

# The social benefits of climate action

## 3. Heat pumps



Reducing carbon is only one part of the climate action story: **multiple other benefits can also be delivered by low carbon measures.** These benefits come in the form of improvements to the environment, health and wellbeing, as well as increased economic productivity.

This guide provides monetised estimates for a selection of socio-economic co-benefits of climate action. By looking beyond carbon emissions reductions and evidencing the delivery of multiple priorities, we can build broader support for plans and increase the effectiveness of our decision-making.



### How do we value the social benefits of shifting from fossil fuel boilers to heat pumps?

Fossil fuel heating systems increase harmful air pollution linked to respiratory and cardiovascular issues. These health risks reduce when switching to cleaner, electricity powered heating systems like heat pumps. More consistent internal temperatures can also result, reducing mould growth and the likelihood of structural damage. Our lives and homes benefit.

The co-benefits calculations begin by identifying house types within an area. We estimate the wider impacts of installing heat pumps compared with pre-existing heating systems.

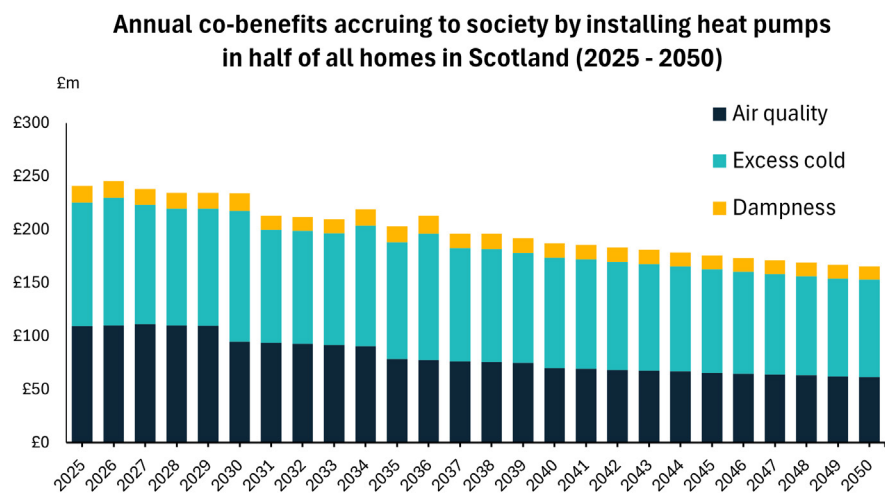
Although we express the additional benefits as monetary values following government guidance, these don't represent direct financial gains. Instead, they are avoided costs. Figures don't appear as revenue in your balance sheets, but should reduce future spending on areas such as health and social care. The result: healthier, happier and more resilient communities.

### How large are these benefits?

The table (below) indicates the estimated total co-benefits when shifting fossil fuel heating systems to heat pumps from 2025-2050 in the Inverclyde Council area, compared to Scotland as a whole. Values are based on clean heat advice within the Climate Change Committee (CCC)'s Seventh Carbon Budget to reach net zero and ECCI analysis. The model assumes half of all households install heat pumps.

Co-Benefit Type	Per person - Inverclyde (£)	Per person - Scotland (£)	Total Inverclyde (£ million)	Total - Scotland (£ million)
Avoided air pollution	£392	£387	£30.1	£2,120
Reduced excess cold	£489	£499	£37.5	£2,733
Reduced dampness	£59	£66	£4.5	£362
<b>Total</b>	<b>£940</b>	<b>£952</b>	<b>£72.1</b>	<b>£5,216</b>

This graph shows the benefits from 2025 to 2050. Please note that the scaling-up of deployment is not reflected within this [analysis](#)<sup>1</sup> and the reduction in benefits over time is influenced by the discounting of future values (in line with the [UK Government Green Book](#)).



These findings illustrate how local authority investments incentivising the transition to clean heat can assist with delivering **key service outcomes**, whilst reducing demand on wider public budgets.

It's also important to note that the methodology is compliant with the Green Book. Estimates are therefore conservative, as they exclude a wider set of benefits for which UK Government-backed methods are not currently available. For example, using electricity over fossil fuels for heating reduces Scotland's reliance on energy imports, increasing energy security.

## How do we shift people to heat pumps?

The first step in the SCIS journey is the population of the ClimateView platform with interventions from current plans and identifying additional actions. Interventions are the actions your council does so net zero targets can be met. Examples include:

- Clearly communicating Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (LHEES) including areas for potential heat networks zones and any heat network development. This allows property owners to shift to the most appropriate clean heat source with confidence.
- Signpost [relevant grants available to homeowners and businesses](#) or assist with collective purchasing. For example, help residents in or at risk of fuel poverty to access the [Scottish Government's Warmer Homes Scotland programme](#) or private landlords to access the [Private Rented Sector Landlord \(PRS\) Loan](#).
- Within Area Based Schemes or council-owned properties, install heat pumps if they are the most appropriate clean heat mechanism.

<sup>1</sup>While the CCC's recommendation is for half of the UK's households to be fitted with a heat pump by 2040, for the purposes of this analysis, the table and graph show the benefits were this to be effective from the present day.

## Further information

- [Sign up for our latest news and resources.](#)
- [Explore the social benefits of climate action for your area based on the UK Co-Benefits Atlas.](#)
- Visit the [SCIS website](#).
- To find out more or request bespoke analysis for your local authority or project, email the CO-BENS team: [cobens@ed.ac.uk](mailto:cobens@ed.ac.uk).