

Section 3

Executive Summary

Background

Through the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) a scientific consensus on anthropogenic global warming has emerged. Today there is new and stronger evidence that most of the warming observed over the last 50 years is attributable to human activities and that human-induced climate change, additional to that caused by natural variability, is now taking place (IPCC, 2001). Unless global measures are taken during the first half of the 21st century to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and stabilise their concentrations in the atmosphere, mankind may precipitate dangerous and unexpected changes to our climate by the end of the century together with a significant rise in sea level. Such changes would persist for many centuries and may indeed be irreversible.

The UK Climate Change Programme (DETR, 2000) has been developed in close consultation with key stakeholders and recognises that local authorities (LAs) are critical to its success. In addition to taking direct action to reduce emissions, LAs can influence the way others respond by raising awareness of the need for action and providing practical advice on what people can do to make a difference. Furthermore, they must prepare for the impact of climate change, which is already affecting local communities.

As a County Council we have recognised that climate change is likely to be one of the key drivers of change within our community this century. We have appointed a Climate Change Officer to direct our response to global warming and have made a far reaching commitment to act by signing the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change on 14th July 2004. This climate change strategy is our first important step in delivering on that commitment.

Strategic Context and Goal

The climate change strategy has been developed within the context of sustainable development where *"the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"*. Although the idea is simple, the emergence of anthropogenic climate change has put in to stark relief the potential of present (and previous) generations to compromise the needs of future generations for many centuries to come. Sustainable development is about delivering a strong, healthy and just society that lives within environmental limits through the promotion of good governance, use of sound science and creation of a sustainable economy. Our climate change response will need to

make compromises between competing agendas and can only be realised through effective partnerships at both corporate and community level. Accordingly, the goal of this climate change strategy is ***"to put in place effective and timely measures both at the corporate and community level to address the causes and impacts of climate change in Devon."***

Strategic Components

It is widely accepted that a twin-track approach comprising of mitigation and adaptation measures is the most appropriate strategy option. The mitigation agenda addresses the causes of climate change and is aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and/or enhancing carbon sinks. The adaptation agenda is concerned with the likely impacts of a changing climate on our environment, economy and society. Its aim is to reduce vulnerability to the adverse effects of climate change and take advantage of the opportunities that climate change might present. However, there is a vital third element, communication, which is needed to identify target audiences, raise awareness of the issues, change attitudes, promote the behavioural change associated with mitigation and adaptation actions, and celebrate successes. This strategy adds communication to the traditional twin-track approach as the priority work stream.

Strategic Phases

Given current financial and planning horizons, and the potential for significant policy and technology advances as climate change rises up the political agenda, it makes sense for this strategy to operate for the climate change short term only i.e. to 2010. This does not mean that it should not consider impacts in the medium (to 2050) or long term (to 2100) where major infrastructure is involved. Over the next five years, the strategy will have two phases which may run concurrently;

- **Set up process** – there is a need to increase the receptivity of the public to climate change action by raising awareness and creating *"agency"* for change. In addition, a *"carbon footprint"* capable of replication on an annual basis for mitigation purposes is required together with a climate impact assessment at an appropriate spatial and temporal resolution on which to base the adaptation response. All of these activities are significant undertakings and necessary precursors to prioritised action planning and implementation.
- **Strategic actions** – this will consist of messages, measures, projects and programmes identified and prioritised by the set-up process. This strategy outlines example actions.

Strategic Space

Within the sustainable development framework, the strategic space occupied by Devon County Council (DCC) determines the depth and breadth of potential climate change action. DCC has three distinct roles each of which contains activity that contributes to or will be impacted by climate change as follows;

- **As a corporate manager** – This is about the management of the business and making sure that the Council's operations are sustainable in resource terms. It covers issues like asset management, energy consumption, building performance, composition of vehicle fleets, travel planning and procurement strategy.
- **As a service provider** – This concerns the contribution and impact of the Council's services, and covers such issues as transport, development planning, waste management, educational development and air quality.
- **As a community leader** - This is all about demonstrating leadership by example, and through partnership working and the community strategy.

Strategic Framework

The components of the strategy described above can be brought together to form a strategic framework (see Figure 1) for our climate change programme. The strategic framework identifies the three core strands of work (i.e. communication, mitigation and adaptation) operating at two levels (i.e. internally within DCC as corporate manager and service provider, and externally as part of the Devon Strategic Partnership Community Strategy). The framework also identifies the need for a set up process to create agency for action amongst stakeholders, a carbon footprint for DCC and Devon, and a climate impact assessment for Devon. Furthermore, it highlights the principal strategic outcomes (i.e. changed behaviours, reduced emissions and reduced vulnerability) of each work stream together with the channels and strategies needed to achieve these objectives. Finally, it recognises the contribution of existing initiatives which provide continuity of action on climate change whilst the core programme is initiated.

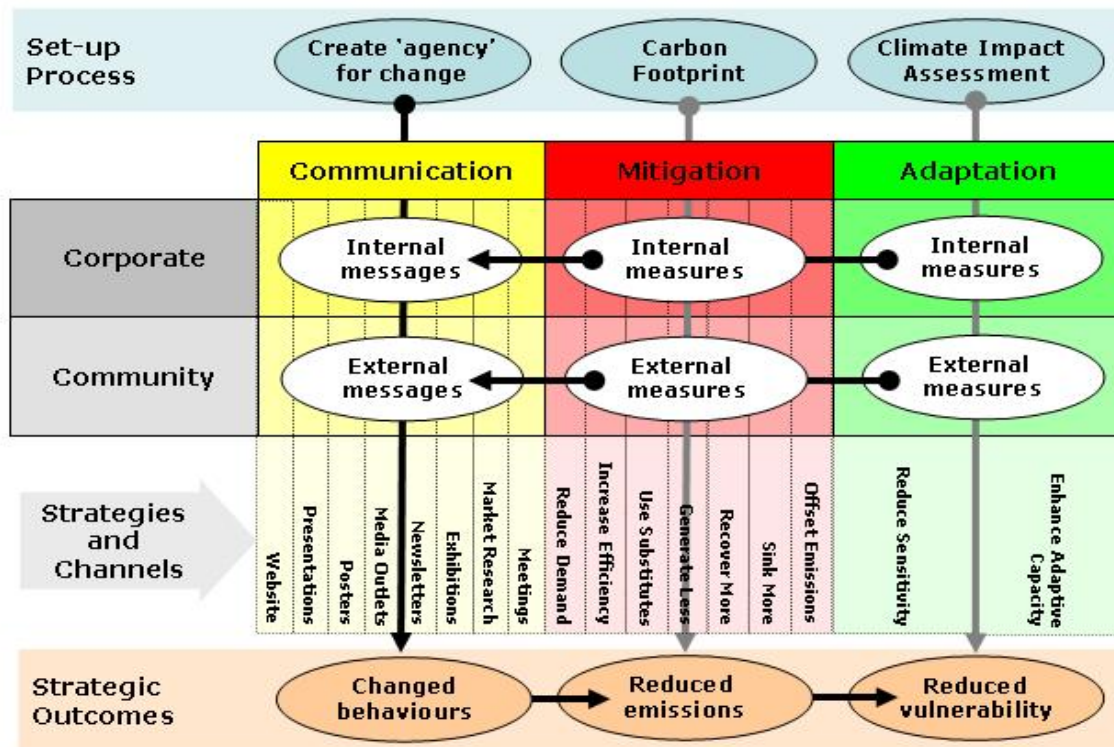


Figure 1. The strategic framework
 Source: DCC

Strategic Objectives

In order to achieve the strategic goal, ten strategic objectives have been identified. These are identified in Boxes 1 to 3 and cover the communication, mitigation and adaptation work streams.

Box 1. Strategic Objectives (Communications)

1 – Attitude to Climate Change.

To create "agency" for action with the members and officers of Devon County Council, our partners and, most importantly, the people of Devon towards climate change by raising awareness of its causes and impacts, and outlining potential responses.

2 – Behavioural Change.

To promote behavioural change of specific target groups within the Council and community in support of the mitigation agenda.

Box 2. Strategic Objectives (Mitigation)

3 - DCC Approach to Carbon Management.

To scope, agree and implement a carbon management policy for application across both the capital programme and the operational items covered by the revenue budget.

4 - DCC Operational Carbon Footprint, Target and Measures.

To define a baseline carbon footprint, agree an emissions reduction target and identify, cost, prioritise measures to reduce the Council's emissions of greenhouse gases.

5 – DCC Capital Programme Carbon Assessment.

To identify, document, agree and implement an assessment process for identifying and minimising both the embodied energy/carbon content and the future operational carbon footprint of proposed programmes/plans, infrastructure upgrades and maintenance regimes.

6 – Implement DCC Mitigation Measures.

To implement, monitor and report progress on measures to reduce the Council's emissions of greenhouse gases.

7 – Management of Carbon in Devon [As agent for the Devon Strategic Partnership]

A. *To define a baseline carbon footprint for Devon, and recommend an emissions reduction target and measures to reduce community emissions of greenhouse gases.*

B. *To assist in implementing, monitoring and reporting progress on those measures.*

C. *To influence regional and local planning authorities to ensure that both the embodied energy/carbon content and the future operational carbon footprint of proposed programmes and plans are minimised.*

Box 3. Strategic Objectives (Adaptation)

8 – Climate Impact Assessment for Devon

To undertake a climate impact assessment for Devon for the short and medium term.

9 – Emergency & Contingency Planning

To review and update the Council's emergency/contingency plans for all vulnerable locations in the light of recently experienced weather-related hazards.

10 – Climate-proofing for Today's Weather Hazards

To ensure that when unexpected, unusual or extreme weather events cause problems the post hoc restoration is climate-proofed for the next 50 years against potentially more extreme events and the lessons learned are applied where practicable to similar locations countywide.

11 – Climate-proofing for Projected Weather Hazards

To climate-proof strategies, policies, programmes and plans that come up for review, infrastructure upgrades, maintenance regimes and new fixed infrastructure that has a life of 20 years or more against projected changes in climate over the next 50 years.

Conclusion

Over the course of the 21st century climate change has the potential to make a significant impact on the economy, society and environment of Devon. In the DSP and DCC Devon has the institutions and appropriate powers to lead the response at a local level. This climate change strategy establishes a framework for the creation and implementation of a prioritised action plan to address the causes and effects of climate change and to secure maximum benefit for our communities. In turn these actions will contribute to the delivery of the UK Climate Change Programme and assist UK plc in meeting its international obligations on climate change.