

# Regional Energy Strategic Plan policy framework

# Cambridgeshire County Council Consultation response

**BACKGROUND**

Ofgem launched their Regional Energy Strategic Plan (RESP) policy framework consultation on 30 July 2024. The deadline for responses is 8 October 2024.

Ofgem are consulting on 3 aspects:

* The RESP proposal
* Governance
* Regional boundaries

**PROPOSAL CONSULTATION QUESTIONS**

**Q1. What are your views on the principles (in paragraph 2.8) to guide NESO’s approach to developing the RESP methodology? Please provide your reasoning.**

The four principles proposed are:

1. Be place-based: Integrate a place-based approach into energy system planning.
2. Be whole system: Adopt a whole system perspective (including gas, electricity, heat, transport, and industry).
3. Be vision-led: Provide a clear long-term objective for energy system development that reflects a region's characteristics and priorities while aligning with national priorities.
4. Be proactive: Enable proactive development of the energy system and infrastructure investment, while remaining agile and adaptive to account for uncertainty.

In summary, the principles are well-suited to guide the development of the RESP methodology. However, they do need to include the relationship with Local Area Energy Plans, prioritise support and engagement with community energy and there needs to be a more explicit narrative on stakeholder engagement or collaborative planning running through each principle. While this may be implied in the place-based and whole system approaches, making it explicit would benefit successful delivery.

Additionally, the Council's role in areas like transport management, waste management, and social care gives us unique insights into how different sectors interact with energy needs and the energy transition. This cross-sector perspective could be particularly useful in implementing the 'whole system' principle.

Our views on the individual principles:

1. Place-based approach: This is a crucial principle for Cambridgeshire. The region has diverse needs, from the urban centre of Cambridge to rural areas, agricultural heritage, peat and fenlands. A place-based approach will ensure that the unique characteristics of each area within Cambridgeshire are considered in energy planning and can benefit according to their need. It will be important to consider future economic development, climate risk and how this applies to new infrastructure and to ensure that the most vulnerable are supported for a Just transition. The Council's local knowledge and relationships with district councils will be crucial in implementing this principle effectively.

* A place-based approach recognises that energy systems are deeply interconnected with local communities and their specific needs, challenges and priorities. The RESP can be connected through Local Area Energy Planning (LAEP). Cambridgeshire is developing its LAEP, led by Cambridgeshire County Council, in partnership with its Local Authorities and it will value dialogue on important aspects of land use planning for energy infrastructure so this and growth can be managed sustainably and benefit communities and businesses. The LAEP will help the RESP to be tailored to the unique characteristics of each region and consider local factors such as demographics, economic development, climate risk and existing infrastructure, NESO can ensure that the plan is relevant, effective, and responsive to local concerns. This will help foster stronger relationships with local communities and stakeholders,

1. Whole system perspective:

Adopting a whole-system perspective is essential for understanding the complex interactions between different energy vectors and for ensuring that the RESP promotes a coordinated and integrated approach to decarbonisation. It can help to identify synergies and avoid inefficiencies, help to ensure that the energy system is resilient to disruptions and climate risk and can help to ensure that the benefits of energy transition are distributed fairly across different sectors and regions.

This principle is vital for effective energy planning. In Cambridgeshire, this could mean considering the interaction between the growing tech industry's energy needs, agricultural energy use, and business and residential requirements. It will also allow for integration of renewable energy sources like solar, wind and heat, which are key to the region. Cambridgeshire County Council has been working on integrating different aspects of the energy system. For instance, our smart energy grids at St. Ives and Babraham park and Rides bring together electricity generation, local demand, storage, EV charging for transport into a microgrid, behind the meter solution, which can support the grid and local resilience. In addition the Swaffham Prior Community Heat Project demonstrates decarbonisation of oil dependent, off gas rural communities through local solutions using solar power and geothermal solutions together to inform heat zoning for hard to treat rural areas.

1. Vision-led planning:

A clear long-term vision is necessary to provide a guiding framework for the development of the RESP. By setting ambitious but achievable goals, NESO can inspire stakeholders and drive progress towards a net-zero future. A clear vision will help to prioritise initiatives and allocate resources effectively. A shared vision can foster collaboration and support from various stakeholders. A long-term perspective is vital to help the RESP withstand short-term fluctuations and uncertainties.

This principle is important for Cambridgeshire, especially given its ambitions for growth and climate.

1. Proactive and adaptive approach:

A proactive approach is essential for ensuring that the RESP is able to anticipate future challenges and opportunities. By investing in infrastructure and technologies ahead of need, NESO can help to ensure a smooth and efficient transition to a clean energy economy. By identifying potential risks early on, NESO can develop strategies to mitigate them and this can lead to more efficient and cost-effective investments.

This principle is particularly relevant given the rapid pace of technological change, especially in sectors like cleantech. It will allow the region to plan for future needs while remaining flexible to new innovations or changes in demand. The Council has shown a proactive stance through its Climate ambitions to support local renewables infrastructure that supports local supply and demand through its investments in North Angle Solar Farm supplying clean electricity to the energy centre at Swaffham Prior to power its heat pumps. The RESP needs to also think about the benefits to local communities of the energy infrastructure or it will struggle with acceptance.

**Q2. Do you agree that the RESP should include a long-term regional vision, alongside a series of short-term and long-term directive net zero pathways? Please provide your reasoning.**

Yes, we agree that the RESP should include a long-term regional vision alongside short-term and long-term directive net-zero pathways.

A long-term regional vision provides a clear and ambitious goal for the region's energy future which can then be reflected into Local Growth Plans; Local Plans, LAEPS and climate ambitions to align ambitions, funding and attract investment. A series of pathways allows for flexibility in response to changing circumstances, such as technological advancements, policy changes, or economic conditions. Having both short-term and long-term pathways enables regular monitoring and evaluation of progress towards the overall vision. Clear pathways provide investors with greater certainty about the region's energy future, encouraging them to support projects and initiatives that contribute to the net-zero goals. Finally, the development of these pathways can foster collaboration and engagement with various stakeholders, ensuring that the RESP is responsive to local needs and priorities.

Cambridgeshire is likely to experience significant energy-related challenges and opportunities due to factors such as rapid growth to support its internationally significant biotech and tech clusters and the shift to a low carbon economy through the decarbonisation of transport and buildings. The RESP, with its focus on strategic planning, technical coordination, and place-based engagement, can provide a valuable framework for addressing these issues.

Some potential affects and implications for Cambridgeshire include:

1. The RESP could help identify specific areas within Cambridgeshire that require new or upgraded grid scale energy infrastructure to support community energy as well as wider investments in renewable energy generation, smart grids, energy storage facilities. Grid connections at the distribution and transmission level are very challenging and costly in Cambridgeshire and a major barrier to decarbonisation at scale.
2. The RESP can support economic development by ensuring that the region has a reliable energy infrastructure that facilitates access to energy supplies and promotes and prioritises local energy schemes for connections. This can attract businesses, create jobs, and boost the local economy.
3. By promoting and facilitating the adoption of renewable energy sources and energy-efficient technologies, the RESP can help Cambridgeshire reduce its carbon footprint and contribute to broader environmental goals.
4. The RESP's emphasis on place-based engagement can foster stronger relationships between local communities, energy providers, and government agencies which can lead to more informed decision-making and increased public support for energy initiatives.
5. The RESP can support local resilience to withstand disruptions, such as extreme weather events or supply chain issues.

However, to achieve the benefits, the RESP will face challenges including:

1. **Managing Divergent Interests:** Different stakeholders may have conflicting interests and priorities making it difficult to reach consensus on a shared vision.The RESP area has Cambridgeshire as only one of its areas.
2. **Future uncertainty:** The future is inherently uncertain, and predicting long-term trends can be challenging. This can make it difficult to agree on a vision that is both ambitious and realistic.
3. **Inequitable Distribution of Benefits:** Ensuring the benefits and costs of energy projects and policies provide a Just Transition and don’t create future ‘public’ costs elsewhere e.g fuel poverty; building in flood plains
4. **Trust:** Building trust among diverse stakeholders is difficult
5. **Limited Resources:** Limited funding and staffing throughout the system, for example in Local Authorities, could hinder progress. For example, NSIPs, development control.
6. **Political priorities:** Political pressures and changes can disrupt the process of developing a shared vision that is meaningful and not banal.

Overcoming these challenges requires effective leadership, open communication, and a willingness to compromise

**Q3. Do you agree there should be an annual data refresh with a full RESP update every three years? Please provide your reasoning.**

Yes, we agree that there should be an annual data refresh.

A full RESP update could be every three years but every 5 years may be better considering a full update could take up to a year to deliver.

However, we consider the vision should be sufficiently long term so as not to need updating regularly.

**Benefits of an annual data refresh and a full RESP update every three to 5 year include:**

* The energy landscape is rapidly evolving, with advancements in technology, changes in policy, and shifts in consumer behaviour. Annual data refreshes allow the RESP to stay current with these developments, ensuring it remains relevant and adaptable to changing circumstances.
  + Regular updates provide investors, policymakers and stakeholders with a clear and up-to-date picture of the region's energy needs, and with the most recent data and insights. This enables them to make informed decisions about energy investment and strategies, which can boost confidence in the region's energy future and attract investment.
  + By identifying emerging trends and potential challenges early on, the RESP can help mitigate risks and ensure that the region is well-prepared for future energy-related issues.
  + A 5-year update cycle allows for a comprehensive review of the RESP, ensuring that it aligns with long-term strategic goals, LAEPs and addresses emerging challenges. This would strike the balance between providing regular updates and maintaining efficiency. While annual data refreshes are essential, a full RESP update every five years can help optimise resource allocation and minimise costs.

While more frequent updates might be beneficial in some cases, a balance between agility and stability is important.

The general principle of annual data refreshes and RESP updates is sound, there are specific factors to consider for Cambridgeshire:

1. Growth: Given Cambridgeshire's rapid growth coordination of the full RESP updates with other key strategies and plans is essential. E.g Transport Plans, Local Growth plans, Local Plans.
2. LAEPS, NSIPs and Land Use Planning: Planning for and managing grid scale infrastructure investment needs long lead times. It will be best if LAEPs can align on a 5 yearly cycle (or whatever is agreed) and that there is strong coordination with Local Plans and consultations on NSIPs
3. Climate Change: As a coastal region, Cambridgeshire in the long term is particularly vulnerable to sea level rise. It is also an area that is low lying and dependent on pumped water drainage systems that require electricity. It has some vulnerabilities on surface water management and managing flood risk whilst also being one of the driest areas of the UK. The impacts of climate change on energy infrastructure both existing and future is very important.

**Q4. Do you agree the RESP should inform the identification of system need in the three areas proposed? Please provide your reasoning, referring to each area in turn.**

Yes, we agree that the RESP should inform the identification of system need in the three areas proposed and in addition includes the identification and prioritisation of community energy in the system or this will not happen. The following is an additional area for inclusion:

NEW area 4. Facilitates Community Energy

For an efficient energy system you need communities to engage and benefit from the system. Currently there are significant concerns that energy system transformation will benefit the few, ie those with the knowledge and funding to invest. This will prevent place-based benefits to be achieved. Greater thought and support from the RESP to support this sector will pay dividends and engagement with more communities will bring wider support for the system changes needed.

**1. Providing Consistent Assumptions:**

Consistent assumptions are crucial for accurate, coordinated and comparable network planning across different regions. Inconsistent assumptions can lead to discrepancies in load forecasting and investment planning, and hinder the development of a coherent regional energy strategy. Consistent assumptions can help identify system-wide trends and opportunities, improve the accuracy of load forecasting and inform Local Area Energy Planning.

**2. Setting Out the Spatial Context for Capacity Needs:**

A spatial view of demand and generation growth is essential for identifying areas where network capacity constraints may arise and for understanding the location-specific needs for network capacity and to inform forward planning. Other benefits include:

* Enables targeted network upgrades and expansions.
* Optimises investment decisions based on specific geographic needs.
* A spatial context can help optimise network planning, reduce costs, and ensure that energy infrastructure is developed where it is most needed.

**3. Informing Strategic Network Investment:**

The RESP should play a proactive role in identifying strategic investments that align with the long-term vision for the region. This can help accelerate decarbonisation and ensure that the energy system is prepared for future challenges. It should provide a long-term perspective on system needs, guiding strategic investments that anticipate future demand and support decarbonisation goals. Some benefits include:

* Ensures that network infrastructure is adequately prepared for future challenges.
* Promotes a more sustainable and resilient energy system.
* Aligns investment decisions with regional decarbonisation objectives.

**Q5. Do you agree technical coordination should support the resolution of inconsistencies between the RESPs and network company plans? Please provide your reasoning.**

Yes, we agree that technical coordination should support the resolution of inconsistencies between the RESPs, network company plans and Local Area Energy Plans.

* Ensuring consistency between the RESPs, network company plans and in addition Local Area Energy Plans is essential for achieving a coordinated and integrated energy system. Inconsistent plans can lead to inefficiencies, delays, and increased costs.
* Technical coordination can facilitate collaboration between different stakeholders, including network companies, local authorities, and other relevant parties, ensuring that their interests are balanced and that the energy system is developed in a fair and equitable manner.
* By resolving inconsistencies between the RESPs and network company plans, technical coordination can help to ensure that the energy system is robust and reliable.

It’s not clear the specified technical coordination would happen between NESO and networks, or whether local authorities have a role in technical coordination. Local authorities would like to feel represented in these conversations.

Ofgem should provide clarity on whether local authorities can and should play a role in the technical coordination conversations.

Local authorities can play a crucial role in technical coordination by:

1. **Providing Local Insights:** Local authorities have a deep understanding of their communities and can provide valuable insights into local energy needs, priorities, and challenges through Local Area Energy Planning.
2. **Facilitating Stakeholder Engagement:** Local authorities can facilitate engagement between various stakeholders, including community groups, businesses, and energy providers and build consensus and support for the energy transition if they are part of the process.
3. **Promoting Sustainable Development:** Local authorities promote sustainable development through land use planning, climate ambitions and other plans and strategies that can feed into the discussions.

**Specific ways local authorities could be involved in technical coordination include:**

* **Participating in RESP development:** Local authorities can contribute to the development of RESPs through Local Area Energy Plans being part of the RESP process.
* **Supporting community energy initiatives:** Local authorities can promote community-led energy projects that can help demand management and generation capacity .
* **Promoting energy efficiency:** Local authorities can implement policies and programs to promote energy efficiency in buildings, transportation, and industry.

**Q6. What are your views on the three building blocks which come together to form the RESP in line with our vision? Are there any key components missing?**

The three building blocks proposed for the RESP are:

1. **Modelling supply and demand:** This involves forecasting future energy demand patterns and identifying the mix of generation technologies needed to meet those demands.
2. **Identifying system need:** This involves assessing the infrastructure requirements needed to support the region's energy transition, including network capacity, storage, and other essential components.
3. **Technical coordination**: This involves ensuring that the RESP and network company plans are aligned and consistent, and that the region's energy system is developed in a coordinated and efficient manner.

These three building blocks provide a solid foundation for the RESP. However, there are a few additional components for consideration:

* The RESP should be developed with significant input from local communities and stakeholders. This can help to ensure that the plan is responsive to local needs and priorities, and that it is supported by the community.
* It should include an economic analysis to assess the costs and benefits of different energy pathways and investment options. This can help to identify the most cost-effective and efficient solutions.
* It should consider the impacts of climate change and incorporate strategies for mitigation and adaptation. This can help to ensure that the region's energy system is resilient to future climate-related challenges.
* Should address issues of equity and justice, ensuring that the benefits of the energy transition are distributed fairly across different communities and demographics.

**Q7. Do you agree with the framework of standard data inputs for the RESP? Please provide your reasoning.**

Overall, the proposed framework of standard data inputs for the RESP appears comprehensive and well-considered. It includes a wide range of relevant data sources, from national-level plans to local-level information, and it addresses the need for a more consistent and coordinated approach to data collection and analysis.

Key strengths of the proposed framework:

* The framework includes a broad range of data sources, reflecting the interconnected nature of the energy system.
* The use of standard data inputs can help to ensure consistency and comparability across different regions and over time. This allows for better identification of trends, patterns and areas for improvement. Standardised data reduces the time and effort required to collect and process data, improving the efficiency and accuracy of RESP.
* The framework allows for customisation to address regional-specific needs and variations.
* The use of transparent aggregation methods can help to build trust and confidence in the RESP.
* The framework encourages input and engagement from local actors, ensuring that the RESP is responsive to local needs and priorities. A common framework of data inputs can facilitate collaboration between different stakeholders, including local authorities, network companies, and researchers.
* A data-driven approach to energy planning helps ensure that decisions are based on evidence and not just assumptions or opinions.

Potential areas for further consideration:

* While the framework includes a range of data sources, it is important to ensure that the data is of high quality and reliable.
* There may be gaps in the data available for certain regions or sectors, which could limit the accuracy of the RESP's analysis.
* The collection and use of data should comply with relevant data privacy regulations.
* Mechanisms should be in place to facilitate the sharing of data between different stakeholders.
* Clear governance arrangements should be established to oversee the collection, management, and use of data.
* Where the plans and data are statutory functions of a local authority to gather and produce (e.g. local transport plans or local plans) the data is easy to provide because it’s available – a local plan might be complex to produce but its production is funded and resourced and would therefore be available to feed into RESP development processes.

The ease with which local authorities could input data into the RESP would depend on several factors, including:

* **Data availability and accessibility:** If the required data is already available in a digital format and easily accessible, it will be easier for local authorities to input it into the RESP. However, if the data is scattered across different sources or in paper format, it could be more challenging.
* **Data quality and consistency:** The quality and consistency of the data can also impact the ease of input. If the data is reliable, accurate, and in a standardized format, it will be easier to use.
* **Technical capabilities:** Local authorities will need to have the technical capabilities to collect, process, and input the data into the RESP. This may require training or investment in new technology.
* **Standardisation and guidance:** If the RESP has clear guidelines and standardized data formats, it will be easier for local authorities to understand what data is required and how to input it.
* **Support and resources:** If local authorities have access to adequate support and resources, such as training or technical assistance, it will be easier for them to input data into the RESP.

Overall, the ease of data input for local authorities would likely range from moderate to difficult, depending on the factors listed above. If the RESP is well-designed and supported, it could be made easier for local authorities to participate. However, some challenges may still arise due to variations in data availability, quality, and technical capabilities across different regions.

**Potential Challenges with Local Area Energy Plans (LAEPs) in Relation to the RESP**

LAEPs can play a vital role in informing and supporting the development of RESPs. However, there are several potential challenges that could arise:

1. **Data Availability and Quality:** LAEPs may vary in terms of data availability and quality. This can make it difficult to aggregate and compare data across different regions.
2. **Scope and Scale:** LAEPs may have different scopes and scales, making it challenging to integrate them into a regional-level plan.
3. **Alignment with RESP Objectives:** LAEPs may not always align with the broader objectives and priorities of the RESP. This can lead to inconsistencies and inefficiencies.
4. **Resource Constraints:** Local authorities may face resource constraints that limit their ability to develop and implement comprehensive LAEPs.
5. **Stakeholder Engagement:** LAEPs may not always involve a sufficient level of stakeholder engagement, which can lead to resistance or lack of support.

To address these challenges, it is important to:

* **Establish clear guidelines and standards:** Developing clear guidelines and standards for LAEPs can help ensure that they are consistent and comparable across different regions.
* **Facilitate data sharing:** Promoting data sharing between local authorities and other stakeholders can help improve data availability and quality.
* **Align LAEPs with RESP objectives:** Ensuring that LAEPs are aligned with the broader objectives of the RESP can help ensure that they contribute effectively to the region's energy transition.
* **Provide support and resources:** Local authorities may require additional support and resources to develop and implement LAEPs. This could include training, funding, and technical assistance.
* **Foster collaboration and engagement:** Encouraging collaboration and engagement between local authorities, network companies, and other stakeholders can help address potential conflicts and build consensus around energy planning.
* **Make LAEPs a statutory requirement** for Local Authorities to coordinate at the County level

**Q8. Do you have any suggestions for criteria to assess the credibility of the inputs to the RESP?**

Below are some potential criteria for assessing the credibility of inputs to the RESP.

1. Data Quality:

* Accuracy
* Reliability
* Completeness (all relevant aspects of the energy system)
* Up-to-date and relevant

2. Source Credibility:

* Source Reputation
* Expertise
* Independence

3. Methodology:

* Transparency of methodology
* Consistency

4. Alignment:

* Data Consistency with other data sources
* Alignment with RESP objectives

5. Sensitivity Analysis:

* How sensitive are the results of the RESP to changes in the input data
* Has the impact of uncertainty in the input data been assessed

**Q9. Do you agree with the framework for local actor support? Please provide your reasoning.**

We generally agree with the proposed framework for local actor support since it provides a comprehensive and balanced approach to assisting local authorities and other stakeholders in participating in the RESP development process.

The framework recognises that the needs of different regions may vary, and it allows for flexibility in the type and level of support provided. Other positives include:

* The ‘bank’ of energy planning good practice can foster knowledge sharing and collaboration among local actors.
* The training and support provided can help to equip local actors with the necessary skills and knowledge to participate effectively.
* The framework encourages coordination between local, regional, and national plans, ensuring a coherent and integrated approach to energy planning.
* The framework clearly defines the scope of NESO's involvement, avoiding overlap with existing local government responsibilities.

However, while this framework provides a solid foundation for local actor support, it's important to consider:

* While the framework does not provide direct funding for local projects, it could explore opportunities for leveraging external funding sources or facilitating partnerships to support local initiatives.
* The framework could consider ways to ensure that support is provided equitably to different regions and communities, particularly those with limited resources or capacity.
* The framework could explore ways to ensure the long-term sustainability of local actor support, beyond the initial implementation phase.

To effectively support local authorities in their participation in the RESP, NESO should consider the following:

* Offering a range of support options to address the diverse needs and capacities of different local authorities. This could include technical advice, training, funding, and access to resources.
* Providing clear guidelines and standards for local authorities to follow when developing their local energy plans. This can help ensure consistency and comparability across regions.
* Investing in capacity building programs to equip local authorities with the necessary skills and knowledge to participate effectively in the RESP process. This could include training on energy planning, data analysis, and stakeholder engagement.
* Exploring opportunities to provide financial incentives to local authorities to encourage their participation in the RESP and the development of local energy plans.
* Fostering collaboration and partnerships between local authorities, network companies, and other relevant stakeholders. This can help build trust, share knowledge, and identify synergies.

By considering these factors, NESO can provide the necessary support to enable local authorities to participate meaningfully in the RESP process and contribute to the development of effective and sustainable energy plans.

**GOVERNANCE QUESTIONS**

**Q10. Do you agree with the purpose of the Strategic Board? Please provide your reasoning.**

**Q11. Do you agree that the Strategic Board should include representation from relevant democratic actors, network companies and wider cross-sector actors in each region?**

**Q12. How should actors (democratic, network, cross-sector) be best represented on the board? Please provide your reasoning, referring to each in turn.**

Yes, we agree with the purpose of the strategic board. But the purpose and representation on the board are interdependent. For the board to meet its purposes, the representation on it must be fit for purpose.

**Positives:**

1. The Board is designed to be a platform for collaboration among key stakeholders, allowing them to discuss and navigate the complex trade-offs involved in energy system planning.
2. By providing recommendations and steers on key decisions, the Strategic Board can help guide the development of the RESP and ensure that it aligns with regional priorities.
3. The Board's role in facilitating transparency and oversight can help build public trust and confidence in the energy planning process.
4. The Board can help navigate complex trade-offs between different energy objectives, ensuring that the RESP is balanced and sustainable.
5. The Board's inclusion of local representatives ensures that the RESP reflects the unique needs and priorities of the region.

**Navigating trade offs**

Navigating trade-offs will be a particularly critical functions of strategic boards. Trade-offs are an inevitable part of the strategic energy planning process – local authorities expect that trade-off discussions are likely when it comes to exploring heat pumps vs heat networks, rural vs urban needs and land use challenges, competing for new industries like gigafactories and hydrogen vs electrification, to name a few.

Not everywhere can have everything at once so deciding what, where and when will be an important challenge to overcome. In order to have these conversations, members of the board must have a grounded understanding of the energy system, local energy plans and the needs of their areas – both practical needs and political needs. There is a risk of the board becoming overly politicised and struggling to reach consensus on trade-off discussions.

The interaction between local authorities and the Strategic Board could present several governance challenges:

1. **Conflicting Interests:** Local authorities may have conflicting interests or priorities that can hinder their ability to collaborate effectively with the Strategic Board. For example, local authorities may prioritise economic development or environmental protection, which can lead to disagreements over energy policies.
2. **Resource Constraints:** Local authorities face resource constraints, such as limited staff or funding, that can hinder their ability to participate fully in the Strategic Board and contribute to the RESP development process.
3. **Lack of Expertise:** Some local authorities may lack the necessary expertise or knowledge to participate effectively in the Strategic Board.
4. **Communication and Coordination:** Effective communication and coordination between local authorities and the Strategic Board are essential for successful collaboration.

To address these challenges, it is important to:

* **Establish Clear Roles and Responsibilities:** Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of local authorities within the Strategic Board and the RESP development process.
* **Provide Support and Resources:** Offer support and resources to local authorities, such as training, funding, or technical assistance, to help them overcome resource constraints and participate effectively.
* **Foster Open Communication:** Encourage open and transparent communication between local authorities and the Strategic Board to build trust and understanding.
* **Facilitate Conflict Resolution:** Establish mechanisms for resolving conflicts and disagreements that may arise between local authorities or between local authorities and the Strategic Board.
* **Promote Transparency and Accountability:** Ensure that the decision-making process of the Strategic Board is transparent and accountable to the public.

We agree that the Strategic Board should include representation from relevant democratic actors, network companies, and wider cross-sector actors in each region.

* + A diverse range of stakeholders can bring valuable insights and perspectives to the energy planning process, ensuring that the RESP reflects the needs and interests of different communities and sectors.
  + The presence of democratic actors on the Strategic Board can enhance the legitimacy of the RESP and ensure that it is accountable to the public.
  + Network companies can provide valuable technical expertise and insights into the feasibility and implementation of energy projects.
  + Wider cross-sector actors, such as businesses, social and environmental organisations, can help connect the RESP with local communities and ensure that their needs and priorities are considered.

While the proposed composition of the Strategic Board is generally sound, it's important to consider:

* **Board Size:** Ensuring that the board is not too large to function effectively can be a challenge. Careful consideration should be given to the number of representatives from each sector.
* **Conflict of Interest:** It's important to address potential conflicts of interest among board members, particularly those representing network companies or other businesses with financial interests in the energy sector.
* **Representation of Vulnerable Groups:** The board should strive to represent a diverse range of stakeholders, including vulnerable groups and marginalised communities.

**Exclusion of lower tier authorities**

Cambridgeshire County Council also recognise the need for a lean and effective strategic board, but consider that representation at County and District would provide benefits

The RESP cannot become something that is done to district tier authorities as they produce local spatial plans. They must be brought along the journey for RESP and be able to meaningfully contribute, like ours are doing in the LAEP.

**Democratic Actors:**

* **Tiered Representation:** We recommend considering a tiered approach where larger or more representative local authorities have direct representation on the board, while smaller authorities may participate through working groups or other mechanisms.
* **Geographical Balance:** We recommending ensuring that the board represents a diverse range of geographic areas within the region to reflect local variations in energy needs and priorities.
* **Rotation:** We recommend considering rotating board members to ensure that a variety of perspectives are represented over time.

**Network Companies:**

* **Direct Representation:** Network companies should have direct representation on the board to provide technical expertise and ensure that the RESP is aligned with network planning.
* **Balanced Representation:** The number of network company representatives should be balanced with other stakeholders to avoid undue influence.
* **Conflict of Interest:** Mechanisms should be in place to address potential conflicts of interest and ensure that network company representatives act in the best interests of the region.

**Wider Cross-Sector Actors:**

* **Targeted Representation:** Focus on representing cross-sector actors with significant interactions with the energy system or a strong interest in the RESP's outcomes.
* **Community Engagement:** Consider mechanisms for involving community-based organisations or other grassroots groups to ensure that the perspectives of local residents are represented.
* **Rotation:** Rotate representatives from wider cross-sector actors to ensure that a variety of perspectives are represented over time.

**General Considerations:**

* **Board Size:** The board should be of a manageable size to ensure effective decision-making and avoid undue influence by any particular group.
* **Diversity:** The board should strive to be diverse in terms of gender, ethnicity, age, and other relevant factors.
* **Training and Development:** Provide training and development opportunities for board members to ensure that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to participate effectively.
* **Conflict Resolution:** Establish mechanisms for resolving conflicts and disagreements among board members, ensuring that the board can function effectively despite differing perspectives.
* **Transparency and Accountability:** Ensure that the board's decision-making process is transparent and accountable to the public.

By considering these factors, the Strategic Board can be composed in a way that effectively represents the interests of all relevant stakeholders and contributes to the development of a successful and sustainable RESP.

**BOUNDARY QUESTIONS**

**Q13. Do agree with the adaptations proposed for Option 1? Please provide your reasoning.**

Option 1 proposes a blended model for England, combining STB and ITL1 regions. While this approach offers certain benefits, it also raises some potential concerns for Cambridgeshire.

Arguments in Favor of Option 1 for Cambridgeshire:

Option 1 is co-terminus with the strategic transport areas and Cambridgeshire currently sits within this.

The Greater Net Zero Hub as aligned its governance with the Strategic transport areas and Cambridgeshire sits within the GSENZH NW Regional Advisory Board which fits with option 1.

While Option 1 offers a reasonable approach for Cambridgeshire, it is essential to carefully consider the potential challenges and trade-offs. The decision should be based on a thorough evaluation of factors such as:

* The specific energy challenges and priorities of Cambridgeshire should be considered.
* The ability of the proposed RESP to effectively govern and implement energy strategies should be assessed.
* The availability and quality of data for the proposed RESP should be evaluated.

**Q14. Do you agree with our assessment that Option 1 is a better solution than Option 2? Please provide your reasoning.**

Yes, as this aligns transport and energy planning areas.