

Lessons from the past

Four challenges of sustainable development for the environment and environmental bodies are identified. Each of these needs to be addressed if the environment is to be an equal partner with economic and social interests in sustainable development.

The first challenge is to ensure that people are involved at all levels and at all stages in activity. Bringing together environmental interests with other interests, whether they be representative or institutional interests, or local communities has to be the major lesson from the last fifty years.

The second challenge of sustainability is to press for a greater integration in decision-making on policy and resources of environmental, social and economic interests. A critical element would be to further the methodologies of assessment and appraisal which ensure that all sets of factors are taken into account on an equal basis.

The third challenge of sustainable development is to ensure the availability of all the skills and competencies that are required to ensure that environmental issues are addressed fully and communicated to other stakeholders.

The fourth challenge of sustainability is to ensure that environmental protection and enhancement is undertaken everywhere and not restricted to protected areas.

Visions for the future

From the assessment of visions for the future I identify a further four challenges of sustainable development for the environment and environmental bodies.

The fifth challenge of sustainable development is to establish integrated frameworks for decision-making and action connecting all the elements of the environment, including nature and landscape, and engaging all stakeholders.

The sixth challenge of sustainable development is to ensure that strategies for the environment have clear goals and the development of meaningful indicators to measure progress towards the achievement of the goals.

The seventh challenge of sustainable development is to promote more actively the importance of the services and functions which the environment provides for society.

The eighth challenge of sustainable development is to ensure that appropriate scientific knowledge is both available and accessible and that data systems work for integration.