



Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB

Climate Change Seminar Questions and Comments from flip-chart work

22nd September 2010

1. What do you think the priorities should be, in your locality, for tackling climate change?

E.g if you live near the sea, then responding to sea level rise might be your main priority, but if you farm on the downs, then preparing for drought and wind erosion might be your priority.

Relaxation of planning rules

- Relaxation of planning restrictions on ALL forms of renewable energy

Water management

- Mitigating flooding, particularly by stopping run-off from farms
- Flooding risk from water courses
- Coastal erosion in sensitive areas
- Water conservation
- Water management and quality
- Water management, surface water collection, storage and use of grey water
- Water conservation
- Water conservation and reducing energy costs
- Water conservation and more tree planting
- Water conservation - run off in hilly areas needs tackling with better maintenance and bigger drains
- Community group approach to water conservation, such as a way of collecting all the grey water and run off from a village to then flush toilets, water gardens and wash cars.
- Raise key local roads above surrounding land to prevent flooding

Energy use reduction

- Reduction of energy inputs into intensive agriculture, analysis of energy budgets (how much you get out for how much you put in)
- Energy reduction

Local food and marketing

- Building local food markets and infrastructure
- Selling produce locally and the lack of small, local slaughterhouses

New crops

- Niche crops
- Effective future scoping of biofuel crops versus food provision into 2030
- Being aware of different crops to grow

- Investing in farm discussions on animal welfare, farm management and crop provision

Better soil management

- Soil management plans make most farmers aware of this aspect already
- Maintaining nutrient levels in soils

Urban green space

- Lack of green space in urban areas
- Increasing the provision of green infrastructure to help both climate change mitigation and adaptation

Others

- Building awareness / changing behaviour in relation to finite resources and use of renewable resources
- Reducing the ever-increasing road traffic to address its wider environmental impact as well as its carbon emissions
- Recycling and reducing the packaging made by manufacturers
- Make natural environment more resilient by enhancing habitat and species through creation and conservation of habitat.

2. Have you considered investing in renewable energy, but not gone ahead for some reason? If so, what was the problem and how might we help you?

Capital costs

- I am considering it, but funding the initial outlay is difficult and change of use planning permission would be needed
- Looking at water source heat pumps, but pay back period is too long
- No capital
- The installation cost is still too high. If I had to borrow the money I would be much worse off!
- The initial cost of investment too high
- Initial capital outlay requires interest free loans or grants
- I definitely am considering it, unfortunately there is a lack of investment capital, needs no-interest loans
- Yes, I'm considering it but I don't have £5,000 - £10,000 to pay for PV installation and I am told my roof is too steep.

Planning regulations, listed buildings and conservation areas

- Planning issues stop me progressing
- I would consider it, but have concern over planning issues
- As I live in a grade 1 listed building I believe I am unable to use PV
- I would like to, but my house is listed and in a conservation area

Lack of knowledge about reputable contractors

- The fear of cowboy contractors, needs a register of authentic firms
- Too many hoops and too many mafia in renewable technology

“Ugliness” of technology

- Solar panels PV look too ugly, ruins the appearance of buildings
- Solar panels PV look too ugly

Lack of information about grants for installation

- I need more information on grants

No problems

- Looked at ground source heat pumps 25 years ago and it cost £25,000, but might do it now!

3. Has your business started to prepare for a changed climate? If so, how? If not, what barriers to doing so have you encountered?

- solar panels and water source heat pump
- PV planned and some water storage
- Water storage, but have met planning issues
- No
- No, but I don't think that the barriers will be removed until we are in the thick of it

4. What additional information do you think that you and / or your business is lacking regarding climate change adaptation?

Technical information

- I want to know how to make my own biodiesel, I need information on local wood fuel networks, energy crops, bio oil, etc
- Individual costings and pay back periods
- What alternative Mediterranean staple crops (not olives and grapes) are suggested if the present climate is unsuitable for current staples?
- Individual specific advice
- Longterm maintenance requirements
- What resulted from the electricity generation possibilities of the survey of the River Stour? Were any generators installed? What was the potential and what was the actual output? *Please ring us for a more detailed chat!*

Specific types of information

- I need exact details on how climate change will effect me and my business
- Village design plan is in draft.have not managed to find much guidance on how to encompass climate change in the plan

More accurate information

- Accurate, defensible data which stands up to proper scientific scrutiny!
- Accurate data

5. What should the role of the AONB Partnership be in tackling climate change?

Education

- Education, publicity and awareness

Campaigning

- Guiding policy to enable landscape protection, but embracing changes that climate change will bring.
- Encourage simple policies on conserving energy and have a sensible planning policy
- Collate, collect and issue information and legislation to assist minor authorities in planning for the future
- Advise, inform and try to influence planning policies to protect the natural landscape
- Promote behavioural change
- Encouraging, cajoling and pressure on central government to make real progress / measures

Local Action

- Encouraging communities to get involved in preserving local landscape
- Raising awareness, enlightening residents of opportunities and funding, demonstrating best practice.
- Securing a substantial grant from Sowing Seeds for major capacity building projects addressing the programme's priorities

Research

- Become knowledgeable to understand which changes are necessary and which are not

6. Thinking of the changes that will occur in our landscape in your lifetime, will these changes be the result of climate change?

(Responses to Questions 6 and 7 have been amalgamated)

7. How do you think our landscape will change in the future? How quickly will do you think it might change?

Climate Change Impacts

Soon:

- More "horsey-culture" taking flat fertile land out of production
- Solar farms in 5 years
- Natural running water will change immediately

Longer term:

- It is likely that we will see larger fields of monocultures but this is something we must find alternatives to as it is completely detrimental to biodiversity
- Increasing size of farms, fewer people on the land, and more urbanisation of our villages

- Yes, climate change will result in drier summers and increased soil erosion. Climate change will result in greater stress on the landscape.
- Most landscape change will be as a result of climate change and our attempts to adapt / mitigate it.
- Larger farm holdings, more intensive cropping, more genetically modified crops - within 10 years
- Larger fields, more horticulture, less grazing, need for stronger wildlife corridors between sites, linking landscape for wildlife.
- Visual landscape character will be very different - wind farms, solar farms, etc, but this has to be weighed against the needs for a still increasing population.
- More woodlands, but different species
- Native indigenous species of trees, plants, birds will change - more quickly than we think in most cases. More studies of individual species and the way in which they adapt might help.

Other impacts and other reasons for landscape change

- Change will be more to do with population expansion than climate change
- Landscape change will be more to do with the need for greater agricultural production than climate change
- Unlikely that changes will be down to climate change
- Few changes will result from climate change, most changes will be the result of poor planning decisions
- Change will come from more development pressures in the richer overcrowded south and continual agricultural intensification rather than from climate change
- More prairie farming
- Some changes will be down to climate change, but “side effects” like peak oil, international food and crop markets will also have changed the landscape
- Our present landscape is a product of historical climate change - the question is, does AONB strategy allow for changes in the landscape to accommodate the latest measures to adapt and mitigate to climate change, e.g. wind farms, solar farms, etc
- This will be dependent upon market forces, CAP reform and food security all mixing in with each other to form a government policy that will drive change
- We need to have an integrated landscape
- I suspect change will take place at an increasing rate - but no change noticed yet!
- if sustainable ventures are fostered - will need higher profile - therefore more low cost housing
- tree health and viability - what about “back to nature” trees?

8. General thoughts, other ideas and questions.

- Announcement today about allocation of territory in the arctic for oil and gas exploration. Irony is that this is becoming more possible due to the melting of the sea ice caused by climate change from fossil fuels!
- Grants available in one county should be available in other counties within the AONB
- Does the AONB designation create a perception against change? Therefore does the AONB need to develop and publicise an open strategy to accommodate wind farms etc?

- I went to a similar event to this one 10 years ago. What has been the impact of 10 years of local government activity, documents and policy making?
- Result of too many people and too much new housing
- Hear! Hear! Result of too many people and too much new housing
- How can we persuade the government to reduce child birth and new housing, the size of new housing. This is far more important than local initiatives
- The seat of all the problems is over population. Put the AONB logo on all condoms!
- Why is there such a delay between central government pronouncements and local planning changes

To clarify the situation regarding population in our own area, we have added this information box.

Population and Migration - some facts and figures

The population of the South West is 5.2 million (including the ½ million who live in Bristol) Most people in the south west live within the fringes of towns and cities, meaning that our countryside is very sparsely populated indeed. In fact, the South West is the most rural part of England. In the South West, our death rate exceeds our birth rate, but the death rate is reducing as people live longer and the birth rate is increasing slowly as women have babies over a greater part of their lives. However, all the population growth is therefore due to migration.

About 40,000 people per year come to live in the South West, predominantly from South East England and London; the most rural areas are seeing the fastest rises in population. However, the population of the AONB has changed very little since 2002; still about 31,000. We are not seeing significant population growth in the AONB, even at the small scale of the regional average.

The population density across the South West is an average of 565 people per square mile. The population of the AONB is just 81 people per square mile. The AONB is one of the most rural places in the UK and it is staying that way, largely because it is an AONB.

(Source: State of the South West Report 2006. www.swo.org.uk)

Notes from the group discussions

Group 1 What practical action can we take, as individuals, businesses or as an AONB, to address the issues around climate change?

Affordable technology

There are a mix of motivations for people to install renewable energy, but it has to be affordable for any business or individual.

These technologies bring clear financial benefits businesses and the wider society.

Information required

We need to know about timing, opportunities and do some on the ground targeting We need easy access to lists of accredited companies for advice and renewable energy installation / supply, and also to understand what those accreditation schemes can actually guarantee

Accurate information tailored to your business is what will make business managers take action, otherwise they will not have the confidence to invest. They need to know about capital and revenue costs, what hidden or unexpected costs there may be, pay back times and the likelihood of gaining sufficient planning permissions.

Communities need to risk assess their own places and understand local impacts, they need the information to do this.

Energy Security - climate change action makes sense for this reason alone, reducing energy costs and increasing energy security measures are no regret actions that will create good outcomes whatever the climate may do in the future.

The AONB Angle

What renewable energy facilities are appropriate in the landscape?

Acceptability - what is acceptable?

Consultation - who decides?

How can we communicate with hard-to-reach companies and communities?

What level of permitted development is acceptable in an AONB?

What are the changes and impacts that we will experience in our locality?

The greatest changes are likely to be:

- Diversification of cropping
- Labour costs will rise, fewer people on the land
- A change from stock husbandry to arable production
- Changes in land use away from farming

Practical Action suggested

AONB should conduct case studies on future crop choices main crops, not niche crops), land management business opportunities.

There needs to be a master plan for each community.

This also goes for greater biosecurity and actions on invasive alien species.

Sowing Seeds should be a way of funding practical action

Parish Councils (some) can lead on taking practical actions

Warminster and Villages Development Trust is also another vehicle for practical, local activity

Group 2 How can the AONB communicate climate change effectively?

Schools and educational establishments should be a priority

Need to convince adult investors as well

Communicate at the parish level, which includes local primary schools

How can we influence the people who don't read the Hart?

- lead by example,
- showcase best practice case studies that people can use as resources
- community-based demonstration zones
- eco-banks
- video on You-Tube and the AONB Web site
- Postcard distribution of important sites and topics door-to-door
- Displays outside Tesco

People need to accept fragility of the landscape more personally

AONB could be a gateway to local authorities, and act as a coordinator

AONB should invest financially in local champions, particularly farmer champions for low carbon farming.

AONB should explore joining up with county wildlife trusts especially at events

AONB position must be clearly stated. AONB is perceived as a constraint on climate change adaptations and mitigation rather than an organisation that is a capacity builder.

Promote the things that we can do, not the things we can't.



Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB

Climate Change Seminar

22nd September 2010

Questions and answers

This short document gives a flavour of the main points of discussion, it is not a verbatim report. We have tried to assign names accurately to the questions that were asked, where this has not been possible, because a speaker did not give their name, it was not heard by the note-takers or more than one person contributed to a point, we have not given a name at all. Responses from the speakers and subsequent discussion are given in italics.

Susan Jonas asked: What is the pay-back time on investment in renewable technology?
The people who invested in photo-voltaic and solar-thermal panels prior to the feed-in tariffs have not been able to obtain retrospective accreditation for their installations. This would seem hugely unfair and uncharitable to those people who were the early-adopters and champions of the technologies.

Are Local Authorities investing in using and dealing with methane, both as a dangerous greenhouse gas and as a possible source of renewable energy?
There are methane fuelled turbines and heating systems being installed in landfill areas and sewage treatment sites. There are biodigester proposed for the disposal and use of food waste. There is some anaerobic digestion on farms. It is possible to treat black bin waste with steam and then the resultant slurry is fed into a biodigester. This is likely to be an area for active development in the future.

Robin Blatchford proposed that three key questions need to be answered:

1. What is the return on investment for each renewable technology?
2. What hazardous materials are incorporated in to technologies such as solar panels and other technologies that we are being encouraged to install?
3. Are we going to be left with high end-of-life costs in safely disposing of these materials?

There are some hazardous heavy metals in the photo-voltaic panels. Solar farming was discussed. Solar farms would take up large areas. Would these areas need a change of use permission from the planning authority? If so, would we be a hostage to fortune when at the end of the solar farm's life we are left with large areas of the AONB designated as suitable for light industrial use?

Where can one get the capital investment (probably in the region of £10,000) to install renewable energy equipment in a home or business?

If one uses one's own money, then one can expect a return of about 7% - 8% over the 25 year life of the equipment. The Green Investment Bank will be created in the near future, offering loan at low rates of up to £6,500. This will be paid back via one's energy bills. However, it will therefore reduce the pay back time considerably as the cost of installation will be increased by the cost of borrowing.

Is New Zealand a good model for our renewable energy development?

If we are to have new houses built in our area, do we have the infrastructure to service their needs, particularly in the face of a changing climate? This led on to a brief discussion about a rush for renewables, and the advice was given that any one thinking about renewable heat installation should wait until the details of the Renewable Heat Incentive is made clear by Treasury.

Can we advocate incentives for drivers to use biodiesel or just drive in a more efficient manner?

We must not get too stuck on how to provide heat for our homes, as in the future we will need to run air conditioning units and extra refrigeration which will greatly increase the power demand of every household and business.

If we are to see land being used to store water in the form of reservoirs, ponds and marshes, should we not also be risk assessing the hazards that might come from mosquitoes and other vectors of disease?

Wiltshire Council's risk assessment procedures will look at some of the potential impacts of adaptation, such as mosquitoes and malaria.

John Larkin reminded us all that when looking at the carbon savings from a piece of equipment, the carbon used in its manufacture should also be taken into account.

As should the carbon used in maintenance, transport of fuel, etc. If photovoltaic is installed, it takes about seven years of use to "make up for" the carbon emitted during its manufacture, but this will get better as more of the factories are supplied with power from renewable sources and recycled materials.

Community-owned renewables discussion

Dorset County Council will work with any group, be it a not for profit community group or commercially based group, to work on getting more renewable energy installed in the county. This would also go in either Hampshire or Wiltshire although the corporate structures are very different.

The danger with community based projects is that the risk of the initial investment has to be made clear at the outset. If, for instance, a community group wished to create a wind turbine farm, but failed to win their planning permission, then all the initial investment may be lost to pay legal and other professional fees.