

DERRINGTON WAY AHEAD: A SUMMARY REPORT AND EVALUATION OF STAFFORD BOROUGH'S FIRST LOW CARBON COMMUNITY PROJECT

1 Introduction

“Derrington – Way Ahead” seeks to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and promote the village as a Low Carbon Community. There is an emphasis on energy efficiency/carbon reductions, with recognition that sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles are the way to tackle climate change - and that by working together on these issues, benefits to community cohesion will accrue.

The project has emerged from a range of ongoing community based sustainable development initiatives supported by Stafford Borough Council.

The initiative has recently celebrated its first anniversary.

2 Selecting a location

In selecting a location several considerations were taken into account. These included in particular: size of community, demographic composition, geographical location, a track record of community - led activity.

Derrington was eventually chosen as a suitable candidate pilot community. The village has an enthusiastic and motivated population, with several active groups, community leaders and a track record of delivering successful community and environmental projects.

The village is within cycling and walking distance of the main employment centre of Stafford and benefits from its rural-urban location in other ways eg there are several local food producers situated on the village edge.

The community benefits from many residents with skills and experience in project management, fund raising, community liaison and a wide range of practical skills and environmental management skills.

The village is approximately three miles from Stafford town centre, with about 350 properties and a population of around 1,000. This community offered a manageable scale with a diverse make – up.

The closure of the village shop and post office in June 2008 was a great blow to the village. However, on 31st October 2008, a Post Office was established within the Village Hall complimented by a W.I. Coffee Shop – an important opportunity for many villagers and friends (especially vulnerable groups) to congregate.

The village features a Millennium Green run by its own Trustees, which has lovely wild meadow flowers, an extensive orchard area and a nuttery, a W.I. herb garden and a Brownie willow maze. There is also a Millennium Wood, officially opened by Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal in December 2000 and managed with the support of the Woodland Trust.

The village benefits from proximity to a disused railway line, which once ran from Stafford to Newport. The line has been turned into a cycle track/footway, called The Greenway, which is now part of the Sustrans National Cycle Network, NCN 5. The Greenway offers an excellent opportunity for commuter trips into Stafford (2.5 miles into the town centre) as well as recreation and leisure use.

Derrington residents are able to receive a monthly Church and Village Magazine, covering the villages of Derrington and Haughton. It contains news and views from within the two villages. This is complemented by the village hall website at http://www.derringtonvillagehall.btik.com/p_Home.ikml - with pages now also dedicated to the 'Derrington – Way Ahead' low carbon community activities.

3 Community Action

Derrington has a strong sense of place. As well as the extensive efforts to set up the Millennium Green, Millennium Wood, etc there are volunteers doing all kinds of community activities eg litter picking; bulb planting; helping neighbours do their shopping; monthly conservation activities on the Green; there's a film club that has made a short film clip of the village and its assets; there is an annual calendar of the Millennium Green put together and sold– there are Christmas Cards of village scenes on sale too.

The Derrington – Way Ahead project has been community led, with plans and proposals emerging from consultation exercises designed and implemented by local people – enabling local people to decide what's good for the locality and what 's at the top of their sustainability concerns.

The initiative has been designed in such a way as to provide evidence (quantitative and qualitative) of the impact of activities, in order to share experiences beyond Derrington and into other communities.

Funding has been obtained to date from the 'Learning 2 Deliver' programme (a programme for Local Strategic Partnerships in the West Midlands to help improve delivery of their Local Area Agreement outcomes), the Staffordshire Aggregates Levy Fund (SALGS) and Stafford Borough Council.

The project has benefited from a successful bid for funding for a Project Development Grant under BRE's Community Sustainable Energy Programme. This is to help develop proposals to improve energy efficiency/install renewables at Derrington Village Hall.

In addition a multitude of in-kind support has been offered from loan of gazebos, to training as Volunteer Walks Leaders, from making cakes to designing questionnaire surveys – an incredible wealth of talent, skill and enthusiasm exists in this community.

4 Some Milestones

- Application for grant funding to set up project - Autumn 2008

- Early discussions with key figures/representatives in village on 'low carbon community' concept – Autumn 2008
- Confirmation of funding - December 2008
- Formation of the Derrington – Way Ahead Steering Group – January 2009
- Presentation to Parish Council and Derrington W.I. February 2009
- Questionnaire designed/consultation exercise carried out by - 66 questionnaires returned (15% response rate)
- Analysis of Questionnaire results indicating preferred projects
- Various Publicity/Promotion: Posters/articles in the Church and Village Magazine/press releases
- Meeting with local Headteacher, Cooper Perry Primary School, Seighford and subsequent participation/support by local school
- Submission for funding to BRE Community Sustainable Energy Programme for Feasibility Study on energy measures at Village Hall – successful and report now completed by Marches Energy Agency
- Led Health Walks established, every Wednesday at 2pm
- Design of project Logo/branding by Steering Group
- Design/construction of Giant Thermometer by local Derrington joiner
- Design/distribution of Launch Event fliers/posters
- Launch Event May 30th – around 200 attending. Women's Institute received £100 in donations from refreshments at Launch Event - have already bought/planted a wide range of new plants for the Millennium Herb Garden
- Stall/exhibition at Derrington Church Fete – June 6th
- Richard Davies (speaker from Marches Energy Agency) 'From Ambition to Action' – turning ambition into action! July 14th
- Furniture Exchange (furniture re-use scheme) collection July 2nd
- Back 2 Bikes (bicycle recycling project) collection July 2nd
- Local Food Festival at Derrington Village Hall – Sept 12th Excellent support with around 300 participants – visit http://www.derringtonvillagehall.btik.com/p_Home.ikml
- Energy Audit of Village Hall undertaken on Oct 7th – report received Nov 2009
- 54 Home Energy Surveys and Reports completed at Nov 16th (15% of households in village). Comprehensive Evaluation will be completed in December 2009. Data so far extrapolates that Derrington's residents have an average carbon footprint/person 7.6 tonnes of CO2 with the highest emissions at 30 tonnes and the lowest at 3.4 tonnes.
- Designed and purchased two promotional pull up banners
- Obtained quotes from contractors for various energy measures
- Submitted bid for Leader funding for Village Hall energy measures and attended Rural Panel
- Successful bid for funding from Community Centres and Village Hall Grant Scheme for energy measures at Village Hall
- Supported bids for further funding to help extend low carbon community activity to other parts of Stafford Borough
- Invited to attend Norton Canes Low Carbon Community launch event Feb 2010
- Launch of Local Food Fact Sheet by Her Worshipful The Mayor and One Year Anniversary Tea Dance, March 2010
- Opened bank account April 2010

- Established draft constitution April 2010
- Presentation to Parish Council about becoming a Fairtrade Village April 2010
- Planning application for PV panels to be submitted, June 2010
- Site visit SCC to earmark locations for new benches on the Greenway, June 2010

5 Learning and Sharing

We have researched other community based low carbon initiatives, including local and national projects – such as Ashton Hayes (Cheshire), Whittington and Fisherwick (Staffordshire), ReaVEN (Shropshire). Derrington – Way Ahead is a member of the Low Carbon Communities Network. It is working with countywide groups such as Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and partnerships such as Staffordshire OC3 and Stafford Borough networks and groups such as Sustainability Matters, Stafford Friends of the Earth, Action Organic, Stafford Area Action for Fairtrade, Transition Stafford etc. Cannock District Council has recently launched its first low carbon community project at Norton Canes and utilised Derrington’s consultation questionnaire and asked the group to support its launch event.

6 Fostering community leadership, involvement and partnerships and promoting equality and diversity

There is real grassroots support from community leaders as well as the community in general. There is genuine support from local partners too, to help delivery eg Women’s Institute and Derrington Millennium Green Trust.

The ‘Derrington – Way Ahead’ Steering Group contains key figures, volunteers and representatives in the village, with a wide range of other supporters including local farmers and producers, the Film Club, Brownies, plus skilled individuals and professional from the village eg a joiner, a face painter etc.

There is a strong willingness to learn and we have sought comment, feedback and input at several opportunities including:

Initial Consultation Questionnaires

Planet Pledges at launch event

Evaluation Forms given out during Film Season

Comprehensive Evaluation/Data collection to be carried out in December by Beat the Cold including carbon footprinting/carbon calculations and behavioural change

Feedback/opportunities to comment via the web pages

Final evaluation questionnaires

The initiative has aimed to promote diversity and equality and to encourage participation by all, including those with special needs or disabilities. Examples include:

14 out of 52 households that have had energy performance reports are in receipt of a disability benefit;

Supported participation of individuals with mental health issues and physical disabilities on the Steering Group

Supporting people with mental and physical health needs on led Health Walks

Aiding individuals with severe physical disability to participate in the fruit tree scheme, attend events

The project has also aimed to support low income households through energy measures/tackling fuel poverty, promoting and improving accessibility of local food, planting fruit trees etc.

The projects aims to work 'cross-generationally' too, with the Primary School and with older residents. The Fairtrade Tea Dance/anniversary event aimed to offer an intergenerational dimension.

7 Beat the Cold

Beat the Cold offered home visits, helped with project planning and attended various events and steering group meetings. Home visits were made to 53 households (15%), with the aim of providing:

- a baseline for every household on their homes efficiency through Energy Performance Reports (EPR), which involved collecting data on the heating systems, heating controls, lighting, the size of the property and checking electric meters.
- a household carbon footprint, based on data relating to behaviour and lifestyle, as a baseline from which to make improvements
- expert carbon saving and energy advice
- opportunities for direct energy monitoring via the distribution of a dozen energy monitors which were passed on from household to household enabling residents to monitor their real time energy usage and differentiate between the electricity consumption of different electrical items
- information, help and support depending on the clients' needs eg linking to partner organizations eg Orbit, making referrals where necessary, helping access grants for loft and cavity wall insulation, switching to Social Tariffs
- a raised awareness of the wider issue of climate change and how householders can become more sustainable

All households were invited to participate, regardless of income, with extra assistance given to vulnerable households to access grants and social tariffs. Households were also signposted to various organisations and where necessary, referrals were made to appropriate agencies.

After each home visit householders received a reusable bag (promoting local food and the Staffs OC3 climate change project), a Derrington-focused thermometer card, a 'flush and save bag' for the lavatory, a fridge thermometer and either a computer or a TV Powerdown kit.

8 Sustainability Matters

Sustainability Matters supported the project by providing expertise in community engagement and liaison, event and project planning, promotion and awareness raising, liaison with the media, and developing web pages for the project.

9 Stafford Borough Council

SBC initiated this pilot initiative as part of its commitment to tackling climate change and as a means of helping to deliver targets relating to NI 186. As a pilot project, it is intended that the project seeks to achieve good practice and to share lessons learned. SBC has helped to formulate and undertake community consultation techniques, to engage the wider community, to build community capacity and to identify and help deliver community priorities and seek funding.

10 Summary of outcomes

(a) Supporting life style changes and reducing CO 2 emissions

As a result of this initiative, including home energy visits and energy advice, a wide range of events and activities, promotional work and awareness raising, there has been a high level of interest and participation in this project.

It has been possible to collate both quantitative and qualitative data.

- around 200 attending the Launch Event in May 2009 with 77 'planet pledges' made and tied to the cherry tree outside the village hall (pledges on website)
- approximately 300 people attended the Local Food Festival at Derrington Village Hall – Sept 12th
- 40 households planted an apple tree as part of the 'Adopt a Fruit Tree' project - another two residents plant a further 60 fruit trees - along with a further 15 being planted at Cooper Perry Primary School, establishing their own school orchard
- approximately 60 people attended the film season showing 3 films on climate change
- a wide range of practical actions have been undertaken by individual citizens and these include (according to evaluation forms): swapping to low energy light bulbs; walking and cycling more; eating more local food; using the cycle track; growing my own veg; installing a new boiler; installing a water meter; using an energy monitor; placing a water saver in the cistern; turned down the thermostat; planting a fruit tree; putting up a solar panel; more recycling; reducing energy use overall
- Evaluation results (full results available from Policy and Partnerships office) show that: 87% of respondents are personally concerned about the climate change and the future of the planet; 75% of respondents consider the initiative has helped the environment; 87% think the project has helped them; 60% are aware there are web-pages about the project; 44% have changed their travel habits with 67% of people either using the car less, using public transport more, or walking or cycling more; 49% have started growing their own food or buying local food as a result of this project and 47% believe they have reduced their energy consumption. Details on energy saving and carbon reductions are given in the following section.

(b) Carbon savings

Carbon savings can be both instant and long term. The instant ones include installing energy measures such as insulation, replacing boilers, choosing more efficient electrical appliances, as well as immediate behavioural change. However, long term carbon savings result from personal choices and actions resulting in long term lifestyle change.

Energy Measures	Approximate CO2 savings (t/year)
Loft insulation (9 homes)	2.18
Cavity wall insulation (4 homes)	2.44
Light bulbs	1.66
Energy monitors (21 households)	6.34
TV Power-downs	0.88
Computer Power-downs	0.48
Tank Jackets	0.19
Savings on Carbon Footprint for household that sold car	1.67
Installation of a new boiler	2.3
Total CO2 savings in first year	14.97
Home energy advice	35.78 t carbon/lifetime
Planting 113 trees	84.75 t carbon/tree

(c) Energy Monitors

Since the introduction of the Energy Monitors the following types of behaviour changes were reported by the residents: Timing showers to 4 minutes; Changing the breakfast routine so the kettle is only put on once not twice; Making sure the computer is shut down when not in use; Turning off unused lights; 1 person has fixed the lid on a freezer so it shuts properly; with the intention of buying a new one as soon as possible, when they saw how much it was costing them; purchase of 'A' rated fridge and freezer, and a new kettle with a water gauge; many residents stated that the Energy Monitors made them more aware of their electricity usage and were highly conscious when switching things on.

(d) Household referrals

Of the households visited, a number of referrals were made to the following agencies; Orbit - Handyperson 9; Orbit – Home Fire Risk Checks – 6; Fire Service – Home Fire Risk Check – 3.

(e) Vulnerable households

Beat the Cold brought its expertise of working with vulnerable households to this project and assisted with the following: Accessing social tariffs (4); Introducing people to the Priority Service Register (9); 2 householders had gas installed several years ago and the Economy 7 meter was not replaced with a single phase meter. One household calculated that they would save money by changing meters. An installation date for a new meter was arranged and the household was also put onto the priority services register. The other household decided to make more use of their cheaper night rate and keep their Economy 7 meter.

(f) Bespoke Advice

Beat the Cold gave generic advice and information materials but also researched and provided specific feedback to households.

Eg one resident was interested in under-floor insulation. Beat the Cold undertook research and produced a basic fact sheet on this topic.

Eg two households expressed an interest in renewable energy (solar thermal and ground source heat pumps). Practical information and costs were passed on to these interested parties.

(g) Case Studies

Case Study One

One householder, (an 80 year old) had a single rate meter installed by a meter company 7 years ago, replacing her multi rate meter. Her only source of heating was electric storage heaters. She thought she was on Economy 7 and was shocked to find she was not. This explained her high fuel bills. Beat the Cold spoke to the fuel company, which she moved to 3 years ago, and found that she was on a standard tariff. As a result of Beat the Cold's intervention the fuel company agreed to install a multi rate meter, free of charge, and volunteered to recalculate her fuel bill since the date she moved to them. She subsequently received a refund for £532.

She also had insufficient loft insulation, which Beat the Cold arranged to be topped up using the Over 70's CERT scheme. She did not use her hot water cylinder because she had had a leak and was scared to leave it on. We contacted a local electrician who recommended installing a timer for the Economy 7 rate and an hour boost button. He also checked the storage heaters were working correctly and fitted a hot water cylinder jacket.

Case Study Two

A family of two adults and two girls booked a home visit after attending the Local Food Festival. They were very enthusiastic about the idea of growing food and saving energy. They borrowed an Energy Monitor and have decided to invest in one of their own. Also they have become more aware of their transport habits and the girls now take public transport to school and mum has 20 minutes more in the mornings for a cup of coffee. They have also applied to the Boiler Scrappage Scheme for a replacement boiler. The girls are activity switching off equipment and light to save money. They show the energy monitor to everyone that comes to the house and tell others how good it is and how it saves money!

(h) Awards etc

The initiative was placed 3rd out of 180 applicants in the national Green Awards and was second in the SBC Green Awards in 2009. As a result of the success of this project SBC was awarded £30,000 funding from the Staffordshire Aggregates Levy Grant Scheme in January 2010 to roll out further low carbon community activities within Stafford Borough (a summary of these activities is available). The initiative has also been used as a case study in a DVD for the RIEP showcasing good practice across the region.

(i) Sustainability of project

The project is guided by an active and committed steering group, supported by several local groups and agencies who have plans as follows: work in partnership with existing village groups to continue to promote sustainable communities and sustainable development related activities (eg Brownies eg St Matthew's Church); continue energy measures at the village hall, including PV installation, zoned heating

and replacement of flat roofs, and seek funding to complete this; plan a programme of films in the Autumn; seek Fairtrade Village status; participate in village events eg summer fete; maintain a series of articles in the village newsletter and on the webpages; arrange for additional seating to be placed along the Greenway to promote use and in particular walking for less mobile people; repeat Local Food Festival in September. Undertake a community group 'health check' at the next meeting.

Conclusion

Lessons and techniques learned through this project will be available to be shared in future community based projects in localities within Stafford Borough, contributing to the safer and stronger communities agenda and contributing to the delivery of the NI 186 Delivery Plan.

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