

LONDON: MAKING THE DIFFERENCE

Samantha Heath

Director, LSx – London Sustainability Exchange, UK.

Abstract

Sustainability is conventionally seen as a trade off between the three tiers of social, environmental and economic pressures. Whilst this definition may be useful in looking back and measuring just how badly we are doing it significantly fails to address what are the significant drivers for securing a better quality of life. Three-tiered sustainability encourages planners to think that sustainable development is just a fancy way of doing the usual bartering and tick box diplomacy. Thus the planning process often makes false trade offs that significantly fail to tackle the entrenched interests that have prevailed over decades.

And it isn't just the planners or built environment specialists that need to be engaged; Best Foot Forward studies and resource modelling such as REAP clearly indicate that sustainability is more about 'how we live' than the buildings we live in. We must tackle the thorny issues of motivation and behaviour change, something that we at the London Sustainability Exchange are investing heavily in.

Londoners consume an astounding amount of energy: more than Ireland and about the same as Portugal or Greece, and produce enough waste daily to fill St Paul's Cathedral. Furthermore, London's population is projected to expand by a city the size of Leeds by 2016; this could mean that the capital may require even more energy in the future

This paper will set out how London as a region has interpreted sustainability and how the city can be an engine for making a difference to quality of life in the UK. London, as a partially devolved region, is a special case; a world city with an almost un-paralleled scale and scope that presents challenges to its economic, social and environmental sustainability. The coming decade will see an unparalleled level of major physical developments and investment. Given that 74% of Europeans are living in cities (and set to rise to 84% by 2030), it is crucial to develop means of living in a sustainable city.

The paper will explore this new look at sustainability and how it can serve to integrate aspects of how we live that so far have delivered only insolvable tensions. It will also to draw conclusions that provide a useful template to support sustainable city development.

Introduction

Sustainable development is about ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come. A widely used international definition is 'development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (The Bruntland Report, 1987). Other simple definitions include 'not cheating on our children' and 'treating the planet like we intend to stay'.

Background, Policy and Framework

London is a world city with an almost un-paralleled scale and scope that represents challenges to its economic, social and environmental sustainability. The coming decade will see an unparalleled level

of major physical developments and investment. London currently uses 31TW of electricity a year (more than Ireland and about the same as Portugal or Greece) and produces 17 million tonnes of waste a year (enough waste daily to fill St Paul's Cathedral). And three out of five most impoverished councils are London boroughs.

London's is a special case with huge pressures, given its growth and size of footprint. However this growth also represents a unique opportunity for sustainable development in the UK. London is set to grow from 7.2 to 8.1million people (about the same size as Leeds). The Mayoral vision is to build 30,000 homes a year and deliver a world class sustainable Olympics

Despite the fact that English Heritage can correctly describe London as almost a third is green space or parks (many of which are Royal Parks) successive ALG/GLA Mori polls indicate that huge numbers of Londoners (71% in 2004) disagree that London is a green city.

Year on year the London First triple bottom line for London indicates an overall trend that London is becoming less socially sustainable. The most prominent indicator is housing which has become progressively less affordable. This amongst other elements of Londoners' lives is seriously compromising London's sustainability. As London First's report clearly states, London's competitiveness and wellbeing will depend increasingly upon it becoming a sustainable world city.

Social breakdown is crucial as witnessed in the New Orleans flooding. As reported in the technical building press, even civil engineers can see that New Orleans should have spotted the social breakdown. And it doesn't have to be a natural disaster to expose unease – Stephen Lawrence's death and murder enquiry is a reminder that social breakdown is not news to London.

According to the GLA Act (1999) the Mayor was duty-bound to produce a series of strategies that acknowledge the cross cutting themes: sustainability; health; and equality of opportunity were fully taken into account both in the production and delivery of the strategies. The Mayor and the LDA have a statutory duty to produce policies and deliver on quality of life for Londoners. To date eight statutory strategies were produced with two non statutory; five of these relate to the Environment.

As set out in the GLA Act sustainability is a statutory duty of the GLA and functional bodies. Over the past five years there has been clear pressure from government for the public sector to deliver on explicit sustainability outcomes. The most recent and unequivocal was the DEFRA sponsored National Sustainability Development Strategy Securing the Future ¹ which made specific reference to RDAs and the setting of Sustainability targets. Thus it is likely that targets relating to sustainable development will be issued over the next 18 months.

The Mayor's vision is for London as an exemplary sustainable city. The London Sustainable Development Commission has produced a framework for sustainable development that sets out the objective to achieve environmental, social and economic development simultaneously; the improvement of one will not be to the detriment of another. Where trade offs between competing objectives are unavoidable, these will be transparent and minimised.

The Mayor's vision and the London Sustainable Development Framework provide the context for the London's commitment to sustainability as an integral part of its economic development and regeneration remit. There are those who identify sustainability is a crucial element in the delivery of a successful London but are unsure that there is sufficient leadership. More importantly, political leaders representing captains of industry cannot believe that true sustainability and good quality of life can ever be affordable.

London has been bold, to the extent that we now have along with other Mayoral Strategies to the London Plan a planning document that specifically attempts to provide a framework for pertinent aspects such as housing and carbon targets. Planning is the prerogative of the ODPM and has a definition of sustainability that is different from DEFRA or the DTI. The London Plan is the region's first stab at joining up the different departments' agendas bringing in the aspirations of the environmental, cultural and economic strategies.

¹ Securing the Future DEFRA March 2005

Delivery

A commitment has been made, and the policy well written; it is the delivery that presents itself before us. And London is organising albeit slowly to form a concentrated structure that can identify what sustainability would look like and the route map for the journey. In order to deliver the rapid changes to meet the huge challenges that London presents we will now have to move to significant systematic and machine-like delivery.

The next steps in this process would be for us to examine the incentives, barriers, drivers and opportunities that will arise over the next few years. For our quality of life to be truly improved we must trust that it is not sustainable behaviours that cost, but attempting to retro-fit them or make do once everything has gone wrong. At many stakeholder meetings dealing with sustainability issues such as London Plan engagement on energy, waste or housing, the key requisites to sustainable delivery are:

- Clear statutory framework;
- Fiscal and other economic drivers;
- Capacity to deliver, London has a crisis in skills;
- A systematic behaviour change programme across London.

If we accept that by and large the London Plan provides the regional leadership the next step is to examine the other drivers

Fiscal Incentives.

Recent work *Bad habits hard choices*² indicate that there are limits to voluntarism and persuading the public through information and exhortation.

The Lyons review presents a good opportunity to evaluate financial drivers as far as they relate to sustainable behaviours. For instance there is evidence that developers would support projects such as the Green Grid, which will provide open space and flood storage capacity in the Thames Gateway. However, there is no mechanism to secure funding for revenue in particular and no strategic leadership. There is an opportunity to link the Mayor's leadership role with new fiscal powers to support green infrastructure.

Recent CABI space reports and the GLA economics report *Valuing Greenness*³ conclude that residents of London attach a value to open spaces as is reflected in the price premium they are prepared to pay to secure a dwelling with that advantage.

TfL have been examining the possibility of land evaluation tax planning and the recent Barker review confirms that planning gain supplement could be imposed in order to deliver broader benefits to the community. In terms of infrastructure that relate to energy and water, it is clear that substantial investment in the development in the Gateway is required. Relying on retrofitting in order to fulfil needs would be a more costly option.

From the establishment of the congestion charge in London we have a real life model; taxation can be effective in delivering sustainable outcomes. Another fiscal incentive that would support sustainable behaviour would be the use of the ODPM-sponsored sustainable development checklist. For this checklist to be as valuable as it could be the treasury should support it. The pilot checklist, produced in the southeast by SEEDA, is now being rolled out across the country and London is interpreting this work and incorporating it in with the London Plan. Work in London is progressing in order to ensure that the construction community accepts it. With added support of a regional taxation, the message will be clear; London really wants to deliver a better quality of life for its people.

² David Fell Brook Lyndhurst Nov 2004

³ GLA economics June 2003

Capacity to Deliver

The skills implications of delivering the London's strategies are not yet clear. Nor is it evident that there is a single body that will be charged to ensure that we have the capacity to carry out what the Mayor intends. There is a prevailing skills gap in London, particularly in the construction or public sector, which this report has looked at. Sir John Egan's review of skills for sustainable communities called for a number of initiatives including a skills academy in order to support professionals. London has seen a number of disparate initiatives, which can support the delivery of the Mayoral strategies; the trick now is to link them together.

One such initiative is London Renewables, a DTI sponsored project examining the barriers to delivering renewable energy in new construction projects. The project produced a toolkit support programme for planners, offering advice on which renewable technologies are suitable to London including aesthetic issues, risks and reliability. The work gave an insight into the cost benefit analysis of installing renewables, information on successful case studies, suggestions on how problems can be overcome and examples of how planning departments, architects and others have handled any issues. More importantly it provide guidance on how to comply with the London Plan.

Once London Renewables produced the toolkit the project did not stop there. DTI and other partner funding supported the delivery of bespoke training to elected representatives, planners and developers in enthusiastic London boroughs.

The London Renewables work in London's sub regions can provide lessons for capacity building of other important emerging sustainability projects. There are a number, which deal with improving our adaptation to climate change, biodiversity and the delivery of ODPM checklist in sustainable communities. The GLA, LDA, London Sustainable Development Commission, World Wildlife Fund, Building Research Establishment, London Wildlife Fund and the London School of Economics are working on these projects with varying degrees of linking up.

Behaviour Change

Over recent years issues concerning behaviour change are becoming increasingly relevant to the discussions on improving sustainable communities. Recent work by the London School of Economics highlights the importance of behaviour change. London's footprint has more (95% more) to do with how we live it than in the building the building fabric⁴. Therefore effort spent in changing behaviour is good value.

According to the Mayor's annual survey of Londoners⁵:

- 47% think traffic congestion is one of the worst things about living in London;
- 23% of Londoners think that the environment should be a priority compared to housing (45%) and safety and crime (51%);
- 50% believe that climate change is one of the major problems affecting London's environment (up 23 % on last year).

Londoners are becoming increasingly aware of issues relating to quality of life. Raising awareness of sustainable behaviours is important, but it isn't enough. Information doesn't work alone. Even a positive attitude sometimes isn't enough to provoke a change in behaviour.

Most smokers are aware that smoking is damaging to their health, but it takes more than that to help them quit. And people know saving water is a good thing, but they might still leave the tap running when they brush their teeth. People are not often as rational as we'd like them to be.

⁴ Using the REAP analysis comparing the footprint construction design and materials. Mike Nigh & Yvonne Rydin Sustainable Construction Conference LSE 15.06.06

<<http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/geographyAndEnvironment/CEPG/Suscon/Conference.htm>>

⁵ Londoners' view of the capital. Annual London Survey 2005 Research conducted for the GLA by Mori October – December 2005.

We, at LSx, aim to support communities so that the right conditions are there to enable change. Providing the right infrastructure and support, raising peer pressure, using entertainment, incentives and reminders, and building relationships with people, are all ways to make a real difference. We have been working on this for a few years, in particular looking at ways that empower and encourage people to change their behaviours.

We don't have to force these behaviours on to people. There are ways that we can encourage people to choose lifestyle changes for themselves. But first we need to understand what motivates them to do what they do at the moment and what might motivate them to behave differently. Motivation is what makes us act in a particular way.

We are exploring motivational factors such as 'pull factors', such as enticing people to take action and such as cash prizes to street improvement through comedy to sermons. It is also important to note that 'push factors', such as legislation and compunction, can also be effective provided the appropriate infrastructure is in place to enforce the requirements.

Using legislation or financial measures such as taxes to enforce behaviour has been done, but it's normally beyond the scope of a local authority to do so. One exception to this is in Barnet, where compulsory recycling was introduced. Where this is done, it's essential to make sure that people are able to carry out the behaviour you're asking for without too much trouble.

The Marketing Mix has been used to entice people to buy washing powder or fast cars. It is appropriate that the SD world learn from these powerful influences in order to support sustainable behaviours. The 'Seven Ps' of the marketing mix are product, price, place, promotion, packaging, partnership and people. These "Ps" are the tactics that can be used to market a product or behaviour. You can alter your marketing by varying the amounts of each element in the mix. Each campaign you have will probably need a different marketing mix.

Bagozzi's model incorporates a large range of influences on consumer behaviour into one comprehensive framework. He links positive and negative emotions, attitudes, and beliefs about behaviour, goals, desire, social identity and morals. It illustrates the fact that the influences on our behaviour are many and complex.

What appears to be effective in supporting people to change their behaviours is allowing them to 'feel the dream' and actually want the lifestyle that you are offering. Not pandering to the current wave of consumerism, but learning the lessons on why it is so attractive.

In terms of establishing when people appear to be most receptive to the idea of a lifestyle change it appears to be; at key life changes such as when they move house and when their child starts primary school. But most importantly when they are influenced by somebody they trust.

Key Life changes; A Sustainability Starter Kit was distributed to new Notting Hill Housing Group residents. It included free energy and water saving products, range of printed resources and top tips and handy hints in relation to adopting greener lifestyles. The combination of information and practical items was well received. A DVD demonstrating how residents can take small steps to adopt even more sustainable behaviour complements this Kit. Notting Hill Housing Association have extended this to all of their residents⁶.

Connecting with religious belief; Being influenced by influencers; appealing to values and beliefs. These tap into personal attitudes and emotions which can be heavily influenced through things like social learning, peer pressure and relating to issues that are already important to an individual.

An example is:

Sermons were delivered to congregations of 6,000 worshippers at the East London Mosque. The sermons connected religious beliefs with environmental themes, using passages from the Qur'an. Events and items accompanied these environmental messages on a Muslim radio station. Exit polls on this work indicate that 90% of those attending were keen to follow a more sustainable lifestyle. These

⁶ Ongoing LSx pilot project commenced Nov 05

behaviours were consolidated by borough support and an effective collection regime, such that nine months later qualitative surveys indicated that the behaviour change was established and even extended⁷. An indicator for this change was that the borough recycling rate increased by the largest amount in the shortest time ever recorded by the borough.

Conclusion

London has defined sustainability in such a way that provides for balanced delivery, and we have argued that in the long term, sustainability is cost effective. The task of the London community is to deliver sustainable practices now.

The London Sustainable Development Framework has now to be integrated into the Mayoral strategies. With the Olympics and Mayoral vision of 30,000 homes to be built each year we are challenged to ensure that these developments can deliver improved quality of life in a very short time.

Work is progressing in several government departments (ODPM, DTI and DEFRA) on issues concerning sustainability. The work for London is not only to provide a coherent response to this but also to ensure delivery at both a local and regional level and to bring the treasury into the picture.

People need to see evidence that government is genuinely attempting to join up and they begin to see sustainability as the lifestyle of choice. Then we can begin to create the resonances that will ensure a sustainable future.

London Sustainability Exchange (LSx) is a programme of Forum for the Future.

We provide organisations and networks of individuals with the motivation, knowledge and connections they need to put sustainability into practice. With the backing of our influential partners, London Sustainability Exchange is playing a unique role in making London a more sustainable world city. Our partners include the Association of London Government, Business in the Community, Groundwork, London Voluntary Service Council and London First.

Website: <http://www.lsx.org.uk/>

⁷ Tower Hamlets Faith Recycling Programme. Snowia Hussain LSx 2006