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# Insights from Innovate UK's Net Zero Living Programme

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# Three Key Programme Themes:



  
UKRI Innovate UK

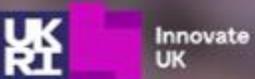
INSIGHTS

## Better Warmer Homes

Learnings from the Net Zero Living programme for scaling place-based retrofit

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## Communities Driving Change

Learnings from the Net Zero Living Programme for empowering communities

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## Investing In Places

Learnings from the Net Zero Living Programme for local net zero planning and attracting investment

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- Local authorities have a role to **evidence the health, economic, and social benefits if they want to unlock** internal support, external investment, and long-term commitment to retrofit.
- **Clear, locally-relevant guidance and engagement** with communities will help accelerate appropriate, high-quality retrofits, including in heritage and environmentally sensitive areas.
- This increasing demand though, can only be met if councils are ready to **convene the right partners and invest in local skills to build confident, capable supply chains.**

## 1. Why?



### Understanding the wider value of retrofit:

Local authorities need to understand the wide range of benefits retrofit can deliver to create the most accurate and compelling business case.

**Cardiff Council's innovative modeling found that everyone £1 spent on retrofit could generate £5 in health, social and long-term economic benefits locally.**

## 2. What?



### Setting and enforcing standards:

Identifying the right retrofit measures, which meet national minimum standards and local rules on conservation areas, is crucial.

**During the programme City of Westminster developed a solution using its local planning powers to streamline the process of retrofitting heritage buildings.**

## 3. Who?



### Scale and quality of local supply chains:

Understanding the skills, capacity and confidence gaps in the local supply chain is essential for planning local market growth to meet retrofit targets.

**Fife Council's skills gap analysis enabled the local authority to develop a detailed delivery plan to meet the estimated fourfold increase in capacity required locally.**

## 4. How?



### Scaling place-based retrofit:

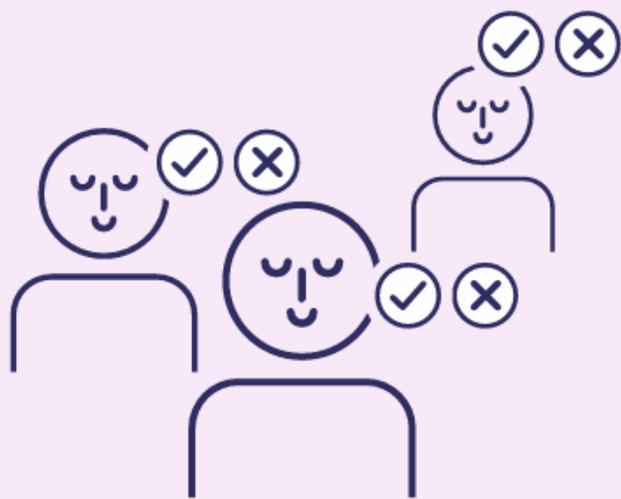
Consumers require accessible and affordable routes to engage in the retrofit market, requiring innovative solutions that address how we can retrofit our homes.

**City of York one-stop-shop service has completed 24 retrofits by December 2025 and will break even by the end of 2026 with a target of 170 retrofits delivered.**



- Projects that start with **lived experience and co-design** tend to see higher uptake, because solutions fit real constraints and needs.
- **Trusted local intermediaries** and peer-to-peer forums can reduce uncertainty and speed decision-making.
- Community energy becomes more scalable when **councils act as enablers by convening partners, supporting at early stages**, and laying out investable pathways.

## Local decision-making



### Bringing people into local decision making

Local authorities brought people directly into local decision making using deliberative and community-led approaches to shape visions, strategies, plans and projects.

**In Warrington, the Council asked a group of 17 young people aged 16-18 to lead the process to develop a vision of "Climate-Resilient Warrington 2040". Through four in-person sessions and 70 discussions with their friends, families and peers they were able to agree 8 priority recommendations for the town's transition.**

## Navigating choice

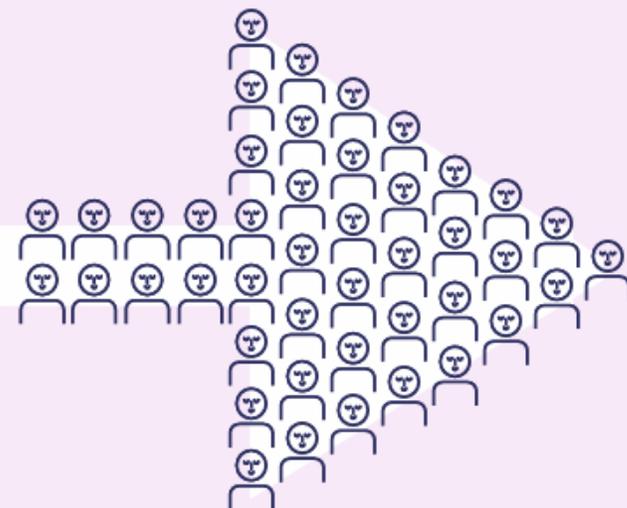


### Helping people navigate complex choices

Local areas worked with residents, businesses and intermediaries to co-design tools, services and information that help people navigate complex choices in areas such as retrofit, heat and energy use.

**Northumberland's Farming in a Changing Climate project engaged more than 360 farmers and 250 stakeholders, using farm visits, conversations, surveys and workshops to understand the best way to support the farming community to deal with the challenges of climate shifts.**

## Community led action



### Spreading the wealth through community led action

Councils and partners created the enabling conditions for community organisations to lead delivery themselves, particularly in areas such as renewable energy, transport and local services.

**The GreenerFuture Leicestershire initiative supported the formation of six new community energy organisations, each rooted in its own locality and supported to develop long-term roles in local energy delivery.**



- Local authorities that are able to **define and clearly communicate their delivery role** will find it easier to streamline their planning, priorities efforts and resources, and move projects more quickly into pipeline stage.
- **Pipeline development should be treated as a distinct discipline.** Local authorities should consider which tools, partnerships, and business cases can help their ideas become investor-ready.
- **Greater fluency in financing mechanisms and language** can help local authorities present their carbon-reducing plans as scalable, de-risked propositions to would-be investors.

## 1. Strengthening local net zero planning



Local authorities are uniquely placed to plan the steps towards a low-carbon, prosperous future across their areas. Through the Net Zero Living Programme, places are finding ways to progress faster through planning processes into pipeline development.

Ahead of undertaking Local Area Energy Planning, Southampton City Council adopted a streamlined approach to data collection and clarified its roles using the 'Enable, Embed, Enact' framework.

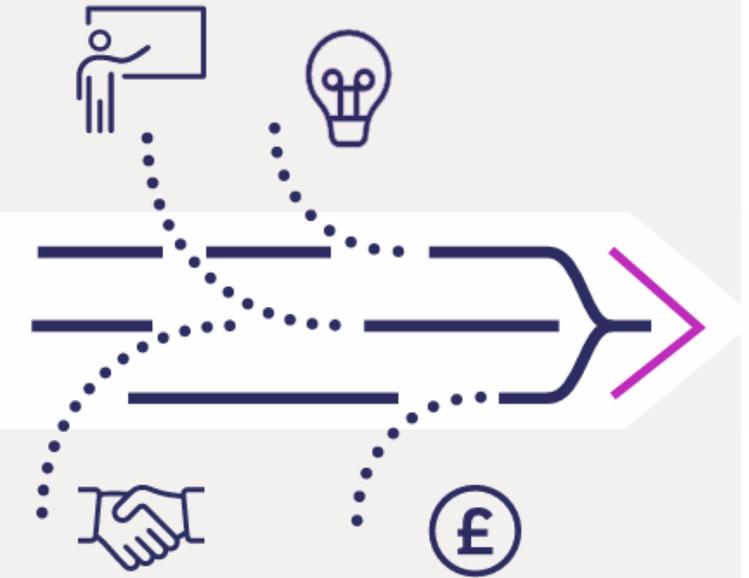
## 2. Building better investment pipelines



Places are taking different paths to build stronger project pipelines, ready for investment. They have involved communities to better meet local needs, developed powerful data tools to inform decision-making, and explored different commercial models to enable working in partnership.

Peterborough City Council is developing a suite of easy-to-use tools to identify and combine low carbon projects to form investable propositions, while Bristol and other West of England local authorities are working with community development organisations as one of the inputs to accelerate and scale clean energy investment.

## 3. Mobilising finance



The Net Zero Living Programme has helped places to adopt innovative financing mechanisms for their projects while technical partners have helped others to better understand the possibilities available and anticipate investor needs.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council worked with Bankers without Boundaries to develop and pitch a renewable energy opportunity to investors. They increased investor interest by combining a proposed wind turbine with rooftop solar and energy storage solutions at an industrial site and tailoring their proposition to investor needs.



Find all the resources on Innovate UK's website

[Innovate UK's Net Zero Living Programme - Innovate UK Business Connect](#)

# Creating Better Places

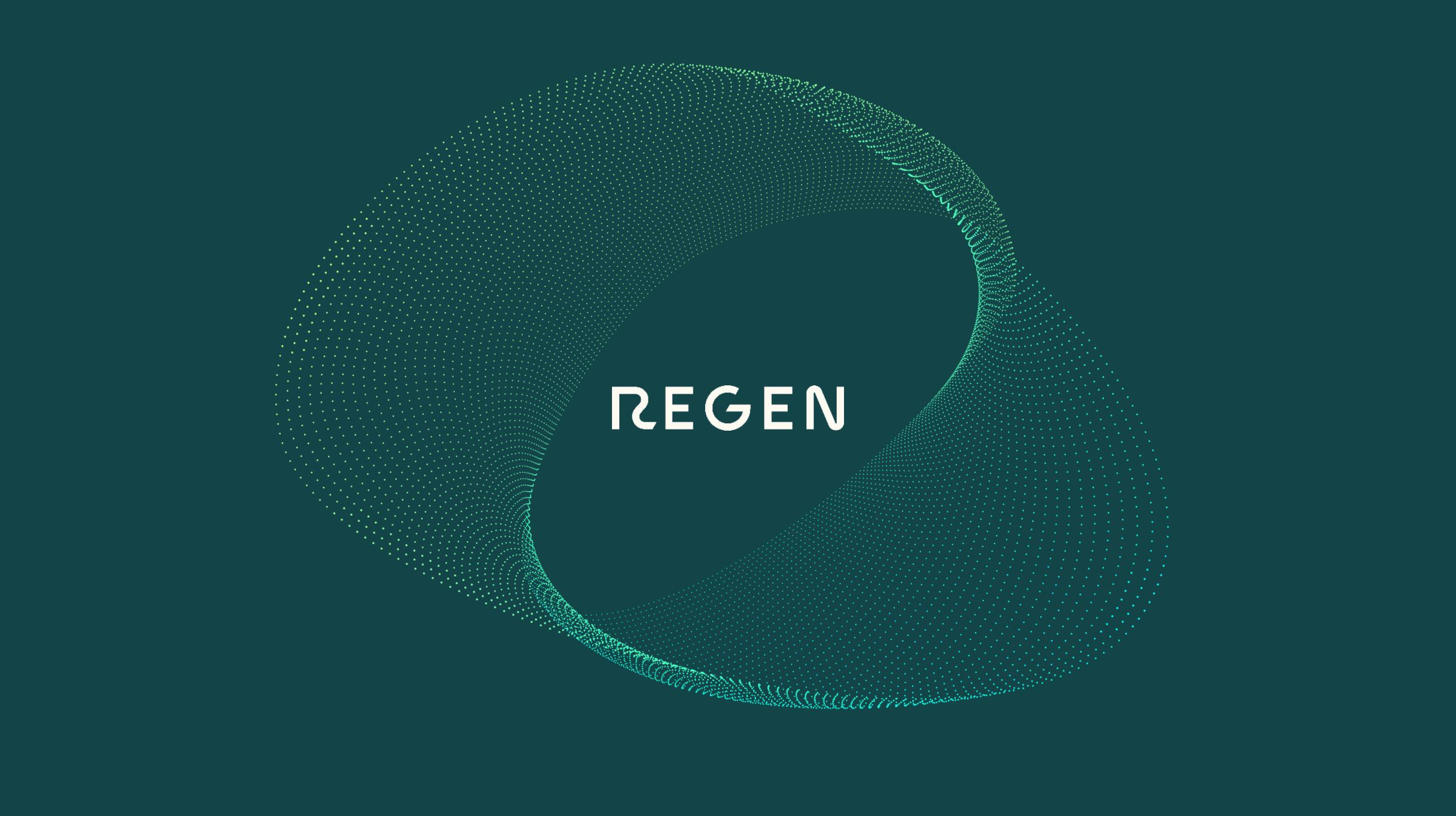
Ten areas where local innovation can improve lives and unlock growth



Delivered by Urban Foresight for Innovate UK's Net Zero Living Programme.

Grounded in insights from the 52 local authorities who participated in Innovate UK's Net Zero Living Programme





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