



Sustainable Development Action Plan 2007-08



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Ministerial Foreword



Hazel Blears MP
Secretary of State for
Communities and
Local Government

Supporting jobs and growth, or protecting the planet? It's a false choice. If we are serious about equipping Britain for the challenges of the twenty-first century, we must do both. This Government is committed to sustainable development, and my Department has a key role to play. In housing, we are driving up environmental standards, insisting on better energy efficiency, and defending the principles of the greenbelt. In planning, we are paving the way for more renewable energy. And with people more and more aware of climate change, we are giving councils and communities the support to show a lead. Working together, I believe we can shape a greener, fairer and more prosperous future.



Yvette Cooper MP
Minister for Housing

Homes are the building blocks of our communities. They affect our health, our wealth and our opportunities for happiness. We have set ourselves ambitious new targets for meeting the housing needs of the current and future generations. But it is vital that we meet these targets in a way that is environmentally sustainable. I want to see Communities and Local Government establish this country as a world leader in sustainable building and housing. We have made a radical start by setting the world's first national target for all new homes to be built to a zero-carbon standard. Now we must match our ambition with delivery.



Iain Wright MP
Parliamentary Under
Secretary of State

As Communities and Local Government's Sustainable Development Minister, I am pleased to present our first Sustainable Development Action Plan. Setting out a clear vision of what sustainable development means to us will be a valuable foundation for the way we do business in the future. And, if our vision for sustainable development is to make a difference on the ground, it is vital that it results in practical actions and delivery. This action plan sets out the steps we are taking to make a difference – to our policies, to our operations and procurement, and to our staff.

1. Introduction

1.1 A new Sustainable Development Action Plan for a new Department

In March 2005 the Government published *Securing the Future*, setting out the UK Government's sustainable development strategy¹. *Securing the Future* required all central government departments and their executive agencies to produce a sustainable development action plan (SDAP). In March 2006, our predecessor department, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), published its SDAP for 2006-07². In July 2007, we published a report setting out progress under the ODPM SDAP³.

This document is the first SDAP published by the new Communities and Local Government. Its purpose is to look forward. In preparing it, we have built on the foundations set in the 2006 SDAP and have learned from the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) review of SDAPs⁴.

In this SDAP, we set out:

- What sustainable development means to Communities and Local Government, a department with a leading role in promoting the social dimensions of sustainable development – prosperous, cohesive and resilient places and local communities – and with a vital role to play in tackling the key environmental challenges (sections 1 – 2).
- The actions that we will take in 2007-08 to promote sustainable development and to integrate sustainable development principles throughout our policies, operations, procurement and people (sections 3 – 5). The details of these actions are brought together in a single appendix for ease of monitoring and reporting (Appendix 2).
- The contribution of our Executive Agencies and Non-Departmental Public Bodies to sustainable development and the role of the Government Offices in supporting our work on sustainable development (section 6).

¹ www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/publications/uk-strategy/index.htm

² www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1164438

³ www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1511938

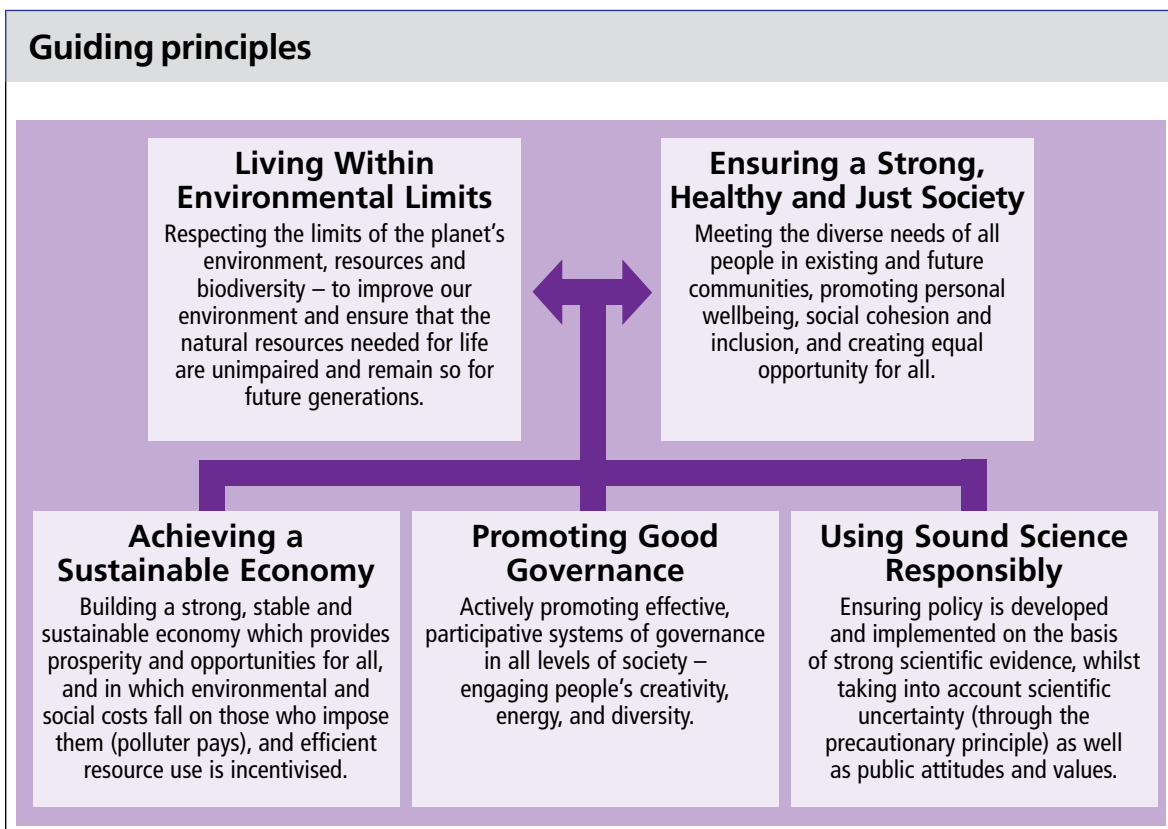
⁴ www.sd-commission.org.uk/pages/SDAP06.html

- The accountability mechanisms for this SDAP and for sustainable development within the Department generally (section 7).

Formally, this SDAP covers 2007-08. However, recognising that we are already some months into the financial year, we have looked beyond the current year and have set out the SDAP in such a way that, in future years, it can be updated as a living document rather than written completely afresh. A summary of this SDAP will be prepared in a form readily accessible to staff and other interested stakeholders.

1.2 Securing the Future

Securing the Future sets out the goal of sustainable development as enabling all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life without compromising the quality of life of future generations. It sets out five guiding principles which should form the basis for policy and four shared priorities for immediate action.



Shared Priorities	
1. Sustainable Consumption & production	Sustainable consumption & production is about achieving more with less – reducing the inefficient use of resources and breaking the link between economic growth and environmental degradation.
2. Climate change & energy	To secure a profound change in the way we generate and use energy and in other activities that release greenhouse gases. To prepare for climate change that cannot now be avoided. And to set a good example for others to follow.
3. Natural resource protection & environmental enhancement	We need a better understanding of environmental limits, environmental enhancement and recovery where the environment is most degraded to ensure a decent environment for everyone.
4. Sustainable communities	<p>To create sustainable communities that embody the principles of sustainable development at the local level. Working to give communities more power and say in the decisions that affect them; and working in partnership at the right level to get things done. Sustainable communities should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active, inclusive and safe • Well run • Environmentally sensitive • Well designed and built • Well connected • Thriving • Well served • Fair for everyone

1.3 Commitments and achievements

Securing the Future set out our key contributions to sustainable development – many of which come under the Sustainable Communities priority – as set out below⁵.

Key Contributions to *Securing the Future*

1. Creating sustainable communities that embody the principles of sustainable development at the local level.
2. Providing homes for all, while protecting and enhancing the environment.
3. Working to give communities more power and say in their decisions that affect them; and working to improve governance at all levels so that we can work at the right level to get things done.
4. Creating cleaner, safer, greener agenda: to make public spaces cleaner, safer and greener and to improve the quality of the built environment in deprived areas and across the country by 2008.
5. Promoting sustainable, high quality design and construction, to reduce waste and improve resource efficiency, and promoting more sustainable buildings.
6. Putting sustainable development at the heart of the planning system, as set out in *Planning Policy Statement 1 'Delivering Sustainable Development'*.
7. Increase voluntary and community engagement, especially amongst those at risk of social exclusion.
8. Reduce race inequalities and build community cohesion.

The above contributions are underpinned by a series of detailed commitments. Those still relevant to Communities and Local Government are reflected in this SDAP.

We have already made real progress in the above areas. For example:

- Many communities have benefited from our regeneration programmes – having access to housing, jobs, infrastructure and services in a decent environment. For example, the Housing Market Renewal programme has helped restore confidence in many of the most deprived areas in the North and Midlands. By March 2008, £1.2 billion will have been invested, with 40,000 homes refurbished and 10,000 poor quality properties demolished. As a result, house prices have been rising and the interest of private sector developers has been rekindled. The programme is central to helping reconnect these areas to their wider regions by making them more attractive places to live and work.

⁵ This list includes contributions inherited from Home Office following machinery of government changes.

- Our housing policies and programmes have helped to increase house building from a low of 130,000 homes a year to 180,000 homes a year. Fewer people are sleeping rough and homelessness is at its lowest level since the early 1980s. The number of households living in non-decent social homes has fallen by over a million – people's homes have been modernised and made more energy efficient.
- We have shown that house building should not be at the expense of the environment. We have announced ambitious policies to make new houses zero carbon by 2016, complemented by policies to reduce the water consumption of and flood risks posed by new development, while protecting valuable countryside by concentrating growth on brownfield sites and at higher densities.
- We are delivering on our commitment to give communities more say in the decisions that affect them. The policies announced in our Local Government White Paper⁶ are giving more power to local authorities and, in turn, to the communities that they serve. These policies are being underpinned by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act.
- We have strengthened and set out more explicitly our commitment to community empowerment through the publication jointly with the Local Government Association of An Action Plan for Community Empowerment: Building on Success, in October 2007.
- The decline in urban green spaces has been halted. And more and more green space managers are recognising that the quality of those spaces is improving⁷.
- We have made progress towards creating a shared sense of belonging to British society, under the Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society strategy, and in fighting racism through the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006.

1.4 Further progress is needed

However, as we set out in the Progress Report on the 2006-07 SDAP⁸, there is further to go. In particular, we need to do more to embed sustainable development thinking at all levels of the organisation – so that it becomes second nature to reflect the guiding principles of sustainable development in our policies.

And it remains as important as ever to lead by example in the way that we conduct our own operations. We have made real strides on some aspects of our estate – we are among the leaders in Whitehall on water and waste. But meeting the targets for carbon emissions and energy efficiency from our office estate remains a significant challenge.

⁶ *Strong and prosperous communities* – www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/strongprosperous

⁷ *Enhancing Urban Green Space*, National Audit Office, March 2006 www.nao.gov.uk/publications/nao_reports/05-06/0506935.pdf

⁸ www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1511938

We have much to gain, as a department, from taking a sustainable development approach to our work, in particular:

- exploiting synergies across a range of policies
- gaining buy-in to our policies by developing them with stakeholders and building in sustainable development principles from the outset
- reinforcing our internal transformation programmes
- helping us to recruit, develop, motivate and harness the creativity of our people
- saving money from more efficient resource use on our estate.

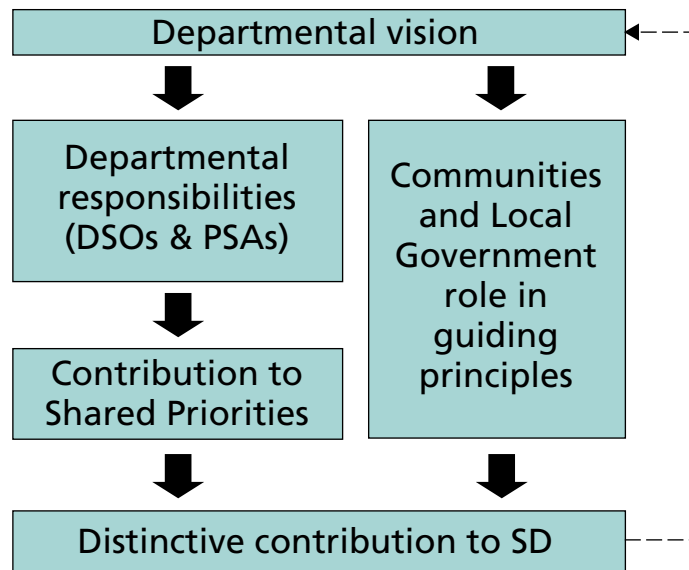
The risks to our work of not taking a sustainable development approach are the converse of the above. And, in the longer term, we will create problems for the work we are doing now if we do not build our policies and programmes on sustainable development principles. For example, we must not let the new communities that are being created today become the regeneration areas of tomorrow.

2. Our Departmental Vision for Sustainable Development

“Our vision is of prosperous and cohesive communities, offering a safe, healthy and sustainable environment for all.”

Communities and Local Government Vision Statement

Whilst *Securing the Future* remains as relevant as ever, it is important for Communities and Local Government, as a new department, to better understand our unique contribution to sustainable development. This needs to reflect our overall departmental vision and new responsibilities, the contribution we make to the shared priorities and our perspective on the guiding principles of sustainable development.



2.1 Departmental responsibilities

As part of the *Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 (CSR07)*, the Department has agreed and published a new set of Departmental Strategic Objectives (DSOs) that encapsulate the work of the Department. These are:

- To support local government that empowers individuals and communities and delivers high quality services efficiently.

- To improve the supply, environmental performance and quality of housing that is more responsive to the needs of individuals, communities and the economy.
- To build prosperous communities by improving the economic performance of cities, sub-regions and local areas, promoting regeneration and tackling deprivation.
- To develop communities that are cohesive, active and resilient to extremism.
- To provide a more efficient, effective and transparent planning system that supports and facilitates sustainable development, including the Government's objectives in relation to housing growth, infrastructure delivery, economic development and climate change.
- To ensure safer communities by providing the framework for the Fire and Rescue Service and other agencies to prevent and respond to emergencies.

Since the DSOs will be used to manage and report on our performance and to inform resourcing decisions, it is useful to embed our contribution to sustainable development in the DSOs. We have therefore used the DSOs to organise the policy-related commitments set out in section 3. The process which is under way to align responsibilities for DSOs with the Department's governance arrangements will help maintain a clear line of sight from our DSOs to our sustainable development commitments.

Alongside DSOs, a new set of cross-Government Public Service Agreements (PSAs) will reflect the highest priority outcomes for Government and identify areas for collective action over the spending period. The Department leads on two PSAs – housing supply, and cohesive, empowered and active communities. It has worked across Whitehall, and consulted key external stakeholders, to develop these.

2.2 Contribution to shared priorities

Based on the above Departmental responsibilities, we see our contributions to the four shared priorities of sustainable development as follows:

Shared priority	Our role	Our main contributions
<p>Sustainable Communities*</p>	<p>Lead/ multi-faceted</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning • Housing • Local govt • Community empowerment • Regeneration • Liveability
<p>Climate Change and Energy</p>	<p>A vital partner</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning • Buildings • Local govt • Housing • Exemplars • Resilience
<p>Natural Resources and Environment</p>	<p>Important but focussed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning
<p>Sustainable Consumption and Production</p>	<p>Important but focussed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local govt • Planning • Buildings

**NB Domestic aspects of Sustainable Communities*

2.3 Perspective on guiding principles

Although all of the guiding principles of sustainable development should in principle be applied to all policies, it is also relevant to reflect in our contribution to sustainable development the key interfaces with our policies.

<p>Living within environmental limits:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We work to ensure that our housing programmes respect environmental limits, including the challenge of climate change. • The planning system is key to reconciling development pressures with environmental limits at a spatial level.
<p>Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present and future generations need access to housing that is of good quality, affordable and supported by the services people need to ensure their wellbeing. • Our work on community empowerment is vital to tackling exclusion, alienation and social injustice. • We work to foster communities that are cohesive and resilient to extremism.
<p>Achieving a sustainable economy:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our regeneration programmes tackle market failures which prevent prosperity and equal opportunities for all. • We are helping local government to join up with partners to consider the local economy holistically with the social and economic priorities of the area.
<p>Promoting good governance:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting the relationship right between central and local government is fundamental to this principle. As the 'department for devolution' we are driving forward an agenda of devolution to local communities and citizens – working to counter the presumption that 'Whitehall knows best'. • And we work to boost local leadership and capacity, so that local areas can rise to the challenges facing them.
<p>Using sound science responsibly:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our transformation programmes are building our internal capacity to use all forms of evidence properly. • The built environment has a long life span. We need to ensure it is planned and designed to accommodate the uncertainties of future climatic conditions.

We have addressed further on in this SDAP what we need to do to embed these guiding principles further into our work.

2.4 Distinctive contributions to sustainable development

Bringing all of the above together, we see the distinctive contributions of Communities and Local Government to sustainable development as being:

- Championing social aspects of sustainable development – tackling deprivation, building social cohesion, empowering communities to act together on the issues they face.
- Ensuring that people have access to housing that is affordable and of good quality, and managing the environmental consequences of housing development.
- Using the planning system and our urban regeneration programmes to give people access to the services, surroundings and amenities that serve sustainable communities.
- Helping local authorities – and regions, sub-regions and cities too – to respond to the needs of local people and to the economic, social and environmental circumstances of a rapidly changing world.
- A vital partner in tackling climate change – principally through the built environment and local government.

We have reflected this vision in the actions that we have prioritised for our SDAP.

3. Our Actions – Policies

“The work of Communities and Local Government is vital to creating sustainable communities and to the nation’s sustainable development. We need to make sure that we focus on the opportunities to extract even more benefit from our policies and programmes by looking at them through a sustainable development lens.”

Richard McCarthy
Chair, Environment & Sustainable Development Programme Executive

This section summarises the key actions we will take in 2007-08 to integrate sustainable development into our policy areas and policy making processes. We have organised these under the headings of the Departmental Strategic Objectives presented in the previous section, with a further heading for cross-cutting work. The details of these and of further actions are presented in Appendix 2.

Virtually everything we do as a Department contributes to the shared priorities of sustainable development – in particular Sustainable Communities. To avoid our SDAP becoming a summary of all the Department’s work, and therefore a weak lever for change, we have focussed on the actions which can yield the biggest gains from explicitly applying a sustainable development lens rather than on activities which, whilst important, are already part of ‘business as usual’. So, we have in general excluded ongoing programmes in which we are not taking fresh actions to integrate sustainable development objectives except where these are ongoing from *Securing the Future* and our previous SDAP.

3.1 Local government

We want to support local government that empowers individuals and communities and delivers high quality services efficiently.

Our 2006 White Paper, *Strong and prosperous communities*⁹, aims to enable effective local services and to create better places. It does this by: promoting more responsive services; promoting empowered and cohesive communities; advocating a stronger role for local authorities as community leaders; and promoting stronger and more stable local authority leadership. These aims are consistent with the aim

⁹ www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1503999

in *Securing the Future* to “give people more control over decisions that affect them, focus on delivering solutions to locally identified problems, and work in partnership to tackle social, economic and environmental issues”.

The principles of the White Paper are now being implemented (see text box). And the enactment of the *Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007* creates a platform for taking this work forward by (among other things):

- providing a statutory basis for Local Area Agreements and a formal framework for co-operation with local partners
- improving community governance – for example, making it possible to set up parish councils in London and extending well-being powers to parish councils which meet certain criteria
- empowering councillors to raise issues with overview and scrutiny committees as part of expanding Councillor Calls for Action to cover all local government services
- enabling devolution for the making of certain byelaws to local authorities and providing for more effective enforcement through fixed penalty notices
- introducing a new duty on best value authorities to involve local people in local services and policies.

IMPLEMENTATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER

The Implementation Plan has five workstreams:

Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

- The legislation was introduced quickly to demonstrate our commitment to change. It made very rapid progress through Parliament and received Royal Assent on 30 October 2007.

Performance

- Round 3 Local Area Agreements (LAAs) signed off. Arrangements for negotiating new LAAs have been road-tested with local authorities and partners in 17 areas to test out our approach to implementing new LAAs.
- We have published the first phase of guidelines on negotiating new LAAs which sets out the lessons we have learnt, and which were co-written by local partnerships, Government Offices and Government Departments.
- Four Departments jointly commissioned seven public service inspectorates to work together to develop and deliver the new Comprehensive Area Assessment.
- A single set of national priorities for local authorities working alone or in partnership was announced in the *CSR07*, measured through a single set of 198 performance indicators. It was also announced that Government will not mandate any targets which must be included in each area’s LAA.

IMPLEMENTATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER (*continued*)

Governance and empowerment

- We have invited and assessed bids from local authorities for unitary status or to become two-tier pathfinders, and announced bids for unitary status that the Secretary of State is minded to implement.
- We launched the independent Commission on Councillors.
- The independent Quirk Review has published its review into the community management and ownership of local assets.
- We launched the Community Empowerment Action Plan jointly with the LGA.

Cities and regions

- The Review of Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration was published on 17 July. It outlines plans to give local authorities the powers and incentives to drive local prosperity, economic growth and regeneration and seeks to ensure that all areas including the most deprived are able to contribute to and benefit from economic growth.

Community cohesion

- Working with Improvement and Development Agency we have launched a web-site containing good practice for areas facing possible pressure from EU migrant workers¹⁰.
- 12 forums on extremism and Islamophobia have been established.
- The independent Commission for Integration and Cohesion published its final report *Our Shared Future* in June 2007 which Government welcomed in its initial response on 5 October.

Besides Sustainable Communities, local government is vital to other shared priorities too – to tackling climate change (a role spelled out in *Strong and prosperous communities*) and, given the circa £40 billion per year of local government procurement, Sustainable Consumption and Production. Various programmes sponsored by the Department, such as the Regional Centres of Excellence, are making a difference. For example, the recent launch of the Sustainable Procurement Information Network (SPIN), which is the first and only website dedicated to supporting local authorities to procure goods and services in a sustainable way. We want to continue to support activity that helps councils make sustainable decisions.

Key actions during 2007-08 (with cross-references to the relevant action in Appendix 2) include:

¹⁰ www.idea.gov.uk/idk/aio/6949811

- Implementation of the Local Government White Paper, to empower citizens and communities to have more choice, better redress and greater opportunity to own and run local services (1).
 - Supporting the *Sustainable Communities Bill* through its legislative passage and then implementing it once enacted so as to elicit proposals for promoting the sustainable development of local communities (2).
 - Working with Whitehall departments and the Local Government Association (LGA) to produce an improvement and efficiency strategy, bringing together an overarching approach to capacity building in local government and its partners (7).
 - Publishing Place Shaping Guidance that will help bring partners together in the local area to produce Sustainable Community Strategies and negotiate Local Area Agreements (3);
 - Producing (with Department for Business and Regulatory Reform) an energy measures report on the actions local authorities can take to tackle climate change and fuel poverty (6).
 - Working with local government to develop its response to Central Government's *Sustainable Procurement Action Plan* so that there is greater awareness of and support for the contribution local government can make to sustainable development through its procurement methods (5).

3.2 Housing

We want to improve the supply, environmental performance and quality of housing that is more responsive to the needs of individuals, communities and the economy.

Shelter is a basic requirement of human needs. The way in which human settlements develop and are supported by services and amenities (both physical infrastructure and natural amenities such as green space) is fundamental to fostering sustainable communities. Where and how we build houses is crucial to all of the other shared priorities too, so it is vital to mainstream sustainable development principles within our housing programmes.

In July 2007, we published our green paper *Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable*¹¹ setting out our plans to increase housing supply and to make housing more affordable. In taking these plans forward, we recognise the need to build new homes that are well designed, of good quality and environmentally sustainable and to support them with the necessary infrastructure. This is cross-cutting work and we have worked across Whitehall and consulted stakeholders

¹¹ www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingsupply/homesforfuture/

to develop our new PSA on housing supply and affordability. The PSA sets out commitments across Government in terms of providing infrastructure, including green space, to support housing growth.

But this agenda is not only about new housing. We also have a role to play in existing development – in helping to improve the quality and environmental sustainability of the existing building stock.

Key actions during 2007-08 include:

- Implementing a programme to increase house building to 240,000 new homes per year by 2016, with a focus on ensuring the effective implementation of the policy framework and making new development fit for the future (8).
- Supporting our housing growth programme with infrastructure. The *CSR07's* policy review on supporting housing growth identified key infrastructure requirements and the Department is ensuring this happens via a housing supply steering group and conducting a series of three month reviews with other departments (12).
- Working with departments and industry bodies to kick-start a major drive to build capacity to meet the skills and construction challenges of accelerated housing growth, higher environmental standards and better places to live (13).
- Seeking proposals for eco-towns (see text box below) and expanding the New Growth Points programme. Our ambition is for at least ten new growth points, and this includes extending the programme to areas in the north for the first time. All proposals will need to demonstrate sustainable growth and promote environmental enhancements (22).
- Finalising our ambitious policy that all new homes should be zero carbon by 2016 and working with industry and other stakeholders to deliver it (14).
- Developing regulations to improve the water efficiency of new homes (with Defra) (16).
- Promoting uptake of the *Code for Sustainable Homes*, including consulting on making ratings against the Code mandatory for new homes, so as to encourage the market for more environmentally sustainable new homes (15).
- Ongoing delivery of the Decent Homes programmes and increasing use of radical solutions to transform some of the poorest neighbourhoods into mixed, sustainable communities, with a range of incomes and housing types, and access to a good quality environment and local services (10).
- Publishing strategies on housing and older people, so that appropriate housing choices are made for an ageing society and to help older people to live independently (29).

- Overcoming information barriers on energy efficiency in buildings via Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) and making it easier for householders to access offers of financial support to implement the recommendations included in EPCs (26,27).

Eco-towns

Eco-towns will be developments of 5-20,000 homes. As new settlements they offer the opportunity to design in zero carbon systems for homes and all buildings, as well as sustainable approaches to transport and managing waste, wastewater, drainage and flooding in line with PPS25: Development and Flood Risk. Green space and features to enhance biodiversity should also be integrated, and construction methods and materials with low environmental impact used. Each town should also be an exemplar in at least one area of environmental sustainability. Eco-towns should have a good range of facilities, including a secondary school, shopping, business space and leisure, but there should be sustainable links to nearby larger towns and cities. A management body will be put in place to help develop the town and provide longer term management.

We are seeking proposals for up to five eco-towns by 2016 and ten by 2020. Expressions of interest are required by the end of October 2007 and schemes with potential will then be given a high level inter-departmental strategic review to ensure that they are sustainable, affordable and realistic in policy terms. The review will include other departments and agencies, including Defra, Department for Transport, the Environment Agency and Highways Agency.

3.3 Prosperous communities

Building prosperous communities is about improving the economic performance of cities, sub-regions and local areas, promoting regeneration and tackling deprivation.

We do this through policies and programmes operating at a range of spatial scales, from large regeneration programmes such as the Thames Gateway to tackling deprivation in neighbourhoods. And we work with a large number of partners, such as Regional Assemblies, Regional Development Agencies, core cities, local strategic partnerships, local authorities and local regeneration bodies as well as with other Whitehall departments. And, of course, since the effective functioning of markets is essential to delivering development, we work with private sector stakeholders (developers, owners, occupiers, etc) to keep abreast of their needs, to promote best practice within the development industry and to understand if there are market failures requiring our intervention.

Some of our regeneration programmes concentrate primarily on economic or physical or social aspects of regeneration. Others are more integrated. But regardless of the origins of these programmes, they need to take account of wider economic, environmental and social considerations if they are to make a lasting impact. We are improving the integration of our approach to regeneration by creating a single integrated lead on regeneration policy, including implementation of the Sub National Economic Development and Regeneration Review.

Regional Development Agencies (RDAs)

The RDA Act 1998 states that one of the five purposes of the RDAs is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom where it is relevant to its area to do so. Changes were made to the RES (Regional Economic Strategies) guidance in 2005, and included a requirement for RES to be based on the five principles of sustainable development. They are also subject to sustainability appraisal and strategic environmental assessment as part of their development.

As a result the six RESs reviewed during 2006-07 have a stronger focus on sustainable economic prosperity and environmental sustainability. They include commitments which will help businesses cut waste and carbon emissions as well as generating new jobs through environmental industries.

For example, the draft West Midlands Economic Strategy, which is currently being consulted on, has sustainable development as one of its underlying principles. Environmental considerations are integrated into its mainstream objectives, with climate change as a clear driver and a key focus on developing a low carbon economy. The new *low carbon Regional Economic Strategy* is due for publication in November 2007 and will assess all regional investments for their environmental impact.

The East of England Development Agency leads for the RDA family on sustainable development and was instrumental in persuading the former Chancellor to include in the last Budget a requirement for RDAs to include advice for small and medium enterprises on resource efficiency in the national Business Link portfolio.

The Sub National Review strengthens the RDAs' commitment to sustainable development by making it clear that RDAs will be required to produce a single integrated strategic plan for their regions, based on the five core principles of sustainable development.

Key actions in 2007-08 will include:

- Signing a joint declaration with the Core Cities on tackling climate change so that Core Cities recognise and focus on the actions to be taken at city level to tackle and adapt to the impacts of climate change (31).

- Publishing guidance and commencing negotiations (via the Government Offices) on the first wave of Multi-Area Agreements (MAAs). MAAs are a new form of voluntary agreement which local authorities and their partners can use to further economic development and related issues which benefit from co-operation between areas (33).
- Working closely with RDAs to review their Regional Economic Strategies in 2007-08 so as to ensure that climate change, limitations on natural resources and the ecological footprint of the economy are factored into assumptions about regional prospects (34).
- Holding a summit on environmental justice to raise awareness within the Department of the way that environmental conditions particularly affect disadvantaged people and neighbourhoods and to consider further the implications for the work of the Department (36).

Looking beyond the current year, we will look for opportunities to incorporate analytical tools to help us broaden our approach to regeneration work – for example, using non-market valuation techniques to evaluate the impact of our regeneration programmes, and thinking through what a wellbeing-centred regeneration programme would look like.

3.4 Cohesive and active communities

We want to develop communities that are cohesive, active and resilient to extremism. To do this, we work with existing communities to strengthen and support areas facing difficulties. We encourage regeneration and development activities to take into account cohesion principles to ensure communities are viable in the long term.

As part of this work, we are working with other departments on developing a refreshed strategy for tackling violent extremism. And we will make community resilience a core part of the work of local authorities and of our own work across policy areas such as housing and regeneration.

Sustainable development can be a motivating influence in creating active communities. It can bring people together to tackle both local and global problems. We work with practitioners like Groundwork who build cohesion alongside carrying out work to improve the local environment, redevelop shared spaces for communities and bring people together to share responsibility for maintaining these spaces. Last summer Groundwork published research funded by the Department on how Groundwork trusts could build cohesion into their projects.

Making the most of the two-way links between communities and sustainable development is a priority for our new Ministerial team. So, in 2007-08, we will:

- Build on the experience gained from the *Together We Can* campaign to accelerate our efforts, in partnership with local government, to promote community engagement and empowerment, so that more citizens and community groups are able to influence the decisions that affect them in their locality. We have set out how we will do this in *An Action Plan for Community Empowerment: Building on Success*, and we are committed to reviewing progress in summer 2008, with a view to setting out a clear cross-government approach (37,38).
- Hold a Ministerial round table event with stakeholders to understand how the linkages between community participation and the environment can be maximised (41).
- Work with Defra to understand the contribution that communities can make to tackle climate change. Work to improve and maintain good quality urban green spaces can be used as a conduit to encourage community-led local environmental action and promote behaviour change, especially in relation to climate change (40).

3.5 Spatial planning

We want to provide a more efficient, effective and transparent planning system that supports and facilitates sustainable development, including the Government's objectives in relation to housing growth, infrastructure delivery, economic development and climate change.

As Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development makes clear, sustainable development is at the heart of the planning system. And the planning system contributes in a major way to the shared priorities of *Securing the Future* – in particular to Climate Change, Protecting Natural Resources and Enhancing the Environment, and to Sustainable Communities.

But the planning system needs to be reformed to support the needs of a fast-moving economy and society. The *Planning White Paper* sets out our proposals for streamlining the town and country planning system, improving the ability of local authorities to shape their local communities, and ensuring that there is a stronger approach to supporting sustainable economic development alongside work to tackle climate change in a way that is integrated with the delivery of other sustainable development objectives. It also proposes a new infrastructure planning system that will enable decisions to be made to achieve our goals for secure energy supply, reduced carbon emissions and international competitiveness, in a way that is timely, efficient and predictable and improves and extends public and community engagement in the system.

During 2007-08, we will:

- Publish the final version of the Planning Policy Statement: Planning and Climate Change along with supporting practice guidance, to help planning authorities shape places that help to tackle and are resilient to the effects of climate change (42).
- Implement the Planning White Paper, ensuring that the new arrangements continue to respect the principles of sustainable development and requiring an appraisal of the sustainability of National Policy Statements. Where appropriate this would be in the form of Strategic Environmental Assessments (43).
- Follow up the Planning White Paper commitment to legislate to set out clearly the role of local authorities in tackling energy efficiency and climate change (43).
- Implement the Sub National Review provisions including moving to a single integrated regional strategy which sets out the economic, social and environmental objectives for each region and respects the principles of sustainable development (44).
- Introduce legislation through the Planning Reform Bill for Local Planning Authorities in England to apply new Planning Charges, to provide additional funding for the infrastructure required to support growth (45).
- Embed flood risk fully into all stages of the planning process, by finalising practice guidance on PPS25 (46).

3.6 Fire, resilience and recovery

We want to ensure safer communities by providing the framework for the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) and other agencies to prevent and respond to emergencies.

All UK FRSs are run by locally accountable Fire and Rescue Authorities. Consequently individual Fire and Rescue Authorities will tend to reflect the sustainable development policies of their parent authorities. The role of this Department is to set the overall framework within which the service operates. Our direct interface with sustainable development in the Service is via sponsorship of the Fire Service College (covered in subsequent sections) and of Firebuy (a body established to oversee the National Procurement Strategy for the Fire and Rescue Service, including sustainable procurement).

Recent activities include publishing a technical report on the impact of climate change on the service¹², to assist the service in preparing their risk management plans. The Fire and Rescue Service will be an important part of the immediate response to emergencies caused by extreme weather events such as flooding and forest or grassland fires.

Key actions in 2007-08 are to:

- Continue to support community safety work to reach out to minority groups through specialist media channels and to encourage FRSs to develop youth training and diversion schemes (52).
- Continue, via Firebuy, the drive towards environmentally sustainable and ethical procurement by FRSs (53).
- Issue design guidance, with Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), to ensure the sustainability of new FRS buildings (54).

3.7 Policy making and cross-cutting themes

The five guiding principles of sustainable development set out in section 1 need to be more firmly embedded into our policies through a combination of approaches – by embedding them in our policy making procedures, in our people (see section 5) and in our governance (see section 7). In terms of procedures, we will:

- Raise awareness of the new Impact Assessment process¹³ across the Department and of the various tests within it, including quantifying carbon impacts, sustainable development and equalities (55).
- Encourage policy makers to make use of Defra's *Stretching the Web* tool¹⁴ to integrate sustainable development into their policies at an early stage as part of the assessment process (55).
- Raise awareness of legal requirements to undertake and publish equality impact assessments on all policy development, and train staff to be able to undertake these as part of the policy development process (56).

An important cross-cutting theme which has been the subject of a recent report by the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (RCEP) is the urban environment¹⁵. The report suggests that there is a policy gap on the urban environment and that insufficient attention has been paid to the links between the environment, health and wellbeing and calls for a contract between central and local government in this

¹² *Effects of Climate Change on Fire and Rescue Services in the UK* – www.publications.communities.gov.uk/pubdetails.asp?pubid=2443

¹³ www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/ria/ia_guidance/

¹⁴ www.defra.gov.uk/sustainable/think/stretch/index.htm

¹⁵ *The Urban Environment*, RCEP 2007, www.rcep.org.uk/urbanenvironment.htm

area. The Department will work with Defra and other departments to consider and respond to the RCEP report.

The Department's policy responsibilities mean that we have a greater influence than ever on the environment in which the Third Sector operates. And our spending programmes are heavily dependent on the sector – accounting, for example, for delivery of more than two-thirds of our Supporting People programme. Our ambition is to build an effective relationship that supports the Third Sector in adding value to our work with communities, local government and in tackling deprivation as well as enhancement of the local environment. Some of this will be taken forward through implementation of the *Local Government White Paper* – for instance, through our work on Community Calls for Action, Local Strategic Partnerships and the role of commissioning. But we are also preparing a Third Sector Strategy which will set the relationship in a strategic framework and, subject to the outcome of *CSR07*, create a more supportive funding relationship with the sector.

Many of the Department's policies have a very long-term impact – for example, policies on the built environment. We need to ensure that our policies are proofed against future economic, social and environmental conditions. We will therefore be undertaking a futures programme, using a variety of futures methodologies, to analyse the trends and drivers, threats and opportunities to the Department and to help us to see how these trends will pan out into the future. This will help to improve the evidence which underpins policy making and to make policy robust and sustainable.

Climate Change in Communities and Local Government

The Department's policy activities on combating and adapting to climate change are reflected throughout this section and Appendix 2. The main elements are:

New development

- New homes to be zero carbon by 2016, with interim steps in 2010 and 2013 (14)
- Low carbon exemplars – eco-towns, Carbon Challenge, Thames Gateway study (22)
- Planning Policy Statement: *Planning and Climate Change* (42)
- Following up the Planning White Paper commitment to legislate to set out clearly the role of local authorities in tackling energy efficiency and climate change (43)
- Examining potential for low/zero carbon commercial buildings (25)
- Consulting on mandatory ratings against Code for Sustainable Homes (15)

Climate Change in Communities and Local Government (*continued*)

Existing buildings

- Implementing *Energy Performance of Buildings Directive* to overcome information barriers on energy efficiency in buildings and making it easier for householders to access offers of financial support to implement the recommendations of EPCs (26)
- Reviewing measures to reduce the carbon footprint of commercial buildings (25)
- Consulting on easing planning restrictions on microgeneration (47)

Local government and cities

- Communicating to local government its role in climate change
- Climate change to have an appropriate focus in post-2008 Performance Framework (with Defra)
- Producing guidance on measures that local authorities can take to tackle climate change and fuel poverty (with Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform) (6)
- Working to embed sustainable procurement in local government (5)
- Examining the role of green spaces in adaptation and mitigation (35)
- Supporting core cities to develop climate change strategies and action plans (31)

Community action

- Examining the role of local authorities and community groups in mobilising action on climate change (39)

Adaptation

- Leading on sustainable communities theme of Government's Adaptation Framework (57)
- Practice guidance for PPS25: *Development and Flood Risk* (46)
- Guidance to Fire and Rescue Service on responding to the effects of climate change
- Reviewing measures to improve the water efficiency and climate resilience of existing buildings (28)

Other

- Playing our role in Whitehall – participating in the new climate change PSA and cross-Whitehall machinery

4. Our actions – operations and procurement

“When we buy something we should understand what’s gone into making it, what resources we’ll need to expend in using it, and what we’re going to do with it when we finish using it. And we all need to take responsibility for using our estate properly. In part, we have to do this if we want local government and our other stakeholders to take sustainability seriously. But actually, it’s just good business.”

HUNADA NOUSS, Director General, Corporate Delivery

4.1 Operations

The success of the Department in delivering the sustainable operations targets is crucial both in contributing to central Government’s commitment made in *Securing the Future* to lead by example, as well as to maintaining credibility for the Department’s own policies such as the zero carbon homes agenda and the introduction of Energy Performance Certificates.

In 2007-08, we will build upon the considerable progress to date in the specific areas of waste and recycling, sustainable travel and water conservation. We will also be seeking to consolidate efforts to widen the coverage of the sustainable operations targets to selected Non Departmental Public Bodies, including Housing Corporation. Indeed, three of our more significant NDPBs have contributed to this year’s Sustainable Operations on the Government Estate (SOG E) questionnaire. The main focus in the coming year will be to establish accurate baselines, primarily for the newly included NDPBs, against which performance can be measured and improved. Re-baselining of the Department’s total figures will then be required to incorporate this new data.

2006-7 Performance against main SOGE targets			
SOGE target (relative to base year ¹⁶)	Actual performance		RAG status
	London HQ	Entire Estate	
Carbon emissions from offices – reduce by 12.5% by 2010-11	+14%	+7%	R
Energy efficiency of buildings – improve by 15% by 2010-11	- 4%	-12%	G
Carbon emissions from vehicles – reduce by 15% by 2010-11	-15%	-10%	G
Waste arisings – reduce by 5% by 2010	- 4%	-22%	G
Recycling rate – 40% by 2010	57%	52%	G
Biodiversity – 95% in target condition by 2010	NA	NA	N/A
Water consumption – reduce by 25% by 2020	- 36%	0%	A
Sustainable procurement – Level 1 by 04/07, Level 3 by 12/07	Level 1	<Level 1	A

Our main priority, however, is to reduce levels of carbon emissions from our office estate, which remain 7 per cent above base levels, as well as from our non-office estate. Work is under way to develop a structured programme to deliver the 2010-11 and 2020 targets. Opportunities identified will be subject to detailed assessment in terms of cost, payback and carbon savings and a phased approach towards budgetary allocation will be sought. The high performing property (HPP) asset management agenda will also have a significant impact for our estate, creating a range of new opportunities. This will strongly influence the overall approach and necessitate continual assessment of our strategy in the light of these developments. At this time and until planned changes to our estate are finalised, it is not possible to determine whether the 2010-11 deadline can be fully met; however, the department is fully committed to delivering its reduced carbon emissions targets.

The HPP agenda will significantly contribute towards our goal of reducing carbon emissions but, in some respects, may actually make it more difficult to meet the energy efficiency target. Reducing the number of buildings occupied will reduce overall emissions but will decrease reported energy efficiency (which is reported in kWh/m² and takes no account of number of building occupants per square metre). The Department considers that delivering absolute carbon reductions should take priority over meeting the energy efficiency target.

¹⁶ The base years used are 1999/2000 for energy and carbon (except vehicles), 2004-05 for water and waste and 2005-06 for vehicle emissions.

It is intended that the sustainable operations team will be strengthened in the coming year and so help drive forward our objectives towards delivering the SOGE targets. We will also be publishing the Department's new *Sustainable Operations Policy* document, available to all staff, which clearly sets out our aims and objectives and what is expected of staff and contractors working on the Communities and Local Government estate.

Specific actions to be taken during the course of the year are reported in Appendix 2.

4.2 Procurement

The Government has published its *Sustainable Procurement Action Plan*¹⁷, setting out what Departments and their agencies will do towards the Government's objective that the UK public sector should be an EU leader on sustainable procurement by 2009. Although the Department has a smaller procurement bill than some other departments, it is nonetheless important for the Department to follow through on the *Sustainable Procurement Action Plan*. In particular, credibility in this area is vital to our work with local government (whose procurement is some £40 billion per year) to implement its own strategy on sustainable procurement (see section 3.1). The Department can also use procurement as a tool towards meeting its sustainable operations targets and to furthering social and economic objectives of the Department such as stimulating third sector activity and the participation of disadvantaged groups in the economy.

Key actions in 2007-08 will be to:

- Communicate the Department's Sustainable Procurement Strategy so that the importance of sustainable procurement is better recognised by senior management and officials who commission procurement (79).
- Establish a foundation for the implementation of sustainable procurement by achieving Level 1 of the Flexible Framework by autumn 2007, with a view towards achieving Level 3 in subsequent years (80).
- Deliver a sustainable procurement solution for Departmental staff travel (81).
- Deliver a sustainable procurement solution for procuring stationery and mobile telephony (81).
- Implement the mandatory adoption of sustainable procurement solutions for Quick Wins 2007¹⁸ (82).
- Promote the adoption of sustainable procurement amongst the Department's wider family by stakeholder engagement and the provision of associated training (85).

¹⁷ www.defra.gov.uk/news/2007/070305b.htm

¹⁸ www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/publications/pdf/QuickWins2007vr3.pdf

5. Our actions – embedding sustainable development in our people

“We are in a period of transformation in Communities and Local Government. Embedding sustainable development plays a part in that transformation agenda and will help galvanise pace, pride and passion in our work.”

Peter Housden, Permanent Secretary

This SDAP presents our vision of what sustainable development means to the new Communities and Local Government. It is a vision to which our Ministerial team and our Board are committed. But it will not be effective in influencing the work of the Department unless it is ingrained in our people.

5.1 Capacity building

Building capacity on sustainable development has a number of elements. We need to:

- Raise awareness throughout the Department of what sustainable development is and how it is relevant to the work of the Department.
- Help policy makers to understand how to embed sustainable development principles as a core part of their work.
- Give staff confidence that they have the backing of Ministers and senior staff to build sustainable development into their work – to devote the time to following through the wider linkages that might sometimes be overlooked in policy development and to make the effort to conserve resources in going about their day to day activities.

This is not a one-off activity but an ongoing process. Key actions during 2007-08 will be:

- We will hold capacity building seminars on sustainable development, with the assistance of SDC, for key staff involved in the areas of local government, cities and regions and regeneration. This will help to surface our key messages on sustainable development with staff and will follow on to further activities as part of a Sustainable Development Excellence programme to embed these more deeply (87).

- We will hold a ‘sustainability month’ to bring SD issues to the fore. As well as general raising of awareness, this will resonate with other themed months held as part of our Departmental transformation programme and help to show that embedding SD is part of raising capacity generally, and not something separate (88).
- As part of the sustainability month, we will hold a range of events which will raise awareness generally, provide a more detailed understanding for those who want it, and demonstrate the commitment of Ministers and senior management to this agenda (88).
- Besides online publication of this SDAP, we will prepare a summary of it in a form which is readily accessible to staff (including via induction programmes) and will offer a presentation on it to directorates and divisions around the Department (89).
- We will build on the popularity of previous seminars on environmental themes, by integrating these into a quarterly lunchtime seminar programme on sustainable development and supporting topics. These will draw on expertise from around the Department so as to widen ownership of this agenda (90).
- We will operate a monthly ‘green pledge’ whereby staff can sign up, via the intranet, to take actions which will contribute to sustainable development and help change behaviours – both work related and home related (91).
- We will continue to run Sustainable Operations forums for the Government Offices, Executive Agencies and Non-Departmental Public Bodies, providing advice and guidance and opportunity for best practice sharing (92).

5.2 Workforce issues

A fair society and a sustainable economy is one in which all groups have equal access to high quality employment opportunities. With an increasingly diverse population within the UK, there is a clear business case for maintaining a diverse workforce, both in terms of attracting talented staff, improving staff retention, and representing the communities we serve.

- The workforce equality strategy sets out the actions that we will be undertaking to support diversity within the Department’s workforce over the coming year (93).

5.3 External communications and stakeholders

We regularly engage our stakeholders across the range of our work as a normal part of the policy development process. This engagement takes place both at a policy-specific and overarching strategic level. As part of our corporate transformation programme, we have been working to improve the way we engage and communicate with external stakeholders. A successful Communications Month was held in September 2007.

External communications can be a useful tool in our own organisational development too – in demonstrating ambition and setting standards for ourselves that we know we will be judged by. Therefore:

- We will continue to take advantage of appropriate speaking occasions, both at Ministerial and official level, to communicate key messages on sustainability (94).

6. Our Agencies and Government Offices

6.1 Executive Agencies

Communities and Local Government has four Executive Agencies. In common with 2006-07, we have asked the agencies to feed into the departmental SDAP as the agencies by themselves are of a scale that may not warrant preparation of their own SDAPs for the time being. However, we will engage and support those agencies who are considering producing SDAPs (or equivalent) of their own in future years.

The Fire Service College

The Fire Service College (FSC) is the training establishment for the Fire and Rescue Service based at Moreton-in-Marsh in Gloucestershire.

FSC's contribution to sustainable development lies principally in managing the environmental impacts of its operations. FSC is fully integrated into the Department's SOGE reporting and targets and has initiated measures to contribute to all four of the shared priorities of *Securing the Future* (see Appendix 2).

FSC is currently developing a new 100-bed student accommodation block. The agreed target is an overall BREEAM rating of Excellent or, if this is not achievable, an overall Very Good rating, with an Excellent rating in energy consumption, carbon emissions and water consumption.

Ordnance Survey

Ordnance Survey is the national mapping agency for Great Britain. It is a government department and Executive Agency in its own right, but Communities and Local Government has a shareholder interest.

Ordnance Survey products greatly assist central and local government in both the planning and realisation of environmental policy. The agency has also recently provided a new (free) web-based community portal, that aims to encourage more people to enjoy the benefits of the outdoors by providing an opportunity for the general public to use maps to record their walking routes and share their photographs and ideas, including commenting on their suitability for wheelchair users.

Ordnance Survey continues to invest in education, supporting the national curriculum for geography by supplying over 700,000 pupils with a free map and map reading leaflet each year, and access to Mapzone, a learning website.

Ordnance Survey has recently announced that it expects to move to new offices in 2009 for which a BREEAM rating of Excellent is specified. In the meantime it is continuing work to improve the energy efficiency of its buildings.

Over the coming year Ordnance Survey is developing a new departmental-wide framework for improving the sustainability of its activities.

The Planning Inspectorate

The Planning Inspectorate provides impartial expertise in planning and land use to help shape well-planned environments and deliver sustainable development.

The agency's main work is the processing of planning and enforcement appeals and holding inquiries into local development plans. It also deal with a wide variety of other planning related casework including listed building consent appeals, advertisement appeals, and reporting on planning applications.

The Planning Inspectorate has recently established a Sustainability Working Group, addressing operations, policy and people issues.

Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre

The Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, located in Westminster specialises in events for 40-1,000 delegates.

The Conference Centre is fully integrated into the Department's SOGE reporting processes, as one of only two non-office buildings on the Communities and Local Government estate. The Agency has an active programme to reduce its consumption of electricity. During 2006/07 the power consumption of the house lights in the Churchill Auditorium was reduced by 25 per cent by substitution of more energy-efficient fittings.

6.2 The Government Office Network (including Regional Co-ordination Unit)

The Government Offices (GOs) make a crucial contribution to sustainable development in the regions, providing a joined up perspective for Government as a whole at regional and local level. The GOs are instrumental for the Department in the following ways¹⁹:

- At regional level, GOs work on behalf of central Government to negotiate with regional bodies on the development of Regional Spatial Strategies, Regional Economic Strategies and, in due course, Single Regional Strategies.
- At local level, GOs develop an understanding of the local "story" and local priorities to an extent that Whitehall could never have. They use this to negotiate and assess Local Area Agreements, ensuring that the social, economic and environmental challenges and opportunities fit together in a way that works best for all parties.
- The GOs work with local authorities when they are preparing their Local Development Frameworks, stressing the need for plans to be sustainable and deliverable.
- The GOs are working with Regional Development Agencies to develop and implement a new round of European Regional Development Fund programmes in English regions during 2007-13. These will be worth around £2 billion. These programmes have a strong cross cutting environmental theme.

As the Department with responsibility for local government, it is vital to Communities and Local Government that the GOs are equipped to carry out the strategic role that is now expected of them in negotiating Local Area Agreements. GOs are developing their own capacity in this area. For example, GO-East has arranged a series of

¹⁹ *Securing the Regions' Futures* (www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/publications/documents/securing-the-regions-futures.pdf) stated that the GOs would not prepare their own SDAPs but that Whitehall departments would report in their own SDAPs on the role played by the GOs on their behalf.

facilitated, interactive workshops for both internal GO staff and senior members of local authorities and LSPs who are involved in the LAA process. This training is specifically geared to raise their understanding of sustainable development, and the implications of including (or not) its principles in LAAs. Other GOs (Yorkshire & Humber, North West) have used this same training package (Planit Sustainability).

The Regional Co-ordination Unit is the corporate headquarters for the GO Network, supporting the work of GOs by providing the mechanisms for an overarching strategic and performance management framework to be agreed between GOs and sponsor departments. The framework enables GOs alongside sponsor departments to monitor progress on sustainable development activity and engage with national stakeholders on cross cutting issues to remove potential barriers and drive forward delivery. The Inter Departmental Steering Group is used as a forum by sponsor departments and the GO Network to discuss strategic issues on sustainable development.

The GOs report on sustainable operations via the Department's returns to the SOGE reporting framework. The GO network is taking forward its property asset management initiative and will use this as a key opportunity to improve the overall sustainability of its properties.

6.3 Non Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) and other bodies

The Department's NDPBs vary enormously in size and scope. Some of them are large organizations with a significant responsibility in developing sustainable communities (eg English Partnerships). Others are smaller and/or have a more specialist role. NDPBs are not directly covered by our SDAP, nor do we currently require them to produce their own SDAP. However, we need to ensure that the linkages are made, where appropriate, between our work on sustainable development and the work of our NDPBs.

- We are working to form the Homes & Communities Agency – the proposed new national housing and regeneration agency. It will unite English Partnerships, the Housing Corporation and key delivery functions from the Department and will work towards achieving Government targets for housing growth as well as creating successful, mixed communities through regeneration and renewal. The agency will have a specific power to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It will use its enhanced purchasing power to demand exacting standards from developers (including through the Code for Sustainable Homes) and influence the demand for environmentally friendly products and low carbon technologies.

- We will engage sponsorship teams of the Department's NDPBs about our work on sustainable development and identify those with whom it is a high priority to engage on our work to embed sustainable development in policy, operations, procurement and people (95).

Audit Commission

The Audit Commission is an independent body responsible for ensuring that public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively, to achieve high-quality local services for the public. Its work covers local government, health, housing, community safety and Fire and Rescue Services.

The Commission has worked with SDC and other stakeholders to develop its approach to sustainable development and has published a statement of intent setting out how it will build sustainable development principles into its work²⁰. The key elements are:

- As a regulator of local public services, to promote sustainable development through the Commission's audit and inspection work. For example, the new Comprehensive Area Assessment will include measures of sustainable development;
- As a partner in capacity building, to design studies and deliver improvement tools to help authorities learn from and share best practice for embedding SD in their work;
- To practice what it preaches by reducing the impact of its own activities on the environment. The Commission has worked with The Carbon Trust to establish its own carbon footprint and is setting stretching targets for reductions, focussed on business miles, commuting and office power.

²⁰ See www.audit-commission.gov.uk/localgovernment/downloads/sustainable_development.pdf

English Partnerships

English Partnerships (EP) is the national regeneration agency for England. Its principal aim is to help the Government deliver high quality, sustainable growth and urban renaissance in England, largely through land and property led regeneration/development.

A key strategic goal is to achieve high quality design and sustainability – by ensuring that housing growth and regeneration is genuinely sustainable - physically and environmentally – through raised standards of quality, design, construction, and energy and water efficiency. To achieve this EP is:

- driving radical change in the industry's supply chain to secure widespread adoption of higher environmental performance in all new homes, building on lessons learned from EP's Millennium Communities and Design for Manufacture programmes.
- creating 'exemplar sustainable developments' at Northstowe and at other sites, with high eco-standards, micro-renewable technology and local services and amenities provided in a sustainable way. EP's revised Quality Standards, incorporating wide sustainability requirements were introduced from November 2007.
- implementing 'The Carbon Challenge', an environmentally focused initiative to challenge developers to deliver innovative affordable, low carbon housing.
- introducing at the earliest opportunity the Code for Sustainable Homes and exploring opportunities to further raise the environmental performance standards achieved on all EP developments. Code Level 3 is now a condition of all EP's development briefs and forms part of EP's Quality Standards.
- working with the Coalfields Regeneration Trust to deliver a prosperous, sustainable future for England's former coalfield communities. The environmental legacy of the coal industry is being cleared up and the housing, economic and social needs of the local communities are being addressed.
- supporting other Government initiatives to pilot and promote decentralised and renewable energy by incorporating integrated approaches to utility provision in EP sponsored developments.
- working with other Government Departments and local authorities to make better use of surplus public sector and brownfield land incorporating sustainable development standards.

Housing Corporation

Through its Affordable Housing Programme, the Housing Corporation (HC) promotes sustainable development in a number of ways:

- From April 2008, all new homes funded via HC with social housing grant will need to meet the Housing Corporation's *new Design and Quality Standards* published in April 2007. These set out the core performance standards expected in return for the public funds invested. The core standards cover internal and external environments and sustainability.
- The Design and Quality Standard document also sets out how the Housing Corporation intends to deliver on the *Code for Sustainable Homes*. For the forthcoming 2008-11 Affordable Housing Programme the Corporation will be looking to fund schemes which achieve a minimum of Code level 3. This will increase to a minimum requirement to Code level 4 as part of the 2012 bid process.
- HC's Design and Quality Strategy sets out the importance of design and quality within the context of delivering the Corporation's overall corporate objectives and targets. It provides an understanding of how design and quality will impact at strategic, programme and operational levels.

More broadly, HC delivers initiatives such as its *Disability Equality Scheme*, *Neighbourhoods and Communities Strategy*, Forum Representing Ethnic Minority Staff in Housing (FRESH), *Tackling Homelessness Paper*; *Rural Action Plans* and *Housing for Older People Strategy*.

As for its own staff and operations, HC has a public *Equality and Diversity Policy*, which recognises that its ability to meet needs of its diverse communities is improved by having a diverse workforce. HC will start to report on its sustainable operations via the SOGE reporting mechanisms.

Commission for Architecture in the Built Environment

Although the Department for Culture, Media and Sport is the sponsor department of CABI, Communities and Local Government provides it with funding for a suite of activities that support our departmental priorities in respect of the delivery of better places.

The Department is providing funding of £6.9m in 2007-08 to support the delivery of better quality in a range of priority work areas, with a particular focus on those areas undergoing significant change (deprived areas, Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders, growth areas and city centres) and a continuing relative emphasis on new build housing quality. More broadly, CABI's work contributes to the Department's objectives of tackling disadvantage, responding to the housing needs of a growing population, promoting equalities and strengthening local government and empowering communities.

Of particular relevance to this SDAP, CABI:

- Is ensuring that emerging guidance gives a consistent message on the links between design and sustainability;
- Is undertaking research on climate change, including urban heat islands and climate change mitigation at an urban scale;
- Is working with teams in the core cities to build their capacity and confidence, in particular through a national "hothouse" event and the production of a *Manual for Sustainable Cities*, which will be informed by its outcomes.

Academy for Sustainable Communities

The Academy for Sustainable Communities (ASC) was established in response to Sir John Egan's review of skills for sustainable communities and is currently constituted as a Departmental expenditure programme hosted by the Regional Development Agency for Yorkshire & the Humber, Yorkshire Forward. It is the national centre of excellence for delivering the skills and knowledge needed to make better and more sustainable places. ASC responds to sustainable development in its widest sense, supporting development of skills needed to create places that are well designed and built, cohesive, inclusive and prosperous.

The Department is providing £5.5m of funding in 2007-08 in support of ASC's activities.

ASC is currently gearing up to bring a sharpened focus to develop skills on the environment and climate change in support of sustainable communities. This programme will include:

- providing sustainable community professionals with an accessible understanding of climate change issues;
- Developing a Continuing Professional Development resource on climate change to enable practitioners to respond to the challenges of climate change.

The roll out of the Continuing Professional Development programme is subject to the outcome of the spending review.

7. Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability

7.1 Departmental governance

Following Ministerial and machinery of government changes in summer 2007, governance arrangements for sustainable development policy within the Department are as follows:

- Overall Ministerial responsibility lies with Hazel Blears MP, as Secretary of State.
- Iain Wright MP is the member of the Ministerial team with day-to-day Ministerial responsibility for climate change and sustainable development, working with Yvette Cooper MP on any major policy decisions in these areas.
- At senior official level, the Environment and Sustainable Development Programme Executive, chaired by Richard McCarthy, provides strategic, cross-cutting oversight of sustainable development as well as the Department's activities on climate change and the environment.
- On a day-to-day level, the Department's activities in climate change and sustainable development (policy and overarching issues) are co-ordinated by the Climate Change and Sustainable Development team (CCSD). Programme management arrangements are being established to oversee the workstreams co-ordinated by CCSD.

Responsibility for sustainable operations and procurement activities rests with the Corporate Delivery Group, under Hunada Nouss, and reports to the Finance and Corporate Delivery Group Management Board. Recognising the importance of joining up operations and procurement with our wider policies and capacity on sustainable development, CCSD maintains close links with colleagues handling operations and procurement.

7.2 Individual accountabilities

The key accountabilities for sustainable development at official level are as follows:

Name	Title	Relevant responsibilities
Richard McCarthy	Director General, Housing and Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departmental champion of climate change and sustainable development • Chair, Environment & Sustainable Development Programme Executive
Andrew Wells	Director, New Homes & Sustainable Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director overseeing climate change and sustainable development policy (including SDAP)
Bob Ledsome	Deputy Director, Climate Change & Sustainable Development (CCSD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibility for climate change and sustainable development (including SDAP)
Hunada Nouss	Director General, Corporate Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departmental champion of sustainable operations and procurement • Chair, Finance & Corporate Delivery Group Management Board
Roy Marshall	Director, Knowledge, Information Technology & Working Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director overseeing working environment and sustainable operations
Roger Hitchcock	Deputy Director, Working Environment (WE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibility for working environment and sustainable operations
David Waterson	Head, Corporate Procurement Division (CPD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibility for corporate procurement

These accountabilities are cascaded down to working level officials within CCSD, WE and CPD (see Appendix 1 for contact details).

7.3 Cross-Whitehall Governance

The Department is represented on relevant cross-Whitehall sustainable development machinery, in particular:

- Our Secretary of State, Hazel Blears MP, is a member of the Environment and Energy sub-committee of the Economic Development Cabinet Committee.
- Iain Wright MP will participate in a network of Sustainable Development Ministers being established across Whitehall departments.

- Our Permanent Secretary, Peter Housden, is a member of the High Level Group chaired by Cabinet Secretary Sir Gus O'Donnell overseeing public sector sustainable operations and procurement.
- We are represented on the Sustainable Development Policy Board (Andrew Wells), Sustainable Procurement & Operations Board (Hunada Nouss) and on the various working groups supporting those boards.

7.4 Preparation of SDAP

Preparation of this SDAP was co-ordinated by the Climate Change & Sustainable Development team (CCSD). In order to obtain high-level input into what should be in the SDAP, including the vision for what sustainable development means to the department, and to engage colleagues around the department on specific actions to be included:

- A presentation on sustainable development and the SDAP process was prepared and, after piloting with the Environment & Sustainable Buildings Programme Executive, was circulated to all directorates to elicit feedback.
- Feedback was received from a number of people, both from people with a direct responsibility and from people with an interest. A common theme in the responses was that social aspects should be strengthened, recognising that sustainable development is not only about the environment.
- Drafts of the SDAP, reflecting the above feedback, were sent for comment to contributors within directorates.

In addition to consultation within the Department, feedback and comments were received from key agencies, Government Offices, Defra and SDC's capacity building team.

Following the above processes, and sign-off by the Permanent Secretary, the SDAP was approved for release to SDC and publication by Iain Wright MP, who has Ministerial responsibility within the Department for sustainable development.

7.5 Monitoring and evaluation of SDAP

The actions set out in the SDAP span a broad range of the Department's activities, many of which have their own programme management and reporting arrangements. It would be burdensome and unproductive to monitor all of the actions in detail as a single programme. However, it is important that senior management remains aware of general progress against our SDAP in case problems arise which lend themselves to being resolved through senior intervention and/or which can inform thinking on future SDAPs. Therefore:

- In addition to annual progress reports against the SDAP (see below) CCSD will collate a mid-year summary update on the progress against the actions listed in Appendix 2 (97).
- CCSD will report through its programme management arrangements on progress, flagging any issues of significant concern for resolution (99).

Evaluating the impact of the SDAP on real world outcomes is not a straightforward task. However, part of the role of the programme management arrangements will be to evaluate, in the round, the success of this SDAP in embedding sustainable development within the Department. And one of the roles of the Programme Executive will be to evaluate how the work of the Department translates into real world outcomes – what is working well, what is working less well, and where the gaps are. There will therefore be a dynamic process whereby the discussions at programme management and Programme Executive levels will inform the evolution of subsequent SDAPs.

7.6 Reporting against the SDAP

In common with the approach taken for 2006-07, the Department will include a brief summary of its achievements on sustainable development in its annual report for 2007-08 and will prepare a separate, more detailed progress report against all of the actions²¹.

In following this approach, the Department will take account of any further guidance that may be provided by SDC on aligning sustainable development reporting arrangements across government.

²¹ For the 2006-07 progress report, please refer to www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/susdev-progreport-0607

7.7 Conclusion and future SDAPs

This SDAP has set out the vision of the new Communities and Local Government of sustainable development and organizes the actions that we will take under the headings of the emerging priorities that will carry us through the forthcoming spending round. It also sets out how we will monitor and report on the actions we have committed to.

With this framework in place, we do not anticipate a fundamental re-write of the SDAP during the coming spending round. Rather, we plan to update the SDAP incrementally each year, updating the text where necessary and rolling forward the actions to be taken. We plan to issue the first such refresh early in the financial year 2008-09.

Appendix 1

Relevant Contacts

For further information on sustainable development within Communities and Local Government, please contact the following:

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