

REFLECTIONS

OUR TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS PROGRAMME
OF WORK AND WHAT WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE NEXT

REFLECTIONS



Our conversations during this programme have pointed conclusively to one clear outcome: to deliver a successful net zero transition across the UK, we must explore place-based solutions tailored to local requirements. Net zero by 2050 is a national target, providing a framework for everyone to work towards, but solutions will differ by region. Therefore, they need to be driven by local plans based on local evidence, with decarbonisation at the core of placemaking, regeneration, and housing activities.

The value of Local Area Energy Plans has been highlighted throughout our discussions. The creation of these robust, stakeholder-driven, and evidence-led databases is already supporting excellent work across the country. We believe more cities and regions should adopt this planned approach to build healthy, prosperous communities. The data and evidence gathered will be crucial for leading local-level engagement. One area worth exploring is how these plans can be linked with local planning regulations and frameworks to further guide decision-making based on solid evidence.

For any holistic approach to combine placemaking, regeneration, housing, and the net zero challenge, net zero must become part of the business-as-usual activities of a city or region rather than being treated as a separate, standalone project. It should be the driving force and catalyst for delivering these complementary agendas while also making the best use of available funding through combined activity.

This shift requires collective thinking and a change in mindset from current approaches. The issues we face at the local level are shared and collective, and the solutions designed to address them should be as well.

The time for talking is over—we must now focus on action. Climate change is here, and we are in a period of adaptation and resilience. This affects how we develop our cities going forward. Although we have until 2050 to reach net zero, many regions have set earlier targets, and achieving them is crucial for maintaining community engagement. We must learn from each other's actions, as there is no established blueprint. Shared experiences and lessons—both successes and failures—will be vital.

A successful net zero transition can only be achieved when it is accepted by the communities it impacts. Early engagement, using language that resonates with and relates to people's lives, is the model we need. This transition represents change on a massive scale, and people need to understand why it is happening, what the benefits are, and how it will affect them. These benefits are diverse and should be communicated clearly to different stakeholder groups with tailored emphasis. A simple message of reducing emissions will not resonate with most people; it must be contextualised in terms of improving their lives—economically, in health outcomes, or through social equity. The message will vary, but it should always be aspirational, showing that this change is about enhancing lives, not something that merely happens to people.

Put simply, we need action. We need to move forward with urgency, learn from our efforts, and adapt accordingly. Most importantly, we need solutions at scale. Who will deliver this ambitious agenda? The answer is all of us, working together in collaboration and partnership. Through this programme, we have seen a lot of positive action and ambition to create a carbon-free future, which will in turn boost placemaking, regeneration, and housing in our cities and regions. Facing this as a collective challenge will help drive us towards the right solutions.✖