

## NET ZERO POLICY ROUNDUP APRIL 2026

HUB UPDATES	LINK
<p>With funding from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, the Local Net Zero Hubs and GBE have partnered with Regen to produce guidance and training to support local authority planners to make confident, consistent and timely decisions on low carbon energy, storage and network infrastructure applications.</p> <p>The guidance is available <a href="#">on this link</a> and contains specific guides on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Onshore wind</li> <li>• Ground-mounted solar</li> <li>• Battery Energy Storage Solutions</li> <li>• Energy system infrastructure.</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">NEYNZH</a></p>
<p>The Hub has produced a series of new video case studies highlighting some of the great community-owned energy projects happening across the North East and Yorkshire.</p> <p>Head over to our <a href="#">YouTube channel</a> to find out more about these amazing projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Chapter of York Heritage Retrofit</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Our Cow Molly Goes Electric</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Solar City York</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Birley Health Centre</a></li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">NEYNZH</a></p>
<p>The Hub will launch a tool helping local authorities and the wider public sector derisk and drive deployment of solar canopies through a portfolio-based approach in public carparks across the region at a webinar taking place on <b>Monday April 27<sup>th</sup> at 11am</b>.</p>	<p><a href="#">NEYNZH</a></p>

STRATEGY/POLICY UPDATES	LINK
<p>The Energy Secretary has outlined a package of measures to boost domestic energy security in response to events in the Middle East.</p> <p>These measures include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Announcing '<a href="#">plug-in solar</a>' (low cost panels available in supermarkets) will be made available in the UK "within months"</li> <li>• <a href="#">Bringing forward</a> the next annual renewables auction to July.</li> <li>• Following the implementation of the <a href="#">Fingleton Review</a> into speeding up the building of nuclear power stations, confirmation the government will apply the lessons of the review to other infrastructure such as renewables</li> </ul> <p>The Chancellor has also announced a series of measures, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new anti-profiteering framework to be introduced to address businesses "unfairly putting up prices to profiteer during this crisis". This may include the introduction of "time-limited, targeted powers".</li> <li>• New legislation in the next Parliamentary session to accelerate the delivery of new nuclear energy. Government-backed guarantees will also be assessed to keep priority infrastructure projects moving where planning consent is legally challenged.</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">DESNZ</a></p> <p><a href="#">HMT</a></p>

<p>The <a href="#">Competition and Markets Authority</a> has also been requested to increase monitoring of pricing in the road fuel sector.</p>	
<p>The government has published its first Land Use Framework, setting out how it intends to balance competing needs for land for food production, housing, energy and industry.</p> <p>The framework states only 1% of England’s land will be needed for renewable energy, although it also acknowledges that this may increase to meet the needs of AI datacentres. Other measures contained in report include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Placing a high priority on restoring peatland, all but 13% of which is degraded across England, but not including an outright ban on development such as wind or solar farms.</li> <li>• Encouraging the “multi-use” of land, for instance with livestock grazing alongside wind and solar farms.</li> <li>• Coordinated spatial planning of electricity networks will be utilised to encourage investment in rural areas and unlock opportunities for greater food security, for example through glasshouse horticulture.</li> </ul> <p>The framework was published <a href="#">alongside proposals</a> for farms, schools and businesses to be permitted to build a single small onshore wind turbine – no larger than an oak tree – without planning permission.</p>	<p><a href="#">DEFRA</a></p>
<p>The government has moved the launch of reforms to domestic Energy Performance Certificates to the second half of 2027.</p> <p>The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero published a partial response to a consultation on the topic in January of this year, at which point it said it was “working hard to deliver new EPCs from October 2026” while noting that “the timeline is ambitious”.</p> <p>A subsequent update to the consultation states that “following engagement with industry on the delivery timeline” it had “decided to move the launch of the reforms to the second half of 2027”.</p>	<p><a href="#">DESNZ/MHCLG</a></p>
<p>Up to 10 GW of offshore wind capacity will be unlocked as a result of government upgrades to air defence radars.</p>	<p><a href="#">MOD</a></p>
<p>Guidance has been published setting out how best to design and construct new domestic and non-domestic premises so smart meters can be installed and commissioned in them from the outset.</p>	<p><a href="#">DESNZ</a></p>
<p>Guidance has been published on how electric vehicle charge point operators can use street works permits to install charge points and related equipment.</p>	<p><a href="#">DfT</a></p>
<p>New smart meter standards have been introduced giving suppliers no more than 90 days to repair faulty smart meters or face action from the regulator, which could include fines or legal action.</p> <p>Ofgem has also introduced new consumer protections making householders eligible for £40 in compensation if they face issues throughout the process of installing a smart meter, such as delayed or failed installations.</p>	<p><a href="#">DESNZ</a></p>

CONSULTATIONS AND REVIEWS	LINK
<p>The Warm Homes Plan announced a £5bn Warm Homes Fund to finance the decarbonisation of heating in a way that generates a return for the taxpayer, made up of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £1.7bn in consumer loans (supported with £300m of capital investment)</li> <li>• £3.3bn for innovative finance for investments in and loans for the building upgrade and retrofit sector.</li> </ul> <p>The government has now published a call for evidence to help identify proposals for how the fund could deliver the greatest impact.</p> <p><b>An overview of the proposals set out in the consultation can be found as an appendix to this document.</b></p> <p><i>This consultation is open until June 1<sup>st</sup></i></p>	<p><a href="#">DESNZ</a></p>
<p>A consultation has opened on proposals to introduce a new permitted development right which would allow one small, non-domestic onshore wind turbine to be installed without a full planning application on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farms and agricultural holdings</li> <li>• Businesses and industrial sites</li> <li>• Public sector sites.</li> </ul> <p>The turbines would have a maximum tip height of up to 30 metres - a significant increase from the current 11m domestic threshold.</p> <p><i>The consultation is open until June 10<sup>th</sup>.</i></p>	<p><a href="#">DESNZ</a></p>
<p>Ofgem is seeking views on how transmission network charges could change to better incentivise generation, demand and assets to locate in places that align with long-term system needs identified in NESO's Strategic Spatial Energy Plan (SSEP).</p> <p>Options range from incremental changes making more explicit links to the SSEP, to more profound changes such as introducing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distinct locational charges between SSEP zones, creating clearer incentives about asset location, with key ideas including making charges reflect the system cost (or benefit) of adding capacity in that zone and making the "right places" cheaper and the "wrong places" more expensive to connect.</li> <li>• Capacity based or auction style approaches, with the auctioning of access or capacity rights aligned with the SSEP and the setting of zonal charges based on the scarcity or value of capacity in each area.</li> </ul> <p><i>The consultation is open until May 26<sup>th</sup></i></p>	<p><a href="#">Ofgem</a></p>
<p>The government is proposing targeted reforms to the connections process to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tackle speculative demand connection applications</li> <li>• Free up grid capacity blocked by non-viable projects</li> <li>• Prioritise "strategic demand" projects (notably data centres)</li> <li>• Accelerate delivery of projects critical to economic growth and net zero</li> </ul> <p>These proposals use new powers in the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 to intervene directly in the connections regime.</p>	<p><a href="#">DESNZ</a></p>

<p>Proposals include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using new statutory powers to tighten entry and ongoing membership requirements for demand side connection queues, particularly for large demand projects such as data centres. This could include higher evidential requirements to enter or remain in the queue and greater powers to remove projects that do not demonstrate progress or intent.</li> <li>Explicit prioritisation of certain demand projects, with the creation of a defined category of “Strategic Demand” allowing certain projects to progress faster through the connections process if they are considered essential for economic growth, clean power delivery or digital infrastructure (especially AI driven data centres)</li> </ul> <p><i>The consultation is open until April 15<sup>th</sup></i></p>	
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FUNDING ANNOUNCED	LINK
<p>The Chancellor has announced £50m of targeted financial support for low-income households in rural communities affected by the rising costs of kerosene for off-grid home heating caused by conflict in the Middle East.</p> <p>The funding is being distributed by local authorities via the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF).</p>	<p><a href="#">HMT</a></p>
<p>The Chancellor has announced “Northern Growth Corridor” funding for Mayoral Strategic Authorities, designed to accelerate large scale regeneration schemes and major city-centre projects, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In West Yorkshire, the Mayor will have access to £145m new money to support jobs and development in places such as the Leeds South Bank.</li> <li>In South Yorkshire, the Mayor will have access to £85m new money to support jobs and development, including in the Don Valley Corridor and Sheffield Innovation spine.</li> <li>In the North East, the Mayor will have access to £120m of new money to accelerate job creation and development across places such as Newcastle and Gateshead Quays.</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">In the annual Mais lecture</a>, the Chancellor also described the North East and East coast as an “energy supercluster”</p>	<p><a href="#">HMT</a></p>
<p>The latest round of the Heat Network Efficiency Scheme – which provides funding to support improvements to existing district heating or communal heating projects, is open for applications until May 22nd</p>	<p><a href="#">DESNZ</a></p>
<p>Hull and East Yorkshire and Tees Valley have secured with up to £30m of funding from the Local Partnerships Innovation Fund to support local clean energy and industrial decarbonisation programmes.</p>	<p><a href="#">DSIT/UKRI</a></p>
<p>ITM Power UK of South Yorkshire has received £40m investment from Great British Energy, alongside a £46.5m government grant in principle, to establish the region as the home of Europe’s largest electrolyser factories for green hydrogen production. Investment is expected to create 400 jobs in the Sheffield area.</p>	<p><a href="#">GBE</a></p>
<p>The government has announced new Zero Emissions Truck and Van grants and a Depot Charging Scheme aim to help businesses make the switch to electric vans and trucks.</p>	<p><a href="#">DfT</a></p>

<p>The grant will allow companies to save up to £81,000 off the heaviest zero emission trucks – covering up to 40% of the cost – and up to £5000 off new zero emission vans.</p> <p>Businesses and public authorities could save up to 70% of the cost of installing charging infrastructure for vans, coaches, and eHGVs from the Depot Charging Scheme.</p>	
<p>New funding will pay for another 82 electric buses in Tees Valley, as well as supporting the full electrification of a further two bus depots, taking the region’s total to three.</p> <p>64 electric buses in the Tees Valley fleet were previously named by local school children following a competition, with winning entries including Bus Lightyear, Bombastic Donkey Bus and Frank.</p>	<p><a href="#">TVCA</a></p>

RESEARCH AND STATISTICS	LINK
<p>A paper from the IPPR has found “a precipitous drop in support on the political right” for net zero “is not mirrored in public opinion where support has remained steady and is much higher than politicians credit” with “the notion of a widespread public backlash...a largely exaggerated one”.</p> <p>Findings in the report include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contextualising net zero (i.e. not using technical language) boosts support in those who have been exposed to high levels of anti-net zero messaging by 16%.</li> <li>• Low trust in government makes it hard for the public to believe in long term outcomes – the argument that net zero is desirable but unachievable is “very effective... no rebuttals landed”.</li> <li>• 41% of people who think net zero will leave them personally worse off support it.</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">IPPR</a></p>
<p>Analysis from charity Asthma and Lung UK suggests damp, cold and mouldy housing contributed to 40,000 hospital admissions in 2024.</p>	<p><a href="#">Asthma and Lung UK</a></p>
<p>The South Yorkshire Sustainability Centre has published its consolidated research report, setting out all research produced by the centre over the last four years. Packages of research within the consolidated report include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Retrofit</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Residential Energy Systems</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Industrial Decarbonisation</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Just Transition</a></li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">SYSC</a></p>

MISCELLANEOUS	LINK
<p>County Durham ultra-light solar panel manufacturer Power Roll has signed a Joint Development Agreement with Japanese utility firm Tokyo Gas. The partnership – which followed a trade mission led by the Mayor of the North East - will support the firm to build a supply chain to enable future large-scale production for the Japanese market.</p> <p>Power Roll panels are printed like wallpaper on a roll making them cheaper to produce than standard panels while allowing them to be installed on surfaces unsuitable for traditional panels</p>	<p><a href="#">NECA</a></p>

The Crown Estate will be progressing leasing activity off the coast of North East England. The area identified could support up to 6GW of future project capacity.	<a href="#">NOF</a>
The government has approved what is set to be the largest power-producing solar farm in the UK, in Lincolnshire. According to the developer the Springwell site could power over 180,000 homes a year, the equivalent of half the homes in the county.	<a href="#">DESNZ</a>

### Appendix: Warm Homes Fund Call for evidence

The Warm Homes Plan announced a £5bn Warm Homes Fund to finance the decarbonisation of heating in a way that generates a return for the taxpayer, made up of:

- £1.7bn in consumer loans (supported with £300m of capital investment)
- £3.3bn for innovative finance for investments in and loans for the building upgrade and retrofit sector.

The government has now published a call for evidence to help identify proposals for how the fund could deliver the greatest impact.

#### Section 1: Strategic Case

The aim of the fund is: *“To reduce consumer energy bills and accelerate decarbonisation by supporting the building upgrade supply chain with loans and equity investments to bring down the cost and scale up deployment of low carbon technologies”.*

At the Autumn Budget 2024 the government announced reforms to its fiscal framework to enable recognition of financial assets created by public loans or equity investment – allowing the government to make investments which generate returns for the taxpayer while contributing to government missions such as Clean Energy.

48% of people report upfront cost to be the biggest barrier to invest in retrofit, the Fund is **designed to remove the need for upfront capital** – particularly where the investment can generate returns large enough to cover the financing. An example is Evaluation evidence showing that 9% of BUS grant recipients who require borrowing to pay for the total cost of heat pumps fund it through the savings through making the investment.

The government also hopes that the Fund will enable investments further up the value chain, lowering costs while supporting jobs – **this could include equity investments to build manufacturing and supply chain capacity, loans to develop the workforce, finance to enable bulk purchasing or support local network upgrades.** In the heat network sector finance could enable construction, improvements and connections.

The scope of the fund includes

- Exploring potential for targeted financing for additional measures (i.e. batteries) in new build homes
- Non-domestic buildings, including commercial, public sector, third sector and community premises
- Proposed eligible recipients include:
  - **Local authorities and strategic authorities**
  - **Landlords – including social and council landlords as well as PRS.**
  - Network companies and energy suppliers
  - **Heat networks**
  - Small businesses
  - **Community energy and retrofit projects**
  - **VCSE**

## Section 2: Investing across the value chain

This section sets out the analysis of benefits and challenges in supporting different groups and seeks views on specific proposals for each group, specifically.

### Owner-occupiers

- Loans: Consumer loans are proposed to help owner-occupiers with upfront costs and lower the cost of financing low-carbon technologies, with different products tailored to different needs.
- Property-linked finance: Financing linked to properties rather than property owners, assisting with upfront costs but payments passed on to future owners when the property is sold as they will benefit from the energy upgrade and potential savings on bills.

### Landlords and tenants

- Revenue and savings sharing models: Specifically aimed at social landlords, this approach would see large scale solar and battery linked to social housing stock, giving tenants access to cheaper electricity with costs being repaid through revenue. Funding could be provided to landlords directly, or to an electricity supplier to install the system.

### Local government

- Loan equity and recycling funds: Loan capital from central government which could support locally led investment funds while delivering social value for taxpayers and local communities. This approach includes redeploying and reinvesting savings and combining with existing investment funds.
- Public private partnership and blended funds: This approach looks at place-based investment – using large capital vehicles to bring commercial and community investors together, potentially backed by anchor funding from government.

### Energy market participants

- Solar and energy as a service: Fixed term finance agreements which allow customers to install home upgrades at no upfront cost, but paid for by a long-term subscription.
- Hire purchase agreements: This approach lets customers pay for equipment over time and own it at the end, while benefiting for energy bill savings during the agreement.
- Loans to enable network connections: Targeted funding to support supply upgrades, working with network operators and local authorities to reduce bills through area-based improvements.

### Manufacturing, supply chain and skills

- Bulk purchasing: Funding could be used to buy low-carbon technologies in bulk at a lower cost, then sell them on at a discounted rate.
- Equity investment: Equity investments are being explored, to support companies that boost low-carbon manufacturing and installer training.
- Loans for training and skills: Looking to allow training providers and contractors to build skills capacity and increase uptake, and how to encourage investment in industry-led skills training.

### Heat networks

- Loans to households: Loans to help spread the cost of connecting to a low-carbon heat network.
- Energy as a service for heat networks: A model is being considered where developers cover the upfront cost of connecting to a heat network, which buildings would then repay over time.
- Financial support to help networks meet HNTAS requirements

- Capital support
- The government is also seeking views on a specific proposal from the Green Finance Institute to catalyse funding for large commercial loans.

### **Community Energy**

- Capital costs: Community buildings often act as hubs for local energy projects but lack the upfront funding to install energy efficiency measures and cut bills. The consultation seeks views on how government finance could help (e.g. through blended finance or property-linked finance) and build on existing links with local authorities and partners.