

Survey

# How are cities going to afford low carbon infrastructure?

February 2021



 PyTerra



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## Background and Purpose

This short survey was commissioned by PyTerra Limited and sponsored by the Future Economy Network in the last quarter of 2020.

A mutual interest in the funding of local low carbon initiatives raised a fundamental question which is becoming amplified across media. If cities are to meet Net Zero targets as early as 2030, and the public purse is increasingly being stretched as a result of the pandemic, who is going to pay?

This survey, with a focus on organisations based in the Bristol area, contributes to this conversation.

## Methodology

The survey was set up using SurveyMonkey with a questionnaire which would only require a few minutes of response. It went live on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> November 2020 and closed on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> December 2020. The primary channels for engaging with potential respondents was through the Future Economy Network, Bristol Green Capital Partnership, LinkedIn and direct mailing.

Most of the 13 questions required simple multiple choice answers. However, the final two questions provided participants with the opportunity to give more thoughtful responses.

The respondent group's profile was broad and included the following sectors:

- Conferencing 4%
- Consultancy 23%
- Finance 12%
- Health 4%
- Legal 8%
- Manufacturing 4%
- Media 4%
- Non-profit 4%
- Property 4%
- Public sector 8%
- Technology 23%
- Travel 4%

## Results

There were a total of 41 respondents. A summary of the results is given at Appendix A.

These results will be used to stimulate further conversation, particularly with companies who are operational in the Bristol area.

## Conclusions

Although the respondent group is relatively small, the results gave some clear messages:

- There was overwhelming concern about the UK's likelihood of achieving its climate change goal of cutting greenhouse gas emissions to almost zero by 2050.
- Respondents generally thought that businesses have a duty to financially support the local communities in which their operations are based – more so than where customers are located.
- Most organisations considered offsetting some of their carbon footprint by funding local low carbon projects.
- Respondents thought that the most effective route for business funding of local low carbon projects was balanced between sponsorship and impact investing, with philanthropic giving scoring less. The two largest groups, Consultancy and Technology, showed a slight difference in preferences here. The former leaned more towards impact investing and less towards sponsorship with philanthropy in the middle. The latter also favoured impact investing, but philanthropy was the least preferred with sponsorship in the middle. The overall result was therefore swayed by the other sectors favouring the sponsorship route. Unsurprisingly, the Finance group supported impact investing, followed by sponsorship and then philanthropy.

When asked more generally about what the benefits might be to their organisation from having a closer connection with local communities, the most common responses included:

- Positive company image.
- Promoting sustainability.
- Fulfilling a moral obligation.
- Staff retention and attraction.

Some of the more novel answers were:

- Synergistic multiplier of business activities to create regenerative business ecosystems.
- Visibility to institutional investors.
- More sustainable suppliers based on locality.
- Indirect revenue opportunities with local businesses and landlords.

## About the Sponsors

**PyTerra Ltd** (<https://www.pyterra.co.uk>) is a market-creating business which is combining emerging technologies with innovative business models in order to match corporate sponsorship with low carbon projects. PyTerra's goal is to connect local communities to local economic capital in order to build the infrastructure which gives them resilience against environmental and social challenges.

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**The Future Economy Network** (<https://www.thefutureeconomynetwork.co.uk/>) is one of the UK's longest standing sustainable business network, a multi-disciplinary organisation at the forefront of environmental and social sustainability. Together with Future Leap, it's first UK carbon neutral hub, weekly sustainability-focused events, and a strong communication strategy, the Future Economy Network aims to empower change-makers with the right knowledge, infrastructure, and tools to accelerate their sustainability journey and progress towards carbon neutrality.

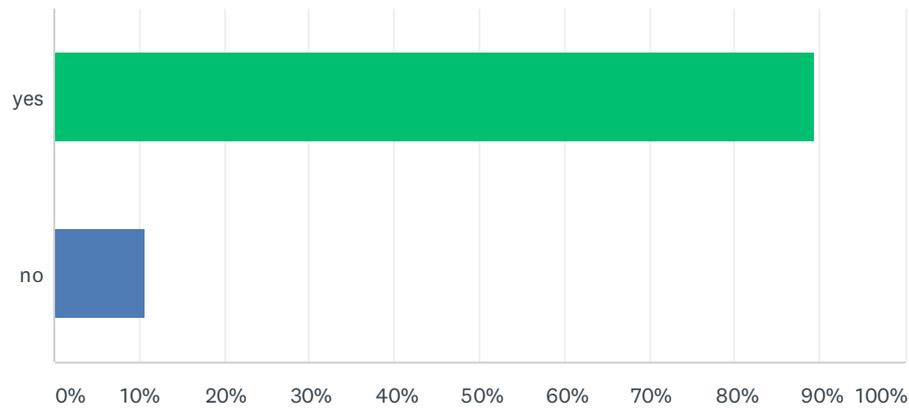
Contact: Davina Gilbert, Events Manager  
davinagilbert@thefutureeconomygroup.co.uk

# Appendix A

## Survey Results

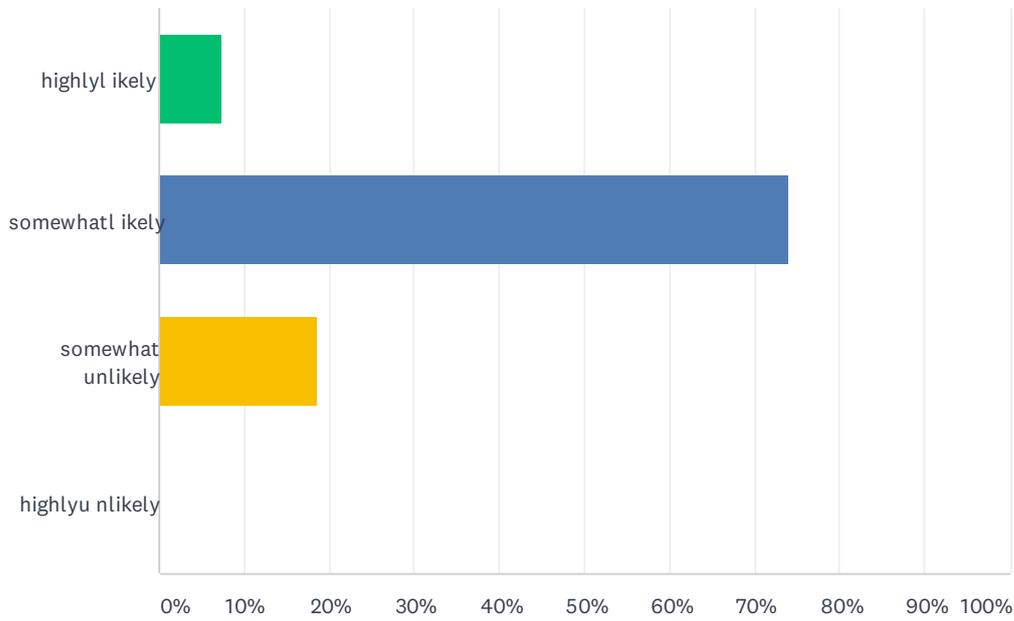
Note that questions 1 and 2 are not included here as they were solely concerned with respondent details and authority to use information.

Q3 Do you personally feel concerned about whether the UK is likely to achieve its climate change goal of cutting greenhouse gas emissions to almost zero by 2050? See these charts for context.



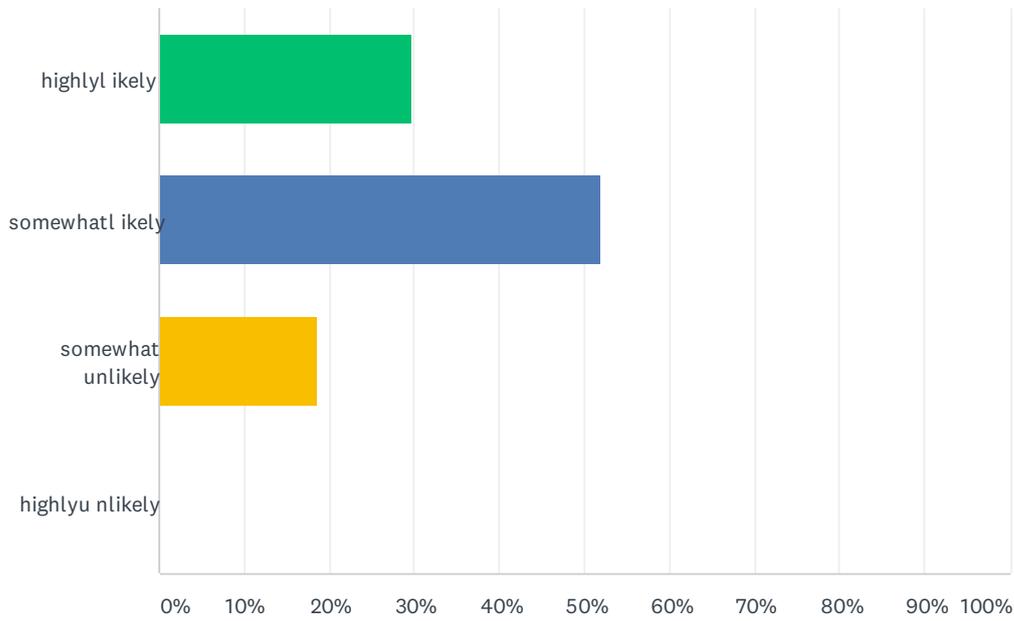
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
yes	89.29%
no	10.71%
TOTAL	

### Q4 Do you think customers in general are influenced in their purchasing decisions by the support shown by businesses for climate change?



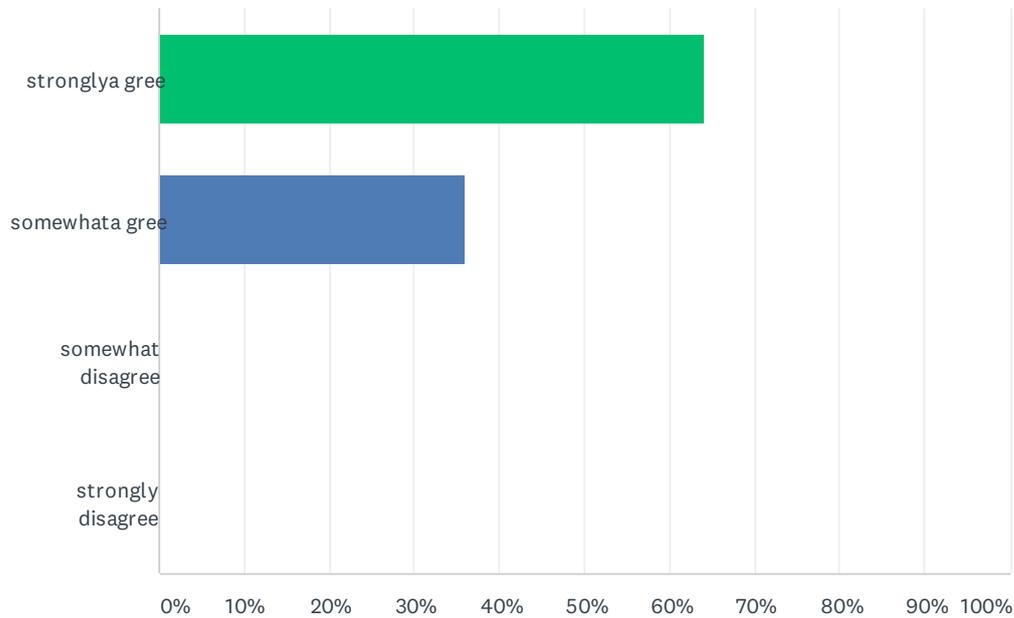
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
highly likely	7.41%
somewhat likely	74.07%
somewhat unlikely	18.52%
highly unlikely	0.00%
TOTAL	

### Q5 Do you think shareholders in general are influenced in their investment choices based on the support shown by businesses for climate change?



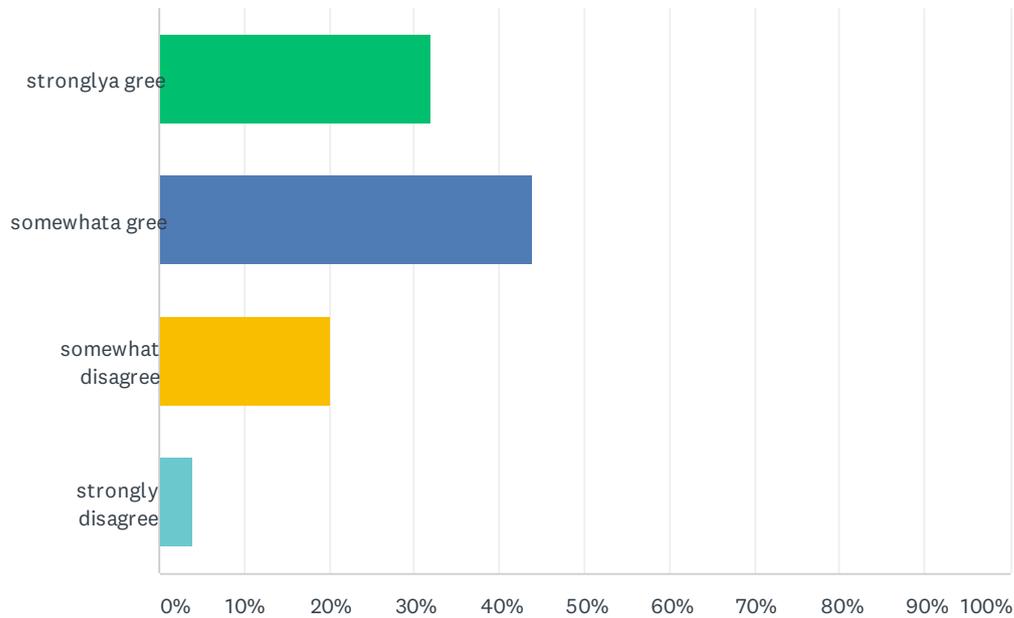
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
highly likely	29.63%
somewhat likely	51.85%
somewhat unlikely	18.52%
highly unlikely	0.00%
TOTAL	

### Q6 Do you personally think businesses have a duty to financially support the local communities in which their operations are based?



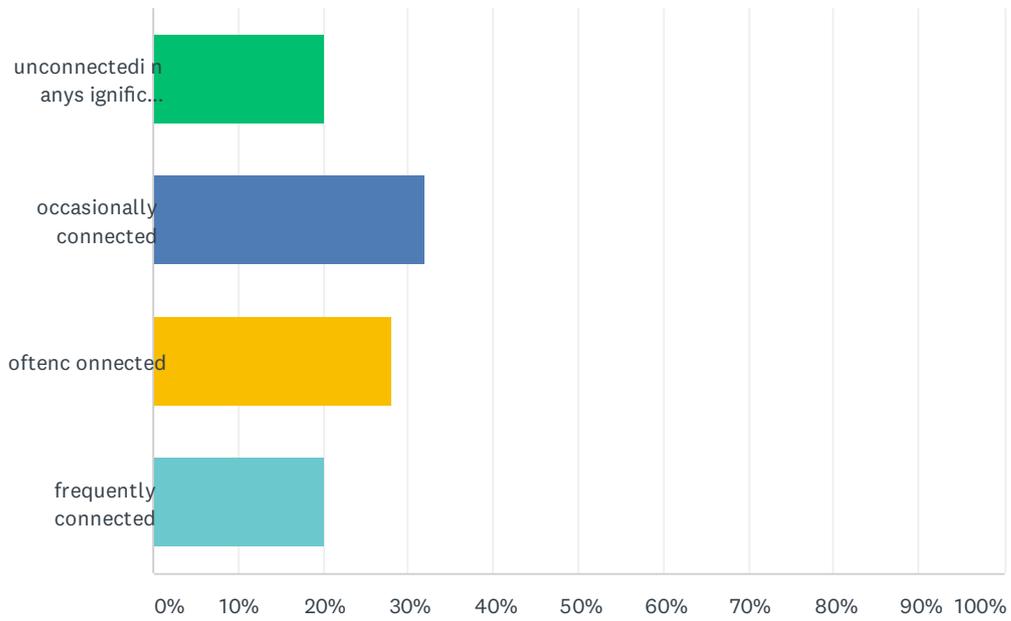
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
strongly agree	64.00%
somewhat agree	36.00%
somewhat disagree	0.00%
strongly disagree	0.00%
TOTAL	

### Q7 Do you personally think businesses have a duty to financially support the local communities in which their customers are based?



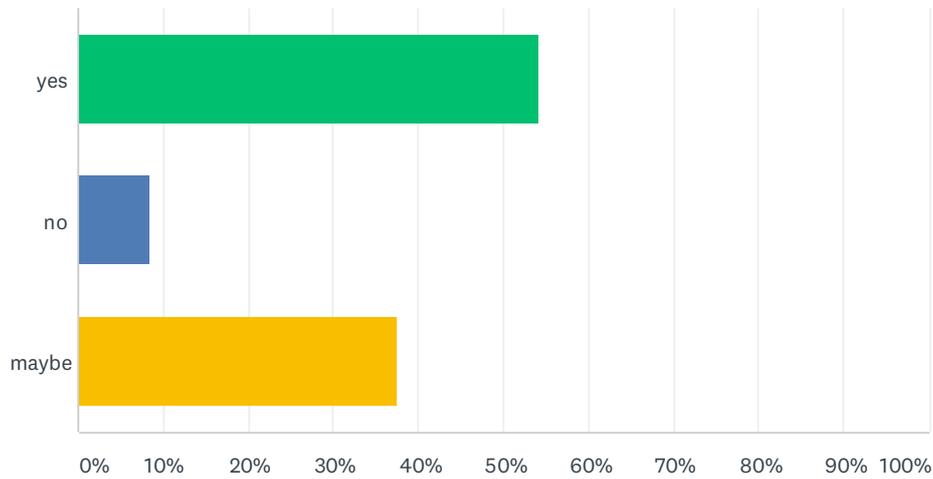
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
strongly agree	32.00%
somewhat agree	44.00%
somewhat disagree	20.00%
strongly disagree	4.00%
TOTAL	

### Q8 How would you describe the relationship between your organisation and local communities in your main city of operation?



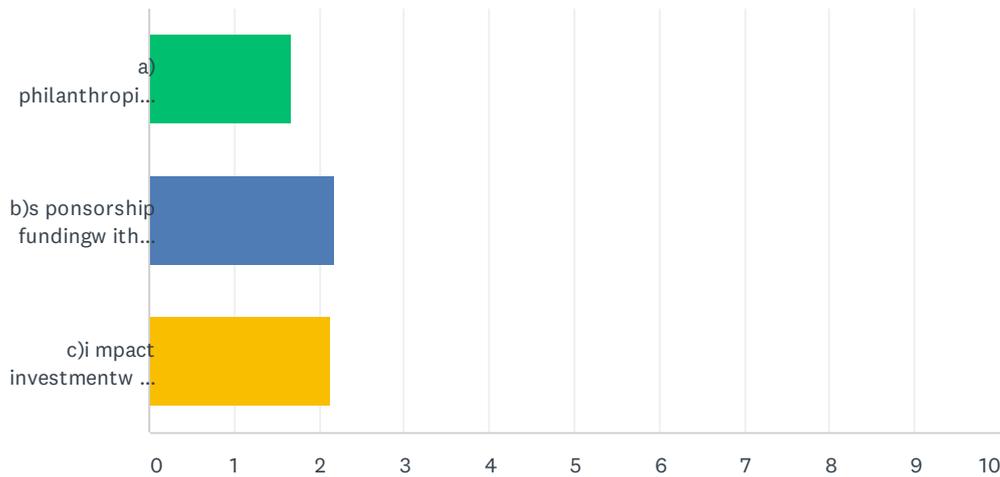
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
unconnected in any significant way	20.00%
occasionally connected	32.00%
often connected	28.00%
frequently connected	20.00%
TOTAL	

### Q9 Might your organisation consider offsetting some of its carbon footprint by funding local low carbon projects?



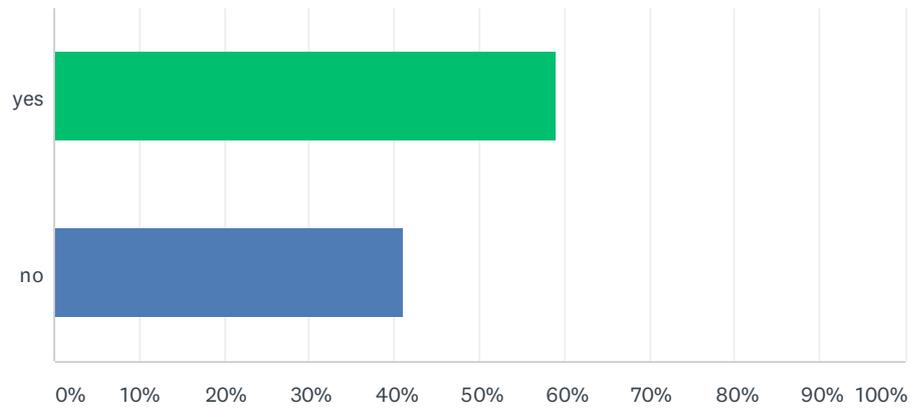
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
yes	54.17%
no	8.33%
maybe	37.50%
TOTAL	

Q10 There are 3 basic ways that organisations can give funds to local low carbon projects. If your organisation was giving financial support, how would you rank the options in terms of which is in its best interests?



	1	2	3
a) philanthropic donations with no direct return to the organisation	13.64%	40.91%	45.45%
b) sponsorship funding with marketing opportunities provided to the organisation	40.91%	36.36%	22.73%
c) impact investment with the organisation receiving a financial return	45.45%	22.73%	31.82%

### Q11 Does your organisation already provide financial support to local community projects of any sort?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
yes	59.09%
no	40.91%
TOTAL	

## Q12 What benefits might there be to your organisation from having a closer connection with local communities? List up to 3 benefits below in order of importance.

### RESPONSES

Higher impact potential from a green transition perspective	Visibility to institutional investors
Strengthened partnership opportunities	Staff retention and attraction
Higher innovation levels	Carbon footprint
Positive company image	Greener cities
Community economic health	Local brand
Promoting sustainability	Commercial marketing
Social responsibility	Social value
Values alignment	More sustainable suppliers based on locality
Fulfilling a moral obligation	Access to a more diverse work pool
Positive feedback from community	Better staff retention
Moral support from the communities to help the organisation achieve its vision	Networking and relationship building
Better acceptance of the organisation's products/services	Trade off opportunities
Deriving a new sense of purpose	Local pride
Personal connections that can lead to business opportunities	Growth
Improving the communities we live and work in	Brand Image
improving public image for the company	CSR obligations
Director's satisfaction	More stable future through reducing climate change impact
Employee happiness	Positive PR
Embedding in the community	Relationship building
Be a good community partner	Identification of investment priorities
Positive economic returns	Management of risk
Resilience	CSR
Community rep	Attract like minded staff
Sustainable investment	Benefit to team working
As a non-profit, if we have a mutually beneficial partnership - we can in turn raise our income streams and regular donations	Better applicants for jobs
Improve awareness of our work	Feedback on improving impact on local biodiversity
Synergistic multiplier of all our activities to create regenerative business ecosystems	Good PR
Case studies proving the power of the FairShares commons incorporation	Indirect revenue opportunities with local businesses and landlords
Insights into different end user market	Talent acquisition

## Q13 Do you have any further ideas about how your organisation can help its community develop the infrastructure needed to become carbon net zero?

### RESPONSES

By tapping into existing data, from which insights and knowledge are derived to support effective and impactful decision making towards a net zero carbon future.

Direct investment.

Showcasing example projects.

Supporting community initiatives with time and advice.

Connecting people.

Collaborating with other like-minded local organisations and representatives of the local community.

In practice, we are net-negative because our company's main function is to expedite the building of clean energy infrastructure. We may eventually make tweaks to further improve our environmental effect, like green banking.

We are professional services, so our scope is quite narrow being energy selection and financial contributions. I specifically assist in solar development work so can offer my services in that respect.

We continue raising awareness of the imperative to have incorporations including all capitals and stakeholders in governance, not just investors; and sharing the wealth generated with all; and designed to multiply all capitals, not just money.

I think there should be an increasing focus on supply chains. Also offering local employment opportunities.

Participate in "open doors" events to share lessons learned.

Generating awareness.

We try to win Government funds to award to business to develop low carbon solutions.

Working from home for all employees where possible to reduce cars/transport emissions.

Lead the development of proptech solutions plus energy buying strategies that can help commercial landlords and tenants achieve carbon neutrality alongside cost savings.

Creating an investment fund for local low carbon projects.

