

A VISION WE HOPE YOU WILL SHARE

We have achieved much in recent years to reverse the environmental damage of previous centuries. For example, who would have foreseen, even 50 years ago, that a river like the Don, in Yorkshire, despoiled by the filth of two centuries of industrial intensification and decline, would one day flow clean enough to support thriving fish populations?

What we came to recognise towards the end of the 20th century – the Government, the growing and determined environmental movement, and the public at large – was that pursuing economic growth without taking account of its impact on our natural environment could not deliver quality of life across our society. In fact there is a growing awareness that a healthy environment is vital for the future of business competitiveness.

There is still a backlog of environmental repair. On top of this, many new problems are only just becoming apparent to us. And we face, of course, the challenge of climate change.

This document sets out our vision for the future. It is a vision that we hope you will share.

Taking our lead from the Government's strategy for sustainable development, we have set our long-term sights on a future in which everyone will be able to enjoy the benefit of a clean, safe and healthy environment. We hope for a future where a spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship can keep pace with as yet unknown demands for resources and products without taking us to environmental limits.

Delivering the vision will be a significant challenge for the Environment Agency. The long-term aims set out in the vision will be our guide when we write our plans for the short and medium term. If the vision seems aspirational, remember that it is an aid to navigation, not an exact route map.

The vision sets out our direction of travel, but it also says a lot about how we will go about our work. Our approach is to do the things we do ourselves in the most efficient way possible, while at the same time unlocking resources and enthusiasm through effective partnerships with national and local government, local communities, businesses, environmental groups and others.

We recognise the power of information and we will make data about the environment as widely accessible as we can. We will listen to the views and experience of all who have an interest in or responsibility for the environment.



Sir John Harman *Chairman*

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Front cover: Water feature ‘Aquarena’ by Bill Pye in Millennium Square, Bristol. Built on a derelict site in Bristol Docks, as part of an 11-acre urban regeneration scheme, and opened in July 2000.
Photo by Chandra Prasad.

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1 CHOOSE YOUR FUTURE

Together, we face the future

In one future, the world fails to deal with environmental challenges. We continue to waste energy and resources. Global warming accelerates. As the environment deteriorates, there are increasing threats to health, prosperity, peace and security. Uncertainty and social unrest increase risk to business. This future, in which we fail to achieve sustainable development, is bad for everyone. We will all suffer.

In an alternative future, the world creates a better environment for everybody by developing sustainably. We pursue social, economic and environmental goals together. That means a cleaner, healthier and more diverse environment. A healthier society and economy will be the result. A better quality of life. We will all benefit.

The Environment Agency wants to help achieve the best future. And we will do it by embracing a vision of sustainable development.

The Agency will use this vision to ensure that our day-to-day and year-on-year activities meet our long-term goals for the environment and a sustainable future. We will use it as a basis for co-operative projects with others – including those we regulate – to help protect the environment and to enhance its quality wherever we can.

We hope that you share our vision for the environment and a sustainable future. The Environment Agency is committed to meeting the challenges and to pursuing sustainable development in the interests of society. We have consulted widely about the content and direction of our vision. It therefore reflects views from across society as well as from within the Agency. Together we can deliver this vision.

OUR VISION – THEMES FOR THE FUTURE

Our vision for the environment and a sustainable future is:

*a healthy, rich and diverse environment in England and Wales,
for present and future generations.*

Set out on the opposite page are our nine themes for the future and how they will contribute to this long-term goal.



Putting sustainable development into action
through the regeneration of contaminated land:
new homes on the site of a former power station
in North Somerset

The fundamental goals¹ we want to help achieve:

- **a better quality of life.** People will have peace of mind from knowing that they live in a healthier environment, richer in wildlife and natural diversity – an environment that they will care for and can use, appreciate and enjoy.
- **an enhanced environment for wildlife.** Wildlife will thrive in urban and rural areas. Habitats will improve in their extent and quality to sustainable levels for the benefit of all species. Everyone will understand the importance of safeguarding biodiversity.

The environmental outcomes for which we are striving:

- **cleaner air for everyone.** We will have cleaner and healthier air. The emission of chemical pollutants into the atmosphere will decline greatly and will be below the level at which they can do significant harm.
- **improved and protected inland and coastal waters.** Our rivers, lakes and coastal waters will be far cleaner. They will sustain diverse and healthy ecosystems, water sports and recreation such as boating and fishing, and those uses needed by a thriving and healthy community.
- **restored, protected land with healthier soils.** Our land and soils in the countryside and towns will be exposed far less to pollutants. They will support a wide range of uses, including production of healthy, nutritious food and other crops, without damaging wildlife or human health. Contaminated and damaged land will be restored and protected.

The changes we will seek:

- **a 'greener' business world.** Industry and businesses will value the services that come from a rich and diverse natural environment. In the process, they will reap the benefits of sustainable business practices, improve competitiveness and value to shareholders and secure trust in the wider community.
- **wiser, sustainable use of natural resources.** Business, public agencies, other organisations and individuals will minimise the waste they produce. They will reuse and recycle materials far more intensively, and will make more efficient use of energy and materials.

The risks and problems we will help manage, prevent and overcome:

- **limiting and adapting to climate change.** Drastic cuts will have been made in the emission of 'greenhouse gases' such as carbon dioxide and society as a whole will take account of, and be prepared for, the probable changes to our climate.
- **reducing flood risk.** Flood warnings and sustainable defences will continue to prevent deaths from flooding. Property damage and distress will be minimised. The role of wetlands in reducing flood risks will be recognised and all the environmental benefits from natural floods will be maximised.

¹Our assessment of the activities which would help us to move towards these goals in the medium term will be described in a series of documents to be published during 2001.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

A new dimension; a new approach

The Environment Agency and its partners have achieved a great deal. The environment is now cleaner, safer and better protected against pollution, environmental crime, floods and the impacts of production and consumption. Rivers are cleaner and many more now support fish. Businesses have improved their environmental management. Some of the worst sources of industrial pollution have been tackled.

But there is a huge challenge ahead. Some of the predictions (*shown below*) are alarming.

Future pressures on the environment: some predictions

- Average temperatures are likely to rise. Sea levels could be some 12 to 67 cm higher in 50 years' time. Winter storms will be more severe, rainfall patterns will change and demands for water could rise.
- The population of England and Wales is projected to grow by about five per cent over the next 20 years. New housing will grow even more quickly, with 80 per cent being single-person dwellings. Housing demand will be greatest in the South, increasing pressure on this region.
- A combination of climate change and increased development will place pressure on water supplies, particularly in the Southeast. Road transport will continue to grow – by anything from 30 to 60 per cent over the next 20 years. Air transport, too, is projected to increase, putting pressure on the atmosphere and land near urban areas.
- Wastes, too, are continuing to rise in output. We reuse or recycle too little. Quantities of municipal solid wastes, at a record level, are equivalent to about one tonne per household per year.
- We will use many more chemicals, but potentially damaging chemicals and products will increasingly be minimised at source. This should lead to a large reduction in landfill disposal and increased use of other forms of waste management.
- Patterns of land use will continue to change. Farming may become more intensive, rural land use more diverse and derelict land will have been put to good use.
- Climate change will affect biodiversity. Wildlife and habitats need more positive management to sustain them.
- Links between environmental quality and human health will be of even greater concern. There will be growing concern about damage to landscapes, light pollution, noise pollution and odour.
- The public will be better informed, with easy electronic access to information, globally linked and ready to act directly on information.
- The environment will come under increasing pressure from diverse and conflicting uses, particularly demand for leisure activities and access to natural beauty and tranquillity.

To respond to this future, in a way that does not solve one problem by causing another, means that society has to change, and change in ways that move it toward integrated, sustainable development. An essential first step for the Agency in responding to change has been to create this strategic vision for the environment and a sustainable future. We have looked beyond current constraints to consider what we should try to achieve; the challenges we have to address; how we are going to meet and overcome these challenges; and how we can do it in an integrated way that recognises all the dimensions of sustainable development. The Agency will continue to work with the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, which leads on UK environmental policy, and to advise it on these challenges. In its White Paper, *A better quality of life: A strategy for sustainable development for the United Kingdom*, the Government has set out four objectives:

- **social progress that recognises the needs of everyone;**
- **effective protection of the environment;**
- **prudent use of natural resources; and**
- **the maintenance of high, and stable, levels of economic growth and employment.**

The Agency's contribution to this strategy, set out in our vision, is best achieved if it can help everyone to:

- **understand society's effects upon the environment;**
- **develop new attitudes and behaviour towards the environment;**
- **ensure that industry reduces its impact on the environment and recognises its dependence on it;**
- **take care of resources and deal with their own waste; and**
- **recognise that the natural environment has always changed, but that emissions of 'greenhouse gases' could accelerate climate change and lead to severe disruption of natural systems.**

The Environment Agency's vision has to take account of a number of complex issues.

Complex issues

- **Globalisation.** The worldwide spread of trade and industry can bring greater prosperity but it also creates new environmental risks. Global problems need to be solved without damaging our economic prospects or those of the world's poorest people.
- **Global environmental risks.** Reliance on oil and other fossil fuels means we are releasing huge amounts of 'greenhouse gases' into the atmosphere, disrupting the climate. Toxic chemicals are also creating health risks to people and wildlife worldwide.
- **Local impacts of global change.** In the UK, climate disruption is likely to mean more extreme weather – more storms and floods. This will threaten health and cause costly damage. Flood warnings are already becoming more common.
- **Social and economic change.** More people are choosing to live in suburbs and the countryside. The result is more traffic congestion and pollution, greater pressure to build on greenfield sites, and more loss of countryside to development.
- **Changes in governance.** Regionalisation within the UK and the role of the European Union are changing the framework within which the Agency works. Public expectations of public bodies are also changing, with increasing demands for accountability and transparency in how they operate.

How we use our land impacts in many ways
– from flood defence to pollution



The Environment Agency cannot afford to take a 'business as usual' approach to dealing with environmental pressures. The Agency must adopt imaginative new approaches.

Imaginative approaches

- **Changing attitudes and behaviour.** People are aware of environmental problems and want to 'do their bit' to help. But some are daunted by the difficulty of taking practical steps. It is hard, for example, for many households to make substantial reductions in their waste. We will work with our partners to enable people to make changes. Responsibilities go hand in hand with rights. Everyone makes a difference to the environment and can play a part in making a better future. We are all environmental managers now. We must be aware of environmental effects and how we can reduce them whenever we dispose of our waste, travel or switch on the lights and heating.
- **Growing collaborative partnerships.** Regulation alone cannot change people's attitudes or behaviour. The Agency will continue with its immediate work – enforcing regulations to protect the environment and health, water management and flood protection and combating environmental crime. The Agency also needs to be a trusted partner in achieving sustainable development. We are committed to working with business, public bodies and community organisations to encourage people to change.
- **Exploit technological innovation.** New technology, and better incentives, can help to reduce over-use of energy and materials, and can reduce waste and pollution. There are major domestic and global market opportunities for business. The Agency and its partners must exploit the huge potential of new technologies – such as renewable energy. In this way our society can make radical reductions in its use of energy and materials, reducing waste and pollution.
- **Developing social awareness.** The Agency needs to be more aware of the social issues raised by its work in protecting and improving the environment: for example the needs of people in poverty who often live in the most polluted neighbourhoods. This means becoming more active in decisions on integrating environmental sustainability with social justice and a more dynamic economy.

*We are all environmental managers now:
cyclist and motorists in Shoreditch, East London*



Dealing with the challenge of climate change today:
Environment Agency staff at work following
flood damage at Lewes, East Sussex



The Environment Agency and its partners need to rise to the challenge of sustainable development. The Agency will respond by:

- raising awareness of sustainable development issues;
- meeting challenging targets set by Government, the European Union and international agreements for reducing pollution, protecting human health and improving environmental quality;
- improving and simplifying the UK's approach to environmental regulation;
- improving the efficiency of inspection, monitoring and information provision;
- working together better, by making partnerships with business, public bodies and community organisations a central part of our activities;
- working to raise awareness of how to reduce environmental impacts;
- continuing to encourage the courts to impose tougher penalties for environmental crime;
- helping people and organisations of all kinds, including industry and communities, to reduce the production of waste and pollution;
- becoming a more efficient organisation, targeting work where it will be most beneficial and taking into account costs and benefits; and
- planning for likely climate changes, to minimise risks from threats such as increased flooding.

In doing so, the Agency will also be contributing to a range of other Government policies, such as those in its Urban and Rural White Papers. It will also be helping to deliver Government environmental strategies and programmes, such as those covering air quality, waste and climate change.

Measurements of progress

The Environment Agency wanted to develop a long-term vision for the environment and a sustainable future, one that is both imaginative and demanding. A number of national and international targets have already been set. They help the Agency and its partners on the way. They are summarised in Appendix 1.

Meanwhile, the Agency has made plans to measure our progress towards a better future. We will keep track of key indicators, set out in the Government's White Paper, *A better quality of life: A strategy for sustainable development for the United Kingdom*. In addition, we will monitor global indicators and the key indicators which apply specifically to the Agency's own activities. We have grouped the indicators under the themes for the future as set out in this vision. They are shown in Appendix 2.

4 MAKING IT HAPPEN

The following sections describe how the Environment Agency plans to make progress towards the long-term vision; how we will achieve this by changing how we operate and by working in partnership with others; and what the vision means for the quality of the environment.

Step by step

In the longer term, the Agency and its partners want to achieve a fully integrated approach to sustainable development. To reach this goal, the Agency must change, along with business, public agencies and citizens.

The activities of the Agency are framed by way of its statutory responsibilities and guidance given to it by Government. Regulation is a major role for the Agency and will remain so. We aim to build confidence that we will carry out our regulatory tasks efficiently and constructively, taking account of both the costs and benefits and targeting our action where it will achieve the greatest environmental gain.

However, we need simpler and more effective regulation of the environment. The Agency will propose changes to the law that, without relaxing protection of the environment, will benefit both those we regulate and those with whom we work.

Strong and effective regulation is crucial. It is also important to introduce measures that influence and encourage businesses and others to innovate. In this way, they will benefit from new approaches to environmental management and cleaner production.

The Agency will have detailed consultation with Government and industry and the wider community of stakeholders. In particular, we need to work better with, and learn from, communities and all those concerned with sustainable development. We will increase our consultation. This will help us to understand people's needs and concerns and how we can work with them to uphold their environmental rights and fulfil their environmental responsibilities.

We will consult anglers, the boating community and other users of inland waters.

We will continue discussions with those most at risk from flooding. We will explain to them the nature of risks, particularly in the light of recent severe weather events, what warnings they can expect from us and how they should respond.

Prevention is better than cure: working with business on cleaner production

Preventing pollution and the worst effects of climate disruption is more sensible than trying to address these issues after the event. The drought of 1995 and the floods of 1998 and 2000 need to be primary considerations in the siting of new development. It is much easier to take these factors into account at the outset rather than trying to respond after completion.

The Environment Agency will work with business and others to raise awareness of the potential for minimising pollution and waste at source and avoiding risk to the environment and to human

Using new technology
can help reduce waste and pollution: office building
with solar panels, Newcastle-upon-Tyne



What we do today
is for our children to inherit tomorrow



health. This approach can often bring economic and other benefits in 'win-win' solutions. We will argue for companies themselves, through their boards and directors, to take direct responsibility for the environmental impacts of their businesses.

Working with others: action to create shared solutions

The Agency aims to identify and agree longer-term goals with our stakeholders and to work together to achieve those goals. Starting with our own people, we will take every opportunity to harness enthusiasm and expertise.

We aim to be a trusted and valuable partner for the many organisations that come into contact with us and for those who seek our help in formulating strategies for sustainable development. That means working even more closely not only with business and public agencies but also with local councils, schools, anglers, users of waterways and many other interest groups.

A prerequisite for partnership is sharing information and know-how. We have already set up a national forum on environmental monitoring, and will ensure that we continue to provide information of the highest quality.

We will do much more to pool our knowledge with others in all our areas of work. We also plan to sharpen up our communication skills and our capacity to work with different groups. In that way the Agency will be a driving force for lasting changes in environmental behaviour.

All this means that the Agency has to change significantly as an organisation; the way we will do this will be set out in later documents. We will have to shift our resources and be more flexible in our internal operations.

We will lead by example. We will maximise our use of new technology to change the way we work, to eliminate unnecessary travel and to share and communicate knowledge. We will undertake our own activities, such as the construction of flood defences, according to best environmental practice.

Within the Agency, we have already introduced an 'environment-first' culture. We have developed our own environmental management systems, and have gained certification for many of our own sites. There is still a lot to do. But we will continue to improve our own environmental performance, and to report on it.

Consulting widely, delivering results

This document presents an overview of our longer-term hopes and aims for the environment and a sustainable future. We fully recognise that our own vision has to be cast within frameworks that are emerging at an international level, and within the Government's own strategy for sustainable development. Our success depends upon working closely in partnership with others, in all sectors of society. We intend to be a strong ally for fellow regulators – a valued service for all who use and enjoy the environment, and an asset for regional and local government.

THE ROLE OF THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

The Environment Agency is the leading public organisation for protecting and enhancing the environment in England and Wales.

We regulate industry and inspect industrial sites to protect the environment and people from pollution and environmental risks to health. We work to encourage ever more effective environmental stewardship by industry and all other sectors.

The Agency maintains essential flood defences, water resources and river navigation structures. We restore and improve the land and wildlife habitats. We also monitor and assess the environment. We make the data and information that we collect widely available.

This document spells out some of the challenges and opportunities that we all face in shaping a better environment in England and Wales. It outlines the strategic steps the Agency will take – as a public service, as a regulator and as a partner with a wide range of organisations – to realise this vision. The Agency will in some cases have a central role but we recognise that achieving our vision will require work and action by others.

A cleaner environment

Much of the gross pollution that characterised the last century has fortunately been dealt with – foetid rivers, choking smogs and unmanaged tips are now a thing of the past. But new challenges are emerging that are equally damaging, if less obvious in their manifestation: global warming, endocrine-disrupting chemicals, ultrafine particles in the air.

For all the progress so far, there is a huge challenge ahead to build on past successes and to address these new threats as we help our economy and society make the longer-term transition to sustainable development.

Our aims

The Environment Agency aims to be a champion for the environment, working for a healthy, rich and diverse environment in England and Wales.

We also aim to be a champion for sustainable development and will contribute to the national strategy for sustainable development. We will protect and enhance the environment in a way that links with measures to promote social fairness and a prosperous, efficient economy. We will work with partners across society to achieve this vision.

New solutions

New problems demand new solutions – ‘joined-up’ policy that takes in all the aspects of a problem. We have to mobilise consumer behaviour and innovation in business and lifestyles; engage communities in planning for and delivering change; and produce and consume in ways that protect and enhance the environment while ensuring prosperity and a better quality of life for all, especially vulnerable communities.

Environmental issues cut across both economic and social concerns, and this fact must be embraced if we are to deliver sustainable solutions. Society will not successfully tackle the big issues such as climate change, transport, energy and health purely by finding solutions that improve the environment. These issues will only be dealt with by policies that have regard to their economic and social implications as well.

For organisations like the Agency this means challenging new ways of working that will allow us to contribute more to 'joined-up' solutions. The Agency is committed to meeting this challenge and to pursuing sustainable development.

Regulation by authorisation and licence will still have a central role but we will increasingly need to take on board other solutions. These include economic instruments and voluntary agreements, building up our educational programme, and putting environmental issues into the plans of regional development agencies and into local community plans.

In the rest of this document we expand upon the nine 'themes for the future' that encapsulate our key milestones and targets and that underpin our vision for the environment. We describe some of the outcomes we hope to achieve; the changes we will help bring about; and the risks and problems we plan to address. We also indicate the type of involvement that we believe the Agency is likely to have.

Over the coming months, we will set out the steps that need to be taken in the short and medium term to move towards our vision of a better environment and improved quality of life. For some of these steps the Agency will take a leading role, in others we will be a substantial partner, and there will also be steps which are taken by others. We will publish these steps as a series of *Frameworks for Change* documents.

Consultation is important to us, both in shaping our activities and in developing a consensus that we have got it right. For this reason, and to improve our own thinking, we will consult widely on these *Frameworks*.

The pace and scale of implementation will ultimately depend on the availability of money and resources. The Agency's part in delivering activities identified in the *Frameworks* will be managed through the normal departmental consultation channels of our three-year corporate plan.

THEMES FOR THE FUTURE – TOWARDS A BETTER ENVIRONMENT

A better quality of life

LONG-TERM OBJECTIVE:

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

The outcomes we will help achieve:

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.

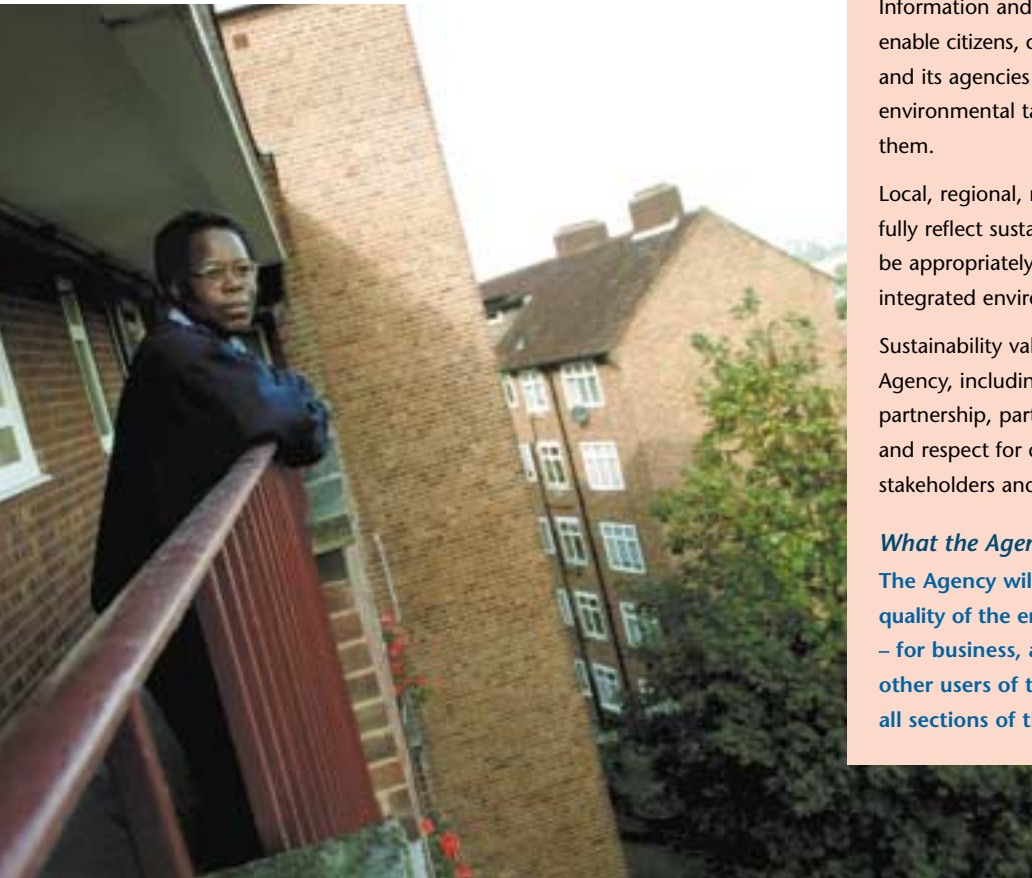
Information and processes will be readily available to enable citizens, communities, businesses and government and its agencies to agree quality of life and environmental targets and the plans that will realise them.

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.

What the Agency will do:

The Agency will work with all sectors to enhance the quality of the environment and the services it provides – for business, anglers, the boating community and other users of the waterways, farmers, planners and all sections of the community.



Fawcett Estate, Upper Clapton, Hackney

An enhanced environment for wildlife

LONG-TERM OBJECTIVE:

Wildlife will thrive in urban and rural areas. Habitats will improve in their extent and quality to sustainable levels for the benefit of all species. Everyone will understand the importance of safeguarding biodiversity.

The outcomes we will help achieve:

Degraded habitats, especially rivers, estuaries and wetlands, will have been restored.

Wildlife corridors and their associated habitats will be of high quality, with no artificial barriers to wildlife movement.

The UK's Biodiversity Action Plan will have been successfully delivered and priority species will no longer be under threat.

Rivers, estuaries, lakes and canals will all support appropriate fish communities.

Urban and rural land-use practices will encourage the protection and restoration of habitats, species and natural processes.

The management of land for wildlife and landscape benefits will be accepted and supported as a normal activity of rural life.

There will be a broad consensus on how biodiversity should be managed against a background of climate change.

Threats to the genetic integrity of our native wildlife will be greatly reduced.

What the Agency will do:

The Agency will ensure that its activities and those it authorises do not threaten key species and habitats. It will work with many partners at local, regional and national levels to safeguard and enhance biodiversity.



Coot in a nest made from an old tyre, on the River Thames

Cleaner air for everyone

LONG-TERM OBJECTIVE:

We will have cleaner and healthier air. The emission of chemical pollutants into the atmosphere will decline greatly and will be below the level at which they can do significant harm.

The outcomes we will help achieve:

Clean air will be valued and demanded by society.

Air quality standards will have been set, and met, for all significant pollutants.

Air quality will no longer be a significant cause of adverse human health effects and damage to the urban and rural environment.

Air pollution will no longer have a detrimental effect on plants, animals or their habitats.

Adverse effects on the natural processes of the global atmosphere will have been greatly reduced.

All national and international aspects of air pollution will be recognised.

All controllable emissions to the air will be regulated on the basis of their environmental impact.

What the Agency will do:

The Agency will work towards shared strategies with our partners at a local level to improve air quality from all sources. Provision of information in an understandable, accessible format on air quality issues, including emissions inventories, will be a priority for the Agency.

Improved and protected inland and coastal waters

LONG-TERM OBJECTIVE:

Our rivers, lakes and coastal waters will be far cleaner. They will sustain diverse and healthy ecosystems, water sports and recreation such as boating and fishing, and those uses needed by a thriving and healthy community.

The outcomes we will help achieve:

Abstractions and discharges will neither damage the environment nor threaten human health.

Damaging pollution incidents will have been prevented at source.

The causes of water pollution, eutrophication, and acidification will have been fully controlled.

The quantities of chemicals entering the sea will have been greatly reduced.

Surface waters will sustain a diverse variety of habitats and wildlife.

Water will be acknowledged as a valuable resource.

Surface waters will be regarded as a recreational and amenity asset.

Inland and coastal waters will be cherished by local communities.

What the Agency will do:

The Agency will work to clean up polluted waters and to reduce the risk of further pollution. We will ensure that aquatic and wetland wildlife has the amount of clean, healthy water it requires.

Angler on the Shropshire Union Canal in Cheshire



Purchasing and investment can be used to influence industrial performance to the benefit of the environment

A 'greener' business world

Restored, protected land with healthier soils

LONG-TERM OBJECTIVE:

Our land and soils in the countryside and towns will be exposed far less to pollutants. They will support a wide range of uses, including production of healthy, nutritious food and other crops, without damaging wildlife or human health. Contaminated and damaged land will be restored and protected.

The outcomes we will help achieve:

Society will value land and soil quality as much as it values the quality of air and water.

Major contaminated land problems will have been identified, and the land cleaned up and restored so that it is fit for specific uses, and the landscape enhanced.

The creation of new problems by the inappropriate use and development of land, by direct and indirect additions to the soil, and by accelerated soil erosion, will have been prevented.

More land will have been brought into sustainable use through more effective clean-up methods and clearer planning targets.

Land use will match its capability, and land users will pre-guarantee appropriate long-term management and restoration as required.

What the Agency will do:

The Agency aims to help make the best possible use of land and to put as much contaminated land as possible back into productive use. We will produce and consult on plans for land for which we are responsible. We will publish more and better data on contaminated land, and guidance on standards. The Agency will press for improved policies to ensure better protection for land and soils.

LONG-TERM OBJECTIVE:

Industry and businesses will value the services provided by a rich and diverse natural environment. In the process, they will reap the benefits of sustainable business practices, improve competitiveness and value to shareholders, and secure trust in the wider community.

The outcomes we will help achieve:

All business activities will have environmental concerns at the heart of their thinking and operations.

The adoption of sustainable production and consumption practices will be the norm.

Industries will exercise stewardship over their products to ensure that they are compatible with sustainable development.

Risk and incentive-based charging schemes will reward reduced risks to human health and the environment and encourage effective environmental management.

The public will use its purchasing and investment powers, and its opinion, to influence industrial performance in terms of human health and the environment.

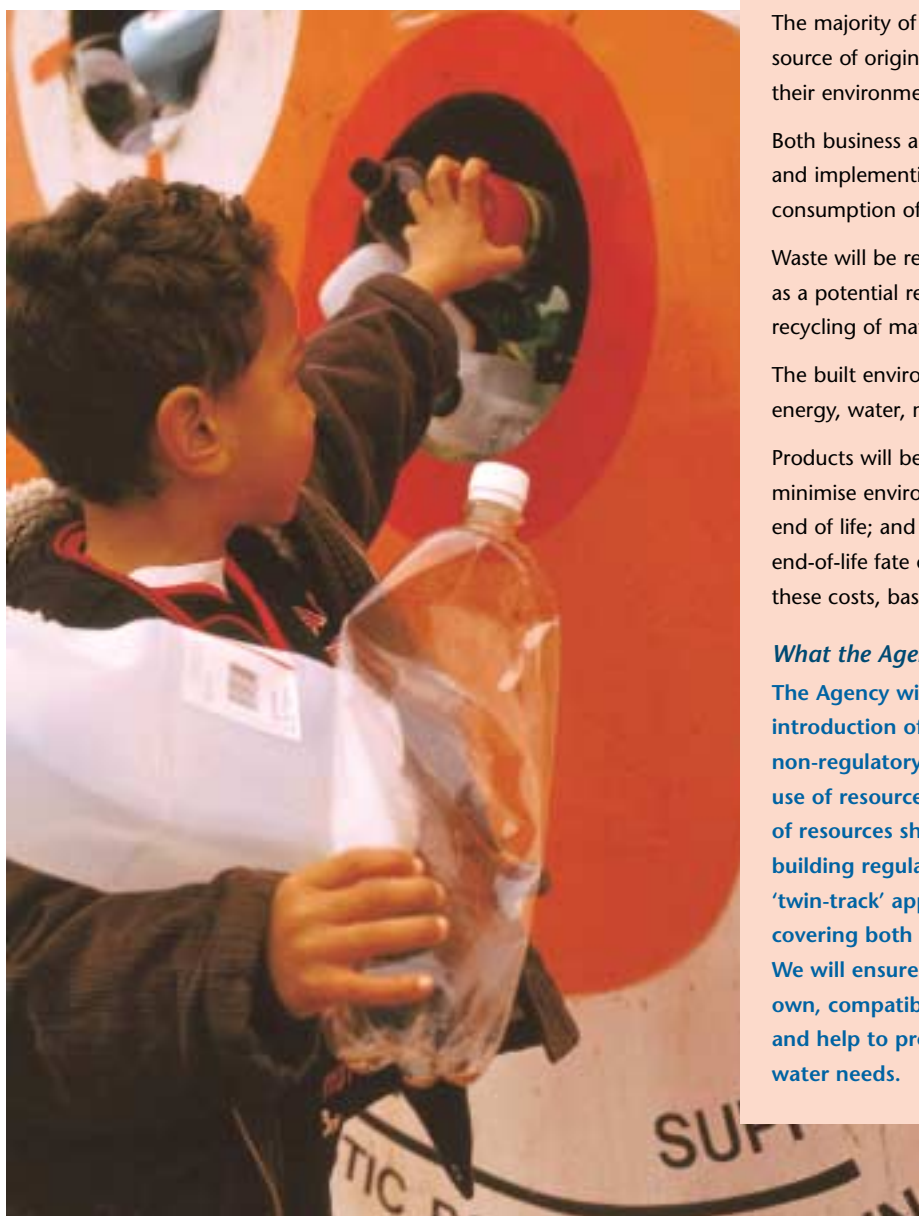
Through the public being better informed and involved, there will be greater general approval in the regulatory process and public confidence in it.

What the Agency will do:

The Agency will work to simplify and improve the regulatory process for business, improve access to environmental information for business and the public, and promote the prevention of pollution and minimisation of waste in industry.

Wiser, sustainable use of natural resources

Recycling plastic bottles at a supermarket, Manchester



LONG-TERM OBJECTIVE:

Business, public agencies, other organisations and individuals will minimise the waste they produce. They will reuse and recycle materials far more intensively, and make more efficient use of energy and materials.

The outcomes we will help achieve:

People will be aware of their natural resource consumption and take responsibility for its environmental impact.

Water will be acknowledged as a valuable resource and will be used wisely by all sectors of society. The justifiable demands for water use will be understood and the means of meeting them in place.

The majority of wastes will be disposed of as close to the source of origin as appropriate, taking full account of their environmental impact.

Both business and the public sector will be adopting and implementing long-term strategies to reduce the consumption of energy and resources.

Waste will be regarded by both industry and consumers as a potential resource, with the efficient reuse and recycling of materials the social norm.

The built environment will be efficient in its use of energy, water, materials and space.

Products will be designed, marketed and licensed to minimise environmental costs in manufacture/use/end of life; and make producers responsible for the end-of-life fate of products. Prices of goods will reflect all these costs, based on full global environmental impact.

What the Agency will do:

The Agency will promote and support the introduction of economic incentives and other non-regulatory approaches to achieve the sustainable use of resources. We will argue that the efficient use of resources should be part of planning guidance and building regulations, and will encourage a 'twin-track' approach to resource management, covering both demand and supply-side issues. We will ensure that major users of water have their own, compatible, water resource management plans and help to provide robust forecasts of future water needs.

Limiting and adapting to climate change

LONG-TERM OBJECTIVE:

Drastic cuts will have been made in the emission of 'greenhouse gases' such as carbon dioxide and society as a whole will have taken account of, and be prepared for, the probable changes to our climate.

The outcomes we will help achieve:

Energy efficiency programmes will be an integral part of all industrial sectors, transport and domestic life.

'Greenhouse gas' emissions from all sources will have been quantified and greatly reduced, with an evident trend showing continuous enhancement.

Energy and transport policies will take full account of their environmental impacts.

The basis for positive attempts to remove carbon from the atmosphere will be better understood.

Society will have accepted the reality of climate change, and will be prepared to take the appropriate actions and bear the necessary costs of limitation and adaptation.

Uncertainty over future impacts of climate change will have been incorporated into long-term decision making, and reflected in environmental standards and targets.

Environmental needs for water and the continuity of public supply will be in balance as the climate changes.

Environmental monitoring programmes will provide accurate information on the direct effects of climate change.

What the Agency will do:

The Agency will explore, in partnership with others, the most effective mixture of economic measures, negotiated agreements and direct regulation to ensure that significant cuts are made in 'greenhouse gas' emissions from industry and other sectors. We will produce options for different sectors of the economy. And we will relate these to strategies for much greater efficiency in use of energy. We will also be at the forefront of measures to inform the public about the issues and to help them take steps to reduce risks and prevent damage and loss of life from inevitable changes to the climate – such as increased flooding.

Reducing flood risk

LONG-TERM OBJECTIVE:

Flood warnings and sustainable defences will continue to prevent deaths from flooding. Property damage and distress will be minimised. The role of wetlands in reducing flood risks will be recognised and all the environmental benefits from natural floods will be maximised.

The outcomes we will help achieve:

Flood warnings will be given in good time, acted upon and damage minimised.

People will accept the need to avoid flood risks, take warnings seriously and act accordingly.

Nationally consistent standards of flood defences will be in place to meet the challenges of climate change.

Flood defences will be designed and constructed to deliver optimum environmental benefits.

Positive aspects of natural flood events will be recognised and flood defences designed to work with nature in accommodating them.

Flood risks arising from land use and climate change will be recognised, understood and fully taken into account in planning decisions.

Planners and developers will understand their role in sustainable flood risk management.

Properties at risk will be designed or modified to cope with the likely consequences of being flooded.

Flood defences that may be required because of new development will be fully funded by developers as part of that development, and should not lead to additional flood risk.

Innovative uses of technology will improve the ability to predict and cope with floods.

Benefits for water resources and wildlife will be achieved from natural flood events.

What the Agency will do:

The Agency will improve flood defences and information on flood risks. We will work with all sections of the community to reduce flood risks through preventive planning, restoration of rivers and flood plains, better management of the disposal of surface water and better design of buildings.

KEY TARGETS

Over the next 20 years, we will contribute to the achievement of a number of key national and international milestones.

Short term

- 2000** Implementation of revised basic safety standards for radioactive substances *Europe*
- 2001** Landfill of liquid waste and some hazardous waste banned from existing landfills *Europe*
- 2002** 25 per cent of Government transactions conducted electronically *UK*
- 2003** Whole tyres banned from landfill *Europe*

Medium term

- 2005** 50 per cent of Government transactions done electronically *UK*
- 2005** Compliance required with all ambient air quality standards *Europe*
- 2006** All urban wastewater treatment plants to have secondary treatment *Europe*
- 2007** All existing process industry authorisations updated as Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control Directive (IPPC) implemented *Europe*
- 2008** 100 per cent of Government transactions done electronically *UK*

Longer term

- 2010** Reduction in biodegradable municipal waste to landfill to 75 per cent of 1995 arisings *Europe*
- 2010** CO₂ emissions 20 per cent below 1990 levels *UK Govt pledge*
- 2010** Recover 45 per cent of municipal waste *England and Wales*
- 2010** Recycling/composting 30 per cent of household waste *England and Wales*
- 2010** Compliance with higher ambient air quality standards SO_x, NO_x, PMs and lead *Europe*
- 2010** EU Water Framework Directive basin management plans start *Europe*
- 2012** Kyoto deadline – reduce European greenhouse gas emissions by eight per cent from 1990 levels *Global*
- 2015** Achievement of UK Biodiversity Action Plan targets *UK*
- 2015** Deadline for complete phase-out of hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) *Global*
- 2016** EU Water Framework Directive basin management plans reviewed *Europe*
- 2020** Reduction in biodegradable municipal waste to landfill to 35 per cent of 1995 arisings *Europe*
- 2020** OSPAR Commission: Sintra Agreement – Targets related to discharges of hazardous substances and discharges of radioactive substances *Europe*

APPENDIX 2

KEY INDICATORS

The Agency needs measures against which it can judge its performance in improving and protecting the environment. We have already identified a set of key environmental indicators to be used in monitoring the environment and in reviewing our own progress. These build on a set of headline indicators in the Government's White Paper, *A better quality of life: A strategy for sustainable development in the United Kingdom*

A better quality of life

- Bathing water quality
- Quality of surroundings
- Beach litter in the UK
- Leisure day visits in the UK
- Craft on inland waters

An enhanced environment for wildlife

- Population of wild birds in the UK
- River habitat classification
- Salmon catches
- Coarse fish catches
- Achievement of Biodiversity Action Plan targets

Cleaner air for everyone

- Days when air pollution is moderate or higher in the UK
- Atmospheric (SO₂, NO_x) emissions from industries

Improved and protected inland and coastal waters

- Rivers of good or fair quality
- Dangerous substances in water
- Nutrients in water
- Loads of major contaminants to coastal waters
- Estuary water quality
- Water pollution incidents

Restored, protected land with healthier soils

- Area of derelict land
- Organic matter in topsoils
- Net loss of soils to development
- Landscape features

A 'greener' business world

- Discharges from the nuclear industry
- Compliance with environmental regulations
- Emissions to air from Agency-regulated industrial processes
- Pollutant load from sewage treatment works

Wiser, sustainable use of natural resources

- Waste arisings and management
- Special waste arisings
- Household water use and peak demand
- Water demand and availability
- Abstraction of water by purpose

Limiting and adapting to climate change

- Emissions of greenhouse gases
- Annual average surface temperatures in central England
- Electricity from renewable sources
- Summer and winter rainfall

Reducing flood risk

- Sea level rise in Great Britain
- Major flooding incidents
- Thames barrier closures against tidal surges
- Flood warnings issued

These indicators come from: ■ the 15 headline indicators of the UK Government; ■ the set of 150 supporting indicators; and ■ the Environment Agency's own set of 69 indicators.

Further copies of this report, including large-print, braille and audio-tape versions, are available from:

Public Enquiries, Environment Agency, Rio House, Waterside Drive, Aztec West, Almondsbury, Bristol BS32 4UD

Telephone 01454 624411

e-mail enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

The report is also available on our website:

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

Bilingual (English/Welsh) copies are available from:

Technical Planning, Environment Agency Wales, Rivers House/Plas-yr-Afon, Fortran Road, St Mellons Business Park, St Mellons, Cardiff CF3 0EY.

Telephone 0845 933 3111

It is also available on our website:

<http://www.environment-agency.wales.gov.uk>

Copies are also available in Bengali, Cantonese, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, Somali and Urdu.

Bengali

এই রিপোর্টটি আমাদের ওয়েবসাইট:

www.environment-agency.gov.uk-এ পাওয়া যায়। যদি আপনি এটির প্রিন্ট করা কপি পেতে চান, তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে পাবলিক ইনকোয়ারিতে 01454 624411 নম্বরে ফোন করুন।

Cantonese

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www.environment-agency.gov.uk 閱覽；欲索取

印刷版本，則請致電公眾查詢熱線：

01454 624411 。

Gujarati

આ અહેવાલ અમારી વેબસાઇટ

www.environment-agency.gov.uk ઉપર ગુજરાતીમાં મળે છે.

જો તમને છપાયેલી નકલ જોઈતી હોય તો, કૃપા કરી

01454 624411 ઉપર પબ્લિક ઇન્કવાઈરિઝમાં ફોન કરો.

Hindi

यह रिपोर्ट हमारे वेबसाइट पर हिन्दी में उपलब्ध है:

www.environment-agency.gov.uk यदि आपको प्रिंट किया हुआ

एक कॉपी चाहिए, तो कृपया पब्लिक इन्क्वायरीज़ को 01454 624411

नंबर पर टेलिफोन करें।

Punjabi

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www.environment-agency.gov.uk . ਨੇਕਰ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਸਦੀ ਛਪੀ

ਹੋਈ ਕਾਪੀ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ, ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਪਬਲਿਕ ਇਨਕੁਆਇਰੀਜ਼ ਨੂੰ

01454 624411 ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

Somali

Waxa warbixintan laguugu diyaariyay Af-Soomaali,

waxana aad ka helaysaa websitekayaga:

www.environment-agency.gov.uk . Haddii aad

jeceshahay in aad heshid nuqulka/koobiga warbixintan,

Fadlan waxa aad kula soo hadshaa Telifoonkan

01454 624411 Laanta wararsiinta dadweynaha.

Urdu

- www.environment-agency.gov.uk - سے ویب سائٹ پر دستیاب ہے۔

اگر آپ کو اس کی کاپی چاہی ہو تو درکار ہونے پر برائے مہربانی پبلک انکوائریز کو اس نمبر پر فون کیجیے

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