



**Friends of
the Earth**

September 10

PASS NOTES

What the political parties think about councils and climate change

This is an easy-to-read briefing to help you prepare for meetings with councillors and MPs from the different political parties, as part of the *Get Serious About CO₂* campaign.

It sets out what the three main parties think about councils and climate change, what they do and don't support, and how best to make your case.

It has [hyperlinks](#) that you can click on for further information.

It is intended for your use, not to pass to councillors or MPs.

Please contact your Regional Campaigner or the Get Serious campaign team if you need further help preparing to lobby your council or MP.

1. Context setting – where have we got to and what are we trying to do?
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1. Context setting - where are we now?

All parties are committed to national action on climate change and backed the groundbreaking Climate Change Act. Now they are starting to get serious about local action to cut CO₂.

Before the election, all parties backed a form of Local Carbon Budget. Oliver Letwin MP, of the Conservatives and Chris Huhne MP, of the Liberal Democrats, publicly committed to Local Carbon Budgets in the run up to the election – see the quotes below. Meanwhile John Denham, as Labour Secretary of State, introduced a 'Local Carbon Framework' pilot scheme that goes a lot of the way towards what we're calling for.

Following the election, local government is facing many changes: its powers, how its run, and how its funded could all change as Government is preparing to re-write the rules in a new 'Decentralisation and Localism Bill' this autumn. It has already scrapped regional Government. Local government is expected to take the brunt of the coming spending cuts.

The Government plans to scrap the current framework for councils to coordinate local action to cut climate emissions ([National Indicator 186, see below](#)), and is thinking about what, if anything, to replace it with. Chris Huhne [asked](#) local government in July (link to speech) to tell him what it thinks councils should do to help meet the UK Climate Change Act targets.

We want both councils and MPs to back new legislation [local carbon budgets](#) in this session of parliament. Local carbon budgets system would help drive the ambitious emissions cuts needed to meet the Climate Change Act targets by supporting and empowering local authorities to lead carbon reduction strategies across local areas. See our [local carbon budgets](#) briefing for more information on how they would work.

On 2 September we launched a [petition](#) to Chris from six leading councils, calling for a system of [local carbon budgets](#). This is due to be presented to Government in October and we want as many council leaders to back it before then. See [this web page](#) for a model letter to ask your council leader to sign up.

It's also important for MPs to back local carbon budgets, as ultimately they will have to vote for them. Some MPs will be happy to back local carbon budgets right away. However, some will want to know that the local council supports them, especially if they are of the same party, so it may be best in some circumstances to ask the council to support local carbon budgets first. See [this page](#) to ask your MP to back local carbon budgets.

Who backs local carbon budgets?

The Federation of Small Businesses
The public sector workers union, Unison
The Women's Institute
[These councils](#)

Number of Tory councils

A lot: 9,446 councillors and control of [202](#) councils.

What are Conservative councillors like?

Whilst some are very serious about tackling climate change, there are more climate sceptics than in the grassroots of other parties.

Conservative position on climate change

David Cameron's made climate change a prominent issue early in his leadership. They backed the Climate Change Act and before the election had strong commitments on decentralised energy.

Just after coming into office David Cameron promised that this Government would be the '[Greenest Government ever](#)'. The key pillars of this so far are:

- Government committing to cut emissions from its own estates by 10%.
- An Energy Bill that is promised to deliver a 'Green Deal' to make housing more energy efficient.
- However they have recently kicked into the long grass proposals committed to before the election, such as an emissions standard on power stations, and the Green Investment bank.
- Mike Childs, Head of Climate Change at Friends of the Earth's article on [100 days of the Coalition Government](#) provides a useful assessment of the record so far.

Conservative position on local government

Localism and '[Control Shift](#)' from national government to local government and people is a central plank of their '[Big Society](#)' agenda. They talk of the [Age of Austerity](#) for government spending - including councils. Like the Tory-led Local Government Association, they want a '[bonfire of targets](#)' on local authorities.

However, Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has [recently angered councils](#) with top down diktats on waste collection.

Local government is also braced to take much of the coming cuts, which will be announced after the [Comprehensive Spending Review](#) on October 20th. Many councils are already slashing their budgets in preparation, and some are starting to scale back climate change work.

Local government and climate change

The coalition Government plans to scrap Labour's national indicator system – including the ground-breaking climate ones. (Such as National Indicator 186 (NI 186) in which councils work to meet targets for cutting CO2 in their area.) They have already scrapped regional government, and with it, Regional Development Strategies, many of which contained good climate programmes and targets.

Oliver Letwin MP, Minister of State for the Cabinet Office and Policy advisor to the Prime Minister, announced support for local carbon budgets on behalf of the Conservative party in the run up to the election. He said:

“On behalf of Greg Clark, Caroline Spelman and myself, I can confirm that we recognise the need for local carbon budgets as part of the implementation of the Climate Change Act”

Oliver Letwin, Minister of State at the Cabinet Office, 28 April 2010

This is a good quote to use when talking to Conservative politicians. You can use this [powerpoint presentation on Local Carbon Budgets](#) which includes it. It's also in the [local carbon budgets](#) briefing.

Who are the important Conservative people?

- **Eric Pickles MP** (Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government),
- **Caroline Spelman MP** (SoS for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA),
- **Greg Barker MP** (Energy and Climate Change Minister)
- **Greg Clark MP** (Decentralisation Minister in CLG)
- **Cllr Gary Porter**, LGA environment board chair.
- **Oliver Letwin MP**, Cabinet Office minister and top policy maker.

Favourite saying

“It’s time for something different, something bold – something that doesn’t just pour money down the throat of wasteful, top-down government schemes. The Big Society is that something different and bold.” [David Cameron, Big Society Speech, 19 July 2010](#)

Top Conservative councils

- **Harrogate Borough Council** passed a motion supporting the Get Serious About CO₂ campaign.
- **Plymouth City Council** has an ambitious target of cutting CO₂ by 60% by 2025.
- **West Sussex County Council and Birmingham City Council** (Birmingham is a Conservative- Lib Dem Coalition) back local carbon budgets. Birmingham is implementing a groundbreaking scheme to retrofit homes, called Birmingham Energy Savers, paid for using the Feed-in Tariff. are signed up to the Get Serious About.
- **Woking Borough Council**, now Conservative led, was one of the first councils to have a climate change action plan and set up an innovative [town centre Combined Heat and Power](#) plant.

Councillors might say

We don't want top-down targets and central government control.

The market will solve the problem – emissions will be cut locally if it is more cost effective.

There's no money.

You should say

- Conservative councillors should back the Get Serious About CO₂ campaign for a national framework of local carbon budgets, so that every council area does its bit towards meeting the targets in the Climate Change Act.

Or if you are working to get a motion passed:

- Conservative councillors should back the Get Serious About CO₂ campaign for every council to do its bit on climate change. Councillors should back a system of local carbon budgets, so that each council area does its fair share on climate change and gets enough support from Government to do so, and for the council to get on with cutting emissions now by setting a target of at least 40 per cent CO₂ cut, and a climate change action plan to show how it will be delivered.
- There is growing support for local carbon budgets, not just from the top of the Conservative Party, but leading Conservative councils.

- Green measures would boost the local economy and green business investment. The Federation of Small Businesses backs local carbon budgets.
- Local Carbon Budgets would mean **certainty** for local business investment and **transparency** for **citizens**, so they can hold their council to account through **social action**. They will help national government **meet the commitments in the Climate Change Act**. The Women's Institute backs local carbon budgets.

But they will only deliver if: all councils are covered; they cut emissions in line with the science; and councils have enough money and support to get on with green projects.

MPs might say

We don't want to impose top-down targets and central government control on councils. The market will solve the problem – emissions will be cut locally if it is more cost effective. There's no money.

You should say

- Conservative MPs should back a system of local carbon budgets so that each council area does its bit towards meeting the commitments in the climate change act.
- Oliver Letwin, on behalf of the Conservative Party, backed local carbon budgets in the run up to the election. [Leading Conservative councils are also calling for the measure](#).
- 80% of emissions can be attributed locally, localising action to tackle climate change involves local people in deciding what their future low-carbon communities will look like.
- Coordinating an area based approach to coordinating action can be more cost effective – for example a recent [report](#) showed that area-based programmes to retrofit housing were 20-30 more cost-effective. Green measures would boost the local economy and green business investment.
- Local Carbon Budgets would mean certainty for local business investment and transparency for citizens, so they can hold their council to account through social action. They will help national government meet the commitments in the Climate Change Act.

PASS NOTES: Labour

Number of Labour councils

2010 saw a marginal increase from 2009's historic low: Labour now controls 55 councils and has [4,809](#) councillors.

What are Labour councillors like?

Most believe in climate change and think councils should have a role in tackling it. Some of the most ground-breaking work to tackle climate change has come from Labour local government leadership.

Labour's position on climate change

Rightly regard the [Climate Change Act](#) as one of the central achievements of office, together with the creation of the [Department of Energy and Climate Change](#) and the [Low Carbon Transition Plan](#) to meet the first national carbon budgets.

Labour's position on local government

Got a grip on local government accountability in 2007 by introducing 198 targets and standards, called [national indicators](#), to reflect national priorities for what councils should be delivering for local people. These are planned to be scrapped.

Local government and climate change

Introduced the first ever climate standards ([NI185 and NI186](#)) to push climate up the local agenda. In Jan 10, announced pilot projects for Local Carbon Frameworks in nine local authority areas to drive more ambitious action, and to help contribute to meeting the [national carbon budgets](#) in the Climate Change Act. The Local Carbon Frameworks are a big step towards the Local Carbon Budgets we've been calling for, but don't yet go far enough.

Who are the important Labour people?

- **John Denham MP** (Shadow Communities and Local Government Secretary), **Ed Miliband MP** (Shadow Energy and Climate Change Secretary) *NB. This is very likely to change after the Labour leadership election when a new shadow cabinet is formed in October.*
- **Ken Livingstone**, former Mayor of London, introduced [world-leading climate change action plan](#) and a 60% 2025 target for London; set up the [C40 cities](#) group of world cities to tackle climate change.
- **Cllr David Sparks OBE (Dudley)**, [Local Government Association](#) Labour Group Leader. **Cllr Richard Leese**, Leader Manchester City Council.

Favourite Labour saying

'Effective devolution of power, leadership and accountability to strong elected local authorities is key'. [John Denham, October 2009](#).

Top Labour councils

- **Manchester City**: have passed a 41 per cent 2020 target and sophisticated climate change [action plan](#) to show how they'll make the cuts and contribute their fair share to meeting the national carbon budgets.
- **Kirklees council**: world-leading [street-by-street housing retrofit](#) scheme.
- Haringey, Islington, Harrow, and Leeds have all passed motions backing the Get Serious About CO2 campaign.

Labour Councillors might say: We're already setting the agenda on councils and climate change, but councils don't want more top-down targets.

You should say

- Labour councillors should back the Get Serious About CO₂ campaign for a national framework of local carbon budgets, so that every council area does its bit towards meeting the targets in the Climate Change Act, and has enough support to do so.

Or if you are working to get a motion passed:

- Labour councillors should back the Get Serious About CO₂ campaign for a system of local carbon budgets, so that each council area does its fair share on climate change and gets enough support from Government to do so, and for the council to get on with cutting emissions now by setting a target of at least 40 per cent CO₂ cut, and a climate change action plan to show how it will be delivered.
- Green measures will create much needed local jobs and slash fuel bills, protecting vulnerable people from fuel poverty.
- Local carbon budgets would build on the groundbreaking Local Carbon Frameworks pilots introduced by John Denham MP and existing best practice. They will help national government **meet the targets in the Climate Change Act**. But they will only deliver if all councils are covered, they cut emissions in line with the science, and councils have enough money and support to get on with green projects.

Labour MPs might say

- We're already setting the agenda on councils and climate change, but councils don't want more top-down targets.
- It's more important that we protect vital services, like protecting older people, from the coming Government cuts.

You should say

- Labour MPs should back the Get Serious About CO₂ campaign for a national framework of local carbon budgets, so that every council area does its bit towards meeting the targets in the Climate Change Act, and has enough support to do so.
- Local action to tackle climate change could create fairer local societies – local carbon budgets would mean councils could, for example, focus energy efficiency and renewable measures in vulnerable areas and slash the energy bills of those in fuel poverty.
- Local action to tackle climate change would create much needed local green jobs, and boost local businesses. The TUC backs local carbon budgets.
- Labour led the way on climate change while in Government, passing the Climate Change Act. John Denham introduced the groundbreaking Local Carbon Framework pilot schemes – the first national scheme for an area based approach to cutting carbon. Labour MPs should now back local carbon budgets which would roll this area based approach out across the country.
- [A cross party group of leading councils](#), including leading labour councils like Manchester, back local carbon budgets.

Number of Lib Dem councils

Quite a lot: 25 councils [3,845](#) councillors.

What are Liberal Democrat councillors like?

Most believe in climate change and think councils should have a role in tackling it and are often eager for the national party to do more and have a higher profile on climate.

Liberal Democrat position on climate change

The environment has always been central to the Lib Dem agenda. They backed [stronger](#) national climate targets than the other parties before the election. In office Chris Huhne has supported 30% by 2020 EU target, but has not kept the Lib Dem commitment to a target of at least 40% by 2020 for the UK. It remains to be seen the extent to which Chris Huhne will be successful in keeping climate as a priority for Government and his own department.

Liberal Democrat position on local government

Support a power of local competence to hand more powers to local councils. Not opposing the scale of spending cuts that will affect councils.

Local government and climate change

The Lib Dems have [championed](#) the 10:10 campaign for councils to cut emissions in their own estate. Chris Huhne pledged to support local carbon budgets in the run up to the election saying:

I pledge to support a local carbon budget for every local authority: capping CO₂ in the local area in line with the scientific demands for emissions cuts and local circumstances.

Chris Huhne, Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, 27 April 2010

This is a good quote to use when talking to Liberal Democratic politicians. You can use this [powerpoint presentation on Local Carbon Budgets](#) which includes it. It's also in the [Local Carbon Budgets briefing](#).

The Liberal Democrat party, as well as having Government positions, have also allocated 'shadow' members of parliament to look over departments and develop distinct Lib Dem policy. Simon Hughes, shadow spokesperson for local government, and Andrew George, shadow spokesperson for environment and energy and climate change, both back local carbon budgets.

Who are the important Lib Dem people?

- **Chris Huhne** Energy and Climate Change Secretary
- **Andrew Stunell** Communities and Local Government Under Secretary (junior minister)
- **Simon Hughes MP** Shadow Local Government **Andrew George** Shadow Environment
- **Cllr Barbara Janke**, Leader Bristol Council
- **Cllr Paul Tilsley**, Deputy Leader Birmingham Council
- **Keith Moffitt**, Leader of Camden Council

Favourite saying

"The message is clear: Liberal Democrat run cities are green cities' [Nick Clegg 3 Nov 09](#)

"We are tearing down the structure of centrally set targets, and returning genuine power to local authorities." [Chris Huhne, July 2010](#)

To local government: “Put forward to me another ‘offer’, outlining how local and central government can work together to meet our national climate change targets.” [Chris Huhne, July 2010](#)

Top Lib Dem councils

Bristol and **York** councils have both agreed a 40% 2020 target and are developing action plans to show how the cuts will be made. Bristol, Newcastle and [Birmingham](#) (Con-Lib Coalition) all back local carbon budgets.

Lib Dem Councillors might say

We believe in local democracy, not top-down targets from central government.

We’re doing 10:10 instead.

You should say

- Liberal Democrat councillors should back the Get Serious About CO₂ campaign for a national framework of local carbon budgets, so that every council area does its bit towards meeting the targets in the Climate Change Act, and has enough support to do so.

Or if you are working to get a motion passed:

- Liberal Democrat councillors should back the Get Serious About CO₂ campaign for a system of local carbon budgets, so that each council area does its fair share on climate change and gets enough support from Government to do so, and for the council to get on with cutting emissions now by setting a target of at least 40 per cent CO₂ cut, and a climate change action plan to show how it will be delivered.
- Green measures would boost the local economy and green business investment, and slash people's fuel bills. The Federation of Small Businesses and back local carbon budgets.
- Local Carbon Budgets would mean **certainty** for local business investment and **transparency** for **citizens**, so they can hold their council to account through **social action**. They will help national government **meet the commitments in the Climate Change Act**.

But they will only deliver if: all councils are covered; they cut emissions in line with the science; and councils have enough money and support to get on with green projects.

Lib Dem MPs might say:

We don’t want to impose top-down targets and central government control on councils. Lib Dem councils are already leading the way on climate change.

You should say:

- Liberal Democrat MPs should back the Get Serious About CO₂ campaign for a national framework of local carbon budgets, so that every council area does its bit towards meeting the targets in the Climate Change Act, and has enough support to do so.
- Chris Huhne backed local carbon budgets in the run up to the election, as do a [cross party group of leading councils](#) including leading lib dem councils.
- 80% of emissions can be attributed locally, localising action to tackle climate change involves local people in deciding what their future low-carbon communities will look like, and ensure we meet the targets in the climate change act.
- Coordinating an area based approach to coordinating action can be more cost effective – for example a recent [report](#) showed that area-based programmes to retrofit housing were 20-30 more cost-effective.
- Local action to tackle climate change would boost the economy, provide certainty for green business investment, and slash people's fuel bills.