

Sightings

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IN FOCUS THIS ISSUE:

The global consumer

...focusing on sustainability in the South West

Summer 2004

Sustainability – **buy now** – while stocks last...

It's time to buy into sustainable development. For those far sighted enough to invest in the **real** futures market the opportunities are HUGE! But lack of investment **right now** will leave us with precious little choice ahead.

In this edition of *Sightings* we're looking into the real benefits of 'taking on' sustainability – from amazing new learning opportunities (see p.2) to fresh new business ideas.

'Taking It On' is also the title of the Government's consultation on its national sustainable development strategy (more inside). The focus of the review is delivery – a focus we need in our region too. If we delay for too much longer (commissioning yet more consultants reports...) it will be closing time!

We already know what we need to do for a sustainable South West – to learn how to *combine* equality and prosperity with the well-being of ourselves, the environment and the wider world. Our *In Focus* theme gives a practical steer on how to adopt a more globally responsible approach – with interviews from Oxfam's regional campaigns manager and a clothing company with a conscience.

Are you buying in to sustainability? Because the offer runs out – soon!

SSW Editorial Team

FOR SALE
South West
future

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**Sustainability
South West**

DIY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

Oz Osborne on communities doing it for themselves

See p. 3

The **Way Ahead** for a more sustainable South West?

Sustainability South West is helping to co-ordinate an exciting new initiative to promote sustainability knowledge and skills. The *Way Ahead* project – developed in partnership with Learning South West – has been informed by consultation with hundreds of organisations across the region. It recognises that **urgently needed progress** on sustainable development will only be achieved if sustainability learning is mainstreamed across all sectors and at all levels.



The initiative will culminate in the production of a strategic Education for Sustainable Development ('ESD') tool for the region. The first phase of *Way Ahead* has involved a major consultation exercise with a whole range of learning organisations – from colleges, universities and local education authorities to community organisations, trainers and inspection bodies (a full analysis of the research findings will be available from Autumn 2004).

An interim report (*The Way Ahead?*) – launched at Learning South West's summer conference on the 11th June – paints a preliminary picture of ESD activity in the South West and makes some early recommendations. The proposals include:

1. creating a regional ESD support network
2. developing a shared ESD learning resource
3. establishing a greater range of accredited sustainability qualifications in the region

The profile of ESD has grown since the publication of the Department for Education

& Skills' own sustainable development action plan (see *Sightings* Winter 2003/4). Charles Clarke's challenge to regions to 'take ownership' of ESD has given a further incentive to learning & skills organisations to take on the sustainability challenge. Launching *Way Ahead* Tony Kendle, Foundation Director from the Eden Project, welcomed the initiative as a timely opportunity for all organisations who influence learning to engage in the ESD agenda.

It is becoming increasingly obvious that learning and skills are the missing ingredients for a South West fit for the future. As well as encouraging **all learners** to adopt more globally-conscious lifestyles, education and training organisations (and the agencies that oversee them) have the opportunity to furnish the region with the skills needed to respond to the challenges of the 21st century – whether it's developing appropriate renewable energy solutions or more sustainable management of tourism or farming. The *Way Ahead* project will make the case for learning and skills as central to meeting the biggest sustainability challenge

for our region – **how** we can combine economic development and social equality with environmental protection.



Phase one of *Way Ahead* has been funded by the South West of England Regional Development Agency. For more information or for a copy of *The Way Ahead?* report please contact Sustainability South West (details on the back cover) or Learning South West (tel. Sara Warren on **01823 365 435**).



by Tim Floyd

'Taking It On' in the South West

The Government is reviewing the UK Sustainable Development Strategy, under the banner of *Taking It On*, and wants to engage with each of the UK regions to focus on priorities for action (for details see www.sustainable-development.gov.uk). Meanwhile the region is poised to update our own Regional Sustainable Development Framework (RSDF).

The South West region is a wonderful place to live and work – BUT we have some unsustainable trends including:

- Pockets of real poverty, poor health and seasonal unemployment
- Increasing traffic congestion
- Many farming communities in crisis
- Much poor and unaffordable housing
- Huge inequalities in access to services and cultural & leisure activities
- Household waste increasing by 100,000 tonnes every year
- A declining wild bird population
- An increasing % of tourists visiting the region by car

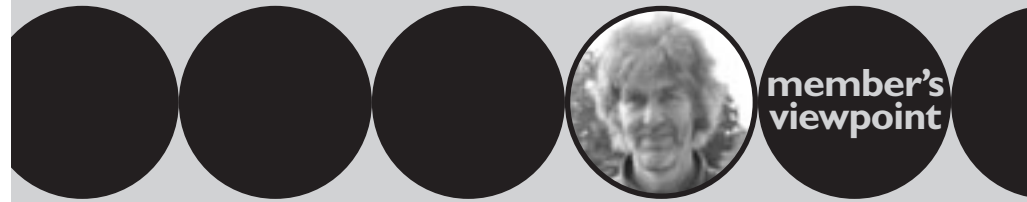
Our BIGGEST sustainability challenge is learning how we can combine economic development and social equality with environmental enhancement. Key questions include:

- What are the main challenges for delivering sustainable development in our region?
- How can local and regional agencies and bodies work better together to deliver sustainable development?
- How can RSDFs better contribute to delivery?
- How can central government help us as a region to deliver sustainable development?

Please send your comments/responses direct to *Sustainability South West* (address back page). Whilst the closing date for comments on the national *Taking It On* consultation is July 31st 2004, your general responses will be fed into the regional update work.

Taking it on
developing UK sustainable development strategy together

A final version of the South West regional response to *Taking It On* will be available on: www.oursouthwest.com and www.sustainabilitysouthwest.org.uk



Oz Osborne – a champion of community-led action on sustainable development – recently stood down as one of SSW's longest serving members. We asked him for his parting comment on global progress towards a more sustainable world...

Could do better? Could do something!

A bright spark once commented that sustainability is too important to be left to politicians. How often have we been inspired by our senior members of government in favour of sustainability? The Sustainable Development Commission's assessment of the Government's progress 'could do better', might more accurately be 'could do something'. If the Government is unable to pay more than lip service, and big business is unable to see beyond the next shareholder meeting, where do we go for a lead on innovative or just downright sensible practice on sustainable development? Yes, it's that much abused sector of our society – the community!

Given a motivation driven by need, rather than obscure criteria set by badly managed public funding programmes, wondrous things often happen. Things we might never see highlighted in glossy magazines alongside photos of children badgered into planting token trees with politicians given a crash course in how to hold a spade. Some years ago there was a scheme to plant trees in schools. Our local secondary school found a class with a bit of time and each pupil duly planted a free tree, having been told how this small act would contribute to global sustainability. The photo call took place and everyone felt good. During the summer holidays a year later, the un-vandalised and healthy trees were dumped to make way for a Japanese language block that the school had received unexpected funding for.

Recently I was invited to say something profound after the great and good had stuffed themselves at a civic dinner. The mayor had devoted his term in office to supporting youth causes so I thought it

relevant to quote Severn Cullis-Suzuki's speech at the Rio Summit when, as an 11 year old, she listed some of the ways that adults were destroying her environment. Half way through, a representative of the town council complete with medals and red face, stormed up to the top table and said how dare I disgrace such an important event with such inappropriate nonsense. His view must have struck a cord with members of the town council, since no apology was forthcoming.

My present work takes me to often obscure corners of the world where local people are doing some amazing, but to them sensible and important, things to improve long term quality of life. I visited our partners in rural India in January during the lead up to national elections. Prospective MPs were doing the rounds of photo calls and sound bites in projects areas. Visits scarcely interrupted the more important work of communities co-operating on organic agriculture projects, small-scale businesses or health programmes. It is heartening to see such co-operation and foresight in the face of so many barriers to quality of life, but disheartening to see the total lack of genuine interest by politicians. The SDC's 'could do better' applies to governments across the world – particularly those of powerful western nations supported by even more powerful trans-national businesses. So what do we do? For a start we all have a vote and the choice about the goods and services we buy. And, if we are in a position to do so, lend a welcome hand to those small community projects that are making a real difference to people's lives.

New World Order?

All hail the sustainable consumer

Nearly two years since the 2nd Earth Summit in Johannesburg (and 12 since the first in Rio!) and there's still much, much more to do to mainstream a more sustainable approach to the world's development.

As the Government prepares to review its own sustainable development strategy (see p. 3) our two IN FOCUS interviews address the role of individual consumption choices on the worldwide sustainability picture. Roger James talks to us about his work with Oxfam to encourage the South West's public to support fairer trade. We then extend our sustainability searchlight to neighbouring Wales with an interview with howies – a clothing company who are demonstrating that sustainability can be stylish.

So, whether you're feeling powerless to affect the world around you, or reviewing your business practices, read on...

Fair Ground Attraction

Roger James is the Regional Campaigner for Oxfam. We interviewed him to find out more about his work and the role of Fairtrade in encouraging more sustainable consumption in the region.

What does your job involve?

Communicating on global issues such as international trade, UK and EU arms controls and global education as well as influencing key political figures, gaining media coverage and working with strategic allies. I also work on key international projects, campaign issues like coffee, conduct training and undertake media work in our international offices. Major national projects in the South West include Oxfam's work with Glastonbury festival (of which we are a main beneficiary).

What regional projects do you undertake and how do they link in with Oxfam's wider work?

I work with South West MP's and MEP's who are influential in trade, agriculture, arms or educational issues or through regional party structures to influence policy. It is vital that decision makers are made aware of real concern on these issues within their constituencies to persuade them to take action. Parliamentarians can have real influence in the house by raising questions, putting down motions or acting through specialist committees. I also attend regional party events – conducting fringe meetings and staffing stalls.

Working with strategic regional allies such as the SWTUC (with whom we are part of an international campaign for the fairer production of Olympics sports clothing) helps to generate and focus public concern. Oxfam, along with other NGOs, co-operates with the regional structures of the national Trade Justice Movement. I worked with them on

their lobby of parliament and we are now preparing for a national event at the Labour Party conference in September 2004. Local authorities are increasingly significant players who, not only work with us on 'Global Citizenship' curriculum topics in schools, but have been a major force in promoting Fairtrade in their communities – many now 'Fairtrade towns'. We are currently campaigning with Amnesty International for tighter controls on UK arms exports. In spring 2004 we worked with SW MP's in creating a 'mass lobby for education' in which local schools were visited by an MP to talk about the need for global primary education. The local actions contributed to a national lobby and were part of a global campaign in over 20 countries.

The widely read regional media is a vital tool in building and reflecting public opinion, so I spend a considerable amount of time working with journalists to get publicity of our activities and issues, to complement



Fairtrade grower Felipe in Swindon with Julia Drown MP



Ghanian cocoa growers in Bristol

national coverage. Media techniques include use of celebrities, like Chris Martin of Coldplay and staging stunts and other events. Oxfam activists are vital at a local level in expressing and creating public awareness. They visit local MP's in their constituencies, contribute to events and write to local

14% of the UK ground roast market. The FT price is \$1.26p – 2x the world price – with 20% of the value going to the grower. Consumers are increasingly looking for taste and quality (Percol Guatemalan FT coffee has won recent taste awards) allied to ethical sourcing.

Fairtrade Fortnight (co-ordinated by the Fairtrade Foundation who are part of the international FT certification network) happens annually in March to promote awareness and sales of Fairtrade products. Celebrities and activists organise events to help generate media coverage, while stores and FT manufacturers run promotions to encourage consumers to try the goods.

The Adam Smith Institute has recently claimed that 'interventionist' measures like Fairtrade are actually holding back development in poorer countries – arguing that progress will only be achieved under free market conditions. What is your response to this?

The Adam Smith Institute's attack on the idea of Fairtrade, particularly their views of the coffee trade, lacks any real substance. The

taxpayers are giving 819m Euros each year to subsidise European sugar production in six sugar-processing companies who dump unwanted sugar on world markets. Meanwhile, efficient sugar producers from developing countries are denied the chance to trade their way out of poverty. Rich countries spend \$1 billion a day on agricultural subsidies; surpluses are exported, which suppresses prices, drives down the income of farmers in poor countries, and puts them out of business. For every \$100 generated by world exports, \$97 goes to the high- and middle-income countries, and only \$3 goes to low-income countries. The rich world taxes imports from poor countries at an average of four times the rate of imports from industrialised countries.

The market is a valuable mechanism and freer trade in certain products may benefit some countries. In an unequal world liberalisation often benefits the strong who then can unduly further influence the market. Consumers are not always fully informed and are also influenced by advertising. International 'free trade' protagonists prioritise economic criteria above real social and environmental costs

The market for products carrying the Fairtrade mark had grown from £2.7m 10 years ago to around £100m today.

media. The Internet is increasingly valuable as activists can add their names to national petitions or email campaign targets direct.

What is the case for 'Fairtrade' and what is the purpose of Fairtrade Fortnight?

Under the Fairtrade system, farmers are paid a stable price to cover production costs and a premium to reinvest either in the business or in social and environmental schemes in the wider community. Figures published at the launch of Fairtrade Fortnight revealed the market for products carrying the Fairtrade mark had grown from £2.7m 10 years ago to around £100m today.

The influence of FT can be very significant. Bananas are the fifth most popular agricultural commodity in the world and it is a very competitive market. It is the third most valuable commodity in the supermarket, accounting for 28% of fruit sales. By value the UK public currently eats 1.5m FT bananas per week. The producers get 80% more value out of these than normal 'free trade' banana

Coffee offers a similar success. 3m cups of coffee are now drunk each week (a 40% growth per annum) and FT has captured

over-supply of coffee worldwide has been caused, not by intervening in the market by paying farmers a fair price, but by the very free market in coffee that followed the scrapping of the International Coffee Agreement in 1989. It had kept supply and demand for coffee in balance and maintained a fair price for producers – now millions of small farmers and their families face ruin. Most of these farmers lack the capital, transport infrastructure, knowledge base or access to other markets that would enable them to switch to other kinds of production. They have to go on growing coffee to sell at market prices that do not even cover their production costs. Fairly-traded goods are a small but growing sector of the market that reflects the increasing awareness of consumers. The institute's picture of 'the majority of consumers' as self-centred and cost-obsessed tells us more about the Institute than it does about consumers. The gospel of self-interest is out of touch with modern reality.

Oxfam's campaign to make trade fair is calling for a fairer and more sustainable world trading system. The current world order is rigged in favour of the rich. Those who call for free trade rarely practice it. For example EU

with exploitation and environmental destruction the result. Oxfam believes that trade should be 'values led' and that sustainable development (incorporating social justice and environmental stewardship) and not only short-term economic efficiency is the way forward in the 21st century.

What three things could our readers do to support a better life for people in developing countries?

1. Act as ethical consumers and influence the market to be more sustainable, by buying fairly traded products with a low environmental impact. If your store is not selling them complain or suggest you would like to buy them if they stocked them. Get your workplace, cafe, or sports centre to do the same.
2. Contact your MP/MEP about these issues – ask them what the government is doing to ensure that world trade rules support sustainable development.
3. Log onto www.oxfam.org.uk to find out more. Why not consider joining or donating to a development or environmental group? It's fun and will make a difference!

howies are an active sports clothing company, with their roots in bike and skate-wear, based in Cardigan Bay on the west coast of Wales. They combine close attention to design with ethically sound principles. In the past year howies have doubled their turnover and are attracting a growing following of loyal customers. We spoke to account manager Adrian Gunn to get the lowdown on the howies ethos.

howie do they do it?

What are the guiding principles of howies?

As a company we believe that howies should be as 'low impact' as we can, whilst operating as a real business. We care about the environmental and social consequences of what we do and challenge others to do likewise. Our catalogue and t-shirts are a great medium to do this! We always want the customer to have a very positive experience when buying howies clothes so we are fanatical about customer service and quality. All our clothes come with an unconditional lifetime warranty.



if things last longer:

We believe that our clothes should be of the highest quality and great design and price. The fact that most are made from either organic or natural fibres is how all clothes should be made. Many of our t-shirts sport a thought-provoking message, and most customers buy them because of the design although a lot are attracted to howies by the idea of 'clothing with a conscience'.

There's been a lot of scrutiny of the cotton industry in recent years from organisations such as the Soil Association. Did you have a hard time finding a good supplier of organic cotton and do you do anything to offset the 'cotton-miles'?

We found our current supplier through contacts in the trade. This year we've been trying to do the entire girl's range as organic as possible but this has proved difficult with the large minimums required for production. But with the t-shirts we have had strong sales so we can meet the minimums on

Did you know that more chemicals are used on cotton than any other crop? Around 150 grams of pesticides (the equivalent of a cup of sugar) are used to grow the cotton for one non-organic T-shirt. Find out more at www.soilassociation.org.uk

How do you reflect the howies ethos in the production of your clothes and in the finished products themselves?

All our t-shirts, and many of our other garments, are made from either organic cotton or other natural (rather than synthetic) materials which offer great performance characteristics but are lower impact. We strive to make our clothes the best quality we possibly can as it is more beneficial to the customer and environment

both the cotton and production. As we continue to grow things will become more possible and we can specify the fabric and quality we want.

As for offsetting the 'cotton-miles' – we used to get our cotton from India and we now source it from Turkey...so we've already made a step in the right direction! We're not a huge profit-making organisation (it's not a prime consideration) but 1% of our turnover or 10% of our profits are donated as an earth

tax to environmental charities. Last year we contributed to costs of some of the GM debates that were held around the UK.

Young people are increasingly influenced by brands and fashion. Do you see brands playing a role in encouraging people to live more globally conscious lifestyles?

It is already happening but there is a long way to go. Big brands currently dominate people's buying decisions and are associated with success, status etc. It will take time to reverse this and develop brands that people will care about for different reasons – the Fairtrade brand is growing year-on-year and organic food sales have forced supermarkets to listen to the consumer's voice. howies tries to be different from other ethical clothing companies as we are associated with fashion and quality and the other messages are secondary. Many of our customers do buy from us on the basis of our ethical branding though and are really interested in discussing this.

Have you got any practical advice for people looking to set up an ethically sound small business?

It can be tough on a practical level. An organic t-shirt, for instance, costs us four times as much to buy than its non-organic equivalent, so we already start off at a disadvantage. Generally I would say be strong and stay true to your values. This will pay off eventually and you will reap the rewards in the long term.

What are howies plans for the future?

In the short term we want to turn more of our ideas into products, increase our range of active wear and further develop our female range. The bigger we get the more we can force the debate. The more volume we sell the more organic materials we will

For more information about howies see www.howies.co.uk For background on some of the current issues facing the global trade in cotton see www.oxfam.org.uk

The National Museum of Science and Industry (NMSI) are expanding their family of museums with Creative Planet, a hugely ambitious project based at a former RAF airfield in Wroughton, near Swindon. Designed to be a 'National Centre for Sustainable Development', if the project goes ahead it could prove to be a major asset to the region. Andy Baker spoke to Steve Briggs to find out more...

Wroughton from experience?

Ten minutes taxi ride from Swindon train station and the rolling Wiltshire countryside is to my left and a former World War II airfield is to my right. This, I discover, is the Science Museum at Wroughton. NMSI (who run the Science Museum in London as well as the National Railway Museum in York and the National Museum of Film, Photography and Television in Bradford) have been using the Wroughton site since 1981 as a giant storage space for some of the 300,000

transformed into five 'Knowledge Farms' blending visitor displays, research and development, business enterprise, innovation and creativity that, according to NMSI's brochure, "explore the complex relationship between human activity and our planet."

"For us there is a real connection between the industrial revolution, the benefits and problems that that has brought us, and our survival on the planet – and that's what Creative Planet is all about," continues Steve.

nothing less than a national centre for sustainable development, which could make a huge impact on the South West region. "The project has the potential to be a powerful economic driver creating a significant number of jobs and an increase of around £90m in economic activity in the region per year." The project could help to deliver one of the initial recommendations of the *Way Ahead* initiative (see p. 2) by encouraging innovation in sustainability learning and skills.

On paper at least, the project appears to be a triumph of joined-up, long-term thinking that takes on sustainability in the round, going so far as to state in their *Work in Progress* document that "Sustainable Development is arguably the most important issue of the 21st Century. It affects all of us." With an organisation willing to invest so much in practicing and educating the public and generations to come about SD it suddenly occurs to me how lucky we are that this could be happening at the 'gateway to the region'. I am impressed that, amongst the relatively small number of staff working on the project at present they already have a 'Sustainable Development Team' on board and the more I learn, the

"The industrial revolution, underpinned by scientific and technological 'progress', has characterised recent centuries and transformed the face of the western world... We are on the eve of another revolution and the driving force behind this era of great change is Sustainable Development, without it, humankind and nature cannot survive as we know them. The 21st Century must be sustainable" *Creative Planet Work In Progress brochure*

(approx.) items in their collections. "This is where we keep the big stuff," explains Steve Briggs, Planning & Community Relations Manager for the Creative Planet project. Another huge building near to the Science Museum in South Kensington houses smaller items like telescopes and syringes whilst here you will find everything from Penny Farthing bicycles to 1950's airliners.

The Wroughton site covers 545 acres and its vast aircraft hangars could soon be

"Our mission statement is to draw people into a dialogue to create meanings from the past, present and the future. To do that we don't just have a model of Stevenson's Rocket, we have the real thing! We have all this stuff that allows us to tell fantastic stories about human ingenuity and technological development – but there's more to tell."

Over the next 15-20 years NMSI plans to spend around £300m on this 'museum for the 21st Century' with hopes of it becoming

more I am convinced that NMSI are not paying lip service or baying to current trends in sustainable development but really mean it and are willing to put their money where their mouth is.

The Knowledge Farms will look at key areas of sustainability such as industry, agriculture and communities and are intended to be as practical as they are informative. I am told that they hope to produce enough energy and food to make the site entirely self-sufficient. "The essence of the message is that people will leave here with a sense of hope, feeling positive about the future. Of course we're going to talk about the problems and what we're doing to our planet but we're also going to be talking about solutions, and developing new solutions through science and technology."



Some of the vast array of objects currently stored at the Wroughton site.

For more information about Creative Planet you can contact Steve Briggs on 01793 846208 or visit www.nmsi.ac.uk

Local Sustainability Group South West (LSGSW)

The current Government consultation on national sustainable development policy (see p. 3) has inspired the LSGSW to take a look at its current role and how it can better support people involved in sustainable development activities in the region.

A briefing paper and questionnaire is now available (see contact details below) – LSGSW would welcome the involvement of any person or organisation with interests in local sustainability. The consultation will remain open until 18th August 2004.

For further info contact the Secretary Steve Marriott on 0117 922 6644 or email steve_marriott@bristol-city.gov.uk

sustainability is...



...taking the kids to the farmers' market

Illustration by T. Floyd

Glimpses



First Aid

On the 1st July WaterAid handed in a petition of almost of 40,000 signatures, urging the British Government to spend 10% of its overseas development budget on water and sanitation (currently 5%). If you'd like to get involved in WaterAid's work please contact Vanessa Ashton on 01225 526 335 or email vanessaashton@wateraid.org

In the SW, WaterAid is supported by Wessex Water, South West Water, Bristol Water and Bournemouth & West Hants Water. For further info see www.wateraid.org

Case Work

The SW Regional Biodiversity Partnership have recently produced *Natural Advantage – Case Studies in Sustainability*. The booklet contains info on 33 SW projects which demonstrate the

wider social, economic and environmental value of conserving and enhancing our natural environment.

Natural Advantage can be viewed at www.swbiodiversity.org.uk/framesets/Option2.htm Please contact Heather Sohl, SW Biodiversity Co-ordinator, if you would like a hard copy. Tel. 01392 457401 or email heathersohl@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk

Making the wrong impression?

A new publication looking at the SW's overall impact on global sustainability will be available from Autumn/Winter 2004. *Stepping Forward* will report on the region's 'ecological footprint' – the amount of natural resources we use relative to what is available worldwide. The study has calculated that if everyone on the planet consumed as much as an average SW resident, we would need nearly 3 more earths to sustain us!

For more info see www.steppingforward.org.uk

Sustainability South West's current membership: Gareth Allen Carlton TV; Mike Birkin Friends of the Earth; Kevin Brown English Heritage; Chris Clarke Somerset County Council; Richard Cresswell Environment Agency; Mike Fox Torbay Council; Mark Harold National Trust; Chris Hines The Eden Project; Simon Hooton South West of England Regional Development Agency; Bryony Houlden South West Regional Assembly; Brian Kennelly; Catherine Le Grice-Mack South West Regional Assembly; Jim Longhurst University of the West of England; Anita Longley RWE Innogy; Jackie Longworth Trade Union Congress; Liz McGrath Learning South West (formerly SWAFET); Tim Render Government Office South West; Louise Thornhill Countryside Agency; John Waldon; Janette Ward English Nature; Brendan Yates Department of Health

Sustainability South West receives regular funding from the following organisations (a full list of funders, for any given financial year, is stated in our annual report): Countryside Agency; Department of Health; English Heritage; English Nature; Environment Agency; Government Office for the South West; National Trust; South West of England Regional Development Agency; South West Regional Assembly

Sustainability South West is the region's independent champion of Sustainable Development.

Its members represent all sectors making connections to generate ideas for a more sustainable economy, society and environment in the South West. It is playing a major role in shaping future plans in the region working with key regional organisations. SSW produced the Regional Sustainable Development Framework, *A Sustainable Future for the South West*. For further info about our activities and free publications visit www.sustainabilitysouthwest.org.uk or contact the SSW office.

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Designed by Peta Morey

