

Report to COUNCIL

Oldham Green New Deal Update

Portfolio Holder:

Cllr Abdul Jabbar, Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate Services and Sustainability and Deputy Leader

Officer Contact: Emma Barton, Deputy Chief Executive (Place)

Report Author: Andrew Hunt, Green Energy & Sustainability Manager

Email: andrew.hunt@oldham.gov.uk

25 March 2026

Executive Summary

This report provides a comprehensive update on the various elements of the Oldham Green New Deal Strategy (OGNDS) 2020-2025, highlighting the successes achieved to date and offering an overview of the initiatives currently in development.

The Council and our partners continue to make strong progress in delivering the Green New Deal, a key element of our Creating a Better Oldham Programme. This work is helping the borough transition to a clean energy system while ensuring that the full range of benefits - jobs, skills, energy security, economic growth and social value - are realised for Oldham's residents and businesses. The OGNDS underpins the advancement of both our economic and environmental ambitions, and the Council has secured significant grant funding to the value of £34.5m, to support timely progress and delivery.

Recommendations

Members are asked to note the various components of the OGND work programme and external grant support received to date to fund progress as outlined in the report.

Oldham Green New Deal Update

1 Background

- 1.1 The Oldham Green New Deal Strategy (2020–2025) was adopted in March 2020, just one week before the first national Covid-19 lockdown. The Strategy established two ambitious carbon-neutrality targets: achieving neutrality for Council buildings and street lighting by 2025, and for the entire borough by 2030, aligned with the Greater Manchester target of 2038. It also set out the approach for meeting these goals, structured around three key pillars:
- Low Carbon Infrastructure
 - Green Economy
 - Northern Roots
- 1.2 Since the Strategy was adopted, the Council has made significant progress in delivering projects and programmes that support the achievement of these highly ambitious targets. Although the pandemic—and the financial and resource pressures associated with it—has undoubtedly affected the programme, the Council has nevertheless strengthened its position within Greater Manchester and nationally as a lead authority on the low-carbon and environmental agendas.
- 1.3 The Council has secured significant grant funding to the value of £34.5m, supporting delivery of our low carbon and environmental ambitions. Grant funding includes:
- £1.5m from the DESNZ / GMCA Local Net Zero Accelerator,
 - £8.7m from the Green Heat Network Fund,
 - £1.7m from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme,
 - £2.6m from the United Utilities Green Recovery Fund and
 - £20m from the Levelling Up Fund.

This report provides an overview of progress to date on Oldham's Green New Deal programme. Although the Strategy itself has now lapsed, the 2030 carbon-neutrality target remains in place, and the Council continues to develop new partnerships and programmes to maintain momentum over the coming decades. Details of the various initiatives can be viewed online here [Green New Deal | Oldham Council](#).

2 Progress Update

2.1 2025 and 2030 Carbon Neutrality Targets

- 2.1.1. Strong progress is being made in reducing the carbon footprint of our buildings. For the 2024/25 financial year, the combined carbon footprint of Council buildings and street lighting was 5,878 tCO₂—representing a 31% reduction from the 2018/19 baseline of 8,559 tCO₂. Final figures for 2025 are not yet available, and the official assessment of progress against the 2025 carbon-neutrality target will be reported at the next available opportunity.
- 2.1.2 More broadly borough wide, the most recent emissions data, from 2023, shows that Oldham recorded a total carbon footprint of 728.3 kilotonnes of CO₂—a 16% reduction from the 2019 baseline of 867.3 kilotonnes. This equates to a per-capita footprint of 3.0 tonnes of CO₂. Oldham has retained its position as having both the lowest total and per-capita carbon footprints in Greater Manchester.

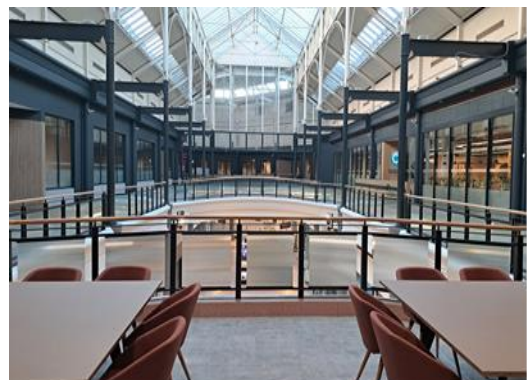
2.2 Alexandra Park Eco-Centre

- 2.2.1 Work to build a new environmentally friendly depot at Alexandra Park is now complete providing a modern working space for our Environmental Services teams and will also play an active role in the community through a range of uses such as spaces for events, education and recreation.
- 2.2.2 The new Eco-Centre does not use fossil fuels and is heated by two Air Source Heat Pumps, funded by the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme. Please find below a few pictures of the completed scheme.



2.3 Net Zero Spindles Centre

- 2.3.1 As part of the overall renovation of the Spindles complex, the building has had all fossil fuel heating systems removed and replaced with high efficiency electrical heating systems. Combined with extra thermal insulation and an electricity tariff sourced completely from renewable energy sources and backed with Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin (REGOs), the Spindles is now completely carbon neutral and the only known example of a carbon neutral shopping centre in Greater Manchester.



2.4 **Oldham Green Summit**

- 2.4.1 In 2023, the Council held the first Oldham Green Summit at the Oldham Athletic Business Centre. A highly successful event, it featured presentations from Oldham Youth Service, the Council and a number of local businesses who have achieved significant financial and other business benefits from implementing decarbonisation measures and technologies.
- 2.4.2 The Council will hold the second Oldham Green Summit on 26 March 2026, again with a business focus, and will feature presentations from some of the Council's key suppliers of low carbon goods and services such as Buro Happold and Vital Energi, who will talk about career opportunities in the low carbon sector as well as supply chain opportunities for Oldham companies to get involved in the delivery of low carbon projects going forward, as well as presentations from key partners such as GM Green Economy, The Oldham College and Get Oldham Working.



2.5 **Oldham Green New Deal Partnership**

- 2.5.1 In 2024, the Council was awarded £1.5m from the DESNZ / GMCA Local Net Zero Accelerator programme to establish a Strategic Energy Partnership for the borough. The Oldham Green New Deal Partnership aims to establish a public-private Joint Venture, this is the largest component of the OGNDS, to secure large-scale investment for the development of modern, smart and integrated clean energy infrastructure with a range of benefits including opportunities for Oldham supply chain companies, training, social value delivery and energy security.
- 2.5.2 The Council aims to publish the tender for the Strategic Energy Partnership in the near future. The procurement will take the form of a Competitive Flexible Procedure under the Procurement Act 2023 and will aim to appoint the preferred bidder in the second half of calendar year 2027.
- 2.5.3 The Oldham Green New Deal Partnership will be only the third such partnership of its kind in the UK after Bristol and Coventry. Bristol's Strategic Energy Partnership, named Bristol City Leap, is already highly successful and the diagram on the next page is an extract from their most recent performance report.
- 2.5.4 The aim of Oldham's Strategic Energy Partnership is to achieve similar benefits for Oldham, although the Oldham model is not as extensive. We have engaged several professional advisors who worked on the procurement of Bristol's Strategic Energy Partnership benefiting from their experience in developing the Oldham Green New Deal Partnership tender.

Social value

Bristol City Leap is not just about achieving the transition to a low-carbon economy – it's about achieving a **just transition** that works for everyone. This ethos is central to our approach and drives our commitment to delivering social value in all our practices.

In the past year, Bristol City Leap partner Ameresco and its subcontractor Vattenfall have again exceeded our social value targets, actively delivering **£17.5 million** to date.

Over the last twelve months, we have been proud to provide:

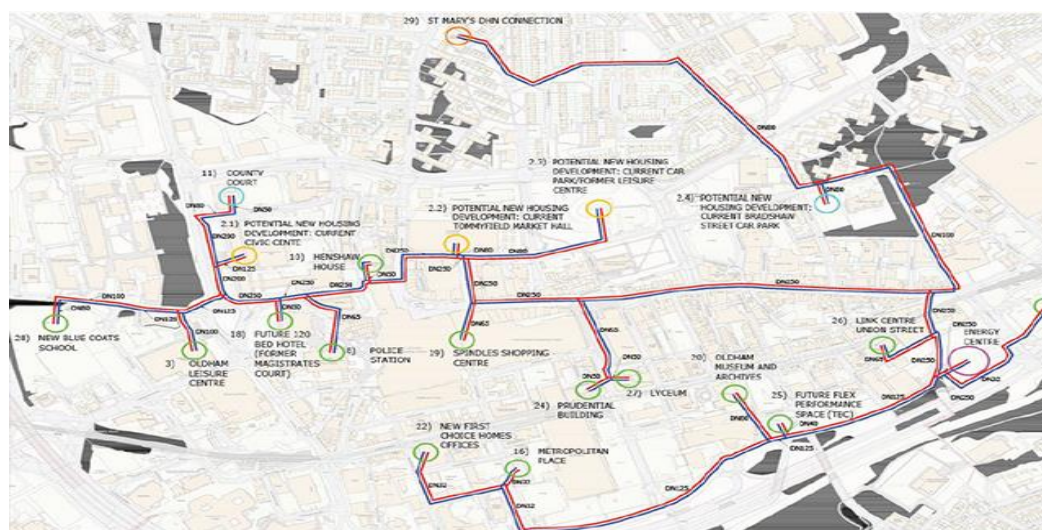


We have also supported a number of external initiatives such as signing the Bristol Equalities Charter and providing £20,000 to the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) operated advice hotline that provides free energy advice for Bristolians.

Figure: Extract from the Bristol's Strategic Energy Partnership (Bristol City Leap) Performance Report

2.6 Oldham Low Carbon Heat Network

2.6.1 Over the last few years, the Council has been developing plans for a new £27m low carbon district heat network to serve Oldham Town Centre. This project has been supported by grants from the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero, the project is now the anchor project for the procurement of a Strategic Energy Partner (as above).



2.6.2 The project will provide energy security for Oldham Town Centre in the form of clean, renewable heat serving a range of public, commercial and residential sites. The Government is introducing regulation for heat networks by OFGEM which will ensure fair

pricing for heat, and the construction and operation of the heat network brings opportunities for jobs and training in this sector for Oldham residents and businesses.

- 2.6.3 The heat network will also benefit from new planned legislation which is being introduced to Parliament this spring and will create heat network zones which will mandate large energy users and new developments to connect to heat networks. Oldham's heat network will require around £265m of investment which brings a huge opportunity for Oldham's Strategic Energy Partner with the associated opportunity for local Oldham businesses to benefit as part of the supply chain.
- 2.6.4 The Council also intends to utilise some of its £8.7m Green Heat Network Fund Construction Grant to install heat network pipes in the Town Centre alongside the wider regeneration works that are currently being delivered increasing efficiency and avoiding roads being excavated numerous times.

2.7 Wrigley Head Solar Farm

- 2.7.1 Construction is now underway on the Council's first large-scale clean-energy generation facility. The 888 kWp solar farm at Wrigley Head will produce zero-carbon electricity, which will initially be exported to the grid. The project will also enhance the site—previously affected by fly-tipping and other anti-social behaviour—through improved security, upgraded appearance and ecological enhancements, including new native tree and shrub planting, wildflower seeding across the site, and measures to support wildlife movement. As part of their social value commitments, the contractor, Vital Energi, will deliver site visits, supplier engagement sessions for students, and placement opportunities. The project is scheduled for completion by summer 2026.



2.8 Town Centre Park

- 2.8.1 The redevelopment of Spindles Shopping Centre and the relocation of Tommyfield Market will free up previously developed land across the town centre. This includes the site of the current indoor market hall, and the former Oldham Sports Centre located on Lord Street. We plan to bring these sites back to life by building much-needed new homes and developing a brand new 5.7acre park in the heart of the town centre.



- 2.8.2 The new town centre park will create green, open space for residents to exercise, play, or spend time with friends and family whilst also enabling town centre workers to enjoy the outdoor space in their lunch breaks. The initial works are already complete at the Rock Street end of the site with pictures below showing progress and work has now commenced on site for the next phase.



2.9 Northern Roots

- 2.9.1 Northern Roots is Oldham's project to create the largest eco-park and urban farm in the UK. It is one of the three pillars of the Oldham Green New Deal Strategy, alongside Low Carbon Infrastructure and Green Economy. The project is supported by grant funding from the Towns Fund and Levelling Up Fund.
- 2.9.2 Construction is underway on a new Visitor Centre and Forestry Skills Centre at Northern Roots. Set in the woodland at the northern end of the site, the Visitor Centre will feature a café, shop, production kitchen, exhibition and performance space, as well as learning and meeting facilities. Meanwhile, the Forestry Skills Centre, will provide residents with vocational learning opportunities linked to a range of technical and land-based skills and qualifications.
- 2.9.3 In 2023 Northern Roots established the first phase of the Urban Farm. The scheme has to date created 80 volunteering opportunities, delivered activities for more than 600 children and young people, and engaged around 6,000 local residents through cultural and environmental activities. And to date, there have been 2,000 trees planted, six ponds created to support local wildlife, and the establishment of a community garden and wildflower meadow.
- 2.9.4 Construction works began March 2025 with a Practical Completion currently programmed for Summer 2026.



2.10 National Warm Homes Plan

- 2.10.1 The Government has now published its £15bn Warm Homes Plan, which will have significant benefits for Oldham residents. The national plan aims to ensure there is an energy improvement offer for every household and contains elements including:
- funding for low-income schemes,
 - low-interest consumer loans, grants towards the cost of high efficiency heat pumps,
 - support for low carbon heat networks including new national legislation creating Heat Network Zones,
 - innovative finance through a new Warm Homes Fund for home upgrades and
 - funding for Warm Homes Plan Programmes.

The approach will remove the cost of energy efficiency measures from home energy bills and fund them from central public finances and aims to unlock around £38bn in total investment across the current Parliament.

- 2.10.2 The new Warm Homes Plan will have significant benefits including the potential to create thousands of new jobs, including re-training of trades such as gas engineers. Oldham is well placed to reap these benefits through its strong existing and planned programmes. The approach will support the Corporate Plan “Green and Growing” outcomes, the include:
- more homes of a great standard that are affordable for local people,
 - attract new businesses and support existing businesses to grow,
 - create additional higher quality jobs for local people,
 - maximise opportunities in the green economy with increased investment
- 2.10.3 At an Oldham level, the approach will enable our residents to:
- invest in the energy performance of their homes,
 - stabilise their energy bills,
 - boost opportunities for Oldham companies to get involved in the supply chain to deliver home energy efficiency measures,
 - boost opportunities for Oldham’s young people to gain training and employment in this growing sector.

2.11 Sustainable Rainwater Management Programme

- 2.11.1 United Utilities secured £15 million through the Governments Sustainable Rainwater Management programme, with approximately £9 million allocated to the delivery of green Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and Natural Flood Management initiatives. Greater Manchester received £4 million of this funding, of which Oldham secured £2.6 million for five schemes in Oldham Town Centre: Rock Street, West Street, Snipe Gardens, Market Street and Curzon Street.
- 2.11.2 These schemes will help to manage surface water in the town centre, reducing flood risk, enhancing biodiversity, and providing green infrastructure that can mitigate the urban heat island effect during periods of high temperatures. The projects will also generate valuable learning to support United Utilities in adopting similar approaches in the future, helping to keep costs—and therefore customer bills—down.
- 2.11.3 For the next investment period (2025–2030), United Utilities has identified Oldham and Bolton as priority districts within Greater Manchester. An Umbrella Agreement has been established, enabling Oldham to bring forward projects under three delivery approaches:
- **Funding Only:** United Utilities provides funding, and Oldham Council delivers the schemes.
 - **Co-Delivery:** Either party delivers the scheme with financial contributions from the other, or both invest their own resources in defined elements that form a joint scheme.

-
- **Enabling:** The Council permits United Utilities to locate projects on Council-owned land or assets

2.11.4 Please find below a selection of pictures for schemes delivered to date.



3 Options/Alternatives

3.1 N/A – report for information only.

4 Preferred Option

4.1 N/A – for information only.

5 Consultation

5.1 N/A – for information only.

6 Financial Implications

6.1 N/A – for information only.

7 Legal Implications

7.1 N/A – for information only.

8. Procurement Implications

8.1 N/A – for information only.

9 Equality Impact, including implications for Children and Young People

9.1 N/A – for information only.

10 Key Decision

10.1 No

11 Key Decision Reference

11.1 N/A

12 **Background Papers**

12.1 N/A

13 **Appendices**

13.1 N/A