

## SDC Sustainable Development Action Plan (SDAP) assessment

**Organisation:** Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)  
**Title of SDAP:** Sustainable Development Action Plan (Nov 2007 – Mar 2009)

**SDAP Publication date:** November 2007  
**SDC Assessment date:** September 2008

Please see the “SDAP assessment methodology paper” for background to the assessment process, and for full details of how the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) has assessed, scored and rated this SDAP at the following webpage: <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/pages/sdap-tracker.html>.

### SUMMARY

	Score	Rating
<b>Coverage</b>	3/4	Yellow
<b>Strategic planning</b>	10/12	Green
<b>Actions</b>	9/12	Green
<b>Ownership, engagement and delivery</b>	6/6	Green
<b>Monitoring, review and reporting</b>	3/6	Yellow
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>31/40</b>	<b>Green</b>

### ISSUES AND RISKS

Defra’s commitment to act as the champion of sustainable development across government is evident throughout the SDAP. However, there is an ongoing concern that the approach being taken to achieve this is not in all cases ambitious, sufficiently comprehensive or indeed urgent, enough. This is particularly evident with regard to the operational and procurement targets, and in how Defra plans to ensure sustainability is embedded into policies across government. In its next SDAP, Defra should set out how it will work with the Office of Government Commerce and other Government Departments to implement the recommendations made by the SDC in its SDiG 2007 Report, the actions in the Government’s Delivery Plan, and the SDC’s comments on that Plan. In particular, it needs to set out how it will work with the rest of government to develop better management information on the full effects of its, government’s and the wider public sector’s operational footprint, including the effect of procurement activities through supply chains and across communities.

### DEFRA’S RESPONSE

“Defra is pleased that the SDC recognise our commitment to champion sustainable development across all levels of Government in our 2007-09 SDAP. Defra’s interim report against this SDAP shows how far we have come in meeting our aims so far, and we will continue to monitor progress against actions over the life of this SDAP. Defra’s next SDAP will also clearly align actions to Defra’s refreshed strategy and *Securing the Future* priorities to ensure that we develop our ambitions in delivering sustainable development through our people, operations, procurement, and policy making.” (Defra, November 2008).

COVERAGE				
	<i>Score</i>	0	1	2
1. Does the SDAP state clearly the period of time that it covers?				X
2. It is clear how the SDAP relates to the wider departmental family, and is SDAP coverage of the departmental family adequate?			X	

STRATEGIC PLANNING				
	<i>Score</i>	0	1	2
3. Does the SDAP set out the organisation's strategy for contributing to the aims, objectives and commitments of the UK Sustainable Development Strategy?				X
4. Does the SDAP articulate the relevance of the five sustainable development principles to its core business, and set out how they are/will be mainstreamed and inform work?			X	
5. Is it clear how the SDAP will contribute to the organisation's high-level strategic objectives, including any Public Service Agreements (PSAs) and Departmental Strategic Objectives (DSOs)?				X
6. Does the SDAP have clear objectives, and does it articulate clearly how these objectives were selected and provide a rationale for any gaps e.g. in the coverage of core business areas?				X
7. Does the SDAP link to other corporate plans or strategies?			X	
8. Does the SDAP include any commitment to work with other organisations or government bodies to deliver joint commitments, actions or initiatives?				X

ACTIONS				
	<i>Score</i>	0	1	2
9. Does the SDAP articulate how the sustainable development principles and priorities are/will be integrated into its policy and decision making, set out specific actions to achieve this, and explain how these actions have been selected?				X
10. Does the SDAP include explicit actions to improve the sustainability of the organisation's procurement activity (linking to SPAP commitments where relevant), and explain how they have been selected?			X	
11. Does the SDAP contain specific actions which demonstrate how the organisation will drive forward the sustainability of its operations (linking to SOGE commitments where relevant), and explain how they have been selected?				X

12.	Does the SDAP contain actions relating to people, such as actions to engage staff in sustainable development, develop their skills and capability to support delivery of the SDAP, and to improve their general well-being in the work place?			<b>X</b>
13.	Are the actions outcome-focused?		<b>X</b>	
14.	Are the actions SMART?		<b>X</b>	

**OWNERSHIP, ENGAGEMENT AND DELIVERY**

		<i>Score</i>		
		<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
15.	Is it clear how the SDAP will be communicated to staff and stakeholders, and how the organisation will ensure they have the capability to put the SDAP's key messages to work?			<b>X</b>
16.	Are the governance arrangements for supporting delivery of the SDAP clearly identified (e.g. boards, working groups), and is it clear who has overall responsibility for its delivery?			<b>X</b>
17.	Has the SDAP been signed off by a Minister, Permanent Secretary or Chief Executive, and has s/he provided a foreword?			<b>X</b>

**MONITORING, REVIEW AND REPORTING**

		<i>Score</i>		
		<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
18.	Does the SDAP present links to the previous SDAP (where relevant) or to the historical context of sustainable development in the organisation (if this is the first SDAP that the organisation has produced)?			<b>X</b>
19.	Are the methods and structures for monitoring and reviewing the SDAP clearly identified (e.g. boards, working groups, stakeholder engagement), and is it clear who the findings will be reported to?	<b>X</b>		
20.	Is it clear how the outcomes of internal SDAP monitoring/review will feed back into the SDAP process, including a commitment to update the SDAP within its period of coverage, where required?		<b>X</b>	