

LONDON'S JUST TRANSITION

The journey to an equitable, net-zero city



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About the London Sustainable Development Commission (LSDC)

The LSDC was established in 2002 to provide independent advice to the Mayor of London on ways to make London a sustainable, world-class city. The Commission works to promote sustainable development, embed sustainability into London-wide strategies and help make sustainability a meaningful and understandable concept for all Londoners.

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FOREWORD



Malini Mehra, Chair of the LSDC working group on the Just Transition

For more than 20 years, the London Sustainable Development Commission (LSDC) has provided independent advice to the Mayor of London on how to integrate sustainable development into policy-making to improve Londoners' quality of life¹.

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement on climate change in 2015 has given a new globally agreed framework for urban sustainable development and climate action. Cities have followed suit and our work at the LSDC has sought to improve awareness of the SDGs and their relevance for London², in particular SDG 13 on climate change and with key stakeholders such as young Londoners³. The SDGs advocate a whole-of-society approach with their call to 'leave no one behind' and have given impetus to an increasing focus on social transition and inequality in meeting broader economic and environmental goals. This has driven our work on social value at the LSDC⁴ and, in the wake of the adoption of a more ambitious net zero goal by the Mayor of London⁵, has inspired this piece of work exploring what a just transition to a net zero future by 2030 could look like for our city.

Countries, cities and communities across the world are grappling with the challenge of ensuring a sustainable and just transition to meet the climate emergency. This has become all the more politically, economically and socially complex with the fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic, increasing climate impacts and the energy shock caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. These and other factors have compounded the economic impact on households, sharpening the cost of living crisis for millions. London has not been immune to the impacts of this global polycrisis and has further borne the brunt of the impact of Brexit which has disrupted labour markets and affected inward investment.

It is against this sobering background that our report considers how to provide a vision of a just transition and recommendations that could guide this process for the Mayor of London and borough leaders.

The traditional understanding of a just transition relates to the economic transition to a low-carbon, net zero economy with a focus on jobs, workers and livelihoods. This framing has driven much of the city-based work on a just transition, including that at bodies such as the International Labour Organisation, labour unions and city networks such as C40. In a [recent report](#) exploring the just transition in South Africa, USA and Europe, C40 explains the pressing case for cities:

“The necessary scale and pace of the transition is unprecedented, and affects the lives and livelihoods of workers across many sectors that need to be phased out or transformed. To address job losses, provide all workers with good quality jobs and create thriving and equitable communities for everyone, we need a just transition.”

We agree with this approach but have expanded the framing of the notion of just transition to include the institutional, governance and community engagement dimensions of the shift to a net-zero, resilient future in which no one is left behind. Our focus is on the unique challenges faced by a global city such as London with its idiosyncratic configuration of governance institutions, its complex demographics and a highly diversified economy with strongly integrated UK and international linkages.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report sets out what a 'just transition' could look like for London, and how to achieve it⁶. For the LSDC, a 'just transition' means that London's plans to tackle the climate emergency must be fair.

We must support people to thrive while living within our finite planetary boundaries, in keeping with the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#), the [Paris Climate Agreement](#), and the Mayor of London's target to achieve net-zero carbon by 2030. It means creating a better, more sustainable city for all Londoners. This is a departure from the conventional framing of the 'just transition', which originally referred more specifically to re-skilling workers for new green jobs as we build a net-zero carbon economy.

London is a global city of 9 million people. It draws great strength from its diversity; its place as a global cultural hub; and its role as a business centre (including its growing green economy); around half of the capital's area is green and blue space, and its carbon emissions per capita fell by 53% between 1990 and 2019. However, systemic inequalities remain based on gender, race, disability and other factors; affluent neighbourhoods sit alongside those in poverty. These issues also underlie other social injustices including the cost-of-living and housing crises, as well as environmental inequalities.

For example, 13.2% of London's households are in fuel poverty (471,000 homes) – and Black, Asian and minority ethnic ('BAME') households are 35% more likely to be fuel-poor than white households⁸. Low-income and BAME Londoners are disproportionately affected by air pollution, despite being less likely to own cars. Similarly, the least wealthy Londoners are hit hardest by the effects of climate change such as overheating and have the least resources to respond⁹, despite London's poorest boroughs producing the least carbon emissions and the wealthiest boroughs emitting the most¹⁰.

Just as climate change is a social justice issue in London, there are parallels with global climate injustice, where the richest nations drive climate change through overconsumption, while low-income nations suffer the worst climate impacts despite emitting the least carbon. These impacts are often felt especially keenly by the many Londoners with international ties.

In order to address climate justice in London – and in order for Londoners to see environmental policies as fair and desirable – the city's solutions to environmental challenges must also help to build a more equitable society. That means unlocking the huge potential co-benefits of climate action for society and the economy. For example, realising the opportunity to deliver more energy-efficient homes, tackling fuel poverty and ending the cost-of-living crisis while adapting to the effects of climate change; to create greener, thriving, walkable neighbourhoods that are healthier with better air quality and widen access to nature; and provide green jobs with decent wages and conditions.

But to unlock this prize, we have our work cut out. Despite the opportunities for the co-benefits noted above, there are many unsolved challenges. For example, there is a trade-off between acting quickly to maximise climate benefits vs moving slowly enough to bring people along with new changes.

While 89% of Londoners want to prevent climate change¹¹, deeper engagement is needed to build trust and give Londoners a say on the actions and issues affecting them. Not all Londoners are on an equal footing to take advantage of the benefits of a green economy – for example, wealthier home-owners are better able to access subsidised support for energy-saving improvements to their homes¹². And in order to build on the plethora of action already being taken by organisations across London, more coordination is needed to ensure we all pull in the same direction.

So London's political leaders must design policies that give all Londoners fair access to the benefits of a more sustainable city, while protecting the most vulnerable from risks. They must also build buy-in from the whole of society for the urgent action needed.

We are not starting from scratch: huge strides to achieve net zero and tackle inequalities have already been made. For example, the GLA's retrofit programme is helping fuel-poor Londoners improve their homes' energy efficiency, cutting bills during the cost-of-living crisis while reducing carbon emissions. The Future Neighbourhoods 2030 programme empowers London's most climate-impacted and marginalised communities to co-create projects that tackle local social and environmental issues, such as improving access to green space. London Councils' climate action programmes are supporting London's green economy, reducing supply-chain emissions and more. Significant work is also being done by community groups, NGOs and the private sector.

But to make the next steps towards London's just transition, this report makes seven recommendations for national, regional and local government. These are supported by evidence gathered through desktop research and interviews with experts.

Steps towards London's just transition

Seven recommendations for national, regional and local government

- 1 Set out a vision people can get behind: a greener, fairer, more pleasant city for all**
- 2 Build trust by convening community engagement that informs decision making**
- 3 Build governance to plan and create shared responsibility for a just transition**
- 4 Devolve powers and funding to the most appropriate level of government**
- 5 Design environmental policies that distribute benefits and costs fairly**
- 6 Empower communities and organisations to take action**
- 7 Collaborate beyond London**

An equitable, net-zero city

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY continued

The report's recommendations and findings are summarised below:

1 Set out a vision people can get behind: a greener, fairer, more pleasant city for all

Urgent action is needed to tackle the climate and ecological emergencies. This includes retrofitting homes and workplaces to be more energy-efficient and cheaper to heat and cool; cutting vehicle journey mileage dramatically; increasing and enhancing green spaces, flood prevention and heat resilience; and creating thousands of new green jobs.

Many of London's political bodies have their own climate action programmes (including the GLA, most boroughs, London Councils and the London Partnership Board). However, the goals in these plans are challenging, and there is currently no shared vision of how to address them as a city.

London's political leaders now need to set out a shared vision of a just transition for the whole city and communicate it to all Londoners – why it is needed; the nature of the changes needed; and how all Londoners can access its benefits to improve their lives. Providing this clarity on future plans would enable London's communities and businesses to give informed support, while helping channel investment in net-zero infrastructure by providing certainty to investors.

2 Build trust by convening community engagement that informs decision making

89% of Londoners want to prevent climate change¹³. The electorate has given the Mayor and borough leaders a clear mandate to act, and there is a good level of trust in them to do so. Significant engagement has already taken place with Londoners, including through borough citizens' climate assemblies and other methods.

However, the scale and pace of the action still needed to achieve net zero will require citizens to adjust to changes such as home retrofits and new transport habits. London's leaders must therefore continue to build public consent – **a new social compact** – to implement the green and fair policies needed for a sustainable future, if those plans are to be accepted and succeed. In order to do so they must continue to build Londoners' trust in both the intent and effectiveness of their policies and projects, requiring them to:

- **engage with citizens**, convening dialogue that inputs to decision-making and informs practical solutions. This includes deeper input to GLA strategies, borough plans and neighbourhood action;
- engage a wide and representative cross-section of Londoners, especially those whose voices are seldom heard and those most affected by changes;
- build people's capacity to meaningfully engage by giving them the right information and skills, while breaking down barriers to engagement – including by paying participants for their time.
- frame issues around people's lived experiences instead of separate policy areas, and discuss them in everyday language.

Many engagement methods are available, which should be tailored to the context. For example, citizens' assemblies can help inform borough strategies; community groups and local residents forums can give practical advice on home retrofits or street schemes; workplace engagement can enable employees to shape their organisation's plans; and long-term engagement with specific communities can help build underlying trust outside the confines of specific policies and programmes. The report presents a number of options for policy-makers to draw from.

3 Build governance to plan and create shared responsibility for a just transition

London's growing green economy can bring multiple social benefits, as described in this report. But for these benefits to be shared fairly, the transition must be properly planned and not left solely to the market. Conversely, the UK's rapid deindustrialisation in the 1980s shows the harm that can be caused – especially to the most vulnerable communities – by an unmanaged economic transition. So in order for London's green transition to be fair, it must be well-planned.

Many bodies already exist that govern different aspects of climate change and equality, but they need to be better coordinated to take a whole-London approach, while allowing local flexibility and autonomy to innovate within agreed goals. A governance framework, either led by existing institutions or a new body, is needed to deliver four functions:

- agree a shared vision and road-map for action, ensuring it is credible and resourced;
- convene major stakeholders to own delivery of agreed key actions, agreeing roles and responsibilities while managing relationships;
- coordinate delivery; and
- monitor and verify the impacts of actions, providing transparency and local accountability.

4 Devolve powers and funding to the most appropriate level of government

National government should devolve funding and powers to accelerate local climate action, as urged by Chris Skidmore's Independent Review of Net Zero¹⁴. Cities such as London are already leading the way on ambitious climate action that supports local communities – but lack the funding and powers needed to go further. Much decision-making and action is most effective and cost-efficient when done at local and regional level. A golden thread should be established between and national, regional and local governance frameworks to clarify where devolved roles and responsibilities should lie, either led by existing institutions or a new body.



5 Design environmental policies that distribute benefits and costs fairly

London's green economy is growing and will continue to do so. Its benefits should be accessible and enjoyed by all equitably. Community wealth building approaches can create public dividends by expanding community ownership of public goods and investing in better, cheaper, more accessible, green public services (e.g. public transport). This can help provide citizens with cheap green alternatives and mitigate the costs of changes in lifestyle.

The boroughs' and GLA's key environmental policies should distribute costs and risks by ability to pay, compensating the hardest hit for any costs.

This should be based on assessing the impacts on low-middle- and high-income Londoners, and different demographics, factoring in intersecting inequalities. For example, while sales from London's low-carbon industries rocketed from £20.9bn to £42.9bn between 2007/08 and 2020/21, the sector is marked by a lack of diversity – more work is needed to ensure all Londoners can access green job opportunities. Equalities Impact Assessments are currently conducted for major policies, but in future these should be more rigorous and meaningfully shape the development and selection of policy options.

The spatial distribution of impacts should be factored in and new assets such as climate adaptation measures should be targeted according to greatest need. The need for urgent climate action must also be balanced against helping communities and economies manage the pace of change. For example, getting residents accustomed to the nature of new policies and laying the groundwork to support businesses transition to greener business models.

6 Empower communities and organisations to take action

London's communities play a huge part in the life and functioning of the city. Community groups across the capital are already taking independent action on inequalities and the environment, such as volunteering to improve green spaces and reduce waste. Boroughs and the GLA already provide significant support for this social infrastructure but should strengthen it by coming together with other funders to develop further support for community groups.

7 Collaborate beyond London

London should continue to collaborate with neighbouring regions and other cities and devolved administrations across the UK and globally to share best practice, drive innovation, and build collective momentum to drive local action for the just transition. This could include learning from the Scottish Just Transition Commission, which advises the Scottish Government and which has also informed the LSDC's own approach. It also includes continuing to work with the M10 group of UK mayors and the C40 Cities climate leadership group which the Mayor of London currently chairs.

Further work for the LSDC

During 2023-24, the LSDC will research the potential benefits and impacts on Londoners of key sectors of the green economy, in order to inform how opportunities and costs can be shared fairly while listening to residents' needs.

Based on this research, the LSDC will develop practical guidance on implementing the recommendations in this report, targeted at London's decision makers.

INTRODUCTION

The LSDC's vision of London's just transition

This report sets out what a 'just transition' could look like for London, and how to achieve it¹⁵. For the LSDC, a 'just transition' means that London's plans to tackle the climate emergency must be fair.

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But to make the next steps towards London's just transition, this report makes seven recommendations for national, regional and local government. These are supported by evidence gathered through desktop research and interviews with experts.

JUST TRANSITION RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LONDON

This section sets out recommendations for how national, regional and local government should deliver a just transition. It is informed by the findings of the LSDC's enquiry (presented in the '[Findings and conclusions](#)' section) and builds on other organisations' work to develop just transition principles.^{18,19,20,21,22}

We are not starting from scratch: huge strides to achieve net zero and tackle inequalities have already been made by communities, NGOs, the private sector, the boroughs and the GLA. The following recommendations present what the LSDC believes is needed next.

1 Set out a vision people can get behind: a greener, fairer, more pleasant city for all



→ See [page 10](#) for the findings supporting this recommendation.

The GLA and most boroughs have declared a climate emergency. Many have climate action programmes; London Councils has published a [Joint Statement on Climate Change](#); and the London Partnership Board has its '[Green New Deal Mission](#)'.

However, London's political leaders now need to set out a shared vision of a just transition for the whole city and communicate it to all Londoners – why it is needed; what the end-goal looks and feels like; and how all Londoners can access its benefits to improve their lives. But they also need to communicate the major changes and tough decisions needed to get there. These won't always be easy, and Londoners and organisations need to understand what they are. Only then can the city as a whole decide whether it likes the journey and destination – and whether to pitch in to make it work.

JUST TRANSITION RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LONDON continued

2 Build trust by convening community engagement that informs decision making



→ See [page 13](#) for the findings supporting this recommendation.

89% of Londoners want to prevent climate change and the electorate has given the Mayor and borough leaders a clear mandate to act.

Significant engagement has already taken place with Londoners, including through borough citizens' climate assemblies and other methods. However, the scale and pace of the action still needed to achieve net zero will require citizens to adjust to changes such as home retrofits and new transport habits. London's leaders must therefore continue to build public consent – a new social compact – to implement the green and fair policies needed for a sustainable future, if those plans are to be accepted and succeed. In order to do so they must continue to build Londoners' trust in both the intent and effectiveness of their policies and projects, requiring them to:

- **engage with citizens**, convening dialogue that inputs to decision-making and informs practical solutions. This includes deeper input to GLA strategies, borough plans and neighbourhood action;
- engage a wide and representative cross-section of Londoners, especially those whose voices are seldom heard and those most affected by changes;
- build people's capacity to meaningfully engage by giving them the right information and skills, while breaking down barriers to engagement – including by paying participants for their time. This in turn builds participants' skills and networks ('social capital') – which in turn builds trust;
- frame issues around people's lived experiences instead of separate policy areas, and discuss them in everyday language.

Much engagement is underway already but more is needed, making fuller use of the engagement tools outlined in this report, and tailored to the audience and context.

3 Build governance to plan and create shared responsibility for a just transition



→ See [page 17](#) for the findings supporting this recommendation.

London's growing green economy can bring multiple social benefits, as described in this report. But for these benefits to be shared fairly, the transition must be properly planned and not left solely to the market.

Conversely, the UK's rapid deindustrialisation in the 1980s shows the harm that can be caused – especially to the most vulnerable communities – by an unmanaged economic transition.

So in order for London's green transition to be fair, it must be well-planned.

Many bodies already exist that govern different aspects of climate change and equality, but they need to be better coordinated to take a whole-London approach, while allowing local flexibility and autonomy to innovate within agreed goals. A governance framework, either led by existing institutions or a new body, is needed to deliver four functions:

- agree a shared vision and road-map for action, ensuring it is credible and resourced;
- convene major stakeholders to own delivery of agreed key actions, agreeing roles and responsibilities while managing relationships;
- coordinate delivery; and
- monitor and verify the impacts of actions, providing transparency and local accountability.

JUST TRANSITION RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LONDON continued

4 Devolve powers and funding to the most appropriate level of government

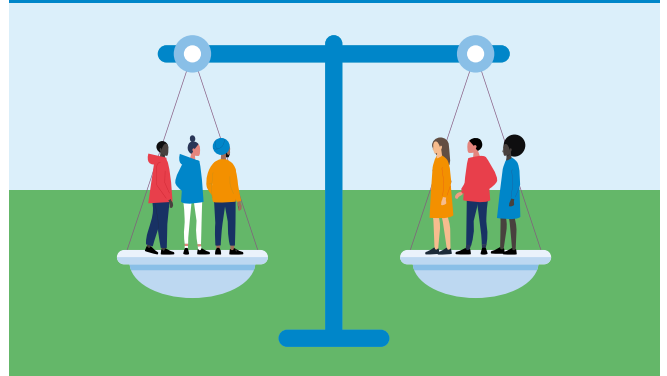


→ See [page 20](#) for the findings supporting this recommendation.

National government should devolve funding and powers to accelerate local climate action, as urged by Chris Skidmore's Independent Review of Net Zero²⁶.

Cities such as London are already leading the way on ambitious climate action that supports local communities – but lack the funding and powers needed to go further. Much decision-making and action is most effective and cost-efficient when done at local and regional level. A golden thread should be established between and national, regional and local governance frameworks to clarify where devolved roles and responsibilities should lie.

5 Design environmental policies that distribute benefits and costs fairly



→ See [page 21](#) for the findings supporting this recommendation.

London's green economy is growing and will continue to do so. Its benefits should be accessible and enjoyed by all equitably. Community wealth building approaches can create public dividends by expanding community ownership of public goods and investing in better, cheaper, more accessible, green public services (e.g. public transport). This can help provide citizens with cheap green alternatives and mitigate the costs of changes in lifestyle.

The boroughs' and GLA's key environmental policies should distribute costs and risks by ability to pay, compensating the hardest hit for any costs. This should be based on assessing the impacts on low- middle- and high-income Londoners; different demographics, factoring in intersecting inequalities; spatial distribution; and balancing the need for urgent climate action against helping communities and economies manage the pace of change. Assets such as climate adaptation measures should be targeted according to greatest need. Equalities Impact Assessments are currently conducted for major policies, but in future these should be more rigorous and meaningfully shape the development and selection of policy options.

JUST TRANSITION RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LONDON continued

6 Empower communities and organisations to take action



→ See [page 24](#) for the findings supporting this recommendation.

London's communities play a huge part in the life and functioning of the city. Boroughs and the GLA already provide significant support for this social infrastructure but should strengthen it by coming together with other funders to develop further support for community groups.

This should include technical advice on projects, provision of meeting spaces, networking and training opportunities to help connect local groups to achieve shared goals, along with targeted funding opportunities. This could help community-led activities such as volunteering in local green spaces, creating community energy projects, and boost community resilience to extreme heat and flooding caused by climate change.

7 Collaborate beyond London



→ See [page 25](#) for the findings supporting this recommendation.

London should continue to collaborate with neighbouring regions and other cities and devolved administrations across the UK and globally to share best practice, drive innovation, and build collective momentum to drive local action for the just transition.

This could include learning from the Scottish Just Transition Commission, which advises the Scottish Government and which has also informed the LSDC's own approach. It also includes continuing to work with the M10 group of UK mayors and the C40 Cities climate leadership group which the Mayor of London currently chairs.

FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

Vision of a just transition

This section supports Recommendation 1:

- 1 **Set out a vision people can get behind: a greener, fairer, more pleasant city for all**

This section explores some of the key actions London must take to tackle climate change, and why London's leaders should set out a vision for achieving a net-zero city.

London's climate action challenges

Of the many measures needed to tackle climate change, the following are key priorities for the boroughs and GLA:

- **Homes and workplaces must be retrofitted:** insulated to make them more energy-efficient and cheaper to heat and cool, while ensuring they are properly ventilated.
- **2.2 million buildings must be fitted with renewable energy sources for heating**, replacing gas boilers with heat pumps, solar thermal and other methods.
- **Vehicle journey mileage must fall dramatically** (by 27% according to the GLA's analysis²⁷) and national government must phase out fossil-fuelled vehicles.
- **We need more green spaces, flood prevention and heat resilience** measures to help adapt to extreme weather caused by climate change.
- **We need thousands of new green jobs** to do the work above, and upskill people to fill them. Jobs must be decent and accessible to all Londoners. Businesses in high-carbon sectors must be supported to transition towards green business models; workers must be supported into green jobs or compensated.

These measures can yield numerous co-benefits for communities. They can deliver better quality housing which is healthier and cheaper to heat, tackling fuel poverty during the cost of living crisis. They can create safer, more pleasant and walkable streets, in turn boosting footfall to local businesses. And they can provide better access to local green space, improving physical and mental health and estimated to save the NHS £950m per year, while enhancing biodiversity²⁸.

However, decision-makers are faced with some tough dilemmas on how to implement these in a way that seems fair to Londoners.

Retrofits

A mass retrofit programme will have complex challenges around delivery, but also on equalities and engagement. Gaining public consent to go into people's homes and install insulation and renewable energy will be a major challenge – and will need different engagement approaches for different tenure types.

Council housing and housing associations are perceived as an opportunity to deliver rapidly at scale, but this must be done sensitively. Residents should have a say in the designs and materials used in their homes, and their hyper-local knowledge can help co-design practical solutions to issues such as leaky pipes and cold spots. Housing estate residents' forums can help facilitate this – either via existing residents' groups, or the one convened by the [Clever Cities](#) project delivered by the Mayor and Peabody Housing in South-East London's Thamesmead Estate.

Which homes should be subsidised (wholly or partly), and who should pay for themselves? And are wealthier, so-called 'able to pay', homeowners also 'willing to pay'? How should London avoid an explosion in energy-guzzling portable air-conditioning units bought by those who can afford them – and a swathe of lower-income Londoners struggling to cope in heatwaves?

Who should be served first – and on what basis? Decision-makers must develop a rationale based on analysis of data including the boroughs' mapping of Local Area Energy Plans and the GLA's [London Building Stock Model](#).



2.2 million

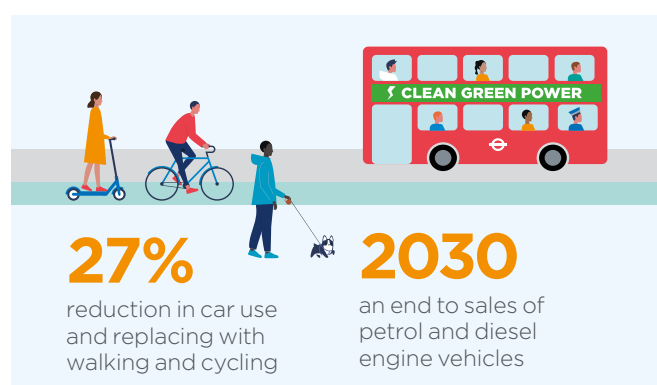
buildings to be fitted with renewable heating by 2030

FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS continued

Transport

The boroughs, the GLA and Transport for London have taken the right approach by providing better, more accessible public transport and cycling infrastructure in order to make those transport modes more desirable than car-use.

However, some measures to tackle air pollution from vehicles and encourage healthier and more sustainable travel choices (e.g. the Mayor's Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) and the boroughs' Low-Traffic Neighbourhoods) have proved controversial. (This was despite public consultation and, in the case of ULEZ, responding to consultation feedback by providing a vehicle-scrappage scheme and grace periods for compliance targeted to support the hardest-hit groups, namely low-income and disabled Londoners as well as sole traders, small businesses and charities.) This reinforces the need to continue to build on public engagement on environmental policies. Londoners must be allowed time to digest new proposals and understand their rationale, while feeling confident their voices have been heard and that plans seem fair; while decision-makers must recognise their impact on communities.

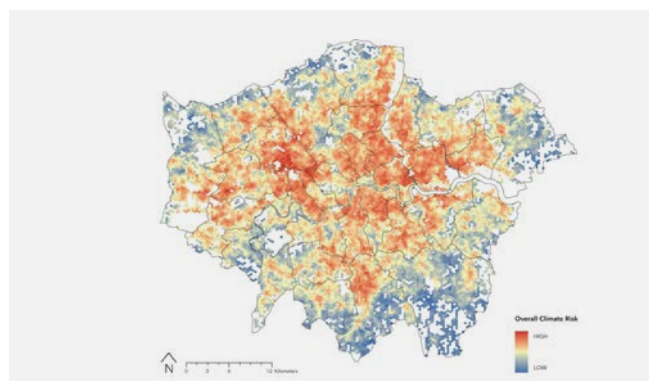


Climate adaptation

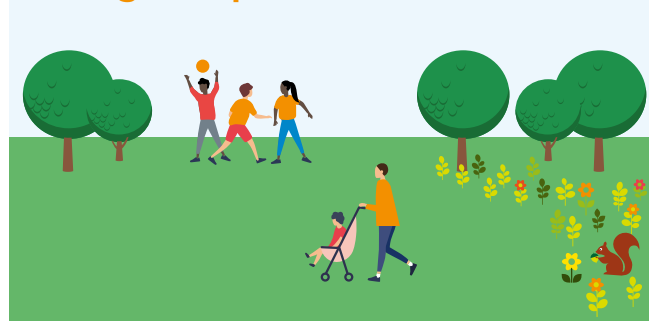
The GLA's Climate Risk Map shows the most deprived Londoners will be the hardest hit by extreme heat and flooding caused by climate change.

Investment to ameliorate these effects must prioritise the most vulnerable: those living in poor-quality or precarious housing; those least able to afford measures in their own homes; and people lacking access to green space (which disproportionately impacts low-income and BAME Londoners). Without timely and well-planned intervention there is a risk that better-off households start to install air-conditioning to cope with summer heatwaves (emitting more heat and exacerbating urban heat-island effect whilst increasing energy consumption) while poorer households are left to suffer increasingly uncomfortable or dangerous temperatures.

Climate Risk Map



More green spaces

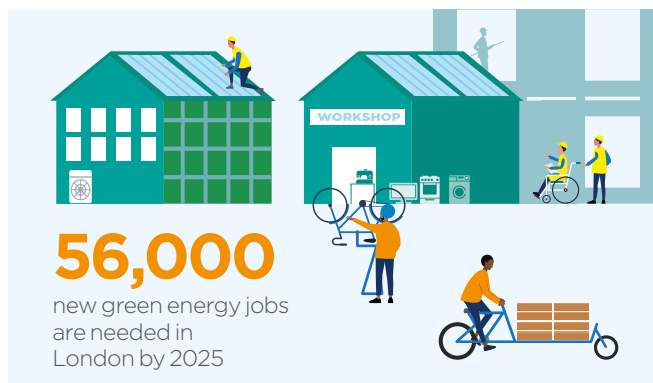


FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS continued

Green jobs and skills

The green economy can generate tens of thousands of new green jobs in London. 56,000 jobs will be needed by 2025 just to insulate our homes, install heat pumps, district heating and energy management – with many more jobs needed to support their supply chains and in other areas²⁸.

But although demand far exceeds supply for roles in green construction, it has proved difficult to recruit people into these jobs. There is also a challenge to increase the sector's diversity; this is also one (but not the only) reason the industry is struggling to recruit young people to replenish its ageing workforce. Work is underway by the GLA, the London Borough of Hounslow and others to address these issues (see the '[Fairness](#)' section), but more remains to be done.



London needs a shared vision of how to achieve a fair, net-zero city

The GLA and the majority of London's boroughs have declared a climate emergency and agree on the need to achieve net-zero. But there is no shared vision of what this looks like, or how to approach the challenges above to get there.

Many bodies in London have their own, separate visions. Several boroughs have climate action plans, as does London Councils the GLA. The London Partnership Board's '[Green New Deal Mission](#)' has a brief mission statement; London Councils also published a [Joint Statement on Climate Change](#).

But a shared vision would bring clarity to London's communities and businesses on the overall expectations for the city. It would help link up borough-level information into a regional perspective, enabling independent local action to pull in the same direction. This would also unlock investment in public environmental infrastructure by providing investors with clarity of direction and opportunities to invest at scale rather than in individual projects, which helps to manage risk.

This vision must set out a shared idea of the destination, painting a clear picture of its myriad potential co-benefits and quantifying the economic and social gains to be had. But it must not simply present a rose-tinted image – it must be clear on the trade-offs and costs of the level of ambition needed.

The vision must show how Londoners can tap into the opportunities of the green economy – and how these benefits will be shared equitably. It needs to be communicated to all Londoners and tailored to a range of audiences in accessible language, so it's not just the 'usual suspects' who are aware of environmental proposals.

Only by producing and communicating such a vision can political leaders ask Londoners to agree to the radical changes needed to create a city that is better in the long-run. This vision is the foundation on which we must build trust and consensus on a shared way forwards.

FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS continued

Trust and community engagement

This section supports Recommendation 2

2 Build trust by convening community engagement that informs decision making

While 89% of Londoners want to tackle climate change, London's leaders must still build support for what this climate action will look like in practice. This requires establishing a new 'social compact', building trust by engaging communities in dialogue.

Public trust

“Communities across the country will experience a multitude of changes – whether that be training for a job in a new green industry, cycling or using public transport more, heating their homes in new ways or reducing, reusing and recycling more to help create a circular economy. The Skidmore Review has demonstrated that net zero will bring positive economic and social changes, but they will be changes to which communities and individuals will have to adjust nonetheless.”

Mission Zero: Independent Review of Net Zero, Chris Skidmore MP³⁰

An overwhelming 89% Londoners want to prevent climate change, while only 2% do not believe in it³¹. Londoners have repeatedly elected numerous borough leaders and the Mayor on clear platforms to tackle this issue. Climate action by the boroughs and GLA has popular democratic support, and Londoners recognise the need and benefits of action – as well as the links between climate action and the cost-of-living crisis.

However, far more work remains to achieve net zero – some of which will require individuals to adjust to new changes. London's leaders must therefore continue to build public consent to implement the green and fair policies needed for a sustainable future. **In order to build this new social compact, they must continue to build trust with Londoners:** trust in both the intent and effectiveness of policies and programmes, and the institutions leading them. Building Londoners' capacity to meaningfully engage in these discussions also builds 'social capital', e.g. skills and social networks, which in turn builds trust³².

89%

of Londoners want to prevent climate change, while only 2% do not believe in it³¹

However, there remains far more work to do: only 35% of the UK population trusts the UK government (below the OECD average of 41%), while 42% trust local government³³. 55% trust the civil service; public institutions are trusted even more strongly (e.g. 80% trust the NHS).

Government bodies need to build trust in their competence to deliver, as well as trust in their good intent. Although half of OECD citizens on average want their governments to prioritise climate action, only a third are confident this will be successful³⁴. Politicians must show consistency over time to convince the public they are sincere and committed to following through on their promises.

High public trust in government is strongly correlated with support for taxation to be spent on environmental policies³⁵. This tallies with our experiences of the pandemic, where public trust in the government was key to accepting and abiding by decisions (on the lockdown, vaccine uptake, new social norms such as mask-wearing). Conversely, high-profile incidents that were seen to breach that trust created strong backlashes and non-compliance³⁶.

The risks of failing to build public trust through fairness are therefore stark. Green policies that are seen to be unfair could become a latterday 'poll tax' situation. Traffic calming measures in Oxford recently became the target of protestors believing they are part of a global conspiracy to imprison people in their own neighbourhoods³⁷. Listening and taking account of public concern is therefore crucial.

Strikingly, of any UK regional population, Londoners are both the most trusting of government and the most willing for government to increase public spending on the environment³⁸ – creating a unique opportunity for London's political leaders.

However, there are wide disparities between how much different communities trust information from local authorities. For example, the level of trust in local authority information is in direct proportion to income (ranging from 32% of people earning below £14,900 to 44% of those earning above £58,900). Non-UK born Londoners (45%) trust local authorities more than those from the UK (32%), while Asian and Asian British Londoners (41%) have more trust than Black Londoners (31%)³⁹. This shows a need to deliver engagement tailored to key communities to build trust among all Londoners that a green transition can benefit them – directly and today.

35%

trust the UK government³³

42%

trust local government³³

FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS continued

Community engagement

Strengthening community involvement in decision-making on environment policies is crucial to building public trust, buy-in and democratic legitimacy. It also builds on local knowledge to help design solutions that work for local needs. However, it is crucial to design engagement processes carefully in order to get high-quality, representative input, and make decision-making accessible to those whose voices are seldom heard. One-way communication is not enough – dialogue must be nurtured through active engagement with citizens, expressed in Arnstein's the 'ladder of participation' model⁴⁰. There are a number of tools to help achieve this – presented below.

Public communication of information is crucial to underpin meaningful public engagement – and officials often underestimate the public appetite for this⁴¹. Information must be communicated clearly and accessibly, so all Londoners can understand it and appreciate its significance. This means using engaging, everyday language; straightforward formats; and platforms that are open to all and can be easily disseminated. Framing information is also important – not just from a policy-makers' perspective, but acknowledging the validity of a range of lived experiences⁴². There is surely also a role for wider public communication with the public, not just by elected officials but by 'neutral' experts and other actors. Could there be a role for a publicly trusted climate communicator for London, similar to Chris Whitty's role communicating public health during the pandemic?

Policy engagement or consultations invite the public to input to decision making on a specific topic. This is often done via borough local forums or the GLA's 'Talk London' online engagement platform. The current Planning for London process is a good example of this being done well, with workshops using fun and innovative approaches including Lego-building to explore key priorities and trade-offs. The GLA's Future Neighbourhoods 2030 programme also empowered local communities to co-design actions to improve their local area and tackle environmental inequalities.

It is important to make it appealing for Londoners to engage, by make discussions stimulating and relatable. For example, the London Borough of Lewisham's 'Artists of Change' project⁴³ uses culture and imagination while combining climate change with other local priorities such as migration. A theatre company held 44 performances and 19 workshops with residents including actors and a choir, culminating in an art exhibition in Lewisham's Horniman Museum as well as a book, reflecting the outcomes of those discussions back to the community and helping to build public consensus.

Climate commissions, such as the one commissioned by the London borough of Waltham Forest, convene an expert panel to examine evidence including desktop research and citizen workshops and surveys. This provides a degree of independence and expertise, as well as some community input.

Citizens' Assemblies convene a cross-section of randomly selected citizens (similar to a voluntary jury service call-up) to address a specific question. They have the benefit of being representative of a community, giving them democratic legitimacy and avoiding accusations of political bias or self-selection. They offer deeper, deliberative engagement with an issue compared with simple consultations. However, they are resource-intensive to run. Political leaders can also be cautious of generating suggestions that don't align with their own programmes.

The evaluation of the UK Parliament's 'Climate Assembly UK' found it made participants better informed and more trusting in the democratic process overall – but argues that citizens' assemblies must be communicated better to the wider populace for these benefits to reach beyond the participants⁴⁴. The evaluations of both the London Borough of Camden's and the Scottish Government's Climate Citizen's Assemblies found they was good at engaging residents and boosting awareness, but that more transparency was needed in how input would be translated into action^{45,46}. This reflects a wider challenge with public engagement that there must be clear parameters for adopting ideas – and open communication on what suggestions cannot or will not be acted on.

Although citizens assemblies have become the poster-child for local participatory climate engagement, they are by no means the only tool available. Although helpful for generating debate, they should only be attempted at the same scale where they can inform targeted action. In the context of London, they may be more suited to inform borough (or even neighbourhood) action, rather than the city-wide scale.

Long-term engagement between local government and communities can be just as important as engaging on specific issues. It can be used to build maintain ongoing relationships with specific groups over long periods so that conversations don't start from scratch each time, for example the GLA's long-running relationships with deaf and disabled groups. Some people may be less interested in engaging with a group without a tangible decision-making output, while others may value this longer-term ongoing relationship above being engaged only on one-off occasions.

FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS continued

The GLA is developing a 'Community Insights Hub' – a digital store of Londoners' stories and insights. The Hub will be available to policy-makers and community groups, helping them base policies and projects on long-term qualitative information on community perspectives, aiming to better support Londoners' needs. For example, it will contain a collection of stories produced by community groups about their experiences and projects on London's environment, which were submitted in response to a GLA call-out in Spring 2022.

A hybrid model of long-term engagement on a specific theme has been adopted by the London Boroughs of Redbridge and Waltham Forest. Redbridge has established a Climate Forum which meets several times a year to update residents on progress with the borough's Climate Action Plan and also gives community groups the opportunity to learn from each other. Waltham Forest has set up a citizens' climate panel, comprising 80 residents selected to represent a cross-section of the community. They meet several times a year to act as a sounding board for decisions and projects within the borough's climate action plan.

The 'Community Organising' model was used by London Citizens to convene 730 community leaders from a range of groups to discuss climate justice, using a deliberative process to engage with local authorities on a campaign footing. It centres people's daily lives, rather than using the often technical and siloed policy lens of typical government engagement tools. This means conversations might focus on people's daily housing problems – their leaky pipes, black mould, slow repairs – instead of (abstract) carbon emissions. But this dialogue can generate holistic, win-win solutions that help with both daily and strategic challenges – the essence of climate justice.

Building consensus among peers also has the advantage of exposing neighbours to each others' sometimes conflicting needs and goals, resulting in a better shared understanding and compromise. For example, the 'Southwark Mothers' group was initially more focused on 'breadline' issues than supporting 'future generations' – but came round to this way of thinking by engaging with other groups – 'Even if this policy doesn't immediately benefit me, might help someone I know, so I support it'. This can act as a powerful deliberation mechanism.

The arms-length relationship with the local authority can also create a more independent and community-centred dynamic – though can also create more friction depending on how this is handled.

Local residents' groups can enable people to express their views on important local topics. These can take many forms, including self-organised residents' associations in individual estates or neighbourhoods, such as PEACH in Newham; groups working on a specific issue, such as the Southwark Planning Network; council-run neighbourhood forums; and project-specific groups such as the one set up by the Clever Cities project (see the '[Vision of a just transition](#)' section).

Such groups are the lifeblood of local democracy. If done well, they can best represent local needs and diversity. They should play an increasingly large role in informing local decisions on practical matters such as buildings and green space.

Workplace engagement enables workers to shape their employer's approach to sustainability. This can benefit organisations by using their staff's practical expertise to design better decisions. It benefits employees by creating a culture where they are listened to (workers are increasingly eco-conscious and 65% want their employer to address climate change⁴⁷), and can even feel empowered to contribute to the direction of the organisation. In some cases employees can develop skills through additional responsibilities such as contributing to 'green champion' staff networks or taking up a trade union 'green rep' role.

In some workplaces such as offices, this engagement can lead to small local improvements, such as creating roof gardens or installing bike facilities.

Workplace engagement

65%

want their employer to address climate change⁴⁷

FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS continued

Tackling barriers to engagement

Engagement doesn't happen on a level playing field: some communities have a head-start. For example, participation is easier for groups with spare time and money (e.g. who can pay for childcare to attend evening meetings); those who are more confident and able to articulate their arguments (e.g. those with higher educational backgrounds and with English as their first language); those without disabilities.

Meanwhile, many choose not to engage believing they won't be listened to. This can include members of communities who have historically been disenfranchised and therefore lack trust, and people who are disillusioned by previous poor experiences of public consultations. C40 Cities' [Playbook for Inclusive Community Engagement](#) provides tools to address these barriers to engagement.

In order to create rich discussions where all Londoners can be represented and heard, we need to level the playing field. Newham Council attempted to do this in their Citizens' Assembly by paying participants for their time (London Living Wage); providing training (both on technical information and skills to discuss issues with their peers); and aiming to randomly select a representative cross-section of the population. These measures aren't fool-proof, and underlying inequalities will persist in any engagement exercise – but they are an important first step.

Conclusions on engagement

Policy-makers are already doing great work to engage communities on climate change. But their use of the tools above is patchy, and engagement must be deeper and more consistent.

The method of engagement must be tailored to the audience and project, and should match the type of input sought. For example, a high-level discussion on a borough-wide climate plan might use a citizen's assembly to build understanding and build agreement on key policy options, whereas installing insulation in a housing estate would need detailed and specific discussions, perhaps through workshops with local residents.

There must be greater transparency on which issues and decisions can be shaped by residents – and which cannot.

In order to ensure policy-makers don't simply hear the individuals and interest groups who shout loudest, significant resource needs to be invested in engaging a representative cross-section of Londoners. We must also make participation appealing to Londoners by using methods that are creative and engaging.

Good engagement requires funding – especially that which breaks down barriers to be accessible to marginalised communities. This is too often overlooked – the boroughs' and GLA's future environmental programmes must factor in the cost of community engagement during project design.

In order for Londoners to entrust these decisions to leaders, the deep engagement above is crucial to build trust, support and co-create the plans that the city needs.

“In order for Londoners to entrust decisions to leaders, deep engagement is crucial to build trust, support and co-create the plans that the city needs.”

FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS continued

Governance

This section supports Recommendation 3:

3 Build governance to plan and create shared responsibility for a just transition

In order for the green transition to be fair, it must be robustly governed and well planned, with support from communities and organisations. This section sets out the reasons for this; outlines the governance measures needed for a just transition, identifying current good practice and gaps that must be filled; and proposes options for a way forward.

→ See the 'Fairness' section for the LSDC's position on how this governance should be used to embed fairness in climate policies and programmes.

The importance of strategic planning to ensure fairness

Disruptions, such as climate change, economic shocks or major policy changes, have the biggest impact on those who are already struggling the most. Those already living on the breadline or who are in precarious housing or employment are first to be tipped over the edge into poverty, homelessness or unemployment. For example, the cost-of-living-crisis shows that these groups are also the worst hit by price-rises in essentials such as energy and food. The rapid closure of mines and industry in the UK during the 1980s shows that communities can be devastated without an economic plan in place to provide alternative jobs.

“Highly disruptive events – such as the effects of climate change, economic shocks or major policy changes – have the biggest impact on those who are already struggling the most.”

In order to integrate social justice from the outset, we must therefore ensure the green transition is carefully planned. This includes establishing the evidence base to understand the distribution of benefits and impacts, so they can be shared fairly. Furthermore, the GLA and boroughs cannot achieve a just transition alone: they must convene multiple stakeholders to succeed, and coordinate action at sub-regional and regional levels.

Therefore a framework for partnership and action is needed to do the following:

- agree a shared vision and road-map for action, ensuring it is credible and resourced;
- convene major stakeholders to own delivery of agreed key actions, agreeing roles and responsibilities while managing relationships;
- coordinate delivery; and
- monitor and verify the impacts of actions, providing transparency and local accountability.

In developing this governance, London should learn from other cities and regions. For example, the Scottish Just Transition Commission (SJTC) was established to provide independent advice to the Scottish Government. The SJTC produced a set of strategic but practical recommendations (which have also informed this report) and has been successful in convening stakeholders and building momentum towards a just transition.

The governance we need – and London's current strengths and gaps

Agree a shared vision and road-map for action

The need for a London-wide just transition vision is explored above, and must underpin the other governance elements outlined below.

Convene stakeholders to own delivery of agreed actions

The GLA and boroughs are unique in their ability and standing to convene London's organisations and communities on key issues. But there is currently no architecture to convene major London stakeholders to take shared ownership of key climate actions needed to deliver a just transition.

We need a framework to harmonise the collective contributions to London of major stakeholders. It must gather key stakeholders to ensure that decisions are practical, fair and ambitious. This includes including trades unions, businesses and community groups. It also includes key industries such as energy and water companies; power network providers; logistics firms; the construction industry; and the education and skills sector.

Robust governance is also needed to manage competing stakeholder needs, even under pressure – which will become increasingly challenging under the disruptive economic and cultural effects of climate change. For example, during the pandemic a tourism boost including support for Heathrow Airport was suggested to bolster London's economic recovery – whereas London must ensure it continues the transition away from fossil fuels whilst supporting those who work in the aviation and cultural industries.

FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS continued

There is a huge amount of work already underway to build from. The London Partnership Board ('LPB' – originally established as the 'Recovery Board' in 2020 to respond to the pandemic) convenes a wide range of public, private, third sector and community organisations, co-chaired by the Mayor and the Chair of London Councils. The LPB's 'Green New Deal Mission' aims to double London's green economy by 2030 and address inequalities; it has convened a network of 'Anchor Institutions' to commit to decarbonising their estates; and facilitated a London-wide approach to retrofitting buildings in collaboration between the GLA and London Councils.

The London Environment Strategy sets out the Mayor of London's targets and programmes; the Mayor's 'Accelerated Green Pathway' to net zero sets out the actions needed for the city as a whole. Most boroughs have declared a climate emergency and their efforts are coordinated via London Councils' Climate Programmes, comprising seven priority areas, each led by a different borough or pair of boroughs.

London's Sub-regional Partnerships have convened boroughs and businesses to act on carbon emissions, green skills and more. Myriad London organisations are already taking huge amounts of independent action, including via networks such as [London Climate Action Week](#), and it will be important to galvanise their collective ambition and contributions. We must especially reach out to convene smaller businesses and community groups – otherwise we risk only hearing from larger, more visible, better resourced businesses and public sector bodies.

There is now a need for more coordination and structured ownership of these activities, to ensure they pull in the same direction towards the vision outlined above.

Coordinate delivery

Action at different scales needs to be coordinated, with a golden thread linking top-level goals to local delivery. The governance architecture must be broad enough in scope to coordinate pan-London action. Meanwhile, locally determined actions at the borough and neighbourhood scale will look and feel different depending on local needs.

This coordination would also enable decision-making to factor in equalities in a more strategic way. For example, the GLA is piloting a new tool developed in partnership with the Tyndall Centre to consider equalities and climate impacts in decision-making. This is explored further in the ['Fairness' section](#).

Monitor and verify impacts of actions

There is currently no body with responsibility to monitor the impacts of London-wide programmes to ensure their effectiveness. The London Partnership Board (LPB) is strategically well placed to do so but in practice is too high-level to hold this function (but could do so by establishing a dedicated working group). The London Assembly holds the Mayor to account on his budget and programmes, while London Councils' Climate Action Plan is overseen by the Transport and Environment Committee (TEC). But despite increasing collaboration between the GLA and London Councils via the LPB, neither the Assembly nor TEC have the remit to oversee pan-London programmes.

London does not currently have an agreed measure of success for a just transition – however, this could be built from existing work underway. London Councils' Green Economy programme has coordinated the boroughs to address this issue jointly, and through this work the London Borough of Hounslow is currently developing a set of just transition indicators. The GLA is developing a 'Wellbeing and Sustainability' measure that could play a similar role.

Other levers that the GLA and boroughs must deploy to support a just transition



Fiscal powers

The GLA and boroughs have limited [fiscal powers](#), relying heavily on council tax and business rates to deliver core services. Non-statutory provisions (such as climate measures) are increasingly squeezed, particularly in the boroughs, and are reliant on limited short-term and unpredictable government grants. This means there is little discretionary investment that can be deployed at scale. However, there is still a role for local and regional authorities to explore how they could place more stringent 'green' conditions on the investments they do make, similar to the climate conditions applied by the French government and others to corporate bailouts during the pandemic. They could also further explore how to use their convening power and scale to bring in private sector investment, ensuring this is allocated equitably via a 'just transition' lens.



Procurement

The GLA Group and boroughs have a combined procurement spend of around £19bn per year^{48,49}. They work extensively on responsible procurement, including embedding environmental requirements in contracts, supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs), embedding fair employment practices and equality and diversity in their supply chains. This work should continue to contribute to shaping greener and fairer markets in London and beyond.

FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS continued



Planning powers

The GLA and boroughs set London-wide and neighbourhood spatial plans which incorporate requirements on sustainability, and have decision-making powers on developments.



Housing

Boroughs own a large proportion of London's housing stock, which (alongside the major housing associations) is an opportunity to deliver large-scale retrofits in order to cut residents' energy bills and create healthier homes while cutting carbon. However, this must be done sensitively with buy-in from residents.



Transport and roads

The boroughs and TfL manage London's streets (95% and 5% respectively), creating an opportunity to better support walking, cycling and public transport. TfL is responsible for implementing the Mayor's Transport Strategy, including improving public transport and cycle infrastructure, setting fares, and managing road-user charging schemes such as the Congestion Charge and Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ).



Education and skills

Boroughs' roles as education authorities and the Mayor's devolved Adult Education Budget are opportunities to support green skills. Developing green jobs and skills is fundamental to achieving London's Just Transition. The key challenges are to bridge the gap between supply and demand in immature markets; ensuring diverse Londoners can access green jobs equitably; ensuring green jobs are good jobs; and reskilling late-career workers in fossil fuel intensive jobs in addition to younger college-leavers. Work underway is shown in the ['Fairness' section](#).



Innovation

The boroughs and the GLA work with businesses, research institutions and others to accelerate the development and adoption of new and existing technologies in businesses. This can be through access to funding and finance, 'innovation clusters' (networks of businesses focused on innovation), and investment in talent and skills.

Options for action

In order to fill the governance gaps identified above, a number of options are available:

- formalising a climate and just transition arrangement between the GLA and London Councils / the boroughs, possibly as a subgroup of the London Partnership Board;
- involving the sub-regional partnerships, which already have significant convening visibility and delivery structures between boroughs and businesses;
- building on the convening and oversight role of the London Assembly;
- a new body similar to the Scottish Just Transition Commission (with a convening and advisory role rather than a decision-making one).

“Large-scale retrofits are an opportunity for local authorities to cut residents’ energy bills and create healthier homes while cutting carbon. However, this must be done sensitively with buy-in from residents.”

FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS continued

Devolution

This section supports Recommendation 4:

4 Devolve powers and funding to the most appropriate level of government

Cities such as London are already leading the way on ambitious climate action that supports communities. National government should devolve the further funding and powers needed to accelerate local action tailored to residents' needs.

National government is responsible for achieving the UK's legally binding target to achieve net zero carbon by 2050; its Net Zero Strategy sets out how it will do so⁵⁰. The Strategy's progress and overall effectiveness were reviewed respectively by the Climate Change Committee⁵¹ and the Skidmore Review⁵². They found that far more work remains to ensure a joined-up, fully-funded plan, with buy-in from communities.

Greater policy and funding certainty is needed to create a stable environment for businesses – as well as local and regional government – to plan and invest. Government funding (for example the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme) is often short-term, piecemeal, and generates competition between local authorities instead of delivering a long-term decarbonisation strategy.

The concept of 'fairness' – which is foundational to a just transition – is mentioned several times in the Net Zero Strategy. However, there is little detail on how this will apply other than to energy prices – more leadership on this issue is needed from central government.

The LSDC's recommendations to London's leaders also align closely with many of the Skidmore review's recommendations to government. In particular, the need for coordinated governance and monitoring, and the need to build community trust and popular support for net zero action.

There are clear benefits to devolving more local powers on the green economy, such as skills and jobs; net zero infrastructure such as electric vehicle charging; and transport. This case is supported by the Skidmore Review, the Government's Levelling Up white paper⁵³, Gordon Brown's devolution review⁵⁴ and the Institute for Government⁵⁵. Cities (and especially mayors) are well placed to lead the charge as they often have more ambitious climate targets than the UK government. The Skidmore Review cites UKRI research showing that locally-led, place-specific climate action is more effective than nationwide, and even could save £137 billion of investment and return an additional £431 billion of financial and social benefits compared with a nationally-led approach.

As noted in the 'Governance' section, devolution must balance flexibility for local needs with a coordinated approach that allows local action to contribute to strategic goals at the regional and national scale. There must also be clear determination of roles and responsibilities⁵⁶. If this does not happen it can create adverse outcomes, as in the case of the government's Shared Prosperity Fund where missed opportunities and confusion were caused by overly ambitious timescales and unclear communication about local and regional authorities' respective roles and expectations.

This highlights that a wider regional conversation is needed about how any new devolved powers and funding would be used, ensuring credibility, fairness and transparency. More fiscal powers devolved to ambitious local and regional authorities could become a powerful engine for change.

“The Skidmore Review cites UKRI research showing that locally-led, place-specific climate action is more effective than nationwide, and even could save £137 billion of investment and return an additional £431 billion of financial and social benefits compared with a nationally-led approach.”

FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS continued

Fairness

This section supports Recommendation 5:

5

Design environmental policies that distribute benefits and costs fairly

Justice is not only a moral obligation, it is a practical means to carry public support for a socially, economically and environmentally beneficial transition by minimising disruption to those worst affected in the short run.

In planning London's just transition, there is a clear need to base decisions on evidence of how benefits and costs will be distributed across space and time – and who to. All tiers of government should aspire towards fair distribution through their policies.

“Justice is not only a moral obligation, it is a practical means to carry public support for a socially, economically and environmentally beneficial transition by minimising disruption to those worst affected in the short run.”

The growth of London's green economy

London's green economy is growing year on year – and ultimately the entirety of London's economy must become green. We must ensure the full benefits of this opportunity are realised – and made accessible to all. The GLA and boroughs' collaborative 'Green New Deal' mission aims to double the size of London's green economy by 2030. The London Councils and Borough of Hounslow's 'Building the Green Economy Action Plan' presents an overview of the key opportunities and risks⁵⁷.

In order to deliver this public dividend, providers of London's strategic infrastructure and public services must invest in better, more accessible, cheaper, greener public services. This includes investing in low-carbon transport infrastructure, renewable energy, and green spaces. National and local government should have a role via regulation, investment and coordination to expanding community ownership of these goods. This 'community wealth building' approach can help local citizens reap the benefits rather than shareholders. It can also help lock social value into the area, boosting local economic resilience⁵⁸.

These improvements should put money back in people's pockets; make their local neighbourhoods healthier and cleaner; improve their access to nature; and boost their physical and mental wellbeing. National and other levels of government also need to create the right market conditions for green businesses to thrive. This includes creating consumer demand for green products and services such as retrofits, by making them desirable as well as affordable.

One practical example of this is making public transport cheaper, better and more accessible. Transport for London and the Mayor froze all TfL fares between 2016 and 2021 and offer free and discounted travel schemes to help the Londoners who need the most support, including older people (protecting the Freedom Pass), young people in education, apprentices, people seeking employment and care leavers. Step-free access to the London Underground network has been expanded. 22% of Londoners currently live within 400m of a high-quality cycling route – nearly double the amount in 2019.

London's highest-emitting industries account for a low percentage of the workforce, and a fairly small share of London's economic output. However, both those figures increased between 2012 and 2018, despite the simultaneous growth of the low-carbon sector⁵⁹. Workers in these sectors will need support into greener jobs – especially the late-career workers who will find that move hardest⁶⁰. Companies also need help transitioning to low-carbon business models, for example switching from making diesel to electric cars.

London must also use its burgeoning green finance sector to secure the private investment needed to deliver green infrastructure across the capital. Climate risk management and disclosure are increasingly at the heart of financial decision making. London is uniquely placed to tap expertise and capital from the City of London. Investors are looking to burnish their ESG credentials and generate returns. By working with local policymakers, planners, architects, technicians and citizens, projects can take advantage of low-cost scaled-up finance⁶¹.

In order to access this investment, the London Borough of Hounslow has been developing a 'net-zero neighbourhood' investment model (in parallel with similar 'pathfinder' programmes by Manchester City Council and West Midlands Combined Authority). This has identified ways to aggregate individual projects into large-scale investments of the kind that are attractive to institutional investors, while spreading costs over time and between parties to make it work for residents. Innovative thinking of this kind is vital to unlock the significant capital investment needed while ensuring delivery is planned and equitable for communities.

FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS continued

Share the benefits and costs fairly

London's just transition must ensure we do not leave the poorest Londoners to foot the bill to make London greener. For example, people who can't afford lifestyle changes such as new cars or boilers, or those who are especially badly impacted (e.g. disabled people's access to a car). In tandem with creating new green jobs, we must support workers in declining carbon-intensive sectors so they are not left behind.

In recent years, London's environmental policy-making has rightly started to address how it will support the most marginalised citizens. For example, home energy-efficiency programmes have been targeted at the most fuel-poor residents. When expanding the ULEZ to outer London in 2023, the Mayor established a £110m vehicle scrappage scheme to help those most impacted to replace older, more polluting vehicles (see above). This built on lessons learnt from a £61m scheme to support the 2021 expansion of ULEZ to inner London.

However, in order to ensure policies are fair – and are perceived to be fair – more work is needed by the GLA and boroughs to develop more nuanced policies. This means more detailed analysis of the benefits, costs and risks across a spectrum of wealth brackets; between demographics, taking account of intersectional issues; across neighbourhoods; and over time. Based on this, policies should be designed to help groups according to their need, not just the very lowest-income Londoners. This detailed analysis is often not done in London's current policy-planning – perhaps as a result of the lack of formal fiscal levers held by the GLA and boroughs.

Economic fairness

Supporting the most marginalised Londoners is the right priority. But distributing the costs of green policies more sensitively could help avoid adding pressure to the 'squeezed middle' and avoid resentment. (While recognising that means-tested policies that deliver more tailored support can be complex and costly to run.) This is supported by LSE research suggesting the UK public would be more supportive of an outright ban on private jets (a radical policy heavily impacting the top 1%) than a modest 5% levy on all consumer flights – showing that measures which appear less economically efficient and more hardline can sometimes be seen as fairer overall by the public.

Despite London's limited fiscal levers, officials must ask questions about the economic distribution of their policies. Does a policy end up concentrating wealth or reducing business competition or opportunities? Are fiscal or pricing policies progressive or regressive? How will they affect low / middle / upper income households? Are there active labour market policies with funds to reskill and retool workers in affected industries and sectors? Who will bear the costs of investment in projects such as electrification – consumers or taxpayers?

The OECD believes market-based measures have more equitable effects than command-and-control measures like personal consumption caps. It also argues for compensation packages to be provided and priced into policies. However, some such market measures can be regressive and seem unfair and to the public, denting their popular support. The Breugel Institute's report on the distributive effects of climate policies⁶² finds that:

“Economically-efficient policies such as emissions standards for cars, renewables support financed through levies on households' electricity consumption or carbon pricing for heating fuels might disproportionately affect less-wealthy households, increasing inequality in society. But if policymakers are concerned about distributional consequences – which they should be – they do not have to discard effective climate policies. The distributional effects of many effective climate policies can be remedied by: (i) compensating lower-income households; (ii) designing the specific policy measures in a way that reduces the distributional effects; and (iii) introducing climate policies that have progressive features.”

The Mayor's Green Skills Academies provide opportunities for Londoners to gain skills enabling them to access green jobs in a range of sectors and his Mayor's Solar Skills London programme has sought to increase the number of solar installers. The London Councils Retrofit London programme also promotes skills development with boroughs such as Camden, Hounslow and Waltham Forest working with skills providers to boost training in green skills and promoting these opportunities to local residents.

But all Londoners need to be able to access and enjoy these opportunities – and recognise that they can – which is currently not always the case. For example, a 2022 study of Londoners' understanding of retrofitting shows that wealthier residents and homeowners were more aware of retrofitting, as well as its benefits to individuals and society, compared with less wealthy residents and renters⁶³. This suggests that better engagement is needed to show less well-off Londoners how they can tap into this opportunity.

Similarly, London's 'Low Carbon Environmental Goods and Services' (LCEGS) sector is huge – and growing each year. In 2020/21, total sales were £42.9 billion, up 105% from 2007/08, and it employed nearly a quarter of a million workers – more than the construction sector.

FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS continued

However, research conducted on behalf of London's Regional Partnerships found that 66% of workers in London's green jobs are male, compared with 54% of all jobs in London; only 30% of workers are BAME, compared with 36% of jobs⁶⁴. A 2023 government study found an even starker lack of diversity in the UK heating and cooling workforce – key to decarbonising our buildings. 95% of installers are white, and 95% are male – rising to 97% among heat-pump installers. Furthermore, this seems unlikely to change without further action, as the report indicates that many employers don't see this as a problem. The GLA is currently researching how to address this challenge – this will be key to ensuring all Londoners have the opportunity to benefit from the green economy.

Further action is needed in partnership with businesses and employers, trades unions and skills providers in order to grow the opportunities of the green economy and open them up to all Londoners.

Social fairness

The impacts on different demographics and communities should be considered more carefully in environmental policy-making. For example, demographic makeup varies markedly between employment sectors, which should be considered when supporting or disrupting particular industries in order to reduce emissions. This equalities impact analysis should inform which policy options are selected and any measures to mitigate negative impacts. For example, a compliant Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) was conducted for the London Environment Strategy in 2018⁶⁵ as statutorily required, but its recommendations for action to mitigate equalities impacts appear limited. The [EqIA](#) for the Government's [Heat and Buildings Strategy](#) states it has no gender equality impacts without acknowledging the gender imbalance in the retrofit workforce noted above. The London Councils Climate Action Plans have also considered inequalities, but could do more to translate this recognition into actions tailored to support the most marginalised communities.

When gathering evidence to make decisions, it is important to be specific and avoid assumptions or generalisations – for example weighing up nuanced social impacts (as well as carbon and value-for-money) when evaluating which renewable energy sources to invest in. The pandemic showed that the specific character of any given disruption determines who is worst hit. The lockdown particularly impacted disabled people; frontline workers, who are disproportionately BAME and women; people with limited access to green space; those at heightened risk of domestic violence⁶⁶.

Geographic fairness

The spatial distribution of green economic impacts must also be considered. GLA research shows that the highest emitting industries are spatially concentrated in certain boroughs including Westminster and Hounslow. (Heathrow Airport contributes heavily to the latter – not just via aviation emissions, but supply chains with a high proportion of jobs in high emitting sectors including transport and logistics.)⁶⁷. But although Westminster has the highest share of high-carbon jobs as a proportion of London (because it has many jobs in total), outer boroughs like Newham, Hounslow and Croydon have the highest in-borough proportion of high-carbon jobs.

Green job creation therefore needs to be matched with job losses at a local scale. For example, the rise of electric vehicles (EVs) may see EV car mechanics being dominated by major car manufacturers and away from local tradespeople, while becoming consolidated and moving to the outer edge of the capital. This would impact not just the livelihoods of existing car mechanics, but connected local economies (e.g. retail and hospitality).

Fairness over time

Planning how quickly to implement changes, and how this is phased, also strongly impacts fairness. The faster you go, the more you need to cushion its impacts – especially on the poorest. Faster change is more expensive, because it means working with immature markets that have not yet built widespread demand and economies of scale; innovations and skills development is limited; and changing business models is hard to do.

Going faster also makes it harder to get people used to new suggestions and ways of doing things, and for people to be (and feel) listened to – which can create public unrest. That doesn't mean London shouldn't be ambitious – we need to act urgently. But it does mean we need to invest more money, more time – and more thought and sensitivity – into engaging with people.

“We need to act urgently on climate change. But rapid action means we need to invest more money, more time – and more thought and sensitivity – into engaging with people.”

FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS continued

Empower communities

This section supports Recommendation 6:

6 Empower communities and organisations to take action

Community groups are the bedrock of London's civic life, and should be further supported to lead independent local environmental action.

Londoners' role should not be limited to inputting to official decision-making. Community groups across the city are already taking independent action on inequalities and the environment, and there is a strong role for boroughs and the GLA to support, resource and connect those groups.

A great deal of support is already available to community groups. For example, Redbridge Council has been successful in using its convening role to help local environmental groups connect with each other across the borough. Tower Hamlets council brought together local community energy groups, many of whom had not previously been aware of the other groups. This has helped groups of organisations to become more than the sum of their parts, delivering more effective local projects while building stronger communities through the bonds forged by working on activities together. Similar networking opportunities could be provided to community groups in other boroughs. Providing free, accessible local meeting spaces would also help groups enormously with costs and logistics⁶⁸.

The GLA and boroughs provide significant amounts of funding for community projects. For example, since 2017 the Mayor's Community Energy Fund has offered over £1.4m of grant funding to support 116 community energy projects across 26 boroughs, which combined are projected to save over 2,500 tonnes of CO₂e. The [Grow Back Greener Fund](#) awarded £2m to 56 community projects to plant trees to create and enhance green space and increase climate resilience.

Continued targeted support for community projects from the boroughs, GLA and other funders can continue to build on this legacy. In addition, local and regional government could provide more non-financial support to community groups (though in some cases this may require additional resourcing from central government). For example, they could help community energy groups to identify suitable locations to install solar panels; help them navigate the complex planning process for new community assets; and help promote their successful projects via existing communications channels such as council newsletters and events.

This support must strike a careful balance between empowering community groups while not making them a cheap source of labour to fulfil local government responsibilities. We must also avoid giving the impression that volunteers have any moral duty to take ownership of the global climate crisis, particularly during a cost of living crisis. It will also be important to set frameworks and boundaries to manage the potential for trade-offs between different groups' goals and needs⁶⁹.

The London Recovery Taskforce found in [April 2022](#) that strong communities are key to resilience in the face of crises:

“Strong communities were critical in London's resilience and can be a major asset. Community organised and led efforts were vital during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide support to vulnerable Londoners. Substantial community-based advice and support assets existed across London, however there were significant disparities across different communities in the ability to access these assets.”

It follows that communities have a key role to play in building resilience to the effects of climate change such as extreme heat and flooding. This can include input to strategic thinking on local resilience plans, strengthening communications channels, and looking out for vulnerable neighbours. The [Mayor's Community Resilience Fund](#) provided up to £5,000 each to 11 borough groups to address these issues by creating (or improving) local resilience partnerships between local councils and Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector groups. Future work should look to scale up this practice and extend it to other boroughs, focusing on areas and communities lacking access to support. More widely, the method to establish community resilience partnerships – which are tailored to local needs but guided by a common framework (in this case produced by national government) – should be seen as an exemplar for how to engage communities in designing a greener, fairer city.

FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS continued

The just transition beyond London

This section supports Recommendation 7:

7 Collaborate beyond London

Cities and regions are leading the way on climate change. London should continue to collaborate and share best practice to drive collective action for a just transition across the UK and globally.

London should continue to partner closely with the immediately surrounding neighbourhoods to ensure the opportunities of London's green economy generate a regional ripple effect, while minimising any negative impacts of 'border issues', caused by different regimes of public services (e.g. transport, support for home retrofits) and regulation (e.g. road-use tariffs).

Cities and regions are leading the way on climate change. Manchester City Council is targeting net zero by 2038, and West Midlands Combined Authority by 2041; both are developing 'pathfinder' programmes to develop innovative new models for net zero neighbourhoods. The M10 group of metro mayors and the Core Cities network are also convening action on net zero. There is a strong case for London to collaborate across the UK to scale up action whilst helping tackle inequality between regions.

London should also continue to learn from other examples of good practice and innovative approaches being taken by other cities. For example, the 'Energy Democracy Project' is a community partnership developing a worker-led just transition plan for high-carbon industries in partnership with North of Tyne Combined Authority⁷⁰. Many UK cities have now held climate assemblies or commissions, including Glasgow, Leeds and Oxford. The Scottish Government's Just Transition Commission has made a set of recommendations to embed fairness in Scotland's green economy which have also informed this report. Now the dust is starting to settle on this initial work, what lessons can we draw about the long-term conversations needed to build tangible action?

London is also a truly global city, with deep business, cultural and political links spanning the globe. It is also home to a huge global diaspora with family ties around the world. In chairing the C40 Cities climate leadership group, the Mayor of London has emphasised this outward-looking stance. This creates a special need for London to pay attention to the global dimension of the city's just transition. This includes international cooperation to share best practice and drive leadership, as well as continuing its work to improve supply chain transparency and labour rights for products such as the minerals in electric vehicle batteries and solar panels.

“London should continue to partner closely with the immediately surrounding neighbourhoods to ensure the opportunities of London's green economy generate a regional ripple effect, while minimising any negative impacts of 'border issues', caused by different regimes of public services (e.g. transport, support for home retrofits) and regulation (e.g. road-use tariffs).”

FURTHER WORK FOR THE LSDC

Building on this report, the LSDC will continue to take forwards our recommendations for a just transition in dialogue with London's political leaders and other stakeholders.

Based on the responses to our report and further research, we will develop practical guidance on how Londoners' homes can be retrofitted equitably and in a way that listens to communities' needs, in partnership with boroughs, London Councils and the GLA.

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