



NET ZERO IN HIGHWAYS



INNOVATION



COLLABORATION



NET ZERO



SKILLS

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Net Zero in Highways

As local council highways teams come under pressure to reduce their carbon emissions and achieve net zero, the Local Council Roads Innovation Group (LCRIG) carried out an exclusive survey to find out more about activity levels, barriers and the actions that are needed to drive this agenda forward.

This survey was kindly facilitated by the Asphalt Industry Alliance (AIA) as a voluntary addendum to its ALARM Survey, carried out in 2022.

The findings are based on analysis by LCRIG.

Who took part in the survey?

- 91 English councils
- 21 London-based councils
- 10 Welsh councils

Key findings:

- Just one council claimed it was fully advanced in taking forward practical steps to deliver net zero
- Of those who responded 84 councils have declared a climate emergency
- Myriad of options available to assess carbon savings
- Cost seen as main barrier stopping progress from being made
- Councils struggling to keep up with technological changes
- Lack of knowledge and skills stifling speed of EV charging rollout

Introduction

The number of local authorities that have declared a climate emergency continues to rise and councils continue to battle with a range of competing demands in this area.

Councils are taking action to reduce their own carbon emissions and working with partners and local communities to tackle the impact of climate change on their local area.

There are numerous ways in which this is being done including through the implementation of Clean Air Zones; transition to electric vehicles; 100% recycled materials in construction; emissions-based parking permits; emissions-charging; etc.

The pressure to act has never been greater with ambitious Government targets and deadlines focusing minds.

One approach to improving air quality is reducing air pollution in towns and cities by discouraging the use of petrol and diesel vehicles via a range of road user and parking charges. Such measures can both encourage a shift to low/zero-emission vehicles, as well as making walking, cycling and the use of public transport the normal. Other approaches include the use of air monitoring equipment and adapted traffic signal phasing to reduce congestion in areas with schools or care homes.

The lockdown response to Covid-19 caused an unprecedented reduction in global economic and transport activity along with unprecedented air pollution declines.

Climate change cuts across all council departments and functions, and everyone has a part to play, whatever their role and remit.

The private sector will also play a key role as they adapt their products and services to help clients in this area.

But with many councils facing severe financial challenges, how can they go about locking in the benefits of air pollution reductions and what should they be prioritising?

The Local Council Roads Innovation Group (LCRIG) has put a major focus on climate change with net zero one of four key pillars that the organisation has focused its activities around. LCRIG has delivered an exclusive webinar series entitled 'Practical steps on the journey to net zero' which has explored in detail the work being done to accelerate the transition to clean energy and sustainable roads.

But are those who are embracing the journey to net zero getting it right? And what barriers still need to be knocked down? To gauge the extent of activity across the sector, and the appetite for change, LCRIG invited councils to take part in an email survey. This was carried out as an addendum to the Asphalt Industry Alliance's (AIA) ALARM Survey in 2022.

A total of 122 councils responded.

In this report, the findings of LCRIG's analysis of responses are described.

More Action Needed

There is a clear need for councils to take more action when it comes to implementing practical steps that can help them deliver net zero.

When asked to highlight how advanced their council is in taking forward practical steps to deliver net zero, just one council from across England, Wales and London responded with a top score of 10.

This immediately highlights the level of the challenge facing councils as they juggle with competing demands and face increasing pressure to deliver on climate change.

24 English councils gave no response at all when asked to rank on a scale of 1-10, where 10 is good – how advanced their local authority is when it comes to taking forward solutions to deliver net zero.

43 of those who responded ranked their progress at 5 or lower with just 25 giving a ranking of between 6 and 10.

Of the Welsh councils that responded, the highest ranking received was 8, four did not respond, two gave a score of 5 whilst two councils provided rankings of 4 and 7 respectively.

It was a slightly more positive response amongst the London councils, with 12 ranking their advancements in this area at 5 or above. Six failed to provide a response, with two councils providing a score of 4 with the lowest ranking received a 2.

The number of local authorities that have declared a climate emergency continues to rise with most English councils who responded to the survey indicating that they have declared one. Fourteen authorities in England said they had not declared one whilst 10 failed to issue a response.

Five of the Welsh councils who responded said they have declared an emergency with three stating they had not.

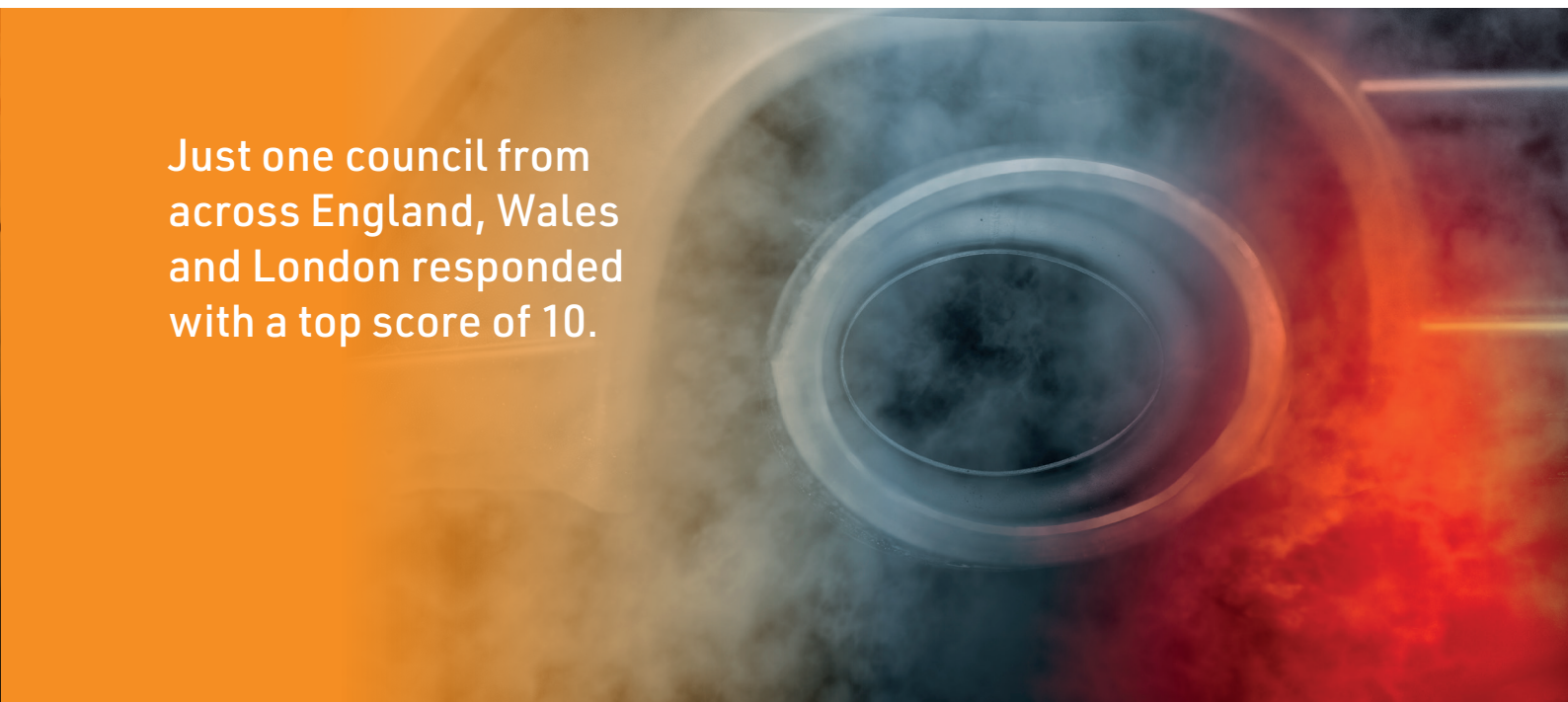
Over half the London councils who answered highlighted that they have declared a climate emergency.

Overall, 84 councils said they have declared a climate emergency, but it is clear from the responses received around progress being made to implement practical steps to help them reach net zero – that there is a need to do more in order to accelerate change.

The pressure to act has never been greater with ambitious Government targets and deadlines focusing minds.



Just one council from across England, Wales and London responded with a top score of 10.



Prioritising Actions

When it comes delivering net zero, councils must try to prioritise the actions that are needed to help them get there.

Respondents to the survey were asked what practical steps should be prioritised to deliver climate change.

Many English, Welsh and London councils ticked all the options available which included:

- Evaluation and tracking of carbon savings
- Rollout of EV charging infrastructure
- Use of sustainable materials
- Reducing emissions through the use of decarbonised fleets

Those completing the survey were asked to provide details of anything else they think should be prioritised to deliver climate change. Responses ranged from “Developing sustainable maintenance methodologies, promoting active travel and public transport to reduce network usage” to “Reducing overall mileage and fuel switching for HGVs”.

One council said it was using solar energy, dimming streetlights, carrying out a tree planting programme and re-wilding verges. They claimed that this had led to a reduction in carbon by 68% to date.

Another perhaps succinctly summed up the actions that are needed by stating that there “must be a broad overarching effort”.

When asked what tools are they/do they plan to use to assess carbon savings, several different responses were received, which perhaps reflects the myriad of options currently available to local authorities.

LCRIG has been working with other industry partners to develop a carbon calculator that can be used for this purpose.



Removing Barriers

There are many reasons why progress towards achieving net zero is not accelerating at the pace required but cost was perhaps unsurprisingly seen as a prime barrier which is stopping progress from being made.

When asked what are the biggest barriers likely to prevent the pace of change necessary to meet net zero, 64 of the 91 English councils highlighted cost as one of the main barriers.

It was a similar story amongst the Welsh councils with 7 out of 10 also selecting cost as a significant barrier.

The same trend appeared in London with 15 authorities in the capital stating that cost was stopping them making progress towards net zero.

Another big barrier which is stopping local authorities from being able to make the progress required is the ‘Ability to keep up with technological changes.’ This is an area that the Transport Technology Forum and LCRIG will be looking to try and support councils in throughout 2023 and beyond.

A total of 30 English councils selected this as a barrier, with 4 from London and 3 from Wales also choosing it.

There is no doubt that the pace of change required to accelerate the transition to clean energy and sustainable roads is advancing quickly and this finding shows that there is a need for further help and guidance to support council officers in meeting their aims and objectives.

Other barriers chosen were a ‘lack of direction’ and ‘lack of confidence in existing solutions.’

Twenty-seven English councils identified the former as a barrier, with just 2 from London and 2 from Wales.

It was a similar story with those selecting ‘a lack of confidence in existing solutions’ which saw 25 English councils highlight this as a concern, 4 from London and 2 from Wales.

25 English councils, 2 London councils and 2 Welsh councils highlighted a ‘willingness to do so’ as another barrier which could stop them making progress in this important area.

Funding is the biggest barrier for English and London councils

There is no doubt that the pace of change required to accelerate the transition to clean energy and sustainable roads is advancing quickly.



Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure

With a £1.3 billion fund allocated to the rollout of public electric vehicle (EV) charge points the installation of this infrastructure will need to be delivered at a local and national level. This will need collaboration between local highway teams, central government, and the wider energy sector for it to happen.

Demand for charging points is going to increase exponentially in the next few years so it is important that local authorities don't get left in the wilderness when it comes to the biggest revolution in road transport since the introduction of the internal combustion engine.

Survey respondents were asked 'What are the barriers preventing your local authority from rolling out EV charging infrastructure?'

Having been asked to rank in order, where 1 is the most important and 10 the least, from a selection of options what the barriers are – funding was highlighted as one of the top barriers.

Over a third (33) of English councils selected it as the top barrier with 4 from London and 4 from Wales also giving it the highest ranking.

Another clear trend amongst the responses was the number of local authorities who scored 'Pace of change (resulting in current EV technology becoming obsolete)' highly when it comes to a barrier slowing down the roll out of EV charging points.

Knowledge and Lack of Direction were also cited as blockers stopping the public sector from rolling out EV charging infrastructure.

Many councils are looking for guidance to help them. The Transport Technology Forum's Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Charging Working Group, with the support of the Office of Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV), recently launched a simple starter guide aimed at helping local authorities understand the challenges around delivering on-street charging networks for electric vehicles (EVs).

Siloed mentality (departments failing to work together) was also cited as another major barrier which is stifling progress in this area.

A total of 31 English councils gave this a mark of between 1 and 5, highlighting the need for more cross-department working when it comes to delivering in this key area.

A third of the London-councils who responded also responded with scores of between 1 and 5, whilst in Wales four councils did.

Overall, more funding and collaboration is needed to help advance progress with the roll out of EV charging. A £450 million Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure [LEVI] Fund will see local authorities able to bid for funding to help accelerate the rollout of EV hubs and on-street charging

Paula Clayton-Smith, Director, Government & Strategy at the Local Council Roads Innovation Group (LCRIG), gives her view

Net zero and activity towards decarbonisation are highlighting some interesting issues and our report into Net Zero in Highways helps shine a light on some of these.

First and foremost, we cannot underestimate the challenge that is facing councils in this area.

The report makes for interesting reading and whilst there are positives to take from the findings there are also areas of concern which must be addressed to help councils reach net zero.

When asked to highlight how advanced their council is in taking forward practical steps to deliver net zero, just one council out of 122 responded with the top score. This highlights the scale of the challenge.

However, it is important to note that guidance and support is available and groups such as LCRIG and the Transport technology Forum (TTF) are here to help.

At LCRIG we have close links with the Department for Transport (DfT) and can directly feedback our members concerns to help identify the actions that are needed and have already been doing this.

Because action is needed to decarbonise now. From looking at the findings cost, and funding are cited as two of the main barriers that are stopping things like the rollout of electric vehicle charging infrastructure happening at the pace required.

Councils continue to face funding challenges and it is extremely difficult to put a figure on the cost of reaching net zero.

This is not something they can achieve on their own and they must work in partnership with the private sector.

It won't be easy but help and information is available to authorities.

For example, at LCRIG we have been running a webinar series entitled 'Practical steps on the journey to net zero' which has explored in detail the work being done to accelerate the transition to clean energy and sustainable roads.

We have also been liaising with the Energy Saving Trust to provide input and feedback into a soon to be published Decarbonisation Toolkit for Local Authorities.

And the Transport Technology Forum recently launched a simple starter guide aimed at helping local authorities understand the challenges around delivering on-street charging networks for electric vehicles (EVs).

Another interesting finding from this report is the fact that the 'Ability to keep up with technological changes' is stopping local authorities from being able to make the progress needed to reach net zero.

Whilst innovation will undoubtedly play an important part in ensuring that new technologies, products, and services help drive forward the changes that are needed – it is important to note that officers must be supported on the journey.

Do reach out to the team at LCRIG as we are here to help and/or will always know someone who can.

Ultimately, net zero is a must and not an if – because by getting there we will be changing the lives of future generations for the better.



Paula Clayton-Smith

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Membership Benefits

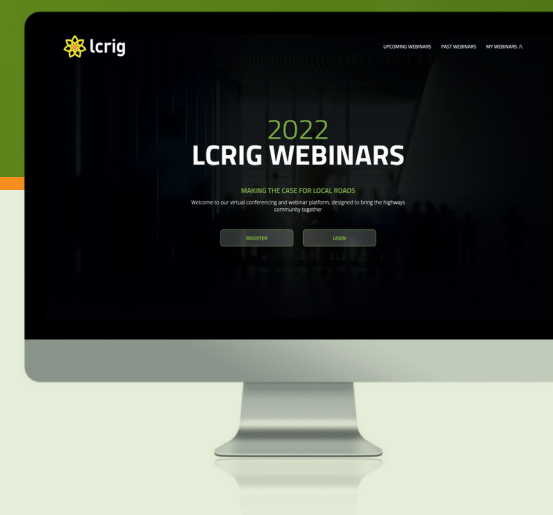
LCRIG's mission is to make the case for local roads through collaboration, innovation, skills and net zero for the highways community and our members. We do this by providing a unique platform for members to engage, providing a vital link between central and local government, supply chain and the wider highways community to ensure ongoing improvements in the highways sector.

Associate Members are invited to consider membership opportunities, advertising, recruitment services and even sponsorship opportunities to enable the 'highways community' to continue to thrive and grow.

Members of LCRIG benefit from a range of services and support. We deliver webinars designed to facilitate fresh thinking in the industry; offer a recruitment service; provide frameworks to encourage greater levels of innovation; produce a weekly newsletter to highlight good work taking place across the industry; plus much more.



MEMBERSHIP



“ LCRIG is influencing change where it matters, at the point of service delivery.

Brian Fitzpatrick
Managing Director
Fitzpatrick Advisory



Scan the code to view
our membership benefits

To enquire about membership, please get in touch via email at info@lcrig.org.uk

