

# Unlocking local leadership on climate change: perspectives from coalition MPs



green  
alliance...



“Some of the areas of greatest potential will be those where delivery is local, supported by a common national framework.”

Damian Hinds MP



“Localism is powerful... these opportunities are being ambitiously pursued with a focus on green businesses and investments.”

Martin Vickers MP



“A key test of this government’s climate change policy should be the extent to which it makes the most of the potential that localism offers.”

Julian Huppert MP

## Unlocking local leadership on climate change: perspectives from coalition MPs

Published by Green Alliance, June 2012

ISBN 978-1-905869-65-7

£5

Designed by Howdy and printed by Park Lane Press

Edited by Hannah Kyrke-Smith, Faye Scott and Rebecca Willis.

This publication is a product of Green Alliance's Climate Leadership Programme under the Political Leadership theme.  
[www.green-alliance.org.uk/politicalleadership](http://www.green-alliance.org.uk/politicalleadership)

The views of contributors are not necessarily those of Green Alliance.

### Green Alliance

Green Alliance is a charity and independent think tank focused on ambitious leadership for the environment. We have a track record of over 30 years, working with the most influential leaders from the NGO and business communities. Our work generates new thinking and dialogue, and has increased political action and support for environmental solutions in the UK.

### Climate Leadership Programme

Green Alliance's Climate Leadership Programme has worked with over 50 MPs since 2009 to develop their knowledge and skills to lead a proactive and ambitious climate change agenda. The programme has featured workshops on the science, policy and politics of climate change for parliamentary candidates and MPs, as well as offering small events for cross-party groups of MPs. Participants are given the opportunity to hear from experts in the field, receive briefings and informal advice on request, and work at constituency level on particular issues.

Green Alliance

36 Buckingham Palace Road, London, SW1W 0RE

020 7233 7433

[ga@green-alliance.org.uk](mailto:ga@green-alliance.org.uk)

[www.green-alliance.org.uk](http://www.green-alliance.org.uk)

Registered charity 1045395

Company limited by guarantee (England and Wales) 3037633

Supported by



© Green Alliance 2012

Green Alliance's work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-No derivative works 3.0 unported licence. This does not replace copyright but gives certain rights without having to ask Green Alliance for permission.

Under this licence, our work may be shared freely. This provides the freedom to copy, distribute and transmit this work on to others, provided Green Alliance is credited as the author and text is unaltered. This work must not be resold or used for commercial purposes. These conditions can be waived under certain circumstances with the written permission of Green Alliance. For more information about this licence go to <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>



creative commons

# Contents

## **Introduction**

Rebecca Willis , Green Alliance associate **2**

---

## **Climate change is local**

Damian Hinds, Conservative MP for East Hampshire **7**

---

## **Power in co-operation**

Martin Vickers, Conservative MP for Cleethorpes **17**

---

## **The potential of true localism**

Julian Huppert, Liberal Democrat MP for Cambridge **22**

---

# Introduction

## Leading through localism

Rebecca Willis

Green Alliance associate

Humberside has a proud industrial heritage. The factories and ports of the Humber estuary have contributed to the UK's prosperity, and provided jobs for local people, over many decades.

With the decline of traditional industry, today the area has a new found source of jobs: renewable energy. The Humber renewable energy super cluster is a comprehensive plan, drawn up by local businesses and government to transform the economy of the area by developing low carbon industries.

Climate change is, of course, a global issue, which needs to be tackled at the international level, and by national government. But solutions won't be found unless local areas like the Humber see the potential in low carbon solutions, and are given the support they need to cut carbon.

No one knows this better than MP Martin Vickers, representing Cleethorpes on the south bank of the Humber. Members of parliament see both sides. They shape national policy, and they also represent a local constituency. Martin Vickers and his fellow MPs, Julian Huppert and Damian Hinds, understand that the interplay between local and national is vital in achieving our climate goals.

This collection of articles, by the three MPs, explores how the government can link two crucial aims: tackling climate change and empowering local areas.

While Martin Vickers concentrates on the economic opportunities of renewable energy, Damian Hinds explores the capacity of local communities to respond to climate change. He tells the story of the village of East Meon, in his East Hampshire

constituency, where villagers have signed up to a host of carbon cutting commitments. Julian Huppert focuses on the role of local authorities, like Cambridge City Council which, through working together with businesses and communities, can forge partnerships to drive local action.

There are some themes common to all the pieces. First, all three MPs make clear that it is not a simple choice between top down diktat, on the one hand, and local control on the other. Instead, tackling climate change requires a carefully crafted combination of national ambition and local action. As Damian Hinds writes, the strength of the idea of localism "is the potential it will unlock at the local level... its ability to free up local authorities to innovate and to empower communities, while still acknowledging that national and international action remains necessary."

**“Localism is not just about transferring power from national government to local government. It is about supporting local communities and businesses, and creating powerful new partnerships to drive action.”**

Hinds points out the crucial role of national policy in establishing markets and setting policies that allow local areas to act. Getting prices right is an important part of this: "however great the devolution of operational responsibility", Hinds

writes, “the power of the purse strings should not be underestimated; whether through the tax system for households and companies, or grants and fines for local authorities.”

This points to a model where national government sets expectations, and puts the right policies, powers and financial incentives in place, then leaves local areas free to act in ways that best suit local circumstances. The need for this approach has been underlined by the Committee on Climate Change. Their report on local authorities and climate change recommends that national carrots, in the form of more funding to support local authorities in taking climate action, and potentially national sticks, in the form of a requirement to develop a local carbon plan, will be needed to ensure that all local authorities make the progress that is possible and necessary.<sup>1</sup> Finding the balance between carrots and sticks and enabling local authorities to go at their own pace, while ensuring that there is no opt-out, is a delicate job but, as these MPs make clear, it is a necessary one.

So how do the Coalition’s efforts at localism so far measure up against this ambition? Far from being too localist, Julian Huppert suggests that the government has not yet offered a sufficiently radical approach. The first wave of localism, embodied in the Localism Act and planning reforms, has focused on dismantling the target-based regime of the previous administration, and given local authorities a general ‘power of competence’, which is an important step. This allows authorities to set their own agenda, rather than just carry out functions set by national government. But Huppert argues that this is not enough: “the resources are too minimal, the commitment to devolve powers too weak and

the resulting policies are nowhere near radical enough. Only through an acceleration of devolution, on a scale not yet considered by any British government, will we engage with citizens and begin to meaningfully tackle climate change at a national, global and local level.” A second wave of localism, giving local areas the power as well as the responsibility, is needed.

Huppert’s views are borne out by Green Alliance’s research, which shows that the first wave of localism has damaged the ability of local areas to act on climate change. The combination of funding cuts and removal of centrally imposed targets has actually resulted in over a third of local authorities deprioritising work on climate change. To quote the stark words of one officer in Green Alliance’s survey, “the sustainability function within my local authority has been deleted and the climate change function has been discontinued”.<sup>2</sup>

## **“The first wave of localism has damaged the ability of local areas to act on climate change.”**

In contrast, experience from elsewhere in Europe, in political systems with a stronger commitment to local autonomy, shows how local areas can lead the way on climate action. In both Sweden and Germany, municipalities play a central role in energy supply and demand, often owning energy generation assets such as heat networks. Swedish municipalities are required to draw up an Energy Plan, to promote efficient use of energy and reduce dependence on fossil fuels. Crucially, the plans tend

to take a wide view of energy, influencing patterns of transport, industry and housing development, for example. Municipalities are given a high degree of autonomy in implementing the plan, including the power to raise taxes. Even in the US, as Damian Hinds points out, in marked contrast to the national government's reticence on climate change, US mayors have joined together to form a Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, with individual states pledging far-reaching action on climate change.

All the contributors to this collection make clear, too, that localism is not just about transferring power from national government to local government. It is about supporting local communities and businesses, and creating powerful new partnerships to drive action. As both Hinds and Huppert write, it is crucial to acknowledge and build on the impressive initiatives that emerge from communities themselves, such as the 'Greening' initiative in Hampshire, and the Transition Town movement. Rather than seeing community action as a separate sphere of activity, a true localism would involve community champions as a crucial part of any local response to climate change.

So how can we move from the first wave of localism to a second wave, in which local areas are empowered to take the lead on climate action? All three MPs point to some crucial opportunities ahead.

First, the Green Deal. As Damian Hinds points out, the Coalition's flagship policy offers a chance for local authorities, businesses and communities to throw themselves into practical local action and carbon reduction. Done well, the Green Deal could

be a brilliant example of enabling national policy, which provides a clear framework for local action. As Green Alliance has previously pointed out, though, government needs to ensure that the Green Deal is not monopolised by large national players, and that there is a route for local organisations to participate and profit from the initiative.<sup>3</sup>

Second, the Green Investment Bank. As shown above, it is striking how municipalities in other European countries have taken a lead in investing in low carbon infrastructure. Allowing local partnerships to access capital funding backed by the Green Investment Bank will be critical to unleashing local action, like the low carbon investment in the Humber, backed by Martin Vickers.

**“Allowing local partnerships to access capital funding backed by the Green Investment Bank will be critical to unleashing local action.”**

Third, low carbon transport. The government's own research shows that the most efficient and effective transport interventions are local.<sup>4</sup> At the local level, transport strategy can be considered in the round, with links to land use planning, demand management and behavioural change. The success of the Sustainable Travel Towns of Darlington, Peterborough and Worcester show that this strategy reduces emissions, improves quality of life and is impressive value for money. This government has continued such an approach, by offering a number of grants through the Local Sustainable Transport Fund,

cited by Julian Huppert. But radical localism would mean more than funding: it would require a transfer of responsibilities and opportunities for low carbon transport from the centre to local areas.

**“All three MPs contributing to this collection are clear about the opportunities offered by localism. But they lay down a challenge to government: to move from a first wave of localism to a more confident, radical second wave.”**

Fourth, developing greater local distinctiveness. As localism develops, there will be more opportunities to forge a strong local identity, and focus on different aspects of the climate challenge. Just as the Humber is becoming known for renewable energy investment, so Birmingham is leading the way on energy efficiency, as one of the first local authorities pledging to become a Green Deal provider. The new planning framework encourages local authorities to work closely with communities to draw up neighbourhood plans which reflect the views and aspirations of the area. Local Enterprise Partnerships allow local businesses to shape economic strategies. And, of course, MPs are often a vital catalyst in these processes, providing a link between different sectors: business, community and government, and between the local and the national.

All three MPs contributing to this collection are clear about the opportunities offered by localism. But

they lay down a challenge to government: to move from a first wave of localism to a more confident, radical second wave. To give local areas both the power and the responsibility to take action on climate change.

Green Alliance will continue to support MPs in this work, through its Climate Leadership Programme which helps to provide politicians with the skills and knowledge they need to lead the way on climate change. Further work on localism will explore how local action can be supported and encouraged from the centre. As local areas gain in confidence, we look forward to seeing new local climate solutions emerge.

# Climate change is local

Damian Hinds  
Conservative MP for East Hampshire



Al Gore made climate change his passion and took his message across the globe. Whatever your view of Gore and his film, he has probably done more to raise the profile of the issue than any organisation or government.

Ron Ingerson is the parallel of Al Gore at a local level, and his contribution is no less vital. While an Al Gore can establish that “something must be done” it takes a Ron to persuade people that “this is what we can do”. Five years ago it started with getting a dozen neighbours together in the Hampshire village of East Meon. From there, almost a quarter of the village residents signed up to a programme of practical emissions reduction commitments, under the banner of Greening East Meon. Now, Ron and his colleagues continue to supply villagers with a trusted source of information on tackling climate change, principally through the local school and the village magazine, *Meon Matters*. Today, the village has one eco-house and another being built. There are five houses with PV panels, with others planned, a number with solar panels and one with an air source heat pump.

On a complex subject like climate change, many people will need guidance and reassurance about what they are doing from people like Ron, as well as active support to make greener choices easier ones. That requires both leadership and support at all levels, from peers, public spirited neighbours, local voluntary groups, local authorities and central government. But it is also striking how often the story of a leap forward on tackling climate change centres on a single individual, from Al Gore on the world lecture circuit to Ron Ingerson in Hampshire.

### From local to national to global

The UK accounts for around 1.7 per cent of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions,<sup>5</sup> so we can't make much difference to climate change on our own. If we were to take action on emissions while no one else did, the leadership role we'd be taking on might help encourage change in other countries. But we would incur plenty of pain while making an almost imperceptible direct impact on climate change. Conversely, if we did nothing while all others acted, we would incur none of the pain, while getting almost all the potential benefit. The same logic applies in other countries too: a classic 'free rider' problem.

**“While agreements and frameworks may be international, little if anything actually happens at the global level. Actions that will actually change outcomes happen within countries, in cities, towns and villages.”**

It is for this reason that countries bind themselves into international agreements and targets, on the condition that others do likewise. Climate change is a global problem; in this sense it can also only have global solutions.

But while agreements and frameworks may be international, little if anything actually happens at the global level. Actions that will actually change outcomes happen within countries, in cities, towns and villages like East Meon. They happen through a

mixture of government policy, voluntary sector initiatives, commercial research and development, and the individual actions of millions of people in their homes and workplaces.

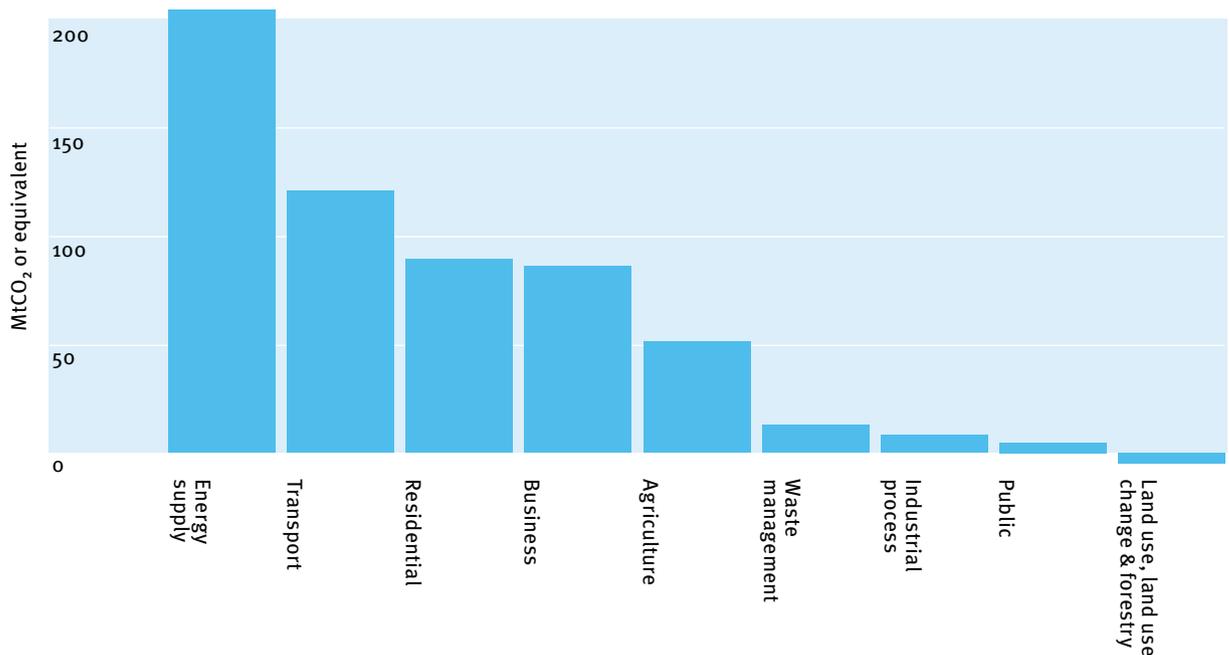
Central government sets the big picture ambitions, balances the costs and benefits of potential sources of reduction and puts policies in place to achieve them. They will actually deliver some activities but, more often, progress will be achieved indirectly through tax and other incentives. Partnerships are invariably required, and it will be others that do much or most of the heavy lifting.

The strength of localism is the potential it will unlock at the local level. The agenda would be flawed if it

simply moved from the extremes of a centrist approach to a localist one. Its strength is its ability to free up local authorities to innovate and to empower communities, while still acknowledging that national and international action remains necessary if we are to tackle climate change successfully.

The graph below breaks down the UK's emissions. Central government has an important role in tackling all of them. It can bring down emissions from energy supply, through driving changes in the mix and by sponsoring new technologies. That also applies to transport; although the single biggest variable will probably be R&D from a handful of automotive manufacturers in the US, Japan and Germany. Central government policies, taxes and

### Sources of UK greenhouse gas emissions 2010<sup>6</sup>



pricing frameworks are other key levers that can impact on emissions from businesses.

At the residential level, government can influence emissions to a degree, through regulations such as building standards, and they can empower, inform and incentivise. Ultimately though, little will happen without the engagement of millions of householders.

Local government also has an important role, with the potential to influence most of the categories of emissions above, through planning and local transport decisions, waste management, or programmes to drive energy efficiency in business premises and local housing stock.

### Individual power

The need to engage individuals presents a challenge, as climate change can be a pretty remote concept to people living in a temperate northern European climate. Even so, many people are concerned by what they see is already happening elsewhere in the world, to wildlife and to some of the world's poorest people. Current high energy prices, of which people see the effect both in their own cost of living and in the hardship suffered by poor and elderly neighbours, provide another motivation.

Children play a particularly important role. They see in the media what is happening in the Arctic Circle or Bangladesh, and rightly ask why we would let these things happen, given that we can take a different course. It is striking how supposedly naïve questions can spur or shame grown-ups into action.

There is a willingness and appetite out there to 'do something' on climate change. Despite economic challenges, 71 per cent of people in 2010 were still

very concerned or fairly concerned about climate change, and two thirds believe that it poses risks to people in Britain.<sup>7</sup> And, in a 2011 Eurobarometer survey which asked UK respondents about the greatest problems facing the world (rather than just Britain), people were more concerned about climate change (44 per cent) than the economy (39 per cent).<sup>8</sup>

**“There is a willingness and appetite out there to ‘do something’ on climate change. Despite economic challenges, 71 per cent of people in 2010 were still very concerned or fairly concerned about climate change.”**

Translating this concern into action is crucial, and this is where local leaders like Ron Ingeron in East Meon come in. The parliamentary constituency I represent is home to the Greening Campaign, led by Terena Plowright (see case study right). It helped Ron and his committee put in place East Meon's structured programme of local action on climate change. They were the third locality to adopt it, after Greening Petersfield and Greening South Harting. Since then, the Greening Campaign has helped empower communities to work on small scale, but focused and effective, emissions reductions programmes in over 200 towns and villages across Britain.

The power of the individual is very evident within firms and organisations, too. East Hampshire's main local housing association, Radian, is particularly

## Case study

### The Greening Campaign

The Greening Campaign is a not for profit organisation set up to help communities live more sustainably, encouraging people to get out of their houses and to interact and pull together as a community. In the long term, this helps to build a support network for people and helps the campaign to spread to communities across the country.

Over the past five years, 240 communities have become involved across the country, each led by a committee of local volunteers. This number continues to rise, predominantly by word of mouth. Communities get involved by choosing ‘challenges’, mostly simple measures to save energy in the home, such as switching off lights, taking shorter showers, or lagging hot water tanks. Once complete, households place postcards in their window stating what they’ve achieved. Each committee can then assess what has been achieved collectively and calculate a rough figure for the amount of energy saved. Communities can also take on collective projects, for example starting a community orchard, if their ambitions grow beyond the initial challenges.

The campaign is well structured, supplying support packs to communities, containing practical information such as how to organise community events, and template press releases, and sharing experience between communities. It makes a point of feeding results back to the communities after only a few months, so they can see that progress is being made. This structured approach to providing support reassures communities that their time will be well spent on something that will make a difference.

The Greening Campaign has built strong links with central government, as it clearly has a role in driving action on climate change by local authorities and individuals. But central and local government are not always the most effective leads when encouraging people to act. Initiatives like the Greening Campaign are more effective at directly engaging communities and will have an important role in communicating programmes like the Green Deal.

[www.greening-campaign.co.uk](http://www.greening-campaign.co.uk)

innovative in developing energy initiatives to improve its social housing stock. This is, in large part, down to the vision and tenacity of one man, Paul Ciniglio, who until recently held the role of sustainability and innovation manager there, working to reduce the environmental impact of the housing association’s stock and activities.

Another local hero is Vaughan Clarke, a councillor, local historian, retired school teacher and serial volunteer and organiser: the sort of many-hatted

doer that will be familiar to many from their own town or village. For years Vaughan has doggedly pursued his ambition to have Petersfield’s open-air heated swimming pool solar powered and has toughed out bureaucratic setbacks, such as when the pool was rejected for a grant on the grounds that, for an open air pool to qualify, it would need to have a roof. The project is now progressing with a different funding source.

Together, these examples illustrate the power of an

inspired and inspirational individual to make a difference whether informally, through a community group or within a larger organisation.

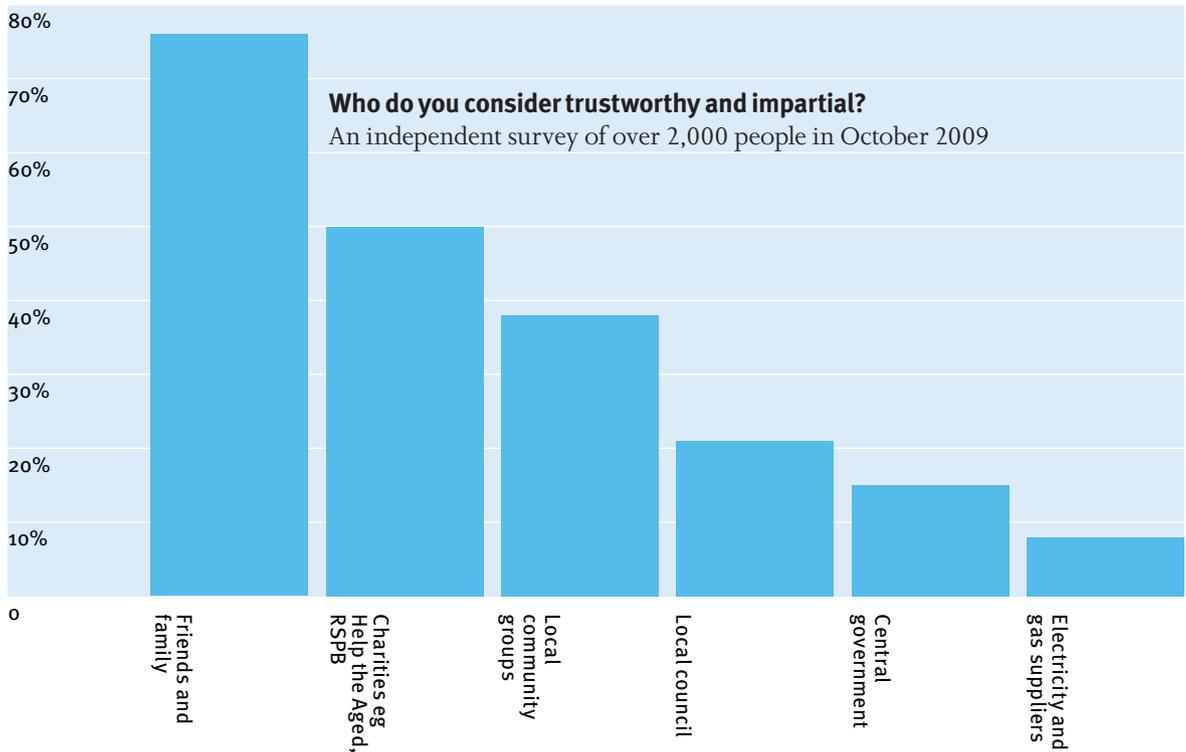
### Group reach

As the graph below illustrates, while friends and family are the most trusted source of advice, charities and community groups don't come too far behind. And they have the wherewithal to be that

bit better informed than the average friend or neighbour.

Voluntary organisations and membership societies can give a crucial *Good Housekeeping*-style seal to schemes and programmes, because members know that they have their interests at heart. They could play a vital role in the delivery of policies like the Green Deal or the smart meter roll-out because

### Relative perceptions of trust in different messengers<sup>9</sup>



many of the providers, such as energy companies, will suffer from a trust barrier. In contrast, societies and associations could be valuable conduits for trusted information and approaches that are more likely to engage householders. Partnerships that take advantage of the power and reach of trusted groups will, therefore, be essential to the successful delivery of a number of environmental programmes.

Although all are voluntary and community sector groups, it is important to note the difference between the relatively small number of groups focused on climate change, and the much bigger set whose day job is something else; from churches and the Scouts to the University of the Third Age (U3A) and the Women's Institute (WI). Just as with households, the latter type of group are often keen to do something on climate change, but it can be difficult to know where to start. Local authorities and MPs can play important roles in linking organisations up, so that non-environmental ones can benefit from the expertise of organisations that focus solely on green issues. Individuals that are members of multiple groups become a powerful asset, as they can channel information and help groups to make connections between issues that may initially seem quite separate.

In the East Hampshire town of Alton, an initiative called Energy Alton exemplifies this approach. It evolved out of earlier environmental initiatives in the town and has now secured a substantial grant from DECC to spread the word on home insulation and act as an exemplar project. The leadership team has been strategic in partnering with other organisations in the town, to broaden their reach and ensure the initiative is relevant, mainstream and practical.

An even greater reach-multiplier is being pursued by the Greening Campaign in partnership with the WI. The Greening Campaign took part in the Start WI Cascade Day in February 2012, alongside other groups and commercial organisations such as B&Q.<sup>10</sup> The objective of this programme is to tool-up WI members with simple, practical and inspiring ideas to promote sustainable living, which can then be cascaded through the WI network.

Finally, the local media can also be very powerful. In my area, the two local newspaper groups, the *Herald* and the *Post*, have picked up the Greening Campaign and been instrumental in carrying it forward. And though parish magazines' circulation may be small, they have a penetration rate within their local boundaries that advertising executives could only dream of.

### Local government's role

Green Alliance's 2011 report, *Is localism delivering for climate change?*, found that 65 per cent of local authorities were deprioritising or scaling back on climate change initiatives in the current economic climate.<sup>11</sup> Of course, all local authority activities are under pressure, but the most far-sighted authorities are continuing to innovate in this field, while sharpening their economic criteria. That kind of approach, and those of the groups mentioned above, is exactly what the localism agenda hopes to enable.

In East Hampshire, when it became clear that the Ministry of Defence would be vacating a substantial amount of land at Bordon, local town, district and county councils came together unprompted by central government, and drew up an ambitious 'Green Town Vision' for development on the site. This evolved into a plan under the last government's Eco Towns

initiative. Whilst there is still a way to go to realise the vision and, quite rightly, a very lively local debate about the scale and nature of development, the council has maintained its emphasis throughout on the low carbon, and broader environmental, considerations.

Not everything will be as ambitious as the vision above, but there are many things local authorities can do to tackle climate change across their activities and the services they provide, as well as supporting community-led initiatives. Terena Plowright of the Greening Campaign notes that while people don't necessarily want their parish or district council to be taking the lead, their seal of approval is vital for credibility. Councils can also provide support such as use of premises, publicity outlets and websites, as well as helping organisations navigate the grant funding landscape. The localism agenda aims to enable local authorities and communities to pursue opportunities further through provisions in the Localism Act, such as the community right to buy and the community right to challenge.

Whilst a lack of council engagement would not actually preclude local action, local government does have a unique contribution to make, not least because of its reach. Again, the power of individuals comes into play, whatever the corporate view may be, engaging and inspirational mayors, councillors and officers can make all the difference. And the number and variety of councils and the people who run and staff them affords significant opportunity for innovation and experimentation. Learning from each other, there is then the potential for best practice to spread.

This has been the experience in the US. Though the US as a whole may get bad press for not signing up

to Kyoto, there has been plenty of innovation at the local level. 1,054 mayors have signed up to the US Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Agreements, to meet or beat the Kyoto targets in their own communities.<sup>12</sup> Initiatives range from anti-sprawl land use policies to urban forest restoration projects and public information campaigns. Highest profile of all has been former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger with his plan to reduce California's emissions by 25 per cent, to 1990 levels, by 2020.<sup>13</sup>

**“Action at the local level has always been inspiring and exciting, and never more so than now when the localism agenda has the potential to strengthen it.”**

While no part of the UK may have been 'Schwarzeneggered', and the legal frameworks and local competencies are different, there are plenty of local areas recognising the difference they can make and developing interesting and important initiatives.

Councillor Melville Kendal of Hampshire County Council notes there are a number of things that councils can do that national government cannot. For a start there are over 500 schools and 1,000 or so public body buildings in Hampshire, generating a tremendous heat load. Melville was inspired by the work of an American company which guaranteed energy cost savings to public sector clients to provide the confidence to invest. He realised a similar programme could be undertaken by his own

council, to make its buildings and offices more efficient, even without a private sector partner. Motivated by shared savings, a whole range of opportunities can quickly be found, as Hampshire has done, by looking for efficiencies in the way it runs its buildings and offices.

### A steer from the centre

Action at the local level has always been inspiring and exciting, and never more so than now when the localism agenda has the potential to strengthen it. But the centre continues to play an important role. Central government creates a national sense of purpose, with the ability to make sure that different sectors of the economy and society are doing their bit to tackle climate change. It can use policy or regulation to achieve this, sponsor new technologies, enable the sharing of best practice and create new financial mechanisms and opportunities to drive action, like the Green Investment Bank or the Green Deal.

However great the devolution of operational responsibility, the power of the purse strings should not be underestimated; whether through the tax system for households and companies, or grants and fines for local authorities. The ability of financial incentives to drive change has certainly been evident in the increases we have seen in recycling and the corresponding reductions in landfill. And when it comes to efficiencies, central government's sheer scale and scope allows it to achieve progress that other actors would struggle to match.

The government also plays an important communications and support role, helping both local authorities and individuals to do more. For all people's identification with their area, and for all the

capability of local people, groups and councils to communicate messages; people look to the prime minister and government to set out how and why we all need to take action on complex, shared challenges like climate change. They also expect the government to demonstrate leadership on the issue through their own actions and policies.

As Terena Plowright of the Greening Campaign notes, "You need households, community groups and all levels of government in broad accord: each reinforces the other." Some things, only local government can effectively support; others only national government can. The national level is essential in providing a context and wider understanding of the need for action, but in many cases change will only actually happen if an individual household or local group buys in to it.

**“Some of the areas of greatest potential will be those where delivery is local, supported by a common national framework.”**

As a result, some of the areas of greatest potential will be those where delivery is local, supported by a common national framework. As recommended by the government's Committee on Climate Change, the development of low carbon plans by every local authority will be an important step in this regard.<sup>14</sup> Central government can also provide coherence and clear messaging around new schemes like the Green Deal, pulling together experience from local experiments and pilots, fashioned into a known brand, offering measurable financial gain. As the table overleaf sets out, different layers and

organisations will play distinct roles, with community groups and local government working closely together:

The Green Deal: local meets national	
Who	What
National government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creates the umbrella brand</li> <li>Develops the financial product, designed to deliver positive returns</li> <li>Sets up quality assurance frameworks</li> </ul>
Local government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publicises opportunities</li> <li>Promotes the local revenue and jobs potential</li> <li>Brings in housing associations and public bodies</li> <li>Ensures inclusion of vulnerable households</li> </ul>
Community groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spread the word through own networks</li> <li>Help to ensure whole community benefits</li> <li>Complement 'core product' with further initiatives</li> <li>Bring in community buildings</li> </ul>
Private sector firms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lend trusted brand support</li> <li>Utilise customer marketing networks</li> <li>Operationalise delivery</li> </ul>
Households	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure efficient deployment through exercising market choice</li> <li>Behavioural change</li> </ul>

## Localism, centralism and everything in between

Ultimately, for best results, there is no pure localism and no pure centralism. In East Hampshire work is well underway to ensure that the national initiative of the Green Deal delivers maximum possible benefits locally, with this impetus coming jointly from the public and voluntary sectors. The Greening Campaign, together with Petersfield Area Churches Together and other bodies, recently ran a workshop on Greening the Green Deal.<sup>15</sup> Although looking at a national initiative, it put the emphasis very much on local job creation, maximising energy bill reduction and tackling fuel poverty.

Overall, localism is helpful in shifting away from a centrist model, making the most of local initiatives and the ability of local groups and local authorities to communicate and engage people with tackling climate change. This focus is hugely to be welcomed, as central, target-based approaches have neglected the local level for far too long. But, as I have argued above, all actors remain essential to tackling climate change successfully. The assumption that the centre will set targets and solve all problems may have lessened considerably, but that does not mean it ceases to have a role at all. Success will come from recognising the strength of the local whilst remaining aware of the interplay between levels, from individuals right up to central government and the prime minister; himself an individual after all.

# Power in co-operation

## Martin Vickers

### Conservative MP for Cleethorpes



In areas such as the one I represent on the Humber Bank, developing renewable energy is more than a vital environmental solution that can help us slow climate change, it is also key to bringing new jobs, revitalisation, rejuvenation, and regeneration to areas hard hit by unemployment and the closure of local business and industry. The Humber already has exceptional renewable regeneration projects that are creating growth. Between April 2011 and January 2012 over 1,650 new jobs were created in the renewables industry in the Humber region, alongside £1.022 billion of investment, the majority of this as a result of the Humber Gateway wind farm project.<sup>16</sup>

A move towards localism has enabled the acceleration of this activity and provides a compelling example of the green economy in action: tackling climate change and delivering jobs.

Our vision in the Humber is for the region to be at the forefront of developing an energy ‘super cluster’. We are ideally situated for this, with access to ports and the necessary production facilities. Local stakeholders, including me and other local MPs, want our local businesses to have the ability to create and access niche markets and for them to provide neighbouring regions with the products and services they need to reduce their energy bills and carbon footprints. We want to see this lead to job creation and growth in northern Lincolnshire and throughout the Humber sub-region.

Although impressive, achievements to date have constantly risked becoming bogged down in the complexities associated with local authorities and businesses working together. Cultures, timescales, and long term visions clash, and projects that succeed do so despite these difficulties, rather than

because of the benefits that constructive co-operation can provide. The localism agenda offers the potential to change that, to enable better co-operation and give projects a stronger start.

### Localism as an enabler

The localism agenda is designed to put power back in the hands of the local communities so that they can decide what is best for them, rather than having to meet unrealistic targets imposed by central government. Localism is empowering, allowing local authorities to identify and respond to local needs in partnership with their citizens. It creates opportunities for collective action and for communities to control their futures, with permissive guidance from government on key issues like climate change, not direct interference.

**“Localism is powerful, and never more so than when it comes to forging paths towards local economic growth and stability, creating new jobs and supporting new businesses.”**

Localism also makes it easier for people to look after the amenities they love and keep them as part of their local life. It enables local social enterprises, volunteers and community groups, with bright ideas for improving local services, to change how things are done. In one of its most important aspects, it enables local residents to call local authorities to account for the careful management of taxpayers’ money, while at the same time reducing the traditional red tape. And it reinforces the democratic nature of the

planning system, passing greater power to communities to shape the places where they live.

Localism is powerful, and never more so than when it comes to forging paths towards local economic growth and stability, creating new jobs and supporting new businesses. In the case of Cleethorpes and the wider Humber region, these opportunities are being ambitiously pursued with a focus on green businesses and investments, and their potential to unlock local economic regeneration.

### Co-operation as a route to growth

A single local authority could never achieve local economic growth on its own or, in the case of the Humber, the vision of a renewable energy super cluster. Working with other local authorities, businesses and wider stakeholders is vital to the journey. In short, co-operation is key and one of the localism agenda's strengths is its recognition of this. It has created a number of avenues that encourage local authorities and businesses to co-operate with each other and with local communities to make progress on shared goals.

Many local authorities have historically had a difficult time working together. This is understandable when considering the newly imposed austerity measures, which have the potential to foster competition as much as they do co-operation. But it can pay great dividends. Various acts have enabled local authorities to co-operate in an increasing range of areas, which can lead to streamlining and reduced running costs. For example, the London boroughs of Westminster, Kensington and Hammersmith and Fulham are demonstrating this to great effect with their plans to share back office, management, and service provision functions from 2014 onwards.

The Localism Act introduced the duty to co-operate. This has not been fully fleshed out yet but, at a minimum, it requires local authorities and other public bodies to work together, as part of an ongoing process, on strategic issues such as infrastructure provision, housing distribution, water and waste planning.<sup>17</sup> Additional structures introduced by the localism agenda further enable co-operation between different actors. These include Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to encourage co-operation between local authorities and local businesses around growth; Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) to bring local civil society organisations together with local authorities to protect the natural environment; and neighbourhood plans which aim to engage communities far more in shaping development in their area.

While this is positive, the realities of local co-operation can be complex. With two enterprise zones in the Humber area and an LEP with the largest allocation of land in the country, it is instructive to examine what this tells us about the challenges and opportunities of local co-operation on green ambitions.

### Local Enterprise Partnerships and Enterprise Zones

The proposals for a Humber LEP focused on renewable energy as the “biggest growth opportunity for generations”, in particular the potential to create upwards of 20,000 jobs in the area.<sup>18</sup> The LEP aims to attract large top tier manufacturing companies, for example in the offshore wind industry, with the ambition being that their supply chains will follow.

With the active support of the Humber LEP, two enterprise zones were secured, designed to attract investment in renewable energy. Competition for enterprise zones was fierce, and not every bid was successful, but the Humber LEP's successful bids give it the largest allocation of land and the largest package of financial incentives for investors in the country. The enterprise zones create a business haven for emerging markets to establish renewables industries. Resident businesses will benefit from discounted business rates worth up to £275,000 per company and simplified, fast track planning for many sites.<sup>19</sup> The enterprise zones are expected to create 4,850 jobs by 2015 alone.<sup>20</sup>

**“The enterprise zones create a business haven for emerging markets to establish renewables industries.”**

The Humber region has focused its enterprise zones and resources on renewables businesses through the creation of the aforementioned super cluster. This will not just be a local renewable industry centre, but will also have a positive impact on the local and national economies. The creation of an industrial base for the manufacturing of renewable energy equipment, and the utilisation of that equipment in the Humber and the North Sea, will create job opportunities and put the Humber on the map as a centre for renewables expertise.

The Humber LEP and the local authorities involved were successful in setting out a vision of the economic potential of the area and what the renewable sector could offer but, for us, this is only

the beginning of a long term process of investment and redevelopment to kick start the economies of the estuary. As it develops, the Humber super cluster will demonstrate not just localism but also the government's commitment to work with local authorities and the private sector, encouraging co-operation and communication to bring economic success to the region.

But how easy has all this been so far? Talking to Richard Kendall, manager of the Humber LEP, it is evident that strong relationships between the various local bodies involved are key to it working effectively. Despite being one of the later LEPs to form, the Humber LEP has been able to build a strong identity and attract the support of local businesses and councils.

LEPs have limited resources, so focusing their activity is essential. Some have struggled with this, but businesses, local authorities, I, and other local MPs all agreed from the outset that a focus on renewables made clear economic sense for the Humber LEP. This has made it relatively straightforward to forge and manage relationships, resulting in a genuine partnership between the stakeholders involved. Clarity of vision and focus helped the LEP secure two enterprise zones. It has also been important to have a good relationship with surrounding LEPs, some of which overlap, to bolster each other's efforts when needed whilst maintaining separate remits and areas of focus to avoid conflict. Delivering the LEP's ambitions with limited resources will, undoubtedly, be a challenge. A countrywide LEP network exists to provide support, but it still has significant potential to become a much stronger and more valuable tool for LEPs. And, despite the focus on localism, the

relationship with national government and local MPs remains an essential one.

### My role

For my part, I have sought to bring together the various parties involved, helping them co-operate and negotiate with each other. This may seem like a daunting task, but I believe the local MP is in an excellent position to facilitate this and, having served for 26 years as a local councillor, I know most of the parties involved. Co-operation has been made easier, and more effective, as neighbouring MPs, regardless of their party, share the same aims and aspirations for the area.

**“Co-operation has been made easier, and more effective, as neighbouring MPs, regardless of their party, share the same aims and aspirations for the area.”**

My vision for the area is simple: to do everything possible to attract new businesses to northern Lincolnshire; to lobby government to ensure the transport network provides for both existing and new developments; and to work with both the private and public sectors to regenerate the infrastructure and built environment.

My constituency and the surrounding area have so much to offer but, for too long, we have undersold ourselves. We need to shout from the rooftops and force this government, and future governments, to maintain its current momentum towards the creation and maintenance of a sustainable green economy that is good for all, rather than chasing

narrow, unfocused and unrealistic climate change targets. Whilst the private sector and the co-ordinated action of local groups pursuing local realities will need to continue to lead the way out of our present difficulties, we will need ongoing government support to allow this collective vision to be realised.

In parliament, MPs from across the region have come together to form the All-Party Group for Yorkshire and northern Lincolnshire and I have taken on the role as one of the group’s officers. The key aim of the group is to focus attention on the ways that industry and government at all levels must work together to unlock the huge growth potential that exists across the region. We will bring together MPs with local authorities, social enterprise groups and business leaders, to help maximise future investment and sustainable economic growth, and to engage fully with the public on all aspects of the region’s future. The group has agreed three key priorities, of which unlocking the economic benefits of renewable energy for the region is one, which complements the work being done by the Humber LEP.<sup>21</sup>

The hard work that comes with creating a new industrial base of renewable energy, and the supply chains associated with it, will be difficult. However, within that challenge lies the path for success in bringing together local entrepreneurs, SMEs and other businesses, combined with local authorities and civil society organisations to create a super cluster of power in the Humber by 2020. A super cluster rooted in local ambition, providing local economic benefits, whilst also helping to meet national renewable energy targets and tackling the international challenge of climate change.

# The potential of true localism

Julian Huppert  
Liberal Democrat MP for Cambridge



Climate change is a global challenge that must be addressed at a national and international level. No one country can tackle this issue alone, and it is only after the successes at Durban that we can now see the first glimpse of a comprehensive solution to our climate problems.

But climate change is also, fundamentally, a local concern. Achieving global and national ambitions requires us all to live sustainable lives, to make changes to our daily habits and to commit to doing so in perpetuity. This is a seemingly mammoth task for policy makers, as two-fifths of the country's climate change emissions currently come from our everyday actions as individuals.<sup>22</sup> How do we persuade citizens of the need for action on climate change? How do we encourage them to change their lives? And, given the threat that climate change poses, how do we encourage sufficiently radical reforms?

I believe that the only effective solution will be a truly localist one. Previous approaches have shown us that individuals cannot be compelled to support action on climate change, regardless of central government plans or targets. Coercive policy making, while occasionally effective in the short term, ultimately risks undermining a citizen's willingness to live a sustainable lifestyle. It can also throttle fledgling initiatives which have not yet been considered by central government, and undermine support for green policies at the ballot box.

There is hope, however, if governments are willing to push for a radical, local approach. Many of the activities that will help to reduce our climate change impact are already influenced by local authority decisions, including improvements to the energy

efficiency of homes, the provision of public transport and reducing and recycling waste. Local authorities also have a powerful role to play in attracting green jobs to their area and protecting the natural environment. More persuasively, a local approach will have far greater power to encourage citizens to act on climate change. Government, at the smallest practicable level, is best placed to identify what is already working and to show individuals that living a sustainable life is in their short and long term interest.

**“In changing the relationship between Whitehall and local authorities and devolving powers and resources, the government has created new potential for local authorities to be climate change leaders.”**

Localism is therefore a valuable new agenda when it comes to tackling climate change. In changing the relationship between Whitehall and local authorities and devolving powers and resources, the government has created new potential for local authorities to be climate change leaders. As the Local Government Association (LGA) climate change commission states: “local government is uniquely placed to tackle climate change with a democratic mandate for action, close proximity to citizens, and a strategic role leading other public, private and voluntary sector partners.”<sup>23</sup> This has always been the case, but it has taken the localism agenda to free local authorities up to make the most of it.

Recognising that climate change policy will only work in the long term if it is deployed at the smallest practicable level should be central to this government's approach. But although some powers and funding have been devolved, we cannot yet see true localism in action. The resources are too minimal, the commitment to devolve powers too weak and the resulting policies are nowhere near radical enough. Only through an acceleration of devolution, on a scale not yet considered by any British government, will we engage with citizens and begin to tackle climate change meaningfully at a national, global and local level.

### Why centrism didn't work

Policy makers often assume that change can only be brought about by central government decree. They fear that failing to set expectations and targets from the centre will mean that some local authorities will simply opt out of their responsibilities. When it comes to climate change, the previous government attempted to change individual behaviour by setting carbon targets for local authorities, alongside national campaigns to raise awareness of climate change. This approach fell short in several ways.

It added costs to local authority efforts to tackle climate change and created a focus on reporting instead of challenging the level of ambition in place and asking whether progress was actually being made. A report commissioned by the Department for Communities and Local Government in 2006 estimated that a typical local authority spent £2.6 million a year in reporting performance information to central government.<sup>24</sup> Wrapping action on climate change up in this culture of bureaucracy was, arguably, an expensive way of securing progress. Being required to act against targets that they had no role in setting

was also very restrictive for local authorities. The LGA identified the problem of 'green tape' in 2008 when it called for councils to have "more flexibility to tackle climate change".<sup>25</sup>

## **“At their worst, targets and coercive policies have weakened public support for action on climate change.”**

Dividing national targets among local authorities was also arbitrary. A local authority should not be held responsible for failing to meet climate change targets if it is a centre for manufacturing or has the country's main airport. In an attempt to meet carbon targets, local authorities could create disincentives for local businesses and push them into neighbouring regions with no overall progress made against national climate change goals. In addition, applying low targets to councils which have funds and resources to go further is counterproductive. Local authorities could content themselves by meeting an arbitrary national target, when every council should go as far and as fast as they can.

At their worst, targets and coercive policies have weakened public support for action on climate change. In focusing on monitoring and reporting to the centre, local authorities often failed to reach out to their citizens and stakeholders on climate change and build buy in to their activities and ambitions. As a result, they missed the main opportunity for making real progress.

### The potential of a localist approach

To tackle climate change successfully, the motivations and interests of the individual need to be thoroughly understood. Local government is far better placed than the centre to do this. There is substantial evidence to suggest that local partnerships, rather than top down initiatives, are most effective in engaging the public. The ability of local government to connect with and support individuals, therefore, represents the most important aspect of localism, but perhaps the most undervalued outcome.

Locally initiated approaches to action, such as the Transition Town movement, where people are encouraged to bring their own ideas, are much more likely to succeed than programmes which simply dictate what actions people should take.<sup>26</sup> Dr Tom Crompton, change strategist at WWF, argues that “the environmental movement has for too long focused on the policy response, without considering the social and psychological barriers”.<sup>27</sup> A positive and participatory approach to tackling climate change, which can only be fully achieved at the local level, will prove to be the most effective way of changing this.

Trust plays a key role in changing behaviour.<sup>28</sup> People do not act on the advice of those they do not trust and here, again, local authorities have the edge on central government. When providing advice on subjects like energy saving, 75 per cent of people rate local government as trustworthy or partly trustworthy, compared to 66 per cent for central government.<sup>29</sup> People are also more likely to trust their peers, so influential individuals within communities may prove to be the best agents of change.

Also crucial for motivating action is the perception of agency: the belief that one can make a difference. When climate change action is focused at a local level it is easier to persuade individuals that their actions matter, rather than presenting them with the overwhelming and negative global picture of the consequences of climate change. Campaigns focusing at this level are potentially alienating and create a feeling of helplessness,<sup>30</sup> whereas community campaigns which focus on teamwork and improving the local environment offer a more positive and manageable message.

Local authorities have a clear understanding of the potential of the localism agenda. When responding to a consultation on Climate Local, which will replace the Nottingham Declaration on climate change, 88 per cent felt that local authorities should commit to ‘providing local leadership on climate change’ and 84 per cent agreed that working with local communities should be included in Climate Local commitments.<sup>31</sup> There is no lack of willingness to act. Local authorities know they can make a difference but are concerned that they lack the autonomy and funds to succeed.

### Evidence from Cambridge

Cambridge already offers some encouraging examples of local action on climate change, demonstrating how local authorities and grassroots campaigns can work together to overcome barriers to progress and produce results. Many of these initiatives build on existing support for climate change and encourage others to engage positively, something which coercive policies fail to achieve.

The Cambridge Climate Change Charter, initiated by the City Council in 2007, is a voluntary commitment

to addressing climate change which highlights existing bottom-up approaches that encourage support for climate change policies. It is supported by an eight step plan for organisations to become 'climate-friendly' and aims to attract signatories from Cambridge's businesses, civil society organisations, schools and university colleges. So far nearly 40 have signed up.

The council also plays a key role in encouraging existing approaches. Close the Door, an initiative set up with initial funding from Cambridge City Council, calls on stores and restaurants to keep their doors closed in order to avoid wasting energy. It involves over 300 stores in the city of Cambridge and has already spread to several other major cities.

### The risks of localism's extreme neutrality A view from Councillor Kilian Bourke Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group Cambridgeshire County Council

Even before the Localism Act was passed, the localism agenda had been resulting in more locally responsive policy making in many places. Some councils are using the new powers available to them to implement a responsive green agenda that reflects their political principles. Others are doing the opposite, implementing flat earth policies that make tackling climate change more difficult. This highlights one of the challenges of localism as a principle of governance. It is neutral, radically so.

Take the case of Cambridgeshire. While Liberal Democrat run Cambridge City Council is investing heavily in action on climate change, the Conservative run County Council has passed a policy that prevents wind turbines from being built on council owned land. As a result, a series of proposed wind farms have been stopped in their tracks, and the council has even excised all reference to the impact of decisions on climate change from cabinet reports; this is a pre-Enlightenment approach to making decisions.

Enabling elected representatives to have greater power to shape the communities they represent is an intended consequence of localism that strongly informs the whole agenda. But it also has inadvertent consequences, one of which is that it enables extreme political positions that would not be supportable at national level to be reflected in local policy. In such cases, localism's political neutrality can lead to radical outcomes. And two-tier areas risk ending up with wildly contradictory policies on climate change across councils, as we are already seeing between Cambridge and Cambridgeshire.

It is of great value that localism will make people more aware of local decisions. But the sway of local politics will have significant consequences for communities. Localism's neutrality, therefore, demands more of citizens as well as elected representatives, requiring them to be more aware and to play a greater scrutiny role in local politics.

Cambridge Carbon Footprint helps people work together creatively to make real reductions in their CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. It organises ‘carbon conversations’, courses for individuals interested in reducing their carbon footprints, ‘grow your own’ gardening sessions, and speaker events. Finally, Outspoken is an innovative start up offering cycle training courses to encourage the use of sustainable transport and providing a local cycle-powered courier service.

### Is localism going far enough?

A key test of this government’s climate change policy should be the extent to which it makes the most of the potential that localism offers and enables local authorities like Cambridge to encourage action. But although positive steps have been taken, reforms to date have been far too limited.

**“A key test of this government’s climate change policy should be the extent to which it makes the most of the potential that localism offers.”**

Climate Local, the successor to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change, will be an integral source of support and will continue to provide a benchmark of good practice for councils. But it is an extension of existing agreements rather than an enhancement of localism itself. The original declaration was set up in 2000 and committed signatory councils to developing local climate change action plans. While virtually every council in the UK signed up, this reveals a strong commitment by local authorities to tackle climate change, rather than the ability for them to do so.

New policies and funding incentives, including the Green Deal, Renewable Heat Incentives and Feed-in Tariffs (FITs), have already made green choices cheaper. Cambridge City Council is investing £900,000 in reducing its environmental impact, and supporting local residents in their bid to access new funding. But a combination of underfunding and uncertainty has rendered these policies less effective than they could otherwise be, and local authority climate change policies are still subject to the vicissitudes of Whitehall funding and ministerial decisions.

A key example of this is the recent uncertainty over the subsidy for Feed-in Tariffs. The argument for a reduction in FIT subsidy was clear: the cost of providing solar panels had fallen, so too should the subsidy. But the short notice provided by central government, and the varied impact which the proposed changes would have across the country, led to two u-turns over funding in just over six months. Indeed, Cambridge’s £900,000 investment was under threat; so too was their ability to support local residents in making green choices. While, at a national level, the reforms were reasonable, the timing was damaging for individual communities, as was the uncertainty. Similarly, critics of the Green Deal scheme have highlighted its inability to help those who need it most. Since concerns were voiced, a portion of the budget has been reserved for low income households on tax credits, but the targeting is still unclear.

If, however, local authorities have more of a say over where and when they can subsidise the installation of solar panels, local investor confidence would be far more certain, changes to tariffs could be properly communicated and a greater number of people

could be encouraged to participate in the scheme. Enabling local authorities to supplement Green Deal budgets, or at least allowing them to help identify which households need extra help, would ensure that insulation measures are targeted at those who need it most. Some communities, for example, have a small minority of very deprived households, who need a greater level of support, but are difficult to identify from far off Whitehall.

Local transport provides a good example of what real devolution of funding and powers can achieve, although this too requires a further push. Norman Baker MP, under-secretary of state for transport, has had great success in devolving funds to local authorities, such as the Better Bus Areas Fund and Local Sustainable Transport Fund. Together, these constitute an investment of over £600 million in sustainable local transport.<sup>32</sup> Along with the devolution of aspects of the Bus Service Operators Grant, local authorities will finally be able to take decisions for themselves that improve bus services and engage with individuals to encourage them to use local public transport.

At the same time, government consultation on the devolution of signage, roads and 20mph zones will help local authorities engage with their communities to incentivise local sustainable transport choices, such as cycling and walking. It is hard to overstate how much more effective this kind of localism is than, say, national campaigns to promote buses or a rise in the cost of motoring.

### A true localism agenda

The localism agenda works best where devolution is the most radical and where funds have been made readily available. But these instances are rare. Given

the contraction in central government funding, local authorities will need new routes to funding, as well as new powers. This is something the government should enable as quickly as possible, otherwise they will jeopardise both the localism agenda and our climate change targets.

**“In its efforts to cut the deficit, the government is cutting funding to local authorities more severely than Whitehall budgets, taking the balance of power between local authorities and the centre in the wrong direction.”**

Financially, local authorities need more autonomy. In its efforts to cut the deficit, the government is cutting funding to local authorities more severely than Whitehall budgets, taking the balance of power between local authorities and the centre in the wrong direction. True localism would give councils more control of their budgets, with the power to raise funds locally; for example, the Liberal Democrats have long supported replacing council tax with a local income tax set by councils. Recent work by the Committee on Climate Change highlights the impacts of the constrained fiscal situation on local authority action on climate change.<sup>33</sup> They suggest that local authorities receive more funding to support them in taking advantage of new opportunities, such as becoming Green Deal providers or rolling out sustainable transport plans.

The remit of the Green Investment Bank should also be radically expanded. While the bank will be capitalised with £3 billion, this funding should increase as soon as possible. The bank should be able to borrow and it should be able to lend to local government to help fund the building of sustainable infrastructure and the promotion of sustainable lifestyles.

Finally, local authorities should be given new powers over transport, housing, planning, waste and energy. The government's City Deals plan would offer Britain's largest cities a range of new local powers.<sup>34</sup> Instead of piecemeal reforms, the government should introduce a new deal which gives every single local authority the power they need to take action on climate change and run their own affairs. For too long central government has possessed an unfounded fear that new powers will be misused or abused, while the fear of unequal performances between authorities has undermined the principle of government at the smallest possible level. The government must act now to overturn these assumptions.

Locally driven outcomes are more than just an aspiration; they are already evident in Cambridge and elsewhere, and they work far better than rigid, centralised directives. But the urgency of climate change, the reduction in available funds from central government and the fall in popular concern for climate change in the face of recession requires far more radical, local approaches than any British government has hitherto considered. By changing the dynamic between the centre and the local, local authorities need to be empowered and resourced to work with individuals and communities to encourage more sustainable ways of living: by

insulating our homes, cycling when possible, or even generating our own electricity.

Just as individuals face psychological barriers to action on climate change, policy makers face an entrenched psychological aversion towards radical localism. This government has taken steps in the right direction, that much is clear. But asking local authorities to tackle climate change, without giving them the power and money to do so, means that the government's localism agenda could undermine our efforts to tackle climate change. It is vital that we promote instances of successful local policy, highlight the efficacy of devolved powers and fight for local funding. Otherwise, we will lose one of our few remaining opportunities to reshape government in a way which will help us protect the environment in the long run.

# Endnotes

- 1 Committee on Climate Change, 2012, *How local authorities can reduce emissions and manage climate risk*
- 2 F Scott, 2011, *Is localism delivering for climate change? Emerging responses from local authorities, local enterprise partnerships and neighbourhood plans*, Green Alliance
- 3 H Kyrke-Smith and R Phillips, 2012, *Getting a good deal from the Green Deal: Views from local communities*, Green Alliance
- 4 Department for Transport, 2010, *The effects of smarter choice programmes in the sustainable travel towns: full report*
- 5 EIA, 2011, *International Energy Statistics*, available at: [www.eia.gov/cfapps/ipdbproject/IEDIndex3.cfm?tid=90&pid=44&aid=8](http://www.eia.gov/cfapps/ipdbproject/IEDIndex3.cfm?tid=90&pid=44&aid=8), last viewed 30 May 2012 (NB latest available data is 2009 emissions)
- 6 Department of Energy and Climate Change, 2012, *2010 UK greenhouse gas emissions, final figures* (NB All figures are for the UK and Crown Dependencies only, and exclude Overseas Territories)
- 7 A Spence et al., 2010, *Public perceptions of climate change and energy futures in Britain: summary findings of a survey conducted in January-March 2010*, School of Psychology, Cardiff University.
- 8 European Commission, October 2011, *Special Eurobarometer 372: climate change*
- 9 Adapted from Energy Saving Trust / Natural Scotland, 2010, *Energy use in the home: a selection of insights into consumer behaviour*, available at: [www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/175356/0101893.pps#292,9](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/175356/0101893.pps#292,9), Importance of trust
- 10 Project Dirt, 'WI cascade day', [www.projectdirt.com/group/wi-cascade-day](http://www.projectdirt.com/group/wi-cascade-day), last viewed 23 May 2012
- 11 F Scott, 2011, *Is localism delivering on climate change? Emerging responses from local authorities, local enterprise partnerships and neighbourhood plans*, Green Alliance
- 12 US Conference of Mayors, 'List of participating mayors: climate protection agreement', available at: [www.usmayors.org/climateprotection/list.asp](http://www.usmayors.org/climateprotection/list.asp), last viewed 9 May 2012
- 13 California Assembly, 2006, *Assembly bill 32: Global Warming Solutions Act*
- 14 Committee on Climate Change, 2012, *How local authorities can reduce emissions and manage climate risk*
- 15 Greening Campaign, 'Greening Campaign events guide', available at: [www.greening-campaign.co.uk](http://www.greening-campaign.co.uk), last viewed 24 May 2012
- 16 Department of Energy and Climate Change, 2012, *Renewables investment and jobs announced 1 April 2011-17 Jan 2012*, available at: [www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/meeting\\_energy/renewable\\_ener/ored/oredjobs/oredjobs.aspx](http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/meeting_energy/renewable_ener/ored/oredjobs/oredjobs.aspx), last viewed 24 May 2012
- 17 UK Government, *Localism Act 2011*, available at: [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/section/110/enacted](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/section/110/enacted), last viewed 24 May 2012
- 18 The Humber Local Enterprise Partnership, 2011, *Proposal to Government*, p.7, available at <http://humberlep.org/proposal/>, last viewed 24 May 2012
- 19 The Humber Local Enterprise press release, 1 April 2012, '£200 million boost to Humber economy is launched', available at: <http://humberlep.org/2012/04/01/200-million-boost-to-humber-economy-is-launched/>, last viewed 24 May 2012
- 20 Department for Communities and Local Government press release, 18 August 2011, 'Greg Clark visits new Enterprise Zone for the Humber',

available at: [www.communities.gov.uk/news/localgovernment/1968471](http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/localgovernment/1968471), last viewed 30 May 2012

21 Andrew Percy MP, 22 February 2012, 'MPs unite to give a powerful new voice for Yorkshire and northern Lincolnshire', *The Guardian* (online) available at [www.guardian.co.uk/uk/the-northerner/2012/feb/22/yorkshire-lincolnshire-allpartygroup-andrewpercy-mps](http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/the-northerner/2012/feb/22/yorkshire-lincolnshire-allpartygroup-andrewpercy-mps), last viewed 24 May 2012

22 Directgov, 2012, *Causes of climate change*, available at: [www.direct.gov.uk/en/Environmentandgreenerliving/TheWiderEnvironment/Climatechange/DG\\_072920](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Environmentandgreenerliving/TheWiderEnvironment/Climatechange/DG_072920), last viewed 30 May 2012

23 Local Government Association climate change commission, 2007, *A climate of change*

24 Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006, *Mapping the local government performance reporting landscape*

25 Local Government Association, 2008, *Cutting through the green tape: the powers councils have to tackle climate change*

26 Tom Levitt, 12 August 2009, 'The psychology of climate change: why we do nothing', *The Ecologist*, available at [www.theecologist.org/News/news\\_analysis/301036/the\\_psychology\\_of\\_climate\\_change\\_why\\_we\\_do\\_nothing.html](http://www.theecologist.org/News/news_analysis/301036/the_psychology_of_climate_change_why_we_do_nothing.html), last viewed 24 May 2012

27 Ibid

28 Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, 2010, Postnote number 347 *climate change: engagement and behaviour*, available at [www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/POST-PN-347](http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/POST-PN-347), last viewed on 24 May 2012

29 Local Government Association climate change commission, 2007, *A climate of change*

30 Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, 2010, Postnote number 347, *climate change: engagement and behaviour*, available at: [www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/POST-PN-347](http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/POST-PN-347), last viewed on 24 May 2012

31 Local Government Association, 2011, *Summary of responses to LGA consultation on the Nottingham Declaration* available at: [www.local.gov.uk/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?uuid=563ccb86-343f-4340-97c9-e6716bd71e10&groupId=10161](http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=563ccb86-343f-4340-97c9-e6716bd71e10&groupId=10161), last viewed 24 May 2012

32 Department for Transport press release, 8 December 2011, '£90 Million boost for buses across England', available at: [www.dft.gov.uk/news/press-releases/dft-press-20111208a/](http://www.dft.gov.uk/news/press-releases/dft-press-20111208a/); and *SD scene news*, 6 January 2011, 'Sustainable transport: funding and research', available at: [sd.defra.gov.uk/2011/01/sustainable-transport-funding-and-research/](http://sd.defra.gov.uk/2011/01/sustainable-transport-funding-and-research/), last viewed 24 May 2012

33 Committee on Climate Change, 2012, *How local authorities can reduce emissions and manage climate risk*

34 Cabinet Office, 2011, *Unlocking growth in cities*





# Unlocking local leadership on climate change: perspectives from coalition MPs

Green Alliance  
36 Buckingham Palace Road  
London, SW1W 0RE

T 020 7233 7433  
ga@green-alliance.org.uk

www.green-alliance.org.uk  
blog: www.greenallianceblog.org.uk  
twitter: @GreenAllianceUK

Registered charity 1045395  
Company limited by guarantee  
(England and Wales) 3037633

Climate change is a global issue which needs to be tackled at the international and national level. But solutions won't be found unless local areas take action to cut carbon.

In this pamphlet three coalition MPs: Damian Hinds, Conservative MP for East Hampshire; Julian Huppert, Liberal Democrat MP for Cambridge; and Martin Vickers, Conservative MP for Cleethorpes, give their views on the challenges and opportunities that the localism agenda offers for their constituencies and the UK as a whole.

All three make clear that tackling climate change requires a carefully crafted combination of national ambition and local action. They describe how national policies, like the Green Deal and Local Enterprise Partnerships, can have major positive impacts on local economies and communities, while contributing to national aspirations on low carbon. However, they also see a need for national government to provide enough support for local areas to be able to realise the potential that localism offers.

The common theme running through the pieces is a challenge for government to move from the first wave of localism to a more confident, radical second wave, to give local areas both the power and the responsibility to take action.