

KEEPING IT LOCAL?

The levelling up agenda is increasingly important post Covid

H1	ACT	PLAN	TRACK	PARK	OPP	THR	NEU
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On coming to power a year ago, [the stated intent of the Conservative Party](#) was to 'level up' every part of the country: from our "great towns and cities" to our "rural and coastal areas".

We know that those places that are in need of levelling up have suffered particularly heavily through the pandemic, and are likely to experience a disproportionate impact from Brexit.

The recent [Comprehensive Spending Review](#) gave some clues to the approach that the government appears to be taking. It included the [announcement of a £4 billion Fund for England](#) to "invest in local infrastructure that has a visible impact on people and their communities"; a new [National Infrastructure Strategy](#) based around the three central objectives of "economic recovery, levelling up and unleashing the potential of the Union, and meeting the UK's net zero emissions target by 2050"; and a refreshed Green Book.

As Cambridge University's Bennett Institute points out, this new fund, [the Fund for England](#), will continue to have its purse-strings held by central government. It also joins an already crowded landscape of existing funding streams, such as the Towns Fund and the Future High Streets Fund. Like the Towns Fund and the Future High Streets Fund, the mechanism for distributing the funding is one of organisation's submitting bids for approval by central government.

[Local devolution has also been a priority for successive governments](#). Yet, even here, the agenda is being shaped by central government - which is encouraging combined authorities, metro mayors and re-organisations to strip out layers of local government and to improve co-ordination of local services. Government is encouraging their take up with 'devolution deals'.

BUILD BACK BETTER

New and existing buildings will be more energy efficient

H2	ACT	PLAN	TRACK	PARK	OPP	THR	NEU
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The government has set out its plans and timeframe for its new Future Homes Standard which aims to ['radically improve' the energy performance of new homes, making them 'zero carbon ready' by 2025](#). As a first step, from 2021 all new homes will be expected to produce 31 per cent lower carbon emissions; and within four years, new housing must produce 75-80 per cent less carbon emissions than allowed under the current regulations.

Existing homes will also be subject to higher standards – with a 'significant improvement' on the standard for extensions, making homes warmer and reducing bills. Replacements and repairs will also have to be more energy efficient.

Meanwhile the government has also announced a consultation on higher performance targets for non-domestic buildings, which will also have to be 'zero carbon ready' by 2025.

Its plans include a new requirement for additional ventilation and indoor air quality monitoring in high-risk non-domestic buildings such as offices and gyms, reducing the risk of any potential infections being spread indoors.

[The new measures will not just apply to new-builds but to existing buildings](#) where relevant refurbishment works are being undertaken. Another area of focus is capture and reuse of heat which is often released in the outflows of a building through extraction and ventilation. The increased integration of smart building technologies in the build process will drive efficiency in general but will also allow users of spaces with periodic use to control all building services remotely only using these when needed.

FURTHER READING