

Scaling up the climate change adaptation response in the West Midlands

Lead organisation:

Sustainability West Midlands

Project Manager: Alan Carr (Senior Sustainability Adviser)

Partners:



WM Sustainability Roadmap themes addressed:



Project Duration:

January 2021 – December 2023

The Project

We have worked in collaboration with the Environment Agency for the past three years to help accelerate and scale-up the region's response to climate change adaptation. While there is an increasing recognition that we are experiencing a greater number and intensity of extreme weather events, progress on dealing with their risks and impacts remains slow. This collaboration aims to drive forward activity across multiple sectors in the region, to increase resilience and encourage adaptation action.

Aims

- To produce a climate change adaptation plan for the region, collating all the actions that are needed to respond effectively to climate change adaptation in the region into one place.
- To develop resources to help a range of organisations scale up their response to climate change adaptation.
- To provide opportunities for knowledge exchange, sharing good practice and collaboration on climate change adaptation activities.

SWM's role

SWM were responsible for delivering all outputs associated with the collaboration, working closely with the Environment Agency. We were able to use our vast experience of supporting organisations on the topic of climate change adaptation going back to the formation of [Climate UK](#) in 2011, and our reach to thousands of stakeholders across the region, to deliver a range of outputs listed below.

Challenges

- One of the outputs is the relaunch of *Weathering the Storm*, the guide for SMEs on how they can improve their resilience. We tried to run workshops with businesses in advance of its publication but had very little interest; on reflection, this is likely due to the other huge challenges businesses have to deal with at present, such as Covid recovery, economic turmoil and energy price rises.
- While the Adaptation Plan for the region has been praised for being a hugely useful resource, it is still difficult to further the implementation of many of the actions due to the lack of national resource or funding. Moving from intention to action is the next step.
- Keeping on top of the actions in the plan is also a challenge; there are many relevant projects taking place across the region that can help to address various actions, but finding these is not always straightforward!



The Outputs

Through extensive engagement and research, the following outputs have been delivered:

- The publication of the first [West Midlands Climate Change Adaptation Plan](#).
- An event [launching the Plan](#), with a range of stakeholders.
- The setting up and convening of the West Midlands Climate Adaptation Working Group, to drive forward the actions.
- Adapt to Survive, a [toolkit and accompanying guidance](#) to support the NHS with the development of adaptation plans.
- A [national event](#) alongside the above for NHS Trusts to share learning on adaptation.
- The publication of [Weathering the Storm](#), a guide on how SMEs can become more resilient.
- The publication of an equivalent guide for the agriculture industry and land managers (to be published in Feb 2024).
- A [case study suite](#) showcasing practical examples of how local authorities can implement adaptation projects.
- A [national event](#) with 75 attendees from local authorities also focusing on the above.

- An event titled '[Climate Change: It's In Our Nature](#),' focusing on nature-based solutions to the climate crisis.
- Three rounds of our [local authority benchmarking exercise](#), monitoring the progress on sustainability of the councils in our region.

In the Future

We want to continue supporting our local stakeholders with this topic of ever increasing importance. Extreme weather events, such as floods and heatwaves, are becoming the norm, and we must be better prepared and able to respond to such events. We would like to expand on the work already done but the next step must be to turn stated intention and guidance documents into action on the ground, and this will only happen if policy and resource follows suit from the national level.

Accolades

“Climate change adaptation underpins much of what the Environment Agency does, and working with SWM has allowed us to influence and drive forward the West Midlands’s response on this agenda in a way that we could not have otherwise done. Their unique reach and experience means that we can collectively produce resources, engage stakeholders and catalyse local action on climate change adaptation that would not have otherwise taken place. We look forward to maintaining this hugely successful relationship with them in future.” – Jim Davies, Senior Advisor (Local Nature Recovery Strategies), Environment Agency.

Contact Details

For further information on the project or to work with us in one of a variety of ways, please [see our adaptation support page](#) or contact the SWM team on enquiries@swm.org.uk.