



Innovate  
UK

March 2026

# Creating Better Places

Ten areas where local innovation can improve lives and unlock growth

Resource pack 01

Putting people at the centre of place-based change



Delivered by Urban Foresight for Innovate UK's Net Zero Living Programme.

Grounded in insights from the local authorities which participated in Innovate UK's Net Zero Living Programme.

# Contents

---

## 1 The opportunity

## 3 How to use this pack

- 4 Who this pack is for
- 5 What this pack is for
- 6 How this pack is structured
- 7 How to use this pack in practice
- 8 How this pack fits

## 9 Insights from places in the Net Zero Living Programme

- 10 Insight #1  
Calderdale's citizen jury: from community deliberation to strategy
- 12 Insight #2  
Designing better climate tools by listening differently in Caerphilly
- 15 Insight #3  
Gwynedd's just transition model: community energy where it's needed most

## 17 Key concepts

## 19 Practical steps

- 20 Citizen engagement: how ready are you?
- 21 Choosing the right approach to public engagement
- 24 Eight ways local authorities can integrate 'energy justice'

## 26 Tools and resources

## 28 Further reading

- 29 Net Zero Living Programme resources
- 29 Participant picks
- 30 Acknowledgments



# The opportunity



# Putting people at the centre of place-based change

Community engagement done well builds legitimacy, unlocks new ideas, and strengthens delivery. It helps local authorities move beyond one-off consultations to lasting relationships that reflect real life and real concerns. This opens the door to decisions that are more grounded, more inclusive, and more likely to succeed.

It also gives businesses and investors greater confidence to act by increasing local demand for new services, reducing the risk of delays or disputes, and making delivery smoother, faster and more cost-effective.

Local authorities participating in the Net Zero Living Programme shifted from simply informing to actively empowering people.

They did this in three key ways:

1. Structuring engagement through tools like citizens' juries and visioning which bring people into decisions early and build shared priorities.
2. Reaching people in familiar spaces and through trusted voices, especially those often left out.
3. Embedding fairness from the start so changes are affordable, accessible and widely supported.



# How to use this pack

This pack is part of the [Creating Better Places: Ten areas where local innovation can improve lives and unlock growth](#) series. Through its Net Zero Living Programme, Innovate UK provided funding, insights, and specialist support to local authorities so they could adopt social, cultural, policy, and technical innovation to help their place prosper.

Produced by Urban Foresight for Innovate UK, this series focuses on ten familiar areas of local delivery where participating local authorities and their project partners have done things differently, so that decarbonisation enables better outcomes for people, services and local economies.

The series includes a handbook providing an overview of all ten areas where there are opportunities for local innovation, alongside ten resource packs like this one.

Each pack focuses on a single area where new approaches can improve lives and unlock growth. It brings together insights from places in the Net Zero Living Programme, key concepts, practical tried and tested steps for local authorities and their partners to take, and further resources.



# Who this pack is for

---

**This handbook is designed for people working in or alongside UK local authorities who are shaping better local outcomes by delivering projects that could support net zero, including:**

- Officers working in regeneration, housing, infrastructure, economic development or sustainability.
- Colleagues in finance, planning, procurement and governance.
- Partners from business, community organisations and delivery bodies.

It is written for people making real decisions in real places, often under pressure, with limited time and resources.



# What this pack is for

---

## Use this pack to:

- Learn what's possible through real examples from other local authorities.
- Build confidence by learning how they navigated familiar challenges.
- Act and make progress using practical steps, tools and prompts you can adapt to your local context.

By changing how local delivery works, places are meeting urgent needs and unlocking warmer homes, better services, lower costs energy, stronger local economies and greater public trust.

Local authorities are leading the way in showing how decarbonisation is a route to better everyday outcomes for resilient places and economic prosperity.



# How this pack is structured

---

Each resource pack in the Creating Better Places series follows a consistent structure so you can quickly find what you need:

## Resource pack structure



### The opportunity

Understand why it's worth taking a new approach to improve this area of local delivery.



### Insights from places in the Net Zero Living Programme

Learn how local authorities participating in the Net Zero Living Programme overcame barriers by doing things differently.



### Key concepts

Short explanations of helpful ideas.



### Practical steps

Actions, prompts and checklists.



### Tools and resources

Tried and tested tools and approaches used by places in the Programme.



### Further reading

Recommended reading for those who want more.

# How to use this pack in practice

---

This resource pack is designed to be dipped into when needed. You don't need to read it from start to finish. Instead, go straight to the sections most relevant to your role, challenge, or stage of delivery, to:

- **Orient yourself**  
Understand how others approached specific issues and what made progress easier.
- **Align colleagues and partners**  
Use practical tools in team meetings, workshops, or strategy sessions to create shared understanding and momentum.
- **Support delivery**  
Use the practical steps and tools to shape actions, test readiness, inform business cases and governance conversations, and scale implementation and the resulting impact for local people, services and suppliers.
- **Avoid starting from scratch**  
Use the examples and resources to build on what already exists, locally and nationally.

The ten areas where there are opportunities to innovate are interconnected, but you don't need to work through them in a set order. Progress in one area often unlocks progress in others. You're encouraged to move between the resource packs in the Creating Better Places series that are most relevant to your changing needs as your work evolves.

# How this pack fits

## This pack is designed to be used alongside:

- The core [Creating Better Places handbook](#), which provides an overview of where local authorities participating in the Net Zero Living Programme have done things differently in ten familiar areas of local delivery, so that decarbonisation enables better outcomes for people, services and local economies.
- The other resource packs, each exploring one of the remaining nine areas where local innovation can improve lives and unlock growth.

Putting people at the centre of place-based change

Embedding net zero as an enabler of better services

Building local authority capacity

Governance to navigate political and institutional change

Enabling partnerships for place-based innovation

Regional collaboration to scale climate action

Digital platforms for collaboration

Building investable pipelines

Strengthening the supply chain and workforce

Models, approaches and tools ready for real-world scale

# Insights from places in the Net Zero Living Programme



## Insight #1

## Calderdale's citizen jury: from community deliberation to strategy

### How Calderdale Council's first Citizens' Jury helped shape its approach to retrofit.<sup>1</sup>

#### At a glance

In 2024, Calderdale Council worked with local partners to convene its first citizens' jury focused on domestic retrofit. Over six sessions, twenty-six local homeowners developed fourteen practical recommendations aimed at making homes warmer, healthier, and more affordable to heat. The process helped generate political buy-in and surface citizen-led solutions to delivery challenges. The jury's insights and recommendations were critical in shaping the project's strategic thinking and influencing Calderdale's Retrofit Strategy

"A lot of the recommendations have been built into that retrofit strategy to be taken forward."

Imogen Butler,  
Todmorden Learning Centre  
and Community Hub

#### What they did

- **Recruited twenty-six residents** with a mix of income levels, housing types and lived experience, reflecting the borough's urban, rural, and stone-built housing stock.
- **Convened a citizens' jury** over twenty-three hours, focusing on homeowners, who make up sixty-seven per cent of Calderdale households.
- **Invited expert witnesses** to present on key themes, including finance, delivery models, planning, engagement, and health.
- **Supported participants to co-develop and prioritise fourteen retrofit recommendations**, covering trusted advice, local supply chains, VAT reform, and public engagement.
- **Held a public event** where jury members presented their recommendations to senior council officers, elected members, and local partners.
- **Produced *Calderdale's Retrofit Challenge* booklet - a public-facing document of their recommendations** to support wider engagement and uptake.

<sup>1</sup> Taken from Future Ready Insights and [Calderdale's Retrofit Challenge Report](#)

- **Fed the findings into the Council's retrofit strategy** through the Climate Action Partnership working group.
- **Shared outputs** regionally and nationally, including at the Retrofit 25 exhibition, raising Calderdale's profile as a place trialling community-led approaches.

## Outcomes

- **Uptake:** Several jury recommendations were adopted into the Council's retrofit strategy.
- **Improved officer understanding** of barriers to the uptake of retrofit, including cost, trust, misinformation, and planning constraints.
- **Strengthened political buy-in:** Direct engagement with residents increased support across departments and informed active workstreams in the Council's Climate Action Partnership working group.

“[Leadership] wanted to understand much more about what might get people started on their retrofit journey... [the citizen jury recommendations] really helped to unlock some of those barriers.”

Imogen Butler,  
Todmorden Learning Centre  
and Community Hub

## Why it matters

This is a practical model for councils aiming to make climate action work for people. Calderdale's citizens' jury helped translate retrofit, often seen as a technical policy, into a community-led plan for warmer homes, lower bills and healthier living.

By rooting decisions in local experience, the process strengthened internal confidence, improved cross-departmental alignment and gave officers a clearer mandate to act. It also created a stronger foundation for delivery partners and supply chains, helping to build the trust and demand needed to grow the local retrofit market.

While developed for retrofit, this model demonstrates how structured community engagement can help prioritise action, strengthen mandate, align policy with community needs, and build public support for delivery.

## Key learnings

### 1. Focus citizen input on what prevents action

The citizens' jury added value because it focused on why retrofit was not happening and what would make it easier to act. Jurors identified clear, practical barriers such as cost, trust in contractors, lack of clear advice, and planning uncertainty.

### 2. Let residents speak directly to decision makers

Jurors presented their recommendations themselves to senior officers and elected members. Hearing directly from residents increased the credibility of the findings and strengthened support across the Council and partner organisations. Direct presentation by residents increases influence and helps build a stronger mandate for action.

### 3. Build recommendations into strategy to create impact

The jury process helped build consensus and translated technical complexity into shared local priorities. The jury's recommendations were fed into Calderdale's Retrofit Strategy through existing governance structures. This helped shape delivery models, engagement approaches and practical tools, rather than leaving the outputs as a standalone report.

## Insight #2

# Designing better climate tools by listening differently in Caerphilly

## How Caerphilly County Borough Council used informal engagement to shape a whole-system net zero toolkit.

### At a glance

Caerphilly County Borough Council wanted to create a decision-support toolkit for net zero, but early on recognised that traditional citizen engagement methods would not generate the interest and understanding needed. Net zero was not front of mind for most residents and was not widely seen as relevant to everyday concerns. Instead of running formal consultations, they chose a simpler approach: talking to people in everyday places across the borough. This required staff to be out in community spaces, listening and having open-ended conversations rather than relying on online tools or formal consultations. This approach helped reach residents who are typically excluded from formal processes, particularly those not online, with low literacy, or for whom English is not a first language. The result is a toolkit that is more accessible and rooted in the lived experience of local people and frontline services.

“We tried to test in a number of places: adult learning and community centres, events, community groups, door knocking and estate walkabouts. Collaboration with other departments and public services, such as health boards, social care, fire, and police, was central to the approach. Representatives from these services were present in the room, and at events, where possible alongside community members who use them, ensuring support was directly available to those who needed it.”

**Anna Lewis,**  
Caerphilly County Borough Council

### What they did

- **Led by the Decarbonisation team,** Caerphilly took responsibility for redesigning its engagement model early in Phase 2 of its Net Zero Living Programme project. They recognised that previous surveys and strategy consultations had failed to engage the people whose lives would be most impacted by net zero decisions and provided only a partial insight.

- **Built a multi-agency partnership** including the Caerphilly Public Services Board and services such as adult learning, social care, schools, and community centres. The engagement sessions were led by the public and helped shape the language of the toolkit.
- **Conducted over six hundred in-person conversations** during the early stage of the consultation at events, drop-in sessions and by actively engaging the public in various locations. Between January and April 2025, group sessions were held to test and trial resources, with many run on a drop-in basis at food banks, leisure centres and community events. Sessions were typically staffed by council officers alongside trusted local professionals.
- **Recruited and trained staff from frontline services**, including adult learning tutors and community officers, to carry out listening conversations rather than simply extract information. These staff used prompts such as “What’s worrying you?”, “What would make this easier?” and “What decisions do you wish you had more support with?”
- **Deliberately avoided surveys or formal feedback tools**, using visual aids, real-life scenarios, and open dialogue to create space for deeper reflection. The team particularly focused on people who are: not online or digitally excluded; Welsh-first

language speakers; neurodivergent or with additional learning needs; older residents.

- **Used feedback loops to shape the toolkit’s features:** Residents said they preferred information in simple, visual formats, available in both English and Welsh, and supported by easily accessible visual outputs that could be reused or shared. This feedback was directly integrated into the toolkit interface and support materials, making the final product easier for residents and frontline staff to use.

## Outcomes

- **Improved the quality and diversity of insight:** By shifting to informal, relational engagement, the Council heard from people not typically involved in net zero conversations. Over six hundred in-person interactions revealed concerns around access, cost, trust, and decision fatigue.
- **Co-produced a more inclusive toolkit:** Feedback led to the development of visual resources, including bilingual comics, explainer videos, and walk-through examples. These reflected real trade-offs (e.g., food vs fuel, car use vs mobility) and helped residents engage with systems thinking in ways that felt tangible and relevant.

- **Strengthened internal understanding of what meaningful engagement requires:** Officers across departments recognised that traditional consultation methods, such as surveys or scheduled meetings, would not have generated the same quality of insight or legitimacy.

## Key learnings

1. **Go where people already are**  
Holding conversations in familiar spaces such as schools, food banks and car parks increased participation and built trust.
2. **Listen before asking**  
Avoiding surveys and scripts allowed for open dialogue. It enabled residents to speak freely and highlighted real decision-making behaviours that shaped toolkit design.
3. **Involve frontline services as equal partners**  
Engagement was more successful when led by trusted professionals already embedded in communities, rather than council staff acting alone.

“I’m not here to change minds. I’m here to ask what people need to decide for themselves.”

Anna Lewis,  
Caerphilly County Borough Council

“A lot of people are at the supermarket with three kids and a budget of £50 for the week. They are making hard decisions all the time. They are doing systems thinking already.”

Anna Lewis,  
Caerphilly County Borough Council

## Why it matters

Caerphilly’s approach shows that when engagement is shaped around real life, not policy targets, it delivers better tools and stronger outcomes for residents and frontline services. By focusing on inclusion and accessibility, the Council reached residents who face tough daily decisions and built a toolkit that reflects those realities. This helped shape more responsive services, fostered trust in local institutions, and built the kind of insight councils need to design effective, people-first climate solutions.

This approach may be of interest to local authorities looking to build trust, reach underrepresented communities, and develop tools that are grounded in local priorities rather than abstract policy goals. It demonstrates the value of cross-service collaboration, with public-facing teams acting as trusted intermediaries and co-designers of engagement approaches.

By shaping tools around real concerns, the Council has helped build the understanding and

confidence that supports take-up. This also reduces delivery risk for businesses developing low carbon services by ensuring they align with what people actually need and will use.

## What other places are learning about trust and reach

**Other places taking part in the Net Zero Living Programme are reaching similar conclusions about what meaningful community engagement requires:**

### Perth and Kinross Council – Retrofit One Stop Shop

A community-led design approach was central to their work. Regular return visits, ongoing feedback loops, and co-delivery with local partners helped build trust in communities that previously felt disconnected from climate plans. The team shifted from mail drops to door-knocking as a more effective way to engage residents who are typically harder to reach and less likely to respond to written communication.

### Norfolk Climate Change Partnership

By working closely with seven pilot communities and local businesses, the partnership focused on listening before informing. Their model recognises that effective engagement is not about giving people more information, but about answering their questions in ways they trust, understand, and find compelling enough to act on. By centring community insight and trusted advice, the model also reduces the risk of low take-up

or resistance, helping funders, councils and businesses align around what works in real life and at scale.

### Northumberland County Council – Agricultural emissions

The Council explored barriers to reducing emissions through in-person visits, surveys and phone conversations with farmers and smallholders. This gave visibility and legitimacy to groups often overlooked in climate policy. The work adopted a user-centred design approach, focusing on practical needs rather than abstract policy goals, and deliberately used the term “user” rather than “citizen” to reflect the distinct role of land managers. This helped make the work more credible with both land managers and the wider agricultural sector. It also gives potential funders and sector bodies confidence that strategies are grounded in what will work in practice and are more likely to be adopted at scale. Trust took time to build, with repeated farm visits needed to establish credibility and create space for open, honest conversations about what would actually work in practice.

## Insight #3

## Gwynedd's just transition model: community energy where it's needed most

### How Gwynedd Council is tackling fuel poverty through community-owned heat and power.

#### At a glance

In the rural communities of Bethesda and Blaenau Ffestiniog, Gwynedd Council is piloting a village-scale approach to net zero. Many households are off-grid, relying on coal to heat energy-inefficient homes. This sits in sharp contrast to the area's wealth of clean energy infrastructure, from local hydro schemes to nearby reservoirs, whose benefits are largely exported. Despite living alongside these resources, residents have no access to affordable energy from the main suppliers.

The project aims to close this gap by developing community-owned energy solutions tailored to local needs, including heat networks, EV charging and retrofit. Its core insight is that technical solutions only succeed when rooted in community trust, social ownership, and place-based planning.

"There is lots of clean, cheap energy within one mile of communities, but people living locally are off grid, on low incomes, and can't afford energy from the main suppliers."

**Peter Jones, community energy partner, Future Ready Gwynedd**

#### What they did

- Gwynedd Council led a place-based energy transition programme in Bethesda and Blaenau Ffestiniog, focusing on communities with high fuel poverty, poor housing, and limited energy access.
- Council officers partnered with community energy groups and technical experts to revisit earlier feasibility studies, including a 2012 heat network proposal for Blaenau. This helped identify viable delivery routes and reconnect with previous stakeholders.
- In Bethesda, the project looked to build on the existing Energy Local clubs, which use smart meters to give residents access to cheaper electricity from local hydro schemes. This focused on including heating and EV charging with the community energy offer. Community groups led the engagement, with coordination and policy support from the Council.
- In Tanygrisiau, near Blaenau, Council officers and local social development staff from Cwmni Bro Ffestiniog engaged directly with residents to co-develop early-stage heat network plans.

- Community engagement was built in from the outset. The Council worked through trusted local intermediaries, such as Cwmni Bro Ffestiniog, and delivered bilingual, hyper-local outreach including leaflet drops, open days, and door-to-door conversations. Materials were deliberately place-specific and practical: one leaflet was titled "Come and find out why we want to dig up the streets of Tanygrisiau".
- Officers also began discussions with a potential anchor customer, a local heat network pipe manufacturer, to act as a long-term user of heat. This would provide a stable source of demand, helping to reduce risk and strengthen the financial case for the network
- In parallel, the Council's housing and sustainability teams explored EV charging solutions for terraced streets with no off-street parking, including testing shared infrastructure options linked to community-owned energy.
- Across all activities, the Council embedded a clear set of principles: community ownership, transparent benefit sharing, and long-term public value. Officers prioritised trusted relationships, clear communication, and local control.

## Outcomes

- **Next steps for Energy Local clubs:** Building on the benefits to households in Bethesda there is a plan to extend community renewables to power heat and businesses.
- **Community-led heat network planning underway:** A group of Tanygrisiau residents are co-developing localised proposals with a trusted supplier
- **Improved understanding of rural delivery conditions:** The work is shaping practical learning on infrastructure, demand, and trust-building in small, off-grid communities

"There's a group of local people in Tanygrisiau coming together around the heat network. Community trust and involvement are central to making it work."

Peter Jones, community energy partner,  
Future Ready Gwynedd

## Why it matters

This project shows how climate innovation can directly improve lives in places that have long missed out. Despite being close to clean energy assets, many households in Bethesda and Blaenau Ffestiniog remain in fuel poverty, off-grid, and unable to access affordable energy.

Gwynedd's model combines trusted relationships with practical delivery, showing how to align decarbonisation with the realities

of rural life and build energy systems that serve local people first. By starting small and working with communities as equal partners, the Council is developing energy systems that are viable, place-specific, and trusted.

For councils working in rural or disadvantaged areas, this provides a practical model for aligning decarbonisation with social need. It can also help to attract ethical and impact-focused investors by demonstrating a community-led approach with visible public benefit and local ownership.

## Key learnings

### 1. Trust unlocks delivery

Fair pricing, transparent benefit sharing and local control are essential to public support and long-term viability.

### 2. Anchor demand early

Engaging with local businesses helps make the case for infrastructure investment and accelerates feasibility.

### 3. Work at the right scale

Village-level pilots make it easier to build relationships, tailor solutions and test delivery models in real conditions.

"The community must see the benefit. That's key to getting people to stay involved."

Peter Jones, community energy partner,  
Future Ready Gwynedd

# Key concepts

Three key concepts  
to understand about  
community engagement  
and just transition

## Key concept 1

### Participation builds support, and support enables delivery

Engagement often comes too late to influence decisions. If people do not see themselves in local plans, they are less likely to back them. That weakens political confidence and makes delivery harder.

Treat participation as part of delivery, not a communications step. Poor engagement can create delays, disputes, and rework that cost more than doing it well upfront.

What helps in practice:

- Start early and be clear about what is open to influence
- Use trusted routes and trusted people, not only council channels
- Close the loop by showing what you heard and what changed.

## Key concept 2

### Meet people where they are

The way you talk about change shapes how people respond. Technical language can be a barrier. Terms like “carbon reduction” or “system transformation” do not connect to daily life. Warm homes, safer streets, and lower bills do.

When climate work is framed in ways people understand and value, it’s easier to build support:

- Start where people are: ask what they love and want from their place, and then connect climate action to it
- Use plain, everyday language
- Show how change improves life locally, and what trade-offs are involved.

## Key concept 3

### A fair transition is essential to making change happen

The shift to net zero will affect how people live, move, work, and use energy. If changes feel unfair, support drops. If change feels worthwhile, people are more likely to buy-in to a local authority’s aspirations. Councils that design for affordability, access, and inclusion are more likely to sustain support and delivery. They will not just hit targets; they will improve people’s lives.

People support change when they see the benefit and trust the process, especially those already making hard trade-offs on heating, housing, or transport:

- Understand that not everyone starts from the same place, and people face different constraints, costs, and risks
- Design with those most affected, making fairness a core component from the start in how a policy or project is designed and implemented
- Track who benefits and adjust delivery where needed.

# Practical steps



# Citizen engagement: how ready are you?

---

## Reflecting on your approach to public engagement on local climate action.

Market research firm Ipsos and public participation charity Involve have designed a self-assessment questionnaire to help local authorities assess and improve their citizen engagement strategies and practices. This framework helps councils understand how strong their current approach is across five key areas. It's about making engagement more inclusive, trusted and useful; so that local people help shape changes that affect how they live, move, work and access services.

[Download the full Citizen Engagement Self-Assessment Questionnaire](#) to get started.

Use this self-assessment tool to explore how well your current engagement practices are working and where you could go further to build trust, involve more people and deliver better outcomes for your community.

### 1. Strategy and local priorities

- Do your engagement activities clearly connect to your council's wider goals?
- Is there a shared local vision that helps guide action across climate, housing, transport, and services?

### 2. Clarity of purpose

- Is it clear why you're involving people - and what's open to influence?
- Do you have ways to protect the independence and integrity of the process?

### 3. Willingness to listen and act

- Are you open to doing things differently based on what residents say?
- Is there a clear plan for how the council will respond and show accountability?

### 4. Fairness, trust and inclusion

- Are you open about what you're doing and why?
- Do you have systems in place to reach those usually left out - and support everyone to take part?

### 5. Time and resources

- Have you allowed enough time and dedicated the right people and funding to make this meaningful?

## What to do next

Download the self-assessment and talk through it with your team.

Use it to spot strengths, identify gaps, and shape a better approach to involving people in the changes ahead, so climate action delivers what matters to your community.

# Choosing the right approach to public engagement

## Use the matrix below to select the right engagement method.

People make change possible. The right engagement method helps local authorities bring communities into decision-making in ways that build trust, surface practical insights, and lead to better outcomes for everyone.

Different methods suit different aims. Before you choose, be clear on:

→ **What you need:**

Insight, shared priorities, local knowledge, co-design, or informed decisions?

→ **Who you need to involve:**

Residents with lived experience, seldom-heard groups, key local actors?

→ **How the results will be used:**

Shaping delivery, guiding investment, or building wider buy-in?



## Choosing the right method at the right moment helps create plans people believe in and want to be part of

Method	Best for	What it involves	Resource commitment	Net Zero Living Programme examples
<h3>1. Community Conversations</h3>	<p>Building trust and surfacing real-life experience, especially with under-represented groups.</p> <p>Reaching the community through peer engagement and trusted messengers</p>	<p>For this programme this involved 3 days with around 20 residents who were supported to engage their communities on what they wanted from their place and how net zero could support that.</p> <p>Can also include informal conversations in familiar places (e.g., schools, food banks, faith groups). Can be repeated to deepen insight. Works well where trust is low or digital exclusion is high.</p>	<p>Lower cost, flexible time commitment (cost depends on the number of groups and facilitator time).</p>	<p>See how Warrington Borough did it: <a href="#">Community Conversations Case Study, Involve</a></p> <p>See how Blackpool Council did it: <a href="#">Community Conversation Case Study, Involve</a></p>
<h3>2. Citizen Visioning</h3>	<p>Starting where people are and creating a shared place-based vision and recommendations that reflect local assets, needs, and ambitions. Can support engagement on controversial or divisive issues.</p>	<p>Structured workshops with a reflective sample of residents to imagine a future for their place and net zero and agree on principles or priorities for action. Involves decision makers at key points to support take up of ideas and guide cross cutting strategies and investment plans. It can also be designed to focus on divisive issues or controversial issues and projects.</p>	<p>Medium–high time and cost (£75k to £150k) depending on participants, sessions, and comms.</p>	<p>See how Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council did it: <a href="#">Citizen Visioning Case Study, Involve</a></p> <p>See how Gateshead did it: <a href="#">Citizen Visioning Case Study, Involve</a></p>
<h3>3. Citizen Jury</h3>	<p>Gaining focused recommendations and / or a recommended decision on a specific issue, especially where values differ or knowledge is contested.</p>	<p>12 to 30 people, selected to reflect local demographics and attitudes, hear balanced evidence, deliberate, and produce recommendations. Useful for policy areas with ethical, social or political sensitivities.</p>	<p>£60k to £200k dependent on the number of participants and deliberation sessions.</p>	<p>See how Calderdale Council did it: <a href="#">Calderdale's Retrofit Challenge Citizen's Jury Recommendations, Involve</a></p>

Method	Best for	What it involves	Resource commitment	Net Zero Living Programme examples
<b>4. Citizens' Assembly</b>	Gaining legitimacy and shared direction for large, long-term decisions.	Larger version of a jury (50 to 250 people) over several days or weeks. Involves learning, reflection and decision-making.	Gaining legitimacy and shared direction for large, long-term decisions.	See <a href="#">Southampton Climate Assembly on transport</a> as a good example
<b>5. Climathon</b>	Rapid co-design of ideas to tackle specific local challenges.	Hackathon-style events (online or in-person) bringing together community, business, and public sector to generate and test ideas.	Low-medium cost, one to two days.	See how Forest of Dean District Council did it: <a href="#">Energy Climathon Report, NICRE</a> <a href="#">Forest of Dean Food and Farming Climathon Case Study, NICRE</a> <a href="#">Forest of Dean Transport Climathon Report, NICRE</a>
<b>6. Climate Panels</b>	Longer term engagement of a group or residents to input into key strategies and issues as they arise	Recruitment of a reflective sample of residents who meet on a regular basis over a period of 12 to 24 months to inform strategic questions. Can often follow a process like an assembly or jury as a way to involve citizens in holding the Council to account for taking action	Medium	See <a href="#">West Midlands Greener Together panel</a>

# Eight ways local authorities can integrate ‘energy justice’

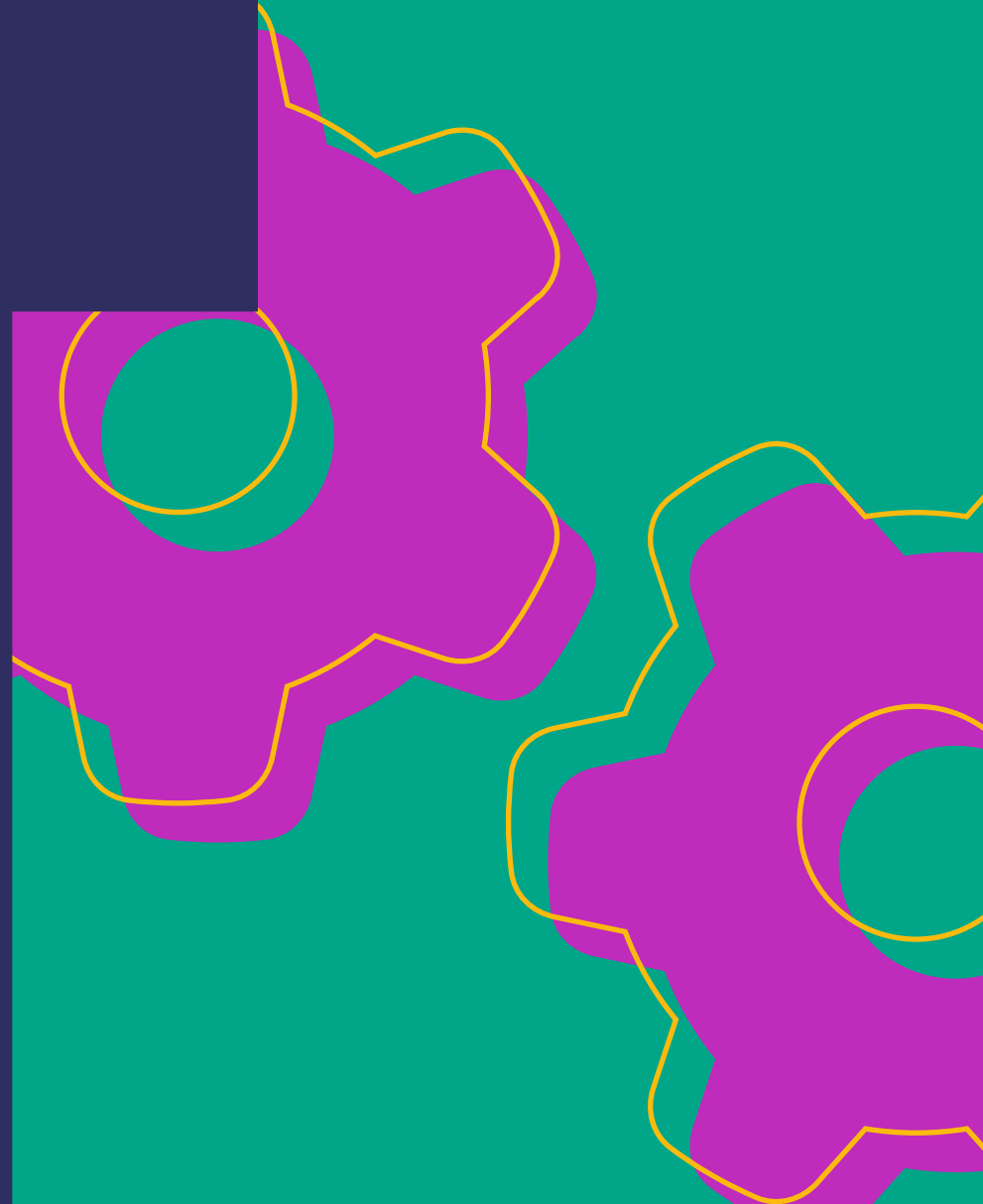
Drawing on inputs from Net Zero Living Programme participants and the programme’s expert partner Regen, this table supports local authorities to reflect on how energy justice is embedded across their work.

Where	What you can do	Why it matters	Check your progress	Net Zero Living Programme examples
<b>1. Strategies, commitments and governance</b>	<p>Embed just transition in climate strategies and corporate plans</p> <p>Create cross-departmental just transition governance</p>	Embeds just transition in high-level direction, improves coordination	<input type="checkbox"/> Not started <input type="checkbox"/> In progress <input type="checkbox"/> Fully in place	<b>See Resource Pack 02: Embedding net zero as an enabler of better services</b>
<b>2. Engagement and decision-making</b>	<p>Involve low-income and marginalised groups in shaping plans</p> <p>Use participatory and democratic models</p>	Improves legitimacy, accountability, and social outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/> Not started <input type="checkbox"/> In progress <input type="checkbox"/> Fully in place	<b>See table above (re structured Citizen Engagement methods)</b>
<b>3. Planning and procurement</b>	<p>Apply just transition social value in procurement scoring</p> <p>Assess equity impacts in business cases</p>	Turns strategy into action through existing processes	<input type="checkbox"/> Not started <input type="checkbox"/> In progress <input type="checkbox"/> Fully in place	<b>See how Oldham Council did it in Resource Pack 02: Embedding net zero as an enabler of better services</b>
<b>4. Energy and climate planning</b>	<p>Use LAEPs and climate plans to analyse distributional impacts</p> <p>Prioritise community co-development</p>	Ensures energy plans benefit those most in need	<input type="checkbox"/> Not started <input type="checkbox"/> In progress <input type="checkbox"/> Fully in place	<p><b>See how Derry City and Strabane District Council did it in Resource Pack 06: Regional collaboration to scale climate action</b></p> <p><b>See how Bristol City Council did it in Resource Pack 08: Building investable pipelines</b></p> <p><b>See how Warrington Borough Council did it in Resource Pack 07: Digital platforms for collaboration</b></p>

Where	What you can do	Why it matters	Check your progress	Net Zero Living Programme examples
<p><b>5. Land use and management</b></p>	<p>Allocate land and assets for community energy or just transition pilot projects</p>	<p>Physical assets enable local ownership and control</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Not started <input type="checkbox"/> In progress <input type="checkbox"/> Fully in place</p>	<p><b>See this process guidance and information pack on How to support community energy in your local authority area from Net Zero Living delivery partner Carbon Trust</b></p>
<p><b>6. Council-run services, buildings and infrastructure</b></p>	<p>Prioritise retrofit and heat decarbonisation for low-income housing</p> <p>Use public assets as visible just transition examples</p>	<p>Demonstrates leadership and improves local outcomes</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Not started <input type="checkbox"/> In progress <input type="checkbox"/> Fully in place</p>	<p><b>See how Rossendale Council did it in Resource Pack 10: Practical delivery models tested in real places</b></p>
<p><b>7. Funding, finance and investment</b></p>	<p>Explore concessional, community or blended finance models</p> <p>Include just transition principles in investment decisions</p>	<p>Ensures funding models support inclusion and access</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Not started <input type="checkbox"/> In progress <input type="checkbox"/> Fully in place</p>	<p><b>See Resource Pack 08: Building investable pipelines for examples of how local authorities have applied these principles in funding and finance decisions</b></p>
<p><b>8. Partnerships with local organisations</b></p>	<p>Support trusted local groups (e.g., VCS, community energy)</p> <p>Co-fund or co-deliver where community leadership is strong</p>	<p>Enables delivery through trusted, embedded actors</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Not started <input type="checkbox"/> In progress <input type="checkbox"/> Fully in place</p>	<p><b>See how Bristol City Council did it in Resource Pack 08: Building investable pipelines</b></p> <p><b>See how Oxford City Council did it in Resource Pack 05: Enabling partnerships for place-based innovation</b></p>

# Tools and resources

**Tools and methods index:  
A selection of tools and  
methods referenced in this  
resource pack**



## Self-assessment

Tool/method	What it can help you do	Used by	Delivered by
<a href="#">Citizen engagement on Net Zero: Local Authority self-assessment questionnaire</a>	For local authorities to evaluate and enhance their citizen engagement practices.	Net Zero Living Programme participants	Involve*

## Structured engagement

Tool/method	What it can help you do	Used by	Delivered by
<b>Citizens' assemblies</b>	<p><a href="#">Defined by Involve*</a></p> <p>A citizens' assembly is a group of people who are brought together to learn about and discuss an issue (or issues), and reach conclusions about what they think should happen.</p>	Warrington Borough Council	Involve*
<b>Citizen juries</b>	<p><a href="#">Defined by Involve*</a></p> <p>These are particularly effective on controversial or sensitive topics, where moral and ethical implications may muddy the waters and there may be social repercussions.</p>	Calderdale Council	Involve*
<b>Citizen visioning</b>	<p><a href="#">Defined by Involve*</a></p> <p>Citizen visioning enables residents and decision makers to develop a bigger picture view that looks into the future, responding to local assets, needs and what makes each place unique. The benefit of this approach is that residents are engaged in decisions that affect them and provide guidance on the approaches to take.</p>	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and Gateshead Council	Involve*
<b>Community conversation</b>	<p><a href="#">Defined by Involve*</a></p> <p>A community conversation focuses on local, grassroots experience, by engaging members of the public through existing community groups and organisations.</p>	Warrington Borough Council and Blackpool Council	Involve*
<b>KIC Climathon Playbook</b>	'How to' playbook for carrying out a Climathon	Forest of Dean District Council	KIC

\*Involve is a public participation charity and technical expert partner to the Net Zero Living Programme.

# Further reading



## Net Zero Living Programme resources

Key Net Zero Living Programme resources on putting people at the centre of place-based change:

- [Involve Report 1 – Citizen engagement on Net Zero: Towards a framework for local government](#)
- Involve Report – How-to guide for citizen visioning and community conversation
- Involve Impact report: Cost of not engaging (business report) (placeholder)
- Involve case studies and videos: [Blackpool’s Community Conversation](#), [Blaenau Gwent’s Citizen Visioning](#), [Gateshead’s Citizen Visioning](#), [Warrington Community Conversations](#)
- [Calderdale’s Retrofit Challenge booklet](#)
- [Regen report - Power of Places: A vision for local energy in the UK](#)
- [Regen report - A Force for Fairness: Embedding a just transition in local authorities](#)
- [Regen podcast – Net Zero Living podcast: Community Empowerment](#)

To find out more about the Net Zero Living Programme, visit:

[iuk-business-connect.org.uk/programme/net-zero-living](https://iuk-business-connect.org.uk/programme/net-zero-living)

## Participant picks

Key resources that local authorities participating in Innovate UK’s Net Zero Living Programme recommend:

- [Involve engagement methods resources](#)
- [Regen Insight Paper – Best practice in community engagement: A guide for renewables and storage developers](#)
- [Involve and UK100 Inclusive Climate Action toolkit](#)
- [CLES Community Wealth-building toolkit](#)
- [Involve blog piece - Beyond ‘behaviour change’: towards involving communities in decision making](#)
- [Cumbria Climate Assembly Principles for Good Engagement](#)
- [National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise’s Rural Climathon Playbook](#)

# Acknowledgments

---

This resource pack was produced by Urban Foresight and edited by Stronger Stories for Innovate UK's Net Zero Living Programme. It draws directly on insights from the places taking part in the Programme, with contributions from expert partners to the Net Zero Living Programme: City Science (with Bankers without Boundaries), Innovate UK Business Connect, Involve, Regen, The Carbon Trust, and Zühlke.

It reflects the collective learning of the places taking part in the Net Zero Living Programme. Insights were gathered from project teams in local authorities and their partners across:

Argyll & Bute, Belfast, Birmingham, Blackpool, Blaenau Gwent, Bristol, Caerphilly, Calderdale, Cambridgeshire (Cambridgeshire, Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire, East Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough city region), Cardiff, Coventry, Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire (Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, Derby,

Derbyshire, Rushcliffe, Broxtowe and Gedling), Derry City & Strabane, Devon, Dorset, East Lothian, Essex, Forest of Dean, Gateshead, Greater Manchester (Manchester and Oldham) Gwynedd, Hertfordshire, Isle of Wight, Leicestershire, Liverpool, London (Haringey, Lambeth, Newham and Westminster), Mid & East Antrim, Mid South West Northern Ireland, Norfolk, Northumberland, Outer Hebrides, Oxfordshire (Oxford, South Oxfordshire and Oxfordshire), Perth & Kinross, Peterborough, Portsmouth, Rossendale, Shetland & Orkney, South Downs, South East Scotland (Edinburgh, East Lothian, Fife, Midlothian, Scottish Borders and West Lothian), Southampton, Staffordshire, Surrey (Runnymede and Surrey), Wakefield, Warrington, Westmorland & Furness, and York.

The content of this resource pack reflects the collective insights drawn from the Programme and does not necessarily represent the official position of Innovate UK, participating local authorities or their partner organisations.

# Creating Better Places

Ten areas where local innovation can improve lives and unlock growth



Innovate  
UK



Urban  
Foresight

Delivered by Urban Foresight for Innovate UK's Net Zero Living Programme.

Grounded in insights from the local authorities which participated in Innovate UK's Net Zero Living Programme.