

# WWF's Earth Hour

Support pack  
for local authorities

EARTH HOUR

8:30pm

27 March 2010

[wwf.org.uk/earthhour](http://wwf.org.uk/earthhour)



# Switch off and support WWF's Earth Hour

On Saturday 27 March 2010 at 8.30pm we want over a billion people around the world to switch off their lights for an hour – WWF's Earth Hour. The reason? To urge world leaders, including the next UK government, to take action to tackle climate change.

But to do this we'll need your help. For councils not only have a vital leadership role to play in reducing their own carbon emissions, but they can also raise awareness and engage local communities, businesses and public bodies in tackling their carbon footprints.

WWF's Earth Hour only began in 2007 (for a quick history, go to [www.earthhour.org/history.aspx](http://www.earthhour.org/history.aspx)), but it has already built up a huge international following. In 2009, hundreds of millions of people across the planet switched off their lights. Iconic international landmarks like Sydney Opera House, the Acropolis, the Bird's Nest stadium in China, the pyramids of Giza, the Eiffel Tower, the Empire State Building and Big Ben were all plunged into darkness for 60 minutes as part of the largest global action of its kind yet. WWF's Earth Hour was endorsed by a host of celebrities and decision-makers including Cate Blanchett, Will Young, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Camilla Dallerup.

International agreements are important, but for many people they only become meaningful when the relevance to their own lives, and the villages, towns and cities where they live, is made obvious. WWF's Earth Hour is a great way for you to make the connections between global issues and local actions.

So, switch off and support WWF's Earth Hour. By doing so you will be joining a climate change campaign that is led by the world's largest and most experienced independent conservation organisation – WWF.



Houses of Parliament, before and during Earth Hour. © Benjamin Ealovega / WWF-UK

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# Local authorities and WWF's Earth Hour: why get involved?

## Fulfil your community leadership role

We know that people are worried about climate change. In a recent survey more than 80% of people responded that climate change 'is a serious threat' and that they were willing 'to make sacrifices to combat it' ([see www.ice.org.uk/news\\_events/newsdetail\\_ice.asp?PressID=511&NewsType=Press](http://www.ice.org.uk/news_events/newsdetail_ice.asp?PressID=511&NewsType=Press)).

Many local authorities are taking their role as a community leader seriously by taking action to tackle climate change. Councils are making progress against the relevant national indicators, working well corporately with other partners through local area agreements, and gearing up for the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC). But how much of that work really connects with local communities?

**"If we're pushing the message to reduce energy then we've got to be seen to be acting on it too."**

Jim Holland, Energy Manager, London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

WWF's Earth Hour is an ideal opportunity for councils to show what you are doing to combat climate change, and to engage with your communities to help them understand what they can do.

While WWF's Earth Hour is only 60 minutes, you can use it as part of a wider campaign to encourage behaviour change to reduce carbon emissions. You might already have programmes up and running that WWF's Earth Hour would fit into. If not, our Community Learning and Action for Sustainable Living project sets out some useful ideas and principles for working with people to change their behaviour in ways that promote sustainable living ([www.wwflearning.org.uk/localmatters-old/projects/community-learning-sustainable-living](http://www.wwflearning.org.uk/localmatters-old/projects/community-learning-sustainable-living)).

## Exploit a message that is simple but powerful

WWF's Earth Hour generates stunning 'before and during' images, celebrity endorsement and high-profile government and corporate backing. It's all a recipe for considerable media interest – so why not tap into the local potential for a positive news story that has international resonance?

For an inspiring reminder of what is possible, check out the images of some iconic buildings during WWF's Earth Hour 2009 at: [www.boston.com/bigpicture/2009/03/earth\\_hour\\_2009.html](http://www.boston.com/bigpicture/2009/03/earth_hour_2009.html)

And closer to home at: [http://earthhour.wwf.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/global\\_lights/](http://earthhour.wwf.org.uk/what_we_do/global_lights/)

To help you prepare your message for WWF's Earth Hour 2010, we have developed a pack that provides 'off the shelf' tools and resources, see page 9 for more details.

## Use WWF's Earth Hour to connect corporately

It's not just communities that need convincing – tackling climate change needs the support of all corporate managers and local councillors.

Almost all councils have signed up to at least one of the national indicators (NIs) on climate change, as part of their local area agreements. Chances are you are working to meet a target for at least one of the relevant indicators:

- NI185 (percentage CO<sub>2</sub> reduction from local authority operations);
- NI186 (per capita reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the local area); and
- NI188 (planning to adapt to climate change).

In many authorities local councillors are the ones who have recognised the value of signing up to WWF's Earth Hour as a simple way of demonstrating that the council understands – and cares – about the challenge of climate change. Show your portfolio holder for the environment, or even the council leader, some of the positive profile for Earth Hour in previous years, and use this to persuade them of community concerns about climate change.

**"We could show deliverable financial savings from our involvement in Earth Hour, which was a big endorsement and very persuasive for corporate managers and members."**

Charlie Morris-Marsham, Sustainable Energy Officer, Oxford City Council



Birmingham Town Hall. © Richard Stonehouse / WWF-UK

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# Local authorities and WWF's Earth Hour: why get involved?

## You might be conspicuous by your absence

More than 200 UK landmarks – including Big Ben and Edinburgh Castle – switched off their lights for WWF's Earth Hour 2009. In excess of 100 UK cities and towns – including London, Cardiff, Belfast, Edinburgh, Poole, Hull, Dundee and Newport – took part. And 120 local authorities signed up to participate.

WWF's Earth Hour 2009 was the biggest mass action against climate change yet seen. And in 2010 we're set to smash our own record for the number of people and places that get involved.

So local authorities may well be asked 'why not?' if they don't get involved in WWF's Earth Hour 2010. In fact, one council faced some awkward questions in 2009 when a local opposition political party took photos of the council offices with its lights blazing during Earth Hour. Better to be getting positive press coverage for being a part of Earth Hour than lambasted for opting out.

## Turning off the town hall lights? It's a logistical nightmare

When an energy officer in one local authority enquired about turning off the lights at the town hall for WWF's Earth Hour, she discovered that it would take nothing less than hiring a qualified electrician to come and do the job – and at weekend charge-out rates!

While it is the iconic public buildings – nationally and locally – that make for the best press coverage, an important purpose of WWF's Earth Hour is to get as many people involved as possible. So be creative – for example, Oxford City Council took a loose interpretation of Earth Hour and turned it into a whole weekend for its staff (see page 6).



Newcastle, before and during Earth Hour. © Chris Booth / WWF-UK

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# What can local authorities do for WWF's Earth Hour?

There is no one approach for a council. How you get involved in WWF's Earth Hour will depend on a number of factors, including what your LAA commitments and other corporate priorities are, your existing energy efficiency initiatives and other community engagement activities.

## Ideas for action

- Turn off the lights in your town hall, civic centre and other landmarks in your control.
- Persuade businesses and other organisations to turn off the lights in an iconic or important building or structure in your local area.
- Encourage local residents, schools and business to get involved – you can probably build on existing links and make Earth Hour part of your ongoing work on climate change.
- Organise an event – for example, Bristol organised a local wildlife walk by candlelight.
- Promote WWF's Earth Hour to council suppliers and networks, and ask them to switch their lights off as part of a wider strategy to help them reduce carbon emissions.
- Use Earth Hour as a chance to monitor energy use and raise awareness across council departments of the need for your authority to walk the talk on reducing emissions (see Oxford City Council case study on page 6).



Moonlit walk in Bristol. © Rowan Griffiths / WWF-UK

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# What we did: local authorities share their Earth Hour 2009 successes



## “You’ve got nothing to lose and everything to gain”

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

Jim Holland, Energy Manager at London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, is plain speaking about the council’s involvement in WWF’s Earth Hour 2009: “It was a roaring success.”

Barking and Dagenham were quick to see the potential of Earth Hour to demonstrate to businesses in the area that it is taking a lead on tackling climate change locally. Holland enthuses that Earth Hour encouraged local interest in climate change: “People see the lights off and they question it – what are we doing? Why are we doing it? And we can tell them, and encourage them to do the same sort of thing.”

The highlight of Earth Hour 2009 in Barking and Dagenham was the complete blackout of the town hall and the civic centre. The resulting pictures made it into the local press.

Like other authorities that have had a successful Earth Hour, Holland echoes the point that good preparation is vital. He recalls that “sometimes you feel like everything’s thrown at you to try and prevent Earth Hour happening – and you do need to be aware of health and safety issues. But we managed to overcome people’s concerns with good forward planning.”

This year Barking and Dagenham is hoping to plunge some more local buildings – such as schools or libraries (learning centres) – into darkness for Earth Hour. Holland is adamant that all authorities need to take the lead: “I would personally feel very, very embarrassed if I had a big employer in the borough telling us what they’re doing [for Earth Hour] and saying to us ‘don’t you think you should do the same?’. If we’re pushing the message to reduce energy then we’ve got to be seen to be acting on it too.”

## “We could show deliverable savings”

Oxford City Council

Staff at Oxford City Council are a competitive bunch. So when the council’s sustainable energy officer Charlie Morris-Marsham was thinking about how best to promote WWF’s Earth Hour 2009 internally she decided to tap into this desire to be the best. She challenged each department to see how much energy they could save over the weekend of Earth Hour 2009.

In the lead-up she developed a series of eye-catching posters, circulated emails and worked with external partners (for example the primary care trust) and universities to build momentum.

On the Earth Hour weekend departmental carbon champions checked how many lights and items of office equipment were left on. The departments with the lowest number (and there was a tie because more than one department recorded zero) shared in the prize pool (modest rewards of chocolate and biscuits!).

Part of her rationale for introducing the competitive edge was to show that energy savings lead to cheaper bills too: “We could show deliverable financial savings which was a big endorsement and very persuasive for corporate managers and members.”

Oxford has calculated that on the Earth Hour 2009 weekend the council saved 1,196kWh of energy. If the council achieved the same reduction every day it would save £13,500 annually and prevent 48 tonnes of carbon emissions per year.

Albert Square, Manchester during Earth Hour. © Steve Morgan / WWF-UK



Newcastle Civic Centre during Earth Hour. © Steve Brock / WWF-UK

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# What we did: local authorities share their Earth Hour 2009 successes

**“Earth Hour was an opportunity for us to draw attention to the fact that we support the whole agenda around climate change”**

South Lanarkshire Council

For Earth Hour, South Lanarkshire switched on all of the lights on its 15 storey headquarter building – but only so officers could turn them all off floor-by-floor to show what a difference it made (you can see their handiwork on Youtube here – [www.youtube.com/watch?v=jtghtJ7Se5o](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jtghtJ7Se5o))

Such a high profile local demonstration of how to save energy caught the imagination of officers, according to Lorna Jarvie, Sustainable Development Officer at South Lanarkshire Council: ‘people are still talking about it’.

Lorna and colleagues used Earth Hour as an opportunity to raise the awareness of climate change as something that all officers in the council need to be addressing. As part of the Earth Hour switch-off on the Saturday evening, officers went through the whole headquarters building (which has about 1,000 employees) and did an audit of all the electronic equipment that had been left on (about 450 items). They left reminder stickers and followed this up with emails the following week.

Lorna says that the support of a mainstream organisation such as WWF was invaluable for making it happen: “WWF’s Earth Hour materials were a good professional way of getting the message out and helping us to sell stuff we were doing already on climate change. Councillors here were quite proud of the attention Earth Hour got.”

It wasn’t just Councillors that saw the benefits. The emphasis on facts and figures associated with Earth Hour (for example, number of buildings with their lights turned off, amount of energy saved) appealed to ‘a certain type of manager’ – while they mightn’t get too excited about the policy links, they could see the practical and financial benefits of taking energy efficiency seriously.

So, is South Lanarkshire signed up for 2010? “Definitely”, says Lorna. “We got mileage out of Earth Hour long after it was over – now we’re talking about how we can make it better next time.”



Newcastle Tyne Bridge, before and during Earth Hour.  
© Steve Brock / WWF-UK

**“Why do we light all this stuff up at night anyway?”**

Newcastle City Council

In an ideal world, authorities would have a long lead-in time to plan for WWF’s Earth Hour. Newcastle City Council had a month from when councillors pressed the green light to prepare for Earth Hour 2009.

And while Adrian McLoughlin, the city’s Climate Change Officer, acknowledges that it was very tight, the Earth Hour images from Newcastle demonstrate that even when time is lacking councils can still use Earth Hour to raise awareness locally. Local landmarks that turned off the lights for Earth Hour included:

- Newcastle Civic Centre;
- Tyne Bridge;
- High-Level Bridge;
- Metro (QE II) Bridge; and
- Gateshead Millennium Bridge.

The main focus was the Quayside where neighbouring Gateshead Council had organised a Youth Summit focusing on climate change.

With such a short lead-in time it was more challenging to prepare the ground for Earth Hour by engaging lots of residents. However, internally, Earth Hour began to prompt officers to question why, if it was possible to turn off the lights for an hour, they were turned on at all on other nights. This awareness raising can be a crucial by-product of Earth Hour and can help to win support for longer-term energy saving measures.

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# Tips for a successful Earth Hour

## Plan ahead

For individuals in their own homes, turning off the lights really is as simple as the flick of a switch. But the logistical issues for a local authority are likely to be more significant – as the case studies above show. Get corporate and councillor buy-in (see above) to help ensure that tasks that can be done ahead of time (such as adjusting lighting timers) actually happen, that frontline staff (such as security) understand what they need to do on the night, and that the necessary health and safety precautions are in place so that the hour runs smoothly.

## Use WWF's Earth Hour as a hook

Earth Hour is only 60 minutes, but if it is part of a wider communications campaign on why tackling climate change is so important and how it can be done, then the value is potentially much more lasting. Earth Hour is a very media-friendly event, so get your communications team involved from the beginning.

Use the international profile of WWF's Earth Hour to enthuse other staff too. Perhaps you could organise a screening of the Earth Hour DVD (see 'resources' section on page 9) or display some of the striking 'before and during' images from previous Earth Hours.



Candlelit meal, Bristol © Rowan Griffiths / WWF-UK

## Hire a photographer

It sounds simple, but the lasting educational value of Earth Hour relies on the images you capture. So don't rely on a staff member's camera phone. For a few hundred pounds you can make sure that the results of all your hard work are recorded digitally for you to use for your ongoing awareness raising on climate change.



Brighton Pier procession. © Emily Brown / WWF-UK

## Make links across different sectors

One of the reasons why WWF's Earth Hour has been so successful globally is that it has involved all sectors – business, governments, voluntary organisations, schools and more. This helps to reinforce the Earth Hour message to individuals and widen the potential for how many lights are actually switched off, thereby sending a powerful message to world leaders. For local authorities, it also provides an opportunity to develop any new links you make with organisations beyond the preparations for Earth Hour.

## Spreading the word to schools

Last year over 1,400 schools registered to take part and it proved a very effective way for schools to engage their pupils and staff in energy saving initiatives. We have a schools support pack which has a range of engaging activities around the theme of "Wear something bright, turn off the light". You can obtain help in contacting your local schools, and find out which ones may have already registered in your area by contacting [oneplanetschools@wwf.org.uk](mailto:oneplanetschools@wwf.org.uk). We can also provide you with further information about how to spread the word to schools in your area.

## Encouraging local groups

We've also produced a range of ideas for local groups to get involved following either a "Wear something bright" theme or ideas around "Spend an hour on the Earth". Contact Cherry Duggan [cduggan@wwf.org.uk](mailto:cduggan@wwf.org.uk) if you'd like to obtain a copy of the pack.

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# Support

We want to help you to engage as many individuals and organisations as possible. We are also grateful to the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) for its endorsement of Earth Hour 2010.

## Dedicated WWF Earth Hour resources

For WWF's Earth Hour 2010 we have produced a range of 'off the shelf' tools and resources. These are available online to registering councils at [www.wwf.org.uk/earthhour/localauthorities](http://www.wwf.org.uk/earthhour/localauthorities) and include:

- WWF's Earth Hour film;
- a downloadable pdf version of this support pack;
- digital templates (such as press releases); and
- other electronic aids (logos, web banners, poster downloads).

If you prefer, we can provide these materials to you on a DVD: just contact Cherry Duggan on [cduggan@wwf.org.uk](mailto:cduggan@wwf.org.uk) but please register online first.

Remember to check the [www.wwf.org.uk/earthhour](http://www.wwf.org.uk/earthhour) site for updates and ideas, and visit our international Earth Hour site at [www.earthhour.org](http://www.earthhour.org) for a global view.

There are Earth Hour communities on all of the main social sites on the web: Flickr, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter.

We will also be promoting Earth Hour with local radio stations. Contact Cherry Duggan on [cduggan@wwf.org.uk](mailto:cduggan@wwf.org.uk) if you would like to know more about plans in your area.

Finally, WWF-UK has published a number of resources targeted at, and involving, local authorities to support them in their work on climate change and sustainability. These include:

### The Right Climate for Change

Using carbon footprint to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions – a guide for local authorities.

[http://assets.wwf.org.uk/downloads/wwf\\_uktherighttimeweb.pdf](http://assets.wwf.org.uk/downloads/wwf_uktherighttimeweb.pdf)

### Community Learning and Action for Sustainable Living

A guide to supporting communities in sustainable living.

[www.wwflearning.org.uk/localmatters-old/projects/community-learning-sustainable-living](http://www.wwflearning.org.uk/localmatters-old/projects/community-learning-sustainable-living)

### Ecological Footprints: Taking the First Step.

A guide for local authorities.

Visit [www.wwf.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/working\\_with\\_local\\_authorities](http://www.wwf.org.uk/what_we_do/working_with_local_authorities) for more information.

### WWF ecological footprint calculator

[footprint.wwf.org.uk](http://footprint.wwf.org.uk)

## Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) endorses WWF's Earth Hour

The IDeA will be using its online Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change (ESCC) Community of Practice to share ideas and promote discussion in the build-up to Earth Hour.

The ESCC Community of Practice has almost 1,000 members and is a key source of information and exchange of ideas for environmental sustainability and climate change for local government. If you are not already a member, sign up – it's easy:

- Go to [www.communities.idea.gov.uk/home.do](http://www.communities.idea.gov.uk/home.do)
- Click on the 'register' button;
- Complete your profile (this takes no more than two minutes);
- Wait for confirmation of registration;
- Once you are registered, search for Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change in the list of all the Communities of Practice; and
- Click to join.



© Chris Booth / WWF-UK

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The mission of WWF is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by:

- conserving the world's biological diversity;
- ensuring that the use of renewable resources is sustainable; and
- promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.

[www.org.uk/earthhour](http://www.org.uk/earthhour)

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