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Sustainability Appraisal of the National Eisteddfod of Wales

Summary

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Summary

There is more to sustainable development than recycling and using low energy light bulbs, although those are important elements. Sustainable Development is about trying to achieve a balance between economic prosperity, social welfare and protecting the environment.

More than 150,000 visitors turn up at the Eisteddfod annually, over 90% of them in 7,000 or more cars per day. To satisfy their needs the Eisteddfod uses 300,000 gallons of water during the week and they all contribute to the 400,000 gallons of sewerage produced. They also contribute to the 66 or so tonnes of rubbish collected. It's not surprising therefore that the Eisteddfod pops up on the radar of environmental pressure groups as in 2006 with the concerns raised by the 'Stop Climate Chaos' coalition.

But what of the other elements of sustainability? In response to the environmental challenge an appraisal covering the three elements of sustainable development (people, planet, profit) was carried out and a report produced by April 2007.

The Eisteddfod scored very highly on the social and cultural side of its activities and the positive benefits of the community actions extend way beyond the Eisteddfod week. We concluded that it's very unlikely that anyone has the complete picture of the value of this. Take for example the old lady who hadn't been out of her home for years for fear of crime, who joined a knitting group to raise money for the Eisteddfod. Often groups such as this enjoy themselves so much that they continue to meet.

The financial crisis of 2004 motivated the Eisteddfod to adopt changes which have led to improved stability and longer term planning. With regard to purchasing decisions there is formal documentation and the Eisteddfod takes action on most of the issues discussed such as sourcing fair trade products and encouraging caterers to use of biodegradable cups. There is room for improvement but they are on the right track.

Transport and energy are the components which impact the environment most, but there were good points to note. Although the environmental impact of transport has attracted

negative publicity the Eisteddfod has taken action on most topics covered. They are aware that cars are a problem but a formal management system is in place, with aims and targets, and performance is certainly improving. Many people consider the Eisteddfod to be their summer holiday – and therefore without it they may travel much further, even possibly by air!

A low score was achieved for energy since performance in relation to energy consumption and CO₂ emission has declined. The reason for this is that the energy demand of stallholders and the expectations of campers and caravanners have increased. However, plans are now afoot to use bio-fuels in the generators in 2008 to improve performance and this year there will be a wind turbine present to raise awareness of alternative options.

Performance with regard to recycling is very much dependent on the level of cooperation on the part of the relevant Local Authority. The reality is more complex than one might expect – during one Eisteddfod, for example, the recycling facilities provided were excellent but this turned out to be very much at the expense of regular services throughout the host county!

As a nomadic festival, the Eisteddfod is confident that it leaves its sites in a better state than when it arrives, be it agricultural land or a former industrial site, such as in Swansea, 2006. Over the last five years it has had a positive effect on biodiversity at each of the sites.

The story which has emerged from the appraisal is a positive one. Although much hard work and innovative ideas are needed in order to solve the transport and energy issues, there is much to celebrate regarding the Eisteddfod's contribution to Welsh sustainability.

Background

The National Eisteddfod of Wales

The National Eisteddfod of Wales is Wales' most important cultural festival, and about 150,000 people attend it every year. The festival is held in a different location every year, during the first week in August. 'Y Maes' is the name given to the site, and there is a presence there for about five months. Staff also have a permanent office in Cardiff. Each Eisteddfod is the culmination of years of organisational work and fund-raising by the host community in the area the festival is visiting.

Sustainability is a subject that naturally receives the careful consideration of the management board, and the sustainability of the language, culture and Welsh speaking communities fully underpins the Eisteddfod. A number of external influences also stimulate interest, including county councils, and sponsors such as the Environment Agency. Their primary sponsor, the Welsh Assembly Government, has a constitutional commitment to sustainable development, and the festival offers a unique opportunity to communicate this to the people of Wales. In addition a number of pressure groups have been attempting to draw attention to the considerable impacts the Eisteddfod has on the environment. For example, the Eisteddfod uses 300,000 gallons of water, and generates 400,000 gallons of sewage. About 50,000 cars travel to the festival, and fossil fuel is burnt to produce hundreds of thousands of kW-hours of electricity.

The appraisal was undertaken by Dr Einir Young and Gruffudd Edwards of *Synnwyr Busnes - Business Sense*, and Elfed Roberts (Chief Executive) and Alan Gwynant (Technical Manager) of the Eisteddfod's management board and a report produced by April 2007.

Synnwyr Busnes Business Sense

Synnwyr Busnes – Business Sense service is a specialist business support service in sustainable development. Our goal is to present the incorporation of sustainable practices as **good business sense** to a diverse business audience across Wales.

The project arose from the University of Wales' *Wales SCEnE* (Sustainable Communities, Environment and Economy)¹ project whose remit was to produce a best practice guide to sustainability for organisations in Wales. In order to identify best practice *Wales SCEnE* developed a method by which organisations and companies of any size could assess their contribution towards sustainable development. Twenty-five organisations from a wide variety of private, public, voluntary and community sectors took part in the project to help develop and refine an appraisal questionnaire to measure sustainability.

In 2006, with funding from the European Union, Welsh Assembly Government and the University of Wales, Bangor, *Synnwyr Busnes – Business Sense* in collaboration with ARENA Network has refined and updated the *Wales SCEnE* appraisal methodology to produce a practical and accessible appraisal.

The appraisal

In the 2006 Eisteddfod a challenge was issued by a coalition of organisations (such as Merched y Wawr, the Women's Institute, Christian Aid, WWF Wales) under the banner 'Stop Climate Chaos' for the Eisteddfod to be more 'green'.

In the first instance it was decided that no credible steps could be taken without an overview of the Eisteddfod's performance on the components of sustainable development. Not only how it deals with environmental issues but how it considers society, the economy and the environment and how it integrates the three elements. The appraisal process took place in response to a commitment made by the Eisteddfod's Chief Executive in the 2006 Eisteddfod that he wished to collaborate with Synnwyr Busnes and the Environment Agency to ensure that the Eisteddfod's contribution to sustainable development was assessed and developed.

¹ Wales SCEnE was an initiative of the Welsh Assembly Government known as the TASK programme - Towards A Sustainable Knowledge-based Region that was carried out in 2002-04 and part funded through the European Regional Development Fund. (For more information see www.sustainableregions.net).

This report is a summary of the Eisteddfod's activities in relation to sustainable development as reflected in the appraisal. It covers fourteen "components" of sustainable development and looks at relevant issues in terms of management, extent of consideration versus actions taken, and performance. Current practices are described and may be a starting point for raising awareness and improvement.

The 'Stop Climate Chaos' coalition expressed concerns that the Eisteddfod's response would not be in the public arena. We therefore would like to publicise the results of the appraisal – the strengths and weaknesses. The successes should be celebrated and shared as examples of best practices. We hope that interested parties can collaborate with ourselves and the Eisteddfod to move this agenda forward.

Disclaimer

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Results

Introduction

The information and graphs provided here have been designed to provide a management overview of the sustainability performance of the Eisteddfod, based on information collected during the appraisal and is a snap-shot of operations at that time. As such, this analysis is a first step in the process of refining the Eisteddfod's working practices and strategies.

The *Synnwyr Busnes - Business Sense* appraisal addresses fourteen topics or components of sustainability that need to be considered when evaluating whether an organisation is working in a sustainable way. These are: economics and business; resource management and purchasing; risk management; people; employment and the workplace; external relations; transport; energy; air quality; waste; water; land-use; biodiversity; environmental management and the integration of sustainable development. A section of the appraisal was dedicated to each component.

In addition, there were three types of question for each component – (i) management, (ii) performance and (iii) concern and action. The results presented here are based on an analysis of the answers to these questions.

Component scores

Overall scores for each component have been derived by combining the answers given to the three types of questions, and the results are shown below. The scores are presented as a percentage of the highest possible score for each component, and therefore scores below 100 indicate that improvements could be made (Figure 1).

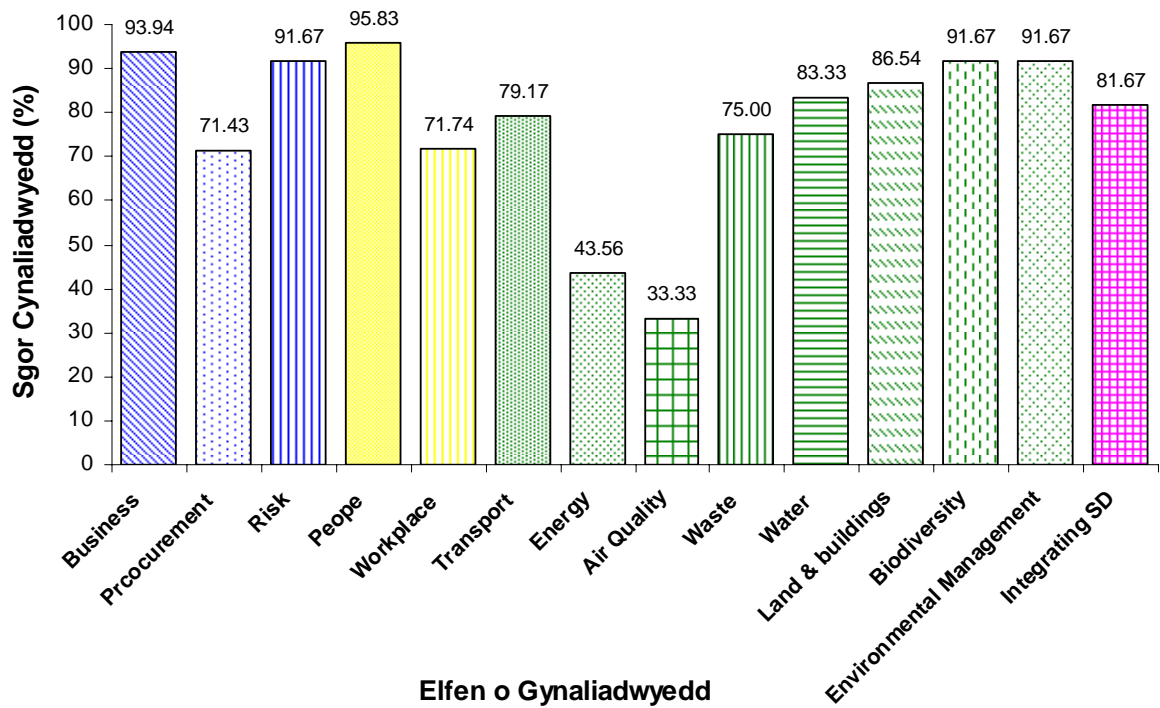


Figure 1. Individual component scores derived from responses to the management, performance and concern versus action questions.

Dimension scores

Sustainable development consists of three dimensions – people (society), planet (the environment) and profit (the economy). In order to see whether the Eisteddfod gives equal consideration to these three dimensions the components were allocated to one of the dimensions and the answers given contributed to the score given to that dimension. For example, the answers to the waste component section contribute to the ‘environment’ dimension, those on ‘people’ to the ‘society’ dimension and resourcing to the ‘economy’. The component relating to integrating sustainable development has not been included in any of the dimension scores.

The Eisteddfod is to be congratulated on its well balanced high scores on the economic (86%) and social (84%) dimensions with the environment (73%) having a slightly lower score (Figure 2).

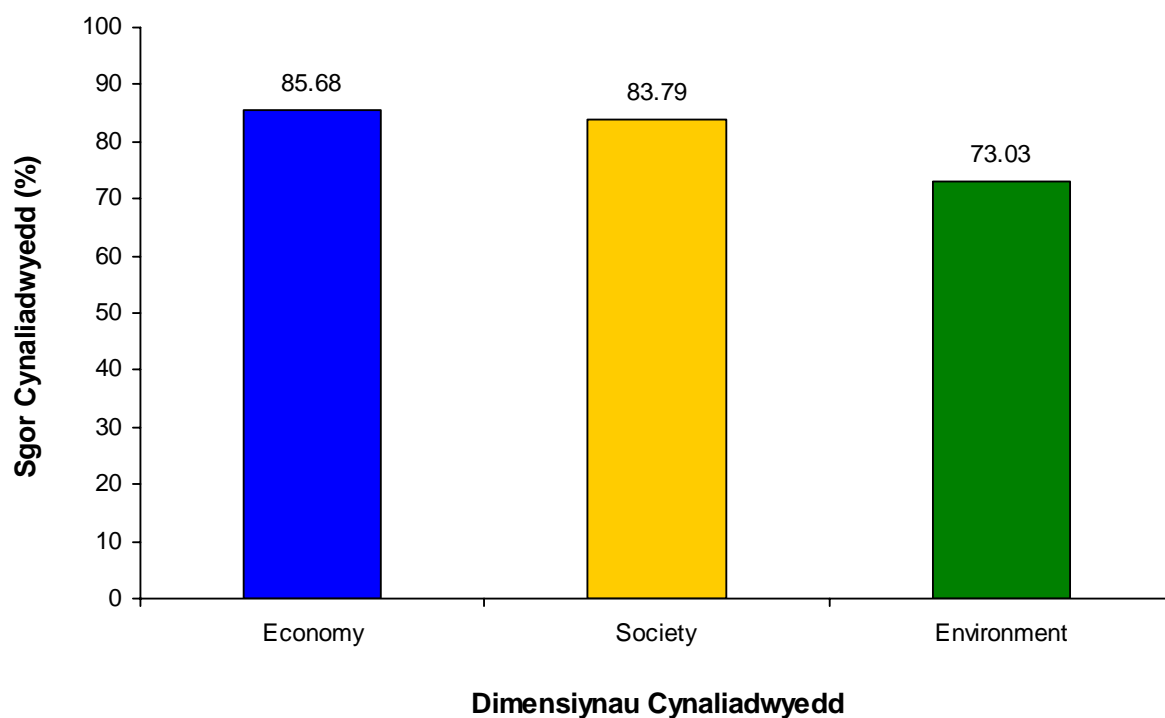


Figure 2. Dimension scores derived from the scores for the components of sustainability allocated to one of the dimensions of sustainable development.

‘Concern versus action’ questions

The first set of questions for each component addressed issues of **concern versus action** relating to each component. The answers were recorded as a choice between five different options, and these are listed in Table 1:

Table 1. Possible answers to ‘concern versus action’ questions

Option	Meaning
1	Not applicable
2	No action taken, and the issue is not of concern
3	The issue had not been considered previously, but is now a concern
4	The issue has been considered previously, but action has not yet been taken
5	The issue has received consideration, and action has been taken as a result

In order to illustrate the Eisteddfod’s action toward sustainable development as a balanced and complete view of all components, a radar diagram has been created. On this diagram there are three ‘areas’ of different colour, obtained by connecting three sets of points plotted on a series of axes (i.e. lines extending out from the middle), with one axis for each applicable component (Figure 3).

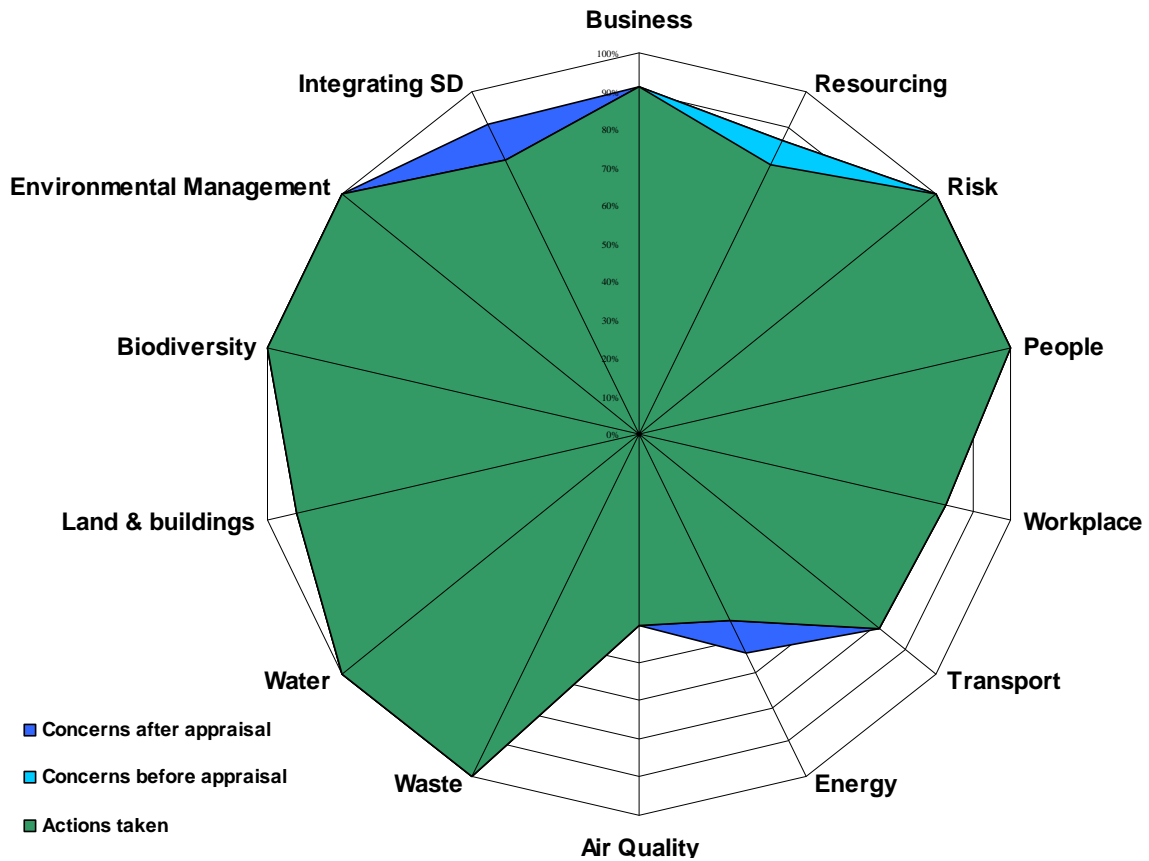


Figure 3. A comparison of concern and action taken for each component of sustainability

The green area was obtained by plotting the ‘action score’ for each component – the number of action questions answered as option 5 (Table 1), as a percentage of all applicable questions – on each axis, and connecting the plots. The light-blue area represents concerns that existed before the appraisal and is obtained by plotting and connecting the number of questions answered as either option 4 or option 5 (Table 1), as a percentage of the total. The dark blue area represents concerns after the appraisal (including new concerns) and is created in the same way, but this time using the total number of questions where the answer was either options 3, 4 or 5.

If either of the two blue areas are visible in the diagram, this indicates that the ‘action’ score (green area) is smaller than the ‘concern’ score, and therefore the organisation should be doing more to ensure that their actions fully reflect their aspirations with regard to sustainability. If the dark blue area is visible, this indicates that the appraisal has stimulated interest in issues that had not been considered previously.

Ideally, the best outcome would be a symmetrical diagram (showing awareness of all issues comprising sustainable development) with high scores for concern and action in all components. The green area should cover the light-blue area completely, indicating that

concern has been matched with the relevant action. Where less than 100% is shown on against any component, further consideration and action is possible.

The Eisteddfod has already taken some action on 126 out of the 146 (86%) applicable issues covered by questions in the appraisal. Figure 3 shows that some issues had not been considered in eight components but, on the whole, the blue area shows fairly good symmetry and good scores in most components. The green area is not much smaller and this is an indication of positive activity. There is room for improvement in particular on energy and air quality. New issues of concern were identified for energy and integrating sustainable development. Even if a score of 100% has been attained it should be noted that it only refers to the response given to the questions asked in this appraisal – which isn't exhaustive.

Management questions

The second type of question, for each component, addressed the issue of management, and the Eisteddfod was given a score based on five possible answers, shown in Table 2:

Table 2. Key to management categories

Management category	Description of management
1	No procedures or consideration of the issue
2	Informal practices, verbal or written statements, limited actions
3	Formally documented procedures or reviews
4	Formal management system with targets and objectives
5	Accredited management system with programme of continual improvement and incorporation of best practice

The results are shown in Figure 4:

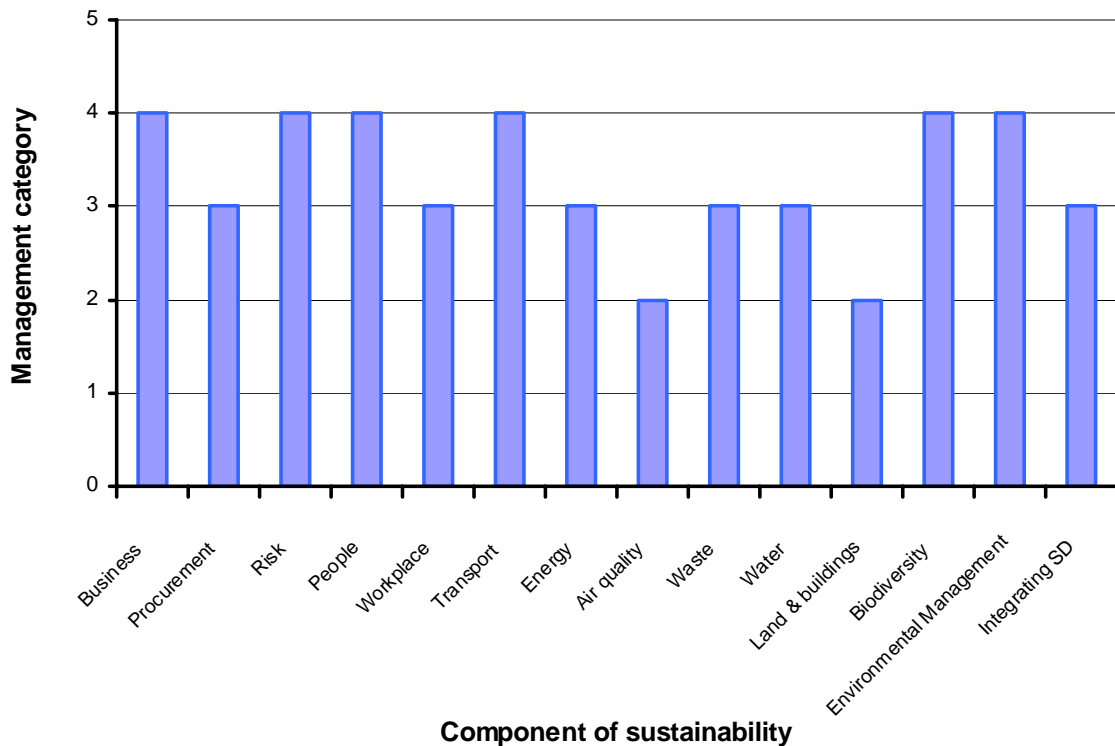


Figure 4. Comparison of the management practices for each component of sustainability

The Eisteddfod does not have any accredited management systems (level 5). However there were six components with a formal system with aims and targets (level 4), and six others with arrangements or reviews recorded formally (level 3). Informal arrangements, verbal or written statements and limited action (level 2) exist for Air quality and Land & buildings, and there were no components without any consideration or procedures at all (level 1).

Trends in performance

The third set of questions addressed performance during the past year. Each section of the appraisal comprised questions relating to how well the company was performing with regard to indicators related to each component. The possible answers are listed in Table 3 and the trends shown in Table 4.

Table 3. Management categories

Description	Key to change in performance
Definite improvement	😊😊
Probable improvement	😊
No change	😐
Probable decline	😞
Definite decline	😞😞

Table 4. Trends in performance over the last year

Indicator	Change in performance
Business performance	😊😊
Influence of environmental and ethical issues on purchasing decisions	😊
Ability to cope with risk	😊😊
Relations with neighbours/community	😊😊
Number of working partnerships	😊
Working conditions	😊
Performance on transport	😊😊
Energy consumption	😞😞
CO ₂ emissions	😞😞
Atmospheric emissions	😞
Volume of waste produced	😊
Proportion of waste reused or recycled	😞😞
Water usage	😊
Emissions to water	😊
Condition of landscape or buildings	😊😊
Condition of neglected land or derelict buildings	😊😊
Impact on biodiversity	😊😊
Environmental performance	😊
Incorporating sustainability into business practices	😊😊

Performance improved in relation to nine indicators, six showed no change, and another four deteriorated. All indicators were relevant.

CONCLUSION

The information presented here provides an overview to the Eisteddfod management board of its sustainable development performance based on the information gathered during the appraisal. It is a snapshot of the activities at the time. The analysis is a first step in the process of refining the working practices and the strategy of the company.

The results show that the Eisteddfod had considered many environmental, economic and social issues and has achieved a good balance between the three elements, in terms of sustainable development, in their business operations. Many issues applicable at the time have led to some action and suggestions have been made to further improve on this.

In the present business and political climate, it makes good sense for any organisation to consider sustainable development when making decisions about the way it operates.

Eisteddfod visitors, together with sponsors and the wider public, will begin to ask for more in relation to environmental and social matters, and it is important that the Eisteddfod has the ability to respond to demands in a knowledgeable way, and show evidence of their commitment. We trust that this report will help the Eisteddfod to become more aware of the relevant matters and aid in the attempt to further integrate sustainable development into the event.

The *Synnwyr Busnes – Business Sense* team would like to thank you for working with us and for making a positive contribution to sustainable development in Wales.

The full report is available on our website: www.synnwyr-busnes.org.