**CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE OVER 50s**

**DIRECTORY AND FACTSHEETS**

**November 2014**

**GENERAL**

The individual topic areas set out in this section provide pointers as to where to get more specific, reliable, independent information and advice. However there are also some general sources of information that provide the wider context to climate change and the issues associated with it.

Independent advice/information on climate science:

For some simple guides to the science behind climate change go to:

- the Committee on Climate Change an independent body established under the Climate Change Act to advise government on setting carbon budgets (http://www.theccc.org.uk/)

- Meteorological Office website at http://www.metoffice.gov.uk, which

also has links to the reports of the United Nations-led Intergovernmental Panel on

Climate Change (IPCC) and the UK government’s Stern review on the economics of

climate change.

· The Royal Society https://royalsociety.org/policy/climate-change) has produced a 2014 update on scientific advances and understanding.

- The European Commission’s website http://ec.europa.eu/clima

- The Daily Climate website is an excellent compendium of latest news from the world’s

press and summaries of the latest key scientific publications http://www.dailyclimate.org/

The sources of information and advice in the topic area factsheets generally provide a national perspective, but in each case local authorities can provide additional advice and information. The starting points for the local authorities in the RSVP West Region are:

· Bristol City Council http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ Tel: 0117 922 4470

· Bath and North East Somerset http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/bathnes Tel: 01225 394041

· South Gloucestershire Council http://www.southglos.gov.uk/ Tel: 01454 868001

· Swindon Borough Council http://www.swindon.gov.uk/ Tel: 01793 445500

· Wiltshire County Council http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/ Tel: 01225 756156

**TOPIC AREAS**

Energy

Issue/Problem: Human beings rely on the use of energy for maintaining warmth, cooking,

transport etc. The breakdown of energy consumption in the UK can be summarised as follows:

*Industrial 16%*

*Transport 36%*

*Domestic 29%*

*Other 14% (agriculture; public administration; commerce)*

*Non Energy 5% (consumption of energy products not used to produce energy eg. road*

*building; chemical feedstocks; solvents)*

*Of the domestic use:*

*Lights and appliances 13% (4% of total)*

*Cooking 5% (1.5% of total)*

*Water heating 25% (7.5% of total)*

*Space heating 57% (16% of total)*

Current concerns focus on the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to the atmosphere caused either directly by energy and power generation processes (such as the burning of fossil fuels), or indirectly through its supply and distribution. The environmental “cost” associated with meeting lifestyle needs depends very much on the source of the energy and the method of its production. However, no source of energy is without some environmental “cost”. It is simply that some are viewed as less problematic, or more sustainable, than others. When debating fossil fuel alternatives, it is important that the full spectrum of energy production and supply options are considered within the overarching desire to move to a low, or zero carbon, economy. However at the individual and household level, the primary focus at the moment is rightly on energy efficiency and energy conservation.

Where to go for independent advice/information:

· It is now possible to choose a household energy provider who generates your supply of

electricity from renewable sources. The Energy Savings Trust is a publicly funded body established to advise on the sustainable use of energy and to reduce carbon dioxide

emissions. With a focus on the household and transport sectors, it provides advice and

information for the public and local communities on energy consumption, efficiency and

renewable energies. Contact details: Energy Savings Trust 21, Dartmouth Street, London

SW1H 9BP. There are also offices in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. For free,

independent and local energy saving advice ring 0300 123 1234 and for Scotland 0808 808 2282. The Trust’s website is at <http://www.energysavingstrust.org.uk>/

· National Energy Action (http://www.nea.org.uk/ ) develops and promotes energy

efficiency services targeted at low income households.

· The Carbon Trust is a publicly funded body focused on provision of advice to industry and the public sector on reducing carbon emissions and promotion of low carbon

technologies. Contact details: Carbon Trust, 4th Floor, Dorset House, 27-45 Stamford Street, London SE1 9NT. Tel: 020 7170 7000. Website <http://www.carbontrust.co.uk/>

Ethical investment

Issue/Problem: National statistics show that the age 50+ sector possess 40% of the UK

disposable income, 60% of savings and 80% of the UK’s private wealth. Most of us trust our money (in the form of pensions, savings and investments, mortgages etc.) to institutions we hope will at least safeguard, and hopefully increase, its worth. However unless the institutions have statements to the contrary, your money could be supporting environmentally damaging practices.

In response to increasing public awareness, many institutions now offer more ethical (that is, socially responsible) investment. In the area of the environment two other terms are used by the finance sector. ‘Dark green’ investment policies adopt a much stricter approach than ‘light green’ ones, which are more flexible. Both approaches are valid and often institutions use a mix of both.

Where to go for independent advice/information:

· Many industries use the Experts in Responsible Investment Solutions (EIRIS) but they

also offer advice and information on many other areas as well. http://www.eiris.org/

· A more comprehensive guide to examining corporate behavior can be found at

http://www.corporatewatch.org/

Food and drink

Issue/Problem: This a politically charged and emotive area of environmental debate and

encompasses many issues including, animal welfare, public health, and international trade. This factsheet deals only with the issues relating directly to climate change.

Austerity associated with the World War Two years resulted in large post-war investments

and state subsidies to bring about intensification of agriculture in order to produce as much

food as quickly as possible. This resulted in a fall in the price of food in UK shops, a welcome development that has hidden costs such as reductions in biodiversity, increased soil erosion and pollution. However recently food prices have been very volatile worldwide and there is considerable concern that this will have adverse impacts on developing countries or those in vulnerable areas that are already experiencing the adverse impacts of climate .

A growing awareness of the environmental impacts associated with intensification of

agriculture has lead to the growth of the organic farming movement. Emergence of organic

farming and other initiatives such as Fairtrade (usually, but not always, organic) has

prompted questions about which is best for the environment. There is no definitive answer to this question but it is generally accepted that organic farming tends to encourage biodiversity, use less energy (reducing climate impacts) and generate less waste. However it is important to differentiate between organic farms and organic food.

Organic farms tend to produce less per acre, be more labour intensive and hence more expensive. To produce the same amount of food organically in the UK as we do intensively at present, would require encroachment on areas of forest that have a greater capacity to mop up greenhouse gases. There is also another dimension to the debate of local food production versus organic or versus Fairtrade. A lot of organic food available in the UK is shipped or flown in from Asia, Australia or Latin America, with consequent impact on greenhouse gas emissions. The concept of food miles, the distance traveled “from farm to fork”, has therefore been born. Even then close examination of the options is required as a tomato grown in a heated greenhouse in the UK could mean greater greenhouse gas emissions than one grown under natural conditions overseas.

Finally the upward trend to “grow your own” fruit and vegetables continues and can have the added benefit of being combined with outdoor exercise. All local libraries will have

information on how to get started.

Where to go for independent advice/information:

For information on organic farming and produce the following are good sources of

additional information:

− Soil Association: http://www.soilassociation.org/ Tel 0117 314 5000

− Department of Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)

http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs/

− Plan Organic is a useful starting point on background to organic farming

http://www.planorganic.com/

In relation to the debate over Fairtrade versus where to obtain local food suppliers

versus grow your own, the following may be helpful

− http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/ (the Fairtrade site)

− http://www.bigbarn.co.uk/ (portal to find local suppliers)

− http://www.localfoods.org.uk/ (portal to local food sources)

− http://www.rhs.org.uk/ (grow your own and gardening in a changing climate)

− Green Gyms (http://www.tcv.org.uk/) are easy ways of getting involved in community conservation or gardening projects, some of which involve growing fruit and vegetables.

Travel/Transport

Issue/Problem: UK citizens travel further and more often than ever before and mostly by

car. The ever reducing costs of air travel means that we also leave the country with growing frequency, with foreign holidays taken 2.5 times more often than 20 years ago. More travel requires use of energy which in turn (directly or indirectly) requires fuel resulting in more greenhouse gas emissions. The bottom line is that transport accounts for 36% of all UK greenhouse gas emissions.

In the hierarchy of environmentally friendly forms of transport, walking or cycling are best

with the added benefits of the exercise they provide. Use of local transport such as buses,

coaches and trains are the next best options with car, air and shipping being the most

detrimental. Comparing the impact of different forms of transport on climate change is not simple and requires calculations that factor in occupancy levels, speed, distance, and the type of vehicle. There is also the fact that planes, whilst not much worse than cars in terms of emissions per passenger mile, allow us to travel further. They have an added problem in that their emissions tend to inject greenhouse gases directly into the high atmosphere where they do most damage.

Road transport requires an infrastructure that eats further into the countryside and consumes huge amounts of resources, even before the issue of fuel source is addressed. However there are many steps that can be taken to reduce the harm done by cars, from making changes to the way we drive to choosing more efficient, lower emissions vehicles.

Choices over the form of transport or the need to travel or both are not uniform throughout the UK. People who live and work in remote areas generally have more limited choice, but the debate becomes more controversial in the sphere of leisure and particularly overseas holidays and the desire to visit relatives who may live at great distances or even overseas.

Where to go for independent advice/information:

· the Department of Transport website http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport highlights the issues surrounding sustainable travel and transport.

· The Energy Savings Trust is a useful source of information about driving smarter, greener vehicles and journey planning <http://www.energysavingstrust.org.uk>. Car Plus also summarises the issues and options surrounding more responsible car use including use of car pools http://www.carplus.org.uk/

· Sustrans http://www.sustrans.org.uk/ has a focus on promoting cycling but is now is the

UK's leading sustainable transport charity whose vision is a world in which people can

choose to travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment.

· Airportwatch http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/ provides some very useful briefing sheets

on the issues surrounding air travel.

Waste

Issue/Problem: Production of UK domestic waste is still increasing year on year but the rate is reducing with out 44.5% than currently being recycled. The EU target is for the UK to recycle 50% of household waste by 2020. The waste not being recycled is either buried or burnt. In the UK amounts going to landfill is gradually reducing. Local authority managed incineration in the UK is increasing, but is much greater in other european countries like Sweden and Denmark.

Burying waste has limitations in terms of land available and the inherent problem of generating methane, a GHG 20 times more potent than carbon dioxide. Incineration is viewed by environmental groups as a disincentive for recycling, and undesirable because of its generation of poisonous emissions and CO2, although strict laws and technology do exist to significantly reduce them. Incineration can certainly be a useful local source of energy to reduce heating costs and is being used by some healthcare trusts.

EU and UK legislation has been instrumental in forcing local authorities, business, industry

and individuals to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill or incinerated. However progress in increasing recycling in local authorities is variable and the approaches being taken are not the same throughout the UK. It is therefore important that individuals and households are aware of what is expected of them at a local level.

Individuals can do a lot to reduce the amount of waste we generate and which eventually

requires collection. By taking action we can help to reduce both the amount of rubbish going to landfill and greenhouse gas emissions. At the heart of the hierarchy, that ranges from prevention to the other extreme of disposal, are the so called 3 R’s of *reduce, reuse or recycle.*

Where to go for independent advice/information:

*(i) Reduce:* While reusing and recycling are good, they are no replacement for not generating the waste in the first place. There are many ways to do this but some basic suggestions are set below:

· The website http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs) provides advice and statistics

· Food and food packaging: It is estimated that around 7 million tonnes of 20% of food and drink is thrown away from homes each year Recent evidence suggests that, in energy usage terms, this waste, and its associated packaging, is equivalent to the entire greenhouse gases produced by all UK road transport. More planning and care when shopping and cooking together with better use of freezers and other methods of storage, will help to reduce food waste <http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com>

· Some 13 billion carrier bags are used in the UK each year. Most of these end up in landfill sites and take around 500 years to decompose. Some types of bags use hydrocarbons as raw materials and use fossil fuels in their production and, after use, produce CO2 and methane as they break down. Supermarkets now offer biodegradable alternatives, provide collection points or have “bags for life”. The latter, namely reusable bags, are the best solution <http://wastewatch.org.uk>

· Paper: Each individual in the UK uses about 200 kilograms of paper per year (100 bags of sugar) and this quantity takes about 3-4 trees and thousands of litres of water to produce. As well as cutting down on food packaging, reduction of paper use can be achieved by going digital, and thus accessing and reading material online. If you need to print it off set up your printer so that double sided printing is the default option and use recycled paper.

· Junk mail is often simply picked up from the doorstep and put straight into the recycle

box. To reduce junk mail register with the Mail preference service to have your name

removed from the lists of direct mail companies http://www.mpsonline.org.uk/mpsr/ or

ring 0207 291 3310.

· Other household items: Whilst originally introduced for convenience, there are many

household items that, for many reasons, can now be viewed as environmentally damaging

and for which environmentally friendly alternatives exist. The classic example is use of

disposable nappies which can account for as much as 50% of the content of household

bins. Washable cloth nappies are a better alternative.

*(ii) Reuse:* The thrust here is on “don’t throw it, donate it”. The UK is actually very good at

donating clothes and books to a variety of charity shops, most of which are represented in any town high street. However there are many other usable items which are often thrown away but could be donated to good causes. Some of these are mentioned below but there is also a website used by millions of people worldwide who wish to give things away locally. It is called Freecycle (http://www.freecycle.org/)

— Computers for Charities http://www.computersforcharities.co.uk/

— An increasing number of charities will accept computers and mobile phones including AgeUK <http://www.ageuk.org.uk>

*(iii) Recycle:* There is a national organization “Recycle Now” who have an excellent Website <http://www.recyclenow.com>. that provides advice on what and where. Local authorities, are putting increased effort into improving recycling facilities and services. Most items of waste generated from households can now be recycled and there are useful local directories on most local authority websites. These give advice and guidance on particular items and where recycling points are.

Water resources

Issue/Problem: Since water is essential for the maintenance of life, access to clean water is understandably viewed as a basic human need. However, in general, there are much greater inequalities between richer nations such as the UK, and poorer countries who often face problems of getting enough clean drinking water.

While the UK only rarely experiences problems with water quality, there are very recent well documented incidences of reduced quantity/supply of the amounts required to support

modern lifestyles. Hosepipe bans etc. have been introduced in drought conditions but at the other extreme many areas have witnessed unprecedented flooding events.

Changing weather patterns, brought about by climate change, are predicted to manifest

themselves through increased frequency of extreme weather events. The UK, as well as

elsewhere, will need to be prepared for, and be able to react to, these extremes each of which can be exacerbated by increasing population particularly in areas that are already under pressure eg. South East England. In instances where demand for water outstrips supply (driven by ever more hungry appliances etc.), ways of reducing consumption have been promoted by water companies and others. However even in times of plentiful supply it makes sense to follow these ideas as all water treatment requires energy and if you are metered they also offer ways of saving money!

Where to go for independent advice/information:

· The Meteorological Office now provides reliable 5 day forecasts which are aided by early

warning of severe weather such as heavy rain http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/

· The Environment Agency provides information on flooding via <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency/> or telephone the Floodline 0345 988 1188

Tips on conserving water can be found at <http://www.waterwise.org.uk>