

April 2011



**Friends of
the Earth**

Briefing

Survey of carbon reduction targets of councils in England

Research by Friends of the Earth has shown that most councils in England have not set themselves targets for cutting the CO₂ emissions from their local areas.

The survey found that just 28% of councils in England have a medium-term target to reduce CO₂ emissions in their area.

Just 6% of councils have a target equivalent to a 40% cut in emissions by 2020, the minimum level of cuts needed for action on climate change. The results also highlight variations among different types of council, and those controlled by the different political parties.

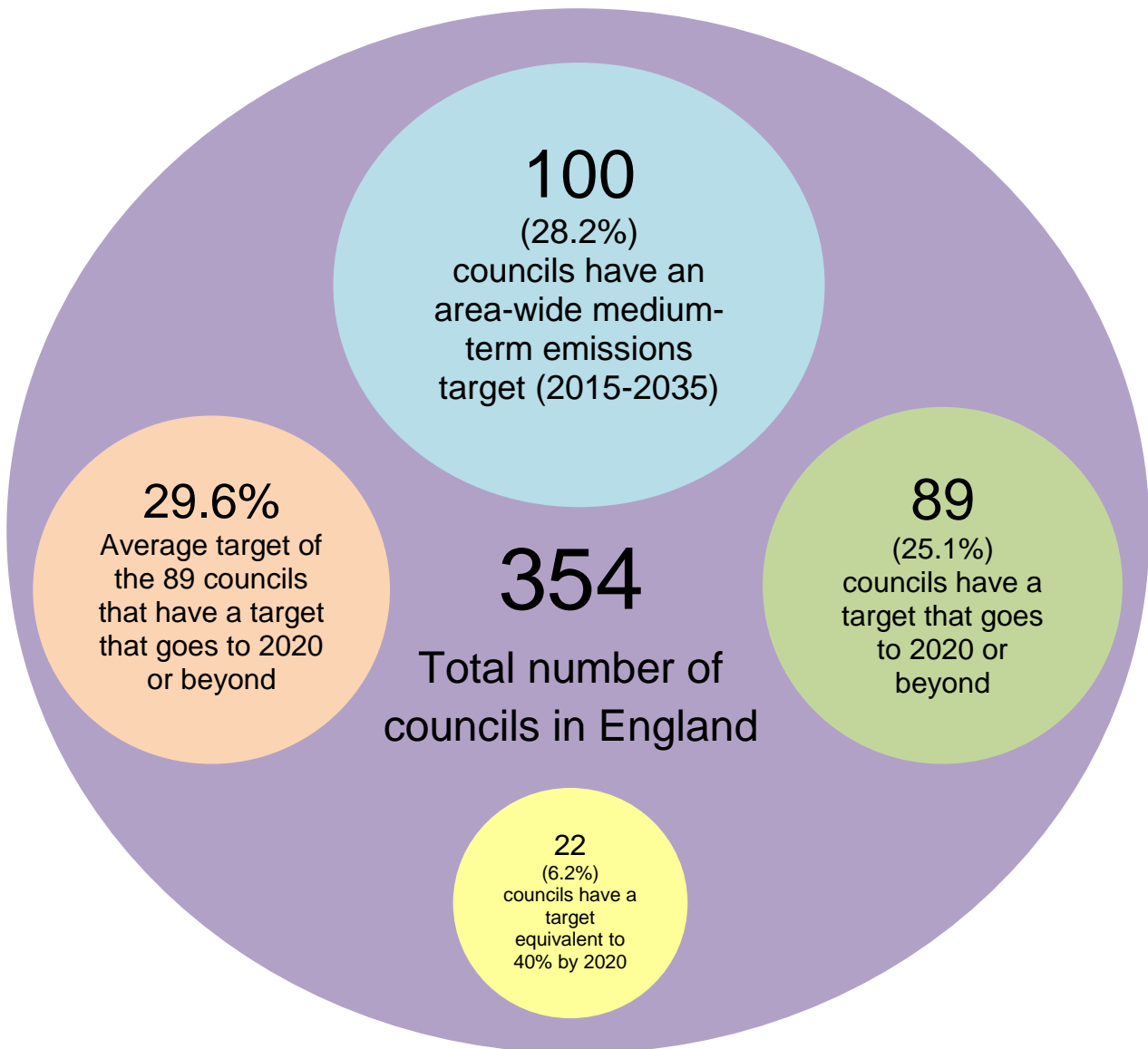
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- the UK's most influential national environmental campaigning organisation
- the world's most extensive environmental network, with around 2 million supporters across five continents and 77 national organisations worldwide
- a unique network of campaigning 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.

To join or make a donation call us on 0800 581 051

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

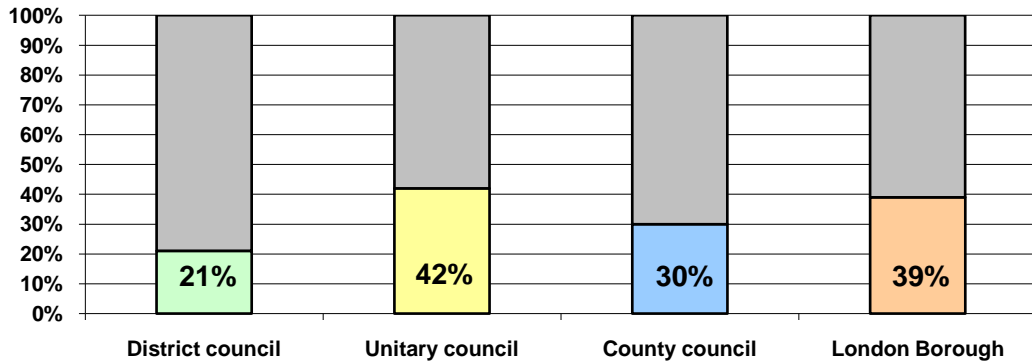
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Survey results

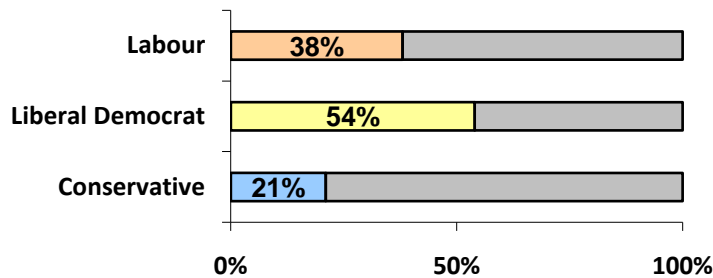
- Of the 354 councils in England, just 100 have an **area-wide medium-term (2015 – 2035) CO₂ emissions reduction target** for their local areas. This represents 28.2% of councils.
- 89 councils have a **target for local area emissions cuts that goes to 2020 or beyond**. This represents 25.1% of councils in England.
- Of these 89 councils, the **average equivalent target for 2020 is a 29.6%** reduction in CO₂ emissions from their local area.
- Only 22 councils have a target that is equivalent to a **40% cut by 2020** – the level of emissions cuts that we need to see. That's just 6.2% of councils in England.

Type of council



The percentage of each type of council with a medium-term (2015-2035) CO₂ emissions reduction target. For example, 21 per cent of District councils have a medium-term target.

Political control of councils with targets



The percentage of each type of council arranged by their political control with a medium-term (2015-2035) CO₂ emissions reduction target. For example, 21 per cent of Conservative-controlled councils have a medium-term target.

What we did

- We attempted to contact **every council in England** – and heard back from 302 of them.
- We checked each council website first to see if it had the information that we were looking for.
- If it did not, we emailed or called the council and asked for the climate change officer or the sustainability officer and asked them the questions directly on the phone.
- We were specifically interested in whether the local authority had a target for the wider area, not just for its own emissions.

The questions we asked

- Does the local authority have a climate change action plan, and does it have targets for cutting CO₂ emissions from the LA area in the medium term i.e. 2015-2035?
- If so, what is the target?
- If not, is it in the process of developing a plan and when will it be adopted and does it contain a proposed target?

The context

The Nottingham Declaration was launched in 2000 to encourage local authorities to sign up to ambitious CO₂ reduction targets. The vast majority of England's local authorities signed up. The problem is, it is based on targets for 2050, and most of the councils who signed up failed to follow through with serious action to deliver steep cuts in the near future.

The Local Government Association set up a Climate Change Commission in 2007 to look at what more local authorities should do. The Commission reported late that year:

“Much of the evidence we received recommended imposition of a statutory duty on councils to act on climate change. We have carefully considered the case for such a duty, as well as wider statutory underpinning, and we make several recommendations in this area. We conclude that, over the next two years, there must be a significant and measurable improvement in the local government response to climate change. Within the new Local Area Agreements (LAAs), and across their roles and operations, local government and its partners must show much stronger commitment to tackling both mitigation and adaptation. To support momentum, we recommend that the Local Government Association (LGA) reconvene the commission in autumn 2008 and again in late 2009. We will then re-assess the effectiveness of the local government response and review the case for further statutory underpinning, including a statutory duty. ***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.***” (our emphasis)

The figures in this report speak for themselves.

Earlier this year a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was announced between the Department for Energy and Climate Change and the Local Government Group (previously the Local Government Association). This is very welcome – but complementary legislation is needed to ensure there is action to cut emissions on the scale that is needed.

Councils around the country are calling for their role to be set out in law – for action on climate change to be a core duty of every council and for clarity about the scale of local emissions cuts needed to help meet Climate Change Act targets.

40 council leaders from all political parties have now signed a petition for legislation – from Manchester, Birmingham and Bristol to Northumberland, Tunbridge Wells and West Sussex: <http://tinyurl.com/councilpetition>

The Government's Energy Bill is the perfect opportunity to introduce the clarity of ambition and responsibility councils say is needed.

Friends of the Earth is calling on the Government to listen to councils and to Peers who scrutinised the Energy Bill and agreed it needs to be strengthened when it is debated in the House of Commons in Spring and Summer 2011.

For more information take a look at our briefing: http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/energy_bill_council_action.pdf