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# Mobilising individual behavioural change through community initiatives: Lessons for Climate Change

Report by the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) and Community Development Xchange (CDX) for;

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs,  
Communities and Local Government,  
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**CENTRE FOR  
SUSTAINABLE  
ENERGY**



**Community  
Development  
Xchange**

## **Mobilising individual behavioural change through community initiatives: Lessons for climate change**

**FINAL REPORT of study for Defra, CLG, HM  
Treasury, DTI & DfT**

**February 2007**

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CSE is an independent charity which advances sustainable energy policy and practice through direct advice to the public, education and training initiatives, technical consultancy and policy analysis. CSE seeks energy solutions that engage people and communities to meet real needs for both environmentally sound and affordable energy services. For more details see [www.cse.org.uk](http://www.cse.org.uk).

CDX is the UK-wide membership organisation for community development. It works to ensure that community development is recognised and supported as a powerful way of tackling inequality and achieving social justice. As an organisation with members from across the UK, CDX reflects a diverse range of interests in community development across all sectors and fields. For more details see [www.cdx.org.uk](http://www.cdx.org.uk).

This report does not represent the views of the Government or any Government department, and should not be interpreted as a statement of current or future policy.

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## **Executive summary**

This report has been prepared by the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) and The Community Development Exchange (CDX). It is the final report of a project entitled 'Individual Mobilisation through Community' which has been undertaken on behalf of Defra, DCLG, HM Treasury, DTI and DfT.

The Energy Review published in July 2006 emphasised the essential role to be played by individuals in tackling climate change. It also highlighted the role which communities can potentially play in stimulating and supporting individual action. In the Energy Review, the Government committed itself to carrying out a 'study looking at the role of 'community level' approaches to mobilising individuals and the role of local authorities in particular in making them work effectively'. This project contributes to meeting that commitment.

This brief study, completed between December 2006 and mid February 2007, has investigated what kinds of local and community initiatives are most effective at influencing changes in behaviour and at what levels, and whether any lessons learned from these are transferable to the issue of climate change. It has also looked for evidence to support or contradict the hypothesis that communities are well placed to mobilise individuals to change their behaviour. The study involved a brief literature review, interviews with 21 community-based initiatives, and a workshop of 23 expert stakeholders from both sustainable energy and community development sectors.

### **Principal findings (Sections 5 and 6)**

- a. Our brief analysis of the published literature suggests that, whilst there is a broad range of research which underpins the theoretical hypothesis that communities are well placed to influence individual behaviour, there is a lack of robust empirical evidence to support this idea (nor, more importantly, to contradict it). We found some evidence linking theory with practice but also an acknowledgement that isolating and measuring the impact of a particular community project on individual behaviour is problematic.
- b. A number of tools exist to evaluate the quality of community engagement processes, but there is a lack of information on whether community engagement can directly and transparently translate into measurable sustainable behaviour.
- c. We interviewed 21 community initiatives drawn from a long-list of 40 from across the country. The schemes we spoke to cover a range of issues from health, food, transport, community development, energy efficiency and climate change. The target audience for these ranged from deprived communities to more affluent groups, and included those defined as communities by their common locality and those defined by their common interests (often within a locality).
- d. The majority of the schemes we interviewed were formed or supported by partnerships of organisations, and were generally managed by professionals with community development or other local organisations or by staff from local authorities or housing associations.
- e. The interviews suggest that the terms 'behavioural change' and 'behavioural measures' tend to be less meaningful to community groups than in the sustainable energy field and government policy-making.
- f. When asked what lessons acquired from their own project might be applied to the issue of climate change, many responded in terms of specific project

outcomes rather than identifying behaviour changes related to their project which might usefully be transferred. This suggests that the 'language barrier' may need to be addressed if learning from community initiatives is to be successfully applied to the issue of climate change.

- g. In terms of evaluating the success in community projects the responses from our interviewees were in keeping with the research findings; we found a variety of approaches to evaluation and little evaluation which explicitly addressed individual behaviour.
- h. On the basis of the interviews we identified six factors which are likely to be critical to the success of a community initiative and which complement the findings of other research on this topic. These are:
  - ownership and control
  - relevance to local needs
  - the ability to achieve small successes
  - a sense of satisfaction and wellbeing
  - receiving an appropriate response from those in authority
  - a trusted and sustained resource base.
- i. Approaches for reaching the target audience adopted by the different schemes varied from those which would be regarded as well established in the field of community development, to those which would be viewed as more innovative in the sustainable energy field (but relatively standard in the community sector). Within the small sample reviewed there was insufficient evidence to suggest that one approach is more effective than another. Nor were we able to demonstrate that communities of interest are more or less effective at mobilising their members to change their behaviour than communities defined by locality or region.
- j. However, the research does suggest that developing trust with a community is very important to establishing and maintaining the engagement of individuals. This is not a short-term process and may take a number of years. Adequate and sustained funding is a core component of this.
- k. Though not essential to the success of initiatives, local authorities can play a key role in developing and supporting community programmes and can be most effective where there is joined up support from officers and members. The support of local authorities is qualitative in nature (resources, technical support and guidance etc) and it is not straight forward to attribute carbon savings to specific inputs and actions from local authorities.
- l. Determined or 'wilful' individuals can be effective at initiating community initiatives, but require support to ensure that their approach remains inclusive.
- m. The interviews suggest that there is broad scope for linking community initiatives with education programmes and that this can be a highly effective means of maximising the benefits of a scheme.
- n. Interviewees confirmed that a supportive national policy context can have direct influence on the formation and support for community-based initiatives, but on its own this will be insufficient to bring about change and required interpretation at the local level.

## The specific challenge of climate change (Section 6.11)

Issues which tend to fit with and motivate community approaches among existing community organisations usually:

- are locally relevant and often immediately obvious
- have personal or known beneficiaries from action
- have clear agency ('if we act we gain') and feedback ('we can see the benefits and improvements from our actions').

By contrast, the issue of climate change:

- is long term and 'worst somewhere else' and 'some time in the future'
- has benefits of action which accrue principally to unknown others elsewhere at some unspecified point in the future
- Individual actions are, in and of themselves, invisible and insignificant in the context of the science of climate change (i.e. the actions of a few, even if they are many within a community, genuinely make little difference to the scale of the threat)

This contrast can lead to a sense that the focus should be on trying to make climate change locally relevant so that it 'feels' more like the sort of issue that does resonate for community initiatives (and the individuals they are reaching). However, assessing this approach, we conclude that it risks 'forcing the science' (because in reality the local impacts are unlikely to be particularly severe at any time soon except for lowest level coastal areas).

Suggestions that groups and individuals should have information and tools to engage with their own 'carbon footprints' have significant merit as an approach to sustaining the interest and action of the already engaged. However, we remain unconvinced that it will stimulate significant *new* interest in addressing climate change; people are unlikely to engage meaningfully and consequentially with such tools without existing interest and motivation.

An alternative proposal is to concentrate on motivating action by focusing on the non-carbon benefits, such as reduced fuel bills or improved road safety. However, this tactic is already much used (with some success) and is therefore unlikely to be sufficient in itself to motivate the significant additional widespread change in behaviour and lifestyle required to meet national carbon reduction targets.

While each of these suggestions may help, we have come to the conclusion during this study that the key challenge for stimulating individual and community engagement to tackle climate change is to address the third of the required 'characteristics'; *the need for a realistic sense of collective agency*.

The issue of climate change has largely been framed for public debate in terms of worrying science and the difficulty of international negotiations and stand offs. These imply a lack of agency. The impact on the atmosphere's carbon content of individual or community action is genuinely insignificant and possibly 'too late'. And the scale of any action is dwarfed by the impact of the well-reported inaction of others.

Indeed, as raised at the Stakeholder Workshop, we will need to be respond to this challenge:

*“I’ve been told a lot about all the awful things that will happen if I don’t act to cut emissions and address climate change. **But what will happen if I do act? What difference will it make?”***

This is not simply about ‘supporting the UK’s leadership on this issue internationally’. Yet, the difference an individual or group is making at this stage is indeed a political one. Stakeholders felt that ‘supporting UK leadership’ was too political in that it sounded like it was about UK leaders (and therefore tied up with personal feelings about them) rather than the leadership they exhibit and at a community and individual level, this approach would still be too remote, lacking feedback and immediacy, and thereby lacking the necessary sense of agency.

We therefore need to find a new framing for the climate change issue which:

- a. clearly communicates a sense of the collective agency that resonates for individuals and communities (and moves them from the inaction of “I will if you will” to the dynamism of “We have...now you”), and;
- b. is consistent with the government’s approach within national policy and international negotiations.

It is difficult to believe that the first of these will be possible without the communication and engagement of individuals either happening or being reinforced at a local, community level; community-based initiatives to engage with action to address climate change are a necessary component of any coherent national programme.

However, it is clear from the study that climate change is unlikely to emerge as a priority for communities of its own accord within a community development approach.

This means that any approach to working with communities to mobilise action on climate change may best focus first on engaging the communities through informed, issue-led organisations taking the issue to them.

Such organisations will then need to engage the techniques of community development to build on that community engagement to achieve trust, establish common purpose, share learning and develop the capacity of the community to act and support its members on a sustained basis.

## **Policy implications (Section 7)**

The lack of unambiguous evidence to demonstrate the impact and the specific costs of community-based approaches is frustrating. However, it is not easy to imagine a successful national response to climate change which does not involve effective community-based initiatives in stimulating individual behaviour change and establishing social norms to reinforce ‘low carbon lifestyles’. The challenge for policy-makers and funders is therefore to justify supporting such initiatives in the absence of such evidence.

The issue of climate change poses specific challenges for community-based initiatives since it shares few of the characteristics of typical issues for such initiatives (local and immediate, known beneficiaries, and clear sense of agency and potential for feedback). This challenge applies similarly for initiatives aimed directly at individuals.

The implications of this challenge are that communities are unlikely to treat climate change as a priority without intervention. This is likely to be the case even if efforts are made (however forced) to make climate change 'locally relevant'. They will therefore need to be led and supported to action, principally by local issue-led organisations, if they – and the individuals within them – are to be mobilised successfully to change behaviour.

Initiatives such as the Community Action for Energy (CAfE) programme of the Energy Saving Trust (EST) indicate the scope for stimulating and supporting action to engage communities with sustainable energy and addressing the threat of climate change.

A key requirement for future success is to establish a clear and realistic sense of collective agency which motivates and justifies individual and group action to cut carbon emissions. This should honestly reflect the scientific insignificance of such actions. It should also make explicit the political significance of many people starting to take action in concert and demonstrate the way in which this genuinely underpins the legitimacy of UK leadership in seeking a global solution to the threat.

### **Recommendations for further action (Section 8.2)**

- The Government needs to define more clearly the role it expects the community sector to take in addressing climate change and how this fits into broader action to curb carbon emissions.
- The Government should review its current and planned policies, programmes and funded organisations to assess whether they are jointly creating the conditions required for successful community-based initiatives on climate change, particularly taking account of the likely need for issue-led organisations to take the issue to individuals and communities.
- The Government should consider the 'what happens if I do act?' question and examine whether its current communications strategy on climate change is creating the necessary sense of common purpose and collective agency.
- The community and sustainable energy sectors should examine jointly how they can help to refine policy, guide programmes and support genuine efforts by Government and others to stimulate effective public response to the threat of climate change.
- Further evaluation of community-based initiatives focusing on climate and energy should take place.
- The Research Councils should initiate a systematic longitudinal study of community-based initiatives, particularly in the field of sustainable energy, to assess their impact on social norms and individual behaviours.

## 1 Introduction

This report has been prepared by the Centre for Sustainable Energy and The Community Development Exchange as the final report for a project entitled 'Individual Mobilisation through Community' which we have undertaken jointly for Defra, DCLG, HM Treasury, DTI and DfT between December 2006 and mid-February 2007.

This document describes the work completed, the findings, and the policy implications which arise from this undertaking. The report presents conclusions and recommendations for further work.

The report does not represent the views of the Government or any Government department, and should not be interpreted as a statement of current or future policy.

## 2 Background

### 2.1 Government policy on community initiatives on climate change

Both the UK Climate Change Programme published in March 2006 and the Energy Review published in July 2006 emphasise the essential role to be played by individuals in tackling climate change. They also both refer to the role which communities can potentially play in stimulating and supporting individual action.

Around 40% of national greenhouse gas emissions are the result of decisions taken directly by individuals. Through their purchasing decisions individuals are responsible for a further fraction of emissions incurred elsewhere in the economy. A focus on the role of individuals and communities is central to the Government's agenda on climate change.

As the Energy Review stated:

"If we are to be successful in delivering the long-term cuts in carbon emissions that we need to avert dangerous climate change, the involvement of individuals will be critical. There are many barriers to individual engagement, but we anticipate that local authorities and community groups can play a key facilitating role." (DTI, 2006: 2.80)

In the Energy Review the Government committed itself to carrying out a 'study looking at the role of 'community level' approaches to mobilising individuals, and the role of local authorities in particular in making them work effectively' (DTI, 2006: 2.84). This project contributes to meeting that commitment.

There are clearly links between the focus of this project and Defra's *Every Action Counts* programme. *Every Action Counts* is a programme to engage national and local voluntary and community sector organisations in work to protect and improve the environment and deliver sustainable development. Reducing energy use and choosing lower carbon transport options are key elements of actions promoted by the programme. However, whereas *Every Action Counts* aims to encourage voluntary and community organisations to take action *as organisations* to help achieve sustainable development, the project reported on here aims to examine how community group initiatives can influence changes in the behaviour of individuals. The differences and links between these types of behaviour change are worthy of further consideration and we discuss this elsewhere in this report.

## **2.2 The context for this project**

As the Climate Change Programme and Energy Review implicitly acknowledge, it seems clear that people are more likely to undertake behaviours which are reinforced by the people they live amongst or with whom they share interests. Indeed, supporting civically desirable behaviours and reinforcing their social value and acceptability are core elements of many community-based initiatives – in tackling crime and anti-social behaviour, improving health (from reducing STDs to healthier eating), cleaning up and greening up derelict spaces, making streets safer and cutting car use, addressing the misery of fuel poverty, etc.

This study is about trying to understand whether there are ways in which community initiatives could provide this social reinforcement around behaviours which cut carbon emissions (and if so, how).

The extent to which community-based initiatives are effective and the reasons why they work has been the subject of much study and analysis over at least the last 60 years. However, the study and analysis has tended either to focus on particular types of behaviour (e.g. crime reduction, health promotion, sustainable consumption) or on broad-brush aspects of what makes effective communities or contributes to weak communities (e.g. social capital, democratic participation, community governance etc).

Much of the research and comment reads as if it has garnered evidence and slanted its analysis to justify a particular preordained position which favours community engagement as a 'good thing'. It has done less to prove that community engagement is an effective and necessary process for achieving certain objectives in terms of changing individual and group behaviours.

In addition, there has therefore been little, if any, attempt to assess the lessons from community initiatives focused on particular types of behaviour for their transferability to other 'fields'.

The limited analysis between different types of behaviour change-oriented community initiatives and the restricted amount of really robust evidence for the value of community initiatives in securing behaviour change have formed the starting point to this research.

In undertaking this work we have looked across the evidence base to draw out common lessons and see if there are clear differences and/or similarities between the fields of action and the initiatives seeking to stimulate them. We have also considered if there are specific characteristics of the types of behaviours which are highly influenced by community initiatives, and specific characteristics of highly influential community initiatives.

The study has drawn down from the more theoretical analysis of social capital and considered what constitutes an effective community initiative. We have looked at what this can tell us about the critical success factors of specific behaviour changing initiatives in different fields, and if this might be applied to the issue of climate change.

There is also a need to examine: (a) whether all or any carbon emission reduction behaviours have characteristics shared by the highly influenced behaviours; (b) whether there are ways to replicate the characteristics of highly influential community initiatives in relation to these behaviours, and; (c) what needs to be done to achieve such replication.

### **3 Aims, scope and limitations of the project**

The aims of this project were to test the hypothesis that communities are well placed to mobilise individuals to change their behaviour and, in particular, to investigate:

- what kinds of local and community initiatives are most effective at influencing changes in behaviour and at what levels;
- whether any lessons learned from these are transferable to the issue of climate change;
- the implications of these lessons for government approaches to community initiatives as a mechanism to engage the public in addressing climate change.

In considering these project objectives we have looked for examples of initiatives where local groups and communities have been mobilised to tackle climate change or adopt more sustainable energy behaviours, and looked for robust evidence of success. We have considered examples of initiatives from other areas such as water use, recycling, air quality, crime etc, and at what lessons or conclusions may be drawn from these; considered if there is any evidence to suggest that communities of interest or ethnicity are more effective at influencing behaviour than communities of locality or vice versa; looked for innovative approaches which would be worthy of further investigation, and considered the role of local authorities in mobilising individuals.

There were significant constraints on the project, not least the timescale; it has been undertaken and completed in under 11 weeks including the Christmas period. The short timescale has limited the scope to undertake new and additional research work. We have not for example attempted to undertake a full academic review of the published literature, rather to give an overview of the key findings and components of relevant publications.

Neither could the project make up for the existing deficit, acknowledged in the research literature, of robust impact studies within community work and the associated complexity of attributing change in community-based settings to particular initiatives. We discuss this in further detail in the report.

The focus has therefore been on the key aims outlined above and on using telephone-based interviews with a range of community initiatives to seek more detail and additional insight into the issues pertinent to this study. As planned and detailed in Section 5 below, we have completed 21 interviews with leaders or representatives of community initiatives and by using semi-structured interviews we have been able to elicit a considerable volume of information for analysis. We have also drawn on the experience and expertise and comments of stakeholders in the community sector, who attended a day long workshop on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2007, as well as the input and comments from members of the Project Steering Group.

This had enabled more detail to be added to the existing picture of what makes for effective community initiatives and helped to provide a more detailed picture of what might relate to community initiatives designed to change individual behaviour with respect to carbon emissions.

In drawing our conclusions and recommendations we have been alert to the limitations of the research, and have proposed areas which we think warrant further work.

## **4 Methodology**

The project was divided into three stages:

- reviewing the available literature in this subject area.
- identifying and interviewing representatives from 21 community groups and initiatives and analysing the results of these interviews.
- facilitating a one day workshop with stakeholders from the community and sustainable energy sectors and Steering Group members to discuss the interim findings and conclusions of the research and explore some key issues in more depth.

### **4.1 Literature review**

A brief literature review was undertaken to consider the published research and analysis which examines the role of communities in stimulating changes in individual behaviour and, more broadly, in raising consciousness and understanding of issues and shifting social norms on acceptable and desirable behaviours.

A detailed reading list provided by Defra formed the basis of the review with additional material proposed by CSE and CDX. Additional papers were added to the literature review following the stakeholder workshop. The complete bibliography is provided in Appendix 1.

As stated in Section 4.1 we have not endeavoured to undertake or write up a full or academic review of each of the listed papers; we refer to existing reviews of published literature where appropriate and do not seek to reproduce that work here. We have endeavoured to provide an overview of their key arguments relevant to this research and looked for evidence to lend support to, or contradict the idea that communities are well placed to mobilise individuals to change their behaviour.

### **4.2 Telephone interviews with community initiatives**

The primary basis of the research was telephone interviews with 21 community-based initiatives. These are listed in [Appendix 2](#).

A total of some 40 initiatives were proposed by CDX and CSE as possible candidates for interview from which a shortlist of 25 was produced and 21 interviewed.

The shortlist was drawn up to give a reasonable geographical spread, a diversity of interests and focus. It was also designed to combine projects operating within a community of interest and others defined by geography or locality. Each of the projects selected for interview was a practical community-based initiative, taking place within a community defined by locality or specific interest. The initiatives focused either on issues of sustainable energy/climate change, or other areas such as healthy eating, personal transport or crime.

As anticipated a number of the key contacts put forward declined to be interviewed or proposed colleagues to take their place. We were unable to contact some of the organisations originally short-listed within the timeframe of the project and so substituted schemes from the original list.

Semi-structured telephone interviews were used to gather information from the contacts in each organisation. This method was chosen partly by necessity because there was insufficient time to conduct face to face interviews, written questionnaires or focus groups, and partly because it was felt that a less formal approach would work better with community groups. All of the interviewees were representatives of the organisation running the project in question, rather than project participants.

Interviews were conducted by three CSE staff using the questions listed in Appendix 3 as the basis for the interviews with follow up questions being added as appropriate.

The responses were keyed directly into a spreadsheet and the majority though not all of the initiatives were recorded (with agreement of the interviewee) for further analysis.

The results were initially analysed by CSE, then discussed further with CDX, at a day long review meeting.

### **4.3 Stakeholder Workshop**

A one-day workshop was run for stakeholders by CSE and CDX at Defra's offices in London, on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2007. The stakeholder workshop was preceded by a meeting of the Project Steering Group to provide feedback and comments on the interim report, and to question CSE and CDX on the findings to date. Written comments were provided by four members of the steering group unable to attend the meeting.

The Stakeholder Workshop was attended by 23 stakeholders and members of the Steering Group and the project team (as listed in Appendix 4). It was divided into two sessions. The first of these was a brief presentation by CSE of the key findings of the project followed by discussion with the stakeholders on issues for clarification, omissions, and areas of agreement or disagreement. This was followed by workshop discussions in three smaller groups to consider the following questions:

- Are there practical ways in which climate change/carbon reducing actions can be made to feel more like an immediate and personally resonant issue?
- What might trigger greater interest and engagement with this issue amongst the community sector?
- What is needed to enable these to happen?

Individuals within each group were then asked to list three 'wishes' which would help to get communities active on reducing emissions of carbon dioxide. These were then discussed within the group and narrowed down to five 'wishes' per group.

This third phase of the project has been used to refine the report and the conclusions and recommendations within it. The findings from the workshop discussions are discussed below.

## **5 Summary of literature review and interview responses**

### **5.1 Review of current literature**

#### **Key points**

- There is a broad range of research which underpins the hypothesis that communities are well placed to influence and change individual behaviour.
- There is a lack of robust empirical evidence to support this hypothesis (though, perhaps more importantly, none to contradict it).
- There is some evidence from Darnton et al (2006) linking the theory with practice.
- There is acknowledgement that measuring the behavioural impact of a given initiative can be problematic.
- Evidence of the successful impact on energy saving behaviour by community-based initiatives does not single out the specific impact of the fact that an initiative was community-based (as opposed to the fact that they are providing energy advice to individuals).
- While tools exist to evaluate the quality of community engagement processes, there is a lack of information on whether community engagement can encourage more sustainable behaviour.
- WWF is developing with CAG Consultants an impact assessment tool, mainly aimed at local authorities and larger voluntary sector groups, which is intended to be used to measure the impact of community engagement on behaviour change towards sustainability.

There is a large body of academic literature on behaviour change theory and the application of this theory to environmental problems. A review of this literature by Jackson (2005) highlighted among other things the social and cultural context to individual behaviour; one of Jackson's conclusions was that 'there are some strong suggestions that participatory community-based processes could offer effective avenues for exploring pro-environmental and pro-social behaviour change.' (Jackson, 2005: 133).

Drawing from the literature, Jackson also suggests that key areas to look at in behaviour change are 'community-based social marketing, social learning, participatory problem-solving and the discursive unfreezing of embedded, routine behaviours' (Jackson 2005: 119-120).

Darnton et al (2006) reviewed some projects that aimed to change behaviour, covering both individual and organisational behaviour, and both corporate and community initiatives. They combined this with an extensive theoretical literature review and found that the suggested approaches from the theory that could be found in real life projects were:

- Changing the physical context within which an individual acts, by providing them with more environment-friendly infrastructure which does not require a conscious change by the individual (e.g. better buildings, more responsive heating controls, etc).
- 'Action networks': working with a network of people to identify issues and solutions

- ‘Unfreezing’ a habitual behaviour by consciously examining it, consciously changing behaviour and then allowing this changed behaviour to ‘freeze’ again into a habit.
- Changing an individual’s sense of agency, so that they feel that they can be successful in taking action on issues that are important to them.
- Understanding the situation from the individuals perspective and involving them in designing the solution. (Darnton et al, 2006)

A further piece of research into actual community initiatives was summarised in the Sustainable Consumption Roundtable report, ‘Communities of Interest – and Action?’ (2006). This was based on desk research and ten interviews with community group representatives. It found that projects were trying out many different approaches to changing behaviour but that there was a lack of evaluation of the effectiveness of these approaches. Interviewees found evaluation to be the hardest part of the project and, although they tried many different approaches such as baseline surveys and ecological foot-printing, the study concluded that, for community group initiatives ‘the methodology of judging effectiveness in behavioural change is in its infancy’ (Sustainable Consumption Roundtable, 2006: 6<sup>1</sup>).

Other publications reviewed included ‘The Benefits of Community-based Energy Efficiency Projects’ which was undertaken by CAG Consultants in 2004 on behalf of the Energy Efficiency Partnership for Homes. This report considers why community-based energy projects are a good idea and how they can be made more effective. The evaluated projects were found to have delivered significant energy and carbon savings and resulted in wider economic and social benefits such as employment creation, training, work experience, take up of benefits advice and skills development.

In considering the added value of adopting a community-based approach, the report states that ‘There is much evidence from the community projects evaluated that face-to-face discussions and awareness raising, and the involvement of people in energy projects, can lead to longer term behavioural change, helping to reduce energy use in the longer term’<sup>2</sup>. (CAG Consultants, 2004a: 57).

This would appear to provide evidence which has been lacking elsewhere in the literature considered for this project. However, while a number of the projects evaluated by CAG specifically set out to encourage householders to adopt behavioural measures such as closing curtains at night, their report does not provide strong evidence as to the success or not of these projects in bringing about long term behavioural changes; it also acknowledges the difficulty in quantifying these effects.

It does cite two projects in support of the statement above. The first refers to the *Dundee Energy Project* which found that ‘many in the community can, through a change in circumstance, slip back into fuel poverty. Increasing their awareness of the help that is available ensures that uptake of grants can continue after projects have ceased to operate’ (CAG Consultants, 2004a: 57). In this case the behavioural change would appear to refer specifically to householders applying for energy efficiency grants rather than broader energy saving behaviours.

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1 A similar though not identical quotation appears in Change Lab, 2005, p.10

2 i.e. Building local awareness of energy and fuel poverty issues can help promote long term awareness and behavioural change

The second scheme referred to is *Energy Resources for Tenants*<sup>3</sup> about which the report says 'is also likely to result in longer-term change in behaviour and awareness than would be expected through leaflets or advertising campaigns' (CAG Consultants, 2004a: 57). However, no evidence is provided to show if this was case or not.

Research undertaken by New Perspectives on behalf of the Energy Efficiency Partnership for Homes (New Perspectives, 2004) examined the impact of five pilot projects supported by the initial *Community Action for Energy (CAfE)* programme. The objectives of this research were to explore the progress made by the projects in their second year of operation, to estimate energy savings arising from each project, and to identify good practice factors affecting success.

Based on interviews with householders who had received advice and information from the projects the report provides figures for the number of energy saving behavioural measures adopted (as stated by respondents) and estimates savings in carbon dioxide emissions resulting from these.

Like a number of other evaluations of energy efficiency projects undertaken it provides information about the positive direct energy saving impact on individuals of energy advice provided by a community-based initiative. However, it does not show the relative importance of the advice to the individual compared with the fact that the advice was provided within the context of a community-based initiative.

WWF has noted that while tools exist to evaluate the quality of community engagement processes, there is a lack of information on whether community engagement can encourage more sustainable behaviour. WWF is therefore developing with CAG Consultants an impact assessment tool which is intended to be used to measure the impact of community engagement on behaviour change towards sustainability (WWF and CAG Consultants, 2006). It has piloted this with 8 organisations and is inviting organisations to take part in a wider research phase where the tool will be used to evaluate behavioural change. The tool is aimed at officers in Local Authorities or supporting Local Strategic Partnerships, as well as medium to large voluntary sector organisations with evaluation capacity. It has not been designed for the use of community level groups and organisations as it may be too heavy a burden on time and resources.

The question of limited documented evidence of impact is not restricted to actions and initiatives related to sustainability. A recent literature review of community initiatives attempting to address health needs is instructive here. The review, undertaken for the National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence, assessed 340 pieces of research and evaluation of community-based initiatives designed to improve health outcomes and found only 7 which were sufficiently robust and sufficiently focused on behaviour change to be included in the final analysis.

Similarly, in terms of regeneration and other area-based initiatives, Coote et al (2004) and Burton et al (2004) have documented the difficulty of making simple statements of 'what works' in community-based projects.

As discussed further below, this somewhat frustrating lack of robust evidence for the influence and role of community initiatives in mobilising individual behaviour change may be due to different perspectives being applied by both researchers and the organisations involved in community-based activities.

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3 A project supporting community organisations located in disadvantaged areas across England to develop self-help solutions and take action on fuel poverty and energy issues through community activity.

In some cases the focus is on the 'issue' and what it is that 'needs to be changed' (eg eating habits, energy consumption, recycling levels etc) with a community-based approach adopted as the 'mechanism' to deliver change.

In other cases the focus is more on the community development 'process', on how a community-based approach is increasing the capacity and skills and networks – the social capital – of the community. In these cases an 'issue' of concern to the community (eg greening up a derelict space or improving housing conditions) may become the subject for joint activities and learning.

This important distinction, which does not routinely feature in the research literature, is examined in more detail below, having emerged from consideration by the project team of discussions at the Stakeholder Workshop.

## **5.2 Summary of interview responses**

### **Key points**

- A broad range of projects has been interviewed; from community development initiatives on healthy eating in deprived areas to projects which focused on environmental sustainability that were located in more affluent areas.
- Community initiatives studied included those defined by locality or region and those which were also communities of interest.
- The majority of initiatives were formed or supported by partnerships of organisations.
- Initiatives were generally managed by professionals within community development or other local organisations or by staff from local authorities or housing associations.
- What have been termed 'wilful' or key individuals were important in the formation and success of two initiatives, but so too are 'mission led' organisations in bringing about change and supporting action within existing community groups.
- The role of Local Authorities ranged from active and supportive participant, to providing more passive support, to no involvement at all.
- Four of the 21 initiatives studied focused directly on the issues of climate change, and reducing emissions of carbon dioxide or sustainable energy or both.

### **5.2.1 The types of initiatives reviewed**

Almost half of the projects surveyed were community development projects located in deprived areas. These aim to increase community participation and engagement, develop the capacity of residents to do things for themselves, increase self esteem and a sense of wellbeing, and reduce crime.

Although the initiatives in this category appear at first to have diverse primary objectives such as reducing crime, cleaning up neighbourhoods, increasing safety or promoting tenants' participation in the management of their estate, these issues tend to be interrelated and the approach to dealing with them was found to be similar.

Another common feature of projects in this group was that interviewees expressed the view that increasing the engagement and cohesion of local people (i.e. creating a

sense of community for its own sake) was as important, or more important than the primary or headline objectives<sup>4</sup> of the project itself.

For example, the fact that people developed an interest in healthy eating through working on a community allotment was considered less important by one interviewee than the fact that young people on the estate were working together on a productive, interesting project, which happened in this case to be an allotment.

Several projects focused on healthy eating or the provision of sustainable food, or both. These were often, though not exclusively, located in deprived areas where the community (in some cases with the assistance of professional community development organisations) had identified a need for access to healthy food or as mentioned above where an allotment was used as the mechanism to engage local people, promote physical activity etc.

One project chose to approach this by encouraging networking between the local farmers and building up the capacity of these farmers to increase the supply of organic food, so that more was consumed locally and less sold out of the area.

Not including transport, we interviewed four projects focusing solely on energy or climate (which are described in more detail below). A variety of approaches were used to address these topics including: networking, developing local infrastructure, raising awareness, providing information, giving energy efficiency advice, and developing initiatives to reduce the emissions of carbon dioxide within a particular village.

A final category of project was waste reduction in which there were two examples. One focused on encouraging parents to use reusable rather than disposable nappies by providing equipment and an incentive payment. The other encouraged children and their families to make small changes at home such as recycling more of their domestic waste.

## **5.2.2 'Target audience' and communities with which work was undertaken**

All the selected projects operated within a defined locality or geographical region. Some of the projects also brought together communities of interest, but these still maintained a local or regional focus to their activities. We did not review any initiatives that were only defined in terms of a community of interest.

The projects ranged in physical scale from a few streets to a county, in this case Cornwall (*Climate Change So What?*), and Herefordshire (*Food Links project*). In some cases interviewees were able to show that the influence of the project had started to spill over into surrounding areas, or regions or national policy as in the case of *Congregations for a Low Carbon Future*<sup>5</sup>.

In only one initiative was the community a professional one. This was the *Food Links* project which focused on farmers in Herefordshire.

Two of the initiatives interviewed concerned faith communities. The first of these, *Congregations for a Low Carbon Future*, was aimed at churches in the Anglican

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4 Headline objectives: Objectives set out in the project or funding proposal.

5 Which led on to the Shrinking the Footprint campaign in the Church of England.

Church. Here the approach was to make a specific connection between the welfare of the planet and the teaching of the Church.

The second example was the *Jagonari Cycles* project encouraging cycling in Tower Hamlets, in London, working mainly with Muslim women and girls. In this case shared faith was the common link between participants but was not used to convey a message or influence a behaviour on the issue of cycling.

Several projects such as *Bike It* and *The Hive Community Allotment* were aimed at young people, and some of these sought to work through and with schools though never as the only means of reaching adults or children.

Two initiatives targeted both young people and older people, and new parents were the target group for the *West Sussex Real Nappy Initiative*.

In three of the projects women were specifically targeted either exclusively or with other groups. These were *Women Away*, *Jagonari Cycles*, and *Small Change South West*. In *Thanington Neighbourhood Resource Centre* the focus was on women and children in an area where there is a high incidence of single parent families.

*Bike It* worked extensively with schools and worked to get more children cycling to and from school. The *London Cycling Campaign* also worked with a school in Tower Hamlets.

The interviewee from the *London Cycling Campaign* emphasised the importance of schools as focal points and 'hubs' within a community and a source of authority.

One comment made by roughly a quarter of interviewees was that children are more open to changing their behaviour and more open to the notion that we should be working to protect and preserve the environment.

### **5.2.3 Origins and management of community initiatives**

Many of the initiatives were formed or supported by partnerships of organisations. Some of these were made up exclusively of community organisations or development agencies; others included local authorities and private consultancies or companies. The importance of making best use of existing relationships and networks was a strong theme throughout the interviews.

The management of initiatives falls broadly into three groups. These are: initiatives managed by local authorities and housing associations; those managed by members of the community (or target group); and those managed by charitable organisations. Most of the latter group weren't community development organisations though their approach was often to use established community development techniques to further a particular agenda or objective (eg increase cycling, reduce food miles, improve energy efficiency).

There was considerable difference in the impetus, idea or inspiration for the initiatives we contacted. In the case of *Ashton Hayes – going carbon neutral*, the driving force behind the idea and the project was one individual, who decided that he should act having listened to the Government's Chief Scientific Advisor, Sir David King. In the case of *The Riverside Food Cooperative* the idea arose from another food produce scheme aimed at a completely different target audience.

Over half the initiatives we interviewed had been developed by local authorities, housing associations or community development organisations.

More than one initiative made reference to the Health White Paper as the driver for setting up the initiative and in one case the interviewee felt that the support of the Primary Care Trust (PCT) had in part been driven by the White Paper.

Some projects (*LEAP, Bike It, Home Zones, Small Change*) were developed from a template conceived and designed at a national level, either by Government or by national charities and then implemented in several areas of the country.

As many of the projects were in deprived areas, the availability of various types of regeneration funding was important. All of those interviewed said that funding was important to their initiative for obvious reasons. But some were careful to stress the importance of continuity in funding and the need to avoid financial support that was 'stop-start' in nature particularly where the aim was to build social cohesion and trust with a community. We discuss this further below.

In each of the initiatives we considered it was clear that the nature of the organisation or the individual(s) running the project had some influence (in some cases very significant) on the 'shape' and nature of the project itself. Despite this being the case we were unable to detect any rules or patterns here<sup>6</sup>.

#### **5.2.4 The involvement of local authorities**

The role of local authorities within initiatives varied. In some cases local authorities undertook initial studies which led to the establishment of projects. In others they provided support at the start of the project and then ongoing support once it was established.

Support was provided in the form of staff time, the provision of venues and buildings and by employing staff on behalf of partner organisations.

Only one project, the *West Sussex Real Nappy Initiative*, was led directly by an officer at the council at the time of interviewing.

Some projects had no involvement at all from the local authority. Most interviewees had found the local authorities to be supportive, though in one case the project leader felt the local authority had been obstructive.<sup>7</sup>

Several projects required the involvement of officers from more than one local authority. Within the same project they had received different levels of support from the partner authorities. We discuss the role of local authorities in more detail below.

#### **5.2.5 Initiatives focused on climate change and sustainable energy**

Four of the 21 initiatives examined related directly to sustainable energy and climate change. These were *Awel Aman Tawe* in South Wales, *Climate Change So What?* run in Cornwall by Cornwall Sustainable Energy Partnership (CSEP), *Congregations for a Low Carbon Future* run by Marches Energy Agency, and *Ashton Hayes – going carbon neutral*, a village initiative in North West England managed by Garry Charnock.

Four initiatives *Bike It* run by Sustrans, the *London Cycling Campaign* projects, *Home Zones*, managed by Sustrans and *Small Change South West* run by Global Action Plan had a climate change aspect to them.

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6 This may simply be a consequence of the small sample size.

7 Although this was seen as political in nature.

Of these, only the *Small Change South West* project was directly about reducing people's environmental impact: the others were about sustainable transport which covered a range of benefits. The cycling projects mainly concentrated on independence and health.

Many of the other projects considered that they had a climate change impact by addressing waste or sustainable food, including the issue of food miles.

While many of our case studies used similar community development approaches, the climate change initiatives covered a wider range of approaches. This may reflect the fact that community development principles have been built up over a long period of research and professional practice, while climate change initiatives are newer and are trying a wider range of approaches based actually on less knowledge of what approaches are considered to 'work' or 'not work'.

It may also reflect the fact that practitioners involved in climate change initiatives are less aware of, or committed to, community development approaches and principles. They are driving a particular 'issue' – climate change – and seeking community involvement, whereas those in the community development sector report that climate change is not emerging as a lead priority for localities where community initiatives are actively supported, resourced and funded to work principally on their own priorities. The implications of this are explored in more detail in Section 6.11 below.

### **5.2.6 Lessons for addressing climate change**

We asked all interviewees 'What lessons acquired from their own project might be applied to the issue of climate change?' What was striking about their responses was that nearly a third replied in terms of specific project outcomes rather than identifying behavioural changes related to their project which might be transferable the issue of climate change. For example, four of the initiatives related to healthy food made the link between food miles and climate change.

Some interviewees raised the difficulty of relating to climate change (and the need to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide) as a problem which should be addressed by individuals now rather than at some time in the future. Many argued that, for people to act, climate change had to be made relevant to their lives. One interviewee thought that this would best be achieved by appealing to a desire to create a better and more secure future for our children. Another interviewee felt that older people who had some experience of the war would be receptive to the idea of cutting back for the common good.

Almost half of interviewees emphasised the importance of leading by example (including Prime Ministers). There was also some concern, expressed by about a quarter of interviewees, about whether deprived communities, where the 'tradition' of professionally-led community development is strongest, would be expected to take a lead on this issue when in relative terms they contribute less to the problem than more affluent parts of society. In a similar vein interviewees felt that individuals in some communities already had so many issues to deal with that it was unrealistic to expect them to take on climate change as well (though at least one felt they would still be able to contribute).

As discussed above a number of projects had achieved notable successes and some have become well known in the process. *Bike It* stood out as project which was successful because it was able to capitalise on the inherent enthusiasm amongst children for cycling.

The *Bike It* Officer identified the barriers which were preventing children from using their bikes to get to and from school, such as storage, safety fears etc, and by removing these increased the number of children using their bikes.

The *Low Carbon Congregations Project*, which had intended to focus mainly on increasing uptake of energy efficiency measures, was surprised to find its principal influence being in terms of influencing Church policy nationally.

This apparent difficulty interviewees had in applying lessons from community initiatives to the issue of climate change became a key focus for the Stakeholder Workshop. Section 6.11 explores it in more detail.

### **5.3 Summary of findings from the Stakeholder Workshop**

The Stakeholder Workshop took place on 6<sup>th</sup> February at Defra's offices in London, and was attended by 16 individuals listed in Appendix 4 as well as members of the Project Steering Group and the Project Team. This brought together experts from sustainable energy organisations working through community initiatives, national agencies which run programmes to support community-based initiatives, community development specialists and organisations representing and supporting local authorities.

Much of the discussion during the day focused on exploring the findings and conclusions of the initial project report. The outcomes are therefore reflected in this final report and in the policy implications and recommendations. There were also new and additional contributions to the analysis within this report.

In particular, the Stakeholder Workshop contributed to encouraging a clearer distinction between (a) organisations – typically in the voluntary sector as charities – which exist to promote and bring about change, potentially on a 'single issue' and (b) community development organisations which may be more orientated to developing and reinforcing social cohesion and enhancing the capacity of communities to identify and address its own priorities. This distinction can potentially helpfully be characterised as between **community engagement** (where an organisation seeks to motivate individuals and groups to address a particular issue – of concern to that organisation – through contact, advice, support and involvement in local community groups) and **community development** (where the focus is on building the confidence, capacity and social networks to enable a local community, or a particular group, to address its own needs and priorities).

The Workshop identified the important new opportunities for joint working between the voluntary and community sector organisations and local authorities, principally through Local Strategic Partnerships and associated Local Area Agreements (LAA). A number of examples were given to demonstrate the role an effective issue-led community-based organisation can have in stimulating focus on climate change and adoption of carbon reduction targets in a LAA.

The Stakeholder Workshop also contributed to discussions regarding the roles and needs of communities to enable them to address climate change and the issue of how to create a sense of 'agency' amongst community groups. This gave rise to an interesting and challenging question to those present whose principal focus is on addressing the threat of climate change:

*"I've been told a lot about all the awful things that will happen if I don't act to cut emissions and address climate change. **But what will happen if I do act? What difference will it make?"***

The workshop quickly identified that the 'difference' made by any individual or community group actions is not a scientific one in terms of any significant impact on atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide (even if that is how the problem is framed).

The difference being made at this stage is a political one. By participating in a collective effort to curb carbon emissions, any individual or group is making it more possible for others to see that they too could take action. At scale this makes it more feasible for the Government genuinely to lead by example in international negotiations on climate change agreements and thus encourage other countries also to act.

As discussed below in Section 6.11, these insights are important for how the issue of climate change is 'framed' for community organisations – and potentially more widely in communications with the public.

## **6 Discussion of findings**

### **Key points**

- ‘Behavioural change’, while commonly used by Government and other agencies in relation to energy use and climate change, is not universally understood or acknowledged as a legitimate goal; it means different things to different groups and agents.
- With the exception of the projects related to cycling, the initiatives we examined were rarely conceived or expressed in terms of achieving a behavioural change even where this was implicit in the nature of the scheme.
- With the exception of the cycling projects where the behavioural change was explicit and easily measurable, most of the interviewees were unclear as to how they would go about assessing or measuring behavioural change as a result of their project.
- Interviewees had a good feel for what is needed to create an initiative they considered successful.
- On the basis of the interviews we have identified a non-exhaustive set of six factors which appear to be critical to the success of any community initiative.
- A range of approaches were found to be successful. Some of these would be described as innovative in the field of sustainable energy, but have been used more commonly in community development initiatives in other fields.
- Developing trust and fairness are both important in building social cohesion and making people open to new ideas. Sustained funding is a core component of this.
- Local authorities have a key role to play in initiating and supporting community initiatives.
- There is significant potential for linking community initiatives with education programmes. When done well this can be very effective.
- A supportive and appropriate national policy context can have a direct and positive impact on community initiatives, but may need to be interpreted to make it relevant to local interests and needs.
- Determined ‘local champions’ or ‘wilful individuals’ can be a significant force for change locally, but need space to emerge and support to bring a community with them.
- The issue of climate change raises specific challenges for a community-based approach, particularly in relation to the need to establish a realistic sense of collective agency.

### **6.1 Clarifying ‘behavioural change’**

A key issue arising from the interviews is that the terms ‘behavioural change’ and ‘behavioural measures’ tend to be less meaningful to community groups than they are in the sustainable energy field. This ‘language barrier’ may need to be addressed if learning from community initiatives is to be successfully applied to the issue of climate change – and if existing community organisations are to be ‘recruited’ to help address this threat.

A number of the stakeholders who took part in the workshop felt that this was already understood and documented within the community development field and almost too obvious to be of note. However, given that this may be less well understood within

other fields (such as sustainable energy and climate change policy-making and programme design), this difference in the use of language may be significant.

Within the sustainable energy field, the term 'behavioural measures' is widely used to refer to actions an individual can take at home or work which conserve energy, and which require no technological intervention or capital outlay. These can include turning off lights when leaving a room, turning down the thermostat by 1° C and putting on a sweater if cold, or keeping the lid on a saucepan when cooking.

Arranging to have a loft or cavity wall insulated, though clearly requiring an individual to do something (e.g. pick up the phone) and implying a shift in normal behaviour, will tend to be referred to in terms of the technical measure in question rather than the underlying behaviour or action required to obtain it. So statistics for cavity wall insulation are expressed in terms of the number of completed installations rather than the number of individuals who arranged to have insulation installed.

The area between these two positions is somewhat grey. Very low cost measures (or actions) such as fitting a low energy light bulb are sometimes described by the energy sector as behavioural measures and sometimes as 'low cost' measures.

However, the evidence from the non-energy related community initiatives interviewed is that the idea of 'behavioural change' and 'changes in behaviour' are interpreted more broadly, and may mean different things to different people.

The term 'behavioural change' tended to be regarded by many interviewees as something which is personal to an individual and not something over which the project or initiative should or could have any significant influence. The obvious exceptions here were the projects related to cycling. From the others there was considerable sensitivity about the idea of setting up an initiative to alter or modify peoples' behaviour. This was expressed strongly, even in cases where to an outsider the project was precisely about changing an individual's behaviour, e.g. eating more healthily.

The term was rarely if ever used to describe the objectives or outcomes of a project. Project objectives tended to be described to interviewers in terms of addressing a need, building capacity within a community, social cohesion, networking, or self esteem, or more specific outcomes such as setting up a food cooperative or reducing carbon emissions, but not in terms of a behavioural change.

Nor was there evidence that behavioural change was a driver in setting up an initiative in the first place. Again the ideas were expressed in terms of addressing a particular need within the community or delivering a particular outcome. This also applied to the energy and climate related initiatives we talked to.

Reticence on the use of the concept of behavioural change may be reflecting a broader view that individuals have the right to choose how they conduct their lives without interventions from outside agencies. Community initiatives can raise consciousness and enable and encourage particular behaviours, but they traditionally do not want to be seen to 'hound' people towards particular actions.

Even if community initiatives are seeking to deliver behavioural change, they rarely describe it in these terms and appear to feel uncomfortable when asked to do so. This has clear implications for the language used in programmes seeking to stimulate community initiatives to engage in addressing the threat of climate change.

## 6.2 Evaluating success in community projects

As discussed above, the issue of evaluation of community initiatives is a key one for this research, given that we are attempting to draw out learning which might be applicable to climate change. However, it is well documented that evaluation in the field of social action and community activity is extremely complex. It is therefore not surprising to find a similar situation in this small scale study.

The responses from our interviewees were in keeping with the research findings; we found a variety of approaches to evaluation and little evaluation which explicitly addressed individual behaviour change.

Clearly to be able to evaluate the success of their projects, interviewees needed to have some sense of what that 'success' might look like. Interviewees were able to describe this from their perspective, though principally in qualitative terms. As discussed in Section 6.3 below, they identified: engagement with the target community; becoming a trusted source of advice and support within the community; promotion of social cohesion; provision of a net benefit to the local community (from the perspective of the interviewee); responsiveness to local needs and/or circumstances, and; sustainability in terms of impact (as long as the need sustained).

All of the schemes interviewed had to undertake some form of evaluation either as part of their funding or partnership arrangements. In most cases this was in the form of self assessment. Projects which formed part of a national programme such as *LEAP* (Local Exercise Action Pilots) were evaluated as part of the national programme<sup>8</sup>.

We had one example of a project (*Bike It*) which had conducted a national evaluation using 'before' and 'after' surveys to monitor its impact.

Several initiatives had been evaluated or will be evaluated by outside agencies. These include *The Real Nappy Initiative* which will be evaluated by MORI, the *Home Zones* project which will be evaluated by Bristol University and *Ashton Hayes – going carbon neutral* which will be monitored by The University of Chester.

Some had developed specific methodologies for measuring their impact and effectiveness, though as described above this did not include detailed consideration of any behavioural shift.

In the case of *Ashton Hayes – going carbon neutral* the impact of the project will be assessed by comparing the carbon emissions from Ashton Hayes at specific points within the lifetime of the project with the baseline emissions measured at the start. This interim assessment has yet to be done so it is not yet possible to say if the project has achieved a reduction in emissions.

There was no evidence from this study to say whether external assessments were more robust than self assessments, especially as some of both types have yet to be completed.

A number of the interviewees said that they would welcome an external assessment, provided the cost of this could be met without reducing their own project funding.

Regardless of the type of evaluation scheme in place, the success of the projects was unlikely to be described explicitly in terms of individual behavioural change, although many of the projects were addressing issues which could be interpreted in this manner. This is likely to be partly because of the sensitivities and philosophical distinctions discussed above, and because the project outcomes are more likely to

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8 This evaluation found no improvement in activity levels only attitudinal change. See IPSOS MORI (2006).

be conceived in terms of community-level changes than individual change. Funders are also more likely to set targets and outputs in terms of community-wide change, rather than individual behavioural change.

When asked how they might measure behavioural change if required to do so, interviewees felt it would be difficult. In most of the schemes, any change in behaviour would take place behind closed doors so would be difficult to monitor objectively, without a high level of intrusion. Secondly, they thought it would be difficult to isolate changes as a result of the initiative from other influences and changes taking place in people's lives.

An example of this concerns a food cooperative which sells bags of fruit and vegetables to members of the local community. One measurable output of this was the number of bags sold and distributed each week. What was unclear though, was whether this could be equated to an increased consumption of fruit and vegetables by the families that bought the bags, or if they had simply switched to buying from the cooperative rather than another local supplier or supermarket, or were giving the food away. While it might seem a relatively simple task to ask participants about their behaviour, if this is not part of the evaluation framework or explicitly stated as an objective of the project, that type of data is unlikely to be gathered.

As mentioned above, WWF/CAG have developed a set of questions for assessing the behavioural impact of community initiatives, which was recently trialled. However, it is too early to draw conclusions about either its effectiveness as a tool or about the impact of the projects it is being used to evaluate.

It is important to note that for any evaluation to be effective and of value a methodological tool needs to be combined with the allocation of time and resources to undertake the evaluation exercise.

The need for time and resources to undertake evaluation was reiterated at the meeting with stakeholders, as was the importance of achieving and noting small successes.

### **6.3 Factors which contribute to the success of an initiative**

All the initiatives in this group placed considerable emphasis on establishing exactly what the need was within a given community, prior to undertaking more tangible activities. Interviewees made the point that members of a community will be less willing to participate in an activity if they cannot see its relevance to their own lives.

Most of the interviewees in this group were able to give examples or had had direct experience of other projects or initiatives that had failed because they were not perceived as being relevant by the constituent community.

This raises questions about whether this need for relevance is a necessary condition for individuals to act on the issue of climate change. The evidence from some of the schemes which focused specifically on climate change suggests that, even where individuals make a connection with the problem and feel generally motivated to do something, on its own this may be insufficient to motivate them to make quite modest but sustained behavioural changes in their own lives. It would be useful to explore this in more detail with a much larger sample of projects.

That said, there were still clear factors identified by the interviewees as critical to the success of their project. While these should not be seen as guidelines for a successful community initiative, they chime with the experience of the Project Team at CDX and CSE as factors which are likely to be critical to the success of community

initiatives, particularly in the context of mobilising individuals and raising their consciousness of an issue.

**Ownership and control** – local initiatives need to have ownership and control over their activities. Where this is absent projects are likely to fail. Interviewees made it clear that providing ownership and control is frequently difficult, but the ability to shape a project in response to local need is critical.

**Relevance** – initiatives have to be relevant (or become relevant) to the needs and wants of a local community or group. Projects will be unable to establish themselves without this.

**Ability to achieve small successes** – The ability to achieve (and feedback) small successes is critical to maintaining the long-term involvement of individuals.

**A sense of satisfaction and wellbeing** – as with success, individuals are unlikely participate in a project or initiative unless they get some sense of satisfaction, wellbeing or personal gain from what they are doing. This may be once-removed; so seeing someone else benefit or gain or achieving some political or social goal may provide this response.

**An appropriate response from those in authority** – ‘someone noticed’. Knowing that those in authority have recognised a need and are responding appropriately is critical to building trust and confidence at a local level.

**A trusted resource base** – This includes physical space (to work, meet, play etc), funding, administrative support, and access to trusted people with appropriate professional skills. These professional skills include both community development skills (in terms of engaging communities and managing group processes) and also technical skills around advising people on reducing carbon emissions.

#### **6.4 Approaches adopted in the surveyed initiatives**

The surveyed projects adopted a range of approaches to engaging with their target audience. Some of these approaches would be considered innovative within the sustainable energy field, but more common or ‘standard’ within the community development sector.

*Climate Change So What?* is a case in point. Here the project team arranged for experts on climate change to give presentations in unusual settings (for this subject area) such as beach cafés and pubs or restaurants. The project sought to reach groups and individuals who would not normally attend such events. The intention, in keeping with the purpose of Defra’s funding, was to raise awareness and change attitudes rather than change behaviour.

The staff member interviewed reported that there had been a shift in the attitude of those who attended the talks, though this hadn’t been evaluated in detail at the time of our interview.

Others such as *Ashton Hayes – going carbon neutral* had been started by individuals who had an idea and the determination and personal skills to turn it into a project with support from the community. Whilst this may not be regarded as a particularly innovative approach in its own right, it could well be regarded as more difficult and pioneering within certain communities.

Some of the more issue-led projects we considered had deliberately adopted a collaborative and consultative approach to working with the community (described by interviewees as ‘a community development approach’). This involved seeking the views of members of the community on how the initiative should be developed, prior

to delivering the project in earnest. This approach was used by all the transport projects in both deprived and more affluent areas.

The majority of the projects evaluated used well established community development techniques. Within the small sample surveyed there was insufficient evidence to suggest that one approach might be more effective than another at mobilising individuals to change their behaviour, or engaging communities on the issue of climate change and the need to cut emissions of carbon dioxide.

### **6.5 The role of geography & interest in influencing & engaging individuals & groups**

Some initiatives were clearly defined by their locality or the region in which they operated. Others such as *Low Carbon Congregations* were a community of interest (in this case faith) operating in a particular region. The sample size was too small to give any clear indication of whether one type is more effective at engaging individuals and groups and mobilising them to change their behaviour than another.

### **6.6 The importance of trust in developing community level projects**

The development of trust emerged as a significantly important issue from the interviews. This was reiterated by participants in the Stakeholder Workshop.

Specifically this refers to trust between a professional development agency and the community participants and trust between the members of the group itself. Interviewees were very clear that this is a long process. Where a community is fragmented or there has been a collective loss of trust these underlying issues will need to be addressed before new programmes and activities can be considered, and where this has not been done initiatives are likely to fail. The importance of a long-term view has been acknowledged explicitly in the Government's strategy for community capacity building, *Firm Foundations* (DCLG, 2004).

Related to this is the issue of sustained funding. Interviewees were primarily concerned about the sustainability of funding, though the actual level of funding support is clearly considered to be important. Short-term funding makes it difficult to build up trust and long-term support within a community. The importance of avoiding very short term funding has been recognised in the recent Local Government White Paper from DCLG, which includes a commitment to a three year minimum as the norm for grant funding (DCLG, 2006a). However, the experience of many projects, often with a variety of funding sources, is that 3 year funding remains relatively rare; funders were reported to change priorities mid-term or withdraw funding at very short notice following changes in their own funding regimes.

Interviewees felt that the impact of the closure of a successful project went far wider than those directly involved with the project and had broader repercussions such as cynicism, loss of trust and breakdown of social cohesion.

No-one was arguing for unrealistic levels of funding or that projects should continue indefinitely. Rather they were making the case that the level and duration of the funding should be commensurate with the scale of the issue being addressed and that care should be taken when bringing projects to a close, to ensure the progress was not undone.

There were also comments about the Government's expectations of the voluntary sector. One interviewee expressed intense frustration that on the one hand the Government wanted the voluntary sector to take on more of the responsibility for the

delivery of services in the community whilst on the other failing to recognise the need for sustained funding and capacity building if this is to be achieved.

### **6.7 The role of local authorities and local strategic partnerships in influencing the mobilisation of individuals through community and local initiatives**

Whilst not essential to the success of a community initiative, it is clear from the interviews that local authorities can and do play a pivotal role in some initiatives and can contribute to their success or failure.

Most of the projects interviewed had enjoyed positive support from their local authorities. Only in one case did the interviewee feel that the local authority had been obstructive and this appears to have been related to a planning application for a wind turbine, and political in nature.

Local authorities were most effective at providing support where officers and one or more elected members were all in support and were able to work together.

As in other aspects of this work, interviewees reflected that it takes time to build partnerships with local authority staff, and this is not an instant process.

The potential of local strategic partnerships to create a supportive local context for action by setting CO2 reduction targets was raised in the Stakeholder Workshop. Examples were given of LSPs where local agencies had engaged with the process and thus been successful in writing carbon specific targets into local area agreements. However, this was typically where a local voluntary sector organisation with a sustainable energy-related mission had made a targeted (and sometimes specifically funded) effort to achieve this goal without necessarily seeking to represent the priorities of the wider community.

### **6.8 The importance of linking community initiatives with education programmes**

It was clear from the interviews that linking community initiatives with education programmes in schools can be highly effective. *Bike It* was an obvious example of this, but other projects had less direct connections. The London Cycling Campaign emphasised the importance of schools in their work.

There are several points of note here. Firstly, where an initiative can tap into a strong or inherent interest of local children, such as cycling, in a way which maintains their interest, this can be a strong driver for success. Secondly, schools can bring authority and credibility to a project which might be difficult to achieve as quickly by other means. Thirdly, children can be open to new ideas in a way which adults find more difficult, but can be persuasive in getting adults to change their attitudes and behaviour. The success of the *Bike It* project supports other work not covered directly in this project which shows that, with effective classroom-based initiatives, children can be more effective than professional advisors in getting their parents to take up energy efficiency advice<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Eg Energy Matters where 76% of the families of participating Key Stage 2 pupils showed the level of energy saving behaviour that usually result from professional energy advice (see [www.cse.org.uk/energymatters](http://www.cse.org.uk/energymatters) for more details). However, there is some older evidence which came to a less positive conclusion with regards to the role of children though this was examining a wide range of environmental behaviours rather than energy saving [See Uzzell, DL, Davallon, J., Bruun Jensen, B., Gottesdiener, H., Fontes, J., Kofoed, J., Uhrenholdt, G., and Vognsen, C., (1994). Children as Catalysts of Environmental Change, Report to DGXII/D-5 Research on Economic and Social Aspects of the Environment (SEER), European Commission, Brussels. Final Report, Contract No. EV5V-CT92-0157]

One of the questions addressed above is how to make a connection between us as individuals, the longer term detrimental impacts of climate change and the need to address these now through our own behaviour and actions. Children provide one possible means by which this link can be made back to parents.

### **6.9 The influence of a supportive policy context**

It was clear from the interviews that where it is relevant and supportive, national policy can have a direct and positive impact on the establishment of community initiatives.

Two of the health related projects commented specifically on the role of the Health White Paper in shaping local policy. In one case the White Paper had been a determining factor in setting local priorities and gaining financial support from the PCT, (though interestingly the PCT subsequently withdrew an offer of continuation funding, on the grounds of their own funding constraints).

In the two cases above national policy defined the broad context and strategic objectives set out by the Government, but had to be interpreted and developed by local development agencies before it could be made relevant or applicable to local people.

Even where policy relates specifically to the habits and lifestyles of individuals as in the case of healthy eating, for many people this will have little or no significance unless it can be interpreted and made relevant their own lives. Linking local needs and national policy is unlikely to happen automatically, and requires professional input and local knowledge.

### **6.10 The role of 'wilful' individuals and wilful 'issue-led' organisations**

The sobriquet 'wilful individual' has been used by CSE and others to describe determined individuals who have been effective at bringing about change or delivering projects and activities, often in the face of barriers and obstruction. This has largely been used in the context of individuals working in local authorities to drive energy programmes.

More than one of the people we interviewed could be described in this way, or spoke of another person involved in the project in this way. It was obvious that the development and success of certain projects was linked to their determination and enthusiasm.

Despite this, it is evident from the research reiterated by the stakeholders that a community initiative does not need to be lead by a single 'wilful individual' to be successful. Indeed, there are times where their participation can be a hindrance, for example where their ideas diverge from the group as whole. They can also act as 'gate keepers' if not supported to work inclusively.

In each of the projects we interviewed it was clear that there was a core group of individuals, voluntary or professional or a mix of both, with a variety of skills, who were described as being essential to the success of the project, and it was necessary for them to work together as a team. Whilst a 'wilful individual' may be effective in some cases they are not a requirement for success; indeed, unless they begin to work effectively within a group, their impact will tend to be blunted.

What seems to be more important than 'wilful' individuals for many of the projects examined in this study is the involvement of 'wilful' organisations which have a clear agenda or mission to bring about change and deliver activities 'on the ground'.

### **6.11 The specific case of climate change as an issue for community initiatives**

One of the issues arising from this research (including discussions with the Steering Group and at the Stakeholders Workshop) is the degree to which the threat of climate change (and specifically the requirement to reduce greenhouse gases emissions as a response to this) differs from other issues being addressed through community initiatives.

Further to this, what are the characteristics of the issues which tend to fit with and motivate community approaches to dealing with them? And how does mobilising individuals to reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases compare with other issues such as healthy eating or crime reduction which seem to be readily adopted within community initiatives? These questions were a particular focus for the Stakeholder Workshop.

It is helpful to detail the characteristics of issues which tend to fit with and motivate community approaches among existing community organisations. Such issues usually:

- are locally relevant and often immediately obvious
- have personal or known beneficiaries from action
- have clear agency ('if we act we gain') and feedback ('we can see the benefits and improvements from our actions').

By contrast, the issue of climate change:

- is long term and 'worst somewhere else' and 'some time in the future'
- has benefits of action (if everyone acts) which accrue principally to unknown others elsewhere at some unspecified point in the future (unless there is stress on the non-carbon benefits such as reduced fuel bills or improved road safety)
- Individual actions are also, in and of themselves, invisible and insignificant in the context of the science of climate change (i.e. the actions of a few, even if they are many within a community, genuinely make little difference to the scale of the threat)

This contrast can lead to a sense that the focus should be on trying to make climate change locally relevant so that it 'feels' more like the sort of issue that does resonate for community initiatives (and the individuals they are reaching).

Interestingly, the interviewed initiatives which were focusing on climate change did not attempt to take this route. Instead *Low Carbon Congregations* made links to a common interest while *Climate Change So What?* provided direct exposure to, and explanation of, the scientific evidence. However, these represent only a handful of the 21 projects interviewed and it is too early to say how effective these approaches have been in changing attitudes and motivating behaviour change.

Discussions at the Stakeholder Workshop did produce ideas relating to showing how the impacts of climate change will effect a locality or common interests (such as sailing). However, assessing these suggestions, we are not convinced. We believe that they risk 'forcing the science' (because in reality the local impacts are unlikely to

be particularly severe at any time soon except for lowest level coastal areas) They also assume that a future threat of comparatively mild local impact would trigger action.

Other suggestions from the Stakeholder Workshop involved providing information to enable groups and individuals to engage with their own 'carbon footprints' and compare their performance (and improvements) with others. We believe this has significant merit as a way of sustaining the interest and action of organisations and individuals already seeking to take action. However, we remain unconvinced that it will stimulate significant new interest in addressing climate change; people are unlikely to engage meaningfully and consequentially with such tools without existing interest and motivation.

A further group of suggestions involved focusing on the non-carbon benefits of action, such as reduced fuel bills (from improved energy efficiency) or improved road safety and air quality (from lower car use).

This has been a much-used tactic to date by sustainable energy organisations within community-based initiatives, with some success. However, its potential (based on previous successes) is dwarfed by the scale of the challenge of addressing climate change. Even with the prospects of rising fuel prices and increasing congestion, these appear unlikely to be sufficient factors in themselves to motivate the significant widespread change in behaviour and lifestyle required to meet national carbon reduction targets.

A number of participants at the Stakeholder Workshop considered that community initiatives would be most successful in the context of stronger action by national government to make reductions in carbon emissions compulsory, for example through a rationed system of personal carbon allowances.

While each of these suggestions may help, we have come to the conclusion during this study that the key challenge for stimulating individual and community engagement to tackle climate change is the third of the 'characteristics'; *the need for a realistic sense of collective agency*.

As mentioned in Section 5.3 above, the issue of climate change has largely been framed for public debate in terms of worrying science (increasing concentrations of carbon in the atmosphere and signs of change already happening) and the difficulty of international negotiations and stand offs (inaction by US or China, no point in acting alone etc). Action-oriented communications have tended to demonise certain types of carbon-emitting behaviour (4x4s and flying) and the failure of governments to act.

None of these suggest that an individual or community taking action to cut their emissions will achieve anything – indeed they explicitly imply a lack of agency. The impact on the atmosphere's carbon content is genuinely insignificant and possibly 'too late'. And the scale of any action is dwarfed by the impact of the well-reported inaction of others.

Indeed, as raised at the Stakeholder Workshop (and quoted in Section 5.3 above), we will need to be respond to this challenge:

*"I've been told a lot about all the awful things that will happen if I don't act to cut emissions and address climate change. **But what will happen if I do act? What difference will it make?"***

Responses from government officials in the Stakeholder Workshop to this question focused on how the difference is through 'supporting the UK's leadership on this issue internationally'. However, none of the non-governmental workshop participants

was particularly taken with this as a persuasive justification for action at either individual or community level (even if they understood that this was indeed the importance and valuable difference which action currently makes).

As mentioned above, the difference an individual or group is making at this stage is indeed a political one. But stakeholders felt that 'supporting UK leadership' was too political in that it sounded like it was about UK leaders (and therefore tied up with personal feelings about them) rather than the leadership they exhibit. And at a community and individual level, this approach would still be too remote, lacking feedback and immediacy, and thereby lacking the necessary sense of agency.

We therefore need to find a new framing for the climate change issue which:

- a. clearly communicates a sense of the collective agency that resonates for individuals and communities (and moves them from the inaction of "I will if you will" to the dynamism of "We have...now you"), and;
- b. is consistent with the government's approach within national policy and international negotiations.

It is difficult to believe that the first of these will be possible without the communication and engagement of individuals either happening or being reinforced at a local, community level. Whatever the nature of that community as one of locality (my street/estate/village, my children's school) or one of interest (my local church/faith group, my WI/Rotarians/WRVS/Freemason/FoE group, my sports club/choir/ramblers group/allotment society etc), it is within these community-based interactions with peers that reinforcement for action (or inaction) and associated social norms will play out.

This analysis implies that community-based initiatives to engage with action to address climate change will be a necessary component of any coherent national programme.

That said, we take note of the points made by many of the interviewees and also the community development experts in the Stakeholder Workshop that climate change is unlikely to emerge as a priority for communities of its own accord within a community development approach. Most communities (and individuals within them) have other more immediate pressing priorities and needs.

This means that any approach to working with communities to mobilise action to address the threat of climate change may best focus first on engaging the communities through informed, issue-led organisations taking the issue to them, rather than expecting communities to arrive at the issue of their own accord.

Such organisations will then need to engage the techniques of community development to build on that community engagement to achieve trust, establish common purpose, share learning and develop the capacity of the community to act and support its members on a sustained basis.

## **7 Policy implications**

The findings of this study have implications for those developing climate change policy. They raise two questions:

- What is the appropriate role for local and community initiatives to take in tackling climate change?
- What is needed to enable community initiatives to undertake this role successfully?

In considering the first question, the evidence provided in the literature and reinforced by this study is that community initiatives can: raise individual consciousness of issues and make them resonant locally; provide opportunities to act; increase capacity to analyse and respond to individual and local needs; and reinforce action to create a sense of collective agency and collective achievement.

Irrespective of how the initiatives themselves would describe their goals, these are necessary (though almost certainly not sufficient) conditions for changing individual behaviour.

The lack of unambiguous evidence to demonstrate the impact and the specific costs of community-based approaches is frustrating (though unsurprising). However, it is not immediately obvious that these conditions could be established in the absence of effective community-based initiatives. The challenge for policy-makers and funders is therefore to justify supporting such initiatives in the absence of such comforting precision.

The specific issue of climate change adds a significant additional challenge for a community-based approach. The issue does not share the characteristics of issues which are the usual fare of community initiatives. It is global rather than local, long-term rather than immediate, and has distant and unknown beneficiaries. Above all, there is currently no sense or evidence of agency that indicates that action has a positive effect. These characteristics also make motivating individual action directly (eg through government-sponsored communications) similarly challenging.

However, the fact that the issue of the threat climate change is 'different' in these respects does not mean that addressing this threat does not need, or could not benefit from, a community-based approach. It just means we all have to think much harder about what needs to be different in community-based approaches focused on climate change.

As outlined in Section 6.11, the analysis for this study suggests that the community sector is unlikely, of its own accord, to 'lead the charge' without significant proactive intervention to stimulate, support and resource its involvement.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> That said, as mentioned earlier, there are examples of where climate change activism at a community level had impacted positively on carbon emissions targets and action plans set by Local Strategic Partnerships. This type of community influence relies on mechanisms such as Community Empowerment Networks which provide the 'know-how' and support to help community-level concerns to be brought to the decision-making tables.

This means that any approach to working with communities to mobilise action to address the threat of climate change may best focus first on engaging the communities through informed, issue-led organisations taking the issue to them, rather than expecting communities to arrive at the issue of their own accord.

Such organisations will then need to engage the techniques of community development to build on that community engagement to achieve trust, establish common purpose, share learning and develop the capacity of the community to act and support its members on a sustained basis. It would appear that the notion of 'stimulating behaviour change' does not resonate with community organisations and therefore other phrases and concepts should be used to describe the purpose of such activities.

As identified in some of the literature reviewed for this study, this is the approach adopted by Community Action for Energy (CAfE), a programme of the Energy Saving Trust. CAfE targets community organisations and community activists with information, advice, expert technical support, training and exemplar case studies, to help them understand more about how they can embed sustainable energy in their existing work and initiate new energy projects. CAfE also targets organisations and activists focused on sustainable energy (energy agencies, local authority officers, energy suppliers etc) to help them develop understanding and skills in community-based approaches.

The CAfE programme currently supports a network of nearly 3,000 members. It appears to have the potential for significant growth; without extensive promotion the demand for services from new and existing members routinely exceeds funded targets.

The findings of this and other studies would also indicate the need to ensure that all of the conditions for successful community-based initiatives are put in place to enable the delivery of community-based initiatives which address the threat of climate change. To repeat the findings reported in Section 7.3, these are:

**Ownership and control** – local initiatives need to have ownership and control over their activities. Where this is absent projects are likely to fail. Interviewees made it clear that providing ownership and control is frequently difficult, but the ability to shape a project in response to local need is critical.

**Relevance** – initiatives have to be relevant (or become relevant) to the needs and wants of a local community or group. Projects will be unable to establish themselves without this.

**Ability to achieve small successes** – The ability to achieve (and feedback) small successes is critical to maintaining the long-term involvement of individuals.

**A sense of satisfaction and wellbeing** – as with success, individuals are unlikely participate in a project or initiative unless they get some sense of satisfaction, wellbeing or personal gain from what they are doing. This may be once-removed; so seeing someone else benefit or gain or achieving some political or social goal may provide this response.

**An appropriate response from those in authority** – 'someone noticed'. Knowing that those in authority have recognised a need and are responding appropriately is critical to building trust and confidence at a local level.

**A trusted resource base** – This includes physical space (to work, meet, play etc), funding, administrative support, access to trusted people with appropriate professional skills. These professional skills include both community development skills (in terms of engaging communities and managing group processes) and also technical skills around advising people on reducing carbon emissions.

To this list, in the context of climate change and the analysis undertaken in this study, we would add:

**A 'framing' of the issue nationally to establish a clear and realistic sense of collective agency** – so that individuals and communities understand to what they are contributing through their action, as discussed in Section 6.11.

**An affirmative national policy context** – which shows how the actions of individuals, communities, organisations and businesses, local, regional, and national government are aligned and fairly distributed and enable the UK to take a legitimate leading role in international negotiations.

Analysing the specific policies and programmes required to deliver these conditions – and how they relate to existing initiatives – was beyond the scope of this study provided to the project team by Defra.

## **8 Conclusions and recommendations**

### **8.1 Conclusions**

- Within the literature reviewed for this project there is a considerable body of published work which underpins the hypothesis that communities are well placed to influence individual behaviour. However, like others, within this we have found little robust empirical research to support this otherwise common-sense idea. We also found no evidence to disprove it.
- The community initiatives evaluated here encompassed a range of approaches, from traditional to those which could be regarded as more innovative in some fields. They involved both communities of interest and locality. There was no evidence from this small sample that one approach is more effective than another at mobilising individuals, or bringing about behaviour change.
- Among the schemes interviewed for this research the achievement of behaviour change was rarely considered as a direct measure of success. Where it was considered, there was no common method of measuring what change had taken place.
- Evidence from the interviews suggests that community initiatives will require resources to undertake evaluation and guidance on the use of the currently available tools if a more consistent approach to evaluating the effectiveness of schemes is to be achieved.
- Evidence from the interviews suggests that developing trust within a community is a long term process, but is a core component of successful community initiatives. It is susceptible to factors such as the withdrawal of funding, poorly community engagement techniques, loss of professional support, and changing Government priorities.
- Sustained funding of successful initiatives is important in building social networks, trust and social cohesion.
- Evidence from several of the initiatives reviewed and from stakeholders suggests that linking new initiatives to existing activities where needs have been clearly identified can be highly effective, and less time consuming than developing initiatives from scratch. Building on existing activities also takes advantage of the trust and credibility that long-standing projects and workers have established in communities.
- Evidence from the interviews reflected by the views of the stakeholders suggests that local authorities can provide a positive influence and contribution to community initiatives. This is likely to be most effective where elected members and officers can work together to provide support. However, there is insufficient evidence from the interviews to quantify the benefits of supportive local authority involvement.
- Evidence from several of the schemes suggests that linking community initiatives with relevant education programmes can be highly effective.
- The interviews have provided a general sense that an affirmative national policy context is important in stimulating and shaping community initiatives. In two of the

schemes there was a direct connection between government policy and the development of a local initiative. National policy must be made relevant to local needs, potentially through interpretation by local organisations.

- 'Mission led' organisations can be highly effective at stimulating local activity. So too can 'wilful individuals' or community champions, but without appropriate support or guidance they may be counter productive and become barriers to progress.
- From the evidence of the interviews there are certain factors which are likely to be critical to the success of community initiatives. These are:
  - A sense of ownership and control
  - Relevance to local needs
  - The ability to achieve small successes
  - A sense of satisfaction and shared well-being
  - The knowledge that those in authority have heard and responded to a need
  - A trusted resource base, including professional support, funding, and physical space
- Community initiatives have the potential to play a significant role in raising individual consciousness of climate change and establishing the sense of common purpose on this issue. Projects based on community development approaches also help build an individual's sense of agency and their confidence in being able to influence the conditions around them.
- The lack of unambiguous evidence to demonstrate the impact and the specific costs of community-based approaches is frustrating. However, it is not easy to imagine a successful national response to climate change which does not involve effective community-based initiatives in stimulating individual behaviour change and establishing social norms to reinforce 'low carbon lifestyles'. The challenge for policy-makers and funders is therefore to justify supporting such initiatives in the absence of such evidence.
- The issue of climate change poses specific challenges for community-based initiatives since it shares few of the characteristics of typical issues for such initiatives (local and immediate, known beneficiaries, and clear sense of agency and potential for feedback). This challenge applies similarly for initiatives aimed directly at individuals.
- The implications of this challenge are that communities are unlikely to treat climate change as a priority without intervention. They will therefore need to be led and supported to action, principally by local issue-led organisations, if they – and the individuals within them – are to be mobilised successfully to change behaviour.
- Initiatives such as the Community Action for Energy programme of the Energy Saving Trust indicate the scope for stimulating and supporting action to engage communities with sustainable energy and addressing the threat of climate change.
- A key requirement for future success is to establish a clear and realistic sense of collective agency which motivates and justifies individual and group action to cut carbon emissions. This should honestly reflect the scientific insignificance of such

actions. It should also make explicit the political significance of many people starting to take action in concert and demonstrate the way in which this genuinely underpins the legitimacy of UK leadership in seeking a global solution to the threat.

## **8.2 Recommendations for further action**

- In formulating policy on responses to climate change, the Government needs to define more clearly the role it expects the community sector to take on this issue and how this fits into broader action to curb carbon emissions.
- The Government should review its current and planned policies and programmes (and those of organisations it funds such as the Energy Saving Trust) to assess whether they are jointly creating the conditions required for successful community-based initiatives on climate change, particularly taking account of the likely need for issue-led organisations to take the issue to individuals and communities.
- The Government should consider the ‘what happens if I do act?’ question and examine whether its current communications strategy on climate change is creating the necessary sense of common purpose and collective agency as outlined here.
- The community and sustainable energy sectors should examine jointly (potentially in a follow-up Stakeholder Workshop) how they can help to refine policy, guide programmes and support genuine efforts by Government and others to stimulate effective public response to the threat of climate change.
- Several of the projects interviewed for this study which focus on climate and energy are intending to undertake evaluation of their overall impact. We recommend returning to these once this work has been completed as this may provide a further indication of their effectiveness at cutting carbon emissions.
- In addition, the Research Councils should initiate a systematic longitudinal study of community-based initiatives, particularly in the field of sustainable energy, to assess their impact on social norms and individual behaviours with a view to establishing a more robust evidence base for future policy and funding and to improving evaluation techniques.

## 9 Appendices

### 9.1 Appendix 1: List of publications reviewed

Burton, P., Goodlad, R., Croft, J., Abbott, J., Hastings, A., Macdonald, G., and Slater, T. (2004) *What works in community involvement in area-based initiatives? A systematic review of the literature*. London: Home Office

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## 9.2 Appendix 2: Community organisation interviewed

Project Name	Organisation where different	Description of Project	Type of community	Interviewee Name	Interviewee's Role
Ashton Hayes Going Carbon Neutral Project		Village aiming to eliminate its carbon footprint through personal energy saving and lifestyle considerations	Geographic: Ashton Hayes village	Gary Charnock	Project Coordinator
Awel Aman Tawe		Community energy project which promotes community renewables and gives energy efficiency to advice local people.	Geographic: Upper Swansea and Amman Valleys	Dan McCallum	Project Manager
Bike It	Sustrans	Schools - centred cycling promotion project	Interest: Schools Geographic: Around Bristol	Katherine Rooney	Bike It Officer
Caia Park		Community centre which works with local groups to influence individual behaviour around health, wellbeing, and social inclusion.	Geographic: Caia Park Estate, Wrexham. Around 12,000 residents.	Nigel Davies	Deputy Chief Officer

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Organisation where different</b>	<b>Description of Project</b>	<b>Type of community</b>	<b>Interviewee Name</b>	<b>Interviewee's Role</b>
Climate Change, So What?	Community Energy Plus, J&M Sustainable Developers, St Austell Brewery	Climate change communications project based around quizzes and talks in schools, pubs, and cafes.	Geographic community: Cornwall.	Mandy Milano, J&M Sustainable Developers	Project developer and quiz presenter.
Community Development	LHA	Community participation initiative based among residents of estates run by LHA, a housing association.	Geographic community: Various housing estates in East Midlands	Natalie Robertson	Community Development Manager
Community Kitchen	Newcastle New Deal for Communities	Initiative aiming to improve healthy eating behaviour, part of larger New Deal for Communities programme in the area.	Geographic: Newcastle	Catherine Mackereth	Developed proposal. Steering group member.
Congregations for a Low Carbon Future	Marches Energy Agency	Works with churches to raise awareness of climate change and of what action churches and their congregations can take.	Faith-based: Church of England Geographic: Started in the Diocese of Hereford	Richard Davies	Director of MEA
Duffryn Community Link		Influencing behaviour around education and engagement, via community activity among residents.	Geographic: Residents of the Tredegar Park ward. Around 1600 residents.	Tim Atkinson	Director

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Organisation where different</b>	<b>Description of Project</b>	<b>Type of community</b>	<b>Interviewee Name</b>	<b>Interviewee's Role</b>
Food Links	Bulmer Foundation	Capacity building for sustainable food production	Interest / profession: Farmers. Geographic: Herefordshire	Peter Norton	Project Manager, Food Links
Home Zones (Bristol and Swindon)	Sustrans	Community participation in the development of Home Zones. Home Zones are redevelopments of streets to change the priority between cars, cyclists, and pedestrians, so that they are on more equal terms.	Geographic: Group of streets	Peter Lipman	Director of Liveable Neighbourhoods, Sustrans
LEAP	Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Primary Care Trust	Targets 11-16 yrs and over 50's, Signposts people to local fitness activities and provides physical activities such as health walks in the community	Geographic: Cornwall Age: 11-16 years and 50yrs +	Lewis Jones	Co-ordinator

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Organisation where different</b>	<b>Description of Project</b>	<b>Type of community</b>	<b>Interviewee Name</b>	<b>Interviewee's Role</b>
Lymebourne Park Community Centre Extension	Lymebourne Park, East Devon District Council	Tenant-led project to raise money for a community centre extension	Geographic: Residents of Lymebourne Park sheltered housing development and people living nearby.	Emma Charlton, East Devon District Council	Previously Tenant Participation Officer, now Housing Project Officer
'Plot to Plate'	Hartcliffe Health and Environment Group	Resident managed project changing behaviour around healthy living. Market garden and food cooperative.	Geographic: Hartcliffe, Bristol	Sue Walker	Community Development
Real Nappy Project	West Sussex County Council	Project encouraging new parents to use cotton nappies rather than disposables.	Interest: New parents Geographic: West Sussex	Susan Gibbons	Project Officer
Small Change (South West)	Global Action Plan	Encourages primary school children, their families, and other target groups to make small changes in their own homes to save energy and water, recycle more and eat healthy local food.	Interest: Priority groups were women, under 25's, and over 55's. Geographic: Around Dawlish area	Zoe Reed	Community Project Officer

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Organisation where different</b>	<b>Description of Project</b>	<b>Type of community</b>	<b>Interviewee Name</b>	<b>Interviewee's Role</b>
South Riverside Community Development Centre		Community development project in Cardiff, with behaviour change initiatives including young people and crime. Interview focused on development of a food cooperative.	Geographic: Cardiff	Ken Barker	Centre Administrator
Thanington Neighbourhood Resource Centre		Community centre on estate with previously high crime rate	Geographic: Housing estate of 1800 residents	Paula Spencer	Centre Manager
The Hive Community Allotment.	Barnardos	Community allotment scheme, achieving behaviour change around healthy eating and wellbeing.	Geographic: Coalfield area of Sunderland Age: Mainly young people	Sharon Humphreys	Allotment project worker / volunteer coordinator.
Two community cycling projects in Tower Hamlets	London Cycling Campaign (LCC)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 'Jagonari Cycles': Jagonari is a women's educational resource centre in Tower Hamlets. Group obtained bikes and had cycling lessons.</li> <li>2. Promotion of cycling at a girls' school</li> </ol>	Geographic: London Borough of Tower Hamlets Interest: 1. Women 2. Girls at the school and their female relatives Faith: The majority are Muslim	Lucy Davis	Community Cycling Officer,

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Organisation where different</b>	<b>Description of Project</b>	<b>Type of community</b>	<b>Interviewee Name</b>	<b>Interviewee's Role</b>
Women Away	Originally supported by Newcastle City Council but now self-sustaining	Initiative aiming to change women's behaviour around participation, engagement and social activity to reduce social isolation.	Interest: Women Geography: Covers several wards in the east of Newcastle.	Fiona Swindell	Initially as Community Development Worker for Newcastle City Council, now a member of the group.

### 9.3 Appendix 3: Questions used in semi-structured telephone interviews

No	Item
1	Interview no
2	Date of interview
3	Time
4	Interviewer
5	Name of interviewee
6	Organisation name
7	Would you have any objection to us recording this interview?
8	Title of project or initiative
9	Role of interviewee in the project
10	What were the aims and objectives of the project?
11	What was the project about? Brief description of the project.
12	When did the project/initiative start?
13	When did/will the project/initiative end?
14	Who are/were the project partners?
15	What was the project budget?
16	Who were the funders? <i>How was the funding raised?</i>
17	What is the value of the voluntary contributions? Time, resources, etc
18	Where did the drive for the project come from? How did the project come about?
19	Was the project professionally lead or lead by volunteers? <i>Level of professional support</i>
20	What was the client group for this project? <i>Who was the project aimed at? Who were you working with?</i>
21	Has the client group been defined in terms of geography, socio-economic, interest, self help etc?
22	How was the 'community' involved? Was there a strong sense of community identity prior to the project starting?
23	Did the project draw in new people as opposed to those who had previously been involved in projects operating at a community level?
24	Was it a specific objective of this project to bring about behaviour change and if so what?
25	If behaviour change was a key objective how was this to be achieved?
26	Was there an identifiable behavioural change as a result of this project? <i>If so how has this been measured? Prompt for evidence.</i>

27	What were the project successes? <i>Prompt for the nature and scale of the impacts</i>
28	Have the successes been achieved in the way that you thought?
29	Have the benefits been sustained? What evidence is there for this?
30	Who were the beneficiaries of this project?
31	In your view what were the critical success factors for this initiative/project?
32	Were there aspects of the project which didn't work - i.e. failures? Why? Were there any surprises?
33	Was there direct or indirect involvement of the local authority(ies) or other local or regional government in this project?
34	Describe the involvement of the LA's
35	Was LA involvement helpful or not? <i>If not why not?</i>
36	Will you be undertaking long term evaluation of the project?
37	What lessons have you learnt from this project?
38	Is there anything unique about this project or could the lessons be applied to other areas?
39	What lessons from this project might be applied to the issue of climate change? If so why, if not why not?
40	In retrospect what would you do differently?

**9.4 Appendix 4: Stakeholder Workshop Attendees, Nobel House, 6 February 2007**

Peter Capener, independent sustainable energy consultant  
Chris Church, Every Action Counts  
Sarah Coe, Local Government Association  
Paul Devlin, Voluntary Arts England  
Amanda Inverarity, Community Development Exchange  
Chris Jacobs, Personal Carbon Allowances, Defra  
Karen Lawrence, Energy Saving Trust  
Mark Letcher, Centre for Sustainable Energy  
Beth Longstaff, Community Development Exchange  
Debbie Lucas, Tenant Participation Advisory Service  
Liz McDonnell, Energy Review Team, DTI  
Sian Priest, National Climate Change Programme, Defra  
Frances Raynor, Climate and Energy: Households and Markets, Defra  
Catriona Reeby, Energy Saving Trust  
Simon Roberts, Centre for Sustainable Energy  
Sue Shaw, independent community development consultant  
Harry Shields, Tenant Participation Advisory Service  
Steve Skinner, independent community development consultant  
Mike Stott, Climate and Energy: Households and Markets, Defra  
Rod Sterne, WWF-UK  
Steve Waller, Improvement and Development Agency  
Kaye Welfare, Severn Wye Energy Agency  
Zoe Redgrove, Centre for Sustainable Energy