



Briefing

Local Carbon Budgets

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1. Introduction

A step-change in locally coordinated action is needed if we are to meet UK Climate Change Act commitments. Councils led by all political parties are calling for a nationwide system of local carbon budgets to help them deliver the action needed.

The vast majority of UK emissions (around 80 percent) result from local activity – how we heat and power homes and workplaces and how we get around. As well as getting the big national decisions right, reducing local energy use is critical.

Locally-coordinated action to cut carbon is cost effective. Crucially it means local people, businesses and institutions like schools and hospitals can shape the low carbon future of their own communities – tailoring solutions that work locally.

Local government is in a strong position to lead and coordinate this action. Many councils are now taking climate change very seriously, adopting ambitious local targets and rolling out strategies that are creating green jobs, cutting fuel poverty and reducing traffic.

But most councils are being left behind. The challenge of climate change is too grave and urgent to be left to those councils that choose to prioritise action. A nationwide system is needed to support councils and ensure emissions come down in every local authority area.

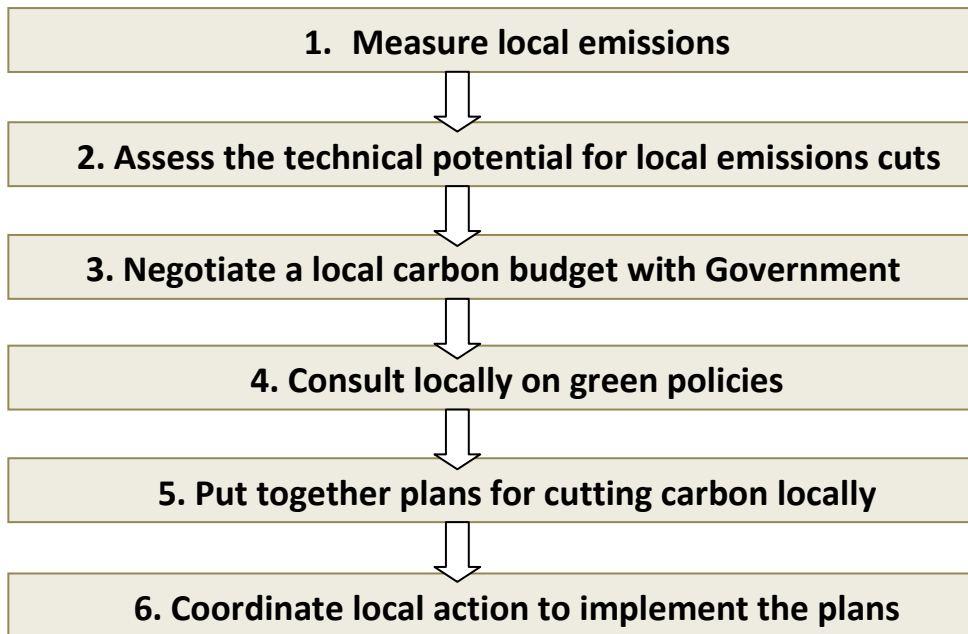
Council leaders across the country, from all parties, are calling for Government to introduce a nationwide system of local carbon budgets to support them lead the local action needed. An alliance of business, community and environment organisations are also backing the call.

“When you find the Federation of Small Business in alliance with Friends of the Earth you know it’s time to sit up and take notice.”

Greg Barker
Climate Change Minister
October 2010

2. How Local Carbon Budgets would work

Each local authority – or grouping, such as a city region – would take the following steps.



Government would work with councils to ensure that the net scale of emissions reduction is sufficient to help meet UK Climate Change Act targets.

This would mean some areas being more ambitious than others depending on local circumstances.

Leading councils have demonstrated that ambitious local action is both practically and politically possible - adopting and rolling out plans for a cut of emissions locally of at least 40 per cent by 2020:

Birmingham, Brighton & Hove, Bristol, Durham County, Haringey, Harrogate, Harrow, Islington, Leeds, Manchester, Plymouth, Suffolk, York

3. The benefits of local carbon budgets

- **Transparency and accountability** in action to tackle climate change locally
- **Community involvement** in carbon-cutting decisions and projects
- New **green jobs** and **skills**
- Increased **certainty for investment** and planning
- **Partnership working:** councils, Government, residents, businesses local institutions
- **Assembled resources** to cut carbon locally
- **Rigorous, timely data** and **technical opportunity** mapping to better understand local emissions

"Local carbon budgets would not be another top-down directive. They would provide an essential framework to help councils respond to a global challenge with locally-tailored solutions."

**Louise Goldsmith,
Leader (Conservative)
West Sussex County Council**

4. Every council doing its bit

Every council will need to do its bit in coordinating local action if we are to meet the challenging targets in the UK Climate Change Act.

If some councils opt out, deeper emissions cuts will have to be made elsewhere. The scale of emissions cuts needed makes this practically very challenging.

“Councils like Manchester can’t save the planet alone! Every council needs to act to achieve the scale of locally-coordinated emissions cuts needed.”

**Sir Richard Leese, Leader (Labour)
Manchester City Council**

‘Our unanimous view at present is that a statutory duty should be imposed on those councils that, within the next two years, do not respond to climate change.’

**LGA Climate Change Commission,
November 2007**

‘The general LG Group position is that new duties from Government should be accompanied by new resources.

If DECC is able to provide the resources for councils to meet nationally set local targets, then the Group could negotiate from this position.’

**Local Government Group offer
to DECC on Climate Change, Oct 2010**

5. Political support for local carbon budgets

Local carbon budgets has support from Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat council leaders.

The Government has made clear its support for the approach of local carbon budgets (see quote), and has take forward Labour’s enormously popular council pilot scheme which is now testing local carbon budgets.

The system also command the support of business and community organisations, and those representing council and private sector employees.

“It can’t all be done from the centre. We can put in the big infrastructure, we can say no to old coal, we can influence the big investment decisions but fundamentally this is a transition that has to have the active engagement of people locally.

I’m working now with my officials, having worked very extensively with Friends of the Earth in opposition, on local carbon budgets to try and come up with something that is effective, that is fair and useful, but also doesn’t impose undue burdens on councils.

We need local people, local authorities, local communities to be empowered. In order to be really empowered they need the right information, they need to understand how that locks into the national picture and local carbon budgets are going to be a key part of that.”

**Greg Barker, Energy and Climate Change Minister
26 November 2010, Bexhill**

“It’s very unusual to hear the FSB call for extra legislation, we’re usually talking about doing away with it, but in this case we think local carbon budgets would be a great help.”

Federation of Small Businesses

“Local carbon budgets would give councils certainty about their role in tackling climate change, and would help authorities prioritise green jobs and action for a Just Transition to a low carbon economy.”

Unison

6. Councils calling for legislation

In June, Climate Secretary Chris Huhne asked councils to make an 'offer' about how they will do their bit to help meet the UK Climate Change Act targets.

In response, council leaders from all political parties are calling for local carbon budgets legislation to be introduced in this session of Parliament.

"In Bristol, we back local carbon budgets and we'd like to see Chris Huhne commit to introduce them in Parliament."

Barbara Janke
Leader (Liberal Democrat)
Bristol City Council

- Cllr Barbara Janke, Leader, **Bristol** City Council (Liberal Democrat)
- Cllr Louise Goldsmith, Leader **West Sussex** County Council (Conservative)
- Sir Richard Leese, Leader, **Manchester** City Council (Labour)
- Cllr David Faulkner, Leader, **Newcastle** City Council (Liberal Democrat)
- Cllr Claire Kober, Leader, **Haringey** Council (Labour)
- Cllr Paul Tilsley MBE, Deputy leader, **Birmingham** City Council (Conservative, Liberal Democrat coalition)
- Cllr Mike Heenan, Leader, **Stafford** Borough Council (Conservative)
- Cllr Mehboob Khan, Leader, **Kirklees** Council (Labour)
- Dorothy Thornhill, Elected Mayor, **Watford** Borough Council (Liberal Democrat)
- Sir Steve Bullock, Mayor, **Lewisham** (Labour)
- Cllr Sian Reid, Leader, **Cambridge** City Council (Liberal Democrat)
- Cllr Jeff Green, Leader, Metropolitan Borough of **Wirral** (Conservative)
- Stuart Fraser, Chairman of Policy and 2012 Strategy Officer, **City of London Corporation**
- Cllr Ray Russell, Leader, **Chesterfield** Borough Council (Liberal Democrat)
- Cllr Jeff Reid, Leader, **Northumberland** County Council (Liberal Democrat)
- Cllr Peter Charon, Leader, **Bournemouth** Borough Council (Conservative)
- Cllr Andrew Waller, Leader, **York** City Council (Liberal Democrat)
- Cllr Catherine West, Leader, **Islington** Borough Council (Labour)
- Cllr Dave Goddard, Leader, **Stockport** Council (Liberal Democrat)
- Cllr Bob Price, Leader, **Oxford** City Council (Labour)
- Cllr Paul Scriven, Leader, **Sheffield** City Council (Liberal Democrat)
- Cllr Bob Young, Environment lead, **Durham** County Council (Labour)
- Cllr Eddie Collicot, Environment lead, **Lewes** District Council (Liberal Democrat)
- Cllr Ann John OBE, Leader, London Borough of **Brent** (Labour)
- Cllr Veejay Patel, Leader, **Leicester** City Council (Labour)
- Stuart Drummond, Mayor of **Hartlepool** (Independent)
- Cllr Mark Crane, Leader, **Selby** District Council (Conservative)
- Cllr Chris Knowles-Fitton, Leader, **Craven** District Council (Conservative)
- Cllr Stephen Houghton CBE, Leader of **Barnsley** Council (Labour)
- Cllr Iain Malcolm, Leader, **South Tyneside** Council (Labour)
- Cllr Berni Turner, Environment Lead, **Liverpool** City Council (Liberal Democrat)
- Cllr Bill Stephenson, Leader, **Harrow** Borough Council (Labour)

7. Introducing new legislation

The Government is being asked to amend its Energy Bill, which is currently being debated in the House of Lords, to make provision for local carbon budgets.

The flagship Bill addresses a range of local and national action on climate change. Framework provision for local carbon budgets, with detail in Secondary Legislation, would fit well with the aims and character of the Bill.

We hope that Government seizes the opportunity to deliver the system that councils, businesses and local people are asking for.

Further information

For further information, please contact Liz Hutchins, Friends of the Earth campaigner.
liz.hutchins@foe.co.uk | landline: 020 7566 1728 | mobile: 07957145996