



Innovate  
UK

INSIGHTS

# Communities Driving Change

Learnings from the Net Zero  
Living Programme for  
empowering communities

REGEN



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# Acknowledgements

## About the Net Zero Living programme

Places across the UK are seizing the economic and social opportunities that come with decarbonisation, and creating warmer homes, cheaper local energy, new skills, and more secure work for their communities.

These pioneering places know what they need to do. But their teams are overstretched and they have limited resources and investment. Innovate UK has provided funding, insights and specialist technical assistance to nearly 300 businesses and local authorities, enabling them to adopt social, cultural, policy and technical innovations that will help their place prosper.

Funding has been delivered across three streams:

- **Demonstrators:** practical demonstration projects showing how non-technical barriers for delivering place-based decarbonisation can be overcome.
- **Pathfinders:** support for places actively delivering net zero plans and who have an understanding of systemic barriers to scaling and adopting solutions, with a view to progressing towards the demonstration phase in the future.
- **Fast Followers:** funding for a local authority to embed a net zero innovation officer who can deliver net zero pilot projects within the organisation and fully engage in the Net Zero Living programme to take learnings into their local authority.

## About Regen

Regen provides independent, evidence-led insight and advice in support of our mission to transform the UK's energy system for a net zero future. We focus on analysing the systemic challenges of decarbonising power, heat and transport. We know that a transformation of this scale will require engaging the whole of society in a just transition.

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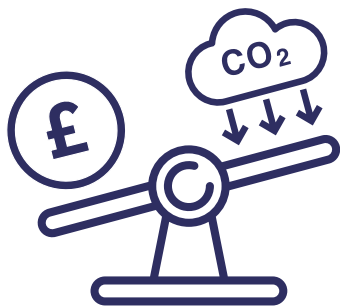
## With thanks to our Net Zero Living programme partners for their contributions to this insight

Stronger Stories  
Involve  
Innovate UK  
Urban Foresight  
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council  
Tees Valley Combined Authority  
Liverpool City Region Combined Authority  
Northumbria University  
Gateshead Council  
Northumberland County Council

## About Involve

Involve is the UK's leading public participation charity. We want to build a more vibrant democracy, where everyone can shape a society that works for all of us. Since 2003, we have been working with governments, parliaments, civil society, academics and members of the public to create, advocate for and deliver new forms of public participation that re-vitalise democracy, improve decision making, and enable people to shape the decisions that affect their lives.

# Executive summary



**Across the UK, support for net zero, clean energy and climate action remains high.<sup>1,2</sup> However, levels of support vary across policy areas and most supporters agree that action addressing cost of living is a greater priority than cutting carbon emissions.<sup>3</sup>**

In addition, those on lower incomes or in marginalised communities are often disengaged from policy making, and the transition to net zero can feel like something that happens to them, not with them.

These are also the people hit hardest by the energy and cost-of-living crises, and who have yet to see the benefits of net zero at scale.<sup>4</sup> Despite being the most exposed to energy price hikes, they are often unable to invest in energy efficiency and retrofit measures, including technologies like solar panels and heat pumps.

To avoid future policies worsening existing inequalities or creating further deprivation and exclusion, and to maintain public support for the UK's transition to net zero, it is important that policies align with issues people care deeply about, such as the cost of living. Climate action must ensure that people are not left worse off and that those already under financial pressure are not asked to bear the greatest costs.<sup>5</sup>

[The IPCC Sixth Assessment Report](#) states with high confidence that policies that integrate and identify with the values people hold are more successful, and that socio-cultural and lifestyle changes are important factors in climate action. Yet research shows that policy makers still need to cultivate a deeper understanding and engagement with the attitudes, values and lived experiences of the communities at the forefront of the net zero transition.<sup>6</sup>

This is something the UK is embracing, with the release of the policy paper [Energising Britain: Your voice in our Clean Energy Superpower Mission](#) in December 2025, which explores how UK government can work with local government, communities, businesses, and the public.

Beyond engagement, the Committee on Climate Change's [seventh carbon budget](#) advises that the focus of policy now needs to turn to supporting the roll out of low carbon technologies, many of which have a positive impact on people's health and quality of life. The report notes that the private sector already has a proven record of innovating and delivering rapid transitions in technologies and consumer choices, provided the right incentives are in place. However, barriers remain, and take up rates for low carbon technologies are below what is needed to achieve 2050 targets.<sup>7</sup>

For some, this is because these technologies remain difficult or unattractive to adopt;<sup>8</sup> they often present higher upfront costs, complex installation requirements, require evaluation of trade-offs (e.g., between cost, disruption, comfort and long-term savings), and can be poorly understood in terms of the concrete, tangible benefits they bring. For others, it's about a lack of agency or means to adopt, which can create further barriers for low income households to participate.<sup>9</sup> This risks further inequalities emerging in the UK's transition to net zero.

This paper, Communities Driving Change, draws learnings from local authority led projects and programme partners in the Net Zero Living Programme to identify innovative solutions for accelerating and delivering local net zero.

The insights and the learnings explored in this document can be used by other local areas to support local delivery of net zero.

**Empowering communities requires that local authorities move beyond traditional consultation towards deeper, two-way relationships with their communities.**

**1/3**

**Research commissioned by Innovate UK found that in contrast to uniform approaches place-specific delivery could double the social benefits for around a third of the cost.**

**£225Mn**

**Community energy has secured £225 million of investment since 2017.**

**£4.4Mn**

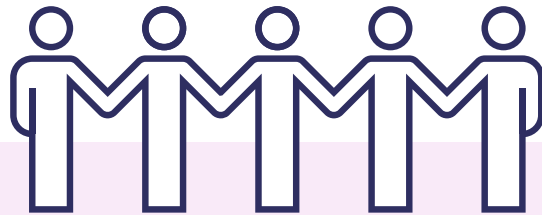
**Community energy organisations have saved UK residents £4.4 million on energy bills since 2020 through energy efficiency initiatives and advice services.**



## **Decades of social science research show that early, meaningful and participatory engagement consistently leads to better decisions, higher trust and stronger support for change.**

While these approaches may demand more time, resources and specialist skills, local citizens and businesses are treated as co-creators rather than passive recipients of policy, and the outcomes are more inclusive, more locally appropriate and more resilient.<sup>10</sup>

More meaningful engagement can also reduce risk for delivery partners and investors by providing clearer insight into what will work in practice, and by helping to create local support for projects and other investments.



**To ensure ongoing support for the UK's transition to net zero, it is critical to align policies with issues people care deeply about.**

Research from Involve, who provided public participation and deliberation expertise to local authorities as a Technical Assistance Partner to the Net Zero Living Programme, shows that in contrast poor engagement can lead to disengagement, challenge, mistrust, low participation and, in some cases, costly legal disputes.

The learnings through the Net Zero Living programme have highlighted three key ways that local authorities have a critical role to play in empowering communities and enabling more effective local delivery that reflects the needs, values and priorities of their diverse residents, businesses and communities.

- 1. Bringing people into local decision making.**
- 2. Helping people navigate complex choices.**
- 3. Spreading the wealth through community led action.**

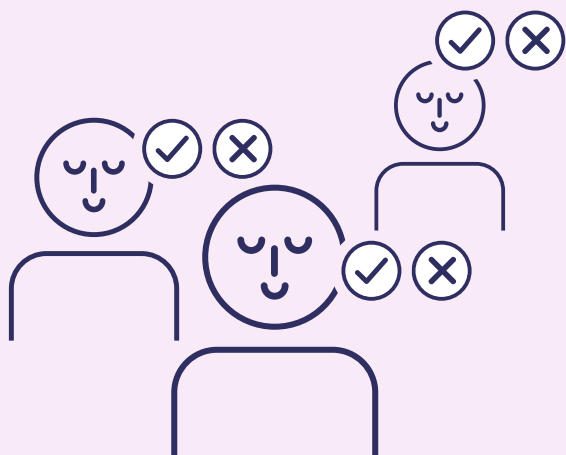
The following sections explore these three types of community empowerment through case studies from across the programme where approaches were tested and refined.

Together they illustrate the rationale, approaches and impacts of empowering communities in the transition to net zero and highlight the learnings that other local authorities and stakeholders need to consider as they look to deliver local net zero.



# Community empowerment

## Local decision-making

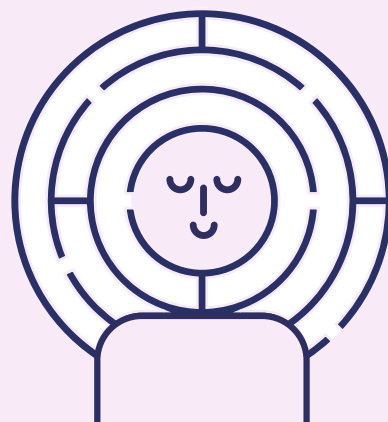


### Bringing people into local decision making

Local authorities brought people directly into local decision making using deliberative and community-led approaches to shape visions, strategies, plans and projects.

In Warrington, the Council asked a group of 17 young people aged 16-18 to lead the process to develop a vision of “Climate-Resilient Warrington 2040”. Through four in-person sessions and 70 discussions with their friends, families and peers they were able to agree 8 priority recommendations for the town’s transition.

## Navigating choice

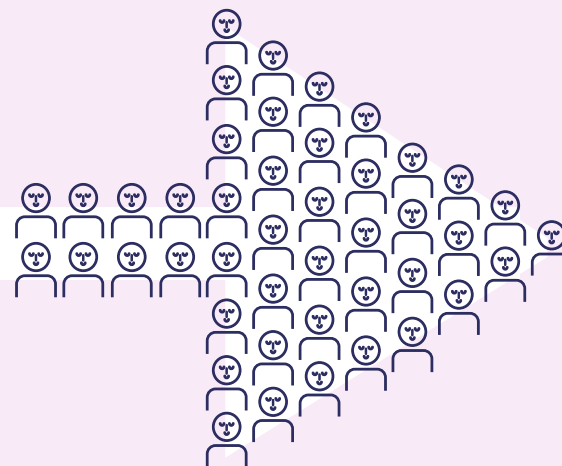


### Helping people navigate complex choices

Local areas worked with residents, businesses and intermediaries to co-design tools, services and information that help people navigate complex choices in areas such as retrofit, heat and energy use.

Northumberland’s Farming in a Changing Climate project engaged more than 360 farmers and 250 stakeholders, using farm visits, conversations, surveys and workshops to understand the best way to support the farming community to deal with the challenges of climate shifts.

## Community led action



### Spreading the wealth through community led action

Councils and partners created the enabling conditions for community organisations to lead delivery themselves, particularly in areas such as renewable energy, transport and local services.

The GreenerFuture Leicestershire initiative supported the formation of six new community energy organisations, each rooted in its own locality and supported to develop long-term roles in local energy delivery.

# 1. Bringing people into local decision making

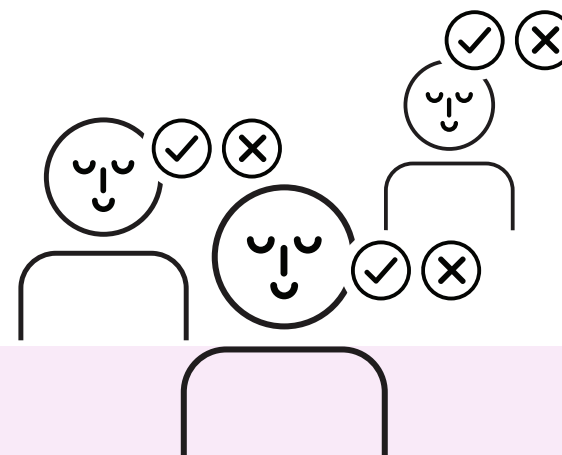
**Across the Net Zero Living programme, places have shown that how their residents are engaged in local plans, projects, or decisions, is central to supporting a fair and effective transition to net zero.<sup>10</sup>**

Many local authorities have recognised the need to step beyond traditional consultation and instead work alongside residents and businesses to shape local plans, projects and priorities.

Work led by Involve with 28 local authorities demonstrated the value of participatory and deliberative approaches—from formal citizens’ juries and assemblies to informal, community-led conversations—which brought people into the process earlier, broadened the range of voices involved and helped develop shared priorities for action.

## **Insight**

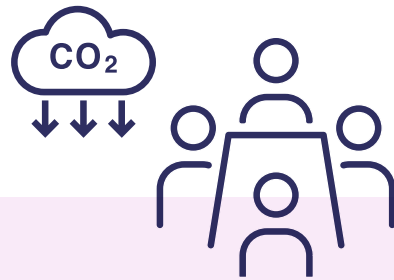
Involve have published a report “[Towards a framework for local government](#)” to support local authority officers in developing strategies for citizen engagement on net zero, climate resilience and just transition and includes a [self-assessment framework](#), along with [guidance on how to use the framework](#).



**Better engagement with stakeholders using participatory and deliberative approaches empowers communities to play a greater role in local net zero.**



These participatory and deliberative approaches have been used by places in the Net Zero Living programme to tackle a diverse set of challenges: informing local strategies, co-designing resources, exploring future scenarios, and generating recommendations that fed into regional and national planning. In some places, for example [Calderdale's Citizen Jury](#), this meant structured deliberation, where selected residents examined evidence, tested solutions and developed principles for fairness. In others, such as [Wakefield](#), it meant meeting people where they are—using everyday spaces, youth networks or trusted intermediaries to engage those who are least likely to participate in formal processes, including underserved or marginalised communities.



**When residents help design solutions, they are more likely to support and champion them.**

Engaging communities in this way gives residents greater ownership over the transition, enabling them to understand and influence how their area is changing, what matters most for their community, and how local action can deliver fairness and wider social benefits. When residents help design the solutions, they are more likely to support and champion them, de-risking investment as local authorities gain clearer insight into what will work on the ground.

For example, in [Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council](#), community-led energy planning helped ensure planned infrastructure aligned with local priorities, reducing the risk of worried opposition or planning delays and creating investable, grounded projects with public buy-in and support. This process made the delivery model more attractive to partners and funders, who could see evidence of local support and reduced likelihood of delays.



## Case study:

# Blaenau Gwent Council

### Co-designing the future of travel in Blaenau Gwent

Blaenau Gwent Council used the Net Zero Living programme to pilot a formal deliberative process that placed residents at the heart of designing a fairer, greener travel system. The approach sought to address long-standing challenges around accessibility, affordability and reliability of local transport networks, while preparing the area for the changes required to meet net zero.

This structured engagement enabled diverse residents, some of whom rarely take part in formal consultation, to shape decisions at an early, formative stage. It provided the council with richer insight into barriers, lived experience and public priorities, reducing the risk of poorly targeted interventions or future opposition.

### The process

The council worked with Involve, [Forum for the Future](#), [Ipsos](#) and [Quantum](#) to deliver a [Citizens' Forum that brought together 19 residents](#), selected to broadly reflect the population of Blaenau Gwent across gender, age, socio-economic background and mobility needs. They addressed the question: What should we do in Blaenau Gwent to tackle the climate crisis in a way that is fair and improves the living standards for everyone?

Over three in-person sessions involving eight expert speakers and totalling 364 person hours, the Forum followed a structured deliberative process to explore local travel challenges, assess potential solutions and weigh trade-offs. The process generated high levels of participant ownership, particularly because the council provided real-time feedback on feasibility and has committed to responding publicly to every recommendation.



The Forum produced three substantial outputs, written in the participants' own words:

- **A vision for fairer, greener and better travel** in Blaenau Gwent.
- **Thirteen principles for fair travel**, setting expectations around affordability, safety, accessibility, reliability, and long-term investment.
- **Ten actionable recommendations**, covering areas such as improving active travel routes, supporting school journey initiatives, improving bus connectivity, better promotion of existing services, and targeted support for those with limited transport access.

### Embedding citizen insight in decision-making

The Forum has already helped reshape the council's internal approach to transport planning, focussing more on people's travel needs than individual modes of transport. The emphasis on fairness, purpose of travel and lived experience encouraged a shift toward a more holistic, user-centred approach.

The fairness principles developed by residents now offer a practical framework for assessing future transport decisions, helping ensure that net zero actions also deliver wider social and economic benefits.

### Key early impacts included:

- **Improved coordination across the council and partners, including establishing a cross-council "travel group" to share data and align action.**
- **Strengthened active travel, particularly around school journeys, walking buses and safe cycling routes.**
- **Transport for Wales drawing on Forum insights to inform their bus network review and franchising process, reflecting the value of resident-led evidence.**

The Forum also helped build political support. Local councillors attended the final session, engaged directly with residents during a dedicated two-hour briefing, and several have committed to championing the recommendations. [The Deputy First Minister for Wales met Forum members](#) and is interested in using the model to support the Welsh government's work on democratic innovation.

The approach is now informing the development of Blaenau Gwent's future travel strategy and providing a model for embedding deliberation more systematically across local decision-making.

Further information on the process and outcomes can be found in the project report here: [How can Blaenau Gwent come together to make local travel fairer, greener, and better for everyone? | Involve](#)



### Community conversations empowering local voices for climate resilience

Local authorities are increasingly recognising that meaningful community engagement is more than a consultation—it's about creating spaces for residents to lead conversations, shape visions and partner in delivery. The “community conversations” model piloted by Warrington and Blackpool is one such approach, demonstrating how to engage distinct groups of people around a shared future challenge and build a foundation for equitable, locally-led climate action.

Traditional top-down engagement can struggle to reach diverse voices or foster ownership of the transition to net zero.

A community conversation format:

- Invites residents to become conversation-starters, extending engagement beyond formal events into everyday networks.
- Gives participants time, information and deliberation support, enabling them to explore trade-offs and build shared priorities.
- Helps local authorities surface lived-experience insight, test ideas early, and build legitimacy and momentum.

As one participant in Warrington noted, **“when people I know talk about what’s possible, it stops being someone else’s responsibility and starts being ours”.**

### Warrington – Young people shaping the future

In Warrington, the council asked a group of 17 young people aged 16-18 to lead the process, and asked: “What can we all do to prepare for and reduce the impacts of climate change, whilst making our town a better place to live?” Over four in-person sessions across three weeks the group:

- Engaged with expert speakers and local data.
- Carried out over 70 discussions with their friends, families and peers.
- Developed a vision of “Climate-Resilient Warrington 2040”.
- Agreed 8 priority recommendations for the town’s transition.

Following this process, young participants presented to the council’s Cabinet, and the Commission committed to publishing a formal response and establishing a Youth Climate Forum.

[See full report here.](#)

### Blackpool – Broad-based resident conversation

In Blackpool, the local authority recruited 15 conversation-starters, reflecting the town’s demographic profile. Over four in-person sessions across three weeks they:

- Heard from speakers on climate impacts and adaptation.
- Led over 50 conversations with family, neighbours and community contacts.
- Deliberated ideas and developed a vision for “Climate-Resilient Blackpool 2035”.
- Agreed 9 priority recommendations.

The council prepared a formal response, and has committed to action across all nine recommendations via its Climate Adaptation Strategy.

[See full report here](#)

### Why more meaningful engagement drives community empowerment

By shifting from “tell us what you think” toward “lead the conversation”, these approaches empower communities in three ways:

- **Enabling**, giving voice and capability.
- **Embedding**, making community priorities part of the policy architecture.
- **Enacting**, catalysing local action.

For local authorities, it offers a replicable model to foster greater ownership, resilience and fairness in the transition to net zero.

Involve has developed a ‘how-to’ guide which provides an overview on how to deliver good citizen engagement. The guide looks at visioning and participatory futures methods that provide innovative ways to engage the public in imagining and planning for sustainable futures, especially where the question requires imagining alternative possibilities for climate action and new pathways. [Check it out here.](#)



**Communities involvement and leading the conversation brings empowerment in imagining and planning sustainable futures.**





## Key insights

# Five key insights emerged around bringing people into local authority led decision making.

While different places may deliver citizen engagement to respond to unique local challenges, five key insights emerged about how participatory and deliberative approaches can best be leveraged to support more inclusive, legitimate and workable local decision-making.

## 1. Start with what people care about

People care about their local areas, so it is important to start conversations with open, inviting questions that speak directly to people's everyday experiences and frame engagement around place and quality of life.

This approach meant participants connected climate challenges to issues they already cared about or valued, such as safety, local pride, affordability, access to services, or opportunities for young people.

In addition, taking an asset based approach<sup>11</sup> and focusing on the positives of a local area can help identify and mobilise local assets – including skills, gifts and resources of people, communities and organisations.

## 2. Visioning helps people think differently about the future

Structured visioning exercises helped participants step back from day-to-day pressures and imagine a desirable, shared future for their area. In every project, residents created a vision statement in their own words, which became an anchor for identifying priorities and trade-offs. Visioning helped unlock creativity and optimism, as seen in work with Wakefield and Gateshead, where residents drew on their industrial heritage and identity of self-reliance to imagine a locally owned green energy ecosystem.

## 3. Building trust requires time, continuity, action, and feedback

Trust-building emerged as one of the most important aspects of these processes. Residents often arrived with limited knowledge of local climate plans—and, in some cases, with scepticism about whether their voices would make a difference. The projects showed clearly that trust cannot be delivered through a single event; it develops through repeated, consistent interactions, and space to share wider concerns not directly linked to climate. For councils it required openness about constraints, feasibility and uncertainty, space and visible follow-through.

## 4. Engaging more diverse voices requires intentional design

These approaches allowed local authorities to reach residents who are often under-represented in traditional consultation. Sortition - the selection of participants by random lottery - ensured that the Blaenau Gwent forum reflected the local population across age, gender, tenure, ethnicity, disability and levels of concern about climate change. Diversity does not happen by accident;<sup>12</sup> it is the result of purposeful recruitment, careful facilitation and designing participation to be accessible and relevant.



## 5. Valuing people's contribution is essential for inclusion and buy-in

A consistent lesson across the projects was the need to recognise and value the contribution residents make. This included:

- Providing clarity over how their input would be used (e.g., councils committed to response, publication and next steps, reinforcing trust and transparency).
- financial recognition for time (e.g., gift of thanks payments); as well as travel reimbursement, childcare support and accessible venues.
- facilitating participation such as offering food and refreshments; or translation or adapted materials where needed.

### What this means for local authorities

**For local authorities, effective community engagement means focussing on what people care about in their everyday lives, such as affordability, comfort, safety and pride in place.**

Starting with open, future-focused questions rooted in local identity helps people connect climate action to everyday benefits. At the same time the question needs to be guided by strategies or action that the local authority is working on and sufficiently bounded, so that engagement leads to meaningful action.

For councils, it is important that engagement is properly resourced and sustained over multiple sessions, using the right mix of models. Prioritising diversity, accessibility and practical support ensures that a broader cross-section of the community can participate meaningfully.

Ensuring that trust and legitimacy is built during the process depends on meeting people where they are, being transparent about constraints, and showing clearly how their input is used - such as issuing formal responses and embedding resident insights into strategy and delivery.

Treating participants as ongoing partners rather than one-off consultees helps build long-term relationships, strengthens local ownership of decisions, and creates a more durable mandate for net zero action. Done well, this type of engagement with community members can improve the quality of decisions and strengthen delivery.

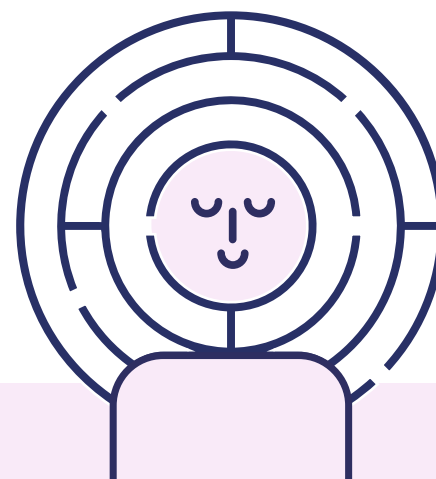
Local authorities often underestimate how much people want to be involved in conversations about the future of their local places, but when people feel listened to, respected and informed, the payoff is significant: clearer strategies, stronger mandates, and reduced delivery risk.

## 2. Helping people navigate complex choices

**Achieving net zero depends not only on long-term planning and system-wide change, but also on the countless decisions made every day within homes, neighbourhoods and small businesses.**

Whether installing insulation, considering low-carbon heating, shifting transport choices, or adopting new digital tools, people need access to clear, trustworthy information that makes these decisions feel achievable rather than overwhelming.

Yet, as many councils found, this is often where some of the greatest challenges lie. Residents face a confusing landscape of technologies, installers, offers, and conflicting advice, and they need support to navigate and understand the options. Effective community engagement can help local authorities and innovators understand the challenges people are facing on the ground, and develop or co-create solutions to better meet their needs.



**Residents face a confusing landscape of technologies, installers, offers, and conflicting advice and need support to navigate and understand the options.**

Meaningful community engagement can also de-risk project involvement for businesses and investors. For example, in Caerphilly, over 600 in-person conversations were held in everyday places, which allowed a toolkit to be developed that reflected real trade-offs local people were facing in their decision making:

**“By shaping tools around real concerns, the council has helped build the understanding and confidence that supports take-up. This also reduces delivery risk for businesses developing low carbon services by ensuring they align with what people actually need and will use.”**

Local authorities as public institutions can help put in place the structure or community partnerships to support the delivery of credible, accessible, trusted, and relatable information at a time when people are unsure who to believe. Better decision making is not just about transmitting facts but also about better communication and engagement by meeting people where they are, asking questions rather than simply ‘telling’, framing advice around what people care about, and reducing the mental load required to navigate complex information.

This means translating technical concepts into everyday language, providing hands-on opportunities to see and understand technologies, and creating routes to support that feel local, relevant and manageable.

For example, York Council, Calderdale Council, and Perth and Kinross Councils explored or established One Stop Shop (OSS) models through Net Zero Living to help households navigate the complexity of home energy improvements. Rather than expecting residents to piece together fragmented information, competing offers, and multiple contractors, a One Stop Shop brings everything into a single, trusted, locally anchored service. More information about how the One Stop Shop model has been developed and applied by cohort members can be found in our first insight, [Better, Warmer Homes](#).

Local authorities in the programme worked together with trusted community partners to develop a wide range of interventions to support better decision making; from in-person advice and peer-to-peer learning to digital guidance tools, targeted messaging, and new community-based delivery models. These initiatives emphasised that information needs to be trusted, accessible, and action-orientated, and that behaviour change is most likely when support is tailored to different households, cultures, literacy levels and local contexts.

The programme projects clearly show that information alone is rarely enough. Effective engagement often relied on pairing advice with practical tools, trusted intermediaries, relatable demonstrations, and the right emotional or social cues.

Many projects also took steps to normalise low-carbon technologies within their area, making them visible, familiar and part of everyday life. The following case studies explore how Net Zero Living projects used these approaches to empower people to make low-carbon choices, and what this reveals about the evolving role of councils as trusted enablers, navigators, and translators of the net zero transition at the household level.



**Creating solutions that normalise and improve community engagement with low-carbon technologies is crucial for better informing net zero decision making.**

## Case study:

# Northumberland County Council

### Farming businesses at the heart of the community

Northumberland's Farming in a Changing Climate project demonstrated that empowering better climate decision making extends beyond households: in rural places, local businesses, especially farms, sit at the heart of the community. The project showed how deep, trust-based engagement with farmers can uncover the real non-technical barriers they face and enable the development of practical tools that support action.

Through the programme, Northumberland County Council and the Rural Design Centre undertook extensive engagement with more than 360 farmers and 250 stakeholders, using farm visits, auction-mart conversations, surveys and workshops to understand everyday challenges. Farmers consistently reported uncertainty about policy changes, confusing funding routes, limited access to trusted advice, and difficulty separating business sustainability from environmental sustainability. Many had no business plan and had not undertaken carbon audits, highlighting the need for holistic, accessible support.

A crucial insight was that language and framing matter. When communications shifted away from "net zero" and towards practical issues farmers cared about, like profitability, resilience, soil health and future generations, engagement increased significantly. Trust-building and long term relationship building, also proved essential: repeated face-to-face contact at marts and events transformed initial scepticism of council involvement into strong participation.



Through co-design, farmers prioritised two solutions that would make decision-making easier.

1. **Pop-up Business Clinics / One-Stop Advice Sessions**, delivered at auction marts where farmers already gather, providing tailored, on-the-spot business and sustainability guidance. These clinics tested a new delivery model for trusted, locally grounded advice.
2. **The Little Green Book**, a simple directory of free and low-cost support services across the region, distributed widely online and in print. This addressed confusion about where to go for help and made information more accessible.

By embedding these approaches into a future Regional Farming Advisory Service, Northumberland is laying foundations for long-term, scalable support for low-carbon practices across the agricultural sector.



## Case study: Norfolk Climate Change Partnership

### Tackling non-technical barriers through community-led insights and practical tools

[The Norfolk Climate Change Partnership](#) brought together eight local authorities in Norfolk with other key local stakeholders such as the Tyndall Centre to address the barriers that prevent residents and businesses from taking climate-positive action.

Norfolk's ambition was therefore to equip citizens, communities and visitors with the information, confidence and tools needed to make meaningful changes.

### A place-based approach to understanding barriers

The project began by establishing seven 'Norfolk Net Zero Communities', that were chosen to be diverse groups that reflected the county's real demographic landscape.

Across these seven communities, the team undertook deep engagement to explore the everyday barriers residents faced. More than 800 residents contributed insights across engagement sessions, surveys, roundtables and thematic events. This revealed a consistent set of obstacles; lack of trustworthy information, financial anxiety, and uncertainty about where to start, alongside additional place-specific concerns linked to housing stock, rurality, and transport availability.



### Co-producing interventions with residents

Building on this, the Partnership worked directly with communities to co-design and test practical interventions. The team ran an iterative, real-time process in which residents helped shape the content, format and delivery of engagement activities, including the following interventions.

#### Energy champions

Local residents were trained to deliver informal, trustworthy advice on home energy improvements. These peer-to-peer conversations helped demystify retrofit, boost confidence, and reduce the perception of risk. While challenges remained around recruitment of energy champions, and the sustained funding required to train them, the model proved to be one of the most effective routes into communities with low trust or low starting knowledge.

### Locally-led case studies

Real stories from Norfolk residents who had installed insulation, heat pumps, or other improvements helped normalise retrofit and counter misconceptions. Because these case studies came from familiar places and ordinary households, they resonated strongly, particularly in areas where there was scepticism about new technologies.

### Open homes and drop-in events

Inspired by [NESTA's 'Visit a Heat Pump'](#) initiative, Norfolk tested in-person visits to homes with low-carbon technologies. Participants valued the chance to see, hear and ask questions directly, often finding heat pumps quieter and less disruptive than expected.

### Digital tools

The project trialled two digital platforms which were well received: [Fairer Warmth](#), offering impartial advice on home energy efficiency, and [Homewise](#), generating tailored home retrofit plans.

### Overcoming scepticism through reframed communication

One of the biggest early challenges was initial scepticism from communities. Many residents associated net zero with high costs, lifestyle restrictions, or abstract environmental messaging disconnected from their everyday priorities. Cost-of-living pressures heightened this resistance.

Shifting the conversation instead to focus on what mattered most to people: reducing bills, making homes warmer and more comfortable, and improving local quality of life, significantly improved engagement and opened the door to deeper conversations about energy and behaviour.

### A pathway to county-wide impact

The Partnership's staged approach (understand barriers, co-design interventions, test solutions, and scale what works) created a structured method for reaching diverse communities in a meaningful way. The final phase will see successful interventions rolled out more widely across Norfolk, targeted to specific socio-demographic groups using emissions and place-based data.

**By the end of the project, Norfolk had developed a suite of tools, insights and proven engagement models that will be deployed at scale. The work demonstrated that when residents are given practical, trustworthy information delivered in the right way, they are more willing to shift behaviour and act in line with net zero priorities.**

This helps reduce risks associated with low levels of adoption, and supports councils, businesses and investors to align around what works in real life and at scale.





## Case study: Gateshead Council

### Co-designing clear, trusted information to support heat network adoption

Gateshead council has been developing its district heat network for several years as part of a wider effort to strengthen local energy security and decarbonise heat. As the network expands into residential areas, the council recognised that its success depends not only on technical delivery, but on whether people understand, trust and choose to connect.

They recognised that for many residents, district heating is unfamiliar and difficult to compare to existing systems, making reliable information and tailored engagement essential.

Gateshead wanted to understand three central questions:

- 1. What information do residents rely on when deciding whether to connect to a heat network?**
- 2. What factors encourage people to connect?**
- 3. What barriers prevent connection?**

To explore this, the council partnered with academics at Northumbria University. Initial research revealed substantial knowledge gaps: most residents had little understanding of what district heating is, how it works, or what it would mean for their home.



### Developing a resident-centred communication strategy

Using insights from the research, the project designed a pilot customer journey for 16 homes, the first of its kind for low-rise residential heat network expansion in England. This whole-journey model applied behavioural insights to every contact point, from initial awareness to installation and follow-up.

The impact was striking: all 16 homes agreed to connect. The pilot validated the importance of simple, accessible and well-sequenced information, and demonstrated that resident receptiveness was far higher than the council had initially expected.

The research showed that residents were less motivated by global climate goals and more by tangible local benefits, such as reduced emissions, improved air quality, and community pride. Messages linked to mining heritage, particularly the reuse of old mine workings for geothermal energy, resonated strongly and have become core to the council's communications.

In an aligned piece of work, Involve and Ipsos held a [citizen visioning process in Gateshead](#) to address the question “What future energy systems do we want in High Fell, Windy Nook and Whitehills? And how can any changes be done in a way that works for residents?” The workshops developed a robust energy vision statement creation for the borough of Gateshead from the citizens of Gateshead, and submitted 10 priority recommendations to Gateshead Council, Energy Services, outlining resident enabling factors to support large energy schemes in Gateshead.

Based on the results of the initial engagement with the 16 homes as well as insights from the citizen visioning process, Gateshead is now formalising the research-based approach into a one-stop-shop communication strategy for the wider roll-out of the heat network, using the following learnings:

#### **Accessible materials and visibility builds confidence**

Many residents had limited familiarity with technical content. The research recommended designing materials with minimal text, clear visual explanations, and simple diagrams. The council has now embedded these principles across its communication materials and invested in animation and video content to support both visual and auditory learning.

To improve general awareness and familiarity, Gateshead’s heat network is showcased at the Discovery Museum’s “From Steam to Green” exhibition. More than 500,000 visitors are expected over two years. School visits and guided tours of the energy centre further help embed the heat network as a recognisable local asset.

#### **Face-to-face contact and peer advocacy is essential for trust**

Residents reported a strong preference for direct, in-person conversations with council officers and contractors; this turned out to be far more influential than written materials or digital content.

In response, Gateshead increased the number of home visits and is developing a strategy to include dedicated tenant liaison activities as a priority in upcoming installations.

The council also introduced familiarisation events where residents can see district heating hardware, ask questions, and meet staff before making decisions. To scale this approach, residents from the visioning forum discussed the idea of a “Green Room” outreach. The council is currently looking into the feasibility of this.

Residents also wanted the opportunity to speak with others who had already connected. In response, the council established a “Green Alumni” network of 22 resident advocates. This included residents from the 16 pilot homes, those involved in the citizen visioning forum, and stakeholders from the council including poverty officers and members of the housing team.”

#### **Building a foundation for long-term engagement**

Through its partnership with Northumbria University, Gateshead Council has moved beyond awareness-raising to build a systematic, evidence-based engagement model for heat network expansion. The approach recognises that household decisions about energy systems are shaped less by technical information and more by trust, clarity, familiarity, and social influence.

**By investing in accessible tools, peer networks, local framing and face-to-face engagement, Gateshead is creating the conditions for a successful, community-aligned expansion of its district heat network, one that reflects what residents value about their area and supports their transition to low-carbon heating with confidence.**



## Key insights

# Four key insights came to the fore in helping people navigate complex choices.

Across the Net Zero Living cohort, local authorities tested a wide range of approaches to help community members make informed choices about home energy, heat, and day-to-day behaviours. Although each place started from different contexts and challenges, several clear insights emerged about how information and tools can effectively support individual-level action.

## 1. Clear, practical and trusted information is essential for behaviour change

People are more willing to engage when information is framed around what they care about: comfort, cost savings, and practical benefits, rather than abstract environmental goals. Engagement also worked best when brought into familiar spaces (homes, community venues, schools, museums etc.), and when delivered by familiar people. Locally relevant case studies, peer advocates, and trained community champions proved powerful in building trust and providing relatable examples of “people like me” making changes.

## 2. Accessibility must be designed-in from the outset

Limited familiarity with energy concepts, and a lack of time all shaped how people engaged. Gateshead’s development of non-technical materials and their investment in visual and audio formats, demonstrated the importance of scaffolding information gradually. As the One Stop Shop model illustrates, making the journey feel simple, relevant, and aligned with local values and needs will encourage people to act.

## 3. Seeing is believing: experiential learning builds confidence

In-person experiences, open homes, familiarisation events, site visits, and demonstrations, were among the most effective forms of engagement across the case studies. People consistently valued opportunities to touch, see and discuss technologies directly, especially with peers or trusted local representatives.

The establishment of Gateshead’s “Green Alumni” and Norfolk’s peer-led case studies demonstrate how social proof accelerates uptake.

## 4. Behaviour change requires more than information: it needs tailored tools and intermediaries

Digital tools such as Fairer Warmth and Homewise helped residents translate information into action. However, these tools worked best when paired with human intermediaries, Energy champions, resident advocates, tenant liaison officers, or retrofit advisors, to help interpret results and help people act. This mixed model (digital + human support) emerged as a key success factor.

## **Tailoring messages to local values, identity and pride makes climate action feel relevant and motivating for people.**

But to translate this into supporting action from households and businesses, requires a trusted guide, someone offering clear, practical, and locally relevant advice that cuts through complexity.

Behaviour change also relies on trusted intermediaries and real-world experience. Community champions, liaison officers and peer ambassadors were shown to provide invaluable personalised support to supplement digital tools, while open-home visits or familiarisation events help residents understand technologies first-hand.

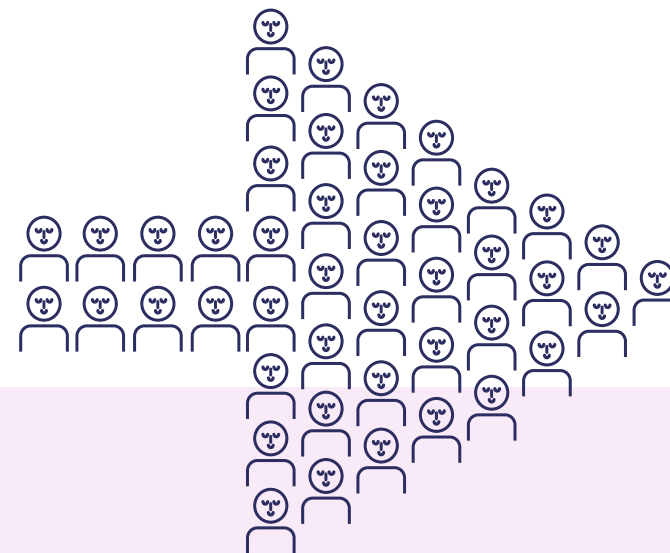
Local authorities can have a key role in this, either directly or through partners to ensure information is accessible, visual, credible and available including through familiar community settings.

Within the programme, most local authorities brought in experts, such as university partners, to support them in this role. Given the specialist skills needed to engage in this way, the right partners were able to help local authorities learn through delivering, and build their own capacity and skills to support ongoing action.

### 3. Spreading the wealth through community led action

**Across the Net Zero Living programme, places demonstrated that community organisations can play a powerful role in delivering the transition to net zero in a way that is fair, locally grounded and socially productive.**

Community driven projects are about far more than clean power: they create local wealth, reduce energy bills, strengthen community resilience and unlock reinvestment into valued local services. [Community Energy England's State of the Sector report](#) shows that community energy organisations have reached more than 61,000 people through energy efficiency initiatives, saved households nearly £2 million on energy bills, and installed over 22 MW of renewable generation. They also create green jobs and strengthen local economies, with £20.5 millions of organisational income spent locally.



**Nationally, community energy organisations have reached more than 61,000 people through energy efficiency initiatives.**

## Community energy projects can give rise to many benefits

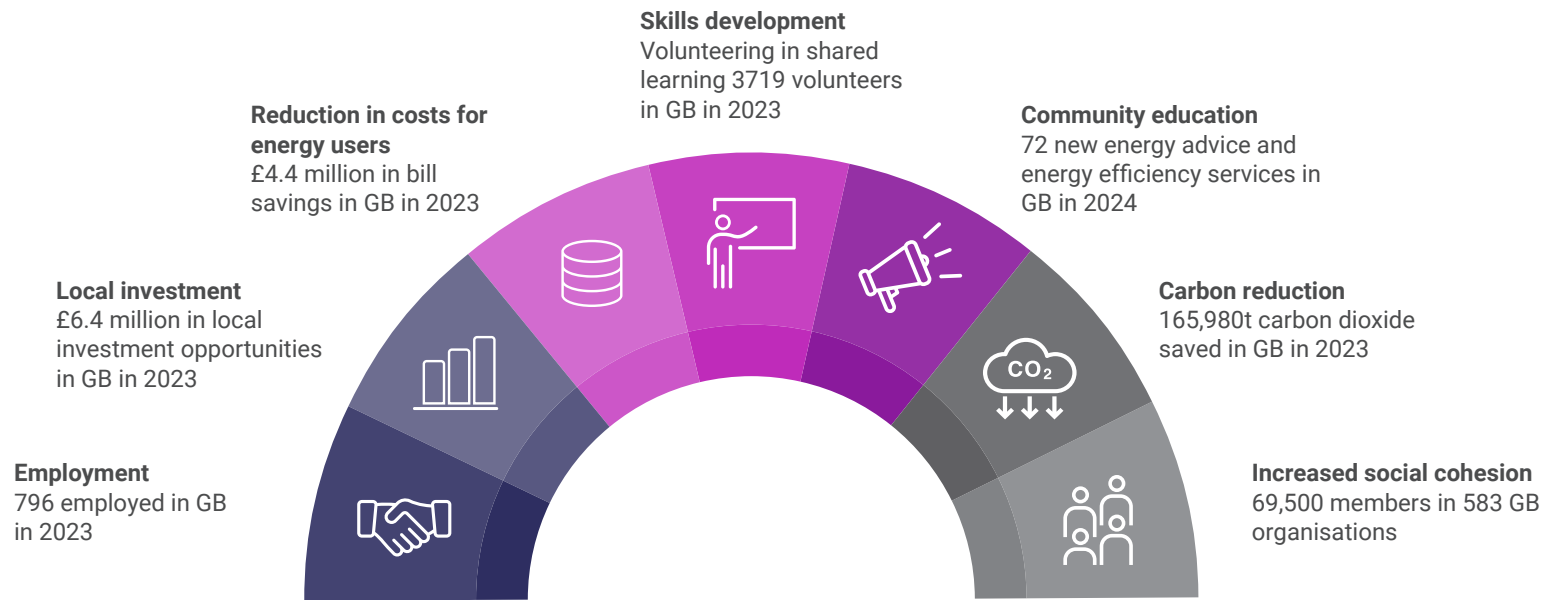


Image adapted from Carbon Trust paper [How to support community energy in your local authority area](#).

The evidence in the programme report [Power of Places](#), illustrated that community-owned energy assets, such as the [Ambition Lawrence Weston](#) wind turbine, can form the backbone of wider community activity, generating long-term revenue streams that can be reinvested in other community priorities such as fuel poverty support, home decarbonisation, community buildings or local transport initiatives. These locally rooted models help keep value circulating in the community, build trust in the transition, and support residents to play an active role in shaping their energy future.

Delivering successful community projects requires navigating a complex landscape of technical, financial and governance challenges. Projects typically rely on a combination of local appetite, dedicated project management, strong community engagement and a clear opportunity, whether a suitable site, a specific local need or an emerging funding source. Technical, legal and financial expertise is often essential, alongside good governance and a committed delivery team.



The Power of Places report highlighted five pillars that a thriving local energy landscape needed to be successful. As well as markets and regulations that recognised the value of local energy, the report emphasised enabling conditions including:

### **Empowered communities**

Citizens and communities with the capacity to participate directly in the ownership, design and governance of local energy projects.

Many communities depend on motivated volunteers to carry this burden, making it difficult for less affluent or capacity-constrained areas to get projects off the ground. These areas are often also those most impacted by climate issues, flooding and pollution.

Community capacity is an issue that three Net Zero Living areas, Southampton, Warrington and Derry and Strabane, explored by developing an innovative new community capacity mapping with Regen and Carbon Trust. This approach combined climate risk data, socioeconomic vulnerability mapping and comprehensive identification of local community organisations to create a systematic understanding of community vulnerability.

### **Thriving partnerships**

Local authorities, community energy, developers, businesses and other stakeholders were enabled to work more collaboratively on mutually beneficial projects.

Local authorities and communities both recognised the value of partnering to combine local knowledge, technical capability and resource. These partnerships can increase the viability of projects and also help attract ethical and impact focussed investors by demonstrating a community-led approach with visible public benefit and local ownership.

The value of thriving partnerships was demonstrated by Gwynedd's community-owned heat and power pilots, which are rooted in deep local engagement and shared ownership. See more on project here: [Gwynedd - Innovate UK Business Connect](#)

To support community energy, the Net Zero Living programme has illustrated that local authorities can have a number of different roles directly or indirectly to support community energy. Firstly, to act as stewards, helping create enabling ecosystems by shaping supportive local policies, identifying project opportunities, sharing data, coordinating stakeholders, as well as facilitating access to funding.

They can also promote community energy to residents, champion local initiatives, and, where appropriate, support directly by providing sites, acting as an electricity off-taker, or co-developing projects through joint governance or investment models.

### **Insight**

Carbon Trust has developed a guide based on the support given in the programme, [How to support community energy in your local authority area](#). This explores overcoming the pressures that local authorities face; tight budgets and competing demands mean that supporting more ambitious or higher-risk local energy projects can be challenging, reducing confidence among commercial partners and investors. This guide helps to strengthen capacity, skills and resources at the local level, and help local authorities understand how they can play a critical role in empowering local communities to develop, own and benefit from community energy projects.

The following case studies showcase innovative ways that local authorities in the Net Zero Living programme have stimulated community activity in their areas.

## Case study: Leicestershire County Council

### Growing a county-wide ecosystem for community energy in Leicestershire

The GreenerFuture Leicestershire initiative has demonstrated how local authorities can take a strategic, partnership-based approach to nurturing community energy, building local capacity and shaping long-term conditions for delivery. Its ambition is to create a coherent local energy ecosystem; one that can support multiple projects, develop new organisations, and help communities take ownership of their energy future.

### Laying the foundations for a community energy pipeline

At the heart of the programme is a Local Area Energy Plan, which provides a shared evidence base for future development and identifies viable opportunities for renewable energy investment, including where community-led projects could deliver additional social value.

However, Leicestershire needed more delivery ready and engaged community energy organisations to turn these opportunities into action. Therefore the project implemented a six-step community energy development process with partners [Community Energy Pathways](#), who led the processes to mentor, train and empower local people. This led to the formation of six new community energy organisations delivering community energy for the first time, each rooted in its own locality and supported to develop long-term roles in local energy delivery.



**Local authorities can play a key role in creating strong foundations for community-led projects.**

Through the [Get Ready Community Energy Fund](#), Leicestershire County Council awarded £134,000 in development grants to kickstart locally owned projects including:

- **Harborough Community Energy**, expanding a volunteer-led home energy advice service and developing a new community energy cooperative.
- **Coalville CAN**, combining fuel poverty support with early-stage rooftop solar feasibility work, including partnerships with local GPs and Green Fox Community Energy.
- **Falcon Support Service**, using energy audits to help clients at risk of homelessness gain skills and move into accredited training.
- **Surya Community Energy**, developing solar projects with local temples and engaging young people from minority ethnic communities in the energy transition.
- **Green Fox Community Energy**, exploring shared ownership opportunities and a county-wide solar school programme, offering community-funded solar installations for local schools.
- **Melton Communities Network Foundation**, undertaking a feasibility study into community owned rooftop solar on redevelopment sites across the town.
- **Coalville Public Radio**, carrying out technical evaluations of sustainable, local energy solutions for community radio stations in Leicestershire and beyond.

### Creating conditions for long-term, place-based energy leadership

A distinctive strength of GreenerFuture Leicestershire is its emphasis on longevity and relationship-building.

Developing trusted partnerships and building new community organisations takes time, and the programme has been structured to support this.

Regular roadshows, online forums, training sessions and advisory services have helped create a growing network of energy champions across the county. This long-term investment has also increased confidence among commercial partners, who now see a clearer pipeline of community-led projects and a more coordinated local energy landscape.

GreenerFuture Leicestershire shows how local authorities can play a transformative role in developing the community energy sector. This project has also strengthened internal relationships within the council. Energy officers, planning teams and senior decision-makers now work more closely together, making it easier for community groups to navigate council systems and progress projects.

**Leicestershire County Council has been named ‘Supportive Local Authority of the Year’ at the 2025 Community Energy England Awards, in recognition of its leadership in championing community energy initiatives.**

The work illustrates that community energy is not a single project but a long-term partnership between councils, community organisations and experts—one that can unlock wider social value, build local resilience and spread the economic benefits of the transition.



## Case study:

# Essex County Council

### Creating an enabling model for community-led solar in Essex

Essex County Council used the Net Zero Living programme to address a critical set of barriers that were preventing locally generated, stored and consumed energy from scaling across the county. While Essex had strong physical potential for renewables, large rooftop estates, suitable land parcels, and high levels of community interest, progress was constrained by a lack of accessible finance, limited technical capacity, and fragmented support for early-stage community energy development.

Through the EssNet project, the council explored how alternative financing and ownership models could unlock stalled opportunity. A central element of this was the development of an innovative 'pay as you use' approach, designed to remove upfront cost barriers, spread risk appropriately, and attract long-term investment from institutions such as pension funds or the National Wealth Fund.

### Establishing a local independent delivery partner

The project also established Essex Community Energy CIC as an independent delivery partner. To support this work Essex County Council brought together [Power Circle](#) and [UK Community Works](#), two specialist not-for-profit organisations, to establish [Essex Community Energy CIC \(ECECIC\)](#) as an independent, community energy service company.

Separating ECECIC operationally from the council meant it could act more flexibly, innovate at pace, and remain resilient to future political or organisational changes. However the council's support helped the new organisation address issues such as finance, procurement, governance, data access, capacity and capability.



This meant the new organisation had the legitimacy and stability needed to start work with households, communities and businesses, while giving partners confidence that projects were backed by robust governance.

The CIC now provides a trusted route for residents and community groups to access expertise, financing mechanisms and project development support. A key achievement for the Net Zero Living project has been the creation of this independent, community-centred vehicle, which is capable of aggregating opportunities and making locally owned solar and storage projects more cost effective and deliverable.

### Building the enabling conditions for long-term local energy leadership

Crucially, this work has also strengthened the relationship between the council and community energy actors. ECECIC's independence allows it to hold long-term relationships with residents, households and local groups, while maintaining close alignment with Essex County Council on strategic priorities.

This mirrors successful models in other parts of the UK, such as the long-standing partnership between Plymouth City Council and [Plymouth Energy Community](#), where an arm's-length structure has provided trusted community delivery within major programmes like fuel poverty support and retrofit.

EssNet has also helped build cross-departmental working within the council. The process of setting up ECECIC required collaboration between energy, procurement, legal and finance teams, increasing organisational capability and making it easier to identify future opportunities for community energy within wider programmes such as Warm Homes delivery or Local Area Energy Planning.

Find further information about the project here:  
[Driving Net Zero in Essex - Innovate UK Business Connect](#)

The EssNet project shows how local authorities can create and support new institutional arrangements that unlock community energy at scale.

**By addressing some of the systemic challenges that prevent local renewable generation from scaling, EssNet provides a replicable approach for other places looking to mobilise community-led energy, support households with the transition, and keep more of the economic value of net zero within local communities.**



**Collaboration between local authorities and independent innovators can help deliver new models for enabling community energy at pace.**



## Key insights

# Local authorities can help build the foundation for spreading wealth through community-led action.

The case studies from Leicestershire and Essex highlight how local authorities can play a strategic enabling role, helping to build the conditions in which community-led action can thrive, particularly when embedded within a wider ecosystem of support.

Access to technical expertise, early-stage funding, community capacity-building and a coordinating body all play a role, as highlighted in Regen's\* consultation response on [Barriers to Community Energy](#). Local authorities are well positioned to convene this ecosystem, aligning community energy with net zero plans, identifying viable sites, and connecting groups to the right partners at the right time.

\* Consultation response is available upon request.

## Creating organisations and developing community capacity is a long-term commitment

The projects GreenerFuture Leicestershire and Essnet have both supported the creation of new community energy organisations within their projects to support local delivery and wealth creation. However, these newer groups in particular can lack the organisational resilience or technical skills required to deliver complex energy projects. Supporting effective and dedicated community energy bodies is a long-term endeavour for a local authority but has significant benefits to delivery. Either directly or indirectly through trusted intermediaries, there is likely to be an ongoing need to support the development of these organisations, for example with mentoring and capability building as well as creating shared spaces to host key resources useful for future endeavours, as has been done in Leicestershire.

## Local planning can help align opportunities

Aligning community capacity with local energy planning processes can help identify opportunities for collaboration and partnership. For example, GreenerFuture Leicestershire has worked closely with community energy groups while developing its Local Area Energy Plan and the LAEP Lens Visualisation Tool which enables people to explore the potential interventions and opportunities in their area. Bristol City Council has also collaborated with community organisations to develop local energy projects which could be integrated into a regional climate investment plan, helping to scale up delivery. Bringing together opportunities through local planning can help build momentum and create a more attractive proposition for investors, an insight which will be explored further under our [Planning, Pipeline and Finance theme](#).



## Finance is a critical factor for accelerating and scaling community energy delivery

Net Zero Living acted as a catalyst for many areas, enabling staffing, piloting new models, and bringing partners together. However, places emphasised that momentum must be sustained beyond the programme, and access to funding and finance remains one of the most significant barriers to developing and nurturing a thriving community energy sector.

Some places who are part of the programme developed practical ways to support the financial journey. Dorset Council's [Low Carbon Dorset](#) programme, funded through the Shared Prosperity Fund, used energy audits and targeted grants to help community organisations progress their projects. [Perth & Kinross Council](#) has taken a similar approach to community-level retrofit and advice. These examples show how councils can use external funding streams to unlock early-stage activity.

### Other opportunities that councils can explore include routes such as:

- [The Community Energy Fund \(CEF\)](#), which has been a critical source of feasibility and early-stage finance.
- The forthcoming Great British Energy [Local Power Plan](#), which is expected in early 2026 and will be looking to set out measures to deliver 8 GW of locally owned clean power by 2030.
- Regulatory changes or clarifications related to [non-licenced supply](#) and [use of complex sites](#). Both of these changes should allow a closer link between renewable generators and demand in order to capture more value for communities and improve business cases – helping to share and retain locally the economic benefits from the decarbonisation of our electricity system.

## What this means for Local Authorities

# Community energy thrives where local authorities play a strategic enabling role—coordinating partners, identifying opportunities, and creating the conditions in which community groups can succeed.

This means investing time in relationships, understanding local needs, and helping build the organisational capacity of community groups so they can participate confidently in local project planning and delivery.

Finance is a defining constraint for community energy, and local authorities can have an important role enable access to funding by helping groups navigate options, build investment-ready proposals and connect with national programmes.

With the right support and enabling conditions, community energy can become a key part of place-based net zero delivery, spreading the wealth generated by the transition and ensuring it reaches the people and neighbourhoods who need it most.

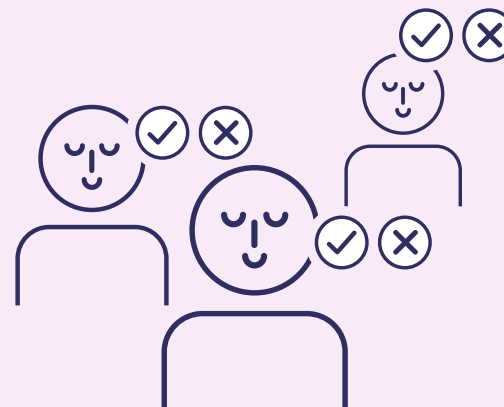
### Local authorities are uniquely placed help attract the investment needed to realise local ambitions.

The third Net Zero Living programme insights theme of Planning, Pipeline and Finance will be exploring in more detail the lessons and learnings around finance and investment.

# Conclusions

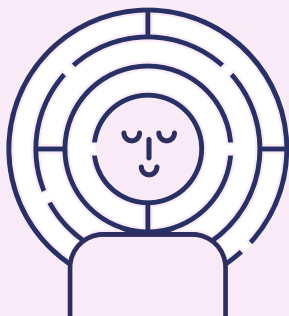
**Across the Net Zero Living programme, local authorities demonstrated leadership in designing enabling conditions critical to empowering communities and delivering a better, fairer and faster transition to net zero.**

Three overarching lessons emerged about what councils must put in place to support effective engagement, confident resident and business decision-making on complex topics, and community-led action.



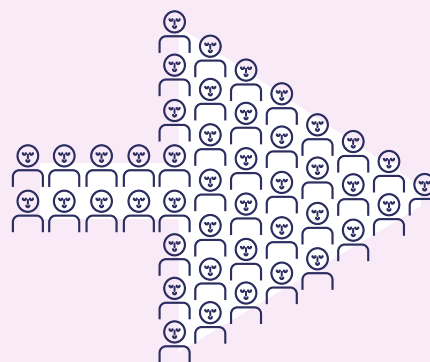
## 1. Effective engagement strengthens decisions and de-risks delivery

Local authorities should look to invest early in high-quality, inclusive engagement which will create clearer strategies, stronger social mandates, and more resilient plans. By framing conversations around local priorities, such as affordability, comfort, access to services or pride in place, councils can enable citizens to participate meaningfully and ground decisions in lived experiences. This requires good resource, transparent communications and then outputs clearly embedded into governance to delivery higher trust, reduced opposition and smoother delivery.



## 2. Local authorities play a pivotal role in supporting resident and business decision making

Residents and small businesses can face a confusing landscape, where trusted, accessible and easy-to-use information, tools and services are key to navigating complex decisions. Successful initiatives need to be informed by strong community engagement and co-creation. Messaging grounded in everyday concerns, accessible materials and repeated, in-person touchpoints can help people build confidence and take meaningful steps towards net zero.



## 3. Councils can shape the ecosystem that enables community-led action

Community energy groups and wider community organisations succeed when councils create a supportive environment. This includes mapping local needs, coordinating partners, brokering access to technical and financial expertise, and enabling new groups to form where capacity is low. While councils often cannot provide finance directly, they can guide communities to funding routes, support feasibility work and help them reach investment-ready propositions. Durable, long-term relationships, rather than short-term project engagement, is essential.

The Net Zero Living programme demonstrated that places thrive when transition is something done with communities, not to them. Engagement is not a hurdle to overcome; it is an asset that strengthens delivery, builds trust and unlocks local ingenuity.



**Places thrive when transition is something done with communities, not to them.**

With additional support from the UK Government through the policy paper [Energising Britain: Your voice in our Clean Energy Superpower Mission](#) released in December 2025, there is hope that public engagement and participation will form a key part of the UK's clean energy transition. The paper sets out how government intends to work with communities, businesses, trade unions, and the public, and acknowledges the key role that local government, community energy groups, and grassroots organisations will play. This sits alongside the [Great British Energy Strategic Plan](#), which includes a core goal of supporting over 1000 local and community energy projects and expanding public participation and local control in the energy system.

Local authorities often have many of the tools they need: convening power, visible local presence, relationships with trusted local partners, deep knowledge of place and long-standing relationships.

**By applying these strengths across strategic decisions, household-level support, and community-led action, councils can create a transition that is fair, locally grounded and shaped by the people it is designed to serve.**

# Further reading and references

## Programme webpage

[Innovate UK Net Zero Living](#)

## Case studies

[Blaenau Gwent](#)

[Northumberland](#)

[Norfolk](#)

[Gateshead](#)

[GreenerFutures Leicestershire](#)

[EssNet](#)

## Insights

[Power of Places: A vision for local energy in the UK](#)

[Running a local, place-based engagement on climate action: A how-to guide](#)

[Citizen engagement on Net Zero: Towards a framework for local government](#)

[How to support community energy in your local authority area](#)

## Useful links

[Local Climate Engagement Resource Hub](#)

[IAP2 Core Values for the Practice of Public Participation](#)

[Involve resources](#)

[Local Government Association report on Working in partnership – how councils can work with the voluntary and community sector to increase civic participation](#)

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# Communities Driving Change

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