

Call for Expressions of Interest: Clean Energy Policy, Outcomes and Public Support for Net Zero

Overview

The [UK Energy Research Centre](#) (UKERC) is inviting **Expressions of Interest** (Eols) to conduct research on **UK clean energy policy, stated outcomes, and public support for net zero energy**. Eols should be submitted by **September 26th 2025**.

The authors of the successful Eol will be invited to co-create, along with UKERC's Director and research theme leaders, the details of a research proposal that would form part of UKERC's research programme on the [Political Economy of UK Net Zero Energy](#). This programme is part of a wider theme on [Geopolitics, Energy Security, and Resilience of Net Zero](#).

The co-created research, led by the authors of the selected Eol and conducted by their teams, should start no later than 30th March 2026 and should conclude by 30th March 2028. The maximum budget available for the research is £312,500 at 100% Full Economic Cost (FEC), i.e. £250,000 at 80% FEC.

Eligibility

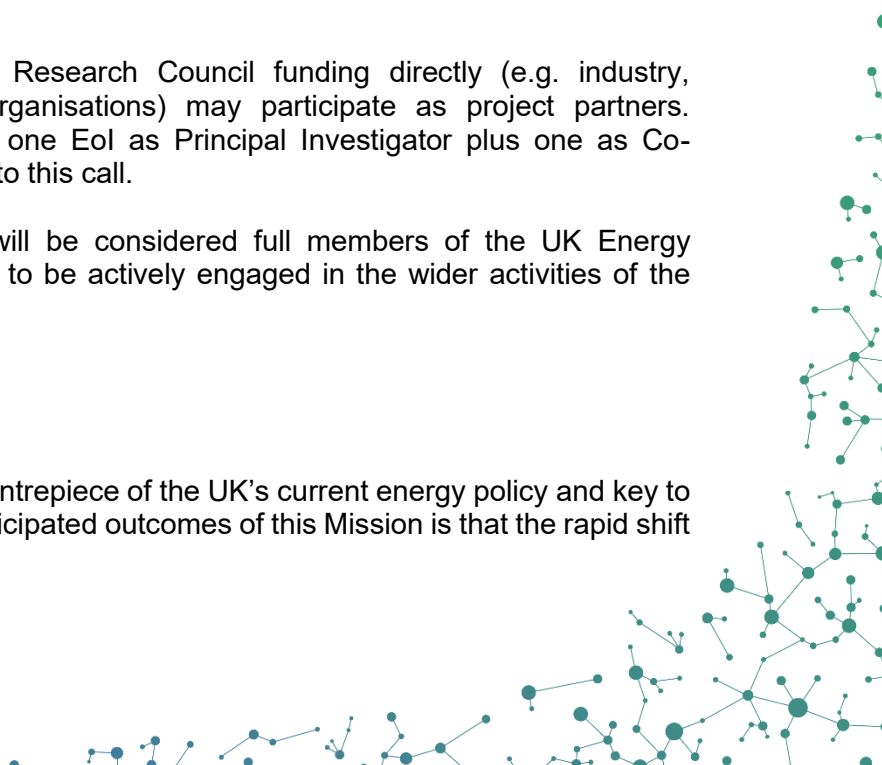
Expressions of Interest (Eols) are invited from eligible UK researchers, i.e. applicants based in UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Research Council Institutes and Centres, and Independent Research Organisations (IROs) approved by any of the Research Councils. Please refer to the [UK Research and Innovation \(UKRI\) website](#) for details on funding eligibility.

Organisations not eligible to receive Research Council funding directly (e.g. industry, government agencies, third sector organisations) may participate as project partners. Individuals may submit no more than one Eol as Principal Investigator plus one as Co-investigator, or two as Co-Investigator, to this call.

Parties delivering the new research will be considered full members of the UK Energy Research Centre and will be expected to be actively engaged in the wider activities of the consortium.

Context and scope

The Clean Power Mission is both the centrepiece of the UK's current energy policy and key to the transition to net zero. One of the anticipated outcomes of this Mission is that the rapid shift



to renewables by 2030 will result in lower electricity prices. Indeed, this has been an important selling point for the policy in the context of high bills, an enduring cost of living crisis, and growing political challenge to the net zero goal and decarbonisation policies. However, the timing and speed of falls in retail prices that might result from the shift to renewables remains opaque, whilst enduring high energy costs and claims about negative economic effects of net zero transitions are being utilised by some actors to undermine public support.

Within this difficult context there are increasing calls for other actions to reduce energy costs for consumers, with multiple ideas being put forward by industry, think tanks, and academics, including at UKERC. Each of these may also infer different possible sets of outcomes in relation to jobs, economic growth, energy security and/or distributions of costs and benefits of transitions. The objectives of this project are: to evaluate different options for reducing electricity bills before 2030, including in relation to wider possible outcomes; and engage members of the voting public on the different options and on the channels through which they receive information about net zero energy policies.

Where we want to build new understanding and evidence

Ensuring reliable and affordable energy is a key objective of government, whilst doing so at times of rapid, and unprecedented, net zero transitions is complex. Internationally, the UK faces rapidly evolving global energy trade and supply chain environments, whilst domestically it has been experiencing a prolonged cost-of-living crisis and fiscal constraints. One assumption is that by articulating net zero energy policies in terms of outcomes that are positive for more established public policy goals, like lower bills, economic growth, good jobs, or energy security, it will result in wider public and political support. In reality, of course, any positive narratives about net zero energy policy outcomes must compete for voter attention and interest within communication channels increasingly dominated by social media, whilst it remains unclear how or when stated positive outcomes would be delivered and communicated to broader publics.

As such, we are seeking research proposals that:

- (i) Evaluate different policy options for delivering clean energy and reducing bills, including in relation to other outcomes that deliver on public policy goals (for example, economic growth, 'good' jobs, decarbonisation, British energy supply).
- (ii) Engage different sections of the voting public on their opinions on, and responses to, information gathered in step (i). Explore how different types of net zero energy policy outcomes affect public support, voting preferences, and/or other forms of political engagement.
- (iii) Investigate where (including via which channels) different sections of the public get information on net zero energy policies and outcomes from, which sources of information they take account of and/or regard as trusted, and why.

Mixed qualitative and quantitative methods are expected, whilst the project will require a multi-disciplinary team including expertise in renewable energy and climate policy, politics/sociology of transitions, and public engagement.

Questions for the expression of interest

- Principal Investigator (PI) details.
- List of co-investigators, their email addresses, and their organisations.

- List of project partners – individuals, their email addresses, and their organisations. (A project partner is a contributor to the project that does not receive UKRI funding via the award for this project)
- What questions you will address on public support for net zero in the UK in relation to current energy policy options and possible outcomes, the methods you will use to answer them, team roles and key outputs. Please make clear how your approach will build on and extend existing literature and practice on routes towards clean energy and reduced bills, the politics of clean energy transitions, and public support for net zero/climate mitigation. (1000 words max)
- A summary of your experience of public engagement and the politics of net zero transitions and/or UK climate mitigation policy in your past research. (500 words max)
- Please describe the types of impact your proposed research is expected to achieve and how you intend to realise them. This could include contributions to policy, practice, or citizen engagement. Outline key mechanisms, partnerships, or engagement strategies you will use to maximise the impact. (300 words max)
- Please outline what you will bring to UKERC's research community if you are asked to lead the invited research and become part of UKERC. (300 words max)
- Please outline how you have employed principles of equality, diversity, inclusion and intersectionality in the proposed research/team setup and any specific objectives planned with respect to EDI. (300 words max)
- Budget details. Including travel and accommodation costs to attend a minimum of two UKERC meetings per year.

Evaluation procedure

Eols will be evaluated by a review panel convened by UKERC, which will make a recommendation as to which Eol should proceed to the co-creation and submission of a full proposal.

Please see below the scoring matrix against which Eols will be assessed:

Section	Criteria	Aspects for evaluation	Score guidance (0–10)
Research questions, methods, team roles, and outputs (1000 words)	Quality and coherence of proposed research	- Clarity and relevance of research questions - Appropriateness of methods - Clear team roles - Extent to which proposal builds on and extends literature and UKERC research	0–3 = vague or off-topic 4–6 = coherent and feasible but not innovative 7–8 = strong with sound rationale and fit 9–10 = outstanding innovation, excellent fit with UKERC goals
Experience researching the politics and public support of net zero (500 words)	Team's relevant experience	- Evidence of prior research on climate and/or energy policy with a focus on politics and public support - Relevance to the current topic - Demonstrated competence in public engagement	0–3 = minimal or unrelated experience 4–6 = some relevant examples 7–8 = clearly relevant experience, good depth 9–10 = strong, directly aligned track record

Pathways to impact (300 words)	Clarity and feasibility of impact strategy	- Relevance and ambition of expected impact - Clear and realistic mechanisms to deliver impact - Stakeholder or policy engagement plans - Letters of support - Alignment with UKERC's impact goals	0–3 = vague or generic; lacks mechanisms 4–6 = plausible but limited detail 7–8 = well-articulated strategy with good alignment and strong letters of support 9–10 = compelling, strategic, and targeted approach
Contribution to the UKERC community (300 words)	Added value to UKERC	- Willingness and ability to engage across UKERC's wider activities - Evidence of collaboration, leadership, or capacity building - Complementarity to existing UKERC members	0–3 = minimal contribution beyond own project 4–6 = some potential for engagement 7–8 = clear added value 9–10 = strong UKERC ambassadorial potential
Equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) (300 words)	Integration of EDI and intersectionality	- Attention to EDI in team composition and recruitment - Inclusive and ethical research design - Specific objectives or actions on EDI	0–3 = generic statements or absent 4–6 = basic awareness, some actions 7–8 = thoughtful and embedded approach 9–10 = model example of inclusive design
Budget and justification	Appropriateness of budget	- Budget is realistic and aligned with project activities - Value for money - Inclusion of required UKERC participation costs	0–3 = incomplete or unjustified 4–6 = mostly appropriate 7–8 = clearly justified 9–10 = excellent cost-effectiveness and clarity

Membership of UKERC

Contributors to the new project will be considered full members of the UKERC consortium and should contribute fully to UKERC activities. This includes participation in relevant research theme meetings and the UKERC annual assembly, submission of quarterly reports, and contributions to stakeholder engagement events, blogs and consultation responses. In turn, UKERC offers access to a large network of parties interested in energy system research, opportunities for dissemination of work, insights into the full range of UKERC research and the forging of new relationships with other energy researchers.

Timeline

- EOI opens: week commencing 11 August 2025
- Submission of EOIs: by 17:00 on 26 September 2025
- Assessment of EOIs completed: 24 October 2025
- Development/Co-creation of full proposal: until 19 December 2025

- Decision on award of funding: 2 January 2026
- Start of project: no later than 30 March 2026

Submission

Please submit your EoI using the form available on the UKERC website, to ukerc@imperial.ac.uk no later than 17:00 on Friday 26 September.

Please submit your EoI as a PDF using the naming convention: 'Net Zero Support' followed by the name of your project. In the submission email please also specify the call that you are applying to.

