



# RURAL NET ZERO SPECIAL

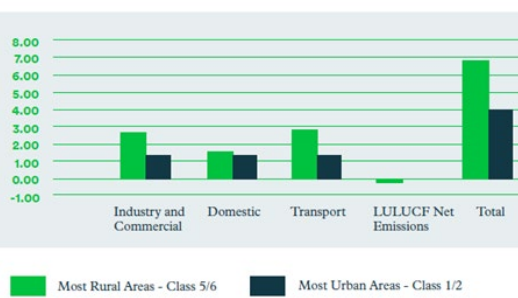
This briefing draws from [this Rural Net Zero report](#) from UK100 Countryside Climate Network and related materials – all linked. How to use this briefing? See the final section with suggested next steps

## WHAT'S DIFFERENT ABOUT RURAL NET ZERO?

Rural emissions per head are higher than urban and are falling more slowly because...

- Transport miles per head are higher & it's harder to shift transport mode
- Housing stock is older & reducing emissions is harder in less dense situations
- High-emission industries like cement production & paper-making sit outside urban areas.

Per Capita CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions of the Most Rural and Urban Areas



- Govt. funds often don't recognise rural challenges
- Govt. policy slower to address rural issues
- Markets work (even) less well; from buses to broadband, 'the market' favours urban investment.

Example of a district's emissions by sector

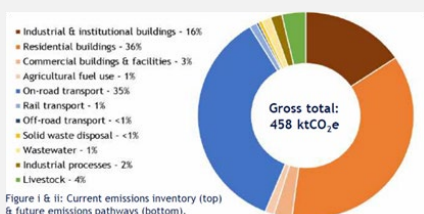


Figure 1 & 11: Current emissions inventory (top) & future emissions pathways (bottom).

## WHAT SHOULD RURAL NET ZERO LOOK LIKE?

Delivering 'Net Zero' should 'level up' rural lives...

- Digital connectivity, accessible public transport & active travel corridors will reduce rural isolation and improve access to services and experiences.
- Bespoke retrofit and renewable energy tailored to local circumstances will improve homes & eliminate fuel poverty
- Locally sourced and delivered goods and services will create resilient communities and meaningful jobs

## THE CASE FOR BOLD ACTION ON HOMES

Rural household CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are 1/5<sup>th</sup> higher than for urban households. Lack of economies-of-scale mean both energy and retrofit solutions are more costly.

Some Councils have managed innovative approaches, pushing for better new build standards, delivering heat network & retrofit pilots using existing funding. [See p25 for case studies.](#) But so far government schemes have been piecemeal & badly implemented – see the disastrous Green Homes Grant, & the failure to bring forward zero-carbon new build standards. Meanwhile some in the building industry can see the opportunities.

Environment  
Retrofitting leaky homes would cost £5bn over next four years, UK ministers told

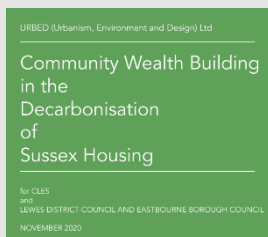
Exclusive: industry leaders say plan would cut energy bills and put UK on track for climate targets

# CLIMATE ACTION BRIEFING



## But bolder action is needed.

Green councillors in Lewes have commissioned work that shows how Housing Revenue Accounts can be used for retrofitting social housing, leading the way in developing a local skills base. This model can be developed elsewhere if councils collaborate with neighbours and work with trainers and SMEs.



## THE CASE FOR BOLD ACTION ON TRANSPORT

Rural dwellers travel 44% further each year. Rural bus services receive only 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the per capita council 'subsidy' compared to urban buses.

Government approach has been to tinker and offer small pots of cash for trials. Some councils have made strides forward [See p20 for useful case studies.](#)

### But rural connectivity needs bold action.

CPRE has shown that a bus for 'Every village, every hour' is deliverable for £2.7bn per year.

Prof. John Whitelegg is working on the costs of [Free Fare Public Transport](#), now established in places like Estonia and gaining support elsewhere, including Los Angeles

A Green strategy also includes

- reducing transport demand by retaining and developing local services ([see our policies](#))
- investing in digital connectivity
- Supporting active travel



## POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS ON BUILDINGS

**Motion:** Council recognises the urgent need to decarbonise heating and power in homes. The collapse of the Green Homes Grant and the failure of government so far to provide long term dependable finance & market shaping for this purpose make this task more challenging & more urgent. We call on the portfolio holder & officers to draw up proposals for the decarbonisation of the councils housing stock; with possible partnerships with neighbouring authorities, social housing providers & innovative social & private sector enterprises; considering the repurposing of housing maintenance budgets to make homes fit for a net zero future. In this year of COP26 we add our voice to calls by the LGA, ADEPT & others for a joint local & national government task force to plan action to reach 'net zero' which should help to overcome the stop-start unpredictable approach to retrofit seen so far.

**Proposal:** A task & finish group to look at housing retrofitting; considering the case studies in the [UK100 Rural Net Zero Report](#) & approaches used elsewhere such as

## POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS ON TRANSPORT

**Motion:** Council welcomes the CPRE report 'Every village, every hour' & its proposition that rural public transport could be transformed with an injection of £2.7bn per year (1/10<sup>th</sup> of the planned spend in the Highways England Road Investment Strategy). Such investment in buses is essential to the decarbonisation of transport, whilst delivering fairer transport for all in our communities. We call on cabinet / senior officers to lobby in support of the CPRE proposals. In this year of COP26 we add our voice to calls by the LGA, ADEPT & others for a joint local and national government task force to plan action to reach 'net zero', which should also help accelerate the development of public transport fit for a net zero future.

**Question:** Can the portfolio holder provide an update on the council's response to the Bus Back Better initiative from government, & initiatives to boost public transport as we emerge from the pandemic?

**Proposal:** A task & finish group to look at boosting public transport post pandemic; inviting evidence from [CPRE / Transport for Quality of Life](#) / local lobby groups & commercial & community providers & examining case studies in the [UK100 Rural Net Zero report](#).