

# Sustainable Development Action Plan – Progress Report Summary 2009

**Organisation:** Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Department     Non-Ministerial Department     Executive Agency     NDPB     Other

**Report of progress against:** Defra, Sustainable Development Action Plan, November 2007 - March 2009.

## Progress Against Actions

Percentage of actions complete or on target: 63.0%  
 Average impact rating\* of all the actions which are complete or on target: 2.70

\*The Impact rating (1-4) is a self-assessment of the contribution to SD priority areas, and is not an indication of performance.

## Embedding Sustainability

Self assessment ratings against four themes: To what extent is sustainable development embedded?

Policies	People	Operations	Governance, Monitoring and Reporting
On Course	On Course	On Course	On Course

## Sustainable Procurement

Self assessment ratings against five themes of the Flexible Framework: What level has the organisation already reached? (Where an alternative sustainable procurement tool has been used, please provide an appropriate summary.)

People	Policy, Strategy & Communications	Procurement Process	Engaging Suppliers	Measurements and Results
Level 5 - Lead	Level 5 - Lead	Level 5 - Lead	Level 4 - Enhance	Level 5 - Lead

## Taking Stock

What have been the **highlights** of your organisation's sustainable development progress over the past year?

- Defra's ActonCO2 campaign has continued to catalyse action on climate change- over 65% of participants claim to have taken action or are planning to take action as a result of the campaign, an increase of 15% compared to summer 2008
- Marine and Coastal Access Bill (currently going through Parliament) to ensure healthy, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas by putting in place better systems for promoting sustainable development of the UK's waters and coastline
- SDC's status change (to executive NDPB), reinforcing its role as critical friend to Government, and a successor to the outgoing Chair identified
- Completion of Defra-funded phase of the Every Action Counts initiative- 180 organisations so far have signed up to the Third Sector declaration on tackling climate change and creating a plan for change
- Launch of the Greener Living Fund, with over £6m of funding for initiatives promoting greener living
- Progress on the sustainable products agenda: we have developed 10 pilot product roadmaps to reduce the environmental impacts across the life cycle of a range of priority products. So far action plans have been published for two of the roadmaps: Milk and Clothing.
- SD messages and tools embedded in new policy-making guidance and training for Defra staff
- SD included in delivery agreements with Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), ensuring that SD is included in quarterly performance assessments
- The Sustainable Agriculture Innovation Network (SAIN) was launched to stimulate innovative thinking and research on all aspects of environmentally sustainable agriculture around the world
- 6 Zero Waste Places were chosen (as part of the Waste Strategy) as demonstrators for innovative and replicable initiatives that enable waste prevention in schools, households and businesses, and support local authorities in taking leadership reducing the overall environmental impact of waste.
- International SD dialogues (with the 'plus 5' emerging countries) developing well. Mexico, India, China and Brazil have renewed their dialogue agreements (South Africa is not due to renew their agreement until 2010)

What are the key **challenges** for the future?

- Ensuring that actions on climate change are seen within the wider context of sustainability.
- Making the business case for SD- showing that the economic downturn is an opportunity to re-evaluate and that SD is the key to tackling the global challenges we face (such as a global population of over 9 billion by 2050, changing climate etc). This will become a key element of our role as 'champion' of SD and we will need to make this case across levels (from international to local communities) and sectors (from central Government to business).
- Embedding SD in policy-development across Government, to avoid policy being produced that in the long-term has unsustainable impacts (such as biofuels development)
- Keeping SD on the agenda regionally and locally at this time of fiscal pressure
- Working with key emerging economies (such as China and India) to ensure that their growth is more sustainable, this will be

crucial as these countries have a significant and growing global impact (e.g. through greenhouse gas emissions)

What are the key things which have **helped and hindered** progress towards sustainable development?

Helps:

- Staff enthusiasm in key areas
- Developments strengthening the evidence base for SD (e.g. ongoing work on economic valuation of ecosystems)

Hinders:

- Difficulty of maintaining focus on SD given the economic downturn

What **lessons have been learnt** from the progress report? How will these be taken forward in the next SDAP?

- We have learned important and varied lessons in implementing the actions in our last SDAP, as well as reporting on progress. Some of the most important lessons learned are included here.
- We will be taking forward lessons learned on specific projects (for example Every Action Counts and Product Roadmaps) with actions in the next SDAP setting out how we will build on existing progress and improve our performance further.
- More generally, we recognise the importance of governance, monitoring and reporting mechanisms to putting actions into practice as well as reporting progress on implementation. In the next SDAP we will show how we are contributing to SD through our core business- our policies- and we will be backing this up by addressing the need to ensure that SD is fully embedded in our policy-making process and that our governance, monitoring and reporting mechanisms are robust.
- We recognise how important it is to reflect the economic aspects of SD (particularly in the current economic climate) in a balanced approach to SD- in our new SDAP we will lay out the research we are doing on the economics of sustainability and the impacts this has for the Department and wider Government.
- We also recognise that it is crucial to engage staff in the delivery of the SDAP, in our next SDAP we describe how the plan is a living document and how staff are engaged through the reporting mechanisms as well as communications activities.

Please summarise how the SDAP is aligned with and has helped your organisation to deliver its high level strategic objectives, including any Public Service Agreements (PSAs) and Departmental Strategic Objectives (DSOs).

The SDAP clearly relates each action to at least one of the four priorities in Securing the Future (StF) so that we can monitor our contributions to the priority areas of StF, and we have also demonstrated how key policy areas (pg 15) link to the four priority areas under the strategy principles. This section links clearly with our departmental Public Service Agreements and our Departmental Strategic Objectives's, in particular on Championing Sustainable Development, it and also explains Defra's role in Government's delivery of the Sustainable Development Strategy. The new SDAP will reflect the refresh to Defra's strategy, following the creation of DECC, as well as the re-energise of the SD Programme four years on from Securing the Future.

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**Date:** 14/08/2009