

## **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: INTERIM COMMUNICATIONS PLAN**

### **Introduction**

1. The launch of the first Sustainable Development Strategy “First steps towards Sustainability” in May 2006 was followed in November 2006 by the publication of the first Implementation Plan (<http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/economic-policy-and-effectiveness.htm>). Sustainable Development is generally accepted to be an extremely wide and complex issue and there is a learning curve and need to build understanding for effective actions, capacity and momentum across a range of quite different sectors. The Implementation Plan develops in more detail the strategic targets contained in the Strategy. These targets are ambitious and while the Implementation Plan focuses on Government departments, Government will not be able to deliver the Plan by its actions alone.
2. The Implementation Plan contains specific targets for the completion of the fuller Communication Strategy by 2007. This Communication Strategy will have to address different diverse audiences and will take some time to develop. However, there is work which needs to be done now in relation to the publication of the Implementation Plan and which will be valuable in highlighting the issues and raising the profile of sustainable development and which will also provide a good base for the future full Communication Strategy. The current timescale, the available budget and the level of understanding in relation to sustainable development will limit what can be done in the first instance.
3. The immediate priority, therefore, is to put in place an Interim Communications Plan to support the launch of the Implementation Plan. Work on the main Communications Strategy will follow the launch and to

ensure continuity, it will also be important to bridge the gap between the two.

## **Objectives**

4. The objectives of the Interim Communication Plan will be to:
  - publicise the Implementation Plan and objectives and targets;
  - put in place a core government script for SD;
  - inject external creative expertise into delivery of main Communications Strategy;
  - engage and involve civil servants in SD;
  - engage and involve key opinion formers (all sectors);
  - begin process of engaging other specific target groups while taking available opportunities to raise awareness and increase understanding; and
  - prepare the ground for the main Communications Strategy

## **Target Groups**

5. As the Interim Communications Plan is limited both in time and in scope, it has been decided to direct our main efforts at a small number of defined groups including civil servants, local authorities/public bodies covered by the new statutory duty and the business sector. Opportunities will also be taken to involve other networks.

## **Networking**

6. Networking with a range of external partners has been identified as an integral component of our approach to communicating sustainable development. It is recognised that key opinion formers have a significant role to play and also that there is a wide range of existing efficient networks which we should deploy for specific audiences.

7. We will seek to utilise these networks to ‘piggyback’ on current (or planned) campaigns. This will make best use of the resources available for delivering the interim communication plan and lay the groundwork for the longer term strategy. Also it will allow us, to tap in to the expertise in sustainable development that rests outside of government. Utilising this external expertise and organisations will enable the key messages to be distilled and distributed in a way that will engage an audience not readily accessible to government.

### **Baselining**

7. We need to be able to measure the impact of our activities and this will require development of baselines. In the short term we will commission internal (government departments) and external surveys.

### **Key Messages**

8. As it is not feasible to meaningfully cover the wide ranging and complex subject of SD in one go the interim focus will be on a small number of key messages around the Interim Plan. It is proposed that these should be:-
  - Economy eg to build a world class economy that will last;
  - Energy eg Improving efficiency of use, reducing consumption, sustainable cleaner sources, ensuring prices are lower than now while remaining competitive;
  - Showcasing Government – eg transformation of public procurement, carbon neutral estate etc.

### **Overall Approach**

9. There will be an initial one-off publicity opportunity around the launch of the Implementation Plan.

10. Following the launch there are a number of specific actions which need to be taken forward over the next six to nine months. Some of these will be stand alone and can be completed in the next six months, others will provide a base for further work leading in to or for inclusion in the main Communications Strategy.

### **Actions – around launch**

#### **Government**

- Publicise launch using ‘first steps’ branding;
- Media plan and Press Release;
- Work with EIS to develop a core script around SD to, for example, Identify ways, such as the Environment, Energy and Renewables Fund to cross reference to main SD agenda;
- Identify and use coming events (all departments) and other opportunities such as websites to trail launch and signpost information about the Implementation Plan.

#### **Stakeholders**

- For ripple effect simultaneously encourage Stakeholders to publicise Implementation Plan through own networks and websites.

### **Actions – next 6 – 9 months**

#### **External expertise**

- By end of 2006 commission consultant to inject creative input;
- Consolidate and market the ‘first steps’ brand as a recognised graphic identity;
- Develop promotional literature for all of the target audiences.

#### **Towards government**

- Engage Centre for Applied Learning to develop a Civil Service SD training programme;

- Engage Personnel Divisions to modify induction packs;
- Establish website with links to SDC;
- Research magazines and other internal government means of communicating with and involving civil servants;
- Place articles with in-house magazines and develop thinking about potential use of other internal vehicles;
- Develop list of simple things staff can do;
- Use NICS Policy Link to review policy making and engage civil servants;
- Issue awareness raising note with salaries;
- Work with NISRA to commission NICS baseline survey on SD;
- Clear way to use NI Omnibus survey to test wider society awareness of SD and key issues.

#### **Towards local government**

- Notify and issue guidance on statutory duty to bodies affected;
- Ensure relevant networks on SD are engaged.

#### **Towards business**

- Work with DETI and other departments including procurement Directorate on ways to reach business including SMEs;
- Target the construction sector, focusing on its contribution to SD both now and in the future.

#### **Towards Networks (including non government sector & overlapping with business)**

- Continue engagement with organisations as opportunities present themselves;
- Over next 3 months Identify and place articles in network magazines;
- Take forward Roundtable event before end of 2006;

- Hold major Information day before end of 2006;
- Identify and target opinion formers in all sectors;
- Identify and engage with key professional bodies.

#### **Actions to prepare for delivery of Communications Strategy in 2007**

- Work with statisticians and economists to find best means, longer term, of measuring effectiveness and the understanding of different audiences;
- Develop and agree shared key messages with stakeholders;
- Use current research into behavioural change to identify targets and indicators;
- Determine barriers to changing behaviour towards sustainability and identify drivers for change;
- Further develop SD annual awards scheme.