

Written response to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs “Climate Ready UK” submitted by Dr James Porter, Professor Suraje Dessai, Ms Susanne Lorenz, Professor Jouni Paavola and Dr Geoff Whitman.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Climate Ready’s vision of equipping society to make “timely, far-sighted and well-informed decisions” needs a stronger clear statement of intent on how, and in what ways, the policies, incentives, support, regulations/legislation, building standards etc it proposes will be realised. Clear, actionable, equitable and measurable goals need to be set.
- To avoid duplication, commitments to further research and development as well as ‘support’ need to be backed up with details on how these activities will be funded, by whom, and prioritised under what criteria. Given the economic climate, with cuts to resources and personnel, what contingencies will be put in place to help private and public organisations adapt, and by extension, ensure the wider implementation of the National Adaptation Programme?
- Encouraging individuals and organisations alike to improve their resilience to a changing climate is important but what role, if at all, will the state now play? A greater appreciation is needed of the challenges involved in developing resilience, especially how to address social justice, and how to engage those reluctant to adapt. If individuals and organisations are to buy into the Climate Ready’s vision, greater articulation of the ‘opportunities’ of adapting to a changing climate is needed.
- Climate Ready illustrates the interconnectedness of different Government departments, and therein their different responsibilities, towards climate adaptation. Greater discussion is needed on how these themes, which cut across different departments, will be tackled as well as how collective action will be coordinated.

Introduction

1. We welcome this opportunity to comment on Climate Ready’s progress update and express our interest in being involved in its development.
2. Climate Ready strengthens the UK Government’s commitment, as set out in the 2008 Climate Change Act and publication of the Climate Change Risk Assessment, to put in place the building blocks for a more resilient society. The National Adaptation Programme (NAP), due to be published in 2013, will be crucial to realising the vision of “a society which makes timely, far-sighted and well-informed decisions to address the risks and opportunities posed by a changing climate”. As explained in the executive summary, Climate Ready is an encouraging starting point. The next stage in the process will need, however, to provide more detail on how the proposals it sets out will be funded, coordinated, and most importantly, achieved.

Research and Development

3. Commitment to doing further research and development is always welcome. Yet more detail on how these activities will be funded, by whom, and prioritised using what criteria would also be welcomed. Indeed, efforts are needed to avoid duplication. For example, the National Indicator NI 188, “*Planning to adapt to*

climate change”, in its previous incarnation offered much of the “supportive policy framework” to “promote” and “enable” Local Authorities to take adaptation action as outlined on page 10 of the Local Government theme. Setting out exactly how these new initiatives build upon, or deliver something different to, previous efforts will be crucial to developing long-lasting action. A cross-departmental strategy that identifies the commonalities and differences of each theme, as flagged up in figure 1, is strongly recommended.

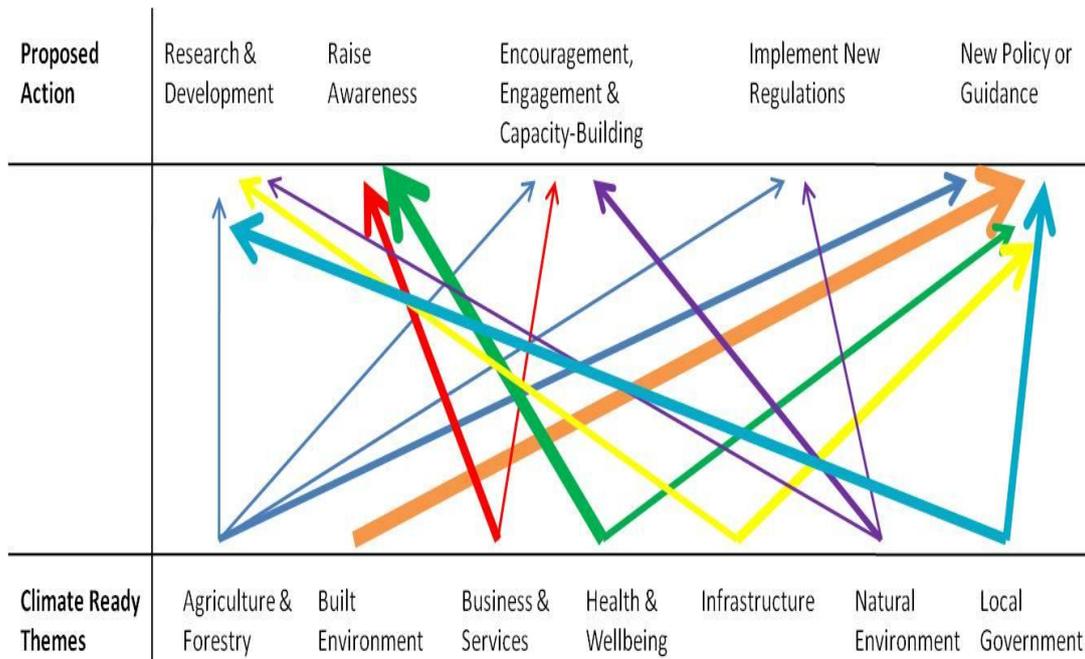


Figure 1 - Concentration of Proposed Actions Related to Each Climate Ready Theme

- Further elaboration is also needed to explain how Local Authorities, for example, can strike a balance between developing new initiatives, which incorporate and tailor the Climate Change Risk Assessment to local needs on the one hand, and the excellent work they have already done in producing Local Climate Impact Profiles (LCLIPs), risk assessments and adaptation plans, on the other. Failure to do this may affect Local Authorities, and others, commitment to future policy/guidance change and undermine the utility of present decision tools as well as represent a waste of experiential knowledge, invested resources, and goodwill.
- Funding additional research and development is championed, implicitly, as a key strategy for aiding decision-making, particularly through the management of uncertainty. Steps need to be taken to offset the potential side-effects of individuals and organisations delaying important decisions, in anticipation of new more certain climate information, and therefore be exposed to negative impacts in the short-term as well as failing to realise the long-term cost-savings associated with taking early action. Wariness of making decisions under uncertain conditions, whether they are informational, economic or social in origin, are unlikely to go away even with the refinement and tailoring of further research and development. Support is urgently needed to enable decision-makers to manage uncertainty now and in the future.

Governance/Resilience

6. Climate Ready's update mainly emphasises the need to raise awareness of the risks/opportunities for adapting to a changing climate among public and private organisations. It is strongly recommended that details on how this "championing" will be achieved (e.g. published guides, media stories, online games), and in turn, what measures will be used to determine whether these efforts are successful (cf. subscription targets, voluntary reporting, unique selling-point marketing), are developed. Information provision alone is rarely sufficient to affect behavioural change. While the promise of more tailored decision-support tools is encouraging, where will existing climate tools such as UKCP09 climate projections feature in these discussions? Although points made in the Business and Services theme, on page 6, acknowledge the different risks/opportunities faced by organisations, it is also important to recognise that they have different information needs and responsive capacities. UKCP09 may be suitable for some actors more than others, for example. Research has repeatedly shown the challenges of applying a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to communicating climate change (cf. Moser & Dilling 2007), these shortcomings need to be acknowledged by NAP, and wherever possible a more deliberative approach adopted.
7. Building and sustaining "resilience", in the commonsense usage of the word, is a key part of Climate Ready's vision. Implicit throughout is the belief that organisations and individuals are capable and willing to be resilient. Once exogenous "barriers" and individual "motivations" to adaptation are identified, and properly addressed, a more resilient society who can make "far-sighted and well-informed decisions" will naturally follow. But not everyone has the capacity to adapt (see Tang & Dessai, *Accepted*; Porter *et al* 2012). Those without the time, money, technical backgrounds or inclination to take responsibility, may experience difficulties in adapting and, as a result, may become more vulnerable whilst those with access to these resources, conversely, may become more resilient. The Health and Wellbeing theme, on page 7, acknowledges these social inequalities, and therein, the importance of helping the "most socially vulnerable", including the elderly in heatwaves, yet leaves the role of social justice and equity undeveloped (a point that cuts across all the themes). Greater consideration is needed, therefore, to clarify exactly what the NAP programme means by 'support'. Will this 'support' come in the form of additional guidance/networks or involve state-led intervention, or both?
8. The NAP strategy, at present, also downplays the question - what happens if individuals and organisations choose not to adapt? Recent research on householders who have been regularly flooded (cf. Harries 2012), for example, has found that the emotional attachment people have to their home, or simply living in a state of denial about the seriousness of the risks they face, means they continually refused to flood proof their properties in spite being offered financial incentives to do so. Communication intent on empowering individuals and organisations alone may not be enough to reach the aspiration of a more 'resilient' society. How, and in what ways, will NAP tackle this? Again while the Built Environment theme, on page 5, highlights that 70% of buildings in use in 2050s will be ill-equipped to cope with a changing climate, what measures, if any, will be implemented to help vulnerable communities left homeless by managed realignment? It's strongly recommended

that social justice and equity play a much larger role throughout the strategy, especially in discussions on resilience.

Diversity/Homogeneity

9. Differences between, and within, each of NAP's themes need to be more explicit. Risks/opportunities, for example, faced by upland and lowland farmers in the Agriculture and Forestry theme, on page 4, are very different. Emphasis in the text focuses primarily on the development of technical and decision-making tools and, in so doing, the importance of other socio-economic factors needed to make these tools work, including the challenges in sustaining the current farming workforce, knowledge-base, and investment, are often sidelined. Another homogeneity issue centres around the Business and Services theme, on page 6, which represents "approximately 94% of the whole economy". Large and small businesses face different risks/opportunities yet are the risks/opportunities the same across the financial, retail and tourism sectors? Differentiating this theme into smaller sub-categories is strongly urged to avoid the loss of these salient details and the appropriateness of more sector-led responses.
10. Pulling together the themes outlined in Climate Ready, and across NAP more generally, is a deserving yet demanding task. How this will be achieved requires further explanation given the potential for interlinkages and overlaps. A Memorandum of Understanding between the different Government departments involved offers one way to facilitate this collective action and minimise the possibility for divergence. Indeed, how themes will be dealt, in principle, which cut across different Government departments also needs to play a more prominent role in the main body of the text. For example, food security potentially falls under both the Agriculture and Forestry theme as a consideration about resilience as well as the Business and Services theme relating to the resilience of supply chains. Coordinating research, support and responses will be critical to capturing 'best' practices and avoiding duplication.

Summary

11. Proposals set out in Climate Ready offer a promising starting point for thinking about how to develop a NAP. The next phase will need to be more specific around collective action, responsibilities for cross-cutting themes, funding, and the challenges posed by resilience if Climate Ready's vision of a society capable of taking "well-informed" decisions in a changing climate is to be realised. More explicit and actionable steps are needed to give public and private organisation, as well as individuals, confidence to invest their time, resources and trust.

References

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Contributors

Dr James Porter is a Research Fellow at the University of Leeds, in the School of Earth and Environment, working on the European Research Council funded project - "Informing Climate Adaptation Decisions" (ICAD). His research interests focus on the production and use of environmental knowledge, particularly in the context of flood risk and climate science.

Professor Suraje Dessai is Chair in Climate Change Adaptation, Lead Author of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fifth Assessment Report and Principal Investigator of project ICAD, at the School of Earth and Environment in the University of Leeds. He has published extensively on climate change science, impacts, adaptation and policy.

Ms Susanne Lorenz is a PhD Researcher at the University of Leeds, in the School of Earth and Environment, working the communication of uncertainty in European National Adaptation Strategies. Her research interests focus on the interface between science and policy in climate adaptation.

Dr Geoff Whitman is a Research Fellow at the University of Leeds, in the School of Earth and Environment, working on the European Research Council funded project ICAD. His research interests focus on the relationship between environmental knowledges, expertise, publics and government.

Professor Jouni Paavola is Professor of Environmental Social Science in the School of Earth and Environment at the University of Leeds and Deputy Director of the Centre for Climate Change Economics and Policy (CCCEP), an ESRC funded joint research centre of the University of Leeds and London School of Economics. His research examines environmental governance institutions and their social justice dimensions, focusing on climate change and biodiversity.