

Carbon Neutral

NEWCASTLE (United Kingdom)

In partnership with Future Forest, Newcastle upon Tyne launched an innovative and original programme in 2002 aimed at encouraging inhabitants and factories to significantly reduce their CO₂ emissions. Newcastle upon Tyne, a founder member of Energie-Cités will be the first Carbon Neutral[®] town.

THE CITY

Newcastle upon Tyne is the administrative, commercial and cultural centre of North East England.

The town's population is 280,000 and the number of jobs 160,000 while the "Tyne and Wear" conurbation's population stands at 1,100,000 and 430,000 respectively. Following the collapse of the coal export trade, the town turned to chemicals and this is now a bedrock industry.

More recently, the car industry set up production plants there. Newcastle is now one of the towns of Northern England set to completely succeed its industrial restructuring.



CONTEXT

At national level

By virtue of the Kyoto Protocol and the European Union's "load sharing" scheme, the United Kingdom has undertaken to reduce by 12.5% its greenhouse gas emissions by 2008-2012 compared with their 1990 level. The first assessment drawn up based on the period 1990-1999 is encouraging since it reveals a 14% reduction of emissions (mainly due to a reduction in the consumption of coal during the period).

The British Government has furthermore set itself another more ambitious target: a 20% reduction of emissions by 2010. To achieve this target, it has set up a national programme to combat climate change based on a partnership approach between public and private players. The programme is underpinned by a whole range of measures including statutory measures, economic instruments, advertising campaigns and subsidy schemes. The programme is particularly focused on local government. The latter also plays a role of relay in the national "Are you doing your bit?" campaign targeting the inhabitants. The government makes available methodological tools and organizes conferences enabling local authorities to direct their actions and discuss their practical experience of "means of achievement" to reduce greenhouse gases. The Energy Saving Trust (EST), a non-profit making association set up by the government and the private sector, offers advice in the form of guides and best practices for government officials and heads of departments.

At local level

The municipality of Newcastle quickly became aware of the damaging consequences locally of global warming: more frequent flooding, damage caused by high winds, upsetting of farming practices and repercussions on tourism and local companies.

Newcastle is one of the first towns in Great Britain to have admitted the particular importance of energy consumption and energy management on environmental impacts.

Milestones in the town's energy strategy are the following:

- 1989 : setting up of a working group involving the various local players,
- 1990 : analysis and drawing up of energy scenarios for the town: "Strategy for Energy and the Urban Environment"
- 1992 : publication and application of the "Energy Action Plan",
- 1996 : assessment and revision of the "Energy Action Plan"
- 1998 : adoption of Agenda 21
- 2001 : adoption of a Charter for the environment and EMAS certification

General research on energy consumption and their environmental consequences on the urban district as a whole was carried out in 1992 using TEMIS software. This enabled the elaboration of prospective scenarios. The most ambitious scenario revealed that only a strong policy favouring energy savings could have far-reaching effects. A complete list classed projects into five categories: cogeneration, energy management, renewable energies and transport.

NEWCASTLE'S DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Partnership

Future Forests is a leading enterprise in the area of the environment. In collaboration with the *Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Management*, Future Forests calculates company CO₂ emissions and offers advice for reducing rates (e.g.: by putting clients in contact with green energy suppliers or by compensating their emissions by planting trees). When all CO₂ emissions are either reduced or compensated, processes, activities or products are able to bear the Carbon Neutral[®] label, a Future Forests brand name. To date, more than 120 companies are entitled to bear the Carbon Neutral[®] label.

The municipality of Newcastle has associated with Future Forests to create the first Carbon Neutral[®] town. The town is banking on environmental, social and economic spin-off through this partnership and hopes to become a town of reference.

Objectives of the programme

The main objective of the "Carbon Neutral Newcastle" programme is to encourage companies, local organizations and the inhabitants of Newcastle to choose these branded products while accepting an increase of one penny (£0.01) in the price.

Canvassing of companies is now underway. Programme coordination will be assured for the first twelve months by a steering committee made up of representatives of the municipality of Newcastle, two non-governmental organizations (FoE, WWF), the public transport company NEXUS and companies of various economic sectors.

It involves:

- supplying local companies an attractive promotional platform designed around the themes of environment and climate change,
- encouraging an increasing number of companies and persons to get involved, thus blazoning Newcastle's image,
- assisting the municipality to win support for its candidature as the European City of Culture in 2008,
- and more generally
 - raise awareness of climate change and CO₂ emissions,
 - reducing emissions at source,
 - generating monies which will be invested into new schemes for local clean energy and tree planting

Organization and management

The campaign will be launched by the municipality and by a chosen group of companies, known as "main partners". In order to launch the campaign, each partner is requested to make a financial contribution of £20,000 (€32,900) and to arrange a sponsorship.

The municipality has undertaken to become Carbon Neutral[®] with respect to its property assets.

Money earned will be churned back into local projects offering social and economic advantages to the municipality such as the heating of accommodation at reasonable rates or the planting of trees in the town or surrounding district.

The cost to offset a ton of CO₂ emissions is estimated to be £13,64 (€22.40), or £50 (€82) per ton of carbon. Roughly 70 % of these savings will be used to finance local clean energy and forestry projects, 20 % will be ploughed back in the promotion of the campaign and the remainder will cover administrative costs.

Requests for subsidies have been made with national financial backers (the Carbon fund) and international backers (the European Commission).

Undertaking

Evaluation of CO₂ emissions

CO₂ emissions resulting from activities will be assessed by means of a "Carbon footprint" evaluation report. In this report CO₂ emissions are broken down into sources and a carbon strategy is outlined in order to identify costs that might be avoided.

CO₂ emission compensation

CO₂ emissions that are unable to be reduced will be compensated through local membership projects of the Carbon Neutral programme. In practice, the sum gained from every ton of avoided CO₂ will be paid into the Carbon Neutral Newcastle Fund. The latter will be used to finance emission compensation projects.

EVALUATION AND PERSPECTIVES

The launch of this campaign represents a world premier through which Newcastle wishes to enhance its image, attract new investments to the town, benefit the local community and the environment and submit its candidature for "Europe's Culture Capital" for 2008.

The programme will enhance the City's position as a European leader in sustainability management, and address one of the major areas within the recently launched Charter for the Environment.

The originality of this approach is that it is cross-sectorial and brings together players from different backgrounds (public and private).

Initial estimates based on the number of participants of the programme reveal that every year between 20,000 and 150,000 tonnes of CO₂ will be "neutralised", generating between £300,000 (€492,500) and £2,100,000 (€3,448,000) of income to conduct local projects and provision the Carbon Neutral Newcastle fund.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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