

Thirty-three ways forward? **Climate change in London:** **Action by local government**

**A survey of local councils
by the London 21 network**

January 2008



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Climate change in London:
Action by local government in London**

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This report is based on a survey carried out across London in 2007. Our thanks to all those in local government who completed survey forms and assisted with follow-up discussions.

The report was written for London 21 by Chris Church. Thanks to Christopher Harris and Robert Peacock for their work on compiling the survey results. This report can be downloaded from the London 21 website: www.london21.org

London 21 is a network of community groups, individuals and representatives who work in all parts of Greater London to help create a greener, healthier and more sustainable city. We are a registered charity and have been operating since 2000.

London 21 supports grassroots and disadvantaged communities in acting to create a sustainable Greater London. London 21 shares information and promotes good practice, raises awareness and recognises that sustainable development is a shared responsibility strengthened by collective action.

Thirty-three ways forward? Climate change in London: Action by local government in London

Summary

This report is based on survey of London councils carried out during the summer and autumn of 2007. The survey focused on both policy and practice on climate change. It also considered how far the local councils were engaging with local voluntary and community sector (VCS) bodies on these issues. The conclusions are clear: not enough is being done to tackle this issue. A growing number of councils are active, but for every council that is starting to make a real difference there are two that are doing little or nothing.

This needs to change and change fast. That change can be encouraged by central and regional government and also by action and pressure from the grass roots. But above all there needs to be commitment and real support within all the London councils.

Every London council is taking a slightly different approach to this issue. This has real benefits: there is plenty of innovation and ideas can be trialled in one area before being rolled out everywhere. But there needs to be a growing common approach, based on what has been shown to work. For that there needs to be better coordination, both between councils and between the councils, the Mayor's office, the other relevant agencies and the wider voluntary sector.

The key recommendations within the report are:

- ❖ Every council needs a climate change strategy and action plan with easily understandable goals and targets. This should be widely promoted. At present only six boroughs have such an action plan. As a first step all councils should sign the national 'Nottingham Declaration' on climate change (so far 23 out of 33 London councils have done so).
- ❖ An action plan is not enough on its' own. The climate change goals and actions should be fully incorporated within each council's new 'Local Development Framework'. There is also a need to make basic energy-saving and energy efficiency measures a core part of the management systems for all council-managed buildings. Staff should be trained and supported to use less energy at work and at home.
- ❖ Councils need to use their influence: they should support the 'Merton Rule' on the use of renewable energy in new development, look for appropriate cost-effective locations for the installation of renewable energy systems, support the rapid development of zero-carbon housing and push hard for improvements to existing stock. They should also develop their procurement of goods and services to ensure that wherever possible maximise energy and carbon savings.
- ❖ Councils should also recognise the value working with the voluntary and community sector (VCS) and the public. Much higher levels of public engagement are needed, and local voluntary groups including faiths, tenants, sports clubs etc. can all help build that engagement.

- ❖ VCS groups also need to focus on climate change themselves. They are often more trusted by those they work with and who use their services than local or central government. They can thus play a key role in getting people and communities actively involved in this work. To do that they also need to plan to build their skills, and to lead by example.
- ❖ Environmental groups are one part of that VCS. They have a special role to play – their knowledge makes them well placed to act as watch-dogs, to ensure that good words are turned into effective action.
- ❖ Lastly, London needs better coordination. There are so many organisations active on climate change that confusion is common. There is a need for an easily accessible agency to act as a ‘first point of entry’ for any organisation new to this work, to enable and support the active participation of organisations in every sector and to recognise the specific challenges and opportunities linked to working in London.

Thirty-three ways forward? Climate change in London: Action by local government in London

Introduction

2007 was the year that awareness of the very real problems of climate change finally hit the UK. However that awareness has not yet led to action and change on anything like the scale that will be needed to head off the worst impacts of our changing climate.

To make that change we need strong policies, changes in our infrastructure to make it easy for people to live low-carbon lives, and we need much more engagement and action. We need local action alongside national changes and global agreements. In that context the role of local government and the voluntary and community sector is very important. Local councils influence local activity and also have their own impacts. In 2005-6 UK local councils employed over 2.1 million people, spent £50 billion on goods and services and another £17 billion on capital works. Their energy consumption is estimated to be at least 26 billion kWh per year (costing around £750 million). This results in annual emissions of more than 6.9 Million tonnes of CO₂.

In London, the situation is a complex one. The 32 London Boroughs and the Corporation of London have all acknowledged their role, and their work needs to link not just to national and international priorities but also to the Climate Change Action Plan for London produced by the Mayor. Some local councils have led the way. The 'Merton Rule', pioneered by the London Borough of Merton, calls for all new major developments in the borough to generate 10% of the energy they use from renewable sources sited within the development. This rule has been picked up by over 80 other local councils across the UK.

London 21 surveyed the borough councils in the summer and autumn of 2007. We looked to see what policies were in place and how those policies were being turned into action. We were also keen to see how London councils were working with voluntary and community groups. London 21 links a network of some 1800 groups across our city, many of which have been active on this issue for years. It may be that as action on climate change becomes more 'mainstream', so the work of such groups may change and develop. But it is certainly the case that voluntary groups have a key role to play in turning awareness to action and can complement and work well with their local councils.

This report sums up the results of our survey. It highlights plenty of emerging good work and it is fair to say that we have been impressed by what is being done. But there is great variation across London: there are a number of councils who have much to do if they are to help safeguard the future well-being of those they represent. And even the best can do a lot more.

If 2007 was the year of climate awareness-raising, then 2008 needs to be a year of action. London 21 would urge every council to set out a clear action plan and framework in line with the recommendations made here. We would also urge every voluntary and community body to make their own commitments. As a London-wide network we will be doing our best to support this action.

Part 1. The London 21 survey

This survey was carried out during the summer and autumn of 2007. 24 local councils took part. The questions focused on both policy and practice.

Initial questions looked at the basic policy instruments: whether the authority had signed up to the 'Nottingham Declaration' – a national statement on climate change, supported by the IDeA and LGA, and whether the authority expressed formal support for the 'Merton Rule'.

We then looked to see how such overall policy work was reflected in action. Does the council have an action plan; have any targets had been set for reduction, and whether the council had carried out any baseline survey to assess the state of current energy use and carbon emissions.

As a network working to support local action London 21 was also keen to discover how far local communities and individuals were involved in the development and implementation of this work. We asked how far their plans had been discussed with local voluntary and environmental groups and how far the council was working to engage local communities in work on climate change.

Lastly we were interested to see how far respondents saw this work as being central to the Council's work and also how what the Council thought about the London climate action plan launched this year by the Mayor of London.

The information we gathered was also supplemented from other sources including the support websites for the Nottingham Declaration and the Merton Rule and the Energy Savings Trust, the Local government Association and Defra. Our thanks go to all those involved.

The results of the survey

At present local councils have very few legal duties that directly link to tackling climate change. As with other such non-statutory initiatives there is a wide spread of activity. There are councils who see this as central to their work and who are developing some very positive initiatives, while there are still a few who are doing a very bare minimum.

The policy work

The starting point for any local government work on climate change should be signing up to the 'Nottingham Declaration'. The Declaration, launched five years ago and now signed by over 200 councils nationwide, is a public statement that avoids specific targets but does commit signatories to "publicly declare, within appropriate plans and strategies, the commitment to achieve a significant reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from our own authority's operations..."

We are pleased that 23 London councils have signed up and that two more say that they working towards this. This does leave eight that have still to make even this basic commitment. It is of course arguable that merely signing a document changes nothing, but we feel that if a council is not prepared to make this basic commitment then on balance they are even less likely to take other meaningful action.

A second policy goal was support for the 'Merton Rule' (www.themertonrule.org). This was developed by the London Borough of Merton as a way to formalise the government's renewable energy targets in its adopted UDP. They set a target for the use of onsite renewable energy to reduce annual CO2 emissions for all new major developments in the borough by 10%. This was opposed by some house-builders and commercial developers, claiming it would add unacceptable extra costs. Despite lobbying the government now seems set to support this principle.

11 London councils have signed up to support and adopt the Merton Rule. This includes two which have not yet signed up to Nottingham Declaration. A further nine have included this in their draft LSP or are otherwise 'actively progressing' this work. That leaves ten that are still not engaging with this: given the need for a common position to support the increased use of onsite renewables, this situation needs to change.

We looked for other policy resolutions aimed at cutting carbon emissions with London boroughs. At the time of going to press two positive initiatives were noted. Islington Council agreed a target for carbon reduction across the whole borough and was the first council to do so. 50 organisations from all sectors have signed up to reduce emissions by 15% by 2010. The Corporation of the City of London have also passed a resolution to set a target of 10% reductions by 2010.

From Policy to Action Plans

The need to turn the policies into action is self-evident. The value of a clear and distinct Climate Change Action Plan is that it sends a message that this is being taken seriously and the goals and targets are clearly defined and easy to find. However there is rather less action at this level.

Only six boroughs have a specific action plan to tackle climate change, although a further eleven are working towards such a plan. Of the remainder, most of those who responded suggested that actions were to be incorporated into work on their Local Area Agreement or by their Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). While integrating this work with other policies is very important, there is a risk that these goals become less apparent when merged with all the other targets for the borough.

Setting Targets

Just as a policy needs an action plan for its implementation, so an action plan needs goals and targets if it is to be effective. We therefore looked to find out if councils were setting targets and if so what those targets were.

The results are again variable. Ten councils said that they have set targets for cuts in CO₂ emissions across their boroughs, and three more were working on this. All the rest of the respondents bar one had set internal targets for energy use reduction.

Given the limitations on what councils can do to influence activity within their boroughs it is perhaps quite a positive sign that even ten have looked to set such targets. The questions arising are simple: what are those targets and how likely is it that they will be reached?

The targets do vary and are broadly short-term and long-term. The most common long-term borough-wide target is a 60% cut in CO₂ emissions by 2050 – in line with government thinking at the time of the survey. Others have more imminent targets: Merton council are aiming for cuts of 15% by 2015, and also aim to have 10% of energy generated in the borough by that time. Islington are aiming at 15% by 2010 and Havering have the same target for 2012.

Internal targets are quite variable. Some are simple year-on-year energy efficiency targets (Camden are aiming at 1.5% / year cuts) other vary. Westminster aim for 20% cuts by 2020 while Lambeth have set a similar target for 2012 and Barking and Dagenham aim to do this by 2010. Some targets show more signs of planning: Redbridge Council have worked on a carbon management programme (see below) and as a result have set a target for an 8% reduction on a 2005 baseline by 2011.

Most of these short-term internal reductions should be very achievable (actions such as a 1° cut in temperature in a large building can save up to 8% of the energy used in that building). The longer-term cuts will need to be achieved within the framework of a national plan (as the Mayor's London Climate Action Plan has recognised).

Setting baselines and Carbon Management

The key to any realistic programme of emissions reductions is to know where work starts from, and to identify all the possible actions involved. Work by the Carbon Trust, a body set up by government to help the public and private sector make these changes, appears to have been central to the work many of the more successful boroughs.

The Trust runs a 'Local Authority Carbon Management' (LACM) programme, now into phase 5 of its work. Annual savings of 500,000 tonnes of CO₂ (saving more than £33 million) were identified during the first four phases. It has shown that substantial saving can be made in the short term – recent work saw many of the participating councils commit to reduce their emissions

by 20 per cent in five years. Work done by one London council – Redbridge – is highlighted as an example in the next section.

This programme has been popular in London – responses show that 13 have done this using the Carbon Trust’s tool-kit while 3 more have done this using other means including purely in-house work. A further four are working on this so at that point two-thirds of the boroughs will have good base-line data. This does of course leave one-third who appear to be doing rather less.

This is clearly an area where more work will be done and the quality of information will improve. New per capita CO2 emission figures for every local council were published in late 2007 by Defra (www.defra.gov.uk/environment/statistics/globalatmos/galocalghg.htm). These figures are heavily affected by the levels of industry and commercial activity (and less by affluence and car ownership) in each borough – which leads Hackney to have the lowest per capita figure.

Involvement across the Council

One challenge identified by some council staff has been to get the buy-in of other departments so that this is an issue for the whole Council and not just an under-funded environmental unit. Much more work is needed here: only four boroughs were in a position to say that a developed strategy had been discussed with all departments. Up to ten were involved in some degree of consultation with other departments and others talked of agreement by the LSP, but it was noticeable how many did not seem to have discussed this in any detail with housing providers, despite the importance of tackling this sector.

There are likely to be many benefits of such cross-departmental work, both in terms of identifying actions to support the work and also in building awareness and engagement amongst staff, which may diffuse into their personal lives and local communities. This is an issue that should be addressed by senior management and the LSP.

The political context

Linked to this is the question as to how far the Council saw this issue as being central to its’ work. Inevitably any responses are likely to be subjective, but it is the case that 75% of respondents opted for the second option that ‘this is an issue of increasing importance’. Of the rest four suggested that this is ‘central to all our work’, although one of those has not produced an action plan nor signed the Nottingham Declaration). Two took the cautious response that this is ‘one issue among many we have to tackle’.

Alongside this we asked for views on the Mayor’s Climate Change Action Plan. Ten authorities saw this as ‘a very useful document with which we will seek to work’; two said that it was ‘an ambitious document which might cause some problems for local councils’, and two agreed with a statement that it was ‘over-ambitious’. The remainder offered no opinion except for one who admitted to not having read it.

Part 2. Towards good practice

It is fair to say that there are no two London boroughs that are tackling climate change in exactly the same way. This is perhaps not surprising: the same is true of waste minimisation and recycling. This may cause some anguish amongst those keen on the totally coordinated 'war-time and rationing' approach that is being called for by some writers.

But it is arguable that this is a very positive way forward, in line with the 'let a thousand flowers bloom' approach. Some projects and initiatives may fail but some, as in the case of the Merton Rule, may flourish well beyond initial expectations.

The basic actions that any council should be doing as a response to climate change may be clear. It is so far much less apparent what the best approaches are for local government and there are many areas where innovation is necessary. This section summarises a few of the positive actions going on in London at present. 33 different local approaches within a city such as London may well lead to some very positive outcomes, but if that is to happen then there is also a need for some very specific cooperation.

Emerging good practice needs to be monitored, assessed and promoted, along with the necessary toolkit of measures needed for successful implementation. This work is being done to some extent by bodies such as the Local Government Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), the Carbon Trust and the Energy Savings Trust, but there is a need for a more coordinated and better resourced and publicised approach.

This report did not seek to identify any or all good practice, but several examples are worthy of replication. These cover work on Policy, Infrastructure development, and Public and Community Engagement.

Positive planning and policies

- ❖ Merton Council's role in developing and championing the 'Merton Rule' has already been highlighted.
- ❖ Richmond upon Thames Council in South West London has become the first local authority in the United Kingdom to charge for residents' parking permits according to how much carbon dioxide their vehicle produces.
- ❖ Haringey is one of a few boroughs that have commissioned carbon reduction scenarios to enable discussion of what will happen. These set out the baseline information on Haringey carbon emissions and develop a scenario to reduce emissions to meet the Government's target of 60% reduction in CO₂ emissions by 2050.
- ❖ Camden and Islington Councils are both examples of councils that have developed comprehensive strategies and plans to tackle climate change.
- ❖ Brent Council developed their 'Carbon Management Strategy and Implementation Plan (CMS&IP)' and their 'Scrutiny Committee' has set up a Climate Change Task Group to review the implementation of this plan and to consider what more should be done.
- ❖ Hounslow Council is campaigning against what is potentially one of the largest increases of CO₂ emissions in London – the expansion of Heathrow airport. They

point out that more planes means more CO₂ emissions as well as noise problems and an additional 21,000 people exposed to dangerous levels of nitrogen dioxide.

Developing infrastructure

- ❖ Islington Council is set to create a £3million Climate Change Fund -- the first of its kind from any London borough -- to fund capital projects that will reduce CO₂ emissions in the borough such as solar panels, wind turbines, biomass boilers and ground source heat pumps.
- ❖ Redbridge Council is one London council that has worked on a Carbon Management programme. The key actions arising out of this have been included in the Redbridge Environment Action Plan where they are listed along with their costs, carbon and costs savings, and payback time, showing clearly how these actions benefit the council and the community. Examples include changes to the hours of operation of Council offices (this is estimated to save nearly 50 tonnes of CO₂ saving each year and save over £5000 for an estimated cost of £5000, giving a payback of less than one year). A staff awareness campaign is costed at £30,000 but is estimated to save over £21,000 a year and almost 200 tonnes of CO₂ annually, giving a payback of 1.4 years. Simply rerouting waste collection vehicles is expected to save over 50 tonnes of CO₂ annually and pay back in six months.
- ❖ Camden council has a Staff Travel Plan which aims to reduce the number of staff travelling by car. A survey in January 2004 showed a 60% reduction in staff travel to work by car from 1998, with an annual carbon saving of 1477 tonnes of CO₂.

Effective engagement

- ❖ Sutton Council led the way in environmental action in the 1990s and has the highest recycling rate of any borough. This has been partly achieved through an active public engagement and out reach programme including the 'Planet pledge' programme.
- ❖ Southwark Council worked with the Southwark Pensioners Forum on a discussion about climate change, highlighting how over-50s have the highest carbon footprint but are also those most concerned about the issue.
- ❖ The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea have worked with the Energy Centre for Sustainable Communities for three years on the 'Cool it' programme for their local schools with support from Defra.
- ❖ Croydon Council run a successful 'Green Guardians' competition to encourage local involvement with prizes for the greenest household, school, and business as well as for active young people and local projects.

Part 3. The role of the voluntary and environmental sectors

Cutting carbon emissions on the scale set out in the Mayor's Climate Action Plan will require public engagement on a much larger scale than that seen to date. Local organisations have a key role to play in building awareness and in encouraging and enabling those already aware to become engaged and active.

Local government clearly has a role to play here, but so do local voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations. There are over two thousand of these in every borough, from large community and residents organisations, through smaller community groups, faith organisations and sports and leisure societies, out to informal social groups such as book clubs. All are made up of people who have common interest and some common bond. These shared interests may make for a more effective way to learn together and to get active on climate change and people in many of these organisations trust and respect their fellow members more than they would trust local or national government.

So far only a few of these organisations are addressing climate change in any effective way. National initiatives such as 'Every Action Counts' have had some success in building VCS engagement and are promoting the 'Third Sector Declaration on Climate Change' which highlights the way in which change will disproportionately affect the disadvantaged, poor and excluded and that the sector has a central role in working with communities and government on these issues (www.everyactioncounts.org.uk/declaration/).

Any climate change planning by local government should include work to build the engagement of this sector so that they can work together to maximise public engagement. Councils for Voluntary Service and other similar borough-level should play a key role in this: most currently have no resources to play a more active part in this and are likely to need support to do so.

VCS organisations and networks should not however wait for local government to take a lead: a strong and active VCS is likely to help get slower-moving councils to become more active. Any organisation can and should develop its' own action plan to tackle its' own contributions to climate change and to look at how it encourages members and users to become more active. 'Every Action Counts' and other networks can provide advice and support on this.

As with local government, there is only so much that can be done at a borough level. There is a need for more London-wide co-operation, something which London 21 is very aware of. Those VCS agencies with a London-wide remit should consider this as a priority.

Part 4. Moving forward – separately or together?

One of the issues emerging from the responses is the variation in how planning to tackle climate change is being treated by London councils. Some are developing specific climate change plans and strategies; others are incorporating this work into various forms of environmental action plans and / or into their Sustainable Community Strategies and other Local Strategic Partnership document and into their Local Development Frameworks.

The integration of the climate challenge into the mainstream ongoing work of the council is clearly desirable and essential. However such mainstreaming may cause problems. Firstly it may make what is being done less obvious to outsiders. It may also give the impression that ‘everything is under control’ and that there is no need for local action by other organisations. Lastly if climate change becomes seen as ‘just another issue’ then there is the risk that it competes for funding and priority with other council responsibilities, rather than integrating with that other work.

There are parallels here with work on local sustainability. During 2000 – 2002 many councils announced that their work on sustainable development (arising out of the Local Agenda 21 programme) was to be ‘mainstreamed’ – the result in many cases was the quiet abandonment of many innovative approaches (which in some cases would have accelerated work on climate change).

With these points and the importance of climate change in mind, it would be desirable for every council to have a clear high-profile public statement or declaration on climate change, setting out policies, targets and key actions. This should link to the more detailed policy programmes and to the Local Development Framework but make clear what those programmes would seek to achieve. It must also link in to London-wide strategies and actions.

London is different

Unlike other UK councils, those in London have a strong regional framework for action on climate change. The Climate Change Action Plan for London produced by the Mayor sets some clear common targets. London's CO₂ emissions were 45 million tonnes in 1990 and approximately 42 million tonnes in 2005. The Mayor's Plan and Energy Strategy commits London to reducing its emissions of carbon dioxide by 20%, relative to the 1990 level, by 2010. This is considered to be a crucial first step towards achieving a 23% reduction by 2016, and a 60% reduction by 2050. The Greater London Authority has since agreed a target of 60% reductions by 2025.

There is support available for this: the London Climate Change Agency is intended to be ‘the primary delivery vehicle for reducing London's carbon dioxide emissions’. It provides information and should play a key role in cutting emissions in London. However current activity in London is a little more complicated, with bodies such as the London Climate Change Partnership and the London Energy Supply Company linked to the GLA, a range of other regional agencies and the London Councils' own coordinating body all having their own roles to play. Those already involved may see this as an integrated approach but too many outsiders, including some working for local councils, admit that this is confusing and opaque.

Towards effective working

There is an urgent need for better coordination and for links between London-wide agencies and those seeing to develop more effective action at a borough level. This should offer support for both local government and for VCS bodies and should ensure that they have a clear perspective on who does what, on how the information and resources available can be accessed and how they can influence and take part in decision-making that may affect their work.

Action on climate change is most likely to work if it is done *with* people and organisations rather than being done *to* them. At the moment it is not clear to many at the local level what is being done and how they can get involved. A more effective partnership, with a clear focus on building skills and capacity around all the issues where change is needed, should be a London priority for 2008.

Part 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

This report is based on a survey and is dependent on that survey and research done since. The work shows that this is an issue where things are moving, but it is also clear that movement is currently too slow in too many councils.

If local government is to play the role that it can and must play in delivering London-wide, national and global targets, then much more needs to be done. For every council that is starting to make a real difference there are two that are doing little or nothing.

This needs to change and change fast. That change can be encouraged by central and regional government and also by action and pressure from the grass roots. But above all there needs to be commitment and resourcing within all the London councils.

This section sets out some steps that local councils and local VCS bodies can take towards ensuring that their work on tackling climate change is delivered. It also highlights the need for more effective coordination and cooperation across London.

Recommendations for Local Government

There is a great deal that local councils can and should be doing to help the UK move from talk to effective action on climate change. These 12 recommendations set out some ways forward; all of them are feasible and most of them are being taken forward already by some councils.

1. Sign the Nottingham Declaration

Over 200 Councils in England and Wales have now signed this declaration. While the Declaration would benefit from strengthening and updating, the key issues remain very valid and the LGA Climate Change Commission report also calls for councils to sign up. It may only be a statement of intent but it remains the best starting point and links the council into a support network.

2. Develop and publish a climate change strategy and action plan.

This should include a straight forward 'plain English' summary for widespread distribution to local people and stakeholders. It should cover both mitigation and adaptation measures. It should also set targets in line with national and regional goals plans should include measurable and quantifiable milestones at 2010, 2015 and 2020.

3. Incorporate climate change goals and actions within the Local Development Framework (LDF).

The goals of the climate action plan should also be incorporated within the LDF, which is going to become the key document to set out how future developments take place in any borough. The LDF should also prioritise work towards improvements in the key climate indicators set out by the Government in the new performance framework for Comprehensive Area Assessment. The LDF is also perhaps the best framework in which to ensure that moves towards a low carbon society do not have negative and disproportionate impacts on poorer communities within the borough.

4. Make basic energy-saving and energy efficiency measures a core part on the management systems for all council-managed buildings.

Annual targets should be set and reported on regularly. Ideally the amount of energy any key building uses on a monthly basis should be tracked and displayed within that building. Existing heating and air conditioning systems using fossil fuels should be reviewed with the aim of maximising efficiency.

5. Support the Merton Rule and develop its' implementation in local planning decision.

The recent Planning Policy Guideline starts to incorporate the Merton Rule in to national policy, but there is stills cope for local councils to lead the way on this and to go 'further, faster' in including renewable energy systems in new developments.

6. Educate, engage and support staff to use less energy, both in their work places and at home.

Staff should be expected to attend briefings on the councils' climate change strategy and on basic energy saving. Energy efficiency measures should included in all staff induction work

7. Look for appropriate cost-effective locations for the installation of high-profile renewable energy systems (in addition to those installed in new developments) and build partnerships to get such systems installed.

8. Support the rapid development of zero-carbon housing within the borough and of improvements to existing stock. This will require the effective use and enforcement of existing powers. The issue of existing stock, especially in the private rented sector is one where strong action is urgently needed.

9. Set standards and goals to help reduce carbon emissions in procurement policies. Local councils spend billions on goods and services: any Council's procurement policy should ensure that such spending is made in ways that wherever possible maximise energy and carbon savings.

10. Consult on and plan for adaptation measures.

Climate change is already happening – some impacts are inevitable. An adaptation strategy can help get this message across while also working on the improvements that will be needed (including issues such as wider drains and sewers to cope with heavier downpours). This work should be integrated fully with work on biodiversity and housing to maximise mutual benefits.

11. Develop a cohesive approach to working with the VCS on these issues

Councils need to work with all their local communities. This may involve education, training and capacity-building but also should involve those communities in planning and decision-making.

12. Develop and support an ongoing public engagement programme.

This should provide a local focus and identity, and help people make sense of what climate change means to them and their neighbourhoods. It should also link in to national initiatives that will lead to 'Climate change literacy' where people have a good understanding of the key issues and can make decisions based on that understanding. This work should be done at every level using all council communication channels.

Recommendations for voluntary and community sector organisations

Every London borough has an active and diverse voluntary and community sector (VCS). VCS organisations frequently are more trusted by those they work with and who use their services than local or central government. They can thus play a key role in awareness building work and in getting people and communities actively involved in this work. To do that they need themselves to become more engaged. There are a number of ways forward:

1. Develop an action plan.

VCS organisations should have a plan to set out their own targets for action on climate and related issues, which also sets out how they will develop the resources needed to carry out this work.

2. Train staff and support a ‘climate champion’

Work on any issue can only be effective if there is a person responsible for that work. Every organisation needs to appoint a lead person and to ensure that they are properly supported to identify and lead the changes needed.

3. Sign up to the Third Sector Declaration

The Third Sector Declaration on Climate Change provides a valuable context for this work. Organisations should sign up to ensure that they are kept in touch with other relevant developments within the sector.

4. Make links with other climate activity in the borough

Every borough has some level of both voluntary and public sector action. VCS organisations and networks should find out what is being done and explore how they can effectively support and promote this activity.

5. Promote the need to engage with climate change issues to service users and other local organisations

The unique value of the VCS is its’ extensive outreach. VCS organisations can get messages about the need to act to avert climate change to a wide range of communities. Every organisation should look to set up a meeting or other suitable discussion forum for its’ members or users.

Recommendations for environmental organisations

Over the last ten years environmental organisations have played a key role in building awareness of climate change. Now that awareness has grown it is perhaps time for environmental organisations to carefully consider their role. Their priorities should include:

1. Develop a clear understanding of what their local council is (or is not doing) and establish a mechanism for exchange of views and information.

Environmental groups vary widely in their views of and relationships with local councils. Groups should as a priority get clear on what their council is doing. The group may have access to information that may be of value to the council (and vice versa): effective cooperation can benefit both sectors.

2. Identify priorities for action within their locality

An environmental organisation may be well placed to develop an independent viewpoint in terms of the priorities (whether on policy or infrastructure) and to learn from innovation and progress elsewhere.

3. Build their skills to act as watchdogs and advocates for effective action

If a group is to be genuinely effective in encouraging their council and other organisations in their locality to take serious action on climate change, they will need to assess their own skills and to consciously build those skills.

4. Use their networks to exchange information and to deliver joint action

Many groups are linked through local or issue-based networks. They should use their networks to spread information about what they are doing and to learn from action elsewhere.

5. Build better links to non-environmental organisations within their locality.

It is often easier for groups to work with those who they know and where they share common values: if environmental organisations really want to see more action in their neighbourhoods in 2008 then they should look to engage with a wider range of local groups.

Recommendations for better cross-London coordination

The number of organisations active on climate change should and must rise in the coming years. The current 'climate infrastructure' is not ready or designed to cope with a growing level of activity by an increasingly diverse range of organisations in every sector.

There is a need for a properly resourced agency to enable the active participation of organisations in every sector and to offer an effective information and support service which recognises the specific challenges and opportunities linked to working in London.