



Get further hints and tips to reduce your impact on the environment and commit your organisation to action on climate change! Sign the Third Sector Declaration at www.everyactioncounts.org.uk/declaration

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Without **Heroes**,
we are all plain people, and
don't know how far we can go

Inspirational stories from the Every Action Counts programme

Introduction



Mark Walton
Head of Every Action
Counts Programme

When we started out on Every Action Counts in 2006 we were excited at the coalition of national voluntary and community organisations from across the social and environmental sectors coming together in a new and unique partnership to tackle the issue of sustainable development.

As we approach the end of the programme, and look back at what it has achieved, we can point to real and lasting changes in the practice of many of those 29 national partners as well as over 2000 local community groups who have registered on

the website, and many more who have received information and resources to help them become more sustainable. We can be proud of the Third Sector Declaration on Climate Change which has over 200 signatories and is recognised by the sector and by Government as a key tool to driving change on this issue. We can celebrate the individuals and community workers who have been trained to support others in their

Front cover quote: Bernard Malamud

communities to take action to save energy, travel wisely, save resources, shop ethically and care for their local areas.

But most of all we should acknowledge and celebrate the often overlooked contribution of the individuals with the energy, drive and commitment to make change happen. That's why we've produced the Every Action Counts 'Heroes' book. Of course it is not possible to name check every individual who has contributed to the programme or who embodies the change that we all want to see in our communities to make them fairer, healthier and more sustainable. However, we believe in the power of individual stories to inspire and encourage others.

The people profiled here all make every action count in their organisations and their communities. They've inspired us during the past two and half years. As the programme draws to a close we want to say thank you to them and we hope their stories will also inspire you to be the change, to lead the change and to make every action count in your community.

Be the change, lead the change because every action counts.

Dr Rennie Johnston

Dr Rennie Johnston is a Consultant in Lifelong Learning and Community Research, based in Southampton. Rennie is originally from Scotland but has lived and worked abroad. His background is in academia and he became involved in the Federation for Community Development Learning (FCDL) after attending a conference.

"I wanted to do something about climate change, so I read up about it and wrote some papers." Rennie decided to combine these two interests and offer some training to FCDL. He did some initial training to deliver FCDL materials and conducted a one-day workshop on 'community and sustainable development' with the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) in South Wales, where he used both FCDL and EAC materials.

At the workshop, Rennie gave an initial talk on how to engage with sustainable development issues in communities. The participants were development workers and tutors plus one active environmentalist from Glamorgan University.

"We looked at different materials including some of FCDL's taster materials." The WEA found the



materials very helpful, particularly in trying to work out what they should do as an organisation.

The second part of the day was devoted to working out an Action Plan for the group. This took in issues such as working with groups and collective organisational behaviour.

Rennie says: "When teaching sustainable development, my experience tells me that local people, groups and communities need to address the questions for themselves and own the problems and possible solutions that emerge."

On the home front, Rennie has tried to cut his carbon footprint by recycling, reducing emissions through better insulation and travelling more wisely, using the car less often. He has to travel abroad frequently for work and likes to take foreign holidays. However, he admits to using aeroplanes too often. "I'm very conscious of this and am trying to take my holidays by train."

Ruth Gordon

Ruth Gordon lives in Norwich and works part-time as a childminder and also in a co-operative. She recently trained as a Community Champion. She says: "I really enjoyed the training and met some really nice people. We did lots of exercises and practised presentations on subjects such as climate change and sustainable transport."

At the beginning of the year, Ruth organised her first session with a community group. In fact it was the church in Kent, where her mother is the priest. The church is in the process of trying to gain eco-church status. There were five people in the session who were all very enthusiastic. Ruth took them through the Community Champions Decider game. "They enjoyed that and looked at how they could plan some activities in the local community." There were some important things to consider such as the listed status of the building, which precluded insulation.

The group has already made changes such as taking the mothers' group to a weekly farmers' market, providing a place to park bicycles to encourage people to cycle to church and encouraging more wildlife



with nest boxes in a section of the churchyard. Other plans include installing a dustbin for non-compostable waste and encouraging car-sharing for those who can't cycle.

The group also reviewed what they are already doing and decided to publicise their activities in the parish magazine.

The church already uses recycled paper for printing and recycles the paper it uses. They also use real mugs rather than disposable ones and are gradually replacing light bulbs with low-energy alternatives where possible.

Ruth is now keen to work with other groups. Her tips for other people thinking about running a session include making sure the group isn't too large and that the training is fun.

For information on the church group, visit: www.sealpeterandpaul.com

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Judy Best

Judy Best is an Energy Adviser, working for the charity, National Energy Action (NEA). NEA develops and promotes energy efficiency services to tackle the heating and insulation problems of low-income households. It works in partnership with central and local government, utility companies, housing providers, health services and consumer organisations. NEA aims to eradicate fuel poverty and campaigns for greater investment in energy efficiency to help those who are poor or vulnerable.

NEA has its headquarters in Newcastle upon Tyne and currently operates 20 projects at 10 offices in England and Wales. Judy's job fits with three of the Every Action Counts aims, namely: Save Energy, Save Our Resources, and Care For Your Area. Her work includes helping people throughout Coventry to save money and energy in their homes through grants for insulation and heating measures. She also gives advice on a one-to-one basis, as well as presentations and talks in the community. If people have debts with the fuel suppliers, she negotiates a payment plan to suit the client's needs.

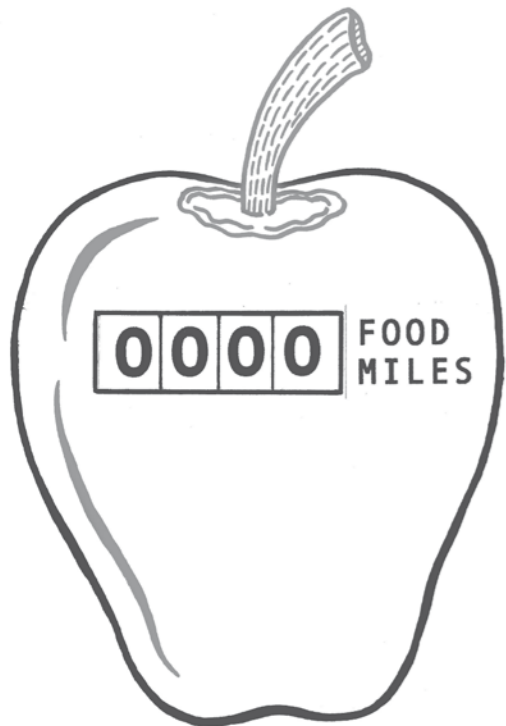
She says she finds her job very satisfying "as a result of what I do I think that people are warmer

and healthier in their homes and can inform family and friends of grants available".

Judy jokes: "I am known as 'the light bulb lady'. Most people we help pass on our details to others and sing our praises." However, she is aware that there are others whose opinions you have to chip away at slowly and there are some who do not want to take advice or think they know it all already.

She adds: "You need perseverance and patience when dealing with people in the community."





Trevor Jennings

Trevor Jennings is a trained Every Action Counts Champion living in the South of England. He is a Health and Safety Manager with a professional interest in environmental issues.

Where were you born? What did your parents do?

I was born in Chessington in Surrey, where my father ran a butchers shop. My two brothers still run it today. After leaving school I joined the Ambulance Service and trained as a paramedic, then as a trainer and finally as a senior manager. My career then led me into senior positions in Health and Safety for a number of public sector organisations. Currently I work with the Metropolitan Police.

How did you get involved in environmental issues and Every Action Counts?

I am doing an MSc in Occupational Health and Safety and Environmental Management at Portsmouth University. One part of my course relates to environmental issues and that led me through my research to Every Action Counts. I saw the Champions course in my area and thought, 'This sounds really good.'

The Community Champions course is a simple approach that offers five areas and five cards (the Decider Game) and asks you to pick out two which you think are important. It puts into people's minds that every action does count!

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Tell us how you have taken the Every Action Counts message out to a wider audience.

I am a member of the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH), which is where I have most recently put my EAC training into practice. Health and safety and environmental management are not a million miles away. H & S legislation applies to all workplaces, while currently environmental legislation does not apply to all. If we can drive forward the fact that the environment is really an issue without putting fear into people, then we can make a difference.

Clearly there is environmental legislation about waste, which is completely ignored by some people who just dump things. This has links to health and safety and to the environment.

How have you used the Every Action Counts material and what impact have they had?

In IOSH, we have an environmental specialist group and also local branches. Recently I did a presentation to the IOSH South Downs branch of which I am a committee member. I wanted to give a presentation to the group that looked at

environmental issues. I used materials from my assignment on climate change and got a debate going.

I asked them, 'How big an issue is it for you?' I looked at environmental systems and what the Environmental Management System (EMS) is all about. The first part of the meeting was business orientated. The second part got people talking. I split the cards from the EAC Decider Game 50:50 and got each row of ten people to choose two actions they would do. They really enjoyed it because it got them talking and discussing amongst themselves.

What does the future hold for you?

I want to write an article for Safety and Health Practitioner (SHP) magazine around environmental issues. I also want to get involved in community groups to sow a few seeds. If you go in all guns blazing, then people just get frightened. It is important to not just put jurisdiction on people to make them do things. You have to get the message across: We've got to look after our one planet because we haven't got three!

www.iosh.co.uk

Ken Elkes

Ken Elkes is the Information Worker at Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens

Where were you born?

Shrewsbury in Shropshire.

What did your parents do?

Nothing vaguely environmental. My mum was a housewife and my father a storesman at a Young Offender Institution.

What is your working background?

Mainly journalism. I started on local newspapers before freelancing on various national newspapers in London. I then became editor of a features agency which provided editorial material worldwide until I got bored with sending copy to all these far-flung places and decided to visit them instead!

What motivates you to be an environmental activist?

I grew up in a very rural area and have always appreciated the natural environment as a result. I have



also travelled a lot and have seen first-hand the contrast between natural beauty and man's very unsustainable activities, particularly in parts of Central America, South East Asia and Southern Africa. Countless times I have visited places overflowing with beautiful landscapes and stunning or unique plants and animals. But these same countries also have terrible environmental problems. Big corporations and governments collude to cause huge damage to the natural environment and this seems to filter right down to the local level so that litter and waste is dumped anywhere and everywhere and people don't seem to care about their local environment. Cities often grow unsustainably with shanty towns sprawling across the countryside, no building controls and buses belching out fumes. Developed countries which should be leading the way on these issues are culprits too.

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What does your current job entail?

My job encompasses all elements of information work for the Federation, including press and PR work - in order to showcase the benefits of the community farming and gardening movement - producing publications, updating content on the website, acting as an information resource for our members and helping shape future information policy.

The Federation supports, represents and promotes community-managed farms and gardens, helping them empower local people, often in deprived areas, to build closer, healthier and more integrated communities. We are the national face of the community farming and gardening movement, working to raise its profile with policy-makers, funders and the public. I think many people don't realise the scope of what our member groups do. The UK's oldest city farm in Kentish Town was built on marginal land in an area of local authority housing either side of railway lines running into London. It is so much more than just a city farm. It's a focus for youth education and community work helping young people make a connection with where their food comes from or increasing their awareness of their environmental impact.

What is your involvement with Every Action Counts?

Our groups are already doing a lot in this area, but Every Action Counts has been useful in letting our smaller groups know there are simple things they can do to improve their environmental behaviour. The Eco-Worrier postcards have been popular because they convey a simple message, carry useful information and stimulate debate. Having to complete a Sustainable Development Action Plan as part of our involvement with the EAC programme made us sit down and think about anything we could do and act as a model for members.





Donna Mear

Donna Mear is an Every Action Counts Community Champion. She has been volunteering on community and environmental projects in Tyneside for more than seven years. Currently volunteering with at least five different charities, the environment is her passion.

Donna, you're still only in your 20's and have already been volunteering for the best part of a decade. How did you start?

I did a bit of volunteering at University and then when I left about 6 years ago, I started working with Barnardos. I was working with families with young children, using games to help enhance children's language and encourage parents to engage with their kids. Whilst I was doing a masters in environmental management a friend of mine was on a placement with Groundwork Derby & Derbyshire and she dragged me along to the course. She needed to practise mentoring and wanted to use me as her guinea pig. In the end I joined the course too and it was a real turning point for me. Groundwork trained me and gave me lots of practical knowledge of running environmental projects and working with children in the outdoor environment. The training helped me bring together my environmental background with my interest in community volunteering.

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I was also introduced to 'eco-schools' the initiative to get schools and pupils to become more environmental aware and it really inspired me.

How did you go on to use your new skills?

I've built up relationships with lots of councils who deliver eco-schools and am working hard to get the same support within North Tyneside. The practical skills I picked up from Groundwork have also given me lots of confidence to run environmental arts sessions with community groups. For example I learned how to create living willow structures. In one school I've been in recently the children built three large willow domes and have just won an environmental award for their work.

Community Champions act as advocates and help raise awareness of climate change, aiming to show how even small steps, such as using low energy lightbulbs or public transport, can make a big difference.

What is involved?

I was already starting to use my knowledge to develop the environmental side of the community groups I knew. Now climate change is on everyone's agenda, signing up to be a community champion seemed like an obvious step. In a sense it's a bit like eco-schools for community groups. Eco-schools aims to teach children to take responsibility for the environment and be good citizens.

Community champions are trying to do the same for community groups.

I took part in two days of training in Leeds where we were introduced to a range of resources to help us communicate the climate change message to community groups. We could just say to groups, 'What could you do to reduce your carbon footprint?' but using the Decider Game enabled them to build up a list of actions in a more light-hearted way. They worked out their actions for themselves.

It's easy to enthuse children over the issue – their eyes light up when you start showing them little projects, like one we're currently working on building a solar car. But we need adults to do the same.

What does the future hold for you?

At the moment I'm working with a number of schools and several charities including Barnardos, Friends of the Earth, RSPB and occasionally the Wildlife Trusts. Environmental action is a really important to me. I love working with children and my work with schools also funds me to volunteer for the charities. Eventually I'd like to get a paid job in environmental community work but I think I'd still carry on volunteering. It's part of who I am.

www.groundwork.org.uk
www.eco-schools.org.uk

Dhara Thompson

Dhara Thompson is a freelance community development worker and community activist.

To help promote the aims of Every Action Counts, he has written course materials and delivered training to community development trainers and workers. This work has involved helping people to identify how social and environmental issues are linked and to develop local stories to illustrate these links.

Dhara says: "While it might feel like yet another layer that community and voluntary organisations are being asked to add to their already full work load, the impacts of increasingly severe weather chaos need to be understood from a social and environmental perspective, both locally and globally."

He adds: "People with experience of collective working need to get their heads round these issues now while there is time to implement meaningful changes."

The way forward, Dhara believes, is not by preaching, but by giving people information and being honest about the context we are working within. "It isn't all about focusing on individuals

and communities, government and industry have responsibilities too, but we can't rely on or expect them to get their act together."

To this end, there needs to be a two-pronged attack, finding points of leverage where communities and small groups of people can work on practical solutions, as well as challenging those in positions of power to affect far wider change.

Dhara says some of the discussions on the courses have increased people's awareness of the necessity for action and increased their ability to lobby for change both within their organisations and in the work they do with communities.

People who came on the course can now do anything

from making a community centre more sustainable to working out the processes involved in setting up a community food group.

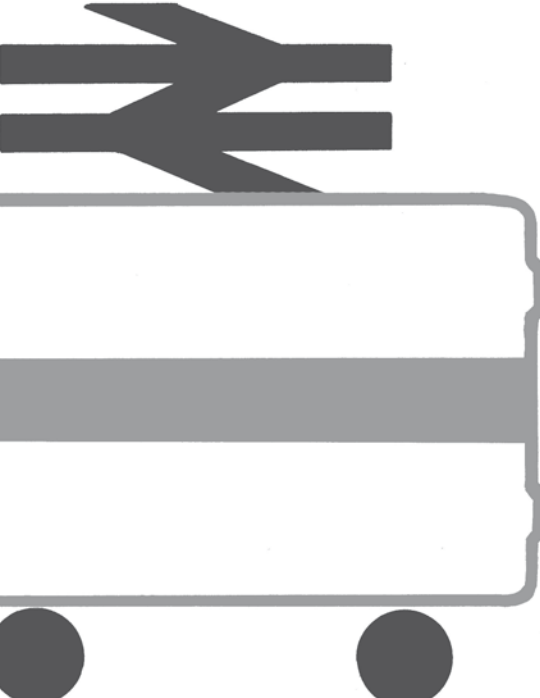
However, Dhara believes there is still a big gap between people who are having an impact and those who deny the necessity of facing up to the huge structural changes that climate chaos will bring. "The former are getting on with doing things quite often in spite of government initiatives, while the latter are waiting for the Government to take more of an initiative."



www.fcdl.org.uk

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Lynn Tupling

Lynn is the Chief Executive of Retford Action Centre in Bassetlaw and Chair of the Environment Subgroup of the Local Strategic Partnership in Bassetlaw. Retford Action Centre has signed up to Every Action Counts and is a signatory to the Third Sector Declaration on Climate Change.

Where were you born?

I was born in Worksop, Bassetlaw. My father worked for the National Coal Board. Twenty two years ago, I moved back to the area, with my husband and bought an old house to renovate. We never meant to stay, but here we are. Bassetlaw is a 256 square mile rural area with two market towns.

What is your history and what has brought you to work for Retford Action Centre?

I have been in the voluntary sector with Retford Action Centre for twelve years. I started out in the private sector working for an industrial plant hire company, supplying the National Coal Board. Later on I worked in a nursing home and later became manager. I realised early on that I liked working with people and making a difference to people's lives. My work in the nursing home gave me experience of working with older people. 90% of the work which we do at Retford Action Centre is with older people.

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How did services expand?

When I arrived at the Action Centre, we already had a community car scheme going, which catered mainly for older people, to help them get around. They would also ask us if there was anyone who could help them with their garden or ask where they could go for some company. We are an ageing population, living for longer. As the Government has decided that people should remain independent in their homes for longer, we have found ways of developing services and supporting people to do that. We work throughout the district. We have a main office in Retford and a community centre, with 30 volunteer drivers and outreach workers.

What motivates you to care about the environment?

My own personal interest came through simply recycling bottles, using low energy light bulbs, buying local vegetables at the farmers markets and only food grown in Great Britain. I developed Bassetlaw Share-a-Ride, which came out of a meeting with employers, who stated that the barrier in getting people into employment was poor public transport provision. The project is to encourage those travelling into work to share a car. It also makes travelling to work possible for those people without access to their own car. We have over 500 people on the database, which translates to 240,000 journeys a year. For example, I car share with another member of staff. There is no public transport alternative because I live in a remote

village. I travel 25 miles in total each day, which costs £4.47 in fuel a day. We save £1224 per annum between us. If we had that amount of money in our hands, we would be delighted. As well as the impact we are having on saving the environment, of course!

What got you involved in EAC?

I sit on the bassac board and therefore know about Every Action Counts. We needed to make bigger differences in our own organisation. One instant decision was to put recycle bins in everyone's office. Anything else goes into a bin which is outside the building, which makes you get up and walk and therefore think before you throw something away. We have to pay to get general rubbish taken away, but we are not charged for recyclable waste. So that is a saving.

We used to have electric water coolers, which we got rid of and now use tap water in jugs, which we cool in the existing fridge. This saves us £80 a month.

The good thing about Every Action Counts is that it has given us a focus for our environmental activities. We aren't only saving money – but saving the planet too.

www.retfordactioncentre.org.uk

Dave Chapman

Dave Chapman, regional development manager at bassac, ran a course in the South West for bassac members and others to promote Every Action Counts. He explains how he set up the course and lessons learned.

Why did you decide to run the course?

To put it very simply we need to address the issues of climate change and peak oil. Energy consumption from buildings and their use is high and as most of this energy is generated from fossil fuels then it made sense to run a session on greening your community building.

How did you set up the course and get the materials together?

I worked with my colleague Helen Garforth from Community Matters to develop and deliver the workshop – it was very much a team event. We were also fortunate that CVS South Gloucestershire was able to support the event as part of their training programme.

We didn't require many materials. There is one session where participants are given a newspaper headline to discuss with colleagues – the headlines are all climate change/environmentally related.

How did you publicise the course?

We used all of the networks that we knew about. We developed a flyer (electronic version only) and sent it out as far and as wide as we could. We asked all interested partners to send it on to their contacts.

How did you make people aware of the five aims of Every Action Counts?

As part of the day we asked participants to undertake an audit of the venue we were using. Their brief was to look at what was good, bad and ugly. This allowed them to consider all issues in relation to sustainability and as a result the five Every Action Counts aims were identified.

We also gave a short presentation on Every Action Counts at the end of the day to let participants know that there is further help and additional resources available.

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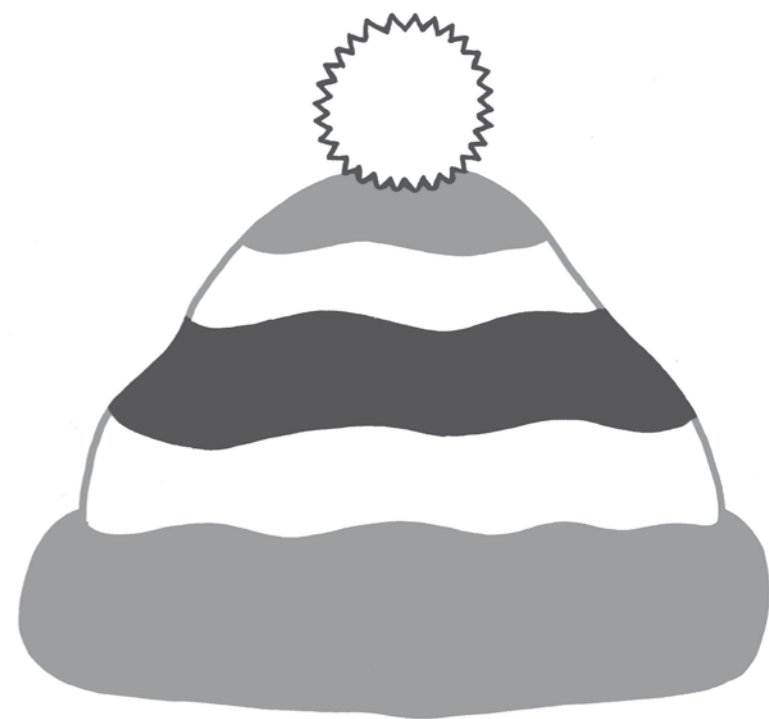


What was the reaction of people on the course, what actions do you think they will take now?

The workshop was well received. All the participants felt that it met or more than met their expectations. Participants are now aware of simple actions (a notice by the light to switch it off when the room is not in use) through to more complex ones, such as considering how renewable energies might be developed for their buildings. My hope is that all the participants take away and implement the easy actions, not only in their work but also their home lives.

What have you learned from the experience that you can pass on to others?

Developing this type of work in partnership with others is important. There is a need for this type of workshop – people are genuinely interested and want to make a difference. The challenges of climate change mean that we must keep trying to engage with people – after all every action counts.





Susi Miller

Susi Miller, Training Development Officer for the Federation of Community Development Learning, explains how she became an activist and her hopes for a sustainable future.

Susi Miller was born in Sheffield and brought up in Barnsley. Her parents came to Britain from Jamaica in the early fifties.

Her father was a clay miner but following redundancy, went on to make tools in Sheffield. Her mother was a nursing assistant. Both her parents experienced racism at work. Physical and verbal attacks were a common experience for the many African Caribbean people, who had recently arrived in the UK.

Susi says: "My dad took positive action in the face of racism. He was among a number of African Caribbean people who set up meetings and self help groups in Sheffield to tackle the issue."

Susi inherited this activism role from her parents' generation. She became involved in a parent and toddler group and started to help run it as a teenager. "We organised more interesting outings, and provided a more diverse range of information to people of African and Asian backgrounds."

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Her work experience now spans nearly 30 years. She used to work for a community arts centre called Common Ground and has been with FCDL for the last six years.

"I am interested in community development work because it challenges inequalities, which harm us all, but especially those who have least power.

"Much of the training delivered by the Federation for Community Development Learning, as part of the Every Action Counts programme, promotes and uses creative approaches. We use participatory methods to improve meaning, discussion and analysis not just about practical actions that encourage community groups to make changes."

When Susi goes back to Jamaica, she feels humbled by their sustainability agenda and how far behind we are in the UK. "People reuse bags not because they want to but because they have to! They make much more careful use of many resources, which we take for granted."

She says her aunt apologised for offering her a crinkly fruit from her garden

but Susi pointed out to her that people pay lots of money for that in Britain as it's called organic. Most working class, low-income families aren't really given the option to buy affordable organic food in England. We should be challenging the pricing hierarchy."

At home, Susi recycles bottles and paper, which are collected from the kerbside. She also takes all her plastic to the local recycling centre and drives an LPG car. She has recently tried her hand at growing vegetables and has three water butts around her yard and garden. "I've attended a local composting workshop run by Green City Action, Sheffield. This workshop promoted positive networking between experienced and green gardeners, and 'don't know what we're doing' newbies!"

Susi comments: "In the future, I would love to work on embedding environmental actions into policies that affect communities, so that the most marginalised and excluded communities are able to do things to make a difference, at their own pace, in ways that deal with their own priorities."

www.fcdl.org.uk

Linda Robinson

Linda Robinson is a freelance trainer in the voluntary and community sector. You could almost say she has green blood, such is the extent of her involvement in environmental issues. She is also a volunteer with many roles, including being Secretary of Harrow Agenda 21, which has action groups to match all of the aims of Every Action Counts.

At Harrow Agenda 21, Linda says: "We are adopting a 'Green Procurement Policy' to give our volunteers guidance to good practice when making purchases, on the basis of sustainability and whole life cost, including environmental cost."

This initiative has been successful in raising awareness of waste, transport, climate change and green consumerism issues as well as increasing membership.

Linda is a trustee of the Friends of Bentley Priory Nature Reserve and a member of

Woodlands Community Association as well as a member of Harrow Friends of the Earth and Harrow Green Party.

On top of all this, she delivers training to all sorts of voluntary organisations and community groups about community development, regeneration and how to get people involved.

On a personal level, Linda also actively pursues the Every Action Counts aims. She explains: "My gas fire became faulty and I needed to make a decision about buying a new fire. I looked up information on the internet and found articles about comparative energy efficiencies of gas and electric fires. I spoke

to people in my groups who are supposed to know about such things. I rang Harrow Council's Energy Efficiency Line, which goes through to the Energy Saving Trust. Finally, they recommended an electric fire as more energy efficient, so I ordered one and had it installed at considerable expense. Afterwards, other energy experts told me that I'd made the wrong energy efficiency decision for the planet. Who knows? At least I tried! And at today's fuel prices I should save some pennies in the short term at any rate. Maybe one day I will be in a position to generate my own electricity."

www.harrowagenda21.org

www.energysavingtrust.org.uk

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Barbara Hancock

Barbara Hancock, Training Co-ordinator for Southampton-based charity, Training for Work in Communities (TWICS) explains how she became involved in a Green Fair and helped make it a success.

“My husband’s church was keen on becoming an ‘eco-congregation’ and wanted to run a community event as part of this,” says Barbara. “Part of my role at TWICS is to help groups plan events, and we’re also keen to promote the aims of Every Action Counts.” So, Barbara was able to represent TWICS on the green fair planning committee, and at the same time maintaining domestic harmony by giving practical support to her husband’s project!

The event took about nine months to plan. The co-ordinating group included individuals, and local groups such as Friends of the Earth, cycling campaigns, churches, and the local Sustainability Forum.

“As well as stalls and activities, we also wanted a political element at the Fair,” says Barbara. At the event, there was a question time session with the local MP. The Oceanography department gave a presentation about the impact of climate change on sea life. There were also many stalls displaying a range of green options, such as how to compost, recycle a computer or join a car club, as well as some selling goods.

The group managed to get good publicity through articles in the local press, posters in community centres and by circulating leaflets. “We wanted to make sure we didn’t just attract the ‘usual suspects’ who go to Green events,” says Barbara. She says the broad based co-ordinating group, with links to many community networks, helped attract support.

On reflection, Barbara says it could have been better to have more people selling goods and to make a feature of this in the publicity. “I think that would have attracted people looking for gifts who might have come to shop but also

found out about Green initiatives.”

Even without this incentive, nearly 400 people came to the event. Each visitor was handed a programme, which also had an evaluation form on the back, asking them what actions they might take as a result of visiting the fair. There was a prize draw to encourage people to hand in their forms. The feedback shows that visitors were keen to make a difference by saving energy or travelling more wisely, for example, walking more often or joining car clubs. One of the stallholders who delivers organic vegetables said his sales went up dramatically the following week.

Barbara says: “Overall, it was hard work but well worth doing, it shows that there is a lot of interest out there.”

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www.twics.org.uk

Chris Lawton

Chris Lawton is the Operations Manager at Trafford Hall, the National Communities Resource Centre, which offers training and support to people living in low-income communities.

The NCRC's commitment to sustainable development is clearly exemplified in the development recently of an old Victorian stable block. The building was structurally unsound so they decided to rebuild it to create a carbon-neutral building.

The new building has two rooms capable of holding up to 100 people each, eleven en-suite bedrooms, a porch, patio and alfresco meeting areas. It uses solar power and bio fuels, under floor heating and 100% renewable energy. There are low water systems for the showers, basins and toilets. The building itself is made from a pine structure with larch cladding - both sustainable woods. The floors, walls and ceilings are insulated with recycled newspaper and the paint and stains are all low odour.

The project won a Clear-Skies Renewable Energy Grant from the Building Research Establishment and the Department of Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform because of the sustainable energy systems, which are used to heat the building.

Chris says: "Overall the systems have been trouble-free and work very well with minimal maintenance."

Even in the main Trafford Hall building, which is older, Chris has managed to introduce 'green' practices. He says: "You shouldn't be put off just because a building is old." He brought together a 'green' team of six members of staff from across the centre, including reception, catering and gardening.

The green practices at Trafford Hall include fitting energy efficient light bulbs, putting temperature regulation valves on radiators and switching to a renewable energy supplier.

The catering team uses produce from the centre's organic garden and the kitchen composts as much waste as possible. The centre has its own woodland and when trees have to be felled they are reused for the fire in the centre's bar.

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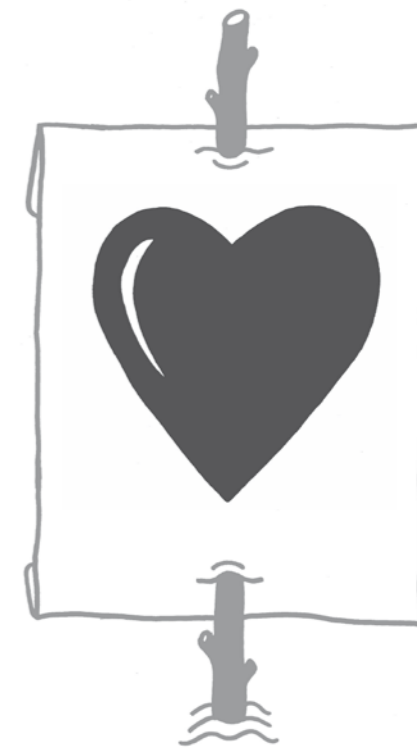


Every Action Counts leaflets are displayed in the building and when customers arrive they are given a welcome talk, which highlights the work of Every Action Counts. "We try to encourage our guests to look at what they can do back in their communities, for example, setting up a community garden or getting a grant to make other improvements."

The man in charge of maintenance also gives talks and is happy to answer questions, so people can be inspired and informed about making a building sustainable.

The centre has ambitious plans for the future. Chris explains: "We want to make Trafford Hall carbon-neutral by 2012."

To fund some of this work, the centre has introduced sponsorship schemes, asking business users to support certain aspects of the work. "So far people have been very positive about this, they want to sponsor individual items." The centre has also set up a 'Friends of Trafford Hall' scheme to raise money. Chris is working on an Environmental Management System, talking to organisations like Groundwork and BTCV to develop a sustainable development action plan. He concludes: "Although initial investments can be more expensive, our green practices have saved us money overall."



Simon Cudworth

www.atlowmill.org

Simon Cudworth is responsible for facilities and maintenance at The Atlow Centre for Emotional Intelligence in Derbyshire. This is an educational centre offering a range of courses and programmes. It specialises in changing the behaviour of young people who are socially excluded. Adults can also attend courses to increase self-awareness and improve their well-being.

The centre is set in seven acres of rolling countryside in a secluded valley. The conference and residential facilities are also available to hire.

Five of the staff, including Simon, live at the centre as a community. "This was part of my motivation for becoming a community champion, to see what difference we could make to the way we live. I also wanted to introduce environmental practices as part of my responsibility for facilities and maintenance at the centre."

He found the training helpful and informative. "There were seven of us and we got on very well, it was a relaxed environment for learning and the facilitator was very good."

Simon has already put his learning into action within the community. He played the Decider Game that is integral to the training with his co-residents. "It took two hours, but it brought up loads of good ideas and debates."

One idea was to set up a water turbine as the main building at the centre is an old mill and there is a stream running past. Simon is investigating if this could not only provide power for the centre but also the local village. The discussions with the local village have raised awareness of their carbon footprint.

Other debates within the community focused on the viability of switching off the Skybox without losing the programme information. The action plan also involved increasing recycling.

"If I was running a session with another group, I'd make the Decider Game quicker," says Simon. However, he found the cards useful at prompting debate.

Simon also hopes to run sessions as part of the training at the centre to spread awareness of what the community is doing and how participants can make a difference in their own communities. One of the courses is a well-being holiday and Simon intends to facilitate a one-hour workshop as part of the course.

He is also spreading the word informally through links with the local pub and football team. "I'm letting people know that I'm available if they want to develop an action plan to reduce their carbon footprint."

Overall, Simon thinks the community champion scheme is very positive and the EAC website is very helpful.

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Gillian Chandler

Gillian Chandler trained as a Community champion last year. She says: "I found it very useful and enjoyed the training. It was very clear and the information pack was great."

Her only disappointment was not having more people to network with. "It was a shame there wasn't more take up on the day but nonetheless it was very successful."

Since the training, Gillian has used her learning with a community planner at Swindon council and a local voluntary organisation, which is a mixed community group of activists who run a community centre. "It was really useful to take them through the Decider Game, helping them to think about priorities. They are definitely going to be putting together an action plan as a result."

During the session, the game provoked a lot of discussion and was a very positive experience for everyone.

The community planner at the council helped Gillian to access the group, inviting her to a first meeting. Gillian has also contacted local parish councils asking if they want any more information. She is also liaising with the other community champion in the area, Deb Joffe.

The training was a bit of a busman's holiday as Gillian's day job is a sustainable development officer



promoting green issues among the local community. She also has a degree in environmental land management. "I liked the idea of becoming a community champion, particularly the five strands of the Every Action Counts programme. I also like the fact that it promotes sustainable lifestyles taking an holistic view from the grass roots up."

Gillian believes that as more local councils are turning to the local community to take up the climate change challenge, Every Action Counts will be a useful way to engage with local people.

With the next group, Gillian is going to let groups generate their own ideas. She thinks the action plan, which is part of the pack, is brilliant. "It is a good way of getting people round the table and could be used for all sorts of planning."

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Jane Laurie

Jane Laurie is a Climate Change Champion for the South West Wildlife Trust and a representative on a local group called Climate Friendly Bradford-on-Avon.

Jane and the Climate Change group are ambitious and wide ranging in their fight against climate change. "As well as focusing on local issues, such as the major problem we have with traffic pollution, we are also interested in world issues such as supporting wind turbines in developing countries."

The group, based in in Bradford-on-Avon, reaches out to its' local community by taking stands at local events such as car boot sales, giving talks to church groups and providing information points in libraries and railway stations. They are pro-active in organising media coverage through local newsletters and have organised publicity friendly events such as a green trade fair and are planning to have an event like the television programme, Ready, Steady, Cook, to show how to use up leftovers.

Jane's group also works to influence local decision makers, by having meetings with the local MP and organising a petition to support the Climate Change Bill. They also keep in touch with the local and district councils, responding to consultations and have recently lobbied for a planned new housing development in the town to have tougher green credentials.



www.swwt.org.uk
www.community.bradfordonavon.com

Sue Kirkman

Sue Kirkman, now corporate services officer for ACRE - Action with Communities in Rural England, talks about her involvement in Every Action Counts and the impact it has had on her own life, ACRE's practice and ACRE's membership.

Where were you born, what did your parents do?

Born in Nottingham. Have lived in Malmesbury, Wiltshire for the past 30 years and have worked at ACRE for nine years.

How did you get into caring about the environment?

We started out completely from scratch at ACRE and it has been a significant piece of work, but now environmental good practice is engrained in our culture. I have also changed my habits at home and sort and recycle as much waste as I can.

What do you like about the Every Action Counts programme?

The five simple messages which everyone can understand but which can make a real difference to individual lives as well as to communities and to the wider world.



What is ACRE's purpose?

It's the national arm of the Rural Community Action Network which, through working with local people and local groups, aims to encourage and support community action which helps create more sustainable rural communities

What environmental action has ACRE taken in the last two years?

We kept talking about taking environmental action to reduce our impact on the environment, but Every Action Counts gave us an impetus to do it.

We have produced procedures for a staff handbook so that it is clear to ACRE staff what they can do to make every action count. We have established a baseline on

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our waste and organised the collection of paper, shredded paper, card, plastic bottles, cans and toner cartridges from the office. I take the glass and tetra packs to the local recycling centre as they are not collected. We have changed cleaning products to more environmentally products and our cleaner was fully supportive and enthusiastic about the changes needed. We were able to buy furniture for our new policy team office from a local company which was relocating and we order recycled paper, stationery products and toilet roll.

We requested from our regular suppliers of stationery, IT support, photocopiers, caterers and venues that they provide us with their own environmental policies. Although this was new to some of our suppliers, ACRE's actions were well received and really made a difference.

We have also put up lots of posters to remind everyone. It was hard to remember at first but it is amazing how quickly habits change.

When ACRE signed up to the Every Action Counts Programme, we wrote an Environmental Management Policy. Personally, I have trained with Groundwork on the BS8555 Environmental Management System course. We have gone a long way to implementing this at ACRE but we found that it was too complicated for a small organisation to be of truly practical use.

We have used the same local catering firm for years and have recently discussed buying fair-trade products and sourcing local produce with them.

How did you use the EAC materials and publications in the office and what impact did they have?

The books gave us guidance and ideas on how we could make a difference, both at work and home. It is always encouraging to read about other peoples success stories. It also saves so much time if relevant information is at your fingertips – especially when we are all so busy.

How did you use the materials in your network and what impact have they had?

We have distributed EAC materials through our network. However through our Performance Improvement Programme, ACRE Quality Standard 4 - Managing Activities, Level 2, requires that: 'The RCC has an environmental policy and the environmental impact of its activities is considered and minimised.' A copy of the RCC's Environmental Policy is one of the minimum required pieces of evidence at Level 2. The ACRE Standards will be re-written in 2009, to include an expanded environmental section.

What is your vision for sustainable development in the future?

Our intention is to analyse the quantity of energy we have saved and the reduction in waste, that is, to measure the impact of our actions.



Jo Dyer

Jo Dyer is the head gardener at Trafford Hall, the National Communities Resource Centre in Cheshire. The centre is a registered charity offering training and support to people living and working in low-income areas in the UK. It aims to develop people's skills, confidence and capacity to tackle problems in local communities.

The centre is set in 15 acres of organically managed gardens. All courses are residential and participants are encouraged to stroll around the grounds and ask Jo for advice about setting up or managing gardens in their local communities.

Jo manages a vegetable garden, several ornamental areas, woodland and a large natural field, which is used as a conservation area for wildlife.

The gardens provide fruit, vegetables and herbs for the centre's kitchen. All the waste from the kitchen in turn, produces compost for the garden. Eggshells are also used as a slug deterrent in the gardens.

Jo recycles as much other waste from the centre as possible. For example, plastic water bottles

and cardboard tubes are used as cloches to protect young plants. Yoghurt pots are filled with beer to provide slug traps. "We have an ethos of thrift, re-use and recycle," says Jo.

Leaf mould is collected in bins to provide compost and there is also a wormery to recycle some food waste. Seaweed is also used as an organic fertiliser. To minimise water usage, rainwater is fed into a drip feed watering system.

Jo says: "A lot of our work is geared towards diversity and wildlife. We also hope that people on the courses will gain inspiration and try some of the ideas in their local community."

Her advice to anyone thinking of developing a community garden is to relax and enjoy it. "Don't try to do too much too quickly, have a basic plan to get people involved but then let it evolve. Don't try to force anything to grow, if you have terrible soil, you can still have a wildflower garden."

Despite this advice, the plans for the centre's gardens are ambitious but it has been established for over ten years. They include starting a cutting patch to provide flowers, replanting a sunken garden and developing a pond from a

natural hole in the field – a marl pit. "If you can provide water in your garden it is a fantastic resource for creatures. It doesn't have to be big."

If you only have a relatively small space for vegetables, Jo recommends growing herbs, leeks, broad beans, cabbage, rhubarb, blackcurrants and strawberries. "Potatoes take up too much space."

One of the main challenges is slugs but rabbits also eat some of the plants in the garden. Jo advises putting barriers around plants until they are big enough. Through trial and error, she has discovered that some grasses are rabbit-proof, for example, *stipa gigantea*, *euphorbia*, as the sap is caustic and *stipa tenuifolia* or Pheasant Grass and Red Hot Poker plants.

The weather is also a challenge. "March has been horrendous, so I haven't been able to prune yet. Last summer was a wash out and some of the plants got blight. Global warming means a gardener's calendar is no longer predictable."

However, Jo obviously enjoys her work and is inspirational. "It is extremely hard work but it keeps you honest and connected to the fundamentals of life."

www.traffordhall.com

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Lizzy White

Lizzy White grew up in Cornwall. She moved to Bristol to go to University and lived there for ten years. She now works for the Community Recycling Network (CRN UK), where she is the Information and Projects Officer.

Lizzy works from home in Truro, Cornwall and runs a number of projects such as the 'Compost Doctors' which involves working with composting experts and advising businesses and public institutions about managing on-site composting. 'There is growing interest in this area but at the moment the cost of waste disposal to landfill is too cheap to make on-site composting financial competitive. However, for smaller organisations it may be more viable but people need advice on how to do it,' says Lizzy.

CRN UK runs a number of projects including the Campaign for Real Recycling as well as producing a newsletter for around 300 members and an ezine called the Waste Paper. It also runs an annual conference and other events for its' members.

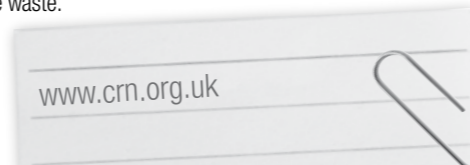
Another part of Lizzy's job involves promoting the work of Every Action Counts. To do this Lizzy recently ran a competition for members. She posted out some EAC publicity material with a letter inviting people to sign up to a prize draw on the condition that they signed up on the Every Action

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Counts website. This was followed up with a reminder email shortly before the closing date. The competition prizes were £250 worth of training, a selection of fair trade tea, coffee & biscuits and two wind-up digital radios.

'This was a really successful promotion with a substantial number of groups signing up,' says Lizzy. She also ran a similar competition for three regions, which resulted in even more groups signing up.

'Ideally we are aiming for Zero Waste. In the short term we need to fully engage people with waste minimisation and resource use. We need people to understand where materials come from and where they go and realising there are financial and environmental implications for all of us unless we minimise waste.'



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