



local carbon management **matrix**

Introduction to the 2010 edition

This guidance introduces the Local Carbon Management Matrix and explains how to use it.

The Local Carbon Management Matrix is designed to help local authorities and partners to:

- understand better how their wide range of roles and functions can influence local carbon dioxide emissions from across their districts;
- assess and reflect on their current standard of performance in being a positive influence to reduce local emissions;
- develop performance improvement plans to use these roles and functions to better effect, driving future actions and greater achievements on local carbon emission reduction.

With support from the SW Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership, the Matrix has been updated in 2010 by the Centre for Sustainable Energy to reflect recent changes in the local authority performance framework and other relevant policies. Its functionality has also been improved to make it easier to use by different types of local authority – district, unitary and county – and by those seeking to co-ordinate a number of councils under a Multi Area Agreement.

The origins of the Local Carbon Management Matrix

The Matrix originated from research led by the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) for Defra in 2006.¹ This research provided the evidence base for the Government to commit to a much stronger drive to improve the performance of local authorities on climate change. At the heart of this drive was the introduction of National Indicator 186 (NI186) focused on reducing local per capita carbon emissions.

Since its development by CSE, a Bristol-based national charity (see www.cse.org.uk), the Matrix has been used by a number of local authorities now considered as amongst the leaders in local authority action on climate change, including Easington District Council, Bristol City Council and the London Borough of Islington. Dorset County Council has also used some of its components to work with its district and unitary partners to underpin performance improvement across the county on energy efficiency.

The Local Carbon Management Matrix has been developed by the Centre for Sustainable Energy and the 2010 edition was funded by the South West Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership. It can be found at www.cse.org.uk/matrix



Why local authority action on climate change is important

There are three particular aspects of action to reduce carbon emissions which highlight the importance of effective local action, alongside national and international action:

- implementation of carbon management is highly diffused – requiring a sustained change in behaviour and consumer choices by every householder, transport user, organisation and business;
- amongst the individuals and groups who need to implement these changes, the current levels of motivation to act and the understanding of required actions are still relatively limited; the tools and technologies, services and skills to enable action are not all widely available and are currently often found in smaller organisations (voluntary, business or academic) which can fall ‘below the radar’ of national bodies.
- This emphasises the need for a focus on changing attitudes, building understanding and motivation to act, and enabling new partnerships and service developments to test and deliver the necessary changes.

In this context, local authorities particularly have:

- direct connections with individual households, community groups and businesses by virtue of existing service provision and electoral relationships;
- opportunities to identify, bring together and support local organisations and encourage businesses to provide services which reflect local need and circumstance;
- a potentially strong ability to establish and maintain a sense of local identity and civic pride which can make national and global issues seem locally relevant.

More specifically, local authorities have duties and responsibilities to:

- manage their own buildings, housing stock and staff activities, and procure equipment and a wide range of services
- deliver a range of services to the public (housing, education, social services, waste, leisure/tourism, culture, etc)
- establish and control planning strategy
- co-ordinate local regeneration and economic development activity
- manage and/or influence public sector investment in local infrastructure
- enforce building regulations and trading standards
- provide civic leadership within their communities, encouraging behavioural change and leading by example (eg through Local Strategic Partnerships)
- create and support effective partnerships (with each other and across sectors) to meet defined objectives
- make nationally significant issues locally relevant and motivating
- promote community wellbeing
- showcase good practice.

With an overarching and fundamental cross-cutting issue like carbon emission reduction (or ‘carbon management’), it is highly likely that each of these accepted roles for local authorities has an influence on carbon emissions. This influence may currently be positive or negative, deliberate or not. It is often not being considered in any systematic way. Yet it is difficult to imagine an effective national effort to reduce carbon emissions unless local authorities are taking action to ensure that their influence is positive and aligned with national policies and programmes.

The purpose of the Local Carbon Management Matrix is to help local authorities and partners consider and understand their current influence – across all of their relevant roles and activities – and to see and plan how they can reshape their actions in future to ensure that influence becomes positive and effective.

How the Matrix works: assessing performance and guiding improvement

The Local Carbon Management Matrix identifies the roles and levers which local authorities have available to them which have an influence on carbon emissions. The Matrix is divided into seven sections: the first looks at co-ordination of NI186 activity and other strategic carbon emissions reduction work, while the rest look at six separate aspects of carbon management:

1. National Indicator 186
2. Domestic energy efficiency
3. Business energy efficiency
4. Public sector energy efficiency
5. Renewable and low carbon technologies
6. Local authorities’ (and partners’) own organisational transport
7. Local transport

This is to reflect the fact that carbon management is the end result of action on one of these aspects, with many actions potentially being delivered for a range of purposes and motivations beyond carbon emission reduction (e.g. affordable warmth, economic development, road accident reduction, local air quality improvement etc).

The Matrix details the conduct likely to secure ‘weak’, ‘fair’, ‘good’ or ‘excellent’ rating for each potential role or lever. Performance can therefore be evaluated by assessing which of these four ‘behavioural indicators’ for each lever most closely resembles the activity currently being undertaken. This ‘behavioural indicator’ approach is taken because many of the levers and actions have an indirect impact on carbon emissions; it would therefore be difficult to develop a purely quantitative measurement of performance.

By detailing behaviours at each level of performance, the Matrix provides a picture of the incremental steps involved in improving performance. It therefore has the potential to act as both a yardstick to measure performance and a guide to improve it. For example, a local authority currently performing at ‘fair’ on a particular lever can see immediately what it would need to be doing in order to improve to ‘good’.

Using the Matrix spreadsheet to assess a local authority's performance

The Matrix spreadsheet is designed to be simple to use to undertake and record a self-assessment of a local authority's performance on carbon management. There is a short set of instructions at the bottom of the Summary Assessment worksheet of the Matrix which provide guidance on how to use the spreadsheet and how the seven separate worksheets (reachable from the 'tabs' at the bottom of the screen view) feed in to the overall performance assessments on the Summary.

A self-assessment requires the local authority to assess the level – 'weak' to 'excellent' – of its current performance against each lever in the Matrix by seeking evidence of how its behaviours compare with those described for each performance level. The appropriate level can then be recorded (by selecting from a drop down menu) together with a brief description of the reasoning for that assessment (entered in the neighbouring cell in the column headed 'Reasoning').

The spreadsheet automatically combines these individual assessments for performance on each lever for each worksheet, providing an overall assessment per aspect of carbon management which appears on the Summary Assessment worksheet. A score will appear in these boxes as soon as one lever on the relevant sheet is scored. To obtain an accurate summary score, all of the levers visible on the relevant sheet should be given a score, referring to each lever's specific description of weak, fair, good and excellent practice. The overall performance assessment is more graded (i.e. includes interim gradings like weak-fair, or good-excellent) to provide a more precise reflection of the average performance across all of the levers that make up that aspect of carbon management.

A self-assessment by a local authority will inevitably require a cross-cutting review of a local authority's current activities involving many different departments – which indicates it may be best co-ordinated by, or in conjunction with, senior staff in the Chief Executive's office, taking advantage of their cross-authority perspective. The 'assessor' column is designed to help the co-ordinator of the assessment identify who is best placed to assess performance of that particular function.

PLEASE NOTE that each time the spreadsheet is opened, you will need to take steps to 'enable macros' or the spreadsheet will not work properly. Many computers are now set up to disable macros by default so you will need to click on the macros security toolbar that will appear when you open the spreadsheet or respond to an on-screen instruction (depending on which version of Excel you have).

- **Tailoring the Matrix to your type of local authority**

The front sheet, entitled 'Summary Assessment', allows the user to select the local authority type. Some levers are only relevant for district or unitary authorities, while others are only suitable for county councils or sub-regional partnerships. When the spreadsheet is first opened, all of these levers are visible. Ticking the box to select the appropriate local authority type for your assessment will hide the levers which are not relevant for your local authority (assuming macros have been enabled). Note that any scores already entered into the spreadsheet will remain, even if a lever is hidden. To clear all scores if re-starting an assessment, use the 'clear all scores' button on the 'Summary Assessment' sheet.

Using the Multi Area Agreement (MAA) coordinator's collation spreadsheet

There is also spreadsheet designed for an MAA coordinator, either in a county council or a sub-regional partnership, to collate the scores from all MAA members. The Summary sheet allows the user to set the number of local authorities included, up to a maximum of 10. Enter the names of the local authorities in the white boxes, and uncheck any superfluous boxes (for example, if you only have five local authorities, uncheck the boxes next to local authorities 6 to 10).

The collation spreadsheet is laid out in a similar way to the assessment spreadsheet. Scores from each sheet of each local authority's own assessment spreadsheet must be copied and pasted in a block into the collation spreadsheet, under the correct local authority name (any rows which were hidden in the assessment spreadsheets will show up as blanks in the collation spreadsheet, and should be left blank). At the bottom of each worksheet is a summary of average scores across the MAA members for each lever in the category. The overall score for each aspect of carbon management is shown on the Summary Assessment sheet.

Using the Matrix assessment results to inform performance improvement planning

While it is beyond the scope of this guidance to explain how best to develop a performance improvement plan, the Matrix assessment can help in two ways to inform such a process: identifying areas of weakness (or opportunities for improvement) and indicating incremental steps to take to improve.

Firstly, the assessment can help to identify particular areas where a local authority's performance is below its average performance, both between aspects of carbon management (from the Summary Assessment) and within them (from the individual worksheets). Thus, for example, it might show that a local authority is doing well on domestic energy efficiency and public sector energy efficiency but poorly on business energy efficiency. Or that, while it is doing well on domestic energy efficiency in general, there may be particular levers where it is falling short of its performance.

Secondly, the Matrix reveals the nature of the behaviour required to improve performance by one or more grades. So if the assessment was that performance was 'fair', it is easy to see what the local authority should be doing to achieve a 'good' rating. Clearly, this does not explain in full how that behaviour might best be secured but describing the behaviours being sought in a local authority is a powerful component of a successful performance improvement strategy.

Using the Matrix to assess performance improvement over time

Undertaking a further assessment one to two years after the adoption of an improvement plan would help to indicate whether the behavioural changes anticipated by a performance improvement plan are occurring in practice.

1 See CSE with Impetus Consulting & QE2 (2005) *Local and Regional Action to Cut Carbon* Report to DEFRA for the UK Climate Change Programme Review. Download at www.cse.org.uk/pdf/pub1057.pdf