

COUNTIES

LEADING RECOVERY
DELIVERING RENEWAL

CCN

COUNTY COUNCILS NETWORK

Stepping up to help deliver net-zero

*How county
authorities are
leading on local
climate action*



November 2021

Introduction

It is now widely accepted that climate change poses one of the biggest threats to the world, and all eyes are on COP26 in Glasgow as world leaders meet to discuss how they can cut emissions to the levels needed for the survival of the planet.

In the UK, the consensus view is that the country must adapt to a greener future, and people are more conscious about their behaviour than perhaps at any point before. The government has set itself a target for the country to become net-zero in emissions by 2050.

In this context, county local authorities have an essential part to play in cutting the UK's carbon footprint. Over 80% of the country's emissions are influenceable by local government, and councils have a significant role to play in local leadership and encouraging behavioural change.

Whilst the County Councils Network continues to argue for an increased level of funding for climate action in county areas, its member councils have stepped up over the last few years and have begun taking matters into their own hands on cutting emissions.

This short publication aims to highlight just some of the innovative and exemplary action CCN member councils have taken on climate change to be at the forefront of the national response - such as using hydrogen energy to power its lorries, leading on electric vehicle charger installations, or helping to make a geothermal power plant a reality.



Suffolk: Plug In Suffolk

Plug In Suffolk, developed by Suffolk County Council, is the country's first fully open fast-charging network.

This pioneering network uses a contactless payment system to make charging easy and accessible for residents and visitors to the county. Unlike other visitor charging systems, there is no need for drivers to register to a network, and no need for apps, key fobs, or specific access cards.

The council worked in partnership with EO Charging and Bulb, and is working on installing over 100 chargers in 50 locations in Suffolk, focusing on remote rural areas.

[Find out more here](#)

Cornwall: UK's first-ever geothermal power plant

Cornwall Council is one of the key partners in the United Downs Deep Geothermal Project, a UK first.

This power plant aims to produce low-carbon, renewable power and heat from the hot granite rocks beneath Cornwall by the end of 2022. Two wells have been drilled into the granite, within a geological fault zone. Water will be pumped up from the deepest onshore well in the UK, where temperatures are around 180oC. The steam produced will drive a turbine to generate electricity for 6,000 homes.

This project was financed by a mixture of public and private funds, of which Cornwall Council was a key backer.

[Find out more here](#)



Devon: Citizens climate assembly

With councils in Devon declaring a climate emergency, Devon County Council helped organise the county's first-ever Devon Climate Assembly this summer where local people discussed their priorities.

The assembly was made up over 70 local residents of all walks of life. They were presented with expert evidence in key areas that had been highlighted through previous public consultations as being particularly challenging to address - such as transport, the role of onshore wind and the need to retrofit homes.

The assembly subsequently voted in support of a range of measures in a report that, if implemented, would significantly cut carbon emissions across the county.

[Find out more here](#)

electric
drive

Buckinghamshire: One tree planted for every person

Buckinghamshire Council is embarking on an ambitious programme of planting a tree for every adult and child in the county.

This initiative will see the county plant 543,000 trees over the next decade on council-owned land, with the council setting a target of 2050 to become carbon neutral.

Once delivered in full, the project has the potential to create at least 200 hectares of new woodland in Buckinghamshire - the equivalent of 285 full sized football pitches.

[Find out more here](#)

Cheshire East: Powering its fleet with green hydrogen

As part of Cheshire East Council's aim to be carbon neutral by 2025, the authority is working with partners to pilot the single site production, storage and use of hydrogen for its refuse vehicles.

Installed at the Ansa environmental services depot in Middlewich, the site produces hydrogen in the greenest way possible – using an electrolyser connected to solar panels and grey-water recycling. This will provide safe, clean hydrogen fuel, which will be pumped into some of the councils' refuse fleet.

Initially, this will provide clean, green hydrogen fuel to two refuse lorries and a 4x4 vehicle.

[Find out more here](#)

Hampshire: Reducing domestic emissions

One quarter of Hampshire's carbon emissions come from residential settings, so the county council has launched a host of projects to encourage residents to go greener - including a freephone advice line.

This includes 'Solar Together Hampshire', where the council has partnered with small and medium-sized businesses to provide solar panels for homes at a competitive price.

The council is also looking at tapping into the county's grassroots by helping to set up the Community Energy Network - which disseminates guidance and provides training to community groups.

[Find out more here](#)

North Yorkshire: Lighting up the county - environmentally friendly

Many local authorities are turning towards LED lamps for their streetlights as a climate-friendly alternative to traditional lamps.

North Yorkshire County Council has recently completed an ambitious tranche of LED installations in 50,400 streetlights which will significantly reduce the council's carbon footprint. The project was delivered ahead of schedule and under-budget.

This was fundamental to North Yorkshire's two national parks - the Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors - achieving International Dark Sky Reserve status last December - one of the largest areas in Europe to be simultaneously designated.

[Find out more here](#)

Warwickshire: £1m for grassroots action

Earlier this year, Warwickshire County Council set aside £1m in its 'Green Shoots Community Climate Fund' to help local groups act on climate change and deliver grassroots projects.

The first 69 successful applicants to the fund have since been announced, including the first-ever 'repair cafe' in Kenilworth, where people can get their household items repaired instead of buying new ones.

Other projects to get funding - a maximum of £25,000 - included a biodiversity site, installing solar panels on community buildings, and transport initiatives to promote cycling and walking.

[Find out more here](#)

Wiltshire: Community toolkit

Wiltshire Council's 'Community Environmental Toolkit' aims to give community groups information so they can take the lead in restoring biodiversity in their areas.

Developed alongside Natural England, this toolkit provides information for community groups, local landowners, parish and town Councils, schools and youth groups on biodiversity.

The toolkit aims to aid their understanding of what they already have in terms of biodiverse habitats as well as how to plan for developing greater biodiversity and nature based carbon sequestration in the future. The Toolkit also signposts to many other organisations which can assist communities in delivering their aims and objectives.

[Find out more here](#)



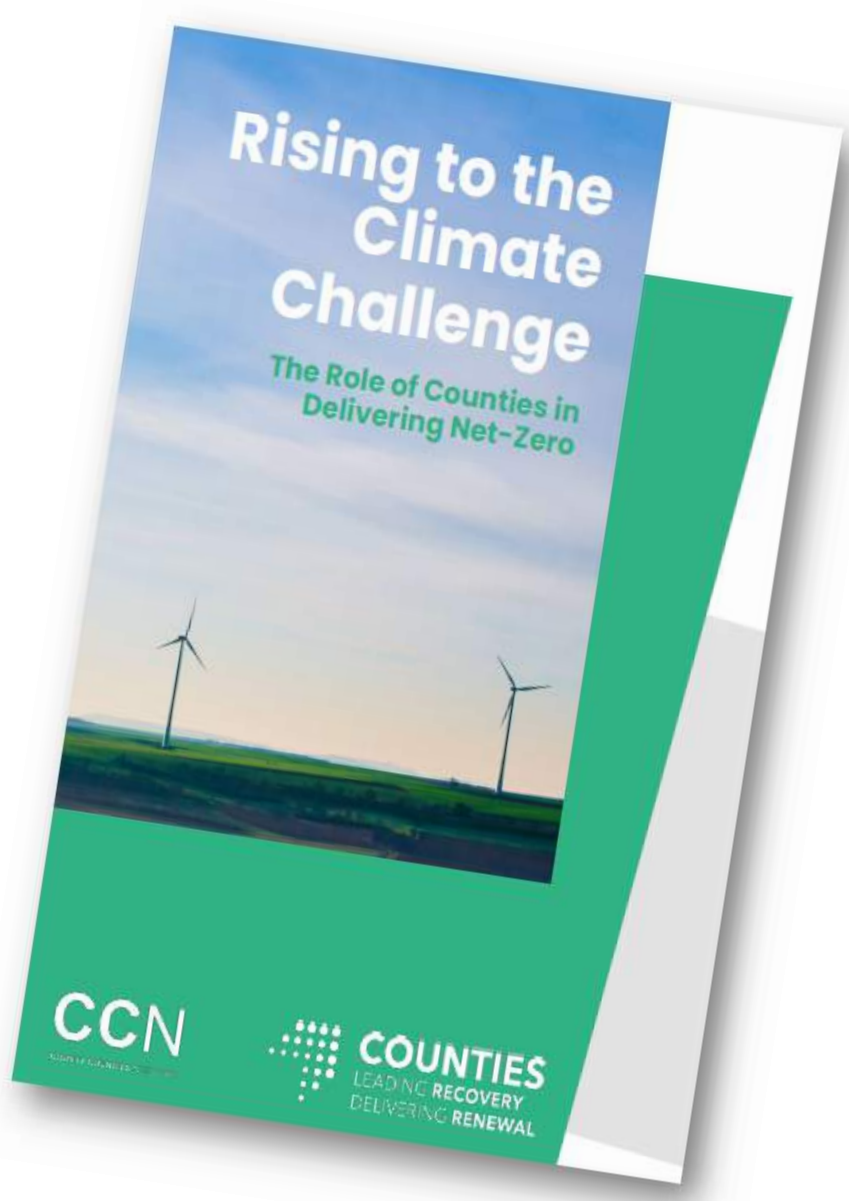
West Sussex: Rolling out thousands of electric chargers

West Sussex County Council has recently announced the largest local authority deployment of electric vehicle charging points in England.

The council hopes its project, working with Connected Kerb, will act as a blueprint for other councils to follow suit. The project will see thousands of chargers installed across the county over the next decade - both on-street residential chargers and publicly available chargers.

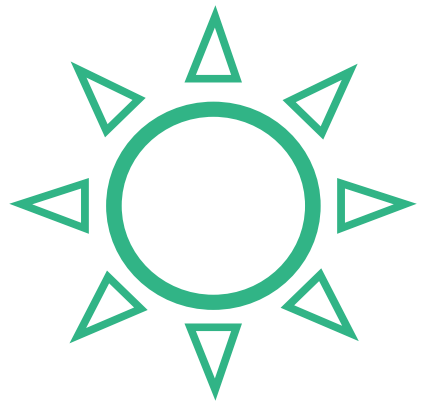
UK-based Connected Kerb is fully funding the project and will also manage and maintain the chargepoints on an ongoing basis.

[Find out more here](#)



Whilst this publication has showcased the self-made momentum from county authorities on climate change, CCN's recent report highlighted the challenge in delivering net-zero in county areas.

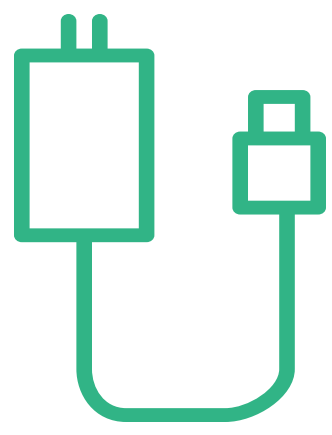
With emissions decreasing the slowest in counties compared to the rest of England, the report made the following key recommendations:



That the government gives more clarity on the policy, strategy and obligations relating to local government and climate change. Government should create the forum for meaningful engagement with CCN member authorities to jointly define the roles, flexibilities and contributions that they can make to build on the self-made momentum and accelerate climate change action in their areas.



Government should move away from an overly-city focused approach, and provide the necessary amount of funding and support to county areas that addresses the size of the challenge they face. More broadly, government must set aside more funding for climate change than the £11.6bn already committed if it wants to achieve its net zero target.



Climate change programmes need to provide clarity of funding and certainty to the supply chain and demand side to increase the participation in action. Programmes should therefore be longer term with appropriate funds committed over the programme period to provide the confidence for businesses and citizens to invest in climate action.



CCN member authorities should be given greater flexibility and freedom to deliver schemes on a basis that reflects the challenges of particular communities, for example the incentives and delivery mechanisms that are needed for a coastal town like Jaywick in Essex are different to the needs of towns like Watford in Hertfordshire.



Government should quickly establish the mechanisms for capturing and recording the performance data (finance, emissions reductions, co-benefits, etc) to support the evaluation of what works well and that initiatives can be scaled with greater certainty.





COUNTY COUNCILS NETWORK

Founded in 1997, the County Councils Network is the voice of England's counties. A cross-party organisation, CCN develops policy, commissions research, and presents evidence-based solutions nationally on behalf of the largest grouping of local authorities in England.

In total, the 23 county councils and 13 unitary councils that make up the CCN represent 26 million residents, account for 39% of England's GVA, and deliver high-quality services that matter the most to local communities

The network is a cross party organisation, expressing the views of member councils to the government and within the Local Government Association.

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County Councils Network



County Councils Network

www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk

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