

York & North Yorkshire Climate Change Leadership seminars

Interim report on Workshop 2: area based emissions (NI188)

This note records ideas which emerged during the second in a series of four seminars on Climate Change Leadership which took place on 4th December 2009, 0930-1230. The series is supported and funded by the sub regional partners of the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership. All nine of the regional local authorities were represented at the seminar¹ with 27 members and officers representing their respective authorities, together with participants from the North York Moors National Park Authority, the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, NHS NY Primary Care Trust, and the Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber

The focus of the workshop was Local Authorities' role in improving climate change resilience and adapting to climate change, with National Indicator 188 as the proxy LA performance measure. NI 188 is titled Planning to Adapt to Climate Change. The indicator is designed to ensure local authority preparedness to manage risks to service delivery, the public, local communities, local infrastructure, businesses and the natural environment from a changing climate, and to make the most of new opportunities. The indicator measures progress on assessing and managing climate risks and opportunities, and incorporating appropriate action into local authority and partners' strategic planning².

The stimulus inputs were:

Dr. Andy Horrocks, Yorkshire Forward who presented an outline of the Yorkshire and Humber Climate Change Adaptation Study³ summarising the body of evidence for the impacts of climate change on regional economy.

Dr. Ceris Jones illustrated the NFU's position on how climate change will affect agriculture, discussing both positive and negative impacts on regional land use.

Tim Godson, GOYH detailed the issues present within national and regional policy, including the UK risk assessment that Defra is undertaking

Craig McGarvey, Area manager, Environment Agency gave clear messages of the threats that flooding, heat stress and extreme weather events pose to the sub region's communities and the Environment Agency's mechanisms of dealing with this.

Summary

The sub regional authorities all recognised the challenges that adapting to climate change poses, but there is still considerable work to be done improving adaptive capacity (NI188) by joining up issues and taking a systems approach. There is emerging good practice in some areas, particularly in flood alleviation where the climate change impact is visible and well understood. However action which reduces climate change emissions (mitigation action) is not currently linked to actions which increase adaptive capacity.

¹ NYCC, York CC, Harrogate BC, Scarborough BC, Craven DC, Hambleton DC, Richmondshire DC, Ryedale DC, Selby DC

² <http://www.localpriorities.communities.gov.uk/NIRResults.aspx?NIRef=NI%20188>

³ <http://www.adaptyh.co.uk/>

1.1 What are the sub region's priorities in adapting to a changing climate?

The workshop discussions provided the following list of priorities, from delegates' point of view.

- Protecting communities. One attendee suggested that it can take 9 months for a home to be refurbished after a flood, whereas effects may be shorter lived for farm land.
- Retrofitting existing buildings (e.g. moving sockets further up the walls).
- Social, physical and economic wellbeing of communities. Not just the physical buildings, but the communities themselves.
- Locating communities and infrastructure out of high risk areas. There are areas that are not optimum to build upon because of risks. Some attendees favoured planning solutions over engineering solutions, although it was emphasised that planning solutions were not easy for existing communities.
- Food security. Issues around food security and adaptation include:
 - Just-in-time food delivery at supermarkets mean that areas can rapidly run out of food after a few days. Communities are not very resilient.
 - Using agricultural land for flood storage can reduce available land for food production, reducing food security and making the UK more reliant on food from abroad.
 - Focus on growing energy crops to reduce carbon emissions can further worsen food security
- There are many issues around the ability of farms to cope with climate change. Some farms have the means and ability to change their practices and crops to adapt to the changing climate, whereas other, smaller, or more remote farms may not have the means and ability to do this.
- The UK may need to change its food consumption patterns to reflect the need to reduce carbon emissions (less food from abroad) and take account of different or reduced food production.
- Water security during potentially more arid summer months (from UK CIP Projections).
- Introducing novel and alternative approaches to infrastructure and service/utility delivery (e.g. distributed renewable based electricity generation, pressurised central heating etc.).
- Integrating climate change policies within regional government, crossing disciplines and providing overarching joined up policies.

1.2 What are the critical issues for Local Authorities' own adaptive capacity?

As discussed in section 2.1, ensuring climate change policy is embedded in organisational structure is essential to achieving meaningful progress. In addition, greater collaboration was recommended between Local Authorities and other relevant groups such as the Environment Agency, (especially in the planning realm) and school authorities.

Whilst flooding, for example in Pickering, has led to an increase in funding for adaptive capacity, this is still small scale and not only do more funds need to be committed, but practical ways of partnership building are required to improve future scheme design and implementation.

Discussion took place over potential DEFRA funding to use agricultural land to store excess

water, and over the issues of grant funding for large renewable hydro-electric projects which are not suitable for the small scale and distributed nature of the grid in North Yorkshire.

Some case study best practice projects exist in the region. For example, at Selby the new civic centre contains inbuilt resilience measures for heating and features sustainable materials in its construction. Craven DC and NYCC are now co-locating services, and buildings now feature advanced lighting sensors and technology. However, it is important to integrate technologies across the subregion and ensure best practice is transmitted between authorities.

What the various case studies across the region have illustrated is that top level leadership is required to 'push through' key projects, and provide ambition and drive to ensure success.

1.3 Issues associated with implementing solutions in York and North Yorkshire

- There are major but localised risks in the subregion, for example Pickering experiences a high level of flood risk. Solutions could be examined in a hierarchy, with the first focus on prevention of risk to communities through locating future development out of high flood risk areas, followed by flood storage, followed by flood protection.
- It is possible to adapt. Countries all over the world cope with higher levels of risk than we have in the UK under any climate change scenario. (I.e. trains run in Siberia in winter and monsoons in other countries).
- It is difficult to engage businesses as costs and changes are relatively long-term. Many businesses presently would prefer to take the risk than invest in adaptation.
- A strategic approach is needed to adaptation. The current RSS focuses on sustainability.
- Local applicability of solutions. For example, some areas of the areas have numerous historic buildings which are more difficult and costly to retrofit solutions to. There is a need for more flood defences to protect the whole community.
- Flood defences don't mean no flooding, but a reduced *risk* of flooding.
- Climate change language can be a barrier to adaptation. Adaptation can sound like we are happy to adapt to any level of climate change. However, there is only a certain amount of adaptation that is possible and there is a need for both mitigation and adaptation so that the level of adaptation required is achievable.
- Communications (key for community security if there is a major event – this refers to telecoms and electrical networks as well as transport and food supply)
- There are funding issues associated with adaptation and this is likely to worsen given the future reduction in public sector funding. There may be a need for innovative partnership schemes to access funding streams and the need to look to other organisations for funding (e.g. like EU thematic or regional funding).
- The sub region's land has many layers of use: food energy/ecology/housing etc. Policy and planning does not always consider all these uses. Sometimes uses may be in conflict. For example, in the North York Moors, then land which is available for flood water storage might have to pay a price in its performance for agricultural or economic value.
- The infrastructure providers need to be part of the debate in the sub region going forward. Distributed Network Operators (YEDL) are important, as well as transport providers.

2 Actions

- Involve National Grid and distributed network operators, plus Drainage boards, to contribute to sub regional action, to help produce realistic policies that are tailored to the subregion's needs.
- Currently, a RIEP proposal is being developed to assess impact of extreme weather on authority services – an improved evidence base is required to demonstrate the urgency of this.
- Adaptation plans and low carbon future plans **MUST** be considered together, a key theme that has come across during the workshop series is that these are inter-related issues and authorities must avoid tunnel vision with adaptation fitting within a global context