

# LOW CARBON COMMUNITIES

## 1. BACKGROUND

In January 2008, Sedlescombe Parish Council adopted a *Climate Change Mitigation and Fuel Poverty Alleviation Strategy*. This committed the Council as follows:

### Keeping our own house in order

- In accordance with the Duty imposed on parish councils by Section 3(2) of the Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Act 2006, Sedlescombe Parish Council will, in exercising its functions, have regard to the most recently published Energy Measures Report.
- The Parish Council will minimise its use of energy wherever possible.

### Education

- The Parish Council will make available to householders any energy-saving advice it receives.
- The Parish Council will provide information, where available, on appropriate goods or services to help reduce the use of energy.
- The Parish Council will promote efficiency in the use, by persons in the Sedlescombe parish area, of electricity, heat, gas, fuel and other descriptions or sources of energy.
- The Parish Council will attempt to motivate the wider community to reduce the amounts of energy, or sources of energy, used by persons in the Sedlescombe parish area.

### Planning

- The Parish Council will support the location of development that is accessible to public transport.
- The Parish Council will support the use of sustainable energy options whenever new build, refurbishment, conversion or extension work requires approval.

### Partnership working

- Whenever the opportunity presents itself, the Parish Council will work in partnership with other bodies regarding the duty imposed by this Act.
- The Parish Council will support principal authorities in any action that is ambitious in addressing climate change.

### Travel

- The Parish Council will support sustainable travel modes.
- The Parish Council will encourage the School to maintain a School Travel Plan.

### Adapting to Climate Change

- The Parish Council will consider ways of adapting to inevitable climate change and will consider how climate change might affect the services that the Parish and Principal Authorities provide.

## 2. RECENT SEDLESCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS

In September 2009, the Council passed a resolution re-iterating the statements made in the January 2008 *Climate Change Mitigation and Fuel Poverty Alleviation Strategy* and extending the Parish Council's commitment to include "safety". A further resolution at the same time committed to undertaking research into conducting a community-led carbon footprint survey in the parish. The intention is to launch the Survey in the 2010 Annual Report/Directory and give publicity at the 2010 Annual Parish Assembly in April 2010.

## 3. FUEL POVERTY ALLEVIATION

Cllr Dellow attended a **workshop on Fuel Poverty Alleviation** on 20/11/09 arranged by Action in rural Sussex in partnership with East Sussex Healthy Homes, District Councils, NHS Hastings and Rother, NHS East Sussex Community Health Services and the DWP. It is suggested that fuel poverty is a major cause of health-related problems, principally

strokes and respiratory diseases. The Office for National Statistics estimates that on average around 24,000 people die every winter across the UK through being too cold in their homes. Cold temperatures raise blood pressure which increases the risk of heart attacks and strokes. Room temperatures can be broken down as follows:

- 21°C, Recommended living room temperature.
- 18°C, Minimum temperature with no health risk.
- Under 16°C, Resistance to respiratory diseases may be diminished.
- 9–12°C, increased blood pressure increases risk of cardio - vascular disease.
- 5°C, High risk of hypothermia.

**What is fuel poverty?** A household is generally defined as being in fuel poverty if it needs to spend more than 10% of its income on all household fuel use. Nearly one in four households in E Sussex is living in fuel poverty. Because of low incomes and the likelihood that they will be living in poor quality, energy-inefficient homes, the elderly, the disabled, those living in deprived areas, the long-term ill and families with children under 16 will be most affected by fuel poverty. East Sussex ranks on the social deprivation scale as the 11th most deprived shire in the 34 shires of England. Paying bills by cash or cheques, rather than by monthly direct debits, raises annual costs by about £70 and pre-payment meters cost an average of £225 more p.a. Paperless billing cuts costs for the consumer and the supplier. It is said that providers “cherry pick” most profitable consumers and are not interested in poorer ones.

**Fuel Debt.** Prices of fuel have gone up by 15% on average and, according to NEA, January 2008, for every 1% rise in fuel costs, it is estimated that 100,000 extra homes are pushed into fuel poverty.

In 2008 research by uSwitch .com revealed that 6.8 million households are in debt to their energy suppliers.

#### 4. WASTE

**Water.** Water use in our homes is responsible for a percentage of the UK’s greenhouse gas emissions:

- 1% greenhouse gas emissions generated to treat and pump mains water to our homes, and to collect and treat waste water from the sewage network.
- 5% greenhouse gas emissions and a fifth of a home’s carbon footprint is generated heating water in our homes.

The following are water saving tips:

- Have showers instead of baths.
- Run dishwashers and washing machines full and use the most water and energy efficient settings. When replacing your appliance, buy Energy Saving Recommended Logo Products.
- Wash up in a bowl rather than leaving the hot tap running.
- Only boil as much water as you need to avoid unnecessarily heating water you won’t even use.
- A running tap wastes over 6 litres of water a minute so turn off the tap while brushing your teeth, shaving or washing your face. Use cold water where you don’t need hot.
- A dripping tap can waste over 5,000 litres of water a year so make sure your taps are properly turned off and change washers promptly when taps start dripping.
- Where possible, try and re-use unused water. For example, pour your left over glasses of water on houseplants and avoid wasting water from running taps whilst waiting for hot water.
- Water your plants with rainwater collected in butts which can collect tens of thousands of litres of water each year. Special offers from Blackbrooks Garden Centre.

Installation of water meters may save costs on water bills for a two-person family. Cllr Dellow to carry out further research.

**Food.** 8.3 million tonnes of food are thrown away by households in the UK every year. Although some of the waste is peelings, cores and bones, the majority is perfectly good food. A great deal of energy, water and packaging is used in food production, transportation and storage. It is said that we throw away into landfill more food from our homes than packaging in the UK every year. In E Sussex, landfill sites are full and no-one is keen to have new sites near them or to suffer the problems caused by Lorries going to them.

## 5. WHAT CAN THE PARISH COUNCIL DO TO HELP?

1. Make sure that it takes account of its adopted *Climate Change Mitigation and Fuel Poverty Alleviation Strategy* in all its decisions.
2. Encourage householders to increase the energy efficiency of their homes with:
  - a. Loft and cavity wall insulation
  - b. Draught-proofing
  - c. Tank and pipe lagging. (Jacket costs £10 but can save £13-£20 p.a.)
  - d. Solar panels
  - e. Double glazing (could save around £140 p.a. on heating costs). Even secondary glazing could save around £30 p.a.
  - f. Low energy bulbs (could save £78 over the lifetime of the bulb)
  - g. Replacement condensing boilers. Upgrading to one and full heating controls could save up to £235 p.a.
  - h. Turning down thermostats by 1<sup>o</sup>C.
  - i. Using less water.
  - j. Heating less water.
  - k. Keeping freezers full – fill gaps with rolled up newspapers in carrier bags.
  - l. Turning off electrical equipment rather than leaving it on standby where it can use over 60% as much energy as if switched on. Power-down devices help.
  - m. Wasting no food.
3. Publish information regarding grants and other assistance to improve the energy efficiency of properties making them warmer in winter and cooler in summer. For example:
  - a. **Free Insulation Survey** to check existing insulation in the loft and the suitability of the property for cavity insulation installation.
  - b. **Loft (25% heat lost through roof) and Cavity Wall (35% heat lost through walls) Insulation grants.** Benefit receipt is not essential if the applicant is 70 or over.
    - i. 100% insulation loft and cavity wall insulation grants may be available for anyone aged 70 or over or for anyone in receipt of certain benefits, tax credits or allowance. All other homeowners and private tenants can still receive an Insulation Grant of up to 70%.
    - ii. 100% insulation and loft cavity wall insulation grants may be available for anyone over 60 claiming tax credits or disabled or chronically ill. Discounts may be available to others.
  - c. **Double Glazing.** There are no grants available for double glazing but, through EnergyLink, homeowners can obtain three competitive quotes.
  - d. **Renewable energy sources to provide heating.** Free to households who meet the eligibility criteria ie have savings under £20,000; home already insulated (where possible); home is suitable (ie not north-facing); spending more than 10% of income on energy bills.
  - e. **Warm Front Grants.** This Government-funded scheme provides a package of insulation and/or heating measures up to a maximum value of £3,500 or £6,000 (both including VAT) where oil, low carbon or renewable technologies are recommended less the value of all works previously completed in the property under Warm Front. The measures undertaken are insulation of lofts, water tanks, pipes; draught proofing (15% heat loss); cavity wall insulation; heating repairs or replacement. Eligibility for grant aid depends on applicants either being 60 or over and in receipt of various benefits; or with a child under 16 or being pregnant and in receipt of various benefits; or anyone who receives a particular set of benefits. Warm Front also carries out an initial free no-obligation survey.
  - f. **Handyman Grants.** Handyman grants could be used to clear lofts so that loft insulation can be installed.
4. Publicise useful help lines and the Priority Service Register.
5. Loan Smart Meters (Rother DC can obtain for £23 each) to encourage reduction in energy use.

6. Arrange an online Community Carbon Footprint Survey in collaboration with Rother DC and East Sussex County Council and publicise results and improvements.
7. Write a supporting letter for Rother DC's Green Communities Challenge for Rye as it is intended to encourage Rye's residents to save energy in the home. A mini-project might be arranged in Sedlescombe.
8. Continue to publicise the need to Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.
9. Encourage community buildings and local businesses to be as energy-efficient as possible.
10. Encourage safeguarding and new planting of trees and hedges.

## 6. HOW COULD THE PARISH COUNCIL COMMUNICATE INFORMATION AND ADVICE TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC?

- Weekly Sedlescombe News
- Quarterly parish council Bulletin
- Annual Report
- Information events provided by outside agencies
- Publishing a booklet.
- Leaflet distribution.
- Weekly Battle Observer
- Webpage.
- Noticeboard.
- Stalls at the Parish Assembly.
- Home visits.
- Local help line manned by trained volunteers (training for the volunteers has already been offered).

## 7. NEXT STEP

To publish the following in the Annual Report & Directory 2010:

**WASTE NOT.** It is three years since the Parish Council published its first "Waste Not" leaflet for Sedlescombe residents to encourage them to Reduce, Reuse and Recycle Waste and, a year later, kerbside recycling was introduced by Rother District Council. Now, thanks to everyone's hard work, Rother has been identified as the 7th most improved council for recycling in recent government league tables.

This year, Sedlescombe Parish Council would like encourage reduction of energy use which will, in turn, help reduce everyone's bills. From the end of April 2010, the Parish Council will be giving out energy saving packs when Welcome Packs are delivered to new residents. These new packs will be paid for using Village of the Year prize money and will contain lots of useful information including grants to make your properties more energy-efficient, tips for reducing food waste including the odd tasty recipe for using leftovers, and information aimed at encouraging water saving. 75 free packs will be available at the Assembly and, afterwards, supplies will be available on application to the Clerk. There will also be a new webpage dedicated to Energy Saving which will contain up-to-date information and a Helpline manned by local volunteers who will be able to help you through the maze of information that is available.

At the Parish Assembly, as well as an energy-saving stand, a community carbon footprint survey will be launched with the help of Rother District Council. The Parish Council aims at getting at least 70 properties, or around 10% of homes, undertaking the survey. Please look out for further information in due course.

**30/11/09**