

AN ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY FOR HUNTINGDONSHIRE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Environment Strategy explains the challenges we face in safeguarding Huntingdonshire's local environment, whilst demonstrating how local action is vitally important to successfully addressing global environmental issues such as climate change and resource use.

At Huntingdonshire District Council we are uniquely placed to provide the vision and local democratic leadership to local communities and businesses, to raise awareness and change behaviours to address these pressing issues. Although we recognise the need to act as community leaders, tackling these environmental challenges is not something we can do alone. The council is responsible for promoting the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of our communities, so that we can all enjoy a good quality of life. Based on the issues that local people have told us are important to them, now and in the future, the Council has a vision for Huntingdonshire which is:

Huntingdonshire should be a place where current and future generations have a good quality of life and enjoy:

- *Continued economic success*
- *Opportunities for all*
- *An environment that is protected and improved*

Growing Success 2008

To work towards this overall vision for Huntingdonshire, the Council will look at its own actions as well as those of businesses, residents and other organisations in the district. The Council is committed to making continual, measurable progress in its environmental performance, to reduce its own environmental impact and to strive to improve the environment. Although there are many challenges to achieving this overall vision, we have identified the three main environmental challenges we need to overcome. These are:

- Tackling Climate Change
- Using resources efficiently
- Protecting & improving the environment

This Environment Strategy contains a series of aims relating to these three challenges, which will be considered during the five-year life of the Strategy. It will be reviewed annually and our progress will be reported and published each year. The annual report will inform the development of the following year's action plan to ensure the strategy remains current and up to date. To ensure the action plan targets are both workable and achievable, all stakeholders in Huntingdonshire, the Council, businesses, community groups and householders will need to be involved in their production.

The result will be a detailed but clear strategy and action plan, involving organisations and residents across the District, which will have an impact on the main environmental challenges facing Huntingdonshire. The final section of this document summarises in a series of tables, all the aims and strategic actions Huntingdonshire District Council will work towards over the following five years to deliver this strategy.

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INTRODUCTION

Huntingdonshire has accommodated rapid growth over the last four decades and is faced with even more significant growth in the next two. The challenge the district faces is to ensure that the prosperity and quality of life of Huntingdonshire's residents is maintained, the local environment is preserved and enhanced and that we minimise our use of, and damage to, irreplaceable natural resources. If all of these things can be achieved the development of Huntingdonshire will be sustainable. We will leave a legacy to future generations that will allow them to maintain the prosperity and quality of life we have enjoyed. If we fail we will have robbed them of that opportunity and, potentially, they will face risks and challenges to their existence that will make their lives much poorer.

Controlling our consumption of natural resources is pivotal to achieving sustainable development. Natural resources include the timber and minerals we use in construction, the land we build on, the fossil fuels used for energy production and travel, the water that we drink and the air that we breathe (but also pollute). These are not inexhaustible and our objective must be to ensure that Huntingdonshire consumes no more than its fair share of those resources. As an organisation the Council will review its own environmental footprint and that of the district of Huntingdonshire.

Where we cannot easily or immediately change what we are doing we must seek ways to mitigate the adverse impacts. A change to renewable energy can reduce our reliance on burning fossil fuels to generate energy but is unlikely ever to replace it entirely. We can reduce our demand for energy by making our homes and businesses as energy efficient as possible and we can help to mitigate the damage to the atmosphere caused by the carbon dioxide resulting from burning fossil fuels by planting trees that take carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. The link between carbon dioxide production and global climate change is irrefutable and local measures to reduce emissions are an imperative.

Tackling climate change is the first theme of this environment strategy. It will complement the objectives in the Local Development Framework and the commitments already contained in the community strategy. Furthermore, it will support the achievement of the targets adopted by the Eastern Regional Assembly which already has acknowledged the risk that this low-lying region runs from climate change. The Council has demonstrated its commitment by signing the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change.

The forecast growth in the district will generate massive demand for construction materials, increase local consumption and has the potential to detract from the council's achievements in reducing household waste. The Council will need to ensure that the efficient use of natural resources is a principal consideration in the delivery of growth and providing services to new residents of the district. **The efficient use of resources will be the second key theme of this environment strategy.**

When considering our use of resources it will be important to consider the role that water has already played in shaping Huntingdonshire. The flood plains of the Rivers Great Ouse and Nene and the fens give the district a unique character and were responsible for the rich agriculture that brought prosperity to the district in years gone by. Climate change brings with it the risk of rising sea levels and more intense rainfall and, therefore, a greater likelihood of flooding. However, winter rainfall may become less reliable and the area will become drier and less able to sustain the demand for water from new development.

The third and final theme for this strategy is protecting and improving our environment. We will look at the existing and future contribution that the broad spectrum of Council services can make to the district. Communities must be free to enjoy and value their local environment. This is the essence of the national 'clean, green and safe' agenda. It is about people's perceptions and these are shaped by how clean the streets are, how easy it is for them to visit open countryside and how safe they feel in their homes and on the local streets. Street cleaning, waste collection, environmental health and community safety are all services provided by the Council that contribute to people's perceptions of their locality.

Major countryside initiatives such as the Great Fen Project and country parks such as Paxton Pits and Needingworth provide accessible countryside as well as creating and enhancing habitat and increasing bio-diversity. They bring the added benefit of providing vegetation that takes up carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and help to mitigate the man-made discharges that contribute to climate change. This is just one example of how the themes within the strategy are inseparable and is a feature which will be increasingly apparent in the detail of the Council's environmental strategy.

On a global level the past 25 years have seen a growing realisation that the current model of development is unsustainable. In other words we are living beyond our means. From the loss of biodiversity in the UK and worldwide to the negative effect our consumption patterns are having on the environment and the climate. Our way of life is placing an increasing burden on the planet - this cannot be sustained. Perhaps the greatest risk to our environment is climate change. The weather is changing. Temperatures and sea levels are rising. Summers are getting hotter, winters wetter. What does this mean for Huntingdonshire? What will it be like to live here? What can we – Huntingdonshire District Council and you do about it? The environmental footprints of an individual, organisation, district or country are the result of many individual choices, activities and policies. This means that actions that lead to changes in policy and the ways products are produced are just as important as changing personal lifestyles.

Through the development of The Community Strategy for Huntingdonshire, consultation with local people and other organisations in Huntingdonshire established a vision for the District.

OUR VISION - *Huntingdonshire should be a place where current and future generations have a good quality of life and enjoy:*

- *Continued economic success*
- *Opportunities for all*
- *An environment that is protected and improved*

Growing Success 2008

This strategy will encourage us to look at the environmental footprint of the district council and of the district of Huntingdonshire to identify where we can take action to create more sustainable communities that will not only benefit today's residents, through a better quality of life, but crucially help to secure our vision today and for future generations. This strategy will include clear actions to promote sustainability by involving people, leading by example and by demonstrating our commitment to deliver the Council's six strategic aims, all of which work towards ensuring a good quality of life in Huntingdonshire:

- A clean, 'green' and attractive place
- Safe, vibrant and inclusive communities
- Access to services and transport
- Housing that meets local need
- Healthy living
- A strong, diverse economy

In addition, the Environment Strategy will take into account national priorities and initiatives, issues that the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership has identified as its priorities, the Council's current ongoing programmes and the aims, objectives and targets of various council strategies already working towards sustainable development. All of which work together to achieve the overall vision of Huntingdonshire.

Although Huntingdonshire faces many challenges in the journey to achieving these six strategic aims and vision, this strategy identifies the main environmental challenges we need to overcome to achieve this.

1. Tackling Climate Change
2. Using Resources Efficiently
3. Protecting & Improving the Environment

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS COMMITMENT

The Council will make continual, measurable progress in its environmental performance, reduce its own environmental impact and strive to improve the environment.

It will fulfil its statutory environmental responsibilities and ensure that all operations and activities carried out on its behalf, comply with, or exceed, relevant statutory environmental requirements.

The Council will foster a sense of responsibility for the environment amongst its employees, elected Members and the local community and ensure that both employees and contractors act in accordance with this policy and in compliance with its adopted Environmental Management System. The Council will provide regular and concise information regarding its environmental performance. Through this strategy and an effective Environmental Management System, the Council aims to:

- Review and understand the environmental impact of service delivery and the way we deliver them
- Communicate the achievement of environmental and sustainable development objectives and targets.
- Promote sustainable development both within its own buildings and in all of its activities by embedding sustainable development in the decision-making process and service delivery.
- Set strategic objectives and targets for this strategy with regular monitoring, reporting and review of progress.
- Achieve continual improvement in environmental performance through the implementation of an Environmental Management System, for example ISO 14001 or EMAS
- Influence the culture of employees by communicating the policy and providing adequate training to achieve this policy.

Through the Council's various strategies, plans and policies, an integrated system will be created to drive forward environmentally aware initiatives in all service areas to achieve a significant impact on the environment.

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PART ONE

TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

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TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE - Reducing greenhouse gas emissions

What is climate change?

Climate refers to the average weather experienced over a long period of time. This includes temperature, wind and rainfall patterns. The climate of the earth is not static and has changed many times in response to a variety of natural causes. The earth has warmed by 0.74 degrees over the last hundred years but around 0.4 degrees of this warming has occurred since the 1970's the majority of which is considered to be the result of human activity.

Climate change is possibly the greatest environmental challenge facing the world today. Rising global temperatures will bring changes in weather patterns, rising sea levels and increased intensity and frequency of extreme weather events.

The main human influence on the global climate is the increasing emissions of the key greenhouse gases – carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide.

What is the greenhouse effect & global warming?

The earth is naturally warmed by rays (or radiation) from the sun, which passes through the earth's atmosphere and is reflected back out to space again. The atmosphere is made up of layers of gases, some of which are called greenhouse gases. They're mostly natural and make up a thermal blanket over the earth. This lets some of the rays back out of the atmosphere, keeping the earth at the right temperature for animals, plants and humans to survive (60°F/16°C). Some global warming is therefore good, but as extra greenhouse gases are made, the thermal blanket gets thicker and too much heat is kept in the earth's atmosphere and the global climate begins to get warmer.

So how do our actions contribute to climate change?

Carbon dioxide has been identified as the main man-made contributor to the greenhouse effect and climate change. Increased industrial activity and the burning of fossil fuels like coal, oil and natural gas used to power our homes and vehicles, has resulted in a dramatic increase in the level of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere. Coupled with the deforestation and the partial destruction of the earth's natural carbon sink, this human activity is now known to be disturbing the natural balance of greenhouse gases, which is causing our climate to change.

What does this mean to me?

The earth's climate has been changing throughout its history and, until now, this has been mostly due to natural causes.

Recent change, however, has been dramatic. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the increase in surface temperature over the 20th century for the Northern Hemisphere is likely to have been greater than that for any other century in the last thousand years.

Global temperatures have increased by about 0.6°C since the beginning of the 20th century, with about 0.4°C of this change occurring since the 1970s. Nine of the 10 warmest years on record have occurred since 1990, including 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003.

Scientists now say that the average world temperature is rising by 0.15 degrees every decade and confidently predict many changes to the global and local environment as a result.

At a global level the following may happen:

- Water expands when it's heated and oceans absorb more heat than land, so sea levels would rise.
- Sea levels would also rise due to the melting of the glaciers and sea ice.
- Places that usually get lots of rain and snowfall might get hotter and drier.
- Lakes and rivers could dry up and there would be more droughts making it hard to grow crops.
- Less water would be available for drinking, showers and swimming pools.
- Some plants and animals might become extinct because of the heat.
- Hurricanes, tornadoes, high winds and other storms which are caused by changes in heat and water evaporation may become more common

The implications for Huntingdonshire's environment are likely to be:

- Progressively warmer and drier summers, wetter, windy and milder winters. More frequent extreme weather events resulting in flood or drought conditions
- A decrease overall in crop yield and a move by farmers towards crops such as maize, sunflowers and vines.
- Changes to river quality and biology, with some species of plant and animals migrating north or dying out. Native species may be replaced by migrating exotic species.

What is causing the increase in carbon dioxide emissions?

Government evidence suggests that the UK contributes about 2% to global man-made emissions. Although this may seem small, it is estimated to range between 22.8 and 25.3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per year. Carbon dioxide accounted for approximately 84% of the UK's man-made emissions in 2005. Of total UK carbon dioxide emissions in 2005 37% came from the energy industries, 22% from road transport, 18% from other types of industry and 15% from residential fossil fuel use.

How will the Environment Strategy help?

Climate change affects us all – but we can do something about it. We will develop, through consultation with other stakeholders, specific targets for reducing carbon dioxide emissions in the council's own operations, in homes in the district and in the transport sector. This strategy recognises that reducing carbon dioxide emissions is a key priority and looks to tackle the issue in four ways:

1. Making Huntingdonshire more energy efficient
2. Increasing the proportion of energy produced and used in Huntingdonshire that originates from renewable sources
3. Encourage Huntingdonshire to use more sustainable modes of travel and effectively minimise the impact of transport emissions
4. Ensure buildings, services and the community of Huntingdonshire are able to adapt to climate change

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

“HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL WILL INCREASE THE ENERGY EFFICIENCY OF COUNCIL OWNED BUILDINGS AND ENCOURAGE SIMILAR GOOD PRACTICE IN HOUSEHOLDS AND BUSINESSES IN THE DISTRICT.”

Most of the energy we use in our homes today is generated by the burning of fossil fuels, a process which results in emissions of carbon and other greenhouse gases. It is estimated that 25% of all UK carbon emissions are attributed to domestic energy consumption.

The fossil fuels we use for energy today originated in the growth and decay of plants and marine organisms that existed on earth millions of years ago. Through geological processes acting over aeons of time, this dead organic matter became the coal, oil and natural gas we access today by drilling through the earth's crust. The use of coal in UK homes and industry has now been largely superseded by natural gas, but it is still used for electricity generation. Huge worldwide coal reserves remain enough for more than 200 years use at current rates. At present, oil is the world's leading energy source. Proven world oil reserves are sufficient for about 40 years of use at current rates. Natural gas is currently the preferred source of energy for heating and electricity generation in Western Europe, but proven world gas supplies are sufficient for about 60 years of use at current rates. The massive use by our society of coal, oil and gas has had numerous adverse consequences. These include air and water pollution, mining accidents, fires and explosions on oil and gas rigs, conflicts over access to fuel resources and perhaps more profoundly, the changing global climate.

Climate change is one of the most important reasons why we need to be more efficient with our energy use and reduce our impact on the environment. By making simple changes in our behaviour such as the way we heat our homes and use electrical appliances we can all help to reduce the impact of climate change on the environment for future generations. Eventually fossil fuels will run out, they are after all a finite resource. For the first time, in 2006, Britain began importing much of the gas needed for heating and electricity generation. As a result of this, many people have seen their fuel bills rise significantly. Adopting an energy efficient life style will not only save money and reduce our contribution to climate change, it will ease the pressure on our UK energy reserves. Using energy more efficiently is a major factor in reducing our impact on climate change. Energy efficiency is not just good in terms of the environment; it also reduces fuel bills for residents and businesses.

Huntingdonshire District Council's Environmental Footprint

As a local service provider with a diverse range of functions, the Council operates from a wide variety of buildings across the district. The current Council headquarters is home to approximately 400 employees and as with any standard office site, energy is primarily used for lighting and heating the building itself. Powering computers, photocopiers and other office equipment also uses a great deal of energy on a daily basis. In 2006/2007 the gas and electricity used amounted to 1.9 million kWh's and resulted in approximately 425 tonnes of carbon emitted into the atmosphere.

In addition to the Headquarters site, other large energy consumers include the Council's Operations Centre, Eastfield House in Huntingdon and the five Leisure Centres across the district. Together the Leisure Centres represent the most energy intensive function within the Council's estate and are responsible for a large proportion of the carbon emitted each

year. When the requirement for outdoor lighting, electronic gym equipment and heating swimming pools is considered, on top of everyday heating and lighting, this is only to be expected.

Other functions such as Country parks, area offices and public toilets, complete the district council's estate. Together, leisure centres, public toilets and other facilities used 9.9 million kWh's of energy in 2006/2007 which resulted in 1890 tonnes of carbon. Looking at our energy use over previous years we have seen a definite increase in the Council's overall energy consumption pattern. Rigorous energy management to monitor consumption and reduce it where possible will be critically important during the life of the strategy. The Council is working with the Carbon Trust to audit energy use within the Councils estate and recommending energy saving measures.

Actions

Adopt an energy policy to reduce the Council's energy use in all its buildings and activities

Projects

Review of overtime & weekend working policy - which gives more efficient use of heating & lighting

Departmentalised metering of energy - to establish responsibility for energy use and encourage competition between departments to reduce energy use

Printer rationalization - to reduce number of machines required and energy used

Breeam "excellent" rating for new office building

Huntingdonshire's Environmental Footprint

There are over 69,000 homes within Huntingdonshire and many other buildings, businesses and industries across the district which consume vast amounts of energy everyday. Not only do we want to make homes and businesses more energy efficient, we want to make sure people have access to , and can afford the energy necessary to meet basic requirements such as lighting and heating their homes. Those unable to afford these basic energy requirements are known as 'fuel poor'. The common definition of a household in fuel poverty is one that needs to spend in excess of 10% of household income on fuel costs in order to maintain a satisfactory heating regime. In Huntingdonshire it is estimated that 6% of households are considered to be fuel poor. Fuel poverty arises as a result of several factors, including low income, inadequate insulation, inefficient heating systems, size and age of the property, the type and price of fuel used and method of payment. Warm, safe housing has a major role to play in maximising people's well being, helping to maintain the elderly in their own homes and reducing the incidences of cold and damp related illnesses.

Since April 2000, the Council has reported to the Government on its strategy and progress in reducing fuel poverty within the District. The Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) 1995 placed a duty on the Council to identify and promote ways in which it can achieve a 30% increase in home energy efficiency over the 15 years to 2010/2011. HECA has served to focus the attention of local authorities more closely on the energy efficiency of residential accommodation, and on developing an integrated approach to their housing and energy efficiency strategies. Improvements achieved through HECA will contribute to meeting the UK's Climate Change commitments. There are many different sources of funding to help residents improve the energy efficiency of their properties and the home energy efficiency team at HDC work closely with the Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre Anglia (ESTACA) to make sure local residents are aware of what they can do to improve the energy efficiency of their home. The Warm Front Scheme is the Government's main grant-funded programme for tackling fuel poverty in vulnerable households. The Scheme provides home owners, or those living in privately rented accommodation, who are in receipt of an

income or disability related benefit, a grant of up to £2,700 for insulation and gas central heating, or up to £4,000 for oil fired systems. By repairing or replacing an inoperable heating system and/or insulating a property, the householder will then be more likely to achieve affordable warmth and therefore lifted out of fuel poverty.

This strategy aims to tackle energy use and efficiency in three ways.

1. Attempting to change people's attitudes to energy use
 - Turning your room thermostat down by just 1°C could save up to 10% of your heating bill
 - Always turn off lights when leaving a room and avoid leaving electrical appliances on standby.
2. Encouraging and facilitating residents & businesses in Huntingdonshire to make structural improvements to their properties to improve efficiency
 - Cavity wall insulation is one of the most cost effective ways to save energy. This measure can save you up to £150 a year on your fuel bills
 - Loft insulation can prevent approximately 30% of your heat from escaping through the roof. The current recommended depth for loft insulation is 257mm
3. Improve standards for thermal efficiency in all new dwellings built in Huntingdonshire
 - Encouraging builders to use the Code for Sustainable Homes when building in Huntingdonshire will mean that all new buildings achieve a high level of energy efficiency

Actions

Encourage improvements in thermal efficiency in **ALL** new homes built in Huntingdonshire by ensuring they are built to the **HIGHEST POSSIBLE LEVEL** of the Code for Sustainable Homes & identify the most cost effective energy efficiency measures, likely to achieve the greatest reductions in carbon and & facilitate their installation in existing buildings

Encourage improvements in thermal efficiency of all commercial properties with a floor space of 500sq m or more by ensuring they achieve at least a BREEAM 'very good' rating & facilitate their installation of energy efficiency measures by residents & businesses

Projects

New Local Development Framework (LDF) – To require all new dwellings to achieve high levels of thermal efficiency

Sustainable homes showcases (existing homes) project - Demonstrate how 3 properties representative of the housing stock in the district constructed in the 1970s and 80s, can be upgraded to make them more sustainable. Houses to include energy saving measures

Sustainable homes showcase (New build) - A development of 30 2, 3 and 4 bed exemplar homes in Hartford constructed code for sustainable homes level 5

Warmer Homes for life project - A home insulation project established by HDC for vulnerable residents

Warm front scheme - National government heating and insulation project

British Gas insulation scheme - Home insulation scheme for able to pay households

Peterborough Environment City Trust business audits - Encourage businesses in the district to undertake environmental audit offered by Peterborough Environment City Trust (PECT)

Business grant scheme – Look to introduce a £500 grant scheme for businesses to deliver energy efficiency measures

Fuel Poverty Strategy – Annual to increase the energy efficiency of homes for vulnerable residents

RENEWABLE ENERGY

“HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL WILL INCREASE THE PROPORTION OF ENERGY PRODUCED AND USED WHICH COMES FROM RENEWABLE SOURCES IN COUNCIL OWNED BUILDINGS AND PROMOTE THE USE OF RENEWABLE TECHNOLOGY TO HOUSEHOLDS, BUSINESSES AND AT STAND ALONE SITES IN THE DISTRICT.”

Renewable energy describes energy occurring naturally in the environment, such as energy from the wind or sun. As these sources are essentially inexhaustible, developing renewable technologies can provide clean energy which will reduce our 'carbon footprint' and significantly reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. Renewable energy has the potential to provide around 40% of the UK's total energy requirements through a range of technologies from directly using the energy from the sun to heat water, to using mechanical devices such as wind turbines, to convert the kinetic energy in the wind into electrical energy.

In 2006 the UK generated around 4% of its electricity requirements from renewable sources. The successful transformation of Huntingdonshire into a 'low carbon' economy will necessitate a wholesale change in the way in which we generate electricity, build new homes, heat and power existing buildings and harness renewable sources of energy for local use. Currently UK Government has set targets for 10% of electricity to come from renewable sources by 2010 with an aspiration for this to rise to 15% by 2020. The development of renewable energy is seen as integral to the achievement of the Government's longer-term aim of reducing CO2 emissions by 60% by 2050. The main forms of renewable energy include:

Solar - Many people believe that we don't get much solar energy in the UK but solar power is already being used to provide essential power for many types of equipment being used in both remote and urban areas across the country. A solar photovoltaic (PV) module works by converting sunlight directly into electricity even on cloudy days. They can be integrated into buildings and even made into roof tiles virtually indistinguishable from normal tiles. Solar energy can also be used to heat water directly using specially designed collectors. Even in winter a useful amount of hot water can be produced from roof top collectors. A third way of using solar energy is simply by designing buildings to make maximum use of the sun. Using this so-called 'passive solar' approach, much of the energy that we currently use for heating, lighting and air conditioning can be saved.

Wind - The winds that blow across the UK can be harnessed by turbines to provide electricity. Wind turbines sited in suitable locations already provide a small, but growing percentage of the UK's electricity, and are used successfully all around the world. In fact wind power is one of the world's fastest growing energy sources. Wind turbine technology has greatly improved over the last ten years, making wind turbines quieter and more efficient.

Biomass - Agricultural waste or specially grown plants can be used as a fuel to run small power stations. Specially grown 'energy crops' provide not only an environmentally sound source of electricity, but also an important new opportunity for farmers. However, there are concerns about the sustainability of sourcing biomass from countries where forests are being cleared to make way for fast growing plants that are then used as biomass.

Geothermal - Geothermal energy taps the Earth's internal heat for a variety of uses, including electric power production, and the heating and cooling of buildings.

Hydro - Water turbines have been used to provide electricity for over 100 years and presently provide over 1% of the UK's electricity. Although most of the possible sites for large hydropower stations in the UK have already been developed, there is a large potential for smaller schemes.

Huntingdonshire District Council's Environmental Footprint

Renewable electricity generation in the UK has increased significantly since 2002 with the introduction of the Renewables Obligation. The Renewables Obligation requires all electricity suppliers in England and Wales to generate (supply) a growing proportion of their electricity from renewable sources. There is a major opportunity for the Council to show leadership in reducing carbon emissions through its buying choices and in particular the energy we buy for Council buildings. Therefore the Council has switched its electricity supply to a green tariff with 50% of its electricity coming from good quality Combined Heat and Power (CHP) and the other 50% coming from renewable sources.

In the same way that we can show a lead by purchasing renewable energy, it is equally important to utilise renewable energy solutions in Council Buildings. The Strategy will require the installation of renewable energy solutions for at least five council owned sites. When installed these will bring significant carbon savings, showcase technologies and provide an impetus for the development of the market for renewable energy locally.

Actions

To continue to review the Council's electricity supply to ensure that we procure as much as possible from renewable sources.

Where appropriate install renewable energy technologies at new council buildings and when replacing systems in existing buildings

Projects

Regular review of electricity supply contracts – Seek to increase the proportion of energy purchased from renewable sources when renewing supply contracts

Renewables at Huntingdon Bus Station - The installation of a ground source heat pump and solar photovoltaic panels at refurbished Huntingdon Bus Station, to contribute towards hot water and electricity generation

Godmanchester Nursery - Solar thermal (hot water) at the Godmanchester Nursery site.

Huntingdonshire's Environmental Footprint

As part of the London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough Growth corridor Huntingdonshire will see significant levels of new development by 2020. Currently new build development increases the total housing stock of the district by around 1% annually and it is anticipated that by 2020 there will be 20,000 new homes in the district. As these homes are likely to be around for at least 100 years, it is extremely important to ensure that they are built to the highest possible thermal standards and for them to incorporate renewable energy systems. The government has set the ambitious target that all new homes in the UK should be carbon neutral by 2016 and intends stepped improvements in Building Regulations to achieve this:

- A 25% reduction in carbon emissions from 2010 (compared to 2006 Building Regulation standard)
- A 44% reduction in carbon emissions from 2013 (compared to 2006 Building Regulation standard)

Delivering zero carbon growth will require all new buildings to have electricity and heating provided by renewable energy. This can be achieved through installing 'on-site' micro-renewable energy installations or by facilitating large scale 'off-site' solutions such as wind farms. The Local Development Framework (LDF) will require developers to incorporate on site renewable energy sources sufficient to provide at least 10% of the energy requirement of the development. The Council will incorporate within the Master Planning process, work to identify suitable locations in the district for larger scale infrastructure to generate renewable energy.

A specific target has been set for the East of England to install 821MW (14% of our energy use) of onshore renewable electricity by 2010. The Red Tile Farm wind farm recently installed in the district contributes 24MW towards this regional target. The Council will support other such developments where appropriate and will, through continued engagement with the renewable energy industry (and local stakeholders) build a common understanding of the potential for further expansion.

Arguably the greatest challenge facing the district is to upgrade the thermal efficiency of the existing housing stock and retro-fit renewable energy systems to reduce the carbon footprint of the housing stock as a whole. The council will actively facilitate the introduction of renewable energy in individual homes in the district and seek grant funding opportunities where possible for installation of those technologies likely to achieve the greatest reduction in carbon emissions. Such micro generation technologies may include:

- Solar thermal – for hot water systems
- Solar (photovoltaic) – to provide electricity
- Ground source heat pumps – to transfer heat from the ground to heat water for space heating
- Micro-wind generators – employing a rotor to convert wind energy to electrical energy using a generator
- Biomass boilers – Biomass boilers produce hot water for heating and domestic hot water by burning biomass fuels. The most common fuel is wood.

Actions

Encourage the installation of renewable energy by local businesses, institutions and householders through promotional events, grant funding and support & advice

Support renewable energy proposals in Huntingdonshire where impacts on amenity, wildlife and landscape are acceptable

Require a minimum of 10% renewable energy generation from all developments of 10 or more units

Projects

Sustainable homes showcases (existing homes) project - Demonstrate how 3 properties representative of the housing stock in the district constructed in the 1970s and 80s, can be upgraded to make them more sustainable. Houses to include renewable technology such as Solar Hot Water and Solar PV

Solar Hot Water Scheme - £600 grant funding (per property) towards the cost of installing solar hot water systems at households in the district

Power to the People Renewable Energy Events - Renewable Energy showcase events organised in conjunction with Energy Saving Trust

New Local Development Framework (LDF) - The Local Development Framework to require all new developments to incorporate on-site renewable energy sources sufficient to provide at least 10% of the energy requirement of the development

Sustainable Homes Showcase (New Build) - A development of 30 exemplar 2,3 and 4 bedroom homes, constructed to achieve compliance with level 5 of the code for Sustainable Homes, incorporating renewable technology

New Local Development Framework (LDF) - A positive policy in the LDF supporting large scale renewable proposals in suitable locations within the district

Red Tile Farm Community Environment Fund - Community fund to encourage environmental improvements within a 5 mile radius of the Red Tile Farm Wind Farm

Glasmoor Community Environment Fund - Community fund run jointly with Fenland District Council to encourage environmental improvements within a 5 mile radius

TRAVEL & EMISSIONS TO AIR

“ENCOURAGE THE USE OF MORE SUSTAINABLE MODES OF TRAVEL ACROSS THE DISTRICT AND SEEK TO MINIMISE THE ADVERSE EFFECT ON AIR QUALITY RESULTING FROM TRANSPORT EMISSIONS.”

Transport is an integral part of our daily lives. An effective transport system is essential to the efficient movement of people and goods, benefiting our quality of life and the economy. However, the more we travel and move goods, the greater the impact on our environment and health, through our dependence on fossil-fuels. The transport sector is currently the third largest source of greenhouse gas emissions (UK Climate Change Programme). But more importantly it is the fastest growing source. Left unchecked, car traffic could grow by about 20% over the next two decades and commercial traffic is forecast to grow by about 22%. Fuel use in the transport sector is the fastest growing contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in the UK and demand is increasing year on year.

Increasing car usage and movement of goods by road has contributed to growing congestion in our towns and a loss of tranquillity in rural areas. Government sources attribute 10,000 annual premature deaths in Britain to vehicle emissions. Action to tackle the impacts of traffic growth on congestion and pollution and to reduce the impact of transport on the environment is one of the government’s main priorities.

Huntingdonshire District Council’s Environmental Footprint

Huntingdonshire has a widely dispersed rural population for which we have a wide range of responsibilities. Our refuse collection, recycling and street scene vehicles travel several thousand miles on a weekly basis to deliver our services. The Council’s Environmental Health service carry out health and safety inspections on premises and our Planning and Building Control services carry out inspections across the district to ensure safe development of new and extended buildings.

The Council is working to reduce the impact of its own transport activities. Specific employee travel plans are being introduced, designed to encourage employees to use cars only when absolutely necessary and to promote the use of alternative forms of transport, such as fuel efficient pool cars, car sharing, cycling, walking and using public transport. The Council will investigate methods for reducing emissions from its fleet and will ensure that emissions are a key consideration when specifying new vehicles. Advice is being also given to employees as to how they can reduce their transport emissions by employing economical driving techniques.

Actions

Develop and implement site specific employee Travel Plans for each of the Council’s main sites and reduce CO₂ emissions from leased and employee owned vehicles
Effective management of the Council’s own vehicle fleet to reduce emissions

Projects

HDC Corporate Travel Plan and site specific Travel Plans – Provides the overall targets for changing the way we travel at work.

Review of employee lease car scheme and car user allowances - to provide incentives to drive smaller vehicles

Calculate accurate CO₂ emissions - for employee travel to provide baseline for reduction

Green Fleet Review - to be undertaken for the Council by the Energy Saving Trust to consider ways to reduce emissions such as increasing the percentage of biodiesel used in the Council's fleet from 5% to 30% and rescheduling refuse collection rounds to minimise miles travelled.

Rescheduling of refuse collection and recycling rounds - Rescheduling of Refuse collection rounds to reduce fuel use

Huntingdonshire's Environmental Footprint

Meeting the demand for housing growth in the district presents a number of distinct challenges from a transport perspective. Dealing effectively with issues such as congestion, widening travel choices and managing travel demand particularly in town centres is absolutely critical to ensuring that environmental impacts are minimised and the quality of life for residents is maintained.

There are a number of key transport projects currently being undertaken within Huntingdonshire all of which are designed to promote sustainable travel growth. These schemes are contained within the Cambridgeshire Local Transport Plan 2006-11 and include:

- Cambridgeshire Guided Bus-way running from Huntingdon to Cambridge,
- Huntingdonshire Car Parking Strategy,
- Bus priority measures between Huntingdon and St Ives
- The Market Town Transport Strategies
- Realignment of the A14 route west of Fenstanton to Ellington.

The council is committed to reducing transport related carbon emissions (particularly from road traffic) and will work with the transport authorities (Cambridgeshire County Council and the Highways Agency) to achieve an integrated transport network. With these partners we will develop alternatives to the single occupancy use of the car and promote and aid the development of travel plans for schools and businesses, and residential travel plans for new developments to encourage more sustainable travel behaviour. The Council will also aim to ensure that all new development is in close proximity to the appropriate infrastructure requirements to limit the need to travel and ensure that the opportunities for walking, cycling and using public transport are increased.

Tackling Pollution

The main source of air pollution in Huntingdonshire is road transport. In certain areas of the district, pollutant levels are high enough that some of the air quality objectives of the National Air Quality Strategy are not being met. Under the Environment Act 1995, local authorities must designate such areas as Air Quality Management Areas if members of the public are exposed to levels of pollution that exceed these objectives.

Huntingdonshire District Council has declared four Air Quality Management Areas. Parts of Huntingdon and St Neots have been given this status due to congestion in the town centres, and Brampton and Fenstanton are now officially recognised due to their close proximity to the A14 corridor. These Air Quality Management Areas will be subject to an Air Quality Action Plan, exploring the measures available to the authority to improve air quality. Options included in the Action Plan will include opportunities to reduce emissions by working with local public transport providers on reducing their vehicle emissions. Pollutants such as nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), principally derived from vehicle exhaust emissions, have the potential to exacerbate asthma and other respiratory conditions.

Sustainable travel, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution and health are all intrinsically linked. We can help reduce the problems of air quality by choosing more sustainable forms of transport, so we need to ensure that a wide choice of travel options are available, allowing us to live within easy reach of work, leisure and essential services. Only by doing this can we reduce reliance on the car and its associated impacts on air quality, pollution and health.

Actions

Provide more opportunities for residents to walk, cycle, use public and community transport, and encourage schools and businesses to develop travel plans, with Cambridgeshire County Council, bus operators and other partners

New development to be accommodated in locations which limit the need to travel whilst catering for local needs

Manage demand for car parking in town centre locations and encourage the use of low emission vehicles and encourage alternative forms of travel

Develop and implement air quality action plans to facilitate prevention and mitigation of air pollution in Huntingdonshire

Work to reduce emissions from buses in the District and ensure taxis become less polluting through regular emissions testing and possible introduction of vehicle age limits

Projects

Delivery of Market Town Transport Strategy Action Plans

Support and promote the 'Cambridgeshire Travel for work partnership' - to encourage the uptake of travel plans by businesses and organisations in the District

Cycle Path improvements – Upgrade Cycleway between Huntingdon and St Ives

Huntingdonshire Car Parking Strategy – Designed to manage parking demand in town centres across the district

Council Emissions Inventory - To inform the Air Quality Management Strategy for Huntingdonshire

Guided Bus-way Project – Buses diverted from the A14, easing congestion and all buses using the guided bus way must be low emission

Amendment of taxi and private hire licensing regulations - Requiring age and emission limitations with variable charging based on road tax category

ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

“HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL WILL WORK TOWARDS ENSURING BUILDINGS, SERVICES AND THE COMMUNITY ARE ABLE TO ADAPT TO CLIMATE CHANGE”

Whatever action is taken now to try to slow down or halt climate change, it will take decades to bring emissions of greenhouse gases down to sustainable levels. Even if we were to make significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions tomorrow, the inertia in the climate system means that we will need to cope with a changing climate for the next 40-plus years, due to emissions already in the atmosphere. As a result significant climate change is now unavoidable and we have no choice but to begin adapting to changes in average weather and also preparing for more extremes of weather.

Organisations and individuals must grasp the reality that we have to both reduce our emissions (Mitigation) and adjust to inevitable climate change (Adaptation). It is not a choice between mitigation and adaptation; they are complementary actions and must be pursued together. Successfully adapting to climate change is not just an environmental problem it is also an economic and social issue, as the changes to our climate have the potential to impact on the whole economy, from financial markets to individuals and businesses. Climatologists predict significant climate change in the eastern region in the coming decades and we must adapt our lifestyles to cope. These changes can be summarised as:

- Hotter, drier summers – Summer droughts (maybe 3 consecutive droughts every decade over the next 50 –100 years)
- Milder, wetter winters
- More frequent heavy down pours of rain – leading to floods at unpredictable times of year
- Higher wind speeds – Unseasonable storms in summer and autumn

The UK Climate Impacts Programme (UKCIP) outlines several possible temperature and rainfall scenarios, with the main message that:

- Until about the middle of the century, the amount of climate change that will be experienced has largely already been set, due to emissions of greenhouse gases that are already in the atmosphere, highlighting the need for adaptation.
- The extent of changes towards the end of the century depends on present day and future emissions of greenhouse gases
- By the 2080s average annual temperature across the UK may rise by between 2 and 3.5 degrees, but some areas could warm by as much as 5 degrees
- Heavy winter rainfall events that occur every two years are expected to increase in intensity by between five and 20 per cent
- Relative sea level around the UK could rise by as much as 86cm in southern England by the 2080s and extreme high sea levels will occur more frequently

Huntingdonshire District Council's Environmental Footprint

The majority Council's building were constructed in 1970's with some dating back much further. At the time of construction, issues of carbon emissions and changing climate were not considered. As a result, most of the council's buildings were constructed with no thought of a changing climate. With the wide range of important services that the council delivers, we need to ensure that all our buildings remain fully operational during times of severe weather events, considering for example working with the Environment Agency to increase the resilience of our buildings to increased flood risk and modifying temperature control within our offices and Leisure Centres.

Actions

Undertake a comprehensive risk based assessment of the Councils estate to identify vulnerabilities to weather and climate and develop a series of measures to minimize the identified risks

Projects

Huntingdonshire District Council Climate Resilience Programme - Enlist consultants/work with the Environment Agency to produce a programme for climate-proofing council buildings and infrastructure

Huntingdonshire's Environmental Footprint

The greatest challenge facing Huntingdonshire is the ability of the district to adapt to extreme weather conditions leading to increased flooding and droughts. As a rural district in the driest region of the UK, stress on water resources is already an issue. The district is dominated by the Fens and the Great Ouse floodplain and farmland adjoining Holmewood Fen National Nature reserve the former site of Whittlesey Mere is at -4m the lowest point in England.

The implications of increased rainfall - Storm events and wet weather could lead to an increase in flash flooding resulting in severe damage and there are likely to be traffic management issues. Transport interruptions can in turn affect commuters and deliveries of goods and services. This will ultimately lead to increased business costs with impacts on the local economy. Drainage problems could also result in flash flood risks. With this comes a greater risk of injury and risk to public health. It also causes damage to property. River flooding causes similar problems to flash flooding, although the floods are more widespread and can last longer, causing greater damage and disruption. Other specific risks such as rising insurance premiums in high flood risk areas or even withdrawal of insurance cover also need to be considered. There are also considerable problems associated with the spread of pollution via flooding. In addition, currently acceptable levels of pollutants released as effluent into rivers may well become unacceptable if drier, hotter summers cause lower seasonal river flows.

The implications of rising temperatures - Climate change is leading to increasing temperatures. Higher average temperatures are being experienced and also many more hot days. Summer heatwaves are becoming more frequent and intense. Research by the MET office has demonstrated that temperatures experienced in the summer of 2003 heatwave will be about average by the 2040's and will be considered 'cool' by the 2060's. Business can be greatly affected by rising temperatures – UK employers lost an estimated £154 million a day in productivity during one week of the July 2006 heat wave, owing to travel disruption and staff arriving late, according to the Centre for Economics and Business Research.

It is estimated that work levels dropped by almost a third when temperatures soared to more than 30 degrees. Heat waves have many other significant effects including an increase in the number of deaths, especially amongst the elderly. More frequent heat waves increase the risks of heat stress, dehydration, heat-related mortality and skin cancer. There may well be an increase in demand for essential services such as social, health and emergency services to cope with these impacts. There may also be an increase in demand for environmental health services due to higher temperatures increasing the amount of vermin and incidences of food poisoning.

Transport can be disrupted as hotter summers cause damage to assets and infrastructure such as buckled railway lines and melting roads. Energy demands for cooling will increase in hotter weather, potentially causing overload of the electricity grid and black outs. Air quality is also a concern as increasing temperatures and prolonged hot periods are associated with summer ozone episodes. There is still some uncertainty regarding the link between climate change and air quality but reports from the summer of 2006 have certainly shown that asthma sufferers were particularly badly affected during the heat waves. Management of parks and open spaces will need to take account of the impacts of drier, hotter summers and warmer, wetter winters on trees and other vegetation. Warmer temperatures are also likely to result in more outdoor lifestyles, putting greater demand on our green and open space.

Huntingdonshire District Council provides guidance to developers in relation to avoiding flood plains and areas at greater risk of flooding. Our Emergency Planning Section has strategies for dealing with the consequences of extreme weather events, flooding and drought. Huntingdonshire District Council, as a service provider at the core of the community needs to be prepared to deal with all possible outcomes. This is best achieved by working in partnership with the range of agencies that are active throughout the District. These partners include the Environment Agency, Cambridgeshire County Council and the Emergency Services. One of the Environment Agency's key roles is in forecasting floods and warning the public. The Council also raises awareness of flooding in areas prone to it, and recommends that people living there make preparations in advance. The Environment Agency use the latest technology 24 hours a day to monitor rainfall and river levels along with weather data from the Met Office, they provide local area forecasts on the possibility of flooding and its likely severity. There are four established codes for warning people of flooding; indicating the level of danger faced and HDC use these codes when responding to floods.

Infrastructure Changes - As well as preparing our residents for emergency situations and severe weather events, this strategy also aims to encourage the long-term development of Huntingdonshire's infrastructure to be able to cope with the changing climate by encouraging the development of the following adaptation measures:

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) - offer an alternative to traditional approaches to managing runoff from buildings and hardstanding and include the use of:

- Rainwater harvesting, green roofs and water butts
- Permeable and porous pavements
- Vegetated landscape features with smooth surfaces and a gentle downhill gradient to drain water evenly off impermeable surfaces

Green Roofs are considered a SuDS technique - They are vegetated roofs, or roofs with vegetated spaces. Many of these benefits shown below help to address climate change:

- Creating natural green spaces in urban areas
- Benefits for biodiversity
- Reduced stormwater runoff
- Reduced energy consumption and fuel costs, since green roofs provide cooling in summer and thermal insulation in winter
- Extended roof life, since the green roof protects the roof's waterproofing membrane, almost doubling its life expectancy

Improving the flood resistance of your home

- Using flood-resilient materials
- Using removable flood barriers and other removable flood protection products
- Raising damp-proof courses
- Locating electrical services and boilers above likely maximum flood level
- Using one-way valves in drainage pipes to prevent back-up of water into buildings

Building design - can assist in reducing temperatures. Shading windows by installing shutters or blinds reduces solar gain and so internal heat build-up is reduced. Extending roofs can also provide shading to a building. Heavier weight building materials like concrete and stone have a tendency to keep buildings cooler in the day, by virtue of their thermal mass. Chilled ceilings and chilled beams can also be used.

Cool pavements - Many of Huntingdonshire's, streets and pavements are typified by dark surfaces. 'Cool pavements' are comprised of light coloured material with high solar reflectivity and good water permeability. This is potentially a very effective way of reducing high temperatures as the amount of solar energy absorbed is decreased.

Planting trees and vegetation - Trees can provide significant benefits in urban areas as they not only provide shade but can also reduce air pollution. Trees and vegetation are natural cooling systems as they convert water contained within their foliage into water vapour which is released into the atmosphere by evapotranspiration. However, trees will need to be selected very carefully in the face of climate change, for example drought-resistant trees should be planted.

Actions

Integrate climate change issues into the Emergency Plan and improve awareness of flood and severe weather warnings in partnership with relevant organisations
Work with other Local Authorities to plan together for climate change impacts and ensure that adaptation is included in 100% of HDC's strategies, plans and policies
Ensure where possible, development occurs on sites above potential flood level. Where development is essential below flood level, detailed risk assessments must be undertaken and adequate flood protection and mitigation measures put in place

Projects

Cambridgeshire Climate Change Partnership - Establish a partnership of all local authorities in Cambridgeshire to establish a county wide response to dealing with the changing climate

Climate change adaptation service review - Audit of all services delivered by HDC to identify all potential risks and opportunities and review plans and procedures in light of audit outcomes

Emergency Plan Review – Review of the emergency plan to incorporate response to climate change risks

Great Fen Restoration – Landscape scale restoration which will enable habitats to adapt to the long-term effects of climate change

Severe weather text alert system – Landscape Messaging system which sends text messages to resident's mobile phones to warn of severe weather events or other emergency planning issues

New Local Development Framework (LDF) – Development of policies to manage flood risk in new developments

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PART TWO
REDUCING THE
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF
THE RESOURCES WE USE

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RESOURCE USE – Reducing the environmental impact of the resources we use

What are natural resources?

Everybody consumes resources. When people consume resources either by buying manufactured products, driving a car or turning on the tap at home, there are associated impacts on the environment.

We all need natural resources to live. The sun, water, air, soil, plants and animals provide humans with the tools we need to breathe, eat, drink to fuel our bodies and build our lifestyles. But, over time and as the global population grows, we have been using these resources much faster than the planet can replenish them.

Human demands on world resources have doubled over the last 40 years. As we have become more affluent we have bought more goods, travelled further and demanded greater convenience. If these demands on the Earth's resources continue to increase we will be causing irreparable harm to the environment. The use of resources can often be associated with the production of waste, air polluting gases and degradation of natural habitats.

How has our use of natural resources damaged the environment?

Human activity has led to many natural resources being depleted and created some major environmental problems:

- **Fossil fuels** - Increasing amounts of fossil fuels are burned to produce electricity and for transport, this produces carbon dioxide which causes climate change
- **Water** – Food production and manufacture of other products place demands on water supplies at home and abroad. For example, It takes around 4,000 litres of water to make a cotton T-shirt - some lakes in cotton-producing areas are drying up, causing the collapse of fish stocks. World populations of freshwater fish have nearly halved since 1970 due to increased demand for water in producing food, fibre and energy
- **Grazing land** - Demand for animal products is rising rapidly and it is estimated that the impact of grazing has doubled globally over the last 30 years - more land is being converted to grassland - reducing other wildlife habitats.
- **Forests** - Wood can be a great renewable resource. But the way people currently use it is causing the world's ancient forests to shrink. Trees are being lost at about an average of 36 football fields a minute because of the spread of urban development, illegal logging, agriculture and industry.
- **Fish** - Over-fishing is a threat to ocean-life and to the food and livelihoods of over a billion people. As many as 90 per cent of all the oceans' large fish have been fished out. More than ever before, responsible fisheries management is needed to help protect marine life and conserve habitats for future generations

What does this mean to me?

Our own wellbeing and quality-of-life, as well as the health of ecosystems, are becoming increasingly compromised by pollution and over-exploitation of resources. A situation created, in large part, by our enormous, collective consumer appetite.

Like most developed countries, the UK currently uses more than it's fair share of resources like fuel, raw materials and water. As the things people buy are often made elsewhere, our lifestyles don't just affect us here in the UK, they damage the environment in other parts of the world too. Developed countries need to move towards using only their fair share of the world's resources – this idea has been described as one planet living.

Current consumption patterns similar to those of the UK could not be replicated worldwide. Some calculations suggest that this would require three planets' worth of resources. Instead we need to move towards 'one planet living'. Decisions people make in their everyday lives – what type of home to live in, how to travel and what products to buy – can help us move towards living within one planet's worth of resources. To live within our resources, we need to achieve more with less. This requires us to change the way we design, produce, use and dispose of the products and services we own and consume.

Current production practices are one source of many of the environmental challenges we face, requiring us to urgently develop products and services using fewer resources and to prevent waste. This will certainly mean using cleaner technologies, but it will also require new ideas to encourage us to meet our needs in different, less harmful ways. While Government has an important role to play in stimulating companies to act through incentives, rewards and the threat of penalties, it is ultimately businesses that will deliver a supply of goods and services that are less damaging to the environment and more resource efficient. We need to reach a situation where companies regard environmental care as important as customer care.

With rising energy and waste costs, tougher environmental legislation and higher stakeholder expectations, organisations are increasingly focusing their attention on improving production practices to both enhance performance and demonstrate responsible behaviour. There is huge potential for better products and production practices to deliver improvements without the need for behaviour change on the part of consumers. However, a sustainable society will require that all sectors - businesses, public sector and households - consume differently and more efficiently.

If we are to realise the vision of 'one planet living', without widening social inequalities, ever increasing demands on resources, and the waste associated with unsustainable levels of production and consumption, we need to learn to use resources much more efficiently.

How will the Environment Strategy help?

The UK Government has committed itself to "encourage and promote the development of a ten year framework of programmes to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production". Currently there are inefficiencies in the whole 'cycle of production'. From the impacts of harvesting raw materials, the production and transporting of materials and products which result in emissions, to the waste products that end up in landfill from the production process as well as the disposal requirements of the product at the end of its life cycle. By addressing how we can use resources more efficiently, and promoting this to businesses and consumers in Huntingdonshire, everyone can save money as well as benefit the environment.

This strategy recognises the need to use resources more efficiently and looks to tackle the issue in four ways:

1. Encouraging more sustainable purchasing
2. Making Huntingdonshire more water efficient
3. Making the best use of land
4. Reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill

PURCHASING

“HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL WILL IMPLEMENT AND FOLLOW A CODE OF SUSTAINABLE PURCHASING AND ENCOURAGE SIMILAR GOOD PRACTICE IN HOUSEHOLDS AND BUSINESSES IN THE DISTRICT.”

Everything we buy and use has an impact on the environment. Products such as computers, stationery, vehicles and furniture have impacts throughout their life, from production, use, through to disposal. Frequently, we aren't aware of these impacts. They may happen in the early stages of a product's life (e.g. through mining the raw materials needed to make our computers, or cutting down the trees to make our paper), or after we have finished using it (e.g. when it is sitting in a landfill site). We all need to consider this 'hidden' environmental footprint when purchasing both for the Council and the district if we are to reduce our environmental impact.

As an organisation it is possible for the Council to show a lead by purchasing goods and services in a more sustainable way by, for example, specifying environmentally preferred products, looking at the whole life costing of a product, and, through our contracts with suppliers, to encourage them to operate green and sustainable procurement policies. Sustainable purchasing takes environmental, social and economic factors into account. The key questions are:

- Is the purchase necessary?
- What is the product made of?
- Where it comes from?
- Who make them?
- How are they made?

All purchasing decisions made by individuals are equally important in promoting sustainability. Terms such as 'food miles'; the distance our food travels from where it has been produced to where we buy it, are now in everyday usage and many consumers are adjusting their purchasing decisions to take account of the environmental impacts. In the UK the food system accounts for up to 40% of all road freight and the ingredients of a typical Sunday meal could have travelled 49,000 miles, equivalent to 2 trips around the world. Supporting local food production and consumption through farmers' markets and farm shops can drastically reduce food miles, benefiting the local economy and the environment at the same time. Evidence suggests that individuals can also have a significant effect on production, by for example, using their purchasing power to demand more energy efficient appliances or through ethical consumption choices, such as the rise in demand for free-range poultry products.

Huntingdonshire District Council's Environmental Footprint

Local Authorities are significant consumers. Huntingdonshire District Council purchases electronic equipment, food, paper, furniture, energy, cleaning equipment, waste services, accommodation, vehicles and much more. As a major purchaser the Council inevitably has a significant effect on the environment. Many things can be done to improve the sustainability of our purchasing. This can be done at a strategic level and also at a day to day level. Traditionally, environmental management dealt with problems once they had happened. For example, waste management traditionally dealt with waste that had already been generated. More progressive and forward thinking environmental management aims to minimise environmental problems before they occur. Huntingdonshire District Council will work towards the European, Eco-Management and Audit Scheme standard (EMAS).

Careful selection of products that are purchased and consumed is another way the Council can reduce its environmental impact, using its purchasing power to influence suppliers and help create a more reliable market for environmental and more ethical products. A good example is the Council's commitment to using recycled paper in its corporate printing policy. Whilst many organisations perceive themselves as acting responsibly by sending their waste paper for recycling, recycling will only be viable if end-markets are created for the products made from recovered waste paper, i.e. closing the recycled paper loop. By specifying papers with a high recycled content for print work, the Council will help create end-market demand for the waste paper that it collects for recycling, thus diverting it from landfill.

Sustainability can be incorporated into the whole procurement process: defining the need, evaluating options, design and specifying, supplier selection, tender evaluation, post-contract management and supplier development. Having a strong environmental policy which includes purchasing is the first step and then by translating this environmental policy into action, a large organisation like Huntingdonshire District Council, can significantly reduce its environmental footprint

Actions

Require all HDC tender specifications to include a section on sustainability and the environment to which weight will be given in the tender process

Seek accreditation to an Environmental Management System (EMS) by the end of the Strategy period

Projects

Green Champions Project – To ensure all employees are aware of the Councils environment policy and to encourage good practice in all our purchasing.

Environmental Management System - Initial work will be undertaken to examine the requirements of gaining accreditation to an Environmental Management System

Sustainable Purchasing Guidance – Develop and implement guidelines to ensure sustainable and ethical purchasing within the organisation

Godmanchester Plant Nursery Project – Returning a disused nursery to productive use, providing locally sourced trees and bedding plants

Huntingdonshire's Environmental Footprint

If everyone consumed the way we do in the UK we would need three planet earths to sustain our current lifestyles. Our purchasing decisions can make just as important a contribution to climate change as the way we travel and the way we heat our homes. In fact almost everything we do in our lives involves products or services that have consumed energy to be made or transported, thus emitting carbon dioxide and causing climate change. We can have a positive impact by aiming to live and consume in a "sustainable" way and we can all use our purchasing power to make sustainability a reality by changing our purchasing habits.

Simple things to make a difference:

- **Don't buy things you don't really need or want** - Every time you buy a product you're responsible for the emissions from its manufacture, packaging and transport.
- **Buy local food to avoid unnecessary "food miles" or grow your own** - When you buy food from overseas you're responsible for the "food miles" incurred by shipping that product to the UK. Buying locally grown produce is probably the most sustainable individual action we can make to reduce our environmental footprint.

- **Buy Fair-trade produce** – We do recognise not all items we buy can be grown locally, with produce like coffee and bananas coming from the third world where many growers face exploitation. Buying fair-trade helps to ensure a decent working conditions and a better quality of life for growers. Fair-trade produce tends also to less extensively farmed and therefore more sustainable.
- **Buy less packaged food** - The more packaging your food has the higher the energy that was required to make it. Try to buy produce and goods with less packaging and send a signal to manufacturers!
- **Use refill packs** - A great way to reduce on packaging for the products you use is to buy refill packs for items like soap powder - they use less packaging and therefore have lower carbon emissions from manufacturing.
- **Don't waste food** - Energy is used in packaging, transporting and heating food, so if we waste food rather than consuming it that's a lot of needless carbon dioxide emissions.
Drink tap water instead of bottled water - Tap water is clean, fresh and free so why buy expensive bottled water? Energy is consumed for each bottle created, filled and transported, leading to unnecessary carbon emissions and yet more plastic in landfill sites.

Actions

Continue to develop and support the local farmers markets and promote further opportunities for the sale of locally produced food and other products in the district

Lead in providing information about the most sustainable consumer choices, through press and publicity campaigns

Actively encourage organisations in Huntingdonshire to implement an EMS & seek accreditation to recognised standard, e.g., ISO14001 or EMAS

Projects

Godmanchester Nursery Project – Returning the disused nursery to a productive demonstration site. A significant area of the nursery site will be cultivated as a small holding producing fruit and vegetables. Local schools and community groups will be invited to tend the site and share in the produce

Environmental Education Officer – To publicise and promote a broad range of environmental messages in line with the Council's role as a 'Community Leader' and to work with Schools and local community groups

Increasing Farmers Markets – Pilot project to increase frequency of Huntingdon farmers' market to weekly

Participation in the annual Huntingdonshire Food Festival – The festival celebrates the very best in local produce and is an excellent vehicle for education relating to healthy eating and sustainable purchasing

WATER USE

“HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL WILL REDUCE THE AMOUNT OF WATER USED IN COUNCIL BUILDINGS AND BY COUNCIL SERVICES AND ENCOURAGE SIMILAR GOOD PRACTICE IN HOUSEHOLDS AND BUSINESSES IN THE DISTRICT.”

New development, climate change and the simple fact that we are using more and more water every year is placing ever increasing pressure on the scarce water resources at our disposal. Each person in the region currently uses about 150 litres of water every day. Most of this is used for washing and toilet flushing, but it also includes drinking, cooking, washing cars and watering the garden. We use almost 50% more water than 25 years ago, partly because of the use of power showers and other water intensive household appliances.

Pressure on water resources is greatest in the summer, when it's hotter and drier. A wet winter will refill reservoirs providing enough water to last until the summer. But in 2004 and 2005, low winter rainfall meant that by July many reservoirs were almost completely dry. A hosepipe ban had to be imposed to conserve the remaining supply for essential use and water companies ran campaigns reminding people to be more careful with their water use. There was a huge public response and nationally water use dropped by about 84 million litres per day, so saving water makes sure that the water we do get lasts.

Water shortages don't just affect us they can also seriously harm our environment. When rivers and ponds run low on water, the fish, birds and other wildlife that rely on them struggle to survive. Continued consumption of water at current levels is not sustainable in the long term so it's vital that everyone uses water wisely, not just when there is a drought but all year round. There are many simple things we can do to reduce our water consumption to make sure that we have enough water now and at the same time protect our natural environment.

By cutting down our water use, we can:

- Save money, particularly if on a water meter
- Reduce the possibility of water shortages and summer water restrictions
- Cut emissions of the greenhouse gases responsible for climate change
- Reduce the amount of energy and chemicals used water treatment and pumping
- Sustain wildlife habitats in wetlands and rivers
- Maintain groundwater levels, thereby reducing stress on woodlands

Huntingdonshire District Council's environmental footprint

The council uses water for a wide range of functions such as swimming pools, cleaning streets, grounds maintenance and general use within its own buildings. There are opportunities in all buildings to provide fittings, components and installations that help reduce water consumption and it is important that the council introduces such measures wherever possible to improve its own water usage, by 'designing-in' water efficiency measures at new and existing sites.

Ultimately it is building users that have the biggest influence on water consumption and employees need to be encouraged to adopt responsible usage patterns, so that water conservation can be optimised. With the cost of water and the stress on resources continuing to rise, the widespread adoption of water saving technologies is likely to become a necessity and our approach to water use must become less blasé.

Actions

Accurately monitor water usage at all council sites and produce site specific Water Management Plans

Introduce rainwater harvesting systems and other water efficiency measures at new Council buildings and where feasible at existing sites

Projects

Introduction of water saving measures at Council's new headquarters building - A series of water efficiency measures are being incorporated into the design of the council's new headquarters building in Huntingdon, these include:

- A rainwater harvesting tank – Rainwater landing on the roof of the new headquarters to be collected in a 5,000 litre tank for reuse within the building.
- Water saving dual flush toilets (3 & 6 litres opposed to the standard 9 litres)
- Aerated flow taps to cut water usage by 50%
- Chilled mains water dispensers will be installed – to avoid the need to transport bottle water by road, remove the potential risk of back injury when lifting bottles and to save energy and waste.

Production of water management plans for Council sites – By auditing all Council sites it will be possible to assess areas where water savings can be made and to upgrade facilities where necessary

Rainwater harvesting and reed bed purification system at Little Paxton Nature Reserve – The Visitor Centre at Little Paxton Nature Reserve is not on the mains sewage system. We propose to introduce rainwater harvesting on site and to purify waste water using a reed bed system

Grey water system and water efficiency measures for the refurbished Huntingdon Bus Station

Huntingdonshire's Environmental Footprint

Rainfall Huntingdonshire is located in the driest region in the country with average rainfall of less than 570mm per year, only two-thirds the national average. In an average year only a quarter of the rainfall is available as a water resource after evaporation and use by plants. Long dry summers, during which evaporation exceeds rainfall, are a normal part of the climate in this region. Water is a renewable resource but is finite and the amount that is available each year depends upon rainfall. The regions main natural water resources are the rivers and groundwater, which are supplemented by artificial storage in reservoirs such as Grafham Water. This dry region is also one of population and economic growth. It is therefore important that we all use water wisely and continue to look for ways to conserve water to ensure that future demand can be met.

Domestic water use has risen year on year for the last 30 years. The extensive housing growth planned for Huntingdonshire to 2020 will place significant further pressure on water supplies. To combat this, the promotion of water efficiency will be critically important. The Environment Agency has suggested that a 25% reduction in water consumption at all new properties and an 8% reduction at all existing properties, achieved against a 2004 baseline figure, will be required to avoid the need to develop major new water storage resources. Evidence suggests that water metering is effective in reducing water consumption with 160 litres per head per day consumed in unmetered households in the Anglian Region, a 128 litres per head per day in metered households.

Adopting a systematic approach to water reduction, through the installation of some or all of the measures listed below can typically result in a 20 – 50% fall in water consumption. Many uses of water do not require it to be of drinking quality. Harvested rainwater and 'grey water' collected after it has been used for washing and showering, is adequate for uses such as watering gardens and flushing toilets. This not only makes wise use of a natural resource but can also have significant cost savings.

Simple water saving measures to make wise use of a natural resource, which can also produce significant cost savings include:

- Dual flush toilets
- Aerated or flow regulated taps
- Showers with low flow rates
- Best practice washing machines/dishwashers
- Rainwater collection facilities (e.g. water butts)

Actions

Increase awareness of water saving measures and promote water saving devices such as grey water systems and water efficient appliances

Encourage improvements in water efficiency in **ALL** new homes built in Huntingdonshire by ensuring they meet and where possible exceed the mandatory levels set within the Code for Sustainable Homes

Work with water companies, the Environment Agency and others as appropriate to produce a water cycle strategy for the district to assess water availability to meet required new growth

Projects

Environmental Education Officer - To publicise and promote a broad range of environmental messages in line with the Council's role as a 'Community Leader' and to work with Schools and local community groups

Water efficiency information on Council website - Content of the Council's website to promote water efficiency measures in line with the council's role as community leader

Sustainable homes Showcase (new build) - A development of 30 exemplar 2,3 and 4 bedroom homes, constructed to achieve compliance with level 5 of the code for Sustainable Homes (80 litres per person per annum).

Water Cycle Strategy - is in line with DEFRA's water Strategy "Future Water" (February 2008) through liaison with EERA (Environment & Resources Panel)

LAND USE

“HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL WILL WORK TO MAKE MORE USE OF PREVIOUSLY DEVELOPED LAND AND EXISTING BUILDINGS, AND USE LAND MORE EFFICIENTLY, TO ACHIEVE MORE SUSTAINABLE GROWTH”

The East of England is one of the UK's most successful and fastest growing regions, making a significant contribution to the national economy. This also means it faces the pressures of growth, putting land availability for development at a premium. Land is a finite resource which is subject to increasing and competing demands from:

- Housing and other development
- Transport and utility infrastructure
- Agriculture
- Open space and wildlife habitats
- Flood management

Over recent years there has been widespread recognition - now reflected in national, regional and local planning policies - that development has been wasteful of limited greenfield land. We must focus on making the best use of previously developed land.

What are 'Brownfield' and 'Greenfield' Land?

Brownfield land is more commonly known as previously-developed land. Greenfield land has seen no previous development and there is general agreement that the new houses which we need should be built on the brownfield land. Unfortunately it is not always as simple as that. Some brownfield land is valuable as it is - perhaps as a wildlife sanctuary; or is impossible to develop - perhaps because it is contaminated or inaccessible. And sometimes greenfield land is not so valuable. Furthermore it is generally agreed that there is not enough brownfield land for all the houses we need. Regional Planning Guidance 6 sets an initial target for Cambridgeshire of developing at least 50% of housing on previously developed sites by 2008. Bringing previously developed land back into productive use eases pressure on valuable Greenfield or environmentally sensitive landscapes and is in accordance with the aims of sustainable development. Regional Strategies tell local planners how many houses they must provide and local authorities set out in their plans to find as much suitable brownfield land as they can. Almost always they can't find all they need and have to include some greenfield sites, highlighting the tension between development and environmental protection.

Huntingdonshire's Environmental Footprint

Huntingdonshire is at the centre of the Cambridge to Peterborough growth area and managing the opportunities and pressures from growth is a fundamental issue for Huntingdonshire's Core Strategy, which sets the framework for how Huntingdonshire will develop up to 2021 and beyond. It contains strategic policies to manage growth and guide

new development. Significant enhancement is proposed for the transport links between Cambridge and the market towns that surround it and high quality public services will be developed in the Cambridge to Huntingdonshire corridor.

How many new homes will be needed?

The draft Regional Spatial Strategy has confirmed an allocation of a minimum of 11,200 new houses to be built in Huntingdonshire for the period 2001-2021, this is the equivalent of 550 homes per year up to 2021. This new development will generate additional demands on Huntingdonshire's physical and social infrastructure. However necessary these developments are, each impacts upon the environment in a different way. The challenge is to ensure that this development enhances rather than degrades the environment. It is important to retain landscapes of value in the district that may be threatened by proposals to build houses, for example. We know where these places are and we can use the planning system to make sure they aren't damaged.

There are four main locations where housing development is planned in Huntingdonshire, which centre on the four market towns of Huntingdon, St Neots, St Ives and Ramsey, with the majority of new development being located around Huntingdon and St Neots. Huntingdonshire's Spatial Strategy sets out how the area will develop over the next 20 years, whilst taking into account National and Regional policy. The approach is to develop sustainable brown field land first, but owing to the predominantly rural character of the district, there is insufficient well located brownfield land to achieve the national target.

Even so, wherever possible we need to promote high quality, mixed development on recycled land by:

- maximising the use of brownfield land and buildings for new development
- promoting high quality, mixed use development to include different house styles, close to jobs and services
- locate higher density development close to public transport routes and nodes by incorporating appropriate policies in development plans
- ensure new retail, leisure and cultural developments are located in town & rural centres
- encourage the provision of high quality health, education and care services close to where people live.

Housing Density

One result of this need to make best use of our land is pressure to try to accommodate more housing on a given area of land. Less than 30 homes per hectare of land is often considered unsustainable in terms of land use and in most cases will not support public transport or a good range of local services. Residential developments without associated facilities (such as schools, shops etc) only further encourage the use of the car for short local trips. For these and other reasons, higher density development – defined as being over 30 dwellings per hectare - is an essential feature of a sustainable community, alongside good public transport, a mix of decent homes for all, good quality public services, a sense of place and a safe and healthy environment. The phrase 'higher density' often brings to mind unpleasing pictures of high-rise flats and associated problems of overcrowding or 'town cramming'.

In fact, many of the 1960s high rise blocks were built at relatively low densities because of poorly used open space. Density is only a measure – it does not mean quality in itself, and it should not be used to dictate the design. Higher density in itself should not be seen as an aim of development. The aim should be to generate a local population large enough to

support local services such as transport, shops and schools. The Cambridgeshire Structure plan sets a target of achieving net densities of 30+ dwellings per hectare (dph) in new housing developments of 5+ dwellings.

Huntingdonshire is a predominantly rural district with just 6% of its total land use in urban use, mainly due to the fact that the district covers a vast area but none of the major towns and settlements is particularly large. Despite this, the district does contain a large amount of previously-developed land. Survey work carried out in 2006 showed approximately 904 hectares of previously-developed land in Huntingdonshire. Over three quarters of this land is made up of several large military airbases, two of which have become redundant, of which some development of employment use and warehousing has been approved. Beyond this, supplies of previously developed land are relatively limited, particularly in locations with the facilities and infrastructure to support new housing. Due to the scale of development required in Huntingdonshire over the next 15 years, the density of these new developments will determine whether further releases of greenfield land will need to be made.

Actions

Increase the proportion of housing development on previously developed land.

Where appropriate encourage developments with a higher density of dwellings per hectare

Avoid development of agricultural land grades 1, 2 and 3a

Increase the proportion of employment floor space on previously developed land

Projects

Encourage the sustainable design & construction of new developments to make optimum use of land through the LDF

Sustainable construction – A development of 20+ demonstration homes in Hartford constructed to achieve accreditation to the Code for Sustainable Homes and be built to sustainable density

Financial incentive schemes for sustainable for sustainable construction - Considering giving sustainably built domestic and commercial buildings a reduction on council tax and business rates

WASTE

“HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL WILL REDUCE THE AMOUNT OF WASTE PRODUCED AND SENT TO LANDFILL AND ENCOURAGE SIMILAR GOOD PRACTICE IN HOUSEHOLDS AND BUSINESSES IN THE DISTRICT”

Waste or rubbish is everything that people throw away because they no longer need it or want it. As a society we are currently producing more waste than ever before. In the UK alone we produce more than 434 million tonnes of rubbish every year. This is the equivalent of enough rubbish to fill the Albert Hall every hour! Most of this rubbish is disposed of in landfill sites where it is buried in the ground and can take hundreds of years to decompose.

Not only are we rapidly running out of space and facilities to landfill all our rubbish; burying it in the ground has a negative impact on the environment. When buried rubbish decomposes, it produces carbon dioxide and methane which are both greenhouse gases contributing to climate change. Also, as the materials break-down they produce a toxic liquid called leachate that contains heavy metals. If this is not managed properly, there is a risk of the leachate leaking out of the landfill and polluting rivers and ground water supplies.

As consumers and producers, the way in which we use materials will affect whether we have a sustainable society that leaves resources available for future generations to use. We need to think about how we can use fewer resources ("get more from less"), how we can make products last longer (which means we use less and we throw away less) and how we can be more creative with our so-called "waste" rather than simply throwing it away.

So whether it's at home or at work, the fact that we produce waste, and get rid of it, matters for the following reasons:

- when something is thrown away we lose the natural resources, the energy and the time which have been used to make the product. The vast majority of resources that we use in manufacturing products and providing services cannot be replaced. The use of these resources cannot go on indefinitely – they will run out.
- when something is thrown away we are putting pressure on the environment's ability to cope - in terms of the additional environmental impacts associated with extracting the new resources, manufacturing and distributing the goods, and in terms of the environmental impacts associated with getting rid of our rubbish.
- when something is thrown away we are failing to see it as a resource. It is well understood that what is waste to one person may not be viewed as waste by another. A good example of this is scrap metal which has been recycled for many years. Increasingly people are realising that it makes economic sense as well as environmental sense to use "waste" rather than just throw it away.

The UK government promotes the concept of the 'waste hierarchy' which encourages us to see "waste" as a "resource" and specifies the following order of preference for dealing with our wastes:

1. Reduce
2. Reuse
3. Recover (Recycle, Compost, Recover energy)
4. Disposal

As shown by the hierarchy, the best way of managing our waste is not to produce it in the first place - waste prevention. After that we can think about reducing the amount of waste we do produce. Then there may be an option to reuse the material and if not, to recycle it. Recycling not only reduces the amount of rubbish we bury in landfill sites, it also makes better use of resources and raw materials. Much of what we throw away could be used to make something else and materials such as glass and aluminium can be recycled over and over again without losing any of their properties. Once buried in the ground we lose these resources for ever, some of which may have been mined and transported long distances, consuming a great deal of energy in the process, e.g. recycling an Aluminium can saves 93% of the energy it takes to make a new one as aluminium cans are made from bauxite ore which is mined in countries like Australia and New Guinea in West Africa before being transported for the aluminium to be extracted through an energy intensive smelting process.

Huntingdonshire District Council's Environmental Footprint

Despite much talk in recent years of the drive towards the paperless office, one of the major waste outputs from the council's day to day operation is still paper. The development of email and the internet has yet to completely replace some forms of written communication with residents in the district, a great deal of information is still better sent and received via letter, leaflet or other documentation, mainly through the post.

Aware that paper is a valuable resource the council has been recycling all its paper via confidential and non-confidential paper recycling processors since 2002. In 2003 a cardboard recycling collection was introduced and the scheme which has significantly reduced the amount of waste sent to landfill from the council's headquarters site. Waste levels have remained fairly constant over the past two years with almost half of the waste leaving the building being cardboard or paper for recycling. Before the recycling schemes were introduced all of this waste was being landfilled. Across all the council's site, the amount of waste produced by employees is rising and there is a need to look at the waste collection and recycling systems in place at all council owned premises and to unify the system at the same time as increasing the range of materials collected for recycling.

Actions

Reduce amount of Council's own waste going to landfill by 15% over next 5 years and encourage partner agencies to do the same

Projects

Recycling bin system - Introduction of dry recycling bins at all suitable office locations

Green champion's scheme - Staff awareness campaign to promote recycling and waste minimisation

Composting of HDC waste - Investigate the possibilities of introducing a compostable waste collection at Pathfinder House offices

Huntingdonshire's Environmental Footprint

As a waste collection authority, the Council has a responsibility to collect all household waste in the district. There are over 66,000 households in Huntingdonshire and we have a fleet of 150 refuse and recycling collection vehicles that visit every household in the district at least once a week. Government guidance and EU legislation gives district councils some very strict targets relating to how much waste can be sent to landfill and what materials should be recycled, including some firm restrictions on the amount of biodegradable waste that can be taken to landfill. In response to these strict targets, Huntingdonshire's waste collection system was totally restructured in 2003 over a period of 2 years, giving households in the district a three bin alternate weekly collection service. This involves the collection of green compostable waste (taken for composting) and normal refuse (taken to the local landfill site in Buckden) on alternating weeks. As an addition to these collections, a third wheeled bin is offered to residents for recycling materials such as paper, card, plastics, cans and tins.

The new collection system has dramatically increased the amount of household waste recycled in the District. Before the scheme was introduced around 15% of all waste was recycled and this rose to 53% in 2006/07. This amazing leap has enabled the Council to stay well ahead of its required recycling target and the national average local authority recycling rate of 31%. In recognition of its efforts, the council, along with other authorities in Cambridgeshire, has been awarded Beacon Status for waste and recycling. The Council continues to work closely with Cambridgeshire County Council who are currently implementing a project to deliver new waste treatment facilities through a long-term Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract with a private sector waste management company – the Waste PFI Project. The government is supporting this project with £35m to help meet the costs of these new facilities to be in place for 2010. The project has the potential to virtually eliminate landfill as a means of waste disposal for household waste in the district.

More emphasis still needs to be placed on the importance of minimising and reusing waste as well as recycling. We have begun to address the changes necessary to combat the growing mountain of waste collected in the district each year from householders and schools with a new waste and recycling collection system, but as yet do not provide a huge amount of advice and support for businesses in the district

Actions

Ensure domestic recycling levels remain above 50% and explore the feasibility of adding additional materials to the kerbside collection, e.g., glass.

Development of Waste Minimisation Strategy in conjunction with the RECAP Partnership and introduced targeted promotional campaigns and education programmes for key waste streams

Facilitate the introduction of a trade waste recycling collection service for small to medium sized businesses in the District and support larger businesses in their effort to recycle their trade waste

Projects

Kerbside glass collection - Investigate the possibilities of including glass in the dry recycling bins

Waste minimisation education campaign - Education campaign for schools promoting the importance of reducing and reusing waste

Battery recycling scheme - Installation of battery recycling banks at some supermarket locations to encourage recycling of a hazardous waste

Kitchen waste campaign - Promotional campaign to further encourage the composting of kitchen waste in the green bin

Trade waste officers - Awarded BREW funding to cover the employment of officers to promote trade waste recycling

PART THREE
TO PROTECT & ENHANCE THE
ENVIRONMENTAL CAPITAL OF
HUNTINGDONSHIRE

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PROTECTING & ENHANCING THE ENVIRONMENT – To protect and enhance the environmental capital of Huntingdonshire

What is Huntingdonshire's environmental capital?

The basic idea is that the environment is a collection of assets which can provide a stream of benefits so long as they (the assets) are not depleted. For example, a woodland provides a stream of benefits/services in terms of biodiversity, sense of place, historical continuity, local cultural identity, recreation, and as an energy/timber crop, in just the same way as a savings account provides a steady stream of interest – provided the 'capital' is kept intact.

The Environmental capital of Huntingdonshire gives the district its unique character. Areas of outstanding natural beauty, a variety of diverse habitats, distinctive landscapes and sites of significant archaeological and historical heritage, all contribute to our environmental wealth and influence how we relate to and feel about the environment in which we live. A distinction is often made between 'critical' and 'constant' environmental capital.

Critical environmental capital is described as those things which are considered to be valuable and irreplaceable and therefore need to be strongly protected in their entirety. Examples of critical capital are archaeological artefacts and sites, historic parks and buildings and rare habitats that support species facing extinction

Constant environmental capital is described as the parts of the environment which, although they can cope with some management or change, need to be protected or enhanced to avoid damaging them or where any loss would have to be compensated for by similar provision elsewhere. Examples of constant capital are green and open space with lower biodiversity value, parks & gardens and other recreational open space

Environmental capital can also be considered in the context of how much value and sense of pride is given to the neighbourhoods and towns and villages in which we live. A neighbourhood free of litter and graffiti, with adequate provision of open green space and low fear of crime is generally considered to be a valuable environment in which to live. All these attractive environmental features, if managed, protected and enhanced to their maximum potential, bring high social and economic benefits, hence the use of the term, 'environmental capital'.

Why do we need to protect and enhance it?

The number of nature reserves in Huntingdonshire means we have a small amount 'protected' high value biodiversity on our doorstep. Not only does the protection of some of the rarer species of plant, insect and animal attract significant national status and attributed funding, it has huge tourism value as people travel from all over the country to visit these precious protected sites. However we have largely ignored the wider countryside in terms of biodiversity.

The distinguished character of the towns and villages in the district also lend themselves well to tourist market, with ornamental bridges and buildings of historic value making Huntingdonshire a great place to learn about English history, dating back to 1130. This tourist market, along with the high quality agricultural landscapes of the area have been key factors in building a prosperous district.

Of equal importance, the green and open spaces of Huntingdonshire contain some very rare and valuable habitats, which act as home to many species, several of which face extinction. Loss of this habitat due to development, inappropriate management or increased tourism damage, can mean that these plants, animals and insects are lost forever. Such habitats are a vital aid for research into the natural world and their decline would inevitably result in the loss of a valuable learning resource. The Great Fen project provides a pivotal example of how both protected sites can be protected and at the same time enhancing biodiversity in the wider countryside

There has been a historic loss of green and open space throughout the UK in previous decades. With ever-increasing pressure to build more homes and the infrastructure needed to support these, we have eaten our way through big sections of countryside, fragmenting habitats and losing valuable biodiversity along the way.

If new housing and infrastructure is placed carelessly and designed without the character of the area in mind, then the historic and aesthetic character of the district could well be diluted and if appropriate consideration is not given to investigating our archaeological past before development occurs, then little pieces of Huntingdonshire's history could also be lost forever.

Attractive, clean and safe neighbourhoods have positive impacts on the social, physical & mental wellbeing of residents and the provision of pleasant green and open space, located nearby plays a crucial part in this.

Loss of this important environmental capital would inevitably lead to a dramatic spiral of decline affecting both the economy of the district and the social wellbeing of the residents who live here.

How will the Environment Strategy help?

The pressure to find space for development is strong and it is therefore crucial that in a district with great environmental value, we look to guide and manage development in a way that doesn't impact adversely on the features that define Huntingdonshire as an attractive and prosperous place to live. The environment strategy looks to raise awareness of the important environmental features in the district and their protection by encouraging more learning and interaction with the natural environment.

Through increasing knowledge and understanding of our natural environment, we aim to increase the sense of pride residents have in Huntingdonshire as a place to live, and through the services we deliver in relation to street scene, cleanliness and crime prevention, we aim to make both our urban and rural environments of value to everyone.

This strategy recognises the need to protect and enhance our environment and looks to tackle the issue in four ways:

5. Protecting and improving biodiversity and greenspace
6. Protecting our urban and rural character
7. Minimising harm from contaminated and polluted land
8. Maintaining a clean and safe Huntingdonshire

BIODIVERSITY AND GREENSPACE

“HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL WILL WORK TO IMPROVE THE BIOLOGICAL, VISUAL AND RECREATIONAL VALUE OF THE DISTRICT THROUGH THE APPROPRIATE MANAGEMENT AND INCREASED PROVISION OF GREEN AND OPEN SPACE”

Biodiversity is the genetic variety of life on Earth – all types of plants and animals. We should protect and conserve wildlife – our natural heritage – for its own sake, and for future generations. The desire for a sustainable world and one rich in wildlife amount to the same thing. The species, habitats and ecosystems that compromise our wildlife are also the building blocks that make up the healthy, functioning environment on which we all depend.

Huntingdonshire is predominantly a rural area with a variety of green spaces including rivers, gardens, parks, farmland, and woods which make up a large proportion of the district. The green spaces support a tremendous variety of plants and animals and some of the most important wildlife habitats in the area include woodlands, meadows, wetlands, rivers, parks, and the ‘urban’ habitats found, for example, on disused railway land or areas where buildings have been demolished and nature has taken over.

While conserving and enhancing habitats and species is of universal concern, Huntingdonshire contains many sites of species that are afforded special protection due to their particular importance. These Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are designated by Natural England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. We need to protect and enhance the number of species of plants and animals and the quality of their habitats, including those which are internationally and nationally important and those which are characteristics of the district. Biodiversity Action Plans have been developed at national and local levels which set out action plans for habitats and species which are considered to be the most threatened. In the past, we have experienced a progressive loss of these sites of importance for biodiversity due to intensive agriculture, urbanisation and other human activities. This development has, over centuries, cut through woodlands and a variety of green spaces that are home to the vast majority of the wildlife and plants in the area. This urbanisation and loss of habitat acts as a barrier to movement, confining many species to tiny pockets of green space and inhibiting the ability of the species to grow and flourish. We need to protect and restore these green spaces, make them more resilient and encourage habitat linkage. Ensuring that intervening landscapes are more accommodating of species movement by linking habitats together in a series of ‘green corridors’ which connect ‘green hubs’, will form a network of connected, rather than isolated green space. The process of improving and linking these habitats is known as “strategic greenspace enhancement”

Other types of green and open space such as recreational land can also make an important contribution to biodiversity and the character and attractiveness of places, and are important in improving quality of life. Green and open space within settlements includes land such as parks, village greens, play areas, sports pitches, undeveloped plots, semi-natural areas and substantial private gardens. Many such spaces play a vital role in providing opportunities for formal and informal recreation, as do parks, sports pitches and allotments outside built up areas. Well designed open space contributes towards ecological diversity, supports environmental sustainability and helps to counter pollution. As well as providing important visual amenity benefits in built up areas, urban open space gives people the chance to experience and learn about nature and wildlife close to where they live. Access to green and open space for residents and visitors is therefore important, but we must ensure we seek the appropriate balance between access and the protection of the biodiversity to which these areas may be home. Protecting, improving and encouraging more green and open space in the district has numerous benefits.

HUNTINGDONSHIRES ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT

Huntingdonshire has a range of wildlife sites, many of which are National Nature Reserves (NNR). The River Great Ouse runs for 26 miles through Huntingdonshire connecting the historic market towns of Huntingdon, St Ives and St Neots. Much of the river valley has been dug for aggregate, leaving large areas of gravel pits. These have developed into fantastic wetland areas such as Paxton Pits Nature Reserve. The area is also well known for its extensive wet meadows, some of which are still botanically rich, e.g., Portholme Meadow. Remnants of vast ancient forest remain with Brampton Wood and Monks Wood being some of the finest examples. The Holme post at Holme Wood marks the lowest point in Britain. This area of the fens was drained in the 1850s and this is arguably where British nature conservation started.

The wetlands and rivers of the district support a range of biodiversity from wetland birds to invertebrates, aquatic plants and fish. However a legacy of intensive land drainage, navigation improvements and flood defence works mean that our river and wetland wildlife has been adversely impacted. Water abstraction can further adversely affect water levels and flow in our wetlands which support these species.

Organisations including Natural England, the Environment Agency and Middle Level Commissioners have a duty to protect our wetlands and rivers. However, we as water users we can play the most valuable role in reducing water usage to safeguard and reduce the threat to habitats.

Huntingdonshire contains vast areas of farmland which includes some of the most productive land in the country, but this is taking its toll on our natural environment. The peat soil which characterises this area is disappearing due to shrinkage and wind erosion. Huntingdonshire is lucky to contain two places which escaped the wholesale drainage of the fens: Woodwalton Fen National Nature Reserve (NNR) established in 1910, and Holme Fen NNR. The rich biodiversity and habitat here is under threat from crop spraying, uncontrolled water levels and nitrogen pollution. Along with the various recognised wildlife sites within the district, there are several that are partially within the area, and one of the most important habitat restoration projects in England lies to the north of the district. The Great Fen Project aims to restore over 3000 hectares of fenland habitat between Huntingdon and Peterborough. In doing so, it will connect Woodwalton Fen National Nature Reserve with Holme Fen National Nature Reserve to create a very large site with conservation benefits for wildlife and socio-economic benefits for people. The wetland will safe guard threatened habitats and wildlife whilst providing for leisure, tourism and business. As it develops, rare and declining species like Fen Violet, Bittern and Water Vole will spread into it. The project aims to combine nature conservation and management with tourism and other income generating activities. It could also play a strategic role by storing flood water and protecting surrounding land and properties. The reserve will be openly accessible by land and water and future generations could enjoy old Fen pastimes like boating, skating and angling. This is a long-term project managed in partnership by Natural England, the Wildlife Trust, Huntingdonshire District Council, The Middle Level Commissioners and the Environment Agency.

Wildlife Sites in Huntingdonshire (REPLACE WITH MAP)

Wildlife Site	Size	Status
Brampton Wood	132 Hectares	SSSI
Monks Wood	157 Hectares	NNR
Waresley and Gransden Woods	54 Hectares	SSSI
Holme Fen National Nature Reserve	266 Hectares	NNR
Houghton Meadow	8 Hectares	SSSI
Portholme Meadow	104 Hectares	SSSI
St Neots Common	32 Hectares	SSSI
Upwood Meadow	6 Hectares	/
Grafham Water	149 Hectares	SSSI
Hinchingbrooke Country Park	68 Hectares	/
Woodwalton Fen National Nature Reserve	208 Hectares	SSSI
Hanson-RSPB Wetland Project	Under development	/
Paxton Pits Nature Reserve	75 Hectares	SSSI
Barford Road Pocket Park	18 Hectares	/
Holt Island Nature Reserve	2.8 Hectares	/
Spring Common	5.2 Hectares	/
The Thicket	2.5 Hectares	/

Despite this apparent wealth of habitats, the general picture across Huntingdonshire's countryside is one of progressive loss in habitat quality and diversity. Intensive agriculture, urbanization and other human activities have all contributed to this process. The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Partnership has formulated action plans for important habitats and species which identify measures needed to increase the variety and vitality of habitats and species in the county, and some progress is being made. Particular opportunities have been identified by the Biodiversity Partnership in a 50 year Wildlife Vision for Cambridgeshire, as well as the Natural England and Environment Agency Great Ouse Vision. These highlight a number of priority areas in Huntingdonshire for habitat creation and enhancement. The Environment Strategy strongly supports the work of these visions and they will enable Huntingdonshire District Council to work with partners to protect both designated sites and influence the management of the wider countryside and all biodiversity.

Huntingdonshire is lucky enough to be the home of ten official nature reserves, containing a range of biodiversity as well as many other areas of green and open space, all of which need enhancement and protection from the pressure of growth we face in the next two decades. There are many benefits to protecting and enhancing this 'natural capital' of Huntingdonshire. Improving the biological, visual and recreational value of the district brings obvious social gains but also helps create an attractive environment in which to live, work, visit and invest, thereby assisting economic growth in the area.

Actions

Protect and enhance biodiversity and open space of international, national and local importance through legislation, policy, site purchase and awareness raising and create habitats and areas of strategic green space enhancement in line with UK BAP and County Targets

Ensure early involvement in master planning process and that biodiversity, open space and recreational objectives are included in development plans, structure plans, community strategies and other strategic documents, and that all development proposals adhere to wildlife legislation and good practice

Develop community involvement in green spaces and biodiversity enhancement projects and encourage experience of the natural world through environmental education

Protect and promote allotments and community gardens and provide further opportunities for those people who wish to grow their own produce as part of the long term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion

Improve the quantity and quality of publicly accessible open space and improve opportunities for people to access wildlife

Projects

Godmanchester Nursery Project - Tree nursery of local provenance, vegetable and orchard areas and greenhouses to provide some of HDC's own plant needs

Access to privately owned green space - Engage with private landowners in relation to using their land as access to green space

River Care Project - Working in conjunction with the partners to regularly clean up town centre river locations in the district

Sustainable homes showcases - A development of 20+ demonstration homes in Harford constructed to achieve a minimum of level four under the Code for Sustainable Homes

New Local Development Framework (LDF) - All new dwellings to achieve high levels of biodiversity and open space amenity in accordance with the biodiversity chapter of the Code for Sustainable Homes

Environmental education officer - To publicise and promote a broad range of environmental messages and projects in line with the Council's role as 'Community Leader' and to work with Schools and the local community

PROTECTING OUR URBAN AND RURAL CHARACTER

“HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL WILL SAFEGUARD OUR RICH HISTORIC CHARACTER FOR PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS; MAKE IT ACCESSIBLE TO ALL AND USE ITS ECONOMICAL POTENTIAL FOR THE BENEFIT OF VISITORS AND RESIDENTS ALIKE.”

Huntingdonshire’s rich and varied heritage is everywhere around us; in its historic buildings, in the pattern of its settlements, fields and woodland, and in the archaeological remains still visible or buried beneath the ground. As a predominately rural district, Huntingdonshire’s landscapes play a major role in shaping the character of our environment, stimulating leisure and tourism and supporting the overall ‘quality of life’. It is an important component of the wider environment and economy with aesthetic, cultural, recreational and educational values which gives the district its sense of identity.

Development pressure can have a damaging impact on this often fragile and vulnerable resource. Natural erosion and agricultural processes can also harm archaeological sites and the historic landscape. Our challenge is to safeguard this heritage for present and future generations, make it accessible to all and use its economical potential for the benefit of visitors and residents alike.

Huntingdonshire, like most of England, contains historic landscapes, occupied since prehistoric times and altered by man through exploitation for agriculture, industry and settlement. Within the landscape there remain many features from the medieval period, including deserted villages, green lanes, abbeys, churches, castles, bridges, numerous moats, manors and ridge and furrow fields. The majority of these features are now only visible as earthworks, but some, such as green lanes, churches and bridges remain in use. The vast majority of Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the district are from the medieval period. The post medieval period saw major changes in the landscape. The most significant of these was the comprehensive draining of the fens, transforming them from a vast wetland into a rich agricultural area with fields, roads and drainage ditches. The 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries had a significant impact on the landscape of parts of the district, transforming the field pattern from one of irregular strip fields to larger, regular fields edged with simple hawthorn hedgerows. The 19th and 20th centuries have contributed major changes to the Huntingdonshire landscape, including the introduction of railways, the construction and widening of roads such as the A1 and the A14, industrial scale gravel extraction along the Ouse Valley, the establishment of several large wartime airfields and the creation of Grafham Water in the 1960’s.

The Huntingdonshire Landscape and townscape assessment identifies a number of landscape character areas across the district. These range from low-lying fen land in the North-East to the rolling uplands in the West. These landscape character areas have evolved and are continuing to change. It is important that both the quality and distinctive characteristics of these areas are conserved and enhanced when new development occurs. The landscape of Huntingdonshire covers an approximate area of 91,000ha (350 square miles) and embraces a diversity of landscapes from. It contains five very different market towns and over 80 smaller villages expressing a variety of architectural styles and materials.

Agricultural History

The clay soils which cover the vast majority of the district have traditionally been used for arable agriculture, and this continues to be the case today. The agricultural landscape includes both arable and pastoral farmland and farming still represents the predominant land use within the district. From the end of the Second World War until the mid 1990's the increased mechanisation and efficiency of farming led to changes in landscape character across the district with significant loss of hedgerows, ponds and drainage systems, and increased use of herbicides and fertilisers. The number and extent of apple and plum orchards (previously a distinctive feature of the eastern part of the district) has declined rapidly in the last fifty years as a result of increased competition from foreign imports and a reduction in locally available labour.

The quality of Huntingdonshire's agricultural land today is generally very good, and the district's soils represent a significant agricultural resource. However, the rich soils of the fens, found to the north east of the district, are at risk from the effects of drainage, peat shrinkage and wind erosion, with measurements from the great fen project showing a loss of up to 2cm a year, which could lead to a decline in the agricultural value of the soil. The drainage of the fens and their intensive agricultural management has also eroded their value as a habitat for wildlife.

The reform of the Common Agricultural Policy and government initiatives such as the Countryside Stewardship Scheme are encouraging farmers to adopt practices which will help conserve and enhance the distinctive character of the Huntingdonshire landscape. Under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, farmers can secure financial assistance to help preserve locally important features such as ridge and furrow fields, and to manage and re-introduce landscape features including hedgerows, ponds, wetlands, woodlands and orchards. Such schemes are having a small impact in promoting land management that is more sympathetic to landscape and biodiversity but a significant amount of deterioration has already taken place. These issues are also targeted in the Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Action Plan, along with the protection and management of field boundaries, road verges, meadows and ditches.

Archaeological History

Huntingdonshire contains extensive archaeological remains dating from successive waves of settlement, reflecting its diversity of landscape types. Roman towns existed at Godmanchester and Water Newton, along the line of Ermine Street which cut across the district. Ramsey Abbey was established in 969AD with smaller monastic houses in St Ives, St Neots and Huntingdon leading to the growth of these towns. The two main threats to this archaeological history are agriculture and development and it is extremely important that provision is made for appropriate excavation, analysis, recording and preservation where development may affect an area of archaeological value.

Urban History

The visual quality of Huntingdonshire's towns and villages has suffered over recent decades. Similarly to the rest of the country, housing built during this period has often been of poor visual quality, characterised by standard house types with little relation to traditional building forms, materials and details. Commercial development was also subject to standardised design during this period and combined with extensive road building to service the development, the local character and distinctiveness has slowly been eroded.

This strategy promotes a high standard of design in all new development, which is essential for the creation of attractive and successful places. Basic principles need to be assessed if developments are to display character, compliment their surroundings and provide attractive and sustainable environments for users. The character of streets and other public spaces has a major impact on the quality of our environment. Basic design criteria are fundamental, but so too are many other influences such as the nature of shop fronts, street furniture, lighting and signage.

How can we protect our Huntingdonshire's Character? - Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings

It is important vitally to retain landscapes of value and historical influences in the district that may be threatened by proposals to develop. We know where these places are and we can use the planning system to make sure they aren't damaged. There are two main mechanisms used to protect areas and features of high historical and archaeological value:

1. Listing buildings - A listed building is acknowledged by the Secretary of State to be of special architectural or historic interest. In the context of listing, the term 'building' is used very widely and includes not only buildings such as houses, churches, schools and barns, but also walls, tomb stones, milestones, ice houses, bridges and locks, telephone and post boxes. The responsibility for deciding which buildings have special architectural or historic interest falls to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, who has a statutory duty to produce a "list" of such buildings, known as Greenbacks. The part of the list covering Huntingdonshire can be inspected at our offices. Once listed, a building has special protection under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the Council has additional powers of protection. It is an offence to carry out works to a listed building without consent.

2. Conservation Areas - "an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance".

Conservation Areas are normally centred on listed buildings, groups of buildings, open spaces or a historic street pattern. By assigning an area as a Conservation Area it seeks to preserve or enhance the character of the area, and not just individual buildings in it. Conservation Areas were introduced in 1967 when it was found that listed building legislation was failing to protect the overall character of cities, towns and villages. The district contains over 60 conservation areas – many of them covering large parts of villages – and nearly 2,800 listed structures. These areas and structures form a significant and vital part of Huntingdonshire's heritage.

Actions

Protect landscapes, heritage sites, archaeological sites and historic buildings and use the planning system to safeguard them and ensure development contributes to the character of the District

Conserve and enhance valuable landscape features by encouraging environmentally sensitive management in the agricultural sector

Encourage environmental improvement schemes within the district and ensure they are sympathetic to the existing characteristics of the area

Develop educational resource materials based on the historic environment and establish further tourism opportunities

Projects

Character statements - Production of character statements for all conservation areas in the district

Environmental education officer - To publicise and promote a broad range of environmental messages and projects in line with the Council's role as 'Community Leader' and to work with Schools and local community

CONTAMINATED AND POLLUTED LAND

“Huntingdonshire District Council will minimise the threat to health, controlled waters and/or the wider environment from land which is contaminated or polluted and ensure that where identified, appropriate remediation will be undertaken”

Contaminated land usually results from industrial pollution that adds substances to the ground that can cause harm to humans or ecosystems, or may be the cause of pollution to local water systems. Contamination, in most cases, arises from a previous use of the site, or an adjacent site, that had an industrial activity on it at one time or another.

The existence of contamination presents its own threats to sustainable development:

- it impedes social progress, depriving local people of a clean and healthy environment;
- it threatens wider damage to the environment and to wildlife;
- it inhibits the prudent use of land and soil resources, particularly by obstructing the redevelopment of previously developed land and increasing development pressures on green-field areas;
- the cost of remediation represents a high burden on individual companies, home and other land owners, and the economy as a whole; and
- the fear of contamination alone can have an adverse effect on property values and lead to blight.

Under Part IIA of the Environment Protection Act 2000, for land to be classed as officially ‘contaminated’, the local authority (which acts as the enforcing authority) must have identified whether substances present in, on, or under the land, may cause:

- significant harm;
- a significant possibility of such harm;
- pollution of controlled waters;
- or the likelihood of pollution of controlled waters.

A risk-based approach is used to identify contaminated land. A site is assessed on the current use of the land and the prevailing circumstances. To be considered a risk, there must be a source of contamination.

Huntingdonshire’s Environmental Footprint

The Council’s process for identifying potentially contaminated sites can be found in the Council’s Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy. The Council’s strategy identifies sites of potential concern within the district, highlighting land that may contain contamination. Once potentially contaminated land has been identified, an assessment is made as to whether a site poses any current or potential risk, and if so a programme of remediation must be undertaken.

It is important to understand that the purpose of remediation is to reduce any significant risks posed by contaminated land; it is not necessarily to decontaminate the land. In other words a programme of remediation may not eliminate all possible future risks or remove all the pollutants.

Fortunately, serious harm from contamination is rare. Many contaminated sites are cleaned up during the redevelopment process and as the Government has encouraged building on "brownfield sites" (previously used land) it is inevitable that land contamination will be a factor in some new developments. As a result the planning process still remains the main driver for dealing with land contamination, despite the introduction of the Part IIA legislation in April 2000.

Planning applicants, their agents, developers and consultants are therefore required by planning policy guidance (PPS23) to give routine early consideration to land contamination in development proposals. It is the developer's responsibility to ensure that their development is 'safe for its intended use'. Failure to do so can result in harm to human health and the environment, land blight, failure to sell properties and legal action. The Council therefore expects potential land contamination issues to be addressed fully and professionally in accordance with current best practice. An advice note has been produced by the Council that clarifies the current requirements. It is important that planning applicants follow this advice to ensure the efficient processing of their application or enable them to comply with any attached contaminated land planning condition.

Actions

Identify, prioritise and remove unacceptable risks to human health and the environment

Seek to bring contaminated land back into beneficial use

Seek to ensure that the cost of contaminated land clean up is undertaken in accordance with the polluter pays principle

Projects

Audit of potentially contaminated sites – The Council will continue to investigate sites identified as priorities in the Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy, to determine whether they pose a significant risk to human health

Provision of Guidance to Developers – To liaise with developers and planning consultants to assess the risk land contamination plays at potential development sites.

Investigation of liability for contaminated sites - Legal Action where necessary targeting the 'original polluter' to pay for any necessary 'clean up' works.

A CLEAN AND SAFE HUNTINGDONSHIRE

“HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL WILL WORK TO MAKE HUNTINGDONSHIRE A PLACE WHERE WE ALL LIVE AND WORK IN A HEALTHY, CLEAN AND SAFE ENVIRONMENT”

The quality of the local environment affects and reflects the well-being of the people living there. Whether it's the town centre, local park or street on which we live, we all want to feel that these are attractive, safe places to be. Residential areas are the spaces that are the nearest and among the most critical in terms of our immediate quality of life. If we step outside our front door into a safe, well-cared for residential area, with clean, well-maintained streets and open spaces, it has a positive impact on our quality of life.

Problems ranging from litter, fly-tipping, graffiti, abandoned vehicles through to dog fouling and chewing gum on our streets all have a detrimental impact on Huntingdonshire's street scene. Evidence suggests that a poor quality street scene can have far reaching social and economic impacts. Consultations undertaken as part of the Community Strategy with the people of Huntingdonshire have shown that residents' sense of pride in their community can be greatly reduced as a result of unclean streets, and the fear of crime can be increased as a result of graffiti and abandoned vehicles in their neighbourhood. This can impact on Huntingdonshire's attractiveness as a place to live and work, affecting the economic prosperity of the District.

Local communities cannot engage in the broader environmental agenda if they are concerned with the more immediate problem of anti-social behaviour and low-level crime. Anti-social behaviour can be seen in a number of different forms, and may range from the dropping of litter to actual violence against people and property. Whatever the level of anti-social behaviour, its effects are the same, and in many cases areas will have experience of both crime and fear of crime, which in turn has a detrimental impact on the surrounding environment.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE'S ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT

Huntingdonshire should be a place where we all live and work in a healthy, clean and safe environment. To achieve this we need to see our local environment well-maintained and free from litter, fly tipping, graffiti, crime, intrusive noise and other forms of antisocial behaviour. Environmental stewardship needs to be at the heart of public and private sector activity. The Council prides itself on keeping the streets of the towns and villages within the district clean and litter free. To do this we provide litter bins in public open spaces and on streets and pavements, mechanical street sweeping services and litter picking in towns and along major verges. These environmental measures coupled with effective street cleaning services help to make Huntingdonshire such a pleasant place to live and work. In order to record and monitor the cleanliness and safety of our streets the Council reports several indicators of performance in relation to the following areas:

Litter and graffiti

The streets in the district are cleaned using a number of specialised vehicles owned by our Operations Division. Different areas of the district are cleaned at different times and at different frequencies depending on how prone to littering they are. Litter accumulation is then monitored in accordance with the ENCAMS Litter monitoring regime which requires a

team of trained Officers and Inspectors to survey the streets in the district every four months. A different cross section is surveyed on each occasion covering both urban and rural areas. Similar surveys are carried out for graffiti and flyposting. The results of these surveys are reported to ENCAMS who give the district of Huntingdonshire an official grading for street cleansing and graffiti.

Fly-tipping

The Council's Operations Division collect all waste that has been reported by the public as fly-tipping. We aim to remove all waste reported as flytipping within three days of receiving the report. This is unless the waste reported appears to be hazardous in nature in which case we aim to collect it sooner. In some instances Huntingdonshire District Council are required to obtain a specialised waste transfer licence from the Environment Agency depending on the type of waste and this can sometimes result in a longer period of time between the original report and collection taking place. The Council monitors its performance in relation to flytipping in a number of ways:

- The number incidents reported monthly is recorded for the Environment Agency and DEFRA. This is recorded by grading the area from one to four with one being a decrease in flytipping and an increase in enforcement action, and four being an increase in flytipping with a decrease in enforcement action.
- The average time taken to collect fly-tipping is recorded and reported as a quarterly scorecard measure as part of the Councils internal performance monitoring system.

Monitoring in this way allows us to look at how successful our pro-active response to flytipping is by looking at the number of reported incidents, as well as our reactive response in relation to the time taken to clean up the waste.

Abandoned vehicles

All abandoned vehicles reported by the public are then investigated by the Council's Abandoned Vehicles Officer based within the Operations Division.

Abandoned vehicles reported must be investigated within 24 hours and if judged by the Council to have been abandoned can (if on public land) be authorised for removal within 24 hours. Removal is undertaken by a private company which then takes the vehicle to an Authorised Treatment Facility (ATF) for de-polluting. It is then crushed and recycled. The council monitors this area of work by recording how many reported abandoned vehicles are investigated within 24 hours of notification being received, and how many vehicles are removed within 24 hours from the point at which the Council is legally entitled to remove the vehicle.

Anti-social behaviour

Although Huntingdonshire is regarded as a safe place to live and work, residents concerns about anti-social behaviour have risen in recent years and people are more aware of being able to do some-thing about it. Anti-social Behaviour is defined in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 as acting "in a manner that caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household as himself and which is not reasonable in all circumstances".

Anti-social behaviour does not have to be a criminal act. Behaviour such as litter or loud noise that puts people in fear of crime can amount to anti-social behaviour. Other types of problems experienced can include: abandoned vehicles, dog fouling, foul language and 'yobbish' behaviour. Often, taken in isolation, individual issues might not appear severe, but the impact on people's quality of life can be very upsetting for those experiencing the problems.

The Huntingdonshire Community Safety Partnership (HCSP) put together their first Community Safety Strategy in 1999 and has recently produced a new strategy for the period 2005-08. There is also a free standing Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy which supports action towards delivering the targets and objectives set out in the Community Safety Strategy. Huntingdonshire District Council has a Community Safety Team with two Anti-social Behaviour Caseworkers, who work with a variety of organisations as well as the community to

address problems. Their roles involve receiving and monitoring complaints and working in Partnership with other agencies and organisations to ensure that the most appropriate and effective solutions are in place.

Actions

Achieve a high level of street cleanliness and reduce levels of fly-tipping across the district

Reduce the amount of criminal damage and graffiti occurring in the district

Work to improve neighbourhood pride and reduce anti-social behaviour and fear of crime

Projects

Improve information on environmental best practice - Promote sustainability and environmental best practice relating to

Litter free market towns - Promotion campaign to make all market towns in the district litter free zones and use of street scene rangers targeting fast food outlets with litter problems & encouraging recycling of packaging

River Care Project - Working in conjunction with partners to regularly clean up town centre river locations in the district

Fixed Penalty Notices - To be issued if rubbish is left out on the wrong collection day

Environmental Education Officer - To publicise and promote a broad range of environmental messages and projects in line with the Councils role as 'Community Leader' and to work with Schools and local community delivering the cleaner, greener, safer lifestyles agenda

Graffiti prevention & clean up - Street Rangers Linking with Luminus Street Wardens, work with community groups to report and help clean up graffiti

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**FIVE YEAR
DELIVERY ACTION PLAN**