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Local authorities can play the unique and critical role in ensuring delivery of nationally driven policies to curb carbon emissions at a local level. The role of local authorities in tackling climate change falls naturally from the way in which almost every facet of their activities, roles and responsibilities will effect some level of impact on carbon emissions. The paper stresses the importance of incremental improvement above “strategizing”.

Ключевые слова: local authorities, climate change, actions, carbon emission.

The role of local authorities in tackling climate change is increasingly identified as a key component of a national effort to address carbon emission. This paper explores the potential extent of the local governments’ influence to curb carbon emissions and the necessary conditions for successful action by local authorities.

The role of local authorities in tackling climate change

Local authorities can play the unique and critical role in ensuring delivery of nationally driven policies to curb carbon emissions at a local level. Furthermore, people should increasingly be able to look at their local government not only to provide established services, but also to coordinate, tailor and drive the development of a low carbon economy in their area [1].

The role of local authorities in tackling climate change falls naturally from the way in which almost every facet of their activities, roles and responsibilities will effect some level of impact on carbon emissions — either directly or through the influence or control they exert on organizations and individuals. It also derives naturally from the nature of commonly proposed approaches in tackling climate change [2]. In many countries, climate change policy was initially addressed in policy as other “pollution” problems had been — with a clear line of causation (the burning of fossil fuels) and therefore a clear focus for policy intervention (reduce the use of fossil fuels). Such a formulation ignores the extent to which the identified cause (the burning of fossil fuels) is embedded in all aspects of economic and social life. Therefore, it tends to simplify the nature, and underestimate the scale of the required policy response. Fortunately, governments of some countries (ex., Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany, the UK, etc.) in recent years has demonstrated more complete understanding of the full extent of economic and social changes implied by an adequate response to the threat of climate change. It has been recognized that local authorities are ideally placed to tackle some of the complexities of climate change. It should be noted that the capacity of local governments to influence exists whether or not they acknowledge it. As well, this capacity exists whether or not it is being applied to achieve positive effects.

The capacity of local governments to influence climate change policy derives from the services they already deliver, strategic roles they play, the regulatory

they have, and the relationship (and therefore potential influence) they have with the citizenry, business sector, NGOs, and public organizations in their jurisdictions. As a result, local authorities have a) direct connections with households, communities, and businesses by virtue of service provision and electoral relationships, b) potentially strong ability to establish and maintain a sense of local identity and civic pride which can make national and global issues seem locally important, and c) a democratically accountable role to provide civic leadership. In fact, almost all everyday experiences of public services and civic leadership “enjoyed” by households, businesses and organizations are largely mediated by local governments. More specifically, local authorities are already expected to:

- manage their own building, housing stock, and staff activities,
- deliver services to the public (ex., housing, education, social services, waste, tourism, culture, etc.),
- establish the local planning strategy,
- coordinate local economic development activity,
- influence public sector investment in local infrastructure,
- encourage behavioral change,
- promote community well-being,
- showcase good practice.

Therefore, through engagement across these existing activities, a local authority can influence positive action on reducing emissions.

There are three fundamental reasons why actions at the local level on cutting carbon emissions are a vital component of a national policy of reduction of carbon emissions. First, implementation of carbon reduction is highly diffused — requiring a change in behavior, housing performance and consumer choices by householders, transport users, and businesses in the country. Secondly, among individuals the current level of motivation to act and the understanding of required actions are still quite limited. And thirdly, technologies, skills and services to enable actions are not widely available. These issues confirm the need for local authorities’ action. Furthermore, they point to the fact that to support low carbon society, it is necessary to focus on changing attitudes, building understanding and motivation to act, and enabling new partnerships and service developments to test and deliver the required changes. As well recognized in

the contemporary world, there is a vital and fundamental role for local authorities in enabling those changes [3].

The fact that local governments can influence carbon emissions in their jurisdiction does not mean that such influence is enormous. Local authorities have their limitations to influence carbon emissions. There are three reasons for this. First, local authorities have influence only on some aspects of carbon emissions reduction. Secondly, influence by a local government on carbon emission will also depend on how well it exerts that influence through the various roles it performs. Thirdly, the limitation could be related to the fact the national government might be reluctant to commit to measures which rely on local authority performance [4].

The key finding of the research led by the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) in the UK in 2005 was that, while there existed examples of outstanding local action on climate change and sustainable energy, these were the exceptions rather than the rule. Moreover, behind each good example were the efforts of a “willful individual” working within the local government. The commitment and knowledge of those individuals have been the key to success, rather than any broader national programme. These characters have managed to create such conditions as strategic coherence, political and senior management support, resource prioritization among others as the conditions required for success. Probably it is fair to say that best practice advice tends to emphasize the importance of those conditions for the achievements of best practice. Moreover, it is rather unusual to find effective and sustained local action on some aspect of carbon emissions reduction without involvement of a “willful individual”.

It is likely that these factors are not preconditions for success, but rather symptoms of willful individual who has been working for years to create right conditions for her work to succeed. Therefore, best practice is difficult to replicate. Moreover, as such it disempowers less willful officials who cannot contemplate achieving all highest efforts and change. For this reason, it might be beneficial to establish conditions within which less willful individuals working on local government could be more effective with less effort.

In this paper, with reference to the further research by CSE (2007), I particularly stress the importance of incremental improvement above “strategizing”. The study by CSE in the UK examined the Local and Regional Carbon Management Matrix from the perspectives of local authority. It suggested that local governments which have done little will need to look for straightforward activities, which make a reasonable impact quickly. For example, an authority’s focus on own energy management is likely to generate cost savings which can stimulate further improvement work. Using the matrix as a guide suggests that those local governments who already achieved some “wins” will need to be planning out “big strides” to create real impact through effective resource allocation and strategic development [5]. And those authorities who already made significant progress need to embed good performance on local carbon management across all their activities and allocate resources to fit this priority. All initial stage actions are

actions which could happen through the initiatives of one-two people “getting on with it”. Further, on relatively late stages of the performance improvement process, the full strategic approach across the local authority is expected to be adopted. Such approach, i.e. of incremental improvement, can be suggested for other countries in their actions to tackle climate change.

Conclusion

The role of local authorities in actions to tackle climate change has been accepted, defined and embedded in the policy framework of many developed countries (ex. Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Germany, the UK, etc.). These governments in recent years has demonstrated more complete understanding of the full extent of economic and social changes implied by an adequate response to the threat of climate change. It has been recognized that local authorities are ideally placed to tackle some of the complexities of climate change. It should be noted that the capacity of local governments to influence exists whether or not they acknowledge it. As well, this capacity exists whether or not it is being applied to achieve positive effects. This paper has argued that there is now a need to understand well how to secure improvement by local authorities in their performance so that good practice becomes the norm. It is suggested that an incremental “bottom-up” approach would prove more affective than “strategizing”. ■

1. URL: www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/publications/lc_trans_plan/lc_rans_plan.aspx.

2. Roberts, S. (2010), The role of local authorities in galvanizing action to tackle climate change: practitioner’s perspective in Peters, M. (2010), Low Carbon Communities : Imaginative Approaches to Combating Climate Change Locally. Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, MA : Edward Elgar.

3. Futerra (2005), UK Communications Strategy on Climate Change: Recommendations to Defra, DTI, Carbon Trust, Energy Saving Trust, Environment Agency and UK Climate Impacts Programme, London: Futerra.

4. Roberts, S. (2010), The role of local authorities in galvanizing action to tackle climate change: practitioner’s perspective in Peters, M. (2010), Low Carbon Communities : Imaginative Approaches to Combating Climate Change Locally. Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, MA : Edward Elgar.

5. Ibid.

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Роль местных властей в борьбе с изменениями климата

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Местные власти играют значимую роль в реализации политики по сокращению углеродных выбросов на местном уровне. Роль местных властей в борьбе с изменениями

климата связана с тем, в какой степени их деятельность регулирует уровень углеродных выбросов в атмосферу. В статье подчеркивается важность постоянных улучшений, одной разработки стратегии недостаточно.

Ключевые слова: местные власти, изменение климата, деятельность, углеродные выбросы.
