

#BeTheSolution

London Councils Community Energy Toolkit

# Embedding Community Energy



REGEN



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This section of the toolkit outlines how community energy can be embedded across your council's operations.



# Introduction

As the borough climate officer, you will typically lead on community energy partnerships and initiatives. However, to maximise value and deliver community energy projects, you will require support and buy-in from other council departments and councillors.

## **This section will help you to:**

- Build political and cross-departmental support for community energy by highlighting its application to key council priorities
- Leverage national and local evidence to secure buy-in for community energy programmes and spotlight impact
- Understand and communicate how community energy can support and integrate with wider council strategies
- Consider how to embed community energy into local planning and procurement
- Overcome common concerns raised by senior leaders or councillors

This section should be used in conjunction with The Strategic Case, which outlines the value of community energy more explicitly, summarising a range of evidence from key sources.

# 1.

## Building political and cross-departmental support

This section contains information on:

- Building support among councillors
- Building cross-departmental support and governance



# Building support

This sub-section explores how internal council support can be built, including tips and case studies from London boroughs.

Leadership support can be pivotal to the success of projects and programmes. This typically takes two main forms:

- 1. Councillor support:** Councillors can help realise community energy ambitions by lending political backing to projects and programmes, helping you to overcome common barriers to delivery within the council. Because community energy can deliver value across a range of priorities, it can be a powerful initiative for councillors to get behind and may tie to several manifesto commitments.
- 2. Cross-departmental support:** Delivering community energy projects typically requires support and action from several council departments, including energy, climate, finance, legal, procurement, planning, and estates. Building support among officers in these departments, and clarifying respective roles and responsibilities, can help ensure projects and programmes progress effectively.

## More information

These two guides are for community energy groups and include tips on working with councils – they provide useful background for considering the community organisation’s perspective:

- [CSE’s Community Energy Governance for the Greater SE Net Zero Hub](#)
- [CAG Consultants’ Next Generation practical learning guide 2: working in partnership with local authorities for Power to Change.](#)

# Building support: councillors

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Councillors can play a leading role in supporting community energy.

They can help ensure that senior officers are willing to approve dedicated time and resources to developing business cases in the early stages of a community energy project or programme.

Political support is also vital at the decision-making stage, where cabinet approval is required to progress projects through a key decision or other approval process.

**Cabinet members** hold portfolios for various council responsibilities. Many will relate to community energy, including climate change, poverty, health, economic development and housing. Mapping how community energy relates to each Cabinet Member's portfolio is an effective way of securing buy-in across the council, beyond the often supportive Cabinet lead for climate.

For example, demonstrating to the Cabinet lead for growth / economy / regeneration that a community energy programme will lead to skills and training opportunities in the borough can help you to secure buy-in beyond the climate and / or energy teams, facilitating your programme in the future.

**Scrutiny committees** can also play a vital role in driving forward the case for community energy. For example, [Islington's 2014 to 2016 Environment & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee review of community energy](#) led to the recommendation that the council should do more to support community energy, resulting in the set-up of Islington Community Energy Fund and the expansion of partnership working with community groups on council roofs.

Support for community energy from councillors on **planning committees** is also important, where community energy schemes require planning permission. Councillors understanding the wider benefits of community energy projects can help to weight their consideration of the planning issues in favour of approval.

# Building support: councillors

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## Top tips for engaging and supporting councillors

- **Demonstrate benefits.** Councillors are elected based on their commitments to serve their communities. Demonstrating the potential tangible benefits that community energy projects could deliver against their commitments – such as jobs and skills – is a potential route to secure political support, giving councillors tangible impacts to discuss with residents.
- **Showcase what other boroughs have achieved.** This can inspire action. For example, you could set up meetings with councillors from areas with established partnerships.
- **Identify quick wins.** The long-term case can be a hard sell, particularly if there is an election coming up. Are there shorter-term things that can be done now (e.g. pilot projects)?
- **Start small.** Working on a simpler project alongside a CEG in the first instance (e.g. solar on one council roof) will be easier to get buy-in for than designing a complex support programme or grant fund.
- **Highlight potential impact.** Existing targets can be leveraged to demonstrate how community energy delivers against council priorities – e.g. fuel poverty strategy, climate change targets, local jobs.
- **Arrange site visits.** These really work for political buy-in, allowing councillors visibility to associate with projects while providing an opportunity for community voices to be represented. Tips on arranging site visits can be found later in this pack, [here](#).
- **Build cross-party support.** Community energy often carries cross-party support given its wide range of benefits – this could be formalised, e.g. as a cooperation agreement or setting a community energy target, enabling this agenda to survive changes in personnel or leadership.
- **Leverage manifesto commitments.** This can create strong drivers for action among council leaders and representatives.

## More information

See *The Strategic Case* to understand the range of potential benefits that community energy can bring.

# Building support: cross-department

Delivery of community energy often requires multiple departments to collaborate. Officers from climate change, estates, housing, procurement, finance and legal may all be required to input into a project at different stages.

Having buy-in from senior officers within these departments can help create a supportive culture toward community energy, which can reduce the risk of barriers being presented at multiple stages of the project.

Example roles for a solar project on a council building:

- **Climate change:** Driving forward the project internally, supporting the CEG
- **Estates:** Building owner, supplying information about the building and access requirements, planned refurbishments and current energy bills
- **Legal:** Establishing lease agreement and PPA arrangements

- **Finance:** Reviewing PPA arrangements; reviewing opportunities for council investment or loans
- **Planning:** Pre-application advice, processing applications and officer recommendations
- **Procurement:** Determining whether there needs to be a competitive process – e.g. where multiple contracts are in place with one CEG, pushing it over procurement thresholds; considering how entering into a PPA will work with existing energy supply contracts.

One way to formalise support may be to establish a cross-department working group, bringing together relevant departments on a more structured basis once initial buy-in has been secured. Or you could table community energy as an agenda item in other working groups that already exist.

# 2.

## Approaches to generate buy-in

This section contains information on:

- Using national policy context to make the case
- Spotlighting local projects and their value and impacts
- How community energy can support existing council priorities



# Approaches to generate buy-in

This sub-section focuses on methods and approaches for securing buy-in for community energy projects and programmes.

This includes:

- **National targets and strategies**, such as the Local Power Plan, which have added new emphasis on (and resource against) the role of local and community energy in delivering net zero and the value this can create.
- **Local examples** of value creation and impact that can help illustrate the benefits of community energy in practice, providing opportunities to spotlight good work led by communities with council support.
- **The value to wider council strategies**, recognising the diverse benefits community energy can deliver and helping to secure more sustaining, cross-departmental support.



For specific empirical evidence to make the case for community energy, see *The Strategic Case*.

# National context

When seeking to generate support for community energy with councillors or colleagues, officers can refer to the national policy landscape for community energy.

The current Government has made major commitments to community energy in its manifesto pledges, including over 1,000 local power projects through the Local Power Plan, with an expected annual funding of £1 billion. GB Energy's Local Power Plan has a target of an additional 8 GW of local and community generation capacity to be installed by 2030. These commitments sit alongside the target to decarbonise the UK power system by 2030 and the legally binding target of reaching net zero by 2050.

The National Wealth Fund is likewise exploring funding to support larger-scale municipal and community partnerships, which can be leveraged towards local authority priorities.

Officers can use these strategic national objectives to demonstrate that these projects sit within a national policy environment that is favourable, with funding and support available to achieve community energy and wider local authority ambitions.



The image is a screenshot of the Great British Energy website. At the top left is the Great British Energy logo. To the right are navigation links for 'What we will do' and 'About us'. The main heading is 'Investing in local communities'. Below this is a paragraph: 'Clean energy shouldn't just power the nation - it should directly benefit local communities. That's why we're launching the Local Power Plan. Through it, we will work with local communities to empower people to generate their own energy, save money on their energy bills, and reinvest the savings where they are most needed.' This is followed by 'We'll work with local energy groups, councils, and mayors to:' and a bulleted list: '• fund and support community-led energy projects', '• provide expert guidance on planning and development', and '• ensure communities have a direct stake in local energy projects'. At the bottom, it says 'Our goal is simple: clean, affordable, home-grown energy that benefits everyone.'

# Local value and impacts

Helping councillors and senior leaders understand community energy and its value at the local level is an important foundation for generating wider organisational support. This could be done by:

- **Mapping:** Undertaking the steps in the Understanding community energy in your borough section of the toolkit to map and understand existing and potential community energy opportunities in your area.
- **Site visits:** Getting 'on the ground' at a community-owned solar PV array or an energy advice cafe, councillors and senior leaders can experience first-hand the positive impact that community energy projects are delivering. Top tips can be found on the next page.
- **Case studies:** Officers can use case studies of community energy projects that have been successfully supported by other boroughs to inform briefing reports. Community Energy London have many examples in different parts of London in their Community Energy Now! Powering Up London [reports](#).
- **Briefings and meetings:** Inviting CEGs and representatives from support organisations, such as Community Energy London, to meet and brief councillors and senior officers can inspire them and help to address any common concerns. These could be one-on-one over a coffee or in a more formal setting. An example of briefing slides for Westminster's Task and Finish Group can be found [here](#).
- **Training:** Dedicated training on specific community energy issues can drill into specific concerns or knowledge gaps.
- **Scrutiny inquiries:** Suggesting the scrutiny committee reviews the borough's approach to community energy will lend resources to investigating the current situation and identifying levers for action.

# Top tips for site visits

- [Community Energy London](#) can help you to identify sites to visit.
- If you don't have community energy projects in your borough, you could arrange visits to neighbouring boroughs. Inviting the Cabinet Lead from that borough can help your councillor to understand the project from a peer, including the political drivers and impacts of the project.
- Invite wider beneficiaries of the scheme to attend, helping your councillors and senior leaders understand the tangible impacts of the project. E.g. talking to recipients of energy advice services or users of buildings hosting a community energy array.
- Have someone on hand to make an informal record of discussions and be sure to follow through on any action points arising.
- If you already have an idea of the types of community energy project that your borough could pursue, select sites which spotlight those types of project, providing more direct inspiration.
- Where possible, compensate community organisations for their time, reflecting that they are committing time and often limited resources to arrange and accommodate a visit.

# Delivering existing council priorities

It may be useful to demonstrate how community energy aligns with the delivery of existing local authority strategies.

For example, in Southwark, officers were able to demonstrate that the development of the Southwark Community Energy Fund was aligned with the council's existing climate strategies.

## **Taking it further**

See the next section ([Embedding community energy in council strategies and processes](#)) to understand how to embed community energy within new or updated strategies.

*The Strategic Case* section sets out the potential benefits in more detail.

Existing strategies	Community energy might contribute
Climate delivery plans and local area energy plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Delivery of projects that increase renewable energy generation or reduce emissions with reduced impact on council budgets</li><li>• Inclusive engagement through trusted community partners and increasing awareness of climate issues through education programmes</li></ul>
Local economic development plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Local jobs and training opportunities within groups</li><li>• Leveraging funding to enable additional investment from the community and external sources</li><li>• Building resilience in local supply chains and service delivery</li></ul>
Just transition action plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accessible community investment opportunities and community benefit funds invested in low carbon projects that benefit the community</li></ul>
Fuel poverty strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Energy advice services might provide advice, emergency aid and measures to households living in fuel poverty</li></ul>
Public health strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Energy efficiency measures and energy advice are proven to reduce winter deaths and illnesses when targeted on vulnerable households</li></ul>
People and place/ community strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased social cohesion</li></ul>
Housing strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improving the energy efficiency of homes</li></ul>

# 3.

## **Embedding community energy in council strategies and processes**

- Embedding community energy in existing strategies
- Community energy in the planning system
- Integrating community energy into Local Area Energy Plans
- Procurement frameworks and social value
- Developing a community energy strategy

# Opportunities for embedding community energy

Embedding community energy within new and existing council strategies can help to build political support and drive cross-departmental collaboration.

This sub-section outlines:

- How community energy can be integrated within existing council strategies
- How community energy can be embedded as a core consideration in other processes, such as planning and procurement
- How to establish new community energy strategies.

## More information

This [guide](#) from the Greater South East Net Zero Hub includes methods for assessing how well embedded community energy is within your local authority.

# Embedding in existing strategies

When strategies are refreshed or new strategies are created, you can play a lead role in ensuring community energy is considered.

Strategies might be focused on climate or net zero, such as Climate Action Plans. Or they may be focused on other issues, such as public health, fuel poverty or economic development.

Slide [13](#) outlines where community energy can integrate with other themes.

## Your role

You can help the community energy sector to feed into a wide range of council strategies by ensuring engagement processes involve CEGs:

- You could signpost CEGs to open consultations on strategies and ensure they receive invites to attend engagement events.
- You could speak to the team leading the consultation to see if a community energy has been considered during the drafting process and to offer support.

## Examples

Examples of strategies in London that have helped deliver community energy programmes include [Camden](#) and [Southwark's Climate Action Plans](#). Each of these has supportive statements towards community energy and specific targets for local authority support.

[Newham's 2023 Just Transition Plan](#) likewise includes specific actions on:

- Facilitating community energy assets
- Accelerating opportunities for community-led and shared rooftop solar.

It allocates officer resource requirements for the delivery of each action, ensuring internal resource needs have been considered.

# Community energy in the planning system

Council planning policy and practice can be a key enabler for growing the community energy sector in your borough.

Embedding understanding of community energy into your planning department and into local plans can allow community energy projects to progress more quickly.

The council could specifically include weighting for community-led projects in local planning policy.

Engaging with CEGs when developing the Local Plan is a crucial step to introducing policies that support the delivery of community energy in the area.

## Your role

You can help the community energy sector to feed into local plan development by ensuring engagement processes involve CEGs:

- Signpost CEGs to open consultations on the Local Plan and ensure they receive invites to attend engagement events – making sure they understand the opportunity they have to influence planning policy.

- Speak to the planning team to offer support in facilitating access to CEGs and to raise the issue of developing supportive planning policy, using the examples below for precedent.

## Examples

- [Cornwall Council's Climate Emergency Development Plan Document](#) (DPD) includes in its renewable energy policy that: “Significant weight will be given to community led energy schemes where evidence of community support can be demonstrated, with administrative and financial structures in place to deliver/ manage the project and any income from it.”
- Although not yet fully approved, Luton Borough Council is in the process of [reviewing its Local Plan](#) with a view to incorporating community energy. One of the draft objectives in the Local Plan review is to “ensure the efficient use of resources and support a local zero-carbon energy system that reduces Luton’s reliance on global fossil fuels and prioritises community energy”.

# Planning support

CEGs may need additional support to understand the planning process for their projects.

## Role of the climate officer

- You could deliver briefings or training to planning officers on the role of community energy and how it supports the council's objectives. If you have a community energy fund or plan to establish one, you could link the application process to accessing planning support, as Camden has.
- You could support CEGs to access pre-application support from planning officers, e.g. advice on suitable retrofit measures in a conservation area.
- The council could dedicate specific planning officers to focus on community energy applications, enabling them to offer specialist advice tailored to the needs of groups.

## Example

Once an application is under way to [Camden's Climate Fund](#), applicants can access free planning advice on the measures they propose, helping to ensure feasibility and alignment with local planning requirements.



# Integrating community energy into Local Area Energy Plans

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Involving CEGs in the development of Local Area Energy Plans (LAEPs) can help embed community energy within strategic energy system planning.

Some projects identified in LAEPs may also be well-suited to community-led delivery; LAEP modelling can, for example, identify sites or opportunities (such as council rooftops or land) suitable for community generators.

**An example of how LAEPs can work with community energy is outlined on the next page.**

## Your role

While developing a LAEP, you could:

- Ensure representation of the community energy in the engagement process to account for the sector's perspective
- Proactively identify sites and opportunities that could be led by or delivered in partnership with community energy and highlight these opportunities to the sector
- Identify how issues of energy poverty, green job creation and local wealth building could be addressed in partnership with community groups.

# Integrating community energy into Local Area Energy Plans

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## Example

After recognising that it needed to scale community energy to meet its targets, [Leicestershire County Council worked to build local capacity](#) and support project delivery while developing its LAEP.

The council worked with Green Fox Community Energy to establish four new groups and get 66 community energy projects under way. Through funding, guidance and practical support, the council has enabled community ownership of solar farms and rooftop arrays on 116 schools. To date, it has installed 12 MW of solar capacity.

## More information

The GLA's [written response to the Energy Security and Net Zero Parliamentary Committee's Call for Evidence on Unlocking Community Energy at Scale](#) sets out the GLA's view on the role of community energy in LAEPs.



One of 116 schools engaged by The Leicestershire Solar Schools project

# Procurement frameworks and social value

Procurement will be involved when climate officers and CEGs are establishing partnership projects, such as commissioning energy advice services or for solar on council roofs.

There may be opportunities to embed community energy into procurement approaches.

**The Social Value Act** requires the public sector to consider social value in their procurement, which can favour community organisations with their non-profit social and environmental objectives.

Wider use of social value clauses in procurements for relevant energy-related services may help to support CEGs to bid for and win work from the council. More “progressive procurement” approaches can also prioritise local and community-led enterprises in procurement decisions..

In some cases, CEGs can be designated as “preferred suppliers”, ensuring that partnerships can be built on key council initiatives and providing revenues to the sector.

## Your role

You could start by discussing the council’s approach to social value with procurement officers and exploring whether there are opportunities to shape it to support or prioritise community-led organisations.

## More information

See the *Solar PV on Council Buildings* and *Energy Advice Services* guides for more information on procurement.

# Developing a community energy strategy

Some councils have developed community energy strategies and frameworks. These will typically include a combination of:

- Assessment of the opportunity of community energy through analysis of local building, site, local decarbonisation plans and pipeline data
- Engagement with the community sector and wider local stakeholders and citizens to understand appetite, needs, ambitions and current capacity
- Commitments to grow the sector, for instance as a GW target of installed community-owned energy by a certain date or establish a certain number of projects
- Clear actions and resource for the realisation of plans or strategies, including internal governance and processes, e.g. procurement or planning guidance.

## Your role

The main role of the climate officer will be to build buy-in for community energy early, working with colleagues and councillors to secure support for a dedicated council strategy or action plan.

If a full strategy is something you wish to pursue, ensure activities from the *Establishing and Supporting Community Energy* section and earlier in this section are conducted with strategy development in mind, systematically gathering data and information to inform council actions.

## Examples

- **Glasgow City Council** published the [Community Renewable Energy Framework](#), mapping and identifying opportunity sites for CEGs to pursue in partnership with the local authority
- **Cambridgeshire County Council** published their [Community Energy Action Plan](#) in 2024, based on engagement with 140 local stakeholders, setting out clear council actions, project priorities and funding support for the sector.

# 4.

## Addressing common concerns

- Financial constraints
- Legitimacy of the community sector
- Diversity of representation
- Appetite for risk
- Potential risks

# Common concerns

Research shows that, while councils may be broadly supportive of community energy, many officers and councillors hold reservations. This sub-section explores some of the most common concerns cited and how these can be mitigated. It covers concerns about:

- Finance and the organisational security of community energy groups, which council officers may view as amateurish or risky partners
- The sector's diversity and its perceived dominance by more affluent, educated and culturally homogeneous individuals
- Key risks to the council and potential mitigations.

While some of these concerns are less salient today, there are ways in which borough climate officers can allay them, ensuring confidence in supporting, enabling and partnering with the sector.

## More information

For more insights on some of these common concerns, see Regen's blog: [Community energy for a just transition, breaking the stereotype.](#)



# Financial constraints

Borough budgets are under extreme stress. Senior or political appetite to spend additional budget and officer resource on supporting a community energy programme may be limited as a result.

Some politicians and officers may consider that working with CEGs on solar on council roofs is a wasted opportunity for the council to realise the projects and associated benefits themselves.

## Your role

You should highlight how community energy projects can:

- Save the council money on bills, e.g. solar on council roofs can lead to Power Purchase Agreements that reduce the cost of electricity at the site
- Deliver net zero projects at low or no upfront capital cost
- Leverage in investment, e.g. borough grants to community energy projects can enable the CEG to raise finance from the community or other financing sources
- Reduce the cost of service provision e.g. by outsourcing energy advice services to the community organisation
- Leverage in funding, e.g. partnerships with CEGs can lead to joint funding bids, enabling the council to access grant funding that it wouldn't be able to otherwise
- Generate wider social, economic and environmental benefits, bringing value to the council, including reducing carbon emissions, public health improvements, increased social cohesion and local supply opportunities
- Anchor [Community Wealth Building](#) approaches, generating new revenues, skills and supply chains to reinvest in the local area.

# Legitimacy of the community sector

A unique selling point of community energy is that it empowers the community to own, operate and benefit from energy projects, while also building community wealth, tackling fuel poverty and, often, supporting a just transition.

However, councillors might need convincing that organisations have a sufficiently robust structures that democratise and protect this approach. They may also have concerns about the sustainability of the organisation, given that they often rely on volunteers.

## Your role

- You could work with CEGs to understand their constitutions and legal structures and present this to councillors to allay any concerns about legitimacy.
- You could present case studies of successful initiatives and enable discussions with councillors in other boroughs to support understanding of the sector.
- You should undertake a due diligence and seek legal support when awarding grant funds or entering into contracts.



# Diversity of representation

A further concern can be that community energy lacks diversity. Decision makers may be concerned that benefits from council support would flow disproportionately to middle-class residents.

[The GLA's scrutiny review of community energy](#) recommended that the Mayor ensures that funding criteria for energy projects (such as for future rounds of the LCEF) supports community energy groups to train members and improve diversity in the sector. In London, the sector is committed to increasing the diversity of representation. Initiatives such as low minimum share levels (e.g. £50) can support inclusive participation, as can considering how to actively enable people from a wide range of circumstances to attend and participate in meetings.

Repowering London has a guide on embedding inclusive participation into community cooperatives [here](#). Regen's [work with the Scottish Government](#) likewise sets out how community energy can support a just transition, with reference to project, governance, engagement and financial structures.

## Your role

You could take decision makers to meet community energy representatives and to attend community energy events, enabling them to ask questions about how organisations take a proactive approach to diversity and inclusion.

If setting up or running a community energy fund, you could include funding for activities that support increased diversity - e.g. training and awareness raising workshops. You could include monitoring requirements on grant funding awards to enable you to track the impact of funding given out on diversity in CEGs, and/or ringfence a proportion of funding for projects in areas of high deprivation, with signposting to resources on inclusive engagement.

You could support initiatives within the community energy sector to increase diversity, such as skills and training sessions, and use mapping the sector exercises to identify less represented groups and organisations for proactive outreach.

Undertaking an equalities impact assessment of planned projects will support you to identify further actions to support a diverse approach.

# Appetite for risk

Local authorities are generally risk-averse organisations. When developing the case to support a community energy project, climate officers should consider the risks to the council.

You should draw up a risk register, with clear mitigations, working with colleagues in finance, legal, procurement, estates and other relevant teams. The following pages summarise the types of risk that community energy projects might expose councils to.



As with any energy project, good project management processes and governance procedures will help to minimise risk. These should include:

1. Clear governance arrangements setting out who is responsible for what
2. Due diligence of organisations and project proposals
3. Appropriate legal and contractual safeguards – e.g. break clauses
4. Transparent decision making with clear criteria for providing support
5. Clear communication to the public about the council's role
6. Limiting the council's exposure by ensuring the groups have appropriate insurance and take on liabilities appropriately
7. Ongoing monitoring and escalation routes.

# Potential risks

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Type of risk	Examples	Mitigations
Reputational or political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Project failure:</b> Reputational damage from being associated with a project that fails</li><li>• <b>Public opposition:</b> Residents object to siting, visual impact, noise, construction disruption, or heat network street works</li><li>• <b>Perceived inequity:</b> Criticism if only certain neighbourhoods receive investment or benefits.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Clear communication strategy:</b> Set out what the council is and is not responsible for; emphasise community ownership</li><li>• <b>Community engagement early and often:</b> Hold local consultations, public info sessions and respond to concerns before decisions are taken</li><li>• <b>Transparent selection criteria:</b> Publish criteria for supporting community groups to avoid perceptions of favouritism.</li></ul>
Financial and liabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Implicit liability:</b> Residents may assume the council guarantees the scheme; if investors lose money, they may pressure the council to intervene</li><li>• <b>Financial:</b> Loss of public money if grants, loans or investment don't lead to a successful project</li><li>• <b>Undervaluing assets:</b> If council land or assets are provided cheaply, this may be perceived as undervaluing public assets.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Clear financial boundaries:</b> Written statements clarifying that the council does not guarantee investor returns</li><li>• <b>Formal appraisal of any financial support:</b> Use business case templates, due diligence checks and robust grant appraisal processes</li><li>• <b>Risk-based grant funding agreements:</b> Milestone-based release of funds; clawback clauses if outcomes are not delivered</li><li>• <b>Internal surveyor</b> will confirm the leasing of the roof/land complies with the Local Government Act 1972 and General Disposal Consent 2003.</li></ul>

# Potential risks

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Type of risk	Examples	Mitigations
Legal and contractual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Weak governance in the community organisation:</b> Groups may lack robust processes meaning that the council could be drawn into disputes or operational issues</li><li>• <b>Contractual disputes:</b> Over land leases, power-purchase agreements, shared assets, or grant conditions</li><li>• <b>Procurement law challenges:</b> If the council is seen to be directly or indirectly giving advantage to a group without proper tendering.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Due diligence on governance capacity:</b> Review the group's board structure, financial records and policies before support is granted</li><li>• <b>Robust legal review of all agreements:</b> Including leases, power purchase agreements, licences and memoranda of understanding</li><li>• <b>Procurement compliance checks:</b> Use internal procurement teams to ensure compliance with public procurement rules before offering substantial support.</li></ul>
Operational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Damage to property or health and safety issues:</b> Project construction or operation causes unexpected issues</li><li>• <b>Ongoing support burden:</b> Officers may spend significant time beyond what was expected.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Insurance requirements:</b> Require the community organisation to hold appropriate liability and operational insurance</li><li>• <b>Capacity assessment:</b> Assess the skills of the group and provide upskilling if needed; view support from the council as investment for future delivery.</li></ul>
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Equality and inclusion concerns:</b> Projects not perceived to benefit low-income residents, leading to reputational damage.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Undertake an Equalities Impact Assessment</b> of support provided and require the CEG to consider equality and inclusion through procurement or grant criteria where possible.</li></ul>

# 5.

## Appendix: Planning in conservation areas

This section contains information on:

- Understanding planning issues in conservation areas
- Case study: Bath and West East Somerset
- Case study: Area-based retrofit

# Planning in conservation areas

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Community led projects can include retrofitting homes and buildings in conservation areas or with listed or heritage building status.

To support the roll out of retrofit programmes, the council could develop guidance for homeowners, CEGs and commercial installers on appropriate measures for these buildings or areas. CEGs can play a role in developing appropriate guidance, sharing their expertise and knowledge of the user journey.

Other tools that the council might use for conservation areas or heritage/listed buildings include:

- **Local Listed Building Consent Orders (LLBCOs):** LLBCOs establish listed building consent for specific works on a group of listed buildings within a certain area. Unlike conservation areas, where buildings often have the same characteristics, listed buildings may vary in their physical characteristics, so developing an LLBCO can be difficult but with valuable outcomes.

- **Heritage Partnership Agreements (HPAs):** Agreements that establish listed building consent for specific works on all listed buildings under a single ownership e.g. social housing provider.
- **Local Development Orders (LDOs):** These orders grant permission in advance for specified alteration measures to be made to properties. They would supersede criteria for the conservation area.

The development of these tools requires a large upfront commitment from the local authority; however, they can smooth the delivery of carbon reduction measures in areas where retrofit is currently extremely difficult.

# Planning in conservation areas

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## Role of the climate officer:

If there are significant conservation areas or numbers of heritage buildings in your borough, you could approach the planning department to make the case for additional guidance or use of planning tools.

You could offer to link planning officers with CEGs so they can understand the issues from the community perspective.

## Examples:

[The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea](#) has delivered two LLBCOs for solar PV and double-glazing installation on listed buildings. Several boroughs have produced retrofit guidance for conservation areas/heritage buildings, including:

- [Camden](#)
- [Lewisham](#)
- [Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea](#)
- [Kingston](#)
- [Hackney](#)



## Case study

# Bath & North East Somerset

Bath & North East Somerset Council partnered with Bath & West Community Energy and other local organisations to provide advice on retrofit and conservation for owner-occupiers of listed buildings, as well as with installers and landlords.

The Green Heritage Homes project ran from August 2023 to March 2025 and aimed to increase the knowledge and confidence of householders and professionals regarding **sensitive retrofit**, demonstrating that **heritage value can be preserved while improving energy efficiency** through careful consideration and assessment of a building's special interest.

The outcome was a solution that provided discounted home retrofit surveys,

# LISTED BUILDING

## Energy Advice & Support Project



*A video from Bath and West Community Energy outlining the Green Heritage Homes project.*

which included guidance from a council officer and a member of the CEG to owner-occupier households whose properties required specialist retrofit actions due to planning requirements. Community energy involvement was vital to

building trust in the programme and the partnership funded important capacity building projects by Bath & West Community Energy.



## Case study

# Area-based retrofit

Rossendale Borough Council has been partnering with community-owned Rossendale Valley Energy to support an area-based retrofit project that includes properties in a conservation area.

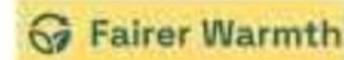
Rossendale Borough Council and Rossendale Valley Energy are partnering on an innovation project that will retrofit and install heat pumps in terraced housing. Rossendale has 10 conservation areas and 273 listed buildings,.

One of the many challenges faced was the planning system and the conservation status of many of the properties they were seeking to retrofit. The local authority and community energy partnership worked to develop heritage-sensitive solutions with their contractors RVE.

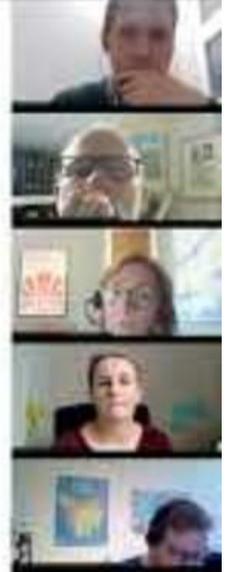
## The Net Zero Terrace Street:

### Why is the project important?

- 'Unlocks' potentially millions of otherwise stranded homes mitigating noise, space and affordability barriers;
- Homogenous, inclusive solution with no upfront cost for householders, can focus on mixed tenure inc PR
- Delivers Affordable, low carbon energy and healthy warm homes, improving lives, reducing bills by over 80% compared to electric boilers;
- Speed of delivery, replicable & scalable for all sizes of local authority using local supply chain (job and skills growth).
- Model can be adapted for other types of communities.
- Can be started by communities, 3<sup>rd</sup> parties or LAs



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*A video presentation from the findings of the Net Zero Terrace Streets project*

The local authority was able to provide access to the planning team who helped to guide the development of the retrofit measures, which were then passed for approval.

Rossendale Borough Council is considering developing Local Development Orders to enable these measures to be rolled out without the need for planning permission in the future.



#BeTheSolution

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The logo for London Councils features the words "LONDON" and "COUNCILS" stacked vertically in a bold, white, sans-serif font. A white, curved line sweeps from the bottom right of "COUNCILS" and underlines the text.

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The logo for Repowering London consists of a circular arrangement of white rectangular blocks forming a ring. The words "REPOWERING" and "LONDON" are centered within the ring in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

**REGEN**