

Local adaptation in the UK – Some aspects of potential and practice

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Stakeholders are at the heart of the UK's strategy of raising awareness on impacts and adaptation. This approach can bring benefits in terms of better identification, communication and ownership of climate change risks. It is also well suited to a locally-driven approach.

Local aspects of climate change policy in the UK

In the UK, one of the main routes of securing stakeholder engagement is the UK Climate Impacts Programme (UKCIP). UKCIP exists to promote and co-ordinate research on climate impacts, to provide a core set of good quality information to underpin impact studies, and to encourage stakeholders to develop impact assessments and adaptation strategies.

From its inception, UKCIP has a strong regional aspect. It has helped set up voluntary stakeholder groups in each of the eight regions of England, and in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The purpose of these groups is to examine regional priorities. While most regions will face the same generic challenges (e.g. increased flood risk, pressure on water resources), the severity of these will vary markedly depending on climate. Local characteristics will also influence the nature of the impacts; some areas will be concerned about the effect on manufacturing industry or upland hill farming whereas as others could be concerned that strong economic pressures might lead to greater coastal development, more at risk from flooding.

The regional groups are made up of a diverse set of stakeholders, often including representatives from different tiers of local government, the Environment Agency, water companies, businesses and NGOs. The groups are largely independent of central government and responsible for finding their own financing (either through subscription or through applying for grants). They provide a core of regional knowledge on climate change, and often include people who are involved in wider climate mitigation or sustainable development agendas. Through their involvement in the regional climate change partnerships, these people can help influence regional development strategies so that they take better account of climate change.

Awareness-raising with local government

In 2003, UKCIP produced a booklet "Climate change and local communities – How prepared are you? An adaptation guide for local authorities in the UK". The aim was to explain to Chief Executives and local government officers how climate change might affect the goods and services that local authorities provide. It listed a number of potential impacts and possible responses which will be developed further into a web-based set of case studies.

A range of central government departments and other bodies are also working with the national representatives of local authorities to look more broadly at the policy implications of climate change.

Response to current climate variability

A number of bodies are involved in responding to current climate variability. The Environment Agency (EA), in particular, has responsibility for issuing flood warnings (as well as a role in the provision of flood defences themselves). In 2003, the EA ran a Flood Awareness Campaign. It also provides real time flood warning information, updated every 15 minutes, and has a floodline information service available 24 hours a day seven days a week.

For more information

www.ukcip.org.uk

www.defra.gov.uk/environment/climatechange/

www.environment-agency.gov.uk