



STRENGTHENING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR LOCAL ENERGY ACTION

A practical guide for local authority officers looking to strengthen organisational capacity, build partnerships and turn ambition into action.

Centre for Sustainable Energy

September 2026

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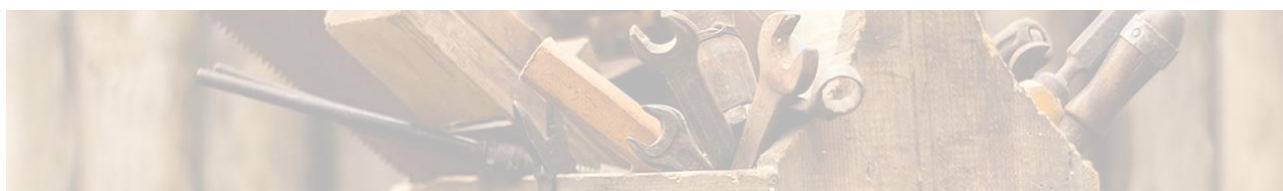
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INTRODUCTION

Delivering local energy action is challenging. Local authorities must balance net zero ambitions alongside statutory responsibilities, competing priorities and limited resources.

While technical analysis and energy system modelling play a key role, learning from the [South West Local Area Energy Planning Project](#) demonstrated that organisational capacity, leadership, partnerships, governance, stakeholder relationships and the ability to work collaboratively across sectors are fundamental to successful local energy action.

This toolkit has been developed to help local authority officers strengthen these broader foundations. Through a series of practical tools, prompts and exercises, it supports discussion, reflection and decision-making, helping local authorities move from ambition towards action.



What this toolkit is

- ✓ A collection of tools, prompts and exercises to help officers build understanding, strengthen relationships and identify priorities so they can make more informed decisions about where to focus effort and resources.
- ✓ A practical resource for strengthening the organisational, place-based and partnership foundations that underpin successful local energy action.
- ✓ A useful precursor to a LAEP or similar planning process, helping authorities get organised, understand their place and build the relationships needed to make future planning and delivery more effective.
- ✓ A flexible resource that can be revisited over time as local priorities, opportunities and planning approaches evolve.

...And isn't

This toolkit is not a method for producing a full Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP), a technical modelling exercise, project delivery guide or substitute for specialist analysis. It is intended as a reflective aid to help local authority officers understand how to strengthen the organisational, strategic and relationship-based foundations that underpin successful local energy action in their areas.

How to get the most from this toolkit

Drawing on learning from the South West Local Area Energy Planning project, this toolkit is organised around five questions that frequently emerge when local authorities begin exploring local energy action:

1. **Are we organised, capable and ready to lead local energy action?**
2. **Do we understand the opportunities and challenges in our area?**
3. **Do we have the relationships needed to influence and deliver change?**
4. **Are we focusing effort where it can create the greatest value?**
5. **What should happen next?**

Each section contains a practical tool designed to help explore one of these questions. The sections can be used individually to address a specific challenge or worked through as a sequence and revisited over time as priorities, opportunities and relationships evolve.

The tools work best when used collaboratively. Wherever possible, involve colleagues from across the authority, senior leaders, elected members and key partners. The value lies less in completing the exercises themselves and more in the conversations, shared understanding and decisions they help create.

What's in 'the box'

No.	Tool	Use when...	Page(s)
1	Self-Assessment Star	Understanding organisational readiness, strengths, constraints and areas for capability-building.	7
2	The Walking Around the Issues (WATI) Tool	Exploring local opportunities, constraints and the wider factors influencing local energy action.	12
3	The Interest-Influence Matrix	Identifying key stakeholders, understanding their role and focusing engagement effort.	17
4	The Visioning Grid	Testing priorities, discussing trade-offs and identifying the most appropriate role for the local authority.	22
5	Categorising Action	Translating discussion into practical next steps, ownership and a realistic direction of travel.	27
6	The Double Diamond	Structuring a project or programme and agreeing key stages, decision points and governance arrangements.	30

GETTING ORGANISED: CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR ACTION INSIDE THE COUNCIL

This section will help you:

- Understand your authority's capacity to lead local energy action
- Identify the strengths and constraints that will shape future progress
- Establish a realistic starting point for future action.



The challenge

Local authorities are rarely approaching energy planning from the same position. Some benefit from strong political support, established partnerships or dedicated staff resources, while others are working within more constrained circumstances. Understanding these realities is an important first step towards identifying what action is possible now and what capabilities may need to be strengthened over time.

Before focusing on external engagement, evidence gathering or project development, it can therefore be helpful to take stock of the organisational conditions that will support success. This means understanding who needs to be involved, how decisions will be made, what barriers may limit progress and which existing strengths can provide foundations for future action.



To move forward, it can be helpful to consider...

1

Do we have the leadership and support needed to take tangible action?

Successful local energy action rarely depends on a single individual. Consider who needs to be involved, who can champion the work and whether there is sufficient support from senior leaders and decision-makers to sustain progress over time.

2

What is most likely to constrain progress?

Every organisation faces limitations. Consider what is currently holding the authority back, which barriers can be influenced directly and where additional support, resource or expertise may be required.

3

What strengths can we build upon?

Most authorities start from a stronger position than they initially realise. Consider where capabilities, relationships, expertise or existing programmes already exist and how they could provide a foundation for future action.

Whilst reflecting on these questions individually can be valuable, exploring them collectively can help surface different perspectives, assumptions and experiences. The exercise on the next page provides a practical way of bringing those perspectives together and developing a shared understanding of your current starting point.



Tool 1: Establishing an appropriate starting point for action with the Self-Assessment Star

The Self-Assessment Star is a structured conversation tool designed to help local authority officers understand their organisation's current ability to lead and support local energy action. By identifying strengths, constraints and areas for development, it helps establish a realistic starting point for future action.

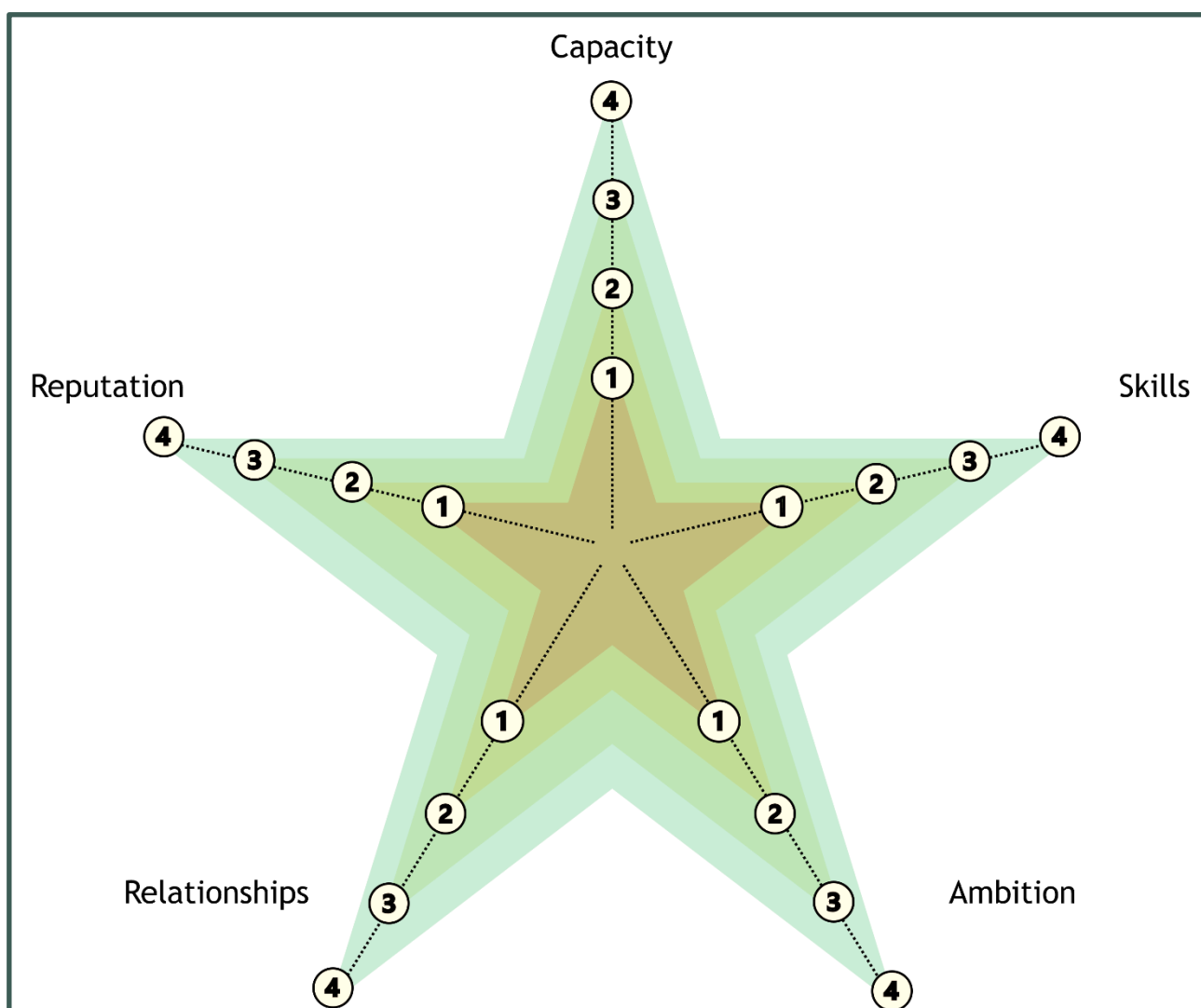


Figure 1. Self-Assessment Star

Key details: Five themes, four levels

Using this tool involves exploring five themes that were consistently identified through the South West programme as important enablers of local energy action.



These are:

- **Capacity** - or more simply “do we have sufficient officer time, resource and organisational capacity to meaningfully support this work?” This could include topics such as officer resource, access to funding, project management capacity, governance arrangements and decision-making processes.
- **Skills** - or “do we have the knowledge, expertise and experience we need to move forward confidently?” This could include topics such as project development, business case preparation, data analysis, innovation management, community engagement and energy planning.
- **Ambition** - “is there sufficient political and organisational appetite to drive local energy action?”. This could include topics such as political buy-in, senior leadership support, appetite for innovation and willingness to prioritise local energy action over other competing objectives.
- **Relationships** - “do we have strong internal and external relationships with the people we need to involve that we can build upon?” This could include topics such as relationships with planning teams, transport teams, network operators, public sector partners, community energy groups and major local stakeholders.
- **Reputation** - “are we viewed as a trusted and credible organisation that can convene partners and influence action?”. This could include topics such as track record of delivery, trust amongst stakeholders, communications and ability to convene others around shared objectives.

For each theme, a list of topics is generated and placed on the star using the four-level scale outlined in the below table.

Table 1. Self-Assessment Star maturity levels

Stage	Description
1 - Establish	This capability does not currently exist. Conversations are required about if it is something that should be developed ‘in-house’, and if so, how to get things moving.
2 - Develop	Some capability in this area already exists, but further development would strengthen future activity.
3 - Utilise	This capability is well established and can form a foundation for our work our near-term ambitions.
4 - Celebrate	This is a particular strength that has been developed over time and can provide insights on how to build other capabilities.



Using the tool - a suggested approach

This exercise is most valuable when completed collaboratively and used to inform future decisions about where to focus effort and resources. You may wish to:

1. Bring colleagues from different teams and services together, including project sponsors, senior leaders and key decision-makers.
2. Ask everyone to complete the self-assessment individually before comparing and discussing perspectives collectively.
3. Identify two or three shared priority areas for further development and agree practical next steps and who will take them forward.
4. Revisit the exercise periodically to understand how organisational capacity is evolving and reflect on progress over time.

Remember: there is no "correct" answer, and rather than looking for consensus, focus on understanding differences in perspective - the value lies in the discussion, reflection and shared understanding the exercise creates.

First next steps in your area

The value of this exercise lies less in the scores themselves and more in the conversations it creates. By reflecting together on capacity, skills, ambition, relationships and reputation, local authority teams can build a shared understanding of their ability to lead local energy action, recognise the strengths they can build upon and identify where further development may be required.

The aim is not to decide everything that should happen next, but to move the conversation from *"What would we like to do?"* to *"What are we currently well placed to do, what is holding us back, and what capabilities do we need to strengthen next?"*

This provides a stronger foundation for deciding where to focus effort and resources in the future. If you would like to explore the wider opportunities, constraints and external influences shaping local energy action in your area, progress to the next section.

If you take one thing away from this section...

Understanding organisational readiness is not about identifying weaknesses. It is about recognising the strengths you can build upon and the capabilities that may need further development.



UNDERSTANDING YOUR PLACE: BUILDING A SHARED PICTURE OF THE LOCAL CONTEXT

This section will help you:

- Develop a shared understanding of the opportunities and constraints impacting local energy action in your area
- Identify the conditions most likely to support or hinder future progress
- Build a stronger foundation for future decisions and priorities.



The challenge

Understanding your organisation's capacity to act is only part of the picture. Local authorities operate within complex and constantly evolving environments, where national policy, local politics, infrastructure constraints, stakeholder priorities and funding opportunities all influence what is possible.

Having the capacity to lead does not automatically mean progress will follow. Successful places also develop a shared understanding of the opportunities, constraints and wider conditions that shape local energy action in their area. Without this understanding, there is a risk of focusing effort on the wrong activities or overlooking opportunities that already exist.



To move forward, it can be helpful to consider...

1

Where are the greatest opportunities for progress?

Where are the existing strengths, assets, partnerships and activities in the area that could help accelerate local energy action? Consider where momentum already exists and where opportunities may emerge if existing efforts are strengthened, connected or scaled up.

2

What obstacles are most likely to affect delivery?

Every area faces constraints. Some of these can be addressed locally and directly, while others will need to be managed or worked around. Consider which barriers are most likely to slow progress and where additional effort, resource or partnership working may be required.

3

How well do we understand the wider system?

Local energy action is shaped by far more than activities taking place within the local authority. Consider who influences local outcomes, what wider developments could create opportunities or risks, and how future changes in policy, funding, governance or infrastructure might affect local priorities.

Whilst reflecting on these questions individually can be valuable, exploring them collectively can help bring together different perspectives on the opportunities, constraints and wider influences shaping your area. The exercise on the next page provides a practical way of organising these perspectives and developing a shared understanding of your local context.



Tool 2: Identifying barriers and enablers for action with the Walking Around the Issues Framework

The Walking Around the Issues (WATI) Framework helps local authorities develop a shared understanding of the conditions that could enable or constrain local energy action. Rather than focusing on technical evidence alone, it considers the wider environment in which action takes place, including local strengths, stakeholder attitudes, funding opportunities, infrastructure constraints and organisational capabilities.

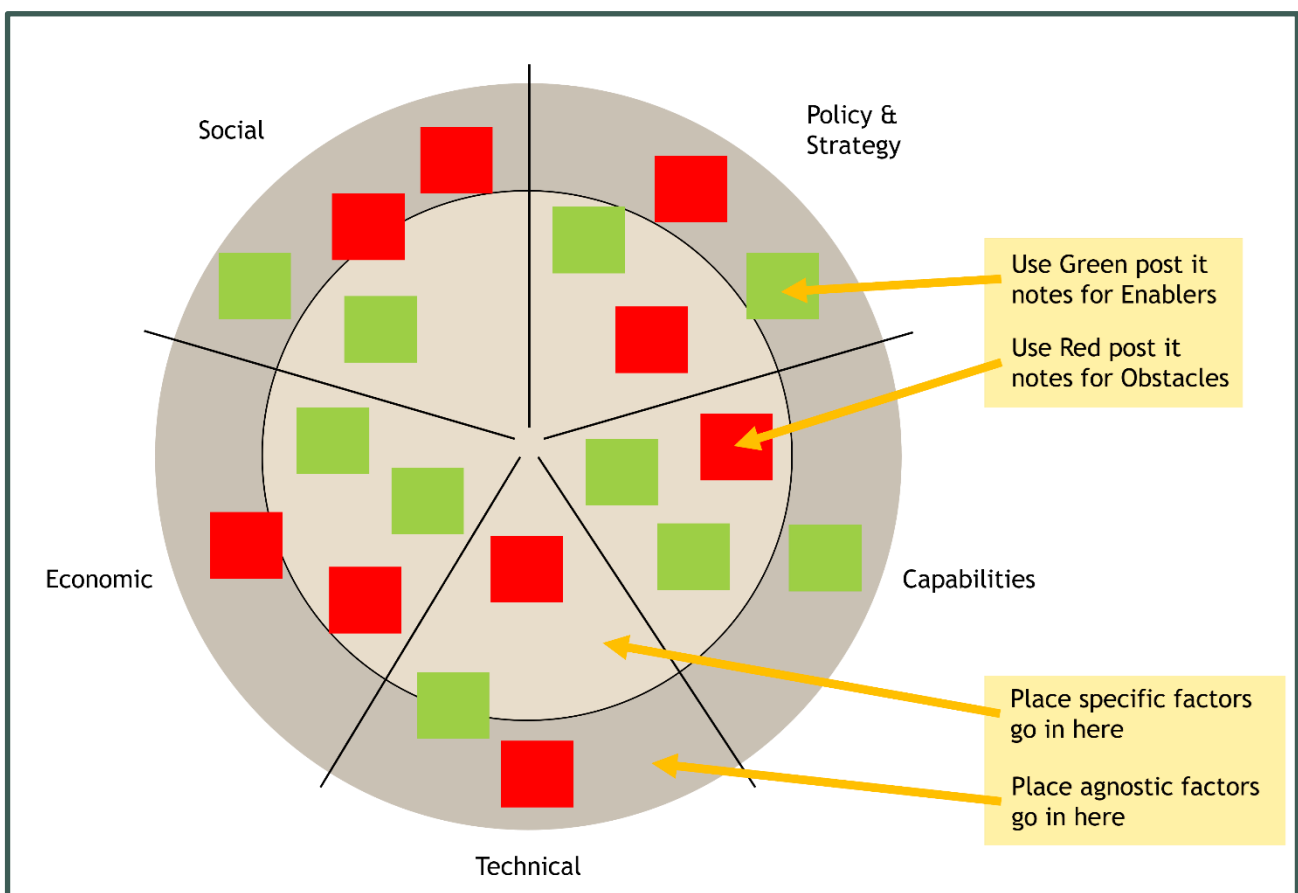


Figure 2. The Walking Around the Issues (WATI) Tool

Essentially a SWOT analysis, the WATI explores local energy action from five different perspectives, outlined in Table 2 below.



Table 2. Five WATI perspectives and areas of focus

Perspective	Focus
Policy and Strategy	Local and national policies, plans and strategies that enable or constrain progress
Capabilities	The skills, knowledge, capacity and experience available within an area
Social	Attitudes, behaviours and levels of support among communities and stakeholders
Economic	The financial and economic conditions that influence delivery
Technical	Infrastructure, technology opportunities and technical constraints

Unlike a traditional SWOT analysis, however, the WATI groups Strengths and Opportunities together as Enablers, and Weaknesses and Threats together as Obstacles. It also distinguishes between factors that are specific to a place and those that are place agnostic and sit at a regional or national level - but still influence what is possible locally.

Using the tool - a suggested approach

1. Bring together colleagues from across relevant teams and services, alongside any key stakeholders whose insights would be valuable.
2. Review existing strategies, plans, evidence and local knowledge to identify the factors shaping progress in your area.
3. Capture both the enablers that could support local energy action and the obstacles that may need to be navigated, considering local, regional and national influences.
4. Categorise observations using the five WATI perspectives and discuss where there are shared strengths, recurring challenges or important gaps in understanding.
5. Reflect on what the exercise tells you about where effort is most likely to create value and revisit the framework periodically as circumstances evolve.

First next steps in your area

This exercise is about bringing together different perspectives on the factors shaping local energy action in your area. By exploring opportunities, constraints and wider influences collectively, local authority teams can develop a shared understanding of the local context and identify the conditions most likely to affect future progress.



The aim is not to create a comprehensive list of every opportunity and challenge, but to move the conversation from *"What is happening in our area?"* to *"What is most likely to help or hinder progress, and where should we focus our effort?"*

This provides a stronger foundation for identifying priorities, engaging stakeholders and shaping future action. If you would like to explore the people, organisations and networks that can help turn ambition into action, you may also find the **Building Relationships** section useful.

If you take one thing away from this section...

The biggest barriers to progress are not always technical. Organisational capacity, governance, relationships and external influences often shape what is possible.



BUILDING THE RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS: IDENTIFYING AND ENGAGING THE PEOPLE WHO CAN GET THINGS DONE

This section will help you:

- Identify the people, organisations and networks that matter most
- Understand how different stakeholders can support progress
- Focus relationship-building effort where it is most likely to create value.



The challenge

No local authority can deliver local energy action alone and many of the decisions, investments and actions needed to decarbonise an area sit with other organisations, communities, businesses and public sector partners. Progress therefore depends as much on relationships and collaboration as it does on evidence, plans or technical solutions.

Building the right relationships is about more than simply engaging stakeholders. Holding workshops, consultations or events does not automatically create change. The



most successful places are intentional about who they engage, why they are engaging them and what role they need them to play.

Different stakeholders can contribute in different ways, and whilst some provide insight and evidence, others influence decisions, unlock resources or help deliver activity directly. Understanding these different contributions helps identify which relationships matter most and how they should be developed.

To move forward, it can be helpful to consider...

1

Which relationships matter most?

Who can help unlock progress in your area? Consider where strong relationships already exist, where important gaps remain and which people or organisations are most likely to influence future outcomes.

2

How should we work with them?

Different stakeholders may need different approaches. Some can help build understanding, others can shape decisions, unlock resources or support delivery. How can existing networks, partnerships and governance structures be used to support this work rather than creating entirely new forums?

Whilst reflecting on these questions individually can be valuable, exploring them collectively can help surface different perspectives on the people, organisations and networks that influence local energy action. The exercise on the next page provides a practical way of identifying which relationships matter most and where engagement effort is most likely to create value.



Tool 3: Mapping stakeholders using the Interest-Influence matrix

The Interest-Influence Matrix helps local authorities understand which stakeholders matter most and where relationship-building effort should be focused.

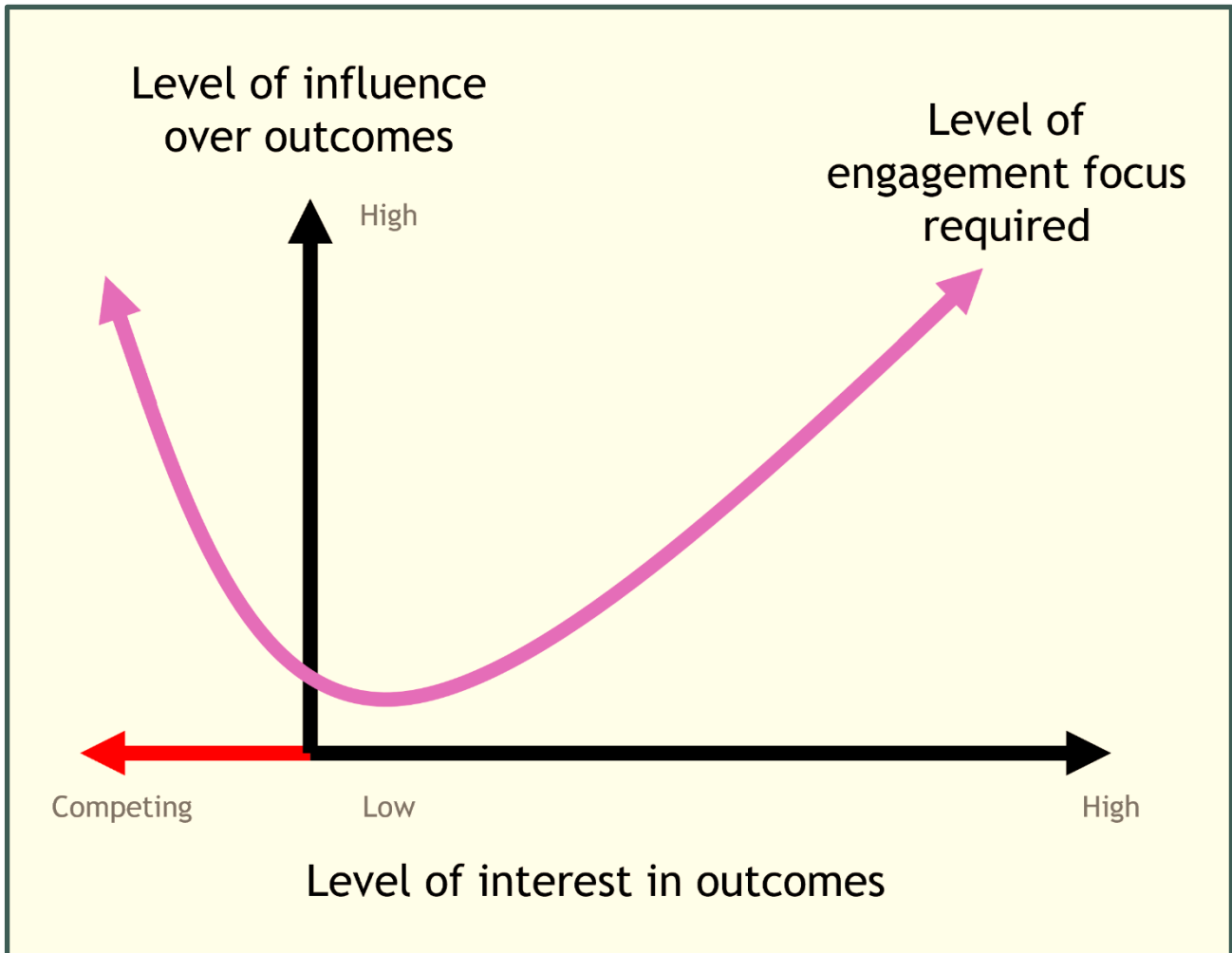


Figure 3. The Interest-Influence Matrix

At its core are two simple questions:

1. How interested is this stakeholder in local energy outcomes?
2. How much influence do they have over those outcomes?

Together, these provide a useful starting point for identifying who should be involved. However, understanding who matters is only part of the exercise, and it is equally important to understand why you are engaging them and the role they could play in helping move things forward. A simple categorisation of potential stakeholder roles in local energy action is outlined in Table 3.



Table 3. Potential stakeholder roles within local energy action

Potential role	What the stakeholder is being asked to do
Inform	Provide insight, evidence or local knowledge
Influence	Shape decisions, policy or investment
Enable	Remove barriers or create opportunities
Partner	Help develop priorities and solutions
Deliver	Lead or support implementation

Framing conversations in this way helps move stakeholder mapping beyond categorisation and towards practical engagement planning: understanding which relationships matter most, the role different stakeholders can play and where engagement effort is most likely to create value.

Using the tool - a suggested approach

1. Bring together colleagues from across relevant teams and services. Include both internal stakeholders and external partners, recognising that some of the most important relationships may sit within the local authority itself.
2. Identify the people, organisations and networks that influence local energy outcomes in your area. Focus on those most likely to affect future priorities, decisions or delivery.
3. Discuss each stakeholder's level of interest, level of influence, the relationship that currently exists and the role they could play in supporting future activity.
4. Identify the relationships that are most important for making progress, where stronger engagement may be required and where existing networks or partnerships could be utilised more effectively.
5. Revisit the exercise periodically as priorities, stakeholders and relationships change over time.

First next steps in your area

By discussing the people, organisations and networks that influence local energy outcomes, local authority teams can develop a more strategic approach to stakeholder engagement. The exercise can reveal gaps in current engagement activity, highlight opportunities to work through existing networks and clarify what different stakeholders could contribute to future action.



The aim is not to create a comprehensive stakeholder register, but to move the conversation from *"Who should we engage?"* to *"Who can help unlock progress, what role can they play and how should we work with them?"*

It can be particularly useful for identifying stakeholders with high influence but low interest, as well as those who may actively oppose elements of local energy action. Understanding these perspectives early can help avoid barriers emerging later and provides a stronger foundation for prioritising engagement activity, strengthening partnerships and focusing effort where it can have the greatest impact.

If you would like to explore where effort and resources are most likely to create value, you may also find the **Prioritising Opportunities** section useful.

If you take one thing away from this section...

Local authorities do not need to engage everyone. Their greatest impact often comes from identifying the people and organisations that matter most and building strong, purposeful relationships with them. Focus on quality, not quantity.



PRIORITISING OPPORTUNITIES: FOCUSSING EFFORT AND RESOURCE ON WHAT MATTERS MOST

This section will help you:

- Identify where effort is most likely to create value
- Discuss priorities and trade-offs in a structured way
- Agree the most appropriate role for the local authority and a realistic direction of travel.



The challenge

Most local authorities have more opportunities than time, resource or capacity. Not everything can be done at once, and not every opportunity requires the same level of involvement from the local authority.

Where some opportunities may align strongly with existing capabilities, partnerships and priorities, others may require significant additional resource, collaboration or wider system change before progress can be made.



Prioritisation is therefore not about deciding what matters, it is about deciding where effort is most likely to create value and recognising that some opportunities are ready to move forward now, while others may need further development.

To move forward, it can be helpful to consider...

1

Where are we best placed to make progress?

Consider which opportunities align most closely with existing strengths, relationships and priorities, and where the authority already has influence or a clear route to action.

2

What role should the local authority play?

Different opportunities will require differing levels of involvement. Consider whether the authority is best placed to lead directly, influence others or enable action through partnerships.

3

What should happen first?

Consider which opportunities could create the greatest value over the next two to three years and which actions might help unlock longer-term progress.

Whilst reflecting on these questions individually can be valuable, exploring them collectively can help test assumptions, uncover different perspectives and identify where effort is most likely to create value. The exercise on the next page provides a practical way of discussing priorities, trade-offs and the role the authority is best placed to play.



Tool 4: Identifying priorities and discussing trade-offs with the Visioning Grid

The Visioning Grid is designed to support structured conversations about where local authorities are best placed to focus their effort and the role they should play in supporting local energy action.

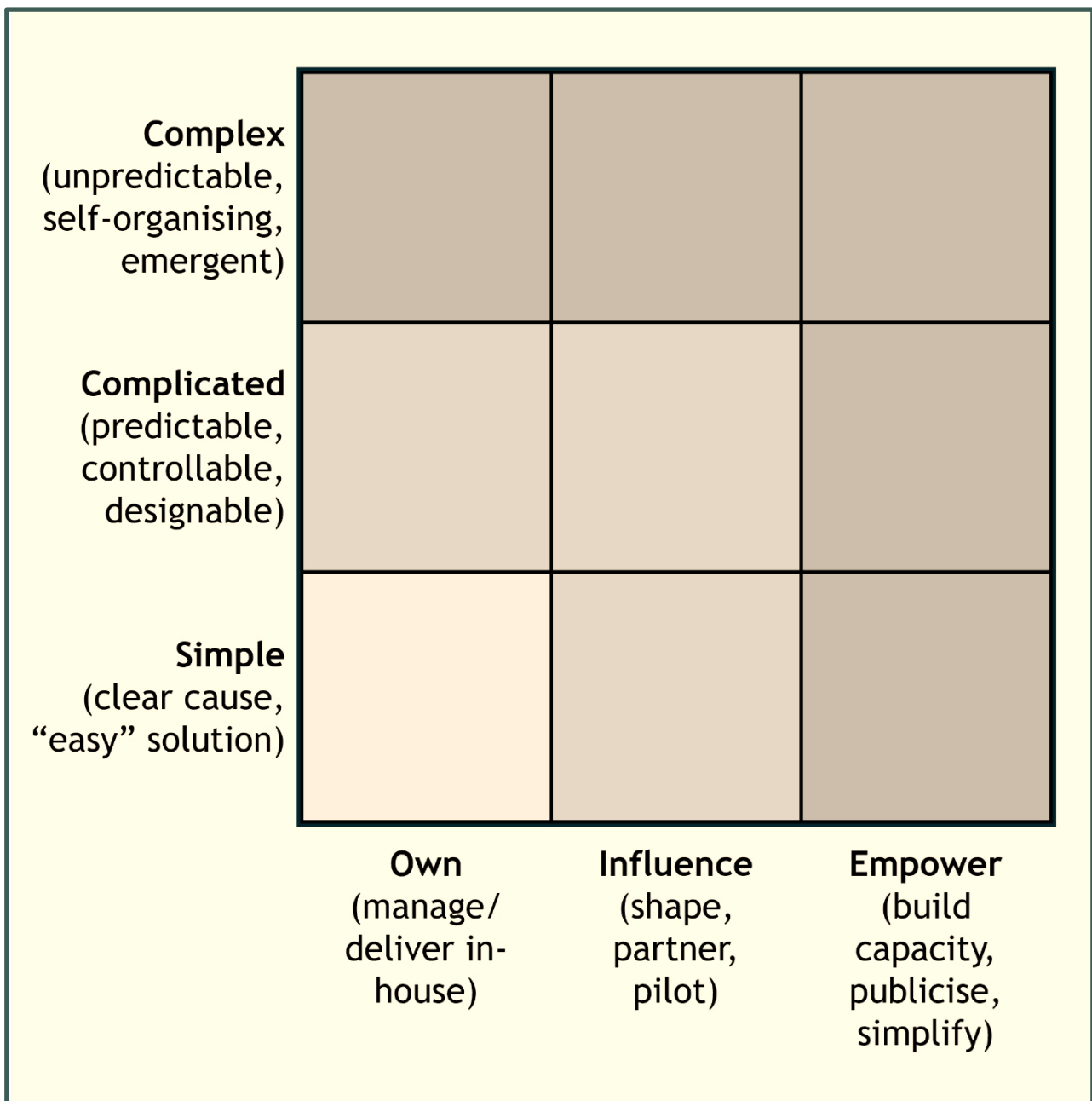


Figure 4. The Visioning Grid

Rather than simply identifying opportunities, the tool helps participants explore two key questions:



- How complex is the opportunity?
- What role should the local authority play?

The vertical axis focuses on the nature of the challenge, encouraging discussion about scale, complexity and the number of stakeholders involved. The horizontal axis explores whether the authority is best placed to:

- Own the activity directly
- Influence others through policy, partnerships or leadership
- Enable action by supporting and empowering others

Together, these discussions help build a shared understanding of where effort is most likely to create value and which opportunities should be prioritised for further exploration.

The types of opportunity that can be explored using this tool are varied and will be very much place dependent. For example, alongside more standard examples such as heat networks, wind farms and rooftop solar, in the South West programme, authorities discussed more locally relevant opportunities such as council fleet decarbonisation, estate management specifics, community buildings, solar car parks and area-specific projects.

Remember: The purpose of the exercise is not to produce definitive answers or rank opportunities mathematically. Instead, it is intended to support informed discussion about priorities, trade-offs and the practical realities of delivery.

Using the tool - a suggested approach

1. Bring together colleagues, decision-makers and partners who understand the opportunities being considered and may be involved in progressing them.
2. Select opportunities to discuss. These may emerge from earlier sections of the toolkit, existing strategies, stakeholder discussions or projects already under consideration.
3. Discuss and position each opportunity. For each opportunity, consider the complexity of the challenge, who would need to be involved, the influence the authority has and the most appropriate role for the authority in helping move it forward.
4. Explore differences in perspective, using the discussion to test assumptions, understand trade-offs and explore where different participants see opportunities, risks or barriers. Focus on learning rather than reaching immediate consensus.
5. Agree a direction of travel. Identify the opportunities that are most aligned with local priorities, capabilities and ambitions, along with any areas that require further exploration before decisions are made.



First next steps in your area

By spending time exploring different opportunities together, local authority teams can develop a shared understanding of where they are best placed to make progress, the level of complexity involved and the role the authority should play in helping move activity forward.

The aim is not to produce a definitive ranking of opportunities, but to move the conversation from *"What could we do?"* to *"What are we best placed to do, what role should we play and where can our effort create the greatest value?"*

In doing so, the exercise can help identify opportunities that are ready to move forward, areas where partnership working is required, activities that require further development before significant effort is invested, and longer-term opportunities that may depend on wider system change.

This provides a stronger foundation for agreeing priorities, allocating resources and developing a realistic direction of travel for future local energy action. If you are ready to translate these priorities into actions and ownership, you may also find the **Making a Plan** section useful.

If you take one thing away from this section...

The best opportunity is not always the largest opportunity. It is often the one where local ambition, organisational capability, stakeholder support and timing align.



MAKING A FORWARD PLAN: AGREEING WHAT HAPPENS NEXT AND WHO IS RESPONSIBLE

This section will help you:

- Translate discussion and insight into practical next steps
- Identify who needs to lead, support or influence future activity
- Sequence activity based on what is achievable now and what requires further development



The challenge

Many planning processes assume that it is possible to identify a clear and predictable pathway from where you are today to where you want to be in the future. In practice, local energy action rarely follows a predictable sequence. Policy, funding, technology and stakeholder priorities will continue to evolve, and rather than trying to determine every step in advance, focus on identifying the next steps that are most likely to create value while remaining responsive to change.



To move forward, it can be helpful to consider...

1

What needs to happen next?

Looking across the opportunities you have identified, which actions are most realistic, achievable and capable of maintaining momentum?

2

Who needs to be involved?

Which teams, organisations and stakeholders will be responsible for progressing these actions, and what role should they play?

3

What requires further exploration?

Which opportunities require additional evidence, relationship-building, funding or capacity before they are ready to progress?

Whilst reflecting on these questions individually can be valuable, exploring them collectively can help build a shared understanding of what should happen next and where effort should be focused. The exercise on the next page provides a practical way of translating discussion into actions, ownership and a realistic direction of travel.



Tool 5: Developing a Forward Plan

A Forward Plan helps translate learning from the previous stages of exploration into a practical set of next steps. Rather than attempting to map every future action, the purpose of a Forward Plan is to identify activities that will:

- maintain momentum.
- strengthen the foundations for future action.
- address key barriers.
- build capability and relationships; and
- create opportunities for future delivery.

One way of doing this is to group actions into three broad categories, as outlined in the below table.

Table 4. Categorising Action

Category	Purpose
Do first	Actions that can begin immediately using existing capacity, relationships and resources.
Prepare opportunities	Activities that require additional development, evidence, engagement or funding before they can progress.
Explore solutions	Longer-term opportunities where further investigation or partnership-building is required before decisions can be made.

The intention of this approach is not to force certainty where uncertainty exists. Instead, it provides a simple structure for deciding where effort should be focused first and how priorities may evolve over time.



Using the tool - a suggested approach

1. Review any outputs from the previous sections of the toolkit with colleagues, partners and decision-makers who will be involved in taking activity forward.
2. Reflect on the organisational capacity, local opportunities and constraints, key relationships and priority opportunities that have emerged through the earlier stages.
3. Identify a small number of next steps, focussing on actions that are realistic, owned and achievable. Consider what can be progressed immediately, what requires further preparation and what may need additional exploration.
4. For each action, discuss who is responsible, who else needs to be involved and what support, resource or evidence may be required before committing further.
5. Revisit and refine over time, treating the Forward Plan as a living document. Review it periodically as relationships develop, priorities evolve and new opportunities emerge.

First next steps in your area

By discussing priorities, ownership and next steps together, local authority teams can develop a shared understanding of what should happen next, who is responsible for taking action forward, where effort and resources should be focused, and what success could look like over the coming months and years.

The aim is not to produce a perfect plan or predict every future step, but to move the conversation from *"What would we like to do next?"* to *"What are we ready to do now, what needs further preparation, and where should we focus our effort first?"*

This provides a stronger foundation for maintaining momentum, coordinating activity and identifying the next actions most likely to create value while strengthening the conditions needed for future progress.

If you take one thing away from this section...

A good plan does not predict everything. It helps identify what should happen first while remaining responsive to change.



RETURNING TO THE TOOLKIT OVER TIME

The toolkit is intended to be revisited, not completed, and different sections may become useful at various times. For example:

If...	Revisit...
Roles, teams or responsibilities change	The Getting organised section to reassess organisational capacity
The policy, funding or governance landscape changes	The Understanding your place section to review opportunities and constraints
New stakeholders emerge or relationships evolve	The Building relationships section to revisit and map key stakeholders
New opportunities or challenges emerge	The Prioritising opportunities section to review ambition and priorities
Priorities need refreshing or progress has stalled	The First next steps section to update your forward plan

Remember: Local energy action rarely follows a straight line. As priorities change, opportunities emerge, evidence develops and relationships evolve, new questions and challenges will inevitably arise. The value of this toolkit lies not in the answers it provides, but in the conversations, reflection and decision-making it supports. Return to it regularly as a resource for ongoing learning, adaptation and action.



A BONUS TOOL - STRUCTURING A PROJECT USING THE DOUBLE DIAMOND

The Design Council's Double Diamond provides a simple framework for structuring projects and programmes that involve complexity, galvanising action across multiple stakeholders and groups, or a need to move from broad exploration, baselining and discussion towards a clearer set of priorities and actions.

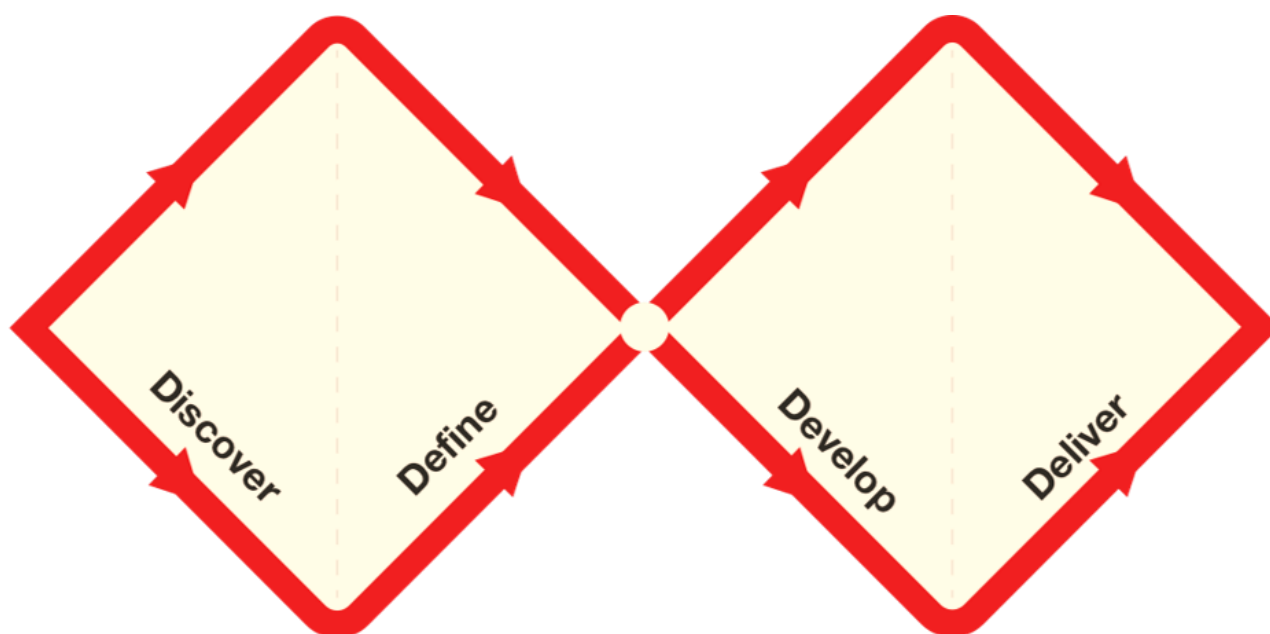


Figure 5. The Double Diamond

Through two phases of divergent thinking (widening out) and two phases of convergent thinking (honing in), it enables teams to co-explore opportunities, understand different perspectives, identify priorities and agree next steps.

- **Discover** and **Develop** focus on exploration, engagement and gathering ideas, for example stakeholder engagement, evidence gathering and co-design activities.
- **Define** and **Deliver** focus on refining priorities, agreeing actions and implementing solutions.
- The approach creates clear decision points at the start, middle and end of a process around which governance and decision-making can be organised.

In the South West project, the Double Diamond provided the overarching structure for delivering Stages 1-3 of the LAEP process, helping the participating local authorities to move from understanding their organisational capacity, local context and key relationships towards identifying priorities and agreeing practical next steps.

Working with four local authorities at different stages of their net zero journey, the framework also provided enough flexibility to reflect local circumstances and priorities, while also creating a shared structure for collaboration, learning and decision-making across the wider programme.

For authorities embarking on the early stages of an LAEP, or any activity that requires significant stakeholder engagement, evidence gathering and prioritisation, the Double Diamond can provide a useful way of organising conversations, managing complexity and moving from exploration towards action.

For more information, visit the Design Council's guide to the Double Diamond:

<https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/resources/the-double-diamond/>

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

This toolkit draws on a range of sources, including:

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