Step by step, the Bergström family has become more eco-friendly in their daily lives. Starting with sorting their waste and buying ecological food, they have now found new ways to save money, lead healthier lives and contribute to a more sustainable community.

“Our goal was always to make changes but not go over the top. We want a comfortable life, and we want to improve without making things too complicated. It would be good if more people understood just how small changes and little effort are needed to make a big difference,” says Peter Bergström.

Best trip by train
One change the family has made is in their travel habits. They now use their car less, and travel more by bicycle, bus and train.

“We used to have two cars. Now we have just one, which runs on natural gas, and we use a bicycle with a trailer to take the kids to their pre-school,” explains Eva Bergström.

The most memorable journey the family enjoyed recently involved taking their bikes on the train.

“A few summers ago we took the bikes on the train to Lysevik, where we rode around and saw things we would definitely have missed in the car,” recalls Eva.

SMART ECO TIPS FROM EVA AND PETER

Think before you buy
Do you really need the latest gadgets? Is that item of clothing necessary? Can you buy second-hand skates for the kids?

Take the train
If you normally go by car, try and trip by train and enjoy having more time to draw and read with the kids.

Cycle to work
Try going to work by bike. It’s good for your health and the environment. You’ll save money and experience more outdoor life.

Eat differently
Add vegetables to your diet, add beans and root vegetables to meat dishes. Instead of rice, try wheat-berry, which is better for the environment.

Save money
If you find ecological food to be more expensive, cut down on things like mineral water and drink tap water instead.

Smarter shopping
Base your evening meal on what you have in the fridge. Keep a shopping list, it reduces the risk of impulse buying.
TOGETHER WITH EVERYONE who lives in Karlstad municipality we are working to create a good, sustainable city. The aim of our environmental activity is that Karlstad should expand while remaining ecologically sustainable.

Caring for the environment means caring about good health and a good quality of life. It’s obvious that everyone should feel included in this aim. We put environmental issues at the top of our agenda and want to help everyone who lives here to lead good lives.

Karlstad has made good progress in environmental issues and is today one of Sweden’s leading municipalities in the environmental field. But we can, and must, do even better. In this journal we explain how the municipality works on environmental issues – our successes and the challenges that remain. To carry on being successful we have to think along new lines, but above all we all need to work together. When we all make small changes in our everyday lives, Karlstad and our planet become greener and more pleasant!

WE NEED TO PLAN for growth while steering development towards a Karlstad that has energy-efficient housing, reduced car dependency, less waste and more space for parks and green spaces.

SMALLER CARS AND ALTERNATIVE FUELS
Reducing our greenhouse gas emissions is a large challenge that we share with the rest of Sweden, indeed with the entire world. In Karlstad, we must reduce emissions from transport, mainly from cars. We have to encourage people to walk, cycle and go by bus. And we must increase the use of alternative fuels that do not destroy our environment.

WE BUY TOO MUCH AND THROW TOO MUCH AWAY
Our consumer society also contributes to climate emissions, and the amount of waste is increasing all the time in Karlstad.

To change direction we need to make it easier to reuse things. We have to get more companies to invest in services and produce material-efficient and serviceable products with a long service life. Consumers can influence this development, by choosing high quality, for example, by using what we already have, sharing stuff and buying second-hand goods.

PHASING OUT HARMFUL CHEMICALS
Chemicals are used in almost everything: furniture, toys, clothing, food, hygiene products, electronics and automobiles. We are using more and more chemicals and some of them are harmful for us and for nature and animals. Children are more susceptible than adults and therefore we are working to phase out hazardous chemicals from pre-schools in Karlstad, but we must make more effort to achieve a more non-toxic environment.

KARLSTAD’S LARGEST ECO CHALLENGES

TO MEET OUR ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS WE FACE GREAT CHALLENGES. KARLSTAD WILL SOON HAVE 100,000 RESIDENTS AND WE WANT THEM TO HAVE A HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE.

DID YOU KNOW? The amount of waste in Karlstad has increased by a factor of ten compared with 100 years ago.

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Creating our green city together

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For Karlstad, the consequences of climate change will mean increased temperatures, greater rainfall during the winter months, changing flows in our rivers and increased risk of heat waves in the summer. This means that floods, torrential rains, heat waves, fires and landslides may occur more frequently and become more intense.

How to protect ourselves
To protect ourselves we are developing a flood protection schemes and a climate adaptation plan. We are also building physical flood defences at vulnerable places such as the main hospital, Torpnoret and at the inlet from lake Vänern to our inner harbour.

The most important measure is that together we are trying to reduce our carbon emissions.

In Karlstad we have a clear goal of reducing carbon emissions from the energy and transport sectors by 25% between 2008 and 2020.

We have reduced our emissions but we must increase the tempo. The reduction so far is 10% but our target is 25% by 2020.
It is only natural that we want to preserve and develop natural resources and biological diversity. One of our goals is that a further 1,000 hectares of forest should have long-term protection by 2020.

In recent years we have made many natural environments more accessible for visitors and walkers. Sites have been adapted so that the disabled can visit them. Boat buses have made lake Vänern’s archipelago accessible.

We are working to restore lake-side fields so that the shores of lake Vänern do not become overgrown. This protects both threatened plants and animals on these sites while opening them up to human visitors.

The municipality has 18 hiking trails that stretch over 120 km in total.

Our forestry work has eco certification.

In 2014-2015 we restored over 100 hectares of lakeside fields beside lake Vänern.

We have established four nature reserves.

The city is full of water

IN KARLSTAD YOU CAN SWIM, SAIL AND FISH. WE GET OUR DRINKING WATER FROM LAKE VÄNERN.

It’s important for us to look after our lakes and rivers.

Our municipal tap water is among the best in Sweden. In 2015 we won the regional competition to find the best water in Sweden! But many of our lakes and rivers are not as healthy as they could be, partly due to overuse of farmland nutrients. Many of our lakes are too acidic and need lime added to them. One positive development is that the sludge from the municipal treatment plants is so clean it can be used as fertiliser on farms.

7.6 billion litres of drinking water were supplied from the municipal water plants in 2015.

20% of the municipality’s surface is covered by water.

The E18 motorway is being rerouted to protect natural water supplies at Sörmon.

The rich variety of countryside provides great opportunities for recreation.

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Outdoor recreation for everyone

FOR MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES,
ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES ARE A NATURAL PART OF EVERYDAY LIFE.

We invest in education, make eco-friendly purchases, use climate-friendly vehicles and build energy-efficient homes. We want to be forerunners and practice what we preach because it makes our environment so much better off.

We are working to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, while in our own operations we focus on food and our use of electricity. Food accounts for a fifth of the municipality’s total carbon emissions.

All new construction projects managed by the municipality must meet high environmental standards.

Sludge from sewage plants is converted into biogas to power our city buses and into nutrients used on farms.

We have installed around 3,000 m² solar energy in municipal buildings.

Practising what we preach

Our municipality

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QUESTIONS ON THE STREET

WE WENT OUT ON THE STREET TO ASK FOUR RESIDENTS OF KARLSTAD WHAT THEY THINK ARE THE KEY ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES, AND ALSO ASKED THEM FOR SOME TIPS.

1 Which is the most important environmental issue?
2 Are you worried about the climate?
3 What is your best tip for helping the environment?

INGEGERD GUSTAVSSON, SÖDRA KROPPKÄRR

1 The environment around our lake Kroppkärrsjön. I live there and I think it’s important we have a good environment for all the birds who live there.
2 Yes, I’m becoming more worried. All of the environmental disasters in the world scare me.
3 Consume and drive in moderation.

PARVIZ NADERI, HAGALUND

1 Our air. You can make a lot of difference by changing how you travel.
2 Yes, especially the air we breathe. It affects all life.
3 Driving a car more smoothly; decelerating in time, using the brakes less.

MARCUS BORNESTAV, HERRHAGEN

1 Meat consumption, because that affects the environment more than anything else.
2 No, not directly.
3 Eat vegetarian food once a week. It’s such a simple thing to do.

LOVISA WETTER, VÄXNÄS

1 Emissions of carbon dioxide must be reduced.
2 Yes! World leaders are not doing enough.
3 Using the car less. If you cannot take the bus, bike or walk, then think if the car journey really is necessary.

ARE YOU WORRIED ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE?

Many people admit that they are worried and indeed scared about climate changes. This can include having thoughts about catastrophes, and this is often combined with a feeling of powerlessness. Many people react to this by denying or playing down the threats. (Source Wikipedia).

WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT YOUR CLIMATE FEARS?

The most important thing is not to ignore them, or to do nothing, because you can make a difference. Change your habits step by small step and do not get a bad conscience because you cannot do everything ‘right’ immediately. Remember that you are not alone, we are all in it together. Learn about what you can do and get more involved. For example, you can support organizations working on climate issues.

IMAGINE IF...

60 kg lighter

... if all residents in Karlstad sorted their waste, collected waste would be 60 kg lighter per person per year.

1,5 tonnes per year

... each car owner in Karlstad travelled by bus or bike once per week instead of taking their car, the number of car journeys would be reduced by the equivalent of 1,200 circumnavigations of the earth.

... each resident in Karlstad bought ecological milk. The use of chemical fertilisers would be reduced by 1.5 tonnes per year.

... if everyone in Karlstad ate vegetarian food instead of meat once a week, it would be the equivalent of eliminating emissions from 1,000 cars in a year.
What is being done at the global level?
In December 2015, world leaders met at the UN’s climate conference in Paris, COP21. They produced a new, legally-binding and global climate agreement that will come into effect from 2020. This agreement aims to keep the global temperature increase under two degrees, and that the main target shall be to limit the increase to 1.5 degrees.

This meeting set the foundation for what will apply after 2020, but this agreement will not be sufficient. The EU, other regions, specific countries and business must all make a contribution. So even you and I must help.

What will happen at the national level?
One of Sweden’s climate goals is to reduce greenhouse gases by 40% compared with 1990 levels. The Swedish parliament has therefore introduced various measures, including a carbon tax and eco-labels. The goal of these measures is to influence individuals, companies and organizations to change their behaviour and production methods in order to cut climate emissions.

What our municipality is doing
In Karlstad, the municipality’s environmental and climate strategy is guiding our activities. We are members of a municipality association that is a leading force on climate issues in Sweden. We have also committed ourselves to the Swedish government’s initiative that is entitled A Fossil-Free Sweden.

In Karlstad our goal is to reduce the impact of the energy and transport sectors on the climate by 25% between 2008 and 2020. To reach this goal we are trying to make it as easy as possible for local people to live, travel and shop sustainably in Karlstad.