

Where next for local climate action?

A Blueprint Coalition panel discussion – 12 July 2023

This event convened a cross-sector, cross-party panel from politics, local government and civil society, to talk about the future of local climate policy. Our panellists were:

- **Louise Marix Evans**, *chair* – author of the Climate Change Committee’s 2022 report on local government’s role in net zero delivery
- **Cllr Richard Clewer (Con)** – Leader of Wiltshire Council
- **Wera Hobhouse MP (Lib Dem)** – Party Spokesperson for Energy, Climate Change and Transport
- **Anthony Payne** – President of the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport
- **Miriam Turner** – Co-Executive Director of Friends of the Earth
- **Dr Candice Howarth** – Head of Local Climate Action at LSE’s Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change

This document rounds up some key takeaways from the discussion, and shares further resources on this topic.

Please do share and make use of these in your vital local work, and help us keep pushing for more support for it by:

- [Reading](#) and [supporting](#) the Blueprint Coalition’s 2024 manifesto asks to all parties
- Continuing the conversation by engaging with us on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#)

Finally – thank you for all that you do in your local areas, for our communities and the environment we all depend on. This event reminded us again just how vital it is, and we will continue to do everything we can to support it.

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Eight key takeaways from our panel discussion:

1. **We urgently need to accelerate climate action, nationally and locally.**
Anthony Payne noted that the CCC has expressed decreasing confidence that the UK will meet its targets. Miriam Turner noted that no local area is yet able to act at the pace and scale we need to deliver, and this will not happen without relevant national strategies supported by local powers and funding to deliver.
2. **Local climate action is a cost-effective, impactful and flexible way of delivering many of the key measures we need.**
Candice Howarth shared the latest academic evidence that local delivery will be the most rapid and cost-effective means of progressing many climate actions. Miriam Turner and Wera Hobhouse highlighted the number of levers held by local government in this space, from waste to planning to small business support.
3. **We all need to act and pull in the same direction, but the same solutions won't work everywhere – so local government and local decision-making is crucial.**
Wera Hobhouse noted the central importance of local democracy in achieving a just transition. Richard Clewer therefore called on national decision-makers to set ambitious policy while allowing investment and delivery decisions to be made locally.
4. **Climate action will require delivery on timescales beyond political cycles, so we need cross-party commitments, consistency and long-term funding to support this.**
Richard Clewer highlighted that piecemeal, competitive funding on issues like retrofit not only makes delivery difficult, but also wastes huge council resources that could be used to deliver.
5. **Support and investment in local government will unlock local cross-sector partnerships and community action that are crucial to delivering.**
Anthony Payne highlighted the critical importance of the Blueprint Coalition's civil society, charity and research partners, and the importance of similar partnerships in local delivery. Richard Clewer also emphasised local small business communities need more support, via local government, to decarbonise, reduce their energy bills and prepare for the future.
6. **We urgently need an unambiguously net-zero aligned planning system and infrastructure investment, to allow for rapid and tailored local decision-making.**
Wera Hobhouse, Richard Clewer and Anthony Payne all highlighted the need for consistent, unambiguous, net-zero aligned planning policy to support local retrofit and net zero new build – as well as the need for nationally supported, locally flexible action on transport and energy.
7. **Climate adaptation and nature are vital for people in our local areas.**
Candice Howarth reminded us of the critical importance of integrating adaptation and mitigation to protect our communities from the effects of the changing climate, and Richard Clewer shared that the natural environment is key in bringing local communities with us.
8. **Local people and communities are, and must be, at the heart of all we do.**
Miriam Turner shared the work that Friends of the Earth do with local people, groups, and councils to connect communities into this work, and Candice Howarth shared her research on embedding citizens and community climate literacy into local decision-making.

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Further resources

These resources and local examples are from our panellists and Blueprint Coalition members, or were shared by attendees in the event chat.

They are not comprehensive, but we hope they will provide a useful jumping-off point for exploring further into the world of local climate policy, and innovative solutions being pioneered in our local areas – which we urgently need to scale up and accelerate further.

If you have more resources and case studies to share, we'd love to hear about them on social media!

Resources from the Blueprint Coalition

- [Blueprint for Accelerating Local Climate Action](#) (2020) and [progress tracker](#) (2022)
- [Manifesto Asks to all parties](#) (2023)
- [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#)
- [Case studies of council good practice](#), led by Friends of the Earth & Ashden (2022)

Other local climate policy resources

- UK100 [Powers in Place](#) report (2023)
- [CCC briefing report on local government and net zero](#) (2022)
- PCAN research report on [Enabling Place-Based Climate Action in the UK](#) (2023)
- [Connecting the Watts: The case for a net zero delivery authority](#)v (2021)

Local delivery and innovation – case studies and resources

- [Carbon Literacy Toolkit](#) for local authorities
- [Communicating with young adults](#) about climate change
- Lancaster People's Jury – partnership between the [council](#) and the [university](#)
- Attendees discussed **planning** system innovations, and associated challenges, in [Chelmsford](#), [Cornwall](#), Bath and [Lancaster](#)
- Case studies of **rural transport decarbonisation** were highlighted from [Hope Valley](#) and the [West Midlands](#)

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