

Case Study



Getting started

Adapting to climate change at local and regional level can take a variety of different shapes and forms, with many activities possibly building on and engaging with activities, practices, networks, and stakeholders that authorities have already developed. Often adaptation is understood as a cycle, which involves a number of steps to develop, implement, monitor, and evaluate adaptation options. Whilst the naming of these steps may differ between different adaptation support tools, they broadly tend to encompass the following:

- Getting started – Preparing the ground for adaptation
- Climate change risks and vulnerabilities
- Identifying adaptation options
- Implementing, monitoring, and evaluating adaptation options

The Met Office launched the Local Authority Climate Service (LACS) in 2024, which aims to support actors progress on adaptation. This case study highlights how the LACS is already being used in practice for the first step in the cycle – Getting started.

Getting started

This first step literally is getting started with the adaptation process. This can include a number of activities such as for example:

- Getting buy-in from senior management
- Raising awareness amongst colleagues
- Engaging with communities and stakeholders
- Building up colleague's climate literacy to make sure everyone is using and understands the relevant concepts and ideas.

Getting buy-in from senior management

It almost goes without saying that getting the support of senior managers in the authority is critical if the adaptation process is to achieve any traction. With the LACS tool you can develop high-level headlines of climate change impacts specific to your local authority (LA). Within Durham County Council a briefing note on the LACS was sent to the Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which included advice on how to progress on adaptation. They also appended their LACS report to a corporate management team report that could be circulated more widely within the authority. By easily being able to draw their director's attention to climate impacts, the LACS report has helped them to place the adaptation discussion 'back on the agenda'.

"The fact that it produces a report I thought was excellent, it just was high level headlines that are really, really useful. That report can be appended to corporate management team report, for information. So, already it's been useful in terms of highlighting the whole adaptation agenda with my director and getting it firmly back onto the agenda."

Durham County Council

A metropolitan council is currently drafting a paper on what is required to get the council ready for climate adaptation to help them understand the scale of the work needed before going into depth in the different service areas. This paper will go to a discussion board for senior managers and potentially to director level too. The LACS (including the explorer, the risk planning and the taking actions sections) is being used to inform the paper and is referenced within it but also included as an appendix. The main element from the LACS report that they use is the number of occurrences of e.g. extreme heat days, frost days. Whilst there is a perception that it might be challenging to bring the full LACS information straight into conversations with wider stakeholders within the authority, efforts are being made to 'translate' how climate impacts are going to affect the different business units. The conversation here focuses on what pressures already exist within those service areas and this is supplemented with information from the LACS to understand how these could be amplified with climate change.

"It's looking at the difference in temperatures, the amount of light frost days, ice days, precipitation. Facts of how it is going to (...) change to start building that this is coming and here are some of the effects of that. The way we are structured is there's different business units but that's if public health or for housing or for environment and transport, so it's then trying to show (...) how it affects everywhere, but in how individual ones will be affected. (...) It only takes a few paragraphs to reference most of our business units in ways that they're already being influenced by climate change."

Metropolitan Council

Central Bedfordshire Council embarked on their adaptation journey in 2023, when adaptation was added to their refreshed Sustainability and Climate Strategy. To prepare the ground for their planned climate change risk assessment, they created a report in 2024 on the climate projections for the LA using the UKCP18 interface. The report findings were subsequently summarised into a slide deck, which was presented to the Executive Member for Sustainability in early 2025 to seek feedback and input into the adaptation agenda. To complement the information from the UKCP18 interface, the slide deck also contained information from the LACS report on the impacts of predicted weather events.

Impacts of predicted climate events

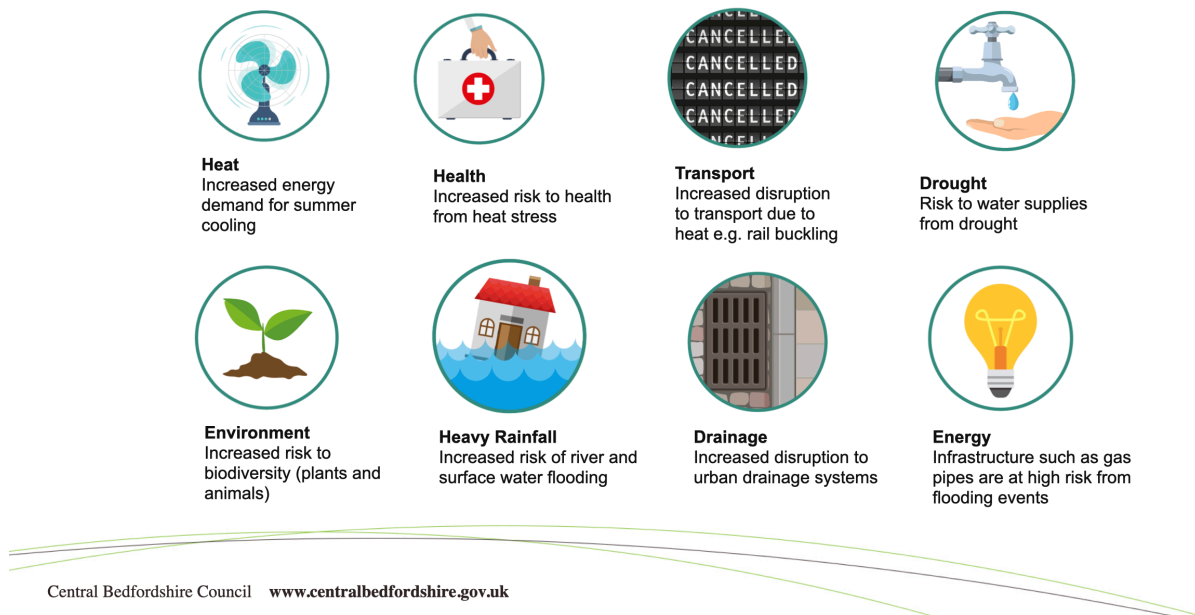


Figure 1 Slide on the LACS data presented by Central Bedfordshire Council to the Executive Member for Sustainability

Having received positive feedback and support from the elected members, the next step will be to create and distribute a brief for the corporate management team based on the information in the slide deck to garner further backing. Once both this political as well as senior management level approval is in place (the ‘top-down go ahead so to speak’), the aim is to go to service heads and deliver the same presentation, as well as to provide the complete LACS report, to facilitate a conversation around the information they may need in order to understand and assess their climate risks, what risk mitigating measures they may already have in place and start considering possible adaptation actions. Subsequently, it will be the responsibility of the service heads to identify who needs to be engaged in further conversations regarding action planning for climate adaptation.

“I used the impact symbols because they really explained that side of things better than I was going to create on a slide from the information I had. It made it a lot more digestible and easier to read, especially with the symbols, we love to use pictures to illustrate information, and the impact symbols achieved that.”

Central Bedfordshire Council

Raising awareness amongst colleagues

Whilst it is important to get senior managers to agree to adaptation, it is equally as important to get the buy-in or at least raise the awareness of colleagues within your authority. Circulating the LACS report proved a simple way to engage key service areas in raising awareness of the sector specific climate change impacts. These have for example included asset management, planning, public health services and contingency planning departments who are responsible for aspects related to resilience.

East Lothian Council take a targeted approach to engaging colleagues by sending specific elements of the report that would be most relevant to the recipient, rather than the whole report. For example, when speaking to the energy officer they sent LACS data on winter temperatures to help them understand change in the need for heating buildings. Or when presenting the LACS data on changing rainfall patterns to the emergency planning team, they were able to make the case to include rainfall and flooding into the corporate risk register.

“We are still at that very high-level strategic stage of adaptation planning. But [LACS has] been a really critical part of it because, if you do anything at a local authority, you have to justify why you’re doing it. Why are we doing a climate change plan? Why do we need to plan for adaptation? And the tool or the report has been a really good way of making that case of going, here’s what we expect the changes in our climate to be, here’s why we need to plan for these changes. And that has been a really useful galvaniser for other people in the Council.”

East Lothian Council

	0.6°C GWL Baseline 1981-2000	1.0°C GWL Recent Past 2001-2020	1.5°C GWL Paris Agreement	2°C GWL Guidance: Prepare	4°C GWL Guidance: Assess risks
Summer Days* Daily maximum temperature > 25°C High daytime temperatures with health impacts for vulnerable people at risk of hospital admission or death. Transport disruption – e.g. track buckling on railways. Can also indicate periods of increased water demand.	1 1 to 1	3 2 to 4	4 3 to 6	5 4 to 8	18 13 to 25
Hot Summer Days* Daily maximum temperature > 30°C Increased heat related illnesses, hospital admissions or death. Further transport disruption – e.g. track buckling on railways, road melt. Overhead power lines become less efficient.	0 0 to 0	0 0 to 0	0 0 to 0	0 0 to 1	2 1 to 4
Extreme Summer Days* Daily maximum temperature > 35°C Increased heat related illnesses, hospital admissions or death affecting not just the vulnerable. Further transport disruption – e.g. track buckling on railways, road melt.	0 0 to 0	0 0 to 0	0 0 to 0	0 0 to 0	0 0 to 0
Tropical Nights Daily minimum temperature > 20°C Health impact due to high night-time temperatures with potential for heat stress. Vulnerable people at increased risk of hospital admission or death.	0 0 to 0	0 0 to 0	0 0 to 0	0 0 to 0	0 0 to 0
Frost Days Daily minimum temperature < 0°C Cold weather disruption due to higher than normal chance of ice and snow.	52 51 to 53	40 28 to 47	32 25 to 43	24 18 to 40	7 4 to 13
Icing Days Daily maximum temperature < 0°C More extreme than frost days, so more severe cold weather impacts.	2 2 to 2	1 0 to 2	1 0 to 1	1 0 to 1	0 0 to 0

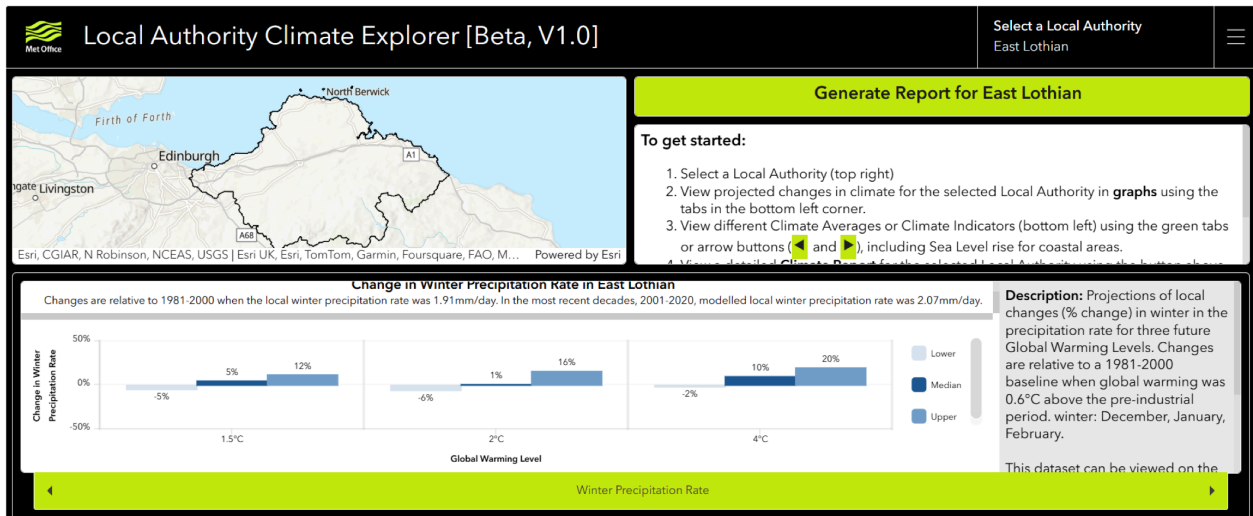


Figure 2 Slides on the LACS data presented by East Lothian Council to council-wide Emergency Planning and Resilience meeting

In February 2025, the LACS was also presented at the council-wide Emergency Planning and Resilience meeting, which happens biannually and is attended by services that manage the whole diversity of risks the council may be exposed to. The presentation included a reference to the LACS as well as the table with projected changes in climate for the local authority.

In Leeds City Council, the climate change team works closely with the Emergency Resilience Team on how climate risks link into corporate risks, the development of a heatwave guidance pack and on supporting the severe weather protocol. The Emergency Resilience Team is accustomed to using Met Office data for issuing severe weather warnings and the LACS has been shared with the team as part of ongoing efforts to keep updating such protocols in line with latest evidence. The LACS can provide the background narrative and evidence should senior managers require further reasoning for proposed measures for resilience planning.

It's more sitting in the background if [managers] challenge [the Climate Resilience Team] (...) they've got the link to it ready so someone challenges them, they can say here's why (...)."

Leeds City Council

Engaging the wider community across the local authority

Engaging with all levels of decision-making across the Local Authority region ensures that any adaptation measures, be they infrastructure or organisational, will more likely be adopted and therefore successful. This potentially could include district councils, parish councils, local businesses, and households. The LACS tool has been used to good effect to support this process as seen in East Lothian Council. As part of building climate resilience for community councils the Sustainability and Climate Change Officer worked together with the local Climate Hub to support the development of a community workshop.

The community councils can be thought of as being similar to Parish Councils in England. The workshop was attended by a diverse range of people including the Council's emergency planning team, elected members from community councils, farmers and representatives from the coastal regions and rural communities. In preparation of the workshop, the information that was compiled by the LA for the organisers of the workshop included relevant screen shots from the report including the graphs and tables that highlight the main likely climate impacts for the region. Though the screen shots were not used in the actual workshop there was a representative from the Met Office who introduced the LACS tool to the participants.

Ahead of, and during, the workshop the LACS report and a link to the LACS website was also shared so that the community councils could access more information about climate change adaptation and the LACS tool if they needed to. The workshop proved a huge success in bringing relevant authorities together and driving exchange of ideas of how to increase resilience to the local impacts as well as to encourage thinking on how the LACS tool could be used in interactions with the Community Councils. A follow-on workshop is being considered to support community councils to start creating actions plans to build climate resilience.

Building up climate literacy

In the West Midlands Combined Authority (CA), work has begun to focus on internal adaptation and climate risks facing the organisation and how the CA can mainstream climate adaptation through the levers that they have available to them. The CA has disseminated the LACS report as well as a link to the LACS website to the respective LAs within their region. Furthermore, within the CA these reports were used for the CA facing adaptation report and the accompanying workshops.

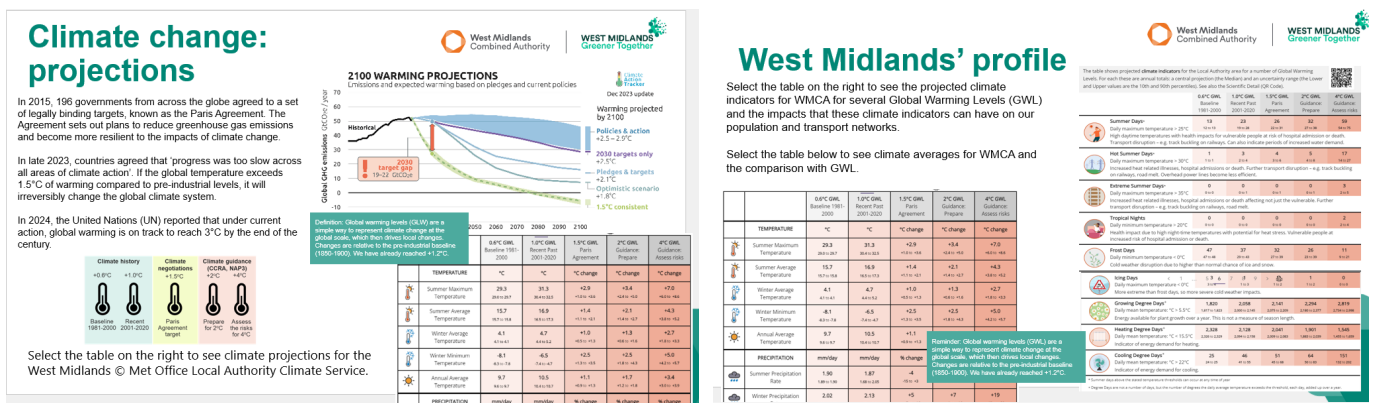


Figure 3 Slides on the LACS data developed by West Midlands Combined Authority for the developers of the adaptation literacy training

Furthermore, the CA is developing a 90-minute-long climate adaptation e-learning resource which will be free for public sector officers and elected members to take. The resource will be online and self-led forming part of continued professional development for staff. The content developed by the CA is divided into three modules: 1) Climate change in the UK and why adaptation matters, 2) Zooming in: climate impacts in the West Midlands, and 3) How can we adapt to climate change? Much of the information for modules one and two, which set the scene and explain what the projections are for the region, is taken from the LACS tool.

These modules will be separated out by hazard type and will focus on climate projections and projected indicators (e.g. number of hot days). The third module will refer to both the LACS tool as well as the Local Partnerships Tool. It ought to be noted though that the latter was also referenced in the training because it was cross-referenced on the LACS. Subsequently, they have commissioned an organisation who work on e-learning resources to design the final material. The final course will be advertised on the CA website and will also be embedded in local authority learning portals. The aim is to undertake user testing of the course with a variety of officers from different LAs in the region who do not normally work on climate-related issues. The CA will be convening a regional adaptation network, and the course will receive a substantial plug at the launch event

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