

EA SUSTAIN. DEVELOP.

A FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE

A better quality of life

JULY 2001



ENVIRONMENT
AGENCY

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A better quality of life

“In our own lives, we know the value of money.

We know it can bring comfort, security and new opportunities.
But we also know that money isn't everything.

Feeling safe on our streets or in our homes. Enjoying our rich
or diverse countryside. Living in strong communities.

These all matter too.”

TONY BLAIR, PRIME MINISTER, MAY 1999
FOREWORD TO “A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE:
A STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR THE UNITED KINGDOM”

1. Why a Framework for Change?

The Environment Agency's vision

In June 2000 the Agency consulted widely on its long-term objectives and goals. After taking into account the responses that we received, in January 2001 we published *An Environmental Vision: The Environment Agency's Contribution to Sustainable Development* (the *Vision*)¹.

This sets out our long term, aspirational objectives for the environment, grouped under nine environmental themes. In preparing it, we were very conscious that it would be the process by which those objectives are met - the route by which the Agency plans, in partnership with others, to make progress towards the long term destination - that would be of particular interest. This was reinforced by the comments we received during the consultation on the Vision.

Frameworks for Change

To show the route we propose to take, we have prepared a series of *Frameworks for Change*, one for each of the *Vision's* nine environmental themes. This document is one of these thematic *Frameworks* which are intended mainly for internal planning purposes though they are publicly available. They set out our proposals for the medium term to make progress towards the long-term objectives described in the *Vision*. These *Frameworks* - and the associated dialogue and business development that will flow from them - are not only intended to make progress towards the environmental outcomes in the *Vision*, but also to improve the Agency's service delivery to Government², industry, and the public. They are also intended to improve our own internal efficiency and effectiveness. Overall, we regard them as being beneficial to both our stakeholders, and society in general. They are frameworks with a menu of possible actions, rather than final plans, because we still have to agree the final proposals. We have to balance the competing priorities within them, take into account their specific implications for others, and match them to the resources we have available. This balancing and prioritisation has to be

¹ The Environmental Vision, and Frameworks for Change is available on the Agency's website <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk>

² References to Government include the UK Government and, where appropriate, the National Assembly for Wales.

agreed with Government, and will be done through our corporate planning process, with our firmed-up work programmes appearing in our formal Corporate Plans. The Government's current revision of its statutory guidance in respect of our sustainable development remit will also help us clarify the routes and options available to us.

We will be discussing these proposals with our stakeholders. The main vehicle for this external dialogue and discussion will be a separate series of sector based *Frameworks* starting late in 2001. These will draw from the nine themes the issues and outcomes relevant to the sector concerned.

Working with partners

We recognise that we cannot on our own deliver the outcomes and goals we have set out. We already work in close partnership with a wide range of organisations and groups, and we are keen to explore how we can strengthen existing partnerships and develop new ones. This does not just involve seeking partners for Agency led projects, but also supporting the work of others. We will need to work with a wide range of bodies with an interest in land issues, including those we regulate. Below we list areas where we will want to work in partnership with others, but have not sought fully to specify who these others might be.

2. Understanding quality of life

As it is described in the Government's 1999 White Paper *A better quality of life: A strategy for sustainable development for the UK*, sustainable development means achieving a number of economic, social and environmental goals at the same time. These goals are:

- Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;
- Effective protection of the environment;
- Prudent use of natural resources; and
- Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

The strategy also describes a number of guiding principles, such as transparency, participation in decision making and access to justice, which add a governance dimension to sustainable development.

The basis of sustainable development is that each of these goals depends on the others; progress towards one of them would be limited by failure to make progress on all of them.

The specific outcome of working towards sustainable development should be that quality of life improves for everyone. This is, therefore, the measure of the Agency's success in contributing to sustainable development, and the Vision recognises it as one of the fundamental goals we want to help achieve. It is why we focus explicitly on quality of life in this *Framework*. However, as is implicit in our principal aim, it is our work to protect and enhance the environment, described in the other themes of the Vision and their respective *Frameworks*, that forms the core of our contribution to this overarching goal.

3. The Environment Agency's role

The principal aim of the Environment Agency, provided in the 1995 Environment Act, is to protect and enhance the environment so as to make the contribution to sustainable development that Ministers consider appropriate. Ministers have provided statutory guidance on how the Agency should make this contribution. The guidance asks the Agency to ensure integration

and take a long-term view in its work. This guidance is currently under review as part of the Government's five – yearly financial management and policy review of the Agency. Both cost and benefits of action are to be taken into account, and the Agency is encouraged to form close and responsive relationships with its stakeholders. Through its work, and by following this guidance, the Environment Agency contributes to the quality of life in a variety of ways.

Contributing to the quality of life

The most immediate impact the Agency makes on quality of life is through its primary functions. These have a direct effect on quality of life, for example by protecting people against pollution and flooding, providing agreeable riverside recreation, and by ensuring wise stewardship of precious resources such as water. Economic regeneration is encouraged by the cleaning up of historic pollution and providing a clean environment within which new businesses might establish themselves. New markets are opened up by the drive for improved pollution abatement technologies, and waste minimisation can also reduce costs and improve competitiveness.

The Agency also has an impact on quality of life through the way in which it carries out its functions. By consulting widely, by engaging with others in partnership and by forming close and responsive relationships with its partners, the Agency makes a substantial contribution to the inclusion of all parts of society in the decisions which affect them. This also contributes to good governance, supporting the Government's aims for local democracy and social inclusion.

Finally, the Agency contributes to improving quality of life by providing expertise and information. This enables decisions ranging from the national and major to the local or those of individual choice to be taken with the best advice and knowledge underpinning them. For example, the Agency provides local environmental information through its web-site. The Agency's knowledge of the environment at a local scale has enabled it to play a key role in contributing an environmental dimension to regional economic strategies and in developing the new Regional Frameworks for Sustainable Development.

4. The Environment Agency's objectives

Having an over-arching objective of contributing to quality of life shifts the emphasis away from single outcomes and towards a set of inter-linked outcomes. In contrast to relatively narrow, quantitative measures of value – for example relative income or standard of living – quality of life is defined by a more holistic set of issues such as health, recreation, equity, social cohesion and democratic vitality, alongside economic wealth and environmental quality. The Government's set of headline and core indicators, described in *Quality of life counts*³, illustrates this type of thinking at the national level, and many complementary examples exist at the regional and local levels⁴. While individual communities naturally differ in their definitions and preferred indicators of quality of life, in each case the focus is on a comprehensive and inter-linked set of outcomes.

Joined-up approaches

It is this inter-linking of diverse outcomes which provides the key to understanding quality of life. This first *Framework* is therefore about highlighting these linkages and ensuring their delivery through the remaining eight thematic *Frameworks*. While each of these eight *Frameworks* focuses

³ DETR (1999) *Quality of life counts. Indicators for a strategy for sustainable development for the UK: a baseline assessment.*

⁴ Audit Commission (2001) *Voluntary quality of life and cross-cutting indicators for local authorities.*

on a specific set of environmental outcomes, the task of the quality of life *Framework* is to ensure 'joined-up' thinking in the ways that these outcomes are delivered – so that overall quality of life is strengthened rather than weakened.

Recognising that the primary functions of the Agency already make a direct and important contribution to quality of life, the aim of a joined-up perspective is to strengthen this contribution. This means thinking more broadly about how environmental measures and outcomes can contribute to a comprehensive set of quality of life outcomes (for example, how sustainable waste management practices can also provide socially inclusive and cohesive employment opportunities), and equally, how social and economic policy can be tapped into to secure positive environmental outcomes.

In summary, the quality of life *Framework* begins to highlight some of the key approaches to joined-up thinking that we will need to apply through the remaining eight *Frameworks* in order to strengthen our contribution to sustainable development. This is expressed through the Agency's overall long-term objective with respect to quality of life, which is that:

People will have peace of mind from knowing that they live in a clean, healthy environment, rich in wildlife and natural diversity – an environment that they can use, care for, appreciate and enjoy.

This *Framework* sets out how, through the other eight *Frameworks*, we will achieve the following outcomes:

- People will be confident that the environment is well cared for, is not damaged by pollution, and does not provide a health risk because of human activities.
- The environment will be greatly valued and cared for by all sectors of society as a source of food, water, materials, income, recreation, sport and wildlife conservation.
- Environmental responsibilities will be taken seriously by all and mechanisms for ensuring environmental equality and justice will be readily available to all individuals and communities who need them.
- Information and processes will be readily available to enable citizens, communities, businesses and Government and its agencies to agree quality of life and environmental targets and the plans that will realise them.
- Local, regional, national, rural and urban strategies will fully reflect sustainable development principles and will be appropriately linked, thereby enabling effective and integrated environmental protection and enhancement.
- Sustainability values and working practices within the Agency, including those of openness, collaboration, partnership, participatory decision making, precaution and respect for diversity, will reflect those of key stakeholders and of society in general.

We will seek to achieve these outcomes in the most efficient and effective manner, taking into account the costs and benefits of the options available to do so.

5. Goals and actions

For each outcome we have identified overleaf a number of goals we intend to achieve in the short to medium term in order to move towards the Vision. We have also outlined the activities

that will help achieve these goals, together with the tests to assess progress in their delivery. In practice, activities may contribute to the achievement of more than one goal and outcome.

Tests for progress

The Government's set of sustainable development indicators⁵ help show, at a high level, whether we are on a sustainable track. The Agency has also developed its own set of environmental indicators⁶ that will be used to show progress towards the Vision. In addition to these, we have included some key tests for progress for each outcome.

Role of the Environment Agency

To clarify the role of the Agency in achieving each of these goals, we have allocated the activities to one of three categories:

Environment Agency's role is central
Environment Agency as a substantial partner
Environment Agency's involvement to build understanding

Because this *Framework*, in particular, reaches across the full range of the Agency's activities, its goals contain implicit references to goals in other *Frameworks*.

⁵ DETR (1999) *Quality of life counts. Indicators for a strategy for sustainable development for the UK: a baseline assessment.*

⁶ Environment Agency (July 2000) *Environmental Indicators.* A set of environmental indicators for Agency use (also available on the Agency's website <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk>)

Confidence in the state of the environment

Outcome 1 – People will be confident that the environment is well cared for, is not damaged by pollution, and does not provide a health risk because of human activities.

Tests for progress:

- Progress against key environmental indicators at national, regional and local levels.
- Progress against key health indicators impacted by our core functions.
- Public confidence in levels of environmental protection and the reduction of pollution and health risk.
- Public understanding of our role in improving the environment.
- Stakeholders’ feedback on our understanding of their agendas and on our capacity to work with them to address these agendas.

GOAL	ACTIVITY
Goal 1.1 Improved public confidence that the environment is improving.	<p>Short to medium term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on the state of the environment, including use of the internet for presenting information directly and through discussion groups. • Focussing on those aspects most relevant to the Agency’s activities, report on the quality of life and on key interactions between social, environmental and economic indicators.
Goal 1.2 Improved trust and relationships with our stakeholders including the public.	<p>Short to medium term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the level of confidence in the Agency as expressed in opinion surveys. • Become more engaged in debates and dialogues focusing on ‘environmental issues’ as perceived locally, regionally & nationally and by different stakeholders.
Goal 1.3 Health Impact Assessments will form a key part of relevant regulatory processes.	<p>Short to medium term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote and actively participate in Health Impact Assessments for key issues of national public health concern, e.g. waste management activities including incinerators and housing on brownfield sites. • Use others’ national Health Impact Assessments to help assess, and as required control, the impacts of local industrial processes and other activities.

- Environment Agency’s role is central
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The value society places on the environment

Outcome 2 – The environment will be greatly valued and cared for by all sectors of society as a source of food, water, materials, income, recreation, sport and wildlife conservation.

Tests for progress:

- Public understanding and appreciation of environmental goods and benefits.
- Numbers of community action groups addressing environmental issues.
- Percentage of large and small businesses addressing environmental issues.
- Progress against key environmental indicators at national, regional and local levels.
- Levels of access to our own land and navigation.
- Levels of participation in water based recreation.
- Levels of environmental exclusion.

GOAL	ACTIVITY
<p>Goal 2.1 General levels of environmental understanding and appreciation are enhanced.</p>	<p>Short to medium term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make appropriate use of tools such as the 'quality of life capital' approach developed in partnership with English Nature, English Heritage and the Countryside Agency to help stakeholders achieve sustainable planning decisions. • Encourage the use of popular TV/radio soap to highlight key environmental issues involving the Agency.
<p>Goal 2.2 Ready access to easily understood information relevant to local circumstances.</p>	<p>Short to medium term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve our provision of local information including through our internet site on issues such as pollution, flood risk, waterside recreation. • Maintain a local spotlight on environmental performance: public information on angling waters, navigation and public access to Agency-owned sites.
<p>Goal 2.3 Improved access to our own land and to navigations for employment or recreation.</p>	<p>Short to medium term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve access for the enjoyment of the water environment for recreation, specifically on our own land and navigations. <p>Medium term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence partnership investments by others, equal to the value of the Agency total budget, on new opportunities to increase enjoyment of the environment.
<p>Goal 2.4 An enhanced contribution of fishing to local economies and social inclusion.</p>	<p>Short to medium term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and increase participation in fishing, focussing particularly on disadvantaged groups such as young people, disabled, unemployed and elderly. • Develop and promote improved market information (participation, tourism values etc). • Develop fishing opportunities close to centres of population. • Seek the inclusion of fishing tourism in rural development plans and in Tourist Board promotion.
<p>Goal 2.5 Environmental benefits are readily accessible to, and enjoyed by, all sectors of society.</p>	<p>Short to medium term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore opportunities to open up land and water for recreation and report on new facilities thereby created.

The value society places on the environment *continued*

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduce inequalities in access to environmental benefits by working closely with existing initiatives focusing on social and environmental exclusion.• Develop specific practical approaches to improve access and facilities for disabled people, particularly to quality urban sites owned by the Agency.
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Environmental responsibilities

Outcome 3 – Environmental responsibilities will be taken seriously by all and mechanisms for ensuring environmental equality and justice will be readily available to all individuals and communities who need them.

Tests for progress:

- Percentage of companies demonstrating board level commitment to sustainability reporting.
- Numbers of community initiatives focusing on waste minimisation, sustainable waste management and/or sustainable energy management.
- Levels of environmental inclusion.
- Numbers of community sustainable development plans and/or initiatives.

GOAL	ACTIVITY
<p>Goal 3.1 All key sectors including the public are aware of their rights and responsibilities for minimising waste and caring for the environment – and act accordingly.</p>	<p>Short to medium term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Government and industry to develop and launch an indicator for business and sustainable development. • Work with others to combat environmental crime. <p>Medium term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the 2005 national curriculum for schools review to include personal responsibility for sustainable development and the environment as a core requirement.
<p>Goal 3.2 There is widespread recognition of the economic benefits resulting from taking environmental responsibilities seriously.</p>	<p>Short to medium term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with local and regional regeneration initiatives to highlight the economic benefits of environmental responsibility and investment. • Recognise mechanisms by which environmental renewal can contribute to economic, social and community renewal.
<p>Goal 3.3 Environmental equality issues are integrated into the Agency’s major work areas.</p>	<p>Short to medium term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop means by which environmental equality issues are integrated where appropriate into the Agency’s major work areas. • Further develop the skills and capacity of Agency staff to work with stakeholders and communities. • Continue to research and map the linkages between social, economic and environmental indicators. • Understand how we might present this information in a way which is accessible and of value to different stakeholders, including currently excluded communities. • Work with key partners to ensure full stakeholder involvement in the development and implementation of local plans, including the voices of deprived groups. • Work closely with the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, the New Deal for Communities and Communities First (in Wales).
<p>Goal 3.4 All groups have equal access to decisions on the environment & quality of life and feel equally confident to contribute to them.</p>	<p>Short to medium term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote opportunities for full stakeholder involvement throughout the Agency’s decision making processes.

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Decision making processes

Outcome 4 – Information and processes will be readily available to enable citizens, communities, businesses, Government and its agencies to agree quality of life and environmental targets and the plans that will realise them.

Tests for progress:

- Numbers of effective stakeholder fora at different levels.
- Numbers of effective learning networks focusing on sustainable development.
- Numbers of trained facilitators in the Agency supporting effective stakeholder dialogue processes.
- National and international reputation of the Agency’s R&D programme.

GOAL	ACTIVITY
<p>Goal 4.1 Participatory decision making processes established.</p>	<p>Short to medium term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and adopt integrated policy appraisal techniques, covering environmental, social and economic costs and benefits, to inform our consultative decision making processes. • Promote and facilitate participatory decision making processes to set targets and agree action wherever these are focused on our primary functions. • Provide more staff with training to enable them to better engage with citizens, communities, businesses, Government and agencies to share values, concerns, perceptions of risk and key information relating to the environment, and thereby to agree quality of life measures and targets. • Expand the education pages on our internet site as a resource for primary, secondary, higher and further education. • Ensure that we engage academia in leading edge ways in addressing key issues of policy and practice, and in contributing to the formulation and delivery of educational programmes in rural, urban and industrial areas. • Support Local Agenda 21 initiatives which engage people in local decision making about quality of life issues. • Help set up and participate in ‘learning networks’ based on sufficient levels of trust to enable citizens, communities, businesses, Government and agencies to learn and to reach effective decisions together on how to maintain and improve sustainable levels of wellbeing. • Become more engaged in the debates and dialogues through which we can, as a society, find ways to integrate environmental sustainability with measures for social justice and a more dynamic economy.

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Adoption of sustainable development principles

Outcome 5 – Local, regional, national, rural and urban strategies will fully reflect sustainable development principles and will be appropriately linked, thereby enabling effective and integrated environmental protection and enhancement.

Tests for progress:

- Percentages of plans based on effective and inclusive partnerships and with quality of life targets and plans embedded in them, covering: community plans; regional plans (including regional economic development plans); rural plans; and urban plans.

GOAL	ACTIVITY
<p>Goal 5.1 Effective community planning process in place that fully reflects sustainable development principles.</p>	<p>Short to medium term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use community strategies to help derive Agency priorities when implementing LEAPs. • Use partnership funding regimes to address local environmental priorities in joined-up ways. • Ensure that community strategies reflect local (neighbourhood) as well as catchment, sub-regional and regional priorities. • Adopt more appropriate and effective use of the land-use planning process, e.g. Better Town Planning project to provide structure and systems for efficient and effective interface with planning authorities.
<p>Goal 5.2 Regional and Sub-regional policy & planning processes fully reflect sustainable development principles.</p>	<p>Short to medium term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work closely with regional assemblies and regional Sustainable Development roundtables to develop sustainability appraisals for all regional and sub-regional strategies – e.g. regional planning guidance; structure plan examinations in public. • Promote the value of water systems, sustainable transport systems and green space/wildlife corridors as a key structural elements in sustainable spatial urban development.
<p>Goal 5.3 Urban renaissance and rural regeneration is based of sustainability principles and effective urban-rural linkages.</p>	<p>Short to medium term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the Urban Task Force on the national “clean up our land” campaign. • Form effective partnerships in rural areas with other statutory, voluntary, community and business organisations to clarify and then to deliver community priorities.
<p>Goal 5.4 National policy & planning processes fully reflect sustainable development principles.</p>	<p>Short to medium term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Government in embedding sustainable development principles in all policies and plans. • Work with regional and local planners to ensure that the national policy and planning process goes beyond legislative and functional compliance.
<p>Goal 5.5 Policy and planning processes at international levels fully reflect sustainable development principles.</p>	<p>Short to medium term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Government to ensure UK has influence on the EU Sustainable Development Agenda. • Work with European partners to deliver the benefits for our three European Interreg III regions.

Environment Agency's role is central

Environment Agency as a substantial partner

Environment Agency's involvement to build understanding

Agency values and working practices

Outcome 6 – Sustainability values and working practices within the Agency, including those of openness, collaboration, partnership, participatory decision making, precaution and respect for diversity, will reflect those of key stakeholders and of society in general.

Tests for progress:

- Measures of internal environmental performance.
- Measures of corporate social responsibility in our annual report.
- Internal culture audits.
- Internal learning audits.

GOAL	ACTIVITY
<p>Goal 6.1 The Agency demonstrates best practice in its own environmental performance, together with high levels of economic efficiency and corporate social responsibility.</p>	<p>Short to medium term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continually improve our environmental management systems. • Introduce processes for auditing and reporting on a range of measures of corporate social responsibility. • Promote sustainability values and working practices within the Agency, including those of openness, collaboration, partnership, participatory decision making, precaution and respect for diversity, reflect those of key stakeholders and of society in general. • Develop a culture of learning and continuous improvement, based on best practice in 'participatory' science.

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6. Working in partnership

We have already noted that the Agency has an impact on quality of life through the way in which it carries out its functions – by consulting widely, by engaging with others in partnership, and by forming close and responsive relationships with partners. For example, strong links have been built with Government through the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the National Assembly of Wales (NAW). We also work with the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) on planning and related issues. Our activities are framed by, and help to implement, a range of Government policies and commitments, including its Sustainable Development Strategy (and the supporting strategies and schemes of the DTI and NAW), its Urban and Rural White Papers, and Modernising Government and Better Regulation policies. The Agency is also involved in a wide range of other partnerships and liaison arrangements, involving other national agencies; the Regional Government Offices; the Regional Development Agencies; industry and commerce; local authorities; non-government organisations in the environmental and social sectors; trusts; researchers, consultants and academia.

In the future, we aim to develop even closer, more responsive and more inclusive styles of working with partners.

The issue of partnership is central to all *Frameworks for Change*, as well as underpinning quality of life in particular, therefore we have noted some of the key elements that will be needed in the future. These apply equally to all the *Frameworks*.

Lead and joint responsibilities

In some cases, the Agency already plays the lead role in establishing partnerships – a good example of this is our involvement in setting up many of the waste minimisation “clubs” in England and Wales. In most cases however, we do not have the lead or sole responsibility for establishing partnership initiatives. For example, local authorities have the lead responsibility for establishing the community planning partnerships, responsible for producing and implementing community plans, and for many of the “local strategic partnerships” which the Government intends to designate in 2001.

However, irrespective of who takes the lead role in establishing a partnership, successful outcomes depend on the combined activities of many players. Therefore, it is important that the Agency is able to demonstrate effective collaboration and influence.

Wherever possible we should refer to the Concordats (for example that between the Agency and the Local Government Association) which clarify and reinforce the joint interpretation of partners’ roles.

Variations in roles and responsibilities

It is unlikely that the Agency’s investment in “local strategic partnerships”, or in urban or rural regeneration partnerships covering broader areas such as river catchments or sub-regions, will be equal across all areas. However, we will aim to concentrate our resources in areas of particularly high value or risk to the Agency, and/or where strong leadership is otherwise lacking. In those cases we may want to take an initiating or leading role in partnership development.

Building inclusive partnerships

One of the key drivers of partnership development is the opportunity to share funding. New funding routes now place increasing emphasis on inclusive partnerships. For example, Treasury support for “local strategic partnerships” is likely to depend on their ability to involve all key players, including the community, voluntary and private sectors. The Agency recognises that it will need to become skilled at operating effectively within increasingly diverse and more extensive partnership arrangements. The added value is that community involvement is fundamental to the development of local democracy, which itself contributes to quality of life.

The Agency should also expect to become increasingly involved in international partnership initiatives, particularly in Europe. For example, the Agency is a partner in the three European Intereg III regions: the Atlantic Area, the North-West European Metropolitan Area, and the North Sea Region.

Creative tensions between the partnership and partner organisations

The individuals involved in agreeing the goals and working arrangements of a partnership tend to also contribute to those of the individual partner organisations. As a result, tensions between the partnership and contributing organisations are inevitable. These tensions provide a major

opportunity for positive change and the Agency will seek to learn from them wherever possible, adjusting our own goals and working practices accordingly.

Promotion of learning

Given the increasing importance of partnership arrangements and the tensions underlying these, it is important to recognise that all parties are learning to work in new ways. If this is recognised, it can provide a valuable tool to support learning both from individual experience and from evidence of best practice. The best application of both types of learning will be identified so that the Agency will seek to promote effective learning, adaptation and innovation across its organisation as a whole.

7. Research and development

A change in focus of research and development is needed by ourselves and others to support delivery of our quality of life *Framework*.

We expect that up to 15% of our current science-based R&D budgets and those of others will need to be diverted to social and economic science, including new and leading edge forms of 'participatory' science. This will be key to supporting the types of partnership and organisational learning outlined in the previous section.

To deliver this research and development we will aim to influence and collaborate with other key stakeholders, in particular working through existing national and international networks.

8. Implications for the Environment Agency

The Agency's ability to deliver and to influence these goals varies. Some aspects are entirely within our power (for example, delivering our expertise), while others depend on the Government to introduce legislative changes (for example, developing new and revised regulation), or working with us in influencing others (such as the development of the local authority community plans or application of the selected licence application procedure) or a mixture of these. Successful delivery will require:

Expertise, knowledge and awareness

- Increased awareness in the Agency of the need to value social and economic impacts to support sustainable development.
- Increased awareness of diversity in work and the community.
- Increased understanding of sustainable development for rural and urban communities.
- Increased expertise and knowledge of social science and economics.
- Better developed skills in the communication of our role and support to communities in the way we regulate and operate to improve and enhance the environment.
- A better understanding of human diversity in the community.
- A better understanding of how social inclusion and economic practices impact on the environment.
- A better understanding of the Agency's role in sustainable development.

Policies and strategies

- Integration of social and economic policy within the Agency's activities in support of our sustainable development duty.

- Development of social and economic capacity within the Agency, to inform the whole range of Agency policy.
- Development of integrated policy appraisal techniques, covering environmental, social and economic costs and benefits, to inform our consultative decision making processes.
- Development and implementation of an Agency diversity policy.

Monitoring and reporting

- A co-ordinated programme of monitoring social and economic impacts to support our State of the Environment reporting.
- Reporting on the environmental impact of rural and urban development in the Regions.

Influencing and education

- Influencing economic decisions relating to both rural and urban development, including regional plans, local structure plans and community plans.
- Providing clear leadership on the impacts of sustainable development on the environment.
- Leading and being responsive to public opinion on environmental issues.

The planning system

- Developing and implementing sustainable development frameworks in assembly, regional and local planning forums.
- Work with planning authorities on sustainable development within their planning area.

Resources

- A re-balance and re-direction of staff with understanding of the social and economic impact of Agency work.
- Deliver our recreation work through dedicated skilled staff and resources at a local level.
- A strategy to incorporate social and economic awareness into the training and development programme.
- Recognition of the need to expand our influencing role.
- Increased investment in and use of the internet.

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NORTH EAST

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THAMES

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ENVIRONMENT AGENCY
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ENVIRONMENT AGENCY
FLOODLINE

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ENVIRONMENT AGENCY
EMERGENCY HOTLINE

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