



Innovate
UK

March 2026

Creating Better Places

Ten areas where local innovation can improve lives and unlock growth

Resource pack 02

Embedding net zero as an enabler of better services



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.



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The opportunity



Embedding net zero as an enabler of better services

When net zero is embedded in everyday planning and delivery, it strengthens core local services instead of being seen as a competing priority. It helps local authorities address familiar pressures, from rising costs and fuel poverty to economic resilience and public health, while creating long-term value for communities. Framed this way, climate action offers a practical route to better outcomes, stronger places and smarter use of public resources.

Through the Net Zero Living Programme, local authorities reframed net zero from a standalone environmental goal to an enabler of what they already exist to do. Rather than treating climate as an add-on, they identified opportunities where it enables delivery against existing strategic priorities, creating clearer alignment and stronger mandates for delivery.

They did this by:

- 1. Aligning to local authority strategic priorities.**
For example: how Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council created economic development, job creation and democratic renewal through net zero.
- 2. Framing net zero as the how and not the why.**
For example: how Cardiff Council made the case for housing retrofit as a driver of health, economic and social outcomes.
- 3. Processes to embed net zero into council decision-making.** For example: how Wakefield Council rewired strategy, planning, and investment, to make net zero a shared responsibility.



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

Embedding net zero by aligning to local authority strategic priorities

How Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council saw an opportunity to use the transition to net zero to grow its economy, tackle inequality and support local jobs.

At a glance

As part of Greater Manchester's ambitions for net zero by 2038, Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council (also known as Oldham Council) was one of ten Greater Manchester local authorities to be supported to develop a Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) as part of the Innovate UK 'Prospering from the Energy Revolution' funded Local Energy Market project. To make this meaningful locally, the Council used net zero as a way to tackle other priorities like fuel poverty and economic inequality.

In 2020, Oldham Council adopted a Green New Deal Strategy for the borough which aims to address climate change while supporting economic growth and social wellbeing. This is a long-term project. With Net Zero Living Programme funding, the project worked to develop a joint venture (JV) that could deliver the £5.6 billion pipeline of investment needed to achieve net zero for Oldham in a way that would drive community wealth and positive socio-economic outcomes for the borough.

What they did

In partnership with The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) and Carbon Co-op, Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council developed the foundations of a delivery system for net zero that is grounded in its people, its businesses, and its long-term future in the following ways:

- **Spend and supply analysis:** The project carried out a detailed analysis of how infrastructure spending currently flows and who benefits from it. This showed that a significant amount of investment was leaking out of the local economy, with many local and small businesses missing out. The findings were used to shape the social value and procurement requirements within the Green New Deal joint venture, so that future delivery partners are expected to localise more of their supply chains. This will proactively drive the anticipated £5.6 billion investment towards local businesses, fair work, and training opportunities for residents.

- **Community insight and engagement:** Oldham Council brought in community researchers to talk to residents through interviews and surveys to understand what people know, expect, and are concerned about when it comes to the Green New Deal. This revealed low public awareness of the initiative, uncertainty about its purpose and impact, and deep mistrust linked to wider inequalities. While some residents hoped the Green New Deal could deliver environmental, social, and economic benefits, many feared that it would mostly benefit wealthier households or property owners and that they would be excluded from decision-making.
- **Economic outcomes framework and assessment tool:** Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council created a set of indicators and a monitoring dashboard to track outcomes and assess how projects deliver benefits for People, Planet, and Place, such as creating new jobs, building skills, or supporting local business innovation.

Vision and pledges of the Oldham Green New Deal

Vision

“To make Oldham a greener, smarter, more enterprising place.”

Core objectives:

- Lead in environmental quality and align with Greater Manchester Green City Region goals.
- Develop a sustainable economy that tackles fuel poverty and drives green jobs.
- Enhance health and wellbeing through a high-quality environment.
- Attract green tourism and investment.
- Lead in the deployment of cutting-edge environmental technologies.
- Regenerate the borough to exemplify green urban development.
- Build carbon literacy across residents, schools, businesses, and public services.
- Support sustainable travel aligned with Greater Manchester 2040 transport goals.

Pledges:

- Carbon neutrality for council buildings and street lighting by 2025¹, and a carbon neutral borough by 2030.

- Ongoing support for community energy in Oldham and the wider Greater Manchester region.
- Ensure inclusive participation and benefits from the Green New Deal.
- Develop high environmental standards for housing and town centres.
- Deliver a Citizens’ Panel and Climate Action Plan.
- Promote green travel through infrastructure investment.
- Create new woodland and increase local renewable energy generation.
- Position Oldham as a national destination for green tourism.

Target outcomes:

- Oldham remains the borough with the lowest carbon footprint in Greater Manchester.
- Highest community-owned renewable generation in Greater Manchester.
- Eradication of fuel poverty.
- Improved air quality across the borough.

¹ Energy consumption information 2025/26 will be collated in 2026 to assess whether this carbon neutrality position was achieved.

Outcomes

- **Procurement as economic strategy:**
Instead of buying infrastructure at the lowest cost, Oldham redesigned procurement to actively grow the local economy. They built in goals such as supporting local small businesses and creating social value to ensure that investment stays in the borough and benefits communities. The JV model gives the Council influence over how money is spent to achieve long-term local benefits.
- **The economic outcomes framework** has been adopted by the Economic Board in Oldham.
- **Local SME visibility:** Many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Oldham did not previously see themselves as part of the green economy. By engaging smaller businesses early and showing they have a role in the delivery pipeline, Oldham expanded the pool of local suppliers and increased confidence in their delivery capabilities.

Key learnings

1. **Net Zero investment pipelines offer boroughs like Oldham a mechanism to create better outcomes for people and place, from jobs and regeneration to health and housing**
The drive to net zero provided a strategic opportunity to invigorate and shape the local economy and in doing so, secured stronger political and community support.
2. **Start with what you spend**
Detailed spend and supply chain analysis showed where local economic value could be retained. This gave Oldham a practical way to focus procurement on local businesses and bring benefits to communities.
3. **Tailor strategy to place**
Oldham's Green New Deal Strategy was not well known but connecting it to outcomes for people and place embedded net zero within the realities of local economic and social life, making it more relevant and, ultimately, more deliverable.

Why it matters

Traditional narratives risk framing net zero as a costly obligation. Oldham's experience shows how councils can shift the conversation. By designing investment models and outcome frameworks around local value creation and tracking spend, it is possible to unlock broader buy-in, de-risk projects, and build enduring community benefit. This place-based, outcome-first framing is crucial for local authorities looking to translate high-level net zero strategies to meaningful local delivery.

Insight #2

Framing net zero as the how and not the why

How Cardiff Council explored housing retrofit's social outcomes to drive council-wide engagement

At a glance

Cardiff Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and set out its response in the One Planet Cardiff Strategy (2021), committing the Council and the city to carbon neutrality by 2030

The 2024 review showed strong progress on emissions from council buildings, streetlighting, fleet, business travel, commuting, homeworking, and waste. It highlighted that supply chain activities remained the largest source of emissions and that work was underway to tackle procurement, a non-technological barrier to carbon reduction. The Innovate UK-funded Let's Go Net Zero project explored how net zero thinking could be embedded into everyday decision-making, addressing governance, behaviour change, data, and financing to support lasting organisational change.

With support from expert partners through the Net Zero Living Programme, Cardiff modelled two retrofit scenarios to help communicate the potential benefits of retrofit activity.

What they did

Cardiff, like many UK cities, faces the dual challenge of reducing carbon emissions from housing while tackling fuel poverty. Approximately 34 per cent of Cardiff homes are considered fuel poor and fuel poverty is most severe in homes with the lowest Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) ratings. Using Energy Performance Certificate data covering 88,000 properties (representing around 55 per cent of the city's housing stock), the Council investigated the wider value of retrofit investment.

Two retrofit scenarios were modelled, each combining whole-house retrofit for fuel-poor households and support for retrofit in the able-to-pay market

Scenario 1: Five-year programme

- £150 million to retrofit 10,000 homes
- £20 million to support 7,500 able-to-pay households
- Estimated carbon reduction: 6 per cent
- Total co-benefits over 20 years: £957 million
- Investment payback period: 2.4 years

Scenario 2: Seven-year programme

- £250 million to retrofit 20,000 homes
- £30 million to support 15,000 able-to-pay households
- Estimated carbon reduction: 12 per cent
- Total co-benefits over 20 years: £1.58 billion
- Investment payback period: 2.1 years

Outcomes²

The modelling demonstrated the estimated benefits of retrofit across multiple policy areas:

- **Health benefits:** An estimated £21 million (Scenario 1) or £35 million (Scenario 2) in annual NHS savings from improved indoor conditions and fewer cold-related illnesses, along with a 6% to 11% reduction in winter deaths and a 0.38% to 0.77% improvement in asthma symptoms.
- **Economic benefits:** An estimated 2,720 jobs in Scenario 1 or 4,480 in Scenario 2 could be created, contributing 0.15% and 0.25% to Cardiff's GDP, respectively.
- **Socio-economic benefits:** Across all Cardiff households, average energy costs were estimated to fall by 4.9% in Scenario 1 and 9.7% in Scenario 2.

- **Environmental benefits:** An estimated 770,000 tonnes of carbon emissions avoided over 20 years, equivalent to removing 8,400 cars from the road.
- **Investment value created:** Every £1 invested could generate £5 in local health, social and economic benefits, with short investment payback periods of between just 25 and 29 months.

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. Make a compelling case**
Demonstrating how decarbonisation work can impact local outcomes, for example health, jobs and quality of life, builds a broader coalition of support than focusing on carbon emissions alone.

3. Use local data to build credible, place-based models

Ground the business case in real local data, such as EPC records and fuel poverty statistics, to ensure credibility and relevance. Tailored modelling strengthens confidence in outcomes and supports decision-making aligned with the needs and conditions of the local area and local people.

4. Develop flexible, scenario-based options for delivery

Modelling options with varying levels of ambition and cost offers flexibility to respond to different funding and policy environments.

Why it matters

Retrofit can do much more than cut carbon. In fuel poor households in Cardiff, retrofitting models demonstrated benefits to public health, reduced pressure on the NHS, job creation and reduced household bills, while supporting the city's climate goals.

By quantifying these benefits, the modelling made a compelling case for treating retrofit as part of everyday council business, where net zero is not a stand-alone project but a means to enable better outcomes for people and place. Local authorities can use approaches like this to create compelling, evidence-led rationales for funding, enforcement, and programme design.

² Data provided by Cardiff Council and Quantifying the Benefits of Green Investment in Large-Scale Residential Net-Zero Retrofits at a City Scale report, by City Science for Cardiff Council (2025).

Insight #3

Unlocking wider benefits from net zero

How Wakefield Council rewired strategy, planning and investment to make net zero a shared responsibility.

At a glance

Wakefield Council set out to make net zero part of how the Council operates day to day, rather than a parallel climate programme. Wakefield Council saw an opportunity to link its climate goals with everyday decision-making across services from planning to investment.

Climate objectives existed, but they were not routinely embedded strategically or during project prioritisation or investment decisions. Net zero was often referenced in general terms without clear mechanisms to translate climate goals into the Council's operations. As a result, services struggled to see how their work contributed to net zero ambitions, or how net zero could support the delivery of their own priorities.

What they did

Through Net Zero Living Programme funding, Wakefield Council focused on strengthening its core decision-making systems, particularly strategy, finance and procurement.

Key actions included:

- **A comprehensive review of the Council's strategic framework:** This identified misalignments with the Climate Change Action Plan and led to a series of targeted improvements.
- **Strategic alignment:** A forward planner was introduced to track when strategies and service plans are updated, creating intentional opportunities to embed climate objectives from the start rather than adding them in later.
- **Business case reform:** The Council strengthened its approach to project appraisal by embedding climate considerations within HM Treasury's Better Business Cases framework, helping teams articulate long-term costs, risks and co-benefits alongside financial value.

- **Project prioritisation:** A structured prioritisation tool was developed, with significant weighting (60%) given to alignment with corporate strategies, including climate goals. This shifted conversations from short-term affordability to long-term value.
- **Lifecycle integration:** Climate considerations were introduced earlier in the project lifecycle, from strategic assessment through to full business case, rather than being assessed later or in isolation.

Outcomes

- **Governance integration:** Climate considerations are now more visible from strategic planning to frontline project assessments.
 - **Enabling role of the climate team:** The climate team has increasingly shifted from delivering standalone actions to enabling and advising other services on how net zero relates to their plans and decisions.
 - **Investment decisions:** Investment decisions are better able to consider climate risks, costs and co-benefits alongside financial and delivery considerations.
- **Organisational commitment:** Despite progress, delivery remains constrained by organisational silos, uneven adoption of tools and fragmented ownership across services. Net zero is better embedded in process, but not yet consistently embedded in practice across the organisation.

Key learnings

1. Embedding net zero into decision systems reveals its wider value

Once climate is built into strategy refresh cycles, business cases and project prioritisation, its relevance to finance, regeneration, health and service resilience becomes visible. This is a necessary step in moving net zero beyond a specialist concern.

2. Governance change does not automatically change delivery

Introducing new frameworks and tools improves decision quality but does not on its own overcome siloed ownership. Without clear accountability and cross-service collaboration, wider benefits remain harder to realise in practice.

3. Link climate to place-based goals

Embedding net zero into high-profile strategies like the District Plan fosters shared ownership among residents, services, and partners, unlocking broader momentum.

Why it matters

Unless climate goals contribute to strategic outcomes and shape day-to-day decisions, they can be elusive targets. Wakefield Council showed how embedding net zero into business cases, project scoring, and service planning, helps turn ambition into action.

Wakefield's experience demonstrates steps to move net zero from a specialist agenda to a shared organisational concern that sits alongside, and contributes to, wider strategic priorities, bringing climate ambition closer to everyday decision-making.

Key concepts

**Two foundational concepts
to position net zero as an
enabler of better outcomes**

Key concept 1

Language and shared outcomes

Place-based work needs accessible language and messaging that connects strategic projects to the real-world benefits that matter to people and places. Terms such as ‘net zero’ and ‘decarbonisation’ can feel abstract and disconnected from everyday concerns. Locally, priorities include better public services, warmer homes, lower energy bills, tackling fuel poverty, healthier living conditions, and creating good job opportunities. Articulating how net zero initiatives contribute to these tangible outcomes makes them more relevant and, ultimately, achievable.

Similarly, internal framing matters within local authorities. Rather than treating climate as a separate issue, show that net zero enables existing strategic goals to be achieved such as job creation, improved public health outcomes, and financial savings. This helps align climate priorities with core local authority priorities and decision-making.

Emphasise return on investment (ROI), resilience and wider benefits to shift perceptions from short-term cost to long-term value.

An “investable proposition” is a project that is clear enough to fund, approve, and deliver.

It can be funded through council capital, grants, or commercial finance. It needs a defined scope, delivery model, risk allocation, and a credible route to outcomes. Prepare a compelling case that describes what “good” looks like and shows that the project has a clear problem statement, defined beneficiaries, a preferred option with evidence, a delivery and governance route, and an agreed approach to risk ownership.

Use established UK appraisal and business case tools to move from a good idea to a decision-ready proposition. HM Treasury’s Green Book sets expectations for comparing options using costs, benefits, and risks. The accompanying business case guidance provides step-by-step development using the Five Case Model (strategic, economic, commercial, financial, and management cases).

Practical tools that help teams do this quickly and consistently include:

- **Option appraisal and cost–benefit analysis** to test value for money and quantify wider benefits (health, jobs, cost of living, resilience).

- **Scenario modelling** to compare delivery pathways and phase ambition (what you can do now, and what becomes possible with more capacity or funding).
- **Whole-life costing and sensitivity testing** to avoid decisions based on upfront cost alone and to show how risks affect affordability.
- **Benefits mapping tools** (such as a strategic benefits matrix or logic model) to show how net zero activity supports core service outcomes and statutory duties.
- **Readiness and risk tools** (risk registers, delivery plans, governance maps, market appetite checks) to reduce delivery uncertainty and strengthen confidence.
- **Early market engagement and commercial options testing** to confirm what the market can deliver, what needs bundling, and what the council must retain control of.

Key concept 2

A shared responsibility

Make net zero a shared responsibility across all services, not a stand-alone special agenda. Embed responsibilities across directorates and service areas and link climate action to corporate planning, finance and governance structures.

Net zero becomes deliverable when it sits inside mainstream governance, finance, and service planning. Treat it as a corporate responsibility, not a standalone specialist agenda. This reduces delivery risk and improves follow-through when priorities compete.

UK scrutiny bodies have repeatedly highlighted that local delivery depends on clear roles, adequate skills, and effective collaboration across tiers of government. The National Audit Office (NAO) has examined the need to clarify local authority roles and ensure councils have the right resources and skills for net zero delivery. Parliament has also stated that the UK will struggle to reach net zero without central and local government working together in a way that reflects local circumstances.

In practice, “shared responsibility” means putting net zero into the systems that shape everyday decisions:

- **Leadership and accountability:** Named senior ownership (political and officer), with clear decision rights and escalation routes.
- **Corporate planning:** Net zero objectives reflected in corporate plans, directorate plans, and service planning cycles, not added at the end.
- **Finance integration:** Climate and wider outcomes built into capital strategies, business case templates, and prioritisation processes (including Section 151 oversight).
- **Procurement and contracts:** Policy intent translated into commercial requirements, delivery standards, and supplier management.

- **Performance management:** A small set of tracked measures that show progress and co-benefits, reported through existing governance routes.
- **Enabling function:** The climate team supports, challenges, and assures other services, rather than owning delivery for everything.

A simple way to operationalise this is to require a short climate and benefits assessment for decisions going to leadership or Cabinet. Tools like local authority climate impact assessment approaches have been used for this purpose, alongside other council priorities.

This approach also helps in a constrained finance context. The NAO continues to stress that local government sustainability needs a whole-system approach and robust accountability arrangements. Embedding net zero into mainstream decision systems supports that discipline.

Practical steps



Four steps to embed net zero into local authority objectives

Learnings from the local authorities participating in the Net Zero Living Programme, showed that net zero plans are often developed in isolation from other critical local authority teams and wider stakeholders.

Regen and The Carbon Trust, two of the expert partners to the Net Zero Living Programme, explored why this happens and how local net zero planning processes could evolve to maximise their value for places and partners. The following extract from [Enable, Embed, Enact - Maximising the Value of Local Net Zero Planning \(Regen & Carbon Trust\)](#) sets out practical steps for embedding net zero in ways that improve cross-council alignment and creating informed and meaningful partnerships for ongoing delivery.

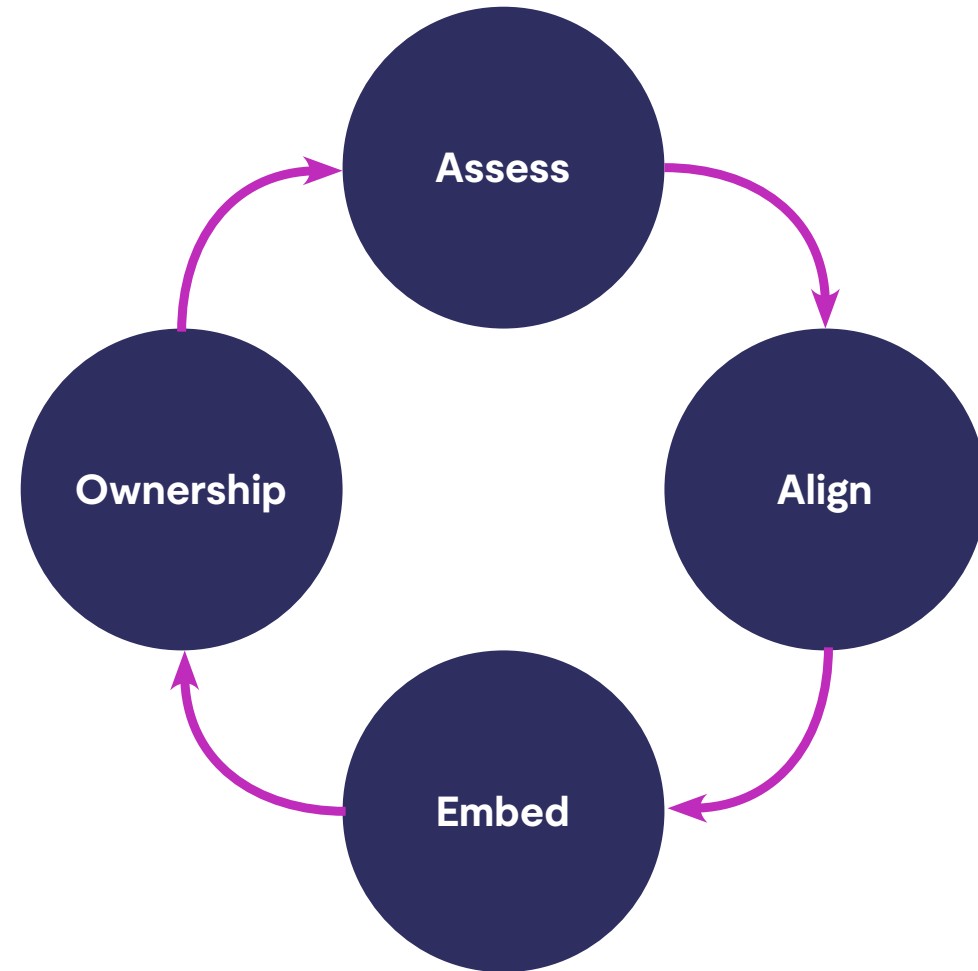


Figure 1: Adapted from Enable, Embed, Enact - Maximising the Value of Local Net Zero Planning (Regen & Carbon Trust)

Method	Best for	What it involves	Net Zero Living Programme examples
1. Assess	Understand where you are and what resources exist	Review spend, policy and data to find opportunities for alignment	Oldham Council’s spend and supply chain analysis revealed where investment could stay local and align to local economic development objectives
2. Align	Link climate action to the council’s strategic priorities	Map co-benefits and connect net zero with economic and health outcomes	Cardiff Council’s retrofit modelling showed an estimated £5 return in long term benefits (health, jobs and cost of living) for every £1 invested in retrofitting homes
3. Embed	Make net zero part of systems and finance	Integrate climate into business cases and governance cycles	Wakefield Council embedded climate criteria alongside other strategic objectives to score project relevance
4. Ownership	Create shared accountability and leadership	Give services responsibility and track delivery through performance management	See <i>Resource pack 04: Navigating political and institutional change</i> for more information on how Manchester City Council’s finance subgroup embedded climate into capital planning

Two practical templates to communicate the wider value of net zero

These two templates help teams explain how net zero activity supports wider council outcomes, not only carbon reduction. They were co-designed by Net Zero Living Programme participants at a hackathon (May 2025) and include populated examples you can adapt.

They are not “tools” in the sense of doing the work for you. Their value is that they:

- Give a shared structure and language that works across services (finance, housing, public health, regeneration)
- Make the benefit pathway explicit, so assumptions can be tested
- Help teams spot what evidence is missing, and what needs agreeing before a project moves forward.

Used well, they reduce the time spent trying to translate climate work into service priorities. They also create outputs for reuse in business cases, council committee or cabinet papers, and stakeholder conversations.

What these templates are (and are not)

These templates are quick-start structures for cross-service alignment, clearer narratives, and better definition of the benefits that will be realised. They are not a full business case, a benefits calculation, or a substitute for delivery planning. You still need local data and service owners to confirm what is credible and who is accountable.



Hackathon tool 1

Strategic benefits matrix

A simple matrix that links common net zero interventions (for example retrofit, transport, energy) to outcomes such as jobs, health, resilience, and reduced public spend. It helps teams show, at a glance, where a proposal supports corporate priorities and statutory pressures. The example is already populated to help you start quickly.

How to use it

1. Pick one priority intervention or programme
2. Agree four to six outcome areas that matter locally (use your corporate plan headings)
3. Replace the example entries with local evidence, assumptions, and likely beneficiaries
4. Note what needs validation (data, delivery partners, distributional impacts).

Scheme →	Retrofit	Urban transport	Energy Service Company (ESCO)	Build renewables
↓ Priority				
Jobs	Creates local jobs in construction, energy efficiency, and supply chains	Expands roles in transport planning, active travel, EV infrastructure, and maintenance	Supports jobs in energy services, monitoring, and local supply	Construction, engineering, and long-term Operational & Maintenance (O&M) jobs in renewable energy
Health	Warmer, healthier homes reduce respiratory and circulatory illness	Active travel and reduced air pollution improve population health	Affordable energy reduces fuel poverty-related health impacts	Cleaner energy reduces air pollution and associated health burdens
Education/ skills/ apprenticeships	Offers training in green construction, insulation, and retrofit technologies	Provides apprenticeships in transport design, active travel, and EV systems	Creates demand for skills in energy auditing, management, and smart tech	Expands training in renewables engineering, project delivery, and grid integration
Access / mobility	Indirect: improved disposable income may enhance transport affordability	Directly improves connectivity through public, shared, and active transport	Energy savings can support affordable community services that improve access	May improve local energy access and grid stability, indirectly supporting mobility (e.g. EV charging)
Savings on social care	Healthier homes reduce cold-related illness, lowering adult and child care demand	Safer streets, less pollution, and active lifestyles reduce long-term care needs	Reduced fuel poverty supports wellbeing, reducing stress and health decline	Cleaner air and stable energy costs can reduce long-term care pressures
Reduced direct expenditure	Cuts council and household energy bills through efficiency	Lowers transport costs, congestion, and infrastructure strain	ESCO contracts reduce upfront capital spend and improve budget predictability	Reduces reliance on fossil fuel imports and stabilises long-term energy costs
Resilience	Improves housing stock resilience to extreme weather and energy shocks	Diversifies mobility options and reduces reliance on fossil fuels	Strengthens local energy independence and reliability	Provides long-term secure, low-carbon energy supply

Table 1: Strategic benefits matrix template (populated example), created by Net Zero Living Programme participants

Hackathon tool 2

Co-benefits logic model

A structured logic model that sets out a clear line from **inputs and activities** to **outputs, outcomes, and impacts**. The retrofit example shows how a net zero project can be framed as a delivery mechanism for wider aims such as fuel poverty reduction, improved health, and local jobs.

How to use it

1. Start with your strategic priorities and the project objectives
2. List inputs that are often missed in early conversations (capacity, data, skills, buy-in)
3. Describe outputs you can count, then outcomes you can measure or evidence
4. Agree indicators early, so benefits can be tracked and reported.

1 Priorities Your local authority's strategic priorities	Reduce inequalities, improve health, growth and economy
2 Objectives What are the key aims of the project?	Improve quality of housing; create green jobs; decarbonise; fuel poverty reduction; investment in assets; increased awareness; health improvements; future cost avoidance
3 Inputs What is needed to make the project happen?	Funding (e.g. grants); resources (e.g. staff and capacity); training (e.g. supply chain and skills); data and evidence (e.g. Energy Performance Certificates); strategic buy-in
4 Activities What are the key actions for project delivery?	Training for supply chain; retrofit assessment; household engagement; senior management engagement; procurement
5 Outputs What will be the results of the activities?	Pipeline of delivery (number of houses retrofitted); people trained; jobs created
6 Outcomes What will be the consequences?	Energy Performance Certificate improvement/Standard Assessment Procedure improvement; greenhouse gas (GHG) savings; reduced electricity bills; increased employment
7 Impacts Do your project outcomes deliver the strategic priorities set out above in 1 Priorities?	Provides economic growth through the creation of jobs; reduces inequalities through improving housing stock EPC standard ratings; improves health by providing warmer and healthier homes
8 Feedback Seek feedback and check the impacts deliver against the strategic priorities	Create shared accountability and leadership

Table 2: Co-benefits logic model template (populated example), created by Net Zero Living Programme participants

Tools and resources

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



Tool/method	What it can help you do	Used by	Delivered by
<u>Spend/supply analysis</u>	<p>Analysis that allows you to see where money is being spent and helps you understand where spending could be redirected to benefit the local economy.</p>	<p>Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council</p>	<p>The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES)</p>
<u>Strategic assessment scorecard</u>	<p>This tool (scoring) shortlists options, prioritises them, and provides a pipeline of projects. It is used when council directorates develop their service plans and midterm financial strategies to identify a long list of projects.</p>	<p>Wakefield Council</p>	<p>Wakefield Council</p>
<u>Climate Impact Assessment Tool</u>	<p>Ensure projects and policies are aligned to local authority climate commitments, as well as other priorities.</p>	<p>The Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE), Cheltenham Borough Council and West Oxfordshire District Council</p>	<p>The Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE), Cheltenham Borough Council and West Oxfordshire District Council</p>
<u>The Green Book and accompanying guidance</u>	<p>HM Treasury guidance on how to appraise policies, projects and programmes.</p>	<p>Wakefield Council and other Net Zero Living Programme participants</p>	<p>HM Treasury</p>

Further reading



Net Zero Living Programme resources

Key Net Zero Living Programme resources on embedding net zero as an enabler of better services:

- [Regen and The Carbon Trust report - Join the Dots, Embedding Climate Action in Local Authorities](#)
- [Regen and The Carbon Trust report - Enable, Embed, Enact - Maximising the Value of Local Net Zero Planning](#)
- [Carbon Trust webinar series - Overcoming Barriers to Net Zero in the Public Sector](#)
- [City Science Report - Unlocking Climate Capital: A Business Case Framework for Local Authority Net Zero Projects](#)

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

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:

- [Carbon and Co-Benefits Decision Support Tool](#) developed by the Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformation (CAST), Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research at the University of Manchester, and Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

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.

Acknowledgement: The "strategic assessment scorecard" tool was prepared by Wakefield Council for the purpose of appraising its capital projects. It is not intended for use beyond this context. Wakefield Council accepts no responsibility for any loss, damage, or costs incurred by third parties arising from the use of this tool. Wakefield Council has not verified the accuracy or completeness of the tool, and it may contain errors that could affect decision-making.

Creating Better Places

Ten areas where local innovation can improve lives and unlock growth



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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.