

Local Sustainable Energy Assessment Matrix



Benchmarking and improving local action on energy

A starting point for planning any local energy action should be to assess the current extent and quality of local energy activity.

This assessment matrix – or scorecard – is designed to help a local authority or other local energy actors do just that: to (a) assess their area's current performance in relation to delivering on various aspects of sustainable energy and (b) identify opportunities for improvement.

The assessment matrix seeks, in its brief descriptions, to capture the range of possible achievements and aspirations on different aspects of sustainable energy. By picking an accurate description of the current local 'state of play' on each aspect, users can benchmark their performance as 'weak', 'fair', 'good' or 'excellent'.

This approach also allows users to understand how their performance compares with what could be achieved – and therefore what they need to be doing to improve their performance. Thus an area which rates its performance as 'fair' can see what 'good' looks like and then consider what might be involved in making the next grade.

The assessment matrix has five dimensions of action, each with three or four sub-elements. It provides brief descriptors of what weak, fair, good and excellent action might look like for each element, thus providing the opportunity for performance assessment either by local actors themselves or by a third party:

- 1 Domestic sector energy
- 2 Commercial sector energy
- 3 Fuel poverty and affordable warmth
- 4 Low carbon energy infrastructure and markets
- 5 Institutional ecosystem and resourcing

Using the Local Sustainable Energy Assessment Matrix

Using the assessment matrix is really straightforward.

Simply (a) consider each element in each of the five dimensions, (b) think about the current state of relevant activity in the locality, and (c) pick which of the four descriptors best describes it. This provides the level of performance – weak, fair, good, or excellent – for that element. Repeat for each element to build up a reasonably detailed picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the area's performance. We've provided some space for each element for you to record evidence of your performance rating.

Comparing the selected level for an element with the one above provides an indication of what's involved in stepping up a grade.

This approach is based on a previous assessment matrix for local authorities developed by the Centre for Sustainable Energy (between 2006–2010)*. It has been updated in 2016 to reflect the current policy context, recalibrate the performance benchmarking (because what was once 'excellent' may now be little more than 'fair' as a result of widespread adoption of better practice), and re-orient the structure so it can be used to assess local energy action led by any party, rather than just a local authority.



* See for example www.cse.org.uk/projects/view/1082

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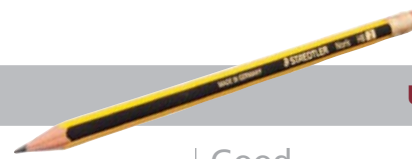
Domestic sector energy

	Weak	Fair	Good	Excellent
Strategic approach	No evidence of a strategic approach to improving the energy performance of local housing.	Local strategies broadly recognise importance of improving energy performance. Long-term targets set but not linked to a resourced plan of action and without delivery vehicle.	Local strategies set out housing energy performance improvement targets in alignment with future UK carbon budgets. Action plan underway with identified resources & delivery agents.	As 'good', plus: Local strategy focus on improving housing energy performance across all tenures Identified agencies lead delivery of a resourced action plan, with regular progress reviews undertaken.
New housing	Only Building Regulations Part L energy requirements apply to new housing developments. Weak monitoring and enforcement of Part L.	Light touch approach to consideration of renewable energy and district heating opportunities as part of new development planning. Aspirational targets but limited effort to realise targets with uncooperative developers.	Strategic commitments to very low or zero carbon new housing in new developments, using all available powers to deliver commitments. Good advice and enforcement activities.	As 'good', plus: Commitment to encourage and support exemplary developments (e.g. Passivhaus standard).
Low carbon retrofit [includes insulation, heating and controls, domestic scale renewables, more efficient lighting and equipment etc.]	Haphazard approach to low carbon retrofit. No obvious effort to establish or stimulate local schemes or apply any available funds.	Systematic and sustained efforts to draw in and promote take up of energy supplier or Government initiatives and funding (e.g. ECO) Limited integration of retrofit activities. Little or no market development.	Structured and integrated local activity to establish low carbon retrofit activities and encourage local take-up, drawing in available funding and national schemes. Effective guidance available on energy retrofit for older homes.	As 'good', plus: Integrated local initiative(s) to stimulate local demand and support to building trades skills development to develop joined up skill-base and market. Wider promotion of smart energy efficient appliances and lighting.
Advice and behaviour change [includes energy advice, local engagement initiatives (e.g. Green Open Homes), switching support and other energy market interventions]	Few or no local services, groups or agencies active in providing energy-related advice or behaviour change initiatives.	Ad hoc initiatives taking place but not well integrated or linked to one another or not operating at sufficient scale to have meaningful influence on community-wide changes in attitudes or actions.	A range of initiatives available locally which work together to raise awareness and stimulate action on a sustained basis and at a meaningful scale to influence community-wide changes in attitudes and actions.	Well-resourced and well-used local services offering energy advice, opportunities to learn (e.g. Green Open Homes) and acting as catalyst for other organisations' efforts to engage people and address housing energy performance (see also '3. Fuel poverty & affordable warmth').

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Domestic sector energy

Use this page to record evidence of your performance



Weak Fair Good Excellent

Strategic approach

New housing

Low carbon retrofit

[includes insulation, heating and controls, domestic scale renewables, more efficient lighting and equipment etc.]

Advice and behaviour change

[includes energy advice, local engagement initiatives (e.g. Green Open Homes), switching support and other energy market interventions]

2

Commercial sector energy

	Weak	Fair	Good	Excellent
Strategic approach	<p>Commercial energy use and business sector not a focus of local efforts to improve efficiency and reduce carbon emissions</p> <p>Individual companies making their own efforts in isolation.</p>	<p>Business sector actively involved in local efforts to reduce local carbon emissions (particularly its own).</p> <p>Activities are piecemeal and not part of coherent local programme.</p>	<p>Strategic focus on commercial energy used as key area for local energy action and economic development.</p> <p>Local leadership (e.g. by local authority, LEP, chamber of commerce) on targeting opportunities and supporting business action.</p>	<p>Relevant local strategies set challenging business sector carbon targets in line with UK carbon budgets.</p> <p>Strong leadership within local business sector with programmes in place to enable companies to realise targets.</p> <p>Cross-sectoral engagement/ integration with corporate-wide initiatives of larger businesses.</p>
New buildings	<p>Building Regulations provide basis for energy considerations of new commercial developments.</p> <p>Weak monitoring and enforcement of building regulations re: energy.</p>	<p>Generalised approach to consider renewable energy and district heating opportunities as part of new development planning</p> <p>Aspirational targets set but limited effort to realise with uncooperative developers.</p>	<p>Strategic commitments to very low or zero carbon buildings in new developments, using all available powers to deliver commitments.</p> <p>Good advice and enforcement activities.</p>	<p>As 'good', plus:</p> <p>Commitment to encourage and support exemplary developments.</p>
Low carbon retrofit and energy management activity	<p>No active programmes locally to support business sector to manage energy performance and reduce carbon emissions.</p>	<p>Some advice and support on business energy management available locally with efforts to highlight and celebrate good practice.</p>	<p>Targeted local efforts to engage owners of key buildings and land to support retrofit/energy management activity.</p> <p>Promotion and support for effective use of smart energy data to optimise building system performance. Structured sector-specific programmes (e.g. run by chamber of commerce) to drive improvement and staff engagement.</p>	<p>As 'good', plus:</p> <p>Local efforts to raise/access finance to support commercial building retrofit and promote energy services contracting approaches.</p>

2

Commercial sector energy



Use this page to record evidence of your performance

	Weak	Fair	Good	Excellent
Strategic approach				
New buildings				
Low carbon retrofit and energy management activity				

3

Fuel poverty and affordable warmth

	Weak	Fair	Good	Excellent
Strategic approach	Limited understanding of fuel poverty as key vulnerability with financial, health and social consequences and which requires specific interventions to tackle causes.	Strategic focus on tackling fuel poverty and associated vulnerabilities as part of broader initiatives to tackle poverty and health inequalities and improving housing condition and affordability.	As 'fair,' plus: Effective understanding of local needs and appropriate targeting of interventions to improve energy efficiency and home energy management, increase incomes, and reduce fuel costs.	As 'good' plus: Strong inter-agency activity (housing, health, social care, community) to target energy vulnerable households and secure funding for appropriate interventions across all housing sector. Actions integrated with other agencies to address vulnerabilities. NICE guidance being realised.
Targeted energy retrofit for housing	Haphazard approach to stimulating or promoting fuel-poverty targeted insulation and heating measures schemes locally (e.g. energy supplier funded initiatives).	Systematic and sustained efforts to draw in and promote take-up of energy supplier and Government initiatives (e.g. ECO). Limited integration with wider efforts to tackle fuel poverty (e.g. energy advice, tariff support etc.).	Structured local activity to establish local retrofit schemes to target fuel poor and vulnerable households, drawing in available funding and national schemes. Integrated with local advice and referral initiatives for wider support.	As 'good', plus: Effective mechanisms, with good take up, to target and refer most vulnerable households to schemes (through systems links to health sector and DNO PSRs). Focus on take-up in private rented sector.
Health sector engagement on tackling cold homes. (See NICE guidance on excess winter deaths and health impacts of cold homes: www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng6)	Public health strategy acknowledges role of cold homes in exacerbating poor health. Limited engagement with implementing NICE guidance.	Public health actively engaged with NICE guidance. Lack of engagement by wider health sector limits implementation.	Local health sector engaged in NICE guidance delivery, with funding for efforts to establish effective referral mechanisms. Limited strategic engagement with the cost-benefits of action/inaction.	Local health sector providing strategic direction in line with NICE guidance. Funding for referral mechanisms and other interventions justified by cost benefit analysis of NHS savings and health benefits from effective action.
Advice support and referral mechanisms (as per NICE guidance)	Limited or no local provision of advice and support for fuel poor households to secure more affordable warmth.	Accessible local services providing energy advice to fuel poor households and making referrals to insulation/heating schemes, helping with tariff switching etc.	Well-resourced and well-used local advice services linked to other agencies to meet range of needs of vulnerable households.	As 'good' plus: Cross-agency referral mechanisms to tackle cold homes meeting NICE guidance, integrated with wider support services for vulnerable households.

3

Fuel poverty and affordable warmth

Use this page to record evidence of your performance



	Weak	Fair	Good	Excellent
Strategic approach				
Targeted energy retrofit for housing				
Health sector engagement on tackling cold homes [see NICE guidance on excess winter deaths and health impacts of cold homes]				
Advice support and referral mechanisms (as per NICE guidelines)				

4

Low carbon energy infrastructure and markets

	Weak	Fair	Good	Excellent
Strategic approach	Limited attention to understanding or realising local renewable and low carbon power and heat opportunities for local benefit.	Supportive and enabling approach (e.g. planning policies) to local renewable energy and district heating/CHP initiatives but ad hoc and reactive.	Strategic goals set based on clear understanding of local renewable and low carbon power and heat opportunities. Coherent locally-driven action plan to realise for local benefit, with appropriate planning policies, commitment to local ownership.	As 'good' plus: Public and community engagement to establish meaningful public consent for energy system transition Active plans to realise opportunities from smart energy data & associated energy market developments. Coherent local financing strategy for investment
Renewable energy	Limited activity to develop or enable new renewable energy projects beyond dealing with planning applications from commercial developers.	Supportive planning policies in place and being applied to permit decent renewable energy projects, irrespective of ownership. Some community-owned renewable energy projects in place (or in development).	Local initiatives to develop and finance renewable energy projects for local ownership and benefit. Local authority providing supportive and enabling role. Supportive planning policies in place and being applied.	As 'good' plus: Clear strategy and targets for significant growth in locally-owned renewables. Neighbourhood planning activities to address low carbon opportunities, with supportive policy.
District heating/CHP [mainly for urban localities]	Little activity to explore district heating and/or CHP opportunities identified in previous studies (e.g. regional spatial strategy evidence etc.)	Policies in place to support district heating and/or CHP where feasible plus studies undertaken and published which identify possible sites.	Active local initiative on district heating and/or CHP. DECC's HNDU engagement to secure funding and to support project identification and development.	Well-defined strategy and action plan to realise thoroughly considered local opportunities, with clear development and financing programme.
Smart energy developments	Smart energy opportunities not on the radar beyond a few individual organisations.	Some interest from academic and tech sectors but not particularly joined up with local focus or purpose.	Smart energy a focus of local strategies. Partnerships emerging to deliver specific projects as basis for further initiatives.	Strong collaborative and cross-sector approach to exploring and realising smart energy opportunities in the area in the public interest, with good understanding of the challenges.

4

Low carbon energy infrastructure and markets



Use this page to record evidence of your performance

	Weak	Fair	Good	Excellent
Strategic approach				
Renewable energy				
District heating/CHP [mainly for urban localities]				
Smart energy developments				

5

Institutional ecosystem and resourcing

	Weak	Fair	Good	Excellent
Dedicated resources and partnerships	Local action on sustainable energy dependent on a few wilful individuals or isolated commercial initiatives, with little support from local authority or other potential lead agencies.	Several different local sustainable energy initiatives from different sectors (e.g. commercial, public, academic, community). These may have loose connections with one another, but have a limited sense of leadership or shared resources.	<p>Clear leadership role adopted by local organisation(s) (e.g. local authority and/or local energy agency) on sustainable energy leadership.</p> <p>Draws others in (including business, universities, community groups) to deliver a range of projects and secure funding from a variety of sources</p>	<p>As 'good' plus:</p> <p>Cross-sector partnership with a sustainable energy focus active in identifying opportunities, developing initiatives and securing funding to realise them.</p>
Community energy	Some community energy activity but slow to come to fruition with real projects.	A few community renewable energy projects realised plus engagement with initiatives like Green Open Homes (or similar), Big Energy Saving Network etc.	<p>Active community energy sector with several groups undertaking projects.</p> <p>Co-ordinating function in place (e.g. regular network meetings, newsletters, website etc.)</p> <p>Broad scope of activities, beyond energy generation to include e.g. low carbon retrofit, energy advice, behaviour change, fuel poverty.</p>	<p>Well-resourced network or hub function supporting several community organisations in developing and delivering sustainable energy initiatives which meet local needs and engage wider public with issues.</p> <p>Sharing experiences and resources to avoid reinventing wheel and wasted effort and to improve practice and sustainability of model.</p>
Financing and funding	Limited efforts locally to secure funding for local action on sustainable energy (reflected in limited activity).	Piecemeal funding secured for individual projects.	Active pursuit of funding, investment finance and/or income generation by several organisations for a variety of initiatives from a range of different sources (e.g. Lottery, supplier obligations, Innovate UK, EU, LEP, community shares/bonds etc.)	<p>As 'good' plus:</p> <p>Joined up approaches to securing funding for local initiatives and investment finance for sustainable energy assets.</p>

5

Institutional ecosystem and resourcing



Use this page to record evidence of your performance

Weak

Fair

Good

Excellent

Strategic approach
Dedicated resources and partnerships

Community energy

Financing and funding




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Founded 1979

The Centre for Sustainable Energy is a national charity which shares its knowledge and practical experience to help people and organisations change the way they think and act on energy.