

Small and big steps

towards sustainable
development



Agenda 21 and environmental
work in the municipality of Växjö

It began back
in the 1960s...

Växjö is not able to solve the world's environmental problems, but by taking small and big steps, we can all share the responsibility. What we do locally is also important globally. As far as Växjö was concerned, it was the polluted lakes and watercourses that set off the alarm bells in the 1960s. The Local Authorities gradually managed to restore the lakes and began to carry into effect the vision of a sustainable Växjö.

For the most part, the environmental work and operations of the Local Authorities are regulated by environmental legislation. The environmental work within the ambit of Agenda 21, on the other hand, is a voluntary part of development work for a sustainable society. This brochure presents some of our work with Agenda 21 and the environment. If you would like to find out more, please contact us or visit our website www.vaxjo.se.

Moving towards a sustainable Växjö

Roads to success/Resources

Agenda 21 and the environmental work in the municipality of Växjö are both successful, and nationally and internationally recognised projects. What is the secret behind this? There are a number of explanations. However, we believe that three of them are particularly important.

Political consensus on environmental issues. Politicians from the various parties are unanimous when it comes to working for the sustainable development of the region. This was especially apparent in 1996 when the Local Authorities reached a unanimous climate decision to decrease the use of fossil fuels in the region.

Extensive collaboration. The Local Authorities have been working together with companies,

organisations and individuals since the mid 1990s. Our Local Agenda 21 strategy and numerous project ideas evolved from this collaborative enterprise. We have been keenly alive to ideas that have emerged at round-table discussions, seminars and the Agenda 21 forum, a network for the general public.

Resources. Växjö has been successful in its applications to the Swedish government and the EU for part-funding of its environmental projects. The funding has meant that many people have become involved, both employees from the Local Authorities and others too. The local investment programmes (Lip) have provided tremendous opportunities for implementing Växjö's Local Agenda 21.



Sarah Nilsson
International strategist,
Växjö Local Authorities

"The climatic changes, which we have in fact already started to notice, constitute the greatest threat to our welfare. We may have to start getting used to a more turbulent climate with more rain."

"I want to believe and hope that Växjö will be the first fossil fuel free municipality in the world"

Some milestones and environmental triumphs stand out in the historical narrative of how the environmental work in Växjö has developed.

1970

Restoration work on the lakes in the Växjö region began in the 1970s.



1980

Växjö Energi AB started using biofuel for heating.

1992

Agenda 21 was adopted in Rio de Janeiro.

1993

The Local Authorities' first environmental policy was approved.

1994

Sundet, a new sewage treatment works was put into operation.

1995

Environmental report 1994 marked the start of an annual environmental review.

1995

Work in collaboration with the Swedish Society for the Conservation of Nature got under way.

1996

Decision to become a fossil fuel free municipality.



1996

Sandvik II biofuel power and heating plant came into operation and extension work continued on the district heating system.

1996

Five fossil fuel free municipalities convene in the 'Challenger Municipalities' project.

1997

Round-table discussions and advisory sessions as part of the Agenda 21 process.

1998

First local investment programme with funds appropriated for about 30 projects.



1999

Local Agenda 21 strategy with goals being approved for the six areas.

1999

Agenda 21 committee introduced.

2000

Växjö won the International environmental award for work promoting the protection of the atmosphere.



2001

Second local investment programme with funds appropriated for about 20 projects.

2001

Decision to construct a biogas plant for organic waste.



2002

Launch of the ecoBudget, Mobility Office and Battering Ram projects.

2002

Review of Agenda 21 in Johannesburg and Växjö. Agenda 21 forum continues.



The goal:

Sustainable development in the municipality of Växjö

The areas in fokus

Four-legged
environmental
labourers on the
wetlands of Bäckaslöv

Our work to create a sustainable Växjö has developed over the course of the years thanks to the commitment and know-how of the general public, staff and politicians. Here are some important areas for a sound living environment that we are working with on a long-term basis.



**Mårten Segerberg, urban horticulturist,
Växjö Local Authorities**

"People need these verdant areas so they can recoup their energy and peace of mind. It is important that children living in towns also have good places in which to play. The trees in our town are a natural air conditioning system, and we must take great care of them."

No fossil fuels in Växjö

On both a local and an international level, Växjö has created a distinctive environmental image for itself, particularly concerning the issue of climatic changes. This is because many of today's environmental problems are caused by the use of fossil fuels, such as oil, petrol and diesel. Changes in the climate are one of the most serious threats to our environment.

In 1996, a unanimous decision was reached to make Växjö a fossil fuel free municipality. The consequence of this would be a reduction in the contribution to the greenhouse effect. Växjö wants carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels to be halved between 1993 and 2010 throughout its entire region.

Experience shows that it is easy to achieve results in the field of energy, for example by replacing oil with biofuel, but it is more difficult to do anything about the carbon dioxide emissions from transport. Växjö has taken many positive measures in its work to reduce the impact on the climate by investing in district heating, bicycle lanes and a biogas plant.

Caring for Växjö's waterways and lakes

In the early 1970s, work began on restoring the heavily polluted and highly eutrophic lakes. Lake Trummen was the first in the world that was cleaned to improve its water quality. In order to restore the ecological balance, a total of three lakes have been dredged and fishing limit restrictions have been imposed. The Local Authorities have also invested considerable amounts in the latest management and treatment technology for sewage and surface water. The investments made for the management of surface water in Växjö, for example Linné Canal, demonstrate that environmental projects can also enhance the beauty of the town itself.

Millions have been invested in improving the water in the town centre, so that for the first time in many years, it is now possible to catch crayfish there and go swimming too.

A greener Växjö

The "Greener Växjö" Agenda 21 project is being run in association with horticultural and wildlife societies to create a more verdant town where people feel happy and like to live. Major renovation work has been completed in Linnéparken, embellishing the park with a new playground, a water feature, paths and cycle lanes, as well as new trees and flower beds.

Part of the work of nature conservation in the municipal region involves preserving and developing rich biological diversity. This includes protecting sites of valuable natural interest in nature reserves.

In recent years, the Local Authorities have constructed fish migration routes to make it possible for migrating fish to get past obstacles, such as power stations and reservoirs, as they make their way to the spawning grounds. So far, all six obstructions have been removed from the river Mörrumsån, between Lakes Helgasjön and Örken.



A bustling main street on pedestrian terms

Agenda 21 i Växjö and out the world

Ecological, financial and social issues all have to interact on equal terms in order to achieve sustainable development. Agenda 21, an action plan for sustainable development, was adopted at the UN's conference on the environment and development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. It is a plan that is directed at the masses and, in simple terms, constitutes a list of what we have to do in the next century to achieve sustainable development. In Sweden and Växjö, we put the main emphasis on environmental work, whilst in the Third World there is a greater focus on the social, economic and democratic aspects. Local Agenda 21 work commenced in 1993, and then in 1999, following wide-reaching dialogues with associations, societies, businesses and the general public, Växjö District Council approved the Local Agenda 21 strategy, 'Sustainable Växjö'. This strategy defines both long-term and short-term goals for the six important areas.

The goal-areas defined in the Agenda 21 strategy

- No fossil fuels in Växjö
- Caring for Växjö's waterways and lakes
- Greener Växjö for greater diversity
- Sustainable housing and construction
- Sustainable business and industrial development, along with new job opportunities
- Democracy and learning for sustainable development

The strategy is being further developed with lines of action, which administrative units and companies adopt and follow up. We are also implementing ecoBudget, the European environmental management system, as a means of managing the internal work processes of the Local Authorities in a more effective way. The Local Agenda 21 strategy for Växjö not only comprises the Local Authorities' own work, but also the efforts of all businesses, organisations and individuals in the region.

Gerd Benjaminsson husmor på S:t Sigfrids folkhögskola

"Each and every one of us must work for the good of the environment in our everyday lives. My contribution has been to help get the school kitchen certified to KRAV organic standards.

The Local Authorities ought to give priority to school meals and demonstrate that this is just as important as computers."



In practice

In some of the housing areas in the municipality, there are environmental officers ready and able to help tenants, in a number of different languages, with information and tips about how to save energy, refuse sorting, eco-friendly washing detergents and much more. This general advice emphasises the link between the efforts of the public and the objectives of the Local Authorities. Plans to turn Växjö into a fossil fuel free region are thwarted by one of the greatest environmental saboteurs of our time – transport. The Local Authorities' own fleet of vehicles are powered by ethanol, electricity or rape oil – all in an effort to reduce the emission of carbon dioxide from fossil fuels. The specially trained environmental pilots, who work at the various homes for the elderly and the disabled in the region, guide the day-to-day routines of refuse sorting and the purchasing of food. Many of those who work in geriatric care and the welfare services for the disabled have to drive a considerable amount as part of their job. However, ecodriving has now been introduced as a more eco-friendly style of driving in an attempt to lessen the impact on the environment. At one of the care homes, a conscious effort has been made to try and become self-sufficient in eggs and vegetables. The firewood chopped by their own hands, keeps the residents warm and cheerful on cold, dark, winter evenings.

Environmental work

on a wide front

Clean air and pure water are good for young and old alike – a good goal to have in mind both at home and at work. Here are a few examples; from everyday environmental work such as refuse sorting and heating with firewood, to training and more long-term environmental projects such as the biogas production plant where potato peel is converted into transport fuel. Schools are always lively forums for discussions about the environment. The 'Battering Ram' project focuses firmly on improvements in the climate. Environmentally-interested companies in the region will meet with parents and children at schools and make promises together to help the climate by reducing carbon dioxide emissions and the greenhouse effect, and thereby improve the atmospheric quality for everybody in the long run.

Promises to help the climate

- use low-energy light bulbs
- drive the car less
- take the train instead of the car or plane
- reduce the speed at which you drive
- lower the temperature indoors

Nursery schools and schools throughout the municipal region are working fervently on a project to attain the coveted Green Flag certification and be voted 'Climate School'. Local ambassadors for the climate boost interest in and promote the use of the everyday energy, climate and environmental management system out at individual workplaces and companies.



We are going further

It is important to hand over a sound and healthy environment to future generations. Government, local authorities, companies and individuals - we all have a responsibility to bear.

We have won the 'easy' environmental victories. We sort our refuse and take it to be recycled, but the total amount of refuse continues to grow. District heating generated from biofuel is both an economical and convenient alternative. But how do we react when the tax on petrol is increased? Opinion polls reveal that the people of Sweden want their government to make a vigorous effort to reduce

greenhouse gas emissions, but at the same time, they want to carry on driving their cars. These are not easy issues, and there are few obvious solutions. What it really comes down to is welfare and what you and I are prepared to do. Agenda 21 and environmental work is not something that will eventually draw to an end. It involves long-term work for sustainable development.

Per-Anders Persson, environmental analysis officer at the County Administration Board in the county of Kronoberg

"The environmental work carried out by the Local Authorities to reduce carbon dioxide emissions is commendable, but it must embrace all areas of local authority operations. Environmental awareness should direct decisions concerning the purchase of vehicles for local authority use and food for schools and day nurseries. Public transport must be environmentally friendly and less expensive."



Exempel på vad som händer och planeras konkret i Växjö kommun

Biogas from food left-overs. Can a car be run on old scraps of food? Yes, as a matter of fact, it can! Biological waste from households and restaurants will be collected and taken to a biogas generation plant where the waste decomposes and becomes an eco-friendly fuel that can be used to power vehicles. The planned completion date for the biogas plant is 2005.

Exporting the environment. Växjö receives quite a number of visitors from different countries who come to study the environmental projects that we are conducting here, especially our bio-energy projects. These visits are a catalyst in moving environmentally driven industrial development forwards and they also create export opportunities for local businesses.

More knowledge. Two of our current projects are ecoBudget and 'Battering Ram'. We are gradually implementing the ecoBudget environmental management system for greater efficiency in our environmental work. 'Battering Ram' is a project aimed at getting schools involved in helping to reduce the negative impact on the climate.

Climate projects continue. Companies, organisations and individuals will be invited to help devise a general plan for the protection of the climate. This will be used as an application for a government grant for climate investment.

Eco-friendly transport. Our work continues with a strategy for eco-friendly means of transport and our Mobility Office. By biking when you can, instead of driving the car, you improve your health, you burn up more calories and you can eat more chocolate. What's more, you save money and you do the environment a real favour!

This is what we are doing!



**Johannes Daun Nilsson,
age 8, goes to Waldorf
School in Växjö**

"I bike to school quite often. When I'm in town, I usually throw away glass, paper and chewing gum in the waste bins. At home, we grow organic vegetables and put all our old newspapers together on a table."



**Richard Henrysson,
age 13, goes to
Lammhults School**

"I try to remember to turn out the lights and television when I leave the room and not to throw sweet papers on the ground. I take the school bus to school. It's too far to bike. It's better for the environment to go by bus rather than everyone going in their own cars."



**Jannie Jarl,
age 10 and a half, goes to
Söraby School in Rottne**

"We have pigs and hens at home, and grow our own onions and potatoes. So we know what we eat. I think it's important not to spray vegetables, because the poison runs off when it rains and ends up in wells and rivers."



**Moa Hallenborg,
age 4, goes to Skeppets
day nursery in Växjö**

"I cut out the KRAV labels from the cartons. At nursery school we've got worms that eat up our food. My friends and I are going to save Nature when we grow up!"

Welcome to visit Växjö.

Many individuals and groups visit Växjö to study and enjoy. Most visitors study environment and bioenergy, forestry, elderly care and gender issues. We will do our very best to tailor a program according to your interests.

For booking of technical visits and further information Municipality of Växjö etc:

*E-mail: technical.visits@kommun.vaxjo.se
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For booking of hotel and tourist activities:

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We would be pleased to hear from you!

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