

## Report on Exeter City Futures Workshop Programme

### 1. Background

In August 2022 the ECF board agreed to a programme of themes workshops. The purpose of each of these workshops was to engage local policy makers and system leaders in a joint discussion on the key topics to assess to what extent we have shared strategies towards Net Zero and to identify priorities for shared action to create the right conditions for systemic change.

The workshops were for specifically invited people and the set –up of the workshops was designed to allow participants to find out more about the issues and to discuss their concerns and views which were then collated for presentation to the Exeter City Futures Board and, if appropriate, subsequently to their constituent organisations for future action.

The four workshops completed are:

1. **Exeter Transport Strategy:** Review of current strategy: to what extent will this get us to net zero: what else might we need to consider?
2. **Exeter Electric Vehicle Charging:** Developing a clear strategy for the city: facilitator Exeter City Futures
3. **Commercial District Heating Network:** A proposal for Exeter City Futures partners and discussion on appetite and viability
4. **The role Hydrogen** could play in decarbonising Exeter: An opportunity to understand the potential that taking a strategic approach to hydrogen production and distribution could offer the city

Detailed reports are appended to this report.

### 2. Overview of the Workshops

Over 120 delegates have taken part in a series of events held by Exeter City Futures over the past few months. These workshops were for specifically invited people from ECF organisations along with leaders from the Exeter Place Board and the business sector.

Those invited included City and County Councillors, Senior Officers, Exeter City Futures Partners (Exeter City Council, Devon County Council, University of Exeter, Exeter College, and Global City Futures) and other City Leaders.

These events were designed to allow participants to find out more about the issues and to discuss their concerns and views about how the particular issues might be resolved to enable the city to deliver on its Net Zero ambitions. The sessions covered the themes of transport; electric vehicle charging, hydrogen and district heating networks.

The Transport workshop looked at the Exeter transport strategy and identified some key gaps in current policy such as tackling Freight Vehicles. ECC's Air Quality Action Plan (2019) identified that freight vehicles represented the second largest percentage of traffic along

key corridors in and out of the city. Despite this, they are repeatedly neglected from transport policy, with limited consensus on how decarbonisation efforts will tackle this area and concluded that placing priority on this area is vital, as meeting net-zero targets necessitates decarbonisation across all areas of transport.

This session also identified the need for accelerating the Electric Vehicle Transition. Whilst there is an ambition to provide an extensive network of charge points, e-bikes and to support the electrification of bus fleets, there is not yet a document that provides specific targets and milestones. We explored this further in a subsequent workshop where we highlighted the scale of infrastructure required and heard about three commercial companies who had very different on street residential charging solutions. The solutions shared were:

- **Chargelight:** On-street charging utilising existing lamp posts.
- **Gul-e:** A cable channel that is inset into the footway, enabling those without driveways to charge their EVs on the road outside their home, using their own electricity supply.
- **Co Charger:** A charger sharing app that allows those with home chargers to get paid for sharing their chargers with other EV users.

An updated EV Strategy consultation has recently been published by Devon County Council [devon.cc/ev-strategy-consultation](https://devon.cc/ev-strategy-consultation) asking for feedback on their plans for how the transition to zero-emission transport will be facilitated.

The third event focused on the importance of Commercial District Heating Networks in decarbonising the City and delegates heard from 1Energy about their proposition to apply for government funding to build a network in Exeter.

The final event on hydrogen helped people to gain a shared understanding of the part that green hydrogen could play in the decarbonisation of energy in the city and included presentations from four companies on how they are already developing hydrogen solutions and innovation in Devon. The companies and their solutions included:

- **Green Emerald:** Site-based electrolyzers for industrial processes
- **Two Drifters Distillery:** Developing Carbon Capture and Storage solutions in Devon
- **Centrax GT:** Developing gas turbines to operate from hydrogen
- **Carlton Power:** Partnering with a local solar farm to develop a green hydrogen electrolysis site

Recommendations coming from this event include a proposal to establish a working group to create a hydrogen strategy and delivery pathway, to identify the key sectors that will drive hydrogen demand and supply in the city in the period up to 205 and the creation of a local energy network, identifying and connecting local businesses operating in hydrogen, to generate a cluster that will attract inward investment.

### 3. Workshop Recommendations

**Exeter Transport Strategy: Review of current strategy: to what extent will this get us to net zero: what else might we need to consider?**

#### Priority Actions Identified by stakeholders

Stakeholders identified 5 priority actions based on their expected impact and also identified actions that they believed could be implemented relatively easily and provide “quick wins” for the city. These included:

1. Improving the integration within the Public Transport Network, both in terms of improved routes and integrated ticketing.
2. Development of a zero carbon, city-owned bus company.
3. Establish intermodal freight hubs to reduce LGVs / traditional deliveries within the city centre.
4. Establish a Workplace Parking Levy to both disincentivise car use and support investment in alternative modes.
5. Support of the development of an Exeter City Metro (improving local rail connectivity and frequency) to improve connectivity between key locations.

#### Priority Quick wins identified by stakeholders

- Develop a Community Cycle Hub to facilitate active travel into the city centre.
- Expand Business Travel Planning to support employers to encourage behavioural change.
- Improve school travel to reduce the use of private cars for the school run.
- Reduce parking at the university to provide an additional disincentive to the private car.

#### Additional Recommendations from City Science

We recommend the actions are developed using the Mini Business Case framework and then prioritised to be progressed further.

We also feel there is value in progressing the following actions that were not identified by workshop participants as priority:

- Traffic Circulation Plan and pedestrianisation options.
- Car Club spaces.
- Mobility Hubs.

Identification of locations for these initiatives could be progressed relatively quickly through desk-based studies and delivery plans phased to maximise deliverability.

## Exeter Electric Vehicle Charging: Developing a clear strategy for the city: facilitator Exeter City Futures

### Summary

In closing, the group's active engagement resulted in many positive conversations and formed nascent ideas related to the collaborative development of EV charging infrastructure in Exeter. ECF's session further provided a prime opportunity for networking and offered clarity on the solutions presented. Overall:

- An overarching theme in the presentations and in the workshop recognised that the City requires a range of charging infrastructure solutions to support the scale of uptake required. A one-size-fits-all response will not suffice.
- Increasing the range of solutions available to the public in the "charging ecosystem" is essential to remove barriers to EV adoption.
- The session highlighted that there are affordable charging infrastructure options which can be rolled out at no cost or low cost to the Council, some of which can offer income to the Council.
- The group exhibited enthusiasm for undertaking collaborative action research in the City, to test out the future demand for the various solutions.

### Recommendations

- DCC and ECC could establish a working group to enable the collaborative and expedited progression of EV charging infrastructure roll out. The working group could enhance collaboration by including Community Action Groups, charging solution providers and other key stakeholders amongst its members.
- Building on the specific solutions explored in the session, the working group should seek to identify other potential solutions that can be rolled out at low or no cost to the council, or that generate income.
- Furthermore, the group could explore the potential for the charging providers to conduct an analysis of the City at little or no cost. An example is the analysis provided in Chargelight's presentation that identified the locations of "charging deserts" in Exeter.
- The working group should aim to develop a charging programme to manage the roll out of a curated and diverse selection of infrastructure that fills charging deserts and meets the needs of residents, commuters and visitors.
- The working group should identify suitable pilot sites and engage early with the private sector to run and evaluate pilots for various EV charging options.
- The working group should engage early with residents to (1) understand where charging infrastructure is required and (2) enable resident buy-in to encourage the later success of installed solutions.
- The group could also liaise with car park owners/operators, universities, hospitals and private car park operators to explore potential charging sites.
- More work could be conducted to look at options for different segments of the population (such as taxi drivers, light good vehicles, residents with no parking, etc).

## **Commercial District Heating Network: A proposal for Exeter City Futures partners and discussion on appetite and viability**

The workshop resulted in a general consensus of support for ECF to work with 1energy on the next steps set out in their proposition to see if a letter of support could be provided from the ECF partner organisations for the funding proposal 1energy intend to submit to BEIS by November 25th 2022. The work co-ordinated by ECF since the workshop has included working with 1energy and partner organisations to:

- **Share learning and experience from Bradford and Rotherham Councils on legal and procurement issues.**
- **Co-drafting a template letter of support to The Green Heat Network Fund (GHNF)<sup>1</sup> for the 1energy bid to the Department for Business, Energy and industrial Strategy. (BEIS).**
- **Facilitating access to key information and policy required for the bid on topics such as planning; highways easements and air quality.**
- **Providing information on energy consumption for the target buildings**
- **Supporting each other through the internal governance processes in each organisation required to provide the necessary mandates for signing letters of support.**

An outcome from this session is that ECF partners have been able to supply letters of support to government for the bid for £42m of a £102m project submitted to BEIS on 25th November.

A further bid to Innovate UK Net Zero Living – Pioneer Places Call has been submitted by ECC with City Science as a lead partner. This project has come about from the themes identified in the workshops and particularly evident in the work undertaken to support the 1Energy bid for funding. Innovate UK can provide grant funding of £75k in the first phase and will provide us the opportunity to bid for a further £8m in Phase 2 if we are successful.

The Phase 1 project is framed around organisational capacity to enable the development and deployment of large-scale net zero projects, focusing on areas such as organisational risk, procurement and collaborative frameworks and is based on our learning from the work of ECF. The initial grant funding will enable us to work together to create the “playbook” that we can then deploy,( hopefully with the support of phase 2 funding) into a real world situation such as the decarbonisation of buildings through the delivery of green energy Commercial District heating Networks and/or retrofit programmes. We have the potential to align this work with the University’s Innovation Centre.

## The role Hydrogen could play in decarbonising Exeter: An opportunity to understand the potential that taking a strategic approach to hydrogen production and distribution could offer the city

### Summary

In closing, the workshop had a clear appetite for developing their understanding of hydrogen and the part it will play in the decarbonisation of Exeter. Some key themes and challenges emerged from the discussion between the private and public sector attendees:

- A collective understanding that “green” hydrogen should be the only “colour” of hydrogen that Exeter looks to develop in the city, focusing on the low emissions and not being reliant on the development of CCS technologies.
- Looking to large, city-based estates to provide demonstration “living-lab” example projects to grow skills and education in the city.
- The session highlighted a need to review the sector-based hydrogen demand in the city to identify where production might need to be based and what the impact was likely to be on planning and residents.
- Challenging slow behaviour change was raised as a key opportunity for the city, focusing on education and skills building.
- Identifying capital funding opportunities that will fast-track industrial solutions in the city will be necessary for hydrogen development.

### Recommendations

- ECF could establish a working group to create a hydrogen strategy and delivery pathway, to identify the key sectors that will drive hydrogen demand and supply in the city in the period up to 2050.
- The creating of a local energy network, identifying and connecting local businesses operating in hydrogen, to generate a cluster that will attract inward investment.
- Working with large private estates in the city to facilitate living lab/demonstrator projects, focused on hydrogen as a low-carbon fuel alternative
- Identify planning and legislative barriers to hydrogen development in the city and seek to find a pathway to resolve any barriers.

## 4. Next Steps

The next steps are for the ECF Partners to be invited to consider the recommendations and identify priorities for their organisations and for ECF collectively, and where possible to take forward recommendations within their organisational remit or with ECF partners.

Key question for the Board to consider are:

1. Which recommendations do you think are already being addressed?
2. Which recommendations are a priority for each organisation?
3. Which recommendations should we be concerned about?
4. Which recommendations are a priority for the City?