

Marketing and Public Relations

How will your service area be impacted by climate change?

Our climate is changing. We each need to understand our role in addressing this challenge and work together to increase the resilience of our organisations and society. Cutting carbon emissions is vital as we must reduce the severity of climate change. However, it is equally important to begin preparing for the increase in extreme weather which we are already experiencing, and which is projected to increase substantially in intensity and frequency in the coming decades. We call this act of preparation 'Climate Adaptation.'

Local councils will play a pivotal role in the implementation of any measures, and so require a collaborative approach from different service areas in order to address the impacts of climate change. Every service has something to offer to increase resilience for the council and communities it represents, from overall strategies to daily decisions and management.

This brief is not designed to provide a comprehensive overview, but rather to initiate discussion on the role of marketing and public relations in addressing climate change impacts as part of a wider suite of documents for other services.

What are the climate risks posed to marketing and PR?

The complexity of risks related to climate change makes communication an important intervention to influence behaviour in ways consistent with climate change prevention and adaptation. This can be from raising awareness on impacts of climate change and proactive actions that can be undertaken, to an early warning mechanism, and to aiding the recovery of extreme weather events. Some of the expected climate change risks to Marketing and PR can include:

- Impacts of climate change on delivery of services can create negative PR.
- Increasing pressure and expectance to provide immediate information either before, during or after event from communities.
- Communications and PR is reactive to climatic events rather than being proactive and prepared.

- Without consideration of the impacts of climate change, there can be additional pressure on staff and resources particularly after a climate change related event.
- Technology failure could hinder communications and delivery of vital information and updates to the public.

What actions could you take?

Effective short-term and long-term planning for the impacts of climate change to local council areas, reduces vulnerability to the marketing and PR service itself and delivers wider benefits to other service areas. You could take action by getting involved with your council's adaptation planning process, which should outline short to long-term impacts, implications and recommended actions for marketing and PR, including:

- Set-up processes for ongoing communication, co-ordination and collaboration between council departments, and the marketing department to ensure valuable information is shared (climate projections, resilience plans, appropriate responses for sharing with public).
- Invest in raising public awareness of the risks from climate change and contacts for emergency response to the risks.
- Publicise information on viable adaptation schemes and available resources to inform domestic and non-domestic users.
- Work alongside other departments and agencies on targeted education campaigns on climate change with communities, schools, businesses etc.

Examples of Messages to Communicate:

- Specific short-term to long-term climate risks to individuals, community and industry.
- Outline the potential climate impacts on individuals, local area, region and industry level.
- Viable actions that can be undertaken at an individual and local level, and by different industries.
- Viable schemes and resources available
- Council adaptation/resilience activities that are in place and measures that will be implemented.

Additional Resources

Climate Change Outreach and Communication Guide, ICLEI. https://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/metadata/tools/climate-change-outreach-and-communication-guide/04_iclei-cap-outreach-communications-guide_0.pdf