
Report of: The Chief Officer

Date: 4 February 2010

Subject: Low Carbon Framework

1. Purpose of this report

1.1 To introduce proposals for a Low Carbon Framework programme across the Leeds City Region

2. Background

2.1 John Denham recently announced the Leeds City Region as one of 10 partnerships to pilot a new £3m Low Carbon Framework programme. Attached as Annex A is a press release detailing the announcement.

2.2 The announcement suggests that the Frameworks could potentially cover a variety of initiatives, including renewable energy, waste and low carbon transport projects. However, no commitments have been given at this time as to what a framework for the Leeds City Region would include.

2.3 As Annex A indicates, this programme presents a potential mechanism for developing the aspirations of the Urban Eco Settlement programmes, including the Domestic Energy Efficiency Programme. The programme may also hold opportunities for the forthcoming Leeds City Region Green Infrastructure Strategy, which will focus on mitigating and adapting to climate change alongside supporting economic growth.

2.4 An initial meeting with CLG to discuss the programmes potential is expected to be scheduled for the first week of March.

3. Recommendations

3.1 Leaders are requested to:

- Note the contents of the report
- Discuss views of the potential scope of the programme

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John Denham - Local action on climate change will drive down fuel bills and generate new income for councils

Radical action by councils on driving down carbon emissions will help cut fuel bills and reduce global warming Communities Secretary John Denham said today, as he announced the nine pioneering local authorities that will work with Government to develop an ambitious programme of action to tackle climate change.

Manchester, Leeds City region, Bristol, Oxford, Northumberland, Haringey, Nottingham, Plymouth and Bournemouth Poole and Dorset MAA will work with Government over the coming twelve months to pioneer and test new local carbon frameworks. These councils will take centre stage in the UK's action to tackle climate change whilst residents in those areas will reap the benefits of large scale home insulation projects, alternative sources of energy and the emergence of greener communities which together could reduce fuel bills alongside wider benefits.

The frameworks will promote new and more effective ways of meeting Governments ambitions on the essential climate change agenda. The eventual aim is to incentivise all councils to significantly reduce their carbon emissions.

By working more closely with energy suppliers to develop ambitious plans for 'greening' up domestic and non-domestic properties, increasing the demand for renewable energy, considering how to increase the economic viability of new energy sources, boosting links to heat and energy schemes and make more effective use of surplus energy to power homes could potentially unlock new sources of income for local authorities.

John Denham is proposing that local carbon frameworks will involve councils:

- setting out a clear set of targets for action and a route for progress and milestones. Many of the councils involved have already set themselves stretching targets to reduce carbon emissions - 40 per cent reductions and higher by 2020. The frameworks will support ambitions for going even further, faster
- developing a clear strategy for how carbon reductions can be achieved. Robust and strongly evidence based; this strategy will need to articulate how the council will secure community buy in and involvement
- producing a delivery plan involving all its partners, including those outside the formal strategic partnership.

Plans might set out what action is needed on issues spanning recycling, energy efficiency, wind power, transport and more.

Councils would be expected to put together a prospectus setting out how they would develop and deliver a local carbon framework. This would be negotiated and agreed with Government. The prospectus will then be negotiated and agreed with Government. It will then be down to councils to take forward delivery and report on its achievements.

Local authorities will also be able to use their prospectus to set out an 'ask' of central government. Councils will be expected to maximise the use of their existing freedoms and flexibilities but Government is ready to offer additional help and support and look at what more can be done to help councils deliver.

The pilot authorities being announced today will work with Government to help develop and test the concept. Further pilot programmes will be developed in the coming months. £3m has been allocated to support the pilot programmes.

John Denham said:

"Green groups have long campaigned on the Think Global, Act Local slogan knowing that it is action taken in homes, in villages, towns and cities that will really deliver the change and the groundswell of support to make the difference on carbon emissions.

"Local authorities - through their oversight of housing, planning, waste, transport coupled with the significant spending power they possess - are uniquely positioned to use their role and influence to drive and shape a low carbon economy, low carbon living and influence the kind of behaviour change that will be needed to meet the UK commitment to the 34 percent cut in emissions on 1990 levels by 2020.

"Councils are already making huge advances on this agenda. We want all local authorities to take the lead on reducing emissions in their area. The nine authorities being named today are ready to help Government identify the support needed for all local authorities to follow the lead of the best, make sure unnecessary barriers to action are swept away, and identify the tools needed for local authorities to do the job.

"There are obvious benefits for local people both financially and in terms of quality of life and it is crucial that local authorities maximise these and involve local people every step of the way."

The potential for local authorities to go further than their current responsibilities around climate change was proposed in the Strengthening Local Democracy Consultation published in the summer. That document made the case for using greater opportunities for local leadership on climate change to put local government at the heart of high quality, innovative public services. The frameworks present the next stage in tackling climate change and offer the potential to transform the expectations of what local government is and what it does for people.

There is no suggestion that the framework is the only game in town however. Several councils are already leading innovative work including Woking which is one of the most energy efficient local authorities in the UK and boasts combined heat and energy centres along with thousands of electricity-generating cells on roofs across the borough. Kirklees operates a waste to energy plant, Manchester City Council published a comprehensive Climate Change Action Plan in November setting out plans and for organisations and individuals to tackle climate change across the range of issues: energy, waste, transport, homes and business, and Southampton has been operating a Combined Heat and Power (CHP) system for the last 20 years.

Ultimately John Denham wants to work with those authorities already engaged in this agenda and encourage them to do more but also raise the bar for all authorities and help them recognise the potential and maximise the advantages that are available.

Notes to editors

This press notice applies to England only

1. The nine councils involved in developing the framework have already indicated where they intend to take action.

Bristol is part of the Low Carbon Core Cities programme and has set a very ambitious carbon reduction target of 40 per cent by 2020. It is producing a new action plan for 2010/11 as part of its Green Capital programme - reducing emissions and improving energy security. This includes establishing an ESCO and District Heating programme, building strong carbon partnerships with the commercial sector and doubling the level of cycling in the city.

Manchester has signed up to reduce emissions by 40 per cent by 2020. The City Council published a comprehensive Climate Change Action Plan in November setting out plans and for organisations and individuals to tackle climate change across the range of issues: energy, waste, transport, homes and business. More widely, the Manchester city region has committed to be a Low Carbon Economic Area (announced last December), with a particular focus on the built environment and skills agendas.

Leeds City region has been developing an ambitious 'urban eco-settlement' programme, aiming to deliver 28,000 homes at least at Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes, and at Eco-Towns PPS standards in 4 main regeneration areas. LCR is also aiming to deliver a Domestic Energy Efficiency

Programme jointly across the sub-region. This is intended to be similar to the leading Kirklees home insulation scheme - aiming at 300,000 homes insulated by 2015.

Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset have a multi area agreement with a strong environmental theme and a strong emphasis on Green Knowledge Economy, linked to domestic energy programmes, district heating, and partnership building across the areas. The area is home to a number of energy firms including the first Marks and Spencer eco-store and the internationally renowned Poundbury Development of the Duchy of Cornwall.

Nottingham is in the process of developing a new sustainability strategy. It has been active on a range of fronts, but in particular through the Tram, and the Nottingham Energy Partnership's consideration of waste to heat provision. They were awarded a CAA Green Flag recently, in respect of Waste and Transport. Nottingham also hosts a recent Low carbon communities challenge winner, the Meadows Ozone Energy Services Company.

Plymouth is focussing its attention on the impact on businesses and a low carbon economy and the impact on vulnerable communities.

Oxford has set itself an ambitious carbon reduction target - equivalent to about 50 per cent by 2020. Oxford's carbon management plan has been developed with the keen support from the administration and senior management. Oxford won the Carbon Trust Innovation Award for the Public Sector. They are the first England and Wales LA to sign a land lease agreement for a large wind turbine, with PfR. The active LSP have climate change as one of their priorities. The Oxford is My World Initiative helps local people, businesses and community group to reduce carbon. Oxford is home to a highly ambitious Low Carbon Communities Challenge winner - Low Carbon West Oxford.

Northumberland has signed the European Covenant of Mayors and through this is developing a sustainable energy action plan which sets how the council will achieve a county wide carbon reduction target of 20 per cent by 2020. As well as this, the council has signed up to the Local Authority Carbon Management programme and has set a very ambitious target of reducing carbon emissions from council activity by 50 per cent over 5 years. The councils has also committed, through its Local Area Agreement to achieve a level 4 in NI 118: Planning to Adapt to Climate Change, the highest possible level and the county also hosted a recent LCCC pilot to be undertaken by the Berwick Housing Trust.

LB Haringey has recently signed up to a carbon reduction target of 40 per cent by 2020, and are in the process of developing a plan to deliver this. Haringey are particularly interested in working with communities on behaviour change and household emissions. They have also been designated a Mayoral Low Carbon Zone and were selected for phase 1 of the Department for Energy and Climate Change Low Carbon Communities Challenge.

2. Government is already looking at what could be done to help authorities wanting to take the lead and bring forward robust local carbon frameworks. This includes:

- a stronger role for Local authorities in coordinating local action by energy suppliers on delivering whole street, neighbourhood and area action on energy efficiency. This will mark the next stage in the existing work with the Energy savings programme and the experience of initiatives like Kirklees warm zone. The Department for Energy and Climate Change will set out the details in the Household Energy Management Strategy due to be published next month
- using money from the clean energy cash back and renewable heat incentive. The Low Carbon Transition Plan (published last Summer) estimated that a household could receive hundreds of pounds from the clean energy cash back (feed in tariffs) scheme. Local authorities could get this cash back for microgeneration measures such as solar panels they install on their own stock and could get big sums back if they installed measures in large numbers to get economies of scale

- consulting on what changes might be needed to make the most of Energy Performance Certificates. In particular to widen access to EPC data and to allow councils to use EPCs as a driver for improving the quality of the private rented sector
- framing planning policy to enable councils to take advantage of their powers within the planning system to push new development towards greener objectives more quickly. This could cover standards in the Code for Sustainable Homes and the promotion of green energy schemes to help households and business cut their emissions and reduce their fuel bills
- setting out how local energy infrastructure could be delivered by allowable solutions as part of the zero carbon homes agenda. And there are also a whole variety of way in which councils could unlock substantial new sources of income. Whether increasing the demand for renewable energy, considering how to increase the economic viability of new energy sources, or boosting links to heat and energy schemes
- looking at whether a 'Total Place' approach might work; mapping all the funding which is available to local authorities on this agenda and considering how this could be most effectively invested and co-ordinated. Central Government will also consider whether there is a need to do better in designing national programmes to support local delivery.