

Communities vs Climate Change

Briefing for MPs

[Communities vs Climate Change](#) is a new report by New Local in partnership with Groundwork, Grosvenor and Eden Project Communities. The report explores the potential of community-led action to ensure that the transition to net zero carbon emissions is fair, sustainable, and able to meet the challenges of climate change and levelling up communities across the UK.

Why local climate action?

- There are four layers of climate action: international, national, individual and local.
- The local has been overlooked by decades' worth of climate change policymaking in the UK but holds the key to building a strong, sustainable and hopeful response to climate change.
- The local level is the best scale for ensuring that:
 - Climate action is more responsive to changing conditions and the unique circumstances of place;
 - Cross-sector alliances are built to form a long-term and joined-up response to the direct and indirect consequences of climate change; and
 - Local people are directly involved in climate change mitigation and adaptation work taking place in their area.
- The innate commitment, energy and pride of communities, so central to the levelling up agenda, can be part of the solution and ensure the process of decarbonisation is equitable and empowering for all places.
- Case studies of effective local climate action in all four UK nations are featured in the report and can be sent separately to MPs on request.

How national policy can further support local climate action

National policy makers play a key role in setting a framework which enables local climate action to grow and thrive. *Communities vs Climate Change* contains recommendations for how national government can break down some of the most significant obstacles currently impeding the full potential of local climate action.

- There is a lack of clarity across national government over the role and recognition of local government in mitigating and adapting to climate change, and what their responsibilities are in terms of decarbonisation.

- **Recommendation:** *Clarify the role of local government in achieving net zero and a just transition.*
- Local authorities have responsibility for a range of policy areas crucial to meeting net zero (such as local transport, waste management and social housing). But councils have insufficient powers to take full control of local net-zero delivery.
 - **Recommendation:** *Pursue an ambitious approach to devolution as the means to achieve our national commitment to net zero.*
- The decarbonisation of industry will have more profound implications for some parts of the country than others. To ensure regional inequality is lessened rather than compounded, national economic and climate goals can no longer be seen as separate.
 - **Recommendation:** *Commit to levelling up the country by achieving a just transition.*
- Different policies coming from different government departments can cut across climate objectives. For example, the UK Government's failure to address the social care crisis has enormous consequences for council budgets, which are ever-more squeezed by rising care costs, limiting councils' flexibility to invest in other areas such as local climate action.
 - **Recommendation:** *Clarify the cross-government priority to achieve net zero and ensure policy from all government departments is assessed against this.*
- In recent years there has been a growth of different funding streams to councils in separate pots, each of which must be applied for separately and many are competitive between areas. The Government's Net Zero Strategy merely commits to "explore" how to simplify and consolidate funds for net zero initiatives at the local level. This is not enough to help local areas plan long-term solutions right now to the long-term challenges of climate change.
 - **Recommendation:** *Ensure sufficient, long-term funding for local areas, with full flexibility to commit resource according to local priorities, in the context of the national net-zero target.*

The full report sets out complementary recommendations for local government, community groups, intermediary organisations, the private sector, and international bodies.

Suggested questions

Written questions for the Rt. Hon. Michael Gove MP and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities:

- What assessment has been made of the potential impact of devolving powers to local authorities as part of the UK's transition to net zero by 2050?
- What consideration has been given to achieving a just transition to net zero carbon emissions in the upcoming Levelling Up White Paper?
- In the context of the national net-zero target, what steps are being taken to ensure sufficient, long-term funding for local authorities, with full flexibility to commit resource according to local priorities?

About New Local and partners

[New Local](#) is an independent think tank and network of councils, with a mission to transform public services and unlock community power.

[Eden Project Communities](#) is a charity that brings people together and encourages them to actively engage with one another and the places where they live.

[Grosvenor Britain & Ireland](#) is part of a global property business that has been developing and managing land and property for over 340 years.

[Groundwork](#) is a federation of charities mobilising practical community action on poverty and the environment across the UK.

Contact

For further information linked to this briefing or to discuss the topic further, please contact: Jessica Studdert, Deputy Chief Executive at New Local, via jstuddert@newlocal.org.uk