



Department for Environment  
Food and Rural Affairs



## Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

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### SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS CONSULTATION

- A new set of indicators of sustainable development are proposed in a Defra-led Government consultation, and responses are invited from today until 15 October 2012.
- The indicators are intended to provide an overview of national progress on key issues that are important economically, socially and environmentally in the long term.
- They are intended to complement the National Wellbeing Measures published today by the Office for National Statistics.
- Twelve headline indicators are proposed:

Economy	Society	Environment
economic prosperity	healthy life expectancy	greenhouse gas emissions
long term unemployment	social capital	natural resource use
poverty	social mobility in adulthood	wildlife and biodiversity
knowledge and skills	housing provision	water availability

along with 25 supplementary indicators.

- The consultation document can be found at:  
[www.defra.gov.uk/consult/open/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/consult/open/)

Updates on the indicators will be published annually with a scorecard showing whether progress is in the right direction. Sustainable Development Indicators have been also widely used outside of Government by academics, non-Governmental Organisations and businesses. This consultation will give stakeholders the opportunity to comment on the choice and coverage of a new set.

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**Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**  
Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR

Public enquiries: 08459 335577 or Press enquiries: 020 7238 6146  
Public enquiries & user feedback: email: [sd.scene@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:sd.scene@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

Website: [Sustainable Development in Government](#)

## Main notes

1. The consultation on the new Sustainable Development Indicators can be found on the Defra website here: [www.defra.gov.uk/consult/open/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/consult/open/) and via <http://sd.defra.gov.uk/new-sd-indicators/>.
2. The first set of sustainable development indicators was published in 1996, followed by revised sets in 1999 and 2005.
3. A National Statistics compendium 'Sustainable Development Indicators in Your Pocket', presenting charts, commentary and assessments for the previous set of indicators, was published annually by Defra from 2005 to 2010.<sup>1,2</sup>
4. Sustainable development recognises that the three 'pillars' of the economy, society and the environment are interconnected. A commonly used definition is ensuring that our development *meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*<sup>3</sup>
5. The Government's vision for 'mainstreaming sustainable development'<sup>4</sup> was published in 2011. It included a commitment to develop a new set of sustainable development indicators, and the consultation document is a key step to meeting that commitment.
6. An earlier consultation<sup>5</sup> sought stakeholder views on the 68 indicators<sup>6</sup> reported on from 2005 to 2010, and the results have fed into the new set proposed.
7. The proposed indicators represent a rationalisation of the indicators to reflect emerging issues, the development of National Wellbeing Measures by the Office for National Statistics, and to reduce the number in order to make the indicators more manageable and simpler to interpret.
8. Defra and ONS are working together to develop the sustainable development indicators and measures of national wellbeing to ensure they are complementary.
9. The proposed indicators are not binding on the other countries in the UK, which have their own approaches to Sustainable Development.
10. The ONS measures of national wellbeing are available here:  
<http://ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/wellbeing/measuring-national-well-being/summary-of-proposed-domains-and-measures/summary-of-proposed-domains-and-measures-of-national-well-being.html#tab-abstract>

### A Defra National Statistics publication

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Responsible Defra statistician: Stephen Hall

<sup>1</sup> <http://sd.defra.gov.uk/progress/national/annual-review/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://sd.defra.gov.uk/progress/national/annual-review/archive/>

<sup>3</sup> [www.un-documents.net/ocf-02.htm](http://www.un-documents.net/ocf-02.htm)

<sup>4</sup> <http://sd.defra.gov.uk/gov/approach/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://sd.defra.gov.uk/2012/01/developing-new-indicators-survey-results/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://sd.defra.gov.uk/progress/national/>