

THE INSTITUTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

COMMENTS ON CORPORATE PLAN 1997/98 as published by the ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

The majority of the Corporate Plan content consists of statements of the aims and objectives of the Agency. These seem comprehensive and admirable and deal with all areas within the responsibility of the Agency. As pure statements of policy it is difficult to formulate a view on priorities when all environmental issues are important but an ability to match the resource with the requirement is missing. Recommendations in this respect based on preference rather than analysis would be valueless.

What is of concern, however, is the ability of the Agency to realize all or even most of its objectives. Reference to the financial information provided reinforces this concern. Sources of income are limited and will be subject to variations in Government spending policy (through the DoE grant). Prioritizing expenditure will be difficult when a wide range of enforcement duties are mandatory and will have first claim on resources.

It is also significant that HALF of the Agency's resource and effort is devoted to Flood Defence and most of the rest to Pollution Control. Disproportionately low amounts are allocated to Conservation, Recreation, etc. It may be questioned even whether Flood Defence itself is an environmental matter.

In view of the above it is recommended that a more detailed programme be published which seeks to establish three factors - the nature and scale of environmental requirements in each of the subject areas: the forward programme to meet those requirements with timescales and costs: the budgeted allocation of income to match the programmed cost.

At least then it will be possible to identify more clearly any deviation from the stated policies. Early warning of a potential shortfall may also enable corrective action to be taken in the programme to avoid undesirable outcomes. Priorities will also be easier to assess.

RAF/IES
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