



South Hams
Sustainable
Community
Strategy
2007-2011
Summary



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To improve the well-being of the people of the South Hams in a sustainable way

The South Hams stretches from the boundaries of Plymouth in the west to the holiday beaches of Torbay in the east and inland to the hills of Dartmoor and the district councils of West Devon and Teignbridge.

The area of some 350 square miles encompasses an abundance of rich natural beauty, countless villages, hamlets and isolated cottages, with 60 miles of magnificent coastline recognised nationally through the South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Approximately 82,000 people live in the District, with two-thirds of the population living outside the larger towns of Dartmouth, Ivybridge, Kingsbridge and Totnes.

The population is expected to grow to nearly 90,000 by 2010, with particular pressure from development in the western part of the District.



Issues facing the South Hams

Perceptions of the South Hams as an area of social and economic advantage can disguise problems for our communities such as lower than average wages, decline in some traditional industries, above average house prices compounded by a high proportion of second home ownership, social isolation and difficulty accessing services, information and transport.

The sparsely populated nature of much of the District results in services being more costly to provide and an over-reliance on private transport. Deprivation exists within areas of affluence and many small villages lack facilities such as schools, shops and post offices, resulting in significant issues of rural isolation. Many employers have trouble in recruiting and retaining essential and skilled workers due to the lack of affordable housing.

Every year, deaths continue to exceed births, yet the population continues to grow due entirely to inward migration. Although there is a net gain of population, there is a loss of young adults as many leave the area for higher education or due to the lack of job opportunities, low wages and affordable housing. The situation means that the age structure of the South

Hams is weighted heavily towards older people, a trend that is predicted to increase. This will have significant implications for health and social services.

Therefore, the challenge for service providers is to address the needs of the people living and working in the South Hams, with its rurality, within the context of sometimes very different needs to our surrounding areas. Furthermore, this requires strong community leadership in order to be tackled effectively.





Sustainable Communities

The Government has recognised that with the rapidly changing needs of the UK population and a shortage of housing, this is a critical point in time to set national policy on the sustainability of housing and communities.

Following national consultation with service providers, the requirements for the development of sustainable communities were established. These are:

- The determination to engage local people and businesses in the planning, design and long-term stewardship of their community;
- To ensure developments are of an appropriate size and scale, with the right layout, amenities and transport links to urban, rural and regional centres.

At a South Hams level new planning documents, the South Hams Local Development Framework (LDF) and for the area of the district within the national park the Dartmoor National Park Authority LDF, are being prepared. These are the land-use documents for this district. This new system is designed to help community priorities, in particular the provision of affordable housing and employment sites, to be progressed much more rapidly. In this way, the LDF and the Sustainable Community Strategy are intended to complement each other.

This Sustainable Community Strategy 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. Further to this, the Sustainable Community Strategy aims to reflect the local culture that we have in the South Hams, ensuring promotion of equality and diversity.

However, not surprisingly, the Sustainable Community Strategy cannot cover everything – the range of activity of partner organisations is too wide and too detailed. It cannot meet everybody's aspirations and must be realistic. Resources are limited and some services must conform to minimum legal requirements and established targets.

Change and improvement in services, facilities, people and communities cannot happen overnight. However change and improvement is possible and the community planning process reflects the commitment to achieve the best we can with the resources available.

Working Together

There are many strategies, plans and partnerships in place associated with the delivery of public services in the South Hams. The aim of the Sustainable Community Strategy is to bring all these strategies together under one 'umbrella' and look for ways to tackle cross-cutting issues effecting our social, economic and environmental well-being.

Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

The South Hams Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) comprises representatives from the district and county authorities, voluntary and community sectors, local businesses and a range of agencies that deliver public services at the local level. The LSP consists of a steering group of key agencies, the South Hams Strategic Partnership (SHSP), and a Community Partnership Forum of many community groups, stakeholder groups and other local, county and regional organisations.

The aim of the LSP is to drive sustainable improvements in the quality of life for everyone. A key role of the LSP is to develop a joined-up approach to effective delivery of public services. This began with the development of the first South Hams Community Strategy for 2003-06 and the associated Action Plans. Following the review of the first Community Strategy, the role of the LSP continues to evolve as we look for innovative ways to deliver identified actions meeting established and emerging community priorities.

Part of the role of the LSP is to represent the South Hams and to influence other strategic planning. By working with other providers in a clear and coordinated way, the LSP will be able to secure resources and improvements for the South Hams.

The partners involved are committed to working together where necessary in order to address the needs and priorities identified in this Sustainable Community Strategy. Particular attention will be given to addressing the following key challenges. How do we:

- Overcome issues associated with rural isolation and ensure that people are not disadvantaged because of where they live;
- Enhance prosperity, regenerate communities and provide community involvement opportunities for all;
- Meet the needs of young people for affordable housing, knowledge and skills, appropriate employment, advice and other facilities;
- Meet the housing and support needs of older people in the District;
- Ensure the South Hams is a safe and healthy place to live, work and visit;
- Maintain and enhance the high quality natural and built environment;
- Promote responsible use of limited natural resources and adapt to the future consequences of climate change.

WORKING TOGETHER

Sustainable Community Strategy Themes

In deciding the priority themes for the new South Hams Sustainable Community Strategy, it has been essential to take into account:

- Priorities and issues contained in local community plans and appraisals
- The outcomes of the various community consultation activities;
- The remit of the LSP 'to identify areas where working together across service and organisational boundaries has the potential to deliver greater benefit for the people of the South Hams';
- New government guidance on preparing Sustainable Community Strategies

The new South Hams Sustainable Community Strategy has a series of aims across four priority theme areas, which the LSP will work towards over the next 5 years. The theme areas are:

- Affordable homes
- Competitive local economy
- Community vibrancy
- Quality built and natural environment

Cross cutting themes

However, the four priority theme areas above are not independent of one another. There are important links and opportunities to be realised between the themes and between the work of the agencies traditionally allied to one theme rather than another. Two cross-cutting themes have been identified, where the LSP is particularly looking to add value. These are:

- **Social Inclusion** – enabling access to services and facilities
- **Climate Change** – addressing the causes and impacts across the South Hams

While there is an impressive level of enthusiasm for achieving the aims of the strategy it is recognised that the timescale for significant improvement in some areas will be longer than others.

Measuring progress

The Action Plan gives an indication of the SHSP priority projects over the next 1-3 years. As the partnership approach strengthens year on year and projects are completed on a 'task and finish' basis, the Action Plan and priorities will need to be reviewed.

The progress of the Sustainable Community Strategy will also be measured by how it is improving the quality of life across the South Hams. A set of Quality of Life indicators has been developed that measure a wide range of social, economic and environmental issues. Using these indicators, the LSP will be able to measure improvement over time.

Affordable Homes

The Sustainable Community Strategy is seeking to contribute to the viability of communities in the South Hams through the provision of affordable and well-designed housing that meets the needs of local people.



House prices in the South Hams have risen sharply in recently years. With the combination of lower than average wages and one of the highest percentages of second home ownership in the country, this has resulted in affordable housing remaining the most pressing community priority.

It is the elderly population which is growing fastest, so it is likely they will need housing close to other facilities and have homes designed to meet particular needs. It is also important to ensure the housing stock is kept in good repair, investment is maintained to minimise 'unfit' housing, and attention is given to addressing fuel poverty through innovative new design and refitting.

Despite the obvious housing difficulties faced by many residents, there is the understandable concern that building new houses could spoil the countryside that both local people value and visitors enjoy. However, some development is essential to keep communities balanced and overly restricting development can

impact on the social and economic fabric of towns and villages. The LDF, in its role as a delivery tool, requires that at least 50% of all new housing should be on previously developed land, including the conversion of existing buildings. However, in many small communities, additional housing provision is likely to require some green field development.

The LSP recognises that good quality, appropriately located, affordable housing has a significant impact on the health and vitality of the community. The South Hams LDF is proposing the challenging target of 66% of housing on newly proposed rural green field sites be affordable. Of this, 33% to be social rented, 33% intermediate affordable (shared ownership or similar) and the remaining 33% open market. The Dartmoor National Park Authority LDF will also be setting challenging targets for the provision of affordable housing for local needs, with the focus on the re-use of previously developed land, where it does not harm historic, cultural heritage or biodiversity qualities.

By working together, partners aim to:

- Increase the supply of affordable housing for local people across the district to create balanced, viable communities;
- Assist a wide range of vulnerable residents to be able to live independently and ensure that housing, care and support is provided as a seamless service;
- Incorporate 'Secure by Design' issues into new developments and therefore reduce the amount or fear of crime as a result;
- Ensure that new housing follows sustainable design codes e.g. Eco-Homes, thereby limiting contribution to climate change, is relevant to the character of the area and minimises adverse impact on the local landscape and ecology.

Competitive Local Economy

The Sustainable Community Strategy is seeking to support sustainable local businesses and employment opportunities, promote the continued use of external funding streams, and address issues surrounding rural poverty, low wages, natural resource protection and environmental pollution.

The South Hams diverse economic base of micro-businesses operates in a heavily protected natural and built environment. This presents particular challenges relating to the ability to respond to external influences and promote sustainable economic growth. Average earnings in South Hams are well below the national average whilst average house prices are significantly higher than average; this presents problems of affordability for the district's workforce.

The demand for business premises is concentrated on the A38 corridor, the Plymouth and Torbay fringes, and the Totnes area. The supply of local development land and premises is limited. Where demand is not met, businesses must then consider locations outside

the district. This loss of investment and business growth negatively affects the district's economy.

The challenges facing the district are to achieve sustainable growth in a way that encourages indigenous businesses, promotes private investment, provides opportunities for those residents unable to travel any great distance, and reduces the reliance on private car use e.g. new live/work spaces. Opportunities exist for innovative and new businesses to develop around new technologies, the re-use of waste materials, and also community-led business approaches such as social enterprises and development trusts.

The LSP recognises that improvements across a range of issues are driven by greater levels of education and skills, and is seeking to ensure that a co-ordinated approach and improved understanding of needs delivers improvements among users and providers of education.



By working together, partners aim to:

- Create the conditions for new and innovative businesses to develop, such as access to start-up units and support to social enterprises;
- Encourage business practices that protect the environment, and promote the benefits for local business in managing their environmental impact, such as supporting the take-up of 'Green Tourism', local purchasing initiatives and the improved use of technology, thereby limiting contribution to climate change;
- Remove barriers to employment, such as improving transport options to work for young people and the provision of childcare;
- Develop links between employers and learning providers in order to increase availability of, and access to, higher level and vocational skills.

Community Vibrancy

The Sustainable Community Strategy is seeking to improve access to local services, and to ensure that communities develop in such a way that people are proud of where they live and want to help others.

In an extensive district such as the South Hams, the availability of public transport is vital for ensuring that people have access to services, work and facilities, as well as being able to socialise and take part in the community. There is also a range of other voluntary and community sector based transport opportunities providing innovative and viable alternatives to the private car, such as community buses, voluntary car schemes and community car clubs.

The aim for the LSP is to enable all people to have access to a healthy lifestyle, including sport and leisure, culture and arts opportunities. The challenge the LSP faces is how to deliver, in a coordinated and effective way, choices for healthy lifestyles.

The LSP recognises that if the district is to develop in the way the community desires, it is important that there is effective communication between all sections of the community and service providers. It is important to increase



active citizenship and build on the sense of pride in our communities. The LSP believes that social inclusion and community cohesion are essential for a vibrant community.

The LSP also recognises that the district will be facing challenges around the development of a new community at Sherford during the lifetime of this strategy. Significant progress had been made to date on developing the Master Plan for this community but it remains important for a range of agencies to continue to work together, to ensure that they realise the potential of a truly sustainable community.

By working together, partners aim to:

- Increase physical and electronic access to key services and advice, including health and housing issues, transport options and travel information, for all groups in society, particularly in isolated areas;
- Provide opportunities for, and encourage, walking, cycling, and other outdoor leisure and recreation, to increase levels of physical activity and improve health;
- Develop ways to engage effectively with all sections of our communities about concerns and successes, ensuring a regular two-way flow of information;
- Support opportunities for increasing community activity and volunteering in our communities, particularly amongst young people.

Quality Natural and Built Environment



The Sustainable Community Strategy is seeking to ensure that the environment of the South Hams continues to make it a haven for wildlife, a highly desirable place to live, work and enjoy, and a key driver behind income sources for our businesses.

The LSP recognises that we need to manage our natural assets in a sustainable way. The issues of the natural environment focus on the condition of the land, soil, air and water in the district, which in turn affect bio-diversity – ‘our wealth of wildlife’. It is essential that the distribution and location of all new homes and employment sites are consistent with principles of sustainable development. This approach offers us the opportunity to embed sustainable living within new and established communities.

Public spaces, everything from town parks, gardens and allotments to civic squares and play areas, offer a range of opportunities for communities to relax, exercise, take part in organised activities or just enjoy informal recreation. The LSP recognises that there are wider benefits around community involvement in the use and ownership of public spaces that include the ability to attract external funding to support a range of activities benefiting local communities.

The South Hams has a strong local identity generated by its buildings, structures and settlements. The LSP recognises that this built environment is valuable, not only to our heritage and culture, but also for tourism and economic prosperity.

The South Hams does not currently have any household waste disposal facilities in the district and, therefore, all waste is transported to facilities in adjacent districts. Not only is this costly in terms of money and carbon emissions, but it is also becoming increasingly difficult as facilities are losing capacity for accepting waste. However, the average amount of waste from each household continues to rise. Energy use also continues to rise across all sectors, household and industry, the consequent carbon emissions have been shown to be related to climate change.

By working together, partners aim to:

- Promote the protection of and, wherever possible, enhance landscape and biodiversity, through sensitive land-use policy and practice;
- Encourage community use and ownership of public spaces, particularly where it contributes to healthy lifestyles and a reduction in the amount or fear of crime;
- Support activities seeking to enhance the distinctive built environment, especially where it contributes to economic and cultural well-being;
- Promote sustainable lifestyles to those living, working and visiting the South Hams, encouraging the efficient use of natural resources, and thereby limit the South Hams contribution to climate change.

Initial Action Plan 2006 - 2008

The implementation of this action plan is dependent on wide ownership in the voluntary and community sector, public and private sector and on the identified resources being maintained.

Strategic Objective	Target	Action	Lead Agency	Resources	Start Date	Target Date	Output/Outcome Achieved
Affordable Housing	Identify appropriate land to bring forward for housing development targeted at local people/ essential workers.	Analysis of SHSP partners assets.	SHDC	Working Group time	Sept 2006	Sept 2007	
		Development of, and sign-up to protocol.	Devon Strategic Housing Group	Working Group time	Sept 2006	Sept 2007	
	Raise awareness of Affordable Housing issues and opportunities.	Joint lobbying of county, regional and national bodies relating to district's problems and possible solutions.	SHDC	Officer time	Sept 2006	On-going activity	
		Use of SHSP partners websites and newsletters.	SHSP	LSP Support Officer time and partners communication methods	Sept 2006	On-going activity	

Strategic Objective	Target	Action	Lead Agency	Resources	Start Date	Target Date	Output/Outcome Achieved
Competitive Local Economy	Create the conditions for new and innovative businesses to develop.	Support Local Development Framework processes	SHDC DNPA	Officer time	Sept 2006	On-going activity	
		Support appropriate community-based planning groups projects.	SHSP	LSP Support Officer time and community planning database.	Sept 2006	On-going activity	
	Encourage business practices that protect the natural environment.	Promote findings of research, such as: Greening Employment Sites study.	SHDC	Officer time	Sept 2006	March 2007	
		SHSP partners to investigate joint / local procurement activities.	SHDC	Working Group time	Sept 2006	March 2007	
		SHSP to promote local buying amongst employees.	SHSP	LSP Support Officer time and partners communication methods	Sept 2006	On-going activity	

Strategic Objective	Target	Action	Lead Agency	Resources	Start Date	Target Date	Output/Outcome Achieved
Community Vibrancy	Increase access to key services and information particularly in isolated areas and to key groups.	Support a range of community-led rural transport projects	SDRTP	Officer time Volunteer time External funding	Sept 2006	March 2008	
		Encourage community-based planning groups to form joined-up transport projects.	South Hams Towns Forum	Officer time Volunteer time External funding	Sept 2006	March 2008	
	Provide opportunities for, and encourage, physical activity and improved health.	SHSP partners to provide consistent and timely health-related messages to employees, and the public.	Active South Hams	Working Group time and partners communication methods	Sept 2006	March 2008	
		SHSP partners to offer workplace opportunities for physical activity, smoking cessation, quality meals, stress reduction.	Active South Hams	Officer time	Sept 2006	On-going activity	
		Promote healthy exercise initiatives, such as Health Walks.	Active South Hams	Working Group time External funding	Sept 2006	March 2007	

Strategic Objective	Target	Action	Lead Agency	Resources	Start Date	Target Date	Output/Outcome Achieved
Community Vibrancy cont	Engage effectively with all sections of the community, ensuring regular two-way flow of information	Encouraging participation by those parishes not yet covered by community-based planning activities.	Parishes / communities to take lead.	Officer time Community Planning toolkits External funding	Sept 2006	On-going activity	
		Review results of all new community-based planning activity.	SHSP	LSP Support Officer time	Sept 2006	On-going activity	
		Development of community planning database.	'LSP chairs'	LSP Support Officer time External funding	Jan 2007	Dec 2008	
		Support a range of networking activities, including 'refreshing' the CPF.	SHSP	LSP Support Officer time.	Sept 2006	On-going activity	
		SHSP website and newsletter.	SHSP	LSP Support Officer time.	Sept 2006	On-going activity	
	Support opportunities for increasing community activity and volunteering.	SHSP partners to encourage employee volunteering opportunities.	South Hams Volunteer Centre	Officer time and partners communication methods	Jan 2007	March 2008	

Strategic Objective	Target	Action	Lead Agency	Resources	Start Date	Target Date	Output/Outcome Achieved
Quality Environment	Protect and, wherever possible, enhance landscape and biodiversity.	Review community-based planning inside and outside of DNPA / AONB areas with view to identifying potential community-led environmental projects.	Environment South Hams	Officer time Community planning database External funding	Jan 2007	March 2008	
	Promote sustainable lifestyles to those living, working and visiting the South Hams, encouraging the efficient use of natural resources.	Support World Environment Day and similar public awareness raising events.	Environment South Hams	Officer time and partners communication methods	Sept 2006	On-going	
		SHSP partners to sign-up to Devon Climate Change Declaration and demonstrate action.	Environment South Hams	Officer time	Sept 2006	On-going	
		Offer advice and support to ensure sustainability is embedded in this Action Plan.	South Hams Sustainability Group	Volunteer time.	Sept 2006	On-going	

To find out more:

For more information on the work of the South Hams Strategic Partnership or the progress of South Hams Sustainable Community Strategy, please contact the Community Development Officer at South Hams District Council on **01803 861234** or email community@southhams.gov.uk.

The full document is also available on www.southhams.gov.uk



All our publications are available in alternative formats, such as large print or a language other than English. Please contact us on 01803 861234 or e-mail customer.services@southhams.gov.uk.

