

Climate change

Climate change is a global priority and impacts upon all of Action in rural Sussex's ten rural priorities

Climate change is a global phenomenon which is constantly in the news. The media coverage focuses largely on worldwide issues such as shrinking ice caps and glaciers, the threat to polar bears and extraordinary weather patterns, or on what individuals can do to reduce their own carbon footprint and adapt or reduce the effects of changing climatic conditions such as free light bulbs reducing energy consumption and use of renewables. Action in rural Sussex's (AirS) focus promotes activities that the local community can take together in order to further reduce the effects of, or help adapt to, climate change.

AirS believes that climate change is an overarching factor that should be taken into account to varying degrees within each of its rural priorities for 2010.

AirS' current activities

In 2009 AirS produced the 21st Century Village Toolkit, see *illustration*, which it is now developing and expanding further, with the University of Brighton, as a practical toolkit that all communities will be able to access and use. Watch this space!

AirS encourages all parish councils and village action plan groups to consider community initiatives that address climate change. There is a great deal of energy and enthusiasm within communities for addressing climate change locally and numerous examples where this is already happening. For example, Plumpton, Barcombe, Henfield and Harting have all been considering what they can do as a community to reduce energy consumption.

Dial Post, Cooksbridge and Barcombe provide just three examples of village hall committees that have actively sought to reduce the carbon

footprint of their community buildings. Other communities are looking into sustainable transport solutions, the use of renewable energy, improved recycling and more consumption of local food.

One of the drivers for many communities is the projected increased occurrence of changeable and extreme weather conditions; remember the snow, flooding, drought, hurricane type conditions that have visited us over the last decade. All of these examples illustrate the need for local preparation; more resilience to such conditions and more local self sufficiency.

Recommendations

- AirS believes that each of its rural priorities needs to be viewed in the context of climate change and public sector investment should itself prioritise actions that address climate change issues.

- Rural communities are keen to reduce their carbon footprint and could be supported to do so through initiatives such as the Low Carbon Communities Challenge from the Department of Energy and Climate Change.
- AirS believes that all community led plans should include initiatives to reduce and adapt to climate change.
- AirS and the Sussex Association of Local Councils believe that parish and town councils should update their Emergency Plan so that it deals with the changing conditions brought about by climate change.



Above: AirS 21st Century Village illustration

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