



Local Government Association

a climate of change

final report of the LGA climate change commission



LGA climate change commission





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foreword

Professor John Chesshire, chairman

The commissioners have pleasure in presenting our final report. As requested in our terms of reference, this report critically evaluates local government's track record on climate change; and makes recommendations for local government, central government and other stakeholders on how the local government response must be improved.

We believe that tackling climate change through effective application of two approaches, known as mitigation and adaptation, will be a key long-term priority for local government. The most recent scientific evidence from the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is unequivocal. The prime minister and the other party leaders have committed the UK to a low-carbon future, within a global low-carbon economy. In our view councils can help cut carbon emissions by 150 million tonnes of CO₂ a year, contributing to the national target of a 26–32 per cent reduction by 2020.

Local government is uniquely placed to tackle climate change with a democratic mandate for action, close proximity to citizens, and a strategic role leading other public, private and voluntary sector partners. Our evidence has identified some outstanding examples of local council leadership and reveals that momentum is now building more widely. But many councils still have to put in place appropriate strategies and action plans. Few have systematically built carbon reduction and resilience to climate change into their organisational DNA. A more consistent, authority-wide, response is now required.

Tackling climate change provides huge economic and social opportunities as well as challenges, although such opportunities vary and there is no 'one size fits all' model. Later in this report, we briefly illustrate some of these in relation to energy and carbon savings in existing homes; and through procurement, planning and transport.

Some commentators perceive a tension between strong action on climate change and localism. We endorse localism and the innovation it can bring, but individual councils cannot opt out of tackling climate change. Councils face challenging financial conditions with tough decisions about resource allocation. But these pressures cannot be an alibi for inaction. In our view, citizens are entitled to expect council leadership and action on climate change.

Appropriate international and national policy frameworks are still evolving. We identify some critical areas where central government and others could do more to assist councils in developing capacity and in delivering effective responses.

Much of the evidence we received recommended imposition of a statutory duty on councils to act on climate change. We have carefully considered the case for such a duty, as well as wider statutory underpinning, and we make several recommendations in this area. We conclude that, over the next two years, there must be a significant and measurable improvement in the local government response to climate change. Within the new Local Area Agreements (LAAs), and

across their roles and operations, local government and its partners must show much stronger commitment to tackling both mitigation and adaptation.

To support momentum, we recommend that the Local Government Association (LGA) reconvene the commission in autumn 2008 and again in late 2009. We will then re-assess the effectiveness of the local government response and review the case for further statutory underpinning, including a statutory duty. Our unanimous view at present is that a statutory duty should be imposed on those councils that, within the next two years, do not respond to climate change.

We thank all those who have assisted us in our work. In particular we are most grateful to Phillip Mind, the commission's secretary, and his LGA colleagues. I also thank my fellow commissioners for their sustained enthusiasm and valuable insights.

introduction

The Local Government Association (LGA) launched the Climate Change Commission on 12 March 2007 with terms of reference to:

- review and evaluate critically local government's track record on climate change, and identify the factors which have contributed to and hampered local government's effectiveness;
- make recommendations for local government, central government and other stakeholders on how the local government response could be improved;
- raise the profile of climate change, and the local government role in responding to it, to local government, central government and the public.

the commissioners are:

Professor John Cheshire OBE (chairman)

Virginia Graham, sustainable energy policy adviser

David Green OBE, chief executive, UK Business Council for Sustainable Energy

Tony Hawkhead CBE, chief executive, Groundwork

Robert Light, council leader, Kirklees MBC

Philip Sellwood, chief executive, Energy Saving Trust

Simon Usher, sustainable development director, SERCO

mitigation and adaptation

In this report, when we refer to action on climate change, we mean action in two related and equally important areas:

- mitigation of the causes – by reducing greenhouse gas emissions; and
- adaptation to the effects – by adapting to the unavoidable climate change resulting from the increased concentrations of these gases from human activities.

To achieve our objectives, we engaged in an open dialogue with a wide range of people from across local government, national government, the voluntary and private sectors on how local government can improve its response to climate change. The commission's papers are freely available on its website <http://campaigns.lga.gov.uk/climatechange/>, alongside the research we initiated including:

- the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research which conducted a *Review of local government action on climate change*;

- the Tyndall Centre also provided an *Overview of the evidence presented to the LGA Climate Change Commission*;
- the Centre for Sustainable Energy produced *Council action to curb climate change: key issues for local authorities on the impact of local authority action*;
- the commission's interim report *Strengthening local action on climate change*;
- Local Government Analysis and Research (LGAR) surveyed council action on climate change, updating previous surveys from 2002 and 2004.

The commission met on nine occasions to discuss key issues with experts, held road shows in Birmingham, Chester-le-Street, London and Taunton, received written submissions, held seminars and workshops on several key issues in London and Brussels and met bi-laterally with a number of organisations including key government departments, the UK Climate Impacts Programme (UKCIP), Salix Finance Limited, the Association of British Insurers and the Welsh LGA.

This report sets out our recommendations to the LGA and local government, as well as recommendations to central government and other bodies which can enable and support more effective local government action.

Within this report, we are publishing short thematic discussion papers with more ideas on how the local government response can be improved – some of these ideas delve into detail, others are blue sky thinking. Our principal recommendations are contained in the main body of this report on pages 20 to 24.



section one

the commission's core message

the climate change imperative

Tackling climate change must be at the centre of local government's vision for their communities. It is not another priority amongst the many that compete for local government leaders' attention. It is now clear from the scientific evidence that it is the single priority which overrides all others, now and for the foreseeable future.

The prime minister, Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP, set out the challenge recently when he said:

"our mission is, in truth, historic and world changing – to build over the next fifty years and beyond, a global low carbon economy. And it is not overdramatic to say that the character and course of the coming century will be set by how we measure up to this challenge." ¹

There is a political consensus on the need for action. The Rt Hon David Cameron MP, leader of the Opposition, has said:

"The long-term nature of the climate change challenge demands a framework and disciplines that no government, of any political colour, will ever be able to fudge" .²

And Chris Huhne MP, Liberal Democrat shadow environment secretary, has said:

"We are stealing the future from our children and grandchildren, and it is imperative that we put our own behaviour on a sustainable footing." ³

Rt Hon Ruth Kelly MP, then secretary of state for communities and local government, set out the local government role:

"local government can have a massive impact on climate change...we are putting our trust in local authorities to have the expertise and leadership to deal with big policy challenges...local government must demonstrate it is ready and willing to take leadership of these issues without being told what to do and how to do it." ⁴

Community leadership on climate change is a moral imperative – to mitigate the most serious threat to our communities, for today's young people and their children, and the world's poorest countries – those that face the greatest risk from climate change. Local government has a moral obligation to protect those people in lower-income households who are currently most exposed to the risks of extreme weather events. If we do not stabilise emissions within eight years, we risk unpredictable climate change and with it, catastrophic consequences for our communities and communities across the globe.

The unique features of local government – its democratic mandate, its close proximity to citizens through the services

it delivers, its regulatory and planning responsibilities and its strategic role working with public, private and voluntary sector partners, and regional bodies – mean that it is on the frontline in tackling climate change.

We face an historic challenge. Local government proved its mettle in the nineteenth century, leading a revolution in public health and sanitation and in the twentieth century raising the standard of social housing, establishing the provision of social services and promoting economic regeneration. Local government action on climate change should be rooted in ensuring the community's economic, social and environmental well-being. It should become the defining feature of community leadership.

Each council's vision must incorporate both mitigation and adaptation and the challenges of delivering at least a 26–32 per cent reduction in carbon emissions by 2020 and at least a 60 per cent reduction by 2050; building a low-carbon local economy; protecting communities from extreme weather events and developing climate-resilient public services.

There are some outstanding examples of local council leadership, but a more urgent and consistent authority-wide response is required by each and every local authority. National government needs to lead by example – this requires considerably more evidence that government departments have convincing plans in place to act on climate change, and proof that these are being implemented. Whilst local government action on climate change is gathering pace, there are as yet few local authorities who have systematically built carbon reduction and resilience into their organisational DNA. Every major decision should be a better decision than the last one – lowering carbon impact and improving resilience to climate change.

We recognise too that councils are facing a challenging financial climate with tough decisions to make about the way in which they allocate resources to meet growing pressures, particularly in waste and social care. But this cannot be an alibi for inaction. Within the report, we make proposals for how councils can mobilise resources through energy efficiency measures, procurement and the Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT).

Some have suggested to us that there is a tension between the global and national imperative for strong action on climate change and localism. We reject this view. Action on

climate change needs to have a strong community focus, and local councils are uniquely placed to achieve this. We are strong supporters of localism, but we cannot have a situation where individual councils opt out of tackling climate change. We are particularly concerned about councils that have not taken the first step of signing the Nottingham Declaration, seven years after its inception.

the statutory framework

Our challenge to local government and the wider public sector is that there should be no poor performers on climate change by the end of 2009.

Local government, working with key national and local partners, including national government, the Audit Commission, CIPFA and the bodies that support local government improvement, should establish the reduction of carbon emissions, and resilience to climate change as priorities for every council and local strategic partnership (LSP), not replacing existing priorities but built into all.

Many people who have given evidence to the commission have suggested that only a statutory duty will deliver this result.

“There appears to be a general consensus in responses that there is a need for councils to have a clear statutory duty to consider and act on issues in relation to climate change mitigation and adaptation in all areas of activity and influence.”⁵

The commission has carefully considered the case for a statutory duty and wider statutory underpinning. We have concluded that:

- over the next two years, there must be a significant and measurable improvement in the local government response to climate change. Within the new LAAs, and across their roles and operations, local government and its partners must show their commitment to tackling both mitigation and adaptation. A statutory duty should be imposed on those councils that are failing to respond to climate change;
- a new statutory framework for local government action on climate change, including a duty, is consistent with the devolution of power and autonomy to local government. It would enable action in the same way that the new economic

development duty on local government is part of a wider re-alignment of powers and resources to promote economic development;

- government must take the opportunities afforded by the legislative programme to strengthen the statutory underpinning for local government action. The framework could be strengthened by taking a power in the Climate Change Bill to apply a new duty on public bodies to tackle climate change; adding the new national targets as a material consideration in planning law; extending the duty of co-operation to multi-area agreements (MAAs); extending the capacity of local councils to hold public bodies in their area to account for their response to climate change; ensuring that the new economic development duty on local government requires sustainable economic development; and allowing councils to fast-track proposals for carbon reduction within their local development frameworks;
- a strong and positive local government response to the new drivers for action and the proposals in our report could potentially have the same outcome as a new duty;
- the Audit Commission has an essential role to play through the comprehensive area assessment (CAA) to ensure that sustainability is embedded effectively in the work of local government. We welcome its commitments in the consultation on the CAA that it will place much greater emphasis on sustainability including the statement that *“long-term value for money requires the sustainable use of resources. This means taking account of the long-term impact on costs and wider implications, including for the environment.”* The Audit Commission will need to consider how it will strengthen its capacity to secure sustainability in the operations of local government and its partners.

To strengthen the challenge to local government on climate change, we recommend that the LGA reconvenes the commission in autumn 2008 and again in late 2009. At that time, we will re-assess the effectiveness of the local government response and review the case for further statutory underpinning, including a statutory duty on those councils that are failing to respond to climate change. At that time we would expect to see:

- demanding targets to reduce carbon emissions and drive forward adaptation in every single LAA;

- a 100 per cent sign-up to the Nottingham Declaration, or an equivalent commitment, matching the commitment in Scotland and Wales where all councils have signed the equivalent to the declaration, with published strategies and action plans in place by the end of 2008, and the development of an action-oriented declaration;
- the development of a carbon accounting framework by CIPFA for the public sector which will enable the appointment of chief executives of public bodies, including local councils, as carbon accounting officers;
- carbon emission reductions that put local government on a trajectory to achieve a 26–32 per cent reduction in carbon emissions by 2020.

We make a number of other recommendations to ensure a stronger framework for action – strengthening leadership, building capacity, improving transparency and building engagement – to ensure that councils take a longer-term view and focus with much greater resolve on climate change. These recommendations can be found on pages 20 to 24.

the case for action

The scientific evidence on climate change makes local action imperative. We briefly review the science below. Taken together with increasing concern about the security of our energy supplies, the case for more urgent and consistent action is now compelling.

climate change science

Climate change is already happening and poses a major threat to our long-term prosperity and well-being. Managing the threat requires a radical decarbonisation of the economy, and a move away from the use of fossil fuels.

The scientific evidence from the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is unequivocal. Most of the observed increase in average global temperatures since the mid 20 century is due to man-made greenhouse gas emissions. The latest IPCC report says *“warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as is now evident from observations of increases in global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice, and rising sea level”*.⁶

If immediate action is not taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, there is a real risk that we will reach a tipping point beyond which uncontrollable climate change will occur. Originally scientists thought that 550 ppm was the safe upper limit, but they have now revised this estimate downwards to 450 ppm. We are due to hit that level in 2015 on business-as-usual projections. This revision has

dramatically increased the need for urgent action.

The trend prediction for the UK anticipates warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers with heavy winter rainfall and extreme weather events becoming more frequent.

- The 2007 summer brought the highest rainfall since records began in 1766;
- The highest temperature recorded in the UK was in 2003;
- July 2006 was the warmest month ever recorded;
- 2000 was the wettest year in England and Wales for over 200 years.

To put this in perspective, the summer temperatures of 2003, which caused deaths, road melting and other infrastructure damage, will be typical by 2030.

The Stern review made the economic case for action. He concluded that *“the benefits of strong and early action far outweigh the economic costs of not acting”*.⁷ He estimated that if we do not act, the costs will be in the range of 5–20 per cent or more of global GDP each year whereas the costs of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to avoid the worst impacts of climate change would be around one per cent of global GDP by 2050.

The graph below, from the Stern review, illustrates the

pathways to stabilise greenhouse gases between 450ppm (parts per million) and 550 ppm CO₂ equivalent. The blue line shows a business-as-usual (BAU) trajectory. To stabilise at 450 ppm CO₂e emissions must be more than 85 per cent below BAU by 2050. Stabilisation at 550 ppm CO₂e requires emissions to be reduced by 60–65 per cent below BAU.

The key point here is to focus on each line over the next decade, where irrespective of scientific consensus on the 2050 end point, each and every profile notes the urgent need for councils to ensure that their approach to climate change is not the business as usual curve. We need to get off the blue line. With rising emissions from both transport and appliance use, there is increased pressure on other sectors, such as domestic housing, to reduce their emissions.

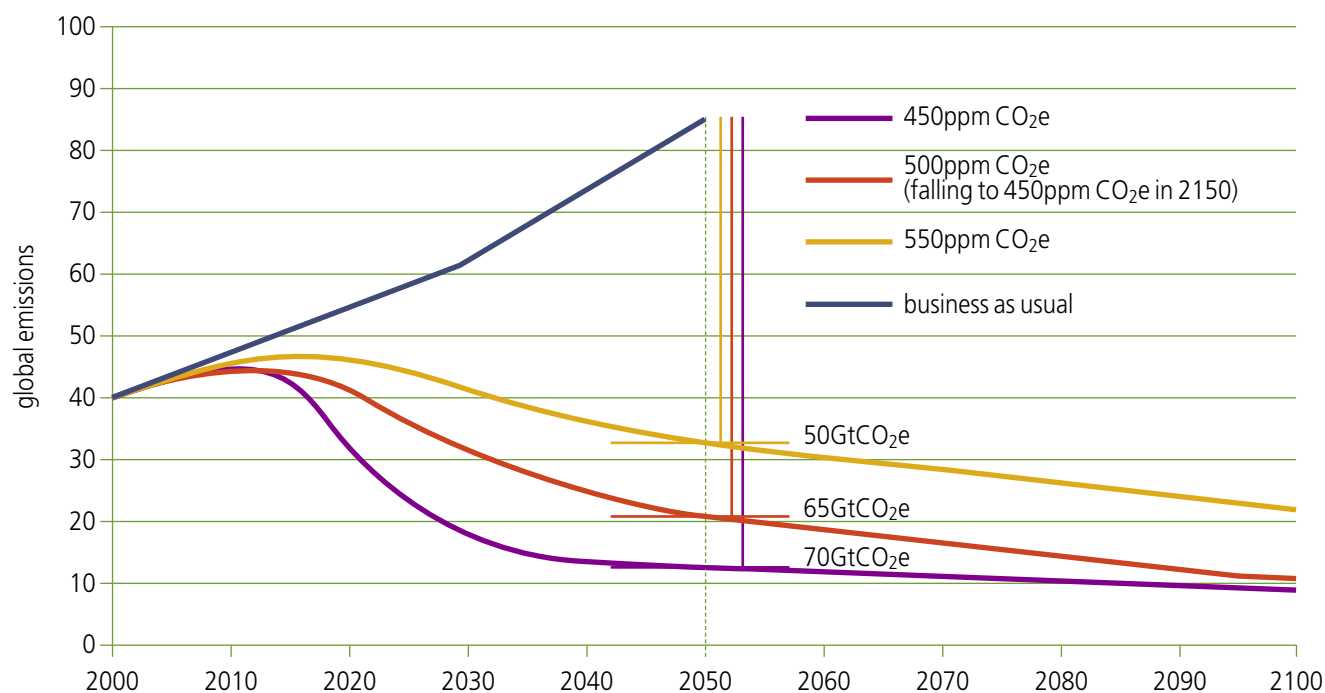
the future of energy supplies

The future security of energy supply is a major driver for diversifying and de-carbonising the energy supply and at the same time reducing energy demand. To achieve this, the UK must increase resource productivity and energy efficiency and increase the proportion of energy supply generated from renewable energy sources.

We face a number of energy challenges:

- much of the UK's energy infrastructure will need renewing over the next decade if energy companies are to maintain the security of the nation's energy supply;
- the supply of fossil fuels is limited and energy demand worldwide continues to increase, with demand expected to be 50 per cent higher in 2030 than today⁸;
- the analysis varies but some commentators say that global oil production has already peaked – the German-based Energy Watch Group predicts that production will fall by seven per cent a year from now on. Others say that it will peak in the next 10 years;
- North Sea production of oil and gas has already peaked and the UK has become a net importer of gas for the first time;
- nuclear power accounts for 18 per cent of our electricity generation and 7.5 per cent of total UK energy supplies. However most of the existing stations are due to close within the next fifteen years or so.⁹

BAU emissions and stabilisation trajectories for 450–550 ppm CO₂e



The market signals are increasing but volatile. Domestic energy prices have risen steeply since 2004¹⁰. The number of households in fuel poverty fell from 6.5 million households in 1996, to 2.4 million in 2004, and rose back to 4 million in 2006. Recent price increases have confirmed the trend with the number of households in fuel poverty rising. This worrying trend will continue if, as expected, fuel prices continue to rise, raising new challenges for local government, in both housing and social services, as vulnerable households face stark choices to meet their energy bills.

the private sector response

Individual citizens receive information on climate change through various channels. The media, the voluntary sector and private sector will all shape the views and behaviour of citizens, and condition their views of the local government response. There is already evidence that the response of some consumer-facing businesses has started to influence public attitudes which will set a higher expectation on local government to take a stronger community leadership role.

Two examples are worth highlighting. Firstly the insurance market is responding to the risks posed by extreme weather events and the summer floods where it has received over 130,000 claims totalling over £3 billion. There is increasing speculation about rising insurance premiums for everyone and the withdrawal of cover in high flood-risk areas. The Environment Agency is *“encouraging the insurance industry to use conditions or reduce premiums for those who install resistance or resilience measures”*.¹¹

Secondly, leading brands are responding to climate change. For example, Marks and Spencer have adopted Plan A¹² which includes commitments to reduce energy use, use green energy, tackle food miles and help customers cut carbon. In the past four years, they have cut their carbon emissions per square foot by 30 per cent in their UK and Irish stores.

The *We're in this together* campaign includes a number of brand name companies that have made a commitment to reducing their impact on the climate and more importantly to help their customers reduce theirs – participating companies include B&Q, British Gas, HSBC, National Express, O₂, Sky and Tesco.¹³

public concern

Against this background, what do the public think? What is their expectation of local government?

The evidence seems to show that people care about the environment and the threat of climate change:

- the Energy Saving Trust's Green Barometer research shows that 76 per cent of people in the UK agree that climate change will affect them;
- Ipsos MORI research for the LGA shows that 73 per cent of people agree that local government should make tackling climate change a priority;
- Strikingly, 67 per cent agree that the government should make efforts to tackle climate change regardless of the economic consequences.

Local government enjoys higher levels of public trust than national government, energy retailers and many other organisations. 75 per cent of people rate local government as trustworthy or partly trustworthy when providing advice on energy saving – compared to 66 per cent who trust or partly trust national government.

We acknowledge that climate change is not yet a doorstep issue for many local councillors. But there are strong links to other issues that do concern citizens – for example, flooding, road safety, care for the elderly and fuel poverty.

the economic opportunity

The focus of the Stern review is on acting now to avoid the future economic costs of climate change. The development of a low carbon economy also offers major economic opportunities.

“Just as in each of the three previous technological revolutions (in which) Britain played a leading role, we now have the opportunity to play a leading role in leading the world towards a low-carbon future.”
Prime Minister Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP¹⁴

Exploiting this economic opportunity and ensuring the resilience of the local economy to climate change should be a major feature of all local councils' economic development

and planning.

There will be a wide range of economic opportunities, and new jobs with a requirement for new skills. For example:

- improving the energy efficiency and resilience of our building stocks and developing new energy services to encourage the take-up of energy efficiency measures;
- building three million new homes to increasingly rigorous environmental standards and ensuring that the infrastructure is built to high and resilient environmental standards;
- carrying out research and development of new low-carbon technology including new vehicle technology and carbon capture and storage;
- providing energy supply from sustainable energy sources, shifting supply from a highly centralised system towards one that is increasingly decentralised and local, using Combined Heat and Power, biomass and other low-carbon sources;
- developing local supply chains, for example to allow supermarkets to supply local food to their consumers and reduce food miles.

The implications of climate change for the local economy needs to be factored into economic plans and strategies. The outcome of the Sub-National Review and the development of new single regional strategies offer the opportunity to make the strategic shift towards a low-carbon future, and for local government to work with regional partners to ensure that they make the most of these opportunities. There will be profound implications for investment plans, employment, skills and training, and risks to energy-intensive industries and infrastructure.

Government has promised consultation on a new economic development duty for local government. We would expect this to fully embrace climate change. This is timely and positions local government to lead the work now necessary to plan for a low-carbon future. The LGA is conducting further work into the opportunities a low-carbon economy offers a cross section of local areas.

international and European policy

Climate change is a top, if not the highest, international and European priority. It has dominated the agenda at international meetings throughout 2007 and there have been a number of landmark agreements and policy statements. During 2007:

- (February) the EU launched a new strategy to reduce the carbon emissions from new cars and vans sold in the European Union to enable the EU to reach the objective of limiting carbon emissions from new cars to an average of 120 grammes per kilometre by 2012¹⁵;
- (March) the European Summit agreed European emissions targets for 2020. The EU has committed itself to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 20 per cent from 1990 levels by 2020, regardless of what happens in international negotiations, and is prepared to go to 30 per cent by 2020 subject to the progress of international negotiations;
- (June) the Summit also agreed an EU-wide 20 per cent target for renewable energy by 2020;
- (June) the EU published a green paper on 'Adaptation to climate change in Europe: options for EU action' focussed on the role that the EU can play in ensuring that Europe is adapting well to climate change¹⁶;
- the European Directive on the Energy Performance of Buildings (EPBD) is coming into force. The first key milestone was when Energy Performance Certificates were introduced initially for the sale of larger homes, as part of the Home Information Pack from Summer 2007;
- (October 2008) all buildings occupied by a public authority or providing a public service with an area of over 1000m² will be required to display an Energy Performance Certificate.

national policy

National government has made climate change a national priority with policy developing quickly on climate change. It has recognised the importance of the council role in policy statements including the Climate Change Programme Review, the local government white paper and the Energy White Paper. Government ministers are placing a higher expectation on local government.

National government's leadership and support for local government action is essential. It is essential too that national government practices what it preaches and reduces its own internal carbon emissions, establishing its credibility with the local government community. During the lifetime of the commission:

- the Climate Change Bill¹⁷ was recently introduced into parliament setting a new national framework for tackling our climate change goals, including carbon reduction targets;
- the Comprehensive Spending Review¹⁸ announced two indicators for carbon reduction in the local government estate and per capita reductions in the community, one for adaptation and one for fuel poverty. They form part of the 198 indicator set from which will be chosen the 35 improvement targets that are enshrined in the LAA following negotiation between local partners and the government's regional office;
- from 2009, larger local authorities will be subject to the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC)¹⁹, a mandatory cap-and-trade emissions trading scheme applying to all UK organisations with annual electricity use in excess of 6,000 MWh from mandatory half-hourly meters (which broadly approximates to organisations spending more than £500,000 annually on electricity). It is expected that around 100 councils will be subject to the CRC;
- the first *Energy Measures report*²⁰ published in September 2007 under the Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Act requires local authorities to "have regard to" information on energy measures.
- the local transport bill includes proposals to increase the flexibility for councils to introduce local road user charging pilots, and strengthens local control over transport planning;
- legislation will also follow to enact the proposals in the Planning White Paper to reform the planning framework;
- CLG will also publish shortly a new planning policy statement: *Planning and climate change* following consultation earlier this year on how the location, siting and design of new development can contribute to the delivery of zero and low-carbon development and to the shaping of sustainable communities that are resilient to climate change²¹;

- Sir Michael Pitt's review of the lessons learned from this summer's floods will be published in December 2007²²;
- the government has committed to strengthening the adaptation dimension of the Climate Change Bill through a government amendment and to producing an 'adaptation policy framework' in spring 2008.

But will these developments create sufficient momentum for a fundamental and historic shift in local government's approach to tackling climate change?

We believe that they will play an important part in generating momentum, but we are sceptical about whether they will provide the necessary impetus for an historic shift because:

- it is not clear how many LSPs will adopt the climate change or fuel poverty indicators in their LAAs or how this will be monitored to ensure consistent and urgent action. Where they are adopted, they will prove a powerful force for harnessing all local partners towards action on climate change;
- obliging councils "to have regard to" an energy measures report is a relatively weak formulation (although it could inform part of an Audit Commission assessment of effective action on climate change);
- the carbon reduction commitment does not apply to all local councils. The best estimates are that it will apply to around the 100 largest councils;
- the Climate Change Bill sets a national-level expectation on the reduction of carbon emissions. It does not however assign carbon budgets to particular sectors, although such burden-sharing arrangements could follow in the future.

Real progress on climate change needs bold local political ambition and strong leadership, transcending short-term pressures for the next few decades at least. It means embedding climate change at the heart of other key priorities such as reducing crime, housing growth and renewal, raising educational attainment, improving health and ensuring economic vitality.

Local government, together with partners in the LSPs and their community, will need to decide the level of ambition for

their areas. That ambition will need to be strong and far-reaching if it is deliver its share of the national goal.

the local government response

local government's unique position

Local government is uniquely placed to tackle climate change – it has a democratic mandate for action, enjoys close proximity to citizens through the services it delivers and has a strategic role convening and leading other public, private and voluntary sector partners, and working with regional bodies. In the USA, city mayors and state government are both leading the US response to climate change. In Europe, cities like Freiburg are leading the way on tackling climate change.

Local government has a frontline role in leading communities towards low carbon lifestyles and can make a significant difference through sustainable procurement, investment in infrastructure and new buildings, waste management and recycling, use of renewable energy, tackling fuel poverty and raising the energy efficiency of our homes, planning for sustainable development, exploiting the economic opportunities of moving to a low-carbon economy, promoting walking, cycling and the use of public transport, and effective emergency planning.

Climate change is the historic challenge. Local government proved its mettle in the nineteenth century, leading a revolution in public health and sanitation. Today's buzz words are place shaping and community leadership. Local government action on climate change must be rooted in ensuring the community's economic, social and environmental well-being. For example, taking advantage of

low carbon economic opportunities; providing everyone in the community with a high-quality, well adapted environment; and alleviating fuel poverty through energy efficiency measures. In our nation, as well as in the third world, it is the poorest communities that suffer most from the impact of climate change.

On this issue, community leadership is a moral imperative. For example, an average county council produces 30,000 tonnes of CO₂ per annum. But its local community can generate 10 million tonnes. A council must lead by example, but action in the community is where the greatest carbon emissions are generated – 27 per cent by domestic users and 28 per cent by transport – and where the greatest savings can be made.

local government's ambition

Each local authority, working with their LSP, should put tackling climate change, both mitigation and adaptation, at the centre of their vision for their communities and enshrine it in their strategic statements including the sustainable community strategy, local development framework, local transport plan and LAA.

They will need to set themselves and their communities a target and strategy for achieving it. National government is establishing a statutory national framework to lock in at least a 60 per cent reduction in carbon emissions by 2050 and a 26–32 per cent reduction by 2020 – a framework that

demands a strong and rapid response from local government. The prime minister has also re-iterated national government's commitment to the UK's share of the 20 per cent renewable energy target agreed at the European Council in March.

The national targets provide a starting point for local ambition for the local council, the LSP and the wider community. Some councils and LSPs will go further. Some may wish to become carbon neutral bodies, a concept that Welsh councils are exploring.²³ If councils made their buildings and vehicle fleets carbon neutral they would save 5.5 million tonnes of CO₂ every year. In some areas, local councils have led innovation ahead of national standards and in our view should continue to do so.

Local targets should be credible and fully underpinned with strategies and action plans. Like the Greater London Authority (GLA) has done, councils should assess their capability to deliver against the targets.²⁴

In many sub-regions, the MAA could provide a model for action on both mitigation and adaptation and a focus for collective public sector action at the sub-regional level.

The LGA's publication *Closer to people and places*²⁵ sets out local government's vision for people and places. It sets a vision for better public services, quality of life and economic performance; and giving people greater power and influence over their lives – where place shaping is “creating places that are attractive, vibrant, prosperous, safe and friendly”.

That vision is only deliverable if local government plays a major role in:

- building a low-carbon economy taking account of the economic opportunities and risks;
- protecting communities from extreme weather events using the information available from the Environment Agency, the Met Office and UKCIP to avoid economic and social disruption which impacts more heavily on the most vulnerable, poorer sections of our communities;
- ensuring the resilience of all public services and infrastructure to climate change.

In developing their plans, councils should aim for a number of key outcomes:

- economic development and regeneration that encourages and supports a low carbon economy that is resilient to climate change;
- holistic local plans and developments that are carbon neutral and resilient to climate change;
- local public services and infrastructures which are resilient both to incremental changes in the climate and the risks posed by extreme weather events, flood risk and coastal erosion;
- public purchasing and infrastructure investment that are consciously low-carbon and resilient;
- all households taking energy efficiency measures to reduce the carbon footprint of the housing stock;
- local public, business and third sector organisations making year-on-year energy savings, releasing funds for other priorities;
- modal shifts away from car use to sustainable forms of transport including higher rates of walking and cycling and public transport use.

Unless there is an effective response to climate change, the delivery of other outcomes will be compromised. For example, the delivery of key public services, like caring for the elderly and vulnerable or providing a comfortable learning environment, depend on a careful assessment of the impact of trend climate change.

There is no one-size-fits all blueprint. The measures which councils take to respond to climate change will vary from one area to another reflecting local circumstance and the synergies with other priorities including tackling fuel poverty, traffic congestion, improving air quality and delivering greener and safer communities. The measures a local council takes to promote renewable energy will vary depending on the population density – for example, with wind turbines more suited to rural areas, and Combined Heat and Power suited to urban.

A number of councils have asked the commission what

action they should be taking. Several toolkits already exist and the various sources of guidance on climate change have already been brought together by the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform in the Energy Measures Report 2007.

At the regional and sub-regional level, councils are working together to identify the most appropriate action in their areas. For example, the Association of North East Councils recently published *Climate change – our commitment to a greener future*.

Councils with common climate change issues are also working together. The Core Cities recently published a shared commitment to climate change action between the core cities and national government.

One of our reports, *Council action to curb climate change*, prepared by the Centre for Sustainable Energy, provides a local carbon management matrix identifying the actions all councils should take. It also indicates the costs, direct and human, and the influence on local carbon emissions. It grades the actions on the matrix as easy wins, big strides and lasting impacts²⁶.

In section two of this report we set out five major areas where councils can make real progress. These are: adaptation; the existing housing stock; planning; transport; and procurement.

measuring up against the ambition – local government's track record

We were asked to assess local government's track record in tackling climate change. Against the bold ambition now needed, proceeding on a business as usual trajectory is not adequate. Many officers and members who are working to reduce carbon emissions and strengthen resilience have accepted that point.

At present, too much weight is placed upon:

- the examples of successful local action – some of which we have included as short case studies in this report. Individual local authorities have led the way including the Beacon councils on sustainable energy, and tackling climate change is a current Beacon theme. For example: the commitment in Kirklees to insulate every home regardless of household

income; low carbon energy supply from Woking's Combined Heat and Power Plant; and Nottingham City Council's measures to reduce car use including a workplace parking levy. But a number of exemplars does not constitute effective action by a sector;

- the role played by the Nottingham Declaration in going beyond an initial mobilisation of local government commitment to action on climate change. Whilst, the declaration, launched in 2000, has over 280 signatories, an increase of over 180 since its re-launch in December 2005, there is no monitoring of action in relation to that commitment.

Our assessment is that:

- whilst a number of local councils are pro-active and vigorous in certain aspects of mitigation, all could take a more systematic and consistent approach to both mitigation across their operations and in the community, and to tackling adaptation;
- many local councils have made a recent commitment to act on climate change by signing the Nottingham Declaration but need urgently to turn commitment into effective action. 70 per cent of local authorities are in the process of preparing a climate change action plan²⁷;
- all local councils must place much more emphasis on ensuring they and their communities adapt well to climate change;
- some councils have not signed the Nottingham Declaration. It would be simplistic to read this as direct evidence of inaction on climate change but it points to a lack of consistent action across the local government community.

The challenge is to bring carbon reduction and adaptation into the standard operations of every part of their authority – to make it as much a part of the DNA as value for money. Counting the carbon needs to become the normal way that local government does business and takes its decisions. For that transformation to happen, to lock on to a more demanding trajectory, a process of improvement needs to take place urgently.

We now set our proposals to make this transformation happen.

the Climate Change Commission's recommendations

Local authorities must strengthen leadership; build capacity; improve transparency; and engage others to tackle climate change more effectively. They have an opportunity, over the next two years, to put a framework in place to address both mitigation and adaptation.

leadership

Councils are well placed to lead all sections of their community's response to climate change. They are uniquely placed through their democratic mandate, their service delivery, regulatory functions, partnership convening and leadership, place shaping roles, and guarding communities against risk. The leadership needs to be systematic – councils can exercise a powerful demonstration effect through their footprint in the local area, illustrating to the rest of the public sector, the private and voluntary sectors and citizens what can be achieved.

But the evidence shows that success to date has been the result of 'wilful individuals' often leading action from relatively junior positions. The new performance management framework, including the new indicators, provides a new rallying point for leadership. The number of LAAs with a climate change target will supply powerful evidence of the seriousness with which LSPs, and local authorities, view climate change.

A number of councils have identified the importance of political leadership and executive champions throughout the

authority operating within a strategic framework that makes climate change the overarching priority.

we recommend that:

- 1 government must take the opportunities afforded by the legislative programme to strengthen the statutory underpinning for local government action. The framework should be strengthened by:
 - a taking a power in the Climate Change Bill to apply a new duty on all public bodies to tackle climate change;
 - b ensure that national carbon reduction targets become a material consideration in the planning law that underpins the work of local planning authorities;
 - c extending the duty of co-operation to multi-area agreements (MAAs);
 - d extend the capacity of local councils to hold public bodies in their area to account for their response to climate change;
 - e ensure that the new economic development duty on local government requires sustainable economic development;
 - f allow councils to fast-track proposals for carbon reduction within their local development frameworks.
- 2 over the next two years, there must be a significant and

- measurable improvement in the local government response to climate change. Within the new LAAs, and across their roles and operations, local government and its partners must show their commitment to tackling both mitigation and adaptation. A statutory duty should be imposed on those councils that are failing to respond to climate change;
- 3 the LGA should launch, early in 2008, a consultation with its membership on the ways in which the statutory framework to tackle climate change can be strengthened;
 - 4 all LAAs must carry targets to reduce carbon emissions and tackle adaptation, at a minimum, that would apply to all public bodies operating in the area;
 - 5 the LGA, Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) should monitor how many LAAs include a climate change target; assess the implications including those for Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships; and challenge those LSPs that choose not to recognise climate change as a priority. The LGA should assess what has been achieved as a result of new LAA targets on climate change;
 - 6 the council leader and chief executive should be jointly accountable for the delivery of climate change targets and action on climate change. By December 2008, all councils should have signed the Nottingham Declaration and published a climate change strategy and action plan covering both mitigation and adaptation. The plans should include measurable and quantifiable milestones at 2010, 2015 and 2020;
 - 7 all councils must undertake a climate change impact assessment of all major policy, planning and investment decisions, screening decisions to ensure that they are systematically lowering carbon emissions and ensuring that decisions are resilient to climate change;
 - 8 councils working together are developing MAAs to manage issues that straddle council boundaries. CLG, Defra and the LGA should identify pilot MAAs as an instrument for partnership working on climate change. For example, ensuring effective adaptation where the impacts are common across a sub-region and managing the risks, such as river flooding, requires a co-ordinated approach; as do responses to reduce transport related emissions; or bringing together public purchasing and procurement;
 - 9 by December 2008, as part of their strategic planning including sustainable communities strategies, local development frameworks, local transport plans and asset management strategies, every council working with the LSP should take further action to:
 - a make energy savings in the public estate and fleet;
 - b procure green energy services for their own buildings²⁸ and increase the use of de-centralised or renewable energy sources where appropriate in their area;
 - c expand the alternatives to car use in their area by improving walking and cycling rates and the use of public transport;
 - d introduce low carbon goals as part of their public procurement;
 - e improve the energy efficiency of the existing housing stock;
 - f ensure local infrastructure and services are more resilient to both trend climate change and extreme weather events.

capacity

To tackle climate change effectively, councils must harness the capacity at their disposal – in the form of powers, human and financial resources, data and third party support. The Local Government Analysis and Research (LGAR) survey identified capacity as one of the most significant obstacles to a more effective response to tackling climate change. This manifests itself in various ways:

- councils are not making full and diligent use of their existing powers to tackle climate change. For example, councils have powers to charge, trade and borrow prudentially. The Local Government Act [2000] also gives councils a general well-being power. But the evidence shows that councils are not using these powers creatively to tackle climate change;
- 86 per cent of councils identified insufficient staff and staff time to tackle climate change. Not all councils have a dedicated climate change function and councils report skills shortages in key disciplines, including energy management;

- council officers need to develop new procedures and skills sets, for example, to implement new planning policies and building standards, and assess renewable energy applications; to operate within the Carbon Reduction Commitment carbon trading scheme; and to procure on a sustainable basis.

There are a number of organisations that provide support to local councils – including the Carbon Trust through the Local Authority Carbon Management Programme, Salix Finance Limited, the Energy Saving Trust, the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and UKCIP. Given the increasing expectations being placed on local councils to respond to climate change, it is logical to re-assess the scale and nature of the financial and technical support to ensure that it is sufficient to meet a much higher level of need, with a view to both broadening and deepening the support available. The Energy Saving Trust, the Carbon Trust and Salix, IDeA, Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships and UKCIP support local action and receive their funding from Defra. The overwhelming balance of support is for mitigation. Given that council action on adaptation is relatively under-developed, there is now a particularly strong case for increasing the level of support on adaptation.

we recommend that:

- 1 the LGA with Local Government Employers (LGE) (consulting the sector skills councils, regional skill partnerships and regional development agencies) should conduct, in 2008, a needs analysis of the skills gaps that are constraining more effective local action on climate change and take action to close them;
- 2 CLG and Defra should review urgently whether the level and quality of the support is effective and sufficient in the light of the higher expectations on local government to tackle climate change, and the case for a substantial increase;
- 3 CLG and Defra should work with the IDeA to develop a set of interventions to drive improvement including peer reviews, self assessment, learning sets, Beacon themes, leadership training and so on. The IDeA should shape a climate change programme by December 2008 with a particular focus on local government leadership cohorts. A parallel programme should be delivered by the Academy for Sustainable Communities for local government's key partners;
- 4 all councils must respond to environmental challenges by

quality assuring their internal systems through an existing and recognised standard to ISO14001 by 2010. There is currently however no standard by which a council, or indeed any other organisation, can assure itself it is adapting well. Defra should support the development of such a standard;

- 5 the LGA should commission a study by June 2008, working with councils who would like to take a more entrepreneurial approach, on how local government can make more effective use of its powers to trade, charge and borrow to tackle climate change more effectively;
- 6 the LGA should explore with the research councils as part of the 'Living with Environmental Change' programme the opportunities to improve the evidence base for local action on climate change, including research to identify the opportunities moving to a low carbon economy offers to a cross-section of local areas.

transparency

In order to gain the maximum support and momentum for change, it will be vital to increase the level of transparency and scrutiny.

The Climate Change Bill provides a national framework to ensure government action on climate change – the four key pillars are: targets; the Committee on Climate Change; powers to introduce trading schemes; and reporting. The bill sets a clear national ambition and a framework for reporting to parliament but makes no provision for sector delivery of the targets, including the responsibility of local government in 'burden sharing' the overall national targets.

Our proposals for making local government action on climate change more transparent mirror this approach and build on both the new performance management arrangements for local government and the sector ownership of its own improvement:

- the new performance management framework offers all LSPs the opportunity to adopt climate change targets but does not create an obligation;
- the Audit Commission will play a key role by embedding sustainability in the use of resources assessments it makes of local areas and offering a third party challenge on the effectiveness of both mitigation and adaptation responses²⁹;

- local government must itself strengthen this challenge function, in particular to those local councils who are currently choosing not to take action on climate change;
- the Nottingham Declaration has “no formal status in terms of ability to monitor council progress, gather data or hold councils to account”³⁰. If it is to remain the focus of good practice amongst councils it must be strengthened;
- councils at the forefront of climate change are enhancing the case for localism. Local government needs to challenge itself to tackle climate change more effectively and challenge poor performance. The new call for community action and the council scrutiny function offer councils and their stakeholders the opportunity to challenge their climate change response.

we recommend that:

- 1 the Audit Commission should maximise the use of the CAA to build reducing carbon emissions and improving resilience into the broader elements of the performance framework, such as risk assessment and whole-life cycle value-for-money;
- 2 the LGA should set up a National Partnership Board which could be linked to the national Committee on Climate Change. Working with the Nottingham Declaration Development Group its purpose would be to lead the work programme on climate change and strengthen the challenge function on climate change;
- 3 the Nottingham Declaration partners, consulting local councils, should strengthen the Nottingham Declaration to include measurable actions on energy efficiency (internal); sustainable procurement; car use; existing housing stock; new development; resilience to climate change; and monitoring of performance in relation to those actions by December 2008;
- 4 the LGA and CIPFA, working with the Treasury, the Audit Commission and National Audit Office, should:
 - a identify ways to embed a whole-life cycle costing approach in local government that takes account of the costs of carbon and overcomes the tension with short-term financial efficiency;
 - b develop a framework that builds a carbon price into

council and other public bodies’ accounting practices to enable them to produce accurate annual carbon accounts in line with regular financial reporting. Once this methodology is available, it will then be essential for the responsibility for carbon accounts to part of the duties of the chief executive and finance director.

engagement

Local government has the unique democratic mandate to engage other organisations and the wider community in tackling climate change. The precise nature of this engagement will vary from place to place. Collectively local government has a significant footprint. Taken together with other parts of the public sector – fire and police, the health service and education – the footprint is of enormous significance. Local government itself:

- employs around 2.1m people who should adopt energy efficient working practices, releasing resources that could be recycled to build capacity to take action on mitigation and adaptation;
- spends a procurement budget of around £50bn and a £17bn capital budget³¹ (figures for 2005–06) which provides considerable leverage to influence the supply of energy efficient goods and services;
- enjoys high levels of trust with citizens and regular contact with households and businesses through the provision of local authority services, which provide an opportunity to drive the take up of energy efficiency measures in homes and other buildings.

we recommend that:

- 1 the LGA with CLG, the energy retailers and the energy efficiency supply chain should develop a strategy on retro-fitting the existing housing stock to higher emissions standards;
- 2 the LGA should set up a clearing house mechanism to assist councils to work with energy retailers and the energy efficiency supply chain on home energy efficiency measures between 2008 and 2011;
- 3 the LGA should work with Defra, CLG, energy retailers, and the energy efficiency supply chain to ensure that a satisfactory joint working mechanism exists for future phases

- of CERT after 2011 (see section on existing housing stock);
- 4 the LGA, LGE and local government unions should develop green/low carbon workplaces in every local authority so that the 2.1m local government employees adopt energy efficient working practices. Pilots building on the TUC's 'Green Work Places' initiative should begin by June 2008;
 - 5 the LGA should identify with 4ps, regional improvement and efficiency partnerships and existing local government consortia where local government can buy low carbon products to achieve economy of scale savings and where they can work with suppliers to develop low carbon products and services reporting by June 2008; and
 - 6 the LGA should investigate the feasibility of investing local authority pension funds much more heavily in support of a low carbon economy.

conclusions and next steps

Local government has a unique opportunity. On an issue of such critical global importance it must demonstrate the power of local leadership at a time when it is assuming the mantle of place shaping. To date, with notable exceptions, its response to climate change has been largely business as usual.

The challenge is how we lever a historic shift in the response. There are many who are calling for a statutory duty. There are others who say a more effective response will be locally determined. The next two years will be critical. As local government, with other strategic partners, negotiate LAAs and experiment with MAAs we will have hard evidence of local government's intentions and progress.

We are grateful to the LGA for setting up the commission, and would act again as a critical friend to local government, if it would find it useful to reconvene the commission in autumn 2008 and again in late 2009.



section two

adaptation

key facts:

- according to LGAR's most recent survey, only about 15 per cent of councils have included adaptation of their own buildings and facilities in their climate change strategy/policy and about 7 per cent have included adaptation of their own housing stock, the two most popular adaptation elements in relation to councils' own activities;
- 62 per cent of councils are developing or intend to produce a climate change strategy or policy. Anecdotally, however, we have heard that the adaptation components of many existing strategies and plans need strengthening;
- 80 per cent of respondents to the LGAR survey said that overall, in their opinion, their local authority had been not very effective, or not at all effective, in adapting to climate change;
- there is currently no statutory duty on councils to take action on adaptation – other than to ensure that flood risk is taken into account at all stages in the planning process to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding, and to direct development away from areas of highest risk. From 2008, there will be an adaptation indicator in the new performance framework for local authorities;
- better information on the local impact of climate change will be available from UKCIP in 2008 when the UKCIP02 scenarios will be replaced by UKCIP08, a new package of

case study

Hampshire County Council

Hampshire County Council signed the Nottingham Declaration in 2001 and was a pilot in Councils for Climate Protection and the Carbon Management Programme. It was a founder member of the South East Climate Change Partnership, leads the ESPACE European project, part of the advisory group to the EU on adaptation to climate change, and a founder signatory to the Aalborg Commitments in 2004. In 2006 the council adopted the vision "*within a decade Hampshire will prosper without risking our environment*".

Recognising that climate change is probably the biggest threat to achieving that vision, a Climate Change Commission of Inquiry (COI) was established with commissioners drawn from business, academia, media and councillors from all the political parties on the county council.

Four themed hearings were held between May and September 2007, where evidence was presented by external experts, and key findings were agreed by commissioners. A meeting of the council considered a report and recommendations at the end of November.

The Environment Agency

The commission invited the Environment Agency to provide advice on adaptation. They suggested:

The new local government performance framework includes a climate change adaptation indicator. Demonstrate your progress.

- 1 Ensure there is strong **corporate commitment and political leadership** on taking action on climate change. Many local authorities have signed the Nottingham Declaration on climate change or an equivalent to demonstrate their commitment. All local authorities should make such a commitment.
- 2 **Embed climate change in your local authority's duties, actions and roles.** New and existing powers can help us adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change. Local authority plans and policies are essential to provide the vision, leadership and long-term actions to help to tackle climate change. For example, strategic flood risk assessments should be prepared as part of the sustainability appraisal of local development frameworks and incorporate climate change allowances.
- 3 **Choose key indicators**, the Adapting to Climate Change indicator (NI 188) and reducing carbon dioxide emission indicators (NI 185 and NI 186) from the new local government framework for your LAA.
- 4 Produce a **climate change action plan** for your area by undertaking a climate change risk assessment covering all the roles of your local authority. The Nottingham Declaration Action Pack provides online guidance on undertaking a risk assessment and producing a climate change action plan. The UK Climate Impacts Programme has climate change scenarios to use in such a risk assessment.
- 5 **Share and learn** by engaging with others in local government and externally with partners. For example, through the various regional climate change partnerships and from case studies such as the Adaptation in the Wear project. This project is assessing climate impacts across different sectors – from critical infrastructure, to how the most vulnerable people in the community could be affected. The methodology is being rolled out across the North East. The UK Climate Impacts Programme adaptation database provides further examples of adaptation.
- 6 **Spread the word** by raising awareness of climate change among your citizens.
- 7 **Act now** as climate change impacts are already upon us.

climate information that includes a range of plausible changes to the climate with an estimated likelihood of occurrence;

- there is comparatively little investment in support available to councils to ensure that they and their communities are adapting well to climate change.

key messages

Local authorities have a long standing responsibility to protect their communities from risk. These risks have to be managed systematically across all of a local authority's functions. The main responsibilities associated with managing that risk are:

- **emergency planning.** Ensuring the well-being of the local population, especially the old and vulnerable during extreme weather events. Local authorities' foremost interest in adaptation should be as community leader in the exercise of their power of well-being. Adaptation is fundamentally about protecting people and property from adverse impacts

of extreme weather events and exploiting any positive impacts;

- **effective maintenance.** Ensuring the effective maintenance of drainage and gullies against the risk of flash floods. Local authorities are also responsible for a wide range of buildings, green spaces, street scene and infrastructure;
- **planning for resilience.** This includes planning for the future resilience of the community as a whole, including ensuring that all new building is resilient to flooding;
- **leading by example.** Councils need to demonstrate to the wider public sector and the community that they are adapting well to the risks of climate change through their service provision;
- adapting well is about assessing and managing risks using the best available information on climate change and relating it to the local landscape, the location of all critical infrastructure and services, and the needs of the local population; and
- action on adaptation needs to be proactive, learning from events in the past, but aimed at reducing future damage and loss. Where there are high risks to an area, for example flood risk, the availability of insurance cover and rising premiums could become increasingly acute issues.

When the commission began its work in March 2007, there was little focus on adaptation compared to mitigation. Whilst a direct link to climate change cannot be proven, the extreme rainfall over the 2007 summer has recently given adaptation a much stronger focus.

Sir Michael Pitt is leading a review into the lessons learnt from the summer floods. The government has announced that it will spend a minimum of £650m in 2008/09, £700m in 2009/10, and £800m in 2010/11³² on flood defences. The Association of British Insurers, however, is campaigning for a higher level of investment.

The government's proposal to build three million new homes across England and Wales by 2020, including the likely creation of ten 'eco towns', provides an opportunity to demonstrate resilient development. Failure to incorporate sound adaptation strategies into planning and design for these new homes and their associated infrastructure will

case study

The City of London Corporation

The City of London Corporation has produced a climate change adaptation strategy that assesses the climate change risks facing the 'Square Mile' in London, such as floods, heat waves, and subsidence and heave of clay soils. The strategy presents a range of 'no regrets', 'low regrets', 'win-win' and 'flexible' options for adaptation to these threats. The strategy represents an excellent example of good practice and can be accessed at http://213.86.34.248/NR/rdonlyres/7347D392-3CF3-4344-8B2D-9AF9315E8801/0/SUS_climateadapt.pdf

lead to wasted investment and poor wellbeing outcomes for home owners and occupiers in the future.

recommendations

leadership:

- all local authorities should assess the adaptations necessary to ensure the resilience of the buildings, infrastructure and services for which they are responsible and the scope for developing resilience. The analysis should also identify those adaptations that are necessary as an immediate priority and the alternative options available linked to the Nottingham Declaration. This is about future-proofing the whole public estate and wider public services;
- the adaptation policy framework currently being developed by Defra should have a local government component;
- CLG should have a key role in encouraging effective adaptation, particularly in ensuring resilience through the planning process.

capacity building:

- the LGA with LGE (consulting the sector skills councils, regional skill partnerships and regional development agencies) should conduct a needs analysis of the skills gaps that are constraining more effective local action on climate change and take action to close them;
- CLG and Defra should review whether the level and quality

of the support is sufficient in the light of the higher expectations on local government to tackle climate change, and the case for increasing it.

transparency:

- all councils should work through the adaptation stream of the Nottingham Declaration Action Pack. The new performance indicator requires parts of this process to take place by April 2011. We see a strong case for a much quicker response.

engagement:

- councils cannot possibly make their communities resilient to climate change on their own. All councils need to engage with their communities about adaptation – the public, private and community sectors, plus individuals. Critical areas include: energy, food and water supplies; community care and health; and all emergency services. Public awareness campaigns about adaptation should be a high priority.

existing homes

key facts:

- home energy use accounts for 27 per cent of UK CO₂ emissions. New homes produce half as much CO₂ as homes built between 1920 and 1960 – but more than two thirds of homes still in use in 2050 already exist and will have been built to pre 2005 standards;
- the average household generates 6.6 tonnes of CO₂ from electricity and direct fuel use – plus another 2.2 tonnes from household appliances;
- installing energy efficiency measures can deliver significant savings on energy bills, particularly important for those on low incomes who are most at risk from fuel poverty and the impacts of climate change;
- households could on average save 2 tonnes of CO₂ per year from standard energy efficiency measures such as loft and wall insulation. However this potential varies hugely depending on age of property and construction method;
- for example, the payback time for insulating cavity walls is typically around three years with the upfront cost around £200. There remain nine million homes with empty cavity walls in the UK. Filling them would save six million tonnes of carbon annually. However solid wall and other ‘hard to treat’ properties require more expensive work which, without grants, will only pay back over much longer periods; and
- on average councils achieved a 19 per cent improvement in domestic energy efficiency over the period 1996–2006: ranging from top achieving councils reporting improvements of over 30 per cent down to some councils reporting only 7 per cent reductions under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995³³.

key messages:

- local government responsibilities for tackling emissions from housing extend far beyond council-owned housing stock. A stronger framework is needed to drive action;
- the Decent Homes Standard should require all dwellings to be brought up to the level of the best with a minimum SAP rating of 65. Higher standards for new build in the Code for Sustainable Homes³⁴ could be a model for improving the energy efficiency of existing homes;
- community, district and domestic level energy generation will be an essential element in reducing CO₂ emissions from hard to treat housing stock in the longer term; and
- councils can play a key delivery role in achieving the objectives of defined national strategy through:
 - working with the energy supply companies to channel funds available for energy efficiency measures for social housing under the Energy Efficiency Commitment (from

case study

Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council

Kirklees council's new Warm Zone Plus was set up in 2007. It offers all homes the opportunity to have loft and cavity wall insulation installed free on a systematic, house by house basis. Contact is by a personal visit offering energy efficiency advice, low cost insulation and grant aided measures.

Over the three years of the programme, the council expects more than 40,000 homes to install energy efficiency measures under the first scheme in the country to offer all households in one area free insulation. Warm Zone Plus which will cost £21m over three years is being funded through capital borrowing (using prudential borrowing powers) with the interest paid from revenue. This is being supplemented by funds from Warm Front and CERT.

Warm Front Plus builds on many years of targeted energy efficiency work. Kirklees has around 26 per cent of its population affected by fuel poverty (ie people who have to spend more than 10 per cent of their gross income on fuel to keep their home adequately warm). The council has therefore run a variety of schemes over a number of years including Keep Warm and Warm Homes Kirklees to help raise home energy efficiency levels.

In April 2008, Kirklees council will be launching a £3m scheme to promote householder renewables. The principal barriers to the uptake of renewables by homeowners is cost, confidence in the technology, its capabilities and how it is installed. The scheme aims to address these barriers.

Private householders will be able to install up to £10,000 of renewable technology on their homes and pay for it when their home is sold via a second charge on the property. The scheme is funded through capital borrowing. Kirklees council will administer the scheme providing tendered prices from approved installers. Once the property is sold and the original loan recovered it will be recycled into a revolving loan fund. It is expected that this relatively simple scheme will attract additional finance from energy suppliers through the Carbon Emissions Reduction Target scheme.

The RE-Charge scheme is one of the schemes which will demonstrate action to reduce household carbon emissions as part of the council's action plan to address carbon emissions targets in the new local government performance framework along with the Warm Zone Plus scheme.

April 2008 to be called the Carbon Emissions Reduction Target);

- leveraging in matching funds from the private sector or other sources such as EU regional and social development funds;
- engaging with the wider local community to incentivise and reward behaviour change in other ways;
- working with the energy supply companies to incentivise householders to install energy efficiency measures in the owner occupier sector, for example by extending the council tax reduction scheme being operated by British Gas with 62 councils;

- incentivising the development of local renewable sources through the Merton rule.

recommendations

leadership:

- government needs to set a national lead by adopting a three year carbon budget for the domestic sector under the Climate Change Bill and charge the CLG with developing a holistic strategy, a Code for Existing Homes;
- a strengthened Decent Homes Plus standard must contain a thermal comfort requirement for local councils to bring all homes to a minimum SAP rating of 65 by 2016; and

- this must extend to all homes in the social rented, private rented and owner occupied sector.

capacity building:

- CLG must lead a programme of detailed assessment of potential to bring existing homes up to the new energy efficiency standards being progressively raised for new homes, including constraints such as the supply chain, skills capacity and cost; and

transparency:

- CLG should develop a Code for Existing Homes to drive a programme and map delivery against aspirations to bring energy efficiency levels in existing homes up to the standards of new build; and
- all local councils should contribute to the Home Energy Efficiency Database (HEED) which gives an overall picture of the UK's housing stock. They should have access to Energy Performance Certificates in their area so that they can build up a more accurate local picture of the energy efficiency of the existing housing stock.

engagement:

- councils should engage the private rented sector further through increased liaison in housing fora and make more consistent use of enforcement powers under the Housing Health and Safety Rating Scheme;
- to enable councils to drive action faster in the owner occupied and private rented sectors, LGA and CLG should address technical and legal barriers to enable wide-scale adoption of council tax incentives for energy efficient homes;
- local councils should seek to embed existing housing stock improvement at the heart of their LAA and LSP work to engage communities fully in delivering against the community climate change outcome in the new performance framework; and
- local councils should work with relevant agencies to develop guidance for older – and especially hard to treat – buildings.

maximising funding from CERT for the social housing sector

The Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT) programme, 2008–2011, is a legal obligation on all domestic gas and electricity suppliers to achieve carbon savings by installing insulation and other energy efficiency measures in homes. 40 per cent of these must come from 'priority group' households in receipt of benefits and tax credits, in either the private or the social housing sectors. Suppliers aim to meet the obligation as cost-effectively as possible so as to gain an advantage over their competitors, thus driving economies of scale and innovation.

In a nutshell, the CERT will have the following characteristics:

- 42m tonnes of lifetime carbon savings achieved;
- 1.1 m tonnes of carbon savings per annum achieved;
- £33 per annum or £97 for three years cost to every household;
- £31 per annum average benefits for each household;
- 3.2m cavity walls and 2.4m loft top-ups expected;
- 1.3m cavity walls and 1.2m loft top-ups in priority group housing;
- around 0.5m cavity walls and 0.5m loft top-ups to come from social housing;
- £2.5bn funds to come from suppliers (passed through to households in full);
- £0.5bn funds to come from able-to-pay households' additional contributions;
- £0.2bn to come from local councils/ Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) in co-financing for social housing work.

There are four million households in fuel poverty in UK, the majority of which are in owner-occupied or private-rented tenure. CERT will target these with its priority group work. The remaining potential for cavity wall insulation in the social housing sector will be limited to around 0.5 million installations over three years with the same number of loft top-up insulations. Energy suppliers have the perception that remaining social housing work is mainly low-grade loft top-ups and they are not very interested in spending time in pursuing it.

It is time-consuming for suppliers to set up partnerships with social housing providers as there are six major suppliers and over 400 councils (and many more RSLs). The time spent increases the cost per measure installed. The result is that some councils have had good experiences of working with suppliers in the past while others do not. On the plus side, there is a high proportion of priority group residents in the social housing sector, most of whom live within close physical proximity, and councils are prepared to offer co-financing for the measures.

It is essential that councils seek partnerships with energy suppliers if they are to attract CERT money for their social housing improvements. We are proposing to establish a simple clearing house mechanism that will help councils maximise the amount of CERT money they access over the next three years. This will be easy to set up in time for 1 April 2008 when CERT starts. One of the independent managing agents in the energy efficiency supply chain performs the role of go-between, to bring together all available social housing measures and the energy suppliers willing to contribute the most towards them.

To access the mechanism local councils and RSLs simply group together numbers of cavity wall, loft insulation or other energy efficiency measures needed in their social housing sector. They pass these packages of measures

to the managing agent indicating the percentage that are priority group measures. At regular intervals, for example every month, the managing agent auctions the packages of measures it has received to all suppliers. The supplier who is prepared to contribute the highest price towards the measures wins the contract to install them with the council/RSL. If the highest bidder's offer does not cover the whole cost of the measures, the council/RSL must arrange to make up the balance from its own or other funds. This approach could also be extended to measures outside the social housing sector (see box on Kirklees Warm Front Plus).

The advantages of this mechanism for the local councils/RSLs are:

- there is a level playing field for all local councils/RSLs;
- they have cost-free regular access to all suppliers;
- there is a transparent, optimum contribution per measure from suppliers;
- it is more likely that suppliers will work in the social housing sector;
- it increases the proportion of savings suppliers will get from social housing sector.

The advantages for the energy suppliers are:

- it flushes out all the remaining work in the social housing sector;
- it increases transparency and access in the market;
- it reduces transaction costs;
- it increases carbon reductions per measure installed.

planning

key facts:

- the government has set a target to build three million new homes by 2020;
- by 2016 the target is to build 240,000 homes a year;
- up to 100,000 new homes will be built in eco-towns;
- building regulations on the energy efficiency of new dwellings will be strengthened in 2010 and 2013;
- BRE research funded by the Energy Efficiency Partnership for Homes in 2004 showed that a third of new homes fail to meet building regulations.

key messages:

- planning powers are central to councils' role as place shapers. Through the use of planning powers, local councils can promote sustainable development, low-carbon lifestyles and development that is resilient to climate change. They can promote access to public transport, energy efficient housing, renewable energy supply, and avoid development on land at risk of coastal erosion or flooding;
- councils have been at the forefront of encouraging the use of renewable energy – around one hundred councils have implemented the Merton rule requiring onsite renewables in non-residential developments. Council action also illustrates

case study

Uttlesford District Council

Uttlesford District Council's supplementary planning document (SPD) on home extensions is an example of how the planning system can be used to reduce carbon emissions from existing homes.

The SPD requires cost-effective energy efficiency measures to be carried out throughout the existing building as a condition of planning consent for a home extension.

The installation of energy efficiency measures is designed to: mitigate the additional energy requirements that result from the house being extended; help reduce the household's energy consumption; reduce energy bills and improve comfort levels. The scheme was designed by the councils' building control and planning functions.

- how the planning system can be used to drive up the energy efficiency of the existing housing stock – see the case study above on Uttlesford District Council's supplementary planning document;
- the planned housing growth and development of eco-towns is an opportunity not just for zero-carbon homes but for low-

carbon development including transport, street-scene, low-carbon infrastructure and access to local employment, goods and services;

- the government is exploring a new statutory planning charge to build on section 106 agreements. It is important that councils can realise the economic value created by planning consent for their communities and invest it in low-carbon infrastructure. Currently the principle is that the investment should be related to the development itself. There is a case for taking a wider view and allowing some proportion of the investment for the benefit of improving the energy efficiency, and greater resilience, of the wider community infrastructure;
- the planning function needs to be integrated with other council functions to ensure that the carbon impact and wider sustainability of new development is fully understood. This may require new partnerships to exploit low-carbon opportunities, for example, with the Forestry Commission to support the use of biomass in boilers and heating systems;
- as environmental standards are increased, it is particularly important that council's planning and building regulation powers are diligently enforced. The planning and building control functions need to work closely together and there is a case for integrating these functions to ensure continuity;
- both the planning and building control functions need to develop their capacity to implement the increasing environmental standards. We suggest a wide-ranging assessment of the skills needs of local government to respond to climate change. It will also be necessary to build the skills of developers and the construction industry;
- There is specific concern about compliance with part L of the building regulations. It is worth noting that the new regulations only came into force in April 2006. There does however seem to be a fundamental defect with the regulatory model, in that developers are able to choose their inspectors and use either private sector or local authority inspectors. This competitive model does not appear to be driving up standards. The government is considering the future of building control and it will need to address this fundamental issue to be sure that standards are properly enforced. Local authority building control, in evidence to the commission, suggested that the building control function should be located solely in local government, and the

licences of approved inspectors in the private sector withdrawn. We note that CLG and the Energy Efficiency Partnership for Homes will be undertaking further jointly-funded work on compliance issues in 2008;

- there have also been cases of councils objecting to the development of renewable energy supplies and over-riding the Environment Agency's advice on development on flood plains. In some cases, the suggestion is that councils are yielding to political and economic pressure. Planning is an area where councils need to show community leadership and nurture a consensus for low-carbon, resilient development. The Beddington Zero Energy Development is a show-case development in one-planet living embracing all aspects of sustainable living. It has a powerful demonstration effect which other councils could replicate with low-carbon zones. We would encourage low-carbon refurbishment – where the principles of sustainability are retro-fitted into an existing community, homes, buildings and infrastructure.

recommendations

leadership:

- the LGA should press CLG to explore how the planning system can be used to drive up the energy efficiency of the existing housing stock, building on the pioneering work of Uttlesford District Council;
- councils should consider the following principles for new development: maximising energy efficiency; encouraging and increasing renewable energy supply; reducing the need for car use; and development that is resilient to climate change;
- local development frameworks are the spatial expressions of sustainable community strategies. LDF's need to be fully integrated with councils' climate change action plans, taking full account of both mitigation and adaptation.

capacity:

- in considering the future of building control, government needs to review the regulatory model for the enforcement of building regulations to drive up and enforce compliance;
- working with the Academy for Sustainable Communities, the LGA and LGE should investigate the skills gap in planning and building control functions and develop proposals to close it;

- the LGA needs to ensure that the pressure for housing growth does not result in any loosening of regulatory standards and continue its support for the progressive raising of environmental standards. The Code for Sustainable Homes should be mandatory and the environmental standards should be extended from domestic to non-domestic buildings.

engagement:

- councils should extend their engagement with the renewable energy industry to build a common understanding of the local opportunities; and to strengthen the skills base and supply chains.

transparency:

- councils, possibly working at the sub-regional level, should assess the potential for the expansion of renewable energy sources;
- councils should consider the use of incentives for the development of low-carbon homes.

transport

key facts:

- in 2004, transport, excluding international aviation and shipping, accounted for 28 per cent of total UK CO₂ emissions. Transport related carbon emission are projected to rise;
- carbon dioxide emissions from private cars increased six per cent between 1990 and 2005. By 2031, the Department of Transport estimates there will be 5.7m more cars on UK roads – a growth of 21 per cent;
- projections show continuing traffic growth – 23–29 per cent higher than 2000 levels by 2010, 29–38 per cent higher by 2015 and 38–53 per cent higher by 2025;
- government target – 10 per cent of new cars sold by 2012 to have emissions of less than 100g CO₂/km. In 2004 of the 2.5m vehicles sold, only 481 met this standard.
- the poorest households are more likely to walk than the richest – 35.9 per cent of all journeys made compared to 19.3 per cent, and more likely to use a bus, 12.1 per cent compared to 4.3 per cent.

key messages:

- our quality of life depends on transport and easy access to work, leisure, the shops and public services and our economic prosperity depends on a safe and efficient

case study

Greater London Authority

The Greater London Authority and Transport for London are cited by environmentalists as best practice for the UK – transport emissions in London have remained flat since the 1990s – the result of high levels of public transport use and high levels of public transport investment. The mayor's climate change strategy includes investment in public transport and promoting alternatives to car use (the summer 2007 visit of the Tour de France was a high profile example of promoting cycling); the promotion of eco-driving; carbon pricing by relating congestion charging to vehicle carbon emissions; regenerative braking on the Tube and the conversion of London's bus fleet to diesel-electric hybrid vehicles.

transport system. But transport related emissions are a major source of climate change, they are rising and are projected to rise further;

- there is a broad symmetry between both proposals to reduce congestion and invest in public transport and reducing transport related emissions – but reducing carbon emissions must be an explicit objective in national and local decision making on transport;

- councils can take action strategically to reduce transport related carbon emissions across each of their roles, in particular, through engaging the local community to take tough decisions, for example, on differential car parking charges. They can green their own fleet; encourage their suppliers to reduce transport related emissions; ensure that spatial planning promotes walking, cycling and the use of public transport; and engage with their wider community to help them travel sustainably. Sutton LBC provides household transport planning advice to promote sustainable transport;
- reducing carbon emissions and resilience need to become a feature of local strategic thinking on transport (through Local Transport Plans) using the measures that have already been developed including the promotion of walking and cycling, 20mph speed limits, workplace parking levies, road space re-allocation, travel planning (both individual and workplace), promoting high vehicle occupancy, eco-driving, and congestion charging with differentiation for vehicle emissions;
- there is a shortage of revenue funding for smarter choice measures relative to capital funding (and a need more local flexibility here). This incentivises the building of new infrastructure, although the Eddington Report underlined the case for funding measures that make better use of existing infrastructure and showed that investment in walking and cycling has high cost-benefit ratios;
- tackling transport-related carbon emission requires sub-regional co-operation, for example, to co-ordinate car parking charges. The MAA provides a mechanism for cross-council co-operation.

recommendations

leadership:

- all councils should undertake the Energy Saving Trust's green fleet programme by December 2008.

capacity:

- the LGA should support an adjustment to Treasury rules to allow "capitalisation" of smarter choice measures. This accounting adjustment would allow smarter choice measures to compete on a level playing field with infrastructure projects;
- planning policy guidance 13: transport sets out how

planning policies can reduce the need for car journeys and enable people to make sustainable transport choices. CLG and LGA should work together to ensure that the guidance is implemented in the new developments built to meet national government's targets for housing growth.

transparency:

- councils and the LGA should pilot the potential of MAAs as a framework for reducing transport related carbon emissions.

engagement:

- councils are able to influence the transport-related emissions of their supply chain by both purchasing energy-efficient vehicles and requiring low transport emissions from suppliers.

procurement

key facts:

- local government has a procurement budget of around £50bn per annum;
- it spends £427m on street lighting³⁵ alone;
- £1.5bn on vehicles, plant equipment and machinery³⁶;
- it has a capital budget of £17bn (in 2006–07) of which £13bn is spent on new construction and conversion.

key messages:

- there is a major opportunity for local authorities to use their procurement activity to systematically mainstream carbon reduction and other sustainable development goals: both reducing their direct carbon footprint through the purchase of energy efficient, low carbon intensive goods and services and influencing their supply chain through setting demanding standards and changing tender practices;
- the local government community also has significant opportunity to use its collective purchasing power to influence its collective supply chain and to create the market conditions for low carbon innovation;
- whilst there are few blockers to significant change, the key opportunities require effective leadership and training as well as wider use of whole life cycle costing and broader

case study

West Sussex County Council

Tendering for new service partners is an IDeA opportunity to engage your supply chain in achieving your carbon and wider sustainability goals. A recent tender for the provision of managed desktop services by West Sussex County Council required all tendering parties to, “*demonstrate their carbon management plans in respect of services being provided to the council.*” The council shared their goals and the council’s sustainability action plan, inviting potential partners both to innovate and to demonstrate their commitment to the low carbon agenda.

partnership working with suppliers aimed specifically at carbon reduction.

recommendations

leadership

the local government community should adopt a leadership position to send a strong message to the supply chain. This will have the effect of creating new markets and encouraging low carbon innovation:

- every council should adopt a ‘no increase in carbon’ policy for significant procurement and investment decisions. The

goal should be that each purchase and investment decision should achieve a carbon impact less than the existing/replaced product or service;

- every significant procurement and investment decision should also have an assessment of implications on resilience to climate change.

capacity building

the local government family should work together to focus improvement activity as well as to unblock real or perceived barriers to low carbon procurement:

- the LGA should identify with 4ps, regional improvement and efficiency partnerships and existing local government consortia where local government can buy low carbon products to achieve economy of scale savings and where they can work with suppliers to develop low carbon products and services reporting by June 2008;
- CIPFA, working with the Treasury, the Audit Commission and National Audit Office, should identify ways to embed a whole life cycle costing approach in local government that takes account of the costs of carbon and overcomes the tension with short-term financial efficiency.

transparency

increased measurement and reporting will reinforce the leadership position:

- all councils should start by reporting internally the proportion of procurement decisions where carbon was assessed and the number of strategic suppliers committing to supporting their carbon reduction commitment;
- all service level agreements and partnership boards should include a carbon reporting element, where relevant with targets for carbon reduction.

engagement

brands and retailers in particular, as well as many voluntary sector organisations, have significant capability to communicate key message to the community as well as strategic commitments to support the carbon reduction agenda:

- all councils should, as part of their carbon reduction strategy, effectively engage with those organisations which have complementary agendas and can support their community leadership ambition.



annexes

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Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Conwy County Borough Council
Finance for the Future
London Borough of Enfield
The Parish Council's Airport Association

Lancashire County Council
JMP Consultants Ltd
Wellingborough Borough Council
Forestry Commission
Leeds Council
South Oxon District Council
Devon County Council
Association for the Conservation of Energy
Plymouth City Council
Peterborough City Council
Stop Bristol Airport Expansion and Alliance of Bristol Friends of the Earth, CPRE and the Parish Councils Airport Association
Eastern Regions Network
Hertfordshire County Council
West Midlands Regional Assembly
Dorset County Council
Go Green GB
Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council
Woking Borough Council
Islington Council
UKCIP (UK Climate Impact Programme)
North Hertfordshire District Council
Scottish Borders Council
Durham County Council
York & Humber Assembly
Westminster City Council
BT
Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority
Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee
Wiltshire County Council
Brecon Beacons National Park Authority
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South Staffordshire Council
Shropshire County Council
Energy Retail Association
Staffordshire County Council
Middlesbrough Council
Yorkshire & Humber Assembly
Neath Port Talbot Council
Nottingham Declaration
Lincolnshire Fire & Rescue HQ
Salix Finance Ltd
BioRegional Development Group

notes

- 1 The Prime Minister's speech on climate change at the event hosted by the World Wildlife Fund on 19 November 2007
- 2 David Cameron's speech "We will keep up the pressure on climate change" on 12 March 2007
- 3 Chris Huhne MP commenting on the IPCC report on climate change on 17 November 2007
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- 27 LGA survey of council action on climate change, 2007
- 28 This involves challenging energy suppliers to provide both investment in energy efficiency as well as energy supply contracts, hence stimulating new private sector investment in reducing the carbon footprint of councils' estate. The Clinton Foundation has recently supported a similar initiative in forty of the world's largest cities, including London.
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- 30 *Nottingham Declaration Programme Partnership* – written evidence to the commission
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- 33 <http://www.Defra.gov.uk/environment/climatechange/uk/publicsector/localauth/heca95/pdf/heca-data2006.pdf>
- 34 <http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/buildingregulations/legislation/englandwales/codesustainable/>
- 35 *CIPFA Highway and Transportation Statistics 2005–06*
- 36 Local Government Financial Statistics



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