

To: BEIS Net Zero Review team
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27th October 2022

Blueprint Coalition submission of evidence to the Net Zero Review

This letter is submitted on behalf of the Blueprint Coalition by Hannah Bartram, Chief Executive Officer, ADEPT. It is not confidential. Coalition partners include:

Ashden
Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Transport and Planning (ADEPT)
Centre for Alternative Technology
Climate Emergency UK
Friends of the Earth
Grantham Institute - Climate Change and the Environment (Imperial College London)
Greenpeace UK
Local Government Association
London Councils
London Environment Directors' Network (LEDNet)
Place-based Climate Action Network (PCAN) at LSE
Solace

Introduction

The Blueprint Coalition welcomes the review of the Net Zero Strategy (NZS) being led by Chris Skidmore MP. We are a group of local government, environmental and research organisations (the list of supporting organisations is in the attached evidence). We came together to set out a [Blueprint](#) for how the government can accelerate climate action at the local level. Local authorities are an indispensable partner in reaching the UK's national target of net zero by 2050 in a way that will also contribute to economic recovery, nature's renewal and tackling inequalities. Place-based, strategic investment in net zero will create huge numbers of new jobs and help level up local economies and places.

In 2020 our Blueprint report set out the national leadership, policies, powers and funding needed to empower local authorities to deliver. In 2021 we set out [the case](#) for a strong partnership between national and local government in the Net Zero Strategy, recommending that it must embed the role of local authorities in delivering carbon reductions, as well as in tackling the nature crisis and health inequalities, and building resilience to the impacts of climate change. We subsequently welcomed the setting up of the Local Net Zero Forum.

However, we are concerned with the lack of progress in the changes need to support local delivery. We have completed a comprehensive review of progress towards our recommendations of 2020, which spanned 7 themes and were based on thorough research to understand the challenges faced by local authorities. Our review of six themes is attached (and [here](#)) and forms the main part of our evidence to this review – we will complete a review of the seventh and final theme soon and would be happy to send this in due course. In addition we have briefly addressed the specific questions for local government, communities and other organisations delivering net zero locally below - but the main evidence for the review is our analysis in the attached document.

What are the biggest barriers you face in decarbonising / enabling your communities and areas to decarbonise?

There needs to be a better partnership approach between national government and local government, and we hope that the Local Net Zero Forum and its associated stakeholder group will help us to speed up and scale up local delivery.

Overall, our assessment of the last two years points towards insufficient support for councils to be able to deliver across all the key areas needed if they are to meet net zero and nature restoration targets. Barriers include fragmented, short-term and competitively allocated funding, a lack of clarity and direction in key policy areas and delays to essential guidance. These concerns have been raised on a number of occasions by the Coalition and other bodies such as the Climate Change Committee (CCC), which recently concluded that “it remains unclear how central, devolved and local government will operate in concert to deliver Net Zero”.

Our full evidence is set out in the attached document. However, it is worth highlighting here an urgent issue for illustration – the need to better insulate our homes – is made more challenging for local authorities and their communities by the energy crisis. The CCC has identified the lack of effective policy for the insulation of the owner-occupied sector as a significant problem area. In addition, the government has also so far failed to introduce new stronger regulatory standards for the private-rented sector to ensure these homes meet EPC by 2030 or earlier.

What has worked well? Please share examples of any successful place-based net zero projects.

The attached document sets out in detail where progress has been made and gives some examples of successful local authority led net zero projects which in some cases have been enabled by national funding. [Over 40 case studies](#) of successful local authority led net zero actions have been published by Friends of the Earth and Ashden. The [Local Government Association's case studies](#) also include climate change examples.

How does the planning system affect your efforts to decarbonise?

Please refer to the attached document for evidence. Planning is a crucial tool for local planning authorities to use to help meet climate change and nature restoration targets. Planning can encourage better development that uses less energy, with buildings that can survive future climate change and that help protect our planet. Some local planning authorities are developing progressive plans and policies to cut carbon emissions, boost nature and create healthier places to live but this needs to become the norm not a few examples of best practice.

Local planning authorities need a strong national framework and currently the planning system nationally is not fully aligned with climate budgets and targets. Instead of addressing this, proposed changes to planning, now set out in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill and the Growth Plan (including proposals for new Investment Zones with ‘streamlined’ planning rules), do nothing to improve alignment with climate targets. Instead, there is an emphasis on deregulation, including removing important protection for nature sites and threats to undermine local policy making.

How can the design of net zero policies, programmes, and funding schemes be improved to make it easier to deliver in your area?

There is a strong relationship between local environmental factors and social, health and economic inequalities. Better policy and funding join up needs to happen at the national level to empower local delivery in a way that brings multiple benefits.

However, the government's current approach does not yet add up to a comprehensive set of solutions, in particular around how the growth agenda is linked to the climate and environment agendas and related geographical, economic, social and health inequalities. Measures to tackle climate change and measures to restore biodiversity need to be more joined up, including ensuring more support for green and blue infrastructure which has a key role to play in climate mitigation and improving resilience to the impacts of a changing climate.

More detail on these issues can be found in the attached evidence.

Are there any other implications of net zero or specific decarbonisation projects for your area that the Review should consider?

Pursuing a 'growth at all costs' agenda not only risks reversing important progress on protecting nature and tackling climate change but would also result in hugely missed opportunities to create high quality green jobs and stimulate local low carbon economies.