

Project RURASU
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Action Agenda for DASU Setup in Rural Areas

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Introduction

A lot of years of research efforts have produced a broad understanding of the implications of building energy use, as well as an increasing number of energy-efficient strategies and technologies with significant potential for energy savings. However, these strategies and technologies have not been effectively transferred to the building design community. A great number of buildings are still designed without any energy-related considerations beyond those required by national building regulations. One reason this knowledge gap still exists is because building designers do not have the means to assess the impact of new strategies and technologies efficiently and reliably during the building design process.

One of the major barriers to the successful implementation of energy efficiency measures in the built environment is the inability to get so-called professionals to understand the benefits of energy efficiency. It is therefore necessary to provide advice and information to these "professionals" such as architects, engineers, builders, installers, etc who have yet to fully realize the benefits of a more energy efficient project. This need for design advice and support is even more important and necessary to be provided to professionals acting in regions away from large cities where provision of support is easier, as usually there are located academic institutes and other educational and technical bodies with high expertise on the subject and capable of providing support.

Information supplied to these professionals needs to be different from that directed at the general public. Building professionals need to be aware of the advantages of passive solar design and the methods of integrating renewable energy technologies into new build or retrofit housing. Professionals involved in installing these technologies also need to be specially trained, e.g. installing a solar water heater requires plumbing skills, photovoltaic installations require electrical skills, and installing condensing boilers or heat recovery ventilation. Professionals require additional training for these practices. They also need to be aware of how the technologies operate (for easy maintenance) and why they are beneficial to the householder / business and also to the environment. Finally, they need to be informed on the new EC Building Directives regarding Energy Efficiency. What arises from the aforementioned is that Design and Advice Support Units could be more than helpful, especially in the rural regions.

Creating a new Design & Advice Support Unit (DASU) is a difficult process, especially when this unit is established and has to act in a rural area. Often new organisations have been stopped after a short period of work due to not satisfied expectations or financial reasons. So it is recommended to keep to a well planned setup action agenda, which should also include details regarding operation and monitoring.

In the project RURASU the experiences of the successful DASUs Pieriki and eza! have established, were gathered to work out an Action Agenda for DASU Setup in Rural Areas. This Agenda will be used in the project in order to help the establishment of the DASUs in the Rural Areas of Spain and Scotland, and it will be available to be used by anyone interested in establishing a DASU.

Part of the agenda to build up a DASU are the following nine steps:

1. Defining aims and objectives
2. Defining target area and main topics
3. Coalitions and Cooperations
4. Fund Raising
5. Detailed Planning
6. Foundation
7. Start up Period
8. Running of the DASU
9. Monitoring of DASU

Each step is explained detailed in a separate chapter of this Action Agenda.

Step 1:

Defining aims and objectives

Before the establishment of a DASU, the actors involved should organise preparatory workshops from which results on aims and objectives should arise. The results should be organised in two levels; one general level where the general aims of setting up a DASU will be explained and a second more specific level where the more detailed objectives will be explained. The connection between aims and objectives is very strong, as the satisfaction of each objective will lead to the satisfaction of the overall aims, defined during the preparatory workshops.

While preparation, it is important that the special consideration on the local circumstances of each region should be given. Detailed examination of the local status should be given. Subjects that should be given special consideration could be following:

- Level of awareness
 - Level of awareness of the local actors
 - Level of awareness of the professionals
 - Level of awareness of the citizens

Depending on the level of awareness of the different types of individuals, special attention should be given to each type and different aims should be pointed. Moreover, depending on how high is the level of awareness for each type, different objectives should be considered for each one.

- Kind of building projects
 - Support and Advice on new constructions projects
 - Support and Advice on Refurbishment projects

Depending on the actual needs of each region the aim should be identified: different objectives should be pointed on where special care should be focused: new construction or existing constructions

- Ownership of building
 - Private buildings
 - Public buildings

Depending on the general guidelines of the DASU, special attention could be provided either to public or private buildings or, of course, both.

Beyond the aforementioned special conditions a general framework of aims (general and specific) and objectives could be provided as follows:

General Aim:

To improve the utilisation of Renewable Energy Sources in the building stock in the region of the DASU by:

- improving communications (in both directions) between available knowledge and design, so acting as a technology transfer mechanism, bringing the results from the EC and national RD & D Programmes and other reputable sources into wider use;

- stimulating the expansion of energy efficient Renewable Energy Sources design expertise throughout the construction industry;
- in conjunction with other technology transfer and promotional activities, exerting a cumulative influence on norms and expectations and raising the awareness and understanding of energy issues throughout the construction industry.

Specific Aims:

- Combination and adaptation of scientific knowledge with best engineering and architectural practise
- Train and support of the local actors (architects, engineers, designers, practitioners etc.) on the use and integration of energy efficient Renewable Energy Sources systems and techniques, either when rehabilitating the building stock or when constructing new buildings.
- Provision of energy management, energy conservation, consultancy and services
- Increase of the efficiency of the education on energy topics.
- Provision to the local people with the highest quality services regarding the use of RES.
- Facilitation to the local community with experienced people, who are necessary in order to apply the proposed systems, materials and techniques.
- Development of educational material for training energy auditors and training energy auditors as well. This will facilitate the local community with qualified professionals to put into effect the building European Directive.
- The continuous support the local Design and Advice Support Units will provide to local actors of the building sector will result in the broader use and implementation of active and passive heating systems and other energy-efficient techniques in each region's built environment. This can eventually lead to important energy savings, up to 40-50% of the current energy consumption required for heating of the building stock and consequently to relevant significant money saving and decrease of CO2 emissions

Objectives:

- Organisation of specific events promoting use of RES and energy efficiency techniques in buildings
- Adaptation of developed practical educational material
- Assessment of region's building stock energy characteristics
- Training of professionals
- Training of Energy Auditors
- Establishment of network with other Energy Centres
- Development of different kind of plans (rehabilitation, refurbishment or retrofitting) for promotion reasons
- Support of local Energy Management
- Media Work and Free Pre-Consultation Service
- On site consultations of different level (initial, further, detailed)

Step 2: ***Defining target area***

For the success of a DASU it is very important to define the target area.

For this step it is very important to take the local press and media publications into consideration. Press and media work takes an very important part in the work of a DASU. Success is only possible, if there are clearly defined communication channels for all information released by the DASU. For example it is very positive for a DASUs work, if one ore more daily newspaper cover the same area like the DASU.

How many people are living in the target area? How is the economical structure? These questions show that every area has its own situation and its own challenges to meet. Therefore it should be one of the first steps to analyse the area detailed.

The following points should be analysed by defining the target area:

- press and media publications in the area?
- rural area
Is it a rural area? Are there any bigger cities?
- number of inhabitants?
How many people are living in the area? Is there an incline ore a decline in the population number? Are there any data about the age structure of the population?
- political and administrative structure?
Is it a constant political situation? Are political changes to be expected in the next time? IS the DASU area identical to an administration district?
- economical situation and market situation?
What are the most important economic branches in the area? Is there an growth or a recession of the economy
- building stock
Are there any typical buildings? Does an analysis exist of the building stock? Is there a high potential for refurbishment?
- energy situation
What energy sources are available? How is the use of renewable energies in the region?

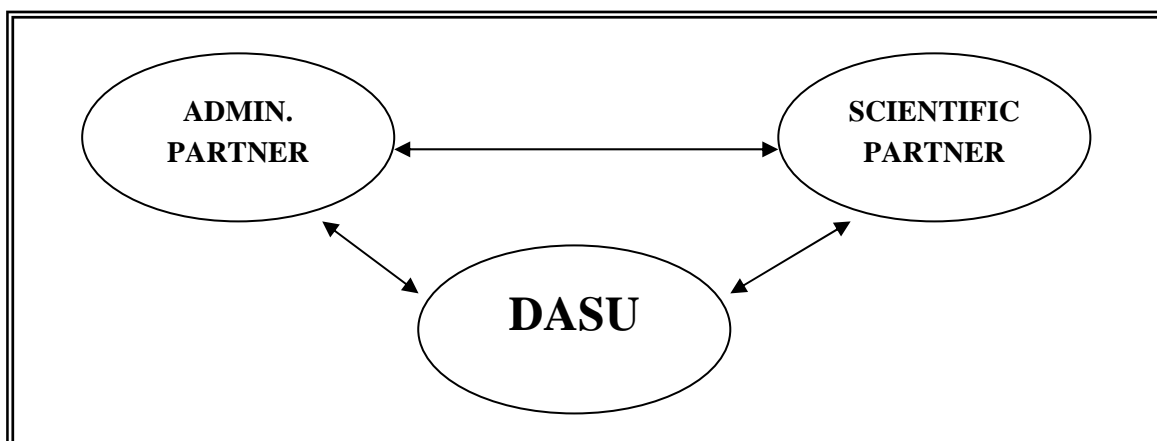
The experiences of the German DASU eza! show clearly, that borders of a newspapers are the most important factor for success in the whole region. The next important point are the borders of the administration restricts. These should be the decisive points, when the target area will be defined.

Step 3: Coalitions and Cooperations

It is important for the DASU's viability to proceed to a great number of collations and co-operations, in order to create a partner network. A list that could be helpful in the process of coalitions searching is the following:

- Local and Regional Authorities
- Chambers of specific professions
- Local Media
- Politicians
- Administrations
- Utilities
- Universities
- Economy /professionals as individuals
- NGOs
- Local industries of relevant to energy products

Another important point that special care should be given to is the academic background of the DASU. It is vital for the DASU to have the required scientific personnel that could face all the possible energy related subjects. Although having in-house scientists and experts could be an obvious solution, this could be a very expensive solution that could jeopardize the DASU's viability. For that reason, a strong co-operation should be established between the company running the DASU and an external organization that could provide scientific support. The administration partner maintains an expertised library in its offices and a system of continuous flow of information should be established between the scientific partner and the academic partner for more specialized subjects.. This flow information system is depicted in the following figure.



The actions of the rural DASUs are addressed to all local actors of the rural regions where they will be realized and especially to building professionals involved in Renewable Energy Sources, Energy Efficiency and Integrated Building Design, including Heat System Designers (Mechanical Engineers), Building Designers (Architects

and Civil Engineers), Building Engineers (Mechanical and Electrical Engineers), Building Scientists (Building Physicists and Indoor Air Specialists), Energy Auditors, Building Managers and maintenance personnel, Developers and Building Industrial Engineers. Industrial managers and executives, Professional Organizations and Utilities, Planners and Energy Economists and, also, any other person or organization involved in the building sector and the energy efficient design of buildings, to local authorities and to consumers of the involved regions seeking for advice. Furthermore, individuals involved with the Local Agencies in other projects in the specific rural areas will be important rural DASU's target group.

Some of the key actors, as the local authorities have already been involved in the Renewable Energy Sources sector as they are cooperating with the existing experts of the field. In addition through the DASUs' operation, rural local actors will be involved in an everyday-basis as they will benefit from the Units operation and will contact the Unit for Design Advice and Support.

The target groups, will be reached and involved in the project and its outcomes through the realization of a specific and well define dissemination policy which will include:

- a.** Provision of continuous pre-consultancy by each DASU to interested companies, authorities or individuals
- b.** Development and maintenance of local WEB sites especially devoted in the project and the established DASUs.
- c.** Publication of newsletters and articles in the local press and mass media
- d.** Participation in regional professional conferences and cooperation with local professional agencies and unions
- e.** Organisation and participation in seminars, workshops and other relevant events
- f.** Dissemination of practical educational material regarding the integration of RES in buildings and adjusted to local standards and regulations

Step 4:

Fund Raising

An important issue that every DASU in rural areas (and not only) should face is their viability. Viability is mainly based on fund raising from several sectors and individuals. In more detail, the following fund raising sources should be under consideration from each DASU:

- **Politicians**

Politicians of local, regional, national and European level could help in fund raising. For this reason, the necessity of the DASU should be presented to them. During operation, the actions undertaken should be presented to them, in order to convince them to fund further the operation of the Unit. For this reason, the actions of the DASU should be promoted continuously, in order to solidify the existence and the necessity of the Unit.

- **Regional administrations and local government**

Local and regional administrations and governments are mostly interested in economical development and in an effective contribution to environmental protection. The work of a DASU offers for both objectives good results. Therefore some financial support can be expected.

- **municipalities**

Municipalities could be an important fund raising source. Two strands could be used for municipalities: consultations and promotion activities. Regarding consultations, the municipal authorities should be convinced that their buildings should be offered full and detailed energy consultations and, moreover, that they should adapt a number of the proposed actions in order to promote the use of Renewable Energy Sources and Energy Efficiency Techniques.

- **Utilities**

Utilities are key players in the field of energy. Many utilities offer contracting and other energy services. In their supervisory boards politicians play important roles. As result of this situation they are interested in a positive image in the public. The financial support of a DASU might be a way for utilities to get this image.

- **professionals**

Connection with professionals should be based on two levels. First of all, the professionals could be advised and supported on practices of Renewably Energy Sources Systems and Energy Efficiency Techniques (pre-consultations, initial consultations, further or detailed consultations). Secondly, seminars could be organised for professionals on new technologies and on new specifications (European and national).

- **customers**

Each DASU should be ready to service ever potential customer. Taking into consideration that strong coalitions should have been established with experts of all energy fields (as already stated in the previous step), the DASUs' personnel should be able to cover all possible requirements, at first step. If further and more specialised consultancy is required and it is not possible to be covered by the in-house consultants, then contact should be made with the external experts (academics or individuals) of the DASU. The external experts should then be able to cover the detailed requirements of the customers.

- national projects

Each DASU should try to rise funding from national projects. This could be succeeded either by participating in already planned projects of the national authorities or by proposing projects to the national authorities. The second option, requires a well organised DASU with an important duration of establishment and a rich network of cooperation and coalitions.

- european projects for new actions

A special fund raising source could be the participation in European funded projects. For this kind of funding the details of the calls for proposals should be taken into consideration, as special care should be given in the possibility of funding already existing actions. This kind of funding should be connected to new and pioneering actions to be undertaken by each DASU.

- chambers

Chambers that could help DASU's fund raising are of two categories: those that their members are related to the construction industry and those that are not. For the first category, through the establishment of a permanent cooperation, a number of seminars every year could be organised, in order to inform chambers' members on new technologies, new materials, new legislations (national and/or European). For the second category, again through the establishment of cooperation, members could be informed on their gains (financial and environmental) they could have if they will adapt the proposed actions a consultation would propose to them.

Step 5: ***Detailed Planning and Foundation***

Once the aims, the objectives and the target area for a new DASU are fixed it is time to make a detailed plan for the DASU set up.

The detailed concept should include:

- the legal construction of the new DASU
- the members or shareholders of the DASU
- the financial concept for the first years
- the planned staff for the DASU
- the marketing concept for the DASU
- the work plan

Legal Construction

There are different opportunities for the legal construction of a DASU:

First here has to be decided, whether the DASU should be an own legal organisation, or whether it should be a department of an administration or any existing development agency.

It needs more efforts to establish an own legal organisation, but it offers various chances for a successful work:

- An own legal organisation has more freedom in its decisions.
- An own legal organisation shows to the public and the customers, that the main objectives are of very high importance
- An own legal organisation makes sure, that the staff can concentrate on the DASUs main work.

The kind of the legal constructions depends on the regional situation and the law in the DASUs country. Possible constructions are legal entity or club.

Members or Shareholders of the DASU

All main supporters should become members or shareholders of the DASU. Of very high importance is the representation of regional politicians in the supervisory board of the DASU. A person with high influence by his official position should be the chairman of the DASU.

Financial Concept for the First Years

Based on the fixed and the optional financial income a concept should be made for a period of at least the first three years. This concept should include the following positions:

- Staff
- Office with the rental of rooms, with equipment, office materials and costs for communication (telephone, Internet, e-mail)
- Marketing with advertisements, events, public relations
- Energy consultancy with costs and receipts
- Partner network with costs and receipts
- Education of professionals with costs and receipts
- Local energy management with costs and receipts
- Public financing
- Financing by the members or shareholders

As in the past many DASUs and local energy agencies have stopped their work after the first three to five years with public financing. To avoid such problems it is very important that there exists a plan for the fund raising after the first years after the establishment of the DASU. This plan should be based on realistic circumstances.

Staff

An experienced, highly skilled and motivated staff is the key factor to success for a DASU. The staff should be interdisciplinary, the general manager or managing director should be an expert for energy issues as well as for marketing, communication and organisation.

It has to be taken in to consideration, that the work of the DASU is not an only technical job. The DASU should be the bridge between new technologies and with the people. So the DASU –staff should include:

- a specialist for the newest technologies in the building and energy area
- a specialist for events and organisation
- a specialist for marketing, media, press and public relations

As the staff is the main cost factor, in the very beginning it should be as small as possible.

Marketing Concept

The marketing concept describes the whole work of the DASU in the market. It is carried by four key elements:

- product
This are the offered products and services of the DASU.
- price
The price has to fit for the product and for the market situation.
- placement
Who are the customers? Consumers, professionals or administrations they all need different products and a different communication.
- promotion
promotion and communication means the whole press and media work, events, all printings, internet-homepage, e-mail newsletters and advertisements

The marketing concept should include all main products and services of the DASU.

Time Schedule

When planning the establishment of a DASU, the time schedule needs a high flexibility. On one side the time schedule should be tough enough to keep all participating persons and institutions together. On the other side political decisions often need a long time.

Nevertheless a time schedule should be part of the concept for the establishment of a DASU. At least it is necessary to put enough pressure on the decisive persons and groups

Step 6: Foundation

The foundation itself is a very important legal process. Therefore it should be prepared very carefully to avoid any errors. The details of the foundation will be different in every country.

Even with such an important legal process, it is not advisable to go to the public and make a press announcement, if there are not some key services of the DASU ready for operation.

Step 7:

Start up Period

In Germany it is said, that if you meet anybody unknown, the first impression will keep the longest. This experience is valid for people and for institutions.

In the end it means, that the start up period of a DASU should be planned very carefully to evoke a positive resonance from all target groups with very first beginning of the DASUs work.

It is recommended to organize the start up period in two phases:

Phase 1: Start with the Basics

In this phase there should be no press and media contact in order to avoid reports and public discussion, while the DASU is not yet ready for operation.

Now the staff should start its work. All structures and equipment needed for a well running office should now be established. In detail, the following work should be done now:

- starting with an office and new staff
- establishment of a knowledge pool:
 - What is the key competence of the staff? Should members of the staff participate in any education programme before the start of the DASU?
 - Are there any contacts to experts in the region and at scientific institutes?
 - A basic library of reference information and a list of links to relevant internet websites should be build up.
- establishment of Corporate Design, Corporate Identity
The new DASU should start with a clear and well developed corporate image. With the first press announcements, the most people will be reached. Therefore Corporate Image and Corporate Design have to be ready at that time.
- development of the first key services and products
There should be at least a description of the key services and products of the new DASU.
- development of a website and first printings
First printings and a homepage should show the aims and objectives as well as the key services. The homepage and the printings should be ready but not available to the public.

Phase 2: Go to the Public

Now, when all preparations of phase two are ready, it is time to go to the public. The best way is, to have a media event with announcements to all regional media.

At the date of the media event, all important information, the printings and the home-page will be released. The staff is prepared for the customers and the first projects will start.

Of course, it is not possible to have a full working DASU from one day to another, but it is very important, to have a quick start to get positive reports in the media. The first successful projects should be reported very carefully to get some good articles and reports in the media.

Not too much:

In the very beginning it is advisable to concentrate the work on very few key services and projects. Later on, additional services and projects can be started, each with an own press release.

After a period of two or three years the start up should be finished and the DASU should be established among all target groups in the region.

Step 8: ***Running of the DASU***

The successful running of a DASU consists of several important points. All these points should have been cleared before the establishment of the DASU, but by running the DASU they should be controlled continuously and changed on demand.

Marketing

Marketing is the behaviour of a company or in this case of a DASU on the market. On one side marketing describes the points product (and services), price, placement and promotion. On the other side marketing is a continuous process of planning, action, monitoring and then the implementation of the results in the planning. So all changes and circumstances should be integrated in this process for a an optimized result.

The marketing of a DASU means a continuous process, based on the marketing concept of the very beginning and all the changes of the concept. In Step 9, Monitoring of DASU, more details are described.

Fund Raising

Many fields in the work of a DASU can not operate with only the fees of the customers. Especially energy consultancy and media work need additional funding. Often, it is easy to get a funding for a start up period, but later, after the establishment of a DASU additional fundings are hard to get. Therefore fund raising needs a continuous focus of the responsible manager.

One important argument for successful fund raising is, that the work of the DASU is a very important part for the development of the regional economy. The highly successful DASU eza! has shown, that it has released about 55 million Euros of new investments. This proof was made by the control of the use of public programs for the retrofit of housing and the use of renewable energies.

Fields of Work

The fields of work for a new DASU should already be defined in the first concepts. Later while running the DASU there is a high flexibility necessary, to keep the services close to the demands of the market and to develop new services.

The most important fields of work for the DASU are:

- PR and media work
to inform consumers and the public about actual technologies and opportunities. Good media work will bring the subjects efficient use of energy and renewable energies to the public.
- energy consultancy
to give practical advice to the consumers. Well informed consumers will ask for energy efficient products and will put pressure on the professionals to offer these products.
- partner-network
to give the consumers contact especially to the best informed and educated professionals.
- education
to offer a high quality education program to the professionals.
- communal energy management
to support the municipalities in their own building. The municipalities should give a positive example to their citizen.

Of course, this description of the fields of work is only a short overview. In every country, in every region it is necessary to adapt these fields to the regional conditions and circumstances.

Important: The DASU has to set new trends and subjects of the public discussion. The DASU should make the market larger for professionals and companies.

Administration

Even when the daily work is very busy, it is very important to have a reliable administration.

Step 9:

Monitoring of DASU

Establishment of a monitoring system for the DASU in order to:

- provide feedback in order to maximize effectiveness in meeting objectives
- control incoming enquires

The overall aim of the monitoring is:

- to contribute to the effectiveness of the Design Advice Support Units by monitoring their operation and by making recommendations on management and working practices, through the details and regular collection of data from the Design Advice Support Units, and from the periodic collection of data from a selection of its in-house staff, associated consultants, and from its users.

To meet this aim, the monitoring has three main components:

1. assisting in specifying internal communications systems, data collection methods, record keeping requirements, and quality management procedures for the Design Advice and Support Unit.
2. using the data and records maintained by Design Advice Support Units to provide the project managers of each Design Advice Support Unit with feedback on the operation of the Unit as a whole, including estimates of its energy saving potential as calculated by Design Advice Support Units and Consultants and of its success in disseminating technical information on energy efficiency.
3. through periodic audits of the operation of the Design Advice Support Units, including collecting data from in-house staff, associated consultants, and users, to provide feedback to the project coordinators on the day-to-day operation of Design Advice Support Units including recommendations for corrective actions.

For these three components an internal reporting system should be established.

Monitoring Details

- *Data Collection*

Consultancies need to be documented in such a way that:

- Design Advice Support Units have a comprehensive record of the conduct of enquiries delay with both in-house and by their associated consultants.
- The project managers are kept fully informed about the operation of the DesignAdvice Support Units.

By specifying in what form the information is to be provided, and by developing appropriate on-line recording systems, it is intended that data collection will be simple and streamlined.

- *Recording Incoming Enquires*

Each Design Advice Support Unit shall maintain a detailed record of each enquiry it receives.

Enquiries shall be categorised as either:

- Non-technical (e.g. enquirers seeking telephone numbers of other organisations, or speakers for a lecture, or other similar non-project related enquiries).

- technical (project related enquirers seeking advice on renewable energy, energy efficiency and environmental issues in buildings).

Non-technical enquirers shall be identified as such, but shall still be numbered consecutively with technical enquiries.

- Recording Initial Consultations

Technical enquiries that result in advice of any technical kind shall be termed Initial Consultations. Technical enquirers shall be fully de-briefed about the project and the enquiry..

The advice dispensed in an initial consultation shall be also recorded in a project record summary.

- Recording Further Consultations

Where Initial Consultations become Further Consultations, the person responsible for conducting the further consultation (either the Design Advice Support Unit Technical Consultant or the Registered Associated Consultant) shall be responsible for completing, so far as is applicable, a full section of a project record summary.

- 6-monthly analysis of initial and further consultations

Design Advice Support Units shall analyse the project record summary sheets each 6-month period and enter the results on a form under the title of DESIGN ADVICE SUPPORT UNIT 6-MONTHLY REPORT for the Project Managers.

- Feedback Questionnaires

Each Design Advice Support Unit shall be responsible for obtaining feedback from those who have either or both initial and further consultations (but not from non-technical enquirers). This shall be organised as follows.

As soon as an initial consultation is completed, the appropriate questionnaire shall be forwarded to the enquirer, and a record maintained of the date on which it was sent. The returned questionnaires shall be analysed at 6-monthly intervals by the Design Advice Support Units. From these analyses, the form DESIGN ADVICE SUPPORT UNIT 6-MONTHLY REPORT to the Project Managers shall be completed.

The results of the above analyses shall be passed to the monitoring contractor for collation with results from all the Design Advice Support Units.

The original questionnaire returns shall be archived by the Design Advice Support Unit to permit later analysis and audit.