

Powers in Place: Executive Summary

In its landmark Net Zero Strategy¹ in 2021, the UK Government recognised that 82% of UK emissions are “within the scope of influence of local authorities”, yet local leaders are still waiting for the powers and resources they need to deliver on their ambitions.

Mission Zero: Independent Review of Net Zero by MP Chris Skidmore published in January 2023 identifies Net Zero as the “growth opportunity of the 21st century”. It highlights that the benefits are greater if we act faster on decarbonisation; risk of delay is significant, and **local areas are hampered** from going as fast as they want to, in part due to lack of policy clarity, infrastructure bottlenecks or delays in the planning system.

Powers in Place considers the powers that local authorities have to deliver Net Zero in their places, and whether they can deploy these powers effectively to create change.

It finds that local authorities are hamstrung by:

- **A lack of a defined role** in Net Zero Delivery
- **A policy and strategy ecosystem and framework** that fails to enable and support local delivery.
- **Conflicting remits of public agencies** which prevent ambitious authorities from delivering their aims.
- **Insufficient funding and resources** to develop the capacity to enable this transformative shift; funding streams are inequitably and competitively distributed and rarely long-term.

The conclusion is clear: despite the progress of a handful of trailblazers, **local authorities are still waiting for Government to put the necessary resources and powers in place** to deliver on their Net Zero ambitions

To capitalise on progress and to address the critical gaps still hampering local Net Zero delivery, this report makes **three key recommendations**:

- 1** The UK government should introduce a **Net Zero Local Powers Bill** that permits and obliges the relevant levels of local authorities to deliver an effective pathway to Net Zero.
- 2** A Local-National **Net Zero Delivery Framework** should be co-designed between local authorities and the UK Government, overseen by a National Net Zero Delivery Unit.
- 3** Ministers should **end competitive short-term funding** and replace it with strategic, needs-based, long-term funding.

The powers and duties proposed in this report must be supported by adequate resource and capacity building if they are to have any impact, and underpinned by a structure of supportive national policies. Empowering local government will help the whole country to achieve Net Zero faster, better and more cost-effectively.