

COMMUNITIES AND THE UK'S ENERGY TRANSITION



NATIONAL AND GLOBAL DRIVERS OF THE UK'S ENERGY TRANSITION

The transition from fossil fuels to clean energy is at the heart of the UK government's mission to make Britain a [clean energy superpower](#) by 2030.

The commitment, framed as the need for homegrown energy, is about generating growth, energy security and tackling the climate crisis.

The UK's reliance on international markets has been highlighted by global events such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the US-Iran war, causing domestic oil and gas prices to rise sharply and further aggravating the cost-of-living crisis.

In response, the government has [doubled down on energy security](#), rejecting calls for new exploration in the North Sea and announcing a set of measures to accelerate the clean energy transition. These include using public assets to ramp up renewable energy generation, measures to mobilise grid infrastructure investment and decoupling gas and electricity prices.

Globally, [investment in renewables continues to expand at scale](#). Alongside government policy, falling renewable energy costs and rising electricity demand – from continued electrification of major sectors and the expansion of digital infrastructure – are now major drivers of the transition.

The UK has [made considerable progress](#) but delivery at pace is still required. According to the CBI, the UK's renewable energy pipeline represents a [£455 billion investment opportunity](#), reflecting the value and scale of development required.

While only [1% of land in England will need to be used for renewables](#) to meet the UK's 2050 climate goals, some parts of the country will feel the increase in infrastructure more than others.

Ultimately, these national ambitions will be realised or constrained through decisions in specific places, where the impacts of transition are most directly felt.

INSIGHTS FROM TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS ACROSS YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER

To realise these national policy goals, local communities are being asked to accommodate renewable energy generation, grid upgrades and associated infrastructure.

These developments are increasingly affecting Town and Parish Councils. They could play a key role in the government's [Local Power Plan](#) to revolutionise the UK's community energy sector.

In March 2026, Yorkshire & Humber Climate Commission delivered five workshops on the energy transition at a [Yorkshire Local Councils Association](#) training day with Town and Parish Councils from across the region.

Discussions highlighted how important small councils could be in helping national energy ambitions work locally. They can help communities understand change, push for fair and locally sensitive decisions, and provide trusted leadership when confidence in the system is low.

Key insights:

1) Support for the energy transition is widespread, but conditional

Support for the shift to a low-carbon energy system is strong, but depends on suitable siting, clear community benefit and genuine community involvement.

2) Place-based impacts drive concern

Opposition is most likely to arise where proposed infrastructure development is seen to threaten local character, valued landscapes or shared community spaces – a finding that aligns with [research led by the University of Leeds](#).

3) Fairness and trust shape perceptions

Views are strongly influenced by perceptions of fairness, particularly where trust in the consultation process is low and financial incentives (such as

community benefit funds and lower energy bills) are viewed with scepticism. Community energy schemes with tangible benefits for residents, or where siting decisions are explained clearly and honestly, are more likely to be viewed positively.

4) Capacity and knowledge can be barriers to participation

Councillors and residents lack the time, knowledge and influence to engage effectively with consultation and planning processes, particularly with [Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects](#).

5) Support for Town and Parish Councils is essential for effective involvement

Town and Parish Councils need accessible, timely information, clarity around where influence lies and powers to genuinely shape outcomes.

PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE ENERGY TRANSITION IN THE UK

These experiences from the region sit within a broader national picture of strong public support for clean energy. Most Britons feel "[positive and proud](#)" about the country's efforts to transition to renewables and are supportive of solar and wind farms in their local area.

At the same time, research suggests that media coverage [doesn't always reflect this level of support](#). This "quiet majority effect", where the public and MPs [underestimate support and overestimate opposition to wind and solar](#), helps explain a [perception gap around support for green policies more generally](#).

The government's [Energising Britain](#) public participation plan recognises that the project is as much a social one as a technical one, and that engaging communities is crucial to success. As the transition becomes more visible and contested, trust, legitimacy and meaningful local participation are increasingly conditions for successful delivery.

This places organisations embedded in communities, like Town and Parish Councils, at the centre of the transition – where national support must be translated into decisions that work for communities.



Contact details

yhclimate@leeds.ac.uk
www.yorksandhumberclimate.org.uk



UNIVERSITY
OF LEEDS