



Governance for Net Zero

February 2024

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Executive summary

Urgent and decisive action is needed for the UK to achieve its net zero goal. This action will take many forms, some of which will be technological and some of which will be social and economic. Others will require active public engagement, especially to involve the young. All types of action will be crucially dependent on the quality of governance approaches.

Without significant attention on governance—which we explore in this report — progress towards net zero targets will be severely constrained. The crucial importance of governance has been repeatedly flagged by, among others, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Climate Change Committee (CCC), and the [Skidmore review](#).¹

Building on previous British Academy work and our policy programme theme on ‘[Governance, trust and voice](#)’, we define governance as the processes and activities, actors and institutions which include (but also go beyond) the government.² It is a more encompassing phenomenon than government, embracing governmental institutions, and informal and non-governmental mechanisms.³

This report focuses on the role of two important and connected aspects of governance: leadership and people. Elected leaders have an important role to play in directing the transition to net zero and the systems that support this, especially given the increasingly dynamic political and media environment. This includes navigating a multi-level governance system for localised and cross-regional policy implementation across the net zero agenda. At the same time, successful leadership requires the active engagement of people across society. The interaction between leadership and the public is critical to the success of any net zero policy and should be a significant factor in any process for successfully developing and implementing net zero policies.

Our findings are presented in two parts. First, we explore leadership, a crucial and under-utilised enabler for reaching net zero.

- Elected leaders, particularly those at the local level, face several challenges in delivering net zero: limited financial resources, conflicting regulatory goals, the impact of central and local politics on prioritisation of net zero, ambiguity over leadership roles and managing disruption.
- To address these challenges, the report suggests a localised approach to governance within broader multi-level governance systems.

Second, people will be critical to the transition to net zero.

- Members of the public provide a mandate to leaders for the type of policies they will collectively support. They expect a range of perspectives and consequences to be properly considered, and they expect to benefit from opportunities that arise, so that overall standards of living will improve. Therefore, identifying ways to fairly distribute the costs and benefits of net zero policies is central to their success.

¹ Skidmore, C. (2022), ‘[Mission Zero: Independent Review of Net Zero](#)’.

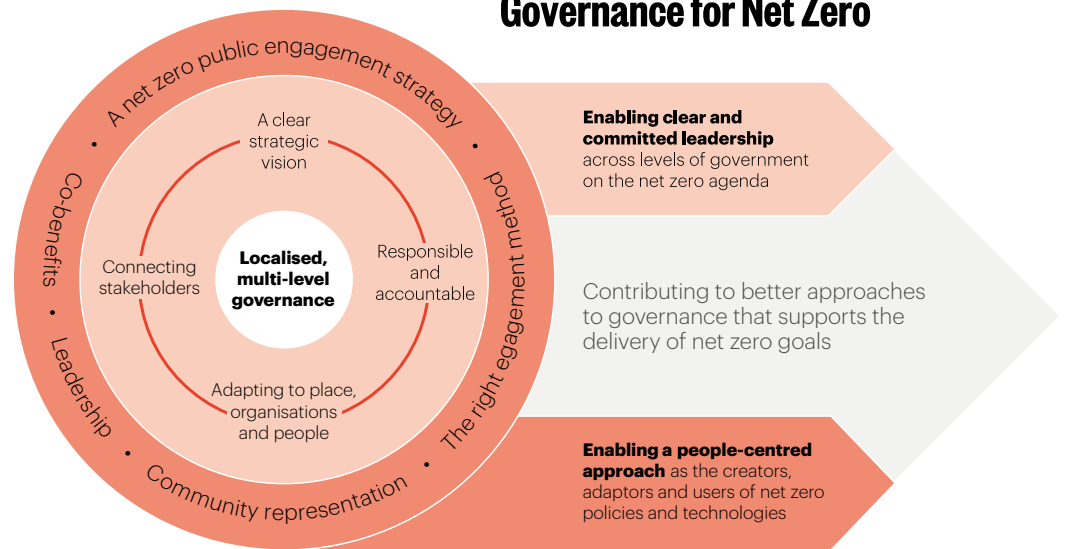
² Kooiman, J. (ed.) (1993), *Modern Governance* (SAGE, Newbury Park, CA), p. 2.

³ Rosenau, J. (1992), ‘Governance, order and change in world politics’, in eds J. Rosenau and E.-O. Czempiel *Governance without Government* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge), p. 4

- A focus on people can enable and accelerate net zero delivery, with a detailed engagement strategy, by choosing the right engagement methods, highlighting immediate benefits, and using innovative community representation methods. Policymakers must also ensure that public support is sustained over the long term.

The relationships between leadership and people, and the elements that support this relationship form an interconnected system that this report explores (see below).

Governance for Net Zero



Illustrating the relationships between systems that connect leaders and people through governance mechanisms and linked enablers that support the delivery of net zero goals.

What follows draws together the British Academy’s funded research and stakeholder discussions with academics, civil society organisations, business, and policymakers. We conclude by proposing that elected leaders delivering for people across society and with their support can contribute to improved governance of the net zero process.



Aerial view of flooding in Wraysbury, London following Storm Henk. Photo by Daniel Leal / AFP / Getty Images.

1 Introduction

The British Academy Net Zero Governance programme aims to produce policy analyses and outputs that contribute to delivering the UK commitment to achieving net zero by 2050. It draws on research and insights from the SHAPE disciplines (Social Sciences, Humanities and the Arts for People, the Economy and the Environment) alongside engagement with a range of stakeholders via roundtables and workshops with representatives from academia, civil society, government and business. These events have brought together multiple perspectives on the topic.

This report reflects the insights to date from this programme, drawing specifically on nine research projects and five discussion papers, which have examined the issue of net zero governance from different perspectives. These insights have been considered alongside additional sources of expertise drawn from our Working Group and wider Fellowship, as well as perspectives from the roundtables and further stakeholder engagement.

The synthesis across these programme activities has shone a light on the critical role of governance for the effective delivery of net zero targets. This report delves into two key parts of the governance picture: leadership and a people-focused approach. The framework that is beginning to emerge should provide a tool to policymakers at all levels to support net zero delivery.

The use of ‘governance’ in this report builds on previous Academy work and our policy programme theme on ‘Governance, trust and voice’. We use the term here to refer to the processes and activities, actors and institutions, which include (but also go beyond) the government.⁴ It is more encompassing than ‘government’, embracing governmental institutions, and informal and non-governmental mechanisms.⁵ The focus on governance highlights the connections between the technical solutions that have the potential to bring

⁴ Kooiman, *Modern Governance*, p. 2.

⁵ Rosenau, ‘Governance, order and change in world politics’, p. 4.

about decarbonisation, and the social and economic systems that must employ and accompany those solutions for meaningful progress towards achieving net zero. Governance on net zero requires the bringing together of the social and technical parts of specific institutions as well as society as a whole.⁶

The starting point for this report is the UK Government's (2021) 'Net Zero Strategy', outlining how the country would meet its legally binding carbon-based emissions target by 2050.⁷ Despite the government's actions to meet this target, in 2022, the UK's Climate Change Committee (CCC) stated that the current strategy and suite of policies will not deliver net zero as required.⁸ In addition, the High Court, following a challenge by Client Earth, ruled that the Government must update its strategy within eight months to include a quantified account of how its policies will achieve climate targets. In 2023, the former Energy Minister Rt Hon Chris Skidmore MP published an independent, widely consulted review of net zero delivery, which outlined additional work to be done at all governance levels and across different stakeholder groups to meet the net zero target.⁹

The government's Net Zero Strategy places significant emphasis on sectoral transformations (such as heat and buildings, transport, land use, and power) and the associated finance requirements. Several of the sectors highlighted in the strategy, such as heat and buildings, and transport, cannot be tackled using centralised initiatives alone. The shifts in these sectors will directly affect a wide range of people across society, and proposed changes will require their explicit support. On these issues, potential policies and responses to them will be shaped by varying socio-economic factors, and good governance will be required to navigate these and deliver on net zero. Looking at local governance within a multi-level governance framework therefore becomes a central theme.

Considering existing applications of these concepts, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) suggests that governance has five aspects:

- a common understanding of sustainable development,
- clear commitment and leadership,
- specific institutional mechanisms to guide integration,
- effective stakeholder involvement, and
- efficient knowledge management.¹⁰

Key points made in the Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change (2020) report ('The path to net zero') also align with this approach.¹¹ Meanwhile other analyses support a close look at governance: the 2021 and 2022 CCC progress reports to Parliament, the 'Independent Review of Net Zero' carried out by Rt Hon Chris Skidmore MP, the National Audit Office report on local government and net zero in England, and the Institute for Government's (2020) report: 'Net Zero: How government can meet its climate change target'.¹²

⁶ Geels, F.W. and Schot, J. (2007), 'Typology of sociotechnical transition pathways', *Research Policy*, 36(3), pp. 399–417. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.respol.2007.01.003>

⁷ UK Government (2021), 'Net Zero Strategy'.

⁸ Climate Change Committee (2022), 'Current programmes will not deliver Net Zero'.

⁹ Skidmore, 'Mission Zero'.

¹⁰ Jordan, A. (2008), 'The governance of sustainable development: taking stock and looking forwards', *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 26(1), pp. 17–33, at p. 26. <https://doi.org/10.1068/cav6>; OECD (2002), *Improving Policy Coherence and Integration for Sustainable Development: A Checklist* (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Paris).

¹¹ Climate Assembly UK (2020), 'The path to net zero'.

¹² Climate Change Committee (2021), '2021 Progress Report to Parliament'; Climate Change Committee (2022), '2022 Progress Report to Parliament'; Skidmore, 'Mission Zero'; National Audit Office (2021), 'Local government and net zero in England'; 'Net Zero: How government can meet its climate change target'.

This report picks up on these strands and digs deeper into two elements on which our work has previously focussed: leadership (particularly by local elected leaders) (see Section 2.1), and the role of people (see Section 2.2), highlighting challenges and enablers that can have an impact on the urgent delivery of the goal of net zero. Adaptation challenges are not considered in this report, nor are broader environmental issues. However, the British Academy leads other programmes, such as [Where We Live Next](#) and [Just Transitions](#), that explore some of these wider, longer-term perspectives.

We conclude the report by setting out how the programme will develop this emerging framework in its next phase, drawing on fresh research and more engagement with a range of stakeholders, and refining the conclusions. We call for wider consideration of the role of leadership and people in governance processes in support of delivery of net zero policies. And we welcome contributions and proposals for collaboration around this emerging framework.

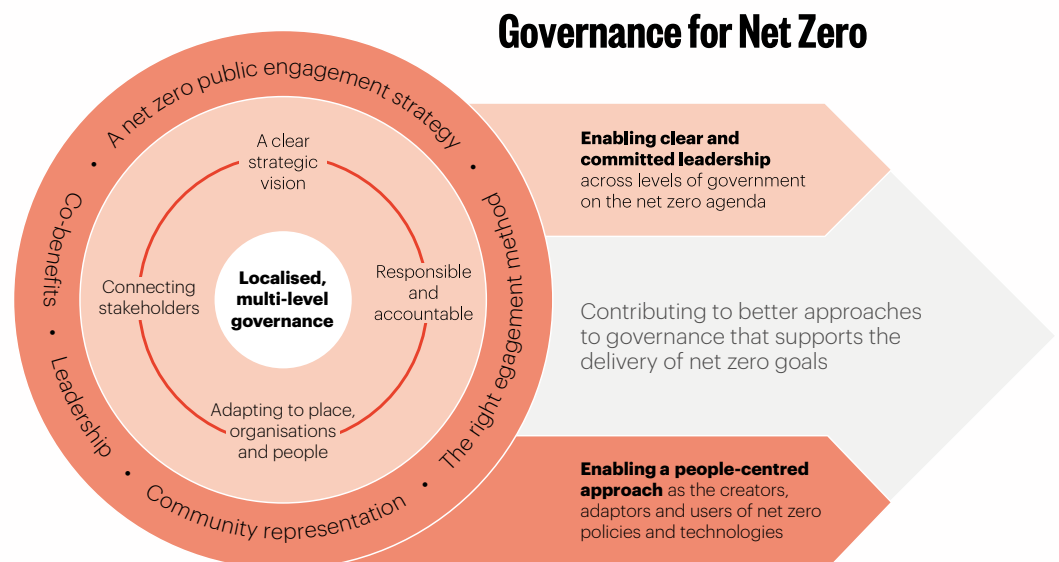


2 Critical enablers: leadership and people

A trainer shows trainees a newly installed heat pump system at the Octopus Energy Ltd.'s training and R&D centre in Slough, U.K., on Tuesday, Sept. 28, 2021. Octopus, backed by Al Gore's sustainability fund, is helping teach the plumbers to install heat pumps that will play a pivotal role in the U.K.'s strategy to have net-zero emissions by 2050. Photographer: Chris Ratcliffe/Bloomberg via Getty Images

The scale of the socio-economic transformations required to reach net zero will be immense. Clear and committed leadership within government is needed to champion and lead on this agenda. To be effective in delivering the ambitious goal of net zero, elected leaders will need a better understanding of the ways in which they can improve their approaches to governance. They will also need to embrace the crucial role that members of the public play in providing a mandate for relevant policies, and find better ways to include them in governance processes. This report focuses primarily on local government leadership, given its proximity to communities and the issues they face. (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. Governance for Net Zero



Illustrating the relationships between systems that connect leaders and people through governance mechanisms and linked enablers that support the delivery of net zero goals.

2.1 Leadership is a crucial but under-utilised lever

Insights from our funded research reflect analysis from the CCC and wider reports, underscoring how authorities across multiple layers of government—especially local councils, cities, and regional or devolved administrations—must have the capacity to lead on net zero. The UK government’s growing focus on devolution and the withdrawal of core funding for Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) in April 2024 provide opportunities to reimagine funding and to strengthen the role of place-based, local authorities in leading the net zero mandate.¹³

2.1.1 Challenges for leading on net zero governance

Although important, providing leadership can present challenges in practice, particularly in the present policy landscape of media and political polarisation on the issue, competing priorities, and limited finance. Despite this broader context, elected leaders are required to work with a range of interested parties to deliver net zero. Our commissioned research has highlighted some of the challenges they face in trying to respond to the goal of net zero, including financing constraints, conflicting policy directions, the politics involved in implementing policy, ambiguity over leadership, and managing disruption. There is also a deep underlying inability to support the most disadvantaged in their struggle to lower their carbon-based living costs.

Charging points for Ecolink zero emissions buses in the bus depot in Nottingham, Nottinghamshire. Photo by Andrew Aitchison / In Pictures / Getty Images.



¹³

Bedford, T., Catney, P. and Robinson, Z. (2023), 'Going down the local: the challenges of place-based net zero governance', *Journal of the British Academy*, 'Governance Factors on the Road to Net Zero', 11(2), pp. 125–156.

Resource constraints

Centrally held financial mechanisms, local authority budgetary constraints, and politically directed funding models limit local net zero action and risk widening regional funding disparity. For example, central government top-down investment has created ‘Super Places’, that attract significant net zero investment. While this net zero activity is welcome, these top-down projects often risk increasing inequalities in and between places, by concentrating resources in specific areas.¹⁴ One of our funded research papers and discussions with stakeholders highlighted that to ensure fairness within and between places, it is important for policymakers to consider where those who will benefit from investment in infrastructure and technology for net zero are based.¹⁵ For example, owners or developers of certain renewable energy technology set-ups in an area may be based outside the area, leading to financial outflows.¹⁶ In addition, those households who are already impoverished and face increasing hardship are not able to save on energy and transport. Even where there are government-funded support payments, they are often insufficient for this sizeable group to take advantage of.¹⁷

There are other financial constraints facing leaders at the local level, such as green financing and securing investment from the private sector. This report will not provide a forensic review of these or of current government financial mechanisms. However, local councils are experiencing long-term funding pressures, and this could affect a range of services.¹⁸ The National Audit Office and the Skidmore review also say that more could be done to improve the funding landscape for local authorities.¹⁹ The Local Government Association has welcomed the recommendations in the CCC’s ‘[Local authorities and the Sixth Carbon Budget](#)’ report, which should allow for an increase in funding to local authorities and provide them with increased flexibility in how they manage their budgets.²⁰ It is clear from these reports and lessons from our research and engagement that a priority for delivering improved net zero governance should be to re-examine the current funding landscape for local authorities.

In some cases, local authority officials and local politicians have aimed to push forward on net zero, but have stated that they need more resources and additional information and skills to make real change.²¹ For example, financial pressures and reduced staff capacity have limited long-term planning in local authorities.²² Officials in local areas need the skills, capacity, and knowledge to create net zero plans that recognise the potential for holistic action and to develop resilience to climate shocks.

A greater emphasis on upskilling and training local planners could support their role to enable, advise and invest in system futures and develop place-based supplementary planning that increases mobilisation.²³ In the affordable housing sector, the extent of low-carbon design and technology implementation is influenced by the skills barriers faced by councils. Housing providers face an unfamiliar procurement route and an uneven geographical spread of skills in the supply chain. There is potential here to learn from city councils such as Norwich and Exeter, which have developed specialist frameworks to manage skills transitions.²⁴

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2023), ‘[Destitution in the UK 2023](#)’.

¹⁸ British Academy (2021), ‘[The COVID decade: Understanding the long-term societal impacts of COVID-19](#)’.

¹⁹ National Audit Office (2021), ‘[Local government and net zero in England](#)’; Skidmore, ‘[Mission Zero](#)’.

²⁰ Climate Change Committee (2020), ‘[Local authorities and the Sixth Carbon Budget](#)’; Local Government Association (2022), ‘[A local path to net zero](#)’.

²¹ Bedford et al., ‘[Going down the local](#)’.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Zhao, J. (2023), ‘Implementing net zero affordable housing—towards a human-centred approach’, *Journal of the British Academy*, ‘[Governance Factors on the Road to Net Zero](#)’, 11(2), pp. 9–34.

Regulatory barriers and conflicting policy objectives

While local authorities have the potential to influence over one third of local emissions,²⁵ they are constrained by their limited legal powers in key areas such as housing, transport, and agriculture. This limits the potential for local policy innovation that could inform wider regional and national policy development.²⁶ Regulatory barriers from other parts of the policy system also hamper the implementation of net zero policies. In 2020, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (under its previous guise as the Ministry for Housing, Communities, and Local Government), outlined 45 policy areas that will influence local authorities and their capacity to deliver net zero.²⁷ Stakeholder engagement outlined the challenge created around this landscape of conflicting policy objectives, and one of the research papers expanded on how this plays out in the residential building sector. (See Example 1²⁸)



²⁵ Climate Change Committee (2020), '[Local authorities and the Sixth Carbon Budget](#)'.

²⁶ Bedford et al., '[Going down the local](#)'.

²⁷ National Audit Office, '[Local government and net zero in England](#)'.

²⁸ Gazze, L. (2023), 'Achieving net zero goals in residential buildings', *Journal of the British Academy*, '[Governance Factors on the Road to Net Zero](#)', 11(2), pp. 35–56.

Example 1: Conflicting policy goals from the housing sector

In 2020, UK homes represented 16 per cent of national greenhouse gas emissions. Local authorities tried to implement the Heat and Buildings Strategy, but a recurring issue was the barriers they faced from the frictions of existing policies or their legacies. For example, the net zero focussed objective to move forward on retrofitting was at odds with other policies in place to ensure the preservation of ‘the character of neighbourhoods’ in conservation areas. In these areas, homes use 10–15 per cent more energy (such as gas for heating) than identical homes just outside the conservation boundary. This extra energy use generates 3–4 million tonnes in avoidable CO₂ emissions per year and costs £104–314 million per annum (at the February 2023 price cap).

Another conflict includes the legacy of the Right-To-Buy scheme, which resulted in mixed social and private tenure of estates or linked buildings. This may have hindered councils’ and households’ ability to reduce costs by benefitting from economies of scale and added challenges for leaseholds where home improvements were disincentivised and there was confusion over who is responsible for retrofitting. Similarly, mixed tenure impacts housing associations’ ability to leverage collective bargaining power. Policy changes or legal instruments might improve coordination and lower costs.

More widely, the [Skidmore review](#) outlined the planning system as being a major net zero barrier, and the [National Audit Office](#) called for Government to better align the planning system with net zero.

Source: Gazze L. (2023), ‘Achieving net zero goals in residential buildings’, *Journal of the British Academy*, ‘[Governance Factors on the Road to Net Zero](#)’, 11(2), pp. 35–56.

The impact of politics in prioritisation

Local authorities balance a complex range of responsibilities, competing duties, and political divisions with limited resources and a lively and at times polarised media setting. This requires them to make difficult decisions on prioritisation, including net zero policies. For example, a research paper funded by our programme showed that in areas such as Staffordshire, local authorities struggle to collaborate across a two-tier authority with a unitary city council due to different perceptions on the urgency of climate action, political priorities, internal constraints, and perceptions of public demand.²⁹ Without local political support, a clear national mandate, or a mechanism for coordinating local action, council officers are left to resolve competing priorities around net zero and other policy areas.

Our stakeholder engagement suggests that commitment from those in leadership positions in government is important for prioritising action on net zero. The Climate Assembly UK also said that clear leadership is needed to focus on an issue that affects all of society.³⁰ One proposal put forward by the Skidmore review suggested the introduction across the UK of a statutory duty for local leaders (this is already [in place in Scotland](#)) to account for how they are working towards the target of net zero.³¹ This may have benefits, but it would need to be balanced against other priorities, and that responsibility should be met by local leaders. The Climate Assembly also

²⁹ Bedford et al., ‘[Going down the local](#)’.

³⁰ Climate Assembly UK, ‘[The path to net zero](#)’.

³¹ Barlow, D. (2022), ‘[Net Zero: Local authority powers](#)’, Edinburgh Climate Change Institute; Skidmore, ‘[Mission Zero](#)’.

outlined that clear leadership is needed to transcend the challenges of party politics and focus on an issue that affects all of society. To achieve net zero, central and local government will need to take continuous action over a protracted period of time. Stakeholder engagement and research funded by our programme have shown that short-term milestones can make long-term net zero targets more feasible and actionable.³² They can also help strengthen the confidence of stakeholders to prepare or invest in programmes.³³

Ambiguity over leadership

Our engagement with stakeholders has also pointed out the need for more certainty over what it means to lead on net zero locally. Otherwise, it could end up dropping off local agendas if no individual or team is directly responsible for delivery. Research lessons from our programme and evidence provided for the Skidmore review suggest that officials of different local authorities have different understandings of who should lead net zero efforts for their area.³⁴ Despite the confusion over leadership, it is generally the case that most stakeholders (members of the public, local businesses, and civil society) think that local authorities are well placed to push forward place-based solutions on net zero.³⁵ (See Example 2³⁶)

Ambiguity over leadership is also challenging due rapid change across a wide range of areas, government departments, and individual leaders. This is found particularly in cross-sectoral or regional issues that are easily fragmented, such as transport and housing. Research insights from our programme show that clarity is needed on the interrelationships between key local actors, such as local authorities, metro-mayors and combined authorities. With more clarity, these actors can lead on locally-based policy innovations, which can then feed into national net zero policy.³⁷

The Skidmore review found that the ambiguity over leadership roles and responsibilities causes problems for net zero delivery and suggested the need for ‘a high-level framework and an agreement to close future partnership working between central and local governments.’³⁸ The National Audit Office and the CCC have called for a local net zero framework that could help in reducing ambiguity on roles and responsibilities.³⁹

³² British Academy (2022), ‘Considering the role of people and institutions in net zero policy in the UK’, [Roundtable summary papers](#).

³³ Adam, S., Delestre, I., Levell, P. and Miller, H. (2021), ‘IFS Green Budget Chapter 8, Tax policies to help achieve net zero carbon emissions’, Institute for Fiscal Studies.

³⁴ Bedford et al., ‘Going down the local’; Skidmore, ‘Mission Zero’.

³⁵ Bedford et al., ‘Going down the local’.

³⁶ Gaze, ‘Achieving net zero goals in residential buildings’.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Skidmore, ‘Mission Zero’.

³⁹ National Audit Office, ‘Local government and net zero in England’; Climate Change Committee, ‘2022 Progress Report to Parliament’.

Example 2: Local and community-based leadership

Local authorities have significant leadership potential in areas where localised and community-based action is central to increasing uptake of net zero initiatives. They can leverage data on the local community, target engagement, and facilitate knowledge exchange within key community clusters. For example, Burnley is leveraging data on rental properties to flag rental homes with below-standard Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) ratings from their selective licensing programme—managing to bring most properties to compliance. Councils could also leverage publicly available data on the energy performance of buildings, energy use, and demographic characteristics to identify clusters of homes in need of similar energy efficiency investments. They could then host community meetings in these clusters, with information about available schemes, showcase model homes, facilitate interactions with local contractors, organise buyer groups and group discounts, and promote lotteries and competitions among energy savers. These community-level forces are effective at encouraging investments, such as the [Solar Together scheme](#).

Source: Gazze L. (2023), 'Achieving net zero goals in residential buildings', *Journal of the British Academy*, '[Governance Factors on the Road to Net Zero](#)', 11(2), pp. 35–56.

Managing disruption

The transition to net zero will be disruptive to institutions, communities, and individuals across the UK. The approach elected leaders take in governance will help determine how net zero policies will contribute to or address challenges such as geographical inequalities, job losses in high-carbon sectors, or the quality and affordability of housing and energy.⁴⁰ Marginalised groups, such as those in household poverty, or with long-term health conditions or disabilities, could be at risk of further deprivation if over-burdened by the costs of the transition.⁴¹

Central and local government could better explore how to manage disruption and deliver a fair transition, including whether and when costs should be managed individually or as a society. More cooperation through governance that is inclusive of diverse perspectives could inform a shared understanding of fairness.⁴² Drawing on social sciences and humanities research and theory earlier on in the policy-making process could improve the careful assessment of progress on net zero programmes and improve knowledge on how people will be affected by the required technological, social and economic change.

⁴⁰ Bedford *et al.*, '[Going down the local](#)'; Zhao, '[Implementing net zero affordable housing](#)'; Gazze, '[Achieving net zero goals in residential buildings](#)'.

⁴¹ Zhao, '[Implementing net zero affordable housing](#)'.

⁴² Verfuether, C., Demski, C., Capstick, S., Whitmarsh, L. and Poortinga, W. (2023), 'A people-centred approach is needed to meet net zero goals', *Journal of the British Academy*, '[Governance Factors on the Road to Net Zero](#)', 11(2), pp. 97–124.

2.1.2 How localised governance can enable and accelerate net zero delivery

There will be a range of suggestions, from across the academic literature and policy landscape, on how to improve leadership for net zero delivery, because the system is vast, and the goal is urgent and ambitious. Our stakeholder engagement and commissioned research together with evidence from the wider policy context, indicate that localising governance is an approach leaders could take in this arena.⁴³

A research project from our programme conducted in partnership with the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Leadership Board (CIOSLB), highlighted steps leaders could explore in developing localised governance.⁴⁴ These include:

Connecting stakeholders⁴⁵

Effective localised and goal-based governance ought to bring together and help form relationships across a broad range of stakeholders from different sectors—including civil society, the private sector, researchers, and local universities and institutions at all governance levels. Designated bodies or structures facilitate collaboration, foster good relationships, and help to identify common goals. (See Example 3⁴⁶)

A clear strategic vision⁴⁷

A clear and strategic vision with short-term achievable goals can bring a range of stakeholders together around specific aims and tangible actions. Alignment with current place-based identities can drive the push for change.

Adapting to place, organisations, and people⁴⁸

Localised goal-based governance requires building and drawing on stakeholders' strengths, matching initial interventions to local capacity, and delegated and dedicated resources to effectively collaborate with civil society and other local organisations. It also requires flexible multi-level governance mechanisms that can adapt to the changing needs of local communities.⁴⁹

Responsibility and accountability⁵⁰

Localised governance necessitates clear lines of responsibility and accountability. It also requires significant top-down support over the long term. An example was suggested by the Skidmore review, which called for the government to learn from the recycling sector where transparency measures and targets have promoted local accountability.⁵¹

⁴³ Climate Change Committee (2020), '[Local authorities and the Sixth Carbon Budget](#)'; National Audit Office, '[Local government and net zero in England](#)'; House of Commons (2021), '[Local government and the path to net zero](#)'; Wills, J., Honeybun-Arnolda, E., Collins, C. and Turner, R. (2022), 'Localising and decentralising goal-based governance for sustainability in England', *British Academy: Summary of research findings*.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Bedford et al., '[Going down the local](#)'.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Wills et al., '[Localising and decentralising goal-based governance for sustainability in England](#)'.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ British Academy (2023), '[Understanding the role of place in environmental sustainability](#)'.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Skidmore, '[Mission Zero](#)'.

There is agreement that local authorities are the closest level of government to people and so should have a good understanding of what is needed in their areas. Due to regional variations and population demographics, a local dimension is required in many sectors such as housing, that need to see a significant reduction in emissions. It is also important to place the localised approach within a multi-level governance perspective to ensure that the needs of and lessons from local authorities are passed on to other levels of government, which can then better contextualise their policy interventions.⁵² Two research papers on low-carbon housing funded by the programme showed that a more localised approach will require knowledge exchange across regions due to the uneven spread of skills, access to training, and supply chains, and to embed an understanding of local needs throughout the development and implementation of low-carbon schemes.⁵³

Example 3: Research on localised governance

This project explored the governance approaches used across four areas in the Midlands: Nottingham, Leicester, Coventry, and Staffordshire. The different areas used distinct approaches with varying degrees of success. One area that stood out was Nottingham. It uses a localised collective governance approach that can alleviate risk within decision-making by using a coherent framework to facilitate engagement by a range of semi-autonomous stakeholders with the complex issues related to net zero. The Nottingham Green Partnership (an outside body that brings together members of the public, civil society, and businesses) supports the City Council in its net zero efforts. It has brought these different stakeholders together to take part in the decision-making process and created shared ownership of net zero in the area, while providing a centre for local leadership.

Despite a lack of complete autonomy and funding limiting some aspects of the council's work, this approach to governance has had a positive impact on its delivery of net zero. The approach has allowed the council to develop synergies and make connections between stakeholders that would have been difficult to achieve using a top-down governance approach. It provides an environment for the exchange of information and knowledge that can be useful in considering and mitigating the distributional impacts that net zero policies can have on members of society. Finally, it includes residents in the decision-making process and allows for community-centred and accepted solutions.

Source: Bedford, T., Catney, P. and Robinson, Z. (2023), 'Going down the local: the challenges of place-based net zero governance', *Journal of the British Academy*, 'Governance Factors on the Road to Net Zero', 11(2), pp. 125–156.

⁵² The British Academy, 'Understanding the role of place in environmental sustainability', p. 33.

⁵³ Gazze, 'Achieving net zero goals in residential buildings'; Zhao, 'Implementing net zero affordable housing'.

2.2 People are critical in the transition to net zero

As part of the governance process, people across all sections of society play a fundamental role in providing a social mandate for net zero policies and will be directly affected by the costs and benefits of the transition. Changes, particularly in some hard-to-mitigate sectors, such as farming, transport, and domestic heating, will disrupt day-to-day lives and require drastic changes to lifestyles and norms.⁵⁴ Most people in the UK support a transition to net zero, but that support is fragile and can fluctuate based on the direct costs and benefits individuals and communities will experience.⁵⁵ Involving people and putting them at the centre of policies to deliver the transition are crucial to achieving net zero rapidly and effectively.⁵⁶

2.2.1 Challenges in people's involvement in net zero governance

People are under increasing pressure due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. Strengthening mechanisms for people's involvement in the governance of net zero can potentially deepen leaders' understanding of such pressures and the strengths of different communities. Evidence from our research and stakeholder engagement highlight some of the governance challenges that leaders face in trying to involve people in the design and implementation of net zero policies.



⁵⁴ Verfuerrth et al., 'A people-centred approach is needed to meet net zero goals achieving net zero goals'.

⁵⁵ Ipsos and the Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformations (2022), 'Net zero living', Ipsos, London and CAST, Cardiff.

⁵⁶ Verfuerrth et al., 'A people-centred approach is needed to meet net zero goals achieving net zero goals'.

Technology without its creators, adaptors, or users

Technologies, such as heat pumps, that can support the transition to net zero already exist, and in the national discourse they are touted as being key to getting to net zero.⁵⁷ However, what these discussions often miss is that the public's support for these technologies will influence how successful they will be.⁵⁸ For such technologies to be effective, the technical solutions need to interact with the social systems in which they will operate and they have to be designed around the people who will use or be affected by them. One of our research papers examined this issue using an example from the housing sector, showing how a wide range of social systems impact the success of building and benefiting from low-carbon affordable housing. (See Example 4⁵⁹)

Example 4: People's influence on low-carbon technology

There are a number of socio-technical challenges in decarbonising the affordable housing sector, such as pressures to prioritise housing quantity over quality, restrictions in funds in specifying low-carbon measures, unfamiliar procurement routes, scaling-up of supply chains, subsidy funding, and skills training to specify, install, and maintain low-carbon technology. Once built, supporting residents to control low-carbon technologies and benefit from their home environment is an important factor in lowering the carbon emissions of buildings, particularly in low-carbon housing.

A case study of two Passivhaus projects in Scotland's social rent sector with similarities in building and system features illustrates the importance of effective and continuous engagement and support for residents. In one built in 2011, a private landlord supported residents with knowledge sharing and behavioural adaptation, with a soft-landing procedure that included technical support, trouble shooting, and community support. This resulted in residents reporting high satisfaction, demonstrating increased knowledge and skill in operating the low-carbon system, changes in practice, and building of an eco-community. In the other project built in 2015, the housing association did not support residents, and restricted their control over their low-carbon home technologies. This led to resident dissatisfaction, frustration with a lack of communication about and limited knowledge of or control over their low-carbon housing, and much higher energy use than expected.

This illustrates how effective and continuous dialogue that support people's agency to adopt low-carbon technologies can foster more sustainable living.

Source: Zhao, J. (2023), 'Implementing net zero affordable housing—towards a human-centred approach', *Journal of the British Academy*, 'Governance Factors on the Road to Net Zero', 11(2), pp. 9–34.

⁵⁷ Harris, B. and Walker, A. (2023), 'Heat pumps', UK Parliament POST 699.
⁵⁸ British Academy, *Roundtable summary papers*.
⁵⁹ Zhao, 'Implementing net zero affordable housing'.

Insufficient inclusion

Social transformations like net zero need active engagement from a wide range of actors.⁶⁰ However, those on low incomes, and marginalised and racialised communities could be much more sensitively and carefully included in the governance process on net zero, especially as they could be disproportionately affected by the impacts of policies for the transition.⁶¹ This may be further hampered by existing power dynamics which can make it difficult for these groups to engage with the policy process.

The stakeholder engagement we undertook showed that people from minority backgrounds share widely held values on environmental sustainability.⁶² This reflects analysis from the UK Energy Research Centre (UKERC) Public Engagement Observatory that, despite mainstream approaches often assuming a lack of knowledge or disengagement, a range of publics are already engaged in many different ways in energy efficiency, climate change and net zero actions.⁶³ Our engagement and insights from our funded research indicate that marginalised groups, along with others in society, require policies that provide them with opportunities to carry out their environmental and social practices while having their needs met on issues such as transport and housing.⁶⁴ (See Example 5.⁶⁵) Policymakers could aim to better comprehend how different communities and cultures understand and act on the environment to support people on the transition.

To include people in net zero, our stakeholder discussions indicated that it is important to use a common language, beyond the defined legal and scientific concepts, and to discuss the transition and its implications for different groups in our society. This also came out strongly in research for the British Academy's *Where We Live Next programme*, which emphasised the importance of using language on environmental issues 'that resonates with the values, culture and experiences of a particular place and community'.⁶⁶

Investing in understanding the role language plays in issues of inclusion and net zero more broadly can potentially have an impact on how widely relevant policies reflect people's needs and can influence how far they will support them.⁶⁷

⁶⁰ Verfuherth et al., '[A people-centred approach is needed to meet net zero goals chieving net zero goals](#)'.

⁶¹ Gajparia, J., Miller, E., Davanna, T. and Drahota, R. (2022), 'Collaborative voices: drawing on cross-sector expertise in building community capacity and sustaining partnerships towards net-zero sustainability futures', *British Academy: Shared understandings of a sustainable future*; Verfuherth et al., '[A people-centred approach is needed to meet net zero goals chieving net zero goals](#)'.

⁶² British Academy, *Roundtable summary papers*.

⁶³ UK Energy Research Centre Public Engagement Observatory (2023), '[Mapping public engagement with energy, climate change and net zero](#)'.

⁶⁴ Verfuherth et al., '[A people-centred approach is needed to meet net zero goals chieving net zero goals](#)'.

⁶⁵ Zhao, '[Implementing net zero affordable housing](#)'.

⁶⁶ British Academy, '[Understanding the role of place in environmental sustainability](#)'.

⁶⁷ 'Ibid'.

Example 5: Inclusion in decarbonising housing

The Heat and Building Strategy outlines some policy mechanisms to decarbonise housing by rapidly scaling up low-carbon heat supply chains and improving home energy efficiency ratings. However, the plan should have addressed how people in affordable housing would engage with the strategy. Issues of immediate concern to people, such as rising energy bills and the linked cost-of-living crisis, should have been considered in how the strategy applies to those living in affordable housing.

The absence of adequate engagement with this group puts them at risk of further deprivation. The national strategy did not include steps to engage them, and local authorities said that they need more funding to organise engagement efforts. For people in affordable housing to benefit fully and participate in the net zero transition, they need tailored engagement strategies with effective support mechanisms, and in some cases, financial assistance. For those moving into low-carbon housing, medium to long-term planning for aftercare (such as energy advice, and auditing and monitoring knowledge support) is crucial to ensure their transition to low-carbon living.

Source: Zhao, J. (2023), 'Implementing net zero affordable housing—towards a human-centred approach' *Journal of the British Academy*, 'Governance Factors on the Road to Net Zero', 11(2), pp. 9–34.

2.2.2 How a focus on people can enable and accelerate net zero delivery

If net zero policies are created and implemented with the involvement of people, and if greater attention is paid to the systems and norms in which people carry out their activities and practices rather than on explicit behavioural changes, governments at all levels can limit the possible disruption to people's lives, provide opportunities for them to tap into wider benefits, and ensure that the delivery process sustains public support. Given the importance of people in this area, central government could become more active in the public discourse by improving engagement and better showcasing the urgency, value, and nature of net zero policies.⁶⁸ As has already been suggested by the [Institute for Government](#) and wider policy actors, the government could explore additional ways in which they can involve people in the design and delivery of solutions and approaches, particularly where there are risks of unequal socio-economic impacts.⁶⁹

This requires the government to publish a detailed public engagement strategy on net zero with an improved approach to building the high-quality public engagement necessary to mitigate risks, widen participation, and support local authorities. This aligns with the UK government's United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) 2021 commitments to Action for Climate Empowerment adopted under the [Glasgow work programme](#), key recommendations from both the [CCC](#) and the [Skidmore Review](#), and the recent Climate Change Public Engagement Strategies published in [Scotland](#) and [Wales](#).⁷⁰ Lessons from our funded research point to several elements that could support this approach.

⁶⁸ Demski, C. (2021), 'Net zero public engagement and participation', Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

⁶⁹ Institute for Government, 'Net Zero: How government can meet its climate change target'.

⁷⁰ SBI 52-55 and COP26 (2021), 'Glasgow work programme on Action for Climate Empowerment', [Decision -/CP.26](#) (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change); Climate Change Committee (2023), '2023 Progress Report to Parliament'; Skidmore, 'Mission'; Welsh Government (2023), 'Climate Action Wales: Public engagement strategy 2023 to 2026'; Scottish Government (2021), 'Net Zero Nation: public engagement strategy'.

Using innovative community representation methods

Research projects funded through this programme tested three less common methods of connecting with people on net zero and representing their perspectives to policymakers. These are initial projects exploring these methods and there is a need for additional research. The British Academy [Where We Live Next Programme](#) delves into additional arts-based methods that can be used to engage with people on a range of environmental issues. The three methods tested by our commissioned research focused on storytelling, local children's voices, and local television.

- Storytelling can shift the narrative on net zero by creating a sense of community with shared histories, knowledge, and values, while embracing the diversity of personal sustainability journeys and perceptions. It can highlight the positive or complex stories a community needs to hear or bring attention to traditional ecological knowledge.⁷¹
- A short film documenting local children's voices and actions provided the setting to examine another novel pathway to interact with communities. The research showed that engaging communication with a local emphasis and with children taking the lead can have a significant impact on adult community members to engage in climate action.⁷²
- Local television was explored by another research project, which found that this form of engagement and representation helps to support better communication on three levels: self-representation, information and education, and interpersonal communication (expressive and relational). Self-representation was found to be the most important for local media initiatives, and policymakers can use local television to good effect to enable people to find relevant information and validate their choices by representing them in the media.⁷³

Choosing the right methods

Traditional forms of engagement alone, such as surveys and consultations, are not holistic enough to capture sufficient input from diverse publics and deliver net zero.⁷⁴ Research from the social sciences and humanities disciplines can shed light on nontraditional forms of engagement that policymakers can use to hear from different communities. Social research is encouraged for State Parties, including the UK, under the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change) Glasgow Programme on Action for Climate Empowerment to assess needs specific to national circumstances in the areas of implementation.⁷⁵ There is a significant body of literature on methods that can be used. The [DEFRA review of Public Engagement](#) explores some of these, and the [UK Energy Research Centre Public Engagement Observatory](#) provides mapping and analysis of diverse forms of public participation and engagement occurring across the UK that can provide learning.⁷⁶

Whilst public engagement can help in getting input from members of the public, it can at times, and depending on the method employed, also be helpful in strengthening community dialogue, allowing members of a community to share experiences and perspectives, and resolve challenging issues.⁷⁷

⁷¹ Wills, A. (2022), 'Shifting the narrative: exploring the role of arts interventions in supporting communities in working across sectors to achieve place-based climate action', [British Academy: Summary of research findings](#).

⁷² Beattie, G. and McGuire, L. (2023), 'The great community climate change experiment: using children from the community to promote meaningful sustainable actions' [publication pending].

⁷³ Weissmann, E. and Tyrrell, B. (2022), 'Community-led television, local voice and climate change', [British Academy: Policy Summary of Key Project Insights](#).

⁷⁴ Verfuherth et al., 'A people-centred approach is needed to meet net zero goals chieving net zero goals'; Barrios-O'Neill, D. (2022), 'Communities of creative survival: live simulation to generate grassroots insight for net-zero policy', [British Academy: Summary of research findings](#).

⁷⁵ SBI 52-55 and COP26, [Decision -/CP.26](#).

⁷⁶ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2022), 'Review of Public Engagement'.

⁷⁷ British Academy, 'Understanding the role of place in environmental sustainability', p. 26.

Table 1 provides a snapshot of three novel methods explored in our funded research, but further approaches and variations are constantly arising. It is crucial to consider the right method for the audience and purpose of the engagement.

Table 1. Three novel methods of community engagement.

Method	Key features	Importance
Systems play	A framework for engaging stakeholders with complex systemic challenges through collaborative, speculative world-building. ⁷⁸	This method allows for increased social cohesion across groups in the system and generates a more resilient social fabric that creates a good grounding for addressing future challenges. ⁷⁹
Climathons	A cost-effective and agile solution to participative, deliberative democracy. They can help create spaces for respectful dialogue and deliberation around potentially contentious and polarising topics, such as net zero transitions in agri-food. ⁸⁰ (See Example 6)	The participative nature of the method allows stakeholders at the local level to make the national net zero agenda tangible at the local level. At this scale of governance, they can help integrate critical voices, increase knowledge and understanding, and enhance local collaboration. ⁸¹
Use of cultural spaces as centres for climate engagement	Public cultural spaces, such as heritage organisations, museums, and community spaces, play a vital role in society. They allow people to develop their sense of community and provide leaders with a platform to engage a cross-section of the society. ⁸²	The space used to engage people can also influence how they interact with the message and shape net zero solutions. Public cultural venues, for instance, can be essential sites to target community engagement with sustainable initiatives. ⁸³

⁷⁸ Barrios-O'Neill, 'Communities of creative survival: live simulation to generate grassroots insight for net-zero policy'.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Maye, D., Simmonds, P., Garner, A., Ingram, J. and Raseta, S. (2022), 'Co-designing sustainable food futures: using climate assemblies to build shared agri-food visions for net-zero', *British Academy: Summary of research findings*.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² British Academy (2023), 'Understanding the role of place in environmental sustainability'.

⁸³ Barron, L. (2022), 'Developing a grassroots sustainable futures platform: collective participation in a community-based cultural organisation', *British Academy: Shared Understandings of a sustainable future*.

Example 6: Methods to involve rural communities

A research project funded by our programme explored how to adapt climathons to rural areas with two distinctive livestock farming communities in Cornwall and Cumbria to build a shared agri-food vision for net zero. It found that through adaptations, this process could help integrate key voices, increase knowledge and understanding, enhance local collaboration, and generate relevant local solutions that are being progressed beyond the event. Adaptions included embedding in the appropriate community scale and existing local initiatives, co-designing the approach and event, using creative methods and outdoor activities to highlight farmers' voices and local solutions, and streamlining the event to a single day. This resulted in co-produced local solutions over a short period of time, with distinctive approaches and a cross-cutting theme of farmer peer-to-peer learning. Dedicated time to build trust and relationships and having clear pathways for outputs were key to success.

Listening to farmers on their terms and understanding their context is important. Barriers such as participation fatigue and limited capacity could be addressed with digital stories, adequate compensation for participation, and planning events around the farming calendar. Methodologies need to be flexible and iterative and respond to local knowledge and action, with adequate resources and time for planning. Different farms and rural communities face specific net zero challenges, and a greater local focus is required to develop solutions to system changes faced by farmers.

Source: Maye, D., Simmonds, P., Gardner, A., Ingram, J. and Raseta, S. (2022), 'Towards local solutions for net zero: using climathons to vision food and farming futures', *British Academy: Summary of research findings*.

Highlighting immediate co-benefits

The shift to net zero presents opportunities and numerous immediate co-benefits that will simultaneously address net zero and other immediate challenges that many members of the public face, such as the cost-of-living crisis. This is echoed across the wider academic literature and relevant policy reports, including The Climate Assembly UK's path to net zero report and the Skidmore review.⁸⁴ The Skidmore review highlighted several of these direct and impactful co-benefits, including cheaper bills and warmer homes, job opportunities, cleaner air, and sustainable and cleaner travel.⁸⁵

For members of the public to capitalise on these immediate co-benefits, the elected leaders could, in their involvement with communities, better highlight policies that will deliver net zero alongside other areas of concern for those communities.⁸⁶ For example, the increased take-up of sustainable transport options, such as cycling, public transport, or electric vehicles, should reduce air pollution, especially in cities.⁸⁷ Also, the move towards a low-carbon diet can also lead to a lower rate of diabetes, obesity, and a range of cancers and deaths related to cardiovascular diseases, while simultaneously reducing the financial strain on the NHS.⁸⁸ This approach is

⁸⁴ Climate Assembly UK, 'The path to net zero'; Skidmore, 'Mission Zero'.

⁸⁵ Skidmore, 'Mission Zero'.

⁸⁶ Verfuherth et al., 'A people-centred approach is needed to meet net zero goals chieving net zero goals'.

⁸⁷ Carmichael, R. (2019), 'Behaviour change, public engagement and Net Zero', A report for the Committee on Climate Change.

⁸⁸ Cobiac, L.J. and Scarborough, P. (2019), 'Modelling the health co-benefits of sustainable diets in the UK, France, Finland, Italy and Sweden', *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 73(4), pp. 624–633. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41430-019-0401-5>; Springmann, M., Godfray, H.C.J., Rayner, M. and Scarborough, P. (2016), 'Analysis and valuation of the health and climate change cobenefits of dietary change', *PNAS*, 113(15), 4146–4151. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1523119113>; Verfuherth et al., 'A people-centred approach is needed to meet net zero goals chieving net zero goals'.

already emerging in Coventry, for example, where messages and policies on decarbonisation were framed alongside immediate co-benefits such as improved health, leading to action that produced community take-up.⁸⁹

Highlighting and creating policies that include co-benefits, as our research and engagement have indicated, is one way to generate broader public support for net zero policies.⁹⁰ (See Example 7⁹¹)

Example 7: Co-benefits of energy efficiency investment in residential buildings

Immediate co-benefits of energy efficiency, such as lowering costs, increasing health and comfort, and a sense of ‘doing one’s bit’, are key drivers for the investment decisions of homeowners (who are able to pay). The government needs to promote awareness of benefits such as how individual practices translate into energy bills, to grow investment in energy efficiency—particularly by speeding up the rollout of smart meters. A recent online experiment found that giving information about the social benefits of smart meters or a small £10 subsidy had a similar effect of increasing adoption of these meters from the low levels found without these benefits.

The government can also use price signals and promote measures to achieve energy conservation, while ensuring support to households facing energy-poverty to achieve equity goals. In other countries this has been achieved through a two-tier or social tariff. More complex tariffs may be required to ensure households with medical needs are not overburdened by cost. However, the data required for this targeting sit across different government departments (HMRC (HM Revenue and Customs) or DWP (Department for Work and Pensions)), reiterating the importance of coordination. Without action in other areas, such as sorely needed investment in workforce training, policies focused on behavioural nudges may have limited scope to make a major difference to decarbonising buildings.

Source: Gazze, L. (2023), ‘Achieving net zero goals in residential buildings’, *Journal of the British Academy*, ‘Governance Factors on the Road to Net Zero’, 11(2), pp. 35–56.

Looking to leadership for action

The urgency presented by climate change raises the need for leaders to take both immediate and sustained action alongside involving people in governance. A research paper from the programme highlighted how citizens’ calls for greater action can contrast with policymakers’ cautiousness related to public acceptance. For example, in the Citizens’ Assembly on Climate Change used in Staffordshire, citizens called for greater support from local authorities to deliver place-based solutions, while local authorities asked for greater citizen engagement and views to legitimise any action taken.⁹²

A collaborative approach could help reimagine community consent for projects.⁹³ As set out above, clear local leadership could help bring stakeholders, including people, together behind a shared and deliverable vision. (See Section 2.1.2). Policymakers being transparent about planning, expected costs, and the long-term implications of not reducing emissions could help build resilience in public support during implementation.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Bedford et al., ‘Going down the local’.

⁹⁰ British Academy (2022), ‘Considering the role of people and institutions in net zero policy in the UK’, *Roundtable summary papers*.

⁹¹ Gazze, ‘Achieving net zero goals in residential buildings’.

⁹² Bedford et al., ‘Going down the local’.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ipsos and CAST, ‘Net zero living’.

3 Conclusions and next steps

The research insights presented in this report challenge the thinking that technical solutions alone will be sufficient to deliver the goal of net zero. Technical solutions, although incredibly important, will only be able to achieve their full potential if they are supported and adopted by society as a whole, meaning that governance—with leaders and people as part of it—should play a significant role in all aspects of net zero delivery.

The shift to net zero hinges on getting governance right, as the changes it will necessitate, technological or otherwise, will affect all members of the public. But it will affect some more than others, and it is essential that a range of voices are properly included in policy and decision-making processes, both to achieve net zero and to do so in a fair, equitable, and efficient way. Elected leaders have a duty to ensure that people are being brought along on the journey, especially as citizens provide the social mandate for such policies.

This report highlighted that elected leaders are facing numerous challenges in delivering net zero: financing constraints, navigating conflicting policies, difficulties in managing the disruption brought about by the transition, and balancing the impact of politics on their prioritisation of net zero, and ambiguity over leadership on net zero. The report explores how a localised governance approach, as part of a nested, multi-level governance system, can be useful in meeting some of these challenges and supporting the delivery of net zero. The localised governance approach has four key areas: connecting stakeholders; creating a clear strategic vision; adapting to place, organisations, and people; and the importance of responsibility and accountability.

The second focus of the report is the important role that people play in net zero efforts. Leaders should not aim to instruct people on the choices they should make and the way they should live their lives. Rather, the emphasis should be on creating and improving systems, institutions, and mechanisms that minimise the disruption to people's lives and social practices, whilst bringing them along and including them effectively in net zero governance processes. The report highlights the common challenges elected leaders face in including members of the public in the governance process. These include: not adequately embracing the role that members of the public play in the success of technology, and inadequately considering the value of inclusion.

There are a number of ways for elected leaders to include people in governance processes, including choosing the right engagement methods, using innovative community representation methods, highlighting immediate co-benefits, and encouraging leaders to set out a plan of action.

This report represents the first part of a British Academy programme on net zero governance. In the next phase, a British Academy funded research project will explore in detail practical pathways for local authorities to deliver net zero as part of a wider, multi-level governance system. Alongside this, the British Academy's public policy team will explore how policy interventions can be tailored in a way that combines the public support, effectiveness and urgency of action that are so critically important to delivering on the transition to net zero.

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