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Summary of responses to the consultation Towards a Defra Third Sector Strategy - 16 November 2007 to 22 February 2008

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Contents

1	Introduction	3
1.1	Background	3
1.2	Structure of the report	3
2	The Respondents	4
3	Overview	5
3.1	Overview of responses	5
3.2	Think pieces	9
3.3	Messages for other government departments	9
4	Detailed Analysis By Theme	11
4.1	Vision and objectives	11
4.2	Strategic partnering	13
4.3	A third sector stakeholder group	17
4.4	Funding, procurement and contract practices	20
4.5	Third sector organisations and Defra’s delivery bodies	22
4.6	The third sector and the environment	23
4.7	Communication with smaller bodies, and the role of advocates and gatekeepers	27
4.8	Working with Local Authority and regional partnership structures	30
4.9	Rural engagement arrangements	32
4.10	Volunteering	34
4.11	Service delivery	36
4.12	Social Enterprise	38
Annexes		
A	List of respondents	41
B	Summary of think pieces	45
C	List of funds cited as potential models for a greener living grant fund	52

Towards A Third Sector Strategy: Analysis Of Consultation Responses

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Defra issued its consultation paper, "Towards a Third Sector Strategy", in November 2007 with a response deadline of 22 February 2008. A further discussion paper was issued in late January 2008 exploring priorities and mechanisms for pursuing the 'pro-environmental behaviour' agenda with and through the third sector. There were 81 responses to the consultation paper and 24 responses to the pro-environmental behaviour discussion paper, making 105 responses in total.

1.1.2 A few of the responses offered the views of more than one body. In particular, the Compact Group submitted a summary of the views of its members and representatives of the wider sector, drawing on an online and a telephone survey undertaken on its behalf.

1.1.3 To complement responses offered spontaneously, Defra also commissioned 7 'think pieces' from different bodies or consortia in the third sector. The majority of these drew on views expressed at specially convened workshops.

1.1.4 IHPC was asked to analyse the responses to the consultation document and related aspects of the environmental behaviour discussion paper, taking account of views expressed in the think pieces. This is our report.

1.2 Structure of the report

1.2.1 This report is organised as follows:

Section 1: Introduction

Section 2: Analysis of respondents

Section 3: Overview of views expressed

Section 4: Detailed analysis by theme

1.2.2 Section 4 summarises views under twelve themes which broadly follow the structure of the consultation document. They draw on views expressed in response to the consultation document and the environmental behaviour discussion paper, and also on views expressed in the think pieces. The relevant questions from the consultation document introduce each theme.

1.2.3 A one page summary of the main points to be made in each think piece is included as an annex to the report.

1.2.4 A populated database noting the views expressed by each respondent under 52 possible headings accompanies this report.

2 The respondents

2.1.1 There were 96 respondents in total, nine of whom responded to both the consultation document and the discussion paper. A complete list of respondents is attached at Annex A.

2.1.2 Over three quarters of respondents were members of the third sector.

Table 1: respondents by sector

Third sector	76
Local authority/ LA body	3
Other public sector	10
Private sector	1
Individual	6
Total	96

2.1.3 Other characteristics of respondents are shown in table 2 below.

Table 2: respondents by prime policy interest and sphere of operation

	National	Regional	LA-wide	Community	Non-specific	Total
Cross policy and non-Defra policy	38	2	3		1	44
Rural community	4	5	9	1		19
Waste	5		2		1	8
Energy/ climate change	3		1	1	1	6
Farming and food	5					5
Wildlife and countryside	6	1				7
Other Defra policy	6	1				7
Total	67	9	15	2	3	96

More than two thirds of respondents operated primarily at a national level while 9 were regionally-based and 15 operated in one particular local authority area. Of the 15 LA-area based respondents, 9 were Rural Community Councils. There were only two responses from community-based organisations¹, and three from individuals whose main sphere of operation is unknown. There was one response from a Defra member of staff, classified as 'national' because of its focus on national policy rather than individual staff issues.

2.1.4 44 of the respondents either had cross-policy interests (such as Groundwork, National Federation of Women's Institutes, the Mayor of London, Big Lottery Fund, Co-operatives UK) or a prime interest in a policy led by a different Government department (such as Royal Town Planning Institute, National Youth Agency, Sustrans). Of those with a prime focus on policy areas led by Defra, those involved in rural community work made up the largest group of respondents (19 in total), with lesser numbers of responses coming from groups involved in waste, climate change, farming and food, and wildlife and countryside.

¹ We defined 'community-based' to cover all bodies whose focus is on a local project or an area which is smaller than the district authority (or unitary authority where relevant) boundaries.

3 Overview

3.1 Overview of responses

Improving engagement with the third sector

3.1.1 Recurring across all aspects of the consultation responses and think pieces, five key points emerge on what the sector is seeking from Defra to improve the quality of engagement. Defra is urged to:

- (i) **Listen** better to the sector, and take account of its experience and views in formulating policy. This is associated with a commonly expressed view that communications must be 2-way, that the third sector organisations must be treated as equal partners, and that a top-down approach will alienate the sector.
- (ii) **Understand** the diversity of the sector better, recognising both that a variety of approaches will be required to engage with different elements of the sector, and also that third sector organisations are driven by a wide variety of aims and objectives which may not always coincide with Defra's.
- (iii) **Communicate** better with the sector, in particular improving links with small organisations and at regional and local level. A large number of suggestions are made as to how this might be done.
- (iv) Do more to **overcome policy silos**, working better with other government departments in dealing with the third sector, and recognising that the work of many third sector organisations supports a range of policy objectives.
- (v) Aim to **build on existing mechanisms** rather than necessarily to create new ones. This view is often expressed in the context of the RCC/ACRE network, but is also applied to support other networking arrangements such as Foodaware.

These points are offered as suggestions for the way forward, and are not necessarily a reflection of views on respondents past dealings with Defra. A number of responses were explicitly supportive of Defra's track record in dealing with the third sector in general and social enterprises in particular.

Vision and objectives

3.1.2 Most respondents were generally supportive of the aims and objectives set out in the consultation paper. In so far as there were reservations and comments, these focussed largely on the concerns listed in paragraph 3.1.1. above. A few respondents had more fundamental criticisms, describing the vision as vague, or arguing for an approach built on a more detailed analysis of the sector's potential contribution and/or for a more detailed statement of plans and targets. There were also concerns that the language of the consultation document was over-reliant on civil servant-speak and jargon.

Strategic partnering

3.1.3 This theme accounted for a substantial part of the content of the responses. While reactions to Defra's proposals were on the whole positive, and many of those who commented expressed interest in being involved themselves, no clear consensus ideas emerged on key themes around which individual partnerships should be built, or on their role or the key characteristics of potential partners. In a conclusion drawn from their surveys of third sector stakeholders, the Compact Group concluded that "there are high levels of uncertainty and confusion about Strategic Partnerships amongst participants". They also drew attention to risks noted elsewhere in the responses, namely the possibility of unintentionally creating two classes of third sector organisation, the danger that smaller organisations (including rural organisations) could effectively be excluded, and the danger that strategic partners may become so absorbed in government processes that they lose their critical edge.

3.1.4 Those who responded to the discussion paper on environmental behaviours were also generally in favour of the partnering mechanisms proposed there, namely a combination of policy forum, strategic partners and delivery partners. A small number of respondents wanted to see the main emphasis on the role of the delivery partners. There were some concerns that the machinery might prove excessively bureaucratic and unwieldy and, again, a concern that smaller groups might be excluded.

A third sector stakeholder group

3.1.5 The idea of some continuing form of central stakeholder group was also generally welcomed, but there were again a wide range of views on what its role and membership should be, and how it should operate. Some respondents saw it as a refresh of the current Compact group, while others assumed it would be a forum for the new strategic partners. A considerable number of respondents argued that a key role of any stakeholder group should be to provide a forum through which third sector views could be fed in to policy formulation. Regional and local respondents were concerned that regional and local groups should be represented. Dissenting voices argued for a number of channels of communication rather than a single group, and there was a warning about setting up a talking shop for those in the know.

3.1.6 The Compact group pointed to a surprisingly low level of awareness of the current group among third sector leaders, and to a corresponding ambiguity in views as to its future. They concluded that the group should be reformed and relaunched with a broader remit and membership.

Funding, procurement and contract practices

3.1.7 Predictably, there was widespread support for Defra's commitment to 3-year funding, full cost recovery and supporting a level playing field in its contracting arrangements. In addition, respondents offered a number of further suggestions for improving Defra's practice including simplified systems, better mechanisms to recognise the added-value that the sector can offer over and above the commissioning requirement, and a preparedness to accept the risk involved in employing small and relatively untried organisations. There was also an interesting contrary perspective from the Joint Commissioning Committee, who argued that the language of level playing fields was unhelpful, and that the third sector itself must do more to help those responsible for procuring services for government bodies to understand what the sector has to offer.

3.1.8 Worries were expressed about diminished resources for the sector, stop/start funding

and a number of other funding issues. Several bodies argued for continued support for RCCs.

Relations with Defra delivery bodies

3.1.9 With the exception of the Environment Agency, all those who commented on this issue pressed for stronger action from Defra to promote Compact compliance by its delivery bodies, and for the Department to do more to co-ordinate action across the Defra family. Many commented that encouraging delivery bodies to comply with the spirit of the Compact was simply not enough.

3.1.10 The Environment Agency took a different view. They noted that they were exploring how they might apply the Compact principles, but that arrangements adopted were likely to differ from those of the Department.

The third sector and the environment

3.1.11 This theme was another which attracted a good deal of coverage in the responses and think-pieces, dealing both with what the sector could do to improve its own practices and its potential contribution in promoting behaviour change among members and the wider public. The ACEVO think-piece was a useful contribution on improving performance within the sector, arguing for (i) environmental specialists to take on the role of environmental champions within the sector; (ii) Defra investment in environmental good practice training to be embedded in mainstream capacity building programmes; (iii) a strategic partner forum dedicated to driving up performance in the sector; (iv) incentivising better performance through clauses in Defra contracts; and (v) more monitoring of performance by reference to common environmental performance standards.

3.1.12 Fewer clear messages emerged about what Defra might do to support the sector in encouraging their members and communities to 'choose greener living'. There were suggestions that Defra needed to do more clarify what was wanted and how it could be delivered, giving practical examples; that central government needed to offer leadership and a consistent message across all departments; and that there was a case for practical support with advice, training and even energy-saving products.

3.1.13 A number of models were offered for the proposed greener living grant, listed at Annex C. A major concern was that the grant should reach local and community organisations. Many respondents argued for a regional or local distribution mechanism.

Communicating with smaller bodies, and the role of gatekeepers

3.1.14 The theme of communicating with smaller bodies, combined with discussion of the role of advocates, gatekeepers and umbrella bodies, also attracted a fair amount of comment, and was the focus of two of the think-pieces. Discussion and comments tended to focus on the theme of improving communications between Defra and small local bodies rather than the role that umbrella groups might play as intermediaries. The current communication gap is well demonstrated in the TPAS/BASSAC think-piece, which noted that some members did not even know who Defra were, and was also reflected in comments from a number of respondents that the language of the consultation paper itself was a barrier to communication.

3.1.15 There were a large number of suggestions as to what Defra should do to improve the situation, ranging from improving its web-site, to better targeted communications, to a

programme of engagement between community activists and civil servants, involving two-way visits and secondments, and induction sessions for civil servants about 'life in localities'. There were also several ideas for improving consultation processes with third sector organisations.

Working with local authorities and regional structures

3.1.16 There were limited comments on this issue. There were arguments that Defra needed to use its influence with regional and local bodies to ensure that third sector views were taken into account in the development of local and regional strategies. The majority of responses made the point that third sector organisations often lacked the capacity to engage effectively at the local level, and argued for some form of support.

Rural engagement arrangements

3.1.17 There were a range of comments on this theme, and a number of suggestions for engaging better in rural areas. Many respondents were concerned that Defra should engage through existing networks rather than set up new ones. There were also regrets expressed for the ending of the Rural Social and Community Programme.

3.1.18 The North Yorkshire BME Strategy Board think-piece argued that the consultation document was essentially 'colour-blind'. It urged Defra to be more proactive in championing minority ethnic communities and businesses, a small but growing population in rural areas.

Volunteering

3.1.19 There was only limited enthusiasm for Defra's proposal to develop a scheme to involve volunteers in its work. Reservations were that volunteering tended to work best at a community level, and that it would be better to build on existing schemes rather than set up new ones.

3.1.20 There was more support for a scheme to offer Defra staff the chance to be volunteers, and a number of bodies offered their help in brokering such a scheme. The Environment Agency noted that it already ran an 'environmental leave' programme for its staff.

Service delivery

3.1.21 There was agreement with the consultation document view that the voluntary sector had hitherto been most actively engaged in delivering Defra-related services in the waste and recycling sectors, and that there was potential for growth in the area of energy services to households and communities. Community transport was another area where many respondents thought that there was also potential for third sector delivery. Sustainable food, land management, training and the letting of community buildings were also thought to offer potential.

3.1.22 Many respondents argued that an enhanced role for the sector in service delivery was dependent on a greater commitment to capacity building. There were also arguments that contract arrangements should include social or environmental benefit clauses.

Social enterprise

3.1.23 A consortium of social enterprise organisations prepared a think piece on social

enterprise, and many of the thoughts in the paper were duplicated in the consultation responses. The think piece argued for strengthened collaboration between Defra and the social enterprise movement, focussing on (i) promoting a pro-social enterprise culture shift within Defra, (ii) developing the evidence base and measurement methods for social enterprise activities, (iii) identifying new markets, and (iv) facilitating access to tailored business support and finance. The current rationalisation of the business support programme was seen as a threat.

3.1.24 Just over half of those who commented were unconvinced about the need for a strengthened social enterprise forum, arguing in some cases that they had not known it existed. Others argued that a strengthened forum was important as a source of expertise and specific representation.

3.2 Think pieces

3.2.1 The following think pieces were received:

- (i) ACEVO: Leading Better Environmental Performance in the Third Sector.
- (ii) Foodaware: Towards a third sector strategy
- (iii) BASSAC/TAPAS²: Consultation findings and Learning to Live Differently
- (iv) North Yorkshire BME Strategy Board: Think piece.
- (v) Five partner organisations³: Social Enterprise and Defra's objectives: and agenda for collaboration
- (vi) Capacity Global and the Environmental Law Foundation: Environmental Justice
- (vii) REconomy: Defra Third Sector Strategy Thinkpiece

3.2.2 The ACEVO think piece focusses on what third sector organisations might do to improve their own environmental performance; many of its messages are reported in section 3.6 (third sector and the environment). The Foodaware and BASSAC/TAPAS think pieces both contain messages on communicating with smaller bodies and working through umbrella organisations, reported in section 3.7. The Social Enterprise paper sets out an agenda for future collaboration on social enterprise issues, summarised in section 3.12. The REconomy paper contains a number of messages for the Department in devising its third sector strategy, emphasising the importance of the sustainable development and 'place' agendas, and underlining the capacity of the sector to deliver multiple outcomes.

3.2.3 The North Yorkshire BME Strategy Board paper is a fully argued and well-referenced document describing the current state of knowledge about the situation of BME populations in rural areas, and highlighting a number of key messages for Defra in its capacity of lead Department for rural policy. There are some messages for the third sector strategy but these are tangential to the main focus of the paper, which is about policy towards rural BME populations generally.

3.2.4 The Capacity Global and Environmental Law Foundation paper deals with the subject of environmental justice. It is not linked to any particular themes in the consultation paper.

3.2.5 To ensure that key messages from the think pieces are recorded, one page summaries of each of them are provided in Annex B of this report.

² British Association for Settlements and Social Action Centres (BASSAC) and Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TAPAS)

³ Co-operatives UK, Development Trusts Association, Plunkett Foundation, RISE, Social Enterprise Coalition

3.3 Messages for other government departments

Cross policy working

3.3.1 A sense of frustration about the compartmentalisation of central Government is the main message to come through from the responses which is of relevance to other Government Departments. Third sector bodies - particularly local community-based bodies - often have agendas which deliver across a number of policy areas. This is well-illustrated in the matrix of schemes by outcome/benefit which is attached as an annex to the Social Enterprise think piece. The third sectors' main concern is that the funding and contracting arrangements are not adequate to take account of multi-policy benefits, but there are also more general concerns about the lack of consistency in the messages coming from central government.

3.3.2 There are a variety of suggested actions to help address this problem. Many of them focus on improvements to the machinery for co-ordination suggesting, for example, that other Government departments are represented on the proposed strategic policy forum and that a relaunched Compact group should have links to other Government departments. There are also a number of suggestions as to how a range of policy benefits might be better reflected in procurement and funding decisions, including some kind of third sector weighting mechanism, or the development of social benefit measures.

Promoting the environmental agenda

3.3.3 There are also a number of suggestions as to what other Government Departments might do to better support the environmental agenda in their dealings with the third sector. These include suggestions that:

- (i) Defra and OTS should build training on environment issues into mainstream capacity building programmes for the third sector;
- (ii) 'Environmental champions' should be selected to promote the agenda within the third sector, and should be supported in that role by all departments.
- (iii) All Government funding should in due course be conditional on some measure of environmental performance.

Other matters

3.3.4 Suggestions or concerns relevant to other matters dealt with by other Government Departments were:

- i. Social enterprise interests were concerned that the BERR-led rationalisation of the business support programme, which proposes greater reliance on Business Links as the primary channel of publicly-funded business support, will not deliver the kind of specialised support which social enterprises need.
- ii. There were suggestions that more should be done by Government Offices and CLG to ensure that the voice of the third sector was heard in developing regional and local strategies. The same point was made by the North Yorkshire BME Strategy Board in relation to the voice of rural BME communities

4 Detailed analysis by theme

4.1 Vision and objectives

Do you agree with Defra's initial thoughts about the vision and objectives for our third sector strategy? If not, what alternatives would you propose and why? (page 7)

Defra's approach

4.1.1 The Consultation Document set out Defra's initial thinking on its vision for working with the Third Sector, and its objectives for a Third Sector strategy. Defra's vision is to help create a strong and independent Third Sector and to maximise the sector's contribution to Defra's vision of living within our environmental means. Defra's stated objectives are to:

- (i) use the skills and expertise of the sector to maximise the collective contribution to the Department's objectives;
- (ii) foster new and stronger social enterprises to help live within our environmental means;
- (iii) enhance its relationship with the sector, and create a level playing field for the conduct of day-to-day business; and
- (iv) reinforce mainstreaming of the Compact, and encourage good practice in the approach of Defra delivery bodies.

The responses

4.1.2 51 respondents dealt with this question directly, the large majority of whom broadly supported Defra's stated vision and objectives but expressed some qualifications.

4.1.3 Several respondents underlined the need for **Defra better to understand the distinctive characteristics and diverse nature of the sector** (Groundwork UK, Community Development Foundation, Educational Centres Association, Social Enterprise Coalition), arguing in many cases that Defra needs to adopt different approaches in dealing with different parts of the sector. Unison argued that the traditional strengths and values of the sector may be undermined by an over-emphasis on contracting relationships. The Centre for Sustainable Energy criticised the document for lacking any strategic segmentation of the sector as a basis for assessing different potential roles and contributions.

4.1.4 There are also concerns that the document did not adequately reflect the **2-way nature of the relationship** between Defra and the sector. There were suggestions that there should be more emphasis on two-way communication and action (the Wildlife Trusts), and a greater recognition of TSOs own agendas and independence (Waste Watch and National Energy Action, Commission for the Compact). BTCV argued that the inclusion of the term 'use' in the vision statement implies a relationship which is too top-down.

4.1.5 There were a number of comments which argued for **better linkages with social and economic objectives**. The World Wildlife Fund noted that sustainable development includes social and economic as well as environment issues. South West Forum pointed out that a thriving farming and food sector may conflict with other objectives. The JNCC would like to see

recognition of the importance of targets and objectives led by other Government departments. BASSAC saw the need for a clearer link with action on regeneration, arguing that current environment messages miss the majority of poor and disadvantaged.

4.1.6 Many respondents argued that Defra's vision and objectives for the third sector should include explicit reference to **creating strong rural communities**, including a couple of respondents for whom rural issues are not the prime concern (Co-operatives UK, Diocese of Liverpool).

4.1.7 A number of respondents queried the second of Defra's suggested strategic objectives, which commits to 'fostering **social enterprises** so that their business skills are fully used to help live within environmental means' (BTCV, West Mids Rural Affairs Forum, Dioceses of Liverpool). Respondents noted on the one hand that other parts of the sector have an equally important part to play in helping to live within environmental means, and on the other that social enterprises may well have a different primary focus. One respondent suggested that there is something of a 'flavour of the month' in the document's emphasis on social enterprises.

4.1.8 Some respondents argued for **express recognition of particular viewpoints**. The Ethnic Minority Foundation argued that the vision needs to include a sound diversity strategy. V highlighted the contribution young people can make through their volunteering activities. Cornwall Centre for Volunteers argued for an explicit commitment to engaging with individuals and not just organisations.

4.1.9 There were **more fundamental criticisms** of the suggested vision and objectives from a few respondents. MSC described the document as an opportunity missed for fuller discussion of how the third sector might contribute to Departmental objectives. Foodaware described the document's vision as 'somewhat vague' and would like to see specific plans and targets. The Centre for Sustainable Energy argued that the paper contains no analysis of the problems that the strategy should address. BTCV saw no vision in terms of what Defra is looking for in its relations with the sector, and no statement of objectives.

4.1.10 There was also a fair amount of criticism of the **language** in which the vision and objectives are stated, and in the consultation document more generally. The Community Recycling Network would like to see Defra 'speak to the sector in language that is comprehensible and hopefully inspiring, not like this document which complicates some issues and misses others'. The word 'maximise' was criticised as vague - how do we know when we have got there? 'Capture learning' and 'reinforce the mainstreaming' are cited as examples of poor use of language or jargon.

4.1.11 Three respondents objected specifically to the use of the term '**third sector**', which was criticised as value-based, derogatory and holding little meaning for the public (Norfolk RCC, Foodaware, National Council for Women of GB).

4.2 Strategic partnering

Which Defra objectives, themes or issues offer the greatest potential for strategic partnering arrangements which would add value to existing activities? (page 12)

What model or approach to strategic partnering do you feel is most effective and appropriate for Defra? (page 12)

What roles do you feel strategic partners should perform? (page 12)

What should Defra offer in return to support strategic partners? (page 12)

Similar or related issues were also raised in Questions 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9 of the discussion paper on pro-environmental behaviours.

Defra's approach

4.2.1 The consultation document noted that Defra is keen to explore the opportunities offered by strategic partnering. It suggested that a small number of strategic partners might be drawn from among national third sector bodies whose objectives align with Defra's own. Such partnerships might perform one or more of a number of roles ranging from working with the Department on policy development through to championing Defra's agenda with other third sector organisations. The document postulated that each partnership might be focussed round a specific Departmental Strategic Objective, or it might take on a theme which cuts across DSOs. It posed four cross-cutting themes⁴ for illustrative purposes.

4.2.2 The document indicated also that the theme of 'greener living' had already been selected as a priority for strategic partnering. Ideas on how partnership arrangements might work on this theme in particular were further developed in the Department's discussion paper on working with the third sector on pro-environmental behaviours. This paper set out a more developed set of proposals for partnership machinery, envisaging the appointment of small numbers of delivery partners as well as strategic partners, and the establishment of a strategic policy forum. Defra's proposal was that strategic partners might be supported through a small capacity grant while delivery partners might receive grant to support activities on the ground.

General attitude to partnership proposals

4.2.3 There was no specific consultation document question seeking views in principle on Defra's proposal to establish strategic partnerships. However, the paper prepared by the Compact Group in response to the consultation paper well captures and presents the implicit views and concerns emerging from other responses. Their conclusion on strategic partnering is as follows:

⁴ (i) protecting vulnerable environments and communities through advocacy; (ii) enhancing waste, energy conservation and land management services; (iii) enterprise and entrepreneurship; and (iv) rural communities

While there is a wide range of views, this report generally welcomes the idea of strategic funding partnerships⁵ with certain third sector partners, although it notes that there are attendant risks, not least:

- The high level of uncertainty and confusion about Strategic Partnerships amongst participants in this review suggesting a communication need going forward;
- The possibility of resulting in two 'classes' of third sector organisations;
- That smaller rural organisations could effectively be excluded by the focus on larger national and largely urban organisations;
- That some strategic partners could allow themselves to be so incorporated into the process of government that they lost their willingness to be critical of government policy.

The report also notes that none of these risks result from the intention of the policy...but on how well they are implemented and communicated. Sensitive process is key here.

4.2.4 Discussion paper respondents were asked specifically whether the structures proposed in that paper (ie a policy forum, strategic partners and delivery partners) were the right mechanisms for working with the third sector. The large majority of those who dealt with this question responded positively. There were, however, some suggestions that the **emphasis should be on the role of the delivery partners** (Marine Stewardship Council, South West Wildlife Trusts, Youth Hostels Association). There were also concerns that the **machinery might become excessively bureaucratic and unwieldy**, with too much focus on talk rather than action (Action for Sustainable Living, Ashton Hayes Going Carbon Neutral Project); and that **smaller groups might be excluded** (Sustain, Women's Environmental Network, Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens).

Themes for strategic partnerships

4.2.5 There was widespread support among respondents for the four illustrative themes identified in the consultation document, and for the theme of greener living. While respondents differed as to which of the proposed themes should have greatest priority, no themes emerged as clear favourites. Some respondents suggested **different or additional themes** including food and agriculture (Foodaware), sport and recreation (CCPR), third sector advocacy at the regional level (TCPA) and accessing and enjoying nature (Leeds Voice). A few respondents advocated a different approach or expressed wider concerns. For example, ACRE and Action for Sustainable Living both queried the need to identify separate themes on which to base engagement, fearing that these would lead to **unhelpful compartmentalisation**. TPAS argued that none of the themes adequately recognise the importance of **involvement and empowerment of communities**. BTCV, by contrast, argued that the themes should be built around Defra's PSAs and DSOs on the grounds that the purpose of the partnerships is to deliver these objectives.

Approach to partnering

4.2.6 Respondents offered a range of suggestions in response to the question about their preferred model or approach to strategic partnering. A few simply noted that they agreed with the ideas listed in the consultation document; others expressly supported one or more specific ideas. Some emphasised the importance of identifying a **small number of national partners** with whom Defra might develop close relationships (including the Development Trusts Association and Social Enterprise Forum). Others were more concerned to emphasise the

⁵ The description of Defra's proposals in terms of strategic funding partnerships seems to be slightly out of line with the partnership model envisaged in the consultation document. It is a conflation of the strategic and delivery partnership ideas incorporated in the later discussion paper. The point rather reinforces the Compact Group conclusion about the high level of confusion and uncertainty about SPs.

importance of **not excluding smaller organisations** (including the Women's Environment Network, West Midlands Rural Affairs Forum, Rural Community Councils in Yorkshire). Several respondents argued for **flexible arrangements to reflect the diverse nature of the sector** (WRAP, Landscape Institute, Community Recycling Network). One organisation (Leeds Voice) went so far as to argue that **partners should be elected by their peers** to ensure that they represented the sector. Another thought that **a wider forum which decided on its own leadership would be preferable to partnering arrangements** (Farm Crisis Network and Arthur Rank Centre).

4.2.7 A recurring view particularly from rural bodies was that Defra should **build on existing structures rather than create new ones**, and that the RCC/ ACRE model was a good one on which to build partnership arrangements. This view was expressed also by several of those responding to the discussion paper on pro-environmental behaviours (Sustain, Soil Association).

4.2.8 Other concerns were that partnering should **not disadvantage holistic organisations** whose interests spanned a range of themes (Sustrans), and that there should be **regional and/or local as well as national arrangements** (SW Forum, Dorset Community Action). National Energy Action recommended the example of the Warm Zones programme, where NEA had successfully engaged others and leveraged EU funds. The Mayor of London proposed the Greater London Authority as an ideal strategic partner for Defra.

The role of strategic partners

4.2.9 Few respondents disagreed with the roles identified in the consultation document which ranged from informing policy development through to championing Defra's agenda with other TSOs. There was also general support for the more developed ideas set out in the discussion paper, where suggestions for the role of strategic partners were described in two categories relating to (i) what partners might do to influence Defra and (ii) what they might do to change their own organisation and networks.

4.2.10 The emphasis of most third sector respondents to the consultation document was very much on **partners' potential role in influencing Defra** rather than on their role in influencing the sector. There were recurring references to the importance of involvement in policy development at an early stage; the critical friend role; acting as a source of expertise on which Defra might draw; sharing evidence; identifying strategic priorities; offering fresh insights; and identifying areas where cross-departmental working is desirable. A few consultation document respondents did refer to strategic partners' potential **role in communicating outwards to the sector**, using phrases such as 'communicating where Government can't', 'engaging with smaller TSOs' and 'reaching out to hard to reach groups'. It is notable, however, that these comments came largely from public bodies rather than the third sector itself, specifically from the Environment Agency, the JNCC and the Commission for the Compact.

4.2.11 There were comments in response to the discussion paper that the **roles envisaged were very demanding** and would require investment in capacity (National Federation of Women's Institutes, Plunkett Foundation).

4.2.12 A number of consultation document respondents went beyond the roles envisaged in that document and **advocated delivery roles for strategic partners**. For example, they are seen potentially as offering infrastructure support to local groups and funding for community development initiatives (Church Urban Fund); operating small grant rounds and overseeing demonstration projects (National Youth Agency); and providing an education programme for schools to encourage pupils to take new behaviours home (Waste Watch).

Defra's support for strategic partners

4.2.13 The question of what Defra should be doing to support strategic partners was raised both in the consultation document and in the discussion paper (Q8). More than half of those responding in both contexts mentioned **funding**. Many emphasised the importance of stability and a 3-year grant commitment, with one organisation advocating a 5-year commitment. Related suggestions were for support for training and marketing materials, funding for secretariat functions and dissemination of information and reimbursement of travel costs, which one respondent argued should cascade down to smaller organisations making an input.

4.2.14 Second to funding, the most commonly articulated requirement was for **respect and support for TSO partners**, and for Defra to listen and take views on board. Respondents wanted 'input to policy' (Ethnic Minority Foundation), a 'sense of ownership' in policymaking (TCPA), 'mutual trust' (ACRE), acceptance of 'dissent and disagreement' and for partners to be 'nurtured, supported and valued' (Foodaware).

4.2.15 Other proposals were for **Defra endorsement of some partner activities** (Landscape Institute, YHA, Forest Stewardship Council) (but note that other respondents argued that Defra branding can be counter-productive), **reduced bureaucracy** (Church Urban Fund), **freeing up of data** for re-use (Phil Green), **Defra support for access to other government departments** (Woodcraft Folk, Groundwork UK), **leadership by example** and through legislative action (South West Forum), **work experience exchanges** and similar (RTPI, Federation of City Farms), and **encouragement of debate at community level** (Educational Centres Association).

Delivery partners

4.2.16 The discussion paper raised the question of what criteria Defra should use in selecting delivery partners, whose role would be to achieve pro-environmental behaviour change among significant sections of the population. Many respondents to this question emphasised **the importance of selecting organisations with a proven track record**. Other desirable **qualities** highlighted by respondents were good outreach networks, an extensive sphere of influence, a shared policy commitment and ethos, value for money, tried and tested methods of communication, a focus on demonstrable behaviour change, and ability to deliver at local and regional levels as well as to be represented nationally.

4.3 A third sector stakeholder group

What are the key roles which should be performed by a Defra third sector stakeholder group and how should it operate? (page 16)

How independent should the group be? For example, should it decide its own agenda and undertake its own secretariat function (with appropriate resourcing provided by Defra)? (page 16)

The discussion paper on pro-environmental behaviours invited

Defra's approach

4.3.1 The consultation document noted that the Compact Group had been established in November 2003 to foster good relations between Defra and the third sector, and to support the implementation of the third sector Compact and its codes⁶ across Defra activities. The document invited views on the continuing relevance, role and membership of a third sector stakeholder group, and in particular on the degree of independence appropriate for the group, and on how it should relate to Defra's delivery bodies.

4.3.2 The discussion paper on pro-environmental behaviours proposed the establishment of strategic policy forums on agreed themes, one of which would be pro-environmental behaviours. These bodies might involve interested organisations from all three sectors, including other Government departments and delivery agencies. Their aim might be to share evidence and insights, and to identify opportunities for a more co-ordinated approach. The paper invited views on the role and membership of such forums.

Compact Group response

4.3.3 Research commissioned by the Compact Group found a surprisingly low level of awareness of the Group among the third sector leaders included in its survey and some corresponding ambiguity about its relative importance and success to date. Nonetheless, it concluded that the arguments for continuing the group in some form were strong, noting the need for a group to oversee the introduction of the Strategy and also the negative note that disbanding the group would sound. Their submission recommended that the group should be reformed and relaunched with a broader remit and membership, and that its role should include more co-ordination with Defra agencies, RDA's and Government Departments.

General views on a stakeholder group

4.3.4 More than half of all respondents (61) commented on this issue, the majority implicitly if not explicitly supporting the view that there should be a Defra third sector stakeholder body of some kind. Dissenting voices were BTCV, which argued for a number of channels of communication rather than a single group, and NCVCC/NCVYS/ Rural Youth Network, who also

⁶ There are Compact codes covering Funding and Procurement, Community Groups, Volunteering, Black and Minority Ethnic groups and consultation and policy appraisal

noted the difficulty of covering the full range of interests in a single group. There was a warning against setting up a talking shop for those in the know, and requests for more clarity about what Defra is trying to achieve through the group (ACRE, Action for Sustainable Living, WWF UK). There were also suggestions that its role should be reviewed regularly to ensure continuing effectiveness and to avoid duplication (EA, RTPi).

Role and membership

4.3.5 A couple of respondents assumed that Defra's **strategic partners** will make up the core of the stakeholder group (DTA, Social Enterprise Coalition). However, this has to be set against the view of others that the membership of the group must include representatives of **smaller groups** and should perhaps **include regional or local groupings** (Sustrans, Rural Action on Merseyside Projects, Federation of City farms, WWF).

4.3.6 Some respondents saw **Compact monitoring and implementation** as at the heart of the Group's role (Commission for the Compact, Dorset Community Action, Phil Green, Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Organisations). Larger numbers saw a role for the group which is not directly linked to the Compact. As with the role of strategic partners, there are a **wide range of views** as to what that role should be. These include providing an opportunity for advice and dialogue, 'enhancing mutual understanding' (Rutland and Leicestershire RCC), 'constructive challenge for Defra' (Sustrans), 'championing the sector within Defra' (Groundwork), sharing evidence and best practice (Foodaware), providing a forum for open debate (National Youth Agency), outreach to groups that have been traditionally overlooked (Rural Action on Merseyside project). The suggestions also include some more executive-style functions such as identifying priorities for funding (Essex Community Reuse and Recycling Network), and leading on consultation with the sector (Furniture Re-use Network).

Independence

4.3.7 Most of those who dealt with this question considered it important that group should have a **degree of independence and its own secretariat**. The Environment Agency suggested that Defra might fund an NGO to supply the secretariat. Views were split as to whether the group should dictate its own **agenda**, or whether the agenda should be agreed jointly with Defra. The Environment Agency, for example, argued for shared ownership of the agenda so that all are committed to joint decisions. Chairing is noted as another key issue, with one respondent (Ethnic Minority Foundation) suggesting this should be shared.

4.3.8 One respondent noted that the **level of influence** is more important than the degree of independence (Furniture Reuse Network) while another suggested that Defra should commit to adopting its recommendations (Essex Community Reuse and Recycling Network).

4.3.9 There was unanimous acceptance of the view that the work of the group should be funded by Defra.

Role in relation to delivery agencies

4.3.10 Relatively few respondents commented on the group's relationship with Defra's delivery agencies, but those that did want to see better links. From the public sector, the Commission for the Compact suggested that the Group should be involved in mainstreaming compact implementation across the Defra family, and that representatives from the delivery agencies should join the group in some capacity. The Environment Agency did not comment on this issue. From the third sector, there were views that the group should have links to the agencies

(Social Enterprise Coalition, RTPI). The Farm Crisis Network and Arthur Rank Centre went further than this and argued that it is nonsense to expect the sector to cope with separate compact groups for each member of the Defra family.

Strategic Policy Forums

4.3.11 Views expressed on the **role of strategic policy forums** to some extent duplicated those expressed on the role of the stakeholder group with respondents mentioning the sharing of intelligence, identification and dissemination of best practice, advising on policy and similar. But many respondents also emphasised the **link to delivery**, with forums seen as taking a role in setting policy, action planning, budget setting and monitoring delivery.

4.3.12 There were **different views as to who should be represented** on the forums. While the Association of Charity Shops and CCORRN argued that members should be chosen not just for their reach but also their **ability to engage**, the Community Development Association argued that **expertise** and involvement in behaviour change work is more important. There were suggestions that membership must be **local** as well as national, and included exemplars from localised smaller delivery partners. There is a concern that **all sections of the population** should be represented (National Fed of Women's Institutes, Woodcraft Folk). Several respondents suggested that the **media** should be represented.

4.3.13 The Marine Stewardship Council and Groundwork are among those who said they would be happy to be involved in the work of forums. By contrast, Ashton Hayes Going Carbon Neutral Project noted that it would not have the capacity to be involved in a forum.

4.4 Funding, procurement and contract practices

What are the most important practical changes that Defra could make to the way it does business, which would improve our working relationship with third sector organisations? (page 17)

What more could Defra do to help create a level playing field for potential third sector suppliers in its own procurement procedures? (page 21)

Defra's approach

4.4.1 The consultation document notes that Defra has promoted the Compact to its own staff, and provided advice on its implications for consultation, procurement and grant funding. The document sets out Defra's commitment to 3-year grant funding and full cost recovery, to improving procurement practice to deliver a level playing field, and to looking at ways to support the sector's infrastructure. The document seeks views on further improvements in this area.

Responses

4.4.2 More than half of all respondents (59) deal with one or other of these questions.

4.4.3 Predictably, there is widespread support for Defra's commitment to 3-year grant funding, full cost recovery and creating a level playing field. Unison goes further and suggests that full cost recovery should be a statutory obligation. Among other suggestions for improvements to procurement and contracting arrangements are timely payment, proportionate reporting and monitoring requirements, fewer targets and more emphasis on outcomes, clearer commissioning requirements and quick response times. There are also suggestions that funders should be prepared to accept some risk in supporting less well-established organisations (Dorset Community Action, South West Forum), that a portion of contract value should be earmarked for third sector delivery (Leeds Voice), and that the size of contracts should be broken down where possible so as to open them up to the third sector (Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority).

4.4.4 A number of respondents would like to see the use of weighting to take account of the added value resulting in third sector delivery of contract work (Cornwall Centre for Volunteers, BTCV). In a similar vein, some argue for the use of 'social benefit' clauses (Essex Community re-use and recycling network, Unison).

4.4.5 There are worries expressed about diminished resources for the third sector, stop/start funding, late announcement of new funding streams, the ending of funding arrangements at short notice and spreading grant funding too thinly (TPAS, Community Council of Devon, Action for Sustainable Living, Herpetological Conservation Trust, Community Recycling Network, Simon Maclachlan). Several bodies urge continued support for RCCs.

4.4.6 The Commissioning Joint Committee - a body sponsored by CIPFA and representing all disciplines involved in local authority procurement - offers an interesting contrary view. It argues that the procurement playing field is not tilted against the third sector; the problem is

rather that the third sector is not always as well-equipped to tender convincingly. The job of work commissioners is to get the best deal for their client, not to favour or support particular potential providers. The voluntary sector needs to get itself better trained in how to tender for public and fixed price contracts. It should also be developing ideas itself on how requirements can best be packaged and specified to play to the strengths of the third sector.

4.5 Third sector organisations and Defra's delivery bodies

In what ways could both Defra and its delivery bodies work more effectively with third sector stakeholders? (page 8)

Defra's approach

4.5.1 The consultation document noted that many of Defra's delivery bodies are independent of Defra and in a position to develop their own arrangements for grant funding and working with the third sector. It indicated, however, that Defra is working with these bodies to promote the Compact and to encourage them to honour its spirit. The document said that Defra would share its awareness raising material with its delivery bodies and would work with them to provide for the publication of contact details for officials responsible for liaison with the third sector. It also planned to develop a third sector liaison network covering Defra and the delivery agencies, and would be considering the possibility of an annual forum.

Responses

4.5.2 While relatively few responses (18) dealt with the specific question of relations with Defra's delivery bodies, all but one of those that did comment pressed for stronger action from Defra to promote Compact compliance by those bodies. Many commented that encouraging delivery bodies to comply with the spirit of the Compact was simply not enough; they should adhere to its actual terms. Mechanisms for ensuring compliance should be developed. The Commission for the Compact was one of several respondents to argue that it should be a condition of funding.

4.5.3 Several respondents made the point that the fragmentation of the Defra family is difficult and confusing for the third sector (eg. Farm Crisis Network). Some form of simplification was desirable (TCPA). It was argued also that the fragmentation of delivery was contributing to a silo approach (WWF UK). The idea of an annual forum was generally welcomed, but it was considered not enough to ensure adequate communication. Regional meetings and web-based forums were among the suggestions for additional actions. Others argued for co-ordination arrangements that would be more inclusive of local and regional third sector organisations (Church Urban Fund, Community Development Foundation, Educational Centres Association).

4.5.4 The Environment Agency by contrast was happy with the approach proposed in the consultation document, emphasising that 'encouragement' was the right approach from Defra in its relations with delivery agencies. The Agency noted that they are exploring how they might apply the Compact principles, 'spirit' and standards to their work with the third sector. They indicate that any future arrangements made in relation to the Compact will be different to those of Defra.

4.6 The third sector and the environment

In what ways could Defra encourage third sector organisations it works with to commit to improve their own environmental performance? (page 17)

How best could Defra help third sector organisations to encourage their members and communities to choose greener living? (page 19)

How best could national strategic partners on the theme of greener living, deploy any grant funding in a way that helps local third sector groups and projects to contribute to achieving the overall outcomes? Are there successful models which could be adopted or adapted from other funding

Defra's approach

4.6.1 In the consultation document, Defra suggested that third sector organisations could improve their environmental performance by, for example, minimizing the impact of their operations on the environment and embedding environmental awareness into their learning and development procedures. Some organisations have put in place their own sustainable development action plans or environmental policies, and many more have signed the Third Sector Declaration on Climate Change which commits them to publishing such plans. Defra said that it would like to see third sector organisations learn from good practice like this and communicate their own commitment to environmental performance to their members and networks. It posed the three questions set out above.

Improving their own environmental performance

4.6.2 The Social Enterprise Foundation commented that many third sector organisations may already be more sustainable than most comparable private or public sector organisations. Several respondents also made the point that in many cases it is not a lack of willingness that holds them back but a lack of knowledge or resources, i.e. information on what works or capacity to invest in making the necessary changes (SEF, Herpetological Conservation Trust, some RCCs). In principle, Defra is preaching to the converted but many small groups may be unaware of what actions they could take on saving energy or water or recycling waste, for example.

4.6.3 Many respondents suggested that more could be done to **disseminate good practice**. As a first step, Defra should lead by example which would enable it to demonstrate the techniques and benefits to other organisations (Community Recycling Network, Gloucester RCC, NCWGB). Going on from this, ACEVO proposed that Defra should work with strategic partners to make the case for organisations to improve their environmental performance, emphasizing that it makes 'business sense' and offering mentoring/support. It should be presented as an integral part of what it is to be a professional, modern chief executive running an 'eco-efficient' organisation. Defra could bring third sector leaders together in a 'strategic partner forum' dedicated to addressing this issue and acting as a forum for coordinating

concrete action.

4.6.4 ACEVO also suggested that Defra in conjunction with other Government departments should encourage third sector organisations excelling in environmental practice to play an integrated leading role in the sector, acting as **'environmental champions'**. Several responses also asked whether any further use would be made of the environmental champions identified under Every Action Counts, and the Wildlife Trusts suggested that there should be at least one third sector organisation in each county which could cascade their experience of implementing change successfully to other third sector organisations.

4.6.5 It was proposed that Defra might work with Capacity Builders to resource a programme to support the dissemination of good practice, and that there could be annual awards to promote successful organisations as role models. ACEVO felt that Defra and OTS should work to provide **more support to third sector organisations wanting to improve their environmental performance**, but that this must be mainstreamed into existing capacity building. Alternatively, Defra and other departments should fund third sector organisations not just on the basis of full cost recovery but in a way that enables them to invest in improving their own performance.

4.6.6 There was a range of suggestions on how to **incentivise better environmental performance**. Many of those who responded suggested that in, say, two years' time all Government funding to third sector organisations should be made conditional on some measure of environmental performance. Some proposed that tenders (or contracts) should require conformity with an accredited standard such as BS8555 or ISO14001 (eg Groundwork), or a specially developed 'kitemark' standard for any organisations seeking Defra funding (CEMVS0). Others suggested different requirements such as a Sustainable Development Action Plan (BTCV) or some other proactive 'green improvement plan' (CDF, HCT), compliance with the Third Sector Declaration on Climate Change (several RCCs) or a charity-wide version of an Environmental Management System (Waste Watch). In the same vein, it was suggested that Defra contracts could require a regular audit of environmental improvement or submission of summary progress reports on their Action Plans (RAMP, Coop UK, EA, CUF, ASL).

4.6.7 The point was also made that there needed to be **better techniques for monitoring environmental performance**. ACEVO said that Defra should encourage the dissemination of existing systems and tools for measuring and monitoring environmental performance, and that this should be accompanied by an evolutionary approach to fostering a shared language and shared standards for measuring performance. This would facilitate benchmarking against other organisations in local areas and feedback on good (and bad) practice. Others commented that it would be useful to have a simple method of measuring carbon footprint (ELF) and some exemplar 'green plans' that could be tailored flexibly to each organisation's circumstances (HCT). For example, some organisations might be situated in rented offices and might need to take intercontinental flights because of the nature of their work. Their scope for green action would therefore be different from organisations without those particular constraints.

Encouraging communities to choose greener living

Defra's consultation document referred to the forthcoming Framework for Pro-Environmental Behaviour Change aimed at helping individuals to adopt greener lifestyles. It also said that Defra is keen to explore the potential for appointing a small number of third sector strategic partners on the theme of greener living, to make use of the fact that third sector organisations were trusted communicators with extensive networks and could also tailor messages to the communities that they served.

4.6.8 Many responses made similar points to those in paragraphs 3-8 above. They said that if

third sector organisations were able to improve their own performance and showcase examples of good practice, this would help to generate a **trickle-down** effect among their members and communities.

4.6.9 As regards reaching the wider community, CFG commented that information and knowledge are the key to understanding. If policy-makers can get people to sign up to the strategic agenda, those people are more likely to support individual actions that flow from it. A quotation from one individual, in response to the question 'Why act on CO₂?' was: 'It is not a question of whether what I do as an individual will or will not affect the planet over coming days and years. I know that what we do organizationally will influence the future and we have a responsibility to play our part'. At the same time it is important that the message should remember the social and economic aspects of sustainable development, because the environment will not be a motivating factor for everyone (WWF).

4.6.10 The general message was that **Defra and its partners need to clarify what is wanted, what counts as achievement and how it can be delivered** (Tees Valley RCC). Many of these issues are complex and the individual choices are difficult, but respondents generally felt that there was a lack of **practical examples of specific actions that people can take** to make a personal contribution. Evidence of how personal action can make a quantifiable difference in relation to carbon reduction targets, as well as tangible benefits in terms of cost savings, needs to be produced and disseminated more effectively to reinforce the messages and ensure that people feel part of the bigger picture (CFG, Coop UK).

4.6.11 On a similar point, BASSAC/TPAS said there should be **consistent messages from all parts of Government around climate change** and the environment. Defra should be prepared to accept feedback over the whole areas of Government policy, eg an additional runway at Heathrow or closing rural schools. It was difficult for organisations acting as strategic partners if other Government Departments were not seen to be doing their bit.

4.6.12 Some respondents argued that there needed to be more provision of expertise, specific advice and environmental services, and that these could all be provided by social enterprises if given the necessary resources (SEF and others). The free supply of toolkits to reduce energy costs or even discounted energy-saving products was also proposed. Others favoured a programme of structured community engagement, with the emphasis on action learning (learning by doing) and social learning (learning with others) as these methods provide practical and social support in a way that leaflets cannot do (WWF).

4.6.13 Finally, CFG suggested that the appointment of a **Climate Change Tsar** would provide a personal focal point for new initiatives in this field.

A possible greener living grant fund

4.6.14 The consultation paper invited views on how any greener living grant funding might be deployed, and sought information on successful models that might be adopted. While a widely expressed concern was that funding should reach small local bodies, one respondent argued that funding should be available to large and small organisations alike (West Midlands Rural Affairs Forum). There were suggestions that a range of small, medium and large grants should be available (Leeds Voice, Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Organisations).

4.6.15 A commonly expressed view was that grant should be deployed on a geographical basis, with some respondents advocating distribution on a regional basis (TCPA) while others argued for distribution at a local level through Community Empowerment Networks or similar. One respondent advocated funding direct to smaller organisations, suggesting that funding through county level TSO community foundations would be the next best option (Essex

Community Re-use and Recycling network). Two respondents thought that grant could best be delivered by partners with both a national and regional coverage, such as the RCC network and RVS network forum (South West Forum, RCC Yorkshire and Humberside region).

4.6.16 Respondents named a number of grant funds which might offer a useful model for the proposed greener living fund. These are listed in the table at Annex C. Other views on the fund echo those recorded in earlier paragraphs in this section.

4.7 Communicating with smaller bodies, and the role of advocates and gatekeepers

How could Defra work better with advocates, umbrella organisations and community gatekeepers to tackle climate change, protect the environment and champion the needs of rural communities? (page 18)

What structures and innovative consultation measures could Defra put in place to ensure policy making reaches out to smaller and more 'hard to reach' groups? (page 18)

Defra's views

4.7.1 The consultation document noted that there are hundreds if not thousands of third sector organisations whose objectives are broadly in line with those of Defra. It recognised the potential benefits of drawing on the expertise and knowledge of smaller, grass roots organisations in the third sector as well as larger well established organisations. It also acknowledged the need to develop the capacity of umbrella organisations and gatekeepers to engage with individuals and communities, and advocate their needs.

Responses

4.7.2 A group of respondents advocated **more use of existing channels** eg the ACRE/Rural Community Action Network (ACRE and two RCCs), county level structures (the Wildlife Trusts), the BCTV network, or the Global Action Plan model (Church Urban Fund). Several supported the use of umbrella organisations and gatekeepers (EA, WVN), but with the proviso that such organisations must involve others if they are seen as being representative (HCT). Defra should engage with these bodies at senior level to recognise their importance. Other models suggested were the Interlink information project in Cornwall, 'helper agencies' (BLF), the Community Empowerment Network system (Leeds Voice), Planning Aid (RTPI), community-led planning (SW ACRE), town/parish councils and faith groups (RAMP).

4.7.3 Other respondents favoured **developing new channels**. For example, Defra could commission local NGOs to develop links with known groups and identify new ones (EA) or to undertake consultations on its behalf (Groundwork). Alternatively, Defra could use third sector organisations to cascade information to others in their locality, following the system used in Every Action Counts (CRN). It would be helpful to re-evaluate EAC in consultation with a third sector panel and reach conclusions about which bits were good and replicable. One response suggested Environment Partnerships, such as the City of Bristol's initiative, as a possible model for cooperation with the third sector (Robert Jones). CFG suggested considering novel possibilities such as using GP surgeries or schools in rural areas.

4.7.4 Other ideas included working with infrastructure organisations to develop a strategy (CEMVS0) and holding a seminar to identify areas where there would be mutual benefits in working together (Foodaware). Also, Defra should use its influence with other Government Departments to promote the role of the third sector eg as consultees on the sustainability of

local strategies (WMRAN).

4.7.5 CFG commented that **reaching out to smaller, 'hard to reach' groups requires designated personnel, community based activists and a conscious effort to meet such people on their own territory, conceptually as well as practically.** The Social Enterprise Coalition felt that **strategic partners and other intermediaries could facilitate input from smaller organisations** by increasing a sense of influence, extending consultative reach via existing structures and translation into culturally appropriate terms. The DTA agreed that real openness and dialogue at an early stage of policy making would give partners confidence to engage the so-called hard to reach.

4.7.6 CFG said that third sector representatives needed to be briefed on policy issues and the evidence underlying policy priorities. For this purpose they stressed the value of **face to face communication** with the opportunities to question experts and for views to be exchanged (eg the quarterly meetings with the CVO). Several other responses suggested that **Defra representatives should attend regional networking events** organised by umbrella groups (CEMVSO) and that they should make an effort to hold **more local meetings, not just ones in London or regional cities** (CDF, Foodaware, Oxfordshire RCC). The RTPi thought it would be helpful to have a **nominated regional member of staff to act as a key known contact**, and a similar suggestion was made for 'account managers' to act as conduits between third sector organisations and Defra (Tree Council). CFG also pointed out that trust between organisations is the foundation of good partnerships and depends heavily on relationships built on respect between individuals. However, significant changes in Defra staffing and structures in recent years have meant that 'as soon as we get to know relevant staff and establish productive working relationships, they change jobs or move on to other fields. **There seems to be no obvious strategy for retaining corporate memory, or continuing to build on good practice internally.'**

4.7.7 TPAS/BASSAC proposed that Defra should establish a new model for consultation with all key players in the third sector by setting up a new **Third Sector Advisory Group**. They felt that Defra was too far removed from medium/small third sector organisations and even further from individuals within communities. To combat this, the new Advisory Group would be headed by Defra and made up of three tiers: large third sector organisations, medium/small third sector organisations, and individuals within communities acting as community champions. This would ensure that community ideas and voices were heard at national level and provide real two-way communication.

4.7.8 On consultation mechanisms, CFG suggested that **all government consultation documents should have a brief synopsis and key questions for stakeholder groups up front** so that they are readily accessible. Some system of prompting, such as text messaging, when new consultations are issued might also be useful. Consultations should generally be broken down into smaller chunks and it would be helpful to include examples of small groups in best practice publications (Essex CRN).

4.7.9 One response noted that **OTS had commissioned research on effective consultation with the third sector and suggested that Defra should look at the findings** [due to be published in September 2008] (Commission for the Compact). CFG took the view that depending on the nature of the consultation and the stage of thinking (strategic, specific, legislative drafting, pre-implementation) different methods were appropriate and more than one method might be appropriate to reach relevant stakeholders. There was **scope for more consultative meetings and stakeholder briefings, but these should not be confined to national events and individuals who attended in a voluntary capacity needed to be reimbursed for their out of pocket expenses.** Finally, **when people had commented they valued feedback** on the main issues raised, which ones had been taken on board and why

others had not been taken up. On some issues it might be possible to use umbrella groups (eg Foodaware) to disseminate information, identify key issues of relevance, stimulate debate and coordinate consultation responses from their third sector member organisations.

4.7.10 There were suggestions that **Defra could have a wiki/blog site where people could debate consultation topics (Leeds Voice), should issue regular electronic briefings (Essex CRN) or should have a dedicated part of its website devoted to third sector organisations ((RTPI).** However, CFG made the point that although the internet provides a hugely valuable tool for supplying information in a cost-effective and accessible way, many people in the third sector do not access the web on a regular basis. They may not own a computer, or may not have broadband connections, or may simply lack the inclination or skills to find what they need. For this reason **the internet should not become the sole means of communication with citizens and their representatives in the near future.**

4.7.11 Finally, one respondent felt that Defra should not use the term 'hard to reach' because it stigmatised people and put up barriers (RCC Leics).

4.8 Working with Local Authority and regional partnership structures

*How best could Defra help third sector organisations to champion climate change and the environment in local partnership negotiations and in preparing regional strategies?
(page 20)*

Defra's approach

4.8.1 The consultation document noted that CLG and OTS were already working together to ensure that the third sector was able to play a stronger role in Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Agreements. It recognised that third sector organisations could be very effective champions for a more integrated approach to a genuinely sustainable community and that, although most of them had traditionally represented social issues, there was significant potential to make the links with environmental priorities and play an active part in delivering environmental outcomes. In order to do this, they would need access to the latest data about environmental issues in their own areas, and to link up with other third sector organisations or agencies which had particular expertise or functions on environmental issues. Where local areas already had committed and thriving sustainability forums, these needed to be fully engaged in Local Strategic Partnerships and their work.

The responses

4.8.2 About a third of the responses addressed themselves to this question. One said that Defra should take a more active role in ensuring that regional strategies included environmental priorities (EA), and many felt that Defra should insist, via Government Offices, that such strategies should only be approved after effective third sector input. At the least, the need to work with local communities when preparing the strategies should be made more explicit (Oxfordshire RCC, SW Forum, Groundwork, CRN). Otherwise there was a danger that the strategies would focus only on high level solutions such as wind farms and would not recognise the cumulative benefit of many small actions. Some observed that the degree of local authority engagement with the third sector in fact varies widely, and suggested that Defra could collect evidence of best practice and circulate this to show what could be achieved (RAMP, Waste Watch) or provide a feedback website on what other local authorities were doing (Wildlife Trusts).

4.8.3 The majority of responses made the point that **many small third sector organisations lacked the capacity to engage effectively and required support in order to do so**. Often they could not afford the time to attend multiple local forums or to travel to regional meetings. Various remedies for this were suggested, mostly involving some kind of support either through **paying for their infrastructure networks or through paying them directly, eg as consultants**. Several felt that **third sector organisations generally needed to work through a network or through Regional Empowerment Partnerships in order to be effective, and noted that it was hard to get funding for such activities**. One response proposed website publication of priorities and actions by local area, on the grounds that regional events are too distant for local organisations (Essex CRN).

4.8.4 There were suggestions that Defra could fund a series of regional workshops, led by third sector agencies, to link themes and policy issues to produce collaborative plans, as they

had recently done on fuel poverty (National Energy Action), or that there could be an allocation of money to local authorities set aside for the kind of pilot projects that Defra was trying to encourage (Action for Sustainable Living).

4.8.5 Some respondents agreed with the consultation document that third sector organisations needed **good, up to date environmental information** relevant to their local area (ACRE SW, Foodaware) and one pointed out that promoting sustainability rather than just climate change would help to engage more third sector organisations. One or two commented that it was important for Defra to recognise the independence of third sector organisations and not in any way constrain their right to be critical of Government policy (Yorks/Humber RCCs, Commission for the Compact).

4.9 Rural engagement arrangements

In what ways can Defra help improve the effectiveness of engagement with the third sector in rural areas? (page20)

Are there any good models of effective rural partnerships that include third sector organisations, which the sector could learn from? (page 20)

Defra's approach

4.9.1 The consultation document noted that there are an estimated 40,000 grass roots third sector organisations in rural communities which help to build social capital as well as filling gaps in service provision. Such organisations are responsible for a diverse range of activities and play a big part in ensuring the social sustainability of rural communities. Defra encourages local partnership working between the third sector, local government (including town and parish councils) and local businesses. The third sector plays an important role in empowering and mobilising rural communities to achieve community-based solutions and actions.

Responses

4.9.2 About a fifth of responses addressed these questions, although there was some lack of clarity over whether Defra was seeking to engage more effectively with the third sector or seeking for the third sector to be more effectively engaged in rural areas.

4.9.3 Several responses **regretted the ending of Defra's Rural Social and Community Programme** which they said had created a yawning gap in investment in the necessary infrastructure and support services for community empowerment, advocacy and governance (ACRE, SW Forum, Oxon RCC). A number of responses thought that **Defra should work through existing networks** such as RCCs, Parish Councils, or the BTCV network (CEMVSO, WWF, BTCV) and two said that Defra should promote the existing parish plan model (ACRE, CRC). One favoured more use of geographical forums (Jon Holland).

4.9.4 The Social Enterprise Forum and the Development Trusts Association advocated focussing on **promoting community-led social enterprise** in rural areas. The RTPI commented that small local groups were particularly valuable for ensuring sustainability of rural communities and CEMVSO favoured **capacity building of community groups** to develop leadership skills, systems and management capacity. National Energy Action proposed making **practical improvements to community buildings** (eg in energy, water, recycling) through a grant scheme. However, BLF noted that funding tends to flow to where facilities exist and that other delivery methods may be needed for remote communities.

4.9.5 Other ideas for improving engagement included work shadowing (Community Council of Devon), making information available in different languages (CEMVSO), and better communication with the use of different media channels, eg incorporating messages into respected soap operas (Waste Watch). One response pointed to the important role that design could play in enabling changes in behaviour (SEED Foundation).

4.9.6 There was one suggestion that Defra should run a pilot project to explore online networking (Church Urban Fund) and one that there should be funding for networking and

research among rural town and parish councils (RAMP).

4.9.7 There were only 14 responses to the question about **good models of effective rural partnerships**. About half of these pointed to **RCCs and community-led planning** as being the prime example of effective partnerships. Two referred to **Regional Rural Affairs Forums and county-wide Rural Forums** (Leics RCC, ACRE SW) and others mentioned **parish councils/community groups** (ACRE) and **parish planning** (CRC), with specific praise for ACRE's 21st Century Villages initiative. One gave an example of a Community Empowerment Network (Jon Holland).

4.9.8 The Church Urban Fund said that there were many examples of churches working to address local needs eg with post offices, village halls, community-run shops and other social action projects. They also mentioned a scheme whereby the **North West Development Agency provided match funding for church expenditure to support the development of social enterprise in rural areas**. The Cornwall Centre for Volunteers called for Defra to support the infrastructure which develops active citizens through volunteering. They said that government objectives can be joined up through actions undertaken by citizens themselves owning the services in their community. Cornwall's LAA partners are using this way of working and they are seeking Beacon status for their LAA.

4.9.9 One response felt that the **LEADER+ approach as developed by Defra was a useful model** because it included networking, community engagement, innovation and inter-sector cooperation which encouraged the growth of the social enterprise sector (Cooperatives UK).

BME perspective

4.9.10 The North Yorkshire BME Strategy Board think-piece expressed concern that the consultation document was essentially 'colour-blind' and therefore did not address the problem of delivering social justice to minority ethnic communities in rural areas which are struggling to develop a third sector responsive to their needs. They pointed out that there has been very little research looking specifically at their policy and service needs and that there are neither effective networks nor, typically, agencies specifically designed to respond to those needs. Because minority ethnic groups in rural areas are often isolated, it can be difficult to achieve the critical mass necessary to create third sector organisations and there was a need to build the capacity of such groups to engage with issues such as climate change.

4.9.11 Although the third sector had a vital role to play in supporting minority ethnic groups because of their status as an interface with local and regional government, third sector organisations generally were under-resourced in rural areas and often failed to act as an advocate for minority ethnic communities. These communities should be seen as an asset making a positive contribution to rural areas and the rural agenda should locate them at the heart of its policies and processes and investment should seek ways to enhance that capital. Defra should therefore take the lead in 'visibilising' minority ethnic needs in rural policy frameworks such as this consultation, and in providing catch-up funding to the sector. It should also issue clear guidance to regional agencies to put minority ethnic needs equally at the heart of rural processes. For example, the LAA process offered real opportunities for Defra to work in concert with local councils to mainstream the race, equalities and community cohesion agenda.

4.10 Volunteering

Do you consider there would be value in Defra supporting a programme that engaged a range of volunteers in the work of Defra and its Executive Agencies? How can this best be developed? (page 20)

Defra's approach

4.10.1 The consultation document said that Defra recognises the value of volunteering and promotes a culture of volunteering among its staff. It said Defra was interested to hear views on how best to develop volunteering in Defra and in the public more widely. Views were sought specifically on whether Defra should develop a new programme to engage a range of volunteers in the work of Defra and its agencies.

Responses

4.10.2 A third of respondents (33) commented on this question. About half dealt with Defra's proposal to engage volunteers in its work and that of its agencies. Others commented on the possibility of a volunteering scheme for Defra staff and/or offered general views on volunteering.

Engaging volunteers in Defra's work

4.10.3 Those who commented on this proposal were split broadly evenly between those who favoured such a scheme, those who did not, and those with major reservations. Most respondents offering support for the scheme identified target groups which could benefit. Young people were most frequently suggested, but there were mentions also for those with low incomes, hard to reach individuals, and rural faith groups (National Youth Agency, NCVVO, NCVYS and Rural Youth Network, V, Social Enterprise Coalition, Council of Ethnic Minority VSOs, Rural Action on Merseyside Project).

4.10.4 Of those respondents who opposed the proposal, several argued that Defra should build on existing volunteer initiatives rather than set up its own. It should look, for example at the work of Home Improvement Agencies and the Tree Warden Scheme (Foundations, Tree Council). The Wildlife Trusts also argued that Defra should work through existing voluntary groups, suggesting that Defra's proposals could alienate the sector, where membership and volunteering were closely linked. Another opposing view was that volunteering is more likely to be effective in, and for, local communities (Sustrans, Action for Sustainable Living). The Environment Agency questioned whether it would be a good use of resources to engage volunteers in its work; its own experience had made clear that volunteer programmes are best run by third sector organisations, or local authorities.

4.10.5 Of those who expressed reservations about the proposal, several commented on the need to avoid exploitation of volunteers, through clear guidelines and application of the Compact's Volunteering Code (Ethnic Minority Foundation, Town and Country Planning Association, Commission for the Compact). The BTCV commented that the scheme would work only if Defra's starting point was volunteer motivation (skills, social contact, sense of achievement etc) rather than Defra's organisational need. They offer to discuss structured

opportunities with Defra.

Volunteering for Defra staff

4.10.6 Several respondents expressed support for a scheme which offered Defra staff opportunities to be volunteers. Brokerage services to place Defra volunteers, secondees and mentors were suggested by the Developments Trusts Association and the Social Enterprise Coalition. Volunteering England noted that employer supported volunteering is a vital strand of volunteering work. The Environment Agency noted that it already operates a volunteer programme for its staff in partnership with third sector organisations, offering 'Environmental Leave' of up to two days each year. They offer to explore how this existing scheme could be extended to staff of Defra and other agencies.

Other comments on volunteering

4.10.7 There were a number of other comments on volunteering. The South West ACRE Network noted that much work in rural communities is already done by volunteers. RCC (Leicestershire and Rutland) wanted to see Defra support for a programme of volunteers to act as Community Champions. Big Lottery Fund noted that support for volunteers is vital for the third sector. ACRE noted that volunteer organisations need more support, particularly in dealing with regulatory hurdles such as planning and health and safety.

4.10.8 There were also notes of reservation about volunteering. The Social Enterprise Coalition argues that not all those in deprived areas can afford to volunteer, and suggests that energy might better be channelled into creating jobs through social enterprises. Phil Green would like to see more emphasis on active citizenship through social networks rather than on formal volunteering.

4.11 Service delivery

In what ways could Defra further support an enhanced role for third sector organisations in delivering services which help tackle climate change, protect the environment and address rural needs? (page 21)

What are the key areas of 'market potential' where third sector organisations could provide new or improved services on climate change and the environment? (page 21)

What more could Defra do to help create a level playing field for potential third sector suppliers in its own procurement procedures? (page 21) -PART

Defra's approach

4.11.1 Drawing on the OTS' classification of its aims in working with the third sector⁷, this section of the consultation document explored issues around the role of the third sector in **delivering services** in Defra policy areas. It noted that the sector has been extensively involved in service delivery in the waste and recycling sectors, and has potential in the area of energy services to households and communities. Defra noted that third sector suppliers can offer additional benefits over and above those of commercial suppliers in terms of innovation and of community support. It invited views on what more Defra might do to support the role of the sector in service delivery, on what service areas offer greatest scope for third sector involvement, and on possible changes to its procurement procedures to support third sector involvement.

Responses

4.11.2 A wide range of respondents (41) commented on this group of questions. Many agreed that **service delivery by third sector organisations gives wider benefits**. ACRE said one of the third sector's potential strengths was the ability to join up agendas and areas of interest, achieving multiple outcomes.

⁷ (i) enabling voice and campaigning; (ii) strengthening communities; (iii) transforming public services; (iv) encouraging social enterprise; (v) supporting conditions for a thriving sector. See *The Future Role of the third sector in social and economic regeneration; final report*. Cm 7189. July 2007

4.11.3 There was **general support for the service areas identified by Defra** as a focus for third sector involvement. Many respondents proposed additional areas for consideration. **Support with communication and engagement** was frequently mentioned as an additional service area. The Women's Environment Network commented that third sector organisations were more trusted than the public or private sectors, while the Church Urban Fund identified faith-based networks as a key area of potential. **Community transport** was also mentioned frequently by respondents: ACRE said that this was an important area for innovation which struggles with a portfolio of funding sources. Other respondents proposed work on **sustainable food, land management, training, and using community buildings as exemplars**.

4.11.4 A number of respondents argued that the design of the service requirement should take more account of the wider benefits of delivery by the third sector. Several respondents proposed that government should place a value on achieving wider benefits by **adding a weighting for added value or social return on investment** (Cornwall Centre of Volunteers, Church Urban Fund), or **using social or environmental benefit clauses** (Essex Community Reuse and Recycling Network, Leeds Voice). The Social Enterprise Coalition argued that **funders should reassess the value of achieving joined-up objectives, and develop robust measures of effectiveness**.

4.11.5 Many respondents argued that an enhanced role for the third sector in service delivery needs **a greater commitment to capacity building**, from start-up support through a long learning curve. The Commission for the Compact was concerned that potential suppliers should not be excluded by lack of experience in procurement. Other respondents suggested skills training, networking and knowledge sharing, pump-priming funding, pilot schemes, marketing support, and support for local infrastructure. Some respondents identified that **capacity building is needed on both sides of the funding relationship**. Groundwork UK argued that the public sector needed to understand the resource limitations of third sector organisations, and those organisations needed to understand the processes and accountability requirements involved in procurement.

4.11.6 Other respondents suggested making **contracts of suitable sizes** for organisations with the capacity to deliver (Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority, Co-operatives UK), or **promoting the formation of delivery consortia** (Leeds Voice). The Development Trusts Association suggested using **targets for procurement from social enterprises**. Two respondents (CEMVO, South West ACRE Network) proposed **simplification of procurement processes**.

4.12 Social Enterprise

In what ways could Defra further support the contribution of social enterprises and entrepreneurs to environmental sustainability? (page 22)

Do you think there is merit in a strengthened Defra Social Enterprise Forum? If so, what do you suggest should be its terms of reference? Should the Forum engage with key social enterprises or just umbrella organisations? (page 22)

What information would you like to see on Defra's website under social enterprise that is not duplicated on other Government

Defra's approach

4.12.1 The consultation document affirmed the Government's commitment to creating the conditions which would enable increasing numbers of social enterprises to thrive. It said that Defra wanted to encourage more environmental entrepreneurs to come forward with ideas for enterprises that could help us all live within our environmental means. Defra itself would seek to ensure that social enterprises were not disadvantaged when submitting tenders for work, and would encourage its delivery partners to adopt the same principles. The document referred to a number of actions that Defra had taken to promote social enterprise, including hosting the Social Enterprise Forum, but acknowledged that there was more to be done to promote and foster a culture of social enterprises that deliver Defra's objectives.

Responses

4.12.2 There were 24 responses to the first question. The social enterprise think-piece described some of the characteristics of social enterprises as being market creation/innovation, locally based, community engagement (including the 'hard to reach') and multiple outcomes. It proposed four areas for strengthening collaboration between Defra and the social enterprise movement:

- securing a **cultural shift** within Defra and its delivery bodies so that social enterprise approaches were considered automatically alongside private sector approaches as a means of delivering objectives and procurement processes reflected this
- developing the **evidence base** for the value added by social enterprise approaches, particularly by improving measurement methods
- identifying **new social enterprise markets** or existing markets with growth potential
- facilitating access to tailored and relevant **business support and finance** for social enterprises to develop.

The think-piece then set out a detailed programme of specific actions that could be taken to achieve these aims.

4.12.3 Others made the point that **Defra could do more to champion the cause of social enterprise within Government**, not necessarily as being the cheapest option but an ethical

one (ACRE SW) and that Defra could encourage and support **more engagement by regional bodies with social enterprise** (CRN). Two responses proposed that annual awards and recognition of success at regional level might encourage further support. Waste Watch suggested that secondment of public sector employees to third sector organisations would help to foster a collaborative culture.

4.12.4 There were a few specific suggestions for **possible new markets or growth areas**. These included community-owned renewable energy generation such as wind or anaerobic digestion (Leics RCC), reform of producer responsibility for packaging compliance so that PRNs are issued to the collector (CRN) and setting up payment schemes for re-use credits (Essex CRN).

4.12.5 About a third of the responses agreed with the importance of ensuring **access to business support and finance**. The Environment Agency proposed creating a dedicated category for social enterprise within the funding programme and consulting umbrella organisations representing social enterprises on how to tailor the funding to their needs. The Community Finance Development Association likewise saw the need for supportive financing, business planning, internal capacity building and professional development training. It also recommended promoting awareness of CDFIs as a source of funding for social enterprises. The Big Lottery Fund pointed out that it now had powers to fund social enterprises and could use loans or endowments as well as grants. Others suggested offering start-up support or low rate office/warehouse accommodation (Leeds Voice) or information and toolkits (Church Urban Fund).

4.12.6 ACRE thought it best to focus on community engagement, community-led planning and infrastructure support to nurture initiatives. However, they cautioned that **social enterprise should not be treated as a silo**: village halls often qualified as social enterprises, earning their own revenue income, and could contribute significantly to changing behaviour within their localities. However, business link support was unlikely to be used for advice on energy reduction or maintaining their financial viability or advice on building management.

4.12.7 Only 20 respondents commented on whether there was merit in a **strengthened Social Enterprise Forum**, and just over half of these were unconvinced. Three did not know it existed or did not know enough about it (CRN, WWF, RAMP) and two others felt there was a lack of evidence to support its continuation (Dorset Community Action, Ethnic Minority Foundation). One made the point that an annual forum was not adequate for such a diverse constituency (Foodaware) and several agreed that it would be better to avoid duplication and instead integrate it into a larger group such as the stakeholder group (Groundwork, NCVCCO) or to strengthen representation at other existing social enterprise forums (Leics RCC, Essex CRN, Furniture Reuse Network). Eight respondents supported strengthening the Forum on the grounds that it was important as a source of expertise and representation specific to social enterprise: these included the Social Enterprise Coalition, the Development Trusts Association and Cooperatives UK (all co-authors of the think-piece), as well as CEMVSO, Church Urban Fund, TCPA, RTPI, and CFDA. One felt that it should meet more frequently and others that it should have higher status with a Ministerial Chair and a brief to draw up a plan of action (Social Enterprise Coalition, DTA).

4.12.8 On **the remit of the Forum**, ACRE commented that its remit would need careful deliberation if it is to play a role in delivering Defra's objectives. One response felt that the Forum should determine its own remit (Leeds Voice) while the TCPA said that its remit should be delineated from BERR's role. Several thought that the Forum should be involved with Defra's agenda at a strategic level (CDFI, Groundwork) by means of discussion, design and delivery. One response thought that it should promote the development of social enterprise (Leeds Voice) and another that it should provide access to procurement opportunities and funding

(Leics RCC). Other functions suggested were networking, awareness raising, sharing good practice and initiating pilot projects (CEMVSO). The Social Enterprise Coalition urged that the Forum should set clear objectives, be able to invite Defra agencies where relevant, and should advise Defra on establishing a dedicated social enterprise unit to drive a culture change across the department.

4.12.9 On **the membership of the Forum**, several respondents thought that it was important to have key social enterprises as well as umbrella organisations (Environment Agency, Church Urban Fund, Leics RCC) but the Social Enterprise Coalition felt that engagement with individual social enterprises should be mediated via umbrella groups or by invitation to the Forum. One response favoured open membership ((Leeds Voice), while ACRE was concerned that umbrella organisations and key enterprises did not relate strongly to the majority of groups and posed the question of who would decide where the boundary for inclusion should rest.

4.12.10 There were 14 responses which commented about extra information on social enterprise that could be put on the **website**. By far the most common suggestion was for case studies giving practical examples of successful outcomes to projects with tangible results (Waste Watch, Leics RCC, Cooperatives UK) or other dissemination of good practice highlighting social enterprise contributions to Defra objectives (CEMVSO, ACRE, Tees Valley RCC). A couple of responses said that there should be more information on how to set up social enterprises and how to secure funding (CEMVSO, CDFI) with information on financing and business support options available in rural areas. Other suggestions included more links to other social enterprise websites (Social Enterprise Coalition, Leics RCC, ACRE SW) and more information on the Social Enterprise Forum including its membership, agendas, reports, etc (Church Urban Fund, RAMP, Cooperatives UK).

List of those responding to third sector strategy consultation paper and/or environmental behaviours discussion paper

1. Third sector

Cross policy and non-Defra policy

Action for Sustainable Living
BASSAC
CCPR
Church Urban Fund
Commissioning Joint Committee
Community Development Foundation
Community Service Volunteers
Co-operatives UK
Cornwall Centre for Volunteers
Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Organisations
Defra Compact Group
Development Trusts Association
Envision
Ethnic Minority Foundation
Foundations
Groundwork UK
Leeds Voice
National Council of Women of Great Britain
National Federation of Women's Institutes
National Trust
NCVCCO, NCVYS and Rural Youth Network
Royal Town Planning Institute
SEED Foundation
Social Enterprise Coalition
South West Forum
Sustrans
Tenant Participation Advisory Service
Town and Country Planning Association
UK Workforce Hub
Unison
V (Russell Commission Implementation Body)
Volunteering England
Women's Environmental Network
Woodcraft Folk
Youth Hostels Association

Rural community (inc rural housing)

Action with Communities in Rural England
Community Council of Devon
Community Development Finance Association
Diocese of Liverpool, Church & Society Unit

Dorset Community Action
Gloucestershire Rural Community Council
Humber Rural Pathfinder Board
Norfolk Rural Community Council
Oxfordshire Rural Community Council
Plunkett Foundation
Rural Action on Merseyside Project
Rural Community Council (Leicestershire and Rutland)
Rural Community Councils in Yorkshire and the Humber Region
South West ACRE Network
Tees Valley Rural Community Council
West Midlands Rural Affairs Forum
West Midlands Rural Community Council Network

Waste

Association of Charity Shops and CCORRN
Community Recycling Network UK
Essex Community Reuse & Recycling Network
Furniture Re-use Network
Waste Watch

Energy conservation and climate change

Centre for Sustainable Energy
National Energy Action

Wildlife and countryside

BTCV
Campaign to Protect Rural England
Herpetological Conservation Trust
South West Wildlife Trusts (workshop)
The Wildlife Trusts
World Wildlife Fund UK

Farming and food

Country Markets Ltd
Farm Crisis Network and Arthur Rank Centre
Foodaware
Soil Association
Sustain

Other Defra policy area

Campaign for Clean Air in London
Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens
Forest Stewardship Council
Landscape Institute
Marine Stewardship Council
Tree Council

2. Local authority and LA body

Cross policy and non-Defra policy

Mayor of London
Oxfordshire County Council

Waste

Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority

3. Other public sector (inc. Defra agency or delivery body)

Cross policy and non-Defra policy

Big Lottery Fund
Commission for the Compact
Educational Centres Association
National Youth Agency
Regional Development Agencies

Rural community (inc rural housing)

Commission for Rural Communities

Waste

Waste and Resources Action Programme

Energy conservation and climate change

Ashton Hayes Going Carbon Neutral Project (NW006)

Wildlife and countryside

Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Other Defra policy area

Environment Agency

4. Private sector/business bodies

Energy conservation and climate change

CarbonSense

5. Private Individuals

Cross policy and non-Defra policy

2

Rural community (inc rural housing)

1

Waste

1

Energy conservation and climate change

2

Think piece summaries

Leading better environmental performance in the third sector

Summary of think-piece by the ACEVO Sustainability Special Interest Group

ACEVO (Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations) was asked to tackle the question 'in what ways could Defra encourage third sector organisations it works with to commit to improve their own performance'. The think piece is the result of a one-day workshop with members, and with reps of Defra, OTS, CLG and NCVO.

The paper takes the view that the sector's environmental performance is not as good as it should be. While the sector boasts members who are strong on leading behaviour change and others who are dedicated to promoting environmental sustainability, these strengths are not brought together to promote better performance across the sector.

The paper makes proposals for improvement under five thematic headings:

- i. **Leadership.** Environmental leaders may avoid taking on the role of sector leaders in partnership with Defra because of the 'politics of opposition'. They should be encouraged to become '**environmental champions**'. A strategic partner forum should be established to facilitate this leadership.
- ii. **Supporting green skills.** Third sector investment in skills tends to be under-funded, and training in environmental good practice can be of low priority. OTS and Defra should provide **more support for investment in environmental performance**, and this should be mainstreamed into existing capacity building exercises.
- iii. **A better networked sector.** There should be a **Strategic Partner Forum** dedicated to bringing members together to drive up environmental performance. Defra should support strategic partners to act as environmental champions.
- iv. **Incentivising better performance.** Government contracts should integrate **environmental performance into contracting processes** (eg bidders being asked to provide copies of environmental strategy, as they currently often are for equal opportunities).
- v. **Measuring and monitoring.** Need to develop common **standards** and language to monitor and compare performance. The private sector currently does much more of this.

Towards a Third Sector Strategy – Foodaware think-piece

Summary of the think-piece by Foodaware, the Consumers' Food Group

Foodaware is an umbrella body which aims to give UK consumers a strong voice in food policy by bringing together organisations that represent them.

Their remit was to consider how third sector organisations might increase their contribution to protecting the environment. Foodaware was asked specifically to focus on how Defra could work better with advocates, community gatekeepers and umbrella organisations. A special meeting of members was held to discuss the issues.

Points highlighted in the conclusions are:

- Defra's communication channels need clarifying.
- Personal relationships are as important as technology to good communications.
- Defra needs to do more to communicate key policy issues and developments to third sector organisations. For example, not all focus group participants had been aware of LAAs.
- Defra's website needs further improvement.
- A Climate Change Tsar would provide a useful focal point (this idea not developed in the text).
- The internet should not be the sole means of communication; there is too much information to sort. Small third sector organisations need help to sort the morass of information available; having some paid individuals to highlight relevant matters would be helpful.
- New means of communication such as texts and wrist bands might be considered.

Other points of interest in the paper include:

- Defra needs to understand that third sector bodies have their own agenda and do not like to be seen as a means of delivering Defra's policy objectives on the cheap;
- If Defra wants to communicate with hard to reach groups, it needs to make efforts to make contact with people on their own territory. They offer the example of a rural GPs' surgery with a CAB on the premises.
- Animal Health and Welfare divisions in Defra have developed some good practices in communicating with consumers (eg establishing a consumer liaison post, quarterly consumer meetings with Chief Vet., tele-conferences with consumer reps etc). Climate change divisions should consider adopting similar practices.
- Reaching out to Government at all levels costs the third sector money. Their costs in liaising with members, maintaining networks, attending meetings, co-ordinating and disseminating information etc need to be met by Government if they wish to promote partnership working.
- The third sector strategy document is described as an example of poor practice in terms of jargon and lack of focus tailored to the interests of consumer groups.

Towards a Defra third sector strategy: consultation findings an emerging issues and options

Learning to live differently

Summary of views expressed in two documents by Bassac (British Association for Settlements & Social Action Centres) and TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service)

The two organisations jointly ran two focus groups in London and Middlesborough to assemble views. There were seven groups represented at the London session, including three from local (specifically shire county) bodies. The Middlesborough session had 22 attendees representing 9 groups, including four tenants groups and one RCC. They provided two reports as outlined below.

The first report notes the points to emerge from the discussion groups, summarising these in a brief note on 12 themes. These are:

- (i) The consultation document itself uses **too much jargon** and 'is a barrier to getting involved with Defra'.
- (ii) Local groups **don't necessarily know who Defra is**. A general perception was that the Department's only concern was rural communities.
- (iii) Defra needs to **get out and about** to communicate with and understand local communities.
- (iv) **Communication is a two-way** business.
- (v) There needs to be better access to **funding**, more notice of new funding streams, recognition of the need for revenue funding and three-year commitment.
- (vi) **Partnership arrangements** should involve two-way communication. Any national advisory group should include both big and small organisations (including tenant and residents groups). The Middlesborough group also wanted to see a regional based forum.
- (vii) There needs to be more **consistency of messages from across Government**. Some policies – eg rural school closures and Heathrow expansion – seem to cut across Defra policies.
- (viii) **Learning from good practice**
- (ix) Improving **local authority** practice.
- (x) More clarity from Defra on the role of the **compact group**.
- (xi) Concerns about how the concept of **strategic partnering** fits with the desire to hear from smaller and more community based organisations.
- (xii) Defra climate change agenda needs to be more **issue driven**.

The second report provides a list of principles which it argues should inform 'learning to live differently'. There are five top level principles (social justice, participation, equality, learning, co-operation) followed by nine second order principles (transparent, bottom up etc) followed by 16 more principles brigaded under four headings (principles such as 'builds on the role of community anchors', 'shares intelligence about what works in local areas').

Black and minority ethnic voluntary and community sector organisations in rural areas and Defra

Summary of think piece prepared by the North Yorkshire Black and Minority Ethnic Strategy Board in response to the Defra Consultation Document

This think piece was developed following (i) a literature review of material on BME communities in rural areas; (ii) a postal questionnaire sent in February 2008 to more than 60 organisations led by, working with, or having some responsibility for responding to the needs of, BME communities; and (iii) a workshop for interested bodies held in York in Feb 08.

The report comprises:

- (i) **An overview of the current state of knowledge about the situation of the BME population in rural areas.** Important conclusions are that the rural BME population is relatively small but growing; and that the chances of being a victim of racially motivated attack are higher in rural areas.
- (ii) **The characteristics, distribution and needs on the BME population in North Yorkshire** highlighting, inter alia, their diversity and geographical isolation
- (iii) **Feedback from the survey and workshop** which identifies seven key issues of concern, considers the limited role that the voluntary sector is currently playing in addressing rural BME issues, and commenting on the limited engagement of the community with the environmental sustainability agenda.
- (iv) **Messages for Defra**, which are:
 - The **'colour-blindness'** evident in most rural policy documents needs to be reversed. Rural BME needs should be identified, and policies developed to deal with them.
 - The historical failure of Defra and rural agencies to **invest in the BME community** also needs to be reversed.
 - Defra and other key rural bodies should proactively **champion BME rural communities and businesses**.
 - Defra **staff should be better trained** to understand race and cohesion issues.
 - Defra should work with **rural local authorities** to improve their performance on race relations and equal opportunities.
 - Defra needs to help build the capacity of BME groups to engage better with **environmental sustainability issues**, where their engagement is currently low.
 - Defra should work alongside **regional infrastructure organisations** such as the Yorkshire and Humberside Regional BME panel to promote the rural perspective.
 - It should recognise the **inter-relationship with urban areas** while not allowing these to obscure the distinct needs of minority groups in rural areas.

Social enterprise and Defra's objectives: an agenda for collaboration

Summary of think-piece prepared by: Co-operatives UK, Development Trusts Association, Plunkett Foundation, RISE, Social Enterprise Coalition

This paper:

- (i) sets out the principles underlying social enterprises, and describes the added value which the sector can offer through market creation, community engagement, locally-based operations and the delivery of multiple outcomes;
- (ii) briefly describes what is already happening within the sector in support of Defra's objectives, highlighting how individual enterprises deliver multiple outcomes and benefits;
- (iii) sets out a proposed agenda on which the authors would wish to work in collaboration with Defra.

The agenda which the consortium would like to pursue with Defra covers:

- (i) **Cultural shift.** Actions to secure a cultural change within Defra and its delivery agencies so that social enterprise approaches are considered automatically as a means of delivering objectives. Measures might include facilitated visits by policy staff to relevant social enterprises, refinements to procurement policies and procedures, use of social enterprise evidence base to inform policy development.
- (ii) **Building the evidence base.** Actions to improve the standardisation of measurement of the benefits delivered by social enterprises and, in particular, of the multiple benefits which 'map onto the achievement of multiple Defra policy objectives'.
- (iii) **Market development.** Actions to identify new markets with potential for social enterprises, or existing markets with potential for growth, which will help Defra to deliver its objectives. This might in particular include work to explore opportunities in the area of encouraging compliance with regulation in farming practice and waste contexts.
- (iv) **Business support.** Actions to facilitate access to relevant business support and finance. A particular concern is that BERR-led rationalisation of the business support programme, which proposes greater reliance on Business Links as the primary channel of publicly funded business support, will not deliver the kind of support needed by social enterprises.

The paper argues that this work needs to be taken forward with support and collaboration from OTS.

Environmental justice think piece

Summary of think piece prepared by Capacity Global and the Environmental Law Foundation

The authors held a facilitated meeting with representatives of the third sector⁸ to consider key consultation issues and themes, and offer practical recommendations for ways in which Defra could work more effectively with the third sector. Their main focus was the issue of tackling environmental inequalities.

Five key issues were identified.

- (i) **Leadership.** Defra should make a clear public statement of its commitment to environmental justice and the rights and responsibilities of people to live in a clean and healthy environment.
- (ii) **Embedding.** Defra should promote a clear understanding of environmental justice and what it means in practice for Defra, OGDs and the environmental performance of its third sector partners.
- (iii) **Framework.** Defra should provide a public and transparent framework for how it will promote environmental justice.
- (iv) **Leverage.** Defra should use its influence, networks and partnerships to promote understanding of environmental justice, and to 'illustrate the importance of funding for environmental justice initiatives'.
- (v) **Behaviour change.** Recognise and gather evidence on how environmental justice issues can be used to create pro-environmental behaviour change amongst the third sector and their stakeholders.

The paper contains a number of largely procedural suggestions to amplify these points. There is however no developed definition or discussion of environmental justice and its relationship with Defra policy priorities, and parts of the paper are unfinished.

⁸ Groundwork UK, WWF, London Sustainability Exchange, FOE, BASSAC, Civic trust, Environmental Law Foundation, and London 21

REconomy think piece

Summary of think piece prepared by Reconomy CIC

Reconomy CIC is a new partnership between the principal national third sector networks representing front-line bodies working on waste-related issues. The partnership has been brokered by London CRN. The think piece drew on focussed interviews and wide ranging conversations with TSOs, support networks and central, regional and local government contacts.

The following are among the main points to emerge from the think piece.

- The paper welcomes the embedding of responsibilities for third sector matters within the **cross-cutting Sustainable Development Directorate** in Defra. It notes a promising emphasis on **collaboration** in the consultation document, and argues that **strategic partnerships** have considerable potential to contribute to the achievement of departmental goals.
- The authors attach importance to the new Departmental strategic objective to champion **sustainable development**, underlining the economic and social as well as the environmental elements of this agenda. They argue that Defra's **inter- and intra-departmental relationships** in pursuing this objective are at least as important to the success of the third sector strategy as its own direct funding of TSOs.
- The paper notes the third sector capability to deliver **multiple outcomes**, citing the example of an appliance reuse centre which handles specialised waste, provides affordable goods, trains marginalised people, creates local employment and sustains a community hub. It urges Defra to support new approaches to **procurement and commissioning** which take account of a broad - based view of service objectives, and to influence its agencies, other government departments and local authorities to do the same.
- The paper notes the importance of **the 'place' agenda**, and urges Defra to work with TSOs to define LAA priorities which further Defra objectives. There is a suggestion that Defra might commission a TSO to develop a LAA toolkit to help all TSOs to influence local communities effectively.
- The paper urges that the Strategy address the third sector at large, and not just the 'Defra slice' of it, and that it encourage **TSOs working outside the traditional sustainability sector** to embed sustainability in their work. It argues also that Defra should not be shy of fostering collaboration between disparate third sector bodies.
- The paper notes the **support needs of small fledgling enterprises** as well as the better recognised needs of start-ups and of mature organisations. It also argues for a **sustainable skills strategy** to be incorporated in the Third Sector Strategy, and for express recognition in the Strategy of the **role of support and infrastructure networks**.

List of funds cited as potential models for a greener living grant fund

Respondent (s)	Fund	Comment
Co-operatives UK	Carbon trust model	Need to avoid corporate flummery
Church Urban Fund	LEADER approach	Successful model
Council of Ethnic Minority VSOs	CEMVO small grants scheme	Operated with an independent panel
i.TPAS ii. Development Trusts Assoc	Every Action Counts	- Some good and some less good aspects (ii) Was over-engineered from the centre
Environment Agency	UK2000	Concerns about this model
Development Trusts Assoc	Adventure Capital Fund Yorkshire Key Fund	Both usefully combines grants and loans
National Youth Agency	Neighbourhood Support Fund/ Young People's Development Programme (DoH funded)	Successful models
BTCV	- Big lottery fund Green Spaces and Sustainable Communities strand 2001-06 - GreenPrints, run by BTCV	Both are potential models
BTCV Groundwork UK	Big Lottery Fund Changing Spaces	Uses national consortia employing locally based facilitators to help groups deliver projects
ACRE	Rural Social and Community Programme	Demonstrated excellent understanding of how to generate community empowerment and community action
The Wildlife Trusts	Rural Action (1990s)	Linked Wildlife Trusts, RCCs and BTCV)
BTCV, Dorset Community Action	Grass Roots, run by CDF for OTS	Could perhaps join up with this programme
Educational Centres Association	Breathing Places in a Box	This could be adapted
Diocese of Liverpool	Faiths4Change – funded by EA and NWDA	An example of what might be done
Mayor of London	CRISP's ex-IT scheme in Southwark	An example of what should be supported
Merseyside Waste Disposal Auth.	WRAP and BREW	Funding should be co-ordinated with existing pots to avoid duplication
Centre for Sustainable Energy	Community Action for Energy	A successful model