

## EA3: Develop Strategic Approach

### Develop adaptation responses

This stage is concerned with developing appropriate adaptations to the threats and opportunities identified during Stage 2.

Adaptation responses to climate change can be divided into two broad categories: Building Adaptive Capacity (BAC) and Delivering Actual Adaptation (DAA).

Building Adaptive Capacity involves developing an institutional capacity to respond to climate change effectively. Examples of BAC could involve activities such as:

- Undertaking research, institutional change, education and training.
- Creating standards and legislation, changing management systems, and developing personnel, or other, resources to cope with, or benefit from, climate changes.
- Developing appropriate policies, plans, strategies.

Delivering Actual Adaptation is concerned with practical responses to climate change and could include measures such as:

- Building flood defences or managing retreat.
- Putting more nails in a roof tile, increasing the diameter of a drain.
- Creating 'siesta' times in a business or locality.

It is likely that most responses will fall into the BAC category of developing managerial processes for effective corporate responses to climate changes across the range of business areas. In practice even for adaptations to buildings and estate proper that may involve DAA, the LA role will be to prepare briefs for external contractors.

This stage of the Action Pack covers similar ground to Stage 3 of the Services thread with some differences of emphasis:

**Stage output: List of key issues and preferred adaptation responses for your corporate estate (with appropriate justification) that can be used to develop a corporate strategy and detailed plan(s). It is likely that the majority of these responses will be suggested changes to managerial processes to ensure that the corporate functions of the local authority are effectively climate proofed.**

### Identify adaptation options

The general guidance on identifying adaptation options is repeated from the service thread because this capacity will need to be built into many of the management processes for responding to climate change at a corporate level. However, this may not be the best approach in many cases of managing the estate proper. For new developments, or major refurbishments, it may be preferable to express the requirements for adaptation to climate change in broad terms in briefs to architects, or contractors, and to rely on their professional skills to recommend and specify more detailed responses. Currently, few architects or builders have much experience of designing climate change adaptation measures, but this should start to change rapidly in the future as the need is more broadly recognised in both public and private sector development. This approach should have the added advantage of transferring some of the liability to the supplier in the event of problems.

The ability to evaluate the climate adaptation measures in tender responses will be an important aspect of building adaptive capacity into local authority estate management. The same may apply to other areas of corporate management, such as procurement. It may be better to require external suppliers to specify their proposals for dealing with the relevant responses to climate risks than to attempt to stipulate detailed requirements in a tender briefing document.

There are a wide range of possible types of adaptation strategies that are outlined in the table below and a wide range of criteria for selecting any given option. These may include attitudes to risk, costs both financial and in terms of social or environmental impacts, conflicts and synergies with other policy objectives and considerations of non-climate factors. Some of the more basic options are considered below before introducing a more comprehensive table of strategy types.

- The most basic option is to **do nothing**. This may be an appropriate response to low priority impacts or situations where climate risks are outweighed by non-climate factors. In some cases, it may also be appropriate for more significant impacts where no obvious adaptation response can be clearly identified, or where there are prospects that other factors may change future circumstances.
- **'No regret' options** will deliver benefits that exceed their costs, whatever the extent of climate change. These should always be implemented if they exist. For instance, if you are already experiencing weather-related problems, then cost-effective actions to deal with them should be 'no regret' options.
- **Win-win options** are ones that contribute to desired outcomes (be they environmental, social or economic), and also improve your ability to adapt to climate risks.

You should, wherever possible:

- Avoid actions that will make it more difficult to cope with climate risks
- Avoid making decisions that will make it more difficult to manage climate risks in the future. These are called adaptation constraining decisions. One obvious example is inappropriate development in a flood risk area.

The table below presents a fairly comprehensive list of possible types of adaptation strategies.

Adaptation strategy type	Notes
Use of risk-based policy and project appraisal process and techniques	Proactive. Organisations that adopt risk assessment will be more flexible and better able to cope with climate risks.
Delay and buy-time	Proactive. A delay strategy can help to deliver a better decision, if the delay time is used to improve your knowledge – for instance by combining it with research or monitoring.
Research	Proactive or strategic. Use research to better understand climate risks and performance of adaptation options.
Monitoring	Proactive: system performance monitoring. Reactive: climate impact monitoring.
Information supply, education, awareness-raising	Proactive or reactive. Can be used to raise awareness of the need to adapt.
Contingency planning	Strategic planning for low probability, high consequence events.
Diversification or bet-hedging	Proactive technical or policy response.
Insurance	Proactive, fiscal response.
Defend and manage	Proactive or reactive technical measures.
Change of use	Proactive or reactive. Includes planning responses, with or without technical measures
Retreat and abandon	Proactive or reactive. Includes strategic planning response.
Safety factors, climate headroom, buffering measures	Proactive or strategic. Includes technical and regulatory response.

### Developing adaptation strategies

Adaptation strategies should be reasonable and proportional. If you over-estimate the significance of climate risks compared to the other risks you face, you may over-adapt. This could mean that resources are wasted, although you may prefer to be precautionary to make sure you are better protected.

### Timing of adaptations

If you are already experiencing problems with weather-related impacts, then you should act right away to address them. You may also want to act quickly in order to take advantage of climate change opportunities. In other cases, you'll need to decide when to take action based on:

- How soon climate risks will exceed any critical thresholds for your system.
- The lead-in time for planning and implementing adaptation measures.

For instance, the time taken to plan and construct a new reservoir can be about 20 years. So if a new reservoir were needed to cope with summer droughts in the 2020s and beyond, planning would need to start now. Remember that in general, proactive adaptation is more effective and less costly than reactive adaptation. It might be appropriate to delay considering significant investment in adaptation in order to make a better informed decision. The delay time should be used to improve your knowledge – for instance by undertaking research or monitoring. However, before deciding to delay an important decision check how long it is before any critical thresholds could be exceeded.

### Minimising the cost of adaptation

The costs of adapting to climate change can be minimised if adaptation is built in when:

- In the early stages of planning new developments.
- Infrastructure is upgraded anyway.
- Plans come up naturally for review.
- Before you are forced to act by a sudden event or mounting maintenance costs. For instance, costs of emergency repairs to infrastructure slopes are typically ten times the cost of routine maintenance.

## CHECKLIST

- Have you identified adaptation options for your Local Authority?
- Have you considered the timing of these adaptation responses?
- Have you considered how to minimise the costs of any adaptation measures?

**Stage output: List of key issues and preferred adaptation responses for your corporate estate (with appropriate justification) that can be used to develop a corporate strategy and detailed plan(s). It is likely that the majority of these responses will be suggested changes to managerial processes to ensure that the corporate functions of the local authority are effectively climate proofed.**

