

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Strategic Asset Management Plan

Executive Summary

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is a ministerial department supported by 33 agencies and public bodies (Defra group). The Defra group's purpose is to unleash the economic potential of food, farming, nature and the countryside. To do this, we are committed to championing the environment and providing security against environmental hazards, including animal and plant diseases and floods.

Striving to continually improve our delivery and customer service, within the challenging environments of EU exit and further budgetary constraints, makes organisational transformation increasingly important. By developing our understanding of our customers' needs and how we operate across the entire Defra group, we have identified opportunities to improve our service to customers, whilst reducing costs. This new, modernised approach to delivery has become our Target Operating Model; a document which describes how we should operate and why.

The Defra group has a diverse estate which includes offices, laboratories, farmland and nature reserves. Our unique operations require us to be strategically located close to customers and operational areas, and often away from city centre locations. In 2015, across our network of organisations, we occupied 147 offices (excluding depots, land, yards and other 'non-office' sites). We have since exited or disposed of 32 offices and acquired 21. We expect to have exited, or disposed of, a total of 23 properties by 2020/21 and we are continuing to explore opportunities to rationalise our estate, particularly through co-location into government hubs.

Opportunities for co-location and collaboration have been further explored via the One Public Estate (OPE) programme, resulting in our Worcestershire site being released for commercial development and Defra group staff transitioning to Worcestershire's County Council building in 2016. Our efforts to co-locate similarly support our commitment as an organisation to release surplus land for housing developments. Our aspiration is to facilitate the development of 400 homes by 2020; a target we are progressing against, having realised £36.8million in capital receipts from land disposal as at the end of quarter 1 of 2017/18. We are, therefore, on track to achieve our SR15 disposals target.

Our asset management objectives extend into an ambitious programme of 41 property projects that will deliver £17.9million through future property cost reductions, alongside generating £17.8million in capital receipts by capitalising on lease end and break opportunities, which will enable estate consolidations across the Defra group.

A key factor in our ability to consolidate our estate and generate savings for the taxpayer is – and will increasingly be – because of our capacity to evolve as an organisation. The Defra group has already initiated a range of ‘smart working’ practices that have contributed to the flexibility needed to achieve a 10m² per FTE target. We are developing a Smart Working Strategy and implementation programme across the entire network of organisations and estates within our diverse and complex network of agencies and bodies. This programme will – through cultural transformation and reconfiguring working practices, physical environments and behaviours – support our goal of achieving 8.4 m² per FTE, which is due to be reached by the end of 2020. Our strategy and the programme that will deliver it, is committed to improving the wellbeing of our staff, through enhancing the work-life balance, engagement and productivity of our most valuable assets; our people. In turn, we hope to create an attractive organisation that allows us to access and retain the talent needed to ensure we deliver for our customers and the country.

Throughout our efforts across strategic asset management, we remain committed to meeting our SR15 expectations, which entails Defra Corporate Property teams ‘on-boarding’ to the Government Property Agency (GPA) from April 2018. Until the official transfer is completed, the Corporate Property team will operate under the direction of the GPA, via an agreed in principle partnership.