

Review & Distillation of Sustainability 'Actions'

Suggested in Plenary Session of

Sustainability in Public Works' Conference - 29 July 2014

It is just over a month since the Sustainability in Public Works conference at Tweed Heads/ Coolangatta. We hope that delegates found the conference a rewarding experience. Nearly 70 papers covering a broad range of sustainability topics were presented.

With so many papers presented, and so many exciting possibilities to consider, there is always a risk that we lose sight of practical sustainability actions that we can (or should) take when we return to our organisation. For that reason, in the last session of the conference we came together to discuss what public works professionals should be doing now to make public infrastructure and local communities more sustainable. After hearing the priority sustainability actions suggested by five authoritative sources, delegates were invited to suggest what they thought public works professionals should be doing now to enhance sustainability in their locality. By the end of that plenary session we had received some 40 suggested sustainability actions and approaches. These are listed on pages 2 and 3 of the attached document.

I have since had the opportunity to carefully examine the 40 suggestions. I found that, whilst many were expressed differently, the ideas suggested are frequently the same. This allowed most of the 40 suggestions to be 'distilled' down to five sustainability actions and five sustainability 'approaches'. Actions are tasks that can be implemented, whilst 'approaches' are strategies or tactics to help market or strengthen sustainability. Both the five sustainability actions and five sustainability 'approaches' were prioritised on the basis of how frequently the idea behind each was suggested. Both are listed on page 1 of the attached document.

The 'distilled' **sustainability actions**, listed in priority order, are:

1. Set, monitor, review and publicly report against challenging sustainability targets covering main resources used for energy, water, materials, waste and GHG emissions.
2. Justify sustainability benefits in public works proposals on economic grounds using 'whole-of-life' costing.
3. Promote more sustainable use of materials in public works by amending procurement policies and practices to explicitly consider environmental and social aspects.
4. Design public works with built-in resilience to cope with increasing risks and challenges of climate change and extreme natural events.
5. Investigate early replacement of all street lights with energy efficient LED lamps.

The 'distilled' **sustainability approaches**, also listed in priority order, are:

1. With help from Council's communications specialists, consult with and engage the local community (including businesses) to develop a shared sustainability vision and encourage the community to communicate its expectations to decision-makers.
2. Adopt a corporate Sustainability policy (if there is none) and make the CEO/GM or a director explicitly accountable for managing Council's sustainability performance, including climate risks, and reflect that accountability in his/her Key Performance Indicators.
3. Promote a common understanding of what sustainability is and its benefits in local government, especially in public works; using 'liveability' to highlight community well-being benefits.
4. Start with small sustainability projects that can be learnt from - try new approaches or work with your community to adapt a successful project elsewhere to suit local circumstances.
5. Market sustainability initiatives using sustainability success stories from other cities and by framing objectives in positive and readily-understood terms, such as improving efficiency, minimising waste, securing water supply and improving transport connections.

I encourage you to circulate these two lists amongst your work colleagues and then to meet with them to discuss whether and how the priority actions and 'approaches' can be incorporated into your organisation's work program and/or culture. I would be very pleased to receive any feedback on how useful those priority lists prove to be.

We plan to get in contact again in a few months to inquire how that went.

Good luck and best wishes!

Regards,

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Distilled Sustainability Actions

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Distilled Sustainability Approaches

1. With help from Council's communications specialists, consult with and engage the local community (including businesses) to develop a shared sustainability vision and encourage the community to communicate its expectations to decision-makers.
2. Adopt a corporate Sustainability policy (if there is none) and make the CEO/GM or a director explicitly accountable for managing Council's sustainability performance, including climate risks, and reflect that accountability in his/her KPIs.
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Original Sustainability Actions and Approaches suggested in Conference Plenary Session

John Martin – Adjunct Professor, LaTrobe University

1. measuring action underpins innovation and change toward sustainability outcomes
2. managing action to refine and continuously improve empowers the innovators
3. research shows quality engagement leads to measured financial strategy (Dwayne Pretli paper)
4. projects presented at this conference are qualitatively better than in 2008 - the profession has embraced the challenge.

Carol Boyle – Associate Professor, Auckland University, New Zealand

1. be positive - frame the objectives in positive terms - increasing efficiency, enhancing water supplies, improving connectivity through multiple transport options/modes
2. engage the community and local businesses - communities want to be consulted and included in the decision making and working with businesses can significantly increase the chances of success.
3. look for success stories that can be applied - there are lots of good programmes for sustainable cities which have been hugely successful and revitalised cities.
4. small projects can lead to bigger projects - sometimes starting small can demonstrate the value of a project and can also be used to identify issues and how to resolve them. Learn from the small projects but use them to see what is going to be most successful.
5. two cities are not the same - while a project may have been successful in one city, it will likely need to be modified to be successful in another; engage the community in developing the project to suit local norms, society and culture
6. don't be afraid to try something different - new ideas will always be needed and have to start somewhere.

Stephen Lees – Director Sustainability, IPWEA

1. if it has not yet done so, persuade Council to adopt a Sustainability Policy
2. have Council set a few measurable sustainability targets covering all its main function areas
3. make Council's CEO/GM or a director accountable for managing Council's sustainability performance and reflect that accountability in his/her KPIs
4. measure and report publicly each year on Council's usage of its most significant types of energy, water, materials and waste
5. institute an annual formal review by the CEO/GM of Council's sustainability performance against its sustainability objectives/targets, and public reporting of the findings
6. amend Council's procurement policies and processes so that environmental and social aspects are also explicitly considered when assessing tenders
7. negotiate with your electricity distribution utility for the early replacement of all street lights that Council owns or pays for with energy efficient LED lamps
8. map or field check the condition of all ecologically sensitive sites within the LGA at least every ten years.

Sustainability Roundtable – presented by Jill Park, Editor of Public Works Professional

1. explain what 'sustainability' means in local government context - so everyone is 'on the same page' – many people misunderstand
2. 'liveability' is easier to sell – sustainability targets plus creating connections throughout the community so people can interact and feel they belong
3. measure and regularly report to the community on Council's energy and water usage, and savings achieved by making changes

4. set Council's sustainability targets after reviewing what other councils have done and consulting with the community
5. set challenging sustainability targets for Council to drive innovation and commitment, even if the targets are ultimately not achieved
6. promote life cycle assessment to encourage more durable and longer-lasting infrastructure
7. design new infrastructure to cope with an uncertain future climate, not last century's climate.

Sustainability Insight Report – presented by Chris Champion, CEO of IPWEA

1. promote better understanding of what sustainability means in public works and the benefits of sustainability
2. encourage community members to communicate their expectations of greater sustainability in order to positively influence decision-makers
3. use 'whole of life' costing and effective asset management to enhance the sustainability of public works and local communities
4. justify sustainable public works on sound economic grounds, as well as the environment
5. re-focus decision-makers on life cycle benefits, rather than just short-term financial savings
6. use examples of vital long-lasting public infrastructure with no end of life in contemplation, such as the Sydney Harbour Bridge, to demonstrate the value and importance of a long-term vision
7. design public works with in-built resilience to meet the climate and energy challenges ahead
8. use more sustainable materials in public works to better prepare for future scarcity.

Discussion Session – facilitated by MC Gerry Gannon

1. develop a sustainable transport policy to include walkability, cycleways, and interaction with State Governments
2. do a business case for your energy use across different areas of the business
3. do an audit of greenhouse gas generated from road construction material
4. find your climate risks assessment and act on the existing policy, find the directors who are responsible for this
5. collaborate and share a common vision and include the community
6. have sustainability as a topic in every meeting
7. we will look at whole of life for everything we do
8. use your communications capacity within your organisation to get your message across.

For further information, contact Dr Stephen Lees, Director Sustainability, Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia: Stephen.Lees@ipwea.org