

sustainable development commission

**2006 Sustainable Development
Action Plan Progress Report**

Office for National Statistics
With SDC Commentary

June 2008

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OFFICE FOR NATIONAL STATISTICS' SELF-ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

This is a summary of ONS' progress report; the full version of which begins on page 6.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is responsible for collecting and publishing official statistics about the UK's society and economy. These statistics are used by Government to make policy decisions, and by the general public to understand their country better.

Progress against actions: 83% of actions were reported to be complete or on target.

ONS did not assess its progress towards "Embedding Sustainability" or "Sustainable Procurement."

SDC'S SUMMARY COMMENTS

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

ONS reported good progress against the actions in its 2006 SDAP, but information in support of this assessment was very limited. ONS did not assess the extent to which sustainability was embedded across the organisation, or report how it was progressing against Government's *Sustainable Procurement Action Plan*.¹

Strengths:

Examples of good progress reported include:

- ONS incorporated sustainability clauses in all contracts for goods, works and services
- All procurement staff were required to attend sustainable procurement courses, and contract team members were required to attain a CIPS² qualification
- An Environmental Management System (EMS) with ISO 14001 accreditation was introduced at ONS' Christchurch site.

Weaknesses:

- ONS did not complete the "Embedding Sustainability", "Procurement" or "Taking Stock" sections of the progress reporting tool, and it did not provide a self-assessment against these themes
- In some cases, insufficient detail was provided about progress made against SDAP actions
- ONS did not explain how it had assessed the sustainable development impacts of its actions
- It appeared that ONS found it difficult to report whether some actions were complete or on target, as they were not SMART³ and did not have a target date.

Challenges for next year's SDAP progress report:

- Provide a broader assessment of how ONS is embedding sustainable development across the organisation, and how it is progressing against the procurement Flexible Framework, or an equivalent tool
- Report what has helped and hindered progress towards sustainable development
- Report on how it assesses the impact of its actions.

¹ UK Government Sustainable Procurement Action Plan, Defra, 2007.

² CIPS = Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply.

³ SMART = Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-related.

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*,⁴ 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
- Consider the impact of actions and the contribution these actions would make to the SD "shared priorities for immediate action"⁵ (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 Framework⁶ or a suitable alternative
- **Taking stock:** Identify what had helped and hindered the organisation in delivering its SDAP.

This report comprises the SDC's commentary, followed by the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') full progress report.⁷ ONS only reported progress against the actions in its SDAP, and did not complete the "Embedding Sustainability", "Procurement" or "Taking Stock" sections of the SDC's reporting tool.

The SDC's commentary evaluates the progress reported by ONS, as well as the quality of its self-assessment.⁸ All progress reported is ONS' own judgement of performance, and there was no process of external verification by the SDC.

The commentary does not review the content of the original SDAP. As such, comments should not be taken as an endorsement of actions and policies pursued. The SDC has already commented on Departments' first SDAPs and provided summarised assessments in the 2006 report *Off the Starting Block*.⁹

⁵ 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.

⁶ *Procuring the Future*, Defra, June 2006 – see Section 2 for more details.

⁷ Reported progress against: *Sustainable Development Action Plan*, ONS, December 2005.

⁸ Please see SDAP Progress Report methodology paper – www.sd-commission.org.uk.

⁹ *Off the Starting Block*, Sustainable Development Commission, November 2006.

⁴ *Securing the Future – Delivering the UK Sustainable Development Strategy*, HM Government, March 2005.

SDC'S COMMENTARY

Progress against actions

Good progress was reported by ONS against the actions in its 2006 SDAP.

- ONS reported that it had "completed" or was "on target" for 83% of actions
- ONS considered that its actions as a whole made a fair contribution to the Government's shared priorities for sustainable development
- ONS did not explain how it had assessed the SD impacts of its actions
- Evidence used to measure progress was referenced against each action, and was reported to be readily available in most instances
- No additional commentary or contextual information was provided
- On the whole, where targets had not been met, reasons were either not provided or were unclear. The SDC would expect to see a clear explanation of why a target had not been met, or was deemed to be no longer applicable.

Many of the actions in the original SDAP were not SMART,¹⁰ and it appeared that this made it difficult to apply a RAG+¹¹ rating in some instances. For example, two actions with overdue target dates were reported to be "on target". These actions should have been "complete" or "recoverable". Also, several actions were reported to be "on target" even though they did not have a target date.

ONS provided good examples of activities it had undertaken in 2006/07, to improve the sustainability of its operations. For example:

- An Environmental Management System (EMS) with ISO 14001 accreditation was introduced at its Christchurch site
- Water saving devices were installed in all refurbished toilets, and aged water mains and faulty water meters were replaced

¹⁰ SMART = Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-related.

¹¹ RAG+: Departments reported each action to be either red (severely behind target); amber (recoverable); green (on target) or complete.

- Waste arising and recycling data were reported monthly to Senior Property Managers and the Facilities Management (FM) contractor
- ONS signed up to a Carbon Trust energy agreement
- The renewable energy supply at the Titchfield site was increased to 18%
- ONS published a Social Strategy on its intranet, which identified the impacts of its land, buildings and operations on staff and local communities, and set out procedures to ensure that such impacts are monitored and reviewed.

However, there were several places where the SDC would have liked ONS to provide more information. For example:

- Two actions were to *encourage* behaviour change, including wider use of internet meetings and car share schemes. These actions were reported to be "on target", as facilities were in place. However, the SDC would have expected to hear how the facilities were publicised, how ONS engaged staff on these issues, and how much the facilities were actually used
- The ONS did not provide reasons for being behind target on its commitment to include clauses relating to minimising waste impacts in waste management contracts. It was reported that clauses were only in some general contracts
- Two actions relating to operational travel had only been undertaken at two out of three sites. It was not reported why this was, or whether the actions would be undertaken on the third site in the near future.

Embedding sustainability

ONS did not report how it felt it had progressed towards embedding sustainable development in its *policies, people, operations, and governance monitoring and reporting structures*.

The SDC expected ONS to provide information relating to the criteria in the SDC's progress reporting guidance tool, such as:

- Whether its policies were aligned with Government's SD strategy, UK framework and related guidance

- Whether it was engaging stakeholders and delivery partners, and helping to build their capacity for SD
- How it had broadened SD awareness and developed capability amongst its staff throughout the organisation
- How well embedded structures and mechanisms for improving the sustainability of ONS' operations were
- How progress towards sustainable development was recorded and reported, and what governance structures were in place to ensure that progress was made.

Procurement

ONS did not report progress against the procurement Flexible Framework. In the "progress against actions" section, ONS reported that its draft Sustainable Procurement Strategy had not been finalised. However, ONS reported that:

- Sustainability clauses were added to all contracts, for goods, works and services, including FM and IT
- All procurement staff were required to attend sustainable procurement courses, and contract team members were required to attain a Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS) qualification
- ONS had a Food Procurement Action Plan, with which the FM contractor was mandated to comply. However, it was not reported whether this had been reviewed recently, or whether sustainability was a key consideration.

In order to assess its contribution to Government's *Sustainable Procurement Action Plan*,¹² the SDC would expect ONS to assess what level it had achieved against each theme of the recommended Flexible Framework, or an alternative procurement tool. It should also provide commentary to support the levels selected, including:

- What level of sustainable procurement training staff received, and whether a sustainable development champion had been identified
- What specific procurement policies were in place, and how they were expected to progress

- Whether an expenditure analysis had been undertaken, and whether key risks and impacts had been identified
- How suppliers were engaged, and whether those with the highest sustainability impact had been identified
- How the sustainability impacts of procurement activity were measured and reported on.

Taking stock

ONS did not provide any information about what had helped and hindered progress against the commitments in its SDAP, and towards sustainable development in general. The SDC strongly encourages departments to think carefully about what is holding back or slowing progress, in order that a solution can be found. It also encourages departments to share positive experiences, by highlighting what has helped them to make good progress.

The SDC would also have liked ONS to provide information about how it evaluates the sustainable development impacts of its overall policies, projects and activities.

Summing up

Overall, ONS reported good progress against the actions in its 2006 SDAP, but information in support of this assessment was very limited.

Some examples of good progress were provided, but the SDC expects more detail explaining the success of actions taken. ONS did not explain why some actions from its SDAP were behind target, and the lack of target dates for several actions appeared to make assessing progress difficult. Furthermore, it did not explain how it had assessed the SD impacts of its actions.

ONS only reported the progress it had made against actions in its SDAP. In future progress reports, the SDC would also expect ONS to provide a broader assessment of how it is embedding sustainable development across the organisation, and how it is progressing against the procurement Flexible Framework, or an equivalent tool.

¹² *UK Government Sustainable Procurement Action Plan*, Defra, 2007.

sustainable development commission

**2006 Sustainable Development
Action Plan Progress Report**

**Office for National Statistics'
Self-Assessment
3rd October 2007**

PROGRESS AGAINST ACTIONS

The tables that follow report ONS' progress against specific actions in its 2006 SDAP. The table was designed by the SDC as part of the self-assessment tool for departments, and encourages critical assessment of the value of each action, as well as the progress achieved.

Progress is represented using a RAG+ Analysis (red, amber, green, +blue) (column E), and provides a subjective indication of the completion of an action towards its stated objectives:

- **Complete** indicates that an action is complete, and the associated output/outcomes fully realised
- **On target** indicates the action is incomplete in one or more aspects, but is still on target
- **Recoverable** indicates that an action is behind target, but recoverable
- **Behind target** indicates that an action is far behind target and that recovery is unlikely.

Column F details evidence to verify the reported progress made, such as:

- Published strategies, policies, Bills, guidance, literature
- Objective performance measures, indicators and associated sources of data
- Reports of events, particularly outcomes and next steps
- Auditable correspondence
- Auditable activities.

In column G, ONS reported whether this evidence is readily available for scrutiny by the SDC.

While each action is important in itself, the aim of the SDAP is to help organisations fulfil their contributions to the government's wider sustainable development priorities for immediate action, as set out in its 2005 strategy, *Securing the Future*.¹³ These are:

- Sustainable consumption and production
- Climate change and energy
- Natural resource protection and environmental enhancement
- Sustainable communities.

Column H contains ONS' critical assessment of how each action impacts on these priority areas, using a scale of 1-4 (see table below).

Column H Level	Contribution of action to one or more of the priority areas
1	Zero or small
2	Fair
3	Good
4	Outstanding

¹³ *Securing the Future – Delivering the UK Sustainable Development Strategy*, HM Government, March 2005.

Office for National Statistics' self-assessment of progress towards SDAP actions

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Ref	Action	Target	Responsibility	Progress (RAG+ analysis)	Evidence/crosscheck used to measure action	Readily available?	Impact (1-4)	Comments
1a	Review significant SD impacts as part of the annual review of ONS SD policy	Dec 06	ONS Environment Manager	Complete	Aspects and Impacts recorded on ENVOY system as a requirement of ISO 14001	Yes	1	
1b	Review significant SD impacts in preparation for the annual BSI ISO 14001 re-assessment of Environmental Management Systems	Annually prior to BSI inspection	FM contractor/ Site EMS managers	Complete	ISO 14001 accreditation retained at all sites	Yes	1	
2a	Develop an EMS and seek accreditation for Christchurch site	31/03/06	FM Contractor	Complete	EMS in place and ISO 14001 accreditation awarded Feb 2006	Yes	1	

A Ref	B Action	C Target	D Responsibility	E Progress (RAG+ analysis)	F Evidence/crosscheck used to measure action	G Readily available?	H Impact (1-4)	I Comments
2b	Maintain EMS by regular updating of ENVOY system	Quarterly	FM Contractor	Complete	Constantly update records on ENVOY system	Yes	1	
2c	Conduct at least 4 internal audits of the EMS system against different elements of the ISO 14001 standard each year	Quarterly	FM Contractor	Complete	ENVOY system records audits	Yes	1	
3	Review significant SD impacts in the ONS policy statement/strategy document on the National Statistics website	Annually in December	ONS Environment Manager	Behind target	N/A		1	

A Ref	B Action	C Target	D Responsibility	E Progress (RAG+ analysis)	F Evidence/crosscheck used to measure action	G Readily available?	H Impact (1-4)	I Comments
4a	Produce progress report for ONS Board and post on the National Statistics website	Annually	FM Contractor / ONS Environment Manager	Complete	Report is contained in ONS Annual Report	Yes	1	
4b	Publicise progress on the ONS intranet and seek staff support	Annually	ONS Environment Manager	Complete	Articles on Intranet and in-house staff magazine.	Yes	2	
4c	Performance data to be internally and externally audited	Annually	FM Contractor / Site EMS Managers / BSI	Complete	Audited by ONS Environment team and BSI auditor	Yes	1	
5a	Use fuel efficient carbon friendly modern fleet cars	Review annually	Registration Division	On target	9 vehicles of the fleet of 14 are Diesel Euro IV compliant	Yes	3	

A Ref	B Action	C Target	D Responsibility	E Progress (RAG+ analysis)	F Evidence/crosscheck used to measure action	G Readily available?	H Impact (1-4)	I Comments
5b	Consider dual fuel cars as infrastructure improves	Review annually	Registration Division	Recoverable			3	
5c	Encourage increased use of video and audio conferencing, public transport and car sharing through notice boards, the Daily electronic newsletter and World Environment Day	Quarterly	FM Contractor	On target	All sites have video and audio facilities bookable by all staff via electronic system.	Yes	3	
5d	Encourage the wider use of net meetings	Quarterly	IM	On target	All staff have access to Net Meetings	Yes	2	

A Ref	B Action	C Target	D Responsibility	E Progress (RAG+ analysis)	F Evidence/crosscheck used to measure action	G Readily available?	H Impact (1-4)	I Comments
6	Regularly publicise the car share database in the Daily and on notice boards. Encourage cycling	Annually June & Dec	FM Contractor	On target	Articles published on ONS Intranet. All sites have covered bicycle parks and shower facilities and changing/drying rooms	Yes	2	
7a	Review green travel plans at least once annually	June 2006	Site EMS/ONS site managers	Recoverable	Two out of three relevant sites have reviewed travel plans.		2	
7b	Attend meetings of local travel groups	As required	Site EMS/ONS site managers	Recoverable	Two out of three relevant sites have attended local travel groups.		1	

A Ref	B Action	C Target	D Responsibility	E Progress (RAG+ analysis)	F Evidence/crosscheck used to measure action	G Readily available?	H Impact (1-4)	I Comments
8	Participate in the Government's pilot carbon offsetting scheme for air travel in 2006, when details have been finalised by lead Departments	Annually in May	Finance Section	Complete	ONS pay £3500 contribution each year	Yes	2	
9a	Continue to introduce water saving measures in refurbishment projects	Prior to finalising spec	FM Contractor	On target	Waterless urinals and sensor taps fitted in all refurbished toilets. Replaced aged water mains at two main sites and repaired meters.	Yes	3	
9b	Examine specifications on major projects and identify opportunities to improve sustainability	Prior to finalising spec	FM Contractor	On target	ONS Central Projects team have remit to maximise sustainability in all property projects.	Yes	2	

A Ref	B Action	C Target	D Responsibility	E Progress (RAG+ analysis)	F Evidence/crosscheck used to measure action	G Readily available?	H Impact (1-4)	I Comments
9c	Raise awareness of water saving issues	Quarterly	FM Contractor	On target	Regular articles in-house magazine and intranet		2	
10	Include a sustainable waste management strategy as part of ONS' SD policy statement and review annually	Review annually in December	ONS Environment Manager	Complete	ONS is just 0.5% short of SDC 2020 target.	Yes	2	
11	Provide data on waste arisings and recycling rates by waste stream as part of (a) annual Environment Performance Indicator return and (b) monthly report	Ongoing	FM Contractor	Complete	Reports produced for each monthly strategy meeting between ONS Senior Property Managers and Facilities Management contractor.	Yes	2	

A Ref	B Action	C Target	D Responsibility	E Progress (RAG+ analysis)	F Evidence/crosscheck used to measure action	G Readily available?	H Impact (1-4)	I Comments
12	<p>Include clauses to minimise and where possible avoid impacts of waste in all relevant waste management contracts initiated 3 months after the publication of standard Government contract clauses</p> <p>(a) Include in FM contract revisions</p> <p>(b) Include in general contract clauses</p>	Dec 2006	<p>(a) ONS Environment Manager</p> <p>(b) Lynne Evans / Sharon Meredith/ Procurement Unit</p>	Recoverable	<p>Clauses in all waste management contracts.</p> <p>Clauses in some general contracts.</p>	Yes	2	

A Ref	B Action	C Target	D Responsibility	E Progress (RAG+ analysis)	F Evidence/crosscheck used to measure action	G Readily available?	H Impact (1-4)	I Comments
13a	Reduce absolute carbon: Examine options for developments of on-site CHP plant and solar/wind power		FM contractor	On target	Study on CHP completed. Consultants have been commissioned to report on feasibility of wind/solar power.	Yes	3	
13b	Reduce absolute carbon: Try to obtain a CHP supply		Procurement Unit	Complete	Study showed CHP not feasible.	Yes	3	
13c	Reduce absolute carbon: Promote energy awareness		FM contractor	Recoverable	Regular articles in in-house magazine. Campaign to reduce travel.	Yes	3	
13d	Reduce absolute carbon: Work with independent energy auditors		FM contractor	Recoverable	Have signed up to Carbon Trust partnership arrangement.	Yes	2	

A Ref	B Action	C Target	D Responsibility	E Progress (RAG+ analysis)	F Evidence/crosscheck used to measure action	G Readily available?	H Impact (1-4)	I Comments
13e	Reduce absolute carbon: Seek invest to save funding to implement recommendations / initiatives e.g. secondary glazing, insulation		ONS Environment Manager	On target	Green Fund established in Property budget. Local council grant received for bicycle facilities.	Yes	2	
14a	Increase energy efficiency: Promote energy awareness		FM contractor	On target	FM contractor mandated to promote sustainability issues		2	
14b	Increase energy efficiency: Work with independent energy auditors and implement findings		FM contractor	On target	FM contractor mandated to promote sustainability issues		3	

A Ref	B Action	C Target	D Responsibility	E Progress (RAG+ analysis)	F Evidence/crosscheck used to measure action	G Readily available?	H Impact (1-4)	I Comments
14c	Increase energy efficiency: Seek invest to save funding to implement recommendations / initiatives		ONS Environment Manager	On target	£150, 000 set aside for energy projects this year.		3	
15	Procure an additional supply of renewable energy for Titchfield site in order to exceed the 10% target	31/03/06	Lynne Evans / Procurement Unit	Complete	OGC contract has secured 18% renewable electricity at this site.	Yes	3	
16	Procure 15% electricity supply from CHP sources	31/03/06	Lynne Evans / Procurement Unit	Recoverable	2004 Feasibility study showed not achievable but have decided to revisit this year.	Yes	3	

A Ref	B Action	C Target	D Responsibility	E Progress (RAG+ analysis)	F Evidence/crosscheck used to measure action	G Readily available?	H Impact (1-4)	I Comments
17	Review contracts to ensure sustainability is included in FM, IT and general contracts	June 2006	FM Contracts / ONS Environmental Manager / IT / Procurement Unit (Sharon Meredith)	Complete	SD clauses in all contracts	Yes	2	
18	Draw up a Sustainable Procurement Strategy	01/12/05	Procurement Unit (Lynne Evans) / Environmental Manager	On target	Original draft being reviewed		1	
19	Ensure sustainability clauses are included in all contracts for goods works and services	31/03/06	Procurement Unit (Lynne Evans / Sharon Meredith)	Complete	SD clauses in all contracts		2	

A Ref	B Action	C Target	D Responsibility	E Progress (RAG+ analysis)	F Evidence/crosscheck used to measure action	G Readily available?	H Impact (1-4)	I Comments
20	Ensure sustainable procurement features in training and awareness programmes	31/03/06	Procurement Unit / FM Contractor	Complete	All ONS Procurement staff must attend SD courses. All contract team members need to attain CIPS qualification. Other staff must read and sign SD guidance doc.	Yes	3	
21.	Review the current Food Procurement Action Plan at least once per annum	31/06/06	ONS Environment Manager / FM Contractor / Catering Manager	Complete	FM contract mandates supplier to comply with the FCAP.	Yes	2	
22.	Review estates strategy annually	30/06/06	ONS Estates Manager	Complete	Property Division produces annual business plan which covers SD.		1	
23.	Use sustainability checklist to clear all specifications for major building work	Ongoing	FM Contractor / Environment Manager	Complete	Checklist used as an integral part of property project management.	Yes	3	

A Ref	B Action	C Target	D Responsibility	E Progress (RAG+ analysis)	F Evidence/crosscheck used to measure action	G Readily available?	H Impact (1-4)	I Comments
24.	Review risk assessment (risks and opportunities to estates posed by climate change and variable weather)	June 2006	Estates Manager	Complete	Risks are low and no new builds planned. No change to conclusions.	Yes	1	
25.	Review progress of program to replace equipment containing ozone depleting substances and those with high global warming potential, with alternatives	June 2006	Estates Manager	On target	Maintenance records show continuing programme of replacement. We are on target to meet regulations.	No	3	
26.	Consider guidance if disposal is considered	Ongoing	Estates Manager	Complete	Disposal through licensed contractor.	Yes	2	

A Ref	B Action	C Target	D Responsibility	E Progress (RAG+ analysis)	F Evidence/crosscheck used to measure action	G Readily available?	H Impact (1-4)	I Comments
27.	Ensure necessary clauses are included in all estates management and construction tender specifications	Ongoing	Estates Manager	Complete	All contractors provided with Briefing Packs specifying ONS SD requirements. Forms part of tender documentation.	Yes	3	
28.	Review biodiversity impacts, as part of EMS	Annually	FM Contractor	Complete	Reviewed as part of regular audits to retain 14001 accreditation	Yes	2	
29.	Include clauses to minimise/avoid impacts and take measures to enhance biodiversity in maintenance, building and leasing contracts - Review at site EMS meetings	Annually	FM Contractor	Complete	All contractors provided with Briefing Packs specifying ONS SD requirements	Yes	2	

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Ref	Action	Target	Responsibility	Progress (RAG+ analysis)	Evidence/crosscheck used to measure action	Readily available?	Impact (1-4)	Comments
30.	Draw up a strategy that sets out the way in which ONS will identify, assess and monitor significant social impacts that arise from the management of its land, buildings and operations. The strategy should also include procedures to ensure that proposals to significantly change the way in which land and buildings are managed take account of potential impacts on staff and local communities	31/03/06	ONS Environment Manager	Complete	Document produced and published on ONS Intranet	Yes	1	

ONS response signed by:

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Sign-off date: 04-06-08