



## PRESS RELEASE

# Exclusive polling reveals voters' message to incoming Prime Minister: give councils more money and power for Net Zero to ease cost-of-living crisis

Embargoed until Thursday, 14 July 0001

The full reports will be available on Thursday, 14 July, at midday here:

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

More information: Liam Ward, UK100, [liam.ward@uk100.org](mailto:liam.ward@uk100.org) +44 (0)7518 864 210

- People in the UK overwhelmingly support Net Zero investment to reduce energy bills
- They believe local leaders are best placed to tackle climate change but that they have too little powers and too few resources
- That's according to a new YouGov poll commissioned by UK100
- The poll comes as UK100 releases its new Local Net Zero Delivery progress reports
- The reports and polling are released amidst a battle for Number 10

Voters want to see more support for local authorities to deal with the threat of climate change and more support for Net Zero action to address the cost-of-living crisis, according to a new poll from YouGov and commissioned by UK100.

The poll comes as the process to select the next UK Prime Minister gets underway, following the resignation of Boris Johnson.

When asked, on behalf of UK100, the UK's only network of ambitious local authorities committed to Net Zero and clean air, people across the UK said they **felt local leaders are best placed to tackle the climate crisis** (34%). But 54% said their local authority **had too few resources** to take effective action, and 42% said they **had too little power**.

At the same time, an overwhelming 80% of respondents reiterated their support for **boosting renewable energy projects to reduce energy bills**.

The opinions raised chime with the issues raised by a series of **Local Net Zero Delivery** reports launched on Thursday, 14 July, to assess local government progress against the UK's Net Zero targets.



The eight sector-based reports from UK100 follow the recent — and damning — [Climate Change Committee report to Parliament](#) on national Net Zero progress.

The individual reports look at Transport, Energy, Heat and Buildings, Finance, Powers, Clean Air, Nature, and Waste.

They find that more than 55% of UK100 members interviewed raised **funding, capacity and regulation/policy issues as the biggest barriers to realising local Net Zero ambitions.**

The reports argue that, over the last year, the Government has made significant progress in setting Net Zero targets, but without any sense of how local authorities should deliver them.

"We have a better sense of the 'what' than we did 12 months ago, but in many areas what is missing now is the 'how' and the 'who'; without these, delivery will falter," say the report authors.

Despite the challenges, ambitious local authorities identified **upgrading the energy efficiency of homes, renewable energy projects** and **programmes to reduce transport emissions and boost active travel** as the key ways they have worked to deliver Net Zero at the local level.

The reports find that local government ambition is not being mirrored or adequately enabled at the national level, and urgent attention is needed to support local leaders to deliver Net Zero.

The cross-cutting recommendations UK100 makes on behalf of its members include calls to:

- Embed Net Zero decision-making across all government structures
- The Government to set a floor, not a ceiling on local ambition
- Combine long-term, non-competitive funding and capacity development and support with a clear strategy for Local Net Zero Delivery to enable local authorities to accelerate progress
- Improve the ability of local authorities to access private finance
- Provide more investment in energy efficiency as a priority area for delivery

Responding to the polling, **Jason Torrance, Assistant Chief Executive at UK100**, says:



"The message to Conservative Party leadership contenders from voters is stark: they overwhelmingly want to see Net Zero action to help ease the cost-of-living crisis, and most trust local leaders to deliver it. But they are clear that the national government needs to give local councils more power and resources to accelerate action. While the results aren't a surprise to us, they must serve as a warning to the next occupant of Number 10 that they cannot afford to abandon Net Zero."

On the findings of the Local Net Zero Delivery reports, Jason adds:

"Local government progress on Net Zero has been significant over the last year, with ambitious local leaders — from across the political and geographical spectrum — making real headway for their communities and the planet. But it is clear that local authorities face significant national barriers that are stifling their ability to do more, more urgently."

"As voters recognise, the major roadblocks to accelerating Net Zero action are the limited powers and resources already stretched local authorities have at their disposal. There is an urgent need to overhaul the diversity of small, short-term, competitive funding slots made available for Net Zero — as suggested by the former Levelling Up Minister Michael Gove. Net Zero is neither a competition nor a short-term goal. It needs real, stable investment."

"At the same time, not only are local leaders most trusted to deliver Net Zero, but [research from UK Innovate and PwC](#) has shown they are also the ones who can do it most cost-effectively. In fact, their report finds that for every £1 invested in local Net Zero, energy costs are slashed by almost £2, and communities reap the rewards of more than £14 worth of wider social benefits. And we agree with the report authors when they argue that Net Zero is, therefore, also a means of delivering against the Levelling Up agenda."

"Net Zero is a route to reducing the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, a vital tool for tackling the climate crisis, and an engine for economic growth. We need the incoming Prime Minister to build upon the positive action taken so far and fully embrace the power of local leaders to deliver Net Zero."

**Tracy Brabin, Mayor of West Yorkshire, UK100 Co-president and the Chair of the M10 group of Metro Mayors**, adds:

"In the last year, across West Yorkshire, our Net Zero plans have already seen more than 600 good green jobs committed by employers. Meanwhile, we have committed £40m of investment in climate action over the next three years which will help us deliver our ambitious plans to make West Yorkshire a Net Zero carbon



economy by 2038. And, as the latest polling shows, voters of all stripes want to see more support for their local and regional leaders to do the same. But, as the latest UK100 report makes clear, we need more funding and more support from the national Government."

"The most important message, however, is that Net Zero is above party politics. It enjoys overwhelming public support and can deliver for people and planet. The candidates currently vying to take the keys to Number 10 need to take note."

**Cllr Richard Clewer, Leader of Wiltshire Council, UK100 Co-president and the Chair of the Countryside Climate Network**, says:

"I am delighted to be a UK100 Co-president alongside my Labour colleague Tracy Brabin. With the Conservative Party leadership race underway, I think it is important to emphasise that Net Zero is not a party political football. We can, and we must work together to deliver it. And the results of the latest polling clearly tells us that is what the public want too."

"As a local leader, it's also heartening to see that the public clearly recognises the importance of local government in delivering Net Zero. As the latest UK100 Local Net Zero reports show, local authorities are a hotbed of climate ambition."

"In Wiltshire, we have allocated over £90m to delivering a climate programme that includes building all new council housing to a zero-carbon standard, upgrading the energy efficiency of all existing council housing, rolling out electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and helping residents to buy cheaper solar panels. As a result, we're on track to decarbonise the organisation by 2030 — and we're seeking to make the whole county carbon neutral."

"Rural areas have different strengths and face different challenges than urban areas, but we're no less committed to delivering Net Zero for our communities."

**Chris Skidmore MP, Chair of the Environment APPG and a member of the Conservative Environment Network**, says:

"The public want their next Prime Minister to prioritise climate, nature and the environment."

"The latest polling demonstrates, the public overwhelmingly supports climate action, particularly amidst a cost-of-living crisis. Communities also want to see more support for their local and regional leaders to deliver it. The latest UK100 report on Local Net Zero Delivery highlights just how much progress ambitious



local authorities have made over the last year. It's no wonder, then, that the public wants to see the next Prime Minister offer more support to unleash the full potential of local government."

"It's vital that politicians of all parties continue not only to work together to protect Net Zero but build on the positive progress that's already been made to make people's lives better through a clean energy economy."

**Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester**, adds:

"Metro mayors and local and regional leaders across the UK are ready to lead the country to Net Zero, but we need to be backed with greater powers and funding. This is something voters clearly recognise too as the new report from UK100 demonstrates.

"We're already making great progress in Greater Manchester and are on-track to become a net-zero carbon region by 2038 – well ahead of the national target of 2050 - but we want to go further, faster. We urge Government to free the city regions up, so we can establish the skills base, new technologies and experience to lay the path for the rest of the UK to succeed.

"This is much more than Net Zero, however. What we're setting out to achieve in Greater Manchester is a greener future, but also a fairer one. For instance, as we work to decarbonise travel, we have announced that single journey bus fares across the whole city region will be capped at £1 for children and £2 for adults from September 2022. We are also developing plans to decarbonise homes through a retrofitting programme – which will also help to reduce people's energy bills and create good jobs.

"The conclusions of the UK100 Local Net Zero Delivery reports only strengthens our call for greater regional powers and a funding package that matches our ambitions so we can drive the whole country to Net Zero. We have a golden opportunity for an incoming Prime Minister to work with us to decarbonise the country while levelling it up and supporting people through the cost-of-living crisis at the same time."

**Andy Burnham, Tracy Brabin, Richard Clewer**, and **Chris Skidmore** will join **Cllr Kevin Guy**, leader of Bath and North East Somerset Council, and **Cllr Linda Taylor**, Leader of Cornwall Council, at midday on Thursday, 14 July, for [a virtual press conference to launch the UK100 Local Net Zero Delivery progress reports](#).

**ENDS**



## About the reports

The UK100 Local Net Zero Delivery progress reports are made up of eight separate reports, looking at **energy, heat and buildings, powers, clean air, waste, finance, nature, and transport**, and one overarching report.

The reports look to assess the progress in the delivery of Government commitments, reflect on the highlights, opportunities, challenges and gaps local authorities face while delivering Net Zero and share success stories from across the UK100 network.

All the reports will be published at midday on Thursday, 14 July to coincide with the virtual press conference. They will be available [here](#).

The reports were produced in collaboration and consultation with our members.

Thinking about local Net Zero delivery progress, over half of our members are primarily focused on developing a strategy for Net Zero alongside applying for and deploying Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funding to address their building stock emissions.

Looking to the near future, most of our members will be concentrating on heat and buildings and transport decarbonisation in the coming months.

The most common barriers to delivery cited by members are limited access to long-term, non-competitive funding, lack of capacity and skills required to deliver within the local authority, siloed working, as well as national policy and regulation stifling delivery.

Upgrading the energy efficiency of homes and heating decarbonisation are the biggest local challenges cited by members. As UK100 highlights in our heat and buildings report and the Climate Change Committee raises in their latest report, members also noted a significant national policy gap in this area that needs urgent attention.

On the next page, is a summary of the key progress highlights analysed in the Local Net Zero Delivery progress reports.

## National developments

| Issue                     | Main developments - Government Strategy/ Regulation                                   | Progress - highlights  | Gaps - what's missing   |
|---------------------------|---|--|---|
| <b>Overarching</b>        | Net Zero Strategy   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Net Zero Forum</li> <li>Broadening of the scope of the Energy Hubs to Net Zero Hubs</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A local Net Zero Delivery Unit</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Transport</b>          | Transport Decarbonisation Plan<br><br>EV Infrastructure Strategy                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LA Toolkits</li> <li>Commitment to EV infrastructure</li> <li>The City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A detailed plan for Net Zero Transport</li> <li>A rural transport strategy</li> <li>Non-competitive funding</li> <li>Integration of clean air and Net Zero (CANZ)</li> <li>A National Highways plan that supports local transport decarbonisation</li> </ul>                                       |
| <b>Energy</b>             | British Energy Security Strategy  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Phasing out of coal at COP26</li> <li>Ofgem acknowledges local role</li> <li>Announcement of Future System Operator</li> <li>Wales published local and regional energy plans</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Energy efficiency</li> <li>A commitment on LAEP</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Heat and Buildings</b> | Heat and Buildings Strategy   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) is being effectively deployed by LAs to retrofit council-owned properties</li> <li>Chancellor's Strategic steer on financing for energy efficiency in homes</li> <li>The Green Homes Grant local authority delivery (LAD) scheme has been more successful than the Government's 'one-to-many' centralised approach</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Additional dedicated investment in decarbonising heat and buildings</li> <li>Detail on meeting hydrogen target</li> <li>Energy efficiency</li> <li>VAT cut on retrofit</li> <li>Systematic plan for decarbonising heat solutions in existing homes and buildings</li> </ul>                        |
| <b>Local Powers</b>       | Levelling up the United Kingdom White Paper<br><br>Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Glasgow Climate Pact - specific reference to the important role of LAs in Net Zero delivery in COP26 outcome text</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Net Zero in Levelling Up White Paper and more generally throughout all of Government's activities</li> <li>Net Zero as priority across all departments nationally and locally</li> <li>No standard emission reporting guidance</li> <li>Planning reform aligned with Climate Change Act</li> </ul> |
| <b>Finance</b>            | Treasury Net Zero Review<br><br>UK Infrastructure Bank Bill                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UKIB has been established, is engaging with LAs and recognises the importance of place-based Net Zero delivery</li> <li>Green Financing Framework</li> <li>VAT reductions on energy saving materials</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Green Book reform</li> <li>Non-competitive funding</li> <li>Clarity in funding (what is in and out of scope)</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Nature</b>             | Environment Act   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Target - Halting the decline in our wildlife populations through a legally binding target for species abundance by 2030 with a requirement to increase species populations by 10% by 2042</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integration between Environment Act (including Biodiversity Net Gain and the Nature Green Paper) and Net Zero</li> <li>Detail on Office of Environmental Protection's enforcement role</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Clean Air</b>          | Environment Act   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commitment to target setting</li> <li>Initial results from Clean Air Zones</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Links between clean air and Net Zero (CANZ)</li> <li>More ambitious, updated WHO-aligned targets</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Waste</b>              | Environment Act   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plans for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPS) and Deposit Return Scheme (DRS)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Details on introduction of EPR and DRS</li> <li>Common national standards or guidance for LAs</li> </ul>   |



Each Local Net Zero Delivery Progress report includes sector-specific recommendations, but it is clear there are cross-cutting issues which need urgent attention to accelerate local Net Zero. These include:

- Net Zero decision-making needs to be embedded across all government structures. A significant number of UK100 members are working on this important governance, but consistency of approach across all levels and areas is crucial
- There is a need for a floor, not a ceiling on ambition. Standards that the Government introduce need to enable local authorities to go further and faster, not impede their progress
- Combining long term, non-competitive funding and capacity development and support with a clear strategy for Local
- Net Zero Delivery could enable LAs to accelerate progress
- Improving the ability of LAs to access private finance should be a priority area of focus - it was highlighted as a barrier across all sectors
- Energy efficiency has been highlighted as a priority area for investment and delivery

### **About the virtual press conference**

Please register your attendance here:

[https://uk100-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_D0MBCsg8RfK-b8a1qeoDdq](https://uk100-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_D0MBCsg8RfK-b8a1qeoDdq)

The event is open to all, and will run for 60 minutes, including a 20-minute Q&A session, during which we will welcome questions to the panel from journalists. Please email [liam.ward@uk100.org](mailto:liam.ward@uk100.org) to confirm if you would like to ask a question.

### **About the polling**

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1,740 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 10th - 11th July 2022. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+).

The full results are available here:

<https://filetransfer.io/data-package/jVUAF6Qw#link>



## **About UK100**

UK100 is a network of the most ambitious local leaders working towards Net Zero as soon as possible but no later than 2045. We help them collaborate to take decisive action in their communities.

Our members represent more than 37 million people in towns, cities and counties across the UK.

We facilitate knowledge-sharing between members, partnership-building and leadership mentoring. And support them to harness their collective power to affect vital national change.

Warm homes, affordable energy, clean air, and healthy landscapes make thriving communities.

And UK100 members have pledged to deliver a Net Zero future that delivers for people and planet.

[UK100.org](https://www.uk100.org)