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**Friends of  
the Earth**

# Briefing

# Climate Change Strategies and Action Plans

Friends of the Earth is leading the campaign for local carbon budgets – to cap carbon emissions in every local authority area. All major parties now back a form of local carbon budget, and Friends of the Earth is pushing for new legislation to introduce them for all local authorities during this parliament.

This legislation would require every local authority to have a Climate Change Strategy to show how the local carbon budget will be met. There will be statutory guidance setting out the minimum standards for these strategies.

This briefing explains what Friends of the Earth thinks a good Climate Change Strategy should include. Please note that we are still developing our thinking in this area, so this document is neither final nor exhaustive.

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We are:

- the UK's most influential national environmental campaigning organisation
- the world's most extensive environmental network, with around 2 million supporters across five continents and 77 national organisations worldwide
- a unique network of campaigning local groups, working in more than 230 communities throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland
- dependent on individuals for over 90 per cent of our income.

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Friends of the Earth, 26-28 Underwood Street, London N1 7JQ  
Tel: 020 7490 1555 Fax: 020 7490 0881 Web: [www.foe.co.uk](http://www.foe.co.uk)

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## **1. Background**

Friends of the Earth's Get Serious About CO<sub>2</sub> campaign is for every council to do its bit to tackle climate change<sup>1</sup>.

Emissions from local activities – like how we heat and power buildings and how we travel – amount to around 80 per cent of the UK's total climate pollution. Local authorities can have a critical influence on most of these emissions, either through direct service provision, or through enabling local residents, other public sector organisations, voluntary groups and businesses to take action.

Many local authorities are leading pioneering and inspiring work in tackling climate change. Friends of the Earth local groups have been working with their local authorities to ask them to make tackling climate change a core part of what they do. The result is councils around the country – including those led by all the main political parties, covering both urban and rural areas – have passed motions and are developing and implementing strategies to cut emissions in their area by at least 40 per cent by 2020.

This shows that ambitious action locally – in line with the scientific evidence of what is needed to do our bit to tackle climate change – is both politically and practically possible. But too many are being left behind. Every local authority will need to do its bit if we are to meet our commitments in the Climate Change Act.

This is why Friends of the Earth is leading the campaign for every local area to have a local carbon budget<sup>2</sup>, which caps the emissions that can take place locally, and to produce a top-level Climate Change Strategy including a more detailed Action Plan showing how the carbon budget will be met. This briefing refers to these collectively as a Climate Change Strategy.

Every council should be covered by a local carbon budget, but in practice it will often be sensible for councils to choose to work together to produce coherent and effective Climate Change Strategies - for example as a city-region or within new Local Economic Partnerships.

Friends of the Earth is working with leading local authorities and climate experts to identify key elements that all good Climate Change Strategies should include. This briefing sets out the central components that we believe all strong Climate Change Strategies will need to be structured around.

## **2. Content of a Climate Change Strategy**

Climate Change Strategies should identify and communicate how a local carbon budget will be met. They should be produced following consultation with the community and other stakeholders.

Strategies will set out the policies needed to make the emissions cuts in the local area. These policies will flow from understanding what can be done locally across homes, industry, transport, and the council's own operations – so before pen is put to paper the

council will need to have done a proper assessment of the technical potential for emissions cuts in the local area.

The strategies will reflect the fact that in most areas a combination of local and national government action will be needed to bring local carbon emissions down – for example, cutting transport emissions needs national policies on tax, car efficiency and transport funding to be right as well as local policies on transport infrastructure.

There would be a requirement for all relevant local public sector institutions to cooperate in drawing up the strategy and committing to emissions cuts.

The key components of a Climate Change Strategy should be:

### **Vision**

The strategy should express a positive vision for a low-carbon future for the area. This should describe broadly how the area and local people's lives will have been improved by the end of the strategy.

### **Ambition**

This should set out the size of the local carbon budget and the scale of cuts that need to be made to meet it..

### **Scope for cuts**

The strategy will need to look at the scope for cuts in key sectors, including energy, homes and transport, and set out the cuts to be made with estimates for emissions reductions in each sector.

### **Measures**

The strategy should identify the carbon-cutting measures that will be implemented, and the contribution that each will make to overall emissions cuts. It should also cover renewable energy generation, as this will help the local authority meet their carbon budgets.

Measures should be SMART – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timetabled. It should be clear for each measure who is responsible for carrying it out, what resources are required and how they will be provided, when it will be carried out, how it will be assessed, and what emission reductions it will achieve. The emission reductions across the measures should add up to at least the overall target.

It may be that while some measures can be stated in SMART terms now, other areas require some further development before such detail can be provided. This is acceptable provided that there is clear process specified, again with clear responsibility and time-frame, to carry out this development. If a specific CO<sub>2</sub> reduction has been attributed to this relatively undeveloped measure, then there may need to be a process of review to ensure that, if the measure will not deliver this target, the overall plan can be adjusted to compensate.

Friends of the Earth's publications provide some examples of measures<sup>3</sup>.

### Responsibility

The strategy should set out the division of responsibility between bodies and individuals, setting out the policies to be delivered by all stakeholders, including:

- national government (detailing how national action, for example on car fuel efficiency, will cut emissions in the area)
- the local authority (or authorities if appropriate)
- local businesses
- public sector organisations such as hospitals
- third sector organisations.

### Finance

The cost of the strategy, and how it will be financed and funded, should be laid out clearly.

### Wider costs and benefits

There should be an assessment of the wider costs and benefits resulting from the Strategy, for example regarding the natural environment, the local economy, health, social justice including fuel poverty etc. Vulnerable sectors and groups should be identified to ensure that no-one is unduly disadvantaged by the effects of climate change or the measures to tackle it.

### Consultation and community engagement

The strategy should be drawn up with the involvement of stakeholders including local communities and neighbourhoods. It should be clear how everyone will be involved in implementing it and shaping it in future in response to changing circumstances.

### Integration

The strategy should detail how cutting carbon will be integrated with all other decisions of the participating local authorities including: budget decisions, waste reduction, and other local authority aims and strategies including corporate plans and Local Development Plans. It needs to sit at the highest level within each Local Authority (with the Chief Executive). It should also be central to the work of cross-sectoral bodies such as Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Economic Partnerships

### Delivery

The strategy should set out the process by which plans will be enacted to deliver the strategy. This should include designating responsibility for delivery to stakeholders as above.

### Review

This will detail how progress towards implementing the Strategy and meeting the local carbon budget will be evaluated and what will happen if the council is not on track to meet its budget.

### Future-proofing

The strategy should set out how it will be amended if necessary to take account of future developments – for example, changes in local population, economic activity, increased ambition for future local carbon budgets, or the need to measure and reduce emissions from embedded carbon.

### **Monitoring and reporting**

This will explain how the council will publicise the strategy and report on progress.

### **Other issues**

Other issues that could be included in a Climate Change Strategy are water and waste management, embedded carbon and climate adaptation

## **3. Conclusions**

Friends of the Earth believes that local carbon budgets will drive ambitious emissions cuts by helping local authorities to lead effective carbon reduction across their local areas. The production of a Climate Change Strategy is a key step in this process.

We would welcome your thoughts on the evolving thinking outlined in this briefing.

### **Contact / more information**

Liz Hutchins  
Friends of the Earth  
26-28 Underwood Street  
London N1 7JQ, UK

[liz.hutchins@foe.co.uk](mailto:liz.hutchins@foe.co.uk)

020 7566 1728

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<sup>1</sup> See [http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/get\\_serious\\_introduction.pdf](http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/get_serious_introduction.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> See [http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/local\\_carbon\\_budgets.pdf](http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/local_carbon_budgets.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> See [http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/get\\_serious/info.html](http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/get_serious/info.html)