

# **Green lifestyles and sustainable development - linking policy and local practice ?**

**Chris Church**

---

**Community  
Environment  
Associates**

# We are here today because....

- We want to engage local people and communities in action on environment and sustainable development issues?
- We want to consider the best ways to get people to engage with environmental policy issues?
- We want to promote sustainable development?
- We want people to have a better quality of life?

# Where do we start?

- *Environment? Green? Sustainable Development?*
- *Understand the barriers*
  - *‘Nothing to do with us.....’*
  - *Time and resources*
  - *Negative ideas around lifestyle change*
- *Individual or collective action?*

# Making sense of sustainable development

- Integrating environmental, social and economic issues?
- Preserving our natural capital and looking to the future?
- Not cheating on our grandchildren?

*All of these.... (and more)*

SD is “vague but comprehensible...”

(We know what unsustainability looks like!)

# So what do we really mean by sustainable development?

This is NOT a “*more complicated version of the environment*”

- It is about putting environmental issues firmly in the context of how we live our lives
- Linking environmental issues and social justice
- Not a phrase to use widely, but an underlying principle

# The national context – the new UK SD Strategy

- A strategic framework for action
- Five guiding principles...
  - Living within environmental limits
  - Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society
  - Achieving a sustainable economy
  - Promoting good governance
  - Using sound science responsibly

# Shared priorities

- Sustainable consumption and production
- Climate change and energy
- Natural resource protection and environmental enhancement
- Sustainable Communities

**Local delivery through  
'Community Action 2020'**

# A role for Housing Associations?

HAs and RSLs have a unique potential:

- Working with and housing local people
- A long-term perspective
- Engaged with the physical environment

But:

- *Time and financial issues*
- *How far is this our role?*

# Starting locally

- What's already happening?
- Are there local issues that may have built awareness and engagement?
- What are peoples' priorities?
- Do the basics
  - Keep it clean!
  - Show that change is possible

# Central action and local projects

- Central action likely to be focused on information & providing facilities
  - regular mailings
  - posters, newsletters etc.
  - recycling info and collections
- Work with councils, PCTs, schools etc.

# Local action

- **Projects to:**
    - **meet locally-identified needs**
    - **help meet national targets**
    - **bring people together**
    - **encourage lifestyle change**
- Make it enjoyable and practical!**

# Linking lifestyle change and collective action

- Individual action can only achieve so much (but is a vital part of the picture)
- Collective action may also be limited (but encourages more individual)
- Some things cannot be changed by local project-based work – the need for advocacy and policy change (locally and nationally)
- Capacity-building is crucial

# One example: Transport

- People need to travel – people need access to facilities.....
- More car journeys (partly due to poor public transport)
  - means more cars
  - means more pollution (but who's worried)
  - also means more road accidents!

# Transport – the national context

- Encouraging fewer car journeys
- New road schemes
- Better public transport(?)
- Local development strategies and transport plans

# Transport – local action

- Encouraging more bus / train use – a map for every household
- Traffic calming and safer streets (identify the problem spots)
- Check local air pollution
- Walk and cycle to school (with support)
- New bus services? Car sharing?
- Community transport and local organisation?

# The real challenges

- Preserving what we want to preserve (sustaining....)
- Changing what we need to change (developing...) *And*
- Getting agreement on what we preserve and change...

**It all starts here....**

A pause for questions.....



# Climate change and energy

- Based on recent work for Defra on engaging the voluntary and community sector on this issue
- Climate change is *the* 'big issue' but it is confusing and does not relate much to day-to-day experience
- The poorest people are likely to be worst affected

# Climate Change and local action

- Work is in three directions
    - Policy level (NGOs such as Friends of the Earth)
    - Mitigation (stopping it happening through practical action)
    - Adaptation (starting now to adjust to what will happen e.g. floods, storms)
- Most local action is around Mitigation

# Why worry?

- Overwhelming scientific agreement that it is happening and will get worse:
    - Storms
    - Flooding
    - Hotter summers and droughts
    - More expense
- Warmer winter advantages more than outweighed by health problems from heat and disease (WHO)

# What's it got to do with us?

- Energy Efficiency
  - Domestic, community buildings, saving energy)
- Fuel poverty
  - 3 Million households suffer
- Transport

These are 'secondary' issues: also work to be done on awareness of the issue itself

# Planning for long-term change

A five stage process:

- Awareness and demystification
- Action by individuals and households
- Action by communities to improve efficiency
- Action by communities to engage others
- Action by communities to engage with policy

Lifestyle work is just one part of a longer process

# Action in any community

- Energy Awareness actions (work with EEACs and NEAs)
- Bulk buying (light bulbs, insulation etc.)
- Training on energy efficiency
- Action on community buildings
- Support for the vulnerable
- Bulk buying energy from green sources
- Installing renewables

# People are busy...

Many of the organisations with which you may seek to work are already over-stretched and spend most of their time simply keeping going and working on their key purpose. Any new work to engage should meet one or more of these requirements:

- Be simple and straightforward (and thus not too time-consuming)
- Be interesting (and even intriguing) to that community
- Be a logical development of current work
- Have some clear result and impact

# So....

- Develop an 'action group'
- Go for clear outcomes, save money
- Engage with local councils /LSPs
- Ignore the 'flat earthers'
- Build capacity...