


Adapting Institutions to Climate Change

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TCPA / Environment Wales Seminar

The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution



The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution

About the Royal Commission

- Established by Royal Warrant in 1970
- Independent of Government
- 12 Members, supported by a full-time secretariat

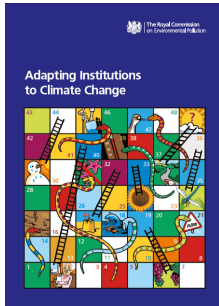
Our Terms of Reference:

“To advise Government and Parliament on matters, both national and international, concerning pollution of the environment, the adequacy of research in this field, and future possibilities of danger to the environment.”

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Our latest report:
Adapting Institutions to Climate Change

- Why we chose this topic
- Definition of an ‘institution’
- Outline of presentation



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Climate change and adaptation

Adaptation to climate change is essential regardless of how much we reduce greenhouse gas emissions

What is the purpose of adaptation?

- to reduce exposure to the risk of damage
- to develop the capacity to cope with unavoidable damage
- to take advantage of new opportunities

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Our Three Exemplars


- Freshwater
- Biodiversity and nature conservation
- Coastal zones

We looked at the institutional arrangements in place in the exemplars, and the potential impact on these of climate change

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The impact of climate change

- Reduced water availability and quality
- Increased risk of drought and floods
- Increased rate of coastal erosion
- It will be impossible to maintain *status quo* for nature conservation





Adaptation is difficult

- Local impacts need local solutions
- No end-point to the process
- Uncertainty about the magnitude and local impacts of climate change
- Complex institutional arrangements
- Need a step change in how to address adaptation – traditional ways of working will not be enough
- Need to build adaptive capacity, welcome progress but more action needed



The challenges for institutions

1. Uncertainty
2. Complexity
3. Path dependency
4. Equity and Efficiency



Addressing the challenges

How to build adaptive capacity

1. Framing
2. Implementing
3. Learning



Framing

Framing questions of how to address the challenge of adapting to climate change is itself difficult, and it is easy to get it wrong.

Five key elements:

- The role of climate in relation to the **key missions** of an institution
- The role of other relevant actors in **partnerships**
- Competition** with other goals
- The tendency for **short-termism** in decision-making
- The existence of **different values** and **interests**



Implementing

Key issues to consider in agreeing on and delivering actions:

- Up-scaling** local and small scale initiatives
- Enabling mechanisms** for adaptation goals
- Engaging** public support
- Co-ordination** between actors
- Resources** – people, money and finance
- Distribution** of costs



Learning

Learning is essential if the challenges of framing and implementation are to be effective and manageable

Key elements include:

- The **generation and sharing** of information
- Use of **information and knowledge**
- **Strategic memory** and **social learning**
- **Innovative** approaches



Ten questions on adaptation

There is no simple blueprint for adaptation

We have developed 10 questions to help frame the problem and implement actions, which may help organisations that have not yet started to think about adaptation.



The ten questions

1. Have you identified the possible range of impacts of climate change on the activities and responsibilities of your institution or business, and their timescales?
2. Do you understand the nature of, and the limitations in, the climate projections in UKCP09?
3. Do you understand that adaptation to climate change is an open-ended process, not a single action that will solve your problems or reduce your risks?



4. Have you framed the questions and issues to be addressed adequately, so as to avoid tackling the wrong problem, or making matters worse? Do you understand how the risks posed by climate change interact with, and might change, the other risks your organisation has to respond to?

5. Have you identified options for adaptation, and devised flexible plans and strategies that can deal with uncertainty?

6. Are you embedding consideration of adaptation into your core business? Is there the right accountability for actions at the most senior levels of your organisation?



7. Are the objectives and aims of your institution fit for purpose in a changing world? Are you aware of the powers and duties affecting your institutions?

8. Who are the significant other stakeholders (including members of the public) with whom you need to interact to deliver adaptation? Are there barriers (perceived or real) that might make collaboration difficult? How do you plan to negotiate these barriers?



9. Do you have mechanisms in place to listen and respond to alternative views on the ways of dealing with climate change, new ways of thinking, and ways of evaluating the success of past actions in relation to climate change?

10. Do your organisation's planning and investment cycles allow for new insights and information about climate change to be taken into account?



Recommendations

24 recommendations, across:

- The policy framework
- Specific institutional arrangements
- Resources to build capacity
- Equity
- Public engagement
- The role of the Adaptation Sub-Committee



The policy framework – An adaptation test

- integrated into public and private decision making;
- reduce exposure to the risk of damage through climate change;
- develop the capacity to cope with unavoidable damage;
- encourage organisations to take advantage of new opportunities.



The policy framework – Duties on public bodies

Climate Change Act 2008 should be amended to impose an adaptation duty on public bodies of the kind included in the Scottish Climate Change Act or the Greater London Authority Act.



Land use planning

Local authorities should ensure planning departments are adequately resourced and organised to enable their responsibilities in relation to adaptation to be met.

The Adaptation Sub-Committee should

- scrutinise planning policy guidance to assess and advise on the recognition within spatial planning of the importance of adapting to climate change;
- scrutinise the activities of the Infrastructure Planning Commission in the context of adaptation to climate change.



Institutional arrangements

Organisations, including those subject to statutory duties, should review and where necessary revise their mission and objectives from an adaptation perspective.

For priority reporting authorities, the Adaptation Sub-Committee should scrutinise these reviews, and where necessary recommend revisions to their mission and objectives.

In implementing EU directives, including those on conservation, governments should utilise the flexibility inherent in the directive in order to facilitate adaptation.



Resources to build capacity

Organisations should

- have, or develop, the necessary resources to build adaptive capacity
- recognise the importance of knowledge transfer



Equity

•The costs of climate change will be distributed unevenly – socially, temporally and geographically

•Difficult decisions - especially around flooding and coastal erosion

•Public compensation is not straightforward and may not capture all relevant interests e.g. community disruption

•We recommend **the Adaptation Sub-Committee should explore the range of options available to address issues such as the loss of community, business and employment, and the disruption to health, educational and social services which may be a direct or indirect consequence of climate change.**



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Public engagement

Climate change impacts will be felt locally and decisions on adaptation must be locally based.

Governments, environmental regulators and local authorities should pay urgent attention to the presentation of narratives describing what climate change will mean for institutions, communities and individuals and the relevant adaptation priorities.

Public authorities should make greater use of discussion-based public engagement much earlier in decision processes, to help frame the issues relevant to adaptation and to gather public concerns and views to inform decision-making.



Conclusion

- Adaptation to climate change is difficult, complex and full of uncertainties
- But we can't afford not to take action now
- Some progress already but a step change needed
- Want adaptation planning to be embedded throughout institutions



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