



WWF

for a living planet

Evaluation of WWF-UK's Community learning and action for sustainable living (CLASL)

Final Report

Diane Warburton, Shared Practice March 2008



defra

Department for Environment
Food and Rural Affairs

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Looking to the future

We are living in a decisive period of human history.

Our runaway demand for natural resources is threatening the environment on which we depend. In fact, if everyone in the world used up resources and produced waste at the rate we do in the UK, we would need three planets to support us. The opportunity to safeguard the future of both people and nature still lies in our hands. But only just.

WWF-UK, the UK arm of the world's leading independent environmental organisation, is at the heart of efforts to develop the solutions we need – striving to build a 'One Planet Future' where people and nature thrive within their fair share of the planet's natural resources.

Why work with communities?

If we are to build a One Planet Future, change needs to happen in the places where we live and work – our communities, and in the way we live our lives, alongside change at wider levels and in other ways.

Community engagement and development is a key way of working with individuals, groups and local institutions to create and sustain this change. WWF-UK therefore regards the 'Sustainable Communities' agenda as an important element of its consumption and conservation work.

WWF-UK believes that if communities are to become sustainable, support is needed to build their capacity and to embed learning for change so that they can tackle issues now and in the future. In order for this to happen, the 'Sustainable Communities' agenda must focus not only on planning and infrastructure solutions, but also on community engagement and development.

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Contents

1.	Introduction	05
<hr/>		
2.	The evaluation study	07
<hr/>		
2.1	Introduction	08
2.2	Aims and objectives of the evaluation	08
2.3	Approach to the evaluation	09
2.4	Methodology for the evaluation	10
2.5	Background and context	11
<hr/>		
3.	Aims, objectives and summary of CLASL activities	13
<hr/>		
3.1	Introduction	14
3.2	Aims and objectives of the CLASL project	14
3.3	The main activities of the CLASL project	15
<hr/>		
4.	CLASL national development process	19
<hr/>		
4.1	The purpose of the national development process	20
4.2	The nature of the national development process	20
4.3	Lessons from the national development process	27
4.4	Overall conclusions on the national development process	31
<hr/>		
5.	CLASL local development process	33
<hr/>		
5.1	The purpose of the local development process	34
5.2	The nature of the local development process	34
5.3	The CLASL methodology in practice	36
5.4	Lessons from the local development process	42
5.5	Overall conclusions on the local development process	48
<hr/>		
6.	CLASL community groups	51
<hr/>		
6.1	Introduction	52
6.2	Reigate group	52
6.3	Stoughton group	58
6.4	Buckland group	64
6.5	Cranleigh group	66
6.6	Lessons from the groups	68
6.7	Overall conclusions on the CLASL local groups	81

7.	Assessment of activities against objectives	83
7.1	Introduction	84
7.2	Assessment against objectives	86
7.3	Assessment against anticipated outcomes	88
7.4	Conclusions on achievement of objectives	91
8.	Overall conclusions	93
8.1	Introduction	94
8.2	Summary of findings and conclusions	94
8.3	Overall lessons for the future	96
	Appendices	101
Appendix 1	Bloom's Taxonomy and Kolb's learning circle	102
Appendix 2	Review of application of CLASL indicators	104
Appendix 3	Benchmarking tool for community groups	107
Appendix 4	Group 1 benchmarking results	109
Appendix 5	Group 2 benchmarking results	115
Appendix 6	Evaluation interview questions for groups and individuals	123

1

Introduction

The WWF-UK Community Learning and Action for Sustainable Living (CLASL) project was launched in 2005, and is being completed in spring 2008. The project was funded by Defra's Environmental Action Fund and by WWF-UK for the three years.

The purpose of the project was to develop an innovative methodology that encouraged and enabled local communities to define and work towards new patterns of sustainable living. The approach was a mix of conventional research, extensive reflection and learning (at national and local levels), and direct development and support work with community groups in Surrey (two in depth, and two less fully).

Since 2005, sustainable consumption has become a significantly greater priority for the UK government and for WWF-UK, and there has been a dramatic increase in the research and literature on the extent to which personal and social behaviour change can contribute to more sustainable lifestyles. However, there remains less detailed information on how the theories work in practice at local level. This project has therefore become of increasing interest to WWF-UK internally, and to a range of other stakeholders.

This report presents an evaluation of the CLASL project. It summarises the aims and objectives of the project, the activities of the project, the evaluation approach and methodology, the findings to date and some emerging issues. As the primary outcome of the project was always intended to be a methodology for working at community level on sustainable living, a significant part of this report covers how those development activities were undertaken, and the extent to which they were valuable and effective, and the experience of the local groups.

The report summarises the methodology of the evaluation, the purpose and objectives of the project, a review of the main activities of the project, considers the extent to which the objectives have been achieved (including effects on ecological footprints), identifies the elements of the process that worked particularly well and less well, and identifies some lessons for future practice in the light of these findings. The final section concludes the report by identifying overall findings and conclusions of the project, and some overall lessons for future policy and practice in this field.



2

The evaluation study

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Aims and objectives of the evaluation
- 2.3 Approach to the evaluation
- 2.4 Methodology for the evaluation
- 2.5 Background and context

2.1 Introduction

The CLASL project design included a significant focus on learning, both throughout the project and from the overall experience of the work. Learning has taken place in various ways during the project, and the evaluation has been part of that review and learning process throughout.

The evaluation was commissioned in April 2005, and was completed in March 2008. Details on the methodology are given in section 2.4 below.

2.2 Aims and objectives of the evaluation

The aim of the evaluation was to demonstrate the value and problems of the type of approach piloted in the CLASL project to increasing sustainable living. It therefore focused on assessing whether the process to develop the methodology, and the piloting of the methodology with the Surrey community groups, was effective in meeting the objectives of the programme overall.

It is in the nature of an experimental and developmental project that the objectives and desired outcomes will change as the project progresses, and the evaluation was designed to contribute to this process by monitoring and seeking explanations for such change over time.

In summary, the objectives of the evaluation were to:

- Provide frameworks for benchmarking and measuring progress and achievements during and at the conclusion of the CLASL project, in ways that contribute to the work at community and national levels as the project progresses.
- Contribute to the development of evaluation methods for participatory working, and to methods of learning from practice, within and outside WWF-UK.
- Contribute to the development of sustainable living by capturing the experience of this specific experiment.
- Involve stakeholders at all levels (community, core team, steering group and national advisory group), both to access their knowledge and understanding of the project as it unfolds and develops, and to enable them to share in the benefits of the evaluation processes in terms of learning.
- Communicate the results and lessons of the evaluation effectively, during and at the end of the project, through various forms of feedback and reports; particularly learning relating to the potential replicability of the approach, and its impact on wider policy change to support sustainable living.

As a result, it was hoped that the outcomes of the evaluation would be:

- A clearer understanding among those involved in the project of the processes that aim to change behaviour at community level through social learning;
- A clearer understanding of the characteristics of sustainable living as understood by communities in Surrey;
- Stories, examples and an overall picture of changes to behaviour among the community and other CLASL groups as a result of the CLASL programme;
- A full description of an experimental process to change behaviour towards sustainable living at community level.

2.3 Approach to the evaluation

In general terms, it was expected that the evaluation would be a major element in the action learning and action research processes adopted throughout the CLASL project. The evaluation was therefore designed to incorporate the following:

- **Use a mix of quantitative and qualitative approaches** to cover different types of data on the sustainability issues and the process issues. Quantitative data involves collecting numbers and statistical analysis; qualitative data is gathered from what people say and feel, and what is observed and deduced. Quantitative data is about measurement and judgement, whereas qualitative data provides for description and interpretation¹.

Using both approaches required a mix of structured and more open data collection processes, including interviews, less formal conversations, meetings and workshops, observation and questionnaires (for benchmarking and to measure ecological footprints).

- **Use a mix of analytical frameworks** against which to collect and test data. Overall, the evaluation was based on the ‘theory of change’ model², which requires articulating the assumptions about the implicit objectives of the project and how it is expected that the project would achieve change. It was also based on a development of realistic evaluation theory³, which identified that context + mechanism = outcome; for this evaluation the wider equation of context + purpose + process = outcome was used⁴.

In practice, the key analytical frameworks included:

- **Benchmarking** to test initial attitudes, sense of responsibility, sense of agency, values, behaviour and knowledge, as well as the context in which the work was taking place. The aim of the benchmarking was initially to enable quantitative and qualitative change to be measured individually and collectively (e.g. through the use of a bespoke benchmarking exercise and some measures of individual ecological footprints). The initial benchmarking was undertaken but there were problems with measuring change over the life of the project (see sections 4.2.6 and 4.3.3).
- **Indicators.** The evaluation originally intended to use two different types of indicators:
 - Existing sustainability indicators from national government sets, ecological footprint etc;
 - Indicators set by the community groups for their own work (which may have drawn on the existing indicators sets, depending on their own priorities).

Detailed initial research work was undertaken by the evaluator to develop appropriate indicators for the project as a whole and the work within the community groups. However, as mentioned above, there were difficulties in measuring change over the life of the project and, in practice, the formal indicators were not appropriate and were not used.

- **Measures of learning**, such as Bloom’s taxonomy/learning hierarchy and generic learning outcomes (e.g. those used by the National Trust). In practice, Bloom’s taxonomy was used directly to develop the benchmarking exercise (see section 4.2.6 and Annexes 1 and 3).
- **Stories and examples** of sustainable living, and the experience of community-based social learning, using the Most Significant Change (MSC) technique and WWF’s evolving story collection approaches. In practice, these specific techniques were not used as it was not possible to ask participants in the community groups to devote the necessary time. However, group review sessions and individual interviews with group members did reveal enough information for basic case studies of the groups to be produced (see section 6), and examples of the groups’ activities.

1. Oakley, P. (1991) *Projects with People. The practice of participation in rural development.* International Labour Organisation (via ITDG publications, London).
2. Connell, James P. and Kubish, Anne C. (1996) *Applying a Theory of Change Approach to the Evaluation of Comprehensive Community Initiatives. Progress, prospects and problems.* Aspen Institute, New York.
3. Pawson, Ray and Tilley, Nick (1997) *Realistic Evaluation.* Sage Publications, London.
4. Warburton, Diane et al (2006) *Making a Difference. A guide to evaluating participation in central government.* Involve / Department of Constitutional Affairs, London.

- **A learning approach.** Evaluations can range from an instrumental ‘audit’ approach through to a more transformative ‘learning’ approach. Instrumental and transformative evaluations have very different approaches and criteria⁵. This evaluation aimed to prioritise the transformative / learning approach, because of the focus of the project on the methodology, while also ensuring that the instrumental objectives of the project (sustainable living) were monitored in ways that contributed to the work of the groups and to measuring the effectiveness of the project overall in meeting those objectives.
- **A collaborative approach with maximum appropriate stakeholder involvement,** partly to gain the necessary data and share findings as they emerged, and partly to ensure the evaluation operated according to the same principles as the project and was thus integral to the project work. In practice, this has meant that the evaluation has worked closely with the project staff, and with the Project Advisory Group, to review and reflect upon activities throughout the project. Although the approach was collaborative, the evaluation role was clearly differentiated from other roles in the Advisory Group throughout, so that the evaluation research could be conducted with independence, rigour and objectivity.
- **Appropriate reports and communications.** An interim evaluation report was produced in March 2007, and this report is the final evaluation of the full project.

2.4 Methodology for the evaluation

The evaluation methodology was made up of the following elements:

- **Detailed design and planning of the evaluation.** This involved regular reviews of the evaluation plans, and yearly evaluation work plans, agreed with WWF.
- **Evaluation research.** This included the following:
 - **Observation** of a meeting of each of the two main community groups, including informal interviews with a range of participants. It was agreed early on not to ask the groups to allow more than the minimum of observation to avoid disrupting their development. The evaluator also attended and participated in the Project Advisory Group meetings throughout the three years of the project.
 - **Development and use of questionnaires for benchmarking,** with the community groups, and linked to WWF-UK’s Ecological Footprint tool. Questionnaires and benchmarking were undertaken in June 2006, February 2007 and November 2007.
 - **Interviews.** Interviews were used to complement the data gained from questionnaires and group reviews, and to provide deeper and richer data on some of the key issues. Interviews were carried out with all five core members of Reigate group, four of the five core members of the SWAP group and four members of the Cranleigh group from November 2007 to February 2008.
 - **Group workshops and reviews.** Regular reviews of progress were undertaken in the Project Advisory Group, and a full review of progress to date was held in December 2006 prior to the production of the interim evaluation report. Each local group also conducted regular informal reviews of their work, facilitated by the CLASL worker.
- **Final reports.** This final evaluation report was drafted in January 2008. In February 2008, the findings were presented at a workshop of practitioners and policy officers from a range of local and national NGOs and government. The report was finalised for Defra in March 2008, and will be further revised for publication in April 2008.

5. O’Riordan, Tim; Burgess, Jacqueline and Szerszynski, Bron (1999) *Deliberative and Inclusionary Processes*. A report from two seminars. CSERGE Working Paper

2.5 Background and context

The design and delivery of the CLASL project was based on the view that humanity is having an increasingly negative impact on the natural environment. In pursuing growth and development, climate change is worsening, natural resources are being consumed at a greater rate than ever before, more plant and animal species are being driven to extinction, and environments are being polluted in ways that make life dangerous and desperate for many - especially the poorest and most vulnerable. Yet much of this frantic activity is not making people happier, healthier or more content.

Much campaigning for sustainable development, that improves real quality of life without devastating environmental consequences, is directed at government and business. That remains a vital focus for lobbying, but there is a growing consensus that individuals and communities can also make a significant contribution towards sustainability through local and personal changes in behaviour and lifestyles, with the added bonus of feeling more satisfied with the way we live our lives.

This analysis provided the main background to the design and development of the CLASL project. More information on the research that informed the detailed development of the CLASL approach and methodology is given in section 4.2.2.



3

Aims, objectives and summary of CLASL activities

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Aims and objectives of the CLASL project
- 3.3 The main activities of the CLASL project

3.1 Introduction

This section provides a brief overview of the aims and objectives of the CLASL project, and an overall picture of the activities that took place. Subsequent sections analyse each strand of work in more detail.

3.2 Aims and objectives of the CLASL project

The purpose of the CLASL project is to develop an innovative methodology that encourages and enables local communities to define and work towards new patterns of sustainable living.

The first stage of the project was to undertake detailed background research to support the development of the methodology by ensuring the project reflects current thinking and practice on behaviour change for sustainability⁶. The research also identified some relevant current methods that had been shown to work at community level, and some potentially appropriate existing indicators for sustainability (particularly from national government), that could be used in the CLASL project.

In order to develop and agree detailed objectives for the project, four main assumptions were identified from the research as underpinning the work (recognising that they overlap):

- Individual and collective attitude and behaviour changes are necessary to make progress towards sustainable living;
- Mutual reinforcement and social learning related to sustainable behaviours, and criticism of unsustainable behaviours, is strongest through close social relationships;
- Helping local communities to work collectively at local level will encourage 'good / sustainable' behaviours, and reduce 'bad / unsustainable' behaviours;
- What a sustainable lifestyle is can be determined through dialogue between communities and external technical specialists.

These assumptions were discussed at the April 2005 CLASL Steering Group, and formed the basis for the discussion at a workshop in June 2005. At that time (June 2005), the objectives for the project were refined and agreed as follows:

- Develop an innovative methodology for defining and working towards sustainable living at a neighbourhood level in England;
- Build the knowledge, capacity, capability, commitment, ownership and responsibility among participants (both residents and those working in local institutions) to increase sustainable living;
- Embed the learning within the project community (the core group, steering group, community groups and national advisory group);
- Influence (and explore the need for) relevant governance structures to ensure that barriers to sustainable living are tackled (including unsustainable behaviour by others which negatively affects the pilot neighbourhoods), and that appropriate continuing support is developed long term.

It was agreed early on that the objectives would be pursued by working with three communities in Surrey. Surrey was chosen partly because it is where WWF is based and would allow the organisation to explore its role as a 'good neighbour'; and partly because of the desire to test ideas and behaviour around sustainable living in a relatively affluent area.

6. *Community Learning and Action for Sustainable Living (CLASL). Literature review.* Diane Warburton, with Vijay Krishnarayan and Ian Christie. WWF UK / Defra, October 2005. And summary report.

The initial proposal for the CLASL project identified an approach that incorporated action learning, action research and community development as key methods in this instance. The preliminary research strongly confirmed the importance of these approaches in developing the social learning required for behaviour change. Social learning involves learning with and from peers and role models, especially through collective action. In these ways, personal and shared values, expectations and motivations can be challenged and developed through joint action, shared responsibility and reflection on experience.

The initial project planning discussions also identified a series of potential outcomes, which were as follows:

- Improved ecological footprint from the three communities, the core team, the Steering Group and the National Advisory Group.
- People in the 3 communities and at all levels in the project:
 - understand more about what living unsustainably means, for them and the planet
 - have changed their behaviour to live more 'sustainably'
 - understand more about how their personal behaviour links to wider policy, regulatory and legislative frameworks
 - have engaged with other bodies (especially local government) to change attitudes and behaviours.
- There are strong links between the local communities and WWF-UK national development work (through the Steering Group, national Advisory Group etc).
- Everyone involved understands what worked best in the three communities to encourage, and maintain, sustainable living.
- Participants become 'ambassadors' for sustainable living locally and wider.
- A new 'vision' of sustainable living is created at the end of the project, informed by experience.
- Clear messages about the practical implications of sustainable living are transmitted to all partner organisations and to Government.
- Participants will learn a self-analysing and evaluating process for dealing with future issues and behaviour changes.
- New ideas have emerged for transforming products and services, based on experience of trying to be sustainable with existing products and services - what is needed and how to create it.

These potential outcomes were designed to provide guidance for the project as it progressed, and it was expected that these would be reviewed at intervals.

3.3 The main activities of the CLASL project

The overall process was in two main parts:

- the national development process
- the work with community groups at local level.

3.3.1 The national development process in summary

The main strands of the national development process were:


- Initial research
- Project Advisory Group
- National Advisory Group
- Monitoring and evaluation
- External links, networks and partnerships

A full description of these activities is given in section 4.

3.3.2 The local development process in summary

- Developing the model for working with community groups
- Work with four local groups in Surrey: in Reigate, Stoughton, Buckland and Cranleigh.

A full description of the local development process is given in section 5, with details of the activities and feedback from the local groups in section 6.

- 
- Individual and collective attitude and behaviour changes are necessary to make progress towards sustainable living;
 - Mutual reinforcement and social learning related to sustainable behaviours, and criticism of unsustainable behaviours, is strongest through close social relationships;
 - Helping local communities to work collectively at local level will encourage 'good/sustainable' behaviours, and reduce 'bad/unsustainable' behaviours;
 - What a sustainable lifestyle is can be determined through dialogue between communities and external technical specialists.



4

CLASL national development process

- 4.1 The purpose of the national development process
- 4.2 The nature of the national development process
- 4.3 Lessons from the national development process
- 4.4 Overall conclusions on the national development process

4.1 The purpose of the national development process

The main objectives of the CLASL project were to develop a methodology for working with communities on sustainable living, and to embed the learning from the project at various levels of the project structure. The national development process was therefore a core element of the project activities.

4.2 The nature of the national development process

4.2.1 How the project started

Initial discussions between Rod Sterne and Niamh Carey (WWF-UK), Diane Warburton (Shared Practice) and Ian Christie (then of Surrey County Council) began in November 2004, to consider the potential for a community-based approach to sustainable living. The funding available through Defra's Environmental Action Fund was then identified, and seen to be relevant to the thinking already being developed. An application was made, was successful, and detailed planning for the project began in April 2005.

Since then the CLASL project was developed through a process of desk research, and through extensive discussion and mutual learning particularly within the Project Advisory Group.

4.2.2 Research phase

The first stage of the project was a research exercise carried out by Diane Warburton of Shared Practice (who also evaluated the CLASL project) in 2005 and published in 2006 (see www.wwf.org.uk/localmatters). The research provided a review of the current thinking on behaviour change and methods for community engagement to feed into the early development of the new CLASL method of working with communities.

The review examined what was even by then a significant body of research on human behaviour and attitude change including work on behaviour change for sustainable living and sustainable consumption. While there were clearly links between sustainable production and consumption, the CLASL project focus on community-level activities led the research to concentrate on sustainable consumption, while recognising that there is research available on the local production of goods and services which may be very relevant to local lifestyle and behaviour change. The review also examined the wealth of material on 'what works' in terms of community development and involvement, and social learning.

The research was completed in October 2005. At that time, the research on behaviour change for sustainable consumption – including how to influence consumption patterns – was mainly academic and theoretical, often based on social and psychological theory about human behaviour. No 'lived examples' were found of attempts to change attitudes and behaviours towards sustainable living, and little practical guidance for community-level working on this subject. The picture was very different on research relating to learning theory and community involvement, which drew much more heavily on practice and provided more practical guidance on methods that could be used locally.

Five linked themes emerged from the review, each of which is described in brief below:

- There is public awareness of environmental sustainability.
- The problem for people is not a lack of information.
- Behaviour change is linked to people's underlying values and attitudes.
- The concept of 'environmental citizenship' is key to future work in this area.
- 'Social learning' is an important factor in encouraging behaviour and value change.

Public awareness of environmental sustainability

Many people are well aware of environmental sustainability issues, and recognise the responsibilities they have for environmental problems, even in low income and disadvantaged areas. The priority in encouraging behaviour change should not therefore be on raising awareness, but should be on the following (e.g. London School of Economics and the universities of Bath and Lancaster in ESRC 2004):

- Practical support is needed for sustainable behaviour to take place, to overcome the many barriers that exist to prevent sustainable behaviour even where people want to change.
- Support needs to be tailored and geared to particular audiences and localities. Blanket information about 'sustainable behaviour' is not helpful.
- Clear links need to be made between community and individual change towards sustainable behaviour and wider change in other sectors. Business and government are perceived to be making things worse and people feel that there is no point in changing their own (relatively small-scale) behaviour if government and business continue with 'business as usual'.
- A critical mass of people needs to be involved in sustainable living to move it into the mainstream.
- There is little knowledge about how behaviour change towards sustainability works in practice. There needs to be a greater exploration of new approaches, good assessments of what works, lesson learning from experience and communication of the lessons to others, so that sustainable living in practice becomes better understood by a wider range of people.

No lack of information

The problem of supporting behaviour change towards more sustainable lifestyles is not a result of simple lack of information. The conventional information deficit model AIDA (Awareness, Interest, Desire, Action) assumes that there is a linear progression from the provision of appropriate information (awareness-raising) to new actions. This has been found not to work in relation to sustainability (e.g. Collins et al 2003; Owens in ESRC 2004) for the following reasons:

- People **don't trust the messenger or the message** – scientific 'facts' do not convince people of the need for change and people don't always trust the institutions (especially government) that are pushing the messages, resulting in no belief that change is necessary.
- There is a **value-action gap** (sometimes called the attitude-behaviour gap) where people know that there is a problem (they have received the information) and they know that they should do something about it, but they don't take any action.
- People don't have the **time or resources** to do it, even if they feel they should, and know what to do. This can be a particular barrier if they are in the habit of doing things in a certain way, and making any change is too demanding.
- People **don't think that what they do will make any difference**, and they therefore feel it not worth making the effort.

Information can help behaviour change if it is available in the right forms at the right time, but the research suggests that, alone, information is not a sufficient incentive to inspire or encourage people to change.

Behaviour change

Individual behaviour is based on individual values and attitudes, which are shaped by collective and social norms and expectations, habits and situations (e.g. Jackson 2005). Beyond that, and more practically, people's actions and behaviours are largely based on what they have always done, and they rarely question or think about those behaviours.

Changes in particular actions can be achieved by direct interventions such as taxes and interventions, but it is also recognised that this rarely leads to long term behaviour change as people tend to revert to their old behaviours as soon as the tax or incentive is changed or removed (e.g. Shove in ESRC 2004). One well-known example is road pricing or congestion charges, which seem to change short-term behaviour but not necessarily long-term attitudes to travelling by car.

Rather than focusing purely on individual behaviour change, the research suggests that the best way to encourage broader social changes in behaviour is by working through groups and communities where 'good' behaviour can be encouraged by social pressure and 'bad' behaviour is discouraged (e.g. Gough and Scott, Bath University, and Foster and Grove-White, Lancaster University in ESRC 2004). This 'social learning' from peers and role models is generally seen to build on people's altruistic and self-interested motives simultaneously, which is seen as much more effective than appealing to altruistic motives alone.

Social learning happens through social experience and social conversations about problems, leading to those involved questioning (and sometimes changing) their values, expectations and motivations. The use of deliberative processes for working with groups can encourage these social conversations and, in turn, these conversations can lead to a 'discursive consciousness', which is essentially a sense of responsibility and questioning that enables people to question and go beyond their normal habits and their everyday, practical thinking.

Environmental citizenship

Environmental citizenship is about formalising environmental rights and responsibilities as part of the broader concept of citizenship (e.g. Dobson 2003; Dobson 2004; Bell 2003); citizenship in general is about individual moral responsibilities for the common good (Jones and Gaventa 2002), alongside basic human rights. In terms of sustainable development, the common good is often understood as relating to ensuring that current and future generations have access to the resources they need to meet their needs (referring back to the definition of sustainable development as development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs", in WCED 1987).

Environmental citizenship has become a crucial idea in moving towards sustainable living because environmental citizens are seen as being committed in the long term to the principles of 'good' behaviour and not just what is currently practical. Such environmental citizenship is therefore developed not just through practical activity but also through group learning that reinforces the 'good' behaviour in a social setting (e.g. Merrifield 2001).

Distinctions can be drawn between people acting as consumers or citizens: consumers are users of goods and services, whereas citizens act on behalf of the common good. It is likely that people will act as consumers and citizens at different times and in different circumstances, and both will be needed for sustainable living.

Social learning

Values can change through social learning as people learn from each other (e.g. Jackson 2005; Holdsworth 2005). Although there are different forms of social learning, there is often a major emphasis on learning through action: people working together to agree priorities, share responsibility for action, reflect on their experiences together and thus turn the experience into expertise that they can use in the future.

The key point about social learning is that it takes place in 'communities', either geographical or defined in some other way. However, the research clearly suggests that the most effective social learning cannot be done at a community level alone; there have to be links to other levels or the lessons cannot be translated into mainstream organisations. There is a need for 'system building agents' (Smith 2005) who work between the grassroots and the mainstream, facilitating grassroots action by ensuring top-down support, and translating lessons both ways so that learning is continuous and widely shared.

Social learning is needed partly to build the social intelligence necessary for people to find their own answers to the problems they face (e.g. Gough and Scott, Bath University, and Foster and Grove-White, Lancaster University in ESRC 2004). Providing information alone may assist with solving a problem at a specific point in time, but as time moves on and the problem changes, the information is no longer valid and the capacity to search and act upon new information has not been built. Social learning that builds social intelligence develops people's capacity to deal with new problems as they arise and is therefore likely to always be an essential element of sustainable living.

How the CLASL project used the research

The key themes described above have been used by the CLASL project to develop and test the method for working with community groups on sustainable living, so they could build their knowledge and expertise and take action on issues that are specific and relevant to their community. Three aspects of social learning were seen to be key to the CLASL approach:

- **Action learning**, which is about learning by doing and explicitly reflecting together as a group on experience. Action learning is an approach to learning that recognises that there are different types of knowledge and that some issues are problems with no 'right' answers, so simply finding the 'right' information is not enough. Action learning enables such problems to be addressed by applying personal and collective inquiry and insight, supported by research using conventional sources of knowledge. The action and learning takes place in groups that are facilitated rather than taught, enabling the group to build on their own knowledge, creating solutions that are relevant to their particular circumstances and developing the skills to tackle future problems more confidently.
- **Action research** is about generating knowledge about something at the same time as trying to change it. It is about bringing together theory and practice (action and research) by doing both at the same time, usually in a participatory process with the group or community. It may use various conventional research methods (e.g. surveys), but the outputs of the research will be focused on working through a particular problem or to support a particular process of change.
- **Monitoring and evaluation**. Reviewing and reflecting are essential to social learning processes, and it is useful to include an explicit monitoring and evaluation process that continues throughout the life of any project that is about social and personal change. Evaluation is often seen as mainly about measuring change, but it is as much about capturing the lessons from the process, and translating them so they are meaningful both for those most involved and for wider audiences. Participatory evaluation, involving all those taking part in the project in the assessment, thus also contributes to the broader learning processes as the project progresses. The use of existing national sustainable development indicators alongside specific local indicators developed with community groups can allow the assessment of both the local and wider impacts of the work.

4.2.3 Project Advisory Group

Throughout the CLASL project there have been, on average, monthly meetings of the Project Advisory Group. Terms of reference for the group were drawn up early on, and the Group continued to meet throughout the project.

This Group consisted of the core team (Rod Sterne, Niamh Carey and Diane Warburton), with various other WWF staff (particularly Liz Jackson and Anna Birney from the WWF-UK education staff) and others at various times, depending on the topic of the meeting. Surrey Community Action (the rural community council for Surrey, representing and supporting voluntary and community groups throughout Surrey) was a particularly valuable contributor to this process over the final two years of the project, with Paul Napthine attending most meetings. In addition, Jane Alexander, the recycling officer in Guildford Borough Council, attended meetings later on in the project which provided a very valuable local government perspective from within Surrey.

The group met for quarterly and annual review meetings, and separate meetings to review lessons overall. It also held meetings on designing an appropriate exit strategy for the project, from the second year of project operations, as well as meetings on creating an influencing strategy, to ensure that the ideas emerging from the project could be fed into the appropriate policy and practitioners networks.

A significant part of the development process has involved trying to develop practical ways forward that build on the theory identified in the initial research report and continuing to emerge from other WWF educational work. To this end, various WWF-UK's educational tools have been learned about, considered, adapted and

used within the project. For example, the WWF-UK Pathways project (A Development Framework for School Sustainability) was used to check plans for development work with the local groups, and questions and frameworks for the evaluation.

4.2.4 National Advisory Group

Various attempts were made to develop a National Advisory Group to provide the CLASL project with a better understanding of current and potential national policy developments that CLASL experience could contribute to, and current and potential policy developments that could help guide the development of the CLASL project: a two-way process.

However, in spite of considerable efforts by all the core team, it has proved impossible to establish a formal group. The reasons for these difficulties seem to be partly because the work with the projects was at too early a stage for that to be of sufficiently significant interest to those with an interest in national policy, and partly because of the existing demands on the time of the major figures in the field.

The links between the CLASL project and national policy remain vital to WWF-UK, and further activities to disseminate the findings from the project will be undertaken within and outside WWF-UK in the coming months, following the formal end of the project.

4.2.5 External links, networks and partnerships

During the course of the project, the CLASL project worker established a series of relationships with other Defra EAF funded projects. There were particularly good relationships with other projects working at community level, including the Sustainable Production in Active Neighbourhoods (SPAN) project which was a partnership between the Community Composting Network, the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens, Garden Organic, Permaculture Association and Women's Environmental Network. The SPAN project was also using an action learning approach to their local work, so there was a lot of common ground and opportunities for sharing of experience with the CLASL project.

At a more local level, a very good working relationship was developed between the CLASL project worker and Surrey Community Action. The involvement of SCA in the CLASL National Advisory Group had enabled the project to draw on their local knowledge and practical local experience, and their local contacts provided the link to the Buckland group which was one of the initial CLASL local groups.

SCA had been working with a range of parish councils in the county on parish plans and there was interest from some local communities in increasing the importance of environmental and sustainability issues in their local plans. This has now led to an extension of the CLASL project in developing the concept of 'sustainable parish plans' in one pilot location, with the potential for expanding the input of sustainability issues into the overarching philosophy of parish plans more widely in future.

The project team had also been keen to work closely with local government on the project. The project had been developed through initial discussions with Surrey County Council (Ian Christie, head of sustainable economic development and waste management), and good relationships were built early on with SCC staff. Two of the CLASL groups were identified through individual contacts from SCC staff, who made personal introductions with the eco-group that became the Reigate group and the school that became the SWAP group and enabled initial development work to begin.

Unfortunately, during the first year of the CLASL project, Surrey County Council went through a major restructuring which resulted in the SCC staff who had been initially very enthusiastic supporters of the project leaving the council entirely. Although Ian Christie remained in contact with the project personally, by the

second year of the project there were no relevant SCC staff remaining in post and the links with Surrey County Council were minimal for the remainder of the project (although links were maintained with the council's climate change officer).

Contacts were also made with the borough councils in which the Reigate and SWAP groups were located. The recycling officer from one of those joined the Project Advisory Group and provided support to the SWAP group (alongside the CLASL project worker), and regular contacts were maintained with the other council.

However, there were fewer structural links with local authorities than had been envisaged in the original project design, largely because there were either no appropriate staff to link to, or those staff were not able to spare the time for any deeper involvement than occasionally keeping in touch with developments.

4.2.6 Communications

In addition to the relationships described above, the project developed a range of communications, including publication of the initial research report and summary in 2006, and has plans for further publications following the completion of the local development work phase of the project.

In addition, there were a number of national events held during the course of the project:

- A major national one day workshop in London in June 2006 to discuss sustainability and behaviour change. The workshop brought together a range of local and community sustainability practitioners, who discussed and agreed that there were some common lessons emerging from current work in this area (see report of the workshop for details⁷).
- A national workshop in February 2008 to discuss the preliminary evaluation findings with around 35 practitioners, national and local NGOs, local government and policy makers in government and local government bodies.
- A major national event in London in March 2008 called The Big Listen, in partnership with the SPAN project⁸. Participants from other Environment Action Fund projects, community project participants, government representatives, experts in sustainable development issues and voluntary sector representatives, were invited. The event aimed to provide an opportunity for people to take part in a fun and participative gathering to build on the successes of Defra's Environmental Action Fund projects. It was designed to enable people to be able to ask questions and listen to what is happening in sustainable development, at grass roots, national and international levels, to celebrate the local achievements to date, to generate some creative new ideas for action and to establish some long lasting contacts.

4.2.7 Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation were core elements of the CLASL project from the beginning. At national level, the evaluator worked closely with the CLASL project worker, with regular debriefing sessions on progress with the groups, and attended all Project Advisory Group meetings as a member of the group. The evaluation activities included helping design and undertake the regular review processes for the project overall through the Project Advisory Group, benchmarking and evaluating the work with the community groups, and undertaking the final evaluation research resulting in this report.

The first benchmarking exercise with the local groups took place in June and July 2006, with the two local groups that were established by then (see Annex 3 for the process and questions used at this stage). This benchmarking included a review of existing knowledge (using Bloom's taxonomy as a guide to levels of knowledge) and existing activities on sustainability. It also used an Ecological Footprint quiz developed by WWF Scotland as a simple and fun way to measure the impacts of the group members' current lifestyles. There were exercises to explore the group members' current definitions and views on sustainable living, as

7. The report of the workshop is *What works? Sustainability, social marketing and behaviour*, by Andrew Ross. WWF UK June 2006

8. The SPAN partnership is made up of the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens, the Community Composting Network, Garden Organic, the Permaculture Trust and the Women's Environmental Network.

well as clarifying their objectives by identifying measurable activities and attempting to get an idea of the scale of activities the group were hoping for. The findings from the benchmarking exercises with these two groups are given in Annexes 4 and 5.

The aim was for further benchmarking with the groups in February 2007, and then a final review in November 2007. The follow up benchmarking was undertaken with one of the groups as planned in February 2007. However, the findings from this were not as expected: the overall scores in the Ecological Footprint quiz were the same or lower than they had been previously, which suggested that group members' lives had become less sustainable since they got involved in CLASL. These results were fed back to the group in summary (i.e. that they were about the same), but the apparently lower scores were not dwelt on as it was felt that this was likely to reduce the morale of the group. It was also decided not to proceed with the follow-up benchmarking on the second group.

There were two subsequent monitoring and evaluation interventions with the local groups:

- A review with the groups in November 2007, using a simpler version of the benchmarking tool used originally for the group members to complete individually, and a group discussion covering the group's major achievements, what has worked and why, what has not worked and why, barriers, the value (or not) of the CLASL project to them, and some ideas about what they would like to achieve over the coming two years.

It had been planned, earlier in the project, that a new tool would be developed from the overall WWF-UK Ecological Footprint specifically for use by local communities. Unfortunately the development of this tool had not progressed sufficiently for it to be used in this project.

As an alternative at this stage, the two main CLASL groups were invited to complete the general WWF-UK Ecological Footprint on the WWF-UK website, both to allow them to measure their own footprint and also to get their feedback on the value of the tool to community groups.

- There was then a final stage of evaluation with the groups after these group and individual exercises, with individual interviews with all five core members of Reigate group, four of the five core members of the SWAP group and four members of the Cranleigh group. These interviews were analysed and quotes are used in this report (see section 6).

An assessment of the value and effectiveness of the monitoring and evaluation processes is given in sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.3 below.

4.3 Lessons from the national development process

The assessment that follows is based on the meetings of the Project Advisory Group and subsequent discussions with members of that group together and separately.

4.3.1 What worked well

- **A strong research base.** The action research mantra that ‘there is nothing as practical as a good theory’ has worked very well for the project.

Various members of the core team and the wider project group (including Surrey Community Action) have been able to draw in different theoretical frameworks that helped everyone involved understand what was happening in the practical work with groups. For example, WWF’s education staff identified an idea from educational theory, Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development⁹, which was used in two ways:

- to understand that people may be ‘nearly ready’ to demonstrate new understanding but need ‘scaffolding’ to help them bridge the gap, and
- to structure the benchmarking so that it started with questions about what people already do and know, to help them feel confident about moving forward.

It had been difficult to identify appropriate practical tools and methods at the research stage. However, it was agreed that this had been attempted too early in the development process - before the detailed objectives of the project, the nature of the groups, their interests and their circumstances were better understood. It was also agreed that more focus was needed on existing WWF educational tools, as much as looking at external methods.

In general, the initial research report provided a valuable overview of the field that gave both the theoretical background to develop a detailed practical design for the process of working with community groups, and also the research and ‘scientific’ credibility for the CLASL project within WWF-UK. It also provided the basis for continuously linking theory and practice within the project, and thus helped ensure a broader overview of the context within which the project was working.

It was an important lesson that projects such as CLASL, which are focused on local social processes, can find it very useful to have a relatively traditional, academically respectable, research study as a basis for innovative developmental work.

- **Project Advisory Group.** This Group worked very effectively to allow the core project team to share knowledge and experience of progress and the issues arising within a supportive learning environment, and ensure links were made to wider WWF work. The formal review meetings of the CLASL steering group also worked very well to continue the development of links between theory and practice.

There were some problems with the group. There was some inconsistency of attendance at Group meetings from the local contacts, which led to information gaps occasionally. Also, it had been hoped that a couple of individuals from the community groups would join the Project Advisory Group eventually, but there was no interest in this from the groups and there was a sense that they were not ready to be involved at a national level during the project life. Also, the links to other parts of WWF’s work were more successful in developing contacts with individuals than on developing strategic and structural links with other areas of WWF-UK work.

9. Vygotsky ref needed

However, overall there was extensive input, a shared sense of responsibility and wide sense of ownership from all involved in the Project Advisory Group: WWF education and other staff, individuals from local government in Surrey and SCA, and the independent evaluation consultant. This led to open sharing of ideas, collaborative development and creative input - as well as challenging questions.

- **CLASL project manager.** The identification of one WWF staff member as project manager throughout, to be the single first point of contact for all enquiries about the project, has been particularly valuable. The project manager worked hard to keep communications between all those involved open and productive, undertook all reporting on the project to funders, and undertook all the local development work. It was invaluable to have an individual with experience of local community development as well as national policy managing all the local groups, and the national development process.

It had been planned that the CLASL project manager would provide an overview for the work with community groups, with a local organisation providing more in depth support. That did not prove possible, so the project manager was required to do rather more hands-on support than had originally been expected. In practice this worked very well, and enabled the project team to have a very detailed picture of how things were working locally.

- **National monitoring, evaluation and sharing learning.** There was a constant focus on reviewing progress throughout the project team and the Project Advisory Group. This action research approach worked very well at national level to test and refine the methodology as the project progressed.

The benchmarking exercises with the local groups provided valuable insights to the core team and Project Advisory Group of the thinking of the groups around sustainable living, and their current activities. They were also useful for this report. Also, the review and monitoring work with the Project Advisory Group did work very well to monitor progress, provide ideas and allow questioning of the implications as the project progressed.

These sessions were very valuable to the development of the project and also to the members of the Group (especially as 'learning' had been one of the main motivations for the core team and others in the Group). These sessions also helped keep WWF staff, not in the core team, up to date with the project and allowed opportunities to feed into wider WWF strategy discussions about how the organisation works with local communities and, more widely, on broad sustainability issues.

Everyone involved (within and outside WWF-UK) has learned a great deal about the theory and practice of working with communities on sustainable living. In addition, the relationships developed by the CLASL project manager with other projects and other NGOs working in the field also helped so share learning as the project continued.

In addition, the project published the initial research report in full and summary, and thus shared the learning from that part of the project. Three events (the two major open events for practitioners and the workshop to consider the preliminary evaluation findings) also all worked well to share lessons from the CLASL project and to link those to work by others in similar fields (e.g. the SPAN partnership's work which also used action learning methods).

This focus on learning was a key objective of the project, with the focus on action research, action learning and monitoring and evaluation, and the whole style of the project in practice has followed that through and delivered fully in those terms.

4.3.2 What worked less well

- National Advisory Group. As indicated above, the plan to establish a National Project Advisory Group to provide links between the CLASL project and national policy development was never achieved, in spite of significant efforts.
- Local benchmarking and ecological footprint. The benchmarking and ecological footprinting with the local groups did not work as had been hoped. The benchmarking that was done did attempt to 'measure' individual and group behaviour, through a bespoke set of questions (see Annex 3) and the WWF Scotland Ecological Footprint quiz, and then by using WWF-UK's own online Ecological Footprint calculator.

Although the initial benchmarking provided useful data on the state of existing knowledge and activities among the group members for the core team and Project Advisory Group, the data was far less useful to the groups themselves. The follow-up benchmarking showed no real change from the initial measurement; with possibly less sustainable living since the project started.

In addition, those local group members who completed WWF-UK's online Ecological Footprint tool found that their scores suggested that, although they were below the UK average of needing 3 planets to support their consumption levels, they were not always very much below that average. Some were disappointed by these scores and some were angry - and took issue with the framing of the questions and also 'what counted' as sustainable behaviour (e.g. they felt that growing their own food organically did not count, even though they felt personally that this was a valuable contribution to sustainability).

As a result, the benchmarking did not provide the sort of information that allowed for any comparison between groups (as a result of different activities) or over time. Nor did it provide any positive feedback to help support the morale and sense of achievement for the groups, and thus no support for increased activity in future.

At the end of the CLASL project, the core team reviewed the possible reasons for the lack of positive improvement in the ecological footprint of the groups at the stage of the second benchmarking exercise, in the light of the overall experience of working with the groups throughout the project. The team concluded that the following were likely to be factors in the difficulties found in benchmarking etc:

- Imposed framework. The ethic of the CLASL project was to facilitate local groups in coming to their own views of sustainability. However, the Ecological Footprint, even the simple quiz used with the groups, is based on WWF-UK's view of sustainability. In addition, the CLASL approach focused on collective action towards sustainable living, and the measurement methods focused on individual action.

In addition, although the benchmarking and footprinting were designed to help the groups themselves assess their environmental impacts, they clearly felt that they were being judged, and resisted that. One immediately related this process to performance measurement at work. Although reassurances were given that this was not the case, the groups clearly felt uneasy at anything they did being measured by external people using external models.

The footprinting methodology was therefore somewhat at odds with the enabling and developmental approach of the CLASL project.

- **Groups had no neighbourhood focus.** It had been decided early on in the project not to impose the external indicators identified in the initial CLASL research, as these were too broad to be meaningful to the activities of small groups working very locally. Several indicators related to improvements across neighbourhoods, and the focus of the groups' work was not on changes that could be measured on a geographical basis: they were much more related to personal and collective change through social relationships that had a geographical element (in that they were 'local') but that were not related to the physical local environment.
- **Group members were already knowledgeable and active.** It had been expected that the project would be able to show measurable improvements in sustainable behaviour over time (e.g. less waste, less resource use, less consumption). However, the individuals in the CLASL groups were self-selecting, and they had decided to become involved because they were already interested.

As the benchmarking showed, group members already had a reasonable level of knowledge about environmental sustainability, and were already taking some action individually to reduce the negative environmental impact of their behaviour. Although they certainly all did more as a result of being involved in the CLASL groups, the difference in terms of environmental impact was not large enough to be easily measurable, either through the bespoke benchmarking, the Ecological Footprint quiz or the more detailed online Ecological Footprinting.

- **Too mechanistic.** The CLASL groups work in a very intuitive, social and interactive way, and it was found that no existing 'tools' could just be used with them as the meetings were too informal. Also, the groups are essentially a social and leisure activity for those involved. They were entirely happy with reviewing what worked and what did not, in terms of the activities they were doing, and they learned a lot from those reviews, but they were not comfortable with measuring progress or impacts.
- **People became more critical of themselves.** It seems that the individuals answering the Ecological Footprint questions were harder on themselves as the project continued than they had been before. Later on, the groups clearly showed that they had learned more and were taking more action individually and as groups, but they felt they were doing less. They had learned more about what really needed to be done to make a difference (e.g. to climate change) and judged their own behaviour more harshly because they were not achieving the very high standards they had begun to set themselves. As one said, being involved "has changed my perspective - I can do lots more, I initially thought I was doing lots." (Cranleigh group member).
- **Group members changed.** The way the footprinting and benchmarking were done was designed to gain a group score rather than individual scores, with the idea that progress could be seen as a collective achievement. However, group members changed between the two benchmarking interventions, and so it was not possible to get a realistic comparison of improvement over time.
- **Answers depended on circumstances at the time.** The questions were very broad, and answers were subjective (e.g. my home is well-insulated, or moderately insulated; I travel mainly by foot/bicycle, public transport or car). The answers individuals gave were likely to depend on their mood, and whether they felt positive about what they were doing themselves and what needed to be done.

Also, answers depended largely on immediate personal circumstances when the group members completed the questions. If their boiler had broken down and they had replaced it with a condensing boiler, they did better in their scores. But if they had just moved home and needed to buy a new cooker and fridge, they did less well. The group members were very aware of these factors, which further undermined their belief in the tools as a fair and realistic measure of negative environmental impacts.

In summary, because the answers to the questions were so dependent on personal circumstances at the time, it was not possible to use the tools to gain any sense of change over time - it was as likely that different answers would emerge the next day as the following year, and not necessarily as a result of real changes in behaviour. It was not, therefore, a useful tool for monitoring progress on individual or group behaviour change and environmental impacts.

The CLASL team concluded that the ecological footprint quiz was a good mechanism for stimulating discussion about what sustainable behaviour means, and for getting an initial idea of the group's own perceptions of their knowledge and activities on sustainable living, but was not a good mechanism for either measuring progress in terms of sustainable living, nor in motivating people to do more to reduce their negative impacts. Rather the opposite - the tools seemed to increase resentment at external measures of environmental impacts at the same time as making group members feel that the significant efforts they were trying to make were meaningless because they could not be measured effectively.

In addition, the team concluded that reviews of progress worked well when it was focused on broad concepts of sustainable living defined by the groups themselves, and concepts of general progress towards those goals, but not when it imposed goals, indicators or targets from other sources.

Finally, the team concluded that the monitoring worked well when it was completely embedded in the group's general activities, and helped them do what they wanted to more effectively in future (e.g. reviews of what worked well, and less well, and why, and how to improve activities in future). More formal measurements and reviews were less useful to the groups and were unlikely to be continued to be used by the groups when the CLASL project was no longer as fully involved.

4.4 Overall conclusions on the national development process

Overall, the national development process worked very well. It succeeded in developing a good model for working with communities on sustainable living that could be implemented, based on a robust evidence base of theory and practice.

The Project Advisory Group worked very well, and the CLASL project manager worked very effectively to manage the national process and the support for local action. All those involved in the project felt a sense of shared responsibility for the success of the project, and the national level monitoring and evaluation review processes worked well to review progress and help the project develop effectively.

The project produced some valuable resources in terms of research documents, and ran some valuable events as well as developing good relationships with other organisations to share the learning from this project with others.

There were two elements that worked less well. The local benchmarking and ecological footprinting did not contribute to positively motivating the groups and provided little valuable information for the project. In addition, the National Advisory Group was never established in spite of significant effort. Clearly measures of progress towards sustainable living, and links to and from national policy development, are needed, but further research and experimentation will be needed in order to find more effective mechanisms than were achieved within this project.



5

CLASL development process

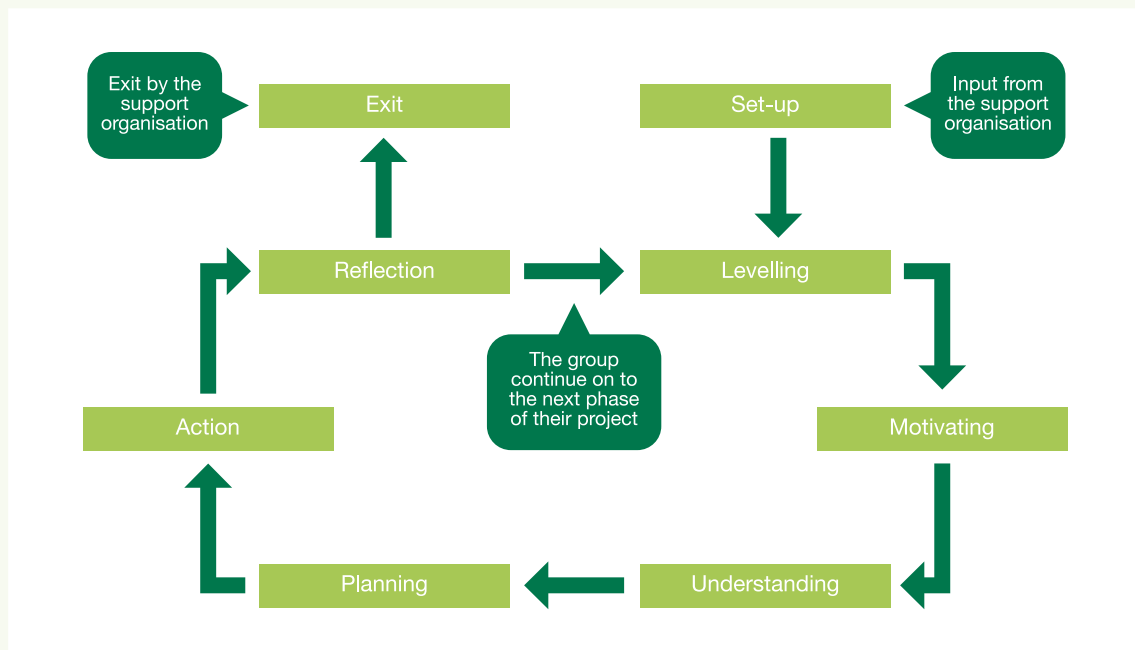
- 5.1 The purpose of the local development process
- 5.2 The nature of the local development process
- 5.3 The CLASL methodology in practice
- 5.4 Lessons from the local development process
- 5.5 Overall conclusions on the local development process

5.1 The purpose of the local development process

The aim of the local development process was to develop and test a model of community support in working towards sustainable living. The model was designed to enable practical work with local community groups in Surrey.

5.2 The nature of the local development process

The detailed design of the process for working with community groups was based on two frameworks: Bloom's taxonomy¹⁰ and Kolb's cycle of action learning¹¹ (and see Annex 1). Adding in some elements of practice from community development, the final process design was as follows:



Each step of the process is outlined in more detail below.

Overall, the approach was for a WWF staff member (Niamh Carey), experienced in community development methods, to deliver the process with each community group. The process overall was designed to use community development techniques alongside the provision of expert knowledge on the element of sustainable living.

The role of the worker was essentially one of facilitation and providing access to expert advice as the group required it.

Before the work began, there was some considerable discussion about the choice of the groups. It was decided that the groups should have the following characteristics¹²:

- There would be three groups in total, with the aim that the groups would be as different from each other as possible (e.g. size of group, type of locality, communities of interest and geographical communities, social mix). There was some discussion of the extent to which 'iconic' groups with media appeal might be identified (e.g. golf club, Wimbledon etc etc), but this was not possible in practice.

10. Bloom ref

11. Kolb, D., 1984. *Experiential learning: experience as the sources of learning and development*. Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.

12. Note on *Which community groups?*, 16 May 2005

In practice, three groups were identified, in Reigate, Stoughton and Buckland, with the later addition of a fourth group, in Cranleigh, which used a very different approach.

- The groups should be existing community groups (given the need to get started quickly with the content of the project), with a formal constitution.

In practice, none of the three groups were fully constituted. One was an existing Global Action Plan group, so the individuals did know each other quite well. The second group was made up of individuals who were associated with a school but they did not know each other. The third group was in a village and everyone knew each other as neighbours but they had not worked together on sustainability issues before.

- The groups should not have 'sustainability' or environmental issues as their core purpose but should have broad interests across the community.

In practice, the Global Action Plan group did have environmental interests, but the others did not.

- At least one group should be from an 'affluent' area.

An analysis of the nature of the areas represented by the three groups was undertaken, using the Community Engagement and Sustainable Development (CESD) tool developed by WWF-UK and CAG Consultants. It was this tool that provided the basic information on the areas given in the descriptions of the groups and their activities in sections 5.3 and 5.4 below.

In summary, these analyses show that none of the three areas covered by the three community groups working with the CLASL project were deprived in any sense; although neither were they uniformly wealthy areas.

- The groups must be willing to act as a case study, and would need to be kept aware and be happy with any messages coming out of the work overall.

In practice, this worked well, with two of the groups clarifying their responsibilities to, and expectations of, the project with letters of agreement with WWF-UK.

- The groups would be adults (a different methodology is likely to be needed for work with young people).

In practice, all the members of the groups were adults.

It was expected that people in the groups would have different levels of interest and knowledge, and be at different stages of personal commitment, and this was the case in practice.

Potential groups were identified through contacts mainly with Surrey County Council (SCC) and Surrey Community Action (SCA), and the final selection was:

- a group of parents linked to an eco-school (through SCC);
- a church group aiming to achieve eco-congregation status (through SCC);
- a rural group, linked to a parish council, that had undertaken a parish plan and had expressed interest in following up on environmental issues (through SCA).

5.3 The CLASL methodology in practice

This section explains how the CLASL methodology (outlined in the diagram above) worked in practice, step-by-step.

5.3.1 Set-up

This first stage focuses on the identification and engagement of community groups to take part. The work at this stage raised a number of issues:

- **Set up can take a long time.** In the CLASL project it was found that it took three to six months from the point of initial meetings to each of the three community groups becoming fully engaged and starting to think about action plans. This was relatively quick for a community process, which can take much longer.

The initial stages are very important in enabling the worker to develop trust and understanding with the group to form a sound basis on which to work, and thus cannot be rushed. The work must proceed at the pace with which the groups are comfortable.

- **The importance of intermediaries.** The relative speed of the setting up phase was largely due to the help provided by Surrey County Council and Surrey Community Action in making initial introductions and explaining the potential benefits for the groups in taking part in the project in their own terms (e.g. as a means to gain the Eco-Congregation award for the group associated with the church, and extended schools status for the school).

Approaching a new group through an intermediary was also important in giving the project legitimacy as the intermediaries were already trusted by the groups. This helped to address the problem of external groups 'parachuting' in to a community and being seen as outsiders. Intermediaries also gave the project background information on the groups, enabling the project team to ensure that project communications and presentations were relevant to the groups.

- **Setting the parameters for the project.** It was important to clarify with groups early on what the thinking behind the project was, and why WWF-UK was supporting it.

At the earliest opportunity, the CLASL worker made presentations to the groups outlining the aims and objectives of the project, the process and how action would be taken. She used Ecological Footprint and the One Planet Future model to explain why sustainable living is important to WWF as an organisation that is known for its conservation focus. She also used the four legs of sustainability model to describe the focus of sustainability as being environmental, social, economic and governance issues. It was important to acknowledge WWF's agenda as being environmental, but also that this did not mean that the project could not focus on all aspects of sustainability.

It was difficult to get across why an environmental organisation, especially a well-known one, was working on broad sustainability issues, and how that is more than just environmental issues. Even with explanation, groups still gravitated towards environmental issues and this may have been because the involvement of WWF-UK influenced the type of people who got involved.

A note on community development and community engagement

These terms are often used together, but there are differences. Community engagement is about supporting communities to become involved in local decision-making and other activities. It may take the form of providing information, collecting opinions on a survey, or may involve some more in-depth participation, such as in participatory appraisal approaches.

Community development is a term used to describe a process of support for a community to achieve its own goals. A community development approach means that a worker does not bring their own agenda to the table, but works with groups to identify the needs of the community and methods to address issues which they identify.

In the CLASL project, WWF-UK was using community engagement techniques to work with the communities in this project and have made sure to explain their sustainability 'agenda' to participants. However, the project also borrowed some community development techniques in the work by supporting the groups to identify the issues they wanted to take action on, supporting them in their decisions, and providing advice on how to tackle these issues, even if this meant the group did not precisely follow the CLASL process and WWF-UK's policy priorities.

To achieve the objective of building capacity and skills within a group to enable them to take ideas forward once the main project was complete, it was important that the groups followed their own initiative and to help them reflect and learn from what happened.

- **Agreeing the terms of engagement.** Once the groups agreed to take part, subsequent meetings concentrated on deciding how the project would be managed. A check list of questions was used at this stage:
 - Who are the members of the group? Do we need to recruit more people and if so, how?
 - How frequently shall we have meetings? At what time? Where? Who will organise the meetings? Who will take minutes? Who should attend the meetings?
 - Communication - how will we communicate? Who will be the key contact with the supporting organisation? With whom do we need to communicate externally? How regularly does this need to happen?
 - Records - how will we record the progress of the group? What type of record? Who will be responsible?
 - Resources - what kind of resources do we have or want? Who is responsible for them? Do we need someone to manage the group's finances? Who will be responsible for this?
 - What should / will the support organisation be responsible for? This can help to manage expectations of the support organisation.

In two of the CLASL groups, a letter of agreement with WWF-UK was a useful starting point, as it clarified what the group could expect from WWF-UK and vice versa. The letters covered:

- What opportunities the CLASL project would offer to the group
- What the CLASL project would provide
- What was expected of the group.

With the church group, the letter was used as the formal agreement they could use to gain approval from their church council to take part in the project. However, although useful at this stage to summarise the nature of the relationship, the letters were not in practice referred to again during the project.

- Allowing the groups to form themselves. The initial contacts made by the CLASL worker were not necessarily the members of the groups that would remain involved in the long term. It was important to understand the networks with which the potential participants were connected, such as schools and churches, and to meet with all the relevant people. Each of the CLASL groups had some degree of protocol to go through before starting a new project, with questions to address such as whether school resources could be used, and whether the church council would give approval.
- Linking to additional support. In two areas, local authority waste officers provided valuable additional support to the groups as the project developed. As well as direct support on the issues (waste and recycling), these local authority officers could also put groups in contact with other similar groups and activities in the area. In Stoughton, this relationship proved very useful for the group, as the aim of the local authority officer was to engage people in waste issues, and she had many useful local contacts.

The importance of a flexible process was demonstrated even at the early stages of the project. Each group was very different in the time and resources people had available and their starting points. It was important to use the process as a guide and to start wherever people felt comfortable.

5.3.2 Levelling

The term levelling is used to describe the phase in the process which aims to get to a stage where the group feels confident about moving forward. It involved examining people's assumptions and expectations about becoming involved in a group by asking question such as:

- What does the group see as their role?
- Is the group what you expected? What is different / similar?
- What did you assume might happen when you joined the group?
- What have you done before? (A brief skills audit of the group was carried out to reveal hidden talents. This stage also helps people to identify and transfer skills that they might use at work or home into the group.)
- How do you feel now you've joined? What else do you need to know?
- What additional skills might be needed to manage the project?

These questions were asked near the beginning of the project, and were asked again at appropriate stages of planning and reviewing.

5.3.3 Motivating

Motivation is key to people getting involved fully and being willing to contribute to the group over time. This stage involved helping the group to review their own existing motivations, and what might motivate others to get involved, through questions such as:

- What was your motivation for getting involved?
- What sorts of 'hooks' encourage people to get involved in something? What sort of incentives work? What doesn't work?
- Should we share ideas / link up with other groups?
- How do we identify community needs? Who do we target?
- Where can we get more information?

In practice, the CLASL project combined the Levelling and Motivating stages to create an overall discussion about expectations, assumptions and motivations, as well as to look into prior knowledge and skills. This was done informally early on and then more formally as part of the benchmarking exercise. This was possibly too early a stage for such a formal benchmarking process; it may have been more appropriate at a slightly later stage when the group members knew each other and the CLASL worker better, and were more confident about what they wanted to do and might achieve.

The outcome from these discussions was intended to be that people got to know each other and got a common understanding of what they may or may not achieve in the project, to prevent disappointment at a later stage.

One group skipped this stage entirely and went straight to action (a survey of the village) as they decided that they wanted to get support from the rest of the community before embarking on any project. Again, it was important to be flexible and allow the group to work in the way that was most comfortable. However, in practice, this group did not get any further than the survey.

5.3.4 Understanding

An essential element to the CLASL project was for the groups to develop their understanding by taking knowledge (identified in the levelling and motivation stages of the process) and developing it into a deeper understanding. This was expected to involve:

- Identifying and/or reviewing the main issues of sustainability that the group wanted to work on, if they had not already done so.
- Considering the use of specific tools to discuss and broaden the group's understanding of issues (e.g. using photos, news cuttings etc), or games (e.g. the New Economics Foundation's Democs tool).
- Considering asking the group members to record the process in journals.
- Considering the skills in the group and what additional skills and knowledge may be needed to achieve what they want to do.
- Using the Ecological Footprint to identify key areas for action.

In practice:

- CLASL did not use any specific tools or games with the groups, as these were considered too formal and not appropriate to the informal 'mood' and style of the groups.
- In one group (Cranleigh) the members were encouraged to keep diaries to record their journeys but it never happened - people felt they had enough to do without recording their progress.
- The Ecological Footprint quiz was used to identify the areas where there was the greatest need for action, but that did not accord with the groups' own priorities for action, so this information was not used directly in planning action.

- The work on understanding continued throughout the project; it was not a single step in the process. Opportunities were taken throughout to review activities and contribute to greater understanding of what was being achieved and why.
- Cranleigh took the approach of providing workshops on different issues relevant to sustainable living, which helped to create a deeper understanding of these particular issues among participants. This approach was closer to conventional training and capacity building approaches than the main CLASL methodology.

5.3.5 Planning

Planning is the stage of the project where the group uses the information gathered and understood in previous stages to identify what the group wants to tackle and to create a working plan of action. At this stage, groups were starting to move into the 'application' section of Bloom's taxonomy.

Using the issues identified in previous stages, the questions used with groups included:

- Identify the opportunities to do something. Are there tools and techniques that have been used before? (The school group decided to start their programme of activities by holding a SWAP It! event; something that had proved successful elsewhere).
- Identify where the group wants to get to.
- Think about who needs to be involved - are there experts who could help with an issue e.g. from the local authority or from other organisations?
- Start to think about how success can be measured - does the plan reflect what is wanted to be achieved? What does the group now think about sustainability? How will the group monitor what happens and what indicators could be used?

In practice, the first three of these questions were very useful in helping the groups to decide what actions to take to achieve the plan. The CLASL worker simply helped the groups to brainstorm ideas and then group them into similar topic areas. This enabled the group to identify their key areas of interest. The groups then agreed upon specific activities that they would like to carry out in each area, which were then entered into a timeline and actions plotted onto it so that the activities could be separated into manageable chunks, and not everything was aimed for at once.

After creating the timeline, each activity could be taken one at a time and a more detailed plan drawn up. The detailed plans included assigning actions to specific people, with deadlines, so there could be reports back on progress at each meeting.

There was no demand from the groups for external technical expertise, contrary to expectations when the methodology was designed. They did want information and advice but the CLASL project worker and/or the local authority officer involved were able either to provide that directly (e.g. on local contacts, or working with other groups, or presentations) or could provide links to that help (e.g. contacts to undertake an energy audit of the church), or could pull materials together to provide the information the group needed (e.g. on the basic principles of climate change).

5.3.6 Action

At this stage of starting to take action, the CLASL project worker took a more backseat role in the meetings, as it was vital for the group to start to take the lead. Handing over the process to groups avoids possible over-reliance on the worker and the danger that the group ceases to function once the supporting organisation completes its role in the project. However, although the groups were delivering their own plans, it was clear that the groups did value the support and worry whether they can survive without it (see section 6).

In practice:

- All the groups decided on action on environmental issues, although there was quite a range of issues covered. Even the group that focused on waste and recycling did consider waste of energy and water within their priorities.
- It was important to consider learning styles when working with the groups. The action stage is partway through the process cycle and some groups did have people who wanted to get on and do something and could have become frustrated by too many 'sitting and thinking' meetings at the beginning of the group. It may have been more realistic to carry out a small easy win activity at the beginning (for example, a survey or a small event) rather than delaying all action until the other stages are complete. The results of this initial action could then have been used to support the other more reflective stages of the process.

The need for flexibility when working in groups is clear here, and the importance of understanding what motivates different people within the group. It was possible within the CLASL groups to combine different approaches to meet different learning styles in one activity.

5.3.7 Reflection

In the reflection on actions taken, the CLASL project worker explored with the groups how their actions met environmental, social, economic and governance objectives and considered how improvements could be made to activities, or where success could be continued, and to work on these issues as part of subsequent activities. The reviews were based around five simple questions:

- What happened?
- What went well?
- What didn't go so well?
- What would we do differently next time?
- What have we learned from this event / activity?

These questions were useful for Reigate and Stoughton, and were used at several points during the project, especially after the apparent achievement of particular goals, with prompting by the CLASL project worker. These informal reviews and simple questions worked more effectively than the more formal benchmarking and ecological footprinting processes. The formal reviews created rather strained discussions with the groups and did not sit easily in the flow of the groups' activities; there was a sense that such processes were disrupting the groups' development.

5.3.8 Exit

The aim of the CLASL project, in addition to creating individual and group change, was to leave the groups with the confidence, skills and tools to tackle sustainability issues in the future.

An initial exit strategy was developed at the end of the first year of the project, both to help planning for how to take forward the findings of the project and to help the groups to think about how they continue once the

CLASL project has ended. The CLASL worker ensured that the groups were clear about the time frame of support from the start of the project, and began to hand over responsibilities to the group throughout, so that they could take over tasks with support and then feel confident about continuing alone. Discussion of the transition phase helped the groups be more confident that they could continue the work.

However, it was agreed early on that the formal transition phase would start after the end of the project. The groups did still want support and WWF-UK agreed to provide a lower level of support after the end of the project, so that the groups could still ask for help if they needed it. However, this would be very different from the way the support had been provided up to that point, which was that the worker would attend (almost) all meetings, and be available whenever needed.

5.4 Lessons from the local development process

5.4.1 What worked well

- **The design of the CLASL methodology.** The overall design of the CLASL methodology worked very well and proved to be robust in different circumstances. All the steps identified contributed to the success of the approach, although the steps were not always completed in the same order, or the order shown on the original diagram.

It was clear from the start (and from the previous experience of all the core team) that no people processes are sequential; often all the steps that seem separate are happening at the same time. At other times, groups may leap several stages in a planned process. However, each of the steps was important in enabling the groups to take action, review the successes and problems of what they have done, and reflect on the implications of that for future activities. It will be interesting to review, in perhaps 12 months, the extent to which the groups continue with this more in depth reflection after the withdrawal of full support from the CLASL project.

The project was always intended to test 'replicability', and it is clear from experience to date that the methodology does provide a very robust model, as long as the necessary support and resources are available.

In this case, WWF has provided each group with a budget of £1,000 per year to cover costs but only one group had even got close to spending that. Feedback from the groups clearly suggests that the amount of cash could have been less (say £500) and that the money was very little of an incentive for the groups. The resource that was most valued by the groups was the personal support from the CLASL development worker (see section 6).

- **Empowering the groups.** The CLASL local development process worked very well to enable the groups to take on responsibility both for their definitions of sustainable living and the goals they wanted to achieve, and for the management of the group and its activities. The CLASL approach - to support and facilitate the groups rather than providing strong directive leadership - worked well to enable the groups to be self-managing and thus more likely to be self-sustaining in the longer term.

This has been an intensive process - taking a lot of the CLASL worker's time but also being a demanding process which needed constant

- vigilance: to spot anything that might be going wrong before it became a problem
- sensitivity: especially to the fact that this is being done in people's spare time and they don't want processes that are too formal or pressured or bureaucratic - it has to be enjoyable, and
- responsiveness: providing help and resources when needed.

At the same time the worker had to ensure that the groups developed a real sense of **ownership** of

the group and its activities so that they continue in the longer term. This is a highly skilled, professional, demanding and resource intensive task, and group members in interview were very clear that they would not have achieved what they have without it.

The rewards in terms of achievements by the groups are beginning to be apparent, but it is important not to underestimate the investment of skills and resources needed.

The approach could be described, in summary, as being:

- support ... not direction
- resources ... not leadership
- learning ... not recruitment
- guidance ... not rigid processes and bureaucracy
- personal ... not objective
- enthusiastic / involved ... not neutral or distanced
- light touch ... not heavy-handed
- collaborative and responsive ... not instructional.

It was found that only very informal support worked - even flip charts could seem too much like a 'classroom'. Tools and methods from elsewhere were researched and bits from some of them were used (such as some of the processes from the Federation of Community Development Learning pack on climate change, which were used in the facilitation training day for the Reigate group). In general though, such toolkits were felt to be too formal and mechanistic for these types of groups, who were basically a few individuals giving up their free time to do something and did not want to follow a rigid process.

The style of support necessary became clearer as the project went. It was a learning process for everyone involved.

- **Review, reflection and learning.** The less formal review and reflection sessions with the groups worked very well. In practice, this reflection became a core mode of operation for the groups, alongside planning future activities. As mentioned above, it will be interesting to review whether this level of formal reflection and learning is continued in the longer term.

There was significant learning at all levels of the project - among the core team, the Project Advisory Group and the group members themselves. Among this set of audiences, learning took place almost entirely through face to face meetings to review the progress of the project, and consider the implications of what was happening. The mix of people in the Project Advisory Group allowed for the input of some feedback on national policy developments to contribute to local development, and vice versa, as well as linking learning into other areas of WWF-UK work.

Community groups often prefer to concentrate on action rather than reflection and learning. They are giving up their free time and want to feel they are achieving something. Although they do see learning as important, they tend to see it as a by-product of getting on with things.

- **Introductions through intermediaries.** In order to make quick progress, it was vital for the CLASL worker to gain the trust of those they are working with. The support worker also needed to be confident about their own knowledge so that the rest of the group could trust it too.

The CLASL groups that made the quickest early progress had someone who could act as a mediator who knew both the group and WWF staff: in this case, it was someone very experienced from Surrey County Council who made the introductions and helped the relationships to start.

- **Developing 'ambassadors'.** It had always been expected that one of the outcomes of the CLASL project would be that participants became 'ambassadors' for sustainable living locally and wider. This happened far more extensively than anyone involved in designing the project thought possible. Indeed, it has become the main focus of the activities of both the two main CLASL groups, with a real interest in both groups in reaching out to others to pass on what they have learned and encourage and support others to live more sustainably.

It was always felt that this element of the CLASL work was very different from other work with communities which identified 'champions'. When the project started, there was an expectation that champions and/or mentors may be created from among community group members. The Cranleigh group has had a clear group leader from the beginning, and she organises the meetings, decides on the topics and creates workshops where the others can learn about specific actions (e.g. climate change and ecological footprinting, energy and chemicals in the home). However, this was very different from the main CLASL methodology.

Neither the Stoughton nor Reigate groups have group leaders, and it has become a conscious approach not to work in that way in order to strengthen the group. The group members each take responsibility for different tasks, and that includes organising meetings and taking notes etc, and they share responsibility for checking progress.

On one or two occasions, individuals in both these groups have found themselves taking a leadership role and it has caused significant problems, with them feeling overwhelmed and wanting to stop or leave. With the CLASL worker's support they have stayed in the group, but this illustrates the problem that identifying a single leader can have, and the dangers of relying on a single person to carry responsibility for the group - if they had left at that point, it is likely that the group would have collapsed. It was the expectation that this may happen that led the project to move away from any focus on champions and formal group leaders.

The difference between 'champions' and CLASL 'ambassadors' can be summarised as follows:

Champions	CLASL Ambassadors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • salesman / teacher: selling a message and telling people what to do 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focus on mutual learning, not telling
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • trained to deliver / present a message 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'you can do it' / 'we can change things' message: a collective movement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using cascade methods to spread the message 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working from a position of personal strength (own group) and moral authority, as well as confidence from having done it
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • isolated locally, even if national support is provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supported and collective, through the local group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agreed message to be disseminated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • starting where people are, and what they can do - their interests and skills

In summary, the approach to leadership in the CLASL project has been two-fold:

- To take the view that leadership is a task that can effectively be shared among the group, if they each take responsibility for certain activities and share overall responsibility for the group itself
- That there need to be layers of involvement, so that those that want to come to meetings and help manage activities do that, but there is also room for those that just want to help with running activities, and for those that just want to join in with activities.

5.4.2 What worked less well

- **Initial clarification of roles.** All three CLASL groups struggled in the early stages of discussions with the project with the idea that they could decide what they did - there was an assumption that WWF would provide more leadership in terms of the issues they 'should' focus on. In one group (Buckland), this became such a stumbling block that the group was unable to proceed.

In Reigate and Stoughton, once these initial understandings were established, the groups moved at rather different speeds to actually decide on their individual action plans. The existing group (the Reigate church group) actually took longer to devise an action plan than the group that had been brought together for the purpose of the CLASL project (the Stoughton school group). The latter plunged immediately into devising an action plan they could get on with rather than going through the process as originally designed (although they did then spend significant time reviewing and reflecting on their activities, and planning future activities very carefully, as time went on).

- **The process took longer than expected.** Although everyone involved knew that community processes take a long time, the local development process did take longer than expected. The project only had three years from start to finish, and part of the first year was devoted to research and designing the methodology in detail. The overall timescale was:
 - **Research and development: March to autumn 2005.** The first six months of the project were research and development, and detailed design of the process, as already described.
 - **Initial contacts with groups: November 2005 - January 2006.** Initial meetings with initial contacts were facilitated by people involved in CLASL who worked locally: particularly from Surrey County Council and Surrey Community Action (the rural community council for Surrey). Even with these initial introductions, initial negotiations and setting up groups from first meetings with individual contacts continued for up to 6 months.
 - **Group action plans began to be put together from summer 2006.** The two main groups started working as groups and had drafted their action plans by autumn 2006, and started their activities. The first group to run a public event was Stoughton, which ran their first SWAP-It event in October 2006.

The third of the initial groups contacted (Buckland) never got to the action plan stage. Meetings were held, presentations made to the parish council, negotiations and discussions continued, but the group never did 'gel' and plans and activities never did take off.

In summary, therefore, it took at least six months from initial contact to getting the groups going, and at least 9 -10 months before they started any activities; and these were people who were already interested and active in some way and who had been introduced by a trusted intermediary. In this timescale, there was therefore only a maximum of 18 months for actual activities before the formal conclusion of the CLASL project.

At the end of the three years, the groups are really only just getting to be fully operational. It was clear to them from the start that they would only have this time, and exit strategies were discussed from the beginning. However, experience of the time taken to establish this work does have real implications for future three-year funding programmes that aim to work with community groups.

- **Working with broad sustainability issues.** All the groups involved focused on environmental issues, rather than social, economic or governance issues. Although some of the groups' activities did cross over into social issues (e.g. the SWAP group's book swaps that supported literacy in disadvantaged families by providing free books as well as recycling unwanted books), and economic issues (e.g. several groups' interest in reducing personal and institutional costs), the main motivation for action was to reduce environmental damage.

It is likely that this focus was due partly to WWF-UK's image and status as a leading international environmental organisation which thus drew in those who were interested in environmental issues. This applies as much to the views of the intermediaries who made the initial introductions between the CLASL project and local contacts and groups as to the individuals in the groups. It is also likely that this inbuilt bias continued as the groups developed, given the priorities, knowledge and interests of WWF-UK and thus the ease with which they could give support on certain topics.

However, it is also true that the individuals in the groups were simply most interested in the environmental elements of sustainable living. They did very much see these as connected to the social, economic and governance issues even if they would not have described them as such - with issues such as saving money from reducing resource use (water, energy, etc), social interest such as being active and contributing to the improvement of the local community, and governance issues such as campaigning and lobbying to change the behaviour of governance institutions (including local government).

There are difficult issues in providing support to community processes to increase sustainable living about the balance between facilitation, support, leadership and motivation. The classic community development approach is to enable groups to take action on the issues they see as most affecting the quality of life and opportunities for their whole community - usually within very disadvantaged communities struggling with issues such as unemployment, lack of skills, poor housing (e.g. damp), neighbourhood crime, drugs etc.

In this case, the communities were not very disadvantaged, and the issues they were dealing with were not focused on personal or family life chances, safety, economic opportunities or liveability. The community groups here had their own motives for doing something and although some were passionate about environmental sustainability, most were not 'driven' to make or campaign for changes as they may have been if their survival, house prices, health of their children etc were at stake. For many of them, it was more a leisure interest than a life or death issue.

It does seem that sustainable living does not have the sort of immediate hook that gets many people engaged, angry, emotional and deeply committed. Here, the focus started small - on individual and group behaviour; the small steps towards sustainability which led on to reaching out to spread the message more widely. These attitudes and forms of action, and the nature of the development from personal change to reaching out to others with the message, may be relevant for future work aiming to encourage sustainable living at local level.

- **Involvement in the national CLASL project.** It had always been hoped that the local groups would come together at some point to share learning, and that people from the local groups would link into the Project Advisory Group (and the National Advisory Group) in some ways, so that national learning could closely involve people active at community level.

In practice, this was not possible during most of project and, although the groups valued being associated with WWF-UK as a well-known national organisation, they really had no sense of being part of a national project.

Various initial plans for bringing the groups together, including with the Project Advisory Group, were never realised - partly because the groups had so little time for networking beyond the work they were initiating locally, and these national connections were not a priority for them, and partly because they had not reached a stage of being sufficiently confident to take part in those national discussions. The groups were invited to participate nationally in various ways, but they were not interested at that stage in making these links. Time for national networking is always difficult to find for small local community groups with few members. However, the local groups' interest in national networking was growing towards the end of the project and there was enthusiasm for the final project event (The Big Listen event with SCAN in March 2008). As contact will remain between WWF-UK and the groups, there may be opportunities for them to link into national activities on local sustainability more extensively in future.

5.5 Overall conclusions on the local development process

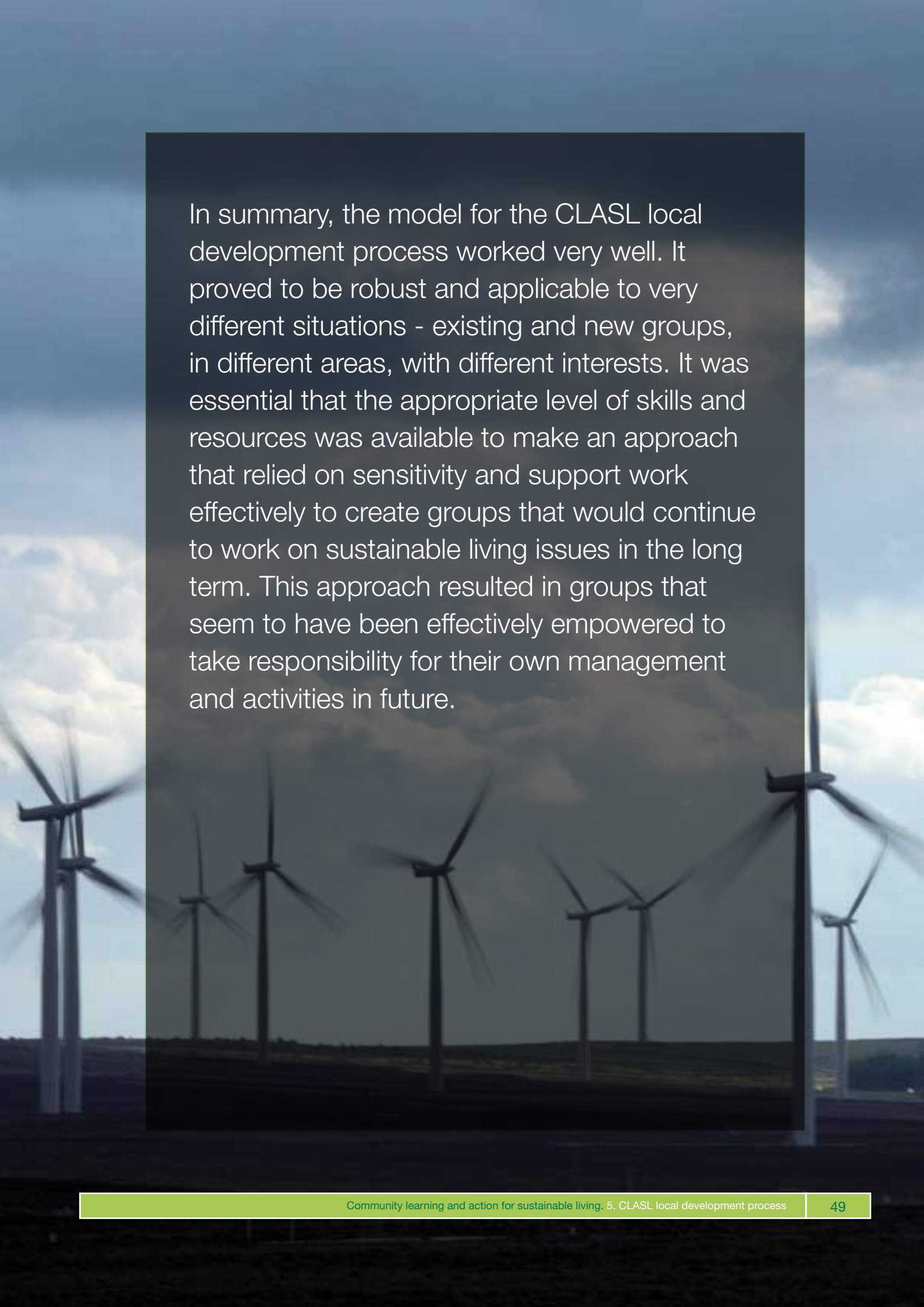
In summary, the model for the CLASL local development process worked very well. It proved to be robust and applicable to very different situations - existing and new groups, in different areas, with different interests. It was essential that the appropriate level of skills and resources was available to make an approach that relied on sensitivity and support work effectively to create groups that would continue to work on sustainable living issues in the long term. This approach resulted in groups that seem to have been effectively empowered to take responsibility for their own management and activities in future.

There was significant informal review, reflection and learning throughout the project, as had been hoped, although (as mentioned in the previous section), the more formal approach to local benchmarking and measurement did not work well. The process did take longer to establish than had been expected - even by the core team who were experienced in community support programmes. The pace of initial development was slower than expected, even with the invaluable input from intermediary organisations (particularly Surrey County Council and Surrey Community Action) who made initial introductions between CLASL and local people, and helped establish relationships of trust very quickly.

The development of the role of group members into 'ambassadors' worked better and more quickly than expected, however, with both the two main CLASL groups reaching out and spreading messages about sustainable living among their first activities, and certainly the focus for current and future work. This was a move that came strongly from the group members themselves, as they saw this outreach as a natural progression from their own personal and group changes in ways of living to encouraging and supporting others to do the same.

The focus of much of the activity was on environmental issues, rather than broad sustainable development, but this was felt to be both inevitable in the circumstances (given WWF-UK's image) but also a reflection of the real interests of the individuals in the groups. The focus was also largely local. Although group members were aware of global environmental issues, and were very interested in finding out more about these issues (especially climate change), the focus of their action remained local. This affected the national relationships in the project as well, with the groups' main interest being developing their own activities, rather than networking with others at wider (e.g. national) levels. As a result, there were fewer links between the local groups themselves, and with the national work of the CLASL project, than had been hoped, although there were signs at the end of the project that local interest in national networking was growing.

Overall, the local development process did work very well and does seem to have resulted in two strong groups that it is hoped will continue working on sustainable living at local level into the future, even without the full support of the CLASL project.



In summary, the model for the CLASL local development process worked very well. It proved to be robust and applicable to very different situations - existing and new groups, in different areas, with different interests. It was essential that the appropriate level of skills and resources was available to make an approach that relied on sensitivity and support work effectively to create groups that would continue to work on sustainable living issues in the long term. This approach resulted in groups that seem to have been effectively empowered to take responsibility for their own management and activities in future.





6

CLASL Community Groups

- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Reigate group
- 6.3 Stoughton group
- 6.4 Buckland group
- 6.5 Cranleigh group
- 6.6 Lessons from the groups
- 6.7 Overall conclusions on the CLASL local groups

6.1 Introduction

This section provides case histories of the nature and activities of the CLASL community groups, and then identifies some of the main lessons from the groups.

6.2 Reigate group

6.2.1 The area

This group is based in a small town of 6,736, with a predominantly rural character in Surrey. The South East region overall is the least deprived in England on all characteristics except access to housing: it is the third most deprived in terms of barriers to housing, largely because house prices here are higher than the UK average. The population is more than 95% white, and there are plenty of community activities and facilities. The rate of democratic engagement is high, based on the 64.8% who voted in the last general election (which is higher than average). Crime is reducing (down 4% in 2003-4), and 24% of crime is criminal damage.

This is an affluent area, with a lot of commuters working in London, and there are good public transport links throughout the town.

6.2.2 The nature of the group

The core group is made up of about six women, although there are two or three others that also attend occasionally (including one or two men). The group usually meets monthly, in the house of one of the group members.

The group was initially an eco-team, working with Surrey County Council on the Global Action Plan programme. The benchmarking exercise showed that the group members were already quite aware of the environmental impacts of their lives and of environmental issues more widely. In addition, several members of the group were already members of other environmental organisations. The group members were already friends and they wanted to take their eco-team work and link it more closely with their church.

6.2.3 The group activities

In January 2006, the CLASL worker met the first individual from the church eco-team through a Surrey County Council link person. At this stage, the worker explained how CLASL may be able to help them achieve their aim of gaining the eco-congregation award, which was the group's first objective.

In February 2006, the worker met the eco-team together, and made a presentation on the CLASL project, including the basic ideas behind sustainable development. The group started to generate ideas for what they wanted to work on, including working with young people, fair trade etc. They also wanted to take their ideas to other churches locally and had interest from other churches to do that. At this stage, the group was also thinking about how to influence the council and other local interests, and had already held a protest about packaging at the local supermarket.

It was made clear to the group, and they fully understood, that the CLASL project had time limits, and the group did not want to become reliant on this external support. They felt able to do this as they were not a completely new group.

The CLASL worker made a presentation to the Church Elders to gain their approval, after which the group could formally start to work with WWF-UK on the project. A letter of agreement was drawn up and signed between the church and WWF-UK to formally set down the terms of the relationship within the CLASL project (see section 5.3.1), which was finally signed at a meeting in September 2006.

At the second meeting of the group, in March 2006, they discussed finances, and who the group members were and should be. Action planning continued, and further meetings were planned for April and May 2006 (which all took place).

At the meeting in May 2006, the group worked with the CLASL worker to agree roles (e.g. main contact and co-ordination, secretary to take notes, someone to look after the finances). These agreements included that the CLASL worker would:

- attend the bi-monthly meetings of the group
- provide support for the proposed youth project (e.g. links to Scouts, Guides etc associated with the church)
- provide training for groups members on facilitation and giving presentations
- provide (or provide access to) technical advice
- provide advice on who could help with the church energy audit.

The group also developed a draft action plan at this meeting, and agreed to formally review progress at regular intervals - in terms of what was working well, what was working less well, what to do differently in future and what lessons were emerging.

In July 2006, the group were taken through a benchmarking exercise developed for the CLASL project to help them assess their current level of knowledge, what were the issues that interested them most, and what they felt they were doing so far.

The results were reviewed and the key issues where the group's ecological footprint was least good (mainly travel and transport) were identified as possible priorities for future action. However, these results on priorities did not accord with what the group actually wanted to do, and so no further action was taken on these.

In the summer of 2006, the group said they were interested in developing an online diary to record their progress, and WWF-UK set up a page for them to do this on the WWF website. However, in practice, this was never actually used.

In September 2006, the action plan was completed, for presentation to the Church Elders. The activities planned and carried out were:

- consulted with about 30 people from the church, did an energy audit of the church and developed an action plan for the church premises
- hosted Church Night presentations, had involvement in the church services (to introduce environmental ideas), discussed issues with Junior Church and ran an Environmental Bible Study course
- at the church, put in place (and emptied weekly) recycling bins, compost bins, water butts, switched to recycled paper, used environmentally friendly cleaning products, put hippo bags in the toilet cisterns and systemisers in the urinals to save water, installed energy saving light bulbs
- ran an Easter Workshop on a green theme in 2006, with about 150 children
- had a column in the parish magazine giving eco-tips (e.g. on household cleaning products, saving energy etc)
- set up an information board in the church, to update the congregation on developments in the church, and to pass on other eco-tips
- assisted with teaching at local schools on environmental issues, often through taking part in an assembly so they were talking to the whole school, staff and parents
- did talks to other churches
- answered constant questions from members of the congregation about activities to reduce environmental damage from lifestyle choices.

The whole church congregation was about 600 people, so there was a large audience for the environmental messages promoted by the group. They also gave talks to three schools, with around 200 children present at each talk, plus staff and parents.

In January 2007, the group reviewed their activities and felt they had too many external responsibilities (e.g. family illness, work commitments) to continue as they were. They decided to take several months off, and think again in the summer.

In June 2007, the CLASL worker arranged a full day of training for the group, from 10am to 3.30pm on a Saturday, run by the CLASL worker and another member of WWF-UK staff. The training was designed to help the group with facilitation skills for outreach and presentations in the community. The aim was to help them work with their audiences in a more participatory way so that the focus in future would be less on them presenting their ideas and more on sharing learning and motivating the audiences they worked with.

Six members of the group attended, and the training day covered:

- designing an event for other audiences (especially focusing on purpose and desired outcomes) and evaluation
- facilitation skills and techniques (e.g. brainstorming, ice breakers and energisers, questioning and listening techniques, recording, nominal group technique i.e. working in pairs or small groups, triads i.e. small groups of three people, round robin i.e. each group offers a point to the whole group in turn, and styles of learning)
- frequently asked questions on climate change, adapted from a WWF Scotland resource, to answer the 'tricky questions' people asked at presentations (this had been a particular request), and activities for use with groups, adapted from the Federation of Community Development Learning's Climate Change Pack.

The feedback on the course was extremely positive in terms of group satisfaction, and the group had used the techniques since. The group has gone on to plan a lot more outreach activities during the remainder of the project. The day also helped get the group working together again after the six month break.

In July 2007, the group held a review meeting to consider the implications of the training and what they wanted to do next. This was a very open, honest and heartfelt meeting, with group members expressing guilt at having not done as much as they had wanted to do, and a great sense of responsibility and loyalty to each other.

The group members used what they had learned on the training day to structure the meeting in a more participatory way and reviewed what they had achieved so far, what motivated them and the skills they had. They had done this at the beginning of the project but it had much more impact at this stage when they had been working together for a while. The group then held meetings every month for a while, to regain their momentum.

In August 2007, one of the group made a presentation about their work at Surrey Community Action's conference to an audience of non-environmental organisations working locally.

In September 2007, the group held an event at the church for 10 - 15 people on organic food, and used pack of information resources put together for them by the CLASL worker from the Soil Association and SPAN (another EAF project focusing on food).

Also in September 2007, the group ran a church service on One Planet Living, for a congregation of about 150 people.

In November 2007, a further review of achievements was undertaken by simple questionnaire to individual group members to update the initial findings from the benchmarking exercise in July 2006. This exercise was designed particularly to assess the extent of personal changes in behaviour as well as views on the way the group was working. This found:

- Group members' view of sustainability was almost entirely around environmental problems and solutions such as recycling, walking instead of driving, composting, reducing water use. Their view of the global implications was around the earth running out of resources and environmental damage.
- Their view of sustainable living was also focused around environmental behaviour, such as eco-living (e.g. not wasting, recycling, composting, reducing waste and re-using), saving energy and water, using locally sourced products especially organic and seasonal food, ethical purchasing, using the library, educating others, "always thinking of the planet as a living organism that needs care just as we do".
- Their current actions were focused around environmental activities such as recycling, composting, growing own fruit and vegetables, educating themselves (and family) about the issues by keeping up to date with current topics, always thinking about impact on natural resources and the environment, and where a product is coming from and going to.
- There was a significant sense of responsibility, with all feeling 'very responsible' for making sure they knew about and took action on sustainability issues. However, they also felt that did not do as much as they wanted to. For example:

"I feel very responsible for leading a life that speaks through my actions".

"As an educator and role model to my children and as an influence among friends and family. I also wish I had more time to show others in the community how it is possible to take responsibility rather than give up in despair."

- Their motivations for being involved tended to be concern about environmental damage, such as:

“[Involved] Because it matters to me that we live in a wasteful throw-away society where resources are being used up, wildlife is dying and landfill sites are filling up”

“I feel passionately that if enough of us shout loudly enough about this then eventually the ‘powers that be’ will realise they are on to a vote winner and start to take action ... I want to make a difference, spread the word about how easy it is to make simple changes and encourage others to learn about the impact of their actions and themselves shout loudly about it. If enough of us seem to care then perhaps the politicians will do something. To be able to look my children / grandchildren in the eye in years to come and say ‘I tried’.”

- Their ambitions for what they want to achieve personally by the end of being involved were, at this stage, about gaining the Eco-Congregation Award (which they achieved later in the year). They also wanted to be living in a way that is more sustainable environmentally, such as being more energy efficient, using local resources, travelling ‘wisely’. And more generally, personal development and outreach activities such as:

“To be credible as a person with up to date knowledge that can educate others about their impact. To know how to influence ‘the powers that be’. To learn as much about the topic as I can and maybe work in some way once the children are at school.”

“To have reached more community groups to spread the word”.

In November 2007, the group’s work was assessed for the Eco-Congregation Award, and they gained the Award in December 2007. The Mayor agreed to present the Award early in 2008. The Award generated a lot of local publicity, with a member of the group doing a 45 minute slot on BBC Southern Counties radio to talk about their work and the Award and to review the papers from an eco-perspective, as well as articles in a range of local newspapers and magazines.

In November and December 2007, the group completed the Ecological Footprint assessment on WWF-UK’s website as individuals, and shared the results among themselves. The aim of the exercise was to get feedback on the Footprint as a tool for use by community groups as much as to help the individuals assess their own Footprint. The results were, in summary:

- although all results were below the UK average of 3 planets, they were not much below (e.g. the lowest was 1.98 planets but several were above 2.5)
- although group members were pleased they were below average, they were disappointed that they were not much better than average, given what they were trying to do: one said “wish I hadn’t bothered now. Doom and gloom”.
- there are some things people resented being penalised for, such as the school run in the car even though there is no public transport and it is too far to walk
- there were other things that people resented were not counted as positive actions, such as growing your own vegetables and recycling
- there was a sense that the questions were too broad and that it was very difficult to make the changes that were required to bring down scores.

Overall, therefore, there was quite a negative reaction to the Footprint, including the phrasing of the questions, the weighting of the indicators, and the skewing of results from some specific actions that were seen as very difficult to change as individuals.

By January 2008, the group had been asked to speak to numerous different groups including:

- to the scouts about eco issues
- to lead an assembly at three local schools
- to talk to the Sustainable Redhill environmental group
- to lead a secondary school's religious studies lesson
- to work with Churches Together to encourage others to go for the Eco-Congregation Award.

Since the Award, the group has agreed to go ahead with a range of actions including:

- the full energy audit of the church (funded by WWF, based on estimates gathered by the group)
- to bring a Church Elder on to the group to consolidate the links with the formal structures of the church
- to join Christian Ecology Link. Greenpeace Direct and for each member of the group to bring information to the group from the other environmental groups they each belonged to
- to campaign for Tetra Pak recycling in the borough (not currently available)
- to speak to not more than one external group each month, so that it did not become too onerous and too demanding on the one or two individuals who were doing the talks.

A further final review and evaluation exercise was undertaken with the group members as a group and individually. Their feedback was that they felt that their achievements had been all the activities outlined above, and also:

- now being seen as a resource to all parts of the church, especially the Junior Church
- influencing all parts of the church, including the minister who ran a 'caring for creation' course for eight months
- the recycling rate went up 100% in the church; nothing was recycled before
- just staying together as a group 'through thick and thin' was seen as a real achievement
- "Seeing a child come up with their own ideas and make a political contribution. They're quite savvy and know what's right and wrong and show knowledge and awareness. We give them an opportunity to bring this out because they're opening up in a pre-learning environment and [they realise they're] not alone in their thinking"

The difficulties the group identified as having experienced were:

- Lack of council recycling facilities, to back up the push for more recycling by the group. Facilities are different in different areas even around the church, especially on Tetra Paks and plastic.
- Lack of action by local business. "I see massive waste outside the businesses near where I work. It's not recycled. This makes you feel like your efforts are wasted."
- People have busy lives and can only do so much - this is one more thing they must do
- Not being able to recruit more people into the group
- Not having enough time to do more, including "not enough time to research options in depth"
- Not having taken enough photographs of all their achievements.
- Sources of support and information changing all the time: "The constant reopening and closing of centres and research. It's not constant and information changes"
- "The barriers at local and national government level make you feel like you're banging your head on a brick wall. We will keep going because of how we feel about this, but others will give up."

- “Negative feeling and indifference in other people is a barrier”
- “[Family] partners who aren’t keen on sustainable options and would rather go for cost rather than sustainability”
- No public transport options, so have to use the car
- “The pace and culture of life today”

The group decided that the main focus for their future work is to reach out to other groups, especially other churches and schools. As one member said “It’s been a natural progression, starting at home, then taking action in the church, and then schools and churches more widely.” The support the group has said they are likely to need in future includes:

- advice on effective lobbying at a local and national level
- getting the information needed to help with lobbying; particularly keeping up to date with information as it changes all the time
- more techniques for getting the message across e.g. campaigning.

Before the end of the project, the CLASL worker was arranging for WWF staff with campaigning and lobbying experience would work with the group to help develop their skills in these areas.

It is clear from this summary that this group has achieved a great deal personally and collectively, developing skills and confidence as well as spreading the message about sustainable living to a wide range of external groups and organisations.

This is a small group of people spending their time voluntarily developing ideas and activities that will contribute to sustainable living, and the achievements of the group are impressive. Equally important is the clear sense that the group is strong and will continue to meet and develop after the CLASL project has finished - although WWF-UK has made a commitment to the group to respond to questions and to continue to provide access to technical advice when needed.

6.3 Stoughton group

6.3.1 The area

This group is based in an area of Guildford with a population of just over 8,000. It is near to the town centre with access to a lot of community facilities and activities. The South East region overall is the least deprived in England on all characteristics except (as with the previous group) access to housing: it is the third most deprived in terms of barriers to housing, largely because house prices here are higher than the UK average. The population is more than 95% white, and there are plenty of community activities and facilities. The rate of democratic engagement is high, based on the 68.5% who voted in the last general election (which is higher than average). Crime is low: Guildford is the 9th safest borough in the country, and Surrey is the safest county.

Guildford is an affluent area, with a lot of commuters working in London, and there are good public transport links throughout the town. However, this neighbourhood is not as affluent as other areas of the town.

6.3.2 The nature of the group

The core group is made up of about eight men and women. The group usually meets monthly. Initially the group met in a meeting room in the local church which rents out facilities to community groups (room paid for by the CLASL project). However, after about six months the group felt that this was a rather formal and impersonal environment and they decided to meet in each others’ houses in future (from February 2007).

The group was brought together through connections with an infant school, and was initially made up of a mix of staff and parents. Again the initial contact was through Surrey County Council who had worked with the school and suggested that the CLASL project could help the school participate in the 'extended school' initiative and thus be of interest to Ofsted. The school was also an eco-school with some light contact with WWF education staff.

6.3.3 The group activities

- In November 2005, the Surrey County Council person brought the CLASL worker together with the school head teacher and some staff to discuss possible joint working. The head teacher sent out a letter to parents, which results in some interested people making contact.

Initially, the CLASL worker met with the people who came forward individually or in pairs, before a preliminary meeting in January 2006. The group members did not know each other at all before the group started, so relationships had to be built as well as activities planned. It proved hard to get the group going initially, with different people coming to sessions: only two people came to the first planned meeting in March 2006.

From the beginning, there were links with the Guildford Borough Council recycling officer, who works with a lot of local groups around recycling issues. She attended a lot of the group meetings and helped with providing access to various recycling events.

- In May 2006, the group met formally for the first time. The CLASL worker made a simple presentation on WWF-UK, the nature of sustainability, the challenge of moving from a 3-planet pattern of consumption in the UK and the CLASL project. As with the previous group, a letter of agreement was signed between WWF-UK and the group, so everyone was clear what was being offered in terms of support.
- At the June 2006 meeting, the group started to map out ideas for an action plan (which included running recycling activities) and decided on a name: SWAP or Stoughton Waste Action Project.

At this session the first benchmarking exercise was also carried out. The benchmarking exercise showed that the group members were already quite aware of the environmental impacts of their lives and of environmental issues more widely, and already involved in environmental activities. In terms of their objectives and motivations, the main emphasis was on influencing and encouraging others to be more sustainable through 'gentle persuasion'.

Personal behaviour change was not the main motivating factor for the group, although they did want to make some personal changes particularly around reducing waste and recycling more, cycling more and using the car less, composting and reducing energy use.

In the Footprint Quiz, the findings were that the group were already doing particularly well on recycling and dealing with waste, and fairly well on travel. They were doing less well on food buying (too much processed food and not enough local / organic food), and on home and energy use / efficiency. Although the quiz was useful in identifying the areas where the group could focus efforts to live more sustainably, these were not the areas they were interested in, so these did not become priorities for action by the group.

The benchmarking exercise was repeated in February 2007, to test whether any improvements had been achieved in personal behaviour towards sustainability. However, some of the group members had changed and when the scores were collated they were no better (and in some cases less positive) than the scores from the earlier benchmarking. As a result, the scores were not used to develop priorities for group action and were not followed up again.

What does emerge from the second benchmarking exercise was more interest and activity around local food production and buying local organic food, which had emerged as an issue in the previous benchmarking. However, this was not a major interest for the group and they did not follow this up in any group activities.

- In October 2006, the group held their first SWAP-It event. The idea was that people brought goods and products that they no longer wanted, and swapped them with others.

The group reviewed this event carefully at their meeting in November 2006. They considered a whole range of issues including press coverage, attendance aimed for and achieved, number of volunteers who turned up on the day to help (or signed up on the day to help in future), number of boxes of goods exchanged (numbers in and out), sense of satisfaction among the group afterwards, extent to which the public audience had generated new hints and tips for recycling (some ideas had been provided by the group on a poster at the event as a starting point), and comments collected.

The review allowed the group to work out what had worked well (e.g. goods exchanged) and what had worked less well (publicity was not very effective and media coverage was low so attendance was not as high as had been hoped).

After this event, the group gained a lot of confidence. Even though the group did not feel the event had been as successful as they had, they had learned a great deal and were keen to do it better next time.

- Early in 2007, the group started to look into setting up a bank account so they were able to manage their own funds more effectively. This also contributed to making the group feel more established and organised.
- In March 2007, the group held their first major book swap. The idea of these events was not only to recycle books, but also to support literacy by providing free books.
- In April 2007, the group started working with another local school, a junior school, following meetings between one group member and the head teacher.

Also at this time, the group started to plan and manage their own meetings, setting dates and drawing up agendas etc, rather than relying solely on the CLASL worker.

- In June 2007, the group held a major water event. This included:
 - a water butt raffle: 100 adults entered and 30 won full water butt kits; a total of 60 water butts were given away during the day.
 - 100 hippos were given away (to put into cisterns to save water)
 - information was handed out, as were recycled pencil cases for children
 - a children's competition to raise awareness of water conservation.
- In the summer of 2007, one of the group was offered a part-time position at the original school to continue to develop the activities the group had been providing on a voluntary basis. This allowed much greater time to be invested in working with the school to reduce waste. For example, between

July and September a waste free lunch box project was developed which included doing a talk about waste reduction and games for children, and Year 2 children designing a waste-free lunch box or drinks container.

- In August 2007, the group went on a trip to a landfill site. From feedback from group members, this visit had a major impact on their understanding of the scale of the problems, and the urgency of finding alternative solutions.

Also in August, the group ran a stall at a local fair run by a residents association. They had a lot of free recycled products to give away, and ran games of sorting objects in to buckets for recycling which were very popular with children so they were occupied while the group talked to their parents about the issues around waste and recycling.

The group met about 100 people during the event, and received a lot of enquiries and took names of more potential volunteers and group members (although none actually joined the group). The residents association were so keen to retain the link that they offered SWAP a page on their website, and the Women's Institute (WI) also wanted to stay in touch and work on future joint events. The local MP also visited the stall and was very interested in what they were saying and doing.

The level of interest and the group's ability to deal with all the enquiries boosted their confidence further. One group member offered to act as a future point of contact for other groups who wanted to set up something similar in their own areas.

- In September 2007 the group ran a stall at a bring and take swap event run by the council recycling officer.
- In October 2007, the group ran a whole school assembly and a book swap event for the junior school which was very successful in terms of numbers of people attending and interest shown.
- In November 2007, partly as a planned exercise linked into the benchmarking and evaluation work for the project but also in response to the needs of the group members to share out responsibilities, the group did a major review of their activities to date. They spent one whole meeting working to identify continuing areas of interest to group members, what they wanted to do and take responsibility for, and put names to tasks and wrote it all up so there was a formal record they could refer to in the coming months. This found that:
 - The group felt their major **achievements** had been:
 - running a lot of successful events at the two schools, as well as going out to other community associations and fairs
 - reaching a lot of people, adults and children, with messages of recycling and reducing waste; they felt that they could get messages across to other people 'like themselves' in ways that government cannot achieve
 - they felt they had developed skills and confidence as individuals through meeting and talking to a lot of people
 - influencing the school governors about the value of their work, to the extent that they have been given access to the school hall without charge - a major achievement
 - the continuing development of work and projects with the two schools

- just managing to stay together as a group - that was seen as an achievement in itself; the group itself was clearly important to the people involved - partly because they felt they were with 'like-minded' people in the group, and partly because it gave them a place to channel their frustrations about environmental issues not being tackled more effectively by others
 - learning - about environmental issues, practical issues involved in running events, and from the visit to the landfill site.
- The **problems** they identified at this stage were that:
 - the first event had not worked as well as had been hoped but that they had learned a lot especially about timing (not holding events in half term week) and about the quantity and timing of advance publicity that was needed - more was needed and it was needed earlier than they had thought
 - they did want more people to join the group, and had found it difficult to recruit more people to become core members; they felt they wanted wider involvement partly so they could achieve more by having more people taking part, partly to get a wider range of activities going by having people with different interests involved, and partly wanting to avoid getting stale; one person had been recruited but was a young mum and was not able to attend meetings regularly; the group recognised that not everyone wants to attend monthly meetings so were thinking about different ways of getting wider involvement
 - The **barriers** the group identified were:
 - lack of time and apathy among others
 - because they were working in an affluent area, it was sometimes hard to get the recycling message across - people did not need to recycle on the basis of cost and did seem locked in to consumerist lifestyles
 - it was always a challenge to find venues for events that were accessible (i.e. the group were allowed to use them) and did not cost much
 - bureaucratic systems around finances (including WWF-UK internal accounting systems, time it took to set up a bank account)
 - The group **valued and wanted the support** from the CLASL project and the borough council recycling officer, and were concerned that the CLASL project was coming to an end. They had particularly valued the support and resources from WWF-UK, partly because of the personal support and also the link to a big 'name' organisation which helped credibility. They felt that their main needs for support in future were:
 - funding, including how to apply for grants
 - IT skills so that they could put information up on websites etc
 - design and printing skills and facilities so they could produce their own publicity and information resources.
 - The group's **plans for the future** revolved around:
 - reaching out further into the community to make links with more people and to spread the word about the group's activities, to influence more schools, pupils and parents, as well as other community groups and local business (e.g. the local supermarket to promote waste reduction).
 - doing something on cycling in the area.

Around this time, one group member had started to feel that leadership had been thrust upon her (because no-one else would take responsibility). She was feeling very strained and pressured - to the extent that she wanted to leave. The CLASL worker was able to draw on her own experience of working in groups, and supporting others who felt they were 'burning out', and provided a lot of personal support which helped get the individual through the sense of mounting pressure. This led to planning a much more in depth review of the group's activities at the January 2008 meeting, so that responsibilities could be shared out more fairly.

- In November and December 2007, the group ran stall at Christmas fairs at both schools, talking to over 500 children, staff and parents.
- Also in November and December, the group completed the Ecological Footprint assessment on WWF-UK's website as individuals, and shared the results among themselves. The aim of the exercise was to get feedback on the Footprint as a tool for use by community groups as much as to help the individuals assess their own Footprint. The results were, in summary:
 - although all results were below the UK average of 3 planets, they were not much below (e.g. 2.61 planets)
 - although group members were pleased they were below average, they were disappointed that they were not much better than average, given what they were trying to do
 - actions for the future that the members of the group said they would do as a result were using the car less
- By the end of 2007, the group was becoming more interested in campaigning as well as continuing with the events. They had been involved in the borough council's 'ban the bag' campaign since October and were increasingly interested in campaigning and lobbying on a range of waste and recycling issues.
- In January 2008, the group undertook a further review of their activities. This built on the review of past activities and achievements and was designed to look forward - to help them re-focus their activities for the next 12 months, partly because the group members had changed over the previous year, partly because they wanted to create some new 'targets' for the coming year - things to work towards, and partly to share out the work.

They revisited their own motivations for being involved, which were, in summary:

- to meet people, make friends locally, share ideas and have fun
- to work with and set up activities within the local community
- to learn about and increase understand of sustainability.

They also added to their list of achievements the following activities which they had not mentioned previously:

- the infant school is growing food within the school grounds
- the school is using recycled plant pots and school composting is going well
- the local supermarket was persuaded to have recycling bins on their premises
- information has been spread through a Google site (set up by group members themselves), and through school newsletters

As a result of this review, the group decided to make some practical changes to the way they ran their meetings. They shared out all the roles involved (including organising meetings, organising events, taking and sending out minutes, leading meetings, etc), so that everyone took on some tasks. They also decided to continue meeting in each others' houses in turn, and occasionally at the pub so those meetings could be more relaxed, informal and sociable. They still wanted to meet monthly, but for no more than 90 minutes, and would focus on updates of what each person had been doing - to support the wider sharing of tasks and responsibilities agreed at the November 2007 meeting.

This group took quite a while to get its action planning and activities started, but has built up significant momentum over the past six months. It has run and contributed to a range of local events that have helped spread very practical messages about sustainable living to a large number of local people - speaking to people 'like themselves' about practical actions that anyone can achieve.

Although this group has expressed less confidence than the church group about their long term survival without support from the CLASL project, their plans for the future (including fund raising) suggests that they will survive and continue the work that is really now getting into its stride.

6.4 Buckland group

6.4.1 The area

This group was based in an affluent village with a population of 4,302 and with a predominantly rural character in Surrey. The village has one shop and is divided by a main road which runs through what was the original village, cutting it in half.

The South East region overall is the least deprived in England on all characteristics except access to housing: it is the third most deprived in terms of barriers to housing, largely because house prices here are higher than the UK average. The population is nearly 99% white, and there is quite a high level of community activities for a rural area. The rate of democratic engagement is high, based on the 71.4% who voted in the last general election (which is higher than average).

6.4.2 The nature of the group

The original core group was never more than four or five people. Two of the members were on the parish council, and 2 already did 'tips' on environmental action in the monthly parish magazine. The village had already been engaged in environmental activities including wildlife walks and village green clean-ups but generally with a social and aesthetic motive rather than an ecological perspective.

The village had undertaken a Parish Plan which had identified environmental issues as a priority for the village. The parish council had worked with Surrey Community Action on the Parish Plan, and it was SCA who made the initial introductions between CLASL and the parish council. The first meetings were between the CLASL worker and the parish clerk, in August 2005. Following this meeting, the CLASL worker made a presentation was made to the full parish council.

6.4.3 The group activities

In November 2005, the CLASL worker made a 10 minute presentation on WWF-UK, the nature of sustainability, the challenge of moving from a 3-planet pattern of consumption in the UK and the CLASL project to the parish council at their regular formal meeting. This led to an enthusiastic discussion for over half hour (much longer than had been expected) and resulted in some interested people coming forward to get involved further.

At first, the parish council was mainly interested in getting help with their composting project as they needed more volunteers to keep it going. There was an initial expectation that the parish council would become the core group. However, that was not possible as it was important that CLASL was not part of formal structures. After some discussion it was agreed that a follow-up meeting would be held with the interested people in the New Year.

In early 2006, the parish council ran an open meeting in partnership with the CLASL worker. Food was provided from the local shop to make it a social as well as formal meeting, and about 20 people attended. The parish council had also invited the borough council to run a stall at the meeting on waste, which confused the participants as they thought it was still connected to waste and composting. The CLASL project also had a stall and generated a lot of interest and questions. Some of the older people said they recycled already and did not generate much waste and that it was important that the younger ones should get involved. However, no clear interests emerged and no-one volunteered.

This open meeting was quite difficult to manage as there was quite a large and diverse audience with different views on what the meeting was for. There was also a demand for WWF to tell them what to do and how local people should be involved, which was not the style and purpose of the CLASL project, which was intended to enable people to identify their own local priorities and work on those.

One of the people from the open meeting came forward and offered to help work with the CLASL worker to move the project on. She suggested another meeting of local 'activists' - local people who were already involved in other projects.

A further meeting of 'activists' was held in March 2006, attended by about 15 people. This was designed and managed by the CLASL worker, who started the discussions in pairs and then worked with the whole group to start to think about what the group may want to do. The small groups generated ideas such as work with young people, wildlife activity, composting, and a review of the wildlife plan for the village (which had been completed in 2003).

However, although good ideas were generated in the small groups, the larger plenary group could not decide on any specific priorities for action. All the people attending were busy already, running other activities, so they felt they had little or no time to come together to plan additional activities through CLASL. However, five people signed up at this meeting to get more involved in the CLASL project.

Another meeting was arranged for April 2006 for these five people, in association with Surrey Community Action who had been invited back into the process by the CLASL worker as they had been the first point of contact with the village and knew the local people and local groups. Unfortunately, there was resistance among the original five people and only three attended the meeting. However, they decided they did want to continue to work on the project.

A further meeting was held in June 2006 to review with the CLASL worker where the group had got to. At this point the group decided that the best way forward was to undertake a questionnaire survey of the whole village to identify ideas and priorities from the local residents, and use that to develop a detailed action plan.

The survey was completed in October 2006, and had responses from 20 families (50 individuals). This was seen locally as a good response, and there were some good ideas and enthusiasm emerging from the survey that would have been practical to pursue. The CLASL worker proposed a meeting to decide how to take these ideas forward. The meeting was held but only two local people attended and could find no common ground or mutual enthusiasms to work on, so nothing was taken forward.

In spite of repeated contacts with the key individuals, there was no real interest in taking any of the ideas forward in the village. A lot of time was put in to maintaining contact, but no project ideas emerged that any individuals or groups wanted to take on. The group had not become cohesive, partly because different people attended at different times, and no new relationships could be developed and no shared interests emerged for them to work together on.

In a follow up conversation in September 2007, the CLASL worker found that nothing had happened formally since the survey was completed, although hippos (to save water) had been distributed.

There was still a high level of activities in the village but they were fragmented; activities included clearing a pond and a campaign against the development of the disused quarry on the edge of the village (which absorbed a lot of local energy and had been a negative and dispiriting experience for those involved). The CLASL worker offered support and resources again, if the village wanted to make progress on any specific activities, but there was no take up.

There was some feedback for this evaluation from the main person who had been involved in the group that local people wanted more of a lead from WWF. They felt that the project was too vague and that they would have been happier if WWF had brought some 'off the peg' ideas that the local community could respond to - such as activities for older and younger people. However, that was never the style or approach that CLASL was trying to work with, and it would not have been appropriate to work in that way as part of the CLASL project.

In the end, therefore, there was a significant investment of CLASL time and effort, but no activities resulted locally in this village. As a result, the CLASL project started to consider links to another, different type of group - and started to make links with a group elsewhere in Surrey working to a different model of engagement.

6.5 Cranleigh group

6.5.1 The group

This group is based in an affluent village in Surrey. It was started and is still led by someone who used to chair the Local Agenda 21 group and is therefore close to the borough council which continued to take an interest in the group. It is a variation of the Global Action Plan model, and works through regular 'workshops' designed and led by the group leader which bring together nine or ten families to consider reducing the environmental damage of their lifestyles. The people involved all knew each other through existing other interests (especially arts and music), so there was already a bond and established relationships.

CLASL was invited in September 2006 specifically to help the group with monitoring and evaluation. As the Buckland village group was struggling to start any sort of activities, it was possible to offer help to this alternative group.

6.5.2 The group activities

The focus of the group's activities is around individual, household, family behaviour, with the aim of reducing environmental damage. The activities of the group have been, in summary:

- October 2005: baseline questionnaire to assess existing activities and behaviour
- April 2006: workshop 1 on climate change, ecological footprint and recycling
- July 2006: workshop 2 on chemicals in the home
- November 2006: first evaluation session
- February 2007: workshop 3 on energy in the home
- August 2007: workshop 4 involving a visit to the Earthship housing development in Brighton
- December 2007: workshop 5 on chemicals and health, and second evaluation session.

During the first evaluation, in November 2006, the focus was on the changes that people were making in their personal behaviour as a result of being involved in the group. The **changes** that people said they were making were mainly about

- reducing the use of harmful chemical household products and making their own cleaning products and cosmetics
- better use of resources and recycling, especially recycling as much as possible (beyond the obvious - such as fabric) and composting, and using fewer plastic bags
- shopping, including fair trade and shopping in the farmers market and avoiding food that had travelled long distances
- improving health, including reduced consumption of meat and drinking more bottled water

- reduced energy use, including research into solar energy, wall insulation, installing a condensing boiler, energy saving light bulbs, energy efficient heating and turning down the thermostat
- trying to reduce transport impacts including car sharing, using the bus and using Eurotunnel.

The **problems** identified at that stage were:

- guilt about flying abroad
- guilt about not doing more
- the difficulties of motivating other family members
- the main motivation being about protecting the future for the children.

The **barriers** to doing more included:

- “friends trying to catch me out and make a joke of this way of living”
- busy lives including “too much to do all the time” and “not enough time”.

The things that **helped** in making more change were:

- the group itself: “a project like this focuses what you’re doing” and “makes you more conscious of a range of issues”, and the safe, non-threatening, rewarding style of the group which supports, provides practical help and does not criticise
- role models of individuals within the group that “make it look so easy”
- certain topics create an “anger energy”.

In the second round of evaluation, the feedback was quite different in style although in content the same issues recurred. There was less guilt and a much more enthusiastic approach. There was also greatly increased awareness of the issues and greater knowledge, understanding and application. The changes in behaviour had clearly stuck, even when the individuals had experienced difficulties. While the topics around which individuals had changed their behaviour were similar to the findings of the previous evaluation, there was a clear difference in the practical actions that had resulted - rather than broad remarks about saving energy and changing cleaning products, this time the feedback was much more specific about actions that people had actually taken, and the improvements to their lives that had resulted. For example:

“Using home-made cleaners and cosmetics has made a real difference. We all really notice the horrible smell of synthetic products when we go to other people’s homes. It’s like being a non-smoker, you really notice the smell.”

“I’m look more at food labels and I’m more aware of the ingredients and what they do”

“We don’t put much out for the recycling bin because we’ve reduced the amount we use in the first place”

“I’ve been growing more vegetables myself - carrots, beans, lettuce, tomatoes. I get lots of satisfaction from this.”

“We’ve fitted a condensing boiler and got the insulation done”

“Sharing magazines among the group has been really important. We share Ethical Consumer and Organic Living.”

There was still a sense of frustration at not being able to motivate other family members but also acceptance that there is only so much that can be done to motivate others. Group members did find that being part of the group supported them and helped maintain their enthusiasm even when it was difficult to persuade others to change.

The conclusion was not that it had become easier but that there was an increased confidence among group members that they were not alone (the other members of the group provided support) and they could actually tackle the problems. There have been opportunities for action learning (learning by doing) and social learning (learning together through the workshops), and also by reflecting together on what they had achieved.

This was a very different model from the other two main CLASL groups, but did show that social learning and action learning could work within a group that was not self-managing but that had taken a much more directive approach with a clear leader who organised and led the meetings. This model requires a knowledgeable local person willing to work voluntarily to set up, motivate and manage a group. The group is not as strong in itself as the other two main CLASL group and it is likely that the group would cease to operate without the leader, so it is not sustainable in the way that the other two CLASL groups are.

However, this approach clearly does work in the short term (as long as the leader remains) to generate interest and provide support for individuals who want to make changes to their lives to make them more sustainable. It is also possible that the group will change and shift over time. The ideas for what the group did next included more collective actions such as the group getting a shared allotment, and ideas for future group sessions, as well as individual actions.

6.6 Lessons from the groups

The assessment that follows is based on interviews with individual group members, a review within the groups (each had a session to consider what had worked and what had not), and a review between the evaluator and the project worker. The findings are summarised below.

6.6.1 Achievements and benefits

- Tangible achievements. The groups have achieved some very tangible improvements in their own individual and group behaviour, and have influenced others:

“The original project was trying to reduce waste in the bins. I couldn’t shut my bin before, but now I only use one bin liner. We’ve come a long way.” (Reigate group member)

“Because they were working specifically towards eco congregation, that was the initial biggy and we have achieved that. The next step will be wider eco lobbying, writing letters and just wider campaigning.” (Reigate group member)

“The two [group] leaders go to schools giving talks. They do a lot of that and that is probably one of the best things. We have a lot of children in our church and these girls are always talking to them. We are raising a great generation.” (Reigate group member)

“We have done several events, all of which have been fairly successful. We went to a local compost day. It was run by the council but we had representation there and got a lot of interest. We’ve also had representation at a local farmers market ... we got quite a lot of interest there too. We have been in the local press too ... I think we have done well bearing in mind that we are all busy people with limited time. People have heard of us locally, which has to be a good sign.” (Stoughton group member)

“We probably have raised awareness of sustainability issues to some extent, certainly within the school community.” (Stoughton group member)

“We have networked in with local government and they have given us packs to work with. We have also had a very supportive vicar and a large congregation of 600, so we have reached a lot of people.” (Reigate group member)

“The fuel energy saving work with the church – it was very effective.” (Reigate group member)

“It’s done so much already. Having signs everywhere on the church, on light switches, is great – it makes people very aware.” (Reigate group member)

“[The group’s main achievements have been] Probably leading a service to try and turn around perceptions of what an eco warrior is, and that it’s a personal thing, for example with carbon footprints. The best thing has been gaining support from the congregation. Also the odd kid in school has so much knowledge on these issues, and we really need to tap into that.” (Reigate group member)

“[Main achievements have been] Changing people’s attitudes in the congregation. I never thought it could be done. We haven’t convinced everyone, but a few people have made a few changes.” (Reigate group member)

“[Main achievements have been] The green Easter workshops with 150 kids, mostly from outside the church, for four days. Also the minister became quite green and included green messages left right and centre.” (Reigate group member)

“We have put on successful events and that it has been a really positive thing at school. Also bringing the two schools together was really good ... Originally it was set out that the group would focus on children and I think we have done that and given them ideas and inspiration.” (Stoughton group member)

“In terms of specific activities the book swaps were very successful. And we have managed to engage the staff in these issues, for example they do assemblies on the issues now.” (Stoughton group member)

“We’ve achieved what we set out to do – to try and reach out. We didn’t have one particular area; it was things like water conservation and free seeds. We have not been so successful with the free seeds, but we have succeeded in giving away 40 water butts.” (Stoughton group member)

“We have done a couple of book swaps and the expressions on the parents and children’s faces showed how good it was. Not so much with the junk swaps – I think it is hard for people to get their heads round no money being involved.” (Stoughton group member)

The Cranleigh group members had also achieved a lot, but their descriptions of their achievements were much more focused on individual changes, rather than group or wider achievements. For example:

“Probably [most proud of] re-using and recycling things. I positively like doing this.” (Cranleigh group member)

“Making our homemade cleaning products and cosmetics. I was really surprised how easy and cheap it is.” (Cranleigh group member)

“[most proud of] making our own cleaning products; energy in the home - we changed tariffs, lagged the loft, got a combi-boiler and insulated the walls. Insulating the walls made a huge difference. We replaced all the lights with low voltage lights.” (Cranleigh group member)

"I ... feed the birds in my garden ... I've started a veggie patch in the garden ... I have a timer for the washing machine so it goes on at night. I brush my teeth with the tap off and switch lights off etc"
(Cranleigh group member)

These are not insignificant changes by individuals in the Cranleigh group, and most of those in the other two main CLASL groups do these things too; the issue here is that the other groups also think as a group (e.g. talking about "we" rather than "I") and seem to have wider interests and greater ambitions for spreading the message.

- **Development of confidence and skills among group members, especially speaking to other groups.** Individuals within the Reigate and Stoughton groups developed significant skills, particularly in speaking to others; this was not just a personal achievement but was seen as an important asset to the group and what they could achieve in future. Comments from group members included:

"Never thought I'd have the confidence to stand on stage and talk to people, but because I was passionate, some power inside came out! I felt it was wrong not to stand up and say anything."
(Reigate group member)

"[My main role in the group has been] Bringing on common awareness of sustainability issues in the community. I've done presentations and talks ... I stood up in front of a large congregation and talked about recycling and energy saving. I've never done that kind of thing before. I had also never done young people's work before either. It ended up being a big group of about 20 rather than the five or six I was expecting. I organised a four week activity programme for them." (Reigate group member)

"Giving talks on eco things. I was surprised I had enough to say – I have obviously learnt a lot."
(Reigate group member)

"[Learnt] How to work with small group. I would have blasted them with facts before!" (Reigate group member)

"There is still so much we can do. We all feel that. I feel that it's a bit like gaining confidence – it started at an individual level and now we have taken it wider to the congregation – there is a natural progression of confidence and knowledge. ." (Reigate group member)

"[Have been surprised by] Taking a year 10 lesson. I've done it three times now and was petrified the first time as it's not something I had done before." (Reigate group member)

"The big thing for me is being able to stand up and talk in front of other people – by the end I could stand up in front of a whole congregation of 300 people. I have a lot clearer understanding of climate change and also of working with groups, for example going into schools and getting the information I need from other people." (Reigate group member)

"Just doing it - learn so much from action and over-coming fears!" (Reigate group member)

"[Was surprised what I could do in terms of] Organising events, and having contact with a lot of different people. I have two young children and you tend to lose confidence with that sort of thing so it's been great to start doing it again." (Stoughton group member)

“[At] A local fete, talking to people face to face. I don’t normally do that kind of thing, but I just got on and did it.” (Stoughton group member)

“I am surprised I’m involved in the group to start with. I’m also surprised that within the events we’ve done I’ve had to approach people and talk to them – I’m not normally that kind of person.” (Stoughton group member)

This confidence-building happened less in the Cranleigh group, as all the communication tended to be done by the group leader. As one said:

“Not sure how ready the group is to stand up publicly as a group and push for something. It would be good if some of the others, other than [the leader], could get up and say something in public. [The leader] has the confidence. Lots of people are put off [speaking in public] because they feel they don’t have the knowledge, but this can be better, ‘I’m not perfect either’. It could be a role for [the leader] to build the skills of the group so it doesn’t rely on one person.” (Cranleigh group member)

- **Increased aspirations among group members, particularly wanting to do more campaigning.**

The group members moved very quickly from thinking about their own, and the group’s, changes in living more sustainably, to thinking about influencing others through spreading the message including through campaigning. Comments from group members included:

“I want to do more campaigning work but there is talk of taking this to another church and continuing the same kind of work there. If a decision is made not to continue with more campaigning work then I’m not sure I will continue being involved ... I would like to campaign with local government and make them aware of the issues like safety. People need accessible, easy to use, safe facilities, or they won’t use them.” (Reigate group member)

“[Next, the group should be] spreading the word elsewhere. We have done what we can with our congregation and want to spread the word elsewhere.” (Reigate group member)

“We finally got the eco congregation award and Niamh came on board when we were at the point of trying to achieve that. Now we still feel that the church could be a lot greener than it is but the next stage is going out wider and giving talks further a field. I enjoy doing that kind of thing so I suppose my role might change to help facilitate other groups.” (Reigate group member)

“[Next steps should be] Moving out to other groups and trying to help them progress. Wider campaigning really.” (Reigate group member)

“[Next steps should be] Start lobbying more nationally. It would be great if we could really understand what the priorities of climate change are, and home in on what will really make a difference.” (Reigate group member)

“I would have liked to reach out more beyond the school. It’s an infant school and we have gone to the junior school, but I’d like to go beyond that ... I think it would be very beneficial for it to go out to the wider community ... I would like to meet with various different groups of people or areas of the community and be the liaison person.” (Stoughton group member)

“I would like us to do something a bit bigger and not just related to the schools. We have done a lot of swapping and giving away events. It's a good place to start, but I am really keen to something to do with cycling to school or walking to school.” (Stoughton group member)

“I would like to see it grow though – it would be great if everyone had one of these groups that they knew about in their area – it should be taken wider.” (Stoughton group member)

- **Recognising the importance of taking small steps in moving towards sustainable living.** The groups clearly articulated the close links between the small steps they could make personally with seeing the major contribution it could make if everyone just did a little. Comments from group members included:

“[The group's main achievements have been] making people aware of the little things they can do.” (Reigate group member)

“Every little bit matters.” (Reigate group member)

“We tried to take on a lot but we kept telling ourselves it was OK to fail and not achieve everything at once. It was a very helpful attitude. We were a group of women – I'm not sure that attitude would have been there with a mixed group or a group of men.” (Reigate group member)

“Trying to do something is better than not trying at all.” (Reigate group member)

“[In terms of my personal learning ...] One thing Niamh said at the training day. There is so much you can do, it can get a bit overwhelming wanting to get it right all the time, and it's impossible to keep up with it. But as long as we're doing something that makes people feel better that's fine.” (Reigate group member)

“Learned that you have to start somewhere, do something that makes you feel good or what feels right, this keeps you going.” (Reigate group member)

“On the one hand you do feel it is just a pinprick. But if there are thousands or millions of pinpricks then you get a much wider effect.” (Stoughton group member)

“I don't think that people on the outside think it's terribly important, but any small changes you make are important overall.” (Stoughton group member)

“I know there is more we can do. We're decorating at the moment and I know we should be using eco-friendly paints, but the cost is too much. You need to have a balance all the time of what you can do. It's a creeping thing, people making little steps. 10 or 20 years down the line and we'll be further ahead ... Everyone has to do their bit - the sum of the parts is greater than the whole. It would be wrong not to try.” (Cranleigh group member)

- **Benefits of working as a group.** The two main CLASL groups felt strongly that there were real benefits in working as a group, rather than just as individuals. This was partly due to strength in numbers but also the mutual support and sense that they are working together on something they all want to do.

“[Our group] is vitally important because of the collective voice we provide. Six people's voices are much stronger than one.” (Reigate group member)

“The group is inspiring and this helps with learning.” (Reigate group member)

“The group provides a climate of safety to not do things you said you would and to fail, but be forgiven and try again. This is very enabling and provides a sense of security” (Reigate group member)

“Locally [the importance of the work of the group] has been good. If the group starts lobbying there will be more national influence. [WWF] has been brilliant with giving us contacts to help widen out the level of contact.” (Reigate group member)

“[The group's main achievement has been] making people aware, even the oldies like myself. It brings it back home to people.” (Reigate group member)

“[Very much satisfied with what the group has achieved] Everyone has been marvellous and we have done a lot ... I think it will spread to other churches. Yes, we've done a good job so far.” (Reigate group member)

“It's nice to help people do things that are achievable.” (Reigate group member)

“We didn't think it would be easy.” (Reigate group member)

“[Main achievement has been] Definitely sticking together. We're all mums so it's a big deal to find the time to do this. And the eco congregation award – that was one of our main aims. But also to have people from church coming up to ask questions all the time – I hardly get the chance to chat to people about anything else any more! But it's great; it is very much out there in the consciousness ... I think we've done some really good work. We set out an action plan in 2005 and we have achieved most of it. [Also] I think the way we support one another really well. There was a time when there were several health issues with us or members of our families, as well as a couple of moves. I took the decision to stop the group for six months. Everyone was very supportive over the decision, but also keen to get going again.” (Reigate group member)

“We are a fluid group and we tend to do whatever we like.” (Reigate group member)

“[The work of the group] I think it is absolutely vital. I firmly believe that the more people hear about what's going on (for example the eco tips in the magazine) from all different sources, it makes people realise that it really is an issue. If more people listen then the politicians will start to listen.” (Reigate group member)

“I think we are quite a knowledgeable group. The contact with the schools has been hugely important as we found it difficult to get other groups involved – we approached churches and youth groups. But yes, we have a wide range of knowledge in the group.” (Stoughton group member)

“I think [the work of our group] is very important. I am encouraged by how interested people are when you talk to them and also by the amount of knowledge I take for granted that other people don't know. These kinds of groups are a good way to get that knowledge across and to show people how to do things like composting. I think people don't like to be patronised and sometimes the information coming from local or central government can be taken the wrong way.” (Stoughton group member)

The benefits of working as a group were not as important to the Cranleigh group, as the sustainability of the group itself was not their main priority and the focus was on individual changes. However, there was still some positive feedback about the benefits of group working, including:

“It's obvious that the group shares ideas etc ... Quite a few of the group knew each other before, so there weren't the same problems with bonding etc. Not sure [about achievements] in terms of functioning as a group, but individually, they're nice people. I've spoken to [one person] and found her very helpful, but I knew her through the local shop.” (Cranleigh group member)

"[The best thing about the group is] Getting together and talking about it, I didn't think I'd enjoy it as much as I did. Getting to see the Earthship was something that I wouldn't normally have done. The outings were good ... The worst thing is probably the lack of enthusiasm. The group has petered out a little, I'm not sure what could be done ... At the moment, I don't think it'll move on to bigger stuff. The allotment might happen, but I don't know how many people will be interested in this. I'm not sure what we could get together to do." (Cranleigh group member)

"If we worked more as a group, this would work really well, we could swap things, people could help me with the garden in return for some vegetables. The group could do this, but it would need to be a bigger group. It is too onerous at the moment. If we could increase the group to be more supportive and look at what each other needed help with, that would be good ... The will is there, if it was a larger group, it would have more impetus and would carry itself. As a small group, people can't be involved all the time ... We could make more of having the group. It's important, but we haven't made the most of it, because of time ... [The best thing about the group is that it has] Created interest, starting to get people focused on what we're doing already and what more we can do ... I think the activities could move up, but it would take more than [the leader] to take it forward, We could have a committee and allocate everyone one thing per year to achieve. For one person doing everything, this is too much ... [Groups] are one of the most important and effective ways of making people more accountable and aware about everyday actions. Changes from far off are not manageable. [Groups] are probably the only way of doing this." (Cranleigh group member)

"I think it's great that WWF and Defra are looking at small groups. It's the most effective way, because they keep it local. Having the focus and weight of authority from WWF and Defra is fantastic, to draw on the knowledge and act on it locally. It's a more realistic way of doing things. People need expertise to take things forward, need to find out how to do things. There is willingness, but there are barriers of money and time. Need to breakdown the barriers for people." (Cranleigh group member)

"Quite a few people are now trying different things. I can now ask advice of others in the group, and ask them how it's gone (when they've tried things out). I'm acquiring knowledge ... generally, the group are acting as an example to other people around you ... I think that the activities will change to meet people's needs. Once they've achieved what they want to achieve, the group can then move on. We could do with getting more people involved." (Cranleigh group member)

However, the Cranleigh group members were also very appreciative of the work the group leader does to motivate and support environmentally sound activities. As one said:

"It's an ongoing lifestyle change versus a targeted campaign. How many [group leaders] are there out there? How long will [our group leader] be able to do this for? How can [the leader] be supported to move the group into a different way of being? There is something about a champion that does like to be in charge ... [but] I admire anyone who stands up and has a go and exposes themselves in front of other people to create change." (Cranleigh group member)

- **Personal benefits gained.** The personal benefits to group members have tended to be social (especially meeting new people), but also learning (including from each other). Comments from group members included:

"I have met three new people out of it that I will stay in contact with." (Reigate group member)

"I have learnt about different types of fuel, environmentally friendly energy sources and specific types of boiler and energy saving devices for radiators. More about the technical and scientific side really. I can talk about it and articulate it better now." (Reigate group member)

“I have learnt so much. I also feel accountable to the group for my actions. It has changed the way we live: we crashed the second car and we didn’t replace it, so we’ve had nearly a year without a second car. Also I think about my carbon footprint much more.” (Reigate group member)

“[Have learnt new things, met new people etc] It has also changed my career aspirations from funding third world to conservation.” (Reigate group member)

“We’re able to admit stuff, like I need a break, never been able to do this before.” (Reigate group member)

“I have met lot of new people and learnt more about different areas of sustainability, but I haven’t changed the pattern of my lifestyle much. I have been encouraged by people’s response to us too – it’s been largely positive.” (Stoughton group member)

“The main benefits are definitely that I have met a lot of new people. The school have given me a job for 10 hours a week doing eco type things. It is separate from the voluntary work the group does but they are interlinked. It has made a difference to my personal life – it’s made me look into areas, research more, and practical things like computer skills.” (Stoughton group member)

“I have definitely learnt a lot. Specifically I think I’ve learnt a lot about waste and how vast a problem it is. We had a trip to the landfill and just seeing that kind of thing and the figures involved, and how it doesn’t decompose – I find that I’ve learnt a lot about that which I didn’t think about before. And now I’m interested in food waste as a result as well.” (Stoughton group member)

“The social aspect has been good – it’s nice to hook up with other members of the community. It’s also nice to see how the children have reacted – they have been very enthusiastic. It’s been nice to hone my writing skills.” (Stoughton group member)

“It hasn’t necessarily made huge changes to my life at the moment, but I have learnt quite a lot ... Visiting the landfill site made a big impact. Although you drive past it and know it’s there, the scale of it when you get up there is quite horrific. Also books and leaflets I’ve read, although I don’t always remember it all, have been useful.” (Stoughton group member)

Several group members commented particularly on the learning they felt they had achieved which built on their existing knowledge, and that has also helped their confidence which has in turn made them feel more able to talk to others about living more sustainably:

“I have always been terribly aware of world shortages. At the age of nine I was terribly worried about shortage of water and coal; then I went through the war, so I have always been aware.” (Reigate group member)

“It is something I have always had awareness and knowledge of, and it’s nice to be able to take it out to other people.” (Reigate group member)

“I have always cared and not wasted. I had great pleasure in realising there was a group doing this though.” (Reigate group member)

“Can explain to family why things are cheap, for example, explaining to my daughter why clothes are cheap and why that might not necessarily be a good thing because of child labour etc. Wouldn’t have done this before.” (Reigate group member)

“View has been strengthened, feel more strongly. Feel that we shouldn’t just buy new stuff because we can, it’s OK not to get involved in a consumerist lifestyle.” (Reigate group member)

"It has made me more aware about purchasing - I have the questions in my mind ... It has saved me money and it improves your lifestyle, I'm not so materially led ... I've got lots of information, not sure about skills ... Most people in the group I knew vaguely from living in the village, but I'd never spent time with them before." (Cranleigh group member)

- **Support from WWF.** The evaluation needed to test the value of the support that the CLASL project had provided, including what had been most valuable to the work of the groups. It is clear from their feedback that the group members particularly valued the personal support they have been given by the CLASL worker very highly indeed - both in the style of the support and in the effectiveness with which the support was delivered.

"[The CLASL worker] has been really supportive, encouraging and positive. It has played a big part. Having experienced, scientific, and professional advice has been vital." (Reigate group member)

"Without WWF, our understanding of exactly what is going on with climate change [would not have happened]". (Reigate group member)

"We like having input from WWF. It is impartial and a voice outside the group dynamics. I hope it continues." (Reigate group member)

"We really appreciate [the CLASL worker's] support and want her to continue with it because it matters, we are grateful for it and it makes a difference." (Reigate group member)

"WWF should carry on what they are doing, and should also try to do more with government, but I think they are a wonderful organisation and have come a long way from the days of just being the panda logo." (Reigate group member)

"The training day was great and we got a lot of resources from that." (Reigate group member)

"[The CLASL worker] has been an excellent person. She sees what we are trying to do and channels it in the right direction. She also gives us contacts and resources ... To talk to a school you need facts and resources so that would not have been so easy. Also [the] eco tips in the parish magazine would not have been as easy. Just having someone there for support makes a real difference." (Reigate group member)

"There was loads of information that we were given. That training day was great as it put a lot of the pieces together and took me over the threshold of understanding. There is so much more about these issues in the papers now and you don't feel like you're fighting a losing battle so much." (Reigate group member)

"A massive thank you to [the CLASL worker] - she has been a star and we couldn't have done it without her." (Reigate group member)

"[The CLASL worker] has been excellent and we had an excellent training day ... that day that we had was very good - it gave us an idea of how to handle groups." (Reigate group member)

"[WWF has played] A huge part really. We were aiming for eco congregation but didn't really have any information. Information was the main thing, for example for our talk on organic food. And encouragement. Not to mention cash. [The CLASL worker] just gave us £1000 to fix energy saving devices right and left. Also the wonderful training days on how to work with small groups." (Reigate group member)

“[Without WWF] I don’t think other groups would want to hear from us as much as they do, as we wouldn’t be as effective. The energy saving devices wouldn’t have been fitted. They’ve given us information and confidence. We would have been floundering really. Also getting us to look at our own individual roles in the group was good.” (Reigate group member)

“I think as we reach out to other groups we might find they will need the kind of help we have had. We could do with more of the same in terms of communications help and information, but not necessarily more money.” (Reigate group member)

“I think [the CLASL worker] has helped in so many ways. If she didn’t know the answers she would know someone who did. She is very positive and shares the passion for the issues with us. It has been great to have someone external and non-judgemental for support. She has also helped us to maintain the impetus to keep going. It made us feel good to have someone from WWF involved – I think it helped us to feel valued and valid.” (Reigate group member)

“They have been fantastic – [the CLASL worker has] been fantastic. They’re always there to get information and resources from and always get back to you on the same day. I also spoke to [her] about the last meeting that didn’t go so well. Speaking to her about that and about her own experience was brilliant ... [Would not have done lot of it without WWF] because of the support and resources. I suppose also the motivation and inspiration that it’s given us. And having a big name like WWF behind you is very useful from the outside – it gives credibility ... Personally just having someone at the end of the phone or email and having that professional back up is great. I will be sad when it finishes.” (Stoughton group member)

“Without them we wouldn’t have achieved anything. They have provided a budget, a representative, literature and information, as well as knowledge and experience of what works and what doesn’t.” (Stoughton group member)

“[Without WWF, I think we probably would have taken a lot longer to come up with ideas. [The CLASL worker] gave us real direction when we needed it.” (Stoughton group member)

“[The CLASL worker] is the most valuable aspect by a long way. She has come to all the meetings, is ever enthusiastic and always has ideas. She has also helped with the layouts for leaflets, resources and give-aways.” (Stoughton group member)

“Because we’ve had [the CLASL worker] from WWF and a recycling person from Guildford Council we’ve had a lot of support to guide us ... having support like that has been brilliant ... people we could call upon and their resources ... We wouldn’t be a group if WWF hadn’t been involved.” (Stoughton group member)

- **Identifying lessons for others.** The feedback from the CLASL groups in terms of lessons for the future of this sort of work were very clear: to have clear aims and objectives and stay focused on those; not to focus on just one issue as not everyone will be interested in that; to start small, as that will give some early success and thus boost confidence; and to take advice. There was also a comment again here about how important it is to provide support in the longer term. Comments from group members included:

“Stay focused on what you are doing. Have objectives but keep them simple. Take it step by step.” (Reigate group member)

“Have clear aims and have people identified as responsible for those areas – it breaks up things into manageable chunks. Also have realistic aims that are achievable.” (Reigate group member)

“Groundswell coming up from below is what’s going to change things, momentum from the ground up, gradually.” (Reigate group member)

“Try not to concentrate too much on composting, on one thing in detail. Not everyone is interested in it.” (Reigate group member)

“I would say definitely focus on small events and try to pick something linked in some way to your community or group, such as a church or school group. That way you can have easy successes and keep building on that. At the beginning there’s so much you can do – find a niche.” (Stoughton group member)

“The most important thing is to listen to the local council and to WWF [or equivalent] – they have a wealth or knowledge and experience.” (Stoughton group member)

“I think it is a very good thing, a good project. It would be useful to do again in the future. But I am worried that a lot of these things have been set up in the last few years, and when WWF and Defra withdraw I think some will fall by the wayside. Without that direct support and funding I think it will be difficult.” (Stoughton group member)

“Try to engage as many already-established community groups as possible early on.” (Stoughton group member)

6.6.2 Problems and barriers

- **Action needed beyond the group.** Although the groups were very aware of the importance of what they often saw as the small scale actions that they could achieve directly, they also felt strongly that there was a need for actions by others before any significant change could be achieved. The role of government was seen as particularly important here - but there were also some complaints about the lack of support even from other family members. Although not a barrier to the work of the groups, it was seen as a barrier to the greater change they felt was needed to achieve sustainable lifestyles. Comments from group members included:

“I want more action from government so that businesses do more and so that individual people can do more without being taxed for it.” (Reigate group member)

“For the government – in general you are not doing nearly enough. Take more action, give more support, just do more.” (Reigate group member)

“Groups like ours need more of a voice to talk to supermarkets and people like Tesco’s who dominate the world market. We need more power to talk and influence. It needs to go back to grass roots with these groups having more of a voice.” (Reigate group member)

“I wanted to get a hybrid car but my husband didn’t want to. Also I would like to have had solar panels fitted on the roof but the payback period would have been 10 years.” (Reigate group member)

“The role of government is to take over when market failure occurs. Things like electricity generation, transport and power are clearly areas of market failure in terms of a lack of green provision, so it is their role to provide incentives.” (Reigate group member)

“I think the Government has got to sit up and listen. They have got to take firm stances on so many areas such as banning plastic bags. They have got to take a firmer stance and be a stronger leader.” (Reigate group member)

“[The work of the group is] Completely irrelevant I would think – a drop in the ocean compared to what needs to be done.” (Reigate group member)

“The challenge is so big, it’s such a huge issue for a small group to tackle anyway.” (Stoughton group member)

“To the Government I would say maybe they should think about using groups like ours across the country to work with the local communities to make a difference. It’s not working top down so why not support us bottom up? Also the Government need to look seriously at business. Even if every household does their bit you still have huge businesses.” (Stoughton group member)

- **Bureaucracy and admin.** Community groups tend to want to focus on action and find that any bureaucracy is a barrier. Comments from group members included:

“[The worst thing about the group has been] getting very bogged down in the detail and following a very wordy, detailed, grindingly dull eco-congregation process.” (Reigate group member)

“Like anything you can get a bit caught up in the paperwork and tend to go through agendas. I’m glad [someone else] has chaired and dealt with that side of things as it’s not really my kind of thing.” (Reigate group member)

- **Not enough time to do more.** The group members did feel they were achieving a lot, but also felt that they would have liked to do more if only they had more time. All groups felt that it was very difficult to live a sustainable life with the pressures of modern living.

“One thing about it is that when you work and have a family you don’t have time for all of this. So it is very frustrating to see the government doing so little when you feel you have so much on your shoulders.” (Reigate group member)

“I would have liked to give more time to it. I was initially doing a lot of supply teaching and couldn’t give as much time to this as I wanted ... [but] everyone [in the group] was open and put everything on the table and we agreed to all do what we could.” (Reigate group member)

“I don’t want to fill my evenings with meetings, so I would do [more] with caution.” (Reigate group member)

“I wish I could have done more work for the group but time and other commitments make it difficult.” (Reigate group member)

“It would have been nice to have more enthusiasm and more members. I would have liked to so more as well.” (Reigate group member)

“Everything takes more time and energy. I’m living as I want to, and I’m not in full-time employment, but I can understand how people who have full time jobs would find it hard to live sustainably because of the time it takes.” (Cranleigh group member)

- **Wanted more people to get involved.** All the groups were keen to get more members into the core group, and also to get more people involved in other ways. Some saw this as a real barrier to achieving more but others seemed to feel that more members would be useful but not essential. Comments from group members included:

“Maybe get in touch with other churches to widen the group out a bit. I could help with that but I want to do it softly-softly rather than going in blazing.” (Reigate group member)

“We could also do with more members.” (Reigate group member)

“It would be nice to attract more people as there is a lot we would like to do.” (Reigate group member)

“It would have been great to attract more people.” (Reigate group member)

“[In future would like to do] Different activities maybe rather than bigger ones. Time is a real factor, but I don’t know, maybe if we get more people involved we could do more.” (Reigate group member)

“The one thing I am really disappointed about is that we have no more people than we started with in the group. A couple have left and a couple have joined but overall we have the same numbers. We need people to know about the group and what we do. A lot of people are interested until they find out they have to come to a monthly meeting. There are a few people in the group who are incredibly enthusiastic, but there are already two or three who I can see in the future might not continue coming along.” (Stoughton group member)

“I think we need to recruit some more interested people. If we don’t it could be a problem and could go stale ... I think we need to diversify and get some younger people involved and a wider range of interests.” (Stoughton group member)

“We haven’t been very successful in attracting new members ... We seem to have an inability to attract new members and trouble keeping those members we do have motivated.” (Stoughton group member)

“I think on this particular project two years is probably enough for the group of people we’ve got. If you can’t attract new people it will get a bit stale and it probably means we’re doing something wrong.” (Stoughton group member)

- **Concerns for the future of the group.** One group in particular was concerned for the future of their group without support, especially from the CLASL project. In practice, the core team of the project feels confident that the group has the strength to continue in the long term, but the comments below show that the group members themselves have some concerns about their survival:

“If it continues then there is always the need for financial support; otherwise it would become a fund raising organisation rather than having time for other stuff.” (Stoughton group member)

“To Defra I [would say]: it’s all very well giving money and saying get on with it, but if it stops at that, where’s the value? Groups like this will probably fold fairly quickly without outside impetus. I have nothing but good things to say about WWF’s involvement – it would be nice if they could continue their support.” (Stoughton group member)

“[Always problems] Finding places to meet that don’t cost money. People’s houses aren’t always convenient. Also finding venues for events. I can’t think of anything else.” (Stoughton group member)

“WWF are supposed to pull out in March so that makes me think ‘oh dear, we’ll be on our own’. But they’re always there so we could pickup the phone and ask for advice. Also, I believe Niamh has permission to stay involved at a lower level, so she won’t come to all the meetings but she will still be able to give us some support.” (Stoughton group member)

“If people want to form groups like this then I think support would be great because it’s quite hard to self-fund. We thought when Defra’s support runs out what could we do to self-fund? There are always things you need to buy and fund such as meeting places.” (Stoughton group member)

6.7 Overall conclusions on the CLASL local groups

From the assessment above, especially feedback from the group members themselves, it is clear that the work of the local groups in the CLASL project has achieved a great deal both in individual and group behaviour changes that have reduced their individual and collective negative environmental impacts, and also in reaching out to hundreds of others to spread messages about sustainable living - both in terms of how important it is but also how achievable and rewarding making such lifestyle changes can be.

Since their involvement in the CLASL project, the groups have developed significant confidence and skills, particularly in speaking in public and in simply talking to strangers about sustainability. They have also increased their aspirations for what they feel they can and want to do next, with very practical and ambitious plans for reaching out still further to others in the community. They recognise that they are only making small steps towards global sustainability but value those steps as an important contribution, although they do feel strongly that further action is needed from others - particularly government - to enable real change to happen.

They have found significant benefits in working as a group, particularly the Reigate and Stoughton groups, and the Cranleigh group has also benefited by sharing information and providing mutual support. However, there has been less focus in Cranleigh in ensuring that the group itself is developed, and that group relies much more on a single 'leader' than the other two groups. There is therefore some danger that the Cranleigh group would fold if the leader left, whereas the other two groups do not rely on any single individual and are therefore more likely to survive if the membership of the groups changes.

The individuals involved in the groups have gained personal benefits, in addition to the development of confidence and skills. Their feedback is that they have particularly valued learning (especially building on what they knew already) and also meeting new people locally.

The support from WWF has been crucial to the development of the groups, and the feedback from the group members has been completely positive about both the style and effectiveness of the support they have had from the CLASL worker. It is clear that the groups would not have achieved anything close to their actual level of success without this support. The money provided was far less important than the personal support from the worker, and there are some concerns in one group in particular that they will struggle without that support in future (although WWF-UK has agreed to continue to provide less intensive support after the end of the project).

The main problems the groups identified were far less strongly articulated than the achievements and benefits. The main issue for them was that they could only achieve so much as a small local group, and that the problems they were addressing needed much wider action, particularly by government. Group members did not like bureaucracy and preferred simply to get on with the action, and did struggle both with not having enough time to do everything they wanted to and also with wanting to get more people involved to share out the work - but also to spread influence.

The people interviewed for the evaluation were asked directly to suggest their own lessons for others working in similar ways. They suggested that the key lessons were to have clear aims and objectives and stay focused on those; not to focus on just one issue as not everyone will be interested in that; to start small, as that will give some early success and thus boost confidence; and to take advice. There were also comments about how important it is to provide support in the longer term.

Overall, this is a very positive picture of the achievements of the groups, and their sense of satisfaction and enthusiasm for continuing to work on these issues into the future.



7

Assessment of activities against objectives

- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Assessment against objectives
- 7.3 Assessment against anticipated outcomes
- 7.4 Conclusions on achievement of objectives

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of the CLASL project has been to develop an innovative methodology that encourages and enables local communities to define and work towards new patterns of sustainable living. The initial research for the project identified four main assumptions about community work on sustainability that underpinned the work:

- Individual and collective attitude and behaviour changes are necessary to make progress towards sustainable living;
- Mutual reinforcement and social learning related to sustainable behaviours, and criticism of unsustainable behaviours, is strongest through close social relationships;
- Helping local communities to work collectively at local level will encourage 'good / sustainable' behaviours, and reduce 'bad / unsustainable' behaviours;
- What a sustainable lifestyle is can be determined through dialogue between communities and external technical specialists.

These assumptions formed the basis for the development of the following detailed objectives for the project, which were agreed through discussion in June 2005:

- Develop an innovative methodology for defining and working towards sustainable living at a neighbourhood level in England;
- Build the knowledge, capacity, capability, commitment, ownership and responsibility among participants (both residents and those working in local institutions) to increase sustainable living;
- Embed the learning within the project community (the core group, steering group, community groups and national advisory group);
- Influence (and explore the need for) relevant governance structures to ensure that barriers to sustainable living are tackled (including unsustainable behaviour by others which negatively affects the pilot neighbourhoods), and that appropriate continuing support is developed long term.

The initial project planning discussions also identified a series of potential outcomes, which were as follows:

- Improved ecological footprint from the three communities, the core team, the Steering Group and the National Advisory Group.
- People in the 3 communities and at all levels in the project:
 - understand more about what living unsustainably means, for them and the planet
 - have changed their behaviour to live more 'sustainably'
 - understand more about how their personal behaviour links to wider policy, regulatory and legislative frameworks
 - have engaged with other bodies (especially local government) to change attitudes and behaviours.
- There are strong links between the local communities and WWF-UK national development work (through the Steering Group, national Advisory Group etc).
- Everyone involved understands what worked best in the three communities to encourage, and maintain, sustainable living.
- Participants become 'ambassadors' for sustainable living locally and wider.
- A new 'vision' of sustainable living is created at the end of the project, informed by experience.
- Clear messages about the practical implications of sustainable living are transmitted to all partner organisations and to Government.
- Participants will learn a self-analysing and evaluating process for dealing with future issues and behaviour changes.
- New ideas have emerged for transforming products and services, based on experience of trying to be sustainable with existing products and services - what is needed and how to create it.

This section summarises the extent to which the CLASL project met its original objectives, and also met the expected outcomes.

7.2 Assessment against objectives

Objectives	How objectives have been met (or not)
<p>Develop an innovative methodology for defining and working towards sustainable living at a neighbourhood level in England</p>	<p>The project has resulted in a tangible, tried and tested method. The development of the approach, the way it has been used, and the effectiveness of the approach have all been tested, and the various elements of the method have been shown to be robust (with appropriate support).</p>
<p>Build the knowledge, capacity, capability, commitment, ownership and responsibility among participants (both residents and those working in local institutions) to increase sustainable living</p>	<p>Knowledge The initial knowledge of the group members was measured in the local benchmarking exercise. That showed that there was an existing level of knowledge and activity among group members on sustainability issues. The monitoring and evaluation research later in the project has shown the growth in knowledge both in the way individuals described the issues (with much greater understanding of the language, and use of technical terms), and the way they planned their activities in response to this knowledge.</p> <p>Capacity and capability The monitoring and evaluation research has demonstrated the growth in confidence, skills and ambition among group members as a result of being involved in the project - especially communications skills and ambition to reach out to others.</p> <p>Ownership and responsibility The group members in two groups (Reigate and Stoughton) now manage their own activities, setting up and chairing their own meetings, setting their own priorities for action and reviewing what works and what does not. Both these groups seem well enough established, and to have taken ownership and responsibility, to the continue their activities in the longer term, after the CLASL project has stopped operation.</p> <p>To increase sustainable living The groups have decided their own priorities for sustainable living, based on information and guidance from the CLASL project worker. It has not proved possible to 'measure' an increase in sustainable living, but the groups themselves have a sense of achievement that demonstrates that they feel they are making progress in the right direction.</p>

Objectives	How objectives have been met (or not)
<p>Embed the learning within the project community (the core team, Project Advisory Group, community groups and National Advisory Group)</p>	<p>The delivery of the project has focused on a learning approach throughout, and has therefore embedded review processes throughout the project planning, monitoring and evaluation. This has ensured that the lessons from the work have been identified throughout and shared between the group members and the CLASL worker, with the core team and among the Project Advisory Group. All those involved have completed all stages of Bloom's taxonomy of learning covering development of knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation, and Kolb's learning circle (see Annex 1 for summary of these models).</p> <p>There has been less success in sharing learning between the local groups and the project at national level, but it was probably then too early for the groups to engage in feeding into national policy and practice development (both in terms of priorities for their own time management, and in terms of their confidence to engage at national level).</p> <p>All Project Advisory Group members have confirmed that they have learned a great deal from the process, both about community processes and about the nature of sustainable living at local level. The National Advisory Group was never established (see section 4.2.3).</p> <p>There have also been a variety of other project activities that have aimed to spread the learning more widely (see sections 4.2 and 4.3)</p>
<p>Influence (and explore the need for) relevant governance structures to ensure that barriers to sustainable living are tackled (including unsustainable behaviour by others which negatively affects the pilot neighbourhoods), and that appropriate continuing support is developed long term.</p>	<p>The local group members were aware of the need for wider change to achieve greater progress towards sustainable living (especially by government), and were keen to challenge the barriers that they felt existed to the level of change that was needed. This type of activity is at a very early stage.</p> <p>The CLASL groups were not focused on neighbourhood improvement, so there was no specific unsustainable behaviours for them to tackle at neighbourhood level, although they did want to take action across their local authority area on various issues.</p> <p>The Project Advisory Group did consider the barriers to sustainable living that emerged during the project, and the need to tackle those at national level. The main mechanisms for this work had been intended to the National Advisory Group, but it had not been possible to establish that Group during the life of the project.</p> <p>Further work on influencing the relevant governance structures, and ensuring appropriate long term support for these types of initiatives, is the focus of follow-up work after the end of the main local development work (i.e. after March 2008).</p>

7.3 Assessment against anticipated outcomes

Anticipated outcomes	Whether outcomes have been achieved (or not)
<p>Improved ecological footprint from the three communities, the core team, the Project Advisory Group and the National Advisory Group.</p>	<p>It had been expected that a community level Ecological Footprint tool would be available during the course of the project, to measure the individual and collective footprint of the local groups. Unfortunately the development of this tool was not completed during the life of the project. However, from initial benchmarking and subsequent monitoring and evaluation, it was clear that the groups had increased the extent of their sustainable behaviours (e.g. reducing waste, using less energy and water, buying less) during the course of the project.</p> <p>It was not possible to measure the ecological footprint of the core team or the Project Advisory Group early enough to provide a baseline against which to measure. As with the members of the local groups, these people were largely already trying to live sustainably, and so it was not expected that major changes would result from involvement in the project. The issues around these measurements are given in sections 4.2.6 and 4.3.1.</p>
<p>People in the 3 communities and at all levels in the project:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand more about what living sustainably means, for them and the planet 	<p>As identified in the assessment against objectives above, this was achieved by working with the groups to enable them to identify what living sustainable meant to them as a group, and they were given information by the CLASL worker on wider sustainability measures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have changed their behaviour to live more 'sustainably' 	<p>Again, as identified above, this was achieved, although this was very much continuing the direction of travel for those involved, rather than a major 'change' in behaviour. In addition, this was much more about progress towards sustainable living, as an ongoing project, rather than any sense of having 'achieved' sustainable living.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand more about how their personal behaviour links to wider policy, regulatory and legislative frameworks 	<p>It was a major achievement of two of the local groups that they shifted their action from a focus on their personal and group behaviours to influencing others locally and aiming to work more on campaigning and lobbying in future.</p>

Objectives	How objectives have been met (or not)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have engaged with other bodies (especially local government) to change attitudes and behaviours. 	<p>This relates to the previous point: it became a major focus of the activities of two of the groups that they reached out to other local groups to spread messages about sustainable living. However, this did not involve significant links to local government, although both groups were keen to engage more with local government in future.</p>
<p>There are strong links between the local communities and national development work (through the Project Advisory Group, National Advisory Group etc).</p>	<p>These links were not established, other than through communications through the CLASL project worker. The local groups were not enthusiastic about this as it was not a priority for them and they had limited time in the early stages of the project, in spite of various invitations for them to take part in national events. However, they were beginning to become more interested in wider networking at the end of the three years of the project.</p>
<p>Ideas have emerged for transforming products and services, based on experience of trying to be sustainable with existing products and services - what is needed and how to create it (including developing niches to develop and test how incentives, social organisation, consumption patterns and technological innovation need to work together i.e. beyond the car pool and shared bicycles which are purely social solutions).</p>	<p>This outcome was abandoned early on. Although some initial work was done to establish links to local higher educational institutions working on the design of sustainable products, the project did not have the resources to continue to develop this strand of work.</p>
<p>Everyone involved understands what worked best in the 3 communities to encourage, and maintain, sustainable living</p>	<p>The continuous review and monitoring processes with local groups, within the core team and with the Project Advisory Group contributed to this. However, it is this evaluation report (and the drafts and consultations that fed into this report) that pulls all this learning together for the first time. Activities within WWF-UK have already started to ensure that the lessons from the work are understood across the organisation (and more widely).</p>
<p>Participants become 'ambassadors' for sustainable living locally and wider</p>	<p>This was probably the key achievement of the whole project at local level. Both the two main CLASL groups worked in this way, and plan to continue to expand and develop these activities.</p>

Objectives	How objectives have been met (or not)
<p>A new 'vision' of sustainable living is created at the end of the project, informed by experience</p>	<p>It was decided early on in the project that there could and should be no single 'vision' of the content of sustainable living developed, as it would depend largely on local circumstances. However, it is clear that the local groups' views of sustainable living have been largely about reducing negative environmental impacts, and contributing to improved quality of life locally (although no clear picture was developed of what this means in detail).</p>
	<p>A clear vision has emerged of the processes needed for sustainable living, which are about the empowerment of local groups so that they can continue to work and learn at local level in the long term on the issues that concern them about the sustainability of their local communities. At national level, this has contributed to the conclusion in the core team about the nature of sustainable living being about empowering local communities rather than about any specific environmental behaviours. This does, to a large extent, reflect the initial research findings of the project - that sustainable behaviour is about behaviour that can adapt and change in the long term rather than specific actions that everyone should follow.</p>
<p>Clear messages about the practical implications of sustainable living are transmitted to all partner organisations and to Government.</p>	<p>This is the next stage of the project, within which this report is one of the first steps.</p>
<p>Participants will learn a self-analysing and evaluating process for dealing with future issues and behaviour changes.</p>	<p>This did happen through the regular processes of review and evaluation that the local groups (facilitated by the CLASL worker) and the Project Advisory Group undertook.</p>

7.4 Conclusions on achievement of objectives

It is clear from the analysis above that the CLASL project has met, or is in the process of meeting, all four of its initial objectives. It has also largely met the original outcomes that were hoped for, apart from those that were dropped at a very early stage (e.g. on transforming products and services).

The main lessons from this analysis seem to be that:

- The original objectives were clear, achievable and measurable. Although the measurement frameworks did not work as had been expected (e.g. the community ecological footprint tool was not developed in time), and some of the measurement processes were not effective (e.g. local benchmarking), the other evaluation and monitoring processes have provided a wealth of information that allows for a robust assessment against objectives.
- Measurement of progress towards sustainable living is very complex (see section 4.2.6), and may be a red herring. It may be that the most appropriate approach to assessing progress towards sustainable living at local level by community groups is simply to set a direction and then check progress and that activities are achieving what was wanted from them - rather than setting indicators and targets with the expectation that it will be possible to measure and quantify improvement.
- The focus of the original CLASL project was on behaviour 'change', and there was an expectation that this change could be measured. In practice, there was no significant behaviour 'change' as a result of the project. There were, however, significant improvements in environmental behaviours among the local group members, and significant impacts on the wider community as the groups reached out to other groups to spread messages about sustainable living.

For the group members, this was much more about continuing the direction of travel rather than changing it, and providing support and encouragement to others rather than promoting 'change'. All those who have taken part in the CLASL local groups have understood about the need to live more sustainably, and have been looking for ways that they can contribute to that individually and collectively. They have valued the personal support from the CLASL project, and each other, that has made that possible.





8

Overall conclusions

- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Summary of findings and conclusions
- 8.3 Overall lessons for the future

8.1 Introduction

WWF-UK's Community Learning and Action for Sustainable Living (CLASL) project has been running for three years (from 2005). It aimed "to develop an innovative methodology that encourages and enables local communities to define and work towards new patterns of sustainable living". This section summarises the overall conclusions from the project overall, and identifies some lessons for the future in supporting community activities towards sustainable living.

8.2 Summary of findings and conclusions

The work of the CLASL project has found evidence of the nature of environmental behaviour change and community level action for change that has challenged some of the initial assumptions. These findings and conclusions are summarised below.

8.2.1 Testing the theory on behaviour change

The CLASL project developed a model that could test in practice, with local communities, many of the theoretical assumptions underpinning various approaches to behaviour change¹³. These assumptions included:

- Individual and collective attitude and behaviour changes are necessary to make progress towards sustainable living;
- Mutual reinforcement and social learning related to sustainable behaviours, and criticism of unsustainable behaviours, is strongest through close social relationships;
- Helping local communities to work collectively at local level will encourage 'good / sustainable' behaviours, and reduce 'bad / unsustainable' behaviours;
- What a sustainable lifestyle is can be determined through dialogue between communities and external technical specialists;
- Behaviour change will result in practical actions with impacts that can be measured using methods such as Ecological Footprint.

It is a major achievement of the project that there is now evidence of how these assumptions play out in practice in working on sustainability issues with real people at local level. The project work has found that, while all these assumptions remain valid and useful to a degree, they are only part of the experience of the CLASL project, as outlined below.

13. *Community Learning and Action for Sustainable Living (CLASL). Literature review.* Diane Warburton, with Vijay Krishnarayan and Ian Christie. WWF UK / Defra, October 2005. And summary report.

8.2.2 Challenging ideas of sustainability and behaviour change

The CLASL project work has shown that:

- The local groups have taken **practical actions** personally and in the institutions they are linked to (a church and a school) to make significant reductions in their negative environmental impacts.

However, the group members have found that the personal and institutional changes that are possible are limited in the existing cultural, local and national policy and legislative context. The group members do seem to feel that they have reached the limits of what they can do individually in their own lives, although they are constantly looking for small ways they can live more sustainably. The development of such a continuous 'review' of personal behaviour is a real achievement of the work of the project.

- The local groups have worked together to reflect on **attitudes and behaviours** related to sustainable living, developed good social relationships and found that peer pressure has encouraged 'good / sustainable' and reduced 'bad / unsustainable' behaviours.

These social and mutual learning activities, in dialogue with WWF-UK staff, have helped the groups move forward significantly in their knowledge, awareness and sense of responsibility for action on sustainability. The learning and confidence the groups have gained through the project has been highly valued by group members and has enabled them to be ready for any changes to policy that they can take advantage of when they arise.

However, the more substantial achievements of the project, in terms of impacts on the group members and others, are related to spreading awareness of sustainable living and empowering the group members themselves, as below:

- **Spreading awareness of sustainable living.** The CLASL groups have spread the message about sustainable living and how to organise as a group to hundreds of people in the 18 months they have been active, and the demand on them is growing. They have contributed to parish and community magazines, and have given talks to local churches, schools, community and youth groups and other organisations. They have also talked to individuals at community events, including events they have run themselves.

The groups are not acting as 'champions' for top down messages. They have developed their own messages based on their own experience and in dialogue with WWF-UK: the group members are concerned that the messages they are giving should be 'accurate' (and ask for advice from WWF-UK on that), but also that the messages are framed within their own experience.

Their activities through the CLASL project appear to have given them a **moral authority** as well as the **personal confidence** in their ability to take the message to others - they can provide role models as well as passing on the message about sustainability. As a result, the messages they are giving are likely to be trusted by the people they talk to in ways that information from official bodies will not be, and are thus more likely to be believed and acted on.

Spreading messages about sustainable living in this way is not a cheap option. The CLASL model works very well in terms of developing and supporting the groups as long as it has appropriate resources of time and money, and particularly enough skilled and experienced staff, all of which require investment.

However, the CLASL model is likely to be highly cost effective when compared to conventional campaigns. It is much closer to the 'viral' campaigns now being developed and disseminated through electronic

networks to market commercial products than to conventional advertising. This model has the added benefit of being largely self-sustaining as the local groups are developing and disseminating the messages themselves, based on the knowledge and experience that they continue to develop themselves, rather than being given messages to learn and pass on using methods that need training and constant updating.

- **Empowering the group members.** Through their engagement with the CLASL project, the group members now feel able to decide what they want to do, and take action themselves - especially through influencing others - to change things.

The strength of the group is important here, and group members themselves have identified the group as being much stronger than any individual voice. CLASL developed the view that leadership is a task not a role, and that leadership could be shared among group members, so there was no need for individual 'champions'. This worked very well in practice, and avoided the collapse of the groups when individuals seemed about to 'burn out'. This recognised value is likely to help keep the group going in the longer term and thus enable the group to continue to provide the framework for mutual support that is so important to the activities of the individual group members.

By taking responsibility for, and control of, their own activities the group members have built their personal confidence and resilience and are better able to adapt to change if new sustainability or environmental priorities or opportunities emerge. Shared responsibility, adaptation and resilience have been recognised as key characteristics of sustainable communities, and the CLASL project has been able to demonstrate a simple practical method for achieving those goals.

8.3 Overall lessons for the future

The CLASL project has some important lessons for future work on behaviour change for sustainable living, including:

- **Long termism.** The CLASL approach has been successful in developing community groups that will hopefully continue to work together on sustainability issues in the long term. However, it takes a long time to get to that stage, and problems (especially climate change) are seen to be urgent. Short termism can be a major disincentive for these ways of working. More importantly, the next small step in these long term approaches could provide the tipping point that will create major change.

It is therefore vital that the sense of urgency (e.g. on climate change) does not stop actions that are necessary now but that have long term impacts that may not be apparent or measurable immediately.

- **Contribution to cultural change.** The amount of resources (skills, time, people, money) needed to make a community-based approach work are extensive, and the impact on behaviour change to reduce negative environmental impacts is not extensive or fundamental. Influence on others is likely to spread the message further but not necessarily to encourage deeper change. Bottom up actions of this sort are likely to need to work in close conjunction with wider policy and legislative change to achieve the necessary major shift in culture.

In summary, **this approach to bringing about enough change to reduce the 3-planet consumption patterns in the UK will only work as part of a larger solution that also includes wider policy and legislative change, leading to a wider shift in culture.**

- **Appropriate measurement.** There are real problems with measuring the changes that can be achieved through community-based initiatives of this sort, whether through formal measurements such as Ecological Footprint or less formal processes such as the CLASL benchmarking. The CLASL experience

has identified problems with inappropriate criteria for sustainability in terms of practical group actions, and insufficiently sensitive measurement models to capture relatively small changes. As a result, impact measurement in the project has sometimes undermined group members' confidence by making them feel their impacts are too small to be of value.

New methods of measurement are needed that support community groups' activities while demonstrating the value of the community approach. That is now possible given the recognition that spreading awareness and empowerment are valuable achievements of the work. The WWF-UK project on measuring community engagement and sustainable development, due for completion in 2009, is designed to contribute to the development of these new methods.

- **Support and resources.** There is a limit to what people can do individually, as groups and through influencing others. It may not be revolutionary but it does create a readiness for change. Effective work to support community based action towards sustainable living is highly skilled and resource intensive. Regular personal support from professional experienced workers is crucial.

It is vital that new support structures, appropriate for the stages the CLASL groups have now reached, as well as new groups just starting, are developed that will widen and deepen the influence of the message of sustainable living that local groups are promoting.

Final

conclusion

The CLASL project has achieved its objectives:

the methodology has been developed and tested and shown to be robust, as long as sufficient skills and resources are invested to support it. The local groups have achieved a great deal in a short space of time, including some very practical measures to improve the sustainability of their own lives as well as the sustainability of the institutions they work closely with (a school and a church), and they have been very effective in spreading the message about sustainable living to hundreds of local people.

The project has also identified some important lessons relevant to future work on behaviour change for sustainable living, based on practical experience of working with real groups of ordinary local people with no previous experience of environmental action. There is now real evidence for a new approach to supporting local action for sustainable living based on the CLASL experience.

References

The references cited here are given only as examples of the sources used for the initial literature review (see section 4). The themes in that section draw on a much wider range of sources, details of which can be found in the full research report.

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Appendices

- Appendix 1 Bloom's taxonomy and Kolb's learning circle
- Appendix 2 Review of application of CLASL indicators
- Appendix 3 Benchmarking tool for community groups
- Appendix 4 Group 1 benchmarking results
- Appendix 5 Group 2 benchmarking results
- Appendix 6 Evaluation interview questions for groups and individuals

Appendix 1. Bloom's taxonomy and Kolb's learning circle

Bloom's Taxonomy: a Learning Hierarchy of the Cognitive Domain

This is a very simple explanation of this categorisation of learning. The term is described and 'question cues' which would be appropriate to test this level of learning are listed.

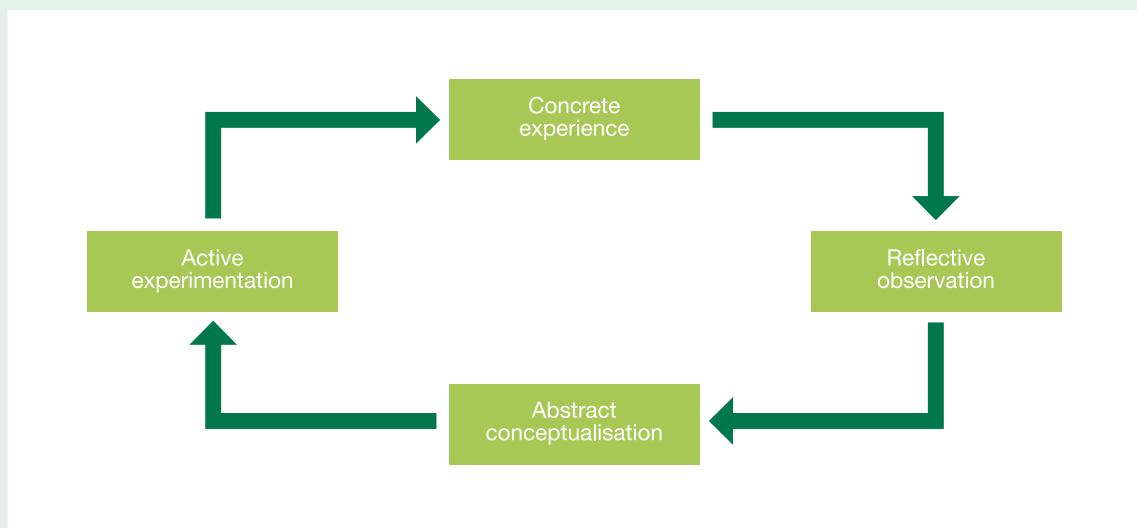
Term	Description	Question cues
Knowledge	Can recall information	Describe, show, list, name, what, who, where, when?
Comprehension (understanding)	Understands information, can compare and contrast, interpret facts	Discuss, interpret, associate, summarise in your own words
Application	Can use information in new situations, solve simple linear problems	Apply, examine, solve, calculate
Analysis	Can look at a body of data or information and know what models or concepts to apply to explain it – can see relationships	Infer, connect, explain
Synthesis	Can build new understanding/knowledge/ models by integrating several different ideas/ pieces of knowledge – can work with complex problems	Create, modify, design, predict, what happens if? Implies systems thinking and reflection to move into new thinking
Evaluate	Critically consider ideas/ information/knowledge and their limitations/ assumptions/bias to test their validity in the context of the issue under scrutiny	Implies above thinking plus critical thinking

This is a hierarchy, so progress to each level requires the attainment of the previous level(s). However, getting to the top does not signify the maximum attainment as the complexity of the information or the abstractness of the ideas under consideration is not defined by this hierarchy. So it can be completed quite mechanically when solving a simple, linear problem or only partially when working with a 'wicked' problem.

This hierarchy describes one of the three 'learning domains' developed by Bloom and others. These are the cognitive, the affective and the psychomotor domains. The above list covers the cognitive domain. The affective domain is concerned with emotional learning and addresses the development of values and their application as demonstrated by behaviours ie. 'living the values'. The psychomotor domain is concerned with the development of manipulative or physical skills.

Kolb's learning circle: an action learning process

This diagram describes Kolb's action learning cycle¹⁴. It relates to Bloom's taxonomy particularly in the reflective observation and abstract conceptualisation stages - requiring not just reflection on action but also the wider conceptual implications of what has happened.



The final design for the CLASL project drew significantly on these two learning models, and added some elements of practice from community development.

14. Kolb, D., 1984. *Experiential learning: experience as the sources of learning and development*. Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.

Appendix 2. Review of application of CLASL indicators

What we said we were going to do	How could we measure it
Objectives	
1. Develop an innovative methodology for defining and working towards sustainable living at a neighbourhood level in England;	The result would be a tangible, tried and tested method that could be published in some way, whether it works or not.
2. Build the knowledge, capacity, capability, commitment, ownership and responsibility among participants (both residents and those working in local institutions) to increase sustainable living;	<p>Knowledge Use the initial activity to find out where people are at and what they know. How do we demonstrate that this knowledge has increased? Do we simply repeat the activity towards the end of the time spent with the group?</p> <p>Ownership How do we demonstrate that there is increased ownership? Of what?</p> <p>Responsibility Do we need to explore what people think responsibility is first? How do we show that people are taking greater responsibility after being involved? And responsibility for what?</p> <p>To increase sustainable living The groups will decide what sustainable living is, so any measurement will have to be in relation to their definitions and ideas.</p>
3. Embed the learning within the project community (the core group, steering group, community groups and national advisory group);	How do we demonstrate that learning has been embedded amongst all participants? This is where the process may be important, showing where people started and where they ended up. Bloom's taxonomy may help us here.
4. Influence (and explore the need for) relevant governance structures to ensure that barriers to sustainable living are tackled (including unsustainable behaviour by others which negatively affects the pilot neighbourhoods), and that appropriate continuing support is developed long term.	How do we demonstrate that our work is influencing governance structures? At what levels do we need to measure this? 'Appropriate continuing support' will likely be a long-term change; at what point do we try to measure that this is happening and how do we show that it was a result of this work?

What we said we were going to do	How could we measure it
Outcomes	
5. Improved ecological footprint from the 3 communities, the core team, the Steering Group and the National Advisory Group. 6. People in the 3 communities and at all levels in the project:	This will be measured using some of our Ecological Footprint tools as a baseline. The development of a tool suited to groups will be being developed in parallel to this project; we will need to measure the baseline footprint in some other way.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand more about what living sustainably means, for them and the planet 	This links to the ‘knowledge measurement in point 2, regarding measuring where people are at the beginning and end of the project.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have changed their behaviour to live more ‘sustainably’. 	We could measure where people are at, at the beginning and end of the project, combining what you know already and what you do already.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand more about how their personal behaviour links to wider policy, regulatory and legislative frameworks. 	How do we demonstrate that people have a greater understanding of behaviour and policy? It may well depend on what the group decide to take action on.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have engaged with other bodies (especially local government) to change attitudes and behaviours. 	We can identify the contacts and new relationships made by the group as an output, but it is more difficult to measure what this contact actually did with regards to changing attitudes and behaviours; it may be possible to evaluate input from experts.
7. There are strong links between the local communities and national development work (through the Steering Group, national Advisory Group etc).	What links were there between the groups and national groups before the project? How has this changed over the life of the project? Are the groups more confident in dealing with local, regional and national bodies?
8. Ideas have emerged for transforming products and services, based on experience of trying to be sustainable with existing products and services - what is needed and how to create it (including developing niches to develop and test how incentives, social organisation, consumption patterns and technological innovation need to work together i.e. beyond the car pool and shared bicycles which are purely social solutions).	Ideas may or may not emerge. By creating a platform from which people can achieve other things, we cannot predict what the outcomes, such as ‘ideas’ may be. What we decide to measure here will be based on the recognition that the ideas are emerging and working with the group to take them forward, if they wish, and that we capture what the ideas are.

What we said we were going to do	How could we measure it
Outcomes	
9. Everyone involved understands what worked best in the 3 communities to encourage, and maintain, sustainable living.	This is an important part of the project cycle where people can evaluate what has worked and what hasn't. 'Learning after' is built into the whole community process. It also needs to be evaluated and reported formally on the wider process.
10. Participants become 'ambassadors' for sustainable living locally and wider.	This may depend on who participates in the group, what social networks already exist and how we encourage these to flourish. The process should act as a cascade, enabling the core group to build up skills to work with and enthuse others. Could be quite quick with some groups. May need to look at, for example, confidence about talking about the ideas, and replicability (if it works).
11. A new 'vision' of sustainable living is created at the end of the project, informed by experience.	The picture of sustainable living, and level of understanding, may be indicated by the action plan and actions taken, the support for these ideas from the wider group (where that is developed), and where learning fits in.
12. Clear messages about the practical implications of sustainable living are transmitted to all partner organisations and to Government.	What messages do we communicate during the course of the project? Will probably be a set of outputs: stories, research findings, etc as we will not be able to test impacts of these messages during the CLASL project.
13. Participants will learn a self-analysing and evaluating process for dealing with future issues and behaviour changes.	By creating a core group able to use the activities to tackle issues, there will be a number of people within the group able to use these skills and show others how to use them. How can we show that this has had a longer term value to the group e.g. is the group still using the techniques? What have they learned and what impact has that had?

November 2005 and amended

Appendix 3. Benchmarking for community groups

Process:

- Summarise the four legs of sustainability from WWF-UK perspective
- For each question, give them a minute or two to think about it, fill in their own answers in terms of 'how much', and then share examples
- Provide checklists of the questions to each individual, without the Bloom categories

1. Knowledge and action on sustainable living (based on Bloom's taxonomy)

- **Information**
 - What sort of personal knowledge do you have of issues around these four legs of sustainability:
 - a lot / quite a bit / not much / none
 - Examples??
- **Applying**
 - Are you already doing things personally that contribute to each of the four legs of sustainability?
 - a lot / quite a bit / not much / none
 - Examples??
- **Analysis**
 - Are you doing things personally that cross over between the four legs, or bring them together in any way (or some of them)
 - a lot / quite a bit / not much / none
 - Examples??
 - Are you talking about these sustainability issues to other people?
 - a lot / quite a bit / not much / none
 - Examples??
- **Synthesis**
 - What do you know about the global implications of these issues - the bigger picture?
 - a lot / quite a bit / not much / none
 - Examples??
 - Are you doing anything relating to the bigger issues - personal actions, lobbying locally, part of wider campaigns?
 - a lot / quite a bit / not much / none
 - Examples??
 - Do you feel responsible for knowing about or taking action for these issues?
 - a lot / quite a bit / not much / none
 - Examples??
- **Evaluation**
 - Why do you think this matters, and how much (a lot / quite a bit / not much / none)?
 - How do you decide what matters and what is most important?

2. Exploring the idea of sustainable living

The project wants to begin to define sustainable living. There is no 'right' answer. So we want to explore with you and the other Surrey groups:

- Overall, what do you think sustainable living is?
- What does it mean to you personally and to other people, in terms of values, attitudes and behaviour?

[Brainstorming of key words and ideas among the whole group, captured on flip charts]

[Then complete the Scotland Ecological Footprint quiz, individually; add up scores and we keep a note of individual scores and for the group overall, so we can see change as the project progresses. Score the a, b and c answers with a = 3, b = 2, c = 1.]

3. Exploring objectives and motivations

For individuals ...

- Why are you getting involved in this (reasons / motivations)?
- What do you want to have achieved personally by the end of being involved (specifics)?
- What do you want the group to have achieved by the end of this (specifics)?

[For this, each person to think about the questions, which will be on the sheet provided, and jot down a few notes that they and we can refer to later to see if achieved, then share the main points with the group]

4. Measuring success

[This is about how the group can tell if it has succeeded in what it wants to do. It is not going to be used by the project to measure the group's performance... it is for them to check progress (half way through), and then check at the end what they have achieved.

This will be done by going through the list of their project ideas and asking a series of question for each one (as below).

The purpose of this is to **clarify their objectives** so everyone is clearer about what trying to do, and how:

- Can we find a **target** number for this (how much, how many etc)? So there is something to aim for.
- What specific things can we **measure** as a result of these actions that will show:
 - outputs / activities - what the group has done (e.g. articles placed, information collected etc)
 - impacts / results - what the group has really achieved (could include learning, skills, confidence among group members - as well as changes to behaviour or to local physical environment)
- What do you want or **need to know** to be able to achieve this objective?
- Is there anything that stands in your way / makes it difficult to achieve this objective / need to get other people to change?

5. Next steps

We will write up everything discussed this evening, check it back with them and then use it to check progress with them at next stage.

Appendix 4. Group 1 benchmarking results

1. Introduction

WWF developed a benchmarking process and questionnaire that was used with two of the CLASL groups in July / August 2006 to benchmark their current knowledge, attitudes and activities. This was supplemented by the use of the ecological footprint quiz developed by WWF-UK in Scotland. The benchmarking was undertaken by Diane Warburton (Shared Practice) and Niamh Carey (WWF-UK) at meetings of the two groups.

Five members of the group were present at the meeting (19 July 2006). Only four of the main questionnaires were returned but all five returned the footprint questionnaires

2. Knowledge and attitudes

Copies of the questionnaire were handed out and the first section completed by the members of the group individually. The findings were as follows:

- What sort of personal knowledge do you have of issues around the four legs of sustainability (environment, social, economic, governance):
 - 0 a lot
 - 3 quite a bit
 - 1 not much
 - 0 none

Most of the knowledge was specifically stated to be around **environmental** issues. Examples given were:

- reduced energy [use]
- environment / economic
- Are you already doing things personally that contribute to each of the four legs of sustainability?
 - 0 a lot
 - 4 quite a bit
 - 0 not much
 - 0 none

Examples given were:

- water butt, cycling to work, diesel car, work recycling
- environment
- Are you doing things personally that cross over between the four legs, or bring them together in any way (or some of them)
 - 0 a lot
 - 1 quite a bit
 - 1 not much
 - 1 none

- Are you talking about these sustainability issues to other people?
 - 0 a lot
 - 3 quite a bit
 - 1 not much
 - 0 none

Examples given were:

- at work - recycling

- What do you know about the global implications of these issues - the bigger picture?
 - 0 a lot
 - 2 quite a bit
 - 2 not much
 - 0 none

- Are you doing anything relating to the bigger issues - personal actions, lobbying locally, part of wider campaigns?
 - 0 a lot
 - 0 quite a bit
 - 4 not much
 - 0 none

Examples given were:

- community recycler

- Do you feel responsible for knowing about or taking action for these issues?
 - 2 a lot
 - 2 quite a bit
 - 0 not much
 - 0 none

Examples given were:

- IoP qualified, work pack waste submissions

- How much do you think this matters, and how much?
 - 3 a lot
 - 0 quite a bit
 - 0 not much
 - 0 none

Examples given were:

- sustainable environment - excess use of resources; inefficient heating, lighting, insulation in UK homes

- How do you decide what matters and what is most important?
 - things I can personally effect / take responsibility for

In summary, we can see from the above that:

- Most of the group already know quite a bit about sustainability (especially environmental sustainability), and are already doing quite a bit ... and even talking about it to others quite a bit. This shows a group with an existing good knowledge and level of activity on environmental sustainability.
- There was less knowledge around the global implications of these issues, and not much activity on the bigger issues either personally, through local lobbying or as part of wider campaigns.
- People did already feel very responsible for knowing about and taking action on these issues: half felt a lot of responsibility; half felt quite a bit of responsibility. And all those that answered the question felt that this all mattered 'a lot'.

3. What is sustainable living?

The group was then given the opportunity to discuss what sustainable living meant - generally and to them personally in terms of values, attitudes and behaviour. Their answers were recorded on flip charts so they could check that they were reported correctly. The group said that sustainable living, for them, was about the following (from the flip charts and notes taken at the meeting):

- maintain standard of living
- remain aware of the impact of personal choices and activities - have access to information about impacts
- be more careful / ethical about your decisions and also motivate others
- progression towards tipping point where things can only get worse - that is not sustainable
- problems include area being more crowded, noise, pollution
- people want and deserve a better quality of life; that means a healthy and happy life
- there are repercussions of decisions that people make as individuals e.g. paving over drives and front gardens which affects the water table
- need to maintain a balance with the environment
- problems include: the 'me' generation (not sustainable) - migration from north to south in England [overcrowding, development etc] - we [the group] are trying to minimise the damage
- stop flying!
- use biofuels (example given of work in Brazil)
- the technology is there e.g. efficient cars.

In addition, responses on the questionnaire forms were:

- balance with your environment - leave no trace
- consideration of effects of one's activity
- change behaviour, educate, reward, motivate

So, in summary, the group felt that there were major problems that were affecting people's quality of life in this area (e.g. noise, overcrowding) which were caused by wider policy decisions (e.g. economic growth, housing development) but also personal choices that do environmental damage (e.g. paving over front gardens, flying).

Sustainable living for them was about minimising the damage (e.g. through personal decisions and actions, motivating others). They felt the technology was there to reduce environmental damage (e.g. biofuels and efficient cars), but these were not as widespread as they could be.

Sustainable living was about maintaining their current 'standard of living', with an improved 'quality of life' that was about health and happiness.

4. Objectives and motivations

The group then discussed their motivations for getting involved in this project and what they hoped to achieve - both personally and through the group. They said:

- To encourage others [to be more sustainable], including others at work ... “this isn’t about me”
- Legislation is a vote loser, and can’t force people to do this, so want to use “gentle persuasion”
- Multiplier effect [more impact than single person doing something]
- Working through the school is very important [partly about being part of a local institution and having links to other groups, partly about influencing the children e.g. through a children's composting day]
- Take ideas elsewhere and learn from elsewhere (links to Malaysia through one group member, where a company buys back returned bottles)
- Getting to know neighbours and being more ‘community-minded’ - build community spirit
- Improving the neighbourhood especially more recycling and reduced waste going to landfill
- Greater knowledge among the group (e.g. of facts) - “learning is a by-product”
- The promise of a free barbecue and Niamh in a panda suit was an attraction

Specific actions that people wanted to change / do personally were:

- shopping locally
- cycling to work
- recycling more (including water)
- re-using water (e.g. refilling water bottles)
- reducing energy use (e.g. turning off lights, not leaving equipment on stand-by)
- re-usable shopping bags
- reducing car use
- composting
- reducing food waste

In summary, the main motivation for group members was to influence and encourage others to be more sustainable through ‘gentle persuasion’.

Working through the school was very important, partly because of the status of the school locally and also to influence children. Getting actively involved with neighbours and improving the neighbourhood was also important. Developing greater knowledge among the group was another, although less important, motivating factor.

Although changing personal behaviour was not the main motivating factor for the group, they did have some specific things they wanted to do more - or less - of, to be more sustainable personally, as outlined above.

5. Ecological footprint quiz

The group then completed the WWF-UK Ecological Footprint quiz, developed in Scotland. They completed the quiz individually, and handed in the forms to be collated. It was agreed that the focus should be on the group rather than on individual scores so that the results could feed into future priorities for the group.

The scores are given in following table below:

	a	b	c
Home			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number of people • house size • energy source • energy efficiency 	1 2 0 4	4 3 1 1	0 0 4 0
Total	7	9	4
Food			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • buying food • type of diet • processed food 	1 1 1	4 2 4	0 2 0
Total	3	10	2
Travel			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • main travel mode • air travel • distance travelled 	3 2 2	0 2 2	2 1 1
Total	7	4	4
Recycling and waste			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • household waste • recycling • composting 	3 5 3	1 0 0	1 0 2
Total	11	1	3
Overall total	28	24	13

The quiz leaflet suggests the following conclusions should be drawn from this exercise:

- Mostly a: Congratulations. As an individual you are already doing your bit.
- Mostly b: Not bad, but if everyone lived like you we would still need around three planets to sustain ourselves.
- Mostly c: Oh dear! If everyone lived like you we would need around four or more planets to sustain ourselves.

The scores in the table show that this group is already doing well ... with 'a' choices being in the majority. In detail:

- They are doing particularly well on recycling and dealing with waste, and also fairly well on travel (although with rather too much air travel, travelling too far and too much car use).
- They are doing least well on food buying (too much processed food and not enough local / organic food), and also not so well on home and energy use / efficiency, with the big problem here being the use of electricity from non-renewable sources.

To make the biggest impact on their overall footprint, the group could consider:

- changing their sources of electricity to use energy from renewable sources
- buying less processed food, eating less meat and fish, and buying more local and/or organic food
- reduce their travel distances, air travel and car use.

The other higher scores (e.g. on number of people in the house, and house size) are less easy to change and also more questionable in terms of impacts on sustainability as they are so variable (e.g. an enormous terraced house could arguably be less sustainable than a detached eco-house although the former would score an 'a' and the latter a 'c').

6. Next steps

It was agreed that a further review of all these issues would be undertaken in February 2007, with a final review later in the project.

In addition, it was hoped that detailed objectives would be developed by the group, based on this general discussion of motivations and objectives, and some ways of measuring progress towards those objectives, so that achievements could be identified as the project progressed.

Appendix 5. Group 2 benchmarking results

1. Introduction

WWF developed a benchmarking process and questionnaire that was used with two of the CLASL groups in July / August 2006 to benchmark their current knowledge, attitudes and activities. This was supplemented by the use of the ecological footprint quiz developed by WWF-UK in Scotland. The benchmarking was undertaken by Diane Warburton (Shared Practice) and Niamh Carey (WWF-UK) at meetings of the two groups.

Six members of the group were present at the meeting (26 July 2006). Only five of the main questionnaires were returned but all six returned the footprint questionnaires.

It had been decided early on in the design of the benchmarking that the focus should be on group change and development rather than on individuals. This was because the CLASL project was designed to develop and test a process of working with groups to establish principles and actions for sustainable living, to try to identify the part played by 'social learning' in behaviour change towards sustainability. Therefore, the scores identified below are anonymised and presented as group scores.

2. Knowledge and attitudes

Copies of the questionnaire were handed out and the first section completed by the members of the group individually. The findings were as follows:

- How much personal knowledge do you have of issues around the four legs of sustainability (on a scale of 1 to 10; all scores are out of a maximum possible 50 points):
 - environment
 - 3 said 7
 - 1 said 6
 - 1 said 5(total 32 points out of a possible 50)
 - social
 - 1 said 8
 - 1 said 5
 - 3 said 4(total 25 points)
 - economic
 - 1 said 10
 - 1 said 7
 - 1 said 4
 - 1 said 3
 - 1 said 2(total 26 points)
 - governance
 - 1 said 8
 - 2 said 4
 - 1 said 3
 - 1 said 2(total 21 points)

Thus, the group can be seen to be more confident overall about their environmental knowledge. There was the same overall score on knowledge of the social and economic aspects of sustainability, although more lower scores on economic issues (the 1 at 10 threw this out slightly), with the lowest confidence in knowledge about governance.

Examples of particular interests were [notes taken in meeting in square brackets]:

- don't use plastic carriers [bags]
 - sustainable home and personal lifestyle; lobbying the council, supermarket, the government
 - Ecoteam
 - contesting planning applications [rural land for building]; I am a Brownie leader (pack of 22); National Trust education volunteer
 - more recycling facilities available from the council [more, and empty more often or doorstep collection]
- How much are you already doing things personally that contribute to each of the four legs of sustainability (on a scale of 1 to 10):
 - environment
 - 1 said 9
 - 1 said 8
 - 2 said 6
 - 1 said 5(total 34 points)
 - social
 - 2 said 8
 - 1 said 6
 - 2 said 5(total 32 points)
 - economic
 - 1 said 6
 - 2 said 4
 - 1 said 3
 - 1 said 2(total 19 points)
 - governance
 - 1 said 5
 - 2 said 4
 - 1 said 3
 - 1 said 2(total 18 points)

Again, environmental action was where there was most activity among members of the group, although social was close behind. Action on the economic and governance legs of sustainability was significantly lower, and at similar levels.

Examples of particular actions were:

- buy frozen food and not imported from African or South America
- church Ecoteam; support WWF, Soil Association, Friends of the Earth; garden organically (ex-HDRA)
- Ecoteam, composter etc; taking own shopping bags; sociable [e.g. giving lifts to church]; taking older group (teenagers) at the church
- this year, took ecology paper in Royal Horticultural Society Diploma; member Garden Organic; Amnesty International
- Ecoteam; Eco-congregation status; church meal - lunch club; junior church

- How much are you doing things personally that crosses over between the four legs, or bring them together in any way (or some of them)
 - 0 a lot
 - 0 quite a bit
 - 4 some
 - 1 not much
 - 0 none

Here, the majority of the group felt they were doing some things that crossed over all four legs of sustainability (4 out of 6), although they feel there is not a vast amount of this activity (none felt they did a lot or even quite a bit).

Examples of particular actions were:

- water butt
 - talking with children in schools
 - Ecoteam; going into schools; walking whenever possible instead of driving
 - Environment badge at Brownies; World Issues badge at Brownies; environment service at church prepared by my group at children's church, etc
 - church awareness - eco-team; go into school
- How much do you **talk** about these sustainability issues to other people?
 - 1 a lot
 - 2 quite a bit
 - 1 some
 - 1 not much
 - 0 none

There is more evidence of activity here, with 4 out of the 5 talking about sustainability to others to some extent.

Examples of who they talk to, and what about were:

- articles in the Record (church magazine) each month [Eco-tips e.g. composting] - people approach her as a result and find there is a lot they can do; simple changes; has touched mums with children of similar age to her]; going in to schools to talk to kids
 - friends, family
 - friends - how to be greener; a partner of IBM who is considering helping the carbon trust
 - friends
 - husbands.
- How much do you know about the global implications of these issues - the bigger picture?
 - 1 a lot
 - 4 quite a bit
 - 0 some
 - 0 not much
 - 0 none

Much stronger response here, with 5 out of the 6 feeling they know quite a bit (or more) about the global implications of sustainability.

Examples of the issues that people knew most about were:

- global warming (4 people)
- impact on animal habitats
- company domination e.g. Tesco
- MA development economics and ecology paper in the RHS diploma (equivalent of first year university); industrial relations

- How much you doing relating to the bigger issues - personal actions, lobbying locally, part of wider campaigns?
 - 0 a lot
 - 0 quite a bit
 - 1 some
 - 3 not much
 - 0 none

There is much less action on global sustainability issues than there is knowledge.

Examples given were:

- try to join the Redhill / Reigate Sustainability Group
 - lobbying on planning applications locally; on church committee raising £6,000 a year for overseas development
 - [protest at Morrisons]
- How **responsible** do you feel personally about the need to take action on, or find out about, sustainability issues?
 - 1 a lot
 - 3 quite a bit
 - 0 some
 - 0 not much
 - 0 none

Quite a strong sense of responsibility was demonstrated for knowing about and taking action on sustainability, with all those answering indicating they feel at least 'quite' responsible.

Examples given were:

- as the spokesperson for the Ecoteam, I feel people look to me
 - what is the future for the kids? [young children]
 - [access to water on tap]
- How much do you think sustainability matters?
 - 3 a lot
 - 1 quite a bit
 - 0 some
 - 0 not much
 - 0 none

Even stronger sense here of the importance of sustainability, with 3 of the 4 members of the group that answered this question feeling that sustainability matters a lot.

Examples of why it matters were:

- because it is only by changing our personal actions that there will be enough of a swing of support for political change
 - because we know we've not got much time if we continue as we are
 - future of planet for children
- How do you decide what matters most / what is most important to sustainability?
 - how it affects my family / community; the environmental impact and what makes a difference
 - not sure about that!
 - reading
 - environment = most obvious for future of planet

In summary, we can see from the above that:

- Most of the group already know and are already doing quite a bit about sustainability. The strongest knowledge and action is around environmental issues, although social issues are fairly close behind (this type of activity includes e.g. work with the Brownies, lunch club at the church).
- If anything, there is a slightly stronger level of confidence about their knowledge of global sustainability issues (especially global warming, identified by 4 of the 5 respondents). There is less activity around global issues, although action on supermarkets fits in here.
- People did feel fairly responsible for taking action on sustainability issues (1 felt a lot of responsibility, 3 felt 'quite a bit'). 3 of the 4 who answered felt sustainability mattered 'a lot', plus 1 who thought it mattered 'quite a bit'; the main focus of concern was the impact on family and community (especially children), and the planet.
- One comment was particularly interesting - that "it is only by changing our personal actions that there will be enough of a swing of support for political change". This suggests that changing personal behaviour is being done to gain political influence, rather than aiming for a direct impact from changes in personal behaviour. It may be worth exploring this further.

3. What is sustainable living?

The group was then given the opportunity to discuss what sustainable living meant - generally and to them personally in terms of values, attitudes and behaviour. Their answers were recorded on flip charts so they could check that they were reported correctly. The group said that sustainable living, for them, was about the following (from the flip charts and notes taken at the meeting):

- The good life
- Put in what you take out
- **Think** about what you buy and impacts
- [Thinking about what is already there] - re-using what you've got
- [Lifestyle going from generation to generation]
- Reaching to others
- Buying local / British
- Avoid food miles and out of season goods
- You need to know a lot
- Can't be ignorant - this is where the Ecoteam comes in
- People know to ask the Eco-team at church

Additional points made on the questionnaires about what sustainable living is were:

- avoiding companies like Tesco; supporting the co-op; buying locally if possible
- living that is responsible and sensitive to the planet / needs

In summary, the focus for this group was very much on personal consumption and lifestyle, with an emphasis on getting more knowledge and information about what to do.

4. Objectives and motivations

The group then discussed their motivations for getting involved in this project and what they hoped to achieve - both personally and through the group. They said the overall motivations and objectives for the project were:

- Inspired by others in the group
- To encourage others
- It's a conscience thing [eco-worrier]
- This works better in a group
- The original GAP Eco-team inspired me to share knowledge. Couldn't continue the same way once I knew the facts. [Felt had knowledge that shouldn't stop with me]
- Want to be able to look grandchildren in the eye [and feel had done best]

In terms of what the group wanted to achieve personally, they said:

- To have made some changes locally - council and church. We can really achieve something in the church
- Only one planet - responsible
- Nice to see people doing things
- This ripples!
- Being in an organisation like the church helps
- Elders want to show support because this is important.

In summary, the main motivation for the group was to work together (there is a sense of some mutual inspiration) to encourage others - because of a sense of 'conscience' ('eco-worrier' a particularly nice phrase used), especially in relation to responsibilities to future generations.

Working through the church was felt to be very important, partly to support the Ecoteam's actions more widely (including influencing others, lobbying etc) but also in being able to influence what the church itself does as an institution: the support of the Elders of the church was an important element of that.

Changing personal behaviour was not a major motivating factor here; there was a clear sense that the group members were already doing as much as possible to act sustainably in their personal lives.

5. Ecological footprint quiz

The group then completed the WWF-UK Ecological Footprint quiz, developed in Scotland. They completed the quiz individually, and handed in the forms to be collated. It was agreed that the focus should be on the group rather than on individual scores so that the results could feed into future priorities for the group.

The scores are given in the following table:

	a	b	c
Home			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number of people • house size • energy source • energy efficiency 	1 0 1 2	3 2 2 2	1 3 2 1
Total	4	9	7
Food			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • buying food • type of diet • processed food 	2 0 1	4 4 5	0 2 0
Total	3	13	2
Travel			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • main travel mode • air travel • distance travelled 	0 1 3	0 3 3	5 2 0
Total	4	6	7
Recycling and waste			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • household waste • recycling • composting 	3 4 4	1 2 0	2 0 1
Total	11	3	3
Overall total	22	31	19

The quiz leaflet suggests the following conclusions should be drawn from this exercise:

- Mostly a: Congratulations. As an individual you are already doing your bit.
- Mostly b: Not bad, but if everyone lived like you we would still need around three planets to sustain ourselves.
- Mostly c: Oh dear! If everyone lived like you we would need around four or more planets to sustain ourselves.

The scores in the table show that this group is 'not bad', with 'b' choices identified quite significantly more often than 'a' choices. In detail:

- The best performance of the group is in recycling and dealing with waste, with most people in the group doing well on producing little waste, recycling and composting.
- They are not doing badly on food, with mostly 'b' answers. Given the focus in the existing actions of the group, and their priorities around buying local food, lobbying supermarkets etc, this suggests a lack of opportunities to buy and eat sustainable food, rather than a lack of desire to do so.
- There are again mostly 'b' answers on the home, with the answers showing that most people live in detached or semi-detached houses with only a few other people (one was living alone). There are more 'a' answers in relation to energy sources and energy efficiency, but still not very many.
- They are doing less well on travel, with more 'c' answers than any others. All 5 respondents use cars as their main mode of travel, and 5 out of 6 respondents fly.

It is not easy to suggest how these scores could be improved without people moving home, and these categories are also more questionable in terms of impacts on sustainability as they are so variable (e.g. an enormous terraced house could arguably be less sustainable than a detached eco-house although the former would score an 'a' and the latter a 'c').

It may be worth exploring in future what alternatives there are to car travel (could be poor local public transport?), and buying food at supermarkets.

6. Next steps

It was agreed that a further review of all these issues would be undertaken in February 2007, with a final review later in the project.

In addition, it was hoped that detailed objectives would be developed by the group, based on this general discussion of motivations and objectives, and some ways of measuring progress towards those objectives, so that achievements could be identified as the project progressed.

Appendix 6. Evaluation interview questions for groups and individuals

The CLASL project used several different sets of interview questions, one set designed to be used with each group collectively and face-to-face by the CLASL worker (to support general review and monitoring by the group about their own work), and set designed to be used by an independent interviewer with group members individually over the phone (to enable group members to offer their individual views, and for them not to be influenced by other group members or the CLASL worker's presence). A further set of questions was devised to use with the Cranleigh group, to reflect their different approach and circumstances.

Questions for the whole group

- 1 What do you think have been the group's major achievements over the past 2 years (most significant change achieved), and why?
- 2 What has really not worked, and why? What have you found to be the real barriers to more sustainable living?
- 3 In what ways has the CLASL process (WWF's support) helped you, and why was that useful? Including:
 - what has the support provided you with that you wouldn't otherwise have had?
 - has it been of any value to be part of WWF's national CLASL project, and why?
 - have you been able to get the technical advice you need, how and why?
 - what other support have you had, and how has that helped?
 - what support do you think you will need over the next 2 years?
- 4 In terms of whether the group has learnt anything ...
 - Do you feel the group has learnt/understood anything new as a result of being involved in this project? If so, what?
 - Is there anything the group has done during this time that has particularly helped in your learning? If so, what and why?
 - Is there anything you have learnt/found out that has made a particular impression on you and changed your thinking? If so, what and why?
- 5 What do you think you would like the group to achieve over the next 2 years, and why?
- 6 What wider influence do you think the group has had so far, and why?
- 7 What influence would you like the group to have in the next 2 years, on what issues and why?
- 8 What is your view of sustainable living now, and how has it changed over the last 2 years? Why? What have been the main influences in your thinking?
- 9 What would you like to say to Defra about supporting sustainable living at local level, to help them understand what is needed to make sustainable living more successful and widespread.

Questions for individual group members

Your involvement in the group

- 1 Why did you get involved in the group at the beginning? What did you want to do? How did you find out about it?
- 2 What has been your main role in the group? What have you been doing mainly?
- 3 Do you want to carry on being involved in that way, or are there things you'd like to change about what you do and your role in the group, and why?
- 4 Is there anything you've done which you were surprised you could do? Please say what, why you were surprised and how you managed to do it.
- 5 Is there anything you'd like to have been able to do personally as part of the group, but have not been able to do? Please say what, and why you think that hasn't happened. And is there anything that could help overcome any of those problems?
- 6 Do you think you'll stay involved with the group? Please say why.
- 7 What would you personally like to see the group concentrate on next, and why that? And what would you personally like to do as part of that?

Achievements

- 8 What do you think have been the group's main achievements overall over the last 2 years? What has it done that has really made a difference?
- 9 Are you pleased / satisfied with what the group has achieved? Please say why.
- 10 What do you think is the best thing(s) about the group, and what it has done, so far? Please be specific (e.g. particular skills among members, strengths as a group, certain activities), and say why they were good.
- 11 What has been the worst thing(s) about the group, and what it has done, so far? Please say why those things were not good.
- 12 Is there anything specific you'd like to have seen the group do by now that it has not done? Please say what, and why you think that hasn't happened. And do you think those things could or should happen now? If so, what is needed to help make those things happen in future?
- 13 Do you see the group continuing to work at the same sort of scale as it has done so far, or do you think it will move on to more and bigger projects and activities? Are you happy with the way things are going? Please say why.
- 14 How important do you think the work of your group is to local and national work on increasing sustainable living - in terms of actions you have done individually, or as a group, and what you've learned?
- 15 From your experience, what lessons could you suggest to other programmes working towards sustainable living?

Support for your group so far and in future

- 16 What part has WWF played in what the group has achieved? What have been the most valuable aspects of WWF's involvement?
- 17 Has it been useful to you and your group to be part of WWF's national CLASL project? How and why?
- 18 Is there anything that has happened that would not have happened without WWF involvement? Please say what and why.
- 19 Is there anything you hoped would happen because WWF was involved that has not happened? Please say what and why.
- 20 What support do you think the group needs now, and why?
- 21 Which organisations or individuals would you like to get to provide support to the group in future? Please say what you would like from each one, and why them.

Benefits for you of being involved in the group

- 22 Personally, what have you got out of being part of the group over the past 2 years - for example
- has it changed you personally? in what ways and why?
 - has it made any difference to your own personal life? in what ways and why?
 - have you learnt new things (skills, information etc)?
 - have you met new people?
 - anything else?
- 23 In terms of your own personal learning ...
- Do you feel you have learnt / understood anything new as a result of being involved in this project? If so, what, and what difference has it made to you?
 - Is there anything you have done during this time that has particularly helped in your learning? If so, what and why did you do that?
 - Is there anything you have learnt / found out that has made a particular impression on you and changed your thinking? If so, what and why?

Finally...

- 24 Is there anything you would like to say to WWF and government about supporting groups like yours in future, to help you be successful in what you are trying to achieve in living more sustainably? Any messages or lessons they should think about?
- 25 Is there anything else you would like to say about being involved in this project over the past 2 years?

Questions for the Cranleigh group

Your involvement in the group

- 1 Why did you get involved in the group at the beginning? What did you want to do? How did you find out about it?
- 2 What have been the main roles in the group? What has each member been doing mainly?
- 3 Do you want to continue attending the group? Why / why not?
- 4 Are there things that you'd like to change about what you do and your role in the group?
- 5 Is there anything you've done which you were surprised you could do? Please say what, why you were surprised and how you managed to do it.

Achievements

- 5 What have you learned / done since November 2006? What has helped / hindered you?
- 6 Did you achieve any of the following (from the 2006 evaluation):
 - Recycle old books
 - Investigate a 'barter' scheme for exchange of goods / services
 - Reuses of old furniture
 - Swapping stuff
 - Grow more fruit and vegetables and keep chickens and bees
 - Eat less meat
 - Buying less stuff
 - Shop locally
 - Energy tariff
 - Continue with changed shopping habits
- 7 How easy / hard was it to achieve these steps?
- 8 What do you think have been the group's main achievements over the last 2 years? What has it done as a group that has really made a difference?
- 9 What do you think are the top 3 sustainable behaviour changes that you have made as individuals that you are most proud of? Why has it been those issues / activities?
- 10 Are you pleased / satisfied with what you and the group has achieved? Please say why.
- 11 What do you think is the best thing(s) about the group and what it has done so far? Please be specific (e.g. particular skills among members, strengths as a group, certain activities) and say why they were good.
- 12 What has been the worst thing(s) about the group and what it has done so far? Please say why those things were not good.
- 13 Do you see the group continuing to work at the same sort of scale as it has done so far, or do you think it will move on to more and bigger projects and activities? Are you happy with the way things are going? Please say why
- 14 What would you like to learn / do next? What resources do you need? Have you got any suggestions for

workshops or activities over the next 12 months?

15 How important do you think the work of your group is to local and national work on increasing sustainable living - in terms of actions you have done individually, or as a group, and what you've learned?

16 Personally, what have you got out of being part of the group over the past 2 years - for example

17 Is there anything you would like to say to WWF and government about supporting groups like your in the future, to help you be successful in what you are trying to achieve in living more sustainably? Any messages or lessons they should think about?

18 Is there anything else you would like to say about being involved in this project over the past 2 years?

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We are also extremely grateful to all those in the community groups and others who gave their time to be interviewed for the evaluation research, and for their wider contribution both to this project and to making sustainable living a more practical proposition in Surrey and elsewhere.

The mission of WWF is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by:

- **conserving the world's biological diversity**
- **ensuring that the use of renewable resources is sustainable**
- **reducing pollution and wasteful consumption**



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