Department for Energy Security & Net Zero

Ready for RESP

Skills and Resourcing for Local Decarbonisation Planning

Enabling Network Investment

Publication 3 from the Ready for RESP series

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The Ready for RESP Programme

Ready for RESP

This document has been produced as part of the Ready for RESP programme: Funded by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) led by the North West Net Zero Hub on behalf of all Local Net Zero Hubs across England and authored by the Energy Systems Catapult.

The programme supports English regions at all stages of energy planning, helping regional partners and local authorities to understand the Regional Energy Strategic Plan (RESP) process, how it can unlock future energy investment and decarbonisation opportunities, and the practical steps needed to maximise its value.

This guide sets out what councils need to resource local decarbonisation planning, from the people and skills you'll require to the partnerships and tools that make delivery possible. It is written for officers and senior leaders and programme teams who must balance statutory duties with the realities of funding, capacity and timescales, and want to better understand the potential approaches that can be taken to influence energy network investment through RESP.

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About the Net Zero Hubs

There are five Net Zero Hubs in England, which provide free strategic and technical support to local authorities and public sector bodies to develop and deliver decarbonisation projects.

Funded by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), the Hubs help turn local Net Zero ambitions into investable projects by offering expertise in project development, funding, and stakeholder engagement.

About Energy Systems Catapult

Energy Systems Catapult (the Catapult) is an independent, non-for-profit innovation centre established by Innovate UK to accelerate Net Zero energy innovation. The Catapult provides expert support to innovators, local authorities, and policymakers to design, test and scale low-carbon solutions across the UK energy system.

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Why now is the time to act

Ready for RESP

Regional Energy Strategic Plans are a new approach being delivered by National Energy System Operator (NESO) aiming to take local bottom-up data, and aligning with national top-down modelling, to ensure strategic investment across energy infrastructure can deliver clean power 2030 and net zero 2050.

To do this effectively, they need **local decarbonisation plan data** from local areas, to know where to invest in the network ahead of when you need it.

Additionally, with **local government reform**, more strategic authorities forming, and the need to produce **Local Plans**, having a local decarbonisation plan in place can help underpin the housing, transport and infrastructure spatial strategies to ensure energy networks are not a barrier to realising these ambitions.

Great British Energy has also been established to fund local and community energy projects, and therefore, having a local decarbonisation plan can help identify opportunities with local authorities taking a leading role.

RESPs – why do we need them?

1. **Local voices & needs** - ensure that local voices & needs are at the heart of the way we plan the energy system
2. **To drive investment** - ensure local areas get the energy infrastructure they need to realise local goals
3. **Ensure efficient network investment** - that keeps bills low by looking at the whole energy system



Great British ENERGY

"The creation of Regional Energy Strategic Plans mean local needs and priorities will directly influence how energy networks are developed, resulting in a more democratic, low carbon, energy system."

ofgem

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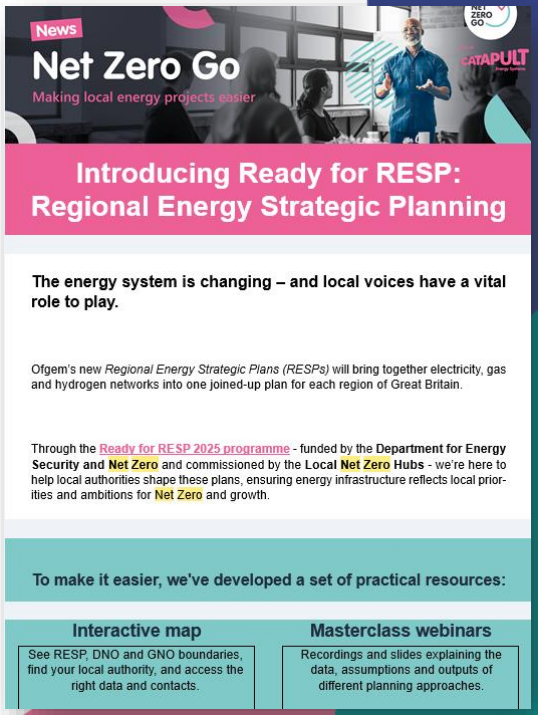
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What does this mean for RESP?



NET ZERO GO

Additional resources are available to local authority officers on Net Zero Go. You can register for the platform and will be able to access the programme here: https://netzerogo.org.uk/collection/ready-for-resp-2025-regional-energy-strategic-plans/

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1. Local decarbonisation planning approaches and resourcing considerations



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Why do councils do local decarbonisation planning?

Local decarbonisation plans are not mandatory for local councils however many have created or are progressing one to support their wider duties. They are most effective when developed with a clear purpose and a shared understanding of what the authority needs the plan to deliver.

A key consideration is how the plan will enhance existing statutory duties, rather than being a one-off exercise. Examples of what a local decarbonisation plan aims to achieve are:

Identify how net zero commitments can be met

Local decarbonisation plans are key to setting out a bottom-up, whole-system, data-driven approach to deliver effective local action that directly contributes to national net zero emission targets (UK Parliament Post, 2023).
These plans outline cost effective pathways and engage stakeholders supporting local progress towards statutory emissions goals.

Attract local investment

Local decarbonisation plans demonstrate and strengthen the evidence base needed to attract private investment. Research highlights that they provide robust, data driven analysis that local decision makers and partners can use to prioritise projects. This can support engagement with investors who require clear, evidence based opportunities (UK Energy Research Centre, 2024).

Build stakeholder buy in

Local planning initiatives help bring together diverse stakeholders, including authorities, network operators, and industry. This helps to foster relationships and set a shared strategic direction to support long term commitment to decarbonisation (UK Energy Research Centre, 2024).

Inform network investment to unlock barriers to local projects

Strategic plans, such as RESP, require local data to inform their modelling and network investment. Local decarbonisation plans can help to provide a clear understanding of where and when network upgrades are needed, supporting targeted investment decisions. This helps to reduce uncertainty for developers and project development (NESO, 2025).

Resourcing considerations to deliver local decarbonisation plans

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Involve the right people and reduce siloed working: Internal governance and project delivery team should bring together planning, housing, transport, energy, economic development, and finance, with clearly defined roles, to ensure that the plan can be integrated across statutory functions. This helps to prevent the plan from being siloed and encourages a whole system and integrated approach.



The importance of stakeholder engagement: Effective local decarbonisation plans are developed in collaboration with a wide range of partners, including local businesses and residents, housing associations, community energy groups, neighbouring authorities and potential investors. Time to commit to the engagement is a key factor in developing and implementing the plan..



Understanding local authority capabilities and gaps: Being aware of the skills and knowledge within a local authority, and the potential gaps is important when considering what approach may be most suitable. This will help understand what should be procured, or what skills/data/knowledge should be developed in house before procuring a plan.



Having clear outcomes the plan will provide: Being clear on how the council will implement the plan, as well as keep it up to date and track progress, is important to consider to inform potential skills development and future resource commitments. For example, does the council want to attract a strategic partner to deliver a portfolio of projects, attract individual developers, or identify sites for when funding is available to progress in house etc?

Ensuring you have the right resources in place to deliver your requirements is fundamental for a local decarbonisation plan to be effective.

From Energy Systems Catapults experience, the most successful plans are integrated into business-as-usual activities, with buy in from across leadership teams, and across departments.

Without the right people, skills, and partnerships, councils risk underestimating the time, expertise, and capacity required for successful local decarbonisation planning which may result in outputs not fit for purpose and inefficient use of time and resources.

Prioritising resources for local decarbonisation planning

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Research highlights several risks and considerations related to skills and resourcing that can limit local decarbonisation plan effectiveness. Recognising and managing these issues is essential if local plans are to move beyond strategy and successfully support delivery.

Some of the risks of under resourcing that have been identified include:

Missed Strategic Integration:

Local energy and decarbonisation plans are often not fully embedded within wider spatial planning, housing and infrastructure decision-making.

Parliamentary research highlights that energy planning is frequently poorly aligned with the statutory planning system, limiting its influence on development outcomes and infrastructure investment. This lack of integration can reduce the strategic impact of plans (UK Parliament Post, 2023).

Skills Gaps:

Even when local decarbonisation plans are in place, authorities may lack the specialist skills needed to interpret technical analysis, engage effectively with network operators, and translate plans into deliverable actions (UK Energy Research Centre, 2024).

Insufficient Resourcing for Delivery:

Evidence consistently identifies limited staff capacity, and short-term funding as barriers to implementation of plans.

Without adequate resourcing, local authorities struggle to maintain momentum beyond plan production, increasing the risk that plans do not progress into delivery (UK Parliament Post, 2023).

Types of local decarbonisation planning

Factors such as funding availability, internal capacity, time pressures, political priorities and the maturity of existing climate strategies all influence the type and depth of planning an authority can undertake.

As a result, a range of planning approaches has developed across the UK to reflect these differing needs.

These vary from whole-system energy modelling used to inform long term strategic decision making, to more targeted and spatially focused tools designed to identify specific project opportunities. The following section sets out the main types of plans and tools in use, explains what each is intended to achieve, and the impact the plans can have on a local area.

The following slide gives a simple comparison of each of the planning techniques used in local decarbonisation planning across the UK. For more information on these approaches you can take a look at our Local Decarbonisation Planning Guide and our e-learning course available on Net Zero Go.



A summary of the different planning approaches

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	Whole system local energy planning	Sector and geographic specific planning	RESP/ DFES
Geographic Scope	Typically local authority scale.		• 11 RESP regions and nations across UK. • DNO license areas (larger than LA boundaries and some LAs will be covered by multiple DNOs).
Data Granularity	Building-level data (more common in LAEPs/visual tools) helps identify specific project opportunities.		Aggregated data (RESP, DFES) is better for high-level planning but not project delivery.
Timescale	Medium term (5-15 years): strategic rollout (retrofit, renewables). Long term (15+ years): whole-system transformation.	Primary focus short term (0–5 years): project delivery (EV charge points, heat pumps).	• RESP - Long term (15+ years): whole-system transformation. • DFES – med-long term (5-15 years): strategic rollout (retrofit, renewables).
Technical Scope	Whole system (heat, transport, power, storage).	Specific small number of technologies. • Visualisation tools: typically, current system only.	• RESP: whole system (heat, transport, power, storage) • DFES: electricity system mainly.
Approach	Typically combines: • Mix of national and local data. Quality improves with local authority input. • Spatial mapping: Makes insights clear and helps stakeholders. • Scenario modelling: Show "what should be done" not just "what could be done". • Whole-system modelling: Prioritise cost-effective actions to reach NZ.	Typically combines: • Mix of national and local data. Quality improves with local authority input. • Spatial mapping: Makes insights clear and helps stakeholders. Doesn't usually include detailed scenario or whole system modelling.	Typically combines: • Mix of national and local data. • Spatial mapping • Scenario modelling • RESP is whole-system modelling • DFES focused on electricity network
Stakeholder Engagement	Typically includes wider engagement with LA stakeholders, developers, community energy groups, networks and industry.	Engagement with smaller number of relevant stakeholders.	• DFES typically includes engagement with energy users and LAs. • RESP includes significant engagement across broad range of stakeholders.

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2. Skills and resource requirements



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Introduction

This section describes the types of skills local authorities need to deliver local decarbonisation plans.

Due to the range of approaches that can be taken depending on the outcomes wanted from the plan, it is very challenging to give a specific number of days of resource needed for the different options. This information has therefore been collected through case studies and the experiences and recommendations from local authorities who have commissioned plans of different types.

Examples provided in this Guide

Whole system local energy planning	Local Area Energy Plan – Stages 1-3 Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) Digital Local Area Energy Plan
Sector and geographic specific planning	Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (LHEES) Using visualisation tools (e.g. LAEP+) Heat Pump deployment scoping Identifying Heat Network pipeline

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Local Area Energy Plan – Stages 1-3 (Energy System Baselining)



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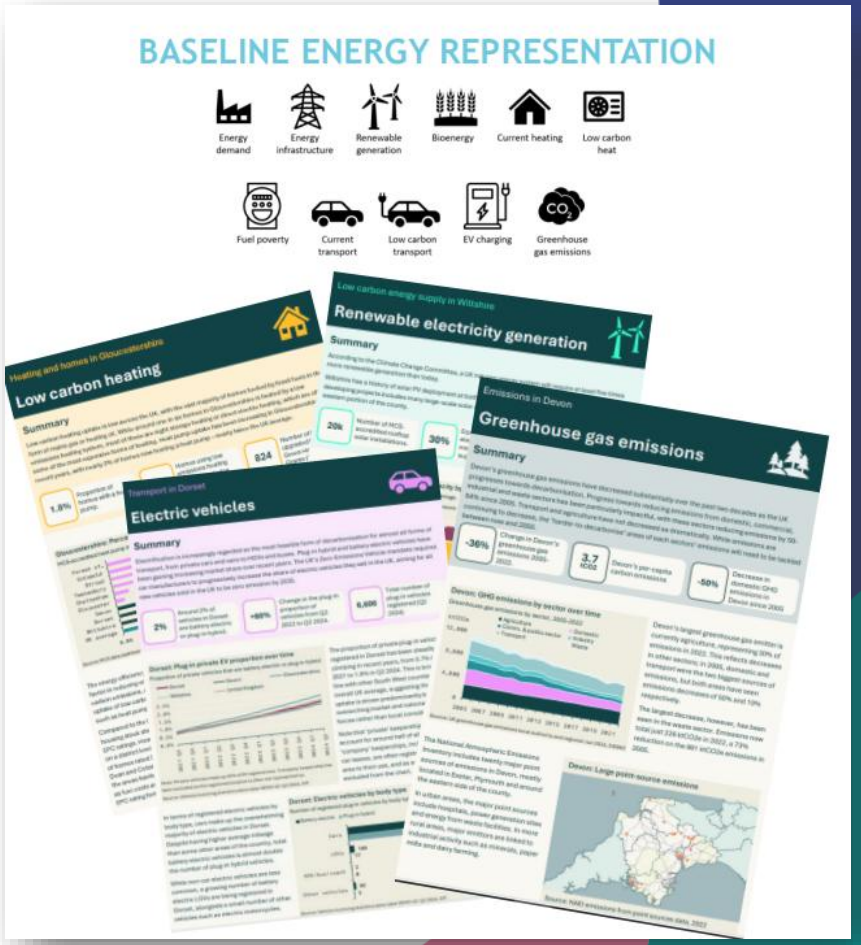
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Whole system local energy planning - Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) Stages 1-3

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Some areas have commissioned stages 1-3 of a LAEP which is developing an understanding of the current energy system to help prepare areas to undertake a full LAEP.

Skill Required	Description
Project Management	A project manager will coordinate timelines, milestones, and tasks across suppliers and council teams, ensuring the plan progresses smoothly from scoping to delivery.
Stakeholder Engagement	Stakeholder engagement is important to bring together different groups and align strategy. Somebody leading the stakeholder engagement will bring together planning, transport, housing, finance, network operators and local partners to shape assumptions, and build shared buy in.
Technical Energy Knowledge	This approach will help local authorities develop their energy system knowledge so while some expertise is useful, this can be developed through the project.
GIS & Spatial Analysis	GIS skills may be required if data is visualised and can be explored through platform
Advanced Modelling	Not required for stages 1-3
Procurement, Legal, and Finance	Involvement of central procurement, finance and legal team is advised to shape the brief, run the tender process, evaluate bids, and make sure the commissioned work delivers what is needed.



Case Study – South West Net Zero Hub

South West NET ZERO HUB

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Early stage Local Area Energy Planning for Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, and Wiltshire - South West Net Zero Hub

What plan did SWNZH commission?	Why was the plan commissioned?
A group of local authorities, supported by SWNZH, commissioned a foundational Local Area Energy Planning (LAEP) programme covering stages 1–3. The programme focused on building the organisational foundations needed for effective LAEP, including: • Governance and cross-departmental buy-in • Stakeholder mapping • Clarifying local priorities and constraints • Assessing organisational strengths and gaps (SWOT-style) • Developing shared data resources	Experience elsewhere showed that moving too quickly into technical modelling without clear governance, agreed priorities, and accessible data can result in poorly specified or underused plans. This programme gave officers time to understand what LAEP involves, what decisions it requires, and what information and stakeholders are needed. The shared, hub-supported approach enabled local authorities to pool learning, access facilitation support, and reduce risk. The aim was to ensure councils were well positioned to commission modelling later as informed "intelligent clients", able to specify requirements clearly, and critically assess outputs.

What was the outcome from the plan?	What impact did the plan cause?
Using baseline data and organisational insights, each local authority developed a forward plan with around six priority "no-regrets" actions deliverable within 12 months. This enabled early progress while awaiting clarity on RESP and decisions about progressing to full LAEPs. The programme also strengthened collaboration between authorities with shared priorities, enabling joint learning and problem-solving across different local contexts.	• For a relatively modest budget, the programme engaged a wide range of stakeholders and built a stronger shared understanding of LAEP across the region. • The 6–9 month timeframe allowed space for workshops, reflection and feedback, helping officers build confidence and internal alignment. • Participating authorities are now better prepared to procure full LAEPs more efficiently and make effective use of modelling outputs.

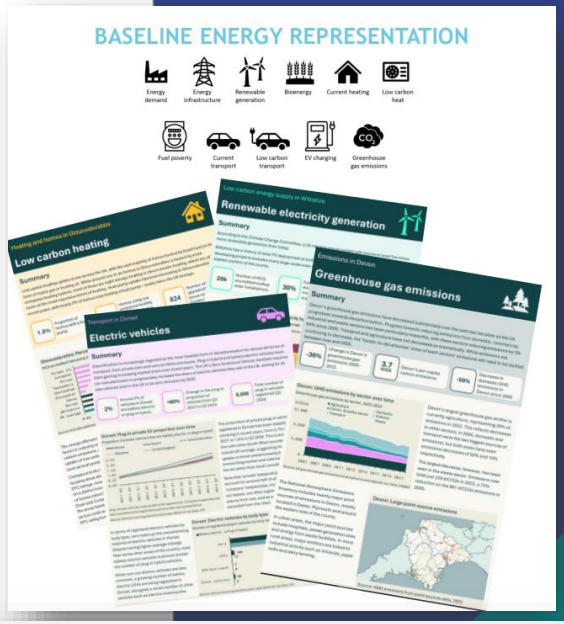
How the plan was procured

South West NET ZERO HUB

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The programme originated from demand across local authorities seeking support to start Local Area Energy Planning (LAEP). The SW Net Zero Hub recognised that funding was insufficient to commission full LAEPs for all interested councils, and that moving straight to modelling risked poor outcomes.
A collaborative approach was therefore developed to build readiness for LAEP. The total contract value was £120,000, with each participating authority contributing £20,000 and the Hub contributing £10,000 per area. Consultants were procured through the Hub, with local authority officers involved in the evaluation process.

Skill	Internal	External
Project Management	Each local authority had an assigned project manager from the climate team who coordinated internal teams. The SWNZH PM managed the contract. Both PMs reviewed outputs from the consultant.	Consultant had one PM assigned to overall contract and regional coordination, with one PM per council leading on local engagement and technical deliverables.
Stakeholder Engagement	LA officers identified and convened suitable stakeholders	Consultants acted as facilitator, independent voice, and brought in external expertise and experience.
Technical Knowledge	Each LA climate lead brought in people across housing, transport, economic development etc to contribute.	Consultant collated data and information, and developed Stage 1-3 outputs.
GIS Analysis	LA identified and signposted local datasets.	Consultants identified national and local datasets and established an open access repository for each LA.
Advanced Modelling	Baseline dashboards required minimal specialist skills required to understand.	Dashboards were created showing baseline for each local authority.
Procurement team	SWNZH managed procurement process and contract for consultant delivery. LAs supported specification development and tender evaluation.	-





LAEP stages 1-3 project outputs so far

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Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP)



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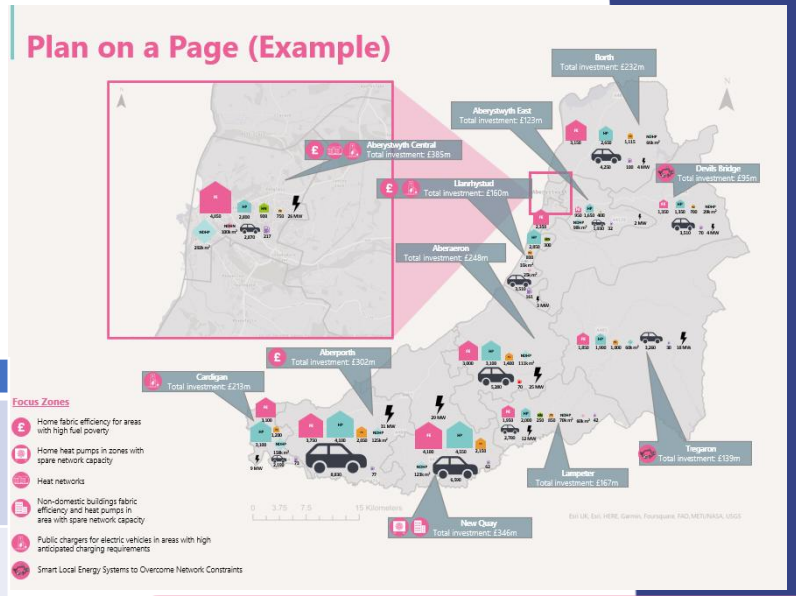
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Whole system local energy planning - Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP)

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From research and interviews different councils have revealed that LAEPs require a core set of skills to be delivered effectively. The exact mix of skills can differ depending on the specification but the skills listed below represent the general capabilities needed to scope, commission, and deliver this type of plan.

Skill Required	Description
Project Management	A project manager will coordinate timelines, milestones, and tasks across suppliers and council teams, ensuring the plan progresses smoothly from scoping to delivery. **Typically at least 1 FTE required to coordinate and manage.**
Stakeholder Engagement	Stakeholder engagement is important to bring together different groups and align strategy. Somebody in charge of stakeholder engagement will bring together planning, transport, housing, finance, network operators and local partners to shape assumptions, test scenarios and build shared buy in.
Technical Energy Knowledge	A council requires somebody with technical knowledge of energy systems, to interpret modelling outputs, energy systems assumptions, technology pathways and network constraints, so the local decarbonisation plan's recommendations are realistic and understood.
GIS & Spatial Analysis	GIS analysis is the ability to interpret modelling outputs spatially using GIS software. This includes mapping out potential opportunities, by turning modelled data into clear, specific insights that support a councils decision making.
Advanced Modelling	Advanced modelling requires external specialists. It involves using modelling software to analyse data, compare different scenarios, and identify the most cost effective pathway towards decarbonisation in the local area. The local authority should be clear what they procure in terms of level of detail, format or outputs, and consideration of specific areas of interest such as hydrogen, heat networks or smart local energy systems.
Procurement, Legal, and Finance	Involvement of central procurement, finance and legal team is advised to shape the brief, run the tender process, evaluate bids, and make sure the commissioned work delivers what is needed in terms of modelling, mapping, and supporting evidence.



A Local Area Energy Plan is a data driven roadmap commissioned by local authorities to guide an area of how it decarbonises its energy system. It is a mapped, costed route showing what needs to change, where, by when, and who's involved across buildings, transport, local generation and networks.

Case Study – Brighton and Hove

This case study was based on an interview conducted with the planning officer at Brighton and Hove council, providing insights into how their LAEP was commissioned and delivered.

What plan did Brighton and Hove commission?

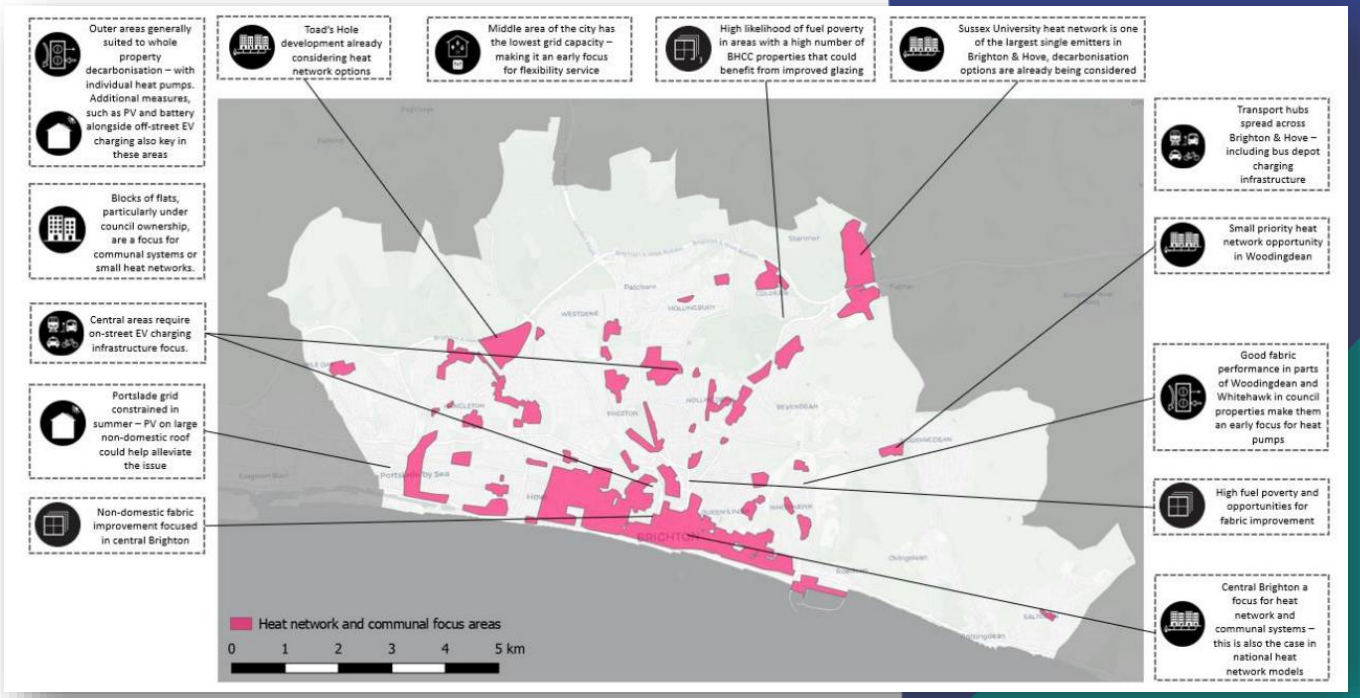
Brighton and Hove council commissioned a Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP), supported by the Greater Southeast Net Zero Hub (GSENZH).

Why was the plan commissioned?

Brighton & Hove wanted to create a robust evidence base for decarbonisation, to help support funding bids, and enable cross team engagement on net zero priorities.

What impact did the plan cause?

- Evidence for decisions and funding: The plan provided a strong evidence base for business cases, spatial planning and funding bids, helping the council to justify quick win projects.
- Cross-team engagement: The plan enabled conversations across the transport, housing, economic growth and finance teams, breaking down silos and securing buy in from the senior management team.
- Support for delivery: Strengthened ongoing initiatives such as social housing heat pump retrofits, keeping them on track despite budget pressures.
- New ideas: Introduced new concepts like local wind energy that hadn't been considered before.



Extract from their plan

How the plan was delivered

Brighton and Hove commissioned their LAEP by engaging a consultant to deliver the plan across all seven stages, with the consultant primarily handling technical modelling and evidence gathering.

Skill	Internal	External
Project Management	Managed the LAEP delivery process, coordinated internal teams and reviewed outputs from the consultant	Consultant managed delivery of agreed technical workstreams
Stakeholder Engagement	Led engagement with local stakeholders, coordinated input across transport, housing, finance, and the senior management teams	Consultant supported engagement indirectly through evidence gathering and modelling
Technical Knowledge	The council required technical knowledge to review and understand modelling outputs	The consultant supplied the specialist technical knowledge to be able to disseminate the modelling outputs
GIS Analysis	-	Produced spatial outputs and mapping to support the LAEP
Advanced Modelling	-	Consultant delivered scenario modelling and technical analysis of energy interventions
Procurement team	Managed procurement process and contract for consultant delivery	-

Case Study – Cornwall and Isles of Scilly

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Based on unique characteristics of the area, the council wanted to understand, and get stakeholder buy in and interest, in key opportunities not only for reducing carbon, but also developing local skills and businesses and retaining the benefits these can provide locally.

What plan did Cornwall & Isles of Scilly commission?

Cornwall and Isles of Scilly councils commissioned a Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) with strong emphasis on stakeholder engagement. It set out a whole-system decarbonisation pathway across electricity, heat, transport, waste and industry, spatially informed scenarios, a roadmap of priority projects, and clear actions for councils and partners.

The plan was co-developed with over **4,000 residents**, businesses, network operators and local stakeholders, making **engagement central to the methodology**. It was designed as a foundation for ongoing programme delivery, informing the Climate and Energy Action Plan and investment decisions.

Why was the plan commissioned?

The LAEP was commissioned to provide a detailed understanding of the local energy system, clarify priorities for decarbonisation, support Cornwall's climate ambitions, embed energy planning across council operations, and **build public and political support through extensive engagement**.

What was the outcome from the plan?

The LAEP produced multiple decarbonisation scenarios, identified key local opportunities such as biomethane and geothermal energy, and set a prioritised delivery roadmap and investable project pipeline. Engagement ensured public support and strengthened political confidence, directly informing the council's Climate and Energy Action Plan.

What impact did the plan cause?

- Strategic: Embedded whole-system thinking into cross-departmental governance and day-to-day operations.
- Investment and infrastructure: Provided confidence to external partners on local priorities and opportunities.
- Community and democratic: Built **legitimacy** through **engagement and increased visibility of energy transition** locally.
- Institutional: Strengthened officer capability, internal coordination, and governance arrangements.

Overall, the LAEP added weight and coherence to project proposals, demonstrating they were part of a robust, evidence-based strategy.



How the plan was procured

The councils secured approximately £500,000 of funding under a rural and island innovation programme to deliver what was, at the time, a pioneering LAEP (pre ESC methodology). The funding was explicitly to go beyond existing approaches and demonstrate innovation in rural and island contexts.

Skill	Internal	External
Governance and Leadership	Climate officers with support from legal, procurement, and other internal stakeholders.	Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Leadership Board in partnership with the Climate Commission.
Project Management	In addition to the considerable resource required to manage the contract itself, council officers were heavily involved throughout contract delivery: ensuring alignment with council priorities; inputting into technical analysis; securing and coordinating cross departmental input; and scrutinising consultant outputs.	Consultant was responsible for delivery of the LAEP, including managing subconsultants and delivery of the agreed technical workstreams within the agreed budget and timeframe.
Stakeholder Engagement	Local authority supported engagement both during delivery and post Plan completion through its relationships with private and public stakeholders, including high energy users, subject matter experts (e.g. geothermal, hydrogen), community energy groups, and agricultural and tourism representatives.	Specialist stakeholder engagement teams ran citizens panel, surveys, and workshops throughout the development process.
Technical Knowledge	Internally, experienced officer with over 20 years in energy and a specialist data analyst played critical roles in providing local sets, interrogating modelling outputs and ensuring local credibility.	The consultant supplied the specialist technical knowledge. University of Exeter quality assured the LAEP data and outputs.
GIS Analysis	-	Consultant completed spatial analysis and produced outputs to support the LAEP.
Advanced Modelling	Although local authority and University of Exeter held technical expertise, they were unable to fully QA modelling without access to detailed inputs and assumptions.	Consultant completed modelling using a bespoke 'black box' model. Four scenarios were developed with a single pathway.
Procurement team	The LAEP was procured through an open tender process, with 100% quality scoring (no cost element – fixed budget).	City Science (lead consultant) with partners including University of Exeter, and stakeholder engagement specialists.

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Timeline of project

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Key
- **Activities** are the tasks carried out to reach each milestone
- **Resource** requires represents the time and skills needed at that stage

Resourcing
High – 10+ days

Medium – 3 – 10 days

Low - <3 days

Activities

Scoping

- Early supplier engagement
- Project scope, reflecting rural/island context
- Building on energy planning work (2010–2020) to create spatial, evidence-based approach to inform prioritisation of forward plan

Procurement

- Project specification
- Assessment criteria
- Open tender process
- Project contracts
- Managing Government grant via net zero hub

Delivery

- Managing delivery within grant requirements
- Stakeholder workshops
- Citizen Engagement Panel
- Surveys
- Input from subject matter experts
- Modelling data and assumptions
- Tailoring scenarios to local conditions
- LAEP outputs
- External QA

Implementation (ongoing)

- Resetting of climate targets
- Continued work with Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Leadership partners to deliver on priorities.
- Outputs incorporated in Council Climate and Energy Action Plan
- Alignment with council strategies (e.g. transport, housing decarbonisation).
- Ongoing data management + refresh
- Submissions to RESP call for evidence.

Resource / skill required

Skill	Time Allocation
Governance	Low
Project Management	Medium
Stakeholder Engagement	Medium
Technical Knowledge	High
GIS Analysis	-
Advanced Modelling	-
Procurement	Low

Skill	Time Allocation
Governance	-
Project Management	High
Stakeholder Engagement	Medium
Technical Knowledge	High
GIS Analysis	-
Advanced Modelling	-
Procurement	High

Skill	Time Allocation
Governance	Medium
Project Management	Very high
Stakeholder Engagement	Very high
Technical Knowledge	High
GIS Analysis	High
Advanced Modelling	High
Procurement	-

Skill	Time Allocation
Governance	Medium
Project Management	High
Stakeholder Engagement	Medium
Technical Knowledge	Medium
GIS Analysis	Low
Advanced Modelling	-
Procurement	-



Key Lessons from the two case studies

- LAEPs require substantial internal capacity even when externally commissioned.
- Deep **stakeholder engagement strengthens legitimacy** and delivery prospects.
- Local data improves credibility but can take more resources to collate and get wider buy in.
- **Cross-department involvement is essential** to embed energy planning beyond climate teams.
- A **well-evidenced LAEP can unlock funding, improve infrastructure coordination and strengthen political confidence.**
- LAEPs are valuable but not a silver bullet: Seen as **essential for setting objectives and evidence-based planning**, however implementing the plan and delivery remains challenging due to budget, capacity in the council, and local politics.
- **Senior management buy in is crucial**. The plan only works when it is treated as a strategic priority across the organisation. Councils emphasised the need for continued leadership support, across multiple teams, to keep the plan relevant and to do something meaningful with the analysis.
- LAEPs need to be more dynamic and easier to update, as the current plan becomes outdated too quickly. This means that councils need to **think about resourcing beyond the plan itself**. Instead of just commissioning the modelling, councils should make sure there is **ongoing capacity** to keep the analysis live and integrate it into decision making overtime, so the plan can be impactful as possible.
- **GIS capability** was highlighted as a key skill gap in the LAEP process. Static maps limit engagement, and feedback from case studies have revealed that more dynamic GIS capability in the council would have made the plan more useful for officers.

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Digital Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP)



Programme delivered by

CATAPULT Energy Systems

Whole system local energy planning - Digital Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP)

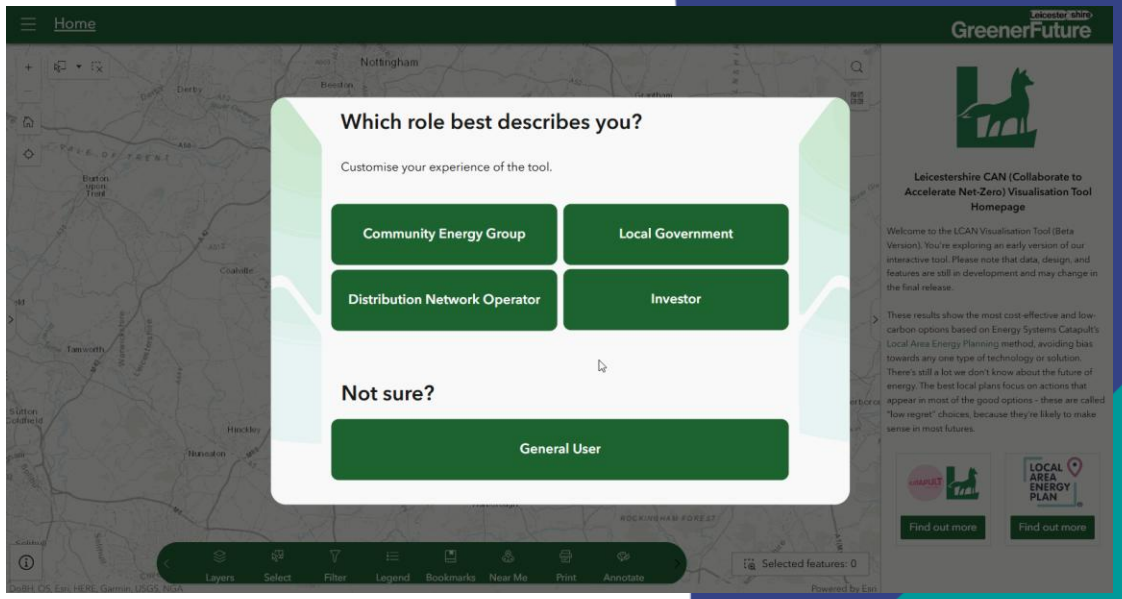
Ready for RESP

The market is moving towards a more digital Local Area Energy Plan to support a more updateable version of a LAEP. It's an interactive mapping and analysis online tool that holds the same plan content, but lets you refresh data, test options, and share live views as things change.

In practice, it turns static plan outputs into interactive maps and dashboards, making it easier to engage stakeholders, prepare funding bids, and develop business cases.

In addition to a LAEP, the following additional skills and resources are beneficial:

Extra Skills Required	Description
Digital and Data skills to manage and maintain	The digital tool and supporting data will require the council to maintain and update, as well as promote and disseminate across other council teams to incorporate into BAU activities. This includes updating datasets, refreshing assumptions, and ensuring the digital workspace evolves as local conditions change. The council will therefore need a person responsible for this to realise the greatest value.
Stakeholder Engagement	Stakeholder engagement to socialise the data and its uses will need to be carried out internally and with external partners to help keep it live and useful and informing wider council strategies and plans.



The example of a digital LAEP is taken from Greener Futures Leicestershire programme

Case Study – Leicestershire County Council

Leicestershire County Council

Ready for RESP

This case study was based on an interview conducted with the energy manager at Leicestershire County Council, providing insights into how their LAEP was commissioned and delivered.

What plan did Leicestershire commission?

Leicestershire commissioned a Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) delivered with a new modelling approach. The approach allowed for a far greater number of scenarios to best tested, as well as the ability to be visualised on an interactive digital map.

Why was the plan commissioned?

The LAEP was delivered as part of the LCAN project within the Net Zero Living programme, funded by Innovate UK. This brought together Energy Systems Catapult, De Montfort University, Leicestershire County Council and the district councils in the region. Because the work was included in a government-funded demonstrator, the procurement was carried out through a competition rather than through a standalone council tender.

What was the outcome from the plan?

- A public, interactive spatial tool that integrates modelling outputs with local and open datasets.
- A library of quick-win projects that helped develop clear, investable business cases.
- A governance arrangement with universities and network operators to guide post-LAEP delivery.

What impact did the plan cause?

- More evidence-led decision-making, reducing reliance on local opinion and providing a consistent basis for choices on technologies such as heat networks and heat pumps.
- Faster progress on near term delivery, with clear identification of low-regret actions that could be taken forward within the next five years.
- Stronger funding and investment readiness, with clearer project pipelines and more robust evidence to support bids and engagement with funders.

How the plan was procured

Leicestershire embedded its LAEP within an Innovate UK-funded demonstrator (Leicestershire CAN), partnering with Energy Systems Catapult to lead modelling and digital tool development.

Skill	Internal	External
Project Management	Local authority lead coordinating internal teams, managing milestones and aligning delivery with council priorities	Delivery manager overseeing modelling, analysis and tool development
Stakeholder Engagement	Steering group members from planning, economic development, district environment teams and network operators	Engagement specialist facilitating workshops, onboarding partners and supporting collaborative working
Technical Knowledge	Some internal knowledge of energy system and other teams in councils were engaged to provide and include data	-
GIS Analysis	Yes, the visualisation platform was chosen to align with existing tools the council uses	GIS specialists developed the LAEP Lens spatial tool using ArcGIS based on significant user research
Advanced Modelling	-	Energy Systems Catapult modelling team delivered 2500+ scenarios
Procurement team	-	-

Key Lessons from Local Area Energy Plan – Digital approach case study

- Better use of time for stakeholder engagement

Developing and defining LAEP scenarios for an area can take a lot of stakeholder engagement time and not reach consensus. Through the new modelling approach developed in LCAN, a larger number of scenarios were run and the data made available through the digital platform for stakeholders to use and analyse themselves. The engagement could therefore focus on making best use of the data for different user needs.

- GIS skills

Previous LAEPs were delivered as static PDFs which become outdated quickly. With many councils already operating on limited capacity, teams struggled to translate static outputs into delivery. LCAN addressed this issue, but only if councils have the **internal digital skills to maintain and update the workspace**; without dedicated resource, even a digital plan risks becoming another static document.

- Standard modelling assumptions

Feedback suggested that there are many different consultants using different modelling methods and assumptions to create a LAEP which has led to inconsistent outputs across the country. To help ensure a council procures a suitable approach, they should include as much detail as possible as part of the procurement specification and involve internal teams at an early stage to help define the requirements.

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Local Heat and Energy Efficiencies Strategy (LHEES)



Programme delivered by

CATAPULT Energy Systems

Local Heat and Energy Efficiencies Plan (LHEES) and LENZA

Ready for RESP

The Scottish Government provided £75,000 grants for each LHEES, with £50,000 being allocated for each local authority to recruit one full time employee to focus on the coordination of the LHEES, with a further £25,000 to procure or internally resource technical support (ScottishGov, 2025).

Many Scottish councils use LENZA, a spatial visualisation tool, into their LHEES process.

LENZA provides:

- Interactive spatial mapping of building stock, heat demand, and technology potential.
- Granular views of strategic and delivery areas
- A visual interface for exploring LHEES evidence and testing local assumptions

LENZA acts as a complementary tool to the LHEES by helping councils visualise strategic zones and delivery areas, interpret outputs, and support early feasibility conversations with internal teams and external partners.

Councils generally incorporate LENZA to make their LHEES' evidence more accessible, user friendly and spatially grounded.



Snapshot from LENZA tool

Summary of skills:

Skill	Internal	External
Project Management	✓	
Stakeholder Engagement	✓	
Technical Knowledge	✓	✓
GIS Analysis	✓	*
Advanced Modelling		✓
Digital tool development		
Procurement	✓	

Case Study – Perth and Kinross

This case study was based on an interview conducted with the planning officer at Perth & Kinross council, providing insights into how their LHEES and their LAEP were commissioned and delivered.

What plan did Perth and Kinross commission?

Perth and Kinross Council commissioned a Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES), alongside a Local Area Energy Plan, to provide a strategic framework for heat decarbonisation, using a whole energy system approach to align local priorities with national net zero targets. The plan was designed to meet statutory requirements and prepare for future heat network zoning regulations.

Why was the plan commissioned?

To meet Scottish statutory requirements for heat decarbonisation and prepare for heat network zoning, while also creating an evidence-based framework for prioritising actions and supporting funding bids.

What was the outcome from the plan?

- Development of a heat decarbonisation strategy that complied with statutory requirements
- Established a governance and reporting structure for heat decarbonisation
- Delivered detailed spatial mapping with LENZA tool which supported alignment with strategic network planning and informed heat network zoning
- Produced robust evidence to support funding bids and prioritise projects
- Council commitment to procure a Strategic Energy Partnership based on the detailed understanding of their energy targets and need to scale delivery to meet net zero ambitions
- Linked buildings (council estate, social housing, and private sector), heat networks, renewables and generation and heat network strategies under one framework

What impact did the plan cause?

- Sped up decision-making and supported governance
- Improved coordination across buildings, transport, planning, economic development, and climate teams
- Provided credible evidence for funding bids
- Shifted to a more dynamic, evidence-based planning approach

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PERTH & KINROSS COUNCIL

How the plan was procured

The council procured the LHEES through a combined procurement process, bundling it with other energy planning work to ensure alignment across priorities. Consultants were engaged to provide technical modelling and commercial advice, and the council integrated the Local Energy Network Accelerator (LENZA), SSEN's digital platform to support decarbonisation pathway planning and inform strategic network planning.

Delivering the plan required a broad range of skills and resources, both internally and externally, which are summarised below.

Skill	Internal	External
Project Management	Strategic governance team coordinated delivery and reviewed outputs	Consultants managed technical workstreams and programme delivery
Stakeholder Engagement	Council led engagement with community and private and public sector stakeholders	Consultants supported through evidence gathering and modelling
Technical Knowledge	Property (Housing/Energy), planning and climate and sustainable development teams provided evidence and advised on modelling outputs	Engineering consultants provided feasibility and technical design
GIS Analysis	Council provided data, interpreted technical evidence, and integrated them into decision-making.	Consultant delivered temporal and spatial, pathways modelling and outputs
Advanced Modelling	Council provided data from various internal teams to inform modelling	Consultant delivered scenario modelling and technical analysis of energy interventions
Procurement team	Managed procurement process and contract for consultant delivery.	-

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Timeline of project

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Key
- **Activities** are the tasks carried out to reach each milestone
- **Resource** requires represents the time and skills needed at that stage

Resourcing
High – 10+ days

Medium – 3 – 10 days

Low - <3 days

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Activities

Scoping (5 mons)

- Further development of intelligence and linkages between LHEES and LAEP processes with a focus on how grid infrastructure can inform and potentially be shaped by the delivery of LHEES.
- Early engagement work in the initial stages with key stakeholders (e.g. SSEN SGN, Housing Associations & RSLs, other local authorities and other key public sector organisations)
- Internal Engagement to align LHEES, LAEP and Council Decarbonisation Plan under one strategic energy planning framework
- Map existing actions/projects/policies to be delivered in the short to medium term

Procurement (4 mons)

- Existing framework used that covered energy consultancy - sole supplier (SCAPE)
- Issue brief and response template
- Evaluate response; review and clarify scope elements of the proposal, -issue award letter;
- Inception meeting(s) to finalise agreed work programme and outputs
- SEA, EFIA and DPIA screening completed
- Data sharing agreements in place across all partners
- Key stakeholders identified and mapped
- Formalise LHEES/LAEP Working group members and resource commitments across teams and services
- Review of statutory requirements, funding opportunities including capital funds programme and policy and evidence alignment to define scope

Delivery (1 yr)

- Guidance review and Consultation, Iterative approach development
- Policy and strategy review
- RFI, -Data and tools library
- Strategic zoning and pathways
- Generation of initial delivery areas
- HN Identification
- Building-level pathway assessment
- - Finalisation of delivery areas -
- LHEES Strategy Development and Publishing
- HNZ, Building demands, generation and storage, transport and grid capacity optimisation and pathways planning
- LAEP published
- LHEES/LAEP Delivery Plan Development and Publishing
- Council decarb plan published
- Publish Evidence

Implementation (ongoing for 2 years)

- LHEES/LAEP Governance incl Steering Board Established (internal) and Delivery Groups established (external)
- LHEES/LAEP monitoring and reporting processes established
- Project funding and implementation prioritised to meeting strategic objectives (e.g. Communities Investment Framework, a strategic heat network programme, Council Estates Target Operating Model (TOC)and detailed programme delivery, One Stop Retrofit shop)
- Strategic Energy Partner procurement to bring in private sector delivery support and funding (on-going)
- Policy and evidence alignment with NESO Strategic Energy Planning

Resource / skill required

Skill	Time Allocation
Project Management	High
Stakeholder Engagement	Medium
Technical Knowledge	High
GIS Analysis	Low
Advanced Modelling	Low
Procurement	Low

Skill	Time Allocation
Project Management	High
Stakeholder Engagement	Low
Technical Knowledge	High
GIS Analysis	Low
Advanced Modelling	Low
Procurement	High

Skill	Time Allocation
Project Management	High
Stakeholder Engagement	High
Technical Knowledge	High
GIS Analysis	High
Advanced Modelling	High
Procurement	Low

Skill	Time Allocation
Project Management	High
Stakeholder Engagement	High
Technical Knowledge	High
GIS Analysis	Medium
Advanced Modelling	Medium
Procurement	High

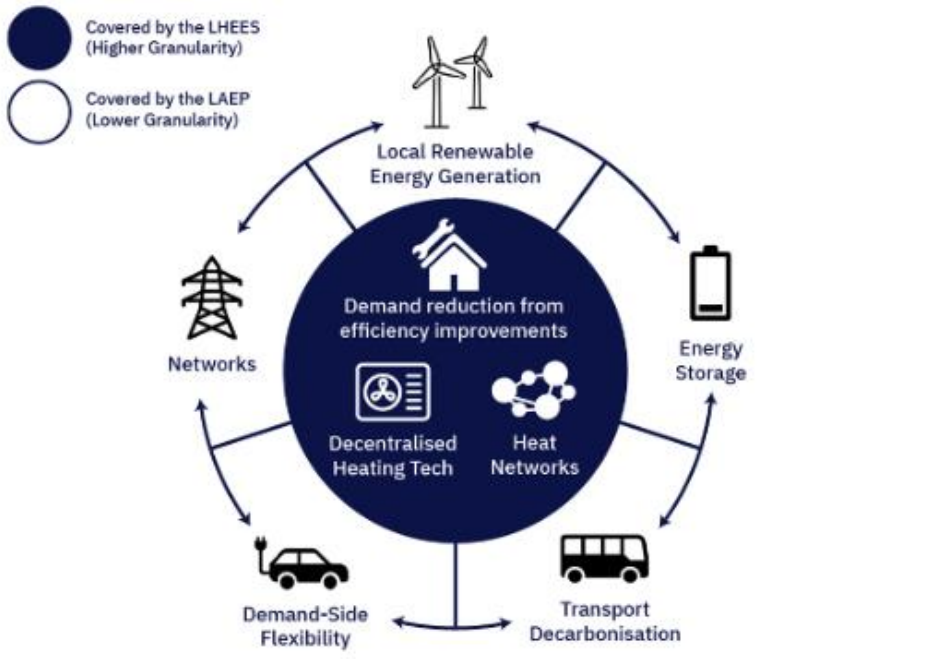
Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES)

Ready for RESP

From the case study from **Perth and Kinross** council the following advice and feedback around resourcing was given:

- **Councils often underestimate the internal capacity needed** to deliver and update a LHEES. Councils should **ensure that they have allocated dedicated officer time across multiple departments**, rather than relying on a single individual, so that the delivery actions can be properly coordinated and maintained.

- Feedback revealed that **officers need stronger analytical and GIS literacy** to interpret LHEES datasets effectively. Other councils should ensure that they have internal capacity to understand modelled outputs, sense check evidence, and identify where additional feasibility or local data is required to support delivery.



Strategic priority areas for decarbonisation covered within the LHEES and LAEP

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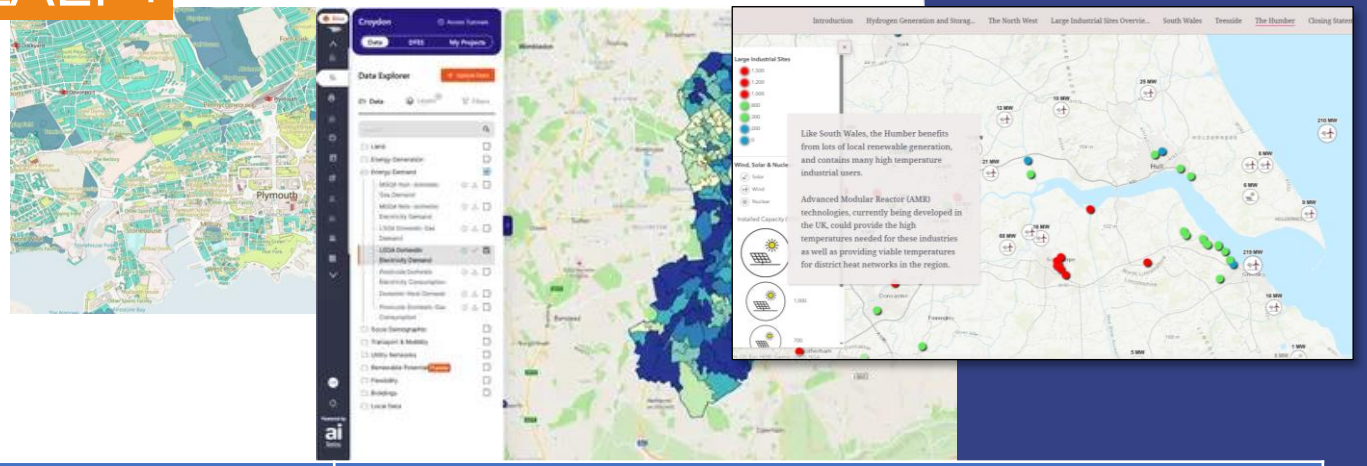
Using Energy System Visualisation Tools (LAEP+)



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Energy System Visulation Tools – Eg. LAEP+



Visualisation tools are used alongside decarbonisation plans to translate technical modelling and datasets into clear, spatial representations that support engagement and delivery.

Visualisation tools do not provide scenario modelling or optimisation themselves. Instead, they:

- Represent local and national datasets visually
- Support councils to explore evidence spatially

They can display scenario outputs, but they do not generate scenarios. Scenario planning only occurs when paired with a modelling exercise such as a Local Area Energy Plan.

LAEP+ is one such example that is a procured, digital visualisation tool that visualises energy and building datasets. Another example is Cadence delivered by City Science.

It brings together local and national data through interactive maps and dashboards, helping councils explore heat demand, building characteristics, retrofit opportunities, and site-specific constraints.

The typical skills required to make the best us of these are summarised in the Table.

Skill Required	Description
Project management	An internal project manager will be required to coordinate internal teams and the supplier, organise data inputs, and ensure the tool integrates into wider planning activities
Stakeholder engagement	Engagement tends to be light touch, and sector specific. Councils coordinate with the teams or market actors relevant to the theme, as well as potentially speaking to consultants about outputs.
Technical energy knowledge	Councils need the technical ability to understand the datasets being visualised and interpret how these shape delivery priorities.
GIS skills	Council teams should have GIS skills to be able to interpret maps and review the data.
Procurement	Usually, a visualisation tool needs to be procured although DNOs may provide use of LAEP+ for free. Costs may be associated with downloading the data to integrate with other tools. Councils must define a clear specification, determine require datasets, and run the procurement process.

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Sector Specific Planning:

- Heat Pump deployment scoping
- Identifying Heat Network pipeline



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Sector and geographic specific planning

Sector specific plans vary widely by technology/theme and can be tailored to current funding or local priorities. Typical examples include:

- Heat network zoning and feasibility (anchor load mapping, route options, commercial structuring)
- Heat pump deployment programmes (estate selection, EPC/fuel poverty targeting, grid checks)
- EV charging strategies (car park/kerbside siting, capacity-ready locations, traffic flows)
- Rooftop solar PV (schools/civic estate feasibility, structural checks, connection routes)
- Fabric-first retrofit (stock segmentation, measure bundles, delivery phasing)

The resourcing requirements typically will depend on:

- The scope
- The technology focus
- The geographical scale
- The data availability
- The delivery ambition

As a result, individual plans vary more than any other planning type. However, experience across councils show that most single sector plans rely on a small, consistent set of core skills, as seen below:

Skill Required	Description
Project Management	A project manager will tend to coordinate timelines, milestones, and tasks across suppliers and council teams, ensuring the plan progresses smoothly from scoping to delivery.
Stakeholder Engagement	Engagement tends to sector specific. Councils coordinate with the teams or market actors relevant to the theme.
Technical Energy Knowledge	Councils need the ability to interpret technical advice, understand technology constraints, and verify that consultant recommendations are realistic for the local area. External specialists usually deliver the modelling.
Advanced Modelling	Typically delivered externally. Consultants provide scenario testing and technical feasibility analysis.
Procurement	Councils procure external support when internal teams lack specialist knowledge and resources.

Case Study – Newcastle City Council

Newcastle City Council

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This case study was based on an interview conducted with the planning officer at Newcastle council, providing insights into how they identified areas most suitable for heat pumps.

What plan did Newcastle commission?

Newcastle City Council undertook a targeted feasibility study to support the deployment of heat pumps at individual property and small cluster level.

The work focused on identifying which housing types were suitable for air-source heat pumps, how installations could be optimised through solar PV, battery storage and time-of-use tariffs, and how local electricity network constraints at secondary substations could be managed to avoid reinforcement costs.

Why was the plan commissioned?

The work was commissioned to develop practical, property level evidence to support heat pump deployment and address delivery barriers, including public perceptions of heat pumps, installation quality and performance concerns, and uncertainty around network capacity. It also supported decisions on whether individual or communal heating systems were most appropriate for different housing types.

What was the outcome from the plan?

The study identified three priority housing archetypes:

- Semidetached homes suitable for air-source heat pumps, taken forward through pilot installations with PV and battery storage
- Narrow three-story townhouses, where standard heat pump installations were not suitable
- Large blocks of flats, where communal heating systems were required

The work produced a clear evidence base to support Energy Accelerator funding bids and informed future retrofit and heat decarbonisation strategies

What impact did the plan cause?

- Enabled pilot installations combining heat pumps, PV and battery storage.
- Improved understanding of local electricity network constraints and the need for monitoring at secondary substation level.
- Shifted planning towards detailed, property-level feasibility, strengthening Newcastle's approach to heat and energy strategy.

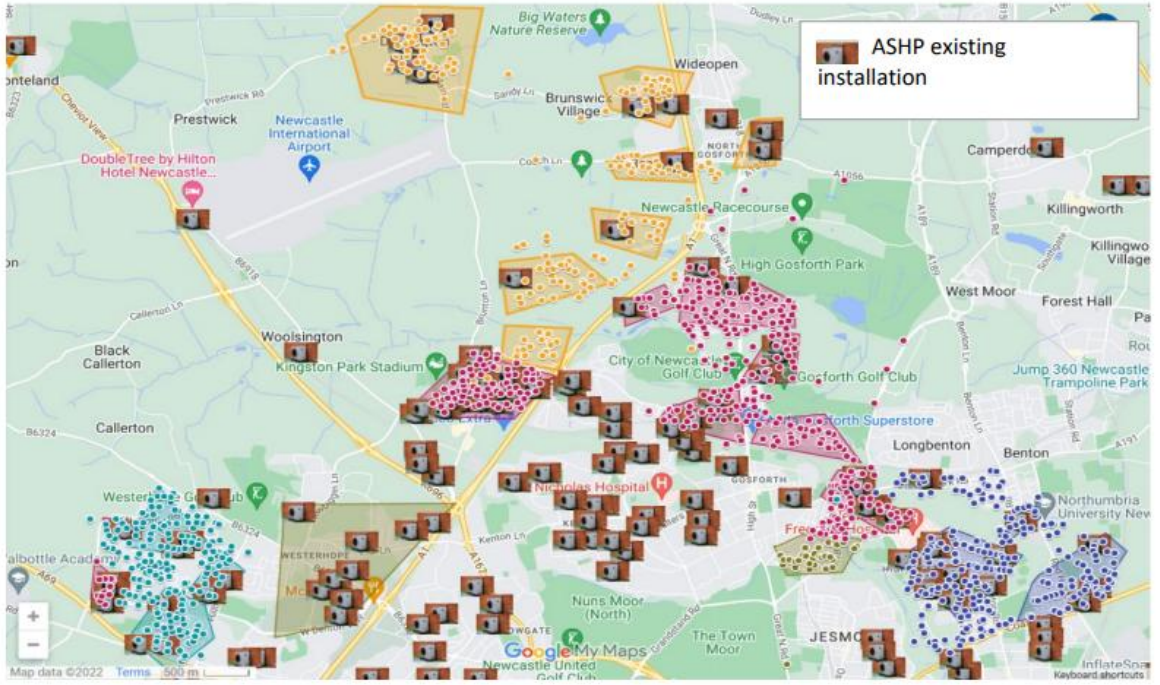
How the plan was procured

Newcastle City Council

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The study was initiated by the council's Net Zero team, using Energy Accelerator funding and legacy LEP funding. Internal GIS capability was used to carry out spatial analysis and housing archetype profiling. External consultants were also engaged, particularly for advanced modelling such as time series demand analysis and power flow assessment.

Skill	Internal	External
Project Management	Net Zero team coordinated delivery and managed funding	Consultants structured and delivered technical workstreams
Stakeholder Engagement	Council engaged housing teams and worked with Northern Powergrid	Consultants supported evidence gathering and technical validation
Technical Knowledge	Energy officers assessed heat pump feasibility and integration with PV and storage	Engineering consultants advised on optimisation and tariff modelling
GIS Analysis	Council used GIS to map housing archetypes and spatial constraints	-
Advanced Modelling	-	Consultants delivered time-series demand modelling and power flow analysis
Procurement team	Council managed procurement and contracts	-



Extract showing priority target zones

Case Study – Peterborough City Council

This case study was based on an interview conducted with the planning officer at Peterborough City Council, providing insights into how they identified areas most suitable for heat networks.

What plan did Peterborough commission?

Peterborough City Council were successful in receiving funding to develop a Net Zero Living Demonstrator project under Innovate UK funding. This was a delivery focused initiative aimed at accelerating net zero implementation in Peterborough, by creating digital tools and a pipeline of investable projects. It built on the Local Area Energy Plan but moved beyond high level outputs to practical delivery.

Why was the plan commissioned?

The plan was commissioned to move beyond static LAEP outputs and create a pipeline of projects ready for funding and delivery. It aimed to provide robust evidence for funding bids such as the Green Heat Network Fund, support prioritisation of low regret projects, and improve confidence for phased implementation. The council also sought to align local planning with national net zero policy while tailoring solutions to local conditions.

What was the outcome from the plan?

- A public, interactive spatial tool that integrates modelling outputs with local and open datasets.
- A library of quick win projects that helped develop clear, investable business cases.
- A governance arrangement with universities and network operators to guide post LAEP delivery

What impact did the plan cause?

- More evidence-led decision-making, reducing reliance on local opinion and providing a consistent basis for choices on technologies such as heat networks and heat pumps.
- Faster progress on near term delivery, with clear identification of low-regret actions that could be taken forward within the next five years.
- Stronger funding and investment readiness, with clearer project pipelines and more robust evidence to support bids and engagement with funders.

How the plan was procured

The council secured Innovate UK funding for the Net Zero Living programme rather than using a traditional tender process. This collaborative approach embedded Energy Systems Catapult, Cambridgeshire County Council, Nordic Energy and Aidan Seven directly into delivery.

Skill	Internal	External
Project Management	Council lead aligning priorities with Net Zero Living	ESC delivery manager overseeing engagement and reporting
	Council officers coordinating local partners	ESC engaged with investors and developers to understand priorities
Stakeholder Engagement	-	-
Technical Knowledge	-	Nordic Energy developing zoning maps and project tools
GIS Analysis	-	ESC engaging investors, developers, and construction
Advanced Modelling	-	Aidan Seven building emissions tracking and portfolio management platform
Procurement team	Council procurement officer ensuring Innovate UK compliance	-

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3. Resource Numbers



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Resourcing numbers

This sections summarises numbers of hours and role titles from the Strategic Outline Business Cases that are publicly available from local authorities commissioning different types of local decarbonisation plans.

Officer time by role for a LAEP for a single local authority

Role	Typical hours	% of total
Project sponsor (Director / Head of Service)	40–60	5%
Programme manager/climate lead	350–500	35–40%
Energy/climate analyst	150–250	15–20%
Planning policy officer	80–120	8–10%
Housing/retrofit specialist	60–120	6–8%
Transport officer	40–80	4–6%
GIS/data analyst	60–120	6–8%
Stakeholder engagement/communications	80–150	8–12%
Procurement/finance	30–60	3–4%
Legal/governance	15–30	1–2%

905- 1480 hours which is equivalent 0.5-0.8 FTE for one year

Resourcing numbers - examples

This sections summarises numbers of hours and role titles from the Strategic Outline Business Cases that are publicly available from local authorities commissioning different types of local decarbonisation plans.

Rutland County Council – LAEP

Typical council contribution stated in programme planning:

Activity	Hours
Project management	~200 hrs
Data provision	~80 hrs
Stakeholder engagement	~120 hrs
Governance/approvals	~40 hrs
	~440 hours

Lancaster District Council – LAEP Report

Role	Hours
Climate officer/PM	~300
Planning policy support	~120
Communications & engagement	~80
Governance/cabinet	~40
	~540 hours

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4. Analysis and key recommendations



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Findings and Recommendations from the case studies

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Our local authority engagement and research have shown that each plan type requires a clear set of skills to be delivered effectively. They also highlight where councils often have skill gaps, which means some skills need to be procured externally, while others may be available in house depending on the council's size, structure, and existing capability.

This section brings together what teams typically need to deliver a plan well, along with advice and feedback from the case studies on how the process could be improved in future.

Local decarbonisation plans (e.g. LAEPs, LHEES, sector strategies) are most successful where councils invest in internal capacity alongside any commissioned technical work.

Case studies consistently show that the quality of modelling is not the main determinant of success, internal capability to interpret, maintain, and implement the plan is.

1. Secure and develop internal capacity

Before commissioning modelling or digital tools, councils should ensure they have in-house capability available across:

i) Project Management

- Coordinating internal teams and suppliers
- Managing timelines and milestones
- Translating outputs into delivery actions

ii) Stakeholder Engagement

- Aligning planning, housing, transport, finance, DNOs and local partners
- Validating assumptions and building organisational buy-in to support implementation

iii) Energy Literacy

- Understanding modelling assumptions and system constraints
- Challenging consultant outputs
- Interpreting energy system pathways for delivery

iv) GIS & Spatial Interpretation

- Reviewing and validating mapped outputs
- Using spatial insights in decision-making
- Avoiding reliance on static, hard-to-use maps

Without this internal foundation, even high-quality commissioned work risks not achieving value anticipated.

Recommendations con…

2. Plan for ongoing use and implementation, not just plan production

A consistent lesson across case studies: static plans become outdated quickly and are difficult to implement.

Councils should resource:

- Ongoing data updates
- Scenario refreshes
- Integration into internal workflows
- Digital tool maintenance (where applicable)

Digital LAEPs reduce obsolescence, but only if councils have internal capacity to maintain them. Without dedicated officer time, digital workspaces also become static.

Key question: *Who owns and updates this plan in two years' time?*

3. Be clear on procurement specification and outcomes

Due to the varied modelling methodologies and assumptions. Councils should understand how to best procure what they need

- Clearly specify required outputs (modelling, mapping, datasets, usability)
- Specify requirements for data ownership and update capability
- Consider controlled access for external partners (e.g. universities)
- Strong procurement ensures consistency, usability, and long-term value.
- Consider case studies and sharing lessons from other councils to inform approach

Key recommendations con…

Ready for RESP

4. Do not underestimate internal capacity needs

Case studies show councils often underestimate the internal resource required to coordinate and implement plans.
Common risks include:

- Reliance on a single officer
- Insufficient cross-departmental involvement
- Limited analytical or GIS literacy
- Effective delivery requires:
- Dedicated officer time across departments
- Senior management sponsorship
- Clear corporate ownership

Leadership support is essential to embed plans into mainstream decision-making.

5. Participation in national/regional plans still requires resource

Even where modelling is delivered externally (e.g. RESP, DFES,) Councils must still resource:

- Internal coordination
- Stakeholder engagement
- Structured data collection and inputs
- Technical interpretation of outputs

Councils cannot be passive recipients; effective engagement requires internal capacity.

6. Common skill gaps identified across councils

Most frequently observed gaps:

- GIS capability
- Analytical literacy
- Digital tool maintenance capacity
- Cross-team coordination
- Senior buy in
- Not relying on single person to manage and deliver plan.

Addressing these gaps significantly improves plan impact.

Key questions to consider before commissioning and deciding on an approach:

- Are we clear on what outcomes we want from the plan?
- Do we have internal staff who can interpret and challenge modelling outputs?
- Who will maintain and update this plan?
- Do we have GIS capacity to use spatial outputs?
- Is senior leadership fully supportive?
- Do we have structured datasets ready?
- Have we allocated cross-departmental time?
- Are we procuring only what we need?
- Could we use this activity to upskill staff and continue operations in house?

5. What does this mean for RESP?



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Support for Local Authorities through RESP

Ready for RESP

NESO have stated that **councils do not need to commission a local decarbonisation plan to provide inputs and engage with RESP**, however council resources will be required to participate and engage in the process.

NESO are currently developing their 'Local Actor Support' to help support councils and other stakeholders. This support aims to: https://www.neso.energy/document/372156/download

1. **Enable engagement with RESP:** Equip local actors with the knowledge and coordination mechanisms needed to contribute effectively to RESP. Support will be proportionate to each actor's needs and relevance, with a focus on uplifting those that currently have limited resources but significant impact to ensure credible bottom-up inputs for the RESPs.

2. **Facilitate collaboration:** Enable stronger collaboration among local actors to drive cohesive, efficient energy strategies and leverage shared learning across nations, regions and GB-wide.

3. **Enhance technical and data capabilities:** Ensure local actors have access to standardised, reliable and up-to-date data, along with the necessary analytical and coordination tools to enable effective and improved local energy planning without duplicating existing resources.

4. **Strengthen local planning capabilities:** Provide guidance and frameworks to enhance local actors' energy planning and implementation efforts.

5. **Ensure long-term sustainability:** Create a support structure that is adaptable, and fosters continued participation and responsiveness to the evolving energy landscape at both local and regional levels.

RESP Local Actor Support from NESO

Ready for RESP

Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3
• **Broad support that could be relevant** to many local actors • Focused on **initial RESP development** • Already in delivery, or for delivery early next year.	• **More detailed and targeted** against RESP delivery • **To address more nuanced needs, and needs emerging** from tRESP and/or this consultation.	• To support local actors in **using the outputs** of RESP • Support established towards the end of delivery of the first RESPs • Will reflect RESP development taking place in the meantime

Councils will require dedicated officer time to coordinate internal teams, manage engagement with NESO, and supply structured local datasets. The level of resource required will vary depending on council size and complexity and role they want to have.

Currently being developed

- Strategic energy planning literacy
  NESO will build strategic energy planning literacy across nations and regions through written briefings and online sessions covering NESO, Strategic Energy Planning, and the whole energy system. Materials will target key local actors and be published online for wider access.
- Signposting to external resources
  NESO will develop an accessible online library of external resources to support energy planning, with RESP teams providing tailored guidance where needed. This resource will expand over time.
- Supporting input into RESP
  NESO will provide targeted guidance and best practice support to improve the quality of RESP inputs, including data collection, cleansing, and standardisation. This will include toolkits, training, and 1:1 regional support where appropriate.

Will be available after RESP methodology published (Summer 2026)

- Technical advice on aspects of RESP
  NESO will provide technical guidance to local actors involved in governance forums, particularly on modelling and energy forecasting. Toolkits will be tailored to different stakeholder and geographic needs, including support for regions with specific technologies such as hydrogen production.
- Data portal support
  NESO will offer guidance on using the data portal and share success stories and lessons learned to promote best practice.
- Integration between RESP and local energy plans
  NESO will provide guidance on aligning local and regional energy plans with RESP, including spatial planning activities. However, these activities will remain the responsibility of local actors.

Will be available towards the end of the RESP development (2027)

- Tools and methodologies on use of RESP outputs
  NESO will provide guidance on how RESP outputs can inform planning and investment decisions, including high energy demand areas, storage and generation, and network upgrades and connections. Online sessions will be offered within nations and regions where needed.
- Sharing best practice
  Building on the data portal, NESO and stakeholders will share best practice examples, including strategic investment projects, community benefit approaches, and effective uses of RESP tools and outputs.

Department for Energy Security & Net Zero

Greater South East Net Zero Hub

MIDLANDS NET ZERO HUB

north east & yorkshire NET ZERO HUB

north west net zero hub

South West NET ZERO HUB

6. Further resources and references



Programme delivered by CATAPULT Energy Systems

Other materials as part of Ready for RESP

Ready for RESP

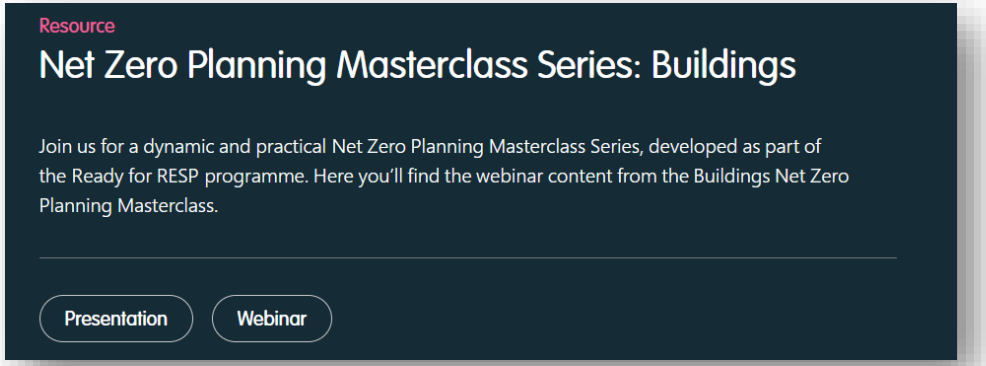
[Guide 1: Understanding the transitional RESP]



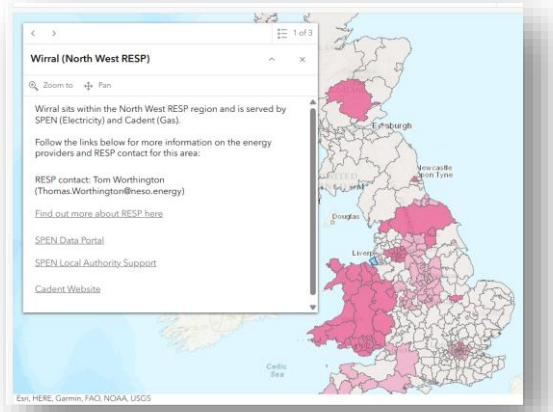
Guide 2: Local Decarbonisation Approaches



[Net Zero Planning webinars]: Topic deep dives to better understand the data and modelling approaches used in Local Area Energy Planning



[Interactive map to identify your RESP region, contacts, DNO and support available]



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Ready for RESP

For more from the Ready for RESP programme visit the website by clicking the link or scanning the QR code below

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