

NET ZERO POLICY ROUNDUP SEPTEMBER 2026

HUB UPDATES	LINK
The Hub's Annual Report is available now!	NEYNZH
The Hub has welcomed two new members to our board. Our work is overseen by an independently-chaired Board of representatives of each of our partner Combined Authorities and advisory members with specific technical and commercial expertise – now including Emma Bridge (Partnerships Director at Centre for Energy Equality and former Chief Executive of Community Energy England) and Rachael Guest (Partnerships Director for HSBC specialising in commercial investment in the clean energy transition).	NEYNZH
Almost 2500 homes in the North East and Yorkshire will receive energy efficiency home improvements to slash energy bills after the Hub-led consortium of local authorities and housing providers smashed its delivery targets.	NEYNZH
The Local Net Zero Hubs will once again be co-producing the APSE Big Energy Summit, the biggest clean energy event in local government. The conference will once again include the APSE Energy Awards, which recognise the best practice in local authority energy projects. <i>Applications for the awards are open now and close on October 30th.</i>	APSE
The Hub has produced new resources to help councils and community groups develop local projects where they own and install solar panels on roofs of local businesses and sell them the electricity produced at a discounted rate. <i>The resources are available at Net Zero Go, the Local Net Zero Hubs online resource of best practice advice, templates and case studies.</i>	Net Zero Go
The Hub is once again teaming up with FairHeat to host a free, in-person workshop for housing associations, local authorities and public sector building managers to explore practical, cost-effective steps for improving heating and hot water performance, identifying low-cost opportunities to reduce energy waste, and understanding how buildings can be made ready for connection to heat networks and other low-carbon technologies. <i>The event takes place in Durham on Thursday October 15th</i>	NYNZH

STRATEGY/POLICY UPDATES	LINK
Local Net Zero Hubs across England are supporting communities and local government organisations to access two newly launched grants from Great British Energy Two new funds were opened for applications on September 17 th 2026 and will close on November 12 th 2026. • GBE Community Fund – offering grant funding to help community organisations to test, develop and build community-owned clean energy assets. This Fund includes capital funding. • Partnerships Grant – a new scheme offering grant funding to help Local Authorities and community energy partners accelerate joint clean energy projects that will provide lasting local benefits.	GBE

Funding has also been provided to the Net Zero Hubs to support delivery of capacity and capability work covering technical and application advice in their regions. In previous years Local Net Zero Hubs have administered Community Energy Funds on behalf of Department of Energy Security and Net Zero and GBE. The administration of funds will now be managed through a national portal, but Hubs will continue to play an active role to support communities in their region of England through the grant application process with tailored advice. <i>Further details about the funds and how to apply can be found on our website.</i>	
Households can save up to £110 a year on their energy bills as plug in solar panels capable of meeting up to 20% of average home electricity use have become legal. Available from major high street and online retailers, each plug-in solar kit produces up to 800W of power with no installation cost and without taking any electricity from the grid, making solar power more accessible to renters and those living in flats.	DESNZ
The National Wealth Fund has announced the latest round of its Strategic Partnerships with Combined Authority areas, aimed at helping to identify and develop investment opportunities in the regions of the UK, including place-based regeneration, transport and clean energy infrastructure. <i>The latest partners include the North East Mayoral Strategic Authority and the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority. A partnership with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority had previously been announced.</i>	NWF
Energy regulator Ofgem has announced a 4% increase of the energy price cap for the period covering October 1st to December 31st 2026. The price cap will rise by £60 per year (or £5 per month) to £1723 for the average household using both electricity and gas. Around 35% of households are on fixed tariffs and will not be affected by this rise	Ofgem
The government has published an interim response to a consultation on maintaining gas security of supply during the transition to a low-carbon energy system. The report maintains the best way to improve energy security and reduce exposure to volatile gas prices is to accelerate the transition to clean energy. Nevertheless, government accepts that gas will continue to play a significant role during the transition. Government and most respondents agreed on the need to: • Maintain sufficient gas infrastructure capacity to meet demand, including in high-stress scenarios. • Improve resilience against infrastructure failures and unexpected disruptions. • Ensure commercial models remain viable so critical infrastructure continues to operate and attract investment A key finding from consultation responses was many stakeholders believe the market does not adequately reward maintaining spare capacity for rare but critical events. The response indicates that the government intends to explore: • Reducing regulatory barriers to investment.	DESNZ

- Commercial support mechanisms to retain existing capacity. - Potential support for a Floating Storage and Regasification Unit. - Potential development of additional gas import infrastructure. - Options for a strategic gas storage reserve to improve resilience during supply disruptions.	
The government has published a response to a consultation on the Non-Domestic Smart Meter Rollout Post 2025. The response confirms: - A universal implementation requirement will come into effect from September 1st 2027. After this date, if energy suppliers enter into new fixed term energy contracts with non-domestic customers, they must ensure the contract includes a term which provides that the customer has, or agrees to have, smart or advanced meters installed - Suppliers must start to communicate the upcoming change from January 1st 2027. - Energy suppliers must be fully compliant with the legally binding consumer protection code by September 1st 2027 - The scope of the policy will be limited to small and medium non-domestic sites in the first instance.	DESNZ
An evaluation of the Rapid Charging Fund pilot scheme, which was aimed at funding electricity upgrades at motorway services to support ultra-rapid EV charging and inform future policy, has been published. The evaluation reported that government support may continue to be needed in locations where grid upgrade costs are a major barrier – with grid capacity and connection arrangements becoming a bigger bottleneck than charger deployment itself and future policy likely to focus on unlocking electricity infrastructure rather than subsidising charging hardware. Other findings included recommendations that future programmes be more closely coordinated with stakeholders, highlighting: - The pilot was designed around infrastructure requirements out to 2035 whereas motorway service operators typically plan investments on a 3-to-5-year basis. - Some motorway service operators lacked the internal project-management resources needed for major grid upgrade projects. Future programmes may need to provide more delivery support, technical assistance or funding for programme management.	DfT
The Department for Transport has confirmed it will proceed with planning reforms designed to speed up the rollout of electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure. These include: - Allowing multiple units of equipment housing associated with EV charging infrastructure without planning permission (permitted development is currently limited to one unit). - Increasing the maximum cumulative volume limit from 29 cubic metres to 45 cubic metres. - Introducing a new permitted development right for cross-pavement solutions allowing homeowners without driveways to connect their home EV charger across a pavement more easily	DfT
The National Audit Office has concluded that upgrades to the electricity grid are necessary to support economic growth but need to accelerate to avoid rising costs being passed on to consumers.	National Audit Office
The government has published a response to a consultation on strategic policy guidance for Ofgem, which contains an expectation that network	DESNZ

investment and procurement should support UK manufacturing, skills and regional economic growth.	
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CONSULTATIONS AND REVIEWS	LINK
The government is consulting on new planning powers for “applications of strategic importance” for the mayors of strategic authorities in England The proposed 'potential strategic importance' (PSI) regime would cover: • Solar: 50–100MW • Onshore wind: 50–100MW • Standalone battery storage: 100MW+ • Certain electricity network infrastructure For projects within these thresholds, mayors could have powers to call in applications (and become the local planning authority for the purposes of determining the application) or direct local planning authorities to refuse them. <i>The consultation is open until October 5th</i>	MHCLG
The Department for Transport has launched a consultation to assess whether the UK's Zero Emission Vehicle Mandate – seeking to phase out the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2030 - remains effective in accelerating the transition to electric vehicles. The consultation does not propose firm changes yet, but responses could inform future amendments to the Mandate. Areas under consideration include: • Maintaining or adjusting annual EV sales targets. • Revising compliance mechanisms for manufacturers. • Introducing alternative policy measures. • Clarifying the definition of vehicles permitted after the 2030 phase-out date <i>The consultation is open until October 23rd</i>	DfT
The Department for Transport has published a summary of responses to a consultation on Net Zero ports which concluded in 2025. Respondents estimated energy requirements could rise to two to ten times current levels as ports electrify operations, with average future capacity needs reaching about 91MW. The strongest message from respondents was that access to electricity networks is a major constraint to decarbonisation.	DfT
The government has launched a call for evidence on new or emerging electricity generation technologies that could participate in future Capacity Market (CM) auctions, which ensure sufficient electricity supply during peak demand periods by paying providers for their availability to deliver power when required. Potential technologies include: • Hydrogen-to-Power (H2P) • Thermal Plasma Electrolysis (TPE) • Consumer-Led Flexibility (Demand Side Response) • Flexible Compute Capacity (FCC)	DESNZ

Offshore Hybrid Assets: Including multi-purpose interconnectors combined with offshore wind generation <i>The consultation is open until October 4th</i>	
The National Heat Risk Commission has launched a call for evidence into how the UK can improve resilience to the growing risk of extreme heat. The Commission wants to understand how organisations have been affected by extreme heat, what they are doing to prepare and respond; and what would help enable further action. <i>The call is open until October 30th</i>	National Heat Risk Commission
As part of its Sustainable Environments Programme, Innovate UK Business Connect is undertaking a survey to better understand how local authorities are approaching climate adaptation and resilience. The survey seeks to identify innovation needs, barriers to action, and opportunities to accelerate the adoption of innovative solutions. <i>The survey is open until September 25th</i>	UKRI

FUNDING ANNOUNCED	LINK
The North East Mayoral Strategic Authority has launched a £3.95m Energy Accelerator, including a £2m fund to help local projects access specialist technical, legal and commercial expertise and a £800,000 capital fund for community-focussed clean energy projects and training and support for people developing new schemes.	NEMSA
255 homes, a hospital and seven schools and colleges in Bradford will benefit from cleaner heating and lower bills thanks to an extension of the city's heat network, thanks to £9.7m funding from the latest round of the Heat Network Efficiency Scheme. Applications are currently open for the next round of the scheme, which provides funding to support improvements to existing district heating or communal heating projects.	DESNZ
An Ultra-Long Duration Energy Storage Challenge has been launched offering £28m of funding for the development of technology capable of storing clean energy for over 100 hours	UKRI
A Northern Gas Networks hydrogen storage project has been awarded further innovation funding from the energy regulator. The Knapton H2 Storage for H2P project in North Yorkshire will now progress into its next phase of development with funding from Ofgem's Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF).	NGN
Refreshed eligibility criteria have been published for the Heat Pump Training Grant, which provides heating engineers with discounts of up to £500 towards the cost of heat pump installation training The current eligibility criteria are that the applicant: Works for a business with 250 employees or fewer, is a sole trader, or is unemployed.	DESNZ

- Is employed by, or is themselves certified through, a recognised Competent Person Scheme for heating and hot water installations. - Has not, or whose business has not, received more than £315,000 in government subsidies over the previous three years. The government has also published details of regional training centres for the training, including the Baxi and Worcester Bosch facilities in Wakefield.	
The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has launched the second round of the Common Ground Award, which offers up to £100,000 towards the cost of constructing or renovating facilities, spaces, and equipment that enables organisations to deliver services that brings people from different backgrounds together.	MHCLG

RESEARCH AND STATISTICS	LINK
Figures for July from the Boiler Upgrade Scheme show an increase of 112% on total applications compared to same month in 2026 – and an 81% rise since the grant rose from £7500 to £9000.	DESNZ
Regen have published a new guide aimed at helping community energy groups navigate the grid connections process.	Regen
The Energy Savings Trust have updated their step-by-step guidance for homeowners on fitting rooftop solar to domestic properties.	EST

MISCELLANEOUS	LINK
Research from NESTA in 2023 found 55% of people who visit a working heat pump go on to install one within six months. The organisation has subsequently developed a free service connecting people who are interested in heat pumps to people near them who already have one.	NESTA
Major oil and gas producer Oman has launched a net-zero strategy which will see the nation aim to cut 33% of emissions by 2035 with a major increase in solar, wind, battery storage, and green hydrogen.	TCD
NESO is inviting expressions of interest to join the Strategic Boards and Working Groups that will support the development of the Regional Energy Strategic Plan (RESP) for the North East and Yorkshire. Further information about the roles and how to express an interest is available here: RESP Governance in the Nations and Regions A Simple Guide to RESP Governance <i>Expressions of interest close on October 9th</i>	NESO