

## **Cover Note - Westminster Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) Report**

In 2019, Westminster City Council declared a climate emergency and set a clear ambition to be a net-zero city by 2040. In order to meet this, we must address emissions from our built environment. The energy used to heat and power Westminster's homes, offices, shops and cultural buildings represented 83% of citywide greenhouse gas emissions in 2021. We also now know that our existing energy system is a significant source of local air pollution - in 2019 heat and power generation alone was responsible for 53% of all nitrous oxide emissions in Westminster, compared to 33% from road transport.<sup>1</sup>

It is therefore helpful to build our understanding of how to reduce Westminster's energy use and identify the opportunities for transitioning to clean and renewable forms of energy across the city. Doing so will unlock long-term cost savings for our communities and businesses, and citywide benefits in terms of energy security, resilience and a healthy environment. These are key foundations for a Fairer Westminster.

Our Climate Emergency Action Plan established a commitment to develop a Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP), and we are now sharing the technical report that has been developed for the council by independent consultants Buro Happold. This LAEP Report is an important part of the evidence base to build our collective understanding of how we could become a net zero city by 2040.

The report provides data-driven pathways that could decarbonise Westminster's energy system. The independent consultants have used a range of data to give us a detailed picture of the current local energy system, and then modelled the most cost-effective interventions and investment opportunities for cleaner and more efficient ways of generating and distributing energy.

The potential investments outlined in the report could produce benefits for Westminster and its residents, such as reducing energy costs through home retrofit measures and improving energy security through the introduction of solar technology and low-carbon heat networks. The majority of the investment will not come from Westminster residents or the City Council, and we are committed to working in partnership with all stakeholders to achieve the benefits the transition could provide.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: London Atmospheric Emissions Inventory data

Many people who live and work in Westminster are feeling the effects of global climate impacts, conflict and economic pressures locally, with a rise in the cost of living driven by rising energy costs. This is particularly impacting on our most vulnerable, with 10.9% of Westminster residents now living in fuel poverty.<sup>2</sup> Our most recent city survey showed that the proportion of Westminster residents who say they are 'just about managing' financially has risen sharply from 25% in 2019 to 43% in 2023, with the number one financial concern being energy bills.

We are already seeing first hand examples of how the right investment can improve people's lives. Our work since 2022 to upgrade our social homes across the city with the support of Government funding has resulted in over 600 homes being improved so far, saving our residents a total of £90,000 a year on their energy bills.

We are focused on futureproofing the city and its communities from further impacts. This transition must happen but in a fair and inclusive way; done right, the transition will provide improvement opportunities for everyone. The LAEP technical report will support us in delivering this.

By sharing this technical report today, we hope to provide a springboard for engagement and collaboration with key stakeholders, including the electricity distribution network operator, businesses, landlords, communities and national government on this critical issue. Only by working together can we best understand how to realise the potential for lower cost, clean and efficient energy, and in turn deliver a truly Fairer Westminster.

This is a technically led report developed by Buro Happold in conjunction with WCC. The council will be engaging internally and with interested stakeholders to determine the next steps upon publication of the report.

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<sup>2</sup> Source: [London's poverty profile](#)