



## **SSN Conference 2008**

**Day 1 – Thursday 13 November**

**Introductory Workshop – Understanding the Procurement Landscape in Scotland**

**Presenters – Sam McLean** (CIPFA in Scotland), **Irene McCulloch** (Scotland Excel)

### **AIMS WHICH PEOPLE HAD FOR THE SEMINAR AT THE START:**

Understanding the **language**, how to pursue sustainability and ensure that Councils buy sustainable products. There are **established ways** of doing things which need to be overcome, even to buy recycled paper!

We have a sustainable procurement policy, and need to see if it's being carried out. **Need more understanding** and more ability to influence.

What are the sustainability **hurdles** people have faced and how have these been overcome?

Role of **standards and compliance** in procurement. It's hard to get good practice out to departments from the central procurement team.

How will **Scotland Excel** work and how will it drive more sustainable procurement?

Bring sustainability and procurement closer together. We talk **different languages**. Need a shared language and vision, and some sources to read up in more detail.

Look at how to prepare procurement plans covering **fair trade and the social aspects** – need to understand the impact of local sourcing internationally, on developing countries.

Understanding the **barriers**. We need **toolkits** in order to help officers, with some suggested weighting of sustainability criteria.

To see more joint working on procurement, encourage **local sourcing**.

**Plain language** is needed to educate everyone, so we can all take responsibility and communicate the messages.

Understand how Scottish local government works and **how decisions are reached**.

How to allow for **local suppliers** when contracts have to go to EU tendering (answer - community criteria can be included but it has to be open and transparent)

### **SOME KEY MESSAGES WHICH PEOPLE TOOK FROM THE SESSION, AND SOME QUESTIONS RAISED**

What has been described offers **a lot of potential**, but it's not clear how it will develop.

Need to proactively take account of **good practice** (& stakeholder consultation).

Scotland Excel works with a **User Intelligence Group** (UIG) – questions raised as to whether there is the right expertise on the UIG to cover sustainability requirements. Need a sort of user intelligence network for the representatives on the UIG to draw on. Sustainability officers need to speak with the corporate procurement people.

Couldn't **Scotland Excel set the standards** for sustainability after agreeing these through its work with SSN?  
Then local decisions would have to accept these standards as a minimum.

Need to get the key messages right about what procurement can deliver – **better communication** and clarity about the challenges involved in sustainable procurement – it's not just about getting the process right, it's about getting the content right in terms of communications

The organisation needs to understand this better, with regular **training** for officers, to be able to interpret tenders rather than just going for the cheapest price.

**Is cheapest always best?** No! There's nothing in the regulations to say this.

**Needs courage** to take account of this and go for more sustainable choices – it's not easy.

Andrew Llanwarne, IDEAction – facilitator – 27.11.08