

January 2007



**Friends of
the Earth**

Briefing

The Big Ask at the local level

What local authorities and others can do
on climate change

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The Big Ask at the local level

What local authorities can do

Friends of the Earth's The Big Ask campaign is calling for a Climate Change Bill that would require the Government to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide by at least 3 per cent year on year.

At the very earliest the Bill will become law in 2007.

The Bill is vital, because it will ensure that the Government in power is the one that is taking action. Achieving a downward trend in emissions is the key to ensuring the overall accumulation of carbon dioxide is minimized. We cannot wait for 10, 20 or 30 years for this to happen – we need to take action now.

To ensure that the UK emissions are on a downward trend every tier of Government must take action. We do not need to wait for the Climate Change Bill to become law to work with regional and local government to take action – there is so much that can be done right now.

This briefing is aimed at any individual who would like ideas and case studies of what local authorities could do to take action to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions.

We hope you find it useful.

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1. Working with the local authority

There are various ways that local authorities can take action on climate change. We have broken this briefing down into 4 sections – to demonstrate some of those ways. Feel free to pick and chose what you think would be most useful for your local situation. There is so much information out there – the hard part seems to be getting it seen and acted upon. If you can do anything to prompt your council into action – please do so!

1.1 Getting council buildings to lead the way

The Woking model: How a local borough council in Surrey set up its own energy services company and managed to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from its own buildings by 77%

1.2 Using the planning system – micro renewables

The Merton model: how a borough of south London pioneered an approach which expects new developments to embed renewable energy to reduce carbon dioxide emissions

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1.5 Getting your local authority to make a public commitment

The Nottingham Declaration: How signing the Declaration can help your local council take action on climate change.

2. Working with local schools, businesses and institutions

If working with the council isn't your thing, but you would like to do more encouraging local businesses and institutions there are several organisations that can help – it may even just be a case of putting them in touch with each other.

2.1 Energy saving trust

2.2 Carbon trust

2.3 National trust

3. Reading list

There is a lot of information out there to help you find out more. Here is a list of some of the resources we think you might find useful.

Section 1 – Working with your Local Authority

Whilst national Government sets targets and policy frameworks on climate change, in the end the actual implementation of these policies must be made at the local level. This presents both a challenge and a huge opportunity to local groups to take action on climate change. For that reason we have put together this briefing to try and give you an overview of the possibilities - to help you decide what would be most appropriate for you to lobby for locally.

In this section we outline examples of Local Authority policy innovations aimed at taking action on climate change. We have tried to give a flavour of what they have done, and set this in the context of how big an impact on climate emission reduction it is likely to have.

We hope you find it useful.

There are just a few important caveats to the content of this briefing:

1. The policies discussed below are current best practice. If we are serious about **reducing** emissions, rather than just **reducing the rate at which they grow**, then all local authorities need to start being more ambitious and implementing more radical policies. Don't think of these policies as a pinnacle to which your authority should aspire – instead think of them as the ground upon which your authority should develop stronger, more far reaching policies.
2. This briefing focuses on policies in the built environment – i.e. housing, micro-renewables and energy efficiency – it does not cover the policies on, for example, transport and waste that could also dramatically reduce emissions. These issues are covered in other Friends of the Earth briefings which are listed in the further reading section.
3. As Friends of the Earth England Wales and Northern Ireland we have been lobbying for changes in policy at the national level, which we hope will set a framework that will make local action easier. One major success of this work has been the publication by the Government of a new Supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1 focusing on Planning and Climate Change. The document is in consultation phase until March 2007. We hope that this Statement will help you to encourage your local authority to take more steps in the right direction. And when you do, please let us know how you get on.

1.1 Getting council buildings to lead the way

The Woking model: How a local borough council in Surrey set up its own energy services company and managed to reduce the emissions from its own buildings by 77%

- a. Climate idea
Reducing CO₂ emissions from council buildings
- b. Pioneer
Woking Borough Council
- c. How
Using decentralised energy to power council-controlled buildings as well as improving their energy efficiency

d. In a nutshell

In 1990 Allan Jones at Woking Borough Council pioneered an approach to reducing CO₂ emissions in the council through using decentralised energy. The company Thameswey Energy Ltd, wholly owned by Woking Borough Council, was set up to oversee the scheme. Over 60 local generators were developed using low and zero carbon technologies such as solar PV, CHP and hydrogen fuel cells to power, heat and cool council buildings and housing.

Money was raised for the scheme through energy efficiency savings. A recycling fund was set up whereby money saved from energy efficiency measures was reinvested in further energy-saving initiatives. Furthermore, Thameswey Energy Ltd attracted investment from several Danish pension companies.

Woking Council has been able to reduce energy consumption by nearly 50% and reduce CO₂ emissions from its own buildings by 77%, between 1990 and 2004, which equates to 142,013 tonnes of CO₂. Around £5.4 million was saved in municipal energy and water bills and in 2001 the council was awarded the Queen's Award for Enterprise; the only local authority ever to be given the award. It has also made Woking Borough Council the most energy efficient local authority in the UK.

Thumbs up

Energy and CO₂ emissions from council buildings were hugely reduced and money was generated from the scheme by reinvesting profits.

Thumbs down

Emissions were only reduced from council-controlled buildings, rather than across buildings in the borough as a whole. So residential and commercial buildings are not part of the scheme.

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e. Latest developments

Allan Jones has been appointed as Chief Development Officer of the new Climate Change Agency for London and may implement similar strategies in the London area. Furthermore, David Miliband (Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs), in a recent speech, urged local authorities to promote decentralised energy in their areas. He said that “we need...to look at how local energy policy, ranging from housing investment, planning, and procurement can help foster more local decentralised energy production and energy efficiency.”

f. How to get your local council to do the same

Any council should be able to implement a similar scheme as this can be done at any time. It may be useful to read Woking's Climate Change Strategy to get a more detailed idea of what the council is doing. You can then begin by writing to your local council and suggesting they emulate the scheme.

1.2 Using the planning system – micro renewables

The Merton model: how a borough of south London pioneered an approach which expects new developments to embed renewable energy to reduce the buildings carbon emissions

- a. **Climate idea**
Using on-site renewables in new developments of a certain size, to reduce their CO₂ emissions from electricity use
- b. **Pioneer**
London Borough of Merton
- c. **How**
Using the local planning documents within the Local Development Frameworks
- d. **In a nutshell**
The London Borough of Merton was the first local authority in the UK to introduce a specific target for the use of renewables in new developments. In 2003, Merton introduced a policy which required all new major non-residential developments in the borough to use on-site renewables to provide 10% of the predicted energy needs.

Many councils have already begun to develop similar policies with many already in place. The best current example is Croydon council which has the following policy: “The Council will expect all new development (either new build or conversion) with a floor-space of 1000m² or ten or more residential units to incorporate renewable energy production equipment to provide at least 10% of the predicted energy requirements.”

Merton, have included the following text in their draft LDF which improves this further: “The Council will require all developments, either new build or conversion, with a floor space of 500m², or one or more residential unit, to incorporate on-site renewable energy to reduce predicted CO₂ emissions by at least 10%.”

Thumbs up

The policy reduces CO₂ emissions from new developments, of a specified size, by at least 10%.

Thumbs down

The policy only applies to new developments or conversions, which is a minority of buildings. Furthermore, up to 90% of the energy still comes from non-renewable sources thereby increasing CO₂ emissions not reducing them.

e. Latest developments

According to the Town and Country Planning Association, over 75 councils have begun to develop similar policies. Furthermore, Yvette Cooper (Minister of State, Department for Communities and Local Government) recently said that the Government “*expect all planning authorities to include policies in their development plans that require a percentage of the energy in new developments to come from on-site renewables*”. The policy also appears not to have put developers off building in the Merton area. Since the implementation of the policy several new developments have been built with some developers applying for planning permission for several sites in the area.

f. How to get your local council to do the same:

Write to your local planning officer asking what stage they are at with regards to reviewing their local development framework. Ask if they will include you on the list for the next consultation. Ask whether they are aware of Merton’s initiative and if they will consider emulating it.

For more information about how to get involved with your Local Development Framework (written for beginners to the planning system) read our briefing: ‘Getting climate change targets into your Local Development Framework’ http://community.foe.co.uk/resource/guides/bigask_actionpack_five.pdf

1.3 Using the planning system – energy efficient homes
The Milton Keynes model: How the East of England town is aiming for higher environmental standards in new developments.

- a. Climate idea
Requiring higher environmental standards in new developments
- b. Pioneer
Milton Keynes Council
- c. How
Using local planning documents in their Local Plan
- d. In a nutshell
Milton Keynes Council developed a policy on sustainable housing, applying to residential developments of more than 5 dwellings and commercial developments with a floor space of 1000m² or more. This policy, within the council's Local Plan, came into force in December 2005.

In short, the council has a range of standards concerning energy efficiency, renewable energy, carbon neutrality, water, building materials and waste. To comply with the policy the development must achieve at least a Pass in each of these standards. For example, in order to achieve a Pass under energy efficiency, new developments must achieve a NHER rating of 10 and meet the Energy Efficiency Best Practice in Housing or to achieve a Pass under renewable energy, new developments must use on-site renewable energy resources to provide 10% of energy needs.

There is a certain amount of flexibility in the scheme in that an achievement of Good or Excellent standard in one criterion may lead to the acceptance of a below Pass standard in another. Furthermore, achieving an “Excellent” BREEAM or EcoHomes rating will fulfil all requirements apart from carbon neutrality. To achieve carbon neutrality, developers may contribute to a carbon offset fund although on-site measures will be encouraged where possible. Contributions to the carbon offset fund will be used to reduce emissions elsewhere in Milton Keynes and will be used to fund projects with a lifespan of at least 20 years.

Thumbs up

Unlike other policies, Milton Keynes' plan addresses energy efficiency, renewable energy and carbon neutrality amongst other environmental concerns. It includes a 10% Merton-style target but also goes further. Furthermore, the policy applies to both residential and commercial developments as well as covering new-build, conversion, renovation and extension.

Thumbs down

The policy only applies to new developments, which is a minority of housing stock. Furthermore, offsetting emissions potentially gives a loophole to developers.

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e. Latest developments

Milton Keynes Council is finalising the guidance to supplement this policy and this will be on their website soon. This guide is aimed only at residential developments but the council plans to produce similar guides for other development types.

f. How to get your local council to do the same

Write to your local planning officer asking what stage they are at with regards to reviewing their local development framework. Ask if they will include you on the list for the next consultation. Ask whether they are aware of Milton Keynes' initiative and if they will include a similar policy in their development plans.

1.4 Using the council tax system

The Braintree model: How an authority in Kent encourages energy efficient improvements to homes.

- a. Climate idea
Providing incentives for homeowners to improve the energy efficiency of their homes
- b. Pioneer
British Gas with Braintree council
- c. How
Using the council tax system
- d. In a nutshell
In 2004 British Gas, recognising that some 25% of all carbon emissions are generated in the household sector, began a scheme to encourage homeowners to install energy efficiency measures in their homes. The scheme, originally trialled at Braintree Council, offers householders a council tax rebate of up to £100 (of which, British Gas pays £50) if they install cavity wall insulation in their homes.

Although householders must initially invest around £225 (discounted from a normal retail price of £430) in the installation of the cavity wall insulation, the average saving on energy bills is around £150 per annum. Together with the council tax rebate of up to £100 the investment could be paid back within 2 years. Homeowners are also entitled to a free “Home Energy Audit” under the scheme, which highlights other areas where they could save energy in the home.

Thumbs up:

This scheme improves existing housing stock and offers financial incentives for householders to undertake these improvements.

Thumbs down:

Initially, British Gas had difficulty getting councils involved in the scheme and many were reluctant to join. Also, some councils have elected not to match British Gas' funding of £50, which means that in some areas customers receive a council tax rebate of £50 instead of £100. This could make the scheme much less attractive to many householders who may be less willing to invest in the energy efficiency measures for a smaller tax rebate.

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- e. Latest developments
23 councils have now signed up to the scheme, which could benefit 880,000 householders, and British Gas is in discussions with several others.

- f. How to do it
Write to your local telling them about the scheme and ask them to contact British Gas to get involved.

1.5 Getting your local authority to make a public commitment

The Nottingham Declaration: How signing the Declaration can help your local council take action on climate change.

- a. Climate idea
Getting local authorities to commit to addressing the problem of climate change
- b. Pioneer
The Energy Saving Trust
- c. How
By developing a declaration local councils can sign.
- d. In a nutshell
The Nottingham Declaration is a voluntary pledge which local authorities can sign thereby committing themselves to actively tackling climate change in their areas. It was developed at a conference in Nottingham in 2000 but was re-launched in 2005 as knowledge of climate change and its effects increased. The declaration is available from here:
http://www.est.org.uk/housingbuildings/localauthorities/NottinghamDeclaration/EST_NDec_cert_HR.pdf

Thumbs up

Signing the Declaration gets councils and authorities to think about climate change and how it will affect their areas. Furthermore, as the Nottingham Declaration is a public commitment it puts pressure on the council to turn their pledge into real actions and policies.

Thumbs down

There is no formal monitoring of a council's progress towards reducing emissions and tackling climate change and therefore councils aren't really required to do anything. Also, local authorities can tailor the pledge to suit their level of commitment and so some councils will go further than others.

- e. Latest developments
There are currently over 130 councils who have signed the Nottingham Declaration. The Energy Saving Trust recently produced an action pack to help local authorities that have signed the Declaration. The pack is designed to help local authorities address the challenges of climate change, develop a climate action plan and review plans once they are implemented.

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f. How to do it:

You can check if your local council has signed the Declaration on the Energy Saving Trust website

(www.est.org.uk/housingbuildings/localauthorities/NottinghamDeclaration/who-has-signed/). If they haven't, then print off a copy of the Nottingham

Declaration and send it to them, asking if they will consider signing it. Once your local authority has signed it is important to keep the pressure up to ensure that they take action.

Section 2 - Working with local schools, businesses and institutions

Beyond the local council there are still many ways to take action on the ground locally. Individuals, schools, businesses and universities could all be playing their part.

The difficult question can often be – what can they do to make a difference? Where can they go for further information?

This is why in Section 2 we have focused on two organisations - the Energy Savings Trust and the Carbon Trust – and what services and advice they can offer to help companies, organisations and individuals reduce their carbon emissions.

2.1 Energy saving trust

a. About

The Energy Saving Trust is a not-for-profit organisation funded by the government and private sector. Their main goals are:

- to achieve the sustainable use of energy
- to cut CO₂ emissions
- and to encourage energy efficiency and integration of renewable energy resources

The Trust also runs several schemes and initiatives to help individuals, communities and local authorities improve energy efficiency.

b. Products and Schemes

Home Energy Check

This is an online questionnaire which asks various questions about type and size of house and current energy saving measures installed before advising on how best to reduce energy bills.

Low Carbon Buildings Programme

This initiative offers grants to householders and organisations to install micro generators. Householders must have taken basic energy efficiency measures previously including loft insulation, cavity wall insulation, low energy light bulbs and basic controls for heating systems.

Energy Certification for Schools

A programme to help improve energy efficiency, reduce emissions and provide curriculum resources on energy efficiency and the environment. Students, teachers, governors, members of staff or local authorities can apply for this.

CAfE (Community Action for Energy)

A programme promoting and facilitating local community energy projects. Membership is free and members can access news about community based initiatives, training sessions and funding opportunities.

Policy work

The Energy Saving Trusts provide policy analysis around the areas of energy efficiency, small-scale renewables technologies and low carbon transport.

The Nottingham Declaration

This is a declaration which local authorities can sign up to; thereby pledging to actively tackle climate change in their area. Over 130 local authorities have signed the Declaration so far and many have subsequently developed climate change strategies or taken action. For example, Southampton council developed a Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy after signing the declaration and employed the UK's first Local Authority Climate Change Officer.

2.2 Carbon trust

a. About

The Carbon Trust is a not-for-profit company, created by the government, which helps businesses and organisations reduce CO₂ emissions through energy efficiency and use of low carbon technology. The Carbon Trust has many schemes or products available to help individuals and organisations reduce carbon emissions and improve energy efficiency.

b. Products and schemes

Energy Saving Starter Pack

This resource, designed for businesses, can be ordered free from the Carbon Trust website and includes an Energy Saving Fact Sheet, with tips specific to your business sector, and a selection of posters and stickers to display around the building.

Action Plan Tool

This online questionnaire asks for sector, company size and level of energy saving experience before drawing up an action plan of practical ways in which to improve energy efficiency.

Surveys

Free surveys are provided to organisations with energy bills greater than £50,000 a year. Consultants identify opportunities to save energy and offer advice on how to reduce bills. Also, online checklists are provided for individuals to assess their own businesses.

Energy Efficiency Loans

These are available to small or medium-sized enterprises in England, Wales or Northern Ireland; businesses in England or Wales could borrow £5,000 to £100,000 to fund projects such as lighting, efficient boilers or insulation while businesses in Northern Ireland can borrow up to £200,000 for similar projects.

Carbon Management

This programme provides advice on managing risks and realising opportunities provided by climate change; available for private and public sector businesses.

Local Authority Carbon Management Programme

This provides councils or local authorities with support and guidance to help them reduce emission under the control of the authority e.g. council buildings, street lighting and landfill sites. The support includes an analysis of their carbon footprint and an outline of the opportunities available to manage carbon emissions.

3. Reading list

There is a lot of information out there to help you find out more. Here is the list of what we are aware of, that we think you might find useful

Woking

Climate Change Strategy

www.woking.gov.uk/environment/climatechangestrategy/climatechange.pdf

Case study

www.takingstock.org/downloads/case_study_2-woking.pdf

Merton

Unitary Development Plan

London Borough of Merton

www.merton.gov.uk/udpfinal.pdf (10% rule is on page 153, Policy PE13)

Survey of councils adopted Merton-style policies

www.tcpa.org.uk/climate_change.htm

List of local authorities who have adopted or are pursuing Merton-style policies

www.themertonrule.org/list-of-boroughs

Milton Keynes

Local Plan

Milton Keynes Council

www.mkweb.co.uk/local_plan_review/documents/04%5FDesign%5FPolicies%2Epdf
(Policy D4, page 34)

British Gas with Braintree

Press release

www.defra.gov.uk/news/2006/060313a.htm

Nottingham Declaration

The Nottingham Declaration

www.est.org.uk/housingbuildings/localauthorities/NottinghamDeclaration/EST_NDec_cert_HR.pdf

List of councils who have signed the Declaration

www.est.org.uk/housingbuildings/localauthorities/NottinghamDeclaration/who-has-signed/

Online action pack (only available to local authorities and councils)

www.est.org.uk/housingbuildings/localauthorities/NottinghamDeclaration/online_action_pack/

Other case studies

Climate change mitigation and adaptation plans

www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelid=80841

Government planning documents

Planning and Climate Change - Supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1

This document marks a major breakthrough in embedding climate change in the heart of planning. It is the key document that Local Authorities must refer to when designing their own plans. In Consultation form until 8 March 2007.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1505140>

Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development

Department for Communities and Local Government

www.communities.gov.uk/pub/806/PlanningPolicyStatement1DeliveringSustainableDevelopmentPDF474Kb_id1143806.pdf

Planning Policy Statement 22: Renewable Energy

Department for Communities and Local Government

www.communities.gov.uk/pub/910/planningpolicystatement22renewableenergyPDF866Kb_id1143910.pdf

Government statements

Yvette Cooper Statement

www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmhansrd/cm060608/wmstext/60608m0068.htm#column_33WS

David Miliband Speech

www.davidmiliband.info/sarchive/defra/defra_06_04.htm

Friends of the Earth briefings

Tackling Climate Change at the Local Level

November 2005

www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/ldf_climate_briefing.pdf

Other relevant documents

Sustainable energy and climate change

I&DeA, Energy Savings Trust, Local Government Association

June 2004

A survey looking at the action taken on climate change across all Local Authorities

<http://www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelid=1707115>

Yorkshire and Humber Regional Spatial Strategy and Climate Change Study –
Research Report

Prepared for the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Assembly by Land Use
Consultants in association with Wilbraham & Co (the Planning & Environmental
Practice of Cobbetts)

October 2005

Available by emailing: luc@london.landuse.co.uk