

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
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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 put forward by a Trustee of the Totnes Development Trust. The Trust is a local charitable organisation (Companies House 03670634) that is a member of the Community Partnership Forum, of the South Hams Strategic Partnership. The CPF meets twice a year to give feed back to the LSP.

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: Given the increasing concerns about sustainability (climate change and energy vulnerability) and health inequalities the proposal is for Government to legislate for Local Authorities to implement a policy that requires Integrated Health Impact Assessments (IHIA)¹ to be undertaken on all new developments and strategic plans. This is already the case for many District Councils. Furthermore, in association with standard public consultation processes, IHIA will draw together diverse and relevant agencies to input the necessary skills to provide the evidence of the potential impacts of strategies / developments on current and future infrastructure, as well as on health and wellbeing. Thus providing a rigorous and defensible evidence-base for local government decisions.

Issues addressed, promotion of sustainability and who is affected: Integrated Health Impact Assessment is an evidence-based process that aims to predict the positive and negative impacts of a strategy, proposal or development. Climate change and energy vulnerability present significant challenges for the development and sustainability of our communities. The adverse effects are likely to be particularly directed at the poor as energy poverty will increase and food security will be compromised, thus increasing inequalities in health. The Integrated Health Impact Assessment process provides an opportunity to promote sustainable communities, by ensuring that new strategies and developments are considered in the context of their contribution to the health and wellbeing of local populations.

Current legislation requires Environmental Impact Assessments to be carried out for new building developments. The combined problems of climate change, energy vulnerability and health inequalities suggest that a more 'integrated' approach is required. Recent guidance from the Department of Health (April 2008)² identifies mitigation and adaptation measures to cope with climate change that should feature in Sustainable Community Strategies. One such approach is the creation of sustainable communities and the use of Integrated Health Impact Assessment (IHIA) methods.

Health Impact Assessment is a standard approach within Public Health to assess risk and uncertainty in areas that may be hazardous to health. More recently these methods have been extended to promote sustainable development. For example North and East Lincolnshire Councils, in association with North and East Lincolnshire Primary Care Trusts have produced an 'Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Tool' that includes both health and environmental impact assessment and requires a multi-agency approach. The tool is aimed at policy / strategy developers involved in the preparation of transport plans and housing strategies, particularly when putting together site-specific proposals. It is designed to support the Regional Sustainable Development Framework and builds on the Yorkshire and Humber region sustainability appraisal tool.

Wider Public Health approaches place people at the heart of communities, within both the built and the natural environment, and point to the determinants of health and well-being in these communities as a product of 'neighbourhoods' and macro-economic, political and global factors (cf The Health Map, Barton and Grant 2006)³. The Map draws attention to the interconnectedness of factors such as natural habitats, buildings, wealth creation and leisure / learning environments on health and well-being, and has been developed to promote collaboration across practitioner professions (planners, public health etc) and topics (air quality, transport, community development etc). Inspiration for this Public Health model (Health Map) comes from principles of working for sustainable development and the WHO Healthy Cities movement. Evidence suggests that Healthy Cities programmes have driven many local environmental actions that have the potential to mitigate the impacts of climate change, and are a relevant context within which to explore the social and environmental sustainability of communities (Bentley 2007)⁴.

Wellbeing powers were issued to local authorities under the Local Government Act 2001⁵ acknowledging the links between economic, social and environmental wellbeing. Any potential building development or local strategy has the potential to affect the wellbeing of a local community in positive and negative ways, particularly in the context of climate change and the need to develop sustainable and cohesive communities.

Main Actions from Government:

The proposal is to:

- Introduce legislation that requires District Councils or Unitary Authorities to conduct / commission Integrated Health Impact Assessments that incorporate sustainable development aims on all significant new developments and strategic plans.
- Central Government to provide appropriate resources to enable District Councils/Unitaries to embed this process into their planning processes.

Benefits of the Proposal: This process would place the development of sustainable communities at the heart of the planning process within District Councils. All planning of new developments would be required to demonstrate the positive and negative impact on the health and wellbeing (and sustainability) of the local community. Through embedding this evidence-based approach into a wider public consultation process it will promote transparency in decision-making and integrate sustainable development into all aspects of community.

¹ <http://totnes.transitionnetwork.org/healthandwellbeing/HIAintro>

² Department of Health (April 2008) The Health Impact of Climate Change: Promoting Sustainable Communities.

³ Barton H., Grant M (2006) A health map for the local human habitat. The Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health. 126(6):252-261

⁴ Bentley M (2007) Healthy Cities, local environmental action and climate change. Health Promotion International. 22(3):246-253.

⁵ http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2000/ukpga_20000022_en_1

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. This proposal will ensure that any new development or strategic plan implemented in the local area abides by our definition of sustainability. By assessing all new projects and programmes under a new statutory integrated assessment scheme public bodies can work together to ensure that the health and well being of local communities is sustained and not compromised by ad-hoc decision making.

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

This proposal will impact on all areas of England, with any new development and strategic plan being assessed for it's impact on the sustainability of the community it may affect, be it a neighbourhood, town, city or sub-region.

2.3 Who would benefit from your proposal?

Any individual who may be affected by a new development or plan from a public body, the Integrated Health Impact Assessment will ensure that the sustainability of their community is protected, be it environmentally or in terms of health and well-being. It is a holistic approach to look at the entire impact of a planned project or programme, by all public bodies involved.

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

This proposal will not have any adverse impacts on sustainability.

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

Pilot work has already taken place through the Health Impact Assessment of a planned mixed housing and commercial scheme and has demonstrated how the approach can work for the benefit of the local community. This pilot work will be extended, through, for example a Knowledge Transfer Partnership in association with the University of Plymouth, which will develop systems for embedding the Health Impact process into sustainable development locally.

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?

It is unlikely that a transfer of responsibilities will result from this proposal, however new duties will be placed on Local Authorities.

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.

The below issues are all relevant to this proposal. The issues symbolise the principles of a sustainable community, and this proposal puts forward a means for all of these principles to be taken into account when new projects or programmes are implemented/being developed. These are the issues that have previously been adversely impacted on by new developments or ad-hoc strategic planning documents. An Integrated Health Impact Assessment will ensure that these issues are not exacerbated and are, where possible, rectified by a more holistic system of 'developing' sustainable communities in the future.

- 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
- 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
- j) measures designed to decrease emissions of greenhouse gases
- k) measures designed to increase community health and wellbeing
- 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

(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?

- The current ad-hoc system of different public bodies publishing strategic plans,
- Lack of consultation between public bodies on strategic plans and new developments,

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

- Lack of knowledge of negative impacts certain developments and plans can cause to communities,
- The individuality of each community not being taken into account by different projects and programmes from developers and public bodies.

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

Integrated Health Impact Assessment can currently be considered in Strategic Environmental Assessments, though this is not a policy / legislative requirement:

- Introduce legislation that requires District Councils/Unitary Authorities to conduct / commission Integrated Health Impact Assessments that incorporate sustainable development aims on all significant (i.e. transport, housing and commercial) new developments and strategic plans.
- Central Government to provide appropriate resources (funding) to enable District Councils/Unitaries to embed this process into their planning processes by developing, evaluating and selecting an appropriate IHIA framework and public consultation process.

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 'Integrated Health Impact Assessment' proposal was put forward by a Trustee of the Totnes Development Trust at our CPF event in February. The proposal was supported by many attendees and received 25 votes from those who attended, being placed 4th out of the 11 proposals short listed that received 10 or more votes. The Community Sounding Board voted this proposal as their sixth priority out of the eleven short listed.

The proposal was initiated in association with Transition Town Totnes who collaborated in the pilot, together with a local business man (and Chair of the Chamber of Commerce):
<http://totnes.transitionnetwork.org/healthandwellbeing/HIAintro>

Nationally this approach is receiving attention; see for example the work of Barton and Grant at the University of the West of England. Furthermore this approach has the potential to directly address health inequalities, sustainable communities and the built environment through a coherent and systematic approach: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/gheg/marmotreview/consultation>

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

This approach will enable the Local Authority to evaluate and embed a systematic, evidence-based approach to planning, that will emphasise and promote sustainable communities. The underpinning evidence will be shared with the local community through community engagement processes.

Whilst Health Impact Assessments are used in some areas across the Region, the lack of a systematic approach limits the potential for their use in supporting sustainable communities and in sharing good practice across Regions.

Limited resources may be required in the short-term to support the process of testing and embedding the approach.

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.