



**Dacorum Environmental Forum
Full Meeting – 27 March 2008**

MINUTES

Attendance

Phil Pennington	DEF Chairman
Douglas Walker	Resident, DEF Vice Chairman
Colin Hobday	Interested Party
Garrick Stevens	Berkhamsted Town Council
John Lythgoe	Berkhamsted Town Council
Fleur Tucker	Berkhamsted Town Council
David Nobbs	Chipperfield Parish Council
Mary Dyson	Lions Club Berkhamsted
Adrienne Gear	Community Action Dacorum
Dennis Harvey	Hemel Nature
Jenny Habib	Chiltern Society
Cllr Fiona Guest	Dacorum Borough Council
Cllr Alan Anderson	Dacorum Borough Council
Vicki Teal	Dacorum Borough Council
Lizzy Savage	Dacorum Borough Council
Cllr Bert Chapman	Dacorum Borough Council
Cllr Neil Harden	Dacorum Borough Council
Norman Cutting	Berkhamsted Citizens' Association
Roger Hands	Water Group/Box Moor Trust
Sylvia Davidson	Water Group
Gruff Edwards	New Conservation Society
Jean Blackman	Friends of the Earth
O Darvill	Friends of the Earth
G Darvill	Friends of the Earth
C Jones	Friends of the Earth
Marion Baker	Friends of the Earth
Veronica Allan	Friends of the Earth
Hazel Johnson	Green Party
Alan Johnson	Green Party/Great Gaddesden Parish Council
Martin Hicks	Herts Biological Records Centre

28. Apologies

Andy Hardstaff	Countryside Management Service
Rudolf Kirst	Hemel Hempstead GM Action Group
Brian Jones	
Cllr Michael Moore	Dacorum Borough Council

29. Welcome

Phil Pennington welcomed everybody to the meeting.

30. Minutes from the Meeting held on 17 January 2008 and Matters Arising

The minutes from the meeting held on 17 January 2008 were approved.

It was noted that there would be a Tree Warden Scheme launch meeting on 17th April 2008.

The issue of Bus Services in Dacorum would be discussed at the next meeting.

There were no further matters arising.

31. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Douglas Walker explained that only one nomination for Chair had been received. Therefore it was declared that P Pennington be re-elected as Chair.

P Pennington thanked the forum for their support over the past year and for re-electing him as Chair.

Three nominations had been received for Vice-Chairman. Two of which had been declined, therefore it was declared that Gruff Edwards be elected as Vice-Chairman.

32. Water Group – Feedback from EOSC

Roger Hands gave feedback following the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 30 January 2008. Prior to the meeting he had circulated current issues for the group, the priorities, Three Valleys nine water options to improve the River Gade and minutes of the previous meeting. He felt that this approach worked very well and generated a question and answer session, discussing a variety of issues. A budget had been approved for a feasibility study.

He felt that the DEF was being recognised.

He concluded by announcing that the Water Group's website was progressing and would be launched soon.

33. Packaging – Update and Feedback from EOSC

Gruff Edwards thanked the forum for electing him as Vice-Chair.

He gave feedback following the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 11 March 2008. He explained that the committee listened sympathetically and with interest.

The objective of his presentation was to gain committee support to approach supermarkets regarding the levels of packaging.

He noted that the response was far better and that they agreed for a joint letter to be sent to local retailers from the Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of the DEF and the Environment OSC and the relevant Portfolio Holder.

He noted that the forum's Fair Trade bag had been highlighted and was available at the meeting.

He highlighted from the EOSC that Councillor Bhinder had suggested that there be financial incentives offered to people who return recyclable materials.

He concluded by noting that Councillor Anderson, Chairman of the EOSC, had mentioned that the HCC refuse green sites had a facility to recycle polythene bags.

P Pennington gave credit to the forum, the steering group and Gruff Edwards for the work carried out to date. He felt they had come along way, however there was still a long way to go.

He thanked the EOSC for their support and for agreeing to the joint letter.

Councillor Anderson suggested that the DEF drafts a letter and circulates it to those concerned. Following this all five parties would sign it.

Councillor Chapman, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services, agreed that he would be happy to support this.

D Harvey was concerned that people were continuing to put general waste into black bags. He asked if these were biodegradable.

They agreed that all issues regarding packaging were important. Many could be recycled, however people were unaware as to how. This is something, which the Steering Group would consider.

It was noted that the Gazette had included an article highlighting the Fair Trade bag and where it was available.

Outcome

G Edwards would produce a draft letter for the forum to discuss. Any amendments would be made and then the relevant five parties would sign it (Chair and Vice Chair of DEF, Chair and Vice Chair of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services).

34. Carbon Neutrality

V Teal gave a presentation entitled 'Cut your Carbon'. This was a light-hearted approach to Carbon neutrality, being launched by EEDA. The website contained further details. The two main areas highlighted were:

- A Web-based tool to calculate a Community's Carbon Footprint based on Defra's "Act on CO₂" carbon calculator
- £2.5 million for community projects through a series of funding rounds over the next three years.

Personal carbon footprints could be made up from: Home (Heating & Hot Water and Lighting)

Appliances (Kitchen, Entertainment and Study) and Travel (Vehicles, Flights).

The 'Cut Your Carbon' Funding Competition was a Competition for Communities to apply for a grant of between £5,000- £200,000 to fund up to 75% of the costs of a capital project to cut carbon emissions.

The time frame included:

- Registering online as a suitable community in the East of England.

- Completing a Carbon footprinting exercise in your community.
- Developing a Community Carbon Reduction Action Plan.
- Submitting a project proposal form to EEDA.
- Successful projects for the pathfinder round will be short-listed in July 2008.

EEDA had offered to visit DEF for a workshop.

N Cutting felt that the carbon footprint should be based on the 'actual', as opposed to 'calculating' it.

V Teal explained that it was good to generate media and public interest, as calculating their carbon footprint would help people visualise it.

Councillor Chapman agreed that the forum could look at new houses and ensure that when they were built the carbon footprint be kept to a minimum.

It was explained that Berkhamsted and Tring were working on obtaining 'Transition town initiatives'. It was felt useful to share ideas at a workshop.

It was asked if planning permission could be given to applications, which did not acknowledge the carbon footprint.

The authority had to follow government directorates. Planners were encouraged to look at alternatives within buildings.

D Walker added that all houses were to include carbon aspects by 2016.

Two workshops would be provided, one for Tring & Berkhamsted and one for Hemel Hempstead.

V Allan informed the forum that Tring had begun the transition process and were operating a very good website: www.tringintransition.org.uk. The website for the same process for Berkhamsted was www.transitionberkhamsted.org.uk.

The aim of having a transition town was to get everyone involved and to build resilience into the local community.

Tring would be meeting on Monday 7 April at 2.30pm and Wednesday 9 April at 7.30pm.

Berkhamsted would meet on Thursday 17 April at 7.30pm.

35. Local Food Production

M Baker felt that there was a problem if the borough had to be self-efficient. There was the need now to increase food produced locally.

Currently food was being shipped from far away, pre-cooked and out of season, therefore it would be good to start a local food production scheme.

She explained of local food funding available (£50mil), which would be available to not-for-profit groups. Schemes which would be considered included community gardens, community seed exchanges, composting, food education & awareness and farmer markets. Two schemes, which she felt Dacorum could pursue, were Community supported agriculture and the community food-growing project.

Land and enthusiastic people were required.

P Pennington added that the grant scheme ran until 2014. He asked that the steering group move this forward.

J Habib felt that there needed to be a system to encourage people to grow things for themselves.

M Baker highlighted that the Soil Association's website contained a very interesting report on 'Can Britain feed Itself?'

It was asked if the council had any statutory obligation to provide food or fuel.

Councillor Anderson explained that the council did not have a statutory obligation to provide food or fuel. Allotments were the only statutory requirement. He did not envisage that Dacorum would be in a position to provide all food locally.

Outcome

The steering group would take this issue forward and would report back at the next meeting.

36. Dacorum Partnership

L Savage introduced the Dacorum Partnership Community Strategy. The DEF were the leaders to help promote a cleaner and healthier environment. Now that the strategy had been produced, an action plan to meet the objectives had to be developed which would be used to monitor progress and this needed to be set by January 2009.

The new strategy aims and objectives had already been looked at in conjunction with the old action plans and they had tried to be aligned.

Members of the DEF could add items to the action plan if they felt something had been missed off.

A timetable had been produced for developing the action plan and members of the forum were asked to volunteer to work on it. The first action-planning workshop will be on Thursday May 1st 2008.

Outcome

Copies of the action plan and the timetable would be circulated with the minutes.

37. Any Other Business

37.1 Letter from Rudolf Kirst

As circulated with the minutes.

37.2 Regional Spatial Strategy – East of England Plan

No response had yet been received to the consultation on the Regional Spatial Strategy.

37.3 Renewable Energy Systems Event

An open day for renewable energy systems will be held on Saturday 14th June. Volunteers were sought to man a display stand to promote the DEF. More details will follow nearer the time.

38. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting of the Dacorum Environmental Forum will be on Thursday 10 July 2008 at 7.30pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre.

Note: The Agendas and Minutes from the Dacorum Environment Forum meetings can be found on the Environment Section of the DBC website. www.dacorum.gov.uk.

The meeting closed at 9.10pm