



Veterinary Medicines Directorate

Chief Executive: Steve Dean

SDC Assessment



Checklist

Sustainable Development Action Plan

1	Does the plan specify the period of time it will cover?	✓	
2	Does the plan specify which organisations it covers?	n/a	
3	Has the organisation articulated what SD means for them?	✓	
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> ? Does the plan mention one or more of the priorities of <i>Securing the Future</i> ?	✗ ✗	The plan does not explain that <i>Securing the Future</i> sets out priority areas for actions.
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> ?	✓ ✗	The plan acknowledges that there are five principles, but does not list or refer to any of them.
9	Does the plan identify links to the principles of <i>Securing the Future</i> ?	✓	
10	Have the organisation's relevant executive agencies produced their own plan?	n/a	
11	Does the action plan contain a work programme?	✗	The plan sets out a list of commitments but no specific actions.
12	Does the plan include actions relating to commitments from the SD strategy?	✓	
13	Does the action plan cover government 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?	✓	Explains that any training needs identified will be incorporated into their training programme.

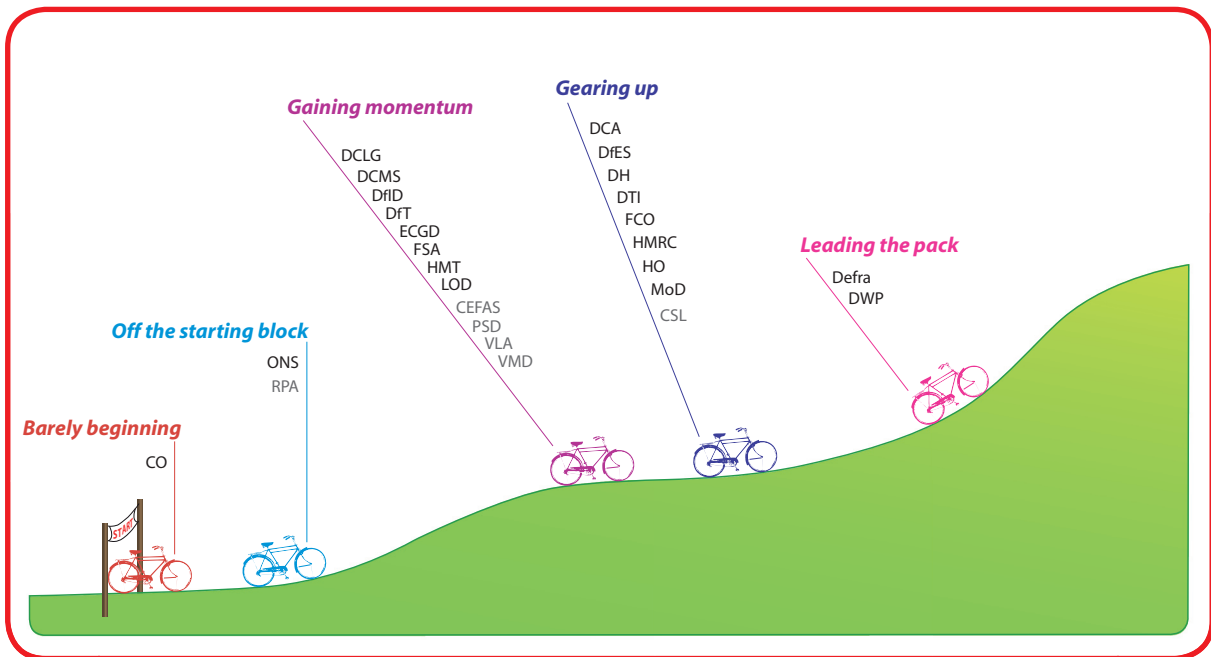
17	Does the plan describe the infrastructure in place to deliver the plan?	✓	
18	Does the plan make it clear who signed it off?	✗	VMD explained that plan was approved by the Management Board.
19	Does the plan designate who is accountable for the delivery of the overall plan?	✓	
20	Does the plan explain 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	✓	Will include progress in their Annual Report.
23	Does the plan commit to reporting against the plan on a defined regular basis?	✓	Will report on progress on an annual basis.

Senior Accountable Officer: John Fitzgerald, *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 VMD doing?



Background

VMD is Defra's Agency responsible for the authorisation of animal medicines for marketing in the UK.

Context

The plan was drafted by the Director of Corporate Business and circulated to other Directors for comments. VMD's Management Board approved the operational and policy commitments outlined in the plan. The action plan was also sent out to staff for feedback.

Organisational view of Sustainable Development

VMD's views its aims and objectives as directly linking to sustainable development.

VMD's vision is the responsible, safe and effective use of veterinary medicinal products. In working towards achieving this vision, the VMD aims to protect public health, animal health and the environment. The Agency's objectives are set by Defra's Ministers and the SDAP explains that its core business activities are 'consistent with the five guiding principles of *Securing the Future*'.

Benefits of taking a sustainable development approach

The SDAP states that the failure of the Agency to meet its objectives as a whole (i.e. integrated across environmental, social and economic aspects) could result in damage to the environment and reduce the sustainability of livestock production in the UK. There could also be an adverse impact on the maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment if consumers and importing countries lost faith in the safety of animal food products originating in the UK.

Link to *Securing the Future*

Guiding Principles

The plan explains that VMD's 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 VMD explained that 'Using Sound Science Responsibly' is of particular relevance to the Agency as it authorises veterinary medicines, using good science, thus ensuring their safety, quality and efficiency. The Agency also recognised its links to *Ensuring a Strong,*

Just and Healthy Society through the impact of its work on human health. The Agency's interaction with industry, particularly links to a 'Sustainable Economy'.

Shared priorities for UK action

The plan does not refer to the four priorities for immediate action. In future plans the SDC would expect VMD to clearly set out how far it is contributing to the four priority areas of *Securing the Future* with corresponding, prioritised, actions.

Policy priorities

The SDAP sets out the Agency's commitments on the following areas: carrying out RIAs on all new legislation being developed, ensuring all business cases for new projects will be assessed against the five principles, and incorporating the sustainable development principles and Defra's priorities into recommendations when negotiating changes to EU legislation. It was explained in bilateral discussions that the

Agency will consider the five guiding principles in its negotiations in Europe. However, it feels that the varying needs and priorities brought to the table in European discussions will mean that sustainable development will have to be incorporated through technical standards and in line with environmental, health and safety priorities.

Leading by example

The SDAP sets out operational commitments on waste, sustainable procurement and investigating the feasibility of offsetting carbon emissions. There are no specific targets in the plan (see target-setting section). The Agency explained that the priority for the first year of the plan was to establish operational baselines (e.g. waste, water, travel) so that targets can be set in the future. The Agency however is not yet clear on how it will determine baselines.

The potential for offsetting the carbon emissions that result from traveling domestically and abroad remains one of the strategic challenges. The Agency explained the difficulty it faces as a cost-recovering Agency and was concerned that private clients might respond quite negatively to a carbon levy added to invoices.

VMD explained in the bilateral that it has a relatively small environmental footprint.

Its main office is on a shared site with the VLA and it has 140 members of staff and relatively small impacts e.g. low waste disposal requirements due to the well managed procurement of office supplies and use of few hazardous chemicals.

The Agency's SDAP commits to carrying out an audit to determine how much of its office supplies are from sustainable sources and what action can be taken to increase the amount of office supplies procured from sustainable sources. VMD explained in the bilateral that the Agency uses the same procurement and standard tender processes as Defra. However, in a number of cases the Agency has secured lower prices from local suppliers using its own systems. The Agency is also looking to address procurement and waste disposal issues regarding glass-based laboratory equipment and test kits.

Securing the Future commitments

Departmental commitment

There are no specific commitments in *Securing the Future* for which VMD has a lead across government.

Cross-government commitments

The plan addresses sustainable procurement, but does not set out the actions in the context of contributing to the cross-government commitment on sustainable procurement.

Target setting

VMD's plan contains high-level commitments with no specific targets, timescales or milestones. VMD explained that the timescale for the plan is from December 2005 to March 2007 and the Agency will action these commitments within the timeframe of the plan.

VMD will need to ensure that future plans set out SMART targets for all of the actions included in the plan with clearly stated expected outcomes and measurements of success.

Policy making

Sustainable development 'proofing'

The Agency has committed to ensuring that all new project work being undertaken within VMD will be assessed against the five guiding principles. The plan however, does not set out

what steps the Agency will take to ensure this happens.

The Agency explained in bilateral discussions that when new legislation is expected, VMD sets up a project group to examine a range of objectives, including sustainable

development, to feed into the RIAs. Reviews of RIAs generally take place after five years. There is now an annual requirement for manufacturers to report to the VMD on the environmental safety of their products. To ensure sustainable development is adequately incorporated into the RIAs, VMD plans to use Defra's 'Stretching the Web' tool when revising legislation.

Sustainable development skills

The SDAP states that any specific training needs identified in regard to the plan will be

incorporated within VMD's Training Strategy for its staff. The plan however does not set out how the training needs of staff will be assessed. It was explained in the bilateral that new employees receive a checklist of requirements to highlight the areas of their work in which they still require training which could be one possible means.

There are currently no plans in place to incorporate sustainable development specifically into staff training.

Achieving Sustainable Development outcomes

Infrastructure

It is not clear from the plan what infrastructure will be used to ensure its delivery. The Agency explained in the bilateral that the Agency's three Directors of policy, Licensing and Corporate Business are responsible for the delivery of the six priorities within the SDAP. Alongside the Audit and Risk Committee, the Management Board will ensure the delivery of the plan.

When formulating the plan, a draft was circulated and discussed among Associate Directors, prior to approval by the Management Board. The plan was signed off by VMD's Chief Executive.

Engagement

The plan explains that VMD did not engage with external stakeholders in the initial development of the plan but that a copy would be placed on the internet once it had been agreed and stakeholders would be able to comment. All relevant sustainable development issues will be discussed at the next open annual meeting which will provide another opportunity for stakeholder involvement. When the action plan is revised, the VMD will take account of any comments received.

VMD staff, however, were given the opportunity to comment on the plan before it was finally agreed. As part of the process, staff were invited to view the Defra DVD 'Putting sustainable development into practice' and suggest ways in which the Agency could limit its use of natural resources.

Monitoring and reporting

The plan sets out a clear system of monitoring and review. The Management Board will review progress against the plan on a quarterly basis (as a standing agenda item). The Agency explained in the bilateral that all relevant sustainable development issues will be discussed at the next Annual Meeting, including progress

against the plan using a traffic light system, as with all progress reporting for VMD.

Progress against the plan will be reported in VMD's Annual Report, published in July 2007. The plan commits to reporting progress on an annual basis.

Strengths to build upon



Ensure systems and processes are in place to facilitate the integration of SD to project appraisals and RIAs, and staff are aware of the need to do so.

Challenges for 2007



Clearly set out in future plans how the Agency is contributing to the four priority areas of *Securing the Future* with corresponding, prioritised, actions.



Ensure that future plans set out SMART targets for all of the commitments included in the plan to facilitate effective implementation, monitoring and review.



Work to ensure the SDAP is supported by appropriate sustainable development skills and capacity within the organisation.



Explore options for cost-recovery of carbon off-setting with Defra and its other Executive Agencies.



Ensure that VMD's developing approach to 'sustainable development proofing' in terms of both RIAs and project proposals, is evaluated, and development actions included in future plans as necessary.



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