



Making the Case for Carbon Literacy in Parish, Town and Community Councils

The Carbon Literacy Project has developed a Toolkit Course enabling Parish, Town and Community Councils to train councillors and officers in a day's worth of action-based learning. This Toolkit Course is one of a number of courses within the Local Authorities Toolkit suite. This document provides you with some initial guidance and materials to assist you in pitching Carbon Literacy to councillors and officers.

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What is Carbon Literacy?

Carbon Literacy provides learners with ‘an awareness of the carbon costs and impacts of everyday activities and the ability and motivation to reduce emissions, on an individual, community and organisational basis.’

Carbon Literacy is globally unique – there is nothing else quite like it anywhere. It was recognised as such by the UN at COP21 in Paris, where it was awarded as a TAP100; one of 100 worldwide Transformative Action Programs that could materially change the way we deal with climate change.

Learners who successfully complete a day’s worth of approved Carbon Literacy learning are certified as Carbon Literate. As part of their certification, participants are required to complete an Action Plan in which they must commit to a significant individual and group action to reduce carbon emissions. Upon successful assessment, a learner is awarded a uniquely numbered certificate to evidence their Carbon Literacy, and confirm that they have met the requirements of the Carbon Literacy Standard.

Find out how many people are currently Carbon Literate [here](#).

“Carbon Literacy gives people the knowledge to speak with confidence about climate change to their peers, friends and neighbours, which is so important in shifting attitudes and raising awareness. It also allows participants to develop a broad, instinctive understanding of where carbon emissions come from, and know what steps they and others can take to reduce them.”

- **CCF Capacity Building Officer at Keep Scotland Beautiful**

Why Carbon Literacy in Parish, Town and Community Councils?

Over half of the emissions cuts needed to meet net zero rely on decisions that are made at a local and individual level. Do you need further engagement and buy-in to meet your net zero ambitions? Do councillors and officers lack the tools and knowledge to improve the council’s environmental performance and drive local action?

It is critical that councillors and officers have the tools and skills to communicate the significance of climate change in order to achieve the behavioural change necessary in their local area to address the scale and urgency of the climate emergency. As local councils are closest to their constituents, there is a unique opportunity to really understand the needs of the local residents and community, include them in creating plans to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and integrate climate change into decision making.

Carbon Literacy is a very real and practical means to share knowledge and best practice throughout your council and the communities you serve. By rolling out Carbon Literacy training within your council, you are joining a network of councils which are already delivering training and committed to this agenda.

The Parish, Town and Community Councils Toolkit Course

With the support of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, we developed off the shelf Toolkits together with partner organisations for five public sector audiences; Central Government, Local Authorities, Universities, the NHS and Blue Light services. Carbon Literacy Toolkit Courses have been developed to maximise the ease and speed of adoption of Carbon Literacy.

The Parish, Town and Community Councils Toolkit Course sits within our **Local Authorities Toolkit suite**. Within this suite, there are Toolkit Courses for Generic Staff, Elected Members and Leadership and Management working in a local authority environment. Following the launch of these, as of February 2023, **over 8700 Local Authority staff have been certified as Carbon Literate across 235 councils.**

No matter where your council is within the UK, the Toolkit Course is designed to be adaptable and customisable according to your location, climate strategy and carbon footprint, to be specific to your unique needs. The Toolkit Course is an easily accessible format for in-house delivery. It consists of all the resources needed to deliver training: slides, a comprehensive trainer manual that guides you through every step of the training, activity resources and a 'getting started' pack.

A panel of councils have co-created, reviewed and piloted the materials, ensuring the latest and best sectoral materials are used. Data sources have been carefully selected to provide up-to-date, robust and accurate information relevant to your setting. We are very grateful to the National Association of Local Councils, for granting us permission to reproduce excerpts from their climate change case studies.

What will councillors and officers gain from the training?

During a day's worth of interactive learning, councillors and officers will:

- Gain an understanding of the basic science of climate change and how climate change will affect us both globally and locally.

- Learn about emissions under their influence.
- Understand the scale of the challenge, what they need to do, and which actions will have the greatest impact in helping your council reach net zero.
- Create an action plan to help reduce the carbon footprint of their local area.
- Explore strategies for talking to and influencing constituents to act on climate change.
- Be empowered to support constituents in making informed low carbon choices.
- Be empowered to mobilise change within their sphere of influence.

Beyond climate

By embedding awareness of the climate impacts of everyday actions, Carbon Literacy training enables councillors and officers to make informed decisions to cut carbon, energy and waste in your council and local community, but what other benefits does Carbon Literacy provide?

The Energy Saving Trust reports that the key advantages of implementing a **behavioural change programme** are:

- 1. Reduced energy bills and transport costs.**
- 2. Improved morale, satisfaction and productivity.**
- 3. Enhanced image and credibility.**
- 4. Up-to-date knowledge and information.**

The financial case for Carbon Literacy

- Carbon Literacy generates energy, resource and financial savings; Jacobs UK, indicate that typical carbon savings from behavioural approaches similar to Carbon Literacy are at least 5-15% per person.

'To say [Carbon Literacy] has been something of a life changing experience for me, is probably not an overstatement.... In hard economic terms, so far we have already reduced our organisation's energy consumption significantly, and this has saved us over £10,000 this year alone. All the more impressive perhaps when you consider that we've been doing this now for less than six months.'

- **Building Operations and Logistics Manager from The Atkinson, Southport**

'Carbon Literacy will save our company money, increase our staff's well-being and most of all enable us to bring these skills to our tenants. They will benefit through lower bills, healthier lifestyles and greater employability. Based on the pledges the staff made during the training, the estimated initial carbon saving is 77 tonnes CO₂.'

- **CEO, Northwards Housing**

Here's the cumulative carbon savings from pledges made by Halton Housing staff as part of their Carbon Literacy training.

Here's how Palatine has used its influence to help other organisations generate financial and carbon savings through Carbon Literacy training.

The social case for Carbon Literacy

- Carbon Literacy provides councillors and officers with the opportunity to actively engage with your council's and community's priorities and ambitions through taking responsibility for climate change.
- Carbon Literacy provides councillors and officers with the knowledge and skills to cascade and embed environmentally sustainable and socially responsible values throughout your council and community. Carbon Literate councillors and officers are more environmentally conscious and inclined to engage with environmental and social initiatives.

Prioritising climate change will address council-wide issues

- The role and ambitions of councils often align with the aims of creating Carbon Literate communities. We can address poverty, social inequality and health issues through decarbonising. Measures such as promoting a circular economy, planting more trees and community engagement (to name but a few) can help councils to increase citizens' standard of living, climate awareness as well as creating a resilient community. This agenda shouldn't be framed as merely climate mitigation but seen as improving the day-to-day lives of local residents.
- Carbon Literacy provides councils with the opportunity to work collaboratively with other councils and share best practice on how climate strategy and council priorities can be more closely aligned.

How can training be rolled out?

- Designate one or two councillors/officers to take part in a Carbon Literacy course. Check out these pages for upcoming courses or please contact us if you have different requirements:

[The Carbon Literacy Project Events Page](#)

[Save Our Shropshire](#)

[Society of Local Council Clerks](#)

- Once one or two councillors/officers are certified as Carbon Literate, they can roll out training to peers. You don't need to be a certified trainer to deliver Carbon Literacy training, just some knowledge on climate change and confidence in speaking and presenting, as the materials come with a comprehensive trainer manual that guides you through every step of the training.
- Trainers can sign up for our free, monthly **[Delivering Successful Carbon Literacy workshops](#)** to learn the basics of delivering Carbon Literacy training.
- Those delivering training can help to facilitate training in other councils and collaborate to share and save resources.
- The Carbon Literate Organisation (CLO) accreditation offers organisations and councils a visible 'badge' that showcases their commitment to Carbon Literacy and a low carbon culture. There are four levels of accreditation; Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum. Over 130 organisations are now accredited as Carbon Literate Organisations.

What do trainers think about the Toolkit Course?

'Striking to see the 'pennies dropping' and the reality and urgency of the climate crisis making an impact.'

'Very surprising to me as a seasoned campaigner just how little was known about the climate science and the availability of simple community solutions.'

'Our pilot showed 'pennies dropping', roles and responsibilities becoming clearer and ideas being generated by group activities and the free and open exchange of ideas.'

Video - Naomi Wise, Sustainability Officer at Winchester City Council discusses her experiences of delivering training using the Local Authorities Generic Staff Toolkit Course.

Blog - The experiences of trainers from Peterborough City Council who piloted the Local Authority Elected Members Toolkit Course.

What do councillors and officers who have piloted the course say about their experience?

'Better informed is better equipped.'

'I went to the meeting slightly naïve regarding the urgency of the need to change our attitude to climate change, I came out at the end of the meeting convinced of the need to react now and not tomorrow.'

'This is a training in enabling community action on climate change – it's more than just telling people about carbon.'

'Having an organisation sign up to this training gives more confidence to speak out about these issues within an organisation because the organisation has clearly demonstrated its commitment to these issues.'

'Thanks once again for the very interesting course. The details within have already helped me talk about the issue with more confidence.'

'...it has emboldened me to be more proactive within the council and was an enjoyable and productive experience.'

'I have learned so much doing this... It's interesting to be reminded what others think about the world, and each other. I just need to remember how best to communicate this locally.'

What could be perceived as barriers?

These are some of the potential barriers that you may be faced with when making the case for Carbon Literacy training in your council.

'We don't have the time'

Would you omit information from a health and safety induction to save time? Climate change will impact the health and safety of current and future generations.

There are many different ways to deliver Carbon Literacy training. Learning can also be broken down into a series of smaller sessions.

Part of responding to the climate emergency is dedicating the time to understanding how the climate emergency will affect your council and community, and then planning how you can respond to it. Without dedicating this time and without engaging your staff, it is highly unlikely you will meet your targets and goals.

'It's not relevant/It's not my responsibility'

Eight in ten local authorities have suffered climate-related incidents in the last five years.

Local councils also have a duty to protect the wellbeing of local citizens and communities. You understand the unique issues your local community faces. Who better to come up with these solutions than your team?

'We don't have the capacity and resources'

The course is designed to be rolled out with minimal input from the trainer to maximise the ease and speed of adoption of Carbon Literacy training for your council. The Toolkit Course consists of all the resources needed to deliver training and comes with a comprehensive trainer manual that guides you through every step of the training.

'Cost'

Carbon Literacy is an investment that will payback and is more than offset by the financial and resource savings made through councillors and officers being more environmentally and carbon conscious.

FAQs

Why is Carbon Literacy a day's worth of learning?

Significant levels of behaviour change are required to limit global heating to under 2°C of warming. To understand the scale of the challenge, emissions declined by around 7% in 2020, and the science dictates that we should be aiming for at least a 7.6% decrease on a yearly basis in order to stay within the global carbon budget.

All Carbon Literacy courses must consist of a day's worth (~7-8 hours) of learning– an element of The Carbon Literacy Standard. There is a wealth of evidence which proves that Carbon Literacy training changes people's behaviour, and enables and motivates them to take action on climate change.

It is important for learners to understand the scale of the challenge in the first half of the course, before then learning about the specific and significant actions that they can take in the second half. 1-2 hours or a half day of learning has not been proven to bring about the long-lasting behaviour change which is required of us.

Only learners who have completed a day's worth of approved Carbon Literacy learning and met the accreditation requirements can be certified as Carbon Literate. To meet the needs of your learners, there are many different ways to deliver Carbon Literacy and training can be delivered over several sessions.

Does The Carbon Literacy Project deliver training?

As the accreditation body, The Carbon Literacy Project doesn't deliver training. Training is delivered in-house by each organisation or out-sourced to experienced Carbon Literacy trainers or training organisations.

More information

Webpage – Toolkits webpage

Webpage – Local Authorities webpage

Overview Pack – Parish, Town and Community Councils Toolkit Course Overview Pack

FAQ – Further Carbon Literacy FAQ

Sign up to our newsletter

Sign-up to receive our quarterly sector newsletter via [this online form](#). We may also use this mailing list to send out invites to Carbon Literacy events, such as launch events for new Toolkit Courses.

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