



Office of the
Deputy Prime Minister

Creating sustainable communities

Government Response to

The Egan Review
**SKILLS FOR
SUSTAINABLE
COMMUNITIES**



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Printed in Great Britain on material containing 75% post-consumer waste and 25% ECF pulp.

August 2004

Product code: 04 SCDD 02512

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Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: London
August 2004

INTRODUCTION

In April 2003, Sir John Egan was asked by the Deputy Prime Minister to review the skills and training required to deliver sustainable communities. Sir John's formal report, *Skills for Sustainable Communities*, was published on 19th April 2004.

Sir John's approach involved clarifying what is meant by the term 'sustainable community'; establishing responsibilities for delivery of sustainable communities and effective delivery processes; and identifying the skills needed to make the processes work effectively. The final phase of the work involved identifying how best to bridge the gap between our current skills base and the skills we want.

The report contained 24 recommendations, including a key proposal to establish a new National Centre for Sustainable Community Skills. At the report's launch the Deputy Prime Minister announced that he would be taking this recommendation forward. A Task Group was set up to advise on the Centre's form, function and organisational structure. This work is already under way.

This document contains the Government's full response to all 24 recommendations of the Egan Review. It sets out how each of Sir John's ideas will be taken forward and the time scales for action.

THE COMMON GOAL: DEFINING AND MEASURING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Egan Recommendation

- 1 We recommend that Government, local authorities and other stakeholders (built environment professionals, public service providers, developers and community organisations) adopt the common goal and a common understanding of what the term 'sustainable community' means. Our definition and seven components constitute a model that others may wish to use. It may need to be supplemented to reflect local priorities and the views of local people.**

The Government's Response

We support the need for a broader understanding of the term 'sustainable communities' that takes account of the latest research and developments in thinking, as well as public opinion. We welcome Sir John's definition and components as helpful contributions to this debate.

ODPM is actively working with government departments, the LGA and other partners to develop further Sir John's model, so that by September 2004 we have a broadly agreed definition and components that can be used by everyone engaged in delivery of sustainable communities.

We are also considering the links between sustainable communities and sustainable development via a Ministerial sub group of the Central Local Partnership.

Egan Recommendation

- 2 We recommend that by the end of 2005, local authorities should:**
 - **incorporate in their Sustainable Community Strategies a process through which they and their partners will select the indicators listed in the report that are most relevant to the needs of their communities;**
 - **identify mechanisms for establishing baselines and regularly tracking progress towards achieving sustainability with the longer term aim of tracking all of the indicators; and**
 - **make provision for taking action to address poor performance where it occurs.****Feedback to local people should be an essential part of this process.**

The Government's Response

We fully support the principle of identifying local priorities for action to deliver sustainable communities, setting locally agreed targets for improvement, and monitoring and reporting on progress towards delivery. Many local authorities already adopt this approach and we will encourage all local authorities to do likewise.

We believe that local authorities should work with their partners to set local targets for their area, and should select the indicators they consider most appropriate to monitor progress. Indicators can be drawn from the Egan list but we would not want to preclude selection of others if these better reflect local circumstances. Whichever indicators are selected, they should, as far as possible, dovetail with existing monitoring regimes, to minimise additional burdens.

We will ensure that the Comprehensive Performance Assessment regime in future takes account of the degree to which local authorities are delivering sustainable communities, including their performance against their own locally selected targets.

We will include additional advice on the definition of sustainable communities, and local target setting and monitoring, in revised guidance on Communities Strategies (see Recommendation 7).

Egan Recommendation

- 3 We recommend that Government works with the Sustainable Buildings Task Group to develop further our proposal for a sustainable communities code/benchmarking, that will give clear information about the environmental and quality standards that sustainable communities should achieve, and how these translate into practical building standards. Government should also look at ways of incentivising progress, with the longer term aim of meeting developments that achieve carbon emissions and waste minimisation standards consistent with a sustainable one planet level within, say eight years.**

The Government's Response

The Sustainable Buildings Task Force also called for a single national Code for Sustainable Building in its report 'Better buildings – better lives' published in May 2004. It recommends adoption of clearly specified minimum standards in key resource efficiency (energy and water efficiency, waste and use of materials).

Government responded to the SBTG report in July 2004, and announced that a project group would be set up to help develop the Code. The group will work closely with local authorities and developers to ensure that demonstration schemes are established in the Thames Gateway and elsewhere. Part of the demonstration process will be to carry out a full regulatory impact assessment and economic assessment. The code should be completed by the end of 2005, with action on a national roll out by early 2006.

Egan Recommendation

- 4 Design standards and guidelines for very significant developments should also be addressed. We want to halt single use of land for industrial, commercial, housing, retail and leisure development without full consideration of mixed-use alternatives.**

The Government's Response

We agree that high quality design standards are essential to deliver high quality development.

Through the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, we now require applications for planning permission to be accompanied by a statement about the design principles and concepts that have been applied to a development. ODPM will consult in September 2004 on the precise requirements to be set out in regulations.

We sponsor the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment to promote high quality design and best practice. Recent design initiatives include:

- Establishment of new **design coding pilot projects** to develop understanding of how design coding can be applied to major new developments;
- Establishing a **Growth Areas Housing Quality Forum** to disseminate best practice within the housing growth areas;
- Working closely with each of the **Market Renewal Pathfinders** on a range of design issues;
- Promoting the new **Building for Life** award to recognise volume developments that meet high design standards; and
- Provision of a **Design Review** and enabling service.

We already promote mixed use of sites through existing planning guidance, and will continue to reinforce this approach through revisions of Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 1, PPG3, PPG4 and PPG6. In addition, the ODPM Property Consultative Group is examining issues surrounding joint commercial and residential development, and will report to ODPM Ministers around the end of March 2005.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROCESSES FOR DELIVERY

- 5 Egan Recommendation**
- We recommend that local authorities should have the lead role for co-ordinating and orchestrating delivery of sustainable communities, through bringing together service providers and other key players with the local community. They should regard this role as their principal purpose. However, they must earn the confidence placed in them to deliver through effective management of their functions. Successful authorities which improve the sustainability of their communities year on year should be rewarded with enhanced financial delegations from central government.**

The Government's Response

We support Sir John's view that local authorities are best placed to lead on co-ordination and orchestration of delivery of sustainable communities at local level, and that they should do so by working with service deliverers, national and regional government, the local community and other key players. Local Strategic Partnerships should be the key mechanism through which these partners engage.

To deliver effectively, individual local authorities will need to work closely with regional bodies (including future regional assemblies, regional chambers, Regional Housing Boards etc) as well as with neighbouring authorities to address issues that cross local authority boundaries. Preparation and implementation of regional and sub-regional level strategies should provide the mechanism for co-ordinated action.

We will encourage local authorities that are successful in improving the sustainability of their areas to share best practice with others, and will consider, with partners, including this theme in a future round of the Beacon Scheme. This will also provide a mechanism to reward authorities that are successfully implementing the Sustainable Communities agenda.

The Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) regime will in future take account of the degree to which councils are delivering sustainable communities. High performing authorities will be rewarded with enhanced financial freedoms and flexibility. In addition, our proposal for Local Area Agreements should allow more flexible use of resources at local level to achieve shared outcomes.

- 6 Egan Recommendation**
We recommend that the Government places a clear responsibility on all relevant public services, including central government departments, to support, contribute to, and promote sustainable communities.

The Government's Response

As part of the Spending Review process for 2004, all government departments were asked to consider the economic, social and environmental implications of policy priorities and objectives, and to integrate these into their spending programmes and policies (Stability, security and opportunity for all: Investing for Britain's long term future, HM Treasury, July 2004, page 52). This should contribute to more sustainable policy making.

We are also using central department's targets – Public Service Agreements – to show how departments will work together to deliver on cross government agendas. For example, ODPM's recently agreed liveability PSA is cross-referenced to the Home Office liveability PSA. The associated delivery plans draw in contributions from other departments, and joint progress will be managed through an Inter Departmental Ministerial Group on Public Space.

We will also ensure that the benefits of cross departmental working on major projects such as Thames Gateway and the low demand Pathfinders are captured to provide good practice models.

- 7 Egan Recommendation**
We invite central and local government to work together to reshape Community Strategies so that they become more sharply focused Sustainable Community Strategies through which a vision is developed, set, and operationalised, and development opportunities are captured to help secure delivery of the vision. Infrastructure requirements to create sustainable communities should be identified together with their costs and benefits.

The Government's Response

We will discuss with partners (including the LGA) the scope for reshaping Community Strategies along the lines proposed by Sir John. An initial meeting to discuss the way forward will be held in Summer 2004. The revision process will also take account of the need to embed the core principles of sustainable development in any revised Community Strategies.

Egan Recommendation

- 8** In implementing the new system, we believe that the Government should take the opportunity to make it clear that the Local Development Frameworks, informed by the Sustainable Community Strategy, should be key delivery mechanisms for creating sustainable communities. We think it is important to recognise that the planning system is essential to the delivery of sustainable communities and it must be reconnected with the central leadership and vision of a local authority.

The Government's Response

We fully support this recommendation. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires Local Planning Authorities to have regard to Community Strategies when preparing local development documents. We expect local authorities to work corporately and share resources in the preparation of Community Strategies and Local Development Frameworks so that there is conformity between the two. We will make this clear in the proposed Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 12, the final version of which will be published for the commencement of Part 2 of the Act planned for September 2004.

In testing whether a local development plan document or regional strategy is sound (in accordance with the new Act) Planning Inspectors will take into account whether the plans will contribute to sustainable development and to the creation of sustainable communities. This will be made clear in work currently being done by the Planning Inspectorate to provide an agreed and common approach to the assessment of soundness.

Egan Recommendation

- 9** We recommend that the Government and local authorities take forward proposals to develop and promote an effective system of pre application discussions for very significant development projects. Swift planning approval should follow where the eventual development proposals fully support the vision.

The Government's Response

Our commitment to pre application discussions is already reflected in the draft revision of PPS1 and the accompanying policy paper on Community Involvement in Planning, published in Feb 2004. The Planning Advisory Service, and in the longer term, the National Centre for Sustainable Community Skills, will work together to ensure that the skills exist to work effectively with communities and other partners in pre-application discussions.

We also propose to look at other ways of promoting pre-application discussions – for example through guidance on new standard application forms for planning permission and consents, and through process re-engineering (see response 10). We plan to consult in summer 2004 on the possibility of extending the current fees regime to include aspects of planning application work currently not covered, and this may include provision to recoup through charges the costs of some pre-application consultation. The new Best Value Performance Indicator on the quality of planning services (BV205) is also relevant to this recommendation.

Egan Recommendation

- 10 We consider that planning processes can be improved and clarified for all participants and we recommend that in each local planning authority, processes for dealing with planning applications should be subject to basic process mapping and re-engineering. This should take account of the developer's perspective as well as that of the local planning authority.**

The Government's Response

We strongly support the use of process mapping and re-engineering to improve planning processes, and will encourage all local authorities to apply it to their planning activities. We will provide advice and support for this through the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) which starts work in October 2004. In addition, the e-Planning Programme (being developed by ODPM, IDeA, e-local government and local planning authorities) will develop tools to facilitate more efficient processes, including e-tools and service standards.

The Planning Inspectorate is applying process re-engineering to its own activities, and will also investigate ways in which service delivery for handling household appeals can be improved.

Egan Recommendation

- 11 We recommend the Government works with partners to undertake a review of existing planning targets, with the aim of producing a system that reflects the Government's commitment to high quality and timely decision making for all types of applications. We propose that the Government should examine the scope for using a combination of national and local targets. Any new targets should reflect the outcomes of planning process re-engineering.**

As part of the 2004 Spending Review, a new PSA6 target was published which covers outcomes as well as the efficiency of the planning processes. This states that *“the planning system should deliver sustainable development outcomes at national, regional and local levels through efficient and high quality planning and development management processes, including through achievement of Best Value standards for planning by 2008”*. This target will come into effect in April 2005. In the meantime we are preparing a supporting Technical Note on indicators and measurements which will continue to build on quality **and** timeliness as key components of an effective planning system. We will consult with relevant stakeholders on proposals.

Egan Recommendation

- 12 We believe that the Government and the Local Government Association should work together to address issues of propriety surrounding members involvement in preplanning and planning brief discussions. We wish to see advice for local authorities issued by the end of 2004.**

We will work with the LGA and Standards Board to take forward this recommendation.

There is existing good guidance in *Probity in Planning: the role of councillors and officers* (LGA 2002) which covers pre-application discussions and the role of members generally. This might be expanded specifically to cover the role of members in such discussions.

Egan Recommendation

- 13** We firmly believe that attempting to upskill professionals in isolation will not produce the outcomes we are seeking. Instead success will lie in changing the behaviour, attitudes and knowledge of everyone involved, many of whom may not have realised in the past that they had anything to do with each other, or with sustainable communities. We want to see planners interacting with tenant associations, highways engineers teaming up with urban designers, and central government officials who plan hospitals and schools working with those who will be maintaining the surrounding streets and buildings in ten years time. There is no quick fix – sustainable communities are a holistic long-term objective requiring a holistic approach to skills to deliver the outcome we are seeking.

The Government's Response

We fully support this recommendation, and will promote cross-sectoral working through the new National Centre for Sustainable Community Skills.

In the meantime:

- ODPM has established a high level leadership network for front line sustainable communities delivery bodies. Its purpose is to encourage practitioners to work together, exchange knowledge and ideas, and establish mutual support. The network was launched in mid July.

Egan Recommendation

Encouraging entrants into core occupations

- 14 We recommend that the Government should work with professional institutions, local authorities, education institutions, Sector Skills Councils and Regional Centres of Excellence to develop professional campaigns that will raise the profile of core occupations and understanding of their role in sustainable communities and in turn encourage entrants into these occupations.**

The Government's Response

The National Centre will take forward this recommendation. In the meantime:

- Several Regional Centres of Excellence (RENEW; RegenWM; NorthEast) are actively working with universities to encourage students into built environment occupations.
- We have launched a national post graduate bursary scheme for planners. The programme will support 144 students per annum on 'fast track' one year planning courses. It will begin in autumn 2004 and will run initially for two academic years.
- We are supporting creation of a Master's level distance learning course in spatial planning.
- We will continue to promote the Tomorrow's Planners Initiative to attract more BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) applicants into planning profession. CABE is carrying out research into BME representation in undergraduate training and in professional roles, identifying barriers to entry and progression, and is soon to launch a campaign to promote urban design as a career choice for BME students.
- English Partnerships is developing a graduate training programme to encourage entrants into the regeneration sector. CABE provides an internee programme.
- CABE Skills 'Grow from the Roots', programme provides learning for unqualified residents of housing projects as an entry into the housing profession. This is run in collaboration with the Housing Corporation and the Chartered Institute of Housing.

- CABE Education is working with teachers to engage young people with the built environment and use it as a learning tool. Career First funded through CABE and others, encourages young people into built environment professions.
- Students at GCSE level will have option of pursuing a specialist module in planning as part of geography within the Specialist Schools Programme.

Egan Recommendation

Gateway education

- 15 We recommend that Government should work with education providers, professional institutions, employers, Sector Skills Councils and Regional Centres of Excellence to ensure that an introduction to the generic skills forms part of existing formal training courses for built environment professions; and that cross-sector working is introduced at an early stage. Inclusion of training in generic skills should be a requirement for accreditation purposes. We recognise that this is already the case with some professional training, but want to see this approach more widely adopted.**

The Government's Response

The National Centre will take forward this recommendation and will work with the bodies identified to ensure inclusion of generic skills training in formal education programmes.

Egan Recommendation

Professional development

- 16 We recommend that:**
- **Employers of people working in core occupations commit to developing and implementing measures that deliver comprehensive and continual on the job training opportunities to develop competencies in generic skills for sustainable communities;**
 - **Employers should make CPD training in generic skills compulsory for staff working in core occupations rather than an optional extra; and**
 - **Where CPD is accredited by professional institutions we recommend that employers work with those institutions to consider how best to accredit on the job training in generic skills and interdisciplinary working.**

The Government's Response

The National Centre will take forward this recommendation and will work with employers and professional institutions to develop the generic skills component of Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

In the meantime:

- We are developing skills and capacity of the local authority workforce through the Pay and Workforce Strategy for Local Government, and the ODPM/LGA Joint Capacity Building Programme. These promote development of skills across the corporate centre of authorities, specific services, management and frontline services. In implementing the Strategy and Programme, we will take on board the Egan Review recommendations on generic skills development in core occupations.
- One of the key priorities of the Strategy, and subsequently of the Egan Review, is developing the leadership capacity of councils. Our proposal for a Local Government Leadership Centre, which was launched in July 2004, will assist in improving the leadership skills of officers and members. The National Centre and the Leadership Centre will need to work closely together.
- Many RCEs are providing networking opportunities at a local level to promote cross occupational learning among professionals.
- CABE Skills provides a range of CPD opportunities on urban design and related issues and has targeted: house builders; highways and transportation engineers; local authority planning committees; local authority officers; RDA staff; investors and those that advise them. This coming year will see new programmes for Chief Executives and other senior built environment professionals in leadership as it relates to design issues.
- The Home Office is implementing a learning and development programme for civil servants and voluntary and community sector workers on community engagement and partnership working.

Egan Recommendation

Continuous development and review

- 17 We recommend that employers of those in core occupations (local authorities, government, private sector consultancies and developers etc) should work with the key professional institutions, Sector Skills Councils, and other skills bodies to develop occupational benchmarks for core occupations (or enhance existing benchmarks where these exist) that reflect their sustainable communities role. The feasibility of an on-line benchmarking and assessment tool should be considered.**

The Government's Response

The National Centre will work with other skills bodies to take forward this recommendation.

Egan Recommendation

Skills management for associated occupations and the wider public

- 18 We recommend that organisations with responsibilities for training those who work in associated occupations review their training programmes to ensure these include both the generic skills and an appreciation of sustainable communities. Joint project working with others from core and associated groups will increase cross-occupational understanding and allow good practice to be shared. Ideally, Regional Centres of Excellence should have a role in brokering such projects.**

The Government's Response

The National Centre will work with partners to take forward this recommendation.

In the meantime:

- The Home Office is leading an action research programme during 2004-6 to identify effective educational routes for a wide range of learners, particularly those who might be wary of more conventional approaches.
- In autumn 2004, the Home Office will publish the conclusions of the review of Government support for community capacity building, and the consultation on its findings, in order to provide an agreed cross-Government framework for more effective capacity building provision for both citizens and communities.

Egan Recommendation

- 19 We consider that access to information about sustainable communities needs to be made available to a wide audience to enable them to contribute to delivering such communities. We recommend that a high quality on-line tool should be available. We further recommend that Regional Centres of Excellence should have a role in collating information about successful projects.**

The Government's Response

The National Centre will work with others to consider the best way of delivering information on sustainable communities to those who have need of it, including the general public.

In the meantime:

- ODPM 's renewal.net provides good practice case studies drawn from neighbourhood renewal areas.
- ODPM has led the development of a cross-Government web portal on liveability issues to improve access to information. This is available at www.cleanersafergreener.gov.uk
- Many RCEs share good practice using virtual approaches.
- The Home Office has established on-line resources – including its civil renewal unit's Active Citizenship Centre website (www.active-citizen.org.uk) – which collects and makes available research evidence and good practice case studies in active citizenship and community engagement – and the Crime Reduction website (www.crimereduction.gov.uk), Government's primary online crime reduction resource.

Egan Recommendation

Training for elected members

- 20 On balance, we do not support compulsory training at present. Instead we prefer to encourage elected members to participate in training through provision of excellent courses/exchanges that help them to fulfill their elected role better. We accept this needs to be kept under review, and compulsory training may become necessary if a voluntary approach is unsuccessful. We suggest this is reviewed by the Government and the Local Government Association in 2006. We are unanimous that training, whether compulsory or voluntary, should be broadened to embrace the delivery of sustainable communities, and that its usefulness and effectiveness should be evaluated.**

The Government's Response

We support the provision of excellent quality courses for elected members, and the broadening of their content to embrace delivery of sustainable communities. We expect the National Centre to work with others (eg the LGA, the Planning Advisory Service, IDeA, and the Local Government Leadership Centre) to ensure development and evaluation of appropriate training opportunities. The LGA will shortly publish a brochure on training courses available to Councillors to facilitate take up of learning opportunities.

ODPM will work with the LGA to review the need for compulsory training of elected members by 2006.

In the meantime:

- CABE provides an advanced learning programme in design and related built environment issues targeted at local authority members. It aims to create support networks at regional and sub regional level for members whose remit includes the built environment. CABE has also piloted a web-based learning tool for elected members jointly with IDeA.

Egan Recommendation

Delivery mechanisms

- 21 We recommend that the Government sets up a national centre for sustainable community skills. Its first task will be to take forward the implementation of much of this report. The name of the centre will need to be decided but for working purposes at this stage we will refer to it as the National Centre for Sustainable Community Skills – NCSCS.**

The Government's Response

We fully support this recommendation. The Deputy Prime Minister announced on the 19th April 2004 that ODPM will take forward establishment of the National Centre.

Egan Recommendation

- 22 We propose that the overarching aim of the NCSCS should be to develop world class skill sets amongst all those involved in planning, delivering and maintaining sustainable communities. It should seek to achieve this aim by:**
- **providing a high profile national focus for sustainable community skills development and research;**
 - **working with education providers, employers, professional institutions, relevant Sector Skills Councils, Regional Centres of Excellence and other skills bodies to provide and promote excellence in sustainable community skills development;**
 - **acting as a catalyst for innovation and a focus for national and international debate on sustainable community skills issues;**
 - **acting as a resource and communications hub for individuals, organisations and communities working in the sustainable communities agenda;**

- **working with others to operationalise the common goal, and ensure its relevance to the public's requirements; and**
- **researching with other partners the long-term environmental standards that sustainable communities should aim for, and how, in practical terms, these should be achieved.**

The Government's Response

A Task Group of key partners has been established to advise ODPM on the role and format of the Centre. It will take full account of these recommended tasks.

Egan Recommendation

Who will run the national centre?

- 23** We recommend that the Centre should be run by practitioners who themselves demonstrate the generic skills, knowledge and behaviour required to help deliver prosperous sustainable communities.

The Government's Response

We agree that appropriately qualified practitioners should assist in the Centre's development and operation.

Egan Recommendation

Priorities for action

- 24** We recommend that the Government's immediate priority on skills should be to set up and resource the National Centre. This needs to be done quickly if the new communities envisaged in the Sustainable Communities Plan are to be delivered within declared timetables. For this reason we recommend that the Centre be open for business by early 2005.

The Government's Response

We support the need for early establishment of the Centre and work is already underway to take this forward.

In April 2004, Sir John Egan published the findings of his review which considered the skills needed to help deliver the vision and aims of the Sustainable Communities Plan.

The Egan Review: Skills for Sustainable Communities presented an ambitious vision to identify and develop the skills needed for prosperous sustainable communities.

This document outlines the Government's response to the Egan Review and its findings.

Website: www.odpm.gov.uk/eganreview

Copies of The Egan Review: Skills for Sustainable Communities (ISBN 1 85946 142 5) priced £20, are available from:

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