

Research into a National - Local Net Zero Delivery Framework

Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

The Net Zero Challenge

The Prime Minister describes the UK's international leadership on climate change as 'game-changing', pointing to a 44% reduction in UK emissions on 1990 levels. He acknowledges that Government is making the tough decisions to make Net Zero possible, but also that Government can't do it alone. As over half the emissions cuts require decisions made at the local level, the biggest challenge ahead is the local delivery of effective projects and programmes that accelerate the delivery of Net Zero.

The empowerment of local leaders and communities is essential, ensuring that they have adequate powers, resources and partnerships to deliver the large changes that are needed to achieve Net Zero and to unite and level up the whole of the UK. While local authorities are already at the vanguard of delivering climate change action on the ground, they know that they need to do so much more.

However, local authorities face multiple plans, strategies and funding pots relating to Net Zero from the UK Government and without a unifying plan or framework - action is being stifled. There is consensus between local leaders and organisations, including the Climate Change Committee¹ (CCC) and the National Audit Office² (NAO), that the partnership between local authorities and national government must improve if we are to deliver Net Zero.

Enhancing partnership with a Net Zero Delivery Framework

UK100's Power Shift report³ is the most comprehensive examination of the powers local authorities have and need to deliver on climate ever undertaken. It explores the wide range of powers already available to local authorities, the barriers to local authority action and how these could be removed or overcome, and the additional powers local authorities need. For example, local authority powers to require buildings to connect to district heating schemes in identified district heating zones and to require existing developments to connect would greatly improve the potential to upgrade the UK's housing stock.

¹ <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/local-authorities-and-the-sixth-carbon-budget/>

² <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/local-government-and-net-zero-in-england/>

³ <https://www.uk100.org/publications/power-shift>

It's central recommendation was that there needs to be a Local and National Net Zero Delivery Framework that supports seamless working and enhanced partnership between the UK Government and local authorities is needed, if we are to deliver Net Zero.

The efficiency and effectiveness that comes from working in partnership needs to be capitalised on. Working through a Net Zero Delivery Framework - a deal between local authorities and national Government - can increase the understanding within local contexts of the powers they have and build a systematic understanding of where the gaps are. This in turn will clarify what delivery needs to look like - enabling place-based solutions that work in local communities and progress towards the delivery of Net Zero.

Recommendations

This research presents a potential framework to enable delivery of Net Zero at the local level.

The following steps should be factored into the introduction of the framework:

- 1.** A National and Net Zero Delivery Board to deliver the framework and tackle blockages and barriers where the Delivery Unit (see below) notes systemic policy or funding barriers and contradictions. An independent Chair reporting directly to the Cabinet Office with members from across local authorities, devolved administrations and national Government.
- 2.** A new National and Net Zero Delivery Unit to deliver the support programme, collect and analyse data and act as a channel between individual authorities and the Board and government departments, with wide representation from across the UK Government and informed by local and combined authorities and national Government.
- 3.** A Local Net Zero Local Powers Bill, via new primary legislation designed to introduce the whole framework in a single piece of legislation – which permits, obliges and supports relevant levels of authority to undertake climate change action to satisfy the Climate Change Act, meet carbon budgets and deliver an effective pathway to Net Zero.

Enhancing partnership with a Net Zero Delivery Framework

There needs to be an expectation on local authorities to deliver, many are already acting alone - but successful strategies cannot deliver unless they are supported by a delivery infrastructure and adequate resourcing. Here we present a system of eight components that, combined, enable national Government and local authorities to work effectively together with clear roles to develop policy and programmes, skills, capacity and finance that delivers across all emissions areas.

Net Zero Strategy: Should include National Routemap and a Framework for Local Delivery of Net Zero



This framework outlines the mechanics of a productive, positive and delivery-focused relationship between national Government and local authorities.

1. Joint Delivery Body: Delivery Board - a joint board of national Government and local authority representatives and Delivery Unit - manages support programme, collects/ analyses data, channel between local authorities, the Board and Government departments.

2. Finance mechanisms: Funding mechanism to support Net Zero delivery via local authorities, including support to underpin private and business investment and local community action.

3. Definition of roles and responsibilities: An agreement on the most appropriate levels of decision-making and operational delivery for Net Zero, taking into account the wide range of levers and powers that local authorities can use to influence climate action beyond their direct area of control.

4. Policy expertise: Net Zero Delivery Board workstream which enables national Government and local authority representatives to discuss and operationalise policymaking at very early stages so it is most effective.

5. Capability and skills: Funded multi-year programme (five years minimum) equipping civil servants, MPs, local officers and elected Members to deliver Net Zero. Designed to fill the gaps in capability, skills and confidence.

6. Agreed commitment: Local authority commitments to deliver Net Zero actions and outcomes within their area within a specified timescale. Greater national Government funding and support for local delivery would follow commitments.

7. Shared information and data: Action-focused information sharing system between national Government and local authorities and between local authorities.

8. Feedback system: Formalised feedback loops, particularly re. blockages; but also opportunities for open and informal feedback about how components of the framework are working / could be improved.

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