

**AYRSHIRE JOINT STRUCTURE PLAN AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE  
7 SEPTEMBER 2001**

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**Checking for Change – Sustainability Indicators for Waste, Energy and Travel for  
Scotland**

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PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To advise the Committee of the “Checking for Change” initiative being undertaken by the Scottish Executive which seeks to establish a set of indicators to measure progress toward sustainable development in the spheres of Waste, Energy and Travel (W-E-T).

BACKGROUND

- 2 In January 2000, a Scottish Ministerial group on Sustainable Development was established to take forward the Governments commitment to Integrate the principles of sustainable development into all government policies and to raise an understanding within Scotland of the benefits that sustainable development offers now and the future. In a parliamentary debate in February 2000 the then Minister for Transport and the Environment, Sarah Boyack announced that in pursuit of these objectives Scotland would establish a set of sustainable development indicators covering waste, energy and travel. Following from this announcement the Scottish Executive commissioned the consultants Entec to review the many existing set of indicators within Scotland and elsewhere in Europe and for these to be brought forward for discussion.

COMMENT

- 3 The initiative by the Scottish executive is to be welcomed. It seeks to establish at a national level a set of indicators that take forward sustainable development and is relevance to the Scottish people within the context of resource use, energy and travel. In this respect it complements the work already undertaken by this Committee in the preparation of the baseline indicators within Monitor 2000 and which was circulated last year.
- 4 The Entec Report suggest around 40 indicators based around a number of common themes relevant to Waste Energy and Transport. It is however felt that this “long list” of indicators would if adopted by the Scottish Executive “dilute” the message that requires to be conveyed. If the Scottish Executive wishes to present sustainable development in a way which makes it more of a day to day concern a more focussed set of indicators is necessary. These indicators should focus on and reflect real concerns such as traffic growth, access to basic services and the steps being taken to recycle waste.

- 5 It is therefore suggested that the “long list” indicators is replaced with smaller set of indicators (between ten to fifteen) which would establish a baseline around which programmes of action and targets can be presented. A smaller set of indicators, if properly formulated, would have the advantage of being readily absorbed at a regional level and allow the progress toward sustainable development to be measured at a sub – national level. This process would also highlight spatial variations across Scotland and highlight whether more targeted action and resources would be appropriate.
- 6 The current proposals only cover resource use, energy and travel. This falls short of a need for comprehensive set of indicators for Scotland. It is hoped that a number of additional key indicators that can encompass the economy, social inclusion and the environment can also be developed and brought forward for wider consultation and comment.
- 7 The Scottish Executive have suggested that they would bring the chosen set of indicators into use in the financial year 2001-2002. This is welcomed. It is hoped that the opportunity to present specific targets and action can also be brought forward at this time.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8 It is recommended that Committee:
- welcome the initiative by the Scottish Executive to prepare a set of indicators for waste, energy and travel for Scotland but suggest that they be limited to between ten or fifteen;
  - seek the Scottish Executive to accompany the chosen indicators with specific targets and an action plan;
  - seek the Scottish executive when formulating the indicators to ensure those chosen are readily applicable at a sub-regional level such as Ayrshire as well as Scotland;
  - seek the Scottish Executive to publish annually a review of progress; and
  - forward a copy of “Monitor 2000” as illustrative of the work undertaken in Ayrshire and of the importance in ensuring the indicators chosen have meaning at a regional level.

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## APPENDIX 1

### Checking for Change - Sustainability Indicators for Waste, Energy and Travel for Scotland

In the consultation document “Checking for Change” the Scottish Executive sought comment on a number of specific questions.

#### **Does Scotland need it's own set of indicators?**

The preparation of a set of indicators for Scotland is strongly supported.

#### **Should Scotland adopt formally the existing UK set?**

No- but there is clearly a relationship between the 15 headline indicators presented in “Achieving a Better Quality of Life” and any future extension of the proposed set of indicators to cover economic, environmental and social inclusion issues.

#### **Entec proposals for 40 or so indicators**

This is a large set of indicators to cover the topics proposed particularly so if the indicators were extended to cover the other issues referred to above. The number proposed would be difficult to incorporate at a regional level and would involve substantial resources in their collation.

A more focussed group of indicators would seem appropriate (see below). It would offer a number of advantages that would include greater awareness amongst the public of specific issues, greater ease in their use and allow for the development of more specific targets and action to be formulated.

#### **Flagship indicators**

The use of flagship indicator such as carbon dioxide emissions has much to commend it. The mitigation of carbon dioxide emissions is a key driver in much of policy formulation (traffic growth, energy efficiency in housing, etc). It also has the advantage that programmes such as and vehicle taxation can readily be formulated around it's reduction. However if progress on this flagship indicator is to be tracked at a regional level energy audits similar to that undertaken by South Ayrshire Council would be necessary to establish baselines within which progress can be measured.

The following comments relate to the more limited set of headline indicators being postulated in the “Checking for Change” consultation document.

#### **Energy**

- ***Greenhouse gas emissions.*** Indicator supported- further work would be necessary if this indicator was to have application at a regional level.
- ***Percentage of total energy generation from renewables.*** Indicator supported

- *Number of households where heating costs comprise 10% of income.* Indicator supported - within Ayrshire 30% of households fall within this category

### **Resources**

- Total use of materials within the Scottish economy. It is unclear which indicator is being proposed here.
- Resource use efficiency. It is unclear which indicator is being proposed here
- Percentage of waste recycled. Indicator supported

### **Transport**

- Total volumes of traffic. Indicator supported
- Average distance travelled by mode. Not supported- this is difficult measure at a regional level
- Access to public transport. Not supported the variation of this indicator across Scotland may make it meaningless for use at a regional level.

It is suggested that the latter indicators are replaced by one which measures access to facilities and services. (While this indicator is largely subjective it can readily be obtained from the Scottish Household Survey and takes account of an individuals perception of accessibility).

### **Air Quality**

- Air pollution emissions. Indicator supported

A wider set of indicators would also seek to incorporate water, land and soil quality.

### **Nature**

- Trends in biodiversity action plan priority species. Indicator supported
- Trends in natural habitats. Indicator supported