

SD Stakeholder News

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Welcome to the SD Stakeholder Group Newsletter

Sustainable Development Strategy

After a detailed consultation on the draft Sustainable Development Strategy, we are moving closer to publication of a final document. I'd like to thank everyone who took the time to participate, whether through personal attendance at meetings or by sending in written responses. The level of interest was good, with 57 written responses received, and 12 meetings taking place at venues across Northern Ireland, although in some cases, attendance was a little lower than we would have liked.

The feedback we received has proven useful, and we intend address the major issues arising as we finalise the document. One issue that was raised across the board, and which I would like to address, was the absence of targets in the Strategy. I can understand people's concerns about this, but throughout the consultation period, we endeavoured to assure people that we never intended that the Strategy should contain explicit targets, but rather, it would be a broad framework of intent. This approach, has, to some degree placed pressure on us to produce an Implementation Plan which provides a number of *SMART* targets – both within and beyond Government – which are strong on detail, challenging in terms of ambition and clear in terms of accountability. This will not be easy, but it is our intention to try.

Personally, I have had many conversations with colleagues and counterparts that have led to the conclusion that a Strategy and accompanying Plan, working as two halves of a single process, as explained above, does have the potential to effect lasting and meaningful change.

In terms of next steps, we are hoping to provide our Ministers with first sight of the final Strategy before the middle of March, before discussing this at OFMDFM Committee level and ultimately at the Executive table. We intend to publish the Strategy as soon as possible thereafter. All of the actions described are necessary steps to secure high level buy-in, and to ensure that the Strategy can act as an imperative for change in terms of progressing sustainable development here.

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Youth Awards for Environment and Sustainability

The Executive is to recognise achievement by people in the field of sustainability and the environment through a major event in October.

All of us in the sustainability community have encountered inspiring and wonderfully effective projects and people delivering real benefits on the ground – and the Executive, in fulfilment of its leadership role in this area has decided that it is high time that such work was celebrated.

In particular, we wish to reward the efforts of young people, who have the greatest stake in seeing Northern Ireland transformed into a sustainable society.

The Sustainable Development Unit, in partnership with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, will therefore stage an awards ceremony at the Waterfront Hall on 6 October 2010, to spotlight the some of the best work by young people here.

A variety of categories will recognise achievement in community transformation, partnership, environment, education, and, importantly, in enterprise and innovation.

A media launch is planned this month for the awards – I would encourage all of you to spread the word to potential candidates, to ensure those who are supporting the transformation to sustainability get due recognition.

John Bradley



SDC Commissioner Appointment

OFMDFM Ministers are presently considering the outcomes of a competitive appointments process with a view to the selection of a Northern Ireland Commissioner and Vice-Chair to serve on the Sustainable Development Commission. A number of highly suitable candidates were identified during the process, reflecting the wealth of experience in sustainable development practice available across the private and third sectors.

This final stage in the process for filling the vacancy comes as a number of major strategic level initiatives, including the Strategy itself, the Implementation Plan and the Programme for Government are at critical stages of their development, and so our new Commissioner will come into office with a full in-tray awaiting them.

Additionally, the new Commissioner will undoubtedly wish to shape and direct the forward work of the Commission to address their strategic priorities. An opportunity exists to do this in part through the agreement of a memorandum of understanding between the SDC and government in Northern Ireland. It can be anticipated with some confidence that this will be an early priority for the incoming Commissioner who will have, I am sure, all our best wishes for success.

John Bradley

Implementation Plan Steering Group



Last week saw a significant step forward in our work to produce a Sustainable Development Implementation Plan to support the forthcoming Sustainable Development Strategy.

The new Sustainable Development Strategy contains a commitment to *“invite representation from the social, economic and environmental sectors to ensure a balance of interests in the development and consultation phases of our new Implementation Plan.”*

The 26 February saw the first meeting of the recently formed Implementation Plan Steering Group, which draws its membership from a range of organisations from across the social, economic and environmental sectors. Significantly, Junior Ministers Kelly and Newton have agreed to co-chair the group, and this is a clear sign of the importance that they place on the work of the group and its potential to contribute towards shaping the sustainability agenda in the future.

The Strategy also commits to *“create a collaborative mechanism which brings together representatives of each of these sectors, with the common purpose of progressing our sustainable development ambitions.”*

I would encourage you to open channels of communication with Steering Group members as fully as possible in order that your views and opinions are heard. I should point out that, as with the Sustainable Development Strategy, we will be holding a full public consultation on the Implementation Plan in due course which will provide an opportunity for everyone to become fully involved.

As you would expect, the first meeting dealt with a number of procedural matters, including the agreement of Terms of Reference and the appointment of Heather Whitney from the Sustainable Development Unit as Communications Manager for the project. More importantly, the model around which the Implementation Plan will be developed was agreed, and members were then asked to spend the next two or

three weeks considering ways in which involvement beyond central Government could be maximised.

This is crucial work, because unlike the previous Implementation Plan, we are trying to focus the efforts of stakeholders from outside government on ‘delivery’ as well as ‘development’. This is an important change in emphasis for us, and I acknowledge that this lays a new burden of expectation on stakeholders. There are many things we need to do to bring sustainable development centre stage, and involving businesses, organisations and individuals in the delivery of objectives, sends a clear message that if we are to succeed in our ambitions of embedding sustainability thinking into everyday actions, then we need to do as much as possible to ensure *Everyone’s Involved*.

Sustainable Development Implementation Plan (SDIP) Steering Group

Membership

Junior Minister Newton, OFMDFM, Joint Chair
Junior Minister Kelly, OFMDFM, Joint Chair
Olive Hill, Invest NI
Philip Irwin, DFP, representing NICS Sustainable Development Champions
Jim Kitchen, SDC
Seamus McAleavey, NICVA
Anne-Marie McDevitt, RSPB
John French, The Consumer Council
John McMullan, Bryson Charitable Group
John O’Farrell, ICTU
Geoff Smith, Carbon Trust
Nigel Smyth, CBI

The Group will operate in a project board capacity to assure

- a high level forum for discussion on implementing our Sustainable Development Priorities
- advice on planning and content of materials produced
- a channel of communication between the project team and stakeholders
- a high level profile in the wider community

The Steering Group is advisory with no statutory powers and it is anticipated that it will only be operational over a limited time span, subject to review by OFMDFM. Membership of the Group is voluntary and without remuneration.

It is anticipated that the Steering Group can be supported, if necessary, by Working Groups, convened and chaired by Steering Group members. Sustainable Development Unit, OFMDFM will manage the project on behalf of the Department.

Everyone's Involved

Draft sustainable development strategy for consultation



participants were asked to answer a number of specific questions both at meetings and when downloading the Draft Strategy from the website. These questions sought views on issues such as the Strategy's High level objectives, Principles, Priorities, Commitments, Indicators and Key Challenges.

SDU are very grateful to all those who attended consultation events or provided written feedback on the Strategy. We very much appreciate the time, effort and careful consideration that went into many replies. We have been examining the responses and have identified a number of key emerging themes which we hope to address in the final Strategy document or, if more appropriate, in the development of the corresponding Implementation Plan. The strength of this Plan will be critical as the intention of the Strategy has been to act as a broad enabling document with SMART targets and a detailed monitoring process contained in the Implementation Plan.

Glenn Donnelly

Involving Everyone

The Executive gave approval, on 22 October 2009, for the public consultation process to begin on the new draft Sustainable Development Strategy, *Everyone's Involved – Our Sustainable Development Strategy*. This consultation ran for a 12 weeks period from 26 October 2009 until 15 January 2010.

As part of the consultation process three facilitation events were organised for key stakeholders and a series of nine public meetings were held in locations across Northern Ireland during November and December, to invite comment on the draft document. Responses were also received by post, email, telephone and through the OFMDFM website, where the document, had been made available to access.

To give structure and focus to the consultation, in addition to seeking general comments and views,