

The Every Action Counts
Community Champions
Handbook



The Every Action Counts Community Champions Handbook

Chris Church



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Foreword

Well, you have done the course, received the toolkit, and now you are reading this guide. You may be wondering what you have taken on and 'would they notice if I gave up?'

This guide is to help you to put into context some of the actions in the game and understand some of the wider issues of this very large subject area. If you wish to learn more we can give you links to where to find more information and the organisations that can help. We can also help with some further training.

Your role is to help groups to decide what they want to do and write an action plan. To do this you don't really need to know a lot about each area for action: you 'chair the meeting'. To have volunteered for this role it is highly likely that you are interested in these issues and knew about some of the areas for action before the training and would like to know more. The groups you meet may expect you to know everything, but I have not met anyone who is that knowledgeable! They will have to make do with someone who knows where to find information.

By the way – we will notice if you give up! Although sometimes daunting, working with community groups is one of the most satisfying things you can do. It has kept me interested for over 20 years.

Best of luck and don't forget you can always ask us.

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PLEASE
TURN OFF



1 Introduction

Global issues, local action: can we really make a difference?

The central role of an Every Action Counts Community Champion is to help local community groups, clubs and societies improve and protect their environment and show their members how they can also make a difference. The 'environment' means very different things to different people, and it doesn't always connect to where we live. For many people the 'environment' is still something they see on television: rainforests, polar bears or dolphins. But our environment is where we live, and more besides. It's where we live, work (and play), and it's also all the other things that affect us.

It can all seem very complicated. We are all threatened by global climate change, which is mostly caused by the burning of petrol, coal and gas all over the world. The idea that much of the problem is in countries such as the USA or China is often used as an excuse for doing nothing. Changes within the UK can affect communities who never heard about the new proposals when they were being planned. There's so much going on that affects our environment that it can be very hard to keep up with it all.

That means that if we want to protect and improve our environment, we do have to keep an eye on the 'big picture'. But we also need to focus on where we live: if we don't look after our surroundings, who will?

Caring for our environment matters for many reasons: it's not just about cutting pollution. A poor and shabby local environment may stop new businesses or shops opening in the area and creating jobs for local people. A badly-designed environment can encourage crime, and if people are scared to go out at night then it may well be hard to get them involved in local action. And there are many ways in which a poor local environment can affect people's health. Environmental action is

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also a good way to bring people together. Helping clean up a local open space needs a lot of people, but it's not difficult: everyone can join in.

Local action matters and it makes a difference. The Every Action Counts website has a great many examples of effective action by people working to protect or improve their local environment. Local action needs a little planning, a little information and as much time and energy as people can spare. A Community Champion can certainly help with the information and planning, and may be able to help people find the time and energy to make some real changes.

If you talk with people, the things they often want to tackle are:

- Waste and fly-tipping
- Improving local green spaces
- Energy waste and efficiency
- Transport
- Cutting local pollution.

This guide can help you with ideas on how to tackle all these issues. It will also help you think about how others see these issues: you may be keen to talk about saving energy to help tackle climate change; others may be desperate to save energy because they cannot afford to pay their gas bills. It can also offer advice on how to get to grips with bigger issues like climate change and fair trade. You'll also find plenty of contacts and websites that can help you get more information and advice.

Some people will certainly try to tell you that local action won't make any real difference, and that it's all down to the politicians (or the big companies or the United Nations or whoever). It's certainly true that even if you and your neighbours changed all your light bulbs for low energy ones it would still only have a tiny impact on the UK's overall use of energy. But there are more than 1000 Community Champions being trained by Every Action Counts and there are around 750,000 community groups in the UK. The combined impact can start to make a real difference, but only if someone in each of those groups takes the first step and encourages their friends and neighbours to do the same.

And if anyone does tell you that you are too small to make a difference, then try sleeping in a hot room with just one mosquito!



2 Working in your community

Getting started as a Community Champion

This offers initial ideas on how champions can work with local organisations on the Every Action Counts (EAC) issues.

If you've trained as a Community Champion, then you've probably got some ideas already as to which group you want to start work with. It's perhaps the group that gave a reference for you on the training. If you're looking around for another group then see the section below on 'making contact with groups'.

Becoming a Community Champion may be a big first step or it may be a logical development of work you've been doing for years. Either way it's an important role that you are taking on. Your community can benefit from your energy and expertise, and you can benefit too, by building your skills, making new friends, and learning more about how to help people change. All this can be helpful to you throughout your life.

It's also important to remember that your role is to help and advise. The role of a Champion is not to be a leader, it's to encourage other people to make changes. You won't see the trainer of a football team scoring the winning goal: like them, your role is to make sure other people have the skills and confidence to make a difference.

Getting started

An important first step is of course to let the group you work with know you've done the training and set a time for a first discussion. This might well be where you use the games as a way to get people talking.

But before that there are a few things you should do. Most of these are

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about finding out as much as you can about what's already going on in your neighbourhood or nearby.

Contact your local council

Most councils have an Environment or Sustainability Officer whose job it will be to support and work with local communities. They will probably be interested and keen to hear about what you are doing and may be able to offer help and advice. They may be able to put you in contact with other local organisations and projects who can offer more support. They should certainly be able to give you the information you need about their environmental activities such as recycling programmes, waste and cleansing and green space management. It's highly likely that someone will ask you questions about these so it's good to be well informed.

Every Action Counts is also running training for community workers so you may find that other council staff understand these issues and can help. If they can't, you could suggest that they check out the free training available from EAC that is delivered by the Federation for Community Development Learning.

What's happening already?

The environment is not a new issue. There are almost certainly other groups already active on these issues in your locality. If such groups are not obvious, then your council Environmental Officer may know, as may the local library. A web search may also give you information, or you could contact national groups such as BTCV or Friends of the Earth who have local branches in many areas. Your local Council for Voluntary Action or Voluntary Action networks may also have useful contacts.

Talk with friends and colleagues

The training will have given you ideas, the games and information covering the five EAC issues (see next section). Before you start work with the whole group it may be helpful to talk with individuals within the group who you know may be interested. You can explain what you are looking to do, what you hope may come from this, and get their ideas as well.

2 Working in your community

Do It Yourself!

Quite a lot of what you will do as a Champion is to advise and support people in making changes. You'll find this a lot easier if you've made some of the changes yourself first and can see how easy they are and what some of the problems might be.

You'll see that the Every Action Counts website has 54 things that any community can do, but you are also likely to be asked 'what can I do?' There's a list of 'individual actions' in this manual (see Section 8); go through that list and see which ones you do now and maybe do one or two you've not done already.

A good example would be installing a water saving device in a toilet cistern. This can be as simple as putting a one litre plastic water bottle upright in your cistern and filling it with water: every time you flush from now on you'll save a litre of water. But: does the cistern lid come off easily? Is there room for the bottle? (almost certainly!) Do I need a chair to stand on?

Do these things at home and you'll be a lot more confident about doing them somewhere else.

Develop your own skills and knowledge

The training is just one step on a road that can be as long as you want. The more you do as a Champion, the more you'll find your confidence grows. It's also important to keep up to date with environmental news, both locally and nationally. Reading the papers will help, and there's a range of e-mail lists that will help you stay in touch.

As an EAC Champion you will also receive the regular *Green Gauge* newsletter.

Making contact with groups

Once you've tried out the games and your ideas with your own group then you may want to make further contacts. Wherever you are there are other community groups, and it's quite likely that some of them will be interested in discussing environmental issues. These could include:

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- Residents' groups
- Faith groups
- Gardening or allotment groups
- Sports groups of all types
- Book clubs
- Schools groups (including governors)

Any local community centre will provide contacts and could be a place to distribute EAC leaflets and posters (as will your local library and other places).

Advising people and groups

It's important to work out what advice you give where. There are 54 'simple actions' on the EAC cards and the website, and there is advice on what these involve in practice on the website. It's important to spend some time going through these so that if people ask you 'what does this mean?' you can give them an answer.

It's also important to give advice that is relevant. The EAC advice is for groups, but all groups are made up of people so it's important to get those people making changes in their own lives as well, even though the impact is likely to be less than what you can do together. Section 8 of this guide, 'What can I do?', has a list of actions that any individual or household can take.

Keeping going

Helping people change how they live their lives is always going to be a challenge, and one special challenge is helping them to keep going. One of your tasks is to be thinking one step ahead – what might the group want to do next? There are a lot of action points in the next section that may give you some ideas.





3 The big issues

This is the core section of this handbook and covers the five main EAC environmental issues.

Each part gives you some background information and plenty of ideas about what any community group can actually do. You'll see that some of these are quite different from the things that individuals can do: there's a lot more that can be done when people work together. One of the most obvious ideas is one that relates to all the issues, and that is to run a local campaign to encourage people to be aware and active. Once you've got people active in a group, helping them in turn to get more people involved is always important. You'll find more advice on how to involve other groups and people in section 7.

The most important thing is to do some planning. The EAC games will help you to be clear about the main concerns of people in the group you are working with. These can be the basis for your own Action Plan. But before you do an Action Plan you may want to show people that this isn't all talk, and organise some event or action that will involve people in the group. This could be one of many things:

- A formal meeting
- A practical 'clean-up' day
- Running a stall at a market or in your high street to spread information
- A visit to a local environmental project
- Or whatever else people feel would be interesting...

To make this happen there are usually nine steps to take (you can use this checklist as you read through the next sections to think about what you might do):

- 1 Get agreement on which of these concerns you should focus on first and work out just what you want to do.
- 2 Discuss what you will need (Information? Money? Leaflets? etc.)
- 3 Agree who is going to do what and when – share the responsibilities and make a timetable for action.
- 4 If you're going to publicise what you are doing (maybe to

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involve more people) allow time for that and work out how you are going to do this.

- 5 Agree a date for the start of this work and make sure that everyone knows everything that needs to be done by this date.
- 6 Keep in touch with all the key people so that everyone is ready and knows what they are doing.
- 7 Set a time after your first event to discuss how it went, what worked and what you will do better next time.
- 8 Thank everyone and move on to planning what you will do next! This should include developing your longer-term Action Plan.
- 9 Tell us about it!

31 Save energy

Electricity, gas, petrol: we all use energy every day. Most people only think about the price of energy when they pay the bills or buy the petrol, but energy doesn't just cost money – it costs us in other ways. Energy's been causing pollution for a long time: old-style smogs from coal fires, 'acid rain' from big power stations, nuclear waste and traffic fumes are just some of the pollution issues that can affect our health and our surroundings.

Now we have a much bigger problem: climate change. This is being caused mainly by the burning of coal, gas, petrol and other fuels. This releases other gases, mostly carbon dioxide, which absorb the sun's heat, and this leads to the atmosphere heating up. While warmer weather may sound like a nice idea, the results are likely to include more big storms and flooding, and rises in sea level over the next decades. If you want to talk about this issue in your group, the Climate Outreach Information Network (COIN – see section 10) can put you in touch with a speaker who could lead a discussion.

There are other problems nearer to home: three million households suffer from 'fuel poverty' – they spend more than 10% of their household income on energy, usually because their house is hard to heat: it's draughty, poorly insulated, and the heating systems are inefficient. Most local authorities are trying to tackle this problem and the government has set up the Warm Front programme to fight fuel poverty. More information on Warm Front can be found at www.defra.gov.uk/environment/energy/hees/.

It makes very good sense to save energy: it saves money and it cuts pollution. There are plenty of things anyone can do (see the box below) and there's a lot more that community groups can do together.

The first thing any Community Champion should do is work out who can help and who works locally. Your council's environment officer will have ideas and may be happy to help. A phone call to 0800 512 012 will put you in touch with your local Energy Efficiency Advice Centre. They will have leaflets etc. explaining what is available, and may have low-energy light bulbs to distribute for free. You should also look at

First steps to saving energy in your home, community centre, etc...

These actions will save you energy and money.
Most of them cost very little.

- Stop the draughts! Spaces around windows and doors (including letter boxes) let cold air in and warm air out. Get draught-excluders from d-i-y stores (or make them).
- Check the thermostats for hot water and central heating. There's no need to have hot water above 60°C – any higher and you may get scalded, and will need to add cold water to cool down the water you've just paid to heat.
- Don't heat rooms to more than 21°C.
- Close the curtains at night (and open them wide during the day to get as much heat from the sun as possible).
- Use low-energy light bulbs. These can save you up to £10 a year and they last up to nine years. Community centres may save hundreds of pounds a year this way.
- Think! Don't fill kettles too full, cook with pans covered, switch unnecessary lights off, and don't use the washing machine until you have a full load (and you can wash most dirty clothes at 30°C). Every little helps you save money and reduce pollution!



your own house: look at your own electricity bills and learn how your use varies, and try making the basic changes to your house and your day-to-day actions set out in the box below. If you've done them yourself you'll be a lot more confident about advising others.

There's also more to work on regarding energy than simply saving it. You can look at where you get it from and at producing your own.

Changing to an electricity supplier that can sell you electricity from renewable sources is easy. This can work for any household or, for example, your community centre, church, mosque. One website that offers impartial advice is www.uswitch.com.

Producing your own electricity is rather more complicated. New forms of renewable energy – solar panels on buildings' roofs or wind turbines – generate electricity without causing pollution. These work at a smaller scale than big power stations, and can be run by local communities. Already schools, adventure playgrounds, community centres and council houses are producing some or all of their own energy. This does take time and money to set up: if your group wants to take this forward then you should contact Community Action for Energy (CAfÉ) run by the Centre for Sustainable Energy (www.est.org.uk/cafè/welcome). They have a network of over 100 local projects and can offer advice based on this experience.

Cutting your emissions

But the key point is simply saving energy and encouraging people to stop wasting it. It may help to encourage people to think about this both in terms of saving money and in terms of cutting CO₂ emissions. This is important both for individuals and households and also for the group as a whole.

There are a number of on-line guides that can help you with this:

- The Energy Saving Trust (www.est.org.uk) offers a 'home energy check' that aims to help people save 20% of their energy.
- The Government Direct website (www.direct.gov.uk) has pages *Environment And Greener Living* and *Energy And Water Saving*

Ideas

People who run community buildings in the **Brighton and Hove** area have set up a network to share experience. Activities include a series of seminars to help them cut the cost of heating and lighting and waste disposal. The seminars and follow-up support help the groups find ways to cut energy use and waste.

The Energy Credit Union in **Reading** buys energy-saving materials such as loft insulation and draught-proofing for selling on to members (in low-income households) at discounted rates and offers cheap credit at 1% a month. It helps cut costs, raises awareness and cuts CO₂ emissions.

Loughgiel Community Association serves a rural area in Northern Ireland. As part of its work to build a new community resource centre, the association wanted the centre to be as self-sufficient as possible, and successfully raised money to install a wind turbine and solar photovoltaic system that provides its electricity.

Ashton Hayes in Cheshire, a village of approximately 1000 people, is working to become England's first 'carbon neutral' village. Local businesses, the village school and households have teamed up with local charities, Cheshire University, the Energy Saving Trust and the County Council to try and reduce the community's greenhouse gas emissions through tree planting, renewable energy and energy efficiency measures. One local resident of Ashton Hayes introduced the idea to the parish council. Over 400 people turned out to the project's official launch, which was sponsored by local businesses and supported by the Women's Institute. So far, 150 households have completed the home energy and travel survey organised with the University of Chester. Other initiatives in the village include installation of a small wind turbine and a solar thermal system at the local primary school, the promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency to households in the area and advice on recycling, which has seen a rise in the village's recycling rates.

- www.icount.org.uk has been set up by campaign groups to help you save energy and CO₂ – the site shows you how much CO₂ that all the people who signed up to the site have saved.
- The Centre for Sustainable Energy offers a free guide to Community Energy Efficiency Projects.

All of these can supplement the work done through the ‘evaluator’ on the Every Action Counts website. See the *Further Information* section for more advice.

If you are going to discuss these issues with your group then it make sense to look at some of these sites and work out which one most meets your needs. If the group meets regularly you may want to encourage people to start assessing their energy savings regularly. Helping people to understand and read their gas and electricity meters can be an important first step – don’t neglect offering basic help like this!

What community groups can do

As well as doing the basics of energy saving (see the box above) local groups can:

- Run an energy awareness week aimed at members and local people – contact a local Energy Advice Centre for materials and ideas.
- Get as many people as possible in the group working to save energy together and sharing their ideas, successes and problems
- Consider bulk-buying low-energy light bulbs or insulation materials for local people
- Make sure the most vulnerable people (old or ill people, especially those living on their own) get help with energy issues
- Buy ‘green’ electricity (from renewable sources): a range of power retailers now offer this possibility
- Make sure people getting state benefits know about the help available through the Warm Front initiative.

First steps to cutting your waste

Anyone can make a start:

- Use your kerbside recycling collection and local 'bring' sites
- Avoid over-packaged products
- Use your own shopping bag



3.2 Save our resources

Rubbish and waste are a problem for just about every neighbourhood. It's always easy to blame the council, but the problems go a lot deeper than that.

At the root of it is our throw-away society. There's been a huge increase in the use of plastic bags and packaging, whether for hamburgers or televisions, and all that packaging has to go somewhere. Much of it is not properly disposed of and that's the basis of the litter problem that faces so many communities.

Litter may not seem very important compared to 'big issues' like climate change, but dirty streets send out a message that no one in authority cares, and if local people think that no one cares about their local issues, then they probably won't worry about those bigger problems. Waste is almost certainly an issue that any community group will want to discuss.

Cutting down the waste

The best way to deal with rubbish is not to have it in the first place. This means:

- Cutting down on excess packaging
- Designing products so that they use less material to do the same job.

This is a big issue: more than 88,000 tonnes of weekly household waste – 4.6 million tonnes per year – is packaging. That's about the weight of 6000 London buses every week. Consumers pay for packaging twice: for every £50 you spend on food, £8 goes towards the packaging costs, adding approximately £470 to the average family's bill every year. Then you pay for the disposal of the packaging through council taxes.

There are things that can be done, and community groups can play an important part by making their voices heard on the policy changes that are needed. The National Federation of Women's Institutes has organised some high-profile events at supermarkets protesting about over-packaging – their website shows you what they did

More ideas...

The Vine Project is a furniture recycling project in South West London. It was started by a small group of volunteers. The demand for its services has been great and as a result it now works in four London boroughs. The Project provides refurbished furniture along with reused children's clothes, toys and nursery equipment to over 200 households every month. The people they help and work with include the former homeless, refugees, asylum seekers and those who have fled domestic

violence. The project also has about 80 volunteers.



The Project now reuses around 640 items (weighing about 19 tonnes) of furniture and household goods per month, which would otherwise end up in landfill sites. This includes all the basic furniture

supplies that people need. The Project's staff and volunteers collect the donated items and clean, repaint and refurbish them before supplying the items to those who need them. This work also provides valuable skills training for people working at the Project's warehouse. The Vine Project continues to develop and it now takes all the furniture which arrives at Sutton Council's new Reuse & Recycling Centre, which opened in April 2006.

In Oxfordshire there's a network of Community Action Groups who are active on waste and recycling issues. For lots of good ideas on local action, see www.cagoxfordshire.org.uk.

(www.womens-institute.co.uk/campaigns). The Irish Government has imposed a tax of about 7p on each plastic carrier bag. This has led to many more people reusing these bags rather than throwing them away.

Recycling

Recycling must take place at every level. Cars and electrical equipment are now being designed so that they can be 'disassembled' at the end of their lives so that useful parts can be reused, while the scrap metal is melted down and recycled.

At the domestic level, everyone can play their part. More and more households now have kerbside or door-to-door collections of waste such as paper, bottles and cans, and most households now have access to a local recycling collection point. Every local council has recycling targets to meet as part of a national strategy to cut waste: most are recycling around 25% of their waste and that figure will grow. Some places are introducing compulsory recycling and within a few years it's likely to be part of our normal routine.

But there are still plenty of people who don't recycle and this is perhaps the easiest thing for any Champion to encourage anyone to do.

The first stop for any Champion is the local council. Talk with the recycling officer and find out what you can about what they collect and when, especially in the area where you will start work. They may well be able to give you a box of 'goodies' such as pencils and notepads made from recycled materials that you can give away when you do talks. Copies of their leaflets and posters will be helpful. If they can give you a recycling box or bag of the type they use for door-to-door collections, this is a useful prop for any talk – you can take along examples of things people should (and should not) put in their collection boxes.

Some councils run their own 'recycling champion' schemes and may be happy to link you to that network. They can also advise on what they are doing to tackle issues of litter and waste. Many have a telephone 'hotline' for reporting fly-tipping, which is something you should encourage any group to act on.

You should also look out for local community recycling projects that

can offer help and advice. It's an area where community action is important. Across the UK, more than 850 community organisations work on recycling. Over 1.6 million households have their kerbside collection run by a community organisation, working under contract to the council. Community organisations also run projects to recycle and repair furniture and electrical goods, which are then sold at low cost to poorer households. These organisations reused around two million items last year, and in doing this they've created about 3000 jobs, while giving training to around 5000 people, many of whom are long-term unemployed or have special needs. The Community Recycling Network (www.crn.org.uk) and the Furniture Recycling Network (www.frn.org.uk) both have a directory of local projects.

Once paper, glass, cans and plastic have been tackled, people often become much more aware of food waste. Much of this can be 'composted' and turned into materials that can benefit any garden. The Community Composting Network (www.communitycompost.org) can advise on how to encourage home composting or on starting a community scheme.

What community groups can do

The most important thing is to make local people aware of reuse and recycling facilities in the area and encourage people to use them. Other things that may need doing include:

- Identifying areas where fly-tipping takes place and reporting these to the local council (and making sure they tackle the problem)
- Running local waste-awareness campaigns, ideally in co-operation with local schools
- Putting pressure on waste creators, such as fast-food shops, to clean up their surroundings and to provide more litter bins
- Encouraging local people to put food and vegetable waste in compost bins
- Thinking about the waste the group itself produces (e.g. at events and meetings) and looking at how that can be cut or recycled
- Starting to use recycled or reused products
- Working with the council to develop a waste strategy that works.

Locally, it's individual people who make the difference, by not dropping litter, by recycling and by trying to avoid unnecessary packaging. But this will only be effective if councils and the government provide the guidance and facilities that people and communities need.

3.3 Care for your area

Caring for where we live makes very good sense for many reasons. Perhaps the most obvious one is that if we don't care for it why should anyone else? Some people will of course say that 'the council should do it', but most councils will focus on providing basic services. If you want to really change things for the better, then you and the groups you work with need to get things moving.

This section focuses on local public open spaces. Public spaces are one reason why any place is nice to live in. Green spaces are for people to walk in, to sit in, for children to play in, for sport, for community celebrations. They can also be places where people learn about plants and food, and even places that give opportunities for training and therapy. Parks, recreation grounds, village greens, community gardens – they all help make our neighbourhoods better places to live. And it's not just green spaces; streets, squares, even the paved space in front of the community centre, library or wherever, they are all places where people meet and maybe do things together. They need to be safe and well looked after.

Looking after an open space can be a good long-term project for any community group. It's clear what you are focusing on, and local people who use the area may well be willing to help. You may have an existing space in mind, want to develop a new site, or it may be that discussion within the group results in an idea.

Open spaces include:

- Parks
- Community gardens
- Playgrounds
- Public open spaces

They also include those bits of rather uncared-for green spaces that you

First steps to caring for where you live

Anyone can make a start

- Report fly-tipping and abandoned vehicles
- Find out who is responsible for local green spaces and parks and how to contact them
- If you have a garden, use a watering can (not a hose or sprinkler) and water plants in the early morning or late evening
- Parks and green spaces



find in many neighbourhoods. There may be a piece of waste ground around a block of flats, some overgrown raised beds near the shops, a neglected play area or just a patch of bare ground which looks as if it could be better used. Whatever it is, effective local action can make a difference.

So first select the area you'd like to see improved. Get a small group of people together who will commit to doing some work on it.

Then find out who owns it. This is not always easy. If it's a park or recreation ground, then it's easy, but if it's a piece of derelict land it may be harder. The next two sections give you ideas on this.

Then decide what you want to do. It may be that you simply want to make the area cleaner and safer or you might want to turn the land into a proper community garden. You might even want to start growing your own food!

Another common problem on some streets is front gardens. You can make a big difference to how an area looks by encouraging more people to care for their gardens, offering advice on getting rid of waste and dumped furniture, and maybe helping those who are unable to look after their own. Some places have run successful local competitions for the best kept or most improved gardens.

Sadly, most green spaces are not as well looked after as they should be. Local councils have too often seen park maintenance as an area where they can save money. If parks are neglected, then the litter builds up, drug-taking, vandalism and other anti-social behaviour happens more and more, and people don't go there. The result is that even less money is spent and things go from bad to worse.

It doesn't have to be like this! There are plenty of parks where this 'spiral of despair' has been turned round, and in most of them, it's due to community action. This may not be enough on its own, but pressure from the local community can persuade the council to review support for its parks. In addition, a local 'Friends of Our Park' group can apply for funds that can add to whatever the council can do. While such groups are becoming more popular, there's no reason why an existing community group cannot work to improve a local park.

More ideas...



The Friends of Phoenix Park in Blakenhall worked with BTCV, through the Prudential Grass Roots programme, to use nature conservation as way of bringing the community together. The park had high levels of crime and anti-social behaviour and few facilities. A range of practical activities were organised to engage the whole community, including people of different ages and cultures. Hundreds of volunteers took

part in clearing rubbish, planting wildflowers, improving pathways and lighting, and creating a nature trail and adventure playground. As well as the practical benefits of these events, people were able to get to know each other in an informal and positive setting, helping to build a sense of shared interest. A community-based management plan was developed for the site, giving local people the confidence to continue to maintain their newly created green space by themselves. The park now has far less vandalism, damage and littering, and has become a focus for local pride.

Jubilee Gardens in Redbridge, east London, had been created as a small park in 1997 but had fallen badly into disrepair. It was fenced off and this enabled local shops to keep their guard dogs on it during the day, meaning that no one else could use it, and this led to fly-tipping of waste. Local people raised this as a problem with the council and many ideas for improvement were raised. The fences and gates were replaced with a low-level wall so that dogs could no longer be left there. Low-maintenance shrubbery and new seats were added and the area is now well used by residents and shoppers.

What community groups can do

If you're worried about the state of your parks:

- Talk with other park users and find out how concerned they are: build support for some changes
- Find out from the council what plans there are for better maintenance and improvement
- If such plans are not good enough, organise a meeting or an event in or near the park to bring people together
- Talk about your concerns with the council; consider what grounds there are for co-operation
- Contact GreenSpace, the national organisation that works with councils and communities on parks and green spaces
- You may want to form an action group: be aware that your plans for improvement will need to be agreed with the landowner (probably the council) and always remember the need for long-term maintenance.

Community gardens

In almost every community there's some derelict land. But there's no reason for it to stay unused and unloved. There are more than 1000 'community gardens' around the UK – mostly small plots of land, such as the site of a demolished building. Some are permanent, but others may exist for just a few years, while land is awaiting redevelopment.

Restoration of such land can be a key part of improving a neighbourhood for several reasons:

- It creates new public spaces
- It removes a focus for fly-tipping and littering
- It can reduce the scope for other illegal activity
- It may increase local land values
- It helps change people's negative views about their surroundings
- It can be a visible sign that 'something is happening'.

What community groups can do

If there's a piece of land like this in your area that you think could be used by local people, there are a few key things to do:

Ideas: Arkwright Community Gardens, Nottingham

Many local organisations in the ethnically-diverse Meadows area of Nottingham were involved in the transformation of a disused school playing field into this attractive community garden.

The overwhelming response to a community consultation was for the space to be more attractive, useful and safe for children. Ideas for the garden reflected the needs of the local communities and came from churches, community centres, schools and the community college, whose multi-lingual Asian outreach worker was well placed to spread the word.

Further consultation continued as work on the site began, while planned activities gave the chance for people to help the garden come to life. Local schoolchildren worked with a community artist, using a range of activities and materials including clay, paints, collage and stories. Their work was incorporated into the final garden design.

A multi-ethnic garden committee was formed and visited a number of established community gardens and city farms to help them with their planning and development. They joined FCFCG at an early stage and continue to see their membership as a valuable developmental tool.

The garden opened in 2004 and has continued to increase its range of produce. The garden has responded to requests from South Asian communities for space to grow exotic vegetables. Informal workshops in hanging baskets, container growing and horticulture are popular, and the International Club provides children from refugee and asylum seeker families with an opportunity to enjoy the space at weekends.

Jane Jeffrey, Arkwright's Chair, said the site had brought major benefits to local people: 'Before the gardens were in place, this was a dumping ground and a walk-through for dog walkers. Now it is very different. The garden has done a lot for the neighbourhood – we aim to employ local people and we buy locally. Lots of people pay just £1 to get cheap, organic vegetables from the garden.'

- Find out who owns it: check with the council; it will usually know. Also ask the council if it knows about any pollution problems. Major problems involve serious contamination, usually from industry based on or by a site. Removal of fly-tipping does not usually leave any long-term problems. Contamination may involve removing substantial quantities of soil and rubble: this can be expensive.
- Contact the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (FCFCG), a national organisation that can provide information and advice.
- Work out if anyone is using the land at present (including kids riding bikes etc.). Get them involved.
- Let all the people who live near it know that you're thinking of improving the area. If it's being used badly they may be very pleased, but they may also be worried about increased use resulting in more noise etc. Make sure your plans meet their needs.
- Organisations such as BTCV offer courses and practical action days to help you and others build your skills and experience.

Why not grow your own food?

One way to help with healthy eating is to encourage more people to grow food. It has many benefits: people get exercise as well as fresh food, and they save money.

The first question most people will ask is 'where?' The easiest place is at home. Even in dense urban areas, half or more homes have gardens. Even if they don't, there's often a balcony – it's surprising what some people do grow in limited spaces.

A second choice is an allotment. There are over 8000 allotment sites across the UK; some have waiting lists, while others are looking for new growers. While allotments have been in decline, recent increased activity by various organisations is helping to turn this around.

The third choice is to find some other land and develop it yourself. Hundreds of groups have done this in recent years. Community gardens can become more than just a source of food: they may become an

unofficial community centre, where people meet, share ideas (and food and seeds) and may well be a source of community pride. A well-run community garden can also provide training, not only in horticulture, but in administration and management skills.

What community groups can do

There are expert gardeners in every community: ask around and there's almost certainly someone who'd be happy to give advice to a new food-growing project. For more advice, see the organisations listed in the 'Information' section. Here are some ways of starting:

- If a few people are thinking of growing their own food, consider organising a gardening class: local further education colleges may help.
- If allotments or gardens are not available, look around for suitable land (see the 'Parks and green spaces' section), but make sure that the land is not contaminated by previous use.
- If there are older people who have gardens but are not using them, help them build a one-to-one link with someone looking for space to grow food.
- Find out if the local school has a garden, and if there is scope for community involvement.
- If there is an existing community garden that is purely recreational, would those involved be interested in growing food as well?
- If people in flats are interested, get advice on how they could grow materials on their balconies (or even grow herbs in window boxes!).
- You may be able to get help, advice and support from a local city farm or other community food-growing project in your area.

3.4 Travel wisely

Everyone needs to travel – to work, to school, to the shops and so on. If it's hard to travel, people are unable to get to their jobs, to health care or to see friends. Cars may be convenient but many people don't have one, and increasing car use damages the environment, people's health and society through air pollution, road accidents and more.

A Community Champion can make a real difference by:

- Showing people there are other ways to get around than by using a car;
- Helping tackle some of the reasons why people need to travel out of their local area by improving local services.

Often people simply don't know what choices they have, so an important first step will be to get details of the local bus and train services for the area where you will be working. The Sustrans website (www.sustrans.org.uk) will give you plenty of useful ideas as well. Your local council should have a transport plan – check this to see what it means for your neighbourhood.

Using cars less

Between 1960 and 1998 the proportion of journeys made by car grew from 49% to 86% (even though the time spent travelling has remained constant at around an hour a day). It's not surprising that traffic jams are becoming more and more common. But a quarter of all car journeys are less than 3km (a figure which varies considerably – in Manchester, for example, half of all trips are under 3km) so it would be easy for people to get where they're going in other ways. Those ways include:

Cycling

The bicycle is a very efficient machine: people can easily cycle two or three times as fast as they walk, with no pollution or waste. Cycling is also a very good way to get fit. Yet in many places in the UK very few people cycle. Two reasons are safety and security: it can be very scary to drive in heavy traffic, and bikes can get stolen if left unattended.

A silhouette of a person riding a bicycle on a grassy hill. The scene is set against a bright, hazy sky, likely at sunrise or sunset, with the sun low on the horizon. The cyclist is in a forward-leaning position, and the bicycle is clearly visible. The foreground and middle ground are dark, emphasizing the silhouette and the bright background.

First steps to travelling wisely

Anyone can make a start:

- If you don't know already, find out where the local bus services can take you
- Make journeys on foot or bicycle where possible
- Use public transport instead of the car

There's plenty that can be done. Good employers are increasingly offering secure cycle parking and changing facilities for cyclists who may arrive at work hot and sweaty. Communities can play an important part in encouraging cycling, not least through getting children cycling. Cycle proficiency schemes help children start safely. Adults can set a good example by cycling as well. Many towns have cycling groups who can provide advice (see section 10, *Further Information*) and maybe run cycle repair 'clinics' to get people's old bikes fully operational.

There's a lot that a community group can do:

- Talk with local people about the best routes for cycling, e.g. to the town centre
- Produce a cycle map showing safe routes (see the TravelSmart section of the Sustrans website to see examples of good practice in creating cycle maps).
- Agree which routes need improving and what the problems are. Talk to local transport officials about these (they are also trying to make improvements, so they should appreciate your help).
- Organise a cycle ride for local people (perhaps with a picnic)
- Run a cycle repair clinic in your neighbourhood
- Make sure local community centres have secure cycle parking
- Talk with local employers about providing changing and parking facilities
- Get playgroups and children's groups to organise bike training.

Walking

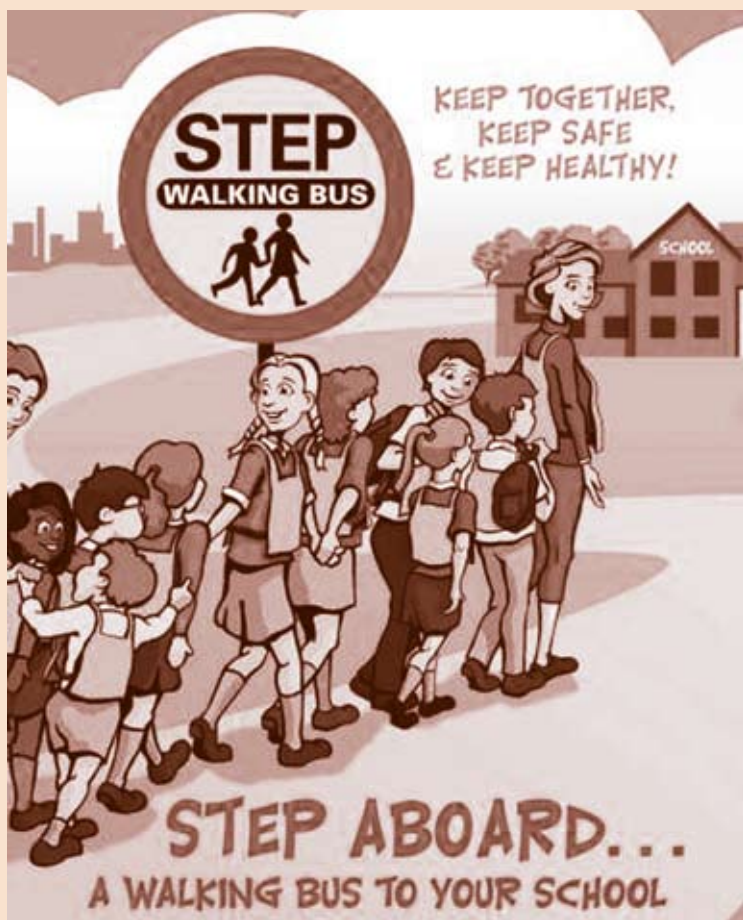
We all do it – even if it's only from the front door to the car! But often it's not a very pleasant experience, especially in run-down, built-up areas or in rural areas where there's no pavement. There's plenty to be done locally, starting with reporting unsafe pavements, out-of-order street lights, dangerous traffic, the timing of and need for traffic lights, and so on. Many local councils have a hot-line where these problems can be reported. A community survey could identify the problem areas, and help work out where changes are necessary.

This is an issue where community groups can really make a difference:

- See cycling section above for ideas of how to improve your area's walking and cycling routes.

The 'Walking Bus'

A Walking Bus lets a group, or 'bus', of children walk from home to school each morning with the help of trained adult supervisors. Some include a trolley for bags etc. In some primary schools this has led to up to 80% of children walking to school. Although walking buses are a useful way of encouraging children to walk to school, they should also be regarded as temporary measures necessary only because of the danger in our streets from motor traffic. Safe routes for all should be possible.



- Get the council to give households postcards to report problems.
- Ask local people about the best pedestrian routes and produce a walking map.
- Get local history clubs to do local history walking tours.
- Talk with your local health trust about 'health walks'.
- Organise walking to school clubs.
- Get advice from Living Streets, the pedestrians' organisation.

Using cars less

This is where you can make an important difference. Encourage everyone in your group to think about their car use. Could their next journey be made on foot, by bike, or by bus?

Three longer term ways forward are:

- In some places people have little choice but to use a car, since public transport is non-existent or doesn't go to the right places at the right times. Think about services in your neighbourhood and work with the council to improve them.
- Car sharing makes good sense, but often people don't know anyone locally who makes the same journey they do. A community group could help match people up.
- Rush-hour traffic is usually worse in term time because people drive children to school. Organising walk-to-school or cycle-to-school schemes can ensure safety and help children learn to be independent.

Changing where you live

There are two other important issues that you may want to look at.

Road safety

For many people the major transport concern is the level of accidents. While the UK has few accidents compared to some nations (3471 in 2002), it's still far too many, and a high proportion involve children. Transport policy has tried to reduce this almost exclusively by removing

people from our streets, which is having a disastrous effect on our society. Making residential streets safe is an important part of creating a more sustainable community.

The major cause of neighbourhood accidents is very simple: people driving too fast. There are several ways to slow traffic – road humps or ‘sleeping policemen’ are just one. Another is to make sure there are speed restrictions.

In urban areas another idea is catching on fast. ‘Home zones’ is a Dutch idea now being introduced in the UK. The idea is to transform a residential street and give walking and cycling precedence. Pavements can be widened and redesigned, and new street furniture and tree planting can change how people use their streets.

Northmoor in Manchester is Britain’s first Home Zone. Local residents in four streets worked with the council and two housing associations to develop ideas. Models were made of possible lay-outs and a full-scale mock-up was set up for a day in a closed-off street. The completed street is now safe for children to play in.

Northmoor was one of a few pilot Home Zone schemes in the UK. Unfortunately, the pilot projects can cost a great deal – £1 million to £2.5 million – which has limited work on existing streets. Sustrans is now launching a new 3-year project called DIY Streets which will work with 10 streets around the UK to achieve the basic principles of Home Zone design, such as reduced speeds of motor traffic and making streets more attractive, at a much lower cost: www.sustrans.org.uk

What community groups can do to improve road safety:

- Check where the danger areas are; local people know them
- Get local residents involved in working out how to make the area safer (see DIY Streets project above)
- Involve your local councillor at an early stage
- Negotiate with the council for improvements
- Get local groups to offer to help the council e.g. with landscaping or tree planting.

Improving access

The best way to cut travel is to have better local shops and services so we don't need to drive elsewhere. Any new housing estate should provide space for a medical centre, shops, a pub, a nursery, a community centre and so on. Any regeneration should consider what facilities are missing and help put things right. Other services such as schools, police station, a library etc should be within walking distance (perhaps 10 minutes' walk pushing a baby buggy).

Much of Britain, and not just rural areas, doesn't have these facilities, and in too many cases things are getting worse. Post offices, banks, health centres and so on are increasingly being centralised. These services are important in their own right, and also because they provide jobs and places where local people meet and socialise.

What community groups can do

Communities can certainly play a part in tackling access issues, and not just by protesting against closure of local services:

- Find out how many people in your area are isolated from basic services: measure which areas and how many people are more than 10 minutes' walk from service centres.
- Talk with the council about ways to improve local service provision.
- Encourage the library service to bring its mobile service to your village or neighbourhood.
- Organise car or minibus-sharing schemes to visit larger centres.

3.5 Shop ethically

Anyone's environmental impact is directly related to the goods and services they buy. We may think about this in terms of 'green energy' and obvious purchases such as low-energy light bulbs, but everything we buy and use has some environmental impact. It makes sense to try and cut that impact wherever possible.

The issue of 'sustainable production and consumption' has become

First steps to shopping sensibly

Anyone can make a start:

- Take a shopping list and only buy what you need!
- Avoid over-packaged products and buy loose fruit and vegetables
- Buy fairtrade food and drink (and other products)



central to making sustainable development work. Back in 1992, the UN Agenda 21 report suggested that unsustainable patterns of consumption and production were ‘the major cause of continued global environmental deterioration’, particularly in richer countries. While any Community Champion probably won’t want to talk with local organisations about these global targets, it is important to see how local action links to national and global plans. This is also important because these kinds of actions are where a lot of people feel that they can start to change their behaviour.

Food and healthy eating

Food is a big part of the goods we buy and use, and eating well is vital for everyone. To eat well, people need to be able to afford good food, and have access to places to buy it. This may seem obvious, but many people in the UK don’t always have easy access to shops with reasonable prices.

Poor diets lead to poor health, and poorer people on low incomes suffer more diet-related diseases, including cancer and strokes. Better food for everyone makes very good sense, both in terms of people’s health and their environment.

There are three places to start:

- Locally-grown food
- Organic food
- Fairly-traded food (see the next section)

Locally-grown food

Interest in ‘local food’ has grown rapidly in recent years. There are now more than 500 farmers’ markets across the UK and the first only opened in 1997: that’s about one a week opening.

A farmers’ market is a market in which farmers, growers or producers from a defined local area are present in person to sell their own produce, direct to the public. All products sold should have ‘been grown, reared, caught, brewed, pickled, baked, smoked or processed’ by the stallholder. Much of it is likely to be organically-grown (see below).

A food co-op idea

The Four Groves Food Co-op in the Risedale area of Barrow-in-Furness was set up by local people who realised there was a need for a door-to-door delivery of healthy food to residents who had difficulty getting to the shops. They increase their sustainability by using a 'quadricycle' (a large four-wheeled bike) to deliver the food orders.



Such markets usually take place monthly or fortnightly and offer people a chance to buy food direct from those who grew it. Organising a trip for group members to a local farmers' market might be a good way for any Champion to start getting local group members talking about food. The Women's Institute also runs more than 500 market stalls for local produce.

Locally produced food has other benefits: it isn't just fresher; it also cuts the need to carry it around the country or across the world, saving energy and cutting pollution. For products that aren't grown in the UK, such as coffee and tea, 'fair-trade' examples are now widely available, where a higher proportion of what you pay goes to the local producers (see below).

If you are working with a group that is keen to develop action around food, there are several ways forward. You can also start growing your own food and also perhaps try to build direct links with food producers. You could start doing this by arranging a visit to an organic food producer who sells at your farmers' market; the organisers may be able to advise you. Some places are developing 'community supported agriculture' where farms sell directly to local people or communities.

Organic food

Organic food is produced without the use of artificial pesticides or fertilisers. There's been a huge growth in demand for this, and organic foods can be found in most supermarkets as well as being available from local suppliers. You can help by getting the use of organic food 'normalised', so that people buy it as part of their regular shopping. Community groups can make sure that they buy organic (and ideally fairly-traded) tea, coffee and biscuits so that people who don't yet buy them can try them out. A visit to an organic farm can also help (see above).

Some people do feel that organic food is too expensive; you can help tackle this by doing cost comparisons and also sharing knowledge about where organic food is available at good prices. You can also promote organic 'vege-boxes', schemes whereby people get a regular delivery of organic vegetables.

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Simply eating well

For a lot of poorer people, the priority is simply trying to ensure that the family is well fed. To help them, a network of 'Food Poverty' projects has grown across the UK. These include food-buying co-operatives and community cafés. Another very practical way forward is growing fresh food. The Food Poverty Network was set up in 1995 and works to improve access to healthy diets for people on low incomes. It links campaigning groups and community food projects including food co-operatives, community cafés, groups providing education on cookery and nutrition, and many more.

Fair Trade

Buying fairly-traded goods links your actions to people across the world, since fairly-traded goods are those which are certified to show that the original farmers or producers are paid a fair and meaningful rate for their produce.

Fairly traded tea and coffee are now becoming quite common. If the idea is new to your group you could organise a 'tasting session' with a range of teas and coffees (and biscuits etc.) or you could simply start to buy these drinks for the meetings of your groups.

There is a lot of information available on Fair Trade at www.fairtrade.org.uk. This is the website for the Fair Trade Foundation which runs the FAIRTRADE Mark. This is an independent consumer label 'which appears on products as an independent guarantee that disadvantaged producers in the developing world are getting a better deal'. The website has a huge amount of useful information, including ideas on how to get your town or city to become a 'fair trade town' and on how to organise events for 'fair trade fortnight'.

There are already a great many local Fair Trade groups across England – you may well find one near you. They will probably be happy to come and talk about the issue or help you organise an event for your group. And don't forget that Fair Trade covers more than just food – there's fairly traded clothing and even footballs.

Look for the label

Fair Trade and organic labels on products mean that those products are properly certified. There are now an increasing number of other labels that make claims about environmental performance, some from labelling schemes, but others may just have been added by the shop or the manufacturer. Some are very important, such as energy labelling, which will give you clear guidance on how much energy is used by any major new appliance, such as a fridge. People may ask for advice on this, so it's worth checking and perhaps having a discussion within the group about which labels people have seen and how helpful people think they are.



Tackling the shopping habit

The last decade has seen an upsurge in consumption, and for some people it seems as if shopping has become a way of life and an end in itself rather than simply being a way of buying what you need. We certainly need to change our consumption patterns by buying the right products, be they organic or fairly traded, but we also need to consider cutting our consumption. The UK is looking to cut CO2 emissions by at least 60% over the next 44 years. Shopping habits will change along with everything else.

'Buy Nothing Day' is an annual event organised worldwide by a wide network of groups to draw attention to over-consumption. This might be a useful focus for discussion within your group. www.buynothingday.co.uk has lots of information about what is done here and elsewhere across the world.

There are a number of things that groups can do to help people shop (and eat) in a more sustainable manner:

- Organise a Fair Trade evening: Have fairly traded goods available to try and buy.
- If people are going to large out-of-town shopping centres, get them to share the car journey to save fuel and encourage them to identify positive purchases and also look out for the most unnecessary and over-packaged products

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- Consider setting up a bulk-buy scheme for organic vegetables, or food from local farms. Many schemes will deliver fresh food to a central point once a week, or set up a rota to go to the main local market.
- Make contact with local farms and see if any are interested in doing direct deliveries: alternatively organise car-share trips to pick-your-own farms.
- Promote the campaign to get everyone eating five or more portions of fruit and vegetables every day.
- Make sure the café in any community centre you use is using fair-trade products wherever possible and ideally organic locally produced food.
- Ask your council what it's doing to use locally produced food in school meals, meals-on-wheels etc.





4 Making the links

Environmental action and sustainable development

Any neighbourhood has a whole range of 'social issues'. Some of these may come up in your discussions, and you may wonder what these have to do with the environment. There are a surprising number of ways in which social and environmental issues link and support each other, and central to this is the idea of 'sustainable development'.

Sustainable development has been around as an idea in the UK since the 1992 UN World Summit in Rio. We have a UK Sustainable Development Strategy (see section 4). While this phrase can be confusing, it's now used in many government documents and in funding programmes. If you and your group are going to deal with officials and grant-makers, then it makes very good sense to get to grips with sustainable development and 'sustainability'.

One reason it is so confusing is that there are many different definitions (see overleaf for two that are relevant). But the simplest way to think about it is still about linking environmental, social and economic development.

This often makes perfect sense at a local level. Whatever the problems in any neighbourhood, people need:

- A better local environment
- A better local economy
- Better social conditions

If a project can help improve all these three, it's likely it will genuinely help to deliver 'sustainable development'. Few local projects try to do everything right from the start, but good local projects often do a little bit of everything.

There's another way to think about 'sustainable development' that may

So what does sustainable development mean?

There are many definitions! The 'original' definition is from the 'Brundtland Report' (the report of the UN World Commission on Environment and Development) in 1987, which said that sustainable development is 'Development that meets the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'

This has been summarised as 'not cheating on our grandchildren'!

The UN Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 set out the idea in the 'Agenda 21' report that this should be about integrating environmental, social and economic issues.

Sustainable development is now a key strand in national policy. The current UK Sustainable Development Strategy, *Securing Our Future*, sets out five principles:

- 1 Living within environmental limits
- 2 Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society
- 3 Achieving a sustainable economy
- 4 Promoting good governance
- 5 Using sound science responsibly

4 Making the links

help people in your group discuss and understand the term:

- *Development* means change or growth.
- *Sustainable* means things that last.

This is about making changes that last, about making things better now and in the future.

At the core of this idea is the matter of meeting people's needs – for a home, for a decent job, for education for their children, for good health care, and for a safe and healthy neighbourhood to live in.

This is not just a local issue. The same problems are faced at a national level. If the governments of the world are to deal with poverty, they don't just need to provide money and food aid; they need to help local people become educated and get jobs. People also need a safe environment with adequate homes and drinking water. To make these things work, governments also need to make sure that people have an effective voice in deciding what happens where they live.

A range of local social issues that link to environmental concerns are discussed in the next section.



5 Community issues

The environment is only one aspect of where people live. There's a whole range of other matters that concern people and where they want to see improvement. If you're trying to help people change the area where they live for the better you need to keep in mind how what you are doing links to this wider social agenda. This section looks at some of the issues that may come up in your discussions and how these issues link to environmental concerns.

The local economy

Your 'local economy' may not always be very obvious, but it's complex and surprisingly large.

It's about how we organise in order to get all the goods and services we need to live in the way we want. But however you look at the local economy, you see money disappearing out of the area into the bank accounts of large companies such as supermarkets, electricity companies, and the banks themselves. Even 'local' businesses such as the pub are probably part of an international company.

This may not seem to be a problem: supermarkets and banks create jobs and pay wages. But a closer look shows how things are changing: small businesses are squeezed out, the butcher's becomes a take-away food shop, and as stores get larger, so they move further away, and we have to travel further to get what we need.

Much of what we need now comes from all over the world, whether it's food or clothing. This adds further problems: all the trucks, trains and boats merely add to global pollution problems, and growing luxury vegetables and flowers in Africa takes up land and water that could be used to grow food for local people.

We can't get away from the global economy, but it does make sense to try to make sure that our bit works for us. Almost every time money changes hands, someone makes a profit: the more those profits stay in the area, the stronger the local economy. Research in Cornwall showed

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that £10 spent on a local food scheme generated around £25 for the local economy, compared to £14 for £10 spent in a supermarket.

Your group may feel that this is an area they want to look at. If they do, there's plenty to be done! One way in which people can strengthen their local economy is to 'plug the leaks' – to find ways to use local products and services wherever possible, and to encourage local business and communities to trade with each other. In this way money circulates within a local community for as long as possible and doesn't 'leak out'. This approach is being developed by the New Economics Foundation (www.neweconomics.org).

Local shops and services

This is an issue where the divide between rural and urban areas is obvious. Small villages have been losing shops for many years, forcing people to drive to buy even basic foodstuffs, while almost all urban areas have at least a corner shop. But the existence of such shops doesn't mean that there are no problems. Small convenience shops often charge higher prices, and offer only a limited range of goods. Many poor urban areas lack good access to fresh fruit and vegetables, and this contributes to health problems.

Who needs money? – LETS schemes and Time Banks

Money is only a way to exchange the value of goods and services: Local Exchange Trading Schemes (LETS) offer a different way to do this. LETS are community-based networks in which people exchange goods and services with one another, without the need for money.

People join a local LETS scheme and decide what skills they have to offer, from specialist skills, to cleaning or dog-walking: a directory lets members know what is on offer. People trade by asking another member for a service and pay them using a cheque made out in the 'local currency', which is deposited with the local co-ordinator. LETS does not work like money: it is based on people doing work for each other and is thus always available. You do not have to earn before you can spend, and the benefits stay in the local community. There are now some 450 schemes in the UK, each with their own currency, such as 'Bobbins' in Manchester, or 'Oswalds' in Oswestry.

A similar scheme is 'Time Banks', described as 'a way for people to come together and help each other'. Participants 'deposit' their time in the bank by giving practical help and support, and are able to 'withdraw' their time when they need something done themselves. Everyone's time is worth the same and a broker links people up and keeps records. There are now 79 active time banks in the UK (and 36 more under development) with nearly 6000 participants. If you want to know more, look at www.timebanks.co.uk.

Local social issues

There's a lot going on in your area, and often you don't notice it until something goes wrong. Local services include:

- Health care
- Safety and policing
- Education
- Local shops
- Environmental services (such as waste and cleansing)
- Public transport.

There are, of course, other services such as local planning that are city- or district-wide, but this list covers most basic concerns. The environmental ones have been dealt with in the earlier sections: this section looks at where a community group might start.

A wide range of community groups enable local people to tackle the key services that are operating in their area. People will have different ideas about the most important local services – if someone has no children, they may be less worried about the quality of schools – but most people will agree on a core of services that are needed.

What community groups can do:

- Organise bulk-buy and home-delivery schemes.
- Organise a 'support your local trader' campaign with local business support organisations.
- Encourage members to join a local exchange trading scheme or a Time Bank (or set one up!)
- If there's a service needed locally, consider setting up a community business to provide it (get help on this).
- Set up a credit union (support organisations exist).

BTCV Green Gym

In 1996 one local doctor in Berkshire developed a plan with a local BTCV conservation group to help people keep fit and stay healthy while doing conservation work. This project has grown into the 'Green Gym' network. People get out into the countryside, get exercise, and they benefit the local environment. There are now some 70 similar schemes across the UK. Doctors are increasingly prescribing exercise as a way to keep healthy. More information is available at www.btcv.org.



- Set up a development trust if you are serious about this sort of work.

Healthy living

Social, economic and environmental factors can all damage our health. Health is affected by the quality of the living environment and poverty as well as by pollution, poor diet and lack of exercise. If we are to improve our health, we have to tackle these issues as well: this is an example of sustainable development in practice. A sustainable approach to being healthy is to avoid falling ill wherever possible. As with crime, it's better to prevent it than cure it.

There have been many changes in health care in the UK over the last few years, but some of those changes are moving in the direction of sustainable development, and offer communities new chances to create better health for everyone. Health care is organised through 'primary care trusts'. These provide medical care but also work on health promotion.

A succession of 'food scares' has made many people think much more about what they eat. Health trusts promote the 'five a day' programme, encouraging everyone to eat five portions of fruit or vegetables every day, while there is also much increased interest in fresh, locally produced food, and in organic food (see 3.3 *Why not grow your own food?*).

Community groups can certainly play a part in helping people keep healthy:

- Find out what organisations offer advice on healthy living in your area and promote their activities to local people. If there isn't one, ask why not!
- If people want to become active, run health improvement classes in a local community centre, set up a Green Gym or simply offer local support for people wanting to give up smoking. Your local primary care trust should be able to help.
- If there seem to be pollution problems in your area, whether from traffic, industry or waste dumping, ask the council what it's doing to limit this. Local environmental groups may also be a source of information and support (see section 10, *Further Information*).

Crime and Community Safety

If people are scared to go out at night (or even during the day) then it may be hard to get them involved. Cutting crime and the fear of crime are vital to creating better places to live.

Most people go for the obvious solution: more police on the streets. This does reduce crime, and many neighbourhoods now have designated local officers. But it's only part of the story. Crime can often be avoided, and crime prevention can work well at a community level.

Designing out crime

Some crime can be prevented by good design and environmental improvements. At the most basic level this means planting thorny bushes in front of ground-floor windows (this works!). Other basic measures include providing better lighting, replacing walls that criminals can hide behind with fences through which they can be seen, and making sure that public spaces don't include nooks and corners where people can hide.

Local people will usually be aware which places in the area feel unsafe: a walk around the area with residents will identify places where improvement is needed.

There's a lot that local people can do to tackle crime as part of creating more sustainable communities:

- Contact your local beat officer and invite them to a meeting to discuss concerns.
- Find out more about your local community safety partnership (ask your local councillor) and see how you can get involved.
- Organise a 'crime-spotting' walk along with councillors, council staff and the police, and identify the problem areas. Get the council to work with local people to come up with practical solutions.
- Talk with a Neighbourhood Watch group. This is now the largest group of volunteer organisations in the UK with over 155,000 schemes covering 10 million people.

Education

Education is not just about schools. It is also about making sure that people have access to the skills, knowledge and information they need to enable them to play a full part in the community. These could be skills to:

- Speak up in meetings
- Set up a new business
- Cook and eat more healthily (and grow your own food)
- Run a community group
- Save energy in the home
- Prepare a fund-raising application
- Using the internet effectively
- Deal more effectively with the council or service providers.

Education can also involve discussion groups about the environment! If you want to organise events to help local people build their skills, contact a local community centre or the council and ask for information about community education. There may be funds available to help run classes or there may already be classes running on the issues you want.

Informal education can also be important. Practical environmental work, trips to educational centres, meetings with other groups working on the same issues, and training courses all help build confidence and skills. As your group develops, keep this in mind and watch for people who are keen to build their skills.

Schools themselves can also play an important part in a community; they may have the best facilities in the area, and if these can be used by the community after school, then everyone benefits.

There's plenty that a community group can do:

- Find out what evening classes are on offer in the area and publicise them.
- Find out what skills local people already have and consider informal skill-sharing evenings.
- Organise trips to places or centres that would offer local people a useful learning experience.
- Bring in experts to talk about and explain new initiatives in the area.



6 Every Action Counts and Community Champions

This section sets out what Every Action Counts does and how the work of the Community Champions links with the other activities.

Every Action Counts (EAC) is a programme to engage national and local voluntary and community sector organisations across England in work to protect and improve our environment and to deliver sustainable development. This work will help tackle global climate change and moves towards 'one planet living'. Given that there are some 750,000 community organisations in the UK, this is a huge opportunity to bring about important environmental changes and improvements.

EAC is funded by Defra (The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) and has a total budget of £4 million over three years. It is managed by the Community Sector Coalition which has developed a consortium of 25 organisations to deliver this work; some are environmental organisations but most are from the wider Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and include the national bodies that link Councils for Voluntary Service, Parish Councils, the Women's Institutes, and all sorts of community organisations.

Every Action Counts (EAC) work focuses on five 'themes':

- 1 Save energy
- 2 Travel wisely
- 3 Save our resources
- 4 Care for your area
- 5 Shop ethically

The programme aims to get up to 14,000 community groups to take action. It is called Every Action Counts since one aim is to show how many small local actions can have a significant cumulative national impact, both in terms of practical change (such as the amount of energy saved) and in terms of public involvement.

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There are five parts of the Every Action Counts programme

1 The 'Community Champions'.

If you're reading this you may be one of them! The Champions are being trained so that they can advise and inspire local organisations to take action and make changes. This work is run by BTCV.

2 A website and supporting resources

A website is the 'first point of contact' for the programme. It is designed to encourage community organisations to sign up and to take action. It offers advice and helps groups assess the impact of what they are doing. It lets you access toolkits and guidance materials and many 'good practice' case studies. This work is run by bassac (www.bassac.org.uk). See below for some more guidance.

3 A programme to help and support national Voluntary and Community Sector bodies to work on these issues

This strand will help these organisations to link work on these issues with their existing programme and to draw up their own action plans for sustainable development. This work is run by bassac.

4 A training programme for community workers

This will help those working with communities to engage with these issues and to build their skills. This work is run by the Federation for Community Development Learning.

5 A 'good practice' programme

Good practice by community groups will be identified and promoted to help groups learn from each other. This work is run by Capacity Global. If you are working with a group that you think are doing something that others would like to hear about or could learn from, then please let Capacity Global know about it!

The whole EAC programme is managed for the CSC by the Community Development Foundation (CDF).

www.everyactioncounts.org.uk

The EAC website is at the core of this programme. It is fully interactive and it is worth spending some time looking at the different elements and at what may be useful for your work. The website includes:

- Home pages: these are an introduction and welcome page, and directions to the most relevant parts of the site
- Getting started: this is a four-step process that takes people through registering their group and encourages them to take stock of what their group does now and to start developing an action plan
- The 'evaluator': this section takes people through a set of questions about what their group is doing and helps them assess their progress through a scoring system. It also provides advice on next steps.
- A library of fact-sheets, resources and toolkits (from a wide range of organisations) provide detailed guidance for groups seeking to develop environmental action and longer-term projects
- There are specific sections for community champions and also for community workers and national VCS groups. These will grow to include specific information and room for user groups etc.
- Discussion forums and news space will enable people to keep up to date with developments and to share ideas and opinions.
- Good practice case studies are easily available to provide ideas and inspiration. You are invited to contribute your own examples.



7 The next steps

We've already said that becoming a Community Champion is just one step on a path that can go wherever you want. You can simply do the work with your group or you can go on to do more work in this field. There are a great many people working for environmental organisations who started out as local volunteers. This section looks at what you might want to do once your local group is active and needs less support.

Getting more groups involved

There are probably a number of groups where you live who could benefit from having environmental advice. There's also only so much one person can do. If you are keen to get more groups involved, think about how much you can put in, but also look around for other people who might be interested in doing what you do. If you can find others to work with you, encourage them to register as a champion to get the tools and training, and then look at how you can work together. You may even want to form a local network and publicise what you can offer to local community groups.

Building your skills

Being a Community Champion for Every Action Counts involves covering a lot of issues from waste and rubbish, to climate change and fair trade. It's hard to know a lot about all these issues, and you may find that you want to develop your skills and interests on one or two issues.

Many of the partners within Every Action Counts have specific programmes that can help you in this. See section 10, *Further information* section. You can join a network such as 'Community Action for Energy' or you could specialise and become a 'community compost champion' or a 'local recycling hero' or a 'tree warden', all with an important part to play in the local community.

You'll have worked out by now that many important local services are

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delivered by your local council and maybe you want to influence them so that these services are run better (and in a more environment-friendly manner). Your local Council for Voluntary Services will be able to advise you on how to get more involved. And if you think you could run things better, you could even think about standing as a local councillor!

Working with other communities

It's (fairly!) easy working with people you know. But local community groups can be very different, whether they involve people from different ethnic backgrounds, different faiths, with very different interests (what would interest a football fan club?) or simply from different parts of town. What works with one may not work with another. If you are interested in developing your work with a wider range of communities, you should get advice and perhaps some training. Your local council environmental officer may be able to offer advice on this, as can BTCV, who can also offer experience as well through their volunteer programmes. A local Interfaith Council (which you can find through talking with any faith group) may offer ways to approach other faith groups.

Community development

A lot of what any Champion will do with a local organisation is about building the skills and confidence of that group – a process often described as 'community development'. The skills you need to do this well are broadly the same whichever group you are working with and whatever the topic. Some people find they really enjoy this work and are good at it. If you are someone like that then you might want to look at getting training and qualifications. The Community Development Foundation and the Federation for Community Development Learning (FCDL) are both members of EAC and can offer advice on this. The FCDL 'support the development of communities through advancing and promoting community development learning at local, regional and national levels, and creating relevant opportunities for good quality training and qualifications'. Find out more at www.fcdl.org.uk.

ONLY





Bus Stop

Howbery Park

buses towards

Oxford

X39

105

106

No stopping
except buses

8 What can I do?

Supporting individual action

Every action does indeed count and everyone can do something. This section lists the things that most people in any group can do. Most are fairly easily, but some require more thought.

- Those marked **A** cost nothing but a little time and thought;
- Those marked **B** involve some small financial costs;
- Those marked **C** may involve some learning, planning and investment.

Many people will have done some of these already. Some can be done once (such as fitting a water saver in toilet cisterns) and others are things that need to be done regularly (and thus become good habits).

1. Save energy

- A** Don't leave electrical items (e.g. the TV) on standby
- A** Turn off lights and reduce (or turn off) the heating in unused rooms
- A** Turn down the thermostat to 21°C*
- A** Put on extra clothing instead of turning up the heating

- B** Install energy-saving light bulbs
- B** Draught-proof the house
- B** Fit an insulation jacket to the hot water tank if you have one

- C** Switch to a green electricity supply
- C** Fit loft and cavity wall insulation
- C** Set yourself an annual target to reduce your CO₂ emissions, and monitor progress

* 21°C is the recommended level for older people. If your household consists only of fit, younger people you may wish to have it on a lower temperature.

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And...

- Use washing machine at 30°C
- Dry your clothes on a line (instead of using a dryer)
- Only boil as much water as you need
- Run your fridge at between 3 and 5°C
- Unplug rechargers when not in use
- Fit shelves above radiators under windows
- Fit thermostatic radiator valves
- Purchase energy efficient appliances

2. Travel wisely

- A** If you don't know already, find out where the local bus services can take you
- A** Make journeys on foot where possible
- A** Combine several purposes in one journey
- B** Use public transport instead of the car
- B** Use a bicycle where possible (and get it serviced)
- C** If you use a car, plan to reduce your car use
- C** If you use a car, service the engine regularly and maintain the correct tyre pressure

3. Save our resources

- A** Use your kerbside recycling collection and local 'bring' sites
- A** Avoid over-packaged products
- A** Use your own shopping bag
- B** Use rechargeable batteries, not disposables
- B** Buy recycled products (such as paper products)
- C** Buy recyclable and repairable products where possible
- C** Send unwanted furniture and other items to reuse schemes, charity shops etc.

And...

- Buy non-perishable goods in bulk
- Reuse carrier bags

- Buy products that come in refillable bottles from stores that will refill them
- Buy products that come in reusable containers
- Buy vintage or secondhand clothing
- Set up a compost scheme for your garden and food waste
- Dispose of household products safely (pesticides, oils, chemicals, paints, batteries etc.,)
- Dispose of fridges and freezers at special facilities
- Recycle used motor oil at special facilities

4. Care for your area

- A** Get active in an Environment or Conservation Group
- A** Report fly-tipping and abandoned vehicles
- A** Vote in elections

- C** Have a say in your local Sustainable Community Strategy or Neighbourhood Plan
- C** Stand as a local councillor

And...

- Think about your garden (see section 3 for actions)

5. Shop ethically

- A** Take a shopping list (and only buy what you need!)
- A** Use local shops
- A** Avoid over-packaged products and buy loose fruit and vegetables

- B** Buy Fair Trade food and drink (and other products)
- B** Buy more local and seasonal and organic food

And read the labels, then:

- Reduce your 'food miles'
- Avoid fish from uncertified or unsustainable stocks
- Avoid Genetically-Modified foods
- Avoid products tested on animals
- Avoid unethical products
- Buy certified 'green' products

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- Buy FSC-certified timber products
- Buy 'Ecolabel' (EU) products
- Avoid products containing chlorine (e.g. bleach)
- Shop at farmers' markets and support local breweries

6. At home

- A** Drink tap water rather than paying for bottled water
- A** Put lids on pans when cooking
- A** Cut down on the amount of meat products you eat

- B** Use eco-friendly products for redecoration

- C** Use ethical banks, insurers, pension funds etc.
- C** Use a charity credit card

7. Water Use

- A** Don't leave taps running
- A** Fit a water saver in your toilet cistern
- A** Flush the toilet less often

- B** Fix dripping taps
- B** Repair any leaks (and demand rapid action from your water company on leaks)

- C** Install dual flush or low flush toilets and spray taps
- C** Have a water meter fitted

8. In the Garden

- A** Avoid buying peat compost
- A** Use a watering can (not a hose or sprinkler) and water plants in the early morning or late evening

- B** Use natural methods of combating pests, and avoid pesticides
- B** Use native trees, plants and wildflowers

- C** Collect rainwater for watering pots and tubs
- C** Grow your own food and perhaps get an allotment

And...

- Don't use a fuel-powered lawnmower
- Use locally produced charcoal
- Plant drought-tolerant plants
- Use mulch in beds and borders

9. On holiday

- A** Avoid souvenirs made from endangered species
- A** Don't change your hotel towels daily
- A** Use local public transport rather than hiring a car

- C** Use travel agencies and companies that promote 'eco-tourism'
- C** Take holidays within the UK



9 Champions' support

9.1 Expenses

As a volunteer you are eligible to receive out-of-pocket expenses while being a champion.

Accommodation and meals	Usually pre-booked and paid for unless otherwise advised
Meals and Beverages	Can be claimed for during travel to an event
Child care	Can be claimed for the period of attending the training course and visiting groups to go through the EAC process
Travel costs	Can be claimed for public transport to and from the event. If you have to use your car we will pay a rate of 40 pence per mile

You will need to keep the receipts and fill in a simple claim form available from:

Community Champions Team, BTCV, Sedum House,
Mallard Way, Doncaster DN4 8DB. Tel: 01302 388 836
or e-mail everyactioncounts@btcv.org.uk

If you have any questions about your expenses, what can be claimed, or how to fill the form in, please contact the team.

9.2 Telephone support

It is likely that at some point the community group you are working with will come up with a question that you cannot answer. The first place to look is in this handbook and the EAC website; however, if you cannot find it try the Community Champions Team. If possible, they will find out for you; it may take a day or two, but they have the resources of 27 leading community and environmental organisations in this partnership, so should be able to come up with an answer from somewhere.

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We hope to put the most common questions on the website, so that would be the first place to look. If the query is very technical or you need advice on whether to do action A rather than action B, we may need more information, and then put you in direct touch with an expert.

I am sure that there will be some questions that have no satisfactory answer, but the world is not perfect.

9.3 Workshops

We will be organising workshops in your region to encourage Champions to come together and share your experiences. We are very keen to hear how you are finding the Champion role and if there is anything more we can do to help.

9.4 Newsletter

You will be receiving a monthly newsletter from the EAC team. To reduce environmental impact, it will be e-mailed to you. This will keep you up to date with the whole programme. Champions will have their own section, so there is a need for stories about your experiences. Remember, a shared experience could be just what another champion was looking for to help them with an issue they are dealing with.

9.5 Champions' safety guide

BTCV is dedicated to the personal safety of volunteers, and treats any act of aggression very seriously. Acts of violence, abuse, intimidation and robbery are rare, but they can happen. Therefore meeting members of the public and travelling to meetings presents a small but a possible risk to your personal safety. Please read this guidance, as we want you to stay safe.

Forward thinking

A bit of forward thinking can control or remove the risks you face, help you cope with the unexpected and prevent you from becoming a victim. Think about:

- What you are going to do if you miss the last bus home.

- What you need if you lose your purse or wallet.
- What to do if a person gets angry during a meeting.

This guidance should turn some of these thoughts into actions.

Comfort zone

When you are in your comfort zone, you feel safe. Stay in your comfort zone by avoiding things that make you feel unsafe. For example, you may not like using buses late at night, so use a taxi instead. By staying in your comfort zone you remain in control and alert to danger.

Carry the essentials – they are your survival kit

- Make sure your mobile phone is charged up and has plenty of credit.
- Keep valuables on you or close at hand
- If you are unsure where you are going, take a map or written directions
- Consider carrying a personal alarm and know how to use it.

In case your bag, wallet or phone get stolen or lost have an 'emergency pocket' containing what you need to get you home, for example:

- important phone numbers written down
- bus or train tickets
- keys
- some coins or a phone card to telephone for assistance.

Plan your journey

Know where you are going and how long it will take to get there and back again. Use reliable transport; if you are using your own car, make sure it is fuelled up, checked and safe to use. If using buses, trams or trains, check out the travel and departure times.

Leave travel and contact details with a friend, colleague or loved one; that way, if something goes wrong people know where to find you.

Reduce your 'victim profile'

Your victim profile is how vulnerable you look to a criminal and what rewards might be gained by robbing you! Taking a few simple steps to

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reduce your profile increases your chances of staying safe.

- Only take what you really need
- Avoid looking lost; if you are, walk confidently towards a local shop, street vendor or telephone box to ask directions or get your bearings
- After dark keep to well-lit places with lots of people
- If you think you are being followed, find a shop, café or pub and call the police
- Keep valuables hidden from view
- Avoid eye contact and talking to strangers on the street.

If someone grabs your bag, wallet or mobile phone, do not put up a struggle; your safety is worth far more than a few possessions.

Meeting the public

Meeting people is both rewarding and enjoyable; however, difficult situations can arise and you need to be on your guard. Avoid emotive subjects like race, religion, politics or sensitive local issues. Sometimes the most innocent of remarks can trigger an argument; give angry people plenty of space and time to vocalise their issues – they will quickly run out of steam.

If you disagree with someone's views you may wish to say so, but do not argue back as it will make things worse. Remember you are likely to be a guest so it may be wise to let some things go.

Try to arrange 'one to one' meetings in public places as this reduces the chances of abuse or false allegations being made against you.

Body language

If you are confronted by an angry person, think about your body language. Look confident; a person who looks confident is less likely to be attacked. Do not clench your fists, fold your arms or physically reach out towards them. Always maintain your personal space – it helps to keep you clear from an aggressor's prodding finger or worse.

Community Champions Personal Safety Checklist

A pull out checklist to stick in your diary or work book as a reminder

Your first duty is to yourself – your safety is worth far more than your possessions

Travel essentials

- Know where you're going and how long it will take
- Leave someone your travel and contact details
- Carry the essentials
- Have an 'emergency pocket'
- Keep valuables hidden from view
- Keep to well-lit places with lots of people
- Avoid contact with strangers on the street

Meeting the Public

- Arrange 'one to one' meetings in public places
- Avoid emotive subjects
- Give angry people plenty of space
- Do not argue back
- Think about your body language
- Maintain your personal space
- If offended or threatened, you can leave

Stay in your comfort zone

Report incidents to BTCV

Learn from events

Your duty to yourself

Everyone has different levels of tolerance regarding human behaviour and you have a duty to yourself to stay in your comfort zone, so if you are offended or threatened, you may decide to go home; it's your call, and BTCV will defend all reasonable behaviour. Always report to BTCV any incident where you have felt threatened or unsafe.

Learn from your mistakes

After a meeting, event or incident, see where you can avoid problems happening again, or think about repeating the things that worked well.

9.6 Building your skills

If you want to learn more about specific issues and develop your work there's a range of training you could do.

The Federation for Community Development Learning is part of the EAC consortium. They run a range of 'taster' courses – usually three-hour sessions on specific environmental issues – aimed at those working with community groups. See www.fcdl.org.uk.

If you are interested in the links between environment, poverty and social inclusion, Capacity Global (also involved in EAC) run training sessions on 'environmental justice' that can help you develop this work in your community. See www.capacity.org.uk for details. Capacity Global are also responsible for EAC's good practice case studies and would be keen to hear from you if you have a good local example for the EAC website.

The Environmental Trainers Network also offers a wide range of courses: get full details of these courses from www.btcv.org/training.

There are plenty of books. The case studies on www.everyactioncounts.org.uk will show you what works and how to contact the people who were involved. You cannot beat talking to people with experience to learn the key things to get right and how to avoid the pitfalls.

The part of learning that many people neglect is the quiet reflection on

what you have done and what you can do to change the parts of your performance you think you could do better.

9.7 Toolkit explained

We have selected the items in the toolkit carefully, paying particular attention to the source of the materials.

- The pen is made from recycled car parts
- The pencil is made from recycled CD cases
- The notebook is from recycled paper and board
- The badge is from recycled plastic cups
- The bag is jute
- The polo shirt is made from organic cotton and sourced from the first UK printing company to be awarded accreditation from the ECO 'Ethical Company Organisation'
- The games, presenter and this handbook are made from recycled paper



GAME 1

START

Not applicable

Not doing it yet

On the way to doing it

Doing it / done it

every action counts



How to use this game sheet

Game 1 - ...

Game 2 - ...

Game 3 - ...



10 Further information and useful addresses

10.1 Overall

There are plenty of sources of information on the individual issues (see sections below); for overall information you should look at:

The EAC website – everyactioncounts.org.uk – is the place to start for any Community Champion.

The Government Direct website now has a comprehensive section covering the environment. Much of it links to other websites so it's another good starting point when looking for ideas and information: www.direct.gov.uk/EnvironmentAndGreenerLiving

A Better Place to Live and ***Changing where you live*** are two guides to community action on the environment published by CDF, an EAC member. Much of this Champions' guide is based on the first edition of *A Better Place to Live*; a new version will be published later in 2007. See www.cdf.org.uk for publications information.

Environments for All – The BTCV Guide for Community Action www.btcv.org/handbooks. On-line version detailing lessons learnt from the Environments for All programme set up by BTCV to encourage and support people from all backgrounds to get involved in practical environmental action. The book is a useful mix of advice, information and illustrative examples. Hard copy version also available, price £15.99.

10.2 Climate change, energy waste and efficiency

Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE). This EAC member works on sustainable energy solutions that engage people and communities to meet real needs for both environmentally sound and affordable energy services. It also co-ordinates the free advice and information service for Community Action for Energy (see below).

E-mail: info@cse.org.uk www.cse.org.uk Tel: 0117 929 9950

Community Action for Energy (CAfE) is a national programme from the Energy Savings Trust to promote community-led or community-based sustainable energy projects and to provide a free advice and information service. Nearly 3000 individuals and groups are signed up to the free network. By joining, you can keep up to date with latest community initiatives, hear about funding opportunities, training sessions and other news from the network. For further information call the CAfE helpline on 08701 261 444, e-mail cafe@est.org.uk or check out www.est.org.uk/cafe.

Climate Outreach Information Network (COIN) works to educate and inform people about the impacts and challenges of climate change, and demonstrates the practical steps that people can take to reduce these impacts. They can offer advice on speakers, and run courses on how to speak in public on this issue. E-mail: info@coinnet.org or tel: 01865 727911.

Energy Savings Trust (EST) Government-backed initiative covering a range of energy efficiency and renewable energy programmes aimed at different target audiences. Its Save Your 20% advertising campaign is about creating a call to action to encourage us all to adopt multiple energy saving measures in our everyday lives to help combat climate change. www.saveyour20percent.co.uk Tel: 0800 512512

An example of a carbon calculator from EAC member Global Action plan can be found at www.carboncalculator.org.uk. This allows you to check progress on your carbon emissions after a few months of carrying out actions designed to reduce your impact. Other examples include Carbon Life CO₂ Lifestyle Calculator (www.bestfootforward.com/carbonlife.htm), Climate Care (www.climatecare.org) and the Centre for Alternative Technology's Carbon Gym (www.cat.org.uk).

I Count is the national 'umbrella' coalition of groups campaigning on climate change. Their website has a lot of useful information and ideas for action: www.icount.org.uk

10.3 Waste and recycling

Community Composting Network (CCN) Promoting and supporting community management and the use of waste biodegradable resources. Its membership reflects a wide diversity of projects from individuals or small groups working on allotments or promoting home composting, to social enterprises with local authority contracts providing kerbside collection services. Has free or low-cost information materials including the *Mucking-In Pack*, a joint initiative between CCN, Henry Doubleday Research Association, and the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts.
www.communitycompost.org

Community Recycling Network (CRN) promotes community-based sustainable waste management. The website can help you find your nearest community recycling project as well as giving guidance and advice to groups. www.crn.org.uk

Community Waste Information Centre is a new website that links you to everything you need to know about the community waste sector, including setting up and running projects, partnerships and key information sources. Partners include EAC member, the Community Recycling Network. www.communitywaste.org.uk

Freecycle is a voluntary international movement that promotes the reuse of items to reduce the amount going to landfill. You can advertise or request items via your local group – all you need is internet access. All items are free. Find you local group and sign up via www.freecycle.org.

Furniture Reuse Network (FRN) is the national body supporting charitable reuse organisations across the UK. Its work helps to reduce poverty by helping households in need to access furniture, white goods and other household items at affordable prices. Its website can help locate the nearest reuse network to you. www.frn.org.uk

WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) works in partnership, helping businesses and the general public to reduce waste, to use more recycled material, and to recycle things more often. The 'Recycle Now' campaign (www.recyclenow.com) is invaluable for anyone communicating the 'reduce, reuse, recycle' message or needing

information on recycling, composting and buying recycled goods.
WRAP Helpline: 0808 100 2040 www.wrap.org.uk and recyclenow.com

Waste Watch – On-line library containing a wealth of downloadable information sheets for community groups on waste reduction, reuse and recycling. www.wasteonline.org.uk

10.4 Care for where you live

ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England), an EAC member, promotes the interests of rural communities. It runs the National Village Hall Information Service and provides advice on parish maps. It has free downloadable information and briefings, but some material is available to members only. www.acre.org.uk

BTCV is the UK's leading environmental volunteering charity and is responsible for co-ordinating the Community Champions programme for EAC. Through its Community Network, BTCV supports several thousand local groups, providing access to discounts, insurance, funding information, training opportunities and advice. BTCV also runs many local volunteering events and activities open to the public, including Conservation Holidays and the BTCV Green Gym", which uses environmental volunteering as a way of helping people feel better and fitter. www.btcv.org Tel: 01302 388883 E-mail: information@btcv.org.uk

BTCV People's Places Award Scheme Although the award scheme is now closed, this website remains live as an inspiration and resource to other community groups wanting to make a difference within their local community. www.btcv.org/ppawards

Community Planning.Net, co-ordinated by the Royal Town Planning Institute, is an essential starting point for members of the public wanting to get involved in shaping their local environment. It explains the principles of community planning (how the system works), details good practice (how to participate) and provides case studies and links. communityplanning.net

ENCAMS Guide to Improving Your Local Environment explains local environmental quality of life issues including litter, dog-fouling,

10 Further information and useful addresses

graffiti and neighbourhood noise, and details who is responsible for what. It contains information about new powers available under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005.

www.encams.org/uploads/publications/mp_pack_2006.pdf.

Tel: 01942 612621

Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (FCFCG)

supports, advises and represents community-managed farm and garden projects in urban areas. It is a membership organisation. Most material is available in hard copy format only. Its *Community Garden Starter Pack* covers the complex issues that can arise when setting up or developing a community garden. Revised 2005, £6.00. They also offer a *City Farm Starter Pack* (£6.00) and a pack (aimed at schools and younger people) on how to develop and use a compost box (£7.50) Tel: 0117 923 1800

www.farmgarden.org.uk

GreenSpace promotes the regeneration of parks and public spaces.

Their Community Network is the first free support network for community groups and friends of groups who work within parks and green spaces across the whole of the UK. There are over 1900 members. Resources available include publications, downloadable 'how to' fact sheets, national register of groups and a Community Network newsletter. Note that funding is not available.

E-mail: community@green-space.org.uk or info@green-space.org.uk

Tel: 0118 946 9060 www.green-space.org.uk

Groundwork is a national network of locally-based trusts that run programmes in their area. Check www.groundwork.org.uk to see if there is one in your area.

The Groundwork Arts Toolkit is an Arts Council sponsored resource designed to provide inspiration, ideas and practical assistance to Groundwork staff (but applicable to others) seeking to use the arts within regeneration projects, and to artists who want to learn more about how Groundwork engages with the arts.

www.artandregeneration.com

10.5 Transport and access

Sustrans is the UK's leading sustainable transport charity working on practical projects allowing people more choice in ways to travel that benefit their health and the environment. For community groups there is a Liveable Neighbourhoods newsletter, on-line maps of the National Cycle Network, now over 10,000 miles, and a voluntary Rangers scheme. Its Safe Routes to School programme includes a toolkit on how to set up and run a scheme. www.sustrans.org.uk and www.saferoutestoschools.org.uk

Living Streets is promoting its Living Streets manifesto as part of a nationwide campaign to win back streets for all, not just cars. Information available includes a 'Check the Liveability ratings of your street' survey. There is a separate resource for those interested in Home Zones. www.livingstreets.org.uk and www.homezones.org

Transport 2000 co-ordinates the 'Streets for People' network that supports community groups and residents looking to create traffic-free neighbourhoods as well as traffic reduction initiatives for safer and healthier streets. www.transport2000.org.uk/communityaction/communityaction.asp

10.6 Shopping ethically

Ethical Consumer publishes a subscription magazine (available hard copy and on-line) and resources to champion fair trade and ethical living. www.ethicalconsumer.org and ethicscore.org

Fairtrade Foundation is responsible for awarding the Fairtrade mark to products in the UK, produces promotional materials for local groups, and co-ordinates the annual Fairtrade Fortnight. www.fairtrade.org.uk

GreenChoices is about the choices we make in our everyday lives to protect the environment. The website is an example of a resource that aims to empower individuals and groups with simple, direct information on green alternatives that make a difference. www.greenchoices.org

Local Food Works – This website is an informative electronic resource containing a comprehensive compendium of resources (cross-referenced), local schemes, case studies, ideas and signposting to other information sources. This is a partnership between the Soil Association and the Countryside Agency. www.localfoodworks.org

10.7 Keeping in touch

There's a lot of work being done on these issues and it's worth keeping in touch with new developments. There are plenty of electronic newsletters and information lists, and there are many local or regional lists. One useful national one is the UK Local Sustainability List, which links around 750 people working locally: to join this, send a blank e-mail to localsustuk-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

National news websites such as the BBC and the Guardian have rapid news and information systems. In many cases you can sign up to get updates on your selected issues.

Don't forget everyactioncounts@btcv.org.uk to let us know how you are getting on.

Photography acknowledgements

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