‘Climate Emergency’ Declarations and the Practicalities of Local Authority Action to go ‘Carbon Neutral’

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Agenda

- What is a Climate Emergency Declaration?
- Who has declared a climate emergency?
- Is it feasible?
- Developing a strategy
- Setting a target
- Finding the finance
- LAs as renewable generators district heaters, tree planters
O what a lovely emergency!

“…an historic opportunity... to dramatically improve lives, close the gap between rich and poor, create huge numbers of good jobs and reinvigorate democracy from the ground up.” Klein

“It’s not about saving the planet – it’s more ambitious than that.” Dyke
Climate Emergency Declared

- Nicola Sturgeon declared a "climate emergency" at SNP conference
- Welsh Assembly voted to declare a "climate emergency" on 1st May
- UK Parliament became first in world to pass motion declaring a 'climate emergency'.
What is a Climate Emergency?

- No precise definition;
- Byword for taking immediate action to go beyond current targets;
- Gov following LAs;
- Origin seems to be Bristol Cllr - first politician to put forward the idea of declaring "a climate emergency" in Nov 2018.
Zero by 2025, 2030, 2045 or 2050?

- Extinction Rebellion want Net Zero by 2025
- It’s a political and social statement rather than a scientific one. (If you say it's not feasible then show us how fast).
- Makes sense given the need to cut warming rapidly, but extremely unlikely.
By 1st May 2019 91 UK LAs declared a climate emergency
Is it feasible?

- Many councils already committed, zero by 2050;
- Climate emergency often calls for net zero by 2030;
- Lack of funding; limited powers; challenging background 2030 or 2050
- London: UK policies reduce by 35%; City 30%; need another 30% by Gov.
Local Declarations

- Clear declaration of seriousness of the issue;
- Determination to do everything in its power;
- Number of declarations should generate some clear policy asks of Gov regarding delegation of powers; creation of incentives, funding etc.
Polycentric Governance

- Despite lack of funding, LAs carrying out innovative projects and actions, which inspire;
- Kevin Anderson at the Tyndall Centre talks about a partnership between top-down and bottom-up.
Build a new model

- Buckminster Fuller was an American architect, systems theorist, author, designer, inventor and futurist who coined the term "Spaceship Earth".
Develop a Strategy

- Edinburgh ‘expects to go further and faster than rest of Scotland’.
- Sustainability audit - lack of coherence; lots of projects going on
- clear over-arching vision & strategy
- improve capacity to develop, deliver and scale investable projects
Strategy Agreed with Partners

- The strategy needs to be coherent and agreed with partners. In Manchester, for instance, partners include churches, the NHS, Manchester City Football Club, Housing Providers, two Universities and Electricity Northwest.
Develop a Regional Strategy

- Complete shift to zero carbon electricity, mostly renewable, decentralised
- Huge reductions in energy demand; low & zero carbon new build
- Smarter, flexible management of demand.
- Decarbonisation of heat
- Cut transport carbon - dramatic rise in EVs

“The key to a low-carbon future is rebuilding our energy system at the local level.”
Setting a Target

- Tyndall Centre for Climate Research at Manchester Uni commissioned to recommend science-based targets - budget would see city become “zero carbon” by 2038.
Finding the Finance

- City Leap Prospectus to up the pace of delivery
- Designed to attract £1bn low carbon & smart energy infrastructure investment in next 10yrs
- £300m heat networks; £125m smart systems;
- £400m for energy efficiency; £40m for renewable energy
180 organisations responded

Bristol City Council celebrates record generation at its solar farm

- Agreed to go-ahead with initiative to source private sector partners to help fund future green energy projects.
- The prospectus referenced much wider adoption of renewables; battery storage; Vehicle to Grid (V2G) electric vehicle (EV) chargers.
LAs as Renewable Generators

- Working with community solar co-ops to save money on electricity;
- Set up fund to support community renewables;
- Develop LA renewables;
District Heating

- Devon County Council joint venture with public sector partners in Exeter;
- Leicester City Council’s District Heating Scheme already connects with 2,800 dwellings and 38 operational buildings
Tree Planting

- Move quickly to higher rates of tree planting - 30,000 hectares per year, compared to less than 10,000 recently;
- Forest of Dean Council wants to champion rural decarbonisation
- Belfast residents are planning to plant 1m trees over the next 15yrs
Leading with a Vision

- Nottingham wants to be 1st UK carbon neutral city.
- 40 renewable projects with a capacity of 12MW.
- Dramatic green council house makeovers.
- Pioneering V2G technology.
- Workplace parking levy
- Tram network; cycle facilities
Conclusions

- Getting to zero by 2030 will be challenging;
- But a declaration of seriousness is clearly worthwhile;
- In current political environment funding, incentives and powers should be forthcoming;
- Solutions can generate income for LA.
Final Thought - Equity

- EVs – latest middle class plot to get grants off taxpayers?
- Tree planting – new grants for wealthy landowners who already made a killing on wind?
- Panic about cost of switching to electric heat
- Need to get on with house retrofits.