



ACT
Government

Suburban Land
Agency

Housing Strategic Action Plan

November 2023

We acknowledge the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

Prior to the displacement of Ngunnawal people from their land, they were a thriving people whose life and culture was connected unequivocally to this land in a way that only they understand and know and is core to their physical and spiritual being. The segregation of the Ngunnawal people from Culture and Country has had long-lasting, profound, and ongoing health and well-being effects on their life, cultural practices, families, and continuation of their law/lore. We acknowledge the historic interruption of the Ngunnawal people of Canberra and their surrounding regions.

We recognise the significant contribution the Ngunnawal people have played in caring for Country. For time immemorial they have maintained a tangible and intangible cultural, social, environmental, spiritual, and economic connection to these lands and waters.

Produced by the Suburban Land Agency.

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About the Strategic Action Plan

The Suburban Land Agency creates great places where communities thrive – and a key part of this is providing opportunities for Canberrans in our new communities and renewal sites to have access to housing that meets their needs.

This Strategic Action Plan continues to set out why housing choice is important, why we are involved and how we support the ACT Government in providing housing choice in the ACT.

Building on the version which we published in September 2022, we have undertaken an annual review of this Strategic Action Plan. We have made some updates to the structure and some minor refinements to our focus areas and actions. These changes have been made to consider our progress to date as well as emerging policy priorities and programs from the ACT and Commonwealth governments.

Targeting our new communities and renewal sites, where we have the greatest influence, we have identified actions we will take across three key focus areas:

- > Enabling housing supply to meet community needs.
- > Refining and strengthening home ownership pathways.
- > Increasing rental opportunities.

In delivering this Strategic Action Plan, we will aim for a sustainable approach, that balances the economic, social and environmental costs and benefits of everything we do. This means that we will consider:

- > The amount of economic and financial support required to address the difference between income and housing costs.
- > Sustainable and liveable outcomes through high quality design that is fit-for-purpose, durable and climate resilient to increase comfort and reduce ongoing costs.
- > Collaboration with the community and industry to help us understand what is needed and how we can best deliver it.

This Strategic Action Plan provides us with a framework to guide our actions over the coming years as we work with our industry and community partners, and colleagues across the ACT Government to implement the ACT Housing Strategy and deliver affordable living, social inclusion and housing choice for our growing community.



We have mapped out our focus areas against the continuum of social housing, affordable housing and market housing, including the different housing models.

The Suburban Land Agency is responsible for delivering people-focused neighborhoods on behalf of the ACT Government. The majority of our land releases are residential lots available for the general public to purchase.

Most of our focus areas and actions are targeted towards affordable housing - this is because it is the part of the housing continuum for which we have the greatest ability to influence within our new communities and urban renewal sites.

As outlined later in this Strategic Action Plan, there are other areas of the ACT Government which focus on homelessness and social housing delivery. We work collaboratively with as many different areas as possible within the ACT Government in order to achieve good outcomes for our community.

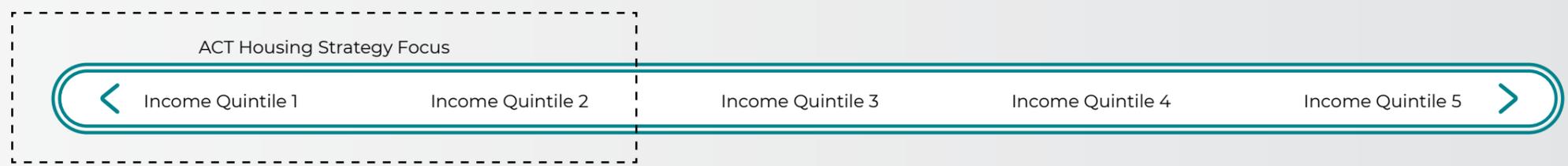
The Suburban Land Agency Housing Continuum

SOCIAL HOUSING

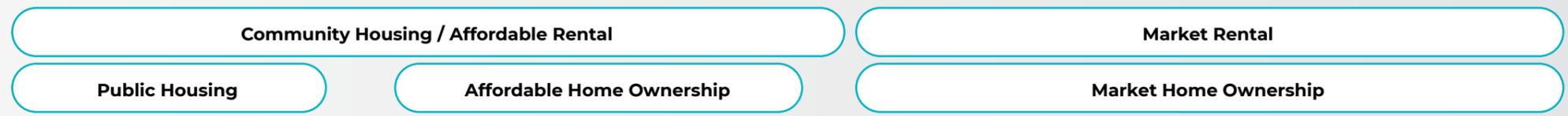
AFFORDABLE HOUSING

MARKET HOUSING

Pre-tax Household Incomes



Housing Models



Focus Areas



Explaining the Housing Models

Public Housing

Public housing refers to housing which is owned and operated by the ACT Government's public housing authority, Housing ACT.

Public housing offers long-term rental accommodation for people on low to moderate incomes. More information about public housing in the ACT is available at www.communityservices.act.gov.au/housing

Community Housing

Community housing refers to housing which is operated by a registered Community Housing Provider. It is usually offered as affordable rental to those on low to moderate incomes.

Community Housing Providers must be registered as part of the National Regulatory System for Community Housing. A [register of providers](#) is available online.

Affordable Rental

Affordable rental includes rental opportunities both in the private market and in the community housing sector. Rental opportunities which are affordable are defined as no more than 75% of the usual market rental rate that the property would otherwise attract on the open market.

Affordable Home Ownership

Affordable home ownership refers to opportunities for members of the community, usually on low to moderate incomes, to purchase their own new home, either by buying a completed home or buying a house and land package, without entering into housing stress. These opportunities are usually supported by Government or other organisations.

Market Rental

Market rental refers to rental opportunities in the private market that are not discounted.

Market Home Ownership

Market home ownership refers to purchase of property by members of the community at market prices.

The majority of our land releases provide land for market rental and home ownership.



Providing housing choice ensures that we can meet the needs of our diverse community through different types of housing and different pathways into housing.

Housing has consistently presented the greatest cost of living pressure for low-income households in the ACT.

- ACTCOSS, ACT Budget Priorities 2023-24

Why is housing choice important?

Access to a safe and secure home provides a foundation for overall wellbeing, and is critical for many other parts of life, including work, education, health and happiness. Providing housing choice ensures that we can meet the needs of our diverse community through different types of housing and different pathways into housing.

Supporting Social Inclusion

Housing choice is not just about affordability. We also know that it is about having housing options available that offer social inclusion and meet the needs of different members of our community.

While we have some existing programs and housing options available for our diverse community, we have heard feedback that we need to do more to provide greater choice in our new communities and renewal sites. In investigating and designing these opportunities, we will focus on accessibility and liveability, and collaborating with key stakeholders to create options which are feasible for us to deliver within our projects while still meeting the needs of the community.

Future-Proofing

Across all of our initiatives, we will look at ways we can future-proof the housing opportunities we are creating. This means considering all aspects of design, including the accessibility, affordability, and sustainability of the dwelling.

It is important that we incorporate universal design principles and appropriateness for people with disability or specific accessibility needs including aging in place considerations, alongside design considerations for energy efficiency and climate-wise building and landscape design.

We will use the Suburban Land Agency's [Sustainability Strategy](#) and the ACT's Disability Strategy which is currently in development as a framework to support future-proof housing in our new communities and renewal sites.

Housing choice is not just about affordability.

Why are we involved?

Our Legislation

We are driven by the objectives which are established for us under the *City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency Act 2017* (CRASLA Act), including encouraging and promoting suburban development that supports:



Affordable Living



Social Inclusion



Housing Choice

Our legislative functions include:

- > Ensuring a mixture of public and private housing in new suburbs.
- > Increasing the supply of affordable and community housing.
- > Meeting housing targets.
- > Following and supporting whole-of-government strategies.

Housing Targets

Each year, housing targets are published identifying numbers of affordable, public and community housing dwellings.

The housing targets meet the requirements of various actions of the [ACT Housing Strategy](#), which called for a 15% target for social and affordable housing. The housing targets comprise approximately 15% of the sites included in the annual Indicative Land Release Program.

The housing targets are formalised as Notifiable Instruments under Section 65 of the CRASLA Act and are available online via the ACT Legislation Register.

- > We have [Statements of Expectations](#) from the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development guiding our delivery of our objectives.
- > We publish a [Statement of Intent](#) each year which sets out our priorities including Key Performance Indicators.
- > We release land according to the [Indicative Land Release Program \(ILRP\)](#) which is prepared by the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD). There is a range of factors that impact land releases, including: planning, environmental and heritage processes, due diligence and assurance package processes, community engagement and consultation processes, legal issues and commercial/market influences. In 2022-23, the outcome for the ILRP to be delivered by SLA was largely achieved, except for releases that were impacted by these factors.
- > We work closely with our colleagues to deliver on the commitments set out in the [Parliamentary and Governing Agreement](#) and [the National Housing Accord 2022](#)

It is great that you have pulled this Housing Strategic Action Plan together and are exploring how to deliver increased supply of affordable rentals.

- Community Housing Industry Association (ACT Region), Action Plan Consultation 2022

The ACT Housing Strategy

We have a role to play in implementing the [ACT Housing Strategy](#). It is structured around five key goals, being:

- > **Goal 1:** an equitable, diverse and sustainable supply of housing for the ACT community.
- > **Goal 2:** reducing homelessness.
- > **Goal 3:** strengthening social housing assistance.
- > **Goal 4:** increasing affordable rental housing.
- > **Goal 5:** increasing affordable home ownership.

Some of the actions from the [ACT Housing Strategy Implementation Plan](#) we are working towards include:

- > **Objective 1A:** provide land and housing development opportunities to meet demand.
- > **Objective 1B:** set a 15% target for social and affordable housing.
- > **Objective 1D:** provide a diverse mix of housing types and choice.
- > **Objective 1E:** facilitate innovative design and delivery mechanisms.
- > **Objective 4A:** grow and diversify the community housing sector.
- > **Objective 4B:** grow the supply of affordable private rental properties.
- > **Objective 4E:** target programs to increase supply of affordable housing for vulnerable and disadvantaged households.
- > **Objective 5A:** provide more affordable homes for purchase.
- > **Objective 5B:** increase home ownership through alternative finance and occupancy models.



In this Strategic Action Plan, we align our actions with these goals.

The Wellbeing Framework

The ACT has a [Wellbeing Framework](#) which provides high-level indicator outcomes for Canberra. With 12 domains and a series of indicators to measure our progress, the Wellbeing Framework will guide decision making. Having a place to call home with Canberrans having access to secure, suitable and affordable housing throughout their lives is one of our wellbeing domains.

The indicators for housing and home are:

- > Homelessness
- > Rental stress
- > Housing affordability and availability
- > Housing suitability.

In this Strategic Action Plan we align our actions with these indicators.

Access to secure, suitable, and affordable housing improves other wellbeing domains including social inclusion, health, wealth, and welfare. It guards against future issues like climate change, economic changes, and health challenges.

The Wellbeing Framework identifies that most Canberrans have access to suitable and affordable housing. But there are people on low incomes and in groups with more vulnerable circumstances who find it harder to access these benefits.



How do we fit in?

The ACT Government's Homes and Housing site provides guidance for the Canberra community about finding the right housing option:

www.act.gov.au/homes-housing/home

ACT Government Roles and Responsibilities

Different parts of the ACT Government contribute to the supply of suitable housing in various ways – at the Suburban Land Agency, our role is to deliver housing choice as part of new communities and urban renewal sites. Often we will implement initiatives by including requirements for builders and developers when we sell land on behalf of the ACT Government.

Our implementation work is linked to a broader range of ACT Government agencies who focus on developing policies and frameworks. We work collaboratively with these agencies to ensure that we align with the ACT Government's strategic objectives and directions.

> [Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate \(EPSDD\)](#) – responsible for the ACT Planning Strategy, statutory planning frameworks and development approvals, planning studies and development of the annual Indicative Land Release Program, which sets out the Government's intended land releases.

- > [Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate \(CMTEDD\)](#) including Treasury, the Coordinator-General for Housing and the ACT Revenue Office - responsible for policy and budget oversight of all ACT Government initiatives. The ACT Revenue Office also has a number of programs available which offer financial support or concessions to home buyers and home owners.
- > The newly established [Office of the Coordinator General for Housing](#) will co-ordinate the many areas across the ACT Government that intersect with housing - driving a whole-of-government approach to deliver our objectives.
- > [Community Services Directorate \(CSD\)](#) including the Office for Disability, Office for Seniors and Veterans, Office for Women, Office for Multicultural Affairs, and Housing ACT - responsible for policy design and implementation for a range of community uses and services, including the ACT's public housing portfolio.

The ACT has a Wellbeing Framework which provides high-level indicator outcomes for Canberra.

Focus Areas: Enabling housing supply to meet community needs



Households in the lower 40% of the ACT's income distribution who are spending more than 30% of their incomes on housing costs are defined as being in housing stress. Affordable housing measures aim to prevent this housing stress from occurring. To support households experiencing housing stress, we work closely with Housing ACT and Community Housing Providers to develop land and homes in new communities and renewal sites which meet their needs.

Many Community Housing Providers may be financially constrained by rising construction, property and land prices. We will investigate other purchase options that we could implement in our new communities and renewal sites to support Community Housing Providers. Any purchase opportunities will need to complement support provided by the Federal Government and could include collaborating with NHIFIC (National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation).

Housing choice is not just about affordability. We also know that it is about having housing options available that offer social inclusion and meet the needs of different members of our community.

We have heard from a range of individuals and organisations who have encouraged us to explore how we can provide land, home purchase or rental opportunities for diverse individuals and groups of people with different needs.

These include:

- > People with disability
- > Older people and women over 55 years
- > Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community
- > Larger families.

We will continue to explore how we may be able to create these opportunities through our existing and emerging programs.

How does it align?			ACT Housing Strategy Goals and Actions
Suburban Land Agency Objectives			
	Affordable living	Community housing offers reduced rental rates.	Goal 1: An Equitable, Diverse and Sustainable Supply of Housing for the ACT Community Action 1A.3 Action 1B.1
	Social inclusion	Supports a mix of housing models and housing tenures within new communities.	
	Housing choice	Community housing continues to be available as a housing model. Encourages different options integrated into new developments. Ensures affordable, public and community housing in new communities.	Goal 4: Increasing Affordable Rental Housing Action 4A.2 Action 4A.3 Action 4A.5 Goal 5: Increasing Affordable Home Ownership Action 5A.1

Wellbeing Indicators

Enabling housing supply to meet community needs supports the following Wellbeing Indicators:

 **Housing Affordability and Availability**

 **Rental Stress**  **Cost of Living**

Focus Areas: Refining and Strengthening Home Ownership Pathways



In December 2021 the median house price in Canberra exceeded \$1 million. It has since fallen to \$943,253 as of May 2023. Despite the fall in price, Canberra has the second most expensive capital city housing market behind Sydney. This makes it challenging for the majority of households in the lower three income quintiles to buy a house.

Owning your own home provides greater security, the ability to build equity and the flexibility to personalise your living space. Home ownership is the basis for a number of positive social, family and community outcomes.

SLA is committed to supporting diverse home ownership needs in our new communities and urban renewal sites. We will continue to investigate innovative home ownership pathways such as shared equity and rent-to-buy schemes. These options could provide another pathway to home

ownership. This could support buyers who are otherwise unable to purchase a home due to the upfront costs and provide security of tenure.

In doing this, we will also investigate opportunities for improving and maintaining affordability. This could include additional requirements on leases or other mechanisms to keep homes under the ownership of lower income families over a longer time period.

Our existing home ownership pathways are designed to provide eligible buyers a chance to become homeowners. We are committed to continuous improvement, as part of this we will explore ways to improve our existing home ownership pathways and create purchase opportunities to support the different housing needs in our community.

How does it align?			ACT Housing Strategy Goals and Actions
Suburban Land Agency Objectives			
	Affordable living	Opportunity for buyers to reduce upfront costs. Building Design can also reduce running costs.	Goal 1: An Equitable, Diverse, and Sustainable Supply of Housing for the ACT Community
	Social inclusion	Supports a mix of housing models within new communities. Meeting the needs of a diverse community.	Action 1A.3 Action 1B.1 Action 1F.3 Goal 5: Increasing Affordable Home Ownership
	Housing choice	Additional pathways into home ownership and the potential for ongoing affordable pathways.	Action 5A.1 Action 5A.2 Action 5A.7 Action 5B.2 Action 5B.3

Wellbeing Indicators

Enabling housing supply to meet community needs supports the following Wellbeing Indicators:

Housing Affordability and Availability

Rental Stress **Cost of Living**

Focus Areas: Increasing Rental Opportunities



Until recently, median rent in the ACT was the highest of all Australian capital cities. Higher average incomes in the ACT hide and even worsen the affordability challenges faced by lower-income households. This creates significant pressure on ACT renters on lower incomes. Households earning in the lowest 40% of household incomes in the ACT are at the highest risk of becoming homeless or experiencing poverty when faced with housing stress.

The ACT's rental market has improved over the past 12 months but there is still more to be done. The rental vacancy rate in Canberra increased to 2 per cent in May 2023, up from a low of 0.6 per cent in March 2022. This means there are more homes available. As a result, rents are starting to fall and in

the March 2023 quarter, Sydney overtook Canberra as the most expensive capital city for renting.

Our actions aim to increase the supply of both affordable rental properties and market rental properties.

We have released land in Turner for the ACT Government's first Build-to-Rent site. Build-to-Rent is typically a multi-unit development where the residential dwellings are retained by one owner and rented out long-term (preferably at least 15 to 20 years) rather than being sold. Build-to-Rent offers greater security for renters by providing longer rental leases and can foster a sense of community through the inclusion of shared amenities. Build-to-Rent creates additional rental supply for the whole market.

How does it align?

Suburban Land Agency Objectives			ACT Housing Strategy Goals and Actions
	Affordable living	Supports reduced rental rates and provides opportunities for reduced living costs with shared amenities.	Goal 1: An Equitable, Diverse and Sustainable Supply of Housing for the ACT Community Action 1D.3
	Social inclusion	Supports a mix of tenures in rental communities.	
	Housing choice	Provides additional rental options.	Goal 4: Increasing Affordable Rental Housing Action 4B.3 Action 4E.1 Action 4E.4

Wellbeing Indicators

Enabling housing supply to meet community needs supports the following Wellbeing Indicators:

Housing Affordability and Availability

Rental Stress **Cost of Living**



Action 1: Investigating Purchase Options for Community Housing Providers

What do we already do?

- > We already plan new communities with requirements for community housing – based on the published housing targets – and we will continue to do so.
- > We report on our progress in meeting the housing targets each year as part of our Annual Report.
- > We have consulted with Community Housing Providers to understand their land and housing requirements.

What will we do next?

- > In collaboration with the Office of the Coordinator General for Housing, we will investigate opportunities for us to enable Community Housing Providers to purchase properties from builders and developers at fixed prices.
- > We will investigate alternative mechanisms to enable land sales to Community Housing Providers to improve any financial constraints.
- > We will investigate ways to improve the capacity of ACT-based Community Housing Providers.
- > We will also investigate ways we can encourage more Community Housing Providers to call Canberra home.

Action 2: Continuing Public, Community and Affordable Housing Target Implementation

What do we already do?

- > We already plan new communities and release sites for sale and to other ACT Government agencies, with requirements for affordable, public and community housing – based on the published housing targets – and we will continue to do so.
- > We report on our progress in meeting the housing targets each year as part of our Annual Report.
- > We participate in the Ginninderry Joint Venture, releasing land for sale in the 6-star Green Star community and offering the Flexi-living Series.
- > We actively track the progress of developers meeting their obligations to sell affordable homes against current and previous housing targets.

What will we do next?

- > We will continue to release land for affordable, public and community housing in line with the published targets and other Government priorities.
- > We will look for opportunities to improve the way we implement the housing targets, to ensure we are being as effective as possible at meeting the needs of the community, Housing ACT and the community housing sector.

Action 3: Creating a pipeline of Build-to-Rent Opportunities

What do we already do?

- > We have released Block 3 Section 57 in Turner as a site to pilot Build-to-Rent with affordable rental requirements.
- > We ran a market sounding process in November and December 2021 to understand the appetite and interest in bringing Build-to-Rent to Canberra.
- > Following on from the market sounding process, we published a Listening Report in May 2022 summarising the feedback we received from industry and the community housing sector.
- > We are identifying potential sites which could be released for Build-to-Rent developments including a site in the Gungahlin Town Centre.

What will we do next?

- > We will use the pilot Build-to-Rent project in Turner as a guide for future Build-to-Rent opportunities.
- > We will create a pipeline of Build-to-Rent developments by continuing to identify sites which could potentially be released for sale for Build-to-Rent.
- > We will continue to engage with stakeholders and the community to expand Build-to-Rent options in the ACT.

Action 5: Investigating Innovative Home Ownership Pathways

What do we already do?

- > We worked collaboratively with the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation (NHFIC), Community Housing Canberra (CHC) and our colleagues across the ACT Government to secure a grant of \$4.5 million for the Ginninderry Women's Housing Initiative. This Build-to-Rent-to-Buy pilot program in the ACT will deliver up to 22 affordable rental dwellings for low-income women in Strathnairn to transition from renting to home ownership.
- > We continue to consider shared equity as an opportunity we could provide including how it could be structured to best support individual buyers and the types of homes and criteria that might be included.

What will we do next?

- > We will continue to participate in progressing the Ginninderry Women's Housing Initiative, so that we can identify opportunities to apply this model elsewhere.
- > We will engage with key stakeholders to understand the requirements for innovative home ownership pathways to work well for buyers, lenders, and the ACT Government.
- > We will consider how these schemes can complement programs delivered by the Commonwealth and other areas of the ACT Government.
- > We will continue to investigate how we could improve and maintain ongoing affordability of homes which are available to purchase.

Action 4: Investigating Housing Opportunities for Our Diverse Community

What do we already do?

- > We have researched options in the ACT system for supporting certain groups of people during the release of land or homes.
- > We reviewed the Affordable Home Purchase Scheme to see what improvements can be made.

What will we do next?

- > We will collaborate with representatives from identified community groups and people with lived experience to understand their specific needs and requirements.
- > We will investigate how we can implement mechanisms for prioritising those groups identified as having the highest need.
- > We will continue to consider how we can prioritise our diverse community through our existing and emerging programs.

Action 6: Continuing to Implement and Improve Existing Affordable Purchase Schemes

What do we already do?

- > When we sell sites to developers and builders, we include requirements for affordable housing. This means homes which meet our requirements and will be sold at fixed prices to eligible buyers.
- > We reviewed the Affordable Home Purchase Scheme to see what improvements can be made.
- > We improved the customer journey by implementing a smart form application process and website enhancements.
- > During 2022-23, more than 130 eligible buyers exchanged contracts to buy homes through the Affordable Home Purchase Scheme.

What will we do next?

- > We will continue to identify and implement improvements to the Affordable Home Purchase Scheme, to make sure it is easy to access and participate in, that it meets the needs of buyers and is a good experience for builders and developers.

Next Steps and Measuring our Progress

We have summarised our next steps and the ways we will measure and report on our progress against this Strategic Action Plan as:

- > Working with our community and industry stakeholders to shape and implement the actions in this Strategic Action Plan.
- > Reporting to the Suburban Land Agency Board and the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development on a regular basis on our progress against each action identified in this Strategic Action Plan.
- > Identifying indicators which are appropriate for inclusion in future Statements of Intent as Key Performance Indicators, and reporting on these in our Annual Report.
- > Undertaking further annual reviews of the Strategic Action Plan, to identify where further information about next steps and other actions should be incorporated.





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