

## **HUMAN SETTLEMENT COUNTRY PROFILE**

### **UNITED KINGDOM**

#### **Decision-Making**

#### **Programmes and Projects**

- A. Providing Adequate Shelter for All
- B. Improving Human Settlement Management
- C. Promoting Sustainable Land-Use Planning and Management
- D. Promoting the Integrated Provision of Environmental Infrastructure: water, sanitation, drainage and solid waste management
- E. Promoting Sustainable Energy and Transport Systems in Human Settlements
- F. Promoting Human Settlement Planning and Management in Disaster-Prone Areas
- G. Promoting Sustainable Construction Activities
- H. Promoting Human Resource Development and Capacity-Building for Human Settlement Development

#### **Status**

#### **Capacity-Building, Education, Training and Awareness-Raising**

#### **Information**

#### **Research and Technologies**

#### **Financing**

#### **Co-operation**

**Please note.** The information contained in this report relates only to the activities of the UK Government and bodies responsible to the UK Government. On some issues different arrangements may apply in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

**Decision-making:** Central, regional and local government plan and manage human settlements in partnership. Central Government departments take the lead on setting policy for the area in which it has responsibility. This is done in consultation, at all levels, with other Departments that have a direct interest in the policy in question. Within the UK Government decision-making is delegated to lowest practical level to devolved administrations and local government.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) has responsibility for creating sustainable communities, and this includes planning, housing and regional and local government policy. The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) leads on general energy issues and sponsors the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), and the Department for Transport (DfT) is responsible for overseeing the national transport strategy. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is responsible for the environment, the atmosphere, and energy efficiency.

The devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have responsibilities on prescribed matters. In England, central government has delegated some advice and decision-making processes to the Government Offices (GOs), who have a more regional focus and work closely with their partners in the region. The GOs represent several Government Departments and are accountable to their Ministers in Whitehall rather than directly to people in their region.

Sustainable development is at the heart of measures to strengthen the English regions. All regions have drawn up regional sustainable development frameworks setting high level visions for sustainable development in their region. A range of strategies are also prepared by regional organisations, informed by these frameworks.

For example, RDAs have been established in all regions to co-ordinate regional economic development and regeneration and to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Each RDA co-ordinates the development of a Regional Economic Strategy which is a primary mechanism for the delivery of sustainable economic development.

Similarly, the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill (before Parliament March 04) makes sustainable development the core principle underpinning planning in England and Wales and requires Regional Chambers, as the regional planning bodies, to appraise the sustainability of their regional spatial strategies, the successors to regional planning guidance.

The Government's proposals for establishing elected assemblies in those English regions that want them, and for improving existing arrangements in all regions, were set out in *Your Region, Your Choice: Revitalising the English Regions*, a Government White Paper on regional governance, published in May 2002. The Deputy Prime Minister announced on 16 June 2003 that the North East, North West, and Yorkshire and the Humber regions would be the first to progress towards referendums for elected regional assemblies and these will probably be held in autumn 2004. Assemblies will have powers to make a difference in key areas such as jobs, planning, housing, transport, culture and environment and this will improve people's quality of life and contribute to sustainable development in the regions. Their responsibilities will include sponsoring the RDA and taking over the role of the regional planning body. Their block grant will give them freedom to allocate spending according to regional priorities. The first assembly or assemblies could be up and running early in the next Parliament.

Local authorities are charged with planning for natural disasters within their areas. Local authorities and the London Mayor have responsibility for decision-making at the local level.

*Local agenda 21:* About 90% of local authorities had produced a Local Agenda 21 (LA21) strategy by the end of 2000. The Local Government Act 2000 gave local authorities wide-ranging powers to promote or improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of their areas. Under this legislation there is a requirement to prepare Community Strategies for promoting or improving this well-being and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK. This is normally done through the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), which brings together local public service providers and the business, voluntary and community sector. An LSP brings together local service providers and business, voluntary and community sector representatives.

In light of this statutory process, the Government recommended, in the Local Government White Paper "Strong Local Leadership - Quality Public Services", that as Community Strategies are developed, LA21 strategies be subsumed within these to mainstream local sustainability.

*Land-use planning:* The Government is modernising the planning system to promote regeneration, social inclusion and more sustainable patterns of development. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill introduces a new clause which will require those persons and bodies responsible for preparing regional spatial strategies and local development documents in England, and the Welsh Spatial Plan and local development plans in Wales, to exercise those functions with a view to contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. To ensure that these objectives are met, authorities will be required to subject their local development documents to a sustainability appraisal, which will incorporate the requirements of the European Directive on strategic environmental assessment.

The Environment Act 1995 introduced mechanisms for the identification and regulation of contaminated land, as well as clarifying existing general statutory controls. The Environment Act of 1995 introduced a specific regime for the identification and regulation of contaminated land, building on and clarifying the more general existing statutory controls.

Environmental impact assessment is a statutory procedure that has been required in the UK since 1988 for certain projects, which includes housing development, where there are likely to be significant effects on the environment. The procedure can include, where relevant, the assessment of likely significant effects on "population".

*Energy:* Maintaining a forward-looking coherent energy policy is a major task for Government. To this end the Energy White Paper (EWP) published in 2003 defines a long-term strategic vision for energy policy combining our environmental, security of supply, competitiveness and social goals. It has four overarching goals:

- to put ourselves on a path to cut the UK's carbon dioxide emissions - the main contributor to global warming;
- to maintain the reliability of energy supplies;
- to promote competitive markets in the UK and beyond, helping to raise the rate of sustainable economic growth and to improve our productivity; and
- to ensure that every home can be adequately and affordably heated.

To ensure joined-up Government and efficient delivery of the commitments, the Sustainable Energy Policy Network has been established between departmental policy units, the devolved administrations, regulators and key delivery partners. The new policies laid out in the White Paper reflect, and reinforce, the Government's commitment to sustainable development.

Programs and Projects: *Poverty and Employment:* The Government is determined to tackle poverty, from childhood through to old age, by tackling the causes of poverty and social exclusion, not just the

symptoms. These causes are complex and multi-dimensional and can only be addressed by joined up action across Government and beyond.

The Government is taking a single approach to work and benefits designed to make work pay, make work possible and to support those who are unable to work. This service is delivered through Jobcentre Plus: a personal service with one goal - to do everything to help people of working age to live independent lives. The Government is working in partnership with employers to ensure their needs are understood and that the services we provide fulfil their needs. The Government is removing barriers to working, giving people information and choices about work with the help of a personal adviser. In today's dynamic labour market, having skills to compete effectively is crucial. The Government is investing in life-long learning to ensure that people have the skills and education to play an active part in the labour market.

As well as tackling the individual and family dimensions of poverty, the Government is determined to combat the complex problems faced by poor neighbourhoods. The problems have built up over many years and cannot be corrected overnight.

*Air-quality:* The Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, published in January 2000, and its February 2003 Addendum, aims to provide the best practicable protection to human health and the environment by setting health-based objectives for the main local air pollutants and objectives to protect vegetation and eco-systems.

*Environmental health:* The UK has published 'Saving Lives: Our Healthier Nation' in 1999, which is a government wide public health strategy to improve health and reduce health inequalities. The strategy tackles, among other issues, the relationship between health and the quality of the environment.

Providing Adequate Shelter for All: Securing decent, affordable and environmentally efficient homes is a critical part of establishing sustainable human settlements. In April 2000 the Government published the Housing Policy Statement 'The way forward for housing' and a strategy for ensuring everyone has the opportunity of living in a decent home. As a result, reductions have been achieved in the number of non-decent homes; assistance has been provided to key workers to buy their own homes, lettings policies for social housing have been made more customer focused and there has been a two thirds reduction in the numbers of people sleeping rough. All local authorities have also developed Tenant Participation Compacts which ensure that tenants are fully involved in decisions that affect them.

Improving Human Settlement Management: The Government published its Sustainable Communities Plan in 2003 - a long-term programme of action for creating thriving and sustainable communities across England. The plan covers a wide agenda, which recognises that, to develop communities in which people wish to live, housing policy needs to be linked to improving economies, public services, transport and the environment at the local level. Action includes:

- Increasing the provision of high quality and affordable housing in areas of high demand;
- Providing for major new housing growth in identified "growth areas";
- Addressing housing market decline in areas of low demand and housing abandonment;
- Bringing all social housing up to a decent standard by 2010;
- Improving the quality of the local environment; and
- Protecting the countryside.

As set out above, the Government is determined to stop low demand for housing and housing abandonment from destroying communities. The Government is therefore promoting a new approach spearheaded by nine sub-regional Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders. The pathfinders are operating across sub-regional areas in which housing markets occur so that problems are not simply displaced.

They are taking a comprehensive and long-term approach - drawing in the key stakeholders so that economic and social regeneration issues are addressed alongside housing. Lessons from the pathfinders will help all areas with declining demand to tackle the problems more effectively.

The Government has a number of regeneration programmes in operation as part of the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal. Among these, the New Deal for Communities (NDC) Programme provides grants of between £35 to £62 million over a ten year period to 39 of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country. These 39 NDC Partnerships are tackling regeneration across five key themes of health, employment, education, crime and housing and the physical environment.

C. Promoting Sustainable Land-Use Planning and Management: The Government's overall aim is for new housing to be secured in the most sustainable way. To achieve this, we expect priority to be given to re-using previously-developed land within urban areas and the bringing of empty homes back into use, in preference to greenfield development. New housing should be in the form of well-designed, higher density residential developments of between 30 - 50 units per hectare.

The Government's Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill (to commence June/July 2004) recognises that planning plays a key role in the achievement of sustainable human settlements. Through the sustainable development clause, the Bill will refocus the current planning system by placing the concept of sustainable development at the core of the planning system. In practice, the Bill requires regional and local plans to be drawn up with a view to contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. The clause requires that in doing so, planning authorities must have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State. The recently published Planning Policy Statement 1 (a National policy statement currently out for public consultation) will be a key document underpinning this requirement.

This document supports the re-focus of the planning system by setting out the Governments vision for planning and the key policies and principles, which should underpin the planning system. These are sustainable development, the spatial planning approach and a much stronger focus on community involvement in planning.

This will require the existing plan-led, development control system to pursue proactively the four aims of sustainable development: sustainable economic development; social inclusion; protection and enhancement of the environment; and prudent use of resources, in an integrated way.

Promoting the Integrated Provision of Environmental Infrastructure: water, sanitation, drainage, and solid-waste management: The Government is committed to ensuring that the growth areas, identified in its Sustainable Communities Plan in 2003, are equipped with the water and sewerage services and infrastructure necessary to guarantee the long-term health of these communities. To achieve this the Government recognises the importance of involving the respective water undertakers<sup>1</sup> and environmental regulators at an early stage in the development of proposals. For example, the Government is providing the Environment Agency with £400,000 to undertake a major study in the Ashford Growth Area, in the South East of England. This study will produce an Integrated Water Management strategy for the proposed growth in the Ashford area.

Promoting Sustainable Energy and Transport Systems in Human Settlements: Energy: In 2003 the Government published the Energy White Paper entitled 'Our energy future – creating a low carbon economy'. This sets out the Government's commitment to support local authorities, local businesses and communities in playing their part in making the UK a low carbon economy through better energy

---

<sup>1</sup> Companies holding a consolidated water company licence

efficiency and use of renewable energies at the local level. One of the four overarching goals in the Energy White Paper (EWP) is to ensure that every home is can be adequately and affordably heated.

The Government published its UK Fuel Poverty Strategy in 2001 which set out the framework for delivery of the Government's overall goal of seeking an end to the problem of fuel poverty, with the first target being to eradicate fuel poverty, as far as reasonable practicable, in vulnerable households by 2010. The Government published the first annual progress report on implementing this strategy which showed that the number of households in fuel poverty had decreased significantly between 1996 and 2001.. The second annual fuel poverty progress is due to be published after the Easter recess. A Fuel Poverty Implementation Plan is also being developed which will outline programmes aimed at delivering the statutory targets for tackling fuel poverty in England.

'Warm Front' is the Government's main programme for tackling the problem of fuel poverty in the private sector in England. Fuel poverty is caused by a combination of energy inefficient housing, low incomes and fuel prices. Warm Front is targeted towards vulnerable households and access to the scheme is through the householder or spouse being in receipt of a qualifying income or disability related benefit. The scheme provides two levels of assistance, with a grant of up to £1,500 for families and the disabled and up to £2,500 for the over-60s in receipt of income related benefits.

The DTI's £10 million Clear Skies Initiative aims to give homeowners and communities a chance to become more familiar with renewable energy technology, for example solar thermal heating and wind turbines by providing grants and advice. Also the DTI's Major Photovoltaics Demonstration Programme offers to private and public sector organisations to install solar systems on new or existing buildings.

*Transportation:* 'Transport 2010: The 10 Year Plan', published in July 2000, sets out the Department for Transport's strategy to support both the economy and society through a modern, less polluting and more efficient transport system. This includes measures to tackle the negative effects of traffic growth and increasing congestion on roads.

The Transport Act 2000 gave local authorities new powers to improve bus services and facilities for passengers in partnership with operators. To improve accessibility to transport in areas of low demand, encouragement has been given to bus services which deviate from a fixed route on demand and recently introduced regulations allow such services to be entirely demand-responsive. From June 2001, all older and disabled people in England have been entitled to a statutory minimum travel concession of at least half fares on local bus services, with a free pass.

With regards to local solutions to traffic management, a substantial increase in funding has been made available to local transport authorities since the introduction of the local transport planning process in 2000. The requirement for local authorities to develop policies for local transport should lead to improved public transport provision and the promotion of cycling and walking.

Planning Policy Guidance (PPG 13) on integrating land-use planning and transport was produced in 2001. This guidance helps local authorities to shape the pattern of development and influence the location, scale, density, design and mix of land uses. In this way, better planning can enable people to make sustainable transport choices, by reducing the need to travel, reducing the length of journeys and making it safer and easier for people to access jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking, and cycling.

The Government aims to see as many children as possible walking, cycling or using the bus (and other public transport) to travel to and from school. On 17 September 2003, the Government launched a joint £50 million Travelling to School initiative.

A sustainable distribution strategy was published in 1999. This provides a framework to deliver a modern, efficient freight transport system across all modes. Its objectives include minimising congestion, making better use of the transport infrastructure, minimising pollution and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, managing development pressures on the landscape, and reducing noise and disturbance from freight movements. These objectives are being achieved by working in partnership with the freight industry to raise standards and promote best practice.

The Government is also focussing on specific ways to reduce emissions from the usage of petroleum-based fuels for transport. A number of programmes have been introduced, including: CO<sub>2</sub> based company car tax and vehicle excise duty systems which incentivise clean, low carbon vehicles, and grants to assist with the purchase of clean and alternatively fuelled vehicles.

A national road safety target has been set to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents by 40%, and children by 50%, over the next decade. The strategy for achieving this target is set out in "Tomorrow's Roads – Safer for Everyone". The Spending Review 2002 strengthened this target to tackle the significantly higher incidence of road casualties in disadvantaged communities. The Government has also reviewed speed management, and issued guidance on safer travel to schools.

Following an extensive public consultation exercise, the Government published its White Paper "The Future Development of Air Transport" in December 2003. This seeks to balance the social, economic and environmental impacts of aviation, and provides a long-term strategic framework for the development of air transport in the UK.

The Government is currently reviewing what changes may be needed to the structure and organisation of Britain's railway industry so that the railway operates more effectively for its customers. The review includes safety regulation. The Government intends to publish its conclusions in the summer of 2004.

F. Promoting Human Settlement Planning and Management in Disaster-Prone Areas: Local authorities are charged with planning for natural disasters within their areas.

The Environment Agency extended its 'What's In Your Back Yard?' website in December 2001 (an on-line database of information) to cover data on areas likely to flood, real time information on areas where flood warnings are currently in place, information on landfill sites and discharges to the sea.

G. Promoting Sustainable Construction Industry Activities: In promoting sustainable construction in England, seven sites have been identified as examples of best practice, known as 'Millennium Communities'. These Millennium Communities promote the importance of good design within its wider context, showing good design is not just about attractive buildings, but is about attention to the mix of homes, shops, workspaces and community facilities, good public transport links, and sustainable jobs as well as education and training opportunities.

One of the aims of the programme is to raise awareness, particularly amongst house builders of the benefits of utilising both the best environmental practice standards and the most efficient construction methodologies in carrying out their mainstream business of building. In this way the programme hopes to set the benchmark in new standards of design, building quality and efficiency and improving access to key public services.

The Government is also working to give industry the confidence it needs to invest in modern methods of construction. Modern methods of construction can increase the speed and efficiency of housing provision, and achieve higher quality and better standards of what we build. They can actually increase consumer

choice, offering a wider range of materials, and new and innovative built forms. Actions which are currently been undertaken in this area are:

- The Housing Corporation will be building around 2,600 new homes using modern methods.
- ODPM have asked English Partnerships to look into offering more examples of what can be achieved using modern methods in the Millennium Communities programme, and particularly at Milton Keynes.

The Better Buildings Summit (October 2003) was launched by the Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott MP, Secretary of State for Trade and Industry Patricia Hewitt MP and Secretary of State for the Environment Margaret Beckett MP. The summit was attended by Chief Executives from Energy and Construction industries, who debated how to increase UK buildings' sustainability. An outcome from the Summit was the Sustainable Buildings Task Group. This group is tasked with identifying specific cost-effective improvements in the quality and environmental performance of buildings, which industry can deliver in both the short and long term - together with identifying further actions that Government could take to facilitate faster progress. Its membership includes industry, agencies and environmental groups. The task group is due to report Spring 2004.

Government recognises it must lead by example – public procurement accounts for some 40% of UK construction output. Through *Achieving Excellence in Construction*, Government requires procurement on the basis of best whole life value. The Senior Officials Policy Group, a cross-departmental policy development group set up by Ministers, has been asked to advise on benchmarks or minimum standards for government procurement. Issues covered will include use of recycled materials, energy consumption, and green energy sources.

Further revisions of Building Regulations are underway and due to come into force by January 2005, and these will raise national standards for water and power conservation in buildings.

The Secure and Sustainable Buildings Bill has is progressing through Parliament. As an amendment to the Building Act (1984) it will allow sustainability issues to be specifically addressed through Building Regulations.

Better quality, more efficient construction practice is being promoted through the Sustainability Forum. The Sustainability Forum has been asked by the DTI to investigate and make recommendations on improving take up of sustainable development within the construction and property sectors.

A number of construction sector sustainability strategies have been, and others are due to be, published. These aim to develop a common understanding of the issues and present effective targeted approaches for each sector to contribute to achieving a more sustainable construction industry. Some of the sectors being addressed include: building services, cement and concrete, wood, construction products, housing and Wales. Those published include: Society, Sustainability & Civil Engineering (April 2002), Brick: made for generations (Nov 2002), Building a Better Future (steel sector, Dec 2002).

H. Promoting Human Resource Development and Capacity-Building for Human Settlement Development: Policies have been put in place that support community participation in decision-making. These include; the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal; the guidance on local transport plans; the National Framework for Tenant Participation Compacts; and the Compact between government and the voluntary sector.

Neighbourhood renewal involves area-based work at all levels, from the grassroots to the strategic, in deprived neighbourhoods to deliver economic prosperity, jobs, safer communities, good education, decent housing and better health, as well as fostering a new sense of community and ownership among residents. The guiding principle is that within ten to 20 years' time, no-one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live.

Part of the challenge is to help community and voluntary groups develop the networks, skills and confidence that enable them to participate fully, or take the lead, in re-building their communities. Crucially, communities will have greater access to decision-making through Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) which draw together all the local service providers and businesses, voluntary and community sector representatives engaged in regeneration in deprived areas.

The Government has invested around £110 million in encouraging and harnessing community involvement over the three years up to 2004, through the Community Empowerment Fund (CEF), Community Chests and Learning Chests. Another £98 million is being invested in these areas between 2004 and 2006

A national Community Forum has been set up. Its remit is to provide a community perspective on neighbourhood renewal policy. It also helps generate ideas to make Government policies more effective from the point of view of residents in the most deprived areas.

Since April 2000 local authorities have been required to develop Tenant Participation Compacts (TPCs). These are documents that set out arrangements for tenants to be involved in decision-making affecting their homes and communities. Research indicates that the introduction of TPCs has raised the profile of tenant participation in many authorities and there is evidence to show that in many cases this is creating more equal partnerships between officers, councillors and tenants.

The Government realises that having the right skills and capacity is essential to the successful delivery of our sustainable communities agenda. On this basis, the Deputy Prime Minister asked Sir John Egan to conduct a review of the skills and training required by built-environment professionals to deliver sustainable communities. The review also considered the skills needs of local authorities and developers. The final report is set to make recommendations on developing a common understanding of the term "sustainable communities", how local authorities should lead in co-ordinating and orchestrating delivery, and strategies for raising generic skills levels and knowledge across core occupations, including built environment professions. To drive this forward, the establishment of a National Centre for Sustainable Communities Skills is recommended. The final report is due in early April.

*Energy:* A number of initiatives have taken place at EC level, including energy labelling, eco-labelling and public information and awareness campaigns. EC proposals on A-G style energy efficiency labelling for new cars are expected by the end of 2006. Tendering training is an element of the Energy and Environment Best Practice Programme. Motivational and educational advertisements are used to educate consumers on energy and environment related issues.

*Transportation:* There are many Government and local authority road safety publicity and information campaigns each year. The most notable national programmes may be those aimed at reducing speeding and drink driving. In terms of road safety "education", the main audience is children. DfT produces a leaflet 'Lesson for Life' which offers advice to parents on how and what to teach their children about road safety as they grow up. The Department has also produced a highway code for young road users called 'Arrive Alive', which covers many aspects of road safety including the well-known and well-used 'Green Cross Code', which is about how to cross roads carefully and safely. Road safety messages aimed at children will have a positive impact on how their parents and other members of their family behave too.

Status: *Housing*: Household projections (1996-based) published in October 1999 by the Government suggested that some 3.81 million more homes will be needed in England between 1996 and 2021. This growth is largely due to increased adult population, longer life expectancy, increasing numbers of single person households, people wishing to live alone, and immigration from Europe

The Government has a target to bring all social housing into decent condition by 2010 and increase the proportion of vulnerable households in decent homes in the private sector. The Government's decent homes standard is designed to ensure that social landlords tackle the worst housing conditions across a range of criteria. By ensuring that homes are warm, dry and have reasonably modern facilities, delivery of the target will help to make homes more energy efficient. This will contribute to Government commitments to reduce health inequalities and tackle fuel poverty. The emphasis on delivery is paying dividends - the Government is maintaining good progress towards the 2010 target and it will have reduced the number of non-decent homes by 1 million by April 2004.

*Poverty*: The latest Government report 'Opportunity for all - fifth annual report' was published in September 2003 and shows that the Government is making real progress towards eradicating poverty and its causes. The report shows that the Government is making progress to meet its pledge to reduce the number of children in low income households by one quarter by 2004. By 2001-02 the number of children in low-income households had fallen by 400,000 after housing costs and 500,000 before housing costs. There are half a million fewer children living in households with income below 60% of national median income than in 1997, even accounting for strong income growth.

*Energy*: The UK has natural coal resources, in addition to natural gas and oil reserves. Access to electricity is generally very good. Overall consumption of coal has been reduced, particularly for electricity generation. There has, however, been a corresponding increase in natural gas consumption. Oil use has been reasonably steady. Energy production from nuclear power plants is likely to decline over next 20 years. There has been a small increase in renewable resources, encouraged by Government policy. There is more interest in burning wood and waste products. The energy market is fully open to competition.

*Transportation*: In Great Britain, around 28% of households do not have the use of a car. 63% of the poorest 20% of households in Great Britain have no car, and 55% of those over 70 years of age live in a household with no car. Women and those under 20 years are also more reliant on public transport, particularly local bus services. It is these groups that are therefore most in need of an improved public transport system. The scale of London and the complexity of its transport system mean that transport problems in London are of a different magnitude from those in any other metropolitan area in the country. Rural communities are often less well served by public transport but resources have increasingly been targeted at improving rural transport and enhancing access to employment and services. Surveys indicate that the proportion of households in rural areas in England within a ten minute walk of a regular bus service increased from 35% in 1996-98 to 48% in 2000-02. Peripheral regions can often be disadvantaged in terms of transport links, and so regional policies of both the UK and the EU are aimed at ensuring better transport links to such areas.

Passenger numbers through UK airports are projected to increase by 50% by 2010, and freight traffic by almost 100%.

*Air-quality*: Urban air quality in the UK has generally improved significantly, although the hot summer and other pollution episodes in 2003 lead to an unusually high number of days with moderate or higher air pollution – an average of 50 such days in 2003 compared with 20 in 2002, and 59 in 1993. Rural air

quality has not shown a clear overall trend, although ozone caused by the hot summer in 2003 led to an average of 63 pollution days in 2003 compared with 50 in 1990 and 30 days in 2002.

**Capacity Building, Education, Training and Awareness raising:** *Education:* The Government launched the Sustainable Development Action Plan for Education and Skills (England), in September 2003. The Plan looks at how we teach and learn about sustainable development throughout our lives; how we generate skills, knowledge, and understanding, so that we fulfil our duty as global citizens, and; how we manage our operations now, to support future generations.

The action plan encourages wider participation in sustainable development in all education and skills sectors, and through formal and informal education. Indeed, one of the key objectives is to make effective links between education and sustainable development to build capacity within local communities.

Within the school curriculum, the Department for Education and Skills intends to build capacity within subjects such as citizenship, geography and science, already used to explore different aspects of sustainable development in various contexts, prompting pupils to think innovatively and preparing them to grow into responsible decision-makers and informed problem solvers.

Within Government, one of the greatest potential influences for raising public awareness of the meaning of sustainable development lies in the capacity for informal learning within those sectors which are the responsibility of the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS). Around 97% of DCMS' budget is spent directly by the 65 bodies it sponsors. Among these are national museums and libraries, English Heritage and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, the National Lottery distributors, the arts and sports councils, tourism, creative industries and broadcasting. "Communicating sustainable development" is an objective of DCMS' sustainable development strategy, published in February 2004. DCMS has already begun to co-ordinate and promote projects across its associated bodies to stimulate interest in sustainable development among the general public. We are also collaborating closely with ODPM on the sustainable communities agenda, especially in the regeneration of parks and the use of public space.

*Employment:* The New Deal programmes are a major element of the Government's strategy to help people without jobs, and a selection are described below. They aim to help different groups of people who have been out of work to move into work, or improve their prospects of doing so. Over 1,000,000 people have found work through the New Deals since their launch in 1998.

New Deal for Young People, for example, aims to help young long-term unemployed people move into and remain in work, entry to the New Deal is mandatory for all 18-24 year old people who have claimed Jobseeker's Allowance continuously for 6 months. New Deal 25 plus aims to help older long-term unemployed people. Participants to both New Deals receive help with intensive job search and specialist help to improve their job prospects.

New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) aims to help lone parents to overcome barriers into work and to improve their job readiness. NDLP Advisers offer a range of support and advice to lone parents for jobsearch, training needs, childcare, benefits and in-work support. New Deal 50plus aims to help long-term unemployed and economically inactive people aged 50. Since 2003, a new package of more intensive back-to-work help for people aged 50 and over has been progressively introduced. This includes an extension of support through New Deal 50 plus and individually tailored help targeted at known vacancies.

**Information:** Information on the Government's commitment to sustainable communities is set out in the 'Sustainable Communities Plan' published in February 2003. As described above, this is a long-term

programme of action for creating thriving and sustainable communities across England. The plan covers a wide agenda, which recognises that, to develop communities in which people wish to live, housing policy needs to be linked to improving economies, public services, transport and the environment at the local level. The Plan is backed with substantial resources of £22 billion.

The Government has also produced two progress reports on the delivery of the Sustainable Communities Plan: Making it Happen - The Thames Gateway and the Growth Areas (2003), and Making it Happen: The Northern Way (2004).

**Research and Technologies:** *Land-use:* Government has published a guide explaining how development plans can be prepared more efficiently. As part of its planning reform agenda, a further study will be published in Summer 2004 explaining how local authorities can prepare the new form of development plans, which will be known as Local Development Frameworks.

*Air-quality:* The Government sponsors various research projects monitoring levels of nitrogen in the air and in waters, and projects intended to explain the fluxes of oxidised and reduced nitrogen between the various environmental media and vegetation. Models have been developed to describe and predict the movement of nitrogen and its likely environmental impacts. The Natural Environment Research Council has also chosen nitrogen as a priority area for basic research. Its GANE programme is intended to provide better explanations for and characterisations of the nitrogen cycle. The UK has a hydrocarbon-monitoring network, providing real-time monitoring of 6 compounds at 3 locations and 26 compounds at 2 locations. This, together with 84 monitoring stations for ground-level ozone and the development of sophisticated models for ozone transport and formation, is enabling the UK to better understand the occurrence of ozone in the UK. The UK takes particular pride in the continuing research designed to describe the chemistry leading to the formation and removal of ozone, and its incorporation into models. Model development is now most apparent in accounting for ozone transport across transcontinental distances.

*Transportation:* The DfT commissions a wide range of research to support relevant transport objectives. The Department also encourages research and works with a number of other Government departments and partners with related responsibilities. The Department of Trade and Industry also carries out some relevant research through its Foresight programme. The devolved administrations also carry out research that is relevant to their functions. In addition, a number of UK universities carry out research on transport and traffic as do a range of private sector companies and consultants. The UK participates in a number of European Union research programmes, including the EU Framework Programmes, COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) and in OECD research.

**Financing:** *Land-use:* The Sustainable Communities Plan set out how the Government would spend £22billion between 2003-04 and 2005-06 to deliver thriving sustainable communities across England. £500million of this Sustainable Communities funding has been made available up to March 2006 to help restructure housing markets in the pathfinder areas.

The Government contributes £1.8billion annually to Regional Development Agencies, who are responsible for regeneration and economic development activities at a regional level. English Partnerships, the national regeneration agency, receives over £230million each year from the Government, which includes money to bring brownfield land back into use.

*Energy:* The Climate Change Levy will be payable on the use of energy in industry, commerce and the public sector, the revenue raised being recycled via offsetting cuts in employers' National Insurance Contributions and additional support for energy efficiency schemes and renewable sources of energy.

*Transportation:* The UK government has put in place a number of fiscal measures designed to facilitate the take-up of clean, low-carbon alternative fuels and vehicle technologies. This includes low rates of fuel duty on road fuel gas and special low rates of Vehicle Excise Duty and Company Car Taxation for alternatively fuelled vehicles. With regards to traffic management in towns and cities, a substantial increase in funding is being made available to local authorities, Passenger Transport Authorities and other transport providers to develop the packages of measures that best answer people's needs and reflect local conditions. Local authorities will identify local solutions when planning their local transport policies, which they are obliged to develop under the Transport Act 2000. The Transport Act 2000 also gave local authorities powers to set up road user charging schemes and/or workplace parking levy schemes in their areas in order to tackle congestion. There are road user charging schemes in London and Durham and a number of other authorities are considering developing proposals for such schemes. Local authorities will identify local solutions when planning their local transport policies, which they are obliged to develop under the Transport Act 2000.

**Co-operation:** The DTI, ODPM and the Treasury have a joint agreement to work together to make sustainable improvements in the economic performance of all English regions and over the long term reduce the persistent gap in growth rates between the regions, defining measures to improve performance and reporting progress against these measures by 2006.

Furthermore, one of ODPM's key targets is to support other government departments, regional and local partners to meet their own targets on mainstream service provision which tackle social exclusion and neighbourhood renewal, especially those focussed on the most deprived areas. In order to do this, ODPM funds regeneration initiatives, promotes interdepartmental discussion at national level of cross-cutting issues, the regional growth agenda and the development of Local Strategic Partnerships to draw up local Community Strategies which look holistically at neighbourhood regeneration and other issues across an area.

Regional tripartite relationships between Government Offices, RDAs and the existing regional chambers/assemblies have been developed and strengthened since the publication of the White Paper *Your Region, Your Choice*. In particular, these bodies are working together and with partners at various levels to help realise the 'Chapter 2' agenda on strengthening the English regions. This has included work to establish and develop many regional initiatives including the new regional spatial strategies, revised regional economic strategies, frameworks for employment and skills action, and active participation in the Regional Housing Boards which are helping to deliver sustainable communities in England.

\*\*\*