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Mrs A Jones, Chair to the
Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee
National Assembly for Wales
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Dee Ann

25 October 2012

Sustainable Development definition

I have been informed by the Minister for Local Government and Communities that during his session with the Committee on 10 October 2012 members asked him to provide a definition of sustainable development. He has explained he will respond to your question himself, but has asked me to write to the Committee on this issue.

Section 79 of the Government of Wales Act 2006 makes provision for Welsh Ministers to promote sustainable development by making a Sustainable Development Scheme. In the Welsh Government's current Sustainable Development Scheme, One Wales: One Planet (2009), we have provided a definition of sustainable development for the purpose of clarity and to enable our partners to work consistently with the Welsh Government's interpretation of it. The definition is as follows:

In Wales, sustainable development means enhancing the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of people and communities, achieving a better quality of life for our own and future generations:

- *In ways which promote social justice and equality of opportunity; and*
- *In ways which enhance the natural and cultural environment and respects its limits - using only our fair share of the earth's resources and sustaining our cultural legacy.*

Sustainable development is the process by which we reach the goal of sustainability.

There are other interpretations of sustainable development, starting initially with the definition of sustainable development initially proposed in the United Nations Brundtland Commission's report, *Our Common Future*, in 1987 which defined sustainable development as:

Development that meets the need of the present without comprising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs

In 2005, the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations set out a similar statement in their shared framework for sustainable development, *One future – different paths*. The goal of sustainable development was to:

Enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life without compromising the quality of future generations.

A set of guiding principles were set out within *One future – different paths* that formed the basis for sustainable development policy in respect of:

- *Living within environmental limits;*
- *Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society;*
- *Achieve a sustainable economy;*
- *Promoting good governance;*
- *Using sound science responsibly.*

The current Sustainable Development Scheme is consistent with these principles.

As part of the current legislative programme we have committed to bring forward a Sustainable Development Bill. The Bill will make sustainable development the central organising principle of the Welsh Government and public bodies in Wales and create an independent sustainable development body for Wales. As part of our consultation on the proposals for a Sustainable Development Bill we have sought views on defining sustainable development. We intend to publish details of our proposals for the Bill in a White Paper in late autumn.

Best wishes,



John Griffiths AC / AM

Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd a Datblygu Cynaliadwy
Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development