

# Climate change to stretch household budgets

March 17 2017, by Grant Hill

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Disadvantaged groups need to be helped to cope with the cost pressures caused by climate change, according to a new report compiled by the University of Dundee for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

The report, 'Community Resilience to Climate Change' warns that shocks such as extreme weather events and stresses like changes in the cost of living will interact to generate hardships for local communities. The researchers from the University's Centre for Environmental Change and Human Resilience (CECHR) further warn that climate change will disproportionately impact upon already disadvantaged people.

The team worked with three flood-prone communities in the Scottish Borders – Hawick, Peebles and Newcastleton – to improve understanding and approaches to building climate resilience. By bringing members of the community together with local authorities, policy makers and other stakeholders they brought about changes to a major flood scheme, increased understanding of social dimensions of climate change and facilitated new [flood risk](#) and renewable energy groups among other outcomes.

Professor Ioan Fazey of CECHR said, "Building community resilience to climate change requires collaborative action that involves working with communities and institutions and across different sectors.

"All three communities we worked with have experienced flooding in the past or are at flood risk. In fact, while carrying out the project there was flooding in Peebles and Hawick. The critical thing about climate

change is that we are not just talking about an increase of flooding, drought or other extreme weather shocks.

"Community resilience to climate change is a systemic issue where climate shocks and stresses and existing vulnerabilities combine to create climate disadvantages. The effect is that the most marginalised members of society are likely to be most negatively impacted upon by [climate events](#).

"In addition to these shocks, climate change will create ongoing stresses including a likely increase in food prices that will put pressure on already-stretched household finances. When we talk about developing community capacity for resilience, we are referring not only to things like flood defences but also practical measures such as assistance to manage household budgets."

The report notes that reducing carbon emissions is a critical part of building community resilience in the long term. Community resilience activities therefore need to engage with measures that simultaneously mitigate and adapt to climate change. This requires explicitly engaging with climate change in community-based activities, albeit through approaches that clearly link [climate change](#) to local issues.

A more integrated national policy landscape is also needed to shape effective action at the community level for building community resilience by improving spatial planning, strengthening policies to build capacity, enhancing coordination across levels of governance, and providing strategic leadership to explicitly promote community resilience.

Professor Fazey added, "Building community resilience is a complex social process that requires bringing people with different perspectives and capacities together to help shape local outcomes. Residents

themselves are often absent from discussions about how to build resilience in their communities. We cannot expect to help them to deal with these vulnerabilities without involving them from the outset in these plans."

Jim Fraser, Scottish Borders Council's Emergency Planning Officer, said, "We were delighted to be involved with this project along with other local partners, including the Tweed Forum and Southern Uplands Partnership.

"The development of our own Resilient Communities initiative in recent years has been very positive, and this report builds on that and hopefully will improve understanding and approaches to building climate and community resilience, both here in the Scottish Borders and nationally."

Provided by University of Dundee

Citation: Climate change to stretch household budgets (2017, March 17) retrieved 27 March 2023 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-03-climate-household.html>

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