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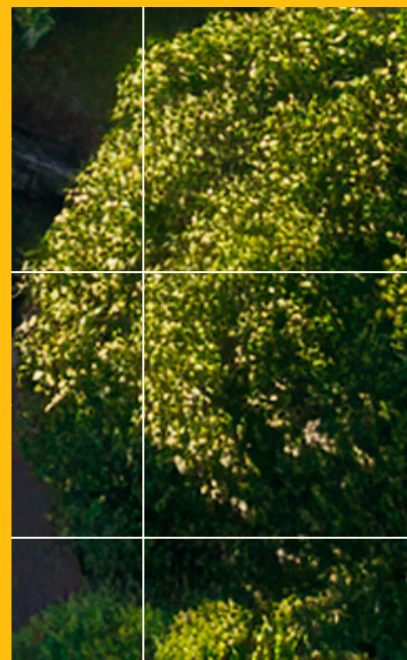
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A workshop guide to using community
wealth building to help you deliver net
zero and a just transition.

Aligning community wealth
building with just transitions:
a guide for facilitators



Aligning community wealth building with just transitions

A guide for facilitators

Introduction

This guided workshop has been put together to support local authorities to convene conversations about how we align place-based priorities around net zero and a just transition with local economic development and community wealth building.

It was developed by the Centre for Local Economies (CLES) and the University of Sussex following a research project in 2025. The project examined how local authorities and other public sector partners navigated conversations within councils about using community wealth building to address the challenges and opportunities of net zero.

The accompanying slides provide a guide to convening and facilitating a workshop which will help your organisation:

- Understand more about the relationship between community wealth building and net zero and its application to your work.
- Navigate the complexity of how net zero, economic development and community wealth building is understood and used in your organisation.
- Help you and your organisation to facilitate a conversation between staff internally about how you can use community wealth building to achieve your ambitions on net zero.
- Help net zero practitioners to learn more about how community wealth building can amplify the economic and social impact of interventions.

Audience: Local authority practitioners (Net Zero, Economic Development, Procurement, Strategy)

Total duration: 110 minutes (can flex 90–120 mins)

Session overview

Suggested agenda and timings

Focus	Time
Welcome & Introduction Group introductions and discussion	15 min
Key concepts Task 1: mapping links between your net zero project and community wealth building	15 min
Current reality Task 2: identifying current barriers	10 min
The opportunity – from problem to progress	15 min

Group discussion	
Change through collaboration Task 3: Identifying levers for change	15 min
Comfort break	10 min
Barriers → solutions Task 4: overcoming the barriers to help us deliver the change	10 min
Shared outcomes design Task 5: Co-design your outcomes	10 min
Action planning Agreeing next steps and key actions to take forward	10 min

Slide one – welcome and framing the challenge (10 min)

Purpose

Set tone, create relevance, and surface existing silos.

Script

“Welcome everyone. Today is about something we all recognise but rarely have time to address - how net zero work and economic development work often sit in separate silos, even though they’re trying to shape the same places.”

“What we’re exploring is simple but powerful: How can we deliver our own priorities AND shared outcomes at the same time?”

“This is not about adding more work. It’s about aligning what already exists, so it delivers more impact.”

Invite everyone to introduce themselves – go round the room – especially if people are not familiar with each other.

Activity (5 min)

Ask participants (pairs or small groups) to answer these questions and then provide brief feedback:

- “What are you measured on in your role?”
- “Where do you think your work overlaps with others in this room?”

Facilitator tips

- Capture any overlaps visually (using tools like a flipchart or screen).

- Highlight duplication or missed connections.

Slide two – concepts in plain English (15 min)

Purpose

Build a shared language without jargon.

Script

“Let’s quickly align on what we mean by these two areas.”

“Just Transition is about fairness for communities and workers in the move to net zero.

One definition describes a just transition as ‘socially inclusive decarbonisation’, where the growth of the green economy improves the lives of those who have historically been hardest hit by economic change. These ideas align closely with the principles of Community Wealth Building (CWB).

- Focus on:
 - Who benefits?
 - Who decides?
 - Who is left behind?”

“Community Wealth Building is about rewiring local economies so that we increase the flow, circulation and ownership of wealth:

For too long, local economic development has relied on a trickle-down model. The assumption has been that economic growth will generate benefits that can then be redistributed to address social and economic challenges. We now know that this approach often fails to deliver for many people and places.

Community wealth building takes a different approach. It is about rewiring the economy so that wealth is redistributed and democratised by design, rather than as an afterthought.

The model was developed in Cleveland, Ohio, in the 2000s and later became associated with Preston, where CLES worked with the council to map procurement spend and develop an alternative economic strategy to private investment in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis.

CLES has played a leading role in developing and promoting community wealth building in the UK. The approach has since been adopted by councils across the UK and has influenced legislation including the Procurement Act and the Community Wealth Building (Scotland) Act.

We can understand community wealth building through its five key levers:

- Ownership: Who owns assets.
- Finance: Where money flows.
- Employment: Who gets jobs and opportunities.
- Land and Assets: how communities benefit.

- Spend – how we ensure that public money is spent and services commissioned with economic and social outcomes of place in view.

Key line:

"Just Transition is the *why*. Community wealth building is the *how*."

Activity (10 min)

- Ask: "Where does your current work already connect with community wealth building and/or just transition?"
- Pick a net zero project and analyse it using the key levers for community wealth building to identify potential local economic opportunities.
- For example – what are the opportunities for creating local jobs and supporting local businesses?

Participants map:

- Net zero goals → community/economy impacts
- Economic/community goals → climate impacts

Facilitator tips:

Reinforce: "You are probably already doing this – just not calling it that."

Slide three – the current reality (15 min)

Purpose

Surface shared frustrations and barriers.

Script

"Let's be honest about where things are today."

"We heard consistently:

- Teams working in silos;
- Short-term funding;
- Lack of time to collaborate;
- Risk aversion."

"And often communities feel like things are being done *to* them rather than *with* them."

Pause and ask: "Does this sound familiar?"

Activity (10 min)

Group task:

- Identify 3 key barriers in your organisation
- Categorise them:
 - Structural (systems, funding);
 - Cultural (ways of working);
 - Practical (time, capacity).

Facilitator tips

- Encourage honesty.
- Validate frustrations.
- Avoid problem-solving yet.

Slide four – the opportunity (15 min)

Purpose

Shift mindset from problem to possibility.

Script

“What happens if we connect these agendas properly?”

“A net zero neighbourhood can also be a community wealth building neighbourhood.”

“That means:

- Local jobs created through climate action
- Net zero training/workforce development to implement change (e.g. through councils, housing associations etc)
- Local supply chains strengthened through supporting net zero businesses as well as existing businesses who are transitioning to net zero markets.
- Communities benefiting directly
- Ownership of net zero infrastructure by communities (e.g. renewable energy)”

“This isn’t a new programme – it’s a new way of connecting what already exists.”

Discussion (5 min)

Ask:

- “Where is this already happening in small ways in your area?”

Facilitator tips

Highlight partial examples participants give:

- “That’s exactly the kind of alignment we want to scale or deepen”
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Slide five – change through collaboration levers (15 min)

Purpose

Translate ideas into practical entry points.

Script

“There are five key levers where this alignment happens in practice.”

Walk through briefly:

1. Procurement
2. Jobs & skills
3. Land & assets
4. Finance
5. Ownership

“Most of you are already working in one or more of these areas.”

Activity (10 min)

Split into groups (one per lever):

- “What are we already doing here?”
- “What could we do together across teams and across?”

Feedback and output (5 mins)

Each group shares:

- One current activity.
- One opportunity for collaboration.

Facilitator tips

Push for:

- Specific examples (not abstract ideas).
- Notice the interconnectivity between the levers. Community wealth building works best when you engage all the levers.

(10 min comfort break)

Slide six – Barriers → Solutions (10 min)

Purpose

Move from identifying problems to practical change.

Script

"We've named the barriers. Now let's make them actionable."

"This isn't about fixing the whole system – it's about identifying what we *can* influence."

Activity (10 min)

In groups:

- Pick one key barrier.
- Answer:
 - What is one thing we could change in the next 3 months?

Examples to prompt thinking:

- "Could we create a multi-disciplinary team?"
- "Could we align two funding streams or initiatives?"
- "Could we adjust procurement criteria?"

Facilitator tips

Keep it grounded and realistic.

Slide seven – designing shared outcomes (10 min)

Purpose

Shift from parallel working to integrated outcomes.

Script

"Right now, many projects deliver either climate outcomes OR economic outcomes."

"What we want is both – simultaneously."

"Instead of asking: 'Does this reduce carbon?' We also ask: 'Who benefits locally?'"

Activity (10 min)

Ask participants to identify and design clear outcomes from their work that deliver the net zero ambition but integrate the wider economic and social considerations that we have been discussing:

- For example, you may want to define:
 - Climate outcome
 - Economic outcome (e.g. increase in local training, employment, engagement with SMEs/VCSE, reduction in economic extraction, greater consideration of ownership in design of procurement.)
 - Place outcomes: how will this intervention support improvements in this local area – e.g. biodiversity, cost of living pressures, unemployment, neighbourhood regeneration?
 - Who benefits – be specific – who exactly needs to benefit from this intervention and how? How can we design our intervention to ensure that this happens?

Prompt examples:

- Retrofit programme
- Energy project
- Transport scheme

Facilitator tips:

Push for:

- Measurable outcomes
- Specific beneficiaries (and how)
- Recognise and celebrate the connection between climate and economic outcomes – not mutually exclusive.

Slide eight – action planning

Purpose

Ensure real-world follow-through.

Script

“To close, we’re focusing on action – not theory.”

“This only works if something changes after today.”

Activity (10 min)

Each participant writes:

1. One action they will take
2. One person/team they will collaborate with
3. One outcome they want to achieve

Closing script

"Breaking silos doesn't require permission – it starts with small connections."

"If we align what we already do, we don't just double effort, we multiply impact."

"Thank you, and I'd encourage you to follow up with at least one person in this room within the next week."

Optional facilitator notes

Room setup

- Tables for group work
- Flipcharts or digital boards
- Mixed teams (don't sit by department)

Tone to strike

- Honest but optimistic
- Practical, not theoretical
- Collaborative, not critical

Key messages to reinforce throughout

- This is not extra work
- Alignment creates better outcomes, not more activity
- Participants already have part of the solution

