

Policy Position:

CLIMATE CHANGE & GREEN GROWTH

May 2022

ADEPT

The Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport

POLICY POSITION: CLIMATE CHANGE & GREEN GROWTH KEY MESSAGES

- Local action is critical to deliver on net zero and climate change action, but this can only be achieved with co-ordinated leadership, support and resource from government, including a clear framework for delivery, coherent policy and powers for councils and appropriate long-term funding.
- Behaviour change is key, and councils are uniquely well-placed to provide the local infrastructure required to support change. More than half of the emission reductions we need to reach net zero rely on households and businesses adopting low-carbon solutions¹.
- Ensuring climate resilience in our places is vital: net zero cannot be achieved without preparing to adapt to already 'baked in' changes to the climate. We must do more to build resilience into local and national infrastructure, and to design and deliver our place-based services with this in mind.
- Tackling climate change must work in parallel with levelling up. We must address the human and environmental outcomes as well as the economic. To do this at place level will require local authority leadership to ensure that clean growth and green skills are intrinsic to local economic plans.
- ADEPT is calling on government to ensure policies and funding across planning reform, levelling up, place-based infrastructure, health disparities, environment and international trade are properly integrated and fully aligned with the Net Zero Strategy and the National Adaptation Programme. Climate change and green growth must be the key drivers across these policy areas.



¹ Climate Change Committee Local Authorities and the Sixth Carbon Budget (2020)



Introduction

The need for urgent action to tackle climate change by government at all levels – local, national and international – has never been greater. Overwhelming scientific evidence, numerous official reports and strategies have confirmed this, and public opinion calls for it – two-thirds of people around the world recognise that climate change is a global emergency², and in the UK that figure is 80%³.

In November 2021, the UK hosted the delayed COP26 (annual UN Conference of the Parties) and, while some significant agreements were reached, the opportunity to ensure that local government contributes to international efforts to respond to the challenges of the changing climate was largely missed.

Recent geopolitical events have underlined the need to improve energy supply resilience and decarbonise the grid through renewable energy generation at the local level. The government's aim of building back better and investing in making the UK a global leader in green technologies is an essential element of economic recovery from COVID-19⁴.

Adaptation is equally important. Net zero cannot be achieved without adaptation – making places more resilient to the impacts of a changing climate. The government's latest Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA)⁵ recognises that the 1.50C target limit on global warming may not be met – “the evidence shows that we must be prepared for warming up to 4°C” – and sets out the key risks from multiple climate challenges.

Local action is critical to deliver on net zero and climate change action, but it cannot be successful in isolation. The role of national government is crucial – to provide a clear framework for delivery, coherent policy and powers for councils, ambitious and co-ordinated leadership, and appropriate long-term funding. Government leadership and investment is vital to incentivise and enable clean growth, leveraging in private investment to the green economy.

Councils have a range of roles and tools to help deliver local climate action, and can work collaboratively with their local communities, businesses and other bodies. However, they are held back by gaps in powers, policy, funding, capacity and skills.

² UN Development Programme The People's Climate Vote (2021)

³ Ipsos and Health Foundation Climate Change and Health Survey (2021)

⁴ BEIS and Prime Minister's Office Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution (2020)

⁵ Defra UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (2022)

Context – the role of local authorities

Local authorities understand climate change risks and impacts in their areas. They are uniquely well-placed to reduce carbon emissions from key sectors (including buildings, transport, energy and waste), and to help places adapt to a changing climate. Most UK councils have declared climate emergencies⁶. Many of them have developed ambitious plans to reduce carbon emissions in line with, or faster than, the 2050 net zero target and to help their places adapt to the changing climate.

Local areas are determined to ‘build back greener’ from COVID-19. Future economic growth must be clean and resilient, with a managed transition from high to low carbon emissions industries based on green skills and jobs. Local authorities are keen to ensure a ‘just transition’ and know what their areas need. They can work with education and business to ensure their communities become more resilient and sustainable.

The UK has striking geographical inequalities between – and within – places. The government’s levelling up agenda⁷ aims to spread opportunity and reduce differences in economic, educational and social outcomes for people. Councils are key to levelling up locally and ensuring that the delivery of national policies is integrated at a place level.

The decisions made at a local and individual level must enable the local community, households and businesses to make easier low-carbon choices, particularly during an ongoing cost of living crisis. Lowering carbon emissions relies on the action of people as well as organisations. Councils are close to their communities and can communicate the co-benefits of local climate action and demonstrate how change can work in practice through innovation and trialling new technologies.

We must also ‘build back healthier’. The pandemic both highlighted and increased health inequalities⁸. The impacts of climate change cause ill health – both physical and mental – through warmer and wetter conditions and extreme weather events such as heat waves, storms and floods. These impacts are felt unequally, with disproportionate effects on older people, those on low incomes and on other vulnerable groups. On the other hand, there are big co-benefits to individual and public health from actions to tackle climate change.

Clean growth also means reducing the use of natural resources, developing a circular economy to minimise waste, and protecting and enhancing the natural environment and biodiversity. The Dasgupta Review⁹ highlighted the fundamental importance of nature as an asset, the dangerous economic and environmental consequences of failing to recognise this, and the opportunity to redefine how we measure economic and social value.

Local authorities are already working with their private sector partners to bring in the circular economy in their local area, but they need government to lead by example in promoting net zero and nature recovery in infrastructure and transport projects.

⁶ Climate Emergency UK List of Councils (2021)

⁷ DLUHC Levelling Up in the UK (2022)

⁸ NHS Health Inequalities Expert Advisory Group (2021)

⁹ HM Treasury Independent Review of the Economics of Biodiversity (2021)



WHAT ADEPT WILL DO

As an organisation, ADEPT is focused on collaboration, driving innovation, supporting members and influencing government, partners and stakeholders by being the ‘voice of place’.

We are able to take the experience and evidence from local authorities across the country to inform our conversations with government, to provide vital data on key services and to share best practice across key policy areas. ADEPT can bring the work of our members to public attention and support calls for empowering local leadership to meet government policy agendas.

Delivering programmes such as the ADEPT SMART Places Live Labs programme enables us to test out new technologies to support climate work in a local highways setting, and through the Excellence in Place Leadership (EiPL) programme, to develop thought leadership focused on place.

Collaborate with government and its agencies

One of ADEPT’s great strengths is its ability to collaborate and forge partnerships across the disparate sectors that form the place remit. We will continue to work with our range of partners across government, the private and public sectors as well as national organisations.

ADEPT welcomes the recognition by the Climate Change Committee (CCC)¹⁰, the National Audit Office (NAO)¹¹ and by the UK government¹² that local authorities have a key role in delivering the UK’s statutory 2050 net zero target and adaptation and resilience plans.

The CCC is developing a close, collaborative relationship with the new Office for Environmental Protection (OEP), although there is a clear intention in law that their remits do not overlap. While the CCC does not have an enforcement role, the OEP can enforce against legislation concerning climate change that falls within their remit as environmental law. ADEPT is strengthening its relationship with both bodies to ensure the voice of local authorities is heard.

Similarly, the government’s Net Zero Strategy announced the establishment of the Local Net Zero Forum to bring together national and local government senior officials on a regular basis to discuss policy and delivery options on net zero and ADEPT has been invited to be a member.

ADEPT will look to work proactively with government as it develops policies and programmes to tackle the climate change agenda, on both mitigation and adaptation.

- We will play an active role in making the Local Net Zero Forum a success and support the work of the Local Net Zero Hubs (the former BEIS Local Energy Hubs) to promote best practice in decarbonisation and clean growth and support local authorities to develop net zero projects. We are represented on the Oversight Board of Defra’s public dialogue programme about building resilient places and services.
- Through our relationship with the Local Adaptation Advisory Panel (LAAP), ADEPT will contribute directly to the next National Adaptation Programme (NAP3). We will continue to work closely with the LAAP as the forum for dialogue between central and local government on climate change adaptation.
- Working with Defra through the LAAP, we will share innovation and good practice in adaptation and publish updated guidance for councils on preparing for the impacts of climate change¹³, ensuring this complements related guidance from other sources, such as Local Partnerships¹⁴.

¹⁰ Climate Change Committee Local Authorities and the Sixth Carbon Budget (2020)

¹¹ National Audit Office Local Government and Net Zero in England (2021)

¹² BEIS Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener (2021)

¹³ ADEPT, Defra and LAAP Preparing for a Changing Climate (2019)

¹⁴ Local Partnerships Climate Adaptation Toolkit (2021)

- ADEPT will continue to work with Defra on the local delivery of the Environment Act 2021 to implement new duties, including Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Biodiversity Net Gain, to promote nature recovery and nature-based solutions for climate mitigation and adaptation.
- Funded by the Department for Transport, our Live Labs 2 programme will build on the work of the ADEPT SMART Places Live Labs 1 programme, to identify practical and innovative ways of promoting decarbonisation and adaptation through our local assets and services. Live Labs 2 will focus on net zero and resilient highways and will create partnerships between the private and public sectors, academia and SMEs across the UK.
- We will support the work of the CCC as they engage with local authorities to hear about net zero, climate resilient transition, and the gaps and challenges to delivery. This work will inform part of their 2022 Progress Report to Parliament.
- The OEP will play a vital role in holding government and other public authorities to account against their environmental responsibilities and the law. ADEPT will continue to support the OEP as they establish themselves in this role, building on the positive relationship we developed in their start-up phase.
- ADEPT will work with the Environment Agency (EA) on its Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy and welcome their focus on developing climate resilient places and future-proofing infrastructure. We recognise that many of the largest projects in their major investment programme are being delivered by and with councils, and we are working with the EA to help ensure that these are delivered successfully.



Collaborate with a range of partners

Climate change and the environment are one of ADEPT's three strategic priorities¹⁵. We will continue to deliver a support programme for our members and partners to share best practice and signposting them to information and resources from a wide range of sources.

- ADEPT will continue its work as part of the Blueprint Coalition¹⁶ of local government, environmental and academic organisations that are working together to set out and lobby for the national leadership, policies, powers and funding needed to empower local authorities to deliver at scale and pace.
- The UK's presidency of COP offers a particular opportunity to ensure that the sector contributes to focusing national and international efforts to tackle climate change. ADEPT will work with sector partners, particularly the Local Government Association (LGA) and Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (Solace), to galvanise the work of councils collectively and ensure that local government's voice is heard.
- Through the Future Highways Research Group, ADEPT works with private sector partners to produce common frameworks, tools and measures to enable standard reporting of carbon footprints for in-house emissions (scope 1 and 2). We are continuing to work with them to develop further standard guidance and tools for supply chain emissions (scope 3).
- Building back greener and healthier from the pandemic demands an integrated approach based on effective partnerships and leadership for shaping places locally. As we recover, we must reduce the inequalities that COVID-19 has highlighted and heightened. ADEPT is exploring better policy integration across the climate, health and levelling up agendas, and is working with the other public sector associations (ADASS, ADCS, ADPH, CIPFA¹⁷) to help scope and steer this work.
- ADEPT will work with public health leaders locally and nationally, including ADPH, the UK Health Alliance on Climate Change (UKHACC), and the Office for Health Improvement & Disparities (OHID), to better understand the health impacts of climate change. We will work together on developing co-ordinated plans for extreme weather events, particularly to support older people and other vulnerable groups.

¹⁵ ADEPT Strategic Plan 2020-23 (2019)

¹⁶ Blueprint Coalition A Blueprint for Accelerating Climate Action and a Green Recovery at a Local Level (2021)

¹⁷ Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, Association of Directors of Children's Services, Association of Directors of Public Health, Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy



Drive innovation and share best practice

ADEPT is an organisation focused on driving innovation and sharing best practice across place-based services. Through our partnerships and network of boards and working groups, we ensure that our work with partners and on key programmes, such as Live Labs and EiPL is shared with members and the wider sector.

- **Clean and green procurement** - we will work with the LGA, CIPFA and our corporate partners to help councils use their commissioning and procurement activities to develop low carbon opportunities in their supply chain and ensure that their purchasing power across the organisation is aligned with and driving their climate action plans.
- **Green finance** - we will help councils maximise the public and private investment funding available to them to deliver their climate and nature action plans. We will update our *Green Finance Toolkit for Place Leaders*¹⁸ and work with partners to develop further thought leadership and training opportunities for our members.
- **Green skills and jobs** - we have supported work by some of our Blueprint partners on council actions on green skills and jobs¹⁹ and will promote this to our members. We will work with partners more generally to identify skills proposals for how these might be addressed.
- **Waste collection, recycling and disposal authorities** - we will work with partners including Defra, the private sector and the CCC to develop guidance and tools to promote decarbonisation in local waste management. We will work with trade associations to promote decarbonisation by providers and their supply chains.

Provide local leadership

ADEPT will support local authorities to develop and deliver robust Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Biodiversity Net Gain policies through the duties and opportunities presented by the Environment Act 2021. We will support councils to:

- Make best use of their natural assets to develop nature-based solutions for adaptation such as flood risk management.
- Manage green spaces and highways verges to reduce emissions, capture carbon, and promote biodiversity.
- Work with partners to promote equitable access to nature as part of the levelling up agenda²⁰.

ADEPT will engage with our private sector corporate partners and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to:

- Help focus plans for local recovery, growth and levelling up reflect the need to tackle climate change and promote clean growth.
- Focus on how all parts of the supply chain can contribute, working with partners to commission any further research and to develop metrics for measuring the impact of place-based strategies.

ADEPT will lead and support local communities and businesses to adopt low-carbon, circular economy and resilient solutions, and develop the infrastructure and services to encourage behaviour change.

¹⁸ ADEPT Green Finance Toolkit for Place Leaders (2020)

¹⁹ Ashden and Friends of the Earth Road to Zero Carbon: Council Action on Green Jobs and Skills (2022)

²⁰ Wildlife and Countryside Link Nature for Everyone (2022)

Make the case for improved policy, powers and funding

Resilient and adaptive assets and infrastructure are essential to reduce carbon emissions and withstand the effects of extreme weather events. Homes and buildings must be designed to the highest standards to minimise their carbon impact and reduce the need for costly retrofitting in the future. Transport, utilities and digital infrastructure must be designed and maintained with the same objectives as priorities.

- ADEPT will work with government to ensure that its policies on strategic national infrastructure and local planning adequately reflect the priority to tackle climate change and promote clean growth.
- Public policies including planning must encourage developments that mean reduced car use and more active travel, adequate infrastructure for low carbon public transport, clean energy generation from a range of technologies, and access to good quality green infrastructure and nature. The Planning White Paper²¹ lacked ambition in this respect. We will scrutinise further policy proposals to ensure this is rectified.

²¹ MHCLG Planning for the Future (2020)



KEY ASKS OF THE GOVERNMENT AND OTHERS

ADEPT calls on the government to ensure that its policies across planning reform, levelling up, infrastructure (buildings, transport, energy and waste), health disparities, environmental improvement and international trade are fully aligned with the Net Zero Strategy and the National Adaptation Programme. It is vital that climate change and green growth are key drivers across all these policy areas, and that they are properly integrated to deliver the outcomes needed. Funding allocations and project appraisals must be driven by the same factors.

We endorse the CCC's call for government to work collaboratively with local authorities and regional agencies to deliver the Net Zero Strategy by providing:

- **Framework** - an agreed framework for delivery for net zero incorporating local and national climate action
- **Financing** - appropriate long-term financing to support local authorities in delivering net zero
- **Flexibility** - local operational flexibility around how local areas address climate change
- **Facilitation** - coherent policy and powers to facilitate delivery

Working with our Blueprint Coalition partners, we have set out some more specific asks in the *Blueprint for accelerating climate action and a green recovery at a local level*. The document sets out five immediate priorities, as well as detailed proposals for how the government can accelerate a green recovery from COVID-19, whilst helping to set the foundations for longer term solutions to the climate and ecological crises we face. These priorities are essential for a levelling up agenda that must have climate change and green growth at its heart:

- **Invest in low-carbon and climate-resilient infrastructure** to deliver on statutory national carbon budgets and drive local green economic growth. For example, for transport, this means bringing forward investment in rail, electric buses, bus networks, segregated cycle lanes, electric vehicle charging, and digital connectivity.
- **Support reskilling, retraining and research for a net-zero, resilient economy**, integrating funding for these programmes and joining them up at local level to align this with place-based employment and business support programmes.
- **Upgrade our homes and buildings to ensure they are fit for the future**, by retrofitting existing homes and schools to a high standard by 2030, and giving local authorities the planning and building regulations powers they need to require all new homes and schools to be zero carbon by 2025.
- **Invest in transport and digital infrastructure** to make it easy for people to walk, cycle or use public transport and where possible to work remotely.
- **Provide additional funding** to councils to accelerate tree planting, restore peatland, protect and improve parks and green spaces, and address current inequalities in access to local green space.

With respect to international trade agreements post-Brexit, government must ensure that trade deals with other countries re-affirm our commitments under the 2015 Paris Agreement and our ambition to meet net zero and improve the environment. Deals should encourage investment and innovation in low carbon goods, services and technology, with liberalised tariffs and regulations to promote this. They should also include clear and enforceable environmental commitments to protect and improve natural capital, tackle pollution, promote sustainable agriculture, and support the transition to a circular economy.



Support and resources for local government

As well as policy alignment, there are a number of broad areas where government must provide the delivery framework and resources to enable local authorities to put climate change and green growth at the heart of their work. We would support new duties on councils to provide leadership in climate mitigation and adaptation locally, and to report on their progress in tackling climate change across all of their services and responsibilities, providing that councils are given the powers and funding that they need to do this.

Requirements for other sectors

There are many other sectors and bodies that must play a part in climate action and green growth. Public agencies such as National Highways, National Rail, sub-national transport bodies and port authorities must be required to prioritise climate change, and deliver emissions reductions and resilience in their planning, investment decisions and operations.

Businesses should be incentivised – and where appropriate, required – to prioritise climate change mitigation and adaptation in their planning, operations and reporting, including through their supply chains.

Government has an important role in sending clear signals to the market about its ambitions and intentions. Business organisations and sector trade associations can help communicate these messages and support their members to deliver. Professional bodies working in the built environment and infrastructure sectors are also important and will play a key role in developing green skills and jobs.

- ADEPT members are the place-making strategists and policy shapers across top tier local authority areas
- ADEPT members are specialists, delivering services and sharing best practice across key sectors including environment, planning, housing, transport and economy
- ADEPT members design strategies for the future, taking communities beyond 2035
- ADEPT members operate in networks, cutting through boundaries to work with partners across the political, public, private and community sectors
- ADEPT members provide opportunities to develop new talent, supporting the place directors of tomorrow

ADEPT

The Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport

www.adeptnet.org.uk

