

Panel 1 Synopsis - “Climate Change Adaptation Policy and Progress”

Chaired by [Dr Helen Adams](#) (Senior Lecturer in Disaster Risk Reduction & Climate Change Adaptation, King’s College London) and featuring [Bethany Haskins-Vaheesan](#) (Project Manager – Climate Adaptation, WMCA), [Dan Clayton](#) (Sustainability Manager, Lincolnshire County Council), and [Paul Fisher](#) (Consultant in Health Protection, UKHSA)

The first panel focused on climate change policy and progress, with representatives from across the public sector discussing the challenges and opportunities for delivering climate adaptation in England today. One key takeaway, as put by Paul Fisher from the [UK Health Security Agency](#) (UKHSA), was “we often badge adaptation as being a really complex challenge, but in fact we very often do know what to do, we just need the resource and expertise in the right place to be able to do it.”

There was a clear sentiment from across the panel that we need statutory requirements for adaptation to be delivered at a local and regional level, but interestingly in particular there was an ask for mandates that require collaborative working cross-sector, as otherwise low resource and tight capacity mean siloed working continues and we cannot tackle issues as systems. Bethany Haskins-Vaheesan from the [West Midlands Combined Authority](#) (WMCA) stated a specific ask for devolved resource, as a combined authority, to coordinate and support risk owners on adaptation to allow for this systems-approach, and Dan Clayton from [Lincolnshire County Council](#) (LCC) voiced a need for specific support for managing all hazards in the same way they manage flooding. In the spirit of Emma Howard-Boyd’s point in the keynote about the need to get together behind the same recommendations, rather than producing more and more advice, Paul reiterated the four recommendations for National Government from the [recent Climate Change Committee \(CCC\) report](#), including embedding adaptation into existing strategic objectives and actions and implementing monitoring & evaluation.

Some interesting examples of best practice were shared by the panellists and attendees (see links below), with clear, tangible advice for the SMEs in the room. Dan suggested the simple yet effective advice that businesses need to start to really believe that climate change can affect them. What would you do in a flood or business-halting heatwave? Beth offered the invitation to join the [West Midlands Regional Adaptation Network \(WM-RAN\)](#) they are running with the University of Birmingham through the MACC Hub-funded WM-Adapt project. Paul recommended looking at the advice for extreme weather planning in the [Adverse Weather & Health Plan](#), which includes guidance on how to communicate advice in a heatwave, and encouraged working with organisations similar to yourself, your neighbours, and internally within your organisation. Aptly put by Paul: “the opposite of resilience is loneliness”.

Best practice:

[A FAIR Approach to Community Flood Risk | Engage Environment Agency](#)

[What is Preston Model? - Preston City Council](#)

[Marmot Places](#)

Panel 2 Synopsis - “Improving Resilience to Climate Change and other Risks”

Chaired by [Dr Beck Collins](#) (Senior Sustainability Adviser, SWM) and featuring [Matt Smith](#) (Programme Manager, River Severn Partnership – Shropshire Council), [Mike Everard](#) (CEO & Founder, PureWave Form Ltd), and [Dr Rachel Lombardi](#) (Chief Executive, International Synergies Ltd)

The second panel focused on business resilience, with a special focus on SMEs who make up a significant proportion of SWM’s membership base.

What was brought out from the conversation was not just the direct need to consider extreme weather as part of continuity planning, but the myriad of interdependencies such as utilities, supply chain, and materials resilience.

Mike Everard at [PureWave Form](#) highlighted the consideration of ensuring a consistent and reliable energy supply. “The cheapest electricity is what you don't consume.” He recommended that all organisations implement a simple monitoring system to assess the robustness of the energy supply coming into the business. Meanwhile, Rachel Lombardi from [International Synergies](#) highlighted the need to diversify supply chains. “If you get critical inputs from more than one source, you have a more resilient supply chain.”

Matt Smith, through his role at the [River Severn Partnership](#), reminded us not to forget the rural economy. He emphasised that climate change impacts are adding to an already large number of unique challenges the agriculture sector faces. But on a positive note, he highlighted some of excellent work already going on; this includes the “use of industrial-sized smart water butts to store water during periods of water scarcity,” and “using AI to identify whether new pests could be a danger to crops.”