



Innovate  
UK

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# Creating Better Places

Ten areas where local innovation can improve lives and unlock growth

Resource pack 06

Regional collaboration to scale climate action



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



# Regional collaboration to scale climate action

Regional collaboration helps local authorities do things together that they can't achieve on their own. By working across boundaries, they can pool expertise, align priorities and build the critical mass needed for major infrastructure, skills and investment programmes. Done well, collaboration reduces duplication, increases market confidence and tackles challenges that no single authority can address alone.

Participants in Innovate UK's Net Zero Living Programme formalised collaboration in new ways. They created shared frameworks, governance models and collective approaches that clarify roles, distribute responsibility and turn regional ambition into investable, deliverable action.

Across the Net Zero Living Programme, places explored purposeful regional collaboration in three key ways:

- 1. Creating shared regional frameworks and targets.**  
For example: how Cambridgeshire's Locally Determined Contribution approach aligned climate ambition and action across local authorities.
- 2. Building regional partnerships to unlock investment and influence.**  
For example: how Runnymede Borough Council developed regional partnerships to pioneer new models of local climate finance.
- 3. Formalising collaboration through regional governance structures.**  
For example: how Derry City and Strabane District Council structured collaboration through a Climate Commission to support long-term delivery.



# 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

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**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

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## 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

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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

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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

Local authority participants in the Net Zero Living Programme are advancing regional-scale action by creating new multi-stakeholder forums and building new governance and delivery mechanisms to collaborate and drive change. The examples shared here are Derry City & Strabane District Council's Climate Commission, Cambridgeshire's Locally Determined Contribution toolkit and Runnymede Borough Council's Functional Carbon Area approach.



## Insight #1

## From local pledges to collective responsibility

## How Cambridgeshire's Locally Determined Contribution creates greater certainty to build investor, business and public confidence in climate action.

## At a glance

The Cambridgeshire Net Zero Financing Framework for Whole System Change project (CANFFUND) brings together Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridge City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council, Huntingdonshire District Council, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, The Collaborate CIC, and Hughes Hall, University of Cambridge. Together, they set out to solve a key problem: the disconnect between national and local climate targets undermining investor, market and public confidence.

“There is always a balance to be struck between accuracy and actionability. You could produce something that is amazingly accurate and precise, but it could also be so complicated it'll never get used by anyone.”

Emily Bolton,  
Cambridgeshire County Council

To fix this, the team developed a Locally Determined Contribution (LDC); a strategic plan that aligns local climate action with national commitments.

They created a toolkit: a step-by-step guide to help councils design an LDC that fits their local context. It includes guidance on governance, data, delivery plans and investment pathways.

The toolkit aligns with the Paris Agreement<sup>1</sup> approach to create clear, practical climate plans for local government. It enables local authorities to:

- Determine their fair share of carbon reduction.
- Focus on areas where they can realistically influence emissions (such as housing, waste, or transport).
- Agree on a shared approach across local authorities and collaborating organisations.

Workshops and hands-on activities, including carbon budgeting exercises<sup>2</sup> and influence mapping, showed that elected members and officers can confidently engage with carbon budgeting when concepts are made tangible and relevant to local decisions. The toolkit has already sparked national and international interest.

<sup>1</sup> The Paris Agreement 2015

<sup>2</sup> Based on Lego© carbon budgeting

## What they did

- **Partnered across sectors:** The County Council brought together the Centre for Climate Engagement at Hughes Hall (University of Cambridge), Collaborate CIC, local district, unitary, county and combined authorities, and national carbon consultants. The project also consulted a wide range of expert stakeholders including HM Treasury, PwC, National Wealth Fund, and UNFCCC<sup>3</sup> amongst others.
- **Ran co-designed workshops:** Combined technical testing with accessible activities including carbon budgeting exercises and influence mapping, to make complex concepts understandable to officers, councillors, and stakeholders.
- **Tested scenarios:** Used a “dummy local authority” exercise to trial the toolkit and sense-check outputs with participants.
- **Adopted a minimum viable product approach:** Iterated towards a non-prescriptive “minimum viable product” to balance accuracy with usability. This avoided creating an overly complex tool that local authorities could not implement. Modularity is built in so local authorities can use the toolkit end-to-end or focus on elements such as influence mapping or target alignment.
- **Mapped existing tools:** Produced guidance on carbon pathway tools (for example SCATTER and Kendum<sup>4</sup>) to help local

authorities choose options suited to their local context.

- **Extended reach:** Shared lessons with neighbouring local authorities, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), the Climate Change Committee and international research partners preparing for the Conference of the Parties (COP).

## Outcomes

- **Proof of concept:** Demonstrated that elected members and officers can work with carbon budgeting when supported by practical and engaging tools.
- **Catalyst for collaboration:** Harnessed existing partnerships to begin aligning multiple local targets into a shared carbon budget.
- **Positioned for replication:** The approach is now ready for further testing. It is attracting interest from other local authorities, national government, and international partners.

## Key learnings

1. **Build from what already exists:** Strengthen and extend work already done and delivered. A staged approach can develop depth over time without overloading already stretched teams.

## 2. Make it tangible:

Creative activities including modelling and role-play make technical concepts accessible and build confidence across different audiences.

## 3. Secure multi-level buy-in:

Political and senior officer backing is essential for moving from individual targets to a budget shared across services.

## Why it matters

Cambridgeshire’s work shows that local authorities already hold many of the assets needed to engage officers and councillors in climate action that achieves better local outcomes: technical expertise, political will, and trusted partnerships.

The LDC toolkit provides a structured way to connect ambition with delivery. By clarifying roles, showing where local authorities can have most influence, and supporting shared ownership, it creates a credible, collaborative framework for planning, investment bids, and delivery across complex governance systems.

**The LDC Toolkit:** see how Cambridgeshire County Council and partners developed a standardised financing framework to de-risk investment.

## Insight #2

## Developing a Functional Carbon Area with Heathrow Airport

### How Runnymede Borough Council is building on regional partnerships and influence to pioneer a new model for local climate finance.

#### At a glance

Runnymede Borough Council, working through the Heathrow Strategic Planning Group (HSPG), has built on regional partnerships to test a Functional Carbon Area<sup>5</sup> model for the borough. The approach applies the logic of a Functional Economic Area which describes a region connected by commuting patterns, jobs, and economic flows, but applied to carbon emissions and climate action. For Runnymede, the approach was used to map not just a borough's own carbon footprint, but the wider flows of carbon linked to shared infrastructure such as Heathrow Airport.

In partnership with decarbonisation engineers City Science, built environment consultants Arup, and neighbouring local authorities, Runnymede Borough Council co-designed a voluntary carbon credit mechanism. This will translate local authority-enabled interventions in planning, transport, and waste, into certified carbon reductions that can be sold, with the resulting income reinvested to deliver benefits for local communities and businesses.

This proof-of-concept project shows how local authorities can collaborate across boundaries to act on Scope 3 emissions, while highlighting

that building political confidence in unfamiliar mechanisms is as important as technical design.

*“The real non-technical challenge was: what do we have within our control that we can generate money from to invest in reducing overall carbon emissions?”*

**Marcel Steward,**  
Runnymede Borough Council

#### What they did

A place-led and partnership-based plan of action:

- **Mapped the Functional Carbon Area:** With decarbonisation engineers City Science, adapted the concept of a Functional Economic Area to emissions and modelled emissions at a subregional scale around Heathrow Airport, looking beyond borough-owned assets to shared infrastructure and activity patterns.
- **Identified potential Scope 3 interventions.** Specific areas where local authority influence could drive emission reductions. These included planning conditions, EV charging infrastructure, and fuel supply, specifically turning food and garden waste into feedstock for sustainable aviation fuel.

<sup>5</sup> The local authorities in the HSPG region are Runnymede Borough Council, the London Borough of Hounslow, Spelthorne Borough Council, Elmbridge Borough Council, Surrey County Council, Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead, Slough Borough Council, and London Borough of Ealing

- **Designed a carbon credit mechanism:** Built a concept where reductions from these interventions could be quantified and certified as voluntary carbon credits.
- **Developed governance safeguards:** Designed controls to protect legitimacy including local authority veto rights over credit sales, ethical exclusions (for example, no fossil fuel or arms-sector buyers) and a proposed independent charity to act as market broker.
- **Commissioned modelling:** Through the Heathrow Strategic Planning Group, worked with built environment consultants Arup to quantify potential carbon savings from high-impact local interventions.
- **Tested with partners:** Collaborated with the London Borough of Hounslow to develop offsetting pathways including planning-led reductions and EV infrastructure credits.
- **Engaged elected members:** Ran councillor engagement sessions, including a three-hour workshop on carbon markets, to explain the model, surface concerns and build understanding.
- **Aligned regionally:** Embedded the work in the Heathrow Strategic Planning Group's wider planning discussions to connect the mechanism to long-term infrastructure strategies.

## Outcomes

- **Functional Carbon Area defined:** Runnymede Borough Council mapped emissions at a subregional scale around Heathrow. This provides a new way for local authorities to understand and plan for Scope 3 emissions collectively.
- **Voluntary offset model designed:** Developed a governance framework for a carbon credit mechanism including veto rights for local authorities, ethical exclusions, and a proposed independent charity broker.
- **Intervention pathways modelled:** Worked with built environment consultants Arup and with the London Borough of Hounslow to test practical options, including credits from EV infrastructure, planning-led emissions reductions, and converting local waste into feedstock for sustainable aviation fuel.

## Key learnings

1. **Scope 1 and 2 emissions are only part of the picture**  
Runnymede Borough Council's own operations account for less than 5% of area emissions, highlighting the need for subregional approaches when major infrastructure, such as an international airport, dominates the footprint.

### 2. Political engagement is essential

Topic-based and technical workshops with councillors showed that discomfort and reputational concerns, rather than technical issues, are the main barriers to adoption.

### 3. Regional forums enable innovation

The Heathrow Strategic Planning Group provided the governance space to test this model across multiple authorities. This custodianship gave the initiative credibility and potential for wider application.

## Why it matters

This case shows how local authorities can act on emissions they do not directly control by working at regional scale.

By mapping a Functional Carbon Area and developing a voluntary credit mechanism, Runnymede Borough Council and its partners created a framework that turns influence over planning, infrastructure and waste into measurable carbon savings with potential financial value and reinvestment in local communities and economies.

The work highlights a key transferable insight: innovative finance models must be accompanied by political engagement strategies. Technical modelling and governance design alone are insufficient; success depends on building understanding and trust among members and senior officers.

## Insight #3

## A multi-stakeholder portfolio approach

## How Derry City &amp; Strabane District Council's Climate Commission is structuring collaboration as a foundation for portfolio delivery.

## At a glance

With Net Zero Living Fast Follower funding from Innovate UK, Derry City & Strabane District Council established the Sustainability and Climate Commission. The Commission brought together over 40 specialists from 28 organisations spanning national government, local government, education providers, businesses, utilities and community groups.

The Climate Commission was deliberately designed to identify barriers, prioritise actions, and build joint ownership of implementation. To ensure continuity, Derry City & Strabane has since funded a dedicated officer role to coordinate the Commission's next phase.

## What they did

## → Established a delivery-focused

**Commission:** Convened by Derry City & Strabane District Council, the Commission brought together partners from across different sectors to focus on how delivery would happen (action and investment). Over 40 individuals from 28 organisations committed time to collaborate on sustainability, climate and biodiversity.

## → Brought national and local actors together:

For the first time, Northern Ireland government officers sat alongside local businesses, education providers, and community organisations. This created a shared space for co-design regarding climate change, sustainability, and achieving net zero targets by 2045.

→ **Applied a readiness tool:** Introduced the Sustainability and Climate Action Readiness Assessment. They combined survey data with a facilitated workshop to produce a baseline of organisational capacity, surface barriers, and identify immediate priorities.

→ **Created sector clusters:** Established smaller working groups within the Commission, including:

- ▶ An Education Cluster connecting local primary and post-primary schools, with an initial focus on reducing their energy costs.
- ▶ A Community & Health Cluster drawing on local community organisations across the city and district to identify how, as a collaborative group, they can make an impact at a grassroots level.

- **Tested governance options:** Piloted a three-part structure comprising a large inclusive Commission (c. 40 members), smaller thematic clusters, and a project board to manage delivery and accountability.
- **Secured continuity:** After the Innovate UK-funded phase ended, the Council funded an officer role to coordinate the Commission, embedding it as part of ongoing governance and sustaining delivery.

## Outcomes

- **A working cross-system forum:** Regular meetings now seat national and local actors together, building mutual understanding of constraints and roles.
- **Portfolio pipeline approach adopted:** The Commission is positioned as “the start of the pipeline”, with sector clusters and a project board developing a portfolio of projects that balances quick wins with long-term priorities.
- **Operational clusters in motion:** Sub-groups have begun progressing tangible workstreams. The housing cluster’s decision to join the Belfast Retrofit Hub provided a practical, scalable route to retrofit delivery.

## Key learnings

1. **Frame commissions or forums as the foundations to delivery pipelines and multi-stakeholder portfolio approaches**  
Large forums build legitimacy but their real value is in generating a rolling portfolio of projects that can be prioritised and funded.
2. **Pair broad forums with focused cluster**  
Sub-groups (e.g., education, housing) provide the smaller discipline-focused clusters needed to turn strategy into implementable projects.
3. **Resource continuity to sustain delivery**  
Funding officer capacity to coordinate the Commission ensures the forum can keep feeding projects into the pipeline beyond the pilot phase.

## Why it matters

Derry City & Strabane District Council’s Climate Commission shows how a local authority can convene a collaborative forum that becomes the start of a multi-stakeholder portfolio approach.

By framing the Commission as a portfolio engine, Derry City & Strabane District Council moved beyond the idea of a council-only project pipeline. Instead, the forum creates shared ownership of delivery, opens pathways to blended funding, and positions the area to unlock large-scale investment opportunities.

“This Commission is an ideal start to a multi-stakeholder portfolio approach. You bring together all the stakeholders for investment and decision-making around the table, create an outline for a portfolio of projects, and demonstrate the billions of pounds worth of potential. Then, with just a small initial resource to convene and coordinate, you can start to develop the project pipeline, exploring blended funding opportunities and collaborative projects. The initial investment is minimal compared to the value that will be unlocked.”

**Andy Boyle,**  
Derry City & Strabane District Council

# Key concepts

Five key concepts to understand about how to scale impact

## Key concept 1

### Layers of influence

Local authorities directly control only a small share of emissions through their own estates and fleets. Their greater impact comes through indirect levers such as planning powers, housing standards, transport strategies, and waste services, all of which shape daily life and carbon use.

Beyond this, major sources of emissions, including airports, energy networks, and transport corridors, sit at a regional scale. Addressing this larger spatial scale effectively requires local authorities to work together.

## Key concept 2

### Portfolio-led delivery

Scaling delivery means shifting from isolated projects to coordinated portfolios. A cross-council pipeline allows a balance of quick wins and longer-term projects. Regional aggregation of projects provides a route for long-term infrastructure investment and is more likely to attract funders, investors and national agencies. Derry City & Strabane District Council's Climate Commission shows how structured forums can provide the foundation for this kind of portfolio approach.

## Key concept 3

### Formalised collaboration

Regional forums are most effective when treated as delivery institutions rather than discussion spaces. To succeed, they need clear mandates, coordination capacity, and direct links to national policy and funding streams. Dedicated officer resource, as seen in Derry & Strabane, is essential to sustaining momentum and turning collaboration into delivery.

## Key concept 4

### Tools and frameworks for shared responsibility

Achieving net zero locally is not only about ambition but also about distributing responsibility fairly. Frameworks such as Cambridgeshire's Locally Determined Contribution (LDC) toolkit translate global and national targets into local carbon budgets that reflect each council's role, sphere of influence, and priorities. By offering a common evidence base, the tool helped partners track progress, identify joint priorities, and develop cross-boundary investment proposals. Together, these tools help local authorities and partners innovate shared ownership models, align priorities, and avoid duplication of effort.

## Key concept 5

### Confidence in finance

Innovative finance mechanisms must be designed with integrity. They require high governance and operational standards that build trust, protect legitimacy and open the door to large-scale external investment in projects that benefit local people and businesses.



# Practical steps



# A practical guide for local authorities on how to navigate common pitfalls

## Common pitfall

### Overcomplexity

Climate tools can easily become too complex, producing outputs that are technically precise but unusable.

## How to avoid it

### Start with usable tools. Don't aim for perfection at the outset.

Avoid overcomplexity and begin with frameworks and toolkits that are simple, modular and practical, like Cambridgeshire's Locally Determined Contribution approach. This makes carbon budgeting and planning accessible to councillors, officers, and partners and builds confidence to act quickly. Frameworks and toolkits can always be refined later.

### Focusing on Scope 1 or 2 emissions only

Local authorities' own operations account for less than 5% of total emissions in some areas. This means that local climate strategies risk being disconnected from the biggest sources of emissions.

### Identify the right geography for action.

Reframe the scale of action beyond the local authority boundary. Use mechanisms, such as Runnymede Borough Council's Functional Carbon Area approach to capture emissions and understand systems at a scale that can bring the biggest benefits to residents and businesses.

### Risk aversion

A cautious approach to financial risk stalls innovation in the finance mechanisms needed for ambitious project pipeline development.

### Innovation needs legitimacy and a positive attitude to risk.

Engage councillors and senior officers with clear, practical explanations, for example through workshops, scenario testing and governance safeguards. Building understanding up front reduces reputational risk and creates space to test new finance and delivery models.

Common pitfall

**Discussion rather than action**

Large climate forums risk becoming “talking shops” without mechanisms to translate dialogue into action.

How to avoid it

**Turn forums into delivery engines.**

Structure collaborations to generate and manage pipelines of projects. Build in a balance of quick wins with long-term priorities.

Derry & Strabane’s Climate Commission shows the value of combining a large inclusive forum with focused working clusters and a project board.

**Duplicated effort across teams, directorates, and councils**

Without coordination, local authorities risk duplicating work rather than pooling resources and creating efficiencies.

**Pool resources to optimise efforts.**

Where capacity is limited, collaboration can fill the gaps. Where capacity exists, it creates scale. Aligning with existing regional hubs or shared initiatives, as Derry City & Strabane District Council did by joining the Belfast Retrofit Hub, allows local authorities to deliver more and faster with the same level of resources.

# Locally Determined Contributions (LDC) guidance framework

## Cambridge County Council's ten guiding principles for the LDC process.

### Principle 1

#### An LDC is part of the national 'whole'

It should be developed and presented so that it can be understood as a building block or constituent part of the UK's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC).

### Principle 2

#### An LDC enables resilience

An LDC should take an integrated approach and consider the co-benefits and trade-offs of proposed actions.

### Principle 3

#### An LDC is ambitious and reflects the scientific consensus on climate change

It should provide local authorities with a clearly defined and robust path to reduce emissions that is in line with the Paris Agreement goals and global scientific consensus.

### Principle 4

#### An LDC is area-wide

An LDC should cover territorial greenhouse gas emissions (i.e., emissions from across the local authority's geographic area).

### Principle 5

#### An LDC is place-based

As much as is practicable, an LDC should be developed using data and approaches that consider the circumstances specific to the local area at an agreed spatial scale.

### Principle 6

#### An LDC is 'nested' under the highest level of local government

An LDC should be owned by the highest tier of local authority governance, but all levels of local government should contribute to it and feel ownership of it.

### Principle 7

#### An LDC is fair

Consideration of fairness is essential when developing place-based approaches to emissions reduction and should be integrated in every stage of the LDC process.

### Principle 8

#### An LDC promotes action in hotspot areas

An LDC should identify the domains key to reducing emissions, e.g., buildings or transport, and those where local authorities have the greatest ability to deliver or influence change.

### Principle 9

#### An LDC facilitates funding

An LDC is a tool that can enable the development of a pipeline of investment-ready low-carbon opportunities and projects.

### Principle 10

#### An LDC is transparent

An LDC should be based on maximum possible transparency around what approaches have been taken and why.

See the full [Locally Determined Contribution Guidance Framework](#)

# Capacity Framework and Sustainability and Climate Action Readiness Assessment

**Here is a practical, easy-to-use approach to understand and strengthen an organisation’s capacity for climate action.**

The Sustainability and Climate Readiness Assessment (SCARA) was developed by Your Climate Strategy (YCS) for the Derry & Strabane Climate Commission. It is based on the YCS Capacity Framework that outlines the elements of organisational capacity and capability necessary to deliver effective sustainability and climate action plans.

**The framework’s capacity and capability questions are set out below. Please credit ‘Your Climate Strategy’ when using the assessment tool.**

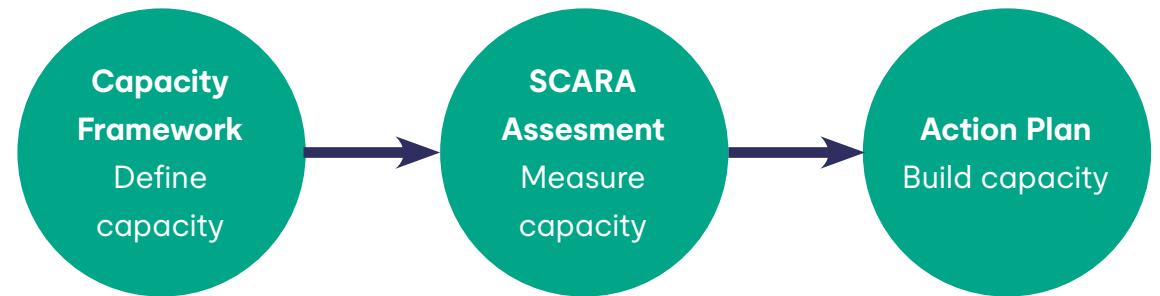


Figure: How SCARA and the Capacity Framework fit together.  
Developed by Andy Boyle and Erica Russell of Your Climate Strategy

See the [full assessment](#) online.

## Section 1: Leadership and strategy

### Q1: Leadership

**Does your organisation have commitment from senior leadership to a) sustainable development, b) net zero and c) climate resilience?**

To deliver meaningful sustainability and climate action, these must be considered strategic priorities by senior leadership. This will often require a mandate from the organisation's key stakeholders, for example politicians, trustees or shareholders, an agreed business case, and internal and external commitments.

### Q2: Culture

**Does your organisation have a culture that aligns with delivery of a) sustainable development, b) net zero and c) climate resilience?**

An organisation's culture is made up of the shared values and practices that shape the behaviours and attitudes of individuals within the organisation. Sustainability and climate action require a broad sense of individual and organisational purpose and responsibility and a willingness to change. This is enhanced where there is a culture of openness with internal and external stakeholders, ensuring transparency, accountability and collaboration.

### Q3: Vision

**Does your organisation have a clear and positive vision for the future through a) sustainable development, b) net zero and c) climate resilience?**

A vision for sustainability and climate action paints an aspirational picture of what an organisation aims to achieve for itself, society and the planet. It may be high level but should have sufficient detail to bring to life what the future will be like and compare this to the current position. A vision statement captures a vision in a succinct way for internal and external communication.

### Q4: Strategy

**Does your organisation have a clear strategy for delivery of a) sustainable development, b) net zero and c) climate resilience?**

A sustainability and climate strategy is a planned set of actions to achieve short and long-term objectives, ideally aligned to a vision. Strategic objectives are often SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) and offer flexibility to deal with changing circumstances. Strategies include actions for delivery, targets and key results to track progress.

## Section 2: Operation and delivery

### Q5: Stakeholder engagement

**Does your organisation communicate and collaborate effectively with stakeholders for a) sustainable development, b) net zero and c) climate resilience?**

Effective engagement with stakeholders is critical for sustainability and climate action and involves both communication and collaboration beyond the core business of the organisation. Organisations will understand who their stakeholders are and plan how to work with them. They will be active in the connections and networks they build to share knowledge and work together on projects.

### Q6: People

**Does your organisation have the people in place with the necessary knowledge and skills they require for delivering a) sustainable development, b) net zero and c) climate resilience?**

Each element of a sustainability and climate strategy involves different functions of the organisation either directly or in supporting roles. This requires people with clear roles and responsibilities and the knowledge, skills and behaviours to fulfil these. These can be complex and new areas for organisations and may require learning and development programmes to support the team.

### Q7: Management and organisational structure

**Does your organisation have a management and organisational structure in place to deliver a) sustainable development, b) net zero and c) climate resilience?**

Sustainability and climate action should be integrated within a clear management and organisational structure and system. This can define policies, processes and collaborative working practices. Ideally this will support a top-down and bottom-up approach to identifying, agreeing, and implementing opportunities. It should also include monitoring, evaluation and learning from progress.

### Q8: Data and information

**Does your organisation have the data and information it requires for a) sustainable development, b) net zero and c) climate resilience?**

Data and information provide an understanding of potential impact and support decision making, the prioritisation of action, and allocation of resources. This includes baseline and forecast data and requires management systems that support the gathering, storage, analysis, reporting and sharing of data and information. This can be enhanced over time through an open approach to gathering and sharing data and information.

### Q9: Technology and infrastructure

**Does your organisation have the technology and infrastructure it needs to deliver a) sustainable development, b) net zero and c) climate resilience?**

Delivery of the sustainability and climate strategy and all the associated operational elements require supporting technology, facilities and infrastructure. Many of these are likely to require some form of transition as part of the strategy. These assets may include buildings, vehicles, plant, equipment, IT hardware and systems and specific low carbon technologies.

### Q10: Project pipelines

**Does your organisation have a pipeline of projects sufficient to deliver a) sustainable development, b) net zero and c) climate resilience?**

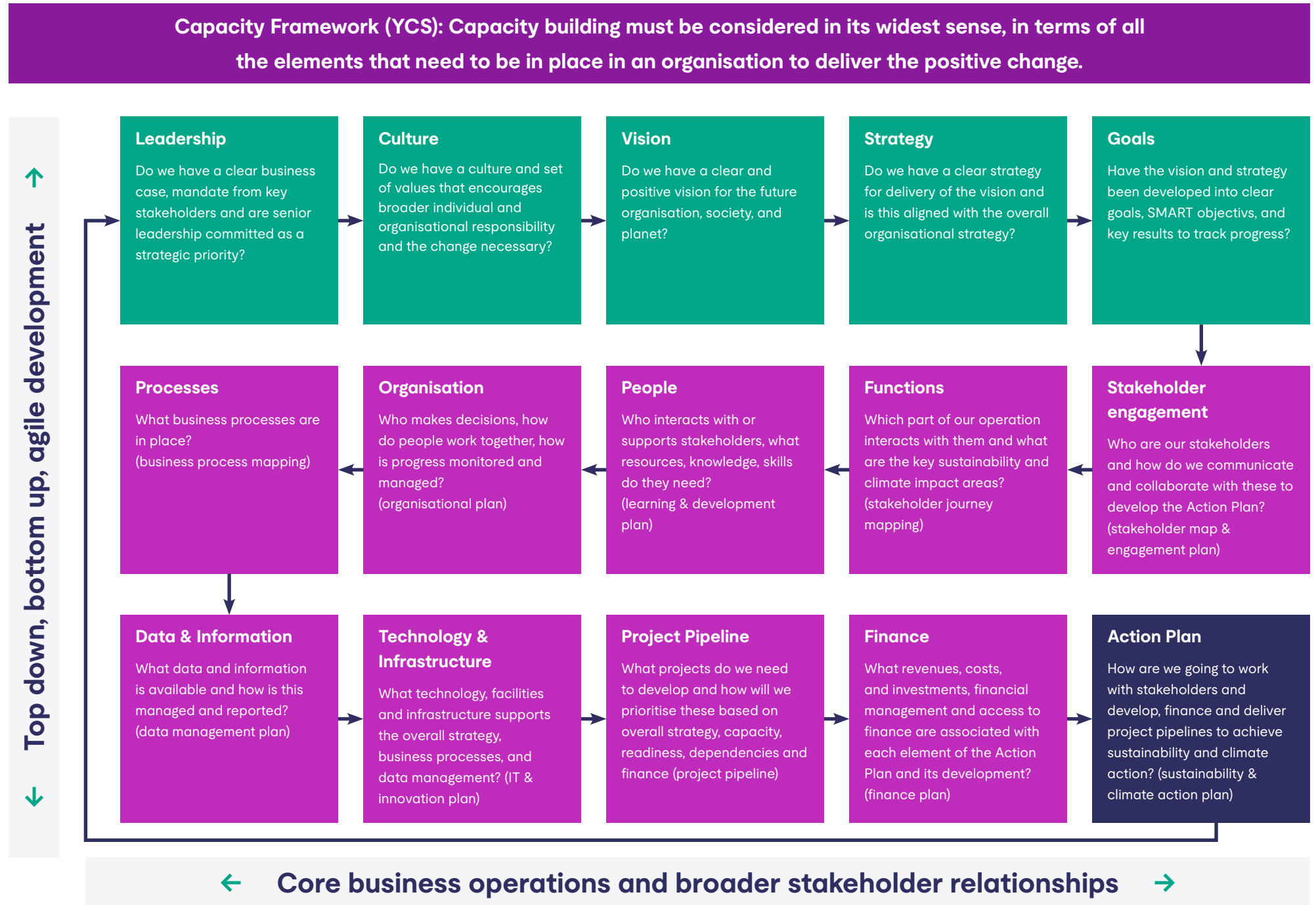
A sustainability and climate strategy typically involves an overall change programme made up of a wide range of connected projects. A project pipeline needs to be identified, prioritised, developed, financed and delivered. Collaborating with other organisations can deliver greater impact through shared resource, knowledge and investment.

### Q11 Finance

**Does your organisation have the financial management and access to finance in place to deliver a) sustainable development, b) net zero and c) climate resilience?**

An organisation will need to understand the revenues, costs, investments, and risks associated with any operational changes and the project pipeline. Accessing the right sources and blends of finance in balance with the other strategic priorities of the organisation, including collaborating on projects and effectively sharing risks and rewards, may require the development of new knowledge and skills.

Figure: Capacity Framework developed by Your Climate Strategy 2025



# 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
<a href="#"><u>Locally Determined Contributions Guidance Framework</u></a>	<p>Guidance on Locally Determined Contributions: a way for local authorities to formally align their climate action plans with the UK's national net zero targets. Provides a common language and framework for places to align to.</p>	<p>Cambridge County Council</p>	<p>Cambridge County Council and the University of Cambridge</p>
<p><b>Climate Commission</b></p>	<p>Brings together various stakeholders from public, private, and civic sectors to collaborate on climate initiatives. Sector clusters created smaller working groups within the Commission, e.g., an education cluster.</p>	<p>Derry City &amp; Strabane District Council</p>	<p>Derry City &amp; Strabane District Council</p>
<p><b>Your Climate Strategy Capacity Framework</b></p>	<p>The Capacity Framework sets out the key components that any organisation needs to deliver effective climate and sustainability action. These include dimensions of leadership, strategy, governance, people, finance, data, technology, and stakeholder engagement.</p>	<p>Derry City &amp; Strabane District Council</p>	<p>Your Climate Strategy</p>
<p><b>Your Climate Strategy Sustainability and Climate Action Readiness Assessment (SCARA method)</b></p>	<p>It allows organisations and teams to think about their capacity to deliver across national and local government's multiple strategic goals (sustainable development, net zero, and climate resilience) in a standardised format.</p>	<p>Derry City &amp; Strabane District Council</p>	<p>Your Climate Strategy</p>

Tool/method	What it can help you do	Used by	Delivered by
<p><a href="#"><u>Surrey Climate Commission Action Readiness Assessment (2020)</u></a></p>	<p>The Commission has developed a Readiness Assessment that allows us to assess how ready certain climate saving activities / projects are when measured against important criteria such as Technical Capacity, availability of Policy, Financial and Community Readiness, and its ability to be delivered. The Assessment uses a traffic light and scoring system to measure readiness.</p>	<p>Surrey County Council</p>	<p>Surrey County Council</p>
<p><b>Functional Carbon Area approach</b></p>	<p>The approach applies the logic of a Functional Economic Area which describes a region connected by commuting patterns, jobs, and economic flows but applies to carbon emissions and climate action.</p> <p>For example, Runnymede Borough Council modelled emissions at a subregional scale around Heathrow Airport, looking beyond borough-owned assets to shared infrastructure and activity patterns.</p>	<p>Net Zero Living Programme participants</p>	<p>Innovate UK Business Connect</p>
<p><b>Voluntary carbon credit mechanism</b></p>	<p>Translation of local authority-enabled interventions (in planning, transport and waste) into certified carbon reductions that can be sold with revenue reinvested locally.</p>	<p>Runnymede Borough Council</p>	<p>Runnymede Borough Council, City Science, Arup and neighbouring local authorities</p>

# Further reading



## Net Zero Living Programme resources

Key Net Zero Living resources on regional collaboration to scale climate action:

- [City Science CANFUND case study: Financing Cambridgeshire's Net Zero Transition](#)

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 because of the practical guidance, hints and tips, and good practice they provide:

- [LGA Sustainability Hub](#)
- [Local Governments for Sustainability](#)
- [Your Local Net Zero Hub](#)
- [Local Partnerships](#)
- [Carbon Trust Public Sector Network](#)
- [NetZero Cities](#)
- [Transition Team Playbook, Net Zero Cities](#) - This playbook is a guide to develop a city's ability to lead such a collective endeavour: to orchestrate a transition
- [C40 Cities](#)
- [UK100](#)
- The five Local Net Zero Hubs in England: [Northeast & Yorkshire](#), [Greater South East](#), [South West](#), [Midlands](#), [North West](#)
- [Scottish Communities Climate Action Network](#)
- [Sustainable Scotland Network](#)

# Acknowledgments

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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.