

THIS IS A REAL OPPORTUNITY FOR COUNCILS TO LEAD ON AN ISSUE WHICH MAY BECOME ONE OF THE GREATEST CHALLENGES TO FACE OUR COMMUNITIES

Community leadership
and climate change

Guidance for Chief Executives



Community leadership and climate change

“ We need both to adapt to the effects of climate change to protect our communities and to act creatively **NOW** to cut the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change. In addition to providing a challenge, climate change offers an opportunity to address issues like fuel poverty, which have dogged our communities for a long time.

You will find that your council is already taking action that will help to cut greenhouse gas emissions by, for example, managing your use of energy, the Home Energy Conservation Act programme or your local transport plan. This guidance sets out information on a range of opportunities for all councils to develop their response to climate change. ”



What this guidance is for

Climate change is a global issue, which is probably already affecting your local communities. This guidance is intended to help local authority chief executives lead the response to the challenge of climate change. You have a vital role to play and are best placed to make sure that your authority supports the UK climate change programme, published in November 2000.

Chief Executives – Ask yourselves

Do you know how climate change will affect your community?

Do you see your authority as leading or following the response to climate change in your area?

Do you know what actions your authority is already taking to tackle climate change and how these link up with other initiatives?

Have you assigned responsibility for co-ordinating your response and developing your climate change strategy?

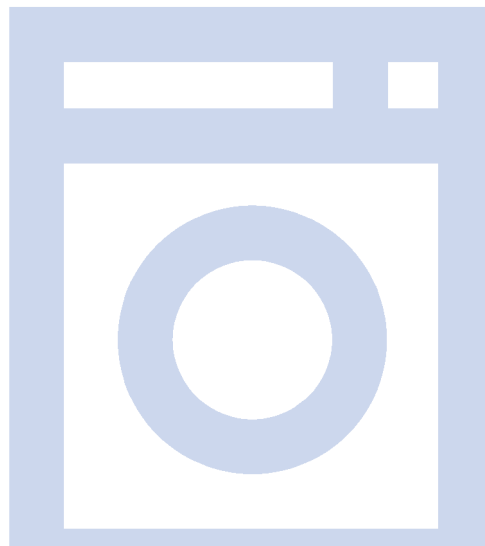
Have you briefed elected members yet and have you made a policy commitment?

Why we need to act

The floods that many councils had to deal with in autumn 2000 showed vividly how vulnerable we are to the effects of severe weather. Although we cannot say that any particular episode of severe weather was due to climate change, we do know that the greenhouse gases that are already in the atmosphere mean that some further climate change is inevitable, however effective we are at cutting emissions. We therefore need to adapt. We can also avoid the worst effects of climate change if we cut the levels of greenhouse gases that we emit into the atmosphere.

The London Borough of Harrow has let the energy contract for its 28,000 street lights to a company which supplies electricity from renewable sources. This should reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 2,500 tonnes per year.

Around the world, countries are working to cut emissions through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Developed countries all now have targets to cut their emissions. The UK's target is to achieve a 12.5% cut below 1990 levels by 2008-2012. The Government also has a domestic goal to cut carbon dioxide emissions by 20% below 1990 levels by 2010. The UK's climate change programme explains how the UK is on course to meet current targets, thanks in part to the action local authorities have already taken.



The benefits

Many of the actions that local authorities can take will also have other benefits. For example, a strategy on climate change could mean:

- lower fuel bills, helping people to tackle fuel poverty and its health effects;
- lower costs for businesses, making them more competitive;
- more efficient use of resources in public services;
- new employment and training opportunities for your area;
- a better transport system, improving access for local residents and businesses;
- improved local air quality; and
- increased resilience to the effects of climate change, leading to greater protection and a better quality of life for people living and working in your area.

There is a strong business and environmental case for authorities to improve the fuel efficiency of their vehicle fleets. By meeting the targets set by Motorvate in a typical 200-strong car fleet, you could save around £34,000 per year as well as delivering savings of over 30 tonnes of carbon.



Chief Executives' action list

The remainder of this guidance helps you to assess what you are already doing and to identify areas where you could do more as service providers, corporate managers and community leaders. Drawing together these actions could form the main elements of your climate change strategy.

Did you realise how much your local authority could do?

As service providers

Do you have a **transport strategy** that will cut emissions by promoting better travel plans and reducing traffic levels?

Do your development plans bring together policies that reduce the need to travel or identify sites for new renewable energy and good quality combined heat and power projects?

Does your **housing strategy** aim to meet Home Energy Conservation Act targets and improve the energy rating of homes? Does it make best use of the new home energy efficiency scheme and energy efficiency commitment investment?

Do you have a **waste strategy** that aims to reduce landfill emissions?

Does your **education development strategy** include innovative ways of promoting citizenship? Does it focus on sustainability?

Do your **publicity programmes** raise people's awareness of climate change and help them to identify what they can do?

Do your council's **regulators** aim to promote the climate change programme through education and enforcement in areas like environmental health, building control and local pollution control?

Do you have an **air quality management plan** that recognises the additional benefits of reducing greenhouse gas emissions?



As corporate managers

Do you have an **asset management plan** and **capital strategy** that identify sustainability as a strategic objective?

Have you signed up to the Government's **make a corporate commitment scheme (MACC2)**?

Are you minimising the impact of the climate change levy by managing **energy** well? Do you:

- *monitor use;*
- *set targets for improvements;*
- *have a self sustaining fund to invest in efficiency measures;*
- *require renewable energy options in tendering exercises;*
- *identify energy use as a criteria in purchasing decisions; and*
- *access energy funds and grants?*

Are you aware of how well your buildings compare with best practice? Are you improving their performance?

Does your **best value programme** require each review to assess sustainability? Have you considered sustainability or climate change as a cross cutting review?

Does your **vehicle fleet** have the least environmental impact possible? Do you also have a **travel plan** for Council buildings minimising staff travel?

Does your **procurement strategy** promote green and local purchasing?

Will your **local public service agreement** reflect sustainability as a strategic priority?

Do you have a climate change strategy?

As community leaders

Do you have a **vision** of a future where your community understands what climate change may mean for them?

Does your **community strategy** reflect people's concerns about climate change?

Does it recognise the benefits of action?

Do you plan to use your **well-being** power to support action on climate change?

Have you reviewed your **Local Agenda 21 strategy** to reflect the importance of climate change?

Do your key **local strategies** support regional sustainability goals?

Have you signed the **Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change**?

Do you lead by example? Do you have an **environmental management system**?

Do you involve key partners in tackling climate change?

Do you support **regeneration and renewal initiatives** that contribute to sustainable development?

Are you assessing your overall performance against climate change objectives? Have you considered setting voluntary local targets?

Are you reporting progress to your elected members and local people?

Adapting to the effects of climate change

Climate change will have far-reaching effects on our economy, society and environment. Research continues into how best we can respond. But it is clear that we will need to build flexibility into all aspects of strategic decision making by local authorities.

- When you make **planning and development decisions on infrastructure and buildings**, do you consider how the climate is expected to change over its lifetime, within the context of the regional development agenda and sustainable development? Do you consider the location of the development, its resilience to more extreme weather and likely pressures on utilities such as water?

Other questions to ask include:

- How vulnerable are your authority's **operations and responsibilities** to climate change? What aspects are currently vulnerable and how can they be adapted to make them resilient to both current and predicted extremes?
- Does your **development plan** bring together a set of policies that locate development away from flood risk areas?
- Does your **emergency plan** recognise the increased risk of weather related incidents and provide for them? Are you taking preventative steps where possible? For example, does your **flood prevention policy** include early warning for flood risks arising from watercourses for which your council is responsible. Does it increase highway gulley cleansing?
- Do your **development plans** consider the need for open and green spaces to offset some of the increased warmth that can be expected with climate change?
- Do you consider whether your programmes for renovating old **housing stock** and building new homes are sufficiently resilient to accommodate climate change over the lifetime of the homes?



The West Sussex Structure Plan proposes that local planning authorities should monitor changes in climate, sea and groundwater levels, air and water quality, and that plans should be revised urgently if necessary. The Plan proposes that development should be resisted in areas of greatest risk, or potential risk, from flooding, erosion or storm. Permission will also be refused for development which would increase the risk of flooding or erosion elsewhere, or development would only be allowed if sea or flood defences were enhanced.

The need for continuing action

The need to adapt to the effects of climate change and to cut greenhouse gas emissions will be with us for the rest of this century and beyond. Experts predict that we will need global cuts of between 60% and 70% over the next 100 years to stabilise atmospheric levels of greenhouse gases. The UK is also likely to find future international targets more difficult to meet as, for instance, our nuclear power stations close down.

Each local authority has a vital role in leading community responses to the challenge of climate change. Strategies developed now could pay huge dividends in the future. Your local authority may already be doing a great deal but, if we are to meet the longer term challenges, then we will need to achieve more. The groups sponsoring this guidance aim to review this action plan in the future, to stimulate continual progress.

Under the MACC2 scheme, Mendip District Council has committed to reducing carbon dioxide emissions from energy by 10% within five years, and from transport by 10% within one year.



Further help and advice on climate change

- The **UK's climate change programme** gives more details of the Government's plans for tackling climate change, and it emphasises the key role of local authorities. The programme also gives details of many other sources of information and help on subjects mentioned in this guidance. Copies are available from The Stationery Office. It is also on the web.
- The **UK Climate Impacts Programme** helps organisations to assess their vulnerability to climate change so that they can plan how to adapt. The latest climate change scenarios for the UK are available from UKCIP, as well as any work carried out to date on your region's sensitivity to climate change. You can find further details on the UKCIP's website at: www.ukcip.org.uk/ukcip.html
- The **Society of Local Authority Chief Executives**. Their website address is: www.solace.org.uk
- The **Local Government Association**. You can contact gavin.wilson@lga.gov.uk
- The **Improvement and Development Agency (I&DeA)**. You can find details at: www.idea.gov.uk/climate
- The **Local Authority Energy Advisory Service** can give you help and advice on energy efficiency: www.easiest.org.uk
- The **Greening Government website** includes practical advice on setting up environmental management systems, how to promote energy efficiency and buying energy efficient equipment, appliances and vehicles: www.environment.detr.gov.uk/greening/
- The **Energy Saving Trust** can provide advice on delivering energy efficiency to domestic consumers: www.est.org.uk
- The **Energy Efficiency Best Practice Programme** gives advice on how to reduce energy consumption: www.energy-efficiency.gov.uk
- The **Carbon Trust** will recycle receipts from the climate change levy to accelerate the take-up of cost effective, low carbon technologies by business and other levy payers.
- The **Environment Agency** can help you to assess your area's vulnerability to climate change and provide advice on other issues: www.environment-agency.gov.uk
- The **Are you doing your bit?** campaign gives people information about easy steps they can take to cut greenhouse gas emissions. The organisers can also work with councils to develop local campaigns. You can find further information on the Are you doing your bit website: www.doingyourbit.org.uk

Other linked initiatives

- **The Councils for Climate Protection (CCP).** In its first phase, this scheme is working with 24 councils across England and Wales to develop community-wide greenhouse gas inventories and climate protection plans. The CCP will provide guidance, training and good practice studies for all local authorities on the integration of climate protection into the local government improvement agenda. You can find further details on the I&DeA website: www.idea.gov.uk/climate
- **The Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change** that was launched in November 2000 commits signatories to prepare a plan to address the causes and effects of climate

change and to secure maximum benefit from action for their local communities. You can obtain more information from steve.waller@nottinghamcity.gov.uk

- **The making a corporate commitment scheme, MACC2,** aims for top-level commitment to set and meet quantified targets, for example, to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, minimise waste and conserve water. You can find further details on the website: www.macc2.org.uk

If you want to send us details of your proposals, then please send them to Philip Matthews, I&DeA, Layden House, 76-86 Turnmill Street, London EC1M 5LG. E-mail: philip.matthews@idea.gov.uk

Newark and Sherwood District Council is one of the many to have signed the Nottingham Declaration. In partnership with Nottinghamshire County Council, it is one of the pilot authorities in the Councils for Climate Protection scheme. The Council already has a corporate Carbon Management Plan to cut carbon dioxide emissions by 20% by 2010, and it is now exploring the actions that would be necessary to delivery a cut of 60% by 2010.



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