

NFLA Policy Briefing No.207



Date: 9th November 2020

Subject: A 'Green Recovery' for Local Authorities to help deliver in response to Covid-19

i. Overview of the report

This report follows directly on from previous NFLA reports on developing best practice in local government in tackling the climate emergency, and what the impacts of the Covid-19 (coronavirus) outbreak and lockdown means for energy and climate change developments. They are very much worth reading before considering this report, and can be downloaded from the NFLA website –

https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/A312_NB199_Climate_emergency_update.pdf

https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/A313_NB200_Covid_19_and_aftermath.pdf

This report focuses on what is often called the 'green recovery' as a core part of central and local government's economic response to the Covid-19 outbreak. This takes account of the greater and longer-term problem of the climate emergency. It has been developed by the NFLA Secretariat as our specific recommendations for the future, and it should be read by Executive Members for Climate and Environment Policy and officers involved in developing climate emergency and economic recovery plans.

1. Introduction

Around the world, governments have committed more than \$12tn to kick-start their economies ravaged by the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. This is about 15% of global gross domestic product (GDP) and multiple times more than that put forward in the aftermath of the global financial crisis 10 years ago. In June, Bloomberg estimated that less than 0.2% of this money has been targeted at post-carbon economic priorities. (1) Climate efforts by governments worldwide are currently insufficient to reach the goals of the Paris Agreement. The world is currently heading for around 3 degrees Celsius of warming above pre-industrial levels and the severe climate impacts that come with it.

However, strong green stimulus measures could help meet the Paris Agreement objectives if just a fraction of the Covid-19 fiscal stimulus is invested annually in a "climate-positive" recovery. Such a recovery would bring about multiple other benefits while stimulating the economy, such as job creation, stimulating innovation and technological developments. This has been highlighted by several recent reports, including a survey of over 230 experts worldwide and the latest World Energy Outlook from the International Energy Agency (IEA). (2)

A green recovery can be defined as one that delivers for the long term; that catalyses job creation into growth industries, empowers citizens, improves public health and drives innovation while all the time removing our contribution to the climate crisis. For a successful green recovery; governments must enable change, existing programmes must be accelerated, new and more effective partnerships must deliver, and local authorities must work with their citizens to build a resilient locality that meets their needs. There needs to be a joint commitment to a Green Economic Recovery from both Local and National Government. Any public stimulus investment decisions should be conditional on a greener future. (3)

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE ON NUCLEAR ISSUES:
WORKING FOR A RENEWABLE, SAFE & RENEWABLE FUTURE**

In a ground-breaking report, Regen and Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) say the focus of an economic recovery should be on an energy transition. The two organisations argue that local and combined authorities are uniquely placed to lead a net zero transition that offers local jobs and investment opportunities and creates a healthier community, natural environment and a fairer, more equitable society. But they also need to create effective partnerships with the energy networks, local communities, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and the private sector, as well as to work across authority boundaries to amplify their plans and influence. In short, local government must lead a coherent, urgent, co-ordinated approach to energy system transformation that drives action by bringing together businesses, key agencies and local communities.

Across the UK and Ireland, local authorities are trying to tackle the climate emergency at a time when they are facing unprecedented challenges responding to the pandemic and huge pressures on their budgets. They will only be able to rise to these challenges with much greater powers, funding and resources. There needs to be a major programme to devolve powers and funding on energy to cities and regions across the UK. The report calls for a new statutory duty to be placed on local authorities to play their part in achieving net zero energy, with appropriate funding, resources and reporting to deliver. Recommendations also include giving control of retrofit funding, including ECO, to local government. Regional authorities should even have delegated powers from the regulator to guide investment planning in energy networks in their area. (4)

2. **‘Build Back Better’ – a core part of a ‘green recovery’ for England / wider UK?**

The UK Government has committed some resources towards a sustainable recovery. For instance, within the £30bn ‘Plan for Jobs’ set out as part of the Chancellor’s Summer Statement, around 3% of the total was dedicated to projects which will clearly align with net zero; most notably the Green Homes Grant, public sector and social housing decarbonisation, and some specific projects within the Infrastructure Package (5). New commitments to offshore wind have also been made, forming the first stage of the government’s forthcoming ten-point plan for a ‘green industrial revolution’. (6) However, packages of support for clean activity announced so far in key comparator countries France and Germany appear much larger in magnitude. (7)

The UK Government has also announced a £40m “green recovery challenge fund” designed to “help tackle biodiversity loss and tackle climate change”. The scheme aims to help charities and local authorities create 5,000 jobs in tree planting, habitat restoration and green space creating. In addition, up to £100m of R&D funding for “direct air capture” technology that can remove CO₂ from the air has been announced. (8)

A growing body of evidence confirms that net-zero-aligned investments have some very appealing characteristics in a recession, making them desirable for inclusion in the UK’s economic recovery package. Investing in new renewable generation capacity or greater energy efficiency creates more jobs than investing in an equivalent level of fossil fuel-fired generation. Implementing measures to improve energy efficiency in housing could create immediate jobs across the country. As could construction projects, including building active travel infrastructure, planting trees and restoring wetlands. And with global demand for clean technologies set to rapidly increase, countries that take early action are likely to reap significant growth benefits. Net-zero aligned public sector investment alone will not be able to soak up all the unemployed but can kick-start demand and employment, increasing confidence for the private sector investment which will be needed to further expand employment and, ultimately, lead to a more sustainable recovery. At the same time, such green investments have attractive co-benefits and advance progress towards climate targets and biodiversity protection.

Money saving expert Martin Lewis has called the Green Homes Grant “a shambles”. He claims 6 in 7 of people who have applied for the Grant “find it a flop as no installers can do it. Many will miss out due to losing the postcode lottery. It must 1) Get more installers 2) Spread the budget out 3) Extend the 6-month deadline.” (9) The National Insulation Association says the deadline for households to use vouchers issued through the scheme did not give installers enough time to complete home upgrades or recruit more installers, the MCS certification body issued a similar call for the government to urgently rethink its approach. (10) The Daily Mail reports that

households cannot find local contractors to carry out work, while some tradespeople on the list of approved installers are now so inundated with orders they fear they will not be able to complete installations. (11)

3. Scottish Government response

The Scottish Government outlined plans in its Programme for Government 2020/21 to spend nearly £1.6 billion to directly support up to 5,000 jobs, tackle fuel poverty and drive Scotland's green recovery. This will include investment to transform heat and energy efficiency of buildings. An additional £500 million is being invested in Scotland's natural economy including £150 million to help deliver a 50% increase in woodland creation by 2024 and an extra £150 million for flood risk management (in addition to continuing to provide £42 million annually to local authorities), vital to increasing climate change resilience. Other commitments include:

- £100 million Green Job Fund;
- £60 million to help industrial and manufacturing sectors decarbonise, grow and diversify boosting youth employment opportunities in nature and land-based jobs by expanding apprenticeship and undergraduate schemes in public agencies, including Scottish Forestry, Forestry and Land Scotland and Nature Scot;
- £70 million to improve refuse collection infrastructure and develop a new route map to reduce waste and improve recycling as part of plans to drive a thriving circular economy. (12)

The Scottish Government has a 20-year Energy Efficient Scotland Route Map which aims to make Scotland's existing buildings near zero carbon by 2050. It includes targets for improving EPCs for different types and tenures of buildings, with these ratcheting up over time. Initiatives to reach the target include significant investment through programmes aimed at householders such as Home Energy Scotland, and support for business consumers through 'Resource Efficient Scotland'. The Scotland Government is currently consulting on measures to accelerate energy efficiency deployment in the difficult owner-occupier sector. There is also strong action at a city and regional level, with local authorities being supported by the Scottish Government to draw up Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies. (13)

4. Welsh Government initial proposals

The Welsh Government has asked Sir David Henshaw, Chair of Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to lead a coalition of experts to deliver practical action on a Green Recovery. The group will focus on delivering practical action that uses the tools in Wales' legislation and the expertise in its communities to inform long-term proposals on carbon emission and climate risk and reversing the decline in biodiversity. (14)

The Green Recovery Taskforce will report to Environment Minister Lesley Griffiths later this autumn. Measures to boost horticulture farming so fruit and vegetables can be sourced more locally. And converting empty offices into eco-homes are among the ideas being considered by the taskforce. They are also looking at volunteering, work experience and apprenticeship opportunities, for example in nature conservation, energy efficiency, woodland planting, or peatland restoration. (15)

In August, the Welsh Government announced a £10m fund to support the energy efficient and low-carbon retrofit of social housing in Wales. The Optimised Retrofit Programme will see almost £10m, a mixture of grant and loan funding, go towards improving the energy efficiency and overall emissions of social housing, through the trial and testing of optimised retrofit approaches. The Government also announced the Innovative Housing Programme (IHP4), which promotes modern methods of construction, the provision of affordable housing, and encouraging place-making and the creation of beautiful spaces. Both policies target improvements to social housing in Wales, aiming to make it more comfortable, secure and warm, while reducing its carbon footprint. While IHP4 is focused on new build social housing, ORP will support registered social landlords and stock retaining local authorities in retrofitting existing social homes.

Natural Resources Wales has awarded £1.2m in grants to environment bodies as part of its commitment to deliver a green recovery. The money will be allocated to five organisations who

care for the environment so that they are able to safely re-open and operate the land they manage as coronavirus restrictions are eased. The grants have been awarded to the Woodland Trust, National Trust; Wildlife Trust; RSPB and Plantlife. (16)

The Welsh Government Energy Service (WGES) provides financial and technical support to the public sector and community groups on renewable energy and energy efficiency projects. In 2019 and 2020, WGES has been working with stakeholders from the four regions of Wales to develop regional energy strategies. Each strategy's priorities and level of ambition has been established through engagement with local stakeholders, backed up by modelling on the pathway to achieving net zero. Regional governance boards with broad representation from across each region's public, private and community sector are being established to take ownership of delivering the strategies. (17)

5. Northern Ireland Government's response

In June, the Northern Ireland Government Department for the Economy published a paper entitled "Rebuilding a stronger economy – the medium-term recovery" which focused on the next 12 to 18 months. The paper highlighted the substantial economic recovery opportunity in decarbonising energy as part of growing the green economy across Northern Ireland. Growing this sector is also a vital part of responding to climate change and building a better environment for the people of NI. (18)

Economy Minister, Diane Dodds, says Northern Ireland is well placed to lead the way in decarbonisation and developing clean energy. In the most recent 12-month period nearly 47% of total electricity generated in Northern Ireland came from renewables, exceeding the target of 40%. Eighty-five percent of this came from wind. NI should build on this success and generate even more electricity from low-carbon sources.

"There is a substantial economic recovery opportunity in decarbonising energy as part of growing our green economy and delivering significant export opportunities for homemade lower and zero-carbon solutions. Not only this, but warmer, more energy efficient homes will be healthier homes for vulnerable consumers, reduce excess winter deaths and take pressure off our health system."

Dodds wants to set an ambitious new renewable electricity target for Northern Ireland. Work is ongoing to gather the evidence needed to set a new target but the Minister wants it to be no lower than 70% by 2030. (19) SSE has called for an 80% target. (20)

She is also looking to make Northern Ireland a centre of excellence for the hydrogen economy, with local manufacture of electrolyzers, hydrogen fuel, and hydrogen-fuelled vehicles for which there will be a rapidly growing demand world-wide. The department is exploring and supporting a range of projects to showcase the potential to develop cutting-edge hydrogen technology. (21)

6. Republic of Ireland – response of the new government

Following a commitment in the recent programme for government to raise the energy rating of 500,000 homes by 2030, the July stimulus plan includes a "retrofit skills training initiative" and a chunk of extra funding for the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland to support expansion of the national retrofitting programme in 2021. The Government also said the money would create an additional 3,200 quality sustainable jobs. The Irish Government is also making available €10m for investment in renewable energy in the fisheries and farming sector.

An additional €15m on top of the €5m peatland rehabilitation fund announced in this year's budget 2020, which climate minister Eamon Ryan says will be used to restore 33,000 hectares of peatlands and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by significantly increasing the area of wetland habitats in post-production peatland. This all forms part of a Climate Action Plan that is currently going through the Dail. At the most recent meeting of the NFLA All Ireland Sustainable Energy Forum Minister Ryan said the Action Plan will complement and help drive forward core aspects of a green recovery.

To help businesses "adapt to the green economy", the government has announced the first phase of a new €10m "Green Enterprise Fund", which it says will support green research,

development and innovation, capital investment and capacity building. An extra €40m for pedestrian infrastructure and €42m to support urban and rural cyclists, as part of a wider funding stream for transport which includes further funding for local bus and rail services. (22)

7. The positive Role of Local Authorities in promoting a green recovery

Across the world C40 Cities connects 96 of the world's largest and most influential cities, representing more than 700 million citizens and one quarter of the global economy. Member cities use a science-based approach and exchange of best practices to take the urgent and effective action needed to confront the climate crisis and keep global heating below 1.5°C, aiming to collectively halve greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. (23)

More than 10,000 cities around the world have committed to some form of climate action. These efforts range from setting emission reduction targets to adopting clean energy and sustainable transport projects, as well as energy efficiency policies. While some city-level climate initiatives fulfil national requirements, many are more ambitious and extend beyond their respective national governments' efforts. Subnational climate efforts may play a critical role in closing the widening emissions gap between current policies and global climate goals. An analysis, published in Nature Climate Change, provides one of the most comprehensive assessments of cities' progress towards their climate goals. The findings show that over 60% of the more than 1,000 European cities that have monitored their performance are on track to meeting their climate target. (24)

In the UK and across Ireland, there may be almost universal agreement over measures which local authorities could be looking at to promote a carbon emission-busting recovery from the coronavirus pandemic, (25) but implementing these measures is proving to be far from plain sailing.

Promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy, supporting walking, cycling and public transport, planting trees and encouraging local food growing and reductions in food waste are some of the more obvious measures which can reduce carbon emissions and generate new jobs to get the economy moving again in a climate-friendly manner. Climate mitigation measures such as flood prevention schemes could also be added to the list.

APSE Energy (26) highlights a coherent framework for Local Authorities provided by the UK Committee on Climate Change (CCC). It could also be of real benefit for use in Ireland.

Although more will need to be done to reduce net emissions across their whole area to zero, the framework allows local authorities to at least make a start. Using this framework, a long list of possible actions that Local Authorities could take in the next few years includes:

- Energy and carbon efficiency of own estate: retrofit buildings, including housing stock, e.g. lighting control, light-emitting diode (LED) lights and thermal insulation; replace street lights and signage with LEDs.
- Electricity generation and the grid: install renewable energy on own estate including solar panels, heat pumps, on-site wind turbines and Combined Heat and Power (CHP).
- Low-carbon vehicles and machinery: introduce Ultra Low Emissions Vehicles (ULEVs) for staff travel with on-site charging and cut usage; adopt green/ULEV fleet except by exception (e.g. refuse collection vehicles – RCVs).
- Licensing and control: to promote electric taxis; tighten controlled parking zone (CPZ) conditions to restrict large/polluting vehicles; introduce city/town centre ultra-low emissions zones (ULEZs).
- Personal mobility: understand staff travel patterns so as to increase use of electric vehicles, vehicle sharing, homeworking; infrastructure to prioritise walk/cycle/bus/train; require developments to submit active travel plans for approval.
- Procurement: prioritise sustainability (application of ISO14001, Environmental Management System / EMS). Introduce emissions reporting requirements into major contracts.
- Trees and re-wilding: increase the tree canopy (adaptation to heat) and re-wild (e.g. wetland restoration); manage and maintain trees and woodland; redesign parks to be carbon neutral.

- Waste management: end single-use plastic on own estate; review office consumables and recycling to minimise waste; transfer food waste from black bin to green; stop other GHG emitters (e.g. fridges) going to landfill.

Local authorities whose capacity has been severely hollowed out by austerity may struggle to find the financial resources. But not all projects cost money: energy-efficiency projects save money, yielding a revenue stream. How such revenue streams are used – and how other revenue streams are developed (for example, from an LA’s own energy company) is likely to be crucial. We look in more depth below at some of the more innovative ways of financing projects which are beginning to emerge.

8. The importance of public support

Perhaps an even more obvious measure than those recommended by the CCC would be not granting planning permission for new fossil fuel extraction facilities. But, unfortunately, that is exactly what Cumbria County Council has just done by approving a proposed coal mine on the West Coast of Cumbria. Burning the coal from the proposed mine, to make steel, will release nine million tonnes of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere every year. That’s more than double Cumbria’s total current emissions. In a blatant misreading of the Climate Change Act planners have shortened the lifespan of the mine, saying that it must cease operations on 31 December 2049, the minute before the UK is legally obliged to reach its net zero emissions pledge.

Cumbrian councillors will, no doubt, be widely criticised for their decision, but the fact that many councillors felt they had to make a choice between producing more carbon emissions or no jobs must tell us something about how a green recovery should be implemented. One councillor said, before voting in favour of the new mine, “I wasn’t elected to do global issues, I was elected to do Cumbria issues” highlighting the fact that local authorities currently have no statutory duties or targets on climate change. They are drastically under-resourced and ill-equipped to consider decisions which may have a significant national and global impact. All governments across the UK and Ireland need to devolve a coherent local climate change strategy, giving local areas the responsibility, powers, and resources that they need to develop local strategies that improve the local area, bringing more high quality employment while also getting emissions down. (27)

9. Climate Emergency Declarations

By March 2020, 282 councils had declared a climate emergency across the UK and Ireland. Most councils have set a 2030 target; some aim to tackle just the councils’ own emissions, others the whole area and most were planning to produce a climate action plan by April 2020. There is a big difference between targeting emissions from “own operations” as opposed to those for the local area as a whole. But either way, by adopting a local leadership role, and taking urgent action on climate change councils are able to encourage others to follow suit and also demonstrate some more immediate local benefits. And it is important to get started as soon as possible - cuts today are worth as much as larger cuts later. In fact, stopping a source of emissions now, in 2020, does as much for the stock of carbon in the atmosphere as stopping a source 30 times as large in 2050. The means that in developing plans, the target date for net zero, usually at least a decade away, is less important than actions over the next few years.

Recent research for APSE Energy by the opinion polling company Survation shows that worries that the public will not support action on climate by local authorities may be misplaced. Three quarters of the public expect a response and when it comes to where the public wants more money spent, climate comes second only to social care. Making homes more energy efficient and improving waste and recycling are the top two priorities.

APSE’s research argues that to keep the public on board, Councils should openly link climate actions back to the science as summarised in the IPCC report. The science provides the reason to act – the answers to the questions of “why?” and “why now?”. (28)

10. Opponents make lots of noise

In what looked like a burst of optimism at the start of the pandemic many local authorities began working to help facilitate more trips on foot or by bike, particularly shorter trips that pre-Covid-19 would have been made by car or public transport, and even to create temporary “low traffic

neighbourhoods” (LTNs). But these proposals have generated some strong reactions, particularly from people opposed to the idea. (29)

For example, in London a businessman has launched legal action against Islington Council claiming it failed to carry out proper consultation or correctly authorised those making major changes to the road network. In Ealing residents have filed papers at the High Court to try to obtain a judicial review into road closures. (30) In Edinburgh local activists have raised thousands of pounds to seek legal counsel with a view to challenging the Council’s plans to reduce traffic in the East Craigs and Craigmount neighbourhood. (31)

In the last four months, more than 200 new schemes have been proposed across the UK and Ireland, with restrictions on through traffic planned or implemented in at least 54 local authorities including Birmingham, Dublin and Manchester. The vast bulk of the schemes – 141- are in London where ‘rat runs’ avoiding the congestion charge have been, or could soon be, partially blocked by barriers. But even fairly modest traffic management changes have sparked sometimes bitter rows, with increasing vocal opposition groups arguing the schemes only really benefit the entitled middle classes in leafy enclaves at the expense of those living in surrounding neighbourhoods or who are dependent on their cars. Of course, there are also many supporters of these schemes and plenty of examples of people who have been encouraged to take up cycling and active travel as a result. But there must be lessons we can learn about how to introduce more permanent schemes and other types of low carbon projects after the pandemic as a response to the climate emergency. (32) While introducing LTNs is not without its challenges, examples from across London and Dublin have shown they do work and once in, become popular. (33)

Despite a loud opposing minority, LTNs are increasingly popular. Nationwide polling, carried out in October 2020, found 26% of people said they strongly supported LTNs, and 31% would “tend” to. In contrast, 8% strongly opposed them, and the same number tended to. That left more than a quarter of people who either didn’t know, or were neutral. (34)

There is a growing body of evidence from the UK’s first LTN in Waltham Forest, which started life in 2014, that the scheme has boosted life expectancy and air quality, without pushing up pollution on main roads. Car ownership fell inside the schemes while walking and cycling markedly increased within one year.

The Scottish Parliament’s Information Centre (SPICE) briefing concluded that:

- There was a consistent trend towards reduced car use among LTN residents;
- There is evidence that LTNs can reduce general traffic levels;
- There is some evidence that LTNs can increase levels of walking and cycling;
- There is evidence that LTNs can help reduce local air pollution;
- Some journeys made by car/van may take slightly longer;
- There is no evidence that LTNs particularly affect those living in low-income households;
- There is no evidence that LTNs particularly affect older people;
- LTNs do not require anyone to walk or cycle who cannot, or does not want, to do so – all properties remain accessible by motorised vehicles;
- There is no evidence that LTNs increase emergency service response times;
- All properties within an LTN remain accessible by bin lorries and service vehicles;
- LTNs have no impact on the great majority of trips made by car, although the creation of an LTN may slightly increase some car journey times for those travelling within, and possibly on roads immediately outside, the scheme area;
- Schemes introduced as a result of the pandemic with very limited, consultation are temporary measures introduced at speed to help facilitate social distancing on streets and, by making walking and cycling safer a more attractive option for trips previously made by bus or rail, on public transport. There is an 18-month time limit on such temporary measures. They cannot automatically be made permanent. Any permanent scheme would have to go through standard statutory consultation procedures.

Returning four neighbourhoods in Waltham Forest back to their residents at the expense of car users has enabled people to get out and meet on the street, businesses open and thrive by

serving local residents. Councillor Clyde Loakes says: “The forlorn belief that businesses thrive on through traffic hurrying to work has proved to be a complete myth. It is just the opposite.” (35)

11. **The Democratic Challenge of Climate Change**

Responding to climate change is going to have huge significance for the way we live and the way in which each local authority area is organised. Climate Emergency declarations are just the start of this process. After the declaration there will need to be a widespread discussion about the far-reaching implications of these declarations. There will need to be a clear strategy with democratic oversight through processes such as citizens’ assemblies. As part of the Paris Agreement each country is expected to develop a national plan called a Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC). One idea is that local areas should develop a Locally Determined Contribution which sets out carbon reduction targets and timescales.

Professor Rebecca Willis, who was one of the ‘Expert Leads’ to the recent UK Climate Assembly established by several House of Commons Select Committees asks what might happen “if we started to see democracy as part of the response to climate change, rather than a hurdle to overcome?” We could begin to see a more deliberative model of democracy in which politicians, citizens and experts debate and collaborate on climate strategies. (36)

Locally Determined Contributions need to be meaningful in two senses. Firstly, they need to provide a meaningful material contribution to carbon reduction, but secondly, they also need to be meaningful to people and communities.

Willis says “There is plenty of evidence about what works from a technical perspective. But much less thought has gone into how to win democratic support, acknowledging people’s values and engaging them, not attempting to bypass them.”

Willis argues that democracy is in crisis. The decline in trust of government and politicians and the rejection of established expertise will both have deeply negative consequences for climate politics. Overlooking people’s concerns and interests and trying to impose low carbon solutions is not going to work.

One practical way in which politicians could explore the public mandate for action, and develop meaningful policy solutions, is through greater use of deliberative processes, such as citizens’ assemblies. These allow citizens and experts to meet on equal terms, to assess evidence, debate and agree solutions. They are not a substitute for electoral politics, but they provide a more nuanced and detailed understanding of voters’ viewpoints than traditional political polling or focus groups. (37)

Following the school strikes and demonstrations across the UK and Ireland by groups like Extinction Rebellion, politicians know what protesters think, but they still do not have a clear sense of what mandate for climate action they have from the wider electorate. A deliberative process bringing together a cross section of a community with experts which allows them to learn, and think about and debate the best way forward might be part of the solution. The Green Alliance ran two citizens’ juries in Cardiff and Penrith. Randomly selected individuals, representative of the local constituency, were briefed on climate science and the UK’s legally binding commitments. They were then given some suggested policies and strategies for tackling climate change to consider. A key finding was that participants perceived a lack of political leadership on climate action, at odds with media messages about the impacts of climate change. They wanted the government to lay out a clear strategy, and indicate a momentum for change. Critically, they were more willing to support specific changes, such as a switch to electric vehicles, if they were part of a wider government-led strategy. (38)

In Ireland, the recent landmark July ruling by the Irish Supreme Court in favour of the group ‘Climate Case Ireland’, supported by the Friends of the Irish Environment, that the Irish Government’s National Mitigation Plan on climate change “lacked the specificity to comply with the law” and the measures did not go far enough in providing short term requirements to quickly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. (39) This ruling is a good example of what happens when government does not react quickly or comprehensively enough to citizen concerns.

Ireland has a long constituted history of developing citizen's juries for action on specific policy. It held a citizen's jury in 2016/17 on climate change which led to a comprehensive suite of actions that were eventually accepted by the Irish Government and formed part of its 2019 action plan on climate change. This recent legal ruling puts pressure on the new government to be bolder in its climate action plans and shows the importance of actively taking up the recommendations of the public. (40)

Policies clearly need to be designed which build engagement and public support. Possible strategies could include local, municipal or community ownership of energy, which helps to build support for, and understanding of, energy infrastructure at a local level. For transport, there could be a greater focus on travel demand locally, and involvement of citizens in the setting and managing of transport budgets for towns and cities. The growing divestment movement has been a useful way for people to engage in the transition to a low carbon economy and society. It is also important to consider the effects of such a shift across the economy. The new 'Just Transition Commission for Scotland' acknowledges that the transition needs to be carefully handled, to ensure that those currently working in high carbon sectors do not lose out.

12. Climate Assembly UK

The recent Climate Assembly UK was established by six Parliamentary Select Committees. Its 108 members of the public were drawn at random from all walks of life and all across the UK. The Assembly made a series of policy recommendations, for instance, it recommended fifteen policies aimed at moving quickly to low carbon vehicles, increasing public and active transport, or discouraging car ownership and use. (41)

The recommendations in the Assembly's final report had a number of themes that recurred throughout the discussions which the Assembly believes should be at the heart of government's and Parliament's approach to achieving net zero:

- **Education and information:** there is a need for information and education for everyone – individuals, businesses, government and others – about climate change and the steps needed to tackle it. It is essential for buy-in to the changes that are needed.
- **Fairness:** as with most things in life, the solutions to climate change are neither easy nor free, but they need to be fair. 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.
- **Freedom and choice:** we believe it is important to maintain, wherever possible, freedom and choice for both individuals and local areas so that they can choose the solutions that work best for them. This should not be at the expense of taking the steps necessary to ensure a safe and healthy environment for future generations. We have outlined in this report where we believe an acceptable balance lies.
- **Co-benefits:** tackling climate change could bring with it many advantages. It could see benefits for local communities, high streets and local businesses. It could boost our economy and promote innovation, including in technology. And it could improve our health and reduce pollution. The UK should take advantage of these potential rewards.
- **Nature:** we need to protect and restore our natural environment, and our access to it. We strongly support measures that have a positive impact on biodiversity and wildlife, whilst also helping the UK move towards its net zero goal.
- It is imperative that there is **strong and clear leadership from government** – leadership to forge a cross-party consensus that allows for certainty, long-term planning and a phased transition. This is not the time nor the issue for scoring party political points.

The core message of the Citizens' Assembly is "get on with it". (42) Policies that politicians have shrunk from imposing on their voters for fear of a backlash have suddenly been urged on them by their own citizens. Assembly members having heard a great deal of expert evidence made it abundantly clear they wanted more renewables, onshore and offshore wind and solar power, rather than more nuclear energy. (43)

APSE Energy Consultant, Stephen Cirell, notes that the Assembly's report provides the first substantive piece of evidence about what the British people think in relation to reaching climate targets. He says it is particularly striking that there was 79% support for steps taken by the

Government to ease the pain of the lockdown to be linked to the targets for net zero carbon - the fact that Covid-19 was actually seen as an opportunity for change is significant. 96% strongly agreed that as the lockdown eases lifestyles must start to change to be more compatible with net zero carbon targets.

One last issue raised by the Assembly was that it believed that local choice was also an important principle. So, for example, whether an area gets a district heating network should be something upon which local engagement takes place. We are already starting to see local Citizens Juries being established, such as the first one in Oxford last year. Again, the success of this particular venture might spur more local authorities to run similar exercises on a local level, to help them shape their plans to meet Climate Emergency declarations.

Cirell concludes that if the Government did believe at the start that public opinion was genuinely divided on the need for robust policies to drive forwards the green agenda and emissions reductions to comply with the Climate Change Act 2008, it is under no such illusion now. The small and noisy group of sceptics that have been successful in giving the impression of having wider public support have via this work been revealed as just that: small and noisy. (44)

Graham Smith of the University of Westminster and Chair of the Foundation for Democracy and Sustainable Development, agrees that the report shatters the illusion that ordinary people will not accept stronger climate policies and are incapable of making difficult decisions about our collective future. He notes, in particular, that where significant disruption to everyday life is expected, such as the need to retrofit housing, assembly members were keen for local enterprises to lead the effort. (45)

The Green Alliance says the Assembly's report reveals that people in the UK recognise that climate policy offers a roadmap to a more secure, healthier future for them and their families, and that there is a strong public mandate to pursue it boldly. NFLA hopes the UK Government is paying close attention to what they have said because the challenges of Brexit and Covid-19 economic recovery means the UK urgently requires truly transformative, popular ideas that will make the UK a prosperous nation in future. It remains concerned though that one anticipated response from the government is renewed support for new nuclear build, which was low on the priorities of the Assembly report in comparison to wind and solar energy. (46)

13. Leeds Citizens' Jury

In Leeds a Climate Change Citizens' Jury was established in 2019 by Leeds Climate Commission. The Leeds Climate Commission's members are drawn from 31 businesses and organisations across the City of Leeds, including the City Council, the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, two universities and Yorkshire Water. The Jury consisted of 25 randomly selected people, including people who were sceptical or weren't bothered about climate change. (47)

Jurors were asked to consider the question: "What should Leeds do about the emergency of climate change?" They produced a list of 12 recommendations, including making the use of private cars a last resort; all houses to be made energy efficient; a communications campaign on the climate emergency; exploring finance sources; and stopping the expansion of Leeds-Bradford Airport. There were also proposals for a Leeds Green New Deal, plastics, recycling and political co-operation. (48)

14. Promoting climate change and environmental education

One of the most notable developments in the discussion over tackling the climate emergency is the increased engagement of young people in schools, colleges and universities. Inspired by the example of the Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg, the schools' climate change strikes lit up this issue and has had its impact on Councils passing resolutions and government activity.

For example, the Irish Youth Assembly developed a special climate change panel with 10 dynamic recommendations for urgent action, held in the Dail in late 2019. At the time, the Taoiseach commented on their proposals saying he was inspired by young people on climate change, noting: "They're the ones who understand the science - they're the ones who get it. And

they are the ones who are demanding action from adults and politicians and from people in power and influence in politics and business and society." (49)

It is important for Councils to also engage in listening to and developing detailed climate change and environmental education programmes to encourage young people to actively consider careers in climate adaptation and mitigation, and the promotion of low or zero carbon energy solutions.

Some good educational information that Councils may wish to consider include:

- <https://www.teachthefuture.uk/> - a repository of information of practical ideas for political engagement by school and college students in the climate emergency debate.
- <https://sustainability.nus.org.uk> – ‘Students Organising for Sustainability’ is a National Union of Students project which looks at a range of carbon reduction measures that students are supporting from low carbon travel and food options to reducing the energy use in halls of residence.
- https://www.ucu.org.uk/env_resources - The Universities and Colleges Union (UCU) is developing campaigns for re-skilling, up-skilling of existing staff and carbon reduction elements to all initial post 16 training. Other Unions across the UK and Ireland have similar environmental projects.

15. Recent Local Government Climate Action in the Republic of Ireland & Northern Ireland

NFLA welcomes a detailed analysis of the state of existing local government climate actions in Ireland undertaken by Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) Research Unit, on behalf of the County and City Management Association’s Environment, Climate Change and Emergency Planning Committee. The report was published earlier this year. The report outlines that the local government sector is expected to play a critical role under the government’s Climate Action Plan and in helping to deliver a green recovery. This LGMA analysis will help local government in understanding the scale of its climate adaptation activity and how it can interact with central government through the national Climate Action Plan. (50)

The report profiles 44 case studies of local government climate actions. These case studies include, for instance:

- Cork County Council’s development of action plans to guide Council operations in the areas of climate action and biodiversity;
- South Dublin County Council’s Energy Masterplan; and District Heating pilot;
- Waterford City and County Council’s use of ‘Better Energy Communities’ Funding for energy efficiency upgrades and renewable energy installations including LED park lighting, heat pump installation and windows/insulation, upgrades at primary school/language college/care for the elderly centre, community centre heating system/insulation upgrades and retail LED lighting upgrades;
- Improvements to energy efficiency in various leisure centres and public lighting;
- Kerry County Council’s landfill gas scheme;
- Tipperary County Council’s installation of solar PV panels on public buildings;
- Other solar installations such as a fire station in Roscommon and Carlow County Hall;
- A solar car park canopy at Wicklow County Council;
- Social housing efficiency upgrades by Dublin County Council and Sligo County Council;
- Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council’s electric vehicle fleet;
- Laois County Council’s low carbon town centre project;
- Cycling schemes in Dublin City and Leitrim;

In Northern Ireland, Sustainable NI are working closely with Councils to assist them in developing detailed climate change adaptation plans to encourage energy efficiency, energy generation and storage schemes.

Some good examples they note include:

- Mid and East Antrim Council support a community food growing scheme in Greenisland involved schools and local community groups after a grant from the White Mountain programme.

- Handiheat is a €2 million European Union project focussed on improving energy efficiency in rural communities who are heavily dependent on fossil fuel imports, and where fuel poverty is prevalent. Northern Ireland Partners include the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the ARC Healthy Living Centre in County Fermanagh. The project also aims to address policy and establish a set of resources and toolkits, which can be implemented to help provide sustainable energy solutions for these communities.
- Ards and North Down Borough Council established its 'Recycling Community Investment Fund' to thank residents for their recycling efforts. This funding has been used to support a range of projects that directly benefit local residents and neighbourhoods.
- Belfast City Council's Giant's Park is a trail blazing regeneration initiative, to transform a closed waste landfill site into innovative environmental resource park.
- Derry City and Strabane District Council is working with Enterprise Rent-A-Car to develop a low-emission car leasing scheme for essential staff travel within the district.
- Energy upgrade works by Newry Mourne and Down District Council at its Greenbank Depot have resulted in an annual saving of £9,300 in electricity costs (35% reduction) and £5,500 in oil and biomass savings (18% reduction). The site's energy rating has improved from an 'F' rating to a 'C' rating.
- Fermanagh & Omagh District Council has been rewarded at the annual Sustainable Ireland Awards for introducing a fleet of 'green' vans, the first council in Northern Ireland to adopt such a strategy. (51)

NFLA were pleased to welcome officers from Derry & Strabane District Council to speak at its most recent All Ireland Sustainable Energy Forum profiling in more detail its recent climate adaptation work following advice from APSE Energy and Sustainable NI. (52)

16. Conclusions

The detailed Annexe below list some of a large number of recent local authority projects which have been reported since our last report in May on this subject – 'Tackling the climate emergency in the UK and Ireland – how Councils can own their commitments and demonstrate their low carbon ambition' – available here:

https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/A312_NB199_Climate_emergency_update.pdf

If all nations within the UK and Ireland are to create a net zero carbon energy system that is both fairer, cleaner, healthier and produces local economic benefits, then NFLA believes the number and scope of projects will need to increase dramatically and be replicated across every region, with the support of every community and local organisations. The evidence is that the public supports action against climate change, provided it is properly consulted and measures are implemented fairly. Now we need the UK, Irish, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish governments to provide local areas with the resources and powers to truly unleash a net zero carbon resolution as a crucial part of a green recovery from the current pandemic.

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Annexe: Recent local authority developments

Here we report on a remarkable number of local authority projects which have been announced since our last briefing on the Climate Emergency published in May 2020, available here: https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/A312_NB199_Climate_emergency_update.pdf

1) Birmingham City Council

Birmingham City Council has bought 20 new hydrogen double decker buses as part of its Clean Air Hydrogen Bus Pilot. The buses, which are made by Wrightbus and are the world's first zero-emission hydrogen fuel-cell double deckers, will be introduced with National Express West Midlands from April 2021. The council has also collaborated with ITM, which will be producing and dispensing the hydrogen fuel from the new re-fuelling hub at Tyseley Energy Park.

Business Desk 5th Oct 2020 <https://www.thebusinessdesk.com/westmidlands/news/2044891-hydrogen-buses-to-drive-into-birmingham>

2) Bridgend

Bridgend County Council won £1.2m to commercialise and construct a heat network that will deliver heat to an unspecified number of public sector buildings.

Business Green 13th Aug 2020 <https://www.businessgreen.com/news/4018943/welsh-low-carbon-heat-networks-clinch-gbp8m-government-funding-boost>

3) Brighton City Council

Hundreds of council homes in Brighton could switch to solar power in a bid to have their fuel bills cut and improve area's air quality. The local authority says the upgrade to 500 households could help residents cut energy bills by up to £150 and reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 300 tonnes every year. The scheme will see solar panels being installed on the roof of each home, which will provide tenants free electricity whenever the panels are generating power. Any surplus electricity generated will be exported to the national grid. There are plans in place to increase the council's ambitions to at least 2,500 installations by 2026, although this is subject to approval

of budget allocations. Over 4,000 properties have been identified as suitable for solar PV as part of this.

Energy Live News 22nd June 2020

<https://www.energylivenews.com/2020/06/22/brighton-council-to-install-solar-panels-in-hundreds-of-homes-to-slash-energy-bills/>

Solar Power Portal 23rd June 2020

https://www.solarpowerportal.co.uk/news/up_to_1000_homes_to_receive_solar_pv_in_new_brighton_hove_city_council_scheme

4) **Bristol City Council**

Bristol has promised to go carbon neutral by 2030, which is the most ambitious target of any city in the country and 20 years ahead of the national government, but even before the pandemic it was off-track, and the lockdown has punched an £80m hole in the city's revenues from council tax and business rates. The Mayor, Marvin Rees wants the central government to intervene by front-loading planned investments in retrofitting homes, public transport and decarbonising the energy system. The focus, he said, should be on creating jobs in the transition to clean energy. "There is no doubt the next shock will be the climate shock. We can't get away from that," he said. "But we need to remember the green economy is also about housing quality, not just wind farms." Nobody needs to tell that to the working class community of Lawrence Weston. This post-war housing estate in north-west Bristol is one of the lowest income neighbourhoods in the UK, but it has also gone further than most in marrying local social concerns with climate strategy.

This is thanks to a strong community spirit, a supportive council and a nimbleness in adapting to crises. Residents realise they can make money and save the planet at the same time. Helped by donors, including a lottery-funded Big Local budget and a 50% share in the profits of a solar power plant, they have hired specialist consultants to help them draw up an ambitious community action plan to build affordable, environmentally friendly housing, install new charging points for electric cars and improve cycle access. Residents – 70% of whom say they struggle to pay heating and electricity bills – can use a mobile phone app that employs thermal imaging to spot weaknesses in the energy efficiency of their homes. Local traders then fix the draughty windows and insulate the lofts, but only charge a fee to those who can afford it.

Guardian 3rd July 2020 <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jul/03/britain-beyond-lockdown-can-social-justice-climate-come-together-coronavirus-bristol>

5) **Bristol Energy Co-operative**

Bristol Energy Cooperative (BEC) has launched a £2 million community share offer to part-fund the UK's first community-owned net zero housing microgrid. Residents of the Water Lilies housing development are to get most of their energy from shared onsite solar, although their electricity supply will be topped up from the grid when needed. The microgrid will combine renewables, heat pumps, battery storage and energy efficiency measures, all linked with what the not-for-profit dubbed "smart technology". It also lauded how due to the inclusion of heat pumps, there will be no requirement for gas boilers.

The community share offer isn't just to go towards the microgrid, however. It will also help to fund Bristol's first hydro-electric generator, which will be installed near Bristol Temple Meads station, at Netham Weir. Bristol Community Hydro is proposing to install a twin-screw hydropower scheme at Netham Weir. Once up and running, it will generate enough renewable electricity to power more than 250 homes, with a lifetime of at least 40 years. It will generate around 900,000 kWh of electricity every year. This is being made possible with funds raised through our latest share offer, which is now live. Anyone can invest from as little as £100 to help support Bristol Energy Cooperative and earn a projected 3.5% return on investment.

Solar Power Portal 19th Oct 2020

https://www.solarpowerportal.co.uk/news/bristol_energy_cooperative_launches_community_share_offer_to_fund_solar_power

6) **Cambridgeshire County Council**

The Heating Swaffham Prior project has received a £2.146 million grant to help provide sustainable heating to homes in Cambridgeshire. Cambridgeshire County Council is working with the Swaffham Prior Community Land Trust to develop the project, which will help to transition the 300 strong village of Swaffham in East Cambridgeshire to clean heating. The grant has been received from the Heat Networks Investment Project (HNIP), which itself is supported by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and will help drive forwards the project that has been under development since 2017. It will include 130 200m deep boreholes being drilled into the ground to extract heat to form a heat network. This will be supplemented by a large air source heat pump, which will be powered by solar panels at the energy centre. Joshua Schumann, chairman of Cambridgeshire County Council's Environment and Sustainability Committee, welcomed the grant saying it was a "fantastic project" and the first of its kind.

Current 24th July 2020 <https://www.current-news.co.uk/news/community-renewable-heating-project-in-cambridge-awarded-2m-government-grant>

7) **Cardiff City Council**

A district-heating network connected to an energy recovery facility in Cardiff had secured £15m in Government funding to start its first phase of works, with the project potentially saving more than 5,000 tonnes of carbon annually. The Cardiff City Heating Network will use heat generated at Viridor's Energy Recovery Facility (ERF) at Trident Park and will cost £26.5m. The project has been backed by an £8.6m loan from the Welsh Government and a £6m grant from the UK Government. The network will transfer heat from the ERF, which diverts around 350,000 tonnes of non-recyclable waste from landfill every year, to businesses and homes across the city. As part of the first phase of the project, heating will be provided to a number of large buildings, including County Hall and the Millennium Centre.

Edie 14th August 2020 <https://www.edie.net/news/6/Cardiff-Energy-from-waste-district-heating-network/>

8) **Clydeside Region**

The River Clyde is to be at the centre of a new revolution as efforts increase to turn the area around it into "an engine of sustainable and inclusive growth" that will kick-start the entire region's economic recovery. It's hoped the move will benefit communities from Dunoon and Gourock to Glasgow. Despite ambitious projects like that at Queens Quay in Clydebank, which will see housing and more created on the site of its former John Brown shipyard where heat from the depths will be used to fuel homes, around 1000 acres of post-industrial land remains. Now the Scottish Government aims to generate new projects to improve the economy and the environment through its £10 million Clyde Mission Fund.

The National 27th Sept 2020 <https://www.thenational.scot/news/18751243.river-clyde-centre-plans-kick-start-local-economy/>

9) **Cumbria Action for Sustainability (CAfS)**

CAfS, along with nearly 70 other organisations, submitted a successful joint bid to the National Lottery Community Fund, for £2.5 million of funding to cut carbon emissions in the county. The award to the Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership will fund a five-year programme of action aiming to make Cumbria the first carbon-neutral county in the UK, in a way that benefits communities and is led by them. The grant brings a significant investment into the county just when it is needed most to rebuild after the Coronavirus pandemic. It will create 12 green jobs and will see a whole range of activities led by communities that will make them more sustainable, stronger and more resilient for the future." An ambitious programme will begin in January 2021 led by the partnership, which spans the public, private and third sectors, including community groups, councils, the NHS, police, national parks, businesses and the farming community, among others.

The programme will build strong working relationships among a wide range of organisations across the county, raising their ambition to tackle climate change and sharing learning and resources. The voice of local people will be at the heart of it.

CAFS 17th August 2020 <https://cafs.org.uk/2020/08/17/tackling-climate-change-in-cumbria-gets-2-5-million-national-lottery-boost/>

10) **Edinburgh Climate Commission**

EXPERTS drawing up £8 billion plans to transform Edinburgh into a carbon neutral city in ten years' time are investigating harnessing hot air trapped under the capital's parks in a bid to end gas central heating. The Edinburgh Climate Commission has been set up to help co-ordinate a pledge for the city to become carbon net zero by 2030 – 15 years ahead of the Scottish Government's ambition. The commission has drawn up a list of principles for Edinburgh to prioritise in its mission to eradicate carbon emissions – with the city's heating system and transport network as key catalysts. The independent commission is calling on city leaders and the Scottish Government to commit to a green recovery from Covid-19 to eliminate carbon emissions and to create jobs as the economy is rebuilt

Herald 9th July 2020 <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/18570128.edinburghs-parks-harnessed-replace-gas-boilers-amid-carbon-neutral-pledge/>

'Forward, Faster, Together': the Commission publishes their Recommendations for a Green Recovery. A green recovery is one that delivers for the long term; that catalyses job creation into growth industries, empowers citizens, improves public health and drives innovation while all the time removing our contribution to the climate crisis.

Edinburgh Climate Commission 9th July 2020
<https://www.edinburghclimate.org.uk/news/forward-faster-together-commission-publishes-their-recommendations-green-recovery>

11) **Exeter City Council**

Exeter City Council has announced plans to build its first solar farm and battery storage project. The plant, which had its preparatory work finished recently, will be built on an inactive landfill site and will comprise of a 1.2MW array of 3,702 solar photovoltaic (PV) modules, two battery storage containers and an electrical switch room. A 1MW/2MWh battery with a separate connection will provide renewable energy supply to the council's nearby operations facility. The local authority says the renewable supply from the project is also expected to support the future electrification of the council's operational fleet.

Energy Live News 8th July 2020 <https://www.energylivenews.com/2020/07/08/exeter-city-council-builds-its-first-solar-and-battery-storage-project/>

Solar Power Portal 7th July 2020
<https://www.solarpowerportal.co.uk/news/exeter-city-councils-1.2mw-solar-site-takes-a-step-forwards>

12) **Flintshire County Council**

Flintshire County Council has appointed French energy company, Engie, to develop solar farms across two brownfield sites. As part of the project, around 9000 400W solar photovoltaic (PV) panels will be installed across the two locations - a former chemical works at Crumps Yard in Connah's Quay and a site in Flint previously used for landfill. Rhys Horan, Strategic Lead for the Welsh Government Energy Service, said, "These projects are excellent examples of a local authority developing renewable energy generation on brownfield land, making better use of their available assets. Flintshire County Council are leading by example in developing such sites in their continued drive to become a Green Council."

The Leader 19th August 2020 <https://www.leaderlive.co.uk/news/18660999.3-1m-solar-farm-developed-flintshire/>

13) **Glasgow City Council**

Glasgow's buses are to go green in new clean hydrogen fuel project. A project with the power to fuel more than 51,000 buses a year on clean hydrogen is set to go ahead within the next six months following the formation of a new green energy partnership. The renewables arm of Scottish Power has joined forces with BOC and ITM Power to launch the Green Hydrogen for Scotland partnership offering an "end-to-end" market solution for powering larger vehicles not suited for electric vehicle (EV) technologies. Its first project, Green Hydrogen for Glasgow, will see the construction of a new production facility near Whitelee Windfarm, where Scottish Power will add an extra 35MW to the current 539MW of capacity.

Herald 17th Sept 2020 https://www.heraldscotland.com/business_hq/18726183.glasgows-buses-go-green-new-clean-hydrogen-fuel-project/

A project to heat homes and businesses in Glasgow using energy from disused mines will receive up to £50,000 to drive local economic growth, provide skills training and create high-value jobs. 'Hot Scot' will provide low-cost, low carbon heat to Scottish homes and businesses by extracting energy from disused, flooded mines in Glasgow. By overseeing 3 new geothermal minewater projects, the consortium aims to deliver economic growth equivalent to £303 million and around 9,800 jobs across the Central Belt of Scotland.

BEIS 11th Aug 2020 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/projects-to-heat-homes-through-disused-mines-and-faster-offshore-wind-farm-construction-win-government-backing>

14) **Greater Manchester Combined Authority / Councils**

An Energy Innovation Agency is to be created by three Greater Manchester universities, local government and SSE Enterprise. The agency is to help support the region's 2038 carbon neutral target, with an aim of bridging the innovation gap. It will act as an intermediary between the region's environmental research output, industry innovators, the energy supply pipeline and stakeholders in Greater Manchester. It is hoped this will lead to an acceleration of emission reductions, increased implementation of technological innovations and enhanced, forward-thinking policy agenda setting.

Current 25th September 2020 <https://www.current-news.co.uk/news/energy-innovation-agency-created-to-support-greater-manchesters-2038-net-zero>

Energy Systems Catapult and five local authorities in Greater Manchester have won funding for a pioneering clean energy project – that will develop 10 renewable schemes across the city – and create a blueprint that can be replicated in other regions across the UK aiming for Net Zero carbon emissions. Unlocking Clean Energy in Greater Manchester (UCEGM) brings together five local authorities that have declared a "climate emergency" – Manchester, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, and Wigan.

The 3-year £17.2m project – led by Energy Systems Catapult and part-funded with £8.6m from the European Regional Development Fund – will capitalise on under-utilised council-owned sites and buildings, to develop: 10 Megawatts of solar PV and hydro-electric generation, battery storage, electric vehicle (EV) charging, and smart energy management systems. The projects planned include solar farms at Chamber House farm in Rochdale and Kenyon Way in Salford, three rooftop solar schemes in Stockport and a rooftop solar scheme at Makerfield Way in Wigan. Energy Systems Catapult will focus on the development of innovative new business models to maximise the value from the electricity generated, for example by taking advantage of regulatory changes, or utilising flexibility between clean energy assets distributed across the city as part of Manchester's emerging Local Energy Market.

Energy Systems Catapult 23rd September 2020 <https://es.catapult.org.uk/news/ucegm/>

Manchester City Council 23rd September 2020
https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/news/article/8547/five_councils_across_greater_manchester_win_funding_for_pioneering_renewable_energy_project

15) Hackney Council

Hackney Council's publicly-owned renewable energy services company, Hackney Light and Power, is celebrating the completion of its first roof installation. The solar panels, installed at the West Reservoir Centre by Spirit Energy, are set to generate 77,000kWh of power per year. This will cover all of the centre's electricity needs, with any surplus generation to be transported to the grid. This installation forms part of the council's plans to decarbonise by 2040, reducing its emissions by 45% on 2010 levels over the next year. Key to this is its plan to become a leader of renewable energy, with Hackney Light and Power set to lead this.

Solar Power Portal 9th Sept 2020

https://www.solarpowerportal.co.uk/news/hackney_light_and_power_celebrates_first_rooftop_pv_installation_in_1mw_pro

16) Hull City Council

Thousands of Hull residents could soon be enjoying low carbon heat, as a multi-million-pound heating network project this week took a step closer to reality. The Hull District Heating Project is designed to provide heating for homes, offices, and other buildings from a central energy centre, with the heat delivered through an underground piped network that would be replacing existing heating systems. The network will form an important part of the council's 2030 Carbon Neutral Strategy and is linked to the Humber Local Enterprise (LEP) Energy Estuary ambition, which has seen the region emerge as a major player in the UK's offshore wind and nascent carbon capture and storage industries.

Business Green 9th Sept 2020 <https://www.businessgreen.com/news/4019889/hull-fires-low-carbon-district-heating-vision>

17) Humberside Region

The Zero Carbon Humber Partnership has made a £75 million public and private sector funded bid. The partnership has applied for funding from Phase Two of the government's Industrial Decarbonisation Challenge, with investment also coming from the companies themselves. This follows the partnership's successful application for funding from Phase One of the Challenge, which will go towards the various projects including low carbon hydrogen, carbon capture and carbon removal projects. As part of one of the projects, Drax Power Station is to connect to a CO2 pipeline network – being developed by National Grid Ventures – to provide bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS). The network is also to link the Equinor-led Hydrogen to Humber (H2H) Saltend project - which is seeking to establish the world's largest hydrogen production plant with carbon capture - to energy-intensive industrial sites throughout the region.

Current 8th Oct 2020

<https://www.current-news.co.uk/news/zero-carbon-humber-makes-75-million-bid-for-funding>

Edie 7th Oct 2020 <https://www.edie.net/news/6/Businesses-pour--75m-into-Humber-s-zero-carbon-industrial-cluster/>

18) Leicester City Council

Leicester County Council has set its sights on a new solar farm and carbon neutral site, in a new £14 million green project. The site would be based on Barrows Road on the northern outskirts of Quorn, containing 15 industrial units as well as the 10MW solar farm. This would help generate almost 10,000MWh of electricity a year, according to the council. The solar farm would cover 13.6 hectare, while the remainder of the 27.5 hectare solar farm site would be used to preserve and enhance biodiversity. Additionally, the units on the site will have solar panels on their rooftops, and the site will have electric vehicle charging along with other carbon neutral technologies such as LED lighting and rainwater harvesting.

Solar Power Portal 28th May 2020

https://www.solarpowerportal.co.uk/news/leicester_county_council_targets_new_14m_solar_farm_development

19) Leeds City Council

Leeds City Council has unveiled plans to invest £24 million in six new district heating networks to lower the region's carbon dioxide emissions and save money on residents' energy bills. The local authority is currently exploring a range of green technologies to power the six new networks, including the potential use of ground and air source heat pumps or biomass systems. The scheme, which is expected to cover 1,485 council homes, is forecast to save around 950 tonnes of greenhouse gases every year and help tenants save a typical 10% on their energy bills. The investment follows Leeds' first district heating network, which will provide low carbon waste-powered heat to 1,983 homes by the end of 2020.

Energy Live News 12th Oct 2020 <https://www.energylivenews.com/2020/10/12/leeds-injects-24m-to-develop-six-new-district-heating-networks/>

20) **Mid-Suffolk**

Solar-powered electric car charging ports are set to be installed in Sudbury and Stowmarket after council bosses secured government matched funding of up to £800,000 for the project. Babergh and Mid Suffolk district councils are to receive the money from the government's 'Getting Building Fund' as the authorities aim to become carbon neutral by 2030. The solar-powered carports would store electricity for charging electric vehicles. A feasibility study will be completed by November this year before the two pilot projects are completed in March 2022.

East Anglian Daily Times 5th August 2020 <https://www.eadt.co.uk/news/solar-carportst-set-to-be-built-sudbury-stowmarket-1-6778679>

21) **Neath Port Talbot**

A total of almost 190kW of rooftop solar is currently being installed across six sites in Neath Port Talbot. The rollout is a collaboration between Egni Coop and Regenerate NPT, a local action group delivering the Rural Development Plan in Neath Port Talbot. Five sites have already seen installs completed by installers Ice Solar and Urban Solar, with the five installs totaling 137kW. A further 50kW system is to be installed on the roof of Cymer Pool, allowing the facility to heat the pool using the electricity generated. The five completed sites that are part of the rollout include Cymer Afan Community Library, Cymgors Rugby Club, Cwmllynfell Hall, Crynant Community Hall and Hwb y Gors.

Solar Power Portal 13th July 2020
https://www.solarpowerportal.co.uk/news/neath_port_talbot_sees_rollout_of_rooftop_solar_across_six_sites

22) **Newport City Council**

The largest solar rooftop project of its kind in Wales has gotten underway, with 2,000 panels set to be installed on the Geraint Thomas National Velodrome in Newport. It will form part of Newport City Council's plan to install 6,000 solar panels on 21 council owned buildings across the city, with a goal of being carbon neutral by 2030. The installation at the velodrome will reduce the council's emissions by 348 tonnes per year alone, with some of the electricity set to be exported to the grid. The council is working in collaboration with Egni Co-op and installer Joju Solar on the rollout, which will see 2MW installed across the schools, council depots and care homes identified at the time as sites.

Solar Power Portal 14th July 2020
https://www.solarpowerportal.co.uk/news/newport_celebrates_largest_rooftop_installation_in_wales_on_geraint_thomas

23) **Northern Ireland Councils' Climate Action Plans**

Friends of the Earth Northern Ireland have published a short, simple guide for all Northern Ireland Councils which includes a 40 point plan to tackle the climate and nature emergency. The plan focuses on the available powers of Northern Ireland Councils and considers improving governance, raising money, retrofitting buildings and improving building standards, developing renewable transport and energy opportunities and considering ways to reduce waste and improve environmental land use. The guide is a handy summary to complement some of the

plans and projects encouraged by Sustainable NI, APSE Energy and the NFLA All Ireland Sustainable Energy Forum.

Friends of the Earth Northern Ireland 22nd October 2020
https://takeclimateaction.uk/sites/files/climate/documents/2020-10/October_2020_Climate_Action_Plan_Northern_Ireland.pdf

24) Nottingham City Council

Nottingham has adopted a Carbon Action Plan Road Map to 2028. This goes into the 3 strands of work: Commercial, domestic and transport. Despite achieving a 41% reduction in emissions from a 2005 baseline, we are still aware there is a lot of work to do. Eight years ago solar was expensive and business cases were difficult. Battery storage, demand side management and district heating are all going to advance over the next eight years. Nottingham now has 40 Nissan Leaf electric vehicles which can connect to a Vehicle to Grid system. These discharge into batteries so any spare electricity can be used at peak times. Aiming to deliver another 450 deep retrofits. Around about 20% of what Nottingham does is really innovative and the Council is good at leveraging funding for that work. The other 80% is standard use of technology. 5,000 domestic solar systems and we own another 80 plus commercial scale systems. A grid connection is a major part of the business case for any new systems and they can fall down on the cost of connection and we are working to alleviate those pressures on the grid in the city, so we don't see business cases fall foul of a really expensive grid connection cost.

Edie 3rd July 2020 <https://www.edie.net/news/8/Net-Zero-Business-podcast--Exploring-smart-grids-with-E-ON-and-Nottingham-City-Council/>

25) Oxford City Council

The 42 members of Oxford's Citizens' Assembly are recommending the introduction of new energy efficiency requirements for community buildings and new-build housing; measures to boost local renewable energy installations; measures to cut transport emissions and investment to expand biodiversity across the region. On the housing front, work has this week started to build eight zero-carbon council homes across three sites in the city. The new homes will be considered zero-carbon for regulated energy use of lighting, hot water, heating and ventilation, but fittings added by tenants won't be regulated. Each home will be built from pre-fabricated panels featuring timber frames, insulation and electrics built in that will then be assembled on site. Air source heat pumps, solar panels and triple glazing will all be features of the homes.

Edie 17th May 2020 <https://www.edie.net/news/10/Oxford-s-zero-carbon-homes-and-L-Oreal-s-eco-fund--The-sustainability-success-stories-of-the-week/>

26) Peterborough

Peterborough is named 'UK's greenest city' after study reveals one in nine homes have solar panels on the roof. Around 11 per cent of households in Peterborough have solar panels installed. Stirling and Wrexham make up the top three, with 10.1% and 7.3% respectively. Study found that the ten local authorities with the fewest solar panels are all London boroughs. Peterborough has the most houses with solar panels on the roof of any city or town in the UK, a study has revealed. The Cambridgeshire city has more than 9,000 solar panel installations, enough to equip 11.1 per cent of the local authority's 82,000 households. Analysis of 371 local authorities across England, Scotland and Wales also saw that London has very few solar panels compared to the number of households. Nineteen of the 20 worst local authorities for solar panels per household are in London.

Daily Mail 20th May 2020 <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-8335941/Peterborough-named-UKs-greenest-city.html>

27) Portsmouth City Council

Portsmouth City Council has celebrated the completion of the largest operational Tesla Powerwall installation in the UK as part of a 250kW solar system installed on its Hilsea Industrial Estate. The new solar installation compliments the existing 50kW system at the site, making it the biggest single solar and battery installation for the council to date. There are 738 solar PV

panels installed alongside a ten-unit battery system capable of storing 135kWh of electricity at any one time. Together, the solar PV and storage solution will reduce the site's reliance on grid-bought electricity by almost 50% according to the council. It was installed by one of Portsmouth City Council's solar PV framework contractors, Evo Energy, and project managed by the City Council's in-house energy team.

Solar Power Portal 26th Oct 2020

https://www.solarpowerportal.co.uk/news/portsmouth_celebrates_largest_operational_tesla_powerwall_installation_in_u

Portsmouth City Council has recorded a record amount of solar generation during the COVID-19 lockdown thanks to the sunniest spring on record. The council's solar panels, which sit on schools, offices, community centres and housing sites, generated 1.3GWh of power. May set a new record as the sunniest month on record with 266 hours of sunshine, according to the MET Office. This beat the previous record set in June 1957, when there was 265 hours of sunshine. Between March and May there were over 600 hours of sunshine according to Portsmouth City Council, the most recorded since records began in 1929. Such a sunny period allowed solar power installations like those in Portsmouth to flourish.

Solar Power Portal 15th June 2020

https://www.solarpowerportal.co.uk/news/portsmouth_city_council_solar_hits_new_record_thanks_to_sunny_spring

28) **Salford City Council**

Salford City Council has partnered with the Energy Systems Catapult to develop a solar farm in Little Hulton. The agreement will help the council take a step forward in its carbon neutral goals, as well as allowing it to access advice and guidance from the not-for-profit. Additionally, the partnership allows it to access European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) grants that will address the gap in funding. Little Hulton solar farm will be built over 3.79 hectares, with 5,094 solar panels installed over five months in 2021 at the site on Kenyon Way. Planning permission for the site was approved in June 2020. Along with the solar development, the council is building a hydroelectric scheme on the River Irwell at Charlestown Weir that will use an Archimedes screw turbine to generate electricity while incorporated fish and eel passes will allow the animals to swim further down the river. This is expected to be built during the summer of 2022, and will be operation by the end of that year.

Solar Power Portal 14th Oct 2020

https://www.solarpowerportal.co.uk/news/salford_city_council_partners_energy_systems_catapult_for_solar_and_hydroel

29) **South Somerset District Council**

South Somerset District Council (SSDC) is to build a second Battery Energy Storage Site (BESS), announcing a 40MW facility that will be located near Fareham in Hampshire. The Council recently finished the expansion of the 30MW Fideoak Mill BESS site in Taunton, the UK's largest council-owned battery storage site. SSDC's joint venture energy company SSDC Opium Power will manage the development of the new site, which will be able to provide instantly available electrical power on demand to the grid. Similar to the Taunton site, Kiwi Power will be the aggregator for the finished BESS and BSR EPC is the project roll out connection contractor.

Solar Power Portal 4th Sept 2020

https://www.solarpowerportal.co.uk/news/south_somerset_district_council_announces_second_bess_to_build_on_unique_po

Solar Power Portal 11th Aug 2020

https://www.solarpowerportal.co.uk/news/uks_largest_council_owned_battery_storage_site_further_expanded_to_30mw

30) **Stirling City Council**

Plans to transform Stirling Council's Castleview Park and Ride site into a sustainable transport and renewable energy hub are underway with the introduction of solar panels. The panels, which will span a 1,375m² area, include 32 new EV chargers and are expected to generate roughly 250,000kWh annually. The solar canopies will cover 132 parking spaces, merging sustainable energy and sustainable transport to generate low cost, renewable electricity for on-site use, including buildings, street lighting, electric vehicle charging and electric bike charging.

Herald 20th Aug 2020 <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/18664845.solar-panels-installed-stirling-low-carbon-travel-hub/>

Stirling City Council's award winning Housing Service has helped make the city Scotland's greenest area with the highest percentage of homes using solar panels. A new study has revealed that one in ten homes across Stirling Council have solar panels on their properties. The statistics place Stirling in 2nd place across any city or town in the UK, and make the region the only Scottish representative in the UK-wide top 10. Analysis by eco developer Project Etopia has recorded that Stirling has more than 4,051 solar panels, enough to equip 10.1 per cent of the area's 40,157 households. In addition to reducing the energy costs for tenants, the Council's investment has resulted in 55 per cent of the Council housing stock already meeting the new challenging minimum energy efficiency standards that all Scottish social landlords must meet by 2032.

Stirling News 2nd June 2020 <https://www.stirlingnews.co.uk/news/18491021.solar-powered-stirling-ranked-scotlands-greenest-area/>

31) **Suffolk County Council**

Connected Energy is to install the first of its new generation of second life energy storage systems as part of a Suffolk County Council project. The 300kW/360kWh E-STOR storage system will be installed at a flagship heritage facility – dubbed The Hold – due to open later in 2020 on the University of Suffolk's Ipswich Campus. The Hold – which will house the council's archive collection – will have a low carbon energy system, with the storage to optimise energy use and peak loads across a system that features solar PV and electric vehicle chargers.

Solar Power Portal 16th July 2020

<https://www.solarpowerportal.co.uk/news/second-life-batteries-find-new-home-at-suffolk-university>

32) **Swansea Bay City Region**

More than 10,000 homes could be fitted with green technology such as solar panels, heat pumps and Tesla batteries. Plans for the Swansea Bay City Region would see 3,300 new properties built and 7,000 retrofitted with equipment. The scheme, where homes generate their own energy and also send surplus to the National Grid is being piloted in Neath on a small scale. Ministers in Cardiff Bay and London will need to approve it. The Swansea Bay City Region is made up of the four west Wales local authorities of Swansea, Neath Port Talbot, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire, with nine projects in total being taken forward as part of a £1.3bn city deal. It costs between £25,000 and £30,000 to retrofit a house, with a less comprehensive option estimated at £10,000. However, retrofitting those at Craigcfnparc would cost about £55,000 per property. The Welsh and UK governments are expected to provide £15m towards the £505m project, with £376m coming from the private sector through new-build and retrofit costs, and borrowing from social housing providers. Levering money from existing and new energy-efficiency programmes in Wales would bring in the remaining £114m.

BBC 12th June 2020 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-53022696>

33) **Swindon Borough Council**

Nearly a quarter of Swindon Borough Council's electricity consumption will be provided by solar power. The local authority has joined with suppliers West Mercia Energy, Total Gas & Power and Swindon Chapel Farm Solar in an agreement which means that all the power generated at the Chapel Farm solar plant near Blunsdon will be used by the council. It is estimated that the

farm – on a former landfill site – will generate approximately 5 million kWh of electricity each year, which is nearly 25 per cent of the council's use.

This is Wiltshire 30th September 2020

<https://www.thisiswiltshire.co.uk/news/18758175.swindon-council-strikes-solar-power-deal-bid-become-net-zero-2030/?ref=rss>

34) **Warrington Borough Council**

Warrington Borough Council is launching a green investment scheme that will enable local residents to help fund a new solar farm, as part of its ambitious Green Energy Strategy to reach net zero emissions by 2030. The council aims to raise £1m through Community Municipal Investment rounds, it announced today, with the local authority issuing CMI bonds directly to the public via internet-based green investment platform Abundance.

Business Green 25th Aug 2020 <https://www.businessgreen.com/news/4019317/council-issued-green-bond-enables-residents-invest-solar-farm>

Solar Power Portal 20th Aug 2020

https://www.solarpowerportal.co.uk/news/warrington_borough_council_launches_green_investment_scheme_for_solar_farm

35) **West Berkshire Council**

West Berkshire Council has launched a green bond that will see residents invest in the region's renewable energy sector, in what it claims is a UK first. Developed by Abundance, the aim of the bond is to raise £1m to finance the installation of solar panels on five council-owned buildings: two offices, two schools and a building at the former RAF station at Greenham Common. Residents will be encouraged to invest in the bond with a minimum of £5. They will be urged to play their part in helping the council – and the UK more broadly – to build back better after the pandemic, creating local jobs in sectors spurring the low-carbon transition. For the council, the benefit lies in the avoidance of costs related to conventional borrowing. Moreover, the local authority is striving to meet net-zero within its own operations by 2030 – 20 years ahead of the national deadline.

Edie 16th July 2020 <https://www.edie.net/news/10/West-Berkshire-Council-launches--UK-s-first--resident-funded-green-bond/>

36) **West Suffolk Council**

West Suffolk Council is working with the second life battery company Connected Energy to install a new generation energy storage system to capitalise on locally generated electricity and minimise electricity drawn from the grid. The Mildenhall Hub E-Stor will be the second installation of such a system for Connected Energy, following on from the announcement of its first unit for Suffolk County Council in July this year.

Smart Cities 8th Oct 2020 <https://www.smartcitiesworld.net/news/news/uk-local-authority-works-with-second-life-battery-pioneer-to-install-energy-storage-system-5740?s=09>

37) **West Sussex Council**

Two district councils on the English South Coast have opened a tender to install six solar-powered car parks plus electric vehicle (EV) charging points and an energy storage system which can offer grid ancillary services. In a tender which is likely to be keenly watched by local councils around the U.K., the separate authorities of Worthing Borough Council and Adur District Council – which work in tandem and are both within West Sussex County Council – have called for expressions of interest, with the deadline for pre-qualifying for the 25-year contract falling on September 2. The successful contractor will install solar panels at six public car parks – including at least three multi-storeys and a crematorium – plus 13 EV chargers across the sites and a battery storage system at one of the locations.

PV Magazine 4th Aug 2020

<https://www.pv-magazine.com/2020/08/04/english-councils-tender-for-solar-car-parks-and-storage/>