

The Sustainable Communities Act proposal form

Using this form

This form should be used to submit proposals under the Sustainable Communities Act to the LGA for short listing. Please complete all sections and then email a copy to selector@lga.gov.uk. These must be received by **July 31st 2009**, and you will receive confirmation that the form has been received.

Once submitted, information within this form may be made publicly available, unless you request for it to be kept private. We will treat information submitted sensitively. If you wish to attach any relevant presentations or graphs etc. please attach them separately in the email.

For questions regarding the act or the role of the Selector, please see our [FAQs](#). Any further questions can be directed to selector@lga.gov.uk.

Section 1: Proposal Summary

Proposing Authority

Under the terms of the Sustainable Communities Act, all proposals must be submitted by a local authority, or group of authorities, in England. Any group, organisation or individual may originate or develop a proposal. However all proposals will require Local Authority endorsement and submission to the Selector.

Parish councils and other organisations and agencies must seek support and formal endorsement from a proposing local authority (defined in the Act as county councils, district councils (including metropolitan, non metropolitan and unitary authorities), the common council of the city of London or the Council of the Isles of Scilly).

1.1 Lead Authority name

South Hams District Council

1.2 Is this proposal submitted by this authority alone, or is it a joint proposal with other local authorities? (If joint please list authorities)

1.3 Who is the lead contact (s) in the authority for this proposal? Please provide email address and telephone number - *The LGA will direct any enquiries to this contact.*

Laura Payne, Policy Implementation Officer
laura.payne@southhams.gov.uk 01803 861325

Supporting Organisations

Whilst proposals may only be submitted by a local authority, we acknowledge that local partners and outside organisations may wish to register support for the proposal. This is entirely voluntary.

1.4 Please provide details below of supporting organisations to your proposal. Please explain if the organisation is a charity, company, unincorporated association or other body. If a charity or company please provide registration numbers. If a local partnership please explain the relationship to the Local Strategic Partnership for the area.

This proposal was raised at our Sustainable Communities Act event for the South Hams Strategic Partnership's Community Partnership Forum. The proposal was raised by a representative from the South Hams Sustainability Group. The role of the group is to act as a consultative forum in advising the South Hams Strategic Partnership on issues of sustainability and to help promote agreed programmes within the South Hams Community Strategy.

Summary of your proposal

Please summarise your proposal. You may wish to include:

- The main elements of your proposal
- What issues your proposal is addressing and how it will promote the sustainability of the local community
- Who is affected by this proposal and how?
- Which public bodies might be affected?
- What are the main actions needed from Government?
- What do you expect this proposal to achieve?

1.5 Please enter your summary below (*word limit 1000 words*)

Main elements: The GREEN SPACES CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION proposals would enable communities to manage the green spaces that are valuable to them ensuring that ecological services are maintained, reducing the impact of climate change within the local area.

The Government should extend powers and funding to local authorities to help communities adapt to climate change by supporting local action to maintain the ecological services that green spaces provide, such as buffer strips and flood plains.

Issues addressed: Green spaces include public and privately owned land, footpaths and cycle routes which provide important recreational and ecological functions valued by South Hams residents and visitors to the area, as well as other appropriate sites nationally. Ecological functions or services provided by green spaces include providing a buffer zone for flood events and barriers to erosion (for example marsh land, and sand dunes) other added benefits include water purification and habitats for rare species.

Climate change will affect ecological services that green spaces provide, reducing local food production, water quality, biodiversity, public enjoyment of open spaces and increasing flood risk.

Much green space is open to public access but is not under positive management, therefore its ecological and aesthetic potential is not realised.

Climate change will affect both wildlife populations and the regulatory services that green spaces provide. Wildlife corridors, water channels and buffer strips will need to be modified to accommodate change and ensure the ecological service of that space is not reduced.

Communities value their open space and are interested in learning more about what makes the landscape special. Local geological and wildlife sites are particularly important in increasing awareness of landscapes and the ecological services they provide and information about these places needs to be more readily available for the public to appreciate.

The Environment Working Group of the South Hams Strategic Partnership is limited in the progress it can make with regard to management of green spaces and adaptation of them to climate change; it requires a policy change nationally, for any initiative to be effectively implemented.

Who is affected: Many communities in the UK are at risk from the effects of climate change, and many green spaces are deteriorating due to the changing climate. It is little recognised that green spaces provide human populations with added-value in terms of the services they provide, such as protection from extreme weather events, flooding and support for complex food webs. Green spaces are deteriorating from a mix of human influence and changes in the climate. Without appropriate management, areas that used to provide vital protection to communities from risks such as erosion and flooding will be lost, increasing the risk and cost to society. This proposal will benefit all communities in England, whether they are aware of the risks of a loss of green space or not.

Public bodies: This proposal requires firm partnership working through Local Strategic Partnerships within a local area. Local Authorities will lead on the dissemination of appropriate guidance and funding to communities to help them manage their green spaces for the benefit of their community to prepare for future climate changes.

Main actions from Government: The Government should extend **powers** and **funding** to local authorities to support local action that will help communities adapt green spaces to climate change and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases from land management activities. Local initiatives in education and awareness raising should be supported by facilitating the development of a network of local sites across the District and throughout England, where ecological services (such as buffer strips for flooding events i.e. salt marsh) are maintained through positive management. Local authorities will be enabled to use their powers of well being to encourage and support local initiatives aimed at demonstrating ways landowners can maintain ecological capacity in the face of climate change.

It will involve grant support for data acquisition, training and small scale infrastructure improvements and demonstration site establishment costs.

Guidance is already provided through engagement of the Environment Agency and other partners on the South Hams Strategic Partnership and other LSPs throughout the country. These proposals would help define national guidance for community involvement in adaptation of green spaces to climate change.

Benefits: The use and enhancement of natural sites to help protect communities and businesses from climate change will provide long-term sustainable defences to flooding, erosion and other climate risks. Significantly for local authorities and other public bodies 'softer' defence and resilience options are less expensive to 'construct', manage and maintain than 'harder' protection options.

Wildlife populations and the regulatory services that green spaces provide will be enhanced through management of wildlife corridors, water channels and buffer strips to meet changing needs arising from the drier conditions and the more intense storms that will be increasingly common during the second and third decades of the century.

The use of public and privately owned land, footpaths and cycle routes would be enjoyed by residents and visitors in larger numbers and the ecological functions of land more widely appreciated and valued by local communities.

Local geological and wildlife sites would be brought under positive management through a rolling programme of regular inspection and volunteering activity. Information about these places will be available at information centres which will enhance local tourism and enjoyment by all visitors.

The South Hams Strategic Partnership will be fully engaged in its Action Plan ambitions for the Natural and Built Environment. This proposal will have the added benefit of providing quality environments that will attract more visitors and provide more opportunities for local work and for local businesses to flourish, essential components for establishing a more even age profile and maintaining a sustainable community in all parts of rural areas.

Section 2: About your proposal

The form asks a set of questions to gather as much information as possible to allow for assessment and short-listing by the Selector. A word-limit is stated for each part of the form.

We appreciate that SCA proposals will vary in range and scope, and some questions will be more relevant than others for any one proposal. Please do not feel that answers are required for every questions or that the full word limit need be used in respect of each and every question box. If you are submitting a joint proposal, please include evidence for all areas.

Impact on sustainability *(word limit 2000 words)*

2.1 Please explain how your proposal promotes sustainability as defined locally (for example in your Sustainable Communities Strategy or LAA)

Within our SCS, we have defined sustainable development as '*taking into account the future affects of our activities so that the ability of future generations to meet their own needs is not compromised*'. Our SCS aims to ensure that communities in the South Hams continue to be desirable places to live and work, with good quality local public services and an environment to cherish. It also aims to reflect the local culture of South Hams, ensuring promotion of equality and diversity. The SCS seeks to ensure that our natural assets, soil, water, air and green spaces which in turn affect biodiversity are managed in a sustainable way, this proposal aims to achieve this. This proposal will also contribute to meeting local government targets for biodiversity and geodiversity (NI 197) and local area agreement targets (LAA2, LAA5, LAA 8 and LAA24).

2.2 Over which geographic area will your proposal impact? (e.g. neighbourhood, town, city, sub-region)?

This proposal can potentially benefit many communities within the UK, be they urban or rural, wherever green space (or coastal resources) can provide a benefit. This proposal is likely to benefit more rural communities, where a network of green spaces can be utilised to build comprehensive areas of protection and management.

2.3 Who would benefit from your proposal?

All communities are at-risk from climate change and many green spaces, if managed correctly, can help alleviate some of the risks posed. This proposal will have a double benefit, the green space will be managed appropriately to provide a service to the local community, be it flood protection or maintaining food webs, and the green space will flourish as a natural area, becoming more ecologically diverse and more of an attraction for the community.

2.4 What steps will you take to mitigate any adverse affects on sustainability from your proposal (if relevant)?

It is not expected that this proposal will result in any adverse affects on sustainability.

2.5 What project, activities and changes would take place in your area if your proposal was successful?

- Local initiatives, supported by Local Authority guidance and funding, to promote awareness of a green spaces, and educate local people and landowners about the services that area provides to the community.
- Community groups, with the assistance of the local authority and Environment Agency / Natural England, would be set-up to help manage sites to enhance their ecological services.

2.6 Does your proposal involve transfers of responsibilities between public bodies in the area? If so what are these? What budgetary implications might be involved?

N/A

Local authorities are required to 'have regard' to a set of specific issues when deciding whether to support SCA proposals. These are matters listed in Schedule 1 of the Act, as passed by Parliament¹. It is worth noting that the issues listed in the Act are not supposed to be exhaustive and that ideas can cover anything that promotes the sustainability of the local area.

Many of these matters may not be relevant to any one proposal. If you are submitting a joint proposal please include evidence for all areas.

2.7 Please identify which, if any, of the issues authorities are required to have regard to, are relevant to this proposal and include any data and information which you feel would be helpful in the assessment process.

- a) the provision of local services
- b) the extent to which the volume and value of goods and services that are- i) offered for sale, ii) procured by public bodies, and are produced within 30 miles (or any lesser distance as may be specified by a local authority in respect of its area) of their place of sale of the boundary of the public body.
- c) the rate of increase in the growth and marketing of organic forms of food production and the local economy
- d) measures to promote reasonable access by all local people to a supply of food is adequate in terms of both amount and nutritional value
- e) the number of local jobs

This Proposal will result in new skill sets being acquired by local people to manage green spaces appropriately. These new skills gained by community volunteers will open up more opportunities for people in the land management sector.

- f) measures to conserve energy and increase the quantity of energy supplies which are produced from sustainable sources within a 30 mile radius of the region in which they are consumed
- g) measure taken to reduce the level of road traffic including, but not restricted to, local public transport provision, measures to promote walking and cycling and measures to decrease the amount of product miles
- h) the increase in social inclusion, including an increase in involvement in local democracy
- i) measures to increase mutual aid and other community projects

This proposal will increase the number of local community projects and groups, by providing funding for green space management projects. Much of the project work required from this proposal will be carried out by volunteers- improving community well-being.

- j) measures designed to decrease emissions of greenhouse gases

Through the promotion of appropriate land-management, it is hoped that land owners will be able to adapt their current activities to 'manage' the land to be less detrimental to the environment and lower carbon emissions.

- k) measures designed to increase community health and wellbeing

The large numbers of positive community projects and volunteering activities resulting from this proposal will encourage community well-being.

- l) planning policies which would assist with the purposes of this Act, including new arrangements for the provision of affordable housing
- m) measures to increase the use of local waste materials for the benefit of the community

Existing Barriers

¹ The Sustainable Communities Act is available here : http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2007/ukpga_20070023_en_1

(Please do not write more than 1000 words for 2.8 and 2.9)

2.8 What are the existing barriers to implementing your proposal?

- Lack of public knowledge of the added benefits green spaces provide in terms of ecological services, beyond aesthetic appearance.
- Lack of Government recognition for the potential benefits of green spaces in reducing threats of climate change, and the significant financial savings arising from the preference of softer 'adaptation' approaches.
- Lack of public funding available to finance identification of beneficial sites.
- Lack of public funding for management of those sites, and training for this management.

2.9 What actions are needed by Government to make your proposal possible?

The Government should extend **powers** and **funding** to local authorities to support local action that will help communities adapt green spaces to climate change and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases from land management activities. Local initiatives in education and awareness raising should be supported by facilitating the development of a network of local sites across the District and throughout England, where ecological services (such as buffer strips for flooding events i.e. salt marsh) are maintained through positive management. Local authorities will be enabled to use their powers of well being to encourage and support local initiatives aimed at demonstrating ways landowners can maintain ecological capacity in the face of climate change.

It will involve grant support for data acquisition, training and small scale infrastructure improvements and demonstration site establishment costs.

Guidance is already provided through engagement of the Environment Agency and other partners on the South Hams Strategic Partnership and other LSPs throughout the country. These proposals would help define national guidance for community involvement in adaptation of green spaces to climate change.

Part 3: Local Authority Endorsement

This section should be completed by the proposing local authority. (Under the terms of the act this means a county council in England, a district council (including metropolitan, non metropolitan and unitary authorities), a London borough council, the Common Council of the City of London or the Council of the Isles of Scilly)

3.1 Have consultation requirements been met? (500 words max)

Please confirm that your authority has met the statutory requirements for consultation on this proposal, via one or more panels of local representatives and persons from under-represented groups constituted in accordance with the Act and statutory guidance as set out in [Strong Safe and Prosperous Communities](#).

You may wish to describe who has been involved in discussions and development of the proposal (*e.g. council, local community organisations and residents groups, parish or town councils, local partnership bodies, local or national organisations, political parties, church and faith organisations, local businesses or chambers of commerce and others.*)

If you have not done so already please give brief details of relevant panel meetings.

Please note if you are submitting a joint application please provide details of consultation and local support across all areas.

South Hams District Council developed the scope of our implementation plan by taking into account the requirements of the Act, as well as the viability of successful implementation through limited time and resources.

Our proposals were raised at a special Sustainable Communities Act event for the Community Partnership Forum (CPF) and all South Hams District Council Members on 23rd February 2009. The CPF exists under the South Hams Strategic Partnership (SHSP) and consists of close to 200 organisations including voluntary, community, church and faith, statutory organisations and charities, as well as all of our local town and parish councils. Members of the SHSP and other interested local district councils and Devon County Council were also invited to attend. Members of the CPF include organisations that represent under-represented groups within the district such as BME and youth groups. Both these groups were able to attend the event.

At the event, close to 200 proposals were raised and discussed and a shortlist was created by attendees voting on the proposals they would like to see taken forward. The shortlist of eleven proposals was formulated into a survey for our Community Sounding Board. Our Sounding Board is a panel of close to 1,000 local residents that are demographically and geographically representative of our whole community; this Panel also included under represented groups. We felt it was necessary for our wider community to rank the shortlist in order of importance to the local community as, at the time of planning, we were uncertain of the time available and resources required to write proposals up for submission due to the unknown publication date and style of the LGA Submission Form. We felt that, as there was a risk not all of our proposals would be written-up in time, we had to focus our resources on those of most importance to our community.

We believe that by involving more than one 'panel' both containing under represented groups / individuals and agreeing our proposals with a large number of our community, South Hams District Council has met the requirements of the Act.

3.2 What are the views from this consultation? You may wish to provide evidence of local support for your proposal? This might include petitions or letters of support from the public, local councillors, Members of Parliament, businesses, public bodies and agencies? Please describe this evidence below. *(The local authority submitting the proposal is likely to wish to review such material and to summarise its content. Onward submission to the Selector of all original documentation will not normally be required).*

This proposal was put forward by a representative of the South Hams Sustainability Group at our CPF event to raise SCA proposals. The proposal was voted on by all who attended the event and it received 16 votes placing it 10th out of the 11 proposals short listed that received 10 or more votes (two proposals were tied in 9th place with 17 votes each). The Community Sounding Board also voted this proposal as their tenth priority out of the eleven short listed.

Proposals may include a change/transfer of functions from one person to another. If this is relevant to your proposal please confirm that the duties under clause 2, subsection 3 of the act (consulting with organisations affected by a change in location of a function) have been carried out.

3.3 Please give brief details of consultation with any affected organisations

N/A

3.4 Confirmation of council support

The process for formal endorsement is a matter for local discretion; however we anticipate that authorities will wish to gain political endorsement and clearance for the proposal through the relevant processes at local level. Please give details of how formal approval has been attained.

A report detailing all eleven proposals short-listed from our CPF event and ranked by our Sounding Board was taken to the South Hams District Council Executive Committee on 16th July 2009. The Executive resolved to endorse / approve this proposal for submission to the LGA for consideration for implementation under the Sustainable Communities Act.

3.5 General comments

This is an opportunity for the local authority to express any additional comments or views on the proposal: This may include: *(1500 words max)*

- the council's view of levels of local support for the proposal
- any local opposition or objections that the Selector should be aware of
- relevance of the proposal to the area's Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement
- outcome of any local authority discussions with agencies or public bodies affected
- potential regional/national significance of the proposal, if replicated elsewhere
- any major resource implications for the council or its local partners
- any other factors influencing viability and achievability of the proposal

Part 4: Assessment by the Selector

SCA proposals will be assessed by the LGA as Selector. This will include consideration, short listing and negotiation with the Secretary of State via the LGA Selector panel made up of councillors from the four parties represented on the LGA

The LGA Selector Panel is committed to undertaking the role in a transparent manner; as such reasons for decisions on proposals will be made available.

There will be no appeals process in relation to decisions of the Selector Panel.

4.1 Do you confirm your agreement to abide by the outcome of the Selector's assessment and decision-making processes?

Yes, South Hams District Council confirms to abide by the outcome of the Selector's assessment and decision-making processes.

4.2 Would your council, accompanied by the originators of the proposal, wish to make a short verbal presentation to the Selector Panel, should this opportunity be available?

Yes

Thank you for completing this form.

Please email it to selector@lga.gov.uk by 31 July 2009.