

# foreword

A lot has happened since Cumbria County Council published its first environmental strategy back in 1991. Some of the issues that were causing concern then have responded to a combination of international action, tougher regulation and public pressure. In addition, private companies, local authorities and other organisations have all taken action to reduce the impact of their activities on the environment in response to public concerns.

As some issues recede, some become more critical. Climate change and global warming were hotly debated throughout the early 1990's. That debate is now over. Global and local temperatures show an upward trend and unpredictable and severe changes in seasonal weather patterns are there for all to see. This reinforces the need for the County Council to take corporate action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions arising from energy use in buildings and employee transport.

Society is producing more and more waste and to help manage it sustainably the County Council has adopted a new waste management strategy. Working with District Councils, we aim to minimise the amount of household waste produced and to increase the amount being recycled and composted. Our first target, in what is a major assault on waste, is to recycle and compost 21% of our rubbish by 2006.

Progress has been made in other areas. Much of the Council's environmental programme is delivered by working in partnership with others. These partnerships deliver a wide range of practical programmes that improve the quality of our countryside, coastline, local biodiversity and heritage and help to ensure that these valued environments are well managed for all.

The Council is striving to base its policy and practice on sustainability principles. In addition we need to influence the policies of others and to encourage the people of Cumbria to live and work in a more sustainable manner.

Much remains to be done. We cannot become complacent about the environment. New issues such as genetically modified crops arise all the time, while other issues like nuclear waste have been and will continue to be with us for a long time.

Cumbria has a unique environment. The County Council values that environment and will continue to take action to protect and enhance it. This Strategy is designed to pull together many of these actions and give them greater coherence. It also provides a basis to prioritise actions. The Strategy should remind us all that we have a responsibility to protect the environment and make life in Cumbria more sustainable.

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