



# Making the Case for Carbon Literacy in Local Authorities

The Carbon Literacy Project has developed a Toolkit for local authorities to deliver Carbon Literacy training to their colleagues. This document provides you with guidance and materials to assist in pitching Carbon Literacy to leadership and management within your local authority.

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## What is Carbon Literacy?

Carbon Literacy provides learners with ‘an awareness of the carbon dioxide 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](#).

*“To place carbon neutrality at the heart of all the council does, there is a need to embed carbon reduction into the internal policy, culture and behaviour of the council. We believe that increasing the number of Carbon Literate staff throughout the council and becoming a certified Bronze Carbon Literate Organisation will help to achieve this. The unique selling point of Carbon Literacy training is that it moves beyond simply educating the workforce - it also encourages trainees to put their knowledge into action, both in their personal and professional lives.”*

- **A UK local authority**

*“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 for local authorities?

Nearly three-quarters of local authorities have declared a climate emergency. The declaration should place the climate emergency at the centre of your local authority’s agenda and assign **responsibility to all employees to tackle climate change**, not just those with roles in climate change mitigation.

Do you need further engagement and buy-in to meet your net zero ambitions? Do your colleagues lack the agency and knowledge to improve their environmental performance?

From senior management to junior colleagues, engagement and training are essential for all council personnel to achieve the **behavioural change necessary to address the scale and urgency of the climate emergency** and meet your net zero targets. Your climate change officers cannot tackle climate change alone. Climate change must be tackled cross-departmentally and embedded into all roles and activities.

Carbon Literacy will empower your colleagues to engage with actions which have the greatest impact in helping your local authority achieve net zero. By rolling out Carbon Literacy training across your local authority, you are joining a network of councils delivering training and committed to this agenda. Knowledge and best practice can be shared throughout all departments in your local authority, across the services you deliver and the communities you serve.

As of February 2023, **over 8700 local authority staff have been certified as Carbon Literate across 235 local authorities**. 35 of these local authorities are now certified as Carbon Literate Organisations, committed to embedding Carbon Literacy throughout council policy and practice.

## **What will your colleagues gain from Carbon Literacy?**

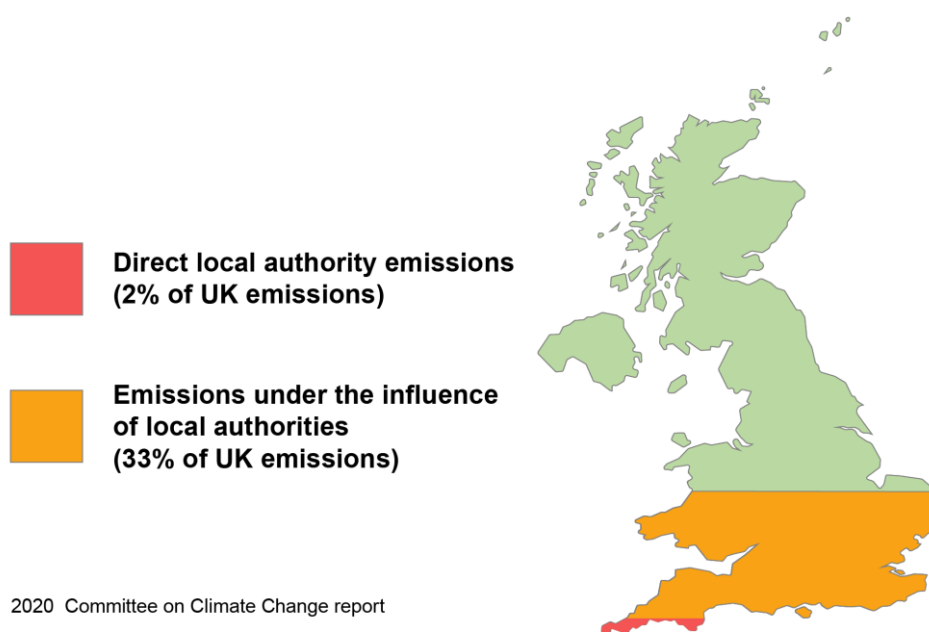
During a day's worth of interactive Carbon Literacy training using the Local Authorities Toolkit, colleagues will:

- Learn about, a) direct local authority emissions, and b) emissions under local authority influence; and how they can address both.
- Understand the scale of the challenge, what they need to do, and which actions will have the greatest impact in helping your local authority reach net zero.
- Commit to two significant carbon reduction actions within their own control to reduce your local authority's carbon footprint.
- Be empowered to make informed everyday low-carbon choices.
- Be empowered to talk to others about climate change.

## Emissions under the influence of local authorities

Around a third of the UK's carbon emissions are dependent on sectors that are directly shaped or influenced by local authority practice, policy or partnerships.

Carbon Literacy provides a framework and a knowledge base from which colleagues working across the diverse functions of a local authority can reduce their own emissions while influencing the wider area to decarbonise.



## Beyond climate

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

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

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

## The financial case for Carbon Literacy

Inherent to carbon reduction is a financial saving; Carbon Literacy encourages efficiency savings on energy and resource consumption. Equally, climate mitigation and adaptation measures entail a long-term saving; money spent on measures now saves money in the long run by reducing the impact of climate-induced events.

- The Carbon Trust estimates that even low or no-cost behavioural changes can reduce energy costs by at least 10%. Systematic action could save between £400 and £1,000/year for every employee.
- Jacobs UK indicate that typical realised carbon **savings from 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.”*

- **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 CO<sub>2</sub>.”*

- **CEO, Northwards Housing**

## The social case for Carbon Literacy

Carbon Literacy provides colleagues with an opportunity to engage with your local authority’s priorities and ambitions by taking responsibility for climate change within their workplace. Over the course of the year, where Carbon Literacy has been carried out by distance delivery, learners have reported that they feel motivated and empowered to take action.

Carbon Literacy provides employees with the knowledge and skills to cascade and embed environmentally sustainable and socially responsible values throughout your local authority and beyond. Carbon Literate employees are more environmentally conscious and inclined to engage with environmental initiatives, often resulting in healthier, happier and more active colleagues.

## Prioritising climate change will address council-wide issues

The role and ambitions of local authorities often align with the aims of creating Carbon Literate communities. We can address poverty, social inequality and health issues through decarbonising. Measures such as improving public transport, switching to plant-based diets and retrofitting our housing stock (to name but a few) can help local authorities increase citizens' standards of living, as well as reduce pressure on council services.

This agenda shouldn't be framed as merely climate mitigation but as improving the day-to-day lives of local authority staff and residents.

Carbon Literacy provides local authorities 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 in your local authority?

- Designate colleagues, ideally from your climate change or sustainability team, to attend a Carbon Literacy course. Check out the [events](#) page for upcoming courses or please contact us if you have different requirements.
- Once colleagues are certified as Carbon Literate, they can roll out training to colleagues across your local authority. This creates a cascade effect, whereby as you roll out the training, there are more Carbon Literate colleagues who can take their turn in delivering training. You do not need to be a certified trainer to deliver Carbon Literacy training, just some knowledge on climate change and confidence in speaking and presenting.
- Trainers can sign up for our free, monthly **Delivering Successful Carbon Literacy workshops** to learn the basics of delivering Carbon Literacy training.
- Trainers can help to facilitate training in other local authorities and collaborate to share and save resources.
- The Carbon Literate Organisation (CLO) accreditation offers organisations 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.

## Which Toolkit Courses are available to local authorities and where can I find more information?

Carbon Literacy training is most effective when learners are in a group with their peers. Discussions can therefore be uninhibited, resulting in significant actions which are commensurate with the learner's role and influence. This is why there are multiple Local Authority Toolkits for distinct audiences, such as the Leadership and Management Toolkit for leaders and managers.

- [More information](#) about the Local Authority Toolkit.
- [Here is a blog](#) on why your Local Authority should use the Toolkit to deliver Carbon Literacy training.
- [Generic Staff Course Taster Pack](#).
- Join our [LinkedIn group](#) for local authorities to collaborate, share experiences, ask questions, or request support.

## What do trainers think about the Toolkit?

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

**Video** - Amy Scoins, Strategic Environment Officer at Leicestershire County Council, discusses her experiences of delivering training using the Local Authorities Leadership and Management Course.

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

## What do learners say about their experience?

*"It was thought provoking and incredibly valuable to step back and look at your daily activities and the impact they have on the world as an individual/community and species. This should become policy, not voluntary. I'd love to learn more and become a Carbon Literacy Certified Training Professional so that I can pass this information on."*

- **Vicki-Louise Clements, Bids and Tenders Manager at Leicestershire County Council**

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*“Really thought-provoking and helpful to see we could make changes at the council if we want to move things forward. Nice to see some successes made by other councils... This should be rolled out to all staff, especially those with decision-making powers.”*

- **Planning – Resource Officer at Winchester City Council**

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*“It’s vital. It’s urgent. Can’t wait. Very interactive/engaging. Powerful.”*

- **Diane Eaton, Corporate Director at Trafford Council**

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*“You will learn and think about things you hadn’t previously considered, regardless of your level of knowledge.”*

- **Paul Farrand, Senior Planner at Trafford Council**

## **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 local authority.

### ***“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, for example through workshops or via e-learning. For part-time or contracted staff, e-learning could give greater flexibility for your learners. Learning can also be broken down into a series of smaller sessions.

Declaring a climate emergency involves understanding how the climate emergency will affect your council and planning how you can respond to it. Carbon Literacy training provides you with this time and should be viewed as workplace planning to formulate your response to your climate emergency declaration. Without dedicating this time and without engaging your staff, it is highly unlikely you will meet the targets and goals set out in your declaration.

Carbon Literacy can be used to further enhance existing activities such as CPD, community-based initiatives or workplace inductions.



***“It’s not relevant / It’s not my responsibility”***

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

Councils have a duty to protect the wellbeing of our local citizens and communities.

Councils require solutions to climate change which are specific to their local authority. As experts in their fields, your colleagues understand the unique issues your local authority faces. Who better to come up with these solutions than your colleagues collaboratively working cross-departmentally?

***“We don’t have the capacity or resources”***

The Local Authorities Toolkit is a constantly updated in-line with the latest climate science, policy and behaviour-change practices, providing a pre-accredited course while eliminating the time and resource pressures inherent in the development, accreditation and maintenance of Carbon Literacy training materials.

Pricing has been kept accessible for local authorities, with reduced Toolkit and certification fees to encourage wide take-up and implementation.

The Toolkit 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 local authority.

***“Cost”***

Carbon Literacy is an investment that will payback - the £10 certification application fee for each learner will be more than offset by the financial and resource savings made through employees 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 does not deliver training. Training is delivered in-house by each organisation or outsourced to experienced Carbon Literacy trainers or training organisations.

### **Why is training delivered using a Toolkit?**

Carbon Literacy Toolkits have been developed to maximise the ease and speed of adoption of Carbon Literacy. The Toolkit is in a ready-to-go, easily accessible format for in-house delivery.

No matter where your local authority is within the UK, the Toolkit is customisable according to your location, climate strategy and carbon footprint, to be specific to your unique needs. Data sources have been carefully selected to provide up-to-date, robust and accurate information relevant to your setting.

A panel of local authorities have co-created, reviewed and piloted the Toolkit materials, ensuring the latest and best sectoral materials are used.

### **What is included within the Toolkit?**

The Toolkit consists of slides, activity resources, a comprehensive trainer manual and a 'getting started' pack.

### **More information**

**FAQs** – Further Carbon Literacy FAQs.

**Video** – Michael Cullen, Borough Treasurer at Stockport Council Testimonial.

**Video** – Alice Webb, Director of BBC Children's and BBC North Testimonial.

**Video** – BBC Vox Pop Testimonials.

**Webinar**– Local Authorities Generic Staff Toolkit Launch.

### **Sign up to our Local Authorities Newsletter**

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

### **Want to find out more? Please get in touch**

Email: [localauthorities@carbonliteracy.com](mailto:localauthorities@carbonliteracy.com)

Telephone: 0161 2981782

Facebook: [@carbonliteracy](#)

Twitter: [@carbon\\_literacy](#)

Instagram: [@carbonliteracy](#)

LinkedIn: [The Carbon Literacy Project](#)