

Voluntary and Community Action South Bedfordshire

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICY

1. General Policy Statement

Voluntary and Community Action South Bedfordshire is committed to sustainable development. As part of our commitment we recognise that we have a vital role to play in delivering a better quality of life and environment for everyone in South Bedfordshire, now and for future generations. We are committed to achieving continuous environmental improvement in all our activities and services. We will strive to reduce our own impact and make every effort to work with the voluntary and community sector to promote a sound awareness and understanding of local and global issues that will facilitate sustainable development practices. To achieve this we aim to:

- promote awareness and a sense of environmental responsibility amongst employees, volunteers and trustees;
- assess the environmental impact of all existing and proposed activities, policies and practices; and take steps to manage all significant effects;
- provide resources for environmental improvements, where economically viable to do so;
- use resources more efficiently thereby reducing consumption;
- minimise the use of natural resources and lessen the impact on the environment;
- minimise waste, promote recycling and use of recycled materials;
- provide all volunteers and employees with access to appropriate staff development activities;
- ensure that practical and specific objectives are included in our Development Plans and ensure that sustainable development considerations are integrated into day to day management;
- set up monitoring procedures to ensure compliance with this policy;
- undertake the above in accordance with our charitable obligations to act in the best interests of the charity.

and work within the voluntary and community sector to:

- provide sustainable development information and encourage open dialogue on sustainable development issues within the voluntary and community sector;
- encourage and work with the sector to help it apply environmental standards similar to our own;
- develop partnerships with local authorities, suppliers, voluntary organisations and community groups to further shared environmental goals.

2. Purpose

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and trustees working for Voluntary and Community Action. The purpose of this policy is to set out our intentions and principles in relation to sustainable development and to enable staff, volunteers and trustees to develop and support actions promoting sustainable development and good environmental practice.

The Policy states how sustainable development considerations form part of the day-to-day delivery of services and includes a *Green Office Code of Practice*. It also informs our suppliers and clients where we stand on sustainable development issues.

3. Principles

Voluntary and Community Action will address the social, economic and environmental considerations of sustainable development, defined as ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come and can best be understood according to three principles:

- **social progress that recognises the needs of everyone** linking health to such problems as poverty, poor housing, unemployment and pollution, without treating others unfairly;
- **effective protection of the environment** limiting global threats such as climate change and protecting valuable elements of our immediate environment and the **prudent use of natural resources** so that we do not deny ourselves what we need by extravagance and waste;
- **maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth** and employment so that everyone can share in high living standards; nurturing and investing in prosperous businesses, skills development, infrastructure, goods and services; but avoiding increased consumption of material resources.

Sustainable development is about what we do and the way we think. It is about community empowerment and participation, rural and urban regeneration, meaningful employment, healthier living and citizenship. Community leaders, trustees, volunteers and others in the voluntary and community sector are central to realising the better quality of life our communities desire.

We recognise the interdependence of individuals, groups of people, living things and the natural and built environments. This means:

- a sense of self, other people, living things and the built environment being connected, and not existing in isolation;
- maintaining and supporting the diversity of natural environments and species;
- seeing and making connections between different aspects of our lives – social, economic and environmental;
- making links between the local and the global;
- seeing the effects of one thing on another – chain reactions;
- recognising how the human and natural worlds depend on each other;
- accessing and sharing resources and power.

We are committed to taking into account economic, environmental and social issues, even when they may be in conflict, and to assessing the environmental impact of community action. This means:

- recognising the potential impact of our actions now and in the future, here and elsewhere;
- recognising the potential impact on health of environmental, social and economic decisions and activities;
- being aware of personal potential and impact, making changes and making a difference;
- recognising and evaluating the impact of alternative ways of trading and making a living;
- understanding and evaluating the impact of lifestyle choices; being free to make them; tolerating the choices of others.

We are committed to inclusion and to enabling people actively to participate in society. This means:

- taking part and being involved, not standing by or being placed on the margins;
- having the right to be informed and involved in what is going on;
- helping others to become involved; working as a team and in partnership with others;
- finding and using our voice and identity; communicating through various media;
- feeling we belong and have a stake in society;

- building strength and enhancing the skills of individuals, groups and communities;
- taking responsibility for the environment in which we live;
- assuming and being supported to take responsibility and leadership.

We are committed to improving quality of life and to a sense of well-being and social justice. This means:

- not feeling deprived or allowing others to be so;
- living comfortably and in good health to satisfy basic needs; and allowing others to do so now and in the future;
- ensuring fair shares, opportunities and rewards for all;
- looking after the health of the individual and the wider community;
- fulfilling one's potential;
- being respected and showing respect for others and the wider world;
- acknowledging and valuing differences in personal characteristics and social and cultural factors;
- recognising what connects us as well as separates us.

We are committed to sustainability, to understanding the process of development and to a sense of looking forward, not just living for the present. This means:

- understanding development, a sense of looking forward, not just living in the present;
- recognising the limits of knowledge; its continuous change and the future, here and elsewhere;
- thinking of the consequences of what we and others do; acting with caution;
- making things last, renewing and recycling;
- safeguarding resources; being aware of their use and abuse; using them effectively; putting in as much as we take out;
- creating work and employment now and for the future;
- everyone has the opportunity to undertake satisfying work in a diverse economy; the value of voluntary activity is recognised;
- meeting local needs locally wherever possible.

4. Sustainable Communities

Voluntary and Community Action will work with others to create and develop sustainable communities, being 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. Voluntary and Community Action believes they should include:

- effective engagement with the community at neighbourhood level, including capacity building to develop the community's skills, knowledge and confidence;
- organisations and activities that enable communities to create, run and sustain the community groups and social networks that enable people to be active in community life;
- a strong, inclusive voluntary and community sector providing a good range of services that are accessible to the whole community;
- a sense of civic values, responsibility and pride;
- opportunities for lifelong learning;
- tolerance, respect and engagement with people from different cultures and backgrounds;
- friendly, co-operative and helpful behaviour in neighbourhoods;
- opportunities for cultural, sports and arts activities creating communities of interest;
- representative, accountable governance systems that both facilitate strategic, visionary leadership and enable inclusive, active and effective participation by individuals and organisations;

- service providers that think and act long term and beyond their own immediate interest boundaries and who involve users and local residents in shaping their policy and practice;
- a strong and diverse economy with a significant increase in local jobs so that people can choose to work locally;
- a sense of community identity and place with a positive feeling for people;
- appropriate size, scale, density, design and layout that complement the distinctive local character of the community;
- strong, well defined relationships within and between new and existing communities.

5. Social Networks

Sustainable development is about establishing social relationships of trust and reciprocity, of social capital, and is the core of active citizenship and key to a better quality of life.

Voluntary and Community Action will enable the voluntary and community sector (VCS) to establish and maintain the development of social networks of people with particular interests or who have expressed a desire to help others, such as health and social care organisations, conservation volunteers, self help groups or tenants associations. These networks link people formally and informally, offering both opportunities and support for a greater engagement in society.

6. Community Development

For sustainable development to be meaningful it must start where people make decisions about their lives and their localities. This entails people taking responsibility, effectively participating in society, being better educated and skilled and recognising the consequences of actions on self and others. Environmental quality also plays an important part in community regeneration.

To make a significant contribution to the development of more sustainable communities and support social, economic and environmental improvements Voluntary and Community Action will seek to:

- identify the ongoing learning and skills development needs of local communities;
- build the skills capacity of communities to understand and improve their local environment;
- enable VCS organisations to better meet the needs of local communities;
- enable people to invest in themselves, their neighbourhoods and communities
- encourage community self-governance, informal learning and skills development;
- enable VCS organisations to develop and promote good practice in community action.

Voluntary and Community Action will focus on getting the best out of volunteers, trustees and staff by enabling them to recognise and value their own skills, knowledge and experience; identify their own learning needs and confidence building measures; develop the skills and knowledge of others; valuing volunteers and colleagues; thus contributing to the improved life skills and employability of the workforce.

7. Resource Use

Voluntary and Community Action will incorporate materials efficiency measures to reduce running costs. It will minimise resource consumption by:

- reducing the amount of waste we produce by reducing our consumption;
- promoting reuse, recycling and disposal of goods in an environmentally responsible way;
- reviewing supplier products and services for environmental impact.

Voluntary and Community Action will endeavour to use 'printer friendly' 70% post-consumer waste recycled papers in all its printers and copiers provided it is economical to do so and does not cause damage to equipment. We will also endeavour to print external publications on 70% post-consumer waste recycled papers where it is economical to do so.

Voluntary and Community Action will seek to practice responsible water and energy management and minimise the use of energy in its activities. It will purchase energy efficient technologies wherever possible.

Voluntary and Community Action will seek to purchase fair traded and environmentally sound goods. In particular wood products should be ethically sourced; tea, coffee and sugar should be fair-traded products and catering for events should, where possible, be locally sourced and organic.

Voluntary and Community Action will offer voluntary organisations and community groups the option to receive information and publications in electronic or paper format, dependant upon their preference, needs and resources.

8. Transport

Voluntary and Community Action will promote the use of cycling and walking as the main means of travel to local meetings. We will also ensure the use of public transport for long distance journeys, where this is practical. For journeys that require the use of a car, car sharing will be encouraged.

Cyclists may claim a mileage allowance for undertaking journeys for work purposes. Shower and changing facilities are available in the multi-story car park adjacent to Voluntary and Community Action's Bossard House premises. Travel information to the offices of, and for events organised by, Voluntary and Community Action will include details of public transport and cycle routes.

Voluntary and Community Action's services will also be delivered in ways that minimise traffic generation, pollution and congestion. The timing and location of training workshops, courses and networking events will allow participants to avoid peak travel times and make use of walking, cycling and public transport links to ensure that barriers to people attending are minimised.

Distance learning methods will be developed and used as part of our delivery of services, where this is appropriate for the learner or where contact time is not so essential, thus reducing the need for beneficiaries to travel. This will have the potential to reduce traffic generation and associated environmental impacts.

9. Application

All staff must have access to this Policy and the Green Office Code of Practice; it should be regularly referred to in decision-making and through team meetings. It is to be included in the induction of new staff, trustees and volunteers.

Responsibilities for the day-to-day application of this policy will rest with the Finance and Premises Manager. Line Managers will oversee its application within their teams and any purchasing responsibilities.

10. Monitoring and Review

The effectiveness of this policy and Code of Practice will be monitored and amended as and when necessary by the Director. Significant changes will require the approval of the Trustee Board. The policy will also be reviewed every three years as part of a continuing review of organisational policies.

GREEN OFFICE CODE OF PRACTICE

Audits

Voluntary and Community Action will undertake regular environmental audits to ensure that it is taking full account of its Sustainable Development Policy and this Code of Practice.

Green Purchasing

Greener purchasing aims to avoid unnecessary purchasing by:

- reviewing the actual need for the product;
- seeking alternative goods and services;
- purchasing a greener variant with comparable if not better performance than a conventional choice.

Voluntary and Community Action will give preference to purchasing environmentally preferable products and services that meet current performance, safety and regulatory requirements. The organisation will continue to source and increase the purchase of products and services that are deemed *environmentally preferable* in accordance with the following purchasing criteria.

- Does production of the product cause ecological damage, such as loss of habitats or damage to threatened species? Are there alternatives?
- Can the product be re-used, refilled, recharged or reconditioned to extend its life?
- Can the item be easily upgraded by adding or replacing a part?
- Does the product have a recycled content? What percentage?
- Is the product accredited with a recognised environmental standard?
- Can the product be recycled easily (in the workplace and/or local community)?
- Does the item use energy (e.g. electrical appliances, equipment) and, if so, is it as energy efficient as alternatives for all operation modes?
- Is packaging made of recycled material(s), can product packaging be reduced or eliminated, re-used, recycled or returned?
- Can locally or organically grown produce be purchased?
- Can Fair-trade produce be purchased?
- Is the product locally manufactured and/or locally supplied?
- Do wood products carry the Forestry Stewardship Council logo?

In implementing our Environmental Purchasing Policy we will seek to raise awareness with both current and new suppliers. We will:

- focus on products or services that have the greatest environmental impact;
- integrate reused, refurbished, remanufactured and recycled-content products into our operations wherever possible;
- use greener products available through existing suppliers, such as energy saving office equipment;
- support local manufacturing efforts by purchasing at least a portion of our recycled products from local manufacturers where they exist;
- actively encouraging suppliers to provide products and services that have a minimum adverse environmental impact.

It will not be possible to purchase a green alternative for every product or service. Compromise will be required. It is therefore important to address the most significant environmental impacts when purchasing.

Paper Use

The use of paper within the office can increase if we are not careful, despite the idea that technology would bring about the paperless office. It is important that the current use of paper is reduced.

To reduce the environment impact Voluntary and Community Action will practice the following:

- purchase 'printer friendly' paper that has a high-recycled content, with a post-consumer waste content greater than 70% and is totally-chlorine free during production provided it is economically to do so and does not cause damage to equipment. We will source paper that is sold with an accredited environmental or green label that details emission standards and post consumer waste content;
- use of paper with mandatory double-sided photocopying and printing, unless there are exceptional circumstances;
- print paper documents that are as short as possible and only when necessary;
- set the photocopier to print both sides as standard;
- the use of e-mail and voice mail to minimise paper use, where appropriate to do so;
- use our letterhead as an electronic template;
- re-use paper used on one side for draft copies in all desktop printers, fax cover sheets and notepaper;
- use of electronic filing and the retention of documents on computer rather than in hard copy where this is appropriate to do so;
- establish green printing standards with regular training and advice for staff and new employees;
- undertake regular paper audits including checks on waste bins, to estimate reused paper against once used paper;
- place recycle points near workstations and in kitchens with clear information on which paper products, plastic and other materials are recyclable;
- produce simple guidelines for all staff so they can operate the photocopier correctly and avoid mistakes that waste paper;
- purchase photocopiers and laser printers that give priority to those with duplex (copying on both sides) capability, and to plain-paper fax machines;
- provide space for publications on our website so reports and documents can be downloaded and viewed on-screen.

Where reports, Information Sheets and newsletters are published in hard copy, they will be printed on both sides of the paper, use line spacing of no more than 1.5 and include relevant environmental information about how it was produced. We will also endeavour to print external publications on at least 70% post-consumer waste recycled papers where it is economical to do so.

Recycling

Recycling can reduce waste volumes and reduce operating costs. It also provides raw material to make new products, saves energy and natural resources.

To reduce the environmental impact Voluntary and Community Action will practice the following:

- provide clear notices for what is and is not recyclable;
- provide specially designated *Paper Planet* recycling bins in visible areas close to workstations and printers/copiers so that paper and cardboard can be disposed of and collected by South Bedfordshire District Council for recycling;
- provide collection bins in kitchen areas so that plastic bottles and cans can be disposed of and collected by South Bedfordshire District Council for recycling;

- ensure staff return unwanted office supplies (such as pens, staples, folders and other general office materials) to the stationery cupboard for future use;
- stop incoming junk mail by contacting the supplier and/or making use of the free Mailing Preference Service;
- recycle ink jet and toner cartridges, putting the old cartridge in the box of the new product to protect the ink jet heads and avoid toner powder being spilled (if damaged these products will not be recycled).

Inkjet cartridges will be recycled by sending them to Tommy's Recycling Appeal, FREEPOST, LON12598, LONDON NW10 7ZZ. Toner cartridges will be sent to The Cartridge Recycling Centre, FREEPOST, NEA 346, LINCOLN LN1 2BR.

When disposing of products that are no longer needed, Voluntary and Community Action will practice the following:

- offer the product for use by another voluntary organisation, community group or social enterprise recycling project;
- contact waste exchange schemes to see if someone else can use the product;
- recycle the product through a local authority recycling site;
- if possible speak to the original supplier to find out if they have a take back policy or recycling scheme.

Catering

We will endeavour to avoid disposable cups and plates bought by the office and for events. Milk, sugar and coffee sachets will not be used in the office or at events organised by voluntary and Community Action as these offer excessive packaging. Food should, where possible, be locally and organically produced; tea, coffee and sugar should be fair-traded.

Energy

It is vital that we reduce the amount of energy we consume, both in order to cut down on associated pollution and conserve the world's natural resources and habitats.

Voluntary and Community Action will seek to minimise the use of energy in its activities. Lights and equipment will be switched on only when needed and not out of routine. Heating will be kept to a minimum and thermostats will be regularly checked to ensure it is not set too high, thereby preventing the need to open windows.

To reduce the environment impact Voluntary and Community Action will practice the following:

- encourage staff to switch off lights, computers, photocopiers and other electrical equipment at night;
- encourage staff to turn off their monitor if they are away from their computer for more than 15 minutes;
- enable energy-saving features on all computers and copiers;
- ensure that lights and none essential equipment is turned off when not in use;
- consider energy-efficiency when purchasing new equipment, giving preference to equipment with low power stand-by or sleep features.

Water Consumption

Global warming and the effects of drought necessitate the wise use of water if we are to avoid wasting or contaminating this precious resource.

To reduce the environment impact Voluntary and Community Action will practice the following:

- fill kettles with enough water for what is needed but not to the brim;
- use less water by turning the hot tap down, rather than the cold tap up, if cooler water is required;
- ensure dripping taps are turned off;
- use a plug in the sink to wash cups and plates rather than washing under the tap over a plughole.