

SEACS legacy project: Communities Living Sustainably

Summary of project/activity

The Dorset SEACS community work package included a target to produce 2 climate and energy action plans. However, there is an existing Dorset Renewable Energy Strategy to 2020, an Energy Efficiency Strategy and Action Plan and a West Dorset Climate Change Strategy. Although strategies were in place, there are insufficient resources available to deliver the actions in the strategies.

Therefore it was decided that the 2 SEACS climate and energy action plans would be focussed on specific projects and activities which could be delivered through a bid for national climate and energy funding.

Objectives of the project

- To secure funding to deliver a comprehensive climate change and energy action plan in 2 pilot communities in Dorset.
- To build a broad-based partnership including community groups, the public and private sectors to deliver the action plans.
- To build on experience from the SEACS project to inform the activities to be included in the action plans

Methodology/approach

An opportunity arose early in 2012 when the Big Lottery Fund requested Expressions of Interest for community-led partnerships to bid for up to £1m each to deliver a new 'Communities Living Sustainably' programme based on 12 pilot communities in England.

A Big Lottery requirement was that the successful pilot projects had to be delivered in a relatively small geographical area of 10,000-20,000 households. The project also had to be led by a not-for profit community organisation, although local authorities could be included as delivery partners. Therefore Dorset Community Action, a local charitable organisation based in Dorchester, agreed to be the

lead partner, with Dorset County Council as a project partner to help write the Expression of Interest.

Two separate communities were selected to be included in the funding proposal, Dorchester and Bridport, 15 miles apart. Both towns have approximately 10,000 households and either one would have been eligible to apply separately for the Communities Living Sustainably funding. However, it was agreed to include both towns, as they differ in character and history, therefore maximising opportunities for innovation and exchanges of ideas.



The Expression of Interest was successful and the partnership was subsequently invited to submit a 2nd stage proposal, which was also successful, resulting in a new £1m, three year project including community-based climate change adaptation, Eco-Schools, local food, plus energy saving and renewable energy initiatives. Dorset CC staff previously employed on the SEACS project will support delivery of the new 'Communities Living Sustainably in Dorset' project.

Tools used, including those to reach target groups

A broad partnership with experience of sustainable development and community engagement contributed initial ideas for projects to be included in the action plans. A steering group was appointed to develop the Communities Living Sustainably project proposal. Individual meetings were held with organisations such

as Transition Town Groups, the Dorset County Council's Eco-Schools officer, a community woodland project in Bridport, Dorchester Community Farm, local renewable energy businesses etc.

The Dorset SEACS community Energy Ambassador assisted in developing the energy saving and renewable energy actions in the proposal, based on contacts and experience from SEACS community energy groups.

Public exhibitions were held in Bridport and Dorchester with feedback incorporated into the final project proposal.



How was the project managed?

The project was managed by Dorset Community Action with support from Dorset County Council's Sustainable Development Manager

Who were the project partners?



The Communities Living Sustainably partnership is led by Dorset Community Action, and includes Bridport Energy Services Ltd, Dorset Agenda 21, Dorset County Council, Dorset Coast Forum, Dorset Public Health, Transition Town Bridport, Transition Town Dorchester, Wessex Community Assets, West Dorset Partnership, WSX Enterprise Ltd.

What were the lessons learned from the project?

- The Big Lottery Communities Living Sustainably funding was available for projects lasting 3-5 years, therefore sufficient time to make an impact within a relatively small geographical area. In contrast, community energy projects funded by the Department of Energy and Climate Change often have to be completed in a period of only a few months, making project delivery difficult.
- Success factors included good working relationships with existing community energy groups which were strengthened through the SEACS project, plus a very broad partnership which was facilitated by Dorset County Council's existing links. Dorset Community Action (DCA) had previous experience of managing projects funded by the Big Lottery and writing funding bids.
- Local authorities are currently facing large reductions in central government funding (for example, a 30% cut in Dorset County Council's budget over the 6 years to 2016). Sustainability and climate change are not core statutory responsibilities for UK local authorities; therefore it is very likely these activities will need to be externally funded in future.
- Communities Living Sustainably in Dorset provides a very good opportunity for Dorset County Council staff and local communities to work together on a joint project- an innovative public – community partnership.



Contact for further information. Links to website information

Communities Living Sustainably in Dorset

<http://www.clsdorset.org.uk/>

Case Study:

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