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THE INSTITUTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

**COMMENTS ON CORPORATE PLAN 1998-99
As published by the ENVIRONMENT AGENCY**

The Institution submitted comments on the previous Corporate Plan (1997-98) in November 1996. Concern was then expressed over the ability of the Agency to realise the stated objectives within the available funding and also the lack of definition and detail in the forward proposals.

The present corporate plan is set out in much more detail, in particular with respect to income budgets and related expenditure targets. The relationship to staffing levels and costs is also included. The net result is to promote greater confidence in the practicality of the programme and the chances of achievement and is to be welcomed. The overall programme, however, remains ambitious even within the parameters set and careful management and monitoring will be necessary.

In commenting on priorities and targets it must be first recognised that almost half of the programme (in financial values) is taken up with flood defence and of the balance a considerable proportion is taken up by statutory regulatory duties under both UK and EC directive. Flexibility in allocating priorities in the rest of the programme is thereby reduced. In view of the considerable amounts of funding and expenditure in the flood defence proposal it is suggested that some economies of scale may be possible by incorporating other environmental measures such as landscape conservation, wildlife preserves, recreational access to the countryside and water quality improvement in other major flood defence schemes.

Air quality improvement is seen as a key area of importance and should be given high priority. Government targets for the reduction of emissions to the atmosphere are commendable and ambitious but essential if harmful effects such as acid rain and global warming are to be combated. Whilst pollution control, waste regulation and control of radio-active substances are essential parts of the programme we have some concern over the possibilities for active remediation of contaminated land due to the significant levels of investment required. We would suggest that a high priority be given to encouraging development (probably with grant aid) through the private sector with assistance/advice from the Agency and the R & D programmes.

Two areas of initiative, which we support and would emphasise, are the Local Environment Agency Plans and the R & D programmes. The former is important in achieving the widest support and involvement for environmental action across the country as a whole and in particular the promotion and co-ordination of activity which can be funded from a wide range of external sources, not least of which is public initiative! The R & D programme is important in terms of the proper identification of problems and the development of more effective remediation measures. The extensive resources within the environmental and science and engineering based departments of the university and higher education system should be more fully utilised. This is in line with newly promoted Government policy and can be promoted through Agency commission, direct Government grant or industry sponsored

research. Whatever the route the Agency can play a key role in identifying and encouraging those areas deserving critical attention