



Engaging with Local Government Regarding Sustainable Development

A Guide for Community Groups Concerned about
Environmental Impacts on their Community

Val Harris



Introduction to FCDL's How-To Series

This guide was published in May 2008 by the Federation for Community Development Learning (FCDL) as part of a series that have been produced by members of the National Empowerment Partnership. The Department for Communities and Local Government's Community Empowerment Action Plan aims to "enable more people to play an active role in the decisions that affect their communities." The Federation has also contributed two other guides to the series namely: *Working Effectively With Communities* (a Guide for non-Community Development Workers) and *Engaging and Influencing Decision-Makers* (a Guide for Community Groups).

Although written at a certain point in time these three guides have been designed so that they retain relevance and usefulness even as government initiatives come and go. This is because the guides follow a community development learning model which acknowledges that communities (and those working with them) need more than just to be presented with fact based knowledge which can go out-of-date. Community development learning is concerned with building on the skills, knowledge and experience of communities themselves; community development workers (paid and unpaid); and the increasingly wide range of other workers who need to use a community development approach in order to engage effectively with communities.

Community development learning also places great importance on reflective practice so that communities are encouraged to continually question their own motives, inclusiveness and ways of doing things. It can support communities to identify their own needs and agendas and further develop the skills, confidence, and organisational capacity to engage with, partner and challenge policy and decision-makers, hopefully without losing their own agendas and energies in the process.

For further information on FCDL resources (which all three guides draw on) please see back pages of this guide, look on www.fcdl.org.uk or contact us at info@fcdl.org.uk



FCDL

3rd Floor, The Circle
33 Rockingham Lane
Sheffield S1 4FW
Tel: 0114 253 6770
Fax: 0114 253 6771
Email: info@fcdl.org.uk
www.fcdl.org.uk

ISBN No. 978-1-904111-24-5
EAN: 9781904111245

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- The United Kingdom Sustainable Communities Plan (2003)
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Throughout the pack, material created through the Every Action Counts Programme will be referenced to, this material is available on the FCDL website and the Every Action Counts website.

Introduction To This Guide

Community Development has at its core the aim of bringing about social justice and change by people working together. The values and principles of Community Development are all about communities determining their own agenda, deciding what they want to change and how to go about getting those changes, and doing that in a way that challenges social injustice and discrimination.

One of the major issues facing communities, all around the world as well as in the UK, is about the environment and the sustainability of communities and the planet. Environmental matters affecting communities can be from the seemingly low-key issues – such as litter everywhere, through to the larger scale problems created by climate change – such as floods and coastal erosion.

Poorer communities suffer disproportionately from the state of our environment. Air quality is often much lower in poorer communities because of traffic pollution, as they tend to be located near busy main roads and often suffer from rat runs, waste incinerators tend to be located in poor neighbourhoods as do polluting factories.

Poorer communities are affected more by changes taking place across the world – as the price of energy goes up and up so those people living in poor quality houses, with little insulation and inefficient heating systems find they cannot afford to heat their homes, and so suffer ill health caused by living in damp houses.

Community Development workers, community activists and community groups are often taking action to improve the environment of their communities. This can range from organising clean ups of 'grot spots' through to trying to become a zero carbon town.

Our government is aware of the problems facing the UK from the changes to the climate, and from the planet running out of natural resources at a faster rate than it can replace them – for example fossil fuels. It has passed legislation and created action plans to try and tackle these matters. Some of these involve communities taking action as well as all levels of government.

At the moment the government has a focus on community empowerment, involvement, participation, and engagement and hence many of its policies have an aspect which is about increasing the voice of communities and citizens. As part of its commitment to increasing the role of its citizens in the decisions that affect their communities they have set up the National Empowerment Partnership (NEP). This is a national partnership of interested parties set up to improve the quality, co-ordination and evidence of empowerment across England. The partnership will support and inform the government to help implement its vision of a truly participative society and promote the fundamental role of empowerment in achieving a more equal, cohesive and democratic society. Empowerment is not the same as engagement. It is the result of strategic and practical actions - such as engagement, participation, partnership working - that increase the capacity of people to influence the decisions that affect their lives and is central to community development principles and practices.

FCDL is part of the National Empowerment Partnership and many of its members are active in the Regional Partnership Empowerment consortia across England.

These two themes have been brought together in this How to Guide. It has been created for Community Development Workers and activists, and others supporting community groups. It aims to outline the opportunities created by government legislation, policy and strategies which can be used by community groups in trying to improve their local environment and to take action locally on the big issues affecting the planet.

It is not intended to be a comprehensive or detailed guide to government policies and strategies, but seeks to provide a summary of the main pieces of legislation relating to environmental and sustainable development relevant to community groups and signposts to where to get more detailed information.

The pack draws upon material created for the Every Action Counts programme. Every Action Counts provides information and resources to support voluntary and community organisations which are looking to reduce their impact on the environment, tackle climate change and improve their local area. The programme has produced a range of publications, guidance and action planning tools which are available free of charge to any organisation which registers on the Every Action Counts website (www.everyactioncounts.org.uk). The programme can also provide access to a trained community champion who can help you with your action plan.

FCDL has been one of the leading national organisations in this programme, providing training and resource material to support community development workers and activists. A full list of all our work is on our website www.fcdl.org.uk.

Within these other packs are many exercises and worksheets to help Community Development Workers in supporting community groups to decide what actions they want to take to improve the environment and how to go about it.

The idea behind this pack was to provide information about government policies on community empowerment and those strategies and policies, particularly at a local level, that community groups can use to improve their environment and promote sustainable development. These can then be used as levers to tackle environmental and unsustainable development issues.

How To Use This Guide

The guide aims to give community groups and community development workers information about the political context of environmental and sustainable development. The intention is that they will use it to be more effective in influencing their local councils, and regional bodies where appropriate, around the issues that affect their communities.

We have made the assumption that community groups are already organised and that community development workers have the expertise to bring together people into effective working groups. We produce a range of other resource packs and guides which cover how to involve people and to ensure groups work well¹. There are also other guides on understanding how local government works for those who want to increase their knowledge about the way local councils are organised these days².

There are many ways that community groups can engage with local councils over their environmental and sustainable development concerns. These can range from:

- A joint clean up campaign where the council provides the gloves and sacks and the groups provide the people to pick up the litter;
- Community group members alerting the council to fly tipped materials or abandoned and burnt out cars so they can be quickly removed;
- Community groups providing representatives to sit on transport planning working groups to improve the infrastructure for cycling and walking;
- Community groups adopting a rail station to improve its facilities, campaign for better services and promoting rail travel;
- A friends of a local wood running working days to remove invasive plants and saplings to improve the biodiversity, and the council providing the equipment and cutting down the larger unwanted trees;
- Community groups getting together with the town centre manager to achieve fair trade town status;
- Community groups campaigning for supported community compost schemes from the council;
- Community groups presenting a petition for 20 mph speed limits in their village to their local councillor and into the council;
- Community groups coming together to oppose planned road building which would impact on their community and its environment and seeking to influence regional transport plans;
- Community groups campaigning against polluting factories or plans to change the use of industrial buildings processing toxic materials and seeking to influence planning decisions.

Community groups may wish to undertake local activities themselves, suggest better ways for their council to tackle particular issues based on local research of ideas from other places, or object to decisions that have been made. All are valid approaches to improving environmental and sustainable development in their area

We have split the pack into a number of sections so that it can be used as a reference tool, which is easy to find your way to the information on the specific topics that concern your community and your work. It is not intended to be read as a book.

The first three sections provide the overview of the main policies and strategies affecting national, regional and local government. The fourth section examines in detail the range of policies and strategies relating to environmental and sustainable development which local authorities are likely to have in place, and provides examples of how communities are taking action on these issues.

1 FCDL Resources Packs to support NOCN units on Involving People; Group Work Skills; Effective Partnership Working and others are available from FCDL.

2 This How to Guide is part of a series of resource material to support communities and Local Authorities in their work on community empowerment. CDF is the managing agency for the National empowerment Partnership www.cdf.org.uk

Section 1. The National Context

In this section we will briefly look at some of the key government policies and strategies in relation to environmental and sustainable development in England.

Sustainable Development is a term that has been used in Government and within the environmental field for some time now, since it was first coined in the Brundtland Report of 1987. Within Community Development and more generally with community groups there is a tendency to think that it means resources to sustain community groups.

Governments say that the goal of sustainable development is to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life without compromising the quality of life of future generations. Sustainable development is the internationally adopted principle that social, economic and environmental issues should be considered at the same time when plans are being drawn up and decisions being taken for the future. It covers topics from climate change and world poverty to bio-diversity and globalisation. While sustainable development is often seen as an environmental issue it is just as much about wealth creation and tackling poverty and injustice.

The past 20 years have seen a growing realisation that our current economic model is unsustainable, as we are living beyond our means. Our way of life is placing an increasing burden on the planet which we can see in the loss of biodiversity (with the felling of rainforests or over fishing), to the negative effect our consumption patterns are having on the environment and the climate.

The increasing stress we put on resources and environmental systems such as water, land and air cannot go on forever. Especially as the world's population continues to increase and we already see a world where over a billion people live on less than a dollar a day.

A widely-used and accepted international definition of sustainable development is: 'development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' - Globally we are not even meeting the needs of the present let alone considering the needs of future generations.

The UK government fears that unless we start to make real progress toward reconciling these contradictions we face a future that is less certain and less secure. The country needs to make a decisive move toward more sustainable development because it is in our long-term best interests. Sustainable Development offers the best hope for the future and they want everyone to play their part. This is the basis of a number of government inspired programmes about improving the environment, which have often resulted from international conventions - the U.N. "Earth Summit" in Rio in 1992, followed by the Kyoto Agreement in 1997.

Sustainable Development is a complex and fundamental idea in modern politics and policy-making. It is about securing economic and social progress that benefits everyone, especially by tackling poverty and disadvantage, while protecting the quality of the natural environment and making wise use of natural resources. Sustainable Development requires us to take a fully 'joined up' approach to the links between economic policy, social equity and the environment, to use new decision-making processes which fully involve those affected, and to consider the implications of decisions for future generations. It calls for action at every level from the global to the local, and should be seen as a *basic framework for decision-making* – the essential underpinning to national, regional and community strategies, rather than one element within them.

www.renewal.net

The main policy documents from the UK Government are:

1.1 A better quality of life; a strategy for sustainable development for the UK (1999)

This wanted to protect the environment, be careful in the use of natural resources and maintain economic growth.

The goals of the UK Sustainable Development Strategy which were set out in this policy document were:

- Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone
- Effective protection of the environment
- Prudent use of natural resources
- Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment

This strategy was reviewed regularly and new actions and targets added.

Details from www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/publications and www.defra.gov.uk

1.2 The United Kingdom Sustainable Communities Plan (2003)

The government is concerned about the quality of life for its citizens and has commissioned various reports and produced strategies to regenerate and renew run down areas, improve towns and cities and tackle housing shortages and over supply. These themes came together in their Sustainable Communities plan and subsequent policies.

‘Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and work, now and in the future.

They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all’

These have also been described as communities that are planned, built, or modified to promote sustainable living. They focus on environmental sustainability (including development and agriculture) as well as economic sustainability, in urban and rural areas.

In 2007 a backbench MP successfully presented the Sustainable Communities Act. Details of the plan and the act are at www.communities.gov.uk

1.3 Securing the Future (2005)

This focused on creating a strong, just and healthy society, living within environmental limits and achieving a sustainable economy.

The government believes that this issue cuts across all of its work and departments and so all central Government departments have to publish their Sustainable Development Action Plans setting out how they intend to contribute to this agenda. These are all published at: www.sustainable-development.gov.uk

The priorities that have been set out for action by the UK government are around:

- Sustainable consumption and production
- Climate change and energy
- Natural resource protection and environmental enhancement
- Sustainable communities
- Changing behaviour

More recently the concept of One Planet Living, which was developed by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), has been adopted by the government to highlight how the UK (and all other rich countries) use far more of their fair share of the planets resources. It has been worked out that developed countries use about 3 planet’s worth of resources. The target is to reduce this ‘global footprint’ by two thirds so only one planet’s worth of resources are used. Details at www.oneplanetliving.org

1.4 Climate Change Bill – UK (2007)

This is currently working its way through parliament. It has four key elements:

- It will set out a statutory commitment to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 60% from 1990 levels by 2050;
- It will establish an independent body - the carbon committee - to work with government to reduce emissions over time and across the economy;
- It will create enabling powers to put in place new emissions reduction measures needed to achieve set goals;
- It will improve monitoring and reporting arrangements, including how the government reports to parliament.

The aim of the bill is to increase the UK's contribution to tackling climate change.

The government's environmental policy initiatives are on the DEFRA website www.defra.gov.uk and their current themes are tackling the big issues of climate change and creating a fairer world, and at a local level they want to create cleaner, safer, greener and healthier communities, reducing waste and recycling, travelling wisely or supporting local food initiatives.

1.5 An Action Plan for Community Empowerment: Building on Success (2007)

This action plan is a key part of the Government's strategy for constitutional renewal – set out in the Governance of Britain Green Paper. It builds upon the 2005 Together We Can programme which has included the Active Learning for Active Citizenship and the Guide Neighbourhoods Programmes.

It is a joint action plan for Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Association (LGA) which:

- Shows how they will take forward a shared community empowerment agenda which aims to give citizens the means of participating in decision-making at every level;
- Clarifies the role of Government, both at central and local level;
- Rebalances power between Parliament and government and gives British people a stronger sense of what it means to be British.

Communities and Local Government is undertaking work to develop a culture of public participation and empower people to play an active role as a key component of this work.

The Action Plan sets out three key outcomes:

- Greater participation, collective action and engagement in democracy;
- Changes in attitudes towards community empowerment;
- Improved performance of public services and quality of life.

The action plan talks about the new duty to provide information, consult and involve local people which is in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill. Key Communities and Local Government programmes such as housing, planning and community cohesion will have community empowerment approaches built into them. The plan is keen to see more people getting involved in 'local democracy'.

Within this plan there are actions relating to sustainable communities, such as more influence over planning applications and better information flows between local councils and their citizens.

The full plan is available at www.communities.gov.uk

Section 2. Regional Government

Government policies relating to environmental and sustainable development, and those seeking to tackle the big issues such as climate change, are to be implemented by all its departments and by all levels of government. So national government departments have their action plans while at a regional level Government Offices and Regional Development Agencies have responsibility for preparing various regional strategies to create a framework for delivering the national policies at the regional level. Local authorities then work within these agreed frameworks.

There are major strategies that these regional bodies are responsible for – mainly to do with the economic development of the region and the development of the regions infrastructure – these are known as the Regional Economic Strategy and the Regional Spatial Strategy.

There are other strategies and frameworks that are developed at a regional level that may be relevant to sustainable and environmental development:

- Planning guidance – affects what gets built where;
- Housing strategy – how the region can meet housing needs, what kind of developments will be allowed or encouraged and where;
- Waste strategy – where will the landfill sites be located, or incinerators;
- Health strategy – provision of health facilities as well as making the population fitter ;
- Forestry strategy – where will trees be grown and access to open spaces;
- Resettlement strategy - of newer arriving communities;
- Social economic strategy – creating different kinds of employment;
- Cultural strategy – the role of arts in regeneration and social cohesion;
- Rural Development Framework – pulls together all the strategies relating to rural areas.

A mapping of the work of community workers in Yorkshire and Humber in 2006 showed that they were contributing to many of these regional objectives (reports on the FCDL web site).

Community groups will need to be aware of these regional plans for some activities and campaigns, for example, it is within these regional strategies that you will find the plans for building more runways and new roads, plans for flooding and coastal defences, or areas designated for housing development.

Section 3. The Local Context

In this section we explain about the main policies and strategies which will determine what is happening in, or what is planned for your area.

Government has put in place a number of mechanisms to help local authorities deliver sustainable communities on the ground:

Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) : Brings together the views of the local private, voluntary and community sectors with the sustainable community strategy in an area, to turn the vision of a sustainable community into a reality.

Sustainable Community Strategy: Creates a long-term, sustainable vision in an area and sets the agenda for priorities in the local area agreement.

Local Area Agreement (LAA) : A three year 'contract' between a local area (represented by the local authority and other partners through the local strategic partnership) and central Government to deliver particular priorities as set out in its sustainable community strategy.

www.sustainable-development.gov.uk

3.1 Local Strategic Partnerships

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) are non-statutory, multi-agency partnerships, which match local authority boundaries. LSPs bring together at a local level the different parts of the public, private, community and voluntary sectors; allowing different initiatives and services to support one another so that they can work together more effectively. They were created to tackle the lack of joint working at local level which has been one of the key reasons why there has been little progress in delivering sustainable economic, social and physical regeneration, or improved public services, that meet the needs of local communities. Originally set up in the most deprived areas they have been rolled out to all parts of England.

LSPs should provide a single co-ordinating framework to:

- Work with local authorities to prepare and implement a Community Strategy, with the aim of improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of an area;
- Bring together local plans, partnerships and initiatives. Improving linkages and simplifying arrangements;
- In the 86 local authority areas receiving Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (NRF), develop and deliver a local neighbourhood renewal strategy to secure more jobs, better education, improve health, reduced crime, better housing / physical environment, addressing liveability issues, narrowing the gap between deprived neighbourhoods and the rest and contributing to the national targets to tackle deprivation;
- Work with local authorities that are developing Local Public Service Agreements (LPSAs), Local Area Agreements (LAA) and Safer & Stronger Communities (SSCF), helping them to devise appropriate targets.

LSPs are being required to take an increasingly responsible, strategic role in delivering genuinely sustainable communities, providing as they do the opportunity to work across agencies and with the inclusion of those who live and work in the community they serve.

It is the job of LSPs to focus the resources - financial and otherwise - of a local area and central Government, to turn the vision of the sustainable community strategy into real changes on the ground.

www.sustainable-development.gov.uk

The plan was that a combination of organisations, and the community, working co-operatively as part of an LSP will have a far greater chance of success. To achieve these improvements, the Government, local authorities and other service providers need to work co-operatively, change the ways they work, reallocate resources and 'bend' their mainstream programmes to tackle issues that really matter to local people.

The research that has been undertaken into the working of Local Strategic Partnerships shows that communities tend not to be well represented at the level of decision-making³ women are largely invisible⁴ and the same applies to other minorities.

You may find that there are voluntary and community sector representatives within different sub groups, or on management boards. Your local CVS or Voluntary Action or similar umbrella organisation will have the details as they often have the job of sorting out community representatives or look at the LSP websites collated by the Department of Communities and Local Government. You can find out who the chair and lead officer of the Local Strategic Partnership are and contact them with any concerns and if you want you can check when the next LSP meetings are and attend or make contact with other people on this group.

You can ask your local CVS to make sure that they raise local issues, and you can make contact with friendly local councillors to raise your issues.

The government has accepted that LSPs are not as good at involving the third sector as they have been at involving the statutory and private sectors and are trying to improve this situation by strengthening the role of Local Area Agreements (see below) which LSPs have responsibility for.

3.2 Local Area Agreements (LAA)

These agreements are made between central and local government in a local area. Their aim is to achieve local solutions that meet local needs, while also contributing to national priorities and meeting the standards set by central government.

Local Area Agreements should:

- Provide intelligent and mature discussion between local and central government, based on a clear framework and shared understanding of national and local priorities;
- Improve local performance, by allowing a more flexible use of resources, to achieve better outcomes and devolve responsibility;
- Enhance efficiency by rationalising non-mainstream funding and reduce bureaucracy to help local partners to join up and enhance community leadership.

New Local Area Agreements became a legal requirement for top-tier local authorities following 'Strong and prosperous communities', the Local Government White Paper in 2006. LAAs were first piloted in 2004 in 21 areas and are now being rolled out throughout England. They are a three-year agreement between central government (represented by the regional government office), the local authority and its partners in an area (working through the local strategic partnership) to improve public services and respond to local needs rather than being driven by national targets. A LAA should complement (but not replace) local strategies such as Sustainable Community Strategies. Previously areas had to manage numerous different funding streams from different government departments, all with their own targets

3 JRF produce a number of relevant research Findings, including The value added by community involvement in governance 12.07.06 Local Strategic Partnerships: lessons from the experience of the New Commitment to Regeneration 11.01; Local Strategic Partnerships: lessons from the experience of the New Commitment to Regeneration 03.01 all available on www.jrf.org.uk

4 OXFAM and Urban Forum research Where are the Women in LSPs? download from www.urbanforum.org.uk

and reporting mechanisms. The LAA pools them all into a single grant to an area and each area develops its own targets and outcomes.

When LAAs first started they had four main themes:

- Children and Young People;
- Safer and Stronger Communities;
- Healthier Communities and Older People;
- Economic Development and the Environment.

In the changes being made in 2008 these will become guide areas and funding will not be restricted just to these topics.

LAAs should be sorted out at a local level with the local authority and the LSP convening discussions between local partners. A vision for an area will set out issues and priorities for the local area, which should also be set out in the Sustainable Community strategy (SCS), which covers 20 years rather than the 3 years for the LAA.

Local area agreements are already taking forward changes to local public services and delivering on many aspects of sustainable development including waste, climate change, biodiversity and renewable energy. However, not all local authorities have taken up the challenge of LAAs and there is much scope for sustainable development to become more integrated into area agreements. The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has published a short guide for local authorities and their partners on how LAAs can be used to deliver genuinely sustainable communities. www.sustainable-development.gov.uk

There is a legal duty to involve local people and the Voluntary and Community Sector in developing the LAA. Each LAA must include a statement setting out how the VCS and local people have been informed, consulted and given the opportunity to participate in the process and the delivery of the outcomes.

Whilst barriers to VCS engagement often exist, including timescales, lack of resources, lack of information, and lack of understanding of the added value the third sector can bring, the involvement of the VCS in LAAs is crucial. This is also due to the fact that funding is likely to follow the priorities set out in the LAA.

3.3 Sustainable Community Strategies

These will be drawn up by the local authority and the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), in consultation with the community. These will evolve from the existing Community Strategies to give a greater emphasis to sustainable development objectives which are necessary for creating an area where people genuinely want to live long-term.

To find your local sustainable community strategy go to [www.\[nameofyourlocalauthority\].gov.uk](http://www.[nameofyourlocalauthority].gov.uk) and search for sustainable community strategy or community strategy.

All councils and LSPs have a community strategy in place. The challenge now is to turn these into sustainable community strategies by developing a stronger focus on integrating social, economic and environmental issues and by tackling the longer-term and global impacts of communities. www.sustainable-development.gov.uk

www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/publications – sustainable communities guide suggests a number of actions that could be included in such a plan:

- Focus on improving the environment in the most run-down neighbourhoods;
- Promote forms of transport which reduce emissions while allowing safe, reliable travel;
- Work with your local biodiversity action partnership to conserve and enhance biodiversity to make the area more attractive, encourage recreation and improve people's quality of life;
- Promote energy-efficiency to businesses and the use of renewables locally in communities;
- Promote recycling and better waste management;
- Use procurement policies to include whole-life costing, high environmental standards, and high levels of good design;
- Design attractive green spaces for the use of the whole community; and promote open access to the countryside for recreational purposes and for good health.

3.4 Local Development Framework (LDF)

Each local planning authority is preparing a Local Development Framework. This is a folder of documents that sets out how your local area may change over the next few years. Use www.planningportal.gov.uk to search for your relevant LDF.

The importance given to community involvement in the creation of these documents is a crucial part of the new plan system. Within the folder there has to be a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) which shows how, and when, planning authorities intend to consult local communities and other stakeholders when preparing documents. A key outcome of the SCI is that consultation begins at the earliest stages of each document's development so that communities are given the fullest opportunity to participate in plan making and to make a difference.

A Local Development Framework must include a Core Strategy, Site-Specific Allocations of land, a Proposals Map and may also contain additional optional development documents such as Area Action Plans. These are classed as DPDs and outline the key development goals of the Local Development Framework. DPDs are to be subjected to rigorous procedures of community involvement, consultation and independent examination. Once adopted, development control decisions must be made in accordance with the DPDs unless material considerations indicate otherwise. DPDs are also subject to a Sustainability Appraisal to ensure economic, environmental and social effects of the plan are in line with sustainable development targets.

Advice on planning can be obtained from regional planning aid centres – find details of your local centre on www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk

3.5 Parish Plans

The Government's November 2000 Rural White Paper stated that Parish Plans should "identify key facilities and services, set out the problems that need to be tackled and demonstrate how distinctive character and features can be preserved". They should set out a vision for the community in the future and identify the action needed to tackle issues of concern in addition to including everything that is relevant to the people who live and work in the community, from employment needs to playgrounds. The Parish Plan should consult everyone and give them a chance to say what they think about the social, economic and environmental issues affecting them and how they'd like to see their community improved during the next 5, 10 or even 15 years.

Airmyn Parish Plan

Airmyn is a village lying beside the River Ouse in East Yorkshire. Its closeness to the motorway system and to the offices of the Press Association has caused an increase in the number of commuters living there although there are still a number of working farms. The facilities within the village include a primary school, a large and modern village hall and a pub. The proximity of the motorway means that Airmyn is one of the few villages with a McDonalds. The post office and shop closed during the process of the exercise and was one of the subjects of the consultation.

In 2005, the parish council decided to carry out a parish plan consultation and set up a separate group to do so, drawing in a range of people with different skills, interests and perspectives. They were committed to encouraging as much participation as possible and hearing a wide range of voices. They did this by using the following range of methods:

- Group members working at the primary school encouraged a group of children to make a plan of the village showing important landmarks such as the river, clock tower, pub;
- This was used at two events in the village hall, one in the evening, one on a Saturday afternoon to encourage local people to participate in designing the survey form by highlighting the issues of concern to them;
- The model was also taken to the village gala to encourage more people, and specifically children, to raise issues to be included;
- Designing a high quality questionnaire, asking questions about these issues and distributing it to all households;
- Making special efforts to ensure that this was also received by people living in outlying farms and settlements collecting the forms back personally to ensure a high return.

Substantial response was received and the parish plan grant was used to pay for data inputting and for high quality presentation materials. The high level of media skills in the village were used to draw out the key themes in the data and present them professionally in a report and on display materials, which were used in a public launch in the local pub.

The issues arising fell into a number of categories. There were those that local people could take action on themselves by working together. These included providing services and activities for young people, developing new groups and activities in the village hall and environmental projects along the river bank and on a disused tip. Other issues were the responsibility of the parish council and the local authority and the group worked to ensure that these issues were raised with them or the police authority or the primary care trust as appropriate.

There was one issue where the group had to admit defeat and felt disempowered. This concerned the closure of the post office. They spent some time researching ways of keeping it open and possibly running it as a community shop, but found a number of obstacles put in their way by the Post Office. Later policy announcements on post office closure would reveal the reason why. Help was offered by national bodies to establish a community shop but the group members felt that this was too big an issue to take on. What was important was that, despite local pressure, they felt strongly enough to know their own limits.

The ways in which they were empowered including

- Having firm information with which they could lobby parish council and district council and other statutory bodies;
- Having the support and the mandate from local people to start new services and facilities and feeling confident they were meeting real needs.

3.6. Local Authorities taking action on sustainable and environmental development

Over 200 Local Authorities have signed the Nottingham declaration on climate change showing they recognise that Climate Change is likely to be one of the key drivers of change within our community this century.

The Declaration says those councils signing acknowledge that:

- Evidence continues to mount that climate change is occurring;
- Climate change will have far reaching effects on the UK's economy, society and environment.

Those councils signing welcome the:

- Social, economic and environmental benefits which will come from combating climate change;
- Recognition by many sectors, especially government and business, of the need for change;
- Emissions targets agreed by central government and the programme for delivering change as set out in the Climate Change - UK Programme;
- Opportunity for local government to lead the response at a local level and thereby play a major role in helping to deliver the national programme;
- Opportunity for us to encourage and help local residents and local businesses - to reduce their energy costs, to reduce congestion, to improve the local environment and to deal with fuel poverty in our communities;
- Additional powers to address the social, economic and environmental well-being of our communities contained within the Local Government Act 2000, which will assist in this process;
- Endorsement of this declaration by central government.

The councils signing commit to:

- Work with central government to contribute, at a local level, to the delivery of the UK climate change programme;
- Prepare a plan with our local communities, to address the causes and effects of climate change and to secure maximum benefit for our communities;
- Publicly declare, within the plan, the commitment to achieve a significant reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from our own authority's operations especially energy sourcing and use, travel and transport, waste production and disposal and the purchasing of goods and services;
- Encourage all sectors in the local community to take the opportunity to reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions and to make public their commitment to action;
- Work with key providers, including the health community, businesses and development organisations, to assess the potential effects of climate change on our communities, and to identify ways in which we can adapt;
- Provide opportunities for the development of renewable energy generation within our area;
- Monitor the progress of our plan against the actions needed and publish the results.

To check if your local council has signed this declaration look on www.idea.gov.uk

Any community organisation can make a similar public statement of their intention to take action on reducing carbon dioxide emissions by signing the Third Sector Declaration on Climate Change at www.everyactioncounts.org.uk/declaration. Over 180 third sector organisations have already signed up to demonstrate their commitment.

Section 4. Specific local policies and strategies relevant to sustainable development

The section above outlined the main policies and strategies that Local Authorities have to have in place and where they have to have a significant input from their communities. In this section we are going to look at some of the more specific policies and strategies that campaigning and community groups may want to use as a way of influencing what their council does to encourage environmental and sustainable development in their area.

The areas we will look at include:

- Waste strategies
- Housing strategies
- Local environment
- Emergency planning
- Social and economic strategies
- Purchasing policies
- Transport strategies
- Public and community buildings
- Health strategies

Under each one we will mention the kind of topics that are covered and signpost to where to find more details. We will suggest the range of community issues within this theme and give some examples of actions community groups are taking.

4.1 Waste Strategies

Waste affects communities in many different ways. From the impact of littering and fly tipping through to the transport and disposal of radioactive waste. From the siting of landfill sites through to the siting of recycling facilities. From the collection of rubbish through to street cleaning.

There are European Directives on Waste and the governments of England, Scotland and Wales have set out their own strategies to comply. In England the Government has set out its vision for sustainable waste management in Waste Strategy for England 2007 (May 2007). The Government's key objectives are to:

- Break the link between waste growth and economic growth and put more emphasis on waste prevention and re-use;
- Meet and exceed the Landfill Directive diversion targets for biodegradable municipal waste in 2010, 2013 and 2020;
- Increase diversion from landfill of non-municipal waste and secure better integration of treatment for municipal and non-municipal waste;
- Secure the investment in infrastructure needed to divert waste from landfill and for the management of hazardous waste; and
- Get the most environmental benefit from that investment, through increased recycling of resources and recovery of energy from residual waste using a mix of technologies.

Get the Waste Strategy for England 2007 document at: www.defra.gov.uk

Within this context Local Authorities have set out their waste strategy – a web search of ‘waste strategies’ soon finds your local council’s strategy. Within their strategy there is likely to be sections on their plans for:

- How to reduce waste
- Recycling facilities
- Transport of waste
- Rubbish disposal
- Landfill sites
- Contaminated land

Some councils have included:

- Street cleaning
- Fly tipping
- Composting
- Use of recycled materials to build roads, playgrounds etc.

Tackling waste and its impact on communities is one of the areas where community groups and associations have long been active at a street level in clean ups and reporting grot spots. Many community projects have been set up to recycle furniture and computers. Groups have campaigned against the establishment of incinerators in their area and have tried to promote alternatives such as community composting schemes.

Examples of actions taken by community groups can be found in the FCDL taster packs:

Care for Your Area – clean up campaigns

Community Buildings – setting up recycling systems and reusing recycled materials in building and refurbishments

In the resource pack on community work and environmental action there is information on Broken Windows, recycling and rubbish collection and what communities are doing to tackle waste issues e.g. Surfers against Sewage, Orkney Bag the Bruck – beach cleaning, Chew Magna – zero waste village, Communities against Toxics campaigns, Real nappy projects... and many others.

If waste is an issue for the communities you live or work in, the grid on the next page can inform your action plan.

Tackling issues relating to waste in your community

What are the issues?	What is the preferred solution?	How could the local council help to resolve this problem ?	What are the relevant policies and strategies that can provide some leverage?	Who should you approach in the local council?
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

4.2 Housing strategies

Housing is a major issue for many communities, whether there is not enough that is affordable, or there are many empty and derelict houses making life unsafe for those who remain, or the state of the social housing is of poor quality and so hard to keep dry and warm.

All councils will have a Housing Strategy Statement which should review all housing-related issues in its area, and sets out its housing objectives, and establish priorities for action both by the local authority and by other service providers. It should have a clear Action Plan agreed with the council's local partners. It should be consistent with national policy and designed to deliver regional and sub-regional strategies (including those for economic development and land use) as well as meeting the authority's wider objectives set out in its Sustainable Community Strategy.

Within this strategy they should identify local needs and priorities, and they should cover all tenures - housing associations and private landlords as well as owner-occupiers. The strategy would include an analysis of the housing markets, and examine issues of any mis-match between supply and demand; affordability, comparing house prices and rents and local incomes; homelessness and rough sleeping; the role of housing in community cohesion and the needs of particular sections of the community.

One important area is the condition of housing stock across all sectors, and this should cover:

- Fitness
- Decent homes
- Energy efficiency

Their strategy should also cover:

- Lettings strategy
- Anti-social behaviour on housing estates
- Neighbourhood renewal and regeneration

Tenants and residents associations have long been involved in social housing and in commenting on plans for where houses are to be built or demolished under various renewal and regeneration schemes.

Housing strategies are important in areas of both over or under supply of housing. In the latter developers may be proposing to demolish terraced housing to release land for other purposes, whereas in the former situation any green / open space may be at risk if being built upon. Communities concerned about what they perceive as development in their area can try and influence these housing strategies. Pressure to ensure houses are built or refurbished to be highly energy efficient can also be built into these strategies.

Some councils have worked with their Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations to agree a programme for the wholesale re-roofing and insulation of all social housing in their district to improve the energy efficiency of their homes and a reduction in their carbon footprint.

An alternative approach is to obtain pieces of land and run it as a community land trust – full details in the resource pack on sustainable communities – which often have aspects of social housing as well as other community benefits. See also www.communitylandtrust.org.uk

If housing is an issue for the communities you live or work in, this grid can inform your action plan.

Tackling issues relating to housing in your community				
What are the issues?	What is the preferred solution?	How could the local council help to resolve this problem ?	What are the relevant policies and strategies that can provide some leverage?	Who should you approach in the local council?
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

4.3 The Local Environment

Everyone is affected by the quality of their local environment. If you step outside your door and the environment is degraded and it looks like no one cares then that reduces the quality of life for all residents. Some research from Scotland suggests that lack of green spaces adversely affects peoples' quality of life, and the amount of trees in streets affects the level of street violence (Central Scotland Forest Trust).

There are many examples of community groups and associations taking action to improve their local environment by getting their council to work in partnership with them on:

- Home zones
- DIY streets
- Friends of local parks / woodlands owned by LAs;

and through such examples they may be contributing to the local authority achieving its targets on tackling pollution, through its air quality action plans; or using green spaces to achieve its biodiversity strategies.

Home Zones are an attempt to strike a balance between vehicular traffic and everyone else who uses the street, the pedestrians, cyclists, business people and residents. Some see Home Zones as a way of "reclaiming" local streets from a traditional domination by cars. Others see it more modestly as a way of trying to restore the safety and peace in neighbourhoods that are becoming overwhelmed with speeding traffic. Home Zones work through the physical alteration of streets and roads in an area. These alterations force motorists to drive with greater care and at lower speeds. Many countries support this with legislation allowing the Home Zones to enforce a reduced speed limit of 10 miles an hour. The benches, flower beds, play areas, lamp posts, fences and trees used to alter the streets and roads offer many additional community benefits to the Home Zones and are considered to enhance the beauty of an area and increase the housing prices. The success of a Home Zone scheme is not just dependant on effective and well thought out plans, but also requires the whole community being encouraged to get involved from the start. More details from www.homezones.org

DIY Streets helps residents to re-design their own streets affordably, putting people at their heart, and making them safer and more attractive places to live. DIY Streets is a innovative approach to the original Dutch design of home zones offering community-led alternatives in a cost effective manner. The project works with local communities to help residents develop low-cost capital solutions to making their streets safer and more attractive, aiming to find simple interventions and materials which can be both effective and durable. DIY Streets aims to establish an equilibrium between drivers and pedestrians, where all users share the street on equal terms, and cars travel at no more than a walking pace. They can consist of traffic calming measures and greening the streets. More details from www.sustrans.org.uk

Information on both of these ideas in the resource pack on local actions on travel and transport available from www.fcld.org.uk

Friends of Local Parks

There are many "Friends of the Park" groups and Park Action Groups who help generate new ideas and improvements in their local Park. Such groups can act as a catalyst for getting improvements made to these parks, with the aim of getting more people to use them and to increase the biodiversity within them. There are scores of innovative ideas on the many websites and in some cases joint ventures with the councils have led to additional resources being obtained from lottery and trust funders.

Biodiversity strategies

Biodiversity simply signifies the variety of life on the planet in all its shapes and sizes. This biodiversity can be found everywhere; in our gardens, in the countryside and in the towns and cities. It encompasses everything from flower pollinating insects to the mightiest oak tree.

The central government has an England Biodiversity Strategy and expects to see the integration of biodiversity into local authorities' key strategic plans, the Community Strategies. Government guidance shows how the objectives of the Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) preparing the Community Strategies can benefit from local biodiversity, including:

- Social benefits, as communities work together towards wildlife projects;
- Health benefits, brought by the pleasure and sense of well-being nature brings;
- The natural source and wealth of jobs, wildlife and habitats bring to local economy, attracting revenue from tourism, creating new industries and providing raw materials;
- Lifelong learning experiences that enable communities to share the knowledge they need to achieve a long-term future that is sustainable.

www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/biodiversity

Strategies and actions to improve biodiversity are developed through Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAP's). LBAPS are prepared for a local area (usually a single county, groups of counties, Districts or Borough) and are delivered by partnerships made up from local authorities, statutory agencies, Wildlife Trusts, RSPB, biological recording centres, businesses and other interested groups.

Most local councils have their own strategies which relate to their specific situation, for example what species are no longer around in their area or in very small numbers.

There are many different community based groups who are actively involved in mapping and recording the local plants, trees, fungi, butterflies and birds for example. They may be trying to protect unmanaged areas of land which are seen as derelict although they may teem with wildlife. They are putting up nesting boxes in local woods or checking that bats are not being disturbed by building developments. Community groups may be working with local schools to create wildlife gardens within the school premises or with councils on developing parts of their playing fields as wildlife reserves.

What local environmental matters are an issue for the communities you live or work in? The grid on the next page can inform your action plan.

Tackling issues relating to the state of the local environment in your community

What are the issues?	What is the preferred solution?	How could the local council help to resolve this problem ?	What are the relevant policies and strategies that can provide some leverage?	Who should you approach in the local council?
1.				
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4.4 Planning around potential emergencies

Whilst some communities have been used to thinking about disaster scenarios (for example past coal mining or fishing communities, or those in the shadow of chemical works) this will be a developing arena for communities to be engaged in as the changing climate and associated changes in weather begins to affect more and more communities, and the global nature of business means that problems are exported half way around the world, like toxic waste.

The changes that are being predicted, and often felt on the ground, arising from climate change are leading to each area undertaking revised emergency planning to deal with situations such as the recent floods, and officials are working out longer term strategies for defusing potential problems. One example is from the Humber where the government’s regional office and local authorities are devising new strategies to deal with the flooding on the east coast and the Humberlands. A consortium of the larger voluntary organisations, regional and national government departments are working with communities in a project entitled Coastal Futures (www.coastalfutures.org.uk)

They are coming up with ideas for letting the river flood farm land that is currently defended by river banks as one way of reducing the impact further along the river and in more built up areas. They are consulting on their ideas with local communities and bodies.

Community development workers and the communities and groups they work with may well want to look at some of these plans, they may want to influence the design of any plans, or contribute to the emergency planning services or the Regional Flood Defence Committees. Many voluntary organisations are already involved with the emergency services and local authorities in planning to deal with emergencies.

Useful web sites are www.preparingforemergencies.gov.uk and www.ukresilience.info

Frontline responders come together in Local Resilience Forums, to facilitate multi agency planning arrangements which meet the needs of their local community. These are established on the basis of existing police areas. The engagement of the voluntary sector in emergency preparedness will largely take place through arrangements with local statutory agencies within these local resilience areas. There may be opportunities for community groups to get involved in these local forums.

Are there particular threats to the communities you live or work within?

What are the threats?	Who has responsibility for dealing with them?	What information do you need and how would you get it?	What role(s) would local community groups want to take in this matter?

4.5 Social and economic strategies

Community development workers tend to be targeted at the poorest and least resourced communities and are often tackling issues relating to poverty – for example community development health workers trying to reduce the disparities between the health and life expectancy of richer and poorer communities. They may be working in areas of tensions between communities which arise from lack of employment opportunities, or the perceived unfairness of resources being allocated to different communities. Increasingly they may be working with environmental refugees as well as economic migrants.

Councils can have a wide range of strategies that aim to improve the social and economic situation within their boundaries and some of these can have aspects which are relevant to promoting sustainable and environmental development. Here are some that you may find relevant.

Anti poverty strategies

Many councils have anti poverty strategies, often linked with social inclusion strategies which seek to reduce the gaps between their richer and poorer citizens. Poor people will find it hard to cover the increasing costs of fuel to heat their homes and they may well live in the worst housing conditions with poor insulation and inefficient heating systems. This is known as fuel poverty and applies to anyone who spends more than 10% of their income on keeping themselves warm. Councils may include within their anti poverty strategies actions to promote energy efficient light bulbs, and paying for insulation schemes such as re-roofing and external cladding.

Neighbourhood renewal and regeneration strategies and partnership working

In the past large scale regeneration projects tended to focus primarily on economic and social aspects of improving an area of poor housing. These regeneration programmes have relied on approaches which are unsustainable in that they have failed to eliminate poverty and disadvantage, and failed to improve environmental quality or protect environmental resources. This has resulted in, for example, inappropriate housing and economic developments using environmentally damaging materials (e.g. PVC), in inappropriate locations (e.g. floodplains), without adequate public transport links, demanding enormous energy use and without tackling land contamination have led to the poorest people in the UK living with the worst pollution (especially air and water), and the greatest risks to physical and mental health (www.renewal.net).

For regeneration programmes to contribute to sustainable development, the environmental, social and economic elements need to be fully integrated. Often the environmental elements tend to be forgotten, or focused around practical projects such as improving open spaces (especially green spaces) and litter, graffiti and other 'liveability' and environmental quality issues.

With the more recent push towards creating sustainable communities the environmental and sustainable development side has become more recognised and we are beginning to see more strategic approaches being pursued. For example Local Agenda 21 plans are now being gradually integrated with the process of community planning and the local government power on well-being. Many of the groups and networks which resulted from LA21 processes remain active and some are beginning to take new roles in Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and regional institutions working on regeneration.

There are a number of new approaches in regeneration programmes, designed to address the wider environmental impacts of local decisions, such as:

- Procurement
- Energy
- Liveability
- Transport
- Environmental quality
- Environmental justice and community cohesion
- Sustainable community enterprise

The council may also have adopted policies to support specific communities – such as Communities on Main Roads, or revitalising run down shopping areas, all of which can have environmental aspects as they promote walking and encourage people to shop locally.

Community development workers support community led refugee organisations to get themselves together and organised so they can contribute to council led neighbourhood or community forums, or setting up their own support networks for newer arrivals to supplement those run by the local authority.

Community representatives may be encouraged and supported to raise environmental matters with other professionals as plans for neighbourhood renewal are being developed; they may have made links with other groups or with the larger voluntary organisations who can provide guidance on good practice or advice on how to challenge less sustainable ideas. Local information and advice centres may be able to encourage the take up of low energy light bulbs amongst local residents as part of checking other entitlements.

What are the local social and economic matters that impact on the communities you live or work in? The grid on the next page can inform your action plan.

Tackling issues relating to the local social and economic situation in your community

What are the issues?	What is the preferred solution?	How could the local council help to resolve this problem ?	What are the relevant policies and strategies that can provide some leverage?	Who should you approach in the local council?
1.				
2.				
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4.6 Rural development strategies and frameworks

Community Development workers and community groups in rural areas are often tackling a wide range of issues – from the slow withdrawal of services such as post offices and banks, or lack of access to appropriate education, health and social services, through to the changing nature of different rural communities which may be in decline, becoming commuter villages, or seeing the increase in second homes. They may be affected by the increase in the price of land, by the changing nature of farming - a move from food production to bio-fuels, and by increases in tourism in specific localities.

The Rural Strategy 2004 set out the framework for the Government's rural policy for the next 3-5 years and identifies three key priorities for rural policy:

- Economic and Social Regeneration - supporting enterprise across rural England, but targeting greater resources at areas of greatest need;
- Social Justice for All - tackling rural social exclusion wherever it occurs and providing fair access to services and opportunities for all rural people;
- Enhancing the Value of our Countryside - protecting the natural environment for this and future generations.

Sustainable development underpins all of these policies and their delivery arrangements.

DEFRA is the lead body for rural matters and provides guidance and support on policy to all rural councils (www.defra.gov.uk/rural). It's Rural Social and Community Programme aims to develop the capacity of the rural voluntary and community and parish council sectors to address locally defined issues of disadvantage and help shape the communities in which they serve.

There is a substantial amount of activity taking place within rural communities – this may be through the Parish Planning processes to determine what local people want to see happen in their area and the feeding of these ideas upwards to the local authority to take action on. Or through the concept of Transition Towns –where residents are trying to reduce their dependence on fossil fuels – through reducing their use of energy or exploring ways of generating their own energy through renewables such as converting old mills into hydroelectric schemes, or to promoting solar panels. Village halls are undertaking energy audits and building wind turbines to meet their energy requirements.

Other villages are aiming to become carbon neutral, and we have seen small towns banning plastic bags. Social and community enterprises are aiming to meet the needs of green tourism and create local employment opportunities.

What environmental and sustainable development issues are affecting the rural communities you live or work in? The grid on the next page can inform your action plan.

Tackling issues in your rural community

What are the issues?	What is the preferred solution?	How could the local council help to resolve this problem ?	What are the relevant policies and strategies that can provide some leverage?	Who should you approach in the local council?
1.				
2.				
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4.7 Environmental policy

Many councils have adopted environmental policies and these can be quite wide ranging – one example states:

Whilst promoting the economic and social well-being of the District and working towards the achievement of sustainable development, the Council will ensure that environmental priorities are integrated into the decisions it takes on all its services and will seek whenever it has a regulatory or influential role to:

- Make the most efficient use of energy;
- Reduce the need for movement of both people and goods and encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport as alternatives to the private car;
- Minimise and where possible, eliminate, all forms of pollution;
- Avoid waste and encourage the appropriate conservation, re-use and recycling of resources;
- Protect, restore and enhance the diversity of the District's wildlife and countryside;
- Conserve and enhance the character and quality of the District's built environment;
- Avoid environmental damage by assessing and monitoring environmental impacts rather than responding to them afterwards;
- Promote a sense of responsibility and understanding for the environment and participation in environmental issues, by raising staff awareness, by education, information provision and open consultation with the local community;
- Work in partnership with our contractors, suppliers and others to comply with all regulatory requirements at a local, national, European and international level and to encourage continuous improvement in environmental performance and practices;
- Protect the health and well-being of all residents of, and visitors to, the District and to improve and safeguard the quality of the environment in which they live, work, or spend their leisure time;
- Publish targets and objectives, monitor and report our performance publicly each year;
- Review and where possible, improve our performance each year with positive action on any areas of non-compliance.

Another example is:

The County Council has a wide-ranging impact on the environment through its use of energy, water, transport and waste generation. In addition to this, the Council is responsible for the provision of a number of environmental services, and is involved in raising awareness, and setting an example to partners and the wider community. It is therefore important that the Council takes responsibility for its environmental impact.

Within its Corporate Plan, there is an objective “to make the county a place where people can enjoy a high quality environment” and within this a priority is “to do what we can as an organisation to enhance the county’s environment now and for future generations”. In response to these corporate objectives, the County Council has developed its first Environmental Policy Statement and Environmental Management Strategy that covers the following topics:

1. Climate Change
2. Natural Resources
3. Transport
4. Natural Environment
5. Built Environment
6. Pollution
7. Waste
8. Purchasing and Contracts
9. Energy
10. Health
11. Environmental Education

Community groups can encourage councils without such a policy to adopt one, or where their councils have such statements, they can undertake a monitoring function, checking on how well it is being implemented. This approach may be a useful way to raise issues and get support for local actions you want to take, or see taken.

Does your local authority have an environmental policy?

How is it reviewed and monitored?

Is there a role for community groups you are working with to be involved in this?

4.8 Purchasing policies

Many poorer communities find that money is often spent outside of them and so they do not benefit, this has been true of many regeneration projects. It has long been recognised that where residents and local businesses spent their money locally it tends to be retained in that community and used to improve its situation. This is the basis of many eco tourism schemes in poorer countries.

As well as where money is spent, how money is spent is important in promoting environmental and sustainable development; buying locally can reduce traffic and hence air pollution; buying less packaged goods can reduce the need for waste disposal; buying wood and other natural materials from sustainable sources can help maintain and increase biodiversity.

Awarding contracts to local social and community enterprises can increase employment opportunities and promote social cohesion.

Many companies, universities, Health Trusts, and councils have developed purchasing policies which take into account environmental principles and can include ethical purchasing.

There are a number of different approaches to these policies and a few examples are given here of what they can cover:

1) From a social enterprise:

- Reduce – return – reuse –recycle
- Fair trade
- Food miles
- Healthy food
- Animal welfare
- Packaging
- Chemicals

2) From a bank:

- Human rights
- Arms trade
- Labour rights
- Genetic modifications
- Ecological impact
- Animal welfare

3) From a health trust:

- Avoiding products which can deplete the ozone, or contribute to global warming
- Avoiding products with toxic substances
- Avoiding products with significant environmental decommissioning costs
- Avoiding batteries that are non rechargeable
- Avoiding cleaning products developed through animal testing
- Avoiding products with excessive packaging where a packaging recovery scheme is not offered by the supplier
- Buying certified sustainable timber products
- Buying energy efficient electrical products
- Buying recycled paper products
- Low emission and dual emission vehicles

- Choosing bio-degradable substances
- Choosing ethically produced food products

4) From a local authority – environmental purchasing policy:

- Purchase goods and services that achieve recognised environmental and ethical standards.
- Purchase products which are made from recycled materials; can be recycled or reused; are energy efficient and cause minimal damage to the environment in their production, distribution, use and disposal;
- Prohibits the use (by the Council and it's contractors) of certain specified environmentally damaging products - EU banned substances, products contravening the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITIES) and products for which environmentally preferable alternatives are available;
- Ozone depleting chemicals;
- Tropical hardwood which is not independently certified as coming from a managed forest
- The use of peat for soil amelioration purpose;
- Encourage and persuade suppliers to investigate and introduce environmentally friendly processes and products;
- Environmentally preferable products - which are less harmful to human health and the environment when compared with competing products which serve the same purpose;
- Are energy and resource efficient;
- Use the minimum amount of virgin materials;
- Make maximum use of post-consumer materials (e.g. recycled);
- Are non- (or less) polluting;
- Are durable, easily upgraded and repairable;
- Are reusable, and markets and the infrastructure exist for recycling the product at the end of its life.

You may want to encourage organisations and statutory bodies to adopt such a policy or to increase its coverage, and to seek evidence that it is being effectively implemented. You could work with the local authority to agree guidelines for good practice in this field when they award contracts relating to communities.

4.9 Fair trade towns (www.fairtrade.org.uk)

A Fair Trade Town is a town, city, village, county, zone, island or borough that has made a commitment to supporting Fairtrade and using products with the Fairtrade Mark. Any area can work towards Fairtrade status and everyone needs to be involved - Community organisations, faith groups, businesses, schools and individuals all contribute to making their area a Fairtrade Town by pledging to do what they can to support Fairtrade and promote the Fairtrade Mark.

Working towards Fairtrade Town status will bring together neighbours, groups, the local authority and businesses towards a common goal and a shared achievement. Becoming a Fairtrade Town is a lot of work, good fun and a great way to bring people together. It will also be an achievement everyone can celebrate and a powerful message about how your community wants trade to work.

4.10 Public and community buildings

Many communities use buildings that are owned by local councils, or they may be involved in taking over community centres as part of the current asset transfer programme. Often community associations or centre users groups raise funds for refurbishment of publicly owned buildings which are being used as community centres.

Local Authorities, have to take account of government policies relating to the design and construction of new public buildings and of refurbishment of existing public buildings (OGC's Achieving Excellence in Construction Procurement Guide 11: Sustainability. www.ogc.gov.uk/sdtoolkit/reference/ogc_library/achievingexcellence/ae11.pdf).

These include maximizing the efficiency of energy, water and waste management, minimizing and where possible avoiding negatives, seeking to enhance positive impacts on biodiversity, and to take account of the likely impact on staff, transport systems and local communities.

An appropriate environmental assessment process such as BREEAM (the British Research Establishments Environmental Assessment Method) or an equivalent appropriate to the size, nature and impact of the project must be carried out on all projects. Where BREEAM is used, all new projects are to achieve an "excellent" rating and all refurbishment projects are to achieve at least "very good" rating, unless site constraints or project objectives mean that this requirement conflicts with the obligation to achieve value for money.

Note that the Code of Sustainable Buildings Practice proposed by the Sustainable Buildings Task Group is currently under development. If its development is successful it will be considered for adoption as a standard for building across the public sector.

In February 2008 The Mayor of London set out a policy for improving the energy efficiency of public buildings in London as part of the capital's contribution to cutting carbon emissions.

Community development workers supporting community groups to obtain, build or refurbish buildings for use as community centres and other community buildings can raise issues of the building design and use of building materials to promote sustainable and environmentally friendly practices. They can raise awareness about carbon neutral buildings and help groups demonstrate the business case for a high technical specification for a new building in terms of future rental income to be gained and reduced running costs. They can draw upon the services of architects and surveyors who specialise in eco friendly design through bodies such as Business in the Community and community design and technical aid centres around the country, as well as making use of the local authorities own staff who are developing an expertise in this field.

Within the pack on sustainable development and community buildings there are several exercises to help community groups to think through how their community building can be made more environmentally friendly and sustainable.

Some of the actions may require the assistance of the local authority – for example can they put in cycle racks outside of the centre using part of their transport budget; will they support a joint funding bid to refurbish to a high environmental standard?

4.11 Traffic and transport strategies and plans

Most communities are affected by travel and transport, mainly from the increase in traffic and often accompanied by lack of access to reliable public transport. The impacts may manifest themselves in high numbers of road traffic accidents in an area, poor air quality, constant traffic noise, communities divided by roads that are so difficult to cross or that separate people from parks and open spaces where children can play, the school run that fills streets around the schools with cars twice a day.

Travel and Transport are key areas which impact on the quality of the environment for many communities, particularly the poorer communities. There are a number of relevant policies, we have mentioned some in the regional section. The resource packs on Local Actions on Travels and Transport and the Impact of Travel / transport on Communities (see www.fcsl.org.uk) give many examples of how travel and transport issues affect communities and the actions that community and campaign groups can take.

Local Transport Plans

The Transport Act 2000 requires most local transport authorities (county councils, unitary authorities and partnerships in metropolitan areas) in England to produce and maintain an LTP. Passenger Transport Executives (PTEs) cover the English metropolitan areas (Greater Manchester, Merseyside, South Yorkshire, Tyne and Wear, West Midlands and West Yorkshire) and produce a plan in partnership with the local district councils.

Within these plans there would be information about planned major schemes, public transport, cycling and walking, local travel plans, road safety, traffic management and traffic calming, streetworks and highway maintenance and other related matters. They could also include users groups (for rail and bus), school travel plans and car share schemes. These plans affect the funding that comes from central government to local councils. They are re-written every 5 years so the current ones end in 2011 and planning will start well before then on the next set of plans. These plans feed into the Local Strategic Partnership (LSPs see section three), and through them to the regional policies relating to transport.

There are also rural transport plans and parish transport plans.

Traffic affects many aspects of people's lives, several of which are health related. The pollution from cars and lorries affects the air quality which is bad news for people with breathing difficulties, death and injury from traffic is massive (over a quarter of a million in 2005- look for up-to-date figures) and the fear of accidents has led to children being driven everywhere or not allowed to play out which has reduced children's independence and fitness.

A school travel plan is a document produced by a school in conjunction with the Local Authority. It encompasses all the issues relevant to journeys to and from the school and includes concerns about safety and health, and proposals for ways to make improvements. It is a way of bringing together the ideas and contributions of different groups of people, to help to solve problems. All parts of the UK have such schemes, and all schools must have their plans sorted by 2010. School travel plans should help schools to tackle issues of congestion and safety around the school, the health and well being of its pupils and staff by encouraging safe and healthy ways to get to school.

Councils have attempted to reduce the level of death and injury on their roads through the use of speed cameras, traffic calming, promoting walking school buses, 20mph zones, and encouraging walking through pedestrianisation schemes. (See above section 4.3) for information on home zones and DIY streets.

Air Quality Assessments - councils have to report annually to central government on the quality of the air in their district, some councils have air quality action plans and others have Air Quality management Areas.

www.defra.gov.uk

For examples of communities taking actions over transport and travel see the FCDL resource packs - Impact of travel/ transport on communities, and Local actions on travel and transport. These packs list many national and regional organisations active in these fields.

The activities described range from getting involved in preparing school travel plans, getting representatives onto bus user groups, undertaking traffic surveys, attending public meetings about particular traffic hot spots, campaigning for 20 mph zones in towns and villages, through to organising events to demonstrate how to ride a bike safely and how to mend punctures.

Campaigning against proposals

Attempts to influence such plans may not be successful, or communities may not know about any plans until they have been announced, which leaves them reduced to campaigning against proposals. One of ways to do this is through working with ward councillors, and in future the idea of a community call for action (check details), and another is to work with the larger campaigning groups such as FOE, Transport 2000, to make your case at any planning application stage or at any public enquiry.

What are the travel and transport issues that impact on the communities you live or work in? The grid on the next page can inform your action plan.

Tackling issues relating to the travel and transport situation in your community

What are the issues?	What is the preferred solution?	How could the local council help to resolve this problem ?	What are the relevant policies and strategies that can provide some leverage?	Who should you approach in the local council?
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

4.12 Health strategies

Community health issues can cut across many of the areas we have already touched upon, whether its access to open space for people to exercise in, or opportunities for children and young people to walk or cycle to school, or health service facilities that are accessible by public transport, or access to shops selling fresh fruit and vegetables at a reasonable price. Health inequalities affect the poorer communities with which community development workers are involved.

There are a number of aspects of health inequalities that councils can have an impact upon and here are a couple of examples.

Local food strategies.

A food strategy provides direction and guidance to implement current national and local policy on the problems in society posed by our current food system.

A food strategy may focus on:

- Improving understanding and awareness about healthy eating, by working with traditional education partners (such as schools) and also a broad range of community and statutory partners;
- Reducing the main barriers to healthy eating: accessibility, affordability and availability;
- Reducing nutrition related health inequalities by targeting the most vulnerable groups;
- Taking into account the wider implications of food and its relationship to the local economy, community and environment – creating a strategy where the health and non-health implications of food consumption are looked at together;
- Agreeing a practical action plan so that aims can become a reality involving a variety of local stakeholders to implement policies and practices, which promote the aims of the strategy.

There are examples of councils working with others to draw up their food strategy as a focus for disparate pieces of work and to encourage partner agencies to incorporate projects that address some of the adverse food and health issues facing local residents. These can outline a set of principles including all people's right to access safe and nutritious food, and promote environmental sustainability within the local food system and address diet related ill health by promoting access to good quality, affordable food.

PCTs and Health Trusts may also have food strategies, one example states it's aim are:

- To maximise equitable access to the affordable, available, safe provision of healthy foods
- To increase the level of knowledge, skill and awareness of the links between food and health within the whole population;
- To develop capacity within the public sector for maintaining nutritional health;
- To support sustainable strategic development locally, regionally, nationally and internationally;
- To develop a sustainable local food supply chain by connecting urban and rural regeneration.

Joint working between Health authorities, PCTs and local councils can lead to funding for food and health development worker and a community dietitian ;a wide range of community food projects are underway to improve people's access to affordable, healthy food; working to develop an award system for organisations and businesses which will raise food standards; improving school meals and food within council buildings.

The FCDL resource pack on community food projects provides examples of actions communities are taking.

These include raising the problems and barriers to getting access to quality fresh food and the range of local food initiatives. These can involve independent ventures such as running a community café serving healthy food, or a food co-op bulk buying fresh vegetables from a local wholesale market and sharing it out on the estate, or they could involve joint initiatives such as local food markets.

Local health strategies

Poor health can often be attributed to a range of social, economic and environmental factors - including: poverty; low wages; unemployment; poor education; sub-standard housing; crime and disorder; and pollution. These issues were highlighted in the 1998 Independent Enquiry into Inequalities in Health (the Acheson report) and in the Government's white paper: Our healthier nation (1999). Local Authorities have responsibilities in many of these areas.

Working with others, they will be able to develop strategies for tackling many of the fundamental causes of ill health; for example, either by targeting housing maintenance or coordinating different types of information services.

There are a variety of initiatives taking place around the country – some focusing on child health leading to an integrated children's service plan and health improvement programme; others have added health to their community plan, while others have mainstreamed health as an issue across the whole council.

Within such strategies it is possible for community groups to raise issues about walking and exercise, access to fresh food in areas known as fresh food deserts, maintaining allotments and promoting community gardens for examples.

What are the health issues that impact on the communities you live or work in? The grid on the next page can inform your action plan.

Tackling issues relating to the health of your community

What are the issues?	What is the preferred solution?	How could the local council help to resolve this problem ?	What are the relevant policies and strategies that can provide some leverage?	Who should you approach in the local council?
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

Resources Available From FCDL

Taster Packs from FCDL: designed to be used as an introduction to key aspects of community development work, this series of 14 packs support three-hour sessions that can be used as a first step to further learning, or as a method for trainers to increase their confidence in this area. The tasters are:

1. What is community development work?
2. How groups work
3. Problems within groups
4. Involving people
5. Understanding and getting involved in partnerships
6. Skills for representing your community
7. Common issues in partnerships
8. Making meetings effective
9. Contributing effectively to meetings
10. Assertiveness/ confidence building
11. Feedback and listening skills
12. Report writing skills
13. Presentation skills – giving a short presentation
14. Presentation skills - Creating effective presentation materials

FCDL has produced a series of resource packs which complement the **National Open College Network (NOCN)** Community Development Work Programme. Each pack is designed to support the teaching of the module of the same name (or similar name), which can be built together to enable participants to gain qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3. The resource pack are:

1. Understanding Community Development Work
2. Community Development Work Skills
3. Group work skills
4. Involving people
5. Representing your Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual community
6. Monitoring and evaluation
7. Developing community organisations
8. Reflective Community Development Work Practice
9. Effective partnership working
10. Practice and Principles in Community Development Work
11. Social Justice
12. Planning for community groups
13. Publicity skills for community organisations
14. Identifying needs in communities
15. Funding and resources for community groups
16. Neighbourhood regeneration
17. Community Development and Environmental Action
18. Sustainable Communities

Community Work Skills Manual

Community worker's practice guide, written by community workers, covering everything from the values and principles underlying community work, to roles and responsibilities, working with groups, community surveys etc.

Learning and Qualifications Framework

This free leaflet aims to enable people who come into community development from varied backgrounds, with different levels of expertise in community work, to work out what their learning needs are and how best to meet them.

How To Set Up a Refugee Community Organisation - is a resource designed with and for new and emerging refugee community organisations to help them establish themselves as organisations.

FCDL (Every Action Counts) Taster Packs:

1. Care for Your Area.
2. Improving the Environment through Community Buildings.
3. Climate Change Communications.
4. Food and Communities.
5. Community Development and Environmental Action.
6. Strategies and Policies to Support Environmental Action.
7. Local Actions on Travel and Transport.
8. Impact of Travel/ Transport on Communities.
9. Climate Change, Environmental Justice & Community Action.
10. Policies for Environmental Action.
11. What Planet Are You On?

FCDL (NEP) How-To Guides:

1. Engaging and Influencing Decision-Makers (a Guide for community groups).
2. Engaging with Local Government Regarding Sustainable Development (a Guide for Community Groups Concerned about Environmental Impacts on their Community).
3. Working Effectively With Communities (a Guide for non-Community Development Workers).

To find out more about these resources and others FCDL offers visit www.fcdl.org.uk

Resources available from Every Action Counts

Every Action Counts provides information and resources to help your organisation take action on sustainable development and climate change.

Free resources available include:

- A Community Pack which contains factsheets, games and activities designed to help your group draw up an sustainable development action plan
- 'What Happens When Every Action Counts' a collection of case studies giving examples of organisations taking action to make their communities more sustainable
- 'Your Community Building Counts' a guide to improving the environmental performance of community buildings
- 'Changing The Way We Work' a guide to help any group or office to reduce your impact on the environment
- Over 50 easy actions you can take to:
 - » Save Energy
 - » Travel Wisely
 - » Save Resources
 - » Shop Ethically and
 - » Care For Your Area
- A wide range of factsheets, information and case studies to help you take action

If you need help you can also request a visit from a trained Community Champion who can work with you to produce an action plan.

All of the above resources available free to groups who register at www.everyactioncounts.org.uk



FCDL
3rd Floor, The Circle
33 Rockingham Lane
Sheffield S1 4FW
Tel: 0114 253 6770
Fax: 0114 253 6771
Email: info@fcdl.org.uk
www.fcdl.org.uk