

Sustainable Scotland Summit

A report of key findings



THE PRINCE'S
MAYDAY
NETWORK

In association with **Business in the Community**

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Overview of the Summit

Held at Holyrood Palace in June 2010 Scottish Business in the Community's (SBC), the Sustainable Scotland Summit united Scotland's most influential businesses and decision makers to discuss solutions to the challenges and opportunities that Scotland faces as it moves towards a more sustainable future.

The summit featured informative speeches from renowned figures, including HRH Prince Charles, Duke of Rothesay, the First Minister Alex Salmond and Frank Blin Chairman PricewaterhouseCoopers in Scotland, who all underscored the challenges and potential solutions for a sustainable transformation.

The event also provided a platform for SBC and Mayday members to offer valuable feedback. SBC carried out a survey during the Summit, the resulting information was analysed and integrated into the findings of this report.

Some key findings:

- 44.3% of delegates identified poverty, social inequality and climate change as the biggest challenges facing Scotland today.
- Over half of delegates did not think that the economy was the most important component of the Triple Bottom Line (TBL), instead 58.5% identified society and the environment as the most important factors.
- 89.4% of those questioned stated that the best measure of success at a national level is a combination of economic progress, together with social well being and environmental improvements.
- Over 73% of businesses identified training or help with behavioural change initiatives as a key requirement for increasing sustainability within their organisation.
- According to 67% of those questioned, Sustainable economic growth should mean; Growth that has sustainable development at its core.

"You have recognised that it is easy to set targets, but a great deal harder to achieve change"

HRH Prince Charles, Duke of Rothesay

The Road Ahead

Poverty, social inequality and climate change were identified by almost half the delegates as the biggest challenges facing sustainability in Scotland.

Only 36.1% of delegates identified the budget deficit as the biggest challenge. Instead organisations are looking towards tackling challenges within society and the environment, to ensure a sustainable Scotland.

Notably, over 89% of delegates agreed that a combination of environmental improvements, social well being and economic progress were defining factors in measuring success at a national level. Furthermore, over 55% stated that the most important components of the TBL are the environment and society.

With all the media attention recently focusing on the budget, the figures above demonstrated a significant shift in Scotland's desire to encourage a new route to recovery aimed at tackling the social and environmental challenges. It is evident from this that climate change, poverty and social inequality are issues at the forefront of the business agenda. It is therefore, imperative that the business community and government work to incorporate practices which can help tackle these challenges.

SBC strongly believes, and indeed advocates to its members, that tackling the social and climate issues of the day goes hand in hand with increasing profitability and sustainability of the businesses. However, while 92% of delegates identified sustainable business practices within their organisation, for a business to benefit fully from its CSR and sustainability agendas, they must go one step further to integrate these into their core business.

A challenge identified by the audience in implementing sustainability was potential competitive disadvantages arising from Scottish, UK or EU specific legislation, which was identified by over one third of delegates as the biggest long term threat to sustainability within business. While SBC acknowledges that this is a risk, we believe that this barrier can easily be overcome through collaboration between government and private sector to ensure that communication on policy development and implementation is well maintained. However, this further demonstrates the complex nature of sustainability on a global level, and as Fran Blin stated: “.. balancing society, economy and the environment is not always a perfect fit.”

Business, government and public sector all need to be realistic about what can be achieved while at the same time working together to overcome barriers and realise opportunities in the pathway to a sustainable Scotland. Scottish Business in the Community offer a range of training, support and advisory services which can help inform individuals and support organisations to implement and develop sustainable business practices. While these services are readily available, it is up to organisations to take these initial steps to actively increase their commitment to sustainability

As the Government works to rebuild the economic structure of Scotland, it is vital that this is constructed in a way which encourages a level playing field, with sustainability at its core.

According to John Swinney MSP ‘Scotland must deploy imagination’ and this turning point provides the perfect opportunity to look forward with such imagination, enabling the

incorporation of a framework into everyday business practise, that does not compromise competitive advantage in the UK and Europe, but which does maximise the opportunities for Scotland in being a leader in sustainable development.

- SBC will continue to work with the government to further develop such a framework, including expert dialogue, forums and training to facilitate sustainability across the board. It is important that organisations join these dialogues and build partnerships to inform on the needs of the business sector going forward.

Work collaboratively

According to Sue Bruce, Chief Executive of Aberdeen City Council; "The impact on businesses is potentially going to be huge. If that level of reduction in public sector expenditure is going to happen, and none of us have any reason to believe it won't, there is going to be a huge impact on the business flow, particularly for SMEs in Scotland"

These public sector cuts have the potential to impact hugely not only on SMEs, but also on skills, the future workforce and general confidence that exists in Scotland.

38.1% of delegates identified lack of finance as the biggest barrier to implementing social and environmental initiatives for their organization. It is therefore critical that both the private and public sectors work together to overcome financial restrictions.

SBC suggests that partnerships in practice, with a strategic alliance of Government, the public sector, businesses and the voluntary sector, could provide a secure foundation for Scotland's economic future. More should also be done to promote the business, and economic advantages, arising from addressing social and environmental challenges and opportunities.

Educating your supply chain

Sustainable partnerships must also be promoted externally, with organisations using their influence to build sustainability within their supply chains.

- According to Frank Blin at the Sustainable Scotland Summit, 'multi-nationals get it'. The larger corporations understand and, in many cases, integrate sustainability. However, sustainability must be integrated on every level to increase effectiveness.

It is the role of organizations to communicate the benefits to suppliers, partner organisations and stakeholders to help increase knowledge and the amalgamation of sustainability within the supply chain.

Organisations must drive their supply chain towards sustainability on every level. With over 90% of organisations attending the Summit integrating sustainable practices, the active engagement of the supply chain is vital to fulfil Scotland's potential.

The importance of behavioural change

An immediate barrier to implementing social and environmental initiatives within organisations is facilitating and encouraging behavioural change with staff.

Results demonstrated that over 73% of organisations identified training or help with behavioural change initiatives as a key requirement for increasing sustainability within their organisation.

Supporting and educating colleagues, customers and suppliers is hugely important to help build on changes required. Scottish Business in the Community is perfectly equipped to educate and instigate behavioural changes in employees through the wide range of services available to organizations.

Behavioural change initiatives should also have a wider influence, with the purpose of influencing positive behaviour changes both at work and at home.

In response to this Scottish Business in the Community is supporting **Start** (www.startuk.org), a behaviour change initiative based on building a positive vision of the future, inspired by SBC President HRH The Prince of Wales. Aimed at the public, Start was set up to educate individuals on sustainable practices which can easily be incorporated in to everyday life.



Where to from here?

SBC believes that there are 4 key areas for development in supporting the transition to a sustainable Scotland:

- Collaboration
- Leadership
- Education
- Procurement

As has been mentioned, collaboration both within and between sectors is vital. Sharing of resources, knowledge, ideas and best practice is key in achieving this. However, it is up to organizations to respond. Through our forums, through the Prince's Mayday Network and through events, SBC can support this collaboration.

Leadership, across all sectors, is instrumental. However, traditional leadership will not necessarily work. We need innovative leaders, leaders who are able to capitalise, and sell, the advantages of a triple bottom line approach to business.

Leaders will need to use their influence to educate employees, customers and stakeholders. Civil society must be on board if Scotland is to lead the way; our behaviours and attitudes need to change. We need to see the benefits of a sustainable Scotland for ourselves, our communities, our businesses and Scotland as a whole.

We should also be using all the tools at our disposal, in particular, those large businesses that have sustainability at 'the core of their business', should use their influence within their supply chains and ensure that this is incorporated in SMEs.

Scotland is small enough to ensure that this collaboration can be manageable and effective, and large enough to influence others to do the same. There are a number of challenges facing the future sustainability of Scotland. However, it is crucial that organisations identify the opportunities that result from these challenges and lead the way in adapting traditional business methods to further incorporate sustainable business practices.

SBC is here to facilitate this journey.

"It is clear we (Scotland) have yet to scratch the surface of the potential of developing sustainable business and I welcome SBC's work on this important issue."

First Minister of Scotland, Alex Salmond

Get involved, steps for organisations

- Take one more step for change: 73% of delegates said that 'help with behavioural changes' and training for staff is key to increase sustainable and responsible business delivery within their organisation. Support your colleagues, customers and suppliers to make the changes needed to get to the next level.
- Take a look at how you can make your business in Scotland more competitive in the long term through embracing sustainable development. Where are the opportunities, what stakeholders do you need to engage with to make it happen?
- If you are not already a Member of SBC join us and be active in the movement of businesses working to deliver sustainable solutions.
- Help SBC position Scotland as a leader in sustainable business practice and a model for the future. Tell you international contacts about how your business – and Scotland – is trying to get it right for today and future generations.

Further information all SBC programmes and services can be found at www.sbcscot.com, alternatively please call Angela Bonney on (0131) 451 1100 or email angelabonney@sbcsco.com