

March 2010

Campaign Champions:

Getting Serious About CO₂ – Local Carbon Budgets



The Story So Far

The Get Serious About CO₂ campaign is on a roll in 2010! Our local campaigns are bearing fruit, and our national lobbying is making progress. You can play a crucial role in the next phase of the campaign.

Since June 2009, 70 Friends of the Earth local groups have been mobilising support from local people to support their council doing more to tackle climate change. We have been calling for councils to commit to cutting carbon dioxide emissions in their area by at least 40 per cent by 2020 and to produce a climate change action plan showing how they will deliver the cuts.

Fourteen councils have now signed up to a target of at least 40 per cent: Birmingham, Bristol, Durham County, Haringey, Harrogate, Harrow, Islington, Leeds, London, Manchester, Plymouth, Suffolk, Wirral, and York.

Nationally, the idea of Local Carbon Budgets is gaining support. The Government is piloting a scheme called Local Carbon Frameworks – with councils including those that have signed up to the 40 per cent target. The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats are looking closely at the policy. Other organisations including the Local Government Association, the Chartered Institute for Environmental Health and the TUC are all backing a form of Local Carbon Budget.

This is where you come in. With a General Election looming, we've got a fantastic opportunity to call for Local Carbon Budgets to ensure every council does its bit to tackle climate change.

Summary of the action

Back in September, we asked you to write to the Department of Communities and Local Government to respond to their consultation 'Strengthening Local Democracy'. We were calling for Local Carbon Budgets for all councils to cut emissions in their area in line with the scientific evidence of action needed. Friends of the Earth submitted the largest number of responses to the consultation!

Your support for local carbon budgets had an effect: in January, we had some great news. Secretary of State John Denham MP announced a pilot scheme of Local Carbon Frameworks. The nine councils in the scheme will get Government help to develop climate change strategies.

While these Local Carbon Frameworks are a big step in the right direction, we think **they need to be improved to ensure emissions cuts are made on the scale and speed needed.**

We are still calling for a nationwide system of **Local Carbon Budgets**. We want to see these budgets set in line with the current science, which demands at least a 40 per cent cut in CO₂ by 2020. We also want the budgets to apply to every council and to include sufficient financial and technical support for councils to ensure the budgets can be met.

We'd like you to **write to your MP** and tell him or her that we need a system to ensure that **all** councils do their bit.

Why act now?

Following the development of the Local Carbon Framework pilots, and in the run up to the General Election, this is an important time to put pressure on politicians to show the electorate cares about this issue.

We'll be writing to you again next month to ask you to write to the Local Government spokespeople from the three main parties about Local Carbon Budgets, but for the moment it's still vital to keep the pressure on all MPs around the country.

What should I write?

Unfortunately your council doesn't yet have a strong target to cut emissions. It would be good if you could include the following points when you write to your MP. As ever, it's important to keep your letter as short and concise as possible, but also make it personal.

- (1) Please tell your MP how disappointed you are that your local council doesn't have a **strong and ambitious target** to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Try and mention in your letter some of the councils that do have strong targets. You can find a list of them on our website, including the targets they've signed up to: http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/council_co2_targets.pdf
- (2) Highlight the fact that it is vital for **all councils to take action on climate change** and to cut emissions in line with the scientific evidence of action needed.
- (3) Also stress that you were pleased to hear of Secretary of State John Denham's announcement of the **Local Carbon Frameworks pilot scheme**, and that this is an important development. If your council is one of the ones in the pilot scheme (see below for the full list), mention that you are delighted your council has been chosen.
- (4) Emphasise, however, that it is vital that the scheme is expanded to cover **all councils**, not just those that choose to prioritise action.
- (5) Tell your MP that it is crucial that the scheme is developed to be one of **Local Carbon Budgets**. These budgets should be timed in line with national carbon budgets - with five-year budget periods and transparency on annual progress.
- (6) Outline for your MP some of the **benefits to people in your area** if councils take action to tackle climate change. Insulating homes or installing solar panels would not only reduce emissions locally, but also create new jobs, boost the local economy, slash fuel bills and reduce fuel poverty.

When should I write?

Please write your letter by the start of April.

How can I find the address of my MP?

Please send your letter to XXX MP, House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA. Or you can email your MP; details here: <http://www.parliament.uk/directories/hc/olists/ams.cfm>

Feedback

Please send copies of any replies you receive to: Glyn Thomas, Friends of the Earth, 26-28 Underwood St, London N1 7JQ, or glyn.thomas@foe.co.uk This is very important as it allows us to track progress. Thanks!

Where you can find help and support

Our information team is available 9-5pm. If you need advice out of office hours let us know and we will try and arrange to call you at a time that suits. Tel: 020 7490 1555 or contact us electronically from here: <http://www.foe.co.uk/feedbackcomment.html> or email glyn.thomas@foe.co.uk

Background to the campaign - Getting Serious About CO₂

Local councils have a major role to play in cutting UK emissions – they have a big say in how we heat and power our homes and how we get around. To meet the UK's obligations under the Climate Change Act 2008, every council will have to do its bit to cut CO₂. We are calling for every council to cut carbon dioxide emission by at least 40 per cent in their area by 2020, based on 2005 levels.

Some councils are already taking action with inspiring and effective projects. But all councils must get serious about CO₂ if we are to avoid dangerous climate change.

At the end of January, Secretary of State for Local Government, John Denham MP, announced a pilot project of Local Carbon Frameworks. This is a significant step along the way to introducing a system along the lines we have been calling for: several of the pilots are in councils that have adopted ambitious targets of at least 40 per cent cuts by 2020, and they will be given help to develop climate change action plans, and will work in partnership with national Government to make the emissions cuts needed locally.

The first councils to be involved in this pilot scheme will be: Nottingham, Bristol, Northumberland, Leeds City Region, Manchester, Haringey, Oxford, Plymouth and Bournemouth, Dorset & Poole (together as a Multi-Area Agreement).

While these Local Carbon Frameworks are a huge step in the right direction, we think the Government should improve on Local Carbon Frameworks by adopting Local Carbon Budgets which limit the amount of carbon emitted in a council area and are set in line with the current science (so that the targets are tough enough), apply to every council and are backed up by financial and technical support for councils.

You can find out more about Local Carbon Budgets in the briefing we've produced:

http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/local_carbon_budgets.pdf