



Briefing:

Joined-up working and policy integration

Many local strategic partnerships are striving to use the community strategy process to develop integrated solutions to complex problems. Yet, in many instances, the gap between the ideal and reality is still large. Several common approaches are being employed to move towards integrating sustainability into decision making. These include:

- including sustainable development as a ‘cross-cutting’ theme
- promoting joined-up working: making the links between single themes
- developing sustainable development scrutiny functions
- undertaking sustainability appraisals
- including sustainable development in performance management systems
- policy integration

This briefing looks at policy integration and joined-up working in more detail. The briefing “Systems for integrating sustainable development into the community strategy” addresses sustainability appraisals and performance management systems.

Partnership: opportunities for joining up policy

LSPs offer particular potential for using innovative solutions-based thinking within sectors which have previously been examined in isolation. They bring together, at a strategic level, many of the actors who, if they collaborate, can make significant change at a local level.

Opportunities for joined-up working include:

Linking sustainable development and regeneration agendas

The 88 Neighbourhood Renewal Authorities have an opportunity to make clear links between the regeneration agenda and sustainable development. Through the combination of LSPs and neighbourhood management, they have the opportunity to make integrated decisions which address sustainable development objectives locally. This can include job creation, neighbourhood and building design, using Community Empowerment Funds to increase capacity locally, and to re-examine objectives to address crime, social exclusion, food poverty, fuel poverty, etc from the perspective of sustainable development principles.

Addressing environmental equity and liveability

The idea of environmental equity or environmental justice also links the sustainable development and regeneration agendas. To quote a briefing published by Friends of the Earth and ESRC¹: “*Environmental justice’s two basic premises are first that everyone should have the right and be able to live in a healthy environment, with access to enough environmental resources for a healthy life, and second, that it is predominantly the poorest and least powerful people who are missing these conditions*”.

A useful guide to some policy hooks for linking environmental equity with regeneration can be found in [achieving environmental equity through neighbourhood renewal: policy and practice guide](#).

A particular element of environmental equity is what is now being called liveability. This means that good quality public spaces are important to quality of life, and that frequently the most deprived areas have the worst public spaces. The key document is [Living places – cleaner, safer, greener](#) published by ODPM in October 2002.

¹ *Environmental justice: rights and means to a healthy environment for all*, November 2001

Closer working with the land use planning system

The new approach to planning which is enshrined in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill makes strong links between the community strategies process and the local land use planning process. This means that there is greater opportunity to link local priorities to the land use plan, to link local people and communities into the process, and to develop solutions which have land use solutions into the wider planning process.

Example from practice: North Warwickshire Borough Council. *North Warwickshire's community plan is the outcome of a broader consultation that also covered the local plan and the area business plan.*

Building the Sustainability Strategy and LA21 Plan into the Community Strategy

The White Paper requires the sustainable development policy to be integrated into the community strategy².

Example from practice: North Shropshire District Council *By using their LA21 strategy as a basis for their community strategy, North Shropshire district council is aiming to ensure sustainability underpins the whole strategy.*

Joined-up working, though important, is not the same as policy integration. The following section of this briefing looks at a policy integration process.

² CM5327 *Strong leadership – quality public services*, DTLR December 2001

Moving further – Policy integration and LSPs.

This section of the briefing is designed to be read in conjunction with the more general briefing on sustainable integration processes (See the briefing “Policy integration” in the ‘Sustainable development defined’ resources area).

Research by Greengage Consulting Ltd highlighted evidence that integration does not happen simply as a result of tackling cross-cutting themes alone, but that it needs to be managed as part of a more conscious and systematic process.³ The report described integration as taking two slices through a plan – one to organise action (via services for example, or by neighbourhood), and another to look for links between issues. The briefing “Policy integration” in the ‘Sustainable development defined’ resources area describes policy integration as looking for solutions which reduce conflicts between different objectives (‘conflict minimisation’) or solutions which meet social, economic and/or environmental objectives without harming any others (‘win, win, win’).

Integration cannot be seen as a discrete step in a decision-making process. It needs to be revisited again and again throughout strategy development and implementation. Yet without careful management it can be missed out of the decision-making process all together. In fact, integrated sustainable development solutions need to be carefully and consciously facilitated and re-facilitated throughout the development of a strategy, and throughout implementation.

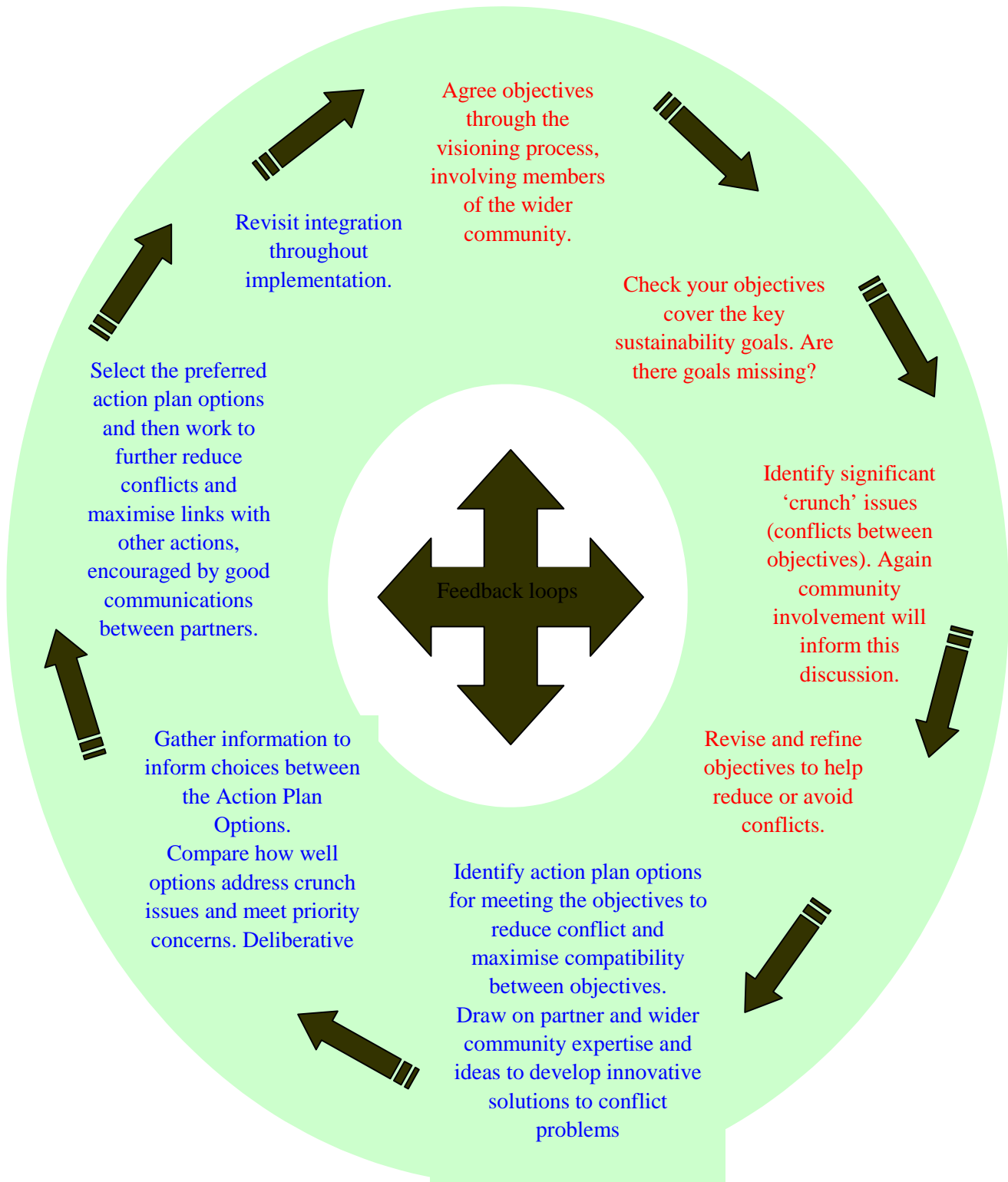
The briefing “Policy integration” in the ‘Sustainable development defined’ resources area describes a generic integration process, built on the following:

- a scoping process to check that all sustainable development objectives have been considered
- identification of and a willingness to confront *crunch* issues where there are conflicts between different objectives
- a search for innovative alternative options to overcome *crunch* issues
- identification of ways to strengthen action plans, options and strategies to meet sustainability objectives.

The briefing also highlights the value to using **imagination and innovation** to seek solutions which minimise crunch issues and make useful links between issues and actions. This is the great opportunity of strategic partnerships. Partnerships can draw on the huge range of specialisms, knowledge and experience of their Board members, partner organisations, theme based partnerships and the wider community, to focus on developing innovative approaches to solving problems.

³ *Leadership for sustainable development: actions that local authorities are taking to mainstream sustainable development*, Greengage Consulting Ltd for DEFRA, November 2001.

Integration process for an LSP and its 'theme-based' partnerships



KEY: Those actions denoted in red fit best with the strategic role of the LSP, whilst those in blue fit best with the role of theme base partnerships.

Checklist for making sustainable integration part of the way your partnership works.

Formal working arrangements

✓ **Building sustainable development principles into the core partnership agreement for the LSP.** Have a look at how sustainability concepts relate to your mission statement, partnership agreement, values statement or terms of reference.

Example from practice: NE Lincolnshire have worked the concepts of sustainability into their mission statement and terms of reference – a commitment which has led to examining integration processes in more depth.

Example from practice: The Leeds Initiative have placed sustainability at the heart of their strategic objectives.

✓ **Build in integration decision making process which looks for and seeks to manage crunch points, and use the skills of the partnership to seek solutions to these.** Ensure that this integrated approach is linked into theme specific groups.

✓ **Link integration into your appraisal and monitoring processes.** (See the briefing “Community involvement at the heart of a sustainable partnership and strategy”).

Example from practice: Sustainable Northern Ireland Programme (SNIP). The vigorous effort being made by SNIP to ensure that sustainable development is at their heart have relevance to all LSPs and community strategies.

Example from practice: North West Regional Assembly. The North West Regional Assembly is using its Regional Sustainable Development Framework as a vehicle for ensuring that community strategies properly integrate sustainable development.

✓ **Ensure that your sustainability strategy is linked into the community strategy and that the LSP links into sustainability networks.** (See the briefing “Community involvement at the heart of a sustainable partnership and strategy”)

Informal information sharing

✓ **Learn from your partners and draw on the wide range of expertise, skills and perspectives represented within the partnership and in the wider community.**

✓ **Access to good information about sustainable development solutions.** The dissemination of such information will be one of the tasks of the IDeA's new Local Sustainability Team. (See the briefing "Putting sustainable development into practice" in the 'Sustainable development defined' resources area for a website link together with other sources of information).

✓ **Build time for discussion and debate into partnership meetings.** Integrated solutions require time to explore the commonality between different objectives, and to make informed decisions about conflicting aims. LSPs can be used to provide time for this reflection, and a focus for making hard choices. Such an approach is also more likely to attract good attendance to meetings than bland agendas which bury differences.

✓ **Build deliberative or informed decision making into the partnership's consultation processes.** The White Paper is clear that the community strategy process will need to grapple with conflicting view points and a range of stakeholder views. Integrated decisions demand a more sophisticated method of decision making which builds on deliberative discussions, involving a wider range of stakeholders and partners, and through which participants are confronted with the alternatives and their social, economic and environmental pros and cons, and asked to face up to the hard choices. (See the briefing "Community involvement at the heart of a sustainable partnership and strategy")



Example from practice: [North Shropshire District Council](#) By using their LA21 strategy as a basis for their community strategy, North Shropshire District Council is aiming to ensure sustainability underpins the whole strategy.