

Introduction

Climate change is increasingly recognised as the greatest environmental threat since the human species evolved. Floods and droughts cause far more death by famine and displacement than all of the human conflicts put together. The biggest cause of climate change is the production of carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels. This affects the developing countries disproportionately but we in the UK face risks too. These impacts include loss of habitats, and severe flooding on the East Coast.

Indicator 1 - Energy Efficiency in Homes

Reduction in Carbon dioxide from Domestic Premises

Authority	% CO2 reduction since April 1996
Broxbourne	2.60
Dacorum	4.88
East Herts	13.2
Hertsmere	2.79
North Herts	8.49
St Albans	8.04
Stevenage	2.18
Three Rivers	4.41
Watford	1.17
Welwyn Hatfield	6.84

The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 required district and unitary councils to draw up a plan for reducing energy consumption and carbon dioxide emissions in dwellings. It set a target of 30% reduction in CO₂ emissions from dwellings over the following 10 years.

The thrust of the approach is to reduce any energy use by improving the energy efficiency of dwellings and simultaneously raising awareness of what can be done to reduce consumption.

The Government's £25m "Are you doing your bit?" publicity campaign aims to explain in very simple terms what individuals can do.

The campaign illustrates how making simple changes to our daily actions can have a positive effect on the environment. For example:

- Turning off unnecessary lights;
- Only boiling just enough water when making hot drinks;
- Switching off TVs, computers and stereos when you are not using them;
- Walking, cycling or using public transport when you can;
- Turning down the heating thermostat by 1°C, which can cut fuel bills by 10%.

In addition to encouraging residents to insulate their homes, councils are also encouraging, where appropriate the use of alternative renewable fuels. For instance a solar club is being set up in Hertfordshire to enable people to claim discounts on the installation of solar panels. More and more planning authorities across Hertfordshire are adopting policies which will require developers to carry out an energy audit of proposed development and to consider what improvements could be achieved using renewable energy.

All the evidence so far indicates that there is a need for continuous and prolonged activity to encourage people to reduce energy consumption.

Indicator 2 - Energy Efficiency in Public Buildings

This indicator is based on an authority's approach to energy conservation. Does it have:-

- a conservation strategy approved by a committee of members?
- a dedicated budget for conservation works and associated expenses?
- a working group of officers to action, monitor and report on progress?
- monitoring of its larger energy accounts?
- instrumentation or sub-metering to analysis consumption by use within a building?
- a programme of works to achieve savings?

Measure of Actions to save Energy in Public Buildings

Authority	%
Broxbourne	50
Dacorum	24
East Herts	29
Hertfordshire County	78
Hertsmere	41
North Herts	56
St Albans	no reply
Stevenage	60
Three Rivers	no reply
Watford	74
Welwyn Hatfield	51
Average	51

As was the case last year Hertfordshire County Council achieved the highest rating (78%) out of the authorities in the County for the management of energy in the buildings it is responsible for. The County had a dedicated budget approaching £200,000 which was used for a miscellany of works including upgrading of the Building Energy Management System (BEMS) at County Hall and a rolling programme of improvements to heating systems and lighting in schools.

Premises by premises monitoring of current consumptions and comparison with "Baseline 1994/95 Data" and specific National Performance Indices (NPI) facilitate the identification of savings and excess usage and the compilation of performance league tables.

The local councils are also active in the pursuit of energy savings in their buildings with Watford a close second at 74% and Stevenage, North Herts, Welwyn Hatfield and Broxbourne scoring 50% or more. In the 5 years since Stevenage Borough Council started actively managing its energy usage gas and electricity worth £1.1 million was saved. During the year Stevenage commenced an extensive lighting refurbishment programme which included the installation of nearly 700 high efficiency fluorescent light fittings in its Head Office, Westgate Car Park and Works Depot. All the fittings incorporate the latest high frequency starters and slimline T5 (16mm diameter) or T8 (25mm diameter) tubes.

Information on St Albans and Three Rivers Councils was not available at the time of publication.

For further information contact: Geoff Beale, East Herts District Council, 01279 655261