



Department for  
Energy Security  
& Net Zero

# The APSE Energy Awards 2026

In partnership with the Department for Energy Security  
and Net Zero



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Birmingham Conference and Events Centre

# APSE Energy Awards 2026

*Sponsored by DESNZ*

We would like to say a huge thank you to all of the councils who submitted an entry for this year's awards. It is amazing to see the dedication and creativity shown by local authorities in the pursuit of net zero.

We appreciate all of your hard work and congratulations to all of the APSE Energy Award Finalists!

The 2026 awards will celebrate excellence and innovation across six categories, highlighting the vital role local authorities play in responding to the complex challenges of the energy transition, climate change and long-term sustainability. These awards showcase outstanding leadership, collaboration and practical delivery, recognising councils that are driving meaningful change within their operations and communities. The finalists below were judged the best from a total of 66 submissions across all categories. Winners will be announced at the Big APSE Energy Summit 2026, held in partnership with the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, bringing together key stakeholders from across the public sector to share learning, inspire progress and recognise achievement.

Taking place as part of the APSE Big Energy Summit 2026, the awards provide a national platform to showcase best practice, share learning and highlight the vital role councils play in driving forward the energy and climate agenda.

## Category finalists

### Supporting Innovation

#### Coventry City Council

Since 2023, Coventry City Council has partnered with E.ON in a first of its kind strategic energy partnership in the UK, with a collaborative goal of developing projects and innovations to benefit Coventry residents. Two key innovation projects delivered are the Battery Affordability Pilot, an industry-first pilot combining domestic battery storage with a Time-of-Use tariff, tackling the symptoms and root cause of energy unaffordability; and the Kestrix Drone Pilot, deploying drones equipped with thermal imaging cameras to rapidly assess heat loss.

#### Hackney Council

Hackney Council's 1 MW residential solar microgrid pilot installs 4,000 solar panels across 27 blocks on three estates, supplying discounted renewable electricity directly to over 700 households via a private wire network. Delivered with

Emergent Energy under Hackney Light and Power's brand, the council owned scheme is funded through a mix of council investment and community finance. It overcomes the landlord-tenant split and promises replicable, self-financing clean energy delivery and long term community benefits.

#### Highland Council

The Highland Council's Net Zero, Energy Investment & Innovation Portfolio delivers a pioneering, place-based model for public sector decarbonisation and energy investment. Integrating council and community-led projects, the programme combines large-scale renewable generation, energy efficiency, and grid innovation to drive economic growth and resilience. Anchored by the emerging Clean Highland Fund, it unites public, private, and community investors in delivering long-term, locally retained value—making Highland a national exemplar for clean energy innovation.

#### Powys County Council

'Warm Powys' ('Powys Gynnes' in Welsh) is a sector-leading project that enhances the UK Government's ECO4-Flex programme by addressing its limitations and offering additional applicant support. Utilising strong, trusted partnerships and innovative delivery via Warm Wales, it provides a bespoke delivery model, the results of which are unprecedented. 'Warm Powys' offers a clear, replicable framework for local authorities to follow, ensuring ECO4-Flex could be delivered to a consistently high standard across the country via simple replication of our model.

#### Torfaen County Borough Council

Producing and following an innovative sustainable school meals roadmap ensured school caterers stayed on track in addressing the key issues in climate change and decarbonisation. With resultant reductions in carbon emissions validated by academics, the roadmap has raised the profile of the school meals service and is the first of its kind in school meals. Far from finished yet, caterers remain committed to ensuring that they meet the needs of today's pupils without damaging opportunities in the future.

## Accessing and Managing Finance

#### Highland Council

Grounded in the Highland Council's Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES), the Energy Efficient Homes Programme demonstrates how a rural authority can transform limited public budgets into a £24 million decarbonisation programme. By aligning Housing Revenue Account capital with ECO4, EES:ABS, and SSE Renewables funding, the Council delivered large-scale retrofit across social and private homes, cutting carbon, fuel poverty and long-term costs. The programme pioneers blended finance and place-based investment, creating a financial blueprint for net-zero housing in remote communities.



## **Newcastle City Council**

Newcastle City Council delivered a £2.9 million decarbonisation of Elswick Pool using a creative blend of public, private, and community funding. The project showcases innovation in managing complex finance, strategic carbon accounting, and strong community engagement. It demonstrates how councils can move beyond single-source grants to deliver sustainable, low-carbon infrastructure that supports community wellbeing and regeneration.

## **Suffolk County Council**

Suffolk's Private Housing Retrofit initiatives support homeowners to improve energy efficiency through free retrofit assessments and interest free finance. Delivered with Reed in Partnership and Lendology, the schemes are designed to reduce carbon emissions, lower energy bills, and build resilient communities. To date, the initiatives have received approximately 1,850 enquiries, completed 390 assessments and, to date, supported 217 homeowners with £3m in interest-free finance - demonstrating strong public engagement and real impact in the journey towards net zero housing.

## **Oxfordshire County Council**

Oxfordshire County Council's Schools Energy Efficiency Loan Scheme provides interest-free loans and independent technical advice to maintained schools, enabling investment in energy saving measures such as LED lighting, solar PV and battery storage. With a total fund of £1.8 million, the scheme fills critical gap left by the end of Salix Recycling fund and limited PSDS funding, delivering measurable carbon and cost savings for schools. This unique, innovative finance model is driving school decarbonisation across Oxfordshire, supports local supply chains, provides excellent value compared to design-and-build contracts and setting a leading example for local authority-led green financing initiatives.

## **Westminster City Council**

The Westminster Climate Fund demonstrates how financial governance can drive people and place centred climate ambition. By transforming a constrained, underspent carbon offset pot into a strategic, citywide physical and social infrastructure investment fund, Westminster has created a model for inclusive, outcome-driven climate finance. The Fund now delivers measurable carbon savings, grassroots community action, and environmental and social co-benefits, setting a precedent for how councils across the UK can reimagine their role as stewards of public and developer-based climate finance.

## **West of England Combined Authority**

The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority is turning Net Zero commitments into action through its Regional Low Carbon Delivery (RLCD) Programme. This £14 million public investment has delivered £39 million spend

to date in the low carbon economy.

It is driving down regional carbon emissions and delivering co-benefits by:

- increasing local renewable energy generation;
- supporting small & medium sized enterprises (SME) to decarbonise; and
- supporting residents to retrofit their homes.

## **Working in Collaboration**

### **Bath & North East Somerset Council**

The Green Heritage Homes project is breaking down barriers to low carbon retrofit of listed buildings. A unique partnership bringing together Local Authority conservation officers and community-led retrofit and heritage expertise, the Green Heritage Homes project provides an innovative advice service to homeowners, and bespoke training to planning professionals. Having completed a successful 18-month pilot phase ("Phase I") funded by the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), the project has secured funding for an additional three years, via Historic England, Curo, and the West of England Combined Authority.

### **Birmingham City Council**

The Fast Followers project successfully addressed the complex challenge of a fair and effective net-zero transition for businesses in East Birmingham, a region marked by significant deprivation and a fragmented economic landscape.

The project's innovative approach was threefold: it adopted a place-based strategy to provide hyper-local, targeted business support; it fostered cross-council collaboration to connect government, business, academia, to the community; and it developed a bespoke data platform to create a unified evidence base.

### **Hackney Council**

Hackney Light and Power (Hackney Council's internal energy services arm) launched the Hackney Community Energy Fund in 2022 to help schools, faith groups, charities and other publicly used buildings partner with community energy groups to decarbonise. The fund delivers grants for solar panels, heat pumps, lighting upgrades, insulation and feasibility studies to get projects moving. It has already invested nearly £1 million and once the upcoming round of awards is made in early 2026, it will have distributed £1.5 million to local projects. This makes the largest local-authority-led community-energy programme in the UK, supporting more than forty collaborative projects over the past 3 years and creating warmer, more efficient buildings while growing the local community energy sector.

## Highland Council

The Highland Council's Energy Efficient Homes Programme delivers community-scale retrofit using the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) methodology. By applying a place-based approach, the Council coordinates energy efficiency works across social and private housing within single projects, tackling fuel poverty and decarbonising some of the UK's most remote areas. Through collaboration with communities, contractors, utilities, and government partners, the programme delivers equitable, scalable, and data-led decarbonisation—ensuring that every household, regardless of tenure, benefits from the transition to net zero.

## Suffolk County Council

The Suffolk Climate Change Partnership unites local authorities, public bodies, and communities to achieve Net Zero by 2030. Funded primarily by annual LA contributions, it delivers projects on carbon reduction, energy efficiency, and climate resilience. Key initiatives include business and school decarbonisation support, community energy networks, and engagement through events like the Youth Climate Conference. With strong governance, measurable impacts, and innovative collaboration, SCCP demonstrates a replicable model for tackling climate change while promoting equity and sustainability across Suffolk.

## YES Energy Solutions

The North Yorkshire Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 (HUG2) was a transformative two-year programme (April 2023–April 2025) that brought together all seven districts through a three-way delivery partnership between YES Energy Solutions, North Yorkshire Council and Align Property Partners.

Targeting low-income, off-gas households, the scheme provided vital energy efficiency upgrades to combat fuel poverty, lower carbon emissions and improve living conditions. By reaching some of the county's most vulnerable residents, HUG2 established a new standard for cross-district retrofit delivery.

## Clean Energy - Heat

### South Kesteven District Council

Grantham Meres Leisure Centre is South Kesteven's largest leisure facility, with nearly half a million users annually. Through a blend of council and grant funding, £4.68m is currently being invested into the centre to reduce energy consumption and eliminate fossil fuel heating. The bespoke design of the new air source heat pump packaged plant room – known as the Net Zero Pod – will slash carbon emissions, making the centre net zero carbon ready while reducing annual operating costs by over £200k

### Westmorland and Furness Council

The Council aims to achieve net zero Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2037 through its award-winning Carbon Management Strategy 2024–2029. A comprehensive, fabric-

first and renewable-enabled decarbonisation programme is being delivered across the entire estate, supported by data-driven planning. By integrating energy management software, condition surveys, and heat decarbonisation plans, the Council prioritises projects delivering maximum carbon and cost savings while supporting schools, communities, and partners, including undertaking heat network feasibility studies across the council area.

## Cinderford Town Council

Cinderford Town Council purchased a cherished local community asset; The Wesley, a Grade II listed Church in an area of deprivation, bringing it back into use and securing its long-term future by delivering a low cost, low carbon heating solution significantly reducing Council costs whilst providing an improved and flexible community space for a broad range of residents and users. The heating solution followed a fabric first approach, including insulation, roof works, Infra-Red Thermal Heating, Solar PV and Battery storage.

## Clean Energy - Power

### Dorset Council

Dorset Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and has since committed to becoming a net zero council by 2035 and a net zero county by 2045. Achieving this ambition requires bold action on clean power generation and Dorset Council is leading the way. Through strategic investment, innovative delivery, and strong collaboration, the council is transforming its estate and empowering communities and businesses to generate renewable energy at scale.

### Exeter City Council

Exeter's new solar farm and battery storage facility is powering the city's electric fleet of vehicles, recycling centre and offices with green energy. The Water Lane Smart Grid and Storage Project includes Battery Storage added to existing Council solar PV sites, and a solar PV array and battery store at Council's Leisure Centre.

The project is the first of its kind in the region and delivers a further step towards the City Council's ambition of becoming a Net Zero Carbon by 2030.

### North Kesteven District Council

We have not only set ambitious targets and ahead-of-the-curve standards for local development, we meet the challenge head-on, leading by example.

We innovate, are creative and adopt a range of approaches to serve our communities as well as the planet.

Across our estate we are implementing measures to reduce reliance on the grid and decarbonise – from housing to leisure facilities. Layering energy efficiency with energy generation we are making great strides towards a cleaner energy future.

## Nottingham City Council

Nottingham City Council's Harvey Hadden Solar PV project demonstrates leadership in clean energy, delivering one of the UK's largest solar-powered leisure centres. Through strategic planning and Salix funding, the Council completed installing a total of 571.5 kWp of solar capacity, reducing carbon emissions and saving circa £56,000 annually. The project tackles fuel poverty, improves energy resilience, and enhances community wellbeing. It also serves as an educational tool, inspiring sustainable practices and showcasing how local authorities can drive impactful, scalable clean power solutions.

## Salford City Council

Over the past five years, Salford City Council has delivered an ambitious Renewable Energy Programme, installing over 4.3MWp of solar energy assets including a solar farm, rooftop panels, and car ports. Funded through grants and council investment, the initiative significantly reduces carbon emissions by over 1,600 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> annually and cuts energy costs by approximately £400,000 per year. This programme demonstrates Salford's leadership in sustainable energy and its commitment to decarbonising the public estate.

## Decarbonising Transport

### Hackney Council

Hackney Council are setting a new benchmark for EV charging infrastructure with its ambitious plan to install 2,500 on-street chargers by 2026. This initiative addresses a critical barrier to EV adoption in dense urban areas: the lack of off-street parking for many residents. By creating a scalable and accessible network, the project promotes an inclusive and equitable shift to electric vehicles.

### Highland Council

The North of Scotland EV Infrastructure Partnership delivers a fair, reliable, and future-proof public charging network across one-third of Scotland's geography. Led by Highland Council with Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray, the £300 million, 20-year collaboration with EasyGo installs 570 new charge points by 2028 while adopting existing infrastructure. Combining £6.86 million public funding and £4.9 million private investment, it ensures equitable tariffs, rural access and community benefit—creating a sustainable model for fleet and public charging that drives Scotland's transition to Net Zero.

### Manchester City Council

Manchester City Council is delivering a bold, inclusive programme to decarbonise transport through active travel and EV infrastructure. Guided by strategic plans and scrutiny-led delivery, the city is continuing to expand public EV charging, piloted innovative residential cycle parking solutions, and invested in walking and cycling

networks. With a strong focus on equity, health, and community engagement, Manchester is creating a cleaner, safer, and more connected city—demonstrating leadership and best practice in local government climate action.

### North Yorkshire Council

Our project supported the VCSE Community Transport Organisations and their vulnerable client groups to make the transition to low carbon transport. It enabled the transport options of local residents that are unable to take other modal shift options by provided a range of EV (MPV/ minibus) and EVCPs (for volunteer driven vehicles) and electric mopeds (for people unable to access public transport for work or training). Collaboration, knowledge share and raising awareness of EVs are co benefits.

### Warrington Borough Council

Warrington's Own Buses (WOB), owned by Warrington Borough Council, took action to address transport-based carbon emissions and poor air quality. With support from the government's ZEBRA scheme, WOB replaced its fleet with 105 electric buses and built an electric depot. The project goes beyond vehicles: through data-led operations, inclusive fares and community engagement it also tackles systemic barriers to sustainable travel. This project provides an example of a whole-system approach to decarbonisation that provides environmental, economic and social value.

### Westmorland and Furness Council

Westmorland and Furness Council is committed to achieving net zero for its scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2037 and addressing transport decarbonisation is a major step on this journey. Our integrated transport programme is built around three interlinked pillars: fleet and transport decarbonisation, active travel promotion, and electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure development. Together, these initiatives create a holistic approach to sustainable mobility, aiming to reduce carbon emissions, tackle air pollution, improve public health, and strengthen community connectivity.

