

Minister Eddie Hughes thanks councils for efforts in tackling climate change

In a speech today (2 July 2021) at London Climate Action Week, Eddie Hughes MP (Parliamentary Under Secretary for MHCLG) has recognised the vital work of councils to mobilise their efforts to combat climate change and meet our ambitious net zero targets.

The UK is a global leader on climate change, and in 2019 became the first G7 country to put into law the ambition for net zero by 2050. Our ambitious planning reforms will help us meet this target.

Minister Hughes said councils' expert knowledge of their communities allow them to help deliver net zero across energy, housing and transport in ways most suited to people in their area.

By joining up across functions such as public health, planning, housing and air quality, they can get wider benefits from decarbonisation, such as reducing inequality, community integration and a green economic recovery.

Most councils are already taking some form of action. Minister Hughes cited innovative work across the country – including in the capital, where the London Plan includes measures to ensure the environmental ambition of major developments is included at the start of the design process.

Plymouth meanwhile has installed solar panels on council buildings, saving up to £1.4 million on its energy bills. It is also providing grants to help 500 fuel-poor families make their homes more energy efficient.

Leeds has introduced co-buying schemes for home upgrades, to reduce the cost for families of making their homes more energy efficient. And Hampshire has invested in digital tools to ensure it factors carbon impacts and climate risk into all its decisions.

Minister Hughes said:

The COVID-19 pandemic has raised many fundamental questions about the way we live our lives. As we have all worked from home, we have spent more time in our local neighbourhoods and built ties with the people who live around us.

Building back better from this pandemic means not only ensuring that new development is greener and better for the environment, but that it supports healthy, happy and flourishing communities.

He added that the government's planning reforms emphasise environmental outcomes, not just processes.

This reflects the call from the Climate Change Committee for councils to collaborate with communities and businesses, and with each other, to deliver local projects that support net zero.

MHCLG's achievements to date include:

- Our [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#) sets out how councils should ensure new developments are not vulnerable to climate change. And our [Planning for the future white paper](#) is clear that environmental concerns and our transition to net zero should be embedded in the planning system.
- The [Future Buildings Standard consultation](#) set out proposals to reduce the risk of overheating in new residential buildings by introducing a new overheating mitigation requirement in the Building Regulations.
- From 2025, the [Future Homes Standard](#) will ensure that new homes produce at least 75% less CO2 emissions than homes built now.
- The government has made over £1 billion available to councils to increase the energy efficiency of low-income households in England. So far thousands of homes have been upgraded, and thousands more are signed up.

Minister Hughes added:

The Planning Bill will establish a clear set of rules – from where communities want homes to be built, to the high design and environmental standards that must be met – while complementing the commitments we are making in the Environment Bill.

This includes making it mandatory for the vast majority housing and developments to achieve at least a 10% net gain in value for biodiversity, ensuring new developments enhance the environment, contribute to our ecological networks and conserve our precious landscapes.

[London Climate Action Week](#) is an annual event bringing together world-leading climate expertise to help solve the climate emergency.

LCAW was established to create space for London's climate professionals and communities to come together and find solutions to climate change. Now in its third year, LCAW is the largest independent climate gathering in Europe.