REGEN

Greater South East Net Zero Hub

Preparing for RESP: Why local governance structures matter

Discussion of findings for local authorities

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Welcome

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About Regen

Regen provides independent, evidence-led insight and advice to support a net zero future.
To deliver this, we are focused on four strategic goals:

We work with local places, utilities and investors to accelerate the energy transition.

The challenge

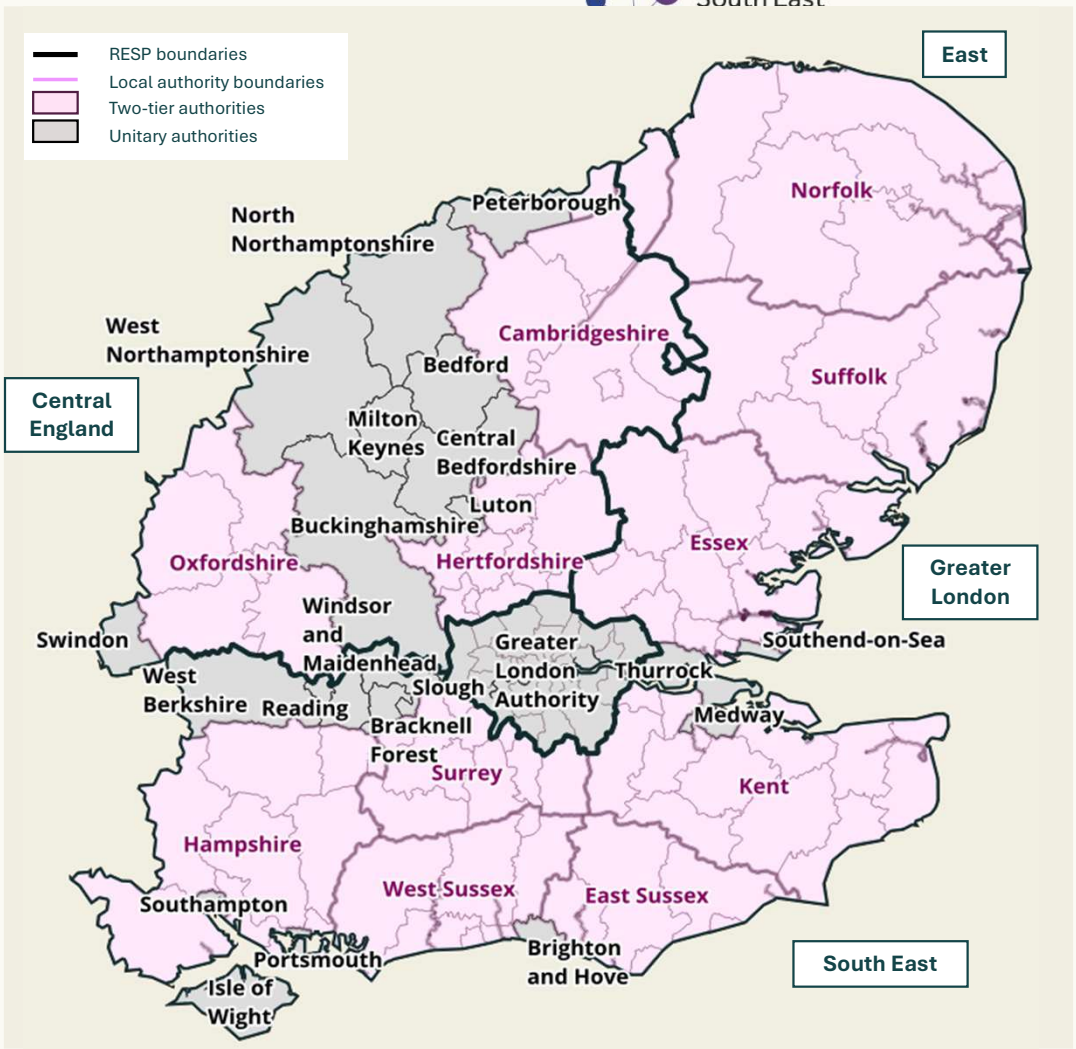
RESP represents a step change in energy system planning.

RESP Strategic Boards will make crucial decisions about energy infrastructure that underpins the strategic ambitions of local places.

Local government representatives will have significant influence on these boards.

How will they make decisions, as a region?

7 interviews with a representative mix of unitary, county and combined authorities



Today’s discussion

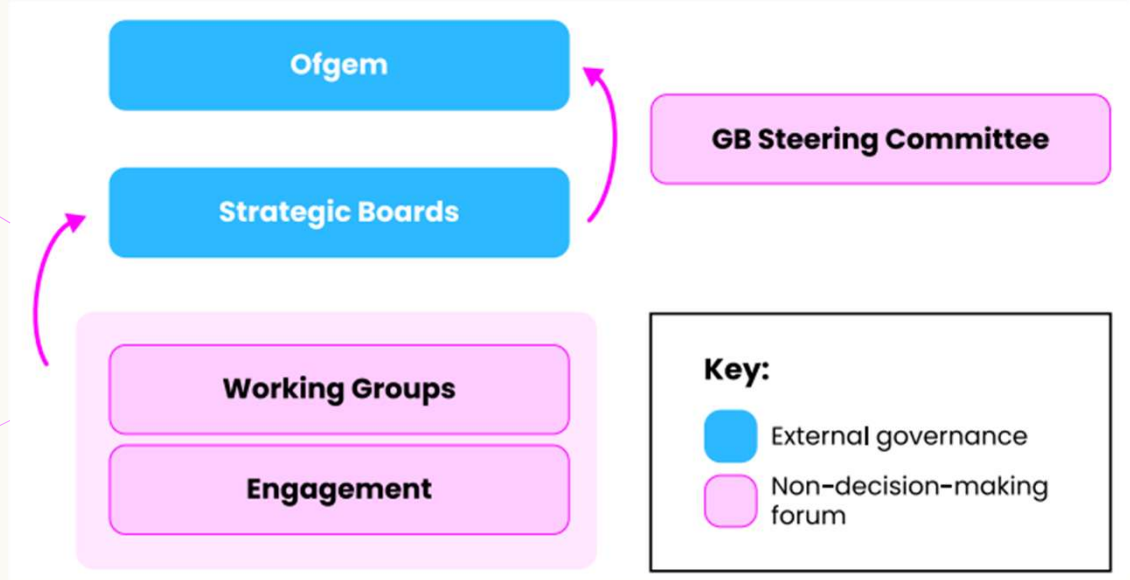
- Share our thematic findings from our research
- Opportunity to share your plans and raise queries
- Discuss the next steps

Nominations are open for NESO's Governance Groups

Up to **6 seats** for local government representatives on each Strategic Board

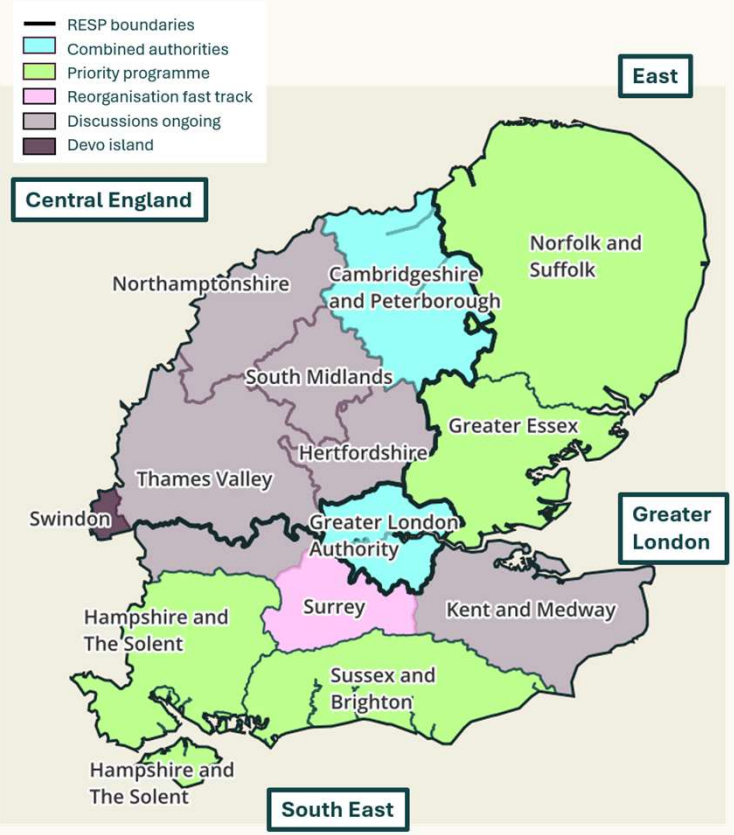
- Represent **region**, not their council area
- 50% voting share

Up to **24 seats** on local authority (and 4 thematic) Working Groups

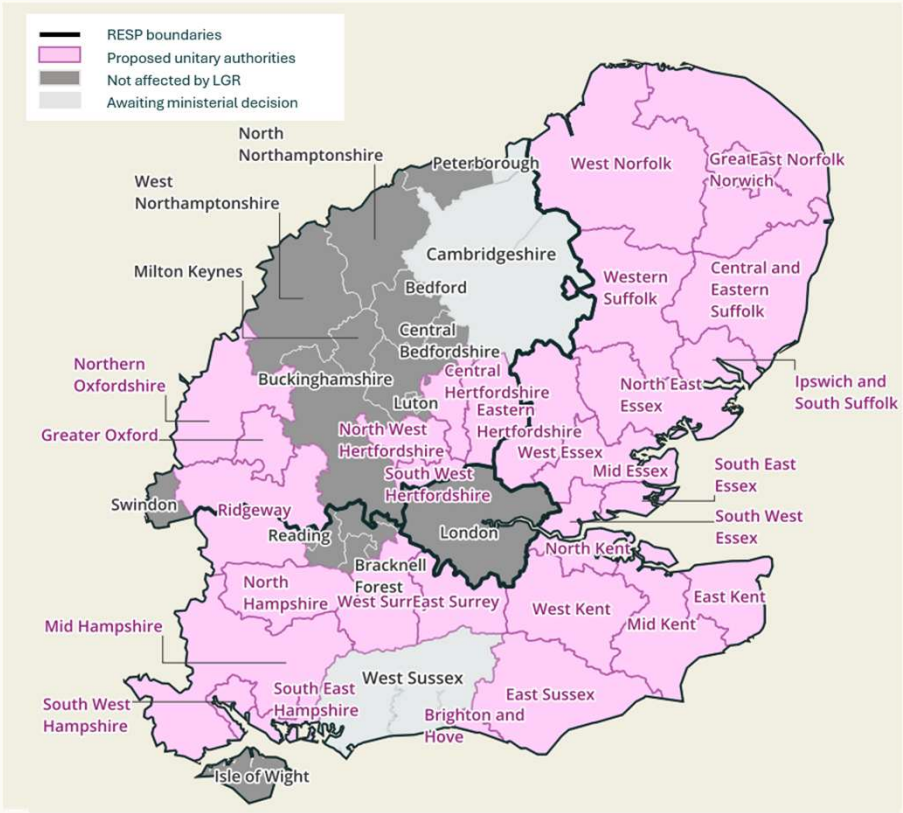


RESP is happening against a backdrop of (potential) change

Established and emerging strategic authorities



Proposed authority boundaries after LGR (as of July 2026)



#1 Everyone is starting in a different place

- **Different approaches** e.g. capacity, evidence collation, coordination
- Most favoured **senior officers** over politicians
- **Varied readiness** to nominate individuals
- **Political changes** are altering strategic priorities and capacity
- **LAEPs** offer some LAs a strong evidence base
  - But unlikely to fit post-LGR boundaries
- Frustration and confusion about **NESO's expectations** on data and evidence
- All see **strong alignment** between energy, climate, growth and spatial planning

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Q – What stage are you at in submitting nominations for the Strategic Boards?

Q – How confident do you feel about RESP?

#2 Council governance structures may need to evolve

- Representatives may **need a structure behind them** to enable robust, transparent, well-informed decision-making
- Existing structures have **broad remits**
- Some are refreshing and **formalising existing structures**
  - e.g. LAEP working groups
- May need **new processes**
  - e.g. to manage complex evidence, build comprehensive view across multiple priorities, decide a position to take
- **Strong alignment** between energy, spatial planning and economic growth
  - **SDS governance structures** may prove useful
- **Tailored** briefings will be needed

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Q – What might need to change in how your council currently makes energy-related decisions?

#3 Proactive, pan-regional collaboration may increase impact

- Some regions are **coordinating** nominations
- May need to build **regional consensus in advance** on strategic priorities and present coherent evidence
- A **regional mandate** is seen as necessary, but unclear how to achieve this
- Lack of existing **forums** - apart from sub-regional transport bodies
- Uncertainty over how **voting processes** can be transparently managed

Q – How might you collaborate as a RESP region?

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Possible roles for the Net Zero Hubs

Immediate actions (Oct 2026 – Mar 2027)

- Disseminate key updates
- Build a comprehensive view of regions
- Host best practice discussions
- Advocate for greater clarity from NESO on data and evidence requirements

Medium term (Dec 2026 - Dec 2027)

- Raise awareness in NESO of complexities facing local authorities
- Explore how SDS could support the RESP
- Develop understanding among representatives of network business planning
- Develop practical resources for officers
- Champion stronger regional collaboration

Longer term (Summer 2027 – Dec 2028)

- Explore the governance processes that may be required e.g. to reach voting positions

Q – How could the GSENZH best support you?

Q – What are your key messages for NESO?

Q – What's next for your authority?

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