



# WMCA Net Zero Neighbourhoods Blog

## December 2024

### ***Looking Back, Moving Forward: Net Zero Neighbourhoods in 2024***

As we wrap up 2024, it's time to reflect on what has been a transformative year for our Net Zero Neighbourhoods (NZN) programme. While the journey hasn't been without its challenges, we've made significant strides in turning our ambitious vision into reality.

#### ***Building Momentum***

One of our biggest achievements this year was securing additional capital investment for six new neighbourhoods. While the funding may not have matched our highest aspirations, it marked a crucial starting point and caught the attention of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ).

Much of our year has been spent navigating the complex landscape of local government processes - from legal requirements to procurement procedures - as we work to transform funding into action.

#### ***Learning and Growing Together***

We've maintained our commitment to knowledge-sharing throughout the year. Thanks to our partners, particularly Keele University, we've offered valuable training opportunities covering heat networks, energy markets, smart systems, and place-based decarbonisation. These sessions have been vital in building the expertise needed to drive our programme forward.

Understanding the importance of measuring our impact, we've developed a comprehensive programme logic model. This framework will help us demonstrate that place-based interventions deliver benefits far beyond carbon reduction and energy bill savings - crucial evidence for securing the future of similar initiatives.

#### ***Spotlight on Brockmoor: Where Theory Meets Practice***

Work in Brockmoor, led by Dudley Council & EQUANS has been particularly illuminating. The performance-led approach to retrofit revealed surprising findings - including failed cavity wall insulation in homes rated EPC C - allowing the team to implement necessary remedial works on many homes before retrofit works could begin.

The delivery team has been endlessly creative in finding additional funding and we have made the most of Social Housing Decarbonisation and Decency Funding already.

Continuous consistent engagement has been at the heart of our success here. We've learned that bringing value and fun to events (yes, even alpacas!) helps build meaningful connections with residents. A heat pump demonstration van helped address concerns and misconceptions, while our end of year show home event attracted over 100 visitors, giving residents tangible examples of proposed improvements.

\*Alpacas at NZN Brockmoor community engagement event: a hit with the neighbourhood!



## Challenges and Triumphs

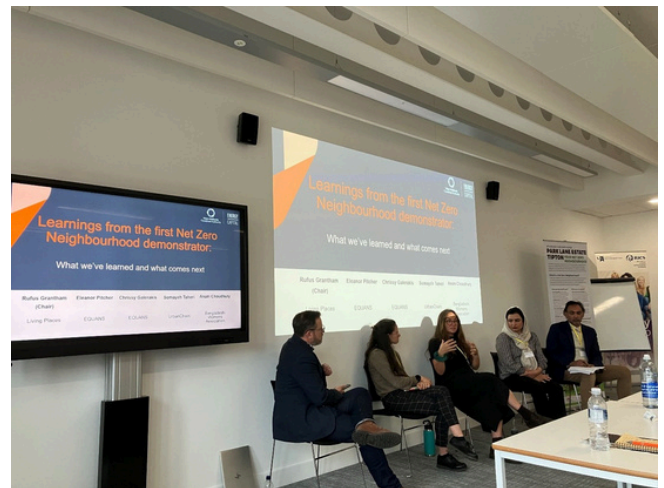
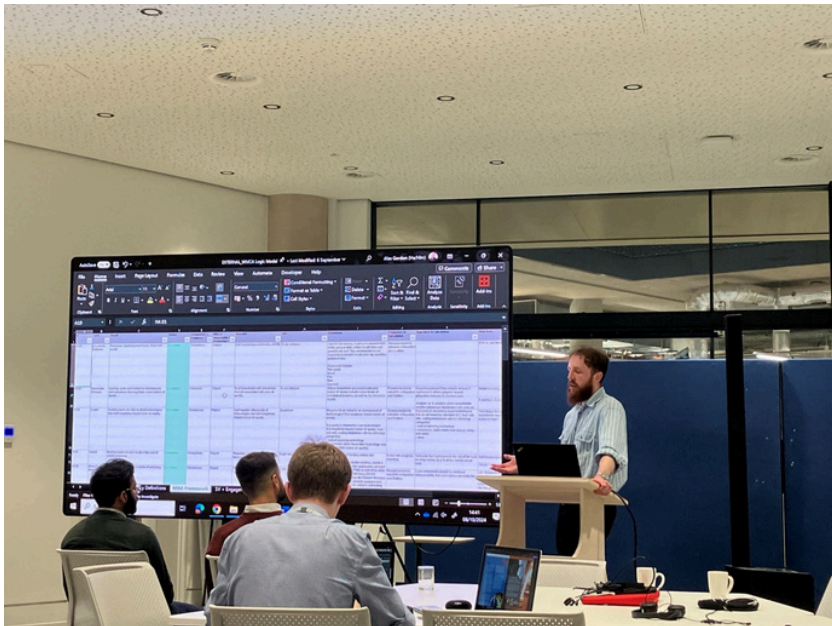
*The strength of our team and the NZN teams at each of the 7 local authority has been our greatest asset. Watching people from diverse backgrounds unite under a shared vision has been truly inspiring. However, we've learned valuable lessons about the pace of change in local government and the importance of realistic resource allocation. A special mention must go to our local authority officers. These dedicated individuals are the true engines of our programme, advocating for these projects while juggling countless other responsibilities. Their commitment, often beyond their formal responsibilities, has been remarkable.*

## Looking Ahead to 2025

Next year promises to be pivotal for the programme. All seven of our projects will enter their delivery phase, with extensive co-design and engagement activities planned. In Brockmoor, we'll see the completion of retrofit works and the delivery of co-designed local travel and green space improvements. We will also learn from the Brockmoor's new relationships with peer-2-peer trading and home energy optimisation providers – which will allow us to test whether revenue can be generated to strengthen the resident offer. With programme funding scheduled to conclude in March 2026, our WMCA NZN team will balance on-the-ground delivery support with securing future funding. Our goal is to ensure these vital neighbourhood initiatives can continue beyond the current funding window. As we close out 2024, we're proud of our progress but mindful of the work ahead. The coming year will be crucial in demonstrating how community-led, place-based approaches can drive meaningful climate action while improving lives across the West Midlands.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our journey this year. Here's to an impactful 2025!

## NZN 2024 in pictures!



For more on West Midlands Net Zero Neighbourhoods, programme resources and materials visit our webpage

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