

Climate Ready support service

Local Government

May 2012

The Environment Agency has a new role to provide advice and support to businesses, public sector and other organisations to help them adapt to a changing climate. Our aim is to help key sectors increase their resilience to climate risks. This role complements our existing roles and responsibilities. It is for England only but the products generated will be available across the UK. We're working closely with Defra as part of Climate Ready - the Government's national programme for adaptation. Local government is uniquely positioned to help increase the resilience of communities and local places and adapt them to climate change. We want to help local councils to understand and to act on the implications of climate change. Our aim is to build lasting capacity within the sector, to establish strong leadership on local climate risks and to build climate resilience into the provision of local services and plans.

What we will do

Our priority actions for the first year include to:

- Fund a secondment to the Local Government Association to build council capacity to manage climate risks and provide advice and support through its network and channels.
- Develop materials for elected members to establish a local 'business case' for action and encourage commitment to the council-led Climate Local initiative which aims to drive, inspire and support council action on reducing climate change and adapting to its impacts.
- Develop the role of the Local Adaptation Advisory Panel to provide input from the local government sector to other work areas of Climate Ready such as the built environment and to form strong links with wider sector initiatives including Climate Local.
- Develop practical advice and guidance in areas such as planning, health and natural environment for the local government sector, to help embed an understanding of climate risks in core service areas.

Other actions we have identified include:

- Support Climate UK's work to facilitate local networks amongst local authorities and key partners.
- Work with senior officer groups who represent directors of adult social services, children's services and public health to share best practice on embedding climate risks into service planning.
- Work with local government representatives to ensure technical requirements are met in the development of the wider service, and its products.

Our existing work

The Environment Agency is a national organisation that operates locally. We work with people, communities and local authorities across England and Wales to protect and improve local environments. We're already working with the local government sector, including:

- Using our expertise and experience to contribute to local climate change adaptation initiatives.
- Partnering projects to deliver environmental protection and improvement.
- Working with lead local flood authorities to implement the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.
- Providing technical information and advice to support local government policy and decision-making.

- Seconding staff to work in councils to work on environmental priorities.

Working with others, in partnership

We need to work in partnership to achieve our actions and reach across the sector to upper and lower tier authorities, unitaries, parishes and sub-national groupings. Our partners will include:

- The Local Government Association.
- The Local Adaptation Advisory Panel as the representative local government body on adaptation.
- Climate UK representing the network of sub-national climate partnerships.
- Individual Local Authorities via networks and expert panels.
- Associations of local authority directors who represent the senior officers of key service areas (including ADEPT, ADASS, ADCS and ADPH).
- Government Departments (including Defra and CLG).

Why Local Government is important

Local government has a central role to implement actions that will help adapt local places to climate change. Local authorities are the elected and accountable bodies responsible for planning and shaping local places. They provide and manage key services and estates. The sector also has a lead role in community well being and safeguarding vulnerable people. The remit and responsibilities of the local government sector are cross-cutting and span work relevant to many other areas of the Climate Ready support service. Key risks and opportunities for the local government sector include:

- Flood risk is predicted to increase significantly, increasing risk of damage to property and infrastructure and disruption to local people's lives and businesses.
- Higher average temperatures and changing rainfall patterns may significantly increase pressure on water supplies some of which are already under pressure.
- Higher summer temperatures may mean additional premature deaths and health problems.
- Warmer summers may increase energy demand for cooling.
- Road surfaces may melt and wear more in extremes of temperature.
- Warmer winters may lead to a substantial fall in cold-related deaths each year.
- Warmer temperatures and higher concentrations of CO₂ in the atmosphere may lead to higher yields of many crops now grown in the UK, and new tourism opportunities for parts of the UK.

More details about key climate risks are contained in Defra's [Climate Change Risk Assessment](#).

Find out more

Our Climate Ready support service work consists of:

1. A web-based information service and helpdesk which gives access to the latest climate science and provides tools and advice to help plan for climate change. Support on the climate science will be provided to users across the UK. We will work with devolved administrations and their delivery bodies
2. Tailored support to key sectors focussed on seven themes: business and services, infrastructure, built environment, health and wellbeing, natural environment, agriculture and forestry and local government.

If you'd like to know more about our work visit our web pages at www.environment-agency.gov.uk/climateready and sign up to our Climate Ready bulletin.

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www.environment-agency.gov.uk