



**Getting you
on the right track**

A new data centres
social charter to help make
informed planning
decisions.

DC Society A social charter for UK data centres

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A social charter for UK data centres

The need for a social charter for data centres

The social challenge facing UK data centres

Our recent report, Data Centre Society highlighted an opportunity for data centres to bring more community benefits. Data centres could move from being perceived as anonymous power, water and land-hungry buildings that suck in resources, to vital social interventions that have the potential to bring much needed change to areas, creating equality, jobs, and community.

Current views are driven by a lack of understanding as to how to unlock the societal and economic value of data centres. This charter outlines some clear steps for data centre developers to take to unlock extensive, positive, social and economic impact for generations to come.



Embodying justice – the social potential of UK data centres

‘Embodying justice’ in data centres is a process where we realise the significant potential of data centres to remedy past and present harm within the built environment. This requires consciously working toward more just futures where the design, construction and stewardship of data centres is driven by a commitment to equity in the distribution of resources and opportunities and is underpinned by fair and transparent decision-making with communities.

Data centres can act as a lightning rod for regional economic renewal but this should be done in tandem with their contribution to embodied justice and specific to each local area. Just involvement of communities in data centre design should include transparent decision-making and good governance so that it can contribute to essential social infrastructure that brings economic, environmental and social benefits for communities.

Data centre developers need to work with other stakeholders to refine their relationship with the communities around them so they can prioritise having a positive impact on communities, such as improving health and social outcomes. A clear set of realistic principles is needed for what socially conscious and community-led data centre development and management should look like. This can form a social contract with data centres that allows them to be a catalyst for local regeneration and renewal.

This charter creates a set of six tiered principles that can be used by data centre developers to understand the needs of communities and use this as the foundation for co-creating data centres with residents to maximise the considerable local benefits.

The purpose of the charter

Whether focussing on developing essential local social and green infrastructure, building local community wealth, contributing heat to local communities or supporting local supply chains, essential skills, training and jobs, the social potential of data centres is huge.

To date, there has been no agreed blueprint on what a socially conscious, community data centre looks like. Many in the industry have yet to realise the considerable benefits they can bring to communities while still retaining commercial viability. And while there is no one-size fits all model, data centres can offer different things to different communities. The guiding principles in this charter seeks to set out a vision for what a new social contract that embodies social justice and social value in the data centres we are building.

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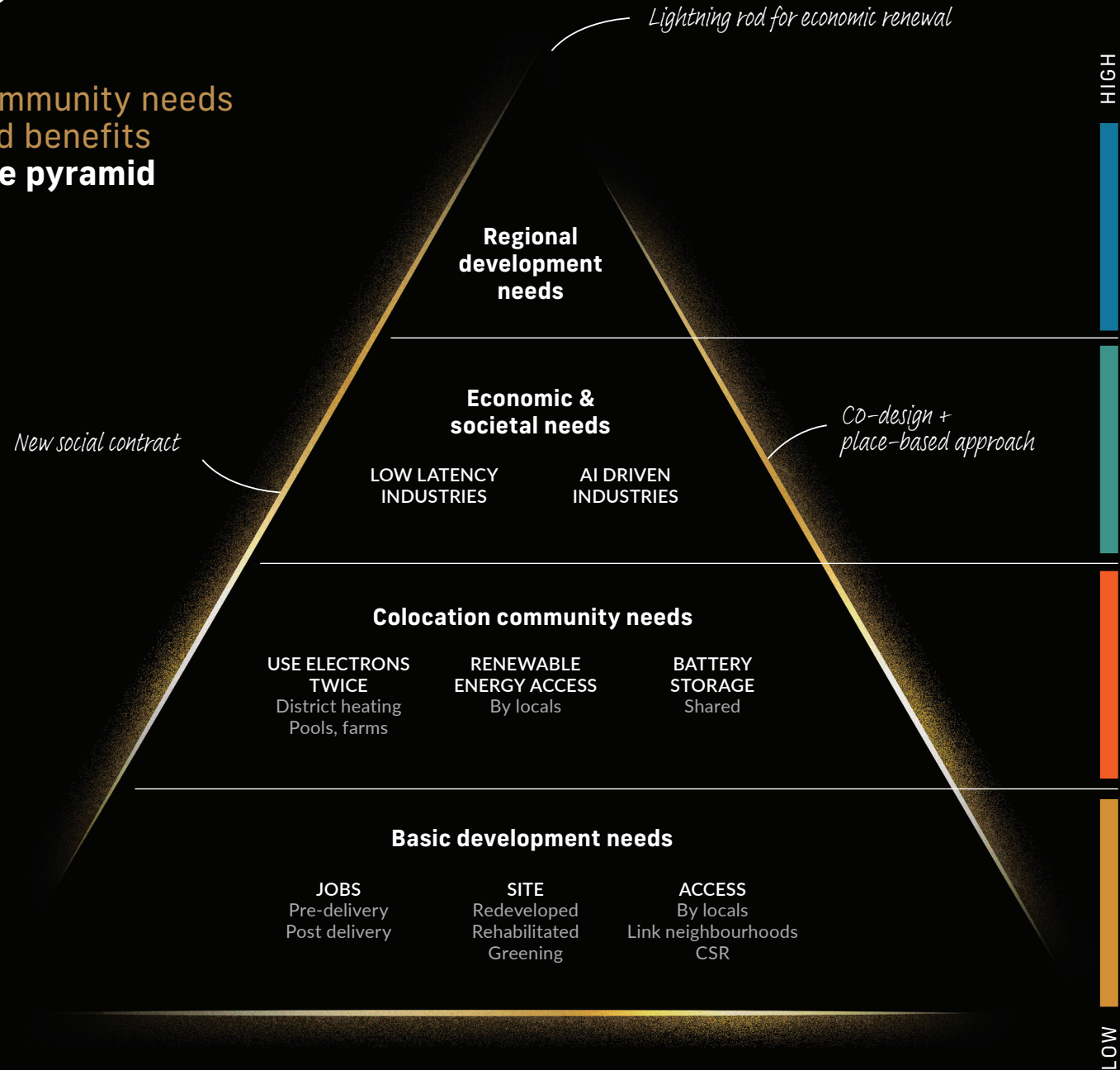
LET’S TALK

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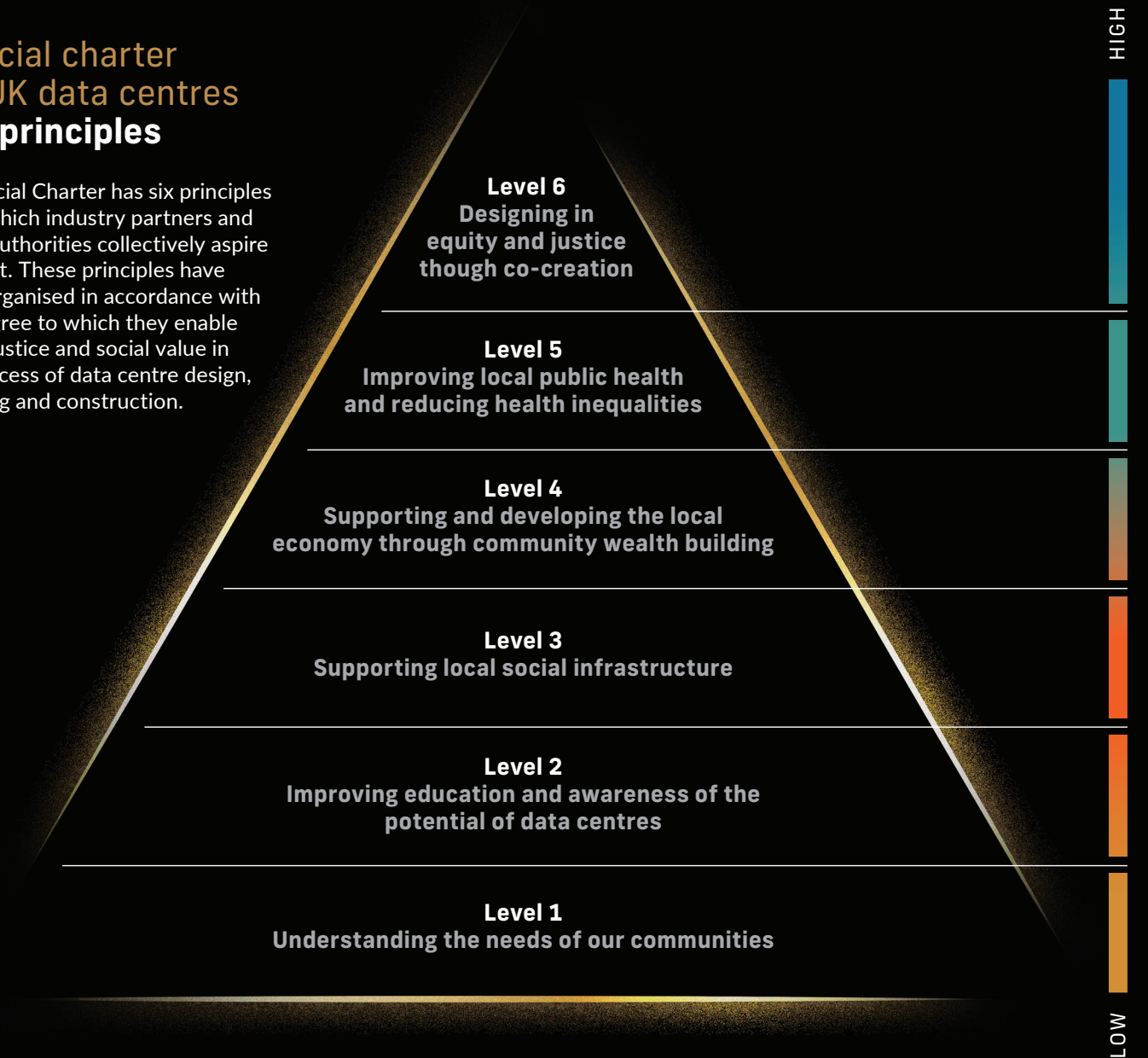


Community needs and benefits The pyramid



A social charter for UK data centres The principles

The Social Charter has six principles upon which industry partners and Local Authorities collectively aspire to enact. These principles have been organised in accordance with the degree to which they enable social justice and social value in the process of data centre design, planning and construction.





Level 1

Understanding the needs of our communities

A key element to maximising the potential of data centres involves a rigorous understanding of the local area. At this level, we must commit to an evidence-based needs analysis that outlines the social infrastructure, community, health, environmental, social and economic needs of an area. By understanding this, we can ensure equitable distribution of benefits for all residents, including potential priority groups.

We (Industry) will engage with the local community and key stakeholders to produce a local needs analysis which provides a rich, evidence-based account of local needs across multiple domains, generating insights into the underlying causes of socioeconomic, environmental and community challenges.

Level 2

Improving education and awareness of the potential of data centres

Little is known about why data centres are so important and what they can potentially contribute to communities. There is a limited understanding of the connection between the use of social media like WhatsApp/TikTok and the data centres that enable their use and this disconnect is most pronounced in the UK. That is partly because data infrastructure is largely invisible. The level two commitment improves education and awareness of the role of data centres and their potential as assets that can add value to their communities.

We (Industry) will commit to identifying, and working to educate and inform, key community stakeholders as part of the co-creation process. Through such activities as workshops, events, panels and ongoing conversations, we will work to educate and inform communities of the potential of data centres and how they can contribute to local needs.

Level 3

Supporting local social infrastructure

A level 3 commitment from a data centre developer to help regenerate local areas will have a significant impact and potential social infrastructure benefits should be embedded at the very beginning, not tacked on. Data centres often provide opportunities for instance, to connect different green spaces to others via walking routes. The synergy between data centres and their communities offers more than just economic opportunity – it introduces a path for renewal in regions often facing significant challenges. A level 3 commitment provides real tangible improvements in public spaces and cultural landmarks and builds trust with residents.

We (Industry) believe that the data centre/community partnership can go beyond corporate responsibility and contribute to the area's social infrastructure and we will work to ensure that the community and data centre grow together in ways that are supportive and sustainable.

We (industry) undertake to understand local social infrastructure, to identify the potential positive impact that the data centre can have for the community and to help to address local community needs.

Level 4

Supporting and developing the local economy through community wealth building

Community Wealth Building can marshal and improve the wealth that already exists in local communities. Communities can then enjoy the economic multiplier effect of finance staying in the area so that money circulates and is spent in the local community, supporting local supply chains, businesses, education facilities and creating opportunities locally for well-paid, dignified work. At the heart of local community wealth-building are co-operatives, local, mutually-owned businesses and local banks that can enable the wealth generated to stay in the local economy to the benefit of the community. Where possible, we should ensure that the resources used for data centres stay within a 50 km radius to maximise the benefits local communities.

A level 4 commitment supports and prioritises initiatives that encourage existing and new contract providers to use local companies within their supply chains. It also commits to supporting the creation of community cooperatives and community stewardship of assets, using local or regional community banking, identifying opportunities to rebalance local economies. This could include teaming up with local universities and colleges to support apprenticeships, local skills development and jobs and supporting local public and private organisations to derive waste heat and energy benefits from the data centre cheaply.

We (Industry) will support our communities through the 5 Pillars of Community Wealth Building. We will:

- support local anchor commissioning & procurement
- facilitate the socially productive use of land and property
- encourage fair employment and just local labour markets
- ensure our financial power works for our local communities
- support where possible, local and community ownership of the economy



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Level 5

Improving local public health and reducing health inequalities

The UK's potential designation as a hub for data centres powering AI infrastructure could translate to billions in added GDP, scores of new jobs, and bolstered tech sectors across the country. However, this could exacerbate existing socio-economic divides and these benefits will not be evenly distributed unless we consciously prioritise opportunities to reduce health inequalities in an area. A level 5 commitment involves a joined-up approach with local councils/authorities, public health and local communities to generate innovative solutions to the inequalities facing our communities.

We (Industry) believe that data centres can positively contribute to addressing the health inequalities facing our communities and we will work with local authorities to develop a local health inequalities strategy that maximises the contribution that data centres can make to address local health needs.

Level 6

Designing in equity and justice through co-creation

Many currently feel disempowered in the planning and design process generally, but the regenerative potential of data centres can become a point around which people, ideas and resources cluster. When people can take part in data centre-driven regeneration, they feel more included and the potential for a data centre to contribute positive change is maximised.

A level 6 commitment means co-creating with communities to understand and deliver what's needed in terms of social infrastructure and meet the real challenges that communities face. Local knowledge and expertise are crucial in ensuring the good placement of infrastructure, green spaces, community resources, educational and retail facilities and general land use.

A level 6 commitment recognises the clear justice imperative from supporting residents to be empowered and to have control over the decisions made about their communities and their lives.

We (Industry) will commit to identifying and working with residents and key community stakeholders. Through such activities as workshops, events, panels and ongoing conversations, we will work to empower communities to co-create data centre placemaking that genuinely seeks to address the needs of those communities.



[SPOTIFY PLAYLIST →](#)

DC Society
social charter



We are your friends

Justice, Simian

You're the voice

John Farnham

Another brick in the wall, Pt.2

Pink Floyd

Danger! High voltage

Electric Six

Anxiety

Doechii

Price tag

Jessie J, B.o.B.

Easier said than done

Morcheeba

Digital love

Daft Punk

Freedom! '90

George Michael

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