

# SETTING A SECTOR SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGE

## **Introduction**

The UK is committed to “doing more with less”, which means improving resource productivity, helping boost business competitiveness and decoupling economic growth and environmental degradation. This commitment is at the core of the *Changing Patterns* Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) Framework<sup>1</sup> and is now reinforced in the new UK Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS), *Securing the Future*<sup>2</sup>, in which SCP appears as one of the shared priority areas for action within the UK.

Business and sectoral involvement is essential for delivering sustainable consumption and production (SCP). The UK SDS acknowledges the need to integrate sustainability considerations in business practice.

## **Background**

UK experience in working with sectors has shown that sectoral bodies engage in sustainability activities to enhance their reputation by demonstrating that their sector is taking sustainability considerations seriously and to help their member companies to become more competitive. Other drivers for engagement include the need to effectively respond to challenges posed by national/EC legislation and to be able to build good relations with Government and lobby them effectively.

Feedback from Pioneers Group<sup>3</sup> members on how to take the group forward identified strong and consistent Government support and available funding as key issues.

Sustainable development has become an important policy issue for sectoral associations during the last three years of the Pioneers Group's (PG) operation. Some associations had initiated action before the start of the PG and others have recently raised the issue to the level of the key policy agenda. However, the Pioneers Group has been successful as an enabler of sectoral action on sustainability initiatives in the long term.

The impact of the Pioneers Group on getting sustainable development on sectoral associations' agendas has been largely behavioural (e.g. moving sectors from general thoughts to defined outputs), including new organisational structures and new approaches to collaboration. Nevertheless, it has been difficult to attribute specific outcomes of improved sectoral performance directly attributed to PG's work. The most tangible impact was the publication of strategy documents (sectoral strategies and progress reports). Government is keen to build on this and stimulate action focusing on

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/business/scp/changing-patterns.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/>

<sup>3</sup> [www.pioneersgroup.co.uk/](http://www.pioneersgroup.co.uk/)

performance, which is why as an extension of the Pioneers concept it committed in *Securing the Future* to introduce a Sector Sustainability Challenge.

### **Sector Sustainability Challenge**

The Government acknowledges that to deliver SCP, the promotion and take up of the SCP agenda in industrial sectors via the sectoral associations and their member organisations needs to continue and become more joined up. The aim is to stimulate action to catalyse implementation at company level.

The Government wants to build on the Pioneers Group and strengthen our work with business so as to improve our understanding of delivering long term decoupling in key sectors whilst putting in place measures to support that transition.

Therefore, the UK SDS commits the Government to set a new Sector Sustainability Challenge to support selected projects focused on taking forward sectoral or supply chain initiatives to put SCP into practical action.

### **Aims and objectives**

The Sector Sustainability Challenge is open to all sectors, including the service sectors. It would be encouraging to see collaboration between larger associations working with smaller associations to spread best practice.

The fund will support a limited number of initiatives promoting, developing, or implementing sectoral sustainable development in ways that stimulate practical actions that lead to improved performance.

This might include action within the sector in the following ways:

- Translating existing sustainability strategies into action at the level of individual companies
- Engaging market leaders to use sustainability in their marketing
- Developing tools to increase sustainability performance and innovation, including resource efficiency (with the possibility to extend to the supply chain)
- Feasibility studies for collaborative projects with sectors/academia
- Enhancing skills through formal training and/or awareness raising
- Workplace initiatives inspired and led by the workforce

Equally it may entail collaborative projects working across trade associations (TAs) or TAs working with specific companies or TAs working with academia or a mix of all of the above.

### **Desirable Outcomes**

- Stimulating further action from sectors to address key aspects of SCP
- Compatible sectors collaborating (e.g. industrial symbiosis)

- Encouraging the adoption of innovative business practices
- Secure concerted action from individual businesses to change behavior in significant ways

Successful proposals will be ones that contribute to taking forward SD and SCP by:

- Tangible action towards improving business sustainability performance
- Changing behavior be individual business and / or consumers

And in doing so demonstrate one or more of the following:

- Innovation
- Impact – scale and significance of the improvement
- Feasibility (in terms of timing / level of funding)
- Commitment – level and degree of involvement of the sector; match funding
- Level of collaboration – extent of joint working with other sector bodies or relevant organisations e.g. RDAs, academia.

### Funding

£100K is available in total for the Sector Sustainability Challenge over the financial year 2005 – 06.

While currently there is no guarantee of funding after this period, there is the possibility that if successful we may be able to secure further funding in following years. Further support might also be sought from another of Governments business support programmes. Sector Sustainability Challenge funding can be used to develop projects seeking further, more significant, funding through other channels (e.g. BREW, DTI Technology Programme).

In view of the limited funding bids are expected to be in the region of £10,000 - £25,000. However, all bids regardless of amount sought will be considered. The offers to successful bidders may not match the sum they applied for.

### Process and Timing

Proposals must be submitted by no later than **29 September 2005** to:

Helen Williams  
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 151 Buckingham Palace Road  
 London  
 SW1W 9SS

Proposals will be assessed jointly by a team from DTI / Defra / Sustainable Development Commission and applicants will be notified by **17 October 2005**.

Projects with a regional focus will be fully considered and, with the applicants agreement, may be discussed with the relevant Regional Development Agency.

#### Contact Details

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