Development Commission

We are the Government's independent advisor on sustainable development issues and report to the Prime Minister and devolved administration leaders. Our mission is to inspire government, the economy and society to embrace sustainable development as the central organising principle.

our work programme

The commission published a two-year forward work programme in April 2001. The work programme comprises five individual projects areas: productivity plus (considering economic growth), climate change, food and farming, regeneration and communicating sustainable development. We also have strategies for working with individual sectors of society – business, central and local government, the English regions and the devolved administrations.

members of the Sustainable Development Commission

Jonathon Porritt (Chairman) Director of Forum for the Future; **Maria Adebowale** Director of Capacity; **Rod Aspinwall** Deputy Chairman of the Enviros Group and Professor of Environmental Management at Cardiff University; **Councillor Maureen Child** Lead Member for Finance, Edinburgh City Council; **Rita Clifton** Chairman of Interbrand; **Lindsey Colbourne** Director of InterAct; **Anna Coote** Director of the Public Health Programme at the King's Fund; **Ed Crooks** Economics Editor, Financial Times; **Valerie Ellis** Assistant General Secretary of Prospect; **Nicky Gavron** Deputy Mayor of London and the Mayor's Advisor on Planning and Spatial Development; **Brian Hanna** President of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health; **Alan Knight** Head of Social Responsibility, Kingfisher; **Walter Menzies** Chief Executive of the Mersey Basin Campaign; **Tim O'Riordan** Professor of Environmental Sciences at the University of East Anglia and Associate Director of the Centre for Social and Economic Research on the Global Environment; **Derek Osborn** Chairman of the Stakeholder Forum for Our Common Future; **Anne Power** Professor of Social Policy at the London School of Economics and Deputy Director of the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion; **Charles Secrett** Executive Director of Friends of the Earth; **Richard Wakeford** Chief Executive of the Countryside Agency; **Graham Wynne** Chief Executive of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds; **Raymond Young** Board member of Forward Scotland, **Jess Worth** Campaigner with People and Planet.

To comment on this report please contact:
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