

Sustainable Homes



Developing an Environmental Policy and Action Plan

A Guide for Housing Associations

Environmental Policy Seminars

This guide is based on the experience of a series of seminars held by Sustainable Homes during 2000 and 2001. The seminars provided guidance for thirty three housing associations developing their own environmental policy and action plan. They varied in size (from 500 to 14,500 homes), location, stock types and provided a good mix of experience. Some associations had an adopted policy but no action, some had a policy but little action and others had no environmental policy. All sought guidance on how to develop or improve the association's position.

The seminars were structured to provide advice and encourage action. Each seminar involved three workshops that explored the process in small groups. Speakers were invited to discuss issues suggested by the groups. 'Homework' was carried out between sessions to encourage action in the workplace.

Sustainable Homes would like to thank the following housing associations for their involvement in the seminar series.

Acton Housing Association	Maritime Housing Association
Aragon Housing Association	Nottingham Community Housing Association
Bethnal Green & Victoria Housing Association	Octavia Housing & Care
Bournville Village Trust	Orbit Housing Association
Broomleigh Housing Association	Oxford Citizens Housing Association
CDS Housing	Perthshire Housing Association
Central & Cecil Housing Trust	Progress Housing Group
Chiltern Hundreds Housing Association	South Warwickshire Housing Association
Dane Housing (Congleton) Ltd	Southern Housing Group
Drum Housing Group	Swan Housing Association
Ealing Family Housing Association	Swaythling Housing Society
East Thames Housing Group	The Guinness Trust
English Churches Housing Group	The Vale Housing Association
Hastoe Housing Association	Threshold Tennant Trust
Isle of Wight Housing Association	Walbrook Housing Association
Kerrier Homes Trust Limited	Westlea Housing Association
Longhurst Housing Association	York Housing Association
Maidenhead & District Housing Association	

This Guide has been written by Jenny Wain. The seminars were led by Martin Rowbottom, Jenny Wain (Sustainable Homes) and Alison Jennings (The Vale Housing Association).

At the time this Guide went to print very sad news was received. Martin Rowbottom passed away unexpectedly on 3 September 2001. He will be greatly missed.

Contents

1	Executive Summary	3
2	Context	4
3	Developing an Environmental Policy & Action Plan	5
	How can it be done?	5
	Types of policies and plans	5
	What should a policy include?	5
	What should a plan include?	6
	Steps to developing an Environmental Policy & Action Plan	8
4	The Reality Facing Housing Associations	13
	What makes the process easier?	13
	What makes the process harder?	14
	The recipe for success?	14
	Postscript	15
	Appendices	
	Appendix A Example Policy	16
	Appendix B Example Action Plan	17
	Appendix C Environmental Issues	19
	Appendix D Useful Contacts	20



Executive Summary

Adopting an environmental policy and action plan will improve a housing association's environmental performance, and benefit residents, staff and the local community. Residents benefit through energy and water savings, alleviating fuel poverty and improving quality of life. The organisation benefits from financial savings, reduction in maintenance costs, a better working environment for staff and raising the organisation's profile in the community. It makes good business sense, good environmental sense and will help meet Housing Corporation Sustainable Development criteria.

The following key points form a checklist for a successful policy and action plan:

- **Ensure Board and Senior Management commitment.**
Commitment from senior management and board members is critical, especially in providing support to staff and the commitment of resources.
- **Keep the process simple.**
Developing an environmental policy and action plan need not be daunting. By following a simple approach, complex issues can be tackled more easily.
- **Start with a clear strategy.**
Take time to develop a clear strategy at the start. The environmental policy will set out the vision; the action plan forms the framework.
- **Encourage a multidisciplinary team to guide the proceedings.**
The decisions, policies and actions that influence an organisation's environmental performance cut across every department - it is the responsibility of all staff.
- **Agree a 'green champion' to co-ordinate the process and encourage action.**
It is often the commitment, enthusiasm and encouragement of an individual that will drive an action plan forward, but they need support from senior management.
- **Form partnerships and maximise external support.**
Don't work in isolation - build partnerships with likeminded organisations to maximise resources, commitment and ultimately action.
- **Keep members of the working party, staff and residents' informed of progress.**
Greater improvements can be realised by keeping people informed of achievements and by encouraging suggestions for action.
- **Identify targets to achieve quickly.**
The first year of an action plan should include targets that can be achieved quickly to boost confidence as early environmental improvement is made.
- **Don't look for a quick fix.**
Accept it will take time to develop the policy and plan initially. It is a process to start now and develop over time, with short, medium and long-term goals.
- **Do what works for your organisation.**
What works for one association may not work for another. By concentrating on individual circumstances a realistic policy and responsive action plan can be developed.

1 | Context

Why bother?

There are many reasons why it is important to develop an environmental policy and action plan.

The development, maintenance and management of housing can have a negative environmental impact. Resources used to build, refurbish and maintain homes impact on the local and global environment, but the greatest impact is derived from living in the homes. The energy use in housing currently accounts for around 1/4 of UK carbon emissions influencing climate change. The existing housing stock offers the greatest potential for improving environmental performance. There are far more existing homes than new homes planned, and these are often less energy and water efficient.

Consideration of energy and water efficiency and the location of homes in relation to public transport, work and community facilities will help to improve an association's environmental performance, and the social and economic well being of residents. Associations also have a responsibility as businesses to reduce harmful impacts through reducing energy and water consumption, waste reduction and their purchasing policy, to name just a few areas.

A fundamental responsibility of housing associations is a social one; to provide affordable homes and improve people's quality of life. In achieving these two goals, housing associations also have economic and environmental responsibilities. Although generally in tune with supporting community, social and economic development, for most associations environmental impact is often a low priority. However, a number of associations take their environmental responsibility seriously and are proving that good environmental performance results in homes that are more affordable to live in and maintain, and that give an improved quality of life for residents.

Associations are starting to acknowledge their responsibility to residents, staff, local communities and stakeholders, to ensure that action is sympathetic to the environment and sustainable. Simply, this means that current action does not have an adverse impact on the economic, environmental and social quality of life for residents, staff and local communities now, and, very importantly, in the future.

Housing Associations are ideally placed to promote and influence sustainable action due to their involvement with local communities. By introducing an environmental policy and action plan an association can begin to improve its environmental performance whilst, at the same time, creating positive economic and social benefits for the residents and communities it works with.

What are the benefits?

Several benefits can derive from an environmental policy and action plan. By reducing negative environmental impact, living costs to residents can be reduced through improving energy and water efficiency, alleviating fuel poverty and improving quality of life. As a business, savings can be made through energy, water and waste reduction in the office. The process should also result in the re-evaluation of some policies and procedures, enabling improved management and efficiency.

Forging better partnerships with organisations sharing common goals, such as local authority LA21 teams, will also derive benefits. (For more information on Local Agenda 21, see Sustainable Homes' policy paper 2).

It will also help meet Government and Housing Corporation targets, such as alleviating fuel poverty. In a more tangible vein, Scheme Development Standards include a sustainability multiplier for grant calculations.

The Ford Motor Company has proved that cleaning up your environmental act can result in a better business through the introduction of the environmental management system, ISO 14001, to all its plants. By revising policies and action in line with the environmental management system it has saved millions of dollars each year through reduced energy and water use, reduced chemical handling and increase of waste recycling. Other competitors haven't introduced the system because they perceive it to add cost, when in reality it results in cost savings.

2 | Developing an Environmental Policy and Action Plan

How can it be done?

The key to developing a successful environmental policy and action plan is to remember that it is an incremental process. It need not be seen as an onerous task where a policy has to be written in a short time scale, with little or no consideration for how action can be taken. To develop a good environmental policy and action plan will take time; action should be expanded into new areas as the capacity of an association allows, following an agreed timetable. It should reflect individual circumstances; the approach taken by one association may be very different from the approach of another. It is an active document, with real commitment, which is reviewed and modified like a business plan. In essence it could be considered as part of 'greening' the business plan.

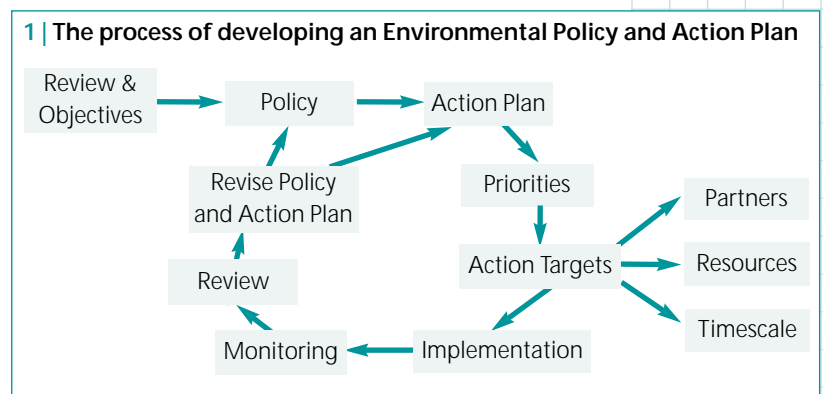
A policy and action plan involves all departments of an association. It is often seen as just a development issue, to ensure new homes are built to a better environmental standard. It is much more than this. It involves the board, for long term commitment; maintenance, for existing stock; development, for new stock; management, for advice to residents; all staff, for the management of the office; and residents, for the house in use.

Types of policies and plans

The best approach to take when considering a policy and action plan is to develop a clearly thought out policy that is supported by a 'toolbox' of action and resources. This puts an association in the best position to reduce long term environmental impact. However, sometimes policies are written without sufficient consideration to the action plan and implementation. A policy is adopted, but for a number of reasons action is limited or non-existent. In essence the policy becomes a statement of intent, but little more. Alternatively, policies are devised that are so specific they allow very little flexibility for implementation, and difficulties are experienced in achieving anything.

The process

Diagram 1 (right) shows the key stages in the process to developing an environmental policy and action plan. The environmental policy is a statement of an organisation's long term environmental commitment. It should set out the main environmental objectives an organisation will tackle in order to improve performance. The action plan sets out the actual tasks and activities that will take place in order to achieve policy objectives. For example, if one policy objective is to reduce CO₂ emissions, action in the plan could include targets to increase homeworking, encourage cycling to work and to increase the SAP or NHER rating of housing by an agreed %. Together, the policy and action plan provide the vision and framework for improving environmental performance.



What should a Policy include?

The policy is a statement of an association's environmental commitment. It should set out why an association is developing a policy, its main environmental objectives, and how it expects to meet these. In practice it is often the case for the policy to be written at the end of the action planning process. This way it

responds to the specific situation of an association and includes realistic objectives. A policy should be short and simple and could include the following elements.

Mission statement

When setting the scene, a mission statement is useful to frame the context for action. A common example of such a statement could be taken from the Brundtland Report:

'...development that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs...'

(World Commission on Environment and Development, Our Common Future, 1987)

But alternative quotes could be used:

'Let us put our minds together and see what life we can make for our children'

Tatanka Yotanka (Chief Sitting Bull)

Commitments

The policy should introduce an organisation's commitments. By setting these out as part of the policy, stakeholders can be made aware of reasons for action and the intent of the policy. These could include:

- Running costs
- Resources and materials
- Quality of life
- Energy efficiency
- Climate change
- Waste minimisation
- Transport
- Pollution minimisation

Caveats

The policy should set out the boundaries or constraints that a policy and action plan must work within for it to be meaningful and realistic. For housing associations, these are likely to include issues such as value for money, the fact low income families are being housed, and the need to recognise the independence of individual householders. Although associations can encourage residents to live in an environment friendly way, some improvements are reliant on resident action.

Monitoring and review

Any policy needs to include information on how it and the action plan will be monitored and reviewed. Monitoring measures improvements in environmental performance and enables a review of action for the future. The best way to do this is by an internal system for annual monitoring and review of performance.

What should the Action Plan include?

The plan should set out the action necessary to achieve policy objectives. It could be structured to include an overview of proposed action for a 3 - 5 year period, with more detailed information on annual action and targets for the first and second year. As its title suggests, a plan is not static; it should be developed on a rolling programme and include realistic and achievable targets, with a clear timetable for action that reflects staff and resource availability. The reality facing a major UK company is highlighted below.

B&Q realised it needed to improve and monitor its environmental performance in 1990 and it recognised that it would take time. Over the past decade it has addressed the environmental performance of different products as part of a rolling programme. It has moved from tackling just environmental performance, to improving social and economic performance in the communities it works with around the world. It

continues to address new issues and impacts as part of a 3 year review programme. The DIY company acknowledge they are on the way to being sustainable, and it has a dedicated team of seven environmental staff to make sure of this result in the long term.

As more housing associations begin to consider improving their environmental performance it needs to be accepted that it will take a number of years to achieve, especially if resources are limited. Box 1 contains an example taken from the seminar workshops (as do boxes 2-8). For examples of an actual policy and action plan see Appendix A and B.

'Hope Housing Association' - Environmental Policy and Action Plan

'Hope HA' aims to contribute to the quality of life of neighbourhoods it works in, and seeks to ensure that development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. A 'green' approach can bring direct benefits and 'Hope HA' is committed to improving its environmental performance by addressing the following objectives:

- *Energy Conservation*
- *Resource Conservation*
- *Reducing Pollution and the Use of Hazardous Substances*
- *Waste Reduction and Recycling*

A Corporate Objective for 2000-2005 is to meet changing demand and circumstances through diversification. The Environmental Action Plan recognises that opportunities for piloting new techniques, new products and codes of behaviour will need to be taken on a pragmatic basis, to take advantage of partnership and funding opportunities, and to ensure that the expectations of interested parties can be met.

The programme of action and annual targets for Year 1 are:

Awareness Raising

- *Train staff on environmental issues*
- *Train front line staff to provide energy and environmental advice to residents*

Residents' Energy Consumption

- *Provide residents moving into a new home with energy advice and up to 4 low-energy bulbs (provided free of charge from the Electric Company). Each bulb could save over £25.*
- *Identify properties which have less than 100mm of loft insulation and upgrade them to 200mm to improve comfort levels.*

Staff Use of Transport

- *Provide staff with training and advice on achieving low fuel consumption.*
- *Monitor how efficiently fleet vehicles are being used.*

Waste

- *Reduce consumption of office materials and paper by holding a stationery amnesty and encouraging staff to use both sides of paper.*
- *Introduce an office recycling scheme for paper, bottles and cans.*
- *Introduce procedures to ensure contractors minimise on-site waste and reduce their impact on the environment.*

Steps to Developing an Environmental Policy and Action Plan

The experience of the seminars showed that following a simple process will make it easier for all.

Step 1: Seeking Commitment

As an environmental policy and action plan cuts across all areas of operation and covers a variety of issues, a range of stakeholders will be involved. Both internal and external stakeholders are integral to the success of a policy and action plan. They should be involved at the start with long term commitment sought.

Stakeholders will include:

Board members	Designers	Housing Corporation
Senior management	Contractors	Local authorities
Staff	Suppliers	Funding bodies
Residents	Local schools	Advisory agencies

Stakeholder involvement is likely to vary depending on the objective being considered and the circumstances of an organisation. However, four stakeholder groups are crucial if an organisation is to improve its environmental performance: board members, senior management, staff and residents.

Board and Management

Board and senior management support is important for a strategic approach to be taken, for the commitment of resources and to influence support from residents, staff and partners. Highlighting the benefits of a policy and action plan can encourage board and management commitment. Benefits include:

- healthier homes and a better quality of life for residents;
- enhanced image and PR in the wider community;
- improved business efficiency and Best Value; and
- meeting Housing Corporation criteria.

Staff

Staff can all assist in generating good ideas, meeting targets in their area of work, and through their interaction with residents and partners. It is important to raise awareness with staff, and show how small steps in daily routines can have a much larger impact on improving the organisation's environmental performance. Ways of encouraging staff commitment could include:

- Awareness raising - use external speakers to make links between the global impact of climate change, pollution, health and an association's activities to promote action with staff. The World Wildlife Fund, Global Action Plan, or other charities known for their enthusiasm could be used.
- Develop links to daily routine and practices in the office and at home - this could be emphasised by encouraging individuals to carry out research in their areas of work, e.g. how much virgin paper is used in your section?
- Recognise good ideas - encourage staff to put ideas forward, and if suggestions result in benefits to the organisation then rewards can be made, e.g. time off or vouchers etc.

Residents

It is important for residents to be involved - it is their environment too, and they can benefit through energy and water savings. It could be argued that, as the end user of an association's services, they have the greatest environmental impact. There are many ways of engaging residents' interest, see box 2, but it is important to enter into dialogue early on in the process and to keep information, suggestions and actions flowing between an association and its residents.

Engaging Residents

- Be clear about resources before starting.
- Contact residents to identify interested and enthusiastic people.
- Suggest a pilot project in one area and encourage 'pilot residents' to decide an environmental issue to focus on, e.g. energy efficiency, water efficiency, waste reduction etc.
- Work with 'pilot residents' to establish existing practice, costs etc. and identify improvements, advice and realistic action.
- Monitor action and results over several months.
- 'Pilot residents' help design energy efficiency advice leaflets and develop an identity to their project, e.g. cartoon character.
- 'Pilot residents' can help to drip feed information to wider community, e.g. resident newsletter.
- Launch the project findings at a major community event, e.g. roadshow/carnival.
- Encourage action and involvement of wider community by offering incentives to attend the event, return survey information and to encourage suggestions.
- Expand good points of project to wider community and develop networks.

Step 2: Setting up a Green Team

When developing a policy and action plan, a multidisciplinary working party or 'green team' can help drive the process forward, and assist in meeting goals more effectively. The team shares the responsibility and workload and can enter into dialogue with staff and residents more readily.

Many local authorities have created environmental co-ordinator roles over the last 5 years, but it is unlikely that this will be the case for housing associations. It is usual for environmental responsibilities to be additional to existing roles. It is, however, common to find an association has a 'green champion' (or in some cases several), to lead the process and encourage action on a continuing basis. For a green champion to succeed they need support from senior management, to be part of the green team, and endless enthusiasm.

Step 3: Agreeing Objectives

Brainstorming potential environmental objectives and prioritising the most significant is needed at the start of the process. These objectives will form the focus of a policy and drive the process forward. A scoping exercise will help determine objectives by looking at an association's daily activities, and identifying areas of significant environmental affect, including the consumption of energy and water, the use of transport and materials, the production of waste and impacts on the natural and built environment. Other areas might also be identified depending on individual circumstances. Appendix C contains further advice.



Box 3 (next page) contains seminar information on A4 paper use and business mileage rates; environmental purchasing and reducing transport emissions are two areas that could require action as a result of a scoping review.

The scoping exercise will also identify positive action already being carried out, albeit often on an ad hoc basis, such as the recycling of toner cartridges or the specification of low energy light bulbs.

Resulting objectives will overlap areas of operation. For example an objective to reduce carbon emissions will affect the office, development, refurbishment programmes, transport and residents' practices, to name a few. It could also link with other objectives, such as alleviating fuel poverty. The range of action and departmental responsibility required confirms the need for a multidisciplinary approach.

The housing associations participating in the seminars identified how much A4 paper was purchased and the annual business mileage (excluding public transport) for 2000/2001. The levels of consumption below give an indication of the environmental impact that housing associations can have on natural resources and CO₂ emissions.

	Sheets of paper 2000 / 2001			Business Mileage 2000 / 2001		
	Total	Per property	Per full time staff	Total	Per property	Per full time staff
Highest level	2,205,000	665	35,000	900,000	181	6,410
Lowest level	105,000	21	991	6,346	4	159
Average level	612,000	250	9,270	221,000	45	1,500

Although these reflect the individual circumstances of the participating associations, they do indicate the levels of consumption possible in any association. Where does your association fit?

Step 4: Setting Priorities

Improving environmental performance will take time, and there will be a limit to how much action can be achieved in the short, medium and long term. Priorities need to be set to reflect what an organisation considers to be most important. It may be that a priority is to set your own house in order. Many actions will be needed to achieve this, but only certain actions can be taken in the first year. Quick hits, but not quick fixes, should be encouraged, as achieving some environmental improvement quickly can help to boost action and commitment. A quick hit could be encouraging staff to switch off lights and computer equipment when not in use or introducing recycling points around the office.

Policy Objectives

Reduce Energy costs
Reduce Water costs
Reduce CO₂ emissions
Raise Awareness

Priorities for Action

Tackle fuel poverty in vulnerable households
Widen understanding of affordable water
Reduce energy use in communal areas
Train staff on environmental issues

The key to a good action plan stems from prioritising the areas of greatest significance. This will assist in setting realistic targets and actions for the first, and subsequent years. It is perfectly reasonable to state that some actions will take longer, explain why and set out when future action is planned. Box 4 highlights some priorities that could be set to meet objectives.

Step 5: Defining Action

step 5 | Defining action



Once the underlying objectives and priorities have been agreed, the next step is to consider the action needed to achieve them. Initial brainstorming is likely to identify a daunting amount of action. Fortunately, this can be managed by identifying action that is SMART:

- **S**pecific
- **M**easurable
- **A**chievable
- **R**ealistic
- **T**imebound.

Considering action against these points will help identify short, medium and long term goals that reflect the partners and resources available. See box 5 for an example and Steps 6 and 7 below for more information on partners and resources.

Short term action (1 year) to meet two energy objectives:

- Objective:* Reduce CO₂ emissions
- Action*
- Amend specification of new build and improvements to increase SAP of homes by an agreed %.
 - Investigate fuel options for housing, vehicles and office.
 - Distribute low energy light bulbs to residents.
- Objective:* Raising awareness on energy use
- Action*
- Carry out training and education for staff and residents.
 - Support energy education in local schools.
 - Introduce an energy cartoon character and column in residents' newsletter.
 - Provide information in plain language.

Step 6: Identifying Partners

Whilst identifying actions, consideration needs to be given to stakeholders and partners.

Although partnership has been one of the buzzwords of the last decade, it really can help achieve environmental action. Housing associations share common goals with other stakeholder organisations such as contractors, local authorities, energy action teams, health authorities etc. By forging links and improving dialogue and co-operation with such bodies, even more benefits can be derived, see box 6. A local authority environmental co-ordinator would be an obvious link to make, but experience shows that organisations who might not ordinarily be involved with housing associations can help just as well. For example, by working with schools and raising environmental awareness with children, parents can be influenced and better informed through their children.

Resource Saving Partnership

A successful partnership between The Vale HA and the local authority resulted in over 2000 free energy efficient light bulbs being provided to residents. This built on a partnership the local authority already had with the local energy company, who sponsored the project.

An association might not always be best placed to implement some actions, but it might have a role supporting and encouraging other organisations to lead on an initiative. For example, it can encourage a local authority to introduce a kerbside recycling scheme, and encourage residents to use this service by providing space for containers to be stored.

Step 7: Allocating Resources

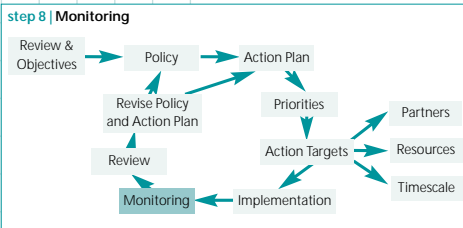
As objectives, tasks and partners are being identified, it is necessary to consider resource implications. Importantly, resources need to include staff time and the allocation of a budget. Additional time will be needed if staff are to develop the process on top of existing responsibilities. The amount of time needed should not be underestimated. A committed budget is necessary to start action, but in the long run, savings arising from improving environmental performance could be recycled to support further 'green' projects. There are other resources that can be utilised; partner organisations may be able to provide grants, support and advice.

The relationship between identifying action and the partners and resources needed is set out in the seminar workshop example in box 7 (next page).

Tackling Fuel Poverty

Action	Partners	Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out baseline survey. Investigate 'Care and Repair potential. Form an energy alliance with local energy companies. Investigate ways to improve residents' income levels, e.g. training initiatives, local labour clauses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff Local authority Residents Consultants GP/health workers Citizens Advice Bureau Welfare benefits Schools Housing Corporation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff time Budget Housing Corporation Local Authority Grants, e.g. LA Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES), energy companies, Energy Efficiency Commitment (EEC), Energy Savings Trust (EST).

Step 8: Monitoring



In order to know how well a policy is performing it will be necessary to monitor and review actions. An effective audit or management system can assist in making resources go further, both for housing associations and residents. It will provide a method of monitoring environmental performance, and the framework for reviewing a policy and action plan. There are several ways to carry out an audit, but the important thing is that it is carried out and integrated into the process.

The audit approach adopted should reflect the individual circumstances of an association. The simplest way to carry out an audit is through a self audit that follows an agreed internal system. This approach could suit small to medium sized associations. Alternatively a formal environmental audit system could be adopted. There are currently three systems available to associations. These could best suit larger associations to ensure consistency of approach across offices/departments.

The Housing Corporation has supported Places for People in developing an Environmental Management Matrix in conjunction with Chris Barnett Associates. This software based package helps to determine an organisation's environmental baseline, guides target setting and reports on progress from input monitoring data.

Formal accreditation via an Environmental Management System (EMS) could be pursued. There are two options available: EMAS or ISO 14001. EMAS is a European system, compatible with ISO 14001. ISO 14001 is an internationally recognised system. The systems are similar and ensure procedures are set up throughout an organisation to monitor progress. Any EMS ensures continuous environmental improvement and compliance with legislation.

3 | The Reality of Developing an Environmental Policy and Action Plan.

What are the realities facing a housing association?

This section aims to highlight some of the realities facing housing associations when developing a policy and action plan. It is largely based on comments from the seminars, and post seminar feedback. It begins to identify how the process can be made easier, and the barriers to be aware of.

What makes the process easier?

Strategy

As with all initiatives, a good strategy generates good outputs. To make the process easier, take time at the outset to determine:

- where you are now;
- significant environmental impacts;
- main objectives; and
- who can help.

The action plan will ensure that all departments are involved and working to collective targets, co-ordinate objectives and actions that overlap departmental responsibility and facilitate external partnerships.

Commitment

All seminar participants agreed that to be successful commitment from senior management and board members is required from the start of the process. One of the best ways of achieving and maintaining commitment is to recognise environmental responsibility as a corporate goal and include it in the business plan.

The integration of the policy and action plan in the business plan will ensure action. If it is not recognised as a corporate goal, it will remain a peripheral activity with other work taking priority on a daily basis. Housing Corporation targets and achieving Best Value should assist in promoting it as a mainstream corporate activity. Environmental responsibility should not be seen as an additional task; the key is to integrate it with the existing processes at work in housing associations.

Experience shows that it is often the commitment of an individual (green champion) that drives the whole process forward. One individual can't take all the action, but with the support of others can succeed in encouraging action. The individual doesn't have to be an environmental specialist, or have environmental qualifications, just someone who is a good networker, enthusiastic, tenacious and well supported.

Allocation of resources

Commitment needs to go beyond moral support. It needs to recognise budget and resource implications. Without the identification and allocation of specific staff and budgetary resources it will be very difficult to meet environmental targets and to turn environmental policy into action. Allocating an environmental budget can enable changes in practice that give long term savings, see box 8.

Improving environmental performance doesn't have to cost more. One housing association with a well developed policy and action plan has made a significant saving from revising its waste policy. Instead of waste being removed from site by a contractor, several mini skips and a skip lorry have been purchased to enable on site sorting of waste before it is taken to a recycling centre. By reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill by around 20%, significant savings should be made to the annual waste bill of £45,000.

box 8

The most advanced associations with an adopted policy and positive action not only had senior level support, but a multidisciplinary Green Team and some budget allocation.

Sources of help

In addition to this guide several tools are available to help develop an environmental policy and action plan. Guidance for improving energy efficiency is available through the Government backed Energy Efficiency Best Practice Programme, which provides advice on new build and refurbishment, travel plans, green fleet management and energy efficiency in the home. The Energy Saving Trust is planning to produce specific guidance on energy efficiency for housing associations. A local authority Local Agenda 21 officer or environmental co-ordinator should be able to provide a range of assistance. The Housing Corporation support a number of projects that should make the process easier, see below. More sources of help are listed in Appendix D.

What makes the process harder?

When an association begins to recognise that developing a policy and action plan makes good business sense as well as good environmental sense, difficulties in securing staff time and resources will need to be addressed. These are often the main barriers to driving the process forward. Difficulties will arise if adequate staff time and resources are not identified. Lead staff are likely to have wider mainstream responsibilities and despite an individual's commitment, environmental issues could be considered a peripheral activity competing for priority with other requirements. Where this is the case, the time needed to start the process should not be underestimated.

Barriers to progressing an environmental policy and action plan can be overcome if the following are secured:

- commitment from senior management;
- allocation of time and funding;
- recognition that it is a core activity integrated with other priorities;
- clear advice, training and awareness, and
- long term co-ordinated corporate approach.

What are the benefits?

Improving environmental performance will result in benefits to residents, staff and as a business. Resident benefits include energy and water savings, alleviating fuel poverty and improving quality of life. Organisation benefits include financial savings, reduction in maintenance costs, a better working environment for staff and raising an organisation's profile in the community. A policy and action plan give a clear signal of environmental commitment to staff, residents, and the local community; enables focused action and a co-ordinated approach; and can help meet Housing Corporation criteria.

Many large corporations and businesses have recognised that environmental issues are their responsibility and have begun developing their own policies and action plans. This includes organisations such as the Co-operative Bank, Ford Motor Company and B & Q. It is now time for more housing associations to recognise it makes good business sense too.

The recipe for success?

To develop a successful environmental policy and action plan and improve your environmental performance, the following are prerequisites:

- **Ensure Board and Senior Management commitment.**
- **Keep the process simple.**
- **Develop a clear strategy at the start.**
- **Encourage a multidisciplinary team to guide the process.**

- **Agree a 'green champion' to co-ordinate the process and encourage action.**
- **Keep members of working party, staff and residents' informed of progress.**
- **Form partnerships and maximise external support.**
- **Allocate sufficient resources.**
- **Look for quick hits but not a quick fix.**
- **Do what works for your organisation.**

But if you're still unsure as to WHY you should bother, read on...

Postscript

The Housing Corporation has a firm commitment to implementing Government policies and strategies with regard to sustainable development, fuel poverty and climate change. The Corporation is currently preparing a Sustainable Development Strategy and Action Plan, which will focus on the need to involve housing associations in this agenda.

'Making a significant contribution to the achievement of Sustainable Development' is a core corporate objective in the new three year corporate strategy 'Building on Success'. This sets demanding targets for taking the agenda forward over the period of the strategy, including the adoption of a formal Sustainable Development Strategy and Action Plan and a formal Affordable Warmth Strategy and Action Plan by 70% of housing associations, with more than 250 units, by March 2004.

The Corporation is also beginning to incorporate sustainable development principles into the Investment and Regulatory frameworks. For example, the proposed Regulatory Code will include the following requirement:

'Housing Associations must demonstrate a commitment to sustainable development and a better quality of life for residents by pursuing social, environmental and economic objectives across all their activities.'

To comply with this requirement housing associations will need to address sustainable development issues systematically and be able to provide evidence that this is being done. Good environmental practice is a fundamental element of sustainable development and the adoption and implementation of an environmental policy and action plan will provide evidence of commitment to tackling this important issue. If Best Value and quality of life for residents is to be improved, positive management of an organisation's environmental impact needs to be integrated into mainstream activities.

The Housing Corporation realises that assistance will be needed to help housing associations improve environmental performance. It has supported Sustainable Homes in running the Environmental Policy and Action Plan seminar series, on which this guide is based. It is also supporting the development of a number of initiatives through the Innovation and Good Practice programme to help achieve this goal. These include:

- Energy Management for Affordable Warmth
- Energy Efficiency Partnership for Homes
- Environmental Management Matrix
- Affordable Water
- Aquaspec
- The Use of Recycled Materials
- How to do Sustainable Housing

For more details visit www.housingcorp.gov.uk

Appendix A ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY Hastoe HA

1. Hastoe Housing Association, in adopting this policy, accepts that sustainability requires “ development that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” . (Our Common Future - Brundtland Commission).

2. The Association's Environmental Policy is to:
 - Enable residents to reduce the running costs of their homes.
 - Provide housing with a good living environment.
 - Avoid building on 'greenfield' sites where the use of redevelopment land is feasible.
 - Take action to reduce emissions of CO2 and other gases which could effect climate change.
 - Reduce the dependence on non-renewable resources.
 - Promote the re-use and recycling of materials.
 - Avoid the use of potentially toxic and environmentally damaging materials and processes.
 - Reduce the use of resources in the daily operations of the organisation.

3. This Policy will be implemented by an Environmental Plan, covering a five year period which will:
 - Review the use of resources in housing and the organisation.
 - Consider how these can be reduced or replaced.
 - Develop the use of renewable resources and products.
 - Improve the internal and external environment of housing.
 - Promote research into environmental issues, and disseminate information.
 - Provide advice, training and guidance for residents and staff.

4. In developing the Environmental Plan the Association will always have regard to the need to:
 - Provide value for money in housing for low income families.
 - Respect the independence of the individual and their own lifestyle.

5. The Environmental Plan will be implemented in consultation with Committee Members, staff and residents. An annual report will be submitted to the Management Committee, setting out progress and putting forward priorities for the future.

Appendix B Hope Housing Trust Environmental Policy ACTION PLAN

Everything we do has an environmental affect, positive and/or negative and it would be impractical to review every aspect of our work in one go. This Action Plan provides a structure to give initial effect to the intentions set out in our Environmental Policy.

The plan provides for a rolling programme, looking at different aspects of our activities, and how environmental impacts can be reduced or changed. Each section of work will go through similar phases:

- Review of current practice
- Assessing options for change
- Agreement of new procedures or policy
- Providing training and resources, where necessary
- Implementation
- Monitoring
- Review and revision, if necessary

The Environmental Policy sets a timetable of six years for the implementation of the Action Plan. This initial version of the plan sets out proposals for the first three years. A number of environmental issues are already being tackled. These have been incorporated into the early part of the plan. The timetable fits in with the Association's Business Plan cycle.

The overall six year period should be sufficient to carry out a review of all the principal activities of the Association. Although not everything will be covered the results will be a reduction in the environmental impact of the Association and an improvement in the quality of life provided in our housing stock.

Action Plan (see table on page 24)

Provision is made in all budgets for identified work in the current year. An additional provision for research and investigation is included in the R & D budget and assigned to the Eastern Operations Director.

Some provision for Affordable Warmth work in years two and three has been included in the Three Year Forward Budget for Maintenance and Improvements. Energy Efficiency Commitment funds will have to be sought if all the likely properties are to achieve the intended minimum SAP of 60 within the planned target of six years. Budgets for other activity areas will be subject to the normal round of bids but the Board is committed to providing resources to support the Action Plan.

Management and Review

This Action Plan covers the next six years and an annual review will take forward a three year rolling programme. The review will need to be flexible to ensure that areas of work are not carried out in following years simply because they have been in the plan for the last two years. The importance, knowledge and perception of environmental issues change rapidly and it is possible, therefore, that the annual review will bring forward new issues for consideration in the following year. The review may also lead to previous issues being dropped.

Direction and implementation of the plan rests with the Green Team chaired by the Eastern Operations Director. This group will be responsible for the initial annual reviews. Staff and Area Residents Panels will have the opportunity to make suggestions and comment before the review is submitted to the Board with proposals for the following year's work.

The annual review will provide the opportunity to identify members of the organisation with a knowledge and interest in a particular subject willing to take the lead in developing policy in that area. The review process will be carried out in the annual cycle of budgets, training programme and review of the Business Plan.

Environmental Action Plan

Environmental area	Current Year				Year 2	Year 2	Lead	Resources
	Jan - Mar	Apr - June	July - Sept	Oct - Dec				
Energy - Affordable warmth		Condition survey complete	New SAP profile	Identify poor SAP properties	Include SAP sub 20 in imp. plans	Include SAP sub 30 in imp. plans	Maintenance Contracts Manager	Maintenance and Improvement budgets
Energy - advice			Training for new staff	Review advice leaflets	Advice leaflet for existing housing	Refresher training	Housing Services Officer	Training and Housing Services budgets
Energy - transport						Review travel policy	Office manager	
Water - conservation	Monitoring trial ends		Review results	Review use of 4 litre WCs	Resident survey - shower use		Business Development Manager	R & D budget
Environmental Assessment	First EcoHomes assessment		First EcoHomes on site		Completion - review design and build stages	Residents review	Business Development Manager	R & D budget
Materials		Review communal areas maintenance materials			Maintenance specification	Projects specification	East Tech Services Officer	Maintenance Budget
Waste - offices	Introduce paper reduction targets		Review Area Office recycling	Set office 'use' targets 4 - skip days		Review 'use' targets	Office Manager	Stationary Budget
Waste - residents		2 - skip days			Continue skip days - kerbside boxes	seek LA partners re	South Area Manger	Estate improvement budgets
Waste - communal areas				Review composting of communal green waste	Review composting of communal green waste	4 'Green Events'	South Area Manger	Open spaces budget
Awareness		4 estate/resident 'Green Events'			LA Promotion		East Operations Director	R & D Budget

Appendix C Housing Associations and the Environment

The following environmental issues are not intended as a definitive list, but a guide to some of the areas that may be of concern to an association in the provision of housing and management operations.

	Housing	Operations
Energy consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • occupation • embodied 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communal areas • offices, stores • transport
Water consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • occupation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communal areas • offices, stores
Development/ brownfield sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contamination • remediation • disposal • greenfield 'contamination' 	
Redevelopment of existing buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • toxicity of existing materials 	
Landscape and ecological diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new projects • existing housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communal areas
Water sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pollution • quality • flooding 	
Air pollution		
Noise		
Design quality		
Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in use • future adaptability 	
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new projects • existing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communal areas • offices, stores
Local services and links	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transport • employment • education • shopping • community facilities and services 	
Adjoining uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new projects • existing housing • change of use 	
Housing mix and tenure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new projects • existing housing 	
Climate change		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • carbon dioxide • other emissions
Pollution		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HCFC • nitrous oxide
Materials		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sustainability of supply • toxicity/pollution /waste in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - manufacture - use - disposal • transport • alternatives
Waste		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduction • reuse • recycling • disposal
Working practices		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conditions/hours • accommodation • opportunities • training • travel

Appendix D Useful Information and Contacts

For an overview of the Government's approach to sustainable development, its strategy and indicators, visit www.sustainable-development.gov.uk

Community

'Housing Associations and Local Agenda 21'; Sustainable Homes, 1998.

Available from Sustainable Homes on www.sustainablehomes.co.uk

Global Action Plan provide training for communities and organisations to improve environmental impact - www.globalactionplan.org.uk

Development and Refurbishment

'Sustainable Homes Good Practice Guide'

Includes 37 case studies of environmental good practice, available from Sustainable Homes or www.sustainablehomes.co.uk

'Sustainable Housing Design Guide for Scotland', Fionn Stevenson, Nick Williams 2000

Developed for Scottish Homes. ISBN 0-11-4972796

EcoHomes

BRE's 'Environmental Assessment Method for Homes'.

BRE 389, BREEAM Office, Centre for Sustainable Construction, BRE, Watford, WD2 7JR www.bre.co.uk

'The Green Guide to Building Specification'

BRE 390, BREEAM Office, Centre for Sustainable Construction, BRE, Watford, WD2 7JR www.bre.co.uk

'The 'e' factor : six guiding principles to improving sustainability in housebuilding',

The Housing Forum 2001, 108 -110 Judd St. London, WC1H 9NT, Tel: 020 7691 0220

www.thehousingforum.org.uk

Energy Efficiency

Energy Saving Trust provides advice on energy efficiency for housing associations and local authorities - www.est.co.uk

Energy Efficiency Advice Centres - Freephone 0800 512 012

The National Energy Foundation can identify your nearest Energy Efficiency Advice Centre, which provides free advice on cost effective ways to save energy - www.natenergy.org.uk/leac

Energy Efficiency Best Practice Programme is a government backed programme providing free advice on cutting energy use/costs - www.energy-efficiency.gov.uk

Information on savings by changing energy supplier - www.buy.co.uk

Energy Companies can provide free/reduced price energy efficient products, grants etc - www.ofgem.gov.uk

Local Authorities also run a variety of energy efficiency schemes and projects as part of their Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) requirements. Contact your local HECA officer to find out more.

Environmental Management Systems

Environmental Management Matrix, David Power, Places for People, 4 The Pavillions, Portway, Preston, Lancashire PR2 2YB Tel: 01772 897 200

ISO 14001

'Implementing an Environmental Management System - a good practice guide',

The Vale Housing Association, 1999. Vale was the first association to gain ISO 14001 accreditation. The Vale Housing Association, The Old Maltings, Vineyard, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 3 UG, Tel: 01235 536 001.

Environmental information is available on www.vale-housing.co.uk

EMAS

More information can be found on the following websites:

www.emas.org.uk

www.defra.gov.uk/environment

Lifecycle Costing

'Handbook of Sustainable Building - An Environmental Preference Method'.

David Anink, Chiel Boonstra, John Mak, 1996 ISBN 1-873-936-8-9

'Green Building Handbook Vol. 1 & 2'.

Sam Kimmins, Tom Woolley, Spons, 2000 ISBN 0-419-25380-7

Office

'The Green Office Manual - a guide to responsible practice', 2nd Edition, Wastebusters Ltd, 2000. ISBN 1-85383-679-6

'BREEAM 98 for Offices'.

This provides an environmental assessment and labelling scheme for office buildings.

BRE 350, BREEAM Office, Centre for Sustainable Construction, BRE, Watford, WD2 7JR. - www.bre.co.uk

'The Office Toolkit - a guide for facilities and office managers for reducing costs and environmental impact'.

1995. BRE 285, BREEAM Office, Centre for Sustainable Construction, BRE, Watford, WD2 7JR. -

www.bre.co.uk

Products and Materials

Forest Stewardship Council certifies sustainable, managed forests worldwide and publishes a directory of certified products and supplies - www.fsc.org.uk

The Global EcoLabelling Network contains information on certified low environmental impact products from around the world - www.gen.gr.ip

'Timber Frame Housing', Sustainable Homes, 1999.

A guide to timber frame specifically for housing associations. Available from Sustainable Homes on

www.sustainablehomes.co.uk

'Embodied Energy in Residential Property Development', Sustainable Homes, 1999.

A guide for housing associations. Available from Sustainable Homes on www.sustainablehomes.co.uk

Transport

'A Travel Plan Resource Pack for Employers', Energy Efficiency Best Practice Programme.

'Powershift' and *'Clean Up'*

are run by Energy Savings Trust. Powershift encourages the use of clean fuel vehicles and Clean Up aims to improve air quality - www.est.co.uk.

Waste

Envirowise is a Government programme offering free practical advice on minimising waste and saving money. Helpline 0800 585794 - helpline@envirowise.co.uk www.envirowise.gov.uk

Water Efficiency

'Affordable Water Briefing and Action Guide', Hastoe Housing Association, 2000

Good practice guides for management and front line staff to ensure affordable water for residents.

Available from Sustainable Homes on www.sustainablehomes.co.uk

Aquaspec is a software tool and directory of water efficient appliances that identifies where water savings can be made - www.ecde/aquaspec

www.hippo-the-watersaver.co.uk



Sustainable Homes

Hastoe Housing Association
Harlequin House
7 High Street
Teddington
Middlesex TW11 8EE

Tel: 020 8943 4433
Fax: 020 8943 2163
e-mail: info@sustainablehomes.co.uk
web: www.sustainablehomes.co.uk

Promoting environmental awareness & action in housing

Printed on recycled paper

PP5/01