

# State of the Network Report 2021

The case for local climate action  
enters the mainstream

UK:  
100

# Foreword

## December 2021

2021 shifted the dial for UK100. A few weeks before the new year, 40 ambitious local authorities had signed up to our new pledge, committing to meet Net Zero at least five years earlier than the UK's target. **A year on, the number has more than doubled.**

From Glasgow to Gloucestershire, West Midlands to West Yorkshire, Wiltshire to Westminster, their pledges demonstrate to the government the commitment of local leaders of all stripes to take immediate climate action.

All together our members now provide services to more than 36 million people across the UK. And I'm proud to say that among them is now our biggest member yet: Greater London Authority. We're excited for what insights the country's ambitious capital will bring.

Our Countryside Climate Network [turned one in June](#). Emerging from conversations with local leaders in Cambridgeshire and Cornwall, it now has 32 members, meets with ministers, gives evidence to parliament, and takes the countryside to the global stage.

In July our flagship event of the year, **the International Net Zero Local Leadership Summit and Conference**, co-hosted with Mayor of West Midlands Andy Street, brought ministers, mayors and local leaders around the same table.

**“ Only with local and central governments working side by side can we keep 1.5C alive.**

The summit's joint declaration included our recommendation for a framework that allows central and local government to work together more effectively on Net Zero. Three months later, **the government drew on this recommendation in its Net Zero Strategy.**

Now, just a year until COP27 when countries regroup in Egypt with clearcut plans in line with a 1.5C target, UK local leaders must continue to push the government for the powers and greater partnership they need to meet Net Zero.

Only with local and central governments working side by side can we keep 1.5C alive, and develop the local solutions and good green jobs needed to reboot the economy and make our lives healthier.

In 2022, **we'll continue to urge the government to recognise that the rules slowing down local climate action need to change.** Our members stand ready to design and deliver Net Zero and we look forward to more discussions on building that critical partnership.

I'd also like to say a big thank you to all our core foundation grants that made our 2021 success possible.

**Polly Billington**  
**Chief Executive Officer, UK100**

# Our membership



## New Net Zero Pledge

By November 2020, more than 110 local authorities had pledged ‘100% clean energy by 2050’. In the year leading up to COP26 we asked them to go even further. And so in December 2020 we launched our new [Net Zero Pledge](#) with 41 local authorities already signed up.

It commits them to get their areawide emissions to Net Zero as soon as possible, and creates an impetus for the government to enable local authorities to deliver climate action. A year later, as COP26 got underway, the number of signatories had reached 93, including our biggest member yet: Greater London Authority.

## New faces

In May the Leader of Glasgow City Council, Cllr Susan Aitken, was [appointed Co-chair of UK100](#).

And in June, Cllr Richard Clewer, Leader of Wiltshire Council, replaced Cllr Steve Count, former Leader of Cambridgeshire County Council, as Chair of our Countryside Climate Network. A big thank you to Cllr Count, whose leadership helped make the network’s first year a huge success.

In the spring, Southampton City Council’s former Leader, Cllr Christopher Hammond, joined the UK100 team in a newly created role for managing our growing membership.

## Countryside Climate Network

Our Countryside Climate Network (CCN) turned one in June. Emerging from conversations with local leaders in Cambridgeshire and Cornwall, it now has 32 members spanning over 45% of England’s land area. It meets with ministers, [gives evidence to parliament](#), and [takes the countryside to the global stage](#).

To mark a fantastic first year of raising the rural voice, we sent our filmmakers coast-to-coast – from Penzance’s geothermal lido to the UK’s first electric forecourt in Braintree, Essex – to get some [beautiful footage of our CCN members in action](#).

# Net Zero Pledge members



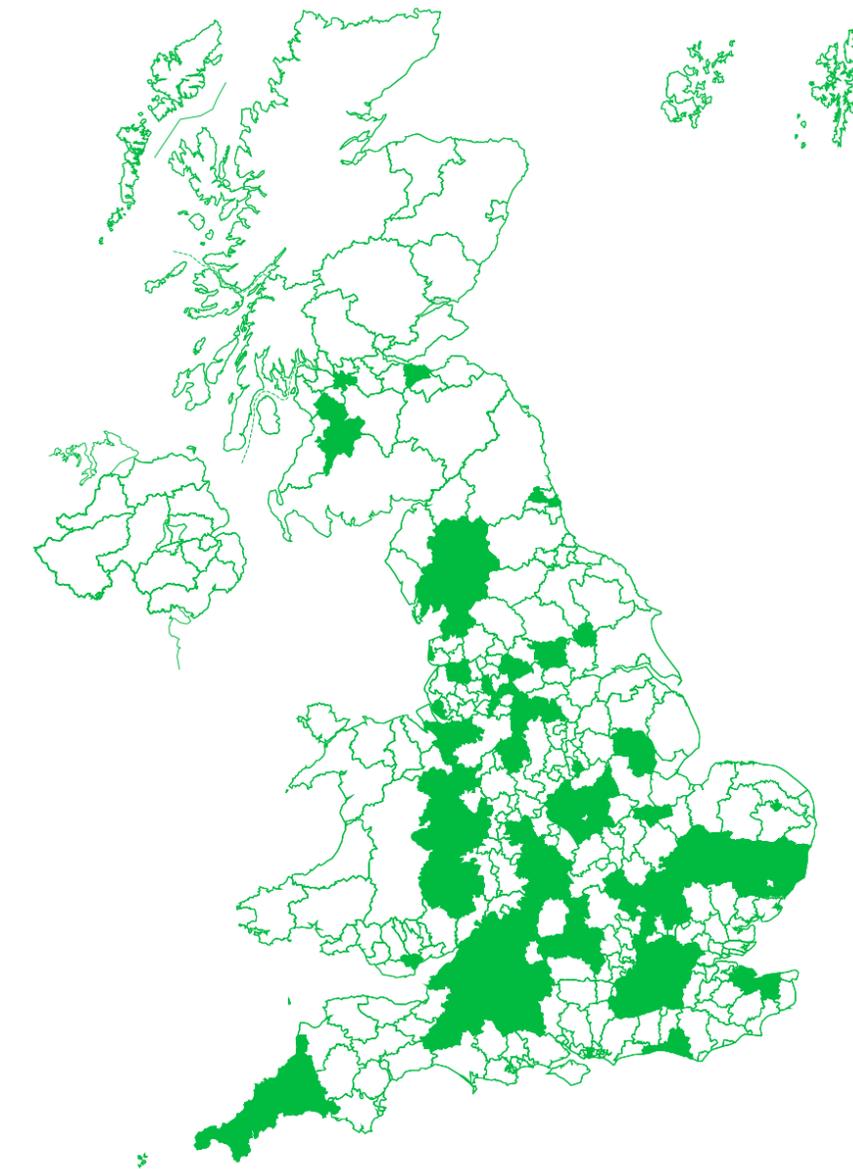
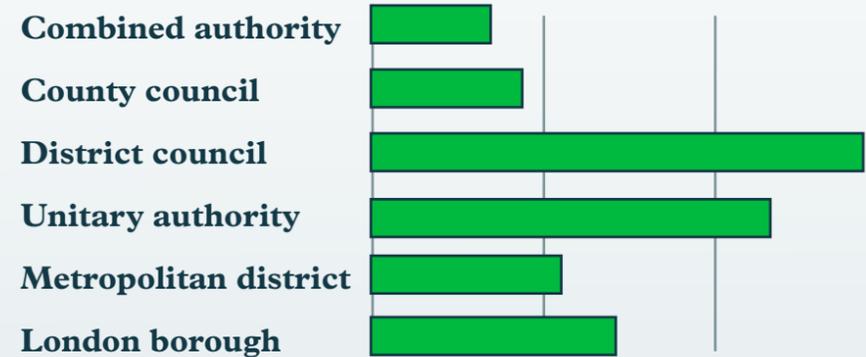
## Political administration

- 39 Labour
- 23 Conservative
- 20 NOC
- 11 Lib Dem



## Type and tier

- 6 Combined authority
- 9 County council
- 29 District council
- 24 Unitary authority
- 11 Metropolitan district
- 14 London borough



## Geographical distribution

- 15 Greater London
- 3 Scotland
- 1 Wales
- 10 East of England
- 15 South West England
- 15 South East England
- 15 Midlands
- 5 Yorkshire and the Humber
- 14 North of England

# Getting the word out

2021 was a year in which we picked up more press coverage than any other. Our CEO Polly Billington made appearances across media including on [BBC Morning Live](#) for a film on air pollution, the popular podcast [Reasons to be Cheerful](#), Times Radio several times, and in slow environmental journalism mag [It's Freezing in LA](#).

BBC Midlands Today [reported on our summit and conference](#) in July from the studio, and The Mirror also [covered](#) it. We had Guardian headlines in [January](#) and [August](#), and op-eds in the Yorkshire Post in [April](#) and [October](#) and in the [Times Red Box](#). Several Conservative members, like [Mayor Andy Street](#), have written about UK100 for Conservative Home.



## Social media

We focus most of our social media activity on Twitter, where many people in both local and UK government are active, along with NGOs and business leaders taking climate action.



**More than  
2.6 million  
impressions**

**↑94% vs 2020**



**More than  
180,000  
profile visits**

**↑450% vs 2020**



**More than  
1,100 new  
followers**

**↑10% vs 2020**

# APPGs on Sustainable Finance and Air Pollution



UK100 is the secretariat for two All Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) – [Sustainable Finance](#) and [Air Pollution](#). Both had a fantastic 2021 with a series of insightful roundtables and webinars that brought together MPs, councillors and leading stakeholders.

A highlight for the APPG on Air Pollution, chaired by Geraint Davies MP, was bringing together leading clean air campaigner Rosamund Kissi-Debrah, Nadia Whittome MP, Mayor of Bristol Marvin Rees and others to discuss [how toxic air disproportionately affects communities of colour](#).

It also hosted air quality expert Professor Sir Stephen Holgate and campaign group Choked Up on Clean Air Day. The panel explored what [can be done to protect children's health from air pollution](#).

The APPG on Sustainable Finance, chaired by Sir Ed Davey MP and run in partnership with Green Finance Institute (GFI) and ShareAction, hosted many [fascinating webinars](#) in 2021 on how the finance sector can be brought in line with Net Zero – from [building a Net Zero financial sector](#) to what [successful levelling up looks like](#).

Several esteemed speakers appeared regularly at our meetings, including Catherine Howarth, CEO of ShareAction, Nick Robins, Professor in Practice – Sustainable Finance at the Grantham Research Institute, and Rhian-Mari Thomas, CEO of GFI.

Among many other expert stakeholders the APPG was proud to host Mayor of Bristol Marvin Rees, Cheryl Hiles, Director of Energy Capital at West Midlands Combined Authority, Jerome Mayhew MP, and Emma Harvey, Director at the Green Finance Institute.



# Highlights from 2021

## January

Cross-party mayors sign our [letter](#) urging the PM to enshrine in law WHO air quality guidelines in the Environment Bill. [Read more](#) on the Guardian.

## March

Mayor of Hackney Philip Glanville explores why the government should be treating [local authorities as 'indispensable partners'](#) in reducing emissions.

## February

UK100 signs E3G's [letter to Rishi Sunak](#) urging him to ensure the UK Infrastructure Bank's mission is to meet the UK's climate and levelling up agenda.

Our research on rural attitudes to climate finds that countryside citizens are greener in their outlook than the rest of us.



**Equipping rural councillors to engage effectively on climate change**

[View report](#)



## April

Armed with data showing 2.7 million workers already have the skills we need for Net Zero, and with polling revealing [most Brits think green jobs are key to a green recovery](#), [our local election campaign](#) shows why local leaders must prioritise climate.



**Well over 100 candidates sign our election pledge to prioritise a green recovery if elected.**

We also launch our keynote report of the year: Power Shift, described as “annoyingly good” by Director of Social Market Foundation James Kirkup. It’s the most comprehensive examination ever undertaken of the powers local authorities have and need to take ambitious action on Net Zero.



**Power Shift: Research into local authority powers relating to climate action**

[View report](#)

## June

The Countryside Climate Network hosts a meeting between Cornwall Council and MPs from the South West to discuss delivering rural Net Zero ahead of the G7 Summit.

We also launch our Landscape of Leadership report, which provides insight on the experiences of five of our most ambitious rural members. It builds on our Rural Net Zero report, released in April, which explores challenges and priorities for rural councils.



**Landscape of Leadership: Countryside authorities delivering Net Zero**

[View report](#)

**Rural Net Zero: The role of rural local authorities in reaching Net Zero**

[View report](#)

July

## International Net Zero Local Leadership Summit and Conference

We hold our flagship event of 2021 on 13 July, co-hosted with West Midlands Combined Authority, designed to speed up the shift to Net Zero in the lead up to COP26.

With Kwasi Kwarteng at the table, and a [video message from COP26 President Alok Sharma](#), 32 UK local leaders gather at our Net Zero Local Leadership Summit. They sign a joint declaration on delivering Net Zero, akin to the Paris City Hall Declaration that paved the way for the Paris Agreement.

The declaration says local leaders need new powers and resources to tackle climate change with utmost urgency. The summit, a milestone for local leaders before COP26, hears from Mayor of London [Sadiq Khan](#), Glasgow leader [Cllr Susan Aitken](#), and [Lord Deben](#).



Net Zero Local Leadership Communiqué

[View declaration](#)

After the summit more than 600 delegates from local and central government, business, NGOs and academia join our conference as we highlight local priorities for Net Zero. The Mayor of Los Angeles Eric Garcetti [addresses the conference](#), while Siemens and National Grid are its [headline sponsors](#).

The summit and conference are part of a wider effort from local authorities offering a partnership to the government to activate enhanced collaboration towards Net Zero. Catch up on all the action [over on our website](#).

**“ This is all about partnership in every sense – from the parish to the region – with national governments.**

**Andy Street**  
**Mayor of West Midlands**



## September

The Environmental Audit Committee [hears evidence](#) from our CEO Polly Billington and Leader of Wiltshire Council Cllr Richard Clewer on English councils' ability to reach Net Zero.

We launch our report examining the local take on the UK's Bus Back Better strategy. And our set of case studies on three major UK cities show there are clear opportunities for early support from the UK Infrastructure Bank.



**Supporting local authorities to improve local bus use and expand zero emission bus provision**

[View report](#)

**An opportunity for the UK Infrastructure Bank to accelerate the pace of Net Zero investment in our cities**

[View report](#)



## October

The UK's Net Zero Strategy draws on our recommendation for a framework that makes it easier for councils to collaborate with the government.

**“ The creation of the Forum also draws on the recommendations for a policy framework put forward by member network UK100.**

[UK government's Net Zero Strategy](#)

The government's strategy coincides with our new research that explores this framework in more detail, unpacks local government influence on the country's emissions, and explores the economic benefits of local climate action.



**Research into a National - Local Net Zero Delivery Framework**

[View report](#)

**The economic benefits of local climate action**

[View report](#)

**Local authority contributions to Net Zero**

[View report](#)

# November

At COP26, more than 80 mayors and local leaders from across the UK gather to share their commitment to reaching Net Zero at our Local Leaders' Reception in Glasgow City Chambers. We co-host the event with Leader of Glasgow City Council, Cllr Susan Aitken.

The guests hear keynote speeches from Cllr Aitken, Mayor of London Sadiq Khan, Mayor of the Liverpool City Region Steve Rotheram, and Leader of Wiltshire Council Cllr Richard Clewer (left to right opposite)

Inside COP26's Blue Zone, we [launch our report](#), supported by Siemens and National Grid, on how in-country local leadership networks speed up climate action. And in Glasgow city centre, we host members and stakeholders for three days of events, knowledge sharing and networking.



## Accelerating climate action: The role of in-country local leadership networks in delivering Net Zero

[View report](#)

At the summit itself, delegates negotiate a new global agreement – the Glasgow Climate Pact. It recognises [“the urgent need for multilevel action and collaboration”](#) after councils across the world stress their central role in Net Zero.



## Our COP26 achievements at a glance:



**93** local authorities sign up to our Net Zero Pledge

more than doubling our membership since the launch of the pledge a year ago.



**56** UK100 members engage in the internationally-focused programme of fringe events.



**61** UK local authorities sign up to the UNFCCC Race to Zero, of which 49 are UK100 members.



Our research from the year contributes to the evidence base on the role of local authorities in delivering Net Zero, building momentum towards COP.

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