

# COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN 2007-08



In March 2005 the Government published *Securing the Future*, setting out the UK Government's sustainable development strategy. *Securing the Future* required all central government departments and their executive agencies to produce a sustainable development action plan (SDAP). In March 2006, Communities and Local Government (CLG)'s predecessor department, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), published its SDAP for 2006-07. In July 2007, CLG published a report setting out progress under the ODPM SDAP3.

This document is the first SDAP published by CLG. Its purpose is to look forward. In preparing it, the Department has built on the foundations set in the 2006 SDAP and has learned from the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) review of SDAPs.

Formally, this SDAP covers 2007-08. However, recognising that we are already some months into the financial year, CLG has looked beyond the current year and has set out the SDAP in such a way that, in future years, it can be updated as a living document rather than written completely afresh. A summary of this SDAP will be prepared in a form readily accessible to staff and other interested stakeholders.

## SECURING THE FUTURE

*Securing the Future* sets out the goal of sustainable development as enabling all people around the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life without compromising the quality of life of future generations. It sets out five guiding principles which should form the basis for policy and four shared priorities for immediate action.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### Living within environmental limits

Respecting the limits of the planet's environment, resources and biodiversity – to improve the environment and ensure that the natural resources needed for life are unimpaired and remain so for future generations.

### Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society

Meeting the diverse needs of all people in existing and future communities, promoting personal wellbeing, social cohesion and inclusion, and creating equal opportunity for all.

### Achieving a sustainable economy

Building a strong, stable and sustainable economy which provides prosperity and opportunities for all, and in which costs fall on those who disobey environmental and social regulations (polluter pays), and efficient resource use is incentivised.

### Using sound science responsibly

Ensuring policy is developed and implemented on the basis of strong scientific evidence, whilst taking into account scientific uncertainty (through the precautionary principle) as well as public attitudes and values.

### Promoting good governance

Actively promoting effective, participative systems of governance in all levels of society – engaging people's creativity, energy and diversity.

## SHARED PRIORITIES

### Sustainable consumption and production

Sustainable consumption and production is about achieving more with less – reducing the inefficient use of resources and breaking the link between economic growth and environmental degradation.

### Climate change and energy

To secure a profound change in the way energy is generated and used and in other activities that release greenhouse gases. To prepare for climate change that cannot now be avoided and to set a good example for others to follow.

### Natural resource protection and environmental enhancement

A better understanding of environmental limits, environmental enhancement and recovery is needed where the environment is most degraded, to ensure a decent environment for everyone.



**Sustainable communities**

To create sustainable communities that embody the principles of sustainable development at the local level. Working to give communities more power and say in the decisions that affect them; and working in partnership at the right level to get things done.

*Sustainable communities should be:*

- active, inclusive and safe
- well run
- environmentally sensitive
- well designed and built
- well connected
- thriving
- well served
- fair for everyone

**KEY CONTRIBUTIONS TO SECURING THE FUTURE**

- creating sustainable communities that embody the principles of sustainable development at the local level
- providing homes for all, while protecting and enhancing the environment
- working to give communities more power and say in the decisions that affect them; and working to improve governance at all levels so that CLG can work at the right level to get things done

- creating a cleaner, safer, greener agenda: to make public spaces cleaner, safer and greener and to improve the quality of the built environment in deprived areas and across the country by 2008
- promoting sustainable, high-quality design and construction, to reduce waste and improve resource efficiency; and promoting more sustainable buildings
- putting sustainable development at the heart of the planning system, as set out in Planning Policy Statement 1 'Delivering Sustainable Development'
- increasing voluntary and community engagement, especially amongst those at risk of social exclusion
- reducing race inequalities and building community cohesion

The above contributions are underpinned by a series of detailed commitments. Those still relevant to CLG are reflected in this SDAP.

As set out in the Progress Report on the 2006-07 SDAP, there is still some way to go. In particular, CLG recognises that it needs to do more to embed sustainable development thinking at all levels of the organisation, so that it becomes second nature to reflect the guiding principles of sustainable development in its policies. It remains as important as ever to lead by example in the way that the Department conducts its own operations. Real strides have been made on some aspects of the Department's estate – it is among the leaders in Whitehall on water and waste – but meeting the targets for carbon

emissions and energy efficiency from CLG's office estate remains a significant challenge.

*The Department has much to gain from taking a sustainable development approach to its work, in particular:*

- exploiting synergies across a range of policies
- gaining buy-in to policies by developing them with stakeholders and building in sustainable development principles from the outset
- reinforcing internal transformation programmes
- helping CLG to recruit, develop, motivate and harness the creativity of its people
- saving money from more efficient resource use on its estate

The risks to work of not taking a sustainable development approach are the converse of the above. In the longer term, problems will be created for current work if policies and programmes are not built on sustainable development principles. For example, the new communities that are being created today must not become the regeneration areas of tomorrow.

## OPERATIONS AND PROCUREMENT

### Operations

The success of the Department in delivering the sustainable operations targets is crucial both in contributing to central government's commitment made in *Securing the Future* to lead by example, and to maintaining credibility of the Department's own policies, such as the zero carbon homes agenda and the introduction of Energy Performance Certificates.

In 2007-08, CLG will build upon the considerable progress to date in the specific areas of waste and recycling, sustainable travel and water conservation. The Department will also be seeking to consolidate efforts to widen the coverage of the sustainable operations targets to selected Non Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs), including Housing Corporations. Indeed, three of CLG's more significant NDPBs have contributed to the *2007 Sustainable Operations on the Government Estate (SOGE)* questionnaire. The main focus in 2008 will be to establish accurate baselines, primarily for the newly included NDPBs, against which performance can be measured and improved. Re-baselining of the Department's total figures will then be required to incorporate this new data.

CLG's main priority, however, is to reduce levels of carbon emissions from its office estate, which remain seven per cent above base levels, as well as from its non-office estate. Work is under way to develop a structured programme to deliver the 2010-11 and 2020 targets.

Opportunities identified will be subject to detailed assessment in terms of cost, payback and carbon savings, and a phased approach towards budgetary allocation will be sought. The high-performing property (HPP) asset management agenda will also be significant for the CLG estate, creating a range of new opportunities. This will strongly influence the overall approach and necessitate continuous assessment of the Department's strategy in light of these developments.

At this time, and until planned changes to the CLG estate are finalised, it is not possible to determine whether the 2010-11 deadline can be fully met; however, the Department is fully committed to delivering its reduced carbon emissions targets.

The HPP agenda will significantly contribute towards the Department's goal of reducing carbon emissions but, in some respects, may actually make it more difficult to meet the energy efficiency target. Reducing the number of buildings occupied will reduce overall emissions but will decrease reported energy efficiency (which is reported in kWh/m<sup>2</sup> and takes no account of number of building occupants per square metre).

The Department considers that delivering absolute carbon reductions should take priority over meeting the energy efficiency target.

It is intended that the sustainable operations team will be strengthened in 2008 and so help drive forward objectives towards delivering the SOGE targets. CLG will also be publishing its new *Sustainable Operations Policy* document, available to all staff, which clearly sets out aims and objectives and what is expected of staff and contractors working on the CLG estate.

### Procurement

The Government has published its Sustainable Procurement Action Plan, setting out what departments and their agencies will do towards realising the Government's objective that the UK public sector should be an EU leader on sustainable procurement by 2009. Although CLG

has a smaller procurement bill than some other departments, it is nonetheless important for it to follow through on the Sustainable Procurement Action Plan. In particular, credibility in this area is vital to its work with local government (whose procurement is some £40 billion a year) to implement its own strategy on sustainable procurement.

The Department can also use procurement as a tool towards meeting its sustainable operations targets and to furthering its social and economic objectives, such as stimulating third sector activity and the participation of disadvantaged groups in the economy.

*Key actions in 2007-08 will be to:*

- communicate the Department's Sustainable Procurement Strategy so that the importance of sustainable procurement is better recognised by senior management and officials who commission procurement
- establish a foundation for the implementation of sustainable procurement by achieving Level 1 of the Flexible Framework, with a view towards achieving Level 3 in subsequent years
- deliver a sustainable procurement solution for departmental staff travel
- deliver a sustainable procurement solution for procuring stationery and mobile telephony
- implement the mandatory adoption of sustainable procurement solutions for Quick Wins 2007-08
- promote the adoption of sustainable procurement across the Department's wider family by stakeholder engagement and the provision of associated training

## RELEVANT CONTACTS

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