

Climate Change, public behaviour and communities¹.

Creating a supportive framework to guide community practitioners, partners, funders and decision-makers in Scotland.

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1 Introduction

This paper presents a proposal for the development of a ‘framework’ providing an easily accessible resource for communities, and those who can support them, to promote effective carbon-reduction activities at the local level.

Communities, for example, need the opportunity to access and learn from the experience of others, saving them the wasted time and frustration of re-inventing wheels.

Funders, for example, considering applications for support, need to know what experience suggests are the essential conditions for success in community-led projects.

Local authorities, for example, need to know how they can help provide a fertile setting for community projects, facilitating community action or simply removing barriers.

Community-led action is increasingly recognised as a highly valuable contribution to popular behaviour change. It is:

- a powerful means of directly reducing emissions through individual action encouraged by neighbourly interest and buy-in;
- an effective way of addressing whole attitudes, values and behaviours to tackle wider aspects of sustainable lifestyles;
- an essential aid to the creation of political space to allow more ambitious policy development, and to the promotion of consumer preferences for low carbon products and services.

2 Progress to date

In recent years a number of initiatives throughout the UK have sought to address the challenge of reducing carbon emissions through influencing public behaviour. Progress has been slow and tentative, with most effort being spent in information and awareness-raising, directed at individuals but with limited evidence of meaningful and lasting change.

¹ ‘community’ is used here to refer to all kinds of community, connected by geographic location or by interest, trade or other shared activity.

Community action is increasingly recognised as the key to individual action. Scotland has already established something of a lead in valuable experience in this area, promoting the efforts of more than 250 communities with generous funding and back-up support and training through the Climate Challenge Fund (CCF) in a wide range of actions. Although primarily focussed on climate change, this programme is helping to build community resilience and strengthen responses to the wider demands of sustainability.

The question now is – how can we build on this experience to extend the scope and scale of a behaviour change programme most effectively?

2.1 Work is already underway in Scotland to capture examples of good practice:

- The **CCF review** - assessing the impacts and key success factors of CCF projects through review of a sample 20 projects;
- The **SESEN² conference** in June 2010 - an empirical exercise bringing together practitioners with a claim of success, to learn from practical experience, and to stimulate further ideas on what works in achieving reduced emissions, changing behaviour and engaging communities, households and individuals.
- A **wider review**, in close association with colleagues in England and Wales, exploring evidence from a wide range of community energy projects throughout the UK, mapping community action and climate change – the results of which will inform later versions of the Scottish framework and vice versa.

2.2 Meanwhile it is clear that the creation of successful, collectively owned, meaningful and enduring community projects to promote pro-environmental behaviours clearly depends on:

- Communities adopting a good design of project, drawing on all possible sources of evidence from past experience;
- the willingness of all other stakeholders to commit to playing their own part in creating a fertile setting for community-led action.

2.3 These are however early days. Community-led activity is still subject to relatively high levels of risk, due to a variety of problems including capacity, information, technical support and funding:

- **Expertise and experience** of practitioners is very variable, showing strong demand for good practice guidance and support;
- **Examples of good practice** need to be analysed on the basis of reliable evidence and made accessible;
- The **strategic roles** of partners and other stakeholders in facilitating community efforts and/or simply removing barriers could be very usefully clarified/resolved;
- A review of the scale, consistency and coherence of **funding** schemes may reveal opportunities for achieving much greater efficiency and effectiveness of investment.

² Scottish Environment Social Evidence Network

3 A framework

Every community is unique, operating in a unique setting. Attempts to simply replicate successful projects in new areas are unlikely to have the same results. Leaders of community projects need to be able to make their own judgements, informed – but not constrained – by experience from other projects. Their prospects of success will be enhanced by efforts of other key stakeholders to provide a fertile setting for community action.

The proposal is to build a strategic ‘framework’, presenting a synthesis of lessons learned to provide guidance on the most effective models to achieve real change through community-led action. This will be an easily accessible resource of great utility for all parties involved, including communities themselves and those on whom they rely for a variety of support and encouragement (policy makers, funders, local authorities, partners etc).

3.1 The framework will

- catalogue models of **best practice** for each type of action in a range of community situations, providing insights and guidance based on the experience of numerous practical examples (drawing on outputs of 2.1 above)
- clarify potential **roles and responsibilities** of all relevant parties to provide contextual support and enhance community action;
- help to improve the **alignment of support** available from these parties, easing the way for communities to do what they can do best;
- Provide information about success factors and key requirements on which **funders** can make more informed assessment of applications;
- Be maintained as an accessible **resource on line**, periodically **updated** to accommodate new knowledge and experience as it is gained;
- Suggest policy action and message framing to remove barriers to action.

Examples of ways that the framework could be used.

User group	How used
Communities	Access to a summary of the range of themes explored in other projects; what has worked, what hasn't, and why; key success factors generally and for each type of project; upcoming issues which may affect plans. Use of a decision tool to help the selection of appropriate themes/projects to suit the circumstances of the community group; links to detailed route maps for the better tried types of project; advice on more novel approaches, derived from wider, pioneering or perhaps international experience, etc. Links to case studies and other reference material; links to sources of funds and other support. Supported peer to peer mentoring programme
Local authorities and other sources of local support	Descriptions of the typical barriers and difficulties encountered by community groups, which Local Authorities and others could help to resolve; A suggested/agreed protocol of roles and responsibilities (taking full account of costs) which LAs and others could fulfil to help communities deliver successful projects.

Funders	Access to insights into the history of projects in this field, key success factors (general and specific to themes); updates on the range of projects receiving funds from various sources; funding policies of all funders; agreed monitoring and evaluation protocols to provide ease of comparison etc
Policy makers	A way of informing all interested parties of policy news affecting their activities, and of obtaining an overview of progress to inform further policy decisions
etc	etc

4 Stages, timescales

Stage 1 by June 2010

Advance consultation with potential beneficiaries and users of the Framework to ascertain their interest in this approach, and to enlist their support in principle for further stages in its development.

GCNS/SP 10 days

Stage 2 by July 2010

A broad synthesis of recent experience to provide strategic advice to government on the policy lessons arising, to inform decisions in the upcoming spending review. Eg

- principles that should underpin future government policy in this area;
- areas of potential that should be considered for further exploration and support (see appendix 1).

GCNS/SP with input from individuals closely involved in CCF, including reps of communities, funders, partners, local authorities, agencies.

15 days

Stage 3 by July 2011

Assembling, consulting and testing the building blocks of the Framework, eg

- best practice guidance based on successful projects to date;
- case studies and easy-access toolkits/route maps;
- clear delineation of roles of national and regional stakeholders;
- community level activities and skill sets required;
- guidance on new themes/approaches;

A project team tbc 45 days

Stage 4 by Dec 2011

Implementation

- Website preparation and launch;
- development of a Framework users support network,
- ongoing maintenance
- updating of content in response to new knowledge/experience

by contract tbc ongoing

5 Conclusion

The proposed Framework is a response to an acknowledged need to gather and consolidate what has been learned from experience so far, to inform the future work of policymakers and communities and to help align the important roles of other stakeholders in providing a fertile setting for community action. This will contribute positively to the achievement of four of the Outcomes in the **National Performance Framework** - Sustainable Places, Communities, Environment, and Environmental Impact.

Appendix 1

Examples of potential areas of opportunity to be explored

- social enterprise models, and other revenue generation models allowing revenue generation in themes other than renewables, and reducing grant dependency;
- the synergies which can be achieved by complementary themes (eg insulation + renewable energy + travel + food + gardening + consumption habits) where each additional theme increases the traction of the programme as a whole;
- key organisation buy-in to the principle of collaboration (Local authorities, agencies etc), and commitment to operate meaningfully within a framework which identifies roles and aligns approaches;
- experience from other initiatives (public, private or voluntary sector) and from overseas;
- a community-to-community mentoring programme;
- guidance on amalgamated projects which leverage greater returns;

Appendix 2

What do you think?

Text section 1

How can we build on experience gained to date, to extend the scope and scale of a behaviour change programme most effectively? Is a strategic framework the sort of resource which you can see would be helpful?

Text section 2.1

What other reviews, mapping exercises, evaluations would you recommend for inclusion in a desk study component of the proposed work?

Text section 2.3

Do you agree with this summary of areas of weakness?

Text section 3.1

Are there other dimensions which should be covered, or uses to which the framework could be put? Which other stakeholder groups should be identified in this process and how should they be engaged?

Text section 4

Do you have any comment on the proposed stages of delivery?