

**10TH ANNIVERSARY REPORT**

# **RE-MAKING THE REGIONAL ECONOMY**

**CELEBRATING ACHIEVEMENT.  
SHAPING NEW POLICIES  
FOR THE SOUTH EAST.**

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**SOUTH EAST ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

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South East Economic Development Strategy

# CHAPTER 5

## ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Adrian Atkinson and Robin Murray

As a policy issue, 'the environment' currently has a high profile. Equally topical is the concept of 'sustainable development'. However, although the latter is clearly concerned with a way of life that can be sustained into the future, in so far as it has entered the public consciousness, it is seen primarily in terms of the urgent need to solve *environmental problems*.

But 'environment' should not be seen in defensive terms. We need to understand it as a context for a fulfilling life. In fact, there are three ways in which the environment is to be understood in this Chapter, namely:

- Environment as a set of problems about the use and abuse of resources (the current popular interpretation);
- Environment as a system of production and the consumption patterns supported by this production system; and
- *Environment as what we have created to reflect the way we want to live.*

This Chapter deals with these three dimensions of the environment in the following way:

- First, it is useful to reflect on the kind of environment which has been created over the past century, and the commitment that most people have to a lifestyle which is clearly unsustainable in the medium term. It is therefore necessary to rethink 'the environment we want' in terms of sustainability.

- Over the past few decades, the approaches to planning for economic development in the region have evolved. However, the environment and sustainability have never been more than marginal issues. The main concern of this Chapter is, therefore, with how economic planning can be reoriented such as to solve environmental and sustainability problems. To do this, we must ask ourselves the following questions:
- What the pressing environmental and sustainability problems of the region are
- What economic development initiatives might be taken to address these problems
- What approach is needed to organise these kinds of initiative
- Finally, we will investigate how environmental problems and sustainability might be addressed in a more coherent way, in particular, through the formulation and implementation of 'Sustainable Development Strategies'

## **ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE SOUTH EAST**

The negative environmental impacts of the rapid expansion of London and its effect on the South East became an urgent concern in the late 19th century. A great number of voices joined the debate as to what should be done about the negative social and environmental impacts of this growth. It is generally acknowledged that the most important contribution - and certainly the most coherent - in determining what should be done was presented in Ebenezer Howard's<sup>1</sup> proposals, published in a slim volume entitled *Garden Cities of To-Morrow*.

Howard, following the utopian vision of William Morris<sup>2</sup>, thought that London was on the verge of breaking apart; and envisaged the South East re-emerging as a network of relatively small communities that would be largely self-sufficient in terms of employment and the use of the countryside around them for both agriculture and recreation. *Garden Cities of To-Morrow* was a manifesto, or even a manual, on how this break-up might best be organised in a creative way.

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<sup>1</sup>Howard, E. 1965[1898]: *Garden Cities of To-Morrow*. London, Faber and Faber.

<sup>2</sup>Morris, W. 1984[1890]: *News from Nowhere*. Harmondsworth, Penguin Books.

Whilst the break-up of London did not occur and only two of Howard's Garden Cities were founded during his lifetime, it is nevertheless important to understand what his vision has done to the environment of the South East, including the establishment of the Green Belt and the construction of the New Towns, and the related expectation of the population of the region with respect to their environment and lifestyles.

It is important to realise that the image most aspired to and the lifestyle enjoyed by the majority of people in the South East, which clearly derives from the ideas of the planning ideologues of the early twentieth century, is extremely difficult to square with a sustainable future. The independent suburban house and garden, with its reliance on cars and its tendency to accumulate consumer goods, is inherently resource-intensive<sup>3</sup>.

In fact, the relatively modest demand on resources made by the Garden City model and the inter-war suburbs grew increasingly less modest with the implementation of post-war planning legislation, culminating in the construction of Milton Keynes, a city which uses resources as if there were no tomorrow: spread thinly across a vast area of countryside, making onerous demands for maintenance of infrastructure and landscaping, where not possessing a private car can mean genuine deprivation.

The original model, indeed, had a significant dimension of rational, even parsimonious use of resources and protection of the environment: the Green Belt was invented precisely to protect rural resources against 'urban sprawl'; and the New Towns were to be 'balanced' in terms of matching jobs with residents, with housing for workers of local factories, so that they could walk or cycle to work. However, by 1970 a comprehensive study of this model<sup>4</sup> indicated that the intended balance was being lost in the rapidity of economic change and the ease of commuting into London and, for those possessing a car, other towns of the region. Meanwhile, the Green Belt was being nibbled away or degraded at a significant rate<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup>Breheny, M.J. (Ed) 1992: *Sustainable Development & Urban Form*. London, Pion.

<sup>4</sup>Hall, P. et al. 1973: *The Containment of Urban England*. London, George Allen & Unwin.

<sup>5</sup>SCLSERP 1974: *The Improvement of London's Green Belt*. London, Standing Conference on London and South East Regional Planning.

However, the model had never asked questions either about the *importation* of resources into the region, or the degree to which the industries serving the employment needs of the New Town residents might also be *servicing regional needs*. On the contrary, the prevailing 'economic base theory' of local development saw the export sectors, rather than local production for local needs, as being the moving forces behind the local economy<sup>4</sup>.

It is a notable feature of the planning system that it initially ignored and, as time progressed, severely misjudged the *structural* dynamics of economic change in London and the South East, where manufacturing employment went into decline and service employment rose, resulting in radical changes in the location of employment and the demand for different skills. The task of economic planning was largely confined to directing production industries to the New Towns and the North, restricting their location in other parts of the South East. There was a fatal complacency in the assumption that structural change in industry would be slow and minimal so that local jobs in new industries would be long-term.

In more recent times, following a growing awareness of the rapid structural change through increasing Europeanisation and globalisation of the economy - an awareness to which SEEDS has made a major contribution, as documented in earlier Chapters of this Report - more attention was paid to the nature of structural change. However, this has been accompanied by a receding willingness of the government, on ideological grounds, to intervene in these changes or in the location of industries. The emphasis has instead been placed on each local authority doing its best to capture whatever economic opportunities it could.

SEEDS and others have, on the whole, criticised this retreat into *laissez faire* on general economic grounds and their social consequences. The environmentalist critique of this policy, however, goes considerably further, posing the following questions:

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<sup>4</sup>This Anglo-American approach to the theory of the local economy contrasted with the approach of German economic geography (von Thünen, Christaller, Loesch) that analysed the symbiosis of countryside and networks of towns of different sizes within relatively self-reliant regions.

- What are the environmental and social consequences of intensification, specialisation and increasingly rapid change in the structure of primary and secondary industries in the region?
- What are the environmental and social impacts of imported goods in their place of origin, in terms of resource exploitation and production of goods for local needs, as a consequence of increased specialisation; and what is the security (sustainability) of the supply of these goods at reasonably stable prices?
- What are the transport and related environmental impacts of the changes in industrial structure and the increasing distances over which materials and goods are being moved?
- To these it is useful to add a question concerning the psychological impacts of rapid change in the environment as a consequence of developmental changes: what does this do to the sense of belonging and ownership amongst the occupants of local environments?

The environmentalist critique calls not only for more social accountability regarding the impacts of economic change within the region, but also more accountability with respect to the impacts on the rest of the world of changes in the economy and consumption patterns in South East England<sup>7</sup>. This is required not only as a measure of responsible behaviour, but also as a measure to safeguard long-term security of supply. It must be perfectly evident that *nothing approaching an overview can be achieved regarding the impacts which today's global sourcing of goods and materials consumed in the South East have on other societies and environments*; hence, it is impossible to establish anything resembling a coherent regime of responsibility for such a system.

To many environmental economists, this demands not only radical changes in consumption patterns and the spacial planning of the regional environment to reduce demand for resources, but also far greater regional economic self-reliance. In practice, some imports and exports will always be necessary. The answer to this lies, on the one hand, in keeping imports within reasonable bounds and, on the other, in ensuring that what are imported have been produced

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<sup>7</sup>This is popularly referred to as the 'ecological footprint' of the region. See: Wackernagel, M & Rees, W.E. 1996: **Our Ecological Footprint - Reducing Human Impact on the Earth Philadelphia: New Society Publishers.**

under acceptable social conditions and in a sustainable manner in their places of origin. According to the *Sustainability Principles* recently produced by SERPLAN, this means:

- Encouraging the development of a diverse economy which builds on existing strengths, but is not vulnerable through over-reliance on a few key sectors; and
- Encouraging, where appropriate, patterns of development which will enable local needs to be met locally, and which will maximise effective use of resources and minimise pollution and waste.

The modern environmentalist critique thus comprises a deep questioning of the lifestyle which was a response to the 'environmental crisis' of the end of the 19th century, as well as a questioning of the economic development model of the region. Indeed, whilst the original development models had aspects upon which a new environmentalist model might have been built, recent practice has moved drastically away from, rather than towards, a sustainable path.

The problem of generating a new, environmentalist model of development for the region will be discussed towards the end of this Chapter. Meanwhile, it is necessary to take a closer look at the immediate environmental concerns which have been preoccupying planners and administrators of the region in recent years.

## **AN OUTLINE OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS IN THE SOUTH EAST**

There is a great concern today about 'environmental problems'. What problems are deemed to be important, however, depends on value judgements, perspectives, who is affected and the strength of their voice in the decision-making process. For the South East as a whole, SERPLAN has produced a list of indicators for the environment<sup>8</sup>. In the first instance, these were heavily oriented towards the chief concern of SERPLAN, namely land use planning: the 11 variables included land use, built heritage, urban environment, urban fringe and countryside/coast.

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<sup>8</sup>SERPLAN 1995: *Environmental Indicators* London: The London & South East Regional Planning

Between 1989 and 1993, SEEDS launched a debate on the environment, which it referred to as the 'Green Plan'<sup>9</sup>. Ten themes were selected, only three of which coincided with those of SERPLAN. This is not to say that there are not common concerns around the most serious problems, but it does say that:

- There is a very large number of variables which might be considered<sup>10</sup> and it was necessary to cluster these under appropriate headings; and
- Whilst 'science' plays an important role in bringing environmental problems into perspective, this does not help much in identifying either what are major and what minor problems or how to organise the solutions that will stem the problems and thence contribute to the creation of a more pleasant and less threatened environment.

It has been increasingly realised that the choice of variables, and the approach to analysing the problems they represent, needs to be made in a public debate. In the case of the SEEDS Green Plan, scientific information around the ten chosen subjects was presented at a two-day conference, to which participants from local authorities, non-government organisations and the private sector brought their own contributions. The conference ended with a general notion of what the *main* problems were, which were investigated in the course of the later stages of the Green Plan.

Six themes - defined not simply as dimensions of the environment, but rather as themes requiring improved planning and management - were selected and 'protocols' were developed (policy statements oriented to local authority action). Workshops were then organised to discuss the approaches which might be taken to addressing problems in each of these areas. The six themes were as follows.

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Conference.

<sup>9</sup>Stone, D. & Atkinson, A. (Eds) 1990: **Green Plan - Interim Report**. Stevenage,: South East Economic Development Strategy Association. SEEDS 1990: **Beyond the Pearce Report - Green Economics Workshop Papers**. Stevenage, South East Economic Development Strategy. SEEDS 1991: **Popular Management of the Environment - Green Plan Phase III Working Papers**. Stevenage, South East Economic Development Strategy. Atkinson, A. & Jacobs, M 1992: **The SEEDS Green Plan Process - Final Report**. Harlow, South East Economic Development Strategy.

<sup>10</sup>The Department of the Environment's list of sustainability indicators (DoE 1996) runs to 118 and that of the Planning Advisory Committee (LPAC 1995) runs to 111.



*Transport and the Environment* was seen as producing serious and increasing global and local environmental pollution, requiring significant changes in policy at national, regional and local levels. *Reducing Energy Needs* was seen as a priority, given the overwhelming reliance of the South East on globally and locally polluting, non-renewable energy sources, and their wasteful use in production and consumption. *Managing Waste* was discussed in terms of a crisis in waste disposal and the need to reduce waste generation, as well as improvements in the environmental management of waste disposal.

*Strategies for Recycling* were discussed in order to clarify the means to reducing the need for waste disposal, and the way in which 'waste' can be understood and managed as resource inputs to the region's economy. *Water and the Local Environment* was discussed in the light of the privatisation of water management and the need to ensure accountability in the new system. The management of *Environmental Health* was seen as providing a foundation for a congenial life in the region.

SEEDS has focused particular attention on two of these themes. *Wheels of Fortune*<sup>11</sup> was produced as the result of a comprehensive study of the transport system in the South East, which incorporated the views and concerns of a wide range of interests in the region<sup>12</sup>. This was complemented by detailed studies of the bus and rail systems, of the impacts of the Channel tunnel link and the regional airports. *After Chernobyl*<sup>13</sup> was the result of a study of the energy economy of the region, representing the first attempt to establish a regional energy balance and proposing institutional approaches that might be initiated at local and regional levels towards planning for reducing energy use and the development of renewable energy sources. This was complemented by a report on the possibilities for energy conservation in housing in the region.

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<sup>11</sup>Buchan, K. 1990c: *Wheels of Fortune - Strategies for Transport Integration in the South East of England*: South East Economic Development Strategy.

<sup>12</sup>This is updated in Chapter 7 of this Report.

<sup>13</sup>Atkinson, A. 1990d: *After Chernobyl - A Safe Energy Policy for the South East*: South East Economic Development Strategy.

SEEDS work on environmental issues in the early 1990s did not emphasise the economic aspects of environmental problems so much as the direct requirements for improved management. In the Green Economics Workshop, organised in the context of the Green Plan, a start was made, however, to obtain a theoretical perspective on how environmental issues should be understood in economic terms.

Then, in 1994, SEEDS organised a conference on *Jobs from the Environment* that took a closer look at how greater emphasis on the environment as a dimension of the development process might yield new economic initiatives. This identified 'green business opportunities' that might be pursued by local authorities in the South East to adapt to changing realities and to serve the economic needs of the region's population.

It is with this proactive intervention in the ongoing processes of economic restructuring, and the attempt to move in the direction of sustainable development that the following section is concerned.

## **GREEN ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING**

Prior to the SEEDS Green Plan Conference in Brighton in October 1989, the two overseas speakers had breakfast with a group of Brighton councillors. What action would they introduce, they were asked, if they were elected to a City Council, which would make an immediate difference to the life of their city?

Frieda Otto Wolf, the Green MEP from Berlin, proposed integrated ticketing for different modes of transport. Chris Zijdveld, a Dutch councillor from Schiedam near Rotterdam, said that he would use the road maintenance and street pavings budget to widen the pavements in the main roads of the town and designate the widened section as cycle lane, and plant bushes down the middle of the roads.

Later in the conference, he showed pictures of how Schiedam had done this. All road lanes, he said, were generous to cars. Narrowing them meant that the cars slowed down. More cycling

took cars off the road. The roads themselves looked more like country lanes. There was an immediate impact on everyday life.

Both these suggestions related to transport. But Schiedam applied the same principles to energy, water, trees and food. New housing estates were built facing south, heated by solar energy, and heavily insulated. Power was generated not through large power stations, but by scattered, smaller ones which could then use their waste heat to warm houses through combined heat and power. Solar-heated boilers could be rented from the local public utility.

Growing vegetables on roofs and in gardens was encouraged to reduce water going into the sewers, as well as providing unsprayed produce and oxygen to reduce air pollution. The municipality dug up asphalt and planted trees in playgrounds, driveways and parks for similar reasons. They planted short-term coppice on sites awaiting development, and ensured that the municipality used non-toxic paint and no tropical hardwoods in construction.

The Conference heard about similarly creative initiatives in Britain, from community recycling in Milton Keynes, to schemes for reducing pesticide use in Norwich. Oxford described their healthy city initiative, including health contracts with major employers where the city and employers agreed to provide a range of facilities and measures to improve health (fitness facilities; health and fitness testing; advice on eating, smoking, alcohol, exercise and stress; and an early AIDS initiative).

The London Food Commission set up by the GLC described its work in monitoring food additives and quality, and promoting local food production. Concerns for water, earth, air, wind and sun - their use and abuse - offered a new reading of urban life and of local government practices. They also promised - in ways it was still difficult to make precise - the prospects of new avenues of economic development and employment.

Although SEEDS' work on environmental issues, including energy, was not initially directly concerned with the economy and the generation of employment, nevertheless, there were job implications, and some of these were spelled out, especially in the conference on *Jobs from the Environment* noted above. In fact, it became evident that many environmental initiatives

are potentially effective creators of jobs. Table 1 gives an example from the field of energy conservation.

**Table 1 - Jobs in Energy Saving in Housing - per 1,000 properties**

Loft insulation	2.1
Cavity wall insulation	6.0
Internal wall insulation	17.0
External wall insulation	17.0
Draught stripping	3.5
Heating controls	5.6

Source: Environmental Resources Limited, adjusted by ACE, 1996.

These jobs are potentially quick to set in place. They use predominantly local labour, and offer opportunities for training people who are unemployed. Already, in the 1980s, many SEEDS authorities had already realised the benefits of promoting projects of this kind<sup>14</sup>.

#### **HERTFORDSHIRE ENERGY AND AIR QUALITY MODEL**

This initiative aims to create the necessary data base and analytical tools for programmes to reduce energy use and introduce renewable energy sources, in order to reduce air pollution. The model is seen as a world leader in the development of energy planning instruments for use at the local level. Once completed, it will be disseminated through partner local authorities in the EU. Responsibility for developing the model lies with the Hertfordshire Environmental Forum, which is a consortium of district authorities coordinated by Watford Council. The initial phase of the research was funded by Eastern Electricity; subsequent funding is expected from the E.U (Page 15, Case Studies).

But the significance of these initiatives went beyond job-creation of this kind. They provided the basis for much wider changes. What was clear was that local government had become a seedbed for ideas from the environmental movement, which often went against the grain of central government policy. The chain of events varied. In some cases, a particular councillor

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<sup>14</sup>Atkinson, A. 1990: *After Chernobyl - A Safe Energy Policy for the South East*: South East Economic Development Strategy.

or officer played a decisive part. In others, there were pressing environmental issues that had to be addressed. In general, local government showed that it was much more responsive to the demands of the environmental movement than central government, and played a key innovative role as a result.

In some areas, such as food, the major changes that have taken place in supermarkets and in what people eat have come about in spite of central government policy. In others, such as alternative forms of energy, combinations of events - including the need to buttress nuclear power at the time of privatisation, but also pressure from local authorities and environmental groups - led to the introduction of the Non Fossil Fuel Obligation (NFFO), providing incentives for wind power, biomass and other renewable sources.

In transport, a critical factor was the squeeze on road finance. In other areas, such as packaging and recycling, the EC played a vital role in promoting a switch in course. It is also the case that the government itself has been changing its perspective. The 'Earth Summit' at Rio made a difference. For all these reasons the political and regulatory climate has changed decisively since the time of the first SEEDS Green Plan Conference in October 1989.

As a result, local government, which was an initiator and experimenter in many of these fields, is now having to respond further. The initiatives which may have started on the margins now find themselves in a churning mainstream. The pressure to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions through energy reduction is one side of this; the prospect of an open energy supply market in 1998 is another. The energy (and to a lesser extent water) economies are undergoing major changes with a multifaceted impact on local authorities. In transport it is the challenge of the car that is the dominant question. Large motor manufacturers are already making plans for car-less city centres in the 21st centuries. What will the urban planners do?

Or, take waste. When SEEDS discussed recycling, it heard from the community-based recycling project in Wye, Kent. It had achieved 19% diversion of waste by late 1990, compared to under 5% nationally. It was aiming for 30% and a 10% reduction of the amount of waste produced. This was for a village of 2,000 people. Now the government has set a

target of 25% recycling for all local authorities by the year 2000, and a 40% diversion from landfill by 2005. It has required disposal authorities to give credits for this diversion, and introduced a tax on landfill from October 1996. The packaging industry has been set parallel targets for 2000 and has budgeted to spend £ 0.5 billion a year on recycling to achieve these targets. Recycling has suddenly emerged from a country road into the fast lane.

The challenges to local government are threefold:

- These changes affect many of the traditional core functions of local government profoundly but, at the same time, involve many other players - regional utilities, privatised rail and bus companies, international waste companies - who approach the problems from different perspectives.
- There are many different systems on offer for meeting the targets as posed; and local government plays a part in deciding which of the alternatives to adopt.
- Local authorities are being asked to innovate in a period of tightening budgets, and with little, if any, supportive central government finance. In the field of waste, councils find themselves faced with sharply increased waste disposal charges as the result of the landfill tax and the alternatives currently on offer.

As one environment minister recently put it: "all waste disposal authorities have to accept that waste disposal, which meets the high environment standards required of waste management system, costs money". This is a cost which is having to be borne by local budgets at the same time as many authorities are having to make overall cuts.

Local authorities are having to answer these questions, and adjust their outlooks, their internal organisation and their practices across a wide range of issues in a short time. As in all periods of rapid 'system' change, there are opportunities. But there are also dangers that councils will bind themselves into new systems which meet short-term needs but freeze out longer-term possibilities. The following paragraphs discuss the opportunities and choices from the perspective of economic development and employment within the South East.

## **The Environment, Restructuring and Employment**

One of the continuing themes addressed by SEEDS is how to negotiate the tension between financial restrictions (the market/public finance) and jobs meeting social or environmental need. In the past, this tension was theoretically resolved through Keynesian deficit finance. Public spending on, say, the new environmental initiatives, would create jobs, which would in turn have multiplier effects, creating more jobs; and, together, the resulting economic activity would generate the tax revenue to pay back the initial public spending.

International liberalisation has severely constrained this route out of unemployment. As a result, employment initiatives have had to face the danger that every job created will be a job lost elsewhere. New employment in wind turbine construction by the Wind Energy Group will mean fewer jobs in GEC's steam turbine factory. The wind turbines might even be imported from Denmark. Public finance to support tree planting will mean cuts elsewhere in the public budget. Is there a way out of this iron cage?

There are three possibilities:

1. *Labour-intensive job-creation:* There may be systems which are more labour-intensive ways of achieving a goal than others. For example, energy saving through home insulation requires large amounts of labour to produce warmth while using fewer overall resources than a power station. There is construction and machine labour embodied in a power station, but some of that may have been sunk in the past, and so the amount of labour used currently will be higher with energy saving, even if the total quantity of labour was the same as for conventional energy supply.
2. *Local job-creation:* From the viewpoint of a particular place, some systems may offer more jobs locally, and can be geared to given skills, even if overall job numbers remain stable. A similar point could be made about the distribution of a given quantity of work: some systems may be more restricted in terms of overtime labour and therefore provide a greater number of jobs than others.

3. *Innovation*: Innovative systems that improve economy-wide productivity will have the effect of raising the overall rate of profit in an economy. This is a major determinant in the growth of new investment and further employment. For example, the road-based system of transport is facing rising congestion and falling speeds. Ways of speeding up the movement of goods and people, or avoiding their need to move (e.g. through telecommuting) would lead to a rise in social productivity, hence an increase in the economy's investable surplus.

#### **HERTFORDSHIRE: A FRAMEWORK FOR GREEN COUNTY HERTFORDSHIRE**

Herts County Council has initiated various environmental projects and recently realised that it was necessary to bring some coherence to bear on these. The approach it is taking in this respect is being developed in partnership with the Danish municipality of Ringkøbing, and connects with the County's 'Bright Green Industrial Strategy' aimed at attracting environmentally sound businesses and promoting innovation to nudge the local economy in a more sustainable direction. This also provides an enabling framework for district-level Local Agenda 21 processes to develop. The Framework focuses on eight discrete areas of activity, ranging from waste management and transport through to construction and economic development (Page 13, Case Studies)

These points should be kept in mind in considering the directions of environmental policy aimed at linking new economic initiatives to the areas of environmental concern identified in the course of the Green Plan process. In the early days, there was a SEEDS view that the environment could be taken on board by considering the restructuring of each sector and choosing the more environmentally friendly option. This is no longer adequate. For it is now clear that the environment has become a cause of industrial restructuring, and is not merely a dimension to be taken into account in a broader process of economic restructuring.

Industries with particular environmental impacts - from primary producing industries like metals and paper, to power, transport, water, agriculture, chemicals or waste - are being transformed by the demands for radical improvements in the environment. The resulting changes will involve both job destruction and job creation. The discussion has moved beyond that of encouraging environmental investments because they would create jobs, to ensuring



that the environmental investment which does occur creates more jobs than it destroys. That is the immediate issue for SEEDS authorities.

### **Alternative Paths of Environmental Investments**

The German sociologist, Ulrich Beck, makes the point that the very corporations found to be the cause of environmental pollution are often the first to profit from the resulting regulation. New regulations may require the write-off of old plant, but they also open up the horizons of new markets. Similarly, the leaders in environmental technology are those countries which were the first to introduce strong environmental regulation. Germany now leads Europe in recycling technology, as in the severity of its regulations against waste, Denmark leads in wind turbine technology, California in water-saving equipment, Canada in de-inking paper technology. OECD estimates that the environmental technology sector is now worth \$53 billion annually within its member states.

Britain starts from behind in these emerging sectors. This need not be a disadvantage if government, and particularly local authorities, can address four issues of importance in the new wave:

1. *Linking new demand to innovation:* There need to be mechanisms for using the stimulus of new demand to generate technological innovations, drawing on and adapting the innovations made elsewhere. Thus, groups of local authorities can use their collective purchasing power to promote locally based innovation in a wide range of fields.

For example, large cities, high-rise estates, as well as institutions and the catering industry require small, enclosed compost systems to handle organic waste. The models developed elsewhere are large and expensive. There is scope for innovation, with an eventual international market - Hong Kong is making enquiries for such systems in Europe at the moment. There is similar scope in such areas as cullet-glass-based products, multi-material recycling vehicles, small scale wind turbines, or back garden composters.

2. *Smart Infrastructure*: One of the key areas to ensure the economy and effectiveness of new ways of doing things is systems design. It requires investment and innovation in software rather than hardware, and the negotiation of the restructuring involved. We can speak of smart infrastructure and systems designs that can be applied locally which also have export potential.

One example is the seamless journey strategy proposed in Chapter 8 of this Report. This suggests that one of the key transport issues is not improved modes (faster trains, new lines, more roads) but improved intermodal connections. In London, over half the journey time of travellers using buses or trains is spent moving between modes or waiting for connections.

Redesigning modal interchanges (notably stations), ensuring that there is a range of alternative connections available (including bicycles and pre-booked joint taxis, as in Holland), and providing real time information to travellers about system availability (not just apologising for late trains, but providing details of the times when the connecting buses, trains, mini-buses can be caught and ensuring the link up) could all be introduced at substantially lower cost, and with a greater effect on journey time, than many single-mode upgrades. As with telecommunications systems, it is switching that is key.

3. *User-centred systems*: Many of the innovative systems require users to become part of the productive system. For example, saving energy and water requires more of householders than simply flicking off the switch or turning off the tap. There is a need to assess the environmental conditions of the house itself, its fixed equipment, the householders' daily practices and requirements. As with food, health, education or waste minimisation, householders can no longer be treated as passive consumers. They are active participants on whom changes in a much wider chain are dependent. At the same time, their role may demand specialist knowledge or technical measuring equipment of a kind not hitherto available to householders. This lies behind the rise of a new type of household environmental adviser, either working from an office or, more effectively, visiting door to door.

There is a growing employment opportunity in home visiting of this kind. To be effective, these visits should be multipurpose since there are economics of scope. Up to half the cost of a home visit is incurred in making the arrangements and getting to and from the house. It makes sense for a home adviser to cover a wide range of environmental issues - energy, water, recycling, appliances, composting, even water mains leak monitoring. The home visits which became the cornerstone of Ontario's successful Green Communities Programme found that they were approached by outside bodies (including municipalities) to buy time on the visit.

The same thing applies to firms and institutions. Programmes to encourage waste, energy and water saving amongst employers show high rates of return, but they are dependent on advisory and consultancy services to clarify the organisational and process innovations required, and/or the changes in employees' practices (75% reductions in office waste can be achieved within three months if adequate advisory support is given to the *employees*). Again, Ontario operated an exemplary scheme and found costs fell dramatically when the original energy audit was extended to include water and waste minimisation.

4. *Partnership and organisational innovation*: The new environmental systems involve a chain of interconnected processes. The prime issue is less one of ownership of any one of these processes, but the determination of the overall system. Local authorities are limited in what they can do alone. They can play an exemplary role; they can launch pilots; they can put their own house in order. But, for a rapid impact through the economy, they need to develop partnerships with other parties in the chain - utilities, suppliers, tenant groups, community and other voluntary associations, as well as different levels of government. The local authority's key role becomes one of strategy, animation, and the 'wiring' together of producers and consumers, in what development economics has traditionally called 'balanced growth'.

Thus, while SEEDS authorities are limited in the new regulations they can introduce, they can play an important role in speeding up the environmental transformation and ensuring that the systems that are introduced are spatially rooted and labour intensive.

## SUSTAINABLE KENT BUSINESS PROGRAMME

Kent County Council is funding a joint-programme involving their Departments of Environment and Economic Development to help establish the 'Sustainable Kent Business Group' as an adjunct to the Kent Economic Forum, and develop a 'Sustainable Kent Business Strategy and Action Programme' for the next five years. This is a multifaceted initiative aimed both at improving the environmental efficiency of existing business and attracting and encouraging the formation of businesses in the field of environmental technologies.

### **Waste**

It is useful to focus attention on one sector to illustrate the possibilities in more detail. Waste minimisation and recycling provide an excellent basis in this respect. This is a sector which is being turned on its head by environmental pressures to cut landfill and increase recycling. The pace of conversion to the use of recycled materials, and the technical change that has accompanied it, has meant that in a number of industries the supply of recycled materials is the constraint on expansion. This is true of newspaper, office paper, aluminium, textiles, and even plastics.

Similarly, on the supply side, every council in the South East is considering how to expand recycling in line with the 25% target, and to reduce landfill in the face of rising taxes. The scale of the shift that is required can be seen from Tables 2 and 3.

In London, only a quarter of the Boroughs have exceeded 10% recycling. From the evidence available for the Rest of the South East, Milton Keynes, Adur and Worthing stand out as exceeding 10%. Of the sample of 25 authorities available from CIPFA figures for 1994/95, only Adur and Milton Keynes exceeded 10%. Of the 14 councils in Essex, only Colchester had made 10%, and half the Boroughs were less than 5%.

Evidence from elsewhere suggests that there is substantial net job creation out of the shift to recycling. A report on a recent study has just been published on waste and employment in the Baltimore, Maryland, Washington DC and Richmond metropolitan regions in the Eastern United States, which have a population of 6.6 million people and a combined waste stream of

13 million tons, just over one third of the waste volume in the South East of England. The study found that by 2005, a continuation of current solid waste policies, with a modest shift from landfill to incineration, an increase in recycling from 25% to 31%, and an overall increase of 12% in the waste flows, would lead to an increase of 6,300 net direct jobs. A recycling-intensive option, shifting recycling and reduction up to 70% of forecasted waste, and developing recycling industries in tandem, would yield 17,300 net direct jobs. This and other studies in Canada and Denmark show that recycling is the strongest creator of jobs.

<b>Table 2</b>		<b>Table 3</b>	
Household Waste Recycling Rates for Selected Local Authorities in the SEEDS region, 1994/5		London Borough Recycling Rates 1994/5	
	%		%
Adur	22	Richmond	22
Milton Keynes	18	Sutton	18
Watford	10	Croydon	17
Rushmoor	10	Bromley	15
Portsmouth	10	Kingston	13
Wycombe	10	Bexley	11
Brighton	9	Merton	11
St Albans	9	Westminster	11
Eastleigh	8	Kensington & Chelsea	10
Maidstone	8	Havering	10
Reading	8	Hillingdon	8
Crawley	8	Harrow	8
Bracknell Forest	8	Greenwich	8
Welwyn Hatfield	7	Lewisham	8
Basildon	5	Hounslow	7
Harlow	5	Ealing	6
Poole	5	Enfield	6
Southampton	5	Camden	6
Braintree	5	Waltham Forest	6
Bournemouth	4	Hammersmith & Fulham	5
South Bedfordshire	3	Haringey	4
Southend	3	Hackney	4
Dacorum	3	Wandsworth	4
Stevenage	2	Lambeth	3
Luton	2	Barnet	3
Slough	1	Barking & Dagenham	3
		Redbridge	3
		Corporation of London	2
		Islington	2
		Brent	2
		Tower Hamlets	2
		Southwark	1
		Newham	1

This is the possibility now facing the South East. Currently, reprocessing industries are poorly represented in the region. United Glass have a plant in Harlow, and there is a cullet recovery operation in Dagenham. Steel and aluminium are reprocessed in Wales and Warrington respectively. Milton Keynes possesses the only plastic reprocessor in the South East region. The only recycling industry that is well developed in the region is paper manufacturing using waste paper pulp. It is centred in the industrial district in Kent where a number of the new mills using waste paper are sited.

There are strong forces for expansion in all recycling sectors over the next five years as the impact of Producer Responsibility targets take hold in an increasing number of commodities. In the face of these changes, local authorities are fragmented. Collection is separated from disposal, when recycling needs a new type of integration between the two. Disposal options are being driven by the prospective rise of landfill costs, and not by the long-term possibilities of recycling development. The emphasis to date has, with notable exceptions, been on large-scale plants - whether incinerators, anaerobic digesters, regional materials recovery facilities (MRFs), or large-scale composters (such as the plant being built in mid Berkshire).

These alternatives tie the collection authorities to the option over a long period (many incinerator contracts are being negotiated for 25 years). They hinder the intensive recycling option based on source separation from rising to the level now achieved in Germany and North America (five US states have now achieved a level of 40% recycling, with individual towns and cities considerably higher). They short circuit the flow of secondary materials as feed stock to the growing recycling industries. Their advantage is that they can be decided upon and managed within existing public and private structures of waste management, without involving the more decentralised and multipartnered networks required by source-separation recycling.

The driving force in the re-organisation of waste management in the South East is waste management itself, re-assessed in terms of new environmental goals. From the economic development viewpoint, however, there is a clearly preferable alternative, which only a small number of authorities, with external funding, have been able to pursue. In short, the issue is not simply one of moving from landfill to recovery, or even to recycling. It is how recycling is

undertaken and how it is linked to the industries using secondary materials, whose expansion it potentially serves.

## **REGIONAL AND LOCAL SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES**

From the foregoing, it is evident that there are many points of entry into economic activity that might lead to a sustainable future. What is also evident, however, is that these initiatives grow out of a very unconventional view of how the local and regional economy might be developed. It must be remembered that we live in a world where competition dominates the economy, and those responsible for local economic development are constantly forced to adopt a competitive outlook.

However, SEEDS authorities need not simply pursue or accept any inward investment that presents itself. Local authorities and other local actors can take initiative to seek out, attract or even develop industries that cater for the new demands for environmental technologies. Above all, local authorities should address local needs for products and services that are environmentally friendly, and reduce the call on imported goods and resources, especially those which are environmentally damaging.

The fact is that some local authorities are already assisting in the development of industries and services that are explicitly aimed at improving the management of natural resources. However, there is as yet no coherent thinking on the general ethos of developing local economies through cooperation rather than competition; and, beyond that, of pushing further towards a strategic approach to sustainable development.

A crucial factor in the generation of strategies for local sustainable development is the connecting up of three different aspects of local societies: economic activity, consumer preferences (lifestyles) and social inclusion.

- Sustainable development strategies need to look systematically at the possibilities of pursuing and further developing those activities which are aimed at sustainable and

environmentally friendly development, and put these together both as discrete options for local or inward investors, and as coordinated sets of economic activity.

- There is an urgent need for systematic campaigns to change lifestyles and consumption pattern: away from cars; towards locally-produced organic foods; against packaging; towards energy efficiency support for local authority energy programmes; against the use of sophisticated chemical products, etc.<sup>15</sup>
- 'Job creation' schemes need to be merged with wider initiatives to create a more sustainable environment, on the one hand; and, on the other, to create an all-inclusive local society, both in terms of decision-making and in providing things for people to do to enhance the local environment<sup>16</sup>.

The process of Local Agenda 21 (LA21), derived from the international agreements signed at the 'Earth Summit' at Rio de Janeiro in 1992, promises the kind of decision-making procedures necessary to move towards sustainable local development - that is, indeed, the fundamental intention of this mechanism. The first principle in Chapter 28 of Agenda 21 states that:

"By 1996 most local authorities in each country should have undertaken a consultative process with their population and achieved a consensus on a 'Local Agenda 21' for the community."

LA21, as described in the sub-documentation from the Rio conference (*The Curitiba Commitment to Sustainable Development*) and, more recently, as set out in the *Local Agenda*

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<sup>15</sup>The SEEDS Green Plan included elements of public campaigning in the areas of transport, energy and food.

<sup>16</sup>Mayo, E. 1996 *Dreaming of Work* in Meadows, P. (Ed) *Work out - or Work In? Contributions To The Debate on the Future of Work*. York, Joseph Rowntree Foundation. A pioneer in multiple-solution initiatives of this kind was the programme which Neighbourhood Energy Action promoted with considerable success in the early 1980s. This trained unemployed youths to install insulation to reduce energy use - and hence energy bills - focusing particular attention on the aged and the poor. Although some government assistance was available and many local authorities lent active support, the programme had many debilitating faults which became more pronounced in later revisions of the scheme (see: Hutton, S. et al. 1985: *Energy Efficiency in Low Income Households: An Evaluation of Local Insulation Projects*. London, Her Majesty's Stationary Office.).



*21 Planning Guide* of the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives<sup>17</sup>, is seen as an action planning process. It involves partnerships between local government and a wide range of other local interests in activities aimed at sustainable development at both local and regional levels.

In relation to the LA21 processes, local 'State of the Environment' (SoE) reports - sometimes referred to as 'Green Audits' - have been produced in recent years by many local authorities. These potentially provide a foundation for local action towards sustainable development. So far, however, these new mechanisms have been poorly funded and are demonstrably marginal to the main activities and approaches to decision-making prevailing in local authorities.

The current popularity amongst local authorities, of adopting 'indicators of sustainable development' as a means to monitor progress - or, as is true of many of the most important variables, regress - with respect to sustainability, may make an impact on the activities of local authorities. However, these could have the opposite effect of fragmenting efforts where too many indicators are used, because many of them are tangential to the main issues, for which no meaningful programmes are available to address the underlying problems.

#### READING'S APPROACH TO LOCAL AGENDA 21

Already, in the early 1980s, Reading Council had a commitment to decentralising services and involving all sections of local society in the management of the town. With the signing of Agenda 21, the Council entered into cooperation with the World Wide Fund for Nature to develop a Local Agenda 21 process that has seen the Council initiating many new actions, including the production of a State of the Environment report. The most innovative aspect has been its GLOBE (Going Local On a Better Environment) initiative, which combines the Council's commitment to local management with the Local Agenda 21 process.

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<sup>17</sup>ICLEI 1996: *The Local Agenda 21 Planning Guide - An Introduction to Sustainable Development Planning*. Toronto, International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives. ICLEI was formed in 1989 as an offshoot of the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA), with the support of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); it was responsible for inserting Chapter 28 into Agenda 21 and has been supporting local authority sustainable development initiatives internationally since the Rio conference.

If environmentally sustainable development is to become a more central concern of local authorities in the coming years, then it is necessary to create more coherent strategies. Such strategies should provide a framework for programmes and plans at both local and regional levels, and for these to become central to the activities and mode of decision-making of local authorities. These strategies will comprise at least three main components and these are discussed below.

1. *A strategy for the use of resources and the protection of the environment:* This must include most of what has traditionally been the substance of land use plans. Recent Planning Policy Guidance notes have been pointing local authorities, with increasing insistence, in the direction of using the land use planning system as a basis for moving towards sustainable development (albeit, as noted in Chapter 7 below, the rhetoric is running somewhat ahead of the government's commitment to action in this respect -which should not be taken as grounds for inaction on the part of local authorities).

The planning system will need to be informed by the new environmental concerns, which find their way into the better SoE reports. It will be necessary to focus more on plans for the sustainable use of resources in the region, and to include analysis of the import and export of resources and wastes. These plans will eventually be extended to become a strategy for sustainable development.

This strategy will need to incorporate the results of 'visioning' exercises, which are currently being undertaken in many local authority areas in the context of LA21. However, these visions will, in the future, need to be considerably more hard-headed about the carrying capacity of the region than has been the case hitherto. In particular, the long-term sustainability of London, as an essential part of the South East, will need to be confronted in a strategic fashion similar to the thinking of the end of the 19th century<sup>8</sup>. (Could it be that William Morris will be vindicated in the 21st century?)

More detailed programmes and plans will be needed for individual components of the strategy, such as waste, energy, water, transport, biodiversity, etc. In fact, the Environmental Protection Act (1990) directed local authorities to produce Recycling Plans, and the government has subsequently published a national strategy for sustainable waste management and a Planning Policy Guidance note on waste management.

Meanwhile, the Home Energy Conservation Act (1995) directs local authorities to investigate energy loss in the local housing stock and to produce a plan for comprehensive improvement of home insulation. Few local authorities have yet developed serious strategies and plans for these areas of work and the Department of the Environment has not penalised local authorities for this failure, but the messages are becoming increasingly insistent.

Once again, a strong connection needs to be established between the LA21 action programme process and these strategy component areas. In this respect, Lancashire County Council has been showing the way most clearly<sup>19</sup>.

#### LUTON LOCAL AGENDA 21

The Luton Borough Council has targeted different groups which it is addressing using different approaches. Amongst young people, it is disseminating information on the environmental problems facing Luton today and in the future. This includes information sent to schools and competitions designed to get the active involvement of young people. Awareness-raising is also targeted on local residents in their communities. Working groups have been established to identify problems, and the results are used to encourage community action. Finally there is a strong focus on local businesses, where small and medium enterprises are visited to help them look into environmental problems and seek cooperation in overcoming them. The University of Luton was involved in a business waste audit. In addition, the Council is developing a programme of energy management in housing and businesses (Page 21, Case Studies).

2. *A strategy for sustainable development of the local economy*: This is the primary area where SEEDS has been assisting local authorities in the South East. Not traditionally a

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<sup>19</sup>Atkinson, A. 1993: Resources for a Sustainable London *Regenerating Cities* 3-4 36-39.

major concern of local authorities in the U.K., as discussed above, *Agenda 21* and the EU *5th Environmental Action Programme* specifically enjoin local authorities to take a greater interest in local economic development, precisely because it is at the local level that the critique of over-consumption and protection of the environment should be focused as being in the interest of the people of this generation and, more importantly, future generations.

As already noted, in the first instance, local authorities will necessarily pursue a dual strategy of development. The first will acknowledge the need to compete but, at the same time, will edge this towards competition for, and protection of, economic activities which are environmentally friendly and require relatively low levels of resources.

The second starts from those economic activities that are necessarily local - in particular, the 'social economy' and 'means of collective consumption' - and moves outwards to colonise new areas of economic activity, in conjunction with campaigns promoting locally sustainable development through appropriate consumption patterns and lifestyles. This is the pursuit of a much more coherent local economy to satisfy local needs for services, for an improved environment and for goods satisfying local tastes<sup>20</sup>, which consciously encourages inclusion of currently excluded groups.

3. A strategy for attaining an all-inclusive society: This means drawing disadvantaged groups into the decision-making process, and developing employment and other inclusive activities (education, entertainment, etc) to cater for the needs of these groups (see Chapters 6 and 8).

It cannot be overstressed that sustainable development will only emerge from a radical reformulation of outlook, lifestyles and organisation of the use of resources and the environment. This is going to require some very imaginative 'utopian' thinking about the

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<sup>19</sup>LCC 1993: *Lancashire Environmental Action Programme*. Preston, Lancashire County Council.

<sup>20</sup>The fundamental problem here is the insistence of advertising in encouraging 'brand loyalty' to meet the requirements of large-scale capital to sell mass-produced goods. Alerting people to the harmfulness of this psychological dependence and persuading them to change consumption patterns of a radically different kind of

future and, at the same time, ensuring that the population as a whole is committed to carrying through the results of the new outlook. This will inevitably require a mass self-educational exercise that will not allow for exemptions or passive roles. Whilst LA21 calls for broad participation in 'visioning' the future, there is clearly a long way to go before the intentions are realised in any way resembling the vision.

#### **WATFORD: ST ALBANS ROAD COMMUNITY PROJECT**

Watford Council is focusing attention on the St Albans Road area because it has an ethnically mixed community and a poor environment. The intention is to generate a community-based regeneration strategy and plan. This will release local energies and resources through cooperation of the various groups in the area, assisted by the Council, to improve the local environment and revive local businesses and entertainment facilities. At the same time, the community is encouraged to participate in the wider Local Agenda 21 process (Page 31, Case Studies).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This final section suggests and recommends policies and actions which SEEDS local authorities should pursue at various levels in order to progress towards more sustainable forms of local development and improvements in the local environment.

### **Recommendations for Policy Development at International and National Levels**

In the first instance, it is important to underscore that there is much support at the international and European levels in terms of policy development and demonstrations of what can be done. Local Agenda 21 is one area where U.K. local authorities have successfully built on such foundations, and it is important that local authorities continue to be aware of developments elsewhere and 'network' with them, where appropriate.

The EU, in the *5th Environmental Action Programme*, has also provided a relatively radical policy framework. In addition, almost half the legislation promulgated by the EU has been

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economy presents by far the greatest challenge to sustainable development strategies.

concerned with environmental matters. These give local authorities directions towards local sustainability programmes. The EU also has some funds available for development initiatives, particularly where sustainable development is a demonstrable component.

The U.K. policy framework, however, as laid out in *Sustainable Development -The U.K.Strategy*, remains strongly oriented towards conventional forms of development, with environmental controls as an adjunct. For instance, whilst the U.K. government intends to increase tax on motor fuel incrementally in the coming years to discourage use of private cars, the primary energy policy is 'to ensure secure supplies of energy at competitive prices'. In the area of agriculture, it intends to pursue various initiatives to protect the environment, whereas its primary policy remains 'to provide an adequate supply of good quality food and other products in an efficient manner.'

Nevertheless, it is clear that the central government is slowly changing orientation towards more sustainable forms of development as expressed, for instance, in Planning Policy Guidance and sundry strategic documents issued by the Department of the Environment. These are being supported by documents emerging from various Select Committees and Royal Commissions.

- There are certain strategic policies which the central government should be pursuing in order to tilt the national development framework in the direction of sustainable development; and SEEDS authorities should undertake research to determine the relative importance of these, and to decide what action to take to bring effective pressure on the national government. Key areas include:
  - ♦ Basic changes in the tax system away from the taxation of jobs towards the taxation of resources;
  - ♦ Rebalancing industrial development policies away from 'market plus environmental controls' towards a more coherent sustainable development strategy;

- As outlined in *Agenda 21* and the *EU 5th Environmental Action Programme*, a vital dimension of a national sustainability strategy must be real decentralisation of powers and resources to the regional and local levels.
- SEEDS authorities should work with other local authorities around the country (most effectively through the local authority associations) to broaden the scope of local planning from its present land-use focus, to encompass the full range of sustainable development concerns.
- SEEDS authorities should make use of the increasingly sophisticated contribution to the definition of locally sustainable development being made by the voluntary and non-profit sectors at the national level. This may be done by subscribing to literature or using their consultancy services.

### **Regional Policy Recommendations**

The regional level is crucial for the development of sustainability, because this provides adequate physical resources and richness of skills and human resources to form the basis of a self-reliant polity and economy. Indeed, the South East of England is several times the size of a few European countries, including the most economically developed, and should therefore have adequate resources to adopt a coherent approach to sustainable development.

Currently, however, the South East of England is clearly one of the most resource-dependent regions in the world, as a consequence of its history as the leading force of the creation of the 'modern global economic system' in its early years. Perhaps because this is an uncomfortable fact (seen in terms of exploitation of global resources and populations), there is also very little useful information on the extent and dimensions of this dependence; equally scanty is the information on the possibilities for greater self-reliance<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> Atkinson, A. 1993: Resources for a Sustainable London, *Regenerating Cities*. 3-4 36-39.

SEEDS policy, as expressed in the last section of this Report, is clearly towards the establishment of a democratically accountable regional authority. This will bring the U.K. into line with the majority of European countries and create a basis upon which sustainable development planning might start in earnest.

An important issue in this respect is the position which London occupies in any regional political arrangements: the resources of the South East cannot be meaningfully planned without reference to the demands of London and London's future policies and programmes for its own sustainable development. Whilst London planning institutions (LPAC<sup>22</sup> and the ALG<sup>23</sup> with the support of the LRC and parallel NGO developments<sup>24</sup>) have already initiated work on a strategy for sustainable development for London, this is in serious need of connecting into a similar exercise for the rest of the South East.

Chapter 10 outlines SEEDS' overall policy regarding the development of a stronger organisation of regional interests. In fact, there are already many regional institutions to do with the environment, including water companies, waste management organisations and energy utilities, which require a regional framework but which currently have different jurisdictional boundaries and operate with little reference to one another. SEEDS authorities need to work with other relevant regional bodies and interests to develop ideas and, where relevant and feasible, initiatives which will enable a smooth transition to an appropriate and coordinated set of regional institutions. Such institutions must be able to deal with resource management and environmental issues. The following policies and initiatives would fit into this overall approach:

- SEEDS authorities should work with other local and regional organisations to initiate a Regional Agenda 21 process. This will provide an overall framework for the development both of a regional sustainable development strategy and of specific initiatives relevant to the region, in cooperation with local (London, county and district/borough) initiatives.

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<sup>22</sup>LPAC 1995: *State of the Environment Report for London* London: London Planning Advisory Committee.

<sup>23</sup>ALG 1996: *Agenda 21 for London - Towards a Sustainable Future for London* London: Association of London Government.

<sup>24</sup>SLT 1996: *Creating a Sustainable London* London: Sustainable London Trust.



- The environmental database of the South East, including information on human and physical resources, is fragmented and inadequate as a basis for developing a strategy for sustainable development. A State of the Environment report is needed, which should be compiled with the active participation of a wide selection of regional interests.
- A Sustainable Development Strategy is required for the South East. This should grow out of the Regional Agenda 21 process and existing arrangements for regional planning in London and the South East, extended to cover the economy as well as land use, transport and other traditional environmental concerns.
- Even preceding the creation of a regional authority, SEEDS authorities, in conjunction with other interests participating in the development of regional sustainable development initiatives (Local Agenda 21, a Sustainable Development Strategy, etc), could usefully consider the institutional arrangements that will be necessary to develop policies and programmes in key environmental areas. These might be considered in terms of 'commissions' responsible for the following areas:
  - Energy planning and management aimed at reducing the need for energy and the development of renewable sources of energy in the region, incorporating both existing energy institutions and other stakeholders in a partnership for sustainable energy development;
  - Water planning and management aimed at demand management and planning issues with regard to water supply, water quality and sea defenses, and with adequate accountability and consultation with existing actors in this field;
  - Waste planning and management aimed at developing a systematic approach to waste elimination over the coming years through reduction, reuse and recycling; this will need to focus strongly on support for the development of industries that reuse and recycle materials (waste exchanges, remanufactures, etc); on capacity-building in local

authorities; on public awareness-raising; as well as on traditional waste management agents;

- Transport planning and management aimed at reversing the current trend towards increased car, lorry and air travel; and promoting an integrated regional system in conjunction with local integrated transport plans developed in the framework of PPG13 and TPP guidance (see Chapter 7).

### **Local Policy Recommendations**

It is important to note that the current great interest in environmental management and sustainability in the U.K. government did not come from central government, nor in the first instance from UNCED - for all the insistence on referring to initiatives under the title of Local Agenda 21. Already, in the late 1980s, many local authorities were taking significant new initiatives in environmental management, and this was strongly supported with substantial publications by the local authority associations, especially the Local Government Management Board (LGMB).

However, as already noted, whilst most local authorities have taken some initiative, and there are few now that have not appointed a Local Agenda 21 officer, these initiatives remain on the periphery of local authority activities. This owes, in great measure, to the constitutional problem whereby local government must carry out duties according to requirements set by the central government (*ultra vires*). But it owes also to inertia and traditions within local government that continue to pursue old agendas or insist on constraining new agendas within the walls of the old.

Local authorities and their associations, traditionally used to waiting for central government to determine policies, as a function of the constitutional and legal framework, have nevertheless started to find their way towards an alternative *modus operandi*, starting from concerns for environmental deterioration. It will continue to be necessary for local authorities to take initiative and maintain pressure on the central government to provide a more sympathetic

policy and legal framework, and fiscal environment, within which local authorities can implement sustainable development programmes with greater confidence.

There are also non-government organisations, which are concerned with environmental sustainability, into which local authorities can tap. These include the local authority associations - including SEEDS and CLES - as well as national NGOs such as Friends of the Earth, Joseph Rowntree Trust, the New Economics Foundation, etc.

Meanwhile, there is an urgent need both for the LA21 approach to decision-making and management to be adopted across the complete spectrum of local authority functions. That is to say that there needs to be a greater willingness than in the past for local authority councillors and personnel to share the decision-making process with other stakeholders who will be affected by the plans, programmes and projects of the local authority.

This involves a measure of information sharing in a structured way, e.g. training community members in the technical details of local planning and management; and a system of 'home advisers', jointly funded by the utilities, to inform and encourage householders to invest in energy, water and waste saving measures. But it also involves a willingness to allow the views and interests of other stakeholders to determine what should be done, and how.

At the same time, the LA21 processes - and with them the planning and management of towns and districts - should take full account of the problem of sustainability. Most citizens are quite out of their depth - and even those with knowledge are often quite frightened - by the implications of sustainable development. Ideas such as the need to abandon private cars and to embrace higher-density living arrangements<sup>22</sup>, run counter to common aspirations to 'the good life'. But these issues must be raised and discussed and, in the end, decisions must be taken that will move us genuinely in the direction of sustainable lifestyles and economy. Local authorities have a crucial role to play in organising this process of community self-education in sustainability.

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<sup>22</sup>CEC 1990: **Green Paper on the Urban Environment**. Brussels, Commission of the European Communities Com(90) 218 Final.

- SEEDS authorities should maintain an awareness of local initiatives towards sustainable development in other countries; this might be pursued via direct contact with such international organisations as the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI).
- SEEDS authorities should foster an awareness of local initiatives aimed at sustainable development in Europe. This may be pursued by 'networking' with national organisations (e.g. local authority associations) but also directly with relevant EU initiatives, such as the Sustainable Cities Campaign.
- Funding for sustainable development initiatives may be obtained from various sources in the EU, in particular the Regional Development Directorate.
- SEEDS authorities should network with other local authorities to be kept informed of what is happening elsewhere in the rapidly developing arena of sustainability planning and management, and Local Agenda 21. But they should also make a genuine effort to push the process forward in terms of identifying initiatives that promise to yield really sustainable development.
- In this context, SEEDS authorities should consider pioneering the formulation of local Sustainable Development Strategies and Programmes. These should grow out of the best of the present green audit and action programme work, in conjunction with statutory planning duties and participatory initiatives relating to LA21 activities.
- SEEDS authorities also need to investigate in greater detail green approaches to local economic development, including methods for screening inward investments, approaches to attracting green investments, and identifying priority enterprises to be supported in developing the local economy in a more sustainable way<sup>26</sup>.
- SEEDS authorities should also consider implementing a more proactive local industrial development strategy through the establishment of a 'green industry development fund' to finance small and medium enterprises entering the space opened up by environmental restructuring, in conjunction with existing financial institutions.

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<sup>26</sup>CAG 1993: **Greening Economic Development**. Luton, Local Government Management Board. Gibbs, D.C. 1993: **The Green Local Economy**. Manchester, Centre for Local Economic Strategies.

- Local authority support for other forms of local economic initiatives, from cooperatives to LETS schemes and credit unions, should be given greater priority and linked into the strategy for a sustainable local and regional economy.
- In their own role as purchasers, *SEEDS* authorities need to be informed of the needs of sustainable development; and consider such additional tasks as the marketing of recycled waste materials and the bulk purchase of insulation materials etc. as an essential part of their service.
- Whilst in recent years local authorities have tended to abandon earlier initiatives in energy management, it is important to reverse this trend and to put significant resources into addressing problems in energy planning and management<sup>27</sup>.
- *SEEDS* authorities should investigate the possibilities for initiating a system of 'home advisers', in cooperation with the utilities, to inform the public on environmentally sound practices in the use of energy, water, waste and other relevant household functions.
- Awareness-raising amongst citizens and communities, and capacity-building of local authority staff, the private sector and other organised stakeholder groups, in the problematic of sustainability at the local level, are crucial foundations for the realisation of sustainable development. *SEEDS* local authorities should therefore cooperate with TECS and other local educational and training institutions to support training initiatives that will prepare the community at large for the tasks ahead and train those who will have to take responsibility for the implementation of sustainable development initiatives in what has to be done.

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<sup>27</sup>Atkinson, A. 1990: *After Chernobyl - A Safe Energy Policy for the South East*: Harlow, South East Economic Development Strategy.

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