

**sustainable development commission**

**2006 Sustainable Development  
Progress Report**

**Cabinet Office**  
With SDC Commentary  
**November 2007**

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## CO'S SELF-ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

**This is a summary of CO's progress report; the full version begins on page 7.**

The Cabinet Office (CO) has an overarching purpose of "Making government work better". The Department has three core functions that enable it to achieve this overarching purpose:

1. Supporting the Prime Minister – to define and deliver the Government's objectives.
2. Supporting the Cabinet – to drive the coherence, quality and delivery of policy and operations across departments.
3. Strengthening the Civil Service – to ensure the civil service is organised effectively and has the capability in terms of skills, values and leadership to deliver the Government's objectives.

### Progress against actions

- The majority of CO's aims had either been completed, or progress had been made. There were only two aims for which no progress was reported.

### Embedding sustainability

- Good examples provided where SD was embedded in policy and people.

### Sustainable procurement

- Reported compliance with the "Quick Wins" standard.

## SDC'S SUMMARY COMMENTS

**This is a summary of SDC's commentary, the full version begins on page 4.**

**The CO report was well written and included a number of interesting examples of the Department's work. However, the SDC feels that there was not sufficient detail or evidence provided of how this progress was achieved.**

### Strengths:

- Positive that CO engaged in the SDAP progress reporting process, even though it did not have a plan
- Good progress was made on embedding SD into policies; particularly with the new IA process.

### Weaknesses:

- Did not use the Flexible Framework or an alternative tool to assess its progress on sustainable procurement.

### Challenges for next year's SDAP progress report:

- Evidence to show that it is considering the impact of its actions
- Provide information on what had helped and what had hindered progress
- Provide an assessment of progress on embedding SD across the organisation.

## INTRODUCTION

Government has made it clear that it wants the public sector to be a leading exponent of sustainable development (SD). The UK SD strategy, *Securing the Future*,<sup>1</sup> requires all central government Departments and their Executive Agencies (EAs) to produce Sustainable Development Action Plans (SDAPs) and report progress on them regularly. An SDAP sets out the strategic actions that the organisation intends to take to integrate sustainable development into its decision-making and everyday operations. It thereby helps the organisation make its required contribution to the delivery of the Government's commitments and goals set out in *Securing the Future*.

*Securing the Future* also empowers the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) to act as the Government's watchdog for sustainable development. This includes "scrutinising and reporting on Government's performance on sustainable development".

Most Departments published their first SDAP in 2006. These plans contained commitments for 2006/07, and the SDC is now reporting on progress made by Departments against those commitments.

The purpose of progress reporting is three-fold:

1. To see what progress had been made against the first plans
2. To encourage Departments and others to evaluate the quality, purpose and contribution of their SDAPs, as well as the individual actions and policies, in regards to the UK's SD goals
3. To strengthen the quality of future SDAPs and reporting by identifying strengths, weaknesses and priority areas for improvement.

To help Departments and EAs produce quality progress reports, the SDC designed a self-assessment guidance tool. The tool covers the following areas:

- **Progress against actions:** Report progress against 2006/07 commitments and against any significant actions that did not feature in the original SDAP

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<sup>1</sup> *Securing the Future – Delivering the UK Sustainable Development Strategy*, HM Government, March 2005.

- Consider the impact of actions and the contribution these actions would make to the SD "shared priorities for immediate action"<sup>2</sup> (from here on referred to as the "SD shared priorities")
- **Embedding sustainability:** Consider how well SD had been embedded into policies, people, operations and reporting mechanisms
- **Procurement:** Gauge progress on sustainable procurement against the criteria in the Flexible Framework<sup>3</sup> or a suitable alternative
- **Taking stock:** Identify what had helped and hindered the organisation in delivering its SDAP.

The Cabinet Office (CO) did not produce an SDAP, and did not use the SDC's progress report guidance tool. However, it did submit a general report on progress made over the 2006/07 time period.

This report comprises the SDC's commentary and CO's full progress report.

The SDC's commentary evaluates the progress reported by CO, as well as the quality of its self-assessment<sup>4</sup>. All information reported is the organisation's own judgement of performance, and there was no process of external verification by the SDC.

The commentary does not remark on the aims pursued by CO. As such, comments should not be taken as an endorsement. While not applicable to CO in this instance, the SDC has already commented on Departments' first SDAPs and provided summarised assessments in the 2006 report *Off the Starting Block*.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The SD shared priorities for immediate action, as outlined in *Securing the Future*, are: sustainable consumption and production, climate change and energy, natural resource protection and environmental enhancement, and sustainable communities.

<sup>3</sup> *Procuring the Future*, Defra, June 2006 – see Section 2 for more details.

<sup>4</sup> Please see SDAP Progress Report methodology paper – [www.sd-commission.org.uk](http://www.sd-commission.org.uk).

<sup>5</sup> *Off the Starting Block*, Sustainable Development Commission, November 2006.

## SDC'S COMMENTARY

As explained in the introduction, the Cabinet Office (CO) did not produce an SDAP for 2005-06, and did not use the SDC's progress reporting tool to report progress.

For consistency of approach, the SDC has drawn out details of progress relating to each of the core assessment themes in the progress reporting tool. However, it has not attempted to rate CO's progress on the different sections: It would not be possible to do this accurately based on the information provided, and in any case, the progress reports are intended to be self-assessments.

### Progress against actions

The CO report comprised three main sections covering operations, policy and people. For each of these sections CO provided the context, set out what its aims for 2006/7 had been, and reported progress against these aims.

Though not made explicit in the text, the report contained details of 21 actions (or aims). The majority of CO's aims had either been completed, or progress had been made. There were only two aims for which no progress was reported:

- Exploring the scope for extracting and using grey water from a borehole
- Applying minimum environmental standards in new contracts when purchasing certain types of product.

In both instances, CO did not report why progress had not been made. **The SDC would expect to see details of why actions had not been taken forward in future progress reports.**

CO generally provided a good level of information on the progress that had been made. **A key gap which the SDC would like to be filled in next year's progress report**

**was that there was no evidence that CO had considered the impact of its actions,** i.e. how they contributed to delivering one or more of the Government's shared sustainable development priorities.

### Embedding sustainability

While CO did not demonstrate whether it had considered how it was progressing overall on embedding sustainability into its policies, people, operations or systems for governance, monitoring and reporting, from the information provided against its aims it is evident that some progress had indeed been made against these areas.

The SDC feels that CO has made some progress on embedding SD into policies:

- The refinement of the Impact Assessment (IA) process was a major achievement for CO. However, while the importance of SD impacts were discussed in regards to the former RIA process and the consultation undertaken to design the new IA process, CO made no mention of the improved SD aspects now part of the IA process. These include greenhouse gas costs and the Specific Impact Test (SIT) checklist
- **The SDC looks forward to seeing how the new IA process operates in practice, and how it is now taken forward by the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (DBERR)**
- Furthermore, the SDC would expect to see how CO used the RIA process to assess the impact of its own policies, such as social exclusion.
- CO published an action plan for government on social exclusion in September 2006 and reported progress against it in February 2007. The SDC would have been interested to see what the plan had achieved in its first six

months, and how progress had been reported

- CO began its Capability Review Programme, aimed at improving delivery of public services. Twelve reviews were published in 2006/07. However, **the SDC was disappointed that CO did not explain whether it had made links between the capability reviews and how SD is embedded across the Civil Service.**

In next year's progress report the SDC would expect CO to demonstrate how it has progressed on:

- aligning its policy with the Government SD Strategy
- joining up policy goals under the SD umbrella
- signalling SD in external partnerships and relationships
- building SD capacity among its delivery partners
- embedding SD in stakeholder engagement
- using the new IA process to determine the SD impacts of its own policies.

CO demonstrated that it had made some progress on embedding SD into its people:

- CO is developing a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Strategy. The SDC is disappointed, however, that the target date of October 2006 was missed, and would have liked to see an explanation of why this was not achieved. The SDC hopes to see the achievement of this action in future reporting.
- Published a Diversity Delivery Plan (DDP) which sets out objectives to achieving diversity. It has also set itself stretching targets regarding diversity and set up a Senior Civil Servant (SCS) Diversity Group to drive forward action. It is positive to see such senior level buy-in and the SDC would like to see a similar support in other initiatives.

- Appointed a Voluntary and Community Sector Champion and established the Office of the Third Sector. The SDC would like to see what CO envisages the SD-related outcomes of these actions will be and looks forward to seeing how CO reflects SD in its Volunteering and Community Strategy.
- CO has produced a People Strategy (along with a Plan) to meet the challenges of creating a more responsive and efficient Civil Service. However, there was no detail provided on the aims of the Strategy or the Plan.

In next year's progress report the SDC would like CO to demonstrate how it has progressed on:

- reflecting SD in its core vision and values
- including SD in its approach to recruitment, performance management and career planning
- embedding SD into its training and development – for example how SD is embedded in its work with the National School of Government.

CO prioritised four areas of its operations: energy, waste, water and procurement. While progress on procurement was poor (see following page), a number of positive developments were reported on energy, water and waste, for example:

- it signed up to the Carbon Trust Carbon Management Programme and put an action plan in place following a comprehensive energy and carbon audit
- it had a water consumption survey across the core central London estate and put action plans in place to take forward recommendations
- it increased recycling on its central London estate.

The SDC would like to see SMART targets set for all priorities along with clear baselines for report progress.

In addition, CO appears to have made significant progress on its environmental management systems (EMS) – although it is not clear what its starting point was. All major sites, accommodating the majority of its staff, are covered by a certified EMS, and it has been recommended for certification to ISO14001. It had planned to achieve this by the end of 2006-07, but it was not clear if this certified.

It is positive that CO was able to include the monitoring of sections and areas, of its plan, including policies and people, into existing mechanisms, and that it was considering the most appropriate way to enable senior management to track progress on operations actions. However, progress in this area appears slow and disjointed. **The SDC expects next year's progress report to include further details of the mechanisms in place for monitoring and reporting on the whole SDAP and SD more generally.**

### Procurement

CO did not use the Flexible Framework (or alternative) to assess its progress on procurement. Despite identifying procurement as one of its operational priorities, the text provided indicated that **little progress had been made** aside from 'encouraging' the purchasing of "Quick Wins" products and services. However, 'encouraging' is not enough. As **"Quick Wins" are mandatory CO should ensure that purchasing complies with these standards.**

In future SDAP progress reports, **the SDC expects to see how CO is analysing its key expenditure and the related sustainability impacts, the extent to which it is including sustainability criteria in its contracts, compliance with Quick Wins, training key staff on sustainable procurement and how it is engaging its key suppliers to deliver sustainable procurement.** The criteria covered in the Flexible Framework are a useful prompt.

### Taking stock

**The SDC would have liked to have seen information on what had helped CO deliver its SD actions – for example leadership, capacity improvements etc – and what had hindered its progress.**

### Summing up

The CO report included a number of interesting examples of the Department's work. **However, the SDC feels that there was not sufficient detail or evidence provided of how this progress was achieved.**

CO reported that wider areas of the Department, mainly the National School for Government, Emergency Planning College and the Central Office of Information, would be encouraged to produce separate SDAPs in future. However, it did not explain why these areas specifically were prioritised, nor did it explain how the plans would be coordinated, the level of support that would be provided to Agencies, and how it would present the whole 'package' of SDAPs to the SDC.

**sustainable development commission**

**2006 Sustainable Development  
Progress Report**

**Cabinet Office's Self-Assessment**

**May 2007**

## Introduction

The UK government's sustainable development strategy, *Securing the Future*, requires all central government departments and their executive agencies to produce sustainable development action plans (SDAPs), based on the Strategy, by December 2005. Departments are required to report their progress against these plans and "regularly thereafter".

The Sustainable Development Action Plans (SDAPs) help embed SD in all government policy and operations. All departments except Cabinet Office made a start in setting out forward programmes to demonstrate how they are making an ongoing contribution to goal, priorities and principles of *Securing the Future*. A sketch outline was produced by Cabinet Office in August 2006 just before publication of the SDC's critique of departmental SDAPs. This was too late to be included in SDC's assessment. The SDC's initial brief assessment of Cabinet Office's SDAP showed the need for further work to meet the SDC's basic standards.

Cabinet Office accepts the SDC's analysis of its SDAP. The delay in submitting a SDAP should not be taken in any way as an indication that this work is of low priority to Cabinet Office. This work continues to be high priority to Cabinet Office but we recognise that we must do better.....and we have been. For example, and as this progress report clearly shows, throughout the past year or so we have been actively undertaking a number of key actions to minimise and

reduce the negative environmental impacts of the Cabinet Office's day-to-day estate management operational activities as well as aiming to meet, maintain and improve performance against the new targets for Sustainable Operations on the Government Estate (SOGE).

When the requirement was made to produce SDAPs one of the reasons Cabinet Office struggled in the area of Policy was because of the wide, diverse and disparate nature of its role and remit. As a result, this made it difficult for Cabinet Office to produce a SDAP that gets far beyond operations and people, important as these two areas are. As a result, and via the setting up of three forums which place more emphasis on staff involvement and mobilisation behind the drive towards higher standards of environmental performance and delivery of sustainable development, we are clearer as to how Cabinet Office policies can contribute to *Securing the Future*.

*Securing the Future* also empowers the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) to act as the Government's watchdog for sustainable development, this includes "scrutinising and reporting on Government's performance on sustainable development". The SDC recently published "Off the Starting Block" as an assessment of the first year of SDAPs.

# Sustainable Development ...in our operations

We identified four priority areas that we focused on during 2006-07.

## 1: Energy

We aim to:

- procure energy consistent with value for money principles, Government Accounting rules, public expenditure constraints and EU rules while ensuring that Cabinet Office obtains the required amount of renewable sourced Climate Change Levy exempt power each year
- reduce the level of associated absolute carbon emissions, from fuel and electricity, used in Cabinet Office buildings, by effective energy management and auditing
- support the creation of renewable sourced Climate Change Levy exempt power via the procurement process, and in turn, reduce the associated carbon emissions (and other pollutants) from the generation of such energy; and
- source and use energy both directly from combined heat and power systems (heat and/or electricity) and indirectly (procuring electricity produced by combined heat and power), in order to stimulate the market, to demonstrate Cabinet Office commitment and to reduce the associated carbon emissions (and other pollutants) from the generation of such energy

We will:

- work with the Carbon Trust to potentially improve energy management practices and identify likely areas for reductions in energy usage, costs and carbon emissions - including signing up to the Energy Efficiency Accreditation Scheme; and,
- participate in the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) Energy Efficiency Review. As part of all this, we will encourage staff, contractors and suppliers to be more energy efficient through regular raising awareness initiatives.

## Progress

We have been actively working with the Carbon Trust to improve energy management practices, identify likely areas for energy savings and manage the risks and opportunities associated with climate change. As part of this, in July 2005 the Carbon Trust undertook an initial energy audit across a number of our core central London buildings. We have already implemented a number of recommendations stemming from the Carbon Trust's subsequent report. However, we felt that we should take a more strategic and long term approach. We therefore signed up to the Carbon Trust's Carbon Management Programme (CTCMP).

The CTCMP is a 5-step process to provide Cabinet Office with a systematic approach to managing the risks and opportunities associated with climate change. A more comprehensive energy and carbon audit was undertaken in

June/July 2006 covering Cabinet Office's core central London estate. The final report was submitted to Cabinet Office via a presentation to the senior official with responsibility for Sustainable Development and estate and facilities managers, the Environmental Systems Manager, Energy Manager and Sustainable Development Policy Advisers. An action plan has been put in place. We are required to report back to the Carbon Trust on our performance regularly.

The first programme of works stemming from the CTCMP is currently underway. Passive infrared (PIR) lighting controls have been installed in 22/26 Whitehall, Admiralty Arch and Admiralty House. The PIRs detect movement and switch the lights on if area is occupied. So far, these PIRs have been installed in washrooms and tea points in 22/26 Whitehall and Admiralty Arch and will shortly be installed in office areas in 22/26 Whitehall and Admiralty Arch before being rolled out to other buildings. It is estimated that once this programme is complete it will save approximately 43 tonnes of carbon and £23,000 a year.

Our core central London estate has been accredited to the Energy Efficiency Accreditation Scheme.

We are continuing to participate in the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) Energy Efficiency Review. As part of our Sustainable Development Raising Awareness/Culture Change Programme, we are encouraging staff and contractors to be more energy efficient.

## 2: Water

Where practical, we will undertake initiatives to conserve water and reduce leaks.

**We will:**

- **place space saving devices (Hippo Bags) in all traditional cisterns where practical;**
- **undertake water surveys at selected sites; and**
- **explore the scope for extracting and using grey water from an existing borehole at a pilot site.**

## **Progress**

A programme of placing Hippo Bags in the toilet cisterns across our central London estate has been completed. In Admiralty Arch this will potentially make efficiency savings of 925m<sup>3</sup> per annum (203,472 gallons or 925,000 litres or a financial saving of £1,319 per annum based upon latest water charges from Thames Water).

In order to understand our water consumption better a comprehensive survey was carried out by Thames water across our core central London estate. The results of the survey have been published and Action Plans are in place. By carrying out the recommendations there is potential to reduce our consumption by 9000 m<sup>3</sup>/year.

Cabinet Office's **reported** water consumption figure in 2004-05 was 31.07m<sup>3</sup> per person. This gives us a target of reducing our consumption to 23.3m<sup>3</sup> per person by 2020. The

projected water consumption figure for 2006-07 is likely to be well below the previous years figure. We will be using the overall water consumption figure as our target in the work we are currently undertaking.

A detailed investigation of water consumption within our buildings (including use of water by minor occupiers, restaurants, gym, visitor and occupancy figures) has been undertaken as part of the work on reducing our water consumption. Following a review of the data collection processes and better monitoring of consumption it is now understood that the water usage figures for the period 2004-05 is 18.46 m<sup>3</sup>/per person per year not 31.07 m<sup>3</sup>/person/year as reported. The figures for 2006-07 have yet to be compiled, although it is clear from the meter readings that Cabinet Office has used at least 10% less water than the previous year.

In order to better understand our consumption profile we have installed data loggers to the incoming water meters. This means that we can analyse flows by 15 minute intervals which means that we can profile day/night usage and look for abnormalities in flow i.e. leaks/high usage.

Recognising that whatever measures we undertake must represent value for money, we have moved ahead with some 'quick wins'. For example:

- As part of routine maintenance works and all refurbishment projects, there is a rolling programme of exchanging existing and expired water fittings with more water efficient devices.

For example when we recently refurbished the disabled toilet in Admiralty House, various water and energy efficient devices were installed.

- Agreement has been reached with our total facilities management provider to only purchase water fittings and white goods (i.e. dishwashers in canteens) which are water and energy efficient.
- Estate and facilities managers have been asked to take steps to reduce water usage across the whole estate; e.g. not using hosepipes for watering and cleaning purposes, where necessary. Staff and contractors are also being encouraged to conserve water through periodic staff awareness notices and guidance.

We will consider exploring the scope for extracting and using grey water from an existing borehole at a pilot site once we have addressed the recommendations stemming from the Thames Water survey.

### 3: Waste

Avoidance and/or reduction of waste are at the top of the Cabinet Office's 'waste hierarchy'.

#### **Our waste hierarchy**

- |   |
|---|
| 1. Pre-consumer<br><b>Avoidance</b>   |
| 2. Consumer<br><b>Reuse</b><br><b>Reduce</b>  |
| 3. Post-consumer<br><b>Recycle</b><br><b>Energy from waste</b><br><b>Disposal to landfill</b> |

Cabinet Office is committed to a zero waste policy; where as much potential/actual waste as possible will be reused, recovered, recycled or composted. For example, where reasonably practical to do so, we require suppliers/ producers of goods to take the packaging away for disposal/recycling. And we are committed to ensuring that recycling rates are as high as practicably possible and to provide adequate facilities to encourage staff to dispose of their waste in a sustainable manner. All internal and external communication is circulated in electronic format wherever possible, including responses to any Freedom of Information and environmental information requests.

#### **We will:**

- **continue to seek ways to reduce waste production and waste sent to landfill as well as increasing reuse and recycling; and**

- **work with our suppliers to minimise packaging and other waste and prefer products that eliminate or minimise waste.**

### **Progress**

Avoidance and/or reduction of waste are at the top of the Cabinet Office's 'waste hierarchy'. In 2006-07 the Cabinet Office's central London estate produced 1049.56 tonnes of waste compared to 1338.04 in 2005-06. A reduction of 288.48 tonnes. Unfortunately, this reduction meant that less waste was recycled in 2006-07 compared to 2005-06 (682 tonnes in 2006-07 / 798 tonnes in 2005-06).

We continue to work with our suppliers to minimise packaging and other waste and prefer products that eliminate or minimise waste.

Cabinet Office is currently recycling approximately 65% of all the waste generated across its central London estate. The difficulty lies in the fact that by reducing total waste produced, we will most likely be cutting down on those waste streams which are recyclable such as paper, plastic containers and so on. Therefore, as our total waste produced decreases, the proportion we recycle will also decrease. In saying that, our recycling percentage still rose in 2006-07 compared to 2005-06 despite a reduction in total waste generated.

We recycle paper, cardboard, glass, all cans and tins, rigid plastic containers, batteries, aerosols, CDs and DVDs, mobile phones, fluorescent tubes, toner cartridges and furniture. Recycling bins are provided in offices for the disposal of paper/cardboard, cans/tins/rigid plastic containers, batteries. An aerosol recycling

bin is provided in the staff gym. Glass, CDs and DVDs, mobile phones, fluorescent tubes, toner cartridges and furniture are collected and held in secure locations before being sent for recycling. Waste cooking oil is supplied to the bio-diesel market or for technical use. We have installed wormeries in those buildings where we have restaurants to allow us to compost some food waste.

Other waste streams that cannot be reused or recycled are either composted off site and/or sent to landfill sites (operated by our main waste contractor). These sites are monitored for landfill gas production and migration, and where possible energy is recovered from waste. For example, gas is used to provide power for nearby industries.

#### 4: Procurement

Cabinet Office aims to ensure that in purchasing goods, works and services it contributes to wider government sustainable development objectives and is consistent with value for money principles, Government Accounting rules, public expenditure constraints and EU rules. Value for money is not an end in itself. Cabinet Office buys in order to achieve those things which it has set out to do. If Cabinet Office has resolved to conduct its business in a sustainable manner then there can be no choice other than to conduct its procurement activities in a sustainable manner.

We will:

- **apply minimum environmental standards in new contracts when purchasing certain types of product, which cover aspects such as energy efficiency, recycled content and biodegradability; and**

- **to achieve this standard, and where manageable and practicable, Cabinet Office will encourage the purchasing of 'quick wins' products and services as published on the OGCbuying.solutions website and included in its Framework agreements.**

#### Progress

We continue to encourage the purchasing of 'quick wins' products and services from the 'Quick Wins' lists 2004 and 2007.

#### Environmental Management System

As well as our priority actions, we are continuing to review the major impacts of our business and working to improve the way we manage them through our environmental management system (EMS).

- **We aim to certify our EMS to ISO14001 environmental standards by the end of 2006-07.**
- **By 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007, we anticipate that all our major sites, accommodating the vast majority of our staff, will be covered by a certified EMS.**

#### Progress

Our EMS has been recommended for certification to ISO14001 environmental standards.

All of our major sites, accommodating the vast majority of our staff, are covered by a certified EMS.

Additionally, our sites at Basingstoke, Warrington and Hannington are covered by a non-certified EMS.

## Public Reporting

Information on further actions in each of these and other areas will be placed on our Intranet and website.

- After each SDC report on Government performance against the Operational targets, we will update the above and other actions accordingly, to address any specific areas requiring improvement.

## Progress

As part of the SDC's analysis of Cabinet Office performance in the 2006 Sustainable Development in Government (SDiG) Annual Report, we have identified and are addressing those areas which require improvement.

## Awareness-raising

Awareness raising and encouraging behaviour change amongst staff is crucial to our commitment to sustainable development.

- We will aim to ensure that by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007, everyone in Cabinet Office understands the concept of sustainable development including how to they can reduce the environmental impact as part of their day-to-day work activities.

These messages will also be given to new entrants through the induction package.

- We will also aim to develop and implement an internal sustainable development communications plan with messages on sustainable development issues, applying the Cabinet Office.

## Progress

Our aim is to place more emphasis on staff involvement and mobilisation behind, the drive towards higher standards of environmental performance and delivery of sustainable development. We strongly believe that, alongside top leadership, this is key to achieving our sustainable development goals.

To encourage individuals and the Department as a whole to play their part in making sustainable development work within Cabinet Office we have recently set up an Environmental Interest Group and Green Coordinators...all members are volunteers. Additionally, on 26 April 2007 Sir Gus O'Donnell launched the Cabinet Office Sustainable Development raising awareness / culture change programme. As part of all this and to look at how we can contribute to *Securing the Future* via our own policy and decision making processes, we are looking to put in place mechanisms to ensure that sustainable development is fully considered. See below for further information:

### *Environmental Interest Group (EIG)*

The EIG was set up to:

- provide a forum for those working on the Cabinet Office estate to contribute ideas and suggestions on how to improve the Department's environmental performance.
- provide advice, support and assistance to staff who are already championing green issues within their management units and to provide encouragement for those who are yet to do so.
- aim to bring about a cultural change within the Department by publicising green practices and promoting their benefits to all staff and contractors.
- help enable Cabinet Office to lead from the centre on green issues by setting a good example to other government departments and through the promotion of best practice and knowledge.

At the request of members of the EIG, three sub-groups have been set up to tackle three of our key environmental impacts: energy, waste and procurement. Membership of the sub-groups is, again, voluntary. Estate and facilities managers sit on each group and provide guidance and steering. The groups are tasked with identifying areas for improvement and devising and implementing strategies to bring about a 'step change' in these key areas.

***Recent EIG achievement*** – In the support of 'green' modes of transport for staff travelling to and from work, the EIG has already persuaded Finance officials to make available the facility to obtain an interest free advance of salary for a season ticket to include the purchase of a cycle and accessories.

### ***Green Coordinators***

The role of Green Coordinators is to:

- champion environmental issues within their management units by encouraging their colleagues to take individual and collective responsibility for reducing the environmental impacts of their day-to-day business activities.
- promote and implement environmental best practice within their management unit as well as providing advice, support and assistance to their colleagues.
- assist estate and facilities managers identify areas for improvement, both within their management unit and across the Department.
- share best practice and knowledge amongst colleagues within their management unit and across the Department.
- engender an air of collective thinking, working together and effective communication; and,
- promote an air of healthy competition between management units and buildings.

To help them do this, support is provided by the Sustainable Development Team, Environmental Interest Group and estate and facilities managers.

At the moment we have asked Green Coordinators to focus on asking colleagues to do three simple things:

1. Switch off PCs and monitors when not in use
2. Switch of lights when not in use
3. Recycle waste

## *Sustainable Development Raising Awareness / Culture Change Programme*

The programme was formally launched by Sir Gus O'Donnell on 26 April 2007. The launch was done in partnership with and supported by Defra's Sustainable Development Unit, The Carbon Trust and the Energy Saving Trust.

We believe that top management should drive this agenda. Therefore, and in advance of the launch, Sir Gus O'Donnell wrote to Board members asking for their help to lift the environmental performance of Cabinet Office.

The programme's main aim is to place more emphasis on staff involvement and mobilisation behind, the drive towards higher standards of environmental performance and delivery of sustainable development. We strongly believe that, alongside top leadership, this is key to achieving our sustainable development goals.

It is likely that the EIG and Green Coordinators will play a lead role in this programme.

The programme's long term objective will be to:

1. Reduce energy consumption, carbon emissions and make financial savings;
2. Achieve the cross-departmental sustainable operations targets;
3. Encourage individuals and the department as a whole to play their part in making sustainable development work.

A number of resources are being made available to staff and contractors as part of the awareness raising/culture change

programme. For example, new sustainable development pages will shortly be published on our Intranet. These pages will mainly focus on what staff and contractors can do to improve the environmental performance of their day-to-day work activities and the estate as a whole.

Detailed information on each building's environmental performance has been published on building notice boards and will also be published on our Intranet. The information will mainly focus on energy consumption and recycling performance and will be accompanied by advice on what staff can do to improve their building performance.

A poster campaign will focus on encouraging staff and contractors to reduce energy consumption, carbon emissions and make financial savings as well as recycling more.

An air of healthy competition is being promoted between Management Units and buildings to see who can be the 'greenest'.

## ...in our policies

### Social Exclusion

On 13 June, Cabinet Office announced the creation of a new Social Exclusion Taskforce to concentrate on identifying the most at-risk and focus on specific hard-to-reach groups including children in care, people with mental health problems and teenagers at risk of pregnancy. The role of the Taskforce is to coordinate the Government's drive against social exclusion, ensuring that the cross-departmental approach delivers for those most in need. The Task Force will champion the needs of the most disadvantaged members of society within Government, ensuring that as with the rest of the public service reform agenda, we put people first.

The Taskforce draws together the expertise of some staff from the former Social Exclusion Unit in the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and policy specialists from the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit. It is based in Cabinet Office.

The Taskforce continues to demonstrate the values that underpinned the success of the Social Exclusion Unit's work - including its commitment to evidence-based policy making, working with stakeholders and giving a voice to disadvantaged groups. Its work complements the role of departments which will continue to have responsibility for delivering social exclusion policies on the ground.

#### *What do we mean by social exclusion?*

Social exclusion is about more than income poverty. It is a short-hand term

for what can happen when people or areas have a combination of linked problems, such as unemployment, discrimination, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime and family breakdown. These problems are linked and mutually reinforcing. Social exclusion is an extreme consequence of what happens when people don't get a fair deal throughout their lives, often because of disadvantage they face at birth, and this disadvantaged can be transmitted from one generation to the next.

#### *Why does achieving social inclusion matter?*

Britain has enjoyed a strong economy and growing prosperity in recent years, but we would be more prosperous still if the talents of each and every member of the community could flourish. Social exclusion and wasted human potential are harmful to the country as well as to those individuals suffering from them.

In our increasingly changing world, demand for unskilled labour is falling, and demand for skilled labour is rising. Therefore the plight of those without skills and qualifications will become more acute. The Social Exclusion Action Plan will help to ensure that opportunity is enjoyed by the whole community and that no group is left behind.

- **The Social Exclusion Action Plan is expected to be launched by the end of 2006.**

### Progress

Reaching Out: An Action Plan on Social Exclusion was published in September 2006. Reaching Out: Progress on Social Exclusion was published in February 2007 and sets out progress on tackling social

exclusion six months after the publication of the cross-Government Social Exclusion Action Plan.

## Regulatory Impact Assessment / Impact Assessment

The Regulation Impact Assessment (RIA) process helps Government Departments deliver policy objectives successfully. A RIA is a framework for analysis of the likely impacts of a policy change and the range of options for implementing it. It is a comprehensive and flexible tool which considers:

- any form of regulation - formal legislation, Codes of Practice, information campaigns etc;
- the full range of potential impacts - economic, social and environmental. Over time, this has incorporated health, gender, race, sustainability, rural, human rights, older people, legal aid; and,
- where the impact may fall - business, the public sector, the voluntary sector or other groups.

The Better Regulation Executive (BRE) is responsible for the RIA process and sits within Cabinet Office. The BRE works across government to support and challenge departments and regulators as they reduce and remove regulation across the private, public and voluntary sectors. The BRE also plays an active role in promoting the better regulation agenda in Europe.

The BRE is currently consulting on proposals to improve the RIA process and has published 'The Tools to Deliver Better Regulation - Revising the Regulatory Impact Assessment: A Consultation'. The key objectives of the proposed changes

are to ensure that Impact Assessments present all cost and benefit information in an even more transparent way, and are carried out and updated throughout the policy making process in order to make policy makers more accountable, and open to reasonable scrutiny.

*The consultation recognises that environmental and social costs and benefits remain an important part of the new Impact Assessment. It is important for these benefits to be monetised or otherwise quantified wherever possible; and the Government will continue to develop guidance on how best to do this.*

*However, there are some areas where it is not possible to quantify all of the costs or benefits of a proposal. In these instances the Summary Sheet proposed in the Consultation provides an opportunity for policy makers to highlight non-monetised costs and benefits. This is in line with the recent findings of the National Audit Office that wider 'issues were often not considered with rigour' and on considering sustainable development in Regulatory Impact Assessments, that few of them identified and analysed Sustainable Development to a sufficient level'.*

- *Following consultation, the Government intends to consider responses and make final proposals before end of 2006.*

## Progress

On 2 April 2007, the Government announced a new Impact Assessment (IA) process<sup>6</sup> aimed at ensuring that all

<sup>6</sup>

[http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/news/2007/070402\\_ia.asp](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/news/2007/070402_ia.asp). See the Guidance at

new regulation is necessary and carried out with minimum burdens. This improves on the previous Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) process with a simpler, more transparent process that will be embedded in the earliest stage of policy making.

The key features of the revised Impact Assessment are:

- A revised template to improve clarity and transparency including new requirements to summarise both the rationale for government intervention and evidence supporting the final proposal.
- A strengthened Ministerial declaration to bolster the quality of the analysis in IAs, supported by improved arrangements within departments.
- Revised guidance for policy makers to make it easier for them to produce high quality IAs focused on the burden of the regulations they are developing.
- An increased emphasis on post-implementation review.
- The new Impact Assessment will be more transparent to stakeholders and policy-makers.
- To improve transparency, the Government will set up a new area on the internet where summaries of published IAs will be available, together with links to departmental websites.

The new IA process follows the Better Regulation Executive's consultation

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[http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/ria/ia\\_guidance/](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/ria/ia_guidance/) and the Toolkit at <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/ria/toolkit/>

*The Tools to Deliver Better Regulation*, launched on 24 July 2006<sup>7</sup>.

- There were over 80 responses to the public consultation from a diverse range of organisations. Around half of these were from issue-based groups, a third from groups representing particular professions or sectors, and the remaining fifth from businesses, individuals and NDPBs. There was almost universal acceptance of the case for reform of impact assessments, but a range of views on the way forward.
- In general, business respondents argued that the government ought to be more ambitious in pursuing a deregulatory agenda and also strongly supported the thrust on improved quantification. However, several respondents considered that the proposal to decouple various impact tests might lead to a fragmented process that marginalized the other assessments.

The key objectives of the new IA process are to ensure that IAs present cost and benefit information in a much more transparent way, and are carried out and updated throughout the policy making cycle – from the first stage when ideas are being initially developed, through the key consultation and decision-taking stages, to post-implementation evaluation. Moreover, other impacts arising from proposed regulations should also be more transparent and visible to stakeholders and policy makers.

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<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/ria/consultation/index.asp>. The Government's response to this consultation is at [http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/ria/consultation\\_response/](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/ria/consultation_response/).

The new Impact Assessment template, guidance and toolkit provide clear signposts to the Government's sustainable development objectives. In particular, the new toolkit provides guidance to policy-makers for considering how their proposals contribute to the five principles of sustainable development and provides a link to Government's strategy on Sustainable Development.

In addition to these processes, the Better Regulation Executive is assisting departments to implement the new IA process by providing transitional training to better regulation units, policy makers and economists likely to be engaged in IAs during the first stages of implementing the new process. This support adds to the better policy making training that most departments already offer covering better regulation and sustainable development issues.

The Better Regulation Executive's Impact Assessment guidance makes clear that all costs and benefits, including environmental and social, need to be assessed and recorded and that these should be monetised as far as possible. Furthermore, the new IA approach indicates that non-monetised costs should be considered, where appropriate, and annexed to the IA. The new Summary: Analysis & Evidence page of the IA template also provides space for policy makers to summarise key non-monetised costs and benefits where these are relevant to decision makers and stakeholders.

In addition, the Impact Assessment template includes a Specific Impact Tests Checklist that summarises a range of tests developed by Government departments and underpinned by

departmental guidance. Considering these tests will ensure that policy development is joined up and that individual policy proposals take account of the Government's priority objectives.

The checklist will be of particular use in helping policy-makers consider how their proposals contribute to the five principles of sustainable development, to which the Government has committed itself.

The new IA process is being phased in from 14 May 2007. From the Parliamentary session beginning in November 2007, all Impact Assessments should follow the new format.

## Capability Reviews

The Capability Review Programme is part of the wider Civil Service reform agenda. It will lead to a Civil Service which is better at delivering public services. The aims of the reviews are to:

- improve the capability of the Civil Service to meet today's delivery objectives and be ready for the challenges of tomorrow;
- assure the public and ministers that the Civil Service leadership is equipped to develop and deliver departmental strategies; and
- help departments act on long term key development areas and therefore provide assurance on future delivery.

The Reviews provide an assessment of capability for departments, identify key areas for improvement and set out key actions.

The Reviews are being undertaken by

the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit (PMDU) which sits within Cabinet Office.

Cabinet Office has published reports of the first four Capability Reviews. The Reviews took place in the Department for Constitutional Affairs, Department for Education and Skills, Home Office and Department for Work and Pensions. A report summarising the common findings across the four departments and their plans to address these areas has also been published.

For more detail see:

- the news release on the [Cabinet Office website](#)
- the four review reports and the summary report on the [Civil Service website](#).

The Cabinet Office is currently undergoing its own Capability Review. Also under review at the moment are the Department of Communities and Local Government and the Department of Trade and Industry.

- **These Reviews are expected to report before Christmas 2006. A total of 17 reviews will take place by July 2007.**

## Progress

Cabinet Office has published reports of a further eight Capability Reviews. The Reviews took place in the Department for Trade and Industry, Department for Communities and Local Government, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Defence, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Department for International Development, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs,

Department for Culture, Media and Support. Two reports summarising the common findings across the eight departments and their plans to address these areas has also been published.

## Skills across Government

The Government has embarked on a major programme to equip the civil service with the skills it needs to address the challenges of the 21st century. Government Skills, the Sector Skills Council for central government, non-departmental public bodies and the Armed Forces, have addressed this by implementing a skills framework for existing civil servants (i.e. Professional Skills for Government -PSG) and developing new qualifications for aspiring public servants (e.g. 14-19 Diploma in Public Service).

A thorough understanding of how to apply sustainable development principles will need to be a key part of policy skills for the future as will the ability to engage the wider public in the development and implementation of new ideas.

Sustainable development is already being integrated more effectively into the new National School of Government, created to help Government organisations in the UK and internationally to be more professional and to offer better value services to Ministers and to the public they serve.

In *Securing the future*, we commit to: "Government will embed sustainable development into the curriculum of the National School of Government in areas such as policy-making, strategic leadership, programme and project

management and the behavioural aspects of management development.”

- The Cabinet Office Strategic HR function for the Civil Service and Government Skills, will work closely with the National School of Government, now a non-ministerial department, to help deliver this.

## Progress

For most civil servants it is evident that PSG is the way we now promote skills at Grade 7 and above but it has yet to gain traction below Grade 7. Feedback from departments, executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies tell us that:

- PSG has been incorporated into the personal development plans of staff at Grade 7 and above;
- uptake in agencies is lagging behind that of parent departments;
- PSG has yet to gain traction below Grade 7;
- the priority skills gaps are in areas of leadership, people management and programme and project management; and
- staff are finding it difficult to gain experience of working outside their main career group.

In response to the consolidated feedback Government Skills have revised the PSG implementation strategy to focus on six key areas:

- to use a balanced scorecard to evaluate how far PSG has been embedded into departmental HR processes;

- further embedding PSG at Grade 7 and above releasing a series of tools that focus on leadership, people management and assessment at recruitment and promotion gateways;
- use of an employers survey and functional mapping to determine what the PSG core skills look like for staff below Grade 7;
- using functional mapping to devise a framework of standards (i.e. National Occupational Standards) populated with appropriate qualifications to devise a full suite of qualifications for staff training below Grade 7;
- refreshing the communication of PSG to make it simpler and focus on a phased rollout sequentially addressing target areas; and
- a stakeholder mapping exercise has identified Permanent secretaries followed by Heads of Profession and HR Directors as having most interest and influence on PSG implementation. Further work will be carried out to ensure that these stakeholders are incorporated into the wider stakeholder management plan for Government Skills.

## ...as an employer

In Cabinet Office, it is arguably the 'people' aspects of the business which people find most difficult to relate to sustainable development – for example: diversity, work-life balance, corporate social responsibility – all link very closely with many of the 'people' related policies already in place in Cabinet Office.

### Corporate Social Responsibility

Human Resources (HR) leads on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) issues within Cabinet Office and has recently appointed a dedicated CSR consultant to enable Cabinet Office to meet its CSR responsibilities (which can impact on diversity, community/volunteering and well-being issues).

- We will publish a CSR Strategy for Cabinet Office in October 2006. The Strategy will aim to bring together all what the Cabinet Office is doing on CSR within one document.

### Progress

Cabinet Office has still to develop its CSR Strategy but has been proactive in delivering on diversity, community/volunteering, well-being and work/life balance issues

### Diversity

Cabinet Office is responsible for co-ordinating Diversity issues across the Civil Service. HR leads on Diversity issues within Cabinet Office.

Delivering a Diverse Civil Service – A 10-Point Plan sets out commitments on 10 key areas that are intended to achieve broad and deep cultural change across the Civil Service. The 10-Point Plan was developed following a review of equality and diversity in employment in the Civil Service by Waqar Azmi, the Chief Diversity Adviser to the Civil Service. It takes account of thinking in this area by the Civil Service Management Board and senior diversity champions. Across the Service HR Directors, the Council for Civil Service Unions, corporate staff networks and other key stakeholders have also had the opportunity to contribute to the development of the plan.

The aims of the plan are:

- To improve delivery of services for everyone in society through achieving a truly diverse Civil Service workforce at all levels, including our most senior.
- To achieve by 2008 the agreed targets of:
  - 37% of the Senior Civil Service to be women;
  - 30% of top management posts to be filled by women;
  - 4% of the Senior Civil Service to be from minority ethnic backgrounds;
  - 3.2% of the Senior Civil Service to be disabled people.
- To use this visible change to lead broader change across the Service in the way we manage and value equality and diversity at all levels, in all aspects of our business.

The plan is an integral part of Civil Service reform: through achieving a more diverse workforce we will achieve a Civil Service better equipped to deliver, adapt and innovate.

All departments are developing individual delivery plans for implementing the 10-point plan. These take account of departmental circumstances and allow for activity to be focused on specific areas for action. All departments will have their plans approved by Cabinet Office and then will be reporting on them regularly.

- **We will publish a Delivering Diversity Plan (DDP) for Cabinet Office in September 2006. The DDP will aim to change the culture of the department to one that is truly inclusive and where talents can flourish.**

## Progress

The Civil Service Group of the Cabinet Office is responsible for programme management of the 'Delivering a Diverse Civil Service – a 10 Point Plan'. Launched in 2005, the Plan commits to 10 key areas that are intended to achieve broad and deep cultural change across the Civil Service and is an integral part of Civil Service reform programme and taken together will achieve a more diverse workforce that is better equipped to deliver, adapt and innovate.

Like all ministerial departments, the Cabinet Office has responded to the 10 Point Plan by publishing a Diversity Delivery Plan. This plan sets out how the Department will support the objectives of the corporate 10 Point Plan. Management and HR are leading on key deliverables, which aim to increase the representation

of under-represented groups in Senior Civil Service and Top Management posts, and encourage a culture within the department which is truly inclusive and where talent can flourish.

The Department has set itself stretching targets for under-represented groups in SCS and Top Management posts, by April 2008 we hope to achieve:

- Women in SCS to be 40% (33.5% at October '06)
- Women in Top Management posts to be 35% (28.4% at October '06)
- Black and minority ethnic staff to represent 6% of SCS (6.3% at October '06)
- And 5% of SCS to be disabled staff (3% at October '06)

But our action on diversity goes much further than only trying to achieve these targets. If are to have a more diverse Senior Civil Service we must ensure that the leadership skills of under-represented groups are fully developed. To achieve this, the Department, in partnership with the National School of Government, has launched the Leaders UnLtd development scheme. Further information on what the scheme provides can be read at <http://leadersunlimited.nationalschool.gov.uk/>

To ensure diversity is embedded across all business areas of the Department the Cabinet Office's Diversity Champion has encouraged greater accountability of senior colleagues. A SCS Diversity Group has been set up that will look at improving the capability of the Department through analysing issues and driving forward action on diversity.

In addition, a Shadow Board to the Executive Management Group has been introduced. This group, consists of high potential individuals from under-represented within the SCS, providing a developmental opportunity to be involved in strategic collective decision making.

## Community/Volunteering

HR leads on staff volunteering (policy, general awareness raising and encouragement for staff).

Cabinet Office is committed to encouraging all of its staff to participate in voluntary and community activities. We fully believe that volunteering activities are of benefit to our staff, the department and our work.

All Cabinet Office staff are entitled to take a day's special leave each year to undertake voluntary work.

HR surveys staff annually to monitor the number of staff who have undertaken voluntary activities in the previous year, what these are and their awareness of the provision for one day's special paid leave to undertake a volunteering activity. The most recent survey was undertaken in February 2006. There were 110 responses to the volunteering questionnaire and the responses and comments will be made available to staff. These will help to contribute towards a new Cabinet Office strategy on volunteering being developed by HR, in consultation with Cabinet Office's newly appointed Voluntary and Community Sector Champion (VCS Champion). The aim of the departmental strategy will be to see how Cabinet Office can contribute to the Voluntary and Community Sector

Network and how they can work together in partnership.

The VCS Champion will be part of the Civil Service VCS Champion Network, coordinated by the Home Office, which is the lead department on Civil Service participation. The role of the VCS Champion is to examine how their department participates and works with the voluntary and community sector to ensure an effective and productive relationship.

2005 was the Year of the Volunteer and culminated in *Make a Difference Day* in October. As part of this, Cabinet Office staff participated in 17 team challenges organised with CSV and 16 employees signed up to be school mentors through CSV. Many Cabinet Office employees have also been involved with a variety of volunteering activity in their own time and are already committed to volunteering. As a result, Cabinet Office was awarded a Community Service Volunteers' (CSV) award in March 2006. The award that Cabinet Office received was presented in recognition of the fact that more of its staff participated in volunteering projects during October than staff from any other government department.

- We will publish a **Volunteering and Community Strategy for Cabinet Office in October 2006.**

## Progress

A draft Volunteering and Community Strategy has been developed. However, this is likely to change significantly in light of the recent appointment of the Cabinet Office's new Volunteering Champion.

In the past couple of years many Cabinet Office teams and individuals have been encouraged to participate in sustainable development and community volunteering opportunities. We fully believe that volunteering activities are of benefit to our staff, the department and our work. To show our commitment all Cabinet Office staff are entitled to take a day's special leave each year to undertake voluntary work.

In recognition of the increasingly important role the third sector plays in both society and the economy, the Prime Minister announced a new Office of the Third Sector (OTS) in May 2006. Based within the Cabinet Office, the OTS has been set up to drive forward the Government's role in supporting a thriving third sector, and brings together sector-related work from across government. The third sector includes voluntary and community organisations, charities, social enterprises, cooperatives and mutuals. The sector is diverse in its needs and priorities, and that diversity is fully reflected in the approach of the new Office.

The OTS works as an advocate for the third sector across government, as well as delivering its own policy programmes. For instance, it works closely with Communities and Local Government on embedding the role of third sector organisations in communities and decision-making at a local and regional level; and with the Department of Trade and Industry on promotion of enterprise and creating the environment for business success.

The Director General of the Office of the Third Sector has also agreed to Champion volunteering within the Cabinet Office.

## Well being and Work/life balance

The Cabinet Office is committed to improving work/life balance in the Department. It values diversity and tries to accommodate different work patterns. If employees want to change their work patterns, their Line Managers are encouraged to take their requests seriously.

In addition to offering many alternative work patterns the Cabinet Office have also conducted a number of well being exercises. These have identified the key factors that impact on the well-being of individuals within particular business units. Resulting in a number of interventions that have a positive impact on individual well-being and work/life balance.

There are a number of ways staff can improve their work/life balance in Cabinet Office. These include working:

- Compressed hours – this means staff work their hours over a shorter period of time (for example, work their full weekly hours over four days instead of five);
- Flexible hours – this lets staff vary the time they get to work and leave, provided they work their conditioned hours and record the hours they work;
- From home occasionally – so that staff can work without distractions
- Full time – at least 36 hours net per week, excluding breaks;
- As part of a job share – this usually involves two people working part-time, but working together to cover a full-time post;

- Part-time – this means that staff can work less than full-time hours (36 hours net) and are paid only for the hours they work;
- At term time only – this lets staff have time off during the school holidays.

In April 2003, new legislation gave parents of children under six or disabled children under 18 the right to ask their employer to consider their request for flexible working. Cabinet Office provides Guidance to staff if they are interested in flexible working.

Cabinet Office provides a work/life balance smart working checklist to make sure that staff are doing everything they can to get a good work/life balance.

## People Strategy

A number of external and internal drivers, such as the Capability Review and the SCS and People Surveys, have highlighted the need for a fundamental change in the way that the Cabinet Office attracts, develops, supports and engages its people.

The Cabinet Office is also facing significant challenges – responding to changing cross-Governmental priorities in a more coherent and strategic way, leading Civil Service reform, achieving headcount reductions to become more efficient, driving the Professional Skills for Government agenda, and all in an increasingly flexible working environment with rapid turnover.

As the Civil Service transforms itself to become more responsive and efficient, it is important that Cabinet Office sets an example to the rest of Whitehall. To do

this we must create and promote the working environment, culture and systems to ensure we continue to have the right people in place ‘making government work better’.

The Department has produced a People Strategy as a major step towards responding to those drivers and meeting those challenges. The strategy will hold strong regardless of future machinery of government changes. It is backed up by a Plan that sets out how the aims will be achieved, this will be evaluated and updated annually.

## Monitoring, evaluation and accountability

We will monitor the ‘...in our policies’ and ‘...as an employer’ actions through existing internal and external monitoring mechanisms.

Over the coming year, we will consider the most appropriate way to enable internal senior management (at Board level) to track progress of the ‘...in our operations’ actions, where necessary.

Internally and locally, the progress of these actions will be tracked through existing monitoring mechanisms – mainly our Environmental Management System, Sustainable Development Working Group, Environmental Interest Group, Green Coordinators. As part of this, we will regularly update senior management (at relevant Management Unit and Board level) on progress with these actions.

For the first Cabinet Office action plan, we have concentrated on actions happening in 2006-07 and will be in contact with the wider areas of Cabinet Office (mainly the National School for Government,

Emergency Planning College and the Central Office of Information) to share the approach we have taken including best practice and knowledge. We will encourage them to produce their own action plan, enabling them to take full ownership of their commitment to sustainable development and ensure that they are accountable for their own performance.

This action plan is a living document. Therefore, elements of the plan will need

to be reviewed regularly to include significant additional actions that were unknown at the time of preparation. For example, further important actions may arise stemming from ‘...in our operations’ actions.

As part of our efforts to continuous improvement in respect of the Sustainable Development in Government (SDiG) agenda, we will consult with stakeholders (internally and externally) on our approach to this action plan.

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**CO response signed by:**

SD Reporting Officer: Nigel Hutcheon, 31/05/07

SD Responsible Officer: Thomas Roundell-Greene, 31/05/07

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**SDC review and commentary:**

Commentary by: Farooq Ullah, Policy Analyst, Watchdog Team

Peer reviewed by: Claire Monkhouse, Senior Policy Analyst, Watchdog Team

Authorised by: Jonathon Porritt, SDC Chairman

Sign-off date: 07/11/07