



House of Commons
Environmental Audit
Committee

**Making Government
Operations More
Sustainable: A Progress
Report: Government
Response to the
Committee's Seventh
Report of Session 2007–08**

**Eighth Special Report of Session
2007–08**

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The Environmental Audit Committee

The Environmental Audit Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to consider to what extent the policies and programmes of government departments and non-departmental public bodies contribute to environmental protection and sustainable development; to audit their performance against such targets as may be set for them by Her Majesty's Ministers; and to report thereon to the House.

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A list of Reports of the Committee from the present and prior Parliaments is at the back of this volume.

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Eighth Special Report

1. The Environmental Audit Committee published its report on **Making Government operations more sustainable: A progress report** on Monday 14 July 2008 as HC 529.
2. The Government's Response to the Committee's Report was received on Tuesday 27 October 2008 in the form of a memorandum to the Committee. It is reproduced as Appendix 1 to this Special Report. The Sustainable Development Commission's (SDC) response to the Committee's Report was received on Tuesday 27 October 2008 in the form of a memorandum to the Committee. It is reproduced as Appendix 2 to this Special Report.

Appendix 1: Government response

Government Response to Making Government operations more sustainable: A progress report

Introduction

Government welcomes this report. Sustainable operations is a key priority for the government, as reflected in the targets for the Sustainable Operations on the Government Estate (SOGE). The ability of the government to show leadership in its own operations is vital to driving change. Departments took steps in 2007–08 to address issues in performance, and we expect that this will be reflected in the next SDiG report. Since the Committee reported, Government has taken further steps to improve the sustainability of its operations. The publication of the Sustainable Procurement and Operations on the Government Estate Delivery Plan in August 2008 marked a significant step forward; progress that was welcomed by the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC).

In October Government announced the formation of the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC). By bringing together policy responsibility for energy (formerly with BERR) and climate change (formerly with Defra) the Department will be able to give an even greater focus to solving the twin challenges of climate change and energy supply. The change means that the Department responsible for meeting the nation's climate change targets also has responsibility for the major areas of delivery, and that policy to develop affordable, secure and sustainable energy will be taken forward in an integrated way. The Centre of Expertise in Sustainable Procurement (CESP) will work closely with DECC to ensure government's operations reflect best practice.

1. The record of civil departments in tackling their carbon emissions has remained very poor overall. We recommend that all departments set out a credible set of actions for delivering the 12.5% reduction target as urgently as possible. (Paragraph 11)

Government accepts this recommendation. The Delivery Plan published on 7 August 2008 included trajectories detailing the activities planned by each department to meet each of

the SOGE targets for carbon emissions from offices and travel, waste, recycling, and water consumption. These trajectories show that at a pan-government level, government expects to meet all of the SOGE targets. CESP will work with departments to ensure that they each have robust plans in place, and to address any difficulties and develop further programmes of work.

2. We welcome the fact that the Government has now removed QinetiQ from the historic baseline against which it is measuring progress in reducing emissions. What is harder to understand is why it has taken several years for the Government to accept and act on this point. It is unacceptable that the Government allowed what was essentially an accounting anomaly to distort its headline performance so profoundly. To avoid such inaccurate reporting in the future, the Government must ensure that where departments acquire or dispose of significant parts of their estate, they clearly recalculate the baseline of emissions from which they are measuring their progress. (Paragraph 14)

Government accepts this recommendation. This year the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) worked with the SDC and departments to undertake a re-baselining exercise, to ensure that the baselines used by Government and SDC to judge progress towards the targets were an accurate reflection of both the starting point and alterations in the scope of departmental reporting, such as Machinery of Government changes. In its Delivery Plan, Government committed to developing a register of baselines, to contain each department's baseline for each target during 2008–09. This will ensure that changes to the estate or the scope of departmental reporting can be easily captured, and to ensure accurate performance data is being used to judge departments progress.

3. While it is encouraging that the Government appears to have found evidence of additional carbon savings to offset the removal of “the QinetiQ effect”, these new figures should be treated with caution, until the SDC has examined and commented on them. We recommend that in future the Government ensures it submits the correct figures to the SDC in time for examination and inclusion in the annual Sustainable Development in Government report. (Paragraph 16)

Government accepts this recommendation. The changes made in the Government response to the SDC's report this year related to suggested changes to the baseline for the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). This has reflected the impact of the inclusion of the Magistrates' Court estate in their Sustainable Development in Government (SDiG) returns for the first time, which it had not been possible to agree with the SDC in time for the publication of their report.

Both the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and MoJ submitted formal re-baselining requests this year, to acknowledge the changes identified in the Government response. The effect of this has been to increase the MoJ baseline to reflect the inclusion of the Magistrates' Court estate.

The MoD also re-baselined, to remove QinetiQ. Despite this change they are forecast to make a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions of 10% in 2007–08 against the baseline, and are on track to meet the 2010–11 target.

The CESP is currently working with departments to move to a process of more timely data recording—ensuring that data can be provided on a regular basis and facilitating the provision of accurate data to the SDC. This process will also capture changes in baselines, ensuring early identification of any re-baselining requirements which can be agreed with the CESP, departments and the SDC in a timely manner.

4. We recommend the Government ensures that the basis on which departments report their emissions is made consistent. In particular, if the main targets on carbon emissions are to refer solely to offices then those major parts of the Government Estate that are not offices—notably large areas of military bases, prisons and courts—should be removed from the figures, and the baselines adjusted accordingly. In that case, the Government must also ensure that these other parts of its estate are subject to an equivalent set of targets and reporting requirements. Alternatively, the Government should enlarge the definition of the target to encompass them. In either case, PFI prisons should be required to meet the same target and reporting requirements as state-run prisons. (Paragraph 19)

Government accepts the need for consistency of reporting and that the same targets and reporting requirements should apply to PFI run prisons as to state run prisons. MoJ is committed to having the same data on privately run prisons as for those run publicly. The proposal of including PFI prisons in the SOGE reporting raises contractual issues which will need to be resolved prior to the inclusion of these prisons; MoJ will be working towards resolving these issues.

Government is content that departments report on parts of their operational estate. Departments will want to report on other parts of their estate, to ensure that they capture, manage and report their impacts to as full an extent as possible. In addition, for some sites, such as military bases and prisons it is not possible to disaggregate the data for the office buildings from the site as a whole. Government accepts that for such reporting to be effective there is a need for greater consistency and transparency.

Government is currently reviewing of the SOGE targets, to ensure that they reflect best practice; part of this review will consider the scope of the current targets including how the carbon emissions from the non-office estate should be reported.

5. Departments have made excellent progress on increasing their use of green electricity contracts. We commend the clear interest this shows across Government in demonstrating leadership on green procurement. At the same time, the contribution these green electricity contracts are making to the emissions—is in fact highly uncertain, and may be very marginal. We note that the Government is awaiting advice from Ofgem on whether departments’ use of “green tariffs” should be counted as reducing their emissions. If Ofgem confirms that they should not be counted in this way, we recommend that the target requiring departments to increase their sourcing of renewable power is revised wholly to exclude the purchase of “green tariff” electricity. (Paragraph 25)

Government is currently reviewing the SOGE framework, including the targets on carbon emissions and energy. The purchase of green electricity sends an important signal to the market about the demand for electricity generated from renewable sources. However,

Government recognises that it is difficult for consumers to assess the environmental benefits of green tariffs.

In recognition of this, in June 2008 Defra asked Ofgem to provide detailed guidelines for suppliers of green tariffs with a view to developing a rating system that will distinguish between the different environmental potential of green tariffs. In addition, Government is working with the chief executives of energy suppliers to ask them to provide the clearest possible information about the benefit their green tariff brings for the environment. Defra will consult on how these benefits, could be treated in its voluntary reporting guidelines.

The forthcoming Carbon Reduction Commitment, which will apply to all departments from 2010, will not allow departments to claim reductions in carbon dioxide emissions from green tariffs, and the current reporting position is consistent with this.

6. We are extremely disappointed with progress on generating electricity from on-site and district renewables. We recognise and support the Government's commitment to taking "a leading position in implementing self-generation renewable energy" through a renewable energy strategy that is currently in development; however, it is a serious failing of the Government that it is only now developing such a strategy. Given the wider contribution to micro- and district renewables of taking a lead through public procurement, Government use of self-generated renewable power must be scaled up enormously as a top priority. We recommend that this be made a key feature of departmental delivery plans, with a senior individual—such as the Chief Sustainability Officer—being made responsible for delivering this strategy across Government. (Paragraph 28)

The Renewable Energy Strategy will be published in spring 2009. Government will consider how best to implement the renewable energy strategy when this has been completed.

A key part of the Delivery Plan published in August was the departmental trajectories, detailing the plans departments had put in place to deliver each of the SOGE targets. Five departments, including DWP and HMRC, identified the installation of on-site renewable energy facilities in their future plans for reducing the carbon emissions from their estate. In addition, as a result of the 2007 Biomass Strategy, all departments are undertaking feasibility studies to identify the opportunities for biomass boilers on their estates.

Support is available to departments through the Low Carbon Buildings Programme, which offers grants for the installation of micro-generation technologies, as well as Partnerships for Renewables, a Carbon Trust enterprise which finances and manages on-site renewable energy projects on public sector land.

7. The degree of confusion within Government as to how the target of making its offices carbon neutral by 2012 is to be met, how much this will cost, and even how it will be defined and what it will measure, is wholly unsatisfactory. These essential issues must be worked out urgently. In particular, each department's delivery plan should indicate what proportion of its effort will be met by offsets and what by self-generation in each year going forward. These projections should be updated annually. (Paragraph 35)

DECC is currently leading work to define what is meant by carbon neutrality for Government and the private sector. Once this work is complete, CESP will work with them to review the 2012 carbon neutrality target and the implications for departments' delivery, including any potential costs arising from off-setting based on forecast emissions levels.

8. In meeting this target from 2012 onwards, it is important the Government does as much as possible to reduce its own emissions, rather than simply relying on buying carbon offsets. This is the surest way to guarantee that the stated amount of emissions are actually being reduced, and should also prove to be better value for money in the long-term. OGC should publish calculations of the amount of money the Government expects to spend on offsetting its own emissions every year from 2012, and should use this to support the financial case for accelerated development of on-site and district renewable generation to cut departmental emissions at source. The Government should also look at capping the use of offsets to meet this target, as a further means of forcing progress in self-generation. (Paragraph 36)

The implications for departments' delivery of the current carbon neutrality target and the potential need for off-sets will be informed by the work currently being led by DECC to define carbon neutrality. Government's guidance on the measurement and delivery of the SOGE targets, published in August, emphasised that off-setting is the last action to be taken, after departments have reduced their emissions as far as is possible.

9. We welcome the Greening Government IT programme. We recommend that this programme is made one of the single highest priorities of the Chief Sustainability Officer, reporting to the Cabinet Secretary. This would be to give it the attention it deserves, given that increased use of IT would appear to be the biggest single factor in the upward trend in emissions from civil departments (up 22% since 1999–00). (Paragraph 38)

Government agrees that the Greening Government ICT programme has a key role to play in supporting the delivery of a more sustainable estate. The Chief Sustainability and Operating Officer will work with the CIO council and Cabinet Office, which lead the work on Greening Government ICT. Departments have already identified a number of actions relating to the greening of ICT in their delivery trajectories and CESP will work with the Cabinet Office, the ICT Collaborative Category Team, and departments to support the delivery of these plans and the associated carbon emission reductions.

Early action taken in support of this agenda was the OGC's work with DCMS to provide access to a framework agreement for IT power management software. This system allows the automatic shut down of PCs during non-working hours to reduce wasted energy. It is estimated that by switching off PCs when not in use annual energy cost savings of up to £10.2 million and carbon emission reductions of up to 55,723 tonnes could be achieved.

10. Even though reducing the embodied emissions in Government IT will have no effect on departments' recorded emissions, it is important that the Greening Government IT programme explicitly focuses on minimising them, given that most of the carbon emissions arising from IT come from its manufacture and disposal. We recommend that this programme includes efforts to minimise demand for new IT equipment overall, to increase the proportion of IT equipment that is reconditioned

rather than bought all-new, and to procure new equipment with the lowest embodied emissions. (Paragraph 39)

Government accepts this recommendation. The Greening Government ICT programme includes proposals to minimise the demand for new equipment. The areas for ICT Carbon Reduction in the strategy include the requirement to extend the lifecycle of all ICT purchases to their natural demise either caused by failure, inability to support business objectives, excessive maintenance costs or excessive carbon footprint and energy consumption. Where equipment has reached the end of life departments are encouraged to consider re-use where possible. Where this cannot be the case then recycle options (including distribution to alternative organisations) or green disposal are highlighted as appropriate alternatives.

Departments are also being asked to procure more energy efficient technology where possible and consider the use of thin client devices where this is appropriate. The Green ICT delivery sub group of the CTO council will continue to work with Defra and CESP on the procurement model to deliver the most efficient ICT estate. Work is now underway to define and agree ICT procurement standards which address wider impacts, such as ease of upgrading equipment and design and labelling of constituent parts for ease of recycling.

11. In terms of tackling the emissions from Government IT in operation, we would expect to see an emphasis on tackling the energy consumption of both IT equipment itself and the air conditioning required to keep it from overheating. In addition to improving the energy efficiency of IT use, however, we recommend that departments review their demand for electrical equipment, and reduce it where possible. (Paragraph 40)

Government accepts this recommendation. It is important that departments review their demand for electrical equipment and reduce it where possible. The largest cooling requirement for ICT is in the data centre. The Greening Government ICT strategy published in July recommends that departments ensure that their data centre efficiency is carefully managed and significant changes brought about. This will include a significant reduction in the number of servers and their utilisation. It is also recommended that data centre managers reduce cooling in data centres to a more appropriate level—as many are overcooled to prevent the risk of failure. It has been shown that increasing temperature in the data centre does not lead to a higher failure rate as was previously thought.

This work will be supported by the forthcoming EU Code of Conduct on Data Centres, which is due to be published later this year. The EU Code of Conduct (CoC) is a European wide voluntary initiative aiming to develop energy efficiency performance standards for data centres. The Code provides the framework to establish product metrics, market metrics, market surveillance, in use best practice and supply chain communication. It is designed to trigger action for data centres to improve energy performance against itself and recognise those who do so. Participants will commit to implement a subset of expected best practice and to annually report energy consumption.

12. We recommend that the Government abolishes its energy efficiency targets, since by measuring energy use per square metre these give misleading pictures of departmental performance, thus rendering the targets meaningless. Similar problems

might recur even if the target were changed to a per capita measure. For this reason we recommend that the Government replaces its energy efficiency targets with targets for reducing absolute levels of energy use. (Paragraph 44)

Government is currently reviewing the SOGE targets. It recognises the potential for the energy efficiency target to provide misleading or skewed data when set in the context of estate rationalisation. In the light of this recommendation and that of the SDC in its 2008 SDiG report, Government committed to review this target in the Delivery Plan published in August 2008, with OGC, Defra and DECC working to assess whether this is the most appropriate measure.

13. By highlighting patchy information systems and lack of compliance with mandatory policies, the SDC's report reveals fundamental failings in the Sustainable Operations on the Government Estate target and monitoring regime, raising questions about its ability to effect progress and to hold failing departments to account. (Paragraph 47)

Government recognises the value of an independent watchdog in providing robust monitoring and challenge, ensuring individual departments and Government as a whole remain accountable for their performance. The response by Government to the SDiG report this year, the subsequent establishment of the CESP and publication of the Delivery Plan showed the value of the reporting process in holding departments to account and driving improvements in performance.

14. At the same time, we recognise that Office of Government Commerce is taking steps to improve these systems, notably the collection of real-time data from Government buildings. We look forward to seeing considerable improvement in performance as a result in the next two years. In particular, if the new role for OGC, including the Centre of Expertise for Sustainable Procurement, is to mean anything, we expect to see a sharp rise in compliance with mandatory policies such as "Quick Wins". (Paragraph 47)

Government agrees with this recommendation. An early priority for the CESP is to establish a pilot for the submission of data on a more timely basis. Candidate departments have already been identified, and it is expected that the first reporting will start in December. Reporting in this way will both enable action to be taken if performance improvements lack the pace required in a specific area and also enable the identification of those departments whose performance represents best practice, facilitating the sharing of best practice and improving standards across government.

A key task for the CESP is to establish performance reporting methodologies for all elements of the SOGE framework and SPAP commitments, including the uptake of Quick Wins. This will give visibility to those areas where performance does not meet the desired levels, and will allow targeted action to be taken to address this.

15. We find it unacceptable that 15% of executive agencies do not report performance against their Sustainable Operations on the Government Estate targets, even though this is mandatory. OGC must ensure that all executive agencies report to the SDC each year. All executive NDPBs either report their performance separately, or do so within individual subsections of their parent departments' reports. (Paragraph 50)

Government accepts that it is important that all bodies covered by the existing SOGE framework report performance. CESP will be working with departments to identify gaps in reporting, raising any exclusions with permanent secretaries and developing action plans to address any barriers which may currently prevent an executive agency from meeting the reporting requirements.

A number of NDPBs already report against the SOGE framework, either as separate entities contained with their parent department's return, or where strategies of estate sharing mean that their impacts are captured as part of the department's own return. The number of NDPBs reporting in the 2007–08 SDiG process has increased, and it is expected that data from 23 NDPBs will be included in the 2008 SDiG report. Government is currently reviewing the SOGE framework and part of this work will be to consider the scope of the existing framework.

16. We welcome the Government's commitment to ensuring that all outsourced operations are retained within the Sustainable Operations on the Government Estate regime, with their environmental performance subject to their contracting department's target and reporting requirements. At the same time we note that this only applies to outsourced operations that take place on property owned by Government bodies. We recommend that the Office of Government Commerce reviews the practicalities of the Government's mandating suppliers of services not based on site to report their environmental data in respect of these contracts. (Paragraph 52)

Government is currently reviewing the SOGE targets, to ensure that they reflect best practice; part of this review will consider the scope of the current targets, including recommendations on including out-sourced services in the reporting requirements. It will be important to ensure that the full impact of government operations is accounted for, while avoiding any potential double counting where out-sourced service suppliers also report their performance.

The CESP is also developing a programme of supplier engagement which will support a greater understanding of the impact of key supply chains on sustainable procurement and operations. This will enable more informed engagement with suppliers on key issues like carbon emissions, and ensure that Government can work in partnership with its suppliers, including those who provide out-sourced services, to reduce the impact of the services and products we buy.

17. While we are encouraged to learn that there is much activity to improve the sustainability of other parts of the public sector, the fact remains that there are no systematic and comprehensive assessments of progress. In the interests of public accountability, and in order to help to drive up performance consistently throughout the public sector, we recommend that OGC, relevant departments, and the SDC develop comprehensive annual assessments of progress in important sectors such as NHS bodies and schools. (Paragraph 53)

Government is committed to ensuring sustainable procurement and sustainable operations are fully embedded throughout the public sector. There are already established programmes to address sustainability in the wider public sector, such as the Building Schools for the Future programme. DCSF and the Department for Health both have

Sustainable Development Actions Plans which address the key sustainability issues for their sectors. The SDC is engaged with these programmes, providing support and oversight of their performance, including recently published reports on the carbon emissions from the NHS estate and carbon foot-printing in schools.

From April 2008, local authorities are required to report emissions from their own operations, including those from schools, under National Indicator 185, part of the Local Government Performance Framework.

As an example of work underway, the Department of Health is engaged with the NHS estate and operations on sustainability issues. The Department routinely collects information from the NHS via the Estates Returns Information Collection system (ERIC). This system holds historical data from which the Department can base policy and strategic decisions affecting the NHS. The Department used this data to report progress against the energy/carbon reduction mandatory target set from 2000 to 2010.

Since 1990 the Department has set energy saving targets on the NHS. As a consequence of the Climate Change Programme in 1998–99, the Department set more stringent and challenging targets, including performance indicators and setting the parameters across energy saving and also carbon efficiency cuts.

To achieve this, two sets of mandatory targets for NHS bodies in England have been introduced:

1. to reduce the level of primary energy consumption by 15% or 0.15 MtC (million tonnes carbon) from March 2000 to March 2010¹;
2. to achieve a target of 35–55 GJ/100 cu.m energy efficiency performance for the healthcare estate² for all new capital developments and major redevelopments or refurbishments; and that all existing facilities should achieve a target of 55–65 GJ/100 cu.m.

Progress towards this target is monitored via the Department's ERIC database, and a report produced in 2005 *Statistics on energy performance and carbon and CO₂ emissions—NHS England, 1999–00 to 2004–5 with predictions to 2009–10*.

18. We invite the House of Commons Commission and the Administration Committee to consider how to ensure the House of Commons sets and meets demanding targets for improving the sustainability of the Parliamentary Estate, and for reporting its performance annually. (Paragraph 55)

Government welcomes this recommendation and encourages the Parliamentary Estate to establish a framework of targets and reporting. CESP would be happy to share examples of best practice to inform this work.

19. Considering the significant nature of the Government's response to this year's SDiG report, we agree that the Sustainable Development Commission is playing a significant role in stimulating Government to improve its performance. (Paragraph 57)

¹ DETR *Climate Change Programme*

² NHS Estates *Developing an Estate Strategy*

Government agrees with these findings; it recognises the value an independent watchdog can bring, and welcomes this recognition of the importance of the SDC's role.

20. At the same time, we recommend that the SDC reviews whether its presentation of performance in the annual SDiG reports could be made more straightforward, including—where necessary—being more critical. (Paragraph 58)

Government agrees with these findings; it recognises the value an independent watchdog can bring, and welcomes this recognition of the importance of the SDC's role.

21. We recommend that the SDC looks again at its practice of simply reporting the data as given to it by departments. Currently, where it has reservations about the figures, it only expresses these in separate commentary sections. For example, the SDC's press release on the recent SDiG report stated that "overall carbon emissions from offices have fallen by 4% since 1999", despite the fact that this figure had been discredited elsewhere in the report. (Paragraph 59)

Government agrees with these findings; it recognises the value an independent watchdog can bring, and welcomes this recognition of the importance of the SDC's role.

22. The departmental delivery plans that the Office of Government Commerce is overseeing are a major step forward. They should not be a one-off exercise, but should be done annually, to set out clearly what progress each department is making, and a revised series of actions needed to meet their targets in the light of that progress. (Paragraph 62)

Government welcomes this recommendation. The CESP established within OGC has committed to updating the Delivery Plan every six months, including updating delivery trajectories where relevant. The next iteration of the Delivery Plan will include revised trajectories to reflect the most recent data verified by the SDC and a progress report on the commitments made in the summer.

23. We welcome the reform to incorporate sustainability goals in the personal objectives of the Cabinet Secretary and all Permanent Secretaries. We expect this to have a tangible effect on the forcefulness and coherence of departments' response to these issues, and look forward to the increase in accountability for such performance to Parliament this should bring. We recommend the Government clarifies which minister has overall responsibility for this agenda—preferably a senior cabinet minister. We also recommend the Government indicates how performance against these objectives will be reflected in terms of career rewards and prospects. (Paragraph 65)

Government accepts this recommendation. The lead Minister for this work was appointed in August and is the Cabinet Office Parliamentary Secretary, Tom Watson. This Minister is also the Minister responsible for the delivery of the Greening Government ICT programme, ensuring that these two key initiatives benefit from a single point of leadership in driving the necessary change.

The Cabinet Secretary has made the delivery of the government's commitments on sustainable procurement and operations one of the four corporate priorities for the civil service, ensuring it remains a key agenda. Each Permanent Secretary has a performance

objective relating to their department's delivery, and CESP will support the process of evaluating this performance.

24. We hope that these new personal responsibilities for sustainability will also provide a mechanism for encouraging senior civil servants to treat their departments' sustainable development action plans (SDAPs) seriously, and see to it that departmental policy is more consistent with sustainability objectives. In the future we may choose to review, department by department, the extent to which SDAPs are being integrated into departmental policies and activities. (Paragraph 66)

Government agrees that it is important that departments consider sustainability in all aspects of their policies and activities and the SDAP process plays a key role in helping departments to identify opportunities and areas which need to be addressed. The process is well established, with departments updating the SDAP regularly. The SDC is invited to review and comment on departments' SDAPs and provides valuable feedback.

25. Beyond the senior civil service, personal responsibility for sustainability issues must be increased at all levels. This will require more training and incentives. The evidence we have received highlights the important role that operational staff in procurement and facilities teams have to play. We recommend that OGC works with civil service unions to ensure that staff are trained, motivated, and empowered to take a leading role in mainstreaming sustainability in Government operations. (Paragraph 69)

Government accepts this recommendation. CESP officials have met with representatives of the Civil Service Trade Union Side and will continue to work with them to address both training and capacity issues, and promote general awareness of sustainability issues.

The existing practitioners' forum will form a key part of the delivery of sustainability. It provides an opportunity for operational staff from estates management and procurement to meet and discuss challenges and share best practice; the most recent events included a conference of over 100 practitioners from central and local government and a practitioner forum of over 20 procurement and operations professional from central government. Working with this stakeholder forum, and other key bodies, including the National School of Government and the civil service trade unions, the CESP is developing a programme of work to address training and capability needs for the next three year within the civil service, ensuring staff are equipped with the skills and support they need to deliver this agenda.

26. The sixth annual SDiG report reveals, behind the figures, very poor progress in tackling carbon emissions from the majority of departments. The Government response has announced many promising reforms; that there was a Government response to the SDC for the first time was itself a big step in the right direction. What is crucial now is that departments make good on this promise by adding detail to these plans and accelerating progress in tackling carbon emissions and increasing on-site and district renewables. In particular, rapid progress needs to be made on reducing demand for electricity, and increasing on-site and district generation of electricity from low and no-carbon sources. (Paragraph 70)

The Government accepts this recommendation. The Government's response to the 6th annual SDiG report highlighted examples of good practice which had taken place since the

period covered by the SDC's report. This was developed further by the publication of the Delivery Plan, a key next step for departments in setting out their plans to reduce carbon emissions. The majority of these plans focus on reducing demand for energy on the estate, through behaviour change, the use of more technologies to reduce demand such as voltage optimisation, and estate rationalisation.

The delivery of these plans will be supported by the CESP and also the programme of collaborative procurement for energy, sponsored by the Ministry of Defence and supported by the OGC collaborative procurement team. The programme seeks to deliver both value for money and sustainability benefits through the implementation of a collaborative strategy for energy procurement; a key element of this is to manage the demand for energy, reducing the volumes required by public sector bodies. This work includes the letting of the IT power management software framework, a joint exercise with DCMS, and future work to provide access to Automatic Meter Reading Equipment and a potential framework for voltage optimisation services.

October 2008

Appendix 2: Sustainable Development Commission response

The Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) welcomes the Environmental Audit Committee's (EAC) report—*Making Government Operations More Sustainable: a progress report*. Such reviews are a vital part of holding government to account and ensuring that the commitments towards sustainable development are met.

Several recommendations and conclusions are made in the EAC's report. Three of these pertain to the SDC; these are:

19. Considering the significant nature of the Government's response to this year's SDiG report, we agree that the Sustainable Development Commission is playing a significant role in stimulating Government to improve its performance. (Paragraph 57)

20. At the same time, we recommend that the SDC reviews whether its presentation of performance in the annual SDiG reports could be made more straightforward, including—where necessary—being more critical. (Paragraph 58)

21. We recommend that the SDC looks again at its practice of simply reporting the data as given to it by departments. Currently, where it has reservations about the figures, it only expresses these in separate commentary sections. For example, the SDC's press release on the recent SDiG report stated that "overall carbon emissions from offices have fallen by 4% since 1999", despite the fact that this figure had been discredited elsewhere in the report. (Paragraph 59)

The SDC also welcomes these comments and will consider the EAC's recommendations in all future reporting and other work programmes.

In particular, the SDC is pleased that the Committee has commented on our role stimulating improvements. The SDC will continue to push government for further and bigger improvements through our watchdog function. At the same time, we also strive to offer support and advice through our advisory and capability building functions. Striking a balance between these roles in our role as government's "critical friend" is essential to our success.

We will therefore continue to support and advise the new Centre of Expertise in Sustainable Procurement (CESP) in the Office of Government Commerce (OGC). Over the past 6 months, we have been working closely with CESP and the rest of government to improve the process for reporting on operations and procurement. For example, we are currently working toward handing back ownership of the data to government for the next reporting. This was begun this year by using the OGC's e-PIMS database as the platform for data collection. It is important that responsibility for ensuring the data is as accurate as possible rests with government.

As a part of this transition we will be developing the understanding of roles with CESP and with Defra over the coming months. Ultimately the aim for all organisations involved is to improve the quality of data reporting and in turn further improve performance.

The SDC will also work closely with the EAC to ensure the Committee is fully up to date with the development around this agenda and other initiatives. Specifically, we are currently discussing reporting options for this year's Sustainable Development in Government (SDiG) report internally. However, once we have developed our thoughts we write to the Committee outlining our intentions and seek feedback.

October 2008

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2007–08

First Report	Are biofuels sustainable?	HC 76-I & -II (HC 528)
Second Report	Reducing Carbon Emissions from UK Business: The Role of the Climate Change Levy and Agreements	HC 354 (HC 590)
Third Report	The 2007 Pre-Budget Report and Comprehensive Spending Review: An environmental analysis	HC 149-I & -II (HC 591)
Fourth Report	Are Biofuels Sustainable? The Government Response	HC 528 (HC 644)
Fifth Report	Personal Carbon Trading	HC 565 (HC 1125)
Sixth Report	Reaching an international agreement on climate change	HC 355 (HC 1055)
Seventh Report	Making Government operations more sustainable: A progress report	HC 529
Eighth Report	Climate change and local, regional and devolved government	HC 225 (HC 1189)
Ninth Report	Carbon capture and storage	HC 654
Tenth Report	Vehicle Excise Duty	HC 907
Eleventh Report	The Exports Credit Guarantee Department and Sustainable Development	HC 929
Twelfth Report	Greener homes for the future? An environmental analysis of the Government's house-building plans	HC 566
Thirteenth Report	Halting biodiversity loss	HC 743

Session 2006–07

First Report	The UN Millennium Ecosystem Assessment	HC 77 (HC 848)
Second Report	The EU Emissions Trading Scheme: Lessons for the Future	HC 70 (HC 1072)
Third Report	Regulatory Impact Assessments and Policy Appraisal	HC 353 (HC 849)
Fourth Report	Pre-Budget 2006 and the Stern Review	HC 227 (HC 739)
Fifth Report	Trade, Development and Environment: The Role of FCO	HC 289 (HC 1046)
Sixth Report	Voluntary Carbon Offset Market	HC 331 (HC 418)
Seventh Report	Beyond Stern: From the Climate Change Programme Review to the Draft Climate Change Bill	HC 460 (HC 1110)
Eighth Report	Emissions Trading: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report of Session 2006–07 on the EU ETS	HC 1072
Ninth Report	The Structure of Government and the challenge of climate change	HC 740 (HC 276)

Session 2005–06

First Report	Greening Government: the 2004 Sustainable Development in Government Report	HC 698
Second Report	Sustainable Timber	HC 607 (HC 1078)
Third Report	Sustainable Procurement: the Way Forward	HC 740
Fourth Report	Pre-Budget 2005: Tax, economic analysis, and climate change	HC 882 (HC 195)
Fifth Report	Sustainable Housing: A follow-up report	HC 779
Sixth Report	Keeping the lights on: Nuclear, Renewables, and Climate Change	HC 584 (HC 196)
Seventh Report	Sustainable Development Reporting by Government Departments	HC 1322 (HC 1681)
Eighth Report	Proposals for a draft Marine Bill	HC 1323 (HC 1682)
Ninth Report	Reducing Carbon Emissions from Transport	HC 981
Tenth Report	Trade, Development and Environment: The Role of DFID	HC 1014 (HC 197)
Eleventh Report	Outflanked: The World Trade Organisation, International Trade and Sustainable Development	HC 1455 (HC 354)
Twelfth Report	Transport Emissions: Government Response to the Committee's Ninth Report of Session 2005–06 on Reducing Carbon Emissions from Transport	HC 1718