

Review 2001: headlining sustainable development

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Sustainable
Development Commission



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Review 2001
Headlining Sustainable Development

Jonathon Porritt

The odd thing about sustainable development is that it either means practically nothing to people, or practically everything. Read on, and you'll get a powerful dose of 'practically everything' – including new thinking on regeneration, the democratic deficit, transport, community development, racial equality, sustainable agriculture, the relationship between economic growth and sustainable development, climate change and renewable energy.

All that (and a bit more besides) is what the Sustainable Development Commission is all about. And we have a funny kind of role in this all-encompassing territory. We are a creature of government (in that we exist at the behest of the Prime Minister, and are paid for through your taxes), yet we are independent of government. We have been asked both to advise government – and other key sectors – and to audit their performance. A tricky balancing act, for one can't help but notice that when that audit goes critical, ears tend to go deaf.

We have been in existence for about a year, an amalgamation of the erstwhile Round Table and the Prime Minister's Sustainable Development Panel. The initial idea was that we would be slim and streamlined, but we have ended up with 22 Commissioners, simply to do justice to the cross-sectoral and thematic breadth of sustainable development. Chairing meetings is therefore a bit of a nightmare, but none of us would have it any other way!

Whatever our background, occupation, expertise or lifestyle, we have one thing in common: a passionate determination to see sustainable development embraced as the central organising principle underpinning all our lives. For governments, businesses and private citizens, sustainable development has something to tell us about everything we do, and every decision we take. To demonstrate this point, we have selected six of the major news events of the Commission's first year, and re-presented them through the prism of sustainable development.

Over our first year, the Commission has seen the language of sustainable development – a phrase with five too many syllables to make it onto most newspaper headlines – become more widely used and understood by decision makers in all sectors. But so what? Though this Government is doing more to promote sustainable development than any preceding government, the honest truth is that it is still an add-on for most Ministers – as it is for most companies, most local authorities, most charities, most universities – and most of us! We need to put sustainable development at the heart of things, not leave it on the fringes.

That's our big idea. And at the risk of arrogance, we don't really believe there is any other big idea that gets even remotely close to answering the kind of challenges we're up against today.

Challenges that have become all the more pressing since September 11th. If nothing else, recent events underline the urgency of the need to move towards a more sustainable world. Sustainable development, social justice, and environmental security are all intimately related and all reinforce one another. On the ground, action programmes for sustainable development can be a crucial part of enabling people to break out of the vicious circle of poverty, alienation and despair which are often the breeding ground of fanaticism and terrorism.

It seems hard to believe that the prevailing model of economic globalisation will survive the trauma of September 11th untouched. Globalisation in itself is not the culprit – most development economists have concluded that there is a positive relationship between international trade and economic growth, and that over time economic growth reduces rather than increases poverty. But as the most ardent promoters of the global economy,



America and other OECD countries have systematically overlooked the economic, cultural and human costs of globalisation, 'cherry-picking' the commercial benefits of that economy without accepting enough responsibility for shared social obligations. To enjoy the fruits of globalisation in future, we must ensure that they are produced more sustainably and distributed more equitably. We must buttress that interdependent commonality of interest through strengthened global institutions and international agreements. President Bush's first few months of US-first unilateralism (during which he walked away from no less than six international treaties) sent out a disastrous message that the rest of the world and its laboriously constructed international agreements counted for nothing to the most powerful nation on earth.

America needs the rest of the world; the rest of the world needs America. The most powerful players in the global economy must become the most generous, the most tolerant, the most compassionate players in the global village that underpins that economy. Wendell Berry (one of the wisest voices in America today) has already started to sign-post some of the changes that this will entail:

"What leads to peace is not violence, but peaceableness, which is not passivity, but an alert, informed, practised, and active state of being. It is wrong to suppose that we can exploit and impoverish the poorer countries, while arming them and instructing them in the newest means of war, and then reasonably expect them to be peaceable. What we need is a new global economy, one that is founded on thrift and care, on saving and conserving, not on excess and waste. An economy based on waste is inherently and hopelessly violent, and war is its inevitable by-product. We need a peaceable economy."

Or a sustainable economy, as we would call it. And all eyes are now on the World Summit on Sustainable Development (taking place in Johannesburg in September 2002) as the place where the ground rules for a genuinely inclusive, equitable and sustainable global economy can be put in place.

Closer to home, we'll have our work cut out with an extremely ambitious programme over the next year or so – you can check out the summary of that programme [here](#). I hope people will increasingly look to the Commission to help provide two things: authoritative guidance on the kind of challenges addressed in each of the following chapters, and some inspirational leadership on how to breathe life into the rather abstract, academic notion of sustainable development.

That's certainly a big challenge for me personally. It was commendably bold of this Government to set up a genuinely independent Commission – with a genuinely independent Chairman! – knowing full well that the role of 'critical friend' will inevitably entail some uncomfortable reminders of just how much there is still to do. But all of us on the Commission are at least as interested in the opportunity end of sustainable development – joining up bits of government that remain obstinately disconnected, improving economic performance through a proper understanding of the business case for sustainable development, and securing real and lasting improvements in people's quality of life. In short, inspiring sustainable development in government, the economy and society.

Jonathon Porritt

Chairman, Sustainable Development Commission, November 2001

"Whatever our background, occupation, expertise or lifestyle, we have one thing in common: a passionate determination to see sustainable development embraced as the central organising principle underpinning all our lives."

Jonathon Porritt
Chairman



Turn Me On Then I'll Turn Out

Brian from Big Brother should be delighted. More votes were cast for him and his fellow housemates than were cast to decide who speaks for the United Kingdom in the European Union^[1].

Perhaps even more sobering is the fact that in the 2001 general election four out of every ten potential voters simply stayed at home^[2]. Their votes went uncast and their voices unheard. A historical low point but positively healthy compared to the turnout for the 1999 European elections (23.1 per cent) or the local elections of the same year (32.0 per cent)^[3].

People everywhere need to be engaged, empowered and inspired if we are to have any chance of achieving sustainable development. We need civic engagement and a true dialogue between the electors and their representatives; this is the only way to discover and follow the path of sustainable development and so improve everyone's quality of life. A switched on electorate is particularly important because sustainable development demands decisions that may be unpopular in the short term, witness the fuel crisis. Government needs a clued up public to support decisions that may disadvantage some now for the benefit of all in the future – a tricky balancing act.

The trouble is, recent voting trends suggest we may be headed in the opposite direction. People increasingly distrust politicians. So does voting still matter?

Yes it does. Voting is still the main way in which government receives a mandate on, and is held accountable for, the delivery of its vision for a better future. When government feels it does not have a clear mandate, it may lose its political will to lead and challenge the electorate, and possibly become less willing to listen to it. Testing opinion and 'business as usual' stand in place of creative debate. But in our fast-moving, complex and interactive world representative democracy by itself no longer cuts it when it comes to communications between government and the people. For democracy to deliver on its potential, citizens need to be able to flex their muscles more than once every five years. We need new forms of governance, in partnership with business and with citizens at the centre, if our political system is to deliver a sustainable future.

When people have responsibility for taking life-shaping decisions, not only are they more than capable of rising to this challenge, our Commissioners' work shows that they will make decisions which are sustainable. We believe that, especially for decisions at local level, government must adopt even more adventurous forms of participation, enabling citizens not only to inform and shape policy, but also to take the lead in the sustainable transformation of their local areas.

There are inspiring examples of breakthroughs achieved when seemingly diverse and opposing views are brought together to share the responsibility of finding the best way forward. These forms of 'stakeholder dialogue' are becoming more and more common. Such breakthroughs cannot be achieved through mechanisms that simply rely on majority vote, confrontational debate or the recommendation of 'experts'. Case study 1, involving a Commissioner, describes a major success story in creatively bringing citizens and their elected representatives into agreement.

Perhaps the greatest unlocked potential is at local government level. Local government is now required to ensure the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of its citizens through a variety of means^[4]. Some involve partnerships of public, private and voluntary sectors. Some involve special public service agreements to ensure better value delivery against agreed targets. Others are specific arrangements for citizen involvement.

These are promising process proposals. But sustainable development is not yet guaranteed. There is no requirement to define sustainability targets which would be a good place to start; only a few local authorities such as Clackmannanshire undertake sustainability appraisals of policies or grant aid schemes. Most importantly, from a



governance point of view, there is a shortage of the skills required to conduct a genuine participatory dialogue with all those who look for better livelihoods, for security, for health and for prosperity.

For this reason, the new schemes for community strategies and local strategic partnerships risk falling short of their potential, although it's still early days. Issues such as energy conservation, renewables, sustainable transport, waste reduction and recycling and support for local food producers are all ones which are likely to engage people and we welcome this. The beginnings are there, and with strong local political leadership, and a genuine engagement with empowered communities, local government that delivers sustainability could come one step closer to reality.

We have a vision of a future democratic process that does away with the point-scoring and adversarial debating which has already turned off so many citizens. Effective partnerships at all levels of government need a culture of consensus to succeed and partners on all sides need to strive for trust and openness in order to take quality decisions, and actions. They also require more resources to be placed directly in the hands of responsible communities themselves, in the form of grant aid for initiated schemes, and access to appropriate expertise. This is our vision of shared power.

Whether they vote or not, people should feel a part of the efforts to make sustainable development a reality. And we know that the potential is already out there. Whilst voting levels may suggest we have lost our interest in a collective future and are fast becoming apathetic and alienated, other forms of engagement appear to be thriving.

The National Centre for Volunteering has found that 22 million adults in the UK are engaged in some form of voluntary activity^[5]. Voluntary groups, local campaigns and non-governmental organisations retain the power to attract interest and support from all sections of the community. Case study 2 is an example of a project that seeks to capitalise on the scope for transformation in local governance in order to achieve sustainability more effectively and justly.

Genuine partnerships and engagement are at the heart of sustainable development. The Sustainable Development Commission views the disengagement and disillusion of the general public as a significant obstacle to be overcome. We must reinvent our democratic process, engage people in visioning their own futures, and organise governance so as to ensure the responsible sharing of power. We need to make mainstream the best ways of debating and communicating about the decisions that affect us. Transparency in government, effective public participation, joint responsibility, and democratic accountability are four vital pillars of a cohesive society and a better quality of life.

Case Study 1: The Tale of Two Cities

Three years ago, two neighbouring city authorities faced the identical challenge of designing and implementing new parking schemes on the streets just outside the central area 'controlled parking zone'. Authority A decided the issue was so controversial that public involvement should be kept to a minimum. Instead they appointed consultants to come up with a solution to the problem. They then distributed a leaflet to all households, inviting them to comment on the consultants' proposals. The public reaction was immediate, vigorous and almost wholly negative. Emergency public meetings were held, new protest groups formed, a judicial review was considered by some residents, and the engineers' department was flooded with letters and complaints (too many to answer). The protest was such that three years later no scheme has been put in place, and the problem is just getting worse.

Authority B decided to involve the public and key stakeholder groups in finding the best way to resolve the problem. My colleague Jeff Bishop and I were asked to work with the council to design and run a series of consultations and dialogues at the earliest stage in the development of proposals. As a result, a series of carefully structured and inter-



linked workshops were held, engaging 1,000 people directly in deliberating and discussing what action should be taken. The resulting consensus meant that Authority B took just 10 months to get from consultation to implementation. They had enjoyed the full understanding and support of the public and all other parties.

Lindsey Colbourne

Director of Projects in Partnership

Case Study 2: The Yarmouth-Lowestoft Project

I am involved in an analysis of how to visualise and organise a viable sustainable future for Yarmouth and Lowestoft in East Anglia. Both these towns experience crime and poverty. Both have their fair share of disadvantaged people, young, old, migratory and disabled. Both have drug cultures, crime, and active community networks. Both are experiencing economic decline in engineering, North Sea oil and gas, and fishing. Both have active city councils with fine leaders anxious to make sustainability work. Our study will create a partnership between academic, public sector, regulatory, and private sector initiatives and a range of local groups and young people to see how these two settlements can become sustainable. Together we will look at the current state of partnerships for energy, waste, housing, transport, health and regeneration to see how far they meet the tests of sustainability. Together we will work towards a vision of sustainable delivery in a manner that involves the schools, civic organisations, young people, and the elected politicians. Together we will assess the current programmes of governmental politics and possible initiatives, including income from the European Union, to discover ways of making these funds work more strongly for sustainable development. And together we will create a community of souls who wish to shape their destiny so they have peace, wealth, security and companionship, whilst making the planet a little more viable in their neighbourhoods.

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

"Stakeholder groups make an increasingly important input to intergovernmental meetings. UNED Forum exists in order to help ensure a proper role for stakeholders of all kinds in international processes. We provide briefings and analyses of issues, and arrange dialogues between stakeholders and with governments."

Derek Osborn
Chairman of UNED Forum

1: <http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk> 16 million votes cast throughout the second series of Big Brother; source: Channel 4 Commercial Development

2: <http://www.electoralcommission.gov.uk/about-us/opinion2001election.cfm> Among non-voters, one in six (15 per cent) claimed they were not registered to vote, a figure rising to 29 per cent of 18-24 year old non-voters and 27 per cent of blacks (although in the case of the latter this is based on a small base size). However, it is instructive that only 6 per cent of non-voters spontaneously gave non-registration as a reason for non-voting

3: Local Government Association May 2001 The only way is up – increasing turnout in local government elections LGA

4: Local Government Act 2000

5: Davis, Smith J, 1998 The 1997 national survey of volunteering National Centre for Volunteering

Divided We Fall

It's summer 2001; there are burning cars and broken windows on the streets of Bradford and Oldham. Racial violence and social unrest have brought chaos and disorder. Rioting has provided a stark reminder that we have yet to create an inclusive and united society.

The riots were not isolated incidents. Tensions, fear and discrimination climaxed in a wave of race-related incidents which powerfully highlighted the divisions and injustice which stand in the way of sustainable development. They showed decisively that a gulf stands between the prosperous and the impoverished which must be bridged^[6].

In many ways the divisions are old news. Twenty years ago Lord Scarman prepared a report on the Brixton riots, concluding that "racial disadvantage is a fact of current British life. It was, I am equally sure, a significant factor in the causation of the Brixton disorders."

From inner city estates to rural towns and villages the prosperity felt by most during recent years has passed a large minority of people by. There are clear social trends which follow hard on the heels of deprivation, including poorer health and lower educational attainment. Many inequalities are environmental, with bad housing conditions and a polluted, degraded environment simply adding to the problems communities need to resolve.

Solutions must be found. While there was an immediate economic impact from the summer riots, with the damages in Bradford alone estimated at £25 million, the longer-term economic, social and environmental costs are far more disturbing. Some analyses show that while certain ethnic minorities may have achieved success in social and economic terms, there are widening gaps elsewhere, with other communities lagging behind in healthcare, housing and employment conditions^[7].

The multiple solutions required lie in sustainable development, in integrating environmental justice, social inclusion and greater prosperity. Sustainable development can deliver new opportunities, new hope and real equality for all citizens.

Recent thinking on neighbourhood renewal and social inclusion has focused on social issues and economic disadvantage. But we also need to tackle the many environmental inequalities which must be addressed if these communities are to see real

improvements in their quality of life. We need a greater understanding of the need for 'environmental' as well as 'social' justice. People need a clean environment and they need equal protection from environmental harm or discrimination regardless of their race, income or class. Some environmental impacts, such as pollution, are already recognised as issues for sustainable development. But others, such as disrepair, vandalism, litter or dereliction also impact on the quality of life for the community concerned,^[8] creating fear and insecurity.^[9] This gives a greater urgency to our task.

Environmental injustice compounds the problems of deprived communities. Industrial sites, for example, are more likely to be located in areas of low income. Fifteen per cent of ethnic minority households live in overcrowded conditions compared to just 10 per cent of white households. One third of Pakistani and Bangladeshi families live in unfit private sector properties compared with just six per cent of white families. A worrying 70 per cent of ethnic minorities live in the 10 per cent most deprived neighbourhoods^[10].

A poor environment is strongly linked to social or economic decline both as a cause and a symptom. The Groundwork Trust has recently identified a link between derelict land and buildings and higher crime figures. As conditions deteriorate those who can get out do so and the concentration of economically excluded people increases still further as neighbourhoods see better off (and often white) families move out. This 'white flight', or at least the flight of the wealthier households, makes communities tougher to regenerate and increases urban sprawl. The widening gap in quality of life is shown



across an array of deprivation measures. Health conditions worsen in deprived communities: Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities are one and a half times more likely to suffer ill health; infant mortality is 100 per cent higher in African-Caribbean and Pakistani communities.

Over 80 per cent of Pakistani and Bangladeshi people and 40 per cent of African-Caribbean and Indian people live in households that have incomes of less than half the national average. The average employment rate for minority ethnic communities in Britain is 55 per cent, compared with 75 per cent among white people^[11].

These trends are then exacerbated by the unscrupulous: estate agents and property companies are said to be actively playing on racial fears to increase property sales,^[12] as noted in research undertaken by one of our Commissioners, Anne Power.

Good regeneration programmes fuse the environmental and social with the economic, bringing new life to deprived areas.

Bringing people together through holistic and integrated regeneration really works.

Mixed income neighbourhoods thrive in their diversity and can see a better distribution of wealth and more viable local facilities as a result. This was emphasised by the Prime Minister at a conference staged by Groundwork on 'Building Liveable Communities': "A local community which is vibrant and successful, where people want to live, is a community where there will be more jobs, where there will be less crime, where people will feel more secure."

The Government is increasingly behind a sustainable approach to regenerating communities and ensuring social inclusion. The National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, which aims to improve conditions in the 88 most deprived communities, calls on local authorities to pay attention to the needs of minorities. It makes a start at recognising that environmental equality is needed in tandem with social inclusion in order to address the intricate nature of deprivation. The Race Relations Act 2000 places race relations at the heart of local services like housing, healthcare and policing. Lord Roger's Urban Taskforce report highlights the importance of mixed income communities and the need to integrate affordable 'social' housing into revitalised urban neighbourhoods within compact cities^[13].

But cultural as well as political changes are needed. Local people must be empowered and directly involved in regeneration as highlighted in our first chapter. Planning authorities through to the real estate sector must change their practices. Education is a priority, recognised in Bradford where the proposed Centre for Diversity, Learning and Living would aim to promote equality and fair treatment across all public services and employers. A cross-sector network is building throughout the UK to support environmental quality initiatives, such as the UK Environmental Justice Network. Community projects increasingly target environmental as well as social problems, linking the two together.

Violent scenes of fractured communities dominated our news bulletins in summer 2001. To stop this happening again, radical changes and shifts in behaviour are needed. We must work on the ground to improve environmental conditions so that low income communities become more popular, more mixed and more attractive for all social groups. This way we can break down the barriers of segregation that threaten our social cohesion. Attractive regenerated urban and rural communities make people feel they have a stake in society worth defending. We cannot guarantee an end to unrest and division, but these actions will bring us far closer to an inclusive and more sustainable society.

Case Study 3: The Belfast Gasworks Regeneration Project

Following the closure of Belfast's town gas industry in 1987 Belfast City Council was left with a 25 acre inner-city site suffering from the legacy of 150 years of gas production. We faced the challenge of what to do with a derelict site characterised by:



- a location as a sectarian interface between the two main Northern Ireland traditions – Unionist and Nationalist – both suffering high levels of unemployment and social need
- a high level of environmental contamination including the most polluted river in the United Kingdom (the Blackstaff) running through the site
- a number of derelict, but listed, Victorian buildings.

The Council recognised, however, that the site presented a number of opportunities as:

- the largest vacant development site in central Belfast
- a key location between the city centre and the River Lagan
- a potentially important part of the Laganside Waterfront regeneration initiative
- a source of employment opportunities for both inner-city communities, with the potential to improve community relations
- an opportunity for significant inward investment.

A master plan was produced for the site and a £10 million clean-up supported by European Union funding was carried out. Major infrastructural improvements were initiated including the culverting of the Blackstaff river and the public realm on the site was designed and landscaped to the highest standards.

Great progress has been made to realise the vision of the master plan and the private sector has responded very positively to the development opportunities.

The flagship business is a Halifax Building Society Call Centre which opened earlier this year and a number of other private businesses, including Venture International, are now also up and running.

Around 2000 jobs will be created (a conservative estimate) and local inner-city communities can take them up via 'The Gasworks Local Employment Initiative'.

The regeneration of the Belfast Gasworks clearly embraces the principles of sustainable development and is beginning to deliver a better quality of life to a number of inner-city communities which have suffered a high degree of deprivation and marginalisation for many years.

The Council has won a number of awards for the Gasworks Site regeneration project including a European Best Practice Award and the RICS National Building Award for Regeneration (1998).

Brian Hanna

Chief Executive and Town Clerk of Belfast City Council

Case Study 4: Planning and Sustainable Development

Planning is a central means of delivering sustainable development. But to do so it must be transformed from a narrowly conceived, regulatory and opaque process to one which is vision-led, integrated and democratic.

Transformation is taking place at a London-wide level. New accountable London government is producing the prototype for regional spatial development strategies in the shape of the new London Plan. The Plan is vision-led and integrated and rolls forward on a huge scale the principles of sustainability explicitly set out in the GLA's unique Act. Inherently holistic, the Plan offers integrated solutions to tackling London's tough issues, making linkages between population and economic growth, affordable housing need, transport and energy and natural resource efficiency. Our approach reverses the strategy of the post war planners who exported people and jobs to another generation of new towns on greenfield sites in the South East. Instead we are creating a more



compact city, linking development closely to an improved and extended framework of public transport across London.

So, what sort of development? Quality, high density, mixed use and mixed housing tenure development. In the longer term that means more balanced communities, a reduction in energy requirements not least through better public transport, and revitalised town centres.

However, this kind of planning at the regional level needs to be mirrored by a similar approach at the local authority and neighbourhood level.

As a politician, I believe sustainable development is predicated on levels of participation that we haven't seen before. It's even more fundamental than involving stakeholders in the process of shaping their neighbourhoods. It's about renegotiating our relationship with citizens as individuals and within communities. In this context planning is a way of realising a much wider agenda.

Nicky Gavron

Deputy Mayor of London and the Mayor's Advisor on Planning and Spatial Development

Case Study 5: The Bradford Action Plan

Bradford is a divided city, rocked by violent disorders over the summer. Council housing is being demolished through lack of demand. Yet Asian families say they want to move to social housing. Younger Asian families often want to move out of the tight and crowded inner neighbourhoods where they are heavily concentrated. This is particularly true of younger women. Even though many council estates have empty homes, few Asian families get offered council accommodation. Meanwhile, there is serious overcrowding and housing shortage within the old Victorian terraced areas of the inner city, that house predominantly Asian communities.

Bradford is pioneering an attempt to tackle deep-seated community problems. It may help other cities and towns face up to and begin to overcome deep racial divides. In our consultation with 150 representatives of Bradford's many communities, we tried to identify the main problems and barriers to access. We then devised an action plan based on people's experiences. The City Council agreed to tackle the racial problems in the city. We also asked participants for their views on generally improving the image and condition of the city.

Front-line housing staff, residents, and caretakers are keen to change conditions and break down barriers. They are very directly affected by the problems and see the potential for action to tackle them. People of all races expressed strong dislike and fear of the current situation. There is a sense of crisis over the current violence and potential for even greater disasters. There is a leadership vacuum that urgently needs to be filled.

The Action Plan has specific tasks, timescales and named implementers for:

- tackling estate conditions
- marketing and advertising all available lettings across all communities
- breaking down barriers, particularly between children and young people – schools are key
- restoring inner city neighbourhoods to attract more people back
- carrying through city centre plans to create shared public spaces and amenities as Belfast is doing
- reducing youth disorder by greatly increasing visible street policing alongside involving young people in plans
- improving race relations by having multi-racial, cross cultural events, projects and staff teams.



Anne Power

**Professor of Social Policy at the London School of Economics and Deputy
Director of the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion**

"I find it difficult to understand why environmental equality isn't at the heart of UK sustainable development policy. To me, that's like trying to bake a cake without flour. As one of the wealthiest countries in the world, it's shameful that we don't have an infrastructure to support joined up thinking on poverty, environment and economic development."

Maria Adebawale
Director of Capacity

6: Neighbourhood Renewal Unit 2000 A new commitment to neighbourhood renewal:

National Strategy Action Plan Cabinet Office

7: Social Exclusion Unit 2000 Minority ethnic issues in social exclusion and neighbourhood renewal Cabinet Office

8: Social Exclusion Unit 1998 Bringing Britain together: national strategy for neighbourhood renewal Cabinet Office

9: Home Office 1998 Concern about crime – findings from the 1998 British crime survey Research findings no 83 Home Office; Home Office 2000 Recorded crime statistics in England and Wales Oct 1998 – Sept 1999 issue 1/00 Jan 2000 Home Office

10: Social Exclusion Unit 2000 Minority ethnic issues in social exclusion and neighbourhood renewal Cabinet Office

11: Ibid

12: Ratcliffe, P et al 2001 Breaking down the barriers: improving Asian access to social rented housing; (Power, A Action Plan) Chartered Institute of Housing

13: Rogers, R and Power, A 2000 Cities for a small country Faber and Faber Ltd



Business@boo.m&bust

What happens if you mix two glamorous entrepreneurs, a spark of an idea and £80 million? The answer is Boo.com, a company which came to symbolise the excesses and short-sightedness of boom-busting internet start-ups.

At one point during its fabulous but brief existence the online sportswear retailer was burning through £20 million of venture capital a month. In May 2000 it crashed, Britain's first high-profile tech casualty.

Flawed business models and weak management are only part of the story; Boo's collapse offers a stark and powerful testimony to sustainable and unsustainable approaches to business growth as we enter troubled economic times.

Boo's demise is symptomatic of the often short term approach of business, which offers no help for the long term challenges of sustainable development. Boo poured financial capital away at a phenomenal rate; on a global scale our wider economy is doing something remarkably similar with the natural capital we have inherited from earlier generations.

Early warnings that we are pushing up against the planet's ability to provide us with the materials and 'services' we need for our ever-expanding economy, which included The Club of Rome's 'The Limits to Growth' report of 1972, have been criticised for exaggeration. But a common calculation has it that, through burning up, burying or flushing away, we have used up 30 per cent of the earth's natural capital since 1970^[14]. This is natural capital that business depends upon for its raw materials, and that all of us need to survive.

This is not just a matter for the environmentalists. The destruction of natural capital is bad for business, and in the long term bad for economic growth and for everyone's standard of living.

Natural capital represents big money. A study by Robert Costanza of the University of Maryland placed a figure of around US\$33 trillion per year on the services the planet provides us with in the form of water supply, climate regulation, soil formation, waste treatment, food production and recreation. This isn't too far from the World Bank's calculation of the entire global income of US\$31 trillion^[15].

So is economic growth inherently bad for us? No. The volume of world trade now stands at 12 times what it was in 1945. Prosperity has enriched billions of lives, often dramatically. More people have more opportunities than ever before; in many parts of the world poverty, disease and early death have been greatly reduced.

The problem is that dramatic increases in the world's overall level of economic activity and material wellbeing have failed to solve some of our worst environmental and social problems, particularly chronic poverty in many developing countries. In some cases – such as global warming – economic growth has made the problems worse.

Successive waves of activists – most recently the anti-globalisation protesters at Seattle, Prague, Gothenburg and Genoa – have argued that this proves that sustainability and the pursuit of economic growth are totally incompatible.

Conventional wisdom, as reflected in policies at all levels, is that growth is good. The UK Government's own objectives for sustainable development marry high and stable levels of economic growth and employment to social progress, environmental protection and the prudent use of natural resources.

The truth is, economic growth can deliver sustainable development, but only if it is the right kind of economic growth. Or put another way, growth by itself is not enough.

Economic activities need to become more efficient in their use of our natural capital and less polluting and the benefits from economic growth should be shared across the whole of society, and across the whole world. This sounds like a simple proposition because it is a simple proposition. The complexities exist in making it a reality. We need to revisit the sustainability goals the Government has set and identify how they will be



met. Real momentum needs to be generated behind the shift towards sustainable growth.

The role of businesses in working towards sustainable development excites much and often heated debate. There are those who cannot conceive of a private business with anything other than cash on the corporate agenda: "It's about profits, not the planet" they would say^[16]. Others, particularly from within business itself, see the private sector as a vital part of the partnership which can deliver sustainable development.

Productivity and sustainable development can be mutually reinforcing objectives. Business is a powerful force in society and if socially responsible can see its brands enhanced. According to major players like the World Business Council for Sustainable Development^[17] smart and successful companies reap financial rewards from eco-efficiency and social concern as they refocus on a 'triple bottom line' approach.

Social responsibility, environmental concern and a dialogue with stakeholders and not just shareholders are signs of good business in the 21st century. In its response to the recent review of Company Law the Sustainable Development Commission has called for the reporting of social and environmental performance to become mandatory for businesses. Trade associations and sectoral bodies are also waking up to the agenda and we are working with the DTI-sponsored Pioneers Group to develop best practice guidelines for sectoral sustainable development strategies.

Ironically, it is these sorts of innovations which are driving many successful enterprises and not the over-hyped opportunities offered by the Boo.coms of this world; they are proof that business and sustainable development are not mutually exclusive. The promises of innovation, new technology development, competitiveness and efficiency are all pushing in the same direction as sustainable development and socially responsible business. As Charlie Leadbeater, the new economy guru, forcefully points out: "There may be a new way forward for the economy and the environment; a way forward in which innovation can feed competitiveness, environmental efficiency and, ultimately, sustainability."^[18]

Highlighting innovation and technology, Leadbeater points to the potential for green consumer clubs on the internet, allowing ethical consumers to pool their buying power and make an impact; the increasing virtualisation of some products, like films and music, which could reduce resource use and transport needs; and new forms of corporate accountability via the web through online, open stakeholder dialogue programmes.

Innovation and economic growth are powerful drivers for our modern society, and sharing knowledge and ideas is a certain route to enhancing our collective, long-term sustainable development. Our natural capital is there to be treasured, as is the social capital represented by our people and their skills and abilities. The businesses that marry together their economic, social and environmental concerns into one strategy for competitive success stand to outperform and leave standing any who still cling to the idea that delivering profits to shareholders is enough. There is a new way of thinking about business taking shape, one which the Sustainable Development Commission will help build on and turn into reality.

Case Study 6: FTSE4Good

FTSE4Good, set up by a joint venture between the Financial Times and the London Stock Exchange, is an attempt to highlight businesses that take seriously their responsibilities to people and to the environment.

Opinion polls show that three quarters of people would like their savings to be used for socially responsible investment – so long as they get equally good returns. History suggests that companies which do look out for their staff, their local communities and their environmental impact perform no worse than companies which do not.



The prospect of inclusion in the FTSE4Good index gives companies an incentive to meet higher standards of environmental sustainability, relations with stakeholders such as employees and suppliers, and respect for human rights. In September 2001, 37 more companies including Tesco, Bovis Homes and Carphone Warehouse were added to the index – showing the world that they had reached these higher standards. But there are potentially some big problems with these socially responsible investment rules. Do we really want to leave it to businesses to decide what are the best social and environmental policies?

Whatever their subsidiary objectives may be, the primary objective of all companies is to make profits. If they do not do that, then they go out of business.

The balance between making money, protecting the environment and looking after individual rights affects all of us. We should all be able to take some responsibility for the big decisions – and that means not leaving it all to business.

Ed Crooks

Economics Editor, Financial Times

Case Study 7: Brands Can Change the World

You know, it can be very frustrating to read reports about 'brand-bashing'. New brand launches, corporate identities and communication campaigns are constantly lampooned – even by the more sophisticated media who should understand the real social and economic benefits of branding by now. Brands constitute the ultimate accountable institution; it's a nonsense to say that a brand can be 'too big'. If a brand is behaving well, living up to its promises and delivering on all its social responsibilities, then it deserves to gain customer loyalty, and grow. If it doesn't live up to its reputation, it'll decline. And, er...that's it.

Behaving well is absolutely about behaving in a sustainable way – whether a company makes marketing capital out of it, or just does it quietly as basic good corporate practice. For those who accuse companies of getting on a 'social responsibility bandwagon', well, frankly, who cares, providing it's rolling in the right direction? I think it's important to try to look at the contribution of business in a 'glass half full' way. At the end of the day if the world needs changing, and business runs the world, well, business has a crucial role. And the way business connects with its audiences is through brands. So I don't feel at all embarrassed to say that brands have the power to change the world. Frankly, the world has got some big problems, and with the right encouragement, transnational big business could make an extraordinarily positive contribution.

Rita Clifton

Chief Executive of Interbrand

Case Study 8: The Role of Business

I believe that sustainable development's vision of reconciled economic growth, social progress and environmental protection will be rendered impossible if we fail to harness the resources of business. Equally, intelligent business practice has always been responsive to the changing needs of society, re-inventing itself to secure its position as markets change. Sustainable development demands an integrative approach which creates high levels of complexity within the business environment. My work and that of my company, Enviro, is to help companies, governments and their agencies, and local authorities to re-interpret their functions, systems, processes, products and services through the lens of sustainable development. Whilst the task is huge, I must say that recent experience permits me to feel cautiously optimistic.

Perhaps what gives me the most hope is my eight years' experience of teaching and mentoring senior business and government executives on the Prince of Wales'



Business and the Environment Programme at Cambridge. Delegates are baptised in every aspect of this subject during an intensive week and the resulting level of literacy and personal commitment shown by virtually every delegate is profound. Even more compelling is the growing evidence demonstrating how many of these delegates have been powerful influencers within their leading organisations.

The nine year track record of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development is considerable but principally engages leaders in large corporations. However, given that 99 per cent of the UK's 3.7 million businesses are small and medium enterprises who employ 55 per cent of the working population, they are a crucial audience. An extremely important piece of Enviros' work over the last two years has been the development of a pilot version of a powerful internet tool 'NetRegs' (<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/netregs>). The site's primary focus is environmental and regulatory, providing free environmental compliance information and practical, sector-specific advice; in addition it introduces and explains connections with sustainability concepts. This pilot has been so successful that the Environment Agency has been awarded £3.5 million from the Treasury Capital Modernisation Fund to develop the tool.

In Wales, which leads the world with an Assembly Sustainable Development Scheme and an attendant Cabinet Committee chaired by the First Minister, I am involved with another new and exciting development. The Economic and Social Research Council has funded a new international centre at Cardiff University for Business Relationships, Accountability, Sustainability and Society (BRASS). Check it out at: <http://www.brass.cf.ac.uk>.

Rod Aspinwall

Deputy Chairman of the Enviros Group and Professor of Environmental Management at Cardiff University

"By understanding the power of the various stakeholders who shape the supply chain we will achieve my vision: global supply chains that benefit every link."

Dr Alan Knight
Head of Social Responsibility, Kingfisher

"Ethical consumers in financial services are showing that consumers can exercise real muscle and bring about radical change in the way in which companies deliver goods and services. Technology should give consumers greater ability to shape the market, but they must be both informed and engaged if they are to wield that power in the interests of sustainable development."

Deirdre Hutton
Chairman of the National Consumer Council

14: Loh, J (ed) 1998 Living planet report WWF – World Wide Fund for Nature

15: Total GNI 2000 Atlas method; Source: The World Bank Group

<http://www.worldbank.org>

16: Wolf, M 16 May 2001 Sleep-walking with the enemy Financial Times

17: Source: <http://www.wbcds.org>



Sustainable
Development Commission

18: Leadbeater, C 2000 Mind over matter: greening the new economy Green Alliance/Digital Futures



The End of the Track

It was an ignoble end. With debts of more than £5 billion but a market value of less than £1.5 billion, Railtrack was finally wound up in October 2001.

It had been at the heart of controversy and chaos for some time. Rail improvements had been slow in coming and were costing far more than had been budgeted for. Train operators were incandescent over broken promises and passenger delays. The media were scathing.

The seeds for Railtrack's demise had been sown by the Hatfield rail crash, a tragedy for passengers and their families which had knock on effects for the entire railway system. Emergency safety checks made routes inoperable and speed restrictions brought trains to an infuriating crawl.

People left the rail system in droves. Before Hatfield there were 2.7 million journeys made across the network each day but by January this had fallen to 2.3 million, a drop of 15 per cent. Though passenger numbers have now recovered, the search is still on for a system which meets the needs of travellers and encourages people out of their cars and onto more sustainable modes of transport.

A better transport system is vital to our sustainable development. Transport underpins our economy and offers us travel experiences which can enrich our lives. It can enhance social contact, take people to jobs or into education. Sustainable development without user-friendly transport is unthinkable. But at the moment, the UK's transport system is failing to deliver, instead blighting UK citizens with negative social, environmental and economic impacts.

First in the dock is the ever upward trend in road traffic. Locally this means poor air quality, congestion and a blight on many neighbourhoods. Globally, in terms of the UK's contribution to global warming, transport is the only sector where greenhouse gas emissions are set to increase.

But it is not just about the environment. Private car use carries a social cost, too. As more people use their cars, public transport systems become less attractive to the private sector companies who are expected to run them. Non-car users lose their access to services, and communities where car ownership is low are left stranded; almost one third of all households have no car, and these tend to be amongst the lowest income groups^[19].

So is the unfettered growth of road traffic the price we have to pay for economic growth? Hardly. Ever upward growth means unmanageable congestion, and congestion hampers efficiency; according to the Confederation of British Industry the percentage of trunk roads suffering from congestion is set to increase over the next 15 years from 14 to 26 per cent of roads affected^[20].

The Government's new Ten Year Plan for Transport tries to tackle this. To tackle car use, the plan aims to deliver a 50 per cent increase in passenger rail over the next ten years. Problems solved? Sadly not. The net impact of the new investments will only succeed in bringing the rate of growth in road traffic down to 1.6 per cent per year against the 2.0 per cent rate which stood before the plan.

Advocates of a more sustainable transport system are not anti-car. The reality is more complex than that. Alternatives to the car in rural regions or parts of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland can be hard to find and car use is often an essential part of daily life.

The Sustainable Development Commission is not anti-car, it is against the over-use of cars. For many journeys there are perfectly good alternatives. Between 1997 and 1999, cars were used for 62 per cent of trips between one and two miles^[21]. Walking and cycling are viable alternatives for these journeys if planners and policy makers – criticised in June 2001 by the Transport Select Committee of the House of Commons, for not paying enough attention to walkers and cyclists – take the priority away from the car.



Research by Sustrans^[22] has shown that segregated, well maintained cycle lanes can reverse the current decline in cycle use. In Denmark eighteen per cent of journeys are by bike^[23] compared to two per cent here in the UK. Walking and cycling offer social benefits such as health improvements, they bring economic benefits through reduced congestion and of course they benefit the environment. And they make some jobs like street policing easier to do.

Local delivery is the key to transport improvements. One welcome new development is Local Transport Plans which allow local authorities to move beyond the promotion of individual schemes and to develop five year plans covering all modes of urban and rural transport, linking them together. Planners have a major part to play too. One long standing failing of the planning system is the inability to grasp that public transport thrives financially where there are higher density populations and that low density building makes new public transport routes non-viable.

Better planning can also reduce the need to travel. People want access to the shops and the GP, not the travelling they have to do to get there. Better planning, new technologies, and other innovations such as online shopping and NHS Direct, offer new ways to provide these services without forcing people into cars.

Better planning needs to be reinforced by fairer pricing. Car drivers don't pay the full cost of their motoring in terms of the road improvement, infrastructure, noise, climate change, pollution and health costs associated with road traffic. We need to make sure that the prices faced by people reflect fairly the circumstances in which they are travelling, and the choices that are available to them.

Road pricing initiatives are often written off as politically impossible but a survey by the Commission for Integrated Transport (CFIT) found that the public supports congestion charging if the funds raised are used for making significant improvements in local public transport (54 per cent support, 30 per cent oppose)^[24]. CFIT research suggests that, for every one per cent rise in fuel prices, 0.18 per cent is knocked off traffic growth – congestion charging may have a bigger impact.

Such economic measures bring with them public acceptability and equity issues. They can have disproportionate effects on the poor, who often already bear the brunt of local environmental degradation such as congestion. If such schemes are to be put into place, they need to be structured in such a way that they do not hit low income or vulnerable groups unfairly.

Efficient and accessible transport systems lie at the heart of a successful economy. We may have almost reached the end of the road on car expansion and for the UK our economically, socially and environmentally damaging system is a major concern. The true costs of road transport need to be reflected in the prices paid for it, without hitting the poor or those in need and without damaging business. The public desire to see these funds recycled to public transport provides new possibilities. The planning system needs to deliver integrated solutions with better provision for walking and cycling. Without a sustainable transport system the truth is, we're going nowhere.

Case Study 9: The Hastings Bypasses

The decision to reject the Hastings bypasses is a prime example of sustainable development in practice.

The decision integrated environmental, economic and social priorities. The Minister did not accept, as bypass supporters argued, that the roads would attract new business into the town and stimulate regeneration. Stephen Byers rightly agreed that ruining three nationally important nature reserves (SSSIs) and an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty could not be justified. Instead he approved a £100 million regeneration package based on upgrading regional rail and other public transport links, building a university campus and developing Hastings as a digital communications technology centre as the most effective way of promoting prosperity and jobs in the area.



The reduced climate and health-threatening pollution, conserved countryside and low impact, high tech developments will also create a higher quality of life for present and future generations, and residents and visitors alike.

It took 15 years of campaigning to reach this conclusion. That says something about the tortuous workings of development planning. But the political process was a triumph for a range of community groups, and organisations like Friends of the Earth, Transport 2000 and Council for the Protection of Rural England, who thoroughly researched the anti-road case and its alternatives. The Hastings Alliance led the way, in council and regional planning meetings, in stimulating media coverage and national interest, and in mustering wider public and professional support for the sustainable options. As Agenda 21 emphasises in every chapter, sustainable development is predicated on participatory democracy and direct community involvement in decision-making. Point taken.

Charles Secrett

Director of Friends of the Earth

Case Study 10: Problems from Perth

Getting people out of their cars and onto good public transport is not all about expensive capital investment. Good information can help us make the transition. I live close to Perth – a Scottish crossroads town of 45,000 people – some 45 miles north of Edinburgh, and 55 miles from Glasgow. There is an hourly train service to Glasgow. Works well. But the line to Edinburgh was closed under the Beeching cuts. And the infrequent train service (8/day) takes nearly one and a half hours against the less than one hour drive to the city centre. But Edinburgh can be very congested – probably the worst place in Scotland. Particularly if you are from the north and have to cross the Forth Road Bridge.

If you want to be sustainable what do you do? Drive to the railhead next to the bridge and take the train? OK if you are there early (before 08.00) so that you can get a parking space.

However, you could take the new Ferrytoll Park & Ride bus service. As you come down the motorway towards the bridge the traffic information overhead signs tell you that there are parking places available. But you have no idea when the next bus leaves, or where it is going. So what do you do? Drive on, put up with the congestion, and increase the amount of pollution. Could the overhead signs give more useful information that might get you out of your car – like when the next bus leaves? And should a timetable be issued to households in the Perth area? Might that encourage them to try it?

Raymond Young

Board member of Forward Scotland; a member of the Scottish Welfare to Work Advisory Task Force and Chair of the Environment Task Force in Scotland

"Health and autonomy are the two most basic human needs, shared by all. To meet these needs, everyone should have a right to a secure income, decent housing, high quality and appropriate public services, strong social networks, a safe environment and freedom to make key decisions for themselves. This is what regeneration must aim to achieve – and why it is an essential ingredient of sustainable development."

Anna Coote

Director of the Public Health Programme at the King's Fund



19: Source: Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions 25 July 2001 News Release CAB 144/01

20: Source: Confederation of British Industry 1998/99 Transport Brief

21: Source: Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) March 2001 Transport Statistics Personal Travel Factsheet DETR

22: Source: Sustrans 16 July 2001 Press Release

23: Gehl, J 1996 City quality the Copenhagen way 1962-1996 Paper for Car Free Cities conference, Copenhagen 6th-7th May 1996

24: Source: Commission for Integrated Transport July 2001 MORI/14336



The Real Cost of Food

The culling, the cleaning up and the compensation cost us dear. The total bill for the crisis this year, with almost four million animals slaughtered and then cremated or buried, will be between £2.4 and £4.1 billion – up to £70 for every person in the UK. The shock waves were felt beyond farming, with many businesses closing and jobs lost – the impact on tourism in England could be over £2 billion this year^[25].

With dramatic economic, social and environmental impacts, foot and mouth has forced us to face facts: modern farming is inherently unsustainable and needs to change, radically.

Our recent report [A Vision for Sustainable Agriculture](#) sets the objectives that farming must meet in order to be sustainable^[26]. This is achievable, though it will mean some major shifts in the way we farm, process and purchase our food. Farming affects our landscapes, our health, our global environment and our culture and heritage. Getting farming right is an essential part of achieving sustainable development in the UK.

In economic terms UK agriculture is proving to be a real drain on resources. Last year our farmers received almost £2.5 billion in direct subsidies but only generated an income of £1.8 billion^[27]. Most of the European Union's subsidies under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) are linked directly or indirectly to production, meaning that they actually encourage the intensive forms of farming that can lead to serious environmental and animal welfare problems.

The first steps towards sustainability have been taken in reforms to the CAP, in particular the Rural Development Regulation, designed to enhance the environment, encourage training and bring about diversification in the rural economy. Unfortunately these new and more sustainable measures still only account for a mere five per cent of subsidies. If we are to make real progress, we need fundamental reform of the CAP; this can only be achieved with the help of our partner nations in Europe.

Working with other nations will be key to making farming more sustainable. We cannot expect our farmers to abide by regulations that are much tougher than those of other nations, as this would turn many consumers to cheaper imports produced to lower standards. As well as putting UK farmers out of business, this would consume more energy and simply move negative environmental and social impacts to other countries. So how can our farmers ever compete against cheaper global competition without subsidies?

Even with current assistance, many are not making enough money to survive. Before foot and mouth disease struck, average farm incomes were down to their lowest level ever recorded, less than £10,000 per year^[28].

One route towards more competitive agriculture in the UK will be to produce more specialised, high quality goods. High environmental standards and distinctive, local flavours offer new opportunities. Another way to bring more income back into farming would be to increase the farmer's cut of the final selling price paid by the consumer. Last year we spent £55 billion on food^[29], yet farmers received just £13 billion of this (excluding subsidies and before costs)^[30]. Even a small increase would make a difference.

Promoting local food may be part of the solution, as shown by the recent success of farmers' markets which enable farmers to win retail value for their products and hear direct what consumers want. Selling food locally can boost rural economies and give an all-important boost to farmers' incomes. One recent study found that purchasing vegetables through a box scheme generates twice as much money for the local economy as buying the same produce in a supermarket^[31].

Such initiatives are, of course, a far cry from the industrial scale enterprises we think of when we consider modern farming. It may be that a profitable future for UK farming includes an ever-growing less intensive sector. That farming should have a future is not in doubt – it has a role to play in the cultures and the landscapes of our rural areas, and



food produced here means fewer greenhouse gas emissions from long distance transport. It is also vital for the many jobs in the food industry sector which would go overseas if the raw materials were not produced in the UK.

Rural landscapes and cultures have to be conserved and protected. From hedges and stone walls to wildlife habitats and forests, farming has a major impact on the natural environment and can be a force for protection or for disruption. Responsible, sustainable farming can enhance the countryside, play a more active role in the local economy and encourage other rural sectors like tourism.

That more responsible face of farming is hard to find in the figures surrounding UK biodiversity. The decline in plant and animal life on and around farms is causing serious concern: numbers of farmland birds, for example, have declined significantly since the late 1970s^[32]. This has been linked to modern intensive farming, including use of pesticides, more intensive cropping and destruction of habitats.

One sure-fire way to reduce pesticide impacts is to turn to organic farming. Sales of organic food are increasing year on year. However, increasingly large amounts of organic food – 75 per cent last year – are imported into the UK^[33]. This results in more emissions of greenhouse gases from long distance transport, and also means UK farmers are missing out on a potential market.

Other aspects of modern food production are not getting such a good press. Salmon farming is in the frame in Scotland, with accusations over pollution incidents, release of alien species and links to shellfish poisoning and algal blooms leading to a call by the Scottish Parliament for a full scale investigation into the impacts of salmon farming. This has so far been resisted by the Scottish Executive, although the Executive is now developing a long term sustainable strategy for aquaculture. We await its publication with eagerness.

From collapsing global fisheries to local farms struggling to get through the present crisis, from calls for better animal welfare to the desire for more organic or local food, farming in the UK, Europe and the rest of the world has to change and become more sustainable. CAP reform is a step in the right direction, but only highlights the need for fundamental reforms on the part of European farm and environment Ministers. Their goal must be higher environmental and social standards – through financial support for farmers delivering the broader benefits the public wants from farming; through better regulation and accreditation schemes; and following this, from the public choosing wisely from a range of well-labelled products.

There is a revolution waiting to happen in food – from farm to table – and it must be sustainable.

Case Study 11: Eastbrook Farm Initiatives

My interest in organic farming became a passion when I started doing it for real at Eastbrook Farm in 1986. It seemed to me then, as now, that organic husbandry is the most elegant solution to most of the problems facing agriculture today, and entirely in tune with the thinking public's concerns and aspirations for food, health and the environment. But, as a tenant farmer with no other means of financial support, it had to be commercially viable. So we began marketing beef, lamb and pork directly to an unsuspecting public in 1988.

Livestock are crucial to organic farming systems and yet there was no infrastructure or developed market for organic meat products; we had to go it alone. After many trials and tribulations we managed to sell all our organic meat, but I felt it was essential to make life a bit simpler for other potential organic farmers facing similar obstacles.

To cut a (very) long story short, we developed two businesses: Eastbrook Farms Organic Meat (EFOM) which sells all-organic meat and meat products to the public and the catering trade; and Eastbrook Farms Organic Pigs (EFOP), a joint venture with Associated British Nutrition.



EFOP aims to be the model farming business. We are committed to the highest organic and welfare standards which are audited quarterly on all the farms we work with. To give farmers the confidence to convert their pigs to organic (a particularly expensive exercise) we provide long term price contracts. We believe in strength through co-operation; everyone in the supply chain must be able to make a fair living without having to cut corners in order to remain solvent. Ultimately, this can only work if the public recognises our aims and backs us through purchasing our products. Because we believe that people want to know the real story behind their food, we have invested heavily in branding our own products (quick plug – 'Helen Browning's Totally Organic' available at Sainsbury's!) and working with other brands, particularly Duchy Originals and Organix.

We have a great team of people whose characters are reflected in our branding: quirky, unconventional and humourous. A bunch of dedicated individuals trying to do the right thing by our animals, our countryside, our community and our customers, but having a laugh along the way.

Helen Browning
Chairman of the Soil Association

Case Study 12: Why Do I Think People Can 'Eat The View'?

There is a (no doubt) apocryphal story of a city dweller on holiday in the Peak District who stopped to chat with a local farmer. The holidaymaker commented that the farmer was extremely lucky to live in such beautiful surroundings, to which the farmer responded gloomily about his struggle to win a living from the land: "Indeed we're lucky, but unfortunately you can't eat the view."

This set me thinking – in fact you can eat a view; what's more, if we care about the countryside, we must eat the view.

Most wonderful landscapes are the product of many years of farming. By buying the products of that farming we can all do our part to sustain our beautiful scenery. Perhaps every Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty should have its own 'appellation contrôlée'? And if we don't eat the distinctive products of our stunning landscapes, how can we expect farmers to continue managing the land? Farmers don't deliberately grow what they can't sell. Poor sales will drive farmers into other crops or even out of business altogether; the scenery then won't be managed in the way people have come to appreciate.

Land in each part of the country is also different and is farmed in different ways, producing different things. This gives us a wealth of variety in our food. Whether you buy it from a supermarket or a farmers' market, buying local produce means you not only eat the view, but also get to taste it.

For more information about this particularly enjoyable form of sustainable consumption visit: <http://www.eat-the-view.org.uk>.

Richard Wakeford
Chief Executive of the Countryside Agency

"Current agriculture policy fails everyone – the farmer, the consumer and the taxpayer. To achieve sustainable farming we need rapid change in policy coupled with action at grass roots level."

Graham Wynne
Chief Executive of the Royal Society for the
Protection of Birds



25: Countryside Agency 2001 Foot and mouth disease: the state of the countryside report <http://www.countryside.gov.uk>

26: <http://www.sd-commission.gov.uk/pubs/food2001/index.htm>

27: Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries 2000 table 6.1
http://www.defra.gov.uk/esq/m_overview.htm

28: Total income from farming (TIFF) per whole time person equivalent. TIFF represents business profits plus income to farmers, partners and directors

29: National Statistics 2001 Consumer trends booklet – Quarter 1 2001 data Office of National Statistics

30: Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries 2000 Agriculture in the UK table 6.1 MAFF

31: Source: New Economics Foundation 7th August 2001 Press Release
<http://www.neweconomics.org>

32: Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions 1999 Quality of life counts p42 DETR

33: Source: Soil Association 2000 The organic food and farming report 2000 p22 Soil Association



Floodgates Open on an Uncertain Future

Stranded senior citizens are waiting for harried fire services to lift them from the flood waters. Whole towns are cut off. Ten thousand homes and businesses are under water. Inflatable boats are making their uncertain way down unrecognisable high streets. Eleven thousand people have been forced from their homes.

That was the year 2000 and we had just witnessed the wettest autumn for 270 years. And floods in October 2001 confirm that last year wasn't a one-off. We can see what life will be like as our climate changes.

It is a case of reap what you sow. During the latter half of the 20th century our releases of carbon dioxide (CO₂) grew at twice the rate of population growth. Most of this was through the burning of fossil fuels, the rest through changes in the way we use our land; uprooted forests and disturbed soils and bogs release about a third of all global emissions. Experts estimate that the level of CO₂ in the atmosphere may be at its highest level for at least 20,000 years.

We have taken our climate into uncharted territory and now we face one of the greatest challenges to ever confront humankind: we must select the climate of the future, ensuring that it supports all life on earth. We somehow have to reverse the trend towards ever greater levels of greenhouse gas emissions and we need to deal with the fact that the CO₂ we've already released will lead, inevitably, to changes in the climate this century and beyond. If we want the ideal test case for sustainable development in action, this is it.

A harsh economic case exists for taking the effects of climate change seriously. The estimates for the costs of the autumn 2000 floods are over £1 billion^[34]. Insurance claims from private firms alone reached £300 million. Motorways and rail services were severely affected. Divers had to be sent down to check if bridge foundations were still safe.

Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott described the floods as a "wake up call" for climate change^[35], stressing that they would return to hit us again and that preparations should be made for defending ourselves. The risks are real and the exposure is great: 1.8 million homes and 130,000 commercial properties lie on flood plains, as well as 1.3 million hectares of agricultural land. And yet we are still building on green field land at an incredible pace, spreading homes and roads over land that needs to drain to prevent further floods.

Flooding is just one of the problems we will be forced to confront. The 1990s was the warmest decade of the warmest century of the last millennium. Sea level is now up by 20cm on 1900 and there have been more intense and extreme weather events.

According to the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases have "contributed substantially to global warming in the last 50 years."^[36]

The prognosis for the future? The IPCC projections estimate that global average temperatures will rise in the region of 1.4 to 5.8 degrees by 2100, a greater temperature range than anything experienced in the last 250,000 years. Where we fall within that range will be largely the result of our choices and actions. More local estimates, courtesy of the UK Climate Impacts Programme, suggest that a hot August like 1997 (currently a one in fifty year event) may become a one in three year event by 2050, while sea level will rise by up to 67cm. Rainfall will be up dramatically in the winter across the UK, but down in the summer, especially in the south^[3725].

"If there is an issue that threatens global disaster it is the changes in our atmosphere."^[38] Not the words of an activist or a headline hungry pundit; this is Tony Blair describing climate change, an issue on which his Government has played an important and praiseworthy leadership role, securing international agreement on mechanisms for CO₂ emission reductions. The outstanding exception is the USA and it



can only be hoped that, in an era of new global pressures, President Bush will join the rest of the world in ratifying the Kyoto Protocol and cutting US carbon emissions. Getting our emissions down will be tough. Kyoto commits signatories to reducing emissions by a few percentage points but our own Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution has called for at least 60 per cent cuts by 2050, far beyond the current agreements.

However, there are many ways to reduce emissions. Carbon trading, the Climate Change Levy, the new Carbon Trust and the Government's review of energy policy are major initiatives which fuse the environmental with the economic and social and could be deployed to enable a low carbon economy to evolve.

Renewable energy targets have been set by the Government. Innovation and investment in new technologies can help us develop new skills, new industries and new jobs as we turn from fossil fuels to wind, solar, hydrogen fuel cell and biomass power sources, and creative neighbourhood energy schemes. All these initiatives will help us stabilise our climate. However, in 'Forging an energy policy for sustainable development', our submission to the Performance and Innovation Unit's Energy Policy Review, we concluded that much more needs to be done to level the playing field for these innovations. If the Government acts there's more good news: vastly improving energy efficiency measures to reduce the energy we use in conjunction with the innovations outlined above will provide us with all the energy we need without having to reopen the thorny issue of nuclear power. Although it still leaves us with the biggest culprit, road traffic, which contributes around 25 per cent of our carbon emissions. Unfortunately proposals for wind farms and road traffic reduction strike against the realities of voter power. Too few citizens have the income or opportunity to be sufficiently concerned about their personal contribution to climate change, and governments are reluctant to curb their electors' enthusiasm for cheap travel and goods. We need to show people the futures facing us and explain why it is necessary to stimulate prosperity through alternative fuels and energy savings. Only an informed, concerned and connected electorate can contemplate the massive culture switch required for climate stabilisation. The Commission will assist in undertaking this endeavour.

Even if carbon emissions are controlled, the CO₂ already out there will warm our planet for decades to come. The impacts of climate change will hit home and we need to adapt our cities and towns, our homes and businesses, our landscapes and natural areas for a wetter, warmer and far stormier future.

Everyone will be affected. There will be fewer cold-related deaths but some increase in heat-related deaths. Food poisoning may increase and we may even see cases of malaria. As always, planners and builders have key roles in siting and erecting more resilient buildings with better energy efficiency, served by modernised sewer networks that replace our desperately antiquated current system. Entire industry sectors such as agriculture and insurance will be transformed. And that's not to mention the profound impact on biodiversity; already our warm autumn has seen birds nesting 3 months early.

Within these frameworks and scenarios, the Sustainable Development Commission will explore the economic and technological characteristics, social outlooks and governing styles of a low-carbon or perhaps no-carbon future. We will audit the Government's national trajectory to the Kyoto agreement each year and support others' efforts to tackle climate change at regional and local levels. The challenges of climate change will move ever closer to the heart of global political debate; we will contribute by exploring the nature of the huge societal transformations required over the next 25 years for sustainable climate patterns to be attained.



Case Study 13: Smart Development

Smart development means planning, designing and constructing our built environment so that it's ready for the future. Anything we build now – from sewers to cities – will experience a very different climate from today's. Cold weather problems will decline but risks of fire, subsidence, floods, sea surges and coastal erosion are already increasing. And we have too many substandard older properties such as the 17 per cent of homes in England with mould on the walls.

In May 2001, Sustainability Northwest – with partners including the Commission – held the UK's first Smart Development conference on climate change and the built environment. The issues are huge, the numbers are staggering and the stakes are high. But some of the solutions are obvious – avoiding building a projected 340,000 new homes in flood plains over the next twenty years and putting a million more people at risk would be a start! Regenerating brownfield sites and reducing transport dependency would help. Energy efficient and more sustainable building design would make a difference. More sustainable regeneration programmes would contribute.

And putting a sweater on in the winter and taking your jacket off in the summer will not undermine the economy! Smart development means smart professionals, government and business thinking longer term, in other words: sustainable development.

Walter Menzies

Chief Executive of Sustainability Northwest

"We don't need to find a new way to develop societies; those whose leaders embrace the law and personal freedom and promote health and education have the best chance of being economically prosperous. However, what we do need to find is solutions for the major negative consequences of this approach, such as resource misuse and social exclusion."

Chris Gibson-Smith
Chairman of National Air Traffic Services

"In all areas of activity, we live and learn one simple lesson: we cannot live today as if there were no tomorrow."

Cllr Maureen Child
Lead Member for Finance, Edinburgh City
Council

34: £1.3 billion of which £0.86 bn is for private homes and £0.44 bn is for commercial properties Source: Association of British Insurers

35: Source 'Panorama' programme 19 November 2000 BBC

36: Source: <http://www.ipcc.ch>

37: Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions 2000 Climate Change, the UK programme, p133

38: Prime Minister's speech of 24 October 2000 to the Confederation of British Industry/Green Alliance conference on the environment



Our Work Programme 2001-2003

It is vital that sustainable development moves from rhetoric to reality and we are working with policy makers, business leaders and others to achieve this in practice, not just in theory. In April 2001 we published a two-year forward work programme. The work programme comprises five individual project areas and strategies for working with individual sectors of society.

Climate Change

Climate change is probably the single biggest environmental issue facing the UK today. The floods of 2000-1 have already given us a taste of the sort of impacts it might cause. Climate change is therefore a key area for us to address and we will undertake annual audits of the UK's policies and practices for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We have published a [submission](#) to the Government's energy policy review.

As time and resources permit, we are looking at how ambitious cuts in carbon emissions can be achieved at the level of a region, a city, a town, a village, an institution and perhaps a household.

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Productivity Plus

UK economic policies are focused on delivering higher levels of economic growth and improving labour productivity. These are important goals. But, pursued exclusively, they can produce (and have produced) outcomes that are socially and environmentally damaging. Sustainable development is about improving the quality of economic growth, not just the quantity, improving the productivity with which we use resources and ensuring that we all share the benefits.

We are exploring, through this project, the relationship between conventionally-measured economic growth and sustainable human welfare. We are considering how the goals of economic growth, social progress and environmental protection can be reconciled with one another and what this will look like in practice.

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Food and Farming

In October we released '[A vision for sustainable agriculture](#)' in order to inform the Government-led review of farming and food policy. The report outlines seven objectives that we believe farming should meet in order to attain sustainability.

We are now developing an appraisal tool to test agricultural policies against sustainability criteria. By the end of 2001 we will have released a sustainability assessment of a range of different policy proposals for agriculture.

In the longer term, we intend to undertake more detailed projects on the environmental and social impacts of food production and consumption, and also on the relationship between agriculture and land use.

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Regeneration

Regeneration work explicitly brings together economic, environmental and social considerations and is a major plank of government policy, attracting high levels of funding from both the UK and the EU. This strand of our work seeks to ensure that regeneration programmes are implemented in a sustainable way.

The programme has begun with a desk study of regeneration practice to date, and consideration of which groups are working directly on the implementation of the policies in the Urban and Rural White Papers. Building on this, we will carry out an assessment of how regeneration programmes are helping to promote sustainable development, as a basis for engaging with key organisations in the public, private and third sectors.

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Communicating Sustainable Development

Bringing sustainable development to life and demonstrating the exciting opportunities it presents to decision makers in all sectors is a key part of our mission.

We are convening a forum of communications professionals from all sectors to establish best practice and to explore new ways of getting the message across. We will also form partnerships with other organisations and individuals to support them in their communications work.

We are committed to ensuring that our own work is communicated in a way that is persuasive, inspiring and engaging.

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Sectoral Strategies

We also have a range of programmes working with individual sectors of society. With business, for example, we are supporting the development of a new generation of sectoral sustainability strategies, through our involvement in the 'Pioneers Group', a DTI-led initiative. We are working with a range of bodies in the English regions to ensure that sustainable development is at the very heart of regional strategies, programmes and projects. And we are working to build sustainable development capacity in a range of regional organisations. We are also engaged with other key players in central and local government, and are developing links with institutions in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

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Further Information

Turn Me On Then I'll Turn Out

- The National Centre for Volunteering – <http://www.volunteering.org.uk/>
- The Yarmouth-Lowestoft Project – <http://www.uea.ac.uk/env/cserge/>
- The Electoral Commission – <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/>
- UNED Forum – <http://www.unedforum.org/>

Divided We Fall

- Neighbourhood Renewal Unit – <http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk>
- The Groundwork Trust – <http://www.groundwork.org.uk/>
- UK Environmental Justice Network – info@capacity.org.uk
- Belfast City Council Gasworks Development – <http://www.development.belfastcity.gov.uk>
- Bradford Council Race Review – <http://www.racereview.org.uk/>
- Office of the Deputy Prime Minister – http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_control/documents/contentservertemplate/odpm_index.hcst?n=3010&l=1
- The Scottish Executive - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/about/ERADEN/SCU/00017108/home.aspx>

Business@boo.m&bust

- World Wide Fund for Nature – <http://www.wwf.org.uk/>
- FTSE4Good – <http://www.ftse.com/ftse4good>
- World Business Council for Sustainable Development – <http://www.wbcsd.ch/>

The End of the Track

- Commission for Integrated Transport – <http://www.cfit.gov.uk/>
- Sustrans – <http://www.sustrans.org.uk/>
- Friends of the Earth – <http://www.foe.co.uk/>
- Department for Transport: ten year plan for transport – http://www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft_control/documents/contentservertemplate/dft_index.hcst?n=7882&l=1



The Real Cost of Food

- The Countryside Agency – <http://www.countryside.gov.uk/farming/>
- European Commission – http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/index_en.htm
- National Farmers' Union – <http://www.nfu.org.uk>
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds – <http://www.rspb.org.uk/rspb.asp>
- The Soil Association – <http://www.soilassociation.org/>

Government Departments:

- http://www.defra.gov.uk/esg/m_overview.htm
- <http://www.wales.gov.uk/subiagriculture/index.htm>
- <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/whatwedo.asp>
- <http://www.dardni.gov.uk/>

Floodgates Open on an Uncertain Future

- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – <http://www.ipcc.ch/>
- Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution – <http://www.rcep.org.uk/>
- UK Climate Impact Programme – <http://www.ukcip.org.uk/>
- PIU Energy Policy Review – <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/su/energy/1.html>

Government Departments:

- <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/climatechange/index.htm>
- <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/climatechange/>
- <http://www.wales.gov.uk/subienvironment/index.htm>

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However, the views expressed are those of the Sustainable Development Commission.