



# CLIMATE EMERGENCIES – AMBITION, POLICY, ACTION

BRIEFING DOCUMENT

**In the first of a series of decarbonisation webinars beginning on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> September, Karen Brown explained that a range of speakers would give informative talks to bring us up to date on developments at a national and regional level, briefing the NHC membership on how to fit policy around communities, and share good practice examples of what the decarbonisation agenda means for Local Authorities and Housing Associations in their day-to-day work. The #OurNorthNetZero campaign, from our member engagement activity to our policy and influencing work, is being supported by our programme partners at Halton Housing, Liverpool City Region Housing Associations, Thirteen Group, Together Group and Consortium Procurement. The first webinar looked at Climate Emergencies, and what ambitious climate policy looks like at a local level.**

**Dom Goggins, Political Consultant, UK100**

UK100 is a network of highly ambitious Local Governments - whether urban, suburban, or rural - who are focused on climate and clean energy. Dom discussed the work of UK100 in supporting local governments to create flourishing communities and the central role of clean energy production to achieving Net Zero.

Their main strands of work are around sustainable finance, climate emergency and clean air. They held a clean air summit in 2019, hosting mayors and city leaders from around the UK, senior NHC staff and global figures, such as Mayor Bill DeBlasio from New York City.

Dom explained the principle that net zero cannot be secured nationally without coordinated local authority actions. 280 local authorities have signalled their intent by declaring climate emergencies and public support is strong on action, both on climate emergencies and clean air. Net Zero is central to Local Authority work around better health, prosperity and happiness in communities.

A number of local authorities within the UK100 membership have eye-catching projects, with Greater Manchester's science-based, Paris-aligned carbon neutrality target being one of the most ambitious and resonating across their membership. Dom explained that under the present circumstances approaches must be innovative because the current national system doesn't accommodate a standard approach through a national framework. Bodies face insufficient powers and resources and encounter a system that is structurally incapable of delivering net zero. UK100's upcoming Powers Research document aims to stimulate discussion on the barriers to action for local authorities in the midst of an expected energy white paper and next year's COP26. Dom explained that the upcoming

year will be revealing, with key decisions in the next 12-months seeing whether the UK will grant suitable powers to local authorities to be able to act.

He stressed the importance of the NHC's membership as actors 'thinking across the whole economy' – facilitating job creation through reskilling and economic growth, saving money for residents, supporting public services, designing public space and tackling air quality. Coronavirus has supercharged the need for these decisions. The Resilient Recovery Task Force, of which UK100 is part of, will see 24 mayors and local leaders, representing 25 million people lead on a project that connects the collective experience, sentiment and ambitions of local authorities and communicates it to ministers and decision makers, driving this problem further up the agenda than it has ever been.

On local authorities' role in coordinating across tenure, Dom explains that it is vital that they use their position act as a conduit, bringing together housing associations and the private sector. This would allow projects on estates with Right to Buy properties for example. An example was given that local authorities aren't able to enforce standards in the PRS effectively and efficiently. Whilst local authorities can work to bring everyone together they lack powers to act adequately at present. On the ability to decarbonise the social housing stock of the country Dom also cited the lack of funds, with the bill to decarbonise just Greater Manchester likely north of £1-2bn.

**Jonathan Mullard, Head of Planning and Devolution - Local Climate and Energy Team, Department for Energy, Business, and Industrial Strategy**

At BEIS Jonathan leads on the delivery and integration of local energy policies into a range of departmental and cross-government initiatives. He will discuss his work raising the profile of climate change in Neighbourhood Planning initiatives and bringing partners together with Local Enterprise Partnerships to deliver energy strategies. Jonathan is also a member of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' Local Adaption Advisory Panel and will discuss how they work to facilitate local authority adaptations to climate change.

He explained that BEIS has been doing a lot of work with local authorities who have declared climate emergencies in the past 18-months. Tackling climate change and achieving net zero is a key government priority and that the government considers the nation a world leader in this fight, believing that they have overachieved against the first and second agreed carbon budgets. BEIS will be bringing forward new ambitions to decarbonise different sectors of the economy and will be engaging local leaders in the run up to next year's event.

If we are to transform the energy sector Jonathan explains that the system will look very different. It is a much more mixed and resilient approach to the traditional model of generation at one end of a wire and the consumer at the other. There will be new design codes coming forward and proposals and guidelines for councils which can be adapted to meet local standards. BEIS are aware they cannot impose a one size fits all model and to this end colleagues at MHCLG are carrying out a lot of work.

UK emissions shows that heating buildings is a major challenge, an aspect which comprises 32% of the total usage, but there are innovative projects being designed to target this. Durham coalfields for example have many people in fuel poverty, in areas which previously generated the nations heat. Those now-flooded mines have geothermal potential to create heat from the water that has been pumped into the ground. This sort of project would of course also be combined with efforts to reduce the heating demands of buildings.

A green economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic is a priority, creating an economy which is stronger, cleaner and more resilient. At BEIS this is held as a top departmental priority and there is a lot of work in this area going forward; outcomes from the comprehensive spending review will illustrate this in broad terms. Funding, estimated to include support for 140,000 jobs, will see £1bn allocated to a new public sector decarbonisation scheme and the £2bn 'Green Homes Grant' will upgrade more than 60,000 homes in England. A £50m demonstrator project for decarbonisation of social housing will encourage innovation and inform design of the Future of Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. BEIS has a key role to support LEPs, local authorities and communities towards net zero and clean growth. They also run the Rural Community Energy Fund. Local energy hubs are distributed around the country, with the North East hub hosted by the Tees Valley Combined Authority and the North West by Liverpool Combined Authority.

Participants were keen to hear about ambitions around funding, citing the relatively small amount of money currently pledged to green home grants, and the long-term nature of social housing strategies. Jonathan reiterated the government's commitment to see this as an initial start. There are conversations about where this leads afterwards but government are keen to pledge money now towards a green recovery. There is very good information on the options for the path forward and these are being discussed ahead of the comprehensive spending review. On the Future Homes Standard Jonathan couldn't say anything further on the timescale but said that there was a lot of conversation going on to orchestrate the response. He believes there will be a big increase in terms of the scale of the plans for the delivery and implementation over the next 18-months and assured that clarity and increased resources will be forthcoming, hopefully at the scale that the sector would like.

[Dr Nadine Andrews, Senior Social Researcher to the Scottish Government](#)

Working as a Social Researcher in the Scottish Government, Nadine has developed a model of the key design features relating to climate resilient communities. She discussed climate-ready green buildings, streets, and infrastructure, and the interconnections those policy areas have with social capital, health and wellbeing, and sustainability.

Nadine has developed a model for using Scotland's National Performance Framework which is rooted in values of kindness, dignity and compassion. The focus of her presentation is climate resilient communities and the interconnections between housing,



social capital and wellbeing. The Scottish Government has a resilience division and a National Resilience Centre to ensure communities are prepared for emergency situations and has worked to prepare areas for the shocks which arise from various crises.

At the centre of Nadine's climate resilient communities model is the core principles of prevention, preparation, response and recovery, with the outcomes of engagement, empowerment, enablement and education the results at the outside of the model. There are various concepts which connect these aims and outcomes, including knowledge planning, social capital and climate-ready buildings, streets and infrastructure, amongst others. The standard of homes impact on a host of other areas, including health and wellbeing, resource usage and air quality. Housing should thus not only be considered in the realm of buildings and infrastructure but amongst the rest of the outcomes.

Social capital is a key theme which is monitored by 18 key measures through this model. These indicators analyse a range of local factors, i.e. with those living in areas of heavy traffic having fewer engagements with neighbours, highlighting the unique nature of each community and the importance of understanding the interconnectedness within at the outset of the approach. Clearly, in terms of physical space we must enable the development of spaces which allow socialising at a distance and interconnectivity in order to, amongst other benefits, improve social capital.

The impacts of climate change drastically affect human health and wellbeing in a whole range of ways. A three-year study of flood management in Aberdeen saw a high variation in experience, with children and the elderly the most affected, and stress causing negative affects across various areas of their lives. These problems were largely pre-existing and were exacerbated by their experience of flooding. Around one-third of the UK's population suffer from 'eco-anxiety', with Nadine explaining that the phenomena comes from a position of acknowledgement and accepting the facts of our situation. This worry is normal, but its regulation is affected by a host of different impacts, housing included. A connection with nature is one aspect which can help alleviate this, illustrating the connecting between access to facilities, buildings and health and nature. Indoor air quality for example can often be worse than outdoors, with outdoor air penetrating into buildings and lingering. The main sources of this pollution include furniture, air fresheners and animal respiration.

In conclusion Nadine explained that we can think of resilience as a dynamic system. Interactions between sections can produce benefits or negatives. From a housing perspective these other aspects must be taken into account so synergies can be created. Housing is a vital aspect of the model and we must draw on its connections with all other aspects of the model to ensure we maximise it's potential to produce benefits within social capital and wellbeing.

Colleagues at Lancaster City Council

Cllr. Kevin Frea, Deputy Leader, Lancaster City Council, & Cabinet Member for the Climate Emergency & Rural Affairs

Cllr Caroline Jackson, Cabinet Member for Housing, Lancaster City Council

Kathy Beaton, Principal Housing Strategy Officer (Directorate of Economic Growth and Regeneration), Lancaster City Council

Like many Local Authorities, Lancaster City Council has declared a Climate Emergency with implications across all services, including housing and planning. Colleagues from Lancaster representing both environmental and housing teams will discuss how their Climate Emergency is manifesting itself in their day-to-day work and plans for the future. Kevin began with an introduction on Lancaster's Climate Emergency, before Caroline talked about the Homes Strategy and key housing priorities linking to climate change and finally Kathy discussed projects happening right now centring on community led housing. Cllr Kevin Frea explained that of the 280 councils who have declared climate emergency the vast majority have set a target of 2030 to hit net zero themselves. Lancaster Council are confident that without government action they can achieve this but of course this is only a small fraction of the emissions in the Lancaster district. A lot of councils have stepped up during the coronavirus period and supported vulnerable people and this will help as they go forward with engaging people in the wider conversation.

Kevin explained he himself lives in a *passivhaus* at Lancaster Co-Housing and has had government visits from ministers in the Isle of Man. Lancaster have developed a holistic approach, producing a priorities update, and they are trying to ensure that these become well embedded throughout the council. They prioritise healthy, happier communities for those in all income brackets and improving the housing stock for those in fuel poverty.

Cllr Caroline Jackson is the housing portfolio holder. They are in the process of creating the new homes strategy with the ultimate aim to reach a position of carbon neutral housing in the district. Their reaches are limited however, and even within these limits they must be selective. They must consider how their approaches affect their other ambitions as a council, and how housing impacts the other areas of residents' lives. They prioritise their freedom to act and in creating new housing they want to create new partnerships.

Under the impetus of their new ambitions they are seeking to establish a trading company. They have around 3000 homes, some of which require urgent attention, and others must be assessed to understand their retrofitting needs. Piloting a retrofitting programme has illustrated the issues they face and the associated costs, as well as skills gaps. This will impact other aspects of renovation work, with fewer new kitchens potentially being installed for example.

Lancaster are planning new acquisitions and have identified many poorly performing homes in the PRS. They aim to retrofit to a high standard and upskill residents, improving the future fortunes of areas of high PRS concentration. They have also identified a site with an SPD for a mixed tenure *passivhaus* site and believe that they can show not only their ambitions but also the feasibility of building such sites.

Kathy Beaton is the housing strategy lead at Lancaster Council. They have worked to support and develop community-led housing. She believes it's a great way to address community problems and act on housing delivery. These are strategically important schemes for the council and will contribute significantly to their climate agenda. In 2016-17 Lancaster City Council were given a Community Housing Fund award of £700k which allowed them to develop a framework for community-led housing, establishing a dedicated officer post and a grant policy scheme. Two important community-led schemes have stemmed from this.

Firstly, their existing cohousing facility has been successful, with a resilient and distinct community established. It has its own district heating system and meets *passivhaus* accreditation. The funding meant that this scheme could be extended for older people through Halton Senior Co-Housing Group with a mixed-tenure of 20 units; 6 units are affordable and will be managed by the scheme itself, rather than an RP. A second project saw the establishment of Lune Valley Community Land Trust, with a partnership with South Lakes Housing. The council provided funding to carry out a parish survey and will deliver 20 units, all affordable and some for shared ownership. Again, they will be *passivhaus* accreditation and will exceed national space standards and will be completed subject to a Homes England grant.

### Sam Granger, Senior Environmental Manager, Thirteen

Sam is part of Thirteen's new environmental management team focusing on decarbonisation, sustainability and climate change adaptation. She discussed the influences of Thirteen's approach to net zero, the action that has been taken to focus priorities and action, and the importance of building an organisation specific approach to addressing climate change.

Thirteen are a social landlord with 34,000 homes and 70,000 customers, as well as developing homes for sale with the majority of the stock in the Tees Valley area. In 2019 they began to assess their environmental sustainability drivers and spent time looking at their responsibilities as a landlord and the regulations they need to comply with. They have also sought to understand their stakeholder expectations, as well as their wider environmental impacts.

With any changes to the way services are delivered impacts to customers must be considered closely. They have designed their 'take control' campaign, with responsibility for environmental impacts shared by all within the organisation. They've worked to develop a priority action plan, examining in through the lenses of the business, their homes and also customers' needs. They seek to empower and educate their staff, as well

as obtaining a wider understanding of the climate emergency scenario. On homes they are looking to develop a road map to decarbonise all stock, with biodiversity and implications for green spaces considered, ensuring current arrangements are secured while maximising opportunity for the future.

Thirteen operate in around 20 local authorities so have partners with a varying degree of ambitions. They have examined baseline emissions – those from homes, offices and fleet vehicles – and have developed an informed approach to emission hotspots and have set a target of 2035 to decarbonise. This is a huge piece of work and across a 30-year investment period. The majority of their stock reaches EPC level C but they have ambitions to see most reach a passive level. They have conducted a survey with Savills and are developing an approach to each home type, as well as what technologies will be needed and have continued to deliver air-source heat-pumps and renewables, as well as working on innovation pilots using void properties.

## Campaign Partners:

