

Module 1: Climate Change and Sustainable Development - Climate Change and Sustainable Development

Background

Introduction to Module 1

Climate change is the greatest long-term challenge facing human development. It is not just our biggest economic and social challenge; it is also a personal and moral one. In whatever sector we work, our endeavour must be to forge practical and rapid paths to a sustainable low-carbon planet. Fairness and justice must be at the heart of the debate about ways forward, alongside an acknowledgement of the need for risk-taking and innovation.

While we need to work nationally and internationally to secure progress on addressing climate change, we also need to galvanise local action. A considerable amount of carbon dioxide emissions are produced as a result of locally based activities, such as heating and powering our houses and local transport. Many of the impacts of climate change – extreme weather during summer and winter, for example – can also play out in ways that require local solutions. Local communities are at the cutting edge of the climate change challenge because they have responsibility for a wide range of decisions that are vital to our collective future.

Spatial planning can make a major contribution to tackling climate change by shaping new and existing developments in ways that reduce carbon dioxide emissions and positively build community resilience to problems such as extreme heat or flood risk. Spatial planning has the potential to deliver the right development in the right place in a fair and transparent way, informed by the imperative of sustainable development.

Specific content

Overview of Module 1

The necessity of a planning response to climate change creates a significant opportunity to engage communities in measures to mitigate against and become more resilient to the impacts of a changing climate. **Opportunities and benefits** can be created by the integration of energy and climate issues in urban development (both for public and private stakeholders). These benefits may be economic, ecological and or social. Through an integrated planning approach, measures for climate change mitigation and adaptation can be delivered alongside measures to improve green spaces, engage local communities and to upgrade existing energy systems. In many cities, regions, towns and villages existing infrastructure is already in need of maintenance and improvement, here there is an opportunity to ensure that future improvements directly benefit the local community in the long term. On the other hand, however, there is the risk that costs for infrastructure, energy efficiency and other measures may lead to higher energy or housing prices. Therefore it is important to consider the social aspects of planning e.g.

energy poverty risks, the distribution of costs in sustainable energy related investment. Furthermore the safeguard of environmentally sensitive ecosystems, for instance carbon sinks, is also a technical planning consideration and is described in Module 1.

Sub-module 1.1 The Case for Climate Change

Sub-module 1.2 Opportunities and potential benefits from planning for climate change

Sub-module 1.3 Socioeconomic aspects of planning for sustainable energy

What this module does not do.

This module does not cover the full breadth of planning issues raised by climate change. Instead, it focuses on mitigation in relation to energy use and generation. It does not provide detailed material on important and related issues such as climate change adaptation, biodiversity, food security and transport which are also fundamental considerations for planners.

Main goal

The main goal of this module is to improve partner knowledge of the evidence of climate change, and to raise awareness for making the case for planning for sustainable development among practitioners.

Building up knowledge and understanding of the important role that planning and sustainable energy can play in mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change impacts is an important step in establishing a co-ordinated and evidence based approach to developing policy and assisting implementation among local and regional politicians, citizens, stakeholders and other practitioners.

Additional information