

DRAFT

ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY FOR
ROSSENDALE

or

HOW GREEN IS OUR VALLEY?

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Summary

The local environment impacts not only on the health of the people of today's and tomorrow's Rossendale but also contributes to the environment experienced by the wider world.

The actions and decisions made by many agencies, organisations and individuals have an impact on the environment and will continue to have an impact for many years to come. The environment is important to Rossendale because of its effect on feelings of wellbeing in addition to health and the economy.

The Council, and its partners, recognise the importance of this issue and have expressed a Vision for the future which includes the state of the future environment. This strategy identifies a number of aspects of the environment where action today will safeguard and improve the environment both today and tomorrow. The aspects have been identified as a framework of Aims and are as follows:-

Aim 1 – Climate Change and Energy – to limit climate change by controlling greenhouse gas emissions

Aim 2 – Waste and natural resources - - to minimise waste and the consumption of natural resources

Aim 3 – Street Scene – to improve the cleanliness of Rossendale's environment

Aim 4 – Sustainable transport – to encourage greater use of sustainable modes of transport.

Aim 5 – Air and Noise Pollution – to minimise air and noise pollution in Rossendale

Aim 6 – sustainable water environment – to encourage the sustainable management of the water environment

Aim 7 – Sustainable use of land – to encourage the sustainable use of land within Rossendale

Aim 8 – Countryside, green spaces and biodiversity – to protect, conserve and enhance Rossendale's countryside, green spaces and biodiversity

Aim 9 – Awareness and education – to increase awareness of environmental and sustainability issues within Rossendale

Each of these Aims will be achieved through the co-ordinated action by agencies, organisations and individuals. Actions will be included in related Action Plans.

This strategy will be regularly monitored to set a benchmark and record progress being made. It will also be regularly reviewed to ensure it continues to be valid and reflect continually changing realities.

1. Introduction and purpose for the Strategy

The local environment impacts not only on the health of the people of today's and tomorrow's Rossendale but also contributes to the environment experienced by the wider world.

Nationally, this strategy links to the Government's strategy "Securing the Future: Delivering UK sustainable development strategy". The Government's Sustainable Development Strategy has the aim of enabling all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life without compromising the quality of life of future generations.

Regionally, the Lancashire Partnership's strategic vision is described in "Ambition Lancashire 2005-2025 with its aim of achieving a greener Lancashire. Their Vision for 2025 is where Lancashire is a County where the dramatic beauty of our landscape and wildlife is cherished, and our urban areas contain fine buildings and inviting open spaces. Lancashire plays its part in addressing global environmental issues and delivering environmental sustainability. This Environmental Strategy represents Rossendale's contribution to achieving the Lancashire Vision. The Lancashire Environment Partnership also published its Environment Strategy 2005-2010 in November 2004.

Locally the Rossendale Local Community Strategy for 2005-2020 which sets out our Vision for the future status, under the Environmental Theme that by 2020 over 85% of people living and visiting Rossendale will be satisfied with the quality of the street scene and local environment. This strategy translates this Vision into action and sets out the way Rossendale contributes to the wider strategic framework outlined above.

The choices made today, and the behaviour resulting from those choices, impact on the environment and the environment impacts on everyone. By focussing on measures and choices we can enable the Government's aims to be delivered locally. By acting with National, Regional and Local agencies, businesses, voluntary and community organisations, communities and families, we can achieve the overall Vision described above.

The Council will lead by example; demonstrating good practice and how it can be replicated. The Council is a substantial employer and property owner, and works with a wide range of businesses and organisations. It will seize every opportunity it can to influence and encourage others to take part in its plans to safeguard and improve the environment.

The purpose of this document is to propose issues relating to the Environment and the action that could be taken by a wide range of agencies, organisations and individuals to protect and improve the environment. Through the development of this strategy, activities can be co-ordinated, best practice spread, the maximum benefit achieved by the avoidance of duplication.

2. Background to Rossendale

- 2.1 Rossendale is one of the smallest Lancashire districts, with a slowly rising population of just under 66,000. It covers 138 sq km between the conurbations of West Yorkshire and Greater Manchester; a band of urban development runs East-West along the deeply incised upper valley of the River Irwell, flanked by harsh Pennine moorland scattered with isolated settlements.
- 2.2 Centuries of sheep farming on the enclosed moorland gave way in the industrial revolution to textile mills, which in turn have been converted to footwear manufacture or other uses. A string of former mill towns – Bacup, Rawtenstall, Haslingden – runs east-west along the narrow valley floor, the western end being connected to the motorway network via the M66.
- 2.3 Eighty eight per cent of the borough is green space and a quarter of this is designated green belt land. It is an area of high landscape and recreational value. The Borough offers excellent opportunities for active leisure.
- 2.4 Rossendale's built environment is characterised by the remains of its industrial heritage – there are over 260 listed buildings and eight conservation areas. Stone-built terraced housing constructed before 1919 forms a third of the housing in the borough; it is visually harmonious, but almost a quarter of these houses are unfit and many are occupied by low-income or elderly residents. Approximately 450 sites within Rossendale are potentially contaminated as a result of previous or current use.
- 2.5 On the index of multiple deprivation, Rossendale ranks 92nd among English Councils. Aspects of deprivation such as crime and employment show few extremes, but there is a high degree of health deprivation in the borough – 20% of super output areas (SOAs) are among the worst 10% in the country.
- 2.6 Manufacturing still employs a quarter of the borough's workforce. Unemployment within Rossendale is low, and the economic activity rate, at 80%, is well above regional and national averages. However, wage rates within the borough are low. There is a marked difference between the median weekly wage of those who work in the borough (£289) and those who commute out of the borough, mainly to Greater Manchester (£360). This gap is the largest in Lancashire, and together with health and housing statistics points to a more general diversity among social and economic groups in the borough.
- 2.7 Many people live in Rossendale because of its environment. Public surveys repeatedly highlight the natural environment as the most important factor in the quality of life in the borough. The Council, conscious of the value of this most vulnerable asset, aims to maintain and enhance it for local people.

3. Vision and Aims of the Strategy

The Council and the Rossendale Partnership have agreed a Vision for the Borough's future which is stated as 'Rossendale Alive'. It sets out a long-term strategy to improve the quality of life in Rossendale which is contained in eight strategic objectives, one of which relates to the environment.

The **Vision** in relation to the environment is that Rossendale 'will, by 2020, be a place which has attractive rural settings, a fantastic street scene and is easily accessible to all'. This Strategy sets out ways in which the Council working with partners, for example the local strategic partnership Environmental theme group, can contribute to the achievement of this Vision.

Aims –The aims are set out within the following sections. Each Section contains background information on the subject and sets out objectives for the future. What needs to be considered is an assessment of the current situation, who can do what in order to implement the strategy and the indicators to set a benchmark and measure future progress. Inevitably, this strategy will overlap with others and links to those existing or proposed will need to be identified.

Action Plans to implement the activities will be developed annually and integrated into the plans of participating agencies or organisations.

An annual review of progress will be published in order to inform participants of the progress made and to ensure that the Strategy remains relevant.

The following Sections identify eight themes followed by a cross-cutting theme of awareness and education and the proposed means by which the strategy will be implemented, monitored, reported and reviewed.

4. Aim One: Climate Change and Energy

Overall aim – to limit climate change by controlling greenhouse gas emissions

4.1 *Background*

Climate change is one of the most serious environmental problems facing the world. Climate change is thought to be caused by a build up of man made emissions of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, including carbon dioxide and methane. These gases are released through the combustion of fossil fuels for energy generation and transport purposes, but also during the landfill disposal of biodegradable waste and from the use/disposal of products containing greenhouse gases.

The timing and severity of effects are still uncertain but the Hadley Centre (2004) research shows that the effects of climate change on the UK are likely to include:-

- Higher temperatures all year;
- More extreme weather events including hurricanes, flash floods and droughts;

- More coastal and river flooding;
- Frequent disruption to transport and other infrastructure;
- Loss of native wildlife.

We depend heavily on the use of energy in our every day lives for the heating and power supply to our homes and workplaces, for transport and for commercial and industrial uses. The majority of our energy is generated from non-renewable resources such as coal, oil and gas, the supplies of which are not without limits. The burning of these fuels releases pollutants such as sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and small particles into the atmosphere, affecting local air quality. Perhaps a more serious problem is the release of carbon dioxide, a contributor to climate change. It is therefore essential that we conserve precious resources by using energy wisely and look instead to the use of renewable technologies including biomass, wind, wave and solar energy.

The Council can act in three main ways to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases and thereby help the community adapt to the impacts of climate change. The Council can act as:-

a) Community leader – through the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Strategic Partnership, Rossendale Borough Council can work with other public and private agencies and the Rossendale Climate Change Group and others to help cut the overall emissions of their area and develop an integrated response to climate change adaptation.

b) Service provider – for all the services that the Council provides or commissions, it can ensure that the impacts of climate change are properly taken into account and emissions are cut as far as possible.

c) Estate manager – the Council is an employer and consumer of energy and other resources. Through better management of transport and buildings, the Council can cut emissions and save money.

The Council has a duty, under Section 3(2) of the Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Act 2006, “in exercising any of their functions, have regard to the most recently published energy measures report (if any)”. This would include action on

a) improving efficiency in the use of electricity, heat, gas, fuel and other descriptions or sources of energy,

b) increasing the amount of electricity generated, or heat produced, by microgeneration or otherwise by plant which relies wholly or mainly on low-emissions sources or technologies,

c) reducing emissions of greenhouse gases,

d) reducing the number of households in which one or more persons are living in fuel poverty.

4.2 *Objectives for the future*

4.2.1 To reduce methane emissions from waste disposal

4.2.2 To reduce carbon dioxide and small particle emissions from transport use, and

4.2.3 To minimise energy use and carbon dioxide emissions originating from the use of energy

4.2.4 To improve the energy efficiency of homes as a means of reducing fuel poverty

4.2.5 To increase the production and proportion of energy consumed from renewable sources.

5. Aim Two: Waste and natural resources

Overall aim – to minimise waste and the consumption of natural resources

5.1 Background

Household waste that is not recycled or composted is currently disposed of in landfill sites outside the borough boundary thereby adding the environmental effects of transportation. Although landfill disposal will probably always be required to some extent, it has the potential to cause pollution and releases greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. The most important way of tackling this issue is to reduce the amount of waste that is produced in the first place.

Using the waste minimisation hierarchy, the following action, in order of priority, can both be undertaken by the Council and encouraged amongst others:-

- Eliminate – by eliminating waste, none needs to be disposed of.
- Reduce – similarly, by reducing the production of waste, there is less to dispose of
- Reuse – reusing waste that would otherwise be disposed of as waste means that you are getting better value for money as you are making valuable materials last longer. Another benefit is that new materials do not need to be purchased, thereby saving money.
- Recycle – At this stage materials have already been produced, used and thrown away. However, recycling is better than final disposal as the use natural resources is being saved together with potential savings in energy and water for processing.
- Dispose – the least favourable option. In Rossendale this generally means burying in landfill and space for landfill is increasingly rare and expensive.

5.2 Objectives for the future

5.2.1 To reduce waste production at source

5.2.2 To increase the reuse, recycling and composting of waste

5.2.3 To reduce greenhouse gas emissions formed during the disposal of waste

5.2.4 To support and promote the market for recycled products.

6. Aim Three: Street Scene

Overall aim – to improve the cleanliness of Rossendale’s environment

6.1 Background

The street scene impacts on the whole community and is consistently rated as the most important issue for local people. A clean, green and safe neighbourhood will win support for and confidence in the Council.

Cleaner, greener environments can support and achieve objectives on health, employment, transport, education etc. For instance, if parks are cleaner, greener and safer, more children will use them, increase their social networks and become fitter. A cleaner well-used area creates a perception that it is cared for and safe and helps discourage anti-social behaviour and serious crime.

Cleaner, greener environments also encourage investment and economic development, support regeneration and help areas to thrive, providing more local jobs and facilities. The Council has a key role in ensuring a cleaner and greener environment and performance in this respect has a significant impact on the public's perception of the Council in general.

6.2 *Objectives for the future*

6.2.1 To reduce litter and dog fouling on the streets and in public spaces, including parks, green spaces, rivers and other water features,

6.2.2 To reduce the incidence of fly-tipping and abandoned vehicles.

6.2.3 To improve the visual appearance of the streetscene and make it more "resident-friendly".

7. **Aim Four: Sustainable transport**

Overall aim – to encourage greater use of sustainable modes of transport

7.1 *Background*

Our quality of life depends on transport for easy access to work, school, shopping, leisure and community facilities. However, the way we travel and the continued increase in road traffic is degrading local air quality, causing congestion and contributing to climate change and the depletion of non-renewable resources.

We therefore need to look at how we travel and examine how we can reduce the impact of these journeys. This means trying to become less reliant on the car and seeking more sustainable alternatives. Looking at when we travel and why we travel is important, as is using public policy to ensure that new developments are located appropriately and make it easier to use sustainable means of transport.

7.2 *Objectives for the future*

7.2.1 To minimise the environmental impact of traffic, including air pollution and noise,

7.2.2 To contain the levels of congestion in the valley

7.2.3 To increase the proportion of journeys made by sustainable modes of transport e.g. walking, cycling, public transport and car-sharing in preference to single occupancy car use.

8. Aim Five: Air and Noise pollution

Overall aim – to minimise air and noise pollution in Rossendale

8.1 Background

Air pollution is detrimental to human health, can damage buildings and building materials and has significant effects on wildlife, soils and water. While the air quality in Rossendale is generally good, pollution levels are increasing in some areas due to increased traffic levels. Emissions from commercial premises and bonfires also contribute to pollution levels. Motor vehicles emit a range of pollutants including nitrogen dioxide, hydrocarbons, carbon monoxide and small particles, which are particularly hazardous to health. In addition, the combustion of fuels for transport, heating and power purposes produces carbon dioxide, which is linked to climate change.

Noise from industry, transport and neighbouring households can affect people's quality of life by causing annoyance, disturbing sleep and in extreme conditions, causing physical damage to health.

8.2 Objectives for the future

8.2.1 to maintain and improve air quality in the valley,

8.2.2 to minimise the effects of noise on quality of life

9. Aim Six: Sustainable water environment

Overall aim – to encourage the sustainable management of the water environment

9.1 Background

Water is a valuable resource and an essential requirement for life. We depend on it in our homes and gardens and for industrial and agricultural purposes. Although it is a renewable resource, moving around the hydrological cycle, our increasing demands for water and the release of pollutants into watercourses have a direct impact on the natural environment. A lot of energy is used to purify rainwater and treat sewage so saving water helps to reduce energy use and therefore climate change.

The controlled or accidental discharge of effluents can, however, cause pollution of watercourses that may lead to a reduction in water quality and loss of aquatic species. Also the natural ecosystem relies on surface water so that any water excluded from the environment has an impact on the ecosystem.

The latest forecasts suggest that summers will be drier, while winters will be wetter with increasing occurrences on flash floods, heightened by increased surface run-off caused by extension of the built environment.

To ensure the long-term future of the water environment it is therefore important that we use water wisely and safeguard it from pollution. We also

need to protect communities against future flooding incidents by regular maintenance of flood defence schemes, the avoidance of building on flood plains and the incorporation of sustainable urban drainage systems into new developments to control surface water runoff.

9.2 Objectives for the future

- 9.2.1 To encourage the sustainable use of water in the valley
- 9.2.2 To improve water quality in the rivers and watercourses
- 9.2.3 To effectively manage flood risks in the valley

10. Aim Seven: Sustainable use of land

Overall aim – to encourage the sustainable use of land within Rossendale.

10.1 Background

Land is a finite resource. The pressures on the use of land for homes, jobs, shopping, leisure, food production, transport and building materials can lead to the loss of what is most valued in the environment. We therefore need to balance the protection of our environment whilst allowing sustainable forms of development that will bring about economic growth, employment and social progress. This includes concentrating development on previously developed or “brownfield” land, where possible, in order to protect the green spaces.

Land can become contaminated by virtue of past or current use or even by the use of an adjacent site e.g. migration of gases from landfill sites. Rossendale has a history of industrial activity over centuries that have left some potentially contaminated sites in the borough. However, few sites are so contaminated that they cannot be re-used for either employment or housing purposes. Contaminated land within the borough needs to be identified and cleaned up where there is a risk to human health and to the environment.

Soil is important for a number of reasons:-

- a) food production is essential for human survival. Almost all vegetation including grassland, arable crops and trees need soil for the supply of water and nutrients and to fix their roots,
- b) soil stores and partly transforms minerals, organic matter, chemicals and energy. It also acts as a natural filter for groundwater.
- c) soil is the habitat for a huge number of organisms,
- d) soil is the platform for human activity. It is part of the landscape and cultural heritage and acts as the foundation for development.

10.2 Objectives for the future

- 10.2.1 to balance the need to stimulate the growth and regeneration of the borough with the need to protect the quality of the environment
- 10.2.2 to protect Rossendale’s surrounding moorland, parks and green spaces
- 10.2.3 to make full and effective use of land and buildings within the urban area,

10.2.4 to minimise the environmental impact of the construction of new developments.

11. Aim Eight: Countryside, green spaces and biodiversity

Overall aim – to protect, conserve and enhance Rossendale’s countryside, green spaces and biodiversity

11.1 Background

Rossendale’s countryside runs alongside and around the urban areas. The moorland to the North and South of the central valley provide an important landscape backdrop and wildlife resource. Together they provide opportunities for recreation, wildlife biodiversity and landscape enjoyment.

Rossendale’s natural green spaces and associated wildlife make a major contribution to the quality of life for those who live and work in Rossendale. They also contribute towards Rossendale’s image as a green borough and serve to make it an attractive place for companies and people to locate to.

Biodiversity is important for several reasons:-

- a) trees ensure that we can breathe by taking CO₂ out of our air,
- b) biodiversity encourages physical activity and therefore improves health
- c) biodiversity encourages relaxation and a sense of well being and leads to a decrease in graffiti and vandalism
- d) biodiversity can encourage social interaction between children and different communities
- e) protecting and enhancing wildlife and natural habitats is important for its own sake.

11.2 Objectives for the future

11.2.1 to protect and enhance Rossendale’s biodiversity and landscape quality

11.2.2 to encourage informal recreation and enjoyment of Rossendale’s green spaces

11.2.3 to raise awareness, understanding and appreciation of Rossendale’s green spaces and wildlife.

12. Aim Nine: Awareness and education

Overall aim – to increase awareness of environmental and sustainability issues within Rossendale

12.1 Background

At any one time we are faced by a variety of global and local environmental issues, such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, acid rain, litter, air pollution, increased waste production and traffic congestion. These problems are, however, generally the result of the accumulation of local impacts. It is therefore important that local action is taken to protect the environment in order to maintain and improve the quality of life of both present and future generations.

Legislation plays a large part in controlling the environmental impact of businesses, organisations and the public.

Technology can also offer a number of benefits, such as harnessing of renewable sources of energy, the development of cleaner vehicle technologies and the discovery of new uses for waste materials.

However, the power that individuals have to influence change, through the actions and decisions taken every day, can have a large impact on the environment. Greater understanding of environmental issues by everyone is therefore of vital importance in helping to make choices which protect and improve both the local and global environments.

This is not just about presenting facts and figures but making linkages with people so that they change their attitudes and, thereby, their behaviour. To do this, we would need to:-

- a. Produce clear and consistent information
- b. Create a sense of urgency
- c. Confirm the local impact
- d. Make environmental issues “cool” and become the norm
- e. Target specific groups with specific messages which are tailored to them
- f. Recognise that this requires long-term commitment as this is not a short term process.

12.2 *Objectives for the future*

12.2.1 to increase public awareness of the environment and sustainable development

12.2.2 to encourage environmentally responsible business practice.

13. Implementation, Monitoring and Review

13.1 This Strategy will be implemented through its adoption by the various agencies, organisations and individuals involved. Progress made in implementing the strategy and action plans will be monitored through the Council's performance management framework, through the Rossendale Local Strategic Partnership Environment Theme Group and through liaison with partners. A set of indicators will be used to enable absolute changes within the borough to be monitored over time. This will enable us to identify where progress has been made and also where further action may be needed in the future.

13.2 The Audit Commission and Defra have produced a local quality of life indicator set covering a range of important sustainable development issues that influence our long-term wellbeing. They include a range of issues concerned with developing sustainable communities which work to:-

- Balance and integrate the social, economic and environmental components of their communities;
- Meet the needs of existing and future generations; and

- Respect the needs of other communities in the wider region or internationally to make their communities sustainable.

The indicators of relevance to the environment can be used to:-

- Paint a picture of the environment locally;
- Facilitate comparisons of performance between different areas;
- Stimulate debate and raise public awareness;
- Inform local strategies and local area agreements;
- Review, justify and set local objectives and priorities;
- Monitor change and assess and evaluate progress over time; and
- Enhance partnership working, shared action and joint working.

The indicators can be merged with the BVPIs of greatest relevance to the Environment to produce a set of information useful for all the above purposes.

13.3 Reference is also made to the performance of business as they have a marked impact on the natural environment. The Council has the ability to influence the environmental impact of businesses and the Government expects businesses to report on their significant environmental impacts whether they are direct or indirect. Both the Council and organisations with which they interact have an effect in three ways:-

- Supply chain impacts – their use of resources e.g. energy, water, raw materials and logistics
- Direct organisation impacts – boiler or plant emissions, transport emissions, waste, recycling rate
- Downstream impacts – products in use, product disposal

Therefore Government has recommended the use of a selection of key performance indicators and these reflect the overall design of this strategy.