

Action on the environment



LGA LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

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Edited by Rob Banks

Views expressed in this booklet are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of either the Liberal Democrats or the Local Government Association.



Introduction

***Cllr Keith House, Leader, Eastleigh Borough Council and
LGA Liberal Democrat Group Environment Spokesperson***

Many thanks to everyone who has contributed to this booklet. It is always fascinating to get examples of Lib Dem action on the environment, share innovation and achieve excellence.

Here we see Bedford's action on energy saving; recycling in Conwy; learn of Lancashire's experience with fracking; and see how outdoor activity can contribute to mental health in Kirklees. Then it's off to Eastleigh (where?!) to look at reducing carbon emissions, understanding energy retrofitting in Bath, learning of Sheffield's wide-ranging initiatives and then see how Sutton's One Planet Living project has moved forward.

If you have good ideas from your area that can help us take the debate forward or have a problem you think others may have the answer to - let us know at libdem@lga.gov.uk.

Cllr Keith House
September 2013

Making a difference in Bedford

Mayor Dave Hodgson, Mayor of Bedford

Since I was first elected as Mayor of Bedford Borough, Liberal Democrat colleagues and I have worked on a series of measures designed to make a real difference in protecting the local and wider environment. We have set an ambitious target for the Council to achieve a 40% reduction in carbon emissions by 2015. We have been working hard to find innovative and effective ways to meet this target and make the desired energy and, importantly, financial savings.

Through the 'RE:FIT' project, we are retrofitting Council-owned buildings with both energy saving and renewable energy technologies. This will allow us to reduce running costs, generate income and reduce carbon emissions across Council properties. The first phase of this project has recently been completed with the installation of 212 solar photovoltaic panels on the roof of a multi-storey car park as part of a high-profile regeneration of the Bedford Bus Station area.

The next project will be within Borough Hall itself: the conversion of oil heating on site to gas and biomass, fuelled by wood pellets. Biomass boiler technology is a low carbon alternative to conventional fossil fuel heating, and this conversion will deliver environmental benefits and create additional income for the council (through the Renewable Heat Incentive).

The creation of a Hydro Power Plant on the River Great Ouse in Bedford has been an aspiration locally for some years, and we are delighted to have brought it to fruition. The micro hydro turbine facility is based on two Archimedes Screws which allow us to harness the power of the river without damaging the ecology; they are the most environmentally-friendly hydro electric generators going and are safe for fish and other creatures to swim down.

It is estimated that the hydropower station, which was installed last year, will create



● Mayor Dave Hodgson officially opening the hydro-power plant on the River Great Ouse in Bedford

approximately 160,000kWh of power annually. Some of the energy produced will be used to power existing lighting along the river, cutting costs and raising awareness, with the rest sold to the National Grid, raising money!

Data centres tend to be extremely ‘energy-hungry’, and our in-house work to reduce the Council’s energy use includes an award-winning Evaporative Cooling project in the Data Centre at Borough Hall. This is reducing carbon emissions and is predicted to save £32,000 a year in energy costs.

More low-key works in this Council-wide effort to save money and energy include the conversion of exhaust systems on council vehicles and the purchase of an electric vehicle, while Bedford Borough was the first council in the country to sign up to Anglian Water’s ‘Business Promise’, undertaking to cut water use by 20% by 2015.

With residents doing their bit to recycle on the doorstep, in Borough Hall Liberal Democrats have worked to reduce the environmental impact of waste collection and disposal. Replacement refuse trucks feature lower emissions and electric tail lifts, while we have used new software to find the most efficient collection routes. We have rejected the use of mass-burn incineration for waste disposal, and instead send it to a mechanical and biological treatment facility, maximising recovery and recycling of materials.

Helping out people and groups in the community to save energy, money and reduce their carbon emissions is also a priority. One of our early environmental initiatives was the launch of the Mayor’s Climate Change Fund, which provides grants of up to £20,000 to fund up to 50% of the cost of projects to install carbon-cutting technology at community facilities. Since its creation just over three years ago, the Fund has invested over quarter of a million pounds in a wide range of projects at village halls, schools, places of



worship and other community buildings, helping numerous local organisations save both energy and money.

Meanwhile, at a visitor centre in one of the most popular local parks, we have an eco-technology demonstration project, promoting a range of domestic technologies and how they work, along with information on how they can be installed in the home.

The Council also promotes recycling through awareness campaigns, the introduction of recycling litter bins in the town centre and even the use of recycled materials to build roads!

Finally, we have overseen huge investment in both cycling provision and bus services to encourage people out of their cars. Completed works across the borough include the lighting of a popular section of National Cycling Network Route 51 in Bedford, while new measures at one of the busiest junctions in Bedford will improve safety for the 3000 cyclists and pedestrians who use it every day.

We are also encouraging people to use public transport through a radical extension of Sunday bus services, retention of the Full Concessionary Fares Scheme and continued investment in rural services, where we have protected a strong network of routes.

Here in Bedford Borough, we hold the view that saving energy, saving taxpayers' money and protecting the environment is common sense. That's why we maintain our commitment to the above projects and many more across the Council, as we continue to work towards that ambitious 40% target!

Boosting recycling in Conwy

Cllr Michael Priestley, Cabinet Member for the Environment, Conwy Borough Council



● Cllr Michael Priestley helping to promote Conwy's recycling scheme

As Cabinet Member for the Environment, I have overseen the transformation of Conwy's Waste & Recycling Service, based on the concept of managing waste as a resource to be recovered. Our service is planned, designed and delivered in-house, with the objective of getting the best value for our residents from their resources. We have incorporated new ideas and current best practice into a single, efficient, sustainable and replicable service model that has created jobs, reduced costs and resulted in the highest recycling rate in Wales.

Back in 2006, we introduced alternate week collections of residual waste and dry recycling (cans, glass and paper). Recycling was new to most residents and the switch from weekly to fortnightly refuse collections was not welcomed by all. By listening to residents' concerns, maintaining a consistent message and through the prioritising of education and advice over enforcement and fines, we were able to win people over. Our residents became used to separating their recycling and the message we were getting was not about reinstating weekly bin collections, but about improving the recycling service by collecting more materials, in particular cardboard and plastic.

In 2009 a pilot scheme collecting segregated food waste, cans, glass, paper and plastic achieved high levels of customer satisfaction – 93% found the scheme “easy” or “very easy” to use. With confirmation of public acceptance of source segregation, the following principles were applied in the design of a new service:

- Get the best value for residents from their resources
- Collect as many materials as possible on one vehicle
- Deliver the service with Conwy staff
- Be open to new ideas and prepared to risk innovation
- Keep refuse collection as a separate service to be flexible for future changes
- Source segregation is cheaper

The ‘Recycle More’ weekly resource collection service was launched in June 2011, collecting segregated food waste, cardboard, plastic bottles, tubs and trays, drinks cartons, cans, glass, paper and batteries on one vehicle on a weekly basis. At the time, there was not a suitable resource recovery vehicle in production, however, we received a tender from a well-established Irish manufacturer of winter maintenance vehicles, Romaquip Ltd., for a brand new vehicle design based on a prototype. We ordered the first vehicles to go into production and were involved in the final design of the vehicle, fine-tuning compartment capacities, loading methods and other details.

We have redeveloped and now operate our own bulking station which produces high quality, high value single material streams and we arrange all outlets for materials ourselves and retain all income. The new service was implemented from within the existing budget, funded by reduced landfill costs and increased income from sale of recyclates. From within this budget 24 new jobs were created: 8 drivers, 12 loaders and 4 bulking station operatives.

Separate collections of food waste, paper, cans, glass, cardboard and plastic are also offered to commercial customers in Conwy with the brand ‘Recycle More – It’s Good for Business.’

The ‘Recycle More’ service had an immediate impact, reducing landfill by 5,700 tonnes in the first year and increasing our recycling rate from 42% to 52%. In the latest data audited and validated by Welsh Government, for Q2 2012-13, Conwy recorded a municipal recycling and composting rate of 60%, the highest in Wales and the first Welsh Authority to hit 60%.

The service has attracted interest throughout the UK and we have been happy to host fact-finding visits from the following organizations, amongst others: Welsh Government, Zero Waste Scotland, Biffa Group, Veolia, Enterprise, Bryson Recycling, 3Gs, and officers and elected members from councils

including Powys, Flintshire, Monmouthshire, St. Helens, Burnley, Swindon, Dumfries & Galloway, East Ayrshire and Stirling.

Residents were really happy with the new weekly collection service, particularly the range of materials collected and that they no longer had to remember what to put out on different weeks. What they did tell us was that our recycling containers could be improved.

We currently use a 55 litre green box for glass and cardboard, a 90 litre white polypropylene box bag for mixed containers and a green reusable polythene sack for paper. In a customer satisfaction survey, 77% rated the green box good or very good compared to 66% for the green bag and 62% for the white bag. I have always thought that the ideal solution would be some sort of set of stacking boxes with wheels, but until recently there has not been anything like that on the market.

In 2010, we became aware of a prototype of a wheeled stacking two-box system for recycling. We began dialogue with the manufacturer and encouraged development of a revised prototype with three boxes and a trolley. Welsh Government agreed to contribute £200k to fund a trial of the system in Conwy, with the aim of encouraging manufacturers to invest in the tooling to bring a product to market.

Following an open procurement, we awarded a contract to Straight PLC to design and manufacture 5,000 stackable wheeled box units for a trial. We were heavily involved in testing and design of the system, which went through two further prototypes and three pre-production designs before arriving at a final product. We christened it the 'trolibocs', a name which works in Welsh and English.

The trolibocs was delivered to residents in the trial areas during May 2013, the



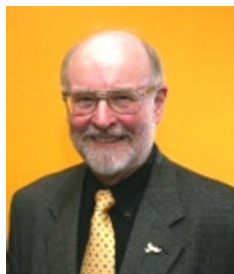
● The trolibocs in action!

first in the UK to try the system. The response has been overwhelmingly positive with comments such as, “as an OAP I find it easier to handle”, “big improvement on the old system” and “so much simpler and tidier.”

We have also seen an increase in the amount of recycling put out for collection. WRAP Cymru are carrying out independent monitoring of the trial on behalf of Welsh Government and their report is scheduled to be released in October.

If the trial is a success we will roll out the trolibocs to all households in Conwy. Later this year we will also be extending ‘Recycle More’ collections to the remaining 5,000 (mostly remote rural) households in the County, such that every resident will receive the same service.

I am also pushing to introduce a nappy collection service – now that food waste is separated it’s the next biggest quantity of smelly waste that we need to do something with. With the financial challenges facing us over the next few years, and a statutory recycling target of 70% to reach, we will then be asking the question, what’s left in your bin and how often should we collect it.



What should we do about Fracking? **A view from Lancashire**

Cllr. Professor Bill Winlow
Leader, Lib Dem Group,
Lancashire County Council

We have a serious long-term energy supply problem in the UK largely due to successive governments failing to give sufficient backing to sustainable forms of energy. Huge amounts of money have been used to support the nuclear industry which would have been better spent on developing renewable sources of energy. In terms of energy security the UK is now very vulnerable to political actions in its sources of overseas gas supply. Hence, there is powerful political pressure for fracking to take place in large areas of the country, particularly here in Lancashire.

On principle we would be better to leave the gas in the ground, but that is not going to happen and our group took the pragmatic view that if fracking is going to be forced upon us then it should be made as safe and beneficial as possible for local communities. We need to learn from the difficulties that have been faced by communities in the USA where water supplies have been polluted mainly due to a lack of well integrity. This demands a better regulatory and inspection process for the UK.

It is clear that there are no specific onshore exploration or extraction regulations for natural gas and the offshore regulations are not appropriate to residential areas. Indeed there are serious issues arising from moving the process onshore especially in or close to populated areas of Lancashire. In addition the regulatory powers for this emergent industry are too diffuse and dispersed among the agencies.

Other worrying points come out of the Gas Generation Strategy, published in December 2012. For example:

- Section 5.19 says: "*Should shale gas progress to a production phase, additional regulatory resources **may** be required in response to the increased scale of activity*" They **will** be required!!
- Section 5.25 talks of setting up an Office for Unconventional Gas and Oil that "*will join up responsibilities across government, provide a*

single point of contact for investors, and ensure a simplified and streamlined regulatory process". That sounds like a conflict of interest to me if I ever heard one – the business and the regulatory functions need to be completely separated.

At present several agencies are involved in regulation of the industry including the Dept of Energy and Climate Change, the Health and Safety Executive, and the Environment Agency. The simplified and streamlined regulatory process ought to take the form of an Industry Specific Regulator and this should be put in place before the current exploratory phase is completed. After that it may be too late because if the exploratory phase is successful, there will be a sudden and rapid blooming of the industry in a few years time which could lead to the industrialisation of rural areas across the UK. We all need to be assured that there will be regular on-site inspections by the regulatory body, rigorously enforced regulations and considerable sanctions should any breach of regulations take place. Mr Osborne's tax breaks for the developing industry do not suggest that this will happen.

Just before Christmas 2012 the Lancashire County Council Liberal Democrat proposed a motion on fracking which in essence said that if fracking is to come into the County it must:

- be subject to appropriate, industry specific regulation
- be under local planning control
- be subject to a regular, rigorous inspection regime
- provide social, environmentally acceptable, and financial benefits for the County”

The motion received unanimous all-party support. Our view is that if large scale fracking takes place then we need an independent, industry-specific regulator to ensure that rigorous inspections take place by qualified people who are independent of the fracking companies. Hopefully other counties will take the same view and will impress that view onto government ministers.

Finally, the government revenues from the fracking industry should be used, in their entirety, to support the development of the sustainable energy industry throughout the UK for the benefit of future generations and for the sake of the planet.



Using the environment to help people - bringing mental health treatment into the open air

Cllr Linda Wilkinson

***Liberal Democrat Councillor for Almondbury Ward,
Kirklees Council and Group spokesperson for Adult
Social Care***

In recent years there has been the beginning of a very healthy cultural shift in the UK with regard to the subject of mental health. For too long mental illness was something not to be spoken of or to be kept quiet about. But today, thanks to the relentless and dedicated work of many professionals and campaigners (and the positive support lent by the media and celebrities) attitudes are perceptibly changing. And as a result, in future the one in four people who will suffer from a mental health issue in their lifetimes are now, thankfully, less likely to suffer in silence alone.

Kirklees Liberal Democrats have welcomed this change and followed it with great interest.

However, with increasing numbers of people trying to access mental health care and support, we have recognised that more needs to be done to broaden the range of treatment and support options open to the public beyond a purely clinical setting.

A greater range of alternative and innovative support options would not only be of benefit to patients but would also reduce the pressure on stretched NHS services and its practitioners. They are clear that, while clinical and professional treatments are needed and effective, for many, prevention and recovery is hugely affected by what support is on offer beyond the patient-doctor relationship.

In late 2012 our Group's commitment to alternative treatment options resulted in officers approaching my ward colleagues and I with a pilot project called "Pathways to Health", which they suggested could be run in our area and funded through our Area Committee.

The “Pathways to Health” project proposed that a mental health partner (Pathways Day-Care Services) and its clients work with Kirklees Public Rights of Way Unit to design and build a new walking trail in Almondbury targeted toward people with mental health issues.

The recovery model on which the project was based sought, through the activity, to build its clients “recovery or social capital”, reinforcing social roles and functions as well as their links to the community in recognition of the vital part these elements of personal identity can play in the healing and improvement process. It was also designed in cognition of evidence which demonstrates a strong correlation between participating in outdoor experiences, having access to open spaces and improved well being.

The evidence and thinking behind the project was compelling and needless to say we chose to support it allocating £8500 to pay for the project.

The “Pathways to Health” project has now been running since January 2013 with a group of service users working on site every Thursday with council officers and a member of staff from Pathways. Feedback from all involved has been very positive and, based on the projects successes, the Council has already chosen to roll it out on a borough wide basis under the banner of “The Great Outdoors and Mental Health”.

£150,000 is being allocated by Cabinet over the next three years and the tendering process for providers has just been completed. The original scheme has been widened to include not only those who are in recovery from serious mental illness who are supported as part of the Care Programme Approach, but also those who need additional activity to prevent emotional problems arising as well as those suffering from dementia.

It has involved a four way commissioning partnership involving social care, public health, community partnerships and the Creative Minds arm of the local mental health trust. Officers believe it is the first of its kind in England.

Again selected providers will work with clients and partners – including Council services – to undertake voluntary physical environmental tasks and creative works in the open air.

As the second largest opposition Group it is sometimes a challenge for councillors to have the impact on council policy that they would like to have. However, this project which started with a conversation with officers about a potential pilot, demonstrates what is possible if you are clear about you want to achieve and make that known.

My colleagues and I feel very proud to have been associated with a first for England and hope that this short resume of the process they went through will see other local authority groups pushing for something similar in their areas. If nothing else, it is a fantastic example of the innovation that can happen when partners from diverging service areas come together to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes.

More information at:

http://www.pathwaysds.org.uk/pathways_booklet/booklet.pdf

What links Eric Pickles with the Olympics?

Cllr Louise Bloom, Cabinet Member for Environment and Sustainability, Eastleigh Borough Council

As a good Liberal Democrat Council, Eastleigh has a great track record in showing leadership on environmental and green issues, working with our communities to do the right thing rather than worrying about what others say we should be doing.

For instance, remember last year's attack from Eric Pickles on councils that have switched to alternate weekly collections?



● Cllr Louise Bloom with the solar display panel at Fleming Park Leisure Centre

Sorry Eric - but in 1996 we were one of the first councils to do this! We introduced alternate weekly collections, along with a strong communication plan with residents about the service which picks up recycling and residual waste on alternate weeks and kitchen waste every week. We didn't suffer at the ballot box and have controlled Eastleigh Borough Council ever since, now holding all seats in the constituency at Borough level.

And we continue to work hard at ensuring Eastleigh leads on green issues. In 2007 we pledged that the council would become carbon neutral in its key business activities by the time of the Olympics in the summer of 2012 and would reduce CO2 emissions by 10% over its 2007 baseline level. Since then we have reported annually the operational CO2 emissions and trying, where possible, to explain the reasons behind such changes.

As part of the Carbon Neutral Eastleigh objective we committed the council to reducing, as far as possible, the carbon dioxide produced by its key business activities and compensate for unavoidable carbon dioxide emissions by investing through CarbonFREE, in local home insulation projects that reduce these emissions.

We got Eastleigh to install solar PV panels on buildings across the borough. Those of you who came to the Eastleigh by-election to help may have seen the

display panel near to the stairs in the HQ! We have 791 PV panels installed on 10 sites around the Borough which generate around 180,000 kWh of electricity. To put this into context the average home uses 3,300 kWh per year so these schemes are expected



to generate enough electricity to power around 57 homes for a year. By producing energy in this renewable form, the scheme will avoid producing approximately 97,000 kg of CO₂ per year.

Through CarbonFREE we set an example to others in tackling the causes of climate change which has local, national and global effects, offsetting the Council's carbon emissions by insulating over 300 homes in the Borough with a saving of almost 5000 tonnes of CO₂.

We were joined in the scheme by the Borough's three main bus companies who contributed more than £12,000 between them to insulate and install renewable energy facilities on community buildings in the Borough.

And the work continues! As part of our drive to get people to be ever more energy efficient, we have joined up with Portsmouth City Council and Southampton City Council to form the Solent Green Deal group, offering advice and information on how the Government's Green Deal can work and what options are available to people - www.solentgreendeal.org.uk. We hope that other local authorities across Hampshire will join us soon. It is no accident that 2 of the 3 councils who formed the Solent Green Deal are Lib Dem.

So how did we perform against our target to reduce carbon emissions? The good news is we exceeded our target set in 2007 and overall have reduced our emissions by 14.8% since then. And we don't want to rest on our laurels. Through our 2011-2020 climate change strategy, we are aiming to reduce greenhouse gases from operations by 50% by 2020. We will keep you posted!



Energy Retrofitting and Green Homes in Bath & North East Somerset

***Cllr David Martin,
Member Champion for Energy and Climate Change, Chair
of the Environmental Sustainability Partnership***

Lib Dems on Bath & North East Somerset Council have been looking at ways to help residents reduce their fuel costs, eliminate fuel poverty and reduce carbon emissions.

In February 2013, we adopted guidance on sustainable construction and retrofitting through a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This provides advice to residents about how to build and retrofit homes sustainably to reduce energy consumption and fuel bills. It also enables the planning department to offer consistent and quality advice that will encourage residents to improve the energy efficiency of homes.

The SPD is a practical how-to guide, aimed at householders and small developers. It is tailored to the many different types of housing found in the local area. The style of the SPD was in direct response to residents who have asked for clearer guidance on the principles surrounding home energy efficiency improvements.

Our guidance includes many ideas for home improvements and the relative cost, CO2 saving and the effectiveness of each one. These are clearly shown using a series of text, annotated diagrams and photos. The SPD seeks to give a comprehensive summary and includes a checklist outlining which improvements fall under permitted development rights, which fall under building regulations and which would require planning permission and/or listed buildings consent.

This month we are planning to adopt an appendix to the SPD which is specifically looking at energy efficiency and retrofitting in listed buildings. These come with a specific set of challenges. Bath & North East Somerset has a particularly high concentration of listed buildings – there are 6000 in the district – and many of them are in wards with the highest levels of fuel poverty.

There is a balance to be struck between improving energy efficiency and conserving the architectural and historic interest of our built environment. The NPPF has a presumption in favour of preserving and enhancing heritage assets but also a requirement for local authorities to tackle climate change.

We have aimed to get the balance right and have worked with English Heritage over the drafting of the listed buildings appendix. The guidance includes practical tips on what makes a good listed building consent application and case studies of successful local applications.

However there is still a gap between what has been achieved and where we and many residents would like to be in terms of improving the energy efficiency of listed buildings. We intend to work with other local authorities and other stakeholders to press for changes to be made to national conservation policy to overcome these constraints. After all, to preserve historic buildings for the future, they need to be habitable, and with rising fuel costs this will not be possible without the full range of energy efficiency measures.

Bath Green Homes: showcasing local homes that are warm, green and cheap to run

“Bath Green Homes” is a programme of events for residents to learn about energy-saving home improvements. The programme was a partnership between the Council and community groups such as Transition Bath, the Bath Preservation Trust and local businesses.

The project complements the guidance provided in the SPD and goes a step further by giving residents direct access to advice and training through a programme of talks, workshops and a green living fair. There is also the opportunity to see energy efficiency improvements first-hand and in situ at the open homes weekend. People “who have been on the retrofit journey” give tours of their own homes to showcase and talk about the improvements they have made.

The open houses included a range of local housing types, from Grade II Georgian terraces to modern sheltered housing, and from a social landlord to a self-built eco-bungalow. The oldest open house was built in 1792 and the newest in 2011.

The sustainable construction projects and retrofitting ideas displayed ranged from simple DIY changes such as draught proofing to a complete intelligent energy management system. Homeowners were on hand to explain the costs and benefits and over 100 volunteers helped with stewarding and preparation.

Over the course of the last two years we have had 30 open homes on show, with visits from 1500 people. 72% of visitors are planning actions in their own homes. We also found these events to be excellent marketing opportunities for local businesses and community groups. We have now set up an environmental sustainability network, which is an online forum for people to share their green ideas, news and events with each other.

We have a free advice line for residents – ‘The Bath & North East Somerset Energy@Home Advice Line’ which provides free, up-to-date energy saving information, advice on local schemes and information about grants and Green Deal loans for our residents. We have also partnered with six other local authorities to provide home energy assessments through the ‘Our Green Deal in Somerset’ initiative.

Promoting Community Energy

The Council also supports Bath & West Community Energy (BWCE). This is a community enterprise that has been set up to reduce our carbon footprint and dependence on fossil fuels by developing, financing and managing community-owned renewable energy projects. Its structure is an Industrial and Provident Society for the benefit of the community, and the Council has a co-operation agreement with BWCE.

This has facilitated the first batch of solar PV projects on Council schools. The work of BWCE helps to create a local energy infrastructure that will make the community more resilient in the face of increasing energy costs. The community fund will receive a significant proportion of surplus profits and the fund will invest in further low carbon projects.

Further information

About the SPD: bathnes.gov.uk/greenbuild

About the houses involved in the open homes weekend: tinyurl.com/cxswddl

About the Bath Green Homes programme: www.bathgreenhomes.co.uk

About Bath & West Community Energy: www.bwce.coop



Sheffield Labour threaten Lib Dem record of environmental action

Cllr Shaffaq Mohammed

When Liberal Democrats were elected to run Sheffield City Council in 2008, we were determined to be a Council that took climate change seriously. As the Council's Cabinet Member for Environment & Climate Change for two years, I was pleased to be at forefront of driving through our vision.

We had fought a strong campaign of increasing kerbside recycling in the run-up to the election and set about this task straight away. Sheffield's recycling services were embarrassing compared to that of other cities and we were committed to delivering an improvement. We delivered on this pledge with a new blue box for dry recycling and free sacks for green waste recycling. This quickly demonstrated an increase in recycling.

We also launched a locally controlled Climate Change Fund. Grants of £500 and upwards were available for community organisations. Grants went towards projects which helped to cut carbon emissions, such as a community cycling or food growing projects. Money from the fund was also used for improving energy efficiency in buildings, or for renewable energy measures such as solar panels, wind turbines or biomass heating. Bids were submitted by community groups and voted on by ward councillors.

However, it wasn't just community buildings we were insulating, it was local people's home as well – 13,000 of them in fact! Our free insulation scheme offered free loft and cavity wall insulation for all homeowners and private tenants in the city. The scheme, which was jointly funded by the Council and the Carbon Emission Reduction Target (CERT), was rolled out on an area-by-area basis. However, the Council also fast-tracked those people who needed it most across the city, including those aged 70 or over or on qualifying benefits.

All of these policies made a big impact on local communities; however, alone they were only piecemeal measures. When we had taken power, we had set out a radical vision to give Sheffield a reputation as the greenest and most thriving city in the country. In 2011, we were finally able to bring this to fruition through our Decentralised Energy City Strategy.

We set the city a radical target: to become the country's first decentralised energy city, entirely reliant on green energy produced in the city.

It was a big task. In Sheffield, our energy sources come largely from the national grids, the majority of homes use gas as the main source of heat and our transport systems are also almost wholly dependent on oil. Nevertheless, the strategy we announced sought to have Sheffield selling excess energy back into the national grid within ten years.

The strategy was a bold partnership between the Council and leading energy company E.ON, who were chosen for the project because of their international expertise in developing energy solutions. The ambitious target was to be met through a public and private investment plan, which already included a new £100m 25MW waste wood energy plant, new biomass plants, expansion of our District Heating Network and our plan to insulate all private homes for free. It was a strategy based on innovation and investment, rather than nagging people to turn off light bulbs!

So yes, a bold and ambitious plan, particularly for a city so memorably described by George Orwell as covered in a 'dim blackish haze'. However it was also one which would require a lot of hard work, especially political leadership.

Unfortunately, Labour councillors regained control of the Council two months later. The strategy was put on the backburner – action was replaced by empty words.

After months of dither and delay, a key part of the project – installing solar panels on council buildings – was dropped. Labour attempted to pin the blame on feed-in-tariff reforms but in reality the panels should have been up months previously. Labour claimed the project was unviable. Liberal Democrats quickly asked for evidence to substantiate the claims. It never was produced.

The Climate Change Fund and the Free Insulation Scheme were also quietly binned, with the Council looking to the Green Deal to pick up the pieces. Promised improvements to kerbside recycling were conveniently forgotten. Labour continue to talk a good game on green issues but their lack of action speaks louder.

However, all our work was not in vain. Shortly after losing control Sheffield was named the leading major city in the UK for micro-generation through solar panels. The report singled out our administration for praise.

Improved recycling, 13,000 homes and numerous community buildings insulated, and a high take-up of green energy micro-generation: we have not lost sight of our bold strategy but we still take pride in this record of delivery.

Cllr Shaffaq Mohammed is Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group on Sheffield City Council and was the Council's Cabinet Member for Environment & Climate Change from 2008-10.



One Planet Living in Sutton

Cllr Ruth Dombey, Leader, Sutton Council

Sutton has one of local government's strongest environmental track records with ambitions for the future to keep us at the forefront of the green agenda.

We were the first council in the UK to adopt a One Planet Living approach – with the aim of becoming London's most sustainable suburb – a place where people want to live and work because of the excellent quality of life.

The One Planet Living approach was developed by environmental charity BioRegional and the World Wildlife Fund. Sutton decided to use One Planet Living as the framework for delivery of a sustainable suburb because it is one of the most comprehensive approaches to sustainability. One Planet Sutton embraces both environmental issues, and how we live as a community.

Key to the delivery of our One Planet Sutton targets is delivery in partnership with a wide range of organisations from across the borough. For example Sutton worked with local charities Ecolocal and Bioregional, alongside B&Q to deliver a £1 million Pay As You Save trial - the results of which fed directly into the development of the government's Green Deal. The council also worked with Bioregional and Ecolocal on the innovative £1 million One Planet Food project, outcomes of which include a community farm, increased local food growing and schemes to use local produce within local schools and hospitals.

The Council and its partners have always been ambitious and this has been reflected in our One Planet Plans. Building on these, there have been many achievements.

In terms of 'soft' sustainability principles (food, wildlife, culture, equity, and happiness), Sutton has performed exceptionally under almost all principles. This is demonstrated by sustainability remaining a key council value, rich natural assets, strong community spirit and a local food movement.

Key successes were:

- Launched a Sutton Bookshare to increase reading, with less books needed – an online scheme where registered parties can list books they own and arrange lending between themselves and other individuals.
- Helping over 8,000 people grow food and eat healthily
- Building 94% of homes on previously developed land
- Delivering a fantastic Summer Festival, with London 2012 activities
- Increase recycling and composting in council offices to 85% by 2012
- reducing council waste by up to 37%,
- Equipping 8,000 people with food growing and healthy eating skills
- created 95 new allotments across Sutton – exceeding our target of 60 new community food growing spaces
- Established Sutton Community Farm as an independent self-sustaining social enterprise by 2012
- At least three local food outlets continue to thrive in Sutton, including Wallington Farmers Market, Sutton Local Produce and Craft Market, and Sutton Community Farm.

Within Sutton, many sustainable projects have been trialled in an area of the borough called Hackbridge. Hackbridge has been chosen as it is a deprived area of the borough which is undergoing regeneration. Residents in the area told the council that they want this regeneration to be as sustainable as possible. Projects within Hackbridge have already included the creation of a Low Carbon Zone for existing homes, greening businesses projects, and health related community projects. Hackbridge will also be the site of the borough's first decentralised energy network.

The Hackbridge Low Carbon Zone (LCZ) launched in March 2010 and finished in March 2012. The aim of the project was to cut carbon dioxide emissions within the zone by 20.12%, from a baseline of 1,875 tonnes. The project was funded by the Greater London Authority and is one of 10 such zones across the Capital. By the end of the project, 300 domestic energy audits had been completed, 114 homes have received free insulation, 51 boilers have been replaced, 11 homes have received discounted gas central heating and 67 white goods appliances have been replaced.

In addition, the community buildings in the LCZ have each received a free energy audit, together with tailored energy-saving advice and a range of free measures. These have included replacement boilers, replacement lighting (with

motion sensors to cut down on use when not required), cavity wall insulation, smart meters, de-stratification fans and solar panels. In total, the audits, measures and behaviour change for both the domestic and non-domestic sector have saved an estimated 320.59 tonnes CO₂ per year, equivalent to 17.% since 2009/10.

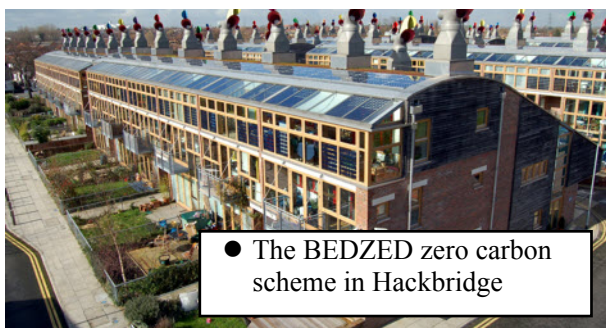
Under the Greening Businesses programme we are helping 45 SMEs to cut their environmental impacts, particularly energy and waste, as well as bringing them together to form collaboration networks. The Greening Businesses in Hackbridge network was launched in February 2011, and we are seeing the impact on the businesses we are advising through audits and support in using environmental policies and tools.

For some time London Borough of Sutton has had ambitions to deliver a heat network, utilising heat produced by waste operations to provide more affordable heating and hot water to residents and businesses. This ambition has recently taken a huge step forward as a Council-owned company has been established to invest £4.5m in its construction.

This company is a new and innovative way for the Council to deliver its objectives of reducing fuel poverty, increasing energy security and supporting its One Planet Living principles whilst supporting the aspirations of Hackbridge to become the first Sustainable Suburb.

Sutton also has a strong record on sustainable transport - in 2007, with support from Transport for London we launched the UK's largest sustainable transport project Smarter Travel Sutton. This project engaged with all households and thousands of employees in small and large businesses. By 2010 it had increased cycling by 75 per cent, bus use by 16 per cent and reduced car trips by 6 percentage points, and the smarter approach continues as we develop area improvements for sustainable travel in Wallington

The Smarter Travel Sutton (STS) project opted for a personalised approach using trained advisors to visit over 70,000 households to offer free



● The BEDZED zero carbon scheme in Hackbridge

support and advice about travelling around the borough. STS also assisted schools and workplaces to develop travel plans. 16,000 employees across the borough are covered by workplace travel plans including council staff. Sutton's schools were the first to achieve 100% coverage by a travel plan.

Lastly in the area of housing, we are working with our ALMO - Sutton Housing Partnership – to make major improvements to our housing stock. Over the last three years, with the help of ALMO and decent homes backlog funding, Sutton Housing Partnership has invested almost £50m in improving the condition and energy efficiency of the authority's 6,200 rented homes. Works have included new windows, boilers and heating systems and insulation measures, all of which have been provided to the highest energy efficiency standards and will help to significantly reduce CO2 emissions.

SHP has also in recent years been successful in attracting additional funding from streams such as the former CERT scheme, which helped to provide insulation to over 600 Council homes. The ALMO is currently working up a strategy to maximise funding under the Energy Company Obligation and has already secured one offer (£450k from British Gas) for further energy efficiency retrofit works including the treatment of solid walls. We are also currently benefitting from £225k of DECC funding that's been made available to Climate Energy to deliver loft and cavity wall insulation within the borough.

In terms of smaller scale innovation SHP is also working with Bioregional and Parity Projects to retrofit three social houses in Sutton. BioRegional have designed interventions for three near identical homes on the St Helier estate in Sutton. House 1 has a behaviour change programme only. House 2 incorporates a decent homes upgrade (boiler and loft insulation) with behaviour change programme.

House 3 is a full One Planet makeover, a deep energy retrofit using low impact building materials combined with behaviour change designed to achieve approximately 80% reduction in carbon emissions. This project will test how low carbon technology can make existing properties more energy efficient, shaping best practice and informing future housing policy.

We look forward to keeping people up to date with our work as a Lib Dem Council with a leading reputation for environmental action.



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