

ADEPT - Energy & Clean Growth Working Group

Minutes

Date & Time:	Thursday 4th September 13:30 - 15:00
Venue:	Microsoft Teams Meeting
Chair:	Daire Casey, Energy Services Manager, West Sussex County Council Deputy Chair: Katie Sargent, Greener Futures Group Manager, Surrey County Council
Attendees:	<p>Alex Chittenden - Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (ACH) Cara Elliott - Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (CEL) Daire Casey - Energy Services Manager, West Sussex County Council (DCA) David Dale - Policy Officer, ADEPT (DDA) Eithne George - Head of Economy & Climate Change, Cambridgeshire County Council (EGE) Ellen Rodger - Energy Programme Manager, Devon County Council (ERO) George Berry - Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (GBE) Katie Sargent - Greener Futures Group Manager, Surrey County Council (KSA) Kofi Adu-Gyamfi – Climate Change Service Lead, West Berkshire Council (KGY) Lynn Trigwell - Head of Climate and Environment, Wiltshire Council (LTR) Margaret Enstone - Sustainability and Climate Change Lead Officer, Darlington Borough Council (MEN) Melania Tarquino - Strategic Energy Lead, Surrey County Council (MTA) Olivia Mortimer - Energy Administrator, West Sussex County Council (OMO) Patrick Allcorn - Head of Local Energy, Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (PAL) Samuel Nolan - Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (SNO) Sarah Fearon - Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (SFE) Sarah Gilbert – Head of Climate Action, Oxfordshire County Council (SGI) Steve Baggs - Net Zero Programme Lead for the Greater South East Net Zero Hub (SBA) Thomas Day – Head of Energy and Low Carbon Programme, Essex County Council (TDA) Victoria Burvill - Senior Climate Officer, Wiltshire Council (VBU)</p>
Apologies:	<p>Carolyn McKenzie</p> <p>David Lewis</p>
Guests:	<p>Alex Chittenden (Head of Community Benefits and Local and Spatial Planning, Energy Infrastructure Planning Reform), Department for Energy Security and Net Zero</p> <p>Steve Baggs (Net Zero Programme Lead – South), Greater South East Net Zero Hub</p>
Note Taker:	Olivia Mortimer, West Sussex County Council

Item No.	Item	Lead
1.	<p><u>Welcome & minutes</u> Welcome to,</p> <p>Alex Chittenden - Head of Community Benefits and Local Planning, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero</p> <p>Steve Baggs - (Net Zero Programme Lead – South), Greater South East Net Zero Hub</p> <p>Sam Nolan – Policy lead, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero</p> <p>George Berry – Policy lead, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero</p> <p>Cara Elliott – Policy adviser, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero</p> <p>Sarah Fearon – Policy lead, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero</p>	Daire Casey
2.	<p><u>Community benefits and shared ownership for low carbon energy infrastructure</u></p> <p><u>Community benefits: Timeline overview</u> December 2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean Power Action Plan published • Scottish Government consultation published on Good practice principles <p>March 2025:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community benefits (CB) guidance for transmission infrastructure published • Power in Planning and Infrastructure bill introduced – this is now at committee stage at the House of Lords <p>July 2025:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CB guidance for onshore wind published <p><u>Mandatory Community Benefits Funds:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government is considering introduction of a mandatory scheme to place obligations on developers of low carbon energy infrastructure to provide community benefit funds • If scheme were to be introduced, it would be guided by the following principles: Flexibility, Community led, Transparency, Lasting Legacy • Community Benefits and Shared Ownership for Low Carbon Energy Infrastructure Working paper has been published and open for responses from 21st May until 16th July 2025. • ACH states they are currently in analysis mode of responses received and working out what future recommendations will be. • A mandatory scheme could come into force by the end of 2027 at the earliest. • If implemented, it would not be retrospective. 	Alex Chittenden, DESNZ

- Part 1 seeks views on potential introduction of a mandatory community benefit scheme
- Part 2 seeks views on how best to facilitate shared ownership

Scope:

- SBA states that the policy on scope of scheme should: ensure communities fairly benefit, promote fast deployment, support deployment of nascent technologies and minimise potential impact of scheme on consumer bills.

Use of Funds:

- May be used for enhancements to the local area, economy and environment
- Examples of potential funded projects: support for community energy projects, grants to local SME's, biodiversity and ecological programmes, local energy efficiency improvements etc
- Prohibited uses include: Political campaigns, personal gain for religious or political groups, as a substitute for any statutory funding etc

Level of Benefit:

- 2 potential options set out in working paper over how level of benefit may be calculated:
- Option 1: Contribution based on generating capacity (£/MW)
- Option 2: Contribution based on generation output (£/MWh)

Part 2 of working paper: Shared ownership

- Working paper seeks evidence to further understanding of current shared ownership practices in GB – barriers to take up of shared ownership and whether voluntary approach to shared ownership is sufficient.
- There are pre-existing powers in the 2015 Infrastructure Act – known as the “Community Electricity Right” (CER)
- These are GB only powers, which would enable the Secretary of State to make regulations that would give individuals/community groups the right to purchase a stake in renewable electricity generation facility in their area.
- This is the broad enabling framework which would effectively mandate that shared ownership must be offered for renewable infrastructure sites of a certain size.
- The paper seeks views on whether the government should mandate that developers offer shared ownership.

In discussion:

-ERO comments on position of Devon County Council – developing own renewable assets but facing difficulty financially including high cost of borrowing from public loans board, so welcomes idea of a community fund.

-DCA comments on position of West Sussex County Council –built out a number of grid connected projects & have voluntarily put in a community benefit fund as a result of this. But primarily tend to work with local schools which are maintained by the county council as well as Parish Councils.

-TDA comments on position of Essex County Council- which have solar farm developments looking to build out on land assets which the council own. Also

	<p>have a range of community benefits groups – up to 9 Community Benefit Societies in Essex -many of which are in a position to engage with solar developers. However, one worry is transaction costs for doing these individual projects are insurmountable for most community energy groups.</p> <p>-EGE comments that key issues not so much viability of funds in some cases but the discrepancy between the contributions which community energy projects make vs private sector contributions. In addition to proper governance- EGE comments that local authorities are well placed to be involved in the distribution of funds.</p> <p>-DCA comments on setting realistic expectations on community energy groups and the need to think about their sustainability as age profile of members increase and key members leave group.</p>	
<p>3.</p>	<p><u>Energy & Climate in the Local Government Outcomes Framework</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announced by Deputy Prime Minister on 3rd July at LGA conference • A new approach for government to work with English Councils • An outcomes framework with 15 priority outcomes – including Environment, Circular Economy and Climate Change which will be most relevant to this group • MHCLG are leading this and it is expected that it will likely help determine future funding. • Will be in consultation until 12th September. • After consultation – it will be published by the end of 2025 and then live and in use in April 2026. • KSA comments that it appears to be driven by data/metrics available at a local level- however there do seem to be gaps. Although “climate change” is in the title there is no mention of carbon emission, fuel poverty, energy infrastructure etc. • KSA comments on importance of adding information/data from local authorities to this to help influence this piece of work <p>In discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PAA states that his understanding is this primarily centred around obtaining metrics – predominantly Office for National Statistics (ONS) metrics. Most of the climate change metrics are 2 years out of date – therefore they want data that is measurable and up to date. • DCA noted that NESO may have relevant up-to-date datasets which are useful. There may be a lesser degree of data quality, but this may still be useful and, importantly, more timely. • PAA states that DESNZ are engaging with MHCLG on this. • DDA states that this outcomes framework is on ADEPT’s radar -colleagues from MHCLG recently attended the leadership team meeting and gave a presentation on this. 	<p>Katie Sargent</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DDA comments that the principle of the framework is not around linking performance metrics to actual allocations of funds, but rather funding simplification will happen with better metrics + give more local control. • DDA echoes KSA concerns around lack of climate indicators in framework. 	
<p>4.</p>	<p><u>Emerging CDEL funding opportunity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There's potentially some funding available which would have to be spent this financial year. • Funding covers renewable energy, energy storage, EV's but not heat decarbonisation. • Focused on power and renewables. • The projects themselves wouldn't have to be completed this financial year but ideally would be completed by at least the end of next financial year. • Possible bidding around October with notification in early November. • Currently the hubs have been asked to collate a pipeline of information to understand what could be delivered. • GSENGH have pulled together 198 projects in the greater southeast region with a potential value of £130 million • There may be a level of match funding – but this is still to be agreed. • Are looking predominantly at community energy schemes, local authority schemes and social housing schemes. • PAA reiterates for people with potential viable projects get in touch with their local net zero hub. 	<p>Steve Baggs, GSENGH</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p><u>ADEPT update</u> Transport / Infrastructure</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Carbon Leadership Programme: There's been significant interest in the programme since we launched it in June, and places are limited for the remainder of the 2025/26 programme. Created in partnership with Proving Services and supported by the Department for Transport, the programme is designed to support local highway authorities measure and identify ways to reduce their carbon emissions. Rather than each authority investing considerable time and resources into developing its own carbon baselining tool and working in isolation with limited visibility of comparative performance, the programme offers a coordinated approach. 2. Live Labs 2: As part of the programme we commissioned the Behavioural Insights Team to explore the behavioural changes needed to run alongside technological change (see the report here). We have launched a pledge that invites stakeholders to drive meaningful decarbonisation across all aspects of the UK's road network and rethink how the highways infrastructure reduces carbon – for more information and to sign the pledge, see here. The latest Live Labs 2 blog focuses on the Devon A382 project (here). 	<p>Hannah Bartram</p>

- The 7th **National Traffic Managers Conference** is now being held online on Weds 8th Oct (it was meant to be held in Birmingham). The programme, and registration link, can be seen [here](#).

Devolution / Growth / Planning

- LGR & Devo webinars:** Our programme of support for members on Devo and LGR issues has now completed. We delivered 6 webinars: 1) becoming a unitary council 2) becoming a combined / statutory authority plus issue-specific webinars on Environment & Climate Change, Highways & Transport, Planning and Waste & Recycling. If you would to see any of the recordings & slides, please get in touch with [Hannah Bartram](#).
- Workforce issues:** Our Gen Z 'Find Your Path' campaign has been shortlisted for an award in the CN Workforce Awards 2025. The campaign was designed to inspire the Gen Z generation to explore careers in local government, directly addressing our urgent skills shortage. We've just published the debrief report, that captures key learnings from the campaign – read the report [here](#).
- We have published a policy position paper on the **Devolution Bill** ([here](#)). Whilst the association welcomed the introduction of the Bill, and the opportunity it presents for strengthening local leadership and place-based service delivery, we are very disappointed that the Bill does not propose to transfer or introduce new statutory environmental or climate-related functions to Strategic Authorities.

Environment / Climate

- In the most recent **climate change blog**, ADEPT policy officer David Dale discusses recent developments in some local authority climate policies and the implications these changes may have (see [here](#)).
- PACE Programme 2025:** The outputs from session one are now available, including a [summary](#), [video](#) and [blog](#). The first session: *'Translating global trends into local place leadership: opportunities and challenges'*, explored four critical megatrends reshaping place outcomes: climate volatility, spatial inequality, erosion of trust and demographic and digital shifts. The session summary brings together the key learnings and discussion points from the day. The video provides an overview of the session's key themes and insights from the expert speakers. We've also published a blog from Matt O'Neill, Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council.
- We are holding a joint webinar with the Environment Agency on the **Coastal Transition Accelerator Programme (CTAP)** webinar on Thursday 25th September 10:30-11:30. England has some of the fastest eroding coastline in Europe. Coast erosion is a natural, ongoing process, but with sea levels continuing to rise over the next century, the rate of coastal erosion in some places will accelerate. For some coastal locations it will no longer be technically or

	<p>economically feasible to provide protection. The Coastal Transition Accelerator Programme (CTAP) is looking at innovative ways to explore how we can work with and support people living, working and using coastal areas to adapt to the effects of climate change on the coast. To receive an appointment please email kylie.russell@eastsussex.gov.uk.</p> <p>Events/Other</p> <p>10. ADEPT Digital Academy: this is a bespoke learning programme, powered by Multiverse and funded by the Apprenticeship Levy, that will equip place teams with digital and data skills to lead transformation and deliver better outcomes for people and places. This programme is fully funded and will run as a pilot programme, starting in the autumn. You can find out more here.</p> <p>11. We will be running another series of joint webinars with the Environment Agency, and Natural England, over the autumn / winter. Dates to be announced shortly.</p> <p>12. Dates for your diary – for more detail please visit the Events page on the website (here):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Lunch & Learn with WDM on ‘PAS 2161: what to expect’ takes place 24 Sept – see here to book ii. Coastal Transition Accelerator Programme (CTAP) webinar on 25th September – please email kylie.russell@eastsussex.gov.uk to register. iii. National Traffic Managers Conference, 8th October, now online – booking site now live (here) iv. ADEPT will be at Highways UK (15&16 October) – Andrew Cook, 1st VP will be speaking and there are several Live Labs 2 presentations. To register for this free event, see here. v. ADEPT Autumn Conference, 20 & 21 November, Manchester – booking site now live (here) - Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester is confirmed as keynote speaker. 	
7.	<p><u>A.O.B.</u> No AOBs noted</p>	ALL
8.	<p><u>Date of next meeting</u> Thursday 16th October 2025 at 1:30 – 3:00 PM</p>	