

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
ENVIRONMENTAL DIALOGUE MEETING**

Date: 21 November 2005

Subject: **Environment Agency Corporate Strategy 2006-11**

Report of: Head of Policy

Purpose of the report

The Environment Agency (EA) will be launching its Corporate Strategy in April 2006 and are inviting everyone to comment on its draft document, which is currently out for consultation before its launch next year. The Corporate Strategy (which covers the period 2006-11) describes how the Agency intends to deliver and monitor the delivery of Government objectives for the Agency in England and Wales. This paper introduces the issues raised in the draft Plan and suggests issues for discussion

1. Background

- 1.1 The Environment Agency is currently reviewing its priorities and objectives as part of its corporate planning cycle. The new Corporate Strategy, expected in April 2006, will cover the years 2006 to 2011 and will set out in detail what the EA plan to deliver for the environment over the next five years, based on current planning assumptions. It is effectively a contract with Government, setting actions and targets for delivering environmental improvements. These are the benchmarks against which EA will measure its progress and effectiveness.
- 1.2 The current Corporate Plan, covering the years 2004-07, defines the role of the Environment Agency as a 'champion for the environment in the context of sustainable development'. The Plan divides EA's work into a number of integrated themes - an enhanced environment for wildlife; cleaner air, improved and protected waters; restored, protected land with healthier soils; a greener business world; wiser, sustainable use of natural resources; limiting and adapting to climate change and reducing flood risk.
- 1.3 Consideration of a new Corporate Plan comes at a time in which the EA, in line with other agencies, is being asked by Government to make hard choices about what it can deliver within limited resources. The EA is taking on additional new duties and must provide an increasingly effective service for the public. Efficiency is critical, with the EA required to take risk-assessed decisions about where best to focus its efforts to gain the most for the environment. And there are a number of significant challenges. The recent

review of the Regional Economic Strategy highlighted concerns about changing climate and the need to reduce emissions of the greenhouse gases that cause climate change.

2. Environment Agency Corporate Strategy 2006-11

2.1 The draft vision outlined in the Corporate Plan - a better place for people and wildlife for present and for future generations – is broken down into nine environmental themes, backed up with more detail on the outcomes the EA want to achieve and priorities for action. The nine themes are:

- A better quality of life
- An enhanced environment for wildlife.
- Cleaner air for everyone
- Improved and protected inland and coastal waters, and
- Restored, protected land with healthy soils.
- A greener business world
- Wiser, sustainable use of natural resources.
- Limiting and adapting to climate change
- Reducing flood risk

2.2 To achieve these objectives, the EA expects to play five roles:

- An efficient operator - actively clean up and restore the environment and protect people from floods
- A modern regulator - regulate business to prevent pollution and protect people and the environment from harm (with a focus on those who pose the greatest risk)
- An influential adviser - use knowledge and practical experience to advise government and others about changing policies or practices for the good of the environment
- An active communicator - gather and co-ordinate a wide range of information and present it in ways which ensure that the need for action for the environment is clear and inspires people to act
- The champion of the environment - ensure that the interests of the environment are properly taken account of while understanding social and economic needs.

3. Suggested Questions

3.1 The following questions act as a guide to some of the issues that may be raised through the consultation on the draft Corporate Plan:

- How successful has the Environment Agency as an enforcer of environmental regulation and controls, and how do the roles outlined in the draft Plan equip them to manage such a wide range of activities?

- Will the draft Plan enhance the EA's ability to operate efficiently and provide good value for money?
- Does the EA's structure, governance and accountability provide the appropriate framework for delivering the priorities outlined in the draft Plan?
- What are the implications of the draft Plan for the EA's relationship with the Assembly, local authorities and others, including the its role in the planning system?
- What impact will the Corporate Plan have on the EA's responsibilities for flood defence, flood mapping, improving wildlife habitats, biodiversity etc.

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