

People, Place, Purpose

*Case studies of public engagement
on climate change*

About Climate Outreach

Climate change affects us all, and involves us all. But all too often conversations about climate exclude and alienate people. We know people care about tackling climate change. And we know we need to act fast. Season after season of wild weather around the world leaves us in no doubt that climate change is happening here and now.

At [Climate Outreach](#) we know people become the solution to the climate crisis when they're invited into the conversation.

We conduct original research to better understand what people from different places and backgrounds think and feel about climate. We work with people and organisations to help create the best stories. We help them navigate difficult climate conversations and unlock more ambitious climate action. And we work with governments and policy makers in the UK and globally to show them the importance of engaging people in climate policy making and policy roll out.

In an era of economic strain, where many people's daily lives are getting harder, the risk of polarisation, political backsliding, and lost momentum is real. The UK's long standing cross-party consensus on climate is under threat. Without the right narrative, we risk division and delay at the very moment we need unity and ambition.

We know the story we need: one of hope, opportunity, and progress. But this story won't write itself. We must act now to shape the language, narratives, and messengers that will sustain ambitious climate action.

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Cover photo: People's Assembly for Nature in the UK. Credit: Jemima Stubbs

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John Ellerman
Foundation



Foreword

“But what is public engagement?” This is a question we get asked a lot at Climate Outreach. People want to understand what public engagement is and why it matters.

From our work over many years, we know good public engagement is essential if we want people to see that tackling climate change is not just possible, but happening. We know that it's essential to involve people in decisions that affect their lives if we want the green transition to succeed.

But it is often overlooked. Sometimes, it's an afterthought; at worst it's seen as an unnecessary expense.

This report seeks to help change that. We wanted to answer the question 'what is public engagement' by collating some of the best examples of it in practice.

So here you will find stories of thoughtful, innovative and impactful engagement. They have led to policies successfully being designed and implemented, more people being inspired to take climate action, and progress towards a fairer, more inclusive transition.

We hope they can inspire far more ambitious public engagement in communities across the country, supported by government, funders and policy makers alike. Tackling climate change is a task like no other. It's only by engaging and involving everyone that we can provide collective hope and solutions to address it.

Rachael Orr, CEO, Climate Outreach

Introduction



For the first time in many years, we are seeing real momentum behind the drive to engage people on climate and nature issues.

We have the opportunity to help the government shape a bold new climate story, one that engages and involves everyone in the UK in what happens next. By producing a strategy on public engagement, the UK government will be fulfilling an obligation and grasping a key opportunity set out in the Paris Agreement.

At the UN, countries agreed on [Action for Climate Empowerment](#) (ACE), a framework that recognises the role of individuals, communities, and every sector of society in tackling climate change. ACE appears as Article 6 of the UNFCCC and Article 12 of the Paris Agreement. It can be seen as a *toolbox* within these treaties for changing systems, attitudes and behaviours that are needed to foster sustainable development and manage drivers and impacts of climate change.

ACE is made up of six elements: Education, Public Awareness, Training, Public Participation, Public Access to information, and International Cooperation. When we talk about a public engagement strategy, we are therefore talking about a strategy to inform, involve and inspire people to act to address climate change and the biodiversity crisis.

These case studies are a part of the work required to make a stronger case for public engagement. They can be used as an entry point into public engagement on climate in the UK and beyond. They can also be used as a guide to help shape plans and ideas in different contexts and settings at local, regional and national level.

Above all, we hope they can inspire us all about what is possible when we are ambitious about engaging and involving people in climate and nature.

Nameerah Hameed, Advocacy Manager, Climate Outreach

Author's Note



Our 14 stories of climate engagement come from across the UK and beyond. They feature the work of many different organisations and groups, on many aspects of the climate and nature crises.

Together they showcase the impact public engagement on climate issues can have. They demonstrate how it can help us reduce climate-changing emissions, adapt to our changing world and address key social issues. They represent the potential of 'doing with' people, not 'doing to'.

Fourteen stories are not enough to cover the full extent of climate engagement in the UK. We have aimed to include a breadth of case studies in terms of their content, topic area and geography. But there is so much we have left out.

Important methods missing from our stories include co-production, climate literacy training, community organising, futures and foresight techniques, and campaigning, among many others. Organisations, networks and programmes whose work could easily have featured in these pages include Possible, Living Streets, The Carbon Literacy Project, Citizens UK, Sciencewise, Transition Towns, The Liminal Space, Hubbub, Local Story-telling Exchange, OSCAR, Friends of the Earth and many more - not least at community level and in the UK's devolved nations.

The stories we have included are based on interviews with the people who commissioned and ran the work that is featured; publicly available reports, books and articles; relevant online content; and in some cases unpublished material. While we have not included references in an academic style, each and every point we make is attributable to at least one of the sources listed at the end of each case study.

Our aim was to be accurate but positive. We have chosen to report on the impact the projects have achieved, rather than holding them up to ideals of what might have been. The result shows why the UK government and others need to put climate engagement at the heart of their work.

Sarah Allan, Public Engagement Specialist

Sarah Allan is a former Director of Climate Programmes at public participation charity Involve. Now freelance, she is a member of the Welsh Government's Innovating Democracy Advisory Group, and one of the UK's leading specialists in deliberative engagement.

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Barnet Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change and Biodiversity

The challenge

Barnet is the second largest borough in London by both geography and population. It's home to nearly 400,000 residents. In May 2022 the incoming Labour administration declared a climate and biodiversity emergency. Their election manifesto also committed to run a citizens' assembly.

Barnet's Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change and Biodiversity took place from February to May 2023. It addressed the question: *"Barnet has declared a climate emergency. What more can we do together to make Barnet more sustainable, now and in the future?"*

The assembly took place at a time of transition for the Council's sustainability team. The Council had recently declared a climate emergency. This was one of the first projects the team delivered together, making it foundational for their work.

One of the key challenges facing the team was how to achieve ambitious change within the context of the financial realities of local government.

The approach

Citizens' assemblies are part of a group of methods called **deliberative mini publics**, or DMPs. DMPs bring together a group of people who together broadly reflect the wider population. They give these 'assembly members' the opportunity to learn about the assembly topic, from both each other and wider specialists. Significant effort is made to ensure information given to the assembly is balanced and accurate. Assembly members then discuss their views with one another, weighing up different ways forward. Finally, the assembly reaches a shared conclusion about what should happen.

There is some debate about how best to distinguish between different types of DMP. However citizens' assemblies generally involve 35-200 participants and meet across several sessions. Assembly members are compensated for their time and their expenses are covered.

The approach of the Barnet Citizens' Assembly is notable in two key respects. Firstly it involved both a citizens' assembly for residents aged 18 and over, and a youth assembly for young people aged 12 to 17. Secondly, it made significant efforts to involve organisations and individuals beyond the assembly members themselves.

This included:

- involving internal and external stakeholders in deciding the question posed to the assembly
- convening two stakeholder groups (one of local community groups and one of specialists from across London) to help shape its design
- including key internal stakeholders in the assembly as facilitators and observers.

A variety of internal and external stakeholders attended the assembly as speakers. The sustainability team maintained an active feedback loop with internal governance structures. The sustainability team also sought to engage community groups and local residents in how it took forward the assembly's final recommendations.

The process

Barnet's Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change and Biodiversity brought together 60 local residents aged 12 to 90. They included:

- 40 residents aged 18 and over, recruited via democratic lottery (or '[sortition](#)'), who participated in the adult citizens' assembly. These assembly members broadly reflected the demographics of the local population, including in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and religion.
- 20 residents aged 12 to 17 who participated in a Young People's Assembly. These young people were recruited via an open two-step process through schools, and between them provided broad demographic representation.

Members of the 18+ citizens' assembly met for a total of 30 hours, split into eight sessions. The Young People's Assembly followed a similar format, but met for 18 hours over three sessions.

The impact of the Young People's Assembly on the adult assembly was significant:

"When we brought the young people to the adults' assembly to present their ideas, the adults completely changed how they were thinking about things and how ambitious they were being, and that was a good lesson."

- Project team member, 2025

Together the Citizens' Assembly and Young People's Assembly resulted in twenty key recommendations, across five themes that emerged from their work: waste and sustainable consumption; learning, communication and partnerships; nature and biodiversity; travel; and housing, building and renewable energy.

Following the conclusion of the assembly, the Council, working with TPXimpact, established five Community Action Groups (CAGs). The CAGs aimed to bring together community groups and interested residents to help take forward the assembly's recommendations. Each CAG focused on one of the assembly's five themes. There was no CAG on nature and biodiversity, with the fifth CAG instead forming as an Inter Faith group. The decision not to have a CAG on nature and biodiversity was made after engagement with the community sector, who felt this group already existed through the Green Spaces Network.

Outcomes and Impact

The Barnet Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change and Biodiversity led to several different areas and kinds of impact.

Impact of the recommendations

Barnet Council's Cabinet formally accepted the assembly's recommendations on 26 June 2024. In November 2024, the Council published [a full initial response to the recommendations](#). It covered both what the Council was already doing and what more it could do in the future to take the recommendations forward. The Council subsequently updated its Sustainability Action Plan, incorporating the recommendations into the sustainability team's ongoing work.

In general, the assembly's recommendations didn't ask the Council to take on totally new areas of action. However they also didn't fully support the status quo; they fell somewhere in between. For example, the assembly asked the Council to commit to planting more trees. The Council already had an ambitious tree planting programme and the Trees Team didn't have capacity to go further. So instead, the sustainability team looked at where else it could incorporate tree planting into the Council's work, for example through its sports programme and the planning process. The team also looked at what it could do to promote the Council's Trees for Streets initiative more widely.

The assembly asked the Council to work with schools. Again, this idea wasn't totally new. Before the assembly, engaging with schools was on the sustainability team's "wish list to do at some point". The assembly made them think "we haven't done anything on this, this needs to be a priority". Now a sustainability team member focuses a large part of their time on working with schools and young people:

"We were ...pleasantly surprised by [the recommendations]. There wasn't anything that was like 'Oh my god, we're never going to be able to do that'. It was lots of things that we [...] wanted to, or were interested in doing, or were kind of starting to do anyway. Which was good because it meant that we knew that we could deliver them... [cont'd]"

and we felt like it gave a mandate to really push ahead with some things that we had been umming and ahing about. So things like community energy was really born out the recommendations from the citizens' assembly and... all the work we're doing with schools that came directly as a recommendation from the citizens' assembly."

- Project team member, 2025

The Council also used the assembly's recommendations to inform its ongoing BarNET ZERO campaign. The campaign took the themes of the assembly's recommendations and ran with them. This helped the campaign to focus on the parts of the Council's sustainability work that were most engaging to local communities. It also informed the campaign's framing, narrative and storytelling.

Impact on the sustainability team: collaborating with those outside the Council

Taking forward the assembly's recommendations was not the only, or arguably, the biggest impact of the assembly:

"It was good for us to figure out who are those key stakeholders and partners within the borough that we need to work with to tackle climate change [...] That was a big impact that [the assembly] had."

- Project team member, 2025

The assembly left the sustainability team with a much more outward-focused approach, and with a real openness and enthusiasm for working collaboratively with others to build change. The team now conceptualises its role as about enabling communities to take action, with the Council as facilitator and convenor. This new approach has been helped by relationships that began during the assembly process and have since continued, including with members of its two advisory and oversight groups, specialists who came to speak at the assembly, and people involved in the CAGs:

"...although [the CAGs] varied in what they were able to achieve [in terms of jointly taking forward the assembly's recommendations], the big impact they had for us as officers was that we had much, much better links with community groups and a much broader variety of community groups that we were working with."

- Project team member, 2025

Projects that the sustainability team are, or have been, involved in delivering that result directly from the assembly, its impact on the team and the relationships built include:

- **Community Energy Barnet and the Barnet Community Energy Fund:** The sustainability team met Community Energy London through its work on the assembly. After the assembly concluded, the Council funded Community Energy London to deliver capacity-building workshops in the borough. A Barnet resident called Sarah, who was part of the Energy CAG, attended one of the workshops. When she discovered that Barnet didn't have a community energy group, she set one up and brought together a group of people around it. The Council offered the group roof space for initial feasibility studies and linked them with organisations who could help with funding.

Community Energy Barnet is now a CIC, and because there is therefore a sector to support, the Council has been able to direct some resources from its carbon offset fund to create a soon-to-be-launched (as of May 2025) Community Energy Fund. The Community Energy Fund will also be open to other community and faith groups, and the Council believes it is likely to lead to further action in this space.

- **BarNET ZERO challenge:** The BarNET ZERO Challenge was a competition run by the Council and Middlesex University, with sponsorship from Brent Cross Shopping Centre, NatWest and Microsoft. People "who live, work or study in Barnet" were asked to submit ideas that would help take forward the assembly's recommendations. Successful applicants were invited to a series of workshops to help work up their idea, with three winning projects then chosen to share £10,000 in funding. The winning projects were GRUBS (Green Roofs Upon Bus Shelters), Eco Mobility (creating an 'approved use' marketplace for mobility equipment) and Eco Learn & Play.

- **Barnet Schools Charter for Sustainability:** The charter is a joint commitment between schools and Barnet Council to work together on school sustainability and Barnet's wider climate targets.

- **New collaborations with the faith sector:** A number of projects emerged from the Inter Faith CAG. These include the soon-to-be-launched (as of May 2025) Barnet Faith Charter for Sustainability, and Council-delivered climate literacy training for faith leaders.

- **Barnet Climate Action Month:** Barnet Climate Action Month celebrates activity across the borough. According to a project team member, it probably wouldn't have happened without the relationships built during the assembly and the openness to collaboration that came with them. In general, the sustainability team now seeks to support and publicise the activities of others as part of what it does.

The sustainability team has also continued its relationship with the University College London team who ran a Strategy Room session at the assembly. It recently invited the team back to run a further four Strategy Room sessions to inform its work.

Impact on the sustainability team: collaborating with other Council teams

The assembly helped the sustainability team build relationships within the Council. Council staff from other teams – including senior staff – were involved in the assembly in several ways, including as facilitators, speakers, (question) responders and observers. Since the assembly, some of these officers have moved to the sustainability team, while others have become spokespeople for the team in different parts of the Council. These internal relationships have helped lead to cross-team working, including with the Public Health and Green Spaces teams.

Impact on assembly members

Around 6-7 of the adult assembly members joined the CAGs, as did a few members of the Young People's Assembly and their parents. Some members of the Young People's Assembly also continued their involvement in other ways. One young person decided to become an environmental lawyer due to their participation in the assembly, and has since been engaged in lots of council programmes. A few of the other young people worked to do more with their schools post-assembly and have invited the Council to support their efforts.

The Council sought to engage members of the Young People's Assembly in two further projects after the assembly finished, with varying degrees of success. They worked with some youth assembly members on a social media campaign called 'Go Green this Christmas'. They also invited interested members to a Work Experience Day, for those considering a career in environment and sustainability in local government.



Impact on engagement practice

The sustainability team has continued to use participatory and deliberative engagement to inform its work since the assembly. Its members also say they learnt a lot about the use of stories in climate engagement from their work with the Young People's Assembly.



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Kendal Climate Change Citizens' Jury

The challenge

Kendal is a market town and civil parish in Cumbria, north west England. It sits on the River Kent and is mostly ringed by hills, sitting just outside the Lake District National Park.

In April 2019 Kendal Town Council declared a climate emergency. It pledged to “make Kendal carbon neutral by 2030”. The same motion committed the Council to commissioning a citizens' jury to “provide insights from residents on how to reach [its climate target].” The Council pledged to use the outcomes of the Jury as the basis for a detailed action plan.

Kendal Town Council commissioned its citizens' jury in the summer of 2020 to consider the question of **what Kendal should do about climate change**.

The approach

Citizens' juries bring together a group of people who together broadly reflect the wider population. These jury members learn about the jury's topic, from both each other and wider specialists. Significant effort is made to ensure information given to the jury is balanced and accurate. Jury members then weigh up ways forward through in-depth discussion with one another. Finally, the jury reaches a shared conclusion about what should happen.

There is no single definition of a citizens' jury. However they generally involve 12–24 participants and meet across several sessions. Jury members are compensated for their time and their expenses are covered.

Kendal Climate Change Citizens' Jury is unusual in several ways in terms of how it developed. Town Councils do not have a huge number of staff or resources available to them. The jury was therefore partly financed by a crowdfunding campaign. The campaign raised £6,000 from 181 individuals, businesses and others. Kendal Town Council ran a further crowdfunding campaign at the end of the jury to help fund a short film about the jury's work.

Members of the jury's oversight panel and organising team also set up four volunteer groups to help with the jury's delivery. The groups focussed on communications, creative, evaluation and information technology support, respectively. Students from Lancaster University's Environment Centre gave further help.

The process

Kendal Climate Change Citizens' Jury brought together 20 residents, recruited via democratic lottery (or 'sortition'). Together these 'jury members' broadly reflected the local population in terms of their gender, age, ethnicity, disability status, geography, attitude to climate change and neighbourhood's level of deprivation.

Jury members met for a total of 26 hours, spread across 10 online sessions between July and October 2020.

During early sessions, members heard background information, for example on climate change and Kendal's contribution to it. They then picked three topics on which to hear more detailed evidence. These were energy generation, transport, and food and farming. The jury also heard from representatives from the three tiers of local government in Cumbria; this responded to requests from some jury members to understand better their roles and future plans.

After hearing information on their chosen topics and discussing it with one another, the jury produced 27 recommendations across seven themes.

Outcomes and Impact

Kendal's Climate Change Citizens' Jury has had a number of impacts.

Embedding climate change as a fundamental tenet of Council work

Kendal Town Council distilled the jury's recommendations down to three 'imperatives' – modal shift (transport), nature recovery, and power (how energy is generated and used) – that it felt would aid progress across the jury's recommendations. It then built these imperatives into every aspect of its work:

“In the way that we tried to build in equality and diversity seven or eight years ago, we've built in mitigations and tackling climate change as being just one of the fundamental tenets of how we set about things, so everything has an impact assessment of how this works against these climate change goals. [...] We've kind of inserted a climate change impact duty [alongside our legal duties] that's now just not questioned.”

– Project team member, 2025

This can be seen, for example, in the work of the Council's three committees.

All three Council committees have made changes to how they address climate change which are still in place five years on from the jury:

- **Environment Committee:** Prior to the jury, this committee was largely focused on public seating, bike stands, signage and tourism infrastructure. Since the jury, it has focused on biodiversity and the modal shift.
- **Culture Committee:** Prior to the jury, the Council assessed grant applications purely on their own merits. After the jury, it shifted responsibility for the grants to this committee and required applicants to explain their project's climate impacts – and the steps they would take to address them – as part of the application process. It has rejected applications that “make no attempt to address climate change at all”.
- **Planning Committee:** Since the jury, the Council has built in issues like biodiversity net gain, surface water drainage and flood issues as “first ground principles” when considering planning proposals. It is also more likely to talk about areas including dark skies compliance, impact on traffic, and connectivity in terms of pavement sizes and cycle paths than it was before the jury; “[t]he whole way we look at planning is much more strategically aligned with climate awareness.” (Project team member, 2025)

Beyond the committees, the Council has embedded the three imperatives in how it carries out its day-to-day duties. For example, one interviewee described how prior to the project they would have responded to requests for new lighting without thinking about climate change. Now, they would automatically consider and install lighting that is dark skies compliant and energy efficient.

The jury's role in bringing about these changes is about the mandate it gave for action, and the impetus and leverage it gave for that action to happen now and happen comprehensively:

“That is the whole legacy of that climate jury process. It shifted us from something that you could do, [that it would] be nice to do. To something that [we are doing and that] nobody questions.”

– Project team member, 2025

The Council dedicated significant capacity and resources to following up the jury's recommendations. Two years on, it reported redirecting two-thirds of its staff time to this work.

This included the creation of two new posts – a Development and Delivery Manager, and a Projects Officer. In its February 2022 budget meeting, the Council also agreed to a rise in council tax (equating to £2.50 a year for a house in Band D) to pay for a range of projects, including many which responded to the jury.

Recommendation implementation

Some of the jury's recommendations fell within the Council's own remit. Others required it to work across tiers of local government. Five years on, progress in implementing the jury's recommendations includes (in addition to what is already covered above):

- Expanding local allotments, which was fully within the Council's own remit
- Running a range of creative engagement activities for local residents
- Working with Cumbria County Council to secure a commitment to develop a 20mph scheme to meet the jury's recommendation around improved cycling provision
- Working with what was then South Lakes District Council to remove planning impediments to the installation of solar panels in local conservation areas. Kendal Town Council also now looks at whether new developments make it easy to install solar as part of the planning process;
- Creating a permanent physical Eco-Hub as a 'one-stop shop' to provide accessible information about climate change. A project team member says the Council has "supported that doggedly since it was just a glimpse in the jury's eye", including securing £30,000 in lottery funding to regenerate and retrofit a local building to serve as the hub, and then putting down three years' initial rent. The Council thinks it's unlikely that it would have created a hub like this had it not been for the jury. [The Eddington](#), as the permanent hub is called, is now open.

The Council took some steps in response to the jury's recommendations that have arguably not borne fruit. Following the jury, the council co-ran a solar audit of the town



and an initiative called Solar Made Easy. Solar Made Easy aimed to encourage householders to generate solar energy, while providing local suppliers with clusters of households to work with. One hundred households registered to receive quotes as part of the first cluster, but the Council hasn't tracked what happened next or continued with the project, at least partly for capacity reasons.

The Council also initially developed and launched the 'Zero Carbon Kendal' website, to showcase "inspiring examples from across the town of local projects, campaigns and actions that residents can take". It is now subsuming the website into its own.

Public participation and community engagement

Following the jury's conclusion, people who took part in the jury's crowdfunding campaigns or had signed up to Council updates about the jury, formed a network of 256 community volunteers. Two years' on from the jury, members described this network as "the first port of call" when the Council needed volunteers. For example, they helped with the solar audit, the design of the Zero Carbon Kendal website and at engagement events.

Five years on, the Council hasn't been able to maintain the network. However Natural Kendal has increased its volunteer base and the Eddington is described as thriving.

As well as providing "a new focus for people who are interested and active", the Eddington has brought different activist communities together. People whose focus was, for example, food poverty, climate change, or transport, are now meeting and attending the same events in a way they didn't before. The Council is hopeful that the Eddington "will continue to develop as a beacon for influence and discussion."

Impact on those directly involved

No one has systematically tracked the impact of taking part on jury members themselves but a team member says "I know some of them were moved to become activists because I still see them at events." The jury process also impacted some Council staff with two now involved with the Eddington and a further staff member reporting that the jury influenced their own personal views on at least one climate topic.

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Participatory Budgeting around the world

The challenge

Participatory budgeting (PB) originated in 1989 in Porto Alegre, Brazil, as a radical response to social inequalities. Through a [highly participatory process](#), it gave local communities much greater control over how local budgets were spent. The innovation resulted in [significant improvements in living conditions](#) for people on low incomes and living in poverty.

PB has since spread around the world. It has been used [over 7,000 times](#), in [over 1,500 different locations](#). This rapid expansion has coincided with changes in how governments, funders and activists view PB. Today it is often seen and used as a policy tool, rather than as a radical democratic initiative.

Different locations run PB at widely varying scales. In the UK, PB initiatives have tended to be modest. They are most common in [Scotland](#), at least partly due to [Scottish Government targets](#) for 1% of all local authority budgets to be spent via PB. PB also occurs in all three other UK nations (for example, PB in [Lancaster](#), [Newport](#) and [Belfast](#)). The most ambitious PB processes, however, are outside the UK. The Paris PB is the largest in Europe, with an available pot of [EUR 100 million in 2024](#).

PB, then, is used globally and has its origins in social issues. The challenge is to determine whether PB could help tackle climate change.

The approach

Participatory budgeting (PB) refers to processes that allow citizens to decide directly on how all or part of a public budget is spent.

Underneath this banner, there are several different PB approaches. **Place-based PBs** cover a particular region, city or area. Proposals for funding can be on any issue within that geographic remit. **Thematic PBs** are also place-based but limit proposals to a particular sector or topic, for example health or education. **Actor-based PBs** are the least common. They seek to distribute ear-marked resources for particular groups within the population, for example the elderly, indigenous communities, immigrants or the homeless. Some PB initiatives may draw on more than one approach.

The process

There are numerous ways in which to run PB. This makes generalisations difficult. Very broadly speaking, however, PB often has three or four basic elements:

1. The public authority decides the scope and budget of the PB, sometimes working jointly with civil society or citizens.
2. Citizens (in groups or as individuals) put forward proposals that they would like to see funded.
3. There may be some feasibility testing and/or refining of proposals by the public authority, by itself or with others - for example to remove unworkable ideas or combine similar proposals.
4. Citizens vote on the proposals, with the most popular receiving funding.

These general steps hide a wealth of differences. For example, PB in Porto Alegre is a complex process involving regional and neighbourhood assemblies, regional thematic assemblies and regional budget forums. It distributes significant sums of money. For example, in 1999 it decided on US\$64 million, or 21% of Porto Alegre's total budget. By contrast, the 2024 PB in Lancaster involved local people voting for their preferences at a single [community voting day](#). Local projects were bidding for a share in the comparatively extremely modest pot of £50,000.

The (bi)annual nature of many PB projects means that even PB initiatives in the same location can evolve over time. [PB in Lisbon](#), which distributed EUR 2.5-5 million annually, started entirely online before the addition of some in-person engagement in later years for reasons of inclusion.



Another key difference between PB processes can be the role of community groups and other organised local bodies. In some PBs, these groups are very active in identifying potential proposals and building support for them.

In 2020 [Yves Cabannes](#) published a [report](#) exploring the contribution of participatory budgeting to tackling climate change. Cabannes (2020) argues that in climate-focused PB, active local groups are “essential to identifying the projects best equipped to address the climate change effects felt by communities”, for example by pinpointing clogged water channels that contribute to flood risks.

Outcomes and Impact

In his report, Yves Cabannes analysed PB initiatives in 15 localities, cities and regions in the global South and North. The range of cases included make them collectively an important reference group for considering PB’s impacts.

About the locations: The fifteen locations featured in Cabannes’ study cover a wide range of geographies and contexts. They come from local areas and regions in Africa, South America, Europe and Asia. Some faced high levels of vulnerability to climate threats; some medium and some low. Between them, they reported climate impacts including flooding (ten out of the fifteen locations), wildfires, heatwaves and heat islands, typhoons, and more.

The population size of the locations differed too. New Taipei City, Taiwan and the region of Bashkortostan in Russia, were among locations with populations of 1-5 million, Dalifort-Foirail in Senegal and Agueda in Portugal among those with fewer than 50,000 inhabitants. Most locations had population sizes in between. Levels of preparedness for climate change, and other cultural, social and economic factors also differed across continents, countries, regions and localities.

About the PB initiatives: Each location’s PB initiative was also distinct. Some had been running for years. The oldest in Cuenca, Ecuador had run annually since 2001. The newest in Bordeaux, France started in 2019. The level of funding available through the PBs in absolute terms and per head of population also varied. This and other factors affected how many projects each PB could fund. Most funded 10-100 projects over the 3 years considered by Cabannes. Some managed more, with Bashkortostan the clear outlier, funding 2,280 projects.

Most of the PB initiatives were place-based in nature. Some were thematic-based; for example, PB in Metz, France has an ‘eco-citizen’ focus and PB in Bordeaux is centred around sustainable development. Other initiatives combined actor-based PB with other PB types: New Taipei City’s energy-saving PB “earmarked its resources for private companies to use PB with employees to identify small energy-saving initiatives”; Molina de Segura in Spain ran a youth PB for climate change; Cuenca originally introduced PB “exclusively for residents of the municipality’s 21 rural parishes with the highest levels of poverty and migration.” (Cabannes, 2020)

Are climate adaptation and mitigation projects successful in PB?

Cabannes and his team collected data about the last three years (on average) of PB in the fifteen locations. Eleven recorded information in a way that allowed them to identify if projects were climate-focused. The results across these locations were clear: PB had funded a total of 923 projects that contributed to tackling climate change or addressing its impacts.

The number of climate-related projects funded via PB varied considerably by location. Cuenca had funded 514 such projects, followed by San Pedro Garza García, Mexico, with 185 projects. Two other locations, Bashkortostan and Metz had funded 51-100 climate-related projects each. Four locations had funded 10-50 projects. And three had funded under 10.

Some of this difference was due to variations in the total number of projects PB funded in each place. Cabannes’ team therefore also looked at what percentage of all funded projects were climate-related. The average across all the locations was 44%.

Location	% total projects funded that were climate-focused
Molina de Segura, Spain	2
Bashkortostan Krai, Russia	3
Luhwindja, Democratic Republic of Congo	27
San Pedro Garza Garcia, Mexico	28
Agueda, Portugal	39
Metz, France	40
Arzgir District, Stravropol Krai, Russia	44
Yaoundé Commune 1, Cameroon	49
Carveira/Tomino Eurocity, Portugal / Spain	57
Bordeaux, France	66
Cuenca, Ecuador (rural parishes only)	77
New Taipei City, Luzhou and Yonghe Districts	100

What Cabannes’ figures don’t include are climate-related projects that were unsuccessful during PB voting, but that were implemented anyway. Public authorities sometimes implement such projects, finding PB a useful source of ideas.

What kind of climate projects does PB fund?

The types of climate project that was funded varied somewhat by place. In Cuenca, 89% of climate projects focused on adaptation. In Metz, 73% aimed to reduce or absorb emissions.

The study concluded:

“Despite the limited size of the sample and the fact that each city used its own definition of adaptation and mitigation, these preliminary results tend to suggest a global North and South distinction, with European cities prioritizing mitigation while those in the South focus more on adaptation. This hypothesis deserves further research.”

- Yves Cabannes, 2020

Beyond these broad distinctions, the PB processes across the 15 locations funded six types of projects:

- **Physical projects aimed at adaptation to climate change** – e.g. wildfire and flood-prevention projects, projects making drinking water accessible during droughts
- **Physical projects aimed at reducing or absorbing emissions** – e.g. reforestation and greening projects
- **Awareness-raising and training projects** – e.g. campaigns, visits and workshops
- **Community-based early warning systems** – e.g. air quality alerts, and improvements to emergency warning systems for wildfires
- **Climate change studies** – e.g. “a study on public electrical consumption as a first step in defining solutions based on renewable energy” (Cabannes, 2020).

How much funding did climate projects receive?

Only 10 locations provided information on how much money had been allocated to the successful climate projects. The total was nearly US\$ 22 million.

Cabannes also noted that several of the locations had successfully attracted additional resources for these projects. The resources came variously from international aid, establishing national and international partnerships, volunteering and community engagement.

He concluded:

“These and other examples... demonstrate once again that PB is able to leverage resources, an issue that is insufficiently studied, despite its huge potential for expanding its contribution – in this case for climate change mitigation and adaptation projects, but more broadly as well.”

- Yves Cabannes, 2020

PB and climate justice

At the core of early PB was the idea of tackling inequities by channelling funding and resources to the people most in need. Today many locations split PB funding evenly between districts. This negatively affects PB's ability to aid climate justice. It is, however, a design choice; PB doesn't *have* to be this way.

Non climate impacts

Cabannes' report focused solely on climate impacts. Other studies have examined different potential benefits of PB. For example, [a report for the UK government](#) found, among other conclusions, that PB could attract additional resources into deprived areas and enable service providers to meet local needs more effectively. PB has also [been found](#) to increase levels of tax compliance.

Wampler, McNulty and Touchton (2018) reviewed existing literature on PB. They found the most common claims about its impact centre around **strengthening civil society; improving transparency, accountability and governance; and achieving better social outcomes**. These impacts are most often shown in case studies of individual PB processes. The authors cautioned that it can be hard to make generalisations about PBs' impact. They concluded that there are

“three general areas of consensus in terms of when PB has its greatest, most beneficial impact [in these areas]: when it has strong government support, available resources, and where an organized civil society exists.”

- Wampler, McNulty and Touchton (2018)

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Medway Council Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy Legislative Theatre

The challenge

The borough of Medway is located just outside London in the county of Kent. It includes five distinct towns – Chatham, Gillingham, Rainham, Rochester and Strood – making it comparatively built up in relation to its neighbours. Its cheaper prices and quick access to the capital, attract many Londoners to move to the area. The same assets also mean that London boroughs often place people who need social housing in the borough. Medway Council has one of the highest rates in Kent of families and people approaching it for help with homelessness.

Homelessness in the UK is not often seen as a climate issue. Yet people experiencing homelessness, particularly those sleeping rough, can be particularly vulnerable to climate change and its impacts. The UK government publishes [guidance](#) on how to support people sleeping rough in England during extremely hot weather. It notes that climate change is increasing the frequency of dangerous heat levels, and identifies three key ways in which people sleeping rough are more at risk: greater exposure to heat; greater prevalence of relevant underlying health conditions; and reduced ability to take preventative measures such as accessing cool, drinkable water. The government also [identifies](#) homeless people as one of the key at-risk groups for flooding.

In 2024 Medway Council was due to renew its Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy. It wanted the strategy to focus on preventing homelessness as well as responding to it. It also wanted to build trust between the Council and local residents, and to identify any administrative barriers to providing high quality services.

This case study shows how the Council can work with people with lived experience of homelessness and frontline council staff to achieve its goals.

The approach

Legislative Theatre (LT) developed in Brazil in the early 1990s from the tradition of [Theatre of the Oppressed](#). It has since [spread around the globe](#). Governments and others have used LT to help address issues relating to housing, health care, the climate crisis and more.

Every LT process differs in its exact execution, but all share a number of fundamental stages:

1. Community members who are directly impacted by the issue come together to play games, tell stories, carry out research and ultimately create a play based on their shared experiences.

2. Other local residents, advocates and policy makers gather to watch the play. This builds a shared understanding of the problems and how people experience them in their everyday lives;
3. Audience members are invited on stage to improvise solutions to the problems, testing and refining their ideas with the actors and other audience members.
4. The actors and audience work together to build on these ideas. They use in-depth discussion to develop specific and feasible policy proposals.
5. The actors and audience members vote for their priority proposals.
6. Policy makers and others in relevant positions of power make commitments to action. The idea is that these individuals then take the LT's proposals back into their work, using them to spark change.

The overall effect of LT is to breakdown the hierarchies that often get in the way of meaningful and constructive dialogue. Equally importantly, it creates opportunities for hands-on testing and negotiation of policy interventions. LT produces a creative and collaborative space, where people's different types of knowledge and ideas are free to combine. This leads to practical, effective and innovative solutions, capable of addressing systemic challenges.

The process

The Medway Council Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy Legislative Theatre grew out of a collaboration between the Council and [Arts & Homelessness International](#) (AHI). AHI is a charity which works to bring positive change to people, projects and policy in homelessness, through arts and creativity.



The LT part of the project started with a **planning phase**. AHI and leading LT practitioner [Katy Rubin](#) worked with the Council to understand the scope of its forthcoming strategy, its timelines, and the Council's perspective on the problems it wanted the strategy to address. This was key to understanding the Council's needs and communicating them to the LT 'actors'.

For example, the Council didn't have additional budget for the new iteration of the strategy. The LT's proposals therefore needed to focus on, for example, how to repurpose resources or change the design and delivery of existing services.

AHI and Katy Rubin **recruited nine 'actors'** to develop and perform the LT. Six were people with lived experience of homelessness. These actors were paid for their time attending the sessions and the follow-up meetings, which lasted until March 2025. Their expenses were also covered. The other actors were frontline Council staff, who were given permission to attend the sessions as part of their work. The Council staff committed to give the sessions their full attention and did not step out for meetings or calls.

Rehearsals with the actors took place over four full days. The first two rehearsals involved playing games, telling stories, building community and then drafting the outline of the play. This gave clarity about the specific problems and questions relating to homelessness and rough sleeping that the actors wanted to address. The actors also identified the questions they needed answers to in order to finish the play. These included questions such as, who decides how verification for rough sleepers work, and what is the Council's current authority over landlords in Medway? The actors and project partners researched the answers to these questions before the final two rehearsals. At these last rehearsals, the actors incorporated the answers into their play. They also practiced for the part of the play where audience members would join them on stage to suggest and act out potential solutions.

The public LT event took place on 6 February 2024 at a local community theatre. Ninety-five people attended including people with lived experience of homelessness, friends of the actors, council staff, and people working for local community and arts organisations. Also in attendance were the 'policy team' – a group invited by AHI and Katy Rubin once they knew where the actors wanted to focus. The policy team was made up of representatives from Medway Council's housing team, local service providers [Riverside](#) and [SIG Pathways](#), and Medway Councillor Naushabah Khan (now an MP).

At the event the audience watched the play; joined the actors on stage to improvise and test out policy interventions; and drafted proposals. The actors and audience then debated and amended the proposals collaboratively with the policy team. Finally, the actors and audience prioritised proposals via a vote, and the policymakers made commitments to action.

The actors and policy team reconvened two weeks after the event. Together they reflected on the process to-date, then worked through the prioritised proposals. They checked if there were any nuances or steps that had been left out, or other commitments that could be made. The outputs from the event were then circulated to everyone who had attended.

The actors and 'policy team' continued to meet quarterly as a 'co-creation scrutiny group' for a further year. AHI facilitated and chaired the group. At each meeting the attendees worked through where the Council and other partners had got to in delivering each proposal. They discussed together any arising challenges and limitations, negotiating about what was possible. Since the scrutiny group met for a final time in March 2025, the task of continuing to progress the LT's recommendations has passed to Medway's Homelessness Forum.

Outcomes and Impact

The Medway Council Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy Legislative Theatre had a range of different impacts.

Changes to policy and service delivery

The LT event identified three priority policy proposals, with specific interventions listed under each one. The Council's work to implement the proposals is ongoing, but progress has already been made.

The LT's highest priority proposal centred around **rough sleeper verification and channels of communication**. Verification is the process by which a Council verifies that someone asking for accommodation is indeed sleeping rough. The LT asked for local service providers and community organisations supporting homeless people in the borough – and not just the Council's rough sleeping team – to be able to verify people. The aim was to speed up the process, make it more efficient and crucially to improve safety for rough sleepers – including in relation to extreme weather. The Council moved quickly to take forward the idea, scheduling verification meetings with the relevant groups. The idea was that the Council would verify an individual if two or more of the organisations present had seen the person sleeping rough.



The change has opened up channels of communication around verification and who needs support. It has also attracted the attention of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). MHCLG has since ordered a review of the verification process, saying it should not be a barrier to accessing services. The partners involved in running the Medway LT believe that MHCLG's "enthusiasm for the evidence presented through the Legislative Theatre process was a significant support in getting this decision to change practice positively, agreed" (Project team member, 2025).

The new system of verification has not been without its teething problems. To-date it has not worked well for the Council because of low attendance at the verification meetings. The Council is currently looking at ways to improve the system.

A second problem identified by the LT was the practice of giving phones to homeless people to enable the Council to communicate with them. Medway is by no means the only area that uses this approach. However LT actors and audience members said that phones are often stolen or lost, and are sometimes sold. In response to the LT, the Council has developed an alternative system which provides homeless people with a voicemail number specific to them as an individual. Homeless people can call the number from any phone and thereby pick up messages from the Council about appointments and services. The scheme recently launched and is now actively being used by homeless people in the borough. It is the first system of its kind in the UK.

The LT's second priority proposal centred on **landlord regulation, advocacy for tenants and increased social housing**. Since the LT, the Council has focussed on two specific interventions under this heading. The first is the creation of a Council run lettings agency, One Medway Lettings. The agency gives the Council more control over the standard of private sector properties that it's helping homeless people to move in to. It also gives it more ways to advocate for tenants who are facing eviction, preventing evictions happening through how it works with landlords.

The Council had been considering developing its own lettings agency prior to the LT process. The LT's role was to confirm that the agency was needed, and also crucially to help smooth the path of the proposal through the Council:

"Everything that we do in a council has to go up through cabinet and through the political process and it really helped with the awareness around that [the lettings agency] and the need for it."

- Project team member, 2025

The Council has also worked to increase its social housing stock. The Council had plans in this area before the LT, but the LT helped demonstrate the need and demand for it. The Council has built new social homes since the LT event.

The LT's final priority proposal focused on the **creation of a multi-service hub** that "brings together housing support, health care, DWP / benefits support, digital support, as well as arts and culture." Conversations about how best to implement this idea have been ongoing since the LT. Currently thinking is focussed on how to better advertise the spaces that already exist, although the Council is also still committed to realising the hub itself.

The fact that people often didn't know about the help already available was a key takeaway for the Council from the LT. In response it is developing training, fact sheets and other resources for use by other Council-run and community-run services beyond housing and homelessness: "homelessness is everybody's problem and preventing that is something that everyone can have a part in" (Project team member, 2025). This development is a direct impact of the LT.

Ways of working and skills

The LT process has changed how the Council's housing team works with people with relevant lived experience when developing services. The new Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy includes a commitment to working in a more co-creative way. And the team now regularly takes its work for feedback to both the Homelessness Forum (for people working in the sector) and the Medway Arts and Homelessness Forum set-up by AHI which includes attendees with lived experience of homelessness.

This change was also contributed to by the co-creation training that AHI delivered to Council staff and key partners in May 2023. The purpose of the training was to introduce and explore co-creation in the context of Medway's local homelessness strategy. It focused particularly on how lived experience leadership and the arts could be embedded into policy, services, and community engagement.

The training and the LT process itself gave Council staff more confidence and skills to engage people meaningfully. Council staff across the UK can feel vulnerable opening up about their thinking and seeking a constructive dialogue with local people, not least because of the criticism they can receive engaging in other ways. Staff involved in the Medway LT project now feel more able to create two-way conversations, and are more certain of their benefits:

“What makes a really good strategy is understanding the people accessing the service, what actually they want and what they are experiencing. [...] We could write a strategy based on data, but it might not be the best strategy we could have done.”

“It changed how we think about getting feedback...[and] solidified and improved the skills to do that and the confidence to ... include people in a more meaningful way than just asking them to fill out a form....”

- Project team member, 2025

Attendees at the quarterly scrutiny meetings became noticeably more confident in talking to each other, and more open and approachable. Meetings showed little or no sign of hierarchy, with communication flowing smoothly between all those attending. Attendees reported gaining a new perspective on how to influence Council thinking and how to build learning from lived experience into their work, respectively. They also reported feelings of increased confidence, resilience, skills and agency. One of the actors with lived experience of homelessness said that he had never felt so listened to by a local authority. He had previously felt there was no way for him to make a difference.

Impact on participation rates and individual actors

The Council's new more co-creative approach has impacted participation rates in the borough. Specifically the Arts & Homelessness Forum has seen a big increase in the number of people engaging with its work, including those with lived experience of homelessness: they know it is a route to influencing the Councils' plans.

The actors with lived experience of homelessness who took part in the LT process are still active in the forum. One of them is now its chair, and freelances with AHI. The LT process also provided routes into employment for two other actors. Both received training from SIG Pathways to become Peer Support mentors and now help people with drug or alcohol addictions to engage with treatment services.

Other impacts

The project partners live-streamed and recorded the LT event in Medway, and shared the recording without edits. This has helped potential commissioners and other interested policy professionals visualise what a process in their own area might be like. It has led directly to another LT process for [Housing Rights Northern Ireland](#). It has also attracted attention from officials in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government who are interested in both the proposals around verification and the potential of LT more widely.

The LT process in Medway has won two awards, a Kent Housing Excellence award and a Medway Council Making A Difference award. The awards fit well with the joyful nature of an LT process. They have also helped to spread awareness of the project and its impacts.

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SONI Mid Antrim Upgrade

The challenge

The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 sets a target for at least 80% of electricity consumption in Northern Ireland to come from renewable sources by 2030. Achieving this target will require the biggest change to the transmission system for electricity, also known as the grid, since it was created. These changes can be controversial, involving new pylons, towers and other infrastructure. The System Operator for Northern Ireland (SONI) sees enhancing the public acceptability of these changes as vitally important.

One of the areas that needs new infrastructure is a part of Mid Antrim. A bottleneck in the grid means that SONI needs to introduce new power lines and a new substation. In 2022, SONI worked with people in the affected area (covering Ballymena, Creagh, Kells, and Rasharkin) to identify an acceptable route for the power lines and an acceptable location for the substation. To do this, it trialled a new engagement approach.

The approach

The engagement had two parts. The **Citizen Sounding Board (CSB)** was a group of twenty-four local residents who together reflected local communities in terms of their age, gender, national identity, ethnicity and socioeconomic background. Recruited by democratic lottery (or 'sortition'), their role was to provide insights about public preferences to SONI and the Community Forum (see below). The CSB offered a voice to local residents who were not involved in organised groups, recognising their right to a say and the value of their knowledge and perspectives. CSB members were compensated for their time and their expenses were covered.

The **Community Forum** aimed to engage community representatives and other local stakeholders. Its members were chosen through open individual expressions of interest. Forum members' roles included reflecting to SONI the views of their organisation or community, and providing feedback on session design for the CSB. The Community Forum had eight members, although fewer attended in practice. The 30km radius of the area SONI was considering for the new infrastructure proved too big to work as a compelling reason for groups to engage. As this part of the engagement worked less well, the rest of this case study focuses solely on the CSB.

The process

The CSB met in-person in Portglenone for three days. Two of those days were in December 2022, during phase 2A of SONI's three-part development plan. These two initial workshops focused on identifying local priorities, gathering feedback on initial route options, and agreeing principles to inform the development of SONI's plans and its final decision.

As well as working on the principles themselves and digesting information about the project and its rationale, CSB members mapped local sites and landscape features important to them (including areas where flooding had recently increased); captured their initial hopes and worries about the infrastructure work; and detailed their views on the local challenges the project might face and how to mitigate them.

The CSB returned for its third meeting in June 2023 during Phase 2B of the development plan. The purpose of this final workshop was to:

- Review SONI's progress in identifying options for the location of the new infrastructure (between the workshops SONI had used participants' initial input to narrow down the options to three routes for the overhead lines and four potential substation locations);
- Indicate a preference for a route and location based on the options presented.

CSB members reached agreement on their preferred choice for both the overhead power line route, and the substation site.

Following the completion of the CSB, SONI ran a further community consultation on its plans through 2023 and 2024. It is submitting its proposals to the relevant planning departments this year (2025).



Outcomes and Impact

Impact of the recommendations

SONI has moved forward with a preferred route corridor for the overhead line and site for the substation that reflect the preferred options of the CSB.

Final decisions on both the route corridor and substation site are subject to obtaining landowner consents. The outcome of landowner engagement may mean slight changes to the finalised overhead line route. However, a large section (currently around 80%) of the 30km route SONI is submitting for planning approval remains the same as the route discussed and preferred by the CSB.

SONI reports finding the CSB valuable for a number of reasons:

- **Giving them confidence about the views of local communities** so that they know their plans take account of community concerns and preferences, as far as they are able. SONI was reassured by the range of people involved and the way they reflected the local area. They felt they could have confidence that the group was an authentic reflection of local views; whereas this can be harder to judge when only hearing representations from established community groups or vocal local action groups.
- **Hearing communities' views early in the development process** so they were able to factor in communities' preferences when plans were still flexible.
- **Being able to have an informed conversation with local community members** who had absorbed the rationale for why the changes are needed and key technical information, meaning they could give their views based on realistic options.
- Allowing local community members with different values and viewpoints to discuss their views together and **reach a shared recommendation**, rather than SONI receiving conflicting individual preferences.
- **Understanding local community members' rationale for their preferences**, which SONI found useful for its work more widely, as well as for the Mid Antrim Upgrade. For example, SONI was already aware that the visual impact of new infrastructure was a "huge concern" for people, as is infrastructure staying clear of large housing developments. But hearing these points directly from local people made a difference and will affect how SONI thinks about approaching future projects. It has also affected SONI's thinking on a more strategic level. For example, SONI is asking the utility regulator for funds for a Community Benefits Model. The funding will allow them to acknowledge the efforts of host communities for new grid infrastructure by offering funding for local projects that contribute positively to tackling climate change:

"It's about recognising the efforts of host communities playing their part in the delivery of the energy transition. It sits in alignment with the principle of a Just Transition and [is] the right thing to do."

- Project team member, 2025

Allowing communities multiple opportunities to feed into the plans. The CSB engagement started early and was followed by further opportunities to engage. This alleviated the possibility that someone could miss a sole opportunity to express their views because of, for example, a holiday:

"SONI's in-depth level of engagement at every part of the process demonstrates that we have tried our utmost [to factor in local views]."

- Project team member, 2025

Engaging early also meant communities had longer to get used to the idea of the new infrastructure, rather than it coming as a sudden shock.

Impact on wider communities

The CSB has made it easier for SONI to achieve buy-in for its plans from other local stakeholders, including political and business representatives: they can see local people have had the opportunity to meaningfully input into the proposals.

Impact on those who took part

Some CSB members stayed involved beyond the Sounding Board sessions, participating in wider grid-development engagement activities. They attended public consultation events and provided written feedback through the formal consultation process. Their responses were "much more informed than those of others due to their involvement in the CSB."

Also notable was the approach of these CSB members to the ongoing engagement. Members clearly felt a "real stake" in the plans, feeling involved rather than consulted, and a "real part" of the process moving forwards. Despite this, they were very happy for other community members to have their say and did not act as if their views were more important.

Beyond CSB members themselves, the CSB also had an impact on SONI staff. For staff who were not a formal part of the engagement team, attending the CSB sessions led to an understanding of the value of engaging early and in greater depth. For example, it helped them realise the link between intentional early engagement and smoother engagement as the project moved through the grid development process.

Impact on engagement practice

SONI's CSB work in Mid Antrim contributed strongly to an evolution in SONI's revised approach to public engagement, culminating with it publishing a new [enhanced public engagement](#) model in 2024. 'Mini publics' like the CSB are embedded within the new approach, and are now seen as a "fundamental part of the engagement model for each of our main strategic transmission projects."

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Electricity North West Limited Plugged In Public Panel

The challenge

If you live in the North West of England then the network of infrastructure that brings you electricity is operated and maintained by a company called Electricity North West Limited (ENWL). ENWL are also responsible for planning for the network's future.

Part of your energy bill goes to ENWL to allow it to undertake its work. In 2025, this is about 11% of your bill. If you live elsewhere in the UK, then a proportion of your bill goes to your equivalent of ENWL. These companies are known as distribution network operators (DNOs).

Every five years the DNOs each have to submit a business plan to the government's energy regulator, Ofgem. The business plans set out how much money the DNOs want to invest in their region (with implications for energy bills) and what they want to invest it in. Ofgem decides whether to sign off on the plans or to require changes. Ofgem states that the DNOs must engage customers and stakeholders in creating their proposals.

In 2020, ENWL and the other DNOs, were developing their business plans for 2023–2028. Ofgem said the business plans had to show how the DNOs would meet UK climate targets for the lowest possible cost. They also had to take account of the wider context, which included a pandemic, cost of living crisis, energy crisis and nature crisis.

ENWL found itself grappling with questions about how to balance different investment priorities:

"[...] so you can invest in lots and lots of different things, but how do you know how much to invest in one thing over another thing and are we making the right decision? [...] We wanted to make sure that we had that evidence [about what customers and stakeholders wanted] and that people understood and were on board with the decisions that we wanted to make."

- Project team member, 2025

ENWL also faced a challenge in the complexity of the questions it wanted to ask North West residents, and the fact that most people don't know what a DNO is or what it does.

This case study explores how ENWL engaged its customers in a way that enabled people to reach informed preferences, and thereby provided useful and usable input to its plans.



The approach

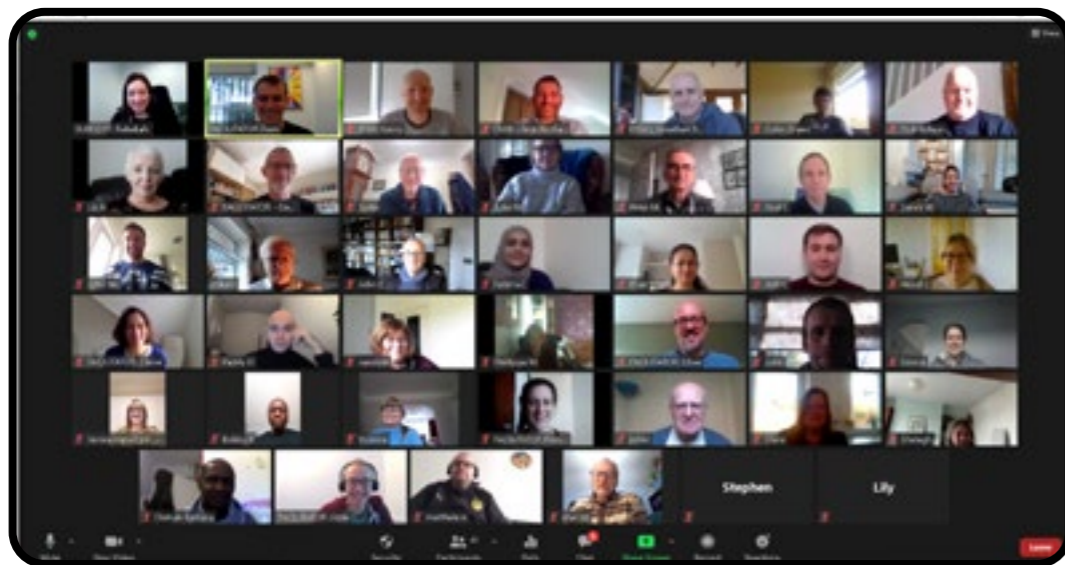
ENWL sought to build its business plan from the bottom up. To do this it ran and commissioned a range of different engagement activities that fed into one another. The business plan gradually developed and was refined as the engagement continued.

A key element of the engagement was the Plugged In Public Panel. The panel brought together around 40 residents from across North West England, recruited via a democratic lottery (also known as [sortition](#)). Together the panel members reflected the North West's population in terms of their age, gender, ethnicity, disability status, occupation, where in the North West they lived, and whether they lived in an urban or rural area.

The panel met online for 10 sessions between July 2020 and October 2021. The first six sessions focussed on competing priorities for where ENWL could invest money to make improvements. The final four meetings covered a range of further topics related to the draft business plan.

Throughout the sessions, the Plugged In Public Panel took what is known as a deliberative approach. In other words, panel members had the chance to learn about the topic areas, and discuss and weigh up potential ways forward, before reaching their conclusions about what ENWL should do.

Panel members were compensated for their time attending the sessions.



The process

The first six sessions of the Plugged In Public Panel focussed on the question: *“What is the right level of investments that Electricity North West Limited should make in their identified areas for improvement?”*

These areas for improvement fell into three broad categories. The *network* covered network reliability and resilience, and keeping employees and customers safe. The *environment* focused on both ENWL's own environmental impact and how it could help the North West meet climate targets. The *customer* looked at issues including customers' needs, energy bills and providing value for money.

ENWL asked panel members to weigh up the trade-offs within and between these areas, providing feedback to ENWL about what it should prioritise and why.

The final four panel sessions focused on other areas of the business plan. These included topics around how ENWL is financed, diversity and inclusion, how ENWL should operate the network, and final acceptability testing of ENWL's proposals.

Outcomes and Impact

The Plugged In Public Panel had a significant impact on ENWL's business plan:

“It absolutely wasn't a 'let's fire off a quick [...] survey and hope for the best.' [...] We really wanted to do it properly and actually have it inform our plan and it really did that in spades [...]

There are some really good examples ... where they pushed us and pushed us. And we went well beyond where we ever imagined that we would get to.“

- Project team member, 2025

This impact took different forms.

Impact on specific improvement areas

Two examples of the panel's impact are its recommendations on biodiversity and fuel poverty.

Before the panel started ENWL had undertaken a small pilot project on biodiversity. This project involved working with local communities to turn nine ENWL sites into more attractive, biodiverse spaces. While the panel was running (and unrelated to it), ENWL expanded this initiative to 51 sites.

Panel members “pushed and pushed” ENWL to be more ambitious:

“We had a draft business plan [informed by the panel’s outputs in sessions one to five], which we already thought was ambitious and 45% of them wanted us to go further, which is why we ended up at 150 [biodiversity] sites.”

– Project team member, March 2025

The panel didn’t just push for a greater number of sites. It asked ENWL to concentrate its biodiversity work in more deprived areas, so that it benefitted communities more likely to be struggling with their energy bills. They pushed ENWL to plant more trees at the sites. And they asked it to maximise [social return on investment](#) through how it delivered the work and who it partnered with. ENWL accepted all of these suggestions.

The panel also had other impacts on ENWL’s tree planting plans. ENWL originally brought to the panel a target of planting one tree for each day of the year:

“We took [the idea of planting 365 trees per year] to the panel and the panel said, ‘didn’t you tell us that you cut down loads of trees because they affect your overhead lines?’ [...] Although there’s an environmental impact, we have to cut down the trees for reliability. And they said ‘Well, how many trees do you cut down?’ So I remember going back to the operations team and saying, ‘how many trees do we cut down?’”

– Project team member, 2025

After more interaction with the panel, ENWL worked out that on average they cut down the equivalent of around 10,000 trees a year across the North West. This changed their thinking; in the final business plan ENWL commits to planting 10,000 trees per year and working with partners to make that goal possible.

One of the other issues discussed by the panel was fuel poverty. Panel members prioritised action on fuel poverty over all other proposals from ENWL about how it could give back to people in the North West. They wanted ENWL to go beyond what it was legally required to do and really help people who were struggling.

The panel asked ENWL to scale up massively the “very small pilot projects” it had previously undertaken. These pilot projects had involved ENWL working with small charities to provide people with support around areas like ‘income maximisation’ – this means checking people are signed up for all the support they’re eligible to receive and helping with energy efficiency measures to make money go further.

The panel’s advocacy had a significant impact on ENWL:

“[The] scale of what we put in the plan and then was signed off and we’re now delivering is huge. It’s 250,000 people engaged during a five-year period that are at risk of or in fuel poverty, with half of those people given really in-depth support [...]

And I don’t think without [the panel’s] advocacy, we would have ever got to have a proposal that was this ambitious. [To deliver at this scale] you’re into the world of contract management. You have to really professionalise it, be sure that every time you engage with a fuel poor customer, they’re going to get a consistent service.

Whereas when it was just small projects helping 50 people, that service could potentially differ across regions, charities. Now it’s systemized and so it’s really fundamentally changed how we do it. And it’s a massive social return on investment.”

– Project team member, 2025

Wider impacts relating to the business plan

Beyond its impact on specific improvement areas, the panel aided ENWL in wider ways.

Firstly, the panel helped ENWL balance short-term and long-term thinking. Panel members emphasised some issues requiring short term action, like fuel poverty and maintaining network reliability and safety. But they rejected any idea that ENWL should focus on short term priorities alone. The panel was clear that ENWL needed to invest for the future now, even during an energy and cost of living crisis, and even if it cost more than doing it later. ENWL found this input valuable for itself, and also useful for presenting to Ofgem.

Secondly, the final proposals that emerged from ENWL’s engagement, including the panel, secured 83% support in wider quantitative ‘willingness to pay’ testing. This is “remarkable for this sort of plan.” Respondents even said they’d be willing to pay more on their bills to allow ENWL to take its plans further.

Thirdly, ENWL found that the panel was good for it as a business. Ofgem made relatively few changes to ENWL’s draft business plan, compared to those of the other DNOs. ENWL attribute this to running the panel and the input and evidence it gave them; “the business impact, it was really significant as well.” (Project team member, 2025).

Impacts on engagement practice

ENWL attribute the Plugged In Panel's impact largely to its deliberative approach. ENWL had all the engagement it undertook for its business plan independently assessed. According to the project team, the panel's quality score was "right up there" with big quantitative representative surveys on willingness to pay. This was a first for ENWL for a qualitative method:

"That's the key thing... it's the difference between uninformed and informed [opinions]. You can do lots of focus groups and that, but that only gets you so far. And we knew that for strategic, long-term topics, like finance, resilience, net zero, climate, it's very difficult to do that within the confines of a 90-minute focus group. So it needed to be deliberative [...]"

It had such a high quality score that when it was being triangulated with all the other insights, it really held its own. It was a critical lever in us deciding what to do next. And that's important because it was the first time that really [a qualitative method had had that sort of impact]. You know, it was very, very high quality insights, very contextualised."

- Project team member, 2025

Running the panel had a large effect on ENWL's attitudes and practices around engagement. Following its conclusion, ENWL created a dedicated research role within the business. It has also just finished tendering for a new deliberative panel to inform the development of its next business plan.

Colleagues from across the business have started engaging differently too, and their attitudes to engagement have changed:

"There are people within this business that in the years after [the panel], when they're doing engagement now, they are not talking about quant surveys. They're talking about deliberative workshops [...]"

Actually, one of the most interesting things I took away from the panels was conversations with those people who attended from our side.... In an engineering business we can be very linear and very process oriented... But actually to stop and think, no, this isn't just a process of getting from A to B, and what's the most efficient way of doing it [...] [cont'd]

It's about the impact of the network and what it does and the impact of the bill on people's lives. And actually, colleagues were coming away saying, 'I hadn't really thought about that before'. And then they were coming back ...[saying] could we ask the panel this in the next session. So I think ... on a broad point... it had a real impact in changing our way of thinking about how we do planning and how we involve people."

- Project team member, March 2025

The panel's impact on engagement practices extended beyond ENWL. [Ofgem's guidance](#) now promotes the use of deliberative engagement, following the success of the panel and other similar initiatives.

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National Climate Assemblies in Europe

The challenge

Citizens' assemblies and juries have become increasingly widespread in recent years. In Europe, there have now been at least 200 such processes. Of those, over a dozen have taken place at national level. These are Europe's national climate assemblies.

The context for each national climate assembly in Europe has differed, as has its commissioner. Commissioners have included Presidents and Prime Ministers (France and Luxembourg, respectively), government departments (Austria, Denmark, Spain), parliamentary committees (Climate Assembly UK) and civil society organisations (Germany, Poland and the UK's People's Assembly for Nature). In Ireland and Scotland, both the government and parliament were involved.

Each assembly has had a different remit. Some assemblies focused just on action that can be taken by the state (e.g. Ireland), or just on mitigation (e.g. France, Austria, Climate Assembly UK). Others have also considered climate adaptation and the role of non-state actors (e.g. Scotland and Spain). Scotland's Climate Assembly was asked to answer the question, 'How should Scotland change to tackle the climate emergency in an effective and fair way?' To-date more specific remits have been rare at national level. The exception is Poland, where the assembly focused on how to counteract energy poverty.

The approach

Citizens' assemblies have a number of key features:

- They bring together a group of people who broadly reflect the wider population. These assembly members are recompensed for their time, and have their expenses covered.
- Assembly members learn about the assembly's topic, from both each other and wider specialists;
- Organisers take great care to ensure this learning phase involves assembly members receiving information that is balanced and accurate. Supporting and overseeing this task is usually one of the key roles of assemblies' governance structures.
- Assembly members have extended time to discuss their views with one another, weighing up different ways forward.

- Finally, the assembly reaches a shared conclusion either by consensus or by voting. Usually this conclusion takes the form of recommendations. Assembly members typically draft their recommendations themselves, although very occasionally they have been asked to vote on pre-agreed options.

There is no single agreed definition of a citizens' assembly. However they generally involve 35-200 participants and meet across the equivalent of at least four days.

The process

National climate assemblies are complex projects, and no two assemblies are the same. Elements of their design include, but are not limited to, the following features:

Length: National climate assemblies in Europe have had very different budgets at their disposal and, at least partially as a result, have lasted for different lengths of time. The French Convention Citoyenne pour le climat and Scotland's Climate Assembly were the longest at eight weekends each. The shortest have lasted for just two weekends, although this is not ideal given the breadth of climate change as a topic.

Assembly members: National climate assemblies in Europe have often involved around 100 assembly members, although some have had significantly fewer and some more. They have tended to select their assembly members via [democratic lottery](#) (also known as ['sortition'](#)). Democratic lotteries have, to date, been the preferred method of recruitment to citizens' assemblies because they give the widest number of people the chance of being invited to take part (e.g. everyone with an address or everyone with a phone number, depending on the type of data available in each country).

Wider engagement: Some national climate assemblies have sought to engage the wider public beyond assembly members themselves. For example, organisers of the Spanish and French assemblies used a survey and public platform, respectively, to collect wider contributions. The Jersey Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change was part of a project called Jersey's Climate Conversation. It aimed to "gather ideas and suggestions from all citizens in Jersey on how the island can become carbon neutral."

Many assemblies have attempted to engage the media, but few have achieved real cut-through; for example, most people in the UK have not heard of Climate Assembly UK, despite it achieving thousands of pieces of national and local news coverage. The exceptions are France (aided by the President's close involvement) and Austria, where large sections of the population were aware of the assemblies. Assemblies have also reached people indirectly, such as assembly members' family and friends.

Governance structures and the role of civil society: The governance structures of national climate assemblies have differed significantly. They often involve two bodies: an advisory group of interest groups to oversee the design and delivery of the assembly and to "ensure it is informed by different social perspectives" (Smith, 2024) and a knowledge committee of academics and sometimes other specialists who advise on what information should be given to assembly members and by whom.

Assembly sessions themselves include a range of speakers – the French *Convention Citoyenne pour le climat* heard from over 100 scientific experts and advocates, including the President himself. They also often offer the opportunity for specialists and interest groups to observe. Some assemblies have taken additional steps to involve stakeholders. For example, Climate Assembly UK ran general or thematic briefings before every assembly session, and also when the assembly reported. The briefings aimed to engage professionals both inside and outside of government. Over 800 people attended briefings on the assembly’s recommendations.



Outcomes and Impact

The [full impact](#) of Europe’s national climate assemblies is not yet understood. What is certain, however, is that the impact of each national assembly has been different. Here we highlight some of the areas where individual assemblies have achieved an effect.

Impacts on policy

The national climate assemblies in Ireland, Luxembourg and France are among those showing a strong impact on policy.

The Irish Citizens’ Assembly (2016–2018) “is widely recognised as play[ing] a critical role in Ireland’s step change from being a laggard on climate policy” (Smith, 2024). The Irish Climate Action Bill (2020) included the majority of the assembly’s recommendations.

The Luxembourg climate assembly is known as the Klima-Biergerrot. The process for implementing its recommendations was led by the Prime Minister’s Chief of Staff, Jeff Feller, and involved an inter-ministerial task force. It started by using the assembly’s recommendations to update Luxembourg’s Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP). The updated NECP, published eight months after the assembly reported, included five new measures and 19 strengthened measures. Since then, work to implement the recommendations – both those relevant to the NECP and those that aren’t – has continued.

In a learning call organised by the Knowledge Network on Climate Assemblies (KNOCA) on 21st September 2023, Jeff Feller, explained:

“This is really an ongoing process... We have, after we spoke last time, now nine additional measures that have been strengthened because of... [the assembly’s recommendations]. We have government strategies, laws, regulations that are updated because of the propositions made by the Klima-Biergerrot.

I am very confident that this will go on for a few months and years, so that the work of the Klima-Biergerrot goes way beyond one single document [the NECP]. ... It will be interesting... to check in a few years. But we are quite confident that perhaps not all of them – but a big majority of [the recommendations] – can be implemented.”

In France, President Macron, perhaps ill-advisedly, promised to implement the French national climate assembly’s recommendations with ‘no filter’. He hasn’t – and the follow-up to the assembly has disappointed many. Nonetheless, France has fully implemented 20% of the assembly’s recommendations. Some have even been strengthened, and 51% have been translated into law in partial or modified form.

Examples of fully implemented recommendations from the assembly include requirements for a daily vegetarian choice in collective public catering, support for research and development for biofuels for aviation, and higher fuel taxes for leisure aviation. Examples of enhanced recommendations include extending the assembly’s proposals for training in eco-driving to include additional categories of drivers, and bringing forward the implementation of recommendations related to the food system by one year.

Recommendations that have been partially implemented include the assembly’s recommendation for “a gradual phase-out of air traffic on domestic flights by 2025 on routes where there is a satisfactory low-carbon alternative in terms of price and time on a journey of less than four hours.” The implemented proposal changes the journey time to two hours and has so far resulted in only 2.5% of internal flights being cancelled – much fewer than the assembly envisaged. Examples of modified recommendations include the assembly’s proposal that electricity supply infrastructure be made available to ships in ports. The government opted instead to lower electricity tariffs, “arguably reaching the same overall target” (Averchenkova et al, 2025)

These changes were not just about the French government implementing the ideas it was already considering: “[t]he intervention of the Convention [assembly] appears to have changed hearts and minds to some degree” (Smith, 2024).

Impacts on institutions and climate actors

Some national climate assemblies have impacted climate institutions. Examples include the national assemblies in Ireland, Denmark and Climate Assembly UK.

In Ireland, the national climate assembly led to the establishment of a new, long-term Joint Parliamentary Committee on Climate Action. In Denmark, the government gave the assembly the same status as other social partners. The Danish government is required to consult social partners when policy or legislation is likely to affect their interests. This means, at least in theory, that the government has to consult the assembly's recommendations when developing policy that relates to them.

In the UK, one of Climate Assembly UK's main impacts was on the UK Climate Change Committee (CCC). The CCC is an independent statutory body established under the Climate Change Act 2008. It advises the UK and devolved governments on emissions targets and provides progress reports to the UK parliament on both [mitigation and adaptation](#). It used the recommendations from Climate Assembly UK to inform its [Sixth Carbon Budget](#). Since the assembly it has also commissioned two citizens' panels itself, one on [home energy decarbonisation](#), and one on [what an accessible and affordable vision for net zero would be for households](#). It has used these panels to inform work including its [Seventh Carbon Budget](#).

Climate Assembly UK also affected the work of wider climate actors. One-hundred-and-sixty-six organisations and individuals took part in a follow-up [survey](#) to help assess Climate Assembly UK's impact on subject area specialists and interest groups. Eighty-five percent of respondents reported that they had discussed the assembly with colleagues or work contacts. Over three-quarters reported that the assembly method and/or recommendations had influenced their work or thinking.

Impacts on assembly members

KNOCA reports that “[s]trong and consistent effects on the attitudes and behaviours of assembly members towards climate action can be found across almost all assemblies, with evidence from Climate Assembly UK that this is sustained and even enhanced over time.” [Research](#) looking at impacts on Climate Assembly UK members found that they had made changes to their jobs, travel, food, homes, and buying habits among other areas. A few had also stood for elected office.

In some countries, such as France, Austria and Spain, assembly members have formed their own organisations to promote their assembly's recommendations and continue to push for change. Several French assembly members have become high profile figures in social and traditional media.

Across assemblies, research and anecdotal evidence also show positive impacts of assembly members' sense of political efficacy, desire to engage further and, for some individuals, their personal wellbeing.

Impacts on public debate

The French assembly in particular has had a notable effect on public discourse. The *Convention citoyenne pour le climat* as it is known, stimulated “extensive public debate”, and raised the profile of climate change as an issue, making it difficult for politicians to ignore. The respected French think tank [IDDRI](#) also believes it changed thinking about “what is possible and acceptable, the Citizens' Convention for the Climate thus presents a new frontier for climate action” (Smith, 2024).

National assemblies, including in both France and the UK, have also led or contributed to the increased use of citizens' assemblies (and similar methods) at a local level.

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Think and Do Energy Savers Club

The challenge

In 2019 Camden Council ran a citizens' assembly on climate change. The assembly's recommendations contained several proposals about community engagement. Part of the Council's response was to set up [Think & Do](#) "to continue the civic collaboration among and between citizens". Think & Do was initially a pop-up on Kentish Town high street, but quickly became an independent non-profit organisation.

One of Think & Do's first projects was [Sharing Spaces](#). Sharing Spaces initially took place in Tenant and Resident Association Halls and Community Halls on estates. It opened up these spaces to local communities, while also exploring how to take climate action on a small, local scale.

Think & Do team members talked to residents at Sharing Spaces events, discussing among other topics what they were most interested in and wanted to learn. Through these conversations and those between residents, it became clear that the most pressing issues for local people were around the cost of living.

One of the biggest concerns was high energy bills. But there was a problem. Residents didn't have access to the knowledge or information needed to bring their bills down. They also didn't have the funds, or permission as tenants, to put in measures like solar panels or heat pumps.

Think and Do asked how it could help communities to reduce their energy use in affordable ways, saving them money and helping to reduce climate-changing emissions. Their response was the [Energy Savers Club](#).

The approach

Sharing Spaces and the Energy Savers Club have much in common in their approach. Neither initiative is framed around climate, and neither seeks to lecture people about what they should do. Both aim to have low barriers to entry.

Sharing Spaces began with significant engagement on estates before any events took place. The Think & Do team knocked on doors to let people know what was happening and explain the concept of "coming together to do things to help live a healthier life". The events themselves bring people together over vegetarian and plant-based food cooked by local people. They offer activities such as mending and upcycling clothes, and making DIY repairs.

The name 'Sharing Spaces' came from a resident. It reflects the idea that everyone has something they can share, whether that's a story or a recipe; "you don't need money or resources necessarily to be able to share things that you have" (Project participant, 2025). This made it easier and more accessible for people to take part.

Growing out of Sharing Spaces and linked to it, the Energy Savers Club is framed around reducing energy bills. It focuses on providing practical advice to people on a priority problem they want to solve. It works alongside another initiative that emerged from Sharing Spaces, a project called *Light Fantastic*.



The process

The Think & Do team began their work on the Energy Savers Club by researching low-cost changes that people can make at home to reduce their energy bills. They also looked at ways of understanding bills better, exploring for example how they are broken down and where energy in the home is going.

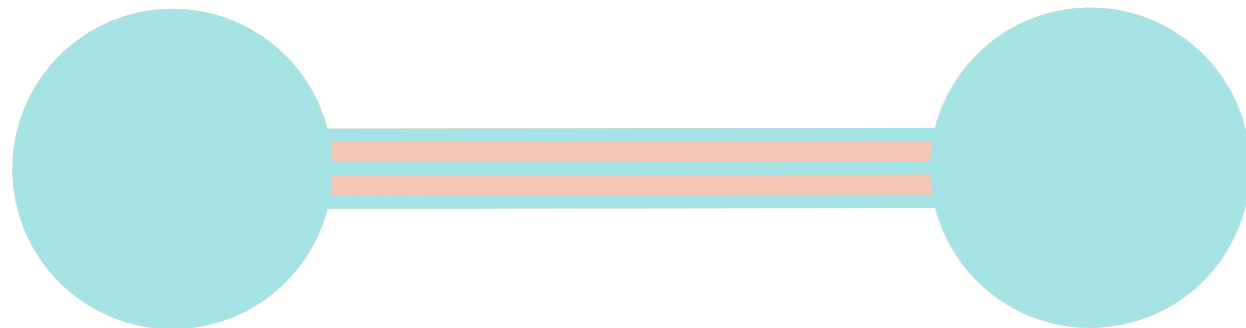
The project then started with three overlapping elements. The first is a **WhatsApp group**, open to anyone to join, but in which only the admins can post. The Think & Do team share one energy saving tip on the WhatsApp group per week. This could be, for example, checking what temperature your boiler is set to, or what temperature you are using your washing machine at. The Think & Do team promote the WhatsApp group at Sharing Spaces events and via campaigns, including door-knocking and Energy Savers Stalls.

The Energy Savers Club also involved, from the start, **giving out free energy saving devices**. These include, for example, LED light bulbs, radiator reflectors, hot water bottles, and draft excluders. The Think & Do team give out the devices through Sharing Spaces, via door-knocking and at events.

The third original element of the Energy Savers Club, involved [videos created by local residents](#) of them sharing energy saving tips. The Think & Do team shared these via the WhatsApp group and uploaded some of them to YouTube. Residents were paid £20 to create their video.

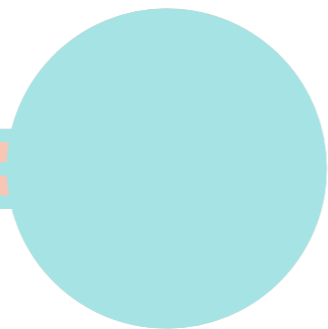
The third iteration of the Energy Savers Club (September 2024 – February 2005) built on these foundations. The Think & Do team aimed to speak to as many Camden residents as possible through day-long pop-up events at Sharing Spaces, on housing estates, on high streets and in libraries. The team ran ten events in total. Each generally included a stall, with free energy saving devices and information (e.g. Think & Do's 'energy saving tips' flyers) and the chance to ask questions. Residents were encouraged to sign up to the Energy Savers Club WhatsApp group. The Think & Do team also made referrals to Council departments for issues like damp and mould.

In 2024 and 2025 Think & Do also added a number of elements to the Energy Savers Club, and alongside it. These included a campaign called [Light Fantastic](#), run in partnership with [Power Up North London \(PUNL\)](#). It aims to swap non-LED bulbs with LED bulbs, focussing on replacements that residents cannot do themselves; for example, because they involve replacing light fittings (which only a qualified electrician can do) and require non-invasive techniques that avoid drilling holes due to the risk of asbestos in ceilings.



Another addition was energy-related **training**. For example, in 2024 Think & Do partnered with PUNL to pilot *Energise Your Career: Home Energy Training*. This short course aims to support the 'green skills' sector by making energy advice work more accessible to local adult residents and showing them clear pathways to employment.

In Spring 2025, Think & Do is also piloting Energy Saving Ambassador training. This four-week programme, running on Monday evenings, provides ten interested local residents from one Sharing Space with a comprehensive overview of energy in the home. The ultimate aim is for Think & Do and the trainees to co-create ways that trainees can then pass on what they learn to others, through activities like stalls, talking to neighbours and events. Ambassadors will each be paid £15/hour for 15 hours of work. One attendee has already suggested that they'd like to engage other parents at their children's school.



Outcomes and Impact

The Energy Savers Club wouldn't exist without public engagement. It only came about because of Think & Do's Sharing Spaces project, and Think & Do traces its origins to the Camden Climate Assembly.

The Club, and Think & Do's related initiatives, have also had considerable impact in and of themselves.

Impact by numbers

Think & Do collects a range of statistics about its work.

The third iteration of the Energy Savers Club engaged well over 400 people, handed out over 300 free energy saving devices and involved Think & Do making around fifty referrals to the Council. Membership of the WhatsApp group has natural ebbs and flows, and currently stands at 101. Of the 51 WhatsApp group members who responded to a recent poll, 39 said they found the advice given on the group useful, 11 said they found it useful 'sometimes' and only 2 said they didn't find it useful at all.

The first iteration of *Light Fantastic* saw 150 LED light bulbs fitted and distributed to tenants. Think & Do estimates that, for each household involved, this results in an annual cost saving of £47 and an annual carbon saving of 36.5kg. The second iteration of the campaign saw 305 LED bulbs fitted or given to residents, creating projected total savings over ten years of £4,590 for residents and 3.5 tonnes of CO₂.

Thirteen residents completed the pilot of the *Energise Your Career* training. Participants gave the training excellent feedback and reported significant improvements in their knowledge across all surveyed areas. Four have since signed up for [National Energy Action's](#) Level 3 Training programme. A second cohort of twenty people has now also completed the training. At the time of writing, the pilot Energy Saving Ambassadors training is fully subscribed.

Qualitative impacts

The way in which the Energy Savers Club emerged from Sharing Spaces illustrates its more qualitative impacts.

Creating a regular weekly space in which people can meet and talk together helps them to realise that they are not alone. Through conversations they can identify and recognise issues that they are all dealing with, have space to express their frustrations, and ask questions or for advice.

People can feel shame in admitting they are struggling with a problem. Creating a regular space that feels safe and supported is a necessary prerequisite for these conversations to emerge:

“I think a really big part of any of this kind of work is the engagement and fostering that trust and space for you to really understand what it is that people are struggling with or want to learn about more.”

- Project team member, 2025

Identifying the need and appetite for the Energy Savers Club, and then running it, has in addition helped to show people that they are not powerless in the face of their energy bill and that there are avenues that they can take to change their situation and seek help:

“[It’s] really nice to hear that people now feel like they have some autonomy and ownership over the energy they use and how they pay their energy bills.”

- Project team member, 2025

Facilitating change

Sharing Spaces acts as an incubator for ideas. While some people who attend already know each other, many do not. The Energy Savers Club and Light Fantastic are not the only ideas to have emerged from conversations between residents, and between residents and Think & Do. For example, one Sharing Space led to the creation of Sharing Eats, a catering business run by local women that is currently in the process of turning itself into a cooperative:

“It’s creating a space for people to come together and share what they’re interested in. That’s almost like the most important thing in all of this as opposed to planning out big projects and having big ideas [...]

If you give people a space to come together and the opportunity to do stuff there, then they already have ideas and things that they want to do. It’s more about facilitating that as opposed to coming in with what we want to do and what we think they need.”

- Project team member, 2025

Creating accessible spaces

Sharing Spaces in Camden have started to spread by word-of-mouth and become embedded in the local area. The first Sharing Space was on one housing estate. Now there are Sharing Spaces on several housing estates and at several libraries.

During pre-engagement for the new Queen’s Crescent Sharing Space, the Think & Do team ran a regular stall at the local market on Thursdays to speak to residents. They found that some of the people they talked to had already heard of Think & Do, knew someone who had attended a Sharing Space, or had been to another Sharing Space themselves:

“It’s a lot easier to go somewhere new if you know that someone else has gone or if you’re going with someone else and they’re taking you for the first time. A lot of the time it is people who suffer from isolation in some ways or are retired or don’t speak English as their first language. And so a lot of spaces are closed to them, not necessarily by design, but just as an unfortunate factor.”

- Project team member, 2025

As word-of-mouth information about Sharing Spaces spreads, barriers to attendance reduce.

Think & Do is currently partnering with Ashden, with funding from [The Kusuma Trust](#), to roll out Sharing Spaces to eight other community organisations in London.



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Floodlights

The challenge

Kingston-Upon-Hull is a city in North-East England. It has a long sea-faring tradition. In 2017 it was UK City of Culture.

Flooding is a major challenge for Hull. It sits on the banks of the River Hull and Humber Estuary, and is exposed to flooding from both the sea and the river. The fact the city is low-lying and that it sits on chalk and glacial clay means Hull is also entirely dependent on pumping to drain water from within its boundaries.

Regular major flooding is recorded in Hull as early as the thirteenth century. In 1980 a tidal barrier was built to protect against tidal surges. But major flood events still occurred in 2007 (caused mainly by rain and surface water) and 2013 (caused by a tidal surge). Minor surface water floods happen every few years. Climate change means the city faces worsening extreme weather events and rising sea levels.

Hull's high flood risk is recognised by national agencies. But local sign-ups to the Environment Agency's flood warning service have been low, and there has been limited community engagement with public flood consultation events.

Against this backdrop, arts-based engagement can provide an effective way to raise awareness of climate-related flood risk, and drive climate action.

The approach

Floodlights was three-site specific multimedia art installations: *Sinuous City*, *Sirens* and *Overflow*.

The installations explored local experiences of living with water and flooding. They focussed on Hull's past, present and future. The installations were open to members of the public to visit for 4 days and nights (21–24 October, 2021). They were free to attend.

The process

The three teams of artists drew on a range of materials and sources to develop their work. These included:

- Archival materials, newspapers and maps;
- Flood fictions in poetry, plays and folklore; and
- Watery stories and flood experiences shared by local people.

These local participants were community members, university students, and pupils from Trinity House Academy (a local secondary school). They took part in in-person workshops and creative sessions that explored different aspects of water – for example, 'water's place in culture, memory and as a material body' – including its relationships to pollution and climate change.

The final art works were three large-scale light and sound installations:

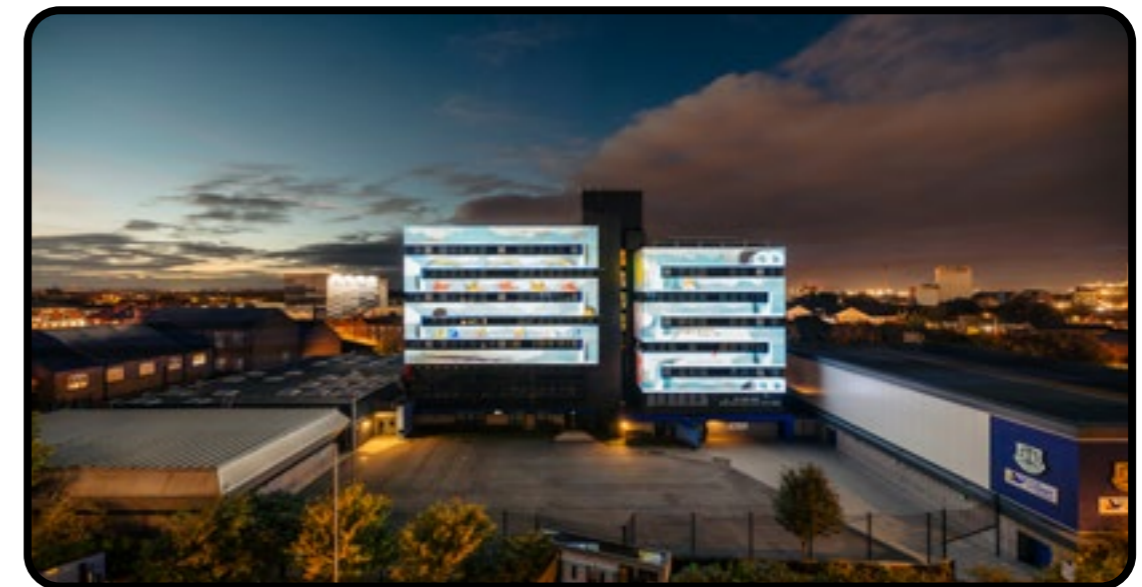
- *Sirens* projected holograms into the water outside Princess Quay shopping centre. It depicted sea creatures including mermaids, turtles and exotic fish. It showed these images alongside others of plastic pollution, climate migration and extinction.



- *Sinuuous City* was an immersive experience and video art gallery, located at an empty city retail unit. It combined lighting, projections, and sound design to create an abstract depiction of a flood. It also used poetry.



- *Overflow* projected images onto the Trinity House Academy school building. The installation took full advantage of the building's unique architecture. It explored the school's 235-year nautical history and Hull's sea-faring past.



The *Floodlights* installations were accompanied by free behind-the-scenes videos, a short animated film for children, a live roundtable discussion, and a launch event. There was also a light parade in the Gipsyville area of the city.



The organisers estimate that there were around 11,000 visits to the installations in total, with researchers estimating that these were made by around 5,000 individuals. Results of an audience survey suggest attendees may have been slightly older, more female, more white, slightly higher educated and less likely to have a disability compared to the city's population as a whole. This would be in-line with attendees at similar previous arts events in the city.

Outcomes and Impact

Our reporting of the impact of Floodlights is drawn from [research](#) by academics at the University of Hull. They used an audience survey, which reached approximately 9% of attendees, to assess the project's effects. The same researchers report that evaluations of later arts initiatives in the Risky Cities project, reaching up to 20% of audience members, showed similar or greater impacts. Publication of these results is forthcoming.

Influencing thinking

People who visited Floodlights self-reported a number of impacts on their thoughts. Over half of respondents agreed that attending Floodlights made them think about:

- “Climate change” (67%)
- “Living with water in the future” (65%)
- “How climate change impacts on me and my community” (59%)
- “My role in climate change” (53%)
- “My flood risk” (51%)

Respondents talked more about these changes in response to the survey's open-ended questions:

“Many reflected on very personal impacts of climate change and 'what this would mean for my grandchildren if something isn't done in time' [...] while others commented on how their increased awareness would change their relationship to water in their homes [e.g. being more mindful of water and energy waste, checking drainage issues], associating this with actions to help reduce flood risk in the wider community.”

- Smith et al, 2025

Generating conversations

The installations were not entirely successful at catalysing conversations between audience members. Only 29% of respondents reported talking to “others about living with water, flooding and/or climate change” at the installations themselves. Twenty-nine percent isn't a huge figure. That said, it is arguably still impressive given the impact of Covid-19. Pandemic restrictions were still in place at the time of the installations and there was ongoing nervousness around the pandemic.

The Hull research team noted that some academics see conversation as a necessary precursor to transformative change.

Changing intended behaviours

Around one-third of respondents self-reported intentions to change their behaviours. The survey asked: “Having seen Floodlights, will anything change about your actions around living with water, flooding and flood risk, and/or climate change?”

Results were mixed. A quarter of respondents (25%) said they had already made these changes; 36% said they would not make changes, and 5% were unsure. The remaining 34% predicated that they would make changes. Some intended to take specific actions. These included reducing the number of cars owned, installing solar panels, putting in rain water collection systems, signing up to national flood alerts and looking for local activism opportunities. Other people made more general statements, saying they were now more aware of the issues and potential solutions.

This is, arguably, an impressive level of impact. It is unknown how many respondents went on to make the changes they predicted.

Why was Floodlights impactful?

The Hull research team attributed the impact of Floodlights to key aspects of the project's approach. The first was the ability of art-based work to elicit an emotional reaction. Audience members who said they had been emotionally affected by the installations were seven times more likely to say they would make changes to their lives, compared to those who did not report an emotional reaction.

Secondly, the place- and site- specific nature of the installations helped make climate and water issues relevant to audience members. In particular they:

- tapped into people's identities and local pride in city's past and current connections to water.
- used local stories about living with water and floods in Hull.
- located images of climate change on and next to important local landmarks.

Comments from survey respondents included:

“I felt pride in my maritime heritage and city and thoughts for the future of our planet.”

“The Sinuous City poem made me think about those whose homes have previously flooded in Hull and how much strength a person would need to rebuild their home.”

“It definitely stirred thoughts around flooding, particularly the Sinuous City piece and the submerged landmarks like the barrier or phone boxes.”

- Smith et al, 2025

The researchers found that Floodlights made the majority of audience members think about climate change in “local and personal terms”. This supports arguments that place-based art can help make climate change personally relevant and meaningful, overcoming the tendency for people to see it as an abstract “out-there-somewhere” global problem.

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Reducing flood risk and restoring rivers in Enfield

The challenge

Enfield is a London borough. It's home to close to 350,000 people. It also boasts multiple waterways, which feed the River Thames. These brooks cut the danger of local flooding by absorbing and carrying away rainfall.

At least, they do in theory. Over the years humans have narrowed the brooks and channelled them through pipes and concrete. This has reduced their ability to protect communities against flooding – a change which has particularly affected people in the less well-off eastern side of the borough where the flood threat is greatest.

[Enfield Council](#) responded to this situation by developing an [award-winning](#) partnership with environmental charity [Thames21](#). It aimed to restore the waterways, and create new natural features to reduce flood risk even further.

The approach

Thames21 is an environmental charity that works with communities to restore and look after rivers, water and nature across London and the Thames Basin. It sees people and rivers as interacting in two ways through its work.

First but not foremost, there is what people can do for rivers. For example, people can volunteer their time and labour, advocate for change, or become [citizen scientists](#) who help monitor water quality.

Second, there is what rivers can do for people. Research shows that being in nature is hugely beneficial for people's wellbeing. Natural spaces that combine land and water – blue-green spaces, as they are known – have a particularly strong effect. Volunteering with a group of like-minded people to improve these spaces can be even better, providing people with a sense of purpose.

Enfield Council and Thames21 applied this dual approach throughout their partnership to reduce flood risk in the borough.

The process

The partnership between Enfield Council and Thames21 stretches across many years, and multiple sites. It focuses on restoring waterways, tree-planting, and wetland creation.

An early example of the partnership is their work at [Firs Farm](#). A key aim of the Firs Farm project was to reduce flood risk to neighbouring properties. It involved multiple organisations, alongside the partners.

In 2014 when the project began, Firs Farm was a public park bordering the A10. It looked like an open green playing field, and was seldom used, aside from Saturday football matches. Hidden underground at the northern end of the park was the Moore Brook. The Firs Farm wetland creation and river restoration project aimed to recruit local volunteers to turn part of Firs Farm into a combined wetland and flood storage area.

A second example of the partnership between Enfield Council and Thames21 is the Restoring Enfield's Rivers Project (RERP). RERP ran in 2021-22 and aimed to tackle three challenges: flood risk, particularly from the Salmons Brook and Turkey Brook; low water quality across many of the borough's waterways; and challenges with health and wellbeing amongst local communities.

The project's design included targets to:

- Create 60 hectares of newly-publicly-accessible woodland
- Construct a 3.3km footpath to enable people to access that woodland more easily
- Install 20 Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)
- Involve communities in volunteering work across the borough
- Upskill communities through volunteering, group work and training
- Set-up a [nature prescribing scheme](#)



Finally the project wanted to collect evidence of the impacts of Nature Based Solutions, and leave a legacy of environmental and social benefits.

Outcomes and Impact

Enfield Council and Thames21's partnership has been highly impactful. Its engagement of volunteers has allowed it to implement nature-based solutions to reduce flood risk and create sustainable ways of maintaining blue-green spaces. The resulting works have benefited wildlife, increased biodiversity and reduced pollution. They have also helped to improve the wellbeing of local people.

Fir Farm Wetlands

The Firs Farm project successfully recruited and worked with volunteers to create a new wetland area. The project also restored 500m of the Moore Brook and created, among other features, a cycleway, network of footpaths, outdoor classroom, dipping platform, open bird hide, stepping stones and several seating areas.



The Firs Farm wetlands protect more than 100 properties (and the A10) from flooding. They can store 30,000m³ of flood water. They also slow down water flowing through the site; water takes roughly 72 hours to pass through the various channels and lakes.

Water quality at Firs Farm has improved considerably as result of the work. There have also been noticeable increases in wildlife, particularly birdlife. And the site is well-used by local people, including regular visits from schools and youth groups:

“Firs Farm...[has] gone from being the most boring amenity space you can imagine with lots of anti-social behaviour. It's become this really well-loved community space that has the Friends of Firs Farm, which are ... so plugged-in to the wider community and engaging them in all sorts of ways and it's always just buzzing there with people.”

- Project team member, 2025

The [Friends of Firs Farm](#) are a community group that formed alongside the project. It is now a registered charity. Along with other local residents, its members helped shape the scope of the original project to meet community needs and aspirations. They describe being involved “every step of the way,” helping with planting, path creation, litter picking and a tree adoption scheme. They also co-organised with Thames21 a community festival that was attended by more than 2,000 people.



Today the Friends of Firs Farm helps to maintain and develop the site, offers volunteering opportunities and encourages local people to get outdoors and active. It also recently successfully fundraised for and built a community hub, making the site more accessible including in wet weather. The hub features a café, community space / classroom, sensory and wellness room, toilets, changing room, and office.

It's not unusual for new long-term groups like the Friends to develop through Thames21's work. The creation of River Action Groups (RAGs), as they are known, is one of Thames21's main missions. Thames21 provides RAGs with a range of training and equipment, helps them with fundraising and insurance, and offers ongoing advice. It also collaborates with them on events. At the time of writing there are 20-30 RAGs across London.

Restoring Enfield's Rivers Project

The Restoring Enfield's Rivers Project (RERP) achieved or exceeded all of its initial targets.

Working with community volunteers – as well as corporate volunteers and contractors – allowed Thames21 and Enfield Council to plant a total of 100,000 trees on over 60 hectares at their designated Enfield Chase site. They were also able to install 32 rural SuDS, well beyond their original target of 20. Modelling data suggests these interventions will have a greater impact on reducing flood-risk than previous hard-engineered flood defences installed in the area. This would reduce the flood-risk to over 1,000 homes.

The construction of the planned footpath was completed in early 2022 and includes a new bridge, as well as seating and landscaped areas.

Volunteer activities across the borough's other waterways achieved significant improvements to river and wetland habitats, benefitting both wildlife and people.

The project featured 194 volunteering events in total, which between them attracted 2,208 attendances. It also included events such as guided walks, talks, community meetings and a River Festival, which were attended 3,281 times.

The nature prescribing initiative faced some initial challenges, but did get off the ground. It involved Thames21 working with local health providers and charities to offer tailored sessions to people experiencing poor mental health, recovering from addiction or who had experienced homelessness. RERP delivered 26 nature prescribing sessions, which were attended 214 times.

The project also worked with 14 primary schools. It offered them interactive assemblies, tree-planting sessions in-school, and tree-planting sessions at the main Enfield Chase tree-planting site. These sessions reached over 2,000 children in total, including those with severe and profound learning difficulties:

“That was really great because a lot of these kids hadn't experienced these big open green spaces or experienced mud on that scale. They were excited by that. And then [there were] kids coming back...[and] teachers say[ing] that they were going to take the kids back in subsequent years to check on the trees and see how they were developing.”

- Project team member, 2025



The project was only able to collect wellbeing data from a small sample of the volunteers involved. It used the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, asking volunteers to complete surveys before their first volunteering session and after they had attended at least four times. The results suggest that the project was successful in improving the wellbeing of those who took part, both for general volunteers and those participating in the nature prescribing sessions.

Finally, RERP was able to secure a longer-term legacy and impact for its work. 39 local people completed Leading Action for Healthy Rivers training as part of the project. This was supplemented by informal training during volunteering sessions. A further 23 people were trained in Riverfly Monitoring. Through these activities and others RERP helped to expand the capacity of existing River Action Groups in Enfield, and empower local people to set up four new ones.

The data collected during the project, including through citizen science, has helped create a strong case for continuing and expanding the partnership's work. Additional funding has already been secured from Enfield Council, Ofwat, and national government – the latter in the form of a major Landscape Recovery Scheme grant.

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Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership's Community Climate Action Project

The challenge

[Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership](#) started its Community Climate Action Project in 2020. In some ways Bristol was ahead: it had declared a climate emergency, and developed citywide climate and nature strategies. But, so far, the people involved in developing, leading and delivering the plan had not reflected the diversity of the city's population.

This, the Partnership felt, created risks. The strategies were less likely to be fit for purpose if not informed by diverse insights, and they were highly unlikely to lead to a just transition. They were missing out on the key insights and creativity that more diverse perspectives would bring. And they were more likely to meet resistance if they didn't have a wide social mandate.

Community partners were also feeding back that while a huge majority of citizens in Bristol were concerned about the climate and nature crises, these issues didn't always connect well to their daily lives and pressures. The project wanted to communicate the issues differently, framing them more around improving quality of life.

Alongside these challenges, many Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector organisations were under-engaged in work on climate change. The Partnership wanted to work with the VCSE sector to create more diverse leadership and involvement in climate and nature action in Bristol.

The approach

Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership wanted to work with communities who had been less involved in climate action, were non-climate specialist and who had less of a platform to make their views heard. This included geographic communities that were experiencing complex, multiple deprivation. It also included demographic communities – specifically refugee and migrant communities, and Bristol's community of Disabled people – who had been systemically excluded from climate plans.

The Partnership wanted to empower these communities to lead climate and nature action themselves, and take on leadership roles within the city. To do that it worked with existing community groups. These organisations knew their communities well, already convened them on a range of issues, and were trusted by them.

They were ideally placed:

“There’s a lot of work on what governments should do on climate and nature, what individuals should do, what businesses should do, and this whole area around communities is slightly forgotten or a bit tokenistic. [...] If you look at the COVID crisis, who were the first people to step in.... before government, before local authorities, it was the community and VCSE sector. So if you're thinking about how to respond to a crisis and how you engage more people, then you need the community sector.”

– Project team member, 2025

Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership selected its initial community partners for the project based on their track-record of co-production. It started by providing them with a [capacity building programme](#). The programme increased the groups’ confidence and knowledge around climate change and related issues. The Partnership also worked with the Centre for Sustainable Energy to provide the partners with a baseline carbon footprint for their communities. Each partner then engaged members of their community to co-produce a community climate and nature action plan. The plans were developed with, by and for each community. A range of external experts peer-reviewed the plans via a roundtable to help refine the plan priorities before they were published.

Running throughout the project was a focus on the idea of a just transition, on “the duality of taking action on climate while also improving quality of life for local people” (Project team member, 2025).



In addition, the project featured a wide range of [creative commissions](#), both city-wide and within specific communities. The idea was to spark imagination and joy, allowing more people to connect with what can be heavy, guilt-inducing, scary and overwhelming issues.

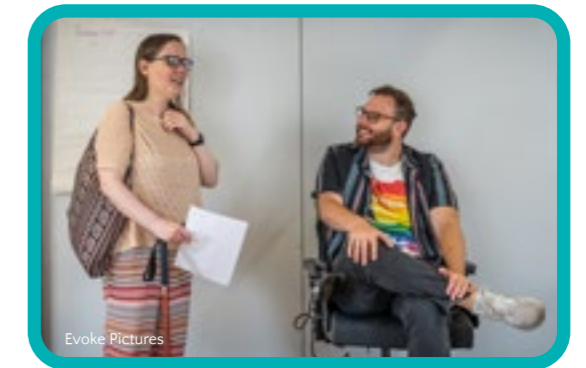
By July 2025, seventeen communities across Bristol will have their own community climate and nature action plans. Each plan contains a set of climate, nature and social priorities for that community, across multiple different climate themes.

The plans are generally refreshed “every couple of years” to make sure their priorities are up-to-date (Project team member, 2025).

The process

Each community partner used different methods to engage its community in the creation of their plan. Here we focus on the plan created with, by and for Bristol’s community of Disabled people, by way of illustration. Dr Emma Geen of [Bristol Disability Equalities Forum](#) (BDEF) led the work. BDEF is a Disabled People’s Organisation, meaning it is [run by and for](#) Disabled people.

Disabled people are likely to be disproportionately impacted by climate change and nature breakdown. But it is equally important to recognise that they are also experts in adaptation – in how to be creative and do things differently to overcome problems. They have massive untapped potential to inform policy around our changing climate to the benefit of us all.



BDEF gathered feedback and ideas from Bristol’s community of Disabled people in four main ways. Engagement took place during the Covid pandemic, with BDEF adjusting its plans accordingly:

- **Sofa stalls:** BDEF staff ran regular stalls in shopping centres and at community events. The stalls invited Disabled people to sit and talk over a cup of tea and a biscuit. Arising ideas and concerns were fed into a survey.
- **Project survey:** Online and offline copies of the survey were shared by disability groups, care homes, and environmental and justice organisations. BDEF also promoted the survey through flyers, a video and targeted adverts on Facebook and local news platforms. BDEF sent a CD version of the video to BDEF members without internet access.
- **Sharing sessions:** These events brought together Disabled people with subject experts and Council representatives. Disabled people shared the expertise of their lived experience and subject experts suggested potential solutions. Both parties then developed these ideas through discussion. The sessions covered nature, transport, energy and food. Some were online, some in-person and some hybrid.
- **Presentations:** BDEF ran two Open Forums on the plan. It also made presentations to other disability groups, and as part of festival line-ups, where Covid restrictions allowed.

A project steering group of volunteers with a range of impairments, and of diverse ages and backgrounds, met at least once a month throughout the engagement period. They drafted the community climate action plan based on the data collected. BDEF presented the draft at a BDEF Open Forum and at disability events for feedback. It also collected feedback via an online form. The steering group used this feedback to finalise its work.

Outcomes and Impact

The community climate and nature action plans have had significant impact collectively and individually. Here we consider their collective impact first, before going on to examine the impact of the Disabled community's plan.

The seventeen plans are at different stages in their development and influence. The work with Bristol's community of Disabled people isn't the furthest along this journey. We consider it here because Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership believes it was the first climate action plan written with, by and for a community of Disabled people in the UK. Disabled people will also have taken part in developing, and benefited from, many if not all of the other community action plans and related follow-up activities. Disabled people live in all communities.

Impact on community agency and voice

The creation of the community climate and nature action plans gave Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership a clear picture of communities' priorities. It was then able to consider what else it could do to give those communities further agency. In particular it wanted to create a way for them to be proactive in influencing strategy, policy, and major projects at an early stage.

The Partnership's solution was to bring leaders from the communities together to form a [Community Leadership Panel](#). The Council and others bring a wide range of decisions to the panel "at a very early stage...for review and critique" (Project team member, 2025). The panel examines the proposals through the lens of a just transition. To-date it has reviewed strategies and decisions including the West of England Nature Recovery Strategy, the Council's flood resilience strategy, NHS plans and regeneration projects. Its feedback has helped to "expand, extend and deepen" thinking around a just transition and inform



Examples of public engagement on climate change

Evoke Pictures

engagement strategies (Project team member, 2025). The Community Climate Action Project has also given VCSE organisations more clout and confidence to be vocal about their needs:

"[W]e have got this collective of 17 community organisations that are empowered, informed, not going to take no for an answer any more. [...] That's not a group of people you can ignore in the collective form. So the presence, the strength, the robustness of the VCSE sector in terms of influencing around climate and nature in the city has increased."

- Project team member, 2025

Impact on the council

Bristol City Council has been a core partner of the Community Climate Action Project throughout its lifetime. And the project as a whole has had a range of impacts on its work.

The Council has used the Community Leadership Panel and an BCNP's aggregation of the plans' priorities to inform its strategies and policies, including the One City Climate Action Plan. The community plans had many priorities in common, including improvements and changes to transport. The Partnership has therefore done further work with six of its community partners, including Bristol's community of Disabled people, to develop an inclusive transport vision for the city. The vision directly contributed to Bristol City Council's [Golden motion to become the UK's most accessible city](#), passed in late 2024. It also informed a regional Transport Hustings as part of the election of the new West of England Mayor in Spring 2025.



Beyond impacts on policy, the Council has used evidence from the Community Climate Action Project to leverage more funding for the city and its residents. For example, Bristol recently received £5m in funding from Innovate UK for Bristol Mission Net Zero; "the USP of that bid was around engaging diverse communities within the net zero journey" (Project team member, 2025). The project has also been central to a bid to Horizon Europe. This funding helps to create a legacy for the project, as well being an impact of it.

Impact on VCSE funding

Initial funding for the Community Climate Action Project included a budget for six community organisations to run demonstrator projects. These organisations took a priority from their community climate and nature action plan and worked it up into a business case. The resulting projects cover waste, nature and energy. They are engaging local people, developing their skills, and embedding climate action within Bristol's communities.

These initiatives have also raised the profile of the six community organisations involved. These groups are now seen as community leaders and key strategic organisations within the city by the Council and some funders. Some have also gained regional and national profile. This has helped the organisations leverage funding, contributing to their organisational sustainability and enabling them to carry out further work in the climate and nature space.

Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership has recently been working to extend this impact. It has produced a [community prospectus](#) which showcases additional projects that community groups are looking to fund based on their plans' priorities. The prospectus is "a pipeline of investable community climate and nature action projects". It has the potential to help organisations diversify their funding portfolios. It should also result in projects which engage local people on climate issues, reduce the city's carbon impact and support biodiversity gain.



Impacts on individuals

The project has had many and multiple positive impacts on [individuals directly and indirectly involved](#). These include support with poverty (including food and energy poverty), improved mental wellbeing, and reduced social isolation. Some of the arts-based commissions have also allowed people to capture their experiences and ideas in fun and joyful ways, avoiding re-traumatisation.

For example, the Partnership used Forum Theatre to enable people from the Bristol's community of Disabled people to [present](#) their often highly distressing experiences on the city's buses, as well as their thoughts on solutions.

Impacts of engagement and action

The Community Climate Action Project has resulted in a larger, more diverse and more representative group of Bristolians discussing climate and nature action, and getting involved. This should help communities across the city to contribute more to climate and nature recovery. The project also has the potential to help communities become more resilient to climate and societal changes.

More widely the project has developed [a model for place-based Community climate and nature action](#) which can be shared and replicated in other places.

Activating the Disabled people's climate and nature action plan

Work to activate and take forward the Disabled community's plan has included the development of a new [Climate and Disability programme](#) which includes, but is not limited to:

- The creation of a [Climate and Disability Forum](#). This is a nine-strong pan-disability group from across the city. Their focus to-date has been on continuing engagement with the Disabled community to keep the plan's priorities up-to-date. Two members of the Climate and Disability Forum sit on the project's Community Leadership Panel.
- Funding for an **Inclusive Transport Advocate** who is employed by the project and seconded to Sustrans. The postholder has been conducting [a range of advocacy work](#), taking forward the priorities of disabled people as detailed in their community plan, and the inclusive transport vision.
- The delivery of **two strategic roundtable events** in partnership with the University of Exeter. The events helped raise awareness amongst local and regional leaders of the needs of the Disabled community. For example, Bristol City Council announced that the first roundtable had "led to [it] setting up a Disabled People Strategic Transport Advisory Group to make sure we are proactively listening to Disabled people and doing our utmost to respond to their needs" (Cllr Ed Plowden in Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership BCNP, 2024).

Feedback from members of the **Climate and Disability Forum** suggests that they really value being in a space that is respectful towards, and is responsive to, people's different needs and abilities. This in itself has been impactful given their previous experiences of engagement. They have also found it empowering to work as a collective and feel like they are really being heard. The two Forum members who also sit of the Community Leadership Panel report that whilst the panel isn't perfect

"it's one of the first times they've ever genuinely felt like they've been in the room with decision makers and been respected in their own right for the expertise, the lived experience insights that they bring to the table."

- Project team member, 2025

They also feel that they are

“actually shaping and informing things at an early enough stage [and] that it's not just tokenistic.”

- Project team member, 2025

The Community Climate Action Project has resulted in more communications exposure and profile for members of Bristol's community of Disabled people on climate and nature issues. See for example '[A green future is possible, but only if Disabled people are invited in](#)'.

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Gwent Energy CIC

The challenge

In 2009 Caldicot Council contacted the energy group of Transition Chepstow with a question. Would they be interested in helping to deliver three large community-owned wind turbines? The idea was that the energy group, as Gwent Energy CIC, would raise the funds for the project through a community share offer. The Council projected that income from the turbines, once built, would be £1m per year. The Council would use this income to improve and maintain the Caldicot seawall, which it was worried was inadequate to protect the town from climate change-induced coastal flooding. Any surplus would be used to fund community projects.

The idea of the wind turbines was eventually abandoned due to local opposition. But Gwent Energy CIC now existed and was already active in providing energy advice to local community organisations. The organisation's director could see that a large portion of these organisations' budgets was going on their energy bills. This restricted how much they could do for the community.

Here was an opportunity to reduce local climate-changing emissions, whilst helping these local groups to do more. There was also the potential to make a surplus from the work which could be reinvested in local community projects.

The approach

Gwent Energy CIC's core business is the installation, ownership and maintenance of solar panels for local community groups. It also provides the groups - which include churches, schools, community centres and lifeboat stations - with free energy advice.

Some community groups can afford the upfront costs of the solar panels themselves, in which case Gwent Energy is only paid for the installation. If a community group needs help financing the panels, then Gwent Energy raises the funding through loans and bond issues to users of the community buildings the panels will be installed on, and members of the local Transition Movement (more on this and what it means below). In these cases, Gwent Energy does the installation for free, in return for all or part of the Feed-in-Tariff (FiT) payments.

Gwent Energy's investors automatically become part of its Investor Club. Among other benefits, this means they can join the two committees of trustees and shareholders that oversee their investments and Gwent Energy CIC as a whole.

This model worked well for Gwent Energy from its foundation in 2009 until 2015, when the incoming UK government made rapid changes to energy policy. Several of these changes had a negative effect on the CIC. Not least amongst these, FiT rates dropped to the point where they barely covered Gwent Energy's administrative costs. As very few community organisations can fund their solar panels themselves, this means the CIC's work with community organisations today is often reliant on grants.

The process

“One of the first projects which we were involved with ... got some grant funding but it was enough only for 4 kW [of solar PV]. But they had a roof big enough for 10 kW ... I said look, let's see if we can raise some more money to put 10 kW on while we've got the chance. So we decided to have a meeting of people that use the hall, and see if they would loan us some money ... I spoke for about five minutes and it took us about 15 seconds to write down the names of people who were offering to lend us about £15,000 ... That's the model we've used thereafter.”

- Director of Gwent Energy CIC in Cairns et al 2020

Gwent Energy offers three financial products:

- A loan repaid in equal annual capital instalments over 10 years. And interest at 5% annually on the outstanding balance paid
- A bond with capital repaid at 20 years. And interest at 6% annually on the value of the investment
- A bond with capital repaid at a date chosen by the lender. And interest at 4% annually on the value of the investment

To be eligible for one of these products, investors have to be part of Gwent Energy's Common Interest Group. The CIC defines its Common Interest Group as including:

- Members of a group such as, but not limited to, a Transition Town organisation with a common interest of making their community more sustainable
- Members or supporters of the community organisation that benefits in some way from the renewable energy installation that is proposed to be installed
- People who have addressed Gwent Energy C.I.C. during an organised talk or event on community energy

Issuing financial products only to members of a Common Interest Group makes Gwent Energy exempt from financial regulations around advertising Investments. This saves it the time and legal fees that meeting these regulations would require.

Community engagement is part of the Gwent Energy process in several ways, from talking to community groups and potential investors, to telling people about the benefits of renewables. Pre-pandemic it held and attended numerous events every year to raise the profile of its work and the opportunities it provided. In 2016/7, for example, it attended 43 such events. It also had its own social media channel and newsletter.

Post-pandemic there have been fewer community events to attend so the CIC has relied mainly on word of mouth. It talks to community centres it had worked with in the past when it checks their installations, and “they all know 100-200 people and their friends” (Project team member, 2025).

Once solar panels are installed on a community building, the CIC gives at least one presentation “to explain how it works and what the benefits are” (Project team member, 2025). It also engages people around climate change through how it reinvests its surplus.

Outcomes and Impact

One of Gwent Energy CIC's most obvious impacts is the **reduction in carbon emissions from properties with which it works**. Cairns et al (2020) reported that the CIC had been involved in the installation of solar panels on 32 community buildings, 276 homes, and a number of local businesses. It had also installed one wood pellet biomass boiler, a number of electric vehicle charging points and more than 100kWh of battery storage.

A more up-to-date version of these figures is not available, but in 2025 the CIC will be installing another 200kW of solar panels. These systems are mainly for Muslim community centres in a range of less well-off areas. The project will be largely financed through grant funding.

Another of Gwent Energy's major impacts is its community benefit – in other words, the positive impact of its work on the local community. **Independent estimates have calculated the CIC's community benefit to be worth around £5 million a year.**

Energy is the biggest expense for most of the community organisations the CIC helps. Installing renewables on their buildings saves the groups money. This in turn allows them to run more services like 'heat hubs' to keep people warm in winter and out of hospital, foodbanks, out of school clubs, childcare, coffee mornings for vulnerable groups and hearing aid battery replacement schemes.

The Bridges Community Centre in Monmouth uses its solar panels and EV charge points to power an electric community transport offer:

“[The money saved means community organisations] can do what their community needs and what they are able to do. They have full flexibility to meet needs in a way that suits the community.”

- Project team member, 2025

At the time of Cairns et al.'s report in 2020, Gwent Energy estimated that 19,000 people regularly used the community centres benefitting from its systems. It calculated the annual savings on the community groups' energy bills to be around £21,000.



The CIC's support for local communities isn't just limited to the benefits of renewables and its energy advice. It also **redistributes some of its surplus to support local individuals and organisations**. For example, Gwent Energy pays for small marquees at local festivals and allows local community organisations to set up stalls inside for free.

Organisations which have benefitted from Gwent Energy funds in this way include Bee Friendly Monmouthshire, Gwent Wildlife Trust, Monmouthshire Meadows, Walkers are Welcome and the Gwent Association of Volunteer Organisations. The CIC also has its own stall in the marquees and estimates it talks to around 2,000 people each year at the events.

The CIC has provided some funding to Transition Chepstow to help with marketing activities such as printing leaflets, or small projects like planting apple trees. It has also installed 30 kW of solar panels for free on the homes of local individuals doing unpaid community work. Beneficiaries include a community ambulance driver and a community bus driver. The CIC saw the panels as a reward for the help these individuals provide to local people.

Individuals involved with Gwent Energy have, over the years, given annual presentations at a local school and sixth form and tutored a group of mature students from Strathclyde University on researching new opportunities in renewables. The CIC delivers its work by working with local tradespeople and, in 2020, had just taken on an apprentice.

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Pledgeball

The challenge

“Pledgeball started in response to my own personal feelings around climate change. I felt real despair in the face of it, completely powerless. I started researching what I could do as an individual, and shared what I found out with my football team. The response was overwhelming. As a result of that, we started Pledgeball.”

– Katie Cross, Founder of Pledgeball (Pantzar, 2025)

Pledgeball didn't start as a nationwide charity. Instead it began with a single football tournament. The idea for the tournament came from conversations between Katie Cross, Pledgeball's founder, and her team mates. In particular they talked about the collective impact they could have on climate emissions.

To join this very first tournament attendees had to make a pledge – a promise about what they were going to do to help reduce climate-changing emissions. Other than that entry was free. The event also offered free food made from food waste, and activities like bike servicing. Cross and her teammates noticed “a real kind of joy and discussion around climate [amongst people there], like a sense of relief that people could talk about it openly” (Project team member, 2025).

The tournament led to Cross's attendance at a related conference, and ultimately to a realisation that there was a wider appetite for the kind of engagement the event had piloted.

The approach

Pledgeball's particular focus is on how to overcome the paralysis and apathy that many people feel in the face of climate change:

“[We aim] to mobilise that very large proportion who care about the climate, because it is very silent. [...] They don't talk to others, and so... people assume that others don't care.”

– Project team member, 2025

Pledgeball's approach to achieving this goal has at least six key elements, all of which are grounded in academic literature about what works:

- **It shows fans how they can take action themselves** and offers them an easy way in – a first step that “can be something they actually feel quite comfortable with” (Project team member, 2025).
- **It makes fans' actions visible to each other**, overcoming the misperception that others do not care and are not making changes.
- **It raises fans' awareness of the impact they can collectively have**, increasing feelings of agency.
- **It utilises communications from, and sparks conversations about climate change between trusted messengers**, including clubs, supporters' clubs, other fans, and friends and family.
- **It illustrates that people are part of a wider movement** and that systemic change (at clubs and more broadly) is happening too.
- **It links to fans' existing identities** and to the values they hold as supporters of their club.

Football, and other sports, provide fertile ground for this kind of engagement. Fans meet regularly, share an emotional bond and have competitiveness embedded in their role. The sheer numbers of people involved also means that the impact of even small changes can be impressive when done collectively. Becoming aware of this impact has the potential to further empower both people directly involved and people looking on.



The process

The Pledgeball mechanism works by fans going to the Pledgeball website. On the site, they choose the fixture in which their team is playing and select the team they support. The website then takes fans to a list of over 60 environmentally friendly behaviours. They have to pledge to adopt at least one of them in support of their team. Once a fan submits their pledge, they receive an email summarising their commitment and the CO2e saving it will produce.

Fans' pledges are continually tallied and visualised in a league table on the Pledgeball homepage. The table shows fans of each team how much they have saved, ranking clubs in order of CO2e savings. The site also totals how much fans across all clubs have saved in total since Pledgeball began, and equates this figure to a number of petrol cars taken off the road.

At the end of each season, the club with the highest CO2e savings wins £15,000 to spend on environmental consultancy. Individual fans who pledge are entered into a prize draw, with prizes including signed merchandise and free transport to away games.

Pledgeball works with clubs to identify 4-6 games each per season to make Pledgeball fixtures. But its pledging mechanism is also free to use and open access. Organisations who have chosen to use the site independently of a partnership with Pledgeball include grassroots netball teams, music festivals and schools. also Pledgeball provides communications support to clubs it partners with.

Outcomes and Impact

Pledgeball's work has resulted in a wide range of different impacts.

Impact on individual fans

Thousands of fans have made pledges through the Pledgeball site. As of 25 April 2025, these pledges added up to savings of 71,138,600 kg of CO2e per year. That equates to 15,464.8 petrol cars off the road.

Given the number of fans Pledgeball does and could reach, if even a small percentage of fans adopted new behaviours following their engagement with Pledgeball that would be a significant impact.

Academic studies of Pledgeball's work suggest that Pledgeball is well able to achieve this goal. Research into Pledgeball's collaboration with Whitehawk FC found that multiple fans had adopted new behaviours long-term. Academics examining Pledgeball's work with UEFA during the 2024 Champions League only followed fans for a short period of time, but did find that some fans had pledged to adopt new behaviours. While most fans participating in this particular project had pledged to undertake pre-existing habits, the researchers found that even doing this had a motivational effect and strengthened participants' resolve.

While its figures on numbers of pledges are impressive, Pledgeball's main value actually lies elsewhere – in its impacts on people's attitudes, worldviews and feelings of agency, and in its ability to spark climate conversations.

Findings from an academic assessment of its work with Whitehawk FC included that the pledge mechanism can, for example:

- increase fans' feelings of ownership and agency over climate-related behaviours
- help fans feel part of a community taking action and/or a global movement for change
- create awareness amongst fans that small changes can add up to something bigger
- lead fans to realise that pro-climate changes can be easy and enjoyable
- make climate-friendly behaviours more-front-of-mind
- provide a less controversial justification for fans committing to pro-environmental behaviours such as eating less meat

A study of Pledgeball's work during the 2024 Champions League found that 42% of survey respondents pledging to make changes had discussed their pledges with at least one other person, potentially passing on Pledgeball's impact. People talked to by those who pledged included colleagues, family and fellow fans. One respondent, a teacher, had made pledging a whole-school challenge. The same study also found that awareness of Pledgeball was

“likely associated with a small... increased frequency of climate conversations” and that fans’ who pledged talked about climate change more frequently than those with the same level of climate concern who had not pledged.”

- Project team member, 2025



This is in itself an achievement that could have wider impacts: climate change is not a common topic of conversation amongst football fans. Sparking these discussions should help to dispel the myth that others do not care..

Pledgeball currently uses its pledging mechanism with 10-20 professional football clubs every season. It also increasingly collaborates with other sports, including working with the Lawn Tennis Association, rugby clubs, and the International Biathlon Union.



Impact on individual clubs

Pledgeball's end goal was initially to engage fans. However it has found that working with fans increases the pressure on clubs to act too:

“It's really accelerated operational sustainability at the clubs a lot.”

- Project team member, 2025

Examples of actions taken by clubs after working with Pledgeball include, but are by no means limited to, the following examples.

- In May 2021 **Whitehawk FC** introduced a new kit supplier who made shirts entirely out of recycled bottles and announced it would keep the same kit for two seasons. It also purchased reusable plastic glasses to replace the single-use plastic on sale at the club, sourced environmentally sustainable packaging for its catering outlet, introduced recycling bins and started conversations with the council about bike racks and connecting the club to active travel and public transport networks in the city.
- Rugby Club **Newport Dragons** is currently, in 2025, setting up a community climate hub, which it hopes will be open three days per week. The hub will bring together over 20 local organisations, such as repair cafes and tool libraries, giving them a permanent site at the grounds. It is also setting up a community allotment with a local school, with all the food grown going to the school's foodbank.

- **Huddersfield Town FC** recently started organising free bus travel for fans travelling to the stadium, after consulting them about how best to help reduce emissions from match-day travel. **Bristol City** are among clubs running match day activities at Pledgeball fixtures such as free bike servicing and discounts on vegetarian food. They also invite along a specialist in climate engagement who uses a rescue falcon to talk to fans: “they usually get an absolute mob and everybody talks there” (Project team member, 2025).

Many clubs use Pledgeball as an informal source of advice, including when creating or updating their sustainability strategies. Pledgeball is also a trusted source of advice for governing bodies.

Impact beyond individual clubs

Beyond its work with individual clubs, Pledgeball has sought to influence sports infrastructure more widely.

It has established a **sustainability network for chief executives of English Football League (EFL) clubs**. The network seeks to gain more senior attention for the climate agenda:

“When you attend the sports sustainability conferences, you tend to only see heads of sustainability there and they aren't the decision makers. To support their work, we need board level buy-in.”

- Project team member, 2025

The network's first meeting attracted board level representatives from over 11 EFL clubs. Fourteen EFL clubs are signed up to another Pledgeball initiative, the **Sustainable Travel Charter** which aims to reduce the number of domestic flights happening within English football, “mostly to prevent the normalisation of flying” (Project team member, 2025). Pledgeball also set up and chairs the **Football Supporters Association's Green Working Group**.

Recently Pledgeball has sought to influence **debates in Parliament** around the independent football regulator, adding considerations about the link between financial stability and environmental stability to the conversation.

Finally, Pledgeball is one of the founding members of **Green Football**, along with Sky and TNT. This “has had a huge reach and obviously brought conversation around climate into the mainstream” (Project team member, 2025). Other Pledgeball initiatives have also received press coverage. Pledgeball would like to find a way to track whether or not this is having an impact on climate conversations amongst the public more generally.

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Scotland’s Climate Challenge Fund

The challenge

The Scottish Government opened its Climate Challenge Fund (CCF) in 2008. The fund aimed to support community-led organisations in Scotland to combat climate change. It funded projects that reduced local carbon emissions, built understanding of climate change, and created support for a wider transition to a low carbon future.

The CCF provided support across four themes: travel, food, energy and waste. By the time it closed in 2022, it had granted over £111 million of funding to 1150 projects, including at least one from every local authority area in Scotland. The projects it supported had engaged hundreds of thousands of people, and saved hundreds of thousands of tonnes of CO₂e.

The CCF adapted its ways of working during its lifetime, including in response to four-yearly evaluation reports. One early problem was a lack of diversity amongst applicants. The first full evaluation of the fund in 2012 found that in its first four years, the fund had only received three applications from racialised and marginalised communities. Only two of these had been funded, and one of those was a pilot.

The challenge here was for the Scottish Government and its delivery partners to find out why racialised and marginalised communities were not applying to the CCF, and to make the fund accessible and engaging to these communities.

The approach

The Scottish Government’s first step was to work with [CEMVO](#) to run a conference for over 100 organisations working with racialised and marginalised groups. At the conference it became clear that most of the organisations attending hadn’t heard about the CCF. Now they had, they were interested to find out more.

The conference coincided with the Scottish Government retendering the delivery of CCF: the contract was due for renewal. The existing delivery partner, [Keep Scotland Beautiful](#), partnered with CEMVO to win the retender. Together they worked to make the CCF accessible and engaging to racialised and marginalised communities.

The process

Keep Scotland Beautiful and CEMVO made four key changes to create a level playing field for racialised and marginalised communities applying to the CCF:

- **They introduced smaller development grants.** These funded organisations to collect evidence needed to support their applications. It also allowed them time to develop their knowledge of climate terminology, something that groups applying successfully to the CCF often already had;
- **They provided 1-2-1 support** to interested organisations, helping them to develop their applications and fit their ideas into the funds' four themes. Many racialised and marginalised communities, it transpired, were already undertaking relevant work. But they hadn't seen it as climate-related, instead regarding work around sustainable travel as about health, for example.
- **They continued to work with organisations once they had received funding** to support project delivery, gradually tapering off their help;
- **They offered the organisations, along with other CCF grantees, a range of toolkits, training and peer-to-peer networks.** Most of the networks were regional or thematic in nature. But the partners also created specific peer-to-peer networks for racialised and marginalised communities: they found that their voices and issues could be invisibilised in the more general meet-ups.

Outcomes and Impact

Keep Scotland Beautiful and CEMVO were successful in attracting applications from racialised and marginalised communities to the CCF. Between 2012 and 2022 over 150 projects from these groups received development and/or full funding.

These projects in turn created significant impacts within their own communities. Below we give two examples of projects funded by CCF by way of illustration. Between them they cover impacts on organisations, communities and individual staff. We also briefly touch on the role of the CCF in creating and delivering networks.

The Welcoming Association

[The Welcoming Association](#) is a charity dedicated to supporting asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in Edinburgh. It began life in 1999 as a small volunteer initiative, before becoming an independent association and registered charity in 2010. Today its mission is to welcome New Scots to Edinburgh, build community and learn together.

The Welcoming Association had always offered activities linked to the environment, including gardening and walks in nature. But until the CCF approached it in 2014, it had seen these initiatives as about social integration rather than climate change. The Welcoming Association team was originally sceptical about the fund's relevance to their mission; but talking to CEMVO staff "really opened our eyes to the possibility of integrating climate change in a more official way into our work" (Project team member, 2025). The association received funding for its [Welcoming a Greener Future](#) project in 2015, and continued to receive CCF funding until 2022.

Welcoming A Greener Future was underpinned by two key ideas. Climate change requires us all to make changes to our everyday lives, which people can find hard. However, the association works with people who are re-establishing their lives in a new country. The organisation realised it had a unique opportunity to help people create sustainable habits from the very beginning of their resettlement process, making change easier.



It also knew it had to make climate action relevant to the everyday lives of the people it works with – people who often need to find jobs, secure housing, learn English, and more. It therefore sought to integrate clear social benefits into its work, and frame its activities around them. It talked to its community about, for example, saving money, learning English, finding out how the recycling system in the city worked and so on. As the project continued, The Welcoming Association realised that there was a real intersection between climate action and some of the social justice issues affecting its community.

Welcoming A Greener Future developed four key strands of work over its lifetime:

- The **home energy savings** programme helped people to understand how housing and utility systems worked, and how to save money on their energy bills;
- The **food growing and food sustainability** programme included awareness raising and workshops, cooking sessions with local and seasonal food, helping families to build their own food growing garden at home, and work in the association's own garden;
- The **waste reduction** programme included reuse fairs, swap shops and upcycling workshops. Early sewing workshops gradually developed into an independent award-winning social enterprise, [Remode Collective](#).
- **Climate literacy** work provided a core backbone to the project. It integrated content on climate change and climate action into The Welcoming Association's English classes.

CCF funding had significant impacts on both The Welcoming Association itself and its community. In 2014 The Welcoming was in a very precarious financial position, with only one full-time staff member. The CCF funding allowed it to get permanent premises and recruit three new staff members. This in turn allowed the organisation to start bringing in a wide range of funding from other sources from the following year: it showed it was able to manage major grants; it became known as a place to go; and it became easier to collect evidence about the size and needs of its community, and the impact of its work. CCF funding was a major milestone in the organisation's history. The Welcoming Association has been financially stable ever since.

Welcoming A Greener Future also had multiple impacts on The Welcoming's community. The independent evaluation of the project concluded:

“All [four work] streams made an impact on the wellbeing of the participants, as they benefited from English classes, practical advice on everyday living, support against social isolation, education and training towards finding work, and inclusive community spaces.”

- Centre for Human Ecology (2022)

The evaluators also noted improvements in community members' physical health from activities like gardening, and commended the way the programme provided New Scots with dignified ways to save money and access essentials.

Welcoming A Greener Future impacted people's attitudes towards climate change too. The project allowed New Scots already interested in the topic to develop their interest. But arguably most importantly, it also created incentives for people with no prior knowledge to engage and discuss the issues:

“... the real impact was that people who were completely outside the discourse of climate change were invited in and were made aware that actually they had a role to play within the bigger picture, that they counted in the conversation that is not an elite conversation only for certain people, who have a certain educational background, who have a certain financial stability and things like that. But actually, everybody counts and everybody's valuable within the conversation and also it created a link between the global conversation of climate change to the little everyday lives of individuals.”

- Project team member (2025)



Welcoming A Greener Future saved 701.5 tonnes of CO2e during its lifetime. The legacy of the programme means that these savings, and the project's other benefits, will continue and increase. Today Remode Collective is thriving, the home energy savings programme has grown, and every event involving cooking focuses on plant-based recipes and energy efficient preparation.

The Welcoming Association also runs a community fridge which delivers around 600kg of surplus food every month to New Scots facing food insecurity, and it maintains its community garden. The association also continues to run English as a Second Language (ESL) classes focussed on climate change, having developed a library of resources during the project. It intends to apply to the forthcoming Edinburgh Regenerative fund. The fund will focus on the intersectionality between racism and discrimination, a Just transition and social inequalities.

Welcoming A Greener Future won the [Ashden Award for Green Communities](#) in 2021.



Al-Meezan

[Al-Meezan](#) is a non-political, non-sectarian charity in Glasgow. Its primary focus is meeting the Islamic educational and social needs of Muslim women and children.

In 2014 Al-Meezan wanted to retrofit its building. The project wasn't eligible for CCF funding unless it also involved community engagement, so CEMVO supported Al-Meezan to develop its idea. The project that emerged and that CCF funded initially focussed on energy efficiency and sustainable transport. It later expanded to also cover food (food growing and food waste) and waste (recycling, reusing, upcycling).

Project work began with the project manager at Al-Meezan researching the Quran and Prophetic Hadith (the traditions and teachings of the Prophet Muhammed), to identify where they talk about caring for the environment. The project manager then used what they'd learnt as a hook to engage people coming to the centre for Quran studies. This happened both in the study classes themselves, and through informal conversations during breaks. The project also included home energy visits.

As with The Welcoming Association, Al-Meezan's project had a significant and lasting impact on its community:

“There were 1,500 people that came through the doors and there was a massive change [...] The success is that people are still doing those things [today]. People are still composting the food waste. They're still cycling. They're still trying to become energy efficient. They're still thinking twice about buying new rather than buying second hand. They're trying to fix things to make them last longer.”

- Project team member, 2025

The project also had a significant impact on the project manager themselves. They had come to Al-Meezan from the motor manufacturing industry and hadn't previously focused on climate change:

“My knowledge of climate change was zilch and it was only when I read that book [[199 Ways to Please God](#) by Rianne C. ten Veen as part of the project] that I realised that the work that we were trying to do and what our faith said, were one and the same thing, and that kind of got me passionate about climate change and then I got really into it... people used to call me an eco warrior.”

- Project team member, 2025

The project manager made significant changes to their own life. For example, they started cycling more, began growing food at home and composting their food waste, and made their house more energy efficient; “I basically changed my whole life”.

They became particularly passionate about cycling. On leaving Al-Meezan, the project manager worked first at [Bike for Good](#), before becoming founding director at [Women on Wheels](#), a women's cycling hub in Glasgow. Women on Wheel's mission is to

“help women overcome their barriers so that they can take up cycling for the joy of it, for their mental and physical health, for active travel”.

- Project team member, 2025

Their offers include cycling lessons, confidence building led-rides, a bike loan scheme, bike buddies, maintenance classes, bike touring, mountain biking, and BMXing. In 2023 their founding director, Al-Meezan's former project manager, won the Visionary Champion of the Year award at the annual cycling Scotland conference. Since starting to read about climate change at Al-Meezan, this one individual has also been involved in other climate work, for example helping to organise a climate festival attended by thousands in Glasgow's George Square.

As another interviewee put it “the legacy [of CCF] goes beyond just the projects... because the project was only successful because of the person who was working on [it]” and these people have gone on to do more.

Networks and collaboration

One interviewee we spoke to for this case study particularly valued the CCF's emphasis on collaboration and networking. They noted, for example:

- That The Welcoming Association couldn't have run lots of its events and workshops without collaborating with others
- The role multiple organisations including The Welcoming played in establishing Edinburgh's annual climate festival
- The importance for staff of building networks in the same sector
- The value of sharing resources, allowing staff to work more efficiently by adapting what already exists rather than starting from scratch
- The importance and potential of sharing learning about what works
- How they have used the CCF networks as good practice examples to influence their own network-building

CEMVO too noted the benefits of the CCF peer-to-peer networks. It began to think about what it could do for people from racialised and marginalised communities working in the environment sector more widely. Ultimately CEMVO established the [Ethnic Minority Environmental Network](#) to run alongside CCF. This network, funded by Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, is still running today. It is one of the CCF's (indirect) lasting legacies.

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Conclusion

The 14 case studies in this report show the immense potential of engaging and involving people in tackling climate change. They also show how different people and partnerships have delivered impactful and high-quality engagement.

Central to their success are deep-rooted partnerships between institutions – central or local government or businesses – and civil society organisations, along with the active involvement of committed individuals and everyday people. This collaborative approach ensures that climate action isn't a top-down diktat, but accessible, enjoyable and relevant to people's most pressing concerns. It roots action deeply in place, in our communities, with our neighbours and friends.

What is also clear is that good, trusting partnerships, must be coupled with sufficient time, financial investment and support for those leading change. These are not just helpful additions; they are the bedrock upon which meaningful and lasting change is built.

The prize for embracing this approach is immense. By fostering genuine engagement, we can move beyond rhetoric to achieve tangible climate action and pave the way for a just green transition. The examples within this report offer a compelling vision of what is possible when we work together, investing in our communities and trusting in the power of collective action. Thank you to everyone who shared their story with us.

Whether you are in government, civil society or the private sector, we hope that you find these case studies useful for making a stronger case for public engagement in your work. For further case studies and analysis, please visit www.climateoutreach.org.

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