



## 'Reflect, Rebrand, Re-energise'

Michael Gallagher, Head of Midlands Net Zero Hub

Welcome to the spring edition of the Midlands Net Zero Hub newsletter. In April, we successfully completed our rebrand exercise and have now transitioned to being the Midlands Net Zero Hub and launched our new [website](#) and social media channels. We are now looking forward to building on the good work of the last four years and continuing to make positive difference in the region as we drive the decarbonisation agenda.

There is growing concern over the cost of living, including rising energy costs and rising food costs. The need to reduce energy demand through decarbonising our homes and transport systems has never been more urgent. There is also a clear need to improve the sustainability of our food growing and minimising food miles. Change does not happen overnight, but we are seeing positive progress and identifying exciting opportunities in the Midlands to address these challenges.

This issue highlights Worcester City Council's great approach utilising active travel options to reduce emissions, reduce costs, and improve operational agility. I am also happy to confirm that the report Farm of the Future: Journey to Net Zero, part funded by the Hub, has been published - a very positive and forward-thinking report. The Midlands PAS 2035 Retrofit Toolkit has also been a real asset to organisations involved in domestic retrofit, and it is certainly worth utilising if you haven't already. The Hub has also secured a further £14.9m of SHDF funding to make energy efficiency improvements to 1,570 social houses in the Midlands.

*The Midlands Net Zero Hub is funded by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) as part of the Clean Growth Strategy. It is supported by Nottingham City Council who are the accountable body.*

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## Introducing the Midlands Net Zero Hub

In the [Net Zero Strategy](#), the Government's Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) made a commitment to support the Local Net Zero Programme, assisting all local areas with their capacity and capability to reach the country's net zero target.

After four successful years as the Midlands Energy Hub, we are pleased to announce our rebrand to the Midlands Net Zero Hub. Since the Hub's creation in 2018, our remit has grown beyond energy projects - and we now support a range of decarbonisation initiatives across the Midlands, alongside national programmes covering England and Wales which is reflected in our new name and identity.

## INTRODUCING THE MIDLANDS NET ZERO HUB



The work of the Hub now includes a range of initiatives to support the net zero agenda, such as domestic retrofit schemes, enforcement and compliance of Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards in the private rented sector, and more. It's fantastic to be able to continue supporting the vital net zero agenda by assisting local authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships in the region to deliver projects at scale.

We are the same brilliant team, offering much of the same fantastic work, but we've created a refreshed look for the Hub and increased our digital presence with [a new website](#) and [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#) channels. We would love to have you follow us and check in regularly to keep up to date with all the work happening across the region.

### News

#### Congratulations to Ellen Cooper-Tydeman!

Fuel Poverty Project Manager Ellen Cooper-Tydeman has been recognised as Business Development Manager of the Year at the National Energy Efficiency Awards in February.

Ellen originally joined the team to develop retrofit schemes valued up to £10m, with a view of trialling some small-scale projects. However, not long after her appointment, the Hub's remit for implementing fuel poverty projects shifted considerably. Taking this in her stride, Ellen demonstrated her ability to think about the bigger picture and always keep residents of the hard-to-heat homes at the centre of her work.

With the support of her team and Hub colleagues, Ellen has also developed vital tools and resources to assist local authorities to deliver retrofit projects at scale and successfully bid to bring substantial funding into the region to tackle fuel poverty and increase the energy efficiency of homes across the Midlands. Congratulations on a well-deserved win, Ellen!

#### The Midlands PAS 2035 Retrofit Toolkit is now available

The Midlands Net Zero Hub have worked with the Retrofit Academy CIC to create a toolkit to provide local authorities and retrofit professionals with a clear process to facilitate PAS 2035 compliance. Local authorities are in a pivotal position to deliver on the retrofit challenge, and the toolkit is intended to assist with the delivery of warm, low carbon homes.

The toolkit contains advice, guidance, processes, and examples of best practice across the following areas: customer interaction requirements, management considerations, legal considerations, and sample specifications. [Download the toolkit now](#) to put PAS into practice.

#### City Council takes to pedal power to help keep Worcester moving

Worcester City Council's team of civil enforcement officers are now travelling by bike to swiftly resolve issues at traffic and parking hotspots. The move has been introduced as part of the City Council's [environmental sustainability strategy](#), which aims for Worcester to be carbon neutral by 2030. Officers have been equipped with e-bikes and have received advanced safety training from [Bikeability Worcestershire](#).

As well as targeting parking hotspots the City Council's civil enforcement team will regularly make visits on e-bike to Worcester schools, with a greater presence at the start and end of the school day. The visits will help to improve safety outside the school gate, resolve parking issues, and promote active travel.

"More staff using e-bikes not only helps the City Council to reduce its carbon footprint, but it also gives us greater agility. Our civil enforcement team can now quickly cycle to areas where problems have been reported and resolve them on the spot," says Cllr Andy Stafford, Chair of Worcester City Council's Environment Committee. "As petrol prices continue to rise, I encourage other businesses and organisations to embrace active travel. As well as having financial advantages, it also has real benefits for employees' health and wellbeing."

Worcester City Council has joined forces with the University of Worcester to offer a free e-bike trial scheme to local businesses. Funded by an £18,000 grant from the Local Government Association, e-bikes and trailers are available for loan on a first come, first served basis. The initiative allows businesses to trial and establish what benefits e-bikes could bring, before investing in new equipment.

To find out more about the scheme or to book a 'have a go' session, please email Wendy Corbett at [w.corbett@worc.ac.uk](mailto:w.corbett@worc.ac.uk) or call 01905 722363.

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## Lowering the carbon footprint of farms

### Farm of the Future Report out now

The Royal Agricultural Society of England's report *Farm of the Future: Journey to Net Zero*, supported by the Midlands Net Zero Hub, was launched on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022, at the [Low Carbon Agricultural Show](#).

The report pulls together the latest science and on-farm innovation to show what farmers can do to decarbonise their activities, with a strong emphasis on soil health and sustainable energy. To reach net zero, farmers will be adopting new technologies and making visible changes to how they farm, which will be challenging at this time of uncertainty, market changes, and price volatility.

Containing contributions from around 30 specialists, the report delivers RASE's [vision](#) of how British agriculture could adapt to the climate emergency, with information on land and resource management; bioenergy and renewables; low emission vehicles and fuels; and agri-tech innovation.

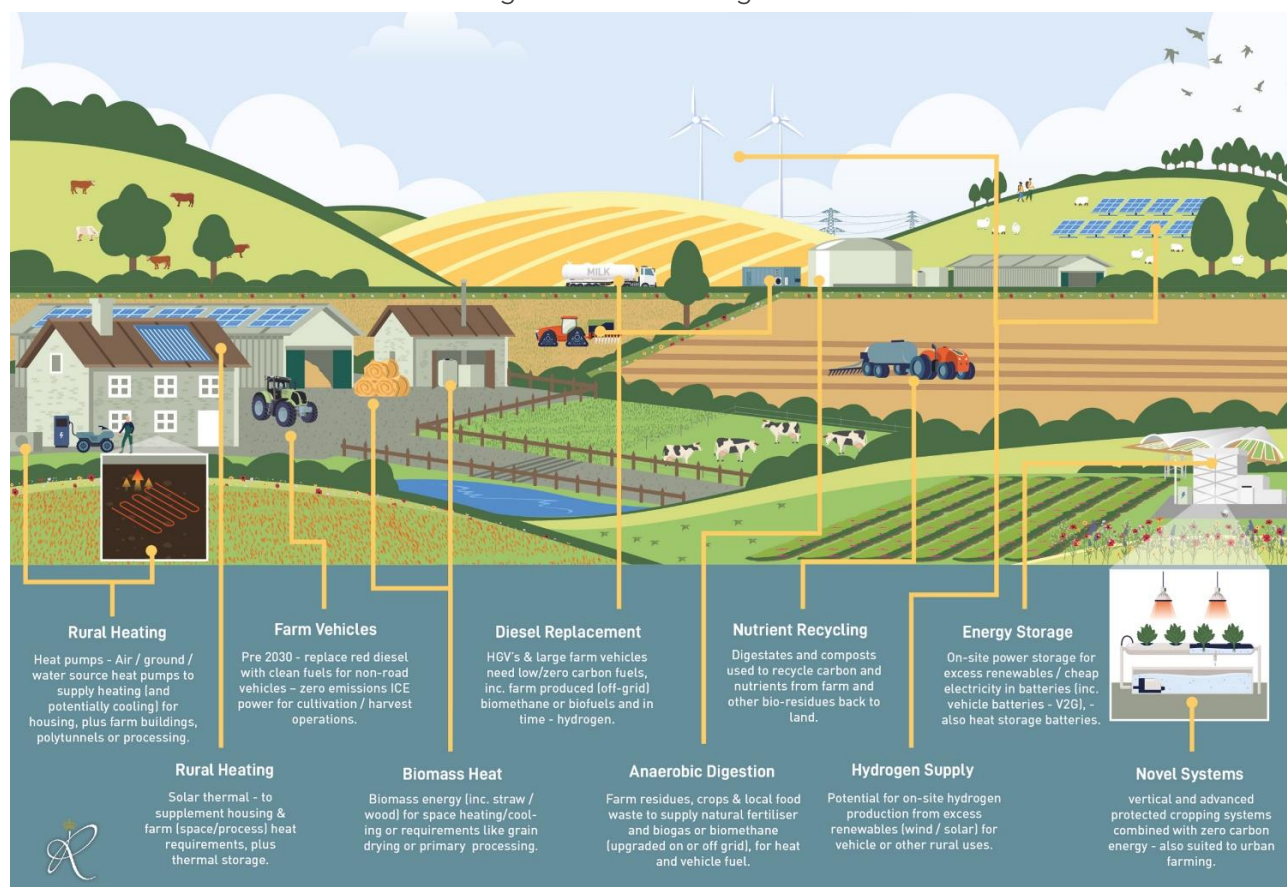
To give practical steps to help farmers in their decarbonisation efforts, the report includes 'enterprise journeys' for key sectors – [Cereals](#), [Dairy](#), [Horticulture](#), and [Livestock](#). Plus there's an analysis of future [farm fuels and vehicles](#). A series of case studies feature British businesses developing game-changing innovation such as Haygrove (leading UK fruit farming operation), the Small Robot Company (robotic farm-tech start-up), and New Holland's biomethane tractor (being built at Basildon with Innovate UK support).

In his foreword to the report, Lord Deben, Chairman of the UK's Climate Change Committee, said "The Net bit of Net Zero is vitally important and crucially it's largely in the hands of farmers", adding that farmers need help and direction if they are to shoulder this essential task. "By 2050, fossil fuels will have no place on our farms, and to that end every year, serious reductions must be made."

RASE hopes that government departments, BEIS, DfT, and DEFRA, will note and act upon the report's key messages and policy recommendations, including biomethane fuel to replace 'red diesel' in farm vehicles,

the need for a network of demonstration farms, and increased R&D support. RASE also calls for more joined-up thinking across Government departments.

Launching the report, RASE Chairman Philip Gready said, "For this transformation to happen, UK farmers need practical guidance on their options, including on currently available or emerging technologies, along with independent advice and technology demonstration sites. To improve carbon capture, they need access to farm-level emissions accounting and benchmarking tools."



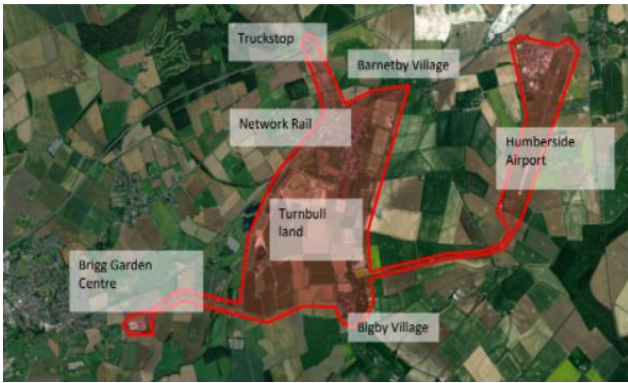
Find out more about our work on low carbon farming projects and [download the full report now](#).

## Renewable technologies planned for 90-acre site on Bigby farm

Supported by the Midland Net Zero Hub, Bigby Parish Council have received funding support through the Rural Community Energy Fund to explore the development opportunities for renewable energy projects utilising local natural resources in the Parish. Through engagement with stakeholders, the Parish Council provided a clear vision of the natural capacity to embed renewable energy infrastructure serving demand growth in the area.

A conversation between a local farmer Anthony Turnbull and Clive Wilson, Vice Chair of Bigby Sustainable Energy Project Steering Group, led to a 90-acre site being chosen to host sustainable technologies. Bigby Sustainable Energy is passionate about communities generating and sharing ownership of energy generation.

The Group identified relatively small existing electricity and heat demands of residential and commercial buildings and examined the potential to expand the demand portfolio beyond the immediate community to surrounding existing commercial demands.



Renewable energy development opportunities hinge on utilising the land area available for electricity generation via PV and wind, and simultaneous use of ground energy for heat provision via ambient networks serving heat pumps. The land area made available by the Turnbull Estate presents a significantly larger capacity of renewable electricity and heat potential than the demand growth scenarios require. Over 70MWe of renewable PV electricity capacity is possible on only a third of the available

land. Ground source heat captured by closed loop borehole arrays would also satisfy all known and potentially developed demands.

However, the ability to capitalise on the maximum renewable potential is constrained by the inability of the Northern Power Grid (NPG) to accept exported power in the short-term. Private wire networks serving the existing and demand growth scenario along with battery storage are recommended from an economic perspective. The strategy for Bigby is therefore one of phased development over 5-year sprints. The feasibility study has identified the magnitude of potential renewable generation, demand growth, net zero carbon, and investment prospect for Bigby and surrounding community.

## Funding updates

### Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund

A consortium bid coordinated by the Midlands Net Zero Hub has successfully been awarded £14.9m of Government funding to make energy efficiency improvements to 1,570 social houses in the Midlands.

The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) is administered by the Government's Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) as part of the country's net zero agenda. The Hub worked in partnership with six social housing providers and three local authorities to secure the funding which will be used to improve energy efficiency ratings of social rented homes across the region.

## Our partners

Sustainability West Midlands have been working with the LGA on various local authority support projects. They have just completed delivery of a series of action learning sets, working with 20 local authorities across England to focus on housing retrofit skills. You can find out more at a [LGA webinar](#) on 12 July from 10:00 - 11:30. SWM also delivered four Climate Change Action Plan Roundtables for 40 local authorities during March, and they have produced a [blog](#) summarising common challenges and opportunities. Finally, SWM are running a [series of workshops](#) focused on improving resilience to the impacts of climate change. There are four online workshops in June - three for businesses depending on their location, and one for support organisations such as LEPs, Growth Hubs, and Chambers.

