

Priority Issue

Creating a Low Carbon Future - reducing carbon dioxide emissions and adapting to climate change.

1. Why was the high level strategic issue chosen? (using evidence base and theme lead's expertise on subject area)

The DSCS Energy evidence base (October 2006) identified the urgency and primacy of reducing emissions of carbon dioxide from use of fossil fuels. Since then, a number of important international and national reports have been published, which confirm and amplify the case for urgent emissions reduction and the challenge for local strategic partnerships. These include:

- UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports (2006-7)
- UK Treasury Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change (Nov 2006).
- UK Climate Change Bill (April 2007)
- UK Energy White Paper (May 2007)
- UK Local Government White Paper (Nov 2006)

The Devon Sustainable Energy Network has developed a Carbon Reduction Analysis for Devon, Plymouth and Torbay (June 2007), which identifies the interim emissions reduction required by 2010 and the priority actions for achieving it.

It is clear that we have perhaps only 5 to 10 years to start to significantly reduce carbon dioxide emissions if dangerous, irreversible climate change is to be avoided. The priority actions for achieving this (energy efficiency in domestic and business premises, and modest installation of renewable energy) are available to us now and are cost effective to implement.

In addition to the imperative of avoiding dangerous climate change, the Devon Economic Partnership has identified the move to a low carbon economy as one of the top economic priorities for Devon. The Devon Carbon Reduction Analysis has identified the following cost/benefits:

- Target: 15% CO₂ reduction by 2010
- Investment gap: £111m
- Energy cost saving: £106m/yr
- Fuel poverty health cost saving: £25m/yr
- Additional inward investment attracted: £510m
- Jobs created: significant

Even if urgent, significant global emissions reduction can be achieved and dangerous climate avoided, a degree of climate change will continue to increase in the future resulting from the emissions already in the atmosphere. Adapting Devon's communities, activities and services to the likely impact of future climate change is also a priority action.

2. Why the particular contributory (linked) issues have been chosen? (using the evidence base and the theme leads' expertise on their subject areas)

Particular linked issues are as follows:

Access to quality employment – there are significant economic opportunities for Devon to increase business competitiveness and productivity through more efficient use of energy and development of low carbon goods and services such as renewable energy and sustainable tourism, leading to job creation, skills development, and increased incomes;

Disadvantaged communities – are most vulnerable to increasing energy costs, poorer housing is harder to heat and less investment is available locally for energy efficiency in homes and businesses;

Health inequalities – fuel poverty is a major cause of ill health and has increased significantly with rising energy costs;

Environment – protected landscapes, habitats and biodiversity are at risk from climate change, as is water quality and supply.

3. How the findings of the *Evidence Base Theme Reports and Check For Sensitivity to Equality Report* has informed the issue

There are no significant negative impacts on equality arising from the priority. Actions to reduce carbon dioxide emissions could be prioritised in disadvantaged communities and so reduce fuel poverty and increase economic opportunities. Adapting to climate change will protect all communities, especially the most vulnerable. Transport is an issue that is now addressed as a priority action in the Devon Carbon Reduction Analysis and social enterprise is identified as a mechanism for creating investment in carbon reduction and community benefit. Further analysis of fuel poverty issues is underway, the initial analysis included isolated rural fuel poverty and the cost of taking up new technologies in disadvantaged households and communities was factored into the cost benefit analysis quoted above.

4. How the contributions made during the public consultation of the evidence base have been integrated within/dealt with?

Transport has been identified as a priority action in the Devon Carbon Reduction Analysis and a delivery plan is being developed.

Economic and social vulnerability to rising energy prices, as fossil fuel becomes more expensive as we approach and pass 'Peak Oil' (possibly between 2007 and 2011) is accepted. The involvement of the Devon Economic Partnership, and their prioritisation of a 'Low Carbon Economy' ensures the business and economy sector's engagement with this issue. The Devon LAA has an outcome to reduce fuel poverty that is being developed.

This priority has been re-focused on climate change and carbon dioxide emissions, rather than sustainable energy. Carbon dioxide is by far the most significant, but not the only, anthropogenic greenhouse gas. Local emissions of other gases needs to be monitored, managed and mitigated, but the immediate priority is carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuel use.

