

Post COP26 LGiU Webinar – in association with the Uni of Liverpool – Heseltine Institute for Public Policy, Practise & Place, Fri 19 November 2021 — [Watch it here](#)

Panel of contributors:

Panel Chair, Jonathan Carr-west, CEO Local Government Information Unit
Chris Murray Director of Core Cities (Belfast, Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Sheffield)
Anna Marie Delaney – Chief Executive, Offley County Council, Ireland
Mark Atherton – Director of Environment Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Opening remarks - Jonathan Carr-west, CEO Local Government Information Unit – The voice of local government is often squeezed out in this debate but it has a strong role to play and can act as mediator with public.

Reflections on COP26:

Chris Murray – Core Cities

Attended COP26 and public engagement was good. Local leaders were further down the road than many other speakers. Model for net zero investment. Finance leaders in City Chambers – they get it now – future investment

We know what we need to do – broadly public opinion is moving towards this but we just don't have the finance – core 12 cities require £200 Billion, this is way beyond local government's current capacity. Investors say plans are not well worked up and can't make a return. Public money needed to de-risk private investment. Good return on Renewable energy schemes but retro-fit and recycling hard to get a return – Need one scheme to pay for another – groups of cities to work together to get Billion pound schemes for low and long term returns. When this was discussed at COP Heads of Banks liked it. Need to get to proof of concept to get over the line to make it happen and be the first.

Not enough focus on place and local govt to make it happen.

Anna Marie Delaney – CE Offley County Council, Ireland:

The Coal phase out/scale down was the biggest progress from COP26. \$8.5 Billion US Europe – agreement to pay for South Africa to have a just transition to move away from Coal

In Ireland the Midlands just transition test case – In Ireland there were centuries of peat extraction in the midlands, but in the later part of 20th Century and into the 21st Century this was on an industrial scale – Finally in 2018 there was a Peat cessation, which resulted in a sudden loss of industry in the region. Regional and Local employers and employees worked together on a training and upskilling programme to new clean energies new tech and skills.

Financing transitioning to new technologies is key and it's a huge change for some communities

Mark Atherton – Greater Manchester Authority

Common ground is found on the innovation agenda – Scale up tech in industries who produce 50% of carbon emissions. Challenge – decarbonise our heat and travel. Energy efficiency is key.

1.5 degrees target may have been lost but 1.8 to 2.4 degrees, and the lower end of this is still achievable – new tech will get us there

Local authorities are now at the forefront for the net zero plan. Without our own plans we won't convince others business and public.

International Mayors are working together cities leading the way – transferable projects that are already having an impact to share ideas. See what's working and transfer it. This is key in next 2 years

What do we need local government to be doing?

What do we need to do re knowledge transfer? Anna Marie – Leadership role of local government makes us well placed to do it. Chris – new financial models – community leadership – how bring together? Collaboration is key - share ideas.

Great things happened in Covid – shut roads pedestrianised for cafes etc. stopped traffic
Local Govt. should have more power to affect change
Local Govt. funding base not working – CT & Business Rate (7% of tax base kept in UK Council's needs to be at 12 to 15% - in the rest of Europe is closer to 40 to 50%) would open local government up to a lot more funding investment opportunities. Collaboration drives innovation in this case not competition.

We have a decade to get this done – Local Govt. has faced the same challenges and not moved forward.

Devolution is needed. We need same level of autonomy as European cities have. Need to move around the obstacle if we can't remove it. Joint venture partnership – work together to de risk the project – moves away from national finance. Regen and transport you can do that but not others. Some of the population will be able to pay/invest in their private property – local govt. can help to create informed clients and can invest themselves (give confidence)

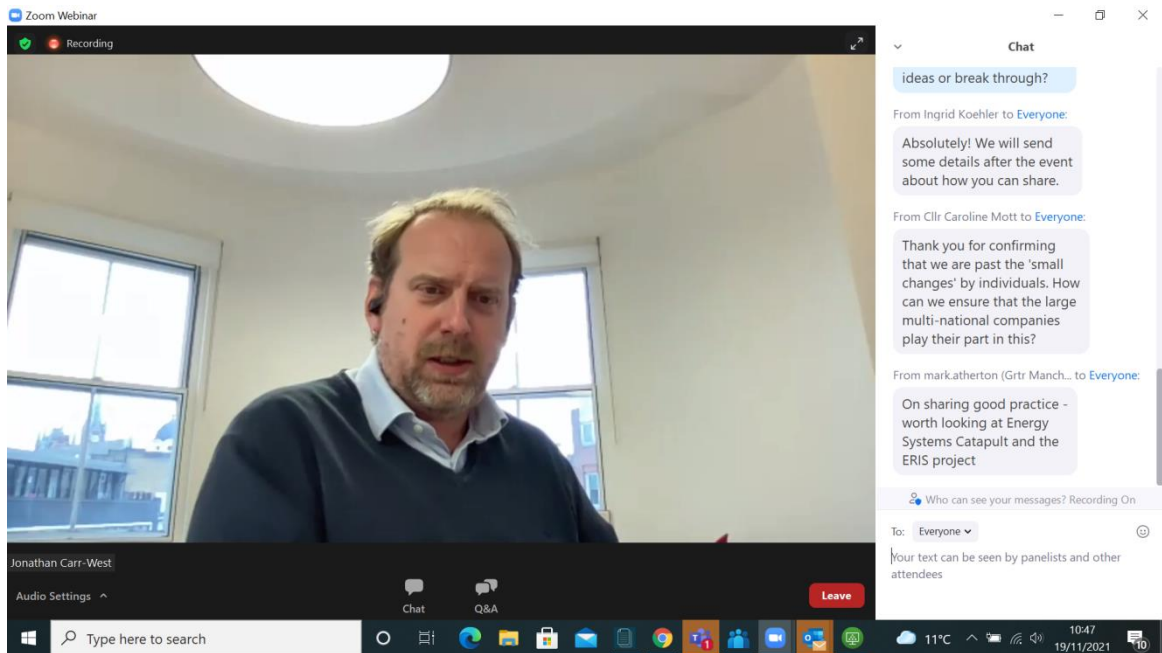
Bidding for the same pot of money is bad – must move away from this model.

Quantum of scale (Hertfordshire should do it – re retrofit social housing, all ten districts and the County would be large enough to get the level of investment needed)

Mark Atherton - Trust – You can't sell a hair shirt to the public – narrative needs to show a path to change. It's actually a lie to say everyone needs to make a small change and this will get us there – it's a lie – its big changes for individuals and for society, business and government – Politicians need to be able to sell this – tell the truth but stay positive.

Anne Marie – Levels of fear and uncertainty – can have overwhelming affect – local govt. leadership role – galvanize people to do local measures and show it is making a difference. Encourage you to make use of the research with local Universities – Retro fitting – reskilling work etc. Promote projects and initiatives that work. European Green Deal – (need a UK fund now to replace this)

Local Govt. is pivotal – business support to get there and with the public.



Need to get into the weeds – do in a pragmatic way, place based co-commissioning now, to help us move the conversation forward – strategic views – drive change by bringing in the private sector in, build a relationship – A local and national dynamic needs to evolve quickly.

Public Trust is crucial – complex big partnership needed. Mark GM -Trust deficit now? Yes, sadly we do. But don't know how far the trust has eroded? Democracy at local level feels more accessible. Build a collective with community groups and NGOs. Social and mainstream media – need to find a way to reengage with our communities.

Anna Marie – Research of 9 countries working on energy – worth looking at. Relationship with citizens is crucial – we should be doing what we are good at – collaborative piece is critical to deliver change.

Engagement with Universities – Sue Jarvis – place leadership – reach out to local Universities and University estates. Role of research and innovation – how utilise by local govt. and businesses – Citizen's Panels – bring additional resource.

Chris – sponsorship – companies with poor green credentials are finding push back Housing Retrofit – employees twice as many people as new build. That resonates with local people.

Adaptation – Financial models – flood defences.

Dialogue with G7 – Urban 7 – Devolved places – dialogue with national govt. is poor internationally and they all see need to work together.

Questions – How do you affect change – Stevenage getting a lot of push back on even small changes – how do we get over this?

Engage with the NHS and other large multinationals etc. Mark Atherton – some of the big multi-nationals say they are net zero already – need to carefully test this. Role for wider public sector lead by example – don't preach to businesses – create a framework for larger businesses to talk to SME's and small business to affect change.

If want change – need to make it easier, cheaper of sexier – Arts can drive this. Create alternative (Stevenage Football Club – work with them on their journey). Won't change capitalism but help people value things that are less carbon intensive.

Develop affordability – help people do the right thing – grants etc. Persistence is important. Local Govt. can host local business engagement. Regional and National Govt. need to support what local govt. is doing.

Is use of data strong? - Chris Murray - no

Public Health locally was very strong through pandemic – could use same levers towards climate change. Seen what has worked well and what has not worked well.

Planning and Development – Mark Atherton GM – Planning vital – complex area – need to understand what the transition looks like – take best available data and understand energy use and efficiency of stock and estate, transport – EV charging – local energy plan for your area.

Spatial Framework – in the Manchester Combines Authority they unilaterally accelerated target net zero for new build to 2028 – but this should be a national standard (not sustainable to do lots of local standards different in different areas – so national target needs to be more challenging) Elevated land values in the future to pay for the schemes and they still make profit. Tried to add in conditions on existing property – lift by an EPC rating – weak ground on EPC – needs a national framework and standard.

Wales has shown this is possible – The Welsh Assembly has put a total stop to major road building projects.

Remote working helping – hot desking – counteract 5 day a week commuting.

LGiU Summary notes from the event:

The event began with panellists highlighting their key moments of COP.

Chris Murray reflected on the leadership and the innovative dialogue displayed by local authorities at COP, noting the significance of a key finance event organised by Core Cities. He did, however, express frustration at the lack of acknowledgement, during COP, of the role of local places confronting the challenges of climate.

Anna Marie Delaney highlighted the importance of coal phase-out within the COP discussions, the [\\$8.5 billion partnership](#) to fund South Africa's transition to net zero. She reflected on the challenges she, as a leader in an area undergoing socio-economic transition due to the shut down of peat mining and fossil fuel-based electricity generation, has to confront on an ongoing basis as the Midlands Just Transition process in Ireland is advanced.

Mark Atherton spoke about some of the achievements that have been lost in the media reporting including successes in investing in innovation, the [Break Through Agenda](#) which all of the major emitters signed up to, the launch of a COP26 product efficiency call to action and the participation of local authorities in the Race to Zero.

What exactly do we need local government to be doing to unlock progress?

The Panellists went on to discuss what actions are required to enable knowledge transfer and progress on net zero at a local level. Anna Marie Delaney highlighted the importance of finance, the key position local authorities hold in communities, the role of community leadership and the urgency of addressing policy silos, principally at national level.

Chris Murray highlighted the role of demonstrator projects, working with the private sector and the need to set aside the notion that competition is the best driver of progress. There is a need to focus on collaborating with stakeholders from across a wide range of sectors. In doing so he highlighted three key challenges to collaboration

1. In order to solve the climate crisis, we must tackle the social care crisis.
2. The issue of centralisation – particularly in the UK – and the revenue streams available at the local level to tackle net zero.
3. Lack of strategic funding – national funding that local authorities are forced to compete for.

Mark Atherton emphasised the opportunities available to local places by working directly with the investment market, in developing ‘informed clients’ who are willing to invest in local places and creating the right narrative around behaviour change.

Anna Marie Delaney noted that in many local communities there are a lot of fears and anxiety around the climate crisis. Local governments must play a key role in combating those fears, encouraging communities to take advantage of the many opportunities, economic and social, that climate transition can bring to the local areas most affected by climate enforced transition. Dealing with uncertainty and supporting climate action should be delivered through the lens of opportunity. Leading by example is a key part of that approach, alongside communicating the co-benefits of climate change.

Is there a crisis of trust in institutions?

Mark Atherton discussed the opportunity for local authorities to work with a range of community partners but also highlighted the weakening communication link in the UK between local government and communities.

Anna Marie Delaney noted the contrast in that regard with the relationships between local authorities in Ireland and their diverse communities. She spoke about the evolving and fluctuating nature of trust with communities and the important role which local authorities play in pulling different stakeholders together to deliver messages locally.

Chris Murray highlighted the role of social pressure in facilitating behaviour change, of articulating the co-benefits of the net zero pathway and the importance of adaptation.

How do we sell behaviour change to individuals? How do we engage other big players in both the public and private sector?

Mark Atherton highlighted the role for local government working with larger public and private organisations and of holding them to account. Also, the importance of trying to get people to buy and value things that are less carbon-intensive.

Anna Marie Delaney emphasised the importance of building resilience, of ensuring affordability and of persisting through adversity. The voice of local government and of local communities must be vital in advancing the net zero agenda.

How do we put conditionality on new developments to ensure low energy usage?

Mark Atherton emphasised the importance of local area energy plans, of building a street-by-street understanding of current energy systems and future requirements.

Is our use of data sufficiently strong in this area?

Chris Murray discussed how much more local authorities could be doing to join the dots between datasets and how they inform policy-making. The importance of learning from the pandemic- what worked well and what did not.

How is this transition different in rural communities?

Chris Murray highlights the links between urban and rural areas and Anna Marie Delaney spoke about the opportunities available in rural areas such as remote working opportunities, future employment opportunities, working with universities, health and wellbeing, green tourism and of piloting decarbonisation zones in towns.

What is the one thing you want to achieve over the next year

All speakers emphasised the importance of collaboration but Anna Marie finished up with a critical message: "...enough of talking and making plans, let's get on with it!"

Related content: *The Heseltine Institute's latest policy brief, '[Climate Finance and Urban Futures at COP26](#)', is from Heseltine Institute Research Associate Dr Sawyer Phinney, who attended the conference in Glasgow. [In this briefing](#), they highlight the challenge of attracting private investment and identify a series of policy tools that could be adopted to increase spending.*