Policy Briefing Note
Local Governance

PCAN PLACE-BASED CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK

Multi-levels of information, tools, data and other resources

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KEY NOTES

- Little evidence of tool use beyond expert sub-national bodies and county council.
- Difficulty in identifying authoritative sources of information.
- Information provided generally supports national strategy rather than local delivery
- Poor levels of knowledge exchange across multiple levels of governance, with greatest direction downwards. Very limited evidence of flow of experiential or acquired knowledge upwards through the tiers of governance.
- Capacity, capability and tools for local emissions monitoring are extremely weak.

The research found only limited evidence of the use of tools, carbon resources and data monitoring, with ad hoc access to information across all of the multiple levels of governance. It has highlighted that the resource needs of local governance bodies change with different stages of climate action. This occurs most strongly between the move from strategy and planning (tools , techniques and knowledge) to operational delivery (skills and capacity). Monitoring the impact of actions taken was seen to be the weakest area of data management.

Developing strategy and plans at all levels of governance

Finding trustworthy, science based guidance and information that met local need was difficult. Frequently climate information was 'topic - based' rather than collated in a 'use-based' format, suitable for local actors. At a sub national level searching the web was the primary method for sourcing information, even though the UK government and county council provided climate change data. People found it difficult to ask the 'right question' and had little time to assess.

Boundary spanning individuals were hugely important in transferring net zero information, ideas and actions across multiple tiers of government and into the community. They were found both within and outside formal governance structures. Those within the councils also formed a bridge

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to other council contacts. Local parish councillors and local climate networks consistently highlighted the difficulty of ***finding the right person to talk to*** within their local council .

Carbon tools available for, and used by, councils appear to be limited and awareness was poor. SCATTER, a BEIS funded, free to use carbon footprinting tool was mentioned. It offered a good starting point for Tier 1 and Tier 2 councils with little knowledge, but was seen as too high level for detailed delivery planning. IMPACT a carbon footprinting tool operating at parish level had just been launched. Surrey County council had commissioned the University's of Leeds and Surrey to create a modelling tool to plan the most effective territorial carbon reduction and cost options at county level.

Regional bodies provided expertise and tools: Both the Greater South East Net Zero Energy Hub and Transport for the South East offered valued guidance and help; the Net Zero Hub to all levels of governance, including parish councils. Tools offered included; own estate public sector investment support, assessment of sites for solar PV farms and the UK power networks 'Heat Street' which considers local heating system retrofits. Current economic tools are being adapted to incorporate transport decarbonisation and develop carbon pathways.

Supporting delivery

Creating 'One Voice' resources for local delivery partners on climate change'. Whilst there is a need to adapt to local concerns, there is a strong sense that local organisations working together to create clear project or campaign messaging would be helpful. There was strong agreement that these would need to be clear, link to the science, be long term and repetitive. Embedding the lead for this work within a neutral and respected institution would remove local concerns of political or personal bias. There was no example of this identified within the network of Surrey actors.

Link climate change with biodiversity to maximise 'locally beneficial' carbon reduction This was a strong message, especially from those in the most rural areas.

Poor capability and capacity to link action with emissions reduction: monitoring emissions data to understand the level of carbon reduction at a local level is time ***consuming, difficult to capture and rarely undertaken.*** There is also concern, that carbon accounting for nature based solutions is also not clear.

At a local level there is **demand for easy to use tools,** with an expectation these need to be provided by government. However, in the absence of, or lack of awareness of national tools, many organisations are developing their own. This has led to concerns about time /money being spent on tool creation e.g. at least two new parish developed tools were identified in the research.

This policy note is drawn from wider research available in the PCAN Report: On multi-level climate governance in an urban/rural county: Surrey, available at https://pcancities.org.uk/

Acknowledgments: We gratefully acknowledge financial support from the UK's Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) through the Place-based Climate Action Network (PCAN).

Published August 2023