

SD Stakeholder News

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Welcome

Welcome to the first SD Stakeholder Group Newsletter

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Sustainable Development Unit

This is the first in an occasional series of sustainable development bulletins from SDU to keep stakeholders informed of our progress on implementing the Sustainable Development Strategy.

Current Priorities

You'll find information on the priority areas of work for the unit, including the development of a second Implementation Plan (IP2) for the Strategy, the SD Training Programme for civil servants and our work with the SDC, as well as related issues.

You'll also find information, including contact details, for our newly expanded team who will be taking these on.

The coming months look set to be very interesting ones for those of us interested in sustainable development in Northern Ireland.

This newsletter seeks to provide readers with an overview of what's happening, and we'd be glad to hear your views.

Assembly focussing on SD

Sustainable development continues to be the subject of continuing interest in the business of the Assembly, reflecting an encouraging engagement on the part of local political parties with the SD agenda.

SDU have been dealing with a number of Assembly Questions from MLAs relating to the Implementation of the Strategy and associated issues.

The unit has also been asked to prepare a presentation on SD for all OFMDFM Ministers and advisors – this is scheduled for the end of May 2007.

SD Training Programme

Roll out of training for the NI Civil Service begins

As programmed in the SDU Communications working document, training for civil servants targeting senior officials, policy and decision-makers and the wider civil service workforce formally got underway at the Culloden Hotel on 12 March at an event opened by Junior Minister Gerry Kelly.

Masterclass – 'Driving Investment through Sustainable Development'

The invited audience to the Senior Civil Service Masterclass, which included representatives of the NI business community, heard from John Cridland, Deputy Director-General of CBI-UK on approaches to Government-private sector engagement to stimulate investment in sustainable development.



JM Kelly and SDU Head Jim Sutherland at the Culloden

Also speaking was Peter Hetherington from the Academy for Sustainable Communities who introduced the senior opinion formers present to the work of the ASC in developing the skills that will be needed to build sustainable communities and of the policy issues relevant to their work and to the work of others active in this area.

Speaking at the Masterclass, JM Kelly said, "This Masterclass is part of a broad ranging programme which aims to raise awareness of what exactly sustainable development is, in order to embed sustainability-focused thinking across Government.

"Plans are being developed to deliver sustainable development training programmes across the NICS in the next few months.

"Courses will range from general awareness training through to more applied courses designed for practitioners and decision-makers covering, among other things, procurement, operational and policy-making backgrounds."

Training roll-out to Departments

Work by SDU, the Centre for Applied Learning and training consultants is well advanced. The third and final round of pilots of the training courses is taking place on 22, 23 and 25 April, with full roll-out to Departments following shortly thereafter.

SDU is funding provision of 500 places, allowing for around fifty staff from each NI Department to be trained in sustainable development at no cost to the Departments concerned – a significant step towards equipping the NICS for continuing successful implementation of the SD Strategy and fulfilment of the Statutory Duty.

Uptake of places has been highly encouraging. The training programme is expected to run at full capacity.

Supporting the training courses will be an online learning module designed to provide a grounding in sustainable development prior to course attendance.

SDU are currently looking at potential ways in which this could be made available beyond the NICS.

VIEWS ON THE MASTERCLASS

"A timely and useful event"

"Many issues important for policy makers and planners"

"Excellent presentations, detailed and succinct"

"Very relevant to my work"

"Fascinating presentations, well delivered"

"More of the same, please!"

Implementation Plan 2

Development of an Implementation Plan for 2008-2011 moving forward across Departments

With the period of the first Implementation Plan now complete, development of a second Implementation Plan to run alongside and complement the Programme for Government 2008-2011 is now well underway, and is SDU's current top priority.

Making the connection to PfG

Both the PfG and the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland have identified sustainable development as a major cross-cutting theme to be addressed, signalling a serious intention on the part of the new Executive to play its part in addressing SD issues.

Building on this commitment, SDU has met with each of the Northern Ireland Departments to help them develop statements for the new Plan. OFMDFM's own statement was recently approved by the Departmental Board.

A draft set of targets for IP2 has been developed, building on progress from IP1, and aligning with Executive Priorities as expressed by the PfG. This target set has been submitted to Ministers for consideration.

The views of the SD stakeholder group received in response to SDU's consultation questionnaire have informed the development of IP2 to this point and will continue to do so.

OFMDFM Action Plan team reports

The Action Plan team assembled by OFMDFM Champion, Alan Maitland, has completed its work and produced recommendations for Departmental Board on an Action Plan for SD on the OFMDFM estate, including mandating social development clauses in procurement contracts and development of a workplace travel plan.

SDU STAFFING

There have been a number of changes in staffing in OFMDFM affecting the Sustainable Development Unit. Linda Wilson, former Head of Economic Policy Unit has departed, as has Barbara Ward who formerly worked within the SDU. Both leave with our warm regards and thanks for their valuable contributions.

We have been joined by Glenn Donnelly and Heather Whitney who will, among other things, be taking forward communications work on sustainable development.

Damian Prince has succeeded Linda Wilson as the head of Economic Policy Unit.

The full OFMDFM Sustainable Development Team is below:

OFMDFM SD STAFF

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SD Commissioner Departs

After three years of valuable service, John Gilliland has left his post as NI SD Commissioner.

His departure follows the completion of his term as Sustainable Development Commissioner for Northern Ireland and vice-Chair of the SDC.

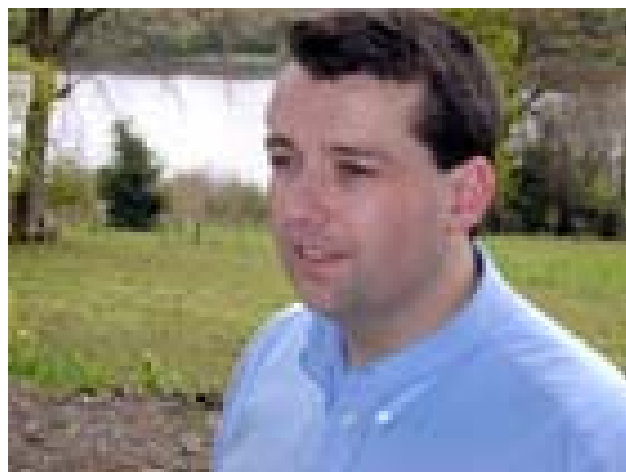
SDU would like to place on record its gratitude for the excellent service of Dr Gilliland during his Commissionership.

The process to appoint a successor to the role is now underway, and will be conducted in accordance with guidance from the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments in Northern Ireland.

Developments in the SDC

The finalisation of the Memorandum of Understanding between the SDC and the NI Executive is anticipated shortly.

This will strengthen the day-to-day working relationship between the NI Government and its advisory body on sustainable development, and hopefully support the effective operation of the partnership between SDU and the SDC, confirming the SDC's role as the principal provider of advice to Government on sustainable development.



Outgoing Commissioner John Gilliland