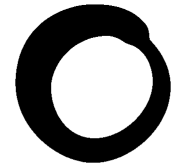


**GET
SERIOUS
ABOUT
CO₂**



**Friends of
the Earth**

Spring 2010

Campaigning for every council to do its bit to tackle climate change

Following the success of our Big Ask campaign for the Climate Change Act, Friends of the Earth has launched the **Get Serious About CO₂** campaign to make sure green policies are implemented locally.

Local Government is crucial to delivering climate solutions. Councils have a huge say in local emissions - how we plan our communities, how we power and heat our homes, and how we get around. Councils are well placed to understand local communities' interests in building a green future.

But although there has been inspirational leadership from some councils, much more ambitious action is needed from most councils if we are to meet our national climate commitments and do our bit to avert catastrophic climate change. **A response on a wholly different scale is needed.**

There are huge benefits to local action on climate change. If councils get serious about climate change, it will boost local economies, create jobs and slash fuel bills, reduce health problems and improve public transport.

Friends of the Earth local groups are working to mobilise popular support for their council to do more to cut carbon. We are asking councils to commit to cutting emissions in their area by at least 40 per cent by 2020 and to produce an action plan showing how they'll make the cuts. And we're already having success with councils from each major party signing up.

We are also working nationally for the introduction of Local Carbon Budgets – placing a cap on emissions in every council area. We are calling for more money and support for councils to help them take the action needed.

This is an ambitious campaign, and Friends of the Earth is working in partnership with our supporters, local government, policy experts and civil society to win local and national political backing for councils to Get Serious About CO₂.

Get involved!

Thousands of people have already backed the Get Serious About CO₂ campaign.

To find out more, and how to get involved, visit
www.getseriousaboutCO2.com
or phone 020 7490 1555

Councils benefit by taking action

The Stern Reviewⁱ and the Committee on Climate Change's first reportⁱⁱ made clear that taking strong action on climate change will cost far less than the costs of weak or delayed action, and will offer significant benefits.

A low-carbon local economy will see local benefits of reduced energy bills, greater resilience to fluctuating energy prices, and the avoidance of high-carbon infrastructure that will be a growing financial burden.

At least **70,000**

new local

green jobs could

be created by loft and cavity wall insulation, and fitting domestic renewable energy.

Independent research by Carbon Descent for Friends of the Earth¹

“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 evidence that it is **the single priority which overrides all others, now and for the foreseeable future.**”*

Local Government Association
Climate Change Commission 2007³

Local action is essential

Most ‘national’ emissions in practice occur locally through the everyday activities of people and businesses across the country.

Making cuts in emissions across the UK is a shared responsibility between national and local Governments: local action on climate change is not optional.

If we are to meet national emissions commitments, broadly similar levels of cuts will need to be madeⁱⁱⁱ at a local level as the national target.

A 40 per cent 2020 target

The science is clear: rich countries need to cut their greenhouse gas emissions by *at least* 40 per cent by 2020 for the world to avoid runaway climate change.

Independent research^{iv} for Friends of the Earth shows a range of types of local authority (urban, rural etc) can meet a 40 per cent reductions by 2020 in their area, by by a combination of local and national effort.

Many councils are already signing up to a 40 per cent cut, and are putting in place climate change action plans to make sure the target is met.

Councils from all political parties are signing up to a 2020 emissions cut target of at least 40 per cent: **Birmingham, Bristol, Durham, Haringey, Harrogate, Harrow, Islington, Leeds, Manchester, Plymouth, Suffolk**²

Climate Change Action Plans

Friends of the Earth is calling on all councils to draw up a Climate Change Action Plans setting out how emissions will be cut. We have a six step guide^v to producing an Action Plan, and we are working with partners to develop a fuller guide to best practice.

“Few areas have developed ambitious long-term strategies to drive CO2 reductions.

... reductions will be **needed in all areas”**.

Audit Commission, Oct 2009⁴

Not enough action

Whilst a growing number of councils are taking bold action, a full third of councils have not signed up to per-capita emissions cuts in their area.

And even those councils that have signed up to targets aren't really pushing themselves. Only one in five of the council targets mean emissions will drop in the local area more than could be expected anyway as a result of national government policies.

Even when money is available to cut emissions, councils are not always taking advantage of it^{vi}. Too often cutting carbon isn't seen as a priority for valuable council time or training – despite the benefits that taking action could bring.

Local leadership is not proving sufficient to address the scale and urgency of the climate crisis.

Six policies every council can introduce now

Friends of the Earth worked with policy experts and local council officers to draw up six policies^{vii} that every council can get on with now for big carbon cuts.

These policies are in addition to measures to cut carbon in the council's own estate.

We commissioned research^{viii} from Arup to show existing best practice for each policy and how councils have found the funding.

1. **Free home insulation**
2. **Renewable energy** in homes
3. **Reducing traffic**
4. Encouraging a shift to **low-carbon vehicles**
5. Encouraging **renewable energy** through planning policies
6. Set up **Energy Services Companies** to invest in local low-carbon energy systems

More money

Friends of the Earth is campaigning for more money for councils to cut carbon locally.

We commissioned independent research^{ix} from local government expert Tony Travers from the London School of Economics to highlight what financial changes are needed to help councils do more to cut emissions.

Better carbon data and support

We're calling for councils to have access to higher quality and more detailed information about where emissions are coming from in their area. This is essential if they are to develop effective policies to cut emissions.

We back calls for more support and technical advice to help councils choose and deliver climate solutions like local green energy, and to develop detailed climate change action plans.

Local Carbon Budgets

Following the Climate Change Act 2008, every part of Government is taking a share of responsibility for making sure our national climate commitments are met. This is an important advance in tackling climate change.

The Government has proposed new Local Carbon Budgets for England, and is currently deciding how they would work.

Friends of the Earth thinks Local Carbon Budgets are an excellent idea and should place a cap on emissions in the whole local authority area and be^x: (see box).

We want the Government and all political parties to back the introduction of Local Carbon Budgets to ensure every council does its bit to tackle climate change.

- **For all councils** – not just those currently prioritising action
- **Set in line with the science** and local circumstances
- **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

getseriousaboutco2.com

is packed with information and ways to take action:

- **Take action online:** to call for every council to do its bit on climate change.
- **Council successes:** see which councils are doing most to cut carbon.
- **Policy ideas and briefings:** what your council can do, and how it can pay for it.
- **Local campaigning:** see if there's already action in your council area.
- **Where to go for help:** details of organisations that help councils tackle climate change.

We're calling on...

Members of the public to:

- Join our campaign at **getseriousaboutco2.com** where you can find out about campaigning in your local area, and asking Government to take action.

Councillors to:

- Champion the campaign in your council. Propose the Get Serious About CO₂ motion^{xi} for an at least 40% cut in CO₂ by 2020, and a climate change action plan, and back local carbon budgets and more money and support for councils.

MPs to:

- Write to the Secretary of State for Local Government in support of Local Carbon Budgets based on the principles above.

References (boxes)

1. www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/job_creation_carbon_descent.pdf
2. www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/council_co2_targets.pdf
3. 'A Climate of Change –final report of the LGA Climate Change Commission' <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/aio/20631>
4. 'Lofty Ambitions, The role of councils in reducing CO₂ emissions', Audit Commission, December 2009
<http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/AuditCommissionReports/NationalStudies/20091021loftyambitions.pdf>

ⁱ <http://www.occ.gov.uk/activities/stern.htm>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.theccc.org.uk/reports/building-a-low-carbon-economy>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.theccc.org.uk/reports/building-a-low-carbon-economy>

^{iv} http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/reports/pathways_to_40_percent_report.pdf

^v http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/reports/getting_serious_about_climate_change.pdf

^{vi} Salix reference

^{vii} http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/reports/getting_serious_about_climate_change.pdf

^{viii} *Ibid.*

^{ix} *Ibid.*

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

^{xi} http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/get_serious_motion.pdf