

Going Forward with Local Agenda 21

Northern Ireland Sustainability Indicators

presentation by
Michael Crilly, Cranfield University
Adam Mannis, University of Ulster
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at
Palace Stables, Armagh.

scope

Meanings and definitions

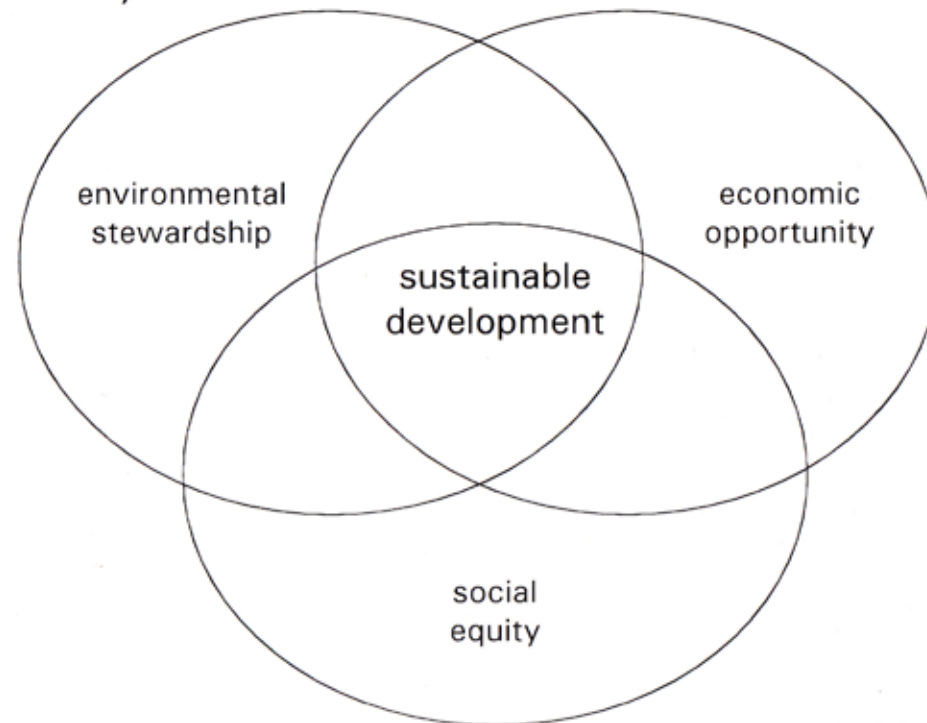
"Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable - to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."
(World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987)

"... improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems." (United Nations Environment Programme, 1992)

- Sustainable development is subjective and locally defined

Balance and integration

- need to integrate environment and development
- sustainability = environmentalism
- equal attention given to the state of our environment, the economy and to society



Sustainability indicators can provide a local definition of sustainable development

links

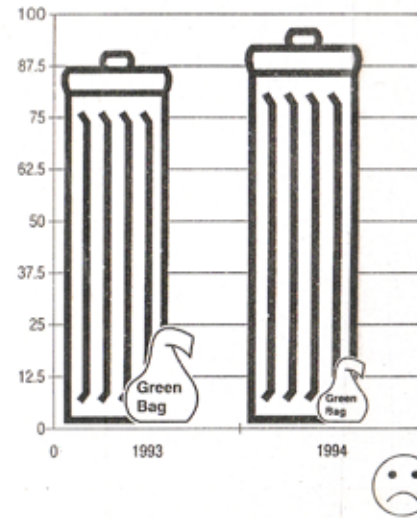
Departmental Responsibility

- multi-disciplinary
- strategic overview
- data coordination
- Local Agenda 21

waste management/
technical services

local economic
development

% recycled domestic waste in Cardiff City

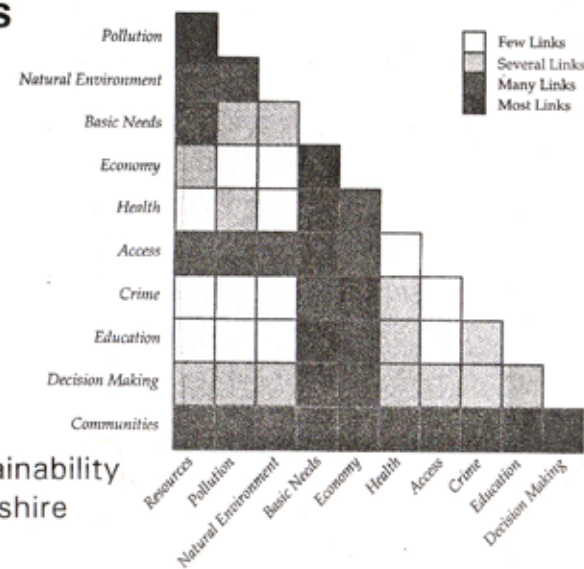


education/
community services

contract services

Beyond Statutory Local Authority Functions

- 'top-down' & 'bottom-up'
- partnership working
- cooperation with data providers



Links between sustainability themes in Lancashire

Sustainability indicators can reflect complexity and show the links between different issues

trends

Measuring and Monitoring

- establish baseline state - single snapshot (state of the environment report)
- national/regional and local comparisons
- long term trends / time series (requires on-going monitoring and data sets)


sustainability indicates direction rather than destination


answers the question 'are we moving towards a more sustainable Northern Ireland ?'


Targets and Standards

"... indicators will be used to help set targets, and to monitor and report progress towards them. We are not looking for a nice set of descriptive statistics of the state of our environment. We need instead a set of indicators tailored to reflect what we want to achieve."

(Environment Minister Michael Meacher, 18 September 1997)

 Double the area of native broadleaf woodland by the year 2015 (1991 about 6% of land area was woodland)

 80% of all new built development to be situated within urban areas and sites within the growth corridors identified (approximately 60% of all new development within main urban areas 1986-1991)

 Increase the extent of land covered by designations, managed by the County Council or covered by management agreements by 25% (the extent of land designated in the county for reasons of nationally or locally important wildlife is 7%)

Bedfordshire targets

County Durham directional measures



Good progress towards sustainability



A substantial move away from sustainability



A modest move towards sustainability




A modest move away from sustainability



Uncertain, but likely to be towards sustainability



Uncertain, but likely to be away from sustainability

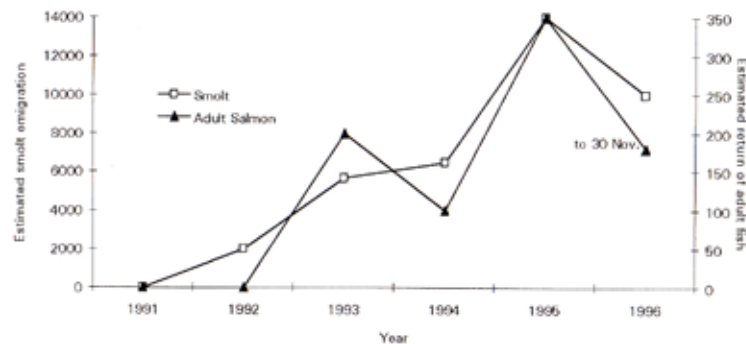
 Provision and maintenance of public squares and green spaces at 25%-35% of total land within the main urban areas (this standard is similar to that of the 'garden cities' - local land use data is available but not collated; open space is currently approximately 10% of the total built up area of Luton, Dunstable and Houghton Regis and 18% of the total built up area of Bedford/Kempston excluding dual use schools, allotments and urban fringe land)

Sustainability indicators can tell us objectively whether things are getting better or worse

community

Education and Responsibility

- must be relevant and easily understood
- can be provocative and hold some resonance with the public



Ownership and Involvement

"Everyone must be a consumer and provider of information. Collecting data is not a legitimate end in itself ... we must be willing to do something about what we learn."

(Gary Lawrence: Sustainable Seattle Indicators Project)

- ownership by local community (public rather than policy focus)
- on-going involvement and feedback (selection of indicators and setting targets)
- shared responsibility (collection of data for indicators)

Sustainability indicators can highlight areas of responsibility and ownership

THE SUSTAINABLE SEATTLE 1993 INDICATORS OF SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

◀ Moving away from sustainability ▶ Towards sustainability

Environment

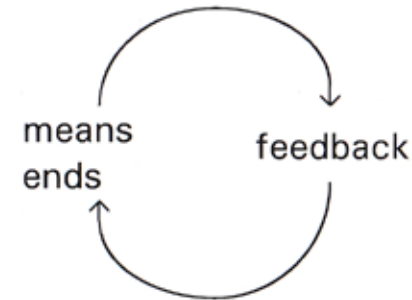
- ◀ Wild salmon runs through local streams
- ▶ Number of good air quality days per year

Number of Salmon
in the River Lagan

action

Practical uses of sustainability indicators

- to highlight areas of concern —————> pressure
- to monitor actual change on the ground —————> state
- to measure policy performance —————> response
-
- to assess the effectiveness of action taken (response)
- to help set priorities for action (pressure/ state)



Actors in the process

- regional NGO's & Government Agencies
- local authorities
- community groups

Benefits to a Local Authority

- better use of limited finances and other resources
- greater influence over policy makers (advocacy tool)
- provides links with larger organisations and with 'grassroots' community feelings
- useful in developing skills and knowledge
- improving public image and healthy competition among District Councils

Sustainability indicators can help with resource allocation and setting priorities for action

summary

Sustainability indicators can;

- provide a local definition of sustainable development
- reflect complexity and show the links between different issues
- tell us objectively whether things are getting better or worse
- highlight areas of responsibility and ownership
- help with resource allocation and setting priorities for action