

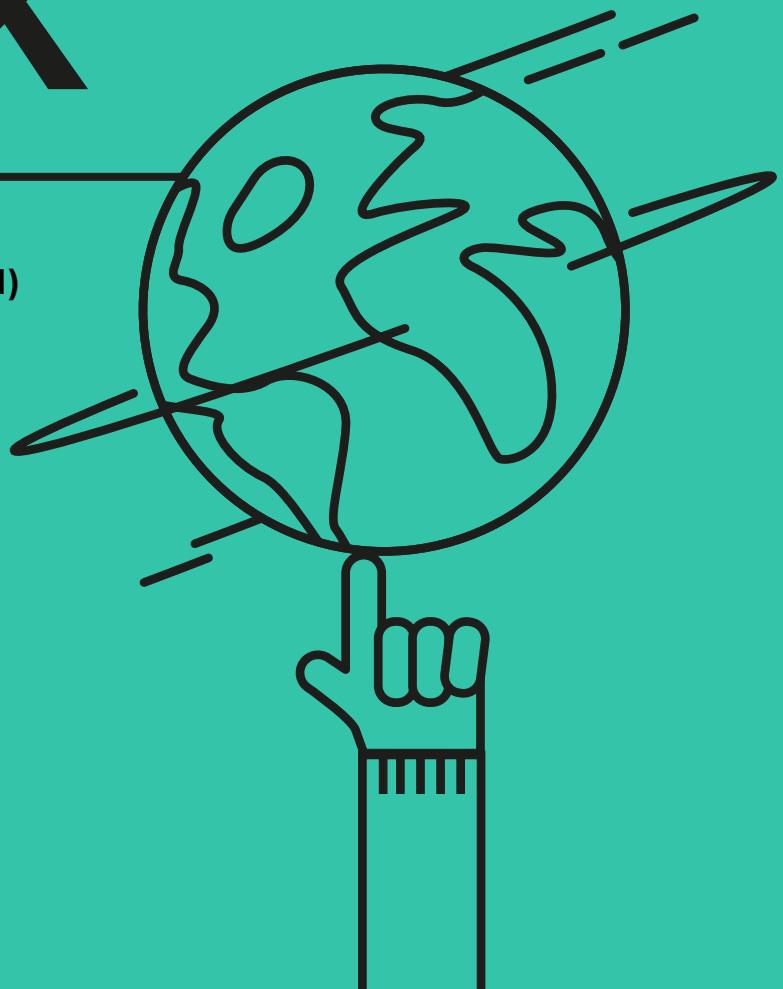


PLACE-BASED
CLIMATE ACTION
NETWORK

MARCH 2021

TRENDS IN LOCAL CLIMATE ACTION IN THE UK

A REPORT BY THE PLACE-BASED
CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK (PCAN)



Economic
and Social
Research Council

ABOUT PCAN

The Place-based Climate Action Network (PCAN) is funded by a Climate Change Network Plus award from the 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 now at regional level (Yorkshire and Humber).

PCAN builds on the policy connections, networking capacity and research strengths of its host institutions at the London School of Economics and Political Science, the University of Leeds, Queen’s University Belfast and the University of Edinburgh.

This report takes stock of local climate action in the UK in 2020.

The views in this report are those of the authors and not the ESRC.

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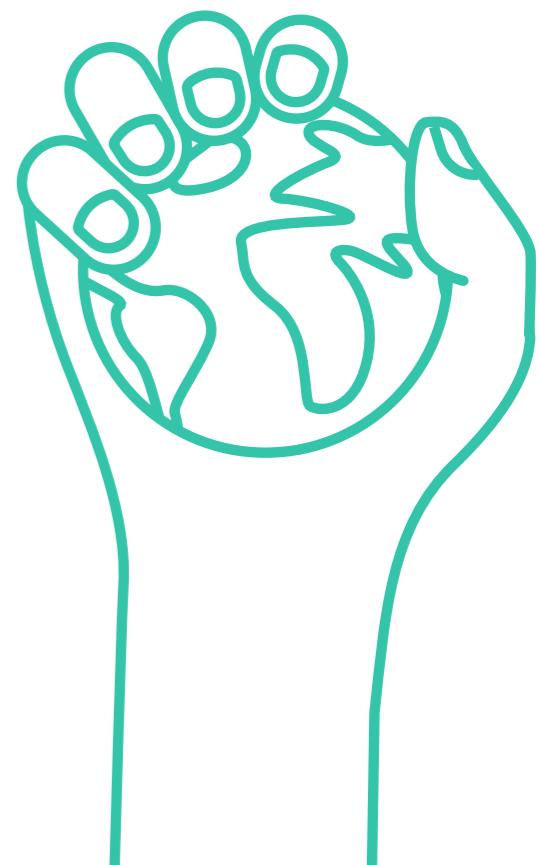
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KEY FINDINGS

There is strong, vibrant and broad-based support for more climate action at the local level in the UK. Three out of four local authorities – 319 in total – have declared a climate emergency. Climate emergency declarations have been instigated from across the political spectrum, with the support of civil society.

However, by the end of 2020, only 62% of local authorities had followed up their emergency declarations with a new or updated climate action plan. Barriers that hold back local climate action include a lack of capacity and expertise within local authorities; stretched funding; poor coordination with and disorganised support from national government; and institutional complexities in areas such as local transport and housing. Many of these constraints have been exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic.

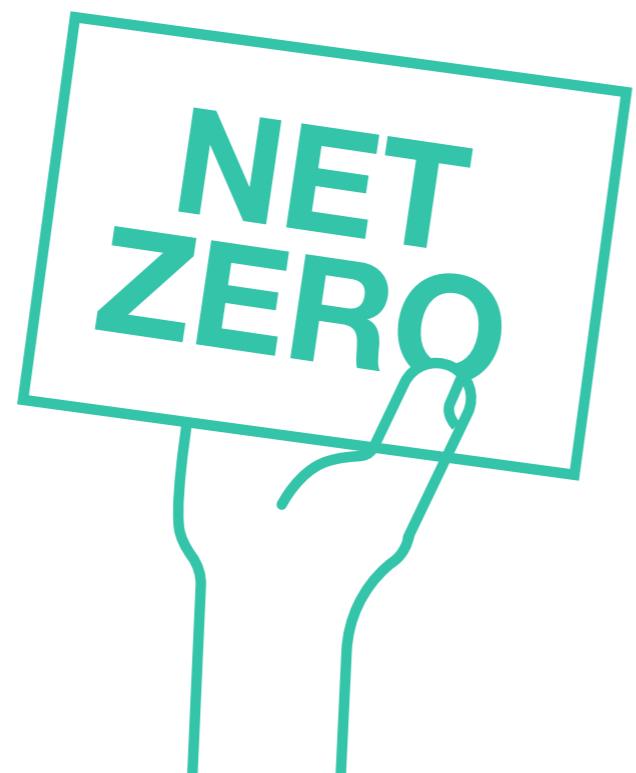
The overwhelming focus of local climate action has been on reducing greenhouse gas emissions (mitigation). Despite the fact that managing the physical risks of climate change (adaptation) has strong local salience in areas such as flood protection, adaptation features in less than 12% of climate emergency declarations. In contrast, there is a desire among local actors to combine climate action with strategies to tackle social inequalities, promote economic regeneration and ensure a just transition.

We are in a period of extensive experimentation with new institutional models that promote more inclusive, partnership-based approaches to local climate action. There is a growing number of local climate commissions, action networks, climate partnerships and participatory forums like climate assemblies and climate juries. Also emerging are new analytical tools (such as place-based net-zero carbon roadmaps) that help local actors to structure and formulate their plans.

The local private sector participates actively in these new partnerships, particularly in the independent climate commissions and local authority-led forums. Participants represent companies from all sectors and of all sizes, but they have in common their strong links to the local community.

We are starting to see the first pilots to raise local finance through climate-themed financial instruments like climate emergency bonds. However, compared to other countries, the UK has a very concentrated financial sector with few locally-rooted financial institutions.

There are notable knowledge gaps that inhibit the effectiveness of local climate action. There is a paucity of local data on council/district-level emissions and emissions sources, emission reduction potentials and mitigation costs. The knowledge platforms where local actors can share their experience and compare good practice are still in their infancy. And the long-term effectiveness of new institutional models like climate commissions and climate juries has yet to be ascertained in detailed evaluation studies.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Local authorities should:

- Follow up their climate emergency declarations with locally supported, evidence-based climate action plans that tackle both mitigation and adaptation. The climate emergency narrative will get devalued, and the window of opportunity will close, unless declarations are turned into tangible actions.
- Adopt a partnership-based approach to local climate action that mobilises the energy and expertise of non-state private and civic actors, as well as the wider public sector. Relationship building and the co-creation of a shared vision and new capacities for delivery are vital components of local climate action.
- Develop climate finance strategies both to mobilise local savings and to attract wider pools of capital to fund the implementation of their climate action plans. It is critical that these climate finance strategies enable transitions to be delivered by and for local communities, rather than being done to them.

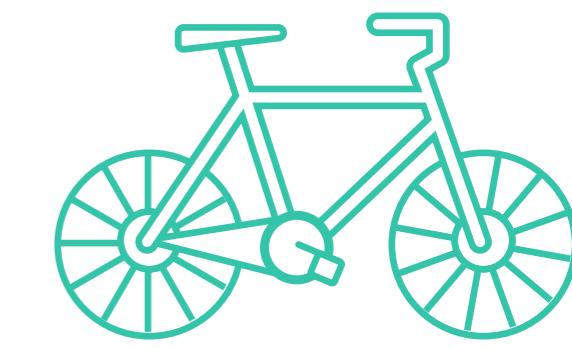
Local climate change communities should:

- Broaden the scope of climate action beyond emission reduction (mitigation) to encompass measures to reduce physical climate risks (adaptation) and tackle social and economic inequalities (just transition). Sustainable recovery strategies from COVID-19 have the potential to be drivers of community resilience, job creation and economic renewal, as well as the zero-carbon transition.
- Formalise the drive for zero-carbon communities through institutional structures like climate commissions. They can be an effective mechanism for local collaboration and a platform to connect public, private and third party actors.

→ Collaborate with their local university, national government and local authorities to improve the knowledge base on local climate action. Local action plans need to be informed by the most recent data on local emissions, emission reduction potentials and sustainable growth opportunities. Local actors also need better platforms to share their experience and learn from each other.

National government and the devolved administrations should:

- Recognise and leverage the agency and power of local communities in the fight against climate change. Local climate action is a critical channel for the delivery of national policies; it is rooted and responsive to local needs, and it is often more ambitious than national action.
- Put in place a coherent framework to support local climate action, backed by appropriate centrally-driven funds, resources and skills. Climate action requires joined-up interplay between national and local action. Local action without national support will be challenging, national policy without local buy-in will fail.
- Tackle the policy and institutional barriers that hold back local climate action. National policy uncertainty and top-down approaches are often enough to thwart or frustrate place-based climate actions and all of the energy, commitment and resources they can mobilise.



1.0

INTRODUCTION

This report surveys the rapidly changing landscape of local climate action in the UK. Local authorities and local communities have emerged as an important, dynamic driving force of climate change action. The report documents the measures taken by local authorities, the growth in community-focused, participatory initiatives and the role played by local businesses and the financial sector.

Our findings are based on conversations with local policy makers and practitioners, the review of relevant documents and our own impressions as practitioners and researchers in the field.

The report is descriptive. It provides a snapshot of the state of play in place-based climate action at the end of 2020. However, it is motivated by a normative appreciation of the multi-level and multi-player dimensions of effective climate change policy, which are worth spelling out at the outset.

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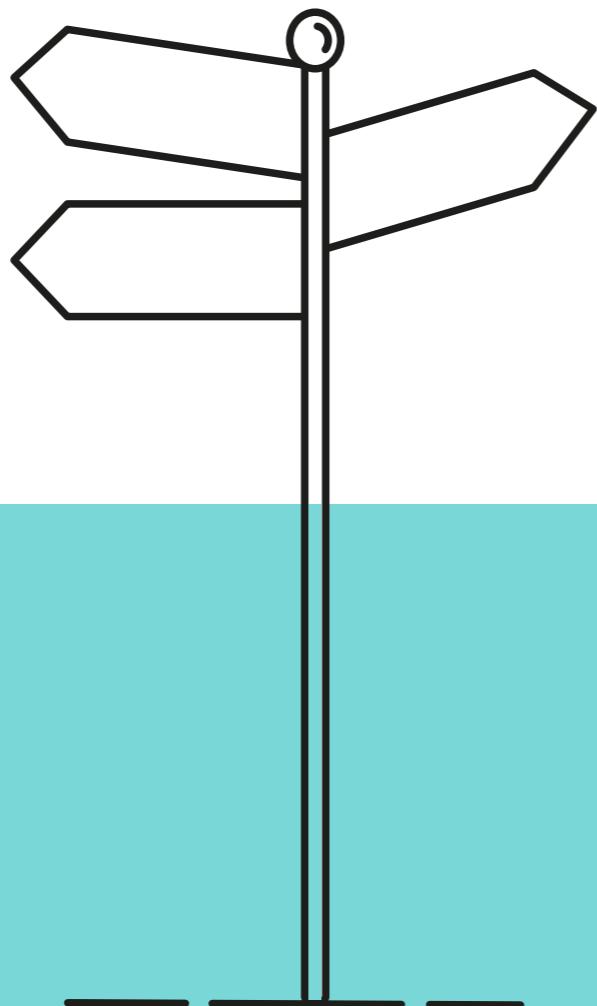
1.1

THE MULTI-LEVEL DIMENSION

Climate change is a global problem, but solving it requires strong action at the local level. Many of the interventions that are needed are rooted in place and require the participation of local actors, businesses and citizens. In order to be fair, inclusive and just, climate action needs to be done by, and for, local communities, rather than done to them or imposed from above. This will allow climate actions to be adapted to suit the context for their application.

A joined up approach is needed to connect international, national, regional and local activities – not only in a top-down way where the response to a global crisis starts at a global scale and works down, but also in a bottom-up way where local initiatives and innovations effectively feed into national and international approaches. Climate action needs to be coordinated with positive feedback loops across multiple scales, levels and processes through which to learn from and reflect on any negative impacts that arise.

We therefore need to ask whether these multi-level links and two-way flows of information, understanding and support are in place and working. In the UK context, a key question is how national-level policy is informed by initiatives developed in the devolved governments/assemblies and local governments across Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, or in the different layers of local government across England. [NB: “Local government” is used throughout to refer to local government, councils and local authorities.]



“

A joined up approach is needed to connect international, national, regional and local activities”

PLACE-BASED CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK

1.2

THE MULTI-ACTOR DIMENSION

Effective climate action depends not only on the role of government and the policies and plans it puts in place, but also on the energy and investment of non-state private and civic actors. This is especially the case at the local level, where local government capacities are limited and climate action therefore depends not only on national government support, but also on the active buy-in of people and communities, and businesses and economies. One of the most common limitations at the local level often relates to resource, including staff and funding, and while higher levels of government often influence this, it is also dictated by the priorities of local authorities themselves. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, many of the resources originally allocated for climate action have been redeployed.

Climate action can depend on changes in the approach to government, and in the roles of other public, private and third sector actors. With perhaps increasingly limited capacities, local government can often be more effective where it acts through partnership-based approaches that facilitate and enable climate actions in the wider community.

“

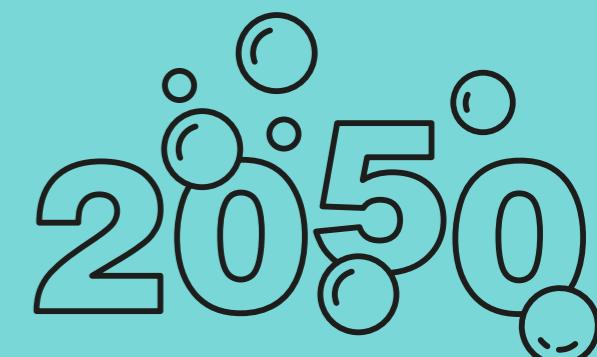
Is there buy-in and capacity to deliver local climate initiatives, especially where ambitious targets have been set through climate emergency declarations?”

In turn, those wider public, private and civic actions can be more effective where they are supported and coordinated to ensure sharing of scarce resources and learning of key lessons. Such partnerships can help unlock new resources rather than filling the gaps left by austerity measures. This needs to happen not only within different locations, but through networks that connect different place-based climate actions.

We therefore need to ask whether such approaches and capacities are being put in place and whether they are working. For example, is there buy-in and capacity to deliver local climate initiatives, especially where ambitious targets have been set through climate emergency declarations? And how do the relative priorities for both mitigation and adaptation shift when we approach climate change through a local lens?

1.3

IMPACT OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

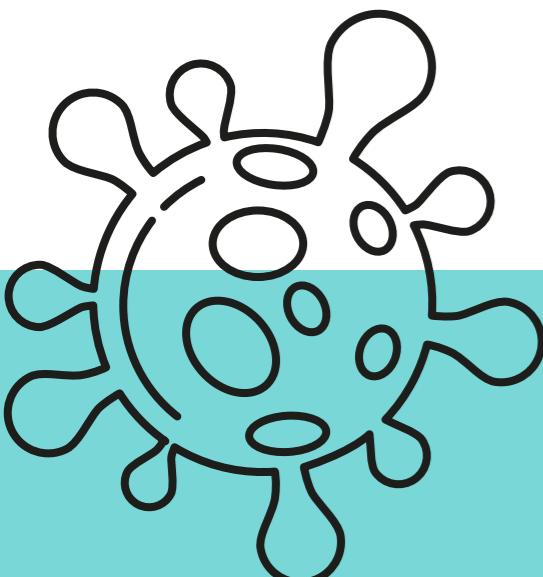


1.3

IMPACT OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

The coronavirus pandemic broke out at a critical time for local climate action. Between November 2018 to December 2020, three out of four local councils in the UK declared a climate emergency and promised a step change in their climate change mitigation.

The virus struck just as councils began to act upon these declarations. It was a substantial task, especially for councils that did not have carbon management or local climate plans before they made their climate emergency declarations. Many councils also promised public consultation or participation exercises when crafting their climate action plans, adding an important but time-intensive layer of democracy to the process.



These resource-intensive plans were severely disrupted by the pandemic. National lockdowns used to control the coronavirus pandemic consumed precious council resources and created huge uncertainty for short to medium term financial budgeting. Public participation exercises had to be shifted online, postponed or cancelled, presenting a huge delay for many councils' climate action plans. Over the summer of 2020 (as restrictions changed and society became more comfortable with online technologies), some councils were able to resume work on their climate action plans and public participation exercises. However, disruption is expected to continue for some part of 2021 at least.

Despite these challenges, progress was made and many councils have produced climate action plans. In a period of severe financial and logistical constraint, some councils turned to private and third sector organisations to help develop and implement their plans, bolstering the participatory nature of local climate action.



National lockdowns used to control the coronavirus pandemic consumed precious council resources and created huge uncertainty for short to medium term financial budgeting”

1.4

A SOCIAL MANDATE FOR CLIMATE ACTION

The Peoples' Climate Vote, conducted in 2020 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) revealed that over 64% of people worldwide recognise that climate change is a global emergency.

The poll was conducted in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and received responses from 1.2 million people from 50 countries (the largest survey of public opinion on climate change to date) and 59% of respondents said the world should do everything that is necessary and urgently to address the climate emergency. A recent Ipsos Mori global poll found that 86% of adults “want the world to change significantly and become more sustainable and equitable rather than returning to how it was before COVID-19”.

However, while there is an appetite for sustainability initiatives, the UK's local councils are not financially or logically equipped to deliver this change. Recognising this challenge, our report presents case studies, networks and initiatives to support local councils to initiate the type of sustainability projects that the public wants.



86%

of adults “want the world to change significantly and become more sustainable and equitable rather than returning to how it was before COVID-19”

2.0

THE GOVERNANCE OF LOCAL CLIMATE ACTION IN THE UK

IN THIS SECTION

2.1 NATIONAL PICTURE →

2.2 LOCAL AUTHORITIES →



Credit: Alena Kravchenko

2.1

NATIONAL PICTURE

The last few years have seen a wave of energy and ambition to accelerate action on climate change, both globally and across the UK. From the publication of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on *Global Warming of 1.5°C* in 2018, to growing civil society calls for climate action (including Greta Thunberg's "School strikes for climate" and Extinction Rebellion's global climate movement), culminating in the declarations of climate emergencies all over the world and a range of tools and resources to support the delivery of these declarations.

Much of local climate action focuses on achieving net-zero and interim emissions targets. There are lesser efforts on adaptation, the focus for which tends to be more on the delivery of projects relating to wildfire protection and biodiversity, sustainable urban drainage, flood awareness campaigns and contingency plans for vulnerable people (as revealed in an LGA survey of local council environment directors in February 2020).

Net-zero targets

Net-zero targets have been established and countries are submitting revised and more ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement ahead of the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), which is due to be hosted by the UK in Glasgow in November 2021.

The UK has built a strong narrative on climate legislation with a combination of targets and policies: the Sixth Carbon Budget; the 2019 target to reach net-zero emissions by 2050; the submission of its NDC (our first; previously we submitted as part of the EU bloc); the UK's adaptation communication to the UNFCCC; the 2008 Climate Change Act, Scotland's 2045 net-zero target, and the 2010 Flood and Water Management Act.

Progress on adaptation to climate risks and opportunities has been slow in the UK, despite it being a major pillar of the UK's Climate Change Act. The Act does not set any targets for climate change adaptation, but sets out commitments on analysis and reporting. The UK has conducted two Climate Change Risk Assessments (CCRA) in 2012 and 2017, with the third due in 2022, and the UK government responds with a National Adaptation Programme to address the risks outlined in the CCRA (this applies to England only).

The Climate Change Committee, which is the UK's independent adviser on tackling climate change, provides a report every two years assessing progress on adapting to climate change. The most recent assessment, published in 2019, demonstrated that the UK is not prepared to adapt to a 2°C rise in temperature, with many national plans and policies failing to fully acknowledge long-term climate change.

A 2020 conference, Is the UK on track to adapt to climate change?, which was co-hosted by the Climate Change Committee along with the National Centre for Atmospheric Science and the SPF UK Climate Resilience Programme champions team at the University of Leeds, made the point that the global average temperature rise could be above 3°C.

National Indicators removed

National level targets to reduce emissions are well established but local level initiatives have gradually been discontinued and further local action on climate change has often been on a voluntary basis. For example, the UK's National Performance Framework generated data, through a set of National Indicators (NIs), provided by local authorities and local strategic partnerships' self assessments on progress on climate action. However in 2011, these NIs were removed, including NI185 "CO₂ reduction from local authority operations", NI 186: "Per capita CO₂ reduction in the local authority area" and NI188 on "Planning to Adapt for Climate Change".

Removal of these indicators means that, as of 2011, there have been no statutory targets or requirements to report such data. Nevertheless, councils do still have statutory obligations under planning regulations, for example, to take climate into account when developing local plans. This excludes Scotland which does have statutory duties on climate change through the Public Bodies Climate Change Reporting Duties.

While these indicators were not perfect, councils signing up to report on them represented a commitment to reduce emissions, and evidence suggests that they helped to raise the profile of emissions reductions in local authorities. Some local authorities continue to monitor their own emissions: a survey conducted in February 2020 of Directors of Environment for councils in England showed that 72% of local authorities surveyed measured their Scope 1 and 2 emissions and 36% measure their Scope 3 emissions*.

*Scope 1 emissions refers to direct emissions from owned or controlled sources emitted directly into the atmosphere, such as fuel combustion and vehicle emissions; Scope 2 (energy indirect) emissions refers to emissions into the atmosphere they are associated with. See Defra Guidance on how to measure and report your greenhouse gas emissions.



BARRIERS TO LOCAL CLIMATE ACTION

Green Alliance's 2020 report, The Local Climate Challenge, highlights the following barriers to local climate action:

- Lack of capacity and expertise
- Limited and stretched funding
- Impact of national policy limiting local action
- Barriers to integrated local transport systems
- Lack of clarity around housing standard.

The report states that in order to achieve the UK's Sixth Carbon Budget, governments, regional agencies and local authorities must collaborate closely. It identifies the need to design and implement a framework that combines national and local climate action, providing appropriate finance to local authorities, flexibility about how local authorities deliver their plans, and coherent facilitation of powers and policy.

Importance of co-ordination

As stated in a 2020 National Audit Office report, all government bodies have an important role to play in achieving net-zero, including the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), HM Treasury, the Cabinet Office, the Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra), the Department for Transport (DfT), and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Currently there is very little coordination between the local and national levels and, in England and Northern Ireland, there is no concrete plan outlining the role of local authorities in delivering net-zero.

Climate Local, a Local Government Association initiative launched in 2012 and supported by the Climate Ready service, was designed to support local authority action on climate change. It provided a platform to demonstrate leadership, share experiences and to provide practical tools and advice to councils on climate issues, and although it stopped taking on new councils in 2014/2015, many councils that had signed up continued to follow through with the initiative. In Scotland, Adaptation Scotland provides support to local authorities on climate adaptation through their Adaptation Learning Exchange (ALE) and Benchmarking Working Group.

There is evidence of national level support for local climate action, such as the Local Energy Programme, launched in 2017 as part of the Green Growth Strategy and supporting Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), local authorities and local organisations through Local Energy Hubs. Other initiatives include the Rural Community Energy Fund, Green Home Grants, and a £250 million emergency active travel fund (in response to the coronavirus pandemic). This is not an exhaustive list but shows the range of options available.

New framework required

Despite the availability of national funding to support local transitions to net-zero, and the ambitions set out in local climate emergency declarations, local authorities lack adequate expertise and funding with an “enabling central government framework” to deliver on their plans. Conversations with council officials reveal that the process required to apply for some of this funding can be overly bureaucratic and resource intensive, with lead times between announcements of opportunities and deadlines for submissions sometimes unrealistically short.

With support, a new framework has been proposed by Green Alliance to set out the expectations faced by local authorities to deliver climate action and overcome barriers to decarbonisation (see panel, p15). This framework addresses some of the limitations experienced by local authorities and includes at its core a process through which to monitor and report emissions at the local level, alongside efficient communication with central government, addressing skills gaps, adequate funding and reforms. This framework is presented in the context of decarbonisation and achieving net-zero targets and we would urge that such a framework also consider climate change adaptation needs. As emphasised by the Local Government Association (LGA), careful scrutiny of climate plans and progress must occur.

Access to data

Another challenging issue is that of data. While the UK is a leader in the provision of socio-economic and environmental data, there are some significant gaps and limitations. Such data can be difficult to access, with some datasets from the Office for National Statistics having different levels of protected access, and others being spread across a large number of websites (e.g. BEIS, ONS, EPC, HEED).

National-level data can vary, for example with Northern Ireland often not included in major government survey datasets, and its existence is often unknown by local actors. The way in which data is assembled and presented can also be opaque at times and the granularity of data varies significantly. Data on adaptation is much less available, and data on industrial actors is mostly absent.

2.2

LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The structure of local government varies between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Since 2010, a number of funding cuts and changes in governance have occurred under subsequent coalition and Conservative governments (Figure 1).

Changes in resource spending on local government by UK nation (real terms)

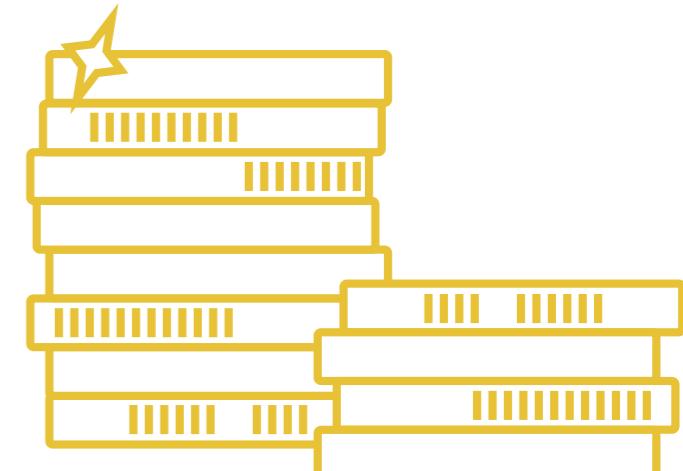


Figure 1: Changes in resource spending on local government by UK nation (real terms).
Retrieved from [Institute for Government 2020](#)

Source: Institute for Government analysis of HM Treasury, Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses, 2015 to 2019; and Office for National Statistics, Country and regional public sector finances expenditure tables, 2019. The analysis covers identifiable resource spending only. It excludes any spending on health, education, and public order and safety. Funding received from DWP for Housing Benefit is also excluded. The functions of local government in Northern Ireland are significantly more limited than in Great Britain and Northern Ireland is therefore not shown.

£250 MILLION

emergency active travel fund to
create new era of cycling and walking
(in response to the coronavirus pandemic)



ENGLAND

The [UK government's website](#) describes succinctly the structure of local government. There are 343 local authorities in England, made up of five different types: county councils; district councils; unitary authorities; metropolitan districts and London boroughs. The majority of England has two tiers, county and district, which share responsibility for council services. The rest are 'single tier' organisations. Among these, unitary authorities are largely in cities, but can also include urban areas and larger towns and even a few shire county councils. Metropolitan districts (of which there are 36) are governed by mayors and cover much larger urban areas (such as South Yorkshire). Some shire district councils and all metropolitan district councils are referred to as a borough or city council. Single tier authorities, especially in urban areas, work in partnership with other authorities to deliver services (e.g. transport) that are best organised on a larger scale through combined authorities.



Local authorities in England receive the majority of their income from three sources: council tax receipts, the retention of a proportion of business rates raised within the authority area, and central government funding grants. Successive governments in the past decades have imposed reductions to the central grant funding awarded to local authorities. In England, these austerity measures have meant that councils cut spending by 21% between 2010/11-2018/19 – over 10% more than the cuts made in Scottish and Welsh councils (see Figure 1).

In England, [2018/19 funding](#) came from central government grants (49.4%), income raised locally (49%) and from local authority reserves (1%). The Government has committed to phasing out central grants, whilst allowing councils to retain a greater share of revenues from business rates. This means that English councils will be more reliant on revenues raised locally.

21%

spending cuts in English councils between 2010/11-2018/19

SCOTLAND

In [Scotland](#), local government comprises 32 local authorities. Each local authority is governed by a council, made up of councillors directly elected by the residents of the area they represent (some are cities, like Edinburgh and Glasgow, and some areas are more widespread, for example, Argyll and Bute, Highlands). Councils operate independently of central government and are accountable to their electorates for the services they provide.

Scottish local authorities receive the [majority of their funding](#) from the Scottish Government through 'Aggregate External Finance' (now known as Total Revenue Funding) which is made up of three elements: Specific Revenue Grants, Non-Domestic Rate Income (NDRI) and Revenue Support Grant (RSG).



In [2018/19](#), 55% came from national government (39% general revenue funding and 16% from grants) and 45% was locally sourced (7% housing revenue accounts and rents, 10% customer and client receipts, 13% council tax and 15% non-domestic rates).

Revenue for Scottish local authorities has fallen by 7.6% in real terms between 2013-2018. The Scottish Parliament has increased the tax on highly valued households while reducing revenue funding, meaning that Scottish councils are becoming increasingly reliant on local taxation.

NORTHERN IRELAND AND WALES

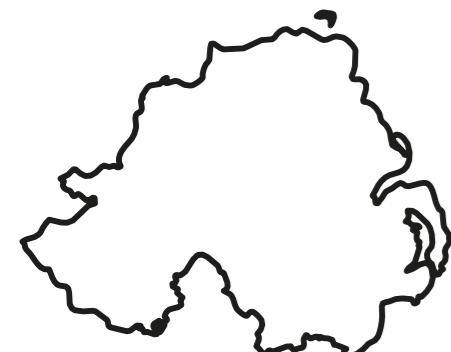
55%

of funding for Scottish local authorities came from national government in 2018/2019

NORTHERN IRELAND

Local government in Northern Ireland comprises 11 districts, with each district governed by a borough council, district council or, in a few cases, city council (Belfast, Lisburn and Castlereagh). Compared to the rest of the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland local councils have a smaller range of functions – education, road building and housing are excluded – although they are responsible for local economic and cultural development, planning and waste.

Notably, the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) provides funding for networking and knowledge sharing initiatives like [Climate Northern Ireland](#) and Northern Ireland Environment Link. Since Northern Ireland's local authorities have fewer essential duties, they receive less money from central government. This can be broken down to 70% from district rates, which are a property tax similar to council tax; 8% from NI Executive grants, mostly provided through Department of Communities (DfC), and 22% from fees and charges for certain services e.g. licences.



DAERA

provides funding for networking and knowledge sharing initiatives in Northern Ireland

WALES

Wales is made up of 22 unitary authorities, which can be county or county borough councils. Just a few of these are called city councils (Newport City Council, Cardiff Council, City and County of Swansea). All are members of the Welsh Local Government Association. 730 community and town councils provide hyper-local services. Welsh local authority services typically include planning, leisure and tourism, transport and highways, housing and social services.

Funding for Welsh local authorities comes primarily from Welsh Government grants (67%), supported by council tax (20%) and business rates revenues (13%). The amount has fallen 5% in real terms from 2011-2020 or a 12% reduction in public service spending between 2009-2015.



730

community and town councils in Wales provide hyper-local services

SUPPORTING LOCAL OFFICERS AND POLITICIANS TO IMPLEMENT RAPID CLIMATE ACTION

**REBECCA WILLIS
(LANCASTER UNIVERSITY)**

There is very little research into the lived experience and motivation of decision-makers, yet a rapid transition to net-zero requires their support and active engagement. Questions that need exploring include, “How are ambitious decarbonisation targets, and the strategy required to meet them, understood by officials and politicians at local level?” and “How does rapid climate action ‘feel’ to them, in the context of their working lives?”.

This PCAN-funded project led by Lancaster University engaged with decision-makers and academic researchers in three cities – Edinburgh, Belfast and Leeds – within the PCAN network to explore these questions in a spirit of collaborative enquiry. The study interrogated the implicit norms and assumptions that govern their work, and facilitated constructive dialogue collaborated with decision-makers to develop new working practices to enable the shift to zero carbon.

The project has shed light as to the different strategies adopted by officers and politicians to adopt the targets:

- *Crusaders* seek to embed climate action in the council and beyond, seeing their role as “getting the message out” and “changing the culture”. They work strategically to establish climate action as an urgent priority that can’t be sidelined, and to shift the accepted range of what is achievable.
- *Entrepreneurs* use their knowledge of existing concerns, situations and ways of working to seek out opportunities to promote climate action. They look for synergies with existing programmes and priorities and try to link the strategic to everyday routines and decisions.
- *Pragmatists* recognise the importance of the climate agenda, while retaining a strong focus on pre-existing personal and council objectives and on how strategic ambition can (or can’t) be delivered through existing procedures.
- *Weavers* focus on collaboration and connections, aiming to mesh together agreed-upon high-level aims with the specific contested measures needed to achieve them, and to build and maintain trust and support.

3.0

LOCAL AUTHORITY-LED CLIMATE ACTION

IN THIS SECTION

- 3.1 CLIMATE EMERGENCY DECLARATIONS** →
- 3.2 POLITICAL SUPPORT** →
- 3.3 STATE OF PROGRESS** →
- 3.4 LOCAL AUTHORITY-LED CLIMATE ACTION: CASE STUDIES** →
- 3.5 DELIVERING A JUST TRANSITION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL** →



Credit: Flavio Vallenari

3.0

Local authority-led climate action is growing across the UK. For example, the Greater London Authority's London Environment Strategy (2018) and Zero Carbon London Plan aim to reduce CO₂ emissions by 40% by 2018-2022 and become zero carbon by 2050. Other examples include Cornwall Unitary Authority's 2019 Climate Action Plan, which outlines the current state of climate action and plans to become carbon neutral by 2030. Bristol's 2019 One City Climate Strategy outlines cross-sectorial steps to reduce direct and indirect carbon emissions to net-zero while preparing to adapt to projected impacts from climate change.

Further north, Leeds published its Climate Emergency Update Report in 2020, detailing the Council's response to its public consultation on climate change (hosted jointly with Leeds Climate Commission), with plans ranging from flood alleviation schemes, a public transport investment programme, and energy efficiency measures. Greater Manchester's Five Year Environment Plan (2019-2024) aims for carbon neutrality by 2038 and to better prepare for the impacts of climate change through cross-sectorial targets.

In Scotland, Dundee City Council has co-designed a partnership Climate Action Plan to achieve net-zero emissions by 2045, as has East Lothian Council with a net-zero target of 2045.

3.1

CLIMATE EMERGENCY DECLARATIONS

The UK, like other countries, has seen a proliferation of declarations of local climate emergencies. Globally, the first climate emergency was made by Darebin in Australia in 2016 while the first climate emergency declaration in the UK was made in November 2018 in Bristol, with UK Parliament declaring a climate emergency in May 2019.

At the end of 2020, 319 of 404 local governments and eight combined authorities in the United Kingdom had made climate emergency declarations (for a detailed breakdown, see appendices on the PCAN website). There is significant variation in the scope, content and ambitions laid out in each council's climate emergency declaration. For example, declarations predominantly focus on climate change mitigation and less than 12% of declarations also pledge to improve their efforts to adapt to climate change, while others declared ecological and climate emergencies (e.g. Doncaster, Surrey, Glasgow).

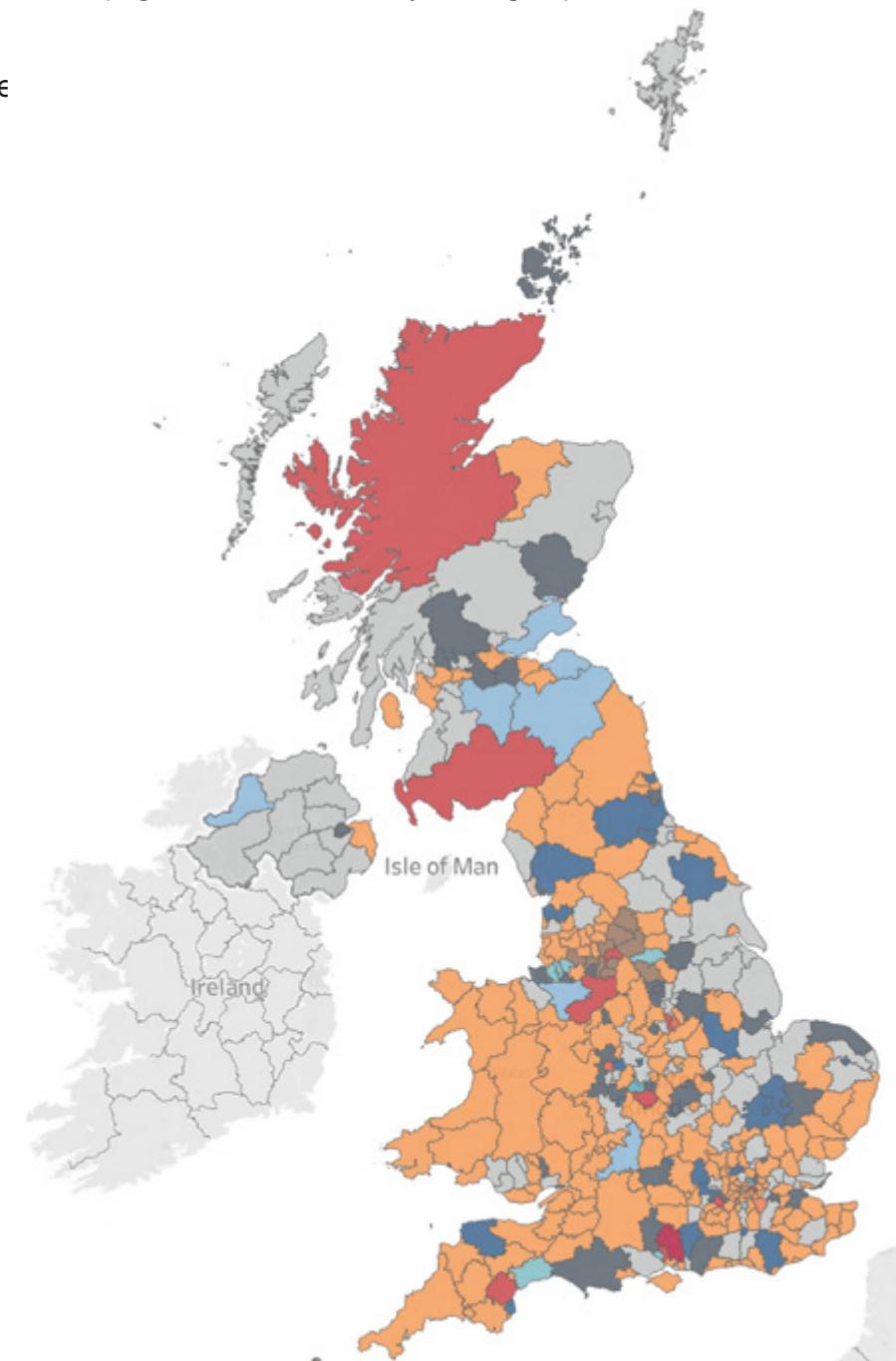
Figure 2: Map of climate emergency de

Target date

- 2024
- 2025
- 2027
- 2028
- 2029
- 2030
- 2035
- 2037
- 2038
- 2040
- 2041
- 2045
- 2050
- No target date
- No declaration

Climate emergency declarations

Climate emergency declarations in the UK as of 5 November 2020, using data from Aether. An interactive version of this map is available [here](#).



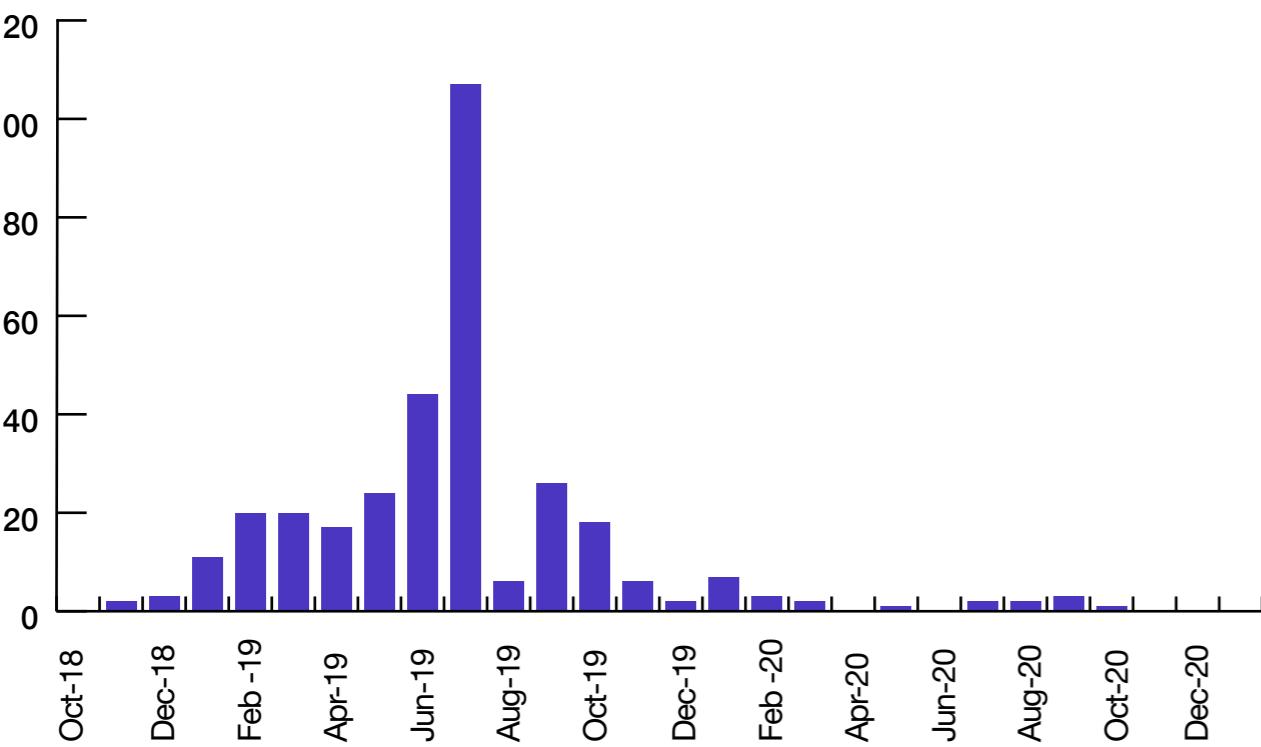


Figure 3: Number of climate emergency declarations made by councils in the UK per month (including eight combined authorities)¹

Each declaration shows that the elected council acknowledges the severity of the climate crisis and states that the council recognises the scale of the threat and will strive to do more to tackle the issue. The declarations inspired a significant number of councils to adopt net-zero targets well ahead of the passing of the national legislation in June 2019. Some local authorities, however, have not declared (e.g. Allerdale District Council, Bridgend Council) but nevertheless have described climate change as an emergency requiring an emergency response, or refer to the devolved government's declaration (in the case of Bridgend Council, this refers to the Welsh declaration) and have a climate emergency working group. The lack of a declaration of a climate emergency is therefore not necessarily indicative of a lack of action or ambition to act on climate change.

With climate emergencies declared, the question remains how these will translate, if at all, into meaningful climate action on the ground. Guides by ARUP, Ricardo, Friends of the Earth and Ashden, among others, provide a useful starting point to do so, with a focus on practical measures local authorities can do. They include topics such as raising funds, transport, waste, buildings, power, land use, influencing others, and higher level approaches such as focusing on leadership, strategy, capacity, action plans, targets, finance and risk, innovation, partners, and behaviour.

3.2

POLITICAL SUPPORT

Proportional to the number of councils controlled, Conservative, Independent and Unionist controlled councils have the lowest number of climate emergency declarations (Figure 4). By contrast, councils controlled by Labour, Liberal Democrats, Sinn Fein and Plaid Cymru representatives had a higher frequency of declaring climate emergencies.

This implies that support for acknowledging the severity of the threat posed by climate change was more consistently supported by left-wing or centre-ground parties. This is reinforced by the frequency that councillors representing centre and left-wing parties proposed emergency declarations to council.

Whether a council had evidenced an interest in tackling climate change before the 2018-2020 emergency declarations was mirrored by those councils declaring a climate emergency. Overall, 229 councils had active climate action strategies in 2019. Of those councils with active climate action strategies, 80% went on to declare a climate emergency.

By contrast 60% of councils that did not have an active climate action strategy in 2019 have declared a climate emergency. This suggests that declarations were more popular among councils that had some pre-existing interest in tackling climate change.

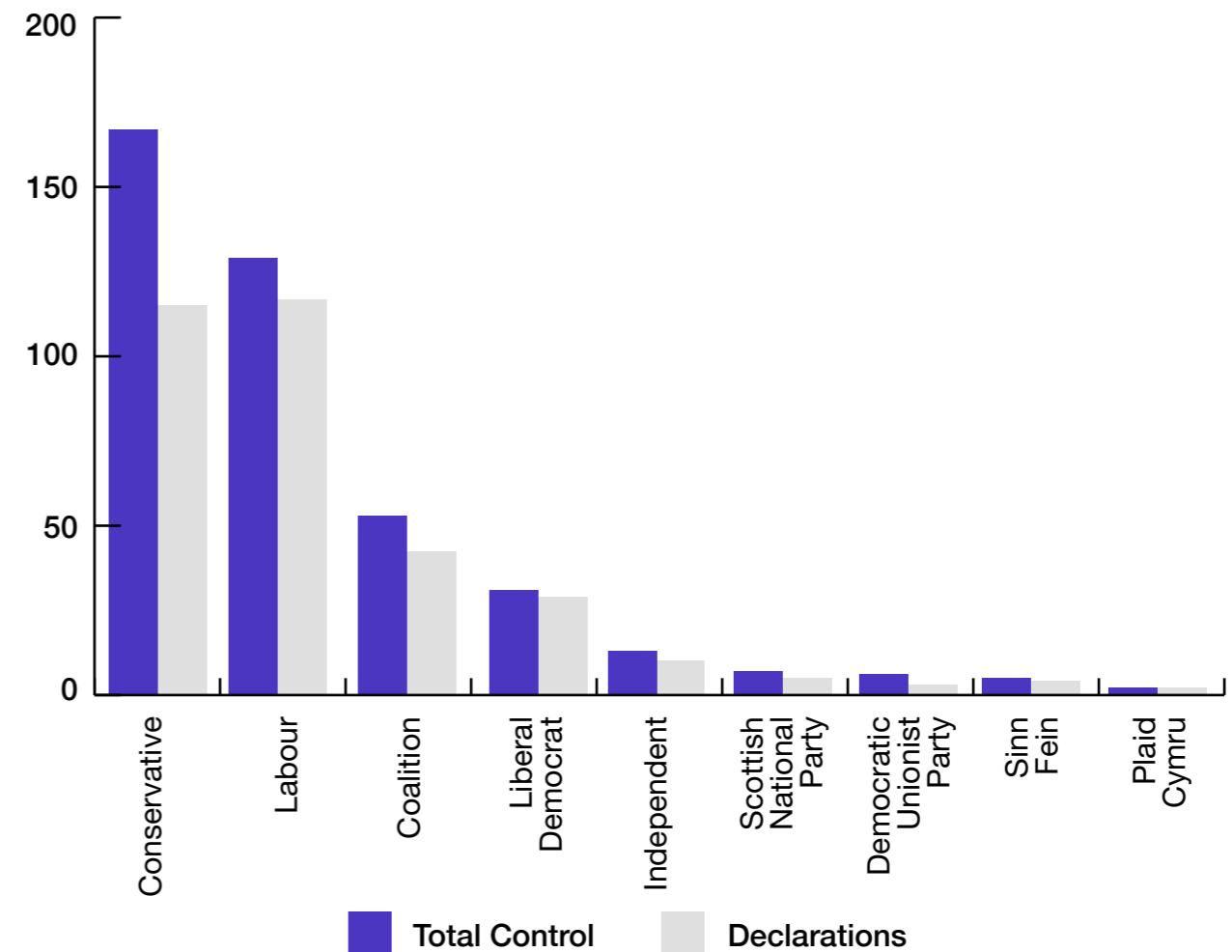


Figure 4: Climate emergency declarations by political party¹

¹Data for Figures 3, 4 and 5 is available in the online appendix at <https://pcancities.org.uk>

LOCAL TARGETS

Eighty per cent of councils have established a form of target to reduce their operational emissions, mainly targeting Scope 1 and 2 emissions. Overall, there are significantly more councils with operational targets than borough-wide targets, reflecting the difficulty for local authorities to address borough-wide emissions which are not directly under their control.

A “confirmed target” refers to an announced target that has been reiterated in a climate action plan, in a council press release or direct communication with the council. With this in mind, 19% of operational targets and 16% of borough-wide targets have not been confirmed since they were first announced. This creates some uncertainty regarding whether or not these targets will be formally adopted in these councils’ climate change strategies.

With respect to authority-wide emissions, 104 of 327 councils that have declared a climate emergency (including eight combined authorities) have set an ambitious net-zero target of 2030, whereas 86 councils have set a less stringent target date of 2050, aligning with the national target. Another 66 have set dates between 2030 and 2049, ahead of the national target. Nottingham County Council has set the most ambitious target for being carbon neutral by 2028.

REGIONAL TARGETS

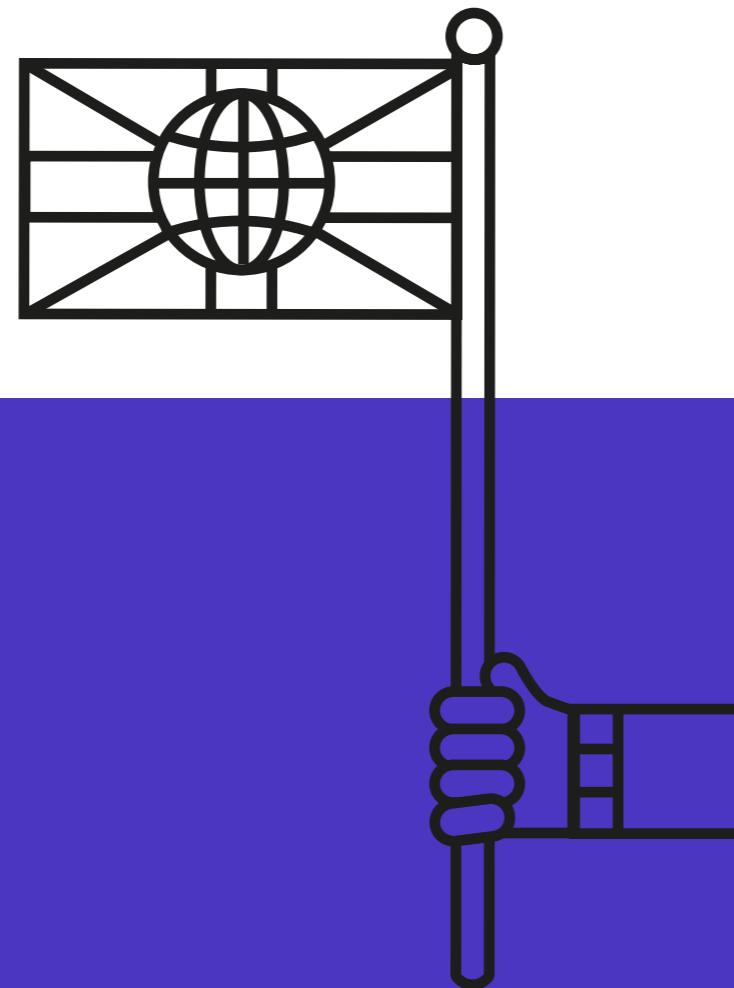
A slightly larger proportion of councils in England have declared a climate emergency in comparison to the devolved regions. A total of 68 English councils are working towards the national government’s 2050 target for operational emissions (of which 22 have not declared a climate emergency), 49 councils from across different regions have set targets between 2040 and 2049, and 18 councils are working towards targets between 2031-2039 (the majority of which are Greater Manchester councils with a 2038 target). Ninety-eight of 339 of England’s local authorities (not counting Combined Authorities) are working towards an authority-wide net-zero target of 2030.

The majority of Northern Ireland councils have no target date for their operational emissions. This may be due to Northern Ireland local governments having fewer resources, capacity and legal responsibilities than local governments in the devolved regions. Where a target has been assumed - for example, in Belfast City Council’s Net-Zero Carbon Roadmap - it is the UK Government’s 2050 target.

This 2050 target for local councils could change in the light of Northern Ireland having its own climate change legislation, which it currently does not.

All Welsh councils confirmed that they aim to reduce their operational emissions to net-zero by 2030, in line with the devolved government’s target.

Scottish national government has set a net-zero target for Scotland as a whole of 2045. Out of the 32 Scottish councils, 28 have reiterated their ambition to support the devolved government’s 2045 target for Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions. However, four Scottish authorities have adopted targets to be net-zero in their Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions by 2030 or earlier: Dumfries & Galloway Council (2025 target date), Falkirk Council (2030), Renfrewshire Council (2030) and City of Glasgow (2030).



“

All Welsh councils confirmed that they aim to reduce their operational emissions to net-zero by 2030, in line with the devolved government’s target”

68

English councils are working towards the national government’s 2050 target for operational emissions

CLIMATE ACTION PLANS
→

CLIMATE ACTION PLANS

Where a council has declared a climate emergency and stated a net-zero target, one of the next steps would be to produce a climate action plan to deliver on this target. Of the 327 local climate emergency declarations (including eight combined authorities) made across the UK, 62% of these councils have followed up with an updated or new climate action plan.

There is the issue however of availability and accessibility of data in order to translate climate emergency declarations into actionable plans, underpinned by an up-to-date, robust and credible evidence base. Evaluation of progress on climate action plans also needs to be robust and substantiated with appropriate quantitative and qualitative data.

62%

of the 327 local climate emergency declarations have followed up with an updated or new climate action plan

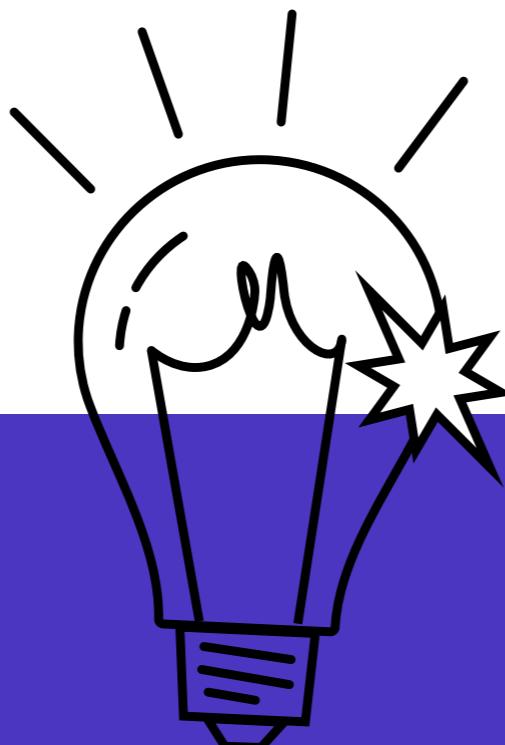


Figure 5 compares the number of climate action plans produced by councils based on their political leadership. This shows that Conservative, Labour and coalition-controlled councils, relative to the number of councils that each party controls, have a relatively similar likelihood of having produced a new climate action plan.

Parties in Scotland and Northern Ireland have low numbers of climate action plans in comparison to the numbers of councils that they control. However, these Scottish and Northern Irish political parties are all operating minority governments, making it more difficult to efficiently pass legislation. Liberal Democrat-controlled councils are the most likely to have produced a new climate action plan, with 24 of 31 Liberal Democrat councils having done so.

PLACE-BASED CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK

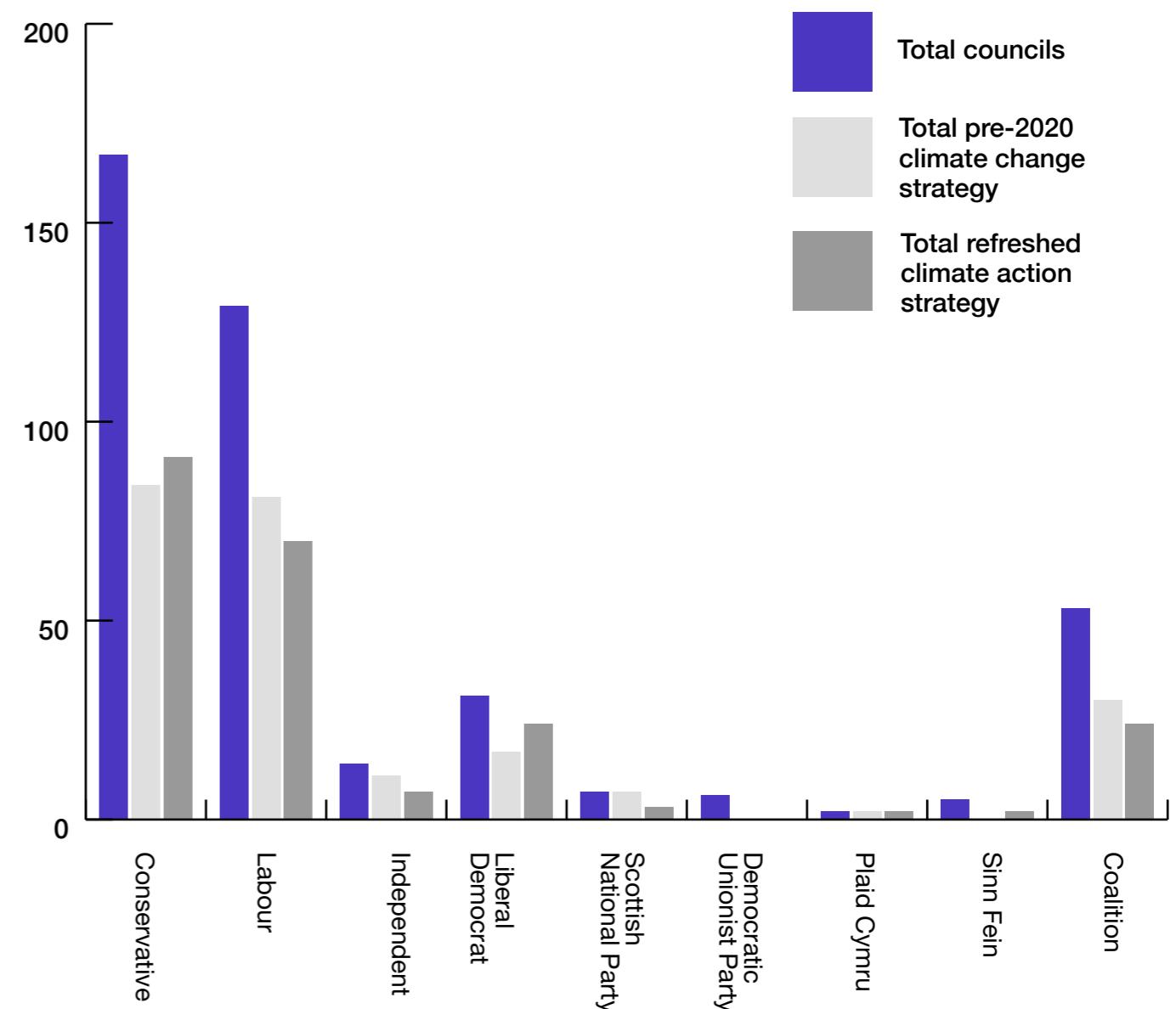


Figure 5: Political parties and climate action plans

“

Evaluation of progress on climate action plans also needs to be robust and substantiated with appropriate quantitative and qualitative data”

**3.3
PROGRESS AND
CONTRIBUTING FACTORS
TO DELAYED ACTIONS**



3.3

STATE OF PROGRESS

A year on from the majority of the declarations being made (over 85% of declarations had been made by the end of September 2019), only 62% of councils with climate emergency declarations have updated their climate action plan or produced a new one. Furthermore, a third of councils with fast approaching 2030 targets have not published or updated climate action plans, suggesting that cementing ambitions laid out in declarations with implementation plans has been a challenge for many of them.

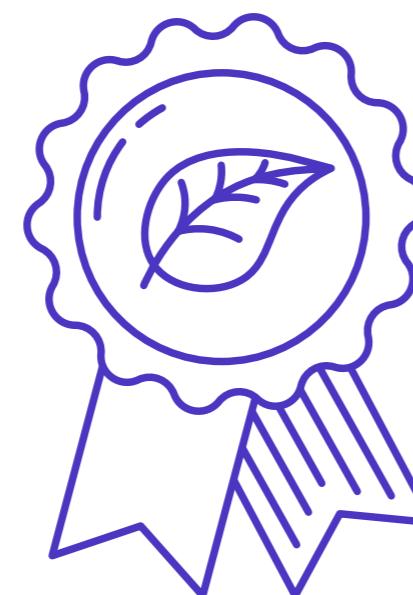
Unlike the emergency powers bestowed on local councils under the March 2020 Coronavirus Act, climate emergency declarations provided local governments with no additional financial or legislative capacity to address the crisis. Since the declarations did not provide new financial and legislative resources and followed a decade of cuts to public services, the physical support needed to tackle climate change did not follow directly from the emergencies. Some councils have nonetheless been able to recruit climate change officers; others have formed climate change working groups (see Table 1 for some examples), which are beginning to produce outputs such as recommendations, reports and some plans.

1/3

of councils with 2030 targets have not published or updated climate action plans

The coronavirus pandemic has restricted local councils' human and financial resources to make good on commitments to tackle climate change embedded in 2018-2020 climate emergency declarations. By reducing council revenue or redeploying climate-related resources to address the COVID-19 crisis, and stretching their services to new areas because of the virus, this has affected councils' ability to fulfil commitments to tackle their climate emergency objectives.

Partly as a result of COVID-19 related delays, evidence that local councils will commit to their ambition to tackle climate seriously has been limited, in comparison to the surge of support for the climate emergency declarations in 2019. The beginning of the pandemic coincided with the final stages of draft climate action plans and public participation events that were intended to inform community-focused policies to tackle climate change. It is not clear exactly how many climate action plans were delayed by the pandemic. However, informal correspondence with local government officers suggests that the disruption caused by the pandemic has been a significant factor for the majority of councils that are yet to produce climate action plans.

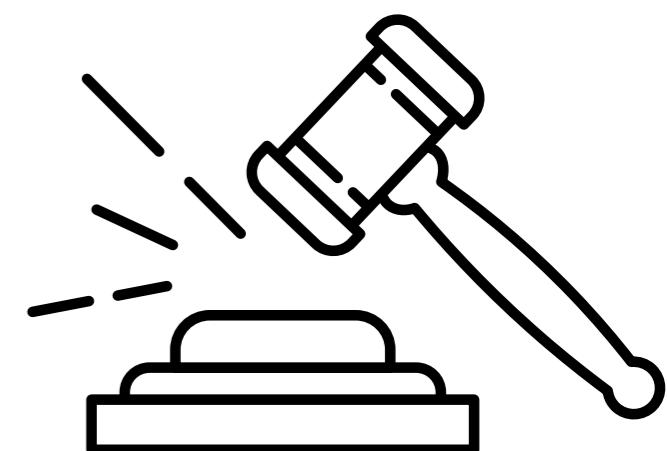


COUNCIL	NAME	OUTPUT
Glasgow	Glasgow City Council's climate emergency working group	61 recommendations
South Ribble	Climate emergency working group	Climate Change Strategy
Bridgend County Borough Council	Bridgend County Climate Emergency Response Programme	Report of the Chief Executive
Lambeth	Climate emergency working group	Corporate Carbon Reduction Plan
Merton	Climate emergency working group	Climate strategy and action plan
Woking	Climate change working group	Climate emergency action plan
Dumfries and Galloway	Climate change working group	Implement a 12-point action plan
Denbighshire County Council	Climate Change and Ecological Emergency Working Group Chair	Climate and Ecological Change Strategy and Action Plan
Vale of Glamorgan	Climate change working group	Working on the climate action plan

Table 1: Example climate working groups (and their outputs) set up by local authorities

“

evidence that local councils will commit to their ambition to tackle climate seriously has been limited, in comparison to the surge of support ... in 2019”



3.4

CORNWALL

ESTABLISHING A NEW NORMAL POST COVID-19

Cornwall Council, in the South West of England, is doubling down on its programme to promote green jobs and development. In June 2020, the council pledged to speed up measures to tackle the climate emergency and prioritise environmental and social benefits for residents as part of coronavirus recovery plans, agreeing that climate change needed an “equally targeted and immediate response” in order to meet their aims to make Cornwall carbon neutral by 2030.



Beaver by Per Harald Olsen CC BY-SA 3.0

To do this, Cornwall Council is expanding the use of its pioneering Decision Wheel – based on the “Doughnut Economics” model developed by economist Kate Raworth – that was introduced as part of its climate change action plan. The Council’s 2015 Environmental Growth Strategy, with an emerging Nature Recovery Plan as part of a Government pilot scheme, is providing a framework for local action and investment in response to the ecological emergency. The Climate Emergency Development Planning Document is embedding the requisite policies in the local planning framework. Combined, this work to embed a green recovery is seeking to establish a new normal that will create community resilience, accelerate their carbon neutral and nature recovery plans, and the transition to a clean and green economy.

One area where Cornwall Council has been successful in combining climate action and economic development is in encouraging council and community-owned renewable energy. Renewables constitute 37% of Cornwall’s electricity supply (the national average is 33%). Cornwall was the first UK council to successfully commission a council-owned solar farm, which now generates enough energy for 1500 homes. During the first national coronavirus lockdown (Spring 2020), the South West’s first “smart grid” wind turbine was installed, which produces energy for 1100 homes. Other innovative projects supported by the council include powering Penzance Lido using a geothermal well, while the Cornwall Together programme helps residents to save money by switching to sustainable energy providers.

The council has also undertaken steps to encourage wider community action. The Carbon Neutral Partnership Group, Carbon Neutral Cornwall Hive, Carbon Neutral Cornwall Crowdfunding and collaboration with the Eden Project are all council-backed projects that are encouraging local entrepreneurship and engagement on the council’s 2030 target. One success includes a 2017 crowdfunding project which raised £20,000 to reintroduce beavers to tackle flooding, a key issue for residents in Cornwall following several severe flood events.

NOTTINGHAM

PROMOTING SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMMES

Nottingham City Council in England’s Midlands introduced a Workplace Parking Levy (WPL) in 2012, the first of its kind in Europe. The council-administered levy applies to businesses with 11 or more parking spaces for employees and it has helped to reduce congestion, air pollution and emissions. Between 2005-2018, the city has seen a 14.2% decrease in transport emissions; by comparison, national-level transport emissions have remained flat (ONS, 2019).



Energiesprong housing by Tracey Whitefoot

Introducing the WPL has been tied with broader economic and social benefits – the number of businesses in Nottingham increased by 22.2% between 2013-2018, defying predictions – and funds raised through the charge are ring-fenced for transport improvement, adding £12m/year to the budget. The precedent set by the project has helped the council to lever a £570m scheme to expand the city’s tram network.

Substantial investment in retrofitting existing housing stock for energy efficiency in Nottingham has made people’s lives more comfortable while laying the groundwork for more sustainable existing domestic housing. Between 2015-2019, 40,000 energy efficiency measures and 4,000 solar PV systems were installed in the council’s social housing stock. As a result, 51% of these homes now have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) C rating and 41% EPC D rating. Nottingham’s Fuel Poverty Strategy is also helping to tackle fuel poverty by reducing bills, increasing energy efficiency and maximising household income.

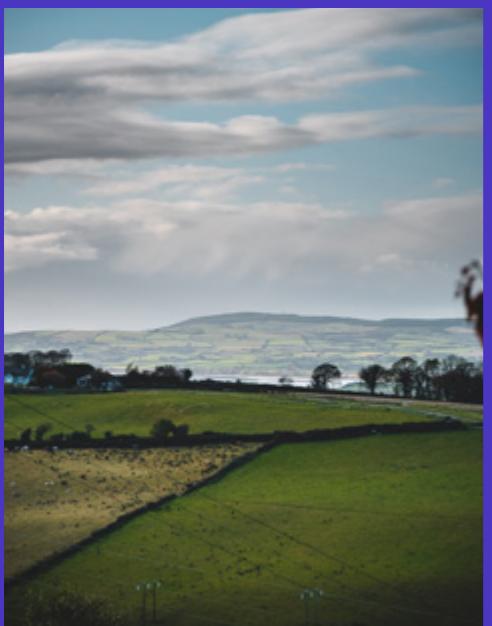
Nottingham City Council is also employing a ground-breaking approach to retrofit with a Dutch model called “Energiesprong” that provides residents with comfortable homes and zero-carbon living. In an Energiesprong development, existing homes can be made “Energy net-zero” in a week, at minimal inconvenience to residents. In Nottingham’s pilot project, residents were provided with contracts that guaranteed access to heating and hot water £100 cheaper than households in fuel poverty were previously paying. These pilot programmes have helped the council to learn how challenges associated with ambitious whole-house retrofits can be overcome - for example, by constructing a factory for off-site manufacturing in its social housing depot the council has been able to reduce manufacturing time.

Nottingham has proved that interventions aimed at supporting a more sustainable way of life have social and environmental benefits. Furthermore, both the Workplace Parking Levy and retrofit schemes demonstrate that local government interventions which directly impact people’s lives are workable when designed as a component of a holistic plan for progress.

DERRY CITY AND STRABANE COUNCIL

PRIORITISING CLIMATE ADAPTATION

Derry City and Strabane Council in Northern Ireland, spans a geographical region which, like other areas in the UK, is at risk from the impacts of climate change. To address this challenge, the council has adopted a policy of adapting to the threat as a priority, and has developed a climate change adaptation plan, the first council in Northern Ireland to do so.



Since 2005, the region has been subjected to a series of unusual extreme weather events, including ten storms and three floods, as well as heatwaves and cold snaps. The adaptation plan aims to ensure that the region is prepared for, and resilient to, the effects of climate change by taking steps such as upgrading blue-green infrastructure. This not only helps absorb the worst impacts but ensures that the council can continue to serve communities through the harshest conditions. This proactive approach and early lessons learned from Derry City and Strabane Council's work could prove valuable for other UK regions that are particularly threatened by the impacts of climate change.

The adaptation plan breaks down current risk and projects the future environmental, social and economic impacts of extreme events and shifting weather patterns in this region. An Impact Profile reveals a string of extreme weather events that have caused significant disruption, damage and anxiety for the region's residents. Future risks for the region are based on studies by Newcastle University, which found that Derry City itself could experience an 80% rise in current one-in-ten-year flood events (Guerreiro, et al, 2018). Acknowledging the threat posed by these risks, the plan focuses on the fact that socially and economically vulnerable people feel the worst impacts of extreme weather events.

The Council has also published a Green Infrastructure Plan (2019-2032) which includes a chapter on climate change and identifies a variety of green and blue projects that will protect communities from the worst impacts of climate change and encourage more sustainable practices. For example, the council is working to on an EU-funded INTERREG project to improve a cross-border active and sustainable transport network. Once completed, the project will connect the district with Muff, Buncrana and Lifford, producing 46.5km of walking and cycling routes, contributing to a reduction of 300 tCO₂/annum.

GLASGOW

EMBRACING THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Glasgow City Council, Scotland, and its city-wide 2030 carbon neutrality target aims to create an environment that shows that radical action to tackle climate change is possible. In the process, Glasgow City Council is working hard to ensure that the drive to carbon neutrality does not adopt a narrow focus on reducing CO₂ and in doing so, lose out on the opportunity to undertake systemic changes that support community-oriented growth as well as protecting the environment. This approach is embodied in the council's goal to become a circular and net-zero city by 2045.



Glasgow City Council's recent Circular Economy Route Map (2020), highlights local initiatives that embody the underlying principles of the circular economy. From turning leftover bread into beer, community fridges and tool libraries, quality second-hand certification to automobile transmission repairs, the report showcases the city's best initiatives and ties their work to their positive social and environmental impact.

For Glasgow City Council, transitioning to a circular economy means learning new approaches to planning decisions and new ways to collaborate and engage with businesses and communities. The council will reform its approach to planning while contributing to EU Horizon's CIRCULT project, which aims to scale up the adoption of circular construction techniques through knowledge and skill-sharing activities. Circular construction aims include reducing the use of virgin raw materials, recycling more materials from demolition and saving on costs. To improve knowledge-sharing, Glasgow City Council has partnered with London Waste and Recycling.

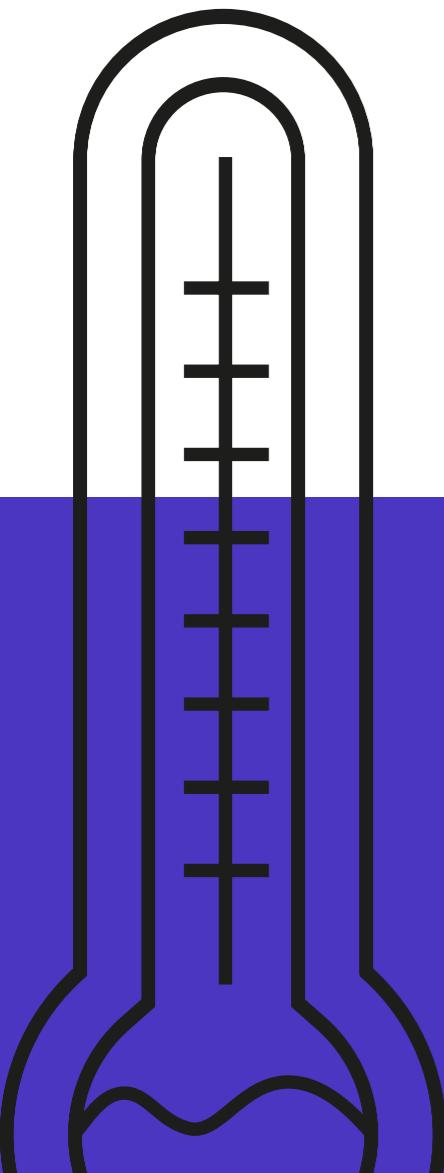
In February 2020, the council hosted a conference for 400 major business, universities and public sector organisations, momentum from which has been maintained through a partnership led by the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, supported by the council, Circular Glasgow. To date, Circular Glasgow has engaged 650 business representatives on topics such as economic development, resource use and carbon reduction. This initiative provides a crucial bridge between the council and the business community in achieving the goal to become carbon neutral by 2030.

Glasgow City Council also recognises that achieving a circular economy will not be possible without integrating its principles into the fabric of people's daily lives. In partnership with Zero Waste Scotland, they are working on repurposing office blocks emptied by the coronavirus pandemic for community businesses that trade, repair, refit and upcycle second-hand items. Innovation Hubs will provide opportunities for upskilling and community engagement through spaces to undertake enjoyable activities that are also economically and socially beneficial for individuals involved.

3.5

DELIVERING A JUST TRANSITION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

A “just transition” – making sure that nowhere and no-one is left behind in the transition to a net-zero carbon economy – is now becoming a shared endeavour in place-based climate action. In 2015, the Paris Agreement recognised the imperative of placing the interests of workers and communities centre stage so that decarbonisation brings decent work. With careful planning and consultation, the net-zero economy offers the potential to do this, if it pays proper attention to the social impacts on workers, consumers and the wider community.



The repercussions of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic have demonstrated that economic recovery must be inclusive. This was underscored in the [final report](#) of the Climate Assembly UK (which took place during the start of the pandemic), which stressed the need for solutions to climate change to be, “Fair to people with jobs in different sectors. Fair to people with different incomes, travel preferences and housing arrangements. Fair to people who live in different parts of the UK.”

DIMENSIONS OF JUSTICE

At the heart of the just transition are two interlocking dimensions of justice: participatory and distributive. Participatory justice focuses on the critical importance of those impacted by decisions being involved in their formation, whether in the workplace, at the community level or in national policymaking. The Leeds Climate Commission has found that mechanisms such as citizens’ juries can be important ways of ensuring that local climate action recognises and responds to underlying inequalities (caused by low incomes and disabilities, for example).

The distributive dimension of a just transition puts the interests of the most vulnerable centre stage. As Scotland’s [Just Transition Commission](#) puts it: “The imperative of a Just Transition is that governments design policies in a way that ensures that the benefits of climate change action are shared widely, while the costs do not unfairly burden those least able to pay, or whose livelihoods are directly or indirectly at risk as the economy shifts and changes.” For the [Trades Union Congress](#), the just transition is summed up in the priorities of “voice and place”, ensuring that workers are involved in decision-making and that regional priorities are front and centre.

PLACE PERSPECTIVE

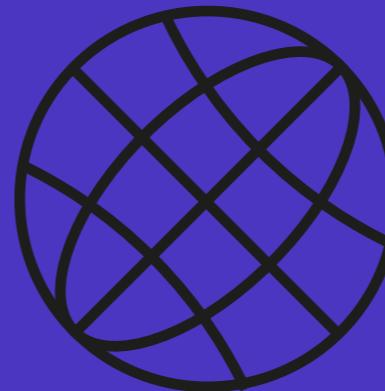
These high-level aspirations are starting to inform local climate action, not least because of the severity of the COVID-19 shock. Edinburgh’s Climate Commission released a set of recommendations for a [green recovery](#) in May 2020. This stressed that “place-making is central to a just transition for Edinburgh”, adding that “building resilient communities can stimulate local economies, and distribute jobs, skills, income and activity across the city”. In Belfast, the Climate Commission has established a just transition working group.

In London, Citizens UK is seeking to make London the first ‘[Just Transition City](#)’ in the UK. In the capital and elsewhere, support for a just transition is no longer the exclusive province of civil society, but is also shared by leaders in the commercial sector. One of the three pillars of London First’s [business manifesto](#) for delivering net-zero is to “use climate action to address inequality and benefit all communities”. This is matched by growing recognition amongst investors and banks of the need to combine climate action with positive social impact.

As the transition to a net-zero economy takes shape, the test of these and other statements of intent will be how the just transition comes to life in specific local plans, processes and investments. One promising area is to deploy the existing social value framework within public contracting, procurement and planning as a tool to fast track the just transition to net-zero and resilience. Frameworks like Cornwall Council’s Decision Wheel, which uses Doughnut Economics, consider this. As we have shown in the case studies in this chapter, local authorities motivated by achieving social objectives that reduce participative and distributive injustice are turning to green measures to achieve them.

“

These high-level aspirations are starting to inform local climate action, not least because of the severity of the COVID-19 shock”



2015

the Paris Agreement recognised the imperative of placing the interests of workers and communities centre stage so that decarbonisation brings decent work

4.0

COMMUNITY-FOCUSED PROCESSES AND NETWORKS

IN THIS SECTION

- 4.1. NETWORKS FOR LOCAL CLIMATE ACTION** →
- 4.2 LOCAL CLIMATE CHANGE PARTNERSHIPS** →
- 4.3 PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE INITIATIVES** →
- 4.4 CIVIL SOCIETY INVOLVEMENT IN PLACE-BASED CLIMATE ACTION** →



4.1

NETWORKS FOR LOCAL CLIMATE ACTION

Non-governmental, community-focused networks that aim to foster local climate action exist at the international level and at UK level.

Some are global heavyweights: there is ICLEI (“Local governments for sustainability”), which has 1750 members worldwide, including a handful in the UK; C40 Cities, a network of the world’s megacities committed to addressing climate change, which also has a UK-specific arm (C40 UK); and the Covenant of Mayors, which covers 61 countries and is open to all democratically elected local authorities, who sign a covenant linked to the EU’s climate and energy framework. Other international networks perform a more specific role, for example CDP, a not-for-profit charity that runs the global disclosure system for investors, companies, cities, states and regions to manage their environmental impacts.

Communities looking for support to build place-based climate action are also served by global operations like Bioregional’s One Planet Network, which brings together actors from all regions and all sectors and is linked to Global Goal (formerly SDG) 12,

1750

worldwide members of the ICLEI (“Local governments for sustainability”)



4.2

LOCAL CLIMATE CHANGE PARTNERSHIPS

The Place-Based Climate Action Network (PCAN), which commenced in 2019, now has a growing number of climate commissions, with more coming on stream regularly, and has expanded so far beyond its original remit of three that it is developing into a self-supporting network. PCAN-associated climate commissions are becoming a demonstratively popular model for local climate change partnerships, but other types of local climate agencies, partnerships, action groups and coalitions exist across the UK. Some are independent, along with the climate commissions, while others are local authority initiatives or are driven by third sector collaborations.

Table 2 shows a selection of established commissions and other types of climate change partnerships, along with new and emerging similar groups and networks.

INDEPENDENT CLIMATE PARTNERSHIPS

ESTABLISHED	NEW
Edinburgh Climate Commission	Eastbourne Eco Action Network
Surrey Climate Commission	Devon Climate Emergency Response Group
Belfast Climate Commission	Essex Climate Action Commission
Lincoln Climate Commission	Cumbria Action for Sustainability
Croydon Climate Commission	Swindon Climate Action Network
Leeds Climate Commission	Sustainability West Midlands
Aberdeen Climate Commission	
Manchester Climate Change Agency	
Reading Can Climate Action Network	
Sheffield City Partnership	
London Climate Change Partnership	
Bristol Advisory Committee on Climate Change	
Haringey Zero by 2050 Commission	

LOCAL AUTHORITY INITIATIVE

ESTABLISHED	NEW
Oxford (Citizens Advisory Council)	Bude-Stratton Climate Change and Environment Committee
Lancaster (Climate Change Cabinet Liaison Group)	Route to Zero (West Midlands Combined Auth)
Liverpool (Spatial Development Strategy (SDS))	Doncaster's Commission on the Climate and Biodiversity Emergency
Cool Wirral Partnership	Newcastle Climate Change Committee
Bradford District Environmental Partnership	H&F Climate and Ecological Emergency
Doncaster Climate Commission	Islington Sustainable Partnership
Glasgow Climate Emergency Working Group	Hereford Council Climate Emergency Steering Group
Birmingham Climate Taskforce (R20)	Plymouth Climate Change Commission
Newcastle Climate Change Partnership	Stoke on Trent Climate Commission
Southend Climate Change Partnership	Suffolk Climate Change Partnership
Merton Climate Action Group	Waltham Forest Climate Emergency Commission
Lewisham Climate Public Forum	Low Carbon Dorset
Lancaster Climate Change Cabinet Liaison Group	
Swansea Environmental Forum	
Climate Ready Aberdeenshire	
Climate Ready Clyde	
Craven/Skipton District Climate Action Group	

THIRD SECTOR INITIATIVE

ESTABLISHED	NEW
Portsmouth (Climate Action Network)	Somerset Climate Action Network
North East England Climate Coalition Link	Coventry Climate Action Network
Derby (Climate Coalition)	
Sheffield Climate Alliance	
Winchester Action on Climate Change	
Derby Climate Coalition	
Climate governance beyond the city	
Fit for the Future	
The Climate Change Commission for Wales	
Suffolk Climate Change Partnership	
Sustainability West Midlands	
Lancashire Climate Change Partnership	
Devon Net-Zero Task force	
Climate East Midlands	

Table 2: Snapshot of UK local climate change partnerships

4.3
**PARTICIPATORY
GOVERNANCE INITIATIVES**



4.3

PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE INITIATIVES

Citizen juries and assemblies bring together local citizens to discuss a particular topic and agree a set of recommendations to enable participants to become part of democratic decision-making processes. These have proved especially popular on the topic of climate change due to their ability to shed light on citizens' views and experiences of climate change and climate action. Models differ, but juries typically include 20-40 individuals and assemblies are usually larger with 40-150 or more members (see Table 3 for examples). PCAN has funded organisations Shared Future and Our Common Climate to produce guidance for local authorities on citizen juries and assemblies.

As many of these democratic deliberative processes have only recently occurred, there is limited evidence as to the direct impact they have had on policy. Funding to conduct these processes is also often limited and does not include an evaluation of resulting impacts or further engagement. However, we know that participatory processes have been important in providing a social mandate for the following: ambitious climate action; assessing public support for climate policies; increasing awareness of a fair, trusted and transparent process for deliberation; and increasing trust between the public and government. More tangibly, citizens' juries and assemblies have led, for example, to the creation of a climate commission with citizen assembly members within it in Croydon (the Croydon Climate Crisis Commission); the provision of £18 million to Oxford City Council's zero-carbon mission, and the approval of the Camden Five-Year Climate Action Plan.



we know that participatory processes have been important in providing a social mandate"



	LOCATION	DATE
Assemblies	UK National Assembly	Spring 2020
	Scotland's Climate Assembly	Nov 2020-Mar 2021
	Glastonbury Town Council: Climate emergency people's assembly	October 2019
	Oxford Citizen's Assembly on Climate Change	September October 2019
	Bright and Hove Climate Assembly	Autumn 2020
	Brent Climate Assembly	November 2019
	Camden Climate Assembly	July 2019
	Newham Climate Assembly	January 2020
	Lambeth Climate Assembly	Spring-June 2020
	Luton Climate Assembly	February 2020
	Wolverhampton Climate Assembly	February 2020
	Devon Climate Assembly	Postponed
	Leicester Climate Assembly	January 2020
	The North of Tyne Combined Authority	Postponed
	Lancaster County Council	Postponed
	Croydon Council	January 2020
	North Norfolk Environment Assembly	August 2019
	Adur and Worthing Climate Assembly	September 2020
Juries	Leeds Climate Jury	October November 2019
	Kendal Climate Jury	Ongoing

Table 3: Examples of UK citizens' juries and assemblies on climate change

OTHER FORMS OF PARTICIPATORY ENGAGEMENT

A range of other participatory mechanisms have taken place in 2020 in recognition of the need for public consultation on climate action plans. Table 4 provides a snapshot.

Yeovil drop-in event	February, 2020
Carlisle City Council online survey	Summer, 2020
Redditch Borough Council Have Your Say	Summer, 2020
Rother District Council Have Your Say	Summer, 2020
South Somerset District Council Have Your Say	Summer, 2020
Stirling Council Climate Emergency Conversations	March, 2020
West Dunbartonshire Council Survey	Summer, 2020
Westminster Council Have Your Say	September, 2020
Epping Forest Climate Change Consultation	July, 2020
Redditch Council Have Your Say	August, 2020
High Peak Climate Change Summit	January, 2020
Edinburgh Talks Climate	Nov 2019-April 2020

Table 4: Example participatory mechanisms for public consultation on climate change in the UK

CLIMATE ASSEMBLIES AND JURIES: THE HOW AND WHY

PETER BRYANT
(SHARED FUTURE)

LUCY STONE
(OUR COMMON CLIMATE)



To stay within 1.5°C of global temperature rise, urgent changes need to be made at the local authority level that will also require significant changes in everyday life for the UK public. Public participation through deliberative democratic processes such as citizen juries and assemblies can help to manage this shift in scope and ambition. A PCAN-funded project led by Shared Future and Our Common Climate drew together best practice advice from key organisations in public participation, academic work and case studies from recent climate assemblies/juries, to help guide local authorities. The research concluded that:

- They enable the public to shape the policies that might affect them thereby improving public legitimacy.
- They help to shift the burden of responsibility.
- If done well they have the potential to radically change the relationship between citizen and local government.
- When facing up to big policy challenges there is much to gain if we can find effective ways to include the informed recommendations of everyday citizens.
- They connect assemblies/juries with more joined up and effective climate policy as well as improved public-local government relations.

See: [Climate Assemblies and Juries: A people powered response to the climate emergency](#).

4.4

CIVIL SOCIETY INVOLVEMENT IN PLACE-BASED CLIMATE ACTION

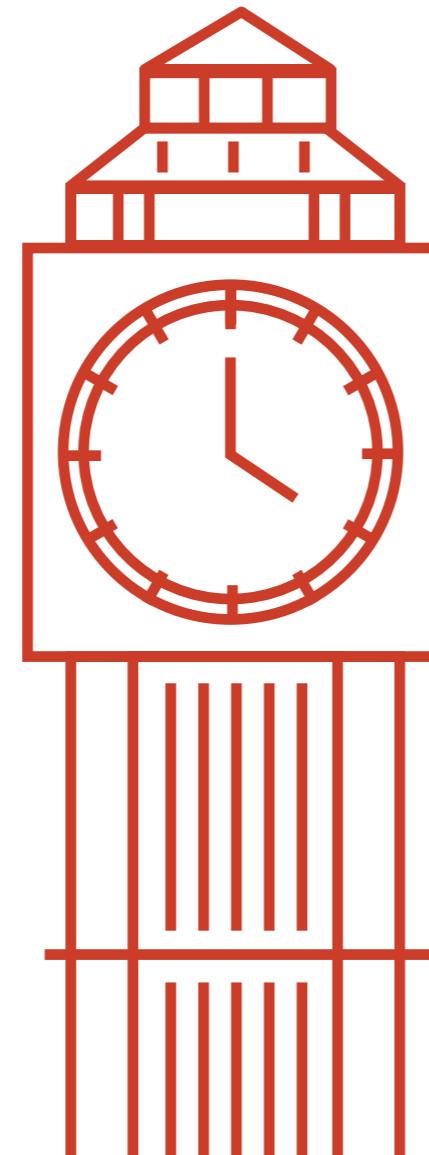
The third sector has increasingly become a delivery partner/lead for place-based climate action. Civil society-led local initiatives are too numerous to list here, but the appendix on the PCAN website gives a sense of the breadth and depth of civil society involvement.

An important source of funding for civil society involvement is the National Lottery. Through its [Climate Action Fund](#) the National Lottery has committed £100 million over ten years to support communities to take action across the UK. The first round of funded projects, announced in 2020 included a range of projects in Wales, Cumbria, Leeds, London, Middlesbrough, Cornwall, Bristol, Nottingham, Derry, Manchester, Sheffield, Fife, West Yorkshire, Somerset, Sussex and across Wales.

The Scottish Government has a [Climate Challenge Fund](#) delivered through Keep Scotland Beautiful, and more recently it has established the [Community Climate Asset Fund](#) with a wide range of projects funded around the country.

**£100
MILLION**

committed by the National Lottery,
over ten years to support communities
to take action across the UK



5.0

THE ROLE OF FINANCE AND BUSINESS IN PLACE-BASED CLIMATE ACTION

IN THIS SECTION

- [5.1 FINANCING PLACE-BASED CLIMATE ACTION](#) →
- [5.2 BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT AT THE LOCAL LEVEL](#) →



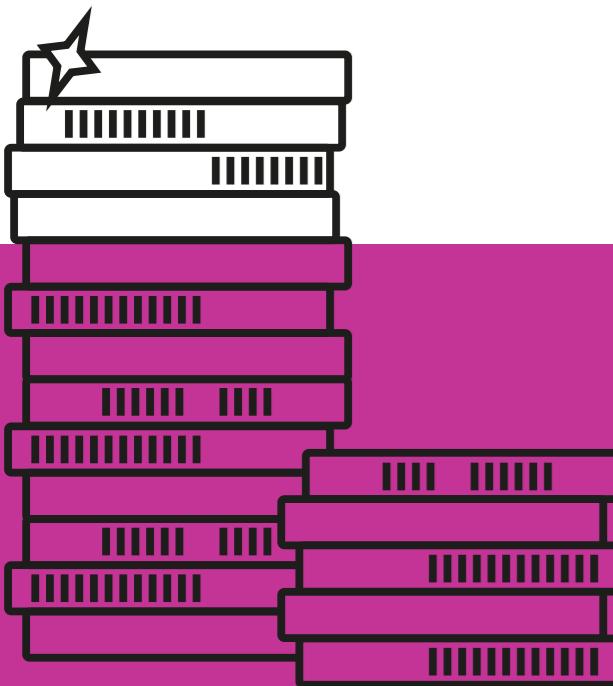
Credit: Johnny Greig

5.1

FINANCING PLACE-BASED CLIMATE ACTION

Financing climate action is becoming a priority for leading banks, investors and insurers. Many are adopting net-zero targets for their portfolios. But there remains a strategic gap between these high-level commitments and the delivery of finance on the ground in local areas across the UK. According to a recent report for the Climate Change Committee, extra net-zero investment needs to rise five-fold between 2020 and 2030, reaching £50bn a year by the end of the decade. A key priority is translating the embryonic world of place-based climate finance into a routine, efficient and effective part of the UK's financial system.

By international standards, the UK is centralised both in terms of its policymaking and its financial system, with the role of the City of London looming large. Regional stock markets have fallen by the wayside, along with the number of financial institutions that were rooted in local economies, not least many building societies.



£4
BILLION

of investable wealth per 100,000 people in the UK, one estimate suggests

Unlike other major European economies, the UK has also long lacked a full-service national investment bank to support the transition at the local level, similar to the role of Caisse des Dépôts in France and KfW in Germany. Following the financial crisis, the British Business Bank has been established focused on smaller companies (with a strong regional dimension) along with the Development Bank of Wales and the Scottish National Investment Bank.

One result has been severe under-investment in local climate action, with the inadequate development of the project pipeline to drive local climate action. UK100 has identified the potential to unlock over £100 billion of investment in local energy systems by 2030 through partnership approaches, which would enable industry and private capital to work with the UK's local authorities to scale up investment initiatives, delivering the transition to net-zero.

Another consequence is the inability to tap local pools of savings to finance place-based climate action. One estimate suggests that there is around £4bn of investable wealth per 100,000 people in the UK. The vast bulk of this is channelled by banks, pension funds and insurance firms onto national and international capital markets, with few mechanisms to ensure that these savings support local economic vitality.

SUSTAINABLE FINANCE INNOVATIONS

The combination of the climate crisis and COVID-19 is bringing a series of sustainable finance innovations that could start to remedy these structural challenges. A new National Infrastructure Bank is being established, which will co-invest alongside the private sector and support the government's ambitions on both "levelling-up" and net-zero. Crucially, the bank will be able to lend to local and mayoral authorities for key infrastructure projects and provide them with advice on developing and financing infrastructure.

The Government will also issue the first Green Sovereign Bond in 2021, which will help to channel private savings into climate action and green jobs across the country. This follows strong demand for investors for the government to issue a "Green+ Gilt" and is likely to catalyse further issuance of municipal green bonds, which have so far been pioneered by Warrington and West Berkshire.

Alongside these important shifts in public finance, there is a critical role for local financial institutions to anchor place-based climate action.

For example, building societies that have a regional base could be at the forefront of financing green buildings, taking a broader area-wide perspective. Local authority pension funds can also take an active role in climate-proofing their infrastructure and real estate portfolios across the UK. They could also develop regional investment strategies that seek to deliver positive social and environmental impact alongside financial returns, as the Greater Manchester Pension Fund is doing in the north-west.

At the national level, leading investors and banks also recognise that place-based action lies at the heart of a rapid and just transition to net-zero. This will mean ensuring that institutional level commitments to green finance are translated into regionally-responsive strategies. A Financing the Just Transitional Alliance has been formed to translate high-level commitments into tangible investment in the run-up to COP26. One mechanism for this will be the design of a place-based finance toolbox by the PCAN Finance Platform that sets out practical ways of connecting local climate strategies with different types of finance, whether from the public sector, commercial banks, institutional investors or new crowd-funding platforms.

“

Local authority pension funds can also take an active role in climate-proofing their infrastructure and real estate portfolios across the UK”

FINANCING ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE MEASURES



FINANCING ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE MEASURES

To date, the bulk of the focus of climate finance has been on delivering decarbonisation. Much less effort has been devoted to understanding how adaptation and resilience can be funded in ways that respond to local needs.

Nationally, public finance is being increased. For example, in 2020, the government announced a doubling of public spending on Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management to £5.2 billion between 2021 and 2027. In addition, the government provided £200 million for the same period to support 25 local areas to improve their resilience to flooding and coastal erosion through nature-based solutions, sustainable drainage systems, encouraging local businesses to improve their flood resilience and building community capacity to respond and recover.

These welcome steps need to be part of a systemic response at the local level that makes sure that all necessary social, human, natural, physical and financial systems are in place to mitigate future flood risks.

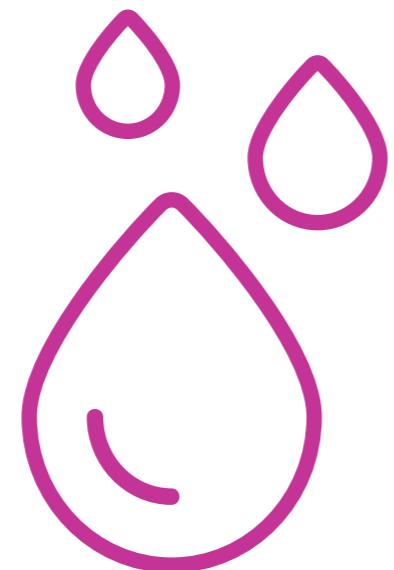
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local areas supported to improve their resilience to flooding and coastal erosion through nature-based solutions

One interesting example of local adaptation financing is the Connswater Community Greenway developed by the EastSide Partnership in Belfast. This brought together funding from the Big Lottery Fund, Belfast City Council, the Department for Communities and Department for Infrastructure. Importantly, as well as being developed to improve green infrastructure in the city and improve health outcomes, a major flood alleviation scheme was incorporated into the project which has helped to reduce flooding to 1700 properties.

What is becoming clear is that localities and regions across the UK need to develop comprehensive financing strategies to realise their ambitions for net-zero and resilience. This means going beyond a focus simply on funding local authority efforts to setting out how the required investment for all stakeholders in an area can be mobilised, whether households, businesses or other sectors. Innovative approaches are also needed that supplement public finance with private investment at the local level.

Looking ahead, developing effective place-based finance strategies is one of the next frontiers for local climate action.



BUILDING LOCAL GREEN INVESTMENT MARKETS USING COMMUNITY MUNICIPAL BONDS

KARL HARDER
(ABUNDANCE INVESTMENT)

A PCAN-funded project led by Abundance Investment piloted the use of Community Municipal Bonds (CMBs or “climate emergency bonds”) to radically transform the way that local authorities raise finances. Councils borrow on average £5bn a year and these climate emergency bonds can reduce the cost of raising capital to pay for infrastructure/systems needed to transition to net-zero.

At scale, a climate emergency bond programme could raise 25% of council borrowing from residents. The first climate emergency bond trials in West Berkshire Council and Warrington Borough Council have been a success. West Berkshire’s bond opened in July 2020 and closed in October 2020 and raised £200,000 on its first day. Funds raised by the CMB will contribute to solar panel installations on public buildings, cycle improvements and flood defence amongst other things. Warrington’s bond, launched in August 2020 and closed in November 2020, with funds contributing to construction of an industrial scale solar farm and battery storage facility near York.

Benefits from the programme include:

1. The scheme can successfully raise money for councils to borrow at a rate that is cheaper than borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board.
2. The scheme encourages engagement on climate change. Facilitating a contribution to local green projects, with investments starting at £5, opens up a new way that people can help to tackle climate change while also contributing to their local economy.
3. There is potential for investors to forfeit the return on their investment, turning it into an altruistic investment.
4. Abundance Investment have developed the legal framework for the CMBs making implementation costs low and enabling opportunities for national upscale.



Warrington's solar farm (Gridserve)

5.2

BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Climate commissions, and other similar place-based partnerships on climate action, bring together the public, private and “civic” sectors in their respective locales, recognising that businesses are key players and that it is vital to have them “on board”.

PCAN has worked to integrate businesses into local climate commissions from the outset. Our research for this report indicates this is a common practice across the UK to identify business voices in most independent climate and local-authority led initiatives. Business participation in third-sector led local climate initiatives is more patchy, with business keen to take action but wary of becoming engaged in campaigning or lobbying activity. Many businesses feel that they lack the capacity to engage with local climate governance but they do want to see business perspectives represented. It is notable that Chambers of Commerce are often significant actors in climate commissions.

Another tension to be navigated is whether an individual from a business, when participating in a climate commission, is representing that business or not. In the Leeds Climate Commission, members are appointed as individuals, but they have been selected because they bring a perspective from a sector or employer. This needs careful navigation if a commission is collectively endorsing policy, strategy or action that may have implications for the businesses and employers around the commission’s table.

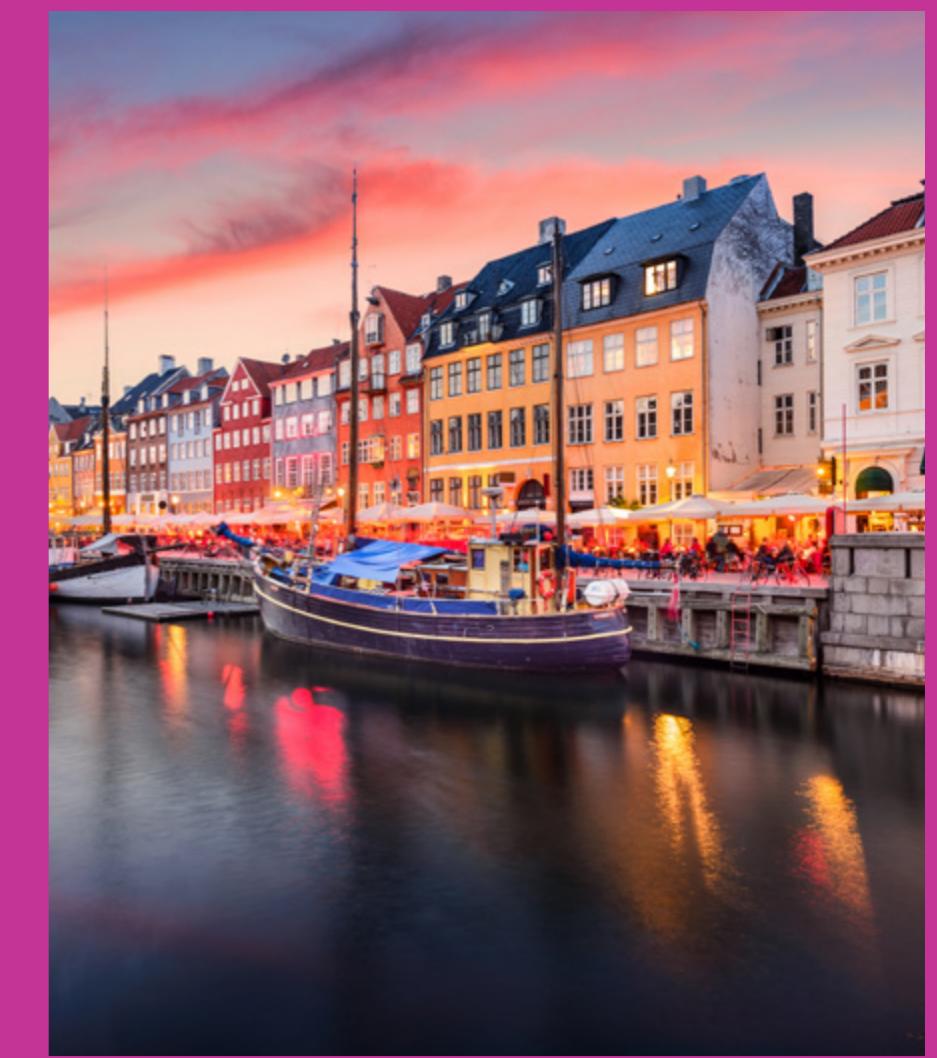
It is not just traditional businesses, eco- or “green” companies that support local climate partnerships: private sector representatives include electricity providers, football clubs, housing associations and house builders, consultancies and law firms, engineering firms, energy co-operatives, wildlife charities’ trading arms, stately homes, insurers, public relations firms, shops, social enterprises, television companies, opera companies, water companies, insurance companies and many more have joined the front line of climate action.

Some businesses are involved because of their significance in the local economy and local climate governance is part of their approach to corporate citizenship. Significance can be in terms of employment, or because they exercise considerable influence over local assets or natural resources (e.g. utility companies). Others are driven by their own business strategy, again with climate action being a core part of their corporate citizenship and commitment to how they operate. Pragmatically, climate change mitigation or adaptation may be an essential part of risk management for the business, with implications for how that business is regulated. Reporting, and action, are often driven by national or sectoral standards.

For a detailed breakdown of the businesses involved in the PCAN core climate commissions and the wider PCAN network, see online Appendix III to this report, available on the [PCAN website](#).

BUSINESS MOTIVATIONS FOR JOINING LOCAL CLIMATE NETWORKS

DR KATHERINE MAXWELL



Doctoral research by PCAN Associate Dr Katherine Maxwell has shown that what motivates stakeholders to join climate networks can have other drivers, too – although these apply to all stakeholders and not just businesses. Dr Maxwell’s studies of climate partnerships in Glasgow and Copenhagen reveal that organisations may join for partnership development and knowledge exchange, either with the local council or with other stakeholders, or it may be a “safe space” for them to share organisational perspectives and opportunities. Joining climate networks can also be to gain a route to decision-makers (although climate commissions are not a place for lobbying or gaining preferential influence), or it may be more personal and altruistic, because individuals and companies involved care about their impact on the environment.

6.0

THE PCAN CLIMATE COMMISSIONS

The Place-based Climate Action Network (PCAN) is about translating climate policy into action “on the ground” in our communities. PCAN stimulates a vital flow of action, helping to implement the UK's Nationally Determined Contribution to the Paris Climate Agreement, UK targets and individual city ambitions to deliver place-based impact. Innovative processes of governance and finance ensure the flow also spreads laterally, informing learning, creating connections and building momentum.

The key to implementing climate action lies increasingly at the local level, with the participation of local actors, businesses and citizens. The aim of PCAN is to strengthen links between national and international climate policies and their local delivery. We do this through our three core city climate commissions in Leeds, Belfast and Edinburgh and our growing network of other climate commissions that have chosen to become associated with, and are supported by PCAN.

IN THIS SECTION

- 6.1 PCAN CORE CLIMATE COMMISSIONS** →
- 6.2 PCAN “NETWORK PLUS” CLIMATE COMMISSIONS** →



6.1 PCAN CORE CLIMATE COMMISSIONS



(ESTABLISHED 2017)

OBJECTIVE

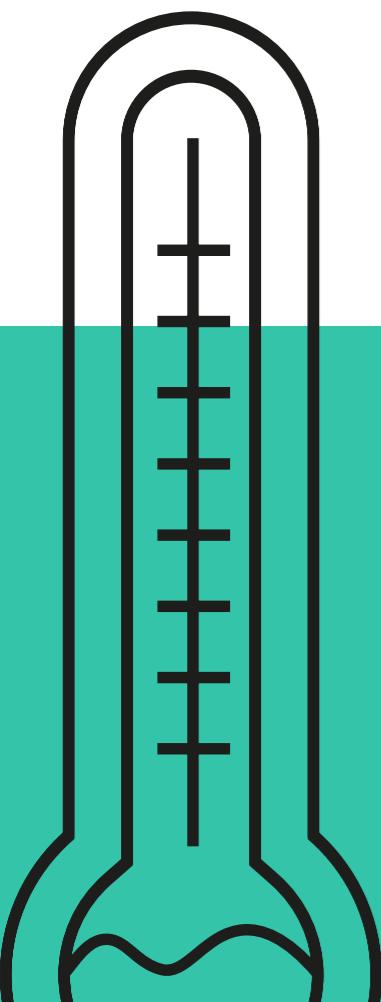
To help Leeds make a positive choice on issues relating to energy, carbon, weather and climate.

SCOPE

Provide authoritative advice on steps towards a low carbon, resilient future so as to inform policies and shape the actions of local stakeholders and decision makers.

VISION

Foster collaborative projects that result in measurable contributions towards meeting the city's climate reduction targets.



**NUMBER OF MEMBERS
(INDIVIDUALS: 58)**

NUMBER OF DIFFERENT ORGANISATIONS THAT MEMBERS REPRESENT: 30

PRIVATE SECTOR REPRESENTATIVES: 15

LOCAL COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES: 10

UTILITIES REPRESENTATIVES: 5

CIVIL SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVES: 6

UNIVERSITY REPRESENTATIVES: 13

OTHER REPRESENTATIVES: 8

POSITION DETAILS

Chair Held and appointed by University of Leeds.

Vice Chair Held and appointed by Leeds City Council.

Members Membership of Leeds Climate Commission is open to individuals representing key organisations from the public, private and civic sectors. Members are appointed on an individual basis (ie not as representatives of their company or organisation) but senior-level authorisation from within their place of work is preferred.

Overarching strategy group Chaired by a University of Leeds representative and vice chaired by a Leeds City Council representative. Includes key organisations and at least one member from each of the working groups. Meets four times a year to take an overview of the projects.

Working groups Low Carbon; Engagement and Communications; Climate Resilience (NB these are in the process of being restructured around panels on housing, transport and finance and investment – see below).

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS, ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

- [A Net-Zero Carbon Roadmap for Leeds](#)
- [Climate Action Readiness Assessment \(CARA\)](#)
- [Leeds Climate Change Citizens' Jury](#)
- Joint-hosted [The Big Leeds Climate Conversation](#)
- Published position papers on [aviation](#) and [hydrogen](#)
- [Leeds Mini Stern Review \(2017\)](#)
- [Climate Resilience Database](#)

“

To help Leeds make a positive choice on issues relating to energy, carbon, weather and climate”



Visit the
Leeds Climate
Commission
website

**INTERVIEW WITH
ANDY GOULDSON, CHAIR,
AND MILLIE DUNCAN,
POLICY ANALYST, LEEDS
CLIMATE COMMISSION**

→



ANDY GOULDSON

CHAIR,
LEEDS CLIMATE
COMMISSION



MILLIE DUNCAN

POLICY ANALYST,
LEEDS CLIMATE
COMMISSION

What is the Commission about?

The Leeds Climate Commission was the very first climate commission, and we hope it has provided a blueprint for other such commissions that have developed since. It was inspired and informed by the work of the [UK Climate Change Committee](#) and is an independent voice in the city, providing authoritative advice on steps towards a low carbon, climate resilient future so as to inform policies and shape the actions of local organisations and stakeholders. It monitors progress towards meeting the city's carbon reduction targets, celebrates success stories and recommends actions to keep the city on track.

Who leads the Commission?

The Leeds Climate Commission is chaired by Professor Andy Gouldson (University of Leeds), with the vice chair from Leeds City Council (the Executive Board Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development).

How is the Commission structured?

In 2021 the focal points will be housing, transport and finance and investment. These emerged as key priorities and areas where the commission can make the biggest difference in the Climate Action Readiness Assessment (CARA) process we conducted with a wide range of stakeholders throughout 2020. For other areas such as commercial buildings and the public sector we will work with other existing networks to support them to act. For climate resilience the emerging Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commission will take things forward at a regional scale, while we maintain a watching brief as a city-level commission. We will also have a communications and engagement working group especially to promote the wider social, economic and environmental benefits for the city as it pursues net-zero by 2030.

The Commission will then have c.24 Commissioners appointed to it from across the public, private and third sectors in the city, and three panels of c8-10 people focusing on housing, transport and finance/investment. The Commission will meet quarterly with the panels meeting more flexibly depending on priorities and opportunities.

What does the Commission want to do?

The Commission has to add value and make a tangible difference. People are willing to give their time and energy as long as they feel that we are making an impact. The CARA process showed us where we're more ready to act, but it also highlighted some of the key blockages preventing

action, and we hope by focusing on these we can make the biggest difference. Some of these are policy related – and obviously we can call for policy change within the city and to some extent also regionally. Nationally, we can say what policy changes we need, but the message will be so much clearer if it comes from the wider network of Commissions associated with PCAN. In other cases, we hope the Commission can catalyse change more directly – for example by helping to develop city-wide retrofit activities, by informing transport decisions or by developing a low carbon investment platform and prospectus. We are also planning to commence work on considering Consumption Based (Scope 3) emissions for the city as this is a bit of a blind spot where there is potential to make significant carbon savings.

Achievements

- Changing the atmosphere around climate change by building a sense of shared ownership and a positive vision of what could be done. This positive vision has helped the city to mainstream climate change into key areas of city life relating to transport, housing, jobs, health and so on.
- Informing the adoption of the city's climate emergency commitment, and supporting/guiding associated policy changes relating to transport and housing.
- Organising a citizens' jury process that has secured broader buy-in from across the city for ambitious climate action.
- Preparing a Net-Zero Carbon Roadmap for Leeds that builds on the recommendations of the citizens' jury and that identifies targets and opportunities for low carbon action.
- Developing and completing a Climate Action Readiness Assessment that has identified opportunities for unlocking climate actions at the local level.

Challenges

- Maintaining momentum and keeping people on board as we grapple with some of the key challenges preventing action on the scale and at the pace required.
- A key challenge has been keeping people engaged whilst not being able to host any in-person meeting or events during the pandemic.

Key lessons learned so far

- Bringing people together and focusing on a positive vision is key; having the right connections between an independent Commission and Leeds City Council is crucial.



(ESTABLISHED 2020)

OBJECTIVE

Translate climate policy into action “on the ground” to bring about transformative change.

SCOPE

Encourages organisations to take action on climate change; provides advice; monitors and reports on progress; advises on the assessment of climate-related risks; brings together major organisations; promotes best practice on climate change communication; acts as a forum to exchange ideas.

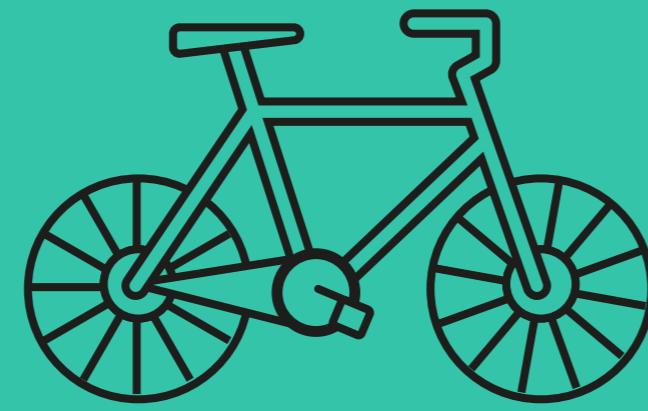
VISION

Foster collaboration, enable positive choices, measurable contributions, be an authoritative voice in the city.

	COMMISSIONERS	WORKING GROUP MEMBERS
Number of members (individuals)	16	15
Number of different organisations that members represent	13	12
Private sector representatives (people)	6	3
Local council representatives	1	1
Utilities representatives	2	0
Civil society representatives	4	8
University representatives	2	2
Other representatives	0	1



Foster collaboration, enable positive choices, measurable contributions, be an authoritative voice in the city”



POSITION	DETAILS
Chair	Jointly chaired by Queen's University Belfast (QUB) and Belfast City Council.
Vice Chair	See above.
Members	Made up of commissioners and members. Membership of the Belfast Climate Commission is open to individuals representing key organisations from the public, private and civic sectors.
Overarching strategy group	Co-chaired by a Queen's University Belfast representative and a Belfast City Council representative. Includes representatives from key organisations and at least one member from each of the working groups. Meets four times a year.
Working groups	Business and Finance Community Climate Action Just Transition Youth Working Group

BUDGET

- QUB grant of £361,000 to last the Commission from 2019-2023.
- Council makes small contributions relating to administration.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS, ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

- [A Net-Zero Carbon Roadmap for Belfast](#) (published 2020)
- PCAN funded project: Building Capacity knowledge and skills in the transition to low carbon economy in order to ensure a just transition, led by Clare McKeown.



Visit the
[Belfast Climate
Commission](#)
website

**INTERVIEW WITH JOHN
BARRY, CO-CHAIR OF
BELFAST CLIMATE
COMMISSION**





JOHN BARRY

CO-CHAIR OF
BELFAST CLIMATE
COMMISSION

What is the Commission about?

Bringing people together to talk, the fact that it's really unusual to have third, private and public in the room together all on an equal footing. Being an independent commission with academic roots, we are able to back up our work with research.

Who leads the Commission?

Queens University Belfast leads the commission and Belfast City Council provides some administrative support.

How is the Commission structured?

We have four working groups:

- Business and finance (co-chaired by David Gavaghan (housing developer) and Claire McKeown (sustainable development at Belfast City Council)).
- Community climate action (Amanda Slevin, Queen's University Belfast).
- Just transition (John Barry, Queen's University Belfast).
- Youth (Maria Aroy, NI Youth Forum and Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful).

What does the Commission want to do?

Specifically for the communities working group, we want to build a network of like-minded organisations and people at a smaller scale and on a local level.

Achievements

- Net-Zero Carbon Roadmap for Belfast (plus extension/ use of this research for housing and transportation).
- Bringing a diverse group of stakeholders together.
- Officially launched in January 2020, so the fact that there is still energy behind it despite pandemic is encouraging.
- Good engagement with the research carried out over the summer.
- 15 different groups that are interested in being involved in the community action working group from a range of sectors that aren't all explicitly environmental.
- Establishment of a youth working group.

Challenges

- COVID-19
- When launched in January 2020, there were a few hundred people at the launch; the main thing is keeping that energy and engagement through lockdown.
- Resources: administration is split between a part-time Queen's University Belfast employee and the council.

Key lessons learned

- Co-Chair (John Barry) and Council leader work together a lot.
- The amount of time and energy that it takes to develop a good working relationship with people when you can't be in the room with them (due to COVID-19).





(ESTABLISHED 2020)

OBJECTIVE

The Commission aims to accelerate action and impact on climate change in the city, and provides independent, expert and authoritative advice to enable and support the best choices being made for Edinburgh.

SCOPE

In its first year, the Commission aims to address key challenges in the city. The Commission will also act as a forum where organisations can exchange ideas, research findings, information and best practice on carbon reduction and climate resilience. The Commission will feed into the democratic process through City of Edinburgh Council, producing reports and position papers on key issues in the city.

VISION

The Commission will support the City of Edinburgh in achieving the transformative change needed to ensure the necessary emissions reductions are realised, engaging citizens as well as the private and public sectors.



The Commission will feed into the democratic process through City of Edinburgh Council, producing reports and position papers on key issues in the city”

NUMBER OF MEMBERS INDIVIDUALS: 16	POSITION	DETAILS	
NUMBER OF DIFFERENT ORGANISATIONS THAT MEMBERS REPRESENT: 14	Chair	The chair was identified and approached by the Commission's founding co-sponsors, the City of Edinburgh Council and the University of Edinburgh's Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation (ECCI).	
PRIVATE SECTOR REPRESENTATIVES: 6	Vice Chair	See above.	
LOCAL COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES: 2	Members	The chair and vice-chair, with the support of the founding members the Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation (ECCI) will appoint members to the commission, with membership monitored for representation and participation.	
UTILITIES REPRESENTATIVES: 1	Working groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The Edinburgh Commission has formed short-life working groups to support the current live elements of the commission workplan. So far these have included: → Green Recovery Recommendations for Edinburgh → City Partnerships, leading the Edinburgh Climate Compact → City Sustainability Strategy 2020 	
CIVIL SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVES: 5	BUDGET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → There is no set budget; we estimate that the total budget is around £100,000/year from the University of Edinburgh and Edinburgh City Council. → The time given voluntarily by all of the commissioners also has a considerable value but is not costed. 	
UNIVERSITY REPRESENTATIVES: 1			
OTHER REPRESENTATIVES: 1			
		<p>Visit the Edinburgh Climate Commission website</p>	
KEY ACHIEVEMENTS, ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Developing and delivering an ambitious programme of activities and outputs from the Edinburgh Climate Commission, despite the global pandemic, shows the importance to the city of its commitment to climate change. The Commission had its first meeting in lockdown and many of the Commissioners have never met physically. → Forward, Faster, Together: Recommendations for a Green Economic Recovery in Edinburgh. Council elected members voted to wholly incorporate the report's recommendations for green recovery into the council's wider recovery plan for the city. Since then, Commission members have been providing evidence and advice to council committees, while continuing to work closely with the Strategy and Insight team. → Establishing the Edinburgh Climate Compact, a public and private partnership of the largest organisations in the city, committing to working together to reduce the city's climate emissions by collaboration and making specific commitments to reduce their own organisational impact. → Depth of partnership with the City of Edinburgh Council, showcasing how independent expertise and city leadership can come together to drive city ambition and action on climate change. → Development of the Carbon Scenario Tool, and its use by the City of Edinburgh to embed climate impact data into city decision making. Further development is being sponsored by the Scottish Government and the Scottish Cities Alliance to scale impact and support national commitments on climate change across Scotland's seven cities and beyond. 	



JAMIE BROGAN

(UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH/ECCI), EDINBURGH CLIMATE COMMISSION

What is the Commission about?

Our city has a particular focus on emissions reduction and the city's 2030 target for net-zero. The Commission is focused on helping find the best way to achieve this city ambition, and on helping Edinburgh to realise the wider social, economic and health benefits of becoming a sustainable city.

Who leads the Commission?

The formation of the Commission was co-sponsored by ECCI and the City of Edinburgh Council. We chose to have an independent private sector chair (Sam Gardner, of Scottish Power) because we felt that would make the Commission more credible in gaining wider city commitment. The Leader of the Council, Cllr Adam McVey, is vice-chair. The Commission is supported by the CEC and the University of Edinburgh who share the secretariat duties. It doesn't have its own budget or resources, hence the strong connection with both of these organisations.

How is the Commission structured?

We create short-term working groups that align with current activities in the work programme, which works well because it means the Commission is responsive to the changing situation.

What does the Commission want to do?

Fundamentally, the Commission wants to help make Edinburgh a better place – both in its global contribution to reversing climate change, and in realising the benefits to everyone in Edinburgh of becoming a sustainable city. Our way of working is to challenge, catalyse and convene – to raise city ambition, to advise on the most effective ways of reducing climate impact, and to use our independence to bring together city partners who can work together to deliver a better city.

Achievements

- We have overcome the very real and practical challenges of the global pandemic to establish the Commission, develop a work programme and produce impactful outputs, which have helped to keep the city focused on climate and sustainability despite the impact on the city and our partners.
- We have secured the commitment of the city's most influential and impactful organisations to the Edinburgh Climate Compact, ensuring those organisations who can most affect city change are helping to deliver it, and building a foundation for collaboration between city partners.

- We have embedded climate change into our city decision making through the Carbon Scenario Tool, and by expanding this into work with the Scottish Government and Scottish Cities Alliance we've created a pathway to national impact on emissions reduction.

Challenges

Like all organisations we've had to tackle many new operational, political and strategic challenges in the last year. The ones I would highlight are:

- Collective city responsibility around climate change
 - the responsibility for achieving net-zero doesn't lie exclusively with the council or the public sector, it requires everyone in the city to make changes; whether to investment decisions and business models, or to personal behaviours and consumer choices.
- The scale of the challenge and the ambition on climate change against the resources allocated to it. The perennial challenge of working on climate change! There is so much to do and a need to do it so quickly, but the resourcing of support for and participation the Climate Commission relies heavily on goodwill and needs to be more secure.
- The same people in the Commission keep contributing – telling us we need to do more to engage and hear the wider range of stakeholder voices the Commission represents.
- Data on city emissions comes with a two-year time lag which makes it difficult to measure the impact of city decisions and policies.

Key lessons learned

In Edinburgh we chose to jointly create the Commission with the City of Edinburgh Council, as the organisation who could have the biggest impact in leading the city transition. That working relationship has had many benefits, but it requires good communication and relationship management to be at its most effective. Across our city partners we are still finding how best to play to each other's strengths.

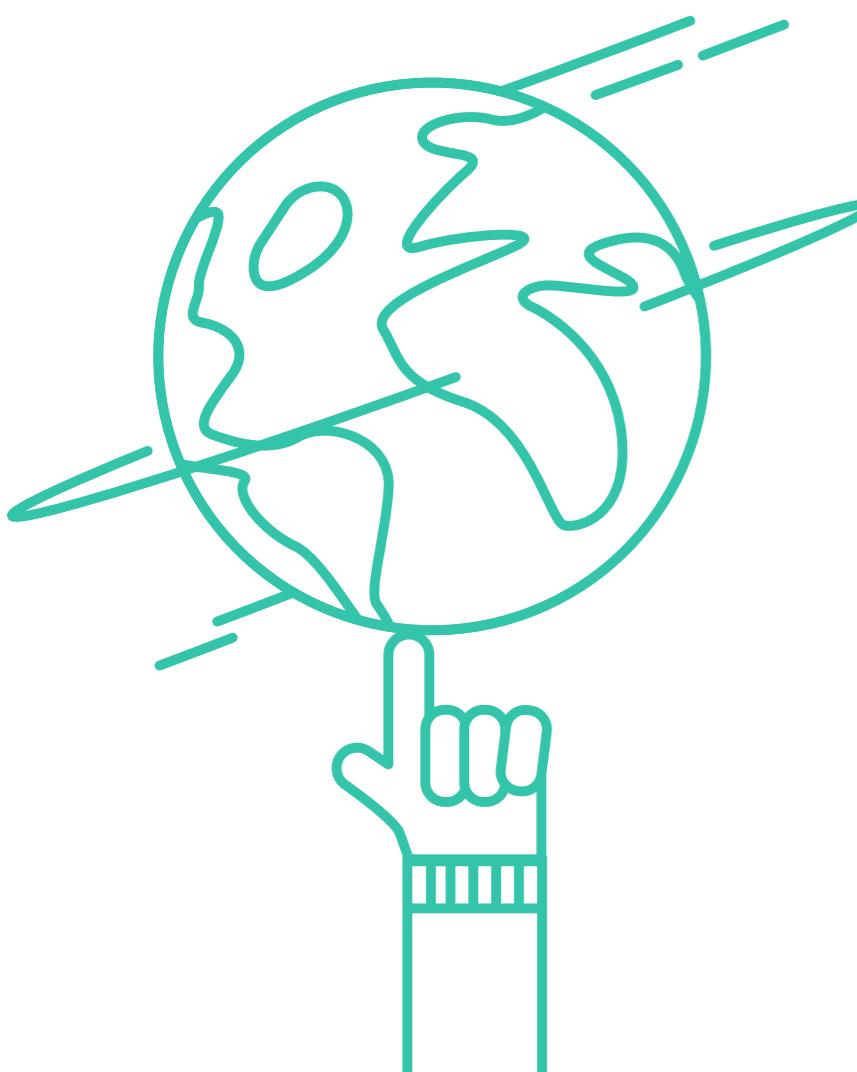
Most encouragingly, we are learning that key city stakeholders recognise that reversing climate change is a priority in which they have a part to play, and are up for collaboration. What we are all still learning together is how to most effectively turn strategy, ambition and intent into impact and action, and how to collaborate across traditional organisational and cultural boundaries to deliver better sustainability outcomes.

6.2

PCAN “NETWORK PLUS” CLIMATE COMMISSIONS

The Place-Based Climate Action Network (PCAN) now counts nine established, short-term/concluded and evolving climate commissions (for Essex, Surrey, Lincoln, Croydon, Doncaster, North East of England Climate Coalition, Kirklees, Yorkshire and Humber, York), as well as our three core climate commissions in Leeds, Edinburgh and Belfast. Some have had close contact with the PCAN team from the outset and we have supported them by providing advice and working with them to get them started. Others have developed independently from PCAN (at least at first) but have joined the wider PCAN network to enjoy the benefits of knowledge sharing and best practice that the network offers (including PCAN branding on websites, network meetings, newsletter and light-touch communications support). The network is expanding rapidly with new requests for support coming in regularly.

The following interviews demonstrate the genesis and range of some of the established and short term/concluded commissions and highlight the challenges and lessons emerging from this novel approach to local climate governance.



ESSEX CLIMATE ACTION COMMISSION



DAVID CLAYDON
—
**ESSEX COUNCIL,
PROGRAMMES
MANAGER**



KERRY BURGESS
—
**ESSEX COUNCIL,
COMMUNICATIONS
MANAGER**



[Visit the Essex Climate Action Commission website](#)

What is the Commission about?

A county-wide approach to tackling climate change that will make recommendations about how the economy and environment of Essex can be improved. It will run for two years initially and deliver a final report in 2021.

Who leads the Commission?

Lord Randall of Uxbridge (former Prime Minister Theresa May's climate change advisor) is the Chair. While he is not local, he has volunteered to support the Commission and his appointment helps secure the Commission's independence.

How is the Commission structured?

There are six key pillars:

- Adapting to an already changing climate
- Transport
- Built environment
- Energy and waste
- Land use and green infrastructure
- Community engagement.

Workstream leads from the Council support each pillar to build challenging recommendations which collectively will form a roadmap to a climate resilient and net-zero Essex.

What does the Commission want to do?

- Make creative and bold recommendations for local climate action specific to Essex.
- Consider how Essex can improve air quality, reduce waste across Essex and increase the amount of green infrastructure and biodiversity in the county.
- Explore how Essex can attract investment in natural capital and low carbon growth.

Achievements

Recommendations are incoming and a cohesive plan is emerging. An [Interim Report](#) was published in November 2020. The Commission is conducting community engagement through a digital-first climate change strategy on social media.

Challenges

The main challenges are turning recommendations into solid action on the ground, and lack of funding. However challenges can also bring opportunities, such as the uptake in active travel during the pandemic.

Key lessons learned

The number and range of commissioners makes for challenging coordination and communication between and among different factions. Virtual engagement platforms have however made bringing together geographically disparate Commissioners much easier.

DONCASTER CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY COMMISSION



TIM NEWTON
—
**POLICY TEAM,
DONCASTER COUNCIL**



[Visit the Doncaster Climate and Biodiversity Commission website](#)

What is the Commission about?

In September 2019, Doncaster Council declared a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency and the Team Doncaster strategic partnership set up a local Commission to advise on targets and actions for the borough as a whole.

Who leads the Commission?

Doncaster Climate and Biodiversity Commission was hosted for Team Doncaster by Doncaster Council and was chaired by Ed Miliband, MP for Doncaster North. Co-ordination and report writing was provided by the Policy Team.

How is the Commission structured?

The Commission was time-limited, meeting monthly between October 2019 and September 2020. The Commission had a wide range of participants including Chamber of Commerce, Elected Members, local activists, Health Trust, Environment Agency, National Farmers' Union, and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust.

What does the Commission want to do?

The Commission recommended that Doncaster should aim for net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040 and a roadmap (from PCAN) to get there. Although the Commission has finished, Doncaster Council remains connected with the PCAN network and the local climate action plan is just starting to get under way.

Achievements

The process of the Commission was a much needed educational journey, building a strong local partnership. The Commission's Final Report and its recommendations have informed a borough-wide Environment & Sustainability Strategy, both documents are [available for download here](#).

Challenges

- To be inclusive of a wide range of perspectives on climate change.
- To ensure that the scale, cost, and complexity of change required is massive, hence this is an area of strategy like never before, with no quick or easy answers.
- To manage expectations of a whole variety of stakeholders.

Key lessons learned

- Pressure for action has to be balanced with the need to develop greater understanding of the scale, cost, and complexity of change.
- Carbon accounting and modelling, and the roadmaps to net-zero are currently very crude and provide only very outline strategies.
- At the completion of a Commission, there is the possibility of losing momentum unless partnership governance for implementation is agreed and in place.

LINCOLN CLIMATE COMMISSION



KATE BELL
—
CITY OF LINCOLN COUNCIL



[Visit the Lincoln Climate Commission website](#)

What is the Commission about?

Reaching the whole area to fulfil a city-wide net-zero target (2030). The zero-carbon road map sets out steps that Lincoln needs to take to achieve that.

Who leads the Commission?

- Chaired by the leader of City of Lincoln Council.
- Sub groups chaired by representatives from the University of Lincoln, Siemens Energy, Transition Lincoln, Lincolnshire XR.
- Secretariat provided by the University of Lincoln and City of Lincoln Council.

How is the Commission structured?

The commission is made up of 33 formal members and has a range of sub groups including Business Support and Engagement, Communications, Climate Action Planning, Local Plan, Community outreach, Climate Action Plan and Climate research.

What does the Commission want to do?

Prepare and deliver “Lincoln 2030 – A Climate Strategy and Action Plan” to communicate a collaborative, local response to address the challenge of climate change.

Achievements

- Net-Zero Carbon Roadmap (produced by PCAN; finalised and agreed in September; now formally adopted).
- Website and social media.
- 33 members on the commission; evenly represented from the public, private and community sectors.

Challenges

- Wider engagement – climate change is going to have a drastic impact and we all have a part to play to meet our ambitious targets.
- Reignite our communications and community engagement in 2021 with the launch of our Climate Exhibition and Climate Assembly.
- Secure funding to help us deliver more climate actions.

Key lessons learned

- Collaborative working isn't always the quickest way to delivering outcomes but we believe it will be more effective in the long run.
- Good communications on climate change is about educating, informing, warning, persuading, mobilising and solving this critical problem.
- It is not just about the big issues; supporting and promoting “small sustainability” as well is an effective approach to reaching a wide community audience.

NORTH EAST ENGLAND CLIMATE COALITION



**SIR PAUL ENNALS
CBE**
—
CHAIR OF FULFILLING LIVES NEWCASTLE AND GATESHEAD



[Visit the North East England Climate Coalition website](#)

What is the Commission about?

NEECCo is a broad coalition bringing together organisations across the north east to create a coordinated approach to tackling climate change, with the ambition to become “England’s greenest region”.

Who leads the Coalition?

Strategic partners (from relevant regional and sub-regional organisations) are being recruited. Staff currently consists of two paid consultants and one administrator pending approval for a staff team.

How is the Coalition structured?

Workstreams will be aligned with the categories identified by the national Climate Change Committee. NEECCo has selected five initial areas to develop its proposals through Preparatory Planning Groups (PPGs). The PPGs will be convened by a lead organisation and/or individual and involve the relevant key individuals and organisations. PPGs set up so far are: agriculture and land use; buildings; public engagement.

What does the Coalition want to do?

Bring the region together to tackle the climate and ecological crises – see mission above.

Achievements

So far the response has been almost entirely positive and the overall message has resonated very well. The fundamental linkage to the region's industrial history (North East was “the great Northern coalfield”) is central: in the arc of history miners were there at the beginning of the fossil fuel era and they are there at the end of it, an exciting story that avoids the “climate doom” narrative and gives people hope. The North East England Climate Coalition's message is that there is something that everyone can do, however, small or large, if people are brought in to the vision.

Challenges

Securing the formal sign-up of the combined authorities; concerns about being accountable to an external authority. A nine-month delay in going public meant a lot of organisations raring to go were kept waiting.

Key lessons learned

That people respond well to the different approach to climate change embodied by the North East Climate Coalition's narrative (place based, historical and positive). People are more willing to be involved if the narrative is changed into something more positive and focused on regional-specific ideas.

SURREY CLIMATE COMMISSION



RICHARD ESSEX
—
SPECIALIST FINANCIAL ADVISER AND CHAIR OF THE SURREY COMMISSION

What is the Commission about?

We want to suggest what a zero-carbon Surrey could look like, providing an independent voice for public, private and third sector organisations and helping them to contribute to the county's climate change targets.

Who leads the Commission?

There is a core strategy group currently made up of 15 voluntary commissioners, e.g., Surrey University, CEO of Wildlife Trust Surrey, HEO of Environmental performance for Siemens and representatives from Surrey County Council.)

How is the Commission structured?

There are four working groups: transport; community and engagement; energy and the built environment; and planning strategy and land use.

What does the Commission want to do?

We are working towards producing a clear transformative action plan, one that can sufficiently reduce both the direct emissions in Surrey and indirect impacts of our residents and businesses, and that can drive a transition to new models of sustainable business and community. We also recognise the importance of monitoring progress towards meeting the plan and advising on the assessment of the climate-related risks.

Achievements

- Building the network to where it is currently.
- Baseline report by the University of Surrey.

Challenges

- Resources are a perpetual challenge – we need funding to get things moving.
- Triggering activity that can be put in place now, such as encouraging the reduction of the number of short car journeys which make a significant contribution to the region's emissions.
- Communicating where organisations/people can make the biggest impact/difference.

Key lessons learned

The network has highlighted the scale of things that need to be done!



[Visit the Surrey Climate Commission website](#)

CROYDON CLIMATE CRISIS COMMISSION



ELIZABETH COX
—
DIRECTOR, PRACTICE & CONSULTING, NEW ECONOMICS FOUNDATION

What is the Commission about?

The Croydon Climate Crisis Commission was launched in March 2020 to tackle the climate and ecological emergency. The Commission draws on findings of a citizens' assembly held in early 2020.

Who leads the Commission?

The first Commission is an independent group chaired by Miatta Fahnbulleh, chief executive of the New Economics Foundation.

How is the Commission structured?

The Commission has a group of 15 members who met four times over the course of this Commission.

What does the Commission want to do?

- Get the groundwork right: The Council will need to put in place the support mechanisms to drive change within the Council.
- Climate ready homes: Retrofitting homes and commercial property to reduce their energy use across the borough.
- Getting around: The Council will need to both reduce the need to travel and influence the type of travel adopted by residents and businesses to achieve carbon reduction targets.
- Green skills and jobs: The Council needs to ensure Croydon citizens have access to good quality jobs created through investments in green sectors.
- Get people and businesses involved, to ensure buy-in.

Achievements

The Commission will report their recommendations in March 2021.

Challenges

In November and December 2020 the Council was issued with S114 notices, which has meant that only spending on essential services is allowed. Support available to the Commission from the Council has been less than originally planned.

Key lessons learned

- A key point of contact with the Council at a strategic level is essential.
- Baseline data on carbon is required at the outset, and information on current activities of the Council.
- Wider engagement will be key to getting buy-in to the actions needed to address the climate change crisis.



[Visit the Croydon Climate Crisis Commission website](#)

7.0

CONCLUSION

There is a palpable vibrancy around place-based climate action, that is, locally-driven initiatives to tackle climate change. One tangible manifestation is the climate emergency declarations by local governments across the UK, where three out of four local authorities have declared a climate emergency. Emergency declarations have been instigated from across the political spectrum, which suggests a strong political consensus on climate change even at the local level.

Only 62% of councils have so far followed up their emergency declarations with a new or updated climate action plan. In part, the scale back was necessitated by the coronavirus pandemic, which has hit the delivery capacity of local authorities hard, but follow up is also hindered by inconsistent support from national government.

Where local authorities have persevered, the development of climate change action plans has often been accompanied by institutional innovations like Climate Commissions or Citizens Juries. They have made local climate action more partnership-based, participatory and inclusive, bringing in private sector voices, for example, as well as civil society. These developments underline the importance of local action in delivering the UK's climate change ambition.

The UK's statutory climate targets – the five-year carbon budgets and the net zero emissions target for 2050 – are national targets. However, they will not be delivered without joined-up interplay between national and local action. Local action without national support is challenging, but national policy without local buy-in will fail.

Looking ahead, place-based climate action is increasingly interlinked with broader local environmental, social and economic challenges. Economic regeneration and the Government's "levelling up" agenda are linked to low-carbon growth opportunities and the need for a just transition. The recovery from COVID-19 is an opportunity to build back better, including at the local level. And the partnerships and the participatory processes developed in the context of climate change can help to shape wider local agendas.



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**PLACE-BASED
CLIMATE ACTION
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