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EDRC Energy Demand Research Centre

Our Energy Futures:

Public views on getting to net zero

Climate change is a global challenge which poses urgent threats to human life, and all nations must contribute to tackling it.

Reducing energy demand is an important part of this, which, done well, can also contribute to quality of life.

People are willing to make changes – with the right conditions in place.

Over two years, 40 people took part in the Our Energy Futures citizens' panel.

They broadly reflected the UK population across age, gender, ethnicity, disability, occupation, political views, climate concern, and whether they lived in rural or urban areas.



Panel members heard balanced evidence on a range of topics and took part in facilitated discussions, **drawing conclusions informed by evidence and their own values and experiences.**

Most panel members supported changes to everyday life to reduce energy use and emissions including how we ↓

heat our homes

Widespread shift to **heat pumps and other low-carbon heating**

Phase out new gas boilers **by 2035**

Insulate existing homes with minimal disruption and build new homes to higher standards

More flexible tariffs, while protecting people with inflexible energy use

get around

Better integrated, affordable and reliable public and shared transport

Transport solutions tailored to the **needs of places and communities**

Reversing the trend towards larger cars

Limit growth in flying without unfairly disadvantaging lower-income people

buy products

Buying less but better, saving money, space and waste

Products designed to last, and to be reused, repaired and remade

Share and hire infrequently used items

Develop community initiatives such as repair cafés and car clubs

eat food

Reduce the total amount of **red meat and dairy** eaten in the UK

Individual **diets continue to vary** widely and freely

Eating habits **change slowly over time**

Build local food **communities**

Reform farm subsidies and **reduce food waste**

get to net zero

Prioritise electrification and **clean electricity**

Reduce energy demand through social and technological change

Avoid relying on unproven technologies to remove greenhouse gases from the air

Big increase in **tree-planting**

providing their conditions were met.

These principles sum up panel members' detailed conditions for reducing energy use effectively and fairly:

1. Clear, consistent government leadership
2. Transparent decisions made with public involvement
3. Make low-energy choices accessible and affordable
4. Stronger action from industry
5. Adequate lead-in times for change
6. Fair sharing of costs and benefits
7. Maximise wider benefits for all
8. Better education and communication
9. Support freedom of choice
10. Support research, but caution on unproven technologies

Citizen-led energy scenarios

Our approach then combined public deliberation with computer modelling to create "citizen-led scenarios" — possible futures shaped by people's views and real data.

In the final scenario, UK energy use fell by **36.2% and greenhouse gas emissions by 81.4% between 2025 and 2050.**



58% of the panel thought this level of energy reduction was about right,

16% thought it went too far

26% wanted it to go further

So, what could a low-energy future look like?

- better health
- less waste
- warmer homes
- lower costs
- cleaner air
- energy security
- stronger communities
- safer streets
- new opportunities

Find out more at edrc.ac.uk

In Partnership: involve

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