



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Guidance on the Agency's involvement in the administration of EC Structural Funds



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1. Purpose

Concern about the environment and sustainable development has never been greater, both within the United Kingdom and Europe. The EC 5th Environmental Action Programme makes it clear that regions with high environmental quality attract investors and tourists, and retain their population by offering a better quality of life.

Many current environmental problems arise from the adverse effects of previous development. The challenge for regions designated as eligible to benefit from EC Structural Funds will be to ensure that economic growth and environmental enhancement go hand-in-hand for the creation of sustainable development.

This guidance note provides basic information on EC Structural Funds. It also makes recommendations as to how the Agency should try to influence the substantial Structural Fund expenditure programmes to secure maximum environmental gain. **The guidance note does not give advice on how to obtain funding for specific projects.** Appendix 1 summarises the main economic aid funding sources that may be relevant to the Agency, including Structural Funds, and suggests sources of further information.

2. Background to EC Structural Funds

The principal aim of the Structural Fund's programme is to promote the economic and social development of disadvantaged regions, sectors and social groups within the EU. As such, they do not have an explicit environmental purpose. However, because of the huge scale of investment associated with projects financed through Structural Funds, it is inevitable that there will be an impact on the environment. It is important that negative impacts are minimised and projects that incorporate environmentally beneficial elements are promoted.

European funding packages are applied over a specific time period and to a pre-determined total budget. The current programmes are operative between 1994-1999, with approximately £6 billion having been allocated to the UK. Financial assistance from Structural Funds is available subject to the principle of additionality. This

means the funds must be used to generate benefits additional to those arising from national funding, and not for replacing national funding.

The legislative basis for Structural Funds is laid down in a series of EC regulations, which are listed in Appendix 1.

2.1 Types of funding

Three types of Structural Funds have been established under the Treaty of Rome:

- European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), which is the EU's principal instrument for promoting regional economic development;
- European Social Fund (ESF), which aims to improve employment opportunities;
- European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF), which provides capital investment to improve and rationalise the treatment, processing and marketing of agricultural products.

The two funding sources most commonly encountered in the Structural and Regional Aid programmes are the ERDF and ESF.

The level of funding that can be obtained varies depending on the project. There are no 100 per cent grants; the maximum funding available is 75 per cent of the project costs for Objective 1 areas and 50 per cent for Objective 2 areas. In the majority of cases, however, the financial assistance provided through Structural Funds is considerably less than these maximum percentages. Matching funding therefore needs to be found.

2.2 Qualifying areas

The EU recognises six reasons for using the Structural Funds. Regions or activities benefiting from the funds fall into one of six categories or Objectives. Four of these are geographical:

- Objective 1 for regions whose development is lagging behind;
- Objective 2 for regions, or parts of regions, seriously affected by industrial decline;
- Objective 5b for disadvantaged rural areas;
- Objective 6 for regions with extremely low population density eg Finland and Sweden.

Two Objectives are focused on sections of the workforce:

- Objective 3 for long-term unemployed young people and those at risk of exclusion from the labour market;
- Objective 4 for workers affected by industrial change.

In January 1994 new regulations governing Structural Funds came into force. From that date Merseyside, Northern Ireland and the Highlands and Islands were the only areas in the UK where Objective 1 status applied.

Eligible areas of England and Wales to which Objective 2 status applies include parts of:

West Midlands
Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Cheshire
Yorkshire and Humberside
North East England
East Midlands
East London and the Lee Valley
Plymouth
West Cumbria and Furness
Thanet
Industrial South Wales

Eligibility of these regions can be reviewed every three years.

A map showing the areas in the UK covered by EC Objective programmes is included as Figure 1.

The categorisation of qualifying areas is under review for post-1999 programmes.

3. Administration of Structural Funds

The following outline of the administrative procedures adopted for Structural Funds focuses on Objectives 1 and 2. These are the areas where the Agency is most likely to have the opportunity of being involved. There may also be scope for involvement in Objective 5b areas and the Agency should be aware of activity under this Objective.

Within the EC the Regional Policy Directorate-General (DG XVI) has the leading role in Structural Fund activity. Other directorates are involved as appropriate, including DG XI, which has responsibility for the environment. Representatives from the Commission will oversee the implementation of Structural Funds in regions, maintaining close contact with the UK Government through regional Government Offices.

3.1 Single Programming Document

At a national level central government, through regional Government Offices, is responsible for securing Objective status for a given area. It also has to ensure that any financial assistance received is used effectively to achieve previously specified goals. To apply for Objective status

in one of the categories identified in section 2, the regional Government Office must prepare a strategy for improving a geographically defined area. It must also support this with information about the economic and social situation demonstrating that the area is eligible for financial assistance. This documentation, which is submitted to the Commission for negotiation and approval, is referred to as a **Single Programming Document (SPD)**.

The strategy need not give details of individual projects, but it must identify the issues that are considered **priorities** for the area, together with the measures that will be adopted to bring about change in the context of the Objective. The targets and expected outputs from the strategy must be quantified so that value for money can be determined. The SPD must also contain an appraisal of the expected environmental impact of the strategy, and provide an environment profile of the area as a base line against the actual impact can be monitored. The role environmental authorities will take in relation to Structural Fund activity must also be clearly identified. The environmental aspects of Structural Funds are discussed more fully in section 4.

3.2 Programme Monitoring Committee

If an area is designated as having Objective status, the allocation of funds between the priorities and measures identified in the SPD is the responsibility of the **Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC)**. The PMC is chaired by the Government Office and is made up of a partnership of senior officials representing organisations with an interest in economic and social regeneration. The EC Commission, industry, local authorities, education, tourism and the voluntary sector are likely to be represented. There may also be a seat allocated to an environmental "competent authority". The PMC may be supported by sub-groups and technical panels that will advise on specific areas such as project appraisal, guidance to applicants and environmental issues.

3.3 Implementation of the Single Programming Document

Before 1997, bids for funding were made on a project-by-project basis. In a recent review of the administrative arrangements for Structural Funds in England, the Government has opted to move to an Action Plan approach for Objectives 1 and 2. This does not, however, preclude bids relating to individual projects that are not part of such a plan. This change is designed to bring about greater benefits from outputs of ERDF and ESF investment through a more strategic approach.

The Action Plans will be developed by Local Partnerships, which should include relevant interested parties from the public, private and voluntary sectors. The Commission and Government Office are not represented on these partnerships. The plans must take into account the priorities and measures identified in the SPD, and may be based on a geographic area or a specific sector. The Action Plan must include details of its purpose, the area covered, the outputs to be achieved, the amount of EU funding required and sources of matching funding. It must also specify the administrative and financial arrangements that will be made to ensure the plan is implemented and value for money is achieved in terms of delivered outputs. Government Office Programme Secretariats, in consultation with PMCs, will assess the Action Plans against published criteria and select which ones are to get the go-ahead.

The responsibility for ensuring that the Action Plan is implemented and that the outputs are achieved is delegated to the Local Partnership. This partnership will also call for individual project applications under the plan, and carry out project appraisal and approval. The criteria for project selection will, however, be agreed with the PMC.

Projects will generally be appraised at three levels against agreed project selection criteria:

- **eligibility** in relation to the requirements of the given Objective for the area;
- whether it is designed to address a **priority** identified in the SPD;
- whether the proposal is consistent with a **measure** identified in the SPD and will contribute to achieving the target outputs.

4. Structural Funds and the environment

The European Treaty, Article 130r, requires a high level of environmental protection to be integrated into all areas of Community policy. The Structural Fund Regulations, (EEC) No 2081/93, include amendments to take account of this. The SPDs for Objectives 1, 2 and 5b must now include the following elements:

- an appraisal of the expected environmental impact of investment under the programme, including details of how negative impacts will be mitigated and sustainable development ensured;
- an environmental profile of the region, addressing the most significant environmental issues and identifying the most acute environmental problems of the area, which will serve as a base for future monitoring;

- the role environmental authorities will play in preparing, implementing and monitoring Structural Fund programmes;
- arrangements to ensure compliance with EC environmental legislation.

The Commission has produced guidance on the information required for Objectives 1, 2 and 5b SPDs. A copy of this is contained in Appendix 4.

The Commission has also, in response to applications for Objective 2 status for the 1997-1999 period, highlighted the fact that improving the environment will help encourage investment which, in turn, will facilitate job creation. Furthermore, it identified the following as offering potential for improving competitive advantage: development of eco-products; environmental services; energy saving measures; clean production technologies; environmental training and awareness. To help achieve these, the Commission suggested substantive involvement of environmental authorities in implementing SPDs. It also listed the definition of specific measures on sustainable development, and adequate consideration of the environment in project selection criteria, as offering a positive way forward.

5. Potential role, opportunities and benefits for the Agency in relation to Structural Funds

The safeguards introduced to ensure that projects supported by Structural Funds do not cause environmental damage have created an opportunity for the Agency to become more closely involved with regional development. This provides an excellent platform from which to work towards sustainability, and to help overcome some of the legacies of historic pollution and environmental damage. The Agency will be in a position to form strong links with other organisations at a local level and to bring about more strategic improvement in the environment that would be possible working in isolation.

The Structural Fund Regulations imply that environmental authorities are to play a necessary part in Structural Fund activity. This is to ensure that history does not repeat itself in the promotion of development that can cause long-term environmental damage. The voice that the Agency can have is to a large extent governed by the fact that involvement is currently at the invitation of local Government Offices and sub-committees. To date the extent of involvement of any environmental organisation, including the Agency, has varied from region to region. The Agency recognises that the views of other organisations need to be considered but *the Agency, as the largest environmental organisation in England and Wales, is well placed to offer itself as the lead*

"Competent Authority" and should pursue the following potential areas of involvement.

5.1 Participation

● Representation on Programme Monitoring Committees

Membership of the PMC is by invitation of the Government Office, and the Environment Agency could be selected to represent the environment sector on the Committee. Membership of the PMC will give the Agency a voice during the process of developing the SPD and in the allocation of funding. This will allow it to try to influence the level of environmental benefits a programme sets out to achieve. The Agency will also be in a position of being able to make formal recommendations as to how the protection of the environment can be incorporated into project appraisal criteria, and how the impact of the programme on the environment can be monitored. It will also enable the Agency to develop links with important partners.

● Representation on sub-committees

In many instances sub-committees, technical panels or informal advisory groups are established to advise the PMC on issues such as project selection criteria, and project selection itself. The Agency should try to be represented on sub-groups with an environment-orientated remit. This could include, for example, sub-groups addressing measures to regenerate derelict land, informal advisory groups on the environment, or groups producing Action Plans for a particular area. There may be scope to link initiatives identified in LEAPS with Structural Fund Action Plans.

● Preparation of the environment profile and appraisal for the SPD

The Agency could carry out this work or could undertake its management and quality review. Increasingly the Agency is being approached by Government Offices to participate in this task, principally because of inadequate environmental appraisals submitted in earlier SPDs. It would be advantageous to the Agency to standardise the format of the profile and appraisal. The appraisals carried out by North West region on behalf of GO-NW received favourable comment from the Commission and the format used there could be adopted across all regions. This should not be an unreasonable burden on the Agency in view of the ongoing work in preparing regional State of the Environment reports.

5.2 Influencing the programme

There are a number of ways in which the Agency can try to influence the environmental impact of the programme, either directly or in conjunction with others:

● Review of the environmental outputs of SPDs

A review of SPDs leading to the preparation of a report on the expected environmental outputs, including both quantifiable and non-quantifiable targets and objectives, should be undertaken. This can be used to produce guidance for those appraising projects on the targets that applicants for funding should be encouraged to achieve. It will also help to formulate environmental screening guidelines, the detail of which will need to be tailored to each SPD.

● Development of environmental screening procedures

No formal environmental appraisal or screening procedures are laid down in relation to projects part-financed by Structural Funds. But any projects would be expected to meet the statutory requirements set out in the EC Environmental Impact Assessment Directive. This is concerned with minimising negative environmental effects associated with large projects. There is also scope for encouraging projects that give rise to positive environmental benefits, and the Agency should promote the adoption of such an approach in the establishment of Action Plan and project selection criteria. Environmental screening procedures have been prepared by the former NRA and adopted for use with large projects in the Merseyside Objective 1 area. The screening criteria use a three-stage process, working first on project eligibility in terms of meeting statutory environmental requirements, and then at priority and measure level. It is recommended that these procedures be encouraged in all designated Objective 1 and 2 regions in England and Wales, perhaps with some local adaptation.

● Development of an environmental audit programme to monitor the appraisal process

The project selection phase is key in achieving the desired outputs in any large programme of investment. Structural Fund expenditure is no exception. Once Action Plan and project selection criteria have been agreed, it will be necessary to ensure that these criteria are being implemented effectively in relation to environmental aspects of projects. Unsatisfactory implementation could lead to recommendations regarding the revision of guidance

given to applicants or appraisers. It may also be necessary to suggest amendments to the selection criteria.

- **Production of a sustainable project design guide**
The guide should cover best practice approaches in terms of sustainable development, including waste generation and disposal, energy, layout, materials and training. A guide is currently being prepared in relation to the Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Cheshire Objective 2 area, which will be transferable to other regions.
- **Provision of an appraisal and advisory service**
The Local Partnership may wish to pass applications containing complex environmental elements to qualified environmental advisors. They will be able to give an expert opinion on the quality and credibility of the applicant's case. This service could help to substantiate claims of environmental benefits, or might be able to suggest additional environmental features that applicants might like to build into their projects. This could involve establishing a database of Agency and non-Agency contacts, creating a network for the provision of advice on specific projects at the design stage.
- **Environmental reviews of programme performance**
A number of outputs could be produced under the review function, including annual reports, interim reports and finished programme evaluation. The reviews would look at the range of procedural issues, including: the ability of applicants to incorporate the environmental outputs required by the SPD into their projects; selection methods; scope for improving guidance to applicants and appraisers to maximise the potential for environmental gain.
- **Monitoring the environmental impact of SPD implementation**
Once a regional network of environmental indicators has been established in the environment profile for the SPD, it will need to be maintained to report on the environmental impact of the programme. Both environmental improvements and negative impacts will need to be covered. This could form an integral part of the Agency's monitoring and reporting on the state of the environment. An R&D project to examine techniques for doing this has been let; it will examine the Merseyside Objective 1 programme.
- **National level tracking and Co-ordination**
To ensure that opportunities to contribute to sustainable development are maximised, and are

treated with consistency across all regions, the Agency is to monitor the Objective status of regions at national level and co-ordinate input through the DETR and the Commission.

5.3 Other non-financial benefits for the Agency

As indicated in sections 5.1 and 5.2, the proposed Agency involvement with Structural Fund programmes links into its existing statutory remit and does not necessarily constitute an unreasonable burden. For example, the Agency has a duty to form an opinion on the state of the environment and to contribute to sustainable development. Sustainability is concerned with the inter-relationship between economic, social and environmental issues, which form the essence of economic regeneration. Careful analysis of the interaction between sustainability indicators in these three sectors will be necessary if the Agency is to make effective decisions at a regional and local level, and produce high quality professional advice and information in this field.

It is essential that the Agency should promote the environment within strategic local partnerships that are addressing wider issues. Involvement in Structural Fund programmes offers an important route to progress this type of initiative by encouraging the uptake of best practice. For example, waste minimisation, regeneration of derelict land, and the implementation of environmental management systems. In some cases, involvement at the project appraisal stage offers considerable advantages in terms of the influence that can be brought when compared with more formal regulatory involvement.

5.4 Financial benefits for the Agency

As indicated in the introduction, this paper does not set out to cover the process of accessing Structural Funds as a financial beneficiary. This is, however, an aspect the Agency should consider carefully.

Collaborative funding of projects

The Agency can bid for financial assistance through European Structural Funds without affecting its Grant-in-Aid allocation. Projects will require matched funding and need to fall within the overall programme strategy.

The Structural Fund Objectives are not specifically aimed at environmental improvement or protection. It may, however, be possible to put forward a project that meets the eligibility, priority and measure requirements. It may also be possible to participate in a collaborative project through which environmental benefits can be secured as

part of the output. Potential partners include local authorities, voluntary organisations, Training and Enterprise Councils and higher education establishments. A collaborative approach may have the added benefit of working with organisations which have more experience of the bidding process and preparation of project submissions.

The Agency, at Area level, should therefore examine SPDs to identify the potential for collaborative projects. This aspect of Structural Fund involvement should be separated from the strategic aspects covered in 5.1 and 5.2 to ensure that no conflicts of interest arise.

In seeking Structural Fund assistance, reference should also be made to the Agency Financial Memorandum and the Finance Directorate's report "European Funding", NRA October 1995, which covers the financial aspects of Agency access to EU Structural Funds.

6. Examples of Agency involvement with a programme

6.1 Promoting the environment within Structural Fund programmes

Environmental screening and scoring procedures developed by the former NRA have been introduced to the appraisal process of the Merseyside Objective 1 programme. The adoption of the environmental screening criteria fulfilled two purposes:

- it helped to ensure that proposals put forward for Objective 1 funding did not adversely affect the environment;
- it encouraged applicants to incorporate environmentally beneficial elements into their proposals which, it was hoped, would have an influence on the economic regeneration of the region.

The environmental factors that have been incorporated are applied in a three-stage scored process. Firstly, projects will be assessed for compliance with statutory requirements, particularly environmental impact assessment needs. Projects will then be screened against environmental criteria relevant to the priorities and measures identified in the SPD. For example, under the sites and premises theme of SPD priorities and measures, some of the criteria used address the following: use of brownfield sites; location in relation to public transport; incorporation of good practice in relation to energy consumption, waste minimisation etc; environmental management plans; improvement of the built environment.

The sophistication of the environmental screening and selection process in Merseyside is considerably in advance of any other programme in the UK.

6.2 Influencing fund allocation

Membership of the PMC for the Merseyside Objective 1 programme provided the Environment Agency with an opportunity to represent environmental interests on a steering group involved with a mid-term review of the Programme. This enabled us to successfully argue that funds be retained in certain measures with an environmental theme that were under-bid; eg. Managing and re-cycling industrial waste, and new and clean technologies. We further argued for a more proactive approach to be adopted to encourage applications under these measures.

6.3 The Agency as a beneficiary

The River Alt in North Liverpool is an example where Objective 1 funding has been secured to progress river corridor projects. The River Alt, a potential asset in a locally deprived area, is of poor water quality with limited access. Alt 2000 is an initiative that is driven by the local community, with a total level of investment in excess of £500,000. In collaborative work with Groundwork Trust, the former NRA contributed approximately £250,000, and Objective 1 funding of more than £300,000 has been secured.

Outputs from Alt 2000 include:

- creation of a community forest and wetland area;
- reinstatement of bridges and improvements to the footpath network to improve access, supplemented by publicity and a programme of walks;
- production of a River Alt Environmental Resource Pack for educational use with supporting teacher training;
- supporting a theatre group that toured the local schools, involving students in activities highlighting environmental problems.

Appendix 1

Principal European Economic Funding Initiatives

Initiative	Funding Available (MECU, 1994-99)	Purpose
Structural Funds	141, 471	Overall objective of reducing disparities between the levels of development of the various regions
Community Initiatives account for 9 per cent of the Structural Funds (<i>relevant ones shown below</i>)		
Urban	600	Environmental problems faced by depressed urban areas
LEADER II	1400	Preservation and improvement of the environment in rural areas
RECHAR II	400	Environmental improvement of coal mining areas
RETEX II	500	Rehabilitation of industrial wasteland, aid to reduce pollution and to facilitate recycling in areas heavily dependent on the textiles and clothing sector
KONVER II	500	Environmental improvement of areas damaged by military installations or the defence industry
RESIDER II	500	Environmental improvement of areas with a strong dependency on the steel industry

Further details and contact addresses for the following sources of European funding can be found in the 'Guide to European Community Grants and Loans: Member State Supplements; Eurofi Ltd. (updated annually), ISBN 0 907304 75 3'.

Principal Domestic Economic Funding Initiatives

Initiative	Funding Available	Purpose
The Single Regeneration Budget		
Challenge Fund	£1.35 billion (1996/7 - 1998/9)	Financial support for local initiatives to regenerate areas
English Partnerships	Unified investment Fund	Promote the regeneration of vacant and derelict land and buildings
National Lottery Funds		
The Millennium Commission	£240 million per year (forecast)	Undefined projects, but must be lasting monuments
National Heritage Memorial Fund	£240 million per year (forecast)	Schemes to preserve and enhance specific land, buildings etc.
National Lottery Charities Board	£240 million per year (forecast)	Charitable, benevolent or philanthropic
Arts Councils	£240 million per year (forecast)	Varies between the four councils
Sports Councils	£240 million per year (forecast)	Varies between the four councils

Appendix 2

EC Regulations concerning Structural Funds, published in OJ L 193, 31.7.93

Council Regulation (EEC) No 2081/93 of 20 July 1993 amending Regulation (EEC) No 2052/88 on the tasks of the Structural Funds and their effectiveness and on co-ordination of their activities between themselves and with the operations of the European Investment Bank and the other existing financial instruments (The Framework Regulation).

Council Regulation (EEC) No 2082/93 of 20 July 1993 amending Regulation (EEC) No 2052/88 as regards co-ordination of the activities of the different Structural Funds between themselves and with the operations of the European Investment Bank and other existing financial instruments (The Co-ordination Regulation).

Council Regulation (EEC) No 2083/93 of 20 July 1993 amending Regulation (EEC) No 4254/88 laying down provisions for implementing Regulation (EEC) No 2052/88 as regards the European Regional Development Fund.

Council Regulation (EEC) No 2084/93 of 20 July 1993 amending Regulation (EEC) No 4255/88 laying down provisions for implementing Regulation (EEC) No 2052/88 as regards the European Social Fund.

Council Regulation (EEC) No 2085/93 of 20 July 1993 amending Regulation (EEC) No 4256/88 laying down provisions for implementing Regulation (EEC) No 2052/88 as regards the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) Guidance Section.

Appendix 3

Bibliography

Guide to European Community Grants and Loans, Eurofi Ltd, 1995

Haigh N., *Manual of Environmental Policy: the EC and Great Britain*

Guidance issued by the European Commission on 1993 on the content of the "Environment Profile" section of the SPD, available from regional Government Offices. Guidance was reinforced in a written communication from the Commission to Member States, 22.07.96

Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Cheshire Objective 2 Single Programming Document 1997-1999, Environment Section; July 1996, Environment Agency North West Region

West Cumbria and Furness Objective 2 Single Programming Document 1997-1999, Environment Section; August 1996, Environment Agency North West Region

Merseyside Objective 1 Programme: Environmental Screening Procedures, March 1996, NRA North West Region

Guide to Sustainable Project Design; available from Environment Agency North West Region when complete (April 1997)

Environment Agency Financial Memorandum

Finance Directorate's report "European Funding" NRA October 1995.

Appendix 4

European Commission Guidance issued to Member States in 1993

Environmental Profiles

The Environmental Profile should provide an overview of the most significant environmental issues and the most acute environmental problems of a region. Consistent with the wider Development Plan of each region, the Environmental Profile should focus on strategic issues to be taken into account by partners in the Community Support Framework.

It is proposed that the Profile consist of three sections. The first would describe the current environmental situation and key issues. The second would describe the legal and administrative situation framework. The third would describe the impact of Regional Development Plans on the environment.

(i) Key Environmental Issues

The description should as far as possible cover (with the aid as appropriate of a map or maps and quantified indicators):

- the location of zones of special environmental interest, distinguishing between those which have a protected status and others;
- the nature and location of acute problems of pollution and the population affected. Problems might be considered acute where there is:
 - pollution in excess of standards laid down by Community legislation where appropriate; or
 - potentially irreversible damage to the environment; or
 - a serious public health hazard.

In order to describe different types of pollution, references can usefully be made to priority themes adopted in the 5th Environmental Action Programme (see Annex).

- problems and/or areas of serious stress on the ecosystem, for example with reference to water (quality and quantity), soil quality, deforestation.

The map may be accompanied by other geographical descriptions. The indicators presented should provide the appropriate summary information, describing for example;

- surface area of protected areas/zones of special environmental interest ;
- nature and levels of pollution;
- population affected.

(ii) The Legal and Administrative Framework including the arrangements made to associate the environmental authorities

This section should describe briefly:

- the legal and administrative framework within which (i) zones of special environmental interest are designated and protected and (ii) the regional development plan and environmental policies are co-ordinated, notably by means of land-use planning, and through the process of project design, approval and implementation;
- the role of environmental authorities in the planning and implementation of regional developmental plans.

Particular mention should be made of procedures for the provision of information to, and where appropriate consultation with, the general public and interested groups regarding projects which may have an impact on zones of special environmental interest.

(iii) Impact of Regional Development Plans on the Environment

This section should describe:

- a) the expected change (with specific reference to reduction) in (i) acute problems of pollution and (ii) stress on the ecosystem (quantified estimates where possible) as a result of actions foreseen under the Regional Development Plan;
- b) expected improvement to human skills (training and technical support);
- c) whether, and if so how, preventive action (including analysis of options) is incorporated in the development and design of:
 - major infrastructure networks and projects, for example, transport, water supply and irrigation, energy;
 - regional aid schemes.
- d) existing and planned environmental information and monitoring systems, including progress in the development and use of quantified environmental indicators.

Annex

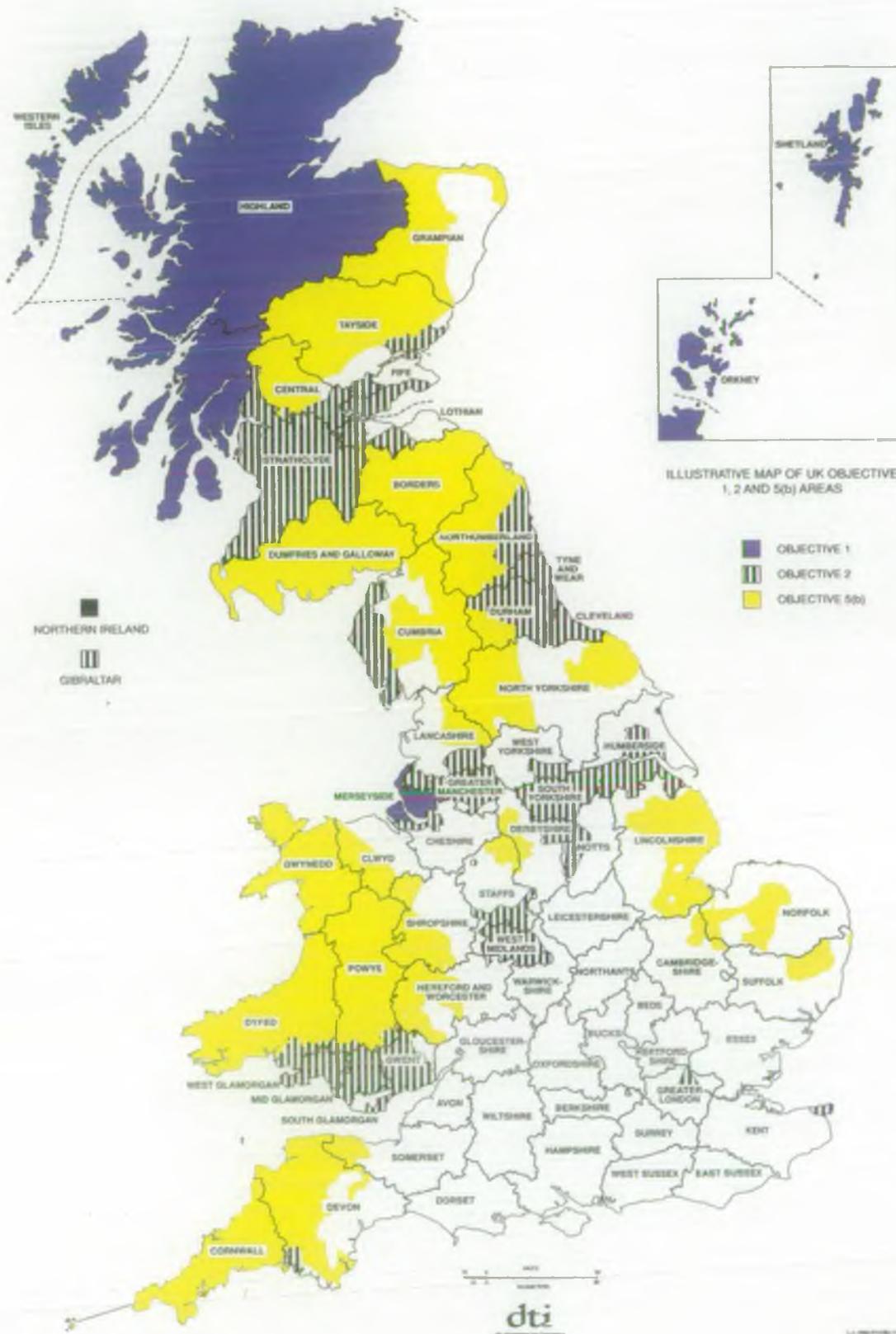
5th Environmental Action Programme: Priority Themes

There are seven priority themes identified in the programme.

1. Climate change
2. Acidification and air quality
3. Protection of nature and bio-diversity
4. Management of water resources
5. The urban environment
6. Coastal zones
7. Waste management

Figure 1

Map showing areas qualifying for EC Structural Fund assistance in the UK



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Sustainable Development Publication Series

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For further information in relation to any of the above, please contact the Sustainable Development Section at:

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Reading RG1 8DQ
Tel: 0118 953 5000
Fax: 0118 950 0388

WELSH

Rivers House/Plas-yr-Afon
St Mellons Business Park
St Mellons
Cardiff CF3 0LT
Tel: 01222 770 088
Fax: 01222 798 555



For general enquiries please call your local Environment Agency office. If you are unsure who to contact, or which is your local office, please call our general enquiry line.

**ENVIRONMENT AGENCY
GENERAL ENQUIRY LINE**

0645 333 111

The 24-hour emergency hotline number for reporting all environmental incidents relating to air, land and water.

**ENVIRONMENT AGENCY
EMERGENCY HOTLINE**

0800 80 70 60



**ENVIRONMENT
AGENCY**