



**A greener, more neighbourly way to live  
in Sheffield**

## **Five Rivers Cohousing Sustainable Living Policy**

We aim, as a cohousing community, to contribute to a sustainable, zero-carbon society and thus help to mitigate climate change. To this end, we will aim to minimise our carbon footprint both as a community and as individuals.

As Lancaster Cohousing puts it, *"We want to design a neighbourhood where it is very easy to live a sustainable lifestyle"*.

Measures we aim to incorporate into our lives include:

### **1. Using less of the Earth's resources**

- We will share resources with each other as much as possible, rather than each household having their own. By "resources", we mean equipment for daily living and hobbies, such as tools and electrical items. We aim to have shared facilities to enable this, such as a common laundry and a workshop.
- We will challenge ourselves to adopt low carbon diets, eating largely vegetarian or vegan food that is seasonal, organic, and locally grown, by ourselves as much as space allows.
- We will aim to consume less. We will purchase products which are designed to last and use recycled materials and quality second-hand products whenever possible.
- When buying products, we will try to do so using ethical principles, choosing brands which offer real protection to workers, animals and the global environment. We will try to shop with co-ops or local independent shops in preference to multinational companies and supermarkets.
- We will repair rather than replace; we will re-use and recycle. We will use our skills and time, and call on people within our networks, to make the best use of the goods we have. We will host a regular "repair café".

## **2. Low carbon construction**

- We aim to build to high environmental standards with a view to reducing our carbon footprint as well as protecting ourselves against rising energy costs.
- We aim to use building materials that have high sustainability ratings and are locally-sourced wherever possible.
- We will install high levels of insulation and draught-proofing, with double- or triple-glazing for windows.
- When repairs are made by members on their individual units, we will ensure they do not impact negatively on the standards used in the initial construction.
- For energy generation, we aim to use technologies such as heat pumps, solar water heating, solar PV electricity generation, energy storage systems, and zoning control for heating. We will avoid the use of gas or oil.
- Where we buy in our energy, we will do so from a 100% renewable supplier, such as Ecotricity or Good Energy.
- We will use energy-efficient appliances (at least A\*\* where feasible).
- As individuals and as a community we will commit to using energy sparingly. We will set up a system to monitor our energy use, on an individual unit basis as well as in the Common House and across the community as a whole. This will include conducting an annual systematic calculation of our carbon footprint, reflecting together on the measures we have taken, and developing a plan for further reducing our carbon footprint.

## **3. Looking after the Environment**

- We will encourage bio-diversity in our green spaces, including protecting wildlife from our pets.
- We will collect and use water wisely, making use of rain water and grey water as much as possible and encouraging, for example, the use of showers rather than baths and low toilet flush levels.
- We will avoid using paints based on petro-chemicals, and instead use Low Volatile Organic Compound paints which will also reduce toxic outdoor and indoor air pollution.
- We will choose low-carbon transport options for our journeys. We will encourage car sharing of any privately-owned vehicles, and consider having a collectively-owned car pool. We will use electric cars, and have on-site electric vehicle charging points. We will also encourage sharing of bicycles, including electric bikes, with secure bike parking. Wherever possible we will avoid flying, particularly long-haul flights simply for adventure as well as business flying unless it is essential.

#### **4. Cohousing as a sustainable way to live**

- We will promote cohousing as a sustainable way to live.
- We will share our experiences in sustainability (construction methods, resource sharing, adopting low carbon technologies and lifestyles, etc.) through Open Days.

#### **5. Review**

- We will review this policy every 6 months to look at its suitability for our community: the progress we have made, what is proving to be difficult, and how to overcome those difficulties in a sustainable way.

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