
Buckinghamshire Energy Strategy

March 2015



South Bucks
District Council



Chiltern
District Council



Foreword

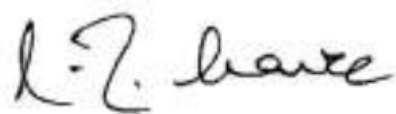
The way we generate and use energy is entering a critical period at both the national and local levels. As the cost of heating and lighting our homes increases and concerns of energy security grow, we must also act to reduce our impact on the climate and continue to protect Buckinghamshire's special environment.

It is not, however, enough to only address these risks. There are significant benefits to be gained by increasing local generation and improving energy efficiency – delivering these benefits is central to our Energy Strategy.

Changing the way energy is generated and used in Buckinghamshire is a big challenge and requires long term commitment if it is to be achieved. Our Strategy therefore sets out a 25 year vision and framework for action, which together provide the certainty and flexibility which will be necessary. These are supported by the first Action Plan which sets out detailed priorities for the initial 5 years of delivery.

Achieving our vision will not be easy and we must continue to work together if we are to deliver on our ambition. This Strategy has emerged from a collaborative process between Buckinghamshire's five councils and a wide range of business, community, education and individual stakeholders. As we move from planning to delivery, the support and expertise of this stakeholder group will prove all the more valuable.

We hope that this Strategy will both lead and catalyse action to ensure that the communities of Buckinghamshire benefit from their energy resources.



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Summary

Buckinghamshire generates little of its own energy – there are no major power stations in the county and there has been a relatively low uptake of renewable generation projects. As a result, there is an outflow of financial support to those areas which are utilising their energy resources. At the same time, we are seeing communities across the country benefiting from the generation of their own energy.

Doing nothing is no longer an option.

To tackle this, the local authorities in Buckinghamshire in partnership with the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership (the NEP) have lead the development of this Energy Strategy. Supporting this has been a wide range of stakeholders from community groups, businesses, charities as well as other partnerships such the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). Together we have a created a Strategy with the aim of delivering greater local generation with the benefits this generates being received by the community.

In order to do this, our Energy Strategy focuses action in four key areas:

- Increasing local energy generation.
- Improving the efficiency of buildings.
- Ensuring communities influence and benefit from projects.
- Growing the local green economy.

The development of energy resources takes time and needs long term certainly if the necessary investment is to be attracted. This Strategy therefore has a 25 year lifetime within which detailed action planning is conducted in 5 year cycles.

Action Plan 1 (2015-20) sets out our priorities and targets for the first 5 year planning cycle and can be found [here](#).

Developing our Strategy

The District Councils of Buckinghamshire in partnership with the County Council commissioned the development of this countywide Energy Strategy. This started in early 2014 with the development of an Energy Baseline which provided a description of the baseline against which the Strategy was developed. This document also made the case for the county using a novel approach to strategy development based on the benefits that energy generation projects can bring, irrespective of the technology used. By the use of various development scenarios, feedback was sought at a series of four stakeholder workshops. This has resulted in a process of strategy development which has been highly consultative with wide ranging stakeholder input. This includes the public and private sectors and community groups.

Within this process, the first question asked of stakeholders was if the strategy should maintain a 'business as usual' approach or go further. The focus on the use of energy based projects to deliver social, economic and environmental benefits for the people of Buckinghamshire unified stakeholders and led to their unanimous rejection of a 'business as usual' approach. Instead there was a high level of support for a 'maximum deployment' scenario. This outcome is contrary to the previous view that there was little appetite for energy projects in the county. It will also go some way to redressing the situation in place at the time of the consultation whereby the people of Buckinghamshire are exporters of money through their energy bills and general taxation to support energy schemes elsewhere in the country.

The development process of the Strategy also highlighted the importance of including energy efficiency within its scope. Whilst the work to improve efficiency may be different from generation schemes, both generation and energy efficiency need to be addressed in order to maximise benefits.

During the development of this energy strategy it was identified that it needed to take a 25 year view and not be based on short term issues. This reinforces the Buckinghamshire Energy Strategy as a high level document. As a result, the Strategy creates a long term framework within which projects will be developed but it contains no specific targets or actions. This does not mean that the Energy Strategy is devoid of these essential elements. Instead, these are contained in separate but linked Actions Plans each covering a 5 year period. The Action Plans will set out short to medium term actions and targets and a clearly identified route to delivery.

For the same reasons, this Energy Strategy deliberately contains no case studies or other sources of reference that can cause it to become quickly out of date. Instead these are linked documents which can be easily updated thus ensuring that the Energy Strategy is always up to date.

While development of the Buckinghamshire Energy Strategy has led to wide ranging support, there is still the potential for tension when specific projects are considered for development, especially if they involve contentious technologies such as large scale wind or shale gas extraction. This Strategy does not however advocate one technology over another. Instead it aims to ensure that the benefits which can be generated are a key consideration in the projects which are brought forward.

It is also important to recognise that the Strategy operates within the existing planning system and the generation of benefits alone doesn't guarantee planning permission or final development. There are a broad range of factors which interact to determine the success of an energy project – both

under planning regulations and in its commercial and technical feasibility – and so whilst the Strategy is benefits led, we must be pragmatic as to its real world application.

A Shared Vision for Buckinghamshire

The Energy Baseline describes the existing low level of energy generation in Buckinghamshire. It also describes some of the benefits which can be achieved by working with communities to increase the uptake of generation projects. The work to transform the way Buckinghamshire generates energy is based on a shared vision of what our relationship with energy should look like:

“Communities are central to the future of energy generation in Buckinghamshire and are the key beneficiaries of the development of energy resources.”

We will know we have achieved our vision when we can all say the following and it won't be unusual or extraordinary, but simply the way things are in Buckinghamshire:

- My community is involved in decision making about new energy generation opportunities.
- I know public sector energy generation is protecting funding for frontline services.
- I have seen the benefits from local energy schemes in my community.
- Local businesses are delivering the goods and services which help provide my energy.
- The local economy is benefiting from more inward investment.
- We all use energy carefully and have learnt how to use even less.

Our Mission

In order to achieve this vision, we need to describe the work which is needed to achieve it – this is our Mission:

“To deliver significant, long term benefits to the people of Buckinghamshire by increasing local energy generation and reducing energy demand.”

The mission establishes the key mechanism by which we are to achieve our vision and allows us to decide whether a proposed project would help achieve this. There are two central criteria for this:

1. Will the project deliver benefits to the people of Buckinghamshire?
2. Will the project help to increase local energy generation, or reduce energy demand?

If a proposed project can answer “yes” to both of these questions, then it will contribute to the achievement of the Vision. We will then always look for projects that deliver best value in terms of the benefits they deliver.

Background

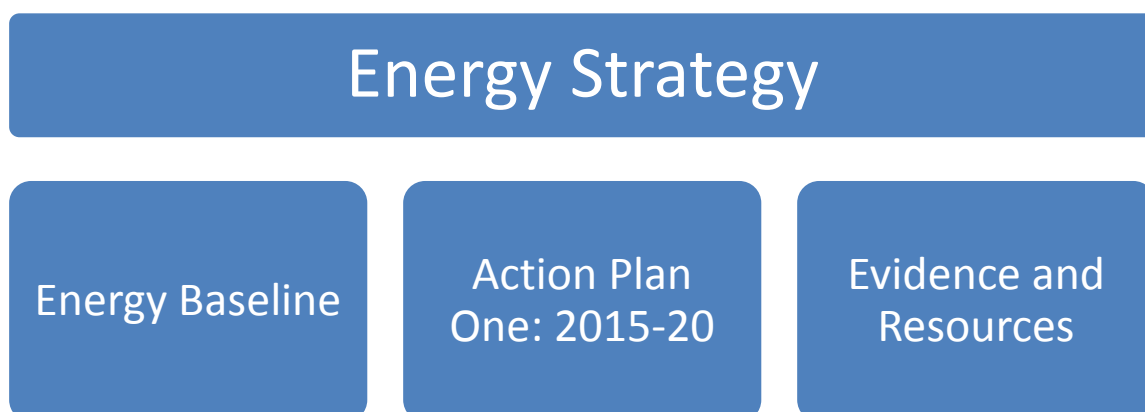
The situation regarding energy generation that was in place in Buckinghamshire at the time this Energy Strategy was developed is described in the Energy Baseline. This can be viewed [here](#).

The Energy Baseline identifies that small scale, local energy generation using new technology is a growing reality across the UK which cannot be ignored. Generating energy at point of use is also amongst the most cost effective and efficient methods of generation and reduces the need for grid enhancements, thereby keeping installation costs down. Implementing more efficient ways to use energy can also help to reduce the impacts of rising energy costs on the lives of Buckinghamshire people.

Local energy generation brings a unique set of financial and social benefits. These come from a range of options for local people to become involved in energy projects including project ownership. These benefits cannot be obtained by other means and can lead to a more prosperous and resilient society. Energy generation schemes can also deliver significant environmental benefits, such as the creation of biodiversity enhancing habitats, as well as reducing the carbon intensity of energy generation. This Energy Strategy aims to deliver these benefits.

The Buckinghamshire Energy Strategy is benefits led and technology agnostic. It is based on the premise that it will be the people of Buckinghamshire who want to see these benefits come to their community who will increasingly influence energy generation schemes. This influence is not limited to technologies used and scale of deployment, but the ownership and financing options which influence how benefits are generated and received. By ensuring communities are engaged from the earliest stages of development, we can aim to deliver schemes which are understood and embraced from the beginning.

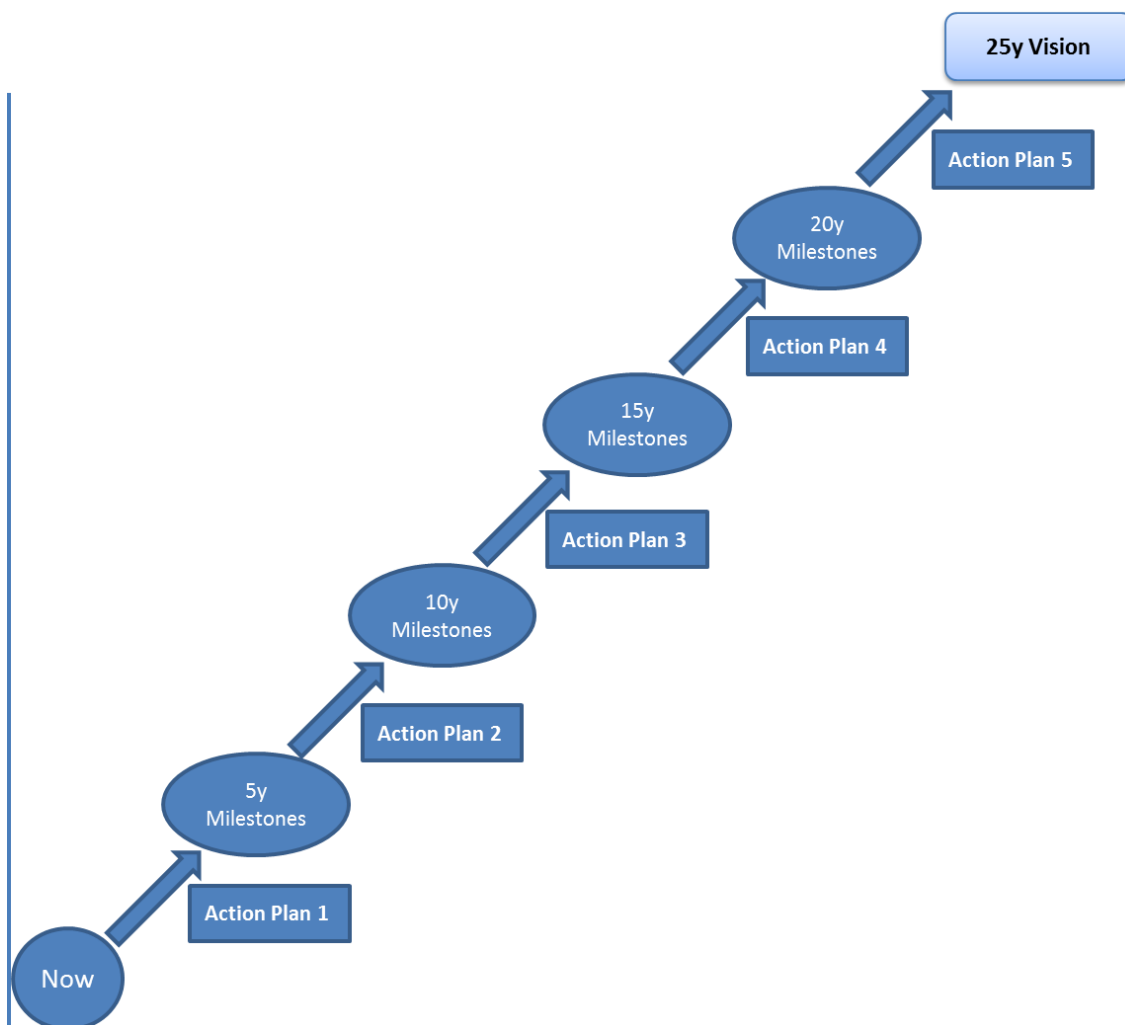
The Energy Strategy forms the core of a number of linked documents. The Energy Baseline provides the background against which the Buckinghamshire Energy Strategy was developed; Action Plans describe the targets that will be met and the actions by which they will be achieved and additional evidence and resources (e.g. case studies and briefings) will help inform and support this work.



A Framework for Delivery

In addition to establishing the vision for energy in Buckinghamshire, this document sets out the framework within which future actions will be planned, monitored and reported upon. It is not realistic or practical to plan all actions over a 25 year period as many aspects and policies will evolve and challenges not yet considered will arise throughout this time.

The Strategy therefore establishes five, 5 year planning periods through which the milestones for the next phase are confirmed, and key areas of work for their achievement planned. These milestones are likely to change during this period, but it is important to establish a pathway early on in the knowledge that this will need to be reviewed and updated as progress is made.



Year	Milestone Statement
2020	There is significant and widespread community interest in energy generation and many schemes are being proposed or developed. Local authorities work with communities to develop jointly owned projects. Energy efficiency improvements to residential properties are common place. Local businesses have started to grow due to increased local demand for energy related goods and services.
2025	Community groups are regularly developing energy generation projects and the benefits derived attract significant positive attention. Local authority generation has significantly increased – income protects frontline services. Energy efficiency improvements are commonplace in business premises as are energy generation projects. Local education and training establishments have increased energy related content in response to calls from local businesses. Important energy research and development projects are taking place.
2030	Community generation schemes are regularly being delivered across the county. Energy efficiency measures now mainly address hard to treat buildings which have longer payback periods. Local businesses work closely with education and training establishments to ensure skills demands are met. Local businesses are funding energy developments and commercial services relating to energy delivery are growing. Nationally significant research and development work is conducted in Buckinghamshire. Buckinghamshire is increasingly seen as a place to invest.
2035	Community generation continues to grow with the benefits derived seen as essential to providing community based services. Energy efficiency is a mature business sector with significant exports to other counties, including the export of related training and education.
2040	Community energy underpins many local services. Buckinghamshire leads the development of many new energy technologies and research and development is a significant part of the local economy. The energy goods and services sector leads national practice.
Vision	Communities are central to the future of energy generation in Buckinghamshire and are the key beneficiaries of the development of energy resources.

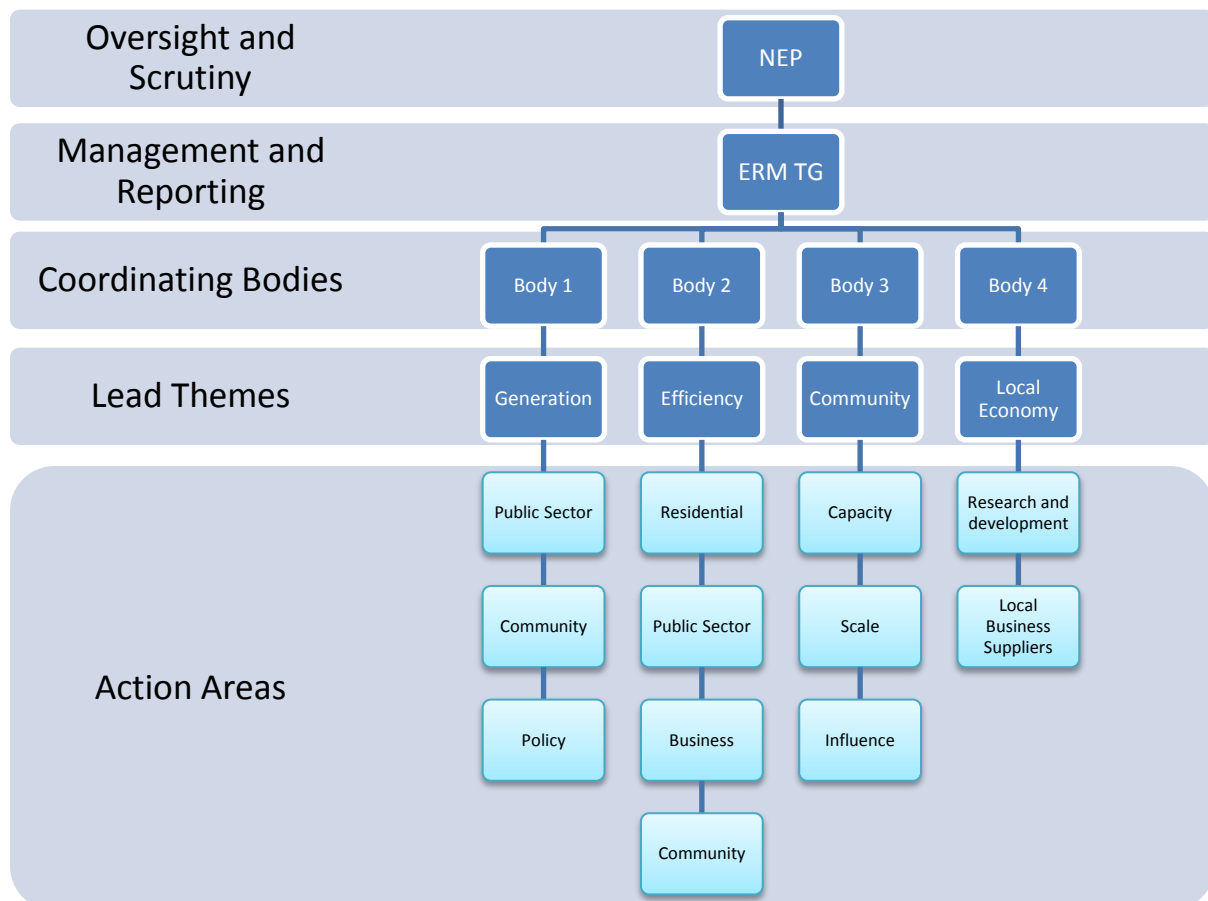
The Governance of the Buckinghamshire Energy Strategy

In order to ensure the achievement of our vision, it is important that its work is overseen and coordinated in a robust but flexible manner. It is also important that the body providing this oversight and scrutiny has a strategic view of the issues which will influence and determine the success of the Strategy.

For these reasons, the Natural Environment Partnership for Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes (the NEP) will provide the strategic direction for the Energy Strategy. The NEP’s own Strategic Priorities overlap with the aims of the Energy Strategy and this work will therefore sit well within the NEP’s wider work programme.

As part of this strategic role, the NEP will provide oversight to the Energy and Resource Management Task Group (ERM TG) – a group which includes officers from the four District councils and the County Council, along with a range of other supporting bodies. This group will oversee the day to day management and delivery of the Action Plans and will report and be accountable to the NEP.

The action which will deliver the vision will draw in many different groups and organisations. In order for these to coordinate effectively, they are arranged into complimentary themes, although there will be overlapping activities. These themes will each be coordinated by an appropriate body or partnership.



Themes

There are many ways in which the Energy Strategy will be changing the relationship between people and energy. In order to structure and coordinate our activity, actions have been arranged into four broad Themes. These do not operate in isolation and there will be important areas of overlap between them. The four themes of the Strategy are described below.

Generation

When work began on the Energy Strategy, Buckinghamshire generated little of its own energy – there are no fossil fuel power stations within the county and renewable energy sources currently account for 3% of the county's energy needs. As set out in the Energy Baseline, this means many opportunities are not being realised and our economy is more vulnerable to increasing and volatile energy prices.

In this area of focus, efforts are made to increase the amount of energy generation in the county and through this deliver benefits to communities. This is done both actively, by local authorities developing proposals on their estate, and by creating the conditions to enable community groups to develop their own schemes.

To support and enable greater local generation, we also need to ensure that local planning policy and guidance supports appropriate generation schemes.

Efficiency

Our Energy Strategy recognises that increasing generation alone is not sufficient to address the issues and deliver the benefits which are needed. It is important that both sides of the energy equation are addressed and so increasing energy efficiency and energy demand reduction are also key areas of work.

Improvements in energy efficiency need to reach all parts of the county and will broadly target groups in 4 buildings uses – residential properties, businesses, public sector bodies and community groups. There are already a range of projects and organisations which help to deliver improvements in energy efficiency and we will work to support these wherever possible.

Community

At the heart of our Energy Strategy are the people and communities of Buckinghamshire – it is they who need to have a clear voice in determining which technologies are used, where they are installed and at what scale. In order to deliver this, we need a thriving network of community groups which have the capacity to deliver their ambitions.

In this area of focus, we will work to find innovative ways to grow and support community groups across the county, so that they can effectively lead the change they wish to see. As the network of community groups grows, work to build capacity to deliver projects will become increasingly important.

Economy

Many of the benefits which can be derived from energy generation and improvements in efficiency have an economic aspect. The economy is not only a beneficiary of this action, but a key ingredient in achieving our vision.

In order to deliver the greatest benefits to the people of Buckinghamshire from energy based projects, the range of goods and services which are needed should be delivered by local businesses. This will also mean that the provision of the knowledge and skills which support these businesses needs to be present, and as demand for the services increases, so will the need for supporting education and training.

These economic benefits are not limited to the scaling up of existing business sectors in the area. Involvement in the research and development of new technologies would also bring benefits, such as further employment opportunities. This along with the early deployment of new technologies, and will complete the transformation of Buckinghamshire to an area which is leading on energy across sectors.

Work in this area will therefore help to create the demand for goods and services and promote the use of local suppliers. We will also work with training and educational providers to ensure that the required skills are available and deliverable locally. We also need to ensure that the conditions for advanced research and development work are present, and that Buckinghamshire is shown to businesses to be an enthusiastic partner for exploring new technologies.

Benefits and Outcomes

This Energy Strategy is built on the principal that it is the nearby communities which should benefit from local energy generation schemes. Ensuring that the desired benefits are articulated clearly is important if we are to ensure these are maximised at every opportunity.

Some of the benefits which we are aiming to deliver are summarised below. However this is not an exhaustive list of benefits, as innovative schemes can deliver new and unforeseen benefits which would not be excluded from our vision.

It is also important to highlight that benefits for which a monetary value cannot (or cannot easily or accurately) be assigned are not excluded either – ultimately, benefits which communities wish to see are those which need to be delivered.

- **Income for community groups** – the return on investment from energy generation can provide a long term income source for community groups, which can help to support the services they provide.
- **Reduced energy bills** – there are a variety of finance and ownership models for generation schemes, but in common is their ability to reduce energy bills for those connected to the generation.
- **Protection of the natural environment** – increasing renewable energy generation can reduce the environmental impact of energy generation, both locally and nationally, for example by reducing carbon emissions.
- **Enhancing and creating new habitats** – the development of energy resources often provides opportunities for habitat protection and biodiversity enhancements, such as planting wildflower meadows or hedgerows.
- **Represented Communities** – criticism of energy schemes can arise where local concerns have not been reflected in the final design. Ensuring communities are represented early on in the development process will help to deliver appropriate and sought after schemes.
- **Protection of public services** – reducing operational costs and providing new income opportunities are important ways that public bodies can address increasing demand for services and reductions to budgets.
- **Contributing to climate change mitigation** – reducing carbon emissions from energy generation is a key way in which the effects of climate change can be reduced.
- **Protection from volatile energy prices** – generating more of our own energy helps to reduce dependency on international energy markets where prices can fluctuate significantly and security of supply can become difficult.
- **Community cohesion** – collectively developing and owning a generation project can help to create new networks and connections between individuals and groups, thereby strengthening a community.
- **Employment** – as demand for energy related goods and services grow, local businesses will have an opportunity to expand to meet rising demand, creating sustainable jobs in the process.

- **Resilience** – increasing the amount of energy generated locally – both at a community and household scale – helps to increase the resilience of communities. This is both through the financial benefits and in reducing dependency on national energy infrastructure which can be vulnerable to extreme weather.

Conclusion

The approach taken in this Strategy and the means by which it has been developed is innovative and represents a model for others to follow. The true value of the Buckinghamshire Energy Strategy, however, will come from the social, economic and environmental benefits that it will deliver to the people of the county now and into the future.

To achieve this outcome requires everyone within Buckinghamshire to understand that these benefits are real, can be delivered across the county, and can make a positive difference to everyone. It will also require a re-think of the attitude towards the energy projects that will need to be considered to be the source of these benefits. This needs to be but within a framework where local people are more deeply involved in what is developed and where.

This will be an exciting journey. Be part of it and help to make it a success!

To find out what work is currently being undertaken to deliver this Strategy, please refer to the most recent Action Plan, available [here](#).