

Implementing effective and just net zero policies

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“Local authorities and local communities have emerged as an important, dynamic driving force of climate change action”. (Place-based Climate Action Network report 2021¹)

The UK government considers local authorities to have power to influence up to 82% of emissions in their local area, yet the Climate Change Committee identified “no overall plan on how local authorities fit into delivering Net Zero” (CCC 2020:6). The Green Alliance suggests English local authorities can fund only 25-35% of their net zero pledges and the Local Government Association argues over 95% of local authorities require more financial resources to deliver their climate change strategies. It is clear that for local authorities to deliver on their pledges and enable communities and businesses to contribute meaningfully to the delivery of net zero, a supportive policy and associated funding framework is required.

Implementing effective and just net zero policies (IMPERFECT) seeks to understand the role that national net zero policymaking plays in the practice of net zero delivery at a local level and how this links with national targets and strategies.

Building on existing academic work we are undertaking a synthesis of government, think tank and civil society reports on local and subnational net zero delivery; evaluating of local authority and regional authority climate action plans across two Combined Authority areas in England; and exploring possible frameworks, mainly focusing on the national scale, to capture how national strategy is translated into local action. To deepen our insights into these processes and the conditions under which local climate emergencies are put into practice, we are also conducting a series of interviews with Combined and Principal Authority net zero managers and community climate action groups. Through these activities we aim to develop a framework that facilitates understanding of and navigation through a fragmented policy landscape, between UK climate law and resulting strategy on net zero, and the myriad of subnational, regional and local policies which determine the supportive environment for local net zero delivery.

This framework will provide the basis for creative workshops in Spring 2024 which bring together local policymakers, activists, artists, and academics in discursive spaces to co-create innovative and practical ways of navigating the policy and support landscape conducive to local implementation of net zero. The resultant framework and creative outputs will, we hope, help unpack complex webs and structures of support within a fragmented policy landscape and support the exploration and forging of creative pathways towards net zero futures.

¹ PCAN report (2021) p 6