

Working in partnership

Identifying and working with partners

Relevant to: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Introduction

An effective way for local authorities to tackle climate change is to form partnerships with a range of other organisations. Benefits include additional resources and expertise, access to different funding streams and more communication links to reach the appropriate target groups.

In England, the new framework for evaluating local authority performance centres on a Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). Local Area Agreements (LAAs) are a key element of this and have a focus on local priorities such as climate change. Effective and efficient delivery of LAA priorities requires partnerships with the community and stronger relationships with the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), local businesses and community groups.

The Concordat in Scotland, agreed in 2007 sets out the terms of a new relationship between the Scottish Government and local government. As part of the package, all 32 local authorities agreed a Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) with the Scottish Government setting out what they will achieve through the services they deliver.

The SOAs cover all local government services as well as the responsibilities of Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) where local authorities have a significant part to play. SOAs will be expected to include the full engagement of CPPs from 2009-10 onwards.

In Wales, as Local Service Boards are established and the wider Spatial Plan Area Groups continue to develop, partnership working will also increase in importance.

Gloucestershire Environment Partnership

The Gloucestershire Environment Partnership was launched in 2007. The aim of the partnership is to bring together relevant organisations and partners to ensure Gloucestershire responds to the challenge of climate change. This work is structured around the agreed LAA outcomes and focuses work on both mitigation and adaptation.

To ensure there was appropriate representation of expertise within the partnership members, a scoping study was done in addition to meetings before, after and during the initial formation. It was agreed that membership would be reviewed at regular intervals to fit in with changing priorities.

The Gloucestershire Environmental Partnership is supported by the county at both a political and strategic level. Due to its achievements so far, the partnership has developed a reputation for getting things done.

Further information on the partnership is available upon request.

Much of the information below is drawn from the Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform's (BERR's) [Energy Measures Report](#)¹.

Getting started

A good first step is to create a long list of project ideas. This should be as broad and ambitious as possible and may include enabling projects (eg

¹ BERR's Energy Measures Report:
www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/housingbuildings/localauthorities/information/nonest/index.cfm?ty=1&ext_id=1385

changes to the procurement process to include whole-life costing) and/or direct emissions reduction projects (eg improving insulation in the town hall, or a large biomass heat project). These ideas might be generated by a brainstorming session (advice on which is provided [here](#)¹), site walk-arounds, surveys or audits organised by key stakeholders.

Ask yourself what you would like to achieve from the partnership. For example, if you are looking to obtain funding for a project, you should look for partners who can supply the funding. If your aim is to ignite senior level commitment for a new climate change strategy, you will need to form partnerships with those who support your aims and have the authority to contribute to building that top-level commitment. In practice, you will probably build an understanding of the importance and influence of individual stakeholders throughout the life of the programme.

Defining your project

The Low Carbon Cities [stakeholder mapping tool](#)² is designed to help you identify the key stakeholders and begin to plan their involvement in the process.

An important next step is to identify any synergies between project ideas and different stakeholders. When other organisations are working on similar aims, why reinvent the wheel? For example, the Islington Affordable Warmth Network which is designed to reduce fuel poverty, worked with the health sector as it also has an interest in alleviating fuel poverty in order to reduce healthcare costs from cold related illnesses.

It is a good public relations exercise for large businesses to be involved in partnerships that reduce carbon dioxide emissions in their sector. Therefore they will be keen to be included in such schemes.

It is also important to clearly define the physical boundaries of the programme. This decision sets

¹ The Carbon Trust's Brainstorming best practice: <http://members.lowcarboncities.co.uk/lccpcms/assets/Toolkit-Documents/3-Identify-City-wide-Opportunities/Brainstorming-Tool.pdf>

² Low Carbon Cities stakeholder mapping tool: <http://members.lowcarboncities.co.uk/lccpcms/assets/Toolkit-Documents/1-Mobilise-City-Stakeholders/StakeholderMappingTool.pdf>.

the scope of the work required, so it should be established from the outset. Bristol City Council settled on the city limits as the boundary of their city-wide carbon reduction plan, but this could equally be a ring road or even a metropolitan county area as used in the case of Manchester City Council.

There are two broad types of partnerships that can be formed: the first is for work on a specific project. This type of partnership requires little set-up effort and can be relatively short-lived.

Strategic partnerships, on the other hand, tend to last longer and require more effort to establish. However, they usually help in the implementation of a wide range of individual actions and therefore provide greater support for the achievement of long term goals.

Islington Affordable Warmth Network

The overall objective of the project was to make a contribution to reducing excess winter mortality in the London Borough of Islington by increasing referrals to fuel poverty schemes of older, vulnerable individuals in private sector housing.

The project aimed to identify front-line professionals and volunteers in the borough who would have contact with the target group of clients. A steering group representing the professionals included in the referral network was successfully established.

Approximately 210 individuals have received training or briefing on the reasons for tackling fuel poverty and the way to identify someone who may need help.

Further information on the network is available upon request.

Potential partners

Identifying who to partner with will be key to your project and is crucial at an early stage so that you can plan their involvement and take account of their views, knowledge and experience.

Partnerships can be formed with a range of stakeholders. When deciding who to involve, the first question you want to ask yourself is what exactly do you want from the partnership? Your

choice of partner will depend on the answer to this question.

Many successful initiatives to increase energy efficiency or the use of renewable and low carbon technologies have come from partnerships between different local authorities. These partnerships result in shared knowledge, cost and management of project delivery.

It is worth considering whether there are existing partnerships that will be effective for the work you are doing, for example LSPs in England and Local Service Boards in Wales as previously mentioned.

Community leadership

For many successful local energy initiatives, engagement with householders is needed and the most effective way to reach these individuals is through face-to-face contact. However, this method can be very time and cost intensive. As professionals in the public and private sectors such as the health, fire and police services already have contact with householders and can be trusted by them, forming partnerships with this sector is crucial. In particular, health professionals often have access to households that are vulnerable to fuel poverty.

Cornwall Sustainable Energy Partnership

Cornwall County Council, Caradon District Council, Carrick District Council, Kerrier District Council, North Cornwall District Council, Penwith District Council, Restormel Borough Council and the Council of the Isles of Scilly were awarded joint Beacon Council Status under the theme of sustainable energy in 2005.

They work in partnership with a number of other organisations through the Cornwall Sustainable Energy Partnership to raise awareness and educate every sector about sustainable energy.

This included a Home Health project which involved setting up a community and health sector referral network to help the most vulnerable and 'hard to reach' households

Further information is available in the Home Health Project [case study](#)¹.

¹ Home Health Project:
www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/uploads/documents/housingbuildings/case13.pdf.

Tapping into your local community and voluntary groups is another great way to achieve successful partnerships. Sometimes the problem of climate change can seem too huge for an individual to deal with, but the idea of 'greening a city' seems more achievable. It also makes the next step – the national effort – easier to imagine.

People can relate to larger issues through activities they can see taking place in their own communities and by reading materials produced at a local level. This can give them the confidence that they have the power to act and crucially, that their actions will make a difference. Local communications have the potential to lead the national and indeed global effort to engage people in the issue of climate change.

Community and voluntary groups may already be active in addressing climate change issues and will likely be interested in working with a local authority on local initiatives. These groups can also provide expertise, trusted intermediaries and communication routes between the local authority and their members.

Finally, don't forget that you can also form valuable partnerships with people you already work with within your local authority.

In addition to the above, useful partnerships can be formed with:

- Higher education establishments.
- Private businesses.
- Regional bodies.
- Civil societies.
- International stakeholders.

Please see Appendix A for an extended list of potential partners.

Maximising effectiveness

Do remember to provide information on how the partnership will benefit all stakeholders involved. From the beginning, there should be a clear plan of action to ensure that all partners are aware of what they are expected to do and how their objectives are to be achieved. Partnerships are used for development and agreement and are more likely to succeed if they clearly help all partners achieve their objectives.

According to the BERR's Energy Measures Report, there are a number of points that should be considered, including:

- What can you offer to your potential partners, and how will you explain your aims in a way that they will respond to?
- What can the potential partners offer to you, and will it be worth the effort to build the partnership?

For a partnership to be successful, communication is essential every step of the way. When partners are involved at the earliest stages of the strategy or project and are regularly consulted on developments and kept up to date with progress, their enthusiasm is more likely to be sustained throughout the entire process.

Another way to sustain enthusiasm amongst representatives is to periodically reassess the partnership members and its structure. This is a good time to decide whether you have enough members, too many members, or whether your partnership members should be broken down into working groups for specific parts of the project that are relevant to them.

As your project develops, roles will evolve and expertise that was once relevant may become obsolete. You may find that you have the right organisations involved, but you require a representative from a different department or someone with a different level of expertise for the next stage.

When reassessing your partnership, it is a good idea to allow members to decide whether they feel their role is relevant to the group. People often stay in groups, even when they feel redundant, when they don't have an obvious opportunity to leave. Representatives who want to withdraw their membership will feel safe to do so if you provide them with a choice.

As mentioned before, if you don't have full commitment from the partnership members, it will be difficult to move forward. Therefore, by ensuring you have membership buy-in you will be more likely to succeed.

Further information

The Energy Saving Trust offers a free enquiries service via our dedicated Practical help team – the team will undertake to answer any query

regarding sustainable energy or sustainable road transport within a maximum of three working days.

Abbreviations used

BERR	Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform
CAA	Comprehensive Area Assessment
CPP	Community Planning Partnerships
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
SOA	Single Outcome Agreement

At the time of publication and to the best of our knowledge, the information contained in this briefing note was correct. This briefing note was first published in September 2008.

Practical help cannot vouch for any of the organisations involved.

Practical help

T: 0844 84 888 30

E: practicalhelp@est.org.uk

W: www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/housingbuildings



APPENDIX A: Potential partners

SECTOR	TYPE OF PARTNER	WHAT CAN THEY OFFER	BENEFITS TO PARTNER	ISSUES
Private	Installers	Installers can offer bulk discounts on work carried out plus assistance with promotion and marketing.	By supporting a council-run scheme, the installers gain third party endorsement of their product and also benefit from council marketing, thus increasing their sales.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Getting a good price from installers. ❑ System for handling enquiries.
	Manufacturers	Manufacturers can also offer a bulk discount on goods, such as condensing boilers, or prizes in competitions.	Increased market share through energy conservation authority endorsement and marketing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Getting good price. ❑ Competitive tendering. ❑ Distortion of the national market through existing sales and distribution routes.
	Energy Saving Trust advice centre	Energy Saving Trust advice centres can be involved in everything from providing advice to householders to running the initiative on a local authority's behalf, eg overseeing the marketing of a programme, taking enquiries, issuing advice, passing contacts onto installers etc. They have good local knowledge and experience of promoting energy efficiency to consumers.	Provides another route of funding for the ESTac as consultancy fee income.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ It is important that the authority retains control of the scheme.
	Energy suppliers	Energy suppliers can provide funding through their Carbon Emissions Reduction Target.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Helps achieve CERT targets. 	
	Housing	Where relevant, this sector can	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Increased tenant 	

SECTOR	TYPE OF PARTNER	WHAT CAN THEY OFFER	BENEFITS TO PARTNER	ISSUES
	associations, RSLs and ALMOs.	be involved in promoting schemes to their tenants. There are also examples of housing associations offering free office space for the start-up of a new scheme. They tend to have good business acumen and good technical services departments.	satisfaction <input type="checkbox"/> In those cases where the housing association performs additional duties, eg acting as the local care and repair agency, involvement can help them to identify new clients	
	Residents Associations	This type of partnership can be formed through councillors or community officers. They can help reach their associated householders through schemes such as local installation campaigns.	<input type="checkbox"/> Access to an existing group with similar aims.	
	Retailers	Retailers can help to promote energy efficient appliances within their stores, or they can offer discount vouchers on DIY energy efficiency measures.	<input type="checkbox"/> Better trained sales staff. <input type="checkbox"/> Increased sales.	<input type="checkbox"/> Local branches of large chains may not have the authority or scope to decide to get involved.
	Banks/building societies/credit unions	Can offer assistance with low interest loan schemes or promoting energy efficiency to home buyers.	<input type="checkbox"/> Another platform on which to persuade customers to takeout loans. <input type="checkbox"/> An opportunity to grow their membership.	<input type="checkbox"/> Limited additional market opportunities for large financial organisations. <input type="checkbox"/> Credit union's membership rules may be limiting.
	Householders	As well as being the target market, householders can also become active partners by being trained as community energy advisers or by becoming part of the project's advisory group.	<input type="checkbox"/> Opportunity to play an active part in a local community project. <input type="checkbox"/> In some cases, free energy efficiency measures are offered in return for taking on these roles.	<input type="checkbox"/> Conflicts of interest. <input type="checkbox"/> Less impartiality from stakeholders.
	Private landlords	Can be encouraged to invest in improving the energy efficiency of their properties	<input type="checkbox"/> Reduced maintenance costs. <input type="checkbox"/> Increased tenant satisfaction.	<input type="checkbox"/> Historically one of the harder partnerships to form, but several schemes show that it can be done.

SECTOR	TYPE OF PARTNER	WHAT CAN THEY OFFER	BENEFITS TO PARTNER	ISSUES
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Enhanced asset value (with central heating installations). <input type="checkbox"/> Improved marketability of property and reduced voids (at least where supply of rented accommodation exceeds demand). 	
	Local media	Can effectively support a scheme by providing news coverage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Local news stories. 	
Public	Other authorities	Consortia partnerships will often generate better ideas and can offer improved economies of scale.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Allows a number of authorities to be involved in a scheme without each having to take on the entire administrative burden. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> It is important to have clearly defined roles from the outset for the various partner authorities. <input type="checkbox"/> Danger of the consortium becoming unwieldy if it is too big or administratively complex. Need to plan and establish written agreements between the authorities involved to ensure proper accountability and completion of agreed tasks. <input type="checkbox"/> One authority should take the lead with other responsibilities clearly allocated.
	Councillors	Can provide effective support to a scheme. Can be particularly supportive if the scheme is targeting their constituency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Raised profile amongst constituents. <input type="checkbox"/> Provides a project focus with defined deliverables to their work. 	
	County councils (where applicable)	With responsibility for local education services, county councils can get involved in education schemes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ties in with a number of other policy initiatives, including community regeneration goals. 	

SECTOR	TYPE OF PARTNER	WHAT CAN THEY OFFER	BENEFITS TO PARTNER	ISSUES
	LSPs	LSPs bring together the private, public, business and community sectors and work towards common goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Access to an existing partnership that brings together different sectors. 	
	The Carbon Trust	Carbon management programmes for the public sector and businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Extensive resources and expertise in this sector. 	
	Home improvement Agencies	Can provide energy efficiency advice to their clients and recommend clients for grant funded work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Helps increase the service offered to clients and to identify new clients. <input type="checkbox"/> Can enable them to expand in remit and size. 	
	Universities	Can offer support in private rented schemes by providing lists of registered landlords and/or requiring a minimum energy efficiency standard in all approved accommodation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provides accommodation which is more attractive to students. <input type="checkbox"/> Contributes to a better 'studying' environment. 	
	Schools	Vital partners in any education project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> A new approach to teaching scientific environmental issues. <input type="checkbox"/> The provision of good teaching materials. <input type="checkbox"/> Assistance in delivering energy efficiency as a classroom project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The best education schemes have involved teachers in the design of the scheme. <input type="checkbox"/> Integration with incentive schemes for parents and guardians.
	Health authorities	Health authorities can be involved in schemes seeking to promote the health benefits of energy efficiency, by allowing community staff to be trained in energy efficiency advice provision and/or making referrals for grant funded work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Reduces the incidence of ill health from cold and damp homes, decreasing the potential for hospital admissions and GP referrals in winter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Health workers are very busy and do not have much time to promote energy efficiency to their clients. The best schemes have involved health workers in designing the scheme.
VOLUNTARY		Two examples are provided below of voluntary sector partnerships that have been formed on local authority-led		

SECTOR	TYPE OF PARTNER	WHAT CAN THEY OFFER	BENEFITS TO PARTNER	ISSUES
		<p>energy efficiency schemes. However there are many other voluntary sector organisations which may be keen to participate in local schemes. Indeed Friends of the Earth Global Action Plan and the Groundwork Trust have already been involved. Note that you will need to ensure that the aims are very much in line with those of your scheme, otherwise keen potential partners may have problems with their own trustees.</p>		
	Age Concern	<p>Can offer community workers and referral networks for training, and poster display space in their shops.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Improve the service offered to the target audience. 	
	Save the Children	<p>Can provide an alternative marketing angle for a scheme, by highlighting the impacts of climate change on developing countries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Increased profile and possible fundraising. 	