

The reality of climate change

There is strong evidence that human activity is changing the climate. The increase in carbon emissions in the atmosphere from burning fossil fuels and cutting down trees is causing global warming. This will lead to more extreme weather events, with an increase in the number of storms, rising sea levels and frequent heatwaves. These changes will have a marked impact on our lifestyles.

Tackling climate change can seem daunting. But we can all take action to reduce carbon emissions.

Target: be a carbon zero council

A carbon zero council has three circles of influence: as an organisation, a service provider and a community leader. Within each circle there are six areas where local councils can take action to become carbon zero.

Getting to carbon zero will be a challenge. Think about it in terms of these five basic steps:

- **Count:** measure and monitor the carbon you are using
- **Conserve:** cut out the carbon
- **Change:** swap for a low carbon alternative
- **Consider:** review the amount of carbon saved and prioritise further action
- **Offset:** invest in schemes to reduce emissions elsewhere, such as renewable energy in developing countries.

The chart inside provides you with the practical actions to complete stage one of becoming a carbon zero council. The more actions you can tick off, the closer to zero you are getting.

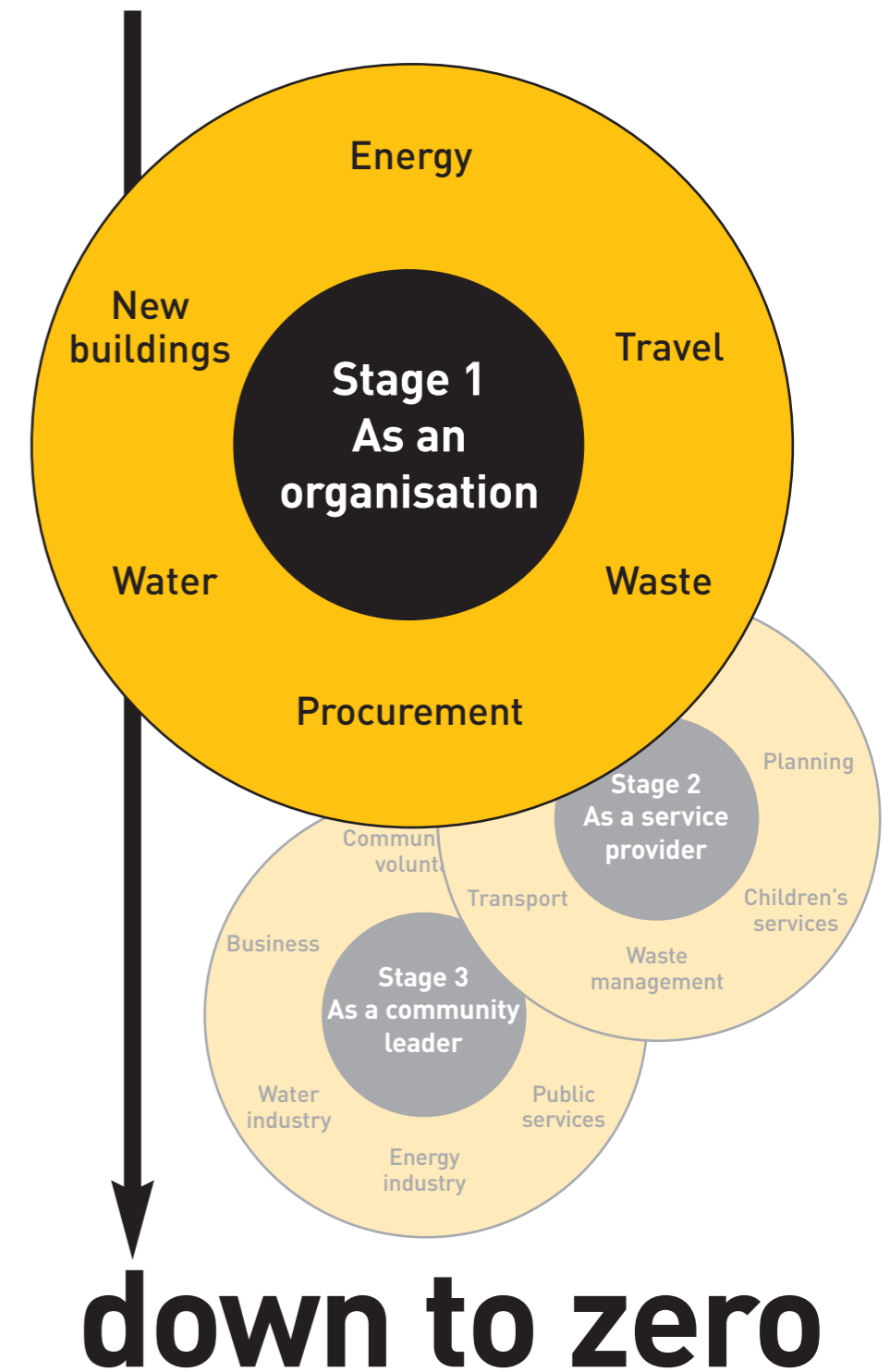
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LOCAL GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION UNIT carbon zero councils



Councils can meet the challenge of climate change. By reducing carbon emissions in your circles of influence you will be taking a huge step to tackle this pressing issue. Details of Stage 1 are inside – actions you can put in place to make your council carbon zero as an organisation.

down to zero the first stage towards becoming a carbon zero council

	Energy	New buildings	Waste	Water	Travel	Procurement
Count	Electricity, oil and gas use is monitored with regular meter readings.	Carbon emissions for the lifespan of the building have been measured.	Levels of waste to landfill and recycling are monitored.	Water use is monitored with regular meter readings.	The mode of transport and distance travelled for business trips, council fleet, commuting and visitors is monitored.	Large contracts with high carbon emissions have been identified and prioritised.
Conserve	Everyone remembers to switch off electrical items when they are not in use.	Choice of location has reduced motorised travel and provides immediate environmental benefits.	Purchases are always the right amount for the job and favour durable materials with low embedded energy.	Maintenance projects have fixed leaks, dripping taps and faulty valves.	Cycling and walking are encouraged, with facilities at work such as showers and secure cycle stands.	Sustainability criteria are integrated with financial considerations when shaping tenders.
	Maintenance projects reduce energy use with investments in heating, windows, lighting and insulation.	Building design minimises total energy based on orientation, layout and material use.	Waste is eliminated from council processes – everyone is aware of the need to reduce waste.	Water saving devices on taps and toilets are improving the efficiency of old devices.	Business trips are kept to a minimum through planning and technology such as video conferencing.	All procurement is challenged on the grounds of necessity and optimal carbon reductions.
	Properties have been rationalised – re-assigning inefficient office space or closing buildings.	Building design reduces the amount of waste and water from construction through to use and maintenance.	Everyone re-uses materials or exchanges with other departments.	New water efficient devices are replacing old equipment.	Visitors are discouraged from driving and given information on other ways to travel to your workplace or offices.	You have reduced waste and purchase of unnecessary resources by pooling orders.
Change	Electricity supply has been switched to an accountable, renewable source.	The location and materials chosen make the building resilient to the impact of climate change.	Recycling is accessible to all.	Bottled water has been replaced with drinking water straight from the taps.	Space for cars is limited and there are schemes to encourage car sharing or use of public transport.	You work with suppliers to develop local business and reduce their level of environmental damage.
	You generate your own electricity, from low carbon or renewable sources.	You generate your own electricity, from low carbon or renewable sources.	You have explored methods to recover energy from waste.	Rain or recycled water is used where possible.	The council's vehicle fleet has been switched to a suitable green option.	There are energy efficiency standards for purchases of all products and services, which bind suppliers.
Consider	<p>Pause.</p> <p>You have reviewed your actions and the amount of carbon that has already been saved.</p> <p>You know how much carbon needs to be offset to get to zero. Goals have been set for next year.</p> <p>You have a plan of actions and opportunities to make additional carbon reductions.</p> <p>The amount you need to offset next year will be significantly smaller.</p>					
Offset	<p>By investing in a recognised, external 'offsetting scheme' for your remaining carbon you can still be carbon zero. Look for a scheme with the following requirements: offsets that are based on carbon reductions now, rather than the future; supports new schemes, so you're not subsidising business as usual; is clear about their approach to offsetting; and also provides wider benefits.</p> <p>Now go local. Develop your own scheme to offset carbon in your area. The scheme should meet the requirements you would expect of an external scheme.</p>					
Carbon zero	<p>But don't stop here.</p> <p>Now you should start thinking about how to reduce your impact in stage two as a service provider and stage three as a community leader.</p> <p>The LGIU will continue this step-by-step support with two more charts later in 2007.</p> <p>For more support and advice on stage one contact the LGIU's Centre for Local Sustainability or go to www.lgiu.gov.uk</p>					



