



A Joint Statement on the Localism Bill: From Local to Global Sustainable Development

The UK is facing unprecedented challenges for the 21st Century - economic recovery, climate change and biodiversity loss, increased urbanisation and the need for greater social equity. The need for us to strive to achieve sustainable development and effectively address these issues has never been more pressing. An effective, strategic planning system has an essential role to play in delivering true integration of economic, social and environmental priorities and objectives at all levels.

We believe that achieving sustainable development must be at the heart of the planning system. However, there is currently no unifying statutory definition of sustainable development and often decision-makers tend to focus on one pillar (economy, environment or society), rather than integration of all three. This has led to vague duties and weak delivery on the ground.

The Localism Bill presents an opportunity to address this. A statutory definition of sustainable development will help to provide greater certainty in local decision-making and identify the common goal which we should all be working towards. It will also help make the proposed 'duty to cooperate in relation to planning of sustainable development' work in practice by identifying the purpose for cooperation, the reason why councils and communities should be working together and what they need to achieve.

The organisations listed here support the amendment of the Localism Bill to include the following definition of sustainable development to apply to planning¹:

“sustainable development” means development that meets the social, economic and environmental needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs including the application of the following principles:

- (i) living within environmental limits;
- (ii) ensuring a strong healthy and just society;
- (iii) achieving a sustainable economy;
- (iv) promoting good governance;
- (v) using sound science responsibly.”

This overarching definition can then be expanded in the National Planning Policy Framework and guidance on the duty to cooperate to provide policy and principles for practical application. At the local level, councils and communities can determine the criteria and indicators that need to be applied in their area to ensure that their communities and development are sustainable and fit within the overarching definition.

This briefing is supported by the following organisations:

¹ Note: For the full list of amendments on sustainable development for the Localism Bill, please refer to the briefings by the Greenest Ever Planning coalition at <http://www.wcl.org.uk/planningreform.asp>. These amendments aim to ensure the purpose for planning is to achieve sustainable development, to define sustainable development, to strengthen the sustainable development statutory duties and to ensure that the core objective of the duty to cooperate is to achieve sustainable development.

- Amphibian and Reptile Conservation
- Badger Trust
- Buglife
- Butterfly Conservation
- Campaign for National Parks
- Campaign to Protect Rural England
- Council for British Archeology
- Friends of the Earth England
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- Town and Country Planning Association
- Wildlife Trusts
- Woodland Trust
- WWF-UK

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