



Briefing Note (April 2013)

Policy Brief: Independent National Adaptation Programme

Headline issue

The Climate Change Act requires the Government to put in place a National Adaptation Programme (NAP) to address the risks faced by the UK from climate change. The Independent National Adaptation Programme has been produced to inform its preparation by providing independent analysis of UK climate change risks and the role of the Government in addressing them.

Key points

- Dealing with climate risk is not new. But climate change poses several new challenges:
 - Climate risks in the future are likely to be different from today's
 - There are areas where action is needed now to cope with the scale, speed and potential irreversibility of climate impacts
 - It is impossible to know what future climate we need to adapt to.
- The NAP is an initial milestone in an on-going, iterative process rather than a self-contained strategy. It should: highlight key areas of risk; establish principles for good adaptation over the long term; and define a set of time-sensitive priorities for action.
- Most adaptation will be undertaken by households, businesses and civil society, and their actions cannot be planned centrally. Therefore, the Government's role is to provide an enabling framework that encourages action.
- The public sector – Government departments, local authorities and public agencies – should:
 - Provide adaptation services directly where they are a public good
 - Enable private adaptation through regulation and price incentives
 - Assist vulnerable committees to adapt to climate change
 - Provide information about climate risks.
- There are some adaptation actions that it would be sensible to initiate now. There are three key areas where early adaptation efforts should focus:
 - Adaptations with early, robust benefits, such as water efficiency and better environmental management
 - Strategic decisions that could lock-in vulnerability profiles for a long time, such as the location of new infrastructure (airports, roads, rail, energy infrastructure)
 - 'Low-regrets' adaptation measures with long lead times, such as research and development.
- 12 priorities for Government action can be identified. These actions have strong cost-benefit ratios and, in many cases, can be achieved by refining existing regulation and policies (see table 1 overleaf).

Table 1. A preliminary set of priorities for Government action

Cross cutting priorities	I	Establish better monitoring systems: a system of new and linked existing indicators, including lead-indicators of vulnerability, is an important tool to inform both public and private sector decision-making.
	II	Provide user-relevant information, guidance, incentives and tools for private adaptation: the development and dissemination of material to inform adaptation throughout the economy can remove barriers to private adaptation.
	III	Build capacity to deliver effective and efficient adaptation across the Government: this includes developing appropriate, integrated decision-making frameworks, local implementation capacity, and coordination.
	IV	Ensure critical services and systems are ready to cope with current climate variability and extremes of weather: being able to respond to extreme events, such as floods and droughts, and taking a more long-term view than in the past will focus preparation for the additional challenges from climate change.
Agriculture, biodiversity and ecosystems	V	Refine current agricultural and related policy frameworks: ensure they enable (and do not hinder) near-term and long-term climate resilience and food security, and preserve or enhance the long-term resilience of land to climate change.
	VI	Encourage research and development into new ‘adaptive’ technologies, markets and measures: this can be done through research and pilot-funding (or seed-funding), innovative partnerships and/or the removal of barriers to private innovation.
Water	VII	Encourage the uptake of water saving measures with clear benefits today: this may include end-user water efficiency and reduced leakage.
	VIII	Enable water companies to make appropriate investments in supply-side measures: subject to careful economic analysis, investments in reservoirs, bulk water transfer, and waste-water reuse will make it easier to cope with long-term changes in climate.
	IX	Refine current water abstraction licensing: this will ensure the long-term sustainability of public water supplies and avoid negative impacts on the resilience of ecosystems.
Infrastructure, buildings and land management	X	Ensure new and existing public infrastructure and buildings are resilient to extreme weather and climate change: e.g. schools, hospitals and flood defences.
	XI	Use policy tools to encourage the resilience and robustness of private infrastructure, buildings and land management: the priority focus may be on areas of national importance and areas with critical implications for the public.
	XII	Ensure that major new developments, such as infrastructure, buildings and land management, support (and do not hinder) long-term resilience: this includes the resilience of natural ecosystems and can be achieved through both regulation and private markets.