



Sustainable
Development Commission

Centre for Environment, Fisheries & Aquaculture Science

Chief Executive: Mark Farrar

SDC Assessment



Checklist

Sustainable Development Action Plan

1	Does the plan specify the period of time it will cover?	✗	Plan does not specify timeframe. Most targets seem to be for 2006 but some are for 2007.
2	Does the plan specify which organisations it covers?	n/a	
3	Has the organisation articulated what SD means for them?	✗	SDAP mentions CEFAS has defined responsibility for sustainable development but plan does not explain what this is.
4	Does the plan describe the benefits of having an SD approach to the organisation?	✓	
5	Does the plan acknowledge the Government's sustainable development goal?	✗	
6	Does the plan acknowledge the priorities of <i>Securing the Future</i> ?	✗	Source of priorities is not acknowledged.
	Does the plan mention one or more of the priorities of <i>Securing the Future</i> ?	✓	Table of actions include Climate Change and Energy and sustainable Consumption and Production.
7	Does the plan identify links to the priorities of <i>Securing the Future</i> ?	✓	
8	Does the plan acknowledge the principles of <i>Securing the Future</i> ?	✓	
	Does the plan mention one or more of the principles of <i>Securing the Future</i> ?	✓	
9	Does the plan identify links to the principles of <i>Securing the Future</i> ?	✗	The plan acknowledges that <i>Securing the Future</i> sets out the guiding principles but does not explore how these relate to the work of CEFAS.
10	Have the organisation's relevant executive agencies produced their own plan?	n/a	
11	Does the action plan contain a work programme?	✓	
12	Does the plan include actions relating to commitments from the SD strategy?	✓	
13	Does the action plan cover government policy?	✗	Plan only covers internal operational policy.
14	Does the action plan cover operations?	✓	
15	Was the plan publicly available by 13th January 2006?	✓	

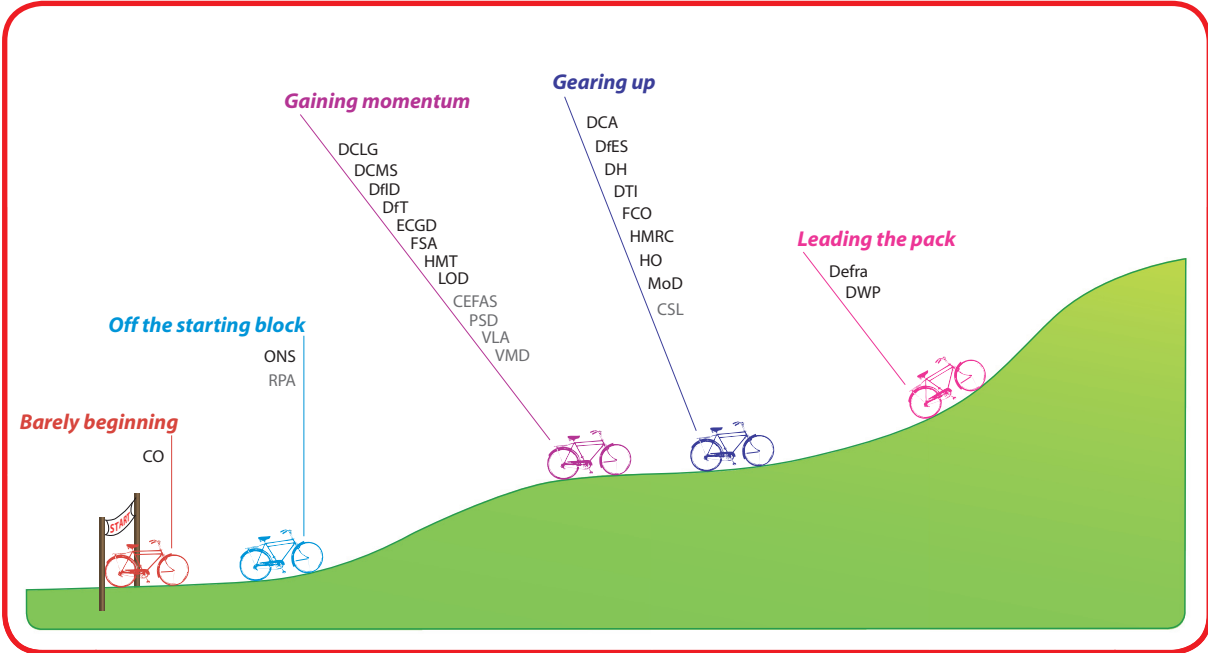
16	Does the plan outline any arrangements for strengthening SD capacity in the organisation?	✓	
17	Does the plan describe the infrastructure in place to deliver the plan?	✓	
18	Does the plan make it clear who signed it off?	✓	
19	Does the plan designate who is accountable for the delivery of the overall plan?	✓	
20	Does the plan explain how the organisation will monitor progress against the plan?	✓	
21	Does the plan describe how the organisation will report against the plan?	✓	
22	Does the plan describe how it links in to other reporting mechanisms within the organisation? E.g. the annual report	✓	
23	Does the plan commit to reporting against the plan on a defined regular basis?	✓	

Senior Accountable Officer: Dr Mike Waldock, *Science Director*

Status of Plan: Published 15.12.05

Please note that the SDC rating is based on a competency framework and not straight addition of the scores in the table above. Please see main report for full explanation of the methodology.

How is CEFAS doing?



Background

Cefas is a Defra Agency and a scientific research and advisory centre working in fisheries management, environmental protection and aquaculture. Their aim is to provide high quality science to be used to conserve and enhance the aquatic environment, promote sustainable management of its natural resources, and to protect the public from aquatic contaminants.

Context

The Agency’s plan is operations based. The Agency explained that its policy priorities are set out in other corporate and business plans and it was therefore felt that the focus of the SDAP should be to ensure the effective use of resources across the organisation. However, these links are not specified in the plan.

Organisational view of Sustainable Development

The SDAP explains that CEFAS has clearly defined responsibilities for sustainable development through its role of conserving and enhancing the aquatic environment, promoting rational management of its natural resources and protecting the public from aquatic contaminants. As an environmental agency, CEFAS views sustainable development as core to its business and integral to the way it works.

Benefits of taking a sustainable development approach

The SDAP asserts that taking a sustainable development approach will help the organisation operate more efficiently and increase the Agency's competitive edge through cutting costs and enhancing its reputation.

Link to *Securing the Future*

Guiding Principles

The plan explains that CEFAS' approach is consistent with the five guiding principles as set out in *Securing the Future*. The plan however does not elaborate on the links between the principles and the Agency's work. In bilateral discussions, CEFAS explained that 'Using Sound Science Responsibly' is central to the Agency's work as it carries out scientific research and provides consultancy advice. The Agency also acknowledged the contribution it can make to a 'Sustainable Economy' through the scientific advice it provides to the fishing industry for the sustainable use of aquatic resources. In addition, the Agency contributes to 'Living within Environmental Limits' by defining the environmental quality objectives for water.

Shared priorities for UK action

CEFAS' SDAP only identifies its contribution to the priorities of *Securing the Future* in the context of its operational delivery priorities. CEFAS intends to contribute to Climate Change and Energy by reducing its road transport vehicle carbon dioxide emissions and offsetting the carbon emissions from business air miles. The Agency will contribute to Sustainable Consumption and Production by producing a sustainable procurement strategy. Clearly the Agency has a key contribution to make to the priorities in terms of its actual advice e.g. that relating to the beneficial use of waste materials, possible impacts of siting new wind farms on marine resources.

Policy priorities

The SDAP does not identify or include commitments relating to government policy. CEFAS explained in bilateral discussions that the sustainability agenda permeates all aspects of the Agency's work and is already captured in the Agency's Science Strategy documents, corporate and business plans and memorandums of understanding and contracts with Defra customers. The Agency decided that to develop another sustainability action plan setting out how CEFAS supports Defra's aims for

sustainability would simply provide a parallel paper trail in the organisation and divert its focus from the improvements the Agency could make on the effective use of resources in an operational context. The latter is the focus of their current plan.

The SDC would not expect the SDAP to unnecessarily duplicate existing plans or strategies. However, it is a cross-government requirement to draw up SDAPs based on *Securing the Future* (a cross-government

strategy). The SDC SDAP guidance makes it clear that departmental plans should cover both policy and operations. We would expect CEFAS to ensure that its SDAP covers core policy and not just operational activity. The plan should focus on the key policy areas where taking an integrated sustainable development

approach is key to optimising outcomes or will make the greatest contribution to the *Securing the Future* priorities. Cross-references to existing documents should be made where appropriate to make it clear how the SDAP fits with corporate activity.

Leading by example

The SDAP sets out the operational priority areas for action. These include procurement, travel and water usage as well as putting in place a resource efficiency and waste plan. CEFAS explained in the bilateral that the ISO 14001 accreditation and the Sustainable Development on the Government Estate (SDiG) targets influenced the content of their plan, as well as the need to meet efficiency targets and reduce costs.

Bilateral discussions revealed that CEFAS plans to offset the carbon emissions from all flights taken by its staff. The agency has set aside 1.5% of the cost of air travel as derived

through its financial systems. However, this may change as the Agency is aware that the cost does not represent the distance travelled. CEFAS is awaiting Defra's travel contract for further guidance. The cost of offsetting will be reflected in CEFAS' project contracts.

The SDAP sets out the Agency's commitment on sustainable procurement and explains that the Agency will ensure it has a sustainable procurement strategy in place. The plan commits to include sustainability considerations in all contracts for goods, work and services in the future.

Securing the Future commitments

Departmental commitment

Securing the Future does not specify any commitments for which CEFAS has the lead across government. It was explained in bilateral discussions that CEFAS contributes to Defra's *Securing the Future* commitment to put sustainable development into practice through the implementation of sustainable fisheries policy. However, the SDAP does not address this area of work.

The SDC would expect future plans to address this commitment and set actions accordingly.

Cross-government commitments

The SDAP sets out commitments on procurement and sustainable development capacity, but does not set these out in the

context of the corresponding cross-government commitments.

Target setting

The SDAP sets out the timescales for completion of targets and designates responsibility for delivery for each of the targets. However, the plan does not include any milestones and the expected outcome of some of the actions is not always clear. For example, there is an action to "include sustainable development in all aspects of new building projects" but the intended outcome and measurement of success is not specified which hinders CEFAS' ability to monitor and report on its progress effectively.

Policy making

Sustainable development “proofing”

The SDAP does not explain whether CEFAS undertakes any form of sustainability appraisal for the policy advice that it provides. It was explained in the bilateral that the Agency’s work provides the evidence base and scientific advice for meeting sustainable use of aquatic resources. For example, the Agency advises on how to set limits on fisheries to ensure the correct balance between best use of resources and sustainable stocks.

The SDC would expect future plans to address the internal mechanisms for policy advice appraisals, ensuring the effective integration of the sustainable development principles into the policy advice which the Agency provides e.g. sustainable development proofing of project outlines etc.

Sustainable development skills

The SDAP contains a commitment to include sustainable development in staff induction. Bilateral discussions revealed that CEFAS is waiting to receive training material from Defra which it will use to address sustainable development skills across the organisation. The Agency tends to use the same training package as its lead department.

The SDC would expect CEFAS’ future SDAPs to set out clear actions to develop staff awareness and capacity through appropriate ‘learning’ mechanisms so that staff are able to reflect *Securing the Future’s* priorities and principles in their work.

Achieving Sustainable Development outcomes

Infrastructure

The SDAP describes the basic infrastructure in place to deliver the plan. The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for sustainable development and this is delegated through the Management Board to key operational managers who are responsible for the implementation of the plan. The Management Board signed off the plan and will be accountable for its delivery.

Engagement

The SDAP explains that the Agency will achieve sustainable development in practice through staff awareness. The plan includes a commitment to raise awareness on sustainable development through an information programme for all existing staff. Bilateral discussions revealed that the Agency plans to raise

awareness using various posters supplied by Defra on sustainability as well as through the intranet which already contains sustainability/ environmental messages.

CEFAS has an action in its plan to include sustainable development in staff surveys which will be used to monitor awareness of sustainable development. Staff were asked whether they understand what sustainable development is and how to incorporate it into their work. The Agency explained that the response was 48% positive. Staff were also asked whether they knew where to go for sustainable development advice for which the result was 35% positive. It will be important that future engagement initiatives help staff to understand how they can contribute to the delivery of their plan in terms of their advice work as well as their impact on operational targets.

Monitoring and reporting





Progress against the targets set in this plan will be monitored and evaluated quarterly with progress reported to the CEFAS Management Board in the standard management performance report. An expanded version of the fourth quarterly management performance report

will form the December 2006 evaluation report on the action plan. Thereafter, the Agency will report on progress against its plan in the CEFAS Annual Report and Accounts, which is produced at the end of each financial year.

Strengths to build upon

✓	Ensure all targets are SMART and outcome focused.
✓	Set out clear actions to develop staff capacity and awareness and ensure there is an understanding amongst staff on how sustainable development relates to their advice work as well as in terms of estate operations.

Challenges for 2007

	Ensure plan covers core policy and not just operational activity and sets out prioritised actions relating to policy work (e.g. reflecting contributions to Defra's <i>Securing the Future Commitments</i>).
	Ensure that plan is cross-referenced to existing corporate documents as appropriate.
	Include actions relating to the implementation of a sustainable fisheries policy, as per Defra's high level sustainable development objectives.
	Address internal mechanisms for policy advice appraisals, ensuring the effective integration of the sustainable development principles into the policy advice that the Agency provides e.g. 'sustainable development' proofing of project outlines.



Sustainable
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