

# **From the Third Sector Task Force to the Big Green Society: *Making Sense of the Policy Agenda on the Third Sector and the Environment***

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# Contextualising the work

- ‘Environment’ strand of the TSRC
  - Mapping the environmental third sector
  - Mainstreaming the environment
    - Policy
    - Environmental management systems
  - Third sector innovations for low carbon practices



# Overview

*Using key documents(e.g. Defra/DECC), and interview material – this presentation asks:*

- To what extent has the change in government led to change in policy towards third sector and the environment?
- How can we account for these changes?
- What are their implications?

# Key movements in government strategy

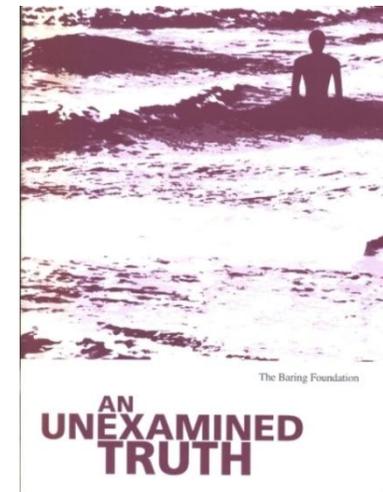
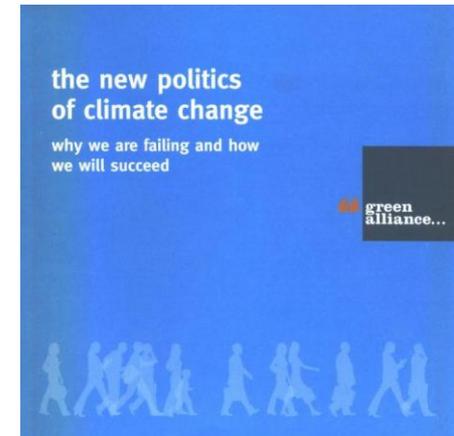
- Defra *Environment Action Fund* (2002-2008)
- Defra *Third Sector Strategy* (2008-2010)
- Greener Living Fund (alongside strategy)
- Charity Commission (2008 onwards)
- DECC *Low Carbon Community Challenge* (2009-2011)
- Joint Ministerial and Third Sector Task Force: (2009-2010)
- Big (Green) Society? (Post may 2010)
  - OCS, Defra and DECC

HM Government



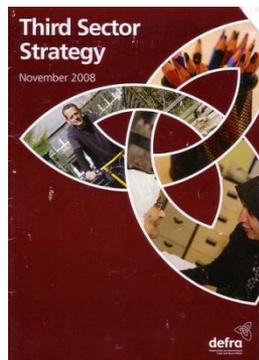
# Third sector momentum

- Under Labour
  - City Bridge Trust
  - Baring Foundation *Big Response*
  - ACEVO *The Sustainability Challenge*
  - NCVO
  - Green Alliance *New Politics of Climate Change*
- Under coalition
  - Green Alliance *New Times, New Connections?*
  - Baring Foundation *An Unexamined Truth?*
  - NCVO: climate change project



# Discourse under Labour (1)

- Emphasis on partnership working
  - Achieving Defra's goals?
  - Minor current on independence
- Many environmental activities
- DECC with a localised community response
- Charity Commission develops new guidelines



# Discourse under Labour (2)

- Creating a politics of climate change?
- Strong emphasis on building third sector infrastructure
  - Third Sector Advisory Board
  - Every Action Counts
  - Capacity building programmes
  - Environmental performance management
  - Task Force develops 57 action points



*In many ways reflected broader third sector-state relations and policy?*

# Policy discourse under Coalition

- Apparent end of Task Force
- Move from top down to local action
  - *Nick Hurd*
- Lack of attention to strategic developments (unclear fate of most of 57 action points)
- DECC fails to continue with LCCC
- Greatly reduced Defra comment on civil society (although civil society advisory board remains)
- New policy actors? E.g. BIG?



*Sound familiar?*

# Third Sector reaction to coalition policy

- Partnership > a more agnostic approach?
- Why?
  - Reaction to policy ‘disasters’ – e.g. forestry sell-off (*Fiona Reynolds*)
  - Reaction to austerity cuts (*Matthew Spencer*)
  - Strategic decisions around where third sector can have biggest impact e.g. Baring Foundation
  - Green Alliance notes vast reduction in local action



# Reflections (1)

- Agenda developed rather late in the day – late 2000s. *'We were late to the party'*
- Extremely poor timing for Task Force
- And now? Many flowers blooming... but strategic support?
- Similar to other third sector policies, but does climate change warrant a specialist response?



# Reflections (2)

- A fractured and agnostic big 'green society'?
- An English picture?
- Need for third sector to respond to climate change?

NCVO notes:

- **Beneficiaries**
- **Advocacy**
- **Internal impacts**
- **External expectations**

THE **BIG**  
**GREEN**  
SOCIETY

  
ncvo

# Thank you!

*Get in touch:*

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