

# Local Climate Engagement

## Frequently Asked Questions

We have designed these FAQs to help local authorities decide whether or not they would like to be part of the Local Climate Engagement (LCE) programme. They also contain information to support you to fill out the Expression of Interest form.

If the answer to your question is not here or you would like an informal conversation about taking part, please contact us using the details on the final page of the [LCE prospectus](#).

## 1. Eligibility

### 1.1 Who can express interest in taking part in LCE?

LCE is open to:

- All levels of local authority in England, from Combined Authorities through to Town and Parish Councils;
- Directly-Elected mayors;
- Partnerships involving local authorities. In these cases the Expression of Interest form must be completed by the local authority.

If you are unsure if you are eligible, then please contact us using the details on the final page of the [LCE prospectus](#).

### 1.2. Are there any restrictions on who can take part?

LCE is currently an **England-only** programme. This is due to the relatively small number of local authorities and partnerships we are able to work with and variations in the legal, policy and political contexts across the UK.

That said, LCE will produce learning and evidence that is more widely applicable, and we will make this publicly available. If you would like to receive this information, please let us know by contacting us using the details on the final page of the [LCE prospectus](#).

## 1.3 Can a local authority take part if it has local elections in May 2022?

All local authorities can express interest in joining the Coaching Group, regardless of whether they have elections in May.

To express interest in joining the Project Group, local authorities need to be confident that any potential change in administration resulting from the election will not affect:

- Their wish to run public engagement on climate;
- Their commitment to use the results of the public engagement to inform their decisions.

As long as this is the case, local authorities are welcome to express interest in the Project Group and the elections will not affect their chances of being accepted on to it. We will agree a timetable with each Project Group member for their involvement in LCE. For example, we can start working with a local authority after May if that would be desirable.

## 1.4 If a local authority has already used participatory or deliberative methods to engage the public can they still apply?

The Expression of Interest (EOI) form asks local authorities to explain how taking part in LCE will allow them to take forward public engagement in climate decision-making in a way that would not otherwise be possible.

This project is not for a local authority, if both of the following statements are true:

- The local authority is already confident in planning and commissioning participatory and deliberative public participation to inform their decision-making, and
- The local authority would commission this sort of engagement on climate whether or not they were part of this project.

# 2. Expressing interest in taking part

## 2.1 What level of sign off within a local authority to express our interest in taking part?

The Expression of Interest form asks for signatures from a senior Councillor who is part of the administration and the local authority CEO.

## 2.2 Can a local authority express interest in both the Coaching Group and the Project Group?

Yes, the Expression of Interest (EOI) form allows local authorities to express interest in both groups. In practice, we will only offer a local authority a place in one of them. The EOI form therefore also asks which group would be a local authority's first preference. Expressing an interest in both groups does not affect a local authority's chances of being accepted into either group.

## 2.3 How will you decide which local authorities to work with?

There are two key elements to our decision. We will consider both in arriving at our final list of local authorities to work with:

- a. **Some questions on the Expression of Interest form are scored** (these are clearly indicated on the form). Interviews for shortlisted local authorities for the Project Group are also scored.
  
- b. **We are looking to work with a range of local authorities** in terms of:
  - Geographic spread across England;
  - Type of location (town, city, rural etc);
  - Type of council;
  - Party political control;
  - How developed local authorities' plans on climate change are;

And also, for the Project Group only:

- The issue the public engagement will focus on;
- The type of engagement method suitable to meet each local authority's brief;
- How much public engagement local authorities have done on climate before.

## 2.4 What if a local authority is not selected to take part?

Unfortunately we are unable to work with everyone who applies to be part of LCE. However, one of our aims for the project is to produce a set of tools, resources and learning that can be used by local authorities beyond those who are directly part of the programme. We will be back in touch with all local authorities who fill in Expression of Interest forms when these are ready to share. Depending on levels of demand for places, we may also seek additional funding to work with a second cohort of areas.

# 3. Coaching Group

## 3.1 What does the training cover?

The intensive training covers areas including:

- What participatory and deliberative engagement is, the range of methods available, what these techniques offer local authorities beyond more traditional methods of consultation and engagement, and when to use them;
- How to plan public engagement, including picking the right method, framing engagement questions, and managing public expectations;
- How to feed engagement results in to decision-making, the role of councillors, planning for impact and feeding back to participants;
- Power, privilege, and inclusion;
- How to communicate engagement work internally and externally;
- The role of local civil society groups;
- How to write a good tender for engagement work;
- Practicalities such as costs, staffing, and funding.

The resource for senior leaders covers areas including: what participatory and deliberative engagement is and what it offers local authorities; how it fits with councillors' role and existing strategies; when to use it and how to support its development, delivery and impact; and how to oversee it.

The resource for councillors covers areas including: what participatory and deliberative engagement is and what it offers local authorities; how this engagement fits with their role; what they can do to support it.

## 3.2 Who should attend the intensive training?

The intensive training is aimed at those members of staff who will be most closely involved in:

- Planning, commissioning and overseeing public participation in climate decision-making;
- Using the results from the public participation to inform decision-making. We strongly recommend that this includes at least one key member of staff responsible for relevant policy areas.

It is also advisable for one member of the local authority's communications team to attend. This is to ensure they are able to support effective communication of public participation work on climate; the training includes content specifically for them.

### **3.3 Can staff attend part of the training but not the whole thing?**

No, the training is designed as a whole. Missing parts of it will mean attendees do not receive key information. We would expect organisational buy-in and commitment from the local authority as a criteria for signing up to take part in LCE.

### **3.4 Can we choose whether to attend the training as 3 days in-person or 6 half-days online?**

We will ask each local authority for their preference if they are accepted on to the Coaching Group, and will do our best to accommodate it. We have some flexibility here - for example, if all Coaching Group members opt for in-person training (or vice versa) then we can change our plans to deliver all the training in this way.

### **3.5 Is your training accredited?**

No, our training is not currently accredited.

### **3.6 Do we have to use all 7 hours of mentoring at once?**

Each local authority can draw down the hours in the way that suits them best. Each local authority can start drawing down the mentoring time once its staff have finished the intensive training course with us. The local authority needs to use the mentoring hours within 6 months of the end of the training course.

## **4. Project Group**

### **4.1 Who should attend the intensive training? Is the answer the same as for the Coaching Group?**

Yes, broadly the answer is the same. Attendees should include key staff who will be involved in planning and supporting the practical delivery part of the LCE project with us. There may also be space for other staff who would be involved in future engagement work.

### **4.2 Are there any limits to the topics or policy areas the practical public engagement work can address?**

The topic needs to be about the transition to Net Zero (or an aspect of it), clean air, adaptation or the decline in the natural environment. As long as this is the case, then it is within scope for LCE.

Some local authorities may want to engage their local populations in broad questions around shaping their climate plans as a whole. Others may want to engage their local population - or part of it - in questions around a much more specific policy area. Either is fine.

### **4.3 What makes a suitable topic for public engagement? Are there any considerations to be aware of when deciding whether or not to express an interest in LCE?**

In general, public participation works best when it happens early in the policy process. If local authorities are already at the stage of having a specific proposal that they want to consult on, or two options to choose between then this is not suitable for LCE. Beyond that, we can work with local authorities as part of LCE to help them decide on a final topic or question for the public engagement work.

### **4.4 How much do local authorities need to know in advance about the piece of engagement they would like to run with us as part of LCE?**

Local authorities need to have some idea of which strategy or policy they want the public engagement to inform. They could know for certain which strategy or policy it is; or have a shortlist of options for us to help them choose between.

Local authorities don't need to know anything else, for example about the engagement method they want to use or who specifically they want to reach; we can work on these areas with them. If local authorities do have a more specific idea of what they want to do then that is also fine.

### **4.5 What if a local authority already knows what engagement method they would like to use?**

If a local authority already knows what public engagement method they would like to use, they should tell us on the Expression of Interest form. We will discuss this with applicants and mutually agree on the best way to proceed.

### **4.6 Are there any limits to the types of public participation method you can deliver?**

We cannot build bespoke online platforms for local authorities but can advise (without bias) on existing platforms that may meet your needs.

## 4.7 How much staff time will it take to support the planning and delivery of the public engagement?

We will provide £45,000 of our time pro bono to plan and deliver the public engagement with you. The time requirement from your local authority will depend on the engagement method that you use. We will work with Project Group members to ensure they pick an engagement method and arrangement that is realistic for them. At a minimum, some officer time will be required to ensure that the engagement fits within your organisational strategy and plans, and for internal and external communications.

## 4.8 How much are the direct costs of the engagement likely to be?

This depends on what engagement method local authorities choose. We will work with Project Group members to ensure they pick an engagement method that is realistic and deliverable for them. Costs may include venues and refreshments, participants' travel and accessibility expenses (including IT kit and data if a process take place online), participant honoraria, or contributions towards the time of civil society groups.

## 4.9 Which of the LCE partner organisations will work with each local authority?

Work with each local authority will be led by one of Involve, Democratic Society and Shared Future, and will draw on the expertise of all project partners as needed. When we assess local authorities' Expression of Interest forms, we will take a view on which organisation is best suited to lead work with each local authority. If a local authority has an existing relationship with one of the partner organisations we will bear that in mind. Please note that having an existing relationship of this kind does not make a local authority more or less likely to be accepted into the Project Group.

# 5. Who is involved and partner track records

## 5.1 Who is funding this work?

LCE is funded by Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (UK branch) and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

## 5.2 Beyond the five project partners and two project funders, is anyone else involved in LCE?

We are in the process of establishing a National Advisory Group for LCE, which will be chaired by Professor Rebecca Willis of Lancaster University. The purpose of the National Advisory Group is to provide us with advice and insight, connect us to other relevant initiatives, and champion the project's work. Its members will not work directly with participating local authorities. Once the National Advisory Group's membership has been confirmed, it will be made publicly available.

## 5.3 What Local Authorities have you worked with before?

All five partner organisations have worked extensively with local authorities.

In the last three years, Involve, Democratic Society and Shared Future have worked to deliver public participation in decision-making with or for local authorities and partnerships including [Selby District Council](#), [Greater Cambridge Partnership](#), [Calderdale Council](#), [Orleans Metropole](#), [West Midlands Combined Authority](#), [Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council](#), [Waltham Forest Council](#), [Test Valley Borough Council](#), [Adur and Worthing Councils](#), [Sheffield City Council](#), [Kingston Upon Thames Council](#), [North of Tyne Combined Authority](#), [Devon Climate Emergency Partnership](#), [Camden Council](#) ([also here](#)), [Bristol One City Partnership](#), [Kendal Town Council](#), [Southwark Council](#), [Lancaster City Council](#), and [Newham Council](#).

UK100 is a cross-party network of the most ambitious local government leaders which seek to accelerate the transition to a Net Zero society. It works closely with elected representatives and policy experts, bringing together 93 local authorities from across the country to share knowledge, collaborate, and petition the UK government with their collective power.

## 5.4 Are there previous success stories you can share?

Yes. You can find details of our work with local authorities by clicking on the links in the answer directly above.