

Sustainable Development Action Plan



Sustainable
Development Commission

Department for Constitutional Affairs

**Sustainable Development Minister:
Baroness Ashton of Upholland**

SDC Assessment

Gearing up



Checklist

Sustainable Development Action Plan

1	Does the plan specify the period of time it will cover?	✓	
2	Does the plan specify which organisations it covers?	✗	Plan explains DCA has sister departments and associated organisations but does not make clear if they are covered by departmental plan.
3	Has the organisation articulated what SD means for them?	✓	
4	Does the plan describe the benefits of having an SD approach to the organisation?	✓	
5	Does the plan acknowledge the Government's sustainable development goal?	✗	Does not mention <i>Securing the Future</i> definition of sustainable development goal. Refers to Brundtland definition.
6	Does the plan acknowledge the priorities of <i>Securing the Future</i> ? Does the plan mention one or more of the priorities of <i>Securing the Future</i> ?	✓ ✓	
7	Does the plan identify links to the priorities of <i>Securing the Future</i> ?	✓	
8	Does the plan acknowledge the principles of <i>Securing the Future</i> ? Does the plan mention one or more of the principles of <i>Securing the Future</i> ?	✓ ✓	
9	Does the plan identify links to the principles of <i>Securing the Future</i> ?	✓	In particular it recognises the relevance of safe and secure communities. However, the DCA also has a critical role in championing the 'governance' principle.
10	Have the organisation's relevant executive agencies produced their own plan?	✗	It was explained in bilateral discussions that all associated organisations are covered by the plan.
11	Does the action plan contain a work programme?	✓	
12	Does the plan include actions relating to commitments from the SD strategy?	✓	
13	Does the action plan cover government policy?	✓	
14	Does the action plan cover operations?	✓	
15	Was the plan publicly available by 13th January 2006?	✗	

16	Does the plan outline any arrangements for strengthening SD capacity in the organisation?	✓	
17	Does the plan describe the infrastructure in place to deliver the plan?	✓	
18	Does the plan make it clear who signed it off?	✓	Draft Ministerial foreword submitted to SDC by March deadline.
19	Does the plan designate who is accountable for the delivery of the overall plan?	✓	
20	Does the plan explain how the organisation will monitor progress against the plan?	✓	
21	Does the plan describe how the organisation will report against the plan?	✓	Will report on progress in departmental Sustainable Development Report.
22	Does the plan describe how it links in to other reporting mechanisms within the organisation? E.g. the annual report	✗	DCA explained in bilateral discussions that they will also reflect performance in their Annual Report.
23	Does the plan commit to reporting against the plan on a defined regular basis?	✓	Will report in Sustainable Development Report annually.

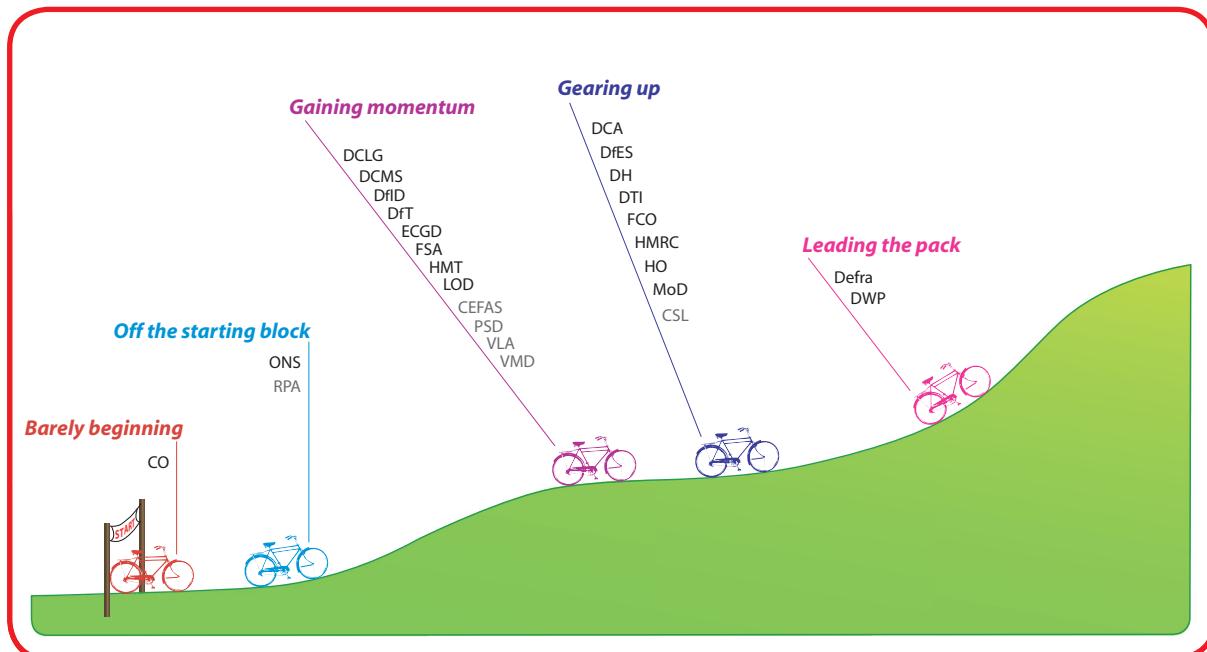
Senior Accountable Officer: Sustainable Development Champion and Alex Limberg, Head of Sustainable Development and Energy.

Status of Plan: Draft submitted to SDC 05.01.06

DCA's Strategy and action plans published on 17.07.06

Please note that the SDC rating is based on a competency framework and not straight addition of the scores in the table above. Please see main report for full explanation of the methodology.

How is DCA doing?



Background

DCA is responsible in government for upholding justice, rights and democracy. Responsibilities in these areas include running the courts, and improving the justice system; human rights and information rights law; and policy on running elections and modernising the constitution.

Context

DCA has produced a Strategy for Sustainable Development and an associated action plan. The department submitted a draft strategy and plan in time to meet the 17 March deadline. The Department confirmed in the bilateral that the plan had been signed off and would be published shortly.¹ The Strategy and plan were developed under the overall direction of a department wide Steering Group, supported by the Sustainable Development team, and external consultants from Entec UK Ltd. The Group engaged with key individuals across the department to gain contributions to the plan.

Coverage

The SDAP explains that DCA has sister departments and associated organisations but does not make clear if they are covered by departmental plan. Bilateral discussions revealed that all related organisations are covered by the departmental strategy and plan. These are – Her Majesty's Court Service, HM Land Registry, National Archives, Public Guardianship Office and the Tribunals Service. These organisations will be producing their own SDAPs in the future.

Departmental view of Sustainable Development

The SDAP acknowledges a number of key themes of *Securing the Future* but singles out the priority of sustainable communities as the area where the department has a particular locus through their core work aimed at building safer communities. The department acknowledges the relevance of their PSAs to this agenda, for example, their PSA on social exclusion and their shared PSA on reassuring the public and reducing the fear of crime. The department commented in the bilateral that DCA found it difficult to work out where to position itself in relation to sustainable development but it was clear that the department should recognise its links to sustainable development through themes around fairness and justice.

Benefits of taking a sustainable development approach

The SDAP asserts that taking a sustainable development approach will bring about long-term benefits to the department, by assisting the department in the implementation of key aspects of its corporate strategy and PSAs, and act as a vehicle for enabling DCA to better serve its communities and enhance its reputation. The plan does not explain why implementing *Securing the Future* and taking a sustainable development approach will better help the department deliver its core business.

Link to Securing the Future

Guiding Principles

The DCA strategy acknowledges the guiding principles set out in *Securing the Future* and explains that their own departmental priority *Making a Difference* (which includes elements such as fighting crime, supporting victims of crime, ensuring a diverse judiciary and efficient and effective fraud trials) fits well with the guiding principle of the Strategy relating to 'ensuring a strong, healthy and just society.'

Shared priorities for UK action

The strategy and plan acknowledge the four priorities of *Securing the Future* and the department recognises the particular contribution it can make to Sustainable Communities through its work to build safer communities and in raising public confidence in the criminal justice system.

In particular, DCA's Objective 6 relates to empowering communities and improving DCA's reputation. The department also acknowledges the contribution it can make to the Climate Change and Energy, and Sustainable Consumption and Production priorities through the operation of the DCA estate and includes actions on these priorities under their operational objective.

Policy priorities

To its credit, DCA has identified several high level objectives as the key policy priorities for the 2006 strategy and plan. The department aims to:

- 1. Ensure a long-term commitment to sustainable development within DCA.** The department has set itself actions to establish governance structures and appoint a Sustainable Development Champion to give both the strategy and plan clear leadership. Sustainable development matters will be incorporated into the Sustainable Development Champion's personal development plan to support his/her role.
- 2. Mainstream sustainable development within all policies projects and programmes.** This includes actions on developing an additional checklist for RIA's, ensuring sustainable development is considered in the business planning process and annual plans.
- 3. Empower communities and improve DCA's reputation.** The department has included actions aimed at improving service delivery and the overall perception and effectiveness of the justice system. The department will also

pilot schemes such as Community Justice Centres so citizens and stakeholders have good access to information which allows them to make informed decisions about their rights and freedoms.

Securing the Future explains that the ability to engage the wider public in the development and implementation of new ideas is integral to the delivery of sustainable development. In its Five Year Strategy Delivering Justice, Rights and Democracy DCA identified 'Strengthening democracy, rights and responsibilities by renewing the relationship between the public and state'² as one of the department's priorities for the next five years.

The SDC believes that active participation by people in informing new policies and in adopting changes in behavior is critical if the UK is to create the momentum and political will to achieve sustainable development. The SDC would therefore like to see future plans explore the possible contributions the department can make to sustainable development through embracing and championing the potential of new forms of governance and participative decision-making which can create momentum and political will to tackle long term, global issues and sustainable development.

Leading by example

DCA's strategy acknowledges that the department has been identified by the SDC as one which has considerable progress to make in responding to the Sustainable Development in Government targets. The operational commitments identified in the plan are an attempt to improve upon performance. The high level objective is to integrate the principles of sustainable development into ongoing estate operations. The department also explains that it has included actions which are set to

bring about considerable financial as well as environmental benefits. The operational aspect of the plan is centred on energy efficiency, travel, water, waste performance and reporting, EMS coverage and procurement. However, DCA highlighted in the bilateral that its operational performance in the SDiG report was unlikely to improve this year. This is due to the limited resources available and the main focus on producing a comprehensive Sustainable Development strategy and action plan.

Securing the Future commitments

Departmental commitment

There are no specific *Securing the Future* commitments for which DCA has the lead across government.

Cross-government commitments

The department refers to some relevant areas of the cross-government commitments but does not set out actions in the context of contributing to them. The plan includes actions aimed at improving knowledge and awareness of sustainable development within the department, integrating the five principles into decision-making and ensuring sustainable development considerations are included at each stage of the procurement process.

Target setting

The department has made a good attempt at demonstrating the links between the high-level objectives and the actions it has set under each of the objectives. However, many of the actions do not include specific timescales for completion or key milestones, and it is not always clear what key steps the department will need to take to achieve some of the actions. For example, it is not clear how the department will ensure sustainable development is considered as a cross cutting theme within the business planning process as set out in page 13 of the action Plan.

Policy making

Sustainable Development proofing

The department acknowledges that currently sustainable development is “peripheral” to many decisions and policy makers within the department, and has included a set of actions aimed at tackling this. The SDC welcomes the department’s honest approach and genuine commitment to addressing this.

The department commits to developing specific tools for RIAs and sustainability appraisals and raising staff awareness of the need to consider sustainable development in policy formulation. The plan includes an action to devise an additional RIA checklist, ensure guidance on the business planning process is modified to include relevant changes for sustainable development incorporation, and undertake awareness raising workshops on RIA guidance and interpretation.

The department makes a commitment to integrate *Securing the Future*’s five principles into policy making. However, there are no specific actions aimed at tackling this. DCA explained that the five principles will be integrated into DCA’s training programme.

Sustainable Development Skills

DCA has set a high-level objective aimed at improving knowledge and awareness of sustainable development within the department. The sustainable development team is currently developing a training programme to roll out sustainable development. It is not yet clear what the focus of the training programme will be. The department has included several other actions to build up sustainable development knowledge, for example, incorporating briefing on sustainable development in the department’s briefing process to raise awareness among senior managers and enable information to be cascaded to all staff through team meetings. However SDC believes a methodical approach to capacity building for sustainable development will be necessary to thoroughly embed sustainable development into departmental policy development. The Commission would like to see future plans include a more in-depth approach to capacity building, which engages staff in understanding that sustainable development is not peripheral to their work.

Achieving Sustainable Development outcomes

Infrastructure

The Sustainable Development Steering Group, supported by the sustainable development team, will lead the implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy and action plan. The Steering Group includes broad representation from across the department with each member representing an area of the department that is responsible for representing the specific components of the strategy. The Sustainable Development Champion who is also the Director of Communications chairs the Steering Group.

Engagement

The department recognises that communication forms an important role in implementing the strategy. The strategy explains that the communications group within the DCA will have an active role in integrating sustainable development into existing internal and external communications. In recognition of the importance of communication, the department has appointed the Communications Director as the Sustainable Development Champion. However, the plan offers no examples of what

the focus of the communications group's work might be, key messages the department wishes to convey etc.

The department is in the process of devising a communications plan for the strategy and plans to ensure an effective launch and sustained implementation, which will be backed by the on-going support of the Sustainable Development Steering Group.

The SDC would like the department to ensure the communications plan includes action aimed at generating a wider ownership of the strategy and action plan. Currently, it is the Steering Group which will 'own' the strategy, including being responsible for its implementation.³ However, the strategy also states that 'ultimately it will be up to every individual within the Department to contribute to its implementation'.⁴ The communications plan needs to make clear how these two statements will be managed.

The department posted the draft strategy on the intranet for internal feedback and provided an invitation to key stakeholder groups to present on 'good practice' and take part in discussions on specific issues. The sustainable development team will lead in stakeholder engagement in the future.

Monitoring and reporting

The department has included several indicators in its plan to monitor progress against some of the actions. The department is also working on a performance measurement strategy which will help monitor progress against the overall strategy and plan. The department has also committed to ensuring that its progress is subject to external scrutiny and verification.

The SDC welcomes this comprehensive approach. It will be important to ensure

that learning will be fed back into the plan. This encourages open and honest review of performance which allows for improvement and adaptation over time.

The department will report on progress against their Strategy and Plan in June each year through a Sustainable Development Report. DCA confirmed in the bilateral that it plans to cross reference the progress report in its Annual Report.

1 DCA's Strategy was published on 17.07.06

2 Delivering Justice, Rights and Democracy, DCA Strategy 2004-2009, page 62

3 DCA Sustainable Development Strategy, page 24

4 DCA Sustainable Development Strategy page 25

Learning points

Strengths to build upon

	<p>Ensure the communications plan includes actions and processes aimed at generating a deeper understanding of sustainable development and a wider ownership of the strategy and action plan.</p>
	<p>Develop a methodical approach to capacity building to embed sustainable development into departmental policy development and include a more in-depth approach to capacity building which engages staff in understanding that sustainable development is not peripheral to their work.</p>

Challenges for 2007

	<p>Making clear and compelling links between sustainable development and departmental core business (see example below).</p>
	<p>Broaden conception of the relevance of sustainable development to DCA from a focus on operations and sustainable communities to embracing and championing the potential of new forms of governance and participative decision-making which can create momentum and political will to tackle long term, global issues and sustainable development. This exciting opportunity fits with the department's priority of 'renewing the relationship between the public and the state', electoral reform and embedding participation in government.</p>
	<p>Ensure all targets include specific timescales for completion or key milestones, and make clear what key steps the department will need to take to achieve all of the targets.</p>



Sustainable
Development Commission

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| England
(Main office) | Ground Floor, Ergon House,
Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2AL
020 7238 4995
enquiries@sd-commission.org.uk |
| Scotland | 1-H (N) Victoria Quay,
Edinburgh EH6 6QQ
0131 244 0140
Scotland@sd-commission.org.uk
www.sd-commission.org.uk/scotland |
| Wales | c/o Welsh Assembly Government,
Cathays Park, Cardiff CF10 3NQ
029 2082 6382
Wales@sd-commission.org.uk
www.sd-commission.org.uk/wales |
| Northern Ireland | Room ES/11, OFMDFM
Castle Buildings, Stormont,
Belfast BT4 3SR
02890 257346
N.Ireland@sd-commission.org.uk |