

It's not just your problem. It's not just my problem.
It's everybody's problem.



Climate Change

We need to talk about it.
Let's start here.

Introduction

As the climate changes, the way we live must change too. Whether you believe the causes are down to human action or natural events, climate change is a reality.

We need to understand and be able to respond to the effects of these changes and must do what we can together to stop it from getting worse, both now and for future generations. Everyone - young or old, in work or not, can play their part in the way we tackle climate change.

Let's talk

Gateshead Strategic Partnership (GSP) has produced this discussion document as the first step on our journey towards tackling this big issue. The GSP is made up of local people, community partnerships and networks, public bodies, business and voluntary organisations.

Our discussion document aims to stimulate debate and get you talking and thinking about climate change and how it could affect you and your family in the future. It will help you understand:

- What climate change is and why it is important to you
- How it may affect you
- How we are responding - globally, nationally, locally
- Key areas we need to focus on

Then, we need to know what you think. You can help us do this by completing the short survey at the end of this document. This will help us to develop a really local approach to this global problem.

By working with you, we will put in place a relevant and positive Climate Change Strategy for Gateshead that sets out what we will do together to protect the environment, reduce energy use and prepare ourselves for severe weather events.

Thank you for helping us - we look forward to getting your views on this important issue either by filling in the survey at the back of this document, completing the online survey at www.gateshead.gov.uk or by writing to:

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What is climate change and why is it important?

Greenhouse gases

The major cause of climate change is the release of so-called greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. These are released every time we turn on our heating, switch on a light, or throw out rubbish that ends up in a landfill site. The carbon dioxide and methane released by these everyday activities is making the world warmer, with temperatures predicted to continue to rise over the next 50 years.

Rainfall patterns are also changing and extreme weather conditions are becoming more frequent. This creates many issues globally and locally - so the reduction of greenhouse gases must be at the heart of any action plan.

Energy resources

We are also running out of key energy resources such as natural gas, and the Government is concerned about the security of overseas energy supplies. Recent problems in Eastern Europe caused by a disruption of gas from Russia show how fragile current supplies can be. We need to find new ways to get our energy using renewable sources including wind, solar and hydro-electricity.

The economy

Climate change will also significantly affect our economy. The Stern Review, commissioned by the Government, predicted that if we take no action, the cost of climate change will be the equivalent of losing at least 5% of gross domestic product every year. In other words it will cost us far less to act now rather than pay for the consequences in the future.



How will it affect me?

No matter who you are or where you live, you will see and feel the effects of climate change. At home, apart from changes in the weather, UK citizens will face higher food prices, higher insurance costs and potentially more severe health problems. Abroad there could be devastating consequences for many countries far from UK shores. Some coastlines will be eroded and others completely swept away.

And it's not just humans who will feel the effects. Wildlife will suffer too. It's estimated that up to 40 per cent of species would be wiped out - from polar bears to birds and sea creatures (Stern Review).

Regional context

A recent study looking at changing weather conditions in the North East concluded that by 2050 we would see:

- Temperatures rising across the entire region with more regular and consistent heat-waves
- More rain in the winter and less in other months when compared against today, with some locations experiencing up to 20 per cent more rainfall
- Winter wind speeds, which presently cause considerable damage across the region, will marginally increase in some locations

Gateshead context

It's important to understand how Gateshead is contributing to the whole problem of climate change in order to see how we can change the way we live and work in the future. Currently in Gateshead:

- We emit around 1,567,000 tonnes of CO₂ into the atmosphere (that's around the weight of 196,000 double decker busses). That's one huge 'carbon footprint'
- The high proportion of manufacturing jobs and industries (which are high energy users) accounts for about 43% of carbon emissions
- 25% of emissions come from road transport. There are increasing numbers of vehicles on our roads leading to congestion, poorer air quality and more carbon emissions
- We consume a massive 3,670 giga watts of energy every year – that's the equivalent to running a one-bar electric fire for 423,298 years
- We produce around 100,000 tonnes of household waste each year. Of this 33,000 tonnes is recycled and 67,000 tonnes sent to landfill - enough to fill Gateshead International Stadium. A higher rate than much of the rest of the UK

- We know that some parts of Gateshead are susceptible to flooding; others still need to be identified. Flooding can happen in residential areas and places of employment as well as roads and other public places

As a business

YOU could face higher waste disposal costs

YOU might need to sign up to the Carbon Reduction Commitment

YOU might be adversely affected by flooding or road closures

YOU could experience problems with your supply chain

YOU could risk losing customers because of workplace issues caused by climate change

As a resident

YOU could find your home at risk of flooding

YOU could face storm and wind damage to your property

YOU could face disruption and problems when roads/essential buildings have to close

YOU and your family could face health problems because of heatwaves and a potential increase in infectious diseases

Overall changes will happen gradually, however weather events are becoming more severe and more frequent. We have already started to experience some of the effects here with flooding at Blackhall Mill, Rowlands Gill and Winlaton Mill. In September 2007, over 150 tonnes of timber was collected from the river Tyne as a result of trees being blown over in high winds and flooding.

Whatever your opinion on the causes, climate change is a reality and its consequences can be devastating.



What can we do?

You may think that this is a problem for politicians and heads of state to solve at an international level. But, none of the international and national agreements on climate change mean anything without positive action being taken by local people, businesses and organisations.

Even if you are not interested in environmental issues, you will save money by taking steps to reduce the amount of energy you use. It is not too late to act. We believe we need to focus our action on two main areas:

Adaptation - we need to prepare ourselves for the effects of climate change, for different weather patterns, severe events and understand more about the issues and what each of us should be doing.

Mitigation - we need to take action to prevent further adverse changes to the climate by reducing damaging emissions by using less energy and recycling more.

How is the world responding?

The issues around climate change have been acknowledged at the highest political level and there is a clear commitment to act through the:

- Kyoto Protocol
- Eurocities Declaration on Climate Change
- EU Commission's Covenant of Mayors on Climate Change

As well as identifying targets for each country these agreements place significant responsibility for achieving these targets at a local level.



How is the UK responding?

The Government is already targeting large organisations and significant energy users through a range of national initiatives. However it recognises that local councils and their partners are well placed to lead their communities to act at a local level. There are a number of studies and reports that you may have heard of, which we need to take account of in Gateshead:

- Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change 2006. This argued that the economic benefits of strong early action to tackle climate change far outweigh the cost of dealing with the consequences
- Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change 2001 and 2005 commits local authorities to set targets for reducing emissions looking ahead
- Climate Change Act 2008 sets legally binding targets for the UK to reduce carbon emissions by 26% by 2020 and by 80% by 2050
- Planning and Energy Act 2008 enables local authorities to take steps to require builders to include a proportion of energy from renewable sources

How are we responding in Gateshead?

We have made many environmental achievements over the past few years through our Local Agenda 21 Strategy.

We have helped more people heat their homes in an affordable and efficient way.

How? Through the work of Gateshead Warm Zone, we have:

- installed over 22,500 insulation measures
- increased the benefit income for 3,000 residents by a combined £2m a year
- saved 12,000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions, improving the energy efficiency of homes in Gateshead by over 30% with a target of 50% efficiency improvement by 2011

We have enabled residents and businesses to recycle their waste more easily, leading to fewer carbon emissions and a reduction in use of landfill sites.

How? By setting up recycling schemes and establishing a Joint Waste Management Partnership with South Tyneside and Sunderland Councils to tackle waste issues over the next 20 years, with the aim of significantly reducing waste and increasing recycling.

We have improved the local natural environment through conservation.

How? The council bought 18 hectares of land at Lamesley Pastures. By reinstating the seasonal flooding of meadows there, a valuable breeding habitat for waders and wildfowl has been created. The project is important to local people, incoming birdwatchers and is a special conservation and recreation site. This project is also reducing down-stream flood risk in the Team Valley Trading Estate by providing flood storage in the new habitat.

We have involved local people in projects to protect and enhance the countryside.

How? Through the Next to Nature programme, we have encouraged local urban communities to make the most of the countryside on their doorstep. Seven new nature reserves have been established through the co-ordinated efforts of local schools and new 'friends-of' groups as well as Gateshead Countryside Volunteers. They provide green oases, link green areas for transitory wildlife and reduce the need for residents to travel to enjoy the health benefits of the countryside. Urban cooling is also provided by this type of green space.

So what more should we be doing?

Although it is clear that we have been taking action locally, the evidence, including recent events, tells us that we all need to do more. Government has set local councils and their partners some challenging targets that can only be achieved if everyone does their bit.

Through local leadership we will take action and work with businesses and communities to reduce carbon emissions in Gateshead and protect our communities from the detrimental effects of climate change as well as encouraging others to play their part too.

Only by changing attitudes and approaches can we avoid future adverse climate change, prepare for changes that are inevitable and save money by using less energy in the process.



The future - your priority areas

Vision 2030 - Gateshead's Sustainable Community Strategy, developed by public services, businesses, community organisations and local people, sets out our actions and targets for the next 20 years. Six Big Ideas, the priority areas, were identified through consultation with local people, businesses and partners. One of these is Sustainable Gateshead, ensuring that we have a sound future. Among a range of actions for the future, it identifies some key targets in response to the climate change challenge including:

- Recycling at least 50% of our waste by 2020
- Achieving carbon neutral status by 2025
- Reducing residents' energy consumption by 20% by 2030

We have also included climate change as one of the key priorities in our three-year delivery plan, called 'The Gateshead Agreement'.

We need to be clear about the responsibilities of different organisations, communities and individuals and ensure we all work together in a co-ordinated way. The key areas we believe we should be focussing on are set out below.

Adaptation

Effective planning

This includes developing plans to reduce the impact of extreme weather conditions, such as improving drainage.

Effective response

Putting tried and tested resilience plans in place with clear roles, responsibilities and resources to respond to the effects of climate change in a joined up way. Protect businesses, communities, roads, communication, water and energy supplies during extreme weather conditions.

Effective communication

Raising awareness of the potential effects of climate change to communities and businesses, offering practical help, information and advice on how you can help yourself and others in an emergency.

Mitigation

Reducing the amount of greenhouse gasses we produce by reducing demand and increasing efficiency.

We can do this in number of ways such as:

- Improving the energy efficiency of existing buildings

- Setting higher standards for new developments (seeing more use of low energy technology and appliances, recycled materials and ways to store water on site through natural drainage and minimising water usage)
- All new homes to be of a higher standard than the minimum requirement, with improved public transport links, close to jobs and services
- Developing a demonstration project to show how we can achieve the highest standard (code 6 sustainable homes) using existing council housing/premises
- Sharing information and good practice, and identifying opportunities for a major joint project aimed at significantly reducing carbon emissions
- Reducing car usage by promoting and improving public transport, cycling and walking routes
- Reducing waste by making it easier for people to understand what can be recycled and how and where they can recycle

Promoting Green Growth, creating a low carbon economy, and developing business and employment growth in environmental industries

We could do this by:

- Working with businesses to reduce energy use and carbon emissions, sharing best practice and marketing opportunities for eco-business expansion in Gateshead
- Looking to create new job opportunities in environmental technologies and investing in education and learning opportunities so our residents can compete for the jobs of the future



More renewable and new sources of energy

Within Gateshead - with its rivers, geology and windy valleys and hills - the opportunities are there to exploit greener energy production such as:

- Wind turbines
- Harnessing hydro-energy for example from the Derwent or Tyne to produce electricity
- Geothermal - getting heat from hot rocks underground
- Clean coal gasification - using energy produced underground from coal without having to extract or burn it
- Investigate combined heat and power production locally for community use
- Using opportunities to incorporate sustainable, renewable and low carbon principles within major developments such as Gateshead Town Centre

Raising awareness and encouraging others by:

- Making sure everyone knows what's happening across Gateshead to tackle climate change and be more innovative in how we communicate and consult
- Developing an awards system for businesses, schools, communities and individuals
- Asking all local people, visitors, and businesses to make a pledge to tackle climate change issues in a practical way

What businesses can do:

- Develop a flood plan or recovery plan - many businesses have plans for fire but not for floods
- Check insurance policies to see if you have the appropriate cover
- Purchase goods and services that use recycled and recyclable materials, use locally sourced produce and materials and choose providers who use sustainable methods
- Ensure that electrical equipment and heating is turned off when not in use and use energy efficient heating and lighting - it will save you money
- Reduce water use in new developments e.g. use of grey water to flush toilets
- Use cleaner fuels in business vehicles and adopt green travel plans

What you can do:

- Recycle more
- Buy recycled and recyclable goods and re-use carrier bags
- Choose water and energy efficient products such as washing machines
- Reduce waste and save money by planning meals
- Have an emergency kit prepared and kept in a safe and accessible place just to be prepared - not just including things like candles and torches, but also insurance documents, etc
- Use energy efficient light bulbs
- Insulate lofts and walls – you may even qualify for a grant to pay for this
- Turn your thermostat down by 1 degree and wash laundry at 30 degrees
- Drive efficiently - you use 15% less fuel driving at 50mph than at 70 mph
- Use public transport or walk more
- Cut down on short car journeys
- Reduce the water you use by storing and using rainwater for gardening
- Try growing your own vegetables or get involved in one of Gateshead's 'Friends of' Groups



Quick glossary of terms

Adaptation - The action we need to take to adjust to the changing climate.

Carbon Footprint - A measure of the impact human activities have on the environment in terms of the amount of greenhouse gases produced, measured in units of carbon dioxide.

Carbon Reduction Commitment - A Government initiative that aims to get businesses to reduce the amount of carbon they produce. It covers large businesses and public sector organisations. It is due to begin in April 2010.

CHP (Combined Heat and Power) - The generation of usable heat and power (usually electricity) in a single process. It is an efficient way to use both fossil and renewable fuels.

Clean coal - Employing techniques that use coal without releasing excessive carbon.

Climate Change - This refers to changes to the average weather experienced over a period of time and includes temperature, wind and rainfall.

CO₂ or Carbon Dioxide - This is one of the main greenhouse gases and is produced from burning fuel used in cars, burning of wood, coal and natural gas. Most of the increase of carbon emitted or released is due to human activity.

Greenhouse gases - This refers to the gases that prevent heat from the sun escaping and keep the Earth warm. Too much of these means more heat is absorbed and the Earth gets warmer. Greenhouse gases include: Carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, ozone, water vapour and halocarbons.

Mitigation - The action we can take to reduce further release of harmful greenhouse gases to help prevent further changes to the climate.

Renewable energy - Effective alternatives to fossil fuels that can meet our energy requirements and reduce carbon dioxide emissions. They will either never run out - like wind, the solar energy from the sun, geothermal energy from the ground and hydro energy from flowing water - or are continually replaceable - like waste products and crops.

Sustainability - This can be applied to all aspects of life such as housing, the economy, communities, population growth and the environment. In this document it refers to the actions we need to take to assure the future of Gateshead.

The Gateshead Agreement - The Local Area Agreement for Gateshead includes a specific target for climate change (188 - Adapting to Climate change).

We want your views!

We want to find out more about what people living and working in Gateshead think about climate change. You can help us by completing the survey below. Alternatively you can save paper and complete this online at www.gateshead.gov.uk. The website has more information about climate change and how you can help.

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statements below?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Climate change is an issue that will affect me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate change has become more of an issue for me in this last year	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I personally can help to limit the effects of climate change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Tick one box on each line to show who you think has a role in tackling climate change

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
International community through the U.N.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
European Union	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The UK Government	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Businesses and Manufacturers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local councils	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other services e.g. NHS, universities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community and voluntary organisations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individuals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Which of these best describes how you feel about your current lifestyle and the environment?

- I'm happy with what I do at the moment
 I'd like to do a lot more to help the environment
 I'd like to do a bit more to help the environment
 Don't know

4. How can we help to make it easier for you to do more for the environment?

5. From the list below what do you think should be Gateshead's top 5 priorities for tackling climate change? (Please tick up to five boxes only)

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	Not a priority
Develop emergency plans for floods etc	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Raise awareness with business and local people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify new ways to source energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improve energy efficiency of existing buildings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure that energy efficiency is included in new developments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improve methods of recycling available to residents and businesses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop skills and expertise for tackling climate change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Publicise and improve public transport	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. What are your ideas for tackling climate change here in Gateshead?

7. Please tick the box that best describes you.

	Under 18	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I live in Gateshead I work in Gateshead I am responding on behalf of an organisation

8. Would you like to be involved further in the development of the Climate Change Strategy? If so, please leave your contact details below:

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Thank you for reading and completing this survey.
Please return completed forms by 15 May 2009.

**Don't forget you can save paper and complete this
online at www.gateshead.gov.uk**