

Structuring the path to climate neutrality through coordinated investment in Bristol

NET ZERO CITIES

EU MISSION PLATFORM | CLIMATE NEUTRAL AND SMART CITIES

Executive snapshot



Bristol is working towards climate neutrality by 2030. Its Climate City Contract, developed through extensive analysis and consultation, was recognised with the EU Mission Label.

The city estimates that achieving this goal will require around £7.8 billion in investment, as well as continued collaboration with local stakeholders. The Climate City Contract includes actions across all major sources of emissions. The review found that these actions would benefit from clearer priorities and better coordination to support implementation.

In particular, the review showed that related actions - such as building retrofits, clean heat, and renewable energy - should be planned together and targeted to specific areas. Because resources and grid capacity are limited, these actions will also need to be phased over time.

Support focused on reviewing plans, providing strategic advice, and using case studies to inform financing, governance, and investment planning. Bristol's experience shows that setting ambitious goals is only the first step. Delivering them requires clear priorities, coordinated planning, and a practical approach to implementation.





Knowledge Report

THE IMPACT

The support included document review, expert advice, mentoring, and case studies to inform Bristol's approach to financing, governance, and implementation.

The review highlighted several practical issues that Bristol will need to address as it moves from planning to delivery, including:

- the need to target actions to specific areas and phase them over time
- opportunities to better coordinate actions in buildings, energy systems, and transport
- ways to group projects together to make them easier to fund and finance

The review also highlighted risks and trade-offs, such as potential conflicts between heat pump incentives and heat network development.

In addition, it identified gaps in areas such as Industrial Process and Product Use (IPPU) emissions and how these could be better integrated into future planning.

THE APPROACH

The support combined document review, expert advice, mentoring, and regular discussions with Bristol City Council as part of the EU Mission for 100 Climate Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030.

Activities included:

- review and co-design of plans, business cases, policies, and contracts
- mentoring and coaching sessions with city staff
- written follow-up on specific questions and issues
- participation in consultation sessions
- development of case studies and practical examples

The work included both online and in-person meetings and was informed by the Climate City Contract and related city documents. International case studies were used to show how other cities have approached financing, governance, and energy planning.



OUTCOMES AND LEARNING

- A detailed review of Bristol's Climate City Contract, including analysis of where actions could be better coordinated, prioritised, and targeted.
- Recommendations on how to better coordinate actions in buildings, energy systems, heat networks, rooftop solar, and transport electrification.
- Analysis of how grid capacity, heat network zones, and phased delivery could affect implementation.
- Further analysis of Industrial Process and Product Use (IPPU) emissions and opportunities to link industrial and community decarbonisation.
- A set of international case studies covering district energy, waste heat recovery, hydrogen systems, solar deployment, and ownership and financing models.
- Ongoing mentoring and advisory support on financing, governance, and implementation.

What worked:

- Combining technical review with ongoing mentoring supported detailed discussion of financing, governance, and implementation issues.
- Reviewing the Climate City Contract alongside related actions in energy, buildings, and transport helped identify where better coordination was needed.
- International case studies provided practical examples that helped inform local discussions.

Challenges and considerations identified:

- Even detailed climate plans need clear priorities, area-based planning, and phased delivery to be put into practice.
- Related actions need to be coordinated to avoid conflicts, particularly between heat pump incentives and heat network development.
- Limited grid capacity, funding, and staff time can affect how quickly actions can be delivered.
- Data gaps can make planning more difficult, including in areas such as Industrial Process and Product Use (IPPU) emissions.

Transferable insight:

As well as looking at the Climate City Contracts as a portfolio of projects by emission domain, cities should also plan by area, combining projects that cover multiple emission domains.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?



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NEXT STEPS FOR THE CITY

- Continue developing approaches to phased and spatially coordinated implementation of Climate City Contract actions.
- Further explore coordination between building decarbonisation, heat networks, rooftop solar, and transport electrification actions.
- Assess implications of electricity grid capacity and delivery constraints for sequencing future actions.
- Develop further analysis of Industrial Process and Product Use (IPPU) emissions and industrial decarbonisation opportunities.
- Continue exploring governance and financing approaches to support implementation and investment planning.

