

Local Net Zero Forum: Terms of Reference

Background

1. Section 4V of the **Net Zero Strategy** - Local Climate Action - states that Government will *'Build on existing engagement with local actors by establishing a **Local Net Zero Forum** to bring together national and local government senior officials on a regular basis to discuss policy and delivery options on Net Zero'*.

Purpose

2. The aim of the Local Net Zero Forum (LNZF) will be to improve engagement between central and local government on net zero, to support clearer delivery roles and expectations for local government, and to discuss how local government can show place leadership on Net Zero.
3. The LNZF will provide a better gateway for local government into the UK Government on strategic net zero issues and a key opportunity for both national and local government to collaborate and co-design options which can maximise the place-based delivery of net zero.

Membership

4. The LNZF will cover England only and be co-chaired by DESNZ and, from March 2023, the Local Government Association (LGA).
5. Government membership will be cross-departmental, with senior-level representation in each Department.
6. Local government membership will be at senior level, representing different local government organisations across the different tiers of local authorities including County, District, Parish, and Town councils. Representatives will be from a cross-section of local authority functions.
7. The membership list is at Annex A.
8. DESNZ will provide the secretariat.

Conflicts of interest

9. All members will be asked to declare any conflicts of interest before joining and in relation to any discussion item.

Remit

10. The LNZF will focus on collective discussion with the aim of improving mutual understanding and reaching consensus, where possible, on key policy and delivery issues relating to the local delivery of net zero. As set out in the Net Zero Strategy, the LNZF will support the establishment of clearer expectations on delivery roles for local government and discuss how local government can

provide place leadership on net zero. The LNZF will provide a better engagement route into central government for local government on net zero issues, with DESNZ leading the coordination across central government.

11. The LNZF is a strategic and collaborative forum. It will focus on strategic, cross-cutting issues rather than discussions on individual issues related to specific programmes.
12. Any member may propose issues for discussion.
13. The LNZF will not have formal decision-making powers. It will, however, provide an opportunity to raise issues which can then be reflected in existing respective decision-making processes within central and local government.
14. The LNZF is an official level technical working group. It does not have Ministerial representation, however, DESNZ Ministers have agreed to hold two accompanying meetings a year to discuss local net zero with councillors.

Ways of working

15. Meetings will normally be on a quarterly basis, with a hybrid approach so that representatives can participate in person or remotely via MS Teams. Forum Papers will be circulated prior to each meeting.
16. The LNZF will be underpinned by Task and Finish Groups, coordinated by DESNZ, with the involvement of, and/or co-leadership by, other government departments and local government as appropriate for each Group. The Task and Finish Groups will be responsible for driving forward the actions and decisions set by the Forum, reporting back to the Forum and presenting and contributing to Forum papers.
17. All Forum members are expected to conduct discussions in a polite and respectful manner at all times.

Confidentiality

18. In order to enable open discussions, the LNZF will generally operate under the 'Chatham House Rule', which means that participants are free to use the information received but must not disclose either the identity or the affiliation of the speaker(s).
19. Formal minutes of the LNZF meetings will therefore only record key issues and points rather than a detailed transcript of the discussions.
20. To enable open discussions of sensitive issues, some items may be discussed under strict confidentiality requirements – where participants may not disclose the nature or content of the discussion.

21. Forum papers and minutes may not be shared with anyone who is not a Forum member without the prior consent of the secretariat. This group may on occasion receive unpublished government analysis. Such analyses are strictly confidential and shared with members of the group on the understanding that they will not be further shared in any form.
22. By accepting membership of the Forum, all members agree to the confidentiality requirements of membership.

Update

23. The terms of reference will be reviewed, and if necessary, updated on an annual basis. The next review will be expected at the fourth meeting of the Local Net Zero Forum.

Annex A – Membership List

Local Net Zero Forum members represent the following organisations:

Local government:

Organisation
Local Government Association
Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport (ADEPT)
Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE)
M10 Group
London Councils/ LEDNet
UK100
Core Cities
R9 Group
SOLACE
County Councils Network (CCN)
District Councils Network (DCN)
Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC)
Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA)
North East Climate Group
Local Adaptation Advisory Panel (LAAP)

Central government:

DESNZ
 DLUHC
 HMT
 Defra
 DfT
 DCMS
 CO