

Ministerial Task Force on the Third Sector, Climate Change, the Environment and Sustainable Development

Terms of Reference

Background

Climate change is the greatest challenge facing the world today. Rising global temperatures will bring changes in weather patterns, rising sea levels and increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather. Our future prosperity and security depend on a successful response. The same is true for other pressing environmental challenges, which must be tackled successfully if we are to achieve prosperity, security and quality of life in the long-term.

Government holds many of the levers needed to tackle climate change and other environmental issues successfully. But a thriving and committed third sector is a necessary condition for successful action in the longer-term. The third sector, at all levels, has particular skills that enable it to influence attitudes and behaviour, and to increase the demand for action by governments. It plays a critical role in increasing understanding and action at an individual and community level and in increasing the support for action at both local and national levels.

Every Action Counts, and the Third Sector Declaration on climate change, are among the many initiatives that have sought to increase the level of commitment to climate change and the environment across the sector. But a strong commitment to act is currently limited to a relatively small number of third sector organisations. A dramatic increase in the quality and quantity of activity is essential if we are to succeed in shifting attitudes, commitments and action in the long-term on climate change and other environmental issues.

Both government and leading figures within the third sector have a shared interest in identifying new ways to achieve this shift. Climate change, like other environmental issues, has potentially profound implications for many other economic and social issues and interest groups.

Aims of the Task Force

The *immediate* aims of the Task Force are to:

- Develop a vision for third sector action on climate change, the environment and sustainable development;
- Identify the specific roles of government and third sector organisations in achieving this vision;
- Develop a partnership action plan with proposals to make this vision a reality by mainstreaming climate change, environmental sustainability, and sustainable development in the sector, and in the third sector programmes of relevant government departments.

The *ultimate* aim of the Task Force is to enable a rapid acceleration of commitment and action on climate change and sustainability throughout the third sector, as both the sector and government acts on its proposals.

Ways of Working

The Process:

The aims described above will be met through a process of 6 meetings. The first will be between the third sector members and will focus on preparing for the first

ministerial meeting jointly chaired by ministers from the collaborating government departments. The final ministerial meeting will be held in October 2009. Over the summer, the third sector chair(s) will then convene the third sector members of the Task Force at three interim meetings, during which the group will work through the process of identifying and agreeing a vision and action plan for the third sector on climate change, the environment and sustainable development.

Task Force Chairs:

Joint Ministerial Chairs – for the second and final meetings:

Kevin Brennan – Minister for the Third Sector

Huw Irranca-Davies – Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for DEFRA

Joan Ruddock – Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for DECC

Third Sector Chair – for the initial meeting and two interim meetings

The Chair, or co-Chairs, for the non-Ministerial meetings will be elected by the third sector members at their first meeting.

Secretariat:

NCVO and Green Alliance will provide the secretariat for the Task Force, organising the three interim meetings, and providing and commissioning papers for the Task Force as requested by the group.

NCVO and Green Alliance will take the lead in the establishment of the task force. They will lead the recruitment process, organise the set up meeting, and provide a scoping paper for that meeting.

Membership:

Membership will consist of the three joint ministerial chairs, a third sector chair or co-chairs and up to 12 other third sector representatives. They will be selected to ensure that there is a wide range of interests and sizes of organisation within the group. The final membership will be signed off by the three departments involved. Specialist contributors may be invited to present to the Task Force as required. Papers may be commissioned from external experts, once the key areas for discussion have been identified by the group. Nominated representatives may attend on behalf of stakeholders unable to attend and will have equal rights.

Timing:

The six meetings will take place between May and October 2009 with the first ministerial meeting in June. The second ministerial meeting will take place in October with the third sector meetings spaced out between them, allowing for time to prepare the action plan. The kick-off meeting of third sector stakeholders will allow fellow members to meet and ensure there is clarity as a group on the process and its aims. The third sector group will elect their chair (or co-chairs) at this meeting.

Mode of Operation:

The Task Force will adopt a participative and inclusive approach to its work. Members may be co-opted to assist with specific pieces of work.

Observers:

Observers from other government and third sector stakeholders may be invited by consensus of the Task Force.