



Office of the
Deputy Prime Minister

Creating sustainable communities

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's Sustainable Development Action Plan

Securing the future

delivering UK sustainable development strategy



Front cover image of Ingress Park, Thames Gateway area,
courtesy of Crest Nicholson.

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The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's Sustainable Development Action Plan

As ODPM's Sustainable Development Minister, I am pleased to present ODPM's Sustainable Development Action Plan to the Sustainable Development Commission. This Action Plan sets out how ODPM will implement its contribution to the cross-Government UK Sustainable Development Strategy "Securing the Future" over the next twelve months and beyond.

BARONESS ANDREWS, MARCH 2006

Introduction

In the UK Sustainable Development Strategy "Securing the Future,"¹ launched by the Prime Minister in March 2005, all Government Departments undertook to produce a sustainable development action plan, and to report on their actions by December 2006 and regularly thereafter.

The UK Sustainable Development Strategy

The UK Sustainable Development Strategy "Securing the Future" describes a common purpose for Sustainable Development:

"The goal of sustainable development is to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life, without compromising the quality of life of future generations."

ODPM acknowledges the long term nature of the challenge and the need to make serious changes in policy and behaviour now across the economy and society. In particular, the "single greatest challenge" of climate change and associated disruption presents great risks to prosperity and quality of life, and to the goals of ODPM, unless concerted action is taken across Government and business and also by individuals and communities to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

1 www.sustainable-development.gov.uk

This Action Plan sets out the progress ODPM will make over the next year in implementing its commitments and policies as described in the UK Sustainable Development Strategy.

ODPM's aim is to create prosperous, inclusive and sustainable communities for the 21st century, places where people want to live, that promote opportunity and a better quality of life for all.

Although the ideas of sustainable development and sustainable communities are not interchangeable, they have the same roots: concern that too narrow a focus, whether in broad policy, in local decision-making or in development on the ground, will deliver outcomes that are not sustainable, and which therefore store up trouble for the future.

Sustainable development is a broad concept which may apply equally at any level, from global to local. Delivering sustainable communities is a more specific goal relating to practical decision-making at the level of individual communities, with regard to the wider and longer-term impacts. Through this focus on sustainable communities ODPM will contribute to the delivery of sustainable development; the notions of sustainable communities and sustainable development are interwoven through this Plan.

As the Deputy Prime Minister made clear in a statement in February 2005:

“Creating Sustainable Communities means putting sustainable development into practice. Sustainable Communities must combine social inclusion, homes, jobs, services, infrastructure and respect for the environment to create places where people will want to live now and in the future.”

Sustainable Communities embody the principles of sustainable development at a local level by:

- *balancing and integrating the social, economic and environmental components of their community*
- *meeting the needs of existing and future generations*
- *respecting the needs of other communities in the wider region or internationally also to make their communities sustainable.*

Sustainable communities are also about things that matter to people: decent homes at prices people can afford, good public transport, schools, hospitals, shops and green spaces; people able to have a say on the way their neighbourhood is run; and a clean, safe environment.

ODPM's responsibilities

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) has responsibility for a wide range of cross-cutting policies including housing, planning, neighbourhoods, local government and fire, as set out in the Government's £38 billion *Sustainable Communities Plan*

There are five **key drivers** of sustainable communities. They are central to the delivery of ODPM's overarching goal:

- **High quality services:** focused on continuous improvement and the delivery of visible results in service delivery and public perceptions;
- **A good physical environment:** clean, safe and environmentally sustainable;
- **A strong economic base:** good infrastructure, employment and opportunity for all, and a good climate for enterprise and investment;
- **Strong leadership:** reinvigorated local democracy, strong partnerships; and
- **Shared values:** building cohesion and respect across communities

These are mutually reinforcing and if a community lacks one or more of them it is unlikely to be sustainable. Good policy and delivery will bring out these synergies. ODPM achieves this by bringing together economic development, good governance, a clean environment and social inclusion.

ODPM helps to create sustainable communities by working with a wide range of bodies including other Government departments, local councils, businesses, the voluntary sector, and directly with community members and representatives.

ODPM has two Five Year Plans, "*Homes for All*"² and "*People, Places and Prosperity*"³ launched in January 2005, which build on the Government's £38 billion Sustainable Communities Plan.⁴ It also has a challenging set of Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets for delivery. During 2005 ODPM completed a stocktake of its policies to ensure that they were fully aligned in order to maximise their impact.

There is also a common agenda for sustainable procurement by the public sector. This means purchasing to promote environmental and social benefits, as well as securing economic efficiencies for the public sector. Sustainable procurement is a key element in ODPM's vision of its operations as an organisation.

This Action Plan describes the milestones which ODPM will pass during the next year in delivering its contribution to the UK Sustainable Development Strategy. It also reports on what ODPM has recently achieved and looks forward beyond 2006.

Page numbers from the UK Sustainable Development Strategy are cited where relevant. The Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) has listed 250 Government commitments in the Strategy.⁵ Where appropriate, the Plan also shows how ODPM is carrying forward these commitments.

2 <http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1122852>

3 <http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1122905>

4 <http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1139868>

5 <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications.php?id=218>

Sustainable Development in ODPM's Policy and Delivery

Planning and Sustainability

(UK Sustainable Development Strategy, pp 116-117)

A starting point for creating sustainable communities must be that they are well planned. Good planning is a creative, powerful tool which brings together the range of ingredients which vibrant and viable communities require: high quality education provision, health provision, cultural facilities, jobs and a decent local environment, as well as good quality homes.

Planning policy is set out in a series of Planning Policy Statements (PPSs) and is delivered through the planning system. The Government's planning policy statement PPS 1 "*Delivering Sustainable Development*"⁶ makes clear that sustainable development is at the heart of the planning system.

Over the course of this year, a range of new PPSs and guidance will be published. Each of these will address one or more aspects of what makes sustainable communities, and will thus help to deliver sustainable development.

PPS 3 will set out national policies on planning for housing. The Government's key objective in planning for housing is to ensure that everyone has the opportunity of living in a decent home, which they can afford, in a community where they want to live. To achieve this objective, the Government is seeking to:

- ensure that a wide choice of housing types is available, for both affordable and market housing, to meet the needs of all members of the community;
- deliver a better balance between housing demand and supply in every housing market, and improve affordability where necessary; and
- create sustainable, inclusive, mixed communities in all areas. Developments should be attractive, safe and well designed and built to a high quality. They should be located in areas with good access to jobs, key services and infrastructure.

MILESTONE:
In **2006** the Government will publish a new planning policy statement (**PPS3**) on planning for housing.

6 <http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1143804>

MILESTONE: In 2006 the Government will publish a new planning policy statement, **(PPS25)** on **development and flood risk**.

MILESTONE: Over the course of 2006 **PPS10** will increasingly influence planning decisions and help in providing more opportunities for new **waste management** facilities of the right type, in the right place and at the right time.

MILESTONE: The national policies in **PPS22** will from 2006 increasingly be reflected in emerging plans at regional and local level, ensuring that renewable energy schemes become an integral part of new development.

PPS 25 will set out national policies to ensure that flood risk is taken into account at all stages in the planning process.

PPS10, a new policy on waste planning, was published in July 2005 to help deliver the waste facilities needed for **sustainable waste management**. ODPM is working with Defra to improve delivery and has held over the winter a series of regional workshops on implementing the new policy. ODPM will update its 'living draft' practice guidance in support of PPS10 in the light of comments received, including at the workshops. ODPM is preparing practice guidance to support PPS10 and will finalise this once the workshops are completed.

PPS22, which promotes the development of renewable energy, was published in August 2004. It requires regional and local planning bodies to set targets and criteria for achieving increased development of renewable energy. Planning authorities may require a percentage of energy used in new development to come from on-site renewable sources. A companion guide to PPS22, also published in 2004, offers practical advice as to how these policies can be implemented. ODPM is undertaking an urgent review of local plans to determine whether there is a problem with emerging plans that do not fully incorporate PPS22 guidance. If a problem is identified, ODPM will take swift and appropriate action. This could include, depending on how serious the problems are, further engagement with local authorities, issuing a Government statement or consulting on an amendment to PPS22 in order to make clearer what authorities should do when planning for on-site renewable generation.

In addition, key regional and local plans must undergo a full Sustainability Appraisal. This involves testing emerging policies against social, environmental and economic objectives to assess their sustainability.

MILESTONE:

During 2006 ODPM will update Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regulations, the EIA Circular (no.2/99) and also EIA Guidance.

ODPM has lead responsibility in the UK for European Directives on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). EIA is required for certain types of development before they are granted development consent. In 2006 ODPM will, subject to Ministerial agreement, be revising EIA Circular 2/99 and producing additional EIA guidance. This will ensure that up to date advice is provided on EIA requirements, case law and good practice. ODPM will also implement amendments to the EIA Directive (as required by EU Directive 2003/35/EC, which transposes the public participation provisions of the Aarhus Convention⁷ into European law).

Climate change and planning. The location, design, construction and siting of built development and economic and social activity can significantly affect the level of greenhouse gas emissions. Statements of planning policy, issued by the Government and the devolved administrations, set out a national policy framework for plan making at regional and local levels and may be relevant to individual planning decisions. These statements take account of the impacts of climate change. The Government has set out its key principles for how the planning system in England should tackle the carbon mitigation aspects of responding to climate change in its Planning Policy Statement 1, in February 2005. It is now considering whether these principles need to be developed in further detail. Possible options include a more detailed statement on climate change considerations within planning policies or updated practice guidance in support of PPS1

⁷ Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus, Denmark, 25.6.98)

Homes for all

(UK Sustainable Development Strategy, pp 125-126 and 136)

The supply of housing has not kept pace with rising demand – caused by longer lives, social change and a rising population. The shortage of new homes has led to housing costs spiralling out of reach for those on moderate incomes, damaging quality of life, increasing asset inequality and, in extreme circumstances, contributing to homelessness. Delivering sufficient new homes to meet our needs in a sustainable manner is an important part of the Government's objectives to deliver social justice and help support the economy whilst protecting the environment. This agenda has most recently been taken forward in the **Government's response to Kate Barker's Review of Housing Supply** (see next page), which was jointly published by ODPM and the Treasury in December 2005.

The Government has accepted the case set out in the Barker review for a step-change in housing supply. At the same time, the Government recognises that new homes must have supporting infrastructure – health, education, transport – and good quality services, both public and private.

They must also be built and planned to high environmental standards. The Government's response to Barker featured a range of new environmental initiatives, a number of which are described in this Action Plan.

However, the contribution of housing to sustainable development goes beyond the issues addressed in the Barker review and the Government's response to it. ODPM's Five Year Plan "*Homes for All*", published in January 2005, shows how the Government will offer greater choice and opportunity in housing across the country for everyone, not just the well-off.

The Government's response to Kate Barker's review of Housing Supply December 2005

- *The Government has now accepted the case for a step-change in housing supply.* The response describes measures to reform planning and enable timely infrastructure provision which will provide more homes to help meet demand. The Government knows that new homes need to be delivered in communities which are inclusive, mixed and well-governed, with excellence in local strategic leadership. Homes and public spaces need to be well designed, built and maintained.
- This step-change in housing supply represents an opportunity to look again at protecting and enhancing the environment. New development does bring environmental pressures. However, planned strategic growth, rather than incremental development should bring fewer environmental impacts because it allows for environmental pressures to be planned for, accommodated and mitigated at a strategic level.
- The Government's response to Barker includes a number of new **environmental initiatives** which aim to address the environmental pressures that may result from a higher level of house building, including:
 - Climate Change Review and follow-up initiatives
 - The Code for Sustainable Homes.
 - Commitment to regulate to achieve water efficiency savings.
 - Managing flood risk – revised Planning Policy Statement 25: Flooding (PPS 25) released for consultation; new Flooding Direction released for consultation; and consultation of Environment Agency on planning applications.
 - Mandating the use of Site Waste Management Plans.
 - Minimum of 10% of growth area funding for green space projects.
 - Ensuring that future locations for growth are identified, in partnership with Defra, Environment Agency and Natural England.
 - Commitment to encourage water companies to make longer term plans for sewerage for growth areas.
 - A new greenbelt direction to reinforce the Green Belt to prevent urban sprawl.

SDC

Commitment

179: *The Government will focus on halving numbers living in temporary accommodation by 2010.*

MILESTONE:

*ODPM is monitoring its delivery of the temporary accommodation target closely and by **March 2007** expects that numbers in temporary accommodation to be around 80,000.*

With this in mind, as described in the UK Sustainable Development Strategy, ODPM has a target of halving the numbers living in **temporary accommodation** by 2010. The target and measures to achieve it are set out in “*Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives*”⁸, published in March 2005.

8 <http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1163057>

Sustainable communities also require decent homes – that is, homes which are warm, weather proof, in a reasonable state of repair and have reasonably modern services and facilities. ODPM has a target to ensure that, by 2010, all social homes meet minimum standards of decency, and that 70% of vulnerable households in the private sector have decent homes.

To date the number of non-decent homes in the social sector has been reduced by over 1 million, and in the private sector, the proportion of vulnerable households living in a decent home has increased from 43% in 1997, to 65%.

ODPM is also working to promote and sustain independence of living, and thus support housing opportunity and choice, through the **Supporting People** programme. The programme is investing over £5 billion in support over the current three year period and is helping 1.2 million vulnerable people to play an active and inclusive role within their communities.

In January 2006 the Government launched “*A Sure Start to Later Life: Ending Inequalities for Older People.*” This set out five agreed Government actions on housing for older people which ODPM is leading:

- Developing a strategy for housing and older people (2006/07)
- Ensuring that the housing needs of older people are built into the Housing Diversity Action Plan to be published in late 2006
- Examining how a more integrated delivery system for adaptation and assistive technologies might be developed (jointly with Defra and the Department of Health)
- Building the lifetime homes standard into the Code for Sustainable Homes
- With the support of the fire services, developing a range of preventative initiatives (e.g. free smoke alarms).

MILESTONE: In November 2005 ODPM issued a consultation paper on the future of Supporting People. The consultation will be complete by the end of February 2006 and the results of it then considered.

Climate Change and Housing

(UK Sustainable Development Strategy, pp 86-88)

MILESTONE:

ODPM's contribution to the Government's current review of the UK Climate Change Programme for release in 2006.

Climate Change is one of the most significant threats facing the country in the 21st century. Since the publication of the UK Sustainable Development Strategy, the scientific evidence and modelling on the extent, timing and impacts of global warming have become more alarming and serious. ODPM regards action on climate change as a central priority for its future strategy across the board, and in the short term for its current review of the sustainability of existing buildings. The results of the Government's current review of the UK Climate Change Programme will be released in 2006.

ODPM has achieved significant progress in reducing the carbon emissions from housing: new building regulations have improved energy efficiency of new houses by 40% in just 4 years, representing a 70% improvement since 1990. This is approximately a saving of 2.5 million tonnes of carbon per year by 2010. ODPM's response to the Barker Review took its commitment further in relation to the voluntary Code for Sustainable Homes (see below), water efficiency and flood risk management, and through close working with Defra, the Environment Agency and Natural England in identifying new growth sites for development.

However, ODPM recognises that the urgency and scale of the problems posed by climate change require ambitious and long-term action. Accordingly ODPM is also reviewing its position on climate change across the whole Sustainable Communities agenda, with a view to developing new initiatives and long-term programmes that will contribute to the achievement of a 60% cut in carbon dioxide emissions by 2050 and to intermediate targets from 2010 onwards.

ODPM's aim will also be to highlight areas for long-range collaborative work with other Government Departments to achieve the goals of the Sustainable Communities programme and also secure required cuts in carbon emissions and gains in resource efficiency in new and existing buildings.

The Government has introduced a range of measures to stimulate take up of energy efficiency measures in the home. Two ODPM polices relevant to this are **Part L of Building Regulations** and the **Code for Sustainable Homes**.

SDC

Commitment

109: *A further revision of Part L of the Building Regulations will be released in 2006 delivering a 25% increase in energy efficiency in new buildings and greatly extending the impact on energy efficiency of existing buildings.*

SDC

Commitment

110: *Between 2010 and 2020, the Government aims to update the **Building Regulations** every five years or so with each stage signalling what the next stage is likely to be. This should lead to incremental increases in the energy standards of new and refurbished buildings.*

It was a commitment in the Energy White Paper of 2003 that ODPM would review Building Regulations.

This includes Part L of Building Regulations which relates to energy efficiency – for example, improving thermal insulation or improving the air tightness of buildings. These regulations encourage the use of low and zero carbon technologies to make properties more energy efficient.

ODPM has already achieved a significant step-change in the energy efficiency of new housing stock, with latest changes to Building Regulations delivering a 40% improvement in energy efficiency since 2002 (and 70% since 1990).

**SDC
Commitment**

111: *The Government intends to consult on the Code during 2005, including fullscale practical demonstrations of how the Code will be applied in a range of locations including the Thames Gateway. National rollout is planned to begin in 2006.*

MILESTONE:

From April 2006 as an interim measure, new residential developments receiving Government funding will meet Ecohomes Very Good 2006 until the Code for Sustainable Homes is properly developed and strengthened over the coming months. The Code will also give private sector developers even higher aspirational levels to aim for.

MILESTONE:

ODPM aims to consult in 2006 on changes to planning rules which, as part of a wider review, will make it easier for householders to install microgeneration equipment.

The **Code for Sustainable Homes** was issued for consultation in December 2005. From **April 2006** publicly funded residential developments will meet the Code standards and the Code will become the Government's preferred standard for sustainable homes. The Code is designed to be a simple way for homebuyers to measure the sustainability of their new homes and compare running costs. A new home meeting the minimum standards of the Code will use around 20% less energy and water per occupant than a home built to 2002 standards. When the Code is introduced, all new homes receiving Government subsidy will meet the Code.

Consultation on the **Code for Sustainable Homes** closed in March 2006. In the light of the consultation, the Government has announced that it will be introducing a series of revisions to strengthen the Code, including:

- Energy efficiency ratings – which form one component of the Code – will be made mandatory for new homes and existing homes;
- Minimum standards will be set for energy and water efficiency for every level of the Code, and the lowest levels of the Code will also be raised above the level of mandatory building regulations;
- New homes that use micro-generation technology such as wind turbines and solar panels will also gain extra points in the Code.

The revised Code will form the basis for the next wave of improvements to building regulations. The Government will be doing further analysis of other issues raised in the consultation including proposals for further ways to increase take-up of the Code.

ODPM will be reviewing what **small renewable energy developments** householders should be able to install more easily without the need for planning permission. The aim will be to remove barriers and promote the wider use of these technologies. This review will form part of a broader set of amendments to the current rules on permitted developments by householders, on which ODPM aims to consult in 2006.

MILESTONE:

ODPM's Review of Sustainability of Existing Buildings will report to Ministers in Summer 2006.

In September 2005 ODPM announced the Review of Sustainability of Existing Buildings, which will include consideration of energy efficiency improvements to housing. The review will report to Ministers in summer this year.

Getting People Involved

(UK Sustainable Development Strategy, pp 126-129 and 130-133)

MILESTONE:

ODPM will draw the **local: vision** debate together in a White Paper during 2006.

MILESTONE:

Government, the Local Government Association (LGA), and national representatives of the voluntary and community sector publicly commit to promote the deal for neighbourhoods through launch of the National Neighbourhoods Agreement (March 2006).

However, sustainable communities will not be created simply by ensuring that physical development has minimal environmental impact. To deliver sustainable communities, and thus to achieve sustainable development at the local level, requires the active involvement of individuals, communities and local government.

There are two closely-related Government programmes which are designed, in different ways, to reinvigorate the three-way relationship between the citizen, local and national government:

- *local:vision*, the ODPM-led 10 year local government strategy.
- “*Together We Can*” (led by the Home Office).

Work on *local:vision* began in July 2004 when ODPM opened a debate with other Government departments, local government and other stakeholders on the long term future of local government.

As described in *local:vision*, the Government wants people to help shape the local public services they receive, and to become more involved in the democratic life of their community. As set out in “*Citizen Engagement and Public Services: Why Neighbourhoods Matter*”, published jointly by ODPM and the Home Office in January 2005, the focus is on empowering people through a National Neighbourhoods Framework, local government charters and a menu of practical options for neighbourhood action.

MILESTONE:

In addition to the existing 21 pilot LAAs, a further 66 LAAs will be signed off in March 2006. The remaining 63 areas are eligible to develop an LAA in 2006 so it comes into effect in April 2007.

SDC

Commitment

21: *Community Action 2020 – Together We Can will encourage the recognition and valuing of communities efforts: by raising awareness of community awards and providing more information about them, and improving access to sources of funding for environmental and sustainable development projects.*

MILESTONE:

Together We Can national conference at the end of March 2006.

Local Area Agreements (LAAs): Also forming part of *local:vision*, LAAs are wide-ranging agreements between local areas, represented by Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), and central Government to deliver national outcomes in a way which makes sense locally. LSPs are formed of the local authority for the area and stakeholders from all sectors. LAAs bring together local partners to identify local priorities, develop a holistic approach to policy-making and facilitate integration of delivery at the local level. LAAs are a key mechanism for the delivery not just of ODPM's sustainable development objectives but those of the Government as a whole. A single LAA will contain commitments to deliver outcomes across key areas such as housing, transport, health, education and employment. LAAs emphasise not only the importance of sustainable development and local decision-making but also of community empowerment and participation. All eligible areas will have an LAA in place by April 2007.

"Together We Can," which was launched in June 2005⁹, is the Government's Action Plan to empower citizens to work with public bodies to set and achieve common goals, including sustainable development. It helps to fulfil a commitment from the Sustainable Development Strategy and is jointly owned by ODPM, the Home Office and Defra.

9 <http://communities.homeoffice.gov.uk/civil/together-we-can/>

SDC

Commitment

160: *Sustainable Community Strategies, which are key to delivering the vision for sustainable communities...will be drawn up by the local authority and Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), in consultation with the community.*

SDC

Commitment

161: *The Government will consider with its partners how to revise the existing guidance and develop toolkits and other materials to support local authorities and LSPs when reviewing and preparing their Sustainable Community Strategies.*

MILESTONE: *A consultation on the future development of SCSs and LSPs began in December 2005 and will run until March 2006. In light of the responses to this consultation paper it may be appropriate to publish SCS and LSP guidance, as required by section 4 of the Local Government Act 2000. The results of the consultation will also feed into the forthcoming Local Government White Paper.*

As described in "People, Places & Prosperity" and "Together We Can", Sustainable Community Strategies will be key to delivering the vision for sustainable communities. These Strategies will be drawn up by the local authority and the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), in consultation with the community.

A Sustainable Community Strategy should outline a long-term vision for the area, using the definition and components of sustainable communities.

Sustainable Community Strategies are an evolution of the Community Strategies introduced by the Local Government Act 2000. They take on board policy developments arising from the introduction of LAAs, Local Development Frameworks, the UK Sustainable Development Strategy and the Government's desire to see sustainable communities everywhere.

Sustainable Community Strategies will also be used to determine the form of the Local Area Agreement between the local area and central Government. This will help to ensure that LAAs reflect local circumstances

SDC

Commitment

167: *The Government will continue to provide extra support to Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) in the most disadvantaged areas through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and to focus on raising standards in mainstream public services in all deprived communities.*

MILESTONE: *Key milestones over the next year include further NRF resources linked to LSP performance. The Delivery Support Unit provides support for LSPs, particularly those facing the greatest challenge (this will be ongoing to December 2006).*

The Government has a clear vision that within 10-20 years no-one should be seriously disadvantaged because of where they live. Neighbourhood Renewal aims to improve quality of life outcomes through narrowing the gap between the most disadvantaged communities and the rest by decreasing crime and anti-social behaviour, improving education, health, employment, housing and the physical environment. There are no quick fix solutions implementing that vision; sustainable change will only happen with continued support and encouragement for communities.

The Government is continuing to provide extra support to LSPs in the most disadvantaged areas through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. LSPs implement local neighbourhood renewal strategies and challenge service providers to improve delivery of services to their most deprived communities. Together with the continued development of Local Area Agreements these will help better focus all partners on the needs of the most disadvantaged making those communities more sustainable in the longer term. Community involvement is central to successful communities, disadvantaged or not – residents working in partnership with key local service providers, supported by time-limited resource such as Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. Empowering local communities to improve service design is producing enthusiasm from the most disadvantaged – local solutions for local problems.

The quality of urban environments, of streets and neighbourhoods, and of parks, play areas and green spaces is essential to the quality of daily life and the sustainability of towns and cities. Through the cross Government “Cleaner, Safer, Greener Communities” programme ODPM is taking action to:

- create high quality places which are well-planned and designed, with attractive public spaces that meet the needs of everyone; and
- sustain the quality of places, by managing and maintaining them better, improving social use, discouraging anti-social behaviour whilst encouraging greater respect.

Through its Public Service Agreement for liveability (PSA8), ODPM is committed to "leading the delivery of cleaner, safer, greener public spaces and improvements in the quality of the built environment across the country and in deprived areas with measurable improvements by 2008." Good results are already being delivered, for example:

- streets are cleaner: the number of local authorities with unacceptable levels of litter and detritus has fallen from 23% (2002/03) to 8% (2004/05);
- there are fewer abandoned vehicles – there has been a 25% reduction since 2002/03; and
- parks and green spaces are better managed and maintained – 40% of local authority areas now have at least one Green Flag winning park, and public satisfaction with the quality of their local parks rose from 63% (2000/01) to 71% (2003/04).

Over the next 12 months, ODPM will build on the improvements achieved so far by supporting and enabling local authorities and their partners to creating cleaner, safer, greener town centres, residential areas and parks and open spaces. ODPM will:

- encourage local authorities and their partners in making best use of resources to secure liveability through the Safer, Stronger Communities Fund and Local Area Agreements;
- work with LSPs to prioritise liveability issues in their strategies and support them in delivery;
- work with 20 local town centres to support the creation of business-led partnerships for enhancing their service delivery and the quality of the trading environment;
- work with Groundwork and other partner organisations to deliver over 7000 community-led projects to improve local environments and community spaces each year;
- engage with local practitioners to spread lessons, good practice and innovation through the How To programme, including a major national conference in March 2006, and a series of 18 regional seminars.

Sustainable Development in ODPM's Operations and Management

ODPM Operations

Sustainable development is not just about policy formulation and delivery. The Government is committed to lead by example, and ODPM's operations, no less than its policies, must contribute to the objective.

The **Framework for Sustainable Development on the Government Estate**¹⁰ was launched in 2002 and covers a number of areas of Government operations, including water, energy use and procurement. ODPM Ministers signed up to this Framework on its publication, recognising that delivery of a sustainable future means more than good policy and outward delivery plans. Work on meeting these operational targets is in progress.

In the UK Sustainable Development Strategy, the Government gave a commitment to review the Framework, and ODPM is fully engaged with this at both official and Ministerial level. In the meantime, the following actions are in hand to address the existing targets.

Framework Target Area	Action Points	Deadline
A: Overarching commitments	New Environmental pages on ODPM Website	Apr 06
	Implement Environmental Management Systems (EMS) across remaining properties in the Estate	Apr 06
	Annual ODPM Sustainable Operations Report to be published	Sep 06
B: Travel	Establish and implement methodology for measuring all business mileage: road and air	Apr 06
	Ensure individual travel plans are produced by sites across the Estate	Apr 06
C: Water Services	Analyse water use at non-office sites to identify water saving opportunities or off-set projects	Jun 06
	Arrange for water surveys to be carried out at office sites where water consumption is high	Dec 06

¹⁰ www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/delivery/integrating/estate/estate.htm

Framework Target Area	Action Points	Deadline
D: Waste	<p>Publish a sustainable waste management strategy</p> <p>Establish data collection system using the EMS for all sites to use</p> <p>Explore options for increasing re-use/ composting as waste management options in HQ buildings</p>	<p>Apr 06</p> <p>Apr 06</p> <p>Jun 06</p>
E: Energy	<p>Review Energy Efficiency Action Plan developed in conjunction with Carbon Trust</p> <p>Carry out works to increase efficiency of two existing Combined Heat and Power (CHP) units</p>	<p>March 06</p> <p>Sept 06</p>
F: Procurement	<p>ODPM corporate procurement division has revised central Best Practice Procurement guidance to take account of sustainability (including environmental, social and economic issues)</p>	<p>Jan 06</p>
G: Estates Management	<p>Estates Management Strategy to be published</p>	<p>Apr 06</p>
H: Biodiversity	<p>Draft biodiversity action plan for the major non-office site completed</p>	<p>Dec 06</p>
I: Social Impacts	<p>Ongoing work for the next year:</p> <p>Accessibility Statement to be published April 2006</p> <p>As a public body ODPM is required to publish a Disability Equality Scheme and a Race Equality Scheme. These set out how the Office will meet its responsibilities under the public duties to promote race equality and disability equality in public policy making, service delivery and employment practices</p> <p>The Office assesses the impact of policies on different racial groups, as required under the legislation and to support the commitment to evidence based policy making. ODPM is currently expanding these assessments to take account of other equality strands</p>	<p>Dec 06</p>

ODPM's Sustainable Development Minister has responsibility for ensuring that the department manages its estate in a sustainable way and that it procures its goods and services sustainably.

An ODPM Board member serves on the cross-Government Sustainable Operations Board, which monitors implementation of the Framework and other related areas.

ODPM Management

ODPM is introducing several new corporate initiatives to help embed sustainable development in officials' thinking. ODPM will:

- Incorporate briefing on sustainable development and sustainable communities in induction material for new staff members;
- use a stand at the next ODPM Open Day to explore and explain the relationship between sustainable communities and sustainable development;
- introduce a new internal award specifically for contribution to sustainable development and climate change;
- ensure that sustainable development features in future ODPM Annual reports.

Government Offices

The Government Offices in London and the English regions form part of ODPM but perform functions on behalf of 10 Government departments. This, coupled with their first hand knowledge of their respective regions, makes them uniquely placed to help deliver sustainable development and other cross-cutting Government priorities.

The Regional Directors who head the GOs are each supported by a team responsible for promoting and co-ordinating work on sustainable development within the GO, and for working with regional partners to ensure that regional strategies and investment decisions take account of regional sustainable development priorities. The GOs also have a key role to play in delivering many of ODPM's policies and programmes outlined above which help to achieve sustainable development, including housing, planning and communities issues.

Government Offices report regularly to ODPM and other departments on how they are meeting departmental priorities on sustainable development. The Government Office Network is also contributing to the development of a Government response to the recent report from the Sustainable Development Commission on the regional arrangements for sustainable development.

The Government Office network is also working to promote sustainable development objectives throughout the Government Office estate, for example by sharing good practice and networking with ODPM and Office Government Commerce framework contracts. There is regular contact between the Estates Management Coordinator in the Government Offices and the Integrated Systems Manager, Infrastructure Services Division of the ODPM.

ODPM as an employer

ODPM's new Permanent Secretary, Peter Housden, is currently leading an internal debate about empowerment, to see whether ODPM is sufficiently open, empowering and supportive.

ODPM considers equality and diversity as essential elements for the target areas of procurement and social impacts, as set out in the table above, and are thus being integrated into both public and corporate policies.

But valuing equality and diversity is also essential for ODPM's investment in its own staff. As an employer, ODPM is actively committed to implementing **Professional Skills for Government** (PSG) and to the areas for action in the **10-point plan on Delivering a Diverse Civil Service**, which was launched on 1 November 2005.¹¹

The 10-point plan aims to achieve a diverse mix of staff on all levels in each Government Department, in order not only to reflect the society which Government serves but to improve its capacity to deliver by valuing and making the best use of diversity of talent in teams and organisations.

As part of ODPM's "Excellence in Delivery" programme, ODPM will be holding workshops over the next year on treating staff with dignity and respect. Training for team leaders and above will be introduced on recognising and dealing with inappropriate behaviour in the workplace.

ODPM's Executive Agencies

ODPM's has three Executive Agencies which all help ODPM deliver the Sustainable Communities agenda. They are the **Planning Inspectorate**, the **Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre** and the **Fire Service College**. These Executive Agencies are all covered by the Framework for Sustainable Development on the Government Estate, and so contribute to ODPM leading by example in sustainable operations.

The mission of the **Planning Inspectorate** is "to use our impartial expertise in planning and land use to help shape well planned environments". In doing this the Planning Inspectorate helps ODPM deliver its planning policies.

During 2006/07 the Planning Inspectorate expects to determine about 25 000 planning appeals and related casework, taking account of Government policies for sustainable development. During 2006/07 the Planning Inspectorate expects to examine in the region of 150 Development Plan Documents, ensuring that they comply with the Government's policies for sustainable development. They will then form part of individual local planning authorities' Local Development Frameworks.

¹¹ http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/diversity/10_point_plan/

The activity of the **Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre** delivers the direct economic impact associated with business tourism, generating income for hotels, their suppliers and other businesses in the London area. In addition, it is focused on recycling waste – winning a National Recycling Award in 2002. In the coming year it is aiming to turn its food waste into compost.

The **Fire Service College** designs and delivers specialist operational and leadership and development training for UK Fire and Rescue personnel. Course delivery is primarily undertaken at its unique Incident Ground or at regional or local training venues. The work of the College supports the ODPM Sustainable Development Action Plan in the following key areas:

- an overall reduction in fire related deaths by providing UK firefighters with enhanced capability and expertise
- positive economic benefit through employment and purchasing within the local rural community in which it is located
- continuing to reduce its environmental impact in respect of energy efficiency improvements, lower airborne emissions and increased recycling of waste.

Leadership and Communication

Leadership

In her role as ODPM's Sustainable Development Minister, Baroness Andrews is a member of a Cabinet sub-Committee which meets to discuss Sustainable Development issues and to promote joined-up working across Government on sustainable development.

ODPM is represented at board level on the Sustainable Development Programme Board and the Sustainable Operations Board, both of which meet quarterly to discuss the implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy.

ODPM's Annual Report is published each year in June¹² and this reports on the progress which ODPM has made in delivering its Sustainable Communities agenda. ODPM also publishes an **Autumn Performance Report** and will report in it on progress on carrying out the actions described in this Action Plan.

Communicating the Action Plan

Communicating ODPM's Sustainable Development Action Plan is vital to implementing both the policy and the operations included in the UK Sustainable Development Strategy. However, as well as ensuring that the Action Plan is widely read, ODPM must do more to communicate what sustainable development is and what it means to ODPM to its wider stakeholders and to its own staff.

This Action Plan will be widely communicated by placing it on the ODPM Website on the Sustainable Development page.¹³ Copies of the Action Plan will be sent to local authority leaders in England and Wales and to other key ODPM stakeholders. The Action Plan will be placed in the House of Commons library.

ODPM promotes the Sustainable Communities agenda with key stakeholders in a variety of ways. It intends to build sustainability issues into external communications by encouraging ODPM officials to link ODPM documents to the Sustainable Development Action Plan where appropriate.

This Action Plan has been placed on ODPM's Intranet and hard copies circulated to senior officials. There is also an article explaining the background to the Action Plan on the ODPM Intranet. The Action Plan will feature in a forthcoming issue of ODPM's internal magazine "The Office".

¹² <http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1123052>

¹³ <http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1122683>

ODPM regularly holds events to explore the Sustainable Communities agenda with ODPM officials. Several events are held at ODPM which discuss a range of sustainability issues affecting ODPM.

It is intended that the linkage between Sustainable Communities and Sustainable Development will be made more explicit in the future. This will develop awareness, capability and skills among ODPM officials which are needed for delivering sustainable development at a local level.