



Energy Pathfinders: 2050 (“EP:50”)

Terms of Reference

1. Background

The low-carbon sector already makes a significant contribution to Oxfordshire’s economy, generating £1.15bn a year (7% of Oxfordshire’s GVA). The Oxfordshire Energy Strategy will help to spearhead a further £1.35bn annually to the local economy, creating over 11,000 new jobs by 2030.

In the run-up to COP26 in November 2021 and to continue positioning Oxfordshire at the forefront of energy innovation, clean growth and the green recovery, the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) and Oxfordshire Greentech (OG) are establishing a new special interest group.

Energy Pathfinders: 2050 – or EP:50 for short – will be a champion of the best 10 energy projects in the county, compiled over a 12-month period. EP:50 will promote the pioneers in clean growth and clean tech – across all sectors – engaging innovators, influencers and investors.

2. Aims

This group will build on tenets of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, which contains commitments made by the six Oxfordshire authorities as part of the £215m Housing & Growth Deal. This specifically refers to the development of cleantech energy and insulation solutions for the region’s greatly needed new homes.

We will specifically support the scaling-up of low carbon initiatives and accelerate the delivery of solutions. An annual showcase event (perhaps part of the Oxfordshire Greentech Clean Growth annual event, subject to timing) will feature all of the winning projects of that year, ensuring we cover initiatives in urban, rural and growth locations and stimulate nominations from diverse communities – through meaningful engagement and reaching out to business and community leaders.

OG special interest groups already exist on the topics of Low-Carbon Mobility, Access to Finance, Circular Economy, Social Enterprise, and Built Environment. Partially reflecting that post-Covid recovery hinges on helping the county’s businesses bounce-back, and in a more sustainable and greener way, the new group’s focus will be on supporting development of a conducive ecosystem and driving demand and investment into the regional economy.

While not its primary goal, the group will recognise the pressing need to educate young people about the opportunities, and skills required, in the green energy sector. For instance, projects highlighted by EP:50 could form part of an OxLEP transformative technology tour for A-Level students.

3. Positioning

Conceived by Tala on behalf of OxLEP, the group will operate under the OG banner, alongside its other special interest groups. OxLEP, supported by Tala, will promote and manage the group, with OG providing in-kind support to the project and offering guidance on areas in which to focus, to act as a sounding board, and to make introductions to possible EP:50 projects.

EP:50 will provide OxLEP and OG with awareness and engagement opportunities among the county’s most innovative green businesses. The benefits to the participating businesses are manifold, including raised profile among their peer group and other external audiences including investors, better visibility of OxLEP’s business and skills offerings, and the chance to network with multiple audiences.

EP:50's work will be widely publicised through OxLEP and OG channels. As well as public calls for nominations and announcements as we build the final list of projects, the group will summarise its experience and learnings in by-lined feature articles for the relevant sector press. An example of this was Ahmed Goga's recent article on how we can drive a green recovery, which featured in [Municipal Journal](#).

We will explore ways in which all entrants can receive some acknowledgement and profile. Companies and projects who are successful in becoming pathfinders will also benefit from:

- Online coverage and profiling on OxLEP, OG and panel members' websites (where appropriate)
- A series of social media posts from OxLEP, OG and panel members' accounts (#EP50), encouraging other organisations to amplify messages
- Physical presence and networking opportunities at annual showcase event
- Mention in news releases and feature articles for regional and trade press
- Opportunity to position project as part of Oxfordshire's Green Recovery with OxLEP and OG providing links to investors through networking and features in investment prospectuses (where possible)
- Profile of projects in OxLEP and OG's work with central government (BEIS, DIT, DEFRA) and other organisations, including the Oxford to Cambridge Arc, with a focus around COP26, plus any further profiling opportunities in partner organisation's publications
- The successful companies will be provided with a winner's toolkit, including a badge for marketing purposes and a trophy for their office

4. Appointment of the Panel

The EP:50 panel will be recruited by OxLEP with advice and input from OG, and will comprise:

- OxLEP rep (Chair)
- OG rep
- University of Oxford rep
- Oxford Brookes rep
- Local authority reps (e.g., Oxfordshire County Council, Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council)
- Up to three experts in industry or consultancy covering the areas of:
 - o New developments
 - o Grid capacity
 - o Low carbon generation
 - o Demand reduction
 - o Growing the low carbon economy
 - o Sustainable transport
- Tala rep (secretary)

Panelists will be selected by Ahmed Goga, Rob Panting, Hannah Scott and Lewis Knight. In the event of a split decision, the deciding vote will be Andrew Baud. The appointments will be on a 12-month initial term, which will be automatically renewed on an annual basis, at the discretion of the chair.

5. Entry Procedure and Award Criteria

Reflecting the Energy Strategy, nominations for EP:50 will be considered from innovations in 1. New developments, 2. Grid capacity, 3. Low carbon generation, 4. Demand reduction, 5. Growing the low carbon economy and 6. Sustainable transport.

For the purposes of the awards, there will be three categories, each judged in tranches during 2021:

- Built Environment & Communities
- Transport & Infrastructure
- Energy Efficiency & Demand Reduction



- The judges will also make a special award to a project that applied in the three tranches, not already recognised, but which embodies key aspects of the Energy Strategy, the Oxfordshire Plan and demonstrates the highest standards of diversity and inclusion.
- The panel anticipates awarding around 10 projects in total, although this is subject to variation depending on interest across the three categories.

Projects in these areas will be considered in the context their impact, scope for scale-up and economic importance to Oxfordshire, and against the three guiding principles of the Oxfordshire Energy Strategy:

- Securing a smart, modern, clean energy infrastructure through increased electricity grid capacity, supporting:
 - planned housing
 - industrial and commercial growth
 - changing energy requirements.
- Reducing countywide emissions by 50% by 2030 (compared with 2008 levels) and set a pathway to achieve zero carbon growth by 2050. Realising the economic benefits of a low-carbon transition by supporting:
 - Ambitious and innovative, clean generation projects across the county, both in urban and rural areas, as well as growth locations.
 - Projects that reduce energy demand and increase energy efficiency for domestic, industrial, commercial buildings and transport.
 - Retrofitting of older premises.
- Enhancing energy networking and partnership working, galvanising pioneers in clean growth, leading influencers and thinkers and those with a passion for low carbon initiatives across Oxfordshire to leverage their collective activities to support the scaling-up of future solutions and accelerate delivery towards a net zero-carbon county.

Judging will consider organisational diversity and ensure a mix of rural and urban projects are represented. Where possible, judges will look to award projects/organisations of differing sizes across start-up/community-based, SME and corporate. Credit will be given to those organisations demonstrating creation of wider social value, for instance through paying the living wage, offering apprenticeships, etc.

The Energy Strategy reflects the importance of networking and collaboration and the judges will give credit for evidence of how working with others has either supported the development of organisation's projects or where they have shared best practice for other's benefit.

Entries can be made via either the OxLEP or Oxfordshire Greentech websites.

Judges will be asked to declare if they have any reasonably notifiable interest in any of the projects/organisations being considered and, if so, they will not participate in that assessment.

6. Timeline

The panel will be formed by 1st December 2020, with a first call for nominations on 18 January 2021. The first tranche of nominations will be considered on 24 March 2021, with an announcement of the successful companies/projects shortly thereafter. Further tranches will be considered over the subsequent two quarters, with the aim to showcase all successful projects in late 2021 or early 2022.