

A background image of a waterfall cascading over dark, craggy rocks. The water is white and frothy, creating a strong contrast with the dark stone. The overall scene is captured in a slightly desaturated, naturalistic style.

Starting to Live Differently

The Sustainable Development Scheme
of the National Assembly for Wales

Made on 16 March 2004
Under Section 121 of the
Government of Wales Act



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STARTING TO LIVE DIFFERENTLY

THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SCHEME OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES

SECTION 1: THE DUTY

1.1 The National Assembly for Wales has a duty under section 121 of the Government of Wales Act 1998 to promote sustainable development in the exercise of its functions, that is, in everything it does. The Act requires the Assembly to make a Scheme setting out how we propose to implement the duty, to consult before making it, keep it under review, publish an Annual report on progress and evaluate its effectiveness every four years. It is primarily the responsibility of the Welsh Assembly Government to implement the Scheme and to draw up an Action Plan to say how it will do so.

1.2 As such, the Scheme is the National Assembly's overarching strategic framework and sets out the vision of a sustainable future for all of Wales where action for social, economic and environmental improvement work together to create positive change. The Scheme works in conjunction with other key documents of the Welsh Assembly Government to deliver change:

- The SD Action Plan identifies the major long term strategic challenges for Wales in delivering that vision and, following consultation with stakeholders, identifies the key actions that need to be taken in the short, medium and longer term;
- *Wales: A Better Country* sets out the Welsh Assembly Government's political priorities against the vision of a sustainable Wales, for the next four years;
- The Wales Spatial Plan recognises that the vision will need to translate differently in

different areas of Wales. The Plan provides both the opportunity for dialogue between the national and local levels about what is needed in those areas and the tool for delivering those agreed needs into action.

All other strategies sit beneath this framework, their role being to underpin the delivery of a sustainable Wales.

1.3 To fulfil its legal obligations, the principles of sustainable development must be mainstreamed into the way the National Assembly operates requiring compliance across objectives and processes. The implementation of sustainable development practices requires a major change in culture and working practices for many organisations, although progress is being made. The consultation with key partner and stakeholder organisations on the new SD Action Plan identified amongst other things, the specific areas where action is needed, with actions for the Assembly and other organisations to undertake.

1.4 Wales is currently operating unsustainably in a number of ways. In common with other developed countries, and despite improvements, we are still meeting our needs in ways that are less resource-efficient than they should be and failing to enhance environmental, social and economic capital at the same time. We are seeing the consequences in climate change, and in damage to environments within Wales and in other parts of the world. Increased globalisation of the world economy also presents challenges to our economy, society and identity and in common with the rest of Western Europe we are facing demographic trends that will mean an ageing population and we also face issues in equality of health and income. To meet these challenges, we need to reinvent the way we live if we are to pass on a better world to future generations.

1.5 Achievement of a sustainable Wales is ultimately only possible in the context of a sustainable planet. Advancement of the Scheme is dependent upon working with governments and organisations beyond Wales both to share with and learn from them and to influence others about the need to pursue a sustainable future. The Scheme recognises the global dimension to sustainable development and the role for Wales. The Welsh Assembly Government's work with European and international governments and our commitment to the declarations of the NRG4SD (Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development) reflects the importance of the global dimension to our work.

1.6 The Assembly takes the view that our current way of living is unsustainable and that real progress can no longer be gauged by standard measures of economic growth alone. Proposals for a full set of indicators, designed to measure both our general and specific progress towards creating a sustainable Wales are published alongside the Scheme, and will be kept under review.

1.7 This Scheme sets out how we intend to fulfil our duty. We anticipate that it will not be amended until after the next election.

SECTION 2: THE DEFINITION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

2.1 The National Assembly for Wales will promote development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. By this we mean the needs of all human life, within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own social, economic, environmental and cultural needs. Our interpretation of what this means for Wales is set out in the vision in Section 3.

2.2 This means that the principles and vision of the Sustainable Development Scheme will drive everything we do. We will integrate these into our work and actively require or influence others, for example local authorities, public bodies, business, the voluntary sector and communities, to do the same to deliver change. We will seek to enable them to do so.

2.3 The Assembly's vision of sustainable development remains a broad one, embracing commitments to improving quality of life, promoting equality and tackling disadvantage and poverty. This is because sustainable development in one place is often different to sustainable development in another place although the principles remain the same wherever. The Wales Spatial Plan will seek to capture this.



SECTION 3: THE VISION OF A SUSTAINABLE WALES

3.1 The Assembly will pursue, on an effective partnership basis, a sustainable future for Wales based on:

- promoting a diverse, competitive, high added-value economy, with high skills and education, that responds to sustainable development opportunities, minimises demands on the environment and maximises the distribution of the benefits;
- action on social justice that tackles poverty, poor health, and consequences of disadvantage and provides people and their communities with the means to help themselves break out of the poverty trap;
- action in our built and natural environment that enhances pride in the community, promotes biodiversity, promotes local employment and minimises waste generation, energy, water and transport demands;
- strengthening Wales' cultural identity and helping to create a bilingual country, while looking confidently outwards and welcoming new cultural influences;
- creating a place which values its children and where young people want to live, work and enjoy a high quality of life, and where future generations enjoy better prospects in life and are not landed with a legacy of problems bequeathed by us;
- supporting people to live healthy and independent lives, irrespective of income, location or disability;
- valuing everyone in society and promoting equality of opportunity;
- promoting openness, partnership and participation, so that people can play a part in taking decisions that affect them;
- contributing to sustainable development at a global level as well as locally and taking account of the global impacts of decisions made in Wales.

3.2 The Assembly also supports the objectives that were set out in the 1999 UK Sustainable Development Strategy *A Better Quality of Life* and will work with the UK Government to ensure that the next UK Strategy enables the delivery of a sustainable future for Wales.



SECTION 4: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

4.1 Translating the Assembly's vision into action will mean changing the way we work so that:

- sustainable development underpins and drives everything the Assembly does and advocates others to do;
- critical issues are identified, through dialogue with leading stakeholders, and focused on;
- people and communities are at the heart of sustainable development;
- decisions in each field of policy take account of effects of proposals 'in the round', not just in the field in question and recognise potential tensions and risks of action and inaction;
- policies and programmes are designed in an integrated way so that they are mutually reinforcing and evidence based;
- funding and grant schemes reinforce this integrated approach;
- opportunities are recognised early and acted upon;
- spending plans are directed towards achieving key sustainable development outcomes with suitable planning horizons;
- new ways of working with our partners to achieve our objectives are developed;
- decisions about the short term should not be contradictory to long-term aims;
- policies recognise the needs and opportunities of all parts of Wales and the connections between actions at different spatial scales;
- we take into account the global impacts of decisions made at the Wales level;
- wherever possible the root causes of problems are tackled;
- good practice examples of sustainable development projects are replicated and mainstreamed at all levels, from local to national;
- sustainable development is integrated into education and training programmes;
- public understanding and awareness of the meaning of sustainable development and its day-to-day implications for everyone is enhanced.

4.2 The Assembly is committed to:

- putting people, and their quality of life now and in the future, at the centre of its concern;
- ensuring everyone has the chance to get information, see how decisions are made and take part in decision-making;
- long-term planning which takes account of the need to recognise future challenges and opportunities e.g. climate change, to safeguard the interests of this and future generations;
- using scientific knowledge to aid decision-making, and trying to work out in advance what knowledge will be needed so that it can be researched;

- taking account of the full range of costs and benefits when making plans and decisions, including those which cannot easily be valued in money terms, and taking account of timing, risks and uncertainties;
- respecting environmental limits, so that resources are not irrecoverably depleted or the environment irreversibly damaged: this implies, for instance, contributing to the protection of the planet's climate; protecting and enhancing biodiversity; minimising harmful emissions; and promoting sustainable use of natural resources;
- applying the precautionary principle, that cost-effective measures to prevent possibly serious environmental damage should not be postponed just because of scientific uncertainty about how serious the risk is;
- preventing pollution as far as possible, and making the polluter pay for the damage done by pollution, and more generally trying to ensure that costs are met by those whose actions incur them.

SECTION 5: FULFILLING THE DUTY

SECTION 5A: Through Decision Making

5.1 The Welsh Assembly Government recognises the need to establish key tests that will enable others to measure its progress in mainstreaming SD and achieving good governance. It will seek to become recognised as an 'excellent' organisation in this respect and measures will include:

- continuing to review all policies, programmes and grant schemes by 2005, including procurement policies, to align them collectively with sustainable development objectives;
- keeping appraisal mechanisms, tools and definitions of value for money under review, to ensure they remain aligned with the objectives and principles of sustainable development;
- ensuring that all new policies, projects, programmes, grant schemes, appraisal mechanisms and definitions of value for money underpin the delivery of our vision of a sustainable Wales.

SECTION 5B: Through Strategic Policies which Contribute to Sustainable Development

5.2 The Welsh Assembly Government will ensure its existing strategies work together and in such a way as to deliver our vision of a sustainable future for Wales and a more sustainable pattern of development. It will design all its future strategies to deliver the vision and will consult to test whether it is achieving this. Individual strategies should not only be underpinned by sustainable development principles but linked together to

ensure an integrated approach and sustainable outcomes.

SECTION 5C: Through Specific Policy Actions

5.3 The Action Plan that is published alongside the Scheme sets out the actions the Welsh Assembly Government will take to deliver change in relation to the key sustainability challenges. Those challenges include climate change, public sector procurement, governance for SD and education and awareness. All the sectors below have a key role to play.

SECTION 5D: By Working with Others

5.4 The Assembly is committed to active engagement at all levels believing that the changes we seek can only take place with the help and engagement of others. The Assembly will work openly and in partnership with others to deliver change and will actively encourage others to do the same. This section gives examples of how this will happen:

Within Europe and beyond

- By promoting understanding, collaboration and partnerships in sustainable development and by seeking greater international recognition of the importance of the contribution that regions make to sustainable development;
- by feeding in to the UN's Commission for Sustainable Development through NRG4SD (the international Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development);
- by ensuring that international commitments and targets relating to sustainable development are carried through into Assembly policies

- by maintaining and developing links with countries and regions within Europe and beyond to share and develop best practice, expertise and experience;
- by maintaining and strengthening links with the European Commission to contribute to its Sustainable Development Strategy through the Sustainable European Regions Network;
- by being outward looking in our approach and responsive to new ideas and thinking from across the globe

With the UK Government at national and regional levels, and with other devolved administrations

- by sharing and developing best practice;
- by developing and pursuing shared objectives, including engaging in development of a UK Strategy to succeed *A Better Quality of Life*;
- by helping deliver UK commitments;
- by protecting and promoting Welsh interests;
- by setting an example for others to follow.

With local government:

The Assembly resources and guides local government in Wales and these dealings fall under the scope of the Scheme. We will encourage and support local government to promote sustainable development through all our links including:

- by working with local government to promote sustainable development, including but not only in relation to community strategies, policy agreements, *Wales Programme for Improvement* and other

strategies such as health social care and wellbeing strategies;

- by learning from local government experience of the development of Local Agenda 21 strategies and sustainability appraisal tools;
- by working together on issues such as the ongoing development of indicators of sustainable development;
- by seeking to carry forward, and to develop further, our compact with the Welsh Local Government Association on co-operating to promote sustainable development.

With other public bodies

All our dealings with other public bodies fall under the scope of the Scheme and it is thus that the Scheme applies to Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies for instance. We will ensure all public bodies promote sustainable development through all such dealings:

- by explaining the Assembly's requirements in the remit letters to sponsored bodies at the start of every financial year;
- by scrutinising corporate plans and strategies to make sure that this agenda is incorporated into their activities, and by monitoring their sustainable development performance;
- by guiding or requiring public bodies to:
 - help deliver the vision of a sustainable Wales actively through their corporate planning and policy development particularly in key areas such as grant schemes, consultation, guidance and advice to the Assembly and others;
 - change the way they work in order to achieve this; and

- work with each other, the Assembly's partners and key stakeholders whenever possible.

With the voluntary sector:

- by promoting and developing the potential for active citizenship by all members of the community;
- by sharing and promoting best practice on sustainable development;
- by working in partnership to develop innovative policies, programmes, grant schemes etc through a 'bottom up, top down' approach;
- by recognising their key role in the delivery of services;
- by seeking to give a clear indication of Assembly priorities, to assist voluntary bodies in planning their activities.

With business:

- by influencing their activities through the goods and services bought by the public sector in Wales;
- by consulting on new policies, including working closely with business representative bodies;
- by promoting ways business can contribute to sustainability objectives, for example resource efficiency (eco-efficiency);
- by being clearer and more open on matters that affect businesses;

- by providing support to help Welsh businesses adapt to new challenges e.g. through Assembly's Business Environment campaign and the Welsh Development Agency;

- by providing specific support;
- by ensuring sustainable development objectives are central to business support and advice programmes.

With experts and stakeholders

- by working with a wide range of experts and stakeholders both within Welsh civic society, including through Cynnal Cymru (Sustainable Development Forum), and those outside Wales.

With communities and individuals

- by action to inform people about sustainable development to enable them to make informed choices;
- by ensuring sustainable development is taught in schools through the national curriculum and in colleges and promote its relevance to global citizenship;
- by encouraging the participation of young people, for example through the young people's forum;
- by promoting local projects, recognising achievements and encouraging others to take action;
- by being open in our decision making;
- by seeking to ensure that all Welsh Assembly Government policies integrate at local level and that local people are engaged in their implementation.

SECTION 5E: Leading by Example

5.5 In order to deliver the vision of a sustainable Wales, the principles of sustainable development will apply to the Assembly's internal operations. This will include:

- developing , maintaining and strengthening arrangements to ensure that Sustainable Development is mainstreamed and promoted within the Assembly's structures;
- continuing development and use of sustainability tools for staff to ensure that sustainable development is mainstreamed into our work as required by this Scheme;
- developing a training programme to ensure that those who develop and implement policy decisions understand what is required of them and are able to use the tools that are developed;
- implementing our Green Action Plan, and Green Transport Plan, and keeping them under review;
- ensuring high standards of sustainable construction and management of Assembly buildings;
- pursuing higher levels of Green Dragon accreditation;
- continuing to develop our sustainable procurement policy and practice;
- continuing to strive to be an exemplary employer;
- communicating the sustainability gains which are made in the Assembly's operations and activities.

SECTION 5F: By setting and using Indicators and Targets

5.6 The Welsh Assembly Government will:

- report progress on the accompanying Action Plan;
- keep the Action Plan under review and publish any alterations to it;
- seek to identify a small suite of high-level summary indicators to use as headline measures of progress towards sustainable development, covering at least the following issues:
 - the global impact of consumption in Wales;
 - biodiversity within Wales
 - the overall level of deprivation in Wales
 - the level of economic activity
 - genuine economic progress, taking account of environmental factors, resources and well-being;
- use a full Indicator set, reflecting cultural ,social, economic and environmental issues, to gauge progress towards sustainable development, and as part of its performance management framework;
- use the indicators to inform the development of its sustainability appraisal tools;
- keep this set under review.

SECTION 5G: By Monitoring, Review, Evaluation, Reporting and Feedback

5.7 The Welsh Assembly Government will:

- seek continually to improve our mechanisms and information base for monitoring the implementation of the Scheme and Action Plan;
- report annually referring both to the full range of sustainable development indicators and to actions taken to implement this Scheme;
- use the reporting system as a driver for change;
- seek to draw on the views of partners in Wales, including Cynnal Cymru, and on the experience of partners abroad, in compiling its reports, particularly the next statutory effectiveness report to be compiled after the next election;
- continue to measure our progress, and the effectiveness of our work, against the highest standards;
- ensure that our monitoring, review and evaluation processes are transparent and simple;
- use a range of media and techniques, including the internet and new technology, to gain feedback and publicise findings;
- be open and honest about our progress and learn from experience;
- ensure that best practice is shared and knowledge is used to inform action.

Further copies

Further copies of this document are available from:

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