

Chapter Three: Local authorities tackling climate change

National Indicators & Climate Change

1. The Surrey Climate Change Partnership is a partnership of all the Surrey local authorities, working together to tackle climate change. The partnership was established in order to develop a common approach to climate change initiatives, pooling scarce resources and learning from the best practice already in Surrey and from elsewhere.
2. The Surrey Climate Change Partnership has jointly agreed a response to the specific questions within the consultation relating to climate change.
3. Overall, the inclusion of explicit climate change indicators within the National Indicator set is positive. It ensures that all local authorities are giving some thought to this agenda. However, questions remain about the exact scope of the current NIs and their value in galvanising real action to address climate change.
4. NI185:
On the whole, NI185 is a helpful indicator, as it ensures that all local authorities are starting to measure and understand their carbon emissions. It is however unclear how this NI will operate with the introduction of the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) in April 2010. For CRC authorities, the focus will inevitably be on emissions from stationary sources in order to comply with the reporting requirements for CRC and it will be important to streamline the reporting system in order to avoid duplication of effort.
5. Measurement of outsourced service emissions is problematic in the short-term. It would be useful to have some standard guidance from DECC/DEFRA that we can give to outsourced service providers, explaining exactly what we want and why it is required. This would then be standardized for the UK.
6. With the overall goal of managing and reducing our carbon emissions, more thought is required to ensure that the information collected is the right information, in the right format, to support real change. In some cases, we would urge cost-benefit analysis of data requirements is necessary in order to be confident that the time and resource required in gathering data is justifiable.
7. Overall, we have serious concerns about the value and resource implications of collecting data for NI185.
8. NI186:
In its current form, NI186 is considered to be unhelpful. We have serious concerns about the value of the data in its current form as the basis for prioritisation of actions.
9. The lack of scope and reporting guidelines means too much time may be spent thinking about how to demonstrate savings (which can only ever be estimated and based on assumptions of cause and effect), rather than focusing on the most appropriate actions for local authorities and other partners to undertake that are likely to make the greatest contribution to national CO2 reduction targets.

10. It would be useful for NI186 to be underpinned by a Government framework that helps to define actions. Many local authorities suffer from a lack of staff and financial resource and so a more defined approach with attached finance could start to drive real progress. For example, the Kirklees insulation scheme is doubtless very helpful in reducing CO2 emissions per capita but the scope and financing of such a scheme would be beyond the scope of smaller authorities. Similarly applying for grants is extremely resource intensive.
11. At a time of serious budget constraints, the Surrey Climate Change Partnership would support an alternative approach where each local authority is given an annual rolling fund (possibly based on population) to be targeted on priority actions that can deliver demonstrable CO2 savings.
12. NI188
Overall, this indicator is helpful in setting out a useful process for embedding adaptation and/or resilience in corporate processes.

Climate change: The Local Authority role and support required

13. A local authority role in coordinating funding streams would be a positive step forward and, in Surrey, could be channeled through the partnership in order to ensure a consistent countywide approach.
14. Resources to tackle climate change are a major constraint and there is an urgent need for funding to address this. There is currently a lack of central funding to reflect the new responsibilities and requirements being placed on local government to tackle climate change, as well as the costs involved in both mitigation and adaptation activity.
15. Overall we support the idea of local carbon budgets, but this would imply the need for much more sophisticated monitoring of emissions at the local level and improved understanding of local authority control and influence.

Ensuring national policies reinforce local efforts on climate change

16. We suggest three factors that would support work carried out locally, on climate change, around transport, renewable energy and energy efficiency.
 - a) The need for supportive and consistent national transport policy
 - b) Supportive planning policy on renewables to facilitate locally appropriate solutions and the need for feed-in tariffs that act as a genuine incentive for micro generation
 - c) Enhanced local role in tackling energy performance of existing house stock beyond target groups
17. Government should adequately resource local authorities to carry out borough-wide renewable energy resource analysis and heat and power demand mapping. The output would be a renewable energy opportunities map for all UK towns and cities. This would provide the evidence base for setting locally appropriate renewable energy targets.