

**A Sustained Lesson –
Reviewing England’s
Sustainable Development
Education Panel**

DfES/DEFRA

February 2003

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SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation One

1. The Review recommends that the Sustainable Development Education Panel is wound up at the end of its current term of appointment (ie, February 2003).

Recommendation Two

2. The review recommends that in 2003 DfES and DEFRA Ministers, consulting other departments, consider the ESD strategy that will have been produced by SDEP, and consult on both that strategy and the type of stakeholder involvement process that might be necessary to ensure that the strategy is achieved.

Recommendation Three

3. To assist with this process, the Review recommends that an inter-departmental working group is set up early in 2003 to prepare material, based on SDEP's draft, for public consultation, after which it should provide advice to Ministers by the summer of 2003. It recommends that Ministers consider the inclusion of representatives of sectors outside central government in the inter-departmental working group.

INTRODUCTION

The review process

Financial Management and Policy Reviews

4. It is Government's policy that a Financial Management and Policy Review (FMPR) of each Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) should be carried out by the sponsoring Department every five years or so, as a major component of a programme of continuous improvement under the Modernising Government agenda¹. The Sustainable Development Education Panel (SDEP) was created in February 1998 and Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Ministers decided to commence the review at the start of SDEP's fourth year in March 2002 so that, in the event that they deemed a continued or successor body necessary, there would be sufficient time to complete the selection process before the expiry of present appointments in February 2003.
5. FMPRs are carried out in two stages. The Prior Options stage assesses whether there is a continuing need for the functions or services provided by the NDPB, and whether these should continue to be provided by a public body, considering the extent to which its objectives either have been fully achieved, or will be through the continued existence of SDEP.
6. In the second stage a forward-looking review examines the operation and management of the NDPB, to establish the best organisational options for delivering the functions and services and developing and improving performance

¹ Though the possibility of scrutinies being better attuned to the business cycle of the organisations concerned is currently being considered.

in the future, including the need for any changes to the present terms of reference, membership and operation of the body, together with its strategic relationship with sponsor Departments.

Context of the Review

7. Ministers agreed that the two stages of the review of SDEP could be carried out concurrently, without however presupposing that the continuing existence of SDEP would necessarily be the outcome of the first stage. In fact the review team decided to report at the conclusion of the first stage. This was because Ministers agreed, after the review had been announced and consultation initiated, that SDEP should prepare a draft Sustainable Development Education Strategy for England, which Government would adapt, consult on, and possibly adopt. Although not widely known, even among consultees, as it had not been the subject of any public announcement, this proposal had considerable influence of the Review's conclusions. The review team was mindful of the fact that SDEP's first objective was *to promote a strategic approach to sustainable development education in England* (see aim and objectives at Annex C). It was clear that the type of advice and stakeholder engagement likely to be required would be very different if such a strategy was put into place.

Conduct of the Review

8. The review was overseen by SDEP's sponsoring division in DEFRA, within the Environment, Business and Consumers Division of the Environmental Protection Group. The review was initiated by a member of the team with no prior involvement with SDEP, Dr Jeremy Marlow. However, when he was assigned to other work, Andy Kirby, manager of that team, took the lead.
9. The work was managed by a Steering Group involving members of both sponsor departments, comprising:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Bob Ryder | Head of Environment, Business & Consumers Division, DEFRA |
| Kevin Brady | Team Leader, Youth Service Unit, DfES |
| Janet Dallas | Team Leader, Curriculum Division, DfES |
| Libby Grundy MBE | Director, Council for Environmental Education |
| Andy Kirby | Team Leader, Environment, Business & Consumers Division, DEFRA |
| Jeremy Marlow (until May 2002) | Policy Advisor Environment, Business & Consumers Division, DEFRA |
| Richard Sharland | Director of Development and Marketing, Groundwork UK |

Terms of Reference and Review Procedure

10. The Review was formally announced by DEFRA and DfES press notice on 6 March 2002 inviting interested parties to contribute their views. A copy of the press notice, which also contains the full terms of reference, is at **Annex A**. This was sent to about 900 organisations which had previously been on SDEP mailing

lists or had expressed an interest in its work or the review, and generated 25 written responses: one each from private individuals and local authorities; two each from educational institutions, professional bodies, and executive agencies; and the remainder from non-governmental organisations.

11. The review team also interviewed 17 people, two-thirds women, who were expected to have a particular interest in SDEP's work. These included the staff of DfES and DEFRA, the Sustainable Development Commission and the UK Youth Parliament. Lists of those who responded in writing and of people interviewed are at **Annex B**. The review was carried out between March and August 2002.
12. The review was conducted in broad accordance with the *Compact on Relations between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in England*, and its code of good practice on consultation and policy appraisal².
13. The review team would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who took part in the process, either by contributing in writing or being interviewed on the telephone or in person.

Background information

Creation of SDEP

14. Discussion of the concept of an advisory body for ESD appears to have been first documented in government publications in a report that DETR commissioned from a secondee, Jennifer Jones. In *The World in Our Hands* (1996) she recommended that

The Government should consider whether to convene an external panel...including educationalists from primary, secondary and tertiary education, alongside environmental specialists. The panel's role would be to facilitate coordination of the activities of the entire sector involved and to make recommendations to key players.

15. At a conference on 27 February 1995 entitled *Environment And Education: The Way Forward*, hosted by the Secretaries of State for Education and for the Environment, the idea of a series of conferences on policy development had been aired, but, a year later, a panel now was judged likely to be more effective. A joint DfEE/DETR leaflet published in July 1996 entitled *The Government's Strategy for Environmental Education in England* stated that the Government intended to appoint such a panel, for England only.
16. In March 1997, the sustainable development charity Forum for the Future and DETR sponsored a one-day seminar with the aim of developing an action plan to take forward the ideas of *Taking Environmental Education into the 21st century*. Their conclusions influenced the terms of reference and nature of the Panel, envisaging a body of ten persons meeting several times a year.

² Home Office *Consultation and Policy Appraisal: a Code of Good Practice*, undated

17. The appointments process took some time to complete, as it became clear that two dozen people would be necessary to provide a body with the skills to look at ESD in domestic, workplace and the full range of formal education spheres. On 27 February 1998 the Deputy Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Education and Employment set up the current SDEP, made up of members of business, local government, education and voluntary sectors. SDEP was to have an initial life of five years, after which its achievements would be reviewed. The terms of reference of SDEP are given at **Annex C**.

Membership

18. SDEP initially had 23 members, the final place being filled two months later, all appointed for three years. However, before that time some vacancies had been created through resignation, so, following advertisement and interview, two further appointments, both women, were made from the business sector in 2000. Ministers felt this to be an important area for SDEP, and Dr Alan Knight of B&Q had left to chair Advisory Committee on Consumer Products and the Environment (ACCPE) and, in due course, serve on the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC). In March 2001, all but those two appointments expired. Twelve members, including the Chairman, were reappointed for a further two years, and eight new appointments were made, after advertisement and interview, of whom one has since resigned. These included a practicing teacher and representatives of women, faith communities and trades unions. Female representation was increased and minority ethnic representation introduced with these new appointments, and the age distribution widened. The Review Team has made comparisons with other sustainable development NDPBs: the Advisory Committee on Business and The Environment (ACBE), the Advisory Committee on Consumer Products and the Environment (ACCPE), and the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC). These are favourable in terms of gender and ethnic diversity but unfavourable in terms of the age range. Table 1 sets out current figures.

Table 1 Composition of some DEFRA Advisory NDPBs, July 2002

| Body | Members | Female | Non-white | Disabled | Range of birth years |
|--------------|----------------|---------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| SDEP | 21 | 10 | 3 | 0 | 26 years |
| ACBE | 21 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 35 years |
| ACCPE | 19 | 8 | 2 | 0 | 39 years |
| SDC | 24 | 11 | 1 | 0 | 39 years |

Attendance

19. SDEP has met formally up to 11 times per year. This is more than originally envisaged, and a relatively high number, the current round of ACBE members having met only eight times since their 1999 appointments. Altogether 34 people have served on SDEP at various times. The attendance records of members (up to July 2002) have varied from 7% to 91% of possible attendances, with an average of 55%; the average for currently serving members being 63%. This is very close to the 69% for ACBE since the 1999 appointments. SDEP has also held a residential awayday each year, and rarely a month has gone by without a meeting of at least one standing sub group or ad hoc team.

Costs of SDEP

20. The Review Team have calculated the costs of running SDEP using standard civil service staff and accommodation costs, and then adding travel and subsistence costs, the costs of consultancies carried out on behalf of SDEP and the costs of publications. The total are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Costs of Sustainable Development Education Panel (£UK)

| Year | Staff cost | Travel cost | Consultancies | Publications | Total |
|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| 1998-99 | 60,000 | 3,320 | 143,000 | 5,000 | 211,320 |
| 1999-2000 | 60,000 | 3,320 | 89,000 | 5,000 | 157,320 |
| 2000-01 | 60,000 | 3,320 | 97,033 | 5,000 | 165,353 |
| 2001-2 | 60,000 | 3,320 | 2,247 | 5,000 | 70,567 |
| 2002-3 | 60,000 | 3,320 | 0 | 5,000 | 68,320 |
| Total | 300,000 | 16,600 | 331,280 | 25,000 | 672,880 |

21. SDEP members were not paid for their time. This amounted to some 2000 person-hours of formal meetings, in addition to annual Awaydays participation in sub groups (for which attendance records were not kept), and work drafting papers, representing the Panel at conferences and other events, serving on interview panels, assessing Environmental Action Fund applications, and a range of other tasks. It is not possible to put a financial value to this time, since the costs to the host organisation of some SDEP members had been paid indirectly from government (such as members of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, the Environment Agency, universities and colleges); while others belong to organisations in receipt of government grant for other purposes, which may have helped release the capacity for participation in SDEP (such as the Campaign for Learning, Council for Environmental Education, the Development Education Association, RSPB and the National Youth Agency. It also may not be the case that such frequent meetings were necessary to achieve these outputs.
22. Of course some of these costs, staff and accommodation particularly, are likely to have been incurred in any case and used for other work that also fulfilled important government priorities. There are limited available benchmarks to allow comparison with other bodies, though RCEP's outturn for 2000-01 was £784k and for 2001-02 was £1,029k which included some substantial capital. The calculations here could form a useful benchmark for the review of other advisory bodies.
23. The review will now outline SDEP's main activities in each of the calendar years of its existence. Much of this information is taken from SDEP's own published reports, but has been supplemented with data from notes of meetings with Ministers, SDEP minutes and records and data from other sources, and it has also been brought up to the present (June 2002).

Summary of SDEP activities by year

SDEP in 1998

24. SDEP held 10 meetings during the year, set up sub-groups on the key sectors of Schooling; Higher and Further Education; the Workplace; and General Public &

Households, agreed a Code of Practice for its members and assembled a register of members' interests³. It held its first residential day at Dartington Hall, and these became annual events. SDEP was represented on DfES's Preparation for Adult Life Group, and met with a number of bodies including the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Education for Sustainable Development Group in Scotland, the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals and the Standing Committee of Principals. SDEP also assisted in evaluating education-related applications to DETR's Environmental Action Fund, and has continued to do so in subsequent years. SDEP itself was addressed by Sir Richard Southwood, of the former Government Panel on Sustainable Development, and Ms Julie Coghill, Chief Education Officer for Schools at the BBC. It endorsed the CEE/DfES/DETR Code for the production of sustainable development education resources, and three HE curriculum audits (business, design, teacher education) produced by Forum for the Future.

Table 3 Consultancies let in 1998-99

| Title | Consultant | Aim |
|---|---|--|
| <i>Towards a language for SD</i> | Quadrangle Consulting | Explore the potential for, and barriers to, establishing a relevant, accessible and meaningful language to engage people in SD |
| <i>ESD Surveys</i> | BMRB International | Surveys of both teachers responsible for education for sustainable development and of school-leavers. This allowed us to ascertain both the arrangements for provision and the impact on Year 11 children. |
| <i>Review of SD in the Workplace and Conference</i> | Impact Limited (review) and Campaign for Learning (conference) | Survey to bring together 73 case studies of good practice in workplace ESD |
| <i>Youth Work and Learning for Sustainable Development</i> | De Montfort University | Review of statutory and non-statutory youth work projects, progression route, and conference in Leicester on 17 April 1999. |
| <i>Environmental Management Systems Guide for Further Education</i> | Further Education Development Agency, Association of Colleges, Professor Shirley Ali Khan | Guide providing framework for managing sustainable development responsibilities. Briefing for college principals setting out the rationale for college action for sustainability and underlying themes. |

25. SDEP presented an Interim Report to Ministers in July 1998 reporting that its task required it to meet monthly rather than the four or so times a year originally envisaged. In its first full report SDEP set out its vision for 2010, and a strategic approach, which would enable stakeholders to achieve these goals. SDEP devoted much attention to the schools sector, since a review of the National Curriculum

³ There are both now required of NDPBs. The Register of Interests must be open to the public. To date there have been no requests to see that of SDEP.

was in progress and made a major submission to the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority on the review of the National Curriculum in England.

26. SDEP also decided to commission a series of studies, because it needed to fill gaps in its own knowledge of the current situation, wished to identify and disseminate good practice, and needed to establish threats and obstacles to ESD. These are set out in Table 3.

SDEP in 1999

27. Most of these studies did not report until the following year. SDEP made use of them to produce seven sector-specific introductions (for further & higher education (FHE), the general public, museums & galleries, professions, schools, the workplace and youth services). This helped SDEP to fulfil the request of Ministers that it consult the sectors on its recommendations.
28. 11 meetings were held during the year, including presentations from UNED-UK and Foresight, together with a residential awayday at Dartington Hall and meetings with DfES and DETR Ministers, OFSTED, the Teacher Training Agency (TTA), the University for Industry, the National College for School Leadership and the Higher Education Funding Council. SDEP also: responded to Government consultation on its sustainable development indicators; developed sustainability learning specifications for business, design, engineering and teacher education; and reported on its consultation with 17 professional bodies.

SDEP in 2000

29. Ten meetings were held during the year, together with a residential awayday in St Austell. SDEP was addressed by Professor Chris Baines and met with DfEE and DEFRA Ministers and with the teacher Training Agency. Ministers asked SDEP to consolidate its work with professions, look at key public awareness campaigns to see where SD messages might have been better highlighted, and carry out further work to ensure teachers and schools had the support they needed to deliver ESD in the National Curriculum. SDEP continued to work with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) on the third of these, particularly developing web-based materials funded by the Department for Education and Skills, serving on a QCA advisory group. It also produced guidance on establishing ESD awareness raising strategies for government departments, which was developed, published and endorsed by the Green Ministers Committee; and assisted the Yorkshire and Humber ESD Forum to develop a regional ESD strategy that has been a model for other regions. It commented on DETR's review of its support for ENCAMS, and also helped to ensure that the remit letter for the new Learning and Skills Council (LSC) contained an appropriate reference to sustainable development.
30. Although SDEP made only limited progress on its plans to explore new agendas, including life long and informal learning, it did commission two further studies on the workplace and general support for the subject: These are set out in Table 4.

Table 4 Consultancies let in 2000

| Title | Consultant | Aim |
|--|--------------------------|---|
| <i>Funding For Sustainable Development Education</i> | Charities Aid Foundation | Explore and make recommendations on support for ESD |
| <i>Investors in Sustainable Development</i> | Quadrangle Consulting | Investigate the feasibility of promoting ESD in the workplace through award or accreditation schemes. |

31. SDEP also considered developing “Big Ideas” that had the potential to harness ministerial commitment and sector interest. One of these was the idea of a regional resource in each region to support ESD, which it explored in a paper *Resource Bases for Sustainable Development Education*. This suggested a role for SDEP in setting standards for comparability, benchmarking and categorisation of good practice, but little was done to take this forward, again because of priorities and resource limitations.
32. Another was *Life Skills for a Sustainable Future*, a wide-ranging educational framework with potential for application in FE and other sectors on which DfEE carried out a consultation exercise on SDEP’s behalf, a third was more effective educational use of the Government’s sustainable development indicators. At its awayday SDEP began the process of planning work for the last two years of its life before review, and this process informed the report on 2000.

SDEP in 2001

33. 9 meetings were held during the year, together with a residential awayday at the Earth Centre, and an expert seminar to develop *Life Skills for a Sustainable Future*. SDEP developed a generic ESD template to be adapted for sectors such as Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and professions. SDEP also met Ministers from DfES and DEFRA and other key stakeholders across a range of sectors, including Jonathon Porritt, Chairman of the Sustainable development Commission. It made joint representations with TUSDAC and ACBE on the proposals to replace the National Training Organisations with Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and secured a sustainable development remit for the new Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA), and also responded to the DfES consultation document *Transforming Youth Work*, and made suggestions on effectively incorporating ESD into preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development.
34. In its Fourth Report SDEP set out four key areas for future work: continued engagement with Green Ministers, opportunities for informal learning; learning in the workplace; and qualifications. One key recommendation was that DfES should develop a centre of sustainable development expertise for its own staff and those of its agencies, bringing together existing expertise on green procurement with skills in policy appraisal and development. SDEP determined that its key role must be to influence and stimulate rather than bring about change itself, and that it must work effectively with other advisory bodies, both new and old. SDEP, along with Forum for the Future and the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) sponsored three seminars entitled *Learning to Last: Skills, Sustainability and Strategy*.

SDEP in 2002

35. The Government announced that the five yearly review of SDEP would take place this year. A Panel delegation met DCMS Minister Baroness Blackstone, and agreed that SDEP would set up a short-term working group, including external experts and key stakeholders, to make recommendations for work in DCMS sectors. Sponsor departments also agreed to SDEP preparing the first draft of a written strategy for sustainable development in England, for themselves to consider for possible consultation and, and adoption by, Government. The 2001 LSDA seminars were followed by the launch, expected in September 2002 of the seminar papers and findings covering Citizenship and Social Inclusion; Education for Sustainable Economic Development; and Responsibility in Education in a Risk Society. SDEP also intended to launch its first five sector guides in September.

PRIOR OPTIONS REVIEW

36. This part of the review considers how effectively SDEP has carried out the work contained by its remit. The Prior Options assesses whether there is a continuing need for the functions or services provided by the NDPB, and whether these should continue to be provided by a public body, considering the extent to which its objectives either have been fully achieved, or will be through the continued existence of SDEP. As SDEP is an advisory body without executive functions, the review has focused on the recommendations that SDEP has made. This has involved considering the number, range, clarity and significance of the recommendations; the extent to which they have been adopted by the bodies to which they were made; and whether, further advice is necessary.

37. The review drew upon SDEP's own critique of its first four years contained in its Fourth Report, where it systematically analysed the progress made on the recommendations in its First and Third Reports⁴. Where it is possible to validly do so, the review has compared SDEP's work to that of other advisory bodies, in particular the Advisory Committee on Business and The Environment (ACBE), the Advisory Committee on Consumer Products and the Environment (ACCPE), the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) and the Trades Union Sustainable Development Advisory Committee (TUSDAC).

Analysis of SDEP's Overall Impact

Number, Range and Clarity of Recommendations

38. In its Fourth report, SDEP summarised 55 key recommendations in its first three reports, to which the fourth itself added six, making a total of 61 recommendations. Further recommendations were contained in representations on specific consultations, such as that made jointly with TUSDAC and ACBE to DfES in 2001 in respect of *Building a stronger network: Developing the role of National Training Organisations*, and that made by SDEP alone in 2002 to DfES's 14-19 consultation document *Extending Opportunities, Raising Standards*. Other SDEP reports such as *Towards Sustainability: The Role of Professional Bodies* also contained recommendations for action.

⁴ The Second Report contained no recommendations.

39. This compares with 66 recommendations in ACBE's 1998 report alone. ACBE has produced two subsequent reports which contain many more recommendations. ACCPE's first two reports covering the same period contain over 30 separate recommendations, though in these cases, as with SDEP, there is some subjectivity in the way that un-numbered recommendations are grouped and counted. SDC (launched October 2000) had made about 60 recommendations in the reports published on its website up to June 2002. TUSDAC does not make formal reports to government in this way.
40. This provides a context within which to consider the comment from a few respondents that SDEP had made an excessive number of recommendations. In number SDEP's recommendations are comparable to those of other advisory bodies over a similar period of time, and could even be considered on the low side considering the wide range of sectors that its terms of reference cover. However, it could be said that the bodies with whom SDEP has been compared, have themselves come forward with a very high number of recommendations.
41. Another comment was that some of the recommendations were rather brief and lacking in detail. There were certainly circumstances in which stakeholders asked SDEP to clarify and expand on its proposals. Relatively few SDEP recommendations possessed the level of detail of, for example, ACCPE's proposal for a family of graded product labels in its First Report. However many of SDC and ACBE's recommendations (and some of ACCPE's) have been equally brief.
42. Moreover, as paragraphs 20 to 30 above show, SDEP has had significant outputs other than recommendations, such as the schools ESD framework (1998), the HE curriculum specifications (1999), guidance for Green Ministers (2000), the *Life Skills for a Sustainable Future* entitlement curriculum (2000) and sector guides (2002). Furthermore, the diagnostic cycle set out in the First Report has featured in the learning materials of several educational institutions as a model of the ESD process, while SDEP's elaboration of seven elements of ESD is widely regarded as an effective way of analysing ESD and has been used by the QCA in its DfES funded on-line support material for teachers. The obstacles to and drivers for change set out in the Fourth Report, and the conclusions on language in the report commissioned from Quadrangle, are echoed in work by the SDC⁵ and the Green Alliance⁶.
43. SDEP's recommendations do not range equally across the areas within its remit. Table 5 shows that schools and FHE account for over a third of all the recommendations made by SDEP in its annual reports. This is not necessarily inappropriate, though may reflect that fact that a larger proportion of SDEP members work in areas connected with ESD in schools and FHE than with ESD in the world of work, general public, youth work and central and local government.

Significance of recommendations and action taken

44. SDEP's recommendations are not in any case either equally significant or equally wide in their application, which limits the value of this kind of numerical analysis.

⁵ Sustainable Development Commission *Review 2002 Headlining Sustainable Development* November 2001

⁶ Wendy Gordon *Brand Green: mainstream or forever niche?* Green Alliance 2002

For example, one referred narrowly to the curricula of MBAs⁷, while another was directed very generally at “all community leaders”⁸ SDEP’s reports made progressively fewer and more detailed recommendations, perhaps because the broader areas had already been scoped, perhaps because, as SDEP itself pointed out, it learned from its own experience of drafting them⁹.

Table 5 – Summary of action taken on recommendations in SDEP Reports 1-4, number and percentage across all reports, achieved by subject area¹⁰

| | Total | % of all recommendations, | Wholly Achieved | Partly Achieved | Not Achieved | % Wholly or Partly Achieved |
|---------------------------------------|-------|---------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------------------|
| Central Government | 8 | 13 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 88% |
| Regional/Local Government | 7 | 11 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 86% |
| Schools | 11 | 18 | 1 | 7 | 3 | 73% |
| Further & Higher Education | 12 | 20 | 2 | 7 | 3 | 66% |
| Professions | 5 | 8 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 60% |
| Workplace | 5 | 8 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 40% |
| Youth Services | 4 | 7 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 100% |
| General Public | 9 | 15 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 33% |
| TOTAL | 61 | 100 | 14 | 28 | 19 | 69% |

45. When asked to point to the most significant areas of SDEP achievement, respondents varied widely in what they chose. Some achievements selected, such as the review of the National Curriculum and Life Skills for a Sustainable Future are in the areas of schools and FHE, but most commonly cited was that the Panel had generally raised the profile of ESD thus making it easier for the respondents to identify, lobby for and fulfil what they considered to be their own role. (Recall that two-thirds of respondents were NGOs). The scoping of ESD in the First Report was particularly well appreciated. There was less awareness of the recommendations to government, which SDEP itself saw as a significant area of achievement, but this may be because some of this work (such as that with Green

⁷ SDEP, Third Report, para 58

⁸ SDEP, First Report, para 41c

⁹ SDEP, Third Report, para 3

¹⁰ Based on Appendix B of SDEP’s Fourth Annual Report, updated to include the recommendations in that report itself.

Ministers), however influential, is not clearly apparent to outsiders, and certainly not clearly attributable to the Panel, by those who responded.

46. One feature of SDEP's own analysis of its achievements in the Fourth Report was that some of the institutions to which recommendations were directed had stated that they were not aware of them. In most cases the relevant reports had indeed been sent to named and influential individuals in those institutions; but staff turnover, lack of resources and competing priorities, , could all have contributed to lack of action. There is some evidence that government departments, associated agencies and external bodies that fall outside the locus of the two sponsored departments have been less prepared to take forward SDEP's recommendations (DCMS being a notable exception). SDEP's own capacity to follow these recommendations through has been hampered by its own limited resources.
47. SDEP's reports, minutes and research have been placed on dedicated pages on DEFRA's (and, before its creation, the former DETR's) websites as part of its dissemination strategy. Some respondents criticised the fact that some of the content was dated, such as minutes of meetings not being placed on the website in a timely fashion, limiting the ease with which such bodies can engage with the developing SDEP agenda. This has also been a concern to SDEP members themselves. The Review Team conducted a search of UK references to SDEP¹¹ and found 304 citations, compared to 36 for TUSDAC, 153 for ACCPE, 788 for ACBE, and 1,320 for SDC. This comparison is of limited value as the organisations vary widely in how long they have been in existence (ACBE being the oldest) and in their size of their budgets (SDC being the most resourced). However it does give some idea of the extent to which the organisation has been mentioned by name on other UK sites.
48. A further idea of the limitations to SDEP's impact is also suggested by the relatively low number of responses to the review itself. Only 3% of those organisations sent the consultation package responded to it. However this does compare well with the 2% which responded to the consultation on the future of the Environmental Action Fund in 2001. It compares less well to recent education consultations, for example, on the National Centre for Excellence in Science teaching which elicited 300 responses. While a few organisations (notably SDC) made a conscious decision not to comment on the review, others that were approached, such as the teaching unions and the local government sector, did not appear to be aware of the range of SDEP's recommendations that were relevant to them. It was also disappointing that over half of the organisations invited to complete a questionnaire as part of the review declined to do so. Notably, none of the teaching unions and no employers' organisations responded.

¹¹ Conducted on Google on 13 June 2002, searching for UK citations only using the full title of each body as used in its reports.

Table 4 – Summary of action taken on recommendations in SDEP Reports 1 and 3, number and percentage across all reports, achieved by subject area¹²

| | First Report | | | | Third Report | | | | All Reports | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------------------|
| | Wholly Achieved | Partly Achieved | Not achieved | % Wholly or Partly Achieved | Wholly Achieved | Partly Achieved | Not achieved | % Wholly or Partly Achieved | Wholly Achieved | Partly Achieved | Not Achieved | % Wholly or Partly Achieved |
| Central Government | 3 | 0 | 0 | 100% | 1 | 3 | 0 | 100% | 4 | 3 | 0 | 100% |
| Regional/Local Government | 1 | 2 | 0 | 100% | 1 | 2 | 0 | 100% | 2 | 4 | 0 | 100% |
| Schools | 1 | 2 | 2 | 60% | 0 | 5 | 1 | 83% | 1 | 7 | 3 | 73% |
| Further & Higher Education | 1 | 1 | 0 | 100% | 1 | 4 | 2 | 71% | 2 | 5 | 3 | 70% |
| Professions | 0 | 0 | 0 | n/a | 0 | 3 | 2 | 40% | 0 | 3 | 2 | 60% |
| Workplace | 2 | 0 | 3 | 40% | 0 | 0 | 0 | n/a | 2 | 0 | 3 | 40% |
| Youth Services | 1 | 2 | 0 | 50% | 1 | 0 | 0 | 100% | 2 | 2 | 0 | 100% |
| General Public | 1 | 0 | 4 | 20% | 0 | 2 | 1 | 66% | 1 | 2 | 5 | 38% |
| TOTAL | 10 | 7 | 9 | 65% | 4 | 19 | 6 | 79% | 14 | 26 | 15 | 73% |

49. This review accepts the overall accuracy of SDEP’s assessment of the impact of its recommendations as set out in its Fourth Report, which had been agreed by the two sponsor departments. Table 4 sets out SDEP’s summary of this impact assessment, which is detailed more fully in that report. However it is not necessarily the case that action taken on a recommendation of SDEP is causally linked to the recommendation having been made. The review explores this issue further in the following sections, also looking at the impact on specific sectors as delineated in successive SDEP reports and commented on in the consultation. It then examines, for each, what further work appears necessary and the extent to which SDEP might contribute to it.

Sector Analysis of SDEP’s Impact

SDEP’s Impact on the Central Government Sector

50. SDEP considers that its impact upon central government has been one of its success stories and this is borne out by some of the responses to consultation. It developed, with the Green Ministers Committee (GMC), a document on developing awareness raising strategies for sustainable development which has led to a range of government departments both formulating and reviewing strategies. These have been reported upon in the Third Report on the Green ministers

¹² Based on Appendix B of SDEP’s Fourth Annual Report.

committee¹³. more recently SDEP has been invited to address GMC in its new incarnation of ENV(G) to address it with suggestions for the development of skills to take forward sustainable development across government. It has also been asked to develop a briefing document for new Green Ministers educating them on sustainable development. This has proved very timely in view of the June 2002 machinery of government changes, which have led to the appointment of several new Green Ministers.

51. A recent SDEP initiative, not fully taken account of by those responding to the consultation, since it has not been formally announced, is that a written strategy for education for sustainable development in England will be developed. Ministers have agreed that SDEP should take the lead in drafting this document, which will then be presented to ministers for completion, consultation, and possible adoption. This is a far-reaching initiative which has considerable implications for the future of SDEP which will be considered further below.
52. A number of those responding to consultation pointed to an awareness that SDEP could engage better with government outside the two sponsor departments. Suggested areas included Number 10, the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, the Active Community Unit, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Treasury, and the Department for International Development.
53. A number of respondents suggested that further support from the DfES was particularly important if SDEP was to achieve its wider aims.

SDEP's Impact on the local and regional government sector

54. In its first four years SDEP attempted to influence the local and regional government sector in a number of ways. Firstly it made recommendations on legislation, particularly the proposals to implement a duty on local authorities to promote economic social and environmental well-being in their areas. SDEP was one of a large number of bodies pursuing this and several associated recommendations so can take only limited credit for the fact that most of these recommendations were taken up and councils are now consulting on and developing these strategies.
55. Secondly, SDEP attempted to influence new structures being put into place in regional government, notably the nine RDAs. It worked with Yorkshire Forward, the Yorkshire and Humber regional development agency in particular to develop a regional sustainable development education strategy. SDEP sought to promote this as a model rather than engaging with all other RDAs individually, while this proved to be relatively successful, it was not taken up by as many others as SDEP had hoped. One reason was the (probably inevitably) competitive nature of RDAs, which may have contributed to some reluctance on their part to acknowledge the capacity to learn from one another. More significantly in their first two years RDAs were heavily engaged in scoping their activities, recruiting staff, setting budgets and the other tasks that are necessary for a new tier of organisations. The hardest time to influence such a new tier is when it is being set up. This has also been noted with other sector bodies such as the sector-based

¹³ Available at <http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/gm2001/index.htm>

SSCs, and the LSC. However, it is precisely at this time that it is most important to influence these bodies, otherwise their principles, procedures and working methods are likely to be so well established that it will be difficult to change them later. SDEP contemplated adopting a similar approach to other structures, such as health authorities, but working with even a single region was felt to require a significant proportion of its resource for the year. This thinking led SDEP to progress the idea of sector specific guides as an alternative more consistent with its resources.

56. SDEP also made a number of specific recommendations for such organisations as the Local Government Management Board, its successor the Innovation and Development Agency, the Local Government Association (LGA) and other representative bodies. It is fair to say that these have not been fully taken up, the bodies concerned have not engaged to any significant with SDEP, and only one (the LGA) has taken an active role in this review process. Some responsibility may lie with SDEP for not carrying forward each recommendations, though here, as elsewhere, there are limits to how much effort a body of unpaid volunteers, albeit with some paid secretariat support, can devote to this; some with the sponsoring departments, which for most of SDEP's life has been one of the departments sponsoring SDEP itself.
57. Lastly it must be said that the most significant single area of local authority work that SDEP has tried to influence has been the schools sector. Primarily SDEP has influenced local authorities in their role as local education authorities, and to the extent that this has been successful, this is explored in this section on schools immediately below .

SDEP's Impact on the schools sector

58. SDEP has also experienced early success in the schools sector. It is widely accepted that its representation to the QCA on the review of the National Curriculum was influential in raising the profile of sustainable development in the new curriculum. This includes references within specific subjects as well as in the overarching values of the new curriculum. SDEP members have contributed to the work of the QCA's group on developing internet support to teachers in realising the sustainable development content of the national curriculum. The feedback on this site has been wholly positive. work in this area is the most consistently cited and highly praised activity that SDEP has undertaken.
59. More recent recommendations on direct forms of support to schools have led to DfES commissioning CEE to undertake investigatory work. DfES has also asked OFSTED to take forward a small scale study of sustainable development in schools which will be carried out in 2002-03. . SDEP's survey on awareness of sustainable development in schools was adopted by government as one of its indicators of the extent to which the UK's Sustainable Development Strategy has been achieved¹⁴. . Interestingly much of this work has been pursued outside SDEP itself through groups convened by the QCA, and through work commissioned by DfES, though SDEP's sub group on the schools has continued to oversee and comment on it. It could be argued that this work is becoming

¹⁴ Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions *Quality of Life Counts* 1999 page 240

sufficiently embedded in the work of DfES and its agencies that SDEP's direct involvement is not necessary for it to continue. Other factors that have contributed to these changes have included the fact that DfES now employs a member of CEE one day a week to advise it on sustainable development issues in education. Most of the impact of this post has been on the schools sector.

60. SDEP has been less a successful in influencing initial and continuing teacher training, a fact that has been commented on in a number of responses to consultation. A number of those responding to the consultation felt that future attention should be focused on the delivery of sustainable development content..

SDEP's Impact on the Further Education Sector

61. This review separates out further and higher education, as progress has been so different for the two sectors. They tend to often be bracketed together, and SDEP reported on them together in successive reports. This section also comments on 14-19 education as a whole, as this is how DfES is now regarding it.
62. An important role for SDP has been influencing the development of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), its 47 sub-regional arms (local LSCs) and the LSDA. The sector feels that SDEP's impact has been quite considerable in influencing the remit of these bodies to include sustainable development. Its recommendations for pilot projects in FE have been taken forward. The first tranche of these has been completed and reported on¹⁵, and the second is about to be launched. This provides resources for institutions and partnerships that wish to take sustainable development forward in a range of education contexts. It is too early to establish the impact of LSDA's seminars and conference on *Learning to Last* but they did attract a wide range of stakeholders and influencers in the field. SDEP put much effort into developing *Life Skills for a Sustainable Future* and much of its content has been taken up by institutions such as learndirect, though not with SDEP's own label.
63. The advice that SDEP sponsored on the sustainable management of colleges has had some, though limited, impact. Some commentators feel that it would be better to developer bespoke solutions for the sector (such as Eco Campus) while others believe that instruments of wider applications such as ISO 14001 are a more appropriate way forward. Some in the sector and their sponsor department feel that SDEP has been pushing too hard and too quickly for changes in a sector where institutions need time to bed down and develop, failing to acknowledge how long it will take to bring about change in the sector. The comments made about in respect of new government institutions at paragraph 55 above are equally relevant here.
64. It has also been suggested that SDEP's comments were in some cases relatively low level and detailed and concerned the development of specific initiatives rather than being the strategic and wide ranging sort that were more proper to an advisory body. Comparison with the recommendations of other advisory bodies such as ACBE, ACCPE and TUSDAC show a similar mix of strategic and specific

¹⁵ John Blewitt *Good Practice in Sustainable Development Education Learning and Skills Development Agency* 2002

recommendations so this perhaps says as much about the expectations that the commentators have of the work of advisory bodies as it does about SDEP itself.

65. One area of recent consultation has been the 14-19 age group where SDEP has made representations and is meeting appropriate officials. This is a striking example of the extent to which there continues, and probably always will continue, to be areas of policy development where expert comments such as those of SDEP could be useful

SDEP's Impact on the Higher Education Sector

66. The Toyne Reports and the review of them¹⁶ meant that considerable reviewing and scoping had been undertaken before SDEP was brought into being. Consequently this was a sector where it felt able to move fairly swiftly into recommendations for action, and the presence of Professor Toyne on SDEP added weight to those until his resignation in 1999. SDEP helped to create the climate that brought about the Higher Education Partnership for Sustainability and influenced the Higher Education Funding Council for England to support it. SDEP suffered from capacity limitations which meant that the effort needed to advise on the FE sector took most of the time available to the FHE Sub Group.

SDEP's Impact on the professions and the workplace sectors

67. In this section the review considers the impact on professions, employers, unions, and the SSC network that is replacing NTOs. SDEP worked very much in cooperation with ACBE and TUSDAC, making joint representations with both on the NTO review and with the latter in the development of its sector guides. It would however be fair to say more information could have flowed to and from SDEP and the other two organisations about their various initiatives. DTLR and later DEFRA did convene meetings of chairs of these and other sponsored bodies in this policy area such as the Round Table on Sustainable Development, SDC and the Royal Commission on Sustainable Development. However the infrequency of such meetings (three in four years) and the difficulty of securing the attendance of Chairs at them suggested to the review team that they could have been, and should in future be, supplemented by more systematic and regular methods of cross-fertilisation, and indeed a more strategic approach to the management of its whole range of NDPBs.
68. SDEP's commissioned work in this sector had some influence. A conference was held in 1999 on SD in the workplace, and good practice was disseminated in a written report, but there has been very limited demand for it and it has had little impact on those not already fully committed. The review has already remarked on the low level of interest that employers' organisations have taken in the work of SDEP, suggesting that sustainable development education (though not necessarily sustainable development) might not be on high on their agenda. ACBE's greater impact on the larger companies might be due to the fact that its co-sponsorship by DTI gives it greater credibility in the sector. SDEP commissioned work on a possible Investors in Sustainable Development Award which suggested that it

¹⁶ Department for Education/Welsh Office *Environmental Responsibility: an agenda for further and higher education* HMSO London 1993, and Department of the Environment/Welsh Office/ Department for Education and Employment *Environmental Responsibility: A Review of the 1993 Toyne report* 1995

would not be appropriate to establish a new award, but better to influence existing ones. However SDEP has done little to follow this work up. Capacity limitations are the main reason for this, the relatively poor attendance by business members of SDEP may be another.

69. In the case of the professions early consultation (with 17 professions with a fairly obvious SD role such as planning, design, and environmental matters) suggested a range of ways in which SDEP, the government and others might assist them. The range, diversity and rivalry of professional bodies limited the extent to which this could be followed through, as did SDEP's own limited resources. More recently SDEP has concentrated on particular professions, such as the Chartered Institute of Water and Environmental Management in developing a sector guide, has been more fruitful. There have been cases where, as SDEP itself acknowledged, it had only succeeded to a limited extent to identify who was best placed to take forward its recommendations and then brought it to their attention. However this observation could also be made of other initiatives such as some of the Foresight reports¹⁷.
70. One success story to end on is the SSCs and their development agency. SDEP and the other bodies have had as much influence as could be expected on the remit of these bodies, but it is too early to tell how far this remit will be taken forward.

SDEP's impact on the youth sector

71. Considerable progress has been made by SDEP, following the study it commissioned from De Montfort University, in articulating the role of sustainable development in youth services, including through the consultation on DfES's *Transforming Youth Work* proposals. Detailed recommendations, including the results of this consultancy work, have been made and these have led to DEFRA funded work by NGOs. Progress has been made towards achieving recommendations that the sector defines appropriate outcomes unique to ESD, and that it is incorporated into local authority youth services and initial professional training.

SDEP's impact on the general public, informal learning and life long learning sectors

72. SDEP was not the first body to note that the general public was a particularly difficult sector to influence. Both the review and earlier comments on SDEP's work suggested that its commissioned work on developing a suitable language for sustainable development was particularly significant. However neither SDEP, government nor other advisory bodies in the SD field have made as much use of this as they might.
73. SDEP sought to encourage greater educational use of the SD indicators and entered into a sustained dialogue with DETR on this. However it did not lead to any particular initiatives, in part because DTLR's first priority was unrolling the regional and local indicator sets. . SDEP also discussed at some length with

¹⁷ The UK Foresight programme was launched in 1994 following a major review of Government science, engineering and technology policy. A new round began on 1 April 1999. develop visions of the future - looking at possible future needs, opportunities and threats and deciding what should be done now to make sure that we are ready for these challenges. See *Messages from the current round*. DTI publication 5547 5k/08/01/NP.URN

government how the *are you doing your bit?* campaign might be made more effective, but this has been subsumed into a wider review of DEFRA's publicity strategy.

74. Ministers asked SDEP to examine the government's own publicity campaigns and suggest where opportunities had been missed to make reference to sustainable development. The thinking was that this is usually done in terms of the environment and regeneration, but there were other economic, social and health campaigns that might have made the links between the aspects of sustainable development clearer. SDEP clarified with government, but did not pursue this request.
75. More recently SDEP has considered at some length with DEFRA the opportunities that the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) offered to educate people about the Summit. DEFRA officials noted SDEP's role and contribution when they appeared before the Environmental Audit Committee as part of that Committee's consideration of the government's preparations for WSSD¹⁸.
76. At the time of writing SDEP is engaging further with DCMS and its sponsored bodies to explore their potential as agents for ESD. This is an example of where SDEP proposals, coming at the same time as recommendations from the PIU¹⁹, look likely to lead to concerned and coordinated action by a range of bodies. This is precisely the approach that SDEP outlined in the conclusion of its Fourth Report²⁰.

Conclusions from Prior Options Review

77. The review has examined the quality and impact of SDEP's recommendations, and, sector by sector, the case for the continued existence of a body exclusively to develop recommendations for education for sustainable development.
78. It concludes that SDEP was given a particularly broad remit covering a wide range of sectors. Within the limits of the expertise of its membership, and its very limited capacity and resources, it had produced a rich, diverse and widely welcomed suite of proposals and recommendations. The number and level of detail of these benchmark comparably to other advisory bodies. Not all of them have been followed through by either SDEP itself or the government as effectively as they might have been. SDEP has however prioritised its own work to carry forward its recommendations. Given how much reactive work also had to be carried out responding to specific government initiatives - such as the review of the National Curriculum and the establishment of RDAs, SSCs and the LSC - SDEP has carried out an impressive range of other activity.

¹⁸ Environmental Audit Committee Third Report *UK Preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development*, Volume II, HC 616-II, Questions 3650, 358, 359. Also available on <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200102/cmselect/cmenvaud/616/2032013.htm>

¹⁹ Performance and Innovation Unit. *Resource productivity: making more with less*. Cabinet Office, Document CAB1 J01-8768/0111/D16, November 2001. Section 4.2.5. Available at www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/innovation/2001/resource/report/default.htm

²⁰ Fourth Report, particularly paragraph 47 f.

79. The review team have not identified previous work on the extent to which the recommendations of advisory bodies have been adopted to benchmark SDEP's achievements in this area. However it hopes that this review will serve as a benchmarking exercise for other reviews of advisory bodies.
80. The conclusions on the future of SDEP are not clear cut. Although DfES and DEFRA ministers have consistently expressed satisfaction with the work of SDEP in respond to their reports in writing or at meetings, a number of doubts have been expressed to the Review Team, both from within and outside government, as to the value of a further five years of this sort of advice.
81. Consultation responses varied on whether the SDEP's functions needed to continue as at present, be amended, or did not require to continue at all. Of the 25 responses and 15 interviews held, 80% were in favour of some degree of continuation, and fewer than 5% were not. The consultation did not specifically ask whether, if SDEP's functions were to continue, a public or some other sort of body should provide them, and this was not volunteered by those responding. Where a body has been suggested, some have thought it should be within government, and many believed that that its emphasis should be on delivery and practicality and work at local and regional as well as national levels.
82. The Prior Options Review needed to ascertain
- whether there is a continuing need for the functions or services provided by the NDPB, and
 - whether these should continue to be provided by a public body, considering the extent to which its objectives either have been fully achieved, or will be through the continued existence of SDEP.
83. The function of the SDEP has been to provide advice to government through its two sponsor departments, DEFRA and the Department for Education and Skills. The consultation on this review showed that a significant number of those responding have serious doubts about the benefits of a further five years of recommendations from SDEP as it is currently constituted. A wider question, to which there is a less clear answer, is whether there is a need for a different mechanism to take forward ESD and, if so, what form it should take.
84. The forthcoming draft ESD strategy, being developed by SDEP, will provide an overview of ESD across the different sectors and help all players, whether at local, regional or national level, understand how they fit into the wider picture. In doing so, it should help to achieve most of the objectives of SDEP's current terms of reference. SDEP will submit a draft to Government, which will then consider it interdepartmentally, adapt and consult widely on, before taking a decision on whether to adopt such a strategy and, if so, what form it should take.
85. However, even if a strategy is adopted, some of the objectives of SDEP, notably to promote an approach which will reduce duplication, increase co-operation and develop synergy between all sectors and groups involved, might remain to be fulfilled. There may well be a continuing need for some means of bringing

together and sharing the views and experiences of a range of stakeholders. There are a number of mechanisms and processes which might help to bring this about effectively.

86. These mechanisms can be seen as varying in both formality and the length of time for which they would exist. They include relatively long lived and formal bodies such as formally constituted advisory NDPBs, which have a fixed membership and a lifespan of years; to one-off open meetings to discuss future policy, or the employment of agencies, consultants or NGOs to carry out specific consultative tasks. Between these fall an assortment of alternatives such as sounding boards, task forces and web-based interactive forums. We conclude that the need for, and nature of any such stakeholder process would best be considered alongside and at the same time as the decision on the strategy.

Recommendation One

87. The Review recommends that the SDEP is wound up at the end of its current term of appointment (ie, February 2003). This recommendation does not undervalue the range and quality of work carried out by SDEP during its five years of operation, but it does recognise that the context in which SDEP operates has changed considerably since its inception. Furthermore, credit needs to be given to SDEP for having influenced the wider ESD scene and for having put in place a number of influential recommendations which have led to action by government and its agencies.

Recommendation Two

88. The review further recommends that in 2003 DfES and DEFRA Ministers, consulting other departments, consider the ESD strategy that will have been produced by SDEP, and consult on both that strategy and the type of stakeholder involvement process that might be necessary to ensure that the strategy is achieved.

Recommendation Three

89. To assist with this process, the Review recommends that an inter-departmental working group is set up early in 2003 to prepare material, based on SDEP's draft, for public consultation, after which it should provide advice to Ministers by the summer of 2003. It recommends that Ministers consider the inclusion of representatives of sectors outside central government in the inter-departmental working group.
90. **Annex E** sets out some further considerations, including comments from those responding to consultation, on mechanisms for future consultation which could be included in the consultation.
91. In the second stage of an FMPR, a forward-looking review examines the operation and management of the NDPB, to establish the best organisational options for delivering the functions and services and developing and improving performance in the future, including the need for any changes to the present terms of reference, membership and operation of the body, together with its strategic relationship with sponsor Departments.

92. This Review cannot proceed to a second stage of that kind, because it has not been able to recommend what mechanism would best take forward further work on ESD - something which clearly depends on the form that any ESD Strategy will take. This there is no basis on which to consider the future operation of any successor arrangement, until the rationale for its functions has been decided by Ministers.
93. However, our recommendations for an interdepartmental working group and subsequent consultation will in effect be the second stage of the Review. This work will be able to take account of suggestions made in the course of this review, set out here in **Annexes D and E**, with the results to be reported to Ministers by Summer 2003.

Glossary

| | |
|--------|---|
| ACBE | Advisory Committee on Business and The Environment |
| ACCPE | Advisory Committee on Consumer Products and the Environment |
| CPA | Commissioner for Public Appointments |
| DCMS | Department of Culture, Media and Sport |
| DEFRA | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs |
| DETR | Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions |
| DfEE | Department for Education and Employment |
| DfES | Department for Education and Skills |
| DfT | Department for Transport |
| EAC | Environmental Audit Select Committee the House of Commons |
| ESD | Education for Sustainable Development |
| FENTO | Further Education National Training Organisation |
| ICT | Information and Computer Technology |
| LGA | Local Government Association |
| LGMB | Local Government Management Board |
| LSDA | Learning and Skills Development Agency |
| NTO | National Training Organisation |
| ODPM | Office of the Deputy Prime Minister |
| QCA | Qualifications and Curriculum Authority |
| RDA | Regional Development Agency |
| SDC | Sustainable Development Commission |
| SSC | Sector Skills Council |
| SSDA | Sector Skills Development Agency |
| TTA | Teacher Training Agency |
| TUSDAC | Trades Union Sustainable Development Advisory Committee |
| WSSD | World Summit in Sustainable Development |

ANNEX A: PRESS NOTICE ANNOUNCING SDEP FMPR

6 March 2002

87/02

FUTURE OF GOVERNMENT ADVISORY BODY ON EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IS TO BE REVIEWED

The future role of the Sustainable Development Education Panel (SDEP) is to be examined as part of the Government's requirement for five-yearly reviews of non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs).

The review will consider whether there is a continuing need for an advisory NDPB on sustainable development education and whether the Panel is the most appropriate body to deliver it. The review will also examine the current strategic relationship between central Government and the Panel.

The review will be led by a steering group including members from outside Government and will consult with a wide range of public bodies and NGOs. Written comments are invited from individuals and organisations with an interest in education and sustainable development.

The review's Terms of Reference are:

To review:

- i. the case for the continuing need for an advisory NDPB on sustainable development education, based on the quality relevance and impact of the advice given to date;
- ii. whether the current Panel with its existing terms of reference is the most appropriate body to deliver it, and in the light of i & ii;
- iii. the current strategic relationship between central Government and the Panel.

And to report to Ministers with recommendations for any changes that should be made to improve the quality and impact of the Panel's advice.

Comments should be sent to:

Jeremy Marlow, SDEP Review, Zone 6/G9, Ashdown House, 123 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6DE. Tel: 020 7944 6695 Fax: 020 7944 6559

e-mail: <mailto:jeremy.marlow@defra.gsi.gov.uk>

The closing date for receiving comments is 30 April.

Announcing the review, Baroness Ashton, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Early Years and School Standards said:

"Now that the National Curriculum, the Learning and Skills Councils and the Sector Skills Development Agency are bedding in, it is timely to review the work of the Panel. I look forward to the results of this review."

Michael Meacher, Environment Minister, added:

"Now the Sustainable Development Commission is well established, it makes sense to review another body that compliments some of its functions. Reviewing the Panel now will also ensure that any renewed or replacement body is set up in good time to advise on any proposals for education arising from the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg this autumn."

Notes for editors

1. The SDEP is an Advisory NDPB established in February 1998 by the Deputy Prime Minister (DETR) and the Secretary of State for Education and Employment. The Panel includes members from business, local government, education and

voluntary sectors. Its purpose is to work to identify gaps, opportunities, priorities and partnerships for action in providing sustainable development education in England, and to highlight good practice.

2. The Panel's 22 members have held 42 meetings to date, and established several subgroups. The Panel has formally submitted its first (1998), Second (1999), Third (2000) and Fourth (2001) Annual Reports to the Government, and made representations in respect of Government consultations, most notably the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's review of the National Curriculum, and DfES's review of National Training Organisations. The Panel has also commissioned consultancy work providing information and developing ideas to take forward its strategy. Its secretariat is provided jointly by DEFRA and DfES.

3. Further details on the activities of the SDEP, including copies of annual reports can be found at:

<http://defraweb/environment/sustainable/educpanel/index.htm>

4. Please direct general inquiries on the SDEP, other than the review, to:
Richard Mabbit, Zone 6/G9, Ashdown House, 123 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6DE.

Tel: 020 7944 6694 Fax: 020 7944 6559 e-mail:

<mailto:mailto:richard.mabbit@defra.gsi.gov.uk>

ANNEX B: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES AND CONSULTATION RESPONDENTS

Interviewees

| | | |
|-----------|-----------|---|
| Jenny | Baker | DfES |
| Frances | Burns | DfID |
| Harvey | Coleman | DfES |
| Angela, | Coulton | DEFRA |
| Philip | Dale | Deputy Secretary and Work Programme Manager, Sustainable Development Commission |
| Janet | Dallas | DfES, Team Leader, Curriculum Division |
| John | Goodwin | DfES |
| Geoffrey | Holland | Chairman, SDEP |
| Esther | Maughan | Head of Communication, Sustainable Development Commission |
| Sara | Parkin | Forum for the Future |
| Claire | Parrish | UK Youth Parliament |
| Chris | Rivington | DfES, Team Leader, LSC Unit |
| Caroline | Smith | DEFRA (representing TUSAC & ACBE perspectives) |
| Mela | Watts | DfES Divisional Manager, Curriculum Division |
| Rebecca | Willis | Green Alliance |
| Anne | Beaumont | ACBE and TUSDAC secretariats, DEFRA |
| Caroline | Smith | ACBE and TUSDAC secretariats, DEFRA |
| Stratford | Lisa | DEFRA |
| David | Collins | ACBE and TUSDAC secretariats, DEFRA |
| Judy Ling | Wong | Black Environmental Network |

Responses to Written Consultation:

| No | Organisation | Type |
|----|---|---------|
| 05 | Black Environment Network | NGO |
| 09 | Bristol City Council | LA |
| 19 | Chelsea Physic Garden | FHE |
| 04 | CREATE | NGO |
| 25 | Council for Environmental Education | NGO |
| 06 | Development Education Association | NGO |
| 12 | Education 21 Scotland | NGO |
| 08 | ENCAMS | NGO |
| 01 | Environment Agency | NDPB(E) |
| 02 | Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges | NGO |
| 10 | Environmental Education Advisers' Association | NGO |
| 14 | Forum for the Future | NGO |
| 20 | Independent Consultant | Ind |
| 07 | Learning and Skills Development Agency | NDPB(E) |
| 23 | Local Government Association | NGO |
| 15 | National Association for Environmental Education | NGO |
| 11 | National Foundation for Educational Research | NGO |
| 17 | Permaculture Academy of Britain | NGO |
| 22 | RSPB | NGO |
| 16 | South Bank University (London) Lecturer | FHE |

| | | |
|----|---|------|
| 21 | South West Branch Royal Town Planning Institute | Prof |
| 18 | The Institution of Environmental Sciences | Prof |
| 13 | UNED-UK | NGO |
| 03 | West Midlands Education for Sustainable Development Forum | NGO |

The review team also attended a meeting of the Sustainable Development Education Panel at which the FMPR was discussed, and informal discussions were held with DfES and DEFRA staff.

ANNEX C: TERMS OF REFERENCE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION PANEL

Aim

To consider issues on education for sustainable development, in its broadest sense, in schools, further and higher education, at work, during recreation and at home; and to make practical recommendations for action in England. The Panel reports directly to the Secretaries of State for Education and Skills and for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Objectives

1. To promote a strategic approach to sustainable development education in England;
2. To identify gaps and opportunities in the provision of sustainable development education and consider how to improve that provision;
3. To promote an approach which will reduce duplication, increase co-operation and develop synergy between all sectors and groups involved;
4. To consider whether and what targets should be set for various sectors;
5. To highlight best practice and consider the means of disseminating it more widely;
6. To make recommendations to key stakeholders on priority areas for action;
7. To assess the effectiveness of this approach.

Output

An annual report to the Secretaries of State for Education and Skills and for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, setting out recommendations, where appropriate, for action by Government, the Panel and other key players.

ANNEX D: CONSULTATION RESPONSES SUGGESTING FURTHER WORK WHICH COULD BE TAKEN FORWARD ON EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (BY EDUCATION SECTOR)

Further action needed in the central government sector

The consultation suggests that central government in general can do more to take a joined-up approach to incorporating sustainable development in education, and show commitment to the area. This can be seen as a special case of the general finding of ENV(G) that there is unrealised potential for integrated policy development that takes full account of economic, environmental and social factors at the policy formulation stage, rather than just when programmes are rolled out. A key driver in bringing about this change is likely to be ENV(G) itself, which SDEP has been invited to address in the autumn. Since the drive for further change has to come from a within government, and since much of what needs to be done it is relatively well understood and articulated, it is questionable whether any further period of activity by SDEP will, of itself, help to take this agenda forward.

Further action needed in the local and regional government sector

The consultation process generated relatively little comment on local and regional government issues, largely because that sector itself, though invited to comment on the review, did not take up that opportunity. One key driver for the future is the new Office for the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) which has assumed many of the local government sponsorship responsibilities of the former DETR, combining them with former Cabinet Office responsibilities for regional policy. It is likely that the proposed written sustainable development education strategy could articulate ODPM's role clearly and set useful targets. This might help to overcome the competitiveness noted in RDAs, and help to integrate education for sustainable development initiatives with other local government initiatives such as the development of community strategies, Best Value and the Beacon Council system. It could also be a conduit for progress in respect of comments made in the consultation about the need for more action at regional and local levels. Government Offices (which also fall under ODPM) would be well-placed to help set this in hand under the proposed Round Tables on Sustainable Development.

Further action needed in the schools sector

It is widely accepted in the ESD community that further work is needed in the schools sector, and the consultation indicates a wide spread view that SDEP has set out quite clearly what this work is. It is not however the case that all of those to whom recommendations are made accept that those recommendations are the best way forward. Some recommendations (such as for a circular to schools on ESD) have clearly been rejected. What the review concludes should now happen is that the bodies involved, such as TTA, OFSTED, and the National College for School Leadership need to consider whether they wish to take forward the SDEPs' recommendations, and if so, how to best do so, either through SDEP's

recommendations or otherwise. Some of those responding to the consultation have also suggested that programmes of support to schools need to be developed, perhaps drawing on and bringing together existing voluntary sector initiatives such as those of WWF and ENCAMS.

Further action needed in the Further Education sector

SDEP's scoping work is regarded by those responding to the consultation as having laid much of the groundwork for what has to happen next. The development and dissemination of good practice is in hand by LSDA and could be competently taken forward by that body and the rest of the sector..

Further action needed in the Higher Education sector

Again there has been little reaction by the sector itself as to what needs to be done, though there is a widespread acceptance by the NGOs that responded that the shortcomings noted in the Toyne Review have yet to be fully addressed. One response to the review from an NGO heavily involved with the sector suggested that HEFCE needed a political steer from Ministers as to the opportunities for the HE sector to contribute to workforce development for the low carbon economy.

Further action needed in the professions and the workplace sector

The workplace is a sector in which key agencies responding to the review (notably ACBE and TUSDAC) feel that much remains to be done, and where the size and diversity of many of the organisations that need to be influenced, particularly small and medium sized enterprises, make it a particular difficult nut to crack. SDEP is by no means alone in having difficulty influencing this sector. As far as the SSDA is concerned, NGOs feel that a political steer is probably as necessary here as it is in HE.

DfES officials have suggested that practical examples of sustainable development for employers and others to visit and be inspired by might be particularly useful (as they would, no doubt, in other sectors). They have pointed to such Millennium projects as the Earth Centre and the Eden Project as possibilities. The review team would add At Bristol, and the Science and Natural History Museums to these list. This suggestion echoes SDEP's own recommendation of regional centres and observatories, which it was not itself able to take forward.

Further action needed in the youth sector

Little comment was made on this in the consultation. NGOs in the sector have, with DEFRA funding, been taking forward a number of initiatives in this area. SDEP feels that at this point political commitment is necessary to ensure that these recommendations are taken up and has not felt that there is much more fact it, as an advisory body, can achieve itself in this area. No responses to consultation comment either way on this.

Further action needed in the general public, informal learning and life long learning sectors

Little comment was made on this in the consultation. Examining the impact of SDEP's recommendations, it is clear that this is an area where government thinking and action might be better coordinated. SDEP has suggested a range of ways in which a public awareness campaign on sustainable development might be developed, and both WSSD and DEFRA's review of its publicity offer particular opportunities for a fresh start. This will need vision, coordination, determination and resources. A written ESD strategy would provide some of these. In the specific area of heritage institutions, SDEP's current working group with them should produce clear recommendations, mainly to DCMS and to these bodies, well before the proposed end date for current SDEP appointments.

ANNEX E: ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS FOR FUTURE STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, TO BE CONSIDERED ALONGSIDE A DRAFT EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Alternative arrangements for discharging SDEP's functions

1. The Review Team have recommended that the Government considers the ESD strategy that will have been produced by SDEP, and consult on both that strategy and the type of stakeholder involvement process that might be necessary to ensure that the strategy is achieved. There are a number of processes that might help to achieve these and the Review Team thought it useful to set out what alternative arrangements might achieve some or all of the objectives of SDEP for the benefit of those taking part in the eventual consultation. *It was the team's intention here not to set out recommendations, but to explore options for the forthcoming consultation.* The options considered were:

- (i) new Non Departmental Public Body
- (ii) amalgamation with or replacement by other sustainable development advisory bodies,
- (iii) contracting out,
- (iv) use of a Select Committee,
- (v) a Task Force set up to deal with specific issues
- (vi) incorporation into central government,
- (vii) a Lead Partner
- (viii) a Sounding Board or Annual Meeting
- (ix) Ministerial meetings
- (x) An Internet discussion board.

These are graphed on the basis of rough relative formality and longevity in Figure 1.

New Non Departmental Advisory Body

2. While the review has concluded that a body of the nature of the current SDEP is not required for a further four years, this relatively formal and long-term option cannot be excluded from further consideration.

Amalgamation with or replacement by other sustainable development advisory bodies

3. One recurring comments made by those interviewed and responding in writing is the perception that sectors are receiving advice and what they perceive as lobbying from a wide range of advisory bodies on sustainable development with what appear to be overlapping remits, and which operate in what they judge to be a poorly coordinated way. This echoes comments in other reviews²¹. It is beyond the scope of this review to explore in detail the rationale for other bodies but it can consider the

²¹ For example *Financial Management and Policy Review of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution*, DETR, April 2000, available at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/rcep/fmpr/index.htm>

scope that the other bodies which currently exist could have credibly take over SDEP's functions. In the consultation process several of those responding suggested amalgamation with one or another of these bodies that the government has set up to advise it on sustainable development. Others suggested that with the demise of some of these groups (such as DfID's Development Awareness Working Group) it was more important than ever that SDEP continued to exist.

4. The remit of the **Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment** is *to provide for dialogue between government and business on environmental issues, both of immediate topical interest and of a longer term nature; in liaison with other organisations to help mobilise the business community in demonstrating good environmental practice and management, building on existing initiatives and activities; to provide a link with and focus attention on, international business initiatives on the environment.* ACBE V was appointed in September 2001. Recent work has included recommendations on waste minimisation and adaptation to climate change. At present ACBE has established working groups on Resource Productivity, Business Transport, Planning, Internalising Sustainable Development and Energy.

5. Since ACBE's primary focus is on the interface between government and business and on larger companies, it covers only the workplace based and vocational aspects of education for sustainable development. Here ACBE and TUSDAC have worked together on areas of mutual interest such as the joint representation that made with TUSDAC (see paragraph 28) on DfES's proposals to replace the National Training Organisations with Sector Skills Councils. Since this is a relatively small proportion of the work of SDEP, to move this work would risk losing synergies and connections with the rest, and would leave an impoverished rump of work to be considered by another body. However DEFRA and DTI are about to embark on a Quinquennial review of ACBE which could lead to changes in its composition and terms of reference.

6. The **Trade Union Sustainable Development Advisory Committee** was set up in 1998. It is jointly chaired by Michael Meacher, Minister for the Environment and John Edmonds, General Secretary of the GMB, who is the TUC's General Council spokesman on the environment. TUSDAC's main aims are: (1) to direct trade union input into the policy process to enable constructive dialogue with the Government on sustainable development; (2) to provide a trade union perspective on the employment consequences of climate change, and the Government's response to it; and 3) to help mobilise the trade union movement to become more involved in better environmental practice in the workplace, building on existing initiatives and activities, and disseminating information and experience. Arguments around merging SDEP with ACBE apply equally to a merger with TUSDAC (and indeed the areas of work which would be subject to and could benefit from overlap would be the same ones).

7. The **Advisory Committee on Consumer Products and the Environment's** remit is to advise on ways of reducing the environmental impacts of goods and services. Its future work plan does include raising awareness among a wider audience about the importance of products for sustainable development, which has some degree of overlap with the general public awareness aspects of the remit of SDEP. However

formal, accredited and school based learning have been of less relevance to this body up to now.

8. The most commonly cited candidate for taking over or amalgamating with SDEP is the **Sustainable Development Commission**, established by government to advocate sustainable development across all sectors in the UK, review progress towards it, and build consensus on the actions needed if further progress is to be achieved. Its specific objectives are to:

- (i) review how far sustainable development is being achieved in the UK in all relevant fields, and identify any relevant processes or policies which may be undermining this;
- (ii) identify important unsustainable trends which will not be reversed on the basis of current or planned action, and recommend action to reverse the trends;
- (iii) deepen understanding of the concept of sustainable development, increase awareness of the issues it raises, and build agreement on them;
- (iv) encourage and stimulate good practice.

9. It was always intended the remit of SDC would overlap with those of all the other bodies listed here (and some others) but that was so that it could take account of their work, rather than take it over. SDC's Commissioners declined to formally take part in the review, but it is clear that SDC sees its work as being more active in communications and awareness raising than in education (understood as including skills development), which it would only be likely to interest itself in where this was relevant to a key area of work, such as sustainable food production. On several occasions, SDC has discussed whether it should run campaigns for the general public and, although there were dissenting views, on each occasion had resolved that this was not part of its remit. However, this may well prove to be an area in which it will wish to put recommendations to Government and others.

10. It remains possible that the Government would wish to, or the Commission might express a preparedness to move into that area of work. The areas where SDC has been active have so far have been those where there were clear gaps in what others were tasked to do. While the proportion of SDEP's work which SDC is currently competent and capable of undertaking is limited, this need no remain the case.

11. Considering these bodies together, however, it is possible to argue that, if TUSDAC and/or ACBE took on reviewing the vocational aspects of SDEP's work, while SDC assumed the general public awareness aspects, then there would be a relatively small rump of work left which would be focussed on the specific responsibilities of central government.. This could then perhaps be internalised in the department itself, an option considered further at paragraph 16 below. This is not an option favoured by ACBE, SDC or TUSDAC. ACBE and TUSDAC feel that DTI and particularly its small business advisors are key stakeholders in this area.

Contracting out functions

12. The review team can neither specify any clear benefits likely to result from transferring SDEP's functions to the private or voluntary sectors, nor identify who

might be willing to assume those responsibilities, or what remuneration they would require. None of those who took part in the consultation could recommend a candidate, and there were no expressions of interest in forming a new private body. It is likely that any institution, perhaps a university or consultancy, would need to call on many of the groups which currently comprise SDEP. Many of the sorts of person who are currently SDEP members are unpaid, compared with their daily charges for consultancy work, and accept this on the basis that their contribution is made for the public good. However, some of them might not take the same approach to working for a private or voluntary sector contractor, who would be likely to profit from their exertions, and would probably require payment at full consultancy rate. However, this is a serious option for further consideration.

Involving a Select Committee

13. It may seem unusual to suggest that a select Committee could take over this function, but in view of the interest that the Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) has taken in awareness of sustainable development (see paragraph 75 above) this option needs to be explored. The remit of the EAC is to consider *to what extent the policies and programmes of government departments and non-departmental public bodies contribute to environmental protection and sustainable development; to audit their performance against such targets as may be set by Ministers; and to report thereon to the House*. This remit makes it more appropriate for this body to take an interest in than to take over an ESD policy role, and it is not likely to be as responsive to ministerial priorities as some of the other options. Moreover the inquiries of such bodies, as the FMPR of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution noted, are generally more rapid and less in-depth than NDPB studies.

Setting up Task Forces to deal with specific issues

14. This option is to make flexible, ad hoc consultation arrangements such as a Task Force to respond to particular needs, drawing on expertise most relevant to the issue in question. This would overcome the undoubted difficulty of appointing suitable persons to an NDPB with the skills and expertise to cover a wide range of topics, which carries the risk of never having sufficient expertise on any one subject. Moreover, such arrangements would be likely to fall outside the remit of the Commissioner for Public Appointments (CPA) and therefore could be set in hand relatively quickly. This would also avoid any perceived danger of creating a body that was looking for work to do. There could also be some financial saving both to the government, if the arrangements could be run with reduced secretarial input, and to organisations providing unpaid expertise.

15. However there are also disadvantages to this suggestion. Firstly it could sometimes be the case the government would not perceive that advice was necessary on an issue on which it had already formed a view or an issue that might otherwise be ignored or was were not easily identifiable from within government. Secondly it may seek advice too late, where there was insufficient time to form a committee and for it to seriously consider the matter before a decision was necessary. Thirdly the appointment procedure would be likely to be less transparent and open to public scrutiny. A further disadvantage would be loss of the long-term institutional memory that can be useful; when members of advisory mechanisms have been in post for longer than the Ministers that they advise.

Incorporation of work into central government.

16. One option is that the remaining function into government itself. There have been other cases of bodies which were set up by a new government which sought to make policy developments in a range of areas for which it had overall goals, and where it acknowledged the need for external advice to help to move towards them. For example in the case of DfID's Development Awareness Working Group, the host department has now dissolved the advisory body as it feels that it has internalised the learning and can take work forward itself, given the strategic vision that the NDPB helped to bring into existence.

Lead Partner

17. This option is by analogy with the idea of a "Tsar" as employed in such areas as drugs and London-based education, or in litter abatement where ENCAMS is recognised by Government as having a lead role. This formal recognition can help to give one individual or body the status and recognition to be allowed by others to take a leading and coordinating role, without always having formal, in the sense of statutory, responsibility to do so.

Sounding Board, Ministerial meetings Annual Meetings or Internet Discussion Boards

18. These terms refer to either one-off or occasional opportunities for a few or a large number of stakeholders to feed in views on the development and achievement of a strategy or initiative. Internet based variants of this, such as those the Government has been using in the build up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development²² can be interactive and inclusive.

²² For example, at <http://212.20.235.11/desc.asp?f=7>

Figure 1 Mapping of some alternative stakeholder mechanisms by formality and duration

