

Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra)

Key Statistics

- **total estate running cost** (annual, gross) = £111.7 million
- **holdings** (sites) = 309
- **floor space** (offices) = 216,426 sq.m; (other) = 181,726 sq.m
- **land** = 352 hectares
- **staff number** (FTE) = 23,134
- **locations** = 223 UK locations, including London

Our Business

We are the UK government department responsible for safeguarding our natural environment, supporting our world-leading food and farming industry, and sustaining a thriving rural economy. Our broad remit means we play a major role in people's day-to-day life, from the food we eat, and the air we breathe, to the water we drink.

Defra is a ministerial department, supported by 33 agencies and public bodies.

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 we have identified opportunities to improve our service whilst reducing costs. This new, modernised approach to delivery has become our operating model¹.

Our Estate

The Defra group – made up of the core department and its five largest agencies and public bodies – has a diverse estate which includes offices, depots and laboratories. Our unique operations require us to be strategically located close to customers and operational areas, sometimes away from city centre locations.

During SR10 we embarked upon an ambitious programme to rationalise our estate and reduce its cost – aiming for a space-efficient 8 sq.m per person. At the start of SR10 our estate cost £170 million to run each year. In 2018/19 our estate is forecast to cost £111.7 million to run, which includes £20.2 million of office space to accommodate our new and growing EU Exit workforce. In the last two years we have accommodated over 1,300 additional staff who have been working to ensure the UK's withdrawal from the European Union is a success, with a further 1300 anticipated in 2018-19.

Over the SR15 period we will have delivered 53 major property and relocation projects that will reduce annual property running costs by £12.8 million.

A key factor in our ability to consolidate our estate and generate savings for the taxpayer is – and will increasingly be – our capacity to evolve as an organisation. Since 2015 the Defra group estate has been managed as single portfolio, creating greater opportunities for consolidation, and creating workspaces that bring people together from across the group.

¹ Further information is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/department-for-environment-food-and-rural-affairs-single-departmental-plan/department-for-environment-food-and-rural-affairs-single-departmental-plan-may-2018>

In addition the Defra group has initiated a range of 'smart working' practices, technology and workspace designs that make us more productive and adaptable. We have developed a combined Smarter Ways of Working Strategy and implementation programme across the core department and five largest agencies and public bodies. This programme will – through improved technology, cultural transformation and reconfiguring working practices, physical environments and behaviours – create a better place to work. In turn this will enable our people to exercise choice about when, where and how they work. This is all part of creating an attractive organisation that allows us to access and retain the talent needed to ensure we deliver for our customers and the country.

Opportunities for co-location and collaboration have also been explored via the One Public Estate (OPE) programme. This has resulted in our re-location to Eastleigh Borough Council office in 2018.

Our efforts to co-locate support our commitment as an organisation to release surplus land quickly for capital income and where practical to support the development of new homes. We committed to identifying and releasing land to facilitate the development of 400 new homes between 2015 and 2020; a target which we have already achieved and will exceed by an estimated 60 units. We also committed to generating receipts from land and property sales of £37 million in SR15. We have already realised £39.5 million, and are forecast to achieve income of £48 million by March 2020.

Our Capability

Defra has an estate management capability comprising a workforce of 284 FTE property and workplace professionals. We are working with the Government Property Agency on the business case for transferring our asset management functions in 2019.