

## Going Dutch? Case study selection rationale

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The Going Dutch? project involves a detailed examination of the effects of different governance arrangements on local heat transition planning and pilots in local authorities and municipalities in the UK and the Netherlands. Examples from Scotland, Wales and England will be included to reflect differences in governance arrangements within the UK (the project does not include Northern Ireland). With limited time and resources, we had to make choices about where to focus. This document sets out the rationale for these choices.

The overall approach is based on the following elements:

- local authorities (LAs) that represent front-runners in heat decarbonisation planning and implementation;
- diversity in terms of heat technology focus;
- the size of LAs (and likely resources available for heat decarbonisation planning and piloting);
- locations representing different geographic regions within the Netherlands and the UK, as well as the different devolved nations and different local government structures within the UK.

Below, we provide a discussion of each criterion in more detail.

### ***Front-runners***

From early discussions within the project team, it was decided that the most suitable cases for analysis would be those that had demonstrated a higher level of activity and progress on heat decarbonisation planning and implementation. By focusing on these LAs rather than those that are less active and have yet to push the boundaries of what is possible to achieve, the analysis is better able to assess the resources that LAs have to address heat decarbonisation and the barriers that they currently face to their efforts.

The project would thus analyse heat decarbonisation front-runners, with progress in both heat decarbonisation planning and piloting of solutions, where relevant activities have been supported by the LA or have taken place within the LA's boundaries. Whilst the level of progress and activity is a critical criterion for selection, it is not the only one and thus a long list of potential front-runners was compiled for closer attention<sup>1</sup>, which were then assessed with respect to some additional criteria, outlined in the subsections below. For the UK, this long list contained LAs that had emerged either from the background work carried out for the writing of the project proposal, the scoping phase and literature reviews of the project, or from the initial discussions the project team had had with related experts and the project advisory group.

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<sup>1</sup> This list is available upon request.

For the Netherlands, we relied on the list of municipalities that received grants from the national government through the Natural Gas-Free Neighbourhoods Program (PAW). PAW has provided grants to municipalities to establish testbeds to pilot low-carbon heating solutions and insulation technology, as well as to identify approaches for effective resident involvement and measures for potential cost reductions. In the first two rounds (2018 and 2020), 50 municipalities received PAW grants (out of all 352 municipalities in the Netherlands). Successful submissions had to demonstrate the ability to immediately launch the pilot, prove the potential for carbon dioxide reductions, and show capacity for upscaling (PAW, n.d.). As a result, the municipalities that have received PAW grants may be considered front-runners in their heat transition efforts.

### ***Diversity in terms of low carbon heating technologies***

The project team decided that it was important that the selected case studies had a degree of diversity in the heat decarbonisation technologies under consideration in order to assess the possible implications for heat decarbonisation governance of different technological low-carbon pathways. Beauchampet and Walsh (2021) argue, for example, that the development of heat networks, due to their centralised nature, provides fewer options for active citizen engagement than all-electric heating solutions, which tend to focus on individual installations.

From our initial scoping and background knowledge, we were aware that larger urban LAs typically have at least some focus on the local potential for heat networks. More rural, sparsely populated areas, meanwhile, are likely to be more focused on heat pumps. Alongside these technologies, the other prominent low-carbon option is the use of a low-carbon gas (e.g., hydrogen or biomethane) in the existing gas grid. There is a wide area – densely populated urban areas, suburban areas, towns and villages – that could potentially receive low-carbon gas through the existing gas grid. To ensure that the project included a case study with a focus on low-carbon gas, the scoping phase and analysis of the case study (front-runner) long list included an assessment of the extent to which each of the long-listed LAs identified a low-carbon gas grid as an option.

### ***Diversity in terms of size and capacity of LA***

During the assessment of the long list of front runners, it was clear that there was some variability in the size and available resources of LAs. Related literature has also discussed this point. Urban LAs are considered to have more resources to develop energy management programmes, apply for grants, and experiment with local energy policy (UK100, 2021; Tingey and Webb, 2020a). To capture a range of experiences, the project team decided that it would be important to include case studies that were of varying scales, with scale acting as the most suitable proxy for available resources. This criterion overlapped with the requirement stated earlier that there should be a case study of a large urban area that has some focus on heat networks and one that is more rural and focused on heat pumps.

### ***Geographical diversity and representation***

The project team determined that different geographical regions within Great Britain and the Netherlands should be represented. The regions in the Netherlands differ significantly from

one another. Despite the majority of the country speaking Dutch, there are numerous dialects spoken throughout the country. The majority of the population (54.1% in 2019) in the Netherlands are irreligious (CBS, 2021). Those who identify themselves with any religion are mostly split between Catholicism and Protestantism, with the southeastern part of the country being predominantly Catholic. The central-western part of the country (the Randstad) encompasses the four largest cities in the Netherlands (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht). The rest of the country consists of relatively smaller cities, towns, and villages. In addition, the province of Groningen has a unique history with natural gas. Natural gas extraction in the area caused earthquakes that damaged houses, and residents there have struggled to receive appropriate compensation from the national government.

The case studies should also involve representation of the three constituent parts of Great Britain: England, Scotland, and Wales<sup>2</sup>. Overall, eleven case studies were thought to be a manageable number for the project, and it was decided to split these as five cases in the Netherlands, three in England, two in Scotland and one in Wales. The greater number of the Dutch cases relates to the fact that the Netherlands is ahead in its heat transition efforts, and one of the project's goals is to identify any policy lessons for the UK. Due to the greater levels of devolution, Scottish policy on heat decarbonisation is more distinctive from that of England than Welsh policy, and thus it was thought important to represent Scotland with two cases in order to provide a meaningful comparison. In England, there are also various types of local government that have varying responsibilities for local services. The different types of local government include:

- 2-tier local authorities: where a county council has responsibility for some services and a lower tier of district councils have responsibility for others. There are 24 county councils in England with 181 district councils within them<sup>3</sup>.
- Metropolitan districts: 36 metro districts cover 6 urban areas – Greater Manchester, Merseyside, South Yorkshire, Tyne and Wear, West Midlands, and West Yorkshire. These districts provide almost all local services apart from some (e.g., emergency services, transport), which are provided by a joint authority representing the wider urban area.
- London boroughs: 32 London boroughs provide almost all local services with the Greater London Authority responsible for emergency services, planning and transport
- Unitary authorities: 58 unitary authorities which provide all local government services in their areas. All LAs in Wales and Scotland are unitary.

The project team thought it would be important to represent this diversity in the case study selection. As a result, the case studies should include a 2-tier LA, a Metropolitan District, and a London borough. As LAs in Scotland and Wales are all unitary, it was not necessary to select an English unitary authority.

## References

Beauchamp, I., & Walsh, B. (2021). Energy citizenship in the Netherlands: The

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<sup>2</sup> A case study from Northern Ireland has not been considered due to the greater differences in energy sector governance in the region and the limited resource and length of the project

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-government-structure-and-elections>

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