

Taking account of Net Zero in your Town Investment Plan



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Purpose of this document

- To provide towns with an overview of what 'net zero' means in the context of their Town Investment Plans.
- To offer practical guidance on how to incorporate decarbonisation into towns' investment propositions and TIP as a whole.

“The government has committed to a legally binding target to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050; clean growth represents a huge opportunity for the UK economy, and is a core principle of the Towns Fund.”



Contents

01	Background and context	4
02	What supporting net zero looks like	7
03	Getting practical – integrating net zero into your TIP	10
04	How we can help	18
05	Further reading	20

Background & Context

Net zero and the Climate Emergency

In June 2019, the UK parliament passed legislation requiring the government to reduce the UK's net emissions of greenhouse gases to zero by 2050.

This marked an increase in ambition from the government's previous legislative target, which was to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% based on 1990 levels.

The new legislation was in part a response to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) 1.5°C Special Report (2018)¹, calling for governments to take urgent action on climate change.

Since 2018, over 280 UK Local Authorities have declared a Climate Emergency, many of which house the 100 Towns of the Towns Fund programme. These Local Authorities, and others, will be in the process of developing plans to deliver net zero (production-based) carbon emissions by 2030 – 2050.



Chris Skidmore signs legislation to commit the UK to a legally binding target of net zero emissions by 2050. Source:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-becomes-first-major-economy-to-pass-net-zero-emissions-law>

“Net zero emissions” refers to achieving a balance between the amount of greenhouse gas emissions produced and the amount removed from the atmosphere. This means that any residual emissions must be negated by actively removing greenhouse gases, such as through planting trees or by carbon capture technology.

¹ IPCC (2018) 1.5°C Special Report. [Source](#).

The Towns Fund as a driver of net zero

The goal of the Towns Fund is to support towns to drive sustainable economic regeneration and long-term economic and productivity growth.

Towns are encouraged to make interventions that increase resilience and prosperity and contribute to the UK's overarching goal to be zero carbon by 2050.

Whilst Towns are encouraged to include short and medium term concepts in their Town Investment Plan (TIP) (e.g. how Covid-19 is impacting their local economy and how it has shaped strategy and prioritisation, and the identification of any “shovel ready” projects) the plan overall should have a focus on the long term. Measures that are short term only will not be supported.

The net zero goal is perhaps the most straight forward and clear way for Towns to gauge the environmental impact of their proposed interventions.

It is therefore critical that interventions being put forward as part of a Town Investment Plan can also be shown to be delivering on or supporting the relevant national and local goals for decarbonisation, whilst also creating jobs and supporting a green recovery. In the Towns Fund priority areas of urban regeneration, skills and enterprise and connectivity, these twin ambitions can be achieved together.

What supporting net zero looks like

Investing in low carbon interventions

Town Investment Plans can support the net zero agenda by supporting interventions that target decarbonisation across all sectors.

Direct decarbonisation measures could include for example:



Improving the energy efficiency of homes



Creation of walking and cycling infrastructure



Mass tree planting for carbon offsetting

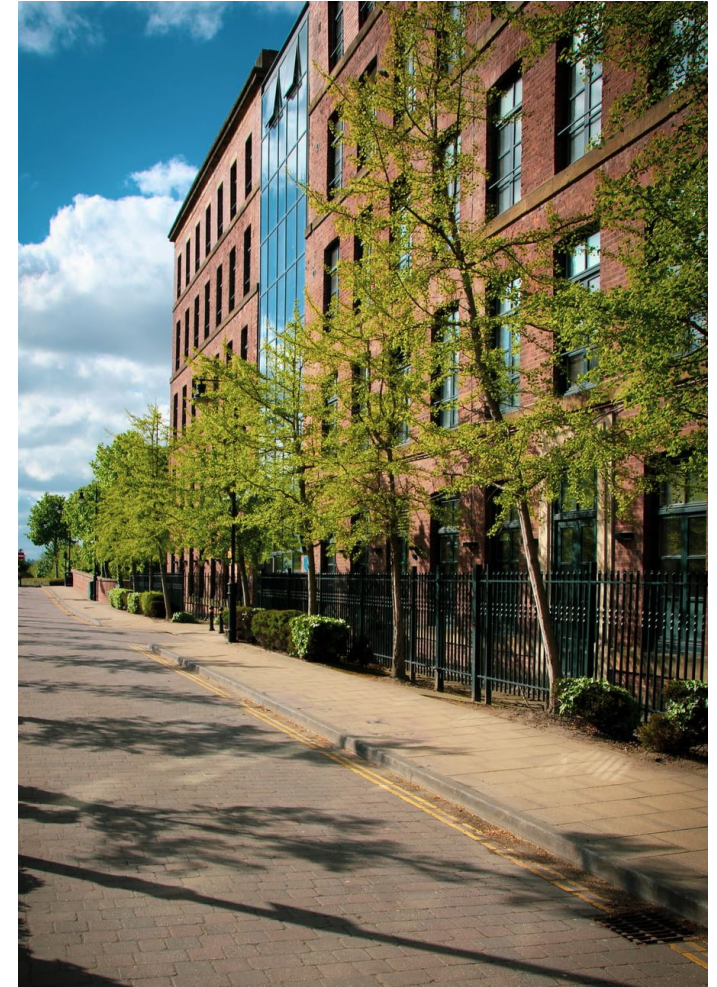


Reducing emissions from local industry



Investing in low carbon energy supply

In your TIP, it will be important not only to include specific decarbonisation interventions, but also to ensure that other interventions do not conflict with the net zero agenda, for example through increasing local future greenhouse gas emissions.



Investing in low carbon skills and behaviour

Town Investment Plans can also contribute towards achieving net zero by developing the enabling conditions for a low carbon transition.

This includes for example investing in skills development for low carbon sectors, providing business development and incubation support to low carbon SMEs and start-ups, and supporting the development of local climate networks and community organisations.

Where possible, investments targeting other economic and social development outcomes (such as digital connectivity investments) should be supported with evidence demonstrating how they will lead to reductions in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Many towns face serious social issues as well. TIPs should be guided by sustainability – economic,

environmental, and social - and it is recommended that social elements in TIPs should be covered through ensuring the plan is inclusive and equitable.

Ensuring that TIP teams have a good understanding of activities is important. Towns Fund funding can be a stimulus for other investments, whether from other government departments or private investors.

It is widely accepted that Towns and local authorities are well-placed to coordinate investment in clean growth in their local area, which can deliver decarbonisation, improved air quality and health, and economic growth.

The opportunity for job creation associated with low carbon skill investment also closely aligns with the government's green economic recovery plans following Covid-19.

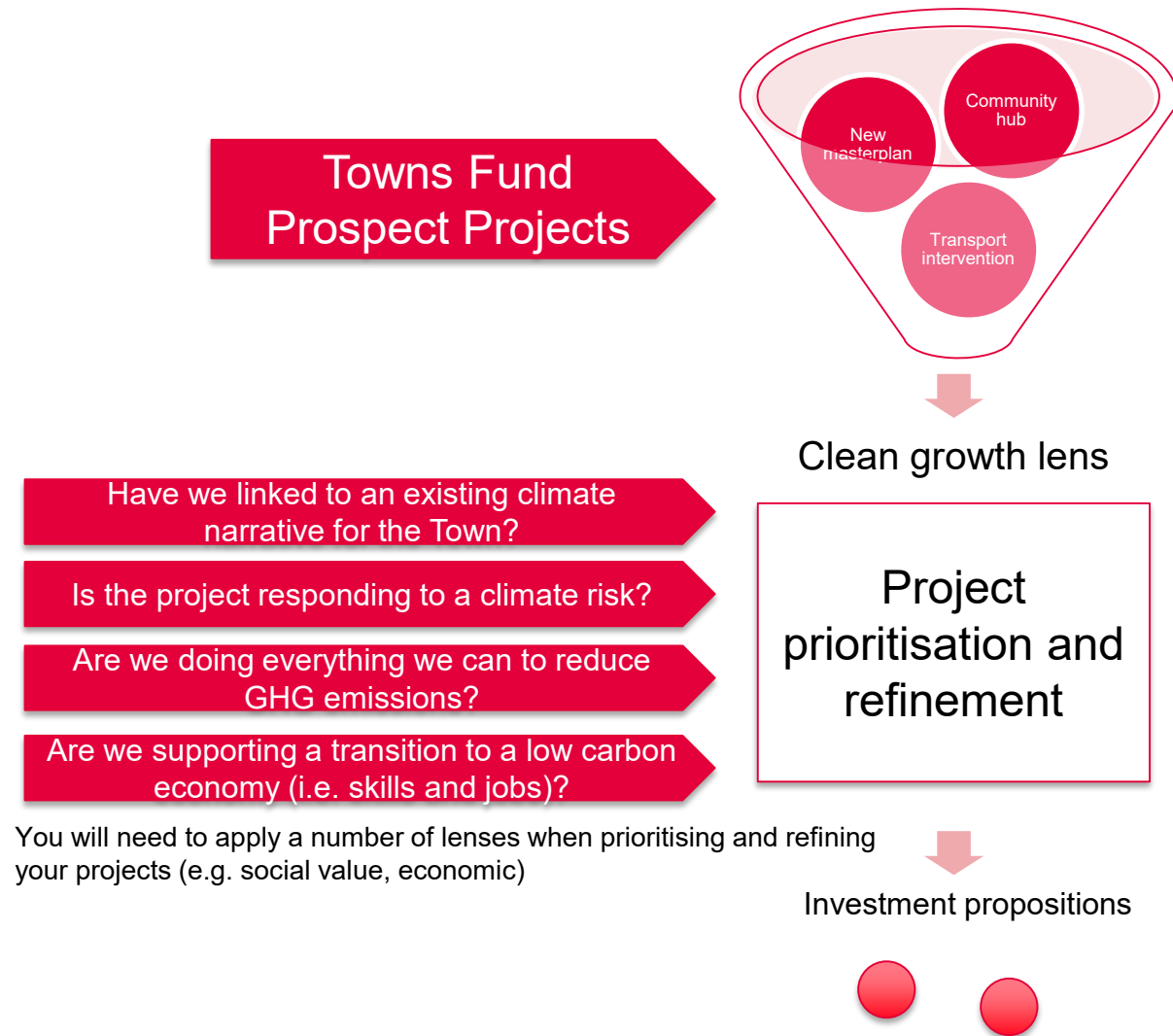
Getting practical: steps to integrate net zero into your TIP

Integrating net zero into your TIP

The high-level guidance is clear, but there remains no “how to” guide to complete your TIP. So, when it comes to addressing climate change what might be appropriate to include?

However you choose to address the net zero goal, whether as a dedicated section or woven into the overarching narrative, both the context and strategy (TIP section 1) and individual proposals (TIP section 2) should align with the net zero agenda.

The following slides offer some practical advice.



Assess your local context and commitments

Understanding the existing local policy context in relation to net zero will help you to identify specific challenges and opportunities that should be addressed in your TIP.

This should ideally be done during the first stage of TIP development as part of the vision setting process and assessment of local context and priorities.

Find out what climate commitments have already been made at the local level and the status of any plans approved or in development.

Ideally understand the types of actions promoted through these plans. It's also helpful to try and gauge how ambitious your local plan is compared with the sorts of interventions being promoted at the National level.

You should also seek to understand how any existing plans conflict with the net zero target, and whether there is potential to mitigate this in your TIP.

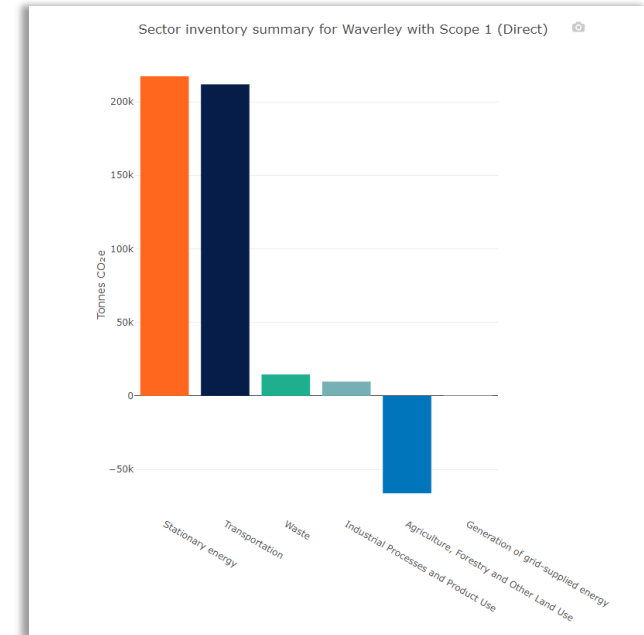


Baselining your GHG emissions

Understand local authority (corporate) and Town (territorial) baseline GHG emissions. You should find the data and be able to articulate where emissions come from for your Town (for example, do emissions mostly arise from buildings, transport or industry?)

Ideally this should be set out in the TIP, and used to help identify sectors for particular action on emissions reduction. Baselining your GHG emissions is a useful activity during any stage of TIP development. However it would be particularly useful during the early stages whilst setting priorities, as it will inform you of the sectors that represent the greatest challenge in reaching net zero.

Different tools are available to support you with this, for example SCATTER and the CURB tool. The UK Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) also produces CO2 emissions data by Local Authority area as a subset of its annual inventory of greenhouse gas emissions.



Example GHG inventory.
Source: <https://scattercities.com/>

Explain how interventions contribute to net zero

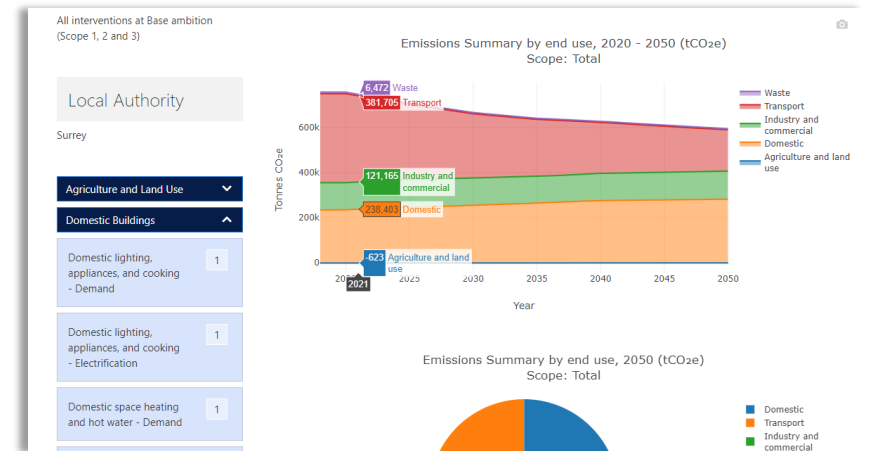
You should be able to justify interventions proposed in the TIP by explaining how they will directly or indirectly contribute to reductions in GHG emissions.

Sometimes this can be done quantitatively, but in other cases it may be more appropriate to do qualitatively (e.g. when GHG reductions in practice rely on behaviour change or skills development).

Emissions modelling tools (e.g. SCATTER and the CURB tool) can also help to quantify GHG reductions associated with actions.

Where possible, you should seek to carry out a comprehensive quantitative assessment of wider benefits, to understand how net zero actions are delivering on other priorities such as health, wellbeing, job creation etc. This will also help to build a balanced and persuasive business case for investment.

Emissions modelling and wider benefits assessments can be a resource intensive activity - you may find that you need external support.



Example GHG pathway. Source: <https://scattercities.com/>

Demonstrate inclusive stakeholder engagement

It is important to ensure the meaningful involvement of all groups, including those that are typically underrepresented, in developing your TIP.

Demonstrate that the interventions have been properly consulted on locally, are supported by key stakeholders and that the benefits are distributed fairly across the local community.



C40 Cities Playbook: Inclusive Community Engagement. Source: <https://www.arup.com/perspectives/publications/promotional-materials/section/c40-playbook-inclusive-community-engagement>

Net zero skills, training and supporting measures

Where supporting services are needed to deliver GHG emissions in practice, demonstrate how these supporting services will be provided (e.g. behaviour change campaigns, marketing / advertising, support to local planning and enforcement teams). Include this in your TIP with your theory of change.

This may involve identifying alignment with existing training and skills development programmes, for example apprenticeship schemes in low-carbon sectors. Or it may involve establishing new skills development programmes as part of your TIP, such as training for construction-sector employees in energy efficiency building retrofitting.

Once you have set your TIP priorities, you should carry out a gap assessment in order to understand whether your town has the necessary skills and capacity to deliver the changes required.



Use your TIP to build local climate resilience

Climate change is already impacting all towns in the UK, and its impacts will only intensify in the coming decades, including more severe and intermittent rainfall, surface and coastal flooding, extreme temperatures, and water scarcity, amongst other risks.²

The Covid-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of building community resilience and being prepared for crises. The TIP offers an opportunity for towns to build protection against extreme weather events and long-term climate impacts, as well as developing economic security to facilitate rapid and effective crisis response.

If your town hasn't already, the first step is to carry out a climate risk assessment to understand your particular local vulnerabilities and priority areas for action. Once this is understood, you should develop 'climate adaptation' actions to reduce the potential of these risks to cause harm to your town, for example through flood management strategies.

It will be important to consider the interaction of these climate adaptation actions with your climate mitigation actions, in order to maximise synergies (such as the potential for Sustainable Drainage Solutions (SuDS) to sequester carbon) and mitigate potential trade-offs (like the potential for building insulation to increase the risk of heat stress).

How we can help

How we can help

If you would like support, or a critical friend to review your emerging TIP from a climate change perspective you might be interested in these services offered by our climate change specialists.

Towns Fund – Zero Carbon Support Options

Practical support (Option 1)	Light touch review (Option 2)
Introductory phone call	Introductory phone call
Support to help you find relevant data on your baseline carbon emissions – and to breakdown wider data sets for use at the Town level	Review of draft TIP with provision of comments / suggestions (in document) on how it could be improved to respond to the zero-carbon agenda
Cross check / examine TIP alignment with national and local zero carbon ambition	Provision of 1 – 2-page file note with key feedback on draft plan and recommendations for improvement.
Provide help and support in calculating carbon emissions saving potential for proposed TIP interventions (up to 6 interventions)	
Challenge / review process for local engagement on interventions.	
Provide a file note with ideas for how to position / tweak TIP interventions, with any further comments that will build alignment between the TIP and the UK governments zero carbon agenda.	

Further reading

Further reading

1. Net Zero in the UK, Committee for Climate Change:
<https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/net-zero-the-uks-contribution-to-stopping-global-warming/>
2. You've declared a climate emergency, what next? Arup:
<https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/ARUP-Climate-Emergency-What-Next.pdf>
3. Climate emergency, next steps, transport. Arup:
<https://www.arup.com/perspectives/publications/promotional-materials/section/youve-declared-a-climate-emergency-next-steps-transport>
4. Land use policies for a Net Zero UK, Committee for Climate Change:
<https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/land-use-policies-for-a-net-zero-uk/>
5. Building consensus on climate action, UK Climate Assembly Report:
<https://www.climateassembly.uk/news/uk-path-net-zero-must-be-underpinned-education-choice-fairness-and-political-consensus-urges-climate-assembly/>

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