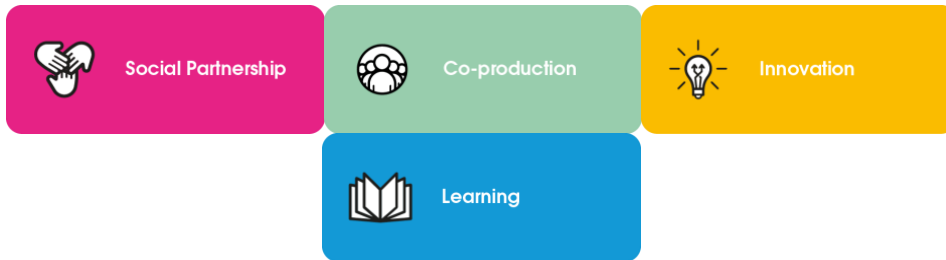




Co-operative Councils

Innovation Network

CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENT



Newham Council

Linking climate and social justice in the UK's first local authority Just Transition Plan



Summary:

Newham Council launched the UK's first Just Transition Plan in December 2023 to support its local net-zero targets. This plan is the result of recognising the need for a comprehensive and collaborative approach to address the climate emergency reflective of the unique intersection of social, economic, and environmental challenges at Newham.

The plan shifts focus from a purely decarbonisation approach to a wider stance embedding core principles of increasing equity for residents and adapting to the worsening impacts of climate change for a fairer, greener borough, adopting a co-production approach.

Background:

Despite being amongst the lowest carbon-emitting boroughs in the UK (per capita emissions), Newham is one of the London boroughs most exposed to extreme flood and overheating risks due to climate change. These risks are further exacerbated by Newham's demographic and socio-economic picture. More than half of our residents are born outside of the UK, and 69% of our residents are from Black, Asian, or other ethnic backgrounds, including Arab (Census, 2021), making Newham the most diverse borough in London. Recent statistics show that people of colour in the UK are four times as likely to live in areas at high risk of dangerous heat. On top of that, a quarter of our residents earn below the London living wage, and one in two children live in poverty, with an increasing number of residents living in temporary accommodation.

This has meant that despite being the least contributors towards carbon emissions and climate change, our residents disproportionately face its most damaging consequences. Our communities pay, as a proportion of income, the most towards implementing climate policy responses but benefit least from these policies and are often overlooked in key decision-making. This highlighted the need for a long-term and systemic view to address the personal, social and environmental factors that determine the way climate change will affect people, places, and organisations.

Newham's Just Transition Plan

The [Just Transition Plan](#) acts as a blueprint to address the unequal impacts of climate change on society to build a fairer borough that is more equitable, has lower emissions and is future-ready. It comes as a collaborative effort from internal and external stakeholders, bringing the latest thinking globally through its partnership with [sustainability consultants](#) Dark Matter Labs and ARUP. The plan will ensure equity considerations are embedded into climate change policies and activities as well as building climate into our understanding of other areas of governance.

Based on a newly developed 3-6-5 framework, it features:

Three Principles – guiding beliefs to inform actions, based on:

1. Increase equity.
2. Reduce emissions.
3. Build long-term resilience.

Six Futures – our ambitions and focus areas for key delivery:

- Homes, workplaces and schools are comfortable, healthy, and efficient.
- The energy system is resilient, equitable and not dependent on fossil fuels.
- Residents walk, cycle, or use public transport and goods are safely moved without polluting streets.

- Sharing is increased and waste is reduced, building a sharing and circular economy.
- Residents eat well and sustainably.
- Newham neighbourhoods are resilient, connected, and green.

Five Enablers - our methods to ensure effective delivery of the futures:

- Growing the Council's climate action capacity and effectiveness.
- Targeting and increasing investment.
- Partnering with Newham's anchor institutions.
- Enabling civic and place-based action.
- Working beyond Newham's borders.

Impact

As a result of the wide engagement conducted during the development of the plan through the formation of the Climate Action Working Group, there is now greater support for Net Zero across a broader range of council departments including our social care and housing teams. There is increasing recognition of the interconnected nature of Net Zero policy and initiatives and the co-benefits which exist between them and wider policy objectives. Embracing these synergies is already presenting good opportunities for cross-departmental working for the betterment of the local community.

The plan also builds a socioeconomic case for the need to act now and focus on adaptation and building resilience. The current projections show a dangerous rise in the use of materials, consumption of energy, and greenhouse gas emissions which will not only increase the effects of climate change, but also place higher financial costs on the economy. Adaptation goals have the potential to encourage investment and create value, as well as reduce risk, in speaking to the particularities of a place. The plan addresses this urgency through reimagining our material and ecological interconnections for our move towards a green economy through innovative investment models. This will involve continued work towards building green skills and the creation of new jobs in partnership with our Community Wealth Building and Housing team.

Challenges:

One of our challenges continues to be the need for more funding to deliver our plan, which acknowledges the need for further financial support from national government to make sure we can successfully reach our targets. That's why, to coincide with the launch of our Just Transition Plan, our mayor has also written a letter to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, asking the Government to provide much needed funding to deliver social housing retrofits which are at an estimated cost of over £800m for Newham's council housing stock alone.

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www.newham.gov.uk/JustTransition