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# GRaBS Expert Paper 5

# collaborative working

# for climate change

# policies

By Alex House





## GRaBS

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The GRaBS (Green and Blue Space Adaptation for Urban Areas and Eco Towns) project is a network of leading pan-European organisations involved in integrating climate change adaptation into regional planning and development.

The 14 project partners, drawn from eight EU Member States, represent a broad spectrum of authorities and climate change challenges, all with varying degrees of strategic policy and experience. The GRaBS project partners are:

**Austria:**

- Provincial Government of Styria

**Greece:**

- Municipality of Kalamaria

**Italy:**

- Etnambiente SRL
- Province of Genoa
- University of Catania

**Lithuania:**

- Klaipeda University Coastal Research and Planning Institute

**Netherlands:**

- Nieuw-West City District of Amsterdam

**Slovakia:**

- Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe, Country Office Slovakia

**Sweden:**

- City of Malmö

**UK:**

- London Borough of Sutton
- Northwest Regional Development Agency
- Southampton City Council
- Town and Country Planning Association
- University of Manchester



The project has been co-financed by the European Union European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and made possible by the INTERREG IVC Programme.

For further information about the GRaBS project, visit <http://www.grabs-eu.org>

# GRaBS Expert Paper 5

# collaborative working for climate change policies

**By Alex House**

## Foreword

One important objective of the GRaBS project is to promote high-level policy commitments from politicians and wider civil society groups. The UK Planning and Climate Change Coalition (PCCC) represents one innovative example of how several organisations can come together to lobby for effective policy action at the highest level.

The story of how the PCCC came into being and how the members worked together to produce a leading-edge policy guide for climate change is all the more remarkable because of the very different objectives of the member groups. This Expert Paper makes a valuable contribution to the GRaBS project by capturing the ways of working that made the PCCC successful. It sets out how the group was almost derailed by very fast moving political circumstances and how it was able to evolve and respond to this challenge. Perhaps more than anything this Paper illustrates how a group of dedicated individuals can effect policy change not only through a strong scientific understanding of climate change but also in response to a powerful moral imperative to ensure that we do everything we can to respond to the climate challenge.

**Dr Hugh Ellis**  
Chief Planner  
TCPA

# 1 Introduction

One of the key outputs of the GRaBS project is the production of high-level policy statements on climate adaptation. This Expert Paper highlights the work of the Planning and Climate Change Coalition (the PCCC) in its attempt to secure a national policy framework for land use planning on climate change. It identifies the importance of transparent and collaborative working practices and highlights the challenges of a rapidly changing political environment.

The Paper illustrates the potential for groups and individuals to come together and deliver real policy change which can influence the outcomes not just of government policy but of national legal frameworks.

The role of Government in creating policy is evolving. A divergence from traditional political processes is taking place, creating new roles for the private, public and third sector to bring about new governance structures. This Expert Paper exemplifies one way of achieving policy and practice change by working in a wholly different way, to build consensus around a diverse coalition of interests, in a fast moving political environment. The Paper outlines the approach adopted by the the PCCC, led by two charities – the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) and Friends of

the Earth (FoE) – and developed by building upon the expertise of the pan-European project GRaBS (Green and Blue Space Adaptation for Urban Areas and Eco Towns – see Box 1 on page 3).

GRaBS aims to produce high-level policy guidance for adaptation to climate change through planning. In the UK the PCCC started this process with an attempt to produce guidance at the regional scale. However, this focus has shifted to the local authority scale following a change in government in May 2010 and the abolition of regional planning.

Over its two years of collaborative working, the PCCC has developed a new approach to creating policy and generating policy support. This has produced influential outputs, and this Expert Paper seeks to present the key lessons learnt from this iterative process.

# 2 Identifying the policy window

To create a change in governance, it is first necessary to identify and take advantage of relevant policy opportunities.



**Launch of the PCCC's *Guidance and Model Policies for Local Authorities* at the House of Commons in November 2010**

### Box 1

## The Planning and Climate Change Coalition and the GRaBS project

The PCCC has been central to the delivery of the GRaBS project objectives, through:

- its open approach to membership, with attendees from public, private and voluntary sectors, and its communication and dissemination activities – this has helped raise awareness and increase the expertise of key bodies responsible for planning and development on how green and blue infrastructure can help new and existing mixed-use urban development to adapt to projected climate scenarios;
- assessing the delivery mechanisms that exist for planning for climate change in England (directly relevant to the five UK partners and transferable to the wider GRaBS network), and by developing model policies and guidance which will help co-ordinate the delivery of adaptation strategies, as well as co-operation, among planners, policy-makers, stakeholders, and local communities;
- sharing the expertise developed by the GRaBS partnership, and in particular the University of Manchester's innovative, cost-effective and user-friendly risk and vulnerability assessment tool, which will aid the strategic planning of climate change adaptation responses; and
- directly influencing policy and running a wider communications campaign – there has been an improvement in stakeholder and community understanding and involvement in planning, delivering and managing green infrastructure in new and existing urban mixed-use development, based on positive community involvement techniques.

In the case of the PCCC, the problem was framed through the ineffectual use of UK national planning policy to produce action on the ground to address the targets from the Climate Change Act 2008.<sup>1</sup>

These national drivers were not delivering the necessary transformational change at the local planning level.

The Climate Change Act imposed a legally binding long-term framework to cut carbon emissions, and created a framework for building the UK's ability to adapt to climate change. The national *Planning Policy Statement (PPS): Planning and Climate Change. Supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1*<sup>2</sup> was published in 2007, and this, in itself, was a considerable achievement, but the science and policy moved at an unprecedented rate following its publication. At the same time, Planning Policy Statement 22: *Renewable Energy*<sup>3</sup> was not delivering

enough renewable energy. It was in this context that in May 2009 the TCPA and FoE decided, in conversation with civil servants in the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), that the two policies needed to be reassessed in order to deliver on their objectives.

The cross-sector PCCC was formed – with leadership and organisation provided by an alliance between the TCPA and FoE – to tackle the problem of the insufficient and outdated planning guidance.

Its objectives were to boost the planning system's responsiveness to climate change, secure greener development, and prevent carbon-hungry projects from being approved. It aimed to:

- make recommendations for new strategic planning guidance on climate change in England, bringing together the PPS on planning and climate and PPS22 on renewable energy;

1 Climate Change Act 2008. HM Government. [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2008/ukpga\\_20080027\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2008/ukpga_20080027_en_1)

2 Planning Policy Statement: Planning and Climate Change. Supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1. Department for Communities and Local Government, Dec. 2007. <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/ppsclimatechange.pdf>

3 Planning Policy Statement 22: *Renewable Energy*. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004. <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/147444.pdf>

# Collaborative Working for Climate Change Policies

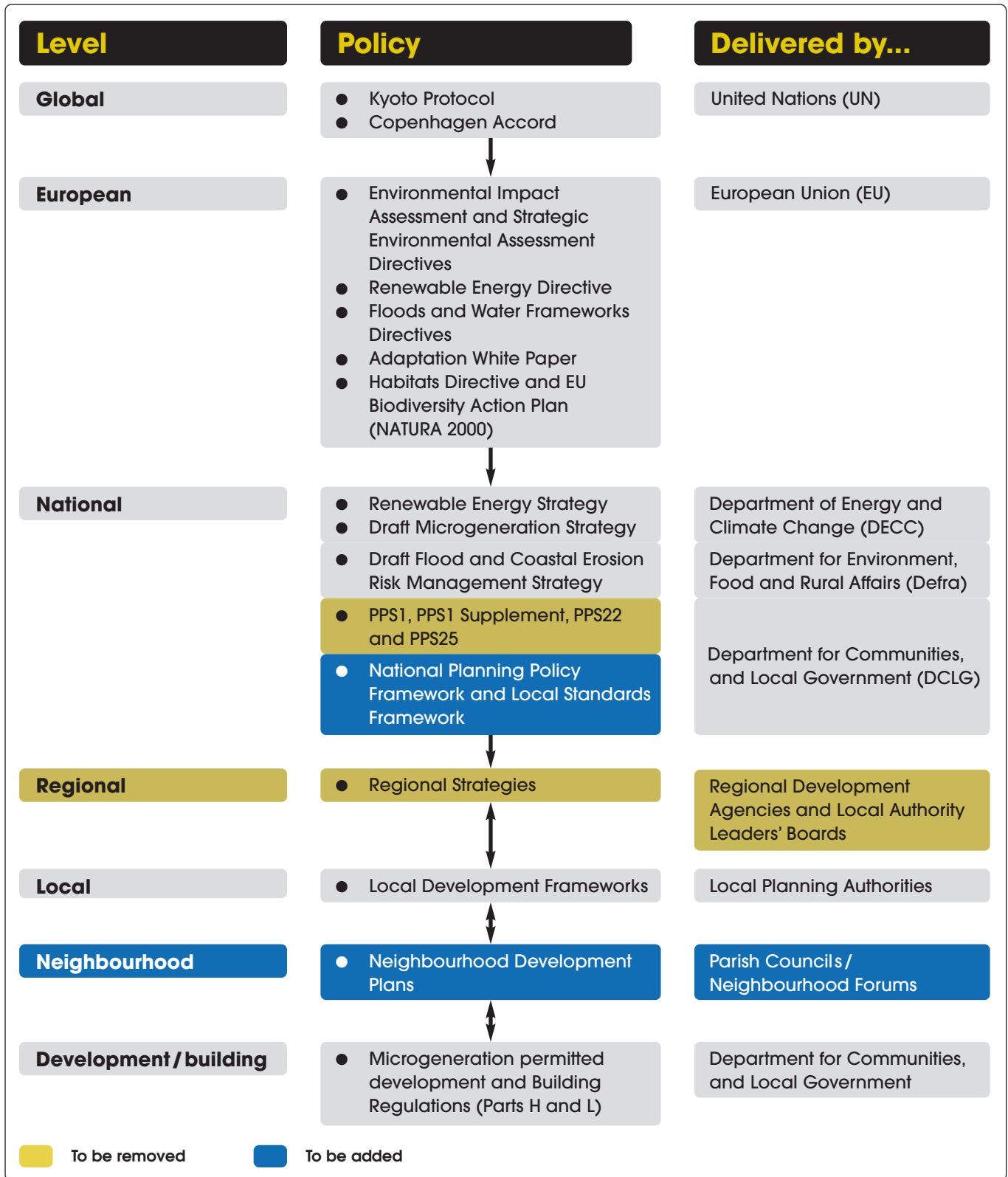


Fig. 1 Key policy instruments influencing planning for climate change in the UK

- build consensus among a wide range of stakeholders on the benefits of new guidance; and
- work with central government to ensure the fastest possible implementation of the new guidance.

During the development of the PCCC, the policy window shifted considerably with the change in UK government in May 2010. Initially, it was focused on influencing the new climate PPS and the UK Renewable

Energy Strategy. Following the general election, the Coalition Government shifted the policy paradigm, with a move away from national guidance and an emphasis on 'localism' (see Fig. 1 on page 4). Adapting to this, the PCCC produced guidance and model policies for local authorities, and is currently focused on influencing the national Localism Bill<sup>4</sup> as it makes its way through Parliament and the associated new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It was important for the PCCC to adapt to these changing circumstances in order to sustain its influence.

### 3 Group mobilisation

Once the policy window was identified, the TCPA and FoE started to build a consensus among other organisations – from private sector companies, third-sector charities, professional bodies, academics, and government agencies. There was tremendous enthusiasm for the PCCC, with many organisations feeling that they had no other opportunity or mechanism to input into the policy-making agenda for climate change. An integrated network going beyond traditional models of governance was developed. This included influential bodies such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), which has over 1 million individual members, and the National Trust, with over 3.5 million members (a complete list of PCCC members is given in Box 2 on page 6). As climate change affects a wide range of people and environments, it proved to be a significant and popular topic around which to form a coalition around. The TCPA was able to lead and support the coalition through the GRaBS project.

Organisations were invited to join the PCCC under the principle that they would talk openly and honestly, and represent a personal commitment rather than

corporate interest. This was a significant difference from other coalitions, where it is more often the practice that the 'delegate' is mandated to vote in accordance with their organisation's policy. A collaborative cross-sector approach was employed to draw up draft planning guidance which would transform the system's ability to meet the challenge of tackling climate change, with the aim of persuading the Government to put climate change at the heart of the English planning system. Comment and compromise was encouraged, in order to achieve a consensus on the benefits of a new climate Planning Policy Statement, integrating PPS1 and PPS22.

### 4 Developing a common policy position

With no core funding, political or corporate affiliations, the PCCC worked hard to develop a *Position Statement*, published in 2009, which included principles for the Government to adopt in an updated Climate Change PPS.<sup>5</sup> The *Position Statement* was produced following two policy meetings held in July and September 2009 and drawing on extensive feedback from approximately 100 stakeholders. The document was launched in the House of Commons on 27 October 2009, and the reception was addressed by the then Housing and Planning Minister, John Healey MP. Detailed solutions were put forward to improve the planning process by making it fairer and ensuring that it played its part in slashing carbon emissions and meeting the targets set out in the Climate Change Act 2008.<sup>6</sup> The *Position Statement* proposed that a new climate PPS must be informed by the following principles:

- a restatement of the importance of sustainable development as the key planning system objective;

4 Localism Bill. House of Commons. TSO,

Dec. 2010. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmbills/126/11126part1.pdf>

5 *Planning and Climate Change Coalition: Position Statement*. Planning and Climate Change Coalition. TCPA, Oct 2009. [http://www.tcpa.org.uk/data/files/pccc\\_position\\_statement.pdf](http://www.tcpa.org.uk/data/files/pccc_position_statement.pdf)

6 Climate Change Act 2008. HM Government. [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2008/ukpga\\_20080027\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2008/ukpga_20080027_en_1)

### Box 2

#### Members of the PCCC

The PCCC includes over 50 organisations and individuals including:

- Action for Market Towns
- Addison & Associates
- AECB, the Sustainable Building Association
- AECOM
- Anne Ashe
- BioRegional
- Birmingham City Council
- Brady Shipman Martin
- Butterfly Conservation
- Campaign for Better Transport
- Campaign for National Parks
- Campaign to Protect Rural England
- Chris Shepley CBE
- Chris Tivey Associates
- Combined Heat and Power Association
- The Co-operative
- Council for British Archaeology
- DPP LLP
- Environmental Law Foundation
- Environmental Protection UK
- Friends of the Earth
- GRaBS project
- Grasslands Trust
- Hugh Roberts
- Instinctively Green Ltd
- John Zetter
- Landscape Institute
- The Landscape Partnership
- LDA Design
- London Borough of Islington
- London Borough of Sutton
- Marks Barfield Architects
- National Housing Federation
- National Trust
- New Economics Foundation
- Roger Lawes
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- Royal Town Planning Institute
- Rutland Group
- URS/Scott Wilson
- Sheppard Robson
- Sustain
- The Sustainability Centre
- Sustainable Works
- Sustrans
- Thamesway Group
- Town and Country Planning Association
- UK Green Building Council
- URBED Ltd
- White arkitekter AB

- a commitment to the plan-led system, which can produce certainty and transparency for all sectors;
- a commitment to make climate change a vital factor in all planning decision-making;
- a commitment to environmental justice and open, transparent and participative decision-making;
- a recognition of the importance of adaptation and the need to integrate mitigation and adaptation solutions;
- the creation of a new technical advice body to ensure the integration of data sets, methodologies and target regimes; and
- the introduction of a new energy paradigm requiring a holistic and positive approach to both minimising energy demand and taking up large-scale, community-level and micro-renewables energy opportunities.

### 4.1 Coalition principles adopted

The *Position Statement* proved to be very influential. A third meeting of the PCCC took place on 9 March 2010, at which a draft consultation Climate Change PPS<sup>7</sup> was unveiled by representatives of the

Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). This was a fantastic result for the PCCC. The statement sent a powerful message to the Government and laid the foundation for a new draft policy. The draft Climate Change PPS combined and updated the existing Planning Policy Statements on climate change (PPS1 Supplement) and renewable energy (PPS22), and set out how planning should mitigate climate change and adapt to its impacts. This policy, as an important tool to tackle the climate agenda, was one of the most dramatic and significant steps forward in the development of spatial planning.

The PCCC's recommendation to boost training and skills for planners and elected members was also heard, with nearly £10 million allocated to empower local authorities to approve more renewable energy projects and sustainable housing. Lessons from the GRaBS project were a key feature of the draft PPS – stressing the crucial role of adaptation, and not just mitigation, in spatial planning policy to improve community resilience to the real threats of climate change, paying particular attention to impacts on the most vulnerable groups.

<sup>7</sup> Consultation on a Planning Policy Statement: Planning for a Low Carbon Future in a Changing Climate. Department for Communities and Local Government, Mar. 2009. <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/1499780.pdf>



## 4.2 Adapting to changing politics

Despite the success of the PCCC's *Position Statement*, the policy window shifted after the change in Government in May 2010, which set the PCCC a new challenge. The Coalition Government signalled a radical shift of responsibility to the local authority and community level, with the intention to abolish national and regional planning guidance set out in the Localism Bill (published in November 2010<sup>8</sup>). National planning policies, including PPS1 and PPS22, were to be streamlined and consolidated. Regional Strategies were revoked, and regional evidence-gathering was ended. While there was uncertainty about how the new planning framework would work, the PCCC felt that this could not be allowed to delay action on climate change.

## 4.3 Guidance and model policies for local authorities

A new consensus was established at the next meeting of the PCCC, in September 2010. It was agreed that the PCCC would adapt its stance, and publish the draft Climate Change PPS standards, without the regional element, so that local authorities could adopt them if they wanted to. This represented a new governance structure, whereby a coalition of cross-sector interests called for local authorities to adopt their policy standards, rather than the Government requiring them to.

The PCCC stepped up to the challenge of the Big Society (the Coalition Government's localist agenda) by voluntarily producing *Guidance and Model Policies for Local Authorities*,<sup>9</sup> based on the draft Climate Change PPS, which was launched at the House of Commons on 3 November 2010. The guide was designed primarily for local authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships who wanted to tackle climate change and reap the benefits that renewable energy and effective adaptation can bring. The guide built upon the wide-ranging consensus which the draft Climate Change

PPS addressed, and was supported by a variety of organisations.

The model policies were developed through cross-sector dialogue, using the wide-ranging expertise of the PCCC partners. The guide gave detailed guidance on the principles that should underpin plan-making and development management. It was recommended as the basis for comprehensive policy in the new, community-based local plans. It could also be used to form the basis of local supplementary planning policy and could guide development management decisions. The guide is intended to be a vital tool for any UK local authority and community that wants to tackle climate change and bring about a low-carbon future.

## 4.4 Long-term legacy

The policy window transformed again when the Localism Bill was published in November 2010. The emphasis for the PCCC was now on influencing planning law by proposing amendments to the Bill, as well as suggesting content for the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which would condense the PPSs into one overarching document. The new Localism Bill was seen as an opportunity to enshrine an effective and open system which allowed communities to face up to and tackle the major climate challenges, as well as deliver visionary sustainable development. However, the PCCC's greatest concern was that the duty to consider climate change only applied to the preparation of Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) and not to the new tier of neighbourhood planning.

The PCCC set about preparing a briefing paper for Ministers,<sup>10</sup> highlighting the PCCC's principles and detailing amendments to the Localism Bill requiring the duty on climate change to cover neighbourhood planning. Once again, the PCCC was able to attain over 30 signatories for the briefing, which was a vital tool in its ability to influence Ministers to table the proposed amendments.

8 Localism Bill. House of Commons. TSO, Dec. 2010. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmbills/126/11126part1.pdf>

9 *Planning and Climate Change Coalition – Guidance and Model Policies for Local Authorities*. TCPA, 2010. [http://www.tcpa.org.uk/data/files/pccc\\_guidance\\_web.pdf](http://www.tcpa.org.uk/data/files/pccc_guidance_web.pdf)

10 *Localism Bill Parliamentary Briefing. Planning and Climate Change Coalition. New Clause 5: Mitigation and Adaptation to Climate Change*. Planning and Climate Change Coalition. Feb. 2011. [http://www.tcpa.org.uk/data/files/localism\\_bill\\_planning\\_and\\_climate\\_change\\_coalition\\_briefing.pdf](http://www.tcpa.org.uk/data/files/localism_bill_planning_and_climate_change_coalition_briefing.pdf)

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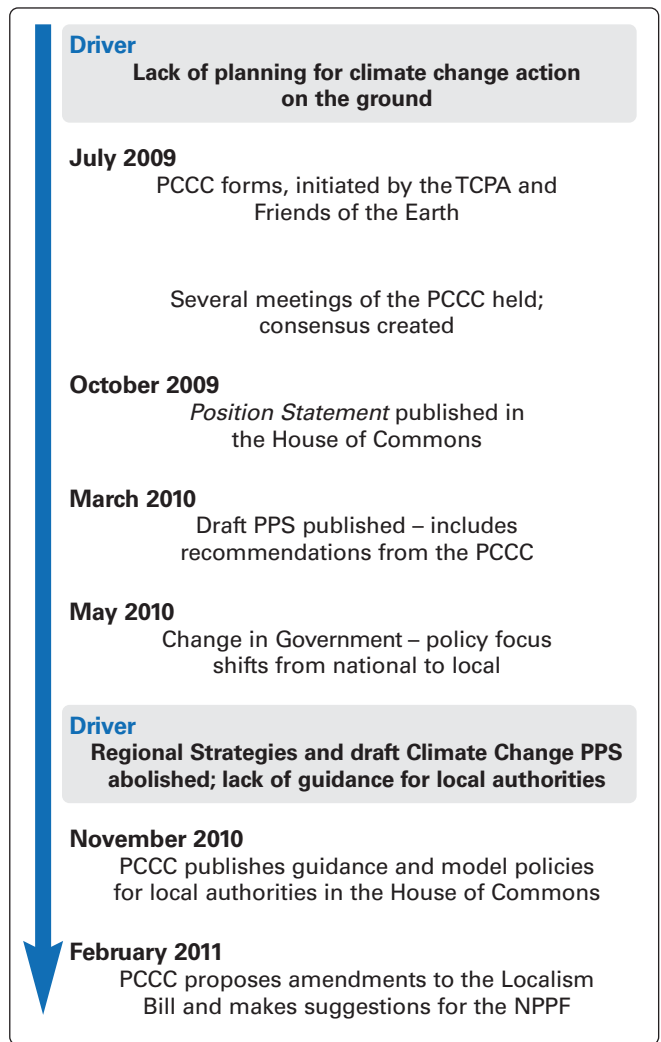
As part of its interaction with the Localism Bill, the PCCC believed that it was vital for the new NPPF to contain strong and effective policy objectives on adaptation and mitigation. It was important that these objectives were supported by detailed policy approaches for both plan-making and development management. The PCCC submitted a response<sup>11</sup> to the NPPF which included the following suggestions:

- Make clear the vital role of spatial planning in dealing with climate change.
- Set clear and ambitious objectives on adaptation and mitigation.
- Provide a set of effective policy approaches around key issues such as renewable energy and flood risk.
- Be positive about how such measures can be used by communities to forge better places in which to live and achieve a low-carbon economy.

It is hoped that this cross-sector coalition working around the Localism Bill will lead to robust climate change policies for planning.

## 5 Achieving political and organisational support

The PCCC took an apolitical approach when engaging with the Government. Achieving political support was a vital aspect throughout the process, and the PCCC worked with elected members of both the former Labour and current Coalition Governments, as well as with the civil servants. The comprehensive interests and extensive membership base of the supporting partners helped the PCCC to gain political backing for the work. At the launch of the PCCC's *Position Statement* in October 2009, the then Housing Minister, John Healey MP, attended and welcomed the



**Timeline of the Planning and Climate Change Coalition's activities**

document, which was a great achievement given the UK's economic challenges.

Since the change of government, the PCCC has kept up its relationships with national and local politicians. Julie Elliot MP and Councillor Colin Hall of the London Borough of Sutton helped to launch the PCCC's *Guidance and Model Policies for Local Authorities* in November 2010 at the House of Commons. The PCCC has also had meetings with Ministers from DCLG, DECC and Defra to promote its work. In September 2010, the PCCC received a letter from Greg Clark, Minister for Decentralisation, in which he shared his concerns about tackling climate change through planning, and stated that this important role would be reflected in the new NPPF.

<sup>11</sup> *Planning and Climate Change Coalition Submission to the National Planning Policy Framework*. Planning and Climate Change Coalition. Feb. 2011. [http://www.tcpa.org.uk/data/files/planning\\_climate\\_change\\_coalition\\_submission\\_to\\_nppf.pdf](http://www.tcpa.org.uk/data/files/planning_climate_change_coalition_submission_to_nppf.pdf)

### Box 3 PCCC wins national planning award

In February the PCCC received the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) 2010 Award for its Contribution to Planning. The judges said: 'The consensual approach adopted by the Planning and Climate Change Coalition demonstrates how ambition and a clear vision, together with real collaborative working based on honest, co-operative and collective discourse, mediated as necessary by the TCPA, can overcome inevitable conflicts and deliver a high-quality policy statement. The approach has shown how policy can be developed without institutional backing and in a way that is adaptable to the new political regime.'

## 6 Enduring influence

The PCCC is continuing to exert its influence at the local, national and international scale:

- **Local level:** The PCCC gained real political support at the local authority level in February 2011 when Southampton City Council, one of the GRaBS partners, began the process of endorsing the PCCC's model policies as a framework to guide the development of future policy at the Council.
- **National level:** The PCCC was also delighted to receive and Royal Town Planning Institute Award (RTPI) in February 2011 (see Box 3), which celebrated how the wider planning community can come together in a co-operative and open way to tackle challenging policy issues and reach consensus on areas vital to the future of our communities.
- **International level:** In November 2010, the TCPA, in collaboration with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), held a high-level stakeholder roundtable meeting to highlight

and discuss the role of planning in delivering sustainable, vibrant and low-carbon cities. The event, entitled 'Compact Cities and Climate Change' built on the extensive experience that the TCPA has developed by leading the PCCC and through EU-funded GRaBS project.

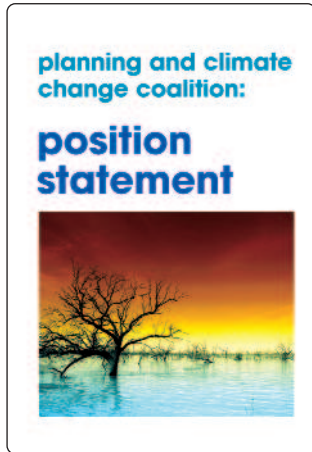
## 7 Conclusion

The achievement of the PCCC, with very little resources, is a rare example of how a cross-sector coalition of organisations can collaborate and robustly debate challenging policy areas. The PCCC worked because of a clear understanding that debate could be honest open and fair, with progress being consensual, and with differing options of involvement to accommodate all sectors. A key issue was one of conflicting interests, inherent in a coalition of this size. However, the TCPA and Friends of the Earth were able to overcome this through negotiation and compromise, and were able to achieve a high rate of sign-on to the PCCC's publications. The process has been a model of its kind in seeking ways forward that are inclusive and respectful of the diversity of opinion, and is a template that could be replicated in other countries.

The PCCC experience shows how we are moving beyond traditional governance structures, whereby new roles are created for groups of organisations from the private, public and third sectors, coming together to influence policy. It illustrates that this process is iterative, that there are inherent feedback loops, and that it is necessary to be adaptable to new political regimes and policy windows in order to achieve successful outcomes.

Elements that featured in the PCCC process and which could be replicated across other countries include the following:

- strong leadership;
- collaborative ways of working;
- Leaving corporate affiliations behind
- honesty and transparency;
- good communication; and
- strong individual moral commitment.



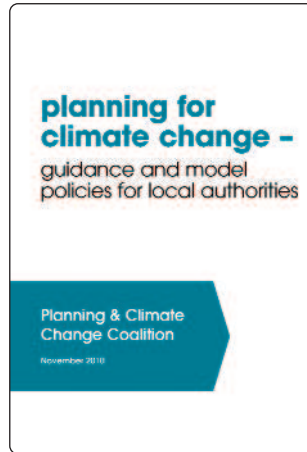
***Planning and Climate Change Coalition: Position Statement***

**October 2009**

The Planning and Climate Change Coalition's *Position Statement* made recommendations for new strategic planning guidance on climate change in England, bringing together guidance from PPS1 and PPS22.

**Download from:**

[http://www.tcpa.org.uk/data/files/pccc\\_position\\_statement.pdf](http://www.tcpa.org.uk/data/files/pccc_position_statement.pdf)



***Planning for Climate Change - Guidance and Model Policies for Local Authorities***

**November 2010**

The Planning and Climate Change Coalition's *Guidance and Model Policies* gives detailed guidance on policies that could underpin new community-based local plans, should local authorities wish to adopt them.

**Download from:**

[http://www.tcpa.org.uk/data/files/pccc\\_guidance\\_web.pdf](http://www.tcpa.org.uk/data/files/pccc_guidance_web.pdf)



The GRaBS Project  
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By Alex House  
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