

# Sustainable Development Action Plan



**Sustainable**  
Development Commission

## Department for Transport

Sustainable Development Minister:  
Gillian Merron MP

**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?	✓	Plan mentions it covers executive agencies but does not specify which.
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?	✓	Plan refers to sustainable development goal from <i>Securing the Future</i> .
6	Does the plan acknowledge the priorities of <i>Securing the Future</i> ?	✓	Plan explains that <i>Securing the Future</i> sets out four priorities for action.
	Does the plan mention one or more of the priorities of <i>Securing the Future</i> ?	✓	Plan lists all four priorities.
7	Does the plan identify links to the priorities of <i>Securing the Future</i> ?	✓	Plan sets out departmental actions in the context of the four priorities.
8	Does the plan acknowledge the principles of <i>Securing the Future</i> ?	✓	Plan explains that <i>Securing the Future</i> sets out guiding principles.
	Does the plan mention one or more of the principles of <i>Securing the Future</i> ?	✓	Plan lists all principles.
9	Does the plan identify links to the principles of <i>Securing the Future</i> ?	✓	Plan explains that first three principles are particularly relevant to DfT but does not explain why. Departmental actions are also set in the context of the guiding principles.
10	Have the organisation's relevant executive agencies produced their own plan?	✗	DfT explained that their executive agencies will produce separate plans in the future.
11	Does the action plan contain a work programme?	✓	No timescales included.
12	Does the plan include actions relating to commitments from the SD strategy?	✓	Plan includes some actions relating to departmental commitments set out in <i>Securing the Future</i> .
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?	✓	

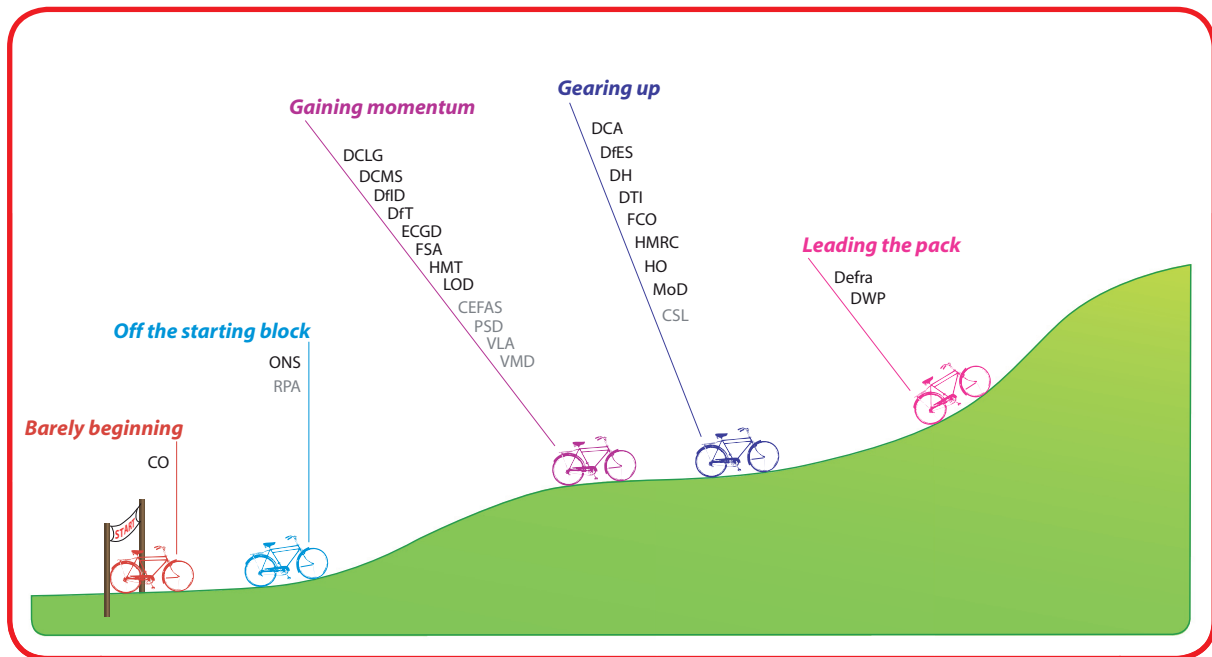
16	Does the plan outline any arrangements for strengthening SD capacity in the organisation?	✓	Training mentioned in narrative but no SMART targets.
17	Does the plan describe the infrastructure in place to deliver the plan?	✗	DfT explained that no infrastructure related to the delivery of the plan exists or is planned.
18	Does the plan make it clear who signed it off?	✗	DfT explained in bilateral discussions that the plan was signed off by Sustainable Development Minister.
19	Does the plan designate who is accountable for the delivery of the overall plan?	✗	DfT explained that the Director General will be ultimately responsible for the delivery of the 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 report on progress in Annual Report.
23	Does the plan commit to reporting against the plan on a defined regular basis?	✗	Only commits to reporting in 2007.

**Senior Accountable Officer:** Simon Webb, *Director General of Delivery and Security Group*

Status of Plan: Published 22.12.05

**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 DfT doing?



### Background

The Department for Transport's objective is to oversee the delivery of a reliable, safe and secure transport system that responds efficiently to the needs of individuals and business whilst safeguarding our environment.

### Context

DfT prepared the plan by collating and coordinating existing activities and commitments in a sustainable development context and did not allocate specific milestones within the plan. DfT is one of only five departments to submit the action plan in time to meet the December 2005 deadline as per the PM's commitment in *Securing the Future*.

### Coverage

DfT confirmed at their bilateral meeting that the SDAP covers the core department and all of DfT's executive agencies which are Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, Driving Standards Agency, Government Car and Despatch Agency, Highways Agency, Maritime and Coastguard Agency, Vehicle and Operator Services Agency, Vehicle Certification Agency. DfT's SDAP commits its agencies to producing separate SDAPs in future years.

## Departmental view of Sustainable Development

DfT's SDAP explains that the department's contribution to sustainable development is made through the Future of Transport white paper (July 2004) which sets out its vision for transport for the next 30 years. DfT is seeking

to "balance the increased demand for travel against the goal of protecting the environment effectively and improving the quality of life for everyone -whether they are travelling or not."

### Benefits of taking a sustainable development approach

DfT's plan highlights the contribution of a good transport system to a prosperous economy and mobility and acknowledges that these have to be balanced with the costs of the negative impacts of transport on the natural and built

environments. However, the plan signals that DfT's primary approach is to provide additional transport capacity where it makes economic sense and is realistic environmentally.

## Link to *Securing the Future*

### Guiding Principles

The plan states that DfT will "adhere" to the five guiding principles of *Securing the Future* stating that the following principles are particularly important to DfT's work:

- Living within environmental limits
- Ensuring a strong healthy and just society
- Achieving a sustainable economy

The plan doesn't explain why these principles are of particular significance to the department nor does it set out how DfT ensures/will ensure that they underpin its decision-making (see below). However, each policy and operational commitment listed in DfT's SDAP has been allocated to a particular principle and priority area of *Securing the Future* which indicates where the department sees the key links. The SDC notes that the plan does not comment on DfT's approach to the "sound science" principle (which includes the precautionary principle) despite its work on transport emissions and climate change. DfT acknowledged that to date its policy appraisals have tended to focus on economic impacts and the department is seeking to better incorporate environmental and social impacts to its appraisal methodologies, particularly health impacts, but these are difficult to quantify.

### Shared priorities for UK action

DfT's plan states that the department contributes to the four priorities of *Securing the Future* through a set of high-level strategic outcomes. These are:

- tackle congestion
- improve accessibility
- reduce traffic casualties
- respect the environment
- support the economy.

Furthermore, DfT's plan has allocated SDAP commitments to priorities in its action plan work programme (Annex A and B) which indicates departmental action in these areas. For example, the department will contribute to:

- Climate Change and Energy: by working on emissions trading at the international level through the International Civil Aviation Organisation
- Sustainable Communities: by working to improve road safety and establishing casualty reduction targets to be achieved by the end of 2010
- Sustainable Consumption and Production: by considering a wide range of evidence on transport's long-term impact on productivity, stability and growth, including options for

demand management, better use, and infrastructure enhancements across all modes of transport.

- Natural Resource Protection and Environmental Enhancement: by continuing to work within the International Maritime Organisation and the European Union to promote quality shipping that is clean, safe and sustainable.

## Policy priorities

The plan does not make clear what the SDAP priorities are or why the department has decided to concentrate its efforts on the commitments included in the SDAP. The SDC would expect plans to clearly set out the departmental approach for prioritising SDAP commitments.

The bilateral discussions revealed that the department sees climate change and aviation as the main priority over the course of 2006 with the aim of incorporating aviation into the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (EUETS). In its submission to the Environmental Audit Committee (EAC)<sup>1</sup>, the SDC expressed concern over the possibility of aviation not being included in the EUETS until 2012 due to delay. The Commission would therefore expect DfT

This indicates that DfT is currently contributing across the full range of *Securing the Future* priorities but the department explained in the bilateral that its contribution to climate change and energy is the top priority for 2006. In future plans the SDC would expect the department to make any prioritisation fully transparent.

to pursue a range of measures in addition to ETS in future plans, to reduce emissions from aviation.

DfT has a joint PSA with Defra and DTI on reducing carbon emissions to 12.5% below 1990 levels and transport has been recognised as a key player. Transport was responsible for 24% of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions in 2004 and they are expected to grow by 7% between 2000 and 2010<sup>2</sup>. DfT explained that not all climate change targets were reflected in the SDAP as the department is waiting for the Climate Change Programme Review (CCPR) to be published. DfT explained that future plans will take the CCPR recommendations on board and set actions accordingly.

## Leading by example

The plan includes actions on operations but does not clearly set out the departmental approach to prioritising the operational commitments in the plan.

DfT's plan includes operational actions relating to:

- Offsetting carbon emissions from official air travel
- Implementing EMS across the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA) estate
- Government Car and Despatch Agency (GCDA) will recycle and use the cleanest fuels possible

- The Highways Agency will extend its contribution to lean construction through changes in procurement practices.

It is not always made clear in the plan what the desired outcome of the actions are or what key steps the department needs to take to achieve the target included in the plan.

The plan doesn't identify any action to improve particular areas of performance against the Framework for Sustainable Development on the Government Estate (SDiG). DfT explained in bilateral discussions that they did not address the SDiG weaknesses highlighted in the SDC's

2005 assessment of Framework performance as this report was published after the action plan had been written. The Commission would expect DfT's own monitoring systems to keep it abreast of performance against the government's operational targets and highlight areas for improvement without waiting for a formal assessment. Nevertheless, the SDC welcomes the department's commitment to address in particular its operational weaknesses in future plans. The SDC's SDiG report highlighted that the department particularly needed to improve its performance on travel and waste management. DfT explained that these areas for improvement had been acknowledged

when the DfT's Senior Management Board discussed the SDC's report.

The DfT explained that the interest in the SDC's SDiG report and particular interest in the performance of the government's fleet had encouraged the Government Car Dispatch Agency (GCDA) to improve its data systems and measure the number of alternatively fuelled cars. It will also now need to consider the new Framework targets introduced in July 2006 which seek to reduce carbon emissions from road vehicles used for Government administrative operations by 15% by 2010/11 relative to 2005/6 levels.

## Securing the Future commitments

### Departmental commitments

The plan does not address all of DfT's commitments within *Securing the Future*. For example, the commitment to "continue to explore the use of other economic instruments building on the work in the joint DfT/DTI report from March 2003 "Aviation and the Environment: Using Economic Instruments" (*Securing the Future*, page 86). It is not made clear from the plan how the department prioritised its *Securing the Future* commitments and why some were left out.

The bilateral revealed that due to the time pressures involved in publishing the plan, the contributing policy teams were only reminded of *Securing the Future* commitments and not asked to plan for their delivery. DfT made it clear in the bilateral that the department acknowledged the need to flesh out their existing plan and indicate priority actions and would seek to address more comprehensively its *Securing the Future* commitments.

### Cross-government commitments

The plan refers to some relevant areas such as skills and integrating sustainable development into decision making. However, the plan does not set these commitments in the context of contributing to the cross-government commitments, nor does it include specific targets on these commitments.

### Target Setting

DfT's plan has no SMART targets. DfT explained in the bilateral that this was partly due to the short time the team had to produce the plan, which meant that details from individual teams on timescales were not obtained. The forthcoming Climate Change Programme Review and Air Quality Review had also made it difficult to specify exact timescales. The department acknowledged that in most cases these could be specified and the department has committed to doing so.

The SDC would like the existing commitments in the plan to be sharpened. All actions need to indicate the desired outcome and include milestones and timescales for completion.

## Policy making

### Sustainable Development “proofing”

The plan acknowledges that “policy evaluation has an important role to play in understanding the impact of DfT’s policies in relation to sustainable development.” The SDAP explains that “in developing major policies, we will assess their potential impact across a range of economic, environmental and social factors using appropriate policy appraisal methodologies such as regulatory impact and value for money assessments” but does not include any specific actions relating to policy appraisals.

The bilateral revealed that that there is currently insufficient resource allocated to RIAs within the department, and consequently, stakeholders are not consulted to a sufficient level. The department currently relies on the Cabinet Office to monitor the quality of RIAs, but accepts the need for robust internal mechanisms for policy appraisal. The department has not yet looked into how it might tackle the commitment to integrate the five guiding principles into policy making, but

has undertaken to explore how to meet this commitment in the long term.

### Sustainable Development Skills

The plan includes a commitment to include sustainable development in staff induction training but does not address the skills requirement of existing staff. The bilateral revealed that a plan for existing staff training has not been developed yet. However, the department is aware of this need and has undertaken to address this in future plans.

The narrative recognises “the need to ensure staff remain aware of the need to integrate the sustainable development principles in decision-making.” However, the plan doesn’t address how the department will ensure their staff have the right skills to do so. The bilateral revealed that the department is not clear on how it will address policy appraisal training.

DfT’s future SDAPs should set out clear actions to develop staff awareness and capacity so that they can fully reflect *Securing the Future’s* priorities and principles in their work.

## Achieving Sustainable Development outcomes

### Infrastructure

The plan doesn’t set out the organisational structures and processes that will support the delivery of the SDAP. The bilateral discussions revealed that no infrastructure related to the delivery of the plan exists or is planned. The plan was prepared by the Strategy Division which has a cross-cutting role across DfT. As the plan largely drew on existing work programmes these already have associated delivery programmes. However, future SDAPs should be explicit about the monitoring and review processes which underpin them.

### Engagement

The department explained in the bilateral that the launch of the plan was publicised on screens in the Department and in the weekly staff bulletin. The department had no particular programme in place to maintain the profile of the plan or ensure that staff were clear on how they should be using it in their work.

The plan acknowledges the need to engage with stakeholders and to ensure this is consistently done across the department. However, it doesn’t include any actions relating to stakeholder engagement.



## Monitoring and reporting

DfT explained in the bilateral that they did not have a specific timeline in mind whilst developing the plan. The SDC would expect future plans to clearly outline their timeframe.

The plan explains that the department will use the sustainable development indicators to monitor progress against the action plan. The department will report on progress against this plan in its annual report in 2007.

However, it was explained in the bilateral that the department will investigate an additional reporting mechanism, as there is unlikely to be sufficient room for a detailed progress report in the Annual Report. The SDC welcomes this investigation and any new reporting arrangements should be set out in future plans.




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1 Climate Change – The UK Programme 2006: SDC response, SDC Submission to the Environmental Audit Committee, July 2006









2 The UK’s Fourth National Communication under the UNFCCC (2006) Defra



## Strengths to build upon

	Set specific actions relating to sustainable development training.
	Ensure all relevant areas of transport, as set out in <i>Securing the Future</i> , are addressed. It should be made clear where priorities/ actions may have evolved or changed since <i>Securing the Future</i> . Make cross links to existing delivery plans if necessary.
	Build on existing sustainable development communications within the department to raise awareness of sustainable development and the intrinsic links between sustainable development and departmental PSAs.

## Challenges for 2007

	Actively engage with internal and external stakeholders to decide priorities of plan.
	Flesh out the existing plan by including actions aimed at delivering the commitments in the SDAP and set actions which are SMART and clearly prioritised.
	Address internal mechanisms for policy appraisals, ensuring the effective integration of the sustainable development principles.
	Include actions which reflect the departmental priority on aviation, as explained in bilateral discussions, in line with the Government's goal of 'living within environmental limits' and explore a range of measures in addition to ETS to reduce emissions from aviation in future plans.
	Consider the recommendations made in the SDC submission to EAC on CCP in July 2006, such as adjusting and strictly enforcing road speed limits and a greater widening of the differential between Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) as a tool to accelerate the uptake of lower carbon vehicles
	Be explicit about the delivery systems underpinning the SDAP – these do not need to be new.
	Set out a clear reporting system for the SDAP and ensure that it is appropriately cross-referenced in relevant corporate reports.
	Support Agencies in preparation of their SDAPs.



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