

Appendix Three: Zero-Som Sustainability Event – Full Report



South Somerset Together SCS Project 5 for 2008/09 Zero-Som Sustainability Event Saturday 13th June 2009 Yeovil Innovation Centre Completion Report

As reported to the LSP Board at it's meeting on 17th July 2009.

SST Partner: Paull Robathan, Chairman
Lead Officer: Helen Rutter, SSDC Lead Officer for the LSP
Contact: Saveria Moss, LSP Coordinator
Link to SCS: All Themes, Goals and Actions. Theme: Environmentally sensitive: Goal 12: Education

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to inform partners of the outcomes of the Zero-Som sustainability event held on Saturday 13th June 2009 from 10:00 to 16:00 at the Yeovil Innovation Centre, Barracks Close, Copse Road, Yeovil.

Recommendation

That the LSP Board:

- Thank Julia Hailes for supporting the event;
- Thanks to all the organisations that exhibited at the event;
- Notes the key learning points and approves that these are applied in the development of future LSP events (See: 5.2 in this Report) including developing a process for testing the appropriateness and likely success of project proposals through peer challenge;
- Agree that unused allocation is returned to the general LSP budget.

Background

Partners approved the project at the LSP's Board meeting held on 28th November 2008 as one of seven projects to be delivered in 2008/09 to pump prime the Sustainable Community Strategy (2008-2026). Funding of £2,290 was approved and match funding drawn down from the Somerset Strategic Partnership's Executive Board, providing £4,580 for the event.

The aims of the project were to:

- Launch Shaping South Somerset: the Sustainable Community Strategy;
- Engage all the partners of the LSP in a sustainability event;
- Engage other stakeholder organisations in a sustainability event;
- Raise public awareness of the LSP, the Strategy, sustainability and what they can do to contribute towards more sustainable communities in the district.

The LSP Coordinator was responsible for organising the event.

Report

1. Who participated?

1.1. Keynote speaker

Paull Robathan approached Julia Hailes, local author of the *New Green Consumer Guidebook* to speak at the event. Ms Hailes presented for 15 minutes at the opening session and also provided a 10-minute video (taken at her home) to show to visitors during the day. (Now can be viewed on the LSP website:

<http://www.southsomersettogether.org.uk/index.jsp?articleid=36647>).

Her presentation included:

- The actions that the ordinary person/family/community *can do* that will make a real difference;
- Challenging some of the misconceptions and myths about sustainable living;
- Examples of where “people power” has made a real difference;
- Inspiring people who may currently feel “paralysed by confusion about what to do” to live more sustainably to “change one thing today- together we make a huge difference!”

Ms Hailes gave her time free of charge and provided a free, signed copy of her latest book as the prize in the free draw.

1.2. Other speakers

Cllr Ian Martin, Chairman of SSDC supported the event by welcoming everyone and Cllr Jo Roundell Greene gave a 10-minute presentation on *What does sustainability mean for South Somerset?* in which she highlighted the significant achievements over the last 3 years with regard to minimising waste to landfill through recycling and the Council taking the lead on saving energy through renewable sources such as the wind turbine which had been installed at the Yeovil Innovation Centre a few days before the event.

Paull Robathan, Chairman of South Somerset Together announced the launch of the Sustainable Community Strategy, summarising the process for its development and the key role it would have in building sustainable communities.

1.3. Exhibitors

Key points are:

- There were 41 stalls at the event covering a wide range of information, equipment, materials and expert support on how to live more sustainable lives;
- 14 LSP partner organisations participated in the event;
- Only one of these 14 had information available with no one there during the day;
- SSDC provided 12 stalls covering a range of topics including consultation on proposals made under the Sustainable Communities Act 2007;
- 14 other organisations participated in the event with the furthest coming from Poole and Bristol;
- 50 people from all these organisations attended all day;
- Four stalls were held in marquees and Rock and Road displayed a range of cycles in the inner courtyard of the YIC;
- Four organisations brought vehicles, which were displayed at the front of the building. These were DSFRS’s Fire Engine, ASC’s Community Contact Vehicle, Al-Vac’s electric powered vehicles and Carshop’s eco-fuel cars.

1.4. Other activities

1.4.1. Spatial Planning Workshop

Simon Gale, SSDC's Head of Service for Development and Building Control and David Norris, SSDC's Team Leader for Development and Building Control hosted an interactive, hour-long workshop about spatial planning and community distinctiveness.

1.4.2. Sustainable Communities Act 2007

76 proposals were initially received, and these were summarised and displayed at the Zero-Som event. The display provided extra information on each proposal, and SSDC staff were on hand to discuss the proposals further. Visitors to the event were asked to vote on the categories in priority order. A further 9 proposals were received at the event.

Results from the voting were as follows (scores):

– Sustainable Homes	20
– Sustainable Public Buildings	2
– Sustainable Transport	18
– Sustainable Design	17
– Sustainable Energy	20
– Sustainable Goods	7
– Sustainable Food	14

From this, a “long list” of proposals was developed and presented to the LSP Working Group on 22nd June, who further short listed proposals that will be prioritised by the newly established Citizen's Panel.

1.4.3. Competition

There were a range of activities for children at the event including an exercise activity by which children gained “points” towards a small portion of fruit salad, a large floor board game on how to prepare for a flooding event, colouring wild life bookmarks and pictures to take home, etc. In addition, the LSP Coordinator developed a quiz (with simple clues to be found at the event leading children to the spelling of the word “sustainability”). The prize, which was presented at the LSP's Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 17th June 2009, was a small gardening set with hand tools, watering can and seeds.

In addition, visitors were given a ticket to enter a free draw for the signed book contributed by Julia Hailes, again that was presented at the AGM.

2. Marketing

2.1. Marketing Plan

The marketing for the event started in March 2009 as soon as the LSP Board approved the date. Each LSP partner was approached by email and telephone to link to key people in their organisations who were then followed up. Marketing included:

- Letter of invitation and poster to Town and Parish Councils, followed by an email in April and reminder email in June;
- Letter of invitation to all SSDC and SCC elected members, with reminder email in June;
- A letter and poster to each of the many organisations on the LSP's Stakeholder list (used to consult on the SCS in 2007 and 2008);

- Letters and posters to all schools, Yeovil College, village shops, sport and leisure centres, village halls, Health Centres;
- Posters and flyers to Police Stations and Police Posts, SSDC’s Community Offices;
- Letters to members of Yeovil Chamber of Trade and Commerce and to businesses in South Somerset via SSDC’s Economic Development;
- Flyers to VCS organisations and groups (about 200) via the SSVCA’s newsletter;
- A full-page colour advert in the Western Gazette on 3rd June edition;
- Press release in the Western Gazette in May followed by another in the 3rd June edition (to ensure not “lost” in the information about SCC Elections the following week);
- Large colour posters at supermarkets in Yeovil including Asda, Tesco and Morrisons;
- Information on the SST website and other LSP partners’ websites including Yarlington Housing Group;
- Radio adverts with Mi-West Radio (not taken up by Orchard FM or Ivel FM).

2.2. Logo and Brand

The Zero-Som logo and brand has been developed. The colours used link to the SST logo. Everyone who has commented felt that the image was attractive. However it is uncertain whether the message was clearly understood by the target audience.

2.3. Target audience

Despite the widespread marketing the event failed to attract the public in the numbers hoped. Between 30-40 people attended (including children) which made the six-hour event feel very “empty”. Comments from exhibitors with regard to the target audience demonstrate that even they were uncertain of whom the LSP were trying to reach with the sustainability message. Although the remit was to reach “everyone” in effect all we reached were people who understood and were attracted by the term “sustainability” – a very tiny amount of the community and actually mainly the exhibitors who thoroughly valued the information provided and the networking opportunity the event provided. The Zero-Som event therefore failed in its core aim of engaging the community in the issues contained in the SCS and creating a forum for discussion around the solutions.

A range of suggestions has been offered (see 5.1 below) and all of these will be used to direct further engagement with the community. Clearly, engaging with “everyone” does not work; so in the future LSP sustainability events will be smaller, in locations where the target audience will be reached easily and with information/activities channelled to attract and maintain their attention. This will require a planned programme of engagement rather than a one-off event.

This approach however will have a resource implication for partners because it may mean more frequent engagement with the public.

3. Financial Report

Allocated	4,580.00
Expenditure	
Low Impact Living Initiative (Renewables)	402.50
SSDC Yeovil Innovation Centre – Venue Hire	650.00
SSDC Resource Centre – 9 tables (inc delivery costs)	37.39
SSDC Equipment Hire (Laptop, Projector & Screen)	0.00
Lynx Lighting (Sound equipment hire)	460.00

Western Gazette - Full page, colour advert	1092.00
Celebration Catering, Yeovil (Teas, coffees etc)	564.00
Britannia Catering Sales – 22 Tables & 40 chairs	226.55
Platform & rostrum hire	0.00
Form-Pro Printing of signage	316.71
SSDC Plotter printing	42.00
Children's competition prize	17.86
Fruit Salad activity	50.00
Printing of A5 flyers and A4 posters	52.50
Misc expenses	43.56
Total	3,955.07
Unused allocation	£ 624.93

4. Outcomes

4.1. Launch of Shaping South Somerset: the Sustainable Community Strategy

The event did launch the SCS. The document is printed and available to the public through the SST website. It clearly sets out the long term strategy for building sustainable communities in the district, recognising that LSP partner organisations play a key role in achieving a baseline of actions for other organisations to learn from as well as having responsibility for making all the SCS actions happen. The community plays an important part in achieving this but ultimately what will raise their awareness and engage them in “the mission” is seeing these things start to happen. The question remains: “Does the LSP lead on sustainability from in front or from behind?”

4.2. Engage all the partners of the LSP in a sustainability event

14 of the 25 LSP partner organisations participated in the event (56%). Clearly, the event did not engage all LSP partners although most of those that did support it were very enthusiastic and committed. The event has highlighted the following points:

- That several of the LSP partners who declined participating said that they had very little to offer at a sustainability event;
- That there was an issue with some of the larger partner organisations about engaging colleagues to provide information about their specialist field for the event;
- That holding an event on a Saturday is challenging for some;
- That greater notice of the event date is needed than the three months provided for this event.

4.3. Engage other stakeholder organisations in a sustainability event

14 non-LSP organisations had exhibitions at the event. This is exactly 50% of the organisations represented or 34% of exhibition stands. These organisations comprised of one public sector organisation, five businesses and eight VCS organisations. One of the private sector organisations approached the LSP to exhibit as a result of seeing advertising. Low Impact Living Initiative (VCS sustainability educational organisation) was hired by the LSP because of the wide range of information they provided, as an “anchor” exhibition.

The organisations presented information on community food growing/healthy eating, farmers markets, allotments, train travel, sustainable homes, local transition groups,

minimising waste and recycling, electric vehicles, eco-vehicles, cycling and using magnets to maximise fuel consumption.

4.4. Raise public awareness of the LSP, the Strategy, sustainability and what they can do to contribute towards more sustainable communities in the district

With the extent of the marketing especially using posters/flyers and radio “bites”, the general public must have seen and/or heard something in relation to the event. Whether they actually understood the weightier message of the SCS, what the LSP is, what it aims to achieve or what their vital contribution towards sustainable communities can or should be is questionable. Interestingly, the public that did attend the event were generally very interested *already* in sustainability and they commented that the exhibition was interesting and informative. The challenge is engaging people who have *no or a very limited understanding* of what sustainability is and means to them. Most people are focused on other issues whether the more serious impact of the economic recession and their family responsibilities, or their hobbies and interests – anything but the vital issue of living successfully within our environmental limits.

It is therefore an ambitious goal to *educate* the public; it will take time, ongoing effort, clear and interesting information presented to a targeted audience in the right way for that group. Clearly, raising the awareness of the public will require a more focused and incremental process.

5. Learning for the LSP

5.1. Feedback from participants

All exhibitors were requested to complete evaluation forms, which was sent out with their pre-event information packs. Of the 41 exhibitions, 17 evaluations were returned (41%). Ten of these were from public sector exhibitors, two from businesses and 5 from VCS organisations. 8 of these are individual LSP Partners; 6 were non-LSP partners. (Note: One LSP Partner sent in three evaluation forms for different exhibitions run by different officers).

The evaluation forms revealed that:

- All exhibitors acknowledged that they had received sufficient information before the event;
- 12 exhibitors did feel it had been worthwhile participating despite low numbers of the public attending;
- 14 of the 15 exhibitors that answered the question, said they would participate in another event organised by the LSP;
- Only one exhibitor said they would not like to receive further information about an event or events the LSP may organise in the future and that was a service within an LSP partner organisation.

Comments made by exhibitors on the evaluation forms included:

What could we have done differently to make things better?

- Take the message to the people where they normally congregate;
- As the event was outside of town there needed to be a draw for the public. Sustainability sounds very corporate and not very fun and even though it explains everything you were promoting, it will only attract the people already interested in the subject;

- If the target audience were families then maybe have a picnic day with fun interactive activities for children to do, getting them to learn about being green;
- If the event was more formal and there were very specific messages you wanted to give out, then maybe you could have the event during the week and invite companies and schools to come;
- Unfortunately even though the event was very well organised, the lack of public attendance did not allow us to achieve our outcomes.
- Was the venue in the wrong place for the general public to access easily?
- Possibly a more central venue;
- Maybe use a venue nearer to the town centre or have provided transport from the town centre to the innovation centre and could have had someone in the town centre on the day promoting the event. Possible wider promotion, I only heard about the event through work;
- Outside venue not in Yeovil? Having local food available/BBQ? Nearer public transport?
- It would probably work better right in the community as the venue is a bit out of the way maybe. Also, like with many events at this time of year there is just so much going on! Maybe having it a little bit 'out of season' e.g. March/October would get more people as there are less events going on.

If you experienced problems - What were they? What could we have changed?

- The event was well advertised but only a limited number of the public attended;
- My view is that the location (which was excellent from the point of view of exhibiting) was too far removed from the centre of town and did not attract any passing public attention;
- I think we should consider smaller road show type events to take the message to smaller communities over a period of several months;
- The public awareness/attendance was inadequate a review of event timing /location and promotional activities would be helpful;
- Need to use a venue where the public have to go in their normal Saturday routine e.g. town centre;
- We had no problems during the day;
- None;
- Several people (including some of the Heart of Wessex Community Rail volunteer supporters) who intended to come did not do so due to difficulty of accessing the venue by public transport. One family who came to Yeovil (from Frome by train) for the event did not manage to find a way to get there from the station or town centre. The venue was superb, and whilst the obvious solution for the future may seem to be to hold such an event in a more central location, perhaps it would be more relevant to put the spotlight on making places like the Innovation Centre more sustainable in access terms?

Any other comments:

- Need to make the environment entertaining for families. Science displays maybe even music and art included!! Just to get the mass of the population interested;
- A very well organised event;
- This was a very well organised event and please keep me informed if you are organising any others;
- I live near Chard and did not see the event advertised although maybe it was not targeted at all of South Somerset. I did not see the Yeovil papers;
- A comment to me from another exhibitor was there was no food snacks available for visitors or exhibitors to buy;

- I think there should be more engagement with community/voluntary/grass root environmental groups;
- Very well organised event that sadly didn't draw in large numbers of the public. If using a similar venue in the future, some form of road signing to the event might both help publicise it and help members of the public find it!
- Really good chance to have direct dialogue with people about the SCA – both public and other agencies.

From this event, what impression do you have of South Somerset Together (LSP)?

- A willingness to work together for common goals and use the expertise and support of other agencies;
- High quality presentations and accessible information from exhibitors with a real grasp of their subject/product. SSDC staff on hand – always friendly and helpful;
- Well managed and organised event with many exhibitors present;
- Good event well organised, staff all keen especially for a Saturday! Just wrong venue;
- Many dedicated people working toward a common goal;
- Very focused and ambitious;
- Everyone seemed to be relaxed and created a friendly atmosphere;
- It's good to see an organisation trying to involve the public and get the message across;
- Interest in sustainable issues good;
- Well organised and embracing many different organisations;
- Because of the talks and organisation at the event;
- Very good. They are really trying to champion sustainability – through a range of organisations who are experts – rather than trying to do it all ourselves! It shows the SCS is not just a paper exercise – we are really trying to put it into action (already!)
- I don't really know, as I didn't actually attend the event!
- Maybe a bit to corporate and not enough grass roots;
- An absolutely golden networking opportunity. Many useful contacts made, and several (previously unknown) organisations “discovered”. At least two exciting potential new projects likely to come out of this for us. Extremely motivating and encouraging to spend a day in the company of like minded people/organisations – we agreed with each other that we are generally going dead against the mainstream “flow” and often feel lonely and exhausted in the process. I believe many of us went away on a high, despite the relatively poor turnout of the public. Making genuine sustainability happen is going to be a hard, hard slog, and will depend on impassioned organisations and individuals like those at this event. The day was A MAJOR LEAP FORWARD in encouraging and aiding such organisations, and if possible should be continued primarily for that purpose. Wider public enthusiasm will take longer to build. It may be quite some time before any substantial proportion of people will spend a day finding out how they can help to make the world better, rather than in simply consuming more of its resources. Those members of the public who did attend were in the vanguard – and consequently more interesting to listen to in terms of suggestions and ideas than the majority at many more crowded events;
- 1)airman was there all day circulating and inspiring participants. 2) Organisation and venue impeccable – in a totally different league to most similar events 3) HUGE range of organisations participating showed that LSP is thoroughly “tuned in” to local initiatives, and encouraging every aspect of a sustainable future.

Additional comments from LSP Board member:

A comment was made that the LSP Board members could be more “challenging” about these sorts of LSP activities when they are proposed and being planned. This would test out their appropriateness and the likely success before support is given.

5.2. Summary of learning points for future public engagement events

Key points are:

- LSP to identify the target audience of any event planned and ensure the content, venue, time, accessibility (including wider public transport links) and communication plans meet their needs;
- Be less ambitious / more realistic about how the LSP will reach the target audience with their message;
- Build further understanding of sustainability and the SCS of individual LSP partners and their organisations;
- Develop a long term approach to sustainability “education” with plenty of lead-in time for LSP partners to engage with;
- Improve communication about the SCS and activities to support the SCS between the LSP representative on the Board and colleagues within their own organisation;
- Stick to one key message and make that clear and simple;
- Make the event interesting and fun for the target audience;
- Plan events to avoid the summer (unless held outside), in places where the target audience *cannot avoid* to be reached;
- LSP partners commission the Coordinator to develop a “peer challenge” template and process for proposals developed by the LSP (to use alongside the LSP project brief template) which will allow partners to test out the appropriateness of the proposals and which partners should be involved in its planning and delivery.

Background papers

- SCS Project 5 (2008/09): Sustainability Event: LSP Project Proposals;
- Zero-Som Marketing Plan;
- Information (documents) to exhibitors;
- Zero-Som Health & Safety Risk Assessment;
- Collated comments from exhibitor’s evaluation forms.