

# Local Net Zero Delivery Progress Report

## Local Powers

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# About UK100

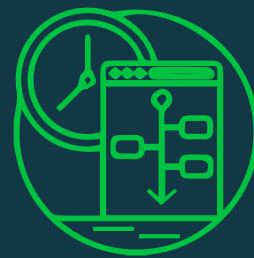
**UK100 is a network of local authorities that have pledged to shift their communities to Net Zero ahead of the government's legal target. They do this to demonstrate their ambition, make the case for rapid change, and enable a fast and fair transition.**

The network provides local leaders opportunities to learn from each other, agree priorities for legislative and regulatory change, engage with national decision-makers and businesses, and develop a better understanding of how to build consent and support for rapid climate action in their communities.





# Executive Summary



The power and potential of local authorities (LAs) to design and deliver real progress towards Net Zero against a global backdrop of unpredictable and far-reaching challenges has never been clearer.

*This report presents an analysis of the progress made towards giving LAs the powers they need to deliver Net Zero at a local level in the UK in the past year, and our recommendations for actions needed to enable the pace and scale of delivery required for success.*

In May 2021, UK100 produced Power Shift<sup>1</sup>, an in-depth assessment of the powers both held by and needed for LAs to deliver Net Zero. The report outlined the challenges and barriers to progress. A key recommendation of Power Shift was the development of a National - Local Net Zero Delivery Framework and UK100 undertook subsequent research to unpack what such a framework should look like and how it should function.<sup>2</sup>

Alongside insights from the Climate Change Committee (CCC)<sup>3</sup> and the National Audit Office (NAO),<sup>4</sup> our report emphasised the crucial role LAs have in meeting the Government's climate targets. Similarly, our Rural Net Zero<sup>5</sup> report delivered key insights on the challenges in the UK rural context. All of this research and insight will feed into this report.

Over the past 12 months, the UK Government has worked to reform local government post-Brexit, including through its Levelling Up the UK White Paper<sup>6</sup> and subsequent Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill,<sup>7</sup> which is currently progressing through Parliament.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.uk100.org/sites/default/files/publications/Power\\_Shift.pdf](https://www.uk100.org/sites/default/files/publications/Power_Shift.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.uk100.org/publications/research-national-local-net-zero-delivery-framework-executive-summary>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/local-authorities-and-the-sixth-carbon-budget/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/local-government-and-net-zero-in-england/>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.uk100.org/sites/default/files/publications/Rural%20Net%20Zero\\_May%202021.pdf](https://www.uk100.org/sites/default/files/publications/Rural%20Net%20Zero_May%202021.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1052708/Levelling\\_up\\_the\\_UK\\_white\\_paper.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1052708/Levelling_up_the_UK_white_paper.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3155>

The Government's Net Zero Strategy<sup>8</sup>, launched in October 2021, announced the establishment of a Local Net Zero Forum (citing UK100 recommendation) to ensure better engagement between Government and LAs on Net Zero.

## Global challenges with local consequences

Following the release of the UK Government's Net Zero Strategy in October 2021 and the Levelling Up White Paper in February, 2022 was set to be a year of delivery. However, progress has been slow, despite an emerging cost of living crisis and a heightened awareness of the need for fuel security, highlighting that action is more urgent than ever.<sup>9</sup>

Challenges like these aren't going away: higher prices and energy demand challenges can and must be tackled in parallel with reaching Net Zero, and local delivery at pace and scale is key.

## Local authorities can lead the way

Many ambitious LAs have set Net Zero targets that are ahead of the UK Government's 2050 deadline. The 102 (correct at time of writing) LAs that have signed UK100's members pledge have committed "to lead the UK's response to climate change, acting sooner than the government's goal by making substantial progress within the next decade to deliver Net Zero."

Through innovative partnerships and by identifying and scaling successful pilot projects, they are focusing on sectors that urgently need decarbonising. Giving more LAs the power to set similar trajectories and build momentum for change will be key to delivering a Net Zero future.

The issues raised in this report both influence and are influenced by cross-cutting issues. This report is one of eight sector-based reports produced to assess progress on Local Net Zero Delivery. There are lots of commonalities and synergies between them which are clearly signposted throughout each of the reports.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1033990/net-zero-strategy-beis.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1033990/net-zero-strategy-beis.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.theade.co.uk/assets/docs/about/Getting\\_%28retro%29fit\\_for\\_net\\_zero-min.pdf](https://www.theade.co.uk/assets/docs/about/Getting_%28retro%29fit_for_net_zero-min.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.uk100.org/publications/local-net-zero-progress-reports>



# What's in this report?

The research, summarised in this report, aims to:

- 1** Assess the progress on delivery of Government commitments
- 2** Take stock of UK100's research recommendations and identify areas where key developments have taken place and highlight where barriers remain
- 3** Share success stories from LAs.



## Background

Local and combined authorities are already leading in many aspects of the Net Zero agenda, but they could go so much further and faster if given the scope to do so.

UK100 has made clear recommendations for faster and more scalable progress towards a Net Zero future. In our 2021 Power Shift<sup>11</sup> report, we concluded that the absence of a coherent national strategy or framework to enable and resource ambitious local action on climate change; insufficient powers to drive the big changes; and, where powers do exist, insufficient capacity to use them decisively amounted to a system that is currently structurally incapable of delivering Net Zero. The report called for a Net Zero Delivery Framework to be included in the Net Zero Strategy, which should align and clarify national, sub-national, regional and local delivery roles and areas for collaboration.

In July 2021, UK100 together with the Mayor of the West Midlands, Andy Street, convened an international climate change summit. The summit launched a communiqué<sup>12</sup> signed by a group of 32 cross-party Mayors and local leaders from across the UK. It called for a 'Power Shift' from Whitehall so that local and regional authorities can deliver Net Zero, with six areas identified as priorities for urgent action. To enable local Net Zero delivery Mayors and local leaders agreed:

**“ National policy and regulatory frameworks must be revised and co-ordinated to enable local, regional, national and devolved governments to work more effectively in partnership towards Net Zero and adapting to climate change. The UK government should put in place a Net Zero Local Powers Bill which both permits, obliges and resources relevant levels of authority to undertake climate change action to satisfy the Climate Change Act, meet carbon budgets and deliver an effective pathway to Net Zero. The bill should be accompanied by appropriate policy and guidance which identifies public funding and potential private sector investment levers, and better cross-departmental alignment within government to support local areas that satisfy these obligations.**

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.uk100.org/sites/default/files/publications/Power\\_Shift.pdf](https://www.uk100.org/sites/default/files/publications/Power_Shift.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.uk100.org/publications/net-zero-local-leadership-communique-delivering-net-zero-uk>



UK100 subsequently developed a Local-National Net Zero Delivery Framework<sup>13</sup> to demonstrate how such partnership could work in practice. The research underpinning this report recommended that the Net Zero Strategy should include a National Routemap and a Framework for Local Delivery of Net Zero. It outlined the following steps to be factored into its introduction:

- A **Net Zero Delivery Board** to deliver the framework and tackle blockages and barriers where the Delivery Unit (see below) notes systemic policy or funding barriers and contradictions. An independent Chair reporting directly to the Cabinet Office with members from across LAs, devolved administrations and national Government.
- A **Net Zero Delivery Unit** to deliver the support programme, collect and analyse data and act as a channel between individual authorities and the Board and government departments, with wide representation from across the UK Government and informed by local and combined authorities and national Government.
- A **Local Net Zero Powers Bill**, via new primary legislation designed to introduce the whole framework in a single piece of legislation – which permits, obliges and supports relevant levels of authority to undertake climate change action to satisfy the Climate Change Act, meet carbon budgets and deliver an effective pathway to Net Zero.

Eight central elements to the Framework were identified that, if combined would enable national Government and LAs to work effectively together with clear roles to develop policy and programmes, skills, capacity and finance that delivers across all emissions areas:

**1. Joint Delivery Body:** Delivery Board - a joint board of national Government and LA representatives and Delivery Unit - manages support programme, collects/ analyses data, channel between LAs, the Board and Government departments

**2. Finance mechanisms:** Funding mechanism to support Net Zero delivery via LAs, including support to underpin private and business investment and local community action

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.uk100.org/publications/research-national-local-net-zero-delivery-framework>

**3. Definition of roles and responsibilities:** An agreement on the most appropriate levels of decision-making and operational delivery for Net Zero, taking into account the wide range of levers and powers that LAs can use to influence climate action beyond their direct area of control

**4. Policy expertise:** Net Zero Delivery Board workstream which enables national Government and LA representatives to discuss and operationalise policymaking at very early stages so it is most effective

**5. Capability and skills:** Funded multi-year programme (five years minimum) equipping civil servants, MPs, local officers and elected Members to deliver Net Zero. Designed to fill the gaps in capability, skills and confidence

**6. Agreed commitment:** LA commitments to deliver Net Zero actions and outcomes within their area within a specified timescale. Greater national Government funding and support for local delivery would follow commitments

**7. Shared information and data:** Action-focused information sharing system between national Government and LAs and between LAs

**8. Feedback system:** Formalised feedback loops, particularly re. blockages; but also opportunities for open and informal feedback about how components of the framework are working/could be improved

Additionally, in a report which examined LA contributions to Net Zero,<sup>14</sup> UK100 also recommended clear target-setting and improved reporting guidelines for LAs to develop a better understanding of how and what to measure, which can in turn enable and demonstrate clear progress towards meeting Net Zero targets.

These recommendations exist alongside the imperative to act with greater pace and scale. We acknowledge recent Government announcements on new strategies, funding streams and targets. Although this is a step in the right direction, we must accelerate. Barriers still remain that prevent a transformative step-change. Indeed the CCC's recent progress report to Parliament highlights the centrally important role of LAs and that Government needs to develop a framework to increase LA capacity and to ensure funding is longer term and policy is more consistent.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.uk100.org/publications/local-authority-contributions-net-zero>



## CCC 2022 Progress Report to Parliament -

### Vital role of LA

In June 2022, the CCC issued its latest progress report to Government and local delivery - through an effective Local Net Zero Forum - is mentioned as a priority recommendation. Squandering the strong commitment to Net Zero at a local level is identified as a major risk.

**“ LAs have a vital role to play in leveraging all their powers, assets and influence to deliver Net Zero and climate adaptation. The UK Government has recognised the role of LAs in delivering Net Zero in its Net Zero Strategy, but now needs to work in partnership with them, through a framework to ensure local capacity is increased, that funding and policy are longer-term and more certain, and that policy contradictions are removed.**

The progress report states that it remains unclear how central, devolved and local government will operate coherently towards the Net Zero goal. And that the Local Net Zero Forum must address coordination and responsibility. It continues that the required changes will not happen at the pace required, if at all, without effective accountability mechanisms.

Whilst Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) has primary responsibility for the Forum, the CCC is clear that the Department for Levelling-up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has a key role in supporting local government to play its full role in the Net Zero transition and climate adaptation and ensuring these are embedded in planning reforms and Levelling Up.

The report is clear that there needs to be a partnership framework to manage local Net Zero delivery and it cites UK100's National-Local Net Zero Delivery Framework as a potential way forward.

## Progress

This section of the report offers us an opportunity to take stock of the past 12 months and highlight the main areas where developments have taken place. A more thorough analysis of what these developments mean is provided later in the report.

### What's happened?



There have been some positive indicators of progress in line with our recommendations over the last 12 months.

UK100 was pleased to see the importance of 'local' run through the UK Government's Net Zero Strategy and the Levelling-Up White Paper. However, it was disappointing that the White Paper mentions Net Zero significantly just once - this is a huge missed opportunity.



## Net Zero Strategy

The Net Zero Strategy is framed to position the UK as a world leader on decarbonising the economy. It makes it clear that LAs must play a vital role in Net Zero:

**“ We will take a place-based approach to net zero, working with local government to ensure that all local areas have the capability and capacity for net zero delivery as we level up the country.**

As part of this, the strategy announced the establishment of a Local Net Zero Forum - stating that its creation draws on the recommendations of a policy framework suggested by UK100. The Forum will bring together national and local government senior officials on a regular basis to discuss policy and delivery options on Net Zero. The strategy states that the Forum will support the establishment of clearer delivery roles for local government and provide a single engagement route into HM Government in a coordinated and coherent way.

The Strategy also continues the Local Net Zero Programme which includes provisions to:

- repurpose local energy hubs as Local Net Zero Hubs, to support all areas of England to reach Net Zero, including those which lack capacity or which face unique challenges
- promote best practice and support LAs to develop Net Zero projects that can attract commercial investment
- increase knowledge sharing to demonstrate and share successful Net Zero system solutions.

The strategy also references plans to reform funding of local transport infrastructure in order to drive decarbonisation, “engaging local areas about their investment priorities in the round, and making quantifiable carbon reductions a fundamental part of local transport planning.” See the transport progress report for more details.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.uk100.org/publications/local-net-zero-progress-reports/transport>

It highlights the critical role that LAs will take in the development of approximately 50 Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) covering the whole of England, each of these locally designed. Our nature progress report covers this development in more detail.<sup>16</sup>

Finally the strategy says that it embeds a Net Zero principle in initiatives which target different types of places, such as the Levelling Up Fund, the Towns Fund, and the Community Renewal Fund.

## Levelling Up White Paper

Whilst there are some generally positive developments in the White Paper relating to the importance of local, there is only one significant mention of Net Zero, under objective E29, which speaks to funding for Net Zero initiatives for local businesses.<sup>17</sup> This is a significant missed opportunity for the two complementary agendas to be better aligned.

As part of the White Paper, the UK Government promises a £2.6bn Shared Prosperity Fund supplementing the £4.8bn Levelling Up Fund, £150 million Community Ownership Fund, and £3.6bn Towns Fund, as well as the additional £3.7bn made available to councils. The Shared Prosperity Fund offers more discretion over what money is spent on. Previous EU requirements for match funding are abolished, and funding decisions are to be made by elected local government leaders, with input from MPs and local stakeholders, instead of by regional agencies.<sup>18</sup>

## Devolution in England

The Government response to the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Select Committee report on Progress on Devolution in England states that devolution should be “accessible to all, and not just areas that are large cities.”<sup>19</sup> It proposes County Deals that will offer county areas the benefits of devolution, giving them similar powers to Metro Mayors and LAs over transport and economic support.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.uk100.org/publications/local-net-zero-progress-reports/nature>

<sup>17</sup> [UK Government \(2022\), UK Shared Prosperity Fund - Interventions, Objectives, Outcomes and Outputs – England](#)

<sup>18</sup> [UK Government \(2022\), Communities across UK handed control of £2.6 billion levelling up funding - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>19</sup> [UK Government \(2022\), Government response to the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Select Committee report on Progress on Devolution in England - GOV.UK](#)



It does not, however, propose new powers for the combined authorities to deliver Net Zero. It says:

**“ LAs already have a combination of powers and responsibilities across housing, planning, transport, and procurement which gives them autonomy to deliver Net Zero. Most have passed local Climate Emergency motions, and many have set target dates for Net Zero and developed climate action plans.**

**“ The recent Levelling Up White Paper outlines that as part of the devolution framework there should be the opportunity for the new authorities to adopt innovative local proposals to deliver action on climate change and the UK’s Net Zero targets.**

As part of the new devolution set-up, local enterprise partnerships (LEP) will be integrated into combined authorities and County Deal areas.<sup>20</sup> Whilst there is positive rhetoric here, it is not supported with any sufficient detail about what these opportunities are or how they will be supported by the Government.

## **Towns and Cities:**

### **Local Power is the Path to Recovery**

The House of Lords COVID-19 committee report on towns and cities speaks to Net Zero multiple times and states that ‘reaching net zero by 2050 is not just about reducing carbon emissions, but also about considering, and creating a new blueprint for what a net zero town or city should look like.’ However, In the UK Government’s response to the report, there is no reference to Net Zero at all.

Whilst this is a significant oversight, the response does recognise the importance of multi-year certainty to LAs, however, it does not make any commitments to longer-term funding, which is crucial to Net Zero projects.

<sup>20</sup> [UK Government \(2022\), Integrating Local Enterprise Partnerships into local democratic institutions - GOV.UK](#)

Yet it does make a commitment to ending competitive funding, reducing the “unnecessary proliferation of individual funding pots with varied delivery approaches.” It is setting out a plan later this year to streamline the funding landscape, helping local stakeholders to navigate finding opportunities.

One of the principles of the plan will be “ensuring places have robust ongoing monitoring and evaluation plans for the impact and delivery of investments and spending.”<sup>21</sup>

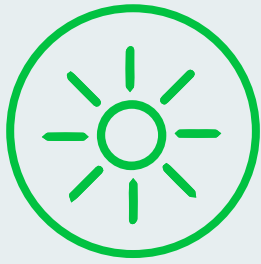
## **Queen’s Speech**

In the 2022 Queen’s Speech, HRH the Prince of Wales announced a Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill designed to drive local growth and empower local leaders to regenerate their areas. Net Zero is not mentioned in the current version of the Bill. As it works its way through Parliament, there is a real opportunity to ensure that the crucial role that planning can and must play in the design and development of local Net Zero places is incorporated. If this gap isn’t addressed there is a real danger that the planning proposals in the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill will make alignment with Net Zero harder for LAs.

<sup>21</sup> [UK Government \(2022\), Government response to House of Lords COVID-19 Committee’s report “Towns and Cities: Local Power is the Path to Recovery” - GOV.UK](#)







## Highlights:

### What's going well?

- The Glasgow Climate Pact gives international recognition of the importance of local government as delivery partners. The pact says it recognises: “the important role of non-Party stakeholders, including civil society, indigenous peoples, local communities, youth, children, local and regional governments and other stakeholders, in contributing to progress towards the objective of the Convention and the goals of the Paris Agreement”<sup>22</sup>
- The Net Zero Strategy included a chapter on Local Climate Action and committed to establishing a Local Net Zero Forum, drawing directly on UK100's recommendation
- Net Zero Hubs - the role of the former local energy hubs has been expanded. This is a positive development, although more clarity on their remit and more funding would be welcomed.

<sup>22</sup> [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change \(2021\), Decision -/CP.26 Glasgow Climate Pact](#)



## Opportunities:

### What we'd like to see more of/what has potential

- In order for the Local Net Zero Forum to be successful, it needs to have a focus on delivery, be adequately resourced and include regular and meaningful input from locally-elected leaders and MPs. Enabling governance to deliver Net Zero is still required. A guiding framework and Delivery Unit to manage the relationships and partnerships in the longer term, as highlighted by UK100 and the CCC, are key to this.







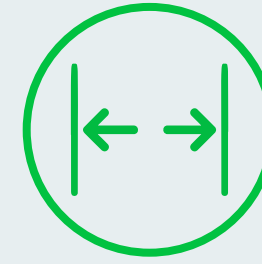
## Challenges:

### What could be going better

- Levelling-up Bill - there is an opportunity to better align the Levelling-up Bill with Net Zero delivery. Levelling up the country was seen as a key enabler for setting the case for action in the Net Zero Strategy, but Net Zero has not been translated in the same way to levelling-up. It isn't too late and the Bill needs to close this important loop
- Funding alignment with Net Zero - whilst the 4.8bn Levelling Up Fund, £150 million Community Ownership Fund and £3.6bn Towns Fund and the additional £3.7bn made available to councils announced in the Levelling-up White Paper are positive, how Net Zero will be factored in to this existing spend remains ambiguous. Factors such as unemployment and income levels are important, but alignment with Net Zero should also be clear.

**In 2018/19, LAs in England received 31% of their funding from government grants. In 2019/20, this figure was 23%<sup>23</sup>**

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainers/local-government-funding-england>



## Gaps:

### What's missing?

- Net Zero in Levelling-up White Paper and more generally throughout all of UK Government's activities
- Net Zero as priority across all departments nationally and locally
- Standard emission reporting guidance
- Planning reform aligned with Climate Change Act.







# Overarching Themes

## Partnerships

Under the devolution provisions of the Levelling Up White Paper, LEPs are to be integrated into the new combined authorities and County Deal areas. This means the function of setting local economic priorities will come under the direct control of elected local leaders, rather than a partnership between LAs and LEPs. This potentially simplifies the processes of grant application and financing. But in relation to Net Zero it also raises some important questions. Energy Hubs have been working with LEPs on strategic energy planning. Now that the remit of the Net Zero Hubs is broadened and some LEPs will be integrated into other entities as devolution deals are rolled out, the role, function and delivery of Net Zero projects needs to be clearly articulated.







## Member Insight:

### Cotswold District Council's Local Plan

Cotswold District Council has around £700k devoted to its Local Plan update over four years, a review that was the key manifesto commitment for the administration at its election. The council sees it as an important tool for reducing emissions, not just from buildings, but also from transport, which has a huge impact for the council's residents, but much of the responsibility for which lies with the county council.

In recent years, development has gone ahead with a 'Predict and Provide' approach from the county council, which has tended to use past car dependency and standard modeling to determine likely future traffic implications from new developments, resulting in limited challenge to car-dependent developments. Cotswold's new plan will focus on introducing district-level planning policies on accessibility to services that will force developers to think differently from the outset about how residents travel around. The Council also intends to include, for the first time in the Cotswolds, detailed policies on renewable energy at all scales. To support this, the council has commissioned and completed a renewable energy opportunity study for the whole district, and has already consulted residents on this challenging issue.





# Finance

A recent study by PwC/UKRI found that local costs less. The report **Unlocking the benefits of climate action in UK city-regions**<sup>24</sup> compares the benefits of place-specific and place-agnostic approaches for the first time. It shows significantly better outcomes when places tailor their Net Zero delivery to the needs and opportunities of the area, with the potential to contribute to levelling-up.

This economic analysis found it requires £195bn of investment across the UK to meet targets set out in the Sixth Carbon Budget by 2035 with a ‘place-agnostic scenario’ and this investment is partly offset by £57bn of energy savings. Whereas their ‘place-specific scenario’ requires just £58bn investment between now and 2035, which is significantly offset by £108bn of energy savings for consumers. More details on this can be found in the Finance progress report.<sup>25</sup>

This highlights strongly that aligning levelling-up and Net Zero will make delivery of both agendas easier. With the UK Infrastructure Bank (UKIB) having a dual focus on both economic growth and Net Zero delivery, and a commitment to support the government’s levelling-up missions, through its investment in infrastructure, the missing link is the commitment to Net Zero in the Government’s levelling-up plans and addressing this should be prioritised.

## Frameworks and Governance

Levelling-up and reaching Net Zero will require changes to broader governance arrangements. The Net Zero Forum is a potentially significant development to manage the transformation towards embedding Net Zero as a consideration between departments of government and between national and local government.

The Forum will include representatives from UK Government departments - the Cabinet Office, Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), HM Treasury, BEIS, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), Department for Transport (DfT), Department for Education (DfE), Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) - and Directors of Place from across the country (across portfolios like housing, transport, environment and finance).

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.ukri.org/publications/accelerating-net-zero-delivery/>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.uk100.org/publications/local-net-zero-progress-reports/finance>

The minister in charge of the Forum is Lord Callanan, Minister for Business, Energy and Corporate Responsibility at BEIS.

Local government representatives will come from all LA tiers from district to combined authority, and representatives will be both urban and rural and geographically spread, with around 12 representatives in total, a number large enough for wide representation, but small enough for efficient and proper discussion.

The Forum will meet four times a year.<sup>26</sup> There will be a meeting with LA chief executives and Permanent Secretaries, and a meeting with Secretaries of State and mayors and city leaders, so that there is political engagement too.

They will have working groups drawing up papers for the Forum to discuss, made up from relevant people from across the Net Zero sector. Local government organisations have been asked to recruit members and these organisations can report back to their members on the proceedings of the Forum.

There are four key objectives of the Forum, although these are not permanent and will be discussed in the Forum. The initial objectives are:

- roles and responsibilities for national and local government
- private finance and government funding
- capacity and capability of local government
- data and reporting.

Acknowledgement that the roles and responsibilities of Net Zero delivery between national and local government needs clarity has gained traction as an idea, with the Local Net Zero Forum prioritising this issue as its first item of business - however, guiding what comes next still requires a clear framework to be articulated.

LAs are getting to grips within their council operations about how to manage Net Zero and make the necessary changes to governance to enable delivery, ensuring that it is a consideration across all activities. But these ways of working could be articulated centrally, with guidance on how to manage these processes offered by Government to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of local resources. Net Zero governance remains a key priority for next steps in delivery at both the local and national levels.

<sup>26</sup> The inaugural meeting of the Forum took place on June 20th 2022





## Member Insight:

### Birmingham Route to Zero Team

Birmingham City Council has established a Route to Zero team and appointed the city's first dedicated Net Zero Assistant Director, demonstrating Birmingham's ambition and commitment to develop its capability and capacity to respond to the climate emergency.

The Assistant Director is responsible for a portfolio of projects and initiatives to deliver on Birmingham's Net Zero ambitions and optimise the co-benefits that Net Zero brings.







## Devolved Administrations

This report so far has concentrated on local and combined authorities in England, but the Scottish and Welsh administrations have their own ambitions with regard to achieving Net Zero and have clear guidance to enable progress to be monitored through standardised emission reporting.

### Scotland

The Scottish Government has legally committed to a Net Zero target by 2045, five years ahead of the rest of the UK. The target is among the most ambitious anywhere in the world, with interim goals of 75% emissions reduction by 2030 and 90% by 2040, compared to 1990 levels.

The Scottish Government's Climate Change Plan 2018-32 includes an emissions monitoring framework, with embedded indicators for policies for each sector.<sup>27</sup>

All public bodies, including Scotland's LAs, are required by the 'Climate Change (Duties of Public Bodies; Reporting Requirements) (Scotland) Order 2015,<sup>28</sup> to report emissions annually to the Sustainable Scotland Network.<sup>29</sup> Clear guidance has been provided to all public bodies to enable a uniform and clear approach to monitoring and reporting.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> [Scottish Government \(2020\), Annex B: Monitoring Framework - Securing a green recovery on a path to net zero: climate change plan 2018–2032 - update - gov.scot](#)

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2015/347/contents/made>

<sup>29</sup> <https://sustainablesotlandnetwork.org/>

<sup>30</sup> <https://sustainablesotlandnetwork.org/uploads/store/mediaupload/1592/file/CC%20Reporting%20Master%20Guidance%202021%2005.10.2021.pdf>

### Wales

In May 2021 the Welsh Government published the Welsh Public Sector Net Zero Reporting Guide,<sup>31</sup> which aimed to be a universal guide as a set of instructions for use by Welsh public bodies to estimate baseline emissions. It drew on the learning and experience of the development of the Scottish guide.

This new reporting is being done in parallel with other activities within many public sector organisations related to carbon emissions estimates and developing and implementing action plans to reduce emissions. By March 2023, all public sector organisations in Wales will report their emissions and publish their plans to achieve Net Zero.

<sup>31</sup> <https://gov.wales/public-sector-net-zero-reporting-guide>







## Analysis

LAs have a crucial role to play in the achievement of Net Zero, but they can only do it if they are given the powers they need. The CCC suggests that the failure to capture the ambition of local leaders represents a significant risk to the Government's ability to meet its objectives as enshrined in legislation.<sup>32</sup>

UK100 has called for national policy and regulatory frameworks to be set to enable local and regional authorities to work more effectively locally in partnership with the Government towards Net Zero.

### Local Net Zero Forum

We are pleased that the UK Government has instituted, in its Net Zero Strategy, a Local Net Zero Forum, citing recommendations by UK100. The Forum brings together UK Government departments with representatives of LAs from both urban and rural areas.

### Net Zero Delivery Framework

But the Forum needs to have teeth, with a dedicated Net Zero Delivery Unit at its disposal. It should have ministerial oversight and once developed, be clear about how to enact the roles and responsibilities identified. As such, we continue to urge the Government to consider the introduction of a National - Local Net Zero Delivery Framework to enable the work and recommendations of the Forum to be enacted.

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/2022-progress-report-to-parliament/>

## Rural considerations

In addition, the Net Zero Strategy does not sufficiently differentiate rural considerations. We believe rural LAs should be involved as key partners in developing and supporting practical climate solutions, in agriculture and land use, that contribute to a wider range of co-benefits including public health, access, housing, biodiversity and adaptation. And there has to be more dedicated consideration for rural challenges.

### Support for Net Zero levelling-up

Whilst there are positive signs that simplifying pots of money will be more of a priority for the Government, there is currently a fundamental disconnect between levelling-up and Net Zero. LAs are key to the delivery of both - and the agendas, financing, support and capacity to deliver at the local level need to be urgently aligned. The role of planning is crucial here and the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill must make it easier to deliver Net Zero.





# Recommendations

- The Local Net Zero Forum should determine in detail how local and national (and cross-departmental) collaboration will work and develop a clear delivery framework to be supported by a Net Zero Delivery Unit.
- There should be a link to Net Zero across all funding for LAs and all applications for funding should have to demonstrate their commitment to Net Zero
- There should be a floor on ambition, not a ceiling. If LAs want to go further and faster, then they should be given the opportunity and resources to do so
- There needs to be clear and consistent guidance on monitoring and reporting for LAs to enable progress to be tracked.



# Glossary of terms

BEIS	Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
CCC	Climate Change Committee
DCMS	Department of Culture, Media and Sport
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DfE	Department for Education
DfT	Department for Transport
DLUHC	Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
HBS	Heat and Buildings Strategy
LA	Local authority
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnerships
LNRS	Local Nature Recovery Strategies
NAO	National Audit Office
NZS	Net Zero Strategy
PwC	Pricewaterhouse Coopers
UKIB	UK Infrastructure Bank
UKRI	UK Research and Innovation





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