

# Climate change: local government's role

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LOCAL AUTHORITIES &  
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# An invitation to join a dialogue



by John Selborne

I was delighted to be invited to be guest editor of this special supplement. Chief executives are tackling issues linked to climate change, trying to effect a culture change. Making better use of the existing knowledge that public funds have already generated should save money now. The living with environmental change partnership (LWEC) exists to help decision-makers benefit from a dialogue with the leading edge of the knowledge base and I hope that this supplement encourages good contacts.

I invite you to join a dialogue about local community needs and making better and more sustainable use of natural and human resources; about strategic plans for the future; about generating new kinds of economic development and about what kinds of local governance are most likely to enable communities to thrive in the face of human and environmental changes.

The environmental changes ahead will, by their very nature, make communities more vulnerable - for example, to extreme conditions - while at the same time presenting new opportunities in the "green economy". The issues involved touch almost all aspects of the

responsibilities and services provided by local authorities. Leading research funders in LWEC are already supporting work that should help local authorities deal with today's variations in weather as well as tomorrow's changing climate.

I am delighted that so many chief executives have signed up to the Nottingham Declaration. The key to success is that local authorities engage in a dialogue with the research community to evolve policy and practice. LWEC exists to facilitate the link between research, policy and practice and to provide decision-makers with the foresight needed in what is a complex situation where competing needs will need to be balanced more keenly than ever.

There are two ways to engage: either by contacting Andrew Watkinson, the director of LWEC at the University of East Anglia or by contacting the research arm of the Local Government Association, who are members of the LWEC partners board.

*Lord Selborne is a hereditary peer and businessman and chair of the Living with Environmental Change partners board [www.lwec.org.uk](http://www.lwec.org.uk)*

# Strategies that will help you

by Michael Bichard and John Benington



We are delighted to present this special issue of the Solace Foundation Imprint, sponsored by the Local Authorities Research Council Initiative (Larci), that looks at climate change, and strategies for tackling it, in the context of local authorities and their chief executives and senior officers.

The wealth of experience and expertise captured within these pages is impressive in its breadth and depth. Contributions range from those providing the hard science underpinning our knowledge of what a changing climate may be like (Richard Betts and Andrew Watkinson) and the practicalities of adaptation and mitigation (AbuBakr Bahaj and Peter Guthrie), through the partnership approach needed to ensure an effective response (Laurie Newton and Laura Robinson), to the harsh realities of having to cope with an increase in extreme weather events, such as suffered by Cumbria last year (Jill Stannard).

Although climate change is a worldwide phenomenon, and the UK's response is enshrined in legislation, we should not lose sight of the importance of local action/response (Warren Hatter and Gary Porter) and the role of the

individual. There are some useful examples of how strong local leadership has resulted in exemplary local outcomes (Derek Myers and Mike Reardon). We can all make a difference by changing our consumption behaviour, and social science research can provide guidance on the most effective approaches (Yacob Mulugetta). Some of the most vulnerable members of our society have both the smallest carbon footprint and are amongst those most commonly affected by a changing climate (Julia Unwin).

It is heartening to hear common messages coming through from both local authorities and from leading thinkers and academics. What we do at a local level does make a significant difference to carbon emissions; local authorities are in a unique position to influence the effectiveness of local responses to climate change legislation; encouraging changes in the behaviour of individuals and organisations is a crucial component of this approach. It is not easy, but leading by example is a strong driver. With trust, mutual respect and a realistic approach, local leaders (both politicians and officers) and leaders can drive forward practical solutions to reduce the

future impacts of climate change on the delivery of public services.

Local authorities have a key role to play in how our society copes with the inevitabilities of climate change, and there is no single, easy solution. The world-class research available through our universities offers evidence and guidance to underpin decisions by key decisionmakers, but to make this relationship work we need a common language, mutual understanding, respect and trust. Local authority leaders and chief executives are in a unique position to step out from the mundane, embrace opportunities and provide strong local leadership to meet this global challenge.

### **Larci**

The Local Authorities and Research Councils' Initiative brings together all the UK's academic research councils and the main local government organisations (including the Local Government Association, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and the Audit Commission) to help to create a robust research and development capacity that both serves local government policy and practice, and also has the stamp of academic rigour.

Larci's work is based on the principle that better research can inform better strategies and decisions, and lead to better services for citizens and communities.

In addition to fostering knowledge transfer and application between local government policymakers and managers on the one hand, and academic researchers on the other, Larci has also promoted five studies on key strategic

issues facing UK local government over the next five to 10 years:

- New horizons for local governance
- Local leadership and integrated public service budgets
- Co-production of local public services
- Risk analysis and management in local governance
- Climate change - threat or opportunity?

This is the fifth in the above series of Larci strategic reports, and we are pleased to have developed and published it in partnership with Solace.

### **Guest editor: John Selborne**

We would like to extend our thanks to our guest editor, Lord Selborne, the hereditary peer and businessman who is closely associated with the Living With Environmental Change programme at the University of East Anglia. His work and support in producing this supplement has been invaluable.



# Can climate science help?



by Richard Betts

This article is not about convincing you to cut your carbon emissions. Neither is it claiming that emissions cuts are not necessary. In fact, carbon emissions are only an incidental part of the story. This article is about living with the consequences of a changing climate, and making decisions that are resilient to future changes – changes which are already inevitable.

Most people realise that the climate is changing. Long-term global average temperatures are rising. Although temperatures fluctuate every year due to natural processes, superimposed on this is an inexorable rise in the average. Every recent decade has been warmer than its predecessor. Other evidence also points to a warming world – on average, ice has been covering less of the Arctic ocean than it used to, and generally there has been less snow cover around the northern hemisphere, even though there have been obvious exceptions in some years. One or even two cold winters in the UK do not mean the world as a whole is not continuing to warm. There is strong scientific evidence that this warming is largely due to human emissions of greenhouse gases such

as carbon dioxide and methane, which implies that further changes in climate are inevitable because such emissions are continuing to rise. Moreover, even if global emissions were to stop rising in the next few years and then start to fall, further global warming would happen for a few more decades, as it takes a while for the world's climate to adjust fully. And if the international community continues to fail to reach an agreement on emissions reductions, the timescale of locked-in climate change will extend only further into the future. All this means that realistically we can expect more global warming (and hence further changes in our own local climate).

Understanding this is crucial for local government decision-makers because many of its areas of responsibility are sensitive to weather and climate. Keeping the roads open is an obvious one. While keeping supplies of road salt is not really a climate change issue – you only need to plan weeks or months in advance, not years – other areas do require preparation years or even decades ahead.

Planning decisions are probably the most important example. Siting a new

housing development can be critical, as it will affect people's lives for generations to come. With increasing pressure on land, building on or close to areas at risk of flooding becomes increasingly necessary, and then it is down to experts to assess what the risk of flooding actually is. Do we expect a flood once in a thousand years, once in a hundred years, once every few years or every few months? Previously this risk assessment would have been calculated through historical records and local experience – however, as they say in the world of financial advice, “the past is not a guide to the future”, and with the climate changing around us, the likelihood of flooding and other weather events is also changing. The question is, how much?

This is where it is important to get objective scientific advice first-hand from someone who knows the science, and not second, third or fourth-hand from someone who interprets the science according to their own agenda. Climate change science is highly complex and subject to huge uncertainties. As with any complex subject, when the messages get simplified for the sake of clarity, the emphasis given to different areas of detail depends very much on the perspective of the interpreter. Since climate change has become a political issue as well as a scientific one, many communicators of the science simplify their message with a political aim in mind – often to highlight the need for emissions reductions, or to argue against this. In the former case, there is a natural tendency to highlight worst case scenarios; in the second, the tendency is to play down the risks. In either

case, the aim is to influence decisions on whether to try to avoid future climate change or not. This is the mitigation debate.

Unfortunately, this is not particularly helpful in informing decisions on living with the changes that are already unavoidable – in other words, adaptation. Until recently it seemed to be almost politically incorrect to discuss adaptation, as this was viewed as giving up on mitigation. However, as discussed above, some climate change is already locked in to the system even if emissions begin to reduce in the next few years, and hence adaptation needs to be considered alongside the mitigation debate. But decision-making on adaptation may be poorly informed if it is based on the rather polarised presentation of the science that seems to emerge through the mitigation debate. Worst-case scenarios need to be borne in mind, but they may be less likely than other scenarios. Focusing entirely on these may actually be a barrier to informed decision-making.

It's rather like the increasing level of sophistication you include in advice to children as they grow up. When they are very little, you simply say “Don't cross the road, you'll get run over”. Actually, it is possible that an 18-month-old could cross the road unscathed, especially if it's a quiet cul-de-sac rather than the A303, but there is no need for them to understand risk to such a sophisticated extent when there are other reasons for them not to be out crossing roads by themselves anyway. You mitigate the risk by avoiding the dangerous situation. However, when they are a little older and can begin to make decisions for themselves, it becomes inevitable

that they will need to cross the road by themselves, so you teach them how to cross it safely. As change becomes inevitable, you provide more sophisticated information in order to facilitate adaptation. An adult who never learnt to cross roads safely would be at huge risk when they find themselves in the situation that can no longer be avoided. They need the information to deal appropriately with the situation.

And this is where first-hand engagement with climate science can help. While decision-makers may hear simplified messages from campaigning groups about catastrophic climate change (or how climate change is all a hoax), this does not help them decide whether it is worth spending millions of pounds on flood defences. If the worst-case scenario of catastrophic floods is as likely as some campaigners might claim, then it would be natural to assume that huge and immediate investment in flood defences is needed in order to protect us from these impacts (given that some further warming is already inevitable). However, a worst-case scenario may actually be less likely than a scenario of medium impact, and there will also be competing priorities for investment, so responsible decision-making will assess the likelihood of a particular level of flooding alongside other investment needs. A full risk assessment will require examination of a range of possible scenarios and their relative likelihood and impact. Expert

advice is crucial, so that the complexity and uncertainty of the science can be interpreted with the decision-makers needs in mind.

Local government decision-makers therefore need to work hand-in-hand with experts on climate science in making informed decisions. Second-hand information may not be a sound basis for decisions, as the specific details of the decision may not be catered for, and key details may be misunderstood or given an inappropriate level of importance. It is far better to go direct to the source of the information and get expert advice direct. Climate science can offer much to decision-makers, but only if the right questions are asked of the right people.

We look forward to talking to you!

*Dr Richard Betts is head of climate impacts at the Met Office Hadley Centre, Exeter, the government's official research centre on climate change. He leads a team of research scientists and consultants in understanding and predicting the impacts of climate change for a wide range of customers both in government and the private sector.*

# The challenges we must overcome



by Andrew Watkinson

Over the past 10 years there has been an enormous growth in our understanding of the science of climate change and the risks that it poses to society. There has also been a tremendous increase in the extent to which society is aware of and engaged with the issue. Climate change has, at the same time, become much more than a scientific issue. While its roots are in science, it has also become a social, political and philosophical issue. It raises fundamental questions about the way we live and interact with others across the globe. It raises questions about food, water and energy security; about equity and social justice; the role of the state and the individual; and the way we live our lives.

Climate science brings together people working at enormously different scales. At one level there are those who are trying to record and understand changes in global temperature, while at the other there are those who are trying to understand how global changes have an impact on local communities and the decisions we make as individuals. But irrespective of scale, the challenges we face from changes in temperature, rainfall, sea level and extreme events re-

quire scientists from different disciplines to work together with stakeholders; key amongst those are the local authorities as it is they who will have to respond to local community needs.

## **Uncertainty and risk**

Inevitably scientists are more confident of some of projections than others. We are more confident about potential changes in temperature than rainfall, more confident about projections at the global than regional or local level, and more confident about average projections than changes in extremes. This is obviously frustrating for those who have to make decisions at a local level. We should be able to reduce some of that uncertainty, but there will always remain a lot that we cannot know for certain.

That does not mean that we should not take action because we are uncertain of the future. The risks are clear. Even if we cannot be entirely confident that climate will change exactly as predicted, we know that the potential consequences are in many cases large. Risk analysis, where the probability of an event happening is multiplied by its impact, indicates that it would be extremely

prudent to mitigate the likelihood of climate change by reducing greenhouse gas concentrations and to prepare ourselves for some of the inevitable changes (adaptation).

### How should we respond?

It is generally agreed that if we are to avoid dangerous climate change and restrict global temperature increases to no more than 2C that greenhouse gas emissions will have to peak in the next few years and that we will need to reduce emissions by the order of 80% by 2050. That is an enormous challenge and one in which we must all play a part; there is a matter of urgency. But while we should aim to prevent global temperatures rising above 2C, it appears increasingly unlikely that we will achieve that target and plan for 4C. Both mitigation and adaptation need to be high on our agenda.

In terms of mitigation, local authorities and communities have a key role to play in reducing energy consumption, increasing energy efficiency and promoting renewable forms of energy to enable us to make the transition to a low-carbon economy. That is an enormous ask, but it is also a tremendous business opportunity for those involved in industries including energy, construction, transport, communications, tourism and retailing.

### How do we live with climate change?

That requires adaptation to reduce

exposure to the risk of damage and development of the capacity to deal with change, whether that is coping with unavoidable damages or taking advantage of new opportunities. Adaptation of necessity occurs at the local level; local authorities, therefore, have a key responsibility here.

Science is giving us insights into how our world might change and how we should adapt. Evidence indicates that climate change will have a dramatic impact on our natural environment and the way we need to manage natural resources, on our food and water resources, on health and infrastructure. And of course climate is not the only change we can expect. Urbanisation, globalisation, technology, biodiversity, population, patterns of consumption and our economy are all changing in an uncertain way. It is therefore imperative that we see adaptation to climate change in the context of all these other changes. That requires us to take a holistic view of the adaptation process, a process that the royal commission on environmental pollution suggested would be both messy and complicated.

### Living with Environmental Change

For local authorities, a changing climate poses three major challenges:

- How do we make the transition to a low carbon economy and grow the green economy?
- How do we ensure food, water and energy security for our communities?

● How do we increase the resilience of vulnerable people, places and infrastructure?

The Living with Environmental Change partnership is helping to provide the knowledge that is needed for local decision makers ([www.lwec.org.uk](http://www.lwec.org.uk)). It is working to improve the prediction of temperature and precipitation at scales that are relevant to the economy, understand how the ecosystem services on which we all depend will change (<http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org/>), provide the science to underpin food and water security, provide us protection from changing health risks, increase the resilience of our infrastructure and transport systems to environmental change, and increase our understanding of how people respond to a changing environment so that we can help develop sustainable communities.

It is imperative that decision makers are aware of what the science is telling us about climate change and critical that scientists try to address the questions and provide options for the decision makers. But what does this mean in practice?

### Working with local government

Over the past 10 years I have worked with colleagues in the Tyndall Centre ([www.tyndall.ac.uk](http://www.tyndall.ac.uk)) on a coastal simulator that we have been piloting on the Norfolk coast to explore how flooding and cliff erosion can be expected to change and be managed

for the benefit of people, the economy and the landscape. Through research, we were able to produce a coupled model that integrated information on climate change, sea-level rise, coastal geomorphology, flood defence and socio-economic change to explore the consequences of future environmental change for people, households and the economy. For the first time, it quantified how management decisions on the cliffed coasts affected flood risk in the low lying areas. This illustrated how the management of the coastline and the governance on which that management depends needs to reflect the connectivity of the coastal system. We were also able to provide an economic analysis of the consequences of different management decisions and provide a “neutral” forum for the discussion of future coastal visions among local politicians, communities and researchers.

Decisions on how we manage our local communities and environments need to be informed by evidence if we are to meet the challenge of climate change as set out in the Nottingham Declaration. The research community through the Living with Environmental Change and other programmes is keen to engage.

*Professor Andrew Watkinson is director of the Living with Environmental Change programme in the school of environmental sciences at the University of East Anglia*

# Sustainable energy plans



by AbuBakr Bahaj

Climate change is recognised as one of the major challenges facing humanity in the 21st century. Attempts to alleviate its impacts span many scientific, engineering, economic, social and policy disciplines. Changing our attitudes to generating energy offers one of the best options. Efforts to de-carbonise our energy supply can be undertaken at the global, national and local levels. There are certain pathways that let local authorities support and promote activities related to low-carbon sustainable energy generation and energy-efficiency technologies. They could provide enabling platforms to enhance their communities' outlook and quality of life by addressing and instigating aspects of policy that are within their remit.

**Building stock:** Develop coherent policy instruments aimed at establishing challenging targets that realise a level of comfort coupled with enhanced energy efficiency. This approach could encompass insulation of homes in local authority ownership – leading by example. A partnership with local businesses and regional utilities to achieve quantifiable targets in terms of property refurbish-

ment and energy-efficiency could be one way. Such an approach could be coupled to fuel-poverty alleviation measures. A well thought out scheme can provide a huge outcome for both participating communities and local authorities resulting in an impetus to apply the scheme widely.

**Micro-generation technologies:** The generation of heat or electrical power at household level and community-wide generation schemes using renewable energy resources and systems will play a major role in the delivery of energy. Predictions indicate that by 2020 around 70% of the global population will live in cities. So buildings will be important both as a resource to provide surfaces that can generate energy and income stream through feed-in tariffs. Such tariffs are relatively new in the UK (April 2010), and offer a real opportunity to create local businesses.

**Planning issues:** Local authorities will need to pool resources to address some deficiencies of understanding of new technologies, especially those related to energy generation and efficiency in

buildings. Buildings overall roughly contribute around half our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions – a reduction in this figure will need to be a target planning policy. A concerted effort is needed to make planning officers aware of the need to reach such targets and to employ new approaches. Innovation in building design will need to be given a chance not only for the generation of new knowledge (innovation) but also in promoting commercial and industrial entities to expand their activities (job creations and enhance economic activities) in low carbon design which is likely to be at the centre of global activities related to the built environment.

**Local industry, support services and supply chain enhancements:** Authorities need to look at regional opportunities and available funding mechanisms to support low-carbon development, for instance, enhancing port facilities to streamline services for offshore energy such as wind power. This can be designed to respond to the various rounds of deployments in offshore wind-energy expansion. Better still will be making available to industry integrated assembly or manufacturing facilities around ports that entice national and international players in offshore energy.

**Locally available resources:** There is always support and resources within local authority areas that are not tapped fully, ie, universities and higher education establishments. If fully utilised, through a partnership for the common good of the region, feasibility studies could be jointly conducted covering many aspects of the above issues and the approaches

needed to study concepts and schemes that will undoubtedly result in the development of well-informed policy actions that could be delivered jointly by the various regional stakeholders.

**Information and advice to citizens:**

Technology offers a fantastic opportunity to local authorities to establish geographical information systems on buildings and their latest state of energy standing. Enhancements in such systems could also guide long term planning of cities and regions encompassing industrial and business information that can provide a capability statement of the city or the region that can help in an inward investment in innovative and environmental technologies.

The above represents a view that regions and cities should be prepared to invest in new approaches to:

- reduce impacts on scarce resources,
- utilise sustainable energy technologies appropriately,
- enhance the quality of life of their citizens, and
- provide them with best platforms that will allow them to successfully participate in new opportunities in what will become a highly competitive global market for low carbon technologies and their utilisation.

*AbuBakr Bahaj is professor of sustainable energy at the University of Southampton. He has published more than 210 articles on his research areas and leads a team of 50 researchers working on sustainable energy and climate change.*

# Tools you might find useful



by Peter Guthrie

As most local authority professionals know all too well, there is an astounding array of research relevant to a greater or lesser extent to their decision making.

The difficulty is not that information is not available, but so much is out there that finding what really matters is all but impossible. The Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council has been funding a £40m programme of research into sustainable urban environments, and this programme alone is yielding much of real potential value to local authorities.

Recognising that the work may not be well known to potential users of the research, such as local authorities, the council commissioned a separate project (implementation strategies for sustainable urban environment systems – or Issues) to help disseminate its findings.

Eighteen consortiums have been working on the programme. These are made up of universities and non-academic partners such as local authorities, consultancy and commercial companies, and government departments. They have been grouped in clusters covering: contaminated land and pollution; transport, buildings and energy;

urban planning and design; and water and wastewater

To help users access this wealth of research, a searchable “gateway” has been set up. Simple keyword searches enable online access to project information, research outputs (including user guides) and contact details for a gallery of experts available to talk to users about the policy and practice relevance of their research. The SUE (Sustainable urban environment) Gateway has been developed as a portal for users. Go to [www.urbansustainabilityexchange.org.uk/ISSUESueProgramme.htm](http://www.urbansustainabilityexchange.org.uk/ISSUESueProgramme.htm)

While it is invidious to single out specific work from such an impressive array, it may be helpful to show some examples.

## **Contaminated Land and Pollution**

Wand (water cycle management for new developments) provides tools and guidelines for project design, implementation and management. Tools and resources are available at [www.wand.uk.net/](http://www.wand.uk.net/)

**Distillate** (design and implementation

support tools for integrated local land use, transport and the environment)

Distillate is aimed at overcoming the barriers to the effective development and delivery of sustainable urban transport and land-use strategies. There is a funding toolkit that can provide decision-makers with an overview of potential funding sources to use for a variety of schemes and projects. [www.distillate.ac.uk/](http://www.distillate.ac.uk/)

**Buildings and Energy** The Innovation in Design, Construction & Operation of Buildings for People investigated the barriers to integrating innovative environmental technologies in sustainable refurbishments for social housing projects. Value for money was found to be a major factor in selecting environmental systems and components. They also found that confidence levels in new products and processes are low, and misconceptions regarding durability and performance are common among housing professionals.

**The Vivacity2020** consortium has conducted extensive research on best practice in designing public toilets, including issues such as disabled access and provision of facilities such as baby changing tables. The result of the research, the accessible toilet design guide, is now in use by Toto (a major Japanese toilet manufacturer), Tesco, the Olympic Delivery Authority, the British Standards Institute, and the Department for Communities and Local Government.

**Urban Planning and Design** Dimensions of the Sustainable City: The Sustainable Urban Form Consortium (Cityform) has just released a book with findings

from the four-year research programme looking at the extent and ways in which urban form contributes to sustainability: [www.city-form.org/](http://www.city-form.org/)

### **Designing Sustainable Cities:**

VivaCity2020 aims to develop an in-depth understanding of human behaviour in urban environments and to create new practical resources to support urban design professionals with sustainable decision-making. Based on the work of VivaCity2020, this recently launched book offers practical solutions to achieving sustainable urban design and development and helps designers communicate these solutions to planners, developers and policy-makers

**Water and Wastewater** Su:brim (Sustainable urban brownfield regeneration: integrated management) has been a research consortium linking science, engineering and social science. Many of its key findings have been gathered in a book, Liveable Places from Problem Spaces. The book has two principal aims. The first is to examine the ways in which science and social science research disciplines can be brought together to help solve important brownfield regeneration issues, with a focus on the UK. The second is to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of different types of regeneration policy and practice, and to show how "liveable spaces" can be produced from "problem places". With the Cl:aire consortium (Contaminated land: applications in real environments), Sub:rim researchers wrote a series of end-user guides. These documents provided a summary of key research findings. The hypothesis of the Ursula project (Urban river corridors

and sustainable living agendas) is that there are significant social, economic and environmental gains to be made by integrated and innovative interventions. This is to be tested by providing a portfolio of new ideas, new tools and new data to support redevelopment of urban river corridors as places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. The key themes of the analysis are people (living, working), river (ecological goods and services), design (possibilities for intervention and innovation) and values (agents of change, measures of success).

**Metrics, knowledge management, decision making** The main aim of Pollutants in the urban environment (Pure) was to develop an integrated decision-support framework to enable more sustainable management of urban pollution. The framework consists of a suite of appropriate models and tools for conducting either simple screening studies and/or detailed modelling and assessments of urban pollution. The framework is designed for different groups of users, including industry, government, local authorities, NGOs and researchers [www.pureframework.org/](http://www.pureframework.org/)

The SUE-MoT consortium is developing a comprehensive framework that encourages key decision-makers to assess the sustainability of urban developments, taking account of scale, life cycle, location, context and all stake-

holder values. Early outputs identified 670 sustainability assessment tools from a comprehensive literature review. The 30 or so most widely used have been cross-mapped on to the contexts where their use is most appropriate.

This is no more than a snapshot of the work that has been done. The key message has to be that local authority decision makers can gain real value from this research.

*Peter Guthrie is professor of engineering for sustainable development at the University of Cambridge and co-investigator on the Issues project. Between 1970-2000 he worked in civil engineering in UK and internationally. The research he leads is focused on the integration of sustainable development into decision-making in large infrastructure projects*



**The SOLACE Foundation Imprint (SFI)** is local government's foremost thought leadership publication addressing the most pressing and challenging issues of public policy and public management. SFI commissions concise contributions on the major themes which are central to the concerns of senior executives, policy makers and politicians. We are resolutely non-political, though we recognise and actively address the importance of political leadership and debate in developing public services. We publish a range of voices that pose challenges to senior public executives and show how challenges might be met. We believe our strength is in the range and diversity of ideas we publish because the world is more complicated than any contrived consensus. Through SFI many flowers are encouraged to bloom.

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# Threat or opportunity?



by Laurie Newton

Local authorities have always been in the forefront of responding to the challenges of climate change in the UK, with many undertaking energy-efficiency measures since the early 1990s. The Nottingham Declaration, a voluntary pledge to act on climate change, was launched in 2000. This has been signed by more than 90% of English authorities, with all Scottish and Welsh councils signed up to similar agreements. However, most local authority responses have tended to concentrate on the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions. It is only over the past few years that the need to adapt to the impacts of unavoidable climate change has been more generally recognised.

Although climate change is a global problem, the direct impacts of the changing climate are felt at particular locations and vary from place to place according to a wide range of physical and socio-economic factors. Local authorities therefore have a vital role in ensuring that the UK is adapting to climate change.

The first report by the adaptation sub-committee published in September 2010, recognised that local authorities

have a key role in addressing climate change impacts with responsibilities for most of the priorities for early adaptation actions including:

- delivering land use planning
- providing local infrastructure
- implementing building control
- managing green space
- co-ordinating emergency planning.

In the past, one of the barriers to local authorities treating adaptation as a priority issue has been a lack of effective policy drivers to encourage action. This changed with the introduction of the new local authority performance framework in April 2008 that for the first time included an indicator on planning to adapt to climate change. NI188, as it was called, was unique in being the only process-based indicator in the performance framework, because it is impossible to devise a single measure of adaptation outcomes appropriate for all local authority areas. It consisted of five levels of achievement, moving from understanding current vulnerabilities through assessing the risks of future climate impacts to developing, implementing and monitoring adaptation plans.

The UK Climate Impacts Programme

(UKCIP) was heavily involved in developing NI188, writing guidance and supporting local authority adaptation work, both independently and with partners. Our experience suggests that NI188 had a very positive role in catalysing local authority work on adaptation.

As yet, it is unclear how the withdrawal of the performance framework and other changes to the policy landscape introduced by the coalition government are affecting local authority work on adaptation.

We received responses from more than a quarter of local authorities to a short online survey on the impacts of these policy changes we conducted in November/December 2010. While this survey cannot be considered representative, early indications are that there are likely to be considerable variations in local authority responses. About a third of respondents suggested that their work would carry on as before, another third that it would reduce, or cease altogether, with the remainder saying that it was too early to tell.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that in almost all the councils making the most rapid progress, one or two dedicated individuals are responsible for driving the work forward. Without this championing role, much less would be achieved. There is a huge opportunity for Solace to take a leading role in raising awareness and facilitating the types of organisational change necessary to ensure that local authorities play their vital part in ensuring that the UK is adapting well to the challenges of the changing climate.

The UK, in common with most developed countries, has adopted a risk-based approach to adaptation which was captured in the levels of local authority indicator NI188 and, more recently, in the statutory guidance for the Adaptation Reporting Powers under the Climate Change Act 2008.

One of the roles of UKCIP is to publish and support the UK climate projections based on the modelling work by the Met Office Hadley Centre. The latest version, published in June 2009, is the most comprehensive to date and for the first time presents climate information to reflect known sources of uncertainty. This offers opportunities for more rigorous approaches to risk assessment, making effective use of the increased richness of the climate information, but requiring greater understanding of the pathways from weather and climate to impacts and consequences and of attitudes to risk. Understanding the complex relationships between physical and social factors is also vital in identifying and appraising effective adaptation responses.

The UK Research Council's annual investment of around £3bn in research has a potentially valuable role in improving our understanding of these complex relationships. For instance, the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council programmes, such as building knowledge for the changing climate, have made a very useful start in improving our understanding of the potential impacts of climate changes on the built environment, but to date this

information has not been widely used in practice by local authorities. The major 10-year programme living with environmental change has aims and objectives highly relevant to local authority work on adapting their own operations and communities to the changing climate. The core partnership of 20 members includes the Local Government Association which is providing the chair of the communications group.

This programme aims to connect world-leading natural, engineering, economic, social, medical, cultural, arts, and humanities researchers with policy-makers, business, the public, and other key stakeholders in order to provide the knowledge and tools to make informed choices about the future. For this, and similar projects, to be successful, it is vital that local authorities engage with the process both to ensure that their needs are recognised by researchers and that they make effective use of the information in their decisionmaking, planning and actions in response to the challenges of the changing climate.

*Laurie Newton is the local authority project officer for UKCIP. He advised on the development of NI188, co-wrote the guidance note and was a major contributor to the support programme. He authored the adaptation material for the Nottingham Declaration website and was specialist adviser to the tackling climate change theme for the Beacon Council awards*

**The UK Climate Impacts Programme (UKCIP) has been funded by the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs since 1997 and is based at the University of Oxford. Its purpose is to help organisations adapt to inevitable climate change. It is internationally recognised as a centre of excellence on adaptation to the changing weather and climate through its role as a “boundary organisation” - linking science and research; policy; and, practical adaptation with stakeholders. Local authorities are one of UKCIP’s key stakeholder groups.**

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# Local solutions you can buy in



by Laura Robinson

It is now widely acknowledged that climate change is on a different scale to any other global challenge and that its potential effects could be both physically and economically devastating.

Six years after the Kyoto agreement came into force, the golden thread of UK policies is becoming markedly green in colour and proposed solutions are taking on an increasingly local flavour.

## Why local?

You may be forgiven for wondering where local comes into the equation when the issue of climate change not only exceeds national boundaries but clearly requires efforts from all nations across the globe. The answer is simple: local works. The Pew Centre for Climate Change in the United States, for example, reviewed a variety of local approaches to dealing with climate change and recognised that their contribution can form a key part of the solution.

Given the nature of the issue, its impacts are being increasingly felt and dealt with in local communities, prompting local agencies to play their part. The Nottingham Declaration - now boasting more than 300 local authority

signatories - attests to growing commitment to this agenda, through pledges to address its causes systematically and prepare their communities for its impacts. Now, with the inclusion of climate change as a key pillar of the coalition's programme for government and a commitment to decentralisation, the level of local engagement and involvement in this agenda is undoubtedly set to rise further.

## Unsung heroes?

But who are the key players in the local battle against the impacts of climate change? Given that over a quarter of the country's carbon emissions come from our homes, it is no surprise that heads often turn first to local planning departments. But with the coalition government stressing the importance of building a cleaner, greener and more sustainable economy for the UK's environmental and financial futures, it would seem that there is an increasing need to have a multiplicity of hands on deck.

Over the last few years, numerous cities across the UK have been hit by persistent heavy rain, resulting in widespread local flooding. Given their

expertise in environmental protection and public health, local environmental health officers have been at the forefront of the councils' emergency response efforts, advising businesses and residents, securing a fresh water supply and ensuring that hygiene and sanitation standards were maintained. This year, the Environment Agency reiterated that 5.5m homes and businesses are at risk from flooding across England and Wales and that because of the effects of climate change, this number could increase by 60% by 2035. Environmental health officers will undoubtedly continue to play a significant role in minimising the impact of such events on local communities. But the potential contribution of regulatory officers does not stop there.

Their contribution can play an important role in both the mitigation and adaptation elements of the climate change agenda in three key ways:

### **Regulation and Enforcement**

Through their statutory responsibility to regulate and enforce, regulatory officers ensure a safe and clean local environment, in which businesses trade fairly and local residents remain protected.

A collective regulatory response to wider environmental issues is by no means a new concept in local government. Enforcement of the Clean Air Act 1956 by smoke control areas, for example, is widely recognised to have been a key factor in the reduction in smoke emissions from the early 1960s.

But as their regulatory remit evolved, so did their potential to feed into emerging agendas. Through their work to prevent and control pollution, for ex-

ample, environmental health officers are required to ensure that energy is used efficiently in industrial installations. Similarly, by ensuring that products have the necessary energy labels and information sheets, trading standards officers provide consumers with the information they need to make greener choices.

### **Advice and support to local businesses**

Whilst conducting their statutory duties, regulatory officers have a high level of contact with their local business communities. This relationship can be used to provide businesses with additional advice about related environmental matters and signpost them to sources where they could obtain further information. Such approaches are not only a resource-efficient way to promote behavioural change and drive better outcomes in the longer term, but also represent a step towards the holistic approach that local businesses welcome.

Trading Standards Services, for example, are obliged to ensure that packaging volume and weight is reduced to the minimum necessary to maintain safety and hygiene while still being acceptable to consumers and adequately protecting the product. Many services have developed initiatives to maximise the environmental impact of their work here.

Lincolnshire county council, for example, launched a programme called Pack it in!, which made consumers more aware of excessive packaging on the products they buy and encouraged them to choose sensibly. At the same time, officers worked closely with their business community to advise them of their obligations and responsibilities. This not only heightened environmental protec-

tion but, in many cases, also had an impact on their bottom line: one local business reported a 20% reduction in packaging costs.

In this way, officers used their understanding of consumer demands as a driver in business's decision-making processes to increase the likelihood of delivering effective behavioural change, and improve the overall effectiveness of the programme.

### **Working with local partners**

Given the complex nature of the issue, there is also significant potential for regulatory officers to work in collaboration with other partners to act as leaders for change in the local community.

An example here is environmental health officers working with the local planning authority to achieve environmental improvements through planning obligations and conditions on new developments. Work in this area can deliver numerous benefits, including the reduction and mitigation of both local air quality pollution and climate change pollutants, such as CO<sub>2</sub>. This approach was used when developing a low-emission zone within the Greenwich Peninsula area, site of the O<sub>2</sub> dome. Local partners, including environmental health, came together to agree and implement a number of low-emission strategies, which accelerated the uptake of low emission fuels and technologies in and around the development site.

### **Making local efforts count nationally**

Regulatory services clearly have a lot to add in using their relationship with the business community and local partners to maximise support for the local climate change agenda. But, by addressing the barriers in the local regulatory system as a whole, there may also be opportunities for them to fulfill a wider mitigation role on a national level.

As the system stands, local regulatory services have no incentive to use their relationships with businesses to address issues that might deliver national or even global benefit. For example, if a local authority engages with a national retailer in relation to excess packaging, this local authority bears the financial burdens of work that delivers limited benefits locally but has significant impact across the nation as a whole.

National schemes, such as Primary Authority, could play a key role here in maximising the value derived from such innovative approaches at the local level. Local authorities can use the strategic relationship constructed with businesses that trade across council boundaries, whose green decisions could viably contribute to the delivery of national environmental outcomes, to deliver tangible change. The scheme's IT infrastructure allows all services' efforts to be conducted at a single point in the regulatory system, enabling effective co-ordination of locally conducted work.

### All hands on deck

Local regulatory officers have the skills and expertise to make a significant contribution to local climate change efforts. By utilising their understanding of local markets to raise public awareness and using demand as a lever to effect behavioural change, their participation can not only support the delivery of local outcomes but also has the potential to impact on a national level. So when addressing a challenge that requires all hands on deck, make sure you're making full use of an expert pair.

*Laura Robinson is a senior policy analyst at the Local Better Regulation Office, an organisation that works with national and local partners to create the conditions for a simpler regulatory system. She has expertise in regulation and growth, the role of citizens, and the impact of regulation on societal outcomes*

# The day the floods came



by Jill Stannard

It's more than a year and a half since the highest levels of rainfall ever recorded in 24 hours in the UK hit Cumbria and brought devastation to some areas of the county. Everyone in Cumbria can still vividly remember the events of 19 November 2009, when more than a foot of rain (316mm) fell in 24 hours. It was an extraordinary weather event with extraordinary consequences.

The rebuilding programme continues today. Construction work on four bridges, including a major new multi-million pound road bridge crossing the River Derwent in Workington, is planned to take place this summer.

The replacement of infrastructure has been an opportunity to refresh and renew, and has brought communities and partner agencies closer together. But the estimated £275m cost of the floods and the death of PC Bill Barker, lost when Workington's Northside road bridge collapsed, is a stark reminder of the impact climate change has on people's lives.

## The Impact

In the aftermath of the floods, we recorded that a total of 2,239 proper-

ties were flooded across Cumbria. More than 80% of these were people's homes and around 20% were shops and businesses. Three significant road bridges were lost completely and 17 others were temporarily closed because of structural damage. In addition, three important footbridges collapsed, many others were damaged and landslides affected many other routes. The port of Workington, owned by the county council, was also damaged by the floods - and a £4m repair programme is still under way there, although it was fully operational again just two months after the floods.

A survey by Cumbria Tourism suggested that 72% of tourist businesses across the county had suffered some negative impact because of the floods, with an average 16% loss in annual turnover and 6% of tourist-based business closing down completely.

Business Link estimates that 3,057 businesses in Allerdale were affected directly or indirectly by the floods - 1,606 in Workington, 693 in Cockermouth and 758 in Keswick.

The floods also caused extensive damage to rights of way across the county. The county council and the

Lake District National Park Authority worked closely to identify major damage to public footpaths and bridleways and made them safe where possible. A total of 253 footbridges were missing or damaged and 51 paths had surface damage.

Most serious for farmers was the changes to river courses and the extensive debris, gravel and boulder deposits across their land. New gravel beds up to a metre deep and covering several hectares were not uncommon.

The floods placed enormous demand on public and voluntary agencies, stretching resources and creating significant budget pressures. Cockermouth's police station, library, town hall and a number of GPs' surgeries suffered serious damage. In Workington, the police HQ was put out of use.

### The Lessons

Cumbria's emergency plan, recovery plan and business continuity plan were re-written following the serious flooding in Carlisle in 2005. In November 2009, there were early indications from the Environment Agency that there would be extensive rainfall and a risk of flooding, so the county council's management team met the day before the floods to run through the plan and began to check bridges and other infrastructure.

Emergency plans had been well tested, but the scale of the flooding was beyond what was predicted. Since 2009, our emergency plans have been revisited to take account of climate change and the severity of the flooding. For example, access routes to

some identified evacuation centres were flooded. A local firm did not have flooding as a risk for its emergency plan as it was on a hill, but such was the severity of the flooding, it was badly affected.

Recovery planning began early, while the incident was still on going. This allowed key partners to get together and set up working groups on welfare, business, environment and infrastructure to plan for the impact and quickly respond once the emergency was over. A key lesson was the need to resource the recovery group with project management and to focus other resources on business continuity. The work of the council did not stop - it increased.

Offers of help came in thick and fast in the form of expertise, food, money, clothing, tents, portable bridges, volunteers etc. Fortunately, having learnt from the 2005 floods, the Cumbria Community Foundation moved quickly to set up a flood recovery fund to manage donations. This allowed the recovery groups to concentrate on other offers of help, but this took a team to establish systems, and dedicated capacity over a number of weeks and months to co-ordinate the offers and ensure they were channelled to the appropriate recovery group.

Engaging with strategic funders at an early stage is essential. Offers of government funding came in after every minister's visit - each had different criteria and methods of access. Technical support from the departments for Communities and Local Government, Transport and the Environment, Food

and the Rural Affairs as well as help from the Government Office was essential in ensuring funding was secured.

The Business Community shared lessons learnt from previous flooding and the Chamber of Commerce was vital in ensuring all businesses learnt from previous experience.

Landscape management remains a challenge. Public agencies (Natural England, the Environment Agency, and the Lake District National Park Authority) work well together but a common approach needs to be agreed with those that farm the land. With different views of the cause and ways of resolving issues such as changing river courses, there needs to be better landscape management before flooding .

Communities were resilient and, where they were organised before the flooding, they were able to respond quickly and efficiently. Keswick Flood Action Group staffed by volunteers was able to check on the welfare of local people, move furniture upstairs and deal with all kinds of trauma. The council's emergency plan needs to dovetail in a way that supports this community resilience. Before the flooding, there were 18 flood action groups; now the National Flood Forum has identified 68 community groups it would like to work with.

The investment in learning lessons was more than matched by the £38m investment by the Environment Agency in flood protection infrastructure in Carlisle following the 2005 floods - we think that if those £38m flood barriers

had not been working, then we would have suffered approximately £48m worth of damages in 2009.

The Environment Agency is now consulting residents in Cockermouth on a potential new flood-alleviation scheme, which could involve raising sections of the flood walls and embankments along the rivers Cocker and Derwent in the centre of the town. A feasibility study suggests this would reduce the risk of flooding to about 360 homes and 55 businesses in the town - around half the 900 affected in 2009.

### Conclusion

In 2008, Calling Cumbria, a total place initiative, brought partners together with local communities to focus on local service delivery and empowering communities. Strong, focused partnership working ensured organisations worked together during and after the floods, building on the strengths of our communities and making the most of public resources to support recovery. We responded together and we responded well, but in the face of such extreme weather events it is impossible to say we won't have to do it again - but if we do, I'm confident we would do an even better job next time.

*Jill Stannard is chief executive of Cumbria County Council. Her first day as chief executive was the day of floods.*

# Why local action is important



by Warren Hatter

It seems wrong to criticise the Climate Change Act; it is, after all, a world-leading piece of legislation. Yet the way it is framed has limited the scope for national and local action to reduce emissions and encouraged local government to take a constrained view of the change required and of its own role.

Yes, we are committed as a nation to an 80% reduction in emissions by 2050, the minimum demanded by the science if we are to play our part; yes, the coalition government has reaffirmed its support for the UK carbon budgets established to support this commitment; and, yes, it is widely recognised that this level of emissions reduction entails radical changes in housing, energy and transport. New, and more honest, approaches, though, are now emerging which enable authorities to take a wider view of what is required, and to understand how the places we shape have to differ from today's reality. It turns out that the challenge is to shape a low carbon economy, in every sense, for every locality.

## Metrics so far

Many processes were put in place

to enable authorities to respond to the demands of the UK low carbon transition plan and to measure progress within the previous government's performance framework. These, however, have a major failing. By using only production-based measures (that is, counting the actual emissions in any place, plus the emissions due to the energy used there), rather than consumption-based measures (also counting the emissions 'embedded' in all the goods and services residents of a place buy and use), we have dodged plenty of lifestyle-related issues until now, and kidded ourselves that UK emissions are falling. In reality, our carbon footprint as a nation has been increasing; but we have "off-shored" much of our CO<sub>2</sub>, particularly to China. The proportion of our footprint we don't account for is now around half the total. This self-deception will not last, at local, national or international level.

This perspective in policy has meant that there has been no policy imperative to act on half of our carbon footprint. This, coupled with the lack of honest metrics, has been a major barrier to strategic, place-based

approaches for developing low-carbon futures.

**Emerging metrics:** The next step in carbon metrics for local government is to estimate the consumption-based footprint, and act on it. A small number of authorities is doing this.

Before indicating how this perspective can help, it is worth pointing out that it makes much more sense to people than existing measures. If you were interested in the carbon footprint of a product you buy, you wouldn't think of discounting those parts of the supply chain outside of your administrative area. Yet this is exactly what policy-makers have been doing for years.

How does this perspective help, though? First, it gives us a framework on which to map current carbon reduction policies and, significantly, see which segments are not addressed. Second, by understanding the demand side (behavioural) issues and supply side issues (including infrastructure) which cause the footprint, we have a starting point for imagining, and working towards, a genuinely low carbon place.

These two approaches are, of course, linked. Let's consider some brief examples. First, in all places, most progress made has been on those emissions included in the "production-based" measures we have used until now, and this is continuing. For example, feed-in tariffs for photovoltaic panels and the Green Deal make it possible to construct financial packages which are beneficial

to residents and authorities, though there is a real need to build high-level, expert capacity to deal with the financial and legal issues involved in the sort of large-scale investment required.

Second, working strategically to improve procurement is one response to an understanding of the carbon impact of supply chains. The evidence is that driving carbon from supply chains reduces costs to a greater extent than simply saving energy, providing local businesses with competitive advantages, and enabling the local public sector to both reduce costs and lead by example.

Third, when residents' leisure flights represent a significant proportion of the total footprint, this can be seen as an opportunity to promote local leisure and "staycations". Success would put more money in the local economy and benefit from the local multiplier effect, as well as giving residents the chance to have lower stress, longer holidays. Links can be made with other important agendas such as developing local food and local sustainable transport.

These are just three examples among many prompted by the analysis. Look at any of the segments, analyse the cause of the current footprint, and an array of opportunities is there for any authority shaping a low carbon future with its partners. This approach also provides a structure for estimating the carbon impact of initiatives and investments being considered, taking into account all aspects of the area's footprint that might be affected.

### Local carbon budgets

If this kind of perspective helps local authorities focus on the realities of emissions reduction, it also helps make the case for local carbon budgets.

Since August 2009, the UK has had carbon budgets: a finite amount of CO<sub>2</sub> to 'spend' across UK activities. At the moment, government departments are accountable to Parliament for different parts of the total budget; this can be seen as the other main flaw in the way policy and metrics are set out.

The clearest example for this is that accountability for the 'homes and communities' carbon budget is shared between the departments for Communities and Local Government, Energy and Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs and Business, Innovation and Skills; none sits with local authorities. Yet a place-based analysis tells us that the trade-offs required to reduce emissions significantly year-on-year for decades will often be local, not national. How could the local authority run or 'convene' carbon budget decisions locally?

This will become more and more important, as ability to emit becomes scarcer. The Lake District National Park Authority has developed a local carbon budget with partners, and both West Sussex county council and Haringey in north London are working towards one, while Friends of the Earth has received considerable senior support within local government for its campaign for local carbon budgets; this requires close

collaboration with partners, residents, businesses and civil society.

### Lifestyles

This is the most challenging area for local government. We are getting used to having a pro-active role in initiatives to change behaviour, for example promoting more sustainable forms of transport. However, addressing the fact that half of the emissions for which we are responsible as individuals is due to manufacturing and consumption is no mean feat. You will struggle to find an elected member who is comfortable with "telling people how to live their lives". But, along with all tiers of government and all sectors, we have to start engaging at this level, working out how to make it normal to buy less, share more, and repair not replace.

*Warren Hatter is a researcher and adviser on climate change, behaviour change, local leadership and innovation. He blogs at [www.warrenhatter.amplify.com](http://www.warrenhatter.amplify.com). [www.twitter.com/warrenhatter](https://twitter.com/warrenhatter)*

# South Holland's experience



by Gary Porter

Communicating the likely realities of climate change is a challenge for us all. There is a tendency for it to be presented either in sophisticated scientific terms or as a threat to our way of life. The former does not reach out to most people, and the latter risks either frightening people into inaction or bringing out the inner sceptic. The challenge for local councils, then, is to make sense of the evidence and to establish what practical action is needed and achievable locally. Doing this, will mean that the locality is prepared both for the threats and the opportunities of climate change. This means using our democratic mandate and broad powers to work with local people and businesses to ensure that local action on climate change works with the grain of local environmental, economic and social characteristics.

## **Will climate change make a difference to the way we deliver public services?**

Councils, like all organisations and businesses, will increasingly need to ask themselves how their local services, properties and procurement policies contribute to carbon emissions, and

how smarter choices, efficiencies and economic opportunities could reduce them. Business continuity is a priority for councils, for their services and for local economies. Recent extreme weather events graphically illustrate how suddenly normal life can grind to a halt when the weather turns nasty. To reduce the risk, local government must lead the way by progressively cutting our carbon emissions.

**Should we concentrate on adaptation or mitigation?** Ideally we would choose actions that help reduce carbon when we are building our adaptive capacity. So in responding to the risk of higher temperatures in our buildings, we would look at how we can improve natural ventilation rather than installing air conditioning, which can use up to three times as much energy as heating.

On water scarcity, we can see that by improving water efficiency we will not only conserve this precious resource, but also save the energy used to pump, heat and treat it.

By encouraging green roofs we can reduce solar gain from direct sunlight during warmer summers, while reducing

the heat we lose during winter, as well as providing more recreational space.

Increasing the amount of green space and trees in urban and suburban areas provides extra absorption for the sudden heavy rainfall we can expect, as well as making our local areas more attractive, thereby encouraging people to walk and cycle rather than drive.

**The role of local government:** There is enormous potential both to reduce carbon use and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Councils can do this as transport and planning authorities. They also co-ordinate emergency planning, work closely with the local business community and, importantly, they bring together other relevant organisations to work in partnership.

Councils need the best possible understanding of how climate risks will affect core service delivery, infrastructure, assets and the wellbeing of their local community. For example, they will need to understand the opportunities for green energy and improving the efficient use of energy in their areas and how they can assist their local businesses and residents in reducing their carbon footprints. They need to think in the long term and integrate strategies for carbon reduction and adaptation into core service plans. This is not (green) rocket science but it does require political will and a positive perspective to see the upside of action on climate change.

**What is the economic reality?** The main threat if we carry on with business as usual is that dealing with climate change will be reactive and more expensive, instead of planned and pro-active. We

will all need to put more emphasis on economic as well as social and environmental costs and benefits, both to demonstrate the case for action, and the cost of doing nothing. With reduced funding available, councils will be looking to embed their climate change work into other service areas by making smart choices and will be exploring how acting on climate change can pay for itself, or even generate income for the council.

**What opportunities should councils be aware of?** We need to identify the potential local opportunities to reduce carbon and ensure local economic strategies actively support local people and businesses to respond to warmer summers or wetter winters. For example, we could support local food production in the face of concerns about food supply and security in a changing world climate, and this could have positive health and economic benefits for local people and businesses.

However, even if the impacts of climate change in a particular local area appear to be benign or even relatively positive, the potential knock-on effects on local biodiversity, sea level, water resources etc, will need careful management. Specialists use terms such as ecosystem services. My challenge to the specialists is to help us understand what this might look like in practical terms, so that we might be able to achieve a sustainable future that works with the grain of natural systems, not against them.

Councils can support local businesses to be part of the low-carbon economy and revive economic growth. There are even opportunities for councils to be

directly involved in generating and selling their own renewable energy. The new feed-in tariffs provide an opportunity to generate income while providing free electricity to residents and businesses. The Green Deal provides an opportunity for councils to help residents improve the energy efficiency of homes, lower bills, and possibly provide an income for the council.

**How do we encourage our citizens to act more sustainably?** Councils can help householders and businesses to reduce carbon by promoting the potential savings and acting as providers of the Green Deal. Installing energy and water efficiency measures in public buildings and council housing can also help to spread awareness.

Increasing the mix of energies we use will help increase energy security and ensure that the lights don't go out. At the same time, local people can get involved in generating energy, by forming community co-operatives and buying shares in local renewables. Providing a direct benefit to local people for having renewable energy technologies in their local area may make them more acceptable, and could even generate a demand.

**Are there potential upsides of a changing climate?** So what if our local climate changed to the extent that living in South Holland, (my own district) became more akin to living

in the Dordogne? Would it generate an annual influx of tourists eager to explore our unspoilt and now much warmer beaches or even snap up a holiday home on the east coast? Would it result in more people eager to move to the area, set up businesses and capitalise on the perfect climate and good transport links, where the cooling easterly winds might provide a refreshing change of climate from urban heat islands such as London and Birmingham? Or would we find ourselves having to find ways to respond to distressed people displaced from other parts of the world and trying to cope with the local impacts of global environmental and economic turbulence?

We cannot answer such questions, but I would say councils need to keep an open mind in planning for climate change and ensure we are as aware of the potential opportunities as we are of the potential risks.

*Councillor Gary Porter is leader of South Holland district council, Lincolnshire, and chairman of the Local Government Association's environment and housing programme board*

# When Kensington got in a real stink



by Derek Myers

I spend a proportion of my time arguing against the lazy analysis that Kensington and Chelsea is full of rich people. This is even worse when people assume that this makes the council rich too. In fact, like many inner-city areas, the borough is a mix of people from across the cultural, racial and income spectrums.

But it is true that a significant proportion of our population consists of articulate people who work hard and expect to be able to enjoy the fruits of their success. How then to discharge our responsibility to influence behaviour to reduce carbon usage?

But that is to rush on. Earlier, my councillors had to be convinced that climate change was likely to be a man-made phenomenon. They were not going to be force-fed an officer view, picked up from a government document: they wanted to consider primary sources and make up their own minds.

So we brought in experts, including those with direct, relevant experience. These included a serious bout of local flooding in July 2007, caused by a short burst of monsoon rain that led to deeply unpleasant blowback through the sewerage systems. After the hydro-

logists and scientists had gone, councillors agreed a strategy which sought to concentrate both on encouraging low-carbon lifestyles, but also on adapting to the effects of climate change.

We never made the mistake of thinking we could fix the world from one borough, but neither did we want to duck our responsibilities. So we settled on a few clear priorities:

**Exercise our powers of community leadership** to get the sewers fixed. This involved cranking up the pressure on Thames Water, which allowed it to crank up the pressure on Ofwat to allow a substantial new capital investment.

**Put our own house in order.** We took the view that we could not seek to influence our local population if it looked as though the council was sailing on regardless. What we are working even harder towards now is environmental mainstreaming of best practice and developing the view that addressing climate change is par for the course.

To help us do this we co-ordinate a group of more than 100 green champions within the workforce who nomi-

nated themselves to lead and change the way we work. This work is resulting in implementing clever solutions to IT usage and energy costs, and increasing internal recycling awareness.

We ensure continuous review of our internal recycling because it is one of the most visible aspects of our resource use. Remember: carbon dioxide is only one of the greenhouse gases and sending waste to landfill creates methane.

We joined the Carbon Trust's carbon-management programme – a great discipline for us – to monitor and reduce our carbon footprint.

We committed to reducing our fleet use. Our executive director for environmental services committed to using her car for a desperately small number of times each year only (and has achieved this). We started to use methane gas from mashed up sprouts to power a new bin lorry (a personal victory as I don't like sprouts). This is the first of its kind in the country.

We knew we would have to renew most of the services in our key civic building and we took the opportunity to replace windows with double glazing and to insulate the walls. This was a substantial investment, but councillors agreed because of the significant reduction in energy and carbon emissions. Our next step is exploring solar panels on civic roof space.

**Make it easy for our residents to do the right thing.** We held frequent

events addressing climate change and what individuals can do to lead greener lifestyles; for example we have been getting closer to our residents through a programme of climate change roadshows and have been challenged to show them more advanced green solutions. Understanding energy consumption helps reduce usage and save our residents money, so we offer a smart meter loan scheme. We've got very enthusiastic about car clubs. We're convinced that car usage locally has fallen because so has car-parking income (which causes my director of finance to fret). Car clubs do involve policy choices – every station deprives a resident of a car parking space and we've already got a third more residents entitled to park than there are spaces.

We are also providing more cycling-parking spaces to make it easier for residents to cycle around the borough. We have also changed our household recycling regime, producing an increase in recycling rate from 20% to more than 30% over the past 3 years.

**Illustrate the possibilities.** We've got a plan to use a building in a park which was previously used by staff but now needs substantial work to be brought back into use. Our plan is to convert it into a sustainable exemplar house using leading-edge technology and excellent design to show how both energy use and water use can be curtailed and how homes can be retrofitted to adapt

to climate change. We feel it is an important step in motivating and guiding residents towards doing the right thing when they refurbish their own homes.

Much of our work is enthusing our young people and making the most of the facilities for them, but there is also work that is about leading the adults around them to make good choices too. Part of our work has been to influence the way children get to school, and we can proudly say 100% of our schools have a travel plan to encourage environmentally friendly ways of travel.

Part of our investment in schools and our children is also about making the best use of resources. Energy audits of 10 borough schools have already been undertaken to assess their building efficiency with low and no cost reduction measures identified. We will be encouraging all our schools to implement similar measures as their first steps. Our headteachers' conference at the end of June is the launchpad for a scheme: we will be offering schools support helped them reduce their energy bills, save money and involve the whole school community.

There are also many projects ranging from the implementation of voltage optimisation in our key buildings to the use of the most energy efficient lamps for our street lighting.

**Being realistic about our place.** In 4.7 square miles the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea has more than

4,000 listed buildings; around 70% is covered by conservation areas. Some of our streetscape is amongst the most loved and most beautiful in the world.

It was therefore debated long and hard with our amenity groups and residents associations as to the limits we should maintain on intrusion into this aesthetic, from secondary glazing and renewable energy equipment such as photo-voltaic panelling.

As in all political debates, we've sought to do a lot of listening and to recognise that we are stewards of both the architectural form and our other public responsibilities. Some might think that ending climate change by having wind turbines could substantially ruin this much loved townscape. We should find a way to meet people's conflicting values and aspirations.

We have ambitious plans for the future and the council has made a very positive commitment to tackling climate change at a local level, by leading by example and getting our own house in order, a responsibility we take very seriously. However, we recognise that this is just a step in the right direction and the real challenge now is to sustain the enthusiasm and deliver against the ambitious targets that we have set .

*Derek Myers has been town clerk and chief executive for the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea since October 2000.*

# Manchester sets its priorities



by Mike Reardon

Greater Manchester is a coherent economic conurbation with a population of 2.7 million, comprising 10 unitary local authorities which in April 2011 became England's first new combined authority under an executive made up of its 10 leaders.

Setting the direction of the new city region is the Greater Manchester strategy, and integral to that is the principle that "We will be known for our good quality of life, our low carbon economy and our commitment to sustainable development." One of the 11 specific priorities is to "achieve a transformation to a low-carbon economy". Building such a future has cross-party support and now permeates all that we do, from work on low-carbon transport infrastructure and energy through to resilience and adaptation. In particular, we have set ambitious goals for retrofitting our existing building stock as evidenced by our designation as the UK's low carbon economic area for the built environment. Put simply, we aim to boost growth in green jobs, business and innovation through accelerating the pace of retrofit.

The city region is developing and

delivering its strategic vision through seven commissions working in concert to advise the executive on forward policy and delivery. As a former strategic director with Manchester city council, I became the first director of one of these, the environment commission, and this has become a major force in developing our thinking on our low carbon future.

The commission is a public-private body chaired by the Liberal Democrat leader of Stockport. The challenges we face as a city region do not reside in any one sector. Our alliances with business – through the newly created local enterprise partnership, the business leadership council and the five private sector commissioners who sit on each commission alongside six elected members – are crucial to tackling climate change.

But we have also set out to build upon our successful approach to regeneration that has seen Greater Manchester become the most successful hub of gross value added growth outside London and the south-east. That experience has taught us that local authority leadership is critical to bringing together the wide coalition of partners needed

to take on what is arguably the biggest challenge that cities now face.

The commission set out its priorities during 2009 and has continuously tested them with each authority. This has allowed a cross-authority consensus to emerge on the issues that we needed to tackle together if we are to develop as a low-carbon city region. The questions we asked ourselves included:

- How do we finance and establish new energy infrastructure and align spatial planning and new investments?
- How do we accelerate the pace of emissions reduction from the built environment and at the same time build the jobs, skills and business growth that would boost the local economy?
- How do we develop a low-carbon transport system and encourage behaviour change?
- How do we make the city region and its citizens more resilient in the face of climate change and a low carbon future?
- What opportunities exist for enhancing the natural environment and increasing the sustainability of the city region through waste minimisation and recycling beyond the domestic sector?

What have we learnt in the process of dealing with these priorities?

First and foremost, for senior elected members and senior officers the language of sustainable economic growth, jobs, skills and investments has created a different approach to and understanding of the climate change challenge. By positioning the debate as a logical extension of the regeneration challenge we have so successfully met over the past 20 years (but by no means solved), we have begun to move beyond committed environmentalists meeting

in small rooms to berate the actions of their leaders! We now have board level engagement with business through, for example, the chambers of commerce, the local enterprise partnership and major companies such as Siemens, the Co-op and Peel Holdings, all of whom are engaged in a dialogue about what we need to do together. Unless the dialogue and exchange takes place at board and leadership levels, the necessary preconditions for the scale and range of actions we need to take will never be met.

This is an area of work that must become part of the stock in trade of all chief executives and senior managers and not passed down the chain to more junior specialists. Solace members will need to draw upon their skills in thought leadership and more tried and tested capabilities such as partnership building, creating new investment opportunities and "place shaping". There are also the more everyday business challenges facing local authorities such as carbon reduction commitment that - whatever the attitude of that council to climate change more generally - will call for a decisive and long term response.

Furthermore, while it would be naïve to think that any public policy challenge exists outside of politics, the cross-party nature of the commission, the engagement we have undertaken at the most senior level with every authority whatever its political complexion and the focus upon the economic challenge and potential benefits means that we have gained support from across the spectrum.

We have also identified a significant skills and capacity gap - our own staff simply do not either have the right skills

or enough of the necessary skills to address the challenges. They either reside in partner agencies, such as the electricity and energy companies, or simply have not been grown or developed in any sector. Local authorities are in the position to devise and create new approaches that will begin to provide us with those skills. The concept that we have been developing is for a city region low carbon centre of excellence that will bring together in actual and virtual ways the people we need to provide a focus for delivering our priorities.

And we can never forget that all of this needs substantial investment which, for the foreseeable future, means private investment. We will need to work alongside national government to develop and test funding mechanisms that unlock private finance in new ways. While this is indeed a massive challenge, the fact that we have been able to use private finance initiative, Building Schools for the Future and housing stock transfer vehicles so successfully across the city region means that we have a wealth of relevant experience to draw upon.

Finally, for many of the challenges we face the integrated city region is the right spatial level for developing and implementing solutions. European and national governments can and must set the frameworks. Nevertheless, through talking to our private sector partners, it is clear that, because we are closer to delivery and at the same time able to

take the long term strategic view, the prospects for transformational change are that much greater.

It's been an exciting time for me personally – I had no professional background in environmentalism, having spent most of my early career in housing and the past 15 years or so in corporate executive roles and in the senior civil service. But I can say that during my time as director of the environment commission I enjoyed working to address a stimulating set of new challenges that called for all my traditional skills and strengths to be deployed, yet at the same time opened up the opportunity to show how local government can and needs to be at the centre of creating a low carbon future.

I stepped down as director at the end of June 2011, but hope to be able to share with others the experience I have gained.

*Mike Reardon has worked in the public sector for more than 30 years. In 2000 he worked on the modernisation of local government, leading intervention in poorly performing councils. In 2006, he joined Manchester City Council and since January 2009, has been director of the Greater Manchester Environment Commission, one of seven commissions set up under new statutory city region arrangements*

# Changing people's behaviour



by Yacob Mulugetta

Many of the primary effects of climate change may be global, but the causes of climate change are located within the activities of individuals and households. About 42% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions result directly from actions taken by individuals.

Research undertaken by colleagues in Resolve, a research group, tells us that if all emissions arising from UK consumption are considered, individuals are directly responsible for around 76% of greenhouse gas emissions. The C40 large cities group points out that cities consume approximately 75% of global energy consumption and produce about 80% of greenhouse gas emissions.

These figures underline a growing appreciation that the government's 80% carbon reduction target by 2050 will require substantial lifestyle and behavioural change for individuals and households. This puts local authorities in a unique position to influence behaviour to adopt low-carbon lifestyles. They are, after all, better tuned to local needs and constraints, and therefore well placed to build effective supportive networks for behaviour change.

Local authorities can play more direct roles in energy use given their control

over critical policy areas, notably land use, transport, housing, education and economic development. Their influence over energy issues could be extended even further with the alignment of new planning policy statements with changes in the legislative framework. Merging the climate change statement with the statement on renewable energy is a clear demonstration that more responsibility for climate and energy is cascading down to local authorities.

This remains a new terrain for policymakers, but there is increasing recognition that such an engagement is essential if long-term energy and climate targets are to be met. Effective engagement is guided by a clear understanding of the factors affecting behaviour, how to intervene to effect widespread behavioural change and how messages for change are communicated.

There is a growing body of research that engagement to change attitudes and behaviours will be most effective if based on a solid understanding of the factors that shape behaviour.

First, informing the public is important but does not always lead to action, especially if other priorities exist. Fur-

thermore, people interpret information based on their existing beliefs and are likely to ignore or dispute information that may go against their beliefs.

Second, behaviour is affected by values, attitudes and emotions. In theory, attitudinal change should lead to behavioural change. But changing attitudes does not always lead to behavioural change, especially if people have become wedded to certain habits. The changes need either to fit into existing routines or coerce citizens to adjust their behaviour, which would be the less preferred option for policy-makers and politicians in liberal democracies.

Third, a person's behaviour is influenced by what they see others doing and how they think their behaviour will be perceived. In other words, social norms guide how we should behave. Many energy-related actions (private transport use, lighting, appliance use) are everyday, routine behaviours, embedded in the social and institutional fabric of our lives. From this perspective, reducing carbon emissions can be characterised as the need to redefine "normal behaviour".

Fourth, socio-demographic patterns influence the behaviours of individuals and households in terms of what they consume and how much they consume. For example, lower-income households are likely to use low amounts of energy but tend to use higher proportions of their income to pay for it. Age and gender are also correlated to pro-environ-

mental behaviour, and the participation of people in local projects is dependent on how people perceive them to be meaningful to their lives.

Enabling behaviour change is no easy task. Indeed, dealing with the forces that drive consumer behaviour is challenging. So what can local authorities do to effect lasting behavioural change? There are many intervention models they could use, but many tend to focus on a narrow understanding of human motivations and capacity for change. We have seen the limits of informing energy end users or using price incentives to discourage "unsustainable" practices in delivering the level of behavioural change needed to fulfil the multiple attributes of a low carbon society.

There are very few tried and tested models (or approaches) that capture the complex nature of our relationship to material goods and services, why people often find themselves locked to consumption patterns that may be at odds with their value systems, and the difficulties associated with making meaningful lifestyle changes. The 4Es model that Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs developed in 2005 offers a framework for understanding individual-scale, social and structural barriers to behaviour change.

Local authorities can help people by enabling them to make responsible choices by removing barriers, providing skills, education and information as well as facilities. For example, local

authorities can support local training in retrofitting of social housing as part of the effort to nurture the required skills to come from the beneficiary community. Such initiatives would go beyond the need to reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions to delivering social and economic wellbeing.

Local authorities can also encourage people through targeted incentive programmes. They could use discretionary powers to offer additional incentives, such as council tax discounts as a reward for reduced energy consumption or installation of renewable micro-generation.

Authorities need to engage and invite active participation. Some of this would involve communications campaigns and in some instances face-to-face contacts such as deliberative forums. A number of local authorities have effective climate campaigns at schools to work with children at an early age about the value of energy conservation and carbon-reduction efforts.

Councils need to exemplify good practice by taking a lead in setting examples and demonstrating consistency in their policies. Woking has attracted widespread attention for achieving more than 80% reduction in carbon emissions from its own property and more than 20% reduction borough-wide. Woking demonstrates the importance of

clear vision and sufficient political support to make things happen.

In the end, understanding the factors that shape behaviour and following through with the range of interventions needs to be supported by an effective communication strategy. It is important for local authorities to hold on to two important communication principles.

The first is to help people realise that they are part of something bigger and their efforts are worthwhile. Research has shown that citizens are increasingly willing to embrace sustainable lifestyles but need the reassurance that others are also acting around them and therefore making a collective difference. A combination of incentives, community initiatives and local feedback would go some way to address this concern.

The second principle is the need to calibrate the content of the message and the way it is delivered. The message should empower. Threatening messages to communicate climate change run the risk of alienating people if they are unable to see their action as part of a wider movement for change. This is a tough sell, but local authorities must evoke in their citizens' minds a future worth fighting for.

*Yacob Mulugetta is senior lecturer at Surrey University's centre for environmental strategy*

# Why the poor will pay a higher price



by Julia Unwin

Climate change is a both a massive global threat, and a great opportunity. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation recognises that there is potential for triple injustice. Those who contribute least to the problem, both in the UK and globally, are the very poor and the dispossessed. Their carbon footprint is typically lower, and their use of other scarce resources is correspondingly lower. And yet these same people are those who are likely to face the most severe impact .

It is on the very poorest that pricing interventions on the costs of fuel and food, designed to drive behaviour change, will bite hardest. It is in areas of poverty and disadvantage that some climate impacts, particularly coastal flooding, are expected to be felt most. And it is often the poorest communities that lack the voice to articulate a powerful response to both the threats and the opportunities.

There is a very real danger that our shared response to climate change will serve to harm only those in greatest need. It is for this reason that the Joseph Rowntree Foundation launched an ambitious programme of inquiry into

the theme of social justice and climate change, with a view to supporting positive and socially just responses to the challenges.

We are examining three areas:

● **The social impacts and social justice implications of climate change itself**

- to identify which people and which places may be affected by different climate impacts in the UK (from flooding to heatwaves, coastal erosion and sea-level rises) and how this relates to existing patterns of disadvantage or may lead to new forms of disadvantage.

● **Policy and practice responses to climate change**

- to consider how mitigation and adaptation responses can take account of the needs of those people and places at risk and offer a fair and equitable approach on key underlying questions, such as who is protected and how the costs and benefits are shared across the population.

● **Social innovation** - to encourage social and environmental thinking to come together to provide innovative solutions that support community resilience in different ways.

The foundation sees climate change

as a social issue as well as an environmental issue. Our remit is to address the underlying causes of poverty and disadvantage within the UK, and it is for this reason that we have chosen to focus on the impact of climate change on people and places in poverty or facing other forms of vulnerability.

Climate change is likely to have significant direct impact on people in the UK. These will in part include extreme events associated with climate change, such as flooding and heatwaves. Those households that have experienced flooding in recent years will know the enormity of the impact – which is often linked as much to the pressures and stress associated with dealing with insurance problems and the clean-up and recovery as the event itself. We are concerned about those households that lack insurance and how the insurance industry itself may be responding to climate change and how the scope and availability of insurance may be affected in areas at higher risk to climate events.

**Protection:** In addition, the indirect impacts associated with climate change – particularly fluctuating energy and food prices – are likely to become more significant as we become more concerned about our resource use and climate change affects global supply chains for food and other commodities. For those on low incomes, price increases are expected to become an increasing pressure as we shift to low-carbon energy sources. Previous research we have conducted has highlighted how fuel

poverty is increasing in spite of government targets to reduce this, and we will be further exploring how fuel poverty can be addressed, within the context of the Hills Review, in the run-up to new energy legislation in 2011.

We need to look at how policy and practice responses are developed to address the scale of the challenge and the impacts on different members of society.

Scientists tell us that in order to have a good chance of avoiding average global temperature increases going beyond 2C, which will have dangerous effects, we need to stabilise and then reduce our carbon emissions within the next 10 years. This raises important questions about how political leaders respond to the enormity of this challenge and how democratic processes can support the rapid transformational changes we may need to how we live. We need international agreements to set the context for action. But in the UK, our policies and the actions of practitioners locally will also be important, not only to try to reduce carbon emissions, but also to prepare for climate impacts and develop effective adaptation strategies. There are major issues here about who we choose to protect, how far we can support community resilience and how decisions taken today will have an impact on future generations.

Climate mitigation and adaptation strategies are costly. Winners and losers are inevitable. Of particular concern are the regressive side-effects of climate policy. For example, energy-price rises or taxation may adversely have an im-

pact on households already experiencing fuel poverty.

So who will bear the costs of carbon mitigation and how do we deal with the transition? Such fundamental questions have as yet been little debated.

Transport and housing emissions form the bulk of emissions created directly by individual households. This is why in our research, we are exploring household emissions across the UK and will be assessing how different policy interventions will affect different types of household, considering their income, tenure and other factors. We will be identifying the effects of different approaches and the opportunities for policy to be developed to avoid the most regressive effects and to ensure it does not exacerbate fuel poverty.

We need to bear in mind too that climate change can offer an opportunity to address social inequalities. Addressing fuel poverty by investing in household energy efficiency saves carbon, reduces bills and so can increase people's income, improve housing quality and individuals' health, and create local employment. There is real scope here for this current time of change and instability to offer an opportunity for systemic transformation as we shift towards living in a low-carbon economy and society. There is a need for local authorities to seize the challenge and play a leading role in ensuring decisions taken now take account of the differing risks facing their local populations. They have a key part to play in ensuring that we do not compound injustice

for those already facing poverty and disadvantage in responding to climate change and rather use this as an opportunity to rethink local systems, for example in food production, energy delivery and housing and transport to ensure that adaptation is central to their future planning.

*Julia Unwin, CBE, is chief executive of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust. She was a member of the Housing Corporation Board for 10 years and has previously worked as an independent consultant operating within government and the voluntary and corporate sectors*

*For more details on our work programme, go to [www.jrf.org.uk/](http://www.jrf.org.uk/) or contact Josh Stott on 01904 615972*

**The Joseph Rowntree Foundation is funding research exploring the social justice implications of direct climate impacts and our mitigation and adaptation responses. Two reports were published earlier this year and further research is about to be published. For example, Joshua Thumim is leading a project at the Centre for Sustainable Energy - Understanding the social impacts of UK climate policies - which is examining UK carbon emissions relating to household energy and transport use and the impacts of a range of policy interventions on households in England.**

# Insight for senior managers

There is a long and proud association between what is now the Public Leaders Network, the Guardian's website for senior managers of all public services, and the Solace Foundation Imprint, and we are delighted to continue that association with this latest publication on one of the most important issues facing local authorities.

The Public Leaders Network began life in 2004 as Public, a printed monthly magazine. Since then it has moved online and changed its name to become the Public Leaders Network, a unique site for all who lead public services. We reflect best leadership practice across all sectors, focusing on existing senior leaders and those who aspire to become senior leaders, highlighting best practice, promoting good ideas across all public services and showcasing great examples of collaborative and silo-busting work.

The Public Leaders Network provides intelligence, analysis and best practice for leaders delivering today's public services. It works in partnership with those representing senior managers across the whole public sector.

Since we began, we have worked with the Solace Foundation Imprint to raise a wide range of issues. One thing remains clear: the need

for clarity, information and top-level debate about government policy and practical, day-to-day measures that affect all leaders.

The Public Leaders Network provides:

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It is the flagship website within the Guardian Professional Networks, a matrix of sites aimed at professionals, with a unique mix of high-quality editorial content, comment, readers' views and blogs.

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**Jane Dudman**, editor

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