

NEW MILLS TOWN COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

The Town Council believes that it should take a leading role in improving the town's natural surroundings and heritage, and providing a responsible, cost-effective service to taxpayers. This commitment to improving our environment was reinforced when it adopted its Environmental Policy and developed its Action Plan in June 2006.

New Mills Town Council will:

- conserve and enhance the natural and built environment
- minimise waste production and recycle and reuse goods where possible
- reduce the Council's consumption of all limited resources, including energy, water and materials, and use sustainable resources where possible
- act in the long term interests of the local economy and community
- encourage commitment and action from the local community
- ensure commitment and appropriate action from all its elected members and staff
- maintain an environmental action plan, monitor and report performance on delivery of the principles of action on an annual basis
- select the best practicable environmental option in all decisions

PRINCIPLES OF ACTION

The following Principles of Action will be applied to all our services and activities within the restrictions of the legal framework created by the U.K. Government, and the powers given to the Council as a Local Authority:

(A) **Protection of our environment** - we will minimise, and wherever possible eliminate, the release of substances which will cause demonstrable damage to the environment or its inhabitants.

(B) **Protection of the Living World** - we will protect, and where possible and appropriate enhance, habitats and biodiversity.

(C) **Enhancement of the Rural and Urban Environment** - we will protect, and where possible and appropriate enhance, the local character and heritage of the area.

(D) **Sustainable Use of Natural Resources** - we will make sustainable use of renewable natural resources where practicable. We will conserve non-renewable resources, and where practicable use recycled materials.

(E) **Sustainable Transport** - we will encourage the use of planning controls and other procedures to encourage the use of sustainable transport.

(F) **Minimisation and Safe Disposal of Waste** - we will minimise the creation of waste, and will recycle materials where this is cost effective and to the environmental benefit. We will ensure transportation and disposal of our waste to comply with current safe practice.

(G) **Wise Use of Energy** - we will seek to minimise waste of energy, and will ensure that, where energy is used, the greatest possible proportion becomes useful heat,

light or power. We will use environmentally safe and, where practicable, sustainable energy sources, and will invest in, demonstrate, and promote, the benefits of energy efficiency.

(H) **Risk Reduction** - we will minimise the risk of environmental harm by using suitable technologies and operating procedures.

(I) **Delivery and Purchase of Services and Products** - we will minimise adverse environmental impacts of the services which we deliver by using the best available technology not entailing excessive cost. We will consider relevant environmental matters in our product purchases and contracts.

(J) **Environmental Promotion** - we will take opportunities to promote and encourage the adoption of sound environmental practices to the local community.

(K) **Environmental Accountability** - we will monitor the implementation of our Environmental Policy, report progress against an action plan on an annual basis, to ensure that members are kept informed of and are fully committed to and responsible for the environmental management of the Council's services. The Council will make progress reports publicly available in order to be fully accountable to the public.

(L) **Training** - we will ensure that all staff and members are aware of their environmental responsibilities relating to the Environmental Policy, and that the appropriate training or guidance is given to them to enable them to implement this effectively. We will encourage employees and members to report any matter that they think is a danger to the environment.

ACTION PLAN

A simple environmental audit of the Council's current activities showed that the Council was already performing well in a number of areas, including:

- Taking opportunities to create new wildlife habitats
- Use of indigenous plants in planting schemes
- Use of sympathetic materials where cost allows
- Ethical investment of council funds with Coop Bank
- Support for renewable energy projects
- Grants to local community groups
- Involvement of community in projects, eg. Community Orchard
- Use of Fairtrade products where available / support for Fairtrade Town campaign
- Use of mulches to reduce need for watering
- Recycling of office paper waste
- Turning off lights in unused rooms
- Some low energy and strip lighting
- Only boiling the amount of water necessary
- Speedy identification and maintenance of leaking taps
- Town Hall staff walk to shops for supplies
- Use of recycled paper in the office
- Favouring use of local suppliers, within local authority purchasing laws
- Paddling pool only operated when high demand
- Much re-use of timber

The audit also identified a number of areas where the Council will look to make further improvements. In accordance with the Action Plan for 2006-2008, the Council has already:

- Publicised the environmental policy on the website and community newsletter
- Installed water-saving hippos in all toilet cisterns, free of charge from United Utilities
- Install energy efficiency stickers in offices and buildings, free from The Carbon Trust
- Changed to environmentally friendly detergents

And will:

- Research options for a green purchasing policy, with a view to adoption in 2006/07
- Consideration opportunities for the use of recycled products wherever possible
- Investigate options for supply of green electricity, with a view to a new contract this financial year
- Report at least annually on progress against the Action Plan, at the Annual Council Meeting
- Consider the environmental policy in all future decisions
- Examine costs and benefits of increasing loft insulation in the Town Hall
- Specify water based paints and varnishes for interior decoration
- Give high priority to energy efficiency of a new central heating boiler on expiry of existing
- Examine the potential for staff and members to benefit from environmental training, possibly in conjunction with High Peak Borough Council
- Consider the energy efficiency rating of new appliances prior to purchase
- Investigate sources of suitable low energy bulbs for main hall and High Lea Park toilets
- Start to use only peat free compost
- Purchase water-retaining hanging baskets for use in High Lea Park
- Consider the reinstatement of windows in HLP toilets