



Repowering the Black Country

CASE STUDY

'Repowering the Black Country' is the first initiative of the Black Country Industrial Cluster – a unique cluster comprising more than 3,000 manufacturing companies employing more than 50,000 people. The Cluster is at the centre of the UK metals and construction products sector, with 80 firms contributing more than £2 billion to the regional economy and employing more than 12,000 skilled people, and national centres of excellence in brownfield remediation and the circular economy.

Repowering the Black Country brings together a consortium of organisations to address the challenge of how to achieve industrial decarbonisation across the UK's diverse supply chains, consisting of many thousands of dispersed and distributed sites.

Through a programme of initiatives, businesses in the Black Country will be supported to capitalise on global clean growth opportunities and the transition to a net zero future. This builds on almost a thousand years of heritage in which the Black Country, then Coventry, and later Birmingham, created local industrial economies and communities centred on the innovative exploitation of plentiful local energy resources.

Through the programme, four zero-carbon industrial hubs will be created and set out to reduce industrial carbon emissions by around 1.3 million tonnes of CO₂ over the next 10 years, sustaining more than 26,900 jobs in the process.

Repowering the Black Country is one of seven industrial decarbonisation projects that have been partly funded by the government and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). It builds on the Black Country's strategic advantages including greater flexibility, connectivity, manufacturing skills, strong local partnerships, a regeneration imperative and a strong local culture of enterprise, innovation and energy-intensive manufacturing – there are around 3,500 energy-intensive businesses in the Black Country - a greater density of mid-sized manufacturing than in any other UK region.

Through the project, a portfolio approach is proposed, wherein a large number of fundable projects will be taken forwards across diverse industrial supply chains. This will happen in an enabling financial, technical and political environment, resulting in faster delivery and lower risk compared to one or two large infrastructure investments.

Mini clusters of zero carbon industry will be created across the Black Country and multiple industrial sectors by using local authority planning powers proactively and attracting inward investment.

A wider aim is to slow and reverse the drift overseas of energy-intensive commercial operations over the last 30 years, taking with them over 300,000 skilled jobs. Many of these are critical to UK supply chains including the automotive, aerospace defence, medical device and energy industries.

Repowering the Black Country aims to help create strategically selected circular economy zero-carbon industrial hubs and enhance UK supply chain resilience in these critical sectors. This is forecast to contribute to a £16 billion boost in gross value added by 2035 and create, or safeguard, at least 20,000 skilled jobs.

This is a positive example of decarbonising an industrial cluster and protecting and creating good jobs, showing the way forwards for a just transition.