

# Net Zero Policy Programme – Terms of Reference for Discussion Papers

This terms of reference document sets out the requirements for short discussion papers as part of a series that will be produced for the British Academy’s developing policy programme on net zero. It provides details of the programme and its aims, along with guidelines on the deliverables, how to respond and a timeline.

## Net Zero Policy Programme and its aims

The transition to net zero is one of the most urgent and critical challenges facing society. In 2021, the UK Government, through the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, released its [Net Zero Strategy](#), which laid out how the country would meet its legally binding carbon emissions target by 2050. Despite the government’s actions on this issue, the UK’s Climate Change Committee (CCC), earlier this year, stated that [the current plan and suite of policies will not deliver net zero](#). Additionally, the UK High Court recently ruled that the government must set out precisely how its plans will deliver on the country’s emission targets, and the court has asked the government to present a detailed outline of its policies to Parliament in 2023. A further independent, rapid review of net zero delivery, led by former Energy Minister Rt Hon Chris Skidmore MP was initiated by the Government at the end of 2022, with a focus on ensuring the UK’s fight against climate change maximises economic growth, while increasing energy security and affordability for consumers and businesses.

Meanwhile, many local authorities and other institutions across the country are developing their own net zero strategies which respond to the national agenda and the immediate needs of their communities.

In this context, the British Academy is building up its Net Zero Policy Programme to use the SHAPE disciplines<sup>1</sup> to address the question: **how well do net zero policies address the challenges facing the economy and society in the UK?** In doing so we aim to contribute to policy outcomes that deliver on commitments to net zero in the UK.

## Framing

Our initial scoping work in this programme has provided **a basis for framing this aim**. It has considered how collaboration across sectors (public, third sector, business, schools and local communities) can foster shared commitments to goals, values and programmes to deliver net zero as part of a sustainable future. The research projects and our own policy work have used a wide range of methods and explored diverse people and places. The

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<sup>1</sup> SHAPE meaning Social Science, Humanities and the Arts for People, Economy and Environment

emerging insights emphasise three areas for further consideration for policy development:

- **How should policy making effectively balance the range of impacts resulting from net zero policies on various communities of interest over different timescales?**
- **How can policy interventions take account of the diverse contextual factors within places which motivate people and organisations to support or oppose net zero objectives?**
- **How do different types of policy support enable people and institutions at different levels of society and across different dimensions of scale accelerate the transition to net zero?**

Alongside these, the initial research indicated a range of **cross-cutting elements**: the importance of place (see below); the relationships between people, communities, institutions, and different modes of governance particularly at the local scale; the coordination of connections between different levels of governance; the methods of engagement and communication between various groups of people and policymakers; the questions of social inclusion and widening values; the diverse economic and financial considerations; and the types of skills and knowledge needed.

Further details, including the research projects' policy summaries and policy roundtable summaries [can be found on this web page](#).

In addition to this, the British Academy has complementary policy programmes on sustainability. These will also be relevant for consideration within the discussion papers. In particular, the *Where We Live Next* programme looks at how place-sensitive policymaking can support environmental sustainability and the [Just Transitions](#) programme brings together evidence of policy interventions and actions on sustainability in different sectors and regions outside the UK. Both provide important context and evidence that complements the work on net zero policymaking in the UK.

## **Discussion papers:**

### Objectives

Having established a set of areas of interest and framing for the programme (as above), we are seeking contributions that will add depth, context and practical elements to the evidence base. The objectives of the discussion papers are, therefore, to:

- Provide practical evidence from SHAPE disciplines around the framing proposed (the three areas for further consideration, and the cross-cutting elements as set out above).
- Reflect on this framing in the context of the relationships between institutions at different levels of governance, in particular at local authority level and in business.
- Prompt engagement and debate among policy audiences, by posing challenging questions highlighting gaps and opportunities for policy where the evidence points to these (noting that these are not opinion-pieces but should include useful conclusions building on the evidence referred to).

Further detail supporting the framing for the programme and the findings of the research projects can be found on the British Academy website:

Net Zero Roundtable summaries: [Considering the role of people and institutions in net zero policy in the UK](#)

[Shared Understandings of a Sustainable Future research project policy summaries.](#)

### Audience

The target for this programme overall is policy and policymakers; as such, the discussion papers should be policy-relevant, focused on practice and presented in a form that is accessible for policymakers. We note that policy can be defined as the system of ideas and processes which govern behaviour and practice to achieve defined goals, within an organisation or community, in other words, including business and other institutions.

In terms of place, while climate change is a global issue, this programme targets UK policy and policymakers. Experience, evidence and knowledge from other parts of the world can be drawn on, where relevant to UK policy.

### Deliverable

Reflecting the objectives listed above, the expected deliverable is **a short, robust, evidence-based, well-referenced and balanced discussion paper that responds to the framing and objectives, and addresses the audience identified above.** They should also be evidence-based and meet usual academic standards. All papers will be subject to peer review which will be facilitated by the Academy.

For clarity, the expectation is that this work will be based on existing knowledge, research, and analysis on these topics rather than involving new field / research. Authors can draw on their existing published material as well as a wider evidence base, but the paper should be an original work that has not been published elsewhere already.

As highlighted above, these are not opinion-pieces, but **should include useful conclusions and where appropriate, proposals, areas for further discussion, or gaps and opportunities for consideration.**

Following the peer review, the paper will be published in the author's name, by the British Academy.

### Author profile

The author or authors of the paper (jointly authored papers will be accepted) must have demonstrable expertise linked to academic or policy knowledge that enables them to contribute authoritatively to the public debate on this issue.

The nature of this programme means that a range of perspectives and backgrounds are welcomed and expected. The framing of the programme is around the SHAPE disciplines and as such the papers should bring out evidence from these disciplines. However, it is important to highlight that relevant non-academic expertise is welcome.

## **Responding to this call**

**To respond, please submit a proposal (comprising a brief CV, a short outline or abstract that describes the paper you would like to contribute to this series and the date you will submit the finished paper).** These should be sent to Chizitera Pennington by email ([c.pennington@thebritishacademy.ac.uk](mailto:c.pennington@thebritishacademy.ac.uk)).

Please ensure your outline / abstract describes how your paper will respond to the objectives and the framing set out in these Terms of Reference.

Your proposal will be evaluated by the programme's Working Group. If it meets the requirements, we will request a short follow-up call. Assessments of expressions of interest will be based on the following criteria:

- relevance of the paper to the framing and objectives set out in these Terms of Reference;
- quality of the proposed approach and robustness of the ideas presented;
- relevance to the policy and research landscape; and,
- the alignment of the delivery date with our timetable below.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this or ask questions in advance of submitting your proposal, please contact Chizitera Pennington on the details above.

## **Fees**

This is a paid commission with fixed terms. The fee paid for each paper will be £4,000. Payment will be made in two tranches, with 50% upon signature of the contract and 50% on completion.

## **Timeline**

**Proposals will be accepted on a rolling basis. However, we will stop accepting proposals once the budget for this series has been allocated to submissions.**

## **Questions**

If you have questions please contact Chizitera Pennington ([c.pennington@thebritishacademy.ac.uk](mailto:c.pennington@thebritishacademy.ac.uk)). We are happy to discuss the framing and offer further guidance if required.