

**GET
SERIOUS
ABOUT
CO₂**

Some Frequently Asked Questions



A - Campaigning for 40% commitment

1. Local councils aren't responsible for climate change are they? Surely they hardly have any influence over emissions and you should be hassling central government instead?

We can only tackle climate change if all levels of government work together, and local councils are key. Local councils have influence over emissions from domestic and commercial premises, and road transport, which together make up 80 per cent of the national total. They employ 2 million people and spend £110 billion each year so they are big players in their own right but they can influence a lot more. They have a big say over transport, energy, planning policy and development control and have a community leadership role. National government expects them to play a role and three quarters of the public think that councils have a key role in tackling climate change.

Much of the potential for reduction in emissions at the local level lies with national Government. Progress in areas such as grid decarbonisation (using less carbon-intensive electricity sources by increasing renewable electricity generation so less CO₂ is emitted as a result) and supporting the increased efficiency of vehicles will have big impacts upon emissions within local areas.

However making the necessary reductions in emissions within local areas is very likely to rely upon the actions of local authorities. Research by consultants AEA for DEFRA during the scoping of the nascent NI186 suggested that of potential emissions reductions within a local area, 30 to 50 per cent are either purely locally influenced or else depend on local delivery of national policy.

The City of Manchester's Climate Change Action Plan, devised to support a target of a 41 per cent reduction in the local authority area's carbon emissions by 2020, is clear that meeting this target will require a concentration on local effort:

"These people, the communities of Manchester, will deliver our most significant cuts in carbon emissions. Through the way we live our lives and run our homes we will all work together to make Manchester a low carbon city".

2. Is it realistic that local councils could reduce emissions by at least 40 per cent by 2020?

Independent research by Carbon Descent shows that it is technically feasible for a council of all types (rural, urban etc.) to cut its emissions by at least 40 per cent by 2020. Emissions cuts of 40 per cent are possible if enough homes are well insulated, enough renewable energy is installed, enough local energy is generated from combined heat and power plants, traffic is reduced and low-carbon vehicles are used more.

For example, in a local council like Tower Hamlets in London, cavity wall and loft insulation alone could achieve a reduction of 3-5 per cent, reducing traffic could achieve a 4 per cent reduction and combined heat and power could achieve a reduction in emissions of up to 15 per cent. On top of that, the Government's targets to introduce renewable energy by 2020 will itself deliver a big chunk of the 40 per cent by reducing the CO₂ that results from electricity generation.

3. Why should a council that is already taking bold steps to tackle climate change commit to a target of cutting its emissions by at least 40 per cent by 2020?

The latest science tells us that rich countries like the UK have to reduce their emissions by at least 40 per cent by 2020 to avoid dangerous climate change. Few councils are taking bold action across energy, housing and transport. Even if a council is taking some positive steps in the right direction, we need a solid commitment from the council that these measures will continue into the future, and bring down that area's emissions in line with the latest climate science - all councils need to reduce their emissions by at least 40 per cent by 2020.

4. How do I go about lobbying local councils on climate change - won't any commitment on climate change only be a form of lip-service?

We have to make sure that commitments to tackle climate change aren't just paying lip service to the problem. Two key ways to do this are, firstly, to get cross-party support in the council for its commitment; and secondly to make sure the council produces an action plan to show how it will make the cuts it has committed to.

We are also working nationally to press for action on climate change in line with the science to be required for all councils via a system of local carbon budgets.

5. How can we lobby second tier authorities (district and borough councils where there is also a county council) when they aren't responsible for transport?

Where there are still two tiers of local government, the different tiers (the county council and the district or borough councils) have different responsibilities. Local Area Agreement targets on indicators like NI186 (that measures CO2 emissions from the local authority area) are generally set at county level, and districts are expected to collaborate in achieving them. Transport and highways policy is set at county level. But district councils do have lead responsibility for homes and planning policy and development control. They run regulatory bodies like environmental health. They can also influence transport through planning policy and through parking policy, which is their responsibility. So there is a great deal they can do, although it is recognised that to achieve 40% they would need collaboration from the county and from national government too (and counties would need support from districts to achieve 40% too).

Conversely, counties would need the collaboration of districts to achieve challenging targets. This is another reason why we think that all councils should be obliged to take action.

6. Shouldn't we be lobbying Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs)?

LSPs include NHS bodies, police, fire, colleges and universities, voluntary sector reps, and large businesses and/or chambers of commerce alongside the council. They are clearly vital in delivering big emission cuts. The local sustainable community strategy should be agreed with LSP members and should influence their priorities and actions. But the local authority is responsible for convening the partnership and is clearly the lead in developing the community strategy. The Manchester climate change action plan exemplifies how broad involvement can be achieved. So the FOE group should not need to influence each of the members if it can get the council to play its due community leadership role.

Having said that, it might be opportune to lobby LSP members as a way to influence the council, if the council is proving hard to budge. Some LSP partners may be driven to do their bit from other directions (for example in London the Fire Brigade has a London-wide policy but this helps drive action in boroughs). Councillors may be more willing to agree 40% by 2020 if LSP members are showing they are up for doing their bit.

7. How does a local group go about verifying what they are told by the LA?

We recognise that the Nottingham Declaration launched in 2000 enabled lots of councils to sign up to a commitment and then do little to implement it. That's why part of our campaign aim is to get a Climate Change Action Plan rather than just a motion, and why it is important to check how the council is developing the plan, its final contents and how it is embedded in policy and funding decisions. Ensuring cross-party support inside the council and a vigilant FOE group and community coalition outside will make it harder for a council to backslide. If there are technical questions groups can ask LRCs or campaigners to advise.

8. Schools - Councils say that schools are a big part of the problem and it's impossible to insulate them properly without huge costs due to most of them being very old buildings etc.

Schools may form a big part of a county or unitary council's own emissions but are likely to be a small percentage of total emissions. Like all buildings, much can be done even in old school buildings to improve insulation (double glazing, loft insulation pitched roofs etc) and reduce electricity consumption by replacing equipment and encouraging green behaviour. Replacing old heating systems can save a lot – with CHP in larger schools – and in some places schools could be linked in to area heating grids. Transport emissions associated with schools can be reduced through adoption of School Travel Plans as part of Council's Local Transport Plans (see section 20). Schools can get grants from SALIX, a loan fund set up by government to help the public sector invest to save energy and costs, and the Building Schools for the Future programmes can enable schools to improve existing buildings on the back of new extensions.

(www.salixfinance.co.uk/home.html and www.partnershipsforschools.org.uk/about/aboutbsf.jsp)

Schools can also sign up to be an Eco-school and some councils have specific officers who help schools to get green flags by being as environmentally friendly as possible.

9. In my local authority non-domestic emissions (commercial and industrial etc) are the biggest sector. What are we saying about this?

We recognise that non-domestic emissions are a big sector. The policies and examples we have promoted so far will address some of these (through planning, CHP, area heat networks etc.) but we also recognise that this is a relatively undeveloped area compared to say domestic energy. We are looking to see what best practice examples are available to make recommendations for emissions reduction in offices, shops, restaurants, hotels etc. and whether further research is needed.

B – Funding

10. Won't local action on climate change put up council tax?

Central government needs to help local councils with funding to avoid big increases in council tax. But many of the measures we are proposing to cut emissions will actually save money in the long run. And even if councils did use council tax to help fund measures, most householders would gain more – because of reduced fuel bills. (In Kirklees council tax was put up slightly to help fund a council-wide programme fitting basic insulation to all homes but householders typically recouped many times that increase in reduced bills). For larger schemes, councils may need to take out loans or private investment but again this should pay for itself over time (see also the Tony Travers research www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/get_serious_finance_report.pdf and a new Friends of the Earth briefing on financing which will be available from the end of January 2010).

11. Who will pay for all the changes Friends of the Earth is suggesting?

Local councils and energy companies already put up money for home energy efficiency works. Central government is now committing to providing a lot more. Some contribution might be needed from homeowners but they will benefit because home energy efficiency measures quickly pay for themselves in reduced fuel bills. Green bonds could be used to fund other initial investment required, for example in combined heat and power schemes. Councils have the power to “sell” bonds to the public, who thereby invest and provide the capital funding. The council would pay interest and capital back out of reduced energy bills. Local energy companies could borrow from the bond schemes and pay it back out of income they get from generating low-carbon energy or reduced fuel bills.

As part of our work on Local Carbon Budgets we are calling for additional funding (see briefing to be published at end of January 2010). We can also make the point that the costs of **not** taking action will be much greater – as the Stern report emphasised.

C - Other local climate campaigns

12. How does Get Serious About CO₂ tie in with Local Area Partnerships (brought in with the Sustainable Communities Act)?

The Sustainable Communities Act provides a way for local councils to work with their communities to develop and fund local initiatives. Councils have to consult their communities and then make proposals, which are filtered by the local Government Association, for new powers or funds. The first round of proposals includes lots of climate-related issues. But it is too early to say how they will work, and whether it will be repeated in future. Friends of the Earth will be tracking it to see if it can become a useful pathway for this campaign.

13. Why is Friends of the Earth running this campaign when Transition Towns are already achieving a lot in local communities?

Transition Towns - and other community-based groups aiming to reduce energy use and hence carbon emissions - have grown enormously in the last few years. Their existence is a strong signal to central and local government of the public's appetite for action. Some of these groups will already have been involved in lobbying councils and many are potentially useful local allies for the campaign.

Their focus is however on voluntary action from the grassroots upwards. Friends of the Earth is lobbying for a far more ambitious programme of action, led by local councils, that will set us firmly on a path to big carbon cuts from every town and village in England and Wales. We believe there is a role for both types of action – within and outside the formal political system – and we want to work alongside Transition and other groups, not replace them.

To date there has been no co-ordinated programme of political action to shift local councils to “Get Serious About CO₂” and this is the gap we aim to fill.

14. What is the relationship between Get Serious and the 10:10 campaign?

We welcomed the 10:10 campaign as a good way to generate urgency and focus people's minds on achieving emission cuts now. But a) if a local authority signs up, it is only committing to reduce its own emissions, not those from the whole area; and b) obviously it has a short-term focus which is important, but wider policy changes and infrastructure development need a longer time-scale.

Some local groups have already had great success in signing their council up to 10:10, but we need to keep the pressure on for the longer-term goals. Several councils are combining action to meet 10:10 commitments and the Get Serious ask of a 40 per cent emissions cut by 2020 with a Climate Change Action plan mapping out the route to achieving the target.

D – Postcards

15. I've already sent my council a load of the old postcards/I have a stack signed that I need to send. Are these now not valid?

A new postcard has slightly different wording on the national ask to reflect positive political developments since the campaign started. The original cards are still valid, but if you haven't handed them over yet then try to do this sooner rather than later. Please make sure you use the new cards for any future public engagement or stalls.

16. My council has passed a motion with the 'old' wording. Does this mean I need to start campaigning again?

A new model motion reflects positive political developments since the campaign started, and experience from successful local groups. The old motion included a commitment to supporting a national duty. Local Carbon Budgets, in the new model motion, would have the effective of a national duty because they would ensure that all councils reduce their emissions. So there is no need to start campaigning again, but please move to using the new model motion where possible. Contact the Get Serious campaign team for further advice on this if you need it.

E – Local Carbon Budgets

17. With the Climate Change Law coming into force, won't the Government be putting councils under pressure anyway?

The Climate Change Act 2008, which was won through the Big Ask campaign, is a ground-breaking piece of legislation. The new law puts a legally-binding cap on national greenhouse gas emissions, and requires the Government to adopt policies – across all of their departments – to meet the targets.

But the Climate Change Act is a framework for *national* emissions cuts. It does not require individual local councils to do any of the things we know are needed: setting a local emissions reduction target, developing a climate change action plan of how the cuts can be made, then rolling out the policies to deliver the cuts.

The radical shift of policy and politics, which delivering the Climate Change Act emissions cuts will drive at a national level, is essential to supporting councils to step up to the challenge of climate change locally. But to ensure that *all* councils get serious, a new mechanism is needed. We are arguing that Local Carbon Budgets are the most effective route to pursue this.

18. Why is Friends of the Earth calling for local carbon budgets and how would they work?

In the summer, the Government proposed Local Carbon Budgets as a possible mechanism for council action on climate. Friends of the Earth welcomed this move as showing that Government is getting serious about ensuring all sections of government and society contribute to meeting the targets in the Climate Change Act.

The Government is in the process of deciding how Local Carbon Budgets would work, and will develop their ideas early in 2010. Friends of the Earth thinks local carbon budgets could ensure every council does its bit to tackle climate change. They should place a cap on emissions in the whole local authority area and be:

- **For all councils** – not just those currently prioritising action
- **Set in line with the science**, and local circumstances (with advice from the Committee on Climate Change)
- **Supported by national government** including more and better-coordinated financial support, and technical advice
- **Use high quality and accessible data** – for robust measurement of emissions cuts, and accountability for local people
- **Timed in line with national carbon budgets** – with five-year budget periods and transparency on annual progress

Reducing emissions in the local area would require both local and national government action. For more information, please see Friends of the Earth's Local Carbon Budgets briefing http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/local_carbon_budgets.pdf.

19. Get Serious was meant to be a local campaign, that's why my group signed up. Why are we now being asked to lobby our MPs on Local Carbon Budgets?

The campaign strategy always envisaged a two-stream approach: local pressure and national pressure supporting each other. However whereas the previous strategy was to only ask councils to back our national asks once they had signed up to our local asks, (because of the positive political developments on Local Carbon Budgets) we now need to secure local council support for the national ask more quickly.

We have produced new props and guidance on a tactic that will hopefully get councils joining us in our call for Local Carbon Budgets sooner rather than later. However your local campaigns are still the most important element of Get Serious, and taking part in the Local Carbon Budgets action is an optional addition.

F – National policy campaigns

20. How does what Friends of the Earth is calling for locally link up with the national picture?

a) On transport?

Over 60 per cent of national carbon dioxide emissions from transport come from journeys of fewer than 25 miles, so local policies are critical to cutting carbon from transport. All local transport authorities (that is, all local authorities apart from District councils, where the County council is the transport authority) must set out local transport plans - documents that set out the strategy and implementation proposals for transport in a local area.

We're calling for all local transport plans to focus on reducing carbon by cutting traffic levels and investing in and promoting low-carbon local transport. This is a key time because all local transport plans are being revised this year. We have published a briefing on how to achieve carbon emission reductions through local transport plans.

The Department for Transport does still get the final say over which local bids for infrastructure spending it will approve or reject, and it needs to take the right choices. Huge amounts of Government cash go every year on building or widening roads. We think this is money that should instead be spent on giving us national, regional and local public transport networks to be proud of, on supporting walking and cycling, and encouraging and inspiring people to use their cars much less.

Right now we're calling for the Government to announce a national roll out of 'Smarter Choices'. These information and advice initiatives that promote walking, cycling and public transport use are demonstrated to cut traffic and emissions, and are backed by the Committee on Climate Change. We are asking MPs to back our EDM which calls for DfT funding from existing budgets to be redirected to support a phased rollout of 'Smarter Choices' across England.

b) On homes?

Homes contribute 27% of UK emissions. Delivering a massive home energy efficiency programme would take us a long way towards the 40% target. Get Serious About CO₂ is calling for local councils to provide free cavity wall and loft insulation for all householders. These measures are already subsidised by several government schemes. We are asking for local councils to provide an additional subsidy to ensure that every home is offered the service for free. Local councils may struggle to cover every single home unless the Government provides additional support, but they can definitely make an important start.

At the national level, Friends of the Earth is calling for the Government to start up a much more ambitious energy efficiency programme. We want every home in the country to be given the opportunity for a whole house make-over to both insulate it and install renewable energy. This would go beyond cavity wall and loft insulation and include measures such as solid wall insulation where needed, and double or triple-glazing.

Our vision is that these financial incentives would be part of a new, single energy efficiency programme rather than the various and fragmented programmes that now exist. We believe that local councils should be at the heart of the new scheme, overseeing low carbon home transformations in their area and managing the roll-out on a street by street basis in low carbon zones, prioritising vulnerable groups in fuel poverty or on low incomes first. The programme would receive finance via a Green Infrastructure Bank and any additional finance required to make it work could be raised by issuing Green Bonds with the proceeds dedicated to supporting the programme.

c) On energy?

It will be hard to achieve the 40% target locally without reducing the emissions associated with electricity generation. The UK must achieve a zero carbon energy system by 2050, requiring a revolution in the way we generate and use energy, starting now if we're to achieve significant emissions reductions by 2020 which are necessary to stabilise global temperatures. This means a massive switch from the energy system we have today, based on large centralised electricity generation from dirty coal, gas, and nuclear plants, to a future system dominated by renewable energy. As we switch to this renewable future we will still need to use some fossil fuels, but we must vastly improve the efficiency of the technology, for example through capturing the 'waste' heat that currently disappears up cooling towers, and using it to provide heat for industry, businesses and homes via a technology known as combined heat and power (CHP). We will also

see a much wider variety of sources used to provide energy at a number of different scales, from vast offshore windfarms, to solar panels on individual homes.

The UK Government has committed to a target of 15 per cent of our energy to come from renewables by 2020, and published its strategy on how to deliver this in July 2009, along with additional measures to increase energy efficiency and delivery of low energy infrastructure, including district heating and CHP.

Local action is essential to meet this national target. Local councils already play a key role in determining what energy infrastructure is built within their boundaries: local plans influence what infrastructure is built where; the local authority's planning committee is responsible for granting or refusing planning permission for small and medium scale energy projects of all kinds, including windfarms, or specifying the need for inclusion of renewable energy and energy efficiency in new development; local councils own and run municipal buildings and social housing which can form the building blocks of district heating systems; and local councils also own land which can host new renewable energy projects.

21. What else is Friends of the Earth campaigning on in 2010?

We will continue to seek to make real headway on the biggest environmental threats facing humanity – runaway climate change and the galloping destruction of natural systems and habitats, such as tropical forests, that support human life on Earth. The Get Serious About CO₂ campaign fits this package of campaigns because it delivers on domestic emissions cuts while the international campaign delivers on global cuts and the Food Chain campaign reduces imported emissions from our consumption.

International climate justice

The science is clear: to avoid runaway climate change, industrialised countries must cut their emissions by at least 40 per cent by 2020 – and these cuts must be made at home, not through offsetting abroad. The weak outcome from the UN talks in Copenhagen in December 2009 means that although we must continue to push for concerted international action, we cannot wait for international agreement to take further action at home. The UK must act now to tackle its domestic footprint and the effects of its consumption on global emissions. The Government must increase its 2020 emissions reduction target from 34% to 42% below 1990 levels. So we will also involve the public, our supporters and local volunteers in pushing local councils in England and Wales to get serious about cutting carbon, and in pressing the Government to address one of the biggest contributors to climate-changing emissions, the global food system. Setting exemplary targets and policies in place will help encourage other countries to follow suit.

Fixing the food chain

Targets alone – whether global or local – will not work unless we begin to tackle the big international drivers of climate change and habitat loss. The global meat and dairy industry causes more climate-changing emissions than all the planes, trains and cars on the planet. This year we will expose the hidden chain linking factory farming in the UK to South American soy production, rainforest destruction, social upheaval and climate change. We will push the Government to show leadership by shifting subsidies away from factory farming to a thriving UK farm sector that provides planet-friendly meat and dairy for families in Britain.