

# Local action for a global challenge

Scaling climate action by UK local authorities

April 2024







## About CDP

CDP is a global non-profit that runs the world's environmental disclosure system for companies, investors, public authorities, cities, states and regions. In 2023, over 24,000 organizations around the world reported data through CDP, representing a 38% growth since 2021. This includes the highest ever number of new environmental disclosers that CDP has seen since its inception over two decades ago. Fully [TCFD](#)-aligned, CDP holds the largest environmental database in the world, and CDP scores are widely used to drive investment and procurement decisions towards a zero carbon, sustainable and resilient economy. Visit [cdp.net](https://www.cdp.net) or follow us [@CDP](#) to find out more.

This report was created using the data reported by UK local authorities through [CDP-ICLEI Track](#) in 2023. 68 UK local authorities reported, and the information is based on those responses. Our open-source cities, states and regions datasets can be downloaded for free from our [Open Data Portal](#).

For more information about annual disclosure, please email [citiesemea@cdp.net](mailto:citiesemea@cdp.net).



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CDP has prepared the data and analysis in this report based on UK local authorities' responses to the Cities 2023 Questionnaire on CDP-ICLEI Track. The analysis contains data from cities or, in some instances, groups of cities at different administrative levels that reported in 2023. This includes cities, metropolitan areas, local authorities, combined authorities, and some regional councils.

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# UK local authorities reporting through CDP-ICLEI Track in 2023

In 2023, 68 UK local authorities disclosed through CDP-ICLEI Track. These local authorities represent:

## 44%

of UK emissions —



## 54%

of UK population —



## 59%

of UK GDP —



## Northern Ireland

## Scotland

## England

## Wales

★ 27 UK local authorities made it onto the [2023 Cities A List](#), a global award recognizing climate leadership through tangible and effective action.

● Local authorities disclosing in 2023



# Snapshot of UK local authorities' climate action

## Climate change in the UK

The UK government has set the legally binding target to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, as outlined in the Climate Change Act 2008<sup>1</sup>. This commitment will require unprecedented change, in both scale and scope, with transformational shifts in energy generation, transportation, land use, construction and heating systems; as well as everyday behaviours.

At the same time, 2023 marked the earth's warmest year on record, and the second warmest year ever recorded in the UK<sup>2</sup>, punctuated by extreme weather events across the globe<sup>3</sup>. The data reported through CDP-ICLEI Track by local authorities in 2023 demonstrates that the reality of climate change is being felt right across the UK.

These impacts, such as extreme heat and flooding, are having very real consequences on local communities and essential services and sectors. Groups such as the elderly (identified by 91% of local authorities), low-income households (88%), vulnerable health groups (84%), children and youth (79%), and outdoor workers (63%) were reported as being the most exposed to climate hazards. Moreover, 82% of local authorities identified human health and social work activities as being particularly impacted by climate change. This figure echoes the findings of the 'Health Effects of Climate Change (HECC) in the UK: State of the evidence 2023' report, which estimates that the total costs of heat-related deaths and related socio-economic change in England are approximately £6.8 billion per year in the 2020s, with a projected increase to £14.7 billion per year by the 2050s<sup>4</sup>. Water supply, waste management, agriculture, and transportation are also identified as the sectors most at risk from climate hazards.



# 99%

**of local authorities (all but one) reported a climate hazard in their area.**



# 78%

**of local authorities reported already being impacted by climate hazards in 2023.**



# 70%

**of the reported hazards are expected to increase in intensity and/or frequency in the short-medium term.**

## 5 most commonly reported climate hazards:



**Extreme heat**



**Urban flooding**



**River flooding**



**Drought**



**Coastal flooding**

<sup>1</sup> Climate Change Act 2008. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/27/contents>

<sup>2</sup> Met Office (2024) 2023 was second warmest year on record for UK. Available at: <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/about-us/press-office/news/weather-and-climate/2023/2023-was-second-warmest-year-on-record-for-uk>

<sup>3</sup> BBC (2024) Climate change: 2023 hottest year on record. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/67921805>

<sup>4</sup> UK Health Security Agency (2023) Health Effects of Climate Change (HECC) in the UK: State of the evidence 2023. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ukhsas-hecc-report-shows-impacts-on-public-health-due-to-warming-climate>

## Ambition and action in UK local authorities

It is widely recognised that a lot of the action needed to advance the UK's climate goals and adapt to the impacts of climate change can only be delivered locally. The Climate Change Commission states that "emissions reductions without local action will be insufficient,"<sup>5</sup> while the Skidmore Review on Net Zero argues that "unlocking the ambition of places and communities will deliver the most successful version of net zero."<sup>6</sup> As decision makers and service deliverers in their communities, local authorities have a crucial role to play in tackling climate change. Indeed, approximately 82% of the UK's emissions fall within their sphere of influence<sup>7</sup>. Local authorities are actively embracing this role.

Since 2018, over 300 UK local authorities have declared a climate emergency and the data reported by 68 of them through CDP-ICLEI Track in 2023 reflects their continued leadership in accelerating the UK's transition to a net-zero future

and addressing climate impacts. 99% of these 68 local authorities (all but one) have set an area-wide emissions reduction target (up from 67% of the local authorities that reported in 2018) and 96% have climate action plans, a substantial increase from 58% in 2018.

Acting on these declarations, targets and plans, all 68 local authorities are actively engaged in climate actions, focusing on emissions reductions or addressing the impacts of climate change. Notably, the average number of climate actions reported by local authorities in 2023 has doubled (14.8 average) compared to 2018 (7.5 average), indicating a shift from setting targets to implementing tangible measures. The benefits of such actions are evident<sup>8</sup>, with local authorities reporting reduced costs, improved air quality, enhanced energy security, biodiversity conservation, job creation and improved mental well-being as a result.

### Most commonly reported co-benefits:



**64** Reduced costs



**62** Improved air quality



**59** Increased energy security



**58** Protected/ improved biodiversity and ecosystem services



**57** Job creation



**57** Improved mental wellbeing/quality of life

<sup>5</sup> Committee on Climate Change (2012) How local authorities can reduce emissions and manage climate risk. Available at: <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/how-local-authorities-can-reduce-emissions-and-manage-climate-risks/>

<sup>6</sup> Skidmore, C. (2023) Mission Zero: Independent Review of Net Zero. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/net-zero-review-uk-could-do-more-to-reap-economic-benefits-of-green-growth>

<sup>7</sup> DESNZ (2021) Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/net-zero-strategy>

<sup>8</sup> Bachra, S. et al. (2020) The Co-benefits of Climate Action: Accelerating City-level Ambition. Available at: [https://cdn.cdp.net/cdp-production/cms/reports/documents/000/005/329/original/CDP\\_Co-benefits\\_analysis.pdf?1597235231](https://cdn.cdp.net/cdp-production/cms/reports/documents/000/005/329/original/CDP_Co-benefits_analysis.pdf?1597235231)



## Most common mitigation actions

### Energy efficiency and retrofit measures

Lancashire's [Cosy Homes in Lancashire](#) initiative targets domestic energy efficiency, focusing on low-income households. The project has reached 2,193 properties, saving 100,488 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> from 2020 to 2022. The initiative is now delivering a £41m Home Upgrade Grant which will provide measures to 2,000 properties, saving an estimated 173,711 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>.

### Electric vehicle charging infrastructure

Coventry City Council has installed 957 charging points in the city, providing a total of 1,326 spaces for consumers to charge their vehicles. Another 450 charge points are expected to be operational by April 2024, contributing to the ongoing development of Coventry's electric vehicle infrastructure.

### Renewable energy generation

[Solar Together Essex](#), a collective purchasing initiative, provides residents and small businesses with solar panels from trusted suppliers. Since 2018, the council has run annual campaigns, resulting in 2,227 installations. The 2023 campaign resulted in 699 solar PV installations and a reduction of approximately 668 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>.

### Improving walking, cycling and public transport access

Greater Manchester's [Bee Network Project](#) has delivered over 100km of walking and cycling routes. In August 2022, a cycle hire scheme was launched and users have already covered over 500,000km.

### Green space and biodiversity preservation and expansion

Enfield has partnered with Thames21 and community groups to restore the borough's [rivers](#) and [woodlands](#). In addition to habitat creation and biodiversity enhancement, benefits include flood risk reduction and carbon capture.



## Most common adaptation actions

### Development of targeted plans or programmes to address specific hazards

Bristol's [Keep Bristol Cool Framework](#) addresses the impacts of extreme heat through actions aimed at protecting the public during heatwaves, enhancing heat resilience in new developments and infrastructure, addressing overheating in homes, and using green infrastructure to cool public spaces.

### Community engagement and education

Aberdeenshire has worked with [Adaptation Scotland](#) to facilitate placemaking workshops. These initiatives address the need to include climate change issues within a discussion about place, and by doing so, maximizing co-benefits to drive just solutions that also support health and wellbeing.

### Green infrastructure

The City of London is investing £6.8m in its [Cool Streets and Greening Programme](#), implementing urban greening, climate-resilient planting and sustainable drainage projects to enhance the resilience of streets and open spaces. Monitoring has already shown that during heatwaves, trees can reduce local temperatures by 6°C.

### Flood defence

Over half of Newport is at [risk of flooding](#). The Crindau Flood Management scheme built defences along 2.6km of the Crindau Pill, protecting over 600 homes. At the same time, new river embankments were established with new footpaths, cycle paths and public spaces.

### Afforestation and reforestation

The [Forest for Cornwall](#) initiative has a goal to cover about 2% of Cornwall's land area, equivalent to 8,000 hectares, with forest. To date, the project has planted over 700 hectares of new trees, which will result in an estimated 175,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e sequestered once the trees reach maturity.



# Levers for local authorities to drive local action

**There are a broad range of levers local authorities can use, and are using, to enhance the impact of their climate action, from policy and procurement to engagement with civil society and collaboration with other levels of government.**

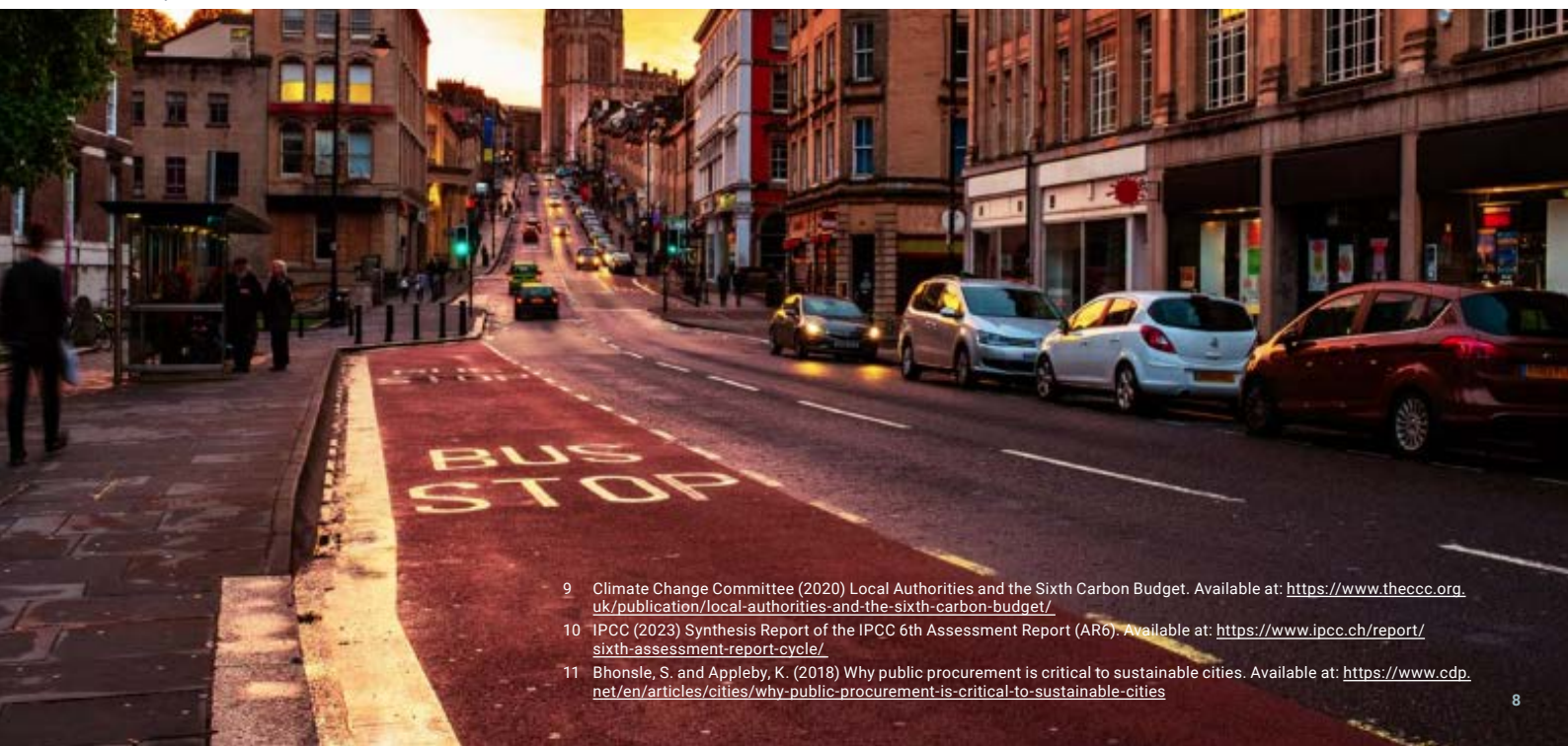
## Incorporating climate considerations into plans, policies and wider decision-making

Local authorities are responsible for creating plans covering sectors that impact emissions and shape resilience to climate impacts, including buildings and housing, transport, waste, and nature and biodiversity. Through these plans and policies, local authorities can embed climate considerations into various facets of local development and help accelerate the achievement of sustainability outcomes.

In 2017, 47% of local government spending went on procurement<sup>9</sup>. Local authorities therefore have a critical opportunity to use their purchasing power to send strong market signals, promote sustainability among suppliers and contractors, and ensure public resources are directed towards initiatives supporting a sustainable future<sup>10,11</sup>.

Finally, beyond formal plans and policies, local authorities are embedding climate impacts and considerations into wider decision-making. From identifying councillors to lead the climate agenda to establishing cross-departmental working groups, this encourages ownership and accountability across service areas.

Bristol City Council



<sup>9</sup> Climate Change Committee (2020) Local Authorities and the Sixth Carbon Budget. Available at: <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/local-authorities-and-the-sixth-carbon-budget/>

<sup>10</sup> IPCC (2023) Synthesis Report of the IPCC 6th Assessment Report (AR6). Available at: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sixth-assessment-report-cycle/>

<sup>11</sup> Bhonsle, S. and Appleby, K. (2018) Why public procurement is critical to sustainable cities. Available at: <https://www.cdp.net/en/articles/cities/why-public-procurement-is-critical-to-sustainable-cities>





Reading Borough Council

## Building a sustainable future

Reading's [Local Plan \(2019-36\)](#) mandates major new housing developments (10 homes or more) to meet a 'zero-carbon homes' standard. For cases where reaching the zero carbon standard is not possible, a minimum 35% improvement in the dwelling emission rate beyond the UK's 2013 Building Regulations is required, along with a contribution of £1,800 per tonne towards energy efficiency or renewable energy contributions in the local area. The policy also includes provisions for smaller developments. With approximately 7,000 new homes expected in the next decade, the estimated impact of the policy is an annual reduction of 753.4 tonnes. The plan also sets out the policy basis for climate adaptation, requiring all new developments to demonstrate how they have incorporated measures to enhance climate resilience, including maximising opportunities for natural heating and ventilation, solar shading, green infrastructure, and mitigation of surface water runoff and measures to protect against any increases in river flooding levels.

Oxfordshire County Council

## Harnessing purchasing power to drive emissions reductions



Emissions arising from Oxfordshire's purchased goods and services are being tackled through a comprehensive [supply chain emissions policy](#). This involves targeted engagement and working with suppliers to drive meaningful change across the supply chain.

- ▼ **Baseline assessment:** Conducting a spend-based analysis to identify crucial areas in the Council's supply chain. Based on this assessment Oxfordshire found that purchased goods and services make up approximately 73% to 81% of its operational carbon emissions. The Council also identified its top 10 emitting suppliers and is working with them to recalculate their emissions from spend-based to activity-based carbon assessments.
- ▼ **Supplier engagement:** Working with current suppliers of major contracts to introduce reporting on emissions and reduction plans. For new contracts, the Council is prioritising suppliers with science-based targets for contracts above £5m and requesting emissions reporting for contracts above £1m. Finally, the Council is engaging with all suppliers to jointly identify decarbonisation opportunities.
- ▼ **Internal engagement:** Developing detailed sustainable procurement guidance for staff and recruiting a specialist in the procurement team to focus on green supply chains.
- ▼ **Leveraging the [Social Value Policy](#):** Climate action measures are given a maximum prioritisation within the policy, encouraging suppliers to independently identify further opportunities to deliver low-carbon contracts.



Edinburgh: One of Edinburgh's new trams makes its way to the Gogar Depot



## Edinburgh City Council

### Mainstreaming climate considerations into decision-making

Edinburgh is making sustainability a central tenet of its governance by embedding climate considerations into decision-making, through political oversight, coordinated actions, and a commitment to change.

- ▼ **Political engagement:** The Sustainability, Climate and Nature All Party Oversight Group fosters engagement between elected members from each of the political groups and the sustainability programme.
- ▼ **Strategic leadership:** The Council Emissions Reduction Plan Board includes key service areas for each strand of the [2030 Climate Strategy](#) and provides leadership for achieving net-zero council emissions by 2030.
- ▼ **Culture shift:** The Council is mainstreaming sustainability in decision-making to ensure mitigation and adaptation goals become “everyone’s business”. This has included training over 450 staff using resources from the [Carbon Literacy Project](#) and [Climate Fresk](#).
- ▼ **Alignment of budgeting with climate ambitions:** The Council’s annual Sustainable Capital Budget Strategy is assessed using a methodology developed by the [Institute for Climate Economics](#), to highlight the share of the budget that aligns with sustainability ambitions, as well as the share which is ‘unfavourable’ with regards to climate.
- ▼ **City-wide collaboration:** The Council co-chairs the Net Zero Edinburgh Leadership Board, leading city-wide partnerships and collaboration with the public and private sector. The board includes four working groups including the Edinburgh Adapts Partnership, which focuses on adaptation and resilience.





# 94%

**of local authorities reported that they are engaging with communities.**



# 67/68

**local authorities have reported examples of engagement with other levels of government.**

## Engaging with local organisations, other levels of government and communities

Achieving area-wide emissions reduction targets and building resilience in an inclusive and holistic way requires multi-level collaboration involving diverse community stakeholders.

With their proximity to communities and in-depth knowledge of local contexts, local authorities are well-positioned to engage closely with the public. 94% of local authorities reported that they are engaging with communities, using methods such as citizens' assemblies, youth climate summits, partnerships with community groups, and climate funds for community-led projects. This enables local authorities to deepen their understanding of climate change impacts in communities and get their input into climate action decisions.

Working with local actors from the public and private sector (businesses, schools and universities, NHS, etc) can unlock areas for joint action and lead to innovative solutions, with each actor bringing unique insights and expertise<sup>12</sup>. Climate commissions and similar alliances bringing together key local actors aligned around the common goal to achieve net-zero emissions and build resilience have been adopted by local authorities across the UK, from [Leeds](#) and [Belfast](#) to [Hammersmith and Fulham](#).

Given the different responsibilities that exist, as well as the cross-boundary nature of climate issues, collaboration and coordination between regional and different levels of local government is crucial<sup>13</sup>. 67 of the 68 local authorities have reported examples of engagement with other levels of government.

To support this engagement, transparency through regular reporting and communication allows local authorities to demonstrate progress, build trust with local partners and the public, and strengthen accountability.

<sup>12</sup> CDP (2019) City-Business Climate Alliances: A Step-by-Step Guide for Developing Successful Collaborations. Available at: <https://cdn.cdp.net/cdp-production/cms/reports/documents/000/004/732/original/City-Business-Climate-Alliances.pdf?1570550817>

<sup>13</sup> C40 Cities (2020) Climate Action Planning Vertical Integration Guide. Available at: [https://www.c40knowledgehub.org/s/article/Climate-Action-Planning-Vertical-Integration-Guide?language=en\\_US](https://www.c40knowledgehub.org/s/article/Climate-Action-Planning-Vertical-Integration-Guide?language=en_US)



Dundee City Council

## Transparency to drive collaboration

As part of Dundee City Council's commitment to engaging and communicating with local stakeholders, the Council has developed the [Sustainable Dundee website](#), which hosts the city's emissions dashboard. The publicly accessible dashboard showcases the city's emissions sources, targets, and mitigation pathways for different sectors, and offers stakeholders and the public the opportunity to explore emissions reduction activities, policies and their impact. The dashboard also provides space to engage, ask questions and comment on climate actions through various channels, fostering participation in the city's climate governance.

Belfast City Council

## Centring climate justice



As Belfast aims to "transition to an inclusive, net-zero emissions economy", addressing climate change is an integral focus of '[The Belfast Agenda](#)'. Created in collaboration with key city partners, residents and community organisations, the Agenda views economic growth, anti-poverty initiatives and climate action as interconnected issues that need to be dealt with jointly. The actions Belfast is taking to address these issues include:

- **Assessing climate risks:** Faced with hazards such as flooding and heat stress, the Council is gathering data on the most at-risk communities, infrastructure and sectors to ensure investment supports those most affected by climate change. Collaborating with Climate Northern Ireland and the Met Office, the Council produced the [Belfast Climate Pack](#) and [Heat Pack](#). Additionally, a climate justice mapping pilot is underway to ensure the transition to net-zero is fair and just.
- **Community engagement:** The [Belfast Climate Commission](#) has a Just Transition as one of its key aims, with the Community Climate Action and Youth working groups seeking to embed community views in the city's climate action. Working with community groups, the Community Climate Action group is developing methods for participatory climate action. The Youth Working Group has held climate discussions with young people (for example, through the [Youth Summit](#) during COP26), fostering engagement between local young people and politicians, and leading to a report that will factor into policy decisions.
- **Promoting wider benefits of climate action:** The [Belfast Food Partnership](#) brings together different partners to help make healthy and sustainable food a defining feature of the city, whilst addressing pressing social, economic and environmental problems such as dietary health, food poverty and climate change.





Brighton & Hove: City of Meadows 22 Cottesmore School



## City of Brighton & Hove

### Engaging schools in climate action

The [Our City Our World](#) initiative in Brighton & Hove is a pioneering school sustainability engagement programme developed in collaboration with local schools. Key climate actions undertaken by the 47 participating schools in 2022-23 include:

- ▀ **Curriculum integration:** Schools integrated essential climate change knowledge across all curriculum areas and promoted the development of green skills.
- ▀ **School operations:** Working towards schools being net-zero by 2030.
- ▀ **Biodiversity initiatives:** Connecting young people with nature, teacher training in outdoor learning, rewilding school grounds and creating a pollinator network across the city.
- ▀ **Water conservation:** Completion of two Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems in Schools schemes, with an additional two schemes proposed.
- ▀ **Waste reduction:** Refill shop pilot, clothes and item exchanges, and the delivery of a 10-week Circular Economy module.
- ▀ **Energy efficiency:** Measures including school solar PV installation initiatives and the utilisation of Energy Sparks to identify energy-saving opportunities.
- ▀ **Food Sustainability:** Schools conducted food waste audits and trialled in-vessel composting, enabling the composting of raw and cooked food on-site.



## Sunderland City Council

### Regional climate collaboration

Sunderland is actively engaged in regional climate efforts through the [North East Net Zero Partnership](#), a collaboration between seven local authorities in North East England. The partnership enables the sharing of experience and expertise, as well as identifying opportunities for collaborative action. Actions so far have included a joint application for a behaviour change project to develop across the region and the [Net Zero North East Inaugural Summit](#) took place in November 2022.

The partnership now convenes annually to exchange ideas and report on progress. Sunderland has also collaborated on regional climate plans with neighbouring local authorities, including the North East Bus Service Improvement Plan, North East Transport Plan, and South Tyne & Wear Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy.

The city has also benefitted from various UK government funding streams, including the Levelling Up Fund, to support low-carbon developments, like the Housing Innovation Construction Skills Academy (HICSA). Expected to be completed by summer 2025, HICSA will train individuals in low carbon technology, aligning with Sunderland's sustainability ambitions for the built environment. Through a separate project, the Levelling Up Fund will also support the delivery of rapid charging hubs and 20 new electric buses. This example demonstrates the compatibility of net-zero goals with local economic growth.

# Challenges to deepening action

**While UK local authorities are demonstrating leadership through their tangible climate action, a more extensive and concerted approach is critical to deepening this action.**

Local authorities encounter persistent barriers to the successful development and implementation of their climate action plans, from differences in decision-making powers across local authority levels to limited funding<sup>14</sup>. Moreover, limited access to good quality local data impedes local authorities' understanding of the extent and

nature of localised climate impacts, while skill and capacity gaps internally limit identifying appropriate actions and measuring the impact of these actions. Out of the 669 mitigation actions reported, only 295 have their associated impact (estimated emissions reductions, annual energy savings or annual renewable energy generation) reported.



# 60%

of local authorities reported that **budgetary capacity** is the most challenging factor in adapting to the effects of climate change.



# 59

local authorities disclosed 257 projects for which they are seeking funding.

Collectively, these projects are worth

# £29.3bn

and seeking

# £8.9bn

in investment, although it is likely that this self-reported investment figure represents a significant underestimate of needs.

## Achieving emissions reduction targets hinges on factors beyond local authorities' direct control, including:



# 56

Decarbonisation of the electricity grid.



# 54

Provision of national funding for infrastructure.



# 51

Complete implementation of regulation or policy set by a higher level of government.



# 48

Mitigation in emissions sources controlled by higher levels of government.



# 48

Mitigation in emissions sources controlled by private entities.



# 45

Additional regional/national legislation, regulation and/or policy.





Brighton & Hove: Varndean tree planting

# 1/4

**have yet to undertake an area-wide climate risk and vulnerability assessment**

# 15%

**have not yet developed an adaptation strategy or action plan**

Adaptation efforts continue to lag behind mitigation. One in four local authorities (25%) have yet to undertake an area-wide climate risk and vulnerability assessment, while 15% have not yet developed an adaptation strategy or action plan. Furthermore, where assessments and adaptation plans have been reported, the robustness of these documents varies greatly, ranging from high-level assessments and adaptation strategies to detailed and actionable adaptation action plans. On average, local authorities reported half the number of adaptation actions (4.6) compared to mitigation actions (9.8). This is due, as outlined in our [2022 UK Local Authorities report](#), to the uncertainty of future climate risks, the difficulty in building the business case for adaptation measures which often offer a limited financial rate of return, and difficulties measuring the impact of adaptation initiatives.

National government has recognised the essential role of locally-led action<sup>15</sup>, facilitating targeted assistance (such as through the Net Zero Hubs and Core Cities Network) and funding for local authority initiatives<sup>16</sup>. The devolved governments of Scotland and Wales have also provided guidance for public sector bodies, including requirements to reduce organisational emissions<sup>17,18</sup>. However, greater support is crucial to join up action between different actors and levels of local government, support effective long-term planning and investments, ensure the continued prioritisation of climate action, and avoid disparities in the level of action taken across the country<sup>19,20</sup>.

15 DESNZ (2021) Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/net-zero-strategy>

16 Crown Commercial Service (2023) Carbon net zero funding and grants. Available at: <https://www.crowncommercial.gov.uk/carbon-net-zero-funding-and-grants-2/>

17 Scottish Government (2021) Leadership in the public sector. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/policies/climate-change/decarbonisation-in-the-public-sector/#:~:text=Public%20bodies%20must%20now%20report%3A%201%20their%20target,reduction%204%20their%20contribution%20to%20Scotland%E2%80%99s%20Adaptation%20Programme>

18 Welsh Government (2021) Public sector net zero reporting guide. Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/public-sector-net-zero-reporting-guide>

19 National Audit Office (2021) Local government and net zero England. Available at: <https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/local-government-and-net-zero-in-england/>

20 Local Government Association. Back Local Climate Action. Available at: <https://www.local.gov.uk/about/campaigns/make-it-local/back-local-climate-action>



# Conclusion

**We need clear leadership from national government and an unwavering resolve from political parties to address climate change.**

**The UK's local authorities are committed to tackling the greatest challenge of our times, demonstrating leadership and taking action in their particular corner of the country.**

We are seeing local authorities deliver energy efficiency measures in buildings, expand transport infrastructure to increase active travel, and develop green infrastructure projects. Despite the challenges and limitations they are facing, local authorities are using levers, from mainstreaming climate considerations into wider policies and decision-making to collaborating with local businesses to maximise their impact. However, more work is needed to maintain momentum and build a net-zero and resilient future. Alongside continued commitment and action from local authorities, we need clear leadership from national government and an unwavering resolve from political parties to address climate change, thereby setting the scene for decisive action.

City of London







## Next steps for local authorities

### A strong foundation for climate action

- Conduct a comprehensive climate risk and vulnerability assessment to enhance understanding of local climate hazards, risks and vulnerabilities<sup>21</sup>.
- Develop climate action plans covering both mitigation and adaptation, with clear targets, achievable actions, governance structures and mechanisms for regular reporting and progress tracking<sup>22</sup>.

### Internal levers

- Foster cross-departmental collaboration to mainstream climate change considerations into plans, policies and activities across the council.
- Integrate climate risks, targets and action into council-wide budgeting and financial decision-making<sup>23</sup>.

### Collaboration

- Adopt a people-centered approach to addressing climate change, ensuring the needs and perspectives of local communities are incorporated in the design and delivery of actions<sup>24, 25</sup>.
- Establish formal partnerships with other regional levels of government and local organisations to identify opportunities for joint action and innovative solutions,<sup>26, 27</sup> and share best practice through networking opportunities.



## Next steps for national government

### Roles and responsibilities

- Clearly define the roles and powers of local authorities,<sup>28</sup> including a statutory duty to develop plans and deliver emissions reductions aligned with government carbon budgets.
- Develop and communicate a clear adaptation strategy with ambitious targets for delivery and practical guidance on taking action and measuring impact.
- Implement reporting requirements for local authorities, making use of existing reporting mechanisms, to establish a baseline, facilitate information sharing, monitor progress towards national targets, and inform policy decisions.

### Funding

- Revise the structure of grant funding to support long-term planning and establish adaptation-specific funding programmes.
- Allocate resources to build local authorities' capacity to develop robust business cases for projects, facilitating proactive funding searches from diverse sources rather than relying on reactive grant-led approaches.

### Capacity building

- Provide standard guidance and training to build local authorities' in-house capabilities and ability to assess climate risks, develop action plans, and use climate data, particularly targeting those with fewer resources.
- Sustain investment in local climate hubs across the country to support capacity-building and facilitate collaborative action on a regional scale, ensuring local needs and strengths are understood<sup>29</sup>.

21 CDP (2023) Adapting to climate change: CDP guidance for UK local authorities. Available at: <https://cdn.cdp.net/cdp-production/comfy/cms/files/files/000/007/042/original/Adapting-to-climate-change--CDP-guidance-document-for-UK-local-authorities.pdf>

22 Ibid.

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**Climate change affects every corner of life. A climate-resilient city is dependent on the actions of many - at all scales - from national government down to the individual citizen. Transformative systemic change is needed to accelerate the speed of transition and level of ambition over the next decade. Addressing climate risks needs to become business-as-usual rather than just tinkering around the edges. Strong leadership, increasing awareness across all stakeholders, organisational change, partnership working; supportive rules and powers including statutory/mandatory requirements for climate resilience and reporting, significant funding and finance, growth in appropriate skills and capacity, the right data and knowledge, and widespread engagement from all walks of life, are needed to tackle the climate crisis.**

Ben Smallwood  
Sustainable City Manager (Bristol City Council)



# Annex: List of local authorities

★ = A List local authorities

Aberdeenshire Council	Hartlepool Borough Council
Bath and North East Somerset	★ Kirklees Council
BCP Council	Lake District National Park Authority
★ Belfast City Council	Lancashire County Council
★ Birmingham City Council	★ Leeds City Council
★ Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council	Leicestershire County Council
Blackpool Council	London Borough of Enfield
Brecon Beacons National Park Authority	★ Newcastle City Council
Bristol City Council	Newport City Council
★ Cambridge City Council	★ North Tyneside Council
Cambridgeshire County Council	Northumberland County Council
Cheltenham Borough Council	Norwich City Council
City of Bradford	★ Nottingham City Council
★ City of Brighton & Hove	Oxford City Council
City of Cardiff	Oxfordshire County Council
★ City of Leicester	★ Perth and Kinross
★ City of London	★ Reading Borough Council
★ City of Manchester	★ Richmond Council
City of Portsmouth	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
★ City of York Council	Sheffield City Council
★ Cornwall Council	Solihull Council
Cotswold District Council	Somerset Council
Coventry City Council	South Gloucestershire Council
Derbyshire County Council	Southampton City Council
Derry City & Strabane	Stroud District Council
★ Dundee City Council	★ Sunderland City Council
Durham County Council	Surrey County Council
★ Edinburgh City Council	Swale Borough Council
★ Essex County Council	★ Wakefield Council
Glasgow City Council	★ Wandsworth Council
★ Greater London Authority	West Midlands Combined Authority
★ Greater Manchester Combined Authority	Westminster City Council
★ Hammersmith and Fulham London Borough Council	Wokingham Borough Council
Harlow Council	Wolverhampton City Council

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