



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR

T: 08459 335577
helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/defra

**From Lord de Mauley
Parliamentary Under Secretary**

18 July 2013

Dear Colleagues,

On 1 July my Department laid before Parliament the first National Adaptation Programme (NAP) report¹ setting out actions that will help the country improve its resilience to the risks from a changing climate and make the most of the opportunities. Climate impacts will mean different things for different locations, and I recognise the valuable role that councils already play in building the resilience of local communities and places. The Local Adaptation Advisory Panel², which advises Government on local council perspectives for adaptation policy, was instrumental in developing the NAP report. It has also developed for councils a short summary setting out its view of the key challenges, opportunities and actions contained in the NAP report, which I have enclosed.

I support the Local Government Association's Climate Local initiative,³ a growing network of councils who are acting on climate change, driven by local priorities. Through it I have seen how councils are taking an innovative and inclusive approach to implementing their responsibilities under the Flood and Water Management Act to address growing flood risk and how councils are also reflecting climate risks in their Local Plans in line with the National Planning Policy Framework. Many are working with their local communities and businesses to make them better prepared for severe weather events and other climate risks through their emergency planning duties, to make local highways, schools and recreation facilities more resilient and to safeguard local biodiversity.

The Government has established the Climate Ready Support Service for England⁴, hosted by the Environment Agency, which is on hand to support local councils and partners by developing tools and resources to help councils realise the benefits of taking action to

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adapting-to-climate-change-national-adaptation-programme>

² The Panel comprises over 20 councils from across England and includes partnership organisations including the LGA, Climate Change Partnerships, London Councils, Core Cities groups. It is chaired by the Director for Economy, Transport and Environment, East Sussex County Council.

³ www.local.gov.uk/climate-change

⁴ <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/137557.aspx>



reduce risks and to exploit any economic opportunities. It will shortly make available a tool, first developed by Kent County Council, which will help quantify the costs of severe weather on critical service areas and so help build the business case for taking early preventative action to reduce resulting costs. Reacting to climate or extreme weather events is often expensive. In Kent's case, five minor events in 2012 resulted in £852,387 of costs from school and road closures, flooded buildings, record numbers of calls to call centres, cancelled services and reduced staffing. Kent is now illustrating how it is addressing its vulnerabilities in its Climate Local commitments.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your role in delivering two core objectives of the NAP report:

- raising awareness, building capability and making the case for action; and
- providing a framework for action.

As the NAP report makes clear, local government plays a central role in leading and supporting local places to become more resilient to a range of future risks and to be prepared for the opportunities from a changing climate. I look forward to hearing more about the innovative work you are doing in this area.

Yours faithfully

Rupert de Manley



National Adaptation Programme: Summary for Local Government

Written by members of the Local Adaptation Advisory Panel

Main climate change threats and opportunities

The 2012 Climate Change Risk Assessment highlighted a range of risks to the UK as a result of hotter drier summers, warmer wetter winters, and more intense and frequent severe weather events (such as heat waves and intense periods of snow and ice).

The importance of adapting to climate change is clearly demonstrated by the costs that accrue from its impacts. The floods of 2007, for example, cost UK businesses around £740 million⁵ and the 2003 heat wave was estimated to have cost the UK economy £500 million.⁶ It is estimated that every £1 spent on measures to adapt to climate change represents four times its value in potential damage avoided.⁷

There are also opportunities; work by BIS suggests that the adaptation sector will continue to grow in the UK at a rate of at least 5% in 2013/14, reaching 7% in 2017/18,⁸ supporting the development of new industries and services. Similarly, more resilient businesses have a competitive advantage, and better prepared and resilient communities are more able to support themselves. It is clear, therefore, that adaptation can bring about economic and social benefits. The National Adaptation Programme is Government's plan to address these risks and realise the opportunities, in conjunction with partners, including Local Government.

What climate change threats and opportunities mean for Local Government

As community leaders and providers of important services that may be impacted by climate change, it is vital that councils are able to manage the threats and opportunities locally. The risks for each Council vary according to locality and are dependent on a range of factors, such as geographic location, the type of authority (and therefore its responsibilities and competencies), and whether it is predominantly rural or urban. Therefore, the NAP contains a range of actions which reflect these local variations and which may help Councils provide suitable local support to residents, businesses and communities. Many of these actions take place in the context of other duties and powers which help drive adaptation, such as the responsibility for Public Health under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

The threats posed by climate change are creating new challenges for Local Government, as well as increasing existing pressures on services, such as the aging population. Local Government also has responsibility for sectors of society that are most disproportionately affected, such as children, older people, vulnerable adults, refugees and asylum seekers and will need to consider what extra support is needed to help them adapt. The knock-on effects could be significant, undermining economic growth, increasing inequality and prejudicing the ability to deliver core services. It is therefore essential that councils take action to build local resilience to climate change.

Councils also play a strong role in supporting economic development, through Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), and can support economic growth by advising on

⁵ Defra CCRA Evidence Report.

⁶ 'The Sensitivity of UK Manufacturing Firms to Extreme Weather Events' publication.

⁷ De Bruin KC, Dellink RB & Agrawala S (2009), table 3 page 24.

⁸ BIS (2012) *Adaptation and Resilience (Climate Change)*



adaptation priorities, helping businesses become more climate-resilient and by producing Local Economic Development Plans.

Key areas for action

A full set of actions relevant to Local Government is included in the Annex to the main report. However, they focus on the following areas:

1. **Embedding adaptation in policies and plans:** Local Government is responsible for ensuring a number of policies consider climate adaptation, including:
 - a. *Local Flood Risk Management Strategies:* As Lead Local Flood Authorities, top tier authorities must develop and apply Local Flood Risk Management Strategies, Area Drainage Plans and Surface Water Flood Maps and these should incorporate evidence of future climate change;
 - b. *Local Plans:* Councils also have a responsibility to ensure that Local Plans include measures to proactively plan to adapt to climate change, as outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework;
 - c. *SuDS Approval Bodies:* By April 2014, councils will also become SuDS Approval Bodies, enabling them to decide on the adequacy of sustainable drainage proposals for new developments.
 - d. *Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies:* These strategies (and the underpinning evidence in Joint Strategic Needs Assessments) offer a route to consider and address the impacts on health and wellbeing from severe weather events and climate change.
2. **Developing the evidence base:** To successfully embed adaptation into plans and policies, Councils will need to continue to build their understanding of what climate change means for their area. This includes assessing the exposure and vulnerability of individuals, groups, business and infrastructure, and their adaptive capacity, as well as key risks to the organisation. This is an on-going process, which will involve implementing tools such as the Severe Weather Monitoring System (SWIMS) to monitor economic costs, or the tools to value adaptive functions of Green Infrastructure, as well as commissioning research (for example mapping Urban Heat Island effects) where necessary. This work will need to take into account emerging evidence and guidance from other actions in the NAP (such as reports under the adaptation reporting power).
3. **Work with others to drive action at a local level:** To deliver the NAP vision, Local Authorities will also need to raise awareness of partners' role in adaptation, and support them to embed it as part of their work. In some cases, this will be through formal mechanisms, such as LEPs, Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs), or Local Resilience Fora. In many of these more formal areas Adaptation is being given more focus (for example EU Structural Funds for LEPs include an adaptation priority, whilst LNPs are encouraged to map ecosystem services which regulate the climate). There will also be a need for specific engagement on issues such as major infrastructure and developments, utilities, or with large employers and small businesses.

Support to Local Government

There is a range of support available to help Councils progress this work. Organisations, such as Defra, the Environment Agency, and ClimateUK will help councils raise awareness, build the capabilities and make the case for action. The Local Adaptation



Advisory Panel offers a forum for councils to work with Government to jointly progress action. Councils must also demonstrate their own leadership and commitment to adapting their services and the communities that use them. A good way to start is by signing up to the LGA's Climate Local initiative⁹ which allows Councils to benchmark their actions and showcase their successes.

Please visit the links below to see how else you can get involved and to view further information on the NAP.

LAAP Contact

Rupert Clubb (LAAP Chairman)
rupert.clubb@eastsussex.gov.uk.

Links

[National Adaptation Programme \(NAP\)](#)
[Climate Change Risk Assessment](#)
[Environment Agency Climate Ready Support](#)

[Climate Local](#)
[ClimateUK](#)
[Local Government Association](#)

⁹ Climate Local: [Click here](#).

