



# Sustainable Operations Policy



## Sustainable Operations Policy

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## Introduction

1. This policy:
  - Sets out the Department's aims and objectives for improving the sustainability of its operations in line with the targets for Sustainable Operations on the Government Estate (SOGE), announced in June 2006 by former Prime Minister Tony Blair and former Environment Secretary David Miliband, and subsequent targets and standards.
  - Applies to all parts of the Department, including central London HQ, Executive Agencies, Government Offices, selected Non-Departmental Public Bodies<sup>1</sup> (NDPBs) and all contractors and facilities management companies that are managing or working on the estate on the Department's behalf.
  - Replaces the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Greening Operations Policy Statement, published in October 2002<sup>2</sup>.
2. Iain Wright MP, the Department's Sustainable Development Minister and the Permanent Secretary, Peter Housden, have agreed this policy which will be reviewed and updated where necessary following formal agreement of each set of SOGE targets, or at least every three years.

## Responsibility

3. At corporate level, responsibility is shared between:
  - Iain Wright MP, Communities and Local Government's Sustainable Development Minister
  - Peter Housden, Permanent Secretary; and
  - Hunada Nouss, Director General Corporate Services, and sustainable operations and procurement champion.

The Department's Sustainable Operations team is responsible for co-ordinating, monitoring and reporting on the Department's sustainable operations activities.

4. Each of the department's property centres hold delegated responsibility for property management and planning and implementing operational policy. This includes responsibility for sustainable development issues. The property centres are defined as London HQ (Central), the Executive Agencies, the Government Offices for the Regions and selected NDPBs.

<sup>1</sup> Audit Commission, English Partnerships and Housing Corporation.

<sup>2</sup> Communities and Local Government replaced the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on 5 May 2006 following a Machinery of Government change.

5. Within each property centre, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or Regional Director (RD) is responsible for implementing this corporate statement, or any local supplement to it. Each property centre is asked to:
  - adopt this policy, or prepare and adopt a compatible policy which reflects local circumstances and achievements, but which is consistent with the principles set out in this policy and of the same standard
  - prepare and maintain local action plans and targets, taking account of the targets for SOGE and the corporate objectives and targets in this statement
  - monitor performance and report progress on the activities of their organisation; and
  - complete the department's annual SOGE questionnaire and other data-gathering activities.
6. In addition, all individuals working on the estate, whether staff or contractors, are expected to follow the principles of this policy, and any related guidance. They should co-operate with any activities or actions designed to help achieve the sustainable operations objectives of the Department or its property centres.
7. The Department's property centres should take this policy into account when setting up their own sustainable operations policies and activities. To help them, Communities and Local Government will:
  - communicate sustainable operations issues effectively
  - provide advice and assistance on policy aims and best practice
  - invite participation in any centrally organised activities including seminars and forums.

Associate bodies will also be asked to report on sustainable operations matters – either as part of their annual reports or separately.

## Policy aims

8. Communities and Local Government aims to continually improve its environmental performance by:
  - implementing environmental management systems (EMSs) across the Communities and Local Government estate, and work towards accredited systems certified to a recognised standard (such as ISO14001:2004 or EMAS)

- complying with all relevant Acts of Parliament, Statutory Instruments, Codes of Practice and any other international Agreement, Protocol or Treaty to which the UK is signatory
- minimising the use of energy, water, wood, paper and other resources – particularly those which are scarce or non-renewable, whilst providing a safe and comfortable working environment
- reducing the amount of waste produced on the estate; disposing of any waste in a manner that promotes sustainable waste management; and using refurbished and recycled products and materials, wherever they meet business need and represent value for money
- developing and maintaining effective systems to monitor, measure and assess our use of resources and the environmental impacts of our operations
- phasing out the use of equipment that contains:
  - (a) ozone depleting substances; or
  - (b) has a high global warming potential. Release of emissions such as volatile organic compounds, nitrogen oxides and sulphur oxides will also be minimised.
- encouraging manufacturers, suppliers and contractors to develop sustainably preferable goods and services at competitive prices
- ensuring that, wherever feasible, procurement of goods derived from natural sources such as timber, plants and leather goods, come from sustainable sources and comply with EU and international trading rules such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)
- developing and maintaining emergency procedures for dealing effectively with any significant hazards and limiting any risk they pose to health and the environment
- ensuring that the Department's buildings are designed, constructed, refurbished and managed to maximise their sustainability
- assessing value for money on a whole life cost basis, including operational and disposal costs, and the social and environmental costs, not simply those directly relevant to the purchaser
- following the Government's consumer products guidance<sup>3</sup> when buying goods and services and when describing the Department's own products and services
- educating, training and motivating our staff to work in a sustainable manner and to play a full part in developing new ideas and initiatives
- communicating our sustainable operations policy and best practice across the department (including best available scientific advice)

<sup>3</sup> [www.defra.gov.uk/environment/consumerprod/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/consumerprod/)

- co-operating with public and private sector colleagues at home and abroad to develop and promote sustainable practices; and reporting on activities and progress annually.
9. Each of the aims stated above applies to every member of personnel working on the estate. This includes Communities and Local Government employees, Executive Agency, Government Office staff, those at selected NDPBs and all contractors working on the Department's premises.

## Policy objectives

10. To meet these aims, Communities and Local Government has set detailed objectives which are set out below.

## Climate Change and Energy

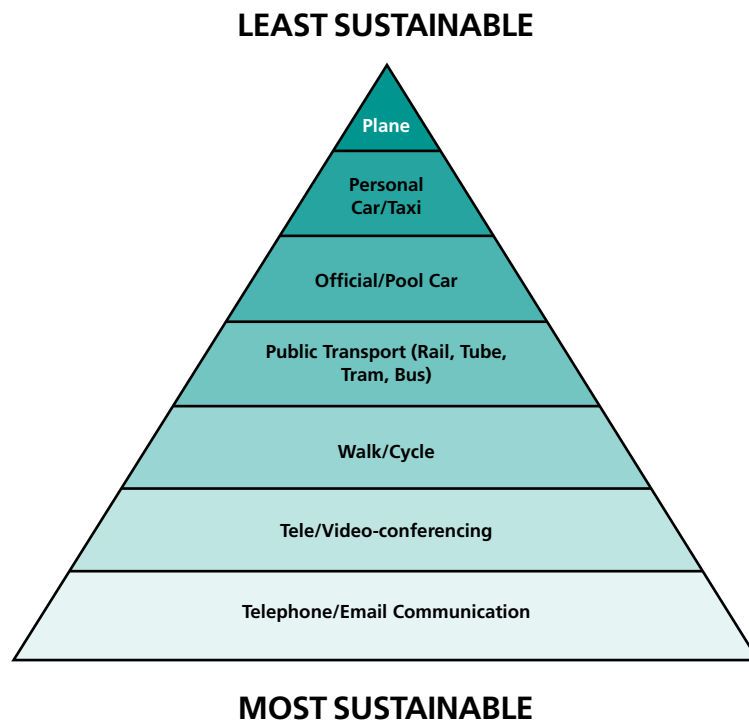
### Carbon emissions from offices

11. We will meet the cross government targets of:
- reducing carbon emissions by 12.5 per cent by 2010/11, relative to 1999/2000 levels and by 30 per cent by 2020 (this target will also apply to our non-office buildings); and
  - sourcing at least 10 per cent of electricity from renewable sources either by procuring electricity which is climate change levy exempt (green tariff), or from on-site microgeneration, by 31 March 2008.
12. In addition we will:
- reduce the total number of buildings we occupy through the Open Space Works project and other flexible working and desking initiatives
  - increase the proportion of energy obtained from embedded sources such as combined heat and power, solar PV and biomass, where possible
  - compare energy performance of all office buildings with more than 50 staff against benchmarks for type, and to use the results to inform energy maintenance and conservation
  - introduce reporting on carbon emissions and energy consumption to senior management on, at least, a quarterly basis; and
  - maintain local Energy Efficiency Action Plans and provide quarterly updates as required.



## Carbon emissions from travel

13. We will meet the cross-government target of reducing carbon emissions from road vehicles used for administrative operations by 15 per cent by 2010/11, relative to 2005/06 levels.
14. To help achieve this target, we will:
  - reduce carbon emissions from operational road travel and where appropriate establish local reduction targets
  - improve the average fuel efficiency of fleet vehicles and achieve an average carbon performance of 130g/km CO<sub>2</sub> or lower for new cars in the government fleet used for administrative purposes by 2010/11
  - select low carbon vehicles when hiring or leasing vehicles for official purposes.
15. In addition we will meet locally set targets of reducing:
  - air travel by 15 per cent by 2015, relative to 2008/09 levels; and
  - taxi travel by 15 per cent by 2015, relative to 2008/09 levels and to use public transport alternatives wherever practicable. When taxi use is unavoidable, low carbon taxi services should be selected where available.
16. More generally the Department will:
  - offset all carbon dioxide equivalent emissions from official air travel by Headquarters based staff and officials through the Government Carbon Offsetting Fund (GCOF). We will also consider extending offsetting on this or a similar basis for all property centres
  - always consider the most sustainable option for conducting business and, wherever practical, follow the travel hierarchy set out below



- prepare and maintain Travel Plans for the Department’s HQ, Executive Agencies, Government Offices and NDPBs (these shall include encouraging staff to follow the travel hierarchy and discouraging single occupancy road travel); and
- have regard to the aims and objectives associated with sustainable operations when reviewing staff travel and subsistence rules and mileage rates.

### **Energy Efficiency from Buildings**

17. We will work towards achieving the cross-government target of increasing energy efficiency per m<sup>2</sup> by 15 per cent by 2010 relative to 1999/2000 levels, and by 30 per cent by 2020. However, our programme to reduce our carbon emissions through a reduction in the total number of buildings that Communities and Local Government occupies (though increased occupational density and use of flexible desking) may have an adverse effect on this target. This is due to way in which this target is measured, which takes no account of occupational density. Whilst we recognise the potential for an adverse impact on this target, the department considers reducing total carbon emissions to be paramount.
18. In addition, the Department will seek to improve energy efficiency from buildings by:
  - promoting best practice, for example, by giving practical advice to managers/ staff and ensuring operations are in line with the energy efficiency hierarchy
  - buying energy efficient, value for money equipment; and where practicable, to take advantage of public-private partnerships

- introducing new, more energy-efficient techniques and technologies without sacrificing productivity or comfort.

## Carbon Neutrality

19. We will meet the cross-government target of becoming a carbon neutral office estate by 2012. Our approach to meeting this commitment will be to follow the energy efficiency hierarchy as set out below.

### Sustainable



- Energy conservation (reducing total energy demand)
- Energy efficiency and carbon reduction projects
- Exploitation of renewable, sustainable resources
- Exploitation of non-sustainable resources using low/no-carbon technologies
- Exploitation of conventional resources as we do now.

### Unsustainable

20. In addition we will offset any remaining carbon emissions through the GCOF, and consider using a similar process for the remaining non-office estate.

## Greenhouse gases, non-gaseous and other ozone-depleting substances

21. We will reduce the use of products containing or manufactured with gaseous and non-gaseous substances that contribute to climate change by:
  - buying more environmentally acceptable alternatives, when the opportunity arises, where it is safe, cost-effective and technically feasible to do so
  - avoiding the purchase of any products which contain ozone-depleting substances or those with high global warming potential, where suitable alternatives exist
  - monitoring and planning to replace systems that use chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs), halons, carbon tetrachloride, 1 1 1 trichloroethane, or any other ozone-depleting substances when practical and suitable opportunities occur; and
  - complying with the fluorinated greenhouse gas (f-gas) regulations and with Sections 33 and 34 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 by continuing

to prevent, to contain and thereby reduce emissions of f-gas and other ozone-depleting substances and ensuring that at the end of its life, equipment is recycled or destroyed using appropriate technology.

## Sustainable Consumption and Production and Natural Resource Protection

### Waste arisings and recycling

22. We will meet the cross-government targets of:
- reducing waste arisings by 5 per cent by 2010, relative to 2004/05 levels and by 25 per cent by 2020; and
  - increasing recycling figures to 40 per cent of total waste arisings by 2010, and to 75 per cent by 2020.
23. To achieve this we will continue to promote the efficient use of resources across the Department and its property centres by following the waste hierarchy set out below:



24. We will ensure that all waste is treated in accordance with legislation and best practice guidance and that all staff are encouraged to reduce, reuse and recycle wherever facilities exist, only using general waste bins for non-recyclable waste.
25. We will also reduce hazardous waste through buying fewer and less hazardous products, recycling and regularly reviewing procedures and practices to make sure hazardous waste is stored separately from non-hazardous waste.

## Water

26. We will meet the cross-government targets of:
- reducing water consumption on the office and non-office estate by 25 per cent by 2020, relative to 2004/05 levels and to work towards a new benchmark standard of 4m<sup>3</sup> per full time equivalent person per year; and
  - reducing water consumption to an average of 3m<sup>3</sup> per full time equivalent person per year for all new builds and major refurbishments.
27. To help achieve this, we will reduce water consumption by following best practice guidance, specifying the use of water-efficient appliances and equipment. We will also install more efficient technologies and water harvesting technology where practical and economical to do so.
28. We will also:
- reduce, and work towards eliminating, the provision of bottled mineral water and to instead provide tap water at meetings, for staff and other hospitality requirements; and
  - ensure that departmental activities do not cause damage to water supplies, groundwater or other natural water courses.

## Wood

29. We will ensure that all wood is either reclaimed, recycled or obtained from legally harvested trees and from sustainably managed forests where possible. From April 2009, we will also ensure that only timber and timber products originating either from independently verified legal and sustainable or from a licensed Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) partner will be used on the estate. The appropriate documentation will be requested from partners to confirm this.
30. We will follow guidance as applicable from the Central Point of Expertise on Timber<sup>4</sup> (CPET) procurement website, operated by ProForest. We will also put procedures in place to monitor timber procurement policies and exchange information and examples of best practice with other government departments and agencies.

<sup>4</sup> [www.proforest.net/cpet](http://www.proforest.net/cpet)

## Paper

31. The Department will continue to seek to reduce paper consumption by encouraging the use of alternative technologies and electronic media where practical. We will also encourage:
- printing of emails and documents only when absolutely necessary
  - double sided printing and copying and/or printing of more than one page per sheet
  - use of scrap/used paper in place of post it notes where practical; and
  - greater use of computer applications for reviewing and commenting on draft documents.
32. More generally we will aim to reduce our consumption by:
- using 100 per cent recycled post-consumer waste paper for all work not requiring specialist paper (eg printed publications)
  - using paper with a minimum 50 per cent recycled content (of which 75 per cent is post consumer waste) for printed publications, rising to 75 per cent recycled content by October 2009
  - ensuring that any virgin pulp used comes from sustainably managed woodlands and that both the pulp and the recycling process use manufacturing processes that are free from chlorine ie manufactured using non-chlorine bleaching agents such as oxygen, peracetic acid, sodium peroxide or more efficient pulping techniques; and
  - ensure that, when sealing is necessary, water based varnishes are used wherever possible and material is bound using materials that do not inhibit recycling practices.

## Food and hospitality

33. We will ensure that all catering and hospitality arrangements are fully aligned with the Government's Sustainable Farming and Food Strategy, and the main objectives of the Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative (PSFPI). A detailed list of PSFPI objectives is attached at Appendix 1. We will also adopt other sustainable food and catering guidance as appropriate.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> For example, Defra's *Catering Services and Food Procurement Toolkit* [www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/toolkit.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/toolkit.htm); the *Marine Stewardship Council's Standard* [www.msc.org/html/content\\_504.htm](http://www.msc.org/html/content_504.htm); the Marine Conservation Society's *Good Fish Guide* [www.mcsuk.org/mcsaction/fisheries/sustainable+seafood](http://www.mcsuk.org/mcsaction/fisheries/sustainable+seafood) and *Defra's Guidance for Public Bodies on Improving the Sustainability of Public Sector Food Procurement and Catering Services* [www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/guidance.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/guidance.htm)

## **Biodiversity and horticulture**

34. We will maintain grounds on the departmental estate appropriately, respecting the local ecology and biodiversity and encouraging native flora and fauna to flourish. We will substitute all slow renewables, such as peat, with organic wastes such as compost, manure, leaf mould, bark chippings or coir, and compost all waste vegetation and other organic matter on site where facilities to do so can be provided.
35. Future climate conditions will be considered when managing the natural environment of our estate.

## **Pesticides and artificial fertilisers**

36. We will minimise the use of pesticides and artificial fertilisers, for example, by adopting natural methods of controlling weeds, insects and fungi wherever possible and maintaining soil fertility.

## **Asbestos**

37. We will ensure that staff working on the estate use appropriate risk management techniques when undertaking work in buildings where asbestos could be present.
38. We will continue to monitor undamaged materials on site for signs of deterioration and, where it occurs, by sealing, encapsulating and labelling as appropriate. Removal and disposal of asbestos materials, will be carried out where necessary, according to regulations and guidance and minimising the risk asbestos fibres might pose to human health.
39. Asbestos free materials will be used for new builds and refurbishments.

## **Hazardous substances**

40. We will minimise the use of hazardous substances or techniques where possible, by:
  - using furnishings and other building materials which emit minimum amounts of volatile organic compounds, formaldehyde, and other potentially hazardous substances; and
  - specifying that staff and contractors should not use products containing potentially harmful solvents where suitable low-solvent, or solvent-free products, such as water or vegetable based paints, varnishes and glues are available.

41. Where the use of hazardous substances is necessary, all storage, use and disposal will be in accordance with the relevant legislation and best practice.

### **Batteries**

42. We will avoid using batteries (particularly those with high levels of lead, mercury and cadmium) where there is a better environmental option offering value for money. For example, rechargeable batteries or photo-voltaic cell products. Where batteries are essential, we will recycle them where possible.

### **Biodegradable substances**

43. We will use biodegradable substances such as wood, cardboard and vegetable-based lubricating oils where they provide the best environmental option and value for money.

### **Social Considerations**

44. The department will comply with the Environmental Protection Act 1990 by keeping the Department's property clear of litter and refuse, taking account of the statutory Code of Practice on litter and will comply with legislation, regulations, by-laws and codes of practice to keep noise levels as low as practicable.
45. The department will also encourage staff to take an active role in volunteering in the community. Some provision should be available to allow this to occur during normal working hours, subject to agreement with Human Resources and line management.

### **Environmental Management Systems**

46. The department will maintain accreditation of those Environmental Management Systems (EMS) currently certified to ISO14001 and will work towards and accreditation for all unaccredited sites with more than 50 full time equivalent staff.

### **Sustainable procurement**

47. Procurement plays a crucial role in delivering sustainable operations within the department and we are committed to following the Government's *Sustainable Procurement Action Plan* published in March 2007. In doing so the department, led by the corporate procurement team will:



- question the requirement for every item purchased and how this might impact on the sustainable operations performance of the Department
  - seek to achieve value for money, taking account of whole life costs and other benefits, current legislation, guidance and best practice<sup>6</sup>
  - present cases for review to HMT, where real affordability constraints may prevent the sustainable option being procured; and
  - achieve 100 per cent compliance with the 2007 *Quick Wins Minimum Procurement Specifications* list by March 2009.
48. In addition, the Department will adopt the Sustainable Procurement Task Force Flexible Framework to inform, benchmark and monitor progress towards establishing robust sustainable procurement practices and to assist delivery of the sustainable operations targets. We will conduct at least one pilot project or environmental audit each year to monitor compliance.
49. We will also seek to use the most resource efficient products subject to practical and whole life value for money considerations. For example the use of Energy Star compliant computer equipment, the most energy efficient white, brown and grey goods according to the mandatory EU energy labelling scheme, the Eco-label scheme, the Carbon Trust's Energy Technology List and the Energy Saving Trust's Energy Saving Recommended products scheme. We will also specify recycled products and re-refined mineral oils where practicable and where this would offer value for money.
50. In our dealings with suppliers, we will
- use the Government's Green Claims Code to challenge suppliers who provide product information that appears to contravene the code's standards
  - encourage suppliers and tenderers to provide innovative environmental solutions; and
  - evaluate, as appropriate, the environmental performance of tenderers when relevant to the contract.

## Sustainable Estate Management

51. We will continue to apply best practice in managing the departmental estate by ensuring, as far as possible, that:

<sup>6</sup> For example, the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) and Defra's *Joint Note on Environmental Issues in Purchasing* [www.ogc.gov.uk/sustainability\\_environment\\_.asp](http://www.ogc.gov.uk/sustainability_environment_.asp), OGC's *Social Issues in Purchasing 2006* [www.ogc.gov.uk/sustainability\\_social\\_issues\\_in\\_purchasing.asp](http://www.ogc.gov.uk/sustainability_social_issues_in_purchasing.asp), Government's *Green Guide for Buyers 2003* [www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/government/estates/green-guide/index.htm#over1](http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/government/estates/green-guide/index.htm#over1), HMT's simplified *Green Book Guidance* [www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/economic\\_data\\_and\\_tools/greenbook/data\\_greenbook\\_money\\_sustainability.cfm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/economic_data_and_tools/greenbook/data_greenbook_money_sustainability.cfm) and HMT's *Transforming Government Procurement 2007* [www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/documents/enterprise\\_and\\_productivity/public\\_services\\_productivity/ent\\_services\\_procurement.cfm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/documents/enterprise_and_productivity/public_services_productivity/ent_services_procurement.cfm).

- departmental land does not pose an actual or potential threat to human health or the environment, for example from contamination of the soil, ground water and surface water, from buildings and building materials and from the migration of gases; and
  - the conservation of species and habitats is respected, especially if sites of international or national importance are involved, or where we could further the priorities of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.
52. We will continue to manage our properties in accordance with the principles of high performing property asset management, specifically to reduce our total estate's energy consumption and carbon emissions, and by ensuring efficient use of space and adopting flexible desking and working initiatives wherever appropriate. In particular we will:
- carry out BRE's Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM), or an equivalent sustainability appraisal when planning new or substantially refurbished premises
  - meet the cross-government commitment to procure buildings in the top quartile of energy performance for the whole estate;
  - continually seeking improvements to indoor air quality; and
  - follow advice from OGC's *Achieving Excellence in Construction Procurement Guide 11 – Sustainability*, and other relevant codes of best practice and guidance.<sup>7</sup>
53. In addition, we will ensure all new builds, office relocations and major refurbishments achieve an overall BREEAM Excellent rating and specifically an Excellent rating in the areas of energy and water, unless site constraints or project objectives mean that this requirement conflicts with the obligation to achieve value for money on a whole life basis. Where site constraints or project objectives conflict with this requirement, a project should at least achieve an overall BREEAM rating of Very Good and an Excellent rating in the areas of energy and water.
54. We will ensure all new builds, major refurbishments and office relocations have fully considered adaptation and resilience to future climate conditions.
55. More generally, all staff and contractors are expected to conduct their business in the most sustainable manner possible, maintaining excellent standards of resource efficiency and environmental management. This includes taking every practicable opportunity to reduce waste, water and energy consumption. Staff are expected to switch off monitors when leaving desk areas for more than five minutes, to ensure that all PCs, printers, photocopiers and other office equipment are switched off at

<sup>7</sup> For example, from bodies such as BRE, the Carbon Trust, Building Services Research and Information (BSRIA), the Construction Industry Research and Information Association (CIRIA), Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE) and Institute of Electrical Engineers (IEE) codes and policy guides and OGC's *Common Minimum Standards for the Procurement of Built Environments in the Public Sector 2006* [www.ogc.gov.uk/construction\\_procurement\\_common\\_minimum\\_standards\\_for\\_the\\_built\\_environment.asp](http://www.ogc.gov.uk/construction_procurement_common_minimum_standards_for_the_built_environment.asp).

the end of each day. Staff are also expected to switch off all unnecessary lighting which is not automatically controlled, while ensuring health and safety regulations are not breached.

## Monitoring and auditing

56. Communities and Local Government Sustainable Operations team will co-ordinate, promote and develop this policy programme and publish an annual progress report. The annual report will be made available to all staff and published on the Department's Intranet and external website. Monitoring and auditing will be carried out in accordance with the requirements of the SOGE reporting processes and the Department's EMS.

## Further guidance

57. The Defra website and the UK Government Sustainable Development website includes guidance and advice for purchasers and property managers, as well as other relevant sustainability guidance and information for staff, suppliers and contractors.

# Appendix 1

## **Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative – Main Objectives**

- To promote food safety and high standards of hygiene
- To increase the consumption of healthy and nutritious food
- To improve the sustainability and efficiency of production, processing and distribution
- To increase tenders from small and local producers and their ability to do business
- To increase cooperation among buyers, producers and along supply chains
- To improve the sustainability and efficiency of public food procurement and catering services
- To increase demand for organic food
- To improve choice for ethnic minority, cultural and religious groups
- To promote the fair treatment of suppliers, including the supply of Fair Trade products
- To improve working conditions for catering staff.