



Highways Agency Sustainable development guide 2012 - 2015

Positive about the future





Introduction

In the Highways Agency we recognise the important role we play in helping to move society towards a low carbon sustainable future. We have a key role in supporting economic recovery as our strategic road network carries a third of all vehicle traffic and two thirds of all freight journeys in England. Our network is also an integral part of our national way of life facilitating links between communities and to leisure, cultural and spiritual centres. But we are mindful of the need to manage negative aspects on the environment or the health and well being of people who live near our network.

This is why over the years we have pursued a positive approach to sustainable development. The evolution of our approach may be traced through four annual sustainable development action plans between 2007 and 2011. These plans have contributed to a shared

understanding in the Agency and its supply chain of the importance of sustainability and, on a practical level, have delivered 105 actions which have contributed to our increasingly sustainable approach.

By mainstreaming sustainable development we are shifting the emphasis from managing impacts to making sustainability central to the future direction and decision making of the Agency. Consequently, our sustainable development plan and this guide will provide the underlying set of principles against which specific actions can be taken to mainstream sustainable development.

The purpose of this guide is to give a more detailed description of our principles to help our staff and suppliers to mainstream sustainability. The guide includes links to case studies to highlight good practice and behaviours that contribute to our sustainable approach.

Highways Agency executive board

Our sustainable development plan runs parallel to our strategic plan until 2015 and is central to our vision to be the 'world's leading road operator'. Our core values 'delivering a professional and affordable service through innovation and partnership working', are an integral part of this plan and will drive its delivery.



Graham Dalton,
Chief Executive.



Derek Turner,
Network Delivery
and Development



Ginny Clarke,
Network Services.



Simon Sheldon-Wilson
Traffic Management



Peter Adams,
Major Projects.



Stephen Dauncey,
Finance and
Business Services.

Contents



Highways Agency sustainable development guide 2012-2015

Our approach to sustainable development	4
A sustainable Highways Agency	5
Taking ownership – to be recognised as a leading organisation for our sustainable approach	6
Adding value - maximise economic benefits while also delivering enhanced social and environmental outcomes	7
Managing our impacts - be a low footprint organisation, both in the services we deliver and in our workplace behaviours	8
Working with society	9
Strong working partnerships - agree common sustainability goals with major suppliers	10
Understanding wider impacts – make positive impacts on quality of life for those using our network and those affected by it	11
Responsive processes and standards – to deliver sustainable and equitable outcomes	12
Future challenges	13
Adapting for change - ensure our network, and buildings estate, is resilient to environmental and societal changes	14
Continuous improvement - continuously improve the economic, environmental and social outcomes that our services deliver	15
Innovation - make Innovation integral to everything we do in search of sustainable solutions	16



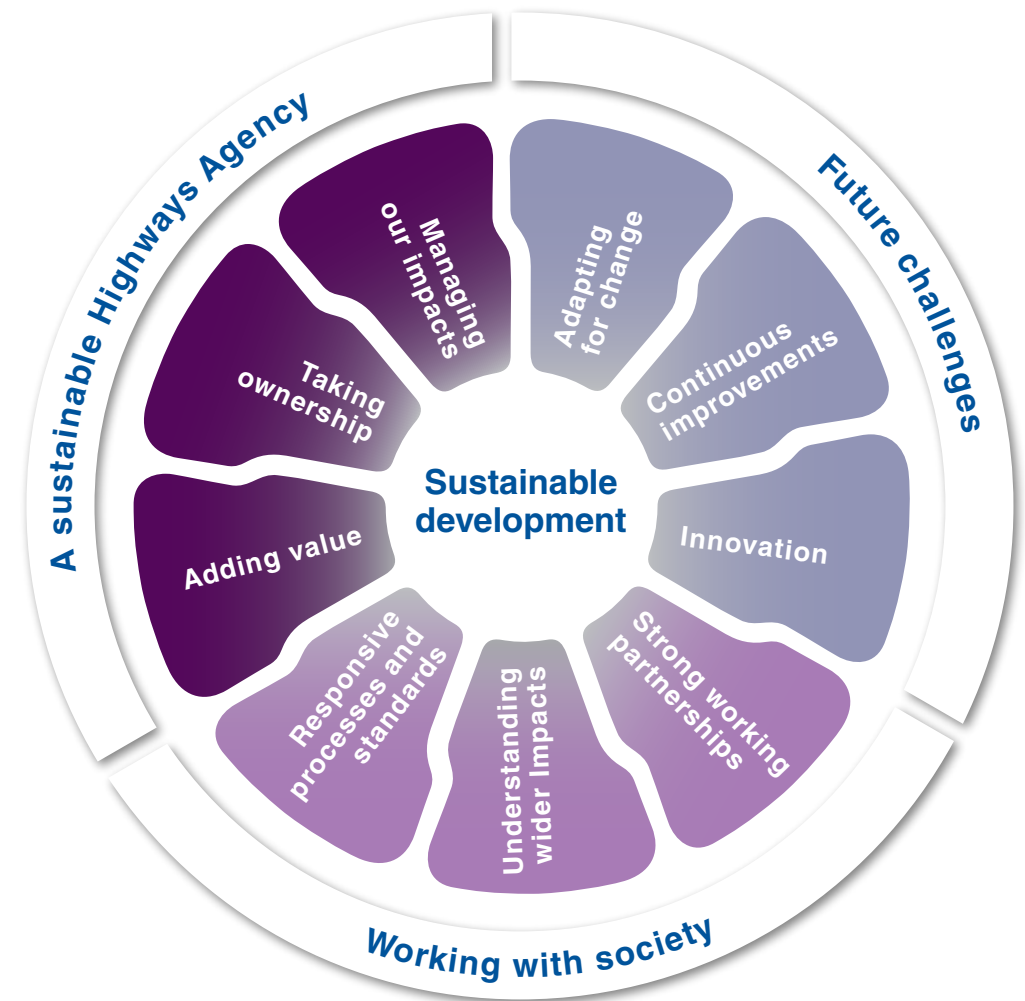
Our approach to sustainable development

We take a longer term perspective to support our [strategic plan](#) and vision to be the ‘world’s leading road operator’. This means operating the strategic road network sustainably as part of a national transport system. We also support the Government’s vision of [mainstreaming sustainable development](#).

Despite our progress, there is still a tendency to see sustainability as a separate issue sitting apart from the core business. This guide provides supporting information to our sustainable development plan. We want to integrate sustainability into our business and our suppliers.

To do this we should consider:

- How the Agency adds the most value from this approach.
- How the Agency works with stakeholders to achieve delivery of our objectives.
- How the Agency meets today’s needs and future challenges.





A sustainable Highways Agency

Mainstreaming sustainability is everyone's business, in both the Agency and our supply chain. Sustainability is not optional. It is central to our programmes, projects and day jobs - a key part of our decision making and delivery.

“Operating our network more effectively lies at the heart of greater sustainability. Our road network must function smoothly to support national economic recovery, we must meet the diverse needs of all our customers to promote national well being, and we must continue to develop our sustainable approach.

“We will choose the right solutions at the right locations, which are deliverable, affordable and provide value for money.”

[*The Highways Agency's Strategic Plan 2010 -15*](#)

From the start of anything we do, we should first ensure that we are satisfied that the intervention is needed at all. If it is make sure we have the lowest possible impact on the environment and society and

where possible make positive improvements to well being and quality of life. The early stages of projects are often when key choices regarding function, design, use of materials and impacts on the end user are made - we need to ensure that sustainability is integral from this stage onwards.

There are three performance aspects that underpin the principle to be a sustainable Highways Agency:

Taking ownership

Be recognised as a leading organisation for our sustainable approach.

Adding value

Maximise economic benefits while also delivering enhanced social and environmental outcomes.

Managing our impacts

Be a low footprint organisation, both in the services we deliver and in our workplace behaviours.

Taking ownership – to be recognised as a leading organisation for our sustainable approach.



Highways Agency sustainable development guide 2012-2015

Everyone has a part to play in working towards a more sustainable future. We all contribute to delivering a world class road network, whether from an office, on site or in the day to day operation of our network. As individuals we should use our skills, experience and knowledge to create solutions which are socially and environmentally responsible and deliver the service our customers need.

- Sustainability needs to be:
 - Embedded as part of our corporate culture.
 - Become a theme running through our higher level [strategic](#) and planning documents.
 - Form an integral part of our corporate governance and performance reporting arrangements.
- Our ambitions and priorities need to be clearly communicated across the Agency and with our principal stakeholders. A common understanding with our suppliers is important to ensure their alignment with the Agency's corporate priorities.
- We want to be seen as a public sector leader in sustainability to encourage our suppliers to adopt the same principles.
- Our approach to [procurement](#) is one of our most significant tools in encouraging sustainable behaviour in the wider highways community. We will embed the Government Buying Standards into our contracts and use the Flexible Framework for procurement to drive sustainability performance.

As well as mainstreaming sustainability into our corporate culture and individual behaviours we are aware that the challenge of sustainability requires strong leadership and organisation. We need to develop our capability in sustainable development at all management levels to facilitate this. We encourage development of a diverse workforce, support its well being and expect our suppliers to do the same. The Agency and our partners need to encourage a culture that is ready to challenge conventional thinking and to seek out better ways to deliver robust solutions. Everyone should consider being an advocate or champion for sustainability using their commitment to influence suppliers and colleagues to adopt ever more efficient and responsible methods of working.

On an individual or local level each of us can take ownership of our own impacts, as simple measures can collectively make a big difference (ie using less energy or less paper can collectively make a large difference and are within our individual control). Each of us can do as little or as much as we like to contribute to a sustainable future. We can all make a difference if we take ownership of our impacts.

Adding value – maximise economic benefits while also delivering enhanced social and environmental outcomes



Highways Agency sustainable development guide 2012-2015

We need to be mindful of our responsibility for the prudent management of public funds, ensuring we are efficient in our use of resource and that our necessary activities represent value for money. Therefore it is important to make decisions on investments which offer the best outcomes in terms of whole life value, (in full recognition of present needs and the need to control costs).

- Actions we take to reduce congestion and to improve [journey time reliability](#) are an essential part of supporting the economy and also the environment and quality of life.
- We constantly strive to reduce the number of deaths and serious injuries on our network.
- Our [managing down costs toolkit](#) enables the sustainability impact of the approach to be assessed alongside cost savings to maximise benefits.
- Adopting sustainable and Lean processes will ensure we can add value in the present and for the future, delivering both economic and environmental gains (such as by improving energy and resource efficiency). We will examine our value management processes to ensure they promote sustainable outcomes.
- We use project appraisal tools such as [WebTAG](#) to understand how to maximise social, economic and environmental benefits.

A prosperous and fair economy is a vitally important part of the overarching concept of sustainability. This sits comfortably with short term economic pressures and the imperative this brings to work smarter can be a spur to innovation and reduced consumption of scarce resources. For each of us it will be important to take a broad view of our decisions as the infrastructure we provide and manage provides us and others with great opportunities for long term value creation.

By using the immense skills base within the Agency and our supply chain we can achieve sustainable outcomes within the constraints of cost reductions. When we think of growth we need to be clear that the goal we seek is a growth in prosperity for all, which is not the same as growth in consumption of materials and energy.

Managing our impacts – be a low footprint organisation, both in the services we deliver and in our workplace behaviours.



Highways Agency sustainable development guide 2012-2015

We need to work towards becoming a low footprint organisation and to lead by example. This includes how we run our buildings, [procure](#) equipment and resources and travel as part of our business. It also encompasses how our [diversity and equality](#) plans are applied, and how we work with suppliers to ensure they adopt [safe working practices](#) in delivering our services.

Being a low footprint organisation (or individual) really boils down to the following key points:

- Maximise energy conservation and energy efficiency.
- Reduce use of natural resources.
- Think about the whole life of the materials we use and the products we produce; aiming to eliminate waste.
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions across all activities which we can influence. No activity is too large or small to be included in this.
- Designing to take less from the natural environment and returns biological resources to the earth.
- Travel as little as possible and use our position to persuade others to think critically about their travel choices.

Some of this will take time but we are already taking positive steps towards becoming a low footprint organisation. Our new plan focuses on:

- Playing our part in delivering the [Greening Government commitments](#) and continuing to drive down our emissions, resource use and waste generation.
- We will focus on our supply chain's impacts specifically for carbon, water and waste, setting baselines from which to reduce impacts.
- Government buying standards will be embedded in our centralised contracts which will drive lower impacts from delivery of work.
- We will identify principal sources of key material used by our suppliers and work to reduce our dependence on non-renewable resources.
- The Traffic Officer Service will look to use progressively more efficient vehicles at each lease renewal in an effort to lower the carbon footprint and deliver a modern, efficient traffic management service.

Individually we can all take positive steps to support the Agency's drive to be a low footprint organisation. Many personal steps we can take are set out on the [Estates sustainability](#) pages of the portal for the Agency and in relevant areas of suppliers intranets. Much of this positive behaviour is readily transferrable to our lives outside of work. Good advice is available on reducing our footprints both at home and work through a websites such as the [energy savings trust](#), and [WRAP](#).



Working with society

The need to address major issues such as climate change, congestion and the environmental impacts of roads is collectively 'owned' by many different stakeholders. The solutions will only come from shared understanding, integrated planning and co-operative working.

To contribute to a fair society and play our part in enabling equality of opportunity, we will ensure our planning and decision making addresses the needs of:

- Road users.
- Communities (and their environment).
- People who work for us (staff and our suppliers).
- The requirements of the public sector equality duty.

To achieve this we remain committed to listening and responding to our customers to help improve the network. Please see the [customer centre](#) pages on our website to learn more.

“Our customer base is large and diverse. About four million customers use our network every day, relying on our roads to arrive at work, to have goods delivered to their front doors and their local supermarket, or for visiting friends and relatives, and travelling to holiday destinations.

“We will challenge complacency about road safety, by encouraging our road users to make positive safety choices for themselves and others, and adopting a vision of zero tolerance to incidents involving our staff and our contractors”.

[The Highways Agency's Strategic Plan 2010 -15](#)

The working with society principle is underpinned by three performance aspects which contribute to how we interact and work with society:

Strong working partnerships

Agree common sustainability goals with major suppliers.

Understanding wider impacts

Make positive impacts on quality of life for those using our network and those affected by it.

Responsive processes and standards

To deliver sustainable and equitable outcomes.

Strong working partnerships – agree common sustainability goals with major suppliers.



Highways Agency sustainable development guide 2012-2015

Working collaboratively is important to the Agency. Some 95 percent of our work is delivered by third parties, therefore it is vital that we continue to agree and communicate priorities with our supply chain. Sustainability is a central aim of our procurement strategy alongside value for money and delivery, and we are actively encouraging best practice and innovation to fulfil these aims.

Strong working partnership means that we:

- Work closely with our suppliers to ensure their alignment with our strategic priorities and encourage all levels of the supply chain to embrace our approach to sustainability.
- Develop and maintain partnerships with organisations with an interest in the strategic road network.
- Develop flexible local partnerships to benefit communities, road safety and the environment.
- Work closely with the Department for Transport, its agencies and other government departments to deliver our contribution to government policies and help raise the profile of sustainability.
- Engage with local communities neighbouring our network and ensure they play a full part in decisions that may affect their area.
- Maintain effective working arrangements with local authorities and the emergency services across a range of common areas of interest.

This is not new for the Agency and we already embrace partnership working in many areas of our work. The focus in our sustainable development plan is on developing this further in the following ways:

- To build on our reputation as a leading client, and be recognised for leading sustainability performance along with our suppliers.
- Through the Strategic Alignment Review Toolkit (StART) we aim to understand our major suppliers' level of alignment with our strategic view of sustainability.
- Our working partnerships go beyond our direct relationship with suppliers and encompass a range of stakeholders. We have [memoranda of understanding](#) (MoU) with many external organisations and these are important in understanding priorities and achieving common aims.
- While the Agency has primary responsibility for safety on our own network there are clear interactions with other authorities and specialist groups which contribute to a safer road network. Our Safety Framework outlines our relationships with the many partner organisations that we work with to achieve our safety goals.

We should build on our already strong track record in community consultation and engagement. We need to see local communities as full partners, and understand their relationship with our network. This means working closely at the neighbourhood level throughout planning, design, construction and operation and working to ensure that any negative impacts do not fall disproportionately on vulnerable members of society. We use appraisal advice on the [social and distributional impacts](#) of transport interventions to enable us to make informed decisions on interventions that impact on communities.

Understanding wider impacts – make positive impacts on quality of life for those using our network and those affected by it.

Our network operates across communities and their environments. We aim to deliver national road transport needs and contribute to national well being, but there are other consequent impacts on quality of life. We will strive to make positive impacts for those using our network and those affected by it.

- We are committed to fairness and equality in delivering our services by making sure that when we make decisions we understand the effects of our policies and practices on diverse groups of people, and that in our day to day work we consider how we can promote equality, eliminate discrimination and foster good relations between different groups in society.
- Road safety is one of our highest priorities and we work with partners striving to make our network the safest in the world.
- The Agency's need to protect and enhance the environment is considered at all levels of our operations. The Agency's environment strategy provides the focus for this. This supports the national commitment to 'strengthen the connections between people and nature to the benefit of both' which is the focus of the Natural Environment White Paper.
- We understand our dependence on the services that nature provides and on the close relationship our network has with the environment. We can have a key role to play in building connections that support landscape scale improvements to ecosystems and bio diversity. In the right circumstances our soft estate can work as a 'green corridor' connecting species and habitats.

- Noise and air pollution from our network can adversely affect the quality of life and health of people in neighbouring communities and we have processes to identify and where possible reduce these effects
- Road transport is a significant contributor of greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change so reducing the carbon impacts of our network in operation is a major challenge that requires input from a wide range of stakeholders.
- Our traffic officer service plays a vital role in both keeping traffic flowing while also helping people who are in difficulties on our network.

We should all recognise the need to reduce our use of scarce resources and to look for more efficient ways of working. Lean approaches should become standard practice and we should all commit to a culture of continuous improvement.

Responsive processes and standards – to deliver sustainable and equitable outcomes.

Processes and standards are a major influence on our work, defining how roads are planned, designed, built and maintained. Our key processes for procurement, major projects and asset management determine how we approach our work where much of our sustainability impact is realised.

Over time we will need to review all of our major processes to ensure they set the standard for sustainability. In doing so we will seek to engage fully with our delivery stakeholders to ensure that we are aligned. We should continue to look wider in terms of best practice knowledge sharing, within both our sector and across others to ensure our approach to sustainability represents best practice as far as is practical.

The Highways Agency has the role of delivery partner to sustainable development promoted through the plan-led system. It is a key statutory consultee to all stages of the planning process, having a legal duty to co-operate in the preparation of local authority development plans and in the determination of individual planning applications that involve some interaction with or impact on the strategic road network. The Agency's input must be substantive in nature.

The national planning policy framework (NPPF) requires that the transport impacts of development proposals be addressed in a sustainable manner. To this end the Agency works with local authorities, developers and other interested parties to ensure that every opportunity is taken to minimize the need for travel and to maximise the proportion of trips made by sustainable transport options such as walking, cycling and the use of public transport. Capacity enhancement of the strategic road network for the purpose of accommodating development will be a very rare exception to this rule.

Specifically we are working to:

- Ensure contracts and specification clearly communicate our social and environmental expectations.
- Embed sustainability and equality into all key decision making processes.
- Continually improve our processes for delivering road safety improvements.
- Investigate options for a new sustainable approach to pavement construction and maintenance.
- Modernise our technical advice in respect of the water environment in response to UK and EU legislative requirements.
- Ensure we provide the reliable information to road users in accessible formats and at the time they need it.
- We currently are working with the Department of Transport on a revision of its policy for the Agency's interaction with the planning system, which will emphasise the need to deliver growth whilst at the same time achieving sustainable transport outcomes.



Future challenges

This strategic principle is concerned with how the Agency can look forward to proactively anticipate, plan for and respond to current and future challenges. We recognise that when dealing with tangible and immediate pressures on the road network, we must ensure our actions do not adversely affect the ability of future generations to enjoy a good quality of life. We also need to maintain awareness of changes in society and environmental challenges such as climate change.

“Roads are deeply embedded within the culture of the nation, and critical to the functioning of our society. Our world is changing and we must equip our network to operate dynamically to adjust to whatever future lies ahead.

“We will sustain the long term integrity and accessibility of our roads through effective management of a flexible, yet ageing asset.”

The Highways Agency's Strategic Plan 2010 -15.

This principle is underpinned by three performance aspects that all contribute to how we manage our approach to future challenges:

Adapting for change

Ensure our network and building estate are resilient to environmental and societal changes.

Continuous improvement

Continuously improve the economic, environmental and social outcomes that our services deliver.

Innovation

Make innovation integral to everything we do in search of sustainable solutions.

Adapting for change – ensure our network, and buildings estate, is resilient to environmental and societal changes.



Highways Agency sustainable development guide 2012-2015

We have to continually adapt to environmental and societal changes that affect our network by identifying impacts and refining our approach, both as we plan ahead and in real time. We aim through this approach to place sustainability at the centre of decision making and we will need to develop our capability to meet the challenge. It's not just about responding to change, the Agency can also provide a positive role in facilitating change.

We have to be aware that sometimes major change can occur suddenly and require a rapid response. We need to ensure that our structure and working practices are flexible and capable of adapting to a rapidly changing environment. However, there are a number of changes that can be foreseen and planned for (even if doubt and uncertainty surround the actual consequences of these changes). Potential changes that we know we need to prepare for are:

- The effects of climate change on our network and its relationship with society at large.
- A growing and ageing population is likely to bring new pressures on the network and different needs of road users.
- Water stress in parts of the country linked both to climate change and to growing consumption is likely to be a challenge for us in the future.
- Increasing scarcity of resources needed to maintain and operate our network will be a spur to finding different solutions.
- Energy security is a potential challenge for the country as a whole and consequently for our operation of the network.

Of all these concerns climate change is regarded as the most significant challenge we face. We have already recognised the need to adapt so we are working to ensure our network is resilient to the predicted effects. This is one of the priority areas we are focusing on over the period of this sustainable development plan.

Others are:

- Working with highway sector partners to build staff capability both to be able to adapt to changing circumstances and to become catalysts and drivers for change to generate sustainable outcomes.
- Working towards a strategy for natural resource management that recognises the stresses of dependence on finite resources.
- Implementing a safety framework to facilitate change to new ways of operating the network.
- Planning and testing business continuity plans to ensure resilience of our organisation to unplanned events.
- Making a contribution to coherent ecological networks through management of our soft estate; the natural part of the highway estate including cultural heritage and landscaping elements.

Continuous improvement – continuously improve the economic, environmental and social outcomes that our services deliver.



Highways Agency sustainable development guide 2012-2015

A clear understanding of our performance is fundamental to meeting our aims and objectives and to continually improve. In measuring our performance we will see how our services are delivering real benefits by maximising our effectiveness and reducing negative impacts. Through our Lean team we are working to embed a continuous improvement culture where staff seek to improve efficiency in a consistent manner and are properly empowered to make this happen. This kind of thinking is important in a wider sustainability context too. Each of us has a responsibility to contribute to continuous improvement by challenging existing processes where they are inefficient or wasteful.

Through mainstreaming sustainability we all have a responsibility to ensure that strategies and policies translate into practice and delivery on the ground. Personal sustainability performance will be recognised both internally through the 'You Make it Happen awards' and through our supplier recognition scheme. Over time sustainability will increasingly be embedded as a core theme within personal development.

Our primary focus for the period of this plan is on:

- Driving down carbon emissions from our operations, reducing waste and managing our use of natural resources.
- Improving the reliability of journey times and also the quality and timeliness of information we give to the travelling public.
- Prioritising the health, safety and well being of all staff who work for us and progressively improving our delivery of our equality duty.
- Continuously improving our processes to ensure sustainable and lean principles are embedded throughout.

Innovation – make innovation integral to everything we do in search of sustainable solutions.



Highways Agency sustainable development guide 2012-2015

Innovation is central to a sustainable approach and the Agency has a strong track record here. Resource and cost constraints, rising energy prices and technological advances lead us to continually look for more efficient and effective ways of working, either through incremental changes to our processes or major changes away from conventional practices. Significant gains for sustainability can be achieved by good and efficient engineering solutions, especially where those solutions make informed choices about materials and their whole life performance. We seek to ensure that construction; operation and decommissioning causes no harm to human health or the environment and leaves no waste.

- We aim to be recognised as a leading organisation for promoting innovation to deliver our services.
- We encourage our suppliers to propose innovative and sustainable solutions.
- There are a number of ways in which innovative solutions may be generated and shared with and between our supply chain. These include our major projects knowledge sharing project and the Agency's knowledge programme of research and development.
- We are at the forefront of implementing innovative intelligent transport systems and will be working to build upon this reputation.
- We want a resilient network that is responsive to environmental, social and demographic changes.

Our supply chain faces many commercial and logistical challenges which drive innovation. We should therefore engage with and motivate contractors to ensure they deliver our requirements sustainably. We want to champion knowledge sharing both within the organisation and from outside and will be continuing to adopt various methods to identify, develop and communicate new ideas.

Our standards need to express a clear commitment to sustainability so this can be factored into design and encourage innovation by adopting a controlled but flexible approach to approving departures from standards, especially those that have a demonstrable environmental or quality of life benefit.

We should all be prepared to (and feel enabled to) challenge existing processes where an alternative approach can be shown to bring benefits such as cost savings, environmental or social benefits.

If you need help using this or any other Highways Agency information, please call **0300 123 5000** and we will assist you.

© Crown copyright 2013.

You may re-use this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/> or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This document is also available on our website at www.highways.gov.uk

If you have any about this publication please email ha_info@highways.gsi.gov.uk or call **0300 123 5000**
Please quote this HA Publications code: **PR20/12**

Highways Agency media services Bedford S120560

