This document is an updated strategic statement and action plan on sustainable development in the higher education sector following feedback received on our consultation document (HEFCE 2008/18).

February 2009/**03**

Free

Sustainable development in higher education

2008 update to strategic statement and action plan

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Sustainable Forests

Totally Chlorine Free

Foreword
by Professor Lord Stern of Brentford

Climate change is the greatest environmental challenge facing the world today. To meet this challenge, the world needs minds capable of creating new possibilities for meeting our basic needs such as energy, water, shelter and food; minds that can transform our daily experiences into ones that allow a sustainable development, safeguarding our opportunities and the environment for future generations.

The higher education sector is where these minds are trained and developed. Therefore, it is crucial that the sector contributes strongly to sustainable development. It can do so by training and expanding these young minds; researching answers to challenges and informing public policy; showing its own understanding and commitment through careful campus management; and by being a responsible employer and active member of the business and local community.

There is much under way already and much more that can be done to avoid the worst effects of climate change – but only if we act now, with urgency, to transform our current ways of thinking and operating. We need to create low-carbon growth if growth is to continue and the great risks to the planet from climate change are to be avoided. The higher education sector offers a vital platform for undertaking this transition and can contribute to the global shift that is necessary to safeguard a secure future.

The HEFCE sustainable development strategy provides an invaluable resource to take forward action in the higher education sector. It has the potential to influence many minds and lives, so I urge you to take action to influence the leaders of tomorrow by creating a sustainable future today.

Professor Lord Stern of Brentford
London School of Economics and Political Science

Sustainable development in higher education
2008 update to strategic statement and action plan

To	Heads of HEFCE-funded higher education institutions
	Heads of universities in Northern Ireland
Of interest to those responsible for	Strategic management, governance, sustainable development, environmental management
Reference	2009/**03**
Publication date	February 2009
Enquiries to	Joanna Simpson tel 0117 931 7411 e-mail sustainabledevelopment@hefce.ac.uk

Executive summary

Purpose

1. This document sets out our revised strategic statement and action plan on sustainable development in the higher education (HE) sector following feedback received on our consultation document (HEFCE 2008/18).

Key points

2. We want to make sustainable development a central part of our strategy for the future development of the HE sector. Our vision is that: 'Within the next 10 years, the higher education sector in this country will be recognised as a major contributor to society's efforts to achieve sustainability – through the skills and knowledge that its graduates learn and put into practice, its research and exchange of knowledge through business, community and public policy engagement, and through its own strategies and operations.'

3. This is a challenging agenda and there is a strong perception that society is not moving forward fast enough, particularly where climate change is concerned. There is now widespread agreement that sustainable development is important and it is a growing political priority both nationally and internationally. HE makes an important contribution to the UK's sustainable development strategy, updated in 2005. We are currently in the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development, which runs until 2014.

4. Higher education institutions can make a substantial, sustained and exemplary contribution to the challenge of sustainable development through teaching and research, as campus managers, as employers and as protagonists in their local communities. Publications such as our strategic review and

Universities UK's 'Greening spires: universities and the green agenda' show that there is already substantial good practice; this is supported by the Estates Management Statistics which indicate that some institutions are significantly reducing the environmental impact of their operations. However, the momentum for change needs to continue and increase if HE is to play its full part in helping society meet the challenge of sustainable development.

5. Overall, the consultation feedback demonstrated:

a. A high level of commitment by the sector to the sustainable development agenda. There is widespread agreement that the sector has an invaluable contribution to make and that HEFCE needs to support and encourage this. Our non-prescriptive and enabling approach was welcomed and the actions we proposed raised relatively little negative comment, though some were clearly prioritised by respondents over others.

b. Widespread recognition that higher education's unique contribution is through both teaching and research. A number of concerns were raised that although this is recognised in the vision and strategy statement, it is not reflected in the action plan, and that HEFCE should do more to support and encourage institutions further in this while respecting autonomy and academic freedom.

6. This document contains a revised and updated strategic statement and action plan. The key revisions are:

a. Research, and business and community engagement, are explicitly referenced in the vision.

b. Our objectives have been revised in response to feedback that they should reflect our leadership role and inspire developments.

c. Where possible we have included time-bound outcomes for the actions. This is not the case for all actions because sustainable development is a learning process in itself – for some actions we do not yet know what the outcomes will look like; for others the issues themselves are not yet fully understood.

d. A new section on students recognises the student body as a valuable partner. The action arising is that: 'We will work with student organisations, including the National Union of Students (NUS) and NUS Services Ltd, to promote behavioural change among students and support initiatives that seek to harness the student resource for positive environmental initiatives at the campus level.'

Action required

7. This document is for information.

Introduction

8. In June 2008 we consulted on an updated strategic statement and action plan on sustainable development in the higher education (HE) sector (HEFCE 2008/18). This document sets out our approach following feedback received through consultation. An analysis of the written responses to the consultation[1] and a summary of the major issues raised at the three consultation seminars[2] are available on our web-site.

9. In 2005, HEFCE set out a vision for how universities and colleges could contribute to sustainable development. This recognised that individual universities and colleges could play their part as centres of teaching and research, as campus managers, as employers and as major protagonists in their local communities.

10. We want to support individual institutions and the HE sector as a whole in meeting the challenges of sustainable development. The strategic review – conducted for HEFCE by independent researchers[3] – found that while a great deal has been done, the momentum for change needs to continue and increase if HE is to maximise its role in improving the environment, preserving natural resources and making a positive and sustainable economic and social impact. The review aimed to create a baseline of practice relating to sustainable development in the sector, against which to measure future progress and highlight what the sector is already doing.

11. The review and subsequent consultation confirmed that continuing with our non-prescriptive approach remains the best method to help institutions find the most appropriate way forward, rather than seeking to dictate or impose an artificial consistency across the sector. In doing this we recognise the diversity of universities and colleges[4] and the range of contributions that each can make. For example, a specialist agricultural college will be able to make a very different contribution to a large, civic university.

12. We are very grateful to our steering group[5], chaired by Geoffrey Copland, former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Westminster, for valuable advice and support in developing this strategy and overseeing the work of the strategic review.

13. Overall, the consultation feedback demonstrated:

a. A high level of commitment by the sector to the sustainable development agenda. There is widespread agreement that the sector has an invaluable contribution to make and that HEFCE needs to support and encourage this. The actions we proposed raised relatively little negative comment, though some were clearly prioritised by respondents over others.

b. Widespread recognition that higher education's unique contribution is through both teaching and research. A number of concerns were raised that although this is recognised in the vision and strategy statement, it is not reflected in the action plan, and that HEFCE should do more to support and encourage institutions further in this while respecting autonomy and academic freedom.

14. This document contains a revised and updated strategic statement and action plan. The key revisions are:

a. Research, and business and community engagement, are explicitly referenced in the vision.

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[1] The summary of consultation responses will be available at www.hefce.ac.uk with this document under Publications from mid-February 2009.

[2] 'Report on sustainable development consultation seminars', available at www.hefce.ac.uk under Leadership, governance & management/Sustainable development.

[3] 'HEFCE strategic review of sustainable development in higher education in England' (January 2008) was commissioned by HEFCE from the Policy Studies Institute, PA Consulting Group and the Centre for Research in Education and the Environment at the University of Bath and is available at www.hefce.ac.uk under Publications/Research & evaluation.

[4] References to 'universities and colleges' in this document include all higher education institutions, universities, colleges of higher education and further education colleges offering higher education courses.

[5] See Annex A for the group's membership.

b. Our objectives have been revised in response to feedback that they should reflect our leadership role and inspire action.

c. Where possible we have included time-bound outcomes for the actions. This is not the case for all actions because sustainable development is a learning process in itself – for some actions we do not yet know what the outcomes will look like; for others the issues themselves are not yet fully understood.

d. A new section on students recognises the student body as a valuable partner. The action arising is that: 'We will work with student organisations, including the National Union of Students (NUS) and NUS Services Ltd, to promote behavioural change among students, and support initiatives that seek to harness the student resource for positive environmental initiatives at the campus level.'

15. We have not yet revised the action plan in the light of the strong concerns that HEFCE should do more to support the educator role. This is a challenging and sensitive area and we do not wish to do anything that might infringe, or be perceived as infringing, institutional autonomy. In the consultation we included an action to 'review the work of the Higher Education Academy (HEA), sustainable development-related Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs) and the teaching baseline produced by the strategic review to investigate the effectiveness of existing curricula and pedagogy, and how HEFCE can best support education for sustainable development'. We are assessing how we can best support the efforts of institutions to develop skills in relation to sustainable development and will work with sector organisations to implement appropriate policy responses.

16. Many respondents made suggestions for general areas and issues which should be covered in the action plan and encouraged us to go further, particularly in relation to the non-environmental aspects of the agenda. For some of these areas there are no obvious actions for HEFCE but we will continue to look for ways in which we can support and encourage activity and initiatives.

Why is sustainable development important for higher education?

Higher education institutions play a major role in improving the environment, preserving natural resources and making an economic and social impact. Graduates are entering a volatile world and higher education needs to respond to challenging, rapidly changing socio-economic and environmental conditions. Through their roles as educators and researchers, institutions can contribute to securing a safer and more sustainable future against recognised threats such as climate change and global poverty.

Our choices now will influence whether current and future generations will live with a changed climate, depleted resources and without the open space and biodiversity that contribute to our standard of living and quality of life. Higher education can help to promote new and sustainable ways of living, working, producing and travelling that will help achieve wider benefits to human health and wellbeing.

The Government has made it clear that it wants the public sector to take a lead in sustainable development, by promoting and delivering sustainable development through all its policies and through its own operations.

Sustainable development can also do much for higher education. Rising public interest provides opportunities for institutions to use their sustainability commitments to aid student and staff recruitment and public relations. Efforts will also lead to cost efficiencies and could open doors to further funding.

Through our new action plan and the programmes we fund, we believe that we can help ensure that higher education is a leader in the drive to promote sustainability.

Strategic statement on promoting sustainable development in higher education

17. We recognise that sustainable development is a challenging agenda. There is a strong perception that society is not moving forward fast enough, particularly where climate change is concerned. Sustainable development is a growing political priority both nationally and internationally. HE makes an important contribution to the UK's sustainable development strategy, updated in 2005[6]. The United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has concluded that warming of the climate system is unequivocal and that human activities make a substantial contribution[7]. The Stern Review[8] advised that the benefits of strong and early action will far outweigh the economic costs of not acting. We are currently in the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development[9] which runs until 2014 and progress in the UK is paralleled by increasing involvement of HE in sustainable development internationally.

18. Graduates will occupy future management and leadership roles and will need the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions taking account of complex social, economic and environmental issues and their interrelation. Researchers can help society find social and technical solutions to these challenges and campuses can lead by becoming more sustainable and efficient, for example reducing consumption of fossil fuels.

19. We recognise the diversity of institutions, and the different contributions each can make. We are keen that the enthusiasm for sustainability in the sector should bring about real change.

20. There is now widespread agreement in the sector that sustainable development is of critical importance. Many universities and colleges have told us that there has been a fundamental change in how they engage with this agenda. We are keen to understand more from different institutions about what has and has not worked, and why. In this way we can build on our role as a catalyst and facilitator to support progress towards our vision.

21. Our vision statement has been revised to take account of feedback that research and business and community engagement should be explicitly referenced and is now that: 'Within the next 10 years, the higher education sector in this country will be recognised as a major contributor to society's efforts to achieve sustainability – through the skills and knowledge that its graduates learn and put into practice, its research and exchange of knowledge through business, community and public policy engagement, and through its own strategies and operations.' We believe this vision is simple yet challenging and is shared by universities and colleges.

22. We will continue to use the definition of sustainable development set out in the 2005 strategy, based on the Government's 'Securing the future' document[10]. By doing so, we can enable universities and colleges to concentrate on practical action.

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[6] The UK sustainable development strategy, 'Securing the future: the UK's sustainable development strategy' (2005) is available at www.defra.gov.uk/sustainable/government under Publications.

[7] 'Climate change 2007: the physical science basis' is available at www.ipcc.ch under IPCC Reports/Assessment reports.

[8] 'The economics of climate change: the Stern Review' is available at www.hm-treasury.gov.uk under Independent reviews.

[9] For more information on the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, see www.unesco.org/education/desd.

[10] See footnote 6.

HEFCE's objectives

23. We have updated our 2005 objectives to reflect consultation feedback, the results of the review and current political context. The consultation also indicated that our objectives should be more ambitious, and they are now as follows:

a.   Continue to raise the profile of sustainable development so that it becomes a mainstream part of university and college activities.

b.   Seek 'win-win' opportunities by helping to identify sector-wide business cases and benefits for individual institutions.

c.   Fully integrate sustainable development into our strategic plan and policy-making through sector impact assessment and being open about the reasons for policy choices.

d.   Demonstrate to stakeholders that HEFCE and higher education institutions (HEIs) are making genuine efforts to promote sustainable development and to extend good practice.

e.   Support sector-led capacity building through support for innovative and novel projects.

f.   Facilitate a carbon reduction culture to significantly reduce carbon emissions across the sector.

g.   Continue to improve HEFCE's own operations so we lead by example.

24. The consultation supported our intention to continue with a non-prescriptive and enabling approach. In this updated strategic statement we reflect on HEFCE's role in achieving these objectives. The discussion is structured in three parts:

• the impact HEFCE has on the sector

• supporting change sought by higher education institutions

• HEFCE's own operations as an organisation.

The impact HEFCE has on the sector

Mitigating potential negative impacts

25. HEFCE measures the impact of its policies on areas such as the financial stability of universities and colleges, and the administrative and bureaucratic impact of its programmes. Working

with the sector, we have been able to reduce bidding and cut paperwork. It is just as important that we assess the impacts of our policies, initiatives and significant projects on sustainable development.

26. This is why we have embedded our approach to sustainable development throughout our strategic plan[11], and this approach will continue. It was suggested at the consultation seminars and in the written responses that sustainable development should become HEFCE's fourth major objective, alongside teaching, research and third-stream activity. This suggestion will be considered as part of the development of our next strategic plan in 2009-10.

27. In the 2008 update to the HEFCE strategic plan for 2006-2011 (HEFCE 2008/15) we revised our key performance target 15 (KPT 15) relating to sustainable development. Our new KPT 15 is: 'To finalise during 2008-09 in consultation with stakeholders a revised strategy for sustainable development in HE, which features a realistic target for carbon reductions which are sufficient to ensure satisfactory progress towards the government targets of reducing carbon emissions by 60 per cent against 1990 levels by 2050 and at least 26 per cent by 2020.'[12] We remain committed to undertaking another strategic review in 2011 to demonstrate progress in line with our previous KPT 15 and this forms part of this action plan.

28. Our sector impact assessment process[13] allows us to assess the impact of our policies in terms of sustainable development, equality and diversity, and regulatory burden. Using this approach we hope to mitigate any potential negative impacts of our policies on sustainable development and to make the most of opportunities to promote it positively. We also seek to make clear the social, environmental and economic impact of policy

proposals in our advice to the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills and other bodies.

Encouraging positive impacts

29. We integrate sustainability within our existing special funding initiatives in order to build and disseminate good practice in sustainable development. We are using the following programmes[14] to encourage positive impacts:

- the Leadership, Governance and Management (LGM) Fund

- the Strategic Development Fund (SDF)

- the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF)

- Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs)

- the Revolving Green Fund (RGF).

30. Our **LGM Fund**[15] provides £10 million over three years from 2007 to support transformational change through projects which deliver clear outcomes and a positive impact on current practice, value for money, sustainability and effective dissemination. Funded projects include work with Nottingham Trent University to develop EcoCampus, an environmental management system designed specifically for the HE sector[16].

31. The **SDF**[17] supports change and innovation in HE. An example of a sustainable development project funded through the SDF is the Sustainable Energy Centre at London South Bank University. This will provide a high-quality teaching resource in sustainable energy technology and building design, construction and management, with facilities to test and demonstrate sustainable energy technologies. London South Bank, City and Kingston Universities will share this resource and develop common modules at the centre.

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[11] For more information see 'HEFCE strategic plan 2006-2011: updated May 2008' (HEFCE 2008/15). All HEFCE documents are available at www.hefce.ac.uk under Publications.

[12] This KPT was introduced before the government target was increased to 80 per cent and the 80 per cent target now applies.

[13] For more information see www.hefce.ac.uk under About us/Sector impact assessments.

[14] Details of projects funded to June 2008 are available in Annex B of the consultation document (HEFCE 2008/18).

[15] For more information see www.hefce.ac.uk under Leadership, governance & management/LGM Fund.

[16] For more information see www.ecocampus.co.uk

[17] For more information see www.hefce.ac.uk under Finance & assurance/Finance and funding/Strategic Development Fund.

32. The **HEIF**[18] is designed to support and develop a broad range of knowledge transfer activities that result in economic and social benefit to the UK. It has funded two sustainability projects including the £4.8 million Carbon Connections programme at the University of East Anglia. Carbon Connections is working with two Regional Development Agencies to support low-carbon technologies and encourage behavioural change by helping with the development and marketing of innovative ideas. A fourth round of HEIF, from 2008-11, will see total funding increase to £150 million in 2010-2011.

33. We fund 74 **CETLs**[19] to reward excellent teaching practice and to invest in that practice. This initiative is HEFCE's largest ever single funding initiative in teaching and learning, totalling £315 million over five years from 2005-10. Among these 74, the Centre for Sustainable Futures[20] and The Centre for Sustainable Communities Achieved through Integrated Professional Education (C-SCAIPE)[21] both focus on sustainable development. The former has developed approaches to sustainability for thousands of students at the University of Plymouth, developed a university-wide sustainability policy, introduced fellowships and masters' courses, and supported changes to the curricula of local schools. C-SCAIPE at Kingston University aims to produce graduates with a holistic understanding of sustainable communities.

34. We will continue to work with the sector to develop the business case for sustainable development initiatives, seeking funds for HE that promote either efficiency or the public interest. The **RGF**[22], in partnership with Salix Finance[23], offers £30 million in recoverable grants for projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Funding is available over three years from 2008, for small institutional projects and larger, transformational

ones. We will continue to include sustainable development in future government spending review submissions.

35. The consultation suggested that while the sector welcomes our non-prescriptive approach, there is some appetite for 'sticks' as well as carrots. We are keen to use the full range of policy levers available to us to promote sustainable development and the action plan reflects this willingness in areas such as capital funding.

Supporting change sought by higher education institutions

36. There remains widespread agreement that each HEI can contribute to sustainable development through its:

- role as educator

- generation and transfer of knowledge

- leadership and influence in local, national and international networks

- business strategy and operations.

37. As well as reducing their direct 'carbon footprint', HEIs can use what might be called their 'brainprint' to contribute greatly to the reduction of carbon emissions through knowledge transfer and local leadership.

38. In order to meet our vision and objectives we will support institutions in working across all four areas so they can adopt a whole-institution approach to sustainable development. During the consultation it was commented that our strategy and action plan is weighted towards environmental aspects, but there was general recognition that this is because these areas are better understood and often provide 'quick wins'. We accept that this is the case and remain committed to developing our

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[18] For more information on the HEIF see www.hefce.ac.uk under Economy & society/Business & community.

[19] For more information on CETLs see www.hefce.ac.uk under Learning & teaching/Teaching initiatives.

[20] For more information on the Centre for Sustainable Futures, see www.csf.plymouth.ac.uk

[21] For more information on C-SCAIPE see www.c-scaipe.rroom.net

[22] For more information see 'Revolving Green Fund – outcomes of consultation and invitation to submit applications' (HEFCE Circular letter 20/2008).

[23] For more information see www.salixfinance.co.uk

understanding and support across all aspects because sustainable development is only possible when all aspects are considered together.

39. It was commented during consultation that the strategy ignores some tensions that exist, for example international travel by students and staff and the view that a campus-based model of provision raises many sustainability issues in itself so the balance needs to shift to a greater use of distance learning. We recognise these tensions but believe that in general they should be considered by individual institutions. It is beyond HEFCE's role to provide definitive solutions that would jeopardise the autonomy and diversity of the sector.

40. We believe sustainable development should be pursued in ways that respect individual institutions' aspirations, needs and priorities while recognising the imperative of bold, long-term commitments to performance improvement. Our agenda is not about making sustainable development the overarching priority for every institution, although some may choose to make it so; rather it is about practical, effective and often money-saving actions that can support a wide range of policies and priorities.

41. Our action plan is organised around the four support roles we set out in our first sustainable development strategy (HEFCE 2005/28) and includes details of the ways in which support for change is available from us and our partners. We will review our approach again at the end of 2010. The action plan is described in detail in paragraphs 46-106 and the full list of our proposed actions is at Annex B of this document.

42. The support roles for HEFCE are:

- engaging with stakeholders to bring about policy synergies on sustainable development

- building the capacity to manage sustainable development

- sharing good practice and supporting the development of good practice where none exists

- rewarding more sustainable behaviour.

43. The table on the next page shows how we believe the actions within the support roles will help deliver our objectives.

44. A strong message coming from the consultation was that the actions should be focused around time-bound outcomes to convey a greater sense of urgency. We understand this view and agree that urgency is needed. Therefore, we have included time-bound outcomes for some of the actions and plan to implement all of the actions by the end of 2010. However, this is not the case for all actions because sustainable development is a learning process in itself – for some actions we do not yet know what the outcomes will look like; for others, the issues themselves are not yet fully understood. In this way our sustainable development strategy can be viewed as a journey. Although the action plan is a static document it offers a degree of flexibility while still retaining the core principal aims. We will regularly review our approach in the light of new knowledge, practice and experience and add new initiatives as they emerge.

HEFCE's own operations as an organisation

45. We are also keen to demonstrate to stakeholders that HEFCE, like universities and colleges, is making genuine efforts to promote sustainable development. We are continuing to improve our own operations and have achieved certification to ISO14001, an environmental management system standard, and the Carbon Trust Standard[24]. We monitor our carbon emissions, water use, travel and waste production and set targets in these areas. Progress against these targets and our Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy is set out in an annual CSR report[25]. CSR is one strand of our use of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) excellence model for which we have been awarded the top score of five stars in the EFQM's 'Recognised for Excellence' award.

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[24] For more information see www.carbontruststandard.com

[25] Our annual CSR report is available at www.hefce.ac.uk under About us/Corporate Social Responsibility.

Support roles / Objectives	Engaging with stakeholders to bring about policy synergies on sustainable development	Building the capacity to manage sustainable development	Sharing good practice and supporting the development of good practice where none exists	Rewarding more sustainable behaviour
Continue to raise the profile of sustainable development so that it becomes a mainstream part of university and college activities	✓	✓	✓	✓
Seek 'win-win' opportunities by helping to identify sector-wide business cases and benefits for individual institutions	✓		✓	✓
Fully integrate sustainable development into our strategic plan and policy-making through sector impact assessment and being open about the reasons for policy choices	✓	✓		✓
Demonstrate to stakeholders that HEFCE and HEIs are making genuine efforts to promote sustainable development and to extend good practice	✓	✓	✓	✓
Support sector-led capacity building through support for innovative and novel projects		✓	✓	
Facilitate a carbon reduction culture to significantly reduce carbon emissions across the sector	✓	✓	✓	✓
Continue to improve HEFCE's own operations so we lead by example				✓

Action plan

Support role 1

Engaging with stakeholders to bring about policy synergies on sustainable development

46. Universities and higher education (HE) colleges do not exist in isolation. They are increasingly engaged with their communities and employers, and with their towns, cities and regions. They are a part of local regeneration and form partnerships with local further education colleges and schools. Their own communities include a growing number of students from the UK and abroad. Lecturers and researchers are a source of ideas, innovation and imaginative pedagogy. Likewise, for HEFCE, universities and HE colleges are a source of ideas and evidence of what can be done. This is why we make stakeholder engagement our first support role.

Celebrating achievement

47. Good practice in sustainable development is widespread across the sector and this should be publicised. The scoping study[26] for the strategic review found support for a major conference on sustainable development in HE as a landmark and focus. Informal discussions about the role of HE in meeting the challenge of sustainable development suggest that it is right to hold a number of events that identify and celebrate success, provide learning opportunities and challenge HEIs, staff, students and society to achieve more.

> **Action:** We will support development work with Universities UK (UUK) and GuildHE to identify ways in which the sector can make a public commitment to sustainable development.

Developing curricula and pedagogy

48. The greatest contribution HE can make to sustainable development is by enabling students to acquire the skills and knowledge that allow them to make a lasting difference. What they learn and what they are taught are therefore critical.

49. This view is supported by the United Nations, which has established 2005-2014 as the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. The goal of the Decade is to integrate the principles, values and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning. The UK National Commission for UNESCO is monitoring the implementation of the Decade in the UK and HEFCE is a member of its Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) working group. The East Midlands was the first UK region to be designated by the United Nations as a Regional Centre of Expertise (RCE) in ESD[27] (an RCE is defined by the UN as a network of existing formal, non-formal and informal education organisations aiming to deliver ESD to a regional/local community). Universities are at the centre of these initiatives and there are now two other RCEs in the UK: in the North East, led by the University of Newcastle, and in the West Midlands, led by the University of Gloucestershire.

50. HEFCE recognises that it is not within its role to influence the curriculum. However, we can support universities and colleges in producing graduates with the values, skills and knowledge to address sustainable development. This is important for all graduates, not just those engaged in fields directly connected to sustainability. Many will, for example, be managing or leading businesses or services where they will need to make decisions that impact on social justice or the environment.

51. Equally, we recognise the danger of bolting what some might see as the latest fad onto courses; doing so is more likely to create resentment than real change. So we will support shared curriculum ideas, content and assessment methods that help to develop teaching and learning. Different institutions will have different approaches. We want to encourage and incentivise engagement (including through our Strategic Development Fund) but

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[26] 'Scoping study for a strategic review of sustainable development in higher education' (2006) is available at www.hefce.ac.uk under Publications/Research & evaluation.

[27] For more information see www.rceem.org.uk

recognise that there will be those who find it hard to engage because of their discipline base, the focus of their mission or the size or level of student interest. Our approach is therefore one of encouragement and support.

> **Actions:**
>
> i.   We are reviewing the work of the Higher Education Academy (HEA), sustainable development-related Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs) and the teaching baseline produced by the strategic review to investigate the effectiveness of existing curricula and pedagogy, and how HEFCE can best support education for sustainable development. We will review the findings to decide what further action to take in this area.
>
> ii.   We will look for ways to support and/or work with UN initiatives including the Decade for ESD and Regional Centres of Expertise in ESD.

Employer engagement

52.   HE makes the country more competitive by supporting a knowledge economy. By supporting workforce development, universities and colleges work in partnership with employers to develop skills and qualities that they and their employees need to build business success and wider economic productivity and growth. Through research, they can develop innovations that meet business needs, and an increasing number of spin-out companies are being created in areas related to sustainable development. HE is already engaged with the world of work and is itself a big employer. The sector needs to work effectively in partnership with employers to maximise the benefits. Through our employer engagement strategy, we are supporting a significant number of universities and colleges as they take forward projects to test the development of markets for employer co-funded workforce development, to develop new flexible and responsive provision, and to build a platform for growth from 2010-11.

> **Action:** We will promote sustainable development within the employer engagement agenda.

Demand for sustainable development

53.   Growing public awareness of environmental and social issues is increasing the importance of sustainable development for employers and students. Initiatives such as the Future Leaders Survey[28] and People and Planet's Green League[29] demonstrate that students increasingly want their universities to leave a smaller carbon footprint. Businesses want solutions that enable them to reduce their own impact on the environment as well as to demonstrate ethical practices and social responsibility. Consumer demand and more demanding legislation are also driving change. Students, staff and employers are increasingly asking universities and colleges about their contribution to sustainable development. Although the strategic review looked at the requirements of employers, professional bodies and students, further work needs to be done to understand their requirements and how they can be met.

> **Action:** We will work with employers, students and professional bodies to understand their requirements in relation to sustainable development and explore what is needed to meet them. We will then decide what further action to take in this area.

Regional level

54.   Universities and colleges are major players in their regions, and an important source of the higher-level skills crucial to regional development. As such, they can play an important part in helping regions to improve their economic performance in ways that are sustainable. HEFCE is working to improve access to HE in parts of the country with no universities, thus helping the sustainability of those areas.

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[28] For more information see www.forumforthefuture.org under Our Projects/Future Leaders Survey 07/08.

[29] For more information see www.peopleandplanet.org under Campaigns/Go Green/Green League.

> **Action:** We will work with Regional Development Agencies and other regional bodies to facilitate collaboration between HEIs and their local communities to promote sustainable development.

Research

55. HEFCE provides funds to underpin research infrastructure, including premises, libraries, central computing costs and the salaries of permanent academic staff. These funds are the basis for 'blue skies' research and project work. They are spent at institutions' discretion: HEFCE does not normally encourage particular forms of research. However, research can make an important contribution to sustainable development and we will continue exploring with the Research Councils and other research funders, including those that actively fund sustainable development, whether these research efforts could be strengthened. The creation of the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) will help facilitate this because all research funding now falls under a single government department.

> **Action:** We will work with existing and potential funders of sustainable development research to explore how the role of research can be strengthened to help meet the challenges of sustainable development.

Support role 2

Building the capacity to manage sustainable development

56. Capacity building is crucial in the introduction of sustainable development policies. In this section, we look at leadership and management issues, construction and refurbishment, space management and procurement.

Leadership

57. University and college leaders have a crucial role to play in supporting the transition to sustainable development. The Leadership Foundation for Higher Education provides a dedicated service of support and advice on leadership, governance and management for all the UK's universities and higher education colleges. It has made a specific commitment to sustainable development in its strategic plan and has a valuable role in helping leaders to integrate the principles of sustainable development into established processes. Sustainable development features in several of the foundation's programmes. We will help it do more in the future.

> **Action:** We will continue to support the Leadership Foundation in embedding sustainable development in its courses and programmes.

Learning from other countries and sectors

58. Sustainable development is an international challenge and so we will look to other countries and sectors in order to learn from their experiences. This will includes comparative research into how other countries set out to do what HEFCE does. The Revolving Green Fund, for example, was based on the experience of Harvard University, and we will look for other opportunities.

> **Action:** We will seek out examples of good practice from other countries and sectors and implement them as appropriate.

Construction and refurbishment

59. Universities and colleges can reduce their impact on the environment and reduce their running costs by improving the quality of existing and new buildings. The annual Estates Management Statistics (HEFCE 2008/41) contain information about environmental sustainability and provide invaluable benchmarking data for leaders and governors. These data show substantial variations between

institutions in their consumption of energy, water and emissions of carbon dioxide (CO_2). As Table 1 shows, in the lower quartile institutions consume just 2,288 kilowatt-hours (kWh) per student, whereas in the upper quartile they consume over twice as much: 6,449 kWh. There are also big variations in the extent to which institutions have changed their consumption patterns in recent years. There are reasons for these variations, including building type, subject mix and research intensity, but it would be useful to understand more about the reasons for variation and the extent to which HEIs use these benchmarking data and act on them.

60. Sustainable methods of construction and refurbishment make sense on both environmental and value-for-money grounds. Any savings will be achieved throughout the life of a building, so they should be considered alongside up-front capital costs. Moreover, where design and delivery teams are well briefed and understand the design objectives from the outset, there is no reason why capital costs should be higher. A recently published report from Higher Education Environmental Performance Improvement (HEEPI)[30] shows that buildings that are good for the environment are also good for business. For example, bright, airy buildings are good to work in, enhance learning and reduce energy bills. Flexible buildings reduce the costs of

adaptation and natural ventilation avoids the purchase and operation of costly cooling equipment.

61. Universities and colleges also need to consider the more stringent legal requirements from increasing Building Regulations. Since 1 October 2008, all public buildings have been required to have Display Energy Certificates showing their actual energy usage, as recorded by gas, electricity and other meters, so that the public may see the building's energy efficiency. In addition, the 2008 Budget[31] set out the Government's ambition that all new non-domestic buildings be zero-carbon from 2019.

Action: We will continue to develop the Estates Management Statistics to support HEIs in benchmarking their performance and to drive improvement. As part of this we will develop a metric relating to construction waste and identify opportunities for other developments.

Space management

62. Universities and colleges have become more efficient in their use of space. Good space management not only benefits the environment, it also frees up resources that can be used for teaching and research. The Estates Management Statistics

Table 1 Energy and water consumption and waste indicators for English HEIs, 2006-07

	Lower quartile	Median	Upper quartile
Energy consumption per student FTE*	2,288 kWh	3,201 kWh	6,449 kWh
Percentage change 2004-05 to 2006-07	-7%	-7%	-11%
Water consumption per student FTE*	7.6 m³	11.5 m³	25.0 m³
Percentage change 2004-05 to 2006-07	4%	1%	2%
CO_2 emissions per student FTE*	643 kg	863 kg	1,593 kg
Percentage change 2004-05 to 2006-07	-4%	-12%	-15%

*FTE: full-time equivalent

[30] 'High performance buildings: the business case for universities and colleges' is available at www.heepi.org.uk

[31] The Budget can be read in full at www.hm-treasury.gov.uk under Budget.

provide benchmarks that institutions can use – the median institution has 8.1 m^2 of non-residential space per full-time student, but the lower quartile has 5.8 m^2 while the upper quartile has 11.2 m^2. There are many reasons for the variations, including building age and the needs of particular subjects, but it is clear that there is potential for space to be used more efficiently[32].

63. The UK Higher Education Space Management Group produced a report on the role of design in space efficiency[33]. Among the findings were the importance of designing spaces capable of being used for different activities and making active use of common areas. This work is being continued through projects at Loughborough[34] and Lincoln[35] supported by HEFCE's Leadership, Governance and Management (LGM) Fund. We will seek to understand better how institutions are performing and to maintain focus on space management through the Capital Investment Framework.

Action: We will communicate the link between efficient use of space and environmental sustainability, promote understanding of how institutions are performing and disseminate good practice. A review of the work of the UK Higher Education Space Management Group, to be commissioned in 2009, will form the basis for this.

Information technology

64. Universities and colleges are major users of information and communications technology (ICT) and have opportunities to lower the environmental impact of it. This encompasses the electricity consumed and the carbon produced by the use of ICT; the contribution that technology can make to improving productivity, using the estate more efficiently and reducing travel; and the environmental impact from procurement and disposal of equipment.

65. Information technology accounts for around 2 per cent of global carbon emissions: similar in scale to aviation, but growing more quickly. A study of a typical US data centre found that every watt of electricity saved by more efficient computing created additional savings of 1.84 watts from the consequent reduction in power and cooling requirements. The Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) is running a project on managing environmentally sustainable ICT (SusteIT)[36] and is also funding some large-scale 'institutional exemplar' projects which address aspects of the 'green' ICT agenda. For example, automatic powering-down of networked desktops at the University of Oxford will lead to estimated savings of 1,621 tonnes of CO_2 per year.

66. SusteIT is working with the University of Sheffield to develop a tool for measuring the footprint of ICT energy and carbon consumption in a higher education body. The team anticipate an average reduction in computer energy consumption of around 50 per cent and a reduction in CO_2 emissions of up to 1,500 tonnes per year, saving the university around £250,000 each year. They will make the methodology and software freely available so that other UK institutions can follow suit, leading to nationally significant CO_2 emission reductions.

Action: We will continue to support the work of JISC and others to minimise the environmental impact of ICT use and to maximise the contribution that ICT can make to sustainable development more widely.

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[32] Figures from 'Performance in higher education estates: EMS annual report 2007' (HEFCE 2008/41).

[33] 'Promoting space efficiency in building design' (March 2006) is available at www.smg.ac.uk under Reports/tools.

[34] 'Innovative, effective, enjoyable? Creating the evidence base to deliver productive academic workplaces.' Further information is available at www.academicworkspace.com

[35] 'Learning landscapes: clearing pathways and making space – involving academics in leadership, governance and management of estates in higher education.' Further information is available at http://learninglandscapes.lincoln.ac.uk

[36] For more information see www.susteit.org.uk

Procurement

67. A university's procurement policy is one of its strongest ways of supporting sustainability. English higher education spends over £8 billion a year on non-pay costs, and how that money is spent can have a great social and environmental impact.

68. The Government published its strategy for sustainable procurement, 'Procuring the future'[37], in 2006. 'Procuring the future' is designed to help the UK become a European leader in the field, with a flexible, five-stage framework setting out the actions that public sector organisations should adopt to improve the sustainability of their procurement policies. We encourage and support institutions' adoption of the principles of the flexible framework as an approach to sustainable procurement.

69. HEFCE participated in the steering group for the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges' (EAUC's) sustainable procurement project[38]. The project, funded by the Department for the Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), worked with 17 universities and colleges that are introducing sustainable procurement within their institutions.

70. There is a need to promote a wider understanding of the impact of procurement decisions on sustainable development. We will continue to work with sector bodies to support sustainable procurement, in particular through UUK's Strategic Procurement Group, which provides strategic direction, and the Association of University Procurement Officers' (AUPO's) Sustainable Purchasing Group.

Action: We will work with UUK's Strategic Procurement Group and AUPO's Sustainable Purchasing Group to encourage sustainable procurement.

71. Article 5 of the EU Energy Services Directive came into effect in May 2008. This requires the implementation of cost-effective sustainable procurement and energy efficiency measures. The public sector is called upon to lead by example and in practice, this means that equipment and vehicles should conform to the energy efficiency specifications detailed in DEFRA's guide 'Buy sustainable – quick wins'[39]. The agreements for implementation provide discretion on how organisations deal with the requirements[40].

Action: We will work with the Department of Energy and Climate Change, the UUK Strategic Procurement Group and others to determine the best approach to implementing and monitoring the requirements of Article 5 of the EU Energy Services Directive.

Support role 3

Sharing good practice and supporting the development of good practice where none exists

72. In this section, we consider the value of universities and colleges learning from each other, and how HEFCE can support them in doing so. We look at the holistic approach to sustainable development, curriculum and teaching issues, spreading and developing good practice, and best practice in carbon management.

Whole-institution approach

73. Some universities have adopted a holistic approach to sustainable development, embedding it across the board, from teaching and research, through campus facilities to work with the wider community. The strategic review found different attitudes to the inclusion of sustainable

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37 'Procuring the future – Sustainable Procurement Task Force National Action Plan' (2006) is available at www.defra.gov.uk/sustainable/government under Publications.

38 For more information see www.eauc.org.uk under Projects.

39 'Quick wins' specify environmental criteria across a wide range of product groups. The minimum requirements are based on the market average level for each product group and have been market-evaluated to ensure availability. Further information is available at www.defra.gov.uk/sustainable/government/what/priority/consumption-production/quickwins

40 For information on the UK approach to implementation, see www.defra.gov.uk/environment/climate/uk/energy

development in university or college missions. There was no evidence of a systematic relationship between the existence of such plans and policies and the strength of sustainable development activity within universities or colleges; some without such plans were relatively active, while others were not. However, where an institution promoted a sustainable development plan across its activities, that activity was more likely to have a greater coherence[41]. We feel that further research is needed to investigate the mechanisms and benefits of incorporating sustainable development in institutional missions, strategic plans and policies.

> **Action:** We will explore with the sector the mechanisms and benefits of incorporating sustainable development in institutional missions, strategic plans and other policies.

Developing curricula and pedagogy

> 'Sustainable development principles must lie at the core of the education system, such that schools, colleges and universities become showcases of sustainable development among the communities that they serve.'
> ('Securing the future: delivering the UK's sustainable development strategy')

74. It remains our view that the greatest contribution that universities and colleges can make to sustainable development is through the values, skills and knowledge that students learn and put into practice. The HEA's ESD project[42] aims to help institutions and subject communities develop curricula and pedagogy that will give students the skills and knowledge to live and work sustainably.

> **Action:** We will continue to work with the HEA directorate to support the work of the ESD project and to encourage the Academy and its Subject Centres to recognise education for sustainable development as a cross-cutting priority programme area.

Building and sharing good practice

75. A substantial body of good practice already exists but we are keen that the sector continues to develop new ideas and approaches. So we will promote the take-up of good practice from other sectors and facilitate the development of effective practice where none exists. In particular we will help institutions explore how sustainable development can be embedded within management and operating systems.

76. We work with the Government and higher education bodies which are promoting sustainable development. DIUS has made sustainable development an important part of our grant letter[43].

77. Among our partners are the Association of University Directors of Estates (AUDE), which has published research on the legacy of the 1960s estate with a particular focus on sustainability, and AUPO which helps its members to realise the benefits of sustainable procurement by providing guidance and toolkits to aid sustainable purchasing policies and practice. We also work closely with EAUC[44], the sector body and champion for sustainable development.

78. We are funding several sustainable development projects through special funding initiatives, such as the LGM Fund, the Strategic Development Fund (SDF), CETLs and the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF). Information on these projects was contained in Annex B of our

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[41] See footnote 3.

[42] For more information see www.heacademy.ac.uk under Our work/Supporting Learning/Sustainability.

[43] Annual grant letters can be read at www.hefce.ac.uk under Finance & assurance/Finance and funding/Grant letter from Secretary of State.

[44] For more information on the EAUC, see www.eauc.org.uk

consultation document (HEFCE 2008/18). Through the consultation we received requests for guidance on specific areas such as whole-institution approaches to the 'sustainable university', workplace well-being, ethical investment policies, community engagement, corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the potential conflict between sustainable development and other agendas (internationalisation, for example). We welcome further applications to the LGM Fund and SDF for projects in these or other areas of sustainable development.

> **Action:** We will continue to work with sector bodies to facilitate the building and dissemination of good practice by funding projects related to sustainable development through the SDF, the LGM Fund and other appropriate funding streams.

79. HEFCE has developed a Sustainable Development Resource Guide[45] on its web-site with links to hundreds of resources and examples of good practice from universities and colleges. We will continue to maintain this site but recognise that sector bodies provide similar resources and we will periodically review the need for our site and explore alternatives with sector bodies.

80. We received a database containing information about sustainability teaching and research, as part of the strategic review. These provide only a snapshot of activity in the sector but they could provide valuable resources for institutions to learn from each other.

> **Action**: In partnership with sector bodies, we will consider updating the teaching and research databases. We will investigate an effective method for institutions to learn from each other in these areas.

Recognising good practice

81. The Green Gown Awards, organised by the HEFCE-funded HEEPI project[46], celebrate positive actions to achieve sustainable higher and further education, with particular emphasis on environmental improvement. The awards recognise work at further education and smaller HE colleges, continuous improvement, course content (degrees and vocational skills), energy and water efficiency, student initiatives and sustainable construction.

82. The Sound Impact Awards scheme[47], organised by the National Union of Students Services Ltd (NUSSL), has been successful in reducing the environmental impact of students' unions. The scheme facilitates new, collaborative relations between students' unions and their institutions, which can play an important role in wider environmental initiatives.

> **Action:** We will continue to support the Green Gown and Sound Impact Awards.

Students

83. The student body is a valuable partner, able to play an important role in promoting sustainable development and encouraging behavioural change. There are numerous case studies of students successfully delivering change, many of which revolve around environmental campaigns led by students through their students' union. The National Union of Students (NUS) and NUSSL run a range of innovative environmental programmes. For example, the Carbon Academy[48] is a project funded by the Carbon Trust that seeks to reduce the collective carbon footprint of student unions by 5,800 tonnes of CO_2 per year through training and best practice in energy management.

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[45] HEFCE's Sustainable Development Resource Guide is available at www.hefce.ac.uk under Leadership, governance & management/Sustainable development/Resource guide.

[46] For more information on the Green Gown Awards see www.heepi.org.uk

[47] For more information on the Sound Impact Awards see www.nussl.co.uk under Ethical & Environmental.

[48] For more information on the Carbon Academy, see www.nussl.co.uk under Ethical & Environmental.

Carbon management

84. Climate change is at the heart of national and international concerns about sustainable development. The UK Stern Review and the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change have both highlighted the urgency of reducing carbon emissions to reduce the effects of climate change on the planet. Energy use in English universities currently results in 1.6 million tonnes of CO_2 with energy bills totalling £250 million a year[49]. There is both potential and a pressing need to reduce these figures.

85. In November 2008 the UK Government raised the climate change target to at least an 80 per cent cut in CO_2 emissions by 2050. We believe that universities and colleges should take a lead in this area: doing so would bring environmental benefits, financial savings, and enhance the sector's reputation. The Government's 2008 grant letter to HEFCE[50] makes clear the importance of universities and colleges in meeting the target. Aiming to meet the national target early would provide a strong case for further infrastructure funding and real kudos for the sector.

86. Our key performance target (KPT) 15 includes setting a realistic sector target for carbon reductions which is sufficient to ensure satisfactory progress towards reducing carbon emissions by 60 per cent against 1990 levels by 2050 and at least 26 per cent by 2020. The Government's 2009 grant letter to HEFCE requested the target be upgraded to 80 per cent by 2050 and this change will be updated in our next strategic plan.

87. Our consultation demonstrated a high level of support for the development of a sector strategy for carbon with almost 70 per cent of respondents agreeing. In addition, 45 per cent of respondents believe that the sector could meet the 2050 target early. We want to develop a target in collaboration with the sector and have commissioned work to develop a carbon reduction target and strategy for HE in England. The work will include establishing a 1990 baseline and sector level targets, forming a strategy to achieve targets and developing subsequent guidance. HEFCE will consult the sector on the proposed target and strategy in May 2009. We will implement any appropriate policy responses following this.

88. There are other imperatives, too. Financial instruments are being used to reduce carbon emissions. Some universities are required to participate in the European Union Emissions Trading Scheme[51], enabling them to sell surplus tonnes of CO_2. Up to 80 universities and colleges are likely to be within the scope of the Carbon Reduction Commitment[52], a UK-wide scheme to reduce emissions from energy use by large organisations whose annual half-hourly metered electricity use is above 6,000 megawatt-hours.

89. Few institutions fully understand the nature of their carbon emissions. Several HEIs have expressed an interest in undertaking a project exploring carbon footprinting with the aim of developing an appropriate model for the sector. We wish to support a project of this type to enhance the sector's understanding,

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[49] Figures are from Estate Management Statistics.

[50] See footnote 43.

[51] For more information on the EU Emissions Trading Scheme, see www.defra.gov.uk under Climate change/Emissions trading.

[52] For more information on the Carbon Reduction Commitment, see www.defra.gov.uk under Climate change/Action in the UK/Business.

resulting in more effective management of its carbon emissions. It would be possible to build on work of this kind through a model predicting the level of carbon that individual HEIs would be expected to produce, based on their student numbers, subject mix and other relevant factors.

90. The Revolving Green Fund (RGF) will provide repayable grants to HEIs in England for projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including CO_2. The £30 million fund is a partnership between HEFCE and Salix Finance Limited. We plan to launch a second round of the institutional small projects strand of the RGF in February 2009.

> **Action:** We will use the RGF to increase the implementation of carbon reduction projects.

91. The Carbon Trust has recruited universities and colleges to take part in its Higher Education Carbon Management (HECM) programme[53], designed to help universities manage their carbon emissions better. Sixty universities participated in the first four phases of the programme. There is a particular focus on reducing building- and transport-related emissions. Participants receive consultant support to help analyse their carbon footprint and identify ways of managing carbon emissions. Universities are also working towards the Carbon Trust Standard[54], which certifies that an organisation has reduced its carbon footprint and is committed to making further reductions year on year.

> **Action:** We will continue to support the Carbon Trust's HECM programme through participation on its steering group.

Support role 4

Rewarding more sustainable behaviour

92. In this section, we examine the business case for sustainable development; consider how sustainability can be built into estate management; discuss the need for better reporting; look at the role of research; and report on HEFCE's own in-house work to improve sustainability.

Business case

93. Helping the environment can also be good for business. Rewards for adopting sustainable practices will often come directly. For example, carbon management initiatives often result in direct financial savings with further benefits from carbon trading.

94. Environmental policies also affect student choices. Students increasingly ask their chosen universities about their sustainability performance and for some this is a factor in choosing an institution. In the Future Leaders Survey of 25,000 university applicants in 2007, 41 per cent thought personal carbon quotas would be good for them personally, and nearly half thought these would benefit society as a whole[55]. However, the rewards for adopting sustainable practices are not always so clear-cut. Through consultations, institutions have told us that they would value more explicit information on the benefits.

> **Action:** We will explore and publicise the financial and reputational benefits to HEIs from sustainable development.

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[53] For more information see www.carbontrust.co.uk under Solutions/Public sector carbon management.

[54] For more information see www.carbontruststandard.com

[55] See footnote 28.

More sustainable approach to managing the estate

95. Universities and colleges can cut their carbon emissions through better management of their estates. The 2008 HEFCE grant letter[56] is clear that this is now expected by Government. The Secretary of State wrote: 'Over the spending review, all institutions in receipt of capital funding should have plans to reduce carbon emissions, and performance against these plans should be a factor in future capital allocations.' HEFCE will work with the sector to assist in fulfilling this requirement and our report back to the Secretary of State sets out our plans for this[57]. The work to develop a carbon reduction strategy and target (paragraphs 85-87 of this document) will include developing guidance for institutions in preparing carbon plans. This will complement existing guidance and programmes, such as the Carbon Trust's HECM programme.

Action: We will publish guidance for institutions on developing carbon management plans in summer 2009. We will then ask institutions to produce plans that have clearance from a governing body or its relevant committee and to publish these plans and subsequent progress against them.

96. HEFCE's Capital Investment Framework[58], which was the basis for the distribution of capital funds in 2008, promoted sustainable development. The expectation was that projects should support environmental sustainability through the efficient use of space, reduced environmental impact and the promotion of biodiversity. The framework relied on high-level metrics, self-assessment through strategic questions and the AUDE self-assessment tool which contained extensive coverage of sustainable development. However, when the Capital Investment Framework process is repeated, sustainable development requirements will be strengthened to reflect progress being made and rising expectations.

Action: We will revise the Capital Investment Framework process to strengthen the sustainable development requirements. In the next round of capital funding we will link funding to performance against carbon management plans as follows:

- the metrics will include a further metric on carbon emissions, probably relative to income

- the strategic questions will be amended to include a more specific and demanding requirement in relation to carbon

- institutions will be required to report on progress in implementing the carbon plans, and on the results achieved.

97. The link between capital funding and environmental performance is already an important consideration with new buildings, when refurbishing existing ones and in the procurement of new equipment. A Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM)[59] can be used to assess the environmental performance of any type of building. Using this methodology, a building can be rated based on its environmental impacts, including management, health and wellbeing, energy, transport, water, waste, land use, and ecology and pollution.

98. Together with AUDE and the other funding councils, we are funding the development of a BREEAM template specific to higher education. The 'GreenBuild' project is being funded through our LGM Fund and managed by HEEPI. This project has two strands: developing an environmental assessment model for higher education buildings and encouraging energy-efficient laboratories. The environmental assessment model will be based on the BREEAM industry standard and be completed by July 2009. It will facilitate the assessment of most types of university building, reducing the cost of assessments and providing more certainty about

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[56] See footnote 43.

[57] HEFCE's response to the grant letter can be read at www.hefce.ac.uk under Finance & assurance/Finance and funding/Grant letter from Secretary of State.

[58] For more information see HEFCE Circular letter 21/2007.

[59] For more information see www.breeam.org

the performance standards that need to be achieved. The laboratory strand recognises the resource intensity of laboratory buildings and their wide variations in environmental performance. It will concentrate on design, management practices and user awareness.

> **Action**: Once the higher education BREEAM scheme is available we will consider requiring specific levels of performance for capital projects (new builds and refurbishments) which are supported with HEFCE funding. We will make this decision by the end of 2009 for implementation in the next round of capital funding.

99. There are many examples of good practice in the sector. These are increasing but we know from the Strategic Review of Sustainable Development that this is not widespread and often relies on the enthusiasm of individuals rather than being embedded within institutional planning and management processes. A study of practice and case studies may help institutions to identify opportunities.

> **Action:** We will explore the potential for a survey and comparative study of sustainable development practice in operational management.

Reporting on sustainable development

100. In our last strategic statement, we explained the value of reporting on sustainable development:

a. It allows comparison with other organisations, which is motivating – whether because of a sense of achievement or by providing a clearer sense of opportunities for improvement.

b. It enables us to demonstrate to stakeholders that the sector is making progress in this area.

c. It may help promote strategic change at the institutional level.

101. These reasons remain important. We funded the Higher Education Benchmarking Project[60] which piloted one benchmarking methodology provided by Business in the Community (BiTC). It benchmarked 25 universities on their environmental and corporate responsibility performance. While universities with a history of benchmarking achieved a high environment index score, most universities were not as strong as the best UK businesses. However, the project showed that the BiTC Environment and Corporate Responsibility indices offer much to the HE sector. We support this voluntary scheme because it is consistent with the aspirations set out in our 2005 action plan[61].

102. We are interested in the extent to which universities and colleges publicly report their sustainability performance on issues such as carbon reduction, waste management, water use and biodiversity in their annual or sustainable development reports, or on their web-sites. We will discuss these issues with the sector to understand the potential for benchmarking and provide case studies that others may follow.

> **Action:** We will work with the EAUC and BiTC to support the development of 'Universities that count'[62], a UK-wide, sector-specific version of the BiTC environmental and corporate responsibility indices.

103. The strategic review published in January 2008 provides a picture of sustainable development activity in the sector. We will undertake another

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[60] For more information on the benchmarking project, see www.eauc.org.uk under Resource Bank/Resources/HE Benchmarking Report.

[61] Specifically paragraph 60: 'Our aspirations for any mechanism are that it must be transparent and generate consistent and auditable results, but at the same time be consistent with our principles of engagement. In particular it should respect institutional autonomy and diversity, complement institutions' existing systems and structures, and facilitate a process of genuine reflection and improvement – not one of secrecy and competition.'

[62] For more information on 'Universities that count', see www.eauc.org.uk under Projects/Universities that Count.

strategic review in 2010-11 to demonstrate progress, reviewing the methodology to ensure that it is appropriate and effective.

> **Action:** We will undertake another strategic review in 2010-11 to demonstrate progress by the sector.

Research

104.   Over two-thirds of universities are engaged in sustainable development research, ranging from the work of a few researchers to multi-disciplinary programmes involving hundreds of researchers. The strategic review concluded that the structure of the Research Assessment Exercise did not encourage submissions relating to sustainable development, because it was not explicitly identified[63]. HEFCE is developing new arrangements for quality assessment and funding to be introduced after 2008 – the Research Excellence Framework (REF)[64]. There is an opportunity to consider how the REF can be used effectively to support interdisciplinary research.

105.   The strategic review noted the difficulties of measuring research activity in sustainable development, suggesting that new mechanisms may be needed. We will explore whether we can measure research activity in sustainable development as part of the 2010-11 strategic review.

> **Action:** When designing the REF, we will consider how it can be used to support interdisciplinary research of relevance to major world challenges.

Actions for HEFCE

106.   We believe that we should lead by example. So we will continue to improve HEFCE's own performance through initiatives such as maintaining certification to the ISO14001 environmental standard[65] and the Carbon Trust Standard[66], reviewing and implementing our CSR policy and targets and publishing an annual report on our work in this area[67]. Our CSR policy includes objectives and targets in relation to:

*   business ethics

*   managing our environmental impacts

*   procurement

*   our people

*   the community

*   working with the sector.

> **Action:** We will continue to improve HEFCE's own performance in CSR and report publicly on our progress each year.

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[63] See footnote 3.

[64] For more information on the REF see www.hefce.ac.uk under Research.

[65] ISO14001 specifies the requirements for an environmental management system, and applies to those environmental aspects over which the organisation has control and influence.

[66] See footnote 24.

[67] See footnote 25.

Annex A

Members of HEFCE's Sustainable Development Steering Group during the development of this strategy

Dr Geoffrey Copland (Chair)	Former Vice-Chancellor, University of Westminster
Jamie Agombar	Ethical and Environmental Manager, NUS Services Ltd
David Allen	Registrar and Secretary, University of Exeter Association of Heads of University Administration
Roger Bond	Director of Estates, University of East Anglia Association of University Directors of Estates
Phil Case	Assistant Director, Sustainability and Climate Change, PricewaterhouseCoopers
Alice Hynes	Chief Executive Officer, GuildHE
Polly Courtice	Director, Cambridge Programme for Industry
Steve Egan	Deputy Chief Executive, HEFCE
John Ellison	Head of Formal Learning, Eden Project
Andrew Farrell	Director of Finance and Facilities, London School of Economics British Universities Finance Directors Group
Olivia Grant	Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council, University of Newcastle Deputy Chair, Committee of University Chairs
Ann Finlayson	Commissioner for Education, Sustainable Development Commission
Alex McFarlane	Head of Purchasing, Nottingham Trent University Association of University Procurement Officers
Sheri-Leigh Miles	Ecoversity Student Engagement Co-ordinator, University of Bradford Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges
Sara Parkin	Founder Director, Forum for the Future
Professor Gerald Pillay	Vice-Chancellor and Rector, Liverpool Hope University
Professor William Scott	Director, Centre for Research in Education and the Environment, University of Bath
Chris Shiel	Head of Learning and Teaching, Institute of Business and Law, Bournemouth University
Dr Stephen Sterling	Schumacher Reader in Education for Sustainability, Centre for Sustainable Futures, University of Plymouth Senior Advisor for Education for Sustainable Development, Higher Education Academy
Professor Elaine Thomas	Vice-Chancellor, University for the Creative Arts
Solitaire Townsend	Managing Director, Futerra Sustainability Communications Ltd

Annex B

Actions contained in our revised action plan

Support role 1

Engaging with stakeholders to bring about policy synergies on sustainable development

a. We will support development work with Universities UK and GuildHE to identify ways in which the sector can make a public commitment to sustainable development.

b. We are reviewing the work of the Higher Education Academy, sustainable development-related Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and the teaching baseline produced by the strategic review to investigate the effectiveness of existing curricula and pedagogy, and how HEFCE can best support education for sustainable development. We will review the findings to decide what further action to take in this area.

c. We will look for ways to support and/or work with UN initiatives including the Decade for Education for Sustainable Development and Regional Centres of Expertise in Education for Sustainable Development.

d. We will promote sustainable development within the employer engagement agenda.

e. We will work with employers, students and professional bodies to understand their requirements in relation to sustainable development and explore what is needed to meet them. We will then decide what further action to take in this area.

f. We will work with Regional Development Agencies and other regional bodies to facilitate collaboration between higher education institutions and their local communities to promote sustainable development.

g. We will work with existing and potential funders of sustainable development research to explore how the role of research can be strengthened to help meet the challenges of sustainable development.

Support role 2

Building the capacity of people to manage sustainable development

a. We will continue to support the Leadership Foundation in embedding sustainable development in its courses and programmes.

b. We will seek out examples of good practice from other countries and sectors and implement them as appropriate.

c. We will continue to develop the Estates Management Statistics to support higher education institutions in benchmarking their performance and to drive improvement. As part of this we will develop a metric relating to construction waste and identify opportunities for other developments.

d. We will communicate the link between efficient use of space and environmental sustainability, promote understanding of how institutions are performing and disseminate good practice. A review of the work of the UK Higher Education Space Management Group, to be commissioned in 2009, will form the basis for this.

e. We will continue to support the work of the Joint Information Systems Committee and others to minimise the environmental impact of information and communications technology (ICT) use and to maximise the contribution that ICT can make to sustainable development more widely.

f. We will work with Universities UK's Strategic Procurement Group and the Association of University Procurement Officers' Sustainable Purchasing Group to encourage sustainable procurement.

g. We will work with the Department of Energy and Climate Change, the Universities UK Strategic Procurement Group and others to determine the best approach to implementing and monitoring the requirements of Article 5 of the EU Energy Services Directive.

Support role 3

Sharing good practice, or supporting the development of good practice where none exists

a. We will explore with the sector the mechanisms and benefits of incorporating sustainable development in institutional missions, strategic plans and other policies.

b. We will continue to work with the Higher Education Academy directorate in order to support the work of the Education for Sustainable Development project and to encourage the Academy and its Subject Centres to recognise education for sustainable development as a cross-cutting priority programme area.

c. We will continue to work with sector bodies to facilitate the building and dissemination of good practice by funding projects related to sustainable development through the Strategic Development Fund, the Leadership, Governance and Management Fund and other appropriate funding streams.

d. In partnership with sector bodies, we will consider updating the teaching and research databases. We will investigate an effective method for institutions to learn from each other in these areas.

e. We will continue to support the Green Gown and Sound Impact Awards.

f. We will work with student organisations, including the National Union of Students (NUS) and NUS Services Ltd, to promote behavioural change among students and support initiatives that seek to harness the student resource for positive environmental initiatives at the campus level.

g. We will explore how we can create a carbon reduction culture and act to help the sector play its part in meeting national climate change targets. The first stage of this is to consult and agree with the sector a carbon reduction target and strategy by autumn 2009.

h. We will use the Revolving Green Fund to increase the implementation of carbon reduction projects.

i. We will continue to support the Carbon Trust's Higher Education Carbon Management programme through participation on its steering group.

Support role 4

Rewarding more sustainable behaviour

a. We will explore and publicise the financial and reputational benefits to higher education institutions from sustainable development.

b. We will publish guidance for institutions on developing carbon management plans in summer 2009. We will then ask institutions to produce plans that have clearance from a governing body or its relevant committee and to publish these plans and subsequent progress against them.

c. We will revise the Capital Investment Framework process to strengthen the sustainable development requirements. In the next round of capital funding we will link funding to performance against carbon management plans as follows:

• the metrics will include a further metric on carbon emissions, probably relative to income

• the strategic questions will be amended to include a more specific and demanding requirement in relation to carbon

• institutions will be required to report on progress in implementing the carbon plans, and on the results achieved.

d. Once the higher education Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method scheme is available we will consider requiring specific levels of performance for capital projects (new builds and refurbishments) which are supported with HEFCE funding. We will make this decision by the end of 2009 for implementation in the next round of capital funding.

e. We will explore the potential for a survey and comparative study of sustainable development practice in operational management.

f. We will work with the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges and Business in the Community (BiTC) to support the development of 'Universities that count', a UK-wide, sector-specific version of the BiTC environmental and corporate responsibility indices.

g. We will undertake another strategic review in 2010-11 to demonstrate progress by the sector.

h. When designing the Research Excellence Framework, we will consider how it can be used to support interdisciplinary research of relevance to major world challenges.

i. We will continue to improve HEFCE's own performance in corporate social responsibility and report publicly on our progress each year.

List of abbreviations

AUDE	Association of University Directors of Estates
AUPO	Association of University Procurement Officers
BiTC	Business in the Community
BREEAM	Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method
CETL	Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning
CO$_2$	Carbon dioxide
CSR	Corporate social responsibility
DEFRA	Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DIUS	Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
EAUC	Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
FTE	Full-time equivalent
HE	Higher education
HEA	Higher Education Academy
HECM	Higher Education Carbon Management programme
HEEPI	Higher Education Environmental Performance Improvement project
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI	Higher education institution
HEIF	Higher Education Innovation Fund
ICT	Information and communications technology
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
JISC	Joint Information Systems Committee
KPT	Key performance target
kWh	Kilowatt-hours
LGM Fund	Leadership, Governance and Management Fund
NUS	National Union of Students
NUSSL	NUS Services Ltd
RCE	Regional Centre of Expertise
REF	Research Excellence Framework
SDF	Strategic Development Fund
UUK	Universities UK