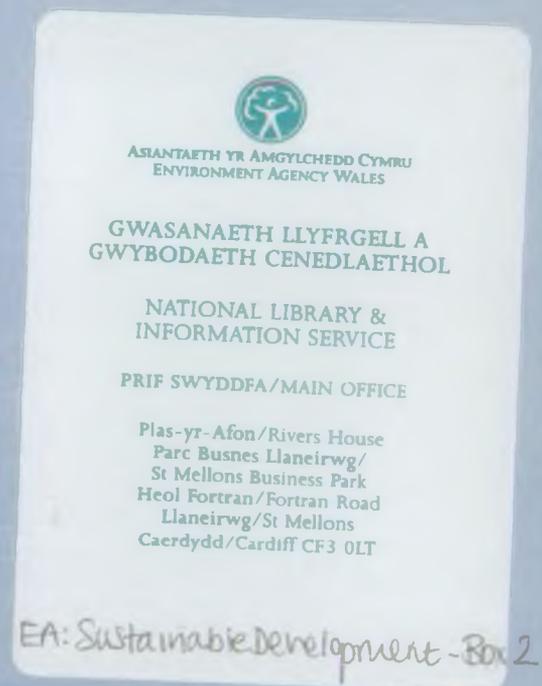


Creating an Environmental Vision

Progressing
the Environment Agency's
contribution to
sustainable development
by way of a better
environment in England
and Wales

S U M M A R Y



CONSULTATION DRAFT JUNE 2000



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Introduction

Sustainable development is not simply about creating wealth and protecting the environment. It is also about caring for people and their quality of life. We, the Environment Agency, can make a significant contribution to this goal.

Actions speak louder than words and the first step to effective action is to know what you want to achieve, the long term vision. We have looked at the stresses and strains that shape the environment and beyond the confines of current legal requirements to consider what we are trying to achieve – the challenges, and how we are going to meet them in an integrated way.

Society can only achieve a more sustainable future if we all have a common and shared view of what the future holds and what it may look like. We are now encouraging others to share our vision.

This leaflet summarises briefly our forward thinking, our vision for the future.

Our Vision is:

A better environment in England and Wales for present and future generations

We Want to:

*improve the quality of life
and enhance wildlife
by 'greening' the business world
and using natural resources wisely
to ensure that the air is clean
to protect and improve inland
and coastal waters
to restore and protect the land
whilst reducing flood risks
and limiting and adapting to
climate change*

So that:

- People will have the peace of mind from knowing that they live in a clean, safe, diverse environment that they can use and enjoy.
- Both urban and rural landscapes will have an obvious and overall improvement in the extent and quality of their habitats and the wildlife that they support.
- Industry and businesses generally will be managed in a way that fully protects human health and the environment.
- Waste and wasteful behaviour will no longer be a major environmental threat because of the re-use of resources and the adoption of sustainable waste management practices.
- Neither human health nor the natural and man-made environments will be damaged by emissions to the atmosphere.
- There will be sufficient clean and healthy waters to support people's needs and those of wildlife.
- The natural resources provided by the land will be enhanced, harm to people and wildlife will be avoided, and a wide range of land uses supportable.
- Flood warnings and sustainable defences will continue to prevent deaths from flooding; property damage and distress will have been minimised; and all the benefits to be derived from natural floods will be exploited.
- Greenhouse gas emissions will have been greatly reduced, society will have adapted efficiently to climatic change and will be prepared for further predicted changes.

We will do this using:

Laws and regulation – Getting the right laws for maximum environmental benefit and using our regulatory powers to best effect, with new legislation if necessary.

The planning system – Working with local, regional and national planners to secure the right sort of development that takes the environment fully into account. Looking for smart alternatives to minimise the impact of development and higher environmental standards for construction and housing.

Education, influencing and campaigning – Informing and advising government and business to influence their thinking. Working with others to deliver environmental improvement such as local government on emissions from vehicles. Raising general awareness of, and interest in, the environment by the general public.

Environmental economics – Using economic 'carrots' and 'sticks' to guide the way industry and others think about the environment. Developing incentives to improve performance and penalties such as new taxes to curb unhelpful activities.

Knowledge – Making our knowledge widely available in ways that will genuinely inform and command attention. Providing advice where it will have the most effect, and following it through.

Action – We are more than a scientific regulatory body. We will make good use of our presence on the ground – such as our flood defence work and responding to emergencies – to promote our wider aims.

Partnerships – Working with others, to achieve common goals, is essential. We recognise that the Agency is not the sole player, nor the only expert. We will therefore encourage others to point out the problems that need rectifying, to suggest solutions and, indeed, to be part of the solutions. We will therefore continue to work with government, with our partners and key collaborators, and with the public.

Changing the Agency

The Environment Agency must change to meet this challenge. We will need to be more flexible and adaptable, to simplify our business and direct our effort where it is most effective in delivering the vision. We will also need simpler environmental regulation. Consulting and engaging people from all walks of life in the longer-term aspirations for the environment will be vital.

But throughout we must maintain our ability to do our current work.

Delivering this environmental and organisational change requires careful planning. Later this year we will seek views on short to medium term 'frameworks for change' that have the vision as a guide, showing the steps we need to take to make progress towards the vision.

Where to get more information ...

You can get more information about our vision and how we are taking it forward from the full consultation document, available free from Nina Smith at Environment Agency, Rio House, Waterside Drive, Aztec West, Almondsbury, Bristol BS32 4UD, telephone 01454 878868, or at our internet site at <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk>

... and send your feedback

We want your reaction to our vision. Please send us your ideas and suggestions by letter or e-mail to:

Dr R J Pentreath, Chief Scientist and Director of Environmental Strategy at the Environment Agency, Rio House, Waterside Drive, Aztec West, Almondsbury, Bristol BS32 4UD.

Comments received before 18th August 2000 will go towards shaping the final vision.

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