

Local Energy Plans and beyond



How communities can work with local authorities for a net zero future.

Introduction

From now until 2045, Scotland's homes, workplaces, and communities must transform to be warmer, greener, and more efficient. This goal is Scotland-wide, but solutions will look different in each area depending on the needs, resources, and priorities of each community. A Local Energy Plan, prepared by the local community, is a way for people to have a voice about what the future of energy and transportation will look like in their area. We have resources on how to develop a Local Energy Plan:

- [Community-led local energy plan toolkit](#)
- [Guide to developing community-led local energy planning](#)

Local authorities across Scotland are also preparing plans to decide how energy will be supplied and used in the future. These plans can provide communities with information on current energy supply and demand. They also set out how the local authority will prioritise funding and decarbonisation projects. However, this relationship should not be a one-way street. Local Energy Plans can influence how local authorities target areas and projects based on community priorities. When communities and local authorities work together, they can create a more sustainable and collaborative future.

The following information will help you link your Local Energy Plan to local authority-led planning, whether your plan already exists or is yet to be developed.



How can Local Energy Plans influence local authority-led planning?

There are several tools and documents that Scottish local authorities use for energy and transportation planning: Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (LHEES), Energy Masterplans, Heat Network Zones, Local Transport Strategies, and Local Development Plans.

Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (LHEES)

Areas of focus: *heating, energy efficiency, fuel poverty, net zero, residential buildings, commercial buildings, public buildings, heat networks*

Overview: Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (LHEES) are documents created by local authorities to support Scotland's net zero and fuel poverty goals. Every local authority is required to publish a strategy and delivery plan by the end of 2023 and then update them every five years, focusing on local priorities and actions for decarbonising heating and improving energy efficiency. An LHEES can provide useful information, analysis and data on decarbonising heating in an area, including targeting specific areas for certain types of work. It also includes an initial review of areas that could potentially be suitable for a heat network. Every LHEES should involve consultation and engagement with local communities, although it is up to the local authority to decide how it will go about this. LHEES will support more detailed planning of energy efficiency improvements and heat decarbonisation and can also support energy network planning.

LHEES and Local Energy Plans: If your community has a Local Energy Plan, any priorities and plans that involve energy efficiency, decarbonising heating, or heat networks will be relevant to your local authority's LHEES. The contents of your Local Energy Plan may influence where your local authority will target projects and funding in the future. If you are not already in contact with your local authority's LHEES officer, you should contact them to discuss your Local Energy Plan.

Table 1 gives an overview of the information available from an LHEES to inform your Local Energy Plan.

Heat Network Zoning

Areas of focus: *net zero, energy, heat networks*

Overview: Heat networks are systems that supply heat to multiple buildings at once from a central heating source using a network of underground pipes. They vary in size and can serve anything from a couple of buildings to an entire city. If a building is connected to a heat network, it no longer needs its own individual heating system such as a gas boiler or electric heaters. Heat networks will play a significant part in achieving Scotland's net zero targets.

Since 30 May 2023, all local authorities have been required to identify, review, designate, and publish areas as Heat Network Zones; areas that are especially

suitable for heat networks. This is to facilitate the development of heat networks by local authorities, private companies, or a community owned company/non-profit. This will be most relevant for urban areas because more densely populated areas are better suited for heat networks. These zones are identified from data that was collected during the creation of an LHEES, and from other sources including [Building Assessment Reports](#), and usually exist in the form of a map.

Heat Network Zoning and Local Energy Plans: Heat Network Zoning will be most relevant for Local Energy Plans created for urban areas. When identifying areas as potential Heat Network Zones, local authorities must use data to see where a heat network could be feasible. They have the option to incorporate additional information to factor into their decision. If your Local Energy Plan discusses heat networks, such as indicating that people in a specific area are interested in connecting to a heat network, your local authority may use this to prioritise heat networks in that area over others. For example, your Local Energy Plan could include an action about raising awareness of heat networks in an area that the local authority has designated as suitable. Additionally, if your area is designated as a heat network zone, upgrading individual heating systems will be less of a priority, as you may be offered a connection to a heat network in the future as an alternative.

The establishment of a heat network could lead to opportunities for community investment, ie ownership of a proportion of a heat network, where profits can be reinvested into the community.

Table 1 gives an overview of the information available from Heat Network Zoning to inform your Local Energy Plan.

Energy Masterplans

Areas of focus: *heating, energy, energy efficiency, fuel poverty, net zero, transportation, residential buildings, commercial buildings, public buildings, heat networks*

Overview: Energy Masterplans are written by one or more local authority and usually have a greater scope than an LHEES. They may include additional areas such as transportation and renewable energy generation. They are not required by the Scottish Government and so they often vary depending on a local authority's priorities. Sometimes, they can involve several local authorities. For example, the Ayrshire Energy Masterplan includes North, East, and South Ayrshire.

Energy Masterplans & Local Energy Plans: Local Energy Plans can help inform how a local authority prioritises funding and projects in an energy masterplan for issues such as energy and transport. You should contact your local authority to find out if it has an energy masterplan. If so, you should contact the designated person and find out how your Local Energy Plan can be incorporated.

Table 1 gives an overview of the information available from an Energy Masterplan to inform your Local Energy Plan.

Other plans

Local authorities will also have Local Development Plans that will indicate energy and transport priorities for the area. You should review these documents to check if their priorities overlap with your Local Energy Plan. Local Development Plans are renewed at least every 10 years. The process of preparing [Local Development Plans](#) includes compiling an Evidence Report, and local authorities must engage with the public in this. Engagement in the Evidence Report, and consultation on the Proposed Local Development Plan itself, are opportunities for communities to use their Local Energy Plan to influence local authority plans. See Table 1 for more information.

[Local transport strategies](#) set out local transport or traffic authority's transport policies and plans, and align with Scottish national and regional strategies. There is no general statutory requirement for a local authority to have a Local Transport Strategy in place. The draft Local Development Plan Regulations and Guidance says that regard must be given to any Local Transport Strategies relating to the area where a Plan is to be prepared. Engagement on the Local Development Plan could also be relevant to the Local Transport Strategy.

How can local authority-led energy planning help you create (and update) your Local Energy plan?

Table 1 explains what information local authorities have and how this could inform your Local Energy Plan

Output		LHEES	Energy masterplan	Heat Network Zoning	Local transport strategy	Local Development Plan
Published report available to the public		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Contact person within the local authority		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
The local authority's priorities for:	Private and social housing	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes
	Non-residential buildings	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes
	Transport		Potentially		Yes	Yes
Geographic areas where the local authority will prioritise funding and projects		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Potentially
A review of all relevant local, regional, and national policies		Yes	Potentially		Potentially	No
Data on how much heat is used in an area		Yes	Potentially	Yes		Potentially – in the Evidence Report
Data on areas that have homes suitable for:	Energy efficiency measures (insulation, window glazing, etc.)	Yes	Yes			
	Heat decarbonisation measures (heat pumps, electric heating, etc.)	Yes	Yes			
Data on areas that are potentially suitable for heat networks		Yes	Potentially	Yes		Potentially
Data on fuel poverty levels		Yes	Yes			Potentially – in the Evidence Report

Note:

- Some of these outputs are unlikely to be published, it is up to the local authority whether these will be publicly available. If they're not available, you can request these from the relevant contact person in the first instance, or through a [Freedom of Information request](#).
- Due to data protection, all data will be on a data zone level (groups of 250-500 households) or larger. Information will not be available at an individual property level.