ON MULTI-LEVEL CLIMATE GOVERNANCE IN AN URBAN/RURAL COUNTY

A case study of
Surrey

1.2 million people live in Surrey

Fifth of county covered by trees

482,000 households

87% urban/13% rural

475 farms
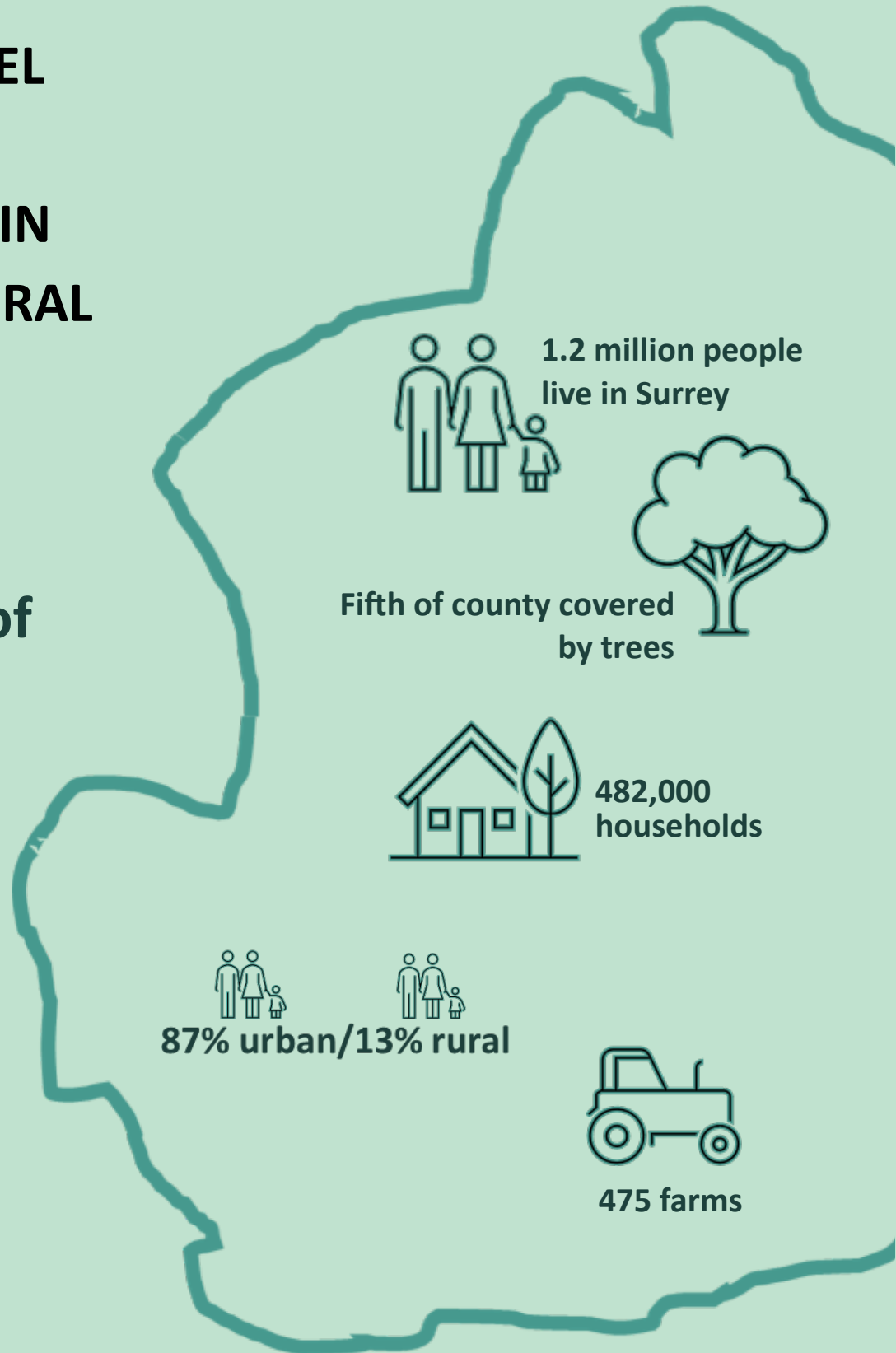
ABOUT PCAN

The Place-based Climate Action Network (PCAN) is funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). It commenced in January 2019 and brings together the research community and decision-makers in the public, private and third sectors. PCAN consists of five innovative platforms to facilitate two-way, multi-level engagement between researchers and stakeholders: three city-based climate commissions (in Belfast, Edinburgh and Leeds) and two theme-based platforms on adaptation and finance, with a business theme integrated into each climate commission. PCAN is about translating climate policy into action 'on the ground' in our communities and supports a wider network of new and evolving climate commissions, including at county level (Surrey, Essex) and at regional level (Yorkshire and Humber). PCAN builds on the policy connections, networking capacity and research strengths of its host institutions, the London School of Economics and Political Science, Queen's University Belfast, the University of Edinburgh, the University of Leeds and the University of Oxford.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The climate governance of high-profile cities and urban areas has long been the focus of intense scrutiny and analysis. Whilst this has offered major insights, we would argue that such a narrow focus has been to the detriment of not only rural and rural/urban areas but in developing the understanding of more complex, multi-level local governance. This report attempts to redress this issue by providing an in-depth review of local governance at a UK county level. Surrey, chosen for this case study, offers an analysis of complex local multi-level governance embedded within wider regional and national structures. It also provides insight into a climate governance of a primarily affluent urban/rural area, and one where local authorities have increasingly focused on climate action.

Like many recent reports, this research has identified barriers to climate action created by a failure to agree the division of labour and responsibility between different levels of multi-level governance (MLG); the limited local capacity and knowledge which restrain local implementation and gaps in local emissions data. Whilst these may now be under review by the government-led Local Net Zero Forum, this research sets these findings within a more nuanced analysis of the perceptions of local governance, the strategic challenges faced and the barriers to be overcome to implement local climate actions. The work identifies local bodies in search of mandate, with their progress often invisible to others within the governance structure and many organisations struggling with issues of scale. The research also identifies the interplay between transient and stable governmental organisations and the role of climate networks.

Through this in-depth analysis **we have identified a new form of governance, that of 'improvisatory governance',** where local government and non-governmental groups are developing **independent and often un-coordinated approaches.** This has been driven by an acceptance of **partial, incoherent, or even 'broken' MLG,** and by **the actions of 'wilful actors' who are demanding change and operate by spanning place and organisational boundaries.**

This report explores these key themes in detail and draws from these findings several key recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Full recommendations are provided in Chapter 7 but here we highlight several important issues:

UK POLICY LEVEL

"Without a duty and target local government is left with voluntary work of 'persuasion and stakeholder management'. This is very time-consuming – costly." **(SCC1)**

As with others we call central government to implement measures that would:

1. Clarify and improve the national framework for climate policy;

2. Clarify powers and responsibilities for local authorities;

3. Establish a statutory duty for local government;

4. Establish a wider network of Net Zero Support Hubs across counties and cities;

5. Ensure that new devolution deals for combined authorities integrate ambitions Net zero implementation;

6. A net zero test in the planning system;

7. UK representative bodies should convene a *Climate Constitutional Convention;*

8. The Skidmore recommendation of Trailblazer net-zero city should be expanded to two cities and two counties;

9. We suggest an extension of the Skidmore proposal to incorporate innovations and experiments in climate governance;

NEW UK CLIMATE GOVERNANCE MODELS

(Climate governance) is "really wavy and sort of moving." (SCC2)

Trailblazers should commit to the development of multi-level 'mesh' governance of relationships and processes:

1. Demonstration of effective horizontal part-nership-building for climate action;

2. Demonstration of effective vertical linkages;

from lead authority to neighbourhoods;

3. Development of capacity, tools, skills and partnership arrangements;

4. Commitment to the development of models for measuring, reporting, training and sharing;

"everybody's just making it up" (SPS4)

SURREY CLIMATE ACTION

"from at a community level, it seems entirely clear that our councils should have a central role, but somehow there isn't doesn't appear to be a framework within which they're working." **(SPS4)**

1. We recommend that Surrey County Council, which has helped develop a 'mesh' (Mulgan, 2020) of vertical and horizontal relationships and governance arrangements for climate action in the county, work with partners to formalize this. The aim would be to develop a local 'climate constitution'.

2. Parish and town councils be brought clearly and formally into the emerging local 'climate constitution' or 'mesh' model of local climate governance.

3. The County Council and all its partners in climate policy and action to lobby central Government in support of the recommendations of the Skidmore Review.

4. Surrey aim to become an exemplar of local climate governance in public communication and debate of challenges and progress. To that end we recommend that the County Council and its partners hold an annual local climate assembly.

5. Operationally focused recommendations, derived from micro-level Surrey based observations:

   a. a focus on place is important, but effective scale of delivery needs to be considered.;

   b. build flexibility of delivery into any county-wide climate framework;

   c. build on the strengths the county's rural base;

   d. work across all levels of governance to agree the key messages and goals that can work from micro-local to county-wide;

   e. create boundary spanning projects;

Schools Strike for Climate march in Guildford Sept. 2019

I'VE MADE CHANGES TO MY LIFE FOR THE SAKE OF THE EARTH. YOU CAN TOO! COME TALK TO ME :)

HI
YO
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WE NEED
NATURE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of the study

The challenge of achieving Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and mitigating climate disruption is the greatest task of the next three decades. The UK Government is by common consent a world leader in making climate action a national priority and in enshrining its ambitious goals in legislation. However, there is also a consensus in the UK, from independent observers and researchers, and from policy actors at all levels, that action lags well behind the stated goals: regular reaffirmation of the urgency of working for Net Zero is not accompanied by commensurate policy guidance, incentives and implementation.

This critique of the gap between strategy and implementation at national scale is complemented by another critical assessment. This focuses on the neglect of local government and its partners in framing and implementing climate policy in the UK and especially in England. This study takes its cue from the widespread perception that the role and potential of local governance in climate action have been given far too little attention by central government over recent years.

The study, commissioned by the ESRC Place-Based Climate Network (PCAN) in 2020, aims to add to understanding of local perceptions and activities in relation to climate governance at the sub-regional scale in the UK. We have focused on the county of Surrey, aiming to map activities and attitudes among policy actors at each of the three levels of local government in the county, and among leading stakeholders in governance in Surrey. We have also sought views on local climate governance from expert observers beyond the county.

There are by now many reports and papers calling for a clearer and stronger role for local government and its partners in climate policy in the UK, and we review the messages from this body of work in chapter 3. But there are few studies that attempt an in-depth mapping of activities in a local area and a rich assessment of views from policy actors across levels and sectors in relation to climate policy.

Our approach has been to review relevant literature, map organisations, networks and activities, and interview a wide and relevant range of expert informants from Surrey and beyond, in order to produce a rich close-up picture of climate governance in a county. We hope that the analysis adds to understanding of existing efforts and motivation to act on climate crisis at local level, and to more recognition of the great potential for local climate leadership at county, district/borough and also parish level.

The aims of the project have been as follows:

- to identify challenges, opportunities and effective practice for Surrey local authorities and partners in mobilising and coordinating action across sectors and tiers of governance;

- to generate resources that can promote effective climate governance in a multi-level local government system such as Surrey.

We have taken a multi-method approach to building up an in-depth map of activities and organisations in Surrey, and to understanding the perspectives of actors in the local governance system:

    a. review of academic and policy literature on local climate policy and polycentric governance, in order to inform development of our empirical work;

    b. interviews with expert informants across sectors and tiers of governance;

creation of a *network map* of climate governance in Surrey.

The questions we have asked include:

1. What are the opportunities, problems and cases of effective practice in mobilisation and coordination of actors in climate initiatives in Surrey, across multiple tiers of local government and a diverse set of strategic partnerships?

2. How do policymakers coordinate climate action in areas such as housing and planning, transport and energy in a multi-level local governance system?

3. What are the policy and management tools that can generate effective mobilisation and cooperation on climate in 'polycentric' local governance systems, as exemplified by Surrey?

1.2 Why local governance matters

Much attention has been given to climate governance at international and national scales. The global nature of the climate crisis and the vital role of nation-states in agreeing on international action have understandably dominated research and policymaking. But implementing climate strategy depends also on effective *local* governance. International and national climate strategies can only be implemented in particular places, and the scale of the challenge of climate change mitigation and adaptation is such that every level of governance and every sector of the economy needs to be involved. Moreover, there is widespread acceptance of the argument that we cannot rely on supply-side technological innovations to do all the work of decarbonisation at the scale and pace needed to meet the Net Zero goals set by central government. We will also need substantial changes in demand and lifestyles, a view supported by a recent report from the House of Lords (2022) noting that decisions by individuals and households to adopt new low carbon technologies, services and consumption will comprise 32 per cent of emissions reductions up to 2035. This means a need for debate, consensus-building and consent from citizens. Finally, local conditions vary enormously: mitigation and adaptation policies will need to be flexible and responsive to local conditions. That will demand engagement with trusted local actors and the harnessing of local knowledge and commitment.

All these factors underline the importance of the sub-regional scales of governance for effective climate action. As noted above, much research and most current Net Zero policymaking focuses on international and national action. The theoretical and practical cases for taking local governance seriously mean that more work is needed to understand the strengths, problems and potential at the local scale.

1.3 Why Surrey matters

Where local climate governance and policymaking *has* been studied in depth and range is at the level of cities. This reflects the significance for major cities of climate risks, and the resources and policy tools at the disposal of metropolitan authorities. However, there is a world of local governance and climate impacts and policymaking beyond the cities. How can a local authority area such as a *county*, with multiple elected councils, a wide range of stakeholders, a complex web of cross-sector partnerships, and a mix of towns, suburbs and rural areas, best organise itself to make climate strategies work? A motivation of this project has been to improve understanding of this distinctive segment of local governance in the UK, which has attracted less attention than have cities.

Why focus on Surrey? We identify several reasons. Surrey was the first county to set up a local *Climate Commission*, in the wake of the innovative example set by major cities in taking climate governance seriously – Edinburgh, Leeds, Belfast. As a multi-authority county on the edge of London, with local councils ranging from highly urbanised areas to largely rural districts, Surrey needs to bring

together a very diverse set of stakeholders in climate governance. Surrey's climate governance system calls for orchestration between a county council, eleven district and borough authorities, numerous strategic and delivery partnerships, and parish councils. The local authorities are developing their own climate strategies; so are many stakeholder organisations. So, the governance scene is rich and complex. Views and experiences from Surrey are likely to resonate with those of policy actors in other multi-level authorities across the counties.

Finally, it is clear that technological change on the supply-side of the economy will not be enough to achieve the transition to Net Zero carbon in the UK, or elsewhere in the West, given the delays in taking climate crisis seriously and the need for very rapid decarbonization all the way to 2050 and beyond. We will need substantial changes in behaviours and values, above all in the affluent countries and sections of society that have done most, through their carbon-intensive consumption patterns, to create the crisis of climate disruption (Fuchs *et al.*, 2021). Affluent citizens are the source of most 'lifestyle' emissions (Kenner, 2019; Wiedmann *et al.*, 2020; Newell, Daley and Twena, 2021). If we are to accomplish Net Zero, then affluent societies and the most affluent within them have to lead the way not only in adopting new technologies but changing and reducing consumption. Surrey, for all that it contains some areas of significant socio-economic deprivation, is a very affluent place. What happens in counties such as Surrey matters for the Net Zero transition: we need the policymakers and citizens of places

like Surrey to be pacesetters and exemplars for Net Zero. That will be made harder if the local governance of climate action is inefficient and ineffective.

1.4 Structure of the report

In the next chapter we outline our methodology – a mixed methods approach intended to generate a rich and in-depth mapping and understanding of Surrey's climate governance system and the attitudes and perspectives of policy actors across different levels and sectors. We open chapter 3 with a brief review of academic and policy literature relevant to the case study of Surrey and to the issues arising in climate governance. We then present in detail and our mapping of climate policy actors and activities in Surrey and our analysis of the results from our fieldwork. In chapter 7 we assess the findings and offer some recommendations for further development of local climate governance in Surrey and beyond. Chapter 8 presents a brief conclusion.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Multi-method approach

To understand the status of climate policy development in the UK, the roles of individuals and organisations in both influencing and delivering the required actions needed to support policy, and to obtain perspectives on how these inter-related tiers of governance operated, a multi-method research approach was adopted. This comprised:

- Review of the academic literature on polycentric and multi-level governance, with specific regard to non-urban research;

- An assessment of national, regional, sub- regional and micro level policy documents, strategies, council minutes and other relevant materials;

- Online, transcribed, semi-structured interviews;

- Public conference proceedings, transcribed House of Commons committee hearings, personal communications.

The rationale for a multi-method approach is that we are dealing with a highly complex and multi-layered system of policymaking, public communications, funding and regulation, in which diverse actors have significant roles, and where new organisations are finding their way into the system. Any one approach to mapping and exploring the system would give a limited view of the issues and the attitudes of participants. By combining a review of academic and policy literature with expert informant interviews and analysis of expert testimony to parliamentary committee hearings, we hoped to gain a rich over-view of the emerging system of climate governance in Surrey. The focus on expert informant interviews was justified by the need to understand the assumptions, experiences, attitudes, values and priorities of actors in local climate governance: this is better accomplished via in-depth interviews than through survey questions. We aimed for a relatively large interview sample, covering all relevant sectors in an attempt to minimize biases, and triangulated the views obtained at local level with material from expert actors at national level via interviews and analysis of testimony to parliamentary committees on the issues we were investigating.

The initial stage of research comprised the review of academic and non-academic literature, which was used to refine the research questions and to guide design of the interviews. The researchers ensured that additional materials published during the period interviews were occurring were read, assessed, and incorporated. rated where appropriate into this report. Interviews were initially planned as face-to-face sessions but due to travel and organisation-based COVID restrictions, all interviews were undertaken using Zoom. The majority of the interviews were attended by both researchers, with both noting down their thoughts and observations during the interview process. All interviews were recorded, transcribed and checked for accuracy.

2.2 Multi-level approach

In selecting materials for review, interview structure and the interviewees to be approached, we wanted to examine issues and views from

expert informants across all levels of UK climate governance, with particular focus on the tiers of governance in Surrey. The multi-level approach sought information at these levels:

- National: Government and local government or business or NGO representative bodies operating at a national level;

- Regional: government funded bodies, business, or NGO representative bodies;

- Sub-regional: county councils, borough and district councils, local NGOs or business organisations;

- Micro: parish councils and place-based climate groups, business networks or community groups.

2.3 Literature review and coding of witness testimony

In preparing for this report a substantial set of academic papers was identified as meeting the criteria of multi-level or polycentric approaches to climate change that considered aspects of governance. These were read by both researchers and the findings synthesised and presented as part of the opening introduction and literature review. This material was supported by a wide range of national reports and strategies by government, membership organisations and oversight bodies. These are presented in Table 1.

Interviews were carried out over a period of eight months (see appendix i for interview questions), and all transcribed responses were reviewed for

accuracy and imported into NVIVO 12, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software programme. All interviews and supplementary comments, conference and EAC transcripts and personal notes were coded using an inductive coding process. This was undertaken by one researcher over an intensive period of 4 days to try and ensure a strong consistency and flow across the materials. Following this work both researchers worked together to refine and aggregate the long list of initial codes into a thematic framework (see appendix ii). The findings from this analysis are presented in chapter 5 of this report.

Table 1: Climate reports and strategies reviewed

Report Title	Published	Publishing organisation
Local Authorities and the sixth carbon budget	Dec 2020	Climate Change Committee (Quantum)
Local councils' powers to address or reduce climate change: existing powers and future opportunities	Sept 20	National Association of Local Councils (NALC)
Trends in Local Climate Action in the UK	March 21	Place-based Climate Action Network (PCAN)
Rising to the Climate Challenge, The Role of Counties in Delivering Net-Zero	September 21	County Councils Network
Climate Assembly UK: where are we now?	July 2021	BEIS
Growing Surrey	June 2021	University of Surrey
Local Government and Net Zero in England	July 2021	National Audit Office
What can local councils do on climate change?	2021	NALC
Powershift: Local authority powers for climate action	May 21	UK 100 - prep by Quantum –
The Role of Rural Authorities in meeting net Zero	June 21	UK 100/BEIS/SE Energy Hub- prep by Quantum
Multilevel climate Action Playbook – for local and regional governments	Nov 21	Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate Emergency
Research into a National - Local Net Zero Delivery Framework	October 21	UK100 – prep by Quantum –+ Siemans
Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener	Oct. 21	BEIS
2022 Progress Report to Parliament	June 22	Climate Change Committee
Climate Conversation: Delivering a Net Zero, Climate Resilient UK (Louise Marix Evans)	June 22	Climate Change Committee
Net zero living	June 22	IPSOS - Mori
Local Net Zero Delivery Progress Reports	July 22	UK100
Letter to the Prime Minister: Policies to support Energy Security	Sept 22	Climate Change Committee and National Infrastructure Commission
In our hands: behaviour change for climate and environmental goals	October 22	House of Lords
Mission Zero	Jan 23	Skidmore Review

2.4 Key informant interviews

The primary source of interview data was drawn from 21 hour- long, Zoom-based interviews. Over 35 organisations and individuals were contacted to take part in the research programme, selected from all types of governance structures, both public and private and at all levels of governance. This also included a range of climate expertise (see Table 2). The response provided the researchers with a width breadth of views at different levels of but, despite multiple requests, no national government representation.

To overcome this lack of representation the researchers have included, as part of the interview material, the responses by BEIS and DLHUC Ministers and senior civil servants in response to the Environmental Audit Committees (EAC) 'Mapping the Path to Net Zero'. Additional material was provided by transcripts, notes and commentary from workshops, meetings and conferences attended (see Table 3). To assist in triangulation of findings and sense-checking, we applied our qualitative interview thematic codes to the corpus of material analysed, in effect treating the testimonies as quasi-interviews This gave further confidence in the robustness of the coding framework devised.

Surrey Hills

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Table 2: Interviewee List

Multi- Tier Level	Organisation	Code	Date of Interview
Micro	Parish Council, Surrey	PCANSPC4100921	10.9.21
Micro	Parish Council, Surrey	PCANSPC1100821	10.8.21
Micro	Parish Council, Surrey	PCANSPC3170821	17.8.21
Micro	Town Council, Surrey	PCANSPC2110821	11.8.21
Sub Regional	Borough Council, Surrey	PCANSBC1070821	7.8.21
Sub Regional	Borough Council, Surrey	PCANSBC2291021	29.10.21
Sub Regional	Metropolitan District Council	PCAN SPE3141221	14.12.21
Sub Regional	Surrey County Council	PCANSCC1030821	3.8.21
Sub Regional	Surrey County Council	PCANSCC2221121	22.11.21
Sub Regional	Surrey Climate Commission	PCANSPS1180921	18.8.21
Sub Regional	PLC Business (Surrey) and Surrey Climate Commission	PCANSBUS1090821	9.8.21
Sub Regional	Surrey Climate Commission and Dorking Climate Emergency	PCANSPS2160921	16.9.21
Sub Regional	Surrey Chambers of Commerce	PCANSBUS2021121	2.11.21
Sub Regional	SALC	PCANSPS70411.21	4.11.21
Regional	Enterprise M3 LEP	PCANSPS3170921	17.9.21
Regional	Transport for the South East		3.12.21
Regional	SECA	PCANSPS4190921	17.9.21
Regional	SE Energy Hub	PCANSPS60110121	1.11.21
Regional	University of Manchester	PCAN SPE2031221	14.12.21
Regional	University of Lancaster	PCANSPE1151121	15.11.21
National	NALC	PCANSPS5281021	28.10.21

Table 3: Additional research materials

Multi- Tier Level	Organisations and Speakers	Information format	Date of Interview
Sub Regional, Regional, National and Global	Chair Maggie Bosenquet, Durham Council; Yunis Arikan, ICLEI; Katharine Wright, BEIS; Prof Dan Parson, Hull University	UCL The Net Zero Innovation Programme – workshop notes	18.5.21
Regional and National representative groups	ADEPT, SECA, UK100, LGA, Countryside Climate Network, London Councils	Written transcripts of verbal responses to the EAC	8.9.21
National Government Departments	BEIS and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities	Written transcripts of verbal responses to the EAC	22.9.21
Regional	NALC – personal communication	Written response to PCAN research outline	Oct 2021
Sub Regional	Surrey Climate Committee personal communication	Climate Commission Meeting	Nov 21
National	CCN conference– transcript Polly Billington presentation, UK 100	Climate Change Network	Nov 2021
Sub Regional	KALC Climate conference speakers	Kent association of parish councils	Dec 2021
National	UK100 conference - key speakers from UK 100 council members	Online – notes taken	June 2022

2.5 Limitations of the methodology

2.5.1 Interview sample

We aimed to secure interviews with expert informants at all the levels of governance listed above in 2.2. The main limitation has been lack of access to national policymakers. However, as noted above in 2.4, we have drawn on extensive material from national policymakers, for example via our analysis of testimony to parliamentary committees. We believe, triangulating our findings with those from other sources, that the picture presented in our analysis below is a reliable one in relation to each of the levels of governance considered.

Given the constraints of a qualitative study of this scale, we have a fairly small representation of any given sector within Surrey in the interviewee sample. However, the aim has been to find expert informants with insights into the development of governance of climate action in the county, and so a focus on particular groups and places that have been in the lead is justified. These informants also have county-wide and regional connections and

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experience, and so have been able to offer insights that we think can be applied more widely across the county.

2.5.2 Citizens' attitudes, values and activities

Climate governance studies now covers the development of deliberative democracy experiments for engaging citizens in policy design and assessment for Net Zero. Given the limitations of this study, we did not focus significantly on such initiatives involving citizens, and concentrated our resources and questions on the expertise of actors in the formal governance system. A further study of local climate governance in Surrey should take the place of citizen engagement in climate governance into account more fully. However, we included in our interviews many expert respondents who have experience in forms of citizen engagement, and their insights include some reflection on the place of deliberative or participatory democratic processes in climate governance.

3. CLIMATE CRISIS AND LOCAL GOVER

A review of literature and recent   policy development and debate in the UK

3.1 A brief review of academic literature and concepts

3.1.1 Introduction

We present here a short overview of relevant academic literature on local governance and climate policy. This draws on a fuller review in our paper offering an analysis of interim findings from the study (Russell and Christie, 2021). The literature on climate policy and governance is large but has tended to focus mainly on conceptualizing and describing international and national levels of climate governance. There is a substantial literature on local governance examining and theorising the role, potential and actual, of cities in climate mitigation and adaptation. However, there is much less material on the development of climate governance at the level of units such as the English county, and still less on the smaller scales of local governance – in England, the district and parish levels of local government and partnerships.

The literature overall presents a picture of local climate governance that is rich in potential but in practice stymied in many ways by constraints related to national and international structures, policies and histories. This is a picture familiar to the policymakers and other expert interviewees in Surrey and beyond on whose experience we draw in chapters 4 and 5 below.

3.1.2 A short overview of academic literature

With rising alarm over climate disruption, there has been a surge in academic research into the implications of the climate crisis for *governance,* which we define as the "interplay of governmental and non-governmental institutions, processes and cross-sectoral and multi-level relationships of policy actors in problem-definition and -solving, agenda-setting, orchestration of strategies and policies, and the management of public goods" (Russell and Christie, 2021; see also Bulkeley, 2016; Wurzel, Liefferink and Torney, 2019; Abbott, Bernstein and Janzwood, 2020; Hamman, 2020; Dubash, 2021; Harris, 2021; Heiden, Arlati and Knieling, 2021).

The main focus of research has been the theoretical and empirical study of the develop-ment of   governance at global and national levels. Key themes have been the processes of negotiation for emissions reduction, and the failures of national governments adequately to implement international climate agreements (see for example: Adger and Jordan, 2009; Biermann, 2014; Galaz, 2014; Bäckstrand and Lövbrand, 2015; Bulkeley and Newell, 2015; Jordan *et al.*, 2018; Hamman, 2020; Harris, 2021; Lieven, 2021).

There is also a complementary and significant body of academic work on the *local* governance of climate action. This has focussed mainly on the role of urban municipalities and of *cities* (; (Knox, 2020); (see for example: Bulkeley and Betsill, 2005, 2013; Betsill and Bulkeley, 2006; Lee, 2016; Chatterton, 2018; Moloney, Hartmut and Granberg, 2018; Thorpe, 2019; Low and Boettcher, 2020; ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability, 2021; Vedeld *et al.*, 2021). Much research has been

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devoted to tracking and understanding the development of city-led climate programmes such as the C40 Cities network and the initiatives led by urban mayors, notably in the USA (Lee, 2014; Moloney, Hartmut and Granberg, 2018; Thorpe, 2019).

These literatures on climate governance at global, national and city levels have generated a significant body of knowledge and conceptual work on the problems and potential of top-down and bottom-up policymaking and governance, contributing to the emergence of theories of *multi-level governance* (MLG) for climate action and sustainable development (Betsill and Bulkeley, 2006; Ostrom, 2010; Bulkeley, 2016; Wittmayer *et al.*, 2016; Wurzel, Liefferink and Torney, 2019; Hamman, 2020; Heiden, Arlati and Knieling, 2021). MLG is about the development of theory and case studies of the interaction and cooperation (or not) of different actors at diverse spatial scales from international to local; and about the recommendation of improved processes and structures for coordination vertically and horizontally in governance across scales. A related idea relevant to the research presented in this report is Mulgan's (2020) concept of *mesh governance*, proposed as a response to conditions of complexity and the mismatch between systemic challenges and conventional governmental struc-tures and divisions of labour:

"The essence of a mesh in the physical world is that it combines multiple vertical and horizontal links, which together make it strong and resilient. Mesh networking in telecoms is a similar idea in which nodes connect to as many other nodes as possible, rather than sitting in a hierarchy. Governments badly need something similar, and although some have elements of a working mesh, none is yet really there." (Mulgan,2020).

To date the literature on MLG and climate policy has been dominated by consideration of national and city-level initiatives, and there has been much less attention given to local climate governance in *non-metropolitan* areas – the governance systems for towns, peri-urban and suburban localities and rural areas. These places are characterised by environmental, political, social and economic 'mixed ecologies' that are often very different from the conditions of governance in metropolitan areas. With large numbers of citizens and specific challenges concerning climate action – such as high levels of car use and dependence – such areas need to be researched and understood, and analysis of them well integrated into MLG theory and practice, if climate governance and policy are to be effective.

3.1.3 Key themes: Multi-level / polycentric governance, failures in governance, and the neglect of the micro-local level

In our literature review in Russell and Christie (2021) supporting this project we identified the following major themes:

- the debate over multi-level and polycentric approaches and models for climate governance;

- the failings and challenges to effectiveness in climate governance, and the consequent need for *remaking* of institutions (Patterson, 2020);

- the relative lack of attention paid to micro-level governance.

We briefly examine each of these in turn below.

As noted above, there is a large academic literature on *multi-level governance* (MLG) and the related concept of *polycentric governance* (PG) in relation to climate policy (see Ostrom, 2010; Galaz, 2014; Jordan *et al.*, 2018; Heiden, Arlati and Knieling, 2021). Both these concepts concern the roles, connections and interactions of *multiple levels and centres* of policymaking, implementation, coordination and agenda-setting, and forging of meaningful local partnerships of actors (Goss, 2001; Keskitalo, 2022). The core idea at work is the recognition that systemic problems such as the climate crisis cannot be handled by any one level of *government* or via one dominant mode of *governance*.

These ideas also connect to the concept of *subsidiarity*. This concerns how and which functions are devolved to the most localised level of action consistent with effective policymaking. MLG and PG approaches recognise that climate change is a systemic challenge that has impacts at every scale from global to micro-local, and that must be governed accordingly. These concepts and Mulgan's (2020) related idea of 'mesh' governance all point to the need for new and/or adapted forms of *'orchestration'* between institutions at all scales, in order better to coordinate and implement climate policies (Bäckstrand and Kuyper, 2017; Abbott, Bernstein and Janzwood, 2020) and for research approaches that can make sense of complex networks of governance and social relations (Knoke, 2021).

Heiden et al (2021) review the debates over MLG and PG. We follow their approach, in which *commonalities* between MLG and PG are more significant than the distinctions suggested in the literature. The common features in these perspectives are identified as follows by Heiden et al (2021, p2 and p10):

- Recognition of **climate change as policy problem** demanding multi-level collaborations;

- The role of **multiple decision-makers**;

- The presence of multiple decision-making centres that must work together;

- The presence of **'rules-in-use' that guide decision-makers** – whether statutory or voluntary rules and processes; and

- The **'degree of dependencies'** – the extent to which there is 'a formalized degree of dependency' among decision-making centres.

Drawing on Heiden et al (2021), and given the overlapping of the MLG and PG concepts, we use 'multi-level governance' in this report as a term that embraces both. We use MLG to refer to the formal statutory levels of government (central and local in the case of England) and to the 'horizontal' governance relations these have with other bodies (such as cross-sector partnerships). MLG also covers the 'vertical' relationships between tiers of government. Our case study of Surrey is an investigation of MLG in the face of the climate challenge.

The second major theme we want to highlight is the *struggle* so far of MLG efforts to overcome constraints and problems in climate governance. To put it bluntly, so far climate policy *in toto* has been a *failure*, in that global and national emissions are far above where they need to be in order to enable us to reach Net Zero emissions by 2050 and to limit global heating to 1.5 degrees C. Harris (2021) identifies 'pathologies' in climate governance at the international and national scales. Stoddard et al (2021) identify multiple sources of international and national failures to put the world on course for meeting the 2015 Paris Accord goals. Parry et al (2021) analyse the extraordinary scale of subsidies from governments for fossil fuel interests worldwide.

One important message from the climate governance literature is that the rise of local innovations for climate action, such as the C40 Cities network, has been based often on *frustration* at these dynamics of power and at the absence of effective national and international policy and multi-level cooperation. Many local leaders present local governance bodies (above all, cities – see for example Barber, 2013) as the main agents of climate action, in the absence of sufficient national and global leadership and collaboration. There is also a growing literature on innovations in participatory or deliberative democracy in relation to climate governance, reflecting the proliferation of local experiments in citizens' juries, climate assemblies and other fora for engaging local citizens in richer discussions and consensus-building exercises than seem to be available through established democratic mecha-

nisms (Fisher, 2017; Climate Assembly, 2020; Willis, 2020; Howarth, Lane and Slevin, 2022; Willis, Curato and Smith, 2022).

In the light of these issues, it is clear that many local climate governance networks and institutions can be seen as a unilateral response to MLG failures at 'higher' levels of policymaking. We conclude that they need to be understood as a *compensatory* and *improvisatory* set of governance innovations, developed in the absence of coherent MLG approaches and leadership at the national level.

This means that it is important to see new forms of local climate governance in part as improvised developments that have been shaped *faute de mieux* by frustrated and 'wilful' local agents (Howarth *et al.*, 2021). Patterson's (2020) analysis of *institutional remaking* is helpful here. His framework emphasises and offers evaluative categories for local institutional forms that are evolving to cope with climate change in the context of all the local constraints and opportunities available at a particular place and scale. Patterson's concept of institutional remaking is valuable as a lens through which we can see the recent evolution of local climate governance as a process of improvisation and (re)invention of institutions by actors who are constrained by the failings of 'higher' institutional frameworks:

"Institutional remaking is defined here as: *the activities by which agents intentionally develop political institutions in anticipation of, or in response to, institutional weaknesses and failures...* The term 'remaking' encompasses both the

'making' of new elements and the 'remaking' of existing elements, while emphasising that this (almost always) occurs within an existing (possibly already crowded) institutional setting." (Patterson, 2020, p. 25, emphasis in original).

The third theme to highlight from the climate governance literature is the relatively limited research so far on the *micro-level* of local governance. In the MLG system of the UK the parish and town council, and associated networks, form this micro level. In Russell and Christie (2021) we suggest that this is an important level for research: at the smallest scale of governance there is, potentially at least, a high level of trust, contact and scope for civic engagement between citizens and representatives, and potentially too a significant channel for transmission of information, practices and lessons learned for MLG. We suggest also that the kinds of problems affecting relations between national and sub-regional actors may be reproduced in new forms between the latter and the micro-level – as in the UK context, between county and district authorities on the one hand and their parish and town authorities on the other. We expected to find evidence of Patterson's (2020) institutional remaking in response, with new forms emerging at the micro level as well as among sub-regional levels (county and district/borough), and in chapters 4 and 5 below we give evidence for this kind of development.

To sum up, the academic literature on climate governance is dominated by studies of international, national and city levels of policymaking and action, and there is a need for more work on the local scale that focuses on mixed urban-rural areas, and on micro-local governance actors and processes. We find the concepts of multi-level governance and mesh governance (Mulgan, 2020) illuminating and use them in analysis of our fieldwork findings in chapters 4 and 5 below. We conclude from the literature and from the shortcomings of climate policy in practice that much local climate governance innovation needs to be understood as compensatory and improvisatory in character: it has evolved in the absence of clear, coherent and consistent governance of climate policy at national and sub-national levels. In the next section we briefly review recent policy literature on climate in the UK, which lends weight to these conclusions.

3.2 The recent policy literature on UK climate governance

3.2.1 Introduction

In this section we provide a short overview of the climate governance policy literature in the UK produced by actors such as the UK Committee on Climate Change (UKCCC) and parliamentary bodies as well as by academics. This recent literature reflects a consistent and strong consensus across sectors and levels of policymaking and advice:

- UK climate governance is centralised;

- national climate policy is techno-centric and narrow in its consideration of people ;

- there has been regrettable neglect of sub-national governance and in particular of local government and its partnerships;

- local government is eager to make progress with climate strategy and implementation but is significantly constrained by the centralised and top-down approach of UK national government and by the legacy of loss of resources and revenue-raising power, the impacts of too-down austerity policies over recent decades, and the impacts of Covid and the Ukraine war.

Below we highlight some of the main recent analyses covering these themes.

3.2.2 Key themes in the literature on UK climate governance

The two years from 2018 to the onset of the Covid pandemic saw a surge in climate concern and protest worldwide that was reflected in stronger commitments for climate mitigation from governments and business, and in the growth in declarations at local level of 'climate emergency' (Gudde et al, 2021). We have also seen rapid development of the UK100 network of local government bodies promoting urgent action and policy reform to enable the transition to Net Zero. A mass of policy and academic literature over the past few years has focussed attention on the gap in the UK between national targets and ambitions and actual implementation: see the authoritative assessment reports by the UK Climate Change Committee (2019b, 2020b, 2021; 2022, 2023)and the independent review of Net Zero strategy commissioned by the UK Government from the MP and former minister Chris Skidmore (Skidmore, 2023).

This body of work has also highlighted further related shortcomings: first, the lack of attention in national policy in the UK to the roles and potential of local actors; and second, the gap between local government aspirations for climate action and the institutional weakness of local government in the UK. The result has been a proliferation of reports calling for a reshaping of local-central government relations to enable local government and its partners to fulfil their potential as actors in the transition to net zero. Calls for much greater attention to local potential and capabilities, for a clear framework for climate action, and for climate-focussed institutional reform have come from local government representative bodies such as the County Councils Network (2021)and UK100 (2021); from national policy advisory bodies (Climate Change Committee, (2019a, 2020a, 2021); National Audit Office, (2021); the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee (2021); and from think-tanks (see for example (Green Alliance, 2020; Sasse *et al.*, 2020; Howarth *et al.*, 2021).

This body of policy literature reveals a striking consensus: national public bodies, think-tanks and local government associations all demand far more attention to the role of local government and its governance partners in the design and implementation of the UK Government's ambitious policies for decarbonisation (BEIS, 2021). They call for recognition of the essential role to be played by local actors in achieving Net Zero climate mitigation goals and implementing adaptation measures. This extract from the National Audit Office's (2021)report on *Local Government and Net Zero in England* gives a representative message:

"While the exact scale and nature of local authorities' roles and responsibilities in reaching the UK's national net zero target are to be decided, it is already clear that they have an important part to play, as a result of the sector's powers and responsibilities for waste, local transport and social housing, and through their influence in local communities. Government departments have supported local authority work related to net zero through targeted support and funding. However, there are serious weaknesses in central government's approach to working with local authorities on decarbonisation, stemming from a lack of clarity over local authorities' overall roles, piecemeal funding, and diffuse accountabilities. This hampers local authorities' ability to plan effectively for the long-term, build skills and capacity, and prioritise effort." (National Audit Office, 2021, p.12)

This analysis was supported powerfully by the Skidmore review report on the Net Zero strategy, drawing on many submissions from local government bodies and other stakeholders (Skidmore, 2023):

"Our local areas and communities want to act on net zero, but too often government gets in the way. The Government must provide central leadership on net zero, but it must also empower people and places to deliver…One of the starkest messages from hundreds of organisations and individuals is that the planning system is undermining net zero and the economic opportunities that come with it. The Review recommends wide-ranging local planning reform – from the introduction of a net zero test to a rapid review of bottlenecks in the system –

to ensure that it is fully aligned with our net zero future… Local authorities are a key partner in delivering net zero, but current central government funding arrangements are standing in the way of effective local action. Stakeholders told us that the funding landscape is disjointed, unfair, and expensive for local authorities to navigate. The Review recommends wholescale simplification of local net zero funding, including consolidation of different pots and a reduction in competitive bidding. These changes will save both central and local government time and money, as well as do more to encourage a systems-wide approach to delivering net zero" (p.12).

The Skidmore Review published in January 2023 recommended a '*Net Zero local Big Bang'*- a package of reform to empower and equip local government and its partners to act ambitiously on climate change mitigation (Skidmore, 2023, pp. 189–190). Central government's response to this and other similar calls for change has been limited: there is a Net Zero Forum bringing together national government and local representatives, but no comprehensive framework for reform of local and regional climate governance has emerged. The March 2023 package of consultations on Net Zero and energy security from the UK Government, *Powering Up Britain* (HM Government, 2023) and the official response to the Skidmore Review (HM Government, 2023b) offered no prospect of a thoroughgoing empowerment of local climate action, and maintained the Government's emphasis on technological solutions to decarbonisation. Whereas the Skidmore Review called for urgent action to reform the planning

system's to accelerate action for Net Zero, to support trailblazer local authorities for Net Zero by 2030, and for a clear statutory framework for local climate action, the Government was content to offer continuing development of its local Net Zero Hubs programme and an eventual review of the National Planning Policy Framework. In short, there is no sign of urgency or radical ambition in the Government's response, in stark contrast to the messages about local climate governance in the Skidmore Review and many other recent reports. We return to this issue in chapters 5 – 7 below.

Other themes emerge from the mass of critical reports on the low priority given to local governance in climate policy in the UK. These concern the overall approach from the UK Government to climate action, which is not only centralist but also technology-driven, neglecting the importance of value change, lifestyle and behavioural shifts and the engagement of citizens; and the capacity of local governance actors to live up to the potential of their role and bridge the gap between ambition and implementation.

The UK Government's Net Zero strategy (BEIS, 2021) is focused on a programme of technology-based policies for decarbonization: it is 'technocentric' and committed to the view that supply-side change can avert the need for radical shifts in consumption and lifestyle. The neglect of questions of behaviour and value change has been highlighted by many observers, notably in the House of Lords Environment and Climate Change select committee's report in October 2022, *In our*

hands: behaviour change for climate and environmental goals:

"*Whilst the Government has introduced some policies to help people adopt new technologies, like electric cars, these have not been replicated in other policy areas and there is a reluctance to help people to cut carbon-intensive consumption. Time is not on our side, and there is too great a reliance on as yet undeveloped technologies to get us to net zero.*" (House of Lords Environment and Climate Select Committee, 2022, p. 5).

Recent research (Willis, 2022)has also shown that UK policy literature on climate is lacking in references to people as citizens as opposed to economic units, and is focused on governance as a technical and economic issue. In our review of the national climate policy literature for this study, we found few references to the many local initiatives for climate governance that have emerged in recent years. In particular, the development of Climate Commissions in cities and counties in the UK goes almost unmentioned, a remarkable oversight given the scale and potential impact of the Climate Commission network (Barlow, 2022; Pringle, 2023).

There is, then, a major gap between national climate ambitions and implementation, and a blind spot in national policymaking concerning the role and potential of local governance. These are inescapable conclusions from the literature noted above. There is, however, another gap that must be considered: that between local ambitions and capacity to deliver on them.

Gudde *et al.* (2021) highlight the mismatch

between strategic declarations and ambitions at local level since 2018 and the patchy record of local authorities in acting on them to date. The authors conclude that

"although there is a near uniformity of political desire to tackle climate change, local authorities are taking very different pathways. However, without strong leadership, clear planning and adequate resources political commitments to tackle the climate 'emergency' will inevitably experience dilution and attention will be diverted by other demands on limited public resources… There is a clear need, therefore, for coherent and collaborative action planning and delivery mechanisms which are locality-based yet nationally aligned. This will require cross-administration governance and working arrangements, both within and between the tiers of public administration as well as with other stakeholders, in ways that are currently not being observed. There is also a need to evaluate how delivery at local level is proceeding to be able understand what difference such diverse plans are making to achieving Net Zero ambitions."

We return to the issue of how these challenges are perceived, and how they might be overcome, in local governance in Surrey in chapters 5 -7 below. It is important here to note that the gap between local ambition and ability to take coherent and effective action is not only a reflection of variations in local leadership and of central Government's failure to take local climate action seriously so far. The patchiness of local response, as Gudde et al (2021) note, also stems from the lack of adequate resources, mechanisms and powers for local authorities across the board as a result of over a decade of fiscal 'austerity' and financial, demographic and political pressures on local services.

Local government has experienced significant losses in power and resources in the years since the financial crash of 2008 (Harris, Hodge and Phillips, 2019)The imposition of 'austerity' greatly constrained local government and governance partners, reducing both funding and capacity (Gray and Barford, 2018). The past decade has also seen the abolition of regional assemblies and development agencies in England, leaving regional and sub-regional coordination to complex and overlapping networks of local councils, new combined authorities (run by elected mayors, mainly in major metropolitan areas), and partnerships (Fenwick, 2015; Shutt and Liddle, 2019).

The reduction in core grant from central government and the loss of staff, skills and discretionary activities from local government services (Harris, Hodge and Phillips, 2019) have been serious challenges. These developments have constrained local development of climate policy and its implementation: climate action has been hampered by lack of political priority, funds, staff and skills (Howarth *et al.*, 2021)Moreover – as respondents underline in chapter 5 –land use planning and housing policy is incoherent at national scale in relation to climate action, and local authorities are hampered in pursuing climate mitigation and adaptation as a result (see for example Ellis, 2022). Local government in England is highly restricted in revenue-raising powers and

Figure 1: UK governance of the climate emergency
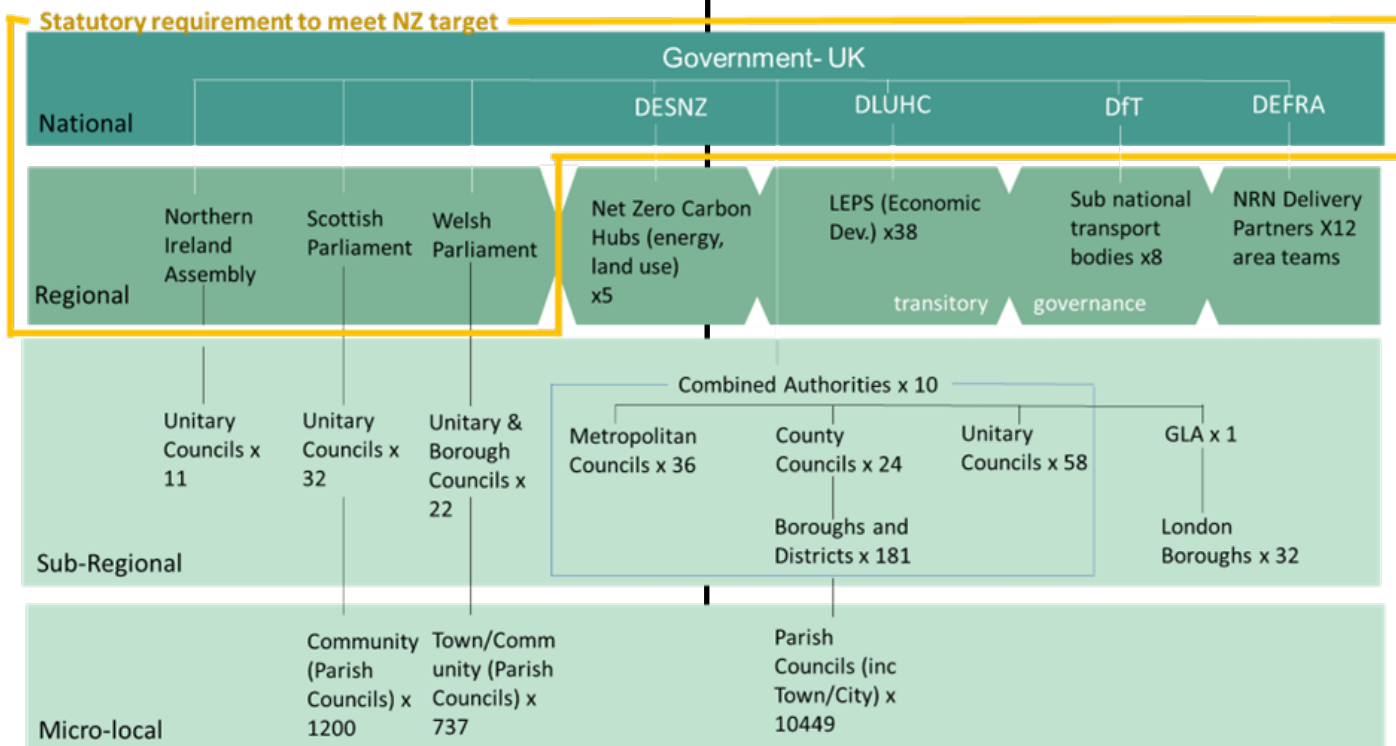
Sources: PCAN interviews for the present study; National Assembly for Wales, 2007; LGIU, 2022a, 2022b; NI Direct Government Services, 2022

capacity to engage in strategic planning and investment in infrastructure (Green Alliance, 2020; National Audit Office, 2021).

At the same time the demands on the core statutory services provided by local councils – such as adult and social care – have grown, with the ageing of populations and the impact on physical and mental health of economic insecurities and, since 2020, of Covid-19 (National Audit Office, 2021; Ogden et al, 2021). The cost-of-living crisis of 2022-23 and inflationary surge sparked in part by the Ukraine war have added to already severe financial pressures on local authorities. Any additional finance for hard-pressed local

authorities has tended to come from central government via once-off targeted grants and via short-term funds available on a time-limited competitive bidding process; or through complex local deals between Whitehall and individual or combined authorities for additional resources – arrangements heavily criticised by stakeholders responding to the Skidmore Review of Net Zero strategy (Skidmore, 2023).

All this makes for a policy environment for local government in which it is extremely difficult to close the gap between climate ambition and delivery. By now there is, as noted above, an impressive consensus in the policy literature on the

weaknesses of UK climate strategy in general. and in particular on the failure to develop an effective role and remit for local governance in the transition to Net Zero. Central government has so far given little acknowledgement of the significance of local governance for the Net Zero transition. The structures, mechanisms, incentives and resources to enable local government and its partners to live up to their potential as climate actors are weak. In the next chapter we build on the discussion so far and present a detailed mapping of existing policy actors and networks in local and regional climate governance.

3.3 Governance at the local scale in the UK

3.3.1 Levels of public climate governance

Four levels of public climate governance operate within the UK, as represented schematically in figure 1

National government and its departments: the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), the successor to the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy departments (BEIS) net zero function, leads on net zero across government but does not control cross-departmental activity. A statutory requirement to meet net zero targets is only applicable to national government and the devolved regions, with no framework in place to specify or guide the sub-national mandate.

Regional bodies such as the formally constituted devolved administrations and more transient non-statutory organisations:

These include the *Net Zero Carbon Hubs*, funded by BEIS to provide technical support to local authorities on local energy, and newly extended to cover land use. The geography covered by the hubs is extensive and was agreed in consultation with the *Local Enterprise Partnerships* (LEPS). LEPS were established in 2011 to support local economic growth, with their operating geography decided at a local level; LEPs are funded via the Department for Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). In its recent Levelling-Up white paper the UK Government recommended integration of LEPS into combined mayoral authorities or county deals, where this aligned with local geographies (UK Government: DLUHC, 2022). In the 2023 Budget the Government confirmed that funding for LEPS would end in 2024 and their functions taken up by combined authorities and other local government bodies.

The Department of Transport funds sub-national transport bodies to develop regional transport strategies; and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has established the Nature Recovery Network with regional partners to support biodiversity protection/recovery and natural capital approaches to nature policy. There is no clear pattern of interconnectedness between the non-statutory regional bodies, and no clear integration with policymaking for local issues such as housing, land use or planning. While it makes

sense for government to work at scale with a small number of strategic units for development of large-scale infrastructure, it is less clear how this approach relates to action for behaviour/value change and local variations in policy implementation related to place. The recently established sub-national institutions represent new forms of governance, which we categorise as 'emergent and top-down' – that is, they have an element of experimentation, and they emerge from new Government policy development.

Local Authorities: a term which encompasses seven different types of council structure, from large-scale *combined authorities* in metropolitan areas to county councils, unitary authorities and local *boroughs and districts*. Currently there are 407 councils across the UK, and government is promoting a rationalization through the development of combined authorities and regional and county-based deals for devolution of more powers and resources. Periodically there are moves towards establishment of unitary authorities at the scale of counties, as implement-ed recently in Somerset. In terms of net zero delivery, as we explore in our report of findings in chapters 4 and 5, there is an unclear division of labour and remit/mandate, with a strong risk of urban bias in climate governance and implementation.

Micro-local representative bodies: the UK has over twelve thousand parish, town and community councils, rarely considered in the policy and academic literatures on climate action. These range from rural communities of just a few hundred people, up to the largest town council, Northampton, with some 130,000 inhabitants. The Government's Levelling-Up white paper indicated that government is interested in extending the parish network to areas that are currently unrepresented. Whilst parish and town councils are often regarded as benefiting from being 'close to their communities', orchestration of net zero action at this level could lead to a risk of mismatches in scale and activity/ambition. We return to this point in chapter 5.

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3.4 Net Zero Implementation Networks in the UK

Through our review of the academic and public policy literature it became clear that three high-

level UK governance networks are operating within the UK climate change sphere (figure 2). We describe these broadly as relating to *Technology, Nature* and *People*.
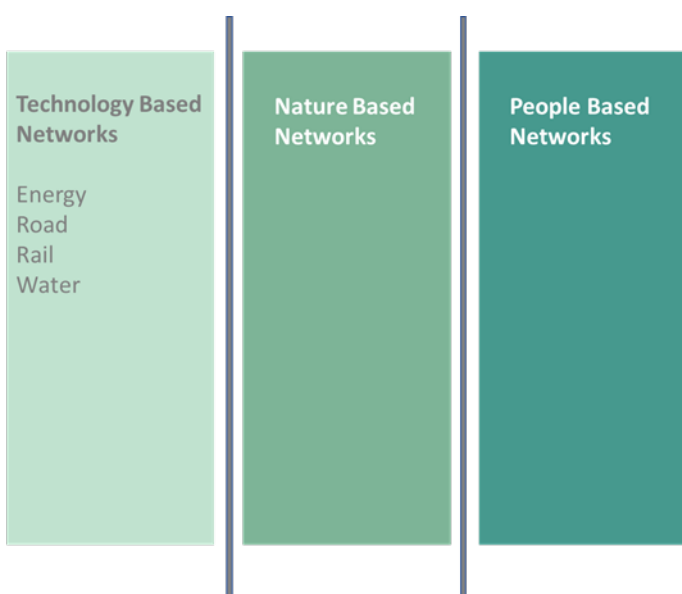
Figure 2: UK Climate Change Networks

The *Technology network* is characterized by both mature and emergent physical infrastructures which sit within systems of fragmented ownership and regulatory oversight. It has a high level of inertia and a mix of both stable and transient features. The network is business-led, supported by academic technology innovation, national regulators and government innovation funding. Energy, road, rail and water networks are not yet integrated for the purposes of transition to net zero.

The *Nature network* comprises landowners and agri-business interests, environmental NGOs and bodies concerned with government regulation. New governance is being developed through the

UK Government's *nature recovery partnerships* and is heavily influence by natural capital approaches to land use. The network is fragmented and immature, comprising of both stable and transient elements and it is not yet integrated into systems for net zero delivery.

The *People network* is also highly fragmented and immature, with a focus on democratic experiments (such as citizens' assemblies on climate at national and local levels), protest, community participation in lifestyle changes, and lobbying. It is comprised of statutory and voluntary bodies and direct citizen engagement. It is the least developed and the organisations within it are highly transient in nature, with no clear lead body.

These three networks remain poorly integrated when it comes to 'joining up' policies, programmes and projects for net zero; and tasks and issues, such as planning, which cut across the networks, are currently failing to address net zero requirements at the scale and pace required, as noted in the policy literature covered in section 3.2 above. There is also an indication that new government strategic goals, such as Levelling Up, lack strong alignment with net zero or nature recovery strategies (Curran, 2022).

Our research indicates several key themes emerging from this outline network analysis:

Technocentric top-down climate policy: the UK Net Zero strategy is focused on the roll-out of technologies for supply-side decarbonization, directed from central government and national infrastructure bodies; there is little clarity on the role of sub-national actors, especially local government and its partners;

Lack of policy integration of sustainability/ climate/nature: the Net Zero strategy is not clearly connected to climate adaptation policy, to a wider vision of sustainable development, or to the UK Government's strategy for nature recovery;

Lack of integration of behavior/value change in technology and (less so) nature networks so far: the emphasis, as noted above, in the Net Zero strategy is on supply-side decarbonization via existing and emergent technologies; there is little focus on emission cuts via changes on the demand side, via lifestyle shifts and reductions in carbon-intensive behaviors.

3.5 Surrey as a case study

The choice of Surrey for intensive case study of local climate governance in the UK was made for the following reasons, which we discuss briefly here in the light of our analysis of the policy literature and of current policy networks for net zero.

First, Surrey is an example of complex multi-level local governance. It has a county council working with eleven district and borough councils and numerous parish and town councils below them. It also has a wide range of policy partnership and network bodies spanning sectors, levels and geographical boundaries, constituting the local expressions of the Technology, Nature and People networks for climate policy and action that we discuss in 3.2 above.

The county has a population of over 1 million residents and a mix of large and small towns, villages protected landscapes and agricultural land, making for difficult and contested planning policy challenges when it comes to development of housing and other major new infrastructure. Given these features, designing and implementing governance for Net Zero is likely to be complex – and should offer lessons for other multi-level counties in the UK.

Second, Surrey is a highly affluent county, albeit one with some significant areas of deprivation. It is famously a leafy and comfortable place for many citizens, who have grown used to lifestyles based on car-based mobility for work and leisure. If the Net Zero transition is to succeed, it requires not

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only new technologies and infrastructures but also major shifts in behavior, values and lifestyle from affluent high-carbon consumers, as we noted in the literature review. That means that consensus and consent for significant shifts in behaviour and lifestyles will be needed precisely in affluent areas such as Surrey. It might not be an exaggeration to argue that if the Net Zero transition does not take place in Surrey, it won't take place successfully anywhere else. So, the development of net zero governance in a county such as Surrey is a matter of considerable interest and significance.

Third, Surrey has undergone a rapid recent period of policy development and institutional change concerning the climate crisis. In 2018-20, there seemed to be a considerable shift in political awareness, debate and policymaking across the county. This was a reflection of, and response to, the larger movement around the world galvanized by Greta Thunberg's protests, the subsequent school strikes for climate initiative, and the rise of the Extinction Rebellion network.

Many organisations, including the County Council, declared a 'climate emergency'. A new level of ambition became apparent in political statements on climate change. Surrey became the first county to have a Climate Commission, which took its cue from the example of the Climate Commissions in UK cities linked in the PCAN network. That process

of institutional change and accelerated policy is still playing out, and makes the county a particularly interesting and potentially significant case study in multi-level climate governance.

In the next chapter we map the structures, processes and networks involved in climate governance in Surrey.

Guildford Station

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4. MAPPING CLIMATE GOVERNANCE: NETWORKS IN SURREY

4.1 The recent development of climate action in the county

Local Authorities in Surrey have, like many other rural/urban councils, been involved in environmental and sustainability issues for decades. To a great extent this is a reflection of the place in which they are situated but is also set within the context of statutory requirements linked to the National Planning Policy Framework and waste regulations. First asked to record and report on carbon emissions from their own estate (N185 indicator) by government in 2008/9, many Surrey councils have working to improve the energy efficiency of their buildings and fleet and to generate an increasing amount of energy from waste and solar technologies. Woking borough council has been a UK leader in the development of a local heat network.

However, there has been a step-change in action, driven by an increasing public concern, the government's own declaration of a climate emergency and the focus on UK hosting COP26 in Glasgow in November 2021. During 2019 and 2020 the county council and all but three of the districts similarly declared climate emergencies, and have either developed their own climate strategies and action plans or linked with the Surrey County Council approach.

All of Surrey's twelve Tier1 and Tier2 councils are now operating within the Surrey County Council strategic framework, and all have climate action plans. Many of the district/borough councils are primarily focusing on emissions reductions from their own estate, with targets for net zero

primarily for 2030 - but at least one borough is working to 2050. Surrey County Council acknowledges that targets must cover the whole county, and both their strategy and action plan address this. It has targeted net zero organisational emissions (Scope 1) by 2030; and all other emissions (Scopes 2 and 3) by 2050. The local climate strategies, whilst noting the importance of consumption-based emissions, do not include these in net zero targets.

At the 'micro-local' level of government in Surrey, the parish and town councils, climate emergency declarations have also been made. For example, in the borough of Waverley the three town councils had declared climate emergency by April 2021; and so had two rural parishes. Moreover, 48% of these micro-local councils across the county were taking some form of climate action. (This will be explored further in section 4.3 below.)

The county also has strong representation from multiple NGO groups, primarily sub-sets of national campaigning organisations but with some locally initiated groups. Our research identified 50 such organisations, ranging from low membership single issue clusters to high-profile campaigning groups such as XR, and long-established, high membership charities such as the Surrey Wildlife Trust and the national charity WWF-UK.

The research has also identified the emergence of local or sectoral hubs for net zero action outside the framework of the Net Zero Hubs set up by the then BEIS department. These complementary hubs can be focused on work at the local level, such as the Guildford Net Zero Hub and Leatherhead/Mole

STRUCTURES, PROCESSES AND

Valley Net Zero Hub, and also located in industry bodies. These voluntary organisations are practical initiatives offering information, education, campaigning and the promotion of behavior change. They frequently have links to nature conservation, waste reduction and the arts. These local groups offer evidence of the emergence of what we have termed improvisatory and compensatory local governance from civil society and they are generally operating outside the local authority and parish structures. Appendix iii visualizes these overlapping connected networks.

4.2 Surrey and climate governance in maps

4.2.1 Formal multi-level governance

Our research has mapped linkages from national to micro-level governance across Surrey (Figure 3). Of the four regional bodies identified, only the net zero carbon hub appears to operate across all levels of sub-regional government, offering support even to parish councils with community energy plans and general energy guidance, along-side larger scale work with counties and boroughs. Local Economic Partnerships (LEPS), focusing primarily on initiatives to stimulate economic growth, work closely with SCC and in collaborations with other neighbouring county councils and LEPS, as for example in the development of the sub-regional TRI-LEP Energy Strategy. Central Government, as noted above, has signalled that the functions of the LEPS are to be taken over by local authorities after April 2024. Sub-national transport bodies work only with SCC on strategic planning. The relationship of sub-regional councils with Nature Recovery Network delivery partners is not yet clear.

While the boards of all regional bodies include representation from county and district/borough councils, and where relevant, LEPs and specialist bodies or local business representation, there is no clear cross-regional linkage between these sub-national organisations. So, as things stand, the centrally funded Net Zero Hubs appear to be the only sub-national body that reaches every level of local government; and for both the Hubs and for the sub-national transport body, the main link to local governance is with the county council.

Figure 3: Information flows and linkages between multiple levels of Surrey governance
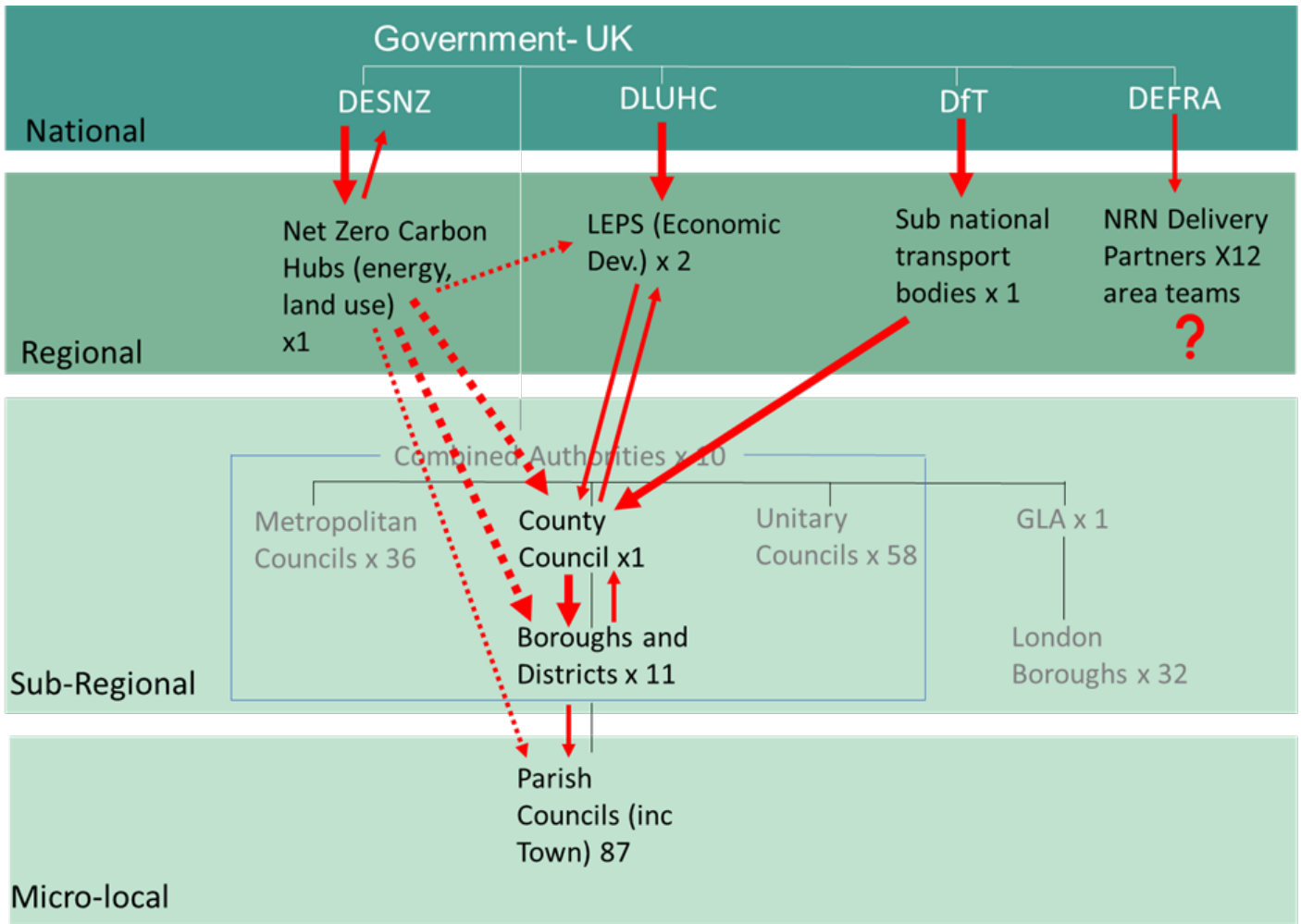
At the sub-regional level, SCC acts as the primary focus for climate change governance, enhanced by a recent increase in capacity and funding. The county council climate team lead a Surrey climate officers group, comprising members from all borough/district councils and SCC, as a coordinating network at operational and policy levels. At a more strategic level this collaboration is replicated through the Energy and Sustainability Board, attended by Tier 1 and Tier 2 council CEOs. A recently established Greener Futures Board, led by SCC, draws in a broader range of governance partners, including for example senior representatives of the Surrey Climate Commission and the University of Surrey. This Board aims to provide county-wide leadership and support for the radical changes in business, communities and lifestyles demanded by the Net Zero goal. (For further information on Surrey climate networks see the network map in Appendix iv).

There are, then, some substantial institutions emerging for coordination and networking on climate policy at the county level and with the districts and boroughs. However, links between these networks and bodies to the micro-local level of government in Surrey – the parish and town councils – seem to be very limited. Information flows to the micro-local bodies from national, regional or sub-regional public sector organisations also seem to be sparse. Our research indicates that the main conduit is voluntary engagement by Individual district/borough councillors at parish/ town council meetings in order to provide updates on local council activities.

4.2.2 Extended governance of place

It is clear from the mapping of policies and networks, and from our fieldwork, that sub-regional public sector bodies in Surrey are operating within a highly fragmented net zero governance structure. This complexity becomes more apparent when scale of place is overlaid with a map of the public bodies, network actors and representative organisations, all of whom interact with local authorities and councils (see figure 4).

Figure 4 above illustrates the importance of the national level within the UK's centralised system,

Figure 4: Multiple net zero actors at different levels and scales: fragmented governance
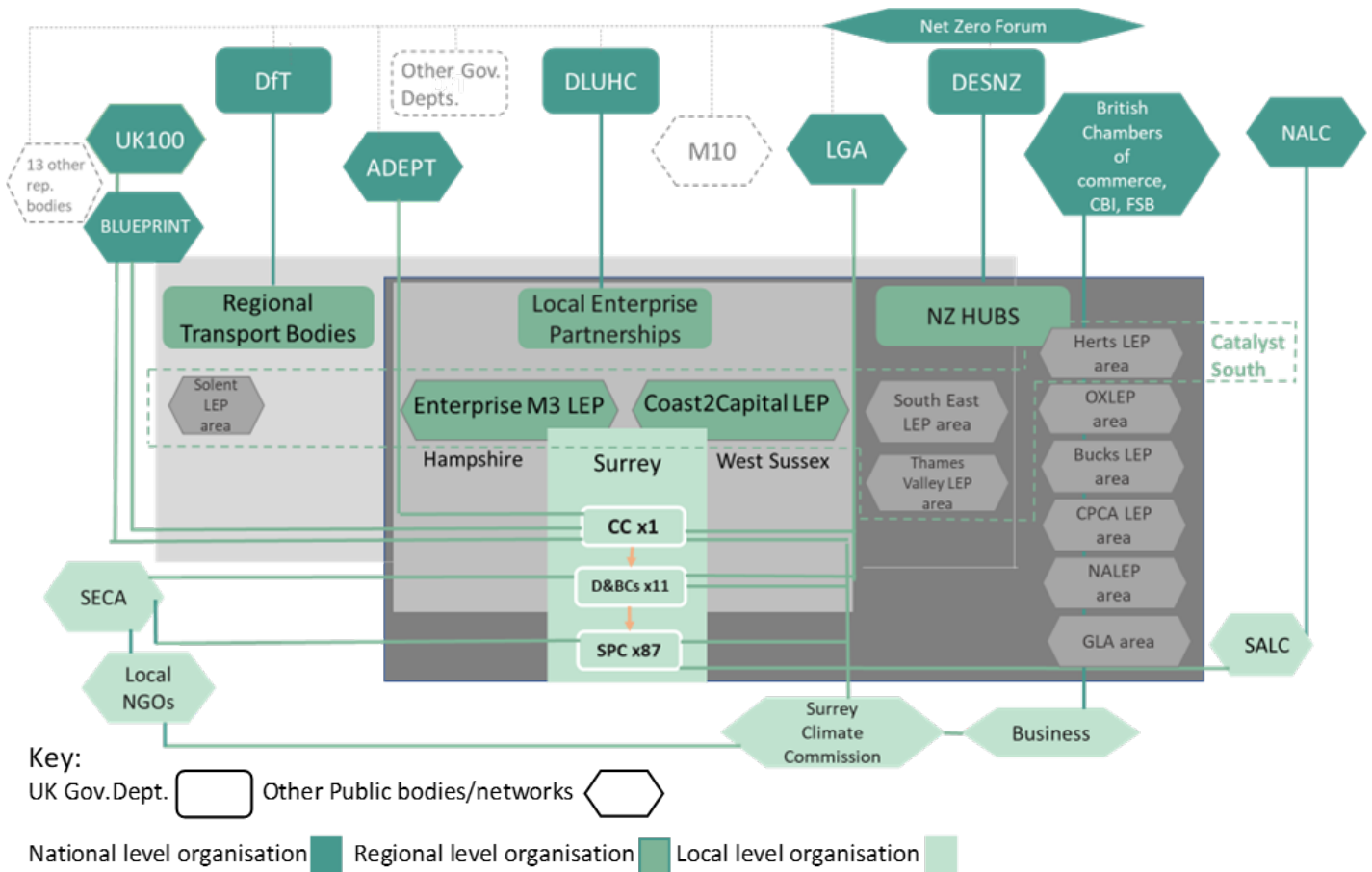
Source: PCAN interviews, (EAC, 2021; Greater South East Net Zero Energy Hub, 2022; Transport for the South East, 2022)

where the voices of local bodies are amplified by national advocacy organisations rather than through a multi-level governance process. Council representative bodies with a climate and energy focus such as UK100 and ADEPT, as well as the Local Government Association (LGA) and National Associations of Local Councils (NALC), lobby government on behalf of local authorities. It would suggest that without adequate subsidiarity, government has difficulty in integrating local considerations, a point highlighted in a recent ministerial response to the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee:

'The problem that I always come across with this is that there are 300 local authorities in England… that have very different needs, very different responsibilities and very different ideas on what should happen. Getting a representative sample, if you like, of local authorities for one absolute view is difficult.' Lord Callanan, Minister for Business, Energy and Corporate Responsibility, BEIS (EAC, 2021)

Whilst this central government reaction to local diversity may be understandable from the perspective of a minister, we would argue that a proliferation of advocacy and aggregating bodies, such as we see in the emerging climate policy networks from national to local level, is liable to come at the expense of clarity of governance and effective orchestration and division of labour in the representative democratic local governance system.

The mapping of organizational geographies, illustrated in figure 4, also highlights the multiple over-lapping scales on which sub-national bodies are operating. The South-East Net Zero Hub, funded directly by central government, is a key provider of expertise, retrofit funding and most recently land use change. The Hub covers an extensive area: the whole of the south and east of England, including London. It has within its boundaries 11 LEPS, 12 county councils, the GLA and over 90 district and boroughs and unitary authorities, and many hundreds of parish and town councils, all of which it has a remit to support.

Transport South East operates at smaller geographic scale, but is still required to support multiple county and unitary councils across 5 LEP areas. Created in 2010 as drivers of regional economic growth, LEPS are the longest established of the sub-national bodies but are currently undergoing change, as government proposes to absorb them into the structures of combined authorities' or counties' 'deals' with Whitehall. The county of Surrey is currently divided between two LEPS, Enterprise M3 to the west and Coast2 Capital (which includes the London Borough of Croydon) in the east. As noted earlier in relation to the government-initiated Tri-LEP energy strategy, a multi-LEP collaboration, the geographic scale of LEP activity has been extended. Increased scale of collaboration has recently created a new sub-regional geography within which the county of Surrey now operates, as the LEPs Enterprise M3 and C2C have joined Catalyst South, a strategic alliance of six southern LEPS working jointly to promote economic growth. LEPs have increasingly focused on 'Clean Growth', but with the cessation of their role it is assumed this function, in some

form, will be taken up by combined authorities and potentially county/ unitary councils.

The micro level of local government is represented at a national level by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), which has a Surrey branch, but there are few references to parish councils in national policy documents (and they are not at all in the Government's Net Zero Strategy (2021). Largely unseen by other levels of government, they are beginning to focus on biodiversity and net zero issues and to expand local knowledge exchange networks (see section 4.3). They, along with other new actors in climate governance such as PCAN and the Climate Commissions, appear to be largely invisible to national government.

Looking into the relationships between the sub-regional governance levels and advocacy or network groups in more detail, we have also considered the importance of changes in values, behaviours and public engagement for climate action, not just deployment of new technologies and infrastructure development. How these themes are to be addressed in local governance for Net Zero is still unclear, and there is a major need for knowledge exchange and for action and clear lines of communication to inform, motivate and build capacity in local organisations and communities. In the institutional map in Figure 5, we see the county council playing a vital connecting and orchestrating role.

Figure 5: Multi-level climate action linkages
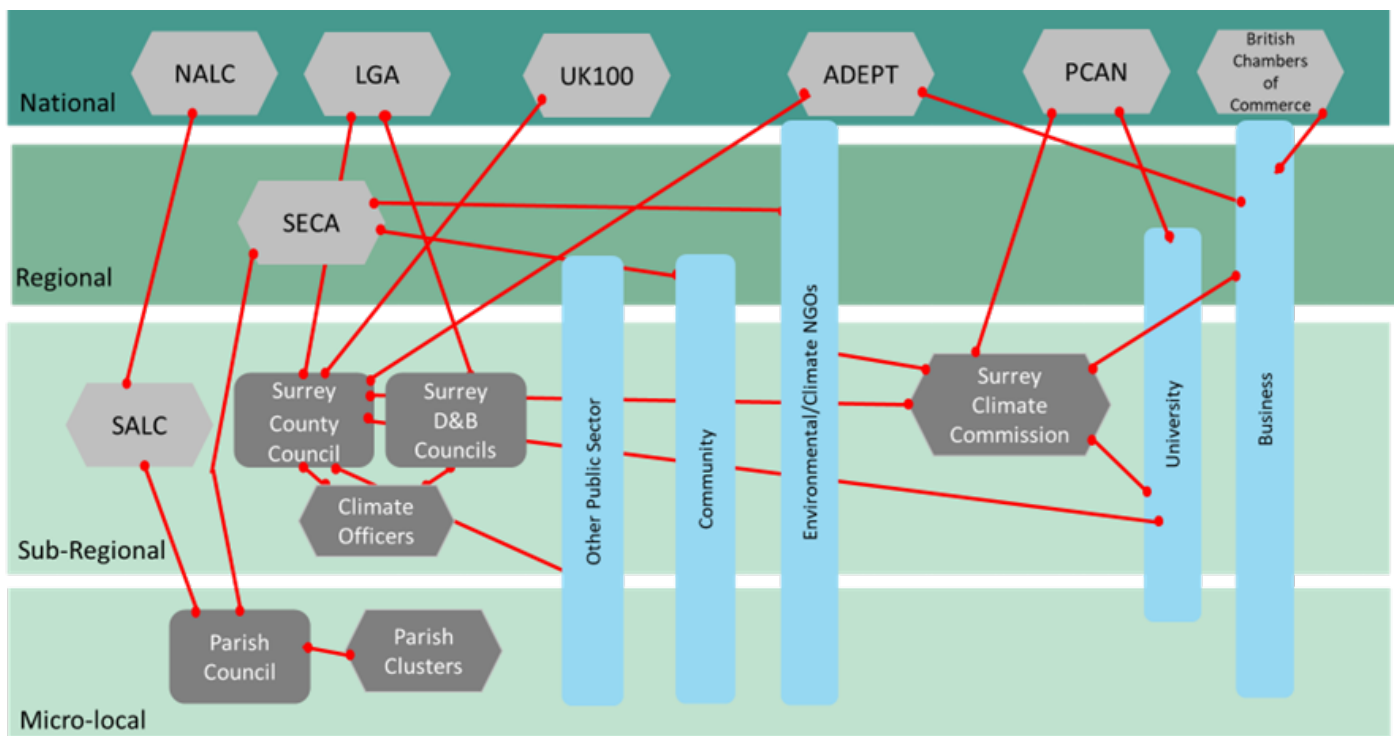
Whilst this mapping exercise does not illustrate the depth or effectiveness of connections, it does show that the county council not only works with national advocacy public sector groups but is also closely connected with the district and borough councils, business and other public sector organisations operating across the county. It has ties with major local stakeholders such as the University of Surrey and the Surrey Climate Commission, and has worked with different departments to draw on effective practice and evidence. However, the county council's net zero targets do not address issues of consumption, or specific behaviour change work – although the imperative of behaviour change is explicitly noted in SCC's June 2021 resolution to establish its Greener Futures Climate Change Delivery Plan (Surrey County Council, 2021). Given the lack, at all levels of government so far, of a clear strategy for handling the consumption and behavioural challenges of net zero transitions, it seems that there is a need for much more strategic governance and orchestration concerning engage-ment with business and communities about these issues. The Surrey Climate Commission has networking and influencing potential in this regard, but is a relatively new arrival (established 2019) on the governance scene with few resources, and its role and mandate are yet to be defined clearly, as we discuss below. The lack of direct connection from the county level with parish and town councils, along with limited community and business engagement so far in net zero, also suggests there is a gap in local climate governance concerning demand management and emissions

cuts from consumption changes.

Our research suggests that there is poor knowledge exchange and lack of clarity between not only the multiple levels of governance, but horizontally across the local tiers. There are exceptions to this rule: for example, the Surrey County Council-led CEOs' and climate officers' groups; and the unique work of the NGO SECA, which has engaged not only Tier 2 local authorities but also charities, community groups, parish and town councils and interested individuals in climate policy work across several counties in South-East England.

Overall, a strong sense emerges from this mapping exercise, reinforced by the findings of our interviews, that local climate governance in Surrey is evolving largely by ad hoc accretion rather than by design, and that its complexity makes it difficult for 'outsiders' to comprehend. Moreover, there seems to be little engagement of parish and town councils with the upper levels of local government and their partners in climate governance. We discuss the micro-local scale of activity in the next section.

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4.3 The micro-level of governance: parish and town councils and networks

As noted in sections 3.1 and 3.2 above, with few exceptions, academic and policy-focused UK climate governance literature does not explore local authority engagement and activity below the district and borough level. The micro-level of parish and town councils is a long-established

Table 4: An analysis of climate action by sub-national councils within borough of Waverley, July 2019–April 2021

	UK Government	Surrey County Council	Waverley Borough Council	Farnham Town Council	Godalming Town Council	Haslemere Town Council	Alfold Parish Council	Bramley Parish Council	Busbridge Parish Council	Chiddingfold Parish Council	Churt Parish Council
pre May											
May											
June											
July											
Aug											
Sept											
Oct											
Nov											
Dec											
Jan											
Feb											
Mar											
April											
May											
June											
July											
Aug											
Sept											
Oct											
Nov											
Dec											
Jan											
Feb											
Mar											
April											

Key

- Climate Emergency declared by council
- UK Government referenced
- Surrey County Council updates
- Waverley Borough Council updates
- Climate Strategy
- Climate Action plan
- Climate actions
- Sub Committee activity noted
- Communication
- Collaboration with other councils or climate act...
- clim...

(Note national Government action outside the sub-national research scope but UK Government Climate Emergency declarat...

part of local government and has been identified as a field for further development in the UK Government's 'Levelling Up' agenda. These factors, and the potential for micro-local institutions to play a role in the engagement of households and communities, and of small and medium sized businesses, in the net zero transition, make it important to examine the development of climate governance among parish and town councils. Accordingly, our research included interviews with

Cranleigh Parish Council	Dockenfield Parish Council	Dunsfold Parish Council	Elstead Parish Council	Ewhurst with Ellens Green Parish Council	Hascombe Parish Council	Frensham Parish Council	Hambledon Parish Council	Peper Harow Parish Council	Thursley Parish Council	Tilford Parish Council	Witley Parish Council	Wonersh Parish Council

No data

...ate finance/budget or funding provided by council

...ors

...ion included for reference)

parish/town councillors and a mapping exercise to draw up a picture of activity among parish and town councils within one borough in Surrey, the south-western district of Waverley.

Our research aims to address the micro-level 'governance gap'. It has been undertaken using a detailed multi-level vertical and longitudinal cross-section of council climate activity. Rather than trying to assess detailed micro-level activity across the whole county of Surrey, a representative mixed urban / rural was selected, that of Waverley Borough. A detailed review of county, borough and parish council minutes, from May 2019 to April 2021, has allowed us to build up a comprehensive picture of multi-level climate governance activities in the borough, including among the micro-local bodies (Table 4). The sampling period was

selected to cover the numerous developments seen in climate policy and local action in the county in the wake of the surge of climate protests and extreme weather events in 2018-19.

Encouragingly, we find that most (73%) of the councils within this sample are highlighting climate change issues within their minutes of discussions, but only 43% are taking climate action - and five do not provide any commentary on climate change at all in the period sampled. The county and borough councils, unsurprisingly, given their far greater resources and national policy engagement, demonstrate much higher levels of activity. However, this analysis suggests that larger, and possibly better resourced councils, such as the large parish of Cranleigh, are also highly active. Where smaller parishes are active there is

Figure 6: Levels of climate governance activity by parish
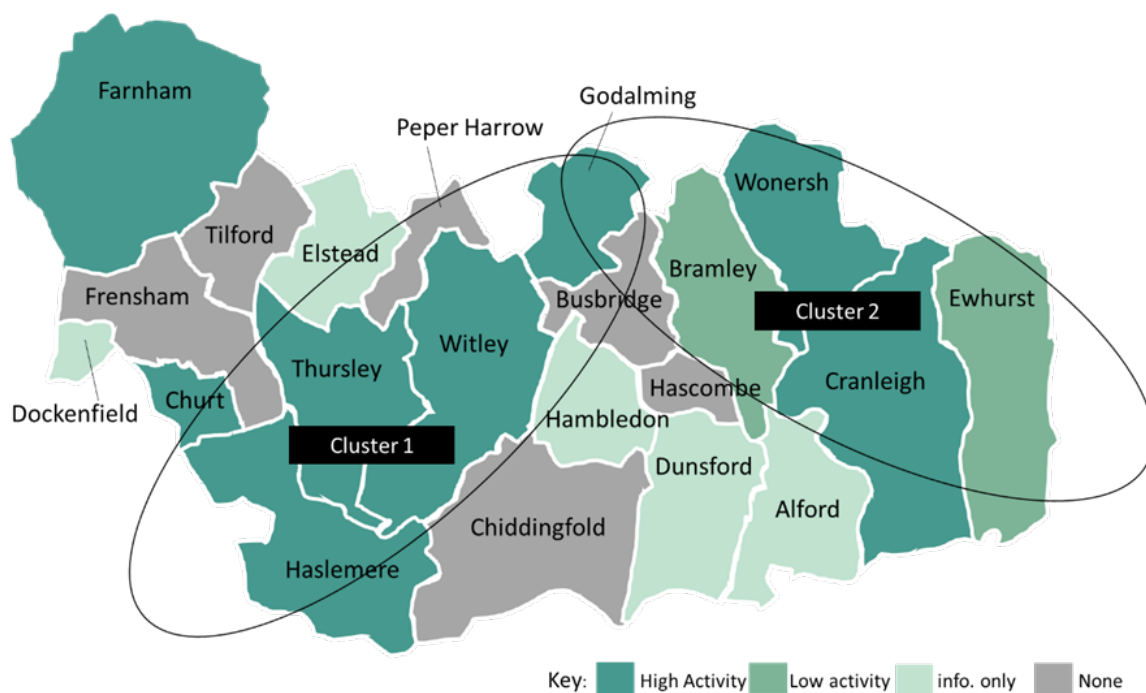
evidence that improved knowledge sharing and peer support are being provided through informal parish-led networks (see Figure 6).

However, just as large sub-regional local authorities find it difficult to access information and direction from national government, we can expect to find similar problems at the borough/district and micro-local levels. Rather than being based on a formal reporting structure both up and down the multiple levels of local governance, information flows often appear to rely on local actors operating voluntarily. This is illustrated by the attendance of a Waverley Green Party councilor at several parish council meetings - an ad hoc arrangement. It was also highlighted in comments from a parish council member,

"so we've got town councillors who are on Waverly Borough and we actually have a few on the county council as well. But if we didn't have that, there wouldn't be a mechanism for communication. Yeah, they are the people that tell us what's going on…… there's four or five of them….. God bless them, thank goodness….. and then it's also just their opinion of, you know, what's happening there." (SPC2)

None of the Waverley parish minutes suggested any relationship with the county council, or with the region's primary hub, nor that they received guidance from any tier of government, in relation to climate change action. This case study also suggests there is also little *upward* feedback from parishes to higher levels of government.

 In conclusion, our mapping exercise indicates a fragmented and complex pattern of local climate governance, with multiple overlapping networks and partnerships, and the involvement of new institutions in as yet unclear relationship with the key established bodies. The county council is clearly the lead representative institution and orchestrator in climate governance, given its resources and multiple linkages upward, horizontally and down to the boroughs and districts. However, there is much less clarity about the rest of the picture. We explore the issues arising in our presentation and discussion of field-work findings, in the next two chapters.

(**NOTE**: An extended discussion of Surrey's micro level governance is available in **'The Remaking of Institutions for Local Climate Governance? Towards Understanding Climate Governance in a Multi-Level UK Local Government Area: A Micro-Local Case Study'**, published in the open access journal S*ustainability* (Russell and Christie, 2021) and based on interim findings from the present research study.)

5. FINDINGS FROM SURREY CASE STU

5.1 Introduction

As noted in chapter 3 above, our research methodology included an extensive programme of interviews with stakeholders in Surrey's climate governance networks, covering county, borough/district and parish/town levels of local government, and other actors from the local public, private and voluntary sectors. We supplemented these local perspectives through interviews with expert observers of climate governance from academia and local government beyond Surrey. We also complemented the programme of fieldwork with analysis of a sample of submissions from local governance actors to the parliamentary inquiries on net zero and local action underway during the project.

The interviews covered respondents' experience and perceptions of the current state of local climate governance; information needs and flows; tools and resources used and needed; progress and problems in development of local climate governance; and views on what is needed to make local climate governance work. Below we report on the findings from the interview programme.

5.2 Perceptions of current state of local climate governance

5.2.1 Local Motivation for Action

It is clear from the interviews that even for those Surrey local authorities that had established long-term energy reduction programmes, the declaration of climate emergencies in 2019-2020 created a strong impetus for local action. Whilst the UK Government climate emergency declaration began the process, it seem clear that it was the efforts of NGO groups such as Extinction Rebellion, local campaign organisations and peer pressure that motivated local council declarations. This initial act was seen by some respondents as a measure that had at times been undertaken without a clear understanding of the step required to act on it. The impetus to declare climate emergency was also seen as coming from elected members with personal commitment to the issues and supported by expert officers. In some councils, officers have acted as catalysts, responding to council climate declarations and highlighting to councillors the actions required. At the county council, climate action is led by senior cabinet members, with the portfolio holder and council leader bringing personal drive and interest to the issues.

While such engagement is by no means universal in local authorities across the county, respondents clearly conveyed a sense of gathering momentum behind action on climate change. A council officer said:

JDY

"there's a real unity in the council about this, some really passionate people" (SPC4)

At the micro-level of local government, whilst a few parishes have declared climate emergencies, it seems that it is primarily personal drive by committed individuals that has been the main impetus for local actions. This is exemplified through the work of a number of parish climate champions, helping deliver practical, small-scale action and their facilitation of local communities to develop projects.

At the parish and town scale, there is also a strong sense from interviewees that, while declarations and policies matter, local motivation is generated and maintained most effectively via *project* work that produces tangible results. Respondents offered examples such as projects for developing cycle routes, improving local biodiversity and tree planting: they had a strong sense that by making climate action visible projects such as these would fuel further peer interest and engagement. Whilst working collaboratively to develop funding for projects was seen as a positive motivator, all too frequently the search for funding was seen as off-puttingly competitive and the funds available too short-term.

5.2.2 Making progress

What did respondents see as the key signs of progress locally with the climate agenda? Within Surrey there has been a major increase in county council capacity to support climate change strategy and delivery plans. Pathways and finance options for net zero have been developed in conjunction with advisors from Leeds and Surrey Universities. Consultancy-based secondees have been used to bring additional expert knowledge to council teams.

There is also evidence of increased cross-tier council collaboration, with CEO and officer networks being set up. The recent initiation of the county council's Greener Futures board, with academic, industry, community and council membership, is intended to strengthen partnership working across the county and reinforce commitment and collaboration for net zero goals. In 2019, building on the move towards climate emergency declarations and greatly increased policy ambition, the Surrey Climate Commission was formed by a core group of volunteers from business, local government and the University, with the aim of helping to encourage and reinforce climate commitments across sectors and at all levels of the county. This was the first local Climate Commission to be formed in a county, and its example has since been followed by several others, for example Essex, where the county council was instrumental in setting up a Commission as a strategic cross-sector partnership. At community level in Surrey, respondents also noted the emergence of several community-led net zero hubs.

Respondents were positive about these kinds of development, but also observed that so far evidence of tangible action was thin on the ground – for example, Surrey could not yet point to bold moves such as the Lake District National Parks local plan which has made car dependency unacceptable

5.2.3 Disconnection between climate strategy and place-based governance

'Disconnection' was a major area of concern amongst those interviewed, with many suggesting a lack of clarity on how central government's strategies related to place, delivery agents and communities. Included with this was a sense that without a clear link to place, national approaches to climate policy were unrealistic:

"…government can create strategies and plans, the money will flow and somehow it will happen" (SCC3)

There is no doubt that a substantial amount of climate policy development has been happening, but many respondents were unclear about whether the climate rhetoric used by politicians was actually resulting in reduced emissions; and indeed, there is evidence that many councillors do not yet see climate change as a material issue. Some respondents felt that there were some excellent strategies and action plans in Surrey, but they had no sense of any action occurring. One local authority interviewees confirmed that while much was going on behind the scenes, it was not yet visible to the public, and also noted that initiatives have been developing piecemeal. Others were less confident about the translation of climate strategy into action: *"…it's just a tick box exercise" (SPS2).* The pace of councils' climate action is also a great frustration to highly motivated local activists:

"I really would pull my own head off because I want to do, I want to make a difference" – on being asked how they would feel if invited to join a council board. (SPC2)

There was also a concern from some respondents that climate strategies are not quite matching up to what they purport to cover. Several interviewees said that they had been surprised to find that, when they delved down into district and borough strategies, that many only covered their own estate, rather than the area they represented. The policies offered no clarity on how the rest of territorial emissions would be met, although at least one respondent suggested that central government is hoping that technology and the market will deliver, with little need for local government action.

It was also felt by some interviewees that in planning climate change action district and borough councils *"don't actively reach to the towns and parishes"* (SBC2). At this level there was little awareness from respondents about how delivery of local climate strategy would affect communities. Across all levels of governance there appears to be no clarity in what reaching net zero means for the *"feel and function of places"* (SPE1).

5.2.4 Division of labour: who does what in the 'climate constitution'?

There is agreement across our sample of interviewees that failure to create a climate delivery framework across the different levels of governance from central to local scales is creating confusion and leading to much overlapping of

activity. There is no clarity about which body and level is best placed and resourced to do what: no-one felt there was a clear division of labour or picture of a local 'climate constitution'. This message came repeatedly from parishes, districts and boroughs, county council, business respondents and regional bodies.

"I'd like somebody to say, you know, we're going to be doing (this at) county level, we're going to be doing this at the borough level……. and that parish level will do this and that will help everyone get on with it." (SPS4)

"In order to be effective, that's all got to fit within a framework, that's all got to fit within a national framework. Otherwise, it's just like a scattergun thing." (SPS4)

"No clarity on roles and responsibilities vertically or horizontally, there's enough work for everybody on this. I mean it is defining the roles so that we're not crashing across each other" (SPS3).

"it's not clear at all. Not even remotely and everyone is doing slightly different things and some of it's not that measured" (SCC2)

However, there are several tensions underpinning this demand for greater clarity. First, it is not clear to local government respondents that national departments see the need for a strong role for sub-regional bodies. Indeed, the national focus on technology-centric climate policy and market-led solutions would suggest they envisage a limited role for local authorities. Additionally, the creation of sub-national delivery bodies, along with a drive to create larger regional or city-regional combined

authorities, indicates a reluctance to engage in coordination at smaller scales of place.

The call for a clear division of labour in climate policy from local interviewees was accompanied by potentially conflicting requests. Respondents wanted clear direction from central government, but also the flexibility and resources to take local action that is most relevant to their places and, in some cases, personal interest.

Surrey's Districts, Boroughs and County Council have identified key areas of responsibility on which to collaborate, such as planning and county-led transport; but major gaps remain in understanding and allocating responsibilities and resources - such as in housing retrofit, business emissions, and community action. It is also unclear from the interview programme if the current levels of collaborative working between local authority officers and members are at a level required to meet the 2050 and interim emissions goals set within the county strategy. The same can be said at the micro-level of parishes and towns; but here groups with the energy to drive change are more likely to lack the knowledge, guidance and information to integrate their work with key county strategic goals:

"if it was made clear who's doing what at what level? I think that would at least raise people's spirits a bit out in the community. Yeah, it's terribly frustrating and dispiriting, and a lot of people are getting very fed up." (SPS4)

Several respondents felt that the existing levers of local democracy are not being maximised, especially in terms of community engagement

through the provision of funding and skills capacity building. However, parish interviewees were tentative about undertaking community engagement on climate action. Some were concerned about lack of authority and skills to promote behaviour change.

The question of the division of climate policy labour becomes still more complex when we consider Surrey in regional context. The regional level of governance has become more complex in recent years, with new tiers of sub-national bodies taking on roles that cut across both national and local action. The remit for sub-national transport bodies appears clear, focusing solely on regional transport strategic planning, but does require close collaboration with Tier 1 local authorities. However, for other sub-national bodies there is less sense of clarity among our respondents. Whilst LEPs have had a longer period in which to be integrated into the local governance structure and have recently focused on Clean Growth and supply chain development to support net zero targets, the UK government's recent decision to embed them in county deals or combined authorities has created uncertainty. There has also been a move to create a much wider geographic alliance across the southern LEPs, with the creation of a new organisation, Catalyst South, with a focus on growth and recovery. What the Government's planned transfer of LEP functions to local authorities means for such a network remains to be seen.

The sub-national array of Net Zero Hubs, previously known as Energy Hubs, is also experiencing changes in function. Not only are the Hubs expected to support a huge number of councils with expertise, but they are also required to manage retrofit funds, and most recently to extend their activities to cover land use; all of which is adding to the complexity of of the question of the division of climate labour.

All these developments were only imperfectly known about in our interviewee sample, with least awareness at the micro-local scale. It should also be noted that one expert interviewee found this developing policy landscape confusing, believing that the LEPs were managing 'climate change' hubs. We return to the question of 'division of climate labour' in our concluding discussion below. Next, we turn to the related issue of 'visibility' – how far actors in local governance felt they were acknowledged and engaged in policy by actors at different levels.

5.2.5 Visibility and invisibility

Many respondents in local governance do not feel that local authorities are seen by central government as having a strong role in climate change plans; rather, many felt that government is highly technology-focused and centralist in its approach to emissions reduction. To increase local authority 'visibility' and help create a more powerful voice with central government, Surrey County Council has joined the UK100 network and is a member of the ADEPT forum. While local authorities can struggle to be heard by government departments, it was felt by respondents that parish and town councils are

largely 'invisible'. DEFRA, working on its nature recovery strategy, did not include parishes as potentially interested bodies: *"it was if they didn't exist"* , complained one respondent (SPS5) at that level. They also have no role within government climate change plans.

The parishes and town council respondents were also critical of county, district and boroughs in relation to climate actions taken at county or borough level that affect their local area but about which the parish and town councils have not been consulted. And even where consultation had occurred, it was reported that parish teams felt that they had *"put a lot of time and energy to put in more effective responses"* but *"they see nothing back from this"* (SPC4). A further aspect of the issue of visibility and invisibility was reflected in the repeated comments we heard to the effect that it felt at times impossible to find the right person to talk to about climate issues, at all levels of government: a *"contact list in Surrey……….would be really extremely useful"* (SPC1).

5.2.6 Issues of scale in local climate governance

The issues raised by our respondents about disconnection, division of labour and (in)visbility converge with questions about the appropriate scales for different aspects of climate policymaking and implementation. The question of what the right scale for different elements of climate governance is has yet to receive any clear answer in UK climate strategy. It was an issue with which numerous interviewees were struggling. Through-

out the multiple levels of governance in Surrey, we found examples of networks, groups and clusters forming, suggesting that there was a perceived value in larger scale units and in horizontal linkages – for example, the network of district and borough officers working on climate strategy and delivery.

These emergent groupings appeared primarily to function as knowledge and expertise sharing bodies that could reduce the isolation felt by individuals and allow for greater confidence and authority. It is important to note that at all scales of sub-regional government elected members offer their services on a voluntary basis, supported by public officers. The support available from a Surrey climate change officer ranges in scale from the well-resourced county council team to individuals or small teams at district and borough level, often covering a wide range of environmental issues, and for most parishes, a part-time clerk. At the borough/district level, and especially at the parish/town level, officers and elected members can feel isolated and under-resourced, and the development of new networks can be seen as a response to problems of lack of knowledge and capacity.

There was a particular concern here about knowledge and capacity in relation to climate governance at the micro-level scale. Parish and town councils are consulted on planning and on the evidence of our interviews appear reasonably comfortable in highlighting local environmental concerns (that is, to do with local landscape issues, traffic, etc) and working within the National Planning Policy Framework. However, respondents felt that they lack the expertise to comment on

climate-related issues within the planning framework.

As noted in section 4.2.2, the development of national scale lobbying organisations, focusing on government departments, parallels the local 'joining-up' activity we heard about. Whilst most of the collaborative activity reported to us was in support of knowledge exchange and strategy-building, there were some examples where the creation of bodies of greater scale and reach was intended to support climate policy implementation, such as work to cut the cost of renewable energy procurement and build the case for greater private investment.

The largest sub-regional scale, namely the mayoral combined authorities, were considered by Surrey respondents to be moving most quickly on climate change, supported by devolution deals with Government conferring useful local powers to set budgets and create targets for energy and transport. At the micro-level, the larger units, the towns, were also more likely to be active on climate change than smaller parishes. It was unclear if this was related to the towns' density and urban character, or to greater local government funding and capacity. Analysis of parish climate activities in Waverley Borough certainly indicated that there could be a scale that was too 'micro-local' for autonomous climate action to be effective, with the smallest parishes least likely to be engaged. In contrast to this case of of 'too small to act', there was also an indication from some respondents that voluntary networks could become 'too large to manage', losing the

dynamism and focus that initially made them successful.

5.2.7 In search of 'Mandate'

We have noted a widespread desire among our respondents to engage in climate policymaking and implementation, and to find a place for local government and partners within a coherent system of climate governance. A term that was often used by interviewees was 'mandate': by this they meant being equipped with the authority and resources to play their full role in climate strategy and delivery. The issue of mandate for climate policy is part of wider, long-term debates and demands for local government to be engaged in a new constitutional settlement with central government and regional bodies, and to be empowered with adequate funding to meet local requirements (SPE3).

In interviews with respondents we heard differing interpretations of what effective 'mandate' would mean for local authorities. Mandate could mean several things in the context of our discussions: new statutory powers and duties; clear direction from central government to engage in climate policy in pursuit of UK Net Zero strategy; or more vaguely a need for local government actors to feel they have 'the authority' to make climate policy a priority.

Through our research in Surrey we have identified four major strands of debate and advocacy among our respondents:

1: Sub-national bodies need additional statutory net zero powers to underpin local strategic goals rather than relying on voluntary positions.

For many local councils, following years of cut-backs in funding the great majority of their activities are undertaken to meet statutory requirements, as for example in adult social care (SPE3). Many respondents felt that without a statutory focus for net zero work there would always be a risk of voluntary climate action by councils being squeezed by the pressure on resources to meet statutory demands. Respondents noted that many councils are putting in place ambitious policies but they were concerned there is no statutory requirement to support them in delivery, thus depriving local authorities of a source of 'mandate' for climate leadership.

2: Local mandates have been established through climate emergency declarations.

Some respondents felt that declaring a climate emergency gave councillors and officers a mandate to act. They reported a growing consensus that it was 'the right thing to do' for local authorities to aim for net zero targets and to see themselves as having a climate leadership role in their areas.

3: Statutory powers and duties for climate action are necessary to fill gaps not currently filled by voluntary action or existing powers.

When only 2-6% of county carbon emissions are directly created by local authorities, respondents at different levels of local government felt that the lack of a clear-cut mandate limited their ability to engage effectively with groups whose input is critical to the net zero target, such as the incorporation of business and Surrey communities into climate governance:

"Without a duty and target local government is left with voluntary work of 'persuasion and stakeholder management'. This is very time-consuming – costly." (SCC1)

And similar comments were made by other interviewees:

" you need to cut your emissions by 50% by then and have no remit to do that, you know, we're relying on people being interested" (SPS3)

At the parish or town level, having the authority to engage in climate issues was seen by respondents as valuable for acclaiming a bottom-up mandate for action. Some felt it would deal with the perception that many of those attempting this work are currently 'tolerated' by local councils rather than embedded in their governance. Parish activists also felt having an 'official' mandate to act would increase their confidence and change local perceptions (SPS7). Several participants were clear that without a mandate they had no ability to give priority to difficult issues such as retrofitting homes. Lack of mandate also meant that actors at the micro-local scale felt that they had little room for action if districts or boroughs, the main route for local climate policy implementation within counties, failed to undertake agreed actions.

Painshill Park, Surrey

4. Sub-national bodies already have the powers required to meet national net zero emission targets.

This argument has been made in testimony to the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee. The suggestion from central government is that local authorities (and sub-national bodies in general) already have the necessary powers. Moreover, if they can come to central government with issues that need to be addressed, then ministers will consider these (EAC, 2021). Only one sub-national body in our sample appeared to concur with this approach, noting that local authorities are now certainly aware of climate change issues and that additional statutory powers may not be needed.

The consensus from our respondents across levels and sectors was that local climate governance needed to be strengthened through powers and resources that would focus local authorities on net zero targets and provide the sought-for 'mandate' to act. As one of the interviewees commented

"local authorities … tend to have control over things which affect energy demand and emissions in terms of land use planning, planning in terms of buildings and also planning in terms of energy infrastructure. So, they have control over a lot of things which affect the ability to meet emissions reduction targets. And yet, they don't have any statutory duty for those targets." (SPE1)

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5.3 Strategic challenges and concerns

5.3.1 The urgency of reforms to enable effective climate governance

The themes of disconnection and unclear division of labour highlighted above are both reflected in our respondents' perceptions of current climate policy in the UK and of the strategic challenges for multi-level governance. There is a strong sense from interviewees across sectors and levels that climate challenges, demanding many interlinking processes and actions, bring into sharp relief the imperfect nature of current governance structures and financing in general. Some argued that strategy is being developed at a local level in a way which omits complex issues such as housing retrofit, and where the goals being set do not meet the scale of the emergency. We heard concerns that local strategies fail to support 'holistic' approaches to climate change and that there is a lack of sufficient understanding of climate science amongst policymakers.

Despite this widespread sense that deep reforms are needed in local governance, many respondents felt that governance imperfections should not delay strategy development and implementation, given the urgency of climate crisis. However, several interviewees noted barriers to rapid action. Some argued that whilst COVID had offered an example of swift collective action, the climate emergency has less immediacy for people. At a practical level some interviewees were frustrated that historical arrangements or existing supplier contracts were blocking climate action. A frequent complaint concerned what many saw as the slow pace of delivery and what was viewed as a local authority failure to provide the metrics by which success could be measured:

"How does the public hold councils to account for delivery of the strategy rather than having a strategy?" (SCC3)

5.3.2 Consistent direction and support from central government

"…….we are going somewhere, with no direction, without knowing the destination. But if you know that this is the destination and this is the route which we need to take in order to achieve that, then we will spend that. Even if just small money, small funds [are] available, we will spend that fund very wisely. But that is not happening at this moment in time." (SBUS1)

The theme of 'direction' appeared in many of the interviews, with local government, business and communities asking not just for clearer steers from central government, but also consistent direction relevant to their place and role. As noted above, local authorities have little spare capacity for non-statutory matters; respondents argued that having clear pathways, tools and messaging increases the likelihood of effective action on climate. Some pointed to local government energy advice as an example of this type of support. The Government-funded sub-national Net Zero Hubs have helped develop community energy schemes and renewables projects, and manage LAD funding. However, as noted earlier, they cover a large

geographical area, may well be a transient actor in the climate governance scene, and have capacity issues of their own.

Given this backdrop, in several cases Surrey councils have worked on climate strategy and projects in advance of clear central government direction; others want to press ahead but lack the resources necessary to do this. Some respondents felt that where climate policy communication from central government reaches sub-regional bodies is the messages are often inconsistent or only partially received. The result reported by many interviewees was widespread lack of clarity and understanding about the role of the local in the national net zero strategy. One respondent said it was dispiriting for councils to find that even their democratic representatives are uncertain about the importance of sub-regional net zero governance :

"A lot of MPs don't actually see local authorities as having a central role" (SPS4)

5.3.3 Emphasis on technological solutions in net zero policy

As already noted, central government has placed a strong emphasis on achieving net zero through the development and use of new low carbon technologies. Indeed, a major technology-focused programme of grid decarbonization over the last decade has reduced carbon emissions by 43.8% between 1990 and 2019 (ONS, 2019). However, among our interviewees the responses to

technology implementation were mixed, with scepticism amongst several of the respondents that new technology and market incentives would suffice to meet all the required targets and that the *"private sector will come in and intervene……….sort us out" (SPE3).* However, other interviewees saw technology offering new opportunities, such as through deployment of electric vehicles, and felt that innovative technologies were generating further impetus for climate action. There was also concern from respondents that a high level of faith in the benefits of new technology might be limiting the willingness of government to address demand management and behavior change:

"The challenges going forward are our techno-optimism, greenwash and behavior change and how they link to not so much the politics of having a strategy and declaring emergency, but the politics of accepting what's needed to deliver it and that that isn't going to be delivered by things that aren't invented yet or can't be afforded." (SCC3)

5.3.4 Lack of 'joining up' in policy: net zero and planning

Interviewees across sectors and levels in our sample echoed local government testimony to Parliamentary inquiries in seeing the lack of a coherent link between net zero strategy and land use planning as an area of major concern. Local authority respondents were clear that they lack the powers necessary to require net zero development

and retrofit. This undermined the efforts of boroughs and parishes in creating robust local and neighbourhood plans. We found examples where parishes had put together a checklist of local biodiversity, renewable travel and emissions reductions but lacked any authority capacity to implement them, and so they rarely progressed. Many respondents felt that the parish and borough councils are helpless in the face of often aggressive development proposals that are at odds with climate policy goals:

"there's no law, there's no requirement for developers to be considerate, you know, to the climate." (SPC1)

5.3.5 Improvisation in climate governance

A theme arising from the interviews was the process by which innovations in climate governance were emerging in piecemeal 'improvised' fashion. Through the development of local climate strategies and new officers' networks, there are increasing signs of climate governance arrangements being reshaped and invented. The Surrey County council climate team is working with climate officers from the districts and borough councils; chief executive officers are meeting; there is a Greener Futures Board as an advisory body for the county council's climate strategy; net zero community hubs are forming; and there are examples of parish council climate teams coalescing to create peer-led clusters (see Appendix iv for a full network analysis).

Improvisation in climate governance is extending to the formation of climate compacts at community level. We found that in Sussex, Worthing had held an online climate assembly, the outcome of which was a short action plan, identifying what the council and community respectively will do. Yet generally local improvisational structures are in early stages of development, seen as *"really wavy and sort of moving"* (SCC2) and many agree that whilst these will evolve it would be "much easier if somebody just said *'this is the model'* (SCC2). This sense of *'everybody's making it up"* (SPS4) pervaded many of the interviews, and whilst many felt that this was dynamic and offered the potential for truly local interventions, there was also a sense of wasted time, and lack of direction:

"They're all reinventing the wheel or copying and pasting bits from other things and bidding for piecemeal funding and trying to squeeze it in between. All their other priorities. It just doesn't feel like the way to react to a global crisis." (SPS4)

As noted earlier, institutional improvisation for net zero is not just limited to the county level. There has been a proliferation of national lobbying bodies working on behalf of sub-regional councils to promote their net zero/climate governance role; and government departments have developed new regional net zero entities with the creation of net zero hubs and other publicly funded bodies.

5.3.6 Partial and incoherent multi-level governance

Whilst respondents saw only limited official mandates for multi-level climate governance and co-operation at sub-regional levels, they emphasized that there is a pragmatic approach from local authorities, working together and collaborating on climate policy. They saw this emerging process as highly fragmented, however: while some districts and boroughs were felt to be providing leadership, others were seen as being only lightly engaged. In Surrey, Tier 2 authorities were declaring emergencies and producing net zero strategies, and in some cases plans, before the completion of the county council's overarching net zero strategy. Whilst much work has been done since the emergency declarations were made to align actions across levels in the county, through county-wide boards and groups, the micro-local level of councils still remains largely outside the governance debate. Some actors at that level felt that they are seen by government as 'voluntary bodies'. Many feel ignored:

"I don't think Surrey cares what Godalming does, Waverley (borough council) sort of does, because their building happens to be in Godalming, you know it's like proximity. If you're under the nose, they notice you." (SPC2)

An exception to this sense of exclusion appears to arise through specific project work, which frequently requires input from many local actors :

"we work with the town councils actually, on a couple of projects, and parish councils" (SBC2)

Communities are also struggling with confusion about local climate governance:

"from at a community level, it seems entirely clear that our councils should have a central role, but somehow there isn't doesn't appear to be a framework within which they're working." (SPS4)

What was seen as the UK's incoherent approach to net zero governance was repeatedly highlighted as a major contributor to the loss of expertise and capacity within organisations. Short-term project or programme funding, or even the setting up and dismantling of transient regional and sub-regional structures such as the RDAs, and now also the LEPs, has seen repeated loss of talent and institutional climate policy knowledge. The stop-start and short-term basis for central government funding was not only identified as a problem for work such as retrofitting social housing, but also for the functioning of sub-national bodies. While they have now funding confirmed until September 2023, at the time of these interviews the Net Zero Hubs noted:

"we're sort of dependent on what comes out of the government spending review, and you know we're still waiting to hear" (SPS6)

More generally many respondents noted a general reduction in local councils' capacity as a result of years of funding cuts and other pressures on finances. Consistency of goals, institutions and funding are seen as critical, in meeting the 2050 target, by many of the interviewees., and all these

were felt to be undermined by inadequate and transient funding.

Lack of direction from central government on climate and net zero action at sub-national level has led to high levels of improvisation in local climate governance in Surrey, all of which has taken resource to develop and will inevitably lead to some inefficiencies and gaps in action. The structure of government funding is also felt by respondents to exacerbate inefficiency. At least one participant highlighted several local net zero transport developments being undertaken with no attempt to test business models and therefore offering no transferable or adaptable knowledge. At sub-regional level many council net zero plans are limited in scope to work on the councils' own estates. Moreover, there is little clarity on how major issues such as emissions from housing and other consumption based emissions will be addressed. There is also frustration among many of our respondents that the current planning framework does not provide a strong enough basis for demanding net zero new builds.

At the level of place, respondents noted that local government is faced with an extremely complex and overlapping set of geographies and organisations to navigate (see figure 4). In dealing with new sub-national bodies, it would appear that county councils are not just managing fragmented geographies but also have to manage central government's net zero 'silos' and lack of joining-up of policy on climate across Whitehall.

The problems of communication, knowledge and implementation in this complex, evolving and 'messy' governance system were highlighted by many interviewees. It was also clear that as local government deals with both place-based mitigation and adaptation there will also be an increased requirement to work with other major public bodies such as the National Health Service. NHS Trust geographies present yet another challenge of geographical coordination and alignment, operating as they do across 25-30 distinct districts in Surrey, with some Trusts' areas extending into neighbouring counties.

5.3.7 'Broken' Multi-Level Governance?

Several respondents did not just see multi-level climate governance as partial and incoherent as it has evolved so far: they were extremely negative about the current multi-level governance system and its ability to deliver against net zero targets. These interviewees saw the system as essentially broken. They noted the failures in delivery concerning other major cross-cutting policy areas, such as land use planning, housing and transport, in all of which responsibility for implementation is split between many different agencies, creating a highly complex and dysfunctional system (SPE3). Interviewees saw 'disconnects', not just vertically, but also horizontally across Whitehall. Whilst BEIS and now its successor DESNZ, is the lead department for net zero, it was unclear to many respondents how this responsibility worked out in practice and how it related to local scale and actors.

Some interviewees noted that central government appears to find it more efficient to work with or

through larger scale organisations, such as combined mayoral authorities, UK100, and sub-national bodies, rather than having a governance structure in place that enables more direct engagement with local or micro-local councils. They saw this in turn as leading to a move towards more ad hoc regional structures such as departmentally funded sub-national bodies and lobbying organisations.

5.3.8 'Holistic governance of place'

How could what was seen as a flawed or even broken multi-level governance system for climate policy be improved? Respondents tended to emphasise the need for climate governance to be seen as a key element in a broader shift to a reformed and better resourced place-based local governance model in general. Taking a holistic place-based approach, one local government interviewee stressed, meant that the focus should not be on decarbonisation but on climate policy being integrated with other priorities such as poverty and public health interacting in a *'wicked complex system of geography'* (SPE3). This analysis was reiterated by a borough council interviewee who stressed the importance of biodiversity and green spaces and the need to connect wider environmental goals with the net zero approach (SBC1). There was a concern that if local actors highlighted decarbonisation as an end in itself, it could *'"become disconnected from social issues and from place".* (SPE3)

Several respondents emphasized the need for a

shift to such a holistic and place-focussed approach, and we noted the concept of co-benefits being used to underpin or add value to a net zero approach. We identified three alternative perspectives on how these were being presented by respondents :

"Net zero action offers multiple co-benefits such as improved air quality, improved health".

"It is about the government of place, integrating climate action in a holistic strategy and governance system". (SPE3)

"Net zero/climate change is a secondary factor, linked to a more traditionally based policy for local development". (SCC3)

Whilst the first proposition, and the one most often stated, was most clearly identified with net zero strategies and policies, the second offered a much broader focus on place in which climate and net zero formed an integral part with other priorities. The final approach indicated a more traditional vision of climate action as an add-on to existing policies and strategy: for example, while decarbonization of transport is important 'we are still undertaking major road building projects'.

Operating in a more holistic, place-based framework across levels requires multiple partners to work collaboratively, and implies the need for high levels of trust. Whilst we have noted important signs of emerging networks and partnerships within Surrey for climate governance, the interviews at times indicated that trust can be weak between actors at county and borough/district councils. The county needs to have leader-

Ranmore Common
Surrey

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ship on net zero, and it was felt by many to be most likely to come from a well-resourced county council. However, as one respondent noted *"we need to get rid of the distrust"* (SCC2). Such leader-ship needs to build trust with those who see spending on net zero as a further stripping of resources from other services. There was also a suggestion from some interviewees that a body other than the county council, one which has the trust of local communities, would be best placed to support climate policy and projects focusing on demand management and behaviour change. It was suggested by some that such an organisation could be the Surrey Climate Commission, a partner of the county council and other actors, which can operate at arm's length from the formal local government system.

We turn next to issues arising from the fieldwork concerning the implementation of climate policy and what the implications are for the actors in the local governance system.

FINDINGS FROM SURREY CASE STUDY: STRATEGY INTO ACTION
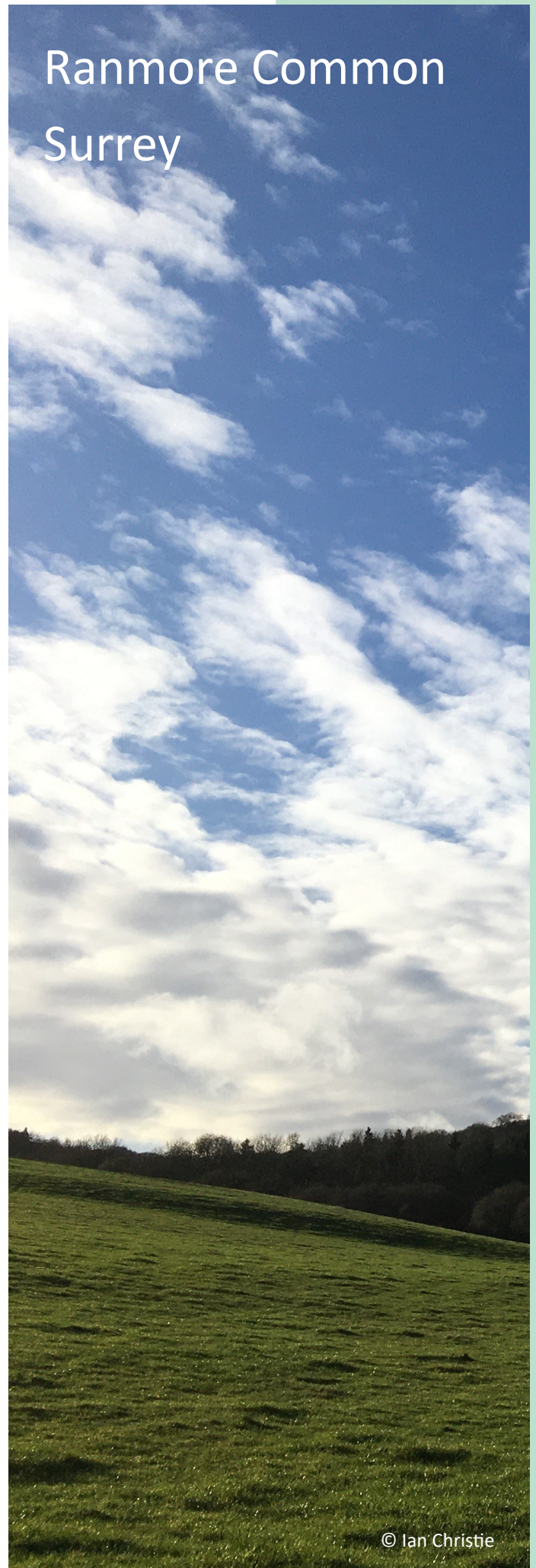
5.4 Strategy into action: practical challenges of implementation of climate policy across levels of governance

5.4.1 Capacity gaps, silos, lack of integration

One respondent (SCC3) highlighted the point that as net zero policy s moves from strategy into implementation the need for climate change knowledge and ability changes. Council officers become responsible for delivery and needs for tools and techniques, and skills and staffing become crucial. In the wake of the climate emergency declaration Surrey County Council has increased funding for their climate and environment team and have been able to expand their staff expertise and capacity. However, capacity gaps were noted by respondents. Local councils are experiencing a *"shortage of people with the right skills sets"* (SCC3).

To overcome this Surrey County council have bolstered their team with external consultants, but with a clear requirement for tools and models to be transferable and staff expertise to be enhanced. We hear that some local district and borough councils have had small increases in staff but still lack the capacity to support many aspects of net zero action plan delivery. Indeed, some organisations have found it a difficult experience trying to work with overstretched councils:

"I just try to work around it. I actually try to avoid dealing with government mainly because they seem so stretched. I just don't get joy working with them".(SPC1)

This would suggest that at least in some cases, rather than engage in increased multi-level collaborative working, it is more convenient to operate in silos.

During the interviews numerous respondents said that knowledge and information were not flowing freely between the different levels of sub-regional government. It was felt that actors in the county council did not appear to be aware of work occurring at the parish level; nor did some of the boroughs; but equally several of the parish respondents were unaware of key features of the county council's work on climate.

Several interviewees were also concerned about silo working and lack of connections horizonatally across the county. Climate change, a cross-cutting theme, requires close, integrated working between teams, but there was a strong feeling that many worked in isolation. An example provided in relation to planning was:

"Most of the planning is managed by Waverley but even the borough councillors themselves struggle to be engaged as it's actually done by the planning group within the councils". (SPC4)

One local authority interviewee intimated that integration would remain unlikely whilst councils focused on fragmented service provision instead of a holistic place-based approach (SPE3).

5.4.2 Transient vs stable governance

There was a deep underlying concern among many interviewees about the transient nature not only of central government's net zero funding but also of the institutional structures put in in place so far to manage climate strategy. has established a new layer of sub-national bodies with specific, Whitehall-led climate change remits. These bodies are operating as arm's length funded entities rather than sitting within government departments. In response, county councils have created alliances such as UK100 and ADEPT to lobby at a national level, and are relying on the availability of expertise and effective services from the new organisations. One interviewee contrasted this picture of new and possibly transient governance bodies with a view of county councils as embedded and durable instititutions bound to their local places: "the steward of this place, in perpetuity, for as long as this local government body is viable" SPE3. The pursuit of net zero at a county level currently brings with it a huge reliance on national initiatives and respondents expressed concern that these may fail to offer long-term stable approaches:

"SCC can do all the networking and coordination but it could all be swept away with a fresh set of changes in HMG policy". (SCC1)

This concern with institutional transience at national and sub-national scales was echoed in comments from interviewees about repeated waves of central government activity on climate and energy leading to loss of capacity, incentives

and know-how (as with the disbanding of the RDAs and with the abandonment of schemes for home energy efficiency. We have already noted respondents' concerns about loss of expertise and institutional memory, as programmes and funding streams change, but we also heard from some interviewees the concern that without stable governance structures and policy direction, many of the most dynamic local climate initiatives can lose direction if and when the 'wilful' individuals who initiated them, leave. This leads us to discussion of this category of local policy actors.

5.4.3 Wilful actors

Our research identified the importance of 'wilful actors' at all levels of sub-regional government. They could be individuals or small groups who exhibited strategic vision and climate policy expertise, and they were frequently highly networked, often across local councils, NGOs, communities and business. Three types of 'wilful' actors were identified from our analysis of Surrey council minutes (Russell and Christie, 2021) and interview discussions:

- Unaffiliated local resident(s);

- A resident member of an environmental group;

- A climate-engaged council member.

Operating as catalysts and pioneers of local climate action, many wilful actors successfully put pressure on all tiers of local government in Surrey to declare climate emergencies. In Haslemere, in SW Surrey,

pressure from a 600-signature petition, along with local business and church groups, helped lead to the town council declaration. Elsewhere in the county local groups such as XR rapidly expanded their action and membership, and were felt by many respondents to have been effective in lobbying councils. Interviewees reported that the commitment of local councillors and officers has also been important, not just for climate declarations but in ongoing climate work. They can contribute as 'wilful actors' embedded within the governance structure:

"It was political will that drove it (the climate emergency declaration) rather than anything else. We have a couple of councillors that are [very committed] and one of them sits in the executive and he's very passionate, very driven". (SBC2)

The determination of individuals within local government to push for change was reiterated at all scales:

"It was individuals within parish councils or even parishes pressing (borough or district) councils to do something rather than the (borough or district) councils themselves". (SPS7)

5.4.4 'Boundary-spanning' roles in climate governance

A feature of Surrey's emerging local climate governance was 'boundary-spanning' - the work of numerous 'wilful actors' who served in roles that crossed levels and sectors. We were offered several examples of 'driven' councillors who exemplified boundary spanning roles: one was operating as town councillor and deputy mayor, a member of the Green Party and XR. Another sat both as a Borough councillor and County councillor, and another as a county councillor, a member of the County Council's Greener Futures board, a local borough councillor and a county council committee member. We found individuals who put themselves forward for public service, building local climate hubs, engaging with the Climate commission. A parish clerk was instrumental in setting up a Surrey parishes climate conference. The importance of these individuals lies in their ability to transmit and help orchestrate climate policy information, ideas and actions across multiple tiers of government and into the community. Their personal drive and networking support such activity where no formal process or requirement to act currently operates.

At a larger scale, organisations such as SECA, set up as a climate information-sharing and co-ordination group, not only span multiple levels of local councils, across several counties, but also welcome climate-focused faith groups, NGOs and interested individuals. This coalition of over 110 groups offers an unusual boundary-spanning view of local climate governance, so distinctive that the views of their membership were presented as evidence to the Environmental Audit Committee in 2021 (EAC, 2021).

5.4.5 Issues of knowledge and learning

Many community groups appear to have enthusiasm and passion to take action on environmental or climate issues, but clear messages on what they can do, what has real impact and where to go to find reliable information is missing. Many non-expert interviewees knew there were a lot of websites with valuable information, but they found it difficult to ask the 'right question'. They also struggled to find the right person to talk to at the local council, although, some better connected with councillors would use them to connect to others sources of expertise and support. There was also an indication from respondents that smaller councils and small businesses also had similar issues. One of the expert respondents voiced concern that the focus on carbon literacy, in isolation from a more holistic view of place, was problematic (SPE3). Several interviewees sensed that national government and the county council were including other organisations in discussion groups or boards, but rather than asking for ideas or drawing on experience at local level, these bodies were being used as sounding boards for already developed plans. There was no indication that any lessons from micro-level council action were being captured and incorporated into future planning.

Several interviewees felt confident in the technological changes that were implemented, but were concerned that citizens were not yet convinced or interested:

"the wheels are literally moving on the transport stuff, but getting the behvavior change, I think that's where we are really behind." (SCC2)

Some of the respondents had developed their own approaches to behaviour change, working with local people to look at their carbon footprints to help raise awareness, whilst others were starting with simple recycling schemes to try and engage people with wider debates on consumption and waste. However, many people, especially at the parish level of governance, felt that they did not have the skills to support projects aimed at changing behaviours. Whilst they did think that face to face conversations worked best many felt they were in an uncomfortable position in that they were talking not to the 'community' but to friends and neighbours.

In most cases they were doing this without any 'authority'. There was at least one example at the parish level where this had been a very difficult experience. Finding the right approach, having the right information and confidence was a challenge not only limited to local climate leaders. Those working with local businesses also said they want help on the *"words that say (net zero) properly to people"* (SBUS2).

5.4.6 Lack of standardized data and tools

When asked directly few of the respondents could suggest useful climate/net zero tools or could suggest tools that they would find useful. Whilst many councils had used SCATTER (a carbon foot-

printing tool developed by the University of Manchester and Anthemis), to understand their emissions, there was concern amongst some officers that it was too high-level a tool and did not have the granularity to support local action plans. During the interview process, a new parish foot-print visualization tool, IMPACT, was published. Only one parish had worked with the tool, and they had supported the University of Exeter's programme trials. At a sub-national level existing economic tools are being adapted to incorporate transport decarbonsiation and to develop carbon pathways.

The Net Zero Energy Hub has tools to support public sector investment in local authority own estate and to analyse opportunties for solar PV farms. UK power networks have developed Heat Street, which sets out the potential for local heating system retrofits. Surrey County Council worked with the University of Leeds and now have a tool which allows for pathway modelling. Some respondents noted that measuring supply chain emissions was a major challenge, and one where government involvement and tools was more limited. Another interviewee referred to the risk of fragmented local take-up of carbon management tools:

"The risk with tools and measurement is that 'everyone is reinventing wheels'". (SCC1)

Many local authority respondents found measuring their territorial emissions one of the most difficult areas. Only a few were aware that the government published emissions data at a sub-regional data and for those that were, it helped give a broad

picture of territorial emissions but did not directly provide a measurement of local activity. This was making it difficult to manage yearly reporting and as one respondent noted:

" I don't think the districts and boroughs have got the metrics at all. In fact, they told us they haven't". (SCC2)

One interviewee was also concerned that there was no standard system for managing nature-based solutions for carbon reduction (SCC1). Managing emissions data collection is time consuming and difficult, even at the county council level. There was also concern that it may not effectively reflect all the initiatives being undertaken: indeed, a more practical measurement, such as *"infrastructure for X number of bikes"* may be more useful (SBC2). Without some form of measurement there is concern that government, at all levels, will not be held to account.

5.4.7 Issues of scale

In the previous section we discussed some of the strategic challenges concerning scale: this encompassed such issues as the idea of a 'race to regionalism' created by government's apparent desire to work at larger scale a than the county or district, and the difficulty of focusing on technology led approaches to mitigation that did not integrate interventions to support behavior change at the level of individuals and communities. Questions of appropriate scale were raised by respondents in

relation to emissions measurement and reduction, organization, place, representation, capacity.

We have seen that some parishes may be too small to have the voice or confidence to undertake action, but collectively may be able to drive change, and be heard. At a local authority level collaboration between county and district and boroughs is helping build up county-wide, coordinated action, with expertise increasingly being drawn from across the South East region. Multiple layers of climate governance continue to create difficulties in communication and knowledge exchange with micro-level parishes being largely invisible above district and borough level. The exception to this is the work by the Net Zero Hubs to support parishes interested in community energy schemes. The potential to scale this work up is something one of the Surrey business interviewees appreciated:

"if you're tackling a small scale, it is very expensive business……but if we can bring these actions together collectively between various regions, then we can scale up the program and...people will be interested in investing in the bigger scale. It means a return on investment for them also will be better". (SBUS1)

5.4.8 Potential for local orchestration and feedback to higher levels of governance

A final issue raised by respondents concerned the limitations of the improvisatory and bottom-up process of institutional shifts, project develop-

ment, local advocacy and deliberation that had taken place in recent years in the county in the face of growing concern over climate change. For all the efforts at coordination, the limits on resources, time, information and capacity meant that orchestration of local energies, ideas and demands was constrained. In particular this meant, in the view of some respondents, that local climate governance actors were not combining their strength and making a case loudly and clearly enough to higher levels of policymaking. As one interviewee put it:

"And actually, there is a massive issue that we're all operating in our silos… we're talking about collaborating. But actually, if you step back and look, … what we're not doing is going out with one big climate change voice." SBUS2

In the next chapter we summarise some key themes from the fieldwork, and then offer recommendations for policy, drawing on the views presented by expert respondents and on proposals made in the recent policy literature.

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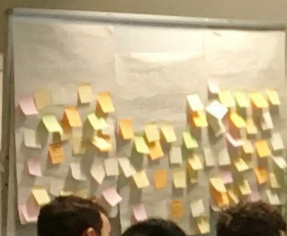
How to build a sustainable financial system:
Reflections on a work in progress

Nick Robins, Professor in Practice, Sustainable Finance
CUSP, 6 February 2020

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6. DISCUSSION

6.1 Perceptions of local climate governance: progress and problems

Respondents at all levels of local governance were clear that local motivation to act on mitigation of climate change was strong, and identified significant areas of progress in harnessing the growing awareness of and concern about climate crisis. Councillors and officers at all levels have become energized and motivated to take action in recent years, with the XR upsurge in 2018-19 a notable catalyst. The county council has developed comprehensive plans on climate action and a Greener Futures strategy for Surrey, supported by an advisory board. Horizontal cooperation and coordination have been enhanced at county and district level in relation to climate policy. A core group of actors in public, private and civil society sectors established a Surrey Climate Commission in 2019, the first Climate Commission set up at county level.

We met many highly committed and well-informed people in our fieldwork, all motivated to put climate action at the heart of local governance and not only reduce the damage from climate change but use mitigation measures as a way to enhance wellbeing, environment and economic life in the county. They were clear that effective mitigation policy would require a massive transition at sub-national levels, and that local knowledge and trusted, rooted institutions would be vital in effective implementation of the technological and behavioural changes demanded by the Net Zero ambition. However, for all the progress to which they could point, the dominant perception of our

sample of informants was that local governance is not well equipped or supported for this task, and that the potential for local actors to play a key role in climate policy and implementation is not being fulfilled. The barriers they identified did not relate simply to shortage of funds, capacity and tools, although these mattered greatly; they pointed also to the need for a basic reset in relations between central and local government, and to the potential of Net Zero to be a catalyst for this.

6.2 The barriers to effective multi-level governance

There was wide consensus about the barriers to effective multi-level governance of climate policy in general and to the realization of the potential in local governance to play a vital role. These can be grouped as follows: first, the lack of recognition from central Government of the importance of local governance to Net Zero; second, the lack of mechanisms and political will for strategic partnership with local government and its stakeholders; third, the heavy emphasis in Net Zero policy on top-down 'techno-centric' strategy and processes; fourth, the piecemeal and short-term nature of funding available to local government.

The lack of recognition of the importance of the local dimension was frequently mentioned. This perception finds support in the recent policy literature too, such as the independent review of Net Zero (Skidmore, 2023). Under-valued in many areas of policymaking, UK local governance has not been seen so far as a major element in Net Zero, despite the broad consensus in academic and

policy literature, and from local actors themselves, that it should be so viewed and treated. The surge in local action on climate goes largely undiscussed in Government policy statements on Net Zero: for example, there are very few references to the emergence of the city and county Climate Commissions, and no sign of interest in weaving them into a new framework for local climate governance in support of wider UK strategy.

As a result, there seemed to our respondents to be little political will at national level for strategic partnership with local actors, and weak mechanisms for improving this situation. The high-level Net Zero forum established by Government for liaison was not well-known to respondents, nor seen as a motor for change. Moreover, many respondents regarded national strategy on Net Zero as essentially a centralist and top-down vision, dominated by a 'techno-centric' view of emissions reduction. Government was seen by many as reluctant to face up to the social dimensions of climate action, notably the need for major changes in consumption and lifestyle, and wished to rely on technological innovations in cutting emissions. A richer view of the issues that took social change and shifts in behaviour and values seriously would point to the importance of the local and of place-based engagement with people in communities.

Finally, and chiming with the recent policy literature (see for example (Skidmore, 2023) respondents lamented the piecemeal and short-term funding available to local government and its partners for Net Zero, and for the broader climate agenda. This was linked to a wider sense of frustration about the inadequate funding base for

local authorities, and about the severity of financial pressures on them after a decade of austerity followed by the shock of the Covid pandemic and then the economic effects of Brexit and the Ukraine crisis. The need to bid competitively for short-term central funding pots, the waste of time and effort on unsuccessful bids, and the pressures on core funding of local services, all meant that Net Zero action was likely to be piecemeal, under-resourced and dependent on the energy of local 'wilful actors'.

6.3 The lack of a clear vision for better multi-level climate governance

All the above meant for our respondents, again echoing the recent policy literature on Net Zero and local climate action, that the UK in general, and England in particular, lacks a clear vision for effective governance of climate policy across multiple scales. Net Zero strategy remains central-ist and technology-led. The lack of coherent multi-level governance for climate reflected for many respondents a wider incoherence and fragmentation in local government and local-national relations. Interviewees spoke of the 'invisibility' of local action at higher levels: this was not only about lack of attention from central government to cities, counties and districts, but also about the difficulties in coordination and achieving 'visibility' between the country, district and parish/community levels.

Underlying the discussion about lack of coherence in multi-level governance for climate action was a sense of confusion and frustration about failure so far to achieve clarity about appropriate scale and 'division of labour' at different levels of governance. What should be done nationally, regionally, at county level, a district level, and in parishes and other micro-local institutions? And who should lead? What funding, investment and information systems are needed for these scales of activity? What, in short, should be the multi-level 'climate constitution' for the UK in the face of the enormous generational challenge of Net Zero goals? Respondents felt that these questions were urgent and largely unasked, let alone answered, in central Government.

Some interviewees expressed the view that multi-level governance in the UK was 'broken' and that a systemic overhaul was required. Others focused on specific failings and faulty connections in the system. The main concern was what was seen as the inconsistency and lack of joined-up policymaking on climate, with high-carbon choices being made even while a zero-carbon future was being strategized. The focus of complaint was the planning system: many respondents saw the need for urgent clarification of the imperative of Net Zero in planning policy and decision-making, and for freedom for local authorities to set planning policies that would accelerate effective climate mitigation (and adaptation). As things stand, many interviewees argued, the planning regime was poorly aligned with Net Zero and the need for rapid deployment of renewable energy and highly energy efficient buildings.

6.4 Compensatory and improvisatory climate governance

Given the challenges, constraints and frustrations summarised above, our respondents described what we have termed in other work a process of 'compensatory and improvisational' governance for climate action. Personal commitment, local pressure for action and the development of ambitious national strategy on climate all stimulated a wave of local concern and action in recent years, notably in 2018-19. However, the problems outlined above, and set out in detail in chapter 5, meant that local actors were operating in what they felt to be a confused, ill-coordinated and unclear policy environment, with poor guidance and commitment from central government. As a result, they felt forced into taking action that was less effective than it might have been had there been a coherent and consistent regime for multi-scale climate policy.

The development of local policy and projects in Surrey has been in this sense 'compensatory' - making up for the lack of a comprehensive and urgent programme of implementation of Net Zero strategy across scales from national to micro-local. And it has been 'improvisational' in the sense that policy and project development has not taken place in the context of a clear national framework that identifies appropriate roles for different levels of governance and funds these adequately and over a suitable period. Rather, local authorities have been forced into an improvisational mode by the lack of such a framework and through the regime of 'beauty contest' or 'begging bowl' competitive bidding for short-term pots of funding

allocated by Whitehall. The shock of the pandemic and the priority given to managing and recovering from its impacts have intensified the problems of compensatory and improvisational forms of climate governance.

6.5 The potential for more effective multi-level governance for climate action

What did our respondents want to see by way of more effective multi-level governance for climate action? There was demand for both more direction from central government, setting a clear framework within which local government and its partners could act with confidence and with adequate resources (powers, funds, tools, information, skills). There was also demand for freedom to go beyond existing targets for emissions reduction, energy efficiency and achievement of Net Zero for specific places and sectors. Respondents felt that a re-set of national-local relations and a joined-up approach to multi-level governance would both reflect the generational importance and urgency of the Net Zero challenge and also help bring an essential range of place-based insights, lessons and skills to bear on it. A coherent strategy across scales for Net Zero would enable co-benefits of emissions reduction to be gained, and would face up to the challenge of discussing and supporting changes in behaviour, values and places as well as enabling necessary technological changes. Again, our respondents echoed the arguments made in much recent literature about the crucial role of local governance in any effective Net Zero transition.

When we asked for a menu of recommendations in

detail beyond these general requests for a clear role in a coherent multi-level Net Zero policy framework and for more powers and resources at local levels, respondents often struggled to suggest specific proposals. This reflected on the one hand the lack of time for reflection on the complexities, given everyday pressures and the impacts of the pandemic; on the other hand it seemed at times also to reflect a sense of fatalism about the unjoined-up and incoherent systems in which our respondents saw themselves embedded. Many had lived through decades of erosion of local government powers and resources, and found it hard to imagine being re-empowered and listened to by Whitehall – or, if at parish level, even by county-level authorities.

What was clear from most of our informants was a request for a 'mandate' for action by local authorities and their partners on Net Zero. As noted earlier, this could cover a range of demands: new statutory powers and duties; clearer direction from central government to engage in climate policy in pursuit of UK Net Zero strategy; or guidance making it easier for local government actors to feel they have 'the authority' to make climate policy a priority and to take ambitious action to accelerate emissions reductions. Overall, many respondents favoured a statutory duty on local authorities to work towards Net Zero within the national policy framework for decarbonization. There was also wide agreement that a revised National Planning Policy Framework should not constrain the ambition of local authorities in devising Net Zero strategies, and should make it clear that land use planning and building standards must be unambiguously aligned with sustainable development in general and Net Zero in particular.

It was also clear from the fieldwork that for many respondents changes concerning duties and powers for climate action had to be agreed and designed in the context of a much wider and deeper debate over the responsibilities, capacity, funding and relationships of local authorities in the UK and in England in particular. Getting clarity and coherence into the local 'climate constitution' of governance for Net Zero could not be divorced from the need for a general re-setting and renewal of local government and its relations with central government. Nor could it be done without a fundamental rethinking of local government finance, with a decisive shift from short-term competitive bidding for pots of central funds. Our respondents' emphasis on this linkage between reform for Net Zero and wider re-empowerment of local government is reflected in recent policy literature – see for example Barlow's (2022) report for the Edinburgh Climate Commission, the Scottish Cities Alliance and the Place-based Climate Action Network (PCAN), and the Skidmore Review (2023).

Drawing on the views provided by our respondents, and on the many ways in which these overlap with diagnosis and recommendations in the recent policy literature, we conclude in the next section with some recommended next steps in the light of our and others' research into local climate governance.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

7.1 Local climate governance in an evolving system

Local climate governance in the UK is an emerging area of activity that has evolved rapidly but in a largely piecemeal manner, with the local dimension of climate policy playing a minor part in central government thinking and measures to date, if it has not been overlooked completely. The pressures on local government from the pandemic, social care costs and the legacy of austerity since 2010 mean that climate governance has been developed in a highly constrained and fraught policy and funding environment. As we have argued, and as our respondents have indicated, local climate action has been developed by highly committed and concerned people at all levels who feel that whatever they achieve is in spite of the prevailing regime for local-national relations, not because of it. Local climate governance has been compensatory and improvisatory – making up for the lack of a clear and coherent Net Zero framework across scales of policymaking.

It is clear that local government is vital to climate mitigation and adaptation, given the scale of the challenges, the need for locally sensitive and informed action, and the task of gaining public trust and cooperation in major changes in infrastructure, technology, lifestyles and values for Net Zero. Given the many constraints on local finances and capacity, major changes will need to be made to enable local authorities and their partners to fulfil their significant potential in delivering Net Zero (alongside many other tasks for sustainable development). There are signs that national policymakers are starting to face up to the malaise of the local and take devolution seriously: the wave of devolution deals agreed with combined authorities at city-region and multi-county scale is promising. But we have yet to see a coherent and comprehensive rethinking and remaking of local governance that would overcome the many problems in local democracy, policy implementation and financing. Potentially the period to the next UK general election, to be held early 2025 at the latest, is a time in which a serious effort can be made to do such rethinking and to press the major parties for a comprehensive re-empowerment of localities in the next Parliament, with Net Zero as the catalyst for this reform.

This ambition could be a realistic one, given the pressures on local government and the extent of consensus that something needs to be done to realise the potential of the local in delivering for Net Zero. It would be hard to think of an proposition commanding more consensus among actors across party lines in local governance, academics, think-tanks, civil society and professional associations than the argument that the UK in general and England in particular is over-centralised and that local government has been marginalised, under-funded and dis-empowered, and that this must be reversed. Given the scale, urgency and importance across policy domains and sectors of the Net Zero challenge, it could be that rethinking climate governance can be a catalytic process for reimaging the place of the local in UK policymaking. We make recommendations below in the light of this possibility, and in tune with proposals emerging in the recent policy literature on climate action and the local.

Woking street

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7.2 Recommendations

7.2.1 Wider policy applications

The overall message from our respondents chimes with proposals from recent reviews of climate action and local governance, notably Barlow (2022) and the Skidmore Review (2023). We endorse the recommendations from the latter studies, calling for measures from central government that would :

a. **Clarify and improve the *national framework for climate policy,*** establishing a clear and significant role for local government and its partners;

b. ***Clarify powers and responsibilities* for local authorities,** and bring definitive clarity to the National Planning Policy Framework in relation to climate policy imperatives;

c. **Establish a *statutory duty* for local government for Net Zero;**

d. **Establish *longer-term funding sources* for local government** to enable more reliable place-based investment for Net Zero and to reduce competitive bidding for challenge funds;

e. **Establish a wider network of *Net Zero Support Hubs* across counties and cities** to ensure broad take-up and use of carbon management tools and indicators, comparability of reporting, adequate training of officers and members, and sharing of effective practice across localities;

f. **Ensure that *new devolution deals* for combined authorities *integrate ambitious Net Zero implementation and Net Zero tests* as a key feature across all elements of the pack**age.

In particular we note the recommendation in the Skidmore Review (2023) for a 'big bang' of policy reforms to support local governance of Net Zero:

"Create a Net Zero Local Big Bang. Reforming the relationship between central and local government on net zero will empower local authorities to deliver place-based, place- sensitive action and unlock the high levels of local net zero ambition that we have across the UK. Unblocking the planning system and aligning it more closely with net zero will enable widespread pro-growth, net zero development." (p.189).

This request - encompassing a statutory duty for Net Zero for local authorities, a Net Zero test in the planning system, and experimental local net zero missions to encourage localities to go further and faster - has not been accepted by Government. This comes in spite of the very widespread support for such an approach that is reflected not only in Chris Skidmore's consultations, but also in the wider policy and academic literature, and that is also reflected in our fieldwork for this study.

We would suggest that, drawing on The Future is Local (Skidmore and Houchen, 2023) a duty for Net Zero would encompass:

* duty to cooperate across sectors and levels and with other local authorities;

* duty to report on progress and collect/present

data in a consistent way within a shared frame-work;

- duty to establish Net Zero in policy design and delivery across all parts of the local authority;

- duty to establish Net Zero leadership roles in Cabinet and Directorate;

- duty to establish forums and other processes for public engagement in Net Zero transition.

The Duty has to be accompanied, to be meaningful, by:

- adequate funding from national government and new measures to boost revenue and enable investment at local level;

- coherence in the land use planning system, such that new developments have to show net positive contribution to Net Zero;

- capacity- and confidence-building via multi-level governance Net Zero Charter (Skidmore) and forum between national govt and local authorities.

Given that level of consensus, we argue that the Skidmore proposals for local climate governance should be taken further in a process of intensive debate, policy development and proposals over the next year, to put pressure on the major political parties in the run-up to the next general election.

Specifically, we propose that in 2023-24 local government representative bodies (such as UK100), leading councils, the UK Climate Change Committee, PCAN and other key stakeholders should convene a *Climate Constitutional Convention*. This could – and we would argue

should – be chaired by Chris Skidmore, given the weight of his Net Zero review and the respect in which he is held across the political spectrum. The role of the Convention would be to synthesise proposals from Skidmore (2023) and other recent literature into a concise statement of what a co-herent new local-national governance regime should be in the face of the Net Zero challenge. It would specify appropriate roles and responsibilities. plus funding systems, at different scales, from the national to the micro-local. It would offer that statement as a consensus-based manifesto for change to the next Government.

Finally, we propose that even if this ambitious call for a Climate Constitutional Convention is not taken up, there is an urgent need for action in response to the Skidmore Review's proposal to Government for funding of experimental missions in local climate action, enabling a set of local areas to display high ambition in designing and delivering policy for Net Zero: "*Central government should fully back at least one Trailblazer Net Zero City, Local Authority and Community, with the aim for these places to reach net zero by 2030*" Skidmore, 2023, p197). The Skidmore proposal is for 'at least one city, local authority and community' to be supported in this piloting of radical Net Zero policies:

"*Government should work with these places to develop 'Trailblazer Net Zero Deals', which should have the outcome of helping places to reach net zero by 2030 and should be based on long-term support from central government. As described earlier in the Pillar, short-term funding*

competitions are a barrier to the long-term, joined-up action needed on net zero. We need to begin planning local net zero delivery across years and decades rather than months. The degree of funding and devolution of powers in Deals should initially be dependent on a track record of delivery, and further flexibility on powers or funding could be based on initial performance to ensure value for money for taxpayers. The Deals should be designed to encourage a whole systems view of net zero" (Skidmore, 2023; p200).

We back this proposal, which we see as opening up opportunities for just the kinds of local leadership, experimentation and joining-up of policies and investments that are called for by our Surrey respondents at all levels. We suggest that in order to generate sufficient evidence, experience and scope for learning by other areas, the mission initiative should encompass at least two cities and two counties, ensuring a balance of engagement by major urban authorities and councils covering smaller towns and countryside communities. We also see a need for at least two such mission initiatives at a regional scale, given the emerging evidence on the need in some respects (such as climate adaptation policy) for larger-scale climate governance than has been possible in the city-based Climate Commissions to date (PCAN, 2023).

We would also recommend extension of the mission proposed by Skidmore (2023) to incorporate *innovations and experiments in climate governance*, building on the insights in the literature on local 'mesh' governance of complexity (Mulgan, 2020) and on the PCAN network's local

Climate Commissions (CAG, 2023). The aim would be to build up evidence and experience of effective ways to design and implement multi-level governance for climate action.

Combined authorities, regional networks and counties would put themselves forward not only as pioneers in Net Zero policy and delivery but in governance models that organize a multi-level 'mesh' of effective relationships and processes horizontally across sectors and actors, and vertically from combined authority or county council level down to parish and community level. We propose that such candidates for Net Zero mission status would commit to the following over the period to 2030:

a. **Demonstration of effective horizontal partnership-building for climate action** across their area; this should include investment in existing or new multi-sector Climate Commissions as developed to date in the PCAN framework;

b. **Demonstration of holistic joined-up climate governance** across policies and departments within the lead organisation (combined authority or county council;

c. **Demonstration of effective vertical linkages** from the lead authority level to urban neighbourhoods, districts and boroughs, and to parish council and community level;

d. **Development of capacity, tools, skills and partnership arrangements** to enable local action on the disaggregated local share of the national carbon budget (Best et al 2023);

e. Commitment to development of models for measuring, reporting, training and sharing of effective practice that can be shared within the mission authority areas and beyond.

We would envisage that candidate bodies for this mission programme would include at least two of the cities with Climate Commissions, the Yorkshire and Humberside Climate Commission and regional partners, and at least two of the county councils that have established and/or supported local Climate Commissions. Given the leadership shown by Surrey County Council on Net Zero and its initial development of a 'mesh' of relationships vertically and horizontally in the county for climate governance and orchestration of Net Zero action, and given the establishment of the Surrey Climate Commission in 2019, we would hope that Surrey would aim to be one of the mission areas.

We propose that in the absence of central Government support for the Skidmore Review's proposal of ambitious mission programmes for several areas, efforts should be made to secure funding from charitable foundations and the private sector to support such an initiative by pioneering local authorities and their partners.

7.2.2 Local Action in Surrey

Given the response so far from Government to the Skidmore Review and to the many reports that echo its findings and recommendations, it is possible that local authorities will need to continue to improvise their way to better climate governance and effective action for Net Zero and related areas of policy. We draw on the experience and demands of our local respondents in making the following proposals that could be pursued regardless of the action taken at national level to accelerate and clarify climate policy implementation.

—— **FIRST,** we recommend that Surrey County Council, which has helped develop a **'mesh' (Mulgan, 2020) of vertical and horizontal relationships and governance arrangements for climate action** in the county, work with partners to formalize this. The aim would be to develop a local **'climate constitution'** that would clarify responsibilities, show areas of specialism, and make lines of reporting and accountability clear. This exercise could be done in partnership with district, borough and parish councils, and with the Surrey Climate Commission. The model emerging from this exercise, which would build on the County Council's existing governance framework for sustainable development, climate and cross-county partnerships, could be shared with other local authorities.

—— **SECOND**, we have given considerable attention in this project to the under-researched and unsung parish and town council level of local government. We recommend that the many 'micro-local' projects in Surrey be encouraged by the County Council and by the districts and boroughs, and that the **parish and town councils be brought clearly and formally into the emerging local 'climate constitution' or 'mesh' model of local climate governance**. We applaud Surrey County Council's recent initiative in assisting selected parish councils to develop **Parish Climate Action**

Plans, covering some 10% of parishes in the county. We urge that this scheme be closely evaluated and rolled out in due course across the remaining parish and town council areas. The lessons learned need to be applied across the county, and capacity built up to enable the 'micro-local' level to play its full part, especially in relation to citizens' understanding of, and engagement in, climate action in their communities.

—— **THIRD**, we urge the County Council and all its partners in climate policy and action to **lobby central Government in support of the recommendations of the Skidmore Review** (Skidmore, 2023) and of the **CSE/TCPA report to UK Climate Change Committee** (Best et al, 2023). In particular we recommend strong communication of support for Surrey as a pilot authority to lead on climate governance and action (as part of what Skidmore calls a local 'Big Bang' for Net Zero projects); and. in relation to this, for **disaggregration of Surrey's share of the national carbon budget to the county** (Best et al 2023, p.15).

—— **FOURTH**, we recommend that Surrey aim to become an **exemplar of local climate governance in public communication and debate of challenges and progress**. To that end we recommend that the County Council and its partners hold an **annual local climate assembly** to enable a richer flow of experience and ideas vertically and horizontally in the 'mesh' of actors in climate governance, from the county to the parish level, and across sectors. This assembly would present and debate latest data on the local carbon budget, progress and problems, project experiences. It would bring together elected representatives from each level of local government, members of partnership bodies such as the Climate Commission, and representatives of local sectoral associations and climate-related projects.

—— **FIFTH**, we make recommendations that are operationally focused and derived from micro-level Surrey based observations. We suggest that in considering the response to climate change that:

a. a focus on place is important, but to maximise local benefits the most effective scale of delivery needs to be considered.

b. build flexibility of delivery into any county-wide climate framework. Local actors are resourceful and know their community and place.

c. build on the strengths the county's rural base. Many living in rural areas see climate change through the lens of environment and countryside.

d. work across all levels of governance to agree the key messages and goals that can work from micro-local to county-wide.

e. create boundary spanning projects. These offer the opportunity for partners to upskill, to transfer information, deliver results and to build trust amongst local communities.

7.3 Next steps: dissemination, debate, further research and experimentation

This report will be disseminated in the PCAN Network, and the authors will be taking the analysis and findings to participants in the study. We aim to stimulate debate in local forums and develop policy proposals in the light of discussion with stakeholders. We will be working with key actors in Surrey to discuss next steps in the county in the wake of the research and its recommendations – in particular, with Surrey County Council's Greener Futures strategy team and with the Surrey Climate Commission, on both of which one of the authors (Christie) sits. We also aim to develop and conduct further research to evaluate policy developments in the county on Net Zero and climate governance

Surrey Hills

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APPENDIX i: INTERVIEW GUIDE

PCAN Local Climate Governance Project

Version: May 12th 2021: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROGRAMME (45-60 minutes per discussion)

- Question list to be tailored for sector and type of organisation

- Brief introduction to project and researchers

- Data confidentiality confirmed to participants

QUESTIONS:

Please tell us about your role in your organization.

What role(s) do you have in relation to climate policymaking in the organization and related networks or partnerships?

How has climate strategy developed in the organization over recent years?

How do you see the current state of climate policymaking in the county as a whole?

Is it clear what the division of labour is between levels of local government?

Is it clear what the division of labour is among other parts of the public sector?

What do you see as the main areas of progress in relation to climate strategy? Your organization and others in Surrey local government / business / voluntary sector (as appropriate)

What do you see as the main areas of weakness ? Your organization and others in local government / business / voluntary sector (as appropriate)

What do you see happening on climate in partnership organisations – eg Surrey Energy/Environment/Nature Partnerships, LEPs, Health&Wellbeing Boards?

What do you see as the opportunities, problems in mobilisation and coordination of actors in climate initiatives in Surrey, across multiple tiers of local government and a diverse set of strategic partnerships?

What do you see as effective practice for climate governance in an area like Surrey? What examples (if any) would you highlight, and why?

Which sources do you gain information, insights and model projects from? Probe re awareness of PCAN, other local governance networks

How do you think policymakers can best coordinate climate action in an area like Surrey?

What do you see as the role of the Climate Commission?

What are the particular challenges and opportunities in your field? (Eg Housing, Land Use/Biodiversity, Transport, Energy, Economy, Finance)?

What are management tools that you find most useful for climate policymaking and reporting, and what are the gaps in capacity? Databases, reporting, progress tracking etc

Any other points?

APPENDIX ii: DATA CODING

```
Inductive Coding Structure
│
├── Perceptions of current state of local climate governance
│       ├── Existing Governance
│       ├── Local motivation for action
│       ├── Division of labour unclear– community engagement behaviour change
│       ├── In search of mandate
│       ├── Issues of scale in local climate governance
│       ├── Making Progress (ie reports of good practice to date and progress in local climate awareness and policy commitments)
│       └── input from expert actors - nb officer networks
│
├── Strategic challenges and concern
│       ├── Broken MLG ──o── Anti-MLG
│       ├── Consistent direction and support from national government
│       ├── Disconnection between strategy and place based circumstances and action
│       ├── Holistic governance of place
│       ├── Improvisation (improvisatory and compensatory governance theme)
│       ├── Lack of joining up net zero and planning - Broken MLG
│       ├── Visibility-Invisibility
│       ├── Trust across MLG
│       ├── Partial and incoherent MLG
│       └── Stress on technological solutions in NZ governance
│
└── Strategy into action: : practical challenges across levels
        ├── Orchestration of comms and action needed
        ├── Boundary spanning
        ├── Capacity gap, silos, lack of integration
        ├── issues of Knowledge and learning
        ├── Lack of standardized data and tools
        ├── Transience vs stable governance
        ├── Wilful actors
        ├── MLG as roles rather than structures
        ├── Issues of scale in local climate governance
        └── Potential for local orchestration and feedback to higher levels of governance
```

APPENDIX iii: SURREY ENVIRONMEN[T]

- **South East Climate Alliance (SECA)**
  - SECA - Surrey
  - SECA- Kent
  - SECA - Sussex
  - SECA Hampshire

- **Surrey Energy and Sustainability Partnership (CEOs) AND Climate Officers Group**
  - Elmbridge Borough Council
  - Epsom & Ewell Borough Council
  - Guildford Borough Council
  - Mole Valley District Council
  - Reigate & Banstead Borough Council
  - Runnymede Borough Council
  - Spelthorne Borough Council
  - Surrey Heath Borough Council
  - Tandridge District Council
  - Woking Borough Council
  - Waverley Borough Council
  - Surrey County Council
  - Surrey Police

- **Surrey Reuse Network**

- **Energy4All**
  - Wey Valley Solar Schools Surrey

- **Surrey Energy Partnership**
  - University of Surrey Living Lab
  - Surrey County Council
  - SSE Enterprise
  - Enterprise M3
  - ThamesWey Group
  - Surrey Climate Commission

- **Local Groups**
  - **Single Issue**
    - DorkingSoS
    - Gatwick expansion campaign (CAGNE)
    - Weald Action Group
    - Dorking Community Fridge
    - Dorking Foodbank
    - MoleValleyCyclingForum
    - Dorking Solar Group
  - **General Climate/Environmental**
    - Guildford Environment Forum
    - WeACt Environment Action
    - Greening Godalming
    - Greener Godalming
    - Sustainable Business initiative Haselmere
    - Western Villages Env Group
      - Churt Parish Council
      - Thursley Parish Council
      - Wonesh Parish Council
      - Whitly Parish Council
      - Tilford Parish Council

- **Surrey**

T AND CLIMATE NETWORKS

- **Extinction Rebellion (XR)**
  - XR Godalming
  - XR Guildford
  - XR Dorking
  - XRWoking
  - XRFarnham
  - XR Reigate and Redhill
- **Transition Towns**
  - Transition Bookham
  - Transition Dorking
    - Dorking Climate Emergency
    - Dorking Repair Cafe
    - Dorking Community Hub In Pippbrook
    - Dorking Trees4Life
    - Dorking Community Orchard
  - Transition Haslemere: (Plastic Free Haslemere)
  - Transition Farnham: (Plastic Free Farnham)
- **Friends of the Earth**
  - Climate Action Network
    - Redhill & Reigate
    - Cranleigh towards carbon neutral
  - Elmbridge
- **CEC UK Network**
  - Godalming Climate Hub
  - Farnham Climate Hub
  - Staines Climate Hub
  - Mole Valley Climate Hub
  - Zero Carbon Guildford
- **Eco-Churches**
  - Guildford Diocese 50+
- **Eco-Schools**
  - Holy Trinity Westcott
- **Greenpeace**
  - Surrey
- **Wildlife Trusts**
  - Surrey
- **CPRE**
  - Surrey
- **Climate Commissions**
  - Surrey Climate Commission
    - University of Surrey
    - Siemans
    - Surrey Chambers of Commerce
    - Surrey County Council
    - Surrey Wildlife Trust
    - Zero Carbon Guildford
    - Individual members x 6
- **Frack off - extreme energy action network**
  - Horse Hill Frack-off
  - Protect Dunsfold
  - Waverley Against Drilling
  - Surrey against Fracking

APPENDIX iv: ORGANISATIONS

Global

Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate Emergency: https://www.globalcovenantofmayors.org/

Local Governments for Sustainability (ICELI): https://iclei.org/

National

UK100: https://www.uk100.org/

ADEPT: https://adeptnet.org.uk/

Blueprint Coalition: https://www.adeptnet.org.uk/blueprintcoalition (available on ADEPT website)

Climate Change Committee (CCC): https://www.theccc.org.uk/

County Councils Network (CCN): https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/

M10: information on West Yorkshire Combined Authority website

Net Zero Forum: no web link available

National Association of Local Councils (NALC): https://www.nalc.gov.uk/

Place-based Climate Action Network (PCAN): https://pcancities.org.uk/

Regional and Local

Greater South East Net Zero Hub: https://www.gsenetzerohub.org.uk/

South East Climate Alliance (SECA): https://seclimatealliance.uk/

Surrey Climate Commission: https://www.surreyclimate.org.uk/

Surrey County Council – Greener Futures: web content on SCC website

Transport for the South East: https://transportforthesoutheast.org.uk/

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