



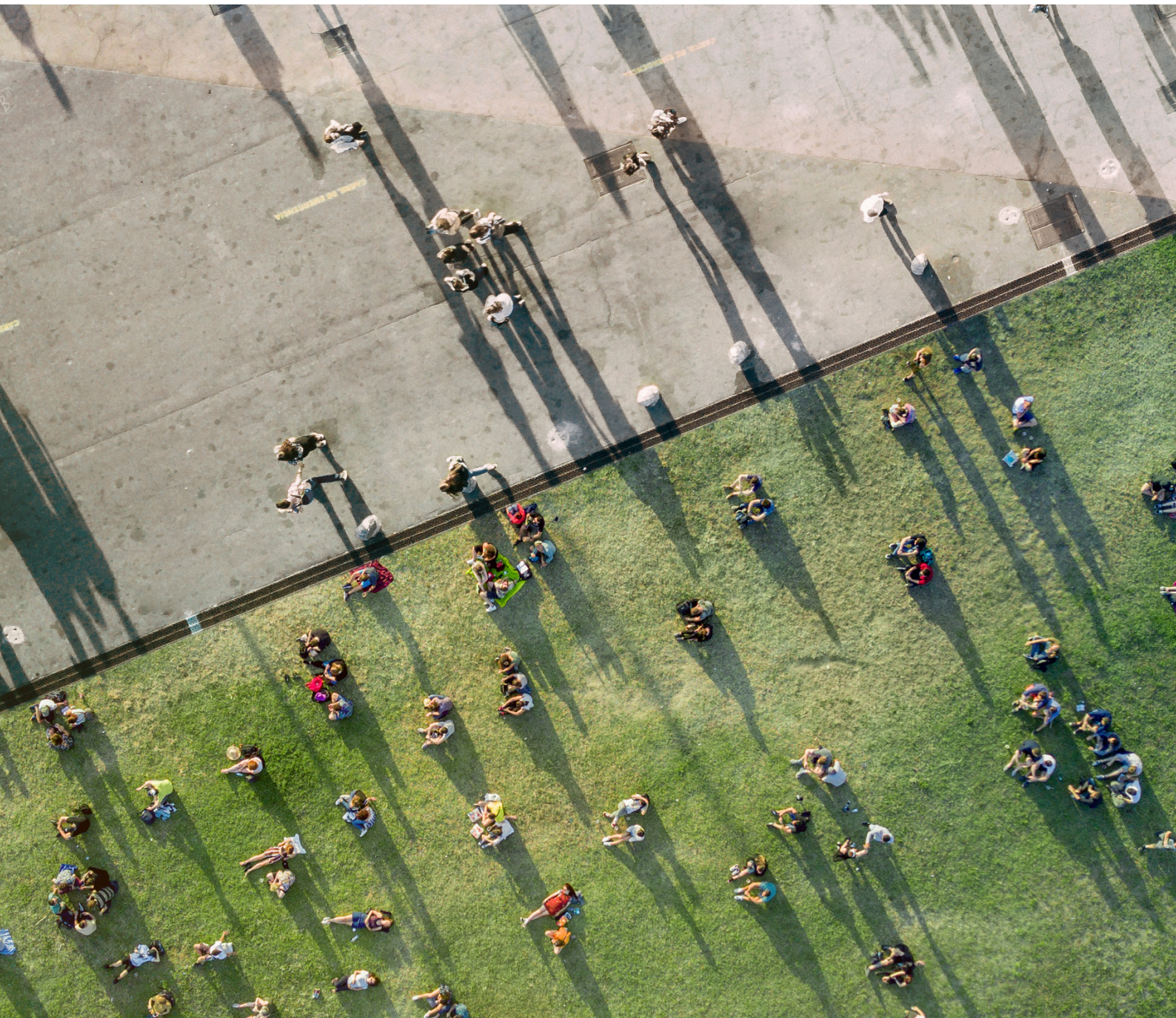
In association with



What now for climate change?

How regional and local government
is leading the response

dwfgroup.com



What now for climate change?

Responding to the emergency in every area of operation

As a global adviser to many public sector bodies, DWF has seen a pronounced increase in local and regional authorities from around the world declaring a climate emergency in the past decade.

We wholeheartedly welcome this local call to immediate action and we have seen a massive change in the content of our legal and commercial advice to reflect and ensure that local and regional authorities minimise their impact on the environment when delivering services and functions.

For example, we have advised on: safeguarding the environment when procuring works, supplies, or services; town centre regeneration projects, asset rationalisation and office accommodation

strategies; how authorities collect and dispose of waste; electric transport infrastructure; local energy schemes; grants and incentives to support local businesses, and delivering infrastructure and development. It has become a core part of our day-to-day interaction with the public sector.

In this report, in association with LGC, we highlight what local and regional authorities are doing across the world in order to respond to the emergency. Assessing the challenges organisations are facing, and the tactics and practical steps being adopted.

We have included a wide variety of case studies and interviews from the UK, Germany, Spain, Pakistan, USA and

Australia, gaining views from senior officers, elected members, leading commentators and the private sector to provide real insight into this rapidly developing agenda.

We hope that our report serves to inform public sector officers and elected members looking to understand the current response to the climate emergency and helps them plan their own response as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic.



Jonathan Branton
Partner, Head of Government and Public Sector, DWF





Contents

04.

Local Government's central role

06.

National government vital to local action in Germany

07.

Implementing climate law in Catalonia

08.

Climate change data and the impact of renewables

10.

Protecting the Queensland coast

11.

Lack of national declaration hampers local efforts in Pakistan

12.

UK roundtable discussion

16.

Willmott Dixon using sustainable construction

17.

Merseyside Pension fund pressures banking giant

18.

UK local authority cases studies

22.

Six actions for local and regional government to consider



Local government's central role in the fight against climate change

Around the world, the sector is taking decisive action despite concerns over funding, but now coronavirus is adding further uncertainty.

COVID-19 has thrust local government into its biggest emergency in anyone's memory, but there remains another threat that for many people looms bigger in the longer term: climate change.

"Climate change is, even now, probably the single biggest long-term issue for local government to deal with because climate change will affect local economies, local standards of living, all in the longer term," says Rob Whiteman, chief executive of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA).

It is an issue that was "top of the agenda of all councils" before the pandemic, according to David Renard (Con), the Local Government Association's environment spokesperson, and leader of Swindon Borough Council.

He is one of many who emphasise that councils cannot tackle the issue alone: he is calling for a joint strategy with central government, longer term funding, and devolved powers. For him, transport and retrofitting housing are "probably the two big ones" where councils do not have the necessary resources.

But although local government is by definition local, there is one field where it

can influence decisions around the globe: pension fund investments.

In the UK, the Local Government Pension Scheme, worth £287bn in March 2019, has to take the very long term view required to pay pension liabilities for decades to come – and climate change is accepted as a key risk it has to consider.

Although environmental campaigners often demand that council pension funds divest from fossil fuel stocks, most prefer to use their leverage as large investors to force companies to act responsibly.

As Doug McMurdo (Ind) chair of the Local Authority Pension Fund Forum, puts it: "Pulling out – all it's going to do is make the stock cheaper, and somebody else will buy it, so it's not going to make the problem go away. Divestment: no. Engagement: yes."

Local government should expect its actions to come under increasing scrutiny. Last year ClientEarth, a charity of environmental lawyers, warned 105 councils consulting on new local plans that they risked legal action if they did not introduce proper climate change plans.

Sam Hunter Jones, from its climate team, says: "Planning is particularly important because what we build now will be around for many decades and so really for planning the net zero, the 2050 target, should be here with us today in the way

"Climate change is, even now, probably the single biggest long-term issue for local government to deal with."

Rob Whiteman, CIPFA

that we decide planning applications and set planning policies."

ClientEarth aims to take part in public examinations of these plans, and Mr Hunter Jones says the group is prepared to litigate if it views the adopted plans as inadequate.

Across the world, local government has a central role. Since Donald Trump withdrew from the Paris Agreement on climate change, 466 US mayors representing 71 million Americans have pledged to "adopt, honour, and uphold the commitments to the goals enshrined in the Paris Agreement."

In Ireland, national legislation required all local authorities to have a formal adaptation plan in place by September 2019. However, leading figures in the local government sector were taking strategic action well ahead of this.

What now for climate change?

In the middle of the past decade, Ciaran Hughes, chief executive of Sligo County Council, secured €10m from the government to create four Climate Action Regional Offices (Caros), set up in topographical areas – two with a large focus on coastal erosion, one on alluvial flooding, and one on issues affecting urban areas.

Mr Hughes says: “I was conscious that within the sector we didn’t have the full competence for the climate change challenges that were going to come at us, so I wanted to start to build that competence within the four Caros, and they in turn would work with each of the local authorities within their region to ensure that the adaptation and other plans were going to be done to a consistent standard.”

Dorean Erhart, climate change lead at the Local Government Association of Queensland, says its surveys consistently find that “council officers feel they lack the skills to confidently consider climate change implications in their work,” and adds that “adequate resourcing (available bodies to do the work) and funding to implement the work are always highest on the list.”

The Queensland Government and LGAQ set up the Queensland Climate Resilient Councils programme to help local governments plan for and respond to climate change. Ms Erhart said 40 out of 77 councils have participated, with actions including 30 detailed governance assessments and a nationally accredited professional development course.

In southern and eastern Africa, Steven Bland, a climate change and urban planning consultant, points to “very different approaches depending on the size and the financial capacity of the municipality.”

He says four cities in South Africa are engaged in global city networks such as C40, a global network with 96 affiliated cities tackling climate change. “For these big cities, there’s definitely a collaborative action going on which is driven by

activities happening on a global level,” missing out national government.

He cites Cape Town’s plans for a carbon neutral bus fleet as “entirely a commitment driven by being a part of the C40 network of cities that are in this bus fleet group.”

“In smaller towns and cities I’ve worked with, they are much more project focused,” he adds.

These tend to be more “isolated projects,” which can mean they are “not integrated with other issues in the municipalities, and you never move out of pilot project mode.”

The COVID-19 pandemic has seen air quality improve and carbon emissions fall globally, but there are fears these gains could be reversed as public transport use falls and economies reopen.

The Committee on Climate Change has called on governments in the UK to follow six principles to ensure the recovery delivers “a stronger, cleaner and more resilient economy,” including using climate investments to stimulate the economy and making support for carbon intensive sectors “contingent on them taking real and lasting action on climate change.”

It is a theme echoed at the top of government, with Boris Johnson telling Parliament in May that: “I do not want to see us going back to an era of the same type of emissions as we have had in the past.”

But with the pandemic seeing central government take action on an unprecedented scale, will it now take a more centralised approach to tackling climate change, or follow other commitments it has made to devolution?

CIPFA’s Mr Whiteman says: “I think either is possible, and in a way local government should form a view about what it feels it can do and what it needs government to do and lobby early on that because I think in the absence of a view from the sector government might start to go in the wrong direction.”

His advice to local government is to go back to basics: “Why did you call a climate emergency, will that now be changed by COVID-19, what do you think you can go on and do something about yourself, what barriers or incentives do you need help on from central government?”

“Council officers feel they lack the skills to confidently consider climate change implications in their work.”

Dorean Erhart,
Climate change lead, Local Government Association of Queensland



National government vital to local authority climate change action



All levels of government need to play a role if action on climate change is to be truly successful

Ask Lizzi Sieck for examples of local governments in Germany that are proactive on climate change and she quickly points to Munich. The city had committed to the same target as the federal government – reducing carbon emissions by 95% by 2050 – but recently went even further: the goal for climate neutrality is now 2035.

Ms Sieck is a scientific officer at the German Environment Agency. The national body conducts research into environmental protection and then provides policy advice to the national government. But she strongly argues that, for action on climate change to be truly successful, all levels of government will need to play a role.

Munich's city's government has not merely appointed one manager with responsibility for climate protection. "They implemented those positions in every division of their local administration which is relevant to climate protection," explains Ms Sieck.

It is an effort to ensure the entire local government is focused on the climate emergency. But the action of Germany's second largest city is to some extent voluntary. While at the national level there are clear emission reduction targets, there is no nationally-mandated legal responsibility for governments in the country's 16 federal states, or indeed its 12,000 municipalities, to combat climate change.

Many federal states have taken matters into their own hands by implementing their own climate protection or energy laws, however. And many municipalities are taking action too, thanks in part to central government funding to advance environmental protection. Some 4,000 municipalities have applied for monies under the national climate initiative, designed to support the creation and implementation of strategies on climate change.

"What the municipalities usually start with is the development of climate protection concepts or programmes," explains Ms Sieck. "They take account of the emission sources within the municipality and what players are important to work with in order to achieve reduction targets. Then they work out a list of specific measures that can be taken towards

achieving the targets. "But the funding also has the ability to fund a climate protection manager for a local administration."

Typical measures, she says, include working with citizens and businesses to spread knowledge about the climate emergency, encouraging changes that will make a difference. It is a role she believes local government is especially well placed to play.

"What's very special about the municipalities is that they have specific responsibilities within their area and with that they can influence important infrastructure within the city or the region. And then, of course, they can implement investment related projects – for example in climate friendly transport, or in the building sector, renewable energy development."

For municipalities, the scheme offers a means to overcome a key barrier to action that will be familiar to those in the UK. "A lot of our municipalities are financially weak, so it's difficult for them to implement measures that go above their certain responsibilities," says Ms Sieck. She argues it is important higher tiers of government play their part in supporting action at a local level, pointing also to the example of a carbon price.

In Germany, the national parliament and states agreed last December to extend carbon pricing by which organisations are taxed for the greenhouse gases they emit – to the transport and building-heating sectors. Both are highly reliant on fossil fuels and together currently account for around 32% of the country's greenhouse gas emissions.

For Ms Sieck, having awareness of where local government can take action is key to being able to make a difference on climate change. "I think the first step is always awareness of what the municipality can do and how they can act within those sectors related to climate change.

"Then I think it's important on the one hand to have leaders who are willing to make bold decisions and on the other hand to have well trained staff. For example, the planning division or the transport sector, their staff have to be well trained and have to integrate planning options that are climate friendly."

But she also argues that true success can only be achieved if local communities are fully engaged. "It's really important to have good communication and participation of the citizens because if you don't have that, of course local political decisions [to focus on climate change] will become difficult. Only if you communicate the benefits and also the co-benefits – like liveability and positive development of the city or the region – can you get the support from the local citizens.



Lizzi Sieck
German Environment Agency

Pandemic offers climate friendly opportunities

Many German cities and municipalities declared a climate emergency in resolutions prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Such declarations themselves have no legal consequences and the cities and municipalities are not invoking a concerted package of demands.

However, most local authorities are committed to the goal of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change of capping climate change at 1.5 degrees Celsius, and stipulate that urban measures are to be assessed for their impact on the climate.

Though the majority of the resolutions do not specify the extent to which a potentially negative impact would lead to a halt or change of an urban measure, some cities decided on concrete steps, in particular climate neutrality for new buildings or reduction of individual.

The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a high volume of state aid, providing the opportunity to support a climate-friendly restart following the crisis.



Irene Schmid
Partner, Germany,
DWF



Forum Photovoltaic Power Plant, Barcelona

Landmark climate law tested region's relations with the centre



In 2017, the Catalan government became the first in Spain, and one of the first in southern Europe, to pass a climate change law.

"It was a turning point, and an ambitious response to the climate change challenge," says Marta Subirà, the regional government's secretary of environment and sustainability.

Measures included a commitment to publishing a carbon budget, something that is proving "very difficult to develop and implement." A committee of experts currently working on the problem hopes to have results next year.

Another ambitious measure is a CO₂ tax on motor vehicles, based on their emission levels. The Catalan government worked with the Barcelona Supercomputing Centre to find a solution to a lack of data about pre-2006 cars, and money from the tax is earmarked for two funds: one on climate change and another for biodiversity and natural heritage.

Catalonia's law proved to be a test of the relationship between regional and national government, with the Spanish government mounting a legal challenge. Ultimately, Ms Subirà said the national constitutional court overruled two provisions: one that prohibited fracking, which it said only the national government could do, and another that saw Catalonia set its own legal targets emission reductions.

Ms Subirà says the relationship between these two tiers of government depends partly on the political party in power centrally – the previous national government "was not very into climate change policies." And she adds that given Spain's geographical diversity, greater impact can be achieved when more resources are concentrated at a sub-national level of government.

"In terms of climate change, we do have the power, we do have the competences, we don't have the resources to do everything that is needed," she says.

The regional government is making a "huge effort on the decarbonisation of public transport" and the electrification of ports. The latter is of particular importance, given the significance of Barcelona's port to the wider Mediterranean. Another priority is to "accelerate the transition toward non-energy intensive industries," and "democratise electricity generation and bring power generation closer to its consumption point" – something she says the government is working on "tightly" with industry.

Ms Subirà believes the recovery from COVID-19 will have to be climate friendly, retaining recent improvements in Barcelona's air quality: "Some things have to change for good, like the way we work. We work maybe from home and also in the office, but maybe differently from how we have done it before. It will have a huge impact on transportation."



Marta Subirà
Catalan government

The fight against climate change is one of the priorities in the agenda of the Catalan government. Proof of that is the ambitious policy led by the public administration in this field, which has resulted in interesting efforts to reduce the carbon footprint, some of which are ahead of other regions in southern Europe.

The climate change law approved by the Catalan government is a good example of how public bodies are putting such an important issue in the spotlight.

The law it is expected to set a trend for other governments in the future.

Making public transport greener, implementing measures to reduce the use of private transport, or redesigning production strategies to cut the intensive use of energy are some of the ongoing initiatives, but they can only make a difference with the commitment of the citizens.

Hopefully, the recent situation related to the COVID-19 will inspire new ways

of consuming and travelling, which will undoubtedly help the cause against climate change. Governments will do their part, but it takes the whole society to contribute to a more sustainable model. Time's up, we need be aware of the seriousness of the challenge we are facing.



Eva Giménez
Partner, Spain,
DWF

What now for climate change?

How they compare: international climate change data

America named most attractive country for renewable energy investment

EY's 55th Renewable Energy Country Attractiveness Index, published in May 2020, rated the US the most attractive country for renewable energy investment and deployment opportunities for the first time since 2016.

This was "largely because of a short-term extension to the production tax credit and long-term growth in offshore wind, with plans to invest \$57bn to install up to 30GW by 2030."

China lost its top spot because "growth in renewables has slowed, as the government looks to wean the market off subsidies towards a more competitive landscape," and reduced demand due to COVID-19, but forecasts "remain optimistic" for long-term growth. The UK rose one place to sixth after making a

"milestone proposal to reinclude onshore wind and solar projects in the next Contracts for Difference auction, encouraging greater and more diverse renewable energy development."

Countries that saw their attractiveness decline included India, where progress in renewables had been "disappointing," Argentina, where "political turmoil has caused its renewables agenda to suffer," and Egypt, due to COVID-19 and low industrial power price forecasts.

A March 2020 report by the International Renewable Energy Agency found that global renewable energy generation capacity grew by 7.4% in 2019.

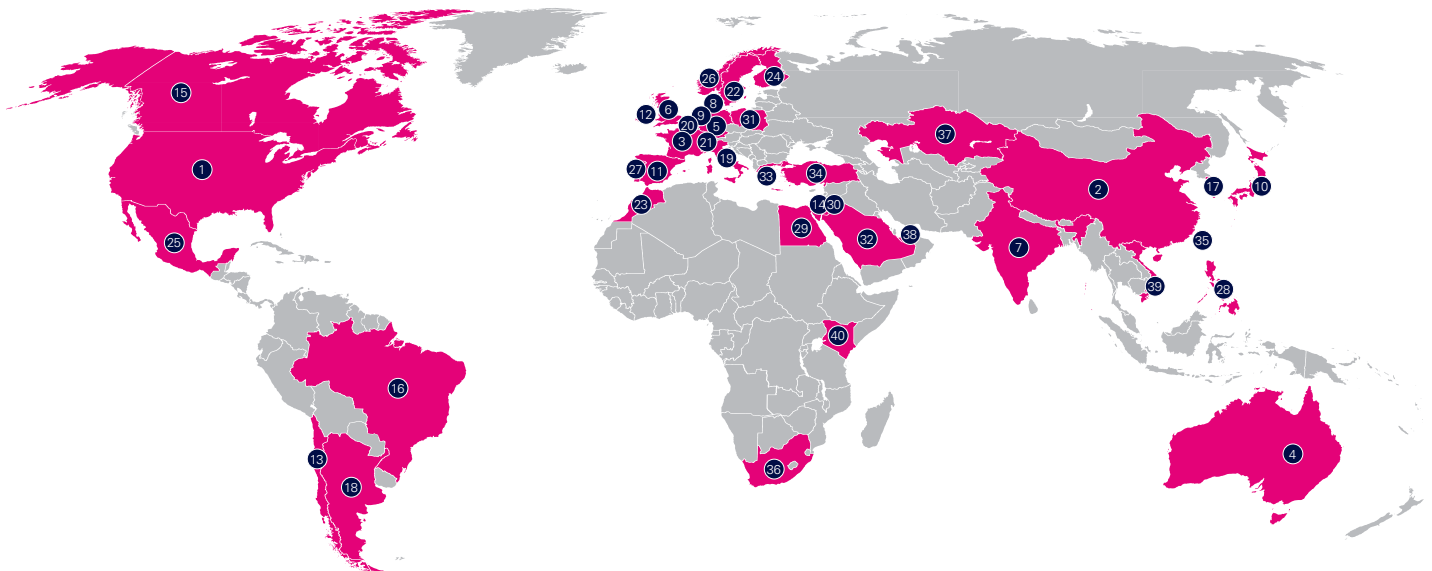
It said that of total global renewable energy generation capacity of 2,537GW, hydropower accounted for 1,190GW,

followed by wind energy (623GW) and solar energy (586GW). Bioenergy, geothermal and marine energy all had significantly lower shares. Solar saw the biggest growth globally – up 98GW, an increase of 20% – followed by wind energy at 59GW, up 10%.

The report says: "Growth in hydro was unusually low in 2019, possibly because some large projects missed their expected completion dates. As in many previous years, China and Brazil accounted for most of the expansion, each adding more than 4GW."

It notes that China and the US "continued to dominate" the expansion of wind energy. Most new solar energy capacity was created in China, India, Japan, South Korea and Vietnam.

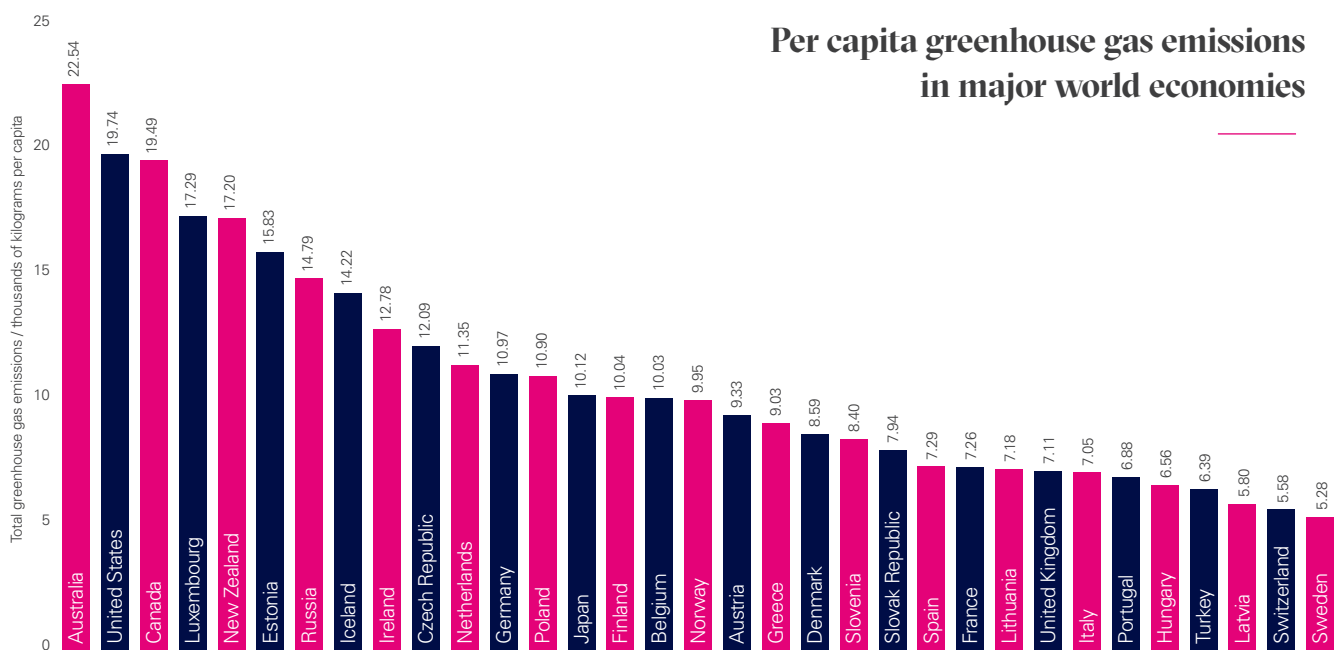
How attractive are countries to renewable energy investment?



Renewable Energy Country Attractiveness Index, EY, May 2020

Since 2003, EY's Renewable Energy Country Attractiveness Index has ranked the top 40 countries in the world on the attractiveness of their renewable energy investment and deployment opportunities, with one being the most attractive.

1 US	10 Japan	19 Italy	28 Philippines	37 Kazakhstan
2 Mainland China	11 Spain	20 Belgium	29 Egypt	38 United Arab Emirates
3 France	12 Ireland	21 Switzerland	30 Jordan	39 Vietnam
4 Australia	13 Chile	22 Sweden	31 Poland	40 Kenya
5 Germany	14 Israel	23 Morocco	32 Saudi Arabia	
6 UK	15 Canada	24 Finland	33 Greece	
7 India	16 Brazil	25 Mexico	34 Turkey	
8 Denmark	17 South Korea	26 Norway	35 Taiwan	
9 Netherlands	18 Argentina	27 Portugal	36 South Africa	



Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2017 Source: https://stats.oecd.org/viewhtml.aspx?datasetcode=AIR_GHG&lang=en

Renewables sector sees cost reductions despite removal of subsidies

The climate emergency has a real and present impact on all in society. Fuel poverty, clean air issues and the need to decarbonise our energy and transport infrastructure are factors which are front and centre in all local government and local authorities' strategies.

There has been a lack of consistent energy policy in the UK for a number of years, with constant shifts in approach and removal of subsidies introduced to promote renewable technologies. With this lack of clear policy and central government support for renewables, it is no surprise that the renewable energy sector has faced difficulties.

Notwithstanding this, however, the renewables sector has seen cost reduction in, for example, the manufacture of wind turbines and solar PV panels being massproduced in the Far East. Whether these supply chains will remain post COVID-19 remains to be seen.

We have seen a general trend of local governments and local authorities undertaking energy and heat mapping across their jurisdictions and seeking demandside, distributed renewable energy and heat generation options.

This reduces their reliance on traditional energy generation which is dependent on fossil fuel and moving towards renewable energy and heat generation.

Developers, funders and technology providers have tried and tested solutions which are available for implementation and will play a key role in striving to attain net carbon neutral targets by 2050 or earlier.



Darren Walsh
Energy Partner,
DWF

Protecting the Queensland coast from climate change



The QCoast2100 programme is designed to give all coastal local governments in Queensland, Australia, the funding, tools and technical support to prepare for increasing coastal hazard risks caused by climate change over the next 80 years.

The \$12m Queensland State Government fund covered 48 projects at 31 councils by the time the final allocations were announced in September 2019. For each council, the end result will be a coastal hazard adaptation strategy (Chas).

The programme considers the effect of a projected 80cm sea level rise by 2100 on storm tide incursion, erosion and increased tidal incursion. Mat Cork, the QCoast2100 programme manager at the Local Government Association of Queensland, says it is "underpinned at all stages by close engagement with local communities so that the values that define each area are managed in the face of risk."

He adds: "A complex task is made more problematic by the nature of Queensland's coast which includes heavily populated coastlines in the south, through to the tropical coastal areas behind the Great Barrier Reef and remote and indigenous communities of the Cape, Gulf of Carpentaria and Torres Strait islands."

In 2019 Douglas Shire Council, 45 miles north of Cairns, became the first to

complete a Chas, following 12 months of community consultation. Its 35 action points include using updated mapping of areas prone to erosion and storm tides to refresh disaster management plans, dune protection, promoting resilient homes in the building sector, and considering options to relocate critical infrastructure if necessary.

Mr Cork said it has "considered a wide range of environmental, cultural and economic values providing a balanced view over a stunning environment (rainforest to reef), heritage values and a buoyant tourism industry.

"The Douglas Shire Chas is a showcase of how remote communities living in a magnificent location can plan to work with the impacts of climate change whilst retaining the key values of the community, building a sustainable future."

Work undertaken by Noosa Shire Council, 80 miles north of Brisbane, included additional studies on habitat shift and migration and species distribution, which Mr Cork described as "a case study of a shire looking to balance growth and maintaining a world famous environment, in response to shifts in sea level rise and tidal inundation, etc., enabling nature to adapt harmoniously with local communities."

Climate change litigation on the rise in Australia

Australian industry now accepts the risks of climate change are real and need to be dealt with by an organisation and be consistent with Australia's commitments under the Paris Agreement.

A recent development is that well organised environmental activists are pursuing litigation against Government authorities and proponents of energy projects such as coal mining for climate change to be elevated in the decision making process.

This litigation is seeking changes over and above commitments given by the Australian government under the Paris Agreement.

Our Australian team is currently acting in landmark legal proceedings which are challenging the development of a major new coal mine in the Galilee Basin, on the basis that atmospheric pollution from the burning of coal from the mine will cause climate change that will cause a breach of a person's human rights.

This is squarely based on international litigation such as the challenges to the Heathrow Airport third runway.

Climate change litigation is the biggest threat to new energy projects in Australia. Our legal advice has adapted to incorporate the threat of climate change litigation and the acceptance by industry that climate change is real threat that needs to be addressed.



Brendan Tobin
Principal Lawyer,
Australia,
DWF



Douglas Shire Council

What now for climate change?

Lack of national declaration hampers local efforts



In 2010, Pakistan experienced the worst floods in its history. Some 20 million people were affected, with a significant proportion made homeless and thousands killed. For Mir Yahya Ismail, director of the public/private partnership unit in the Government of Sindh, it provides compelling evidence that all levels of government in the country must take action on climate change. "It is the responsibility of the government to protect its citizens from obvious harms, and environmental challenges have become an obvious harm," he argues.

"Pakistan is a society that is still directly connected with the agricultural sector, and for our season's crops [droughts and floods] are just impossible for farmers to manage. Keeping all of those factors in mind, I think it is the responsibility of government itself, but also a moral obligation on all citizens now, to join hands and help come up with a climate change policy that makes sense." His unit forms part of the finance department within the Government of Sindh, one of four provinces in the country.

He says he and his colleagues have a "clear mandate" from the chief executive to factor in the environmental impact of projects – "making sure that you are leaving

the place better after the project than it had been before."

Indeed, any project managed by his unit includes an initial environmental impact assessment. "It is mandatory for the project developer, government or private party, to carry out that initial exercise and to make sure that all of necessary mitigations [of possible environmental harm] are brought in at a very early stage." It is also necessary to consult widely on any such scheme. "There's an environment protection agency at the local level – the Sindh level – and at the national level as well. And part of the process of getting approval from the environmental agency involves stakeholder engagement exercises, and that's not just with experts, that's with people at large as well." But because local authorities have no statutory duty to reduce carbon emissions, formal rules are often lacking.

Climate change considerations are not generally put into procurement guidance, for instance – and Mr Yahya Ismail says that is partly down to a lack of formal imperative at the national level. "We don't really have any climate change act in place, because Pakistan itself has not declared a climate change emergency.

Out of the 28 countries that have done it, we're not one of them. We realise that it needs to happen at the national level, because it becomes an extremely difficult challenge at the local level to convince people that although [mitigation of climate change] is not mentioned in the procurement rules this is a need."

The lack of such a national declaration can make it harder to justify local investment in measures designed to target climate change, he reports. "For a developing country, especially that is going through several austerity measures, it makes it more difficult to allocate more finances towards more initiatives that would reduce the impact on the environment. "Pakistan is one of the countries to be worst affected by the climate changes that are coming about, so we need to declare an emergency. But when you wish to declare an emergency at the national level, you're talking about setting different priorities and there are so many other challenges for a developing country."



Mir Yahya Ismail
The Government
of Sindh

Two decades of climate change action



Fort Collins, a city of 168,000 residents in Colorado, has been publicly committed to climate action since 1999, and describes itself as having "some of the most aspirational climate goals" in America, which would see it become carbon neutral by 2050. Threats it has identified to its community from climate change include reduced snowpack, water quality and increased storm severity, and Michelle Finchum, the city council's lead sustainability specialist, says the fact that a quarter of households has a member with a respiratory illness means "climate action is particularly urgent for Fort Collins."

Council staff have carried out two climate vulnerability assessments, focused mainly on city operations, and have worked with

other governmental agencies on more site specific assessments.

Ms Finchum says: "All of these assessments help inform how the city can protect business continuity based on various climate and weather-related hazards. Many of our key services are tracking climate science and the implications from a warming climate to inform their infrastructure and planning processes and help reduce risk to city operations."

In January, the city completed the first phase of a community engagement process to update three key strategies – the Fort Collins Energy Policy, Road to Zero Waste Plan, and the Climate Action Plan. This six-month period identified barriers

including racism, inequality and access, lack of education and awareness, and "mistrust and lack of communication between community members, local institutions, and government." The city's flood mitigation work has included removing properties from the 100-year floodplain, including 41 properties, such as a retirement home and 30 mobile homes, that the authority bought.

The city's online climate action plan dashboard tracks the community's progress in meeting its goals. Overall emissions are down 14% since 2005, but it shows citizens that while electricity, which makes up 51% of its emission, fell 16%, ground travel, which makes up 23% of its emissions, was up 22%.



UK roundtable discussion: there is a role and responsibility for everyone

The response to the coronavirus pandemic is cause for optimism for climate change action, a discussion of leading figures in local government has heard

When the members of South Gloucestershire Council declared a climate emergency last summer, support for the motion was unanimous. Which is not to say discussion on the detail of the matter had been lacking.

"Members had a big debate about whether [the target] should be [carbon neutral] by 2030 or 2050, or something in between," recalls Nigel Riglar, the council's director of environment and community services.

"We just made the point to them that [it needed to be] as soon as possible – 2030 being an expression of an aspiration as to how quickly we need to respond; the Climate Change Act setting 2050 as a legislative and a policy position at the moment. Any day we can achieve carbon neutrality before 2050 will be a good day."

The majority of local authorities in the UK have now passed such motions, part of at least 1,500 around the world, clearly acknowledging both the seriousness of the threat posed by climate change and the need to take urgent action.

But concerns about quite how to realise the stated aim of becoming carbon neutral – and over what time period it is realistic to do so – are common. In addition, these anxieties naturally now mingle with worries about dealing with the other pressing crisis confronting the world.

In late March, on the first full day of UK lockdown in response to the coronavirus pandemic, DWF and LGC brought together a small group of local leaders to discuss how councils might lead action on climate change – virtually, of course. The conversation revealed no doubt that local authorities have to play such a role.

But many speakers emphasised that, in declaring a climate emergency, part of the aim was to highlight the breadth of action that would be required in a local area.

"Clearly we need to change many of the ways that we do things as a council, but we wanted to stimulate a wider debate and a wider call to arms," reported Clyde Loakes (Lab), deputy leader of Waltham Forest LBC. "What we didn't want was for this to be another thing the council had to do, as opposed to instigating some wider levels of understanding around what could be done by families, households, businesses across the piece," echoing thinking in the Germany Environment Agency (p6).

The situation in Humber – detailed during the discussion by the chief executive of the local enterprise partnership – served as a particularly powerful illustration of the need for that wide understanding. The area is home to two refineries that together provide a third of the UK's oil, the Drax power station is nearby, and much heavy industry is concentrated in the region.

"We've done some work which shows we are probably one of the highest polluters in terms of CO² in the country, and when we compare the figures in Humber alone we throw more carbon dioxide in the air than countries like Kenya," Kishor Tailor, chief executive of Humber LEP, told the group.

The sheer scale of the challenge was, he admitted, daunting. The aim is to move away from use of fossil fuels and capitalise on the potential for Humber be a provider of greener energy – an offshore wind farm has, for instance, already been operational since 2015. Mr Tailor also reported that increasing numbers of local businesses are pledging to reduce pollution.

"I think on the business side I feel comfortable because I think they are signed up to the carbon neutral ambition and they want to do something similar to us. It will obviously be expensive in many cases, but they will step up to the plate. I think our big challenge is going to be the human behaviour and people in the home."

It was a point echoed by Cllr Loakes, who suggested people "don't see how the small differences they can make in their household, in their day-to-day lives, can contribute to a wider benefit for everyone."



UK

“Certainly that’s been our experience here in Waltham Forest – people are wedded to their existing behaviours, and they are reluctant more often than not to let go. It is massive the kind of behaviour changes that we need to support and orchestrate.”

In the public response to the coronavirus crisis – on the day the group met, lockdown had been imposed after a week of varying levels of compliance with ‘advice’ on social distancing – many saw lessons to be learnt.

“I think it’s proving some things that are not necessarily going to work with the climate emergency – so asking people nicely, and asking them to exercise choice, and relying on a bit of behavioural insights and a bit of nudge clearly isn’t working,” said Mr Riglar of South Gloucestershire Council, who is also the incoming president of the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport.

“I do think there is something about what we learn from what we’re seeing at the moment – how perhaps we help limit the number of choices that people actually have, or frame choices in a different way that help people exhibit the right behaviours.”

Jonathan Branton, Partner and Head of Government and Public Sector at

DWF, was in agreement on that point.

“I definitely agree with the observation that COVID-19 is showing us that people can’t always be trusted to do the right thing without a little bit of a push. So I think there’ll be a lot more debate about what sort of a push is appropriate in order to get action on climate change happening on a more general level for the general populous.”

The scale of action taken on coronavirus did provide those around the virtual table with greater optimism that climate change could be tackled, however. For Mark Kemp at Hertfordshire CC, it proved that large scale changes which previously may have felt impossible could actually be made – and have a lasting impact. He pointed to the specific example of reducing potentially unnecessary work-related travel.

“The county council’s 8,000 workers are pretty much all working from home at the moment,” reported Mr Kemp, the council’s director of environment and infrastructure.

“We’ve got very limited numbers of people on site and we’re actually proving that we can do it. We would all have been really cautious about doing this last week. This week, we’re doing it. So that’s really a positive.”

“I do think there is something about what we learn from what we’re seeing at the moment – how perhaps we help limit the number of choices that people actually have, or frame choices in a different way that help people exhibit the right behaviours.”

Nigel Riglar,
South Gloucestershire Council



What now for climate change?



“There will be a legacy of the impact of COVID-19,” agreed Cllr Loakes. “Already in London we were seeing bus usage starting to decline as more people were starting to work from home, so not requiring that level of mass transit in a way that they did 10, 15 years ago. COVID-19 will bring forward that kind of thinking about more people being able to work from home, therefore reducing the carbon footprint of your travel needs going to and from work. There’s going to be some big, big changes that come out of this current crisis.”

But if changes are to become lasting, he argued action will be required from central government as well as from local. “I think there is a lobbying point around how we collate and learn the lessons from how and what we did during COVID-19 that were beneficial to the planet. And how we then put that together collectively as local government and various charity and lobby groups to say [to the centre]: ‘If you’re serious about the planet, here’s what we can do, here are the lessons that we learnt, here are the positives that came out when we decided to rally round’”

It was a point reinforced by Mr Kemp, who spoke of the challenges of taking action on climate change locally when budgets are restricted. He pointed to the specific example of transport for children with special educational needs. “That transport budget is getting out of control because of the amount of people we’re transporting.

To try and manage that, we then try and squeeze the contract. The net result is that we’re using smaller operators who by definition aren’t able to provide the more environmentally friendly transport.

So we end up with a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy, trying to balance the books but ending up driving the wrong behaviours.” In countries where local authorities lack a statutory duty to reduce carbon emissions, such as Pakistan, this can hamper local action (p11).

This example also highlighted the extent to which local government will need to embed the imperative to take action on climate across the entirety of the organisation. As Colin Murray, partner and head of local government at DWF, put it, the nature of the climate emergency is “all-pervasive” and will need consideration in all parts of councils.

Whether that is currently happening is open to debate. At Hertfordshire CC, there is a head of sustainability and a small team focused on the climate emergency. But Mr Kemp said he is very keen that taking action on climate change is not merely seen as the work of that group.

“We are saying to all our directorates: here is the framework you’re supposed to be working within now, here is the advice and help that we can give you, but everything you do now needs to be done with a sustainability lens on. Otherwise we end up with an individual team being accused of not having reduced the carbon emissions of [for example] a major, £100m project.”

Cllr Loakes wholeheartedly agreed: “This is a corporate agenda for local authorities that they need to embrace, and that needs to be filtered through every service area, because there is a contribution that can be made across all of those areas. Until perhaps we get the next generation of social workers that know they’re not going to get an essential user permit, but actually the expectation will be that they use a bike – ebike or push bike – then I think we’re still some way off on ensuring totality of place response.”

“There is a role and responsibility for everyone to be fully engaged on this,” Cllr Loakes concluded. And while he was clear on the sort of push that would be needed to ensure all citizens were involved, he did feel positive about how some existing community groups were already taking action.

“Some of our residents’ groups in Waltham Forest, traditional residents’ associations, are now doing their own library of things – they’re collating if I’ve got a sander, I’ve got a ladder, who wants to borrow it. So those kind of circular economy principles are permeating right down to local residents’ associations and they’re just setting them up and doing them by default.

“You’re seeing more and more of those kind of initiatives being taken up by ordinary grassroots organisations, not necessarily those that are particularly interested in what we need to do to save the planet. And that’s great; that means the message is starting to get down there and people are changing their behaviours at the grassroots level in a way that they can accommodate.”

Mr Riglar reported something similar. “Our communities at a recent event said, actually, we’re really well connected with each other, it’s the local authority over the last few years which because of austerity has lost its connectivity and so don’t get in the way and stop us from what we’re doing already – come and talk to us about what we do next. And that’s where I think I’m entirely optimistic about the ability of us to tackle this agenda and take it forward.

We need to listen very carefully as local authorities and be able to advocate that up to central government.”





Every action must consider climate change impact

The response to COVID-19 has rightly involved primary legislation, and an unprecedented volume of guidance and financial assistance from governments around the world. Faced with an immediate threat to life, countries have taken drastic action and millions of people have changed their daily lives in a way that many of us would have simply not previously believed possible in order to respond to an emergency and safeguard our health and wellbeing. It has shown what can be done if we put our minds to it.

To date, the response to the climate emergency has taken a very different approach, which often means little primary legislation, national government guidance or financial assistance.

It is perhaps the perceived medium/longer term threat to life, the environment and economic stability which has prompted this response.

It is against this backdrop that regional and local authorities around the world have taken the initiative and declared a climate emergency, which requires definite and practical action. The sector has taken a stand, as climate considerations have become embedded in values and culture.

The roundtable shows how the impact on the environment is becoming a core consideration as councillors and officers take brave decisions while bringing local communities with them.

Local circumstances often dictate local solutions and priorities, and each local authority is focusing on what will most reduce carbon emissions in their areas. No one size fits all and there is no single solution to the climate emergency, but it is clear that local authorities can learn lessons from those leading the way.

It is for this reason that we are working in collaboration with LGC on this report, and also because we have seen climate considerations take a much greater prominence in our advice when procuring works, services, or supplies, the delivery of major transport projects (for example, the roll out of bike share projects and transport hubs), the asset rationalisation of the public sector estate to reduce carbon emissions (for example, office accommodation and town centre regeneration projects), the procurement of IT solutions (for example, to encourage remote working), the commitment of funds and structuring of grant programmes to favour eco-projects and solutions, and major capital projects.

We are aware that it is no longer enough for regional or local government to just continue delivering services and functions; each and every action must also have regard to its impact on the environment.



Colin Murray
Partner, Head
of Local Government,
DWF

On the panel



Jonathan Branton
Partner, Head of
Government and
Public Sector,
DWF



Clyde Loakes (Lab)
Deputy Council
Leader, Waltham
Forest LBC



Kishor Tailor
Chief Executive,
Humber LEP



Nick Golding
Editor, LGC
(Roundtable Chair)



Colin Murray
Partner, Head
of Local Government,
DWF



Mark Kemp
Director of Environment
and Infrastructure,
Hertfordshire CC



Nigel Riglar
Director of
Environment and
Community Services,
South Gloucestershire
Council

What now for climate change?

Willmott Dixon: using sustainable construction

Before becoming chief sustainability officer at construction company Willmott Dixon, Julia Barrett had worked as a senior manager at Cambridgeshire CC and the Environment Agency.

For her, communication is the key to successful partnerships between construction firms and local government sectors on climate change, whether the project is a school, a leisure centre or a community health hub.

“The first thing is to start talking and get around the table and understand what success would look like for the authority and all the stakeholders involved in a particular project,” she says.

Finance is a big barrier, specifically the “siloeing of capital funding versus operating funding,” which she says makes it hard for councils to accept higher upfront costs, even if they would lead to bigger long-term savings in areas such as energy.

“Too often councils are really constrained by the different funding pots and aren’t able to do that balancing off. That’s something that we aim to do, and in other sectors it’s easier.”

It is an issue Willmott Dixon “keeps flagging to government.” When it comes to ensuring sustainable construction is affordable, she cites Willmott Dixon’s development of a “suite of standard products” in areas such as schools, homes and leisure centres.

“We want to do all the thinking and it is embedded so you get to the stage where you don’t pay a premium for it. I firmly believe that if we can build all our products to that standard then it’s not the exception, it becomes the rule. By making something the norm, you stop paying a price premium for it.”

The need for sustainable construction is an “increasing” consideration in Willmott Dixon’s work with councils. Ms Barrett says the company has been carbon neutral since 2012, and will soon launch a strategy to be “zero carbon” by 2030.

The coronavirus pandemic is having a big effect. Social distancing has “forced another level of innovation” in construction techniques – many climate positive. For example, carrying out more building work off-site increases efficiency and reduces transport miles.

But Ms Barrett says the biggest effect on the construction sector is likely to be the realisation much of the economy operated despite lockdown. “Perhaps we need to be thinking about home office space as standard,” while other changes could result from greater appetite for walking and cycling.

Greater Manchester Combined Authority takes convenor role for 2038 target

Greater Manchester Combined Authority declared a climate emergency in July 2019, and has set a carbon neutrality target of 2038.

Its approach is to act as a convenor, bringing together not just the 10 local councils, but also the three largest universities, business community, wider public sector including health, social care, police and fire, and community groups working in areas such as retrofitting homes and local community energy generation.

Its 2019-2020 environment report says the authority has taken a “mission based approach” to the 2038 target, which “rather than focusing on particular sectors, focuses on problem specific challenges” – including energy, natural capital and communications – “with task and finish groups working on the challenges.”

It has run a reverse auction for photovoltaic cells for the public, which it says reduced

the cost by around 36%, allowing 500 more people to have the technology. It has extended the scope of existing schemes, such as its warm homes fund, helping people with energy efficiency. And work in the pipeline includes, subject to contract, a local energy market project.

The coronavirus emergency is having an impact, with mayor Andy Burnham saying “we just have to be realistic” about a short-term rise in car use and associated emissions, but he adds: “We do believe, even if there is a short-term impact, we can start to soon have a very coherent plan for a climate positive recovery from COVID.”

He cites the authority’s clean air proposal, the start of procurement for a bike hire scheme, and plans for new electric vehicle charging points.

The mayor is also seeking government support for a green economic recovery in Greater Manchester: “We think the

retrofitting of domestic properties is an obvious candidate for prioritisation coming out of this situation,” he says. “There are potentially thousands of jobs that could be created with a retrofitting programme around Greater Manchester, and that of course would support people into work who might otherwise be facing redundancy.

“I think we can make the recovery from COVID climate positive, but it will require a very strong partnership between national and local government, and that’s something that we’re arguing for.”

And while Andrew Western (Lab), who holds the authority’s green city region portfolio and is the leader of Trafford MBC, acknowledges that local energy action planning work in the environment plan had “slipped somewhat” because of the pandemic, he says that overall it was “very much all systems go.”



Merseyside Pension Fund pressures banking giant

In May 2020, investors at Barclays committed to an ambition “to become a net zero bank by 2050 and a commitment to align all of its financing activities with the goals and timelines of the Paris Agreement.” It was a decision in which local government played a crucial role.

Merseyside Pension Fund – which Wirral MBD, Knowsley MBC, Liverpool City Council, Sefton MBC and St Helens MBC belong to, and whose £8.9bn market value makes it the fourth biggest fund in the Local Government Pension Scheme in England and Wales – was among 11 institutional investors that had filed a resolution for the bank to phase out its funding of fossil fuel companies.

It prompted three months of intense talks with investors that led to what ShareAction described as Barclays’ own “milestone announcement.”

The investors’ resolution was not passed at the AGM, but Barclays’ new policy was.

Owen Thorne, portfolio manager, monitoring & responsible investment, at Merseyside Pension Fund, said:

“We felt it was the right time to focus particularly on the banking sector, and Barclays, because of its status as one of the largest European financiers, it was the right choice to begin a direct approach. It’s been successful certainly in terms of the policy that Barclays is now committed to, but also the wider signal it sends to the banking sector more broadly.”

The fund views climate change not as an ethical consideration but as a core risk that threatens the value of its investments and its ability to pay its members’ pensions in the decades to come.

Mr Thorne said it is “interwoven” into its investment decisions, and added: “We consider it a material risk to the financial stability of the scheme, so it sits alongside the other long-term risk factors that we might consider – interest rates, the demographic.”

One sign of the importance of the issue came last year, when the fund launched a new low carbon fund on the London Stock Exchange, with an investment of £400m. “It’s delivering in line with expectation. It’s proving quite resilient in the current market dislocation, in common with a number of environmental, social and governance strategies.

It’s outperformed its market cap weighted peers in the last quarter, so we are pleased with how it’s performing,” Mr Thorne said.

What now for climate change?

Stroud: using community networks to achieve carbon neutrality

Stroud District Council claims to be the first district in Europe to achieve carbon neutrality on its own estates in 2015, and is now adopting a “standing just behind the community” approach to achieve districtwide carbon neutrality by 2030.

Senior carbon neutral officer Rachel Brain has written that if people think the local authority has got it covered, they are less likely to make those big behavioural changes.

She says that Stroud’s climate emergency response action plan is different to many she has seen in having a theme devoted to community, which is “very much centred on our vision of the council being a cog in an inclusive, environmentally conscious community of considerate producers, consumers and service deliverers.”

The focus on community is about co-production, and making sure that the plan

connects with more than the “certain demographic” of citizens who already environmentally conscious – Stroud is the birthplace of Extinction Rebellion – and does not marginalise groups, and promotes social justice.

Ms Brain helped a local community energy cooperative bid for money from the Next Generation programme to look at retrofitting homes, supporting them with the interview process and giving them information about the council’s 5,000 homes.

The council is now considering whether it can pilot the resulting business plan drawn up by the group.

She says: “There are lots of existing networks, and that for me is what’s important: to try to go down a route of plugging this into where it’s business every day, rather than creating new boxes of

carbon neutral groups. It has to be business every day. We can’t keep making it special and different.”

A recent redesign of the council’s internal structures has put climate change at heart of its work.

Ms Brain sits on a newly formed corporate governance and policy team. “It puts me and the work that I do in a position of looking across the whole organisation, rather than just being out on a limb and looking at it from a completely carbon neutral perspective. That is promising in how we can start joining things up,” she says.

The council also has a carbon neutral steering group that includes Ms Brain and party leaders, which she says is “a core group looking at how the plan I’m working on can be embedded across the council and how it fits in with what the electorate are looking at.”

Balancing carbon and financial accounting in West Lindsey

West Lindsey District Council has not declared a climate emergency, but not because its chief executive is unconcerned about environmental change. Quite the opposite – he wants to see climate embedded into every aspect of his council’s work.

“I think climate change is something that influences everything we do, not just an emergency for the now,” says Ian Knowles. “It is informing the decisions we take for the next two decades at least.

That’s why we steered away from it being an emergency. It doesn’t make it any less of an urgent issue for us to have a position on.”

That position is a strategy for the council to be carbon neutral by 2040. Local businesses will be encouraged to set a similar goal.

In the large and rural West Lindsey, that represents particular challenges.

“90% of our businesses are micro businesses. So when we talk about influencing business, that’s a big task to take that on. We can influence our larger businesses, but being a rural area we get people moving to the area to live in the countryside and have a lifestyle business.”

Mr Knowles’ view is that “carbon accounting will need to take priority over financial accounting” for the council, but he acknowledges that equates to a tricky and potentially controversial equation to balance.

“Is the taxpayer willing to accept they’re going to need to pay more for green technology use within local authorities?”

The characteristics of West Lindsey also mean some of that technology isn’t yet available.

Battery requirements mean electric refuse trucks are not currently an option in a district where such vehicles need to cover 400 or 500 miles a day.

While the council entered the year with clear ideas on how to fund action on climate change, coronavirus has led to a potent £2.5m revenue gap.

Ironically, the pandemic has forced some changes that are positive for the environment – including a growing confidence among members and officers about working from home and using virtual meetings, meaning less travel.



The Dutch model used in Nottingham to retrofit housing stock

Nottingham City Council has set a target of becoming carbon neutral by 2028.

Wayne Bexton, its head of energy services, says “one of the key challenges that has been earmarked in our carbon neutral action plan to give us a bit of a road map to 2028 is domestic retrofit.”

After mapping its more than 30,000 housing properties, the council has identified 10 different “archetypes” – from properties that only need fairly minor adjustments to the “hardest to treat properties, those that are really poor, energy inefficient.”

To improve the latter, the council has introduced the Energiesprong model. Pioneered in the Netherlands, the council has described it as a “ground-breaking wholehouse renovation approach,” which “upgrades a home with innovative energy-saving and energy generating measures,

including new highly insulated outside walls and windows, a solar roof and a state-of-the-art heating system.”

An initial pilot was funded by the European Regional Development Fund, which delivered 10 Energiesprong properties in the city in 2018.

It was, Mr Bexton says, a “complete remodelling,” with new exteriors, solar PV on the rooftops, and smart monitoring systems. The homes are also part of an energy centre which allows energy to be shared between them.

However, Mr Bexton acknowledges that “the problem we have is that, financially, it’s not sustainable,” costing approximately £70,000 per dwelling. It now has funding from different sources – including money from the EU and the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy – to deliver up to 260 more properties by the

end of 2021, and has set contractors a requirement of halving the cost.

“They know they can get the price down, but it’s all about the volume and the amount of these interventions that are being carried out across the country,” Mr Bexton says.

If councils and housing associations think long term, he believes that modelling over a 20-30 year period would show that upfront spending now “to get these properties to these really high specifications will longer term save you that drip fed maintenance over many years and ultimately you do get a saving over that longer period of time.”

A key lesson is the need for “a holistic approach for private and council and social housing to make sure that we have an offer for private landlords or owner occupiers who can jump on board with the initiative at the same time with the same contractor.”



On-demand buses and electric bikes in Watford

Sustainable transport initiatives form a key part of Watford BC's efforts to make the borough carbon neutral by 2030.

Elected mayor Peter Taylor says: "Climate change is one of the biggest challenges we are facing. As Watford grows, it's clear that congestion and air quality are becoming bigger problems. It is up to all of us to act. Our sustainable transport initiatives are only the latest steps we have taken to tackle climate change."

Proposals to extend the London Underground's Metropolitan Line to Watford Junction were shelved in 2018, which Mr Taylor says meant other options to tackle growing problems with congestion and air quality had to be found. The council has introduced an on-demand bus service, bicycle hire and a local transport information app.

The on-demand bus service is being provided by Arriva Click. Users register details and credit card information through an app, choose their pick up and drop off points and a route is plotted for the bus with a seat for each passenger.

Community infrastructure levy receipts previously committed towards the Metropolitan Line extension were made available for the service.

The council's transport app, created by Molten Mouse, includes information on bus times, taxi availability at ranks, bike sharing, trains, vacant car park spaces and electric vehicle charging points.

Watford's bicycle hire scheme was impeded by the COVID-19 outbreak, which delayed the delivery from China of 100 electric bikes to complement the 200

pedal ones that entered use in March. These operate from 70 docking stations as Mr Taylor says: "We did not want a scheme where people could just leave bikes anywhere."

They saw 5,000 journeys in the first month of being available, the average of which took 20 minutes and cost £1.

Charges are per minute though users can buy blocks of discounted journeys through an app if they wish, and the app is used to access bikes.

Electric bikes are intended for longer journeys, or for use by people unable to cope with a pedal bike, with the expectation these will be used to access locations more distant from the town centre such as the business parks or nearby Warner Brothers Studios.

What now for climate change?

Leadership is vital to making COVID recovery climate friendly

Climate change is a challenge that is both truly global, and intensely local. Without international action, efforts to counter the threat will fail, but the same will be true if change does not also happen in countless individual lives and communities.

The crucial role of national government runs like a thread through this report. Without a proper national framework – and the funding to deliver it – the best efforts of local and regional governments will not achieve what they should.

But another unmistakable theme is the vital importance of local and regional leadership. Whether it be the American mayors who have pledged to deliver on the Paris climate change agreement, no matter what the White House says, or the UK councils whose net zero ambitions are far in advance of Whitehall's, local government at its best is leading and innovating. And it is doing this not just through the use of 'hard' powers, such as Catalonia's vehicle tax, but also the 'soft' powers of community leadership and persuasion.

While it is a truism that no two communities are the same, it is also true that no community is on its own. Whatever one local authority's particular

challenges, there will be others they can learn from. This report highlights examples, whether it be Nottingham City Council or South African cities, where this is already happening. Through action tailored to their individual needs, local authorities around the world are building a wealth of knowledge that their peers can and must draw upon.

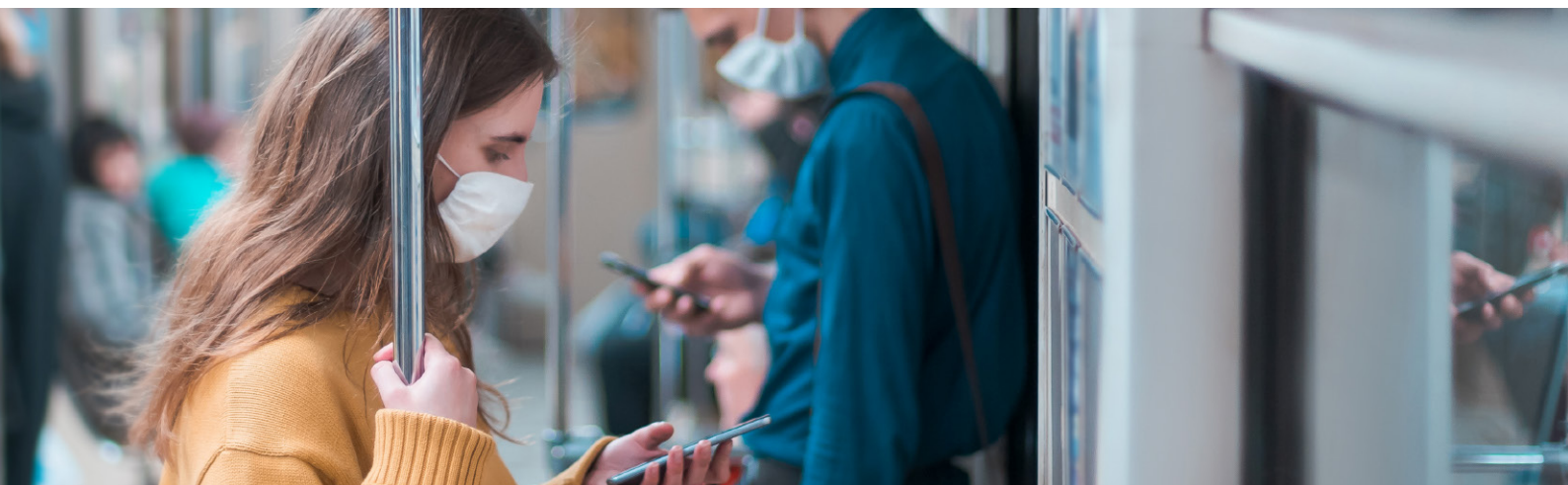
One other thread inevitably runs through this report: COVID-19. If there is a silver lining to this tragedy, it is the proof that radical action can be taken in the face of a clear and imminent threat. Whether it is the cleaner air, revised construction methods or the switch to home working, we now know that changes we previously thought would take years can happen in a matter of weeks.

Now, local government has the task of holding onto, and building upon, these positive side effects of the response to the pandemic. And, as Rob Whiteman indicates, it should use this opportunity to speak with a common voice to show national government how it can be central not just to the recovery, but to delivering it in a climate friendly way.

This is a rare and important opportunity. The sector should act decisively to seize it.

“Whether it is the cleaner air, revised construction methods or the switch to home working, we now know that changes we previously thought would take years can happen in a matter of weeks.”

Martin George,
LGC Features Editor



What now for climate change?

Global network key to tackling climate emergency

Strategy, collaboration and relentless action can make a difference to mitigate our effects on the climate

In producing this report, DWF and LGC identified some of the world's leading local and regional government responses to the climate emergency. While most authorities will be used to approaching critical agendas on a regional or national level driven by a national government policy framework, we believed that it was vital to take a global approach to what is after all a global emergency. We have seen in recent months the importance of insight beyond our own borders in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and in this report one of the key messages is that we can be learning from and collaborating with authorities from across the world in identifying our own response to climate change. We hope that some of the fantastic insight that this report contains will help you chart your own response, and we believe that there are some common routes to success:

1. Take a global approach to learning and collaborating

We have seen a wide range of innovative approaches demonstrated in this report, which can be adopted regardless of your location. Nottingham City Council's successful introduction of Energiesprong, the whole house renovation model pioneered in the Netherlands, is a great example. While many authorities can have a big impact independently, this can be magnified through collaboration and we have seen that with the Merseyside Pension Fund, in Queensland's Climate Resilient Councils programme and in South Africa's engagement with the global C40 city network.

2. Develop a sound and supported climate emergency strategy

It is vital for public sector bodies to have a formal climate emergency strategy that clearly articulates a baseline position, targets for the reduction of carbon emissions and hard deadlines for when these targets

will be delivered. The strategy should be supported by senior executives and approved by elected members. This public document should inform employees of the corporate values and culture of the authority; providing transparency and a rallying call to respond to the climate emergency.

3. Make the right people accountable for delivery

This was summed up perfectly by Lizzi Sieck, scientific officer at the German Environment Agency, when discussing Munich City Council. It is vital that the climate emergency is not tackled by a single isolated function within the authority. Munich has people with responsibilities in every division of their local administration that is relevant to climate protection.

We have seen many examples in this report where in order to be successful, responsibility, monitoring and targeting has to be adopted throughout the organisation and become enshrined into its governance.

4. Focus on what makes most impact

As we have seen by the widely differing solutions pursued around the world, local and regional authorities have many options available to them to respond to the climate emergency. Unlike COVID-19, we cannot hope for one single vaccine and while it is a global problem, the local economy (for example, the Humber's reliance on two oil refineries), demographics and geography mean that every authority needs its own unique strategy.

5. Act on community behaviour

Influencing community behaviour is vital to successful climate strategy as we have seen in the approaches of Stroud District Council in acting as a cog in its community and Greater Manchester Combined Authority as a convenor. COVID-19 has shown us that behaviours can change in ways that we

previously thought impossible and while it remains to be seen whether the seismic shifts in consumption of energy, working conditions, transportation and global trade are temporary or not, they have (at the very least) prompted us all to consider the impact of our actions. Authorities now have an opportunity to capitalise on this behaviour change as economic strategies are launched as we come out of lockdown (for example Greater Manchester and Liverpool City regions have already launched their Building Back Better initiative). As Nigel Riglar at South Gloucestershire DC said, it has shown us that we can "frame choices in a different way that help people exhibit the right behaviours."

6. Be brave and relentless

We know that "business as usual" is simply not sustainable. In order to respond to the climate emergency, we must take concerted action now and changes need to be implemented effectively. This takes leadership, particularly as we know that not everyone will support the changes that are required to respond to the climate emergency. The good news is that we can see, from our daily interactions with local and regional authorities across the world, and from this report, that the sector is starting to respond and is making real progress. We strongly advise that you reach out to others within the sector to learn more about how they have delivered their objectives. As a global legal business, we talk to authorities from across the world every day, advising them on innovative climate change-related projects and we see much to be gained by developing your global network.



Colin Murray
Partner, Head
of Local Government,
DWF



Our Government and Public Sector team

DWF's multi-disciplinary international Government and Public Sector team brings together expertise in national, regional and local government, healthcare, education and charities. We combine vast experience across the many different strands of the public sector, working both on behalf of public bodies, quasi-public bodies and institutions, and private sector suppliers and partners that work with them.

With the focus clearly on national and local governments to meet the challenges created by climate change and COVID-19, our team will continue to advise government authorities and support them in steering their local economies back to growth in a safe, sustainable and climate-preserving way.



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This report was written in association with Local Government Chronicle.



Beyond borders, sectors and expectations

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