

How Authorities Can Reduce Emissions and Manage Climate Risk

Notes From Committee on Climate Change Report Launch

Thursday 17th May 2012

David Kennedy Chief Executive, Committee on Climate Change

- The Committee is not political
- Wants to highlight the significant risk of UK missing targets
- Report should be seen as an alert/warning to central government, not an attack on local government
- Clear message to DECC and CLG to respond and not “wait 5 years” to see what happens

Julia King Committee on Climate Change

- Every local authority needs a carbon-plan, but not a set of carbon-budgets.
- Very concerned re loss of National Indicators.
- 4th national carbon budget will be missed if LA action continues to decline.
- A balance of carrots and sticks are required. Some statutory duty and some funding.
- Made a clear call for a new Duty for LAs to have a carbon plan.
- Incentives required as “we do not have time to wait and see what localism can do”.

Carbon Plans

Should contain targets but not budgets. Budgets not appropriate due to the many drivers of emissions that are outside of LA control. Government should incentivise action and consider funding.

“League tables can be dangerous”.

Key areas for LA carbon-plans to cover:

1. **Building emissions** (energy efficiency, encourage Green Deal involvement)
2. **Low carbon heat networks** (support through direct involvement, committing base load, and supporting others through the planning system)
3. **Transport emissions** (influencing behaviours, infrastructure development for public transport and low carbon vehicles)
4. **Emissions from waste** (she particularly focussed on food waste and energy-recovery)
5. **Planning to support renewables** (she particularly focussed on on-shore wind, declining approval rates)

Greg Barker

Minister for Energy and Climate Change

- Government is taking “bold steps” and has set “extremely challenging carbon goals” which “central government cannot meet on its own”.
- Welcomed CCC report and stresses need to LAs and central government to work together. Looking into resource issues.
- Not inclined to set carbon budgets.
- HECA guidance will probably come with financial support
- Large emphasis on opportunities around Green Deal

Green Deal

Green Deal is “my baby”. Wants to see all authorities pro-actively embrace the economic opportunities it can provide. Local authorities are the “most trusted brand” in local areas. LAs should make use of the “genuine economic value” that they have (because of their relationship with the public). LAs should work with the private sector to get “value transfer” into authorities. [i.e. form commercial partnerships, trading using the value of your “brand”.]

There’s a model to fit all LAs, from provider to producer to promoter. All can lead to “value transfer”. Green Deal not to be seen as a drain on resources, rather a gain.

Climate Local

Coming soon [initial commitment should be launched in June]. Will “knit it all together”. Should “drive, inspire and support local action”.

HECA

New guidance will emerge shortly, will enforce and drive legislation forwards. He is “looking to find finance” to support HECA and “is aware of resource constraints”.

Carbon Budgets v. Plans

He is “well disposed” to them but feels the report “has come down on the right side of that judgement” [i.e. not recommending them]. Not intending to make any “sticks to beat authorities with”. “Not going to be overly prescriptive.” No dictats, instead enabling. Expects LAs to proceed at different speeds, but with a clear destination.

LA Resource Constraints

In response to a question from the audience re funding for climate change work in LAs he was fairly robust, telling the questioner that they must “find smarter ways of working” and “cheer up, there is a lot to be cheerful about”. We should look for the opportunities (Green Deal) not forget “what is happening in the wider world”, as everybody is having to deal with large cuts and budget reductions. He reiterated his intention to seek financial support for HECA.

Mark Atherton
Director of Environment for Greater Manchester

Provided an update on Greater Manchester's work on Low Carbon Economy. Stressed the strong political will around this agenda as economic opportunities recognised. Touched on potential Green Deal model, merging a "producer" and "provider" role.

Specific response to this report:

- AGMA supports the report with 1 caveat. There is a need for BOTH funding and statutory duty (not "and/or".)
- Personally prefers voluntary agreements with central government but acknowledges some LAs may benefit from statutory, for political driver.
- Fears for smaller authorities if statutory duty comes without support
- Agrees with no enforced budgets, there are other ways to assess and benchmark, e.g. using national standard metrics, reframed to use locally

Andy Atkins
Executive Director, Friends of the Earth

- Welcomes report
- Strongly against voluntary approach which has been "thoroughly tested and has failed"
- Called for a prompt response from government to this report
- Greg Barker needs to supply "detailed and concrete" response not just "warm words" of today
- FoE keen to support LAs locally