

**West of England Partnership
Planning, Housing and Communities Board
17 September 2010**

Leadership in Tackling Climate Change: a background paper for the workshop

Purpose

1. To advise the Board on the roles and functions of spatial planning in tackling climate change.
2. To identify the key challenges and opportunities for delivering positive outcomes for the West of England on climate change, through spatial planning.

Introduction

3. Spatial planning has a pivotal role to play in tackling climate change through addressing the energy needs of communities, reducing their greenhouse gas emissions and ensuring people and property will not be vulnerable to risks arising from a changing climate in the future.

Legal and Planning Policy Framework for Tackling Climate Change

4. The Planning Act 2008 places statutory duties on local authorities to take action on climate change. This includes a duty for local development frameworks to include policies on climate change.
5. Targets have been put in place through the Climate Change Act 2008 which will require an 80% cut in greenhouse emissions by 2050 and a 26% cut in CO₂ emissions by 2020 (against 1990 baselines).
6. The overarching planning policy framework for tackling climate change is provided by the Planning and Climate Change Supplement to PPS1 (December 2007). This places tackling climate change at the heart of spatial planning.
7. A draft PPS, "Planning for a low carbon future in a changing climate", was published for consultation in March 2010. Although in draft, it spells out more clearly how local planning can tackle climate change. The document starts from the premise that plan making and development management should fully support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate.

Local Authority Responses to Climate Change

8. Climate change is a cross boundary issue and therefore the response to national policy needs to be consistent within each authority, notwithstanding local characteristics, opportunities, risks and needs.
9. The four local authorities are leading on tackling climate change in the following areas:

- Integrating climate change adaptation and mitigation policies into core strategies and other policy guidance including supplementary planning documents;
- Gathering evidence on issues such as flooding, energy, biodiversity employment, housing and waste, to underpin strategies and policies;
- Setting high standards and targets for sustainable development in masterplans and design codes;
- Supporting the development of renewable and low carbon energy infrastructure, including identifying appropriate sites;
- Promoting green building designs and carbon reduction technologies as part of new development;
- Managing development proposals to minimise their impact on the environment and maximise their contribution towards sustainable development;
- Coordinating investment in the delivery of housing, jobs and infrastructure to maximise energy efficiency and use of decentralised energy;
- Working in partnership with the development industry, statutory bodies and utilities to create the right conditions for supporting sustainable growth in the green economy;
- Monitoring climate change indicators and targets and analysing trends to feed into policy revisions.

The Role of Elected Members

10. Members have a big say in ensuring that the West of England responds positively to addressing the challenge of climate change. For example through their role in spatial planning and development management they are key to getting the infrastructure in place to supply and deliver renewable and low carbon energy; in planning the right scale, mix and character of development and in the right location, they can encourage less travel; in adopting appropriate local plans and strategies they can reduce the vulnerability of communities to the effects of climate change; and through partnership working they can ensure climate change is addressed corporately as a cross cutting issue.

The response to Climate Change at the Partnership Level

11. Many key aspects of sustainability can be delivered at the Partnership level because this is a functional economic area with key linkages including, travel-to-work patterns, housing market areas, inward investment, flooding, green infrastructure and efficient energy generation, which extend beyond administrative boundaries.
12. The West of England Vision sets out the objectives of promoting balanced growth that: maintains and enhances economic prosperity; seeks to reduce the need to travel by car; and conserve and enhance the natural assets that make the West of England unique.
13. In the West of England a number of planning related activities are already underway which are making a difference as follows:
 - Through the **Joint Waste Core Strategy**, ensuring that the West of England is resource efficient with waste generation minimised and operating a sustainable waste management infrastructure;

- Through a **Joint Supplementary Planning Document** the Partnership is promoting a positive and flexible delivery framework to encourage development at the most sustainable locations;
 - Through the **Delivery and Infrastructure Investment Plan** the Partnership working together with business will prioritise investment to support sustainable growth in new homes and jobs;
 - Through the **Green Infrastructure Strategy** the Partnership is looking to develop a cohesive vision and action plan to promote and deliver multi-purpose networks of green space, particularly where there is currently limited access to natural green space or where connectivity between these places is poor; and integrate green infrastructure provision within existing and new development, particularly within major development and regeneration areas;
 - Undertaking **Local Economic Assessments** which will include defining how to achieve a low carbon economy for the sub-region;
 - Working in **Partnership** with the Environment Agency, Highways Agency, English Nature and developers to plan for and deliver infrastructure requirements as part of new development, as well as generating a common evidence base to support delivery;
 - Through the **West of England Sustainable Construction Network (WECON)** officers from the four local authorities are sharing good practice and developing policy and delivery approaches around renewable energy.
14. More broadly Regen SW has developed a region-wide GIS heat demand map for the south west. The map models heat demand down to the individual building scale, based on a range of datasets. The map provides local authorities and local project developers within the south west with a detailed understanding of existing heat demand in their areas. This will enable them to scope meaningful opportunities to use low carbon and renewable heat technologies – avoiding the need for the individual commissioning of local heat demand assessments for their areas. Local authorities will also be able to combine use of this information with data that they hold on potential housing/commercial development sites to support them in planning for sustainable energy.
15. Finally Regen SW has also published a Planners Toolkit on Climate Change. The toolkit has been developed to provide advice on Sustainable Energy and Climate Change Adaptation based on the guidance given in the Climate Change Supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1.

Recommendation

That the Board notes the content of the report and provides any views as part of the discussion with Forum for the Future.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

Background Papers:

None

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