SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENTS AND ACTION FOR PEOPLE, PLACES AND COMMUNITY

*Report of a seminar held on 21 February 2011
at COSLA Conference Centre, Edinburgh
Co-hosted with:*

PREPARED BY TIM BIRLEY CONSULTANCY MARCH 2011

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Seminar held on 21 February 2011 at COSLA, Edinburgh

Report to LINK on behalf of the Steering Group by Tim Birley

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

i.i   This is an independent report of the seminar on Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs) held in COSLA's conference suite, Edinburgh on 21 February 2011. It was attended by more than 50 delegates from 35 organisations, including 20 local authorities. The event followed the publication of Scottish Environment LINK's review of current SOAs undertaken by CAG Consultants and the Sustainable Development Commission's (SDC) 4th Assessment Report [para 2.1; Annex 1].

i.ii   The seminar endorsed the findings of the LINK review. Sustainable development is not widely seen as a strategic priority for Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs). Few SOAs address 'crunch issues' where social, economic and environmental aspects interact. Recognition in SOAs of the interconnectedness between economic and environmental priorities is not well recognised, though many SOAs recognise the interconnectedness of environment, health and transport outcomes. Generally the environment receives considerable attention but with a narrow focus on, for example, waste, recycling and street cleanliness [paras 3.4 and 8.2].

i.iii   Work on CPPs and SOAs, as on sustainable development and the environment, is seen as a journey. There is huge potential and some - but limited – progress; there is a need for new ways of tackling intractable problems. In particular CPPs need to align economic, social and environmental plans, policies and programmes so they support one another; avoid a short term focus; and secure the objective of being able to do better on less [paras 3.10, 4.11, 6.2, 8.3-8.5].

i.iv   What is needed includes:

* **Leadership, both political and management**. If the CPP really matters, leaders have to behave more courageously and demonstrate its importance by their example. This includes aligning budgets, timetables and outcome delivery plans. The challenges are urgent [paras 3.10, 4.9, 4.13, 6.3-6.4, 7.11, 8.6].

* There is a key role for Scottish Government to **give clear guidance, but also establish a more responsive mutual learning process** to enable continuous improvement. That guidance must explain the benefits of sustainable development, and show how it can deliver both national and local outcomes [paras 4.14, 7.3, 8.6].

* The **evidence base of the Area Profiles** should inform priorities and outcomes, and could be a focus for community engagement. Informing the evidence base and monitoring progress against outcomes both need the right data sets disaggregated to the right spatial level. Local priorities are often a better starting point for SOAs than a top-down process using national priorities as a framework [paras 4.9, 4.16, 7.8, 8.6].

* SOAs need to be built around a **small number of genuinely strategic local outcomes**. It is easier to recognise the connections and interdependencies with a small number of outcomes, such as the importance

of the quality of local environments in supporting local health and economy outcomes [paras 3.6, 4.4, 4.14, 8.6].

- Great care needs to be taken that **indicators and targets don't drive the process**. 'What gets measured and reported gets included' must not trump 'what is important to measure to inform progress on outcomes'. It is outcomes that matter, and what is needed are ways in which progress towards these can be understood and communicated [paras 4.15, 7.6, 8.6].

- There is a need to **improve accountability**. At present the consequences of non-delivery are very vague. There is a need for effective audit and holding to account, both internally by CPPs, and externally by Scottish Government, the Improvement Service and Audit Scotland [paras 4.7, 7.11, 8.6].

1.   INTRODUCTION

1.1   This is a report on the seminar on Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs) held in COSLA's conference suite, Edinburgh on 21 February 2011. The seminar followed the circulation of the Scottish Environment LINK review of current SOAs undertaken by CAG Consultants and published in February 2011: *Delivering for the environment in our communities: an audit of Single Outcome Agreements*, and the publication of the SDC's 4th Assessment Report.

1.2   The aim was to explore how action on local priorities by local government and community planning partnerships (CPPs), through the outcomes based approach between central and local government, can maintain and enhance progress on sustainable development, tackling climate change, and the environment. The event was targeted at those involved in the preparation or delivery of SOAs, to provide an opportunity for exchange between experienced practitioners. Acutely aware of tight budget constraints, it also set out to focus on 'upstream' solutions, i.e. prevention rather than cure, and how to secure both multiple benefits (economic, social and environmental) and cost savings. The list of delegates is attached at Annex A, and the programme for the event at Annex B.

1.3   This report, in accordance with the brief from LINK, is not a transcript or minute of proceedings. In particular it does not report each discussion group's deliberations, though it does report on the main presentations that formed the foundations on which these discussions could build. It aims to provide a narrative that captures the key themes and points made, and draws out the implications of the day's proceedings.

2.   INITIAL BRIEFING PRESENTATIONS

2.1   *Jenny Brough* of Scottish Government set out an overview of the Community Planning and SOA processes, and the progress made. Community Planning has its basis in the 2003 Local Government in Scotland Act, and is designed as a mutually reinforcing process between public bodies and the public in each local authority area. The present Scottish Government established the National Performance Framework, with 15 national outcomes for Scotland, and in November 2007 agreed a Concordat with local government which established Single Outcome Agreements. The Concordat has resulted in the bulk of ring fencing being removed, and in "the spirit of co-production", SOAs have been agreed between the Scottish Government and each CPP.

2.2   SOAs set out what is to be delivered, in terms of local outcomes, and how it will be measured and evidenced, through local indicators. Each CPP is responsible for the delivery of outcomes in its SOA "within the spirit of Best Value and continuous improvement". Jenny referred to the "golden thread of alignment" and "line of sight" between activities and outcomes within the SOA and between the SOAs and the National Outcomes and overall Government Purpose as set out in the National Performance Framework. There are outcome toolkits and frameworks for several social policy areas such as education, and there could be similar for aspects of the environment.

2.3   *Tim Maiden*, described how CAG Consultants had undertaken a desk-based review of all 32 of the current round of SOAs. The audit focussed on the coverage of sustainable development and the 10 key environmental topics identified in LINK's January 2010 policy paper, and aimed to highlight good practice. Tim noted the variety of approaches to the development and presentation of SOAs, with indicators ranging from 30 in Dundee to over 200 in Argyll and Bute. He emphasised that SOAs are high level documents, and do not cover all the priorities and activities of the community planning partners.

2.4   The key findings of the report are:

- Notwithstanding the statutory requirement to contribute to sustainable development as part of the duty of Best Value, **sustainable development is not widely seen as a strategic priority for CPPs in Scotland**. It does not appear to be widely understood as an over-arching framework for policy development. While referred to in 19 SOAs, it is often just a brief reference.

- **Few SOAs address "crunch issues"** where social, economic and environmental aspects interact. Links which are generally absent include:

  - Climate change and economic development

  - Economic development and environmental protection

  - Tackling congestion alongside emissions reduction and modal shift.

- However, **many SOAs do recognise the interconnectedness of environment, health and transport outcomes**. This is a useful model to demonstrate how multiple benefits and efficiencies can be achieved. Tim also illustrated how East Lothian addresses the crunch issue of how to reconcile securing the benefits of being part of a city region with retaining viable local services and a vibrant community through local diversification.

- Generally **the environment receives considerable attention but with a narrow focus** on, for example, waste, recycling and street cleanliness. Some officers see the environment as a special interest, an add-on, and even take the view that "SNH and SEPA do that". There are significant gaps including on:

  - Climate change mitigation (only 2 SOAs have area wide emissions indicators)

  - Climate change adaptation

  - The historic environment

  - Landscape (with no indicators or outcomes in any SOA) and

  - Sustainable management of water resources.

- Most SOAs fail to recognise the need for a step change because of the scale and urgency of climate change, and appear more responsive to the financial downturn. **The interconnectedness between economic and environmental priories is not well recognised** and could have serious adverse impacts on Scotland's economic prosperity in the long term.

2.5   Tim set out a number of recommendations for policy makers and for CPPs. The former include:

- The duty to contribute to sustainable development needs to be reiterated, and guidance given on how to do it

- CPPs often show links to individual national outcomes: this encourages a silo mentality and does not show interconnections. SOAs are better when they start with a small number (say 5-6) of genuinely strategic local outcomes and show their interconnectedness (he cited Fife, Clackmannanshire and Inverclyde as examples)

- Guidance to CPPs must emphasise the importance of the environment to economic prosperity and quality of life

- The menu of indicators needs to be more comprehensive, with greater consistency and robustness for indicator selection and target setting

- SOAs should report on their intended contribution to key national targets, especially the 42% reduction in carbon emissions by 2020.

2.6   For CCPs too, the statutory duty to contribute to sustainable development needs to be given more attention, with better joining up of economic, social and environmental objectives. As part of this, the environment needs to be given a higher priority, recognising its role in underpinning economic prosperity, quality of life, health and wellbeing. The key gaps identified in paragraph 3.4 above need to be addressed in the next round of SOAs, and the scale and urgency of environmental challenges, especially in relation to climate change, need to be reflected in setting local priorities and levels of ambition. SOAs need to be built around a small number of genuinely strategic local outcomes, rather than starting with national outcome templates.

2.7   **Phil Matthews**, formerly with the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC), set out how SDC's Fourth Assessment of sustainable development progress headlined that **sustainable development will enable better policy with fewer resources**. While action on climate change should be part of sustainable development, it is not the whole story. Several aspects of integration have improved, but more is needed on transport, the impact of planning on the ground, and changing spending decisions.

2.8   The Assessment also looked at the relationship between central and local government, welcoming the new relationship and SOAs, and advocating that sustainability is the key to maintaining outcomes despite budget cuts. There is some tension between national and local priorities, and so far community engagement has been limited. The SOAs have not always shown a clear link between outcomes and resources, and there is some scepticism about the value added. Many SOAs have focussed on economic and social issues, with environment targets not stretching and only those legally required. The challenging issue of quality of life has not been enshrined in indicators.

2.9   It is not clear that local planning decisions align with the aspirations of the National Planning Framework and Scottish Planning Policy (SPP), or that the cumulative impact of planning decisions align with climate targets rather than locking us into a high carbon future. Current transport policy with huge spending on roads is not sustainable, and needs to re-focus on local outcomes: joining-up, the small scale, and walking and cycling. With energy, there has been progress on renewables, but again more emphasis is needed on demand reduction and local action; it is not clear what the impact of the Public Bodies Duties will be.

Regeneration spend is now more integrated, and social policy is a core commitment in SOAs. Corporate performance on sustainable development of Scottish public bodies is both mixed and little reported. Bodies sign up, for example on climate change, but action is limited: Phil cited a Councillor asking: "Tackling climate change is a duty; but is it a *real* duty?" He cited the SDC's report *The Future is Local* and argued that CPPs could be at the heart of an "integrated community upgrade", cutting carbon emissions, tackling health, and adapting to climate change.

2.10   Phil concluded that SOAs and CPPs offer huge potential for the delivery of sustainable communities. So far there has been only limited success, and it is difficult to say how much there is genuine partnership rather than local authorities predominating: for example with carbon emissions, there is surely an opportunity for CPPs to share information and tackle this jointly. The challenges are urgent, and integration, innovation and better partnership working are the keys.

3.   EXPLORATORY DISCUSSIONS

3.1   After these briefing presentations, delegates who were seated in six groups each discussed a range of topics, each group starting with a different topic.

Group 1 - Joining up: securing interconnectedness and an integrated approach

3.2   Participants had a wide variety of views on the extent of joining-up. For some "SOAs are not demonstrating interconnectedness except in a few cases (the East Lothian example, q.v.)" and "there is no real evidence of CP partners making fundamental changes in the way they work or join up." However, for others there is joining up and making headway on cross-cutting issues in at least some authorities (East Lothian, Fife, Inverclyde and South Lanarkshire were all cited) and on some topics. Two groupings quoted were transport, environment, health and job creation; and biodiversity, open space, active travel and volunteering. In these cases the joining up is often "below the waterline", and can be found in outcome delivery plans. The voluntary sector was identified as an important player in joining things up.

3.3   Two particular stumbling blocks were identified. Even where there are win-wins, the investment and savings may not be from and to the same organisation, and partners may not share commitments for delivery. For example, active travel investment may come from the local authority, but the savings go to the NHS. Collective responsibility and collaborative working are still very variable. Second, corporate management are not happy if they cannot prove how CPP is making a difference. This impacts on tackling climate change, which is seen as too distant and not amenable to control or influence.

Group 2 - The contribution of the environment to other outcomes

3.4   A key message is that it is easier to make the connections with a small number of outcomes: Clackmannanshire is notable for having only 9 outcomes, which by necessity are strategic in nature. In turn, this can be good if the connections and interdependencies are made. A small number of outcomes may also make it easier for partners to engage in the process, rather than having to deal with

everything; some partners are withdrawing from the SOA because they can't serve a large number of SOAs.

3.5   However, there is nothing prescribed in the SOA process to check for interdependencies and identify linkages across activities and outcomes. SOAs have not been subject to the same level of scrutiny as other plans, programmes and policies. Weak integration may have resulted from the compressed timescales for SOAs to be developed. Even where regional approaches are possible and desirable (e.g. for transport or waste) they haven't happened, and it is unclear how such an approach relates to individual SOAs.

3.6   Jobs and economic growth tends to remain the key driver, as it is what people want (or councils think they want). Links are not generally made to aspects of the environment which could be linked to economic potential, such as landscape quality. Environmental policy is driven forward if there is a duty, funding, infrastructure, and clear results, as there has been with recycling. SOAs are strong on areas which affect every organisation such as social inclusion, whereas issues such as climate change may not be seen as important by some partners, such as fire and rescue.

Group 3 - Capacity building and development

3.7   At present there is uncertainty about what is the appropriate level of Scottish Government intervention to support capacity building. There is a particular concern about the lack, or variable levels, of scrutiny, both internal and external, with a sense of "who cares if SOA outcomes and activities are not achieved" and uncertainty whether SOAs have the power to influence budgets. There is also a tension between national priorities and CPPs developing their own priorities. Some authorities, for example Dumfries and Galloway, may be doing more to reflect the golden thread than others.

Group 4 - Engagement and local buy-in: involving communities

3.8   The lack of scrutiny is compounded not only by the lack of community involvement in SOAs but also many local authority staff and members do not know about SOAs or how to relate to them. Participants recognised that it can be difficult to engage communities on strategic issues as opposed to small scale local priorities (which may include dog fouling, litter and bin collections) and specific focussed initiatives (e.g. on community safety, or drugs and alcohol). Presentation of SOAs is not people friendly, with what are seen as bureaucratic processes and language, and outcomes seem remote from people's experience and not obviously mainly about people, places and community.

3.9   Experience from Inverclyde is that engagement takes time and money, and may still result in poor turnout. Funding is getting more difficult and it may be difficult to get partners to pool funds for engagement, when they want to do their own. Local area forums and citizens panels have been more effective ways of communicating what SOAs are about and engaging people in informing priorities. There are also 'local CPPs' with funds for local priorities, and some councils invite Community Council representatives onto groups. SOAs need to be invested in, which includes communicating and engaging with politicians, officials and the public. There is a particular role for tapping into local knowledge and understanding, including into the evidence base of the Area Profile, though in practice because this is produced at

the same time as the SOA, the evidence base does not inform priorities and outcomes.

3.10   Some aspects of community planning do achieve good local engagement, but environmental work less so. The voluntary sector has been good at stimulating action, and there are examples of successes driven by regeneration programmes, such as local energy systems in Aberdeen; targeted engagement of young people, though Eco Schools and Young Scot; and work by churches on climate change and fair trade. Engagement with the business community was identified as a gap.

Group 5 - Funding and budgets: how the environment can save money, and not cost more

3.11   Discussion centred on the fundamental question: how can we challenge the perceived lack of importance that sustainable development and the environment has within public bodies and show that action in this area can save money? There is a lack of understanding of sustainable development and its potential contribution at a time of retrenchment, and lack of commitment to the environment when it comes to funding. This is compounded by the lack of alignment between budget and political cycles of 4 years and the generational changes needed in the environment (such as the long-term climate change targets).

3.12   What is needed is a culture change so senior managers start to see the environment and sustainable development as fundamental to delivering high quality sustainable communities. This should lead to better allocation of budgets. For example, tourism is a huge contributor to the Scottish economy, yet it is absent from SOAs. There should be scope too for building from existing commitments, such as the Edinburgh Festival, and for innovation. While the 'big society' concept is not a cheap option and needs public support, good examples are the work of the Climate Challenge Fund and Going Carbon Neutral Stirling.

3.13   More generally, it was suggested that resources are not deployed on the basis of SOAs, because different organisations work to different budgeting requirements. This may be an issue for the Christie Review on the Future Delivery of Public Services. The Improvement Service is piloting a study in 2011 looking at the potential to align service delivery and budgets across CPPs in one or two areas.

Group 6 - Measuring progress: robust data underpinning indicators and stretching targets

3.14   There are major concerns that the targets for outcomes are too often those determined by statutory requirements and Scottish Government, are not overly stretching, and relate to work going on anyway, adding little value. Government only challenges the process, and not the level of targets: there is little constructive feedback. Related to this, the selected indicators tend to be those which are easy to measure and monitor, not necessarily those that are important. Trying to innovate encounters aversion to risk, and a lack of funding and commitment to invest in sound time-series data. There are some examples of good practice (such as Fife), where local targets have been set, often where the focus is on a limited number of outcomes.

3.15   In SOAs there is a tendency to pick convenient indicators, such as tonnes of recycled waste (Dundee were told by Scottish Government to include diversion from landfill as an indicator: they don't have a landfill). This leaves questions about how important issues get incorporated if public bodies don't have systems in place to deal with them. The challenge of 'what gets measured and reported gets included' trumps notions of 'what is important to measure to inform progress on outcomes'.

3.16   There are particular problems over the environment, where SOAs want evidence of outcomes, but actions may take time to deliver and be difficult to measure, especially if the emphasis is on quantitative indicators. Unlike health and the economy, environmental data is not well resourced. More generally there is a need to invest in developing sound indicators. The need to have the right data sets which are disaggregated to the right spatial level came up regularly, and is necessary to provide the evidence base to get CPPs to be able to monitor their progress against the outcomes.

4.   PROGRESS ON ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOME INDICATORS

4.1   *Clive Mitchell* described the work on environmental indicators being co-ordinated by SNH. The project board and indicators task group of the Scottish Government and the Improvement Service devise the Menu of Local Outcome Indicators. The current menu has 64 indicators of which only about 8 can be identified as on the environment: CO_2 per capita, derelict land, 3 on active travel and 3 on waste. This gap has been recognised and work is underway to address this, though there is limited space.

4.2   The selection criteria for local outcome indicators is that they should be: relevant and unambiguous; harmonised with other frameworks and concepts; timely and accessible; statistically robust and accessible; and affordable. The framework for environmental indicators agreed in November 2010 with the Improvement Service Task Group on indicators is attached at Annex 3. Their range is based on SEA topics together with environmental education. A more complete environmental framework is being developed to show how activities, inputs and outputs contribute to the proposed outcome indicators; Clive [Clive.Mitchell@snh.gov.uk] would welcome any further thoughts on this. These relationships can be complex, but need to be understood to know what to do if an outcome indicator moves in the wrong direction. Potential tools include logic modelling, systems diagramming and mapping of benefits. The key is to be clear about what outcome indicators are trying to show.

4.3   Outcomes are typically multi-dimensional but indicators are one-dimensional, and if indicators become targets, one should expect perverse outcomes. As Clive put it: "what gets measured gets managed, but sometimes we can't measure what matters, and we measure things that don't really matter … and then we manage those things".

4.4   Clive concluded by quoting Robert Kennedy who said in 1968:

   "… gross national product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education, or the joy of their play.

It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages; the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials.

It measures neither our wit nor our courage; neither our wisdom nor our learning; neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country; it measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile."

5.   SHARING LOCAL EXPERIENCE OF SOAs

5.1   **Brian Forsyth** set out Midlothian Council's approach to realising sustainable development outcomes in Midlothian's SOAs. One of 6 CPP thematic groups is called Conserving and improving Midlothian's environment. It is broadly based and currently has an environmental focus, though they are considering if their remit should extent to the more cross-cutting sustainable development issues under discussion at the seminar. The group inputs to both SOAs and a 20-year Community Plan. Both are currently being refreshed, and work is moving to a 3-year cycle. The process is informed by Midlothian's vision, themes, communities and profile.

5.2   Prior to SOAs, Midlothian were using local outcomes as part of community planning. Now, the SOA is a subset of the local outcomes in the Community Plan, and they try to ensure that the outcomes come within the scope of actions by community plan partners. Guidance from the Improvement Service is that there may be a need for intermediate outcomes, and that they should not put forward long term aspirations in the SOA unless there is intermediate progress in prospect. The Improvement Service also advise that each thematic group should identify the top 5 outcomes, and top 5 indicators – the "big ticket" items. SOA guidance is to be able to know what success looks like and know if you are getting there. However, if the focus is short term and on big ticket items, there is a risk of a silo approach and avoiding tackling what Tim Maiden had called the crunch issues.

5.3   **Rona Gold** brought experience from West Lothian of an exemplar project on area wide footprinting. Previously West Lothian Council did not have a carbon indicator. Now they have an indicator on climate change, and a need to take action on this. This is because if it is in the SOA, it is also in the performance management framework, and therefore will be called to account. Development work was conducted by partners across the Lothians, including 3 workshops run by SSN. Rona said that you need people who can agree to take action: it takes time to secure buy-in and resources. The partners decided that they all influence transport, and have taken this into fleet management, staff travel, and transport planning. Overall, area-wide footprinting has required a lot of people and resources to make action happen and produce carbon management plans. The process is not simple.

5.4   The East Lothian approach to the development and evolution of SOAs, who are on their third iteration, was outlined by **David Evans**. The partnership structure comprises a Community Planning Board, with a CP Working Group, 6 Theme Groups and Local Area Forums. This is to enable a bottom up approach, and is being extended as resources allow. The Environment, Housing and Places (EHP) SOA Theme Group itself brings together partnerships, groups and forums on biodiversity, land use planning, housing, heritage, food policy, local access and the environment.

5.5   For 2011, the SOA will have a service delivery focus, address the financial context, and drive to reduce the number of outcomes to 15-20. It will also include cross-cutting issues on: prevention and early intervention; equalities; sustainability; and effective and efficient services, to be monitored through the performance management system. Sustainability will be addressed through revisions to the EHP outcomes, with footprint based outcomes, links across thematic areas including to the economy and health, and taking into account the Climate Change Act Public Sector Duties Guidance from Scottish Government. David described the CPPs work to link Inputs, Initiatives and Outputs to short-term and long-term Outcomes.

5.6   He advised that the SOA needs profile, buy-in and understanding. In his opinion they are only making a start on joining-up, and footprinting provides an opportunity for joint working. SOA is an evolving process: they are looking to rationalise, and have more meaningful indicators. On the difficult question of whether SOAs are making a difference, he thought there was a lot of work on process, but it was an open question if we are actually delivering. He too thought that advice from the Improvement Service could lead to short termism.

6.   SOA PROCESSES, INDICATORS AND DELIVERY

6.1   In the afternoon working groups session, the groups rotated so that each could discuss these 3 topics in turn.

SOA Processes

6.2.   Much of the conversation focused on whether the SOA process made any real difference to the work of partners and how budgets were allocated. There was a feeling that the move to collective responsibility for the outcomes, together with the discussion processes, did enable partners to influence each other's thinking, but that this could only influence budgets at the detailed level with no significant impact on the overall allocation of resources. These are decided by the partners separately, often out of sequence with the community planning process so that there is discussion on resources after budgets have been set. There are also potentially contradictory priorities, as partners who are national agencies will set their priorities at national level.

6.3   The preparation of SOAs needs adequate time to be meaningful. Also, given the long term nature of the outcomes, they should not be refreshed too often. In the previous round, CPPs found what they could measure, then selected outcomes, then wrote the area profile, when it should be the other way round. There is also a need for a negotiated agreement with Scottish Government, with a priority for local issues, but also clear statements of what contribution CPPs make to national outcomes and duties. Current guidance is too late and too loose: there is no model of a sustainable community planning process.

6.4   Sustainable development is clearly not well covered, and has to become a top-level cross-cutting theme, not just environmental. There is a need for a high level steering group or programme board to have sustainable development in its remit. The Inverclyde example was cited of a programme board which meets every 6 weeks and can follow through high level commitments to the outcome delivery

plans. Inverclyde can start to see projects which are happening because of the CPP and SOA.

6.5   Overall, there was a high degree of scepticism about the added value of the community planning process in relation to the time it absorbs: much of the joint working that goes on would happen anyway, and people still tend to work within their silos.

Indicators

6.6   Discussion on indicators developed the morning's exploration of measuring progress (paras 4.14-4.16), and reiterated that indicators and even outcomes are being driven by the availability of data, and then steering activity towards the indicator rather than the outcome. Indicators should not be the drivers, but instead a way to tell a story about progress to the outcome, in which case data accuracy is less of an issue because progress will be both qualitative and quantitative. This should mean measuring not only physical characteristics and flows, but also public perceptions and satisfaction.

6.7   SOAs need to connect to people and place, and there is a role for community involvement in setting indicators, though this can be difficult, costly and time-consuming. What is required is putting together creative teams with different disciplines to explore needs and possibilities. Some of the best indicators are innovative and based on lateral thinking. For example, the presence of certain species can be a useful indicator of wider ecosystem health, water quality etc.

6.8   The complexities need to be recognised and understood. Using national outcomes and indicators may be a constraining starting point and using local priorities to frame community plans is preferable. Some indicators, such as the proposed landscape connectivity, may be hard to measure and convey. Sometimes it may be difficult to attribute progress to specific interventions, though tools such as logic modelling may help. League tables might enable sharing of good practice, but delegates regarded them with great caution and felt they would need very careful interpretation. Care in setting boundaries round what is measured; having consistent and stable data sets without resetting baselines; and learning from use of indicators elsewhere including overseas, are all important too.

Delivery of Activities that contribute to Outcomes

6.9   There were mixed views and experiences of delivery. On the one hand many felt that delivery by CPPs and through the SOA had been disappointing. The removal of ring fencing jeopardises spending on key areas such as reducing flood risks. The Climate Change (Scotland) Act and duty on public bodies are felt to be woolly and lacking in real teeth. Generally, it is hard to see the impact of much legislation in terms of outcomes – there are lots of policy documents and commitments but little action.

6.10   The contrary view is that some projects would not have happened without the stimulus of the SOA. In some CPPs, the SOA has improved collaborative working and developed a common understanding, even a common language, between agencies, which is important in the move towards more joined up working. In this more positive perspective, the Climate Change Act and its Public Bodies Duties could

help underscore and promote joined up working on climate change (and sustainable development) agendas – as illustrated by the orientation and development of the Lothians Footprint project.

6.11   Whether the gloomy or more optimistic opinions prevail depend on a number of key factors. Political and corporate leadership is needed to breathe life into the process, developing shared responsibility for delivery. There is a need too to improve accountability through proper internal and external audit and scrutiny. At present there are no sanctions, and the consequences of non-delivery are very vague. There needs to be support for genuine engagement and partnership, on which the successful delivery of SOAs depends, and practical guidance on how to relate outcomes and indicators down to project level, with funding following the priority outcomes. The role for local ownership and a 'bottom up' approach must be respected by central government.

6.12   Public bodies are completely focussed on dealing with the cuts at present, and it is hard to get interest in wider priorities or longer term outcomes, particularly on sustainable development which is not viewed as a core function. Sustainable development must be explained simply, and sold in terms of efficiency given the financial pressures facing local authorities, and should look to new funding streams such as Feed in Tariffs that can provide financial support.

7.   CONCLUSIONS

7.1   Work on CPPs and SOAs, as on sustainable development and the environment, is a journey. Taking a comprehensive view in Scottish local government has its roots in the Regional Reports of the 1970s, the pioneering work by Fife and Strathclyde Regional Councils on a holistic approach to policy and indicators, and the extensive work on LA21. All these lead to the current SOAs. The task ahead is challenging, but we have to start from where we are.

7.2   What the seminar achieved was to add the voice of a large number of experienced practitioners to the independent audit of current SOAs. It endorsed the findings and recommendations of the report to LINK by CAG Consultants, and supported the conclusion that sustainable development is not featuring strongly, let alone underpinning, SOAs.

7.3   On CPPs and SOAs the glass is seen by some as half full, and by others as all but empty. Outcomes are too often indicator and target driven, too centrally determined, short term, and with a lack of learning or audit. There is a lot of talk and little action. Yet at the same time there is also emerging good practice: shared understanding and language; efforts to engage people and find innovative ways to tackle wicked or 'crunch' problems. On balance there was little confidence that what is in the glass so far has repaid the effort, but also a clear view that the effort should continue and become more effective. Delegates recognised that old ways of service delivery have not brought about the changes sought, and we need new ways of tackling intractable problems.

7.4   There is widely perceived risk that the financial cuts will reinforce - or drive people backwards to – working in silos and seeking to restore business as usual. Contributing to sustainable development (which is a statutory duty on all public bodies) has to be seen as aligning economic, social and environmental plans, policies and programmes so that they support one another, and secure the objective of being able to do better on less.

7.5   Delegates reported that discussion of the environment was characterised by productive meetings, but typically this was lost when passed on to those drafting the SOA. They argued strongly that the environment is not an optional extra, but the context within which society and our economy operate. They drew attention to the imperatives of a destabilised climate and the need for mitigation and adaptation, and how much the quality of life, including prosperity, health and wellbeing, depend on the quality of places. There is a clear correlation between poor physical environments and disadvantage in social, health and economic terms, and equally so between high quality environments and economic opportunity.

7.6   What is needed includes:

- Leadership, both political and management. If the CPP really matters, leaders have to behave more courageously and demonstrate its importance by their example.

- Recognition by Scottish Government that they have (a) to give clear guidance but also (b) area profiles and local priorities are often a better starting point for SOAs than a top-down process using national priorities as a framework, and (c) establish a more responsive mutual learning process to enable continuous improvement.

- That guidance must explain the benefits of sustainable development, and show how it can deliver both national and local outcomes. This should make clear that safeguarding the environment is essential and can contribute to, and not detract from, tackling key social, health and economic issues. The guidance should be illustrated with reference to emerging good practice.

- Effective audit and holding to account, both internally by CPPs and from Scottish Government, the Improvement Service and Audit Scotland.

- Fewer outcomes, but with the connections and interdependencies better recognised: for example the importance of the quality of local environments in supporting local health and economic outcomes.

- Taking great care that indicators and targets don't drive the process. It is outcomes that matter, and what is needed are ways in which progress towards these can be understood and communicated.

7.7   As **Roddy Fairley**, chair of the event concluded, the scale of the task that confronts us is immense. Many of the problems which public bodies face are very very difficult: dealing with financial cuts, but also tackling deprivation and marginalisation in all its forms, climate change, and environmental degradation – all vital facets of the quality of life for present and future generations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

7.8   Many people worked to make this seminar productive: the steering group, chair, presenters, facilitators and note takers, and all who took part. The event covered much ground in a productive and positive way. Even when critical or sceptical about progress, the spirit of the discussion was of public servants who want to tackle big issues, improve public services, and play a part in bringing about a Scotland in which people, places and communities can all flourish. Roddy Fairley cited Ghandi, that we all must "be the change we want to see".

Tim Birley for Scottish Environment LINK

March 2011

ANNEX 1: DELEGATE LIST

Organisation	Name	Job Title
Aberdeen City Council	Amy Smith	Sustainable Development Officer
Aberdeen City Council	Andrew Win	Senior Sustainable Development Officer
Aberdeenshire Council	Kelly Fairweather	Sustainability Officer
Angus Council	Jacqui McNeill	Corporate Planning Officer
Archaeology Scotland	Eila McQueen	Director
Argyll & Bute Council	Stephen Colligan	Policy Assistant
CAG Consultants	Tim Maiden	Director
CAG Consultants	Phil Matthews	Senior Consultant
City of Edinburgh Council	James Garry	Policy Officer
City of Edinburgh Council	Euan Renton	Policy Officer, Sustainable Development Unit
Clackmannanshire Council	Lesley Baillie	Community Planning Policy Officer
Clackmannanshire Council	Rebecca Bell	Sustainability Officer
Dumfries & Galloway Council	Chris Wood-Gee	Sustainable Development Team Leader
Dundee City Council	Alison Anderson	Environmental Development Officer, Dundee Partnership for the Environment
Dundee City Council	Bryan Harris	Senior Community Planning Officer
East Dunbartonshire Council	Sylvia Gray	Sustainable Development Officer
East Lothian Council	Jill Burnett	Sustainable Development Officer
East Lothian Council	David Evans	Senior Environment and Consumer Affairs Manager
Fife Council	Shona Cargill	Policy Officer
Fife Council	Alison Irvine	Senior Access Officer
Forestry Commission Scotland	Neil Langhorn	Land Use Planing Advisor
Glasgow City Council	Ken Harris	Sustainable Development Officer
Glasgow City Council	Laurence Naismith	Principal Corporate Policy Officer
Improvement Service	Bob Christie	Outcomes Programme Manager
Inverclyde Council	Karen Barclay	Green Charter Unit Co-ordinator
Inverclyde Council	Lynsey Frizell	SOA Programme Manager
Living Streets Scotland	Janice Gray	Healthy Environments Officer
Midlothian Council	Brian Forsyth	Senior Planning Policy & Sustainability Officer
Renfrewshire Council	Kasia Owczarek	Assistant Policy Officer
Scottish Government	Jenny Brough	Local Government: Outcomes & Partnerships Division
Scottish Government	John Landrock	Environment Statistics
Scottish Government	Denise Patrick	Statistical Support for Public Bodies, Office of the Chief Statistician
Scottish Natural Heritage	Zeshan Akhter	Policy and Advice Officer, Scottish Biodiversity Forum
Scottish Natural Heritage	Keith Dalgleish	Area Officer – West and Central Fife
Scottish Natural Heritage	Roddy Fairley	Head of Strategic Engagement
Scottish Natural Heritage	Clive Mitchell	Strategy & Communications Manager, Strategic Division
SEPA	Alan Farquhar	Planning, Advice and Engagement Manager
SNIFFER	Julian Holbrook	Manager, Scottish Climate Change Impacts Partnership (SCCIP)
SNIFFER	Andrew Llanwarne	Consultant
SNIFFER	Ruth Wolstenholme	Managing Director
South Ayrshire Council	Lorna Jarvie	Sustainable Development Policy Officer
South Lanarkshire Council	Brian Sinclair	Research Advisor
South Lanarkshire Council	Lesley Wylie	Sustainable Development Officer
Stirling Council	Angela Heaney	Policy Officer (Sustainability)
Sustainable Development Commission	Anne Marte Bergseng	Communications and Engagement Manager
Sustainable Development Commission	Maria Bell	Office Manager
Sustainable Scotland Network	George Tarvit	Development Manager
Tactran	Michael Cairns	Strategy Manager
Tim Birley Consultancy	Tim Birley	Consultant
University of Edinburgh	David Hawkey	Research Fellow, Heat and the City
University of Edinburgh	Janette Webb	Professor of Sociology
West Dunbartonshire Council	Liz Tuach	Community Planning Co-ordinator
West Lothian Council	Rona Gold	Climate Change Policy Officer
WWF Scotland	Elizabeth Leighton	Senior Policy Officer

ANNEX 2: PROGRAMME FOR THE EVENT

Event title   **Single Outcome Agreements and Action for People, Place and Community**

21 February 2010

Who is it for?   *This workshop is aimed at people involved in the preparation or delivery of Single Outcome Agreements, including. Scottish Government, Local Authority and Community Planning Partnership reps, COSLA, Historic Scotland, Forestry Commission, SEPA, SNH*

What is it about?   *To explore how action on local priorities by local government and community planning partnerships through the outcomes based approach between central and local government can maintain and enhance progress on climate change, sustainable development and the environment.*

Specifically, discussion will focus on the success factors for taking forward local priorities and sustainable development through the outcome approach. For example, recognising issues and priorities through the development of area profiles, monitoring progress through local outcome indicators, and joining up of related outcomes such as health, education, transport and climate change and working out the mechanics of issues above and below the waterline.

What will you gain from attending?   *Looking ahead to the tight budget constraints for councils and the public sector, the event will focus on 'upstream' solutions (prevention rather than cure) such as the "value for money" of investment/commitment to environmental targets/outcomes, i.e. the multiple social and economic benefits from investment in green infrastructure and translating that into to cost savings*

An opportunity to hear from experienced practitioners

Valuable networking opportunities

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Content: *Outline agenda:*

Chair   Roddy Fairley, SNH

09:30   Registration and coffee

10:00   Welcome and introductions, purpose for the day

10:15   Presentations and discussion

10:15   Jenny Brough (Scottish Government, Local Government Outcomes and Partnerships Division) - update on the evolution of SOAs, work underway on indicators, evidencing success for outcomes and sustainability.

10:35   Tim Maiden: Scottish Environment LINK review of current Single Outcome Agreements (presentation from report author)

11:05   Phil Matthews: SDC report on its 4th assessment and focus on Single Outcome Agreements

11:35   6 working groups with local authority leads on key questions raised (eg joining-up outcomes plus others to be confirmed on the day)

12:45   lunch

1:30   Clive Mitchell: progress on environmental outcome indicators

1:45   Sharing Local Experience of SOAs - Local Authority/Community Planning Partnership presentation from Midlothian, West Lothian and East Lothian Councils

2:20   6 working groups with local authority leads - on specific questions - two on indicators, two on process of SOAs; two on delivery (above and below the waterline) – tbc on the day

3:30 - Next steps

Times:	09:30 (coffee and registration) for 10:00 start. Finish at 16:00

Venue:	*COSLA Conference Suite, Haymarket, Edinburgh*

Organiser:	*SNH in partnership with SEPA, COSLA, Improvement Service, Scottish Environment LINK, SDC, SSN and IS*

Cost:	£free – lunch & refreshments will be provided

Booking:	To book a place, please send an email with your • Name • Organisation • Job title • Address • Contact details (phone and email) • Any medial or dietary requirements To **Maria Bell** maria.bell@sdc-scotland.org.uk at the **Sustainable Development Commission** by *31 January 2011* **Please book early – numbers capped at 50.** If you are subsequently unable to attend please let Maria know so someone else can.

Single Outcome Agreements
Menu of Local outcome Indicators

Environmental Indicators

The Table below summarises the framework for environmental indicators agreed on 12 November with the Improvement Service Task Group on environmental indicators[1], and the indicators proposed to populate it.

A more complete environmental framework will be developed to show how activities, inputs and outputs contribute to the proposed outcome indicators.

Environmental Outcome Indicators for the Menu of Local Outcome Indicators

Topic	Proposed indicator	Action (lead) / date expected	Comment
Biodiversity (flora and fauna)	the proportion of national priority habitats / species in each LBAP area under positive management	SNH. March 2011.	Currently best available (for next 3-4 years). Development work on BARS complete. Funding decision on continued funding of BARS expected in Jan 2011.
Population and human health	proportion of people/households (in settlements over 3000 population) within 300m of accessible greenspace of more than e.g. 2ha which is being actively managed for community use	SNH. Nov 2010	Distribution available now. Quality for some LAs available now, for all others in next 2 years. Via Open Space Strategies
Soil	extent and condition of carbon-rich soils (peat and associated organic soils)	SEPA/SNH. March 2011	Currently best available – SNH/SEPA to agree relevant metadata. SEPA/SNH to work on 'sustainable land use' indicator (after launch of State of Scottish Soils Report). 2011/12
Water	percentage of km length of rivers and water bodies achieving good ecological and chemical water quality	SEPA. Jan 2011	SEPA to advise on simpler measure less vulnerable to 'one out all out'

[1] Next steps – once we have provided metadata etc, the Task Group will check that they are fit for inclusion in the Menu and recommend to the Project Board that they are adopted

Topic	Proposed indicator	Action (lead)/date expected	Comment
Flooding	reduction in number of properties and businesses at risk of flooding, measured by the percentage reduction from baseline in ?2010	SEPA. Jan 2011	SEPA to advise on revised wording to allow e.g. expansion of natural flood management – this wording 13/12/10
Air	background pollution (primarily for human health)	SEPA. Jan 2011	SEPA to finalise best available indicator and provide relevant metadata
Climatic factors (mitigation)	CO_2 per capita (current indicator)	n/a	Environmental Framework to show relevant activities, inputs and outputs, including role of carbon footprint.
Climatic factors (adaptation)	Adapting to climate change	SNH/SNIFFER. March 2011	Depends on independent assessment of degree of preparedness.
Material assets	the proportion of adults making one or more visits to the outdoors per week	SNH. November 2010	Future depends on relevant Q being asked in Scottish Household Survey (decision expected Jan 2011)
Culture (inc architectural and archaeological heritage)	Historic Environment Service maintained by every LA to an agreed national common standard	SE LINK. Jan 2011	Depends on agreed 'national common standard'
Landscapes	landscape connectivity	SNH. March 2011	Best currently available. Strong biodiversity indicator – but reveals something of tapestry of the landscape. SNH to develop landscape outcome indicator during 2011/12
Environmental Education	number of schools (percentage of which) achieving eco-school accreditation (and flag achieved)	SE LINK. Jan 2011	Agree detailed wording for the indicator (with Eco-Schools in Scotland)

Clive Mitchell, SNH
23 November 2010

Prepared by Tim Birley BSc(Eng), ACGI, MSc, FRSA
Facilitator and Advisor on Sustainable Development