

## LETTER TO SIR JOHN EGAN - 20 AUGUST 2004

Dear Sir John,

When we launched your report '*The Egan Review: Skills for Sustainable Communities*' on the 19<sup>th</sup> of April 2004, I announced that government would be taking forward your key recommendation - to establish a new National Centre for Sustainable Community Skills. I am pleased to tell you that work on the Centre is moving forward, and that the Task Group set up to help us with this has already met twice.

I also said in April that I needed more time to fully consider your other recommendations, in conjunction with ministerial colleagues. I have now done so, and want to set out for you how we will be taking your ideas forward and in what sort of timescale.

The attached table contains the details, but some highlights include:

We support the need for a broader understanding of the term 'sustainable communities', and we will work across government and with other partners to agree a definition and components by September 2004. Your work provides an excellent foundation from which we will build.

We agree that local authorities should lead on delivery of sustainable communities at local level, and should bring together service providers and others partners to achieve this. This role will require local authorities to identify local priorities, set targets and monitor progress towards achievement. Your suite of indicators will be a useful tool that authorities and their partners can draw on for this process.

We will work with partners to consider how best to sharpen Community Strategies so that they become *Sustainable* Community Strategies, which (with associated documents) set out how the vision for an area will be delivered, infrastructure needs, costs and benefits of development, and how local people can access the opportunities created.

We share your view that planning process improvements are essential to delivery of the sustainable communities agenda. A raft of changes are already underway as a result of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and our Culture Change initiative, and we will ensure techniques such as process re-engineering are used where appropriate to deliver further improvements.

Your skills recommendations will be taken forward through the National centre when it is open for business.

Your report has challenged our thinking on skills issues and shown how we can move forward. I hope the new National Centre will be instrumental in raising the game of everyone involved with the sustainable communities agenda, to the benefit of communities across the whole country.

My thanks again to you and your Task Group