

Written evidence submitted by The Local Government Association (LGA)

About the LGA

1.1. The Local Government Association (LGA) is the national voice of local government. We are a politically-led, cross party membership organisation, representing councils from England and Wales.

1.2. Our role is to support, promote and improve local government, and raise national awareness of the work of councils. Our ultimate ambition is to support councils to deliver local solutions to national problems.

Key Messages

2.1. Local government plays a leading role in accelerating the shift towards achieving net zero carbon. [Almost two thirds of councils in England are aiming to be carbon neutral 20 years before the national target](#) and 91 per cent of local authorities have adopted at least one net zero commitment, according to the [National Audit Office \(NAO\)](#).

2.2. Councils are often first responders when there are extreme weather events and, just as with the pandemic, are able to coordinate relief efforts through partnerships and networks. Responsibility for adapting to climate change sits across a number of government departments and a greater focus has been on mitigation in Government strategies and announcements. Cross-departmental working is critical, and Government must integrate adaptation into current and forthcoming policies.

2.3. Councils want to work as partners with government, industry and communities to meet the UK's net zero target by 2050 or earlier and are well placed to do this. The LGA's [A local path to net zero](#) campaign sets out why councils should be trusted partners to tackle the climate challenge as place-shapers, convenors, delivery agents, commissioners and owners of assets. Net zero can only be achieved with decarbonisation happening in every place across the country and this will require local leadership.

2.4. We have been calling for central Government to work with the local government sector and businesses to establish a national framework for addressing the climate emergency.

2.5. We have also been calling for a Ministerial/local government climate taskforce to be set up, bringing Ministers and local leaders together to drive co-ordinated and cross cutting action on climate change. We propose that this is led by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and provides a forum for a greater national-local government partnership.

2.6. Councils are committed to ensuring new, sustainable homes are built and communities have quality places to live. It is vital that these are delivered through a

[locally-led planning system](#) with public participation at its heart, which gives communities the power to participate and engage in our national shift to a carbon neutral future.

2.7. The LGA has called on the Government to provide councils with the powers and tools to help [Build Back Better](#), by delivering 100,000 much-needed social homes per year. [Analysis for the LGA by Pragmatix](#) found that building 100,000 new social homes per year could result in £15 billion boost to the economy, and a homebuilding programme would offer a steady source of demand for green-tech skills and trades.

2.8. The LGA published analysis in its [local green jobs – accelerating a sustainable economic recovery](#) report, developed by Ecuity Consulting LLP, which shows that nearly 700,000 jobs could be created in England’s low-carbon and renewable energy economy by 2030, rising to more than 1 million by 2050. [Work Local](#) is the LGA’s framework for an integrated and devolved employment and skills system that is fit for the future and the Government should back and fund the trialling of the Work Local model.

2.9. The Infrastructure Bank goes some way to harnessing capital for large-scale infrastructure such as retrofitting. However, it will be important that the financial mechanisms are in place to translate national and international scale finance into the delivery of locally-led solutions. Capital funding must be combined with revenue funding to ensure councils have the capacity to deliver projects.

2.10. [Surveys suggest that councils managed over £8 billion of additional cost pressures](#) and £3 billion of lost income, excluding business rates and council tax, since the pandemic began. [Early analysis by the LGA](#) ahead of the forthcoming Spending Review shows that councils face average annual cost pressures of £2.5 billion to maintain services at their current level of access and quality. Of this, £1.1 billion per year is related to adult social care in addition to a £1.4 billion provider market pressure. This shows that unless adult social care funding is fundamentally fixed, councils will always be under financial pressure.

2.11. There are a number of challenges facing council finances. The LGA’s [Build back local: Building back better](#) sets out the core issues of uncertainty, spending power and fragmentation. [In 2017/18](#), nearly 250 different grants were provided to local government. Half of these grants were worth £10 million or less nationally. At the same time, these grants are highly specific – 82 per cent of the grants are intended for a specific service area. Around a third are awarded on a competitive basis. With long-term certainty and local flexibility of funding for councils, local government can stimulate the low carbon economy by being able to plan a holistic pipeline of activity.

2.12. New proposals set out in the Future Homes and Future Buildings Standards, along with legislation in the Environment and Planning Bills will impact councils’ ability to implement and enforce new standards. [There is a bigger opportunity to deliver change if the Environment Bill](#) is properly aligned to the Planning Bill and forthcoming sector strategies and that local government has appropriately skilled staff and adequate resources, particularly as these areas of work are set to increase.

2.13. There are a number of key areas that government's analysis of net zero funding should focus on in the next Spending Review. We support the [NAO's recommendations](#) for an integrated view of public spending across organisational boundaries and over the long term. There should also be a focus on greater partnership working between national and local government through a national framework, adaptation including flooding and waste.

2.14. Work Local is the LGA's model for an integrated and devolved employment and skills system that is fit for the future and should be used as a blueprint for skills and employment devolution that works for all people and places. The Government should back and fund the trialling of the Work Local model.

2.13. We want to ensure lasting, positive impacts for the local government sector from COP26. We are supporting international calls for multilevel action and formal representation of regional and local government through a dedicated chapter for subnational governments in the official agreement reached at COP26. We have also been calling for a key role in designing and participating in the dedicated local government day on 11 November 2021, with the UK Government.

Notes:

3.1. The LGA recently delivered a written submission to the [Environmental Audit Committee inquiry: Mapping the path to net zero](#). This document provides a comprehensive overview of the LGA's core concerns and priorities.

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