



Evaluation of the Local Carbon Framework Pilots

5. Discussion and recommendations

A report by CAG Consultants in association with
Impetus Consulting and Dr Joanne Wade

Commissioned by the Local Government Association
and the Department for Energy and Climate Change

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Chapter 5. Discussion and recommendations

Note to reader

This chapter is taken from the full report of the LGA and DECC Evaluation of the Local Carbon Framework Pilots, produced by CAG Consultants in association with Impetus Consulting and Dr. Joanne Wade.

This chapter pulls together the overall learning from the evaluation, highlighting common challenges and lessons from across the Local Carbon Framework (LCF) pilot programme. It also make recommendations to the Local Government Association (LGA), the Nottingham Declaration Board, the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC), the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and others on how to respond to these challenges and lessons. These recommendations are embedded in the main text, highlighted in italics and bold, and then summarised at the end of the chapter in table 2 for easy reference. The final chapter goes on to put forward proposals on developing a council framework on climate change.

Taking the learning forward

Learning: an evolving process

The full impact of the LCF pilot projects will not be known for some time. Many projects were still underway as the research for this took place. Furthermore, climate change is a long-term issue and so solutions and their impacts are as well. The learning from the programme will therefore not stop with the production of this report. It will continue to evolve, both from the projects themselves, but also as other councils apply and test the learning and tools from the programme.

(1) LGA, working with the Nottingham Declaration Board, should explore options to ensure that the evolving learning from the LCF pilots programme, and from wider council activity on climate change, is kept 'live', for example through web-based peer-review facilities or an online project wiki which could also be contributed to by other sectors.

Project outputs: testing and refining

The LCF pilots programme has produced a wide range of outputs that can be used by other councils. Some of these guidance documents and tools have been explicitly designed guidance documents and tools for other councils' use.



Others, however, were produced for the council or councils involved in the project. These are still useful to other councils, but would benefit from further development to make them more universally applicable. This would help to maximise the learning from the programme by making them more accessible and tailored for use for all councils.

(2) LGA and the Nottingham Declaration Board should seek to work with the LCF pilot councils to convert key outputs into universal tools and guidance documents where necessary.

In relation to this, the evaluation was not tasked with assessing the merits and effectiveness of the various tools and other outputs produced. In many cases, the councils involved are still 'road-testing' them. They would benefit in the future from some form of assessment of their efficacy to enable other councils to judge whether they would be useful for them to use themselves. This might be through an assessment by independent experts and / or through a peer review mechanism, allowing other councils to rate and provide feedback on their use.

(3) LGA and the Nottingham Declaration Board should consider ways in which to review the tools and other outputs from the LCF pilot programme to provide other councils with information about their efficacy and use, for example through a web-based peer review mechanism.

Quantifying impact

Quantifying the impact of projects and interventions has been difficult in at least two ways. Firstly, many projects are still under way and so the full impact of these won't be known for some time. Secondly, and more significantly, there has been no consistent standardised methodology for measuring impact and quantifying carbon emissions reduction¹.

This is partly because no standard method for baselining and quantifying carbon savings was established at the beginning of the LCF pilot programme². It is also, however, because the range of actions and interventions available to councils on carbon reduction are so broad and diverse that quantifying their impact is not always straightforward, particularly for 'softer' actions such as behavioural interventions or community capacity-building. Furthermore, where councils have attempted to measure the impact, they have not necessarily used similar or consistent data sets and methodologies, making it difficult to compare their relative impact.

Developing a more consistent, standardised method for quantifying impacts will be important as local government moves towards a sector-led approach to tackling climate change. It will provide councils with better information about the impacts of their own work, enable them to assess the impacts of 'like-for-like' projects run by different

¹ The EST 'Baseline Data and Methodology Review', published alongside this evaluation, was partly designed to explore these issues and provides a partial solution in terms of evaluating the various methodologies and data sources.

² DECC noted that the Government's original intention was to undertake a review for this purpose before the commencement of the pilots programme, but that this had not been possible due to changing political circumstances.

councils, and could make the impacts of their actions more understandable and more accountable to the wider public.

As highlighted in the 'mainstreaming carbon reduction' section in the previous chapter, a number of projects have sought to establish methods and tools for measuring carbon emissions savings. This provides a useful starting point for establishing a sector-wide approach to baselining and measuring carbon emissions, which should be built on in the future.

(4) LGA, DCLG, DECC and the Nottingham Declaration Board should seek to build on the learning from the LCF pilots programme to establish a sector-wide approach and framework for baselining and measuring carbon emissions, building on the EST work on baseline data and methodology. Advice from the Committee on Climate Change should be sought as part of this process.

An important pre-requisite for quantifying carbon emissions is having access to the requisite data. Data issues are discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

Scope

Whilst the LCF pilot programme encompassed a wide range of activities and interventions, it should be noted that there were limitations to its scope³. The projects, for example, did not cover some key areas for council carbon saving, such as energy management on councils' own estate. They also tended to be focused on urban areas, although the lessons in many cases are universal. This issue of scope is important in relation to building on the LCF pilot programme to develop a council framework on climate change and is therefore discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Common challenges and lessons

The previous chapter has already outlined some of key challenges and lessons from five learning themes: housing retrofit, sustainable energy generation, mainstreaming carbon reduction, enhancing reputation and winning hearts and minds. This section builds on this chapter by drawing together some of the key challenges and lessons from the programme as a whole.

Partnership working

Partnership working has been an integral part of many of the LCF pilot projects. Some of the pilots are centred on sub-regional partnerships between councils. Others have involved cross-sectoral collaboration. Many of the officers interviewed for this research considered working in partnership to be a challenge for councils, yet nonetheless they also felt that benefits of collaborating with others outweighed the difficulties that could arise.

³ It should be noted that the projects were self-selected by the nine pilot areas and so reflect the areas where councils felt there was a need to explore, rather than being pre-determined by DECC.

The 'enhancing reputation' section in the previous chapter explores in detail the learning about partnership working, based on the experiences of five of the pilot projects. It is worth drawing out some of the wider learning on partnership working from the programme given its prevalence in so many of the projects.

It is clear from the experience of the pilots that working in partnership is important for any council working to reduce carbon emissions. Councils on their own only have direct control over a relatively small amount of their area's emissions. Working with others widens their sphere of influence in terms of carbon emissions and can create a pan-area response to developing a low carbon community, as many of the LCF projects demonstrate.

Partnerships don't just have to be geographic however. One of the findings from the Haringey retrofit project, for instance, was that partnership working would be important to achieve the scale necessary to develop an effective Green Deal offer, but that this could be done with non-neighbouring councils.

Making effective use of resources

Collaboration is particularly important given the economic challenges councils are currently facing. The pilots have shown that it enables councils and their partners to make more effective use of their resources through pooling of skills, knowledge, expertise and funding. To pick just two of many examples, strategic engagement with the private sector by the Greater Manchester pilot has enhanced the councils' capability to understand and attract private sector low carbon investment. In the Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset MAA pilot, the project on carbon accounting for household waste was enabled through each of the councils involved providing a small amount of funding to produce a tool for common use.

Increasing council buying power

Linked to this, many of LCF pilot projects demonstrate that councils can significantly increase their buying power through working together. Greater Manchester's approach to housing retrofit across ten councils led to valuable large strategic partnerships with suppliers such as British Gas, for example.

Further lessons about responding to economic challenges are discussed below.

The value of developing the evidence base

Many of the LCF pilot projects have enabled councils to develop the evidence base for addressing carbon emissions. In themselves, these studies will not result directly in carbon emissions reductions. Further steps will be required to move these studies from enhanced understanding to the implementation of carbon cutting activity.

Nevertheless, they have provided councils with a valuable foundation from which to base action and the evidence from the pilots suggests that they have enhanced councils' ability to deliver carbon savings in a number of ways:

- Improving decision-making. In many cases, the studies have enabled councils to quantify what the opportunities for carbon savings are, and therefore decide where

they should concentrate their efforts to make the biggest difference. In other cases, such as Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole MAA's school journeys behavioural project, studies have provided councils with a more advanced understanding of local drivers for action;

- Increasing buy-in. Officers from the pilots reported that studies from their projects had enabled them to build a powerful business case for action within their council and beyond. This has enabled them to secure buy-in for carbon reduction activities from senior decision-makers and key partners. In Oxford, for example, the evidence-based approach had given key partners more confidence with one of the partners referring to a 'light bulb' moment when he realised the potential of the scheme in question;
- Accelerating action. Developing the evidence base enabled councils to identify concrete actions for carbon reduction. This has moved equipped councils to make the step from an ambition to cut carbon to having the practical tools and knowledge to make these cuts a reality. The lead of the Haringey pilot, for instance, had found that the projects had provided them with an action list for achieving the council's aim of reducing carbon emissions by 40% by 2020;
- Widening ownership. By highlighting what needs to be done, building the evidence base has also the widened ownership of the low carbon agenda. They have identified practical contributions that 'non-climate change' council departments and partnership organisations can make to the low carbon agenda. As one officer interviewed for the research commented, "it has moved the agenda from being something that the climate change team does to an issue that other departments now realise they can address, taking actions that also deliver on their own priorities".

Data

Building the evidence base has required councils to access or collect a wide range of data. This was not always been straightforward for the pilot projects however. A number of projects highlighted limitations or issues regarding data, as set out in table Annex A. These span a range of different areas, the most common concerning energy-related and housing-related data.

Not all pilot experiences of data were problematic. Some have highlighted innovative ways in which data can be used. Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole MAA's electric vehicle study, for instance, demonstrated how datasets such as Green ACORN and Google Earth can be combined to provide interesting assessments of the potential for some carbon emissions reduction measures. Some projects also highlighted the importance of collecting locally relevant data to making effective decisions, rather than relying on national datasets, which can be less informative about local needs.

(5) DECC, DCLG and LGA should facilitate interaction between that the councils concerned and the relevant decision makers and data set owners to highlight their experiences and discuss solutions to issues they have encountered.

Financial opportunities

Many of the pilot projects demonstrate tangible financial opportunities available to councils who prioritise a low carbon agenda, though more effective use of resources, securing external funding and generating income. This is particularly important given the UK Government is committed to reducing the UK's debt and reducing the annual deficit over the course of the next Parliament. This has led to significant spending constraints for councils, who are re-thinking and re-prioritising the services they deliver. This has put pressure on resources previously earmarked for tackling climate change. The pilots demonstrate, however, that low carbon projects can be a way of securing economic development, creating new investment opportunities and achieving savings.

Achieving cost savings

The pilots demonstrate a number of ways in which councils can make direct cost savings. As highlighted earlier, partnership working can reduce project costs through pooling resources and increasing their buying power. As importantly, the projects themselves can lead to cost savings. Examples include invest-to-save projects such as Haringey's solar project, which the council predicts will achieve savings of £155,000 in reduced energy costs. Practical collaborations with other sectors can also relieve pressure on council resources; Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset MAA's community sustainable energy network project was designed with this aim in mind, whilst partnership with the private sector has led to valuable in-kind secondment arrangements in Greater Manchester.

Securing external funding

There remain significant opportunities for councils to secure external funding for low carbon projects. Whilst competition for external funding is likely to increase in the future, there is still likely to be significant amounts available. The Green Deal and the Energy Company Obligation (ECO)⁴, for instance, will present opportunities for councils to secure millions of pounds to work on domestic retrofit in the future. Projects in Haringey, Leeds and Manchester are paving the way to enable the councils involved to take advantage of these opportunities, as highlighted in the previous chapter. As discussed in the following section, there are also significant opportunities for attracting private sector investment to support the local low carbon economy.

Generating income

The projects also highlight opportunities for councils to generate income. Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset MAA, for example, found that there are potentially significant economic benefits for the partners involved in decentralised energy schemes. Furthermore, Haringey's light supply licence project could make this schemes even more attractive by enabling councils and other providers to sell electricity at retail rather than wholesale

⁴ At the time writing, DECC was due to publish its consultation on the Green Deal in Autumn 2011.

rates. Haringey's solar PV project meanwhile is taking advantage of the FITs and will generate a predicted of over £250,000 a year⁵.

Building on LCF pilot funding

According to the councils involved, the LCF pilot programme has enabled them to continue to make progress in reducing community-wide carbon emissions. This is because the process has raised the profile of the agenda within the council and incentivised councils to run the projects. Perhaps most significantly, the project funding from the LCF pilot programme was also critical to many of these projects.

The projects have provided direct benefits to the councils involved, but importantly these benefits also potentially extend to all councils. They have provided a suite of tools, guidance and experiences that will enable other councils to replicate they work at reduced, or even no, cost.

This suggests that a continued demonstration fund would be of significant value to realising the sector's potential contribution to meeting the UK Government's statutory climate change targets. The fund could be conditional on supporting projects that aimed to achieve value for money, only supporting projects that provided resources and experiences that allowed other councils to replicate the work to achieve carbon savings at no, or reduced, cost, or helped them to save money or generate income. Such a fund need not rely on government grant funding and a range of alternative funding options could be explored including opportunities for self-financing within the sector and other sources of grant funding.

(6) DECC, DCLG, LGA and the Nottingham Declaration Board should explore options to create a continued source of funding for council demonstration projects.

Corporate commitment

Strong, senior-level, corporate commitment was identified as a necessary success factor for many of the LCF pilot projects. Developing a sound business case, including demonstrating the financial or economic worth of the project to the council or the wider economy, was viewed as an important process in bringing senior decision-makers on board.

LCF pilot officers also emphasised how helpful the LCF pilot programme had been in securing the engagement and buy-in of Members and senior management on boards, particularly in light of the lack of national indicators driving this agenda. Similarly, Manchester said that their designation as a 'Low Carbon Economic Area' had been tremendously helpful in this regard; the designation didn't come with any funding, but it was nevertheless enough of a catalyst to allow for stretching targets to be agreed upon.

This suggests that such 'status-related' drivers can have an important effect in generating corporate 'excitement' and commitment in projects. In the absence of performance-related drivers, such as the national indicators, it will be important that the

⁵ Returns from FITs are likely to change following DECC's Phase 1 Review of FITs. See www.decc.gov.uk for more details.

new Nottingham Declaration is designed in a way that galvanises and inspires senior decision-makers to set ambitious carbon targets.

(7) LGA and the Nottingham Declaration Board should ensure that the new Nottingham Declaration is designed in a way that generates corporate 'excitement' and commitment to the agenda and galvanises councils to set ambitious carbon targets.

Supporting the local economy

A number of the LCF projects demonstrate the potential for councils to support low carbon activity based on locally relevant economic issues. The food supply chain project in Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset, for instance, is aiming to reduce the carbon footprint of the food supply chain by supporting local produce. According to the Leeds City Region pilot, its low carbon economic analysis project has estimated that carbon saving action could result in £1bn in energy savings alone. The green enterprise growth project in the Haringey pilot, meanwhile, has been turning the heads of key decision-makers by demonstrating the job opportunities in the low carbon sector, highlighting that 15,000 jobs already existed in the sector and finding that energy-from-waste facilities can potential provide 1700-2000 local jobs.

Aligning low carbon activity with political priorities

Finally, this also demonstrates the value of linking low carbon action to other council priorities, be they economic or social. Many of the officers involved in the pilots stressed the importance of 'selling' low carbon projects using language tailored the political priorities of the council, such as fuel poverty, job creation, economic development or enabling the Big Society.

For many of the LCF practitioners the use of language could unite or even polarise. Often, the term 'climate change' was not effective in selling projects, whereas their experience had taught them terms such as 'low carbon', 'energy security' and 'fuel poverty' were more likely to engage decision-makers and other potential partners.

This is an important consideration for the LGA and the Nottingham Declaration Board given that the new declaration that will need to galvanise and inspire councils and their partners.

Summary of recommendations

The table summarises the recommendations embedded in the discussion sections above.

Table 2. LCF pilots evaluation recommendations

| | Issue | Recommendation | Organisation(s) |
|---|-------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 | Learning from LCF | Explore options to ensure that the | LGA and |



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| | pilots will continue to evolve | evolving learning from the LCF pilots programme, and from wider council activity on climate change, is kept 'live', for example through web-based peer-review facilities or an online project wiki. | Nottingham Declaration Board |
| 2 | Not all LCF outputs are designed for use by other councils | Work with the LCF pilot councils to convert key outputs into universal tools and guidance documents where necessary. | LGA and Nottingham Declaration Board |
| 3 | LCF outputs would benefit from external testing and peer review | Consider ways in which to review the tools and other outputs from the LCF pilot programme to provide other councils with information about their efficacy and use, for example through a web-based peer review mechanism. | LGA and Nottingham Declaration Board |
| 4 | There is no sector-wide approach to baselining and measuring carbon emissions | Build on the learning from the LCF pilots programme by establishing a sector-wide approach and framework for baselining and measuring carbon emissions. | LGA, DECC, DCLG and Nottingham Declaration Board With advice from the Committee on Climate Change |
| 5 | The LCF pilots raised a number of data-related issues | Facilitate interaction between that the councils concerned and the relevant decision makers and data set owners to highlight their experiences and discuss solutions to issues they have encountered. | DECC, DCLG and LGA |
| 6 | LCF Pilot funding has provided value-for-money learning to help the sector meet national climate change sector targets | Explore options to create a continued source of funding for council demonstration projects, looking at both public and private sector investment opportunities. | DECC, DCLG, LGA and Nottingham Declaration Board |
| 7 | The need to secure corporate commitment and engagement in carbon reduction | Ensure that the new Nottingham Declaration is designed in a way that generates corporate 'excitement' and commitment to the agenda and galvanises councils to set ambitious carbon targets. | LGA and Nottingham Declaration Board |

Annex A. Data issues

This table summarises key data encountered by the LCF pilots, discussed in section 5.2.

Table 6. Data issues encountered by LCF pilot projects

| Project | Data issue |
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| Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset Multi-Area Agreement (MAA) area-based approach domestic energy efficiency project | The results of modelling exercises such as Vantage point are not useful in the project area because the housing stock is non-standard. Therefore, a significant amount of local data is needed and has to be collated |
| Dorset Energy Group renewable energy strategy | Concerns about limitations of national data for some resources e.g. geographical scale used for wind resource estimation failing to exclude all area where physical constraints (e.g. roads or inland waterways) would prevent development; and the exclusion of non-food organic waste from Environment Agency data on biomass |
| Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset MAA electric vehicle charging demand study | The extent to which Green ACORN accurately represents the likely demand for EV charging. This uncertainty includes whether or not the profiles accurately match the households in the area, and also whether or not the council has chosen to focus on the right profile in determining demand for EV charging |
| Bristol area-based solar scheme | The mapping of community solar potential relied on collecting new raw data. This was delivered a month late due to weather conditions, which had knock-on effects in terms of the project timeframe |
| Bristol City Council procurement carbon footprinting project | The project found that further process-based data should be sought to understand specific opportunities for product substitution or efficiency gains. This could include obtaining data from suppliers relating to the carbon footprints of the commodities they produce, but most suppliers do not currently have the capability for this kind of reporting |
| Bristol Smart City | There were challenges around quantifying the potential carbon savings from smart technology initiatives; other projects do not always publish this data. Also, this is a new area so there is in general a lack of data, making it necessary to 'dig deep' to find out what works |

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| <p>Bristol sustainable buildings standards evidence</p> | <p>Getting hold of data on costs was a challenge</p> <p>The industry itself was not able to provide information on the costs of building to high levels of the Code</p> <p>Much of the available data was out of date. For example, the government produced a report on the cost of building to different levels of the Code, but this was published just before Feed in Tariffs were introduced, so the costs were immediately out of date</p> <p>The definition of 'zero carbon' was changed halfway through this project with the result that Code 6 will no longer be specified through Building Regulations. This means that the data relating to Code 6 will only be of use if a council chooses to set its own local requirement that new developments are built to this standard</p> |
| <p>Greater Manchester carbon metrics framework</p> | <p>The project officers felt that a lack of national consistency and standardisation would hamper the ability to measure the UK's progress against national targets</p> <p>There were significant technical data challenges especially to establish an area (cross council)-based carbon production data-set. The use of the ENIGMA air quality data set has helped to create this data set although there are still issues with completeness (there are gaps in data collection) and baselines</p> |
| <p>Haringey Council domestic and commercial retrofit project</p> | <p>Haringey's feasibility study used local land register and post office datasets, which required some work to match up. However, there are plans to unify these in future</p> <p>Accessing data was particularly difficult and getting hold of private sector stock data was real challenge. For example, using Home Energy Efficiency Database (HEED) data at an address level was also not possible because of data protection requirements, although a compromise was reached allowing the use of census-level information</p> |
| <p>Leeds City Region domestic energy and efficiency programme</p> | <p>Testing the EPC data has shown there are gaps. For example, EPCs don't pick up pre-1920 properties. They also don't gather the information that the market would value in order to develop wider measures e.g. on renewables</p> |
| <p>Leeds City Region low carbon economic analysis</p> | <p>The study has been based on the Climate Change Committee's MACC (Marginal Abatement Cost Curve) methodology, where possible replacing national data with locally relevant data. It has proved a complex process requiring a very long list of datasets. Issues raised by the analysis have been identified and the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) and DECC who are</p> |

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| | <p>undertaking a 'health check' on the MACC data set</p> <p>Problems encountered include that some of the national models, for example on transport, are related in MACC to actions that can only be taken by national government - e.g. on vehicle efficiency - whereas a local study needs to identify actions that could be taken by the sub-region or individual councils</p> |
| Nottingham City Council energy mapping project | Availability of some of the data - e.g. some DEC information - was an issue. The pilot was forced to select lots of static data because live data wasn't available. Specifically, EPC data and distribution network data wasn't available |
| Oxford City Council OxCO ₂ project | Need for community level baseline energy data in order to show carbon reductions |

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