

# ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY

This document is an updated version of the Environmental Strategy, produced because of the continuing development of the Council's services in response to developments in legislation and within the community including its work to protect the environment and its continuing commitment to the Local Agenda 21 Process. The Environmental Strategy is integrated with the Council's Corporate Plan which was revised in spring 1997.

THE POLICY OF THE COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IS:-

“The Council is committed to good environmental practice and to safeguarding the environment in partnership with the community of the District and others.”

This Environmental Strategy contains nine sections:-

- ! Energy and Water
- ! Transport
- ! Waste
- ! Pollution
- ! Natural Environment
- ! Built Environment
- ! Purchasing
- ! Environmental Management and Monitoring
- ! Environmental Awareness Raising and Action in the Community.

Each section contains:-

- ! Aim
- ! Overview
- ! Objectives
- ! Achievements
- ! Existing Council Action
- ! Future Programme

## **AGENDA 21**

The Agenda 21 international action plan was agreed at the United Nations 1992 Earth Summit in Rio. Over 150 countries, including the UK, committed themselves to implementing plans for sustainable development - a concept which means developing societies within the capacities of the natural environment whilst improving the quality of our own and future generations' lives. The development of an Agenda 21 plan requires co-operation and action at all levels. Chapter 28 of Agenda 21 recognises the crucial role of local authorities in bringing together key organisations and the community to produce a local plan for sustainable development (Local Agenda 21 Plan).

### **Council's Commitment to Local Agenda 21**

The Council formally committed itself in 1994 to undertaking a Local Agenda 21 Process. The initial emphasis was placed on formally incorporating the aim of protecting the environment while assisting in providing for the community's economic and social needs in all Council activities, monitoring the Council's performance in achieving this aim and raising awareness both within the Council and in the community on environmental, economic and social issues.

The Council is now expanding the Local Agenda 21 Process to obtain the community's views and ideas about the environment and quality of life in Blaby District. This will commence with the setting up of a Forum of key organisations (Blaby District Quality of Life Forum) which will co-ordinate the process leading to the production of a Local Agenda 21 Plan for Blaby District. This initiative is linked to the work of the Forum for a Better Leicestershire.

The Council is actively participating in the initiative coordinated by the Forum for a Better Leicestershire which has collected views from county organisations about the environment and quality of life in Leicestershire and is using these to help produce a Local Agenda 21 Plan for Leicestershire.

## **THE AIMS OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES POLICY ARE:-**

### **ENERGY AND WATER**

To reduce consumption of energy and water.

### **TRANSPORT**

To reduce the negative impacts of transport on the environment .

### **WASTE**

To reduce the amount of waste produced.

### **POLLUTION**

To reduce pollution of air, water and land.

### **NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

To protect and enhance the natural environment.

### **BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

To protect and enhance the built environment.

### **PURCHASING**

To reduce the impact of purchasing on the environment.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING**

To maximise the positive impact and minimise the negative impact of the Council's activities on the environment and improve the state of the environment in the District.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS RAISING AND ACTION IN THE COMMUNITY**

To increase awareness and positive environmental action by the community.

## ***ENERGY AND WATER***

### **Aim:**

**To reduce consumption of energy and water.**

### **Overview:**

The issues surrounding the use of energy and water relate to the detrimental impact consumption of these resources has on our environment:-

- ! The use of energy for domestic and industrial activities (by burning fossil fuels such as coal, oil, gas and petrol) is one of the greatest contributors to pollution and to global warming.
- ! The increased frequency of shortages in the public water supply reflect the stress being put on water resources to cope with demand.

As the number of residents and business' in the district are predicted to increase in the future, there are likely to be increasing demands on energy and water resources.

### **Objectives:**

- ! **To improve the energy and water efficiency of Council housing.**
- ! **To facilitate improvements in energy and water efficiency of non Council housing.**
- ! **To minimise the wastage of energy and water in the provision of Council services and in its non-housing buildings.**
- ! **To facilitate energy and water efficiency of new developments.**
- ! **To promote energy and water conservation.**
- ! **To promote the use of renewable sources of energy.**

### **Achievements:**

- ! The Council approved an Energy and Water Strategy in 1997 which is being put into action.
- ! The Council produced an initial report in 1996 containing proposals on improving the energy efficiency of housing as required by the Home Energy Conservation Act.
- ! Most Council houses now have gas central heating systems, insulation and draught proofing.

- ! Production of the “Green Workplace Guide” for Council staff and the “Guide to Good Environmental Practice in Building” for anyone carrying out building works.

### **Existing Council Action:**

The Council is continually working to improve the energy efficiency of its Council houses. It also provides energy efficiency grants to private sector properties in need of repair and works with Housing Associations to ensure their housing developments are built to high standards of energy efficiency.

The energy efficiency of other Council buildings such as the Council Offices and Leisure Centres is also being upgraded, in conjunction with use of monitoring procedures.

Other activities include enforcing the energy efficiency section of the Building Regulations, purchasing energy efficient equipment, providing information on energy issues to the community and investigating opportunities to introduce renewable energy technology into Council buildings.

Several of the Council’s services particularly the Leisure Centres, Golf Course and Public Conveniences use water; action is taken to reduce water usage whilst taking into account public health issues. Information on water conservation is available to the community.

### ***Future Programme:***

- ! *Continue to implement a programme to improve the energy efficiency of housing in the district as required by the Home Energy Conservation Act.*
- ! *Seek to improve the water efficiency of Council dwellings.*
- ! *Investigate if water efficiency issues can be included in private sector renovation grants and if so, seek to introduce appropriate measures.*
- ! *Continue to improve the energy efficiency of Council buildings such as the Leisure Centres wherever appropriate.*
- ! *Continue to purchase energy and water efficient equipment wherever appropriate.*
- ! *Continue to improve the water efficiency of Council buildings such as the Leisure Centres wherever appropriate.*
- ! *Continue to enforce the energy efficiency section of the Building Regulations.*
- ! *Investigate how improvements to energy and water efficiency and renewable energy technology might be achieved in new developments via planning policies.*
- ! *Continue to promote awareness on energy and water conservation to Council staff and the community.*



## ***TRANSPORT***

### **Aim:**

**To reduce the negative impacts of transport on the environment.**

### **Overview:**

Transport is very important to communities through its impact on employment and wealth creation and enabling access to education; shopping and leisure facilities. However, transport has impacts on the environment such as air pollution, noise, loss of countryside and use of fuels; the quantity of each impact depends on the type of transport.

Road transport contributes significantly to emissions of carbon dioxide, lead and nitrous oxide - pollutants that can have detrimental effects on our health and the vitality of the natural environment. Blaby District has a high proportion of car ownership, higher than the national average and its close proximity to strategic motorways and other transport links renders it a prime location for new development hence more road transport use. Given that the Government has forecast that road traffic could more than double by the year 2025, the potential for adverse environmental impact in the District is not to be underestimated hence the Council's role on transport issues is important.

### **Objectives:**

- ! To facilitate reducing the need to travel by the community and others.**
- ! To facilitate the development and use of alternatives to road transport by the community and others.**
- ! To reduce the impact of the Council's use of transport.**

### **Achievements:**

- ! Involved in the development and implementation of the County Council's Transport Choice Strategy which identifies transport options and seeks to reduce the reliance on cars and road transport.**
- ! The Council's draft Local Plan provides an important framework for all new development for the District and includes policies based on the Transport Choice Strategy.**
- ! Supporting the Sustrans National Cycleway route which will go through part of the District.**

### **Existing Council Action:**

The Council recognises that the car provides both benefits and disbenefits and considers that the issue of car use is most effectively addressed in conjunction with issues such as public transport and location of employment, housing and other facilities.

It therefore seeks to influence transport patterns through its planning responsibilities and is working in partnership with other authorities to implement the Transport Choice Strategy developed by the County Council. The Council works to ensure that new developments are built close to existing transport routes and for cycleways and footpaths to be included in new developments. It is liaising with the County Council concerning the future extension of rail transport routes in the District. Cycle racks or storage are provided at several Council buildings and facilities and the Council provides or facilitates provision of bus shelters.

The Council is working to reduce the amount of mileage by cars and fleet vehicles in providing its services and to use alternatives to the car wherever appropriate.

### ***Future Programme:***

- !*** *Continue to implement those parts of the Transport Choice Strategy within its responsibilities*
- !*** *Continue to provide or facilitate provision of cycle storage and bus shelters.*
- !*** *Seek to further reduce the impact of its own use of transport.*
- !*** *Seek to develop a transport policy.*

## **WASTE**

### **Aim:**

**To reduce the amount of waste produced.**

### **Overview:**

Over 400 million tonnes of waste is produced in the UK each year mainly produced by households, industry and agriculture. The majority of this waste is placed into landfill sites which can have damaging effects on the environment - moving waste to land fill sites creates extra lorry traffic which contributes to noise, vibration and air pollution; disposing of waste can cause pollution such as landfill gas, ground and surface water pollution, smells and litter. The Government's draft waste management strategy, "Making Waste Work" seeks to reduce waste of resources and these environmental effects by encouraging waste prevention, reduction and recycling/reuse initiatives.

### **Objectives:**

- ! To assist and encourage the community to reduce, reuse and recycle more of their waste.**
- ! To assist and encourage businesses to reduce, reuse and recycle more of their waste.**
- ! To reduce, reuse and recycle more of the waste produced by the Council.**
- ! To reduce the amount of litter.**

### **Achievements:**

- ! The Council approved a Recycling Strategy in 1992.**
- ! Increase in both the number of recycling sites from 12 to 33 and the range of materials collected; a recycling rate of 5% was achieved in 1996.**
- ! Launched the Community Repaint Scheme which provides unwanted paint from householders to community projects in 1995.**
- ! Launched a Home Composting Scheme in 1996.**
- ! Introduced a successful recycling/reuse scheme in its Offices of paper and cardboard, furniture and computer items.**
- ! Developed proposals for kerbside recycling from households and recycling from schools and businesses.**
- ! Increased the quantity of street cleaning services.**



### **Existing Council Action:**

The Council is responsible for waste collection from the approximately 35,000 households in the District and also from businesses on request. We provide facilities to enable recycling and reuse of material, and promote the benefits of waste reduction and recycling initiatives in the community; our approach is based on reducing the amount of waste disposed of in landfill sites.

The Council currently provides 33 recycling sites with facilities to recycle materials such as paper, glass, oil, textiles and aluminium cans and operates a glass recycling scheme for entertainment premises in the District. It also operates a Community Repaint scheme for reuse of paint and a Home Composting scheme.

The Council also operates street cleaning services to remove various types of litter throughout the District.

### ***Future Programme:***

- ! Seek to expand the provision of recycling sites.*
- ! Seek to expand the Home Composting Scheme.*
- ! Seek to expand the Community Repaint Scheme.*
- ! Introduce a kerbside collection of recyclable material from households.*
- ! Seek to expand the recycling scheme provided to businesses.*
- ! Seek to increase the education of businesses and the community on the benefits of waste reduction and recycling/reuse initiatives.*
- ! Seek to introduce a recycling scheme for schools.*
- ! Continue to reduce, reuse and recycle waste produced by the Council.*
- ! Seek to increase the provision of litter bins and dog waste bins.*
- ! Seek to increase the education of business and the community on the benefits of not fly tipping nor depositing litter.*

## ***POLLUTION***

### **Aim:**

**To reduce pollution of air, water and land.**

### **Overview:**

The types and amounts of pollutants being emitted into the air, water and land is changing continually. There is an increasing quantity of legislation to control this pollution; which is enforced either by government managed organisations such as the Environment Agency or by local Councils.

The increase in some types of air pollution is caused by greater use of cars and domestic and industrial use of fuel. Water pollution can be caused by industry, agriculture, sewage and oil and can affect rivers, lakes, coastal waters and ground water. Contamination of land is generally caused by incorrectly managed industrial processes or incorrect disposal of waste.

### **Objectives:**

- ! **To protect and improve water and air quality.**
- ! **To minimise problems arising from noise and contamination of land.**

### **Achievements:**

- ! The Council approved an Energy and Water Strategy in 1997 which includes water pollution issues which is being put into action.
- ! Introducing and enforcing Smoke Control areas which cover almost half the District.
- ! Enforcing the Environmental Protection Act on businesses covered by this legislation.
- ! Setting up 18 monitoring sites for Nitrogen Dioxide.
- ! Undertaking a Radon survey.
- ! Carrying out remedial and monitoring work at sites in Glen Parva, Braunstone, Huncote and Whetstone enabling safe reuse of the land for development.
- ! Establishing a register of landfill sites and developing a monitoring programme.

### **Existing Council Action:**

The Council is responsible for enforcing legislation relating to pollution control such as ensuring certain types of businesses comply with emission limits, appropriate chemical disposal procedures and noise control. The Council also considers the environmental impact of proposed new developments on the quality of the air and water and the generation of noise. The Council also has a duty to monitor landfill sites for landfill gas, taking remedial action wherever necessary. Monitoring of dust levels is undertaken at Croft Quarry and of nitrogen dioxide and sulphur dioxide at other locations. Action is taken to ensure that waste water is correctly disposed of from new developments via installation of drainage systems. The Council monitors the quality of drinking water and the quality of water in areas used for recreation and liaises with the Environment Agency and Severn Trent Water Plc concerning the quality of rivers and canals in the District.

### ***Future Programme:***

- !*** *Continue to enforce legislation relating to air pollution under existing legislation and to monitor for a range of pollutants which may be expanded following development of an Air Quality Management Strategy for the District as required by the Environment Act.*
- !*** *Continue to monitor for other pollutants as required by legislation relating to public health.*
- !*** *Examine efficiency of existing practices to control noise taking account of new powers of the 1996 Noise Act.*
- !*** *Assess the extent of contaminated land in the District and ensure its safety.*
- !*** *Continue to liaise with the Environment Agency and Severn Trent Water Plc about pollution control.*

## ***NATURAL ENVIRONMENT***

### **Aim:**

**To protect and enhance the natural environment.**

### **Overview:**

The countryside is increasingly the focus for business and residential development and also for recreation and leisure activities. Concern for the protection of the natural environment has increased as plant and wild life is threatened by human activity. Blaby District is particularly attractive for new development, both business and residential, with its excellent transport links and potential for building expansion. Whilst there is the need to ensure vitality of the economy and the community, the Council also recognises the importance of protecting the natural environment.

The natural environment includes special areas of countryside designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, nature parks which often also provide a leisure facility for the community and smaller green open spaces and parks in built up areas.

### **Objectives:**

- ! To safeguard the countryside and other areas of green open space.**
- ! To conserve and enhance wildlife habitats and improve access to these wherever appropriate.**
- ! To increase the number of trees.**
- ! To promote understanding and awareness of nature conservation.**

### **Achievements:**

- ! Produced a draft Local Plan which includes the establishment of a register of Sites of Special Scientific Interest in the District and the identification of 'Green Wedges' for protection of the countryside.**
- ! Produced a Recreation and Leisure Strategy in 1996; which includes management of Countryside Recreation Areas.**
- ! Acquired and opened 8 Nature Parks including Bouskell Park, Crow Mill Walkway and Fosse Meadows.**
- ! Jointly declared Aylestone Meadows as a Local Nature Reserve.**

### **Existing Council Action:**

The Council has a role in protecting important areas of countryside from development and this achieved using policies in its Local Plan. The Council also works in partnership with other organisations such as the County Council, the Rural Development Agency and the Countryside Commission, in order to produce a co-ordinated approach to conserving the natural environment, which includes participating in development of the Leicestershire and Rutland Biodiversity Action Plan.

The Council provides 8 Nature Parks; these protect and enhance the natural environment as well as providing countryside leisure facilities. It requires that green open spaces are provided on developments and maintains many of these. It enforces Tree Preservation Orders, plants trees and encourages tree planting.

### ***Future Programme:***

- !*** *Continue to implement policies to protect the countryside and natural environment.*
- !*** *Further develop wildlife habitats on its Nature Parks.*
- !*** *Continue to participate in development of the Leicestershire and Rutland Biodiversity Action Plan and seek to implement policies from the Action Plan wherever appropriate.*
- !*** *Continue to seek to increase the amount of green open spaces or nature areas accessible to the public.*
- !*** *Continue to enforce Tree Preservation Orders; plant and encourage planting of trees.*
- !*** *Raise awareness on nature conservation issues in the community.*

## ***BUILT ENVIRONMENT***

### **Aim:**

**To protect and enhance the built environment.**

### **Overview:**

The quality of the built environment is determined by the design and appearance of new and existing settlements and developments. Particularly attractive buildings may be designated as Listed buildings, and groups of buildings may be protected by being given the status of a Conservation Area.

### **Objectives:**

- ! To facilitate good design in new and refurbished buildings in development proposals.**
- ! To safeguard historic buildings.**

### **Achievements:**

- ! Historic Buildings at risk have been identified and safeguarded.**
- ! Designated five Conservation Areas and identified a number of potential Conservation Areas.**

### **Existing Council Action:**

The Council is responsible for assessing designs of new developments and enforcing action where breaches may occur. It provides advice about design issues for architects and builders and may provide grant assistance for repairs to Listed buildings. The Council also identifies, designates, prepares schemes of enhancement and reviews Conservation Areas and works with the County Council to monitor and encourage repairs to Listed and other historic buildings.

### ***Future Programme:***

- ! Continue to fully utilise legislation to protect appearance of buildings.***
- ! Continue to enhance design of new developments wherever possible and include public art in the issues to be considered when developing designs for new developments.***
- ! Continue to protect historic buildings including Listed Buildings.***
- ! Seek to designate additional Conservation Areas.***
- ! Seek to enhance existing Conservation Areas.***

## **PURCHASING**

### **Aim:**

**To reduce the impact of purchasing on the environment.**

### **Overview:**

The use of resources, particularly those which are nonrenewable, can have a damaging effect on the environment. The selection of items which are less environmentally damaging eg particular chemical products can have a significantly positive impact on the environment. By reusing items and avoiding purchasing products such as those that contain CFC's and tropical hardwood it is possible to lessen the environmental impact of consumption of resources.

### **Objectives:**

- ! To avoid purchase of new goods wherever possible.**
- ! To purchase goods and services which are less damaging to the environment.**
- ! To promote awareness and action on environmentally friendly purchasing to others.**

### **Achievements:**

- ! The Council approved a Policy on Environmental Aspects of Purchasing in 1994 which applies to all items purchased by the Council; items specified in tender documents regarding works and services to be undertaken on behalf of the Council and items in grants where the Council has a discretionary role and contains seven topic areas ie; Building works, Energy and water saving, Fixtures and fittings, General chemicals, Open spaces, Recycled products and Vehicles.**
- ! Monitoring of the policy has demonstrated a high rate of compliance.**

### **Existing Council Action:**

The Policy on Environmental Aspects of Purchasing continues to be implemented throughout all the Council's services and activities. The content of the policy is reviewed regularly and monitoring of compliance with the policy continues. Opportunities to further improve the Council's environmentally friendly approach to purchasing are continually being investigated and implemented eg introduction of low sulphur diesel in the fleet vehicles. Information is provided to others about environmental friendly purchasing.

### ***Future Programme:***

- ! Continue to implement the Policy on Environmental Aspects of Purchasing.***

**!** *Continue to promote environmentally friendly purchasing to others.*

## ***ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING***

### **Aim:**

**To maximise the positive impact and minimise the negative impact of the Council's activities on the environment and improve the state of the environment in the District.**

### **Overview:**

The growing concern about the state of the environment has stimulated action to protect it which has promoted much new legislation and activity in local authorities, national Government, business, public sector organisations and many others.

It is widely recognised that it is important to monitor the environmental performance of organisations, ie their impact on the environment, to assist with the process of improving their performance. The extent of monitoring of environmental performance is increasing, in local authorities and in other sectors.

The importance of raising awareness on environmental issues and how individual employees can contribute to improving an organisations' environmental performance is another issue on which organisations of all types are increasingly active.

Data about the state of the environment is being collected and assessed by Government and local authorities on issues such as pollution, wildlife and energy use. Increasingly this information is being included in reports together with data on economic and social issues since it is recognised that the state of the environment is inextricably linked with the social and economic state of an area.

### **Objectives:**

- ! To manage the impact of the Council's activities on the environment.**
- ! To collate information on the state of the environment in the District.**

### **Achievements:**

- ! Introduced a set of environmental performance indicators in 1994 for use in the monitoring/review process.**
- ! Commenced an internal environmental audit programme in 1996.**
- ! Produced a Good Practice for a Green Workplace Guide for staff.**
- ! Participated in production of a report containing information on the state of Leicestershire by providing information about the environment in Blaby District.**



### **Existing Council Action:**

The Council uses several procedures to monitor its environmental performance; a summary of its overall environmental performance is produced annually and more detailed reports are provided on individual environmental issues. A programme is underway to assess the environmental performance of each of the Council's divisions.

The Good Practice for a Green Workplace and information sessions are used to provide information to staff on environmental issues.

Data is continually collated by the Council on various aspects of the state of the environment of the District.

### ***Future Programme:***

- !*** *Continue to assess Council and other projects for their impact on the environment.*
- !*** *Continue to review the Council's performance in implementing the actions in the Environmental Strategy.*
- !*** *Continue to promote awareness on environmental issues to Council staff.*
- !*** *Seek to produce an overview of the state of the environment in the District.*
- !*** *Participate in the preparation of an updated report on the state of the county for Leicestershire by providing information about the environment in Blaby District.*

## ***ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS RAISING AND ACTION IN THE COMMUNITY***

### **Aim:**

**To increase awareness and positive environmental action by the community.**

### **Overview:**

Interest in the state of the environment has increased significantly in recent years; most people now have some awareness of the significance of the environment in our lives. However, there is a long way to go before everyone realises the extent of the impact on the environment our lifestyles can have, and the steps we need to take to protect the environment. A process of awareness raising and motivation is needed to gain commitment from people to take action and change their practices and can arise from international, national and local initiatives, particularly the latter.

### **Objectives:**

- ! To promote environmental awareness in the community and encourage positive environmental action.**
- ! To improve the availability of information and understanding about the state of the environment in the District.**
- ! To co-ordinate production of a Blaby District Local Agenda 21 Plan.**

### **Achievements:**

In addition to those Achievements listed in other sections about raising awareness on environmental issues in the community the Council has:-

- ! Produced leaflets containing information on good environmental practice and the environment in the District.**
- ! Gained a Local Authority and Business Environment Links award which is funding a project to raise awareness and promote environmental action by businesses.**

### **Existing Council Action:**

The Council has an important role to play in the process of environmental awareness raising in the District. As a key service provider, contacts with residents, business, and other organisations renders the Council important in the education process. Advice and information is provided through leaflets, seminars, presentations, campaigns and by acting as a contact point liaising with other providers of information. The Council participates in initiatives to promote environmental action eg the Leicestershire

Rural Action Initiative and provide grants to assist community groups with environmental projects funded by this initiative.

***Future Programme:***

- !*** *Continue to implement and seek to expand the initiatives aimed at promoting awareness and action on environmental issues by the community.*
  
- !*** *Continue to provide information on the state of the environment in the District to the community.*
  
- !*** *To seek to establish a Blaby District Quality of Life Forum.*