
Natural and Built Environment

Three Year Work Plan 2002/03-2004/05

1. Summary

An introduction to the Natural and Built Environment Theme

Statistics on this Theme cover four main areas:

- natural environment (air, water, soil, wildlife, natural resources, waste, land cover);
- housing (houses, households, housing finance, homelessness);
- construction (output, new orders, employment, building materials, price and cost indices); and
- land use and planning (development control, land use change and stock, small area retail turnover, floor-space, town centres, green belt).

The main government departments included in the theme are DEFRA, DTLR, ONS, SE, Welsh Assembly Government, Northern Ireland Department of the Environment and DTI. Changes in the machinery of government mean that the new DEFRA, is now involved in the work of the theme. In addition, the DTI, already part of the TWG, has now taken on responsibility for the Construction Industry.

Data are collected from a variety of sources, including businesses, local authorities, and individuals. Much information on the natural environment is collected by research and consultancy organisations – or, in the case of wildlife data, voluntary groups – outside government, or by regulatory environment agencies. The role of government statisticians is to bring this information together in a way that provides an overview of the state of the environment, and its interactions with socio-economic activity. Across the Theme, work continues to bring more datasets and outputs within NS.

The Theme includes data used to support many areas of policy development and monitoring in UK government, in particular for regeneration, social inclusion and urban and rural issues. For example:

- housing stock condition data are used to generate a baseline and monitor developments on the Decent Homes Implementation Plan and the aim of reducing by 33% the number of households living in non-decent social housing;

- land use planning data is used to monitor developments toward achieving the government's aims on regeneration;
- environmental statistics are used to monitor advancement towards improvement in air quality and improvements on the aims of the Waste Strategy; and
- Council Tax data on vacant homes can be used to identify areas with major problems from lack of demand. At the other end of the spectrum, regular monitoring detects problems of homelessness in areas of high demand.

The primary dissemination routes for the Theme are the departmental websites, which usually contain press releases, datasets, and many of the publications from the theme. The National Statistics website also contains information and maintains links to information on the relevant departmental websites. Data are widely disseminated to reach interested users in the general public and in other areas outside government, including environmental organisations, the EU, European Environment Agency, the Office of Economy Co-operation and Development and United Nation bodies. National Statistics representatives work closely with international organisations such as Eurostat, London Group on Environmental Accounting and the European Environment Agency.

The UK has an increasing number of international commitments to provide environmental data. It is also involved in a number of initiatives to develop environmental indicators at international level; for example the EU is developing a set of headline environmental indicators, following UK and German initiatives. The Theme welcomes user input to its business planning decisions. User consultation is carried out through various formal groups consisting of data providers and data users, for example, the Environment Statistics Advisory Group, and CLIP groups such as the Housing Sub Group. Officials in local authorities are consulted directly when significant changes to statistical returns are proposed. When consultation exercises are undertaken, consultation documents can be found in the 'Your Views' section of the *Natural and Built Environment* pages on the NS website.

Brief Overview of the Theme's Work Programme

The key developments across the Theme include:

- quality improvements, such as increases in sample sizes and the disaggregation of data, in conjunction with the emphasis on better regional and rural statistics, will aid policy development and monitoring in areas such as regeneration and social inclusion;
- developments of better links between existing data sources on land use and property to contribute to analysis at central and local government level for better use of land;
- increased emphasis on regional and rural issues, in keeping with some of the aims of social exclusion policy in the development of rural areas, and improved analysis for urban and rural areas following a review of urban/rural definitions. The reorganisation of the machinery of government has left the Theme in an excellent position to address this area;
- increasing use of electronic data collection and expanding and improving current surveys, in many cases with the intention of bringing more surveys into scope for National Statistics;
- greater availability of information and wider dissemination via the Internet; and
- increasing involvement in international considerations across the Theme.

Examples of particular initiatives are:

- Natural Environment:
 - DEFRA are continuing to work to improve participation in the survey of Expenditure by UK Industry on Environmental Protection;
 - ONS are extending UK environmental accounts to incorporate new data on solid waste and water resources;
 - DEFRA and the EA (England and Wales) are working together to review the requirements for data on industrial and commercial waste and to inform the design of the second survey.

- Housing:
 - increased sample sizes for both the English House Conditions survey and the Survey of Mortgage Lenders for the UK to improve breadth and quality;
 - various initiatives underway aimed at extending and improving publications for England and Wales;
 - appointment of a local authority secondee to take forward development of small area housing data for Neighbourhood Statistics;
 - Quality Review of the Survey of English Housing;
 - the SE are developing a system to capture homelessness data from local authorities;
 - the Northern Ireland Department for Social Development intending to review available housing statistics and propose improvements.
- Planning and Land Use:
 - continued use of new methodology to produce more reliable Green Belt statistics for England;
 - DTLR investigating opportunities to improve timeliness and coverage of Land Use Change Statistics for England;
 - working with Local Authorities to improve the availability of information on brownfield (previously developed) land and other urban capacity;
 - using the new Ordnance Survey Digital National Framework to create a new baseline for the National Land Use Database (England);
 - DTLR are continuing to develop and improve floorspace statistics for England and Wales.
- Construction:
 - developments to address specific policy initiatives that particularly impact onto construction in the UK;

- taking forward recommendations from the NS Quality review on UK construction statistics;
- transferring construction output and new orders information completely from Standard Statistical Areas to Government Office Regions for Great Britain.

These initiatives, and others, are explained in more detail in the following sections.

2. Strategic Influences and Policy Drivers

Cross cutting themes

There are a number of policies and initiatives that impact across all Themes. These include strategies for Sustainable Development and Neighbourhood Statistics (further information on these strategies can be found in the relevant chapters elsewhere in this programme) and regeneration/social inclusion. Regeneration and social inclusion issues are covered particularly in the emphasis on housing and land use information whilst sustainable development is additionally reflected air quality and climate change. Other policies that impact all themes are those that consider specific geographical areas, in particular those relating to regional strategy and urban/rural issues. Developments in all the other Themes will contribute to analysis for these policies.

Specific policies

In addition there are policies and initiatives that are particularly, and in some cases uniquely, relevant to the Natural and Built Environment Theme. These originate both internally from the UK and externally from Europe and include UK waste strategy, European Union Waste Statistics Regulation, aggregates tax and its impact on the construction industry and EU Short Term Indicators Regulation, which has implications for statistics on the construction industry.

Underlying strategies for developing statistics

National Statistics strategies also place influences on the activity and development of the Theme. Strategies on Neighbourhood statistics and the e-business agenda must be considered in planning development as well as more general strategies which encourage maintaining and improving quality and promoting efficiency and value for money.

3. Planned Developments

Outputs

Natural Environment

Environmental Statistics Outputs

DEFRA are now updating the *Digest of Environmental Statistics* (UK where possible) on a rolling basis throughout the year as data on complete topics become available. They also intend the first phase of the Environmental Statistics core database to be fully operational during 2002, improving data accessibility and dissemination of information.

Agencies and other organisations outside government collect much of the data for environmental statistics. DEFRA continues to work with these organisations to confirm where appropriate the status of the key datasets as National Statistics.

The SE will now update datasets held in *Scottish Environmental Statistics Online* on a rolling basis throughout the year.

The NAW proposes to develop and publish indicators of Sustainable Development for Wales. The Assembly will also be assessing the scope for producing additional information about the natural environment in Wales.

Housing

Housing Data for Neighbourhood Statistics

A local authority secondee has been appointed within the Housing Statistics Division to take forward development of small area housing data for Neighbourhood Statistics.

Housing Statistics

An annual *Housing Statistics* publication was launched in 2000 covering England and, where possible, the UK and Great Britain. DTLR plans to extend the use of the Internet and ensure that long run series are available electronically, where possible.

The NAW is developing the dissemination of statistical information, including housing statistics, over the Internet.

Housing Statistics Quarterly

DTLR will develop this as purely Internet publication, updating information for England and, where possible, up to the level of the UK and Great Britain, as it becomes available.

Housing Statistical Releases

The range of their statistical releases produced by DTLR for England will be expanded to inform customers of other housing statistics publications.

Housing Statistics Summaries

DTLR will continue to increase the number of these publications that are designed to summarise the statistics available on particular housing topics.

Survey of English Housing

Following last year's plan, a study is now being carried out into restructuring publications to improve the timeliness of results. In 2001 the main tables were published on the Internet some five months before the main report was published. Consideration is still being given to replacing the current single main report with separate reports, examining particular aspects of housing, phased throughout the year.

The Survey of English Housing (together with the English House Conditions Survey) provides many of the key statistics to inform housing and related policies in England. For example the Survey of English Housing gathers information on the housing circumstances of households in England, which can then be used as a means of analysing and monitoring social inclusion. The Survey of English housing is also undergoing a Quality Review. The review process, begun in 2001/02, is set to be completed in 2002/03.

Housing Statistics IT strategy review in DTLR

With the completion of the implementation of the new housing statistics IT strategy, further developments in data analysis, presentation and dissemination through the increased use of GIS and direct web publishing of databases will be possible. The other aim remains to set up a database of housing statistics that will be updated as information is released and accessible to all users via the Internet to improve dissemination.

Planning and Land Use***Town Centre Statistics***

Employment, turnover and floorspace data have been combined to model areas of town centre activity. A set of statistics will be produced for the area of activity as defined by the model. This work has been done for London. This will be extended to England and published during the year.

Development Control Statistics

Publication of statistics of the speed of planning decisions by local authorities will be extended to monitor performance on the new set of targets proposed in the Planning Green Paper published in December 2001.

Construction***Large Contracts Bulletin***

DTI plans to place the Large Contracts Bulletin on the Internet during 2002-03.

Construction Statistical Releases

DTI intend to continue to develop *the Construction New Orders and Output Statistical Releases* for Great Britain to improve the presentation and increase the amount of information available.

Monthly Bulletin of Building Materials and Components

Following recommendations from the industry, the definition of the table on imports and exports for the UK in the *Monthly Bulletin of Building Materials and Components* is being revised.

Sources**Natural Environment*****Expenditure by UK Industry on Environmental Protection***

DEFRA is continuing to work hard to improve participation in the survey of *Expenditure by UK Industry on Environmental Protection*. This is an area where practice is developing and DEFRA is participating in work at EU level aimed at developing definitions and guidance.

Waste

DEFRA in consultation with the Devolved Administrations and the Environment Agency is continuing to look at the need for changes to meet the requirements for implementing the proposed EU Waste Statistics Regulation, as mentioned in last year's plan.

A joint DEFRA/EA study is looking at requirements for data on industrial and commercial waste in England and Wales. It will help inform the design of future surveys, building on the first EA survey in 1998/99.

The annual *Survey of Municipal Waste Management Statistics* is now in its sixth year and DEFRA is looking at ways to improve the database and as a result the quality of analyses which can be produced.

Public Attitudes Surveys

The most recent survey of attitudes to the environment in England and Wales will be published in early 2002, and includes information to deliver sustainable development indicators, promised in the *1999 Sustainable Development Indicators report*. DEFRA will start planning for the next survey, provisionally scheduled for 2004/05.

The Scottish Executive will be conducting an attitude survey in Scotland and plan to publish results by the autumn of 2002.

UK Environmental accounts

The UK environmental accounts will be extended by ONS to incorporate new data on solid waste and water resources and will be developed to provide the basis for detailed measures of resource productivity and use. The indicators will build upon an initial project funded by DEFRA which developed a material flow account for the UK. These developments are currently within budget, although they are dependent upon the availability of data from other sources.

A working group has been set up to establish a remit and work programme for the development of Scottish environmental accounts.

Rural Statistics and Indicators

DEFRA will pursue development work to extend information for rural statistics and indicators (see the work programme for the Agriculture, Fishing and Forestry Theme). Urban-rural definitions are currently being examined in Northern Ireland in

a cross-departmental project aiming to report in 2002.

Housing**Housing Statistics IT Strategy Review in DTLR**

The system for collecting housing data from local authorities has now been developed to enable the uploading of data direct from spreadsheets. DTLR are looking for a partner to further develop the system and make it available to a wider set of users.

Household Projections

Contractors are now examining the different factors that influence household formation, such as headship rates and marital status, both nationally (England) and regionally. The model will also include work within the DTLR on the determinants of internal migration.

English House Condition Survey

Data from the English House Condition Survey is used to monitor the DTLR target to deliver decent social housing- a key element of social inclusion. In order to monitor this target effectively, the sample size was increased to 20,000 in 2001 and the survey will be continuous from April 2002, with an annual sample size of 8000. Although it is not at present, it remains an aim that the survey be included in the scope of National Statistics as soon as possible. This survey, together with the Survey of English Housing, provide the majority of the key statistics to inform housing and related policies, for example on regeneration and social exclusion, in England.

A Scottish House Condition Survey will be conducted in summer 2002. The survey is expected to have an achieved sample of some 15,000 dwellings.

Survey of Mortgage Lenders

The increase in the Survey of Mortgage Lenders sample size from 5% to 100% for major lenders in the UK, introduced during 2001, should be completed in 2002/03. This, together with the methodological improvements recommended by the interdepartmental group, will enable the construction of a new monthly index covering mortgage purchases from January 2002. It is intended to include cash purchases in the index once further development work has been completed.

Homelessness Statistics in Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Department for Social Development intends to review available housing statistics and propose improvements.

Homelessness Statistics in Scotland

A new electronic system is currently being developed to capture homelessness data from local authorities. The data collected under the new system, which went live at the end on 2001, will allow early reporting of application details and will enable households to be separately identified from (repeat) applications.

Homelessness Statistics in England

Improvements in the collection of information on the types of household affected by homelessness are being introduced. Work is being undertaken to improve the information available on the length of time spent by homeless households in temporary accommodation, including bed and breakfast accommodation. Changes will be made to reflect any legislative changes that are introduced.

Housing Statistics for Wales

The NAW will be producing a report reviewing housing statistics for Wales and proposing improvements following the development of the new National Housing Strategy for Wales. This will include developing local area housing data to support the ONS's Neighbourhood Statistics project (further details of the Neighbourhood Statistics project can be found earlier in the programme).

The Assembly is also likely to carry out a new Welsh Household Interview Survey. This will look at many policy issues (for example social inclusion, Welsh language and transport). It will also measure aspects of housing need in Wales, plus other areas of policy interest, such as mobility, migration, housing costs and so on. The proposed survey would also incorporate a small-scale stock condition survey and investigate energy efficiency and fuel poverty issues.

Housing Flow Statistics

A new return to collect information on dwelling stocks was introduced on a pilot basis for 2000/01 and on a final basis for 2001/02. The new return will provide better quality information by tenure on dwelling stock and completions, conversions, demolitions and changes of use of buildings in England. It will also provide information on

houses built on previously developed land, complementing the Land Use Change Statistics.

Planning and land use**Green belt statistics**

The new methodology, in which the extent of Green Belt is captured in digital form from proposals maps in development plans, continues to be used. This approach provides much more reliable figures than those previously published and therefore represents new baseline data for England. The last update was published at the end of 2001 and subsequent updates will be issued annually.

Land Use Change Statistics

These statistics, derived from Ordnance Survey data, are used to monitor the key target on the proportion of new housing built on previously developed (brownfield) land. However they are also an important source for all types of change in land use.

Further research will investigate opportunities of changes in Ordnance Survey revision practices to improve the timeliness and coverage of Land Use Change Statistics for England.

National Land Use Database

The 1998 baseline survey of previously developed (brownfield) land is to be updated with a regular annual series for England and Wales. DTLR, Local Authorities, English Partnerships and Ordnance Survey are working together to develop this database which is an important input to the identification of urban capacity.

Research is being conducted to create a much wider baseline layer of land use data, covering all land not just previously developed land, linked to a standard classification and the new Ordnance Survey's Digital National Framework. This offers the potential for a major improvement in the understanding of changes in land use at national and local level, linked to a range of other data sources.

Floor space and Retail Turnover

DTLR has recently published commercial and industrial floorspace statistics for England and Wales. These are derived from the administrative databases held by the Valuation Office Agency. It is planned to develop these statistics into an annually updated set with historical time series.

DTLR has been working with ONS to further develop the turnover information associated with the above floorspace. These datasets are two major components of a town centre model currently in development. It is planned that employment, floorspace and turnover data will be published annually within these statistically defined town centre boundaries.

Urban and Rural Definitions

The results of the current research into urban and rural definitions will be used to bring greater coherence to analysis for urban and rural area policies.

Construction

Use of ONS data for construction industry statistics

DTI will work with ONS to develop the use of the results of the new ABI. They also plan to develop the use of electronic data collection and extend the use of general electronic communication with data suppliers.

Response to Specific Policy Initiatives

Competitiveness: A Sector Competitiveness Analysis of on-site construction work is due to be undertaken.

Health and Safety: A working group has been established to look at the drivers behind construction fatalities, the New Strategic Forum will steer the group's role.

Sustainable Construction: A working group has been established with the aim of proving a business case for more sustainable construction. In addition collaborative work has begun between DTI, DEFRA, DTLR and HMT colleagues on establishing a research project looking at fiscal incentives for a more energy efficient housing stock.

Quality Development

Current National Statistics Quality Review Schedule

2002/03
Air quality and global atmosphere
Wildlife
Land use and planning

2003/04
Dwelling stock
Waste and resources

2004/05
Housing services
Water

Natural Environment

The results from the 1999 *Expenditure by UK Industry on Environmental Protection survey* have been published, but are not currently part of National Statistics as quality improvements are required. DEFRA hopes to make further analyses available, including further development of the current basic benchmarking information produced for the industry sectors.

Housing

A review of the missing value estimation procedures for housing statistics was started in late 2000 and was finished in early 2002. This should improve data quality and increase confidence in published results. Significant progress has already been made and it is intended to start implementation of the recommendations of the review immediately they are available.

Construction

The theme's *first National Statistics Quality review covering Construction Statistics* took place in 2000-01. DTI plans to take forward the recommendations of the review during 2002-03.

Geographic Coherence

Natural Environment

Geographical Breakdowns

As the 2001/02 – 2003/04 plan suggested, a greater emphasis on disaggregating environmental statistics on geographical bases emerged. For example, water quality data for the 1990s have been re-analysed to produce figures for Government Office regions and local authorities. The water quality data will be updated annually and a database published on the DEFRA website. Some figures for municipal waste management have been published on a local authority level.

Construction

Geographical Coherence

DTI plan to transfer construction output and new orders information completely from Standard Statistical Regions to Government Office Regions for Great Britain from 1 January 2002.

4. Key Changes from last year's Plan

The machinery of Government changes which took place following the election in 2001, resulted in the creation of DEFRA and DTLR from DETR and MAFF. Due to this split, the Theme has a large part of its membership and scope divided across the two departments and this incorporation of joined-up working should serve to strengthen the Theme. DEFRA and other UK Departments, with the Forestry Commission, are core members of AFF Theme, and this will help to create a bridge between the two Themes on complementary issues within, for example, transport and the environment or regional and rural affairs. The creation of DEFRA will result in closer ties between environmental, agricultural, regional and rural issues.

There has also been a greater emphasis on regional and rural issues. As the planned developments show, there has been a move to provide more statistics on a regional basis. The new rural emphasis provides a major driver to the AFF and NBE Themes, which are both well placed to address some of the issues that arise. In the feedback received from consultation, concern was expressed about the need for the inclusion of regional and rural issues, and the NBE Theme Working Group in association with the AFF Theme has recognised this. The AFF Theme will be initially taking the lead in co-ordinating the development of rural statistics. Details of early plans are given in the AFF Theme chapter. As mentioned above, DEFRA plan to pursue development work to extend information for rural statistics and indicators. In addition urban-rural definitions are being examined in Northern Ireland, with the intention of producing a report in 2002.

Having said this, there are no major changes from last year's plan that can be identified for the Theme. However, work on the National Statistics review of air quality and global atmosphere has been delayed due to staff vacancies. The work plan this year is a development of the previous year's themes and aims. The 2002/3-2004/5 plan shows how the Theme is moving towards the goals that it has set for itself.

5. International Considerations

There are many EU and other international requirements that make demands for data, some of which are legally binding. These demands continue to evolve over time and need to be met by the work of the Theme. DEFRA is currently participating in the negotiations on the new EU Waste Statistics Regulation and also in work at EU level aiming to develop definitions and guidance for the survey of Expenditure by UK Industry on Environmental Protection. Similarly, DTI will be participating in work to improve the information available across the EU covered by the Short-Term Indicators Regulation

6. Costs

For a full explanation of National Statistics costs, see Appendix B.

Theme specific expenditure is as follows:

'Projected' Resource Costs:

2002/03	£7.8m
2003/04	£7.8m

These annual estimates of 'projected' expenditure include the following expenditure on **significant developments** (i.e. over £50k):

Review of Air Quality and Global Atmosphere	2002/03	£70k
Review of Wildlife	2002/03	£70k
Review Municipal Waste Management Survey	2002/03	£70k
Material flows and resource efficiency indicators	2002/03	£60k
Review of Waste Statistics	2003/04	£60k

Please note, these figures represent **significant** developments only and will not match the total expenditure on statistical developments for the theme shown in Table 1 in Appendix B.

7. Contacts and further information

Websites

Further information on statistics covered by this Theme can be found at the following websites:

National Statistics
www.statistics.gov.uk

Department for Transport,
Local Government and the Regions
www.dtlr.gov.uk

Scottish Executive
www.scotland.gov.uk

National Assembly for Wales
www.wales.gov.uk/keypubstatisticsforwales/index.
htm

Department of Trade and Industry
www.dti.gov.uk/statistics

Department of Environment, Northern Ireland
www.doeni.gov.uk

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Welsh Assembly Government

Paul Swallow
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If you have any comments on this Theme plan, or suggestions for future programmes, please email us at:
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