



Achieving net zero:

capita

How local authorities and transport providers can drive sustainable behaviours across their communities.

PREFACE

Achieving net zero is one of the largest, most complex, and cross-cutting challenges for governments. Carbon emissions are embedded in every aspect of our daily lives – in energy production, transport, buildings, agriculture, manufacturing, supply chains, consumer products and more. Whilst changing such societal behaviours requires broader action, transport providers and local authorities are uniquely positioned to play a pivotal role in catalysing and orchestrating this transformation.

We understand the capabilities of the public sector and the potential impact they can create on the way we travel and the places we live, work, and share experiences in. To aid the critical work of local authorities and transport providers, we have conducted an independent survey across a diverse population to better understand the public's awareness and perceptions of net zero. In this report, we reveal insightful findings on the public's clarity, connectivity and comprehension of net zero, as well as purposeful solutions that can help you to drive progress and behavioural changes in your communities.

Our findings indicate that the responsibility of net zero is not well articulated and the public are largely unaware of the work that you are undertaking. It's evident in the report that there is a tremendous opportunity for you to influence the attitudes, expectations, and actions of the people that interact with your services every day. In fact, you will also be able to see that public engagement and participation has the potential to impact the scale and pace of your delivery, costs and success towards net zero. We believe that by understanding the public's perceptions, you, as decision makers can focus your energy, resources and strategies in the right direction and accelerate the positive changes that will bring the UK closer to achieving its 2050 net zero goals.

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CONTENTS

one	Introduction: Towards net zero	04
two	Mutually dependent: Focusing on place and transport	06
three	The net zero challenge: The perceived responsibility gap	11
four	Encouraging communal action: Strategies for local authorities and transport providers ..	19
five	Partnerships with purpose: Boosting sustainable activities through joint action	23
six	The way forward: Setting up net zero	27





INTRODUCTION

Towards net zero

In October 2021, the UK government unveiled a bold strategy for directing common action towards the issue of global warming. **The Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener** sets out plans to reduce emissions and decarbonise all sectors of the UK economy, from transport to agriculture, to meet the net zero target by 2050. The strategy followed on from the **Sixth Carbon Budget** in December 2020, required under the Climate Change Act, which recommended a 78% reduction in UK carbon emissions by 2035.

One year on from the strategy's publication, has it succeeded in galvanising public sentiment and orienting action towards carbon reduction? To begin answering this question, we wanted to find out just how aware the UK public is of the strategy's overarching vision and directives. To that end, we commissioned research to gain a deeper understanding of the public's knowledge and awareness of the Net Zero Strategy and perceptions of its impact on their daily lives and behaviours.

As part of the research project, we surveyed 2,000 people nationally, from a balanced sample of regions, ages, genders and social grades. We asked them questions to gain insight into their concerns around climate change, their understanding of actions being taken to reduce dependence on carbon-emitting behaviours, as well as the ways that support measures are delivered at different levels.

The responses we received highlighted confusion over where the responsibility lies for implementing measures aimed towards carbon neutrality. The vast majority (89%) attribute accountability to the government – the architect of the strategy – versus only 57% for transport providers and 56% for local government. The gap in perceptions suggests the latter two agents need to raise their profiles on green matters if they are to gain greater mindshare among the public and assist them in reaching the common end goal.

The present social and economic conditions can be considered an ally in this ambition.

From a social perspective, following the turbulence of the global lockdown period, individuals are now well advanced in reintegrating with their workplaces and communities. As a result, they are in the process of forming new behaviours that can be informed and influenced to help guide positive societal outcomes around sustainability for the years to come.

Economically, households are experiencing a period of stress, unparalleled in recent times.

Economically, households are experiencing a period of stress, unparalleled in recent times. In September, **Bank of England figures** showed inflation at a 40-year high, with the expectation of ongoing cost pressures, underpinned by higher energy costs and global supply chain bottlenecks, to extend into 2023 and 2024. In times of uncertainty it is hard to identify clear-cut solutions, but reducing dependence on carbon-based energy – at home, at work and in travel – can potentially make a significant difference to household costs.

For decision makers in the domains of local government and transport, we believe this presents an opportunity to increase community engagement in order to enable the formation of more sustainable habits and reduce the impact of cost pressures. It also entails working more closely with government bodies to understand national policy as it evolves and jointly deliver measures aimed towards carbon neutrality.

In this report, we build on the research findings to offer some suggestions for the form and function of such engagement and collaboration strategies. By understanding where the public perceives a lack of information and support, decision makers can better target their own organisation's strategies to drive the positive changes that will bring the UK, as a collective, closer to its 2050 commitments.

Adapting to the rising cost of living

UK households face economic challenges that may take years to resolve.

- According to the **Office for National Statistics**, 89% of UK adults reported an increase in their cost of living in August 2022.
- Real household incomes are expected to fall in 2022. In August, the **Bank of England** expected post-tax household income to fall by 1.5% in 2022, then fall by 2.25% in 2023.
- Low-income households spend a larger proportion than average on energy and food, so are affected by price increases.
- The **Resolution Foundation** estimated that to afford the increase in energy bills in January - March 2023, the poorest fifth of households will have to cut back 24% of non-essential spending.

MUTUALLY DEPENDENT

Focusing on place and transport

2

While the Net Zero Strategy applies across all spheres of the UK economy, for the purposes of this report we will narrow our focus to two key areas: place and transport.



Optimising your place

Place is the 'where' part of the equation. It's the physical domains where we live, work and share experiences.

It's our homes, workplaces, town centres, hospitals, parks, woodlands and other communal places. In the wake of two years of periodic closures and enforced social distancing, the role of 'place' in our habits and routines is being reconsidered by many individuals.



How many days per week will I work from the office versus working from home?

Will I shop at the local retail park or online?

How will I interact with local services and what more environmentally friendly options exist?

These are common questions that have arisen due to the 'hybrid' physical-virtual nature of the modern economy. Rather than binary, these tend to be complementary choices – hybrid working, for example, allows the individual to balance the social and productive benefits of an office environment with the cost and carbon-reduction benefits of remote working.

Individual decision-making on the role of place in their lifestyles and habits is also impacted by the current cost of living crisis. Considerations around the heating of homes and office buildings through winter, along with the adoption of new behaviours to create energy savings in the future, add a further dimension to how communities approach the goal of carbon neutrality. Local authorities will naturally have an influence on these decisions by helping the community to understand the options that are available along with the environmental implications of their choices.

Local authorities will also have an important role to play in helping to shape the local infrastructure, such as the design of buildings, landmarks and other public spaces, with the goal of encouraging people to be active in their community, while also containing the potential damage to the environment. An example of this is the growing popularity of 'low-emission zones' (LEZs), which discourage the use of vehicles with higher emissions in designated areas, with the aim of promoting the use of greener modes of transport.



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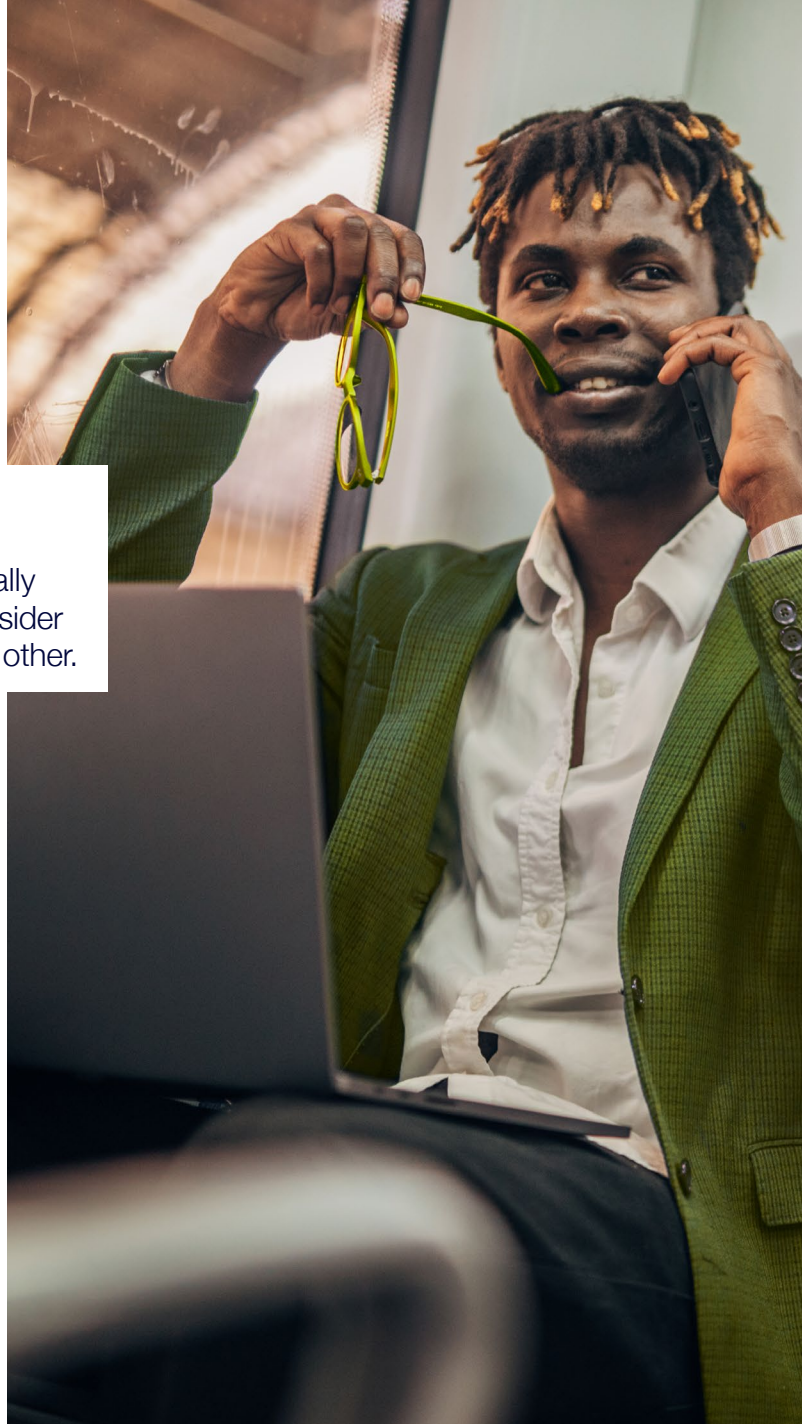
Rethinking transport

Our next area of focus is on how transport providers can capitalise on changing public sentiments and habits to grow passenger numbers while also supporting carbon reduction measures. Transport relates to the decisions people make around commuting for work and leisure, such as whether to use the bus or train network over their car, the use of healthier modes such as walking or cycling, and – given the option of leveraging digital communications platforms – whether they need to travel at all.

Place and transport are naturally interlinked. Place is where people want to go; transport is how they get there. To make more environmentally conscious decisions in one sphere, we must consider our actions in – and consequent impact on – the other.

For example, a public health organisation may decide to invest in improving the sustainability of its hospital buildings. It may regulate the use of energy in heating and air-conditioning, replace unnecessarily wasteful equipment with more energy-efficient alternatives and implement measures to improve recycling practices. These measures, over the course of time, will have a significant environmental impact and greatly improve its efforts to get to net zero carbon emissions.

However, to assess the real environmental impact, we must consider the full patient-customer journey. If the health centre has poor transport connections or access restrictions, then patients may find that to get to their appointments on time they need to drive or take a taxi. Equally, staff may find that without proper support they too are unable to utilise greener alternatives, such as walking or cycling to work. The net carbon impact of the strategy may therefore help to optimise place, but not transport.



A unified approach

Over the course of this report, we will make the point that for the UK to meet the goals of net zero carbon by 2050, the two spheres of place and transport must not be viewed in isolation. Making vast improvements in one area will require improvements in the other.

This will require joined-up thinking that enables both areas to operate around the needs and decision-making capacity of the individual to enable mutually beneficial outcomes. These two areas present massive opportunities for engaging the public on the topic of sustainability and reducing the current impact of buildings and vehicles on carbon emissions.



Supporting net zero

The UK government's Net Zero Strategy supports decarbonisation in place and transport through the following targets and measures:

Place



By 2035 the UK aims to be powered entirely by clean electricity.



No new gas boilers will be sold after 2035. Households will be offered grants of up to £5,000 for low-carbon heating systems to replace gas boilers.



The government has committed more than £750m by 2025 on peat restoration, woodland creation and management.

Transport



The strategy aims to transform cities and towns with greener, faster and more efficient transport. This includes the transformation of local transport systems, with 4,000 new zero emission buses and the infrastructure to support them, and a net zero rail network by 2050, with the ambition to remove all diesel-only trains by 2040.



The government has made a 2030 commitment to end the sale of new petrol and diesel cars, and a 2035 commitment that all cars must be fully zero emissions capable.



A £2bn investment has been allocated to help enable half of journeys in towns and cities to be cycled or walked by 2030. There is a further £3bn allocated to create integrated bus networks, more frequent services and bus lanes to speed journeys.

Areas for carbon improvement

There are four key areas in which local authorities and transport providers can support the dramatic reduction of carbon emissions.



Revolutionise power:

Adopt solutions to generate and store power in a far more carbon-neutral way.



Transport electrification:

Reduce the use of cars for short, energy-wasting journeys, and encourage the use of greener alternatives.



Decarbonise heat:

Encourage businesses and individual households to opt for more renewable ways of heating their premises.



Carbon capture:

Stop cutting down trees, and planting more. Households also need to be aware of the steps they can take to capture carbon in their own homes. For example by using low carbon building materials and supporting better airflows.

THE NET ZERO CHALLENGE

The perceived responsibility gap

3

One year on from the release of the Net Zero Strategy, the wheels are in motion on turning the vision into an everyday reality.



For such an ambitious target, the actions and behavioural changes required to deliver the Net Zero Strategy must devolve from the national government down to the agents on the ground who are responsible for the nation's carbon future. That includes local governments and services, transport providers, businesses (of all sizes) and communities.


This will involve collaboration across multiple levels of government and authorities to ensure strategic alignment and support for positive outcomes.

Through our research, we wanted to find out whether the core messages of the strategy had filtered down to those agents. Do people understand their responsibilities? Do they feel adequately informed and equipped to make more responsible decisions and adapt their behaviours to more environmentally sustainable ends?

To fulfil the goal of becoming net zero in aggregate, we need behavioural change to manifest at the micro level.

Our research, however, didn't paint an encouraging picture. We found a vague awareness of what the Net Zero Strategy is, what it involves and who is in charge of making the goal a reality.



A man with a beard, wearing a grey polo shirt and a bright yellow high-visibility safety vest, stands outdoors next to a large array of solar panels. He is looking towards the right with a slight smile. The background is filled with lush green foliage.

Mixed feelings over urgency of action

The research found divisions in opinion over the urgency of action towards climate change.

Only 1 in 4

of those surveyed said they were **'very concerned'** about climate change.

A third (33%)

expect to see the **impact within their lifetime**,

more than half (52%)

think it's a **concern for future generations**

Two-thirds (64%)

believe there is **currently a climate emergency**,

compared with

a quarter (24%)

who think an emergency will **occur in the future**.

Nearly half (45%)

of those that initially answered they were **unconcerned** with climate change in general, also said they **don't believe** there will be a climate emergency in future, highlighting significant scepticism on the issue.

Climate change continues to be a contentious issue in communities. The divisions highlighted in the research show the need for broad and consistent messaging on the current state of climate change.

While the topic is clearly emotional, it's important that citizens are presented with data on how climate change is impacting their communities, as well as highlighting the implications of maintaining the status quo and the opportunities for change.

Who is driving the net zero initiative?

According to the findings, there is generally high awareness of the national Net Zero Strategy, likely as a result of the extensive media coverage and commentary generated by its launch.

However, there is a worryingly low understanding of what that means in practice and who is responsible for driving it.

When prompted on the topic,

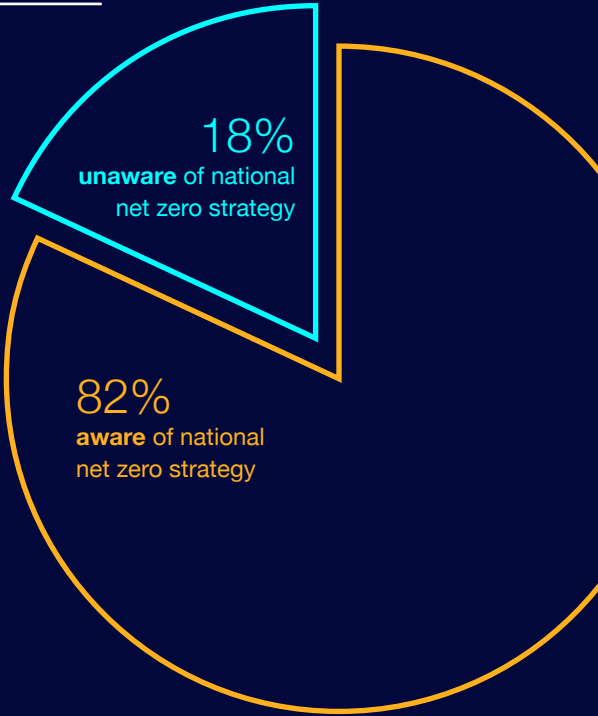
82% of respondents

said they were aware of the existence of the Net Zero Strategy, versus

fewer than 1 in 5 (18%)

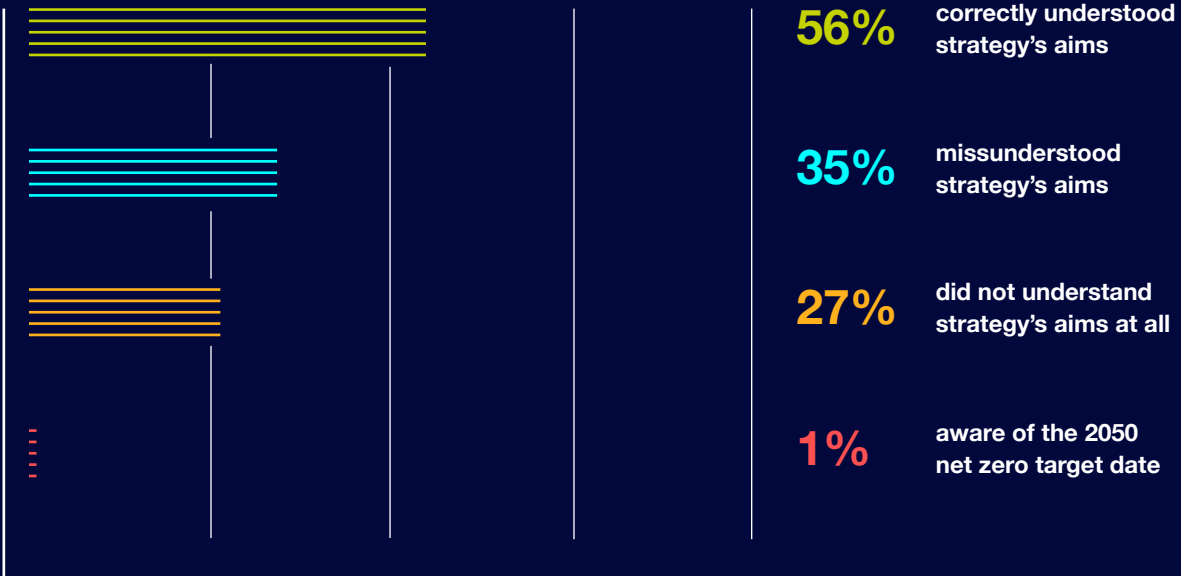
who said they were unaware.

Awareness was higher among older generations (90% of 55+ age bracket).



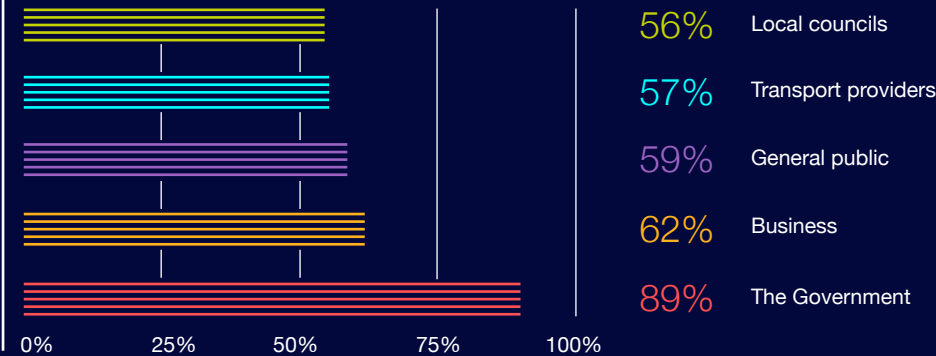
The research showed a patchy understanding of what net zero means.

More than half (56%) correctly said the strategy aims to achieve net zero carbon emissions, however more than a third (35%) erroneously thought it meant no carbon emissions whatsoever and 27% didn't know at all. Only 1% were aware of the 2050 net zero target date.



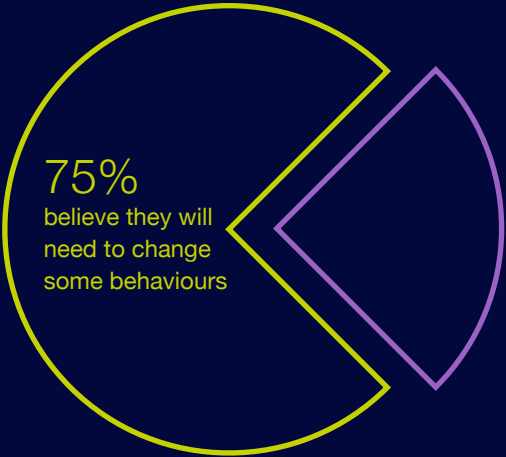
There was an overwhelmingly large attribution of responsibility for activating the strategy to the government (**89%**) across all age groups, with relatively low understanding of the role of local councils (**56%**) and transport providers (**57%**) in driving the strategy's success.

Where the public attributes responsibility for activating the net zero strategy



While the public largely accepts that they will need to change some behaviours to meet the net zero carbon goals (**75% agreed with this statement**), there is a lot of ambiguity on how clear the government has been on helping them to reduce their carbon footprint.

Among respondents, **37% disagree with the statement that the government has been clear in its messaging versus 34% who agreed with the statement**, and a majority believes that the government has not adequately informed the public on the Net Zero Strategy (48% agreed with the statement versus 26% disagreed).

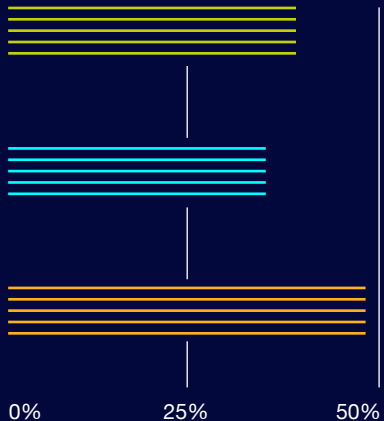


The inconsistencies highlighted by the responses suggests substantial work needs to be done to deliver the strategic messaging in a clear, relatable and individually identifiable way.

37%
think government
messaging is unclear

34%
believe messaging
has been clear

48%
believe the public have
not been adequately
informed



Lack of visibility of net zero in the workplace

Our workplaces, whether physical or virtual, act as a conduit for social and environmental change. Through our employers and peers, we gain information, signals and norms that help us to decide upon how we can lead more sustainable lives. As the policies emanating from the Net Zero Strategy roll out, workplaces will be instrumental in helping people to identify opportunities for carbon reduction, at work, at home and in travel.

However, the findings suggest there is very low awareness of actions to pursue net zero plans within the workplace.

Only 14%

said their organisation has a net zero plan in place.

1 in 5

were aware of a green sustainability plan in their workplace and

40%

said they did not know whether such a plan existed.

While the lack of awareness is concerning, there may be some explanations for this.

The conventional notion of the workplace has experienced a massive shake-up in recent years following prolonged periods of lockdown. As people in many sectors are still reconnecting with their workplaces, the channels of communication are yet to be fully re-established. This has reduced the role of the company 'noticeboard' and interrupted conventional word of mouth channels between peers.

Regardless of the circumstances, it's clear the message isn't getting through.



Low awareness of the role of local councils and transport providers

In a thriving community area, residents take interest in the developments that affect their lives and wellbeing, as well as the lives of those around them. The Net Zero Strategy will have a profound impact on communities, particularly in the implications for green spaces, transport options and the enablement of circular economies.

As the cost of living crisis deepens, local councils will have a vital role in reducing its impact on residents. It is projected that to afford energy price rises alone, **the poorest fifth of households will have to reduce non-essential spending by around a quarter.**

The rising cost of food and energy will make the challenge of heating and eating increasingly difficult for low-income households. Action on sustainability at a council level can help alleviate the impact of some of those costs.

Equally, volatility in the energy markets will weigh heavily on households as the cost of running private transport becomes increasingly unpredictable. These pressures can easily be exacerbated by petrol shortages, as commuters experienced during the supply chain issues of late-2021. This provides an opportunity for transport providers to show the cost and flexibility benefits afforded by public transport options.

Yet, we found that people are not aware of how their local council can support in delivering essential services and advice on crucial matters such as energy costs and debt.

Nor are they aware of how transport providers can support with flexible ticket payment options that support the new way of hybrid working so that commuting isn't a necessity.

71%

of respondents said they were not aware of their local council's net zero targets. Surprisingly, the 18-24 age group seemed most aware of what their council is doing to meet its obligations.

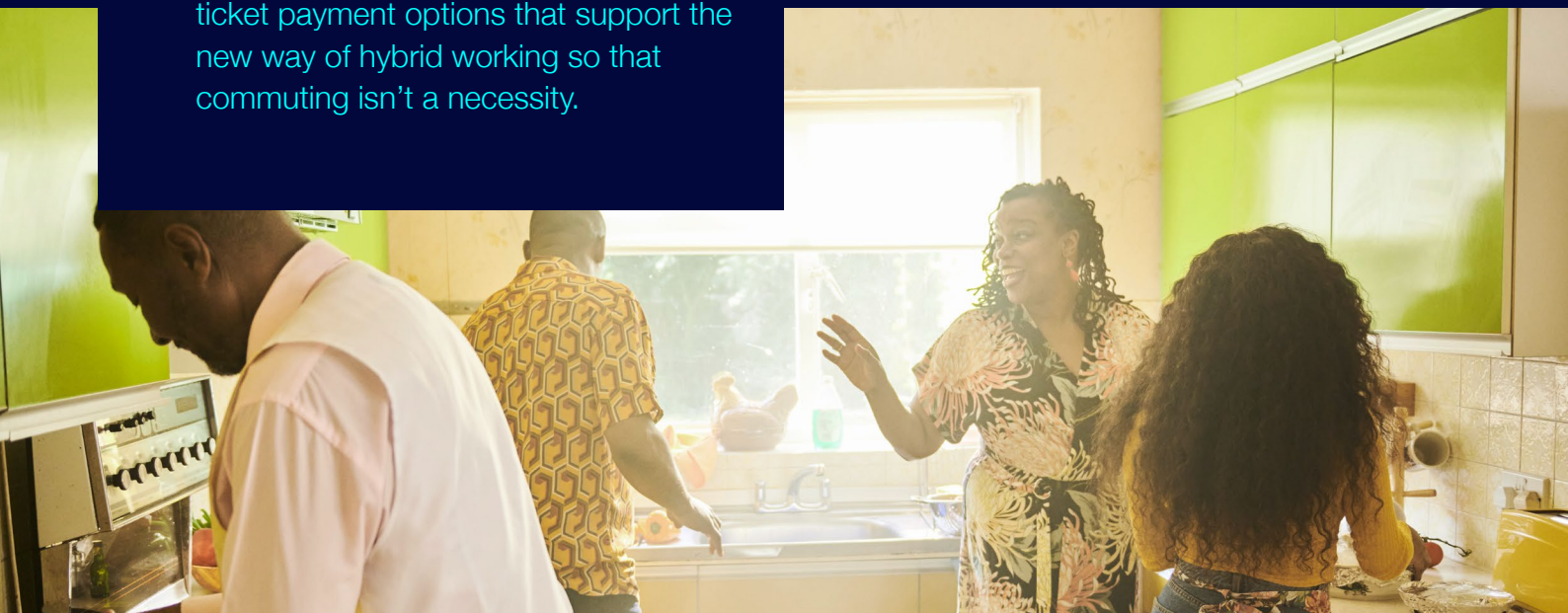
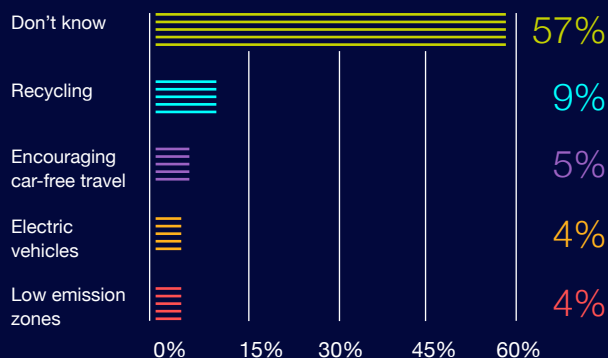
The majority (57%)

said they were not aware of their local council doing anything to reduce the area's carbon footprint.

While more than two-thirds (68%)

of 18-24-year-olds agreed that the Net Zero Strategy will require change in how they live, work and commute, less than half of this cohort (45%) recognised the role of transport providers in delivering on net zero goals.

What is your local council doing to reduce the carbon footprint in your local area?



Improvements in an area's sustainability tends to occur through feedback loops – individuals see progress in their area and are inspired to change their behaviour to contribute to the success of their community.

Seeing evidence of local council sustainability measures, such as promotional campaigns, local success stories and practical advice for energy savings, are crucial for putting the flywheel in motion to encourage the adoption of new habits.

For transport providers, the priority will be to make their public offering as appealing, if not more, than the private one to drive this behavioural change - especially when it comes to commuting.

How do they make it more desirable?

- Better, more reliable, more cost-effective, transport services.
- Town planning that facilitates low carbon transport, such as bus or cycle lanes.
- Infrastructure that favours electric vehicles (EVs) over combustion vehicles, like congestion zones or EV charging points.

So far, the plans, messages and success stories achieved to date do not appear to be penetrating through to individuals and communities.

Bridging the awareness gap

Overall, the research highlights a gap in the public's understanding of the Net Zero Strategy.

Before we can expect consistent, common action, it's important that efforts are taken to provide the necessary leadership and educational foundation for change.



ENCOURAGING COMMUNAL ACTION

Strategies for local
authorities and
transport providers

4



Based on the research, it's clear that the public needs guidance and support in order to make the changes at an individual level that will make a difference to our collective net carbon usage.

The approaches to bring the public together on the issue however cannot be achieved in a vacuum. As highlighted earlier, place and transport run in tandem: strategies in one directly impact outcomes in another, and – equally – mixed or conflicting messages between these spheres can create confusion for the public over what's the proper course of action.

Furthermore, any activities carried out at a local level need to be aligned with government-level policies and initiatives. This helps to bring consistency in the public's mind in terms of the messages they hear and the actions they see. It also helps prevent situations where local-level initiatives are counteracted by developments at a broader scale.

It is important therefore that decision makers in government, local authorities and in transport provision co-operate on how they address the gap. Working together and in alignment can help bridge the gaps between the public's sentiment on climate change and their ability to take decisive action.



To build a foundation for change, decision makers should consider the following areas:

1 Demonstrate leadership on sustainability matters

Perceptions matter. If the public notices a misalignment between what the government is saying, and what local authorities and transport providers are actually doing, it undermines the entire strategy. It is therefore important for local authorities and transport providers to set a positive example by taking sufficient action to reduce their own emissions. This includes making their own premises more energy efficient, embracing hybrid working and incentivising the use of alternative modes of transport.

It is also important that they think of the implications and consequent effects of their policies and actions on their staff. This means they avoid shifting the burden of sustainable behaviour to other domains. For example, enabling working from home does not mean pushing the onus for responsible energy usage onto staff without offering the necessary support and direction.

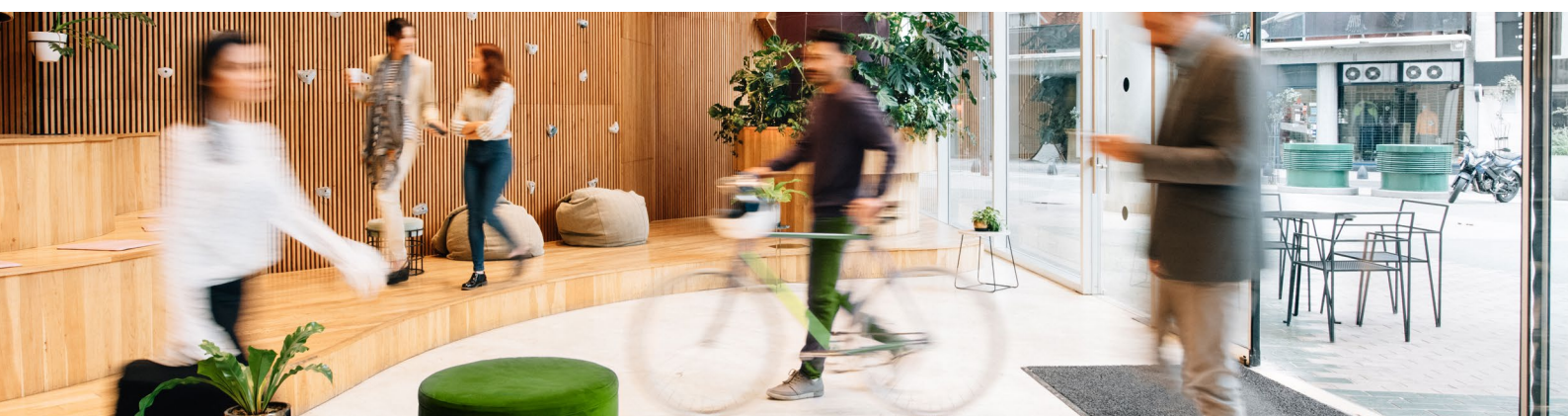
As local businesses and public sector organisations settle into hybrid working, there is an opportunity for local government and transport providers to consult with and guide them towards more sustainable behaviours. Transport, in particular, presents a key area in which to address the evident lack of awareness around workplace environmental plans. By working collaboratively with management in these organisations, local authorities can influence and encourage those that are now back in the workplace, whether hybrid or permanent, to be taking steps to reduce reliance on cars and explore alternative transport options.

2 Enhance communication efforts on sustainability

The path towards sustainability can often be unclear for the individual. Mixed messages and the risk of substituting one problem with another means that the public can often find themselves in a state of inertia or despondency. Worse, messages from public authorities that demonise residents and workers who are not embracing sustainability – often for understandable reasons, such as the need to maintain a car to drive their children to school – can create polarisation in the community and run counter to the common objective of social cohesion.

Local authorities and transport providers are a regular touchpoint for the individual. This can be leveraged to help create enthusiasm and acknowledge progress. It is important that councils and transport providers take the community with them on their own journey. This can take the form of delivering and sharing successes demonstrating that simple behaviour changes and new habits can make a huge difference. It also demonstrates how sustainability ties into other community goals, such as healthy living, through programmes that promote exercise, use of public spaces and low emissions zones.

Our research also highlighted that messages around net zero can fail to land when not properly calibrated for different members of the community. It is important to simplify language and make the guidance practical. Messages should be relevant to younger generations as the research data suggests that current communications are not resonating equally across demographics.



3 Emphasise money saving messages

Global events have culminated in one of the most uncertain economic environments in living memory. Amid this uncertainty, households are struggling.

Rising energy costs and inflation on essential goods have captured the public's attention as they seek guidance and support in getting through the challenges that lie ahead.

While the complexity of the situation means that the cost of living crisis may persist for several years, the public is open to messages around how they can optimise their existing choices and behaviours to reduce costs and explore alternatives. Adopting more sustainable behaviours is one major area where people could notice a difference in their household bills, both short and longer term.

Local authorities and transport providers can use sustainability as a trigger to address cost of living worries. Tying carbon reduction to measures that cut household energy expenses and help manage transport costs can help to make organisational efforts and messages more relevant to the individual. This can lay the foundation for ongoing communication and support and help strengthen ties with community members.



PARTNERSHIPS WITH PURPOSE:

Boosting sustainable activities
through joint action

5



The research has shown that a gap exists between the vision, plans, policies and actions being taken at various levels of government and transport, and the public perceptions of the urgency that's being applied to addressing the climate emergency.

Left unresolved, this vacuum can easily be filled with inertia or irritation that works against the success of sustainability programmes.

Local authorities and transport providers can leverage the current environment to increase engagement and collaboration with stakeholders, with the goal of reorienting communications and service delivery around the individual. This means understanding the individual's motivations, concerns, context and challenges, and developing strategies that offer stimulus and enablement for their sustainability goals.

These strategies should be informed, consistent and well-timed. The following are important areas for decision makers to consider.

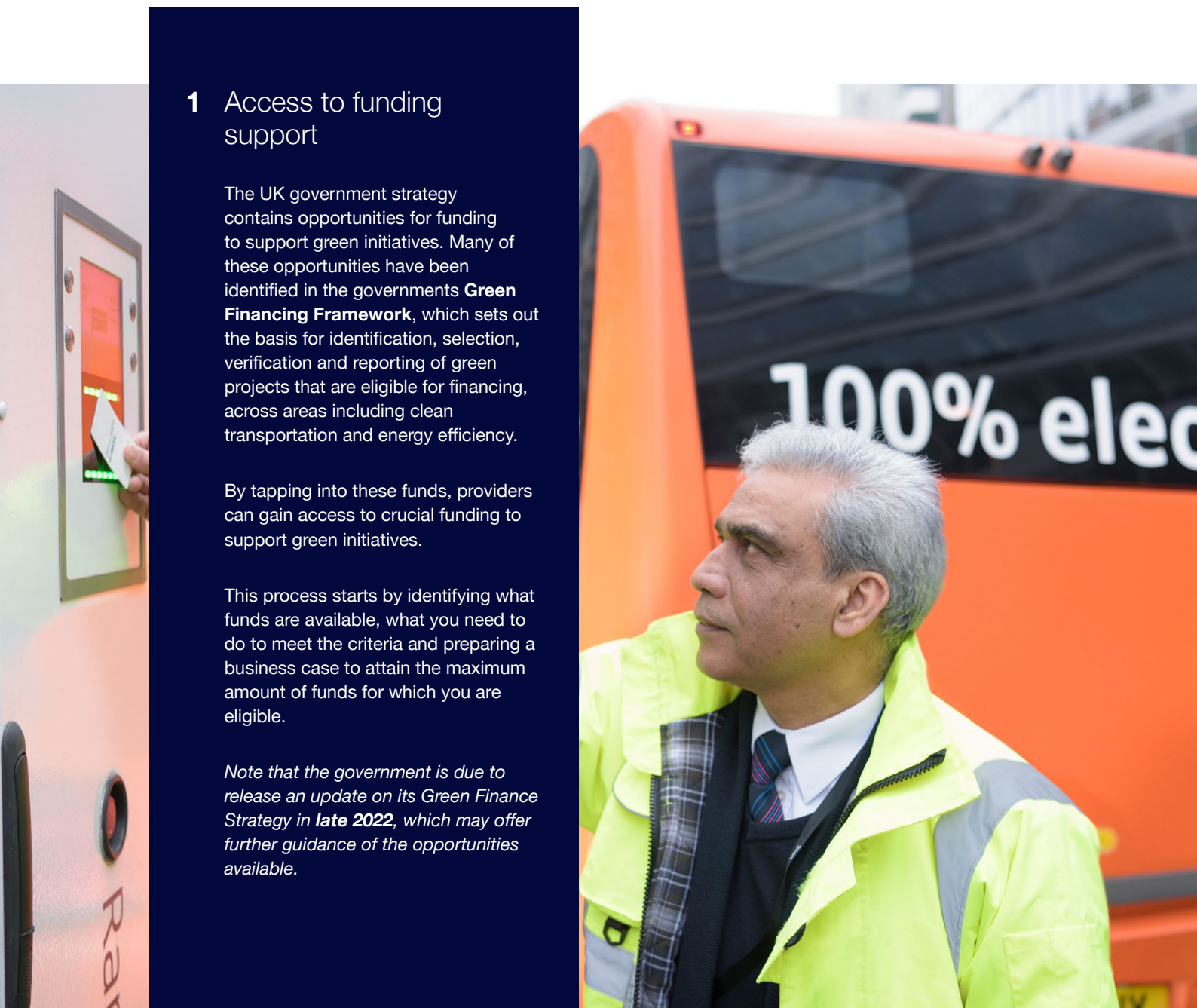
1 Access to funding support

The UK government strategy contains opportunities for funding to support green initiatives. Many of these opportunities have been identified in the governments **Green Financing Framework**, which sets out the basis for identification, selection, verification and reporting of green projects that are eligible for financing, across areas including clean transportation and energy efficiency.

By tapping into these funds, providers can gain access to crucial funding to support green initiatives.

This process starts by identifying what funds are available, what you need to do to meet the criteria and preparing a business case to attain the maximum amount of funds for which you are eligible.

*Note that the government is due to release an update on its Green Finance Strategy in **late 2022**, which may offer further guidance of the opportunities available.*



2 Support better outcomes through public enablement

Enablement is becoming a more common approach towards encouraging behavioural change in many aspects of public society. The notion of enablement holds that the most innovative and effective solutions to problems can often be found on the frontline, and therefore conditions must be cultivated where citizens feel empowered to drive change in their local area.

This approach is underpinned by the notion of subsidiarity, which holds that decisions are best made as close as possible to where they will have their effect. This naturally involves more active participation at a community level to find locally appropriate solutions. Local authorities and transport providers can play a key role in enablement initiatives by providing the forums and mechanisms for deliberation and feeding the information from these forums back into policy decisions.

Enablement strategies can therefore create an environment where better, more congruent decision making is made at multiple levels, including empowering businesses to reduce emissions arising from their operations and providing the tools for individuals to make better choices on day-to-day matters such as transport.



3 Drive carbon reduction with data

As digital transformation efforts pervade many aspects of government and public services, opportunities arise to leverage the data captured by these systems and process for progress in environmental initiatives. The opportunities span across all local council and transport operations, from identification of relevant success metrics for green initiatives, through to collection, analysis, measurement, data-driven decision making and communication.

While the value of data can transform many areas of operations and service delivery, there are three areas where data can have a more immediate impact in encouraging energy-saving behaviours. These are:

- Measuring the effectiveness of carbon-reduction initiatives. This involves implementing energy efficiency measures across all operations and activities, such as avoiding the risk of phantom or vampire energy use.

- Supporting individuals and communities to make changes to their travel behaviour through better service integration and delivery of available options. This includes encouraging alternatives to cars and providing integrated, user-friendly access to schedules and travel options.
- Addressing the communications gap to enable more accurate and timely public engagement strategies, including public consultations and information campaigns.

Tracking the progress of green initiatives can also help to improve public perceptions and expectations, as linking data to progress can help communities to associate small, incremental changes in their own behaviours with larger-scale outcomes.



THE WAY FORWARD

Setting up net zero

6



The signing of the Paris Agreement in 2015 marked a watershed moment in human history. The 20th century had marked a period of massive global economic expansion and the pervasive reliance on carbon to fuel growth-at-all-cost approaches to business and commerce.

The advancements of the globalisation period have produced many of the technologies, supply chains and business models that underpin today's prosperity. However, there is now a broad and decisive acceptance that this model needs to change in order to avoid further irreparable damage to the natural environment.

As we look towards 2050, we have an opportunity at global, national and local levels to make the changes that will enable the 21st century to be marked not only by remarkable growth and progress, but also a necessary cap on carbon emissions to ensure that economic prosperity is matched by natural and ecological vibrancy.

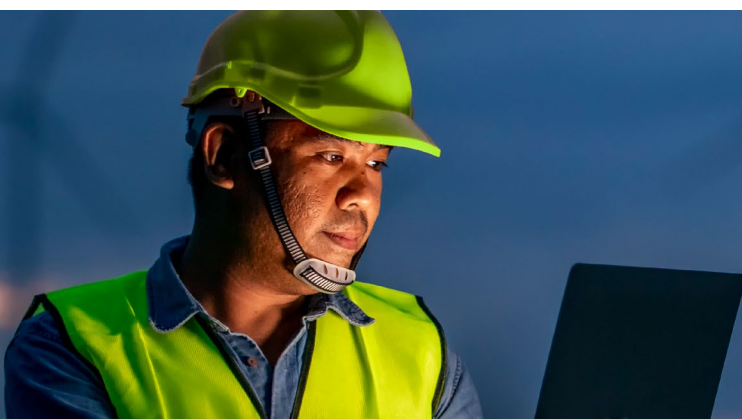
We all have a role to play in this – positive change starts at the micro level with new habits and behaviours and builds towards a massive reduction in carbon emissions in aggregate. These behaviours must be encouraged and enabled, with local authorities and transport providers key stewards in shaping the attitudes, expectations and actions of the communities that interact with their services every day.

Action on sustainability isn't oriented only towards future gains – it has relevance for the here and now. As households across the country face up to the reality of rising energy bills, higher fuel costs and rising prices on supermarket shelves, steps taken now to identify areas of pressure and increase the range of alternatives can have a beneficial effect in guiding households through the crisis.

The findings from the research showed there's a great deal of work to be done in bringing the public on the journey towards sustainability.

The current void in public knowledge on how the vision for net zero by 2050 is being delivered brings the risk of an accountability vacuum. Local authorities and transport providers therefore have an important role to play in providing the information, inspiration and enablement necessary to drive change, especially given the financial challenges households are currently experiencing.

In practical terms, this means adopting a more structured and measurable approach towards addressing carbon reduction commitments and capturing the public's attention in order to guide them on that journey.



Engaging communities in new ways

A report by leading UK think tank Demos offered guidance to local authorities on how they may go about implementing a new approach to community participation.

Locating Authority: A vision for relational local government offers a model local authorities can use to build strong relationships between council service professionals and the people they are supporting, between councils and the community they represent, and between local citizens themselves.

This model, titled relational local government, has three core pillars:



Genuine power sharing: People feel they have an equal and effective say over decisions that affect their lives locally.



Spaces for connection: People have access to welcoming spaces where they are able to build connections with service professionals, council staff and representatives more broadly, and with other local people.



Consistent and open communication: People feel informed by their council and view its actions as transparent.



Getting started

If you are still in the early stages of setting your own net zero strategy, we can help you to build the foundation for leadership, trust and progress with your communities.

We invite you to connect with us to start the conversation and find out where you are currently and what steps you need to take next. Get in touch with our net zero team: PublicServices@capita.com

Let's get connected



Capita