

SIX CITIES WORKSHOPS

SUSTAINABILITY, BEST VALUE AND WELL BEING

A Summary Report of the Workshops and Outcomes



SUST.
THE LIGHTHOUSE ON SUSTAINABILITY

This report relates to the pilot programme of workshops for local government in Scotland's six cities presented under the title 'Six Cities Workshops: Sustainability, Best Value and Well Being'.

The Workshops were commissioned by The Lighthouse: Scotland's Centre for Architecture, Design and the City with support from the Sustainable Scotland Network.

The Workshops were devised and delivered by Thirdwave Scotland Limited in 2003/2004.

The Six Cities workshops formed part of 'Sust: The Lighthouse on Sustainability', an initiative devised by The Lighthouse on behalf of the Scottish Executive to raise awareness of sustainable design in architecture and the built environment. Sust. is funded by the Sustainable Action Fund.

Author:

Roger Talbot

Thirdwave Scotland Limited

8/1 Maritime Street

Edinburgh EH6 6SB

0131 625 1467

Roger.Talbot@thirdwave.org.uk

Introduction

The Six Cities Workshops were devised to help local authorities assess and build local capacity at the organisational, operational and service-delivery level through the following:

1. Improving the performance of staff in managing sustainability issues that are most critical to the performance of the urban built environment and to the well being of the local community.
2. Customisation of each Workshop to address specific local issues and local priorities.
3. Helping local authorities assess their current strengths with respect to sustainable development, and develop strategies to make necessary improvements.
4. Developing an action plan to take forward agreed strategies to better meet sustainability objectives.
5. The provision of a specially produced Workshop Manual that would provide a permanent guide to:
 - Sustainable development principles, policies and practices
 - Sustainability appraisal and sustainable design tools
 - Links to sources of further information including best practice and useful contacts.

The Six Cities Workshops: Sustainability, Best Value and Well Being formed part of Sust: The Lighthouse on Sustainability, a 12-month initiative devised by The Lighthouse on behalf of the Scottish Executive to raise awareness of sustainable design in architecture and the built environment.

The Six Cities Workshops were held on the following dates and attended in total by around 130 delegates.

Edinburgh:	Thursday 27th November 2003
Stirling:	Friday 28th November 2003
Dundee:	Monday 1st December 2003
Glasgow:	Tuesday 2nd December 2003
Aberdeen:	Wednesday 3rd December 2003
Inverness:	Tuesday 27th January 2004

The Workshop Programme

While each Workshop in the series - organised in close collaboration with local representatives of the Sustainable Scotland Network - was customised to reflect specific local concerns, conditions and priorities of each city, a generic programme for the one-day event was as follows.

Plenary Session 1.1

Sustainability and Local Government in Scotland

Exploring the challenges of mainstreaming sustainability into the best value framework and promoting well being within the context of policy integration.

Plenary Session 1.2

Sustainability and the Built Environment

The special significance of the six cities in helping to build a sustainable future for Scotland.

Plenary Session 1.3

Tools for Sustainability Appraisal and Design

Focus on a select range of sustainability appraisal and sustainable design tools that could form part of an essential local government toolkit.

Plenary Session 1.4

The Business Case for Sustainable development

The business case for a sustainable approach to planning, design, construction and building management.

Plenary Session 1.5

Putting Sustainability into the Local Context

Integrating sustainability, best value and well-being from a specifically local perspective.

Break-out Session 1

Identifying Local Capacity Building Needs

Identifying the key sustainability issues confronting local communities, assessing the effectiveness of current policies and strategies in addressing these issues and identifying any gaps in the city's capacity for improving the sustainability performance of its buildings and infrastructure.

Feedback Session 1 All Groups

Break-out Session 2

Capacity Building to Meet the Local Sustainability Challenge

Practical ways of building capacity amongst key departments, functions and individuals to meet the sustainability challenges facing their city.

Feedback Session 2 All Groups

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Each Break-out Group in each of the Six Cities Workshops was set the task of agreeing a set of recommendations relating to capacity building for sustainable development both locally and nationally. In practice, recommendations arose from very interactive and committed discussions which covered many different aspects of capacity building.

For the purpose of this report, attention has been placed on bringing together and collating those many recommendations arising from the six workshops which most closely related to human capacity: training, skills development and knowledge exchange. Some General Conclusions of the Workshops are outlined below.

1. The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 offers a real opportunity for local authorities in Scotland to make substantial progress in moving towards sustainable development. This opportunity should be fully recognised and realised. The Act provides the process (Community Planning), the duty (Best Value) and the power (of Well-Being) to make it happen.

2. Given the chronology of implementation of legislation, there is much that Scotland can learn from English and Welsh experience. In particular, lessons should be learned from IDEA, in the development of guidance on sustainable development and best practice in the progress of the new

local authority governance agenda.

3. The development of effective guidance should be linked to the assessment of training needs within Scotland's local authorities and to the delivery of capacity building programmes in order to promote a much better and deeper understanding of local authorities' new leadership role in sustainable development.

4. The Six Cities Workshops was felt to provide a good model and a solid foundation for extending capacity building beyond the six cities, and a basis for developing more advanced level programmes for both elected members and for officers where the need for these could be demonstrated.

5. Guidance and training initiatives need to be based upon a practical and agreed definition of sustainable development, a clear understanding of what is meant in the Act by "contribution to the achievement of sustainable development", why sustainable development is important to the future of Scotland; and a definitive measure of performance on sustainable development.

6. Asset management and procurement strategies are obvious - but not exclusive - opportunities for a local authority to make a significant contribution to sustainable development. Real need for the public sector (as the largest construction

industry client) to drive forward on all the matters above by adopting a procurement policy that actively requires improvements in buildings for government departments and local authorities.

7. The link between sustainability and well-being is recognised but there is concern at the absence of a clear definition of well-being in existing guidance. Guidance on well-being makes reference to key factors, which contribute to the promotion or improvement of well being such economic factors, social factors and environmental factors. Environmental factors are equated with the “availability of clean air, clean water, clean streets and access to parks and open spaces, the quality of the built environment, the removal of objects considered hazardous to health, protecting communities against the threat of climate change, freedom from a high risk of flooding, and removal of disfiguring or offensive graffiti from buildings, etc.” These take a very limited and short-term view of the environment. For the link to sustainable development to be effective, advancing well-being must include, as a minimum, reducing greenhouse gas emissions to minimise the threats posed by climate change.

8. Examples should be provided in any published guidance - and with associated capacity building programmes - to show how innovative use of the power of well-being could genuinely contribute to sustainable development within and by local government.

9. Cutting across all these themes is the need for effective skills. Most recently, the Egan’s Skills and Training Review has focussed attention on industry-wide barriers to and opportunities for managerial and professional improvement and increasing skills capacity. It is not clear what input the devolved administration in Scotland has had into the Egan Skills review (if any) and what the response from Scotland to the planned report will be (if any).

10. Government should set exemplar sustainability standards for the buildings they procure. The perception that the public sector still granted contracts on the basis of lowest price must be challenged. Government at both local and national level needs to embed sustainable development and principles firmly and irreversibly into all tendering processes and team building exercises, on the basis of the business case and compliance with Government. It is important that the right Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are incorporated into this process and that the preferred contractors are held fully to account through the employment of an effective sustainability management system.

11. Use of a national sustainability checklist based on the format developed by SEEDA (South East England Development Agency) /British Research Establishment (BRE) would be extremely helpful in pushing the agenda forward through Scotland’s local authorities in a consistent and integrated way. The SEEDA checklist is divided into 10 key topics:

1. Impact on the wider community
2. Land use, urban design and design
3. Transport
4. Energy
5. Buildings
6. Infrastructure
7. Natural resources
8. Ecology
9. Community
10. Business

12. Whilst there are a growing number of buildings and developments that demonstrate good practice there would appear to be no effective, centralised and well co-ordinated database for collecting and disseminating such case studies in a form that is most useful to local authority officers and their partners. Establishing and managing such a database might be a function for The Lighthouse or for the proposed Scottish Centre for Innovation and Excellence in Construction, working in active collaboration with local government.

13. It is important for market demand to be there to encourage developers to opt for producing more sustainable buildings. It is equally important to win the confidence of local people and the language needs to be right to engage them. There is currently insufficient public perception as to what sustainable buildings are and what they can contribute to quality of life and to the creation of sustainable communities.

14. Life cycle issues are of special importance here, with the need to educate house buyers in particular in the understanding that there are real financial benefits to be gained by investing in a sustainable life style, both through direct savings but also reduced risk and increased access to capital.

15. Local government can and should play a significant role in this education process in raising key awareness within the community of the true costs and benefits of sustainable buildings, enabling housebuyers in particular to demand improved performance, to specify it in meaningful terms and to press for its achievement.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

1. The Scottish Executive should set out clear, open, agreed and targeted long-term priorities for sustainable development that gives local authorities effective powers to attain them and gives developers incentives to implement them.

2. The Scottish Executive should show prime leadership by recognising the urgent need for a different approach and a different culture within the fields of planning, development and construction. The new approach must be based on a better understanding of what makes a community sustainable.

3. The Scottish Executive should take a lead role in setting the national priorities that it considers Community Planning partnerships and individual authorities should proactively address through the proposed national planning framework.

4. The Scottish Executive must make it a national priority to see an end to developments that ignore the sustainable community agenda. The presumption must be that sustainable development is the first and only choice.

5. The Scottish Executive should establish a detailed and common definition of 'sustainable communities' and a set of indicators to track progress towards the creation of sustainable communities, building on systems of measurement (such as 'Meeting the Needs') already in use.

6. The Scottish Executive should give clear and explicit expression to the lead role and responsibilities expected of local government in enabling the delivery of sustainable communities matched to the right powers, authority and flexibility of resource use.

7. A sustainable communities agenda for Scotland must be joined up. The Scottish Executive have a special responsibility to set the standard for planning, design and construction professions; for different service providers at local level; for the different departments in local authorities; for the different departments within the Executive itself and for the various inspections.

8. The Scottish Executive should recognise that meeting this challenge of building sustainable communities as a key 'joined up' policy objective will require new skills within both local government and within the Executive itself. These would include the skill to delegate power and authority, and the skill to allow policy integration and joined-up Government at every level leading to co-ordination at national, regional and local levels of all services of Government.

9. The Scottish Executive must recognise that the skills challenge goes beyond local and national government and make the necessary response. The Egan Skills Review identified well over 100 occupations involved in sustainable

communities. About one third of these were classed as 'core occupations' who spend almost all of their time on developing, delivering or maintaining sustainable communities. These 'core occupations' include local authority members, and the voluntary and community sector, as well as architects, engineers and planners.

10. The main problem identified by Egan is not in the specialist skills practiced by such built environment professionals but in the serious lack of a set essential 'generic skills' possessed by both core and non-core occupations and in the provision of necessary training in these generic skills. The Scottish Executive is recommended to note Egan's conclusions that the effective acquisition of certain generic skills would significantly enhance individual and cross-sectoral performance in respect to sustainable development in the fields of planning, design and construction. The key generic skills are taken to include:

Leadership

Egan identifies a lack of leadership from decision-makers in both the private and public sectors to commit to excellence.

Visioning & Strategic Planning

Strategic planning skills, particularly within local planning authorities, are essential to inform the production of development plans, supplementary planning guidance, development briefs, masterplans.

Urban Design

Where skills are needed to lead, manage and advise on the process of re-thinking existing urban areas or planning new developments, including the production of design briefs.

Working in Teams and Partnerships

Developing skills for managing and maintaining local development partnerships and other special purpose vehicles, and in particular, in the discipline of managing community involvement in the design and development processes.

Project Management

Providing clients with the confidence to take on complex mixed schemes that combine commercial and residential development, and related infrastructure provision.

Financial, Economic and Sustainable Prosperity Planning

Experience and expertise in project appraisal and financing, including dealing with the requirements of funding bodies and financial institutions.

Communication

The ability to communicate complex objectives and plans to the community as a whole is a fundamental skill all too often lacking.

11. The Scottish Executive should promote a shift in young people's education to capture the importance of the built environment and the contribution they can make to building the sustainable communities of the future.

12. The skills challenge extends to improving client performance and as a principal construction client in its own right the Scottish Executive should provide a model for the rest of the sector.

13. The skills deficit places new and clear demands on the professions, and the institutions that represent them, to change the way they promote education and learning, so that capacity for delivering skills can be raised through undergraduate, postgraduate and professional training. The Scottish Executive should encourage and support the professions in meeting this challenge.

14. A Scottish Skills Strategy for building sustainable communities should be devised, which should set a new standard for learning, producing an understanding of integration and urban design amongst targeted professional groups, local authority officers, house builders, investors and others.

15. The Scottish Executive should work closely with Scottish local government to explore how training for local authority members – especially those directly involved in planning processes – in generic and technical skills might be developed and offered.

16. The Scottish Executive should recognise that of all local government processes that enable the delivery of sustainable communities the planning process is perhaps the most relevant and this has highly significant implications for training and skilling.

17. The opportunity presented by a review of the Planning Act should be taken to reconceptualise the planning process as a positive tool for the delivery of sustainable development policy, rather than as a blocking tool.

18. The Scottish Executive should consider means for establishing a single source of information, knowledge, research and toolkits for 'building better places'. There is a wealth of information available, but there is no one

recognised route to access it. It is essential that a 'one-stop' online knowledge and evidence portal for built environment professionals be created to carry out this function and bring together all the available resources, learning packages, development tools, best practice examples and research. Such a facility should be the base from which to research, collect and disseminate tried and tested examples of good practice from those countries with the best track records in the various areas of sustainable development, including how to improve the existing stock.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

1. The aim should be for all local authorities to improve the sustainability of the communities they serve. Local government should welcome and operate systems that promote continuous improvement where reward is given to those most proactive in building sustainable communities through joined-up governance and service delivery. Enhanced delegated authorities and flexibilities should not be awarded to authorities lacking the commitment to act and to improve.

2. Local authorities, public agencies, communities and the private sector must have a clear understanding of who will take the lead on tackling particular issues and, once agreed, must be proactive about grasping development opportunities and driving through change. This should be the clear and agreed role of Community Planning. At present there is a danger that, due to a lack of clarity over responsibilities, real opportunities are being missed.

3. Local government should embrace the positive opportunities inherent in cabinet style governance, which presents all the relevant service providers and others with responsibility for delivering aspects of sustainable communities to work together as an integrated group. Local authorities should work with the regulators to ensure that all auditing and performance assessments are done in a way that encourages sustainable community targets to be met in a co-ordinated fashion.

4. Client departments with local authorities should be tasked to produce briefing guides on sustainable planning and construction for distribution to design teams and client users.

5. Sustainability policies should be aggressively supported in every council department and the implications for training and capacity building made explicit and a priority of governance.

6. The types of interactive activities represented by the Six Cities Workshops should be ongoing to demonstrate long-term commitment to improving participants skills levels amongst both officers and elected members.

7. Local authorities - at both member and officer level - should adopt a new approach based on quality and visionary leadership. Informed and committed leadership needs to be capable of connecting with and involving communities and service providers, capable of engaging all stakeholders, and capable of leading and delivering the development of a vision for each place.

8. From a capacity building perspective this new approach must, above all, be based on developing and encouraging the right skill base for the delivery of Scotland's sustainable communities.

Sust.: The Lighthouse on Sustainability aims to raise awareness of sustainable design in architecture. It was devised by The Lighthouse: Scotland's Centre for Architecture, Design and the City on behalf of the Scottish Executive and in support of the aims of the Policy on Architecture. It is funded by the Sustainable Action Fund.

www.sust.org