

# Have your say on the proposed vision, themes and cross-cutting issues for Shropshire's new Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2020

**PLEASE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE 4 PAGE CRITIQUE SUBMITTED WITH THIS RESPONSE**

- 1. Is the 2020 Vision for Shropshire right? Does the vision need to capture anything else about Shropshire?**

Your comments:

We agree with the Local Government Association that "climate change is the most important long-term priority for local government". Added to this are the challenges of finite resources, food and energy security and environmental degradation. The vision needs to reflect these challenges but project confidence and leadership. This is not evident in the draft strategy. Our proposal for the vision is:

All Shropshire communities will be resilient, informed and able to meet future challenges – particularly climate change, finite resources, food and energy security, loss of biodiversity and other environmental degradation.

- 2. Are the five themes right for Shropshire? (Children and Young People, Economic Vitality, The Environment, Health Culture and Leisure and Our Communities). If not, what should be changed?**

Your comments: Introductory Note The selection of themes and cross-cutting issues and the way they have been expressed is confusing and misleading: no criteria have been given for their selection and no guiding principles that give the strategy direction and focus.

In the past it has been customary to seek for a balance of sustainable aims between social, economic and environmental concerns. However in the face of current overwhelming threats to the planet's life support systems and finite resources there needs to be a radical shift in emphasis and priorities which place strategies and actions addressing these threats right at the top of the agenda. We can only create jobs, build schools and houses and provide better services within a stable and sustainable natural environment and with resources that are available and affordable. We propose that climate change adaptation and mitigation is introduced as the **overriding cross-cutting theme** so that priorities are always first assessed against their contribution to this yardstick.

The Environment Theme should not mix / confuse natural environment with built environment and sustainability issues relating to waste management etc. Doing this downgrades the critical importance of the natural environment: this theme should concentrate solely on the **natural environment** (please see comments under Theme 3 priorities).

### 3. Do you have any comments on the priorities identified for each of the five themes?

Your comments:

Children and Young People priorities mostly focus on problem areas no doubt influenced by national targets to reduce obesity, alcohol misuse etc. These need to be balanced with other priorities that focus on the future role of young people within our community: ensuring that they are all fully aware of the challenges (climate change, resource depletion, food and energy security etc) and are equipped with the tools to meet them.

Challenging young people in times of crisis engages their energies and creativity in positive action and gives meaning to their lives at the same time tackling many of the other priorities.

Economic Vitality The priorities given are pertinent and well expressed.

“The promotion of Shropshire as a place for business ..... ” implies inward investment and this needs to be balanced by the proactive generation of home-grown industry and businesses which will be more sustainable in the long term.

Employment opportunities and support services should not be restricted to Shrewsbury and the market towns but available to small settlements too so that full opportunities for building sustainable local economies can be realised.

The Environment This theme should be **restricted to the NATURAL ENVIRONMENT** and not lumped in with resource management (the remaining elements under this head need a separate theme). The Natural Environment is the least understood and most neglected area, yet the most important.

If we continue to treat the living world simply as a resource we are doomed. Sustainable living cultivates a respect for the life-support systems that are embedded in the air we breathe, the water we drink, the energy we use and the soil and seas that feed us.

Shropshire is rich in “natural” landscapes and the diversity of life they support, in productive farmland and forest, in rivers and lakes: management of all these resources in a sustainable manner is essential. This means supporting and nurturing the systems that feed and conserve them from the smallest bacteria to the largest predator at the end of the food chain.

Health, Culture and Leisure These priorities mostly address perceived problem areas of our current social and cultural lifestyle but not the conditions that cause them. The Council is in prime position to influence people’s lifestyles through the active promotion of sustainable living which will have many beneficial knock-on effects:

Encourage healthy eating, promote self-sufficiency which builds confidence and provides a purpose in life, build stronger local communities where all have a place and a purpose, encourage adoption of healthier, community driven sports and pastimes. In short lead the change from a self-centred consumer culture to a community focused sustainable one.

Our Communities This section contains the most positive passages in the draft which directly address the main objectives of the strategy, namely: “By 2020 a sustainable pattern of development and positive change will have been promoted to support sustainable communities.” and “We will build communities that are strong and safe for everyone ..... ” However the priorities listed give no indication that the true nature of ‘sustainable communities’ is understood or the process of building them.

The keys to this are: **localisation, subsidiarity, awareness and skill building**. The Council’s key role needs to change from ‘provider of services’ to one of ‘enabler of self-reliant local communities’.

We are entering a period of tremendous change. For the Council to manage this change and not simply react to it will require a fundamental rethink of how it operates. **This is the Council’s biggest challenge of all!** We believe that sustainable local communities can only be truly achieved through the reinstatement of genuine local democracy. Please see the report of the Carnegie Commission ‘Charter for Rural Communities’ which spells out their plan for strengthening local democracy.

Priorities will then focus around achieving ambitious targets for carbon reduction and self-sufficient communities by providing the tools and support needed.

**4. Which of the five themes would you/your organisation be best placed to support? Would you/your organisation be interested in contributing to the delivery of action plans for this/these theme/s, and do you have any suggestions about the actions we could take for each theme?**

Your comments:

Supporters of the Environmental Alliance have a wide range of skills and experience encompassing many aspects of environmental issues and sustainable living amongst their individual members. These persons could provide much valuable support for all themes but especially any situation where themes need to respond to our proposed new / amended cross-cutting issues of Climate Change and Sustainable Communities and could also contribute to action plans given a restructuring of the strategy along the lines we propose.

We have provided some examples of potential actions in the 4 page critique submitted with this response and are keen to help develop further actions. **There is so much scope and potential for positive actions that can benefit all themes that this area of working together needs to be examined as a separate exercise as proposed in our critique.**

**5. Are the seven cross-cutting issues right for Shropshire? If not, what should be changed?** 1. Planning together 2. Sustainable future 3. Vulnerable people 4. Infrastructure 5. Access to services 6. Engaging local people 7. Geography and characteristics

Your comments: We propose the following restructuring of the cross-cutting issues:

1. A new overriding issue – Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation.
2. An amended issue 1 – Planning together should cover local level planning to satisfy the needs of subsidiarity as well as county level as described and would include issue 6.
3. An amended issue 2 – Sustainable Communities to include issues 3 and 7
4. Retain 4 – Infrastructure
5. Retain 5 – Access to services though this will mesh with Sustainable Communities

- 6. Which of the seven cross-cutting issues would you/your organisation be best placed to support? Would you/your organisation be interested in contributing to the delivery of action plans for this/these cross-cutting issue/s?**

Your comments:

Please refer to our response under 4.

- 7. Can you suggest any short, medium or long term actions which could help to address the seven cross-cutting issues?**

Your comments:

Please refer to our response under 4.

**8. Is there anything else you like to tell us about the consultation document?**

Your comments: the strategy needs guiding principles. We propose the following:

- The application of 'systems thinking' to each layer of the strategy.
- Long term planning
- Proactive engagement with all areas of challenge.
- Economics that affords proper values to the natural world and to human wellbeing.
- Built in resilience at every stage.
- End use / least cost first approach.
- Look for creative combinations of already proven technology.
- Adopt international best practice.

**9. Thinking more generally, is there any specific information you think should be included within the final Sustainable Community Strategy?**

Your comments:

Include a widely accepted definition of "sustainable development" e.g. as in the Brundtland Commission report (1987).

Include a clear statement of the essential components that are required for a "sustainable community".

Include targets for carbon reduction in different sectors of the community over the next 20 years.

The Evidence Base (unfortunately this was not consulted on but the deficiencies here need to be flagged up and this seems the best place) is very thin on much of the key data necessary for building sustainable communities. For example:

- The state of insulation within the housing stock.
- Existing and potential sources of renewable energy.
- Eco School status of Shropshire Schools.
- Carbon footprint of different sectors compared to regional and national figures and projected targets over 5 year time spans.
- Supply of trades people with training / experience in green technologies.

## Your details (optional)

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Would you like to receive a copy of the final Sustainable Community Strategy? Yes  
please

**Please complete and return this questionnaire to the  
Shropshire Partnership Team by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2009.**

By email to [shropshire.partnership@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:shropshire.partnership@shropshire.gov.uk)

Address: Shropshire Partnership, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND

**If you would like a member of the Shropshire Partnership to attend a meeting with your group, organisation, sector or partnership to talk about the consultation document, please contact the Shropshire Partnership Team on 01743 252269.**

### **\*SHROPSHIRE ENVIRONMENTAL ALLIANCE – SUPPPORTERS**

Bridgnorth and District Furniture Scheme

Cleobury Country Environmental Forum

Ellesmere Goes Green

FOE Shrewsbury

Ludlow 21

Rea Valley Environmental Network

Stretton Climate care

Transition Town Wem

**With contributions from:** Marches Energy Agency