

DEFRA aims and objectives - comments

01.10.01



Sustainable
Development Commission

DEFRA AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Comments by the UK Sustainable Development Commission

1. The Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft high level aims and objectives for [DEFRA](#). Indeed, we would like to see similar consultation exercises carried out by all Government Departments!
2. The Commission is pleased to see the prominence that is given to sustainable development in the overarching aim for the Department, and the good representation of sustainable development in the individual objectives. We do, however, have a number of detailed comments to make both on the drafting of the aim and on the scope of the individual objectives:

The aim

3. SDC believes that the draft aim at present underplays the role of DEFRA in promoting sustainable development across the whole of government and society. “The promotion of sustainable development across government and society at large” is more than a “key cross-cutting issue” but an overarching-aim in its own right. Sustainable Development should be the central organising principle for UK society, and this should be reflected in the aims and objectives not just of DEFRA but of all government departments.
4. We suggest the following alternative wording: “To promote sustainable development across government and society at large, and to secure a better environment, competitive and sustainable farming, fishing and food industries, a thriving rural economy and a countryside for all to enjoy.”

The objectives

5. Within the individual objectives, SDC would like to see more prominence given to DEFRA's role on promotion of sustainable development internationally (which goes beyond the resource management points in objective 6) and more recognition of its central role in relation to urban communities (see especially objective 1).

6. As a UK body, SDC is concerned that it is not always clear throughout the document which responsibilities are being carried out on behalf of England and which on behalf of the UK as a whole. For example, objective 5 talks about (inter alia) the management of fisheries in the "UK", while this is a devolved matter. Further clarity of the scope of these aims and objectives would be helpful.

7. It would be helpful for the schematic outline of Government planning (page 5) to make explicit reference to DEFRA's own sustainable development strategy, which SDC looks forward to being involved in developing.

8. Finally, SDC warmly welcomes the emphasis that is given at section 6 to partnership working, which we see as central to the effective promotion of sustainable development. In this spirit, we look forward to working with the new Department on the delivery of our common agenda.

28 September 2001