



UNLEASHING THE POWER

COMMUNITIES & THE ENVIRONMENT



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UNLEASHING THE POWER

COMMUNITIES & THE ENVIRONMENT



ANDREW PAKES
CHAIR, SERA

There has been a lot of talk from government and green-groups alike about the need for individual action to tackle climate change and help the environment. From flying less and recycling more, we know that we need to change behaviour. But moving people to act is a difficult thing.

As a Labour movement, we are not afraid of difficult things though. And we have a history of moving people to act to change – together. Because we know that working together as a community can have even greater impact.

This pamphlet is a contribution to the ongoing discussion on the role of communities in tackling climate change. It draws on Labour's traditional values of social solidarity and collective action to explore how community groups, social enterprises, local authorities, neighbours and friends are joining together to fight against climate change and reduce their impact on the environment.

Too often the focus on environmental issues is about international agreements or high-level policy changes. Here, we focus on real, innovative action already happening in our communities and the added impact it brings to tackling environmental problems. Projects that bring people together to improve their environment not only have a greater effect on the environment than the individuals alone could have, but such collective action produces significant spin-off benefits that increase the quality of participants' lives too.

The discussion in the pages that follow, then, shares some of the lessons of community engagement from across the UK and provides some real-life examples of the value of community and collective action coming together to unleash the power.

ANDREW PAKES
CHAIR, SERA

COMMUNITIES 'IN POWER'

Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP,
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

In my SERA Deputy Leadership speech in May 2007, I said **"There needs to be a collective response at the level of the street, neighbourhood, estate and community if our action to tackle climate change is to be lasting and effective"**. In these tough economic times saving energy and preparing for future opportunities in the upturn are important to everyone. Coming together in our communities to work together is as, if not more, relevant than ever.

We all recognise the importance and urgency of the climate change challenge - some say we may only have 100 months to stabilize emissions before irreversible climate change takes hold. While we in government, and the markets, have a role to play, the most important change agent is and will continue to be the people of this country. They will have the biggest impact on this issue when they come together to work out how and what needs to be done, and work together, to challenge and support each other to help make the UK the first successful low carbon economy, the first successful low carbon society, the first successful low carbon country.



We all understand the need to reduce our carbon dioxide emissions. But what is more important is how and whether we collectively understand what that means for what we do, or don't do. How will we live, work and play in a carbon constrained world? We will need to rethink our homes and their energy needs. We will need to take a different view of getting from A to B, and even where A and B are. We will need to work differently, and possibly even earn our living in new ways. And while we probably all appreciate using wasting less energy is a good

thing, but do we know enough about what is waste, or excessive use?

Hence 'Communities in Power'. Resolving these issues requires shared and collective understanding of why they are important and some degree of consensus on how we share the effort to address them. For this to happen, I would encourage every community to have, sooner rather than later, a 'Carbon conversation'. This will be an opportunity for people to come together in their communities to discuss and agree 'what is the right response for us'. We need to recognise that what might work best in and for the people of Salford, may not be the same as what works for the people and place that make Milton Keynes, or Hackney the communities that they are. These 'Carbon conversations' will help people work out what they think they can and will do together to generate and use local energy, to rethink rubbish as a resource, to make best use of local transport, as well as to engage friends and neighbours and promote their collective ownership of local solutions.

Some people have started this for themselves through things like CRAGs – Carbon Reduction Action Groups – where like-minded friends gather to support and of course challenge each other to reduce their emissions – a modern day slimming club 'for carbon dieting'. For me the importance of CRAGs is that people come together to work together for a greater achievement than simply their own interest. Others have taken the route of Transition Towns – a way of people coming together to consider their response to our dependence on oil and fossil fuels. What I most value

and wish to support is the way in which people come together to meet the challenge – you don't need permission to establish a transition town (or a CRAG for that matter). It is a matter of citizen empowerment and of citizen action.

One of the key objectives of my 'Communities in Control' White Paper, and now the Local Democracy Bill, is to unleash collective 'People Power'. There are people who are happy and capable of being active on climate change of their own volition, while there are others who need support or a prompt. It is, I believe, the role of government to enable everyone to find their voice, have their say and be able to act individually and collectively. For some that will mean government not having to do anything, or even getting out of their way. Others may need the right framework, better opportunities and the right incentives. It may also be the case that government, particularly local government, can facilitate people coming together to then act on their own.

Whether you are self motivated or need some support, access to information is key – to know which electrical appliance to buy, or whether locally produced food really is the most sustainable. Climate change is a complicated business involving, as it does, some of the greatest scientist, activist and political brains in the world. Most of us, though, need information that is more digestible and more meaningful in terms of our day to day existence. Information that ought to help us understand the issue, the consequences and how we can make a difference (for ourselves, and for and with others) is what government and others need to provide. And it is important that

what we say is both clear and sensitive to the personal situation of different people, which may also mean it is good to offer a chance to discuss the issues.

Information often leads to ideas and a willingness to express a view or even to act. What though, could be more depressing than being told something is important, getting motivated to speak, or act, and then finding your voice is unheard, or worse, ignored. Whether that is the recycling bags being too big to carry to the kerb, or the health centre too difficult to get to without a car, local public and other services need to ensure they understand their citizens and their customers. I would argue it is the right of citizens to be heard and that it is a straightforward truth that if public agencies and services respond to what people need, and do things right for customers first time, then services will be better regarded and usually cheaper to deliver (as there is no need to provide or deliver more than once). There is a clear challenge to public bodies to hear what people want and expect of them on climate change and to be influenced accordingly.

And of course many public agencies and local authorities have heard, are seizing local interest, have made a public statement of the community's desire to act (for example through the Nottingham Declaration), and are beginning to act. That might be in terms of the services they provide, for example the wider range of materials that can be collected for recycling, or in terms of how they operate, reducing their own climate impact through what they buy and how they do things. It is a particular pleasure to see that the process



of devolving power and responsibility to local strategic partnerships and local area agreements continues to flourish and that most recently almost all local area agreements prioritise at least one of the climate change 'indicators', be that local CO₂ emissions, emissions of the local authority itself, or addressing climate change adaptation. These are a clear expression of the priorities of a local community which will continue to impact on how local agencies and local government plan and deliver their services in future.

Even when services, such as the recycling or community heating work well, there will always be scope for improvement. It is often those closest to delivery, both users and staff, who will know how things can be improved. This is clearly another reason for public services to ensure they engage with their residents to hear what they have to say and act, as well as to empower their staff to respond to what they can see need to be done. Equally, with all human endeavour, there will be times when things don't work as well as they might and citizens and customers,

as well as staff, should know who and how to challenge what has been done, and how to hold the appropriate person or organisation to account. And of course sometimes things do go wrong, in which case people need to know that those providing the service know something isn't right, they say sorry for their mistake and they act to make sure it won't happen again or to anyone else.

Ultimately 'Communities in Power' will involve some taking a further step - either to stand for local political office or become involved in the ownership and running of services that help address the climate change challenge. While this may not be for everyone, we do need more people from a wider range of backgrounds to take this step if these issues are to be properly reflected in how and what local services do. After all, many councillors are of an older generation and may not have to face the worse consequences of adapting to climate change, though their expertise of living through the 1940's and 1950's in a more resource constrained world could be invaluable given the challenges we face.

So if we can support those who want to act and work together, if we can encourage, support and prompt more to do so through the right environment, if we can engage public services and particularly local government, what will that give us?

My experience and belief, writ large in the case studies highlighted here, show that community based approaches allow us to learn from and respect others, to support, motivate and challenge each other and to build a greater sense of neighbourliness and community spirit, which in turn makes communities more cohesive and resilient. Community approaches embrace a personal approach which suits our needs while respecting the needs of others. Personalization also means our needs are met the right way first time, which means the community can benefit from more effective public services. The more our services deliver what we need when we need it, the greater the impact on local CO₂ emissions. Community Power, expressed as collective action of local people supported by their local services will make the big difference to our efforts to address the challenge of climate change. After all it is the way that most of us will be involved.





THE POWER OF GREEN COMMUNITIES

Gearoid Lane
Managing Director, British Gas New Energy

Households account for around a quarter of total UK CO₂ emissions. And it's estimated that poor insulation means around £1 in every £4 currently spent heating UK homes is wasted. If existing homes could be brought right up to the standard of the newest homes, the savings would be much higher still.

Building regulations require all new homes to be 'zero carbon' by 2016. But by 2050, over three in four of the homes we will live in are the ones that have already been built. So whilst making sure that new homes are built to a far higher standard is obviously important, making the existing stock as energy efficient as possible needs to be a priority.

Over half of all the potential CO₂ savings from the UK's 25 million homes can come from simple measures such as installing cavity wall and loft insulation. There are still around 9 million homes without cavity wall insulation, and many more without solid wall insulation. Making simple behavioural changes like turning lights off can contribute further to cutting energy use.

As the country's biggest energy supplier, British Gas knows we need

to take the lead in helping consumers reduce their energy consumption by becoming more energy efficient.

It was in that context that we decided to launch the British Gas Green Streets campaign early in 2008. It was a year-long national social experiment in improving energy efficiency and reducing CO₂ emissions which has helped to demonstrate what can be achieved by households up and down the country in existing homes.

Eight households in eight "green-themed" streets in each of eight major metropolitan areas nationwide were selected. From hundreds of volunteers, the final sixty-four households were selected to ensure a realistic cross section of the national picture and represent the full housing mix in the UK. Around half were British Gas customers.

Each street was given a budget of £30,000 to spend on domestic energy saving equipment – from energy efficient light-bulbs, to cavity wall insulation and solar panels. Each street worked with a British Gas energy expert who offered practical advice on energy-saving measures and the benefits of behavioural change.

To make the experiment more interesting, we introduced a competitive element. The 'Green Streets' – in Manchester, Leeds, London, Birmingham, Edinburgh, Cardiff, Plymouth and Southampton – competed against one another over the year to see which street could drive down their energy demand the most. The winning street will shortly be awarded £50,000 worth of energy saving equipment to invest in local community projects.

The energy savings have been dramatic. Many households have cut their energy use by over 30%, and some highly motivated households have nearly halved their gas use. Average energy savings of more than 25% have been achieved across all eight streets.

We asked the ippr to independently monitor the experiment and draw policy lessons based on observing the behaviours and outcomes from the participating households. The emerging conclusions contain some interesting thoughts.

The competition element has helped drive energy saving behaviour, but anticipated financial savings have also been important. Trust has emerged as an important theme. Our Green Streets households felt that they could trust the energy-efficiency information they were given. They also valued the back-up they got from the British Gas Energy Experts. That has helped to sustain interest and behaviour change.

Most unexpected though, Green Streets has had a positive impact on community spirit and neighbourliness, bringing together neighbours who hadn't met

before and creating both peer pressure and support to maintain energy efficient behaviour. Real communities have emerged as a result of the project. When the ippr interviewed our residents, many people commented that getting to know their neighbours and build communities had been the best part of being involved.

A virtuous circle seems to have taken off in all the streets. Acting together to reduce energy demand has helped to develop social cohesion. And better community cohesion has acted as a driver, encouraging households to make a bigger effort to reduce their energy demand.

The interaction with their neighbours has helped to very quickly "normalise" action, and has provided a local support network where people don't want to let each other down. It's also made it easy for people to share tips and hints on energy saving.

And the impact has gone wider than the original households. The ippr found that friends, family and other neighbours of many of the participants have taken an interest in the competition. Some of them have bought energy efficiency measures including energy monitors, standby savers, light bulbs and cavity wall insulation. Many have shown an interest in learning how changing their behaviour can reduce their energy use. At least one of the streets has, unprompted by British Gas or the ippr, held community meetings to share their learnings. This "multiplier effect" has significantly increased the energy savings beyond the boundaries of the 64 participating families.

So what lessons can we learn from all this?

It seems reasonable to suggest that the energy savings achieved by our Green Streets residents could, given the same support, be replicated across the country. The ippr has estimated that could cut the nation's collective energy bill by £4.6 billion. That would make a significant contribution to meeting 2020 renewable energy targets, as well as 2050 targets to cut carbon emissions by 80%.

Unfortunately, it's not possible to replicate Green Streets in this way. It's too expensive, and we don't have enough energy efficiency advisers to allocate one to every eight homes. But Green Streets starts to show us the potential and hints at the policy lessons that could start to impact nationwide. The community approach is emerging as a key, if not the only, approach.

What should we mean by a community in this context?

It's people who share something in common. That could be a geographical area, as in Green Streets, but it could be based on shared interests; a theatre group or scout group for instance where people come together on a regular basis. It could be based around a physical location; a church, mosque or school.

So what's the role for an energy supplier like British Gas? Well, we don't pretend to have all the answers. British Gas is not going to create communities where they don't exist. And our ability to tap into communities is limited.

But we do have experience of working in partnership with other organisations to engage with communities. Perhaps the best example is the British Gas flagship community programme 'here to HELP', The largest social initiative of its kind in the UK, 'here to HELP' is a unique coalition between the public, private and charity sectors, delivering real benefit to vulnerable households.

The scheme aims to tackle the root causes of household poverty by improving the living conditions and quality of life in some of Britain's most deprived communities. Launched in 2002, we have helped over 320,000 households. It provides energy efficient products, but also benefits assessments, essential appliances and adaptors, home security measures, and advice from our charity partners who include Help the Aged, Scope & the RNIB. We have found unclaimed benefits totalling around £17million, and on average qualifying applicants are over £1,500 a year better off as a result of the benefit health check alone. Over 60,000 households have been referred under the scheme to our charity partners. So the value of working in partnership is well-understood at British Gas.

Green Streets has also shown the importance of locally based advice, of a local presence in delivering social initiatives and local services. We feel it is worth exploring further the role of partnerships, where local initiatives are supported by trusted "experts".

This community based approach allows local residents to act as 'ordinary' champions, persuading others to take action, based on their own experiences. Energy suppliers like British Gas could have a role in helping people take action by providing advice and support to community groups. The recently launched Heat and Energy Saving Strategy consultation, which considers how the suppliers' energy efficiency programme should develop in the future, will provide a focus for debate. Allowing energy companies to be credited for this kind of action under statutory energy efficiency programmes is something British Gas feels should be actively considered.

The new Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP) offers an early vehicle to test a community approach further. Announced by Prime Minister Gordon Brown in September last year, it is a £350million energy efficiency programme, funded by an obligation on suppliers and generators. Where the supplier-led CERT programme looks for maximum carbon savings at least cost, an approach that can be described as broad but piecemeal, the CESP programme will be community-focused allowing a narrower but deeper approach. Its focus will be on the most vulnerable communities.

Longer term we believe this approach, if structured correctly, could have a significant impact on low income communities, and become an important means of tackling fuel poverty.

A street by street approach will be most effective in vulnerable communities that have been largely untouched

by energy efficiency schemes, where the homes are hard to treat, and where measures are installed for free. CESP is a blueprint for this model.

We don't believe though that a Government-coordinated "house by house, street by street" approach, as mooted in the recently launched Heat and Energy Saving Strategy is the right model for every community. This "Ministry of Lagging" model takes away consumer choice by dictating who gets the work, and who provides the work on any given day.

Instead, we believe that with the right support and more creative initiatives like Green Streets to raise awareness, a thriving, innovative private sector in energy savings will emerge, engaging with households and communities of all shapes and sizes, with the flexibility to treat each householder differently. It will find ways to engage with customers, not just when we're "doing your street", but at the key moments of opportunity in their household lives such as buying their first house, having their first child, improving their home, right through to retirement. We're confident of this because we'll be at the heart of making it happen.



Gearoid Lane

ECOTEAMS & EVERGREEN

Trewin Restorick
Director, Global Action Plan



Initially the conversation was difficult, the elderly residents were suspicious. What, they wanted to know, had this green stuff got to do with their daily lives? Was this yet another short-term 'initiative' that would come and go raising expectations and delivering nothing?

Gradually though the atmosphere thawed, common and genuine concerns emerged. Yes, the residents would like to recycle more but the recycling bags given to them by the council were too big to lift and were a tripping hazard in the corridor. Yes, they would like to have more of a say in the way that their buildings were heated and lit. It was often too hot in their rooms, the left-on lights made sleeping difficult and many avoided the common room because the TV was never turned off. As for the grounds, they would like to grow their own vegetables and flowers but they would find it back-breaking work and there was nowhere to put garden tools.

This conversation and others like it formed the basis of the EverGreen project created by the environmental charity Global Action Plan. Since 1993, Global Action Plan has run practical community-based

initiatives that have delivered tangible environmental savings through the active engagement and support of people.

Based upon practical experience, backed up by academic research, Global Action Plan has developed a model for community based environmental change initiatives that have been successfully delivered in communities including schools, voluntary organisations, companies and Housing Associations.

Global Action Plan believes that communities operate in a way very similar to a school assembly or a religious congregation. When it is time for the communal singing the pianist or organist starts to play. There is a moment of silence before a few brave souls start singing very loudly and often off-key. Once they have started singing the remainder of the group is given the confidence and permission to join in. There will always be a few at the back who just mime their way through the whole song!

In any community it is important to find these singers and then to give them

the ability, space and knowledge that enables them to effectively persuade other members of their community to join them. It is also important to give them the confidence to understand and accept that not everybody will join in and that there will always be a few dissenting, sceptical voices.

The initial conversations with the residents of the Housing Association in Hackney found our community singers or Champions. With the support of a locally-based Programme Manager, conversations started discussing what type of practical initiatives could be run. Sorting out the grounds was one of the first identified priorities. Residents wanted to create raised beds where they could grow their own vegetables and flowers. They also desperately wanted a shed with wheel chair access where they could keep their tools:

The raised beds were built in partnership with the Leaside Wood Recycling Project, generally using wood reclaimed from construction projects in the local area. Through consultation with residents, the beds were built to a suitable specification for their needs and located in the most convenient and practical spot in their communal garden area. General purpose soil was supplemented with manure from the local city farm and the beds were ready to be planted.

"I feel that people are mixing more now because they have something in common. I'm also enjoying growing a vast amount of veg!"
Mrs. Lilian Gunn, *Hanover resident*.

This occurred in various separate housing schemes and as the groups of growers expanded and began to acquire some

tools and basic equipment, they started planning for a garden shed for storage and potting. Following a meeting with a local expert, residents decided that they would like a low environmental impact straw bale shed. To bring down costs it was agreed that an effort should be made to involve volunteers in the construction process and seek donations of materials. The shed was built with an expert helped by a team of volunteers including Sky employees who, along with residents, gained an insight into how this sustainable construction process works.

"I really enjoyed having all the volunteers here and am looking forward to using the shed. It looks great." *Eileen, resident*.

EverGreen meetings have helped different groups of residents reach different conclusions on what path they want to pursue. Some, after deciding that it was younger, not older people that should be learning about environmental issues, volunteered to host a group of local school children to discuss their perspectives on the environment and share some of their own experience of making do and mending. This was followed by a return visit to the school.

"We really enjoyed spending time with the children. We didn't know how it would work out at first as young people sometimes don't get on with older people but they were so polite and well mannered. We shared lots of ideas about the environment and what we can do to help deal with the problems it is facing. They even invited us to visit them at school"
Margaret Koroidivi, *Hanover resident*.

Another group was more interested in craft activities and with the help

of a local artist decided to create a memorial mosaic of a rose made from damaged kitchen tiles donated by local businesses to display in their lobby.

What these initiatives demonstrate is the level of imagination and creativity locked within communities that can be unleashed with the right level of support and encouragement. Global Action Plan has witnessed this creativity time and again.

In companies we have seen towers of waste paper built in glass atriums to demonstrate how much waste is thrown out in one day. Employees at another company designed a carbon saints and sinners campaign. Red 'sinner' balloons were tied to computer monitors left on overnight whilst golden saint balloons were attached to those that were turned off. It was a colourful reminder to encourage people to change behaviour.

In schools we have seen students arranging recycled fashion shows and running campaigns designed to catch teachers 'Green Handed' where they have given teachers awards for taking positive environmental action.

In communities, we have seen the strength of bringing households together. In one group, elderly residents were too frail to maintain their garden. They agreed that other households in the group could grow vegetables in the garden which would then be shared between all of them. Another group organised communal trips to recycling facilities to cut down on car travel. Another group set up a local campaign to phase out plastic bags within their locality.

In whatever community Global Action Plan operates people want to be able



to see what difference their efforts have made and to be thanked for what they have done. Measurement is an integral part of all our community-based initiatives. At the start of the process, this element does not always generate universal enthusiasm. Employees are not overly enamoured about being asked to sort through their colleagues' rubbish. Households also take a little bit of encouraging that it is worthwhile to weigh their waste, even though we provide the scales to make it easier, and locating their gas and electricity meters is often difficult.

By the end of the process, the reaction is different. Independent research by the University of East Anglia discovered that weighing and measuring offers a sense of control and empowerment and helps overcome feelings of helplessness with regards to the scale of environmental problems.

It gave me a feeling of...being more in control...I mean reading the meter's now not an issue for me, you know it's something that is effortless... And I don't feel in control with an awful lot of the paraphernalia of life so it's really nice to have that one.

The results from the University of East Anglia illustrate that effective community-based behaviour change programmes can achieve significant results. Research into the EcoTeam programme demonstrated that on average households have achieved a:

- **20% REDUCTION IN WASTE TO LANDFILL.**
- **5% INCREASE IN RECYCLING AS A PROPORTION OF TOTAL WASTE.**
- **7% REDUCTION IN ELECTRICITY CONSUMPTION.**
- **20.8% REDUCTION IN HEATING ENERGY CONSUMPTION.**
- **16.6% REDUCTION IN CO² EMISSIONS.**
- **14.9% REDUCTION IN WATER USE.**
- **£148 ANNUAL SAVINGS ON ENERGY AND WATER BILLS PER HOUSEHOLD.**

Most importantly, measuring and monitoring also provides the connection between everyday actions and environmental impact. Making waste production and energy consumption tangible helps to re-enforce green behaviour.

The evidence also shows that EcoTeams has achieved durable behaviour change within the community. Survey and interview results conclude that those EcoTeams participants who completed the programme three years ago are now engaged in more environmentally friendly activities than when they first started, more so than those participants who finished the programme within the last year.

What then are the policy implications that can be drawn from Global Action Plan's experience? The first is that Global Action Plan is one of the few organisations that has

tangible, independently verified data on the impacts of community behaviour change initiatives. More funding is required to enable further data and analysis to be undertaken.

Based upon Global Action Plan's evidence, community environmental initiatives can achieve rapid, low-cost and significant environmental savings. Changing the values and behaviours of communities creates local financial benefits and strengthens social cohesion. These changes can be achieved without the need for cumbersome legislation and many households find them inspiring and liberating.

Finally, working directly with local communities enables policy-makers to identify the changes that need to be made to make it easier for households and communities to do the right thing.

GLOBAL ACTION PLAN IS AN ENVIRONMENTAL CHARITY THAT DELIVERS TANGIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL & FINANCIAL IMPROVEMENTS BY WORKING PRACTICALLY & CREATIVELY WITH HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE FROM ALL SECTIONS OF SOCIETY.



OWNING THE POWER: ENERGY4ALL

Andrew King
Chairman, Energy4All

Local Oxfordshire farmer Adam Twine, had dreamed of a community-owned wind farm on his land at Westmill for well over a decade. If it made sense for big business, why not for he and his neighbours? For more than a decade, he worked on his plans, gaining enthusiastic support in the area but persistent opposition from local councillors.

The location at Westmill was relatively marginal for wind resource and did not attract the interest of major developers, but a social enterprise called Energy4All stepped in.

Energy4All is a not-for-profit, financially self-sufficient organisation that specialises in facilitating community-owned renewable energy schemes across the UK. It grew out of the Baywind Energy Co-op in Cumbria in 2003, when the coop members noted the almost total absence of community ownership of energy generation in the UK compared to many northern European countries.

Early on, Energy4All took the decision not to be reliant on grants as chasing grants, can distort the activity in an organisation. Instead Baywind members,

many of whom had invested for purely ethical reasons ("are you sure this cheque is for me" was often heard in the early years!) voted to financially support Energy4All as it got established. This caused a dip in the annual return to members in 2002 but on average, returns have been between 7.5% and 10% for the majority of members.

In line with the social enterprise ethos, Energy4All is owned by the co-operatives it creates and ploughs any surplus back into its community ownership projects. It is also working on a charitable arm to extend its work into new areas.

Energy4All specialises in launching public share offers for each of its co-ops (under FSA regulation) and has raised over £13m of equity capital to date for community projects. The cost of running public share offers is only justifiable if the project is raising well over £1m. Profitability is essential to deliver a financially robust project, so large scale wind turbine projects have been the norm. However Energy4All is currently looking at models to handle smaller scale projects, and technologies other than wind.

The share offer at Adam Twine's proposed Westmill windfarm raised £4.6m. Members invested for a variety of reasons and in a wide range of amounts from £250 up to £20,000. The multiple motivations of members are illustrated by a member who wrote on the project's website:

"I have invested a good chunk of my retirement money in the wind farm, enough to (generate a sufficient return to) cover my and my parents' electricity use, so hopefully using the same money to achieve two things."

Other members have worked out the amount they need to invest to own sufficient of the wind farm to generate their own power needs (very roughly £2,500 per household on average).

Following the success of the share offer, Energy4All secured Co-operative Bank finance to enable the project to proceed. Following a series of setbacks and crises, the project was eventually constructed in early 2008 and is now in full production. The co-op has 2,500 members and is a dramatic example of what can be achieved by determination and persistence.

Members' comments typify the passion of members who clearly feel empowered by the Westmill experience:

"One of the most satisfying events in my life took place when Westmill Wind Farm was hooked up to the National Grid. I was so impressed by the commitment of those involved, and also their obvious professionalism. It would be hard to find a more valuable gift for our two grandchildren's future than shares in the project."

"I feel so proud that my husband and I have enabled them to be part of the solution to the enormous problems that climate change is presenting humanity with, and I can't thank enough all those involved, for making Westmill Wind Farm happen. "

There is also much anecdotal evidence that individuals' personal energy use is affected by being exposed to the whole idea of renewable energy ownership. One newly-sensitized co-op member spent many hours puzzling over why his electricity meter continued to turn even when everything was switched off. The mystery was eventually solved by the discovery that his electric shower (used for perhaps 10 minutes per day), had a transformer consuming 30 watts that was permanently on. Inserting a simple isolation switch saved him 260 Kw hrs per year costing at least £30!

Unfortunately there are few landowners like Adam Twine and even fewer community groups with the ability to overcome the obstacles put in their way in the UK environment.

A rare exception is the Findhorn Community in NE Scotland where Energy4All has helped to finance the construction of 3 second hand wind turbines. This community has a 'private wire' system and is now self-sufficient in electricity over the year as a whole.



Despite these successes, Energy4All has become very conscious of the difficulties facing community schemes and has identified five main problem areas:

- 1 PROJECT IDENTIFICATION
- 2 STRUCTURES AND ORGANISATION
- 3 SKILLS
- 4 RESOURCES (ESPECIALLY FINANCIAL)
- 5 TIME

1 IDENTIFICATION OF REALISTIC PROJECTS

Not all sites are suitable for large wind turbines, and communities may have difficulty identifying and eliminating factors that may cause problems, for example, land ownership, grid connection, aviation issues, wildlife habitats, proximity of dwellings etc. Due to the very high demand from community groups, and with the support of Greenpeace, Energy4All has developed a website specifically for communities (www.energysteps.coop) with a step by step guide to project assessment.

2 ORGANISATION

The make-up of a community group is very important. It must be as representative as possible, and the benefits of the project should be spread as widely as possible in the community. Internal conflicts within communities, and lack of clarity on the purposes of the project, can pose serious problems if not addressed. A further conflict can arise if the community expects all the net income from the project to go to the community; this is usually due to a lack of understanding that financial lenders and shareholders have a right to a return on capital before any surplus is declared.

3 SKILLS

There is generally a shortage of skills within any community group. In Energy4All's experience, any co-op board needs to have people with business, technical and leadership skills, plus marketing and community connections if possible. Creating such a group, empowering and encouraging them to work together is a long process, but one that should not be overlooked. Other skills have to be bought in as required.

4 RESOURCES

Firstly, a new community group needs financial resources. Energy4All advises groups that it could take £150,000 to achieve planning permission on a free standing wind farm project. As there is absolutely no preference given to local or community ownership in the UK, this money is at considerable risk, as there is no guarantee that projects will be successful. Many groups decide to go no further, unable to accept such risks, though in Scotland, advice and risk money for smaller schemes may be provided by the publicly-funded body Community Energy Scotland. In the rest of the UK, lack of risk funding and the vagaries of the planning system are the biggest obstacles to the spread of community ownership schemes.

Secondly, community groups must be able to find capital to finance the project. Lenders require confidence in an organisation before they will lend, and community groups are often seen as high risk, especially as they may struggle to raise equity to put into projects. Energy4All can resolve this problem if the scheme is financially viable. Energy4All specialises in public share offers. Large sums can be raised and

it is a very good way of getting local people involved. However, a public share offer is expensive and it does give control to members of the co-operative rather than the entire local community. There are alternative business models available but they can struggle to raise the required investment as they cannot promote a return to members. As a rule of thumb, Energy4All works on a 10% average annual return which seems to be attractive to a sufficient number of potential co-operative members, bearing in mind the perceived risks and the long-term nature of the investment.

5 TIME

Many people do not realise how long a project will take from start to finish. In Energy4All's experience, 4-5 years from conception to commissioning is normal, and if the project is heavily geared, the spare cash available for the community may be very limited in the early years of the project. This delay may be unacceptable to the community

Against this background of major difficulties facing community groups, Energy4All has also developed a successful model to buy a stake in commercial developers' wind farms. The advantage of this model is that the developer identifies the project and takes the risk. The community simply buys a stake. The developer gains in improved community relations and the community gains a direct stake in a project in their locality. Four community co-ops are now up and running in Scotland using this model. Each has around 600 members and has raised up to £1.3m.

These co-ops create a much greater sense of identity with the local project, as a local member explained:

" It completely changes how you see the thing; it's now our project not something that's being done to our community"

Local co-op members have even been known to contact the developer to enquire why one of 'their' turbines is not working! In addition, Energy4All actively encourages the local co-ops to engage in educational and environmental initiatives in the area, with many school groups visiting the sites to learn at first hand about renewable energy. Plans are in hand to develop common teaching resources to be used by all the Energy4All co-ops.

The reward to Falck Renewables (Energy4All's partner in the Scottish projects) was to be held up as an example of Best Practice in Community Relations at a Highland Council planning seminar. This reputation will no doubt stand the developer in good stead with future planning applications. In the meantime a very notable feature of the new Scottish co-operatives is the significant number of members who, having taken the plunge once, decide they like the idea and join other Energy4All co-ops in their region.

An alternative response to the difficulties facing community schemes in the UK is being pioneered by Energy4All with some of the Regional Development Agencies who have ambitions to develop community renewable energy. For example, Advantage West Midlands and East Midlands Development Agency are both working with Energy4All looking at structures to encourage community renewable energy in their regions.

The aim of these initiatives is to create a self-sustaining structure so that the regional community develops not only some successful projects but also a self-supporting infrastructure to extend the process in future years. Other regions are also talking to Energy4All about even more ambitious programmes with detailed attention to both the supply and demand sides of renewable energy, using a range of technologies.

Energy4All demonstrates what can be achieved by a determined and professional approach to community ownership of renewables. The company's aim is to combine business efficiency with co-operative ethics to deliver something unique in the renewables sector. To date, around 7,500 individuals have joined Energy4All co-operatives and invested over £13m of their cash to secure at least a small stake in their own energy supplies and the country's 'renewables revolution'.

ENERGY4ALL IS A NOT-FOR-PROFIT, FINANCIALLY SELF-SUFFICIENT ORGANISATION THAT SPECIALISES IN FACILITATING COMMUNITY-OWNED RENEWABLE ENERGY SCHEMES ACROSS THE UK.



DOING THE GREEN THING: AN ONLINE COMMUNITY AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE

James Alexander
dothegreenthing.com

Green Thing is a public service that inspires people to lead a greener life. We all want to live greener lives these days but often find it too hard, too confusing or too futile to make a habit of it. Green Thing is for those of us who don't get turned on by the tree-hugging thing, the guilt thing, the scientific thing or the world-is-at-an-end thing. Green Thing is an easy thing, a fun thing, a creative thing and a community thing. It's for anyone who wants to be a bit greener but hasn't found a way.

With the help of brilliant videos and inspiring stories from creative people and community members around the world, Green Thing focuses on seven things you can do to lead a greener life. These are delivered with world-class creative (videos, poetry, music etc) and a sense of community and collectively add up to a more sustainable life. Green thing is about individual and collective behaviour change.

Green Thing's mission is to help as many people as possible in as many countries as possible to do the Green Thing. And then use this people power to get governments and businesses across the world to do the Green Thing too.

Since launch in October 2007 people from 190 countries have tuned into Green Thing more than 2.1 million times, sharing 48,000 stories about living a greener life and reporting savings nearly 6m kgs CO₂. Those endorsing and advising Green Thing include Nobel Peace laureate Professor Wangari Maathai, Satish Kumar, founder and editor of Resurgence magazine, Alex Steffen, co-founder and executive editor of WorldChanging.com, and Cathy Zoi, chief executive officer of Al Gore's Alliance for Climate Protection. And virtually all of this has been achieved without spending a bean on marketing.

Green Thing is a completely different approach to Environmental Behaviour Change - although it's based on well-understood mechanisms from marketing and the Internet that are proven to change behaviour in other sectors. It exists because behaviour is hard to change. Green Thing is the first to deploy marketing psychology, world-class creativity, and the self-fuelling energy of online communities to turn sustainable behaviour from a chore into a pleasure. We believe that great creativity can inspire individuals to take action to live a more sustainable life.

To quickly and best understand Green Thing please:

- visit www.dothegreenthing.com
- watch an introduction to 7 Green Things to do (<http://www.dothegreenthing.com/about>)
- watch a compilation of Green Thing's creativity (<http://video.yahoo.com/watch/4013996/10863641>)

There are 3 core elements to Green Thing's proposition:

1 Individual Green Action

2 Community Action

3 Creativity Against Climate Change

1 INDIVIDUAL GREEN ACTION

Green Thing is about inspiring individual green action. According to DEFRA, 97% of UK adults are aware of climate change as an issue. The problem is that very few people have changed their habitual behaviour.

Green Thing believes that existing communication mechanisms are too activist or too scary or too preachy or too complicated. The magnitude of climate change is for many incomprehensible and as a result many are left feeling helpless and ineffectual.

Green Thing aims to re-frame the sustainability issue for individual's from "ought to do" to "want to do" and believes environmental behaviour change needs to come from the part of the brain that's about pleasure, leisure and fulfillment and not out of the part of the brain that's about admin, chores and to do lists. Green Thing believes sustainable living can be redefined as smart, sexy, fashionable and fun and something worthwhile on its own terms.

In short, Green Thing is creating a brand that inspires people to choose to lead a greener life – by building up a programme of sustainable behaviour one easy step at a time.

Every month we highlight one of these 7 Green Things to do and then show people doing them. Periodically we remind members of all of the actions together and how they are all connected pieces of a greener lifestyle

- You get from A to B without any C when you Walk The Walk
- It's delicious but it causes more CO₂ than cars so go Easy On The Meat
- Resist the urge to buy the latest and Stick With What You Got
- Turn down the central heating and turn up the Human Heat
- The art of wasting nothing and using up everything: All-Consuming
- Instead of jetting your way around the world, Stay Grounded
- Don't leave it on or even put it on, Plug Out

For example take a look at: Walk the Walk (http://www.dothegreenthing.com/content/gusty_and_ford) Or Stick With What You Got http://www.dothegreenthing.com/content/devious_macbook_air_commercial

A recent user commented on a blog:

"The video they've got is a spoof Apple advert trying to get you to buy one of their impossibly beautiful new laptops. It's genius... Suddenly Doing The Green Thing made keeping my old laptop appear as cool as buying a new one. I became part of a community of people trying to do the right thing. It felt good."

Green Thing believes that if a lot of people do a little bit then it can add up to something big, both in terms of direct impact (ie the carbon that collectively they will save) but also in terms of the indirect impact that this will have on the decision makers in companies and Government.

Green Thing makes it easy for people to access its communications and content; for example through email, Apple's iTunes store, Facebook and RSS feeds. Green Thing also uses social network communities such Facebook, Twitter and MySpace and can be viewed through the world's largest content networks (e.g. YouTube, Yahoo).

2 COMMUNITY ACTION

Community is a the next critical element of Green Thing. Green Thing is a community of people who have chosen to take on leading a greener life. But what is more exciting is that the community inspires others to do the same.

At Green Thing you can see others taking part. You can see how many they are, where they live, how much difference (e.g. CO₂ saved) they are making, both individually and collectively. You can read their stories – share their joy, their frustration. You can feed off their inspiration. You can contact them. They can contact you. So rather than feeling a lone individual battling climate change you feel part of a vibrant community that is making a choice to act.

Human nature and marketing psychology suggests that people are more likely to behave in a certain way if they can

see others doing so. This normalisation of a new set of values and behaviours is an important part of Green Thing.

Green Thing has created mechanisms that allow groups of individuals – a few friends, a school, a street, a college, a company – to come together within the Green Thing community. This means that individuals and groups of individuals can galvanize their communities and harness the power of their spheres of influence. They can of course do this far better than Green Thing will ever do alone. They know the best way of reaching people and how to best engage them. Over 70 communities including schools and companies (e.g. Carphone Warehouse, Nokia) have already chosen to do the Green Thing. For a company it provides a mechanism to engage not only employees, but also customers, suppliers and other stakeholders.

3 CREATIVITY AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE

As the late, great comedy genius Bill Hicks once said to his audience: "By the way if anyone here is in advertising or marketing, kill yourself. You are Satan's spawn filling our world with bile and garbage – kill yourself."

Some might consider this a bit extreme, others might think it's rooted in deep truth but in the case of climate change, marketing skills and insights could help to make a difference. After all, why can Steve Jobs get people to froth at the mouth over the new iPhone but they can't be bothered to switch off their lights?

In times of need, we need great creativity. Great creativity is astonishingly, absurdly, rationally, irrationally powerful. Great creativity can spread tolerance, champion freedom, make education seem like a bright idea. Great creativity can turn a spotlight on deprivation or show that deprivation 'aint necessarily so. Great creativity can make politicians electable. And parties unelectable. It can make war seem like tragedy or farce. Creativity is the meme-maker that puts slogans on our T-shirts and phrases on our lips. Creativity is the path-finder that shows us a simple road through an impenetrable moral maze. Science is clever but great creativity is something less knowable, more magical. And now we need that magic. This is a time of need. Our climate is changing quickly, too quickly, and great creativity is needed to do what it does so well - provoke us to think differently with dramatic creative statements, tempt us to act differently with delightful creative scraps.

So because entertainment is very inspiring and lectures a bit less so, the 7 Green Things are suggested with brilliant content from a growing community of talented writers, musicians, designers, directors and artists - pro and am, young and old.

From the artistic world, graphic design maestro Pete Fowler created the first Green Thing creature and illustrator Andrew Rae did the current version.



James Alexander

Author Tracy Chevalier (Girl with the Pearl Earring) and poet John Hegley have written walking stories for a Green Thing podcast. Satirist Alison Jackson will be lending Green Thing her photographic talents and artists Ackroyd and Harvey have also contributed. From the music world, U2 producer Howie B put together a walking-paced track for another Green Thing podcast, and ex-Darkness front man Justin Hawkins wrote Green Thing a rock song and a heroic theme tune.

We've got a whole group of agencies helping us too. For instance, TBWA London and production company Partizan (who did award-winning work like the Honda cog and choir ads) making videos. OMD are doing the media planning, Pentagram and Interbrand have helped with the design and brand identity, PR firm Mission Media is helping to spread the word, BigMouthMedia, Agency.com, Glue, Agency Republic, AKQA, Digit, Blue Barracuda, Headshift, Profero and LBi are all bringing the ideas to life on and offline.

Come join us to Do the Green Thing.

WWW.DOTHEGREENTHING.COM

JAMES ALEXANDER, NARESH
RAMCHANDANI AND ANDY HOBSBAWM

COMMUNITY HEAT WARMS UP

ALAN WHITEHEAD MP

Heat has been the poor relation in the renewables revolution. Yet fully 53% of domestic carbon emissions arise from heat – mainly from space heating. Well over 50% of the energy from the fuel that goes into conventional power stations literally disappears into thin air in the form of waste heat going up the chimney.

Capturing this waste heat and putting it to work efficiently has long been within our grasp in the form of Combined Heat and Power plants (CHP): gas fired CHP increases the efficiency of the fuel to energy process by 50%, and the potential of biomass both inputting fuel on a low carbon basis and being used efficiently is considerable. Importantly also, CHP heat and power is essentially an urban solution to heat and power delivery: it dramatically shortens supply lines and enables heat and power to be delivered effectively on site, where wind and other forms of renewable would be difficult to engineer. It is significant now that Government has 'got' heat: the Renewable Heat Incentive included in the Energy Act should be on-stream next year and, for the first time, heat is being included in strategic energy plans. The Renewables Obligation itself includes in its rebanding a provision

of two ROCs (Renewable Obligation Certificates) for 'quality CHP' – that is largely biomass based power production.

CHP is also very adaptable, and works at a scale that ranges from engines that power one home, through small plants heating a few homes or a modest commercial or industrial site, to large power stations providing heat for several thousand homes and perhaps 50mw of installed electricity capacity.

But of course delivering heat does have an additional hurdle – how do you move the heat from where it's produced to where it's needed? Heat networks are the sine qua non of district heating schemes, and because of its poor relation status, heat piping has virtually never been laid alongside other utilities in new build schemes. Yet putting in a district network of pipes delivering heat is no more complicated than laying gas mains or water pipes. Indeed there is a strong case for including heat pipes as registered assets of a utility – probably water, and bringing the installation and operation of heat networks fully into the family of utility regulation.

All of this places community heat firmly centre stage. The establishment of local community owned companies, owned specifically by the people to whom the heat is offered, is a very practical and low-risk way of developing community heat, and it has a number of positive spin offs: the project itself focuses community effort and participation: there is a direct 'payoff' from the project in the form of reduced heating bills over a long and guaranteed period for participants: and the company itself, once established, is likely to generate income for the community which can be used for other purposes. Furthermore, the community company does not in itself need to possess the expertise to develop the whole system. It can exist, essentially as the holding company for a number of components. The power plant can be operated by a private sector company, making its income from the sale of electricity and the ROCs that go with it. The community company can contract to receive the heat offtake at a low cost, and either run the heat network itself, or contract that out to another private company able to make its living by what are effectively carriage charges for the delivery of heat through the pipes.

Nor are heat networks confined only to new build schemes, as has often been popularly supposed. Some of the best early schemes have been developed in new build, and it really should be a requirement in the future that new build plans should have to argue why CHP should not be a feature of submitted plans in every part of the country, rather than sometimes proposed as a slightly leftfield way of heating homes. But even before the advent of the additional support now emerging, more imaginative Local Authorities, Housing Associations

and other bodies have been building such capacity into developments.

BEDZED, the eco-community of eighty-two homes in Sutton, has at its heart a CHP plant providing heat and hot water to all homes. But a number of schemes have effectively replaced old centralised conventional boiler systems with CHP plants in recent years – such as the St Pancras Housing Association's CHP scheme built in 1995, that replaced an outdated boiler and distribution system with a 54 kWe CHP system, which also extends to heat an old persons' community centre, ten commercial units and the head office of the housing association. The North British Housing Association reequipped all 351 flats on the Stanhope Street estate in Newcastle with a 300 kWe plant, retrofitting flats which for years had been expensively and inefficiently equipped with night storage heaters. This, among other outcomes has resulted in an almost two-thirds reduction in energy use on the estate, and the introduction of very low heating bills for all over an extended period of time.

Southampton has shown that it is possible to build much larger scale district heating schemes incorporating heat supply to homes, offices, public buildings hotels shops and other users on the basis of an extendable district heating ring main system. Originally using geothermal heat derived from by heat exchanging with a hot water source from an underground aquifer, the City scheme has developed over the years from a few hundred metres of pipe to the eleven kilometre network that exists today. Using the initial heat load as a base point,

the Southampton district Heating Company has successively offered both new and existing developments the opportunity to connect up to the network and save substantially on the plant and financial commitment that would go with building a conventional heat supply. Now the civic centre, a large supermarket, four city centre hotels, a small housing estate, much of the Southampton Solent University and a number of city centre office buildings are supplied by this means. The scheme has also been adaptable in its fuel use over the years. As the supply from the aquifer diminished, gas CHP has augmented it, and will in turn be augmented by biomass based CHP from this year onwards.

The success of the City Centre scheme has engendered in Southampton a view among planners and local policy makers that CHP proposals should be supported as default position – quite the opposite of many places in the country. As a result, Southampton has three other CHP networks: one heating the General Hospital, one at Southampton University and one heating three hundred flats in the city centre. Two further extensive domestic heating schemes encompassing several thousand dwellings are presently planned or under development in the City. This underlines, I think, a

key feature of district and community heating: that the local authority supports it, and makes the assumption that it can be done in its planning and building control approach. Aberdeen Heat and Power co, a not for profit body dedicated to local CHP development has benefitted greatly from Local Authority support and has concentrated on schemes in high rise blocks of flats, presently powering four blocks and undertaking work to heat ten more.

In short community CHP is an idea whose time has come. Pioneers have shown that it is eminently feasible: consumers of heat, in many instances among those categorised as fuel poor, have found a structured way of permanently keeping their heating bills under control, and huge savings have been made, and are being made in energy use and CO₂ emissions. The challenge now is to move beyond those pioneers so that district heating is a mainstream concern – and active communities should be at the heart of the movement.

**ALAN WHITEHEAD IS LABOUR
MP FOR SOUTHAMPTON TEST.**



COUNTING THE COST - LOCAL GOVERNMENT CARBON TRADING SCHEME

Cllr Paul Gittings
Executive Member for the Environment and
Sustainability, Reading Council

The growing urgency to tackle climate change has led to increasing support for a market mechanism to change behaviour through financial incentives, in particular carbon trading. But this is not just for international agreements. LGiU's Carbon Trading Councils provides a platform for councils to come together to use trading to focus their investment in carbon reduction.

Many councils will have to take part in carbon trading through the mandatory carbon reduction commitment starting in April 2010. However, the effect of having a carbon budget alongside a financial budget and the visibility this brings to climate change means there is potential for voluntary carbon markets to expand in a number of ways.

Reading Borough Council joined Carbon Trading Councils because we saw it as an ideal, low-risk opportunity for acquiring better knowledge of carbon trading, as well as a better understanding of the resources and reporting that would be required before we are compelled to trade.

On a practical level, the trial scheme is proving invaluable because it introduces the price of carbon into

the decision-making process. It also makes us look long and hard at the real and measurable effects of projects which we have put in place for the mitigation of carbon emissions.

Carbon trading works by putting a monetary value on emitting carbon. In order to do this a carbon market needs to be established. In the case of Carbon Trading Councils it is a voluntary market, which covers carbon emissions from 34 councils across the UK.

The organisations involved have to purchase carbon allowances, but the amount of allowances available is limited or 'capped'. Then to drive carbon emissions down the amount of allowances available will decline annually.

In this first trading year there are 506,715 carbon allowances in the Carbon Trading Councils market, which is a cap of 5% on previous baselines and at £12 per allowance cost a virtual amount of £6,201,050. The carbon allowances each organisation receives gives them their carbon budget for the year. The aim at the end of the trading year is for the amount of carbon emitted by each council over the year to be equal to or lower than the number

of carbon allowances they purchased. Councils can meet their carbon budget either by reducing emissions or buying allowances on the market.

Developing a carbon market is a much more attractive way to make the polluter pay than through abundant taxes. With councils managing their own carbon budget they have the freedom to deliver carbon reductions in the most efficient way for them.

In Reading, we have set ambitious targets for carbon reduction in our soon to be launched Climate Change Strategy and have pledged to lead by example with a 20 per cent reduction of the council's emissions by 2012, for which we are well on target, and a 50 per cent reduction by 2020. Reading is also lead authority on a new Berkshire-wide strategy and looking to share best practice with a whole range of partners through the Local Strategic Partnership.

With a robust strategy and targeted action plan in place, there is clearly the potential to reduce emissions far enough to have some carbon allowances available to trade to make some financial gain.

On the other hand it may be more efficient to purchase allowances on the carbon trading councils market. The cap on the market will affect the supply and therefore the price of carbon permits as organisations within the carbon market buy and sell permits from one another.

The ambition is for the market as a whole to reduce emissions in a cost effective way, rather than single organisations chasing hard

targets with expensive solutions. As the supply of permits reduces, the price of carbon permits increases, encouraging councils to find new ways to reduce their carbon emissions.

Since Carbon Trading Councils started in April 2008 the councils involved have been identifying the challenges and opportunities they see in carbon trading. Through this voluntary carbon trading market, councils have been able to test their skills and take some risks without having to pay out if things do not go to plan.

It is clear that carbon reduction is a matter for the whole council; it is not just for a single officer such as the energy manager to tackle. The financial and political risk of trading and staying on carbon budget pushes climate change up the agenda. One of the practical hurdles that has been overcome in the early days of trading is compiling data. Not only for a baseline of the council's carbon emissions but also the ability to then monitor emissions closely to be able to forecast for the year and make decisions about trading.

This is no simple task with data coming in from all directions - on bills and meters, in different formats and timescales. Any measurements are, more often than not, a one-off snapshot of a council's carbon footprint. In Reading, we already had in place a robust monitoring system in a number of localities and this has proved an advantage as we move towards mandatory carbon trading.

Our challenge is to extend the monitoring to our entire council estate and also to implement smart metering to make the practical collation of information speedier and more efficient. Reliable data is clearly crucial to enable councils to make investment decisions that will have dramatic impacts on their carbon footprint.

Carbon trading is growing around the world in formal and informal networks. So far carbon trading has focused on organisations and the emissions they directly manage. However, councils have a much broader sphere of influence and carbon trading on a broader community level could have a big impact.

In Reading we are only too aware of the need to engage with the local community to meet the long-term target of 80 per cent reduction by 2050. We will be looking to build on our public engagement activities such as 'In Town Without My Car Week' and 'Forbury Fever', an environmental-themed event which attracted thousands of people this summer.

We await with interest further work being developed by the LGIU for community carbon trading, where communities would be brought together by the council to manage their carbon budget, trade with each other and realise the benefits of reducing their carbon emissions. This would take the transparency and engagement of a personal trading scheme and bring the support and knowledge of community groups and councils to deliver change.

The positive experience of taking part in the LGIU trial is not to be understated. More importantly it has left Reading in a stronger position when carbon trading becomes a reality, which can only benefit the authority and our constituents in the long-term.

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT INFORMATION UNIT (LGIU) IS AN AUTHORITATIVE AND INFORMED SOURCE OF COMMENT, INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS ON A RANGE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES. IT HAS PROVIDED SUPPORT TO COUNCILS AND CHAMPIONED LOCAL DEMOCRACY FOR 25 YEARS.





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