

Speech by the Rt. Hon Alun Michael MP, Minister of State for Industry and the Regions on 01 November 2005

I am pleased to be here today at the launch of the British Cement Association's Sustainable Development Taskforce report.

Sustainability is a key challenge to Industry as a whole, including the construction and cement industries. We must guarantee a better quality of life for future generations, by achieving social, economic and environmental objectives.

That is why it is so important to us that UK industry is able to achieve its targets for sustainable growth, so society can benefit from reduced pollution and a more efficient use of natural resources.

The growth of industry is also as important to this government today, as it has always been, but today we face new economic and environmental challenges.

We have seen developing countries expanding and developing their industries, at a time when our environment is struggling to cope with the imprint from existing industries.

Our consumption of natural resources around the world is unsustainable and we must be more farsighted in the solutions to the sustainable challenges we face.

Kyoto highlighted actions we needed to be taken and the government has signed up to its targets. We must all now find ways to deliver this climate change commitment.

The Government has set itself the tougher target of 20% by 2010 and we are expecting to meet this.

The Cement industry's products are vital to our daily life and contributes an essential ingredient to the construction industry, which delivers around 10% of UK's GDP.

Cement's contribution to sustaining the quality and fabric of life, contributing to the UK's homes, schools, hospitals, roads, runways and reservoirs as well as sustaining many thousands of jobs, often in remote rural areas is invaluable.

However, the Cement industry is largely mineral based and its processes require burning fossil fuels which, with the minerals themselves, release emissions into the atmosphere.

But you are addressing this.

The cement industry with its "Agenda for Action", is investing in new high tech plants and equipment , and the restoration of former operating sites.

The industry has shown it is undertaking leadership, taking on board the sustainability agenda and creating the Sustainable Development Task Force in 2004, taking forward the delivery of initiatives on the industry's sustainability agenda.

The result of this work is that the industry now has the ability to meet 90% of the country's cement needs from some forms of sustainable production

I understand that your Industry has spent \$4 million examining the issues globally over the next 20 years, and this sustainability plan has developed into a programme of works with individual and partnership projects.

The result has meant a reduction in the use of raw materials by using the waste products of other industries, such as Pulverised fuel ash (from power stations) and waste which contains iron, calcium, silica to replace the limestone and clay usually used in cement.

The cement industry strategies for dealing with waste, hazardous or otherwise, such as extracting energy from waste is saving landfill and is exactly the type of initiatives we want to encourage. For example, the cement industry burns 50% of the used solvents in the UK and 10% of the UK's packaging waste. It has the capacity to handle 50% of the total of waste tyres. **This shows a truly excellent commitment to recycling.**

UK cement manufacturers have signed up to the Climate Change Levy Agreement with government, to deliver 26.8% energy efficiency improvements by 2010.

We know that whether we are individuals or companies, we all need to learn to live more sustainably, to enjoy our environment today so that our impact on this precious environment will allow our children and grandchildren a world to appreciate in the future.

Your industry is an example to others, illustrating where environmental issues, government policy and business meet and agree on the topic of sustainability in practical terms. You are heading in the right direction but I urge you to redouble your efforts. The issues surrounding Sustainability are core to your industry's future.

I am delighted to have this opportunity to endorse the good work of the BCA's Sustainable Development Task force.
