



Learning Brief Six – April 2009

Show & Tell: Sharing Good Practice & Filling the Information Gaps

Introduction

The Sustainable Scotland Network (SSN) exists to support information sharing and delivery of sustainable development across local authorities in Scotland. For more information on SSN, visit our website: <http://www.sustainable-scotland.net/>

Who is this learning brief aimed at?

This Learning Brief is aimed principally at SSN members.

What is the purpose of this learning brief?

SSN recognises that there is a need to develop a better collective understanding of Scottish local government performance on sustainable development. A clear baseline of activity would allow SSN and other relevant organisations to better assess progress made in achieving sustainable development aims across Scotland.

In April 2009, SSN held a Quarterly Meeting that addressed the issue of 'filling the information gaps' that exist on Scottish local authority performance on sustainable development. Representatives from 18 of Scotland's 32 local authorities attended the day. SSN members had the opportunity to share good practice, to discuss how effectively SSN is using existing networking tools, and to consider how SSN can improve and increase the gathering and sharing of information within, and beyond, the Network.

Information Sharing Exercises

The meeting started with a brief exercise that allowed delegates to reflect on 'distance travelled so far', and share their stories with other members. Delegates were asked to fill in a small slip with some headline information about their work (see Appendix 1 for the full text). Delegates started by sharing their stories initially in pairs, then created an 'information snowball', by sharing their stories in groups of fours, and finally eights.

The aim of the second exercise of the day was to start to develop a basic 'baseline of activity', and to get a sense of how well SSN members felt their council was progressing on a number of key themes. Delegates were asked to use an 'SSN Framework' (see Appendix 1 for the full text) to rank their council on a scale of 1 (Foundation) to 5 (Lead) on progress made on: climate change, sustainable procurement, footprinting, Best Value, sustainable economic development, Strategic Environmental Assessment and sustainable development overall.

Presentations

Delegates listened to three presentations at the April 09 Quarterly. All the PowerPoint presentations can be download via the SSN website here: <http://www.sustainable-scotland.net/page.asp?pg=18>

Anna Hunter, SSN's Information Officer, began by giving an overview of how SSN currently gathers and shares information.

Delegates then heard from Steve Waller, Sustainability Advisor with the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA). Steve outlined the many events, tools, schemes and strategies that IDeA employs to share information and encourages best practice in English local authorities. Steve made special reference to the Nottingham Declaration Partnership and the Beacon Councils scheme.

In the final presentation, delegates heard from Dan McCartney, Junior Consultant with IDeA. Dan focussed on IDeA's work in developing good practice in online information sharing. Dan provided delegates with an overview of the local authority social networking site, 'Communities of Practice', and demonstrated the Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Community of Practice (ESCC CoP) to delegates. Dan also discussed the successful online climate change conference that the ESCC CoP held earlier this year.

Useful Links:

IDeA Environmental Sustainability & Climate Change website:
<http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=80829>

The Nottingham Declaration Partnership:
<http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/nottingham/Nottingham-Declaration/Why-Sign/The-Nottingham-Declaration-Partners>

The Beacon Scheme – Energy & Environment themes:
<http://www.beacons.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=9574632>

Communities of Practice website:
<http://www.communities.idea.gov.uk/welcome.do>

Case Study Workshop

The afternoon session at the Quarterly focussed on developing an SSN case study template, and collecting examples of good practice from delegates.

Delegates were asked to consider a basic SSN case study template (see Appendix 1 for the full text), and make suggestions to improve the template. They were then asked to produce a basic case study, highlighting an example of sustainable development good practice at their local authority.

Delegates worked initially in pairs, and both related the 'story' of their case study to their partner. All the case studies were then put on the wall. One half of each pair was asked to peruse the other case studies, while the other half of the pair stayed beside their case studies to answer questions from other delegates. During this 'marketplace', delegates were given stickers to affix to the case studies that they felt would be most valuable to develop into formal, detailed studies.

A brief overview of the case studies offered by delegates are below:

East Dunbartonshire Council – A Fairtrade Zone

Through partnership working in-house and with the local community, East Dunbartonshire Council has made significant and lasting progress on FairTrade through its successful campaign to become one of Scotland's first 'FairTrade Zones'. The Council's work on FairTrade has captured 'hearts and minds', and there is greater awareness amongst council staff and residents of their impact on communities and environments further afield.

South Lanarkshire Council – Earth Hour

South Lanarkshire Council participated in WWF's Earth Hour on March 28 2009. Their involvement in Earth Hour generated good publicity for the council and raised awareness of climate change with council staff, community planning partners, schools and local communities. The council also developed a spin-off 'mini switch-off' campaign within council headquarters.

Perth & Kinross Council – Mainstreaming Sustainable Development Within Council Processes (Sustainable Development Framework)

Perth & Kinross Council has developed a corporate Sustainable Development Framework to monitor and evaluate the council's sustainable development performance. The council has developed a matrix and indicators to monitor S.D. performance that fits with current performance management systems. Links have also been developed to the SOA and Best Value criteria. The Framework means that sustainable development is now taken seriously by the Corporate Policy Unit. There is a greater recognition that sustainable development is more than just 'the environment', and now has a higher profile within the council.

West Dunbartonshire Council – The Green Dream

West Dunbartonshire Council organised 'The Green Dream', a month-long climate change/ecological footprint awareness raising campaign for community planning partners and the wider community. The campaign provided an opportunity to promote sustainable behaviour locally and coordinate action in the sustainability area e.g. recycling, improving greenspace etc. A series of events took place throughout the campaign, and the council also worked with the local press to promote events and raise awareness. The council is now committed to build on the 'Green Dream brand' annually.

Renfrewshire Council – Sustainable Development Reinvigorated

The Sustainable Development Working Group had not been operating in Renfrewshire Council for approximately three years. The Working Group was reformed and its remit reviewed to reflect recent changes in national and local government policy. The new Working Group reflects the corporate approach that the council is now taking towards sustainable development. Relevant officers from each council directorate attend quarterly meetings, and there is support at the political and directorate level. The new Working Group has also led officers outwith the group to offer support and to 'buy in' to the sustainable development agenda at Renfrewshire.

Fife Council – C02e Emissions Audit

Fife Council have worked to develop a methodology for auditing service performance on C02e reductions. The Council aims to achieve a 3% per annum reduction of C02e. A 'new' team was appointed to develop the methodology, which comprised of two audit staff and one lead officer. Part of the development of the methodology involved consulting with services and getting the Corporate Management Team and elected members on board. A C02 performance assessment has now been produced and C02e has already been reduced. The Council is now looking at how they can support services to self audit.

Falkirk Council – C02 Awareness & Behavioural Change Programme

In-house awareness raising and behavioural change is a key action in Falkirk Council's Carbon Management Plan. The Council have designed and implemented a multi-faceted programme to address the issue. A questionnaire was issued to staff as part of the development process. This led to a poster campaign, an action programme, a presentation to the Corporate Management Team, and the use of the Council's intranet to spread messages around the staff.

Glasgow City Council – Achieving Fairtrade City Status

There was a need to raise awareness about Fairtrade in Glasgow, and officers recognised that, without Fairtrade status, there was no pressure within the Glasgow area for the council and others to procure more ethically. Community groups, business and NGOs came together in 2006 to request that Glasgow City Council addressed the issue. Their request received the backing of elected members and a steering group was established. A motion was passed by the Council to support Fairtrade and resources were put in place to support the plan. Fairtrade City status has now been achieved in Glasgow, and the profile of Fairtrade has been raised within the Council, in businesses and in schools.

East Lothian Council – Sustainability & The ELC Single Outcome Agreement

A proactive Community Planning Officer and the 'Charter for People' enabled existing environmental groups in East Lothian to get involved in the SOA 2009/10 development process. This led to East Lothian Council and Community Planning Partners establishing sustainability as

an overarching theme for the East Lothian Single Outcome Agreement, which acknowledges that a fundamental change is required. Three 'Environmental Sustainability' indicators are included in the SOA, including a commitment to move to becoming a low-carbon county (aiming at an 80% reduction in the ecological and carbon footprint by 2050). The SOA now provides a framework for developing East Lothian's Environmental Strategy, and has helped to identify key issues for the Council to address.

Next Steps

Information gathered at the April Quarterly will be brought to the SSN Steering Group, who will consider ways in which the SSN can improve their information gathering and sharing strategies, and who will develop a plan to progress future SSN case studies.

For further information on the April Quarterly, please contact Anna Hunter, SSN's Information Officer, on 01786 468 768 or by email: anna.hunter@ksbScotland.org.uk

Appendix 1: Worksheets From April Quarterly, 2009

Task 1: Reflecting on Distance Travelled

My name is _____ (first name only), I work with _____ council.

I have been working there for _____

During my time there, our biggest sustainable development gain has been _____

The sustainable development activity which has taken up most of my time has been _____

I am most proud of _____

The SSN helped me most when _____

What I wish I knew when I started _____

What I would like to know next year _____

Task 2: The SSN Framework: Where Does Your Council Fit In This Grid?

	1 – Foundation – just starting out, at awareness raising level, winning hearts and minds, superficial buy-in, but with potential for development in the future	2 – Embed – topic making its way into policy, starting to have champions, training on topic being requested and delivered, buy-in from upper management, benchmarking started.	3 – Practice – changes to practice because of implementation of the topic, starting to affect resource allocation, monitoring and evaluation is taking place	4 – Enhance – looking for improvement in practice, ranking up performance and striving for better results	5 – Lead – central to strategy, recognised as a leader in the field,
Climate Change					
Sustainable Procurement					
Footprinting					
Best Value					
Sustainable Development overall					
Sustainable Economic Development					
SEA					

Task 3: SSN Case Study Template – How Would You Amend/Improve This Template?

Case Study Title
Summary <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Summary of what happened• Summary of the positive impacts that have resulted from the work
Background <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The situation prior to the change: “The problem was this...”• Who came together to tackle the problem?
The Response <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stage by stage, how was the change effected?• What problems were encountered and how were they overcome?
Assessment of the Response <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What was the outcome?• How have we benefitted?• What could have been done better?
Looking Ahead <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How are we planning to build on what we have done?
Key Contacts / Additional Information <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contact details for those involved• Relevant weblinks• Relevant documents