

**CLIMATE CHANGE PROGRESS REPORT
THE NOTTINGHAM DECLARATION ONE YEAR ON**

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Background Papers:- Nottingham Declaration 2006; Sustainable Energy Strategy
Financial Implications:- None
Equalities Implications:- None
Legal Implications:- None
Options: To note progress being made
Risks:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report reviews the progress made on climate change issues since the adoption of a Sustainable Energy Strategy in December 2005 and the subsequent signing of the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change in January 2006. It lists a number of new and ongoing initiatives that contribute to the reduction of climate change or help adapt to the effects of our changing climate. This includes a wide range of activities from the obvious energy efficiency and promotion of renewable sources to biodiversity and the major impacts of waste. Wherever possible the effect of the initiatives is quantified in terms of CO2 savings. The report concludes with a summary of initiatives planned for the coming year and discusses possible revisions to the reporting format and frequency in subsequent years.

DECISION

To note the progress made on climate change initiatives since signing the Nottingham Declaration in January 2006.

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BACKGROUND

Climate Change is now widely recognised as the most serious environmental threat to our future. There is clear evidence that the climate is changing, average temperatures are increasing and we are observing more extreme weather events. Further change is inevitable due to the legacy of past greenhouse gas emissions and it is generally recognised that we need to plan and adapt for the future. Current rates of greenhouse gas emissions are still unsustainable and there is an increasing urgency towards reducing emissions and developing a low carbon or carbon neutral future.

Public awareness of climate change issues is increasing due to personal experience of weather phenomenon and extensive media interest. Businesses are recognising both responsibilities and commercial opportunities in dealing with climate change and we have seen a renewed interest in sustainability as part of the business response to corporate social responsibility.

Government has a lead role in managing the change to a low carbon society. At local government level the community leadership role of local authorities provides an opportunity and expectation for council's to respond to the climate change agenda and influence communities at a local level.

At the end of 2005, Braintree District Council adopted a new sustainable energy strategy, and on 27th January 2006 the Council, together with Uttlesford District Council, became the first authorities in Essex to sign the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change. By signing the declaration the Council acknowledged that Climate Change is occurring and that it will have far reaching effects on our economy, society and environment. It also commits the Council to achieve a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and encourage the community and key partners to do the same.

One year on, this report looks at the progress being made by Braintree District Council in dealing with climate change.

SCOPE OF REPORT

Much of the environmental work carried out by the Council has a positive climate change impact and the report includes some of the more significant ongoing activities as well as new initiatives. Both mitigation and adaptation measures are included and wherever possible an estimate of carbon savings has been provided. Calculating the net carbon savings at a local level is not always straightforward as many services also contribute to emissions. The report uses recognised carbon calculators where appropriate but does not attempt to apply complex life cycle analysis tools where readily available data is not available.

DESCRIPTION OF CLIMATE CHANGE INITIATIVES

Energy Conservation

Home energy use is a major source of carbon dioxide emissions. Burning fossil fuels to heat our homes or to produce electricity releases carbon emissions. This can be reduced by improving standards of insulation and other energy saving measures. Home energy conservation also helps deal with fuel poverty, reducing heating costs for low income households and providing more comfortable homes. The Council encourages home energy conservation through promotional work and the provision of grant aid. As a social landlord, the Council can make a significant difference by achieving high standards of energy conservation and efficiency when maintaining and improving its stock of council houses.

Activity	Performance (January 06 to December 06)	Mitigation or Adaptation	Estimated Carbon Savings (CO₂ Equivalent)
Cavity Wall and Loft Insulation Grants	340 properties improved	M & A	600 tonnes
Additional Building Notices received for cavity wall insulation over an above grant aided schemes.	401 properties improved	M & A	710 tonnes
Solid Wall Insulation Grants	Scheme introduced November. No applicants by end of year.	M & A	0
Provision of low energy lamps	2,500 compact fluorescent lamps distributed	M	3,119 tonnes
Sustainable energy promotion through newsletters, leaflets, grant aided promotions, targeted mailings and face to face contact. Performance based on national figures showing an average 5% saving as a result of individual contact, personalised information and advice.	2,500 contacts	M & A	1,375 tonnes
Improvements to council houses:			
New or replacement heating systems with condensing boilers.	241 properties	M	Basis for calculation still under review
Full window installations.	377 properties		
Insulation installation or upgrade.	239 properties		

Renewable Energy

Renewable sources of energy are helping to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and offer major reductions in carbon dioxide emissions. In addition to large scale generation projects there is increasing interest in small scale local generation. The Council encourages the installation of domestic small scale technologies such as solar hot water and wind turbines through its planning policies, the provision of information to the public and developers, and the provision of grant aid.

Activity	Performance (January 06 to December 06)	Mitigation or Adaptation	Estimated Carbon Savings (CO₂ Equivalent)
Solar hot water grant aided installations	32 completed installations	M	710 tonnes
Planning consents for solar panels not included in above	3 installations, type and effective capacity unknown	M	Unknown
Planning consents for wind turbines	4 installations, effective capacity unknown	M	Unknown
6KW demonstration wind turbine at Discovery Centre, 2 smaller domestic wind turbines on order. Dialogue continuing with Essex County Council on development of the Discovery Centre as an energy advice / exhibition centre.	Ongoing energy saving to Discovery Centre	M	99 tonnes
Large wind turbine feasibility study carried out for Discovery Centre.	Feasibility report produced	M	Unknown
Solar hot water demonstration project at Discovery Centre	Ongoing energy saving to Discovery Centre	M	50 tonnes
Publication of leaflet advising the public on small scale renewable energy projects in response to dialogue with national retailer.	1,000 leaflets available in Council offices, local suppliers and on web site	M	Unknown

Planning and Sustainable Development Policies

Planning and sustainable development policies are key drivers in establishing low carbon development in the District. The past year has seen considerable progress in translating the broader aims of the Local Plan into more specific guidance for developers and in appraising our own policies for climate change and sustainability impacts.

Activity	Performance (January 06 to December 06)	Mitigation or Adaptation	Estimated Carbon Savings (CO₂ Equivalent)
New "Urban Spaces Supplement" to the Essex Design Guide produced, including high standards of sustainable construction and development and a requirement for 10% of energy to be provided from renewable sources, normally as part of the development.	Adopted January 2007	M & A	Unknown
A "Sustainable Development Guide" was produced for developers, outlining the local plan requirements and indicating how these might be delivered as part of future developments.	Adopted December 2007	M & A	Unknown
Production of a "Sustainability Checklist" for B.D.C. Strategies in response to work by the Environment Policy Development Group	Adopted December 2007	M & A	Unknown
Development of a "Sustainability Vision Statement" by the Environment Policy Development Group.	Scheduled for consideration by Cabinet February 2007	M & A	Unknown
Development of a Green Travel Plan for Council staff and Members	In progress, due April 2007	M	Unknown
A research brief has been prepared for a Climate Impact Profile for the District. This will provide a localised indication of the likely effects of climate change and aid future planning and adaptation work.	In progress	A	Not applicable

Waste and Recycling

Landfilling organic wastes is one of the main sources of climate change gases. The methane gas produced in landfills is 23 times more potent as a global warming gas as CO₂. In addition the resource recovery from recycling represent enormous fossil fuel savings over the first time production of goods from raw materials. For example recycling one tonne of aluminium saves seven tonnes of CO₂. The alternate weekly collection system in the Braintree District has consistently delivered high rates of recycling and reduced the need for landfill. The extension of alternate weekly collections from October has already had a major impact.

Activity	Performance (January 06 to December 06)	Mitigation or Adaptation	Estimated Carbon Savings (CO₂ Equivalent)
Ongoing diversion of waste from landfill by recycling.	16,000 tonnes	M	15,400 tonnes
Additional diversion from roll out of alternate weekly collections to 17,000 properties from October 2006.	1,900 tonnes	M	2,000 tonnes

Biodiversity and Carbon Sequestration

Climate Change will have significant implications to our natural environment, including biodiversity, trees, woodlands and landscape. Management plans need to consider greater extremes of drought and storms. There will be a northward migration of species which will need to be aided by the development of wildlife corridors and planting of different species to adapt to the new climate and provide new habitats. Retaining existing landscape features will need extra care in supporting trees and planting at the limits of their natural growing conditions. An increased demand for biomass to fuel the growth in renewable energy will provide a major opportunity for local agriculture but will also have an impact on our landscape and biodiversity.

The planting of new trees can help offset carbon emissions. Offsetting isn't the answer to climate change but as some emissions can't or won't be avoided, particularly in the short term, it is a way of compensating for these emissions with an equivalent carbon saving. Carbon dioxide is absorbed by growing trees and locked into the developing plant. However there are complications in calculating the amount of carbon sequestered by this method and risks of early release due to fire, disease or failure to re-plant when eventually felled. The usefulness of tree planting is being questioned by the scientific community but the technique has been included in this report as it is still widely used and promoted.

Activity	Performance (January 06 to December 06)	Mitigation or Adaptation	Estimated Carbon Savings (CO₂ Equivalent)
Provision of guidance to public and private landowners on habitat management.	Ongoing	A	Not applicable
Ensure plantings are adequately protected against the increasing risk of attack by mammals.	Ongoing	A	Not applicable
Develop management plans that minimise	Ongoing	A	Not

the threat to sensitive species and habitats.			applicable
Increased monitoring of plant health and developments in control measures for pests and disease.	Ongoing	A	Not applicable
Small scale trial plantings of alternative amenity species, and review of new planting schemes for "climate proofing"	Ongoing	A	Not applicable
Planting of new trees and woodlands in the District either directly by BDC or as a result of partnership work or publicity and promotion of the landscape, biodiversity and climate change benefits of trees.	340 trees planted	M	68 - 221 tonnes depending on method.

FUTURE PLANS

Many of the Council's new initiatives on climate change are still in the planning stage and their full effects will not be seen until next year. Some of the key activities for 2007/08 are listed below:

Carbon Management Programme

Application has been made to the Carbon Trust to join their Carbon Management Programme. Last year's application was unsuccessful and this year we have joined forces with Uttlesford and Colchester for a much stronger partnership bid. If successful the programme, starting in June 2007, will provide specialist consultancy to help review the organisation's own carbon footprint. This work will result in a carbon management programme that will form the basis of our future internal climate change action plan. If the bid is unsuccessful we will continue to review energy efficiency and consumption in Causeway House and other Council buildings with a view to prioritising improvements.

Green Fleet Review

Application has been made to the Energy Saving Trust for a Green Fleet Review as part of the current travel plan project. If successful this will provide specialist consultancy to analyse our lease car, casual user and light van fleets and make recommendations on reducing the environmental impact of the fleet.

Renewable Energy Study

A joint study has been commissioned with Uttlesford District Council to examine the potential for commercial or community scale renewable energy in the area. This will be completed by autumn 2007.

Sustainability Event

An event is being arranged for early summer to showcase sustainability initiatives to staff, key partners and the general public. This will raise awareness of sustainability issues, including climate change, and promote Braintree District Council's community leadership role on climate change.

Green Spaces Strategy

A new PPS 17 (Green Spaces) Strategy is being developed and a report is scheduled for District development Committee in April 2007. The new strategy will address the need to adapt to a changing climate.

Metering Technology Project

A pilot project will be undertaken to carry out a trial of remote metering for the main Council buildings. This will replace manual meter reading and provide real time energy use data, giving much greater potential to monitor energy use and effectiveness of energy saving projects.

Green Purchasing

The Council will continue to pursue switching to a renewable energy supplier, for all or part of its supply, through the procurement agency for Essex.

Energy Performance Certificates

Energy ratings will be calculated for the Council's main buildings and certificates displayed under the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive by April 2007.

Micro-Hydro Review

A micro hydro survey has been commissioned under the Low Carbon Buildings Programme to evaluate the feasibility of generation at water mills and suitable structures on the District's rivers.

FUTURE REPORTING

A new climate change benchmarking toolkit has been developed by the IdeA, DEFRA, DTI and a number of Beacon Councils. This is expected to be ready for general use in June 2007. The toolkit will be evaluated at the first opportunity and if successful it will be used as a basis for future reporting. It is very likely that tackling climate change will be part of the performance assessment framework for local authorities from 2008. If this is the case it may be necessary to change the date of future progress reports to coincide with the financial year rather than celebrating the future anniversaries of signing the Nottingham Declaration. This situation will be kept under review.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This report demonstrates the wide range of activities carried out by the Council that provide a positive response to Climate Change. Many of these activities are traditional local authority services that have been helping to reduce CO₂ emissions for many years, but there has been a clear acceleration in activity since the Council declared its commitment by signing the Nottingham Declaration. Initiatives range from major service improvements such as waste and recycling to internally focussed actions to reduce energy use and carbon emissions and externally focussed actions which achieve results through promotion and regulation. Many initiatives have still to come to fruition and planned activities will ensure continued improvements over the coming year. Government has clearly identified a role for local authorities in promoting and responding to climate change and regular reporting of climate change activity is expected to become a requirement in future years.

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