

**DEPARTMENT FOR BUSINESS
ENTERPRISE & REGULATORY REFORM**

**SUMMARY FOR ENGLISH DISTRICT
COUNCILS**

Energy Measures Report

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IN ASSOCIATION WITH:

DEPARTMENT FOR ENVIRONMENT FOOD
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COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL
GOVERNMENT

DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT

WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT

Climate change mitigation and fuel poverty alleviation

A summary of the 2007 energy measures report, for English district councils

This summary highlights the drivers for local authority action on climate change mitigation and fuel poverty alleviation, and describes the main areas in which local authorities can take action. The full report details possible actions that can be taken in each of these areas.

The role of local authorities

The overwhelming majority of scientific opinion supports the view that emissions of greenhouse gases (such as carbon dioxide) from human activities (such as the production and use of energy) are changing the earth's climate and that likely future changes present a serious threat to human society and the natural environment.

In October 2006, the Stern Review of the economics of climate change was published. This assessed the evidence on the impacts of climate change and on the economic costs. The Review concluded that there is still time to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, if action is taken now and in concert with other countries. A key conclusion was that in the long term the cost of inaction would be far higher than the cost of tackling climate change now.

The Government's view is therefore that taking action to mitigate the effects of climate change is the only strategy consistent with long-term economic growth and global stability.

Alongside this, the Government remains committed to tackling fuel poverty and minimising the risk of UK households suffering from the associated detrimental health, social and financial effects. Government efforts to remove households from fuel poverty are having a positive impact but there remains much work to be done, in particular following fuel price increases.

Local authorities are uniquely placed to act on climate change mitigation and to alleviate fuel poverty. They can take action on their own estates and housing stock but can also play a key role in motivating the wider community to take action, based on their understanding of local priorities, risks and opportunities.

All parts of the UK will be impacted by climate change and all areas have the potential to benefit from action to tackle it. Improving the quality of housing will help to bring warmer, healthier homes to those people living in fuel poverty. Increasing energy efficiency can save money for individuals and businesses, benefit the fuel poor and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

Local authorities already have a number of responsibilities to incorporate climate change and energy policy considerations into the way in which they carry out their powers and functions.

The publication of the Local Government White Paper 2006 signalled a shift in the role of local authorities. Tackling climate change is now recognised as one of the key areas in which local authorities can take on a community leadership role. The new performance framework, detailed in the White Paper, will have an appropriate focus on climate change, with the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review making decisions on national outcomes, indicators and any national targets.

Purpose of this report

Given the important role that local authorities can play in tackling climate change and fuel poverty, the Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Act 2006 required the Secretary of State to produce an energy measures report on the measures that would help local authorities tackle climate change and fuel poverty. The report must contain information on measures that local authorities can use to:

- Improve energy efficiency;
- Increase the levels of microgeneration or low carbon technologies;
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and
- Reduce the number of people living in fuel poverty.

Local authorities must have regard to the report when exercising their functions.

The Government does not expect local authorities to have to incur additional costs in having regard to this report. The report itself does not therefore impose any unfunded new burdens.

Key sources of advice and support

There are various sources of advice and support that local authorities can access when thinking about how they could contribute to tackling climate change and fuel poverty. The major sources of this advice include the Energy Saving Trust, the Carbon Trust, The Nottingham Declaration Action Pack, the Local Government Climate Change Commission, the Improvement and Development Agency, and Warm Front. These, and others, are referred to throughout the report, as appropriate.

Ideas for action

This energy measures report details actions that local authorities can take. For any given authority some actions will be more appropriate and more feasible than others. Only someone within a local authority can judge precisely which are the best alternatives for them. To help you make this judgement, this report details options for action in a series of modules and offers examples of action from a wide range of local authorities.

A good practice strategic approach

Taking a strategic approach to climate change mitigation and fuel poverty alleviation can help ensure that all appropriate actions are considered, that progress can be reported and that potential partners can see the value of proposed actions. This report is focused on climate change mitigation but any strategic approach should include adaptation to inevitable climate change also.

The report sets out the key stages involved in a strategic approach. The ideal depth and breadth of any strategy and action plan will to some extent depend on the resources available to an authority but the key steps of the process can be of use to all.

Effective action will include the development of appropriate partnerships. These can increase the resources available for initiatives, provide expertise and offer routes to reach and persuade the right people to take action. Monitoring the effectiveness of actions is something that can often be neglected, particularly when resources are constrained. However, it is an essential part of an effective approach.

Community leadership

Strong local leadership is going to be vital to national efforts to tackle climate change and fuel poverty. All sections of the community are going to have to contribute, through increased energy efficiency and increasing the use of renewable and low carbon technologies. A local authority is in an excellent position to encourage such action. Equally, a local authority is in an ideal position to bring together organisations and facilitate the tackling of fuel poverty.

Leading a local area to reduce carbon emissions and remove fuel poverty can deliver many local benefits beyond the obvious ones of avoiding potential climate change impacts and improving quality of life for households taken out of fuel poverty. It has the potential to impact on areas such as health and community cohesion. It also demonstrates that the local authority is willing to act on issues that many

are concerned about, and can create the potential for increased pride in the local area. Lower fuel costs that result from increased efficiency can provide increased disposable income, some of which may well be spent in the local economy. Developing a market for low carbon goods and services can offer opportunities for local businesses to develop in areas that will have national and international markets.

Own estate and operations

The energy consumption of local authorities is estimated to be at least 26 billion kWh per year. This results in emissions of more than 6.9 million tonnes of carbon dioxide (MtCO₂) and corresponds to energy expenditure in the order of £750 million per year. However, there are some common areas of excessive energy consumption where savings can be made, such as lighting, heating, ventilation, air conditioning and office equipment. Energy management within local authorities will contribute directly to climate change mitigation, lead to cost savings for the local authority, and form a key part of the local authority's community leadership role in this area.

Local authorities also have opportunities to influence practices in undertakings in which they have a part interest, e.g. a joint venture with a private sector company and services that are contracted out.

Environment

Local authorities have a far reaching role in the environment and can take significant steps towards mitigating climate change and alleviating fuel poverty through their functions in this area. They have the opportunity to encourage behavioural change through policies and enforcement action, and by taking a community leadership role that clearly promotes actions that reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

By ensuring policies and enforcement action support the climate change agenda, local authorities can also achieve significant benefits for themselves and their communities. These include financial savings, improved air quality, reduced traffic congestion and enhanced community liveability.

Planning

The planning system helps define local authorities' place shaping role and is centred on sustainable development. As such, it offers one of the largest opportunities for local authorities to influence energy use and hence carbon dioxide emissions arising from new developments. National planning policy in England and Wales has an increasing focus on climate change mitigation and adaptation and this has a direct influence on expectations for local planning policy and practice.

The new Planning Policy Statement (PPS) on climate change, due to be published later this year, will set out how planning, in providing for the new homes, jobs and infrastructure needed by communities, should help shape places with lower carbon emissions and resilience to the effects of climate change now accepted as inevitable. The PPS will be supported by a practice guide.

The planning system can be used to help minimise the carbon footprint of new developments. The design and location of new developments, including accessibility to public transport to permit sustainable transport options, are also important elements of low carbon developments.

Spatial planning also has an important role in shaping sustainable communities that are resilient to the consequences of climate change that are now accepted as inevitable.

Local authorities can substantially influence carbon emissions through their spatial planning role by producing development plan documents which make a full contribution to delivering the Government's climate change and energy policies and, in doing so, contribute to global sustainability. A key role can

also be played by local authorities in helping shape regional spatial strategies which are ambitious in addressing climate change.

In addition to implementing planning policies, local authority development control officers can encourage and educate developers to progress beyond minimum standards and towards a zero carbon standard, which will shortly be required for homes in England and potentially for all buildings in Wales. For existing buildings, local authorities can require or encourage use of sustainable energy options whenever refurbishment, conversion or extension work requires approval. Both development control and building control officers have a role to play here. In the domestic sector, this can in turn improve the energy efficiency of the housing stock, reducing levels of fuel poverty.

Housing

In 2004, energy use in housing accounted for around 27% of UK carbon dioxide emissions.¹ In England, approximately 4.4 million homes lack effective insulation or efficient heating required to meet the thermal comfort criterion of the Decent Homes Standard.² Partly as a result of this, approximately two million households in the UK were in fuel poverty, with one and a half million of those in the vulnerable category.³ There are therefore very good reasons for taking action to improve the energy efficiency of the housing stock and to encourage greater investment in the use of renewable and low carbon technologies for the provision of heat and electricity in the home.

Local authorities, along with other social landlords, have a duty to ensure that any housing stock they own meets the Decent Homes Standard. Local authorities also enforce the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, which includes removing hazards associated with cold and damp homes. However, effectively tackling climate change and eradicating fuel poverty requires more than meeting these basic standards. The report provides information about how local authorities can work to improve both social and private sector housing through energy efficiency and renewable and low carbon measures, as well as through changing behaviour and offering assistance.

Transport

Tackling climate change is a priority for transport policy. A good transport system is central to a prosperous economy, better access and greater mobility, but must balance the increasing demand for travel against the goals of protecting the environment and improving the quality of life for everyone, whether or not they are travelling. As people become more prosperous, they tend to travel more, and in ways that release more carbon dioxide. Carbon emissions from domestic transport have risen by 10% between 1990 and 2004.

Local and Regional Transport Plans are a key element of the response to climate change. There are also important areas of influence for all local authorities, whether or not they are responsible for the development of these plans, such as encouraging sustainable travel through the planning system, improving the infrastructure for all travel modes and working with schools and other partners to explain the benefits of low carbon travel in order to allow the public to make informed travel choices.

Measures to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from the transport sector will have a range of benefits beyond climate change mitigation, such as health benefits and improved air quality.

The Government recently published a draft Local Transport Bill (www.dft.gov.uk/localtransportbill). It contains proposals to support the Government's efforts to tackle congestion and improve public transport, by ensuring that local authorities have the appropriate powers to take local action to meet

¹ Defra statistics: www.defra.gov.uk/environment/statistics/globalatmos/kf/gakf07.htm.

² English Home Condition Survey 2005:

http://communities.gov.uk/pub/682/EnglishHouseConditionSurvey2005AnnualReport_id1510682.pdf.

³ 4th Annual UK Fuel Poverty Progress Report: www.berr.gov.uk/files/file29688.pdf.

local transport needs. Where they choose to exercise these powers, local authorities could in many cases also contribute to climate change mitigation.

Schools and education

Schools have an important role to play in mitigating the causes of climate change in a number of ways.

The government is currently investing in a major capital programme for schools. This presents a significant opportunity for local authorities to ensure that energy use and carbon dioxide emissions in school buildings is reduced through the adoption of energy efficiency measures and renewable / low carbon energy technologies.

Local authorities can work with school communities to ensure that energy use in school buildings is managed effectively. Local authorities can also work with schools in the development of school travel plans.

Schools have an equally important role to ensure that when energy efficient measures are in place these are brought to life within the teaching and learning plans for the school and incorporated within lessons and actions. This would help to encourage children's active involvement in energy awareness.

Economic development and regeneration

In terms of economic development, there are a number of benefits of tackling climate change and fuel poverty, including: the creation of employment in the manufacturing and installation industries; increased disposable income as a result of lower fuel bills, that may well be spent in the local economy, and business development opportunities for suppliers of low carbon goods and services. Furthermore, if left ignored, climate change will eventually damage economic growth (as highlighted by the Stern Review).

Local authorities play a key role in this as they are key delivery partners of regeneration schemes and new developments. Through good and positive planning, they can facilitate and promote sustainable and inclusive patterns of urban and rural development by contributing to sustainable economic development.

Adaptation to climate change

The focus of the report is on measures for mitigating the causes of climate change. However, some degree of climate change resulting from past and present emissions of greenhouse gases is already inevitable. Therefore it is important for local authorities to take into account both steps for mitigation (to reduce future emissions) and adaptation (to adapt to the changes already taking place).

Local authorities provide many services that will be affected by climate change. The UK Climate Impacts Programme (UKCIP) climate scenarios project demonstrates that we could have wetter winters, hotter and drier summers and more frequent extreme weather events such as storms and flash flooding. These are likely to have implications for services including: emergency planning, waste management, planning, estates management, provision of leisure facilities and social services.

This report does not attempt to outline what local authorities can do with regards to adaptation (although it does point out some key resources for this). Rather it aims to highlight how a strategic approach to both mitigation and adaptation is important.