

Local Resilience Act

Localis campaign summary

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1. About the Local Resilience Act

As climate shifts worldwide, councils across England are being hit by increasingly extreme weather patterns including violent storm surges, unbearable temperatures, and widespread flooding. Even under the most minimal of warming scenarios, infrastructure, public health, and GDP will all worsen due to the weighty pressure of extreme weather events.

If action is not taken, the UK might see damages of up to 7.4 percent reduction of its potential GDP by the end of the century, alongside devastating shocks to its agricultural sector and to the health of its population. Yet with suitable upstream mitigation and preventative measures in place, that figure would drop to a predicted 2.4 percent. Local authorities have the capability to enact necessary resilience measures for both the built and natural environment.

However, the current funding landscape for local government to deliver resilient places is far too piecemeal and insufficient. Furthermore, the system is overwrought with complexity - the division of responsibilities between local, central government and industry are too fragmented and disconnected for this to be addressed as a whole place agenda.

To address these problems, Localis proposes the drafting of legislation and construction of cross-sectoral support for a **Local Resilience Act (LRA)**.

The LRA would serve to: -

- Ensure funding for place resilience to meet a statutory duty upon local authorities, as a core service line, to provide the best adaptation measures for the built and natural environments in the coming generations.
- Streamline existing legislation - including the current Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill currently going through parliament - to allow the absolutely necessary changes to happen at the local level.

2. Work stream

Because the level of place is where climate change adaptation is most able to mitigate the risks of dangerous weather changes. Changes to transport, buildings, local businesses, land use and biodiversity are all required and can be enacted by local authorities. These changes, however, can only be affected at the level of place if the role of local government in directing resilience is consolidated, and if the necessary funding and revenue streams are provided.

To support this argument, Localis will be producing a series of short reports, comment pieces and other analysis over the course of 2023, beginning with an analysis of the current role of climate adaptation and mitigation in recently-adopted local plans. These analyses will aggregate up to a comprehensive case for a Local Resilience Act, as well as scoping out its possible contents and parameters.

2.1 Reports

The first short paper, **Climate Resilience in Local Plans**, was released in March 2023. A second paper, **Defining Resilience**, will be released in June 2023.

Climate Resilience in Local Plans: summary

The purpose of this short report is to evaluate the role that Local Plans currently play in driving climate change resilience across England, and where the planning system falls short of providing the protection necessary for people and communities against the impacts of a changing climate. The research involved reading 88 Local Plans, all adopted after 2018, and drawing out instances where climate change impacts have been included as informing the development strategy, either in a background or a primary manner. It is evident that where there is a duty place on local authorities to enact adaptation to climate change, adaptation will occur.

Much work is already being done in the drive to net zero and reducing carbon emissions, coming off the back of the Climate Change Act of 2008 alongside efforts to reduce waste and support sustainability. Local authorities are devoted to ensuring the best possible strategies for development and the highest quality of life for constituents and as such will enact as much change as possible for the benefit of people, communities, and the environment, provided there are the resources and support available. As a result, there are plenty of examples of best practice when it comes to adaptation to environmental change and climate extremes. However, when guidance, no matter how practical and detailed, is vague and in need of balancing with multiple other obligations, it is difficult for all local authorities to respond substantially to potential risks.

Every part of the country should be allowed the highest level of multi-dimensional resilience to the risks of climate change. A strategy focused on the risks of climate change alone is, at this stage, necessary. The inconsistencies in adaptation must be eliminated in order that best practice becomes common practice across the UK. Local authorities are placed in optimum position to provide tailored adaptation to the impacts of climate change. There needs to be open-access climate risk data that considers risk at the level of place, consideration of risk at all levels and of all kinds, and there needs to be suitable responses to risk – alongside the funding and opportunity to enact these responses. Legislation must be able to ensure that action is being taken in all required aspects of climate adaptation, in a way which is readily available for public scrutiny. This is a case of consolidating and strengthening what exists, whilst raising the baseline across local authorities for a consistent national approach.

2.2 Events

We are also holding webinars to support the publication of the research papers, with a view to holding in-person receptions and panel discussions if funding can be obtained.

Our first webinar was **Resilience in Local Planning**, held on 8th March with panelists:

- Alastair Brown, Director, Arete Consultancy & Management Ltd
- Ben Smith, Director of Climate and Sustainability Services, Arup
- Harry Steele, Infrastructure Specialist, Royal Town and Planning Institute
- Jo Wall, Strategic Director - Climate Response, Local Partnerships LLP

Our second webinar, **Defining Resilience**, will be held on 5th June with panelists:

- Chitra Nadarajah, Head of Climate Change and Environmental Strategy, Hampshire County Council
- Catriona Riddell, National Strategic Planning Specialist, Planning Officers' Society
- Professor Samer Bagaeen, Localis Fellow

3. Supporting the Local Resilience Act campaign

Localis is hoping to work with a range of diverse project partners in 2023 to construct a broad and supportive coalition drawn from across parliament, from councils and the local government family, from business and industry, from the third sector and civil society, to support our campaign for a Local Resilience Act.

This will involve, we hope, a series of staged activities and events throughout the year, at major industry and party conferences to promote the concept of a LRA and to influence the party manifestos. We are seeking funding to run these events and support the research workstream, with ample opportunities for sponsors to co-brand events and feed into their design and content.

If you or your organisation are interested in feeding into or supporting our campaign a Local Resilience Act, please contact Localis chief executive Jonathan Werran at jonathan.werran@localis.org.uk.