

# Every Action Counts...

for our board

**a guide to smart and  
sustainable governance**



# Foreword

Making our organisations more sustainable isn't just about the simple physical actions and the choices we make, like turning off a piece of electrical equipment or using a recycled product. It is also about delivering our values, responding creatively to change and planning for future opportunities and challenges.

All voluntary and community organisations need good governance to thrive and the way that we carry out our governance responsibilities can say a lot about the values of our organisation and how we live these on a day-to-day basis. So, if we are trying to make our organisations more sustainable then we also need to reflect this in the activities of our board.

This short guide offers a host of practical advice to help you weave sustainable actions through your existing governance processes and the activities of your board. It includes exercises, tips, checklists and, perhaps most valuable of all, direct experience from those who have done it themselves. It also recognises that becoming more sustainable in what we do is a learning process –

we can't expect to do everything at once, so we need to make realistic decisions about what we can do now, soon or later. The main thing is that we get started!

This guide is one of a series which looks at how we can build sustainable actions into the processes that make organisations tick – like events, finances and people management. We hope they all help you to make sure that every action counts in your own organisation.



Mark Walton,  
Head of Every Action Counts Programme

This guidance was written for Every Action Counts by Eleanor Pryde of bassac. It is the result of a thorough consultation process which was designed to produce guidance that is relevant and realistic for people working in the voluntary and community sector. To this end, a range of people from both national and local organisations came together for a facilitated discussion around a paper written by Tesse Akpeki. The discussion was facilitated by Steve Evison from Resources for Change and recorded by Natasha Roe of Red Pencil Projects. Comments, experiences and action points from the discussion were taken away and used to produce this final guidance.

## **bassac and Every Action Counts would like to thank the following people for their valuable contributions:**

Tesse Akpeki, Governance consultant  
Mike Barfield, Illustrations  
Steve Baylis, Bath Place  
Alan Bell, North Doncaster Development Trust  
Katherine Bryant, Groundwork UK  
Steve Evison, Resources for Change  
Jeremy Fennell, bassac  
Bernard Godding, Educational Centres Association  
Karen Heenan, Charity Trustees Network  
Ben Hughes, bassac

Taira Kayani, Burley Lodge Centre  
Danielle Mawdsley, Graphic Evidence  
Naya Naqvi, Thurrock CVS  
Mark Parker, bassac  
Jo Pearce, Every Action Counts  
Natasha Roe, Red Pencil Projects  
Lynn Tupling, Retford Action Centre  
Mark Walton, CDF  
Jude Winter, HCT Group

# Every Action Counts...

## for our board

As leaders and ambassadors, your board members play a pivotal role in influencing and promoting positive change and delivering the values of your organisation. After all, the board is responsible for the strategic development of your organisation in order to ensure its long term sustainability. It is also responsible for ensuring that your organisation develops in a way that reflects the needs of your local community and addresses the issues that local people face.

At the same time, you and your board members may be facing an uncertain future in the face of rising costs, hardship and shortages. As a result, your daily struggle with working towards organisational goals, not to mention limited resources of money and willing help, may be being challenged by new and worrying pressures. Any economic downturn highlights starkly the need for organisations and communities to be ready and able to respond to economic, environmental and social changes. Those that can adapt and find new, more sustainable ways of living and working will stand a better chance of sustaining their organisations and communities into the future.

Taking action is therefore urgent. In order to better the lives of those we support and make our organisations stronger, we all need to get smarter about sustainable development. Applying sustainable development to your organisation (leading to increased organisational sustainability) can help you to strengthen your organisation's values and develop new and creative ways to save money, generate income and foster external interest. Moreover, the Charity Commission's recent report 'Going Green: Charities and environmental responsibility' suggests that the public are more likely to offer support and investment to charities that take sustainable development seriously.

### Is our board delivering the values of our organisation?

Your organisation's mission and values may be based on a passion for equality and human rights, anger at discrimination and injustice, a determination to tackle poverty or an aspiration to build stronger communities and better lives. Yet, it is the vulnerable groups in society that are most affected by climate change and unequal access to limited natural resources. As the Third Sector Declaration on Climate Change states, "there is overwhelming evidence that the worst impacts of climate change constitute one of the greatest social, environmental and economic threats to society. Issues such as health, housing, transport, waste, food production and equality are completely linked with environmental conditions". So, there is much more work

that can be done in addressing the environmental as well as social and economic factors that impact on people's lives. You can harness the energy and commitment of your board, and use it to drive a new approach to delivering the values of your organisation – one that balances economic, social and environmental considerations.

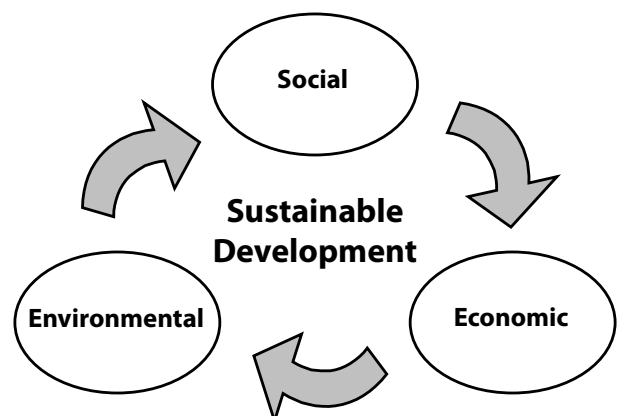
### What is the Third Sector Declaration on Climate Change?

The Declaration is a statement of intent from Third Sector organisations to tackle the issue of climate change by taking action in our organisations and in our communities.

Those that sign it believe that climate change will disproportionately affect the disadvantaged, poor and excluded and that the Third Sector has a central role in working with communities and government to promote sustainable development that delivers both environmental and social justice.

### What do we mean by sustainable development?

It is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (The Brundtland Report, Our Common Future, 1987). Sustainability is often described as the goal, while sustainable development is the journey, achieved by balancing economic, social and environmental aspects, as in the diagram below:



## Is this guidance for me?

This guidance is aimed at you if you are a Trustee or Management Committee Member or if you work with them – perhaps as a Chief Executive, staff member, volunteer or advisor. You will want to find new and creative ways of engaging with your mission and values, connecting with your communities and responding to the external pressures on your organisation.

## How can we make the actions of our board count?

As a group of individuals working together for a common aim, the people power of your board is substantial. Their collective action offers huge potential in leading the change not only within your organisation, but externally too, with your community, funders, local authority and local businesses. After all, the role of the board is twofold, influencing the actions that others can take internally to develop your organisation and providing influence externally as ambassadors.

There are a number of ways that your board can build the values of sustainable development into its practices. This guidance will focus on the following five key areas:

1. Practical actions
2. Vision, mission and strategy
3. Financial governance
4. Policy development
5. Recruiting, managing and developing board members

The guidance encourages you to start asking questions, but it does not give all the answers. It is up to you and your board to decide what you want to do, how much you can do and how best to put these things into practice. Your choices will probably vary depending on the size of your organisation, the resources you have available, whether you are rural or urban and whether you employ mostly volunteers or paid staff. The important thing to remember is be realistic! Start with simple actions and succeed at those, rather than setting yourself challenging targets which you can't meet because you don't have the resources, enthusiasm or support.

“ *I believe that as a community organisation we have a duty to try to protect our environment. After all, it has a direct impact on our service users. For us, fuel poverty is a huge local issue and we can't deny that there are environmental as well as social and economic causes and impacts of this. We want to set an example to people that use the centre and show others what is possible for a non-environmental charity to achieve. I think it sends out the right message about our values and I hope that now we have done the learning ourselves, we will be able to move forward and share that with others*

**Taira Kayani, Burley Lodge Centre** ”

## What are the Every Action Counts Themes?

Why not try using the following five themes to help structure your organisation's approach to sustainable development?

**Save energy** – save fuel and reduce energy bills

**Travel wisely** – travelling in ways to save money, save fuel and reduce carbon dioxide pollution

**Shop ethically** – buying local food which cuts transport pollution and supports local businesses. Fair Trade goods help producers and workers in some of the world's poorest countries

**Save resources** – saving waste and water

**Care for your area** – taking an interest in the local environment, protecting local wildlife and having a say on local plans affecting the area

## What do we need to consider when working with our board?

It is not the role of your board to get involved in operational detail and they will not have time to read through pages of information about sustainable development. However, it is important that your board supports this work and keeps an eye on progress both from a financial and strategic point of view. It can be helpful if the board is provided with short briefings including key points and hard evidence. Start by asking yourself the following questions:

- What research can we do before we introduce this issue at a board meeting?
- Can we work with others to achieve our aims? If so, who and how will this benefit us?
- How will we communicate our key messages to our board and the outside world?
- How can we deal with resistance?

N.B. It is worth noting that conflicting priorities may arise around certain issues so you and your board will benefit from being prepared for this. For example, your board may be tasked with providing a pension policy that is the best available for the organisation's staff. However, this duty may conflict with your board's decision to provide an ethical pension policy from a supplier with an environmentally and socially sound investment portfolio. The conflict itself is fine, but it would be helpful to have measures in place to help your board work through the pros and cons of the decisions they have to make.

'Changing for good: An EAC guide to sustainable planning' contains lots of ideas about developing a plan to address these issues, but in particular, you may want to think about the following things:

### **How can we get hard evidence for our board?**

One way of getting some hard evidence about what your organisation is currently doing is to carry out an environmental assessment. This will provide you with a baseline of current activity against which you can measure change and impact. As part of this process and depending on resources, you may want to consider energy efficiency tests. The EAC publications 'Your Community Building Counts' and 'Changing for Good: An EAC guide to sustainable planning' have more information about environmental assessments and how to include these in your planning processes. Having a succinct list of facts and figures will enable your board to better focus on where and how your organisation could shape its activities in this area and further its vision and mission.

### **How can we demonstrate costs and benefits to our board?**

If you are starting from scratch there are many environmental measures that you can take that cost very little or nothing at all. Some of them may even save you money in the long run, such as using energy saving light bulbs or printing double-sided. If you are further down the line, you may be considering a bigger capital spend, such as a new boiler. Listing the costs and benefits of spending in this area will help you to get clear picture about what you are facing. It will enable you to go to your board equipped with clear information about what savings can be made, what costs might be incurred and how any costs measure up against the short or long term benefits produced. You could try thinking about both costs and benefits in relation to economic, social and environmental factors.

### **Are there any sustainable development requirements for accounting and reporting?**

It will benefit you and your board to keep yourselves updated about changes to the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP). At the time of writing there is no obligation for charities to include environmental information in their annual report. However, this may change in the future and will therefore play an important part in encouraging good practice and increasing transparency in this area.

### **What perspective does our board have on procurement?**

What policies or procedures do you currently have in place around procurement? Would your board support a shift in your procurement to encompass decisions about economic, social and environmental impacts?

### **What funding is available for sustainable development?**

Funders are increasingly asking for evidence that sustainable development is being addressed by organisations, whether in tenders, competitive bids for funding or as an integral part of contractual obligations. How can you present this information to your board?

- The Environmental Funders Network [www.greenfunders.org](http://www.greenfunders.org) provides a list of UK funders that offer grants for sustainable development work. Some funders provide money for 'eco-audits' to help you carry out initial assessments.
- The Big Lottery Fund now aims to encourage and enable grant applicants to incorporate the principles of sustainable development into the design of their projects. Although this is not yet mandatory, it represents a significant shift in thinking. You can read the Big Lottery's 'Sustainability Assessment Guidance' on their website at: [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk).
- Local Authorities have targets that they need to meet in this area. Ask yourselves, what the local drivers are. How can you use your work around sustainable development to strengthen your relationship with your local authority? If you are helping your local authority to meet their targets at the same time as receiving funding for your own activities, you may be better placed to negotiate with your local authority on other issues.

### **What do the staff team need from our board?**

As well as providing succinct information for their board, it would be helpful for staff to be clear about what the board need to deliver. The board's role is to be strategic so you don't need to gain everyone's opinion about the pros and cons of recycling, but you do need to know whether the board will sanction certain expenditure.

“ *The government has set challenging targets for recycling and has passed these on to local authorities. Our Council therefore has responsibility to meet these. A project was set up by Thurrock CVS to collect good quality furniture from Thurrock households and pass it on to people on low incomes at a low cost or in cases of need for nothing at all. This not only helps local people, but is also assisting the Council in meeting their targets and we have found that it has helped to build our relationship with them as a result* ”

**Naya Naqvi, Thurrock CVS**

## 1. What practical actions can our board take?

There are a number of practical actions that your board can take to support the values of sustainable development. Have a look through the following list for some initial ideas for taking action. It is not an exhaustive list, but is aimed at

getting you started and you will probably come up with your own ideas too. And of course, the number of actions that you decide to do will depend on the size of your organisation and resources available.

“ We believe that the values of sustainable development are consistent with our mission and values and are congruent with other work we are undertaking. Seven out of our ten trustees were recruited as EAC Community Champions and are committed to improving their understanding of sustainable development as well as supporting staff in this area. One of the organisational changes that we have made is to adapt our Constitution, in dialogue with the Charity Commission, to allow us to use electronic communication for decision making. This enables

us to reach collective decisions more quickly and it is also sympathetic to the fact that our trustees live across Britain as it decreases the need for travel. We feel that it therefore reflects the values of sustainable development: reducing the carbon emissions produced by travelling to meetings, cutting down on printed documents, decreasing the time that trustees need to commit to attend meetings and decreasing the financial cost of holding meetings

**Bernard Godding, Chair, Educational Centres Association** ”



## Checklist...

### Travel

- How could we reduce the need for trustees to travel?
- Could we bring some board members into meetings via a conference call?
- Could we use a free video conferencing system such as Skype?
- Could we encourage several board members to travel together in one car?

During induction processes and ongoing board building processes, board members coming from the same direction could be put in touch with each other. As well as helping to reduce environmental impact, this is a great way of building relationships between your board members. Perhaps you could provide guidance to board members about travelling more wisely to help cut carbon emissions as well as fuel bills.

### Meeting agenda

- How can trustees and especially Chairs who set the agenda find ways to include sustainable development?
- How can we ensure that sustainable development issues mesh with other board business?
- Could we consider the social, economic and environmental aspects of each piece of business?

N.B. You may find it helpful to refer to 'Lost in translation: A complete guide to Chair/Chief Executive partnerships'. (See Section 7) It stresses the importance of the Chair and Chief Executive taking a leading role in framing issues and raising the awareness of potential future opportunities and risks for the organisation.

### Board information

The way that information is presented to the board should help to reinforce the importance of considering, discussing and making decisions in relation to sustainable development.

- How can we ensure that information provided to the board is framed in a way that makes relevant links between economic, social and environmental aspects of our work?
- Could we draw on findings in the nef/Oxfam report, or the Charity Commission's report (See Section 7 for links to these reports) to reinforce our message?
- How does sustainable development link with our organisation's mission and vision?
- Are we able to connect this with the information we provide to the board?

### Board papers

- Could we consider sending papers via email to reduce the bulk of board papers?
- If we need to print board papers can we ensure they are double sided, with reduced margins and two pages per sheet (people's eyesight allowing)?
- If our budget allows, could we print board papers on recycled paper?
- Can we store board papers electronically rather than in paper form?

### The board room

- Where do we hold our board meetings?
- What refreshments do we provide? Are they ethically sourced? Take a look at 'Every Action Counts...for our event' for more ideas in this area.



## 2. How can we use the values of sustainable development to strengthen our vision, mission and strategy?

The vision, mission and strategy of your organisation provide its backbone and give you a clear sense what it needs to achieve to thrive. You will probably already be familiar with reviewing the vision, mission and strategy and their relevance, in light of changes in your community, society and even the world as a whole! After all, there is growing evidence that links peoples' economic, social and environmental experiences to their quality of life and this is something that concerns all of us working with our local communities.

For example, there is emerging research that connects levels of crime not just to economic and social circumstances, but

to the condition of local environments: the more vegetation in an area, the lower the levels of crime as well as fear of crime. Likewise, the relationship between people's health and their environment is well known, with respiratory diseases linked to pollution and damp environments and lack of knowledge about and access to good quality fresh food linked to obesity. (See Section 7 for links to this research).

If your board has not previously thought about sustainable development in relation to your organisation's vision, mission and strategy, you may find it helpful to ask the following questions:

### Checklist...

#### The vision

- What is the leadership's vision for a changed world, and how does being a trustee /Chief Executive in this organisation move that vision forward?
- What do the people we serve need us to be doing?
- Beyond services and outputs, what principles and values does our organisation stand for?
- Do we understand the impact of sustainable development on our organisation and on our ability to carry out our strategy?
- Are we integrating all three aspects of sustainable development in our vision?
- Is this board showing the way as a leader in the community and, if yes, how?

### Checklist...

#### The mission

- How does our mission reflect the values of sustainable development?
- Is taking action on sustainable development in the best interests of our charity? (See Section 6 for more information about legal considerations).
- How can we demonstrate the link between our activities and their economic, social and environmental impact? Even for non-environmental organisations, the impact of pollution, lack of access to affordable public transport, rising fuel prices and flooding, is great for many of those we support.
- How does sustainable development impact on the reputation of our organisation and our ability to fulfil its mission?

### Exercise

It is important for your board to get a convincing sense of what sustainable development means for the whole organisation and it must also have a platform to explore gaps in existing provision and to identify where new expertise is needed. In order to understand the economic, social and environmental impact of your organisation's work try the following exercise, perhaps at a board away day.

1. Choose one of your programmes or projects and take a thorough outline of this to your board meeting.

2. Depending on the size of your board, split everyone into two or three groups with no more than six people in each.

3. Ask each group to create a list of the economic, social and environmental impacts of the project and to consider how your organisation mitigates, manages or celebrates these.

4. Once these lists have been created, ask each group to feed back to the whole board. Encourage discussion about whether these three aspects of sustainable development are in balance and, if not, what could be done to make them so.

“ We have environmental statements in our mission because the charity was originally established to serve former coal mining communities in North Doncaster. The environmental impact of mining was huge, and part of our original remit was to assist community projects which looked to reclaim the old slag heaps to provide sites for recreational activity. The environment and nature are

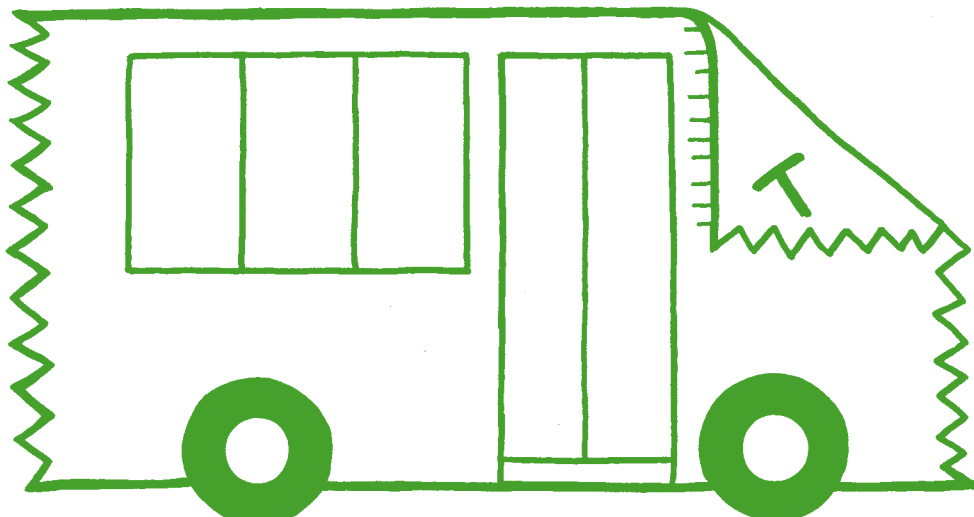
therefore really important to the area we work in and they have created an important linkage to other work that we do. So, for example, we have a community transport scheme, Kick Start, where local people can hire scooters to get them to work. This saves them money, provides social cohesion as well as having environmental benefits due to lower carbon emissions

**Alan Bell, North Doncaster Development Trust** ”

## ✓ Checklist...

### The strategy

- How could consideration of economic, social and environmental factors strengthen our decisions about future strategy?
- Are staff and trustees partners in the development of our strategy?
- Is there a good level of information sharing between staff and trustees? Does the engagement between them draw out the necessary links and lessons?
- What longer term opportunities does our organisation gain by factoring in economic, social and environmental values?
- How can we build sustainable development into our risk management framework? What economic, social and environmental factors do we already have in our risk assessment?
- How does our strategy tackle the question of how our organisation is going to address the economic, social and environmental concerns and challenges confronting it?
- Could we develop a sustainable development action plan (SDAP)? Take a look at the Every Action Counts publication 'Changing for Good: An EAC guide to sustainable planning' for more ideas and information on how to approach this. The publication includes a sample action plan which helps you log the practical things you need to do.
- Do we use PQASSO for improving the quality of our organisation? If so, the latest edition now includes criteria around environmental as well as social and economic performance. How can we use a tool like this to help structure our approach to sustainable development?
- How do the five Every Action Counts themes impact on the strategy of our organisation? Could we use them to provide a framework for developing a strategy?



## Building sustainable development into your risk assessment

A risk assessment is vital for planning ahead and sustaining your organisation through good times and bad, so that you can continue to provide a service to people in your community. You therefore probably already have one in place. How can you build economic, social and environmental risks into your risk assessment?

**Social** – changes to the local population, public perception,

changes to political environment, changes in use of your service by local people, complaints.

**Economic** – accuracy and timeliness of reporting, diversity of funding, adequacy of reserves and cash flow, fraud.

**Environmental** – potential for flood damage or other extreme weather events, changes to your area such as planning applications for new buildings or roads.

### Exercise

Try using a simple SWOT analysis to help you to consider how you can build economic, social and environmental

factors into the strategy of your organisation. You could expand on this to include potential costs for each action.

	Helpful To achieving the objective	Harmful To achieving the objective
Internal Origin Attributes of the organisation	Strengths	Weaknesses
External Origin Attributes of the environment	Opportunities	Threats



### 3. How can we build the values of sustainable development into our financial governance?

Your board has a vital role to play in ensuring that the finances of your organisation remain stable and sound. But finances are not just about economics. Social and environmental factors can have an impact on them too and the way that your organisation responds to these impacts will be vital in

sustaining it into the future. For more information you might like to try 'Every Action Counts...for our finances', which has a wealth of ideas about how to build the values of sustainable development into your financial processes. For now, you could start by asking yourselves the questions below:

#### Checklist...

- Where does our funding come from? How are the values of sustainable development reflected in the way that we source our income and is this important to us?
- Where do we invest our funding?
- How do we decide what funding we need and how do we then use it? How can we ensure that we don't 'drift' from our mission?
- How do we currently report on the ways in which we have used our funding? Could we strengthen our reporting by including information about our economic, social and environmental impact?
- How can we measure evidence of economic, social and environmental impact? Could we encourage feed back from staff or volunteers on developments relating to our building? (Try The Carbon Trust at [www.carbontrust.co.uk](http://www.carbontrust.co.uk) or the Carbon Neutral Company at [www.carbonneutral.com](http://www.carbonneutral.com) for more information about how to measure environmental impact, and the nef publications on Triple Bottom Line reporting for information on how to measure economic, social and environmental impact together – see Section 7).
- Can we add weight to our funding applications by including information about our work around sustainable development?
- If we are refurbishing our building or building a new one, how can we build the values of sustainable development into the planning of this? How can we ensure that our building's environmental impact is balanced with its social and economic one?
- How will we balance additional costs of any environmental measures that we take against other factors such as benefits to our reputation, donor confidence and support to those we serve?

#### What is Triple Bottom Line (TPL) reporting?

It is reporting that moves beyond a purely financial bottom line to also consider a social and environmental one. In other words it encourages organisations to review their economic, social and environmental value together and to make the most of these to fulfil their vision and mission.

There are a number of different approaches to TPL depending on the size of your organisation and resources available. Even if you don't have the resources to carry out full triple bottom line reporting, you may find that it gives you some ideas about how to begin and where you might like to head for.

Try the following nef publications for information about Triple Bottom Line reporting: 'Proving and Improving: a quality and impact toolkit for social enterprise' or 'Measuring Value: a guide to Social Return on Investment (SROI)'. Both are available on the nef website at [www.neweconomics.org](http://www.neweconomics.org). John Elkington (the person who coined the term 'Triple Bottom Line') also has a website with a variety of resources on it: [www.johnelkington.com](http://www.johnelkington.com)

“ We run a range of programmes that have an environmental as well as a social and economic angle. We think that the values of sustainable development are really important because they fit with the ethos of the work we do, so we are informed by and draw on this in our funding channels and applications. We have run a vegetarian café for our community for several years and recently received funding to run a 'Kiddie Cafe' or 'Grub Club'. The aim of the Kiddie Cafe is not just to provide good quality food at affordable prices to local people, but also to teach young people about healthy eating and the benefits of buying locally. It also provides them with a wide range of skills and training around social enterprise which they can draw on in the future

**Steve Baylis, Bath Place**

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## 4. How can we build the values of sustainable development into our policy development?

In partnership with staff, your board plays a key role in approving and supporting policies that strengthen the work of your organisation. It also ensures that decisions are made that will sustain your organisation in the long term. Your board is therefore in a prime position to help build the values of sustainable development into policy making, ensuring that economic, social and environmental concerns are all taken into account.

For more ideas about how to begin building sustainable development into your organisation's policies and procedures, particularly those relating to the people that work and volunteer for you, try 'Every Action Counts...for our people management'.

### Try this...

Policies that enable people to work from home not only have a social impact (allowing staff to juggle work with other responsibilities such as picking up children from school) and an economic impact (mitigating the cost of travelling to work) but they also have an environmental impact in reducing carbon emissions produced by car or rail travel.

“ *We haven't set up new policies to reflect what we do, but rather have tried to reflect what we do in our existing policies. We have recently established a new governance structure which has created regional sub boards as well as our national board. The regional sub boards make local decisions based on local need about how we reinvest our profits and we have taken the decision to audit the local investment that comes from our commercial work. In particular, we measure the social, economic and environmental value of local projects and we have produced guidelines for our sub boards on how to build these criteria into their investment decisions. We are still learning because this is a new model, but we are confident that it will help us to become more robust and accountable*

**Jude Winter, HCT Group**

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### ✓ Checklist...

For other policies, try asking yourself the following questions:

- What policies do we currently have and how often do we review them?
- How could we build the values of sustainable development into our organisation's policies?
- Could we develop a Health, Safety and Environment policy instead of a traditional Health and Safety one? Or a Sustainable Development policy?
- How can we use our commitment to sustainable development to encourage new users, volunteers, trustees and staff?
- What policies do we currently have around purchasing? Could we encourage something to be built in around ethical purchasing, for example locally sourced or Fair Trade? How about switching to a 'Green' Energy supplier?
- How are our learning and development policies structured? How can we adapt them to equip front-line staff, volunteers and trustees with the understanding, awareness, leadership and skills to take actions around sustainable development?
- How will we review whether our policies are actually encouraging a change in practice?

### Exercise

Try the following exercise for a bit of awareness-raising with your board. You can adapt the exercise depending on the number of board members you have.

1. Choose two or three key policies that affect the running of your organisation (your board won't have the time to review every existing policy so setting an achievable target such as two or three will help to make sure that this exercise is successful!)
2. Distribute the policies between members of the board.
3. Ask the board members responsible to read through the policies and identify 3 or more areas where the values of sustainable development could be incorporated.

## 5. How can we apply sustainable development when recruiting, managing and developing our board?

Recruiting and retaining committed and active trustees from a range of age groups and backgrounds is vital in providing your organisation with stable leadership and enabling it to develop. It may be worth considering therefore, how you can incorporate sustainable development into the way that

you recruit, manage and develop your board. Can you use an emphasis on the values of sustainable development to help you attract a new and younger generation of trustees who are concerned about the environmental, as well as social and economic, impacts of their work?

### Exercise

As a board, think about the following question: What attracts people to your organisation, either as trustees, staff or volunteers?

Social reasons

Economic reasons

Environmental reasons

Are these three areas in balance? How can you adjust the balance to attract more people?



## Checklist...

### **Board role descriptions and person specification**

- Could we update our role descriptions for board members, the Chair and honorary officers to reflect the values of sustainable development? See 'Every Action Counts...for our people management' for more ideas in this area.

### **Board induction and training**

- Could we hold a quiz for new trustees, focussing on sustainable development and its link with the work of our organisation?
- If we have a board manual, how could we build economic, social and environmental concerns into it?
- How much of our board manual needs to be printed and how much could be stored electronically with internet or intranet links when required?
- Could we include a 'sustainable development induction' as part of the board induction? This could help to raise awareness of the organisation's internal procedures and sustainable development practices.

### **Ongoing board development and training**

- Could we go back to basics and find practical ways of linking sustainable development with leadership, trusteeship and strategy development? Some examples of resources can be found Section 7.

### **Board awareness**

- Could we invite a speaker who is knowledgeable about sustainable development to a board event or meeting? Perhaps the speaker could be from another local organisation that has successfully begun building sustainable development into their mission, strategy, policy and board development.
- Can we use some of the exercises in this guide to raise awareness?

### **Building the board**

- How could we use the theme of sustainable development to creatively encourage our board to support the issues whilst also getting to know each other better?
- Could we host a meal using local food or a Fair Trade tasting session?

### **Developing sustainable development themes - reviewing performance**

- How can our board explore the ways in which economic, social and environmental activity could further the charity's objects?
- Has our board considered including economic, social and environmental aspects in their risk assessment?

### **Board away day**

- Can this be organised to explore issues around sustainable development?

The away day could include financial information, facts, figures and research and evidence which dispels myths and shows sustainable development as a 'must do'.



## Outside the boardroom and inside the organisation

### Checklist...

#### **Working with the Chief Executive, the senior management team, staff and volunteers**

Your board has a role in supporting the management team to deliver the social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable development.

- How can we ensure that trustees, staff and volunteers reach agreement about the best ways of working together and identify how to achieve positive results?  
'Changing for good: An EAC guide to sustainable planning' has a range of ideas for communicating messages and dealing with resistance.
- Could our board appoint one of its members as a 'sustainability champion' who would be responsible for liaising with staff and volunteers and feeding back to the board as a whole?
- Could we invite a board member to join our Green team, if we have one?
- Can we encourage use of e-mail or the internet when possible to communicate and where possible cut down on the need for paper?
- Annual General Meetings (AGMs) present an ideal platform to promote your organisation's values around sustainable development. How can we ensure that the venue we choose for our AGM reflects our values?  
Try 'Every Action Counts...for our event' for ideas in this area.
- Can we use the AGM as a 'show and tell' of what we have achieved and why sustainable development is important to our organisation?

## Be the change, lead the change - the ambassadorial role of trustees

### Checklist...

#### **Promoting sustainable development**

- How could our board support the work of our organisation in promoting sustainable development?  
Promotion could include raising awareness of staff and volunteers within the organisation, as well as supporting other organisations involved in building the values of sustainable development into their vision and practices.

#### **Knowledge and information sharing**

- Sustainable development is an area where organisations can learn from each other. There is huge potential to share knowledge, perspectives, experiences and practices for mutual benefit, even if your organisations operate in different fields.

#### **Collaborating with others**

- Members, service users, volunteers and voluntary and community sector organisations: how can our board utilise its ambassadorial role to forge alliances and work together with others, not just within the sector but more widely with civil society, regulators, central and local government?

“ I have to admit that I have taken the lead in encouraging Retford Action Centre to take action around sustainable development. At home I shop ethically, source local food and recycle, but part of my motivation also came from being a trustee at bassac – when I saw what they were doing to make their building more sustainable I thought perhaps that's not so hard after all and I started putting some of the ideas into practice here. Our organisation's ethos is to find local solutions to local problems, so we provide a local transport service, buy locally sourced food, use a local business for our recycled paper and we back the local Fair Trade movement. It just feels like the right thing to do – it fits with our values and is therefore at the heart of what we are about  
**Lynn Tupling, Retford Action Centre** ”

## 6. What does the law state?

Your board must consider its legal responsibilities that relate to sustainable development. Key areas are listed below in brief, but for up to date information contact the Charity Commission at: [www.charity-commission.gov.uk](http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk) or Companies House at: [www.companieshouse.gov.uk](http://www.companieshouse.gov.uk).

Environmental activity became a charitable purpose when the Charities Act 2006 came into force in 2008. The Charity Commission encourages and supports charities to take environmental responsibility and to carry out environmental activity consistent with their purposes and to consider the development of environmentally sustainable practices wherever possible as a way of maximising their effectiveness.

Charities may carry out environmental activity either:  
Directly as part of their charitable purposes: These charities are established purely for environmental purposes.

OR

Indirectly: Not specifically environmental charities, but with environmental themes at the core of the work. They demonstrate environmental sustainability through the way they run themselves or where environmental themes enhance their purposes and further existing legal objects. The main purposes may be unconnected with environmental issues.

The Local Communities Sustainability Bill is aimed at simplifying the planning session. The Government has indicated a commitment to make environment protection an important consideration at all stages of the planning process and emphasises the role of sustainable development.

Your board will need to decide which activities best further your organisation's objects. (The Charity Commission can provide advice and guidance to trustees who are unsure or are in any doubt about what the charity can or cannot do in terms of environmental projects under charity law. Your organisation may need to change its objects if it wants to adopt an additional environmental-related object.)

Unincorporated charities are likely to require a Scheme from the Charity Commission in order to change their objects and would need to satisfy the 'cy-pres' test under section 13 of the Charities Act 1993. Charitable Companies must apply to the Charity Commission for consent to amend their objects under section 64 of the Charities Act 1993.

Section 172 (1) (d) of the Companies Act 2006 introduced a new environmental duty of Directors. Directors of charitable companies are required to act in a way that they consider to be the most likely to achieve their organisation's charitable purposes. They must have regard to the impact of the company's operation on the community and the environment.

The Energy Performance and Buildings (Certificates and Inspections) (England and Wales) Regulations 2007 SI2007/91 – all buildings require an Energy Performance Certificate whenever they are built, sold or rented out. The Certificate shows how efficient a building is.



## 7. Where can we find out more?

### Building Awareness and Education

Changing for Good: an EAC guide to sustainable planning (Every Action Counts, 2009)

[www.everyactioncounts.org.uk](http://www.everyactioncounts.org.uk)

Changing the way we work: An Every Action Counts guide to greening your office (2008)

[www.everyactioncounts.org.uk/guides](http://www.everyactioncounts.org.uk/guides)

Climate Change and Resource Scarcity: A discussion paper for non-environmental civil society groups (2008)

<http://democracy.carnegieuktrust.org.uk>

Environment and Crime in the Inner City (F.E. Kuo & W.C. Sullivan, Environment and Behaviour Vol. 33, No. 3, 343-367, 2001)

<http://eab.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/33/3/343>

Every Action Counts...for our event (2009)

[www.everyactioncounts.org.uk/guides](http://www.everyactioncounts.org.uk/guides)

Every Action Counts...for our finances (forthcoming)

[www.everyactioncounts.org.uk/guides](http://www.everyactioncounts.org.uk/guides)

Every Action Counts...for our people management (2009)

[www.everyactioncounts.org.uk/guides](http://www.everyactioncounts.org.uk/guides)

Environmental Management Systems (Every Action Counts, 2008)

[www.everyactioncounts.org.uk/information](http://www.everyactioncounts.org.uk/information)

Going Green, Charities and Environmental Responsibility (Charity Commission, 2008)

[www.charitycommission.gov.uk](http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk)

Physical Environment and Crime (National Centre for Justice Research, 1996)

[www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/physenv.pdf](http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/physenv.pdf)

PQASSO (Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations) 3rd Edition (Charities Evaluation Services, 2008)

[www.ces-vol.org.uk](http://www.ces-vol.org.uk)

Promoting and Supporting Fair Trade (Every Action Counts, 2008)

[www.everyactioncounts.org.uk/information](http://www.everyactioncounts.org.uk/information)

Sustainability in Practice: measuring and reporting (Charity Finance Directors Group, forthcoming, 2009)

[www.cfdg.org.uk](http://www.cfdg.org.uk)

Tackling climate change, reducing poverty: The first report of the Roundtable on Climate Change and Poverty in the UK (nef, with contributions from members of the Roundtable on Climate Change and Poverty in the UK, 2009)

[www.bassac.org.uk](http://www.bassac.org.uk)

The New Politics of Climate Change: why we are failing and how we will succeed (Green Alliance, 2008)

[www.green-alliance.org.uk](http://www.green-alliance.org.uk)

The Sustainability Challenge: Implications for chief executives in the third sector (ACEVO, 2009)

[www.acevo.org.uk](http://www.acevo.org.uk)

Your Community Building Counts: Helping community buildings lead the way to a better future (2008)

[www.everyactioncounts.org.uk/guides](http://www.everyactioncounts.org.uk/guides)

What has all this got to do with us? An introduction to Environmental Issues for Trustees (Every Action Counts, 2008)

[www.everyactioncounts.org.uk](http://www.everyactioncounts.org.uk)

### Board development

Good Governance: Code for the Voluntary and Community Sector

The Good Trustee Guide (Fifth edition, Peter Dyer, NCVO 2008)

The Strategic Board: The step-by-step guide to High Impact Governance (Mark Light, Wiley Nonprofit series, 2001)

Codes of Conduct for Trustees: Developing and using trustee codes of conduct (Claire Farmer, CTN 2008)

Lost in translation: A complete guide to Chair/Chief Executive partnerships (Tesse Akpeki, NCVO, 2006)

Ecosystem Leadership Style (Shayne Hughes & Dr Jennifer Crocker; the article appears on

<http://learnaslead.com/programs/ecosystemLeader.htm>

### Tools

For organisational/behaviour change models and techniques, try the following:

Management Help

[http://managementhelp.org/org\\_chng/org\\_chng.htm](http://managementhelp.org/org_chng/org_chng.htm)

Entarga

[www.entarga.com/orgchange/resources.htm](http://www.entarga.com/orgchange/resources.htm)

NCVO

[www.strategy-impact.org.uk/page.asp?id=1502](http://www.strategy-impact.org.uk/page.asp?id=1502)

If you want information, help or advice about how to work together, try the Collaboration Benefits programme at:

[www.bassac.org.uk/collaboration](http://www.bassac.org.uk/collaboration)





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