



Rise of the conscious community

Health and wellbeing are playing an ever-increasing part in our choice of where to live.

By far the fastest-growing of the property tribes we identified in 2015 is the “Mecos”. These are people who make health and wellbeing a priority, and want their home to reflect that, whether by architecture, design or technology.

In 2015, 20% of respondents to our survey identified as Mecos. By 2020, that figure had almost doubled to 39%.

Five years ago, this meant spa bathrooms and yoga studios. Today, however, their idea of health and wellbeing in the home is more about community and sustainability: two thirds of them said they would move house for greener and more sustainable living. Only 3% said they weren’t interested in finding out how to make their homes greener.

“ WE HAVE DEFINITELY SEEN AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE LOOKING FOR ECO HOMES AND WAYS TO BE MORE CARBON NEUTRAL ”

Many are also looking to become a bit more self-sufficient, perhaps seeking extra space to grow their own vegetables,” says [Kate Eales](#), head of regional residential at Strutt & Parker.

Our survey backs this up, with respondents saying they were looking for ways to live a greener life. Many cited home improvements such as double glazing (57%), high levels of insulation (47%), solar panels or solar energy (38%). Others said they wanted to buy direct from farmers (48%), grow vegetables (44%), or get milk delivered in reusable glass bottles to reduce single-use plastic (42%).

What is more striking is that these good intentions are not being turned into action. In terms of sustainable living, the top two things respondents said they actually do is use a green energy provider such as Octopus or Bulb (44%) and recycled over and above local collections (54%).



An occasional trip to the dump and switching utility company aren’t going to save the world from climate change. But rather than blame these would-be do-gooders for failing to do any good, the real lesson should be how difficult it actually is to take significant steps to reducing your carbon footprint, without committing to a dramatic life change.

“If you really want to take sustainable living seriously, you’ll probably have to move into an eco-home. We’re seeing a lot of demand for them, but while new builds are becoming more environmentally friendly, there’s very little guidance on offer for people living in older homes,” says [Kate Eales](#).

Lack of guidance is one of the biggest issues. Does any householder have any idea of the best way to insulate a draughty Victorian house? They can be forgiven for being cautious after a widespread, heavily subsidised scheme started in the 1990s to install cavity-wall insulation left many homes with damp and mouldy walls.

“There are very few planning regulations on sustainability, precious little guidance and the rules change frequently. There isn’t even any formal advice on how to cut carbon emissions when houses are being built,” says [Charlotte Moxon](#), head of regional new homes at Strutt & Parker.

This is a particular problem with new technology, such as heat pumps. More than 600,000 of these will have to be installed every year by 2028 if the Government is to achieve its target of phasing out gas boilers by 2035³. At the moment, fewer than 30,000 are being installed.

“The challenge to anyone wanting to add environmental improvements to their home is finding reliable, qualified installers you can trust. And there doesn’t seem to be a plan for training them,” says [Jason Beedell](#), research director at Strutt & Parker.

This is a problem that has already derailed the Government’s Green Homes Grant initiative, offering £5,000 grants towards carbon-friendly home improvements. Following an extension, with reports of widespread difficulties finding registered contractors, as well as confusion over exactly what measures were covered by the scheme the government cancelled the initiative this spring.

In our survey, almost half the respondents (46%) said they would like to drive an electric car - though the cost of new vehicles and the lack of charging points can make this a challenge, too. Happily, some locations are beginning to tackle it.

In London, four local authorities - Kensington & Chelsea, Hammersmith & Fulham, Westminster and Richmond - have more than 70 rapid charging points per 100,000 population. Elsewhere in the UK, Dundee and Milton Keynes are way ahead of the pack, with more than 70 rapid charging points per 100,000. Oxford, with 42, is the only other location with more than 40.

Some parts of the country are doing better than others when it comes to increasing the number of ultra-low emission vehicles on the roads. The outer London boroughs of Barking and Bexley top the list with five-year growth of 877% and 820% respectively. Outside the capital, Exeter leads the way with 809% growth, followed by Bristol (715%), Leeds (567%) and Glasgow (512%).

Recharging a nation

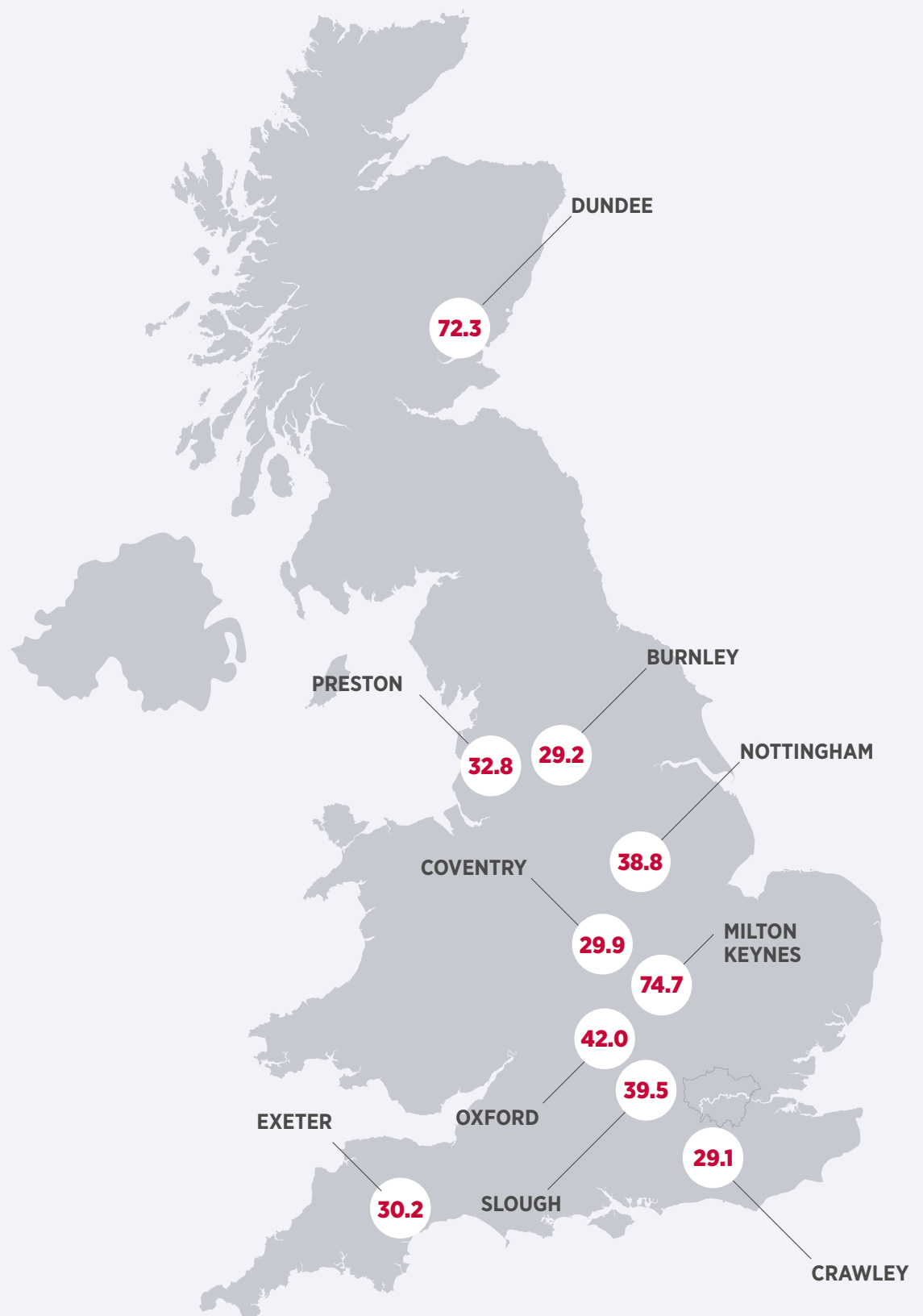
With the UK Government committed to its Net Zero objectives, and usage of electric vehicles rising exponentially, the drive towards new transport solutions for the green economy is gathering pace. Last year, the Government announced £500m of investment into the roll out of new rapid vehicle charging hubs. The aim: to ensure no driver is ever more than 30 miles away from a charging device.

This programme is just one part of an ambitious plan to build a fit-for-purpose green transport infrastructure ahead of the ban on sales of new petrol and diesel cars in 2030. Local authorities are already introducing clean air zones that penalise high-polluting vehicles, while grants to encourage consumers to switch to electric cars are now widely available. The challenge will be ensuring that the rollout of green transport infrastructure keeps pace with demand.

“We’ve seen a five-fold rise in ultra-low-emission vehicle usage in the UK since 2015. This will drive huge demand for car charging infrastructure going forward. As we approach 2030, local decision-makers will have to come to terms with an increasingly eco-conscious population unwilling to compromise on the ability to get around easily,” says [Charlie Tattersall](#), Senior Research Analyst at BNP Paribas Real Estate.

UK LOCATIONS

Number of public rapid charging points per 100,000 population⁴





LONDON LOCATIONS

