Defra works for the essentials of life – water, food, air, land, people, animals and plants.
Our vision

Our vision of the future is of a world in which climate change and environmental degradation are recognised and addressed by all nations and where low carbon emissions and efficient use of environmental resources are at the heart of our whole way of life. A future where, here in the UK, rural communities are diverse, economically and environmentally viable, and socially inclusive with high quality public services and real opportunities for all. A country where the food, fishing and farming industries work closely together with Government and are not dependent on output-related subsidies to produce safe, nutritious food which contributes positively to consumer choice and the health of the whole nation. A place where the land is managed in such a way as to recognise its many functions, from production through to recreation; where we seek to promote biodiversity on land and in our seas; and where the promotion of animal welfare and protection against animal disease is at the core of the way in which we farm and live.

The pursuit of sustainable development, which means a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come, is central to achieving this vision.
Our Strategy 2003–06
Defra was created to drive forward the Government’s approach to sustainable development, both across government as a whole and specifically for the environment, for the food industry and for rural England. In *Working for the Essentials of Life* we set out a long-term programme that recognised how central our issues are to the Government’s overall agenda. We describe here how we are taking forward that work over the next three years.

As a result of the 2002 Spending Review we will see our expenditure grow at an average of 2.7% per year over this period. We cannot do all that we or the public and our customers and stakeholders might want. So we have had to focus our resources on the most important priorities and we will be accountable for their delivery to the Treasury, to Parliament, to stakeholders and customers, and to the public.

My priorities for the period 2003-06 are:

- turning the concept of sustainable development into reality: economic growth with better lives for people and a better environment; and managing key natural resources, such as land, countryside, water, and fisheries to benefit consumers, business and the environment, including protection from flooding;

- addressing the needs of those who live in rural areas by working with others to give all people a strong economy, sense of community and fair access to transport, housing, health services, schools and information technology;

- reducing pollution especially, by the gases that threaten our atmosphere and climate;

- helping create a sustainable food and farming supply chain serving the market and the environment;

- reducing risks of animal diseases, and being ready to control them when they occur; and

- helping everyone to cut down on waste and meet tough targets for recycling.

To achieve this ambitious programme, we must continue to build Defra’s capacity to deliver at all levels. We must be clear in what we will do; focus on what the public want and deliver high quality services to our customers; and invest in our people. In short, we must link new resources to reform.

Margaret Beckett
Secretary of State
Defra’s programme
Defra’s programme for 2003–06

In the 2002 Spending Review, the Government set departmental spending plans for the three years from 2003/04 to 2005/06. For Defra, the settlement allows us to make progress on our most vital objectives but we cannot do everything and we have had to make difficult choices about priorities.

This strategy focuses on our most important targets. It includes a positive response to the Commission on Food and Farming; a wide range of work on animal health; additional investment in flood defence; pursuing the Government’s policy for rural areas; pursuing EU obligations to reduce landfill and modernising the way Defra operates through the Developing Defra programme.

The Government has long-term goals and these are clear, accountable and transparent through our framework of Public Service Agreements and Delivery Plans. Annex 1 summarises our Public Service Agreement targets within the framework of Defra’s overall objectives and the following sections highlight the relevant links. Investment in services will be accompanied by modernisation of delivery mechanisms and we will in particular be focusing on the review of rural delivery arrangements, led by Lord Haskins.

Defra is a large and complex organisation and this strategy cannot cover all the work we do. Our policies are delivered by a range of bodies, including local government, the Regional Development Authorities and Non-Departmental Public Bodies, as well as Defra’s own delivery arms and Executive Agencies. Over 14,000 people work on a very diverse range of activities in Defra and its Executive Agencies, providing services to benefit the economy, environment and people. Around 80,000 people have direct contact with us daily, for example through regulations advice and grant schemes.

Much of our work is vital to the running of the economy and society as a whole, such as our work to control animal diseases, programmes to protect air and water quality, and flood and coastal defence. Much is driven by the requirements of implementing EU law in ways that are fair, effective and proportionate. Many staff in the frontline of Defra who do this work are experiencing change as we develop new ways of working and adapt to opportunities provided by new technology.

More comprehensive information is found on the website (www.defra.gov.uk) particularly in the Departmental Report, our Business Plans and Delivery Plans.