Local Agenda 21
in the United Kingdom

A review of progress and issues for New Zealand

Acknowledgements

Contents

Local Agenda 21 in the United Kingdom: Phil Hughes

Executive summary

This report discusses the implementation of Local Agenda 21 in the United Kingdom (UK). It is recognised that a number of councils in New Zealand are seeking to implement Local Agenda 21 and advance sustainable development. This report raises a number of issues for New Zealand in terms of its implementation of Agenda 21 and its approach to sustainable development, particularly at the local level.

What is Local Agenda 21?
Agenda 21 is a non-binding framework for action to achieve sustainable development resulting from the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Implementation of Agenda 21 at the local level is known as **Local Agenda 21.** This involves developing partnerships among local authorities, the business sector, NGOs and citizens to improve quality of life through the management and enhancement of the local environment and social and economic conditions.

What is a Local Agenda 21 strategy?
A Local Agenda 21 strategy is developed with the full participation of the local community – it is **a community strategy**. Key features include: a long-term vision statement; a prioritised action plan; implementation mechanisms; and monitoring and reporting through the use of indicators.

Local authority actions to address Local Agenda 21
In partnership with communities, local authorities can play a key role in implementing Agenda 21 and addressing sustainable development. Specific local authority actions to address Local Agenda 21 include: addressing a local authority's own sustainability performance (eg improving resource use and purchasing); integrating sustainability issues into all policies and activities; education; and monitoring and reporting on progress.

Local Agenda 21 in the United Kingdom – uptake and progress
The Local Agenda 21 initiative in the UK was launched after 1992 by a number of key individuals with some local government association support. A cross-sectoral Local Agenda 21 steering group was set up to promote the initiative and support local authorities. The former Local Government Management Board sustainable development unit has driven and co-ordinated much of the work on behalf of the local authority associations, with some financial support from central Government. The unit has produced a wide range of guidance and materials to bring about progress. A number of key organisations are actively promoting, facilitating and providing information on sustainable development. This is in contrast to New Zealand.

In 1997 at the 5th meeting of the United Nations after the Earth Summit, the UK Prime Minister Tony Blair called on all local authorities to adopt a Local Agenda 21 strategy by the year 2000. This was a voluntary target but strong political leadership has resulted in substantial progress. In 1999 around 67% of local authorities were preparing a strategy.

United Kingdom local government issues
While making progress on Local Agenda 21, there are a number of substantial challenges for local government in the UK, which are quite different to those in New Zealand. The 1998 white paper *Modernising Government* highlighted a series of local authority issues: performance, democratic renewal, and community leadership. Two new proposals to address these issues were **best value** and **community planning.** Local authorities would be given a new duty to promote the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of their areas (ie sustainable development). In part this would be achieved through a requirement to develop a comprehensive strategy for promoting wellbeing (ie referred to as a **community plan**).

The future for Local Agenda 21 in the United Kingdom?

The focus for most activity in local authorities over the next few years will be on modernising local Government. However, questions about the relationship between Local Agenda 21 and community planning remain:

- Is the duty of wellbeing really a duty to promote sustainable development in an integrated way, or, as is often the case, will economic and social concerns dominate over environmental issues?
- Can the best ingredients of community planning and Local Agenda 21 planning be combined to create an even better type of strategic planning?
- How long will Local Agenda 21 planning and community planning be seen as separate entities, or will the term "community planning" replace Local Agenda 21?

If the sustainable development framework proceeds as intended, ultimately the preparation of a distinct Agenda 21 strategy may represent a duplication of activity and even the term Local Agenda 21 may become superfluous. However, **it is the focus on sustainable development and the principles of Agenda 21 that is the important issue and not just having a process and strategy called Agenda 21.** So the new government initiatives may bring more councils into the sustainable development fold and allow those already working under this banner to continue to do so.

Key messages for New Zealand from the UK work on Local Agenda 21 include:

- Local Agenda 21 is providing a very suitable process for addressing the integration of environmental, social and economic issues at the local level;
- The development of new mechanisms for public involvement has assisted the local democratic process and community participation;
- A Local Agenda 21 strategy is a community and not a municipal agenda and is relevant to all sizes and types of authority and community; and
- The co-ordination and information provision role of the Local Government Management Board and other organisations has been vital, as has been the role of the national steering group.

Local Agenda 21 can work at different levels and be applied in different ways. There is no standard template that can be applied but there are examples of best practice. For a local authority, unless Local Agenda 21 is <u>the</u> central driver for a local authority's strategic and financial planning process, it will not have the influence that is possible, and it will just become another process. There are already too many of those!

The overall picture for sustainable development and Local Agenda 21 in the UK is still very patchy. There is growing local authority interest in Local Agenda 21 but it is also in "a state of healthy confusion" as statutory duties such as *best value* and *community planning* are defined and addressed. Local Agenda 21 has had a good start but how the new duties are implemented and more explicitly linked to sustainable development is the challenge for the future.

Key issues for New Zealand include:

- How could more New Zealand local authorities be encouraged to respond to sustainable development and Agenda 21 with the development of Local Agenda 21 processes and strategies?
- How could central Government provide support for Local Agenda 21 and work in partnership with local authorities and communities?
- Are local authorities sufficiently managing and improving their own sustainability performance (eg addressing resource use, energy efficiency, "green purchasing", …)?
- How can sustainable development be better integrated into existing policy frameworks?
- How can community and business participation be enhanced to bring improved community and business partnerships to address sustainable development?
- How could sustainable development indicators be promoted and developed in New Zealand?

Local Agenda 21 in the United Kingdom: Phil Hughes

Observations about progress with Local Agenda 21

The following observations about respective progress with Local Agenda 21 in the United Kingdom and New Zealand can be made as at the end of 1999.

Factors influencing progress with Local Agenda 21 in:	
The United Kingdom	**New Zealand**
Some central Government support and leadership: Initially limited under the previous Conservative Government. Since 1997, more direct support from the Labour Government including the Prime Minister's challenge to all local authorities to complete a strategy by 2000. The proposed new statutory duty for community planning will further require local authorities to address sustainable development. A second national sustainable development strategy has been developed by the Government. Major Government documents and reform proposals recognise the value of LA 21.	**Little central Government support or leadership.** No national sustainable development strategy. Limited understanding of how to apply and integrate Agenda 21 throughout central and local government. Some good community initiatives in accordance with the principles of Agenda 21. Limited integration of the two levels.
A number of identified champions from local government associations, local government and NGOs. These champions initially promoted the concept and have brought sustained widespread action and response.	**Few champions** apart from a number of well-known councils and personalities, and the Christchurch Agenda 21 Forum.
A number of small central and local government partnerships to fund the production of guidance material, best practice notes and other information (eg the development of sustainability indicators).	**Few partnerships and little finance:** In 1994 MFE formed a trial partnership with the then Local Government Association and five local authorities to develop Agenda 21. Little has occurred since this trial but recent renewed interest.
More than 65 % of local councils have made a formal commitment to LA 21. The approach has been actively supported by all local government associations.	**Limited number of councils formally identifying themselves as LA 21 councils.** No formal commitment from LGNZ.
Vast range of guidance material prepared by the I&DeA (formerly the LGMB). Other material available from the LGA and DETR and various NGOs.	**Limited guidance material** except for the 1994 Agenda 21 implementation guide produced by MFE.
The I&DeA conducts regular surveys of progress. The I&DeA, LGA and DETR are developing methods to evaluate LA 21 strategies and processes.	**Limited independent monitoring and review.** LGNZ is currently surveying local authorities on responses to LA21 and sustainability issues.
Considerable networking: Annual conferences for LA 21 co-ordinators and interested parties have been held for eight years. A range of training programmes has been provided.	**Little formal networking:** Limited and mainly informal networking. Two exceptions have been an Agenda 21 workshop at the 1998 local government conference and a short session on Agenda 21 as part of the 1999 social & environmental sustainability research seminar. Recent new initiative to form a Sustainable NZ Association.
Newsletters: The I&DeA has produced a monthly newsletter on LA 21 guidance, issues, and events. The Environment Resource and Information Centre (ERIC), University of Westminster produces a monthly local environment news journal.	**Newsletters:** No regular information sources.
Websites: A number of dedicated websites eg the I&DeA site, the DETR sustainable development site, the ERIC site (see list of websites at the end of this report).	**Websites:** No dedicated websites.

I&DeA UK Improvement and Development Agency (formerly the Local Government Management Board)
DETR UK Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions
LGA UK Local Government Association   LA 21 Local Agenda 21
LGNZ Local Government New Zealand   MFE NZ Ministry for the Environment

1.   Introduction

Local Agenda 21 is an international movement which can trace its origins to the United Nations Earth Summit in Rio De Janeiro in 1992. Local Agenda 21 is concerned with developing partnerships and consensus among local authorities, the business sector, community groups and citizens to improve quality of life through the management and enhancement of the local environment and social and economic conditions.

This report discusses the implementation of Local Agenda 21 in the United Kingdom. It outlines what has been done and raises a number of issues for New Zealand in terms of its implementation of Agenda 21 and its approach to sustainable development. The information was gathered during a study tour by Phil Hughes from the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment to the United Kingdom, 14 - 19 November 1999. The purpose of the study tour was twofold: to attend the British Council seminar on "Sustainable Communities and Local Agenda 21" in Nottingham; and to meet London based agencies involved with sustainable development and the "Greening Government" initiative.

The British Council seminar on Sustainable Communities and Local Agenda 21

The British Council seminar on Sustainable Communities and Local Agenda 21 was directed by Tony Hams, who as head of the sustainable development unit at the Local Government Management Board (LGMB), London (now the Improvement and Development Agency) was responsible for setting up and managing the UK Local Agenda 21 campaign.

The seminar examined what is meant by sustainable communities and examined how Local Agenda 21 can assist with their development in order to enhance and maintain local quality of life. It also considered how Local Agenda 21 can assist with the preparation of national and local programmes for sustainable development and how it can develop and expand local community partnerships and facilitate community development.

Sustainable development

Sustainable development can be described as ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come (DETR 1999a). It encompasses environmental, social and economic goals. Sustainable development is concerned with seeking to satisfy people's basic needs, such as providing good homes, safe streets and a clean environment. It is also about giving people the opportunity to achieve their potential through education, information, participation and good health. It requires a robust economy to provide people with satisfying work opportunities.

The emphasis on sustainable development in this report is in terms of the integration of economic, social and environmental objectives. The integration of the three objectives is the critical point to aim for in undertaking all policy development, programmes and activity. It is not a balancing act, it is not "fixing" one issue and then considering the other two, but integrating across all three objectives. This applies equally to the government sector, the business sector, and the community. This integration requires a strategic framework of targets, policy and programme appraisal, co-ordination, monitoring, audit and review.

Outline of this report

Section two of this report outlines what is Local Agenda 21 and describes a typical Local Agenda 21 process and strategy. A number of specific instruments for progress, namely indicators for sustainability and environmental management systems, are highlighted in section three.

Section four examines the uptake and progress with Local Agenda 21 in the United Kingdom including the roles of key players such as the Improvement and Development Agency (formerly the Local Government Management Board) and the Local Government Association. Two examples of Local Agenda 21 processes/strategies are then provided in section five.

Section six reports on the modernising government agenda to address a number of local government policy and performance issues. Two proposals for change, best value and community planning, are discussed in more detail. Section seven examines the future for Local Agenda 21 in the United Kingdom and its relationship with community planning.

Section eight finishes with a number of conclusions and a series of observations about the implementation of Local Agenda 21 in the United Kingdom and New Zealand.

Appendix A.1 of this report describes key features of the structure and functions of local government in the United Kingdom and makes some comparisons with New Zealand. These features have in part brought about the proposals for change and improvement, specifically best value and community planning, as described in section six.

Appendices A.2-A.5 provide further information on sustainability indicators, the eco-management and audit scheme, a sustainability checklist and the best value proposals.

2. What are Agenda 21 and Local Agenda 21?

Agenda 21 is a non-binding framework of action to achieve sustainable development. It was a major result of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) at Rio de Janeiro. Agenda 21 consists of four interlinked sections: social and economic dimensions; management and conservation of natural resources; means of implementation; and strengthening the role of major groups (including women, young people, indigenous people, business, NGOs, local authorities). In 1997 the nineteenth special session of the United Nations General Assembly reaffirmed that Agenda 21 remained the fundamental programme of action for achieving sustainable development and that an acceleration in its implementation was required.

Chapter 28 of Agenda 21 identifies that local authorities have a major role to play in addressing sustainable development. The emphasis on Agenda 21 at the local level is known as **Local Agenda 21** as it is believed that around two-thirds of the actions identified in Agenda 21 involve local authorities and local communities. Chapter 28 of Agenda 21 calls on each local authority to enter into a dialogue and partnerships with its communities and

businesses to prepare and adopt a Local Agenda 21. Local Agenda 21 initiatives were first promoted at Rio by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives.[1]

2.1   What might a Local Agenda 21 process look like?

A successful Agenda 21 process involves:
- multi-sectoral engagement in preparing a long-term action plan based on sustainable development;
- a commitment to long-term meaningful consultation with the community;
- strengthening participatory assessment of local social, environmental, and economic conditions and needs;
- negotiating of specific target setting to achieve local visions and goals; and
- monitoring and reporting through the use of local indicators developed and measured by the local community.

A Local Agenda 21 strategy can be described as a strategy that is developed with the **full participation** of the local community. It would include:
- **a vision statement** identifying the main sustainability issues and aims for the area and **indicators** for quality of life and the state of the environment;
- **an action plan** of prioritised actions allocated to organisations or sectors which will work towards these objectives; and
- **implementation mechanisms** covering how the actions will be made to happen, how performance and achievements will be assessed and how the strategy will be **reviewed**.

Six components of a Local Agenda 21 process for local authorities have been identified: (LGA et al 1998):

Internal processes
- Managing and improving the local authority's own sustainability performance in terms of addressing resource use, energy efficiency, waste management, the purchasing of products, etc;
- Integrating sustainability issues into the local authorities policies and activities: ensuring that all policies and activities are assessed and scrutinised against environmental, social and economic objectives to clearly identify all impacts with appropriate responses;

External processes
- Awareness raising and education of the wider community on sustainable development issues and how they can play a significant role in responding to sustainable development;
- Consulting and involving the wider community and the general public in all activity;
- Working in partnership with all sectors, especially business. This is a critical part of the process but often the most difficult; and
- Measuring, monitoring and reporting on progress against measurable targets.

---

[1]   The International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) is an association of local governments dedicated to the prevention and solution of local, regional, and global environmental problems through local action. Over 300 cities, towns, and counties from around the world are Members of the Council. See http://www.cities21.com/iclei.htm

Two examples of Local Agenda 21 processes are described in section 5. Further information on "why and how to prepare a Local Agenda 21 strategy" is available from the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions website at:
http://www.environment.detr.gov.uk/sustainable/la21/policy/index.htm

---

Issues for New Zealand
- How can sustainable development be better integrated into existing policy frameworks and activity?
- Are local authorities sufficiently managing and improving their own sustainability performance (eg in terms of addressing resource use, energy efficiency, waste management, green purchasing, …)?
- How can community participation be enhanced to bring improved community involvement and partnerships to address sustainable development issues?

---

3.   Tools for Local Agenda 21

3.1 Indicators for sustainability

There are considerable resources going into the preparation of sustainable development indicators at all levels of government in the United Kingdom. It is a real growth industry! The focus on sustainability indicators could be contrasted with New Zealand's approach and predominant focus on environmental performance indicators. These are critically important but they are not enough to measure all aspects of sustainable development.

The United Kingdom national sustainable development strategy was released in May 1999 and it included a series of indicators to measure progress (DETR 1999a). The set of around 150 indicators is referred to throughout the strategy, and will be at the core of future reports on progress. These indicators cover the full range of sustainability issues and address: sending the right signals (eg "Greening Government"); a sustainable economy; building sustainable communities; managing the environment and resources; and international co-operation and development.[2]

An important new element in the list of indicators is the identification of a subset of 15 key headline indicators (see table below), intended to focus public attention on what sustainable development means, and to give a broad overview of whether the country is achieving a "better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come". These headline indicators will be widely reported with significant media coverage.

Themes, issues and objectives (DETR 1999b)	Headline indicators
Maintaining high and stable levels of economic growth and employment	
• our economy must continue to grow	Total output of the economy (GDP)
• investment (in modern plant, machinery as well as research and development) is vital to our future prosperity	Investment in public, business and private assets

---

[2]   The full list of indicators can be found at:
     http://www.environment.detr.gov.uk/sustainable/quality/monitor/index.htm

Local Agenda 21 in the United Kingdom: Phil Hughes

Themes, issues and objectives (DETR 1999b)	Headline indicators
• maintain high and stable levels of employment so everyone can share greater job opportunities	Proportion of people of working age who are in work
Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone	
• equip people with the skills to fulfil their potential	Qualifications at age 19
• improve the health of the population overall	expected years of healthy life
• reduce the proportion of unfit (housing) stock	homes judged unfit to live in
• reduce both crime and fear of crime	level of crime
Effective protection of the environment	
• continue to reduce our emissions (of greenhouse gases) now, and plan for greater reductions in longer term	emissions of greenhouse gases
• reduce air pollution and ensure air quality continues to improve through the longer term	days when air pollution is moderate or high
• reduce the need to travel and improve choice in transport	road traffic [volume]
• improving river quality	rivers of good or fair quality
• reverse the long-term decline in populations of farmland and woodland birds	populations of wild birds
• re-using previously developed land, in order to protect the countryside and encourage urban regeneration	new homes built on previously developed land
Prudent use of natural resources	
• moving away from disposal of waste towards waste minimisation, reuse, recycling and recovery	waste arisings [volume] and management
Improving quality of life	
• achieving a better quality of life for everyone	satisfaction with quality of life (to be developed)

The United Kingdom Government has reported on the set of indicators in the first annual indicators report (DETR 1999c). This can be found at:

http://www.environment.detr.gov.uk/sustainable/quality99/index.htm

A list of Local Agenda 21 indicators for local authorities is being developed by a partnership between central and local government. These indicators covering environmental, economic and social parameters are being tested by 30 councils. Appendix A.2 lists the trial indicators.

Short summaries of the local sustainability indicators reports have been found to be extremely useful to communicate issues and potential responses to the wider community. It is not sufficient to prepare them and leave them on the shelves – they need to be circulated as widely as possible and used to inform the community.

Issues for New Zealand
- How could sustainable development indicators be promoted and developed in New Zealand, especially the "headline indicators"?
- Does the information exist and only require "repackaging", or would additional resources be required to obtain the information?
- What agency should co-ordinate any national indicator development?
- How could more local authorities be encouraged to develop and report on local sustainable development indicators?

3.2 Environmental management systems

Good internal environmental management is a key issue for government at all levels and is an integral part of the Local Agenda 21 process. This includes the efficient use of all resources, energy efficiency, waste minimisation, addressing environmental impacts in all operations and "green purchasing".

Local councils have been strongly supported and encouraged by the UK Government to undertake comprehensive assessments of their environmental performance using the Government sponsored Eco-management and Audit Scheme (EMAS). EMAS is a systematic process for evaluating, managing and monitoring the environmental impacts of local authorities via an environmental management system (EMS). EMAS is similar to ISO 14001, the international standard for environmental management systems. EMAS covers both the direct environmental impacts made by a council in providing its range of services and also the effects of the services themselves on the environment. The ultimate aim of the scheme is to build on good environmental practice already being performed and to improve any areas where a council is under performing (see Appendix A.3 for further information).

A number of advantages of implementing EMAS have been identified including (DETR 1998a):
- Improvements in the quality of service delivery: EMAS can help ensure that effects on the environment are considered in all areas of activity;
- Financial savings from reducing waste and using resources more efficiently;
- Improved business and environmental management control through target setting and monitoring;
- A consistent approach to environmental management across the local authority;
- Maintenance of credibility: as regulators, local authorities are increasingly promoting the use of quality and environmental management systems by industry. Local authorities also need to use these systems.
- Demonstration of commitment: if local authorities are to be seen as competent leaders of Local Agenda 21 then they must be able to demonstrate they are "putting their own house in order"; and
- Compliance with legislation.

Barriers and problems with implementing EMAS include:
- The relative costs of developing an EMS for a small local authority;
- Local authorities not undertaking the initial environmental review in sufficient depth; and
- Local authorities not having sufficient corporate, financial and technical support to complete the EMAS process.

Use of EMS in government
The EMAS scheme was launched in April 1995. An I&DeA survey conducted in late 1998 reported that six local authorities have achieved EMAS Registration and an additional six authorities have operational units certified to ISO14001. A further 58 councils have formally committed themselves to achieving external recognition under one of the standards. In addition, 82 councils are implementing an EMS but have yet to make a decision on whether they will seek formal verification or certification. A further 61 are engaged in feasibility studies.

Since May 1998, central Government Ministers have actively encouraged departments and agencies to "green" their own operations and more recently consider the use of environmental management systems such as EMAS. This is partly in response to local authorities being asked to use these systems and central government agencies being very slow off the mark.

Issues for New Zealand
- Following on from the Local Government New Zealand and Ministry for the Environment sponsored guide to environmental management systems and ISO14001 for local government (Pattle Delamore Partners Ltd 1999), how could the use of environmental management systems be given greater encouragement in New Zealand?

---

4.   Local Agenda 21 in the UK – uptake and progress

It was not until the late eighties and early nineties that systematic environmental management became a recognised discipline within UK local government. Early attempts by some councils to become "green" involved not just specific environmental initiatives (such as nature conservation or recycling), but attempts to build environmental awareness into all activities of the authority. "Green charters" or policies were produced and "environmental audits" were conducted.

Following the 1992 UN conference at Rio, the Local Agenda 21 initiative in the UK was launched. A number of key individuals provided leadership that coincided with some local government association support. The UK local government associations decided they would set up a Local Agenda 21 initiative to encourage local authorities to work with their communities to produce local sustainable development plans. The various local government associations entrusted the task of advising local authorities on the implementation of Local Agenda 21 to the Local Government Management Board (LGMB) (now the Improvement and Development Agency (I&DeA)) under the direction of a cross-sectoral Local Agenda 21 steering group.

The cross-sectoral Local Agenda 21 steering group was established to promote the Local Agenda 21 process in the UK and support local authorities in this work. Membership of the group was drawn 50 % from local authorities and 50 % from other groups. This has resulted in broad political support for this work. One of the most influential contributions of the steering group has been the articulation of thirteen themes of a sustainable community which helps to define the vision and goals of Local Agenda 21 (see below).

Thirteen themes for sustainable development

The set of 13 themes broadly conveys what a sustainable community might look like:

Resources: Resources are used efficiently and waste is minimised by closing cycles.
Pollution: Pollution is limited to levels which natural systems can cope with without damage.
Biodiversity: The diversity of nature is valued and protected.
Local needs: Where possible, local needs are met locally.
Basic needs: Everyone has access to adequate food, water, shelter and fuel at reasonable cost.
Satisfying work: Everyone has the opportunity to undertake satisfying work in a diverse economy.

Health: People's good health is protected.
Access: Access to facilities, service, goods and other people is not achieved at the expense of the environment.
Safety: People live without fear of personal violence from crime or persecution.
Knowledge: Everyone has access to skills, knowledge and information.
Empowerment: All sections of the community are empowered to participate in decision-making.
Leisure: Opportunities for culture, leisure and recreation are readily available to all.
Distinctiveness: Diversity and local distinctiveness are valued and protected.

On behalf of the steering group, the LGMB sustainable development unit has driven and co-ordinated much of the work on behalf of the six local authority associations, with some financial support from the Department of the Environment. The unit has produced a wide range of guidance materials eg a framework for local sustainability, a step by step guide to Local Agenda 21, guidelines for sustainable development in various topic areas including: community participation; planning; transport and sustainability; nature conservation and Local Agenda 21; and action on the coast. The unit has undertaken research on sustainability indicators. This constant supply of information and support has been extremely valuable and encouraged progress.

The work of the I&DeA sustainable development unit

Working closely with the local government associations, this small unit of two-three permanent staff has provided support for local authorities working on Local Agenda 21, Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS), and sustainable development and environmental issues. This support is provided in the following ways:
- Producing guidance on the Local Agenda 21 process to encourage good practice (eg step by step guides, detailed guidance on key issues, case studies, indicators) through a range of chargeable and free publications;
- Promoting training and awareness raising (two training programmes have been developed for councillors and officers);
- Answering queries from local authorities and other organisations and individuals;
- Producing regular updates and sending mailings to the nominated Local Agenda 21 co-ordinator in each local authority. In 1994 a database and network was created for Local Agenda 21 co-ordinators;
- Organising an annual Forum to provide the co-ordinators with networking opportunities and the chance to hear about latest national and international developments;
- Surveying all local authorities on their progress on Local Agenda 21 and EMAS;
- Visiting local authorities to present and discuss Local Agenda 21 and EMAS;
- Liaising with other organisations in the sustainable development field, at home and abroad;
- Co-ordinating various award schemes; and
- Undertaking relevant project work.

Following reorganisation in December 1999, the unit has been disbanded. However, its website is still active.

A major promotion for Local Agenda 21 occurred in New York in 1997 at the 5th meeting of the UN after the Earth Summit. The UK Prime Minister Tony Blair called on all local

authorities to adopt a Local Agenda 21 strategy by the year 2000. This was a voluntary target but it has resulted in substantial progress. The chart below shows the status of 361 local authorities (77% of all local authorities) who responded to a Local Agenda 21 survey in late 1998. Around 67% of local authorities are expected to deliver on achieving a Local Agenda 21 strategy by the end of 2000. Very few councils have rejected Agenda 21 or not responded to the survey (less than 2 %). The DETR, LGA and I&DeA are jointly developing checklists for evaluating Local Agenda 21 strategies to assess whether a local authority has met this target and the quality or otherwise of a local strategy.

Status of Local Agenda 21 in UK local authorities in late 1998
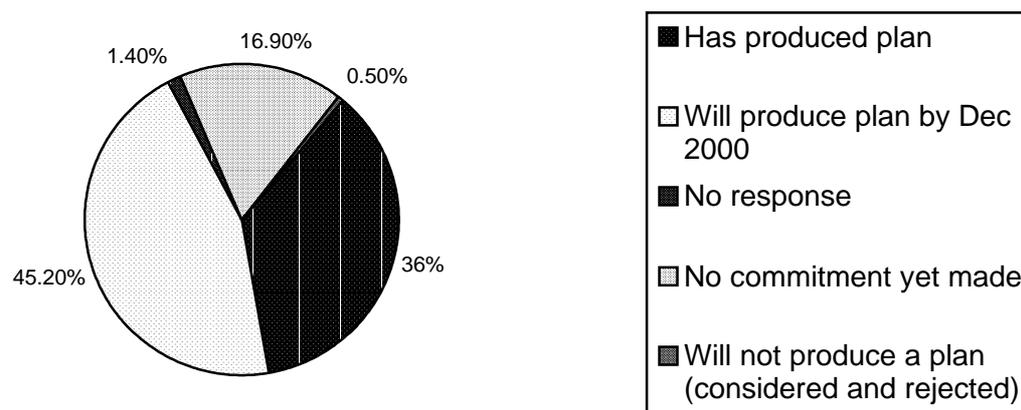
Local Agenda 21 is receiving increasing political profile and there have recently been joint central and local government approaches to local authorities who are not yet performing on Local Agenda 21 (via joint letters). The LGA has also written personally to some local authorities to encourage suitable responses on Local Agenda 21 and other issues.

An important ingredient in the uptake of Local Agenda 21 is the number of agencies and organisations that are promoting sustainable development and providing information on how to address it. Examples of organisations or networks that are actively promoting, facilitating and providing information on sustainable development are the Forum for the Future (see box below) and the Environmental Information and Resource Centre at the University of Westminster which produces *EG: Local Environment News*, the principal networking publication for local government and sustainability. This is in contrast to New Zealand.

Forum for the Future

The Forum for the Future was founded in 1996 to accelerate the building of a sustainable way of life by taking a positive, solutions-oriented approach to sustainable development challenges. It has an annual budget of over £2.5 M, mainly from donations and gifts. The forum has a series of sustainability programmes with the business sector, the education sector and local government (Forum for the Future 1999).

The Forum for the Future local authority partners scheme involves 28 local authorities and addresses three priority areas:
- The integration of sustainable development work with the governance and service delivery strands of the modernising agenda;
- The relationship between the local economy and sustainable development; and
- The particular issues faced in implementing sustainable practices in rural areas.

The scheme has focused on capacity building with clusters of local authorities, improving networking and sharing expertise, and improving cross-sectoral partnerships with business and the education sectors. It is an important component of an increasing network of agencies and organisations that are working together to address sustainable development.

Issues for New Zealand
- How could more New Zealand local authorities be encouraged to respond to Agenda 21 with the development of Local Agenda 21 processes and strategies?
- What value would an "umbrella" Local Agenda 21 process and community strategy have in New Zealand given existing processes and plans?
- How could central Government provide support for Local Agenda 21 and work in partnership with local authorities and communities?
- How could best practice approaches and techniques be communicated to all local authorities to assist with the greater adoption of Local Agenda 21 approaches?

5. Examples of Local Agenda 21 processes and strategies

5.1 London Borough of Greenwich

"Sustainable development should not just be the aim of a select group of people. It needs the widest possible commitment from the council, community and businesses to enable a move towards a more sustainable way of life" (Greenwich Council 1997).

The London Borough of Greenwich is located in the south-east of London next to the Thames. In June 1994 Greenwich initiated an Agenda 21 process with a round-table style meeting for each of the community, business and council sectors in order to develop a Local Agenda 21 strategy.

Key components of the Agenda 21 process are described below:
- The round-table meetings led to the establishment of the *Greenwich Agenda 21 Partnership*. This body was set up to act as a steering group for the Agenda 21 process, comprising elected representation from each of the community, business, council and academic sectors. It meets approximately every two months and recommendations from the *Partnership* are referred to the council policy committee for consideration.
- The *Greenwich Agenda 21 Forum* acts as an awareness raising and consultation forum for the local community to express views and make recommendations which can then feed into the Greenwich Agenda 21 process and other council strategies. It meets every six weeks and comprises individual residents as well as members of local environmental,

housing, health, and ethnic minority groups. The *Forum* elects two community representatives to the *Partnership.*

- The council has a small community award scheme ($170,000 over 5 years) that provides some financial leverage for local projects that seek to improve quality of life eg enhancing the local environment, tackling poverty, improving health or addressing the needs of disadvantaged groups.
- The council has attempted to develop an eco-management and audit scheme (EMAS) for improving the council's environmental performance (similar to an ISO 14001). Action plans were developed for each working area following a review of council activity. These plans have proved difficult to implement due to a lack of co-ordination, resourcing and integration with mainstream service reviews.
- Greenwich Environmental Management Services is a local agency that was set up as a not-for-profit company which provides advice and assistance to local businesses on actions to improve their environmental management eg resource efficiency good practice.

In October 1997 the council released its Agenda 21 strategy (Greenwich Council 1997). This built and extended upon its original environmental policy prepared in 1989. It addresses the thirteen themes for sustainable development identified in section 4 of this report.

Although the framework has provided some achievements, the strategy has not become an overarching framework for the council as a whole. Despite a high level of sustainable development good practice within individual areas, significant council actions are taken without reference to Agenda 21. The challenge is to now mainstream sustainable development and Agenda 21 in Greenwich. At its broadest level this requires two areas of activity: action within the community and action within the council.

Action within the community
A community planning process in Greenwich is being developed. This will attempt to set out priorities for action in the borough which are agreed to by the council and its partners, the community and local businesses. This provides a mechanism for promoting the council's community leadership role whilst allowing for the creation of a shared, community-based vision which all organisations can work towards. By integrating the philosophy of sustainable development into the process and setting a long-term vision, the community plan could combine the community engagement and inter-generational elements of Agenda 21 with the new responsibilities for promoting wellbeing and consultation under community planning.

The plan process will also seek to increase community involvement through new and innovative participation techniques (eg through the development of a public involvement strategy). The establishment of eight local fora across the Borough will be one such way to increase contact and involve the community. The *Greenwich Agenda 21 Forum* will also play an important role.

Action within the council
Greenwich council is one of 37 pilot authorities for best value performance reviews and it has in place a corporate best value framework with an agreed four-year service review programme. This will include an assessment of how best value impacts on the implementation of sustainable development. The council has also prepared a sustainability checklist to enable project planners to assess the implications of a policy initiative in terms of its sustainability criteria (see Appendix A.4).

Key objectives of the council's work currently are:
- raising the quality of its services;
- anti-poverty: the growth of poverty in the borough has become one of the most important issues for the council to confront; and
- regeneration: the council has been successful in achieving a substantial amount of new investment in Greenwich over the last few years, including the UK's "Millennium Experience".

5.2   Lancashire County

Lancashire County is in the north-west of England centred on Preston. The county has a population of 1.1 million. The Lancashire County Council is committed to working towards sustainable development through Local Agenda 21 and other initiatives and is supported by 12 district councils and two unitary authorities.

Local Agenda 21 strategy/policy
In 1994 Lancashire County Council adopted a *Charter for Sustainable Development* with eleven goals covering: resources and waste; pollution; natural environment; basic needs; opportunities for work; health; access to facilities; crime and persecution; access to education; decision-making; and valuing neighbourhoods and communities. It outlines how the council is proposing to work towards their achievement through:

- Continuing to develop partnerships and to work with the local, national and international community to encourage further action;
- Monitoring and reporting on progress towards sustainable development goals using indicators in the Green Audit of Lancashire;
- Developing a new approach to service planning involving the public and organisations. This will be carried out initially through an international research project in conjunction with the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives; and
- Improving the council's own performance, within the limits of available resources, in terms of energy and water consumption; use of transport; purchasing and consumption of materials; waste management; and raising the awareness of staff.

Lancashire County Council is working in partnership with a number of organisations in the county and the Lancashire Environment Forum to develop a county-wide strategy for sustainable development. This Local Agenda 21 strategy will be completed by the end of 2000 to meet the Prime Minister's target. This strategy will link with the national and regional strategies but will be developed through a bottom-up process of discussion and learning about issues that concern and affect local communities in the county. It will link with and develop strategic approaches to many issues that are emerging in the district Local Agenda 21 strategies. Many of the twelve district councils in Lancashire together with the two unitary authorities are intending to prepare their own Local Agenda 21 strategies.

Monitoring and information collection
Monitoring is a vital part of planning for sustainable development. In Lancashire two information gathering exercises (green audits) have been carried out. The first in 1991 resulted in a comprehensive State of the Environment report and identified 150 issues of concern. The second green audit, which began in 1994, takes a more holistic view of the county's environment and its relationship with social and economic conditions. This

integrated approach reflects the aims of sustainable development (Lancashire County Council 1997).

Lancashire's second green audit is designed to help in the task of gathering information and measuring progress towards sustainable development. Thirty-nine indicators have been selected by the Lancashire Environment Forum to monitor the county's environmental, social and economic conditions. Collectively, they measure vital aspects of life in Lancashire. The indicators are organised under eleven themes. Each theme represents a desirable goal for sustainable development, and together the goals provide a vision for Lancashire. The indicators measure or indicate progress towards each goal.

Each indicator shows, where possible, how conditions vary across the county (the geographic information system is particularly useful); how conditions are changing over time; and how the indicator is linked to the condition of other indicators. This latter aspect is crucial since many environmental, social and economic issues are strongly linked and can only be resolved by an inter-related, holistic approach to decision-making. A linkage matrix shows clear correlations between many of the indicators in the report, particularly those concerned with socio-economic issues.

Local Agenda 21 projects
1.   The Lancashire Environment Forum was established in 1989 and has membership of over 90 organisations representing national government and agencies; business and trade unions; community and interest groups; academic establishments and local and health authorities. The Forum is administered by the county council.

2.   The Lancashire Environmental Action Programme (LEAP) (1993) is a fifteen year plan with 203 proposals for action. It was produced and endorsed by the Lancashire Environment Forum in response to issues raised in the first green audit. The county council has contributed to many LEAP proposals through its own Better Environmental Practices Strategy

3.   The council has also promoted and supported the *Centres of Environmental Excellence* project that aims to develop a network of centres spread throughout Lancashire. These centres will work with local communities to promote environmental awareness and actions for sustainability. The initial efforts of the project have been directed at establishing the network; holding regular meetings; carrying out an audit of functions and facilities at each of the centres; developing communication between centres pursuing joint applications for funding; and co-ordinating the dissemination of information.

The nine Centres of Environmental Excellence focus on: environment and development; industry; personal environmental action and sustainable lifestyles; business and community development; protecting and enhancing biodiversity; agriculture; sustainable energy, the built environment; and raising awareness.

4.   The LA21net web site provides information on Local Agenda 21 activities in Lancashire for the benefit of the public and interested organisations. It focuses on the activities of the county council and the district and unitary councils in Lancashire which are promoting Local Agenda 21 with local organisations, community groups and members of the public.

Websites:
Lancashire County Council   http://www.lancashire.com/lcc/index.htm
Lancashire Local Agenda 21 net   http://www.la21net.com/

6. United Kingdom local government policy proposals

The 1998 white paper "Modernising Government" highlighted a series of issues concerning the performance of local authorities, democratic renewal, and community leadership. It stated the Government's concerns that local government was: old fashioned; inward looking; out of touch with people; low turnout at elections; dominated by too many, large committees; too much focus on details and not enough on the overall picture/strategy; and councillors not representative of the community (age, gender, ethnicity,…) (DETR 1998b).

Progress was to be achieved via a push-pull approach: "push" by Government setting minimum standards and "pull" by self-improvement by councils. The (new) Labour Government has wanted to provide more support to local authorities but there is also a desire to improve performance.

The main proposals to improve the identified issues were:
- Separation of executive and scrutiny functions to reduce the number of committees;
- A new duty of best value to bring continuous improvement (see section 6.1 below);
- Establishing a beacon council programme where progressive and well-performing councils are used as "beacons" to demonstrate best practice and innovation;
- More frequent elections, with voting made easier;
- Improved ethical standards via codes of conduct;
- Improved financial accountability; and
- A new duty/power of community planning (see section 6.2 below).

The proposals for new governance options will require local authorities to separate their executive and scrutiny functions. Three models have been identified: a directly elected mayor and cabinet, a cabinet and leader, or a directly elected mayor and council manager. The proposal for directly elected mayors with cabinet style council decision-making with small executive and larger scrutiny components is favoured by Prime Minister Tony Blair. London will be the first large urban area to receive an elected Mayor and others will follow soon after (if suitable candidates can be found). A directly elected Mayor requires a referendum but it can be triggered by a 5 % petition (binding on the council).

An issue is that a small cabinet style council in areas where there is weak opposition, a strong party structure and weak scrutiny may not result in good decision-making.

What the reform may bring is large numbers of unneeded councillors resulting in another wave of reform to reduce the numbers of councillors.

Local Agenda 21 in the United Kingdom: Phil Hughes

6.1 Best value

The 1998 white paper outlined the new processes of "best value" and "community planning" (see section 6.2 below) and identified both these processes as mechanisms for implementing sustainable development. Best value is expected to also help councils address the cross-sectoral issues facing their citizens and communities which are beyond the reach of a single service or service provider.

Best value is a duty on local authorities to deliver services to clear standards, covering both cost and quality, by the most effective, economic and efficient means available. The duty of best value will apply from 1 April 2000 and will replace the existing compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) regime although competition is still seen as essential.

The best value proposals indicate that the Government intends to put pressure on poor or mediocre authorities to seek sustained improvements in service standards whilst controlling and as far as possible, reducing costs. Achieving the right balance between local discretion and central specification is therefore the key to the success of the policy.

As far as possible, the intention is to specify only a general best value framework, within which local authorities will be free to establish what their communities require and to respond as they judge appropriate within the resources available to them. Such arrangements will allow for:
- consultation with local people on service aims and standards;
- reviews which look objectively as to how those services are to be provided and standards set; and
- the use of a combination of benchmarking, performance indicators and competition to ensure real change on the ground year-on-year (see Appendix A.5 for further information on best value).

6.2 Community planning

The 1998 white paper signalled the intention to place on councils a duty to promote the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of their areas and to strengthen councils' powers to enter into partnerships. This new duty would put sustainable development at the heart of council decision-making and provide an overall framework within which councils must perform all their functions.

This duty of wellbeing was to legitimise the role of the council as the elected leader of the local community with a responsibility for the wellbeing and sustainable development of its area. A local authority acting as a community leader would then tend to focus on the identification of needs, strategy/planning, enabling and orchestrating roles rather than the delivery of services.

The duty will be supported by a requirement for councils to secure the development of a comprehensive strategy for promoting the wellbeing of their area. In the white paper (and elsewhere) this strategy is being called a "community plan", and the process of its development and implementation "community planning". This strategic plan will take account of statutory plans and other strategies (eg regeneration or community safety).

There is much discussion as to whether this sustainable development role should be a duty or a power. Initially it was promoted as a duty but then some officials feared a local authority could be taken to court for failing its duty, so it was "watered down" and promoted as a power. However, a power may not provide enough weight or signify the importance of the role. Is it a duty of sustainable development or a weak power of general competence? Discussion and debate continues.

Common principles of community planning to underpin a comprehensive strategy will include (Pinfield and Saunders 1999):

- **Wellbeing:** the community planning process should set out to discover what the new duty of wellbeing means for a local area and community - and then develop a strategy for promoting it over the long term. The link between global issues (eg: the global economy, climate change and biodiversity), and local wellbeing should be addressed.
- **Commitment to holistic thinking:** this requires all parties to break out of departmental structures and "silo-policy" development.
- **Integration:** the holistic approach of community plans can foster more integration, because it encourages organisations to look at how their services interact. It encourages the public to say where they feel the council's "left hand" and "right hand" don't seem to know what the other is doing. Vertical integration between different tiers of government will be as important as horizontal integration between the authority and other agencies.
- **Participation and feedback:** effective community planning requires the process to be as important as the end product. This process often involves several stages of consultation.
- **Accessible, inclusive and open:** the emphasis on participation in community planning also extends to using a variety of methods to make it easier for a wide range of groups to have their say, and to being open and transparent about the issues and the decisions reached: this includes groups whose views are often not heard.
- **Partnership:** community planning is very much about sharing agendas, promoting consensus on issues, and working with local communities and partner organisations to achieve a bigger impact by combining resources and capitalising on the skills and experience that others can offer.
- **Prioritising:** community plans will not be credible if they pretend to tackle every single issue. They provide a way of agreeing what the priorities for an area should be, and how to tackle them in a concerted way. Authorities need ways of ensuring that these priorities are reflected in resource allocation, and in the delivery of mainstream services. Plans can also acknowledge where there is a conflict of views that is yet to be resolved.
- **Action orientation:** community plans need to lead to tangible results. They should include major actions that will be taken to follow through on the plan's priorities. However they may not be able to list all the actions, particularly if the plan is intended to be a short, readable "umbrella" document for the whole of an authority area.

A community planning process will need to be devised that reflects local circumstances and conditions and may involve the elements in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1: Elements (not necessarily sequential) of a community planning process
(Pinfield and Saunders 1999)

Objectives
- Provide a guide to the process, whatever it may be called, that sets out the principles, objectives and guidelines for working on the comprehensive strategy for wellbeing.

Partnership and community involvement
- Create a dialogue with individuals, community voluntary groups, private sector and other government agencies and departments.
- Set out strategic, thematic and sectoral partnership arrangements.

Vision
Set out a long term vision that:
- promotes an outward focus on the needs of the community;
- promotes a holistic view of social, economic and environmental wellbeing;
- focuses attention on tackling causes via prevention/anticipation measures;
- develops and monitors wellbeing and service performance indicators;
- tests current services against their impact on current/future wellbeing.

Action Plan and implementing actions
- Set out annual, medium (3-5 years) and long (20-25 years) term objectives with clear targets and measures of success.
- Clarify relationship to/between other statutory and non-statutory plans and processes including best value performance plans.
- Encourage clear responsibilities among various agencies and co-ordinate contributions of individuals and organisations to maximise effective use of public resources.
- Seek to link actions with potential impact on rest of world.
- Assess other plans and priorities against those of the community plan.

Monitoring and review
- Provide a clear review and monitoring process with evaluation and recommendations for improvement or change.

One of the benefits of Local Agenda 21/community plans is that, as strategic documents, they can provide an "umbrella" for other plans and policies which local authorities are required to produce. This kind of framework would ensure that all of the key documents for a council would need to address economic, social and environmental wellbeing even if each only focused on one.

The advent of community planning has raised questions about its relationship with Local Agenda 21 and the future role of Local Agenda 21. This is discussed further in section seven of this report.

Issues for New Zealand
- Is there a distinction between 'community planning' and 'community development planning' as presently practised in New Zealand?
- Does 'community development planning' currently have a wide enough focus?
- Does sufficient potential exist for the role of community development planning to be expanded to embrace sustainability issues?

Local Agenda 21 in the United Kingdom: Phil Hughes

7.   The future for Local Agenda 21?

There is a cartoon of a sign welcoming drivers to a mythical local authority with the statement, *Lembury Local Authority: working towards finding a pithy slogan.* It encapsulates the threat of style dominating over substance. The future task is to develop more substance to Local Agenda 21 and community planning.

The focus for most activity in local authorities over the next few years will be on the modernising local government agenda. The proposed new duty to promote wellbeing and the associated requirement to institute a community planning process will be central to this work.

However, questions about the relationship between this and Local Agenda 21 planning remain:
- Is the new duty of wellbeing really a duty to promote sustainable development in an integrated way, or, as is often the case, will economic and social concerns dominate environmental issues?
- If a community plan is, in theory, a strategy to promote wellbeing and sustainable development, backed by statutory powers, where does this leave Local Agenda 21 with its non-binding status and targets?
- Can the best ingredients of community planning and Local Agenda 21 planning be combined to create an even better type of strategic planning? and
- How long will Local Agenda 21 planning and community planning be seen as separate entities, or will the term "community planning" replace Local Agenda 21?

The evolution of community planning and Local Agenda 21 (Pinfield and Saunders 1999) There are strong similarities in theory and practice between community planning and Local Agenda 21 planning, which have emerged during the 1990s. Both have sought to develop a strategic planning framework within which local authorities can work, but formulated in a new way through a participative process with local stakeholders and local communities.

Local Agenda 21 is concerned primarily with the **issues** of sustainable development and the contribution that local government, through its functions and services, can make to the resolution of these. **Community planning**, up to now, has been largely concerned with local government **functions** and the role that a council can play in the resolution of local issues. When exercising its community leadership function, a local authority arguably should consider both issues and functions together, thus combining the strengths of Local Agenda 21 planning and community planning.

In terms of both the process ("the development of the plan") and product ("the plan"), the similarities between the two are striking. Table 6.1 illustrates the similar formulation processes underpinning Local Agenda 21 strategies and community plans. These include partnerships, multi-agency approaches, public consultation, and investigating issues and needs in the local authority area. The expectations of what the plan or strategy are expected to contain are also similar including: vision; strategy; implementation and review – in other words, the key ingredients of good strategic plans.

Table 6.1: Community plans and Local Agenda 21 strategies: similarities and differences in processes and plan content (Pinfield and Saunders 1999)

	Local Agenda 21 Strategy	**Community plan**
Impetus	Agenda 21/ sustainable development	Democratic renewal and community leadership
Process	Partnership Community involvement Outcome/issue oriented Global and local area focus Concern for present and future generations Often promoted by environment department	Partnership Community consultation Service/outcome oriented Local area focus Concern for present generation Corporately driven by local authority
Plan content	Vision Environmental, social, and economic integration Action Plan Implementation Indicators, assessment and review	Vision Economic, social and environmental well being Action Programmes Implementation via other plans and strategies Indicators, benchmarking audit and review

The table identifies some distinctions between the Local Agenda 21 and community planning processes. These include:

- Varying time horizons: Local Agenda 21 strategies typically look forward 15-20 years because sustainable development involves a concern for future in addition to existing generations (however, within this many Local Agenda 21 strategies have short and medium term targets). Many community plans to date only have short (typically five year) time horizons because they are focused on improving current wellbeing and are linked to internal local authority political and policy timescales.
- The degree to which plans/strategies have an outward or inward focus: many Local Agenda 21 strategies try to address global issues as well as local area and community problems. Many community plans to date have been concerned solely with local issues.
- Whether they seek to integrate or balance environmental, social and economic concerns: some Local Agenda 21 strategies have been biased towards environmental issues while many community plans have tended to address socio-economic or quality of life concerns. The degree to which environmental, social or economic issues dominate is interesting. Could community planning lead to a watering down of the environmental component of the duty?
- The agency that is leading the process: the majority of Local Agenda 21 strategies have been led by the council, but have often not been corporately owned, particularly if they are driven by the environment section. In contrast, many community plans so far have been instigated and led by corporate policy units. Despite these differences, it should be possible for councils (many of which are already actively developing Local Agenda 21 strategies for the year 2000 deadline) to combine their Local Agenda 21 work with their responsibilities to initiate a community planning process under the banner of modern local

government. What the end result of the process is called, be it community plan, Local Agenda 21 Strategy, Quality of Life Plan or similar, must be a matter for local choice.

- A difference between community planning and Local Agenda 21 plans is the clear focus on strategic and integrative planning, against a background of fragmented responsibilities at the local level. The UK Government clearly wants "joined-up thinking" and "joined-up solutions". This means local authorities encouraging cross-departmental/ agency working to address cross-sectoral issues. Community planning provides a mechanism for securing this integration. This strategic planning aspect is something that perhaps got watered down and sometimes lost in the myriad of creative approaches to Local Agenda 21 taken by UK local authorities over the past few years.

Box 6.1: Bradford's experience of integrating community planning and Local Agenda 21 planning (Pinfield and Saunders 1999)

Work was undertaken in Bradford in late 1996 to investigate the guidance that existed for Local Agenda 21 and the initial documentation promoting the concept of community planning. Following this, a decision was made to integrate the philosophy of Local Agenda 21 in the emerging community planning process and documentation. This was mirrored by the move of staff responsible for sustainability into what is now the Corporate Strategy and Partnerships Team.

The objectives of integration were to:
- ensure one overarching framework for "community leadership";
- mainstream sustainability and move it from its predominately environmental focus into the strategic work on improving quality of life for present and future generations;
- minimise duplication and resource use, especially around officer time, publications and promotional activities.

The current Bradford District document is presented as a combined Local Agenda 21 strategy and community plan. Embedding the concept of sustainability into the heart of the community planning process operating within the district is a long term aspiration: incremental, continuous improvement requires patience and persistence. The strategy is paying off in the medium term and the next revision of the community plan should further support the proposed duty of wellbeing.

The challenge for the future
The challenge for sustainable development practitioners may well be to ensure that the principles inherent in sustainable development (including the environment, future generations and global concerns) are not forgotten in the dash for modernising government, best value, and community planning.

If sustainable development is set as an overall framework within which key local authority initiatives operate (ie through a strategic partnership, community planning and implementation of best value reviews within a council), then the progression of a distinct Agenda 21 strategy would represent a duplication of activity. Even the term Local Agenda 21 may become superfluous.

It is the focus on sustainable development and the principles of Agenda 21 that is the important issue and not just having a process and strategy called Agenda 21. So the new

government initiatives may assist in bringing more councils into the sustainable development fold and allow those already working under this banner to continue the work. This will be a positive achievement.

8. Conclusions

The study tour was a great opportunity to learn about a range of sustainable development and Agenda 21 initiatives in the United Kingdom. There is no substitute for "face to face" meetings to discuss the issues, note the successes and failures, and make comparisons with approaches in New Zealand.

The benefits of this study tour have included:
- Identifying a number of key issues and responses in terms of the implementation of the sustainable development and Local Agenda 21 in the United Kingdom at both the central and local government level;
- Gathering a wide range of material on the implementation of sustainable development and Local Agenda 21 in the United Kingdom;
- Making a number of important contacts in relevant United Kingdom departments and agencies; and
- Promoting the role of the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment and our "unique" approach to auditing and reviewing "the system" for environmental management.

Key messages from the United Kingdom work on Local Agenda 21 are:
- Local Agenda 21 is providing a very suitable process for addressing the integration of environmental, social and economic issues at the local level;
- The development of new mechanisms for public involvement has assisted the local democratic process and community participation;
- A Local Agenda 21 strategy is a community and not a municipal agenda. It is relevant to all sizes and types of authority and community;
- Environmental management and audit systems are a key tool to assist local authorities to measure and improve their own environmental performance; and
- The co-ordination and information provision role of the former Local Government Management Board and other organisations has been vital, as has been the role of the Local Agenda 21 steering group.

Local Agenda 21 can work at different levels and be applied in different ways. There is no standard template that can be applied but there are examples of best practice and good approaches.

In the initial years following Rio, sustainable development and Local Agenda 21 duties were often assigned to local authority planning sections or environmental health units as they were seen as environmental issues. This is now changing as sustainable development is increasingly seen as requiring integration into all policy and programme development. There is a two-fold priority:
- to get all local authorities to deliver on Local Agenda 21; and
- to get sustainable development taken seriously ie "taken out of the porta cabinet [outside toilet] and placed in the CEO's office and embedded in the corporate policy team".

However, the overall picture for sustainable development and Local Agenda 21 is still very patchy. It is rare to find a local authority where a corporate commitment to sustainable development informs **every service and strategy**. Many politicians and professionals in local government still express uncertainty as to how they should integrate sustainability principles into their work. This remains a challenge for the future.

The approach to public participation (and commitment to it) by councils is slowly changing from a council-led process to a more devolved community process. This is again a test of the extent of commitment to Local Agenda 21 and participatory democracy.

Observations on participation and Local Agenda 21 (Derek Taylor)

Participation	*Process*	*Comment*
Internal	Council-led	Most common (~ 70 %), traditional, council retains control, council resourced and staffed, stakeholder involvement
	Balanced	Less common (~ 20 %), more innovative, sustainability agenda, shared roles and influence, public and stakeholders
	Service-led	Uncommon but growing (best value), service based Local Agenda 21, council driven but open, innovative integration and participation
External	Community-led	Uncommon (~ 5 %), independent co-ordination, community driven, innovative participation

---

For a local authority, unless Local Agenda 21 is the central driver for a local authority's strategic and financial planning process, it will not have the influence that is possible, and it will just become another process. There are already too many of those!

Local Agenda 21 must address social and economic problems, which are very serious in some areas, as well as environmental issues. There is a major Government focus on addressing social exclusion issues with a specific unit located in the Cabinet Office. Environmental justice issues related to social poverty are also starting to be raised eg as recognised in a recent UK Treasury report!

In conclusion, the focus on sustainable development in the United Kingdom is growing in momentum and key structural components are in place at central Government level. Likewise, there is growing local authority interest in Local Agenda 21. However, Local Agenda 21 is also in "a state of healthy confusion" as statutory duties such as *best value* and *community planning* are now defined and addressed. It will be interesting to observe what is delivered in the longer term and how this approach evolves in the future.

Local Agenda 21 in the United Kingdom: Phil Hughes

As we enter the new millennium the idea that our economy, our environment and our society are all one is widely recognised. Yet just a few years ago the concept of sustainable development was the preserve of a few specialists.

The challenge now is to integrate sustainable development thinking into the heart of local government. The new powers in the Local Government Bill will provide fresh impetus towards that. Local authorities have built up expertise on sustainable development through preparing local agenda 21 strategies. That is a good foundation for community planning.

But a strategy is just the start. The hard work comes with making sustainable development into a reality – helping all staff to understand how to apply sustainable development principles to their work, reviewing policies and continuing the steady work of raising awareness. All too many people still think that sustainable development is just about recycling or getting people involved in improving their immediate surroundings. And the minority of local authorities which have not started on LA21 have a great deal of catching up to do. The Government will be watching progress closely.

To reinforce the importance we attach to local action for sustainable development, the existence of an LA21 strategy is an indicator of corporate health under best value. Over the next year DETR, with colleagues from local government and the Audit Commission, will be developing additional indicators to show how well local authorities are integrating sustainable development principles into everything they do.

Our shared aim is for a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come...

John Prescott, Deputy Prime Minister *(EG Local environment news. Volume 6, Number 1, January 2000)*

Observations about progress with Local Agenda 21
The following observations about respective progress with Local Agenda 21 in the United Kingdom and New Zealand can be made as at the end of 1999.

Factors influencing progress with Local Agenda 21	United Kingdom	New Zealand
Central Government support and leadership	**Initially limited** under the previous Conservative Government. **Since 1997, more direct central Government support** from the Labour Government including the Prime Minister Tony Blair's challenge to all local authorities to complete a strategy by 2000. The new statutory duty for community planning will further require local authorities to address sustainable development. A second national sustainable development strategy has been developed. Major Government documents and reform proposals recognise the value of Local Agenda 21.	**Little direct central Government support or leadership.** No national sustainable development strategy. Limited understanding of how to apply and integrate Agenda 21 throughout central and local government. Some good community initiatives in accordance with the principles of Agenda 21. Limited integration of the two levels.
Champions	**A number of identified champions** from local government associations, local government and NGOs. These champions initially promoted the concept and have	**Few champions** apart from a number of well-known councils and personalities, and the Christchurch based Agenda 21

Factors influencing progress with Local Agenda 21	United Kingdom	New Zealand
	brought sustained widespread action and response.	NGO.
Partnerships and finance	**A number of small central and local government partnerships** to fund the production of guidance material, best practice notes and other information (eg information on sustainability indicators and EMAS).	**Few partnerships and little finance.** In 1994 MFE formed a trial partnership with the then Local Government Association (now LGNZ) and five local authorities to develop Agenda 21. Little has occurred since this trial but recent renewed interest.
Uptake by local authorities	**More than 65% of local councils have made a formal commitment to Local Agenda 21.** The approach has been actively supported by all local government associations. [Widespread promotion of sustainable development by many groups/forums and substantial response from the business sector.]	**Limited number of councils formally identifying themselves as Local Agenda 21 councils.** No formal commitment from LGNZ. Renewed interest in "sustainability" issues eg through Sustainable New Zealand proposals.
Guidance	**Vast range of guidance material** prepared by the I&DeA (formerly the LGMB). Other material available from the LGA and DETR.	**Limited guidance material** except for the 1994 Agenda 21 implementation guide produced by MFE.
Monitoring and review	The I&DeA conducts **regular surveys of progress**. The I&DeA, LGA and DETR are developing methods to evaluate Local Agenda 21 strategies and processes.	**Limited independent monitoring and review.** LGNZ is currently surveying local authorities responses to LA21 and sustainability issues.
Networking	**Considerable networking.** Annual conferences for Local Agenda 21 co-ordinators and interested parties have been held for eight years. A range of training programmes has been provided.	**Limited and mainly informal networking.** Two exceptions have been an Agenda 21 workshop at the 1998 local government conference and a short workshop on Agenda 21 as part of the 1999 social and environmental sustainability research seminar. Recent new initiative to form a Sustainable NZ Association.
Newsletters/ Information	**Regular information updates.** The I&DeA has produced a monthly newsletter on Local Agenda 21. The Environment Resource and Information Centre (ERIC) produces a monthly local environment journal with many features on Local Agenda 21 processes and issues.	**No regular information sources.**
Local Agenda 21 websites	**A number of dedicated websites** eg the I&DeA site, the DETR sustainable development site, the ERIC site (see list of websites at the end of this report).	**No dedicated websites.**

Local Agenda 21 in the United Kingdom: Phil Hughes

I&DeA	UK Improvement and Development Agency (formerly the Local Government Management Board (LGMB)
DETR	UK Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions
LGA	UK Local Government Association
EMAS	UK Eco-management and audit scheme (an environmental management system)
MFE	NZ Ministry for the Environment
LGNZ	Local Government New Zealand

References

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions 1998a: *EC eco-management and audit scheme for UK local government.* December 1998. London.

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions 1998b: *Modern local government in touch with the people.* UK Government White Paper. July 1998. London.

Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions 1999a: *A better quality of life. A strategy for sustainable development for the UK.* May 1999. London.

Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions 1999b: *Monitoring progress (indicators for the strategy for sustainable development in the United Kingdom).* July 1999. London.

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions 1999c: *Quality of Life Counts. Indicators for a Strategy for Sustainable Development for the United Kingdom: A Baseline Assessment.* December 1999. London.

Forum for the Future 1999: *Annual report 1999.* London.

Greenwich Council 1997: *Greenwich Agenda 21. A Local Agenda 21 strategy for sustainable development in Greenwich.* October 1997.

Lancashire County Council 1997: *Lancashire's green audit 2. A sustainability report.*

Local Government Association, Local Government Management Board and Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions 1998: *Sustainable local communities for the 21st century. Why and how to prepare an effective Local Agenda 21 strategy.* London.

Local Government Association and Improvement and Development Agency 1998: *Integrating sustainable development into best value.* London.

Pattle Delamore Partners Ltd 1999: *A guide to environmental management systems and ISO14001 for local government.* Auckland.

Pinfield G and Saunders J 1999: "Community planning and LA21." *EGextra.* Volume 5, Number 1 April 1999.

Key websites

Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions sustainable development index (includes the sustainable development strategy and sustainability indicators): http://www.environment.detr.gov.uk/sustainable/index.htm

Improvement and Development Agency sustainable development and Local Agenda 21 index http://www.idea.gov.uk/menu/sustainable/sustainable.html

Forum for the Future http://www.forumforthefuture.org.uk/

Environmental Information and Resource Centre, University of Westminster
(including the *EG: Local Environment News* journal)
http://www.westminster.ac.uk/eric/

"Greening Government" site:
http://www.environment.detr.gov.uk/greening/minister/grmin.htm

Environmental Audit Committee:
http://www.parliament.uk/commons/selcom/eahome.htm

Appendix A.1   United Kingdom local government structure and functions

It is worth noting several defining features of local authorities in the United Kingdom. This makes them somewhat different to those in New Zealand. Key features and differences include:

- There is a mixed system of unitary councils in Wales, Scotland, the London Boroughs, and large cities and two-tier councils in other areas (with over 34 county councils and 237 district councils). There are over 400 UK local authorities in total. There are also around 8,600 parish, town and community councils representing a further, semi-independent tier of local government.

- Local authorities have a wide range of functions. County councils are directly responsible for education, personal social services, police and fire services. District councils are directly responsible for housing. Other functions are addressed at both levels including: landuse planning, economic development and regeneration, transport and roading, the local environment, trading standards, leisure and recreation, and emergency services. Increasingly private firms are starting to run education and social services. Sometimes the Government has removed these responsibilities from a council following reviews showing poor performance.

- Party politics is very strong at the local level. Some city councils have had over 80% Labour politicians and generally weak opposition. In other areas there is a more even mix with pockets of Conservative or Liberal Democrat councils and a range of independent members. In Scotland and Wales the nationalist parties have significant representation.

- Councils have many councillors eg Nottingham City has 300,000 people and 55 councillors (Christchurch in New Zealand with a similar population has around 22 councillors). Lancashire County Council has 1.2 M people and 77 councillors. Greenwich Council in London has 62 councillors. Councillors serve a four year term.

- There are no directly elected mayors. A high ranking councillor is voted in by councillors as council leader or mayor and speaks on behalf of the council. A council may often have an appointed ceremonial Mayor or Sheriff.

- Councils receive 80% of their funding directly from government via a general grant for services and special grants for programmes eg countering crime.[3] Councils have a domestic property tax (but they cannot rate businesses) and a range of fees and charges. The Government administers a national non-domestic rate (also known as the uniform business rate). The Government has a considerable influence on what each council can spend and each year it conducts standard spending assessments and announces allocations for each activity area.

- The Conservative Government instigated a system of compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) to require local authorities to open up many of their services to competition to obtain value for money. This has brought major changes with the provision of services often now being undertaken by the private sector (CCT is to be replaced by best value –

---

[3] This primarily indirect source of funding from Government does not appear to be a significant issue for councils as some have used innovative ways to fund and address issues, particularly through partnerships. Progress depends on how councils work and organise themselves and not how much money they receive from central Government.

see section 6.1).

- Low voter participation in local elections is a major issue. Average voter turnout at local elections is around 40%. In May 1998 it was 26% with some councils as low as 17% and wards as low as 10%. The multitude of elections (European, national government, regional assemblies, local government etc) and voter apathy are possible factors. The lack of direct rating (and thereby direct interest) of residents to fund local authority activity may also be a contributing factor.

Appendix A.2   Draft local authority indicator list

1. Energy use (gas and electricity) per head.
2&3. Household waste arisings (and disposal). [Total tonnage of municipal waste arisings expressed as % recycled; % composted; % used to recover heat, power and other energy sources; % landfilled. Kg of household waste collected per head as a percentage of kg collected in the previous years figures.]
4. Number of days of air pollution. [The average number of days per site that air pollution was recorded as moderate or higher (National Air Quality Standards for PM10, O3, SO2 in urban areas and O3 in rural areas)]
5. Rivers of good or fair quality. [% length of rivers and canals falling into the good or fair quality grades of the Environment Agency Chemical and Biological GQA.]
6. Domestic water use. [Household water use per day (litres)]
7. Net change in natural/semi-natural habitats (e.g. woodland and grassland). [Net change in the quality and/or quantity of locally important natural/semi-natural habitats.]
8. Changes in population of selected characteristic species. [The occurrence of a characteristic species (determined locally).]
9. Public concern over noise. [Percentage of respondents finding different categories of noise a serious problem.]
10. Recorded crime per 1,000 population. [Crimes recorded by the police per 1,000 population according to: Theft of or from motor vehicles, Burglary in dwellings, Violent crime.]
11. Fear of crime. [Percentage of respondents feeling unsafe or worried about forms of crime according to…]
12. Average distance travelled to work by mode. [Respondents travel to work by distance and mode.]
13. How do school children usually get to school? [Percentage of children travelling to school by different modes.]
14. Overall traffic volumes by mode. [Traffic volumes by vehicle type on various classes of road (traffic flow * length of road)]
15. Journeys made by mode.
16. Social support. [Percentage of respondents agreeing with the following statement: 'Would you describe the people who live in this area as friendly, or not?' (General survey)]
17. Social participation. [Percentage of all respondents who are actively involved in at least one local community or voluntary organisation (General survey)]
18. Mortality by cause. [The death rate of residents in the four categories over time (Specific survey)]
19. Community well being. [Percentage of respondents satisfied with their area as a place to live (General survey)]
20. Number of miles transported for a specific, locally produced commodity. [Average number of miles, which selected food items travel to reach your local area]
21a. Qualifications at age 19. [Percentage of the population aged 19 with level 2 qualifications]
22. Adult education [Participation rates in adult education]
23. Local community or voluntary group representatives on partnership committees or council committees/sub-committees. [Number of local community representatives

or voluntary group representatives who are on partnership committees, or council committees/sub-committees]
24a. Minority group representation in decision-making fora [Minority group representation as on partnership committees, or council committees/sub-committees, in relation to their ethnic make-up within the community (Specific survey)]
24b. Demonstration of cultural interest. [Number of local people participating in or attending events or sites that celebrate local historical culture (Specific survey)]
25. New homes built on previously developed land (including conversions)
26. Homes judged unfit to live in. [Percentage of housing stock judged unfit to live in - by tenure]
27. Homelessness. [Homelessness acceptances in the period 1 April 1998 to 31 March 1999]
28. Tenant Participation. [Proportion of tenants currently represented by recognised tenants' associations]
29. Access to key services. [The ease of access to key services (General survey)]
30. Unemployment. [Percentage of the local population classified long term unemployed.]
31. Benefit recipients. [Percentage of residents in receipt of income support and the percentage of non-income support recipients receiving council tax benefits]
32a. Business start-ups and closures: VAT registrations and de-registrations. [Net Vat registrations (business start-ups and closures)]
32b. Ratio of locally owned business in comparison with national/multi-national businesses.
33. Respondents perceptions of local job opportunities for young people. [Percentage of respondents thinking that young people have a good chance of finding work in the local area (General survey)]
34. Companies with Environment Management Systems. [Percentage of companies with Environment Management Systems (Specific survey)]
35. Social & Community Enterprises. [The number of community enterprises (Specific survey)].

Source: http://www.la21-uk.org.uk/clip/guide.rtf

Appendix A.3 Eco-management and Audit Scheme

The Government sponsored Eco-management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) is the local authority based version of the EC EMAS scheme for industry – an environmental management system (EMS). EMAS is a systematic process for evaluating, managing and monitoring the environmental impacts of local authorities via an environmental management system. The scheme covers both the direct environmental impacts made by a council in providing its range of services and also the effects of the services themselves on the environment.

The requirements of the EMAS local authority scheme differs from the EC industry scheme in three main ways:
- whilst the EC EMAS permits industrial organisations to register as individual sites, the local authority scheme refers to "operational units" within the local authority which can register;
- any local authority can register either the whole council, or approach it on an operational unit by operational unit basis. If the latter approach is taken, the council has to commit all units to be registered for EMAS by a certain date (chosen by the council); and
- less emphasis is given to the direct effects of the local authority. It recognises that more impacts occur as a result of the services which a council provides.

ISO 14001 is the international EMS standard and has a broader scope than EMAS and is applicable to all economic sectors. It also differs from the local authority EMAS in a number of other ways including:
- ISO 14001 does not require a preliminary (or initial) environmental review. This is mandatory in EMAS;
- ISO 14001 requires only periodic audits of the EMS. EMAS requires completion of the audit cycle within 3 years;
- Operational units can be registered separately, with no council commitment to follow through with the rest of the council; and
- ISO 14001 does not require the production of a publicly available environmental statement.

The seven steps to prepare an EMS involve:
1. Developing an **environmental policy** for the whole authority stating overall environmental aims and its commitment to continuous improvement. A corporate overview and co-ordination system is also required;
2. Undertaking a comprehensive **review of the environmental impacts** of activities;
3. Developing an **environmental programme** to achieve defined objectives identified during the review;
4. Installing an **environmental management system** which defines responsibilities and tools for implementing the programme;
5. Conducting periodic **environmental audits** to assess progress;
6. Producing a **statement of environmental performance**; and
7. Providing for the statement to be independently verified leading to **validation** of the public statement and process.

The above process is shown in Figure A3.1 below.

Figure A3.1: Eco-management and audit scheme(EMAS)
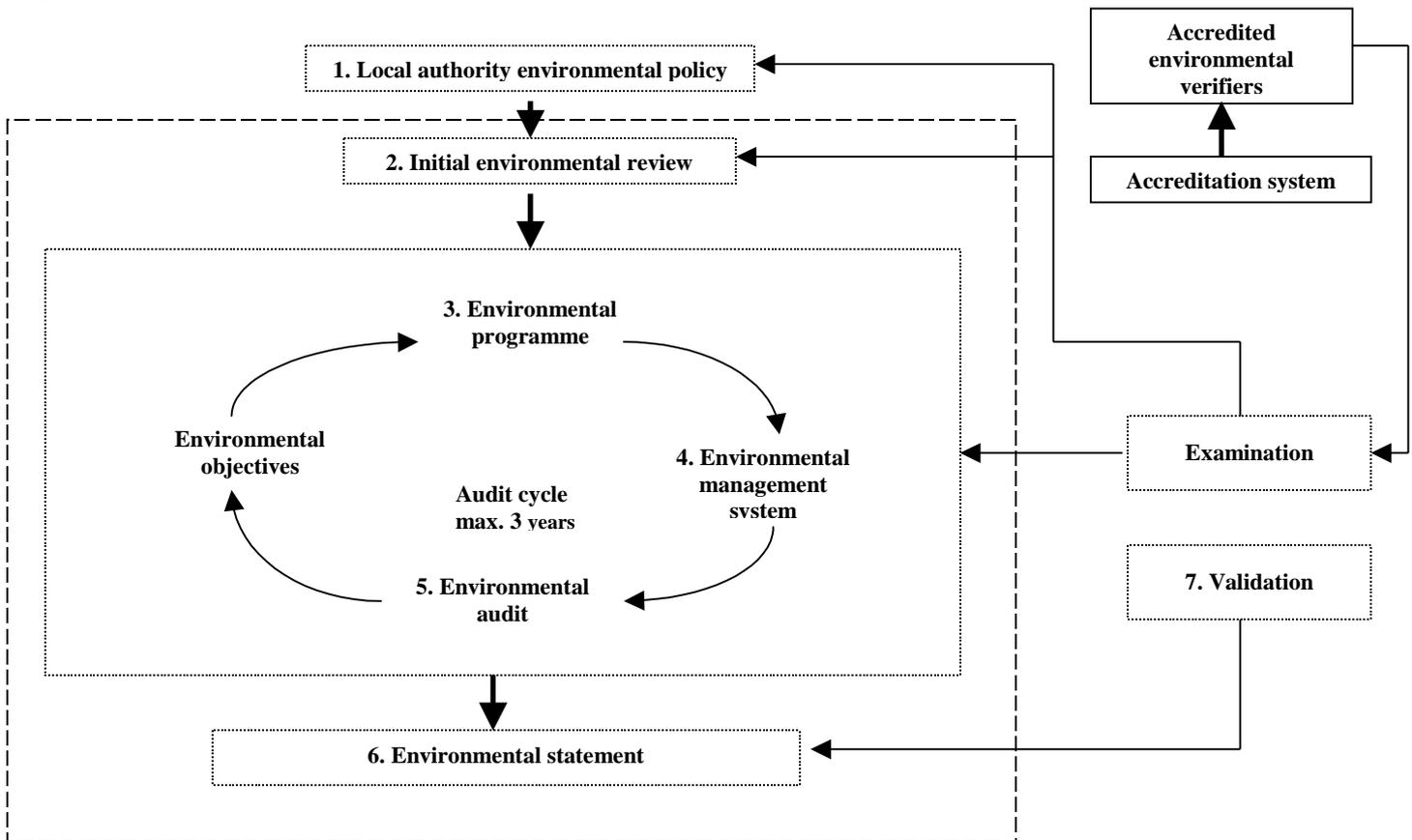
A Public Sector Help-desk (PuSH) for environmental management systems (an information help-desk) is jointly funded by the I&DeA and the DETR and forms part of the "Greening Government" initiative. PuSH is located within the I&DeA. PuSH was originally the LA-EMAS Help-Desk which was tasked with promoting the use of environmental management systems to local authorities and providing the practical advice and assistance which local authorities will need to achieve these standards. This service has now been extended to include central government departments.

Local Agenda 21 in the United Kingdom: Phil Hughes

Appendix A.4   The Greenwich sustainability checklist

The sustainability checklist below is essentially a tool to enable project planners and policy makers to assess the implications of an initiative in terms of its sustainability criteria. It puts forward a series of questions that relate to the thirteen themes of sustainability generated in partnership with the Local Government Management Board. In this way it is possible for projects and policies to become better integrated with related issues through the modification of initiatives in response to some of the questions in the form.

When completing the assessment form one should note for each question if:
1. Yes – it seeks to…
2. Yes – it partially seeks to…
3. Not applicable to initiative
4. No – it hardly seeks to…
5. No – it does not seek to…

The sustainability score can be summarised by totalling the responses and attributing a score of 2, 1 , 0, -1 and -2 to the above categories. In some specific circumstances this scoring could be weighted to reflect certain priorities. Deciding which category best fits the merits of the initiative can be determined by comparison against best practice.

Does the initiative seek to: (yes, partially, n/a, hardly, no)

Resources
Minimise the consumption of non-renewable resources?
Maximise the re-use and recycling of waste?

Pollution
Minimise the emission of air-borne pollutants?
Minimise the emission of water-borne pollutants?

Biodiversity
Maximise the provision for habitat creation?
Maximise the protection of local indigenous flora?

Local needs
Maximise the production of goods and services for local consumption?
Maximise the potential for local currency and community business creation?

Basic needs
Maximise the prospects of people on low incomes?
Maximise the resources diverted to disadvantaged groups?

Satisfying work
Maximise the prospects of small and/or local businesses?
Minimise the environmental impact of local businesses?

Health
Maximise the integration of health needs?

Local Agenda 21 in the United Kingdom: Phil Hughes

Maximise the incorporation of health and safety measures?

Access
Maximise access for people without a car?
Maximise access for people with disabilities?

Safety
Minimise the potential for criminal activity?
Minimise the fear of crime or persecution?

Knowledge
Maximise the level of information available to the public?
Maximise the take up of training and education opportunities?

Empowerment
Maximise the opportunity for public participation in decision-making?
Maximise the opportunity for public participation in implementation?

Leisure
Maximise the range of facilities for arts and leisure?
Maximise the use of cultural and artistic interpretation?

Distinctiveness
Maximise the percentage of derelict land or buildings used?
Maximise the protection afforded to listed buildings or conservation areas?

Appendix A.5   Background information on best value

As introduced in the 1998 white paper, best value is a duty on local authorities to deliver services to clear standards, covering both cost and quality, by the most effective, economic and efficient means available. The new framework will seek continuous improvements in efficiency, effectiveness and the quality of local services. It will be a permissive framework which emphasises local choices and local accountability. Authorities will be encouraged to develop the principles of best value and pursue innovative approaches to service delivery in advance of primary legislation.
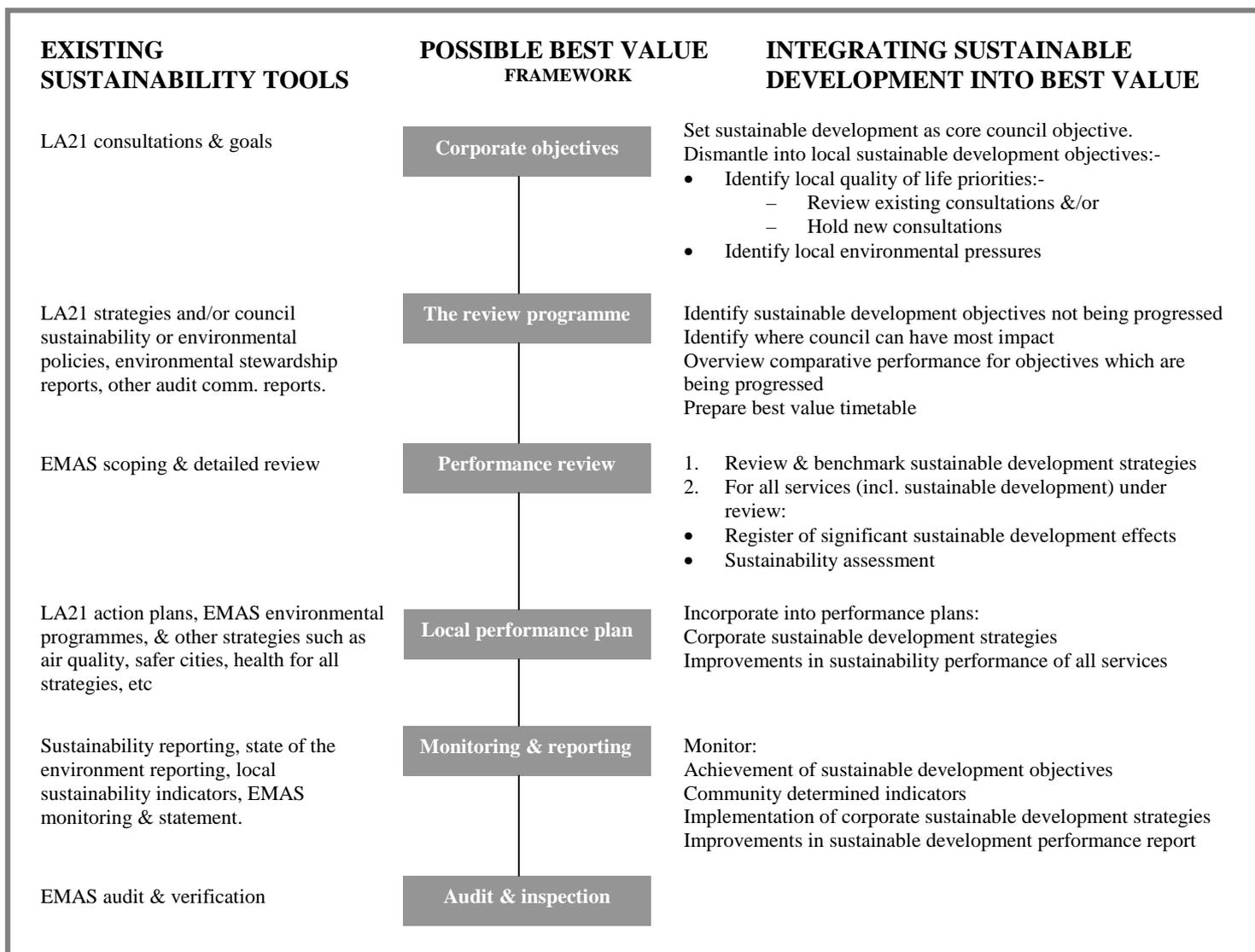
The duty of best value will apply from 1 April 2000 and will replace the existing Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) regime. Competition is still seen as essential but it will not necessarily occur by tendering. There is no presumption that services must be privatised, and once the regime is in place there will be no general requirements for councils to put their services out to tender. However, there is no reason why services should be delivered directly if other more efficient means are available. Competition will therefore continue to be an important management tool and test of best value, but it will not be the only such tool and is not in itself enough to demonstrate that best value is being achieved.

It is intended that a general best value framework will be specified, within which local authorities will be free to establish what their communities require and to respond as they judge appropriate within the resources available to them. Such arrangements will allow for consultation with local people on service aims and standards (see below), regular service reviews and the use of a combination of benchmarking, performance indicators and competition.

Local authorities will be required to undertake performance reviews over five year cycles on a worst-first basis. A local authority must prepare an annual best value performance plan to be audited (with inspections) by the new best value inspectorate within the Audit Commission. Performance standards are to be developed by local authorities for all activities except for education and social services. A performance indicator framework will be established by the Government with performance targets to be set in line with the standards of the top 25 % of councils! This will be a tough challenge.

The experience to date of the best value pilot authorities and others suggests that best value reviews have the potential make a real difference to performance on the ground. If that potential is to be realised, then reviews will need to give effect to the principles of sustainable development. New performance targets generated by reviews need to reflect the principles of sustainable development set out in the May 1999 national sustainable development strategy (DETR 1999a). Where authorities have Local Agenda 21 and any community strategies in place, reviews will provide an opportunity to give such principles practical effect through the setting of consistent performance targets.

Specific guidance on integrating best value and sustainable development has been produced by the Local Government Association and Improvement and Development Agency (see next page).

EXISTING SUSTAINABILITY TOOLS	POSSIBLE BEST VALUE FRAMEWORK	INTEGRATING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INTO BEST VALUE
LA21 consultations & goals	**Corporate objectives**	Set sustainable development as core council objective. Dismantle into local sustainable development objectives:- • Identify local quality of life priorities:- – Review existing consultations &/or – Hold new consultations • Identify local environmental pressures
LA21 strategies and/or council sustainability or environmental policies, environmental stewardship reports, other audit comm. reports.	**The review programme**	Identify sustainable development objectives not being progressed Identify where council can have most impact Overview comparative performance for objectives which are being progressed Prepare best value timetable
EMAS scoping & detailed review	**Performance review**	1. Review & benchmark sustainable development strategies 2. For all services (incl. sustainable development) under review: • Register of significant sustainable development effects • Sustainability assessment
LA21 action plans, EMAS environmental programmes, & other strategies such as air quality, safer cities, health for all strategies, etc	**Local performance plan**	Incorporate into performance plans: Corporate sustainable development strategies Improvements in sustainability performance of all services
Sustainability reporting, state of the environment reporting, local sustainability indicators, EMAS monitoring & statement.	**Monitoring & reporting**	Monitor: Achievement of sustainable development objectives Community determined indicators Implementation of corporate sustainable development strategies Improvements in sustainable development performance report
EMAS audit & verification	**Audit & inspection**	

Source: LGA and I&DeA 1998.

Principles of best value
The twelve principles of best value upon which Ministers are to consult are:

1. The duty of Best Value is one that local authorities will owe to local people, both as taxpayers and the customers of local authority services. Performance plans should support the process of local accountability to the electorate.
2. Achieving Best Value is not just about economy and efficiency, but also about effectiveness and the quality of local services - the setting of targets and performance against these should therefore underpin the new regime.
3. The duty should apply to a wider range of services than those now covered by CCT. Details will need to be worked up jointly with Departments, the Audit Commission and the LGA.
4. There is no presumption that services must be privatised, and once the regime is in place there will be no general requirements to for councils to put their services out to tender, but there is no reason why services should be delivered directly if other more efficient means are available.

5. Competition will therefore continue to be an important management tool and test of best value, but it will not be the only such tool and is not in itself enough to demonstrate that Best Value is being achieved.

6. Central government will continue to set the basic framework for service provision, which will in some areas, as now, include national standards.

7. Detailed local targets should have regard to any national targets, and to performance indicators and targets set by the Audit Commission in order to support comparative competition between authorities and groups of authorities.

8. Both national and local targets should be built on the performance information that is in any case needed by good managers.

9. Audit processes should confirm the integrity and comparability of performance information.

10. External auditors will need to report publicly on whether Best Value has been achieved, and should contribute constructively to plans for remedial action, including agreement on measurable targets for improvement.

11. There should be provision for intervention at the direction of the Secretary of State on the advice of the Audit Commission when an authority has failed to take agreed remedial action, or has failed to achieve realistic targets for improvement.

12. The form of intervention should be appropriate to the nature of failure. Where an authority has made limited use of competition, and as an exception to the usual rule, intervention may include a requirement that a service or services should be put to competition. Intervention might also take the form of a requirement that an authority should accept external management support, and may relate either to specific services, or to the core management of the council.

The duty to consult

The Government is going to promote a duty to consult cast only in general terms, leaving the process open to local discretion and the development and dissemination of best practice, including that learnt from the pilot schemes.[4] While legislation can be used to prescribe a framework for the form and timing of consultation, a formal requirement to consult in a particular way would not in itself guarantee a responsive and sensitive process, or guarantee a sense of interest and involvement by local people. There is probably no one mechanism that will be appropriate in all circumstances: individual local authorities and people will need to consider what suits their local circumstances best, building on the good practice that authorities have been developing through initiatives such as Local Agenda 21.

Consultation with the local business community, as well as with individual members of the public, will be necessary. A statutory requirement on local authorities to consult business representative groups, including representatives of small firms, at key stages is seen as probably sufficient, but it may need to go further than the current duties to consult in respect of expenditure plans and the promotion of economic development.

---

[4] Consultation could be achieved through general publicity, through specific mailing of individuals and businesses, through regular feedback related to specific services, or in respect of the whole impact of the council's services on particular groups or communities. A combination of such methods, decided locally, might be feasible. The process of consultation might, therefore, need to have a longer term focus recognising that it could sometimes be difficult to adjust services instantaneously. Either way the local consultation process will be effective only insofar as it secures and sustains a positive response from local people. This will depend in part on local authorities' responsiveness, and the skill and transparency with which the issues are presented. But it will also depend on public perception of progress in restoring fiscal responsibility to councils and in involving local people in local decisions.