

# A blueprint for accelerating climate action and a green recovery at the local level

As a coalition of local government, research and environmental organisations, we have come together to set out a blueprint for how the Government can accelerate climate action and a green recovery from Covid-19 at the local level. **We are calling on the Government to support local authorities in delivering climate action.**

The UK's net zero by 2050 target, set by the Government in 2019, can only be reached with the contribution of councils working at the local level. Without properly empowering and resourcing local authorities the target will be missed. But with further support and by working with a wide variety of partners within their areas - including local people, businesses, community groups and voluntary groups - councils could reach net zero ahead of 2050.

Empowering local authorities is not a 'nice to have' but an essential. The response to Covid-19 shows how local authorities can respond effectively to a crisis, many of them are already developing plans to address the climate and ecological crises too but they urgently need the powers and resources to scale up action.

The actions we recommend align closely with priorities set out by the Climate Change Committee (CCC), which acknowledges the important role of local authorities. The benefits are unarguable, including improved access to nature for all, tackling inequalities, creating jobs and supporting resilient local economies.

The CCC is strongly recommending that the plan to kickstart the economy after Covid-19 must be related to the UK's climate goals. This is supported by research from the Local Government Association, which has shown that 700,000 direct jobs could be created in England's low-carbon and renewable energy economy by 2030, rising to more than 1.18 million by 2050.

**We present five immediate priorities for how government can accelerate a green recovery from coronavirus and help to set the foundations for longer term solutions to the climate and ecological crises we face:**

1. Invest in low-carbon and climate-resilient infrastructure including public transport, renewable energy and electric vehicle charging
2. Support reskilling, retraining and research to accelerate the move to a net-zero economy
3. Upgrade our existing homes to ensure they are fit for the future and ensure new housing is zero carbon
4. Make it easy for people to walk or cycle, and work remotely
5. Accelerate tree planting, peatland restoration, green spaces and other green infrastructure

## About the blueprint

[www.aeptnet.org.uk/documents/blueprint-accelerating-climate-action-and-green-recovery-local-level](http://www.aeptnet.org.uk/documents/blueprint-accelerating-climate-action-and-green-recovery-local-level)

Our blueprint sets out how local authorities are already delivering on the climate emergency and the national policies, powers and funding needed to empower them to scale up action. We have drawn extensively on the direct experience of many councils as they develop their own climate action plans, as well as their more recent experience at the frontline of the coronavirus response.

## Building back better

The pandemic has been – and continues to be – an unprecedented shock to our lives, and provides a stark reminder that prevention is better than cure. We have seen how the threat to human life and resilient economic activity is increased by damage to natural systems. We must tackle the climate and ecological emergencies together and reduce the inequalities that coronavirus has helped lay bare.

This is what our communities want. Amidst the tragedy and stress of the pandemic, people have adapted to working remotely and communities have valued cleaner air and time spent in nature. Polling has shown that the majority of people want climate change prioritised in the economic recovery.

The Covid-19 crisis has demonstrated the unique role of local authorities, who have responded rapidly and effectively. Councils' unique insight into local communities and circumstances, their service delivery, regulatory functions and convening power, will also enable them to drive carbon emissions reductions across their whole area in ways that can also deliver better public health, reduced inequalities, a healthier environment and thriving local economies.

**To deliver this shared agenda, government's approach to net zero must put place-based action at its heart.**

## Resources needed

Coronavirus has put councils in a vulnerable position with new responsibilities and greater community needs combined with significant financial uncertainty. Although government funding to deal with the crisis has been welcome, councils have seen huge new spending demands at the same time as seeing normal revenue streams reduced or completely cut.

Government should consider how it can join up and simplify the funding that is already available to local government, how this can be focused on carbon emission reductions, and where it should be accelerated. Simply providing certainty around medium and long-term resourcing will be of considerable importance in enabling councils to deliver climate action.

Above and beyond this, there will be a need for new funding. The Climate Change Committee has advised that net zero by 2050 can be met within the agreed resource cost of only 1 - 2% of GDP each year. And they note that it may be possible to partially or fully offset the resource costs through the quality of life benefits alone. Councils also need a supportive national policy framework, but recent proposals to reform the planning system risk hampering local councils' ability to require high quality net zero development. The Government describes clean growth as 'one of the greatest industrial opportunities of our time' but measures announced so far do not go far enough.

## Your feedback welcome

Our blueprint is a starting point for discussion. We will continue to work, engage and collaborate with a wide range of organisations and we welcome your feedback. You can contact us through Hannah Bartram, Chief Operating Officer of ADEPT ([hannah.bartram@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:hannah.bartram@eastsussex.gov.uk)).



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