



# informed

## building understanding learning lessons

### CSE's striking report [You Just Have to Get By](#) reveals the coping strategies of the fuel-poor

**A**s this annual review goes to press, winter is upon us and the prospects for the five million Britons living in fuel poverty is bleak.

Faced with rising energy bills on one side and welfare cuts on the other, people struggling on low incomes will feel the pinch when temperatures start to fall. But with their domestic spending already pared-to-the-bone, how do they cope?

The answer is revealed in a CSE study based on a survey of 699 UK households living below the official poverty line and a series of 50 in-depth interviews undertaken last winter, before the cold snap: they'll ration their heating and go cold, they'll withdraw from the world (often into one room), and, in the words of one interviewee, they'll 'just have to get by'. And they don't trust the energy market to deliver them a better deal, sticking with the higher tariffs they are on rather than risk making the wrong choice and end up paying even more.

"I'm disabled and I've actually got arthritis. My hands get pretty cold so I have to try and heat them up. I put the fire on for five minutes then I've got to turn it off again because it costs too much... if I put it on my husband goes mental because we have to pay the electricity and gas" (Joyce N, a middle-aged woman living in fuel poverty with her husband and son.)

Will Anderson was the study's principal researcher. "Most of the debate around fuel poverty focuses on numbers – the millions of households living in fuel poverty, the percentage of income spent on fuel and so on," he said. "But what about the people themselves? How do those facing fuel poverty feel about their situation? What strategies do they use to cope? And what is it like when winter represents a daily struggle to stay warm? This report gives the fuel-poor a voice. Let's hope someone in government is listening."

[www.cse.org.uk/have-to-get-by](http://www.cse.org.uk/have-to-get-by)

**See also...**

**Evaluating National Trials of Smart Meters** CSE was asked by the energy regulator Ofgem to evaluate the on-going £20 million programme of research trials to assess the impact of smart meters on households [www.cse.org.uk/smartmeterevaluation](http://www.cse.org.uk/smartmeterevaluation)

**What makes a good home-energy display?** CSE undertook focus-group research to find out how householders want home-energy displays to look and work [www.cse.org.uk/displays](http://www.cse.org.uk/displays)

# in-touch

## empowering others to act

### Providing the analysis and evidence to underpin Bristol's low-carbon strategy

**W**hat proportion of its energy could the city of Bristol generate from its own renewable resources? This was one of the questions addressed by a report written for Bristol City Council by CSE.

The aim of this study – illustrated with heat demand maps such as the example of Bristol city centre, shown below – was to assist the council in developing policies that lower the city's energy consumption and encourage more renewable energy.

Our research showed that if Bristol exploited all its local, potential, sustainable energy resources to the full – which include wind, biomass, sewage, gas and solar technologies along with energy recovery from municipal solid waste – the city's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions could be cut by nearly a quarter.

The report concluded with a series of recommendations regarding the development of Bristol's Core Strategy policies on sustainable energy.

1) The council should publish an overarching statement on climate change to underpin its development-specific low-carbon policies.

2) New residential developments in the city should be required to have incrementally increasing standards for CO<sub>2</sub> reduction.

3) A strategic planning study on a citywide heat distribution network should be undertaken as soon as possible.

4) The wind power resource around the city's port which already includes three large turbines should continue to be developed. CSE experts supported council officials by giving evidence to the official examination of the policies by the Planning Inspectorate. CSE is now working with the council to develop an investment programme to kick-start energy saving activity in the city's buildings and the exploitation of district heating and renewables.

[www.cse.org.uk/bristolstudy](http://www.cse.org.uk/bristolstudy)

**See also...**

**Improvement Prophet** A multi-funder programme to enable policy makers to assess the impact of proposed energy efficiency improvements on the housing stock [www.cse.org.uk/imppro](http://www.cse.org.uk/imppro)

**Building a heat map for London** Pinpointing areas of the capital suitable for community heating systems [www.cse.org.uk/londonheatmap](http://www.cse.org.uk/londonheatmap)

**West Sussex sustainable energy study** Assessing the opportunities and spatial-planning requirements for renewable and low-carbon energy [www.cse.org.uk/westsussexstudy](http://www.cse.org.uk/westsussexstudy)

**Planning Renewables** A website and a programme of training and support for the planning community, managed on behalf of DECC [www.planningrenewables.org.uk](http://www.planningrenewables.org.uk)

**Helping Islington meet carbon-cutting targets** Producing a baseline study for the London borough's emissions-reduction programme [www.cse.org.uk/islingtonbaseline](http://www.cse.org.uk/islingtonbaseline)

**Plymouth City Centre and Derriford sustainable energy study** Minimising carbon emissions arising from Plymouth's ambitious and on-going urban redevelopment [www.cse.org.uk/plymouthstudy](http://www.cse.org.uk/plymouthstudy)



Our core charitable objectives are to tackle the threat of climate change and to end the misery of cold homes

Our vision is a world where sustainability is second nature, carbon emissions have been cut to safe levels and fuel poverty has been replaced by energy justice

influential

## influencing policy and practice

### CSE's analysis of the **Distributional Impacts** of UK climate change policies shows that the poor will carry more than their fair share of the bill

**T**he UK government isn't short of policies for attempting to cut carbon emissions and tackle climate change – think feed-in tariffs, the Carbon Emissions Reduction Target, smart meters, Renewables Obligation and so on.

But all these rolls of insulation and solar panels, which create benefits for those who have them installed, have to be paid for. The question is how and by whom? The EACA Charitable Trust asked CSE to shine a light on the issue, building on analysis we have been developing for the Department of Energy and Climate Change.

"The money will come either from the energy companies – which means their customers – or from government – which means taxpayers," said CSE's Ian Preston who conducted the research.

"Our analysis shows that the former option is less fair. This is because, even if the energy companies spread the cost evenly across their customer base, the poor will be hit hardest because they spend proportionally more of their income on energy. A more worrying possibility is that costs are actually *loaded onto the poor* who, as energy companies well know, are less likely to switch supplier than better-off customers."

The alternative is recovering the cost of the UK's climate change policies through income-based taxation. In this scenario, the lowest-income households who pay least income tax can still potentially benefit from the renewable energy or insulation schemes but would not bear the cost which would pass to higher earners more able to afford it.

"Of course at the moment we can't see any government using income tax to fund these measures – which could run to billions of pounds" added Ian, "so if we are to avoid the poor having to bear an unfair share of the cost of the Low Carbon Transition Plan, the energy suppliers need to respond to these findings."

"This means firstly that the costs should be spread across all fuels – and not just piled on electricity, which hits the poor hardest. And secondly that energy companies should introduce tariffs that load these costs where they belong – on high consumers – and protect the vulnerable. And if they won't do it, the regulator and government should step in to insist they deliver a fair outcome."

[www.cse.org.uk/distributional-impacts](http://www.cse.org.uk/distributional-impacts)

**See also...**

**Personal carbon trading: making the system fairer** CSE's report to the Institute for Public Policy Research on moderating the distributional impacts of personal carbon trading [www.cse.org.uk/fairerpcr](http://www.cse.org.uk/fairerpcr)

**Evaluating the 'Energy Best Deal' campaign** Did the national campaign to promote the benefits of switching energy supplier have any impact? [www.cse.org.uk/bestdeal](http://www.cse.org.uk/bestdeal)

**Energy Justice** We marked our 30th anniversary with a policy-makers workshop exploring the relevance of fairness and equity in the context of cutting carbon emissions [www.cse.org.uk/30](http://www.cse.org.uk/30)



# turning 30

In 2009 we celebrated our 30th anniversary, noting as we did so that many of the issues facing the world in 1979 – looming economic crisis, oil price shocks, concerns about environmental limits to growth – are still with us. To mark the occasion we hosted two special events.

First off was a **one-day conference** in Bristol in June. More than 200 people from across the energy spectrum examined ways in which the best of the existing sustainable-energy initiatives can be replicated. How, in a nutshell, can we move faster, go further and do more? And afterwards, what else but a 30th anniversary party complete with a large cake.

And in November we held a **one-day policy workshop** exploring the newly minted concept of 'energy justice'. Does it matter that current UK climate policies will hit poorest households hardest? Or is the question of social justice a distraction from the paramount issue of tackling climate change? All grist to the mill for a range of high-calibre participants including policy-makers and policy-shapers; government officials; officers from both environmental and social justice NGOs; members of charitable foundations; senior energy industry employees; and leading academics.

Downloads of policy papers and other materials from the conference and workshop are available at [cse.org.uk/30](http://cse.org.uk/30)

Oh, and we also published a little 30th-anniversary book, **Switched on Since 1979**. We'll send you a copy if you like, write to [info@cse.org.uk](mailto:info@cse.org.uk)



# inventive

## piloting new approaches

### PlanLoCaL puts 'low carbon' into 'localism', giving communities the knowledge and confidence to influence local planning policy and contribute to their own low carbon future

**T**he government explicitly recognises that communities have a critical role to play in tackling climate change, not least through their ability to enrol local people in low-carbon developments like wind farms and other renewable energy developments.

But in order to identify, prioritise and implement the most appropriate and viable low-carbon solutions for their local area, communities need support.

And this is where PlanLoCaL ('Planning for Low Carbon Living') comes in. Devised by CSE and funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government, PlanLoCaL encourages positive and proactive public engagement with the planning process.

PlanLoCaL seeks to demonstrate that tackling climate change is an opportunity for communities and that, given the right inputs and support, communities can:

- take greater control over shaping the place they live in and their low carbon future
- have direct and meaningful influence on planning policy
- explore the integration of low-carbon measures into existing local buildings, businesses and lifestyles
- reap both the financial and social rewards that come from the ownership and management of low-carbon assets

Where communities are seeking to pursue a significant low carbon project, PlanLoCaL can also provide direction, tools and support to improve its likelihood of success.

Underpinning PlanLoCaL is the simple truth that, when it comes to tackling climate change, there is no opt-out clause; every community will have to do something, and leaving it to the neighbouring village, town or county is not an option.

And, as many communities are discovering, making your own contribution that has local buy-in and brings local benefits is a lot better than doing nothing and having a solution thrust upon you.

Some of the practical tools that have already come out of the project, can be found at [www.planlocal.org.uk](http://www.planlocal.org.uk)

[www.cse.org.uk/planlocal](http://www.cse.org.uk/planlocal)

**See also...**

**Freedom from Fuel Poverty** A solid-wall insulation and renewable energy programme for people in fuel poverty, undertaken in partnership with Bath & North East Somerset Council [www.cse.org.uk/ffp](http://www.cse.org.uk/ffp)

**Our Big Energy Challenge** A three-year invest-to-save initiative to bring about a 10% reduction in energy consumption among public sector organisations in Bath [www.cse.org.uk/obec](http://www.cse.org.uk/obec)

# independent

## delivering energy services locally

### Warming Bristol Communities recognises that, when it comes to energy advice, different communities have different needs

**S**uppose you were born and grew up in Somalia and arrive as a refugee in the UK. Here, in addition to a different language, culture and climate you are faced with a range of energy paraphernalia such as condensing boilers, central-heating controls, mains gas, contracts with energy companies and card-operated electricity meters, all of which may be bewilderingly unfamiliar.

The risk is that you, like too many others from black, Asian and other minority ethnic communities, end up living in cold, damp homes, struggling to pay fuel bills or at risk of falling into arrears.

A CSE initiative, **Warming Bristol Communities**, is supporting disadvantaged members of Bristol's minority ethnic communities. The project, funded by Big Lottery Fund and Comic Relief, is managed by Sarah Jeffrey. "Many Somalis living in the city are refugees and large numbers experience language problems, isolation, poor physical and mental health, and a low income. On top of this, they may live in substandard housing and are disadvantaged by not fully understanding the help that is available to them."

"Alongside local community organisations like the Pakistani Community Welfare Organisation and the Somali Advice Centre, our energy advisors are working with vulnerable householders to minimise their fuel bills and ensure that grant-aided energy efficiency measures (such as loft and cavity wall insulation and boiler repairs) are installed where possible."

[www.cse.org.uk/wbc](http://www.cse.org.uk/wbc)

**See also...**

**WISH** A Somerset-wide fuel-poverty advice service that supports older people in rural areas who live in cold, damp homes or who struggle with fuel bills [www.cse.org.uk/wish](http://www.cse.org.uk/wish)

**Warm Streets** Tackling cold homes and carbon emissions through cavity wall and loft insulation in partnership with seven Somerset councils [www.cse.org.uk/warmstreets](http://www.cse.org.uk/warmstreets)

**Bristol Energy Action Network (BEAN)** Accessible and appropriate energy advice services in Bristol, a project now in its tenth year [www.cse.org.uk/bean](http://www.cse.org.uk/bean)

