

## **Hastings must go green**

In the week that the government is presented with a 700-page report on tackling climate change, Labour councillors in Hastings are calling for a town-wide debate on what can be done locally. As their contribution to the debate they have produced an Action Plan for a Greener Hastings.

Their suggestions include homes around the borough with their own mini-wind turbines generating power, dustcarts running on chip fat and solar panels on the Town Hall roof.

They have looked at ideas from councils with the best environmental record across the country to compile their action plan. Poole council really is trialling running its dustcarts on used vegetable oil that would otherwise be disposed of.

They are calling on Hastings Borough Council to produce a climate change strategy showing how the town can play its part in counteracting climate change. They are pressing for the council to take steps to reduce its own carbon dioxide emissions by making all its buildings energy efficient and looking at microgeneration of electricity, hence the idea of photovoltaic cells on the roof of the Town Hall and other buildings. But the Action Plan is also calling on the council to give a lead to the whole town.

“We should be setting a target as a community – council, business and individuals – to reduce carbon emissions at least by the amount pledged at the Kyoto conference,” said Labour leader Cllr Jeremy Birch. “This is measurable at the level of a town and other councils and their communities are doing just this.

“We have a real opportunity right now as the council with the involvement of local people is drawing up a development framework which will set the rules for new building in the borough over the next twenty years.”

The Action Plan is demanding that this framework insists that all new buildings in Hastings generate on site 10% of their electricity needs from renewable sources (solar, wind, ground source etc), that the construction materials used for all new buildings include at least a 10% recycled content and that all new housing developments include water conservation measures – dual-flush toilets, spray taps etc.

“We also need to encourage homeowners to adapt existing properties, whether it is loft and cavity wall insulation or installing microgeneration equipment like mini wind turbines. Borough planners need to be relaxed about this sort of equipment going up. If you can install a satellite TV dish on your home why not a wind turbine?” asked Cllr Birch. “Even in conservation areas we need to encourage sustainable living which means changing how buildings work.”

The Action Plan does also talk of the council encouraging a change in behaviour by all townspeople – to recycle more, to use their cars less, to walk and to cycle. “If residents believe this is not just a personal contribution but a collective effort by the town they will want to take part. By selecting policies from the most sustainable communities and implementing them Hastings could be right up there among the leading local areas fighting climate change and working to improve the environment. But it takes leadership and the local council has to show the way.”

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