

Purpose of Report

To update members on the LGA and Government Climate Summit which took place on 24th May and was attended by representatives from the LGA, Defra and CLG.

Summary

The meeting was co-chaired by Sir Merrick Cockell and Rt Hon Caroline Spelman MP and attended by communities and local government Minister Andrew Stunnell MP. The LGA was represented by members nominated to attend from the Environment and Housing, Safer and Strong Communities, Health and Wellbeing and Economy and Transport Boards.

Defra Chief Scientist Professor Sir Bob Watson gave a presentation outlining the findings of the first national Climate Change Risk Assessment. LGA members provided local perspectives on the opportunities and challenges posed by a changing climate including examples of existing good practice.

Participants agreed a joint commitment text stating the importance of local and central government working together to manage the impacts of our changing climate. Sir Merrick also invited Professor Sir Bob Watson to address the Councillors Forum on the findings of the CCRA and implications for councils.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the joint statement.

Action

LGA officers to note and act on any agreed direction from members.

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Summary of Climate Summit discussions

1. The meeting was co-chaired by Sir Merrick Cockell and Rt Hon Caroline Spelman MP and attended by communities and local government Minister Andrew Stunnell MP and Chair of the Government's advisory panel on adapting to climate change Lord Krebs. The LGA was represented by members nominated to attend from the Environment and Housing, Safer and Strong Communities, Health and Wellbeing and Economy and Transport Boards.
2. Defra Chief Scientist Professor Sir Bob Watson gave a presentation outlining the findings of the first national Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA). The CCRA confirmed that the global climate is changing and that warming will continue over the next century. Key issues for the local government sector included increased flood-risk, water scarcity and health impacts (both benefits and threats) arising from milder winters and hotter summers. Likely impacts on infrastructure, including road surfaces were noted, as well as higher energy demand for cooling.
3. Rt Hon Caroline Spelman MP outlined the approach that the Government was taking to develop a National Adaptation Programme to respond to the CCRA. This would include the actions that councils could take to build resilience across local estates and services and as leaders of local communities. Andrew Stunnell MP outlined the progress that Government had made to support local decision-making and sustainability in the development of the new National Planning Policy Framework.
4. LGA members provided local perspectives on the opportunities and challenges posed by a changing climate. Examples of local climate change impacts were highlighted as well as good practice by councils, including ways to ensure that the changing climate was taken into account in council decision-making, local plans, and in planning services for vulnerable communities.
5. Cllr David Parsons outlined the LGA's new initiative to drive, inspire and support council action on climate change 'Climate Local'. The initiative will be launched alongside the LGA's Conference in Birmingham. In signing up councils will be asked to agree a set of locally determined actions to reduce carbon emissions and respond to changes in the climate. A key component will be to share with other councils and with national partners their progress and learning.
6. Participants agreed a joint commitment text stating the importance of local and central government working together to manage the impacts of our changing climate. This was agreed by lead members of the Environment and Housing Board on 30th May. (See Annex 1) Sir Merrick also invited Professor Sir Bob Watson to address the Councillors Forum on the findings of the CCRA and implications for councils.

Annex 1 - Climate Summit Commitment

We recognise the importance of increasing resilience to our changing climate. We now know more about what the impacts of climate change will mean for us. The UK's first National Climate Change Risk Assessment identifies the urgent risks we need to act on now including: flood risk, pressure on water supplies and the impacts of higher temperatures on public health, critical infrastructure and energy use.

Councils have a critical role to play in working with partners and communities to plan and ensure the UK is better prepared and resilient to climate change. They can help to increase the resilience of local places and communities, including by:

- building resilience into decisions on buildings, roads, businesses, parks and other public spaces;
- building resilience into key services such as social care, emergency planning and public health;
- making the best use of land, assets, investments and maintenance spending, to manage risk better;
- planning for the long term by reflecting climate risks and sustainable development in Local Plans;
- increasing organisational resilience to extreme weather by building climate change risks into corporate risk registers;
- supporting retrofitting, green-build, the design and management of green spaces;
- encouraging local businesses to be climate ready, to ensure they are resilient and competitive.

Central Government acknowledges the importance of locally-led action on climate change to strengthen resilience to current and future climate risk. Government will work with the Local Government Association (LGA) to develop a framework for action that sets out a clear narrative on ways in which councils can build climate resilience. The National Adaptation Programme will be informed by the local government sector and will showcase examples of council-led action.

The LGA commits to working with partners including Defra, Department for Communities and Local Government and the Environment Agency to support councils to build resilience to climate risks so that timely, far sighted and well informed decisions may be made. Recognising the cross-cutting nature of climate change, the LGA will continue to work with councils to help them build in resilience and promote the economic and financial opportunities and benefits across their key local priorities.

Through the development of the new Climate Local initiative, the LGA will aim to represent and support councils to act on climate risks and to showcase their local commitment, ambitions and achievements. Climate Local will provide a framework through which councils can organise and plan their journey in addressing climate change and a forum for peer-to-peer learning.