

# Securing the Regions' Futures

Strengthening delivery of sustainable development in the English regions

**Securing the future**

*delivering UK sustainable development strategy*

**dti**



Office of the  
Deputy Prime Minister  
Creating sustainable communities

**defra**  
Department for Environment  
Food and Rural Affairs

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
Nobel House  
17 Smith Square  
London SW1P 3JR  
Tel: 020 7238 6000  
Website: [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)

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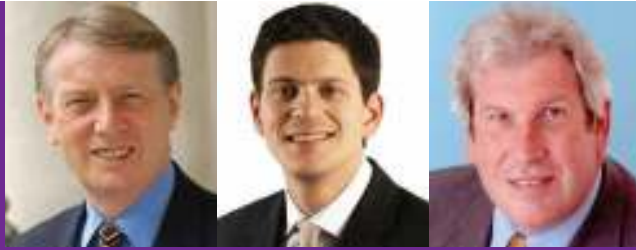
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Tel: 08459 556000  
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Alun Michael

David Miliband

Elliot Morley

# Foreword

Everyone has a part to play in implementing *Securing the Future*, the UK Government's Sustainable Development Strategy, which was launched by the Prime Minister in March 2005. Sustainable development needs a joined-up approach which works across Departmental boundaries, organisational boundaries and across national, regional and local levels. This is equally true within the English regions, whose strategic decisions, plans and investments can have a major impact on sustainable development goals. Government on its own cannot make the changes we need to secure a more sustainable future for all - the regions have a key role.

This is why our Departments have come together to publish *Securing the Regions' Futures*. This document sets out the way in which we will strengthen delivery of sustainable development at the regional level. It also responds to recommendations made by the Sustainable Development Commission in November 2005 as part of its review of regional infrastructure on sustainable development. We welcome the Commission's report and our response is in line with many of its own recommendations.

The five guiding principles and four priorities for immediate action which are at the heart of our UK Sustainable Development Strategy also provide a framework within which the English regions themselves work to improve quality of life.

Each region faces its own particular challenges and opportunities in reconciling social, economic and environmental objectives. We aim to provide an enabling framework within which the regions themselves can devise their own sustainable solutions to meet their needs and which are in line with our wider UK goals on sustainable development.

Government Offices, Regional Assemblies and Regional Development Agencies each have a particular role to play and this document explains how we are working together to strengthen this role on sustainable development. We also recognise, in the context of sustainable development, the importance of partnership work across regional bodies and also work across city-regional or sub-regional boundaries which share a common agenda.

This document helps demonstrate the Government's commitment to empowering regions in order that they can secure a sustainable future for their own communities, and one which helps us meet our sustainable development goals in the UK as a whole.

**Alun Michael**

Minister of State for Industry  
and the Regions

**David Miliband**

Minister of Communities  
and Local Government

**Elliot Morley**

Minister of State for the  
Environment and Climate Change



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## Executive Summary

Just over one year on from the publication of *Securing the Future*, the UK Sustainable Development Strategy, we are publishing ***Securing the Regions' Futures*** – our approach to strengthening the delivery of sustainable development in the English regions.

*Securing the Future* emphasised the importance of delivery at all levels. The regional level is critical and the Strategy included a commitment by the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) to review the regional arrangements for delivering sustainable development.

The SDC published its review in November 2005. The report cited some good progress in recent years to deliver sustainable development but called for more to be done. Their report set out 16 recommendations to increase the effectiveness of existing regional strategies, partnerships and institutions on sustainable development. This involved strengthening regional leadership, decision-making and delivery processes on sustainable development.

*"Each of these actors at the regional level has the potential to incorporate the goal of sustainable development at the heart of all their own individual plans and activities. And when they act together, they have a still greater potential capacity to transform their regions in a more sustainable direction."*

**The Next Steps: An independent review of sustainable development in the English regions. (SDC), Page 5.**

The Government accepts this analysis and is responding by strengthening the regional framework for delivering sustainable development as set out in this document. *Securing the Regions' Futures* sets out 20 commitments along with clear guidance, which will help regions to make a step change in their contribution to delivering sustainable development. The key elements of this approach are:

- Using the sustainable development priorities and principles to underpin the refreshed or updated high-level regional strategies.
- Creating a strengthened role for regional sustainable development roundtables as champion bodies.
- Maximising the contribution which city-regions, sub-regions and inter-regional strategies can make to delivering sustainable development through innovative ways of working at these levels.

- Embedding sustainable development within the work of Government Offices and across their organisations and operations so as to become exemplars in the regions.
- Supporting the role of Regional Assemblies in delivering sustainable development through all their functions.
- Working with Regional Development Agencies to help them deliver economic productivity, which delivers sustainable development at the same time - and to ensure that this contribution is fully reflected in Regional Development Agency assessments.

All of this fits well with the SDC's proposals to strengthen their own regional role, the Government's vision and direction for more strategic Government Offices, and the increasingly important role of cross-regional and sub-regional partnerships to join-up delivery on the ground.

There is no 'one size fits all' solution and the enabling framework set out in this document will help regions to determine their own sustainable solutions to meet the needs and challenges they face. Understanding the regional challenge on sustainable development through indicators, information and data is the starting point.

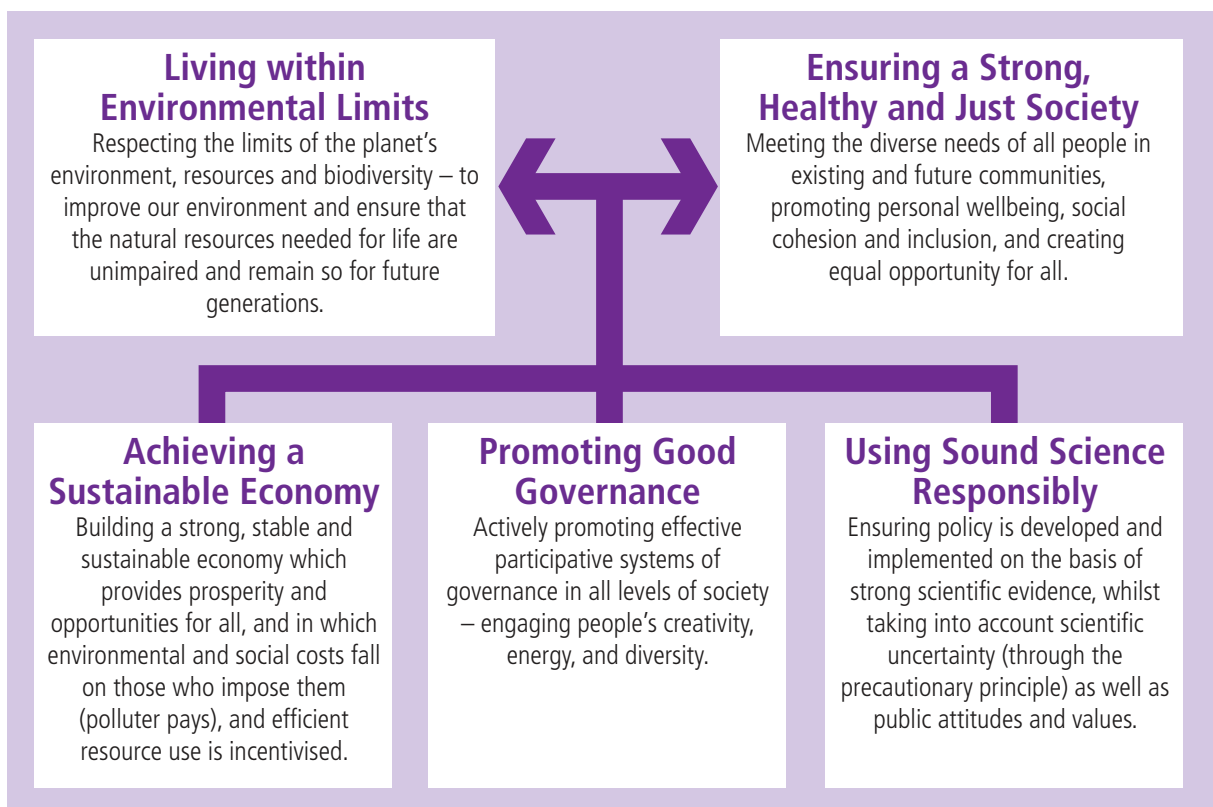


# Introduction

*Securing the Future* was launched by the Prime Minister in 2005. It set out five new guiding principles and four priorities for immediate action, which would help deliver a sustainable future for all. This new UK Sustainable Development Strategy provides a clear and robust overarching framework within which the English regions can deliver sustainable development and secure their own sustainable future.

## Guiding principles

*Securing the Future*, set out five shared UK principles, which we will use to achieve our sustainable development purpose. They bring together and build on previous UK principles and set out an overarching approach which the regions share.



## Shared priorities for UK action

The UK Sustainable Development strategy set out the following four priority areas for immediate action:

- “One Planet Economy”: Sustainable Consumption and Production
- Confronting the Greatest Threat: Climate Change and Energy
- A Future without Regrets: Natural Resource Protection & Environmental Enhancement
- From local to global: Creating Sustainable Communities and a Fairer World

The regions are well placed to join-up social, economic and environmental policies and take an integrated approach to improving quality of life. Regional stakeholders can also help identify tensions between social, economic and environmental goals at regional or indeed national level in order to help central government policy join-up more effectively. Sustainable development is not about bolt-on initiatives or additional burdens. It is about better ways of working which make positive, long-lasting differences to peoples’ lives and the world they live in.

Sustainable Development has been integrated into the Government’s programme of measures to strengthen the English Regions, and much has already been achieved since the publication of this Government’s first sustainable development strategy in 1999.

### **Sustainable development Integrated into the Government’s Regional Policies.**

- Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) have been established in all the English regions with a statutory purpose to contribute to sustainable development. RDAs are required to produce Regional Economic Strategies (RESs). These RESs need to take account of Government guidance for regional strategies. The guidance states:

*“The RES must have a clear focus on economic development, and both it and actions to implement it must be based on sustainable development principles set out in the March 2005 Sustainable Development Strategy. The RES should help advance the shared priorities for UK action set out in the strategy – Sustainable Consumption and Production, Climate Change and Energy, Natural Resource Protection and Environmental Enhancement and Sustainable Communities - in terms that reflect regional distinctiveness. In developing the RES a full sustainability appraisal should be carried out in order to identify how the RDA and its partners will contribute to sustainable development. The appraisal should be informed by the Regional Sustainable Development Framework, or equivalent in the region, and should be published alongside the RES.”*

- In London, strategic city-wide government has been restored and the Greater London Authority Act placed a duty on the Mayor to have regard to the effect that Mayoral strategies will have on the achievement of sustainable development.
- In 2000 the Government published guidance on producing regional sustainable development frameworks (RSDFs). By the end 2001 all the English Regional Assemblies had agreed RSDFs, or their equivalents, in partnership with Government Offices, RDAs, regional sustainable development roundtables and a wide range of other regional

stakeholders. The Mayor of London endorsed the London sustainable development framework in June 2003.

- Sustainable development underpins the planning system. The Government's policies on delivering sustainable development through the planning system are set out under Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1) "Delivering Sustainable Development" (2005). Planning Policy Statement 11 (PPS11) sets out the guidance for regional planning and the development of Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs). When revising a RSS a key requirement is to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal. Separate guidance supports this process.

Sustainable development is now integral to many regional strategies, policies and programmes. It is becoming central to the aims of many regional bodies in the public, private and voluntary sectors. It is through this regional partnership approach that we are best able to achieve our aspirations on sustainable development.

The Government's regional sustainable development indicators show that there have been improvements on social, economic and environmental issues in each region. They also show, however, that all regions continue to face some significant challenges if we are to secure a sustainable future for all. Much has been done but there is more to do.

*Securing the Future* emphasised the importance of delivery and made proposals for strengthening delivery in central government and at the local level. The Strategy also included commitments on regional delivery including an independent review by the SDC into regional infrastructure for sustainable development.

In November 2005 the SDC published its report: "The Next Steps: An independent review of sustainable development in the English regions". This review put forward recommendations to strengthen regional leadership on sustainable development within and between key regional institutions. It also recommended more streamlined and effective regional strategy arrangements to deliver sustainable development. The SDC also identified the important role played by regional sustainable development roundtables and recommended ways in which this role could be enhanced.

***Securing the Regions' Futures*** sets out detailed proposals for strengthening regional delivery of sustainable development in line with the SDC's recommendations. Government on its own cannot achieve sustainable development. All regional bodies have a part to play in order that their decisions and plans actively contribute to the delivery of sustainable development in the regions. This report sets out the way in which the Government now believes regions can best secure their own sustainable future through **engaging** wider stakeholders, **encouraging** innovative action, **enabling** sustainable development through regional strategies and **exemplifying** best practice on sustainable development within regional institutions.



# Understanding the Challenge

## Summary

The quantity and quality of regional level data on sustainable development issues has recently improved. Government Departments and regional bodies are increasingly providing this data which helps region's to determine the key challenges for their region, now and in the future.

The Sustainable Development Commission recommended that national and regional sustainable development indicators be used more widely and that regions should produce their own 'State of the Region' report to provide an overview of regional progress on sustainable development. The Commission also called for greater clarity about the purpose of the different types of indicators being used at the regional level.

The Government will strengthen delivery of sustainable development at the regional level by:

- Disseminating new regional level data on the sustainable development indicators.
- Encouraging Regional Observatories and Regional Intelligence Groups to build on existing good practice and provide regional information on sustainable development priorities and issues.
- Encouraging Regions to agree a clear purpose for regional sustainable development indicators, how they will be measured and assessed and how they will respond to negative trends.

Regional data on sustainable development challenges and trends is a critical starting point for making informed decisions about the regions' priorities, programmes and a vision for a more sustainable future.

A wealth of information on sustainable development is now available to Government and to regional stakeholders. This includes regional data on the national sustainable development indicators and also data collected within the region by Regional Observatories or other bodies.

*Securing the Future* included a new set of 68 indicators, which give an overview of sustainable development in the UK and the Strategy's four priorities. In December 2005 regional data for 44 of these indicators was published in order to provide a perspective on sustainable development in each region. All the regional data and individual reports for each of the nine regions are available from the Government's sustainable development website: [www.sustainable-development.gov.uk](http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk)

The regional indicators are not intended to be used as a league table and the focus for them is, where possible, to provide regional trends and enable comparisons between a given region and the England average. That said, it can be informative to identify where some regions may be making more progress than others.

The regional data showed that:

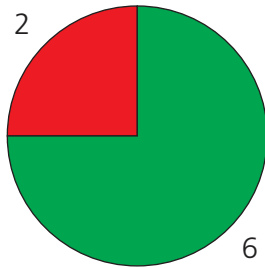
- Every region has shown improvement in a number of areas during the last decade.
- With a few exceptions, every region is moving in the same direction as the national trends.
- There is no single region that is in the best or worst position for all of the indicators.

The regional fact sheets include pie charts that summarise progress for indicators within the UK SD priority areas of (a) sustainable consumption and production and natural resources inclusive, and (b) sustainable communities. The pie charts below show progress in each region for priority area (a). The numbers next to each segment refer to the number of indicators covered. The colour of the segment refers to the traffic light assessment of the indicator data:

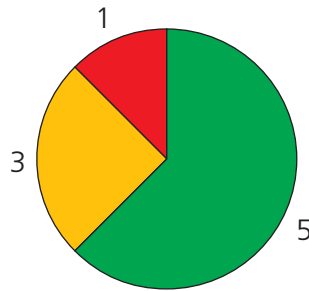
- Green** = indicators in the region showing clear improvement
- Amber** = indicators in the region showing little or no change
- Red** = indicators in the region showing clear deterioration
- White** = insufficient data

**Pie Charts showing progress on Sustainable Consumption and Production and Natural Resource Protection for nine English regions**

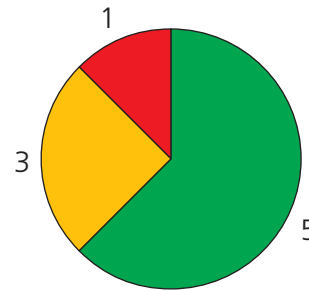
**East Midlands**



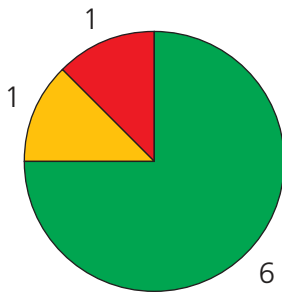
**East of England**



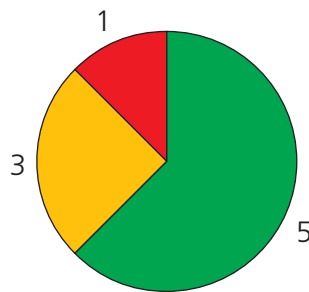
**North East**



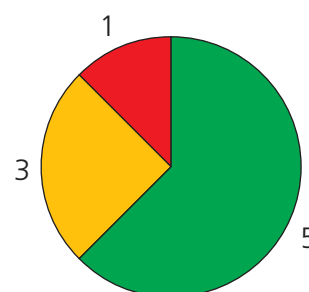
**North West**



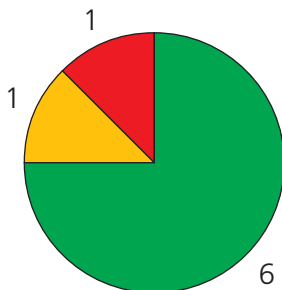
**South West**



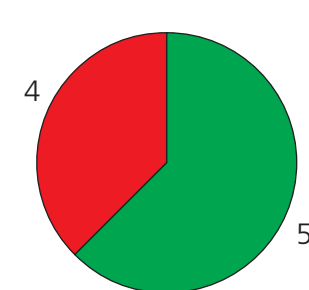
**Yorkshire and the Humber**



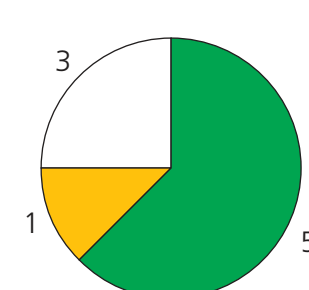
**West Midlands**



**South East**



**London**



This data provides regional stakeholders with a comprehensive set of information, which can inform decisions about regional priorities, plans or programmes. They help each region to identify and raise awareness about the key sustainable development issues for their region.

Following the publication of the indicators on 13 December 2005, there was a wide variety of coverage in the national and regional press. The regional press in particular developed very interesting stories around the indicators to highlight what was good and what was bad about their region. The reporting included wide mention of sustainable development and indicators which we believe resulted in arguably the best media coverage on sustainable development we have achieved. We consider that indicators like these help regions to more readily identify the key issues for their region.



Regional Observatories and Regional Intelligence Groups have been established in the English regions by partnerships involving Regional Development Agencies, Government Offices, Regional Assemblies, and other bodies. They vary in their composition from region to region but they too have an important role in researching and monitoring regional data on sustainable development. Many now include regional data about the national sustainable development priorities on their websites.

### The work of the Regional Observatories

#### East of England

The East of England Observatory hosts an interactive web site, maintained and funded by the **East of England Development Agency (EEDA)**, for the benefit of the region and its partners. The site collects, analyses and disseminates key regional information depicting an accurate and up-to-date picture of progress on sustainable development in the East of England. Resources and datasets are contributed by EEDA and its regional partners including the Local Authorities in the region, the **Government Office**, and the Learning and Skills Councils. The website provides a link to Defra's recently published regional data sets. More information can be found at: [www.eastofenglandobservatory.org.uk](http://www.eastofenglandobservatory.org.uk)

#### West Midlands

The West Midlands Regional Observatory's key strategic objectives are to review the State of the West Midlands Report and provide effective access to information and intelligence. The observatory has produced a State of the Region Report entitled: 'Real Lives, Real Issues 2004' and an update report in 2005. The report is informed by Defra's quality of life data sets. The data shows that within the West Midlands Region there are many factors contributing to quality of life. More information can be found at: [www.wmro.org](http://www.wmro.org)

A number of regions have produced their own State of the Region reports, which cover sustainable development issues. These provide a means of bringing together and sharing information about the regions' sustainable development trends and challenges. These reports enable Regional Assemblies, Regional Development Agencies and Government Offices to perform their strategic and leadership roles in the region and ensure that policies and programmes are taking account of major sustainable development issues.

### **State of the Region Reports – understanding the regional context for sustainable development**

#### **South West**

In order to gain a clearer understanding of sustainable development priorities and issues in the South West and raise awareness of sustainable development, the Regional Observatory has produced regional indicator/data sets and a State of the Region Report with facts, figures, essential characteristics, trends and challenges. The work on datasets has also resulted in an ecological footprint report: "Stepping Forward" (more details are on the following page). More information on the State of the Region report can be found on the web at: [www.swo.org.uk/state\\_of\\_the\\_south\\_west/](http://www.swo.org.uk/state_of_the_south_west/)

#### **Yorkshire and Humber**

Yorkshire and Humber's State of the Region Report: *Progress in the Region 2005*, shows how Yorkshire and Humber is performing on its key economic, social and environmental indicators. This is based on the integrated set of high-level indicators that Yorkshire and Humber included in its overarching 'Advancing Together' regional sustainable development framework (RSDF). The report states that a sustainable region would be one that uses resources in small relatively closed cycles of consumption with minimal new resource consumption and minimal waste, whilst energy use would keep total greenhouse gas emissions to within safe levels for the environment and for human health. The report acts as a guide on whether the region is moving towards sustainable development. More information can be found at: [www.yorkshirefutures.com](http://www.yorkshirefutures.com)

The importance of regional statistics and their development is very much recognised and the Office for National Statistics (ONS), in consultation with statisticians and policy customers across Government, is establishing a Strategic Framework for Regional Statistics. Also, towards implementing Christopher Allsopp's recommendations on improving statistics for regional economic policy, the RDAs have agreed to work in partnership with the ONS to deliver a full regional statistical presence by March 2007.

Clearly given the broad nature of sustainable development many of the sustainable development indicators produced by government departments and published in the regional set of sustainable development indicators may be included in the Strategic Framework for Regional Statistics.

### **Regional ecological footprinting as an awareness raising tool**

Ecological footprints are becoming increasingly utilised as a powerful way of raising awareness of sustainable development issues within the regions. Footprints can also help with appraisals and scenario planning at a strategic level. However, ecological footprinting also has its

limitations given some concerns over transparency of data, sensitivity to regional or local factors or methodological constraints.

Many regions have now calibrated their own ecological footprints which outline their region's patterns of consumption. In most cases these reports show that we are living beyond our means and compromising quality of life for future generations.

### A few examples of Regional Ecological Footprints

**London** – The *“City Limits”* report (published 2002) measured London's Ecological Footprint and found that Londoners consume more than three times their fair share of the Earth's resources. Partners included the Greater London Authority, Chartered Institute of Waste Management and the Institute of Civil Engineers. The report can be found at [www.citylimitslondon.com](http://www.citylimitslondon.com)

**South West** – The *“Stepping Forward”* report states that “If everyone on the planet consumed as much as an average South West resident, we would need three Earths to support global resource consumption sustainably. More information can be found at: [www.stepsforward.org.uk](http://www.stepsforward.org.uk)

**North West** – The *“Footprint North West”* report states that: “In order for the region to be self-sufficient we need a land area 30 times larger than the North West - in fact it would need to be the size of Germany.” This report can be found at: [www.york.ac.uk](http://www.york.ac.uk)

**East Midlands** – This report highlights that three planets would be required to support the lifestyle of an average Greater Nottingham resident. Partners involved were Nottinghamshire County Council and the Greater Nottingham Districts - Broxtowe, Nottingham City, Rushcliffe, Gedling and Ashfield. More information will be available on line in due course.



# Delivering Sustainable Development Through Regional Strategies

## Summary

Regional strategies set out the vision and priorities for a sustainable future, which meet the particular needs and circumstances of each region.

Results of the 'Taking It On' consultation, undertaken to develop the new UK Sustainable Development Strategy, found that many respondents felt that Regional Sustainable Development Frameworks (RSDFs) sometimes compete with other high-level strategies, such as Integrated Regional Frameworks (IRFs) and Integrated Regional Strategies (IRs), meaning that RSDFs now lack authority in the region. This in turn is hampering the understanding of sustainable development objectives and priorities. Respondents also felt that many other regional strategies were not consistent with RSDFs.

The Sustainable Development Commission recommended that new guidance be given to the regions to clarify the role of different high-level regional strategies and to strengthen their role in delivering sustainable development by taking a long-term and cross-cutting approach.

The Government will strengthen regional strategies by:

- Clarifying the role of Regional Assemblies in determining the regions' high level strategy arrangements and seeking opportunities, where they exist, to rationalise RSDFs, IRFs and IRs.
- Inviting regions to update their high-level strategy / strategies in line with the new UK Sustainable Development Strategy and the 'essential ingredients' set out in this section in order to put sustainable development at the heart of the strategy / strategies.
- Helping scale up good practice in undertaking sustainability appraisals on other thematic regional strategies and plans.

There are a suite of statutory and non-statutory documents within each region, which provide important mechanisms for delivering sustainable development. All have an important role to play and should be underpinned by the principles of sustainable development.

## Regional Sustainable Development Frameworks, Integrated Regional Strategies and Integrated Regional Frameworks.

In February 2000 the Government published guidance on preparing Regional Sustainable Development Frameworks (RSDFs). The guidance established RSDFs as high-level frameworks in each region which set out a vision for the future of the region and the region's contribution to delivering sustainable development at the national level. It was also intended that RSDFs map out relationships between various regional and national initiatives and help minimise duplication. Regional Assemblies were invited to take a lead in establishing RSDFs in their region and all regions did so.

In *Your Region, Your Choice – Revitalising the English Regions*, published in 2002, the Government encouraged and supported the progress being made across regions to join up regional strategies. It is important there is, where necessary, consistency across different regional strategies. The Government further stated that it would be for regions themselves to decide how to take this forward and that it would invite Regional Assemblies to take the lead in establishing the best arrangements for their region. As a result, many regions have now established Integrated Regional Strategies (IRS) or Integrated Regional Frameworks (IRF). This integration of strategies is also a key principle mentioned in both PPS1<sup>1</sup> and PPS11<sup>2</sup>.

The SDC, in their regional review<sup>3</sup>, found that in some regions RSDFs exist separately to IRFs or IRS. In other regions, they are one and the same. In regions where a separate RSDFs exists, research<sup>4</sup> has also shown that there are variations in the role and content of these documents. In some regions the RSDF is now primarily seen as a sustainability appraisal tool while in others it remains an overarching strategic document. During the 'Taking It On' consultation to develop the new UK Sustainable Development Strategy, many respondents felt that RSDFs now lack the authority needed to contribute to the delivery of sustainable development. It was felt that this made the allocation of responsibilities difficult and hampered the understanding of objectives and priorities. Respondents also felt that many other regional strategies were not consistent with RSDFs.

In its review of regional sustainable development infrastructure, the SDC recommended that Government clarify the role of the different overarching regional plans and help ensure that these plans strengthen delivery of sustainable development.

- 1 Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development 2005 ODPM, <http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1143805>
- 2 Planning Policy Statement 11: Regional Spatial Strategies 2004 ODPM, [http://www.odpm.gov.uk/pub/844/PlanningPolicyStatement11RegionalSpatialStrategiesPDF2594Kb\\_id1143844.pdf](http://www.odpm.gov.uk/pub/844/PlanningPolicyStatement11RegionalSpatialStrategiesPDF2594Kb_id1143844.pdf)
- 3 SDC. The Next Steps: An independent review of sustainable development in the English regions. November. 2005. <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/cgi-bin/search.cgi?q=the+next+steps&m=bool&sp=1&cmd.x=9&cmd.y=11>
- 4 Research undertaken by the English Regions Network in 2005 concluded that future RSDFs needed to be 'smarter' by having: more structured and representative stakeholder involvement; better defined and prioritised objectives and associated targets; action plans that address unsustainable activity at the regional level and set out responsibilities and tasks against defined time-scales; more effective monitoring processes. The ERN report can be found at: <http://www.ern.gov.uk/page.asp?id=14>

The Government believes that the regions are best placed to determine the high-level strategy arrangements they think are most appropriate and that Regional Assemblies should continue to take a lead with partners in establishing these arrangements. However, the Government does not require regions to produce separate RSDFs, IRFs or IRSs and it believes there are opportunities to rationalise these documents. Though regions have discretion over the names and numbers of these types of high-level documents, the Government firmly believes that the arrangements in each region must be fully in line with the UK Sustainable Development Strategy, and that this can be achieved by incorporating the 'essential ingredients' listed below. The Government expects Regional Assemblies and other regional partners to fully take into account the UK Sustainable Development Strategy and the essential ingredients below, when they review or prepare their high-level regional strategies.

### **"Essential Ingredients" on sustainable development for regional high-level strategy / strategies**

- **Evidence Base:** The region's current and future challenges are clearly set out based on robust social, economic and environmental data, trends, scenarios or analysis. This includes regional data for the national sustainable development indicators and other regional sustainable development indicators.
- **Stakeholder involvement:** In taking account of these ingredients and preparing high level strategies in the region, regional stakeholders from social, economic and environmental interests and from all sectors are engaged in the process.
- **Integrated Vision:** A shared, overarching and long-term vision for the future of the region is clearly articulated, based on the region's challenges and opportunities, and which integrates the region's social, economic and environmental priorities. The vision is consistent with the national priorities and principles set out in *Securing the Future*.
- **Aims and objectives:** Clear aims and objectives are identified, which will help implement the shared vision for the region's future. These attempts to reconcile strategic issues / conflicts facing the region and move the regional and national headline sustainable development indicators in the right direction. The aims and objectives make the relevant links across regional social, economic and environmental issues and have regard to the priorities and principles in *Securing the Future*. Clear links are made between other relevant regional and local plans.
- **Indicators, actions and targets:** Targets are identified along with accompanying indicators and actions in order to address unsustainable activities / negative trends and meet the region's aims and objectives. Clear links are made to related actions, indicators or targets in other regional or local plans. Actions have owners and timescales identified.
- **Monitoring and reporting:** Arrangements are identified for monitoring progress on implementation and for reporting to regional stakeholders and the wider public. Monitoring and reporting arrangements capture the region's contribution to delivering the priorities in *Securing the Future*.
- **Sub regional and local levels:** Links are made between the 'ingredients' above and the opportunities offered by sub-regions, city-regions and local Sustainable Community Strategies / Local Area Agreements, to help contribute to national and regional sustainable development priorities.
- **Sustainability appraisal:** A sustainability appraisal has been conducted on the high-level strategy / strategies in line with available best practice.

Regional Assemblies, supported by the regional sustainable development roundtables, are responsible for ensuring that these ingredients are fully incorporated into their region's high-level planning arrangements.

- **The Government will invite regions to report by the end of September 2006 on how their own regions' high-level strategy arrangements are taking account of these "essential ingredients".**
- **By December 2007 all regions should have refreshed or updated their high level strategy / strategies to take into account these essential ingredients and the UK Sustainable Development Strategy itself.**

## The contribution of other regional strategies.

There are many other thematic or issue based plans and strategies at the regional level. Some of these already have to have regard to sustainable development. The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) provides a broad development strategy for the region for a fifteen to twenty year period. RSS's are spatial strategies setting out the strategic policies and proposals, including infrastructure proposals and management polices, governing the future distribution of regionally or sub-regionally significant activities and development within the region. The RSS already heavily advocates integration with other regional strategies (it actually includes the Regional Transport Strategy within it) for the purpose of the delivery of spatial sustainable development. The RSS is also required to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal, which test the proposed and developing options and polices against a framework of sustainable baselines.

Another key and statutory regional strategy is the Regional Economic Strategy (RES). Six of these Strategies are being reviewed during 2005-2006 and will strengthen their contribution to sustainable development in order to deliver sustainable economic prosperity in the regions. RDAs (who prepare the RES) are also strongly encouraged to align policy frameworks and programmes with the Regional Housing Strategy (RHS) and the RSS. This can be illustrated in the recent publication of guidance on developing common evidence bases for the RSS and the RES<sup>5</sup>.

Other regional plans cover such issues as planning, housing, health, culture, transport, environment and community safety<sup>7</sup>. There are some excellent examples in the regions which show how these plans can be enhanced by undertaking a sustainability appraisal. A range of different sustainability appraisal tools are now available and the Sustainable Development Commission are committed to providing guidance during 2006/07 on how to further develop or apply these tools. The Government encourages regional bodies to undertake a sustainability appraisal of their key plans in order to maximise the opportunities for delivering sustainable development in the region and contribute to its achievement in the UK as a whole.

5 Guide to Improving the Economic Evidence Base supporting Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies' September 2005 ODPM.  
[http://www.odpm.gov.uk/pub/492/ImprovingtheevidencebasesupportingregionalplanningpoliciesPDF592Kb\\_id1144492.pdf](http://www.odpm.gov.uk/pub/492/ImprovingtheevidencebasesupportingregionalplanningpoliciesPDF592Kb_id1144492.pdf)

6 Government's expectation is that regional plans will reflect the Government's objectives, set out in the Respect Action Plan published in January 2006, to promote good behaviour and tackle bad behaviour and to ensure that managing behaviour is reflected in all development plans in order to create the strong, sustainable communities that we all want to live in. For example, we have committed that all Government funded regeneration initiatives will be accompanied by measures to manage behaviour and we would expect to see other elements of regional strategies making similar provision to manage behaviour.

## Sustainability Appraisal Tools

### East of England

The Sustainable Development Toolkit for the East of England has been developed through a partnership coordinated by the Sustainable Development Roundtable (SDRT), to enable the appraisal of regional strategies and projects against the objectives of the Regional Sustainable Development Framework (RSDF). The toolkit was commissioned by the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA), with East of England Development Agency (EEDA) funding.

EEDA has piloted the toolkit with a range of regional partners. High profile projects that have been developed and appraised using the toolkit include the Snoasis winter sports development in Suffolk, the Leys post-16 education project and the Offshore Renewables Centre at Lowestoft. The results of these trials has demonstrated the strengths of the toolkit as being both a project development and an appraisal tool. Feedback from the piloting exercise has been extremely positive, with interest and potential users from the East of England and other parts of the country. EEDA, EERA and GO-East hosted a cross-regional meeting to discuss the roll out of the toolkit to other regions. All the regions represented expressed an interest in the toolkit and three (**East Midlands, North West and West Midlands**) are developing their own region-specific versions of the toolkit. EEDA has also been in discussions with BRE and WWF over inclusion of their checklist for Sustainable Construction to be integrated into the regional toolkits. More information can be found at: <http://www.toolkit-east.org.uk>

### The East Midlands

The East Midlands Integrated Toolkit (EMIT) has been developed to assist decision makers, planners and developers throughout the region to evaluate the impacts of their plans, policies and projects on the region's sustainable development objectives. The web-based toolkit has been developed through collaborative action between partners in the region as well as broad consultations with stakeholders. The toolkit covers sustainability issues such as climate change impacts, protection of the rural landscape, health impacts and social equity issues. The toolkit includes an appraisal tool for those assessing individual proposals and appraisals can also be combined to show how well a range of proposals meets an overall aim. The toolkit is suitable for both local and regional proposals. More information can be found at: [www.emtoolkit.org.uk](http://www.emtoolkit.org.uk)

### North West

The North West's Integrated Appraisal Toolkit (IAT) is designed to help decision makers, planners and investors in organisations throughout the North West to assess and improve the sustainability of their projects, plans, policies and strategies. The IAT was published in 2003. The toolkit allows users to assess initiatives against the economic, environmental, and social priorities of the North West. It has already been used in a number of key areas in the region including Regional Planning Guidance Partial Review, Regional Economic Strategy, Regional Waste Strategy, Regional Health Investment Plan, Community Strategies and reviewing European Funded Projects.

A refined toolkit is being developed on behalf of regional partners to take account of the revised Action for Sustainability Framework, the new statutory requirement to include sustainability in all local development frameworks and the EU Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). More information can be found at: <http://www.actionforsustainability.org>

### South West

The South West Sustainability Appraisal tool - OSSAS (One Stop Sustainability Appraisal Shop - or the SA Information Service - is a joint project between the SWLGA, SW Observatory and SWeGG that is being delivered with the aid of £300,000 grant from ODPM to SWeGG to develop a tool to help planners get access to data to support sustainability appraisals. The data encompasses employment, business, housing, learning and skills, ageing and youth to allow for full sustainability appraisals.

The tool uses a GIS system to integrate data sets for different geographic areas and it can retrieve data from sources such as Neighbourhood Statistics and Environment Agency databases. The tool has received a lot of interest from around the country - from land use planners, regional/national agencies and also some international bodies. The wide spread of data sources, and proposed ease of use of the tool means that it can be applied to a much wider suite of applications - such as Local Area Agreements, evidence-based policy making, transport plans and so on. The tool is set up to help improve the way the region works together. Each of the English regions received a similar grant, for a similarly new and useful application and it is intended that the South West's tool integrates with these. The tool could also be expanded to be used by other regions. More information will be available when the tool is up and running.

Defra has commissioned each region to develop a Regional Rural Delivery Framework, underpinned by sustainable development principles. The Frameworks are intended to ensure that prioritisation and delivery in the English regions address the three core strands of Rural Strategy 2004 – supporting rural enterprise; social justice for all; and enhancing the value of our countryside by protecting the natural environment. Development of the Frameworks is meant to ensure that:

- priorities are shaped to fit regional need and opportunity and support achievement of national priorities;
- “rural delivery” activity by a range of partners is better co-ordinated; and
- activity and funding are prioritised to ensure they are being targeted where most needed.

The Frameworks have been brokered by the Government Offices for the Regions over the past year. After they had prepared initial drafts, Defra held a series of challenge sessions with the Government Offices to ensure that the Frameworks were developing in accordance with the principles set out in Rural Strategy 2004, and in particular, that they would help deliver sustainable development in the regions. The Government Offices were encouraged to look at how they could integrate social, economic and environmental activities to achieve sustainable rural communities.

Subsequently, the Government Offices have brought together a range of partners representing economic, social and environmental interests to look at ways of co-ordinating delivery and making more effective use of funding.

It is still early days for the Frameworks. After the development work undertaken over the past year, they will move into implementation over the next year. Already, however, there is evidence that they are helping some regions to make links across the three pillars of sustainable development. This is particularly evident in activity to support rural tourism in a number of regions, where protection and enhancement of the natural environment are linked to attracting

visitors with the economic benefits that should bring, and to improving access to the countryside for local communities. Once the Frameworks are in place from April 2006, the Government Offices will report twice a year on progress in implementing them.

### Case studies : Regional Rural Delivery Frameworks

#### Yorkshire and the Humber

The framework has stimulated the creation of a Rural Practitioners Group, which brings together local authority representatives, Yorkshire Forward (the regional development agency), the Environment Agency, the Forestry Commission, rural community councils and others. The group will ensure the delivery of a wide range of activities under the framework – from projects to empower rural communities to have greater involvement in decisions on coastal and flood management, to work to develop local marketing chains for energy crops.

#### South West

The framework draws on “Just Connect”, the integrated regional strategy which identifies key aims for the sustainable development of the region, including:

- targeting resources at areas of greatest need;
- improving intra and inter-regional communications and embracing new technology to enhance access to labour and products markets, while shifting to a more sustainable transport policy which protects the environment; and
- making better use of the social and economic benefits of the region’s high quality environment and cultural distinctiveness.

## EU Structural Funds

European Structural funds are currently managed by Government Offices. This role is set to reduce significantly from 2008, when Structural Fund programmes financed under the current EU Financial Perspective (2000-2006) is complete. The Government is currently consulting on the strategy for and architecture of new Structural Fund programmes to operate from 2007, following the European agreement on a new Financial Perspective (2007-2013) in December. The Government Proposes stronger alignment between Structural Funds and domestic funding streams. The Government proposes ERDF funding be aligned with the RDAs’ Single Programme Budget. It believes that ESF support for employment and skills should be strategically aligned to domestic employment and skills funding, which is currently deployed primarily through Jobcentre+ and Learning and Skills Councils.

To ensure greater alignment, the Government will develop, in due course, detailed delivery arrangements for Structural Fund receipts. Under the proposals that the Government is currently consulting on, there would be a greater role for the domestic delivery agency or agencies in the management of programmes. The detail and balance between the role of Government Offices and delivery agencies under this model is still under consideration. The Government will take final decisions on the arrangements for Structural Funds delivery including the role of Government Offices and resource implications for the Government Offices and other bodies affected by these decisions, following the consultation exercise.

EU Structural Funds can make a significant contribution to regional delivery of sustainable development. Some examples are highlighted below.

### **Regional Sustainability Projects funded with EU Structural Funds (Objective 2 Programme)**

#### **South West's new Dobles Lane Workspace Units**

In November 2002, Torridge District Council secured capital funding from the South West Objective 2 programme and the South West Regional Development Agency for the construction of eleven new managed workspace units at Dobles Lane, Holsworth. This will include training / seminar rooms for business support together with meeting facilities, IT facilities and a reception desk.

The workspace extension has embedded sustainability into its design. The workspace units are made from timber sourced from local forests and there is energy efficient lighting and heating systems. Grey water and rainwater will also be re-used. The site is also linked to the town centre and residential areas by a new cycle route while an enhanced wetland habitat is also being created alongside a comprehensive native planting programme. The programme invests £738,000 ERDF funding and the total cost of the project is £1,490,000.

This is a good example of how European Structural Funds money is being used to progress economic, environmental and social objectives for the region.

#### **North West ENWORKS – Making environment practice profitable**

ENWORKS is a North West England regional programme which helps businesses to improve their competitiveness by adopting good environmental management practices. It was established in 2000 as a partnership between the North West Development Agency (NWDA), the Environment Agency, Business Links, North West Chambers of Commerce and the North West Regional Assembly. The programme is co-ordinated by Groundwork North West.

ENWORKS advises and trains about 1,000 businesses each year on, for example, resource efficiency savings (energy and water saving, waste minimisation), compliance with environmental legislation, and marketing and supply chain benefits (including better commercial and public image).

The programme has received (£6.59 million) ERDF funding from NWDA with additional support from the European Social Fund (ESF) via Merseyside (Objective 1) and Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Cheshire (Objective 2). This mix of funds, together with their geographical distribution, adds significantly to the range and quality of assistance that the programme is able to provide.

Notably, one element of the project the 'Training for Sustainability' scheme won a Learning NorthWest award in 2003 for its marketing approach and business effectiveness.

More information is available at: [www.enworks.com](http://www.enworks.com)

In the current programming period (2000-2006) Structural Funds have contributed to sustainable development in two main ways.

First, there has been a number of direct environmental projects which contribute to economic development, recognising the environment as an economic driver. Examples of these include renewable energy, waste management facilities and cleaner production processes.

Secondly, there has been an EU requirement in the current programming period that the environment is integrated into all actions of the funds. This has been translated into a horizontal cross-cutting environmental sustainability theme. This has enabled essentially economic/social projects to achieve environmental benefits and therefore made an important contribution to regional sustainable development, particularly when the level of resource in Structural Funds is considered (the UK's allocation over the current funding period is £10 billion). Examples of the benefits realised include emission reductions, improved resource and energy efficiency, compliance with environmental management systems and the use of sustainable building practices.

Looking to the future, the UK Government is committed to building on the successes that have been achieved in the current programme. The National Strategic Reference Framework for future structural fund programmes was published for consultation on 28 February 2006. This proposes maintaining the environmental sustainability cross-cutting theme in future programmes. In addition, for England it is also proposed that one of the priority areas for action would be sustainable development. This will allow funding to be provided to encourage innovation in the use of the environment as an economic driver, help business mitigate and adapt to climate change and promote increased energy and resource efficiency.

- **The UK Structural Funds National Strategic Reference Framework will include environmental sustainability as a cross-cutting theme. This will ensure that all future UK structural fund programmes (2007-2013) include integrated strategies for addressing environmental concerns and respecting the principles of sustainable development**



# Government Offices

## Summary

This section sets out the ways in which the role of Government Offices will be strengthened to deliver sustainable development.

The Sustainable Development Commission recommended that sustainable development should be the 'primary purpose' of Government Offices and that they should be required to produce their own Sustainable Development Action Plans. Regional Directors were identified as having a key leadership role on sustainable development.

The Government will further strengthen the role of Government Offices by ensuring that sustainable development principles are embedded in Government Office business planning, workforce development and performance management systems. This will mainstream sustainable development across Government Offices rather than create separate documents or additional burdens.

Regional Directors have made their own commitment within this response to embed sustainable development within their organisations.

Government Offices are part of central government. Located in the nine English regions, they are one of the few parts of central Government to operate at the regional and local level.

Government Offices work with their sponsor departments and act as the eyes and ears of Government in the regions. They already have an important role in helping to deliver sustainable development in the regions. This is achieved by bringing together regional stakeholders, influencing strategic regional plans and joining-up the delivery of a broad range of departmental policies and regional programmes.

Government Offices have first hand knowledge of their respective regions and this, combined with their ability to join up the work of individual departments, makes them uniquely placed to help deliver Government priorities. Their ability to join up programmes and policies is particularly useful when drawing together regional issues which have many cross-cutting

outcomes such as those on sustainable development. This was highlighted in the Government Office Network 2004/5 Corporate Plan:

*“Government Offices provide the sustainable development glue through [our] leadership and brokerage role”.*

Government Offices now perform functions on behalf of ten Government departments, and are involved in the delivery of over 40 national Public Service Agreements.

Regional Directors have a crucial leadership role to play in their own organisations and in the region as a whole. By demonstrating strong leadership on cross-cutting agendas such as sustainable development, Regional Directors can engage and enthuse staff across Government Offices and also other leaders across the region.

- **Regional Directors, as leaders of Government Offices for the English Regions, are committed to ensuring that Government policies and programmes are delivered in regions and localities in a way which secures sustainable development. In our Government Offices we will:**
  - **Lead by example, to ensure that sustainable development principles are embedded in the way we work across all our businesses as well as in partnership with others.**
  - **Make this a reality by making sustainable development one of our key challenges but one which is central to our new more strategic purpose as set out in the Government Office Review.**

In April 2005 the Regional Co-ordination Unit<sup>7</sup> put in place a new performance management framework for Government Offices to strengthen the Government Office reporting arrangements. This framework has helped to strengthen the Government Office role on sustainable development. In 2005-06 the performance management framework included four performance measures on the Government Office role in achieving Defra’s PSA 1 objectives on sustainable development.

These measures set out what the Government Office should do to help deliver the new UK Sustainable Development Strategy, and taking action on these measures should help other performance measures to be delivered in a sustainable way. Defra, as owner of PSA 1 on sustainable development, works with Government Offices to support them to deliver sustainable development and provides regular constructive feedback on their performance.

Government Offices have already made a significant contribution to delivering sustainable development in the regions. Government Offices have been doing this by:

- Promoting sustainable development in their own organisations and in the work that they do.
- Working externally through regional partnerships and plans to demonstrate leadership on sustainable development and to make the links between social, economic and environmental initiatives or programmes.

<sup>7</sup> The Regional Co-ordination Unit (RCU) was established as the corporate centre of the Government Office network in 2000. It is an inter-departmental unit located in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). The RCU is responsible for overall management and administration of the Government Office network budget and acts as a co-ordination interface between Government Offices and their sponsor departments.

## Case studies: Leading by example – promoting and integrating sustainable development within Government Offices

### Improving staff skills and knowledge on sustainable development : GO Yorkshire and Humber

GOY&H has completed an audit of staff skills and knowledge on sustainable development. This identified a range of training and awareness raising needs that need to be addressed to increase the contribution across the GO on sustainable development. It also recommended that GOY&H develop an action plan with communication strategy to embed sustainable development into the business planning and reporting process. A number of training events have been held and the GO will be undertaking further actions to address other recommendations. This work ties in with wider work to embed sustainable development in the GO outlined in the GO's own sustainable development policy.

<http://www.goyh.gov.uk/>

### Staff champions on sustainable development: GO North West

GONW has developed and is implementing an action plan for mainstreaming sustainable development within the office. As part of this, the GO has developed a network of sustainable development champions across the organisation. Their role is to champion and embed sustainable development within their own business area.

<http://www.gos.gov.uk/gonw/?a=42496>

### Sustainable Operations : GO South West

As representatives of central government in the regions, all GOs are required to work towards the targets in the Framework for the Government Estate. GOs are actively engaged in meeting these targets in their own buildings, land and operations. In 2005, the GOSW management board took a decision that all GOSW events would be carbon neutral, sustainable and should use locally sourced food. Monthly facilities management forum meetings occur to explore how to manage GOSW operations more sustainably. This has resulted in GOSW purchasing green electricity and achieving a recycling rate for their organisation of 72%. This work has led to a greener events guide for the region.

<http://www.gosw.gov.uk/>

### Embedding sustainable development into business planning : GO East

The 2005/6 GOE Business Plan builds sustainable development into its aims to ensure that it underpins the whole of the GO's work. The Plan uses the UK Sustainable Development strategy as its context, and highlights the Integrated Regional Strategy 'Sustainable Futures' as the vision for enhancing quality of life in the region. The plan sets out GO East's role in delivering this vision and how it will work to achieve a joined up approach to cross-cutting initiatives.

[http://www.go-east.gov.uk/goeast/about\\_us/business\\_plan/](http://www.go-east.gov.uk/goeast/about_us/business_plan/)

## Case studies: Government Offices engaging and enabling in the regions

### **Strengthening regional arrangements to deliver sustainable development: GO West Midlands**

To raise the profile of sustainable development GOWM worked as a regional champion and, together with other stakeholders, established a forum to bring sustainable development to the forefront of the regional agenda. This work included: reviewing the regions RSDF and linking it to the 'Taking it On' consultation exercise to raise its profile; putting in place Memorandums of Understanding; and Service Level Agreements between key regional players which linked to the GOWM Business Plan. This work has greatly enhanced the regions contribution to sustainable development and regional partnership networks, which are now linking sustainable development to their own delivery work.

### **Working with Local Strategic Partnerships : GO North West**

To raise awareness of sustainable development GONW helped develop an innovative learning simulation model (Planit North West) to help Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) in the region achieve more sustainable outcomes. This virtual reality game aims to help LSPs ensure that sustainable development principles are a key component of local decision-making and community strategies. Most LSPs (41 of 44) in the region have had Planit NW training, over 70 people are trained as trainers and 50 support packs disseminated. An education version for schools and colleges has also been produced. This tool has enhanced working relationships in the region and increased awareness and usage of Sustainability Appraisal (e.g. Lancashire Local Area Agreement).

<http://www.pixelfountain.co.uk/planit-nw>

### **Training for Leaders for Sustainable Communities: GO East**

Given that three of the four Growth Areas identified in the Communities Plan are in the East of England, GOE have identified an opportunity to offer some sustainable development training for local leaders who are expected to deliver Sustainable Communities. GOE are discussing this training with the National School for Government and the Academy for Sustainable Communities with a view to piloting a Sustainable Communities course. Training would include a short intensive course plus a year's ongoing mentoring / support from experts in different fields. Leaders to be targeted include: GOE Sustainable Communities and Growth Areas policy teams, Inspire East, the region's Centre of Excellence, East of England Development Agency and Local Authority Leaders in Growth Areas. If successful, the training programme could be cascaded wider with pilot trainees acting as mentors.

### **Embedding sustainable development into Local Area Agreements: GO London**

To promote the mainstreaming of sustainable development into Local Area Agreements (LAAs), GOL held a series of workshops with lead GOL LAA negotiators to explain how to integrate sustainable development into London Boroughs' LAAs. These identified opportunities for mainstreaming sustainable development, as well as demonstrating why sustainable development should be a key consideration of an LAA. At the same time, GOL worked with regional stakeholders – London SD Commission, London Health Commission, London Sustainability Exchange and Association of London Government – to promote an integrated approach to mainstreaming sustainable development into LAA objectives and across the four blocks, focusing on national and specific London priorities. This work has enhanced understanding of sustainable development both within and outside of GOL and has informed LAA negotiations.

It is clear that a lot has been achieved but there is more to do.

## Strengthening the Government Office role on sustainable development

A recent review of the Government Office Network by the Regional Coordination Unit (RCU) and HM Treasury<sup>8</sup> has found broad support for a more strategic role for the Government Offices, moving from process-oriented work such as grant administration, towards more strategic, place-based policy work such as the negotiation of Local Area Agreements. This increasingly strategic role offers a new opportunity to strengthen the Government Office role in delivering sustainable development in the regions. It will enhance the role of Government Offices in joining-up social, economic and environmental issues, for example by, applying sustainable development principles across the Government Offices as a cross-cutting agenda and building effective partnerships with others to secure a more sustainable future for the region.

As part of this strategic role, the Government Office role in delivering sustainable development can be strengthened by:

- Closer alignment between Government Offices and their sponsor departments, in terms of the Government Office contribution to delivering Departmental Sustainable Development Action Plans.
- Further work to put sustainable development at the heart of each Government Office, to underpin its business planning, partnerships, programmes, its people and their development.

## Sustainable Development Action Plans and the Government Office role

For the first time, each Government Department is to have its own Sustainable Development Action Plan (SDAP). These plans set out the way in which the Department can help deliver sustainable development by applying the principles and priorities set out in the UK Sustainable Development Strategy, *Securing the Future*, to their own policies and programmes. These SDAPs can help Government Offices and their sponsor Departments to ensure Government Office performance measures are aligned with the SDAP and help their implementation. These SDAPs are monitored by the Sustainable Development Commission in their enhanced 'watchdog' role.

- **When reviewing or updating Government Office performance measures, sponsor Departments will seek to ensure that these measures reflect the Government Office contribution to delivering their Department's Sustainable Development Action Plan and the Government's Sustainable Development Strategy more widely.**
- **When sponsor Department's update or review their Sustainable Development Action Plans, they will consider the Government Office role in delivering sustainable development.**

8 A Government review of the Government Office Network was undertaken in 2005. The report containing its findings was published in March 2006 alongside the Budget and can be found at: <http://www.gos.gov.uk/rcu/news/386895/>

## Government Offices with sustainable development as a principle underpinning their organisations.

The current performance management framework for Government Offices provides a range of information about sustainable development activities in the regions.

- **Defra will work with other departments, Government Offices and the Regional Coordination Unit to identify the work covered under all Departmental PSAs within the Government Office performance framework, which are relevant to Government priorities for sustainable development.**
- **We will introduce mechanisms in the performance management framework to enable tailored reports on Government Office sustainable development activities to be prepared, which will demonstrate the contribution that teams across each Government Office make to the Government's sustainable development objectives.**

Within Government it is for Departments, in consultation with Defra and the Regional Co-ordination Unit to assess the effectiveness of the Government Office role in achieving departmental objectives on sustainable development, and any implications for their funding allocations for regional programmes. The Regional Co-ordination Unit will support this by working primarily through the Government Office performance management framework to promote better management of delivery across the network, provide evidence of how Government Offices are contributing to changes, and facilitate the dissemination of best practice. Business planning processes also offer an opportunity for Government Offices to review how their activities contribute to national and regional sustainable development priorities and indicators.

A number of Peer Reviews have taken place in the Government Office network. Peer Reviews offer a way of challenging processes and performance to improve the way the organisation works. The reviews involve Government Office staff and senior stakeholders and focus on key issues. There is scope for including sustainable development within the review process, if it is continued.

- **The Regional Co-ordination Unit will include sustainable development within the range of peer review questions during 2006 - 2007.**

There is also a need to raise awareness and understanding about sustainable development issues amongst Government Office staff.

- **Government Offices and the Regional Coordination Unit will, in partnership with Defra, ensure Government Office staff have access to information or training which increases understanding about sustainable development issues relevant to their work.**

Government Offices are working with the National School for Government on the development of a pilot sustainable development course which, if successful, could be made available across all departments and Government Offices. Some Government Offices have also identified sustainable development champions across the organisation who aim to ensure that sustainable development principles are mainstreamed into the business planning and delivery in each policy area.

We will encourage the sharing of best practice and Government Office success stories (for example, through the use of 'champion' schemes) to help spread knowledge of sustainable development principles across the Government Office network. The Government Office Network has been giving more prominence to sustainable development as a cross-cutting issue on Government Office websites (which now all follow a standard format), for example by including sustainable development in the 'sustainable communities' section and 'rural' sections of the websites.

## Sustainable Estate Management

Government Offices seek to lead by example in the sustainable management of their buildings, offices and land. The Government Offices are mandated, in every site, to meet the targets and commitments outlined in the Framework for Sustainable Development on the Government Estate<sup>9</sup>. The growing profile of the Government Offices means that they must set an example to others and show leadership when they are working to influence their regional communities and businesses and be able to show leadership in delivering high levels of achievement in their own use of natural resources and energy.

A programme of relocations underway across the Government Office estate has resulted in occupation of more efficient buildings, which offer lower carbon emissions through better energy efficiency and a reduction in local transport impacts. Many Government Offices are also taking significant steps to reduce the environmental impacts of their business. Some have implemented functional environmental management systems and are working with colleagues across the network to develop best practices supported by ODPM specialists. For example, in the latest relocation in Government Office Yorkshire and the Humber, the building is rated as BREEAM<sup>10</sup> Excellent.

The UK Sustainable Development Strategy stated that Government should be a leading exponent of sustainable development and that Departments should "...do better..." and "...set an example for the rest of the public sector and businesses". The Strategy included a commitment to review the Framework for Sustainable Development on the Government Estate and to make proposals during 2005 for achieving a significant change in its operational performance. The Sustainable Operations Board (SOB), was set up in June 2005 to give leadership on this commitment.

The initial outcomes of the Framework review will be fewer but more challenging outcome focussed targets. Other areas to be taken forward under the review are leadership and capacity building. This approach has been endorsed by Sustainable Development Ministers across Government. People expect Government to be leading on this and setting an example to others. Senior management within Regional Co-ordination Unit and the Government Offices themselves will need to acknowledge the requirement placed on them to deliver these targets and to support and resource the units that deliver them.

9 More information can be found at: <http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/government/estates/index.htm>

10 Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM)

- **Alongside Government Departments, Government Offices will seek to improve the way they manage their land and buildings sustainably and in doing this set an example for the rest of the public sector and business.**

## Sustainable Procurement

Government Offices can help deliver sustainable development by using their procurement to maximise wider environmental, social and economic benefits. The Sustainable Procurement Task Force's action plan will be published in spring 2006. As the Government's representatives in the regions, the Government Offices will have a key role in helping to implement this action plan which aims to ensure that the UK achieves its goal as being recognised amongst leaders on sustainable procurement across the EU by 2009.



# Regional Assemblies

## Summary

Regional Assemblies, as voluntary bodies whose membership is drawn from a range of regional stakeholders, have a key role to play in delivering sustainable development at regional level. Their different functions can each make a significant contribution to securing a sustainable future in the regions.

The Sustainable Development Commission recommended that Government clarify the role of Regional Assemblies in relation to sustainable development and ensure that this is their primary purpose.

The Government will strengthen delivery of sustainable development in the regions by:

- Publishing new guidance to Regional Assemblies which supports and clarifies their role in helping to deliver sustainable development through their different functions.
- Promoting good practice in delivering sustainable development across Regional Assemblies and their regions.

It is important that regional strategies are developed and informed by the regions themselves. The Government fully supported the moves being made in all regions, outside London, in the late 1990s to establish Regional Assemblies as multi-party regional partnerships, bringing together partners from local government and the private and voluntary sectors. These assemblies can speak on behalf of the region and the Government has subsequently designated them to undertake certain specific tasks. It has also indicated that it will further extend the remit of the assemblies where they can make an effective contribution to regional policy development. The assemblies have recently been fully involved with partners in the preparation of advice to Government on regional funding allocations. The Government is also currently considering extending to assemblies responsibility for leading on the regional housing boards. In this context assemblies have been required to show how they are streamlining their operations and procedures and fully represent their varying sub-regional agendas.

Regional Assemblies draw their membership from all local authorities across a region and from a range of regional stakeholders from the economic, social and environment sectors. Local Government members make up at least 60% of the membership and at least 30% are regional partners. Regional stakeholders represent a broad range of interests while the local authority members ensure the people in the region can have their views represented.

#### The main roles and functions of Regional Assemblies are:

- Acting as the **Regional Statutory Planning Body** with responsibility as the body for preparing the Regional Spatial Strategy on behalf of the Secretary of State as well as producing the Regional Transport Strategy.
- **Scrutinising their Regional Development Agency**, and as designated under the Regional Development Agencies Act 1998, as consultee bodies for their RDA during the preparation of Regional Economic Strategies.
- **Integrating policy** development and enhancing partnership working at the regional level across the social, economic and environmental policy agendas.
- Acting as the **'voice of the region'** and speaking out on behalf of the whole of the region at a national and international level and promoting regional strategies such as Regional Sustainable Development Frameworks.

In September 2004 the Government announced a new role for Assemblies (with the Government Office and the RDA) to provide advice to government on regional investment priorities across housing, transport and economic investment. We have also proposed that the Regional Planning Body and the Housing Board should be merged.

Regional Assemblies are inclusive strategic bodies able to draw on the experience and knowledge of representatives from the key sectors across the region, sub-region, major cities, city areas and the rural areas. They provide a focal point for the region, able to speak on its behalf and represent its interests within the region and more widely. They work with a full range of public, private and voluntary sector partners and also embrace the full range of political opinion in the region.

### Regional Assembly Scrutiny and Promotional work on Sustainable Development

#### English Regions Network guide on embedding Sustainable Development into Regional Assembly scrutiny (Chapter 10)

During 2003-4 the English Regions Network (ERN) - which represents the eight Regional Assemblies - co-ordinated a project to strengthen regional scrutiny across the regional assemblies. One component was a pilot to improve the integration of sustainable development into the regional scrutiny process. The project was funded by the English Regional Chamber / Assembly Fund. The findings from the pilot were translated into a guide for scrutiny officers, a summary of which also appears in Chapter 10 of the 2004 Regional Scrutiny Handbook. The reports provides practical guidance on how Regional Assemblies can promote sustainable development through regional scrutiny work by integrating sustainable development into all stages of scrutiny reviews (e.g. setting the scope, research brief, inviting stakeholder submissions, reviewing evidence, questioning,

hearings, final report and monitoring and implementation). The guidance also suggests providing sustainable development training and appointing champions and gives guidance on promoting sustainable development through 'dedicated' sustainable development reviews. More information can be found at: [www.ern.gov.uk](http://www.ern.gov.uk)

### **East Midlands Regional Assembly Scrutiny Review of the East Midlands Development Agency**

As part of its scrutiny function, EMRA commissioned Forum for the Future to evaluate the delivery of sustainable development through delivery of the Regional Economic Strategy and make recommendations for improvement. The scope of the review was to look at how EMDA applies sustainable development principles in: influencing business; regeneration and EMDAs own corporate behaviour. The report praised EMDAs commitment to sustainable development and their ability to work well in partnership and spread sustainability outcomes across the entire region, particularly in terms of their work on social enterprise and regeneration. The report also highlighted areas for improvement and makes recommendations to EMDA, and its regional partners. More information can be found at: [www.regionalfutures.org.uk](http://www.regionalfutures.org.uk)

### **East Midlands Promoting Sustainable Development Policy Group**

This group acts as a forum to drive forward sustainable development in the region. The group reports to the Regional Assembly's Regional Policy Board and works in partnership with regional stakeholders to: demonstrate and showcase sustainable development; lead cross-cutting initiatives; co-ordinate regional activity; and develop and promote good practice. The Group develops its work programme in conformity with the Regional Assembly's Business Plan and prepares an annual review of the outcomes achieved in line with this. This has been updated in line with the UK Sustainable Development Strategy.

The Business Plan includes a performance indicator to: 'Hold an annual event to showcase good practice in sustainable development to business and other organisations'. This annual event is known as East Midlands Expo and is led by the Regional Assembly's Promoting Sustainable Development Group. Expos have been held in October 2004 and September 2005. This is a good example of how Regional Assemblies can fulfil their role as 'voice of the region' and showing leadership by bringing together regional partners and harnessing funding to initiate high-profile sustainable development projects, to help raise the profile of sustainable development and contribute to a better quality of life in the East Midlands.

The Regional Assemblies contribute towards the wide range of strategies at the regional and sub-regional level. The all embracing nature of Regional Assemblies enables them to contribute to and ensure consistency across regional strategies. They are in an ideal position to contribute to the delivery of sustainable development in their regions and have so far used their strategic role to great effect by taking forward a range of initiatives which have sought to deliver sustainable development.

## Strengthening the role of Regional Assemblies in securing a sustainable future.

In the earlier section of this report on regional strategies, Regional Assemblies were identified as leading the process for determining and preparing high-level strategy arrangements in their region, which fully incorporate the 'essential ingredients' to ensure these plans help secure a sustainable future for all.

Regional Assemblies will continue to exercise their role and functions in a way that can help deliver sustainable development in the regions and also contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK as a whole. Whilst the Government can issue guidance to Regional Assemblies, which helps them achieve this, it is not appropriate to place duties upon them as they are voluntary bodies and therefore set their own agenda.

- **During 2006 ODPM and Defra will jointly publish guidance to Regional Assemblies which supports and clarifies their role in helping to deliver sustainable development through their different functions.**

Regional Assemblies have an important part to play in demonstrating leadership on sustainable development by raising the profile of sustainable development issues in the region and bringing partners together to address them. We will recognise this leadership role in the guidance given to Regional Assemblies, which will ensure they are fit for purpose.



# Regional Development Agencies (RDAs)

## Summary

Regional Development Agencies were established in 1999 and since this time have made a significant contribution to delivering sustainable development in the regions. This has been achieved through Regional Economic Strategies, which have increasingly sought to deliver economic prosperity in tandem with environmental and social goals and investments which promote sustainable economic prosperity.

The Sustainable Development Commission recommended that the effectiveness of target-setting and performance appraisal processes should be reviewed for the RDAs' delivery of sustainable development.

The Government is working with RDAs to strengthen their role in delivering sustainable development by: ensuring RESs are underpinned by strong SD principles; and embedding the principle of sustainable development in RDA accountability frameworks.

The Government's commitment to regional delivery through regional governance was greatly enhanced through the establishment of nine Regional Development Agencies (RDAs). There are eight RDAs and the London Development Agency - which operates as a functional body of the Greater London Authority. Under the Regional Development Agencies Act 1998 each RDA has five *statutory purposes*.

RDA Statutory purposes:

- To further economic development and regeneration;
- To promote business efficiency, investment and competitiveness;
- To promote employment;
- To enhance development and application of skills relevant to employment;
- To contribute to sustainable development.

England's RDAs play a critical role in delivering sustainable economic prosperity and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK as a whole. RDAs are able to make this contribution in many ways including through:

- Regional Economic Strategies.
- Regional investment programmes.
- Good business practice in sustainable procurement, business operations, staff training and use of land and buildings.

England's RDAs have already made a significant contribution to the delivery of sustainable development as outlined below. This section also describes the way in which the Government has sought to strengthen sustainable development in the policy framework within which the RDAs operate. This includes guidance, monitoring and assessment arrangements. This will enable RDAs to enhance their contribution to delivering sustainable development in the future. We regard it as important to balance and integrate sound economic and environmental considerations consistently throughout the activities of each RDA.

## Delivering sustainable development through Regional Economic Strategies

The primary role of the RDAs is to act as 'strategic drivers of regional economic development' particularly through their contribution to delivering Regional Economic Strategies which provide the economic development framework for the region. RDAs are required to review the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) on behalf of their region every three years. RESs are signed off by the RDA Board and the Regional Assembly. The purpose of the RES is to provide a shared vision for the sustainable development of the region's economy, to improve economic performance and enhance the region's competitiveness. The Strategies identify measures that will lead to improved economic performance. In addition, some RDAs are exploring working at an inter-regional level where this will add value or help increase economic growth, as in the case of the Northern Way.

Although the RDAs are charged with producing the strategies and keeping them under review, the intention is that they should be owned and implemented by all partners within the region, drawing on their combined resources. Each RES aims to provide a strategic vision for the region, backed by a firm evidence base, which will help ensure its influence on, and synergy with, other regional strategies, as well as contributing to national policies.

Last year the Government revised the guidance to RDAs on producing RESs. This guidance provides the other main lever with which the Government seeks to shape the RDAs' regional investment programmes. The revised guidance has sustainable development at its heart, requiring the RDAs to ensure that their RESs and actions to deliver them are soundly based on sustainable development principles and priorities, as set out in the March 2005 UK Sustainable Development Strategy. The guidance therefore is intended to ensure that the RESs are influential documents in driving improvements in sustainable economic performance at all levels across the English regions.

Regions' RESs are also subject to European Directive 2001/42/EC on environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes (the "strategic environmental assessment" or the SEA Directive). SEA can form part of, or complement a full sustainability appraisal, which RDAs are required to undertake, to identify how the RDAs and their partners will contribute to sustainable development more widely. This should be informed by the Regional Sustainable Development Framework or the equivalent in the region.

Currently, the RESs for six regions are under review (Yorkshire and the Humber, North East, North West, South West, South East and East Midlands) and sustainable development will be a key underlying theme in the revised Strategies when these are published.

### **Case studies: Stronger integration of Sustainable Development through reviews of Regional Economic Strategies (RES)**

#### **South West's revised RES**

The South West RES is currently undergoing a revision and is due to be finalised in May 2006. As a result the RES is now being set within a robust sustainable development context. Sustainable development has been integrated into the RES's vision and objectives and both regional and national frameworks have been used to help set the RES's priorities. The South West has recognised the importance of measuring prosperity through well-being, rather than purely economic wealth, and that the environment is the foundation of peoples quality of life and acts as a business opportunity. Climate change, limitations on natural resources and the ecological footprint of the economy are factored into assumptions about regional prospects and energy and climate change is one of the region's 'key issues'. More information can be found at: [www.southwestrda.org.uk](http://www.southwestrda.org.uk)

#### **North West's revised RES**

The North West RES has also undergone a revision. This has allowed the North West to strengthen the integration of sustainable development into the RES. The North West made a positive approach to embedding sustainable development at the start of the review process, inserting prominent references to sustainable development at the heart of the RES, and incorporating the current UK Sustainable Development Strategy's Principles and Priorities. The North West has recognised the contribution the RES can make to sustainable development priorities and accordingly has set out the social and environmental benefits of activities in each section. More information can be found at: [www.nwda.co.uk](http://www.nwda.co.uk)

## Delivering sustainable development through RDA investment programmes

England's RDAs have already profiled a number of case studies demonstrating their contribution to sustainable development through *Smart Growth – Sustainable Development in the English Regions*<sup>11</sup>

- **We will work with RDAs during 2006 to publicise further case studies, which illustrate how RDAs can deliver economic productivity in a way which also delivers sustainable development.**

### “Smart Growth”

RDAs have a pivotal role in delivering sustainable development in their regions. RDAs provide leadership, as well as funding, required to kick-start new programmes in the regions to increase economic performance. Ensuring sustainable development is at the heart of these programmes adds further value to outcomes: e.g. securing a better quality of life for the region in turn promotes business activity and economic prosperity.

The joint RDA/Defra publication **Smart Growth’ – Sustainable Development in the English Regions** highlighted a range of innovative RDA projects ranging from; promotion of the local cheese industry in the North East, a new sustainable business park in the East of England, a green grid in London, and a new offshore renewable energy hub in the South West. These are just a few of the many examples outlined in *Smart Growth*, which shows how RDAs are making a positive difference to delivery of sustainable development through their economic investment programmes. Defra and the RDAs will continue to build on this work to promote ways that RDAs can help to deliver sustainable development in the regions through their economic activities.

RDAs work in partnership with many stakeholders to deliver sustainable economic prosperity and develop a joined-up approach to social, economic and environmental investment.

### Defra / RDA seminar to raise awareness of sustainable development

A good practical example of applying sustainable development principles in a specific context is the annual joint seminar hosted by Defra Ministers with the RDAs, National Park Authorities and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This has enhanced an understanding of the economic contribution and potential of protected landscapes, the social and economic needs of the communities within these “living landscapes” as well as encouraging a joined up approach to environmental and conservation issues.

11 The ‘Smart Growth’ publication can be found at: [www.eeda.org.uk](http://www.eeda.org.uk)

## Delivering sustainable development through good business practice.

Many RDAs have established environmental management systems, sustainable transport plans and project appraisal tools that help to mitigate the environmental impacts of the RDA operations and activities. The RDAs will also have a key role to play in implementing the Sustainable Procurement Action Plan being developed by the Sustainable Procurement Task Force, which will be published in spring 2006.

### Promoting Sustainable Development Internally within RDAs

#### Yorkshire Forward's sustainable procurement project

Yorkshire Forward (YF) has recently initiated a work programme to champion sustainable procurement and take a lead role in the region on buying recycled products. Working with Recycling Action Yorkshire, Yorkshire Forward are currently developing a means of implementing a 10% recycled content target (of the total value) for materials used in both the RDAs own work and in the projects it funds. Waste Resources Action Programme (WRAP) are providing practical support on three pilot projects including: Nelson Mandela Building, Sheffield; Barnsley Market; and Holbeck re-development.

While the establishment of sustainable procurement policies is widespread across the region, public sector bodies and private sector companies need support to turn these policies into action. By setting this recycling target and working in partnership with Recycling Action Yorkshire and WRAP, Yorkshire Forward will promote the integration of sustainable procurement into purchasing decisions, help source recycled content products and bring forward new products which specifically support regional reprocessors. Further information can be found at: [www.recyclingaction-yorkshire.org.uk](http://www.recyclingaction-yorkshire.org.uk)

#### Developing sustainable development expertise within the RDAs

The English RDAs recognise the need to empower its staff to make choices that promote sustainable development. The RDAs have committed, through the work of Sustainable Development Leads Group, to ensure that all RDA staff skills are sufficient to enable them to fulfil RDA statutory duties and the PSA on sustainable development. All RDAs provide various levels of sustainable development induction training for staff and tailored training for project managers. A few examples of additional work by several RDAs is highlighted below.

#### Yorkshire Forward

- Yorkshire Forward places a responsibility on all staff to implement sustainable practices in all aspects of their work - a requirement which is now specified in all job descriptions.
- A Sustainable Development module within the Corporate Development Programme aims to stimulate thought and debate on the key issues, encouraging staff to apply the principles of sustainable development within their own work.
- Project managers are required to complete a Sustainable Development Assessment and greenhouse gas emissions inventory for all interventions made.
- Sustainability appraisals are undertaken on projects where appropriate.

**North West Development Agency**

- As part of the follow up to an external audit in line with ISO 14001, NWDA has recently updated the sustainable development questions in their Single Proposal form and will be incorporating Sustainable Development training for project managers into the Single Programme training courses
- NWDA has recently completed a widespread training initiative of Local Strategic Partnerships using a specifically developed training tool- PlanIT North West.

**OneNorth East**

- A bespoke sustainable development course has been in place since August 2004 and has been delivered to over 120 staff, sub regional partnership staff and stakeholders from local authorities, partner organisations and other bodies who run projects under One NorthEast funded programmes.

**London Development Agency**

- As part of LDA's internal training initiatives, a Green Office group has been established to ensure staff are aware and able to meet progressive targets on office waste minimisation and recycling, green procurement, energy efficiency and renewable energy and their sustainable travel plan.

## Strengthening the contribution of RDAs on sustainable development.

Although England's RDAs have already made a significant contribution to the delivery of sustainable development, the Government has worked to strengthen sustainable development in the framework within which RDAs operate. In addition to more flexibility and funding we are building a stronger role for RDAs through more robust tasking and performance management processes, which will improve the effectiveness of the RDAs in contributing to the delivery of sustainable development in their regions through sustainable economic development. These measures include the following:

- RDA Tasking Framework;
- RDA six-monthly progress reports on their delivery of the Corporate Plan targets/outputs;
- Independent Performance Assessment for the RDAs, conducted by the National Audit Office and the Audit Commission<sup>11</sup>;
- Impact Evaluations; and
- Single Programme Appraisal Guidance.

These are described below.

<sup>12</sup> The National Audit Office will be assessing the eight RDAs outside London. As a functional body of the Greater London Authority, the London Development Agency is assessed by the Audit Commission.

## RDA Tasking Framework

The RDA Tasking Framework came into effect in April 2005 and required each RDA to show in its Corporate Plan for 2005-08, how, in support of its statutory role and responsibilities, it would address the priorities identified in the RES for its region and contribute to the delivery of a number of the Government's PSA targets. The Tasking Framework specifies that the Sustainable Development Public Service Agreement (PSA) target is an overarching target and that the RDAs must contribute towards its delivery.

### Sustainable Development PSA target

This PSA target aims to promote sustainable development across government and in the UK and internationally, as measured by: the achievement of positive trends in the government's headline indicators of sustainable development; the UK's progress towards delivering the World Summit on Sustainable Development commitments, notably in the area of sustainable production and consumption, chemicals, biodiversity, oceans, fisheries and agriculture; and global climate change.

The RDA's Corporate Plans for 2005 - 2008 have now been published. Our guidance to RDAs on Corporate Plans says that RDAs should work to the objectives in the UK Sustainable Development Strategy in terms that reflect regional distinctiveness or specific regional issues. The guidance also states that sustainable development should underpin the actions and decisions the RDA takes in pursuance of its objectives.

### Embedding Sustainable Development into Regional Development Agencies' Corporate Plans.

#### Yorkshire Forward

Yorkshire Forward's Corporate Plan 2005/10 sets out a key goal for the region to ensure that economic activities and interventions contribute to sustainable development and maintain Yorkshire Forward's leading edge work and reputation in this area in moving the region to a Low Carbon Economy. The Plan sets out the RES and PSA target on sustainable development delivery at annex C. This outlines what Yorkshire Forward will do to deliver it through leadership, partnership work and acting as a catalyst through key programmes, projects and investments. The Corporate Plan fits with "Advancing Together" – the region's vision, and the Regional Sustainable Development Framework. Yorkshire Forward states that "sustainability demands consideration in all our areas of activity and influence, and it provides major opportunities for the region. The RDA has ambitious corporate and RES targets to cut greenhouse gas emissions. A Diversity Excellence Model will be aligned with the organisation's Business Excellence Model to ensure continuous improvement in these areas." A specific section provides a "Sustainable Development Overview"; corporate objectives have sustainable development clearly described and embedded and the RES/PSA Delivery Areas have a well articulated sustainable development core. Further information can be found at: [www.yorkshire-forward.com](http://www.yorkshire-forward.com)

## South East

SEEDA's Corporate Plan 2005-8 explains the cross cutting nature of sustainable development as a central theme of the region's RES and that the corporate plan has a strong focus on building a sustainable economy for the future. However it also recognises the crucial importance of social and environmental sustainability too. The Plan places emphasis on the four UK sustainable development priorities: climate change and energy, sustainable communities and highlights sustainable production and consumption and natural resource protection. Part 3 of the plan sets out specifically SEEDA's actions which will contribute to delivery of the sustainable development PSA in terms of activities, milestones and strategic added value. This will include programmes such as environmental capital, energy and materials resources management. Further information can be found at: [www.seeda.co.uk](http://www.seeda.co.uk)

Defra is the lead Department for delivery of the PSA on sustainable development and will work in partnership with the RDAs to form an evidence-based view of the aggregate contribution RDAs are making to the delivery of this target.

Under the Tasking Framework, Strategic Added Value is a key part of the RDAs' contribution to the delivery of PSA targets. Strategic Added Value will be identified in reporting delivery of RDA Corporate Plan commitments.

In relation to sustainable development the RDAs' Strategic Added Value activities could include:

- Contributing to the development of Regional Sustainable Development Frameworks (RSDF) or their equivalents. These are high-level documents that set out the objectives and priorities for sustainable development in each region. Each is different, reflecting varying circumstances and priorities. The way each RDA will report their contribution will therefore vary.
- Working in partnership with their Regional Sustainable Development Roundtable (RSDRT) to implement the RSDF or equivalent. The RDAs also work with partners to increase the capacity of RSDRTs to become the regional focus for sustainable development.
- Integrating the principles of the RSDF or equivalent into RDA programmes, projects and strategies, often through the use of a sustainability appraisal tool.
- Strategic leadership and delivery of a range of programmes that directly contribute to the priorities of the RSDF or its equivalent as well as the UK Sustainable Development Strategy (for example Sustainable Consumption and Production and climate change mitigation). The established relationship between the private sector and the RDA plus the regional approach to addressing sustainable development enables businesses and communities to formulate solutions that are appropriate to the circumstances of the region.
- Influencing their stakeholders and partners to drive change and influence longer term strategy and investment decisions based upon sustainable development priorities and principles. This is achieved at the regional level through concordats and membership of regional governance fora.

- Promoting sustainable development individually or collectively as part of the RDA strategic remit during the development of regional, national and EU strategy and policy. This is achieved through lobbying, formal consultation and RDA representation on policy and strategy working groups.
- Integrating sustainable development within RDA operations and activities, such as staff training, guidance to funding applicants and the sustainability appraisal of funding decisions.
- Influencing national Government policy, sharing best practice and promoting organisational and partnership ways of working across the RDAs and other organisations through the RDA Sustainable Development Leads Group, Waste Leads and Energy Leads.

To help Defra better communicate the Government's sustainable development priorities to the RDAs, Defra recently produced a short statement of strategic priorities to inform the review of Regional Economic Strategies. This statement was set in the context of the UK Sustainable Development Strategy and the contribution RDAs could make to delivery of the sustainable development PSA target.

## Progress Reports on the delivery of the Corporate Plan

Each RDA Chief Executive reports regularly to the RDA Board on progress in delivering on the commitments set out in the RDA's Corporate Plan for 2005-08. The Corporate Plan outlines how, in support of its statutory role and responsibilities and through its own activities and influence on others, the RDA will contribute to addressing the priorities identified in the Regional Economic Strategy for the region, and contribute to delivery of the sustainable development PSA target included in the RDA Tasking Framework. The reports are shared with Government every six months and are also made publicly available on each RDA's website. The reports will help Government and stakeholders to understand the progress that the RDA is making in delivering sustainable development and form a view of the aggregate contribution that RDAs are making to both national and regional priorities.

## Independent Performance Assessment of the RDAs

In the March 2005 Budget, the Government announced that independent assessment, conducted by the National Audit Office (NAO), would be introduced for the RDAs during 2005/06 on a rolling basis. The Government therefore fully agrees with the SDC report's recommendation that the independent assessments on RDA performance should be carried out.

This new assessment system draws heavily on the Audit Commission's programme of Comprehensive Performance Assessment for local authorities and builds on the learning experience of the London Development Agency, which went through a similar process of assessment in 2004. (As a functional body of the Greater London Authority, the London Development Agency is subject to a separate assessment regime performed by the Audit Commission).

Independent Performance Assessment will allow the RDAs, Government partners and stakeholders to understand the role and the performance of the RDAs as strategic drivers of regional economic development since they were established in 1999. By placing emphasis on

self-reporting backed up by strong independent audit and peer review principles, independent performance assessment will be critical to driving continuous performance improvement in the RDAs. The NAO's assessment of each RDA will be shaped by the perceptions and understanding of the RDA's stakeholders and partners. It will provide an objective, evidence-based understanding of how well each RDA is performing now and how it will continue to enhance its performance over the longer term.

One of the key questions that will be covered by the NAO's assessment is 'has the RDA made progress in achieving its ambitions in sustainable development'? The NAO's Guidance<sup>13</sup> on Independent Performance assessment of the Regional Development Agencies provides further information about the assessment process, including examples of the evidence the NAO will be looking for to assess each RDA's performance on sustainable development.

## RDA Impact Evaluation

The Spending Review 2004 further emphasised the government's commitment to the development of efficient and accountable sub-national institutions, such as the RDAs. Spending Review 2004 announced the creation and devolution of further responsibilities to the RDAs including the delivery of Business Links and delivering priorities (through the PSA targets) associated with productivity, regional economic performance, regeneration and sustainable development in both urban and rural areas.

Each RDA is undertaking an Impact Evaluation to assess the effectiveness of their interventions on economic growth in their regions (specifically business development and competition, regeneration through physical infrastructure development and human resource and community development), including their impact on sustainable development. These assessments encompass particular PSA targets, drivers of productivity and value for money. Sustainable Development is fully covered in the Impact Evaluation Framework (IEF)<sup>14</sup>, on which assessments are based through reference to the PSA targets (one referring to Sustainable Development itself and one to Sustainable Communities). It is also explicitly looked at in a dedicated chapter on sustainable development (Chapter 5).

The IEF was agreed by Government and RDA Chief Executives and published in October 2005. RDAs are now in the process of undertaking impact evaluations. It is expected that initial results will be ready later in 2006 in preparation for the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 (CSR 07). The IEF is expected to be part of the continuous process of review that will extend beyond CSR 07.

## Single Programme Appraisal Guidance

In April 2002 we introduced a cross-Departmental Single Programme Budget for RDAs. This provided RDAs with new flexibilities in how they invest and manage their resources. Agreed between Departments and the RDAs, the Single Programme Appraisal Guidance (SPAG)<sup>15</sup> sets out the principles and key stages for project appraisal, delivery, monitoring and evaluation.

13 This guidance can be found at: [www.NAO.gov.uk](http://www.NAO.gov.uk)

14 IEF can be found at: [http://www.dti.gov.uk/economics/RDA\\_IEF\\_FINAL\\_REPORT261005\\_5.pdf](http://www.dti.gov.uk/economics/RDA_IEF_FINAL_REPORT261005_5.pdf)

15 SPAG is available at: <http://www.consumer.gov.uk/rda/info/spag.pdf>

The SPAG is an important document in the context of the Government's policy objectives as it forms the basis for the appraisal of projects involving RDA funding. The SPAG includes seven key principles with which RDAs must ensure their systems are underpinned. One of these is 'Sustainability' – assessing the impact on economic, social and environmental objectives, both in the short and long-term. The SPAG will be reviewed in line with current Government policy, including the principles and priorities of the UK Sustainable Development strategy.

- **A review of the Single Programme Appraisal Guidance will commence in April 2006, with target completion for the final guidance by Autumn 2006.**



# Joining it up within and across the regions

## Summary

Although individual regional bodies and strategies have a key role to play, there are significant opportunities to work in partnership and join-up agendas at the regional level to secure a more sustainable future.

The Sustainable Development Commission recommended that the role of regional sustainable development roundtables be strengthened as regional 'champion bodies'. The Commission also recommended a set of characteristics which should underpin these bodies.

The Government will strengthen the delivery of sustainable development in the regions by enabling:

- a more effective role for regional sustainable development roundtables.
- a joined-up approach through core cities, city regions and inter-regional strategies.

Securing a sustainable future for the regions can only be achieved through closer working between regional stakeholders and regional bodies. Although each regional body has a particular role to play, sustainable development requires a joined-up approach, which brings together social, economic and environmental perspectives at every level. It also requires the engagement of wider stakeholders who can provide views, opinions and specialist advice, which can inform regional decision making.

This section sets out how the Government is strengthening the delivery of sustainable development through new approaches to improving quality of life at the pan-regional, city-regional and sub-regional levels. It also outlines the role of regional sustainable development roundtables and how we will work to support them in this role.

## Delivering sustainable development across regions, city-regions and sub-regions

The Government is working, through ODPM, on strengthening policies relating to cities and city-regions, so as to maximise their economic potential and contribution to national growth and prosperity. The towns and cities policy agenda is complementary to the Government's policies for regions, so that strategies are set and implemented at the most appropriate level to ensure that real change happens on the ground, supported by local democratic empowerment in parallel with strategic decision-making.

Towns and cities have substantial potential to improve not only their own economies, but also broader social cohesion and environmental performance, through: increased collaboration on environmental initiatives, a focus on innovation and enterprise, and strategic planning and transport issues, emphasising the importance of proximity and connectivity.

This potential is being explored through the follow-up to the eight Core Cities summits undertaken last year, including the development of business cases – which have the opportunity to help address climate change through customised initiatives at the city-regional level; and through a further round of summits – between March and May 2006 – focussing on smaller cities and larger towns in England. These and the earlier Core Cities summits have established a foundation for developing sustainable development proposals which draw upon local innovation and enterprise – such as city road pricing and high quality building design, as well as on national standards and targets – such as development on brownfield land and the development of mixed communities in town and city centres.

Such initiatives, supported by appropriate governance arrangements and more informed decisions, can make a major contribution to sustainable development, drawing on national and international precedents and connections, economies of scale, and utilising new technology and innovative solutions.

■ **The Government will continue to encourage a joined-up approach to delivering sustainable communities, which embody the principles of sustainable development through working in partnership at a city-regional scale.**

Inter-Regional Growth Strategies are long-term plans focussed on achieving economic growth in the regions. These strategies first arose from a challenge from the Deputy Prime Minister to the three northern RDAs to develop a plan for creating a step change in economic growth in the North. Strategies are being developed in the North (the Northern Way), the Midlands (SMART Growth: The Midlands Way) and the South West (The Way Ahead) and are being taken forward by the RDAs working together with key regional partners.

Although the focus of these strategies is on promoting economic growth they all recognise the importance of ensuring this growth is sustainable and promotes the creation of sustainable communities. They recognise the need to attract people to live and stay within their regions if they are to be economic successes and for growth to be sustainable.

*The Northern Way*, the most developed of the three strategies, recognises this and one of its ten workstreams is devoted to creating truly sustainable communities. Also, as part of this workstream the Northern Way is supporting the development of the Academy for Sustainable Communities Skills in Leeds. The Academy will promote and enhance the national skills base for planning, delivering and maintaining sustainable communities.

*SMART Growth: the Midlands Way* acknowledges the need to manage the Midlands' urban environments and rural hinterlands to develop a range of high quality, vibrant, attractive environments that are sustainable. This is given form in its SMART Renaissance proposals which includes ideas on promoting energy efficiency and zero waste.

*The Way Ahead* highlights, as one of the South West's great strengths and key economic assets, its quality of natural and built environment. As part of its ongoing development it is preparing a sustainable development toolkit consisting of best practice on, amongst other things, urban design, sustainable construction and low carbon usage, for use in the region.

■ **We will work with these initiatives to ensure that sustainable development thinking continues to influence their developing proposals and delivery.**

## Promoting Sustainable Growth

The Sustainable Communities Plan set out our commitment to creating sustainable communities where housing growth is supported by infrastructure, good public transport, other public services and quality green space. We recognise that infrastructure is vital to support housing growth. We recognise the potential for new housing to be much more sustainable e.g. closer to jobs, reducing the need to travel, and saving energy and natural resources. We are committed to better buildings and working with infrastructure providers such as the water industry.

Development in the growth areas is therefore not just about additional housing - we need to create genuinely sustainable communities. Our proposals for the growth areas aims to bring together good design and planning to ensure that the built environment is of a high quality, and the surrounding countryside is protected and enhanced. Developers and house builders have a fundamental role to play in helping us achieve sustainable communities in the growth areas by:

- Undertaking a more creative approach to mixed-use development so that housing is accompanied by jobs and local services, community facilities, leisure and culture.
- Developing at a sufficient size, scale and density to support local amenities, promote regeneration, support public transport use and reduce Greenfield land take.
- Creating developments that are of a high-quality design and are constructed sustainably.
- Ensuring a safe and healthy local environment with well-designed public and green spaces.
- Integrating development with good public transport and other transport infrastructure to serve the community and link to urban and regional centres.
- Planning a well-integrated mix of decent homes of different types and tenures to support a range of household sizes, ages and incomes; especially affordable housing to meet the needs of key workers.

### Case Study: Ashford Growth Area - planning sustainability into growth

Ashford Delivery Board has been tasked with delivering 31,000 new homes and 28,000 new jobs by 2031, with supporting infrastructure. Sustainability remains central to the Greater Ashford Development Framework in that its development was conducted to ensure public transport is joined with the 'green grid' of pathways, cycle ways and green spaces

and parks, providing easy access, high quality public transport systems across the borough. Natural resources reduction is part of the design code pilot, with the aim of achieving the eco homes standard of "very high", with a reduced planning application process for private sector developers whose plans are compliant with Ashford's design codes.

Ashford's Future has successfully bid for ODPM Sustainable Communities funding for a number of specifically sustainability focussed projects that are integral to Ashford's growth. For example, an Integrated Water Management Strategy for Ashford will develop a toolkit to facilitate the development of Ashford within the limits of the sustainability of the water environment. Also, the Willesborough Dykes project will deliver sustainable ecological management over important areas of the east Stour river floodplain and adjacent areas of neutral grassland covering an area of around 70 hectares. This project will establish a sub-regional Wetland Park over the coming decade. For further information email: [rob.hancock@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:rob.hancock@ashford.gov.uk)

The regions are well placed to join-up social, economic and environmental policies and take an integrated approach to creating genuinely sustainable communities. Across Whitehall, Government Departments are joining up policy-making in order to foster joined-up delivery at the regional level. For example, the Government's first National Community Safety Plan aims to spur new ways of working in Departments on a shared community safety vision, join-up a broad range of existing community safety activity and provide greater clarity to aid local delivery. The five themes of the NCSP reflect clear linkages between sustainable development and the creation of safer communities and vibrant local economies, with Government Offices playing a key part as the brokers between central Government policy on community safety and its effective delivery on the ground.<sup>16</sup>

## Regional sustainable development roundtables

One of the ways in which this partnership approach can be fostered within the region is through a Regional Sustainable Development Roundtable as a 'champion body'. These are voluntary bodies which bring together key stakeholders in the region to deliver common sustainable development outcomes. Each region already has partnership arrangements in place which could mirror a roundtable. The model varies from region to region. At present most are resourced by regional bodies, which are members of their round tables, including RDAs, Government Offices and Regional Assemblies.

### Regional Sustainable Development Roundtables

**London:** London is different from other English regions as it has its own directly elected Mayor with a statutory duty on sustainable development. In London the Mayor of London appoints the London Sustainable Development Commission (LSDC) to provide advice and promote sustainable development in the capital. Due to London's different governance arrangements, the LSDC has two specific roles to play:

- providing an independent London voice on matters that relate to sustainable development; and

<sup>16</sup> The NCSP, published in November 2005 with strong cross-Government support, represents a new approach to a shared community safety agenda with Departments and local delivery partners working much more closely together.

- promoting the integration of sustainable development into all strategic decision making in London and advising on the sustainable development dimensions of key London-wide strategies, policies and practice to the Mayor, the London Assembly, London bodies and the public.

**North East:** Historically the North East Assembly and the Government Office have been jointly responsible for co-ordination of Sustainable Development, the North East Partnership for Sustainable Development, but this has been with a limited budget and with no dedicated resource. The SDC review has prompted the RDA, Government Office and Assembly to jointly commission a review of how sustainable development is being implemented in the North East, particularly focusing on the roles of regional bodies with the aim of achieving additional resources for regional SD activity, leading to a stronger, more focussed roundtable.

**North West:** In conjunction with concordat partners, GONW is looking at existing SD structures within the region in the light of the SDC report. Active consideration is being given to some form of independent SD champion body but difficult issues, particularly funding and buy-in from private and voluntary sectors, remain and it may well be that another more partnership-based model emerges.

**Yorkshire & Humber:** The Yorkshire and Humber Assembly is currently looking at restructuring its existing Sustainability Commission into a more high level, strategic SD board set within the Assembly - not independent but 'independent-minded'.

**West Midlands:** An independent model is currently in place – Sustainability West Midlands. It is independent, and meets the criteria set out in the SDC report.

**South East:** No formal arrangements currently in place.

**East Midlands:** The East Midlands Promoting Sustainable Development Group is set within the RA - it is not independent but is chaired by a business representative and is action orientated. The Group has representation from key regional organisations, including the GO, RDA and RA, as well as public, private and voluntary sectors. Administrative and financial support is provided by the RA with individual projects supported financially or in kind by a wide range of regional partners.

**East:** An independent roundtable is already largely in place, but the current body recognises the need for a more formal status, and a more transparent and inclusive membership base, whilst maintaining its independence. It is currently working to address these issues.

**South West:** Sustainability South West is established as a charity and plays an independent sustainability champion role similar to that envisaged in the SDC's report.

The Government believes that voluntary regional sustainable development roundtables have an important role in delivering sustainable development in the regions. We welcome the SDC recommendation to strengthen the role of roundtables and feel that this is best served by clarifying the purposes of these bodies and the ways in which they can be supported.

Regional sustainable development roundtables should be appointed jointly by Government Offices, Regional Assemblies and Regional Development Agencies, who are best placed to identify the relevant stakeholders in their regions. The Sustainable Development Commission

set out a number of principles to underpin the roundtables or 'champion bodies'. We agree that principles such as these provide a useful guide for roundtables in their structure, membership and operation. However, we feel that the existing roundtables have benefited greatly by including Government Offices, Regional Development Agencies and Regional Assemblies in their membership. Only by engaging and involving these bodies can roundtables aim to influence major regional plans and decisions which impact on sustainable development. We feel that this inclusiveness need not be at odds with an effective role as a 'critical friend' to advise these same regional bodies on sustainable development issues and to constructively challenge regional plans or policies from a sustainable development perspective. Roundtables will therefore require the right skills and techniques to manage this relationship with regional bodies who are members of the roundtable but who are also supported through the roundtable's 'critical friend' role.

### Principles to underpin regional sustainable development roundtables

An effective regional sustainable development roundtable or champion body should be:

- a. Independent (providing an effective critical friend role to regional bodies and where appropriate constructively challenging regional policies or strategies from a sustainable development perspective).
- b. Inclusive (with wide cross-sectoral representation).
- c. Influential (as a result of its membership and actions).
- d. Capable of delivering campaigns, programmes and projects that exemplify sustainable development excellence.
- e. Well-networked (through partnerships within and beyond the region, including the SDC).
- f. Sustainable (run efficiently with resources secured from within the region to ensure stability and from outside the region where relevant opportunities arise).

Though regions will determine their own detailed objectives and terms of reference for the roundtables which fit regional circumstances, we believe that these roundtables share a common set of purposes.

### Common purposes for regional sustainable development roundtables

- Raising the profile of particular regional sustainable development issues based on sound regional evidence and data
- Identifying opportunities for joint projects or initiatives which, by acting as catalysts, would significantly improve regional performance on sustainable development and which could not be delivered by other existing mechanisms or single agencies working alone.
- Providing a well-managed 'critical friend' and 'constructive challenge' function in the region to further the achievement of sustainable development through relevant regional plans, policies and programmes

The 'critical friend' or 'challenge' role of the roundtable is distinct and different from the formal scrutiny role of Regional Assemblies. Many Regional Assemblies have discharged their formal scrutiny function in ways that help deliver sustainable development in the regions. This function of Regional Assemblies is therefore separate but complementary to a broader 'critical friend' role for the roundtables.

In many regions, existing regional bodies support the work of the regional sustainable development roundtables. The Government believes this increases ownership in the region and ensures close links are made between the work of the roundtable and the regional bodies and plans which have significant impacts on sustainable development outcomes.

We welcome the SDC's recommendation for stronger links to be made between the Commission and regional roundtables and look to the SDC to decide on how to take this forward in collaboration with the regions. Closer links will encourage sharing of best practice and experience and put the Commission in a stronger position to communicate regional messages on sustainable development to central Government. It will also enable regional roundtables to benefit from the Commission's experience of managing their advisory and 'critical friend' functions together.

- **The Government [Defra] recognises the role which roundtables can make and will therefore contribute to a targeted two year work programme (2006 to 2008) for each roundtable in line with the common purposes outlined above.**
- **As part of this work programme, we will support a number of workshops hosted in the regions which bring together stakeholders from relevant regional bodies, national organisations and Government Departments to explore innovative ways of addressing the most pressing issues facing the regions, in ways that help deliver sustainable development on the ground.**

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# Annex 1 – Summary of SDC Recommendations and the Government’s response

Issue	SDC Recommendation	Government Response
<b>Institutional Leadership</b>	<p><b>Recommendation 1</b></p> <p>All regional government institutions should develop a <u>proper accountability framework</u> as they set about embedding sustainable development, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying leadership and ownership of sustainable development at management board level, which is needed for driving forward strategy implementation and setting targets.</li> <li>Creating a well-defined business case explaining why sustainable development matters to the delivery of the organisation’s objectives, and creating and maintaining an effective strategy or delivering sustainable development.</li> <li>Developing a network of sustainable development champions, established at all levels of the organisation, to communicate and inspire delivery throughout the organisation.</li> <li>Defining sustainable development objectives and targets in all parts of the organisation – including policy delivery, human resources, estates/facilities management.</li> <li>Establishing clear indicators of successful delivery, which are properly monitored and reported on regularly.</li> </ol> <p><b>Recommendation 2</b></p> <p>As their contribution to the Government’s priorities for action on climate change and sustainable consumption and production, all RDAs and GOs should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sign up to the Carbon Trust’s <u>carbon management programme</u> to improve the energy performance of the regional government estate.</li> <li>Commit to signing up to the <u>national action plan for sustainable procurement</u> across the public sector, to be developed by the</li> </ol>	<p>In principle, we agree with this recommendation and our response sets out the similar steps we are taking to embed sustainable development in all that Government Offices do. The response also details the RDA accountability frameworks, which covers their contribution to delivering sustainable development . We will leave it to other regional bodies to determine how they will embed sustainable development throughout their own organisations in line with our response.</p> <p>Our response explains how Government Offices will be improving the performance of their operations to meet the challenging targets in the refreshed Framework for Sustainable Development on the Government’s Estate. This includes energy, carbon emissions, water and transport in its scope. As representatives</p>

Issue	SDC Recommendation	Government Response
	<p>Sustainable Procurement Task Force in 2006 (which will encompass social, environmental and economic sustainability issues).</p> <p>c. Sign up to the new <u>Framework for Sustainable Development on the Government Estate</u>, when it is published in 2006.</p> <p>d. Sign up to the UK Government commitment that <u>10% of all their vehicles will be low carbon by 2012</u>.</p> <p>e. Work with Government to join the commitment to <u>offset all carbon emissions from official air travel</u>.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 3</b> In view of the ongoing reviews by Government of RDA performance, we recommend that DTI in particular should re-examine the effectiveness of its current target-setting and performance appraisal processes for RDA's delivery of sustainable development.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 4</b> ODPM and Defra should clarify the role of the RAs in relation to sustainable development to ensure that sustainable development is <u>their primary purpose</u>. A key role for RAs should be to help motivate and stimulate activity on the sustainable development agenda at local authority level.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 5</b> The UK Government should ensure that the <u>'primary purpose'</u> of GOs is to deliver UK Government sustainable development policy through <i>all</i> their activities in the region. All sponsor departments should sign up to this new 'primary purpose'.</p>	<p>of central Government in the regions, GOs will also be part of the national sustainable procurement action plan. RDAs will also have a key role to play in implementing this action plan when it is published and are best placed to determine their own detailed arrangements for enhancing their existing performance on sustainable operations.</p> <p>The Government has revised and strengthened RDA accountability frameworks in a way that strengthens sustainable development as an underpinning principle. Defra will work in partnership with the RDAs to form an evidence based view of the aggregate contribution that RDAs are making to the delivery of the PSA on sustainable development; and we will continue to work with the RDAs to further improve RDA performance on sustainable development in line with the RDA accountability frameworks.</p> <p>We agree that Regional Assemblies have a key role in relation to sustainable development. During 2006 we will publish guidance to further clarify the role of Regional Assemblies in delivering sustainable development through all their functions and we will promote good practice across Regional Assemblies and their regions.</p> <p>The Government will work with Government Offices, through their new strategic role, to help ensure sustainable development more tightly underpins GO performance management, staff training and business planning systems.</p>

Issue	SDC Recommendation	Government Response
	<p><b>Recommendation 6</b> Regional Directors should be made responsible for delivering against this new primary purpose.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 7</b> a. GOs should be required to produce their own SDAPs, in collaboration with their regional partners, to drive forward delivery of <i>Securing the Future</i>. This should be done in line with the SDC’s SDAP guidance <i>Sustainable Development Action Plans – Getting Started</i>. b. Government Departments should ensure that, in the future, GOs fully contribute to the sponsor Department’s own SDAPs to ensure delivery of their commitments at the regional level.</p>	<p>We feel that this will help mainstream sustainable development across GOs and avoid creating separate documents which might ghettoise sustainable development or create additional burdens which divert resources from delivering the Sustainable Development Strategy. This is why we have chosen the ‘mainstreaming’ route rather than require a separate Sustainable Development Action Plan (SDAP) from each GO.</p> <p>We agree that Regional Directors have a key leadership role on sustainable development. Regional Directors have made their own clear commitment to sustainable development in this response. GOs will be able to report on the implementation of this commitment through their usual reporting mechanisms including business plans and annual reports.</p> <p>The Government will work with GOs, through their new strategic role, to help ensure sustainable development, as a principle, more tightly underpins GO performance management, GO training and business planning systems. We feel that this will help mainstream sustainable development across GOs and avoid creating separate documents which might ghettoise sustainable development or create additional burdens which divert resources from delivering the Sustainable Development Strategy. This is why we have chosen the ‘mainstreaming’ route rather than require a separate Sustainable</p>

Issue	SDC Recommendation	Government Response
	<p><b>Recommendation 8</b> The Cabinet Office should follow up its 2002 study of government policy and its impact on the regions, <i>Incorporating regional perspectives into policy-making</i>, with a wider review involving a range of regional stakeholders, including RAs, RDAs and local government bodies. The review needs to identify and resolve any conflicts at the regional level that undermine sustainable development. The objective of the review should be to identify solutions that enable a long term approach to the delivery of crosscutting objectives at the regional level.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 9</b> Working closely with the Sustainable Development Commission, the Regional Coordination Unit (RCU) should develop the skills and capacity required to monitor GOs and provide an overall assessment of performance across all the English regions. RCU should then:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Take these findings back to Government Departments to influence their funding allocations for regional programmes.</li> <li>b. Work with the GOs to reflect the learning from this overall assessment back to each region, highlighting good practice and learning from each GO's experiences.</li> </ol>	<p>Development Action Plan (SDAP) from each GO.</p> <p>We have also committed in our response to strengthen links between Departmental SDAPs and Government Offices and their performance measures.</p> <p>This Government response has set out how we will create an enabling framework within which regions can deliver sustainable development. This includes strengthened roles on sustainable development for regional bodies which help shape and inform the development of policy. In light of this we do not consider that repeating the 2002 Cabinet Office study would be warranted although there may be certain elements of this original report that could merit further communication/ promotion.</p> <p>Within Government, It is for individual Departments, in consultation with Defra and the RCU to assess the effectiveness of the GOs on the delivery of SD and any implications for their funding allocations. RCU will support this by working primarily through the GO performance management framework . RCU, along with GOs has committed to strengthen SD in their performance management framework. Business planning processes also offer opportunities. The resulting information about GO activities will help Departments and GOs themselves to continuously improve their delivery of sustainable development .</p>

Issue	SDC Recommendation	Government Response
<p><b>Regional Frameworks and Strategies</b></p>	<p><b>Recommendation 10</b>                      New Government guidance should be developed by the UK Government (including ODPM, Defra, and DTI) to assist regional bodies in integrating strategies. This guidance should cover all the main strategies, such as Integrated Regional Frameworks, Integrated Regional Strategies, and Regional Sustainable Development Frameworks. It should clarify the roles of the different bodies and documents. It should make clear that the overall purpose of strategy integration is to contribute to achieving the goal of sustainable development by ensuring that regional strategies take a long term, cross-cutting approach.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 11</b>                      Working with a cross-section of regional practitioners, the Sustainable Development Commission should, in 2006, provide specific guidance on how to develop a suite of sustainability appraisal tools to be used by all regional bodies and applied to all regional strategies. In some regions, the existing RSDF will form the basis for those appraisal tools; in other regions, the RSDF may prove to be unsuitable for that purpose.</p>	<p>This Government response provides further clarification and guidance for RSDFs or their equivalent (IRs, IRFs) through the updating of these documents in line with the UK Sustainable Development Strategy and the 'essential ingredients'. SD should be at the heart of the region's high level strategies providing a long-term cross-cutting vision for the region.</p> <p>We support the development of further guidance on sustainability appraisal tools. However we consider sustainability appraisal to be distinct from the overarching front-end function of an RSDF, which sets the vision for SD in the region, as opposed to the more technical back-end process of SD appraisal of regional strategies.</p>
<p><b>The Role of Mayor Bodies: coordination and integration</b></p>	<p><b>Recommendation 12</b>                      All regional bodies should make use of voluntary agreements to facilitate joint working. These have been found to be highly effective if clearly structured and partnered.</p>	<p>We accept this recommendation in principle and we encourage regional bodies to put in place voluntary agreements which co-ordinate roles, responsibilities and actions to deliver sustainable development. We consider the detailed implementation of this to be a matter for the individual regions.</p>

Issue	SDC Recommendation	Government Response
<p><b>Regional Sustainable Development Rondtables</b></p>	<p><b>Recommendation 13</b> GOs and RAs should be jointly responsible for coordinating the development of a sustainable development Champion body for each region. The new bodies will be responsible for advising on and critiquing the performance of regional institutions in delivering sustainable development. Each should comply with the characteristics defined below.</p> <p>Working with key stakeholders in the region, including RDAs, we recommend that the GOs and RAs should either redefine the remit of the existing roundtable or create a new Champion body. Proposals for development of the new bodies should be made within six months of the publication of this Review.</p> <p>It is critical that proper resources are identified to enable these bodies to work properly, and that these resources should be secured from regional sources. This should not require new resources, but a reallocation of existing resources in each region.</p> <p>An effective Champion should be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Independent (by acting as the 'critical friend' to the RDA, the Ra and the GO).</li> <li>Inclusive (with wide cross-sectoral representation).</li> <li>Influential (as a result of its membership and actions).</li> <li>Capable of delivering campaigns, programmes and projects that exemplify sustainable development excellence.</li> <li>Well-networked (through partnerships within and beyond the region, including the SDC).</li> <li>Sustainable (with a core professional team, resourced through secure funding by regional partners to ensure stability).</li> </ol> <p><b>Recommendation 14</b> The Champion bodies should monitor and scrutinise regional sustainable development performance and identify areas of weakness that need strengthening. This should include an assessment of GO's performance against their SDAPs.</p>	<p>We welcome the SDC recommendation to strengthen the regional roundtables on SD. However we think it important to do this in a way that complements the varying circumstances in the regions. We believe the roundtables should be appointed jointly by the GOs, RDAs and RAs and that the roundtable should work closely with these bodies whose decisions and actions have significant impacts on sustainable development goals. We have set out the common purposes and principles that will strengthen the role of the roundtables. We have also made a commitment to support the roundtables in delivering a two year work programme in line with these common purposes.</p> <p>We believe that the roundtables have an important 'critical friend' role in the regions on sustainable development. This needs to be carried out in a way that allows for inclusiveness of stakeholders on the regional roundtables. It is up to regions to decide how best this can be achieved without compromising the partnership arrangements that underpin them.</p>

Issue	SDC Recommendation	Government Response
	<p><b>Recommendation 15</b></p> <p>With the creation of the new Champion bodies, the SDC will initiate the creation of a network of Champion bodies which would include a twice-yearly meeting between the Chairs of Champion bodies and relevant SDC Commissioners, and appropriate arrangements between the secretariats. These meetings will focus on developing solutions to problems of mutual concern. The SDC will facilitate the exchange of information on good practice on the basis of experience across the whole of the UK, and will gather evidence from the regional Champion bodies of good practice in the regions.</p>	<p>We support stronger links between the SDC and the regions (in line with our view of regional roundtables above). We also support the SDC facilitating the exchange of information and good practice across regions.</p>
<p><b>Indicators, monitoring and scrutiny</b></p>	<p><b>Recommendation 16</b></p> <p>We encourage the use of regional sustainable development indicators and national strategy indicators. Regions should agree at the outset the purpose of the indicators, how they will be measured and assessed, how they will respond to negative trends, and the reporting arrangements. Based on these indicators, Regional Observatories, in conjunction with the Office of National Statistics, should produce an annual 'state of the region' report in order to provide an overview of regional progress towards sustainable development. Monitoring and evaluation must be focussed on outcomes.</p>	<p>We agree with this recommendation and the use of indicators to inform regional policies and programmes. Our response clarifies and supports the role that trend-based 'state of the region' indicators and reports can play in determining regional strategies which deliver sustainable development and helping regions to respond to any negative trends.</p>

# Annex 2 – Summary of Table of Government Commitments

Chapter	Commitment	Lead Department
Delivering sustainable development through regional strategies	The Government will invite regions to report by the end of September 2006 on how their own regions' high-level strategy arrangements are taking account of these "essential ingredients". (pg 18)	Defra / ODPM
	By December 2007 all regions should have refreshed or updated their high level strategy / strategies to take into account these essential ingredients and the UK Sustainable Development Strategy itself. (pg 18)	Defra / ODPM
	The UK Structural Funds National Strategic Reference Framework will include environmental sustainability as a cross-cutting theme. This will ensure that all future UK structural fund programmes (2007 – 2013) include integrated strategies for addressing environmental concerns and respecting the principles of sustainable development. (pg 23)	Defra / DTI
Government Offices	The Government will further strengthen the role of Government Offices by ensuring that sustainable development principles are embedded in Government Office business planning, workforce development and performance management systems. (pg 24)	Defra, RCU and GOs
	Regional Directors, as leaders of Government Offices for the English Regions are committed to ensuring that Government policies and programmes are delivered in regions and localities in a way, which secures sustainable development. In our Government Offices we will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Lead by example, to ensure that sustainable development principles are embedded in the way we work across all our businesses as well as in partnership with others.</li> </ul>	Regional Directors of Government Offices

Chapter	Commitment	Lead Department
	<p>■ Make this a reality by making sustainable development one of our key challenges but one which is central to our new more strategic purpose indicated in the emerging Government Office Review. (pg 25)</p> <p>When reviewing or updating Government Office performance measures, sponsor Departments will seek to ensure that these measures reflect the Government Office contribution to delivering their Department's Sustainable Development Action Plan and the Government's Sustainable Development Strategy more widely. (pg 28)</p> <p>When sponsor Department's update or review their Sustainable Development Action Plans, they will consider the Government Office role in delivering sustainable development. (pg 28)</p> <p>Defra will work with other departments, Government Offices and the RCU to identify the work covered under all Departmental PSAs within the Government Office performance framework, which are relevant to Government priorities for sustainable development. (pg 29)</p> <p>We will introduce mechanisms in the performance management framework to enable tailored reports on Government Office sustainable development activities to be prepared which will demonstrate the contribution that teams across each Government Office make to the Government's sustainable development objectives. (pg 29)</p> <p>RCU will include sustainable development within the range of peer review questions during 2006 - 2007. (pg 29)</p> <p>Government Offices and the Regional Coordination Unit will, in partnership with Defra, ensure all Government Office staff have access to information or training which increases understanding about sustainable development issues in Government Offices. (pg 29)</p> <p>We will encourage the sharing of best practice and Government Office success stories (for example, through the use of 'champion' schemes) to help spread knowledge of sustainable development principles across the Government Office network. (pg 30)]</p>	<p>All sponsor Departments</p> <p>All sponsor Departments</p> <p>Defra / RCU / GOs</p> <p>Defra / RCU</p> <p>RCU</p> <p>Government Offices &amp; RCU</p> <p>Defra/ RCU/ GOs</p>

Chapter	Commitment	Lead Department
	Alongside Government Departments, Government Offices will seek to improve the way they manage their land and buildings sustainably and in doing this set an example for the rest of the public sector and business (pg 31)	Government Offices / RCU / ODPM
Regional Assemblies	During 2006 ODPM and Defra will jointly publish guidance to Regional Assemblies which supports and clarifies their role in helping to deliver sustainable development through their different functions. (pg 35)	ODPM / Defra
Regional Development Agencies	We will help RDAs publicise further case studies, which illustrate how RDAs can deliver economic prosperity in a way which also delivers sustainable development. (pg 39)  The review of SPAG will commence in April 2006, with target completion for the final guidance by Autumn 2006. (pg 46)	Defra / RDAs  DTI / Defra
Joining-it up within and across the regions	The Government will continue to encourage a joined-up approach to sustainable communities which embody the principles of sustainable development through working in partnership at a city-regional scale. (pg 48)  We will work with these initiatives to ensure that sustainable development thinking continues to influence their developing proposals and delivery. (pg 49)  The Government [Defra] recognises the role which roundtables can make and will therefore contribute to a targeted two year work programme (2006 to 2008) for each roundtable in line with the common purposes outlined above. (pg 53)  As part of this work programme, we will support a number of workshops hosted in the regions which bring together stakeholders from relevant regional bodies, national organisations and Government Departments to explore innovative ways of addressing the most pressing issues facing the regions, in ways that help deliver sustainable development on the ground. (pg 53)	ODPM  ODPM  Defra  Defra

