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One future – different paths

The UK's shared framework for sustainable development

*ensuring a
strong, healthy
and just society*

achieving a sustainable economy

promoting good governance

using sound science *living within*

environmental

responsibly limits

ensuring a strong, healthy and just society

achieving a

sustainable economy

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One future – different paths

The UK's shared framework for sustainable development

“The past 20 years have seen a growing realisation that there are models of development which are simply unsustainable. We live in a world coping with the consequences of climate change and many resources strained by patterns of production and consumption. This joint framework represents a decisive move toward more sustainable development – a move we are making not merely because it is the right thing to do, but because it is in our own long-term interests. Sustainable development, across the UK, is not an option. It is a necessity.”

The Rt Hon Tony Blair MP, Prime Minister

“We did not care enough in the past about our environment and our planet's scarce resources. Now we have to tackle the problems we have inherited, and learn to stop causing new ones. This is not just about the environment: it is about people and quality of life. This is why in Scotland we are committed to environmental justice for those who suffer most from poor environments. The challenge is to make economic growth sustainable. We can and must break the link with environmental damage. Being more efficient with our resources will make our businesses more competitive and our economy more productive. Government must lead but all of us must act now. We must all be prepared to change the way we lead our lives and leave a better legacy for those who come after us.”

The Rt Hon Jack McConnell MSP, the First Minister, Scottish Executive

“Wales knows all about the human and environmental consequences of unsustainable models of development. For a generation or more, we've been dealing with that legacy within Wales, while at the same time as reinventing our economy. That process continues. We need to ensure better life-chances for all our people, and we have a practical interest in reducing the demands our way of life places on the planet. Living better but with less impact on the environment of our planet will mean making some hard choices that will call for real powers of political persuasion that will test our leadership to the full. For our children and their children's sake we cannot afford to fail that test.”

The Rt Hon Rhodri Morgan AM, the First Minister, Welsh Assembly Government

“We recognise the significance of the sustainability issues created as a result of our current lifestyles and appreciate that it will require action by all of us to ensure that the resources we produce and consume and the manner in which we live reflect the principles of sustainable development. The framework provides an opportunity for leadership and co-operation across government with a focus for action on priority areas. In supporting this approach and in progressing a sustainable development strategy for Northern Ireland we will work closely with communities, the business sector and environmental groups to negate adverse impacts, encourage innovation and grasp the opportunities that can effect real change and safeguard the future.”

The Rt Hon Paul Murphy MP, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

We commit our Governments to the purpose and principles set out here, agree to support each other in delivering sustainable development in the UK, and to be held accountable for that delivery.

I. Strategic framework

In 1999, the UK devolved many powers to new democratic bodies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Since then, as new bodies we have been creating our own solutions to the shared challenge of sustainable development. As different parts of the UK, our ability to set our own priorities and find our own answers is an important part of achieving sustainability.

The model for the UK's strategic approach to sustainable development reflects this new structure of decision-making. Instead of one strategy document, we will each have our own. But there are still common challenges and goals. This framework document sets out what those are, and is an affirmation that, although we have devolved government, we will work to common goals without compromising the strengths which our diversity of approach offers. The framework demonstrates our commitment to work together – wherever we live in the UK – to meet our shared goals.

In the consultation on the new UK Sustainable Development Strategy, we therefore committed ourselves to produce a UK strategic framework for sustainable development to 2020, agreed by the UK Government and the administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, to provide a consistent approach and focus across the UK.

This framework, launched in conjunction with the UK Government Strategy, comprises:

- a shared understanding of sustainable development;
- a common purpose outlining what we are trying to achieve and the guiding principles we all need to follow to achieve it;
- our sustainable development priorities for UK action, at home and internationally; and
- indicators to monitor the key issues on a UK basis.

Delivering the Framework

The strategic framework will be supported by separate strategies for each administration. These will build on existing work and translate this framework's aims into action, based on our different responsibilities, needs and views. These strategies will include further priorities, and be supported by additional measures and indicators.

2. A Shared Endeavour



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In **Scotland**, the Scottish Executive's commitment to sustainable development was reaffirmed in *A Partnership for a Better Scotland* in May 2003. This sets the goal of a Scotland that delivers sustainable development; that puts environmental concerns at the heart of public policy and secures environmental justice for all of Scotland's communities. Sustainable development has been a cross cutting theme of the last two Scottish spending reviews. Our vision, priorities and indicators for sustainable development were set out in *Meeting the Needs... Priorities, Actions and Target for Sustainable Development in Scotland* in April 2002, since when progress reports have been published annually. We will develop a Scottish sustainable development strategy working closely with key stakeholders in Scotland during 2005.



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

In **Wales**, the National Assembly has a legal duty to develop a Scheme setting out how we will promote sustainable development in exercising all our functions. Our first Scheme, *Learning to live differently*, was launched in November 2000. It committed us to take account of sustainable development in all our decision-making and to work in partnership with others to promote it. After the Assembly election in May 2003, the effectiveness of the first Scheme was independently reviewed. Flowing from that review, sustainable development was built into the Welsh Assembly Government's new strategic agenda *Wales: A Better Country* and in March 2004, we, the Assembly, adopted a revised Scheme *Starting to live differently* aimed at creating a sustainable Wales. Our programme for putting the new Scheme into effect is set out in our *Sustainable Development Action Plan* published in October 2004. Sustainable development is built into the testing of policies, the operational planning process, and reviews of expenditure. We publish progress reports annually.



Northern
Ireland
Office

In **Northern Ireland**, the Northern Ireland Executive (in its Programme for Government 2002-2005), explicitly placed sustainable development at the heart of our work programme. This commitment continues to underpin the development and

delivery of public sector policies and services whilst work on a sustainable development strategy is being progressed. When completed, our Northern Ireland Sustainable Development Strategy will set out a long-term vision of sustainable development, together with a series of high-level objectives. The strategy will be underpinned by an Implementation Plan which will set out the detailed actions to be undertaken to deliver both the high level objectives and a series of lower level objectives and targets based on the different responsibilities, needs and views within Northern Ireland. We are aiming to launch our own sustainable development strategy and supporting indicator set in 2005.



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The **UK Government** is launching its new strategy for sustainable development,

Securing the future, in conjunction with this Framework. It takes account of developments since 1999, both domestically and internationally: the changed structure of government in the UK with devolution to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; greater emphasis on delivery at regional level and the new relationship between government and local authorities. It takes account of new policies since 1999, and it highlights the renewed international push for sustainable development from the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. The lead Department, Defra, chairs a Programme Board to oversee delivery of the Strategy, but all UK Departments share responsibility for making sustainable development a reality.

3. A Common Purpose

To set the United Kingdom on a more sustainable track, we must know what we are aiming for. The 1999 strategy set out clearly that sustainable development means “a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come”, and used the widely used international definition “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”¹

The four aims developed for the 1999 strategy were:

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

These aims effectively captured the simple idea at the heart of sustainable development. However, although the 1999 strategy stressed that these objectives had to be pursued at the same time, in practice, different agencies focused on those one or two most relevant to them. So a new purpose is needed to show how government will integrate these aims and evolve sustainable development policy – to develop the earlier strategy, not depart from it. It needs to paint a picture of what things should look like if we achieve sustainable development, while maintaining continuity with the aims of the 1999 strategy.

The following ‘purpose’, which has been agreed by the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations, has now been adopted as the new framework goal for sustainable development:

¹ From *Our Common Future (The Brundtland Report)* – Report of the 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development. Oxford University Press 1987.

The New Framework Goal for Sustainable Development

The goal of sustainable development is to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life without compromising the quality of life of future generations.

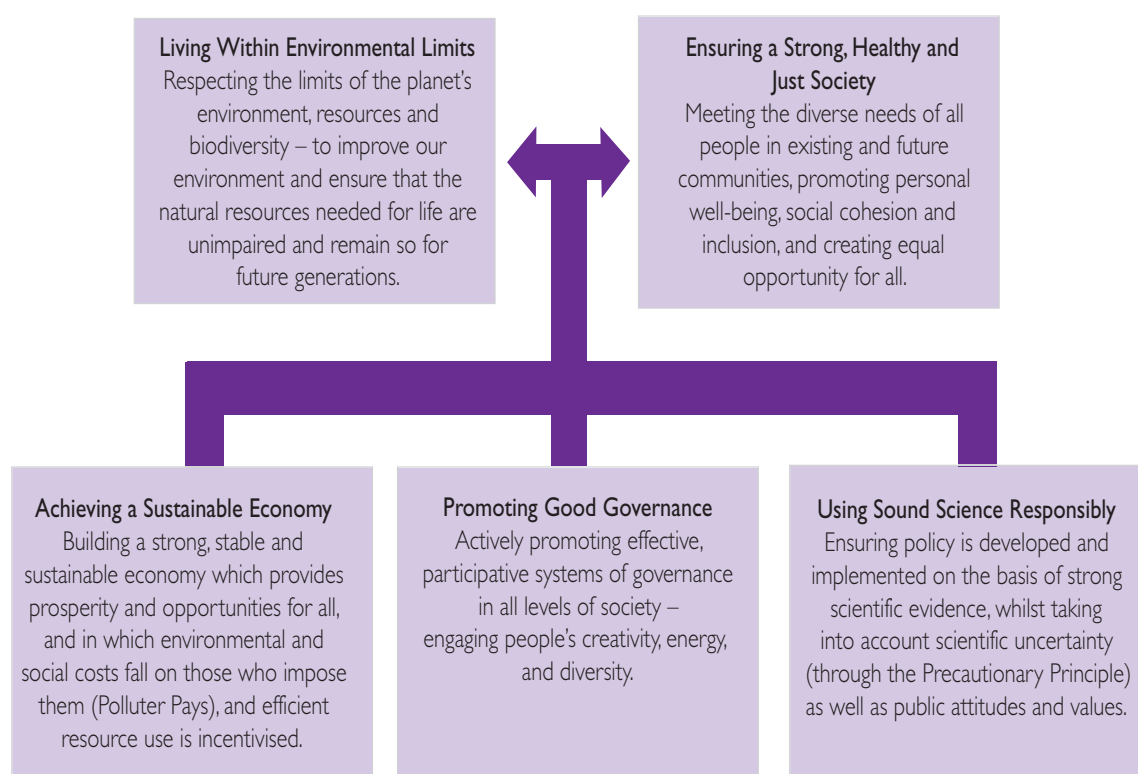
For the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations, that goal will be pursued in an integrated way through a sustainable, innovative and productive economy that delivers high levels of employment, and a just society that promotes social inclusion, sustainable communities and personal well-being. This will be done in ways that protect and enhance the physical and natural environment, and use resources and energy as efficiently as possible.

Government must promote a clear understanding of, and commitment to, sustainable development so that all people can contribute to the overall goal through their individual decisions.

Similar objectives will inform all our international endeavours, with the UK actively promoting multilateral and sustainable solutions to today's most pressing environmental, economic and social problems. There is a clear obligation on more prosperous nations both to put their own house in order and to support other countries in the transition towards a more equitable and sustainable world.

4. Guiding Principles

As the UK Government, Scottish Executive, Welsh Assembly Government and the Northern Ireland Administration, we have agreed upon the following set of shared UK principles that will help us to achieve our sustainable development purpose. They bring together and build on the various previously existing UK principles to set out an overarching approach, which our four separate strategies can share.



These principles will form a basis for sustainable development policy in the UK. For a policy to be sustainable, it must respect all five principles. We want to achieve our goals of living within environmental limits and a just society, and we will do it by means of sustainable economy, good governance, and sound science.

5. Shared Priorities for UK Action

As a result of the consultation, the priority areas for immediate action, shared across the UK, are:

Sustainable Consumption and Production – Sustainable consumption and production is about achieving more with less. This means not only looking at how goods and services are produced, but also the impacts of products and materials across their whole lifecycle and building on people’s awareness of social and environmental concerns. This includes reducing the inefficient use of resources, which is a drag on the economy, so helping boost business competitiveness and to break the link between economic growth and environmental degradation.

Climate Change and Energy – The effects of a changing climate can already be seen. Temperatures and sea levels are rising, ice and snow cover are declining, and the consequences could be catastrophic for the natural world and society. Scientific evidence points to the release of greenhouse gases – such as carbon dioxide and methane – into the atmosphere by human activity as the primary cause of climatic change. We will seek to secure a profound change in the way we generate and use energy, and in other activities that release these gases. We must set a good example and will encourage others to follow it.

Natural Resource Protection and Environmental Enhancement – Natural resources are vital to our existence and that of communities throughout the world. We need a better understanding of environmental limits, environmental enhancement and recovery where the environment is most degraded to ensure a decent environment for everyone, and a more integrated policy framework.

Sustainable Communities – Our aim is to create sustainable communities that embody the principles of sustainable development at the local level. This will involve working to give communities more power and say in the decisions that affect them; and working in partnership at the right level to get things done. The UK uses the same principles of engagement, partnership, and programmes of aid in order to tackle poverty and environmental degradation and to ensure good governance in overseas communities.

These priorities for action within the UK will also help shape the way that our administrations work internationally. The UK government and the devolved administrations will identify issues where it would make sense to act jointly rather than separately to deliver the shared priorities. This is likely to include areas such as public awareness campaigns.

6. International Action

We must take domestic action now, to get the UK's own house in order, and address the international impacts of our domestic policies.

Our strategic objective for international sustainable development is to support multilateral and national institutions that can ensure effective integration of social, environmental and economic objectives to deliver sustainable development, especially for the poorest members of society. We will work with developed and developing countries, and through international institutions, to spread good practice and maintain political pressure for change.

In Europe, our aim will be to drive actions to deliver sustainable development and to forge links between the economic, social and environmental agendas.

Further information on these goals and how our administrations will work towards them will be found in the separate strategies that support this framework.

7. Indicators for the new UK Framework for Sustainable Development

We are introducing a new set of high-level indicators – the **‘UK Framework Indicators’** – to give an overview of sustainable development and the priority areas in the UK.

Since devolution we have formed separate indicator sets for Scotland and Wales, and a set is under development for Northern Ireland. However, responses from ‘Taking it on’ showed that there remained strong support for an overarching set of UK ‘headline’ indicators.

The UK Framework indicators are intended to cover key impacts and outcomes that reflect the priority areas we share across the UK.

In addition to the shared UK Framework Indicators, we will each have a mix of indicators, targets and performance measures in our own strategies. These will underpin our shared framework priorities while reflecting our respective priorities.

We will assess and report annually on progress against the Framework Indicators and use this assessment, together with other evidence from monitoring and evaluation, to determine whether we are succeeding in our goals or whether we need to develop different policies and act accordingly.

Criteria for the set of UK Framework Indicators

In selecting the new UK Framework Indicators, we choose measures that, wherever possible:

- are **linked** to the purpose and priorities within the UK Framework;
- are **agreed** as high priorities by the UK Government and Devolved Administrations;
- have **UK coverage** (though there are some data constraints);
- have **trends** available;
- highlight **challenges**;
- and are statistically robust and meaningful.

There are a number of areas for which it is difficult to monitor progress. In particular we need to take account of global impacts, not just what is happening in the UK.

When reporting on the Framework Indicators we will therefore also provide information on international trends, and will be considering how we might assess the UK's global impacts.

We are also committed to investigating the concept of well being, how it might be integrated into our policies, and how we might monitor whether we are genuinely making a difference to people's lives.

Further information on the proposed development of indicators can be found in the UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy.

UK FRAMEWORK INDICATORS

1. **Greenhouse gas emissions:** Kyoto target and CO₂ emissions
2. **Resource use:** Domestic Material Consumption and GDP
3. **Waste:** arisings by (a) sector (b) method of disposal
4. **Bird populations:** bird population indices (a) farmland birds (b) woodland birds (c) birds of coasts and estuaries
5. **Fish stocks:** fish stocks around the UK within sustainable limits
6. **Ecological impacts of air pollution:** area of UK habitat sensitive to acidification and eutrophication with critical load exceedences
7. **River quality:** rivers of good (a) biological (b) chemical quality
8. **Economic output:** Gross Domestic Product
9. **Active community participation:** civic participation, informal and formal volunteering at least once a month
10. **Crime:** crime survey and recorded crime for (a) vehicles (b) domestic burglary (c) violence
11. **Employment:** people of working age in employment
12. **Workless households:** population living in workless households (a) children (b) working age
13. **Childhood poverty:** children in relative low-income households (a) before housing costs (b) after housing costs
14. **Pensioner poverty:** pensioners in relative low-income households (a) before housing costs (b) after housing costs
15. **Education:** 19 year olds with level 2 qualifications and above
16. **Health inequality:** (a) infant mortality (by socio-economic group) (b) life expectancy (by area) for men and women
17. **Mobility:** (a) number of trips per person by mode (b) distance travelled per person per year by broad trip purpose
18. **Social justice:** *(social measures to be developed)*
19. **Environmental equality:** *(environmental measures to be developed)*
20. **Well being:** *(well being measures to be developed if supported by the evidence)*

Reporting on progress

Each of the UK Government and Devolved Administrations is responsible for progress on its own strategy. But we collectively recognise the need for some periodic assessment of how the UK is doing overall. We will publish assessments of the UK framework indicators each year.

The Scottish Executive will report annually against the indicators in the Scottish strategy, as it does now with the current set of Indicators of Sustainable Development for Scotland.

The Welsh Assembly Government will continue to report annually (as the Government of Wales Act requires) on progress in implementing the Assembly's Sustainable Development Scheme and its Action Plan. Reports will include progress against the UK Framework indicators and the Assembly's own set. We will invite the Sustainable Development Commission to contribute to our annual reports. In addition, we are required to report on the effectiveness of our Scheme every 4 years. The next report is due in 2007, and the Commission will be invited to contribute to this too.

The Northern Ireland Administration recognises the importance of monitoring and reporting on progress and we are committed to looking at how best to incorporate this vital role within the development of the Northern Ireland strategy.

Progress on delivering the UK Government Strategy will be reported on using all the UK framework indicators and some additional indicators related to the priority areas identified in the Strategy.

The Sustainable Development Commission already operates on a UK basis and will continue to work with us all to ensure that we are both individually and collectively making an effective contribution towards the achievement of sustainable development.

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