

First Steps to Sustainability: An Environment Strategy for South Ayrshire

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**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT UNIT
Trading Standards and Environmental Health
DEVELOPMENT, SAFETY and REGULATION**

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1 Introduction

South Ayrshire Council has committed itself to preparing and implementing an Environmental Strategy, under the remit of the Community Safety Committee. Such a strategy requires to articulate the Council's approach to the "Green Agenda", and in particular to environmental pollution, waste management, energy efficiency and sustainable resource use. Caring for the environment is one of the Council's principal duties, and this Environment Strategy sets out the framework by which this will be achieved, including performance monitoring systems, an educational programme and public involvement. A comprehensive action programme will drive all of this work.

The Council wishes to address this aspiration which is being driven at national and international level. There is growing public support for the "Green Agenda" to which the Council must respond. Failure to address these important issues coherently could cost the Council its progressive image and alienate it from popular concerns. In the extreme, financial and legal penalties are also possible in certain areas. A sustainably managed organisation will generate revenue savings through improved efficiency and ultimately reduced social costs, and it is recognised that a successful Environment Strategy will have a positive impact on the entire community for generations to come.

The adoption of an Environment Strategy is recognised as an essential first step for organisations to take in order to integrate sound environmental management practice into business planning processes. Significant improvement can be quickly made in terms of identifying environmental issues, measuring performance and raising awareness. This strategy is seen as the first step in a series of reviews and actions addressing these important issues. Changes to the current situation will be more long-term. The development of the strategy can be accomplished within existing resources. Implementation is likely to have both costs and savings. External funding will be available for a number of areas such as waste management and energy efficiency.

It is difficult to determine where South Ayrshire might sit in a league table of environmental issues, but, given the image which we enjoy of an area with a good quality of life, beautiful natural surroundings and tourist potential, it is essential to support this image with positive action. This strategy is seen as vital to that objective.

2 Policy Context

This Environment Strategy is being prepared against a backdrop of policy initiatives at national and international level on waste, energy, transport, climate change, water, biodiversity and access to environmental information. Over recent months the Council has participated in consultations related to all of these topics, and has been active in formulating local action plans on them.

On an international level, the outcomes of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development at Rio, and the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development at Johannesburg have done much to focus media attention on issues of environment and sustainability. Further, a range of European Directives have created a framework for UK legislation on specific issues of Energy, Waste, Transport, Water, Biodiversity, and access to environmental information.

The Government has stated four clear objectives in its “Strategy for Sustainable Development in the UK”. These are: Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone; Effective protection of the environment; Prudent use of natural resources, and; Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

The Scottish Executive has consulted on a number of environmental and sustainable development issues in the recent past, and looks set to incorporate sustainability in the Best Value process to be given statutory underpinning in the Local Government Scotland Bill currently going through the Scottish Parliament.

The Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan has considerations of sustainability at its heart, and there are a number of important issues around the disposal of waste, development of sustainable alternative energy technologies, preservation of built and natural heritage, addressing the effects of climate change, and implementing appropriate transport infrastructure which will become increasingly important for the local community. Further, the new Finalised South Ayrshire Local Plan embraces the vision of maintaining and enhancing the high environmental quality of the area through a sustainable approach.

In the Local Agenda 21 (LA21) Strategy approved on 15 August 2000, South Ayrshire Council supported the principles of sustainability as set out at the Rio Earth Summit and endorsed by HM Government, and the Scottish Executive. Further, the Council is committed, through its `Vision of 2020` Policy Document, to work towards a sustainable community. This is defined as a community which meets the needs and aspirations of its members to maintain and improve their quality of life, without compromising the ability of future generations everywhere to do likewise. The LA21 strategy was based on four aims of:

- **Protection** of the natural environment
- **Future effects** of actions on the sustainability of community and environment
- **Participation** of interested parties
- **Quality of life** of residents

The Council established a Sustainable Development Unit within the remit of the Head of Trading Standards & Environmental Health as part of the Department of Development, Safety and Regulation. The Department’s strategic vision is to “enhance the quality of life for all those living in, working in, and visiting South Ayrshire”, with five strategic themes – Physical Environment, Business Environment, Sustainability, Community Safety, and Open-ness and Transparency. Following these themes, one of the Department’s key Business Priorities is the establishment of Council-wide environmental performance indicators as a basis for performance improvement. This strategy is a direct result of that priority.

Further examples of how key environmental issues are being addressed in South Ayrshire are summarised below. There is a fuller indication of relevant initiatives under way across the Council in Appendix B, and a list of local partner groups in Appendix C.

		Environment Action (see Section 5 for explanation)
• Energy	Energy Advice Centre (SW Scotland)	E11
	Home Energy Conservation Act Projects	E17
	Council Property Energy Efficiencies	E 1
	Fuel Poverty Group	E17
• Waste	Area Waste Strategy	E14
	South Ayrshire Waste and Environment Trust	E20
• Transport	South Ayrshire Transport Initiative	E16
• Climate Change	Ayrshire Strategic Flood Appraisal Group	E 2
• Bathing Water	Beach Award Scheme	E 3
• Biodiversity	Ayrshire Biodiversity Group	E 4
• Environmental Education	South Ayrshire Environment Week	E11
• Community Involvement	Community Links Initiative	E21

3 Our Approach

The key principles required to implement this strategy are as follows:

1 – Identifying an Action Framework

To develop and implement, in conjunction with other Council Services, an Environmental Action programme which will address environmental and sustainable development issues through a programme of planned actions.

2 – Measuring Performance

To identify and implement suitable indicators to reflect local and national environmental priorities through which we may measure, monitor, and improve the Councils Environmental performance.

3 – Improving Awareness

To improve the understanding and awareness of environmental issues and performance in the Council and the wider community, encouraging a future generation which is more aware of their environment as a resource to be protected.

4 – Working with Others

To establish partnerships with business, voluntary and other public sector bodies to develop sustainable environmental initiatives, including the encouragement of full Community participation in the implementation of this Strategy.

Principles 1 and 2 are closely linked, and are intended to meet the need to better track existing commitments as well as encourage new ones. They will deliver the aims of protection of the existing environment and due consideration of future effects set out in the Local Agenda 21 Strategy referred to above.

Principles 3 and 4 are also closely linked, and address the aim of encouraging participation.

In total, all principles contribute to the ultimate LA21 aim of improving quality of life across the community.

4 Indicators and Milestones

The South Ayrshire Council Environment Strategy will adopt locally appropriate indicators allied to targets which are challenging but achievable. These indicators will fall into two broad classes – *internal performance* which are under the Council’s direct control and a measure of organisational sustainability, and *external measures* of community sustainability, which are strongly influenced by Council actions, or significantly impact on Council Services.

These will be easily measured or estimated, easily collected, understandable, and able to be related to other benchmarks currently under development by the Scottish Executive and other branches of Government. Indicators and allied targets will be derived from other strategies and as a result of consultation with other Council Services. These will cover a range of environmental and sustainability issues such as energy, waste, transport, economy, education, environment, pollution, resources, and community. Examples of possible indicators are set out in Appendix A. The Environment Strategy and its associated Action Plan will be driven by a Local Agenda 21 process and is envisaged as open-ended and iterative, that is it is a process of continuous improvement, which should be frequently reviewed and updated. This does not prevent the setting of milestones, however. The setting of appropriate milestones will be agreed with the lead departments or agencies involved in delivering the actions which influence particular indicators. We would seek to have made measurable progress on all indicators within three years, and review them at that time.

The following ten indicators have been identified as most significant in monitoring progress, and it is proposed to report on them quarterly.

Internal Environmental Performance Indicators

SECTOR	INDICATOR	MEASURE	ACTIONS
ECONOMY	Goods & services obtained from local suppliers	percent of spend	E14
ENERGY	Reduction in energy consumption	value	E1 E10
RESOURCES	Reduction in water consumption	value	E1
TRANSPORT	Use of private cars on Council business	miles	E15
TRANSPORT	Fuel consumption of Council Fleet	miles/litre	E1
WASTE	Tonnage of Council waste recycled	percent	E1 E13

External Environmental Performance Indicators

SECTOR	INDICATOR	MEASURE	ACTIONS
ENERGY	Houses provided with energy efficiency improvements	number	E11
POLLUTION	beaches meeting EU standards	number	E3
WASTE	Tonnage of municipal waste disposed at landfill sites	tonnes	E13
WASTE	Tonnage household waste recycled	percent	E13

5 Strategic Environment Actions

Sustainable Development is a topic that affects everything and everyone. It is difficult to draw boundaries and set priorities within the overall framework. The key actions that are set out below are linked to the Objective that appears most appropriate. Against each key action the indicators which might apply are set out. The detailed descriptions of the indicators are set out in Appendix A. Flowing from each key action it is intended that a whole series of projects and initiatives from across the Council will be established.

5.1 Identifying an Action Framework

South Ayrshire Council will consider the impact of its existence and activities on the physical, social and economic sustainability of the area. In common with other strategic issues, environment requires a strong corporate commitment so that its influence extends across the organisation and is supported from the top of the organisation down. Departmental Service Plans must demonstrate linkage to this strategy. The undernoted key actions are designed to facilitate this process.

Key Action	Description	Performance indicators
E1 Resources	Develop guidelines to ensure that resources are used efficiently and production of waste is minimised, and manage their implementation, including regular environmental auditing of operational units. This will include guidelines for suppliers, contractors and developers to ensure environmentally-friendly materials and practices are used as far as possible.	3, 9, 11, 23, 24, 25, 28, 31, 37, 38.
E2 Environmental protection	Minimise the risk of environmental damage by employing "Best Practice" safe technologies and operating procedures, and prepare contingency plans to deal with environmental accidents.	13, 16
E3 Pollution	Promote improved public health by maintaining and extending pollution monitoring of air, water, noise, dog fouling and bathing beaches to direct resources towards a cleaner safer environment.	14, 19, 20, 21, 22
E4 Natural Environment	Ensure that the diversity of nature is protected and enhanced.	12, 15, 17, 20
E5 Training	Ensure adequate resources and training for delivery of objectives, including the establishment of link officers in each department/section for environmental issues.	5, 9, 11
E6 Funding	Identify necessary funding sources and establish budgets to deliver the initiatives set out in this strategy within the timescales indicated, and ensure that financial savings generated by resource efficiency programmes are clearly identified.	11

5.2 Measuring Performance

The test of success in implementing an Environment Strategy is improved quality of life for residents (and visitors) due to demonstrable improvements in their economic, social and physical environments. It is recognised that this can be difficult to quantify, but the range of measurable indicators in Appendix A together may give some objective indication of trends across the spread of strategic environment issues.

Key Action	Description	Performance indicators
E7 Framework	Develop a framework for systematic consideration of the environmental impact of all the Council's initiatives.	
E8 Indicators	Develop a range of sustainability indicators to measure quality of life for comparison with local and national criteria.	
E9 Forum	Establish a local Sustainability Forum to undertake regular reviews of progress on initiatives and gauge public perceptions of the process.	

5.3 Improving Awareness

A crucial element of delivering an effective Environment Strategy is information and education within the organisation and the wider community. There are strong links to the schools' Environmental Education curriculum in this area. The Environment Strategy is seen as forming part of the organisational ethos, and is therefore the responsibility of all South Ayrshire Council employees.

Key Action	Description	Performance indicators
E10 Employees	Ensure that all Council employees understand the importance of a sustainably managed organisation, and how they can contribute.	5, 9
E11 Public	Promote public understanding and participation in environmental issues through education, information provision and consultation.	5, 6, 7
E12 Schools	Provide a programme of talks and demonstrations in support of 5-14 Curriculum on Environmental studies	5, 6
E13 Business	Provide informal advice on environmental legislation, waste minimisation and energy efficiency to the business community.	2
E14 Waste	Encourage and promote waste minimisation and, as a last resort, ensure the disposal of waste in the least environmentally damaging way.	32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38
E15 Local Goods	Promote the use of local goods and services as far as possible by example and incentive.	4

E16 Public Transport	Promote the use of public transport and reduction of dependence on private vehicles, and ensure access to facilities is not achieved at undue expense to the environment.	27, 29, 30
E17 Fuel poverty	Promote access to basic living needs at reasonable cost, and support the Home Energy Conservation Programme in deprived areas.	26
E18 Community Safety	Endeavour to ensure all its citizens and visitors experience a climate free of fear of crime or persecution.	link to Community Safety
E19 Health	Support a healthy lifestyle through promotion of healthy diet and indoor and outdoor leisure activities.	18, 29

5.4 Working with Others

South Ayrshire Council believes that sharing responsibility for our local environment with national bodies, local organisations, and individuals is an important part of developing an effective Environment Strategy. The Council has an important role in enabling and co-ordinating local action, and will endeavour to work with a range of partners from all sectors of society to ensure that social conditions of health, opportunity and employment are not degraded through adverse physical and economic environmental conditions.

Key Action	Description	Performance indicators
E20 Partnership	Contribute to and work in partnership with local and national organisations to pool resources and maximise attraction of funding for environment projects.	
E21 Local Groups	Form links with, and support where appropriate, Community Councils, Tenants and Residents Groups and other representative fora on environmental matters.	1
E22 Volunteers	Recognise the value of unpaid work to the community and individual, and encourage opportunities for satisfying voluntary work in improving the environment.	1

6 Next Steps

This Strategy sets out the first steps to improving sustainability in South Ayrshire. One of the key elements is the setting up of a Sustainability Forum within the Council to develop the Strategy and links to the community. The key actions in the Strategy are envisaged as being in the ownership of all, with individual inputs from the areas of each Service Plan which support each action.

Further information on this Strategy may be obtained from Ken Gibb, Sustainable Development Manager. Telephone 01292 616288, email ken.gibb@south-ayrshire.gov.uk

Appendix A - Environmental Performance Indicators

Key quarterly indicators in bold italic

No.	SECTOR	PI TYPE	INDICATOR	UNIT	ACTIONS
1	COMMUNITY	Internal	Funding to environmental projects	value	E21 E22
2	ECONOMY	External	Environmental business advice	number	E13
3	ECONOMY	Internal	Environmental approved suppliers	number	E1
4	ECONOMY	Internal	Supporting local suppliers	value	E15
5	EDUCATION	Internal	Presentations/Events	number	E10 E11
6	EDUCATION	Internal	Eco-school programme	number	E12
7	ENERGY	External	Energy efficiency grants awarded	value	E11
8	ENERGY	Internal	Energy efficient improvements to housing stock	value	E6
9	ENERGY	Internal	Reduction in energy consumption	value	E1 E10
10	ENERGY	Internal	Funding attracted for energy projects	value	E22
11	ENERGY	Internal	Energy efficient improvements to Council Offices	value	E1 E6
12	ENVIRONMENT	External	% new homes on previously developed land	number	E4
13	ENVIRONMENT	External	Sustainable urban drainage schemes	number	E2
14	ENVIRONMENT	External	Illegal dumping	tonnes	E3
15	ENVIRONMENT	External	Sites of Special Scientific Interest	number	E4
16	ENVIRONMENT	External	Pollution incidents	number	E2 E3
17	ENVIRONMENT	Internal	Greenfield development	hectares	E4
18	ENVIRONMENT	Internal	Quality urban open space	hectares	E19
19	POLLUTION	External	Dog fouling	complaints	E3
20	POLLUTION	External	Watercourses of good or fair quality	km	E3 E4
21	POLLUTION	External	Reedbed planning applications	number	E3
22	POLLUTION	External	beaches meeting EU standards	number	E3
23	RESOURCES	Internal	Use of peat-based composts and fertilisers	volume	E1
24	RESOURCES	Internal	Paper stationary purchase	volume	E1
25	RESOURCES	Internal	Reduction in water consumption	value	E1
26	SOCIAL	External	Households in fuel poverty	percent	E17
27	TRANSPORT	Internal	Private vehicle business mileage	miles	E16
28	TRANSPORT	Internal	Fleet vehicle numbers	number	E1
29	TRANSPORT	Internal	Investment in paths and cycleways	value	E15 E19
30	TRANSPORT	Internal	Council staff use of public transport	value	E16
31	TRANSPORT	Internal	Council fleet fuel consumption	litres	E1
32	WASTE	External	Municipal waste tonnage to landfill	tonnes	E14
33	WASTE	External	Recycled glass tonnage	tonnes	E14
34	WASTE	External	Green waste collected	tonnes	E14
35	WASTE	Internal	% population within walking distance of recycling	percent	E14
36	WASTE	Internal	% household waste recycled	percent	E14
37	WASTE	Internal	% Council waste recycled	percent	E1 E14
38	WASTE	Internal	Total waste from Council premises	tonnes	E1 E14

Appendix B – Associated Council Initiatives

The Environment Strategy is linked to the following areas of work currently underway in the Council, which is broadly indicative and by no means exhaustive.

Environment, Land and Property:

Roads, Parks and Waste Management

Waste Management

Strategy and Design

Enterprise, Tourism and Leisure

Property Management and Resource Support

Landscape Design & Maintenance

Cycling Initiatives

Waste Management

Recycling Plan

Litter Control

Transport Initiative

Economic Development

Strategic Procurement

Social Work, Housing and Health:

Social Inclusion Partnerships

Housing Plan

Fuel Poverty

Development, Safety and Regulation:

Trading Standards and Environmental Health

Energy Management

Domestic Energy Efficiency

Environmental Education

Community Links Initiative

Air Quality Strategy

Anti-Dog Fouling Initiative

Contaminated Land Strategy

Crime Prevention

Emergency Planning

Rural Affairs

South Ayrshire Local Plan

Forestry Strategy

Wildlife Initiative

Access Initiatives

Flood Appraisal

Planning, Building Standards and Licensing

Education, Culture and Lifelong learning:

Life-long learning

Resource Planning and Support

Community Learning

Ecoschools Programme

Deputy Chief Executive :

Community Planning

IT Strategy

Appendix C – Key Local Partners

There are a number of key local partners which also require to be linked with, and consulted on, this strategy:

Ayrshire & Arran Health Care Trust
Ayrshire & Arran Tourist Board
Council for Voluntary Organisations
Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire
SW Scotland Energy Advice Centre
Scottish Natural Heritage
South Ayrshire Homes
Community Councils
South Ayrshire Waste and Environment Trust

Scottish Water
Scottish Power
Scottish Gas
Scottish Environmental Protection Agency
Strathclyde PTE
Tenants and Residents Forum
Town Centre Management Association
Paisley University