



# **Title of report: Carbon Neutral Housing - A report for the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee**

**Meeting: Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee**

**Meeting date: Tuesday 16 December 2025**

**Report by: Principal Sustainability and Climate Change Officer**

## **Classification**

Open

## **Decision type**

This is not an executive decision

## **Wards affected**

(All Wards);

## **Purpose**

This report provides information to the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee on Carbon Neutral Housing. The report details whether new houses and self-build properties are 'zero carbon ready' and looks at the role of fuel replacement to heat homes.

## **Recommendation(s)**

**That:**

- a) That the committee reviews the report regarding Carbon Neutral Housing including planning, and building regulations perspectives in Herefordshire; and**
- b) The committee determines any other actions or recommendations it may seek to make.**

## **Alternative options**

1. None identified. This report provides an update to the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee.

## Key considerations

### Relevant data on house building and zero carbon readiness across the county

2. Over one-third of Herefordshire's greenhouse gas emissions are calculated to come from heating homes and other buildings.
3. There are c. 85,000 homes in Herefordshire. A significant proportion of these homes have a poor energy performance rating, there are c. 60,000 D-G Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rated properties in the county.
4. A total of 416 households have accessed the Boiler Upgrade Scheme in the county from FY22/23 – FY 24/25 that leads to installation of low-carbon heating systems, giving residents £7,500 for an air source or ground source heat pump, or £5,000 for a biomass boiler<sup>1</sup>.
5. A total of 8,516 domestic solar PV installations totalling 41.3MW have been recorded in the county up to September 2025<sup>2</sup>.
6. The Climate Change Act 2008 enshrines in law the UK's commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 100% of 1990 levels, by 2050.
7. In response to increasing awareness of the impacts of climate change, Herefordshire Council declared a climate emergency on 8 March 2019, and on 11 December 2020 this was strengthened to a Climate and Ecological Emergency. The Climate and Ecological Emergency was reaffirmed by Full Council on Friday 28 July 2023.
8. New homes are being built and will be developed in the future. The standard of new homes is important to reduce emissions.
9. Zero Carbon Homes can be defined as homes without means to burn fuel directly, e.g. entirely heated and powered by renewable electricity.
10. The homes are also often high efficiency in terms of design and materials but should not be confused with other archetypes such as 'Off grid' or 'Passiv-Haus'.
11. The number of appropriately skilled local installers and the capacity of the electricity network will need to increase in response to the demand created by government legislation.

### Local authority powers over building standards

12. Major new policies are due to be introduced in line with the new housing targets being imposed on all Local Authorities. The Future Homes and Building Standard<sup>3</sup> was consulted on at the end of 2023 and is the chance to ensure every new building in Britain is part of the solution. At the time of writing, there are plans for new homes, to enforce electric heat pumps or other non-gas alternatives as standard by 2027 with this Standard expected to be released in Autumn 2025.
13. New national planning policies may trump local planning policies in some instances. Planning policies and building regulations also are integral to the drive to build carbon neutral Housing.
14. Adaptation needs to be incorporated to mitigate the effects of climate change and should be considered in all new homes built.

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<sup>1</sup> [Boiler Upgrade Scheme statistics: September 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Solar photovoltaics deployment - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>3</sup> [The Future Homes and Buildings Standards: 2023 consultation - GOV.UK](#)

### **Different types of fuel available**

15. Awareness raising of the general public will be crucial in the run up to the first phase of the gas boiler ban in 2027 when the Future Homes Standard applies to all newly built homes, meaning new homes will not be able to connect to a gas network and will have to install low carbon heating measures.
16. Electric heating systems produce no direct emissions, so carbon reduction efforts focus on how electricity is generated, with clean electricity and heat pumps offering greater efficiency than alternatives like hydrogen or biogas.
17. In rural areas predominately off gas others fuels dominate notably oil and LPG. All traditional fuels such as wood, LPG, and oil face declining viability due to environmental concerns, infrastructure challenges, and regulatory changes

### **Community impact**

18. Herefordshire Council declared a climate and ecological emergency in 2019. The Herefordshire Council Plan 2024 – 2028 commitments confirm: Herefordshire Council will endeavour to meet our commitment to reach net zero by 2030/31.
19. Mitigation and adaptation measures will be central to how we become more sustainable. We will work with others to support county-wide reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and support communities to become more resilient.
20. A central council objective is to work towards reducing county and council carbon emissions, aiming for net zero by 2030/31 and work with partners and communities to make the county more resilient to the effects of climate change
21. There are no direct community impacts as a result of providing an update to the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee.
22. The effects resulting from a changing climate will potentially impact every community in the county. Risk and level of impact is increased for specific geographic areas, specific archetype of houses and demographics.
23. Fuel poverty remains a significant issue in Herefordshire, with an estimated 15,401 households thought to suffer from fuel poverty across Herefordshire. Carbon Neutral homes would help with lower utility bills.
24. Working towards Carbon Neutral Homes supports improvements that will benefit all who reside in the county. The resulting improvements in local air quality will in turn lead to improved public health.

### **Environmental impact**

25. Climate and environmental impact are intrinsically linked. Activities that impact the climate impact biodiversity and local air, water and soil quality. Emissions reduction and climate adaptation will also have associated environmental positive impacts.

26. Working towards Carbon Neutral Homes across Herefordshire supports the County Plan's ambitions to:
- i) seek strong stewardship of the county's natural resources;
  - ii) protect and enhance the county's biodiversity, value nature and uphold environmental standards;
  - iii) build understanding and support for sustainable living;
  - iv) develop environmentally sound infrastructure that attracts investment;
  - v) minimise waste and increase reuse, repair and recycling.

### **Equality duty**

27. There are no equality duty implication associated with providing this progress report to the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee.
28. Environmental inequalities tend to disproportionately impact areas of deprivation and those with lower household income<sup>4</sup>.

### **Resource implications**

29. There are no resource implications associated with providing this progress report to the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee.
30. Any recommendations arising from the Scrutiny Committee will require separate governance.

### **Legal implications**

31. The role of the scrutiny committees is to help develop policy, to carry out reviews of council and other local services, and to hold decision makers to account for their actions and decisions.

### **Risk management**

32. There are no risks associated with providing this progress report to the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee.
33. Any new projects arising as a result of recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee will require separate governance.

### **Consultees**

34. Planning and Building Regulations colleagues in addition to members of the Sustainability & Climate Change team input into this report.

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<sup>4</sup> The Marmot Review (2010) Fair Society, Healthy Lives: Strategic review of health inequalities in England post 2010 <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review>

**Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Carbon Neutral Housing in Herefordshire

**Background papers**

None identified

**Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report**