

AUDIT OF SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENTS BY SCOTTISH ENVIRONMENT LINK

Terms of Reference
2nd draft – May 2010

SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENTS

Background

In November 2007, a Concordat between the Scottish Government and Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) set out the terms of a new relationship, based on mutual respect and partnership, between the Scottish Government and Local Government. Crucial to this relationship was the ending of ring fenced funding and the creation of a Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) between each council and the Scottish Government, based on the 15 National Outcomes which underpin the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework¹. From 2009 onwards SOAs have been agreed between Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) and the Scottish Government.

SOA guidance² states that SOAs should be high level, strategic documents, with a relatively small number of priority outcomes and a relatively small number of outcome indicators used to track progress.

Area Profile

Each SOA contains an Area Profile which sets out the CPP's agreed *strategic priorities* for their local area. The priorities are expressed as *local outcomes*, which are linked to the Scottish Government's relevant National Outcomes and are delivered by the community planning partners either individually or jointly.

Outcomes Indicators

So far, the SOA process has presented a major challenge regarding how to *measure*, through indicators, the successful delivery of local outcomes. In recognition of the difficulties faced by councils in identifying meaningful indicators, the Improvement Service (IS) produced a *Menu of Local Outcome Indicators* in November 2009³, to assist in the process. The Menu is not intended to be prescriptive; rather it is up to CPPs to decide if less robust/relevant indicators should be replaced with the indicators from the updated Menu. However, the IS acknowledge that there remain serious gaps in some areas of the Menu e.g. there are no robust indicators in the Menu for the natural environment (incl. biodiversity, clean air/water/land, green space) and the historic environment.

SCOTTISH ENVIRONMENT LINK'S INVOLVEMENT

LINK wishes to provide support to CPPs in the ongoing process of drawing up and reviewing SOAs in relation to sustainable development, with particular reference to the environment. As part of the engagement process, LINK published a policy paper⁴ highlighting ten priority topics⁵ together with preferred outcomes and indicators which will benefit the environment and improve Scotland's health, communities and the economy. LINK also want to ensure that the Scottish Government remains engaged in the SOA process. As such, we are maintaining contact with the relevant central government directorates and statutory agencies.

SOA audit

As part LINK's continued monitoring of SOAs, LINK wishes to conduct an audit of how these issues (i.e. sustainable development, the environment and the ten themes) are being addressed by each CPP in SOAs to determine emerging trends in the lead-up to the national and local elections in 2011 and 2012 and influence the development of new SOAs.

¹ See: <http://openscotland.net/About/purposestratobjs>

² Single Outcome Agreements – Guidance for Community Planning Partnerships. Rory Mair (October 2008)

³ Available at: <http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/single-outcome-agreements/>

⁴ Working for Sustainable Development through Single Outcome Agreements – Scottish Environment LINK. Available at: <http://www.scotlink.org/files/publication/LINKReports/SOAreportJanuary2010.pdf>

⁵ Biodiversity, Climate Change, Ecological footprint, Education/Volunteering, Historic and Built Environment, Landscape, Physical activity/Health, Recreational access, Transport, Water and Flooding

Scope of work

❖ Audit of 32 SOAs (2009-2012)⁶

- *Check list for audit:*
 - Acknowledgement of:
 - Sustainable development
 - Environment
 - Ten key areas - Biodiversity, Climate Change, Ecological footprint, Education/Volunteering, Historic and Built Environment, Landscape, Physical activity/Health, Recreational access, Transport, Water and Flooding
- *In:*
 - Area profile
 - Are any of the three topics, under check list above, a *strategic local priority*?
 - If yes, please state what is said
 - Local outcomes
 - Are any of the ten topics above included as a *local outcome*?
 - If yes, please state what is said for each topic
 - If yes, list which topic is included
 - If yes, which of the 15 *national outcomes* is the local outcome linked to?
 - If yes, check if the outcome corresponds to the relevant LINK outcomes
 - High level outcome indicators (i.e. above-the-waterline)
 - Are any of the ten key topics included as an outcome *indicator*?
 - If yes, under what outcome is it included?
 - If yes, what is the indicator?
 - Does it correspond with the LINK list of indicators?
 - What is the target?
 - If yes, is it linked to other plans/strategies/policies?
 - If no, is the key topic linked to other plans/strategies/policies? (i.e. recognised as a below-the-waterline activity)

❖ Audit output priorities

- List of CPPs that acknowledge (i) sustainable development (ii) environment and /or (iii) ten key areas in area profile as a *strategic local priority*
 - Produce a separate list for all three
- List of CPPs that **do not** acknowledge (i) sustainable development (ii) environment and /or (iii) ten key areas in area profile under *strategic local priority*
 - Produce a separate list for all three
- List of CPPs that acknowledge any of the ten key areas as a *local outcome*
 - Produce a separate list for all ten
- List of CPPs that **do not** acknowledge any of the ten key areas as a *local outcome*
 - Produce a separate list for all ten
- List of CPPs that include the ten key areas as a *local indicator* (above-the-waterline)
 - Produce a separate list for all ten
 - Do they correspond to LINK's local indicators (YES/NO)?
 - If no produce a list of the differences for each indicator
- List of CPPs that **do not** include the ten key areas as a local indicator (above-the-waterline)
 - Produce a separate list for all ten
- List of CPPs that include ten key areas as a below-the-waterline activity
- List of CPPs that **do not** include ten key areas either in above or below-the-waterline activities
 - Produce a separate list for all ten
- Summarise findings using excel spreadsheets and figures

⁶ Greenspace Scotland, Paths for All, SEPA, SNH and Scottish Wildlife Trust have already carried out their own analysis of SOAs (covering their specialist areas) and should be contacted before starting the audit for LINK

- Report on the main trends within and between CPPs and how they relate to LINK's report. What are the important gaps? What are the recommendations for central government and CPPs for the production and monitoring of the next round of SOAs.

❖ **Timescale**

- *Inception meeting 1*
- *Background reading and downloading 32 SOAs*
 - One day
- *Audit of 32 SOAs*
 - Six – eight SOAs per day
 - Production of draft excel spread sheet
 - Total - five days
- *Inception meeting 2 Discussion of data/interpretation and recommendations*
- *Audit output*
 - Four days
- *Total Time*
 - Ten days