

**Westmeath County Council**

**Environmental Awareness Strategy  
2008**

**Presented to Environment SPC  
Monday 28th January 2008**

## **Environmental Awareness Strategy**

Corporate Plan Mission Statement

“To Lead the Economic, Social and Cultural Development of County Westmeath and to Deliver Quality Services”

Corporate Plan Objectives relevant to awareness and education:

- Working towards the achievement of a safe, clean and healthy environment
- Tackling the symptoms and causes of anti-social behaviour (e.g. litter, vandalism, graffiti, etc...)

### **Introduction**

The following areas are addressed within the Environmental Awareness Strategy:

- Waste
- Litter
- Water
- Other environmental topics
- Local Agenda 21
- Legislative changes
- Council in-house ‘green’ programme

A number of different approaches or tools will be used to raise awareness within the principle areas of concern including:

- Partnership arrangements and sponsorship
- Talks and visits to schools and other groups
- Workshops, seminars and conferences
- Leaflets and newsletters
- Website information
- Media
- National and local campaigns

### **Waste**

Actions outlined in this plan are designed to raise awareness of the waste problem. By encouraging the adoption of waste minimisation and more environmentally friendly approaches to dealing with waste (e.g. Reduce, Reuse and Recycle, home composting, what steps people can be taken to make a difference) it is hoped to educate and make people aware of the consequences of their actions on the environment, in line with the Midland Waste Management Plan.

**Litter**

The litter awareness campaign will work in tandem with the Litter Management Plan. The campaign will work on a three pronged approach: Awareness, Clean-ups and working in partnership with local communities. Partnership approaches will be developed to get the general community to buy into the fact that everyone needs to take responsibility for litter in their local area.

**Water**

It is proposed to continue raising awareness of water usage, water quality, pollution and prevention. The strategy will tie in with work carried out by the Environmental Scientific Officer and teams working to prevent water pollution. It will also develop educational and awareness materials for the European Blue Flag beach programme. It will also link to developments originating from the EC Water Framework Directive and the Westmeath Agricultural Bye laws.

**Other environmental topics**

This will include working with the County Veterinary Officer, Dog Warden and other environment section staff to develop awareness of priorities areas of their work.

It will also involve work to raise awareness on other global and local environmental issues e.g. Energy, Climate Change, Agriculture, Biodiversity, and as and when requested depending on priorities.

**Local Agenda 21**

Working with local community groups and other to develop partnership projects within communities, which promote and further Sustainable Development and LA21 principles throughout the county.

It will encourage the Council to lead by example by enhancing environmentally sound policies in all its work.

**Legislative Changes and New Initiatives**

The awareness strategy will strive to plan ahead and respond to new challenges arising from forthcoming legislation and new developments at a local and national level.

**Council In House Awareness**

Raising awareness of environmental issues and the Council's own impacts on the environment within the Council at all levels. This will include a programme to introduce an EMS (Environmental Management System) within the Council.

**Target Audience**

The environmental awareness strategy will be fully inclusive and will target Schools, Public, Businesses, Community Groups, Other Groups, Council staff and the public in general.

**Review**

An annual review will be carried out each January of the objectives and actions of the plan. Improvements will be highlighted and incorporated into the following years programme. A report will be presented annually to the SPC.

# Action Plan 2008

**Objective:**

To increase environmental awareness amongst school children & teachers/leaders

<b>Action:</b>	<b>Tasks:</b>	<b>Targets:</b>
Conduct Leader workshops on 'Energy' theme to schools on second theme of Green-Schools Programme	Organise and co-ordinate SEI ECO UNESCO teacher training workshops for schools & colleges undertaking the energy theme.	By Feb '08
Host Green-Schools Teacher Seminar	Organise and co-ordinate seminar with guest speaker from An Taisce. One seminar for green schools and one for schools considering applying for Green Flag status.	Before end Feb.
Conduct talks in schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- write to schools who have not registered with An Taisce.</li> <li>- Encourage schools who have registered to set up programmes in their schools, offer Council assistance in form of talks and literature.</li> <li>- Talks and visits as requested.</li> </ul>	<p>Introduce green school programme to 6 more schools and develop themes of energy, water and transport with schools moving to these themes.</p> <p>Assist 6 schools in achieving Green Flag status. (75 schools currently registered with 30 schools awarded flags)</p>
Run back to School Art Competition with environmental theme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Liaise with AWM re sponsorship</li> <li>- Circulate criteria to schools</li> <li>- co-ordinate judging</li> <li>- organise PR for winners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- by Sept '08</li> <li>- art work to be printed on refuse lorries by Dec '08</li> </ul>

**Objective:**

To promote Local Agenda 21 Programme by working in partnership with others to highlight sustainable development principles and develop an awareness raising network – a partnership of Council, Central Government, NGO's, Business community, environmental groups, and others.

<b>Action:</b>	<b>Tasks:</b>	<b>Targets:</b>
<p>Avail of grant aid available through DOE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advertise grant on radio &amp; local papers.</li> <li>- Encourage local groups to apply.</li> <li>- Evaluation of applications.</li> <li>- Administer grant.</li> <li>- Work with successful applicants to implement their '07 projects (community composter, Energy Leader workshops for teachers &amp; youths, composting workshop, Down in the Dumps' theatre workshops, Waste Minimisation Programme).</li> <li>- Report to DOE on progress of '07 funded projects.</li> </ul>	<p>Dependent on announcement from DOE – normally May – Jul</p> <p>Before year end.</p> <p>Jan – April '08</p> <p>By June 13<sup>th</sup></p>

**Objective:** To promote environmental awareness amongst the public.

<b>Action:</b>	<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Targets</b>
Annual Environment newsletter & mailshot	-Prepare articles, collate photographs, coordinate production. Liaise with staff environment.	Prepare articles Jan '08  Distribute by Feb '08
Press releases in local newspapers re environmental events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National Tree Week (distribute trees in association area offices)</li> <li>- Support Real Nappy Week</li> <li>- National Spring Clean Month (liaise community groups, Schools, Tidy Towns, Resident Associations &amp; Waste Enforcement and Litter Teams for clean ups)</li> <li>- composting workshops in association with Tidy Towns Groups to promote community composting.</li> <li>- National Recycling Week</li> <li>-Christmas recycling, reuse</li> <li>- Christmas Tree Collection Programme</li> <li>-Any other national events which may be notified to council (e.g. '07 National Gum Task Force launches &amp; Farm Plastic Collection)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mar 3<sup>rd</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup></li> <li>Mar 11<sup>th</sup> – Mar 18<sup>th</sup></li> <li>Month of April</li> <li>April/May</li> <li>1<sup>st</sup> week October</li> <li>December</li> <li>December</li> <li>Ongoing</li> </ul>
Run competitions with above national events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- national tree week tree planting ceremony</li> <li>- real nappy week (coffee morning)</li> <li>- National Recycling Week</li> </ul>	

Advertising campaign local radio	- Littering, fly tipping, recycling, bottle banks, composting, dash board dining.	Ongoing
By developing Environment web pages	- participate on Internet & Intranet Review Group. - revise layout in accordance with decisions made by Review Group. -regularly update web pages - train to update web pages rather than going through IT - work in association with Athlone.ie to update their web site. - encourage Environment staff to put forward suggestions and information for site.	Ongoing during '08
Run two hazardous waste collection days	- carry out annual review of collections - seek quotations - organise PR (press & radio adverts, .press releases, posters etc)	Saturday May 31 <sup>st</sup> & Sat 6 <sup>th</sup> Dec
Host information stands at Agricultural Shows	- Organise attendance at Athlone, Mullingar and Moate Agricultural Shows	May to Aug
Visits and talks to groups	As requested	Ongoing
Tie in with and highlight national events and strategies which are relevant to the Council's role in Environmental Awareness	- advertise events - devise local campaigns where necessary	Ongoing
Develop promotional material	- prepare and design new recycling leaflet  - liaise with staff Environment Section on needs.	Printed by May '08  Ongoing
Administer Anti-Litter Grant	- Advertise local press - Devise projects with Litter and Waste Enforcement Teams (litter blackspot areas) - devise grant scheme to encourage community	Sept/Oct '08 Ongoing '08  By Feb '08

	<p>groups to carry out clean ups in litter black spots/bogs etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implement projects</li> </ul>	By Dec '08
<p>Improve awareness through projects with regional EAO's</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participate on Regional EAO Committee</li> <li>- Attend national EAO meetings for information gathering ect.</li> <li>- Devise regional projects where appropriate</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>At least 2-3 mtgs per year.</p>

To promote an In House Awareness Programme

<b>Action:</b>	<b>Tasks:</b>	<b>Targets:</b>
Work with Greening Committee to implement Action Plan approved by Management in Nov '07	See Greening Committee Action Plan below.	

## **Greening Committee Action Plan**

The action plan below sets out a programme to introduce waste minimisation within the Council.

### **Objective:**

**To implement a programme for waste minimisation and sustainable management of waste generated within Westmeath County Council.**

Aim	Responsible	Actions	Target Date
<b>Waste Minimisation</b>	All employees Greening Committee IT Section	<b>REDUCE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paper – photocopy/print both sides (those who cannot use facility to be shown how).</li> <li>Printers to default to double sided by Dec '08.</li> <li>Email memos.</li> <li>Cancel any unwanted subscriptions to avoid unwanted paper accumulating.</li> <li>Print in grey scale for all internal documents.</li> <li>Scan documents rather than photocopy where possible.</li> </ul>	<i>Jan - Mar '08</i>  <i>From Jan '08 By Mar '08 From Jan '08</i>  <i>Jan – Mar '08</i>  <i>From April '08</i>  <i>From Jan '08</i>
	All employees Greening Committee	<b>REUSE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reuse scrap paper</li> <li>Replace plastic cups at water founts with paper cups</li> <li>Reuse envelopes internally</li> <li>Reuse cardboard for outgoing deliveries</li> </ul>	<i>From Jan '08 From Jan '08</i>  <i>From Jan '08</i>  <i>From Jan '08</i>
	All employees Greening Committee	<b>RECYCLE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set up system for segregation of materials for recycling (all office paper -non confidential, newspapers, magazines, cardboard, tetra paks, plastic milk bottles, washing up liquid bottles, soap dispenser bottles, cans - steel &amp; aluminium) throughout Council, by introducing a second bin at each desk. The latter is dependent on budget (funding available through Partnership could possibly be used).</li> </ul>	<i>Introduce Jan '08 &amp; achieve 90% recycling of all paper &amp; cardboard by Dec '08</i>
	Awareness Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff to be made aware of what types of plastic can be recycled so correct plastics are put into recycle bin.</li> </ul>	<i>By Jan '08</i>
	Greening Committee members in association with Caretakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce blue recycling bin at Millennium House, Library (Church Ave), Motor Tax &amp; Finance.</li> </ul>	<i>Jan '08</i>
	Greening Committee/IT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All sections to recycle printer cartridges (through Charity e.g. Jack and Jill Foundation, Temple Street, or Wingspread or with Cartridge World), computer components, mobile phones, etc.</li> </ul>	<i>From Jan '08</i>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set up receptacle (through KMK) to recycle batteries at Fire Station and at County Buildings, libraries.</li> </ul>	<i>From Mar '08</i>
		<b>COMPOSTING/BROWN BIN SCHEME</b> Should consider for new County Building, an in house composting project for horticultural waste (grass, plant waste, etc.), staff lunch waste (teabags, fruit peels, etc.) and paper/cardboard waste.	<i>When moved to new County Buildings</i>

<b>Staff Awareness</b>	EAO	<p><b><u>AWARENESS TRAINING PROGRAMME</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run an awareness day to kick off Action Plan.</li> <li>• Ongoing Awareness programme for staff - Posters, Emails, message board.</li> <li>• Create awareness re use of Datastroy disposal units.</li> <li>• Competition for best idea for in house Reduce, Reuse, Recycle</li> <li>• Liaise with Gerry Sheridan in relation to briefing cleaners re segregation of waste to ensure it goes to correct bin. Notification in other languages if necessary.</li> </ul>	<i>Jan '08</i>
	EAO/Greening Committee		<i>Jan – Dec '08</i>
	EAO		<i>By end of Mar '08</i>
	EAO		<i>Jan '08</i>
	EAO		<i>Jan '08</i>
	EAO	<p><b><u>OTHER ISSUES</u></b></p> <p><i>Bin tag receipt forms at Mullingar Area Office to be dated.</i></p>	<i>From Jan '08</i>

To support Community Groups in developing environmental awareness in their locality.

<b>Action:</b>	<b>Tasks:</b>	<b>Targets:</b>
By promoting Tidy Estates Competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advertise grant</li> <li>- Administer grant</li> </ul>	Carry out inspections by end of August
By promoting Tidy Towns Competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- support to Tidy Towns groups</li> <li>- organise seminar in March/April for groups with guest speakers from National Tidy Towns Competition &amp; a consistently successful Tidy Town representative</li> <li>- liaise with C&amp;E re grants</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing 2008</p> <p>Before end March</p> <p>May/June</p>
By running Tidy Town Merit Awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organise awards ceremony</li> <li>- administer grants</li> </ul>	<p>By end Oct</p> <p>By end Oct</p>
By running Residents Association Grant	-Liaise with C& E re grant application, approving grants & awards ceremony	Jan - Jun
By promoting Sponsor a Bottlebank Campaign	- approach businesses and community groups e.g. football clubs, community centres etc to get involved in the campaign	Commence in February 2008
By supporting businesses & community groups & in house committee re IBAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Liaise with Area Staff</li> <li>- Work with &amp; devise projects with Tidy Towns groups, businesses &amp; schools to improve litter situation</li> </ul>	Ongoing