

Empowerment Strategy

Net Zero Aberdeen

1. Purpose

1.1 How is the Empowerment Strategy relevant to Net Zero Aberdeen?

Aberdeen's transition to net zero will require collaborative and co-creative ways of working with participation from businesses, organisations and communities.

To create and implement appropriate adaptive policies and new ways of thinking and doing, there is a need to involve everyone in the decision-making process.

More agile, iterative and responsive approaches are required to involve and empower all of the various communities in identifying and prioritising their needs and suitable solutions; as well as take part in implementation of these.

2. Context

2.1 What is the context for the Empowerment theme

Scotland is committed to being a Net Zero Nation by 2045 and research has shown that 60% of the measures that need to be put in place to reach this target require fundamental change to all our lives, from the way we travel and heat our homes to what we choose to eat and drink. The transition will be successful only if we work with people, rather than imposing solutions from on high without social support.

The Scottish Government's Climate Change - Net Zero Nation: Public Engagement Strategy¹ sets out a clear vision: *Everyone in Scotland recognises the implications of the global climate emergency, fully understands and contributes to Scotland's response, and embraces their role in the transition to a net zero and climate ready Scotland.*

To achieve this there are fundamental objectives to be achieved both nationally and locally which involve raising awareness, developing opportunities for collaboration and actively empowering communities with resources and steering local intervention.

Aberdeen context

Aberdeen is the 8th largest local authority population in Scotland and is made up of 37 neighbourhoods of which 13 are in the 20% most deprived areas in Scotland. It has a relatively young population with a median age of around 38 years compared to Scottish median of 43.3 years. Aberdeen has long been a diverse city with 24.7% of its population being born outside the UK (9.8% Scotland).

Aberdeen has long held an international reputation as a global centre of excellence for the oil and gas industry energy with many of its citizens directly employed within the sector or strongly connected. Recent development aims to make Aberdeen the perfect place to build a decarbonisation hub for the UK, with investments in the city's

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/net-zero-nation-public-engagement-strategy-climate-change/pages/0/>

grade A office space, the ONE Tech Hub for digital and entrepreneurship activity, science centre, research hubs such as the ground-breaking Net Zero Technology Centre, the University of Aberdeen's Centre for Energy Transition, and the new Aberdeen South Harbour.

While it is recognised that the transition away from this dependency will be a significant challenge for the city and its communities, recent participation in the revision of the [Local Outcome Improvement Plan](#) and the locality plans for the [North](#), [South](#) and [Central](#) areas of the city saw communities and individuals highlighting the need to embrace greener more sustainable ways of working and living. This desire for more, biodiverse and connected greenspaces was also seen in [NESCAN's visioning for the future workshop outcomes](#) as part of a COP26 initiative.

All the above set the context and challenges for the Empowerment Strategy which aims to set out a framework for public engagement with people at the heart. Building on the strong [community empowerment networks](#), and the existing [organisations and partnerships](#) active in the city with a key focus on being inclusive and ensuring that all voices are heard as we work together to ensure that the ambition for Net Zero Aberdeen is turned into action.

2.2 Key challenges for the Empowerment theme

How do we:

1. **Embed fairness, inclusion and transparency** into the transition to Net Zero.
2. **Identify net zero aspirations**, values and pathways at local levels.
3. **Ensure place-based planning** and community wealth building are embedded in local development and community planning
4. **Community investment** and support and for green and low carbon infrastructure.
5. **Unlock place-based innovation** and investment into green jobs and wellbeing.
6. **Mainstream climate and nature education** into our curriculums.
7. **Promote ride sharing** culture for our transport challenge.
8. **Promote re-use** culture of products for our circular waste challenge.
9. **Aligning agendas** of energy transition, biodiversity and wellbeing in planning and investment.

2.3 What is already happening

[North East Scotland Climate Action Network](#) (NESCAN) is a collective of over 31 climate action organisations in the North East of Scotland developed by Aberdeen Climate Action in response to the need to develop a network to knit together the fast growing number of organisations and groups. Recent funding from the Scottish Government has enabled the creation of the NESCAN Hub. One of two regional hubs in Scotland, this community climate action support and collaboration hub aims to be an information, education and collaboration resource for projects to reduce carbon or increase biodiversity to build capacity and skills of those organisations and

support members and the local community to deal with climate change, biodiversity loss and help develop sustainable thriving communities.

Aberdeen has an active climate events programme which includes [Climate Week North East](#) which was founded in 2017 and regular climate cafes, workshops and talks held across the city and region.

Through schools and further education, young people are advancing learning and driving forward and participating in a range of climate initiatives. This includes direct actions to help reduce emissions in city Eco Schools, participation in the Hydrogen Challenge as well as engagement and learning around COP26 providing a stimulus for participation and discussion from global to local perspective.

Aberdeen’s globally renowned knowledge institutes are evolving to the climate and energy challenge to establish new institutes and undertake research and engagement on a range of regional skills and just transition matters with industry and community partners. That work will inform our journey to Net Zero.

3. Strategic drivers

Global	Sustainable Development Goals UNFCCC Paris Agreement
Scotland	Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 National Performance Framework / Sustainable Development Goals Programme for Government Community Wealth Building Place Principle Just Transition Commission Public Engagement Strategy for Climate Change Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan
Regional	Cities and regions policy Regional Skills Strategy Aberdeen City & Shire Regional Economic Strategy
Aberdeen	Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-2026 (2021 Refresh)

4. Approach

4.1 Overview

Strategic Aim: We will empower stakeholders to understand their needs and remove barriers to their goals, working with them on our net zero journey, ensuring a strong partnership approach. We will communicate with stakeholders, allowing us all to learn and adapt, while maintaining a view across the Net Zero themes, community projects and other initiatives.

Key Outcomes	Strategic objectives	Measures
Increase communication and understanding	Inform stakeholders about climate change and engage with them to help understand their needs	# comms outputs # people engaged
Improve collaboration and participation	Facilitate collaboration and partnership in the design and development of initiatives	# people educated and trained # projects designed
Ensure intervention and action	Design and deliver diverse initiatives, tackling challenges and with stakeholders at the heart	# projects funded # jobs created Emissions reduction

There will be a need to develop local just transition indicators that identify reductions in carbon, increase and distribution of green jobs and independent measures of inclusion, fairness and transparency.

4.2 About the approach

With the [National Standards for Community Engagement](#) as the foundation of our approach we will use three main approaches which determine type and format of engagement to be used however none of these should be viewed in isolation as are all interlinked and more when combined

Communication / Understand

To successfully support empowerment we must first understand the needs of our stakeholders. These needs will vary and are dependent on many factors including: business types, citizen age, where they live, learn, work, how they travel and their income. There is a need to ensure that communication, education and training are accessible for all. To be successful there is a need to identify the barriers faced, to understand the motivations and solutions for different stakeholder groups.



Climate change and energy transition information and education needs to be relatable to all by first understanding stakeholder needs and what it means to them:

- Identify priority groups where awareness campaigns should be focused i.e. Low Emission Zone residents
- Identify place-based narratives around climate change that resonate with businesses, individuals, communities and young people
- Develop and deliver targeted climate literacy campaigns for all audiences
- Accessible information for young people linked to Aberdeen's net zero approach
- Use customer insights to understand the challenges faced
- Clear communication of climate change at a localised levels

Collaboration / Participate

Designing collaboratively involves taking the needs of stakeholders into account and embedding a culture of true collaboration in all projects. As well as designing with, it's also about empowering them to be part of the journey and to ultimately take on the decision making and delivery. This can be either institutionally led or grassroots people led.

- Creating space to bring stakeholders together to discuss and collaborate on ideas
- Engage with all to stakeholders to ensure citywide inclusion
- Ensuring that mechanisms to participate are inclusive, accessible and equitable
- Bringing people together to deliberate, leading to co-decision making, which is citizen focused, e.g. citizen juries, participatory budgeting, citizen assemblies, etc.
- Co-creating business and community that take account of climate change
- Empowering / reforming organisations and groups
- Increasing learning opportunities, participation and involvement from young people
- Supporting stakeholders to enable a true effective people led approach
- Enabling others to develop and deliver initiatives e.g. local / community energy, decentralised management of green spaces

Intervention / Act

This approach relates to choice and the barriers around those choices. Engagement to incentivise action after decision making, addressing barriers or challenges and seeking solutions, e.g. education programmes, cycle infrastructure, etc. Continually reviewing and monitoring, building in learning into future planning.

- Finding solutions to barriers to making choices
- Identifying key incentives
- Reviewing interventions and adapting/changing them to push change
- Ensuring infrastructure is in place to support positive choices e.g. walking or cycling
- Providing resources, make it easier to recycle/reuse
- Delivering demos, training and building capacity
- Enabling and encouraging exploration and development of alternative solutions and ideas

5. Risks for this theme

The approaches in this theme must be used in tandem to avoid undermining the aim, to empower stakeholders. Likewise, they should not be overused, to avoid stakeholder fatigue and loss of engagement. Well considered, collaborative and efficient approaches are suggested from national to local levels and across partners.

It is important to ensure that progress is transparent, if stakeholders are making changes or adapting the way they live and travel we must ensure that they can see the progress and benefits for themselves and the city. A variety of communication channels should be used to provide updates on the implementation of this strategy.

A strong focus on designing and delivering initiatives on raising awareness, providing education and training is critical to ensuring a just transition for Aberdeen, drawing on the Just Transition Fund for the Northeast.

Identifying indicators for changes in behaviour is a significant challenge. On one hand given the scale of possible impact, over 60% of total reductions, the impact will be obvious. It will nevertheless be difficult to separate out behaviours which change due to a change in principle and those that change due to other policy levers.

6. Theme synergies

Mobility	Promote awareness of and access to affordable low/zero carbon private and public transport, active travel and ride sharing.
Buildings & Heat	Provide affordable finance for energy retrofit, heat and power solutions and ensure no increase in fuel poverty.
Energy Supply	Deliver skills, jobs and engage citizens in affordable zero carbon energy and heat solutions and community energy initiatives.
Circular Economy	Promote the waste hierarchy, circularity in general, developing local initiatives and building new skills and jobs.
Natural Environment	Empower citizens to shape and manage nature-based solutions and associated benefits to the challenges in their communities.