



Building capacity to respond to climate change in Kent CC

In common with local authorities across the UK and much of the world, Kent County Council (KCC) has been reviewing how climate change will affect it over coming decades. In 2006, a Select Committee of members looked at the issues in depth and issued a well-received report. The conclusion was that climate change is a very serious issue indeed for the County and for KCC itself; a serious programme of action was proposed. A central recommendation was that KCC needed to think through in detail how its services would be affected by climate change and make strategic plans to ensure their continued resilience.

KCC has taken many actions since the report was issued. In parallel, the INTERREG-funded European Spatial Planning: Adapting to Climate Events (ESPACE) project (to which KCC is linked through its membership of Climate South East and in other ways) has been developing a tool for assessing organisational capacity to respond to climate change. KCC seized the opportunity to use this tool to take stock of progress since 2006 and to identify how it could move forward again in respond to the Select Committee's recommendations.

How organisational responses to climate change develop

Although organisations are used to adapting to changing circumstances over time, the scale and pace of climate change demands a more rapid, radical and concerted change agenda. The ESPACE change tool has been designed to give organisations some perspective on the change landscape, helping them to pinpoint where they are on the change journey and map out where they might go next.

Organisations improve their response to climate change in predictable stages, becoming able to use six levels of response of increasing complexity as they develop their understanding of the issue and of how to respond to it. Most organisation of any size are using more than the first and second levels of response: "**core business focused**" and "**stakeholder responsive**". Many of them are now comfortable using the third level of response: "**efficient management**". At this level, they integrate climate change responses into core business processes using approaches like carbon management and applying good practice in a disciplined way.

While this represents progress and a basis for development, climate change poses challenges that go far beyond business-as-usual. At the fourth level of response: "**breakthrough projects**", senior managers commission projects to explore issues in depth, looking beyond the status quo, seeking performance breakthroughs and looking for insights relevant to the organisation's strategy. This level of response is needed to engage seriously with the agenda as recommended by the Select Committee, which itself could be seen as an early breakthrough project.

The Select Committee's recommendations pointed to the fifth level of response: "strategic responsiveness". Climate change becomes a strategic business concern with a focus on the ongoing resilience of the organisation both to climate impacts and to a future in which energy is likely to be seriously constrained. Major changes of approach are often needed and this demands a high level of capacity. There is also a sixth level of response: the "**champion organisation**", but research shows that few if any organisations yet work at this level.

To sustain movement from one level to another requires parallel progress along nine developmental pathways. These – and the ways in which they interact – are summarised briefly at Attachment One.



Main conclusions: substantial progress since 2006

- KCC is very unlikely to have had the capacity in 2006 successfully to take on the challenging questions that were asked by the Select Committee.
- The Council now seems to have the third level of response well in hand in all pathways and to be moving towards the fourth level of response.
- KCC's capacity has now improved to the point where it can engage in a serious way with the Select Committee's remaining recommendations – the next step!
- The challenge is to do this in a way that takes the organisation quickly towards level five where high quality strategic responses to the issue become embedded, helping to ensure the resilience of KCC's estates and services and allowing it to provide a strong lead to the community in Kent's wider response.

A chart summarising how we see KCC's current status is at Attachment Two.

Areas for attention in moving forward again

1. In our view, critical pathways are 'Awareness' (understanding in depth how climate change will affect specific services and responsibilities) and 'Agency' (finding timely and effective ways of responding to ensure their resilience). These are needed at a deep level and there are good reasons why they are best developed together. The 'breakthrough project' capacities that the organisation has developed now need to be focused onto these areas, so giving the other capacities that the Council has developed a chance to spearhead the move to the fifth level of response.
2. The 'Building Schools for the Future' programme is of great importance to the County and provides a fertile ground for 'breakthrough projects'. Senior officers and members need to stay closely involved with such projects, learning themselves and using insights to think through strategy.
3. The 'Learning' pathway may be holding progress back and would repay some attention. Responding to climate change requires significant organisational learning that goes beyond that typically provided by the ISO14001 process.
4. Change agents such as those in the 'Green Guardian' and 'Champion' roles are likely to provide much experience around which learning processes could be built.
5. There would be value in providing 'quality circle' or 'mentoring' type approaches to change agents: this is a potentially stressful role that deserves support.
6. Logging of constraints and other issues has begun among Green Guardians. This is a helpful initiative and can potentially be used as a basis for knowledge management and for referring issues to the part of the organisation best placed to deal with it.
7. In due course, the strategic review of major projects for climate resilience will need to be strengthened. In the meanwhile, planning assumptions for costs of energy, etc, could be strengthened to take account of future energy cost scenarios.

Further information

This review was led by David Ballard, Director, Alexander Ballard Ltd. He was assisted by Kristen Guida of Climate South East. Michael Howard, an Alexander Ballard Ltd intern, also participated in the review. To assist Kent County Council in its progress on climate change, we have sent a draft of a detailed report supporting these conclusions and with further information on the developmental pathways to Alison Cambray, Climate Change Programme Manager. This also described how we carried out this review. We would be happy to respond to any points of clarification at the address below. While this review is our own responsibility, our work was considerably assisted by the officers and members of Kent County Council who gave their time to help this review. We offer them our thanks.

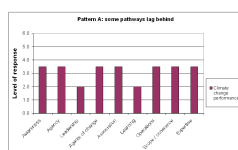
ATTACHMENT 1: The nine developmental pathways

The ESPACE organisational change tools gathers and organises information about nine pathways – organisational capacities which research shows to be necessary to improvement.

- a) **Awareness.** The grasp of what climate change means for society, for the organisation and its mission, and for particular areas of responsibility, now and into the future.
- b) **Agency.** The capacity to spot, prioritise and develop opportunities for meaningful and timely action on climate change.
- c) **Leadership.** The extent to which a formal leadership team has developed a strategic vision and engages with, supports and legitimises its implementation.
- d) **Agents of Change.** How is an “ecosystem” or group of champions identified, developed, empowered and supported so that they can be effective agents of change.
- e) **Association.** The capacity to involve, respect the needs of, learn from, and act in collaborative partnerships with internal and external groups.
- f) **Learning.** How much sense is being made of outcomes and feedback from innovation and whether this is communicated to improve procedures, strategies and mission.
- g) **Operational Management.** The embedding of procedures to get to grips with climate change in a systematic way to ensure that intentions and policies turn into action.
- h) **Programme scope and coherence.** How far projects sit within a strategic programme of action suited to the scope of what the organisation is trying to achieve.
- i) **Optimising Expertise.** Being able to recognise, access and deploy the necessary skills, understanding and technical and change expertise to make the biggest difference.

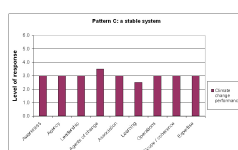
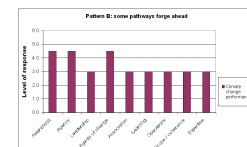
If performance in any one pathway lags behind, research suggests that it is likely to impair the overall response to climate change. Because the pathways are 'complementary', progress needs to be made along each one at the same rate. So it becomes necessary to understand where each 'pathway' stands relative to others – the purpose of this exercise.

We see three generic patterns of response, each with its own challenge:



Pattern A: Some lagging pathways. In this pattern, one or two pathways are lagging behind most others. They are likely to be acting as a brake on progress. The payoffs from improving them are likely to be very high – probably higher than trying harder in leading pathways.

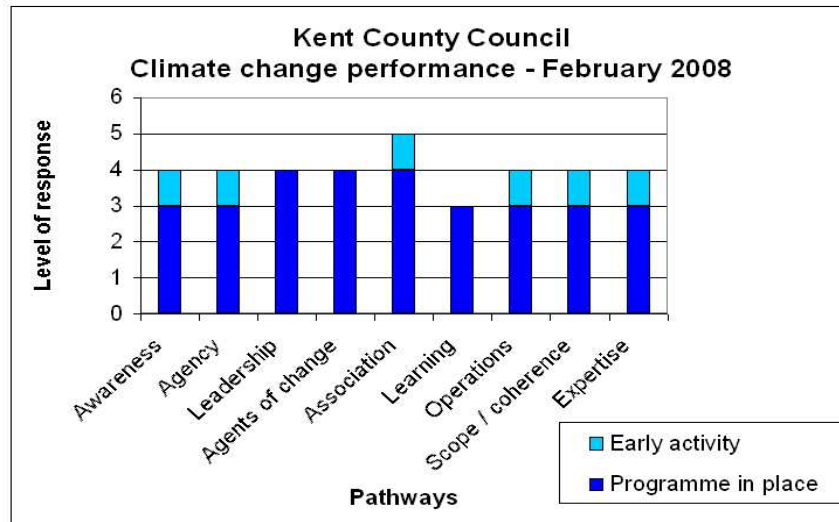
Pattern B: Some pathways forge ahead. In this pattern, progress along some pathways is beginning to accelerate. Nobody wants to slow down or stop momentum – and yet there is a great risk that the initiatives will fail unless the rest of the organisation moves forward, The task is to protect leading pathways, using them as a basis for developing other pathways



Pattern C: A stable system. In this pattern, different pathways reinforce each other, making change difficult: whatever happens, it tends to look like more of the same. The task is to 'unfreeze, change and then refreeze' at a higher level to consolidate – finding out ways of creating opportunities for groups of pathways to move together in parallel, protecting the experimentation and spreading learning to other areas.

ATTACHMENT 2: Status of Kent County Council in February 2008

Based on our analysis, here is a chart summarising how we see KCC's current status along each of the nine pathways described in Attachment 1:



Response level 5 is the level at which the Select Committee's recommendations were pitched (see page 1 of covering report). The dark blue areas are where we see a solid programme in place; the lighter blue areas indicate movement forwards which has not yet fully been consolidated. Some obvious lessons are as follows:

1. The pattern is C – a stable system (see Attachment 1).
2. The Council seems to have the third level of response well in hand in all pathways and to be moving towards the fourth level of response.
3. KCC's capacity has now improved to the point where it is possible to engage in a serious way with the Select Committee's questions about services and climate change – the next step!
4. The challenge is to do this in a way that takes the organisation quickly towards level five where high quality strategic responses to the issue become embedded, helping to ensure the resilience of the council's estates and services and allowing it to provide a strong lead to the community in doing likewise.
5. The Learning pathway may be holding progress back and would repay attention.
6. In our view, critical pathways for moving forward are Awareness and Agency. The 'breakthrough project' capacities that the organisation has developed now need to be focused onto these areas, so giving the other capacities that the Council has developed a chance to support a move to the fifth level of response.
7. Moving to Response Level Four and beyond is challenging but rewarding and KCC is ready to do this. Some care needs to be taken to set up projects to maximise the learning from them and to support participants through the process.

A more detailed analysis of the current status along each pathway, with suggestions as to next steps and with some case examples of organisations that have taken them is included in the detailed analysis, a draft of which has been sent to Climate Change Project Manager, Alison Cambray: alison.cambray@kent.gov.uk, 01622 221979.