

Creating a better place

Environment Agency

Corporate Strategy

2010

to

2015

We are the Environment Agency. We are an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body responsible to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and an Assembly Sponsored Public Body responsible to the National Assembly for Wales.

Our principal aims are to protect and improve the environment, and to promote sustainable development. We play a central role in delivering the environmental priorities of Central Government and the Welsh Assembly Government through our functions and roles as:

- an environmental regulator
- an environmental operator
- a monitor of the state of the environment
- an adviser on the development of environmental policy, and
- a promoter of scientific research in support of these roles.

Creating a better place



Foreword



By Chris Smith
Chairman



It's impossible to ignore the current economic crisis. But whatever the financial difficulties are, they are as nothing compared to the crisis faced by the environment.

The evidence shows that the global climate crisis is potentially catastrophic: rapidly disappearing Arctic sea ice; sea levels rising by up to one and a half metres by 2100; greenhouse gas emissions rising globally at three per cent on average per year.

At home, the UK is experiencing more unpredictable weather patterns. More frequent deluges of rain threaten serious flooding. Sea levels and coastal erosion threaten low lying communities. And, in the south and east of England, water will become ever scarcer, with river flows much reduced. In other words, the challenge is tough and immediate.

The UK now has a welcome target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80 per cent of 1990 levels by 2050. But there is much to be done, if we are to turn targets into reality.

This draft strategy sets out our ambitions for the period to 2015. But the environmental challenge is a much longer-term one than that. The work we do over the next five years will greatly affect the environment for the rest of the twenty-first century – on climate change, on air, land and water quality, and on sustainable use of resources. Get it right now, and the future will be more manageable; fail to get it right and it does not look so good. We're running out of chances to get it right.

Our aims

The Environment Agency is the largest organisation protecting and improving the environment in Europe. We are in a unique position to advise Government and business to deliver real improvements for the environment. Over the period of this strategy we will use our influence to put the environment at the heart of decision-making and to help Government address climate change and build a low-carbon future for the UK.

To help us to do this we have simplified our strategy to bring greater focus to our work. We are not abandoning any of our responsibilities, but clarifying the areas where the challenges are most urgent. On climate change our aim is to help get the UK on track to meet its target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This is a tough

challenge. We are already acting to help England and Wales adapt to the consequences of climate change. But more needs to be done to address its causes. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions will be an increasingly important aspect of our work.

We will continue to improve and protect air, land and water quality through continued use of better regulation and clamping down hard on those who ignore their environmental responsibilities.

We will help businesses and the public sector use resources more efficiently and seek to break the link between production, resource use and waste generation.

And we want to put people and communities at the heart of what we do, responding to their views and needs, and giving them a bigger say in their environment.

What this means for us

We've delivered considerable benefits for the environment over the years, much of it with partners. Our challenge now is to deliver environmental benefits more quickly in the face of even greater challenges. To put our full focus on improving the environment, and less on process and procedure. We want to be an organisation that is part of the

solution, with a 'can-do' attitude to getting things done.

We want to be one of the best organisations that there is. We want our customers to value what we do, and we want our staff to be proud to work for us. Everything we do will be driven by a passion for the environment, based on good science and evidence.

We can do it. The past 15 years have seen a 90 per cent reduction in sulphur dioxide emissions. The hole in the ozone layer is being repaired. The threat of acid rain has reduced. All due to human endeavour, incentives, international agreements and regulation. This shows that it's possible to change environmentally destructive behaviour for the better.

This draft strategy sets out our plans for the next five years – years that give us the opportunity to become the generation that really took on climate change; and won.

Introduction



By Paul Leinster
Chief Executive



If we're to make England and Wales a better place to live, we need to be very clear about what we are aiming to achieve.

Our current strategy – Creating a better place – has been in place since 2006 and through implementing it we have delivered real benefits for the environment, and helped to improve the environmental performance of businesses.

But we need to keep up with the changes in the physical and business environments. All of the reports on climate change indicate that it is happening faster and with greater impacts than people had previously predicted. The devastation caused by the floods of 2007 is still having an impact on people's lives. We need a new framework to shape and guide our work to protect and improve the environment in England and Wales over the next five years.

This strategy has five themes – four focused on environmental outcomes and one about how we want to be as an organisation. Between them they cover the major environmental issues we face: climate change; protecting and improving air, land and water quality; the efficient use of resources; and working with people and communities to develop solutions to address the pressures on their environment. The fifth theme addresses what we have to do as an organisation to deliver our objectives and targets. The strategy as a whole is our contribution to sustainable development.

We're now consulting on our new strategy. Our thoughts so far have been developed internally by our Board, Directors and senior staff. We now need your thoughts and input. Have we missed any big issues? Are we being ambitious enough? How does this translate into what we need to do at a local level? How might this work affect the working relationships between you and the Environment Agency?

I look forward to receiving your views, comments and suggestions.

Our draft strategy 2010–2015

Our strategy has five themes:

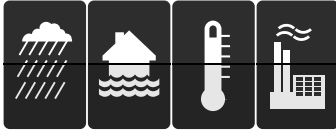
- 1. Act to reduce climate change and its consequences**
- 2. Protect and improve air, land and water quality**
- 3. Put people and communities at the heart of what we do**
- 4. Work with businesses and the public sector to use resources wisely**
- 5. Be the best we can**

1. Act to reduce climate change and its consequences

Climate change is a threat to life on earth as we know it. An important part of our work is helping to prevent future climate change. But there is also a need to reduce the impact of climate change as much as possible.

We have major responsibilities for managing adaptation to the effects of climate change including flooding, drought, sea level rise and coastal erosion.

The causes and impacts of climate change will inform all of our work.



→ Our aims:

- The UK will meet its target for 1990 levels of greenhouse gas emissions to be reduced by 80 per cent by 2050
- We help people and wildlife to adapt to climate change and reduce its adverse impacts
- The consequences of flood risk and coastal erosion are effectively managed and people and property are better prepared and protected

→ To achieve these we will:

- Put reducing and adapting to climate change at the heart of everything we do
- Run the UK part of the European Union Emissions Trading Scheme efficiently, and incorporate emissions from aviation
- Set up and run the Carbon Reduction Commitment efficiently
- Drive energy efficiency, greenhouse gas emissions reductions, and carbon capture and storage through our regulatory and operational work

-
- Ensure our regulatory work helps the development and implementation of low carbon technologies while minimising environmental harm
 - Work with others to develop and implement a national climate change adaptation programme
 - Work with local communities and organisations to better understand, manage and reduce flooding and coastal erosion risks
 - Improve our flood forecasting to give better and earlier warnings to people
 - Work with nature to manage flood risk, including creating new wetlands and coastal habitats that absorb water and prevent flooding
 - Respond rapidly and decisively to flooding
 - The UK is on track to deliver 15 per cent of energy from renewable sources by 2020
 - Designs for new nuclear reactors meet the highest international environmental standards
 - Large scale carbon capture and storage demonstration projects are operating
 - Carbon storage in soils and standing biomass is increased
 - 200,000 more homes are protected from flooding *
 - More households in deprived communities are protected from flooding
 - 800,000 households and businesses at risk from flooding receive direct warnings*
 - Flood warnings are given in an emergency and people act on them
 - Flood defences operate effectively
 - Fewer utility supplies and transport routes are disrupted by flooding



We will know we are succeeding when:

- Our policies and activities take account of climate change
- Greenhouse gas emissions from sites we regulate meet UK reduction targets

* assuming funding is maintained at current levels

2. Protect and improve air, land and water quality

We want a healthy and diverse natural environment that supports the needs of society and the economy. Air, land and water quality have been steadily improving for many years. Point source pollution from industry has been reduced. But ‘diffuse’ pollution from sources such as agriculture, industry, households and road transport is growing in importance.

More needs to be done to tackle this pollution and we will work with partners and individuals to do so. By working together, we will be able to prevent future problems, improve the quality of the natural environment and protect people’s health.



→ Our aims:

- The quality of rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal waters will continue to improve for the benefit of people, the economy and wildlife
- Wildlife and wetlands are protected from over-abstraction of water
- Groundwater is recognised and protected as a precious resource
- Land is managed in a way that maintains and improves soil quality, and reduces water pollution from soil erosion and chemical run-off
- Contaminated land is restored and returned to use without negative impacts on human health or the environment
- Fewer pollution incidents impacting on air, land and water
- Air quality will continue to improve with benefits to the health of people and the environment
- Businesses will report on their environmental performance and demonstrate they are reducing their impact on the environment

→ To achieve these we will:

- Reduce pollution by substances that threaten the chemical and biological quality of water
- Clean up degraded and polluted rivers, especially in urban areas

-
- Maintain, improve and develop freshwater and migratory fisheries
 - Advise businesses on how they can improve their environmental performance
 - Encourage land and property developers to clean up contaminated land
 - Respond rapidly and decisively to incidents and emergencies to protect people and the environment
 - Help businesses stop unnecessary or accidental pollution
 - Be a ‘better regulator’ and use civil sanctions to supplement our existing powers
 - Reduce unnecessary bureaucracy in our regulatory work including delivering permits more quickly
 - Where necessary, set tighter conditions to reduce emissions and discharges from the industries we regulate
 - Close down illegal operators and prosecute those that deliberately damage the environment
 - Change or revoke licences for water abstraction that threaten protected habitats
 - The number of over-abstracted water bodies is reduced
 - River habitat is improved
 - Protected sites, including Sites of Special Scientific Interest, are in favourable or recovering condition
 - Populations of priority Biodiversity Action Plan species are higher
 - A further 1,200 hectares of Biodiversity Action Plan habitats are created by 2015*
 - More rural land is covered by environmental agreements that protect soil and water
 - More previously contaminated land is returned to beneficial use
 - Local air quality objectives are met
 - Air emissions from the businesses we regulate are lower
 - Compliance with permit conditions is improved
 - Operators’ management of site performance is improving
 - More companies we regulate have environmental management systems
 - Serious and significant pollution incidents have been halved
 - The administrative burden we place on business is reduced
 - More FTSE all-share listed companies disclose their carbon and other key environmental impacts

* assuming funding is maintained at current levels

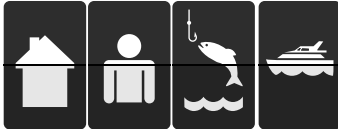
 **We will know we are succeeding when:**

- Inland and coastal waters have achieved or are improving towards ‘good ecological status’
- Bathing water quality is better

3. Put people and communities at the heart of what we do

A good quality environment enhances people's lives and supports a sustainable economy. But the environment is under pressure from population growth, rising standards of living and climate change. Many people are concerned about what this means for them and their community – whether from the effects of pollution on their health, the impact of new development, or flooding and coastal erosion.

We want new and existing building developments to be environmentally sustainable with people living in ways that do not harm the environment. We will work with communities to understand their local environmental issues and to develop shared solutions.



➔ Our aims:

- An improved environment which enhances people's lives and supports a sustainable economy
- The people and communities we work with trust us and understand our decisions, especially relating to: flooding and coastal erosion; managed realignment; water resources; and the impact of living near regulated businesses
- People care for, enjoy and benefit from their local environments
- More people from all backgrounds enjoy water and wetlands for sport and recreation
- Spatial and economic planning addresses the causes and consequences of climate change and the need to meet environmental standards and objectives
- New and existing developments have a reduced environmental impact
- New developments are supported by long-term plans for their environmental infrastructure

 **To achieve these we will:**

- Engage with local communities to create a shared understanding of environmental concerns and how to address them
- Promote and provide more and better angling, boating and other recreational opportunities so that everyone can safely enjoy our sites, waterways and the environment
- Support recreational initiatives that promote social inclusion and cohesion and improve public health
- Work with others to contribute to sustainable economic growth and support economic recovery
- Work with Local Strategic Partnerships in England, Local Service Boards in Wales and local authorities to improve local environments
- Develop a better understanding of the links between social deprivation and environmental degradation, and work with others to improve the poorest environments

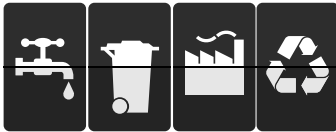
 **We will know we are succeeding when:**

- More people use our navigation, angling and other recreational services
- More of our navigation assets are in target condition
- Fish populations are at sustainable levels
- Environmental targets are included within regional and local strategies and agreements
- There are no inappropriate new buildings in floodplains
- New developments do not cause unacceptable environmental impacts
- More new buildings are built to high environmental design standards
- Existing developments use resources more efficiently
- The harmful effects of illegal waste activities are reduced
- More households in deprived communities benefit from improved local environments

4. Work with businesses and the public sector to use resources wisely

Globally, the consumption of resources is higher than can be sustained. The population continues to increase, as do living standards, and demands on natural resources are already at levels which are not sustainable. In England and Wales, a quarter of catchments suffer from having too much water taken out of them.

We want organisations to use less natural resources in the future and to treat the waste they produce as a resource. We will provide advice, guidance and leadership to businesses and the public sector to help promote more efficient and sustainable use of natural resources.




Our aims:

- People in England and Wales consume resources at a rate which is sustainable over the long-term
- Commerce, industry and the public sector are energy efficient, produce low levels of greenhouse gases, minimise pollution, produce low levels of waste and are highly resource efficient
- The public sector actively manages the environmental impacts of its supply chains
- Safe, secure water supplies that are used efficiently to meet the needs of the public, business and the environment

 **To achieve these we will:**

- Identify the resource streams with the largest environmental impacts. Understand how the resources flow through the economy and take action to minimise their impacts
- Work with others to stop resources being wasted
- Promote safe and effective re-use and recovery of worn out goods and materials
- Concentrate on major consumers of resources and producers of waste to improve responsible management of resources
- Support delivery of effective infrastructure for the more efficient management of waste and recovery of materials
- Work with water companies to strike the right balance between developing new resources and reducing demand, including progress to universal water metering in areas of serious water stress in England
- Provide information, advice and leadership to businesses and the public sector on sustainable procurement and internal environmental management

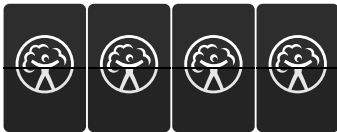
 **We will know we are succeeding when:**

- Resource use is decoupled from production
- Businesses and public sector organisations use resources more efficiently, re-use and recover more materials, and produce less waste
- Public sector supply chain management promotes the environmental performance of suppliers
- Individuals' water use reduces towards 130 litres per person per day

5. Be the best we can

We want to be the leading organisation in protecting and improving the environment. All of our actions will be driven by our commitment to maximise the environmental outcomes we deliver. Our decisions will be based on well founded evidence.

We will be regarded as one of the best public bodies, anywhere. We will lead by example and our environmental performance will be the best in the public sector. Our staff will be valued for the work they do and be proud to work for us. We will work with others wherever possible and develop our people to be the best they can be.



We will:

- Put customers at the centre of everything we do, and provide them with the service they need
- Engage genuinely with partners and business to improve and protect the environment
- Be recognised as a world class regulator that both protects the environment and reduces bureaucracy and costs for business
- Be acknowledged as leaders in managing our own environmental impact
- Keep our assets, data and intellectual property secure
- Translate data, information and knowledge into compelling evidence that enables us, and others, to make better decisions
- Provide a working environment that enables our staff to perform at their very best
- Have a diverse workforce that reflects the communities we serve
- Have staff who are healthy and well, and injury-free at work
- Achieve more for the environment and people for every pound we spend

 **To achieve these we will:**

- Engage effectively with, and listen to, communities and businesses to develop better solutions to environmental issues
- Reduce the costs and environmental impact of our buildings and work, challenging others to follow our example
- Manage all our assets, including money, to the highest standards
- Recognise data, information and knowledge are assets and manage them accordingly
- Ensure that team plans and individual objectives are focussed on improving the environment
- Ensure we have a highly motivated workforce with the right levels of knowledge, expertise and experience
- Provide a safe place to work and develop our people to manage the risks they face

 **We will know we are succeeding when:**

- Our internal and external customers say we are providing a good service
- We receive positive media coverage and are seen to be at the forefront of the environmental debate
- Key stakeholders agree we are good at working with them towards shared goals
- All our staff have personal objectives that are clearly linked to our strategy
- External funding helps us achieve our priority environmental outcomes
- We meet our internal environment management targets
- We meet our targets for the diversity of our workforce
- We are on a path to zero lost time incidents and occupational illnesses
- We meet our efficiency targets
- Our funding and expenditure is in accordance with our plans

Success measures

We have grouped the success measures from the strategy themes to show how they relate to our different business functions. Some areas, including climate change, are important to all of our functions and are not presented as a separate category here.

Air

- Local air quality objectives are met
- Air emissions from the businesses we regulate are lower

Land

- Carbon storage in soils and standing biomass is increased
- More rural land is covered by environmental agreements that protect soil and water
- More previously contaminated land is returned to beneficial use

Water

- Inland and coastal waters have achieved or are improving towards 'good ecological status'
- Bathing water quality is better
- The number of over-abstracted water bodies is reduced
- Individuals' water use reduces towards 130 litres per person per day

Fisheries, Ecology and Conservation

- Fish populations are at sustainable levels
- River habitat is improved
- Protected sites, including Sites of Special Scientific Interest, are in favourable or recovering condition
- Populations of priority Biodiversity Action Plan species are higher
- A further 1,200 hectares of Biodiversity Action Plan habitats are created by 2015*

Navigation and Recreation

- More people use our navigation, angling and other recreational services
- More of our navigation assets are in target condition

Flood and Coastal Risk Management

- 200,000 more homes are protected from flooding*
- More households in deprived communities are protected from flooding
- 800,000 households and businesses at risk from flooding receive direct warnings*
- Flood warnings are given in an emergency and people act on them
- Flood defences operate effectively
- Fewer utility supplies and transport routes are disrupted by flooding

Business Performance and Regulation

- Greenhouse gas emissions from the sites we regulate meet UK reduction targets
- The UK is on track to deliver 15 per cent of energy from renewable sources by 2020
- Large scale carbon capture and storage demonstration projects are operating
- Designs for new nuclear reactors meet the highest international environmental standards
- Compliance with permit conditions is improved
- Operators' management of site performance is improved
- More companies we regulate have environmental management systems
- Serious and significant pollution incidents have halved
- The administrative burden we place on business is reduced
- More FTSE all-share listed companies disclose their carbon and other key environmental impacts

* assuming funding is maintained at current levels

Waste and Resource Management

- Resource use is decoupled from production
- Businesses and public sector organisations use resources more efficiently, re-use and recover more materials, and produce less waste
- The harmful effects of illegal waste activities are reduced
- Public sector supply chain management promotes the environmental performance of suppliers

Planning and Sustainable Communities

- There are no inappropriate new buildings in floodplains
- More new buildings are built to high environmental standards
- Existing developments use resources more efficiently
- Environmental targets are included within regional and local strategies and agreements
- New developments do not have unacceptable environmental impacts
- More households in deprived communities benefit from improved local environments

Supporting strategies

Over the next few months we will develop a set of supporting strategies. These will provide more detail on the outcomes we want to achieve over the next five years and how we will measure progress and performance towards them.

The supporting strategies are:

- Climate change and energy
- Flood and coastal risk management
- Biodiversity
- Water (quality and quantity)
- Regulated businesses
- Sustainable communities
- Fisheries, navigation and recreation
- Sustainable resource use
- Internal environmental management

Tell us your views

We are now consulting on this draft strategy. Our thoughts so far have been developed internally by our Board, Directors and senior staff. We now need your thoughts and inputs.

Is there anything missing?

Are we being ambitious enough?

What does this mean at a local level?

What will you work with us on?

You can send your views to

strategic.development@environment-agency.gov.uk

The latest we can receive views is Friday 17 July 2009.

**Would you like to find out more about us,
or about your environment?**

Then call us on

08708 506 506 (Mon-Fri 8-6)

email

enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

or visit our website

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

incident hotline 0800 80 70 60 (24hrs)

floodline 0845 988 1188



Environment first: This publication is printed on paper made from 100 per cent previously used waste. By-products from making the pulp and paper are used for composting and fertiliser, for making cement and for generating energy.