



HELPING LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND THEIR COMMUNITIES WITH THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

1. Introduction

Local authorities are at different stages of planning for the Climate Emergency. There are though two distinct sets of actions that are required:

- a) Those that the authority needs to take, e.g., using renewable energy, carbonless vehicles etc. While these will take time and incur costs, they are all under the authority's control.
- b) What are not under their control are the communities which make up the borough, district or city and where the bulk of the carbon is consumed. The strategy to get to these communities is completely different to that of greening the council.

Commonplace's thrust in helping authorities address the Climate Emergency is in facilitating the mobilisation of communities to identify what needs doing, where and when. To this end, we are providing local authorities with a package of Engagement Templates to get their communities involved and turn the vast majority of people who are demanding activity into a vast majority that is doing something about it.

2. The Community Engagement Road Map

We have developed The Community Engagement Road Map below to look at several scenarios, relating to how communities can be involved in the overall plan to reduce carbon consumption, and these are self-explanatory. When we talk about communities, we don't just mean neighbourhoods, rather we include businesses, hospitals, central government offices, schools, colleges, universities and any other organisations. Speaking to one local authority, they said that Community was the smallest element of their plan but the biggest job they face. As stated in the introduction, communities are not under local authority control, so the approach has to be completely different. However, there are things happening out there which will help other communities in their pursuit of net zero. In an earlier bulletin on this subject, we mentioned Zero Carbon Manchester and Our Chorlton, also in Manchester. Both these community based, lottery funded projects are progressing and over time, Commonplace (a co-sponsor of these projects) will be able to feedback useful information on what works and what doesn't. This will help local authorities guide their communities and optimise the use of time and energy they have at their disposal. Local authorities' role in the Community will be one of a guide or a coach, an enabler or facilitator rather than a doer.

In the road map we have identified (in blue boxes) some of the activities that we feel will be the main ways in which local authorities can help communities.



Start Point	Potential Engagement Plan			
Completed Climate Assembly or Jury	Share selected output with the community.	Build plan based upon Assembly <u>and</u> Community	Publish plan with final refinement and execute.	
Documented Climate Action Plan	Share plan with the community.	Engage Community and seek views.	Refine plan and publish.	Execute with community.
Documented Strategy but no Plan as yet	Engage Community and seek views.	Build plan based upon Strategy <u>and</u> Community	Publish Plan for Community Feedback	Publish plan with final refinement and execute.
Facilitation by the Local Authority	<p>Create exemplar(s)</p> <p>Education and behaviour change.</p> <p>Seed corning projects</p> <p>Help to gain grants from lottery etc</p>		<p>Provision of tools to help with the work</p> <p>Publishing and celebrating success</p> <p>Learning from mistakes</p> <p>Helping not telling</p>	



3. Facilitation by the Local Authority

Here is an overview and explanation of the points identified above:

a) Create Exemplar(s)

Exemplars are areas or communities that can be used to showcase the art of the possible, and that can be replicated across a local authority area. Key to setting these up is having a group of Climate Change Champions or enthusiasts who will motivate their communities to get involved and “roll their sleeves up”. Our Chorlton has a very strong and determined leadership group and there are many [Climate Action Groups](#) across the country. When helping to establish an exemplar, start small and grow from there. This is a huge elephant; it will not be eaten quickly.

b) Education and Behaviour Change

Many people believe that governments will solve the climate emergency. They won't, for the simple reason they can't. They can do so much but it is individuals that will do the most. A lot of local and central policies have “sticks” attached to them. E.g. Congestion charging, Clean Air Zone charging. What happens to the money that these and other charged services like parking generate? Why not use it to reward people who travel by train or use active travel. This is more likely to change behaviour than fining people. Having said that and it is just one example, education is key: reinforcing ideas and material will help it stick. This is a key role for governments of all types and sizes.

c) Seed Corning Projects

Once your communities' champions have assessed the suggestions from their constituents, they may start looking for funding. In many cases this may be quite small e.g., provision of printing services for posters or leaflets or the funding of meeting places or meeting technology. If these help get projects with high potential off the ground these are good investments even if the projects fail, but this is covered below. Small investments keep small groups motivated and that will be important over the long haul to get to net zero. Local authorities are accountable to the public for the money they spend. However, as 70% of the public's want government(s) to spend more on the climate, there should be little pushback.

d) Help to Gain Grants from the Lottery and Government

There will undoubtedly be communities who will have business expertise and will be able to competently complete the applications that the National Lottery and other grant giving organisations require. Equally there will be many that won't. Most



government funding is managed and spent centrally or is made available to local authorities. While there has been some movement toward directly funding communities, that movement is small, though arguably should be greater. So where communities do not have the skills, or where they are not invited to bid for funds, the local authority must support them. Many government-funded programmes are demanding that the community, the public and stakeholders are consulted as a condition of funding. Local authorities must help communities achieve such public buy-in through education and provision of engagement skills and or tools. They must take the lead in applying for funding be it from government, the National Lottery or other grant giving bodies.

e) Provide Tools to Help

As stated in other sections it is important that local authorities provide technology-based tools to help communities in their quests. These tools include:

- a) Traffic counters to identify congestion, related pollution, and traffic increases/reduction.
- b) Carbon measurement technology so that communities can understand baselines and the improvements of their action.
- c) The ability to engage the community to understand areas of problem and opportunity.
- d) The ability to promulgate good news and how successes were achieved, and how these successes can be replicated.
- e) To report and publish the interventions that didn't work to prevent the reinvention of the square wheel.

We are sure there is much more technology out there that can help local authorities. Commonplace can advise on the last three points and have applications of these, which are 'live' now.

f) Celebrate success, understand failure and encourage the sharing of ideas

It is really important that the community shares their successes and equally important that the local authority has the mechanism to promulgate successes and encourages other communities to replicate such successes. Celebration is a splendid word, but celebrations are a way of saying thank you to those who thought of the intervention and those who turned the idea into reality. It is inevitable that some ideas will not result in success. These should not be considered as failures. Rather they are learning points and with the right mechanisms they will prevent repetition. At the heart of all innovation are ideas. Provide a way to capture and share ideas. That way communities may find people who can help bring that idea to life. Don't be proud. Communities don't have to invent everything themselves. There will be many other local and national groups involved. As a colleague once said "beg, borrow or steal with pride". Commonplace will, through its work with other authorities play a pivotal role in the promulgation of best practice.



g) Helping not Telling

Without wishing to be, or sound contentious, local authorities are bureaucratic organisations that, broadly speaking, tell people what they can or can't do, as they operate within a strict legislative regime. In the context of communities needing to dramatically change behaviour, as they will for climate change, that approach will not work. What is required is leadership. Most authorities have set the goals, now they have to help their communities. They need to talk with communities to understand the issues they are facing, the barriers that are stopping progress and find ways to co-create solutions. There will not be a bottomless pit of money, especially after the billions that have been necessarily spent on the pandemic. There is though, an enormous amount of talent. Harnessing this talent will be fundamental to change, and many people have been involved in major change. Over the last forty to fifty years most of Britain's cities have re-invented themselves. The population of these places have had to change to make these transitions, and their lives a success. Many local authorities have been involved in these transformations: the climate emergency is just a much, much bigger one.

4. Summary

Commonplace can provide local authorities and communities with the tools and support they need to engage community members, capture ideas, promote co-creation and publish outcomes.

5. References

- In Our Nature from the Manchester Climate Change Agency - <https://zerocarbonmanchester.commonplace.is/>
- Our Chorlton - <https://ourchorlton.commonplace.is/>
- Carbon Neutral Royal Borough of Greenwich - <https://carbonneutralgreenwich.commonplace.is/>
- Surrey County Council - <https://surreysgreenerfuture.commonplace.is/overview>
- London Borough of Lambeth - <https://lambethclimateaction.commonplace.is/>

