

Durham University Business School and Northern Powerhouse Partnership Net Zero Knowledge Exchange – Event Outline

- Details:** Thursday 4th June, 2026, 1-4pm, Durham University Business School, Waterside, Riverside Place, Durham, DH1 1SL.
- Purpose:** To bring together senior and emerging academic voices who are leading research on the energy transition and its implications for regional economic growth, in order to share the latest insights from their research with those working across the sector, as well as with regional policy makers. The workshop will facilitate the exchange of cutting-edge research with topical private sector insights and evidence, to promote effective policy making.
- This event will also mark the launch of the Northern Powerhouse Partnership's Northern Energy Transition Network, a coalition of business leaders, policy experts and those working in the energy transition space across the North of England, to advocate for the decarbonisation policies that will drive economic growth in the northern regions.
- Attendees:** Leading academics, senior policy experts from across relevant business sectors and regional policy makers.

Agenda

- 1-1.15pm: Welcome and opening remarks by Sarah Mulholland, Kieran Fernandes, and Laura Marsiliani
- 1.15-2pm: Keynote by Anna Valero, Professor in Practice at LSE and Industrial Strategy Advisor to the Chancellor of the Exchequer* (Chair Sarah Mulholland)
- 2-2.15pm: Coffee break
- 2.15-3pm: Short research presentations by Durham University Business School colleagues, and the wider Durham faculty. (Chair Joanna Berry)
- Chien-Yi Chang, Assistant Professor in Computer Science and Law and JustNOW: 'Equitable and Sustainable Data Governance for AI Development'
 - Pia Andres, Assistant Professor in Economics and Law, CE3 and JustNOW: 'How Advances in AI Shape Energy Innovation and the "Race" between Clean and Dirty Technologies'
 - Laura Marsiliani, Professor in Economics, Faculty of Business Associate Dean for Ethics, Responsibility and Sustainability, CE3 and JustNOW: 'Economic Lessons from Energy Decarbonisation Projects for the North East of England'
 - John Moffat, Associate Professor in Economics: 'UK R&D Policy and Co-Location'
- 3.00-3.45pm: Panel discussion: Net-Zero-Oriented Industrial Development and Regional Growth in the North of England. (Chair Pia Andres)
- Anna Valero, Professor in Practice at LSE and Industrial Strategy Advisor to the Chancellor of the Exchequer
 - Richard Harris, Professor in Economics, Durham University
 - Clare Wildfire, Global Cities Lead, Mott McDonald, and Co-Chair of the Northern Powerhouse Partnership's Northern Energy Transition Business Network.
- 3.45pm: Refreshments and networking

** Note: Professor Valero will be speaking in her capacity as Professor in Practice at the London School of Economics. She will not be representing the government.*

Speakers

Professor Anna Valero

Anna Valero is a Professor in Practice at the LSE's Centre for Economic Performance (CEP) and Global School of Sustainability; Director of the Growth Programme at the CEP, Deputy Director of the Programme on Innovation and Diffusion and an Associate of the Grantham Research Institute. Her research focuses on the drivers of productivity and innovation in firms and regions, and she has a particular interest in informing policies for environmentally sustainable and inclusive growth. She is currently serving as Industrial Strategy Adviser to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves, having served as a member of the Council of Economic Advisers in HM Treasury in 2024-25. Anna has previously held a number of advisory roles for the UK government and policy institutions.

Dr John Moffat

Dr John Moffat is an Associate Professor and Deputy Head of the Department of Economics at Durham University. His research focuses on analysing the nature and sources of geographic differences in innovation and productivity in the UK, typically through the application of statistical techniques to large firm-level datasets. The policy relevance of his work has led to engagement with various government bodies.

Dr Laura Marsiliani

Laura is an economist active in the fields of public, environmental, natural resource and energy economics. She is currently a Professor of Economics, Faculty of Business Associate Dean for Ethics, Responsibility and Sustainability (ERS), Fellow of the Durham Energy Institute and Centre for Sustainable Development, Law and Policy and Co-Director of the Centre for Environmental and Energy Economics at Durham University. She has held academic and visiting positions at the Universities of Rochester and University of California Santa Barbara, USA, University of Tilburg, The Netherlands and Sichuan University, China. Laura holds a PhD in Economics from London Business School and an MSc in Environmental and Natural Resource Economics from University College London. She has participated in research projects funded by the UKRI, ESRC, BEIS and the EU, and more recently in major interdisciplinary initiatives such as the HEIF/Research England 'Growing Teesside's Hydrogen Economy and Catalysing a Just Transition to Net Zero', EPSRC/NERC 'Geothermal Energy from Mines and Solar Geothermal Heat' and Durham University SRF JusTN0W (Just Transition to a Net Zero World) which explores ways to spearhead a green and fair transition at global, national and local level. Her research has informed the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) on electricity pricing and capacity policies, especially in connection to captive and quick-rental power plants. She has chaired two EURESCO conferences on the International Dimension of Environmental Policy and edited two books on the same topic with Springer. Laura is actively engaged with the dialogue on climate change, renewable energy and net zero and is a member of the Durham University observer delegation at the UN COP conferences.

Dr Pia Andres

Pia is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Economics and Law School at Durham University, a member of the JusTNOW Initiative, and an Associate of the Centre for Economic Performance at LSE. She is an economist studying the technological shift towards a low-carbon and increasingly digital economy, how these transitions are reshaping the global landscape of economic competitiveness, and the challenges involved in making them just and inclusive. Before joining Durham, Pia was a Research Economist at the Centre for Economic Performance. She holds a PhD in Environmental Economics from the London School of Economics.

Professor Richard Harris

Professor Richard Harris is a professor of economics and a past Deputy-Dean of the Faculty of Business, Durham University. Before joining Durham in September 2012, Richard held the positions of Alec Cairncross Professor of Applied Economics and Director of the Centre for Public Policy for Regions at Glasgow University. He previously worked at Queen's University, Belfast, and the Universities of Newcastle upon Tyne, Durham and Portsmouth in the UK and Waikato in New Zealand. He has published some 180 journal articles, book chapters, and books and undertaken a significant amount of public policy research for government.

Clare Wildfire

Clare Wildfire is Mott MacDonald's Global Cities Lead and a Fellow, with 35 years' experience spanning low-carbon engineering, regeneration, and sustainable urban development. She applies systemic thinking to help cities accelerate decarbonisation, strengthen climate resilience, and deliver healthier, more inclusive outcomes. Clare serves as Framework Director for the Mayor of London's [Zero Carbon Accelerator](#) and has played a key role in industry-led collaborations advancing the UK's transition to net zero, including authoring [A place-based approach to net zero](#). She also contributes to the Mayor of London's Infrastructure Advisory Panel and supports the Surrey Climate Commission in a voluntary capacity.

Dr Chien-Yi Chang

Dr Chien-Yi Chang is an Assistant Professor of Law and an Assistant Professor of Computer Science at Durham University. She is also affiliated with the Center for Sustainable Development Law and Policy (JusTNOW initiative) and the Stanford School of Medicine. Her research bridges law and technology, combining doctrinal analysis, empirical study, and computational experimentation to explore the legal, social, and technical dimensions of artificial intelligence and biomedical research. She holds a Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering from Stanford, a J.D. from CUHK, and a B.S. in Physics from Caltech.