



Your Moray - Your Environment

REPORT TO: GREENER STRATEGIC GROUP ON 18 SEPTEMBER 2008

SUBJECT: ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINTING

BY: HEAD OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an overview of "Ecological Footprinting", what it is and what it can do, as well as its relationship and relevance to the Single Outcome Agreement.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Strategic Group agree:

- Note the options for measuring Ecological Footprinting described in this report; and
- Instruct further investigation into the implications of undertaking an ecological footprint.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Greener Strategic Group has been tasked with delivering National Outcomes 12 and 14 of the Single Outcome Agreement "to protect and enhance the environment" and "to reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production"

- 3.2 Within the Moray Community Planning Partnership Single Outcome Agreement document, an ecological footprint is identified as the indicator to demonstrate progress in delivering these priorities.

3.3 What is an Ecological Footprint?

- 3.3.1 An eco-footprint is a measure of the impact of human activities on the natural environment that sustains us. The footprint expresses the area of land and sea that is required to feed us, provide resources, produce energy, assimilate waste and re-absorb the greenhouse gases produced by our use of fossil fuels. Each resident of Moray would need 5.32 hectares (slightly below national average of 5.37) of land and sea to provide enough energy, food, water and materials to sustain his or her lifestyle. To put this into perspective if the earth's resources were spread evenly among the world's population each person would have 1.8 hectares to sustain them.

3.3.2 To clarify, a carbon footprint differs from an ecological footprint. A carbon footprint is a measure of the impact humans have on the environment in terms of the amount of carbon dioxide emissions that are directly or indirectly caused by an activity. Energy consumption is however a significant component of any ecological footprint. It is worth noting that Moray Council is participating in the latest round of the Carbon Management Programme and NHS Grampian has already completed the process and is actively implementing the actions arising from it on an ongoing basis.

3.4 What can an Eco-Footprint do?

3.4.1 Ecological footprinting is a tool that can help local authorities and their partners work towards and achieve genuinely sustainable communities. For the purposes of this report two different ecological footprints are discussed.

3.4.2 Firstly, the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) footprint, this is a standardised ecological footprint prepared for all Local Authorities. It is calculated using an average figure representing consumption and production demands that is multiplied by the population of an area. The footprint is freely available online and has no input from Local Authorities as data collection is carried out by SEI. This footprint can be compared with other Local Authority areas and the Scotland wide figure. The significant drawback of this footprint is that there is no way to influence outcomes, if the footprint increases or decreases and no way to evidence that a particular policy or plan has a negative or positive impact on the footprint.

3.4.3 The alternative is to invest in the REAP software tool which offers the flexibility to include locally sourced data to the SEI footprint. The clear benefit of the software tool is that it can help provide baseline data to inform policies and projects, analyse different policy scenarios to determine targets and predict footprint reductions based on alternative courses of action. Most importantly it can measure environmental performance and identify key areas for improvement. If populated with accurate local data it will provide a more accurate presentation of Moray's eco-footprint. The main drawback is that by updating the baseline using locally specific information takes away the direct comparability at the national and regional level. There will also be significant input required in terms of staff resources for data collection input and the roll out of a training programme to relevant individuals.

3.5 Purchase of Eco-Footprinting Software

3.5.1 The costs associated with the purchase of the REAP software to undertake an eco-footprint is £5000 with an annual licence fee of £450. There is no limit to the number of computers the software can be installed on. As part of the £5000 payment there are 5 days of support and training from the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI). The cost of the software will decrease significantly to £3000 if bought in bulk, by a group of Local Authorities for example. There is a Government funded Local Footprints Project that could provide further support.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) COMMUNITY PLAN AND SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT

Preparation of an Eco-footprint would assist in delivering Single Outcome Agreement commitments by providing baseline data that can inform decisions and allow policies and strategies to be developed to reduce Moray's eco-footprint.

(b) RESOURCES (FINANCIAL, STAFFING AND RISKS)

There may be significant resource implications in terms of staff time and the report seeks approval to fully investigate these.

(c) CONSULTATIONS

There have been no consultations undertaken.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 An eco-footprint prepared using the REAP software tool with locally sourced data is a useful tool in delivering the Single Outcome Agreement commitments in terms of identifying key areas for improvement and providing the basis for monitoring performance over time.**
- 5.2 Further investigation is required to establish the technical aspects associated with the project, including staff resources, training and data collection which may be significant to ensure that the Group is in a position to make the best decision on whether or not to commit to undertake an eco-footprint for Moray.**

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Background Papers:
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