



Resources to help communities plan for a low-carbon future

1 Introduction

The Plan LoCaL programme is funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government's Empowerment Fund. The project name, Plan LoCaL, derives from 'Planning for Low-Carbon Living', and the aim of the programme overall is that:

Communities in England take responsibility to contribute positively to a low carbon future and have the confidence, knowledge and ambition to influence local planning to achieve this end

The programme is now in its second year, and has produced innovative and pioneering resources and approaches to community led planning that were already well developed when the new localism agenda was crystallized as a result of the May elections.

The forthcoming Localism Bill will 'devolve greater powers to councils and neighbourhoods' and aims to give local communities a real share in local growth, along with a more efficient and more local planning system.

The Bill, the recent introduction of the Feed-in-Tariff for renewable electricity, and the proposed introduction of the Renewable Heat Incentive, combine to produce a fertile environment for community led planning approaches to low-carbon development and real growth in community ownership of renewable energy generation.

CSE is at the forefront of ensuring that communities are well-placed to take advantage of this shift in decision-making power and security of energy income. Our novel resources, to be made freely available, will support communities to own and manage renewable energy installations, shape policy relating to energy in their local area, and to use current and potential new planning tools (such as Local Development Orders and 'Neighbourhood Planning' approaches) to characterise themselves as pioneering 'Renewable Energy Action Areas'.

2. Developing national resources from the year 1 pilots

Year 1 of Plan LoCaL produced a series of workshops, training courses and research that we are now in the process of disseminating more widely through the development of a suite of resources. The Plan LoCaL resources for communities are designed to be a professional, engaging, thorough and, above all, useful set of

tools, information, guidance and case studies to help communities realise their low carbon ambitions and play a knowledgeable role in shaping development in their locality. The resources consist of a website, and a DVD resource pack, and will be followed by the outcomes of two action research projects on community led planning for a low-carbon future.

2.1 The website: www.planlocal.org.uk

The website has predominantly grown out of the work which concentrated on bringing a clear low-carbon focus to the process of Community Led Planning (CLP), pioneered by practitioners such as ACRE.

The website is designed to reflect one of the key points of the learning from our year 1 work with ACRE – that information on low-carbon planning needs to be framed within the context of what priorities community members already have. A community where there is a large proportion of the population strongly driven by the low-carbon agenda will already be adopting tools such as the Transition Energy Descent Plans approach. For everyone else, low-carbon decisions need to relate to their stated priorities. As a result, the web-page has been organised around the navigational principle “What Matters to You?”



The website will also contain a media player, (similar to the BBC iPlayer) where the DVD resource (See section 2.2) and support sheets can be downloaded, as well as hosting project pages for ongoing reports on

the Low-Carbon Bath project and Renewable Energy Action Areas project (these projects are described in more detail in sections 2.3 and 2.4, below).

The website launch date is scheduled for November 2010.

2.2 Community Renewable Energy DVD resource pack

The DVD resource reflects the fact that many community representatives, community development workers, local authority officers and others have the desire and the ability to run events and disseminate information that could result in the establishment of community renewable energy projects, but aren't confident that they would get all their facts right. The DVD resource pack will allow them to plan and run a series of public events within a community, interspersing factual information with participatory exercises. The resource pack is designed to empower communities to make decisions and plan projects on their own, rather than passively receiving information and relying on consultants to make even the basic feasibility decisions for them.

To provide a national programme of facilitated events is neither possible financially nor desirable from an empowerment point of view – it will remain a passive process for most attendees. The DVD resource pack will contain guidance on planning and running events, and a series of facilitated exercises relating to low-carbon issues, including imagery and reference material. Within this resource sits a DVD element that provides the 'expert in the room', talking attendees through issues covered in our workshops, ranging from renewable energy technologies, planning policy, running a consultation and securing project finance, and showing a range of practical case studies of communities who have already done it.



What makes this different is that it is designed to promote interactive, communal learning and decision making. The event plans and exercises that we are developing for the folder of resources that the DVD sits within are designed to ensure that many people from the same community can work together through

understanding the issues, clearing away the myths, and then applying what they have learned to their own community and environs by working through a series of simple exercises.

The DVD itself is made up of a series of 30 short films on renewable energy technologies, planning, finance, project management, and community consultation. These were filmed in a studio in front of a green screen, with graphics and footage being added in post-production. The films can be navigated through in any order, to build an event that concentrates on a certain technology or stage in a project for example.

These presenter-led 'learning' elements are backed up by a series of 10 case studies filmed on location. Each can be watched as a narrative story in its entirety, but they are also edited into smaller chunks highlighting key points (such as how to consult a community) that relate directly to one of the learning sections.

Because the resource is also designed to promote ongoing engagement (rather than one-off events), it also serves to widen the pool of people in any community that are actively involved in, actively following or at least passively aware of the proposed project.

Appendix 1 shows the navigation of the DVD resource, which describes the sections and identifies the community projects who were generous enough to devote considerable time to being interviewed and filmed. Between them, the case studies cover the range of all renewable energy technologies, as well as providing a full range of examples of funding mechanisms, legal structures, community consultation approaches etc.

The DVD resource pack will be launched by Christmas 2010 – those wishing to receive a copy can register their interest in advance by emailing rachel.coxcoon@cse.org.uk

2.3 Low Carbon development in a heritage setting

The Bath World Heritage Site (made up of the City and its environs) is perhaps the most challenging place in England in which to develop renewable energy, and presents similar barriers to energy efficiency measures such as double glazing and solid wall insulation. These problems are repeated on a smaller scale in conservation areas and listed buildings in nearly every town and city in the country.

This research project in Bath aims to develop a process for developing community consensus on low-carbon development in a heritage setting, and to produce widely supported guidance. We are working closely with the local authority on this project, and the ultimate aim for the next project year would be to steer the resulting guidance through the process of becoming a Supplementary Planning Document for the World Heritage Site.

The process is challenging, as there are potentially many differences of opinion among local people about how climate change should be addressed in an environment as unique as that of Bath. It is nonetheless important, if progress is to be made in this field, for such differences to be explored and tested, initially with individual interest groups on their own, and ultimately by bringing representatives of various groups together.

BATH PRESERVATION TRUST **Centre for Sustainable Energy**

Can you imagine... a low carbon Bath?

Where the carbon emissions from buildings in the World Heritage Site are at or near zero?

If you can, but wonder how we are going to get there, come along to one of the community consultation events of the Low Carbon Bath project.

Low Carbon Bath is a joint project of Bath Preservation Trust and Bristol's Centre for Sustainable Energy. The project aims to develop guidance and draft planning policy which make clear how far the buildings of Bath can be transformed to meet the challenge of a low carbon future without the loss of their heritage value.

Come if you care about the built environment of Bath, you want to see a transition to a low carbon city, or you simply want to communicate your own ideas about, or experience of, making changes to the buildings of Bath.

The consultation events aim to identify the scope for change, the constraints upon change and what needs to be done to make it possible for everyone to contribute to the creation of a low carbon Bath.

Events will take place at the Building of Bath Collection on:

Wednesday 22nd September
Heritage organisations and interest groups
12.30 for 1pm - 4pm (lunch provided)

Thursday 30th September
Environmental organisations and interest groups
6.30 - 8.30pm (refreshments provided)

Thursday 7th October
Architect's, developers and major land owners
12.30 for 1pm - 4pm (lunch provided)

Building of Bath Collection,
The Countess of Huntington's Chapel,
The Vineyards, Paragon,
Bath BA1 5NA
Please contact Gemma Killick at
gkillick@bptrust.org.uk or telephone
01225 338727 to book your place.

Public Event
There will be an opportunity for all residents to participate in a public meeting on Wednesday 27th October, at St Swithin's Church, starting at 6.30pm.

The process will enable the articulation of shared values and interests as well as clarification of where real differences lie. The project started with a stakeholder seminar in late August, to establish the key issues and questions that the project must address.

This is being followed by a series of public consultation events with local interest and community groups. Following these events, and further consultation with professional, academic, commercial and local authority stakeholders, draft guidance will be produced. This will be subject to further consultation at a seminar bringing together representatives of all the previous focus groups, as well as wider advertisement for commentary in local press before being finalised as guidance. We are engaging with the local council to encourage them to prioritise the formalisation of the guidance as a Supplementary Planning Document.

The process and the outcome will be promoted to other local authorities in England via the Plan LoCaL website.

The Bath Preservation Trust also hope to present the project process and outcomes to UNESCO as a model for reaching community consensus on climate change and heritage in other World Heritage cities.

2.4 Renewable Energy Action Areas

The Renewable Energy Action Areas aims to apply the principles of Community Led Planning (a bottom-up process that reaches and gets input from more than 70% of the population in a particular area) in order to engender a local desire to increase skills and knowledge of, investment in and high installation rates for renewable energy.



A 'batch': slag heaps from the area's coal mining days

The ultimate aim would be to entrench this desire in local planning policy through use of either a Local Development Order or Supplementary Planning Document. We are also now investigating the possibility of using the recently announced Community Right to Build mechanism.

The project is running in the Somer Valley, an ex-mining area in Somerset, focused in particular on the area around the towns of Midsomer Norton and Radstock.

The project process is as follows:

- **Establish a working group for the project:** This group will help to guide CSE on the stakeholder groups in the area, and to map out a vision for the REAA to take to the wider community. Not to be confused with the ultimate Steering Group for the project, which will have wider membership and be established later on.
- **Run a series of focus groups and public meetings:** using the Working Group to help identify particular groups that we should engage with, we will run a series of exploratory focus groups, to outline a vision for the REAA, investigate what local people see as being the benefits to them, what they fear or dislike about the idea, any characteristics they would like to see that are not included in the vision, etc. The focus groups will be followed by open public meetings to further test the idea

- **Consult the wider community via postal and online questionnaire:** We will work with the council to incorporate mailings in official council mail, and in council newspapers and advertising, as well as general advertising in the area. The aim will be to elicit responses from a significant proportion of the public on the idea that has been refined through the working group and focus groups/public meetings.
- **Establish a Steering Group , Vision and programme of work:** The outcome of the community consultation will be taken on board to establish the vision for the Renewable Energy Action Area. A Steering Group will be established from the local community and a process of mapping possible work areas undertaken (e.g. proactive identification of renewable energy sites, self-administered housing stock assessment, engaging with local further education providers on skills analysis etc).
- **Assess priorities for low-carbon development in the area:** Further community consultation will distill the range of options into those that the community wish to take forward immediately, those that need funding or development, and those that are not popular and will not be progressed.
- **Engage with the local authority on development of planning documents:** Proposed low-carbon developments that could be facilitated by the use of tools such as Local Development Orders or the new Community Right to Build mechanism will be discussed with the Local Authority, and a strategic framework drawn up (with further public consultation), to be taken forward as a planning document.

Ongoing progress reports and findings will be published on the Plan LoCaL website.

For more information on Plan LoCaL, visit www.cse.org.uk and search for 'PlanLoCaL' in the project pages, or contact Rachel Coxcoon on rachel.coxcoon@cse.org.uk