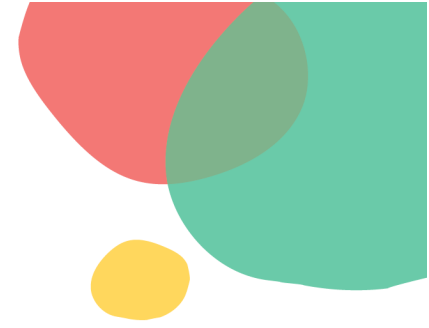




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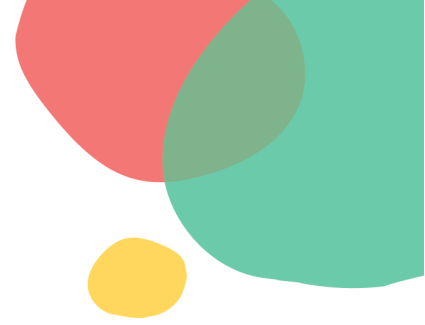


# People, place, and planet

Place-sensitive participatory policy  
development for a just transition to net  
zero.

Tania Carregha and Samanthi Themini-mulle

January 2024



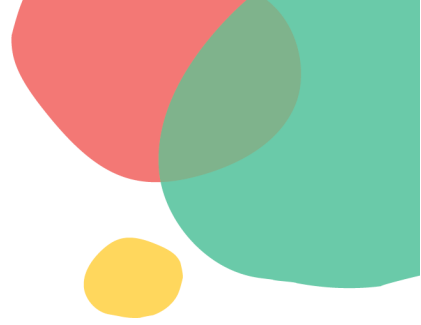
# **We believe that involving communities leads to better decision-making.**

## **About the Institute for Community Studies**

The Institute for Community Studies is a research institute with people at its heart. Powered by the not-for-profit organisation, The Young Foundation, we work to influence change, bridging the gap between communities, evidence, and policymaking.

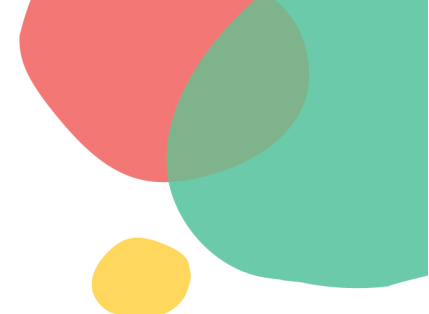
## **About the British Academy's Policy Insights Case Studies**

This work has been generously funded by the British Academy as part of a portfolio of policy-focused research projects under the theme of sustainability for people and planet. It will inform 'Where We Live Next', the British Academy's programme of policy work exploring environmental sustainability through the lens of place and place-sensitive policy.



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# Executive summary

The transition to net zero carbon emissions presents a major social and technical challenge, which will change most aspects of how we live. There is broad consensus that the fairest path to achieving 'net zero' is one that build public support by providing opportunities for participation (Demski, 2021; Sunak, 2023; OECD, 2023). However, there are several systemic challenges preventing widespread public participation in the transition, such as a lack of cohesive guidance and frameworks, limited resources and capacity, and gaps in evaluation that make it difficult to determine what is (and isn't) working.

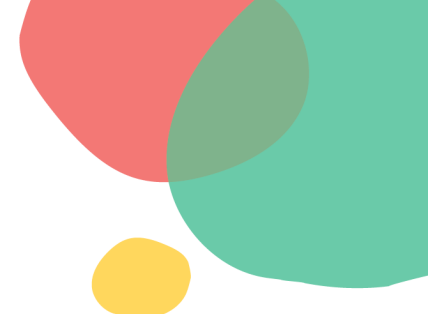
Participatory policy development (PPD) is a potential route to engaging individuals and communities in decisions about the transition to net zero, with the potential to build understanding and support. This work recommends a methodology for person-centred, place-sensitive participatory policymaking, tested in three case study locations across England - Luton, Hartlepool, and Newcastle - and refined iteratively. This pilot unearthed place-specific and cross-cutting findings, presented in this report alongside short case studies highlighting outcomes of the process in each place.

The following cross-cutting findings were identified:

1. Capacity and progress on net zero affect local authorities' abilities to engage in participatory policymaking.
2. It can be challenging to convince stakeholders of their role in policy processes.
3. There are different understandings of what fairness and justice in the transition means across stakeholder groups.
4. While there are common opportunities and challenges in different places, the need for place-sensitive working remains.
5. There is an opportunity to use net zero policies to address other local challenges.

Based on the findings, the report sets forth the following policy recommendations:

1. Use a person-centred, place-sensitive approach to reducing carbon emissions towards net zero.
2. Establish a common language and shared understanding around the 'just transition'.
3. Prioritise carbon reduction policies that have a positive impact on other local challenges.
  - Target common leverage points, such as financial deprivation and low trust, as starting points for net zero policies across levels of governance.
4. Consider the role of 'soft' infrastructure and intangible assets, such as resident groups and community cohesion, in supporting the delivery of a just transition.



# Introduction

The UK has set a legally binding target to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050. There is broad acknowledgement that achieving net zero is a social as well as a technical challenge, which will require changes to most aspects of how we live (Chilvers, et al., 2017). A crucial part of achieving net zero is to build public support for and participation in these coming changes (Demski, 2021). Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has said the “fairest credible path” to net zero is “a way that brings people with us” (2023). The OECD echoes the importance of participation, stating that transition to net zero can only succeed with ‘strong public support and widespread opportunities for people and firms’ (2023).

However, public engagement is not part of the country’s net zero strategy, and no plans have been published to enact and evaluate it (Sasse, et al. 2021). Additionally, most decarbonisation efforts to date have been in areas that require little public engagement (e.g., the power sector), and plans for delivering and evaluating community participation in the transition remain limited (Demski, 2021). Opportunities to engage the public remain, both in terms of achieving collective action and in involving citizens in decision-making about how to reach net zero, including policymaking (Demski, 2021).

The local or ‘place’ level is particularly important in achieving net zero, as local authorities hold power and responsibility over areas such as transport, social housing, and waste (Rankl, et al., 2023). These authorities therefore have a key role to play, including through the engagement of local communities (Rankl, et al., 2023), to build collective action and make collaborative decisions on local policy for net zero.

In this work, we interrogate and test what a place-based collaborative approach to climate policy might look like, and how it might be enacted in practice. This work is grounded in a theoretical approach, summarised as ‘person-centred place-sensitive’, which the Institute for Community Studies has developed over the past two years, with funding from the Nuffield Foundation. The current programme of work has allowed us to take move beyond the theoretical approach, towards an exploration of how to put the principles in practice in places.



## Why participatory policy development (PPD)

Those that are thought to be most vulnerable in society are often denied participation in research and policy development (Aldridge, 2016). This is mirrored by current policy debates and developments – and even community initiatives – on the transition to net zero, which tend to struggle to be inclusive and representative (Anantharaman et al., 2019; Murphy et al., 2021; Taylor Aiken et al., 2017; Webb et al., 2022). However, the inclusion of community and stakeholder voices in policymaking processes has the potential to create a range of benefits both for those who participate and for the overall outcome (CIVICUS and Rietbergen-McCracken, 2020).

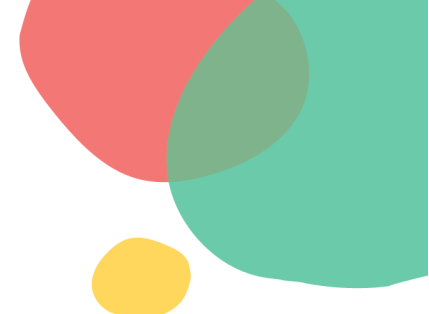
PPD practices seek to include the voices of communities and people affected by a policy issue in crafting solutions, by positioning them as active participants in the design process (Blomkamp, 2018). Considered a form of 'deeper' participation, this enables participants to take command of the process and outcomes (Chambers, 1996).

PPD is sometimes referred to as policy 'co-design', in reference to participation in the design of a new public policy. Although co-design practices come from private sector innovation literature, they are increasingly being applied to public services (Blomkamp, 2018). In the private sector, co-design processes seek to include 'end-users' of a product or service. In this same logic, policy co-design includes those who will be affected or most affected by a policy issue in decision-making. Policy co-design therefore incorporates the needs of those affected by an issue and unearths their ideas for solutions, based on their lived experience (Booth, 2019).

Participatory policy practices can help amplify the voices of communities often marginalised in existing processes, and bring a wider recognition of who holds 'expertise' when solving problems (Booth, 2019, De Smedt and Borch, 2021). Arnstein, a foundational thinker on citizen participation, believed having the chance to think of and develop solutions is a way of empowering citizens (1969).

When done well, participatory policy practices offer the potential to identify problems and solutions that speak to the needs and interests of various actors and can lead to improved policy design and enhanced decision-making processes (Rodriguez and Komendantova, 2022). Additionally, participatory processes are a way of acknowledging and incorporating local knowledge, skills, and resources in solutions (Mubita, et al., 2017).

PPD has several limitations and potential risks, which require careful consideration. One of the key elements of a successful process is including a diverse set of voices, but this adds social complexity and may lead to difficulties in mutual understanding and decision-making. Participatory processes can be susceptible to domination by some voices in the room, which may mirror local relationships of power (Mubita, et al., 2017). Another key risk is that participatory processes may not lead to change due to rigid and centralised decision-making and resource allocation mechanisms (Mubita, et al., 2017). The methodology developed through this work seeks to mitigate the potential impact of these risks, for instance through facilitation that was sensitive to local conditions and power dynamics. Exercises were designed to foster equitable participation and were accompanied by accessible baseline information to manage differences in knowledge levels. Engaging local authorities brought expert knowledge on potential barriers to the implementation of solutions, and how to overcome them. Concurrently, we attempted to manage expectations of the outcomes of the workshops to avoid disappointment.



# Participatory approaches in the transition to net zero

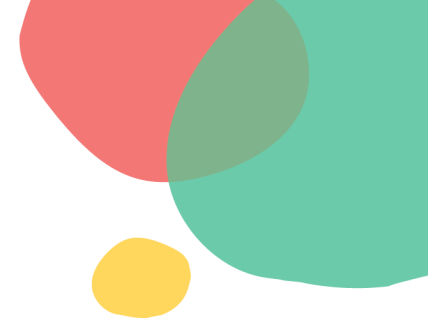
PPD is increasingly being used to engage local people in the development of projects and programmes, for instance in international development (Mubita, et al., 2017). In the context of the transition to net zero, participatory policy practices offer a route to a more inclusive debate of what policy should look like across places.

Public engagement with net zero is conceptualised as a twofold challenge; including citizens in decision-making on how to reach net zero (including policymaking) and engaging the public in action to reduce carbon emissions (Demski, 2021). These two challenges are interlinked, as increasing engagement in decision-making may strengthen changes to behaviour, for instance by promoting understanding of why changes are happening and building policy acceptance (Demski, 2021).

Public concern for climate change is at an all-time high, with individuals becoming increasingly worried due to the increased visibility of climate impacts (Demski, 2021). However, this concern does not necessarily translate to an understanding of or support for the changes required to meet net zero carbon emissions (Demski, 2021). A nationally representative survey by the Institute for Community Studies and Ipsos found widespread awareness of climate change and willingness to act, with only 3% of people uninterested in lowering their carbon footprint (2021). However, only 12% of respondents felt fully aware of how the transition to net zero would affect them (Institute for Community Studies and Ipsos, 2021). This points to an opportunity to build both public understanding and acceptance of the transition to net zero, for which participatory policy practices can act as an active route. There is evidence that public engagement, especially in decision-making, can promote understanding of why changes are happening and build consent for societal changes (Demski, 2021). The Climate Change Committee (CCC) agrees that 'if people understand what is needed and why, if they have options and can be involved in decision-making processes, they will support the transition to Net Zero' (2020, p.13).

There is evidence of an increasing appetite for public participation in policies around the transition to net zero. There is increasing demand from citizens themselves to be more involved in decisions, demonstrated by high participation in climate assemblies (Demski, 2021). The Institute for Community Studies and Ipsos identified broad support for wider participation in decisions to reach net zero, with 44% of survey respondents calling for the involvement of local communities (Institute for Community Studies and Ipsos, 2021). Similarly, decision-making and knowledge generating bodies are calling for increased and deeper public participation in decisions around the transition to net zero. The CCC, for instance, sees a vital role for people in delivering net zero, and calls for involvement of people in developing proposed solutions (2020). The UK's Energy Research Centre also calls for deeper public engagement in decisions about the direction and purposes of energy transitions (Chilvers et al., 2017), viewing this a route to tackle questions of equity, justice and control associated to the transition, as well as a route to overcoming public resistance, gaining social acceptance of policies, and enabling bottom-up initiatives (Chilvers et al., 2017). The OECD echoes these calls for public participation in complex policy areas including climate change, as a way of finding common ground and supporting action (2020).





The use of participatory policy practices in the transition to net zero is by no means new (Wesselink, et al., 2011). We have seen parliament-commissioned climate assemblies, local authority-led citizens' juries, and third-sector or community-led research and engagement. However, there is little consistency in the delivery of these strategies, and limited recognition of the impact of these mechanisms on policy decisions. Public engagement is not part of the governments' net zero strategy, nor is there a clear plan, or guidance for how to deliver it. This has led to a loss of momentum in public participation in environmental governance, partly due to disappointments about the achievements of these processes (Wesselink, et al., 2011). This echoes a historical struggle to embed public engagement in policymaking, limiting the consistency and effectiveness of approaches (Norris and Ilott, 2015).

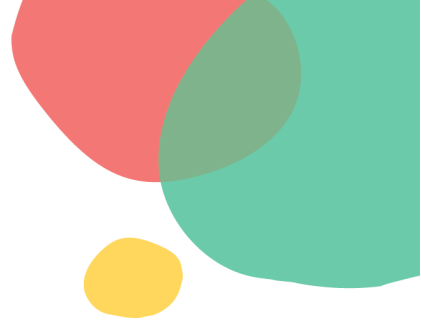
Examples of participatory practices related to the transition to net zero can be found across a range of geographies, from national policymaking to local and hyperlocal decision-making. At a national level, the UK has set up a Climate Assembly with 108 members who represent the general population. They met over the course of six weekends (three in person and three online) and were supported by expert leads, an advisory and academic panel, and notable leaders across business, faith, and civil society. Feedback from the process shows that taking part in the assembly positively impacted individuals' 'appetite and confidence' to engage in decision-making (Climate Assembly UK, 2020). However, it is unclear if and how the recommendations of the assembly have been taken forward, and whether similar assemblies will continue to inform the government as the transition to net zero unfolds.

At a local level, there is growing interest in engaging communities in decisions related to climate change and climate action. The Local Government Association (LGA) has published resources to support climate action in local government, including communication with and engagement of local communities. The LGA has hosted webinars and published blogs focusing on community engagement, sharing tips, and showcasing best practice across the sector. However, this is not joined up with expectations in national government, whose plan for local government in net zero notably omits community engagement (Rankl, et al., 2023). The House of Commons acknowledges a need for 'clearer expectations' for local places, and clarification of how action at a community, local, regional, and national level fits together (Rankl, et al., 2023). This may be part of the reason why resources and appetite for local public engagement in policymaking are not translating into consistent action.

There are numerous positive examples of councils engaging residents. This report does not seek to invalidate the good practice that is already happening, but rather to build on it by introducing new tools and guidance, with the hope of supporting places that may be struggling to engage residents. Lambeth Council, for instance, has set up a citizen's assembly for residents of the borough, who met on six occasions and delivered 13 recommendations (Traverse, 2021). The council recognises the role of the community and the need to ensure transition is equitable and fair and has committed resources to establish channels for engagement (Lambeth Council, 2021). Another notable example is Stroud District Council, the first council in Europe to be carbon neutral, who are carrying out a variety of engagement activities with their local community on the transition to net zero. Stroud District Council has set up a Community Engagement Board to build community inclusion in climate action and design how the council can support it (Stroud District Council, 2023).

These are two of many positive examples that demonstrate strides towards participatory practices in local government. However, there is still a way to go in terms of embedding these practices in governance structures, and ensuring they are reaching all places (Sasse, et al., 2021). Importantly,





there is little publicly available evidence of what is working when it comes to participatory processes around the transition to net zero, or evaluation of outcomes. This limits the potential of local authorities to learn from one another, and support those that may be struggling with public engagement.

## A person-centred, place-sensitive approach

This report draws on the conceptual approach developed by the Institute for Community Studies and researchers from the University of York, University of Leeds, and Trinity College Dublin. The work explored the potential unequal impacts of the transition to net zero on different individuals, households, and communities, identifying the importance of centring individuals and places in net zero policies. The approach, illustrated below, is summarised as a person-centred, place-sensitive approach to a just transition (see Figure 1). This report draws on this approach by putting individuals and places, their needs, and priorities, at the heart of the policymaking process. The proposed methodology forefronts the unique barriers and opportunities for participation that individuals in different places face, responding to them through policy asks. Furthermore, the methodology recognises the interconnectedness of different areas of life, challenging policy approaches that focus on a single area (such as transport or housing).

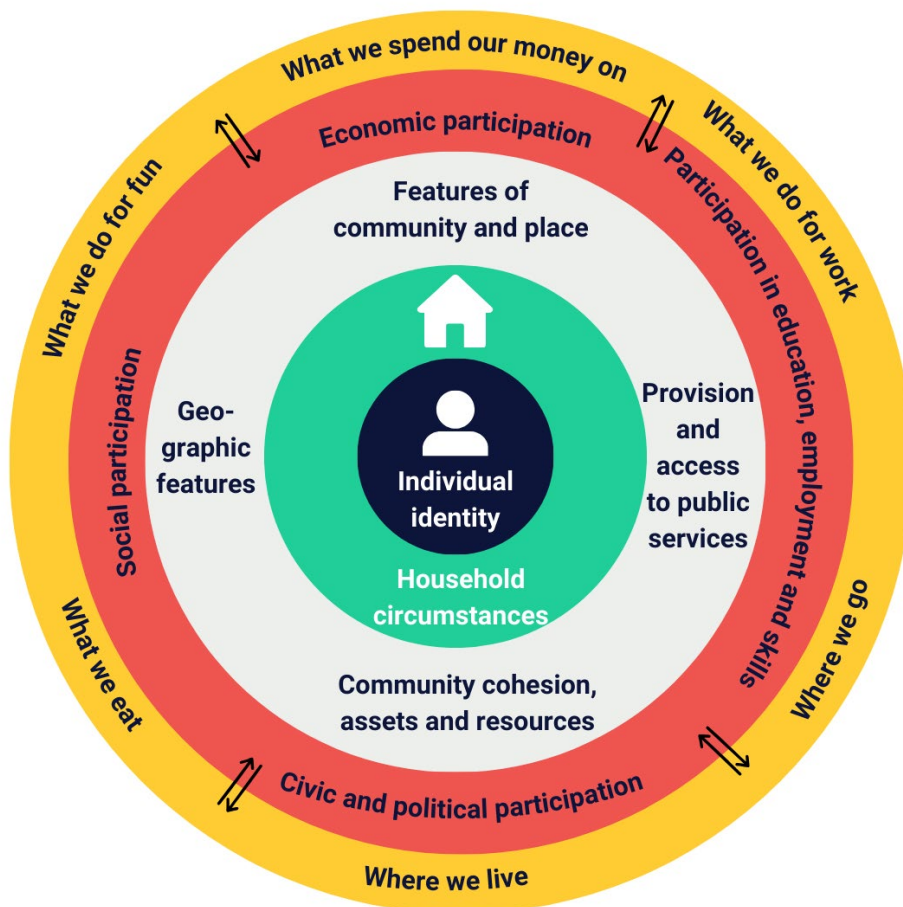
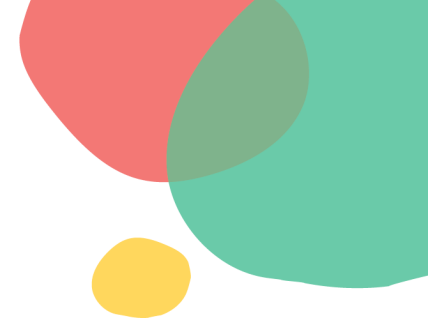


Figure 1: A person-centred, place-sensitive approach to net zero



The person-centred approach is gaining traction as a necessary tool to reach net zero (Verfeuth, et al., 2023), emphasising the importance of centring people’s needs and circumstances in policymaking, and involving people in the transition (Verfeuth, et al., 2023). However, the ‘how’ of involvement is still a developing picture, and ranges from supporting behavioural change to involving individuals in decision-making on net zero (Verfeuth, et al., 2023). We suggest that adding place-sensitivity to this approach not only mirrors how policymaking is happening in the transition (largely at a local level) but adds necessary nuance to policy about the conditions that communities face in their places. Additionally, the place-sensitive approach calls for the involvement of local communities in decision-making and action, recognising it as a driver of impact. Community-led approaches are emerging effective in reducing emissions across a range of areas, from community energy (see: Manchester Carbon Co-Op, Repowering London) to grassroots retrofit (see: Putnam and Brown, 2021).

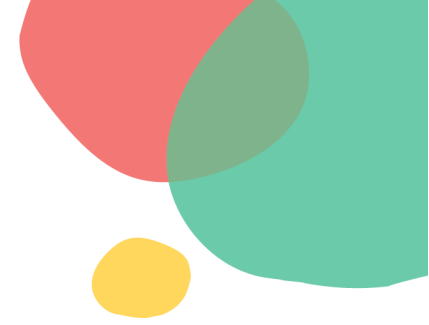
The person-centred, place-sensitive approach was brought into this work as the framework on which to hinge policy asks. The PPD process involved stakeholders in their places and drew on their lived experience as individuals and part of the local community. Exercises focused on local assets and opportunities, and challenges that are specific to the places, as well as their symptoms and causes. Participants were also invited to think of the impacts of net zero at individual and household levels and consider how a change in one area might affect other areas of life.

## Methodology

To bring together PPD and the person-centred, place-sensitive approach, we designed a workshop comprised of three stages. The workshop methodology was tested in three case study locations – Newcastle, Hartlepool, and Luton. The project undertook an iterative approach, testing and refining the workshop methodology using learning from each location. In addition to the contextual differences across each place, each setting represented different level of progress towards carbon emissions reduction, as well as different configurations of participants. The workshops were delivered sequentially, with enough time to reflect on the delivery in the previous location(s) and refine the methodology. The focus of refinement was on improving the experience of participants and adapting the methodology to each of the contexts.

The table below presents an overview of the workshop methodology broken down into three component parts. A summary of the activities that sit under each of the objectives can be found in Appendix 1.

Stage	Duration	Aim	Activities
<b>Building a common understanding:</b> introduction to key concepts around the transition to net zero	Two hours	The objective of this stage is to build a common, baseline understanding of net zero, a person-centred, place-sensitive transition, and a ‘just transition’ in the context of the local community and place. This should be done using accessible language, and accompanied by visual prompts including definition cards, pen portraits of different ways in which people might be expected to change in the transition,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introducing definitions (net zero, just transition, person-centred approach)</li> <li>• Discussing local plans for net zero</li> <li>• Pen portraits</li> <li>• Principles for the local transition to net zero</li> </ul>



		and visuals representing local plans for net zero.	
<p><b>Understanding household and place conditions</b> What are the opportunities and challenges for this place in the transition?</p>	Two hours	The aim of this stage is to collectively identify household, community, and place conditions, to identify those that might translate to tangible opportunities and challenges in the transition to net zero. The identification, prioritisation and definition of challenges forms the base for developing policy asks in the following stage. The focus on assets supports participants in using an asset-based approach and may lead to the identification of opportunities to leverage these towards a just transition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying local assets and challenges</li> <li>• Identifying and prioritising challenges relevant to the transition to net zero</li> <li>• Developing a deep, shared understanding of challenges</li> </ul>
<p><b>Policy development</b> What needs to happen for a just transition in this place?</p>	Two hours	The objective of this stage is to identify person-centred policy asks that are community and place specific. Facilitators support participants to iteratively develop asks that respond to the challenges that have been identified and explored collectively. The group then tests the feasibility of the proposed asks and identifies opportunities and assets that might enable the policy asks to be taken forward. To finish, participants share their desired next steps, including any commitments to action they are willing to make.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brainstorming and prioritising policy asks</li> <li>• Developing policy asks</li> <li>• Deciding next steps</li> </ul>

**Table 1: A breakdown of the workshop structure, which is comprised of three parts, delivered over a two-day workshop.**

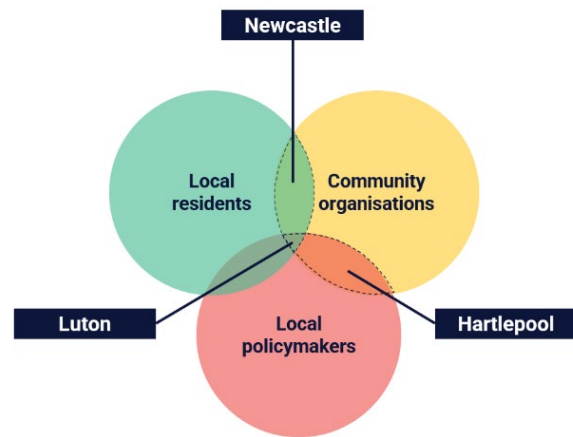
The results of the workshop are contingent upon the participants in the room, who bring unique perspectives based on their personal and professional experiences of their place. Ideally, PPD for the transition to net zero calls for the involvement of a range of relevant stakeholders and might look different for different places. This work focused on three key stakeholder groups (listed below), which we worked with in different configurations due to difficulties in recruitment. While this had impacts on the process itself (discussed later), it did provide an opportunity for comparative analysis across places.

Stakeholders we hoped to engage for the process:

- Local authorities, particularly civil servants engaged in the transition to net zero and/or working with local communities.
- Representatives from local voluntary and community organisations, who can speak to the diverse needs of local communities.
- Local residents, who can speak directly to their experiences of a place, and what changes under the transition might mean to them.

These stakeholder groups were selected for their connection to their places and local communities. Additionally, they are groups with power and responsibility in the place and are well-placed to potentially take the emerging policy recommendations forward. Local commercial bodies were not included due to their potential conflict of interest in the policy development process.

We used multiple recruitment channels including social media advertising and advertising through existing networks such as community and voluntary sector networks, or council-led engagement networks. Recruitment materials were designed to promote what people could get out of participating, and to provide clear and accessible routes to register to take part. Residents and representatives from small community organisations were offered remuneration for their participation. Further information about taking part in the workshops was provided online, so people were fully informed.

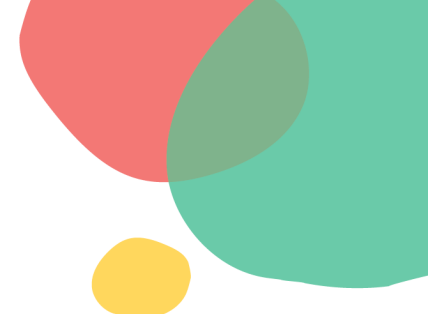


**Figure 3: Configuration of stakeholders attending the three place-sensitive workshops. Luton was attended by all stakeholder types, while Hartlepool was attended by local policymakers and community organisations, and Newcastle was attended by local residents and community organisations.**

## Selection of places and stakeholders

The Institute for Community Studies identified a shortlist of potential places to work with. We were looking for a diversity of places to engage across factors including local economic identity, different forms of local government, and different levels of engagement with the transition to net zero, both at a local authority and resident level. As local leads, and to try to establish political accountability within the process, local authorities in each place were approached in the first instance. We successfully engaged two borough councils - Luton Borough Council and Hartlepool Borough Council - and attempted to engage four other local authorities, who were unable to participate. Where local authorities couldn't participate, we took the alternative route of working just with residents and the community and voluntary sector, to explore what that might mean for policy outcomes.

We chose to engage local authorities, as opposed to national government, in recognition of the key role that they will play in transitioning their places towards net zero, and their potential to do this in a way that is sensitive to the conditions of local individuals and communities. The UK's Net Zero Strategy, Build Back Greener, sets out the role of devolved and local government as essential to reaching net zero targets, with key responsibilities including driving action directly and communicating with and inspiring action by local businesses, communities, and civil society (BEIS, 2021).



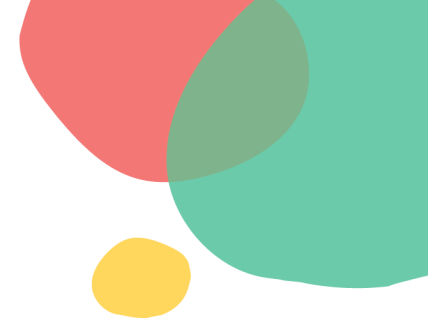
Councils hold powers and responsibility in a range of areas, including housing, planning, transport and, importantly, in convening local stakeholders and residents (WPI Economics, 2021). At the same time, they face significant challenges, including strengthening partnership with national government and impacting areas that are out of the council's direct control (WPI Economics, 2021). In contrast with national government, local government has the potential to produce policies that respond to the conditions, challenges, and opportunities of their places. Additionally, the UK government is committed to the devolution of power from central to local government across England, increasing the importance of local authorities in every aspect of shaping their places (Scott, 2023).

Across England, there are multiple levels of local governance, with different roles, responsibilities, and powers, including metropolitan boroughs, parishes, combined authorities and council or district councils, creating diversity across places (Scott, 2023). Additionally, there is great diversity in local authorities, in terms of progress towards net zero, with some councils yet to declare a climate emergency, and others (nearly two thirds of councils in England) setting a carbon neutrality target 20 years before the national target of 2050 (WPI Economics, 2021). Across the UK, around 75% of local authorities have declared a climate emergency. However, this is not predictive of further action (Latter, 2021; Howarth et al., 2021).

The Institute for Community Studies carried out desk-based research to establish baseline knowledge of each place. Where local authorities chose to participate in the process, they participated in a semi-structured interview, seeking their views on the assets, needs and challenges in their place – in general, and with particular relevance to the transition to net zero – as well as any progress to date on net zero strategies and activities. They were asked to provide any useful resources, such as published strategies or council documents.

Where we could engage local authorities in semi-structured interviews, these were used to provide a comprehensive snapshot of the starting point of the local community and place. They were also used to inform how net zero would be framed in the workshops, and any particular challenges or opportunities to consider. Finally, the interviews served as guidance for who needed to be involved in the workshops and helped to create 'buy-in' amongst potential participants from the local authority.





# Findings

The following section presents short case studies for each of the locations where workshops were carried out. They include a brief background, notes on the process, the emerging policy asks for each location, and other outcomes.

## Case study 1: Luton

**Background:** Luton Borough Council has pledged to be carbon neutral by 2040, setting forth an ambitious plan to decarbonise the town - including the local airport, which is the biggest local employer. In parallel, the local authority has led substantial work to understand the conditions of marginalised communities through its Fairness Taskforce.

**Participants:** Local residents (3), community organisations (4) and Luton Borough Council (4).

**Process:**

- To balance power dynamics in the room, we had sought a ratio of 2:1:1 of local residents, community organisations and council representatives. However, this was not achieved due to unexpected drop-out of participants – a reality in this type of work. Facilitators managed this dynamic by adapting their facilitation techniques, in particular to avoid discussions being framed through a council narrative.
- Generally, all participants were empathetic towards the need for decarbonisation and fairness outcomes in the transition to net zero. However, they struggled to relate to the person-centred, place-sensitive approach. While it was beneficial to have representatives from across the council, who were knowledgeable about how different areas of life might be affected, it was challenging to encourage them to move away from siloed thinking.
- Occasionally, tensions arose between council and community organisation representatives, but this was largely due to misunderstandings around roles, responsibilities, and funding. For example, when developing policy asks, there was frequent pushback from the council, given the lack of financial resources available to distribute to community organisations motivated to participate and enable changes.

**Outcomes - emerging policy areas:**

- **Introduce a levy on private charter flights:** the local airport was raised as a unique stakeholder in Luton, which already provides a large amount of funding to local community organisations. The airport currently raises funds through a levy paid by commercial passengers. However, the possibility of additional levy on private charter flights was suggested. This additional levy could be used to both disincentivise private charter flights and raise funds to support net zero initiatives. Participants pointed out the window of opportunity for the council to propose this condition ahead of the renewal of the airport's lease in 2030.
- **Introduce a public participation programme, delivered from existing local assets and social infrastructure:** participants drew on previous discussions about creating value from existing physical assets and social infrastructure, to create more pathways for participation. Where some participants sought a dedicated transition- or climate-focused hub or community centre, others pointed towards existing assets that could be reframed or developed to enable participation in households and communities in Luton. However, it was noted that these assets would require a programme of support to participate in the transition themselves (for example, through retrofitting buildings).



- **Introduce an education programme delivered by trusted community leaders:** participants discussed extending the role of community leaders and strong community networks as educators on the transition to net zero. They saw the need for the council to support community organisations with information and resources, building on the existing trust model. There was common agreement that net zero should not feel too 'top-down', and that excessive dependence on the council would undermine existing community structures. Therefore, participants saw a community-led, council-supported programme as the best route towards educating the public on net zero.

### Other outcomes

- **Increased understanding of the transition to net zero:** some participants joined with little or no understanding of net zero. This gradually built over the course of the workshops, with people asking for further resources and information about the transition by the end.
- **Building familiarity with local plans for transition:** residents and community organisations participating in the workshops were not all familiar with Luton's existing strategic work – in particular, Luton 2040 and the Roadmap to Net Zero.
- **Council commitment to next steps:** Luton has several existing successful mechanisms for community engagement that they could evolve or build on to have more honest dialogues with residents and organisations, including the Fairness Taskforce. The council climate team committed to conducting more participatory engagement through the taskforce in the immediate future.

## Case study 2: Hartlepool

**Background:** Hartlepool grapples with challenges related to deprivation and child deprivation, after the decline of local industry. But the town has a strong third sector, which supports marginalised residents. The council has not yet announced a climate emergency or set a carbon emissions reduction plan, though a plan for decarbonising council operations is in development.

**Participants:** Hartlepool Borough Council (3), community roles at the council (3), local community and voluntary organisations (4)

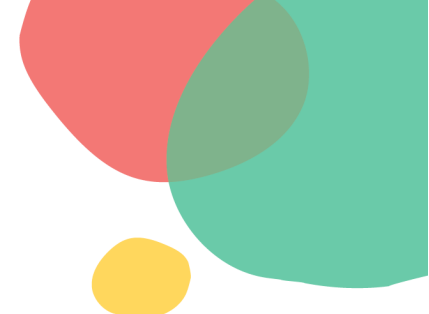
### Process:

- The local government representatives we spoke to were reluctant to engage residents for fear of creating expectations they may not be able to meet. A decision was made to invite only members of local community and voluntary organisations, who reside locally.
- Despite the council's reluctance, the general attitude towards council representatives was of understanding and support, with representatives from local organisations offering their own assets, resources, and knowledges to work in collaboration towards reducing emissions.
- Participants struggled to understand the concept of a 'just transition', and several participants were set on the idea that net zero can only make people worse off. This points to a need to deliver clear and accessible messages about the transition to net zero and how it may contribute to better outcomes.

### Outcomes - emerging policy areas:

**Launch an education programme supporting residents to grow their own food:** in response to the challenge of widespread deprivation and lack of opportunities to gain skills, participants proposed a communications campaign supported by local community organisations to promote food autonomy. Residents would be encouraged to grow their own food as a way of reducing costs, reducing emissions, and reaping health and wellbeing benefits. Residents would be





provided with essential tools such as seeds, training courses and resources, and, where necessary, shared growing spaces.

**Launch an engagement programme to capture the voices of local residents in the town's net zero strategy:** in response to the challenge of political disengagement and low trust in government, participants proposed a programme of community engagement to understand the priorities and challenges of different communities within the town. Engagement would be carried out through a taskforce made up of council members and community groups, making use of existing communications channels. Residents would be given accessible information about the transition to net zero and changes happening locally and provided easy ways to contribute their opinion.

**Other outcomes**

- **Building capacity to deliver collaborative work between the council and the voluntary sector:** participants expressed their wish for the local net zero strategy to be developed and delivered collaboratively. They shared ideas to build a local net zero taskforce spanning the council, community, and voluntary sector. Additionally, participants from the voluntary sector who did not have a prior relationship with the council made use of the workshop space to identify opportunities for collaboration on other topics.
- **Tackling existing challenges through net zero policies:** participants highlighted ways to tackle existing challenges and inequalities through policies for the reduction of carbon emissions, leading to a higher quality of life. Participants shared examples of how their response to the rise in energy prices had improved their lives in some ways, for instance by spending more time outdoors and grow their own vegetables. Based on this experience, participants highlighted opportunities to improve health and life expectancy through outdoor leisure activities, strengthen social cohesion through shared initiatives for decarbonisation and lower the strain on spending through increasing self-reliability.

## Case study 3: Newcastle

**Background:** Newcastle has set the target of reaching net zero emissions by 2030, led by an ambitious roadmap that spans the council, local businesses, public services, and households. The roadmap is underpinned by a Net Zero Taskforce, a Climate Change Committee, and a Citizen's Assembly. The city is in the midst of the North East Devolution Deal, which will create a new mayoral combined authority in May 2024.

**Participants:** Residents (11), local voluntary organisations (1).

**Process:**

- In the summer of 2022, the Institute for Community Studies engaged residents from three case study neighbourhoods in Newcastle in a series of participatory workshops, as part of a Nuffield Foundation-funded project on family and community vulnerabilities in the transition to net zero. Only individuals who took part in this prior research were invited to join the current workshop, which meant participants were starting from a higher baseline level of knowledge on the transition. This allowed for more in-depth discussions on justice issues in transition, and for more granular place-sensitive discussions.



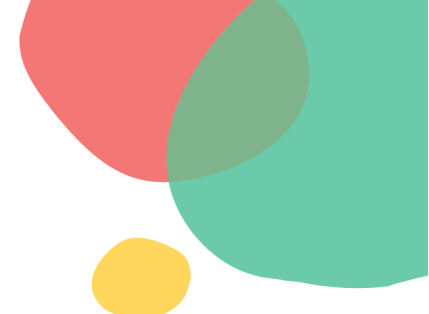
- Despite repeated attempts to engage the council and other voluntary and community organisations, no response was received. This is likely a reflection of current capacity issues, perhaps associated to changes in local government due to the North East Devolution Deal.

### Outcomes - emerging policy asks:

- **Establish a community surgery for net zero:** in response to the lack of trust and communication between local communities and the council, participants proposed a regular 'surgery' in a community setting, focusing on different aspects of the transition to net zero. The surgery would respond to themes proposed by local residents and would change location as relevant to the selected theme. The sessions would be led by an impartial chair, with representation from the council, and would include expert guidance, information sessions, signposting to support available, and updates on council programmes.
- **Appoint a dedicated neighbourhood coordinator:** in response to the challenge of widespread deprivation, participants proposed a figure within the local authority dedicated to deploying financial support initiatives. Among the initiatives, participants suggested convening community investment or local purchase schemes (for instance for home adaptation), education programmes for sustainable cost-saving, and community-based rewards schemes (e.g., for recycling bottles or clothes, or shopping locally).
- **Introduce a sustainable energy rewards scheme:** another proposed response to the challenge of deprivation was a rewards scheme to incentivise emissions reductions in businesses and individuals. For instance, small businesses would receive council tax discounts for sustainable initiatives, and market and sharing spaces would be provided for local sustainable businesses. Individuals would be incentivised through small economic rewards for recycling, reducing energy usage, recycling clothes, shopping locally and choosing low carbon products.

### Other outcomes:

- **Focus on community cohesion:** participants highlighted the importance of community cohesion in their shared principles for the just transition in Newcastle. Not only this, but they saw community cohesion as a key asset, and the lack of it as a key challenge for certain neighbourhoods. This was reflected in the sense of community within the room. In the closing round, several participants reflected that their key takeaway from the workshop was meeting with others and having the space to hear different perspectives.
- **Community voices led to community-based solutions:** The composition of participants in the room (highly skewed towards local community voices) was reflected in the proposed policy asks, which were community-focused, and community-based. There was always a role for local government in the proposed solutions, but they were seen more as providers of resources to facilitate community-led participation.



# Cross-cutting findings

A comparative analysis was undertaken to identify crosscutting insights and what they might mean for policy at a local and national level. The following section presents an overview of the key findings, followed by policy implications.

## **Finding 1: Capacity and progress affect local authorities' abilities to engage in participatory policymaking.**

Six local authorities were engaged for an initial conversation about taking part in this project, out of which two local authorities agreed to participate. In this process, we learned valuable lessons about conditions in which local authorities are operating, and what this means for their participation in such work.

- Several of the local authorities that were engaged were constrained by limited resources or capacity to take on additional work. Capacity was impacted by devolution deals, lack of funding and resource across the local authority, and low resource dedicated to net zero. This reveals the relative fragility of net zero initiatives in a local government environment where they are not robustly resourced. The LGA is calling for longer-term national funding to build local government capacity to deliver local low-carbon infrastructure, including through hiring new people or upskilling existing staff (WPI Economics, 2021).
- Capacity concerns further limit the ability of local authorities to lead or take part in public engagement around the transition to net zero. This mirrors the findings of the Institute for Government, who have identified barriers to embedding public engagement in policymaking (Norris and Ilott, 2015), including a perception of participatory policymaking as a burden with little benefit, and a lack of resources to carry it out.
- In local authorities who were very far ahead in their net zero journey, we observed reluctance to conduct a policy co-creation process, which might send conflicting messages. Additionally, where a net zero strategy or programmes were already underway, there were valid concerns about the ability of local authorities to enact policy suggestions by residents. Often, local authorities had already undertaken public engagement at the beginning of their net zero journey. However, an opportunity remains to explore what ongoing engagement of local residents and organisations in net zero strategies might look like.
- On the other hand, local authorities who were very early in the journey toward net zero expressed concerns that engaging the public might increase scrutiny. This echoes the findings of the Institute for Government, which found that departments might worry about public engagement exposing gaps in strategies (Norris and Ilott, 2015).

These findings point towards barriers that local authorities might face in engaging the public on the transition to net zero. There are clear opportunities for national government to provide support, both financially and in terms of capacity and resource, to enable local authorities to confidently engage their local communities.

## **Finding 2: It can be challenging to convince stakeholders of their role in policy processes.**

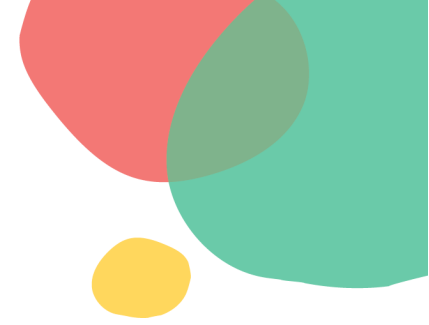


We were interested in bringing together stakeholders who could reflect on the breadth and interconnectedness across different areas of life that would be affected by transition, to develop person-centred, place-sensitive policies for a fair transition. With support during workshops to build knowledge and confidently engage in discussions, we hoped recruiting a diverse pool of residents would enable us to draw on their tacit knowledge to consider changes in the transition to net zero. In recruiting representatives from community organisations and the local council, we sought to recruit those working across a range of departments or issues, given there is often a tendency to work in siloed ways.

- Across case study locations, this had differing levels of success. While the transition to net zero has featured in political discussions for some time now, its framing as largely a technical or technological policy area has resulted in a lack of knowledge and awareness in households and communities, as well as in areas of policy that have previously been deemed less relevant (such as arts and culture, or health) (Chilvers, et al., 2017). In some cases, lessons we have already learnt about why people do or don't engage were reemphasised. In other cases, we learnt new lessons about appetite for engaging in this type of processes.
- While it was made clear through recruitment materials that no prior knowledge or experience is required, and although language was accessible and incentives and adjustments were offered to make participation easier, it was challenging to recruit local residents to take part in a policy-focused workshop. This contrasts with research-orientated workshops, where there was a clearer opportunity for participants to learn about net zero amongst peers, rather than alongside policymakers or organisations. Where we recruited participants we had previously worked with in our research on the impact of net zero on families and communities, there was higher uptake.
- In recruiting community organisations from different issue areas, it was sometimes challenging to convince community organisations of the link between their work and the transition to net zero. However, where community organisations saw this as an opportunity to learn more about the transition to net zero, they were more encouraged to participate. This may reflect the lack of understanding of what areas of life will be impacted by net zero, as discussed above (Institute for Community Studies and Ipsos, 2021).
- Local policymakers were recruited through contacts within the local council. Unsurprisingly, those who were recruited to take part in the workshops closely mirrored both where the local council were in their net zero policy journey, and how the local council were understanding and framing the challenge. Where local councils had made very little progress in the transition to net zero, it was more challenging to recruit policymakers in larger numbers or from different teams across the council.

### **Finding 3: There are different understandings of what fairness and justice in the transition means, across stakeholder groups.**

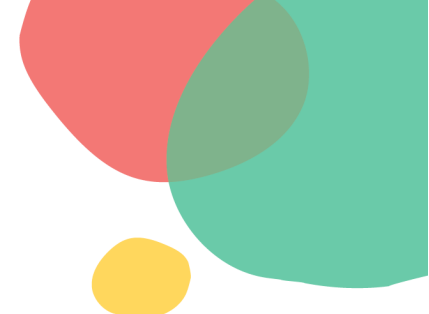
We wanted to build a common understanding of key concepts and ideas to ensure clarity when working between communities and local government, and to test alignment between the terminology of the workshop and regional or central government terminology. We also wanted to test whether key concepts and ideas evoked different connotations across places. The biggest variation in understanding was of fairness and justice, in the context of the transition to net zero.



This is unsurprising given it is not a mainstreamed discussion in the UK. Fairness and justice were understood in several ways:

- We observed that in workshops with a larger proportion of community organisations participating, there was a stronger focus on social justice, inequalities, and community cohesion within the transition to net zero. Verfuert et al. similarly found strengthening social cohesion within the transition to net zero is highly valued by community initiatives (2023). Participants in Luton and Hartlepool highlighted the need to protect those already facing social and economic disadvantage from disruption and harm that might come from the transition. Furthermore, participants in Hartlepool identified ways of tackling existing challenges, such as deprivation and child deprivation, through net zero policies. The joint pursuit of fairness and decarbonisation was a strong driver for action for these groups, and their proposed policy asks mirrored this. Participants identified examples and collaboratively created policy asks that paired the reduction of emissions with improved quality of life and strengthened relationships between the council and the local community. This points to an opportunity to design climate policies that address social concerns beyond climate change.
- At the same time, some participants in Hartlepool and Newcastle found it challenging to envision a scenario where the transition could lead to improved conditions for households and communities at risk of being left behind – particularly those experiencing deprivation. This perception was centred around the trade-offs that net zero policies might require. This led to discussions between participants, who had disagreements as to whether net zero policies will make people ‘worse off’ or ‘better off’, with most agreeing with the former. This points to an opportunity to reframe the transition to net zero, identifying and communicating co-benefits and providing support for potential trade-offs. Verfuert et al. similarly suggest a need to design policies and interventions that maximise and communicate co-benefits (2023).
- In Newcastle, where local council representatives did not participate, as well as Hartlepool, where less net zero progress has been made, there was a greater focus on procedural justice. There was interest in clarifying the role that businesses and local authorities and anchor institutions would be held accountable to. Explicit links were made between different levels of governance, with recognition from residents that local government required support from central government if they were to exercise leadership.
- In the case study locations involving fewer or no residents, a few participants struggled to empathise with the idea that the transition to net zero would have unequal impacts on different people, despite this being broadly acknowledged (OECD, 2023). Particularly when reflecting on the pen portraits provided as prompt material, participants were judgemental of the decisions individuals had made that led them to these life circumstances. This points to the importance of communicating that even with successful policies, the impacts of the transition to net zero will not be distributed equally (OECD, 2023).
- Participants identified those groups or identities that shared commonalities with their own experience as groups at greater risk of exclusion in the transition to net zero. For example, community organisations drew attention to the groups they worked directly with, including those facing economic disadvantage, homeless people or those battling substance abuse. Similarly, local residents raised personal experiences, such as households with highly dependent children, or households with high debt. This points to the value of having a diverse range of experiences and backgrounds participating in the policymaking process.





## **6. Finding 4: While there are common opportunities and challenges in different places, the need for place-sensitive working remains.**

We asked participants to think about opportunities and challenges in their place generally, and then to reflect on those that might be more relevant in the transition to net zero. Our recent research found a wide range of conditions that can ultimately leave people with more or less resource, agency, and skills to participate. Many of these were reflected in these place-sensitive discussions. While some conditions were raised consistently across places (shared below), whether those conditions were an opportunity or a challenge varied, strengthening the argument for place-sensitive policy:

- **Financial precarity, deprivation and low disposable income were raised as the most significant challenge in all places.** In Newcastle, where participants had a higher baseline knowledge of what changes in the transition look like, this was discussed in the context of the real costs of tangible change in transition, and challenges to investing in change. In Luton and Hartlepool, financial precarity was discussed in broader terms of households having to prioritise survival and basic needs today before they could begin to think about changes for net zero transition.
- **Political disenfranchisement and low trust in government were raised across all three case study locations.** Participants discussed how there was a need for greater transparency around how and why local, regional, and central government access and distribute funds for people to be motivated to play a role and participate. In Luton, local residents and community organisations discussed being distrustful of information that the local council shared or finding it hard to navigate. Participants in Hartlepool and Newcastle both identified a breakdown communication between government and communities as a priority challenge. Participants from the council in Hartlepool shared how difficult they found it to engage communities and understand their needs, while residents in Newcastle shared perceived barriers to speaking with their local representatives, and a desire for more open channels.
- **Only one case study location – Newcastle – discussed governance.** There, participants described challenges related to the different levels of governance that are responsible for supporting a transition to net zero and how they felt ‘forgotten’ by central government. They shared the perception that Newcastle was not ‘present’ enough in national conversations, and perceived other northern cities, such as Leeds or Manchester, as more of a focus. Participants feared that this might lead to underrepresentation of their needs and challenges in central policymaking. They put forth an idea for a regional body to represent the interests of cities and towns in the Northeast. This perception demonstrates a lack of awareness of the North East Devolution Deal, agreed in 2022, which will bring together Newcastle with other local authorities in the region under a strategic economic plan and 30-year investment fund (DLUHC, 2022).
- **In all case study locations, but particularly Hartlepool and Luton, participants drew strongly on intangible assets and social infrastructure for their proposed policy asks.** This included pride in place, active communities, community cohesion and the local voluntary sector. Participants reflected on how these assets supported households and communities through the Covid-19 pandemic – another, albeit very different - moment of change and uncertainty. They saw an opportunity to capitalise on these assets to support residents in the transition



to net zero. The third sector and the community sector were highlighted as playing a crucial role in helping households and communities to navigate change and were identified as more trusted sources of information. In Luton, participants highlighted the need to be mindful that this sector is already very overstretched.

- **Several conditions were commonly shared as challenges** in at least two case study locations, in all cases reflecting findings from our recent research. Participants across the three case study locations discussed the lack of local job opportunities, despite having quite different economic profiles. They discussed how this impacts the ability of residents to work locally and to have choice over the sectors people engage with through employment. This perception is faithful to the employment challenges reported by the council in all three places. Despite hosting a large employer (London Luton Airport), Luton has an unemployment rate of 8.5%, and an average annual salary almost £2,000 below the national average (Luton Borough Council, 2023). Hartlepool has an unemployment rate of 9%, the highest in England (Hartlepool Borough Council, 2018). Newcastle has a jobseeker rate of only 5.5%, however the 'hidden' unemployment rate is as high as 18%, with the difference lying in those who are inactive but not looking for jobs (Centre for Cities, 2023).
- **The built environment and hard infrastructure were seen as a both an opportunity and a challenge in the transition to net zero** across and even within all three case study locations. In Luton and Hartlepool, participants saw potential in cultural assets and buildings for bringing people together, and as an opportunity to demonstrate the benefits of changes such as retrofit. Participants identified heritage buildings as potential spaces for meeting or learning about net zero, and as exemplary places to demonstrate decarbonisation strategies. At the same time, participants questioned the scale of investment in the preservation of assets, when local government is faced with many other pressing issues. Participants in Luton raised the lack of free and accessible spaces for communities, which cultural assets could be used for.

## **Finding 5: There is demand for using net zero to address broader local challenges.**

While participants were able to identify transition-specific opportunities and challenges given local conditions, there was a strong interest in exploring much broader local challenges through the transition to net zero. For instance, participants across two locations chose to focus on deprivation as a priority issue in transition. This points to an opportunity to link public engagement on net zero with engagement on existing inequalities.

Furthermore, participants proposed policy asks that had wider potential benefits beyond the reduction of carbon emissions. For instance, participants proposed a food autonomy programme as a way to not only reduce the carbon footprint of households, but to potentially improve eating habits and reduce costs, which could lead to improved quality of life. Again, this implies that participants see alignment between achieving decarbonisation and wider benefits to individuals and communities. This is regardless of conversations during workshops where participants questioned whether the transition to net zero would make people 'worse off'. This seems to imply that although there is potential for policies to be beneficial in ways beyond decarbonisation, there is still a worry that policies will be designed in such a way that negatively affects individuals.

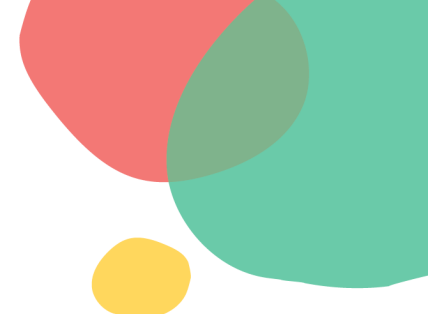
In most cases, alignment between wider aims and decarbonisation happened in the following ways:





- Participants identified ways of addressing existing inequalities through net zero policies. For instance, participants in Newcastle and Hartlepool chose to focus on deprivation as a priority challenge and thought the transition to net zero could be a tool to address it.
- Participants identified opportunities for policy asks to serve a purpose beyond decarbonisation, establishing new services, relationships or infrastructure that could adapt to serve other functions. For instance, participants in Newcastle proposed a 'community surgery' service that would provide information and support for decarbonisation, but also tackle other issues of importance to local residence. Participants in Luton proposed an engagement structure to integrate resident voice in local net zero strategy, but also as a mechanism to support better communication between the council and local communities.
- Participants saw the opportunity for decarbonisation policies to improve the quality of life of local people, for instance by supporting community life. In Newcastle, participants came up with two policy asks that were aimed at decarbonisation as well as improved community cohesion, which they saw as a key priority to improve lives.

This finding was likely influenced by the design of the workshops, which encouraged participants to think about transition through a person-centred, place-sensitive lens and draw on what they knew about the conditions within their place. Participants were encouraged to identify the relationship between local conditions, opportunities, and challenges in the transition to net zero, which likely influenced the resulting policy asks. However, this finding still points to the opportunity to use net zero policies to address existing inequalities, and/or set up resources and infrastructure that can address several concurrent needs.



# Policy recommendations

Based on this pilot programme of research, a series of recommendations emerge that can inform policymakers at different levels. They are especially relevant to those wishing to undertake participatory processes or increase participation in the transition to net zero. However, they remain relevant to all policymakers tackling the challenge of decarbonisation, as we consider participation a requisite of a fair transition.

## **1. Use a person-centred, place-sensitive approach to reducing carbon emissions towards net zero.**

Using a person-centred, place-sensitive approach to lowering carbon emissions has the potential to drive a more just transition at a local level, which balances fairness and decarbonisation. It also presents the potential to shift away from siloed working towards a holistic approach to net zero transition, relevant to both national and local policymakers.

## **2. Establish a common language and shared understanding around the 'just transition'.**

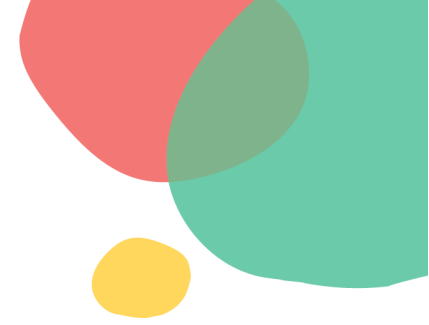
Our fieldwork, especially the recruitment process, highlighted a lack of shared terminology and language around a fair transition to net zero. There was limited understanding amongst participants of what net zero or the transition to net zero means, and of what fairness looks like in this context. This was the case even within some local authorities, who were not always familiar with the concept of a just transition. Tying the concept of fairness to particular processes or outcomes is challenging. However, common terminology and a shared approach to justice issues in transition are necessary to enable collaboration and clear communication.

Our fieldwork highlights the work needed to build a higher baseline level of knowledge of the transition to net zero. Without this understanding, people are excluded from participating in conversations about how transition should happen. Participants in the fieldwork shared a desire to see clear messaging from local and national government on what transition to net zero means and how it affects them. This basic information underpins agency to participate in the transition in a range of ways, from day-to-day changes to participatory policy processes. This is relevant not only to the general public, but also to voluntary and community organisations, businesses, and people working in local government, to ensure everyone is able to participate in shaping the transition to net zero.

Furthermore, our fieldwork highlighted the opportunity to communicate more clearly the likely trade-offs and potential for inequality in net zero policies, as well as the potential benefits. Participants were aware, to an extent, of the potential for the transition to net zero to make them 'worse off'. This may create reluctance to participate in the transition, and leaves ambiguity around how changes are likely to affect people. There is an opportunity for local government to be a source of trusted information on how changes will affect people, with a balanced narrative on the likely trade-offs as well as benefits that individuals may derive.

## **3. Prioritise carbon reduction policies that have a positive impact on other local challenges.**

There is an opportunity to couple initiatives to lower carbon emissions with other locally relevant challenges to increase engagement, and to tackle other existing challenges. There is a range of potential policy areas where lowering carbon emissions is aligned with tackling other challenges.



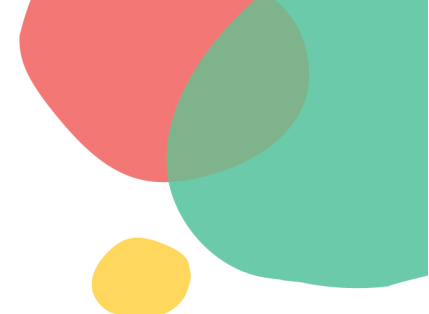
For instance, participants in Hartlepool proposed a food growing programme which would both reduce emissions and alleviate poverty by reducing household food costs. Although not all policies will be aligned to other challenge areas, the opportunity remains to communicate the co-benefits arising from any policies. For instance, highlighting the health benefits of increased active travel or reduced meat consumption rather than focusing solely on environmental benefits.

**4. Target common leverage points across levels of governance as starting points for net zero policies.**

This research has pointed to two common leverage points across levels of government - financial deprivation and low trust - but many others exist. There are opportunities to join up strategies between multiple levels of government to tackle these common leverage points. There is potential to transform these leverage points into levers for the reduction of carbon emissions, and as starting points for joint strategies and delivery. For instance, rollout of home adaptation can serve as a cost reduction measure for households, targeting deprivation and cold homes. There is an opportunity to deliver these initiatives collaboratively across levels of governance to reduce the burden on single authorities.

**5. Consider the role of 'soft' infrastructure and intangible assets in supporting the delivery of a just transition.**

Participants in the fieldwork drew on the intangible assets and infrastructure of their community to propose policy asks and ways of implementing them. They identified assets such as community cohesion, partnerships, and pride in place, which they considered invaluable, as well as 'soft' infrastructure, such as communication channels between organisations and residents, residents' groups, and supportive social relations. These assets and infrastructure were considered key to unlocking policy solutions. For instance, participants wanted to leverage existing communications channels between the community sector and local people to transmit information about the transition to net zero and engage communities in decisions. Even in cases where places lacked social infrastructure, such as affordable meeting spaces, 'soft' infrastructure such as WhatsApp and Facebook groups were maintained and highly valued. This points towards a need to look beyond policy engagement on hard infrastructure or technological changes to also consider the role and requirements for social and soft infrastructure.



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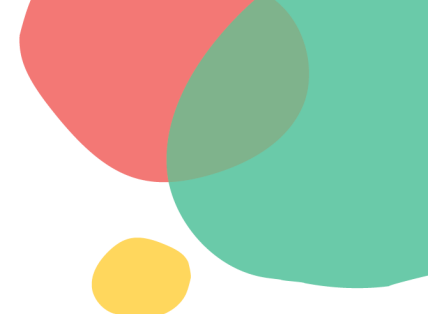
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# Appendix 1

This appendix presents an in-depth description of the activities that made up the workshop methodology, presented in three tranches according to their aims.

## Building a common understanding

A key requirement for ensuring participants were able to participate freely and equally in the workshop was to provide a baseline level of knowledge and develop a common understanding of the transition to net zero. We designed several activities within the workshop to support this kind of knowledge building. Each knowledge building activity was designed to build on the last, to facilitate gradual and accessible building of knowledge. Activities were carried out in a variety of configurations, from pair work to small group work to whole group discussions.

Activity	Aim	Description
Introducing definitions	Establish a common understanding of net zero and the just transition	Facilitators begin by asking participants how much they know about net zero and asking them to share their understanding. Facilitators then introduce an accessible definition of net zero and the just transition. Any questions about net zero should be addressed, and where not possible (e.g., with highly technical questions) they should be recorded and answered after the workshop.
Discussing local plans for net zero (where possible)	Grounding the workshop and the definition of net zero in changes that are expected to happen in the local area	Facilitators introduce published local plans for net zero, referencing specific changes that may happen in the area. Participants are invited to ask questions, which may be answered by the facilitator and or members of the local council present.
Pen portraits	Developing a deeper understanding of the transition to net zero through a person-centred approach	Participants are split into small groups and provided with pen portraits describing a person's capacity to participate in the transition to net zero. The pen portraits should be fictional but draw directly on the conditions and foreseen changes in the places. Groups are asked to reflect on 'what would be different about this person's life if the transition to net zero was inclusive and equitable?'
Principles for a just transition to net zero	Developing a shared set of principles that should underpin the transition to net zero locally	Participants respond to a series of prompts about how the transition to net zero should feel, who/what should be protected in the transition, who should be involved and what outcomes it should lead to. A group discussion is held, with the aim of arriving at a shared set of principles that can be references throughout the next stages of the workshop.

## Identifying local challenges and opportunities

The person-centred, place-sensitive approach calls for an understanding of the different household, community and place conditions that affect what skills, agency, resources, and opportunities have to participate in the transition to net zero. Over the course of the workshop, participants were

guided through several activities to build a picture of the different place-sensitive assets, resources, and conditions over the course of the workshop, to identify those that might translate to tangible opportunities and challenges in the transition to net zero.

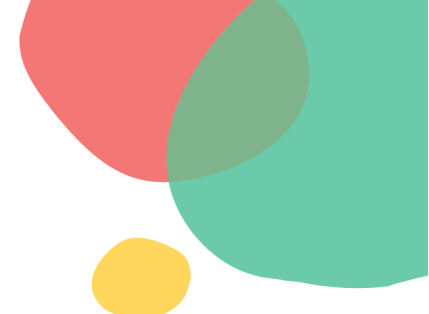
To finish, participants were asked to vote on what challenges they would most like to take forward into the policy co-production process. Ideally, these challenges would be specific to the transition to net zero. However, in some case study locations due to the diffuse boundary between general challenges and those relevant to the transition, participants voted on a range of issues with differing levels of relevance to the transition. To address this, facilitators spent time between workshops refining the most voted challenges, grouping them when there was duplication and phrasing them to be more referent to net zero. This was brought to the workshop for participants to check intention and meaning had remained the same and voted on again.

Activity	Aim	Description
Identifying local assets and challenges	Mapping tangible and intangible assets and challenges that are unique to the place	Participants are put in small groups and asked to identify assets and challenges in their places. Facilitators support the process by posing prompts, including identifying tangible/intangible assets and challenges, and identifying assets and challenges that are relevant to specific places or groups of people.
Identifying and prioritising challenges in the transition to net zero	Arriving at a shortlist of challenges that are considered relevant in the transition to net zero, to be taken into the policy co-production stage	Participants are asked to add to their mapping from the previous exercise, using a different colour of sticky note/pen to identify assets and challenges that are particularly relevant in the transition to net zero locally. Based on the mapping, participants are invited to vote on the challenges that they think are most important, to be taken into the next exercise.
Developing a deep shared understanding of challenges	Developing a deeper understanding of the shortlisted challenges, including root causes, symptoms, and relevance to the transition to net zero	Participants work in groups to develop a deeper understanding of the prioritised challenges. Facilitators support the process by prompting participants to think about root causes vs symptoms, aspects of the challenge that are more relevant to the transition to net zero, and particular groups of people or places that may be disproportionately affected by this challenge.

## Developing policy asks

The final stage of the workshop was to identify policy openings and develop policy asks, reflecting on the opportunities and challenges explored in greater detail in previous activities. After an explanation of what a policy is and the different ways it could look, participants were guided through several activities that helped them to gradually build policy asks, and collectively critique and refine their ideas through group reflection and using the various tools they had used in previous activities, including the person-centred, place-sensitive approach and guiding principles.

Activity	Aim	Description
Brainstorming and prioritising policy asks	Generating ideas to take forward as policy asks	Participants are put in small groups and asked to brainstorm policy ideas based on the previously developed definition of the prioritised challenge. Facilitators guide participants through a process of



		prioritisation that considers feasibility and impact, arriving at a final idea to take forward for each group.
Developing policy asks	Developing a robust policy ask that considers existing assets and opportunities for delivery	Participants work in groups to develop the details of the prioritised policy ask, including who could deliver it, how, as well as what particular groups of people or places might benefit from it. Facilitators support participants by prompting them to think of how the policy ask might be delivered, and what assets and opportunities might come in handy. Participants share their policy ask with the entire group, which responds by adding to the idea. Facilitators prompt the group to test the policy ask with the principles for the just transition developed in the first stage.
Deciding next steps	Closing the workshop on a positive, action orientated note	To finish the workshop participants are invited to share the next steps that they would like to see after the workshop. This may include, but is not limited to, any next steps that they may want to commit to.