

A blueprint for accelerating climate action and a green recovery at the local level

As a coalition of local government, research and environmental organisations, we came together to set out a blueprint for how the government can accelerate climate action and a green economic recovery at the local level.

We are calling on the government to support local authorities in delivering climate action with a joined-up approach that helps nature's recovery and tackles inequalities across the country.

We have identified five immediate priorities:

1. Invest in low-carbon and climate-resilient infrastructure including public transport, renewable energy and electric vehicle charging
2. Support reskilling, retraining and research to accelerate the move to a net-zero economy
3. Upgrade our existing homes to ensure they are fit for the future and ensure new housing is zero carbon
4. Make it easy for people to walk or cycle, and work remotely
5. Accelerate tree planting, peatland restoration, green spaces and other green infrastructure

Why local place-based action is essential

The UK's legally binding carbon reduction targets can only be reached with the contribution of councils working at the local level. Properly empowered and resourced local authorities working with a wide variety of partners within their areas - including local people, businesses, community groups and voluntary groups – can deliver the necessary carbon reductions, improve climate resilience, and help levelling up.

Empowering local authorities is not a 'nice to have' but an essential. The response to Covid-19 showed how local authorities can respond effectively to a crisis, now they are helping their residents deal with a cost of living crisis whilst dealing with the impacts of rising prices on their own operations. Among these challenges most local authorities have already developed plans to address the climate and ecological crises and they know that the best solutions require a joined-up approach. They urgently need the powers and resources to scale up action. The benefits are unarguable, including improved access to nature for all, tackling inequalities, creating jobs and supporting resilient local economies.

The actions we recommend align closely with priorities set out by the Climate Change Committee (CCC), which acknowledges the important role of local authorities and the contribution they are already making for example in insulating fuel poor homes.

Place-based investment in net zero will create new skills and jobs. This is supported by research from the Local Government Association (LGA), which shows that 700,000 direct jobs could be created in England's low-carbon and renewable energy economy by 2030, rising to more than 1.18 million by 2050. Many of these jobs could help people transition from high to low carbon industries.

This is what our communities want. Polling has shown that most people want climate change prioritised in economic recovery. And as energy prices rise polls show that people want investment in renewables and energy efficiency.

Empowering local place-based action

National government needs to work in partnership with local government, including through the Local Net Zero Forum, to fully understand the potential and challenges of local delivery, and how to put place-based action at the heart of its approach to net zero, building resilient places, and levelling up. The CCC's 2022 progress report highlights slow progress on 'wider enablers' such as green skills and public engagement on climate action. Without strong cross-departmental government action on these enablers, local authority delivery will be hobbled.

The government describes clean growth as 'one of the greatest industrial opportunities of our time' but measures announced so far do not go far enough, and its levelling up agenda has not been linked to action on climate change or to the importance of a healthy local environment. The strong relationship between local environmental factors and social, health and economic inequalities means that the government's levelling up missions must be aligned to its Net Zero Strategy, National Adaptation Programme, and nature recovery goals.

The government should consider how it can join up and simplify funding that is already available to local government, how this can be focused on carbon emission reductions, and where it should be accelerated. Simply providing certainty around medium and long-term resourcing will help councils to deliver climate action. The government has acknowledged the problems associated with short term competitive funding, which can leave the places most in need of measures like new green space, better buses or retrofitting cold homes missing out. The move away from allocating funding via competitive bids rather than based on need must be embedded across all government departments.

Above and beyond this, there will be a need for new funding. The CCC has advised that net zero by 2050 can be met within the agreed resource cost of only 1 - 2% of GDP each year. They note that it may be possible to partially or fully offset the resource costs through quality of life benefits.

Councils also need a supportive national policy framework, but recent proposals to reform the planning system risk further hampering local councils' ability to require high quality net zero development.

More information about the blueprint

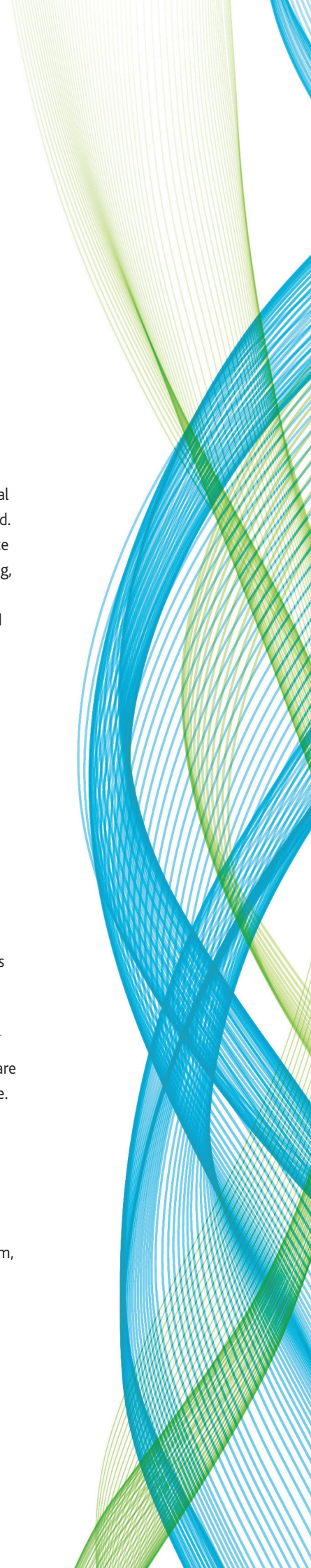
Our blueprint sets out how local authorities are already delivering on the climate emergency and the national policies, powers and funding needed to empower them to scale up action. We have drawn extensively on the direct experience of many councils as they develop their own climate action plans, as well as their more recent experience at the frontline of the coronavirus response.

www.adeptnet.org.uk/documents/blueprint-accelerating-climate-action-and-green-recovery-local-level

Blueprint members Ashden and Friends of the Earth have produced case studies showing how councils are already acting on the climate and ecological crises. Further cases studies from the LGA are also available. With more support this action could be significantly scaled up.

Your feedback welcome

Our blueprint is a starting point for discussion. We will continue to work, engage and collaborate with a wide range of organisations and we welcome your feedback. You can contact us through Hannah Bartram, Chief Executive Officer of ADEPT (hannah.bartram@eastsussex.gov.uk).



ADEPT

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