

Scope for Oxfordshire Local Area Energy Plans

Final agreed version

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1 Introduction

This document is the third and final version of the Oxfordshire LAEP *Scope*. It captures the subsequent development of the themes following the early market engagement exercise with the main LAEP contractors in January and February 2024 and ongoing discussions amongst the Oxfordshire local authorities and consultation with the EPWG and ESB. The *Scope* is referenced in the Outline Business Case which sets out the case for the additional funds required to deliver LAEPs as set out in the *Scope*.

The *Scope* covers two workstreams (WS) as summarised below:

- **WS1: LAE Plans:** Areas relating to the scope of what is being procured in the form of LAEPs which sets out the optimal decarbonisation pathways for Oxfordshire Councils. These will require consideration by the EPWG in April in order that a recommendation can be made to the ESB and will form the basis of the LAEP contract specifications.
- **WS2: LAEP Function:** Areas that need to be developed so that LAE Planning is effective and the procured LAEPs result in the right outcomes. This is largely about developing local capability to manage the LAEP process in the longer term. EPWG steer and ESB approval is required on the principle of including this workstream in the FOP funding bid, however no detailed scope decision is required at this stage.

The purpose and benefits of LAEPs were described and consulted on in the Outline Project Scope (OPS (appendix 1)). They have been shaped and developed further through extensive engagement, and are summarised in the LAEP Outline Business Case, which will be presented to the EPWG and ESB as a separate document for decision.

In summary, LAEPs are essential to enable Oxfordshire and Districts to determine the optimal pathways to achieve strategic targets that are impacted by the energy transition across four key themes: decarbonisation, economic growth, energy security, and equity/climate adaption. LAEPs help identify the best projects in the short to medium term to enable delivery on these commitments. Energy security was not originally covered in the OPS, however, is a key underpinning of the Future Energy Scenarios and emerging Regional Energy System Planning function. Community level energy security and energy system resilience will be a key factor in the development of local infrastructure and flexibility.

Early Market Engagement

The Forward Plan originally proposed a *Specification* stage between February and May 2024, focussed on the procurement decisions and documentation to be taken to market subject to ESB approval in May 2024. At the ESB meeting in November 2023 however early market engagement was recommended to better understand how Oxfordshire could innovate to both develop LAEPs and LAE Planning capability and maximise value from the procurement process. Over the course of drafting this *Scope* it has become clear that Oxfordshire could use this scoping opportunity to

explore novel approaches to developing LAEPs given a potentially limited budget, the emergence of new digital LAEP tools and most importantly how LAEPs will be delivered on the ground.

Early market discussions with contractors took place during January and February and the learnings from those workshops have been included in this *Scope*. These workshops built on the *Scope v2*, which considered two key areas:

- Area 1) Decisions that are needed such there is clarity and consensus in terms of the LAEPs that Oxfordshire is intending to buy, and
- Area 2) Capacity and capabilities that need to be developed so that LAE Planning intent is clear, practice is effective, and outcomes are realised.

2 Outcomes from the Early Market Work

ESC [Guidance](#) (2022) identifies seven stages of LAE Planning. There was consistent feedback from contractors that grouping stages 1-4 together for all the districts followed by stages 5 to 7 being carried out separately for each district. This enables each district to shape their own LAEP in terms of scenarios modelled, emission areas covered etc in line with local mandates. This approach would create significant benefits as set out below:

Speed and co-ordination

- It is quicker, because the same process is being run at the same time over all of the data; This will result in efficiencies and cost savings
- It decreases supply chain fatigue as this avoids repeated requests for the same data but for different areas; and
- It allows for consistency of units that can then be aggregated up and down as needed for projects, for example understanding progress in comparable ways, drafting funding bids, articulating business cases and talking to investors.

Lead-in & mobilisation

It gives LAs time to mobilise in terms of their interaction with LAE Planning at stage 5, at which point LAs have much more influence, and LAE Planning therefore requires more engagement. This transition period between the start of procurement through to the end of stage 4 allows LA input to be planned in advance, and for confidence, capacity and capability to be built in readiness.

Development & clienting at the right level post-stage 4

- There may well be divergence of vision at LA level when it comes to detail, for example differing use cases, or scenarios that need to be refined differently in one area compared to another due to differing Net Zero target dates. These realities can diverge in a structured way at stage 5, but the core modelling at stages 1-4 remains the quickest, most cost-effective method to develop ways forward while allowing for LA priorities and leadership to take precedence at stage 5;

- Projects that would operate best at a County-wide level would emerge from stage 4, as well as projects that involve cross-boundary working (even if they don't operate over the whole County). Project delivery could then be organised at the most appropriate level; and
- Scenario-planning, as one of the most significant elements of LAE Planning, is initially modelled in stage 4, but then refined in stage 5 to ensure that;
 - Scenarios fit with the local area; and
 - Stakeholder engagement can be used to understand how they translate into viable pathways for the geography in question.
 - The end of Stage 4 therefore from a scenario point of view represents the most sensible jumping off point for work focussed at LA level.

At the point after LAEP publication there is a strategic risk of lost momentum and confidence as there is likely to be a delivery gap as attention shifts from planning to project implementation. LAEPs identify what projects need to happen where and when, who has agency and how much they might cost. LAEPs however aren't feasibility studies and don't ordinarily bundle projects into deliverable packages. Contractors can work with the client to bundle projects into blended investment packages if required (e.g. via an Investor Prospectus alongside the LAEP, or using practice from other areas to package commercially attractive projects with less attractive ones to unlock investment). These activities are not within the scope of a conventional seven stage LAEP however, hence the concept of a Delivery Model, which becomes more sophisticated model as it moves towards LAE Planning outcomes rather than LAEP outputs:

In summary, the following model is intended to deliver LAEPs, LAE Planning capability and enable LAEP implementation.

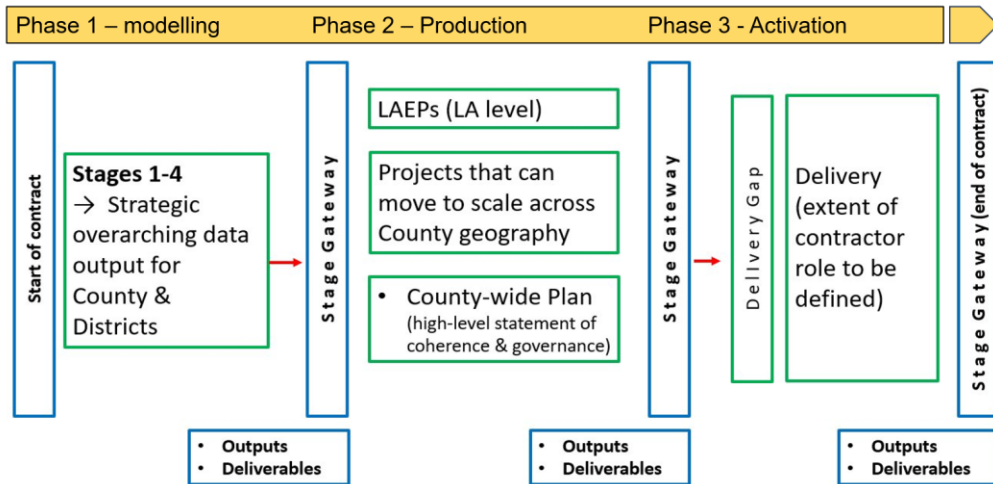
- **Phase 1:** ESC Stages 1-4 (data collection and modelling) for the whole County as one package. This would save cost, and stakeholder time and avoid duplication. It will create financial capacity for phases 2 & 3;
- **Phase 2:** Production of LAEPs at LA level – ESC Stages 5-7. This creates space for LAEPs to reflect different contexts (e.g. net zero target dates), priorities, demographics and challenges; and
- **Phase 3** - The extension of activity post publication of LAEPs into delivery, meaning that bidders will have to articulate how they will add value to the whole model, not just the production LAEPs. This will particularly require bidders to consider how they will help Oxfordshire navigate the delivery gap.

Appendix 2 lists required supporting information for the procurement process.



Proposed LAEP Delivery Model

A value orientated approach



The potential cost of this model exceeds the currently available £150k budget. A business case is being submitted in line with the request for an additional £450k of housing capacity funds held by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.

3 Areas of the scope relating to LAEP procurement (WS1 LAE Plans)

This section considers the following areas highlighted in the Outline Project Scope that have a bearing on what Oxfordshire LAEPs should address. Where appropriate there are either recommendations or areas for discussion at the end of each section.

- 3.1 Objectives and modelling
- 3.2 Geography
- 3.3 Emissions Sectors
- 3.4 Data
- 3.5 Community/neighbourhood-level Plans and 'nesting'
- 3.6 Stakeholder engagement
- 3.7 Delivery environment
- 3.8 Client Capacity (Development Stage)
- 3.9 Budget

3.1 Objectives and modelling

Oxfordshire has stated several objectives that it wants LAEPs to achieve. These objectives are set out below in priority order. This currently is closer to a vision than a set of objectives, but Oxfordshire could go to market with a vision that will then be refined during the early stakeholder engagement phases.

	Objectives	Comments
	Identification of most appropriate interventions on the low voltage network to enable Oxfordshire to reach Net Zero in the most cost-effective way.	The primary overall driver for all as set out in the Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan and the basis for establishing LAE planning as a Future Oxfordshire Partnership priority.
	Identification of best mix of DSO/DNO network interventions to guide their network investment strategies.	LAEPs will need to inform network investment decisions, although flexibility services are in an early stage of development.
	Enable holistic outcomes for Oxfordshire's communities - Decarbonisation, sustainable growth, equitability and energy security.	It would not make sense to have LAEPs that recognised community level energy planning and didn't factor in holistic outcomes.
	Community Development. Community level energy planning and projects	Recognising the important role of bottom-up involvement in energy planning, and enabling bottom-up plans and projects to be included
	Drive upskilling and capability-building at council level and across the supply chains that will be critical to wider decarbonisation.	Building internal capability already present so the county is not wholly reliant on external help
	Project Financing (e.g. Grants, investable project pipeline for inward investment)	This is not normally part of a LAEP, but to address the delivery gap, funding should be considered
	Identify infrastructure projects / provide the energy infrastructure for growth.	Clear links with Oxfordshire Investment Strategy and emerging green finance work

Modelling

In addition to the LAEP objectives, scenario modelling will need to be applied at Phases 1 and 2. Using the governments Future Energy Scenarios framework it is recommended that both the "Do Nothing" (BAU) and "Leading the Way" scenarios be applied as part of the modelling in stages 1 to 4. It should be noted that DNO network investment plans are based on modelling using the Consumer Transformation Future scenario. The remaining local authority specific scenarios will need to be applied to the appropriate modelling for each LAEP at stage 5 to 7.

1a	Do Nothing	Modelling this scenario is advisable as outlined in the ESC <i>Guidance</i> because this aligns with Treasury Green Book practice and means it can act as a point of reference for bids (for central govt funds).
1b	(Oxfordshire) Leading the way	This was the agreed FES scenario used in the Oxfordshire Route Map and action Plan 2023. This scenario was used following consultation with local authorities
2a	Cherwell 2030 NZ target	
2b	Oxford City 2040 NZ target	
2c	South Oxfordshire 2030 NZ target	
2e	Vale of White Horse 2045 NZ target	
2f	West Oxfordshire 2050 NZ target	

Key Use Cases

Use cases help define both what the LAEPs will do for Oxfordshire that can't currently be done, and what the contractor will be expected to do and what the data requirements are to do it. Below is a list of critical use cases for Oxfordshire LEAPs

1	Better informing DSO investment decisions to secure capacity where it is needed, in a manner that is timely, cost effective and fair.
2	Integration of community energy schemes and alignment with Smart & Fair Neighbourhood and Grid Edge Coordination principles (developed via LEON)
3	Nesting hyper local LAEPs and ensure LENZA (assuming other DSO tools are integrated within it) enables this: Hyper-Local LAEPs.
4	Identify heat network opportunities and potential heat sources
5	Local authority capability and agility. Being able to reiterate LAEPs until Net Zero is achieved
6	Alignment with the emerging Regional Energy System Planner role
7	Access to project financing opportunities including integration with local authority green finance plans.
8	Integration of LAEPs into local spatial planning frameworks to enable place-based climate action
9	Long-term utilisation of LAEP Plans and the LAEP Function to develop topical local strategies that create synergies of land use, such as agri-photovoltaics (combined food production and solar energy generation).

Proposal: The objectives of the LAEPs will be to: 1) identify most appropriate interventions at low-voltage level to reach net zero across Oxfordshire in a cost-effective way, 2) identify best mix of DSO/DNO interventions to feed into the network strategies, 3) enable holistic outcomes for Oxfordshire communities, 4) supporting community level energy planning and projects, 5) drive upskilling and capability building in LAs and supply chains, 6) consider project financing for the pipeline of activities emerging from the LAEP, 7) identify key infrastructure projects required.

‘Do nothing’ and ‘Oxfordshire leading the way’ scenarios will be modelled (at Oxfordshire and district/city level) for Phase 1, then district/city net zero targets to be used for modelling during Phase 2.

3.2 Geography

Focus of LEAPS will need to bear in mind the varied geography across Oxfordshire. Urban areas will have different issues/concerns than rural ones. LAEPs are more often than not determined by LA boundary, but this frequently doesn't acknowledge technical realities such as properties actually served, electrical substations and community realities. This is less of an issue in Oxfordshire because the LAs are being convened as a whole within the governance structure, and the remit of the EPWG will give visibility beyond formal LA boundaries. This should bridge issues stemming from DSO boundary areas not mapping on to LA boundaries.

Following the early market work it was clear that LAEPs based on district council boundaries would provide the best balance between granularity and value. These would also allow for separate modelling according to each council's net zero targets while the underlying county-wide data would still allow cross-boundary projects to be considered in district LAEPs.

With 5 district level LAEPs there will need to be some way for the individual LAEPs to cohere (showing how they interact) that sits above the individual LAEPs. This will be developed as part of the procurement of LAEPs in partnership with the EPWG and will most likely take the form of a summary document highlighting cross boundary and Oxfordshire wide projects.

For the LAEPs to be realised, they need to be used by multiple stakeholders in their decision making and to inform strategic engagement that joins up that decision-making. Ultimately the footprint will need to be a balance between key strategic needs and community-driven initiatives at much more local scales. The LAEPs commissioned need to cohere across Oxfordshire (DNO and LA boundaries) and to be able to accommodate and inform very local level activity, down to the lower voltage network (primary and secondary substation level)

Assuming LAEPs are based on District Council boundaries there will be opportunities to rationalise inputs (and hence cost) into LAEPs by factoring in areas where related work is ongoing such as the Bicester LAEP recently commissioned by Cherwell District Council, Local Plan renewable energy studies, Industrial

Decarbonisation (ZCOP ID). These will need to be identified in the specifications as essential inputs.

Proposal: For data to be gathered at the Oxfordshire level and for this procurement to focus on 5 district LAEPs, with a requirement in the tender for contractors to propose a mechanism for interacting with both county-wide or cross-border projects and local level activity.

3.3 Emissions Sectors

As per the requirements set out in the Energy Systems Catapult guidance (p18), Oxfordshire LAEPs should at a minimum address the following emissions sources:

Conventional Sectors	Emission source
Generation	Traditional Electricity Low Carbon Electricity – Including energy from waste and anaerobic digestion
Storage	Electrical Thermal
Industry	Electricity Gas Other Fuels (Hydrogen) Large Installations
Commercial	Electricity Gas Other Fuels
Public Sector	Electricity Gas Other Fuels
Domestic	Electricity Gas

Note – Electricity and Gas includes their use in heat networks.

LAEPs are supposed to encompass a whole system approach, so omitting some areas may have consequences elsewhere. Therefore, in addition to the core emissions sources set out above, it is recommended that transport and agricultural emissions which are significant for the county are also included in the modelling. Both sources have a significant impact, so even if no projects emerge from the modelling it does mean that the projects that do emerge have been considered in that context.

Emissions sources in scope need to be identified at tender stage; once the contract commences, stages 1-4 are where the bulk of the technical analysis takes place, so it is problematic to revisit whilst LAEPs are being developed. LAE Planning is however an iterative process, so optional emissions sources that are omitted at this time can be included at a later date. These additional elements could be included as modular, and priced as such. More sources in addition to the recommended core in the guidance means more time, complexity and cost (including more stakeholder engagement).

Additional	Emission source
Generation	Low Carbon Electricity – hydro Heat sources (e.g. waterways, wastewater treatment plants, datacentres) Future solutions potential (Nuclear Fusion, other)
Efficiency	Domestic, Commercial, Industry, Agriculture
Storage	Pumped Hydro Smart Flex Hydrogen
Capacity	Electrical headroom Gas infrastructure
Industry	Efficiency Heat offtake
Agriculture	Efficiency Electricity Gas excl. methane Other Fuels (incl. Hydrogen)
Commercial	Heat offtake
Domestic	Other fuels (off-gas households) Heat offtake
Transport	Electric Vehicle Infrastructure incl. public transport Rail electrification New road infrastructure

Land use emissions, although not considered as part of the Catapult guidance, are likely to be important as schemes such as solar farms and biofuel crops have biodiversity impacts. We should as a minimum ensure that energy schemes proposed in LAEPs do not have negative ecological impacts and at best have positive ones.

Proposal: to include emissions from the 6 required sectors and to request costs for the inclusion of additional sectors (Agriculture and Transport being priorities), with the intention of scoping them in as long as cost allows.

3.4 Data

Data is critical to underpin the scenario-planning and other modelling that will be used to identify optimal decarbonisation pathways. Much of the data to be used for the modelling of Oxfordshire decarbonisation pathways has already been assembled via Project LEO and constitutes almost a complete **Local Area Energy Representation (LEAR)** as set out under stage 3 of the Catapult guidance (p27). Most of the data from project LEO currently resides in the LENZA digital platform. The Oxfordshire Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan and the related plan for Oxford City also used many relevant data sets that may be available for use in LAEP modelling, as may be outputs from the Cherwell Bicester LAEP.

Local Authorities will need to provide data sets across all stages of the programme, but particular during stages 1-4. A significant element of LAEP cost is data gathering, cleaning and modelling; perhaps 50%. The more that a client understands what data they have and has capacity to work with the contractor in terms of organisational liaison and data access, the lower the cost. An audit of all relevant data held by Oxfordshire authorities will be required prior to tender with an inventory of prioritised additional outstanding data to be gathered.

Additional datasets such as on planned development will need to be more recent, and will require input from internal Planning teams. However, these datasets will be closely aligned with the datasets requested from LA's in the annual DFES process¹. Providing these datasets will carry a substantial co-benefit in embedding DFES process and remove the need to provide them again in the current year.

DSO digital portals

The scenario-planning that will be undertaken by the appointed contractor to produce the optimal pathways in LAEPs is based on their own software. However, rights to data outputs will be specified to rest with the local authorities, and data origins and validity information must be fully declared for all datasets. Proprietary data outputs will only be accepted where these cannot be otherwise secured within the budget envelope. In such cases, long-term licensing will be pursued, and tracked as a risk to be considered as part of the award decision.

Oxfordshire Councils have access to and familiarity with LENZA and Your Local Net Zero Hub, SSEN's and UKPN's LAEP tools respectively. All DSOs serving Oxfordshire are planning to make their data available on LENZA. LENZA will likely be a core operational and digital tool for client-side LAE Planning for the term of any LAEPs. This will be subject to continued access to the tool and DSO assurances will be required prior to tender. The following are therefore deemed necessary to ensure LENZA is fit for purpose and Oxfordshire has the capability to use it as a LAEP tool:

¹ [Forecasting future needs of the network - SSEN](#)

- Outputs from proprietary modelling systems used by the successful contractor must be interoperable with LENZA and in formats accessible to various levels to the local authorities to incorporate into their own work such as GIS systems;
- Incentivisation structures that mean capability can be developed with LENZA as Oxfordshire's core system such that Oxfordshire builds effective LAE Planning agility as well as reduced reliance on contractors for iteration LAEPs;

Capacity for close working with the contractor so that the modelling assumptions and parameters are understood and can be articulated as needed to stakeholders, particularly in the latter stages of LAE Planning.

- It will be necessary to involve Advanced Infrastructure Technology as key project partner, embedded in LAE Planning as an active participant at tender stage and during the whole project lifecycle. This is because;
 - LENZA is likely to remain the principal software platform that allows Oxfordshire County and Districts to have a viable data environment at the heart of their work, and around which capability and agile practice can be built, and therefore strategic risk and dependence reduced.
 - Data sits at the heart of stages 1-4, and contractors were very clear that the more actively and precisely the client can engage with them from a data perspective, the more accurately they can plan and price, including less contingency for risk. This creates very considerable opportunity for financial capacity; sourcing, cleaning and integrating data is one of the most significant cost centres within LAE Planning; partnership with AIT and utilising LENZA presents an opportunity to gain pricing at the lower end of the continuum normally allocated for this exercise.
 - There are multiple potential advantages that partnership with AIT could create beyond the two most important above, including crossover associated with the use of LENZA by the Low Carbon Hub in Project LEON to generate hyper local LAEPs. These are listed in appendix 3

All of the above are likely to have an impact on the development of capability within Oxfordshire LAs. This may have a short-term impact, e.g. a smaller gap between external and client capabilities (i.e. less dependence on external contractors), and a long-term impact, mainly the future ability to cost-effectively renew LAEPs.

There are several studies taking place across the county which are likely to feed into LAEP data requirements such as the renewables mapping as part of South Oxfordshire and the Vale of the White Horse Local Plans and the LAEP commissioned by Cherwell District Council covering the Bicester area, and the ZCOP industrial decarbonisation study. These and other studies present an opportunity to enhance data provision to respective LAEPs. Under the longer term LAEP Function development, all partners should consider interoperability

requirements when specifying datasets that could be utilised in LAEP project development and future LAEP planning exercises.

Proposal: To require all data outputs to be interoperable with LENZA. Workshops with the contractor to understand modelling assumptions and parameters. Potential partnership with AIT.

Resource implications for LAs pre-tender: County Council to provide data requirements, County and Districts (+others) to do data audit.

3.5 Community/neighbourhood-level Plans and ‘nesting’

Oxfordshire contains many community-driven energy schemes that typically connect at the low voltage level. Some of these schemes have already produced plans ranging from project feasibility all the way through to hyper-local versions of LAEPs. Project LEO has already demonstrated the important contribution very local community energy schemes/plans have in contributing to net zero targets.

A key requirement is ensuring that LAEPs operate at the right level. Levels may be functional, such as a village or business park, administrative, such as a parish, or energy system specific, such as a primary substation. It is beneficial therefore that LAEPs are capable of incorporating or recognising smaller more local plans within them, reflecting communities and their aspirations, especially as they offer an opportunity to increase the number of viable desirable projects and unlock community investment and action.

Such nested community level plans will also enable better integration of flexibility and energy security aspects of LAEPs, as they can act as subsystems that aggregate a range of technologies and end users within a single area. Nesting of community level plans would also enable communities to compete for infrastructure investment against commercial profit-based projects. A co-benefit of this would be to retain a greater share of local economic benefits even where investment comes from elsewhere.

There is potential for integration with Project LEON, e.g. [Smart and Fair Neighbourhoods](#) and [CAPZero, Grid Edge Co-ordination](#). LEON will be utilising testing and improving the effectiveness of LENZA as tool for producing hyper local plans. The digital nature of Oxfordshire’s ambitions supports the principle of nesting, because it allows pockets of greater resolution. Granularity at building level will allow projects to be built up from this base. A greater understanding of the requirement for nesting and what the desired outcomes are can be included in the stakeholder engagement during staged 5 – 7.

Balance needs to be found between deep work given the capacity and budget this requires (whether direct or via contractor), raising expectations (given capacity and budget constraints), the opportunity to build on Project LEO and link with LEON, and the desire to make sure communities have a voice and feel that they are part of the energy transformation.

Proposal: Add a requirement in the tender for contractors to propose an approach for ensuring community activity can be incorporated into the LAEP

3.6 Stakeholder Engagement

All of the key stakeholders are already members of the EPWG as per the Catapult guidance. These organisations cover most of the necessary primary and secondary stakeholders who will have data, plans and responsibilities with respect to the local energy system, with the possible exception of domestic and non-domestic customers. It is likely that given other parts of the *Scope* that community energy organisations will also need to be part of the process.

Stakeholder engagement is critical to LAE Planning and the development of LAEPs due to the nature of the decarbonisation directly affecting households and communities in many cases, presenting both opportunity and risk. So, although key stakeholders are involved in the LAEP production process, there is a wider group of stakeholders that have an interest in the development of local energy systems and related projects such as domestic and non-domestic customers.

Decarbonisation projects create many opportunities for stakeholders:

- Clean air, healthy homes.
- Development and/or fostering of local community energy projects.
- Economic growth, employment, skills and (re)training opportunities.
- New areas of economic activity, including innovation and investment; and
- Economic resilience for householders and businesses, especially via homes that are easier and cheaper to heat, and reliable access to appropriate energy sources to support economic activity.

These holistic outcomes create opportunities to counter-act the perceived threat associated with decarbonisation as a deep and significant programme of change, but they also create fundamental questions in terms of the extent of stakeholder engagement.

Stakeholder Engagement is one of the most significant costs within a LAEP tender. It occurs repeatedly throughout LAEP development, but at different scales and with differing intent. For this reason, stakeholder engagement needs to be quite tightly defined (especially client expectations about key groups to engage) to enable accurate costing & project planning. For this reason, a LAEP Stakeholder Strategy will be prepared pre tender. It will:

- Consider how deep and extensive engagement is required to be, e.g. are working groups representing cross-sections of stakeholders envisioned? In order to reduce uncertainty around engagement in specific area it will be necessary to consult with specialists (Low Carbon Hub for hype local LAEPs)
- Consider what work is necessary to enable development of the LAEP through the stages in the ESC *Guidance*, which has the benefit of being commonly understood by bidders;

- Consider additional requirements such as to enable the development of the recommended specification relating to nesting and other use cases;
- Conduct high level internal stakeholder mapping (picking up on the stakeholder work done as part of the Oxfordshire Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan) exercise to determine which stakeholders fall into this secondary stakeholder definition. In terms of stakeholders, these are categorised in the *Guidance* as primary (which the EPWG equates to) and secondary, which is broader. More detailed stakeholder mapping can be carried out during the LAEP development phase by the contractor, but procurement documentation will need to be clear as possible in terms of the extent of stakeholder engagement (SE) and the groups that the client wants the contractor to engage with. This helps establish the boundary between SE in the context of LAE Planning, against much broader public engagement.
- Provide an outline assessment of current Oxfordshire County and District stakeholder engagement activity, and an estimate of capacity to support stakeholder engagement activity during LAEP development. This estimate is to potentially include LAE Planning partners – the DSOs, gas distributor, Net Zero Hub and Low Carbon Hub, as all have capacity and outreach.

Further stakeholder engagement considerations are listed in appendix 4

Proposal: To follow once the engagement strategy is agreed.

3.7 The Delivery Environment

These are the factors that influence which LAEP projects can realistically proceed. Typical significant delivery environment factors include supply chain capability and availability, and stakeholder acceptance. A LAEP needs to be grounded in a realistic assessment of the current and future potential of the area to actually deliver on the plan at the pace and scale required. It is important that LAEPs:

- Develop an understanding of the agency that different stakeholders have, and this includes an assessment of local authority project and programme delivery capabilities and maturity. This is acknowledged in the Delivery Model, which aims to carry LAEPs over the delivery gap and into delivery. This ensures the programme operates holistically and LAE Planning outcomes – client capability, agility – are significant outputs in addition to the LAEPs themselves.
- Address endorsement / commitment to act by those who really matter.
- Set out what else needs to happen beyond the LAEP and specifically in terms of project financing.
- Look at the ongoing process of delivery and monitoring as things change.
- Project interdependencies are captured as these offer opportunities to influence the delivery environment and communicate long-term, ambitious messages that supply chains may respond to via investment in capacity and capability.

The delivery environment is a typical and well-structured area of research assuming that LAEPs are procured as per the Catapult [Guidance](#) (2022) and this is normally addressed in stage 5, so in the case of Oxfordshire would be tailored to each local authority. The Catapult Guidance will be included in the procurement specification to ensure that LAEPs are developed as per best practice. The delivery environment will be considered after contract award as it is a formal element of the Catapult Guidance so is already covered adequately.

Proposal: The district LAEPs will have a section on the delivery environment, as per the Catapult guidance. This will cover capability, financing, monitoring and the delivery gap to assess what needs to happen at each Local Authority to be able to deliver the LAEP actions. This will require stakeholder engagement internally (within LAs) and externally with relevant stakeholders to allow contractors to build up a complete picture of the delivery environment.

3.8 Client Capacity (LAEP Development – Phases 1 and 2)

The client will need to work closely with the contractor, provide information, monitor KPIs and navigate the decision-making process and conflict resolution. Some aspects of LAE Planning, such as stakeholder engagement and data provision can be delivered directly by the client, provided there is capacity.

In a multi-authority system, it is clearly important that LAEPs are cliented at the appropriate level for the relevant project stages, and that this is balanced with the consultants strong preference for clear reporting lines. It is recommended for phase 1 there is a single point of contact for the county-wide work this would seem best done by the County Council. Individual District level contacts will be required for phase 2. This will ensure speed of decision-making and sign-off, and access to data and information at the right level.

Responsibilities at client end include:

- The provision of data;
- Assisting with the planning of stakeholder engagement and facilitating delivery;
- Ensuring sufficient engagement with LAs across multiple functions and
- Providing meeting rooms and spaces, and coordinating meeting schedules.

The County Council is currently acting as the lead organisation and will have capacity as a central resource for LAEP clienting and to coordinate and facilitate where possible / necessary clienting by the districts. Work is ongoing to establish the resource availability and potential requirements for the District Councils as part of the LAEP work package in the Project LEON bid. Other options will also be explored.

This points towards an example client team shown below:

Clienting Team Functions:

- **Client Sponsoring Board: LAEP Executive Steering Board (ESB).**
Responsible for decision-making within FOP agreed scope such as contract award, escalation for decisions that require scope change, and championing the project in their respective organisations².
- **Client Project Board: LAEP EPWG:** Responsible for regular monitoring of project progress, shaping recommendations on project issues and project change and provide insight and support.
- **LAEP project coordination group:** Attended by full matrixed project team. Meets at higher frequency to progress work packages. Attended by subject matter experts as required. May sit at lower frequency during stages 5-7, to enable consultants to fully focus on district needs.

Project management Functions:

Key Roles and Responsibilities:

- **Client Programme Manager (County level):** Chairs EPWG, champions the project with district partners and County leadership, maintains buy-in, coordinates project portfolio and investment work strands.
- **Delivery Project Manager (external consultants):** Responsible for managing and coordinating delivery of LAEPs according to contract and agreed programme, reliably meeting KPIs and reporting into EPWG. Weekly meetings with LAEP Project Coordination group.
- **Client project and contract manager (County level):** Reports to EPWG, maintains working groups as needed, responsible for timely management of procurement, contract management on behalf of the contracting authority, responsible for overarching scope control and coordination of work packages with district project managers, coordination of transition into BAU.
- **Client project manager (District level – may be shared and seconded role):** Responsible for internal reporting within the relevant authority, providing inputs to EPWG reports, coordinating district work-package delivery and inputs from internal teams with the Delivery Project Manager. Maintains client obligations within contract constraints. If any deliverables, such as engagement, are delivered by an authority directly, takes responsibility for such delivery.
- **Data Specialist:** Ensure client software platform is actively and appropriately exploited, and interoperability and long-term data preservation requirements met. Attends and reports into EPWG and local authorities

Proposal: Clienting Team functions to follow existing governance. Project Management functions - County Council to continue acting as the convening organisation and to provide a programme manager and contract manager to act as the lead interface between the client LAs and the contractor. For each LA to nominate a client project manager (County to add approximate

² All local Authorities are responsible to ensure that decision makers have appropriate delegations in place from the respective cabinets. Scope changes will be escalated via FOP, but may also require authority-level change processes to be followed. This will be considered case by case, and appropriate time allowed for approvals to be sought.

timeframe of activities that require LA input). This will form a virtual PMO along with a data specialist.

3.9 Budget

The likely budget required to deliver this scope (Phase 1, stages 1 to 4 countywide and phase 2, stages 5 to 7 at district level and Phase 3 bridging the delivery gap) is between £500k and £600k assuming all districts proceed to stages 5 to 7 in phase 2. The costs of Phase 1 is likely to be in the region of £250k.

There is currently an available budget of £150k. After completion of the early market exercise an initial request was made in March via the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) governance process for an additional £450k. FOP does have sufficient resources with the Housing Capacity Fund to cover this request, however a final decision pending the production of an outline business case will be taken in June. Without the benefit of knowing the cost of the procurement exercise, it is probably helpful to view Phases 1 and 2 as core and Phase 3 as a series of stretch targets.

The full £600k budget is intended to cover the actual procurement exercise and potentially up to £100k towards the costs of having Advanced Infrastructure Technology Ltd as a project partner and as a fund to contribute to the costs of additional council clienting resource requirements.

If insufficient budget is available. Alternative options include:

1. Having a phased LAEP procurement programme.
2. Having a base programme funded by the £150k budget with modules covering additional areas required.
3. Exploring alternative funding which may require some element of innovation to be an attractive funding proposition and/or may only fund the innovative aspects of the proposal.
4. Consider full adoption of the DSO digital platforms as the basis for Oxfordshire LAEPs, which could also be integrated into either option 1 or 2. This option does have immediate resource implications for the district councils.

The following points are also key considerations in terms of the finances available for LAEPs:

- The extent to which the County and LAs are engaged in bid opportunities.
- Access to information about policy developments, funding streams, and discrete finance opportunities.
- What resources can the wider LAE Planning partnership bring to the development of LAEPs; and
- How much client capacity is required to work with the contractor(s).
- Data, modelling, scenario planning and stakeholder engagement are the most expensive areas therefore maximum possible clarity on these areas needs to be given in the specification.

4 Areas of the Scope relating to developing LAE Planning capability (WS2 – LAEP Function)

Our collective capability to develop and deliver Local Area Energy Planning will affect the extent to which we can effectively client the development of LAEPs. In the long term, it will impact on the delivery of the LAEP programme, both from a project point of view, but also how independently and effectively LAEPs can be reiterated/updated. It is highly unlikely that a 6-figure budget will be available every 3 or so years to deliver continuous rounds of LAEPs. LAEP Function development will determine how LAEP Planning can be incorporated into internal business as usual (BAU) processes, to be managed in-house. The exact mechanism for this is yet to be determined but is likely to involve resource from the County Council, Planning Authorities and Net Zero subject matter experts, working closely with network operators, and grid edge coordinators.

This section scopes the requirements in regard to LAEP function development. However, WS2 is not anticipated to be fully delivered until 2026, and any decision on the nature of this function will require a full business case to determine how it can be funded in the long-term. As such, no EPWG decision on the nature of the Function is required at this stage. But we are keen to maximise training opportunities deriving from the consultancy contract, so are outlining scope boundaries here.

This section considers the following areas:

- 4.1 Collaboration, alignment & visibility
- 4.2 Learning and Capability
- 4.3 Agility
- 4.4 Delivery gap
- 4.5 LAE Planning & Planning Authority interaction
- 4.6 Mandate
- 4.7 Client capacity (LAEP Delivery)

4.1 Collaboration, alignment and visibility

A central requirement of effective implementation of LAEPs is close collaboration between LAEP partners. The ESB and EPWG are the governance structures through which this collaboration should happen. A key outcome of close collaboration will be improved visibility and alignment of the areas outlined below within emerging LAEP(s)

- The outputs and outcomes of Project LEO-N and grid edge and local area planning functions
- Emerging CAPzeros from the Low Carbon Hub (hyper local scale energy plans at the primary substation level)
- The Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy – to be revised in 2024
- The Oxfordshire Energy Strategy
- The emerging North West Bicester LAEP being carried out by ESC

- DFES and resulting DSO investment plans
- Interface with Regional Energy System Planning (RESP)
- Proposed major infrastructure projects such as HIF1, Bicester West
- Retrofit delivery plans / strategy and associated skills training
- ZCOP ID and discussions related to BMW future energy needs
- ZCOP cross-boundary focus areas (e.g. LIPD – Oxcluster and Mobilityways project)
- Oxford Colleges' renewable energy plans on their land holdings in the county
- The Botley West solar Development
- Heat Network proposals notably in Oxford and Banbury, but also other potential schemes

Future alignment is important as the development and delivery of the projects that form the LAEP project pathways is likely to supersede the existing range of projects within Oxfordshire and it is likely to absorb a significant amount of capacity, so the ESB and EPWG need to look ahead to how this overall programme becomes more viable through alignment, visibility and mutually-supporting activity. Large schemes are likely to be known via the planning system, DFES and the Great South East Net Zero Hub (GSENZH), but smaller community initiatives will not necessarily be well known. The development of some form of countywide project register (potentially integrated into LAEPs) is likely to be the best way to achieve this.

Proposal: Future alignment of the LAEP pathways with existing projects and future adaptability will be discussed during Phase 2 (and doesn't need to form part of the costed proposal from contractors as this relates to internal agreements)

4.2 Learning and Capability

There is a requirement for training and skills sharing that helps to upskill EPWG members to enable them to support the delivery of this project and its wider decarbonisation goal. EPWG members are a key link with their parent organisations and therefore information cascade via members is fundamental to partner organisations being informed.

A broad level of understanding/capability about energy systems is key to Oxfordshire being able to successfully develop and implement LAEPs now and in the future. These skills are broadly grouped as clienting skills related specifically to managing the LAEP contract and wider skills and understanding around transition/decarbonisation. Each level of Oxfordshire LAEP Partnership will need to conduct an assessment of their capabilities relevant to their own area summarised below.

In the first instance the EPWG could conduct an assessment of capabilities and skills amongst members and the extended cohort linked to LAEP development across the county. A summary of skills and capabilities is set out below:

- High-level skills, e.g. the engineering skills to build out the grid and undertake the design and costing of major projects;
- Technical skills, e.g. those required to undertake extensive modelling and scenario-planning, gain insight from multiple datasets, undertake crunching; and
- Delivery skills, e.g. those required so that a home retrofit programme can run cost-effectively at scale and deliver safe good quality retrofit (which is not a given).
- Clienting skills, managing and understanding the LAEP contract process.

Proposal: In order to improve learning and capability, the following actions are proposed:

- **A skills and capability assessment of its members and wider cohort including the ESB.**
- **Establish a learning network via specific events hosted by partners to include peer networking and best practice.**
- **Closer collaboration with DNOs and specifically their digital platforms.**
- **Learning from the emerging Cherwell/NW Bicester LAEP, from Project LEO and LEO-N and other relevant projects.**

4.3 Agility

The ESB and EPWG need to be nimble in response to changing external factors such as national policy. LAEPs need to be located within an agile environment that can iterate LAEPs as required. Whilst this means that internal capability and access to partnerships and expertise must be developed and maintained, it also ensures that one benefit of LAEPs is consistently realised; they remain relevant, timely documents that help articulate the way forward to all stakeholders, ensuring there is a greater opportunity to create a Just Transition.

Recommended ways to ensure agility are:

- Working with the contractor initially and then in-house as LEA planning becomes embedded in LAs, scenario-planning should be dynamic and productive, to ensure pathways remain as optimal (and therefore cost-effective) as possible.
- Central ESB governance should take an enabling stance, actively seeking to remove blockers and constraints where appropriate, to maximise the opportunities for partners and communities to take action independently wherever possible, within a framework of a commitment to shared learning.
- Part of the procurement process will be to ensure LAEPs don't become static and a way to avoid this is to investigate the potential of digital LAEPS.

- LAEP specification could be modular (a core LAEP product which optional modules depending on the requirements of each local authority) to enable LAEP delivery to flex in response to the availability of funding, and to enable members to move at a pace they are comfortable with.
- Being agile also has strong links to learning (e.g. emerging technology and financing options), capability (because of the technical skill required) but also the culture of the EPWG, i.e. its ability to act in a coherent manner
- Members will need to meet regularly, embrace networking and sharing opportunities and possibly establish task and finish subgroups when required.
- Programme of upskilling (which is implied in some of these bullet points), setting out which roles need to know what so that if people leave the organisation, it is clear what the new person needs to know and be trained on to be able to continue supporting the work.

4.4 Delivery gap

The 'delivery gap' refers to how quickly can the projects in a LAEP be translated into activity on the ground. Ideally there should be no delivery gap between adoption of LAEPs and identified projects being implemented. To achieve this, the following are likely to be required:

- Throughout the LAEP development process visibility of projects in optimal decarbonisation paths will be required so projects can be factored into work plans and funding decisions.
- Project financing.
- Following Phase 2 resourcing (by LAs and/or others) will be needed to facilitate the delivery of project ideas from feasibility to investment readiness and to manage project implementation.
- Investable projects would form part of a countywide green finance investment prospectus.
- Processes need to be in place to assist funding of community led projects.
- A mechanism will need to be developed to factor in impacts of projects outside the visible path.

Phase 3 of the Delivery Model is intended to enable local authorities to minimise the delivery gap by developing a range of services and tools (potentially an investment prospectus) designed to address the above points. The details of what services and tools will be available at Phase 3 will emerge as part of the procurement process.

4.5 LAE Planning & Planning Authority interaction

As stated earlier, LAE Planning responds to a situation as it finds it, and articulates optimal pathways on that basis. There are interactions between LAE Planning, LAEPs and Planning Authority activity which need to be explored in more detail for the ESB and EPWG, but at this stage it is more important to understand what is happening in terms of Planning Authority consultations and timescales, so that the LAE Planning can feed in appropriately.

LEAPs should inform the implementation of local plan policies, there will also be scope to inform supporting guidance e.g. technical advice notes, which help support implementation of the Local Plan's policies. To that end, it would be sensible to reference LAEPs in upcoming reviews of local plans.

LEAPs are likely to have a role in integrating with local plan related Infrastructure Delivery Plans (IDPS) as much as the county level OXIS. Identifying specific costed projects would be helpful for informing future IDPs and supporting local plans, as well as potential funding asks of developers as part of contributions within the planning process.

Local Development Orders could be explored as a means to speed up desired types of LAEP supporting development in specific communities or even across whole districts.

Another opportunity for county-wide LEAP work is to identify opportunities that certain areas cannot explore but others can and help deliver a coordinated approach to net zero e.g. Oxford's constrained nature means it is unable to say much about large scale renewables provision, however this very much within the purview of other districts in Oxfordshire. To this extent the LAEPs can provide a framework for strategic discussions between LAs about cross-boundary energy infrastructure.

**Proposal: To develop resources on the interface with spatial planning.
Resources to be shared with all LAs.**

4.6 Mandate

A result of moving decisions about prioritisation of investment in energy infrastructure to local authorities (or at least giving them more say) is the politicisation of the energy sector. The current "first come first served system" maybe perceived as fair (because it is unfair to everyone) but clearly takes no account of equity and fairness. LA involvement in strategic energy decisions could be a powerful determinant in who gets what. How these decisions are made will require consideration of the political mandate and the value basis upon which decision are made. It is therefore important this merits further investigation as part of the LAEP process and that ESB consider the democratic mandate that comes with LA involvement in project prioritisation via LAEPs and issues of equity and fairness. Stakeholders could be asked for instance to set out "What equitable and fair means in terms of future energy system".

Proposal: For the role of equity in LAE planning to be considered through stakeholder engagement (during Phases 1 and 2 of the project?).

4.7 Client capacity (LAEP delivery)

This is effectively ensuring the client is sufficiently in charge of what is happening in their area as the implementation of LAEPs proceeds. Currently this is limited and would need to expand to deliver LAEPs at the scale and pace required.

Client LAs have experience managing individual energy projects, this would need to transition to LAEP-driven activity on varying levels as set out below:

1. As a coordinator of all the energy activity in the area to ensure visibility and alignment between projects and with neighbouring districts. Some of this can be managed at a county level and would also involve the iteration of LAEPs over time.
2. As a partner in project delivery.
3. Planning and delivering projects in their own right.
4. As a funder / investor in projects

All of the above are likely to either need additional resourcing or new models for how this can be achieved across the county in the most resource efficient way possible. There is time to consider how clienting LAEPs delivery will work, but this needs to be resolved well in advance of LAEPs being finalised which at this stage will be late 2025.

The Delivery Model

Phase 3 of the Delivery Model recognises the resource constraints local authorities are under in terms of LAEP project delivery. Phase 3 is designed to enable local authorities (and other partners delivering projects) to minimise the time and resource required to bring projects forward. The exact nature of Phase 3 is as yet not determined, but is likely to include different ways to improve the investability and deliverability of projects.

Proposal: There will be a requirement for project coordination and management resources at County and District level once the LAEPs are complete and move into implementation. The exact nature of this requirement will be clarified at the LAEPs are developed.

Appendix 1 The Benefits of Local Area Energy Planning

As set out in the Outline Project Scope

- They are place-based, whole-system and evidence-based;
- They are fully costed, spatial plans, identifying near-term actions and projects, providing stakeholders with a basis for taking forward activity and prioritising investments. They detail what needs to happen, where, when and by whom;
- They provide linkage between energy and climate change mitigation into other key County and LA policies, and provide a link between LA infrastructure planning and Distribution System Operator (DSO) planning;
- They provide transparency in terms of how decisions have been made, and why particular projects represent optimal ways forward;
- Stakeholder engagement plays a fundamental role in the development of LAEPs, also meaning that published LAEPs have a role in continuing to engage and inform stakeholders; and
- They can provide an evidence base for Net Zero policies in Local Plans, and underpin other interaction with Planning Authorities.

As developed for the Business Case

- Reduces risk of Council and community & industry projects being unable to proceed due to grid constraints by informing targeted infrastructure investment, and enabling alternative solutions such as flexibility and renewable generation;
- Local Plans, neighbourhood plans/area action plans are better positioned, more effective and more likely to be realised. Improved response to Distribution Future Energy Scenarios (DFES) incl. reduced workload for authorities;
- Faster decarbonization: aligning local DNO grid investment with governments “Leading the way” scenario, while reducing end user cost through geographically targeted grid upgrades;
- Active balancing of Council priorities in line with political mandates, e.g. ensuring that climate mitigation projects protecting those most vulnerable to climate change are identified early and supported;
- Reduced Network impacts and minimizing disruption through coordination of major infrastructure works, such as delivery of Heat Networks, electrical infrastructure upgrades, gas network decommissioning and drainage/water utilities works;

- Increased investment into local and regional projects, better investment coverage of harder-to-fund projects through portfolio bundling;
- Funding for LEON Beta secured; and
- Regional Energy System Planning (RESP) is more responsive to local needs, interests and opportunities, better reflects local political mandates.

Appendix 2: Supporting information needed at tender stage

The following is a list of supporting information to be provided at the tender stage. This includes:

1. Information on the client software platform, functionality, data sets and formats;
2. Use cases, as this will illustrate what we what LAEPs to do and how outputs will be used;
3. Relevant strategies, and their role relative to LAEPs;
4. Live, in-development and planned/proposed decarbonisation projects;
5. Client stakeholder engagement activity and capacity, including that which is accessible via the LAE Planning partnership and any consultation with stakeholders to date;
6. A stakeholder mapping exercise (light-touch and focussed on internal colleagues and key partners) to articulate the core set of secondary stakeholders that the contractor is required to engage with and for what purposes (see 2.5 below);
7. Local Plans status and timetable;
8. Green Finance project – what is happening, connections made, trajectory, objectives;
9. Client team structure & LAE Planning governance structure; and
10. Client change control process.

Appendix 3 – Working with Advanced Infrastructure Technology (AIT) as a Project Partner

The following details key considerations should AIT become an Oxfordshire LAEP Project Partner. AIT are also likely to be involved in Project LEON. Should the LEON funding bid be successful, it will therefore be necessary to align LEON and Council requirements when it comes to AIT and LENZA.

Pre-tender input

- Assist the client with drafting elements of the procurement documentation relating to data and the digital environment (e.g. format of interoperable outputs, development of use cases that are realistic given the functionality of LENZA);
- Risk management. Early market engagement signalled the risk of 'digital front ends', i.e. platforms that aggregate data, in contrast to tools with clear functionality in which LAs have agency to act. LENZA is very much in this latter space and close working with AIT mitigates the digital front-end risk. Working with AIT means that client requirements that reflect this latter requirement can be better articulated when the tender is being drafted; and
- Use cases help the client articulate what they want the contractor to do. Having AIT help develop the use cases mean they remain grounded in what LENZA is able to do. This doesn't limit ambition given the extent of LENZA functionality, but it does mean that client requirements are effectively articulated and structured, which in turn means that interoperable outputs can be integrated in LENZA and are more likely to be immediately useful.

Tender stage

A pre-procurement session focussed on data has been discussed. A partnership approach aligns AIT into the success of that session, and creates more confidence if it is clear to contractors this is part of a long-term framework that will support the work of the successful bidder. Again, this means there is more cost and programme certainty, and less pricing for programme risk and contingency. Having a contractor that is confident they can talk to a client partner in data-speak and access information swiftly in a format they can use is a subtle but very effective way to *create financial capacity*.

It may be that AIT can play a role in assessing elements of the tender response, e.g. those that relate to interoperable outputs, use cases, capability-building requirements.

Live programme (LAEP development)

- Brings AIT into the programme as an active partner in capability-building, the development of agility and the ability to mirror, as far as possible, scenario-planning;
- AIT could be incentivised to write Oxfordshire requirements into the ongoing LENZA development programme. They could for example create a user group reflecting the partnership that then becomes a

consultee in developing the LENZA roadmap in response to client requirements;

- It will ensure the relationship between LENZA is well-managed, and mitigates the risk of dependence on LENZA given that this principally been developed by SSEN in response to their Ofgem Licence Obligations. To be clear, SSEN have been very supportive of LAE Planning in Oxfordshire, but they are the client for LENZA rather than Oxfordshire and it has an important role in serving their requirements as a DSO, which is a different relationship to that between Oxfordshire and LENZA;
- It will assist with integrating data sets from different sources that may be in different formats and may vary in quality;
- It will ensure interoperability is effectively articulated and managed. This interoperability is also linked to integration and data auditing and refreshing, which are outside the capability and remit of Oxfordshire staff; and
- There are critical stages in the development of LAEPs (e.g. stage 5) where data sources would need to be reviewed to ensure they support the next stages of development. It would be better to do this with an organisation that knows the data sources in LENZA in great depth and can support the client in ensuring data is where it needs to be.

AIT are intending to develop a Customer Success function that will be focussed on assisting clients with building deep capability in terms of LENZA. This aligns with the development of LENZA as an increasingly sophisticated tool that allows clients to close the gap between what LENZA can do and what they may need to ordinarily procure externally, with the Product Development Routemap for LENZA reflecting this. The Customer Success function is very closely aligned in terms of intent and objectives with the capability outcomes desired by Oxfordshire, and may be a way to locate capability development outside the main LAE Planning contract. This has the advantage of meaning the tender will be more straightforward, as well as focussed on contractor core competencies (i.e. producing LAEPs), recognising that capability development isn't something that contractors ordinarily do as part of a LAEP contract.

Future (post-contract) work and horizon-scanning

- It would maintain Oxfordshire at the forefront of the development of 'Digital LAEPs'. These have not yet reached maturity but do represent a way to develop LAEPs at scale, cost-effectively, and the LENZA system, one of the leading platforms nationally on which digital LAEPs may be built. This approach may also create opportunities to benefit from innovation funding;
- Oxfordshire may well need to tender the next phase of LAEPs in 3-5 years' time, but the development of capability and agility, and the integration of AIT into the programme, may mean that the requirements of this work are needed later, are more targeted, and has more elements that Oxfordshire can develop and implement

independently of external contractors. This means less future cost is embedded within a long-term programme; and

- There is certainty regarding LENZA until 2026. A partnership approach aligns Oxfordshire with contingency planning should LENZA cease to be developed and supported.

Summary

ESC *Guidance* notes the significance of keeping the LAEP alive as one of the final programme objectives. It is hard to understand how this could be achieved without a digital operating environment of some sort, as well as organisational capability in terms of using this system. This summarises why:

1. Considering AIT as a project partner specialising in the digital space;
and
2. A contract structure that incentivises capability-building in terms of Oxfordshire operating that space

are so important.

Fundamentally, a partnership with AIT brings Oxfordshire closer to where it wants to be in terms of data, given how significant a success factor this is.

Appendix 4: Stakeholder engagement considerations

- What are the lessons that can be drawn in from the Smart and Fair Neighbourhood projects under Project LEO?
- What stakeholder engagement capacity and structures are being created under Project LEON that align with LAE Planning?
- What does the stakeholder environment surrounding the EPWG look like? Who/what groups is the EPWG linked to?
- Who do remain aware of or communicate with via others/other forums?
- Role of particular groups, e.g. Community Energy groups
- How deep and wide should stakeholder engagement be in the context of LAE Planning in Oxfordshire? To what extent so we pick up Just Transition (i.e. balance what is desirable with what is manageable and can be adequately resourced)?
- With the above in mind, what capacity does the EPWG partnership have for stakeholder engagement?
- Does this capacity need to be expanded, and if so, what are the best ways to do this? Would it be more beneficial to contract engagement capacity in the context of developing LAEPs via a procured partner?
- Can this stakeholder engagement be phased, for example are there initial neighbourhoods where projects can proceed, allowing the experience and practice to be used to engage other communities in the medium term?
- Who are primary, secondary, key and other stakeholders, and have they been mapped against staging? (e.g. the *what, where and when* stage may require different engagement with different stakeholders compared to the *how* stage.

