NEW LOCAL

COMMUNITIES VS CLIMATE CHANGE

The power of local action

Luca Tiratelli, Jessica Studdert and Charlotte Morgan

New Local (formerly the New Local Government Network) is an independent think tank and network with a mission to transform public services and unlock community power.

Published by New Local

Tel 020 7148 4601
Email info@newlocal.org.uk
www.newlocal.org.uk

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The ideas and impetus for this report have come from a wide range of people and organisations, for whose contribution we, the authors, are immensely grateful. We would like to thank those who contributed to the research process by being interviewed, participating in our workshop or by commenting on early drafts. In particular we would like to thank: Polly Billington, Ric Casale, Lousie Crow, Nick Gardener, James Goodman, Anthony Hurford, Cara Jenkinson and Alasdair Roxburgh for their helpful contributions.

Many colleagues at New Local have played a key role in ensuring this report came together. Special thanks must go to Adam Lent, Katy Oglethorpe, Joseph Barnsley, Simon Kaye, Grace Pollard, Pawda Tjoa, Vivek Bhardwaj, Katy Evans, Francesca Besana, Jane Swindley, Stephanie Riches and Rich Nelmes.

Finally, and most importantly, we would like to thank our partners on the project: Groundwork, Grosvenor and Eden Project Communities. In particular we would like to thank Graham Duxbury, Fay Holland, Matt Bell, Kate Nottidge, Lindsey Brummitt and Channa Van leijsen for their support and contributions throughout.

Any errors or omissions are our own.

Luca Tiratelli

Jessica Studdert

Charlotte Morgan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Net zero by 2050 blah blah blah…
hope is taking action…
hope comes from the people”

Greta Thunberg, 2021

In recent years the issue of climate change has shifted from a future threat to clear and present danger. The mounting toll of global extreme weather events, from fires raging out of control to floods devastating whole communities, show that we are already too late to stop all disruption to our planet.

Climate change is ‘widespread, rapid and intensifying’, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.[1]

Human activity has already caused global temperatures to rise by 1.1°C since industrial times, and we are at risk of that number breaching 1.5°C in the next couple of decades.

1 ‘Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis’. *Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/

Climate change: The mismatch of urgency and inaction

The seriousness of the situation is not going unnoticed. Increasingly active protest groups such as Extinction Rebellion are deploying disruptive tactics to register the urgency. The powerful voice of Greta Thunberg speaks for future generations of young people not old enough to vote, but who will endure the consequences of this generation's failure to act. The salience of climate change is rising up the public political agenda. UK public attitudes polling in August 2021 found it was the second biggest issue of concern, second only to the Covid pandemic.[2]

Despite this growing recognition of the global emergency climate change is causing, international and national politicians are being rather slow to respond. International processes for agreeing national emissions targets rumble on. The high point of the Paris Agreement's legally binding treaty to limit global warming in 2016 was matched by the low point of the Madrid Summit three years later during which leaders failed to reach agreement on how to fulfil their promises.[3] National targets are set to reach net-zero, but are not so deeply ingrained in our decision-making that they prohibit plans to drill and dig afresh for oil and coal.[4] There is little reflection about the implications moving towards net zero would have for our energy-hungry economic systems and infrastructure. This failure to recognise the scale of the challenge, let alone act on it, is costing us time that we no longer have.

The missing layer: How the global can be local

This report proposes a route which has the potential to blast through the inaction. Rather than starting at the abstract international or national levels, we set out a vision for tackling climate change from the ground

2 See https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/public-concern-about-climate-change-and-pollution-doubles-near-record-level

3 These summits were the annual gathering of the Conference of the Parties (COP), the signatories to the first international treaty on climate change following the original Earth Summit in Rio in 1992. COP has been meeting annually since 1995.

4 Gillet, F. (2021). 'Climate Change: Time running out to stop catastrophe – Alok Sharma'. *BBC News*. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-58132939

up – led by communities and galvanising action on a local level. By conceiving of the challenge not as a single big one, but the culmination of lots of local issues, we can begin to make progress. This report argues that the latent commitment and pride of communities, so central to the levelling up agenda, can be a part of the solution and ensure the process of decarbonisation is equitable and empowering for all places.

By focussing on what climate change means for specific places and groups of people, we can begin to shift our view of tackling climate change from a challenge which is overwhelming to something that is more tangible. By unlocking the potential of communities to meaningfully address climate change *as it manifests in their lives*, we can create an ecosystem of climate action that permits braver policymaking from the top.

By thinking locally, we can build an array of small actions that culminate in significant change overall.

There are three distinctive features of the local level as a scale for action that make it an indispensable part of any coherent policy response to climate change:

1. **Responsiveness:** Local action can be **responsive** to conditions on the ground. It can also be flexible as conditions change, in ways that national and international action cannot match.

2. **Legitimacy:** Local action has an inherent **legitimacy** with local people. The transitions that climate change necessitates can be negotiated at this level without creating the pushback that might come from more top-down approaches.

3. **Power over adaptation:** Local action is better placed to facilitate **adaptation** to specific consequences of climate change than national or international actions, because the consequences will be different in every local area.

The potential of local action

Given the particular impact that can result from local action in responding to climate change, we need to pay close attention to key actors that populate this space, communities and local government:

Communities

From the wide range of community-led action and activity on the environment that already exists, three significant features emerge:

1. Community action doesn't need to focus on climate change to have climate impact.
2. Community action is demonstrating how it is possible to 'level up' by addressing economic and climate goals together.
3. Communities are building powerful local alliances of neighbours, businesses and voluntary groups.

Local government

Evidence from existing practice demonstrates the range of ways councils can have an impact on climate change, which need to be deepened and embedded:

- **Hard levers:** Across the estate, service delivery and infrastructure councils are responsible for, they can directly impact about a third of local emissions. Yet local government has incomplete powers and insufficient resource available to reach net zero ambitions.
- **Influencing roles:** The challenge of climate change demands that councils work in new ways. Beyond traditional service delivery roles, they must work with people as our economy and society transitions to net zero. Councils will need to **mobilise** community action where there is none, **facilitate** communities where they are already coming together to have greater impact, and **convene** powerful networks of local stakeholders and institutions.

The approaches councils can take to engender local climate action

Councils

Convening

Mobilising

Facilitating

Local Institutions

Communities

Recommendations: A new devolved framework to reach net zero

To confront the challenge of climate change on the scale required, at the pace the urgency dictates, we set out a comprehensive blueprint for a new approach. No single actor or level of action is capable of solving the problem alone, yet rising to the challenge means every actor operating in a completely different way to present. Our recommendations set out a renewed national framework capable of magnifying the value of local action, where at present it barely recognises it. This would serve to empower both communities and local government with the tools they need to take decisive steps.

Recommendations for national governments

Climate change and devolution should no longer be seen as separate policy issues. We set out how a new devolved framework should be a route to reach net zero. This would hand power and resource to communities to manage the transition to a green economy and society in ways which ensure equity across a country of highly unequal starting points. To this end, national governments should:

- Pursue an ambitious approach to devolution as the means to achieve our national commitment to net zero.
- Commit to levelling up by achieving a just transition.
- Clarify the role of local government in achieving net zero and a just transition.
- Clarify the cross-government priority to achieve net zero and ensure policy from all government departments is assessed against this.
- Ensure sufficient, long-term funding for local areas, with full flexibility to commit resource according to local priorities, in the context of the national net-zero target.

Local government

Despite operating in a highly constrained financial and practical context, there are many ways in which councils can have a deeper impact on the mitigation and adaptation climate change requires:

- Recognise that climate change is an opportunity to create new democratic relationships with people.
- Understand the different starting points of different communities, and offer a range of routes to participation that meet this range.
- Adopt a whole borough approach to tackling the climate crisis.
- Develop a clear understanding of council and borough-wide emissions profiles to inform policies.

Community groups

Community-led action is a powerful force for change, and we suggest ways in which this can in practice reach its full potential for those involved in community groups:

- Ensure the wider community is both represented and heard.
- Start with what matters to your community most and see where it leads.
- Proactively build local networks to grow and sustain community-led action on climate change.

Supporters of local action

Beyond councils and communities, there are other organisations, be they private or third sector, who can play a key role in local climate action:

- Businesses should scale up investment in community-led climate action and give equal importance to the 'E' and the 'S' in ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) practice.
- Larger third sector organisations should ensure capacity-building is made available to community groups to help them grow and connect their climate-focussed activities.

International bodies

By definition operating at an abstraction from the local level, there are important ways in which international processes can build in the role and voice of local actors:

- International frameworks should deepen their commitment to local-level action, and community-led action in particular.
- International frameworks for understanding and responding to climate change should seek to become more accessible, and appeal directly to communities.

Our recommendations for change are focussed on how we can build resilience and sustainability into the future. For the biggest global challenge we'll ever face, the solution is local.

INTRODUCTION

Understanding the concept of climate change is relatively simple – indeed the science of the greenhouse effect is taught to children in schools. Yet truly grappling with climate change's implications is bewilderingly difficult. The scale and gravity of global warming is such that it's impossible to conceive of it as one tangible issue. It is a physical process that manifests as a series of phenomena of almost endless diversity – which have implications for almost every aspect of how we live our lives.

In the face of a problem of this magnitude, it is tempting to look for a 'solution' of a similar scale. There is a certain logic to the idea that a global crisis requires one global answer.

As we will argue in this report, this instinct is misplaced. As the work of Elinor Ostrom[5] and others shows, the key characteristic of climate change is its complexity. An effective response must therefore operate across a number of levels. This includes the international processes such as which occur annually at COP,[6] and national-level policy commitments like the government's target to reduce carbon emissions to net zero by 2050.[7] Beyond this, it will require behaviour changes from all of us.

5 Ostrom, E. (2009). 'A Polycentric Approach for Coping with Climate Change'. *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No.5095*. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1494833

6 The Conference of the Parties is the supreme decision-making body of states which are signatories to the UN Convention on Climate Change.

7 Dray, S. (2021). 'Climate change targets: the road to net zero?'. *House of Lords Library*. https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/climate-change-targets-the-road-to-net-zero/

These layers of action – international, national and individual - are broadly understood and accepted. What is often missing from policy discussions about climate change in the UK especially is the role of the local. Local actors – including communities and local government – represent a powerful convening tier for meaningful action. They are capable of providing a space for collective endeavour more tangible than national or international levels and more efficacious than individual action alone.

This report sets out the case for a response to climate change that is grounded in local communities. We will offer recommendations and guides on best practice for key actors at that level, including local government and local partners, as well as for communities themselves. We illustrate these ideas with a range of case studies that offer a sense of how to do this in practice.

To reach the full potential of local level action, we make the case for an ambitious programme of devolution, recognised as a means to achieving net zero in a way that is equitable and minimises the social and economic fallout of what will be a significant change to all our lives. Indeed, economic and climate objectives can no longer be seen in isolation – and we argue that only by pursuing a just transition will it be possible for the government to achieve its ambition to level up the country.

Climate change is *the* policy challenge of the 21st century. It will affect all our lives in ways both big and small. It is not something that can be left to a particular group of people, with a particular set of skills, to 'solve'. Whilst we do not all share equal responsibility for it, climate change is a problem for us all. By focussing on the power of our communities, we can ensure we are all part of a sustainable solution.

1. HOW CAN THE GLOBAL BE LOCAL?

Conventional wisdom on climate change holds that as a deep and existential challenge, it needs to be tackled through ambitious international agreements and innovative national policymaking. This leadership from above will then require shifts in behaviours and expectations on the part of individuals on the ground, and we should be prepared for these shifts to be increasingly noticeable as the crisis accelerates.

International. National. Individual. These three levels of action will all have an important role to play in any response that is commensurate to the environmental damage our social and economic systems are causing. However, there is another level of action, one that is often overlooked – the local. This is where the forces of communities, local government and key local institutions meet. As a more tangible part of people's lives than the abstract national or international, the local resonates more with real life experience. As a collective sphere beyond the individual, local community-led initiatives potentially offer more efficacy for action.

This section explores the merits of thinking about climate response at a community-based, local level.

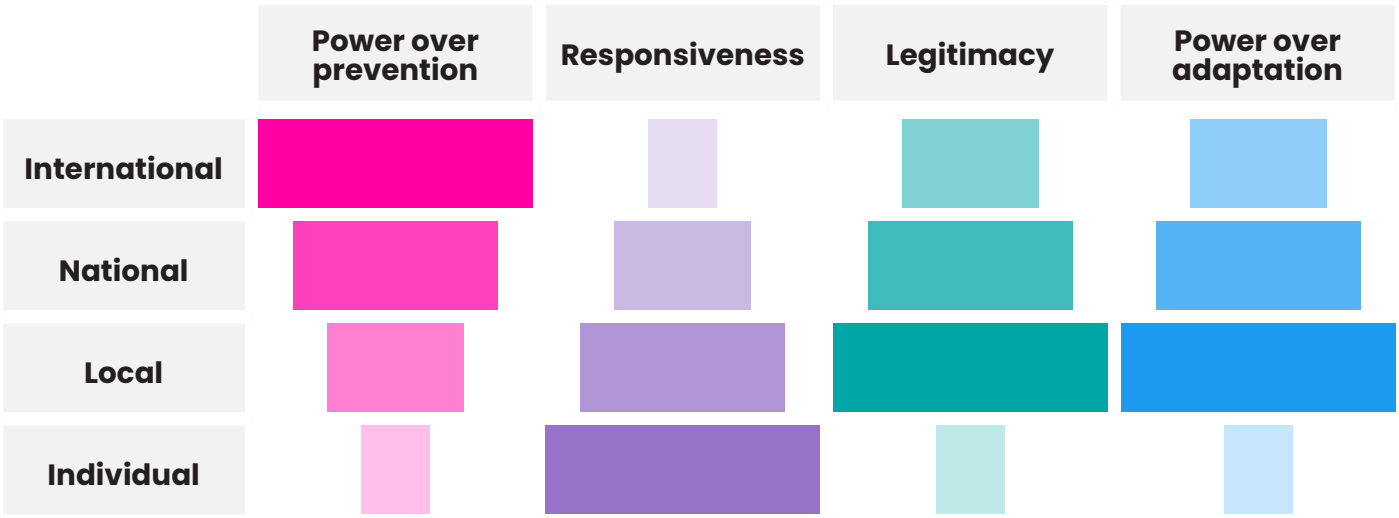
Local actions can have impact and reach beyond that of international, national or individual actions

When considering what would constitute an effective response to climate change overall, we identify four components. These are:

- **Power over prevention:** The ability to arrest climate change by stopping carbon emissions.
- **Responsiveness:** The ability to rapidly move from commitment to action and react to changes on the ground in real time.
- **Legitimacy:** The ability to build consensus amongst people for action, particularly where this action involves trade-offs.
- **Power over adaptation:** The ability to shift social, economic and consumer conditions to adapt to the realities of both global warming and decarbonisation.

These four components are not exhaustive, but set out how we might conceive of what constitutes effective action. We have mapped these against the four different scales of action set out at the start of this section, in order to demonstrate where there are strengths and weaknesses. We will briefly consider each in turn before focussing on the local level.

Figure 1: The relative advantages of different scales of climate action (darker shades/greater size indicate strength)



International action is strong on prevention, but weaker on responsiveness, legitimacy and power over adaptation

As a global problem, climate change requires a global-level response. Over the decades, emergent action and negotiation between nations on an international stage has developed. Since the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change entered into force in 1994 and was ratified by 196 countries, international leaders have met annually in a Conference of the Parties (COP) to review progress and deepen commitments. The Kyoto Protocol in 1997 committed countries to limit emissions according to individual national targets, but was not fully ratified for another eight years.

The Paris Agreement adopted in 2016 was the most ambitious international treaty on climate change to date, covering mitigation, adaptation, and finance. Yet it has shortcomings on two fronts – it set targets that were widely regarded as lacking in ambition, and then also failed to create the necessary mechanisms to ensure that even these weak commitments were stuck to.[8] The failure of successive

8 Maizland, L. (2021). 'Global Climate Agreements: Successes and Failures'. *Council on Foreign Relations*. https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/paris-global-climate-change-agreements

COPs to reach agreement on key mechanisms of the Paris Agreement demonstrates that international agreement alone has proved too weak to compel national governments to fulfil their commitments.

Global targets on emissions have the greatest potential to prevent the planet from warming further – as it is only through multilateralism that it is possible to leverage governments from across the planet to engage in coordinated activity. Yet as the history of international cooperation demonstrates, international action has been slow and is failing to respond to the urgency of the looming threat.[9] International agreements also lack popular legitimacy which makes it relatively easy for national governments to sidestep their requirements in practice. As such, international action can only ever form one component of our response to climate change.

National action has an important role in prevention, responsiveness, legitimacy and adaptation, but alone is insufficient

National level action has an array of more direct policy levers to use to fight climate change, such as binding legislation, and the ability to incentivise meeting targets throughout the system – including at the levels of local government, businesses and individuals. These are all powerful mechanisms, with the ability to fulfil international level commitments in practice, underpinned by the democratic legitimacy that the international level omits. For example, the UK, Scottish and Welsh Parliaments have passed legislation to reduce their respective national greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by a specified year (2045 in Scotland; 2050 in Wales and the UK).[10] As a staging post to this, the UK, Scottish and Welsh Governments have interim targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (for example, the UK Government intends to cut emissions by 78 per cent by 2035 compared to 1990 levels).[11] This is to be done through activities such as requiring and building the

9 Hovi, J et al. (2016). 'Climate change mitigation: a role for climate clubs?' *Nature*, 16020. https://www.nature.com/articles/palcomms201620

10 'UK becomes first major economy to pass net zero emissions law', *GOV.UK* (2019). Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019, *legislation.gov.uk*. Welsh Parliament Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee. (2021). *Report on the Climate Change (Wales) Regulations 2021*.

11 'UK enshrines new target in law to slash emissions by 78% by 2035', *GOV.UK* (2021). https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-enshrines-new-target-in-law-to-slash-emissions-by-78-by-2035

infrastructure for more electric cars, low carbon heating, renewable electricity and reducing meat and dairy consumption.

Yet to manage these shifts, action at the national level is not sufficient. There is often a weak interface between national governance and local government, for example. So although one government department is responsible for the net-zero commitment, the actions of other government departments place constraints on councils' ability to deliver this in practice, for example by reducing their budgets. The commitment to zero carbon will need to filter from national government institutions to everybody, everywhere. People will all need to shift and adapt their behaviours in a range of ways, from choosing what to eat, to how to travel and how to use energy. National legislation is a blunt instrument in this respect, actions can only be mandated up to a point – beyond that they need to be encouraged, incentivised and brokered.

Individual action is the most responsive, but alone lacks wider power over prevention, adaptation or legitimacy

As individuals, the quickest route to taking action is to shift how our personal behaviour and decisions can reduce or neutralise our 'carbon footprint'. The power of individual action is important as it is direct. In the face of a challenge as deep-rooted and all-encompassing as climate change, individual action fulfils a basic psychological[12] need for a feeling of agency. Yet alone these consumer choices can never be enough, and a series of individual actions do not automatically amount to a strong sense of personal efficacy. Neither do they guarantee enough coordination for impact.

The enormity of the challenge of climate change can feel overwhelming on an individual level. Exploration of the role of psychology in public climate change response shows thinking about global warming in the broadest terms can be disempowering and breed a certain degree of

12 Mayer, A & Keith Smith, E. (2018). 'Unstoppable climate change? The influence of fatalistic beliefs about climate change on the behavioural change and willingness to pay cross-nationally'. *Climate Policy*, 19(4), 511-523. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14693062.2018.1532872?scroll=top&needAccess=true

fatalism.[13] How can the actions of any one person solve the problem of climate change?

In light of the potential for individuals to feel paralysed in the face of the climate 'meta crisis', the local level offers an attractive convening sphere for action. Wider communities comprise a large enough group to feel impact beyond oneself and a tangible enough space to feel consequential, as opposed to more dystopian or abstract framings of the challenge which are demotivating.

In recent years, we have witnessed the rise of direct action by groups such as Extinction Rebellion and Insulate Britain, who use disruptive tactics to block roads and transport interchanges to raise the profile of the existential crisis. This reflects the recognised urgency of the issue on the part of protestors and their view that formal processes are not capable of responding. But their approach to disrupting the daily lives of ordinary people doesn't always win them mainstream support – indeed media focus is often on the tactics rather than the climate crisis itself. On the other hand, we have also witnessed direct action from groups opposed to measures taken by governments meet climate goals – notably the *gilets jaunes* protests in France which emerged in response to an increase in fuel tax.

There is a risk that society becomes increasingly atomised along the lines of those who demand radical change and upheaval on the one hand, and those who feel threatened and cling to the status quo on the other.[14] The importance of legitimacy surrounding the economic and social changes required to adapt to climate change will increasingly come to the fore. Simply leaving a space between the national and the individual, without an empowered local level capable of supporting people through change and building consensus between people, will become increasingly untenable. Responding to climate change will involve massive changes to people's lives, and there is an opportunity to do this in a positive, empowering way which helps them imagine a

13 Mayer, A & Smith, K. (2018). 'Unstoppable climate change? The influence of fatalistic beliefs about climate change on behavioural change and willingness to pay cross-nationally'. *Climate Policy*, 19(4), 511-523. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14693062.2018.1532872

14 'Don't let climate goals be lost in culture wars'. *Financial Times,* (2021). https://www.ft.com/content/a07a0c8b-96c0-4bd7-a558-bbb34646cd26

different future, focussed on the need to build the support of the public rather than antagonise them.

Given the strengths and weaknesses of the three levels of action on climate change, there are important ways in which the fourth, local tier has the potential to achieve impact. In the uniquely centralised UK policy context, this level is under-explored, although it is important to note that internationally, local action is recognised as a significant sphere for impact. Since the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro which first acknowledged the existence of human-caused climate change, cities and regions have been designated as essential partners in society for implementing a global sustainability agenda.[15]

To focus explicitly on the potential of local level action, three critical benefits we identify will each be explored in turn.

1) Local climate action can be responsive in a way that national and international action cannot

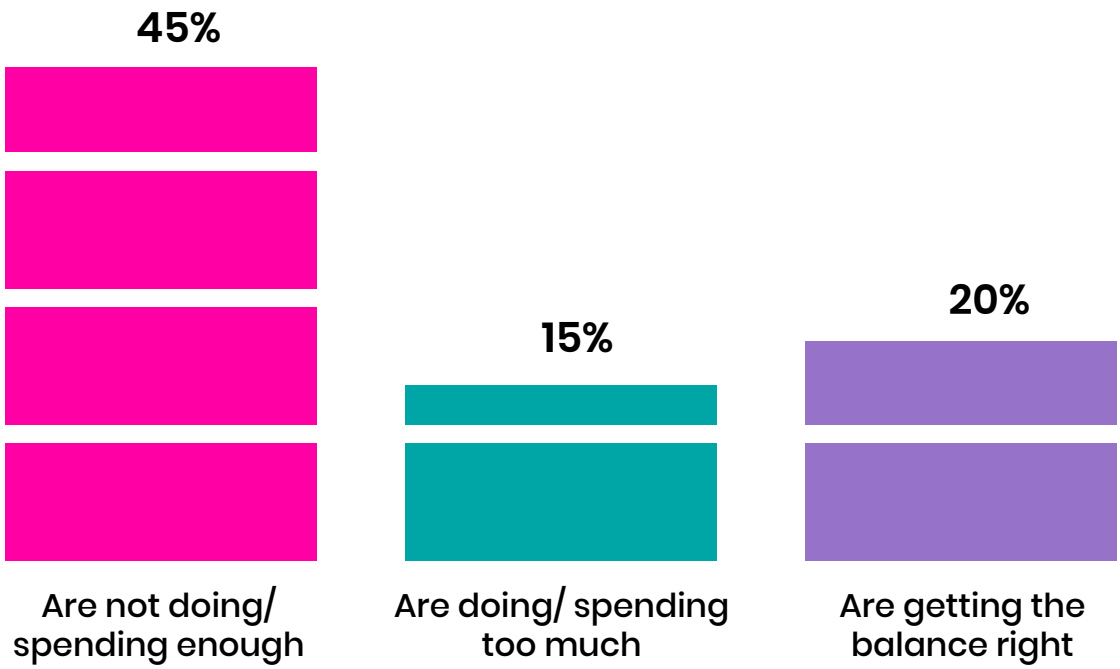
Locally-led action on climate has potential to be more responsive to the particular circumstances and opportunities of places than the more abstract national and international spheres. As Elinor Ostrom noted, efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are a collective action problem, where incentives to stick with the behaviours that make matters worse often outweigh the reasons to work together and solve them. Such problems become almost impossible to overcome at the international scale. Therefore, there are "inherent weaknesses" to systems predicated on the actions of "single government units", and the challenge is best addressed across multiple scales and levels of governance and action.[16]

15 The Local Governments and Municipal Authorities (LGMA) Constituency has represented networks of local and regional governments at the processes under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) since the first Conference of Parties (COP) in 1995. See https://www.cities-and-regions.org/

16 Ostrom, E. (2009). 'A Polycentric Approach for Coping with Climate Change'. *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No.5095*. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1494833

Certainly, in the UK context, there is evidence of a clear gap between public recognition of climate change as an urgent challenge, and a comparatively weak national response. Ipsos Mori polling shows that a third of the public rank climate change and the environment as a big issue for the country, making it the second biggest issue overall, behind only the immediate concerns of the Covid-19 pandemic.[17] Meanwhile YouGov polling has found that 91 per cent of people agree that national governments should do more 'to protect the environment'.[18] While there is some nuance to this picture around socio-economic background and political views, this is a pattern that is borne out demographically across an astonishingly diverse group of people.[19] In addition, the level of concern only seems to be growing.[20]

Figure 2: How is the UK Government handling climate change? (Source: YouGov)



17 See https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/public-concern-about-climate-change-and-pollution-doubles-near-record-level

18 Data here: https://docs.cdn.yougov.com/wtfpr14xro/UniversityOfCambridge_7CountryClimateChangeMessageTesting_Dec2020_W.pdf

19 This broke down to 87% of Conservative voters, 97% of Labour voters, 92% of 18-24 year olds, 91% of people over 65, 93% of ABC1s, 89% of C2DEs, 93% of Londoners, 91% of people in the North, 89% of men and 92% of women.

20 'Concern about climate change reaches record levels with half now 'very concerned''. *Ipsos Mori*, (2019). https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/concern-about-climate-change-reaches-record-levels-half-now-very-concerned

Yet despite apparent public appetite for national action, there is no majority view that national government is currently meeting the challenge. As Figure 2 shows,[21] more than twice as many people think the UK Government is not doing enough on this issue than think the right balance is being achieved. Separate polling indicates that only a minority of Britons think the UK Government has a clear plan to tackle climate change.[22]

Given the weakness of the 'single government unit' to meet the public's ambitions, there is an opportunity for locally led action to be more responsive. Although public opinion implicitly in favour of more ambitious action on climate change does not necessarily translate into voting behaviour in favour of tough trade-offs, action at a local level has the potential to build consensus and take pragmatic, necessary steps towards lowering emissions.

Evidence from other countries demonstrates that, with strong local leadership, vision and community involvement, effective climate change responses are demonstrating impact and building support amongst the local populace to significantly shift activity and infrastructure. In the United States, 1,066 Mayors have signed the Mayors Climate Protection Agreement which commits local policy action, public awareness campaigns and pressure on state and federal level action.[23] Further examples of locally led climate action in Paris, New York City, Lisbon and the Danish island of Samsø are presented in case studies that follow.

21 Data here: https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/trackers/how-is-the-uk-government-handling-climate-change

22 'Minority of Britons think UK government has clear plan to tackle climate change – poll', *University of Bath*, (2021). https://www.bath.ac.uk/announcements/minority-of-britons-think-uk-government-has-clear-plan-to-tackle-climate-change-poll/

23 https://www.usmayors.org/programs/mayors-climate-protection-center/

Climate change leadership – Paris

The City of Paris and its Mayor, Anne Hidalgo, are climate action leaders, both in France and on the global stage. Paris has big ambitions to become a carbon neutral city by 2050, powered entirely by renewable sources of energy.[24] The roadmap to achieving these targets is set out in the Paris Climate Action Plan, which was approved by Paris City Council in 2018. The Action Plan was informed by a three-month public consultation and endorsed by 95 per cent of people taking part in a citizens' vote called by Hidalgo to secure a popular mandate for action.[25] The council also established a Paris Climate Action Charter to engage with the city's businesses and institutions on the commitments of the Action Plan.[26]

The Paris Climate Action Plan contains a series of milestones to steadily reduce the city's greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption in order to meet the 2050 deadline. One of those milestones is the 2024 Olympic Games taking place in Paris. Hidalgo has pledged that Paris will "host the most environmentally sustainable Olympic Games in history" and intends to ban the use of single-use plastic in the city by the start of the Games.[27]

24 'City of Paris passes its new Air Quality, Energy and Climate Action Plan', *C40 Cities*, (2018).
25 'Paris Climate Action Plan: Towards a carbon neutral city and 100 per cent renewable energy', *C40 Knowledge Hub*, (2018). https://www.c40knowledgehub.org/s/article/Paris-Climate-Action-Plan-Towards-a-carbon-neutral-city-and-100-renewable-energy?language=en_US
26 'The Charter Overview'. *Paris Climate Action*. https://parisactionclimat.paris.fr/en/charter-overview
27 'How Paris is Actually Walking the Climate Change Walk', *TIME*, (2019). https://time.com/5669067/paris-green-city/

Hidalgo already has a long track record of taking measures against vehicle pollution. In 2015, Paris became the first metropolitan area in France to create a Low Emissions Zone to limit the number of highly polluting vehicles travelling in the city. By 2030, Paris' Low Emissions Zone will only permit entry to zero-emission electric and hydrogen fuel cell vehicles.[28] In 2021, Hidalgo approved plans to transform the Avenue des Champs-Élysées into an "extraordinary garden" and announced a public consultation on banning most vehicles from the Paris Centre district.[29] [30]

Case study

Climate change adaptation – New York City

The Government of New York City has established the Mayor's Office of Resiliency (MOR) to prepare strategies and programmes that adapt New York City (NYC) to the impact of climate change. One such strategy is Cool Neighbourhoods NYC, which provides funding for and coordinates extreme heat mitigation and adaptation projects in the city.[31]

28 'Impacts of the Paris low-emissions zone and implications for other cities', *The International Council on Clean Transportation*, (2020). https://theicct.org/publications/true-paris-low-emission-zone

29 'Champs-Élysées, shunned by Parisians, to be turned into 'extraordinary garden'', *France 24*, (2021). https://www.france24.com/en/france/20210114-champs-%C3%A9lys%C3%A9es-shunned-by-parisians-to-be-turned-into-extraordinary-garden

30 'Mayor Anne Hidalgo steps up plans to ban most cars from Paris city centre', *France 24*, (2021). https://www.france24.com/en/france/20210514-paris-mayor-steps-up-green-city-goals-with-latest-car-ban-plan

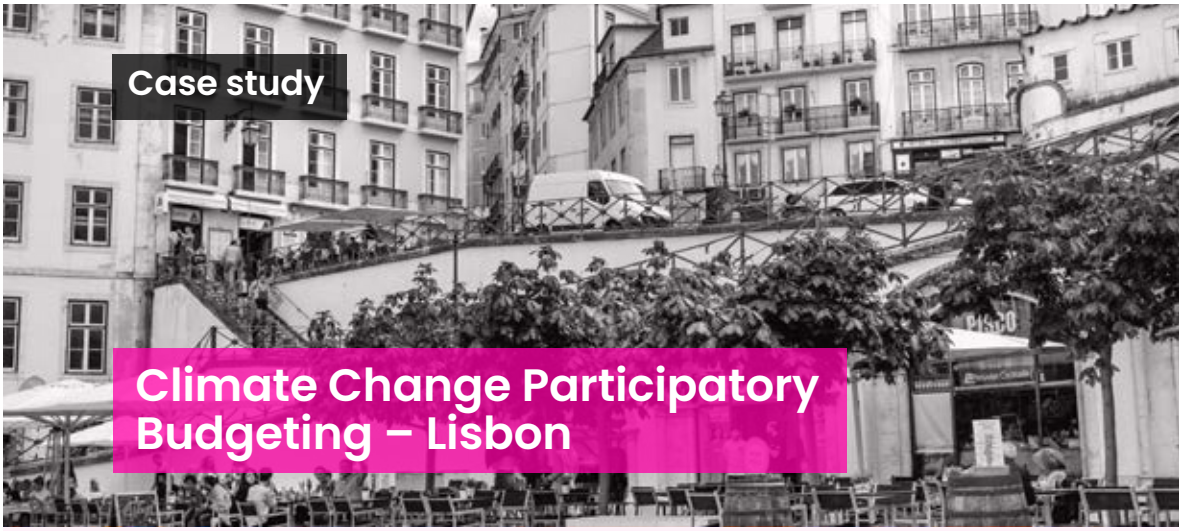
31 'Cool Neighborhoods', *Urban Land Institute*. https://developingresilience.uli.org/case/cool-neighborhoods/

NYC's average temperature is expected to rise by close to 3°C by 2050. At present, there are already on average 150 heat-related hospital admissions and 13 heatstroke deaths in NYC every year. However, 10 percent of people living in NYC do not have home air conditioning, and only half of households residing in public housing self-report having air conditioning.[32] Cool Neighbourhoods NYC was formed in order to give additional support to communities in the city who are vulnerable to extreme heat.

An intensive heat vulnerability mapping collaboration between NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene and Columbia University helps MOR to target cool design and heat resilience schemes at people most in need. MOR also works with home care agencies and community health organisations to train staff to recognise and treat heat stress in people who are at high risk during extreme heat events, such as people who are elderly or have certain medical conditions. NYC Government is funding three community organisations to implement a pilot 'Be a Buddy' scheme to train volunteers to identify and assist at-risk individuals and communicate heat-related health messages.

By April 2019, NYC Government had installed more than 10 million square feet of reflective, cool roofs in heat-vulnerable neighbourhoods. NYC estimates this type of roof will reduce the summer indoor air temperature by up to 30 per cent. The city also allocated over $100 million for targeted tree planting in streets, parks and forests.[33]

32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.



Case study

Climate Change Participatory Budgeting – Lisbon

Lisbon City Council introduced participatory budgeting in 2008, enabling city residents to submit ideas for projects and vote on the ones they wished to see included in the Lisbon City Council Activity and Budget Plan the following year.[34] In 2019 the Mayor of Lisbon announced that the city's participatory budget would become 'green' for the first time, allowing citizens to assign funds to projects that support climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Lisbon already has a good track record promoting sustainability and meeting climate targets. The city halved its carbon dioxide emissions between 2002 and 2014, reduced energy consumption by 23 per cent and water consumption by 17 per cent between 2007 and 2013, and won the European Green Capital Award in 2020.[35]

The Green Participatory Budget 2020/21, which has been allocated €5 million, is supported and managed by consultancy firm South Pole and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology Climate-KIC's City Finance Lab.[36] It was shaped by a 'Green PB

34 'Green Participatory Budget', *citiesoftomorrow.eu*, (2020). https://www.citiesoftomorrow.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Green Participatory Budgeting Lisbon - PT.pdf

35 'Lisbon is the 2020 European Green Capital Award winner!', *European Commission*. https://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/lisbon-is-the-2020-european-green-capital-award-winner/

36 'Lisbon's City Finance Lab-backed green participatory budget awarded €5 million for next cycle', *EIT Climate-KIC*, (2019). https://www.climate-kic.org/news/lisbons-city-finance-lab-awarded-e5-million-budget/

for Schools' pilot, involving five schools in Lisbon, to learn how to apply an environmental focus to Lisbon's existing participatory budgeting procedure and engage young people in sustainability issues.[37] Learning from previous participatory budgeting exercises, Lisbon City Council also developed plans to test different methods of engagement to involve communities such as migrants and senior citizens who are at greater risk of exclusion from public participation initiatives.[38]

Case study

Sustainable energy community – Samsø, Denmark

Between 1998 and 2007, the Danish island of Samsø became the first island in the world to be fully powered by renewable energy.[39] The catalyst for this development was a Danish Government competition launched in 1997 to develop a model renewable energy community. Samsø won the competition with an application based on proactive community engagement, cooperative ownership and aspirations to boost local economic, employment and skills development opportunities.

37 'Green Participatory Budgeting: Lisbon, Portugal', *Centre for Public Impact*, (2021). https://www.centreforpublicimpact.org/case-study/green-participatory-budgeting-lisbon-portugal

38 Silva Graça, M. (2019). 'Lisbon: A decade of participatory budget'. *The Progressive Post*. https://progressivepost.eu/wp-content/uploads/Miguel-Silva-Grac%CC%A7a.pdf

39 'The world's first renewable island 0 when a community embraces wind power', Rapid Transition Alliance, (2019). https://www.rapidtransition.org/stories/the-worlds-first-renewable-island-when-a-community-embraces-wind-power/

The island's electricity needs are met by 11 onshore wind turbines, nine of which are owned by local farmers and two by local cooperatives. Ten offshore wind turbines help to offset emissions from Samsø's cars, tractors and ferry connecting the island with mainland Denmark. Five of these offshore turbines are owned by the municipality, three are privately owned and two are cooperatively owned by small shareholders. Biomass boilers fuelled with locally grown straw provide three-quarters of Samsø's heating and hot water supply. The 4,000 residents of Samsø now have an average carbon footprint of negative 12 tonnes, compared with the Danish average of 6.2 tonnes and the UK average of 10 tonnes per capita.[40]

2) Local climate action can build stronger legitimacy than national and international levels, alongside greater efficacy than individual action

There are important democratic and psychological advantages to the local level as a convening tier for action. By being grounded in communities, local-level initiatives enable more direct citizen engagement in decisions than is possible at larger scales. As evidence from Victoria, Australia has demonstrated, carefully planned and implemented community engagements are essential components of strengthening inclusiveness and effectiveness of climate mitigation and adaptation strategies.[41]

Decisions negotiated and agreed collectively at a local level have inherent legitimacy,[42] as local actors have played a greater role in shaping them than would occur with decisions taken at national or international levels. As evidence from citizens juries across Great Britain

40 Ibid.

41 Wiseman, J et al. (2010). 'Community Engagement and Climate Change: Learning from recent Australian experience'. *International Journal of Climate Change Strategies and Management*, 2(2). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228423303_Community_engagement_and_climate_change_learning_from_recent_Australian_Experience

42 Ostrom, E. (2009). 'A Polycentric Approach for Coping with Climate Change'. *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No.5095*. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1494833

run by the IPPR Environmental Justice Commission demonstrates, sophisticated deliberative processes are capable of agreeing quite ambitious far-reaching proposals through consensus.[43]

In relation to taking on the psychological challenge the climate crisis represents, the geographer Mike Hulme has argued: "[T]here is a real danger that a hyperventilating condition of despair and panic will lead society into making either hubristic or authoritarian responses to climate change". He sets out a compelling case that the core question is not 'how do we solve the problem of climate change', but rather "how does the idea of climate change alter the way we arrive at and achieve our collective social goals".[44] Hulme argues that reconceiving of the challenge in this way opens up more creative approaches to shifting how we inhabit our geographical, social and virtual worlds, for example exploring new ways of living in urban and rural settings. The benefit of pursuing these approaches, he argues, is that:

"[they] do not demand global agreement. Indeed, they may be hindered by the search for such agreement. They thrive in conditions of pluralism and hope rather than in conditions of universalism and fear. The problem with trying to "stop climate chaos" – and believing that we can – is that the end is too remote in time (50 years or more) and distant in place (an abstract global climate) for it to have any psychological purchase. Benefits of change need to be now and they need to be visible."

In this way, bringing people into decision-making processes, and focussing on the climate through the prism of the immediate world around us, allows us to see climate change as less of a problem in need of a solution, and more as an "environmental, cultural and political phenomenon that is reshaping the way we think about ourselves".

Locally-led approaches offer this opportunity to make the response to climate change real and meaningful, directly linked to people's everyday lives. This can help give people a sense of agency and purpose in the context of climate change, and by bringing people

43 The Environmental Justice Commission carried out four citizens juries in England, Scotland and Wales in 2020 and 2021. See, for example 'South Wales Valleys Climate and Fairness Panel', *IPPR*, (2021).
44 Hulme, M. (2009). *Why we disagree about climate change*. Available here. https://www.mikehulme.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/Hulme-Carbon-Yearbook.pdf

together as part of a wider committed community, can lead to an increased individual sense of efficacy.[45]

By aligning democratic goals of consensus-building through engagement and the psychological needs people have for security and purpose, there is an opportunity to bridge the gap between people's sense of climate change being an important issue, and their commitment to actively doing something about it.

Case study

Eco-Streets – Groundwork Greater Manchester

The Eco-Streets initiative supports communities in Greater Manchester to transform alleyways and unused land into vibrant green spaces. Groundwork Greater Manchester plays a facilitative role: helping residents to shape their ideas, co-designing the space to give it the best chance of success, and supporting them to undertake the practical work to turn concept into reality.

The initiative is led by communities for communities. Those who take part really value the benefits to health and wellbeing of green community spaces. Often, the most attractive initial benefits of green streets and green spaces are to create pleasant places where neighbours can come together and socialise. It is from this

45 Punzo, G et al. (2019). 'Assessing the role of perceived values and felt responsibility on pro-environmental behavirous: A comparison across four EU countries'. *Environmental Science and Policy*, 101, 311-322. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1462901119302746

point that Groundwork Greater Manchester slowly introduce more conversations around climate change issues as well.

When a community approaches Groundwork Greater Manchester for help to green a street or a piece of land near where they live, the Groundwork team starts conversations with them on the merits of their idea whilst exploring the full range of benefits they could experience. The team also aims to describe the climate benefits of the Eco-Streets project in a way that would appeal to the community, for example talking about the potential of green walls to keep the indoor temperature cooler in summer rather than global warming and urban heat mitigation strategies.

In 2021, Groundwork Greater Manchester organised a competition with IGNITION and We Love Manchester to support four communities to develop an Eco-Street and provide them with £6,000 funding. The competition received over 200 expressions of interest and 45 entries. Groundwork Greater Manchester is currently working with the four winners on the design phase. The team is also seeking to nurture the enthusiasm of communities who made the shortlist by giving them a free visualisation of their Eco-Streets design to help them apply to other funding schemes.

3) Local climate action has potential power over adaptation that national and international action does not

Climate change is no longer a distant future threat. The consequences of global warming are already visible and their impacts are gathering pace. During the summer of 2021, wildfires raged from Canada[46] to

46 Cecco, L. (2021). 'Second western Canada town destroyed by 'exceedingly aggressive' wildfire'. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/06/canada-wildfire-monte-lake-climate-crisis

Greece,[47] major flooding hit central Europe[48] and the US, and the UK also experienced freak weather.[49] Therefore, an important element of the overall response to the complex challenge of climate change is not just preventing it from happening, because it already is. Adapting to its effects is also an imperative.

Adaptation must operate on two levels: we must get better at responding to climate emergencies unfolding due to the damage already done, while we also transition our social and economic systems to zero carbon norms. There are several reasons why conceiving of this as a series of local challenges, rather than one big national or international challenge, has merits.

First, the evidence demonstrates that the global challenge of climate change manifests very differently in different places. The problems and emergencies caused by global warming, from flooding[50] to droughts, are necessarily localised and will impact different areas to a varying degree. In addition, the distribution of causes of climate change, such as industrial outputs, vary from place to place, based on human and economic geographies.[51]

As such, the 'challenge' of climate change is not a uniform one. In this context, an effective practical and policy response is necessarily local, based around the specific 'climate change journeys' that different areas experience and will need to travel. As Ostrom put it, "no-one knows for sure what will work, so it is important to build a system that can evolve and adapt rapidly. Decades of research demonstrate that a variety of overlapping policies at city, subnational, national, and international levels is more likely to succeed."[52]

"No-one knows for sure what will work, so it is important to build a system that can evolve and adapt rapidly. Decades of research demonstrate that a variety of overlapping policies at city, subnational, national, and international levels is more likely to succeed.
- Elinor Ostrom

47 'Greece wildfires spread, causing mass evacuations', *BBC News*, (2021). https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-58124129

48 Oltermann, P. (2021). 'Germany floods: 155 still missing as hopes of further rescues fade'. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/21/germany-floods-one-hundred-fifty-five-still-missing-hope-further-rescue-fade

49 'Flash flooding after heavy rain sweeps across London', *BBC News*, (2021). https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-57964312

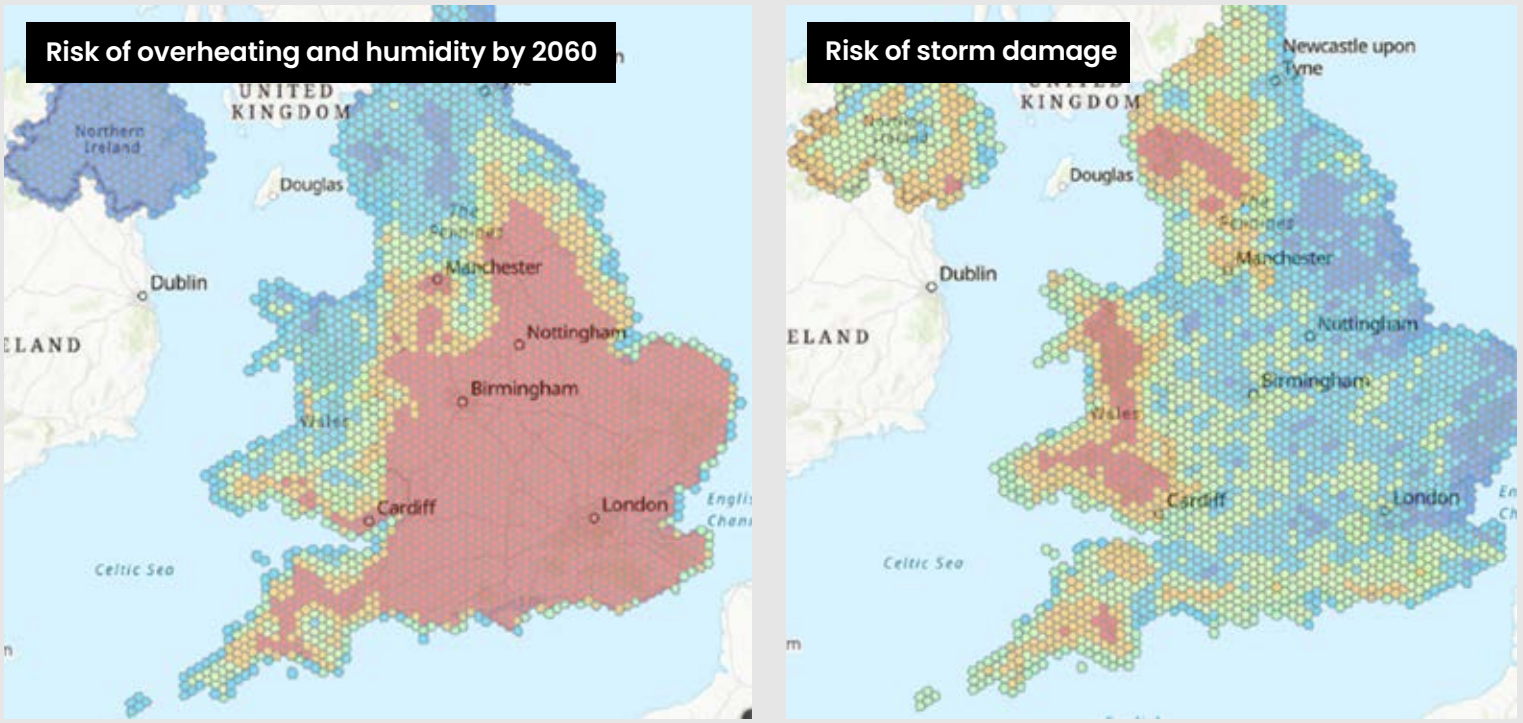
50 Harvey, F. (2021). 'Flash floods will be more common as climate crisis worsens, say scientists', *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jul/26/flash-floods-will-be-more-common-as-climate-crisis-worsens-say-scientists-london-floods

51 Kapetaniou, C & McIvor, C. (2020). *Going Green: Preparing the UK workforce for the transition to a net-zero economy*. Nesta. https://www.nesta.org.uk/report/going-green-preparing-uk-workforce-transition-net-zero-economy/

52 Ostrom, E. (2012). *Green from the Grassroots*. Project Syndicate/Common Dreams. https://www.commondreams.org/views/2012/06/12/green-grassroots

For example, mapping by the National Trust highlights the risks that different areas face as a result of climate change.[53] As Figure 3 shows, within England and Wales there is a considerable variation in whether a local area's primary threat is flooding, landslides, drought or heatwaves.

Figure 3: Risk of overheating and humidity by 2060 (left) vs risk of storm damage (right) **(Source: National Trust)**



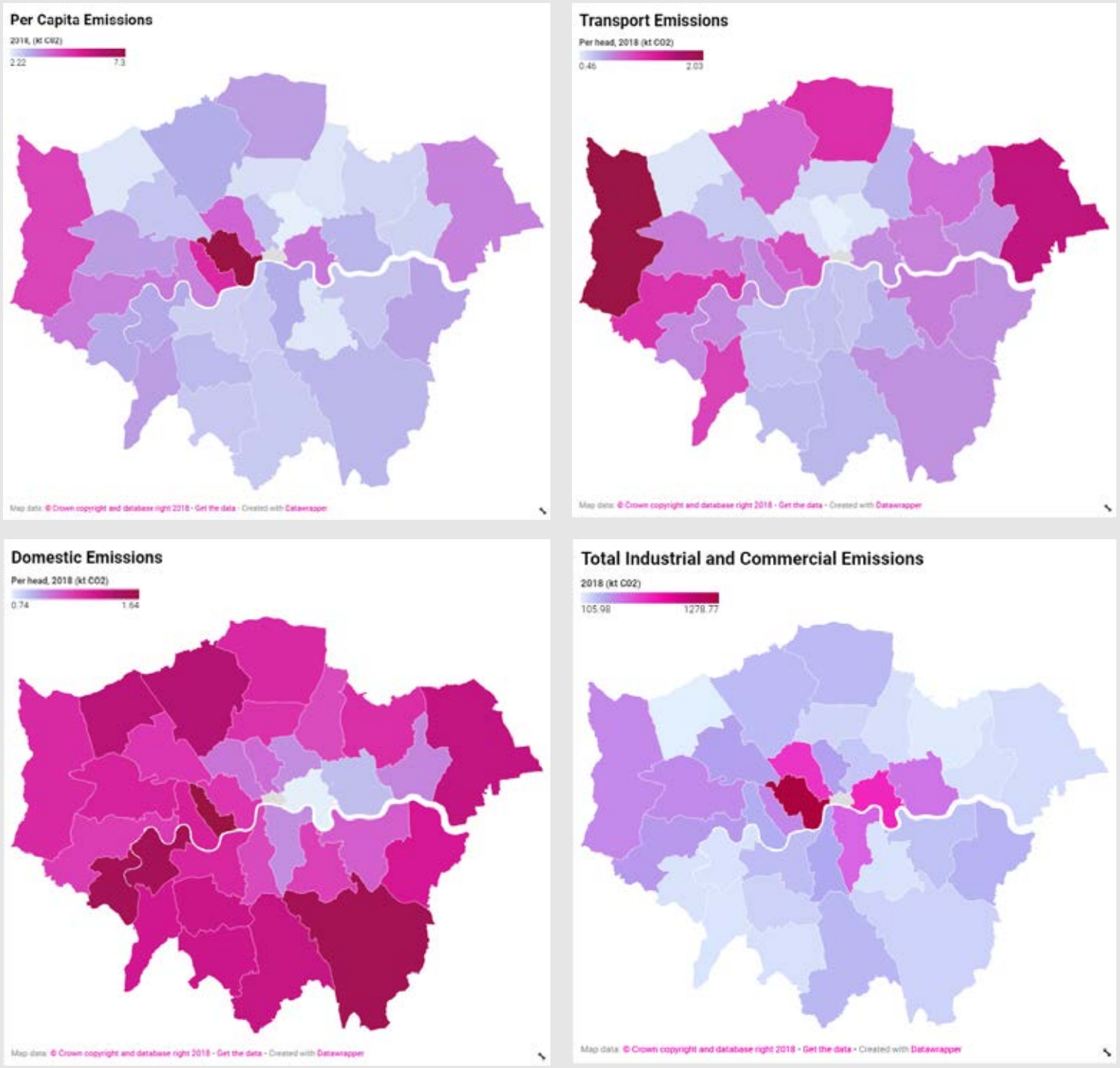
Even on a city-wide scale, climate-related challenges vary. The 33 boroughs of London, for example, are together only around 45 miles in diameter, and share similar features such as good access to public transport[54] and relatively strong local economies.[55] Despite these similarities, however, the emissions profiles of the boroughs – as the Figure 4 illustrates - are startingly different, even between neighbouring authorities, and even when adjusted for population.

53 https://nationaltrust.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=0bc569747210413a8c8598535a6b36e1

54 'Transport spending in north of England less per head than London', *BBC News*, (2019). https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-50592261

55 'Dataset: Regional Gross Domestic Product: Local Authorities', *ONS*, (2021). https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/datasets/regionalgrossdomesticproductlocalauthorities

Figure 4: A comparison of causes of emissions between different London Boroughs[56]



56 Maps created using data obtained from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, available here: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-carbon-dioxide-emissions-national-statistics-2005-to-2018 (see data tables, tab 2 - 'full dataset'). The diagrams themselves were created using Datawrapper https://app.datawrapper.de/signin.

The implication of this regional and local variation in climate change experience is that the immediate issues people are confronted with are different from place to place. The negative effects will be experienced differently, some immediately and some gradually. Areas hit by flooding will have a priority on building effective flooding defences. It may also be the case that the local population of a flood-hit area is then also more galvanised to tackle climate change than somewhere with no lived experience of catastrophe, in which case the public conversation will require a different starting point. Different localities will also have different opportunities – for example parts of the country with peatland and moorland will have a priority on protecting these assets, quite different to the circumstances of predominantly urban areas with dense housing and heavy transport, where emissions reduction will have a sharper focus.

Policy-making that is responsive to these differing priorities is going to have to be local – rooted in places and communities. National governments can set broad ambitions, operating within internationally agreed frameworks, but the particulars around adaptation are practical, and will require very different approaches aligned to the threats and opportunities that exist in different places.

Second, the reality of adaptation will involve deep economic and social shifts towards more sustainable systems. Changes will be required to carbon intensive industries, for example, with potential fallout for people currently employed within them, and communities who currently view them as anchors. The potential of decarbonising industry to create large numbers of new 'green jobs' is often mooted.[57] But ensuring those who lose out economically from decarbonisation also gain from the new economic opportunities will be the work of proactive localised skills and employment strategies. There is a real risk of significant inequality and dislocation unless locally-devised, place-specific policy is able to respond to the particular requirements of adaptation.

57 'Green economy could create 24 million new jobs', *UN Sustainable Development Goals*, (2019). https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/04/green-economy-could-create-24-million-new-jobs/

The concept of a 'just transition' relates to this workforce challenge specifically, in the context of moving away from a carbon intensive and environmentally destructive economy towards sustainability, while sharing out rewards and costs equitably.[58] It was developed within the trade union movement and formally accepted as part of the Paris Agreement.

The practical requirements of making a just transition real are inherently place-based.[59] For example, an area that currently emits a lot of carbon from industrial and commercial activities is going to experience a transition that is hugely disruptive to the local economy and labour market. Dealing with this in a 'just' way will consequently involve hugely targeted investment in creating new jobs and equipping people with the skills to do them. Delivering on local priorities in this way is how we can meet the ideal presented in the concept of 'doughnut economics'[60] - of meeting our social obligations and delivering 'justice', while remaining within the constraints of our planet and environment.

Transition is both a challenge and an opportunity for the government's levelling up agenda, which is focussed on improving living standards and opportunities in poorer places.[61] The parallel requirements of decarbonisation will mean highly localised disruption for certain communities – but it carries with it the potential for a better future and a sustainable transition for areas if determined steps are taken. Organisations like the Transition Network[62] are leading the way in thinking through how to negotiate that disruption and, by engaging with local nuances, turn it into a positive process of renewal. By following this lead, we can ensure that decarbonisation is a positive and locally specific process for communities and ecosystems[63] in all their diversity and specificity.

58 *A Just Transition to a Greener, Fairer Economy*. TUC, (2019). https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/A_Just_Transition_To_A_Greener_Fairer_Economy.pdf

59 'What Do We Mean By Just Transition', *Climate Justice Alliance*. https://climatejusticealliance.org/just-transition/

60 Raworth, K. (2017). *Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st Century Economist.* Random House.

61 https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/oct/06/levelling-up-restoring-local-pride

62 https://transitionnetwork.org/about-the-movement/

63 Wahl, D. (2016). *Designing Regenerative Cultures*. Triarchy Press.

Case study

Green Jobs Fund – North Ayrshire

North Ayrshire Council has set up a £500,000 Green Jobs Fund to support the creation of local sustainable employment and assist businesses to reduce carbon emissions. The Green Jobs Fund stems from a broader £8.8 million Investment Fund approved by the Council's Cabinet in 2020 to stimulate a local economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic through community wealth-building and environmentally friendly approaches.[64]

Case study

Communities Prepared – Groundwork South, UK wide

Communities Prepared is a national community resilience programme that helps local volunteers prepare for and respond to a range of emergencies, such as severe weather and public health events.[65] The programme is led by Groundwork South, which works

64 https://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/news/500k-Fund-to-support-green-economic-recovery.aspx
65 https://www.communitiesprepared.org.uk/about/

in partnership with the Environment Agency and local organisations to identify communities in at-risk areas who would benefit from training and support in matters such as understanding volunteer roles and responsibilities, developing community emergency or flood plans and fundraising.

Case study

Treesponsibility – Calderdale

Based in the Upper Calder Valley, Treesponsibility is a not-for-profit community group aiming to improve the local environment, involve communities in tree planting, and raise awareness of the need for action on climate change. Since it was formed in 1998, Treesponsibility has planted an average of 5 hectares every year in collaboration with local volunteers, landowners, schools, community groups and visitors from outside the area joining tree-planting weekends.[66]

In recent years, the group's main focus has been on tree planting for flood mitigation. Since the 2015 Boxing Day floods, Treesponsibility and local volunteers have planted more than 50,000 trees in the Calder Valley.[67] Treesponsibility is also a founding member and key delivery partner in the SOURCE partnership, working alongside organisations such as Calderdale Council, the Environment Agency and the National Trust to promote natural flood management techniques as a means to reduce the risk of flooding.[68]

66 http://www.treesponsibility.com/about-us/
67 http://www.treesponsibility.com/
68 https://eyeoncalderdale.com/the-source-partnership

Treesponsibility has supported the development of tree-planting groups in other areas of England. In 2020, one of the group's main projects was the ReTree It! programme, for which Treesponsibility organised a series of residential training weekends for newly established tree-planting groups from Nottingham, Derby, Liverpool, Huddersfield, Pendle, Chorley, Preston, Shipley, York, Bristol and London.[69]

This section has explored the reasons why locally-led action can in principle have impact beyond other levels of action, and how some initiatives, both in the UK and abroad, are already demonstrating this in practice. We now turn to how communities in the UK are themselves already leading the way on the climate agenda.

69 http://www.treesponsibility.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Source-20-A5-20pp-1.pdf

2. CLIMATE CHANGE: A COMMUNITY-POWERED RESPONSE

Communities can be defined simply as people who live in a particular area, or who have a particular interest. However, when communities are mobilised – meaning when they come together to set goals and take actions[70] – communities can form groups and initiatives that make them a powerful changemaking force when it comes to climate change.[71] They have granular knowledge of their proximate area, a strong sense of the specific challenges and opportunities that exist, and a proven ability to react with speed and precision to crises.[72] These strengths mean they can play a leading role in both the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change.

> **“Communities have granular knowledge of their proximate area, a strong sense of the specific challenges and opportunities that exist, and a proven ability to react with speed and precision to crises.**

New Local has long championed the idea of community power, which refers to the innate capabilities, knowledge and assets of communities themselves. Communities have strong insight into how best they can fulfil their potential, and in order to ensure sustainable outcomes, public services should work with communities as equals, handing over more direct power and resource to that end.[73] This notion of community power is inspired by the work of Elinor Ostrom, whose

70 Tiratelli, L. (2020). *Community Mobilisation: Unlocking Community Power*. New Local. https://www.newlocal.org.uk/publications/community-mobilisation-unlocking-the-potential-of-community-power/

71 The focus of this report is on community groups as opposed to more formal voluntary sector organisations which tend to be larger and with a significant professional staff core. Community groups range from ad hoc informal groups with volunteers to smaller organisations with some paid staff support.

72 Tiratelli, L & Kaye, S. (2020). *Communities vs Coronavirus: The rise of mutual aid*. New Local. https://www.newlocal.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Communities-Vs-Corona-Virus-The-Rise-of-Mutual-Aid.pdf

73 See Lent, A and Studdert, J (2019) *The Community Paradigm*. New Local and Pollard, G et al. (2021). *Community Power: The Evidence*. New Local.

lifetime body of fieldwork and analysis demonstrated that people's motivation and ability to cooperate, participate, and sustainably steward their own resources are far greater than is usually assumed.[74] As Ostrom noted, climate change represents a challenge where local action will be crucial, not *despite* the scale of the problem, but *because* of it.[75]

The evidence of existing initiatives demonstrates that there are notable pro-environmental and carbon reduction impacts to be had from community-led work. Building on the factors set out in the previous section around the potential for the local level to be more responsive, more legitimate and better at adaptation, this section explores what communities in the UK are already doing to meet the challenge of climate change.

We identify three core elements of community power to tackle climate change that are important for both practitioners locally and policymakers nationally to consider.

1) Community action doesn't need to focus on climate change to have climate impact

There is a compelling argument that community work *is* climate work, since the strengthening of community bonds almost inevitably leads to action over a shared path to sustainability and resilience.[76] Many Big Local areas, each of which have long-term community development plans supported by £1 million of National Lottery funding, report outcomes that result in carbon reduction. For example, Greenmoor in Bradford is helping people save energy to reduce bills and Bradley Big Local Community Land Trust in Lancashire is building new energy efficient homes.[77]

74 Kaye, S (2020) *Think Big, Act Small: Elinor Ostrom's radical vision for community power*. New Local. https://www.newlocal.org.uk/publications/ostrom/

75 Ostrom, E. (2012). *Green from the Grassroots*. Project Syndicate/Common Dreams. https://www.commondreams.org/views/2012/06/12/green-grassroots

76 Alford, C. (2020). 'Community work is climate work'. *Local Trust*. https://localtrust.org.uk/news-and-stories/blog/community-work-is-climate-work/

77 Ibid.

Community power to tackle climate change doesn't necessarily need a starting goal of tackling climate change. But the results of people coming together to agree shared priorities bonds not just people with each other, but to their localities. This can enhance pro-environmental behaviours – in other words regular actions which factor in the quality of the environment more. Community action is often driven by a motivation to improve places and the quality of life within them, which is often implicitly, if not explicitly, linked to the local environment.

Research from IPPR explores this 'co-benefit' of community-led initiatives.. Their analysis found that although only six Big Local areas mention the climate crisis explicitly in their strategic plans - the fourth most common priority across the programme - more than half have prioritised the local environment in some way. This includes litter-picking, maintaining green space and recycling.

Research undertaken on the UK-wide Big Lunch initiative, founded by the Eden (see page 43) has shown how forging links between neighbours can have both indirect effects on the environment by building connections to place, and direct effects on the environment by explicitly promoting more sustainable choices. There is also evidence that people who are more civically engaged are more likely to be concerned about climate change.[78]

These effects will, via the process of a virtuous cycle, be self-reinforcing. The more that people see others in their community engaging in 'pro-environmental' behaviours, the more they will be motivated to do so themselves.[79] This is as a result of a mixture of peer pressure and inspiration – but the net effect is the same: the more networked and developed a community is, the more likely it is to be able to take action on climate change.

78 Data from Eden Project Communities, 2021. https://www.edenprojectcommunities.com/
79 'Legacy of the Big Lunch', *Eden Project*, (2020).

Case study

The Big Lunch – Eden Project, UK wide

Founded by the Eden Project in 2009, The Big Lunch is a UK-wide initiative funded by The National Lottery. On the first weekend of June every year, The Big Lunch brings together millions of people in streets and green spaces all around the UK to share a meal with their neighbours and get to know their local community. The ambition of the programme is to stimulate, encourage and celebrate local social relationships and connections in order to increase social cohesion and build social capital.

In 2021, an estimated total of 9 million people (13.2 per cent of the population) attended a Big Lunch. Independent research has recorded outcomes including reductions in loneliness, an increased sense of belonging and community spirit, and new, supportive relationships being formed.[80]

Evidence also indicates that, especially in recent years, a growing number of Big Lunch events are taking on an environmental angle.[81] Although not an explicit aim of The Big Lunch, people are increasingly using the events to encourage attendees to adopt environmentally sustainable behaviours (for example, by making their event 'plastic-free').

80 The Institute for Voluntary Action. (2020). *Legacy of the Big Lunch: Eden Project Communities*.
81 Ibid.

The Big Lunch is helping some communities raise awareness of local environmental campaigns and projects. Residents of Farland Way in Derry, Northern Ireland, held a Big Lunch on the themes of healthy eating and climate change. They worked with three local organisations – Zero Waste, Farm Garden and Pink Ladies – to run stalls and activities on good diets and limiting exposure to toxic chemicals in plastic waste, food and products such as deodorants. In Morecambe, a group of children set up a stall at their street's Big Lunch to share information on the environment and recruit other young residents to their 'Eco-Gang' striving to make their area a greener place to live.

Many Big Lunch events have served as a catalyst for further community-led activities, some with an environmental focus. Residents of Mount Pleasant, a district in Swansea, came together following their Big Lunch to start a new e-bike initiative and build a lockable bike shelter. The residents' project, which was supported by Swansea Council's Crowdfund Swansea platform, aims to encourage people to reduce car use for environmental reasons and make cycling in the hilly city more accessible and pleasurable.[82]

The impact of community gatherings like the Big Lunch goes beyond the enhancement of community cohesion and wellbeing. By bringing together communities of residents in parks, streets and gardens, events such as Big Lunches are demonstrating the value of giving communities a platform to talk about what matters to them, and the ways in which this can lead to pro-environmental behaviour.

82 https://mountpleasantcommunityebikes.lend-engine.com/

2) Community-led action is demonstrating how it is possible to level up by addressing economic and climate goals together

The Government has set out a clear commitment to 'level up' the country by improving the living standards and opportunities of the poorest communities.[83] There is strong evidence that those more deprived communities now the focus of this cross-government agenda, are also disproportionately affected by climate change.

A review conducted by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation identified a variety of different types of 'climate injustice'.[84] One is that people on lower incomes, and other disadvantaged groups, contribute the least to causing climate change but are likely to be most negatively affected by it. Another is that it is the voices of these communities that often go unheard in decision-making.

This is in part due to structural inequalities in terms of who gets to make decisions in general in our society, and in part due to lower levels of engagement with climate change in more marginalised communities.[85] As Catherine Happer of Glasgow University put it, climate change has a certain "middle class aura", which is reinforced by perceptions of "tree huggers" and media narratives that state that environmentalism is a privileged concern rather than a "bread and butter" issue.

In addition, there is increasing recognition that the environment movement is dominated by white people.[86] So, there is a real need to engage black and minority ethnic people into discussions which often exclude them, but which directly affect them often disproportionately

83 Rt Hon. Michael Gove, Speech to Conservative Party Conference, 4th October 2021. Full transcript here: https://policymogul.com/monitor/key-updates/19230/michael-gove-s-speech-to-conservative-party-conference

84 Banks, N et al. (2014). *Climate change and social justice: an evidence review*. *JRF*. https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/climate-change-and-social-justice-evidence-review

85 Pearson, et al. (2017). 'Race, Class, Gender and Climate Change Communication'. *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Climate Science*. https://oxfordre.com/climatescience/climatescience/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228620.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228620-e-412

86 Jones, R. 'The environmental movement is very white. These leaders want to change that.' 21 July 2020, *National Geographic* https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/environmental-movement-very-white-these-leaders-want-change-that

given the links between race and structural poverty. The Black and Green Ambassadors programme in Bristol (see page 50) is directly focussed on bringing more diverse voices and leadership into Bristol's environmental movement, with a focus on both individual development of young ambassadors and to also lead wider community engagement.

The experience of communities becoming more mobilised and taking control of reshaping their areas demonstrates that economic and environmental agendas need not be zero-sum. On the contrary, they can align together to create more sustainable local economies with community wellbeing at the core.[87]

The example of Ambition Lawrence Weston – in many ways a typical so-called 'left behind' community on the periphery of Bristol – exemplifies this (see page 47). Their evolving approach shows how coming together as a community to address immediate concerns – around the lack of a good local supermarket and affordable housing – has led to the development of community assets that align carbon reduction with cost savings. The community now has the direct benefits of a solar farm and soon a wind turbine, which have created a shared stake in sustainable local infrastructure.

Work on a just transition around jobs is another good way of conceptualising this. Groups such as the Transition Network - who are focussed on working with communities to navigate labour market disruption association with decarbonisation - demonstrate the ways in which focussing on local economic issues, and concrete ways of adapting to them, creates space for meeting local needs and solving local problems in a green and sustainable way.

87 From interviews. Interviews were conducted with experts from national and local government, as well as people working on climate change policy roles across the third sector. A research workshop was also conducted bringing together people from the same set of backgrounds to discuss barriers preventing their being greater levels of local climate action in this country.

Ambition Lawrence Weston – Bristol

Lawrence Weston is a post-war housing estate located in the north-west outskirts of Bristol. Following a decline in local services and people feeling their voice was not being heard by decision-makers, a group of residents formed a charity, Ambition Lawrence Weston (ALW), in 2012 with the mission to make their area a better place to live.[88] A process of active community listening exercises including doorstep surveys, meetings and discussions with residents, led by residents, resulted in a community action plan focussed initially on affordability of fresh food and housing locally.

Aided by investment from Big Local programme, the group achieved a number of successes, including taking over the local youth centre and influencing local development to bring a new supermarket to Lawrence Weston.[89] [90] ALW first became involved in community energy by supporting a solar farm to operate in the area. With 50 per cent of profits going back into the community, the solar farm has provided ALW with a sustainable source of income to re-invest in schemes to alleviate poverty and other community activities.[91]

It then set up a community interest company, Ambition Community Energy, and submitted plans for a 4.2-Megawatt onshore wind turbine to be built on land owned by Bristol City Council in Avonmouth. The

88 'Becoming the dog, not the wagging tail': Transforming a Bristol estate', *New Local*, (2021). https://www.newlocal.org.uk/articles/transforming-bristol-estate/
89 https://www.ambitionlw.org/community/the-big-local/
90 https://www.ambitionlw.org/about-us/
91 Tjoa, P. (2021). *Organising for Change: How councils can support communities to drive change.* New Local and FutureGov. (New Local member-only report).

structure, which has received full planning permission, is expected to power 3,850 homes a year, reduce household energy bills and save 1,965 tonnes of carbon dioxide a year in the lifetime of the development.[92] [93] The wind turbine project has received funding from Bristol City Council, the Bristol and Bath Regional Capital Group, and the West of England Combined Authority, the latter awarding a £500,000 grant through its Local Energy Scheme.[94]

The project site will host an Energy Learning Zone for schools and communities to learn about renewable energy. Profits from the project will go towards a development plan for Lawrence Weston, including a community hub to provide training, social support and debt advice. The wind turbine is expected to be operational by early 2022.[95]

Case study

One Planet Pioneers in Middlesbrough

Launched in 2016, One Planet Pioneers (OPP) is a five-year project supporting the development of green skills among Middlesbrough's next generation. It provides young people aged 14-21 with apprenticeship, kickstart and volunteering positions giving them experience in a range of environmental management

92 'Development Control Committee A – July, 2020', *Bristol Council*. https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/documents/s50384/2. 20.01270.F - Land to the South East Side of Severn Rd - Final Committee Report.pdf

93 'Lawrence Weston to tackle fuel poverty with wind turbine', *BBC*, (2020). https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-54736218

94 'Community wind turbine project wins £500,000 grant', *West of England Combined Authority*.) https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/community-wind-turbine-project-wins-500000-grant/

95 'Ambition Community Energy CIC', *Ambition Lawrence Weston*. https://www.ambitionlw.org/community-energy/

activities. These include growing fruit and vegetables, taking care of local green spaces, and assisting with outdoor education at school clubs and community events.

OPP is one of 31 National Lottery-funded 'Our Bright Future' projects aiming to connect young people with their local environment.[96] It is led by Middlesbrough Environment City (MEC) – a charity dedicated to sustainability and environmental causes – and organised in collaboration with Actes Trust and Tees Valley Wildlife Trust.[97] MEC also liaises with Middlesbrough Council on projects where young volunteers are working on public land, and the council supplies equipment and infrastructure for activities such as green waste removal.

MEC takes an asset-based community development approach. The charity starts with the skills, passions and ambitions the young people already possess and identifies placements that will build on their strengths. This approach has reaped significant rewards. As of December 2020, OPP had engaged 2,793 young people, none of whom were in employment at the time they joined the scheme.[98] Over half have since gone on to secure employment, volunteering and paid training positions; some also obtaining qualifications in areas such as cycle maintenance and environmental conservation.[99] One OPP project officer working at MEC was previously a young volunteer on the scheme. Another young person won a Global Youth Award for leadership in environmental rejuvenation following the opportunities and support she received through OPP.

One secret behind the success of the OPP project is that the young people are involved in work with genuine benefit to the local community. OPP often assists with sites that are overgrown and 'unloved' and returns them to a more manageable state for community groups to take over. In one such project, young

96 https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/our-bright-future
97 https://menvcity.org.uk/opp/
98 https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/insights/differences-we-make/difference-we-make/place-based-stories/middlesbrough-the-right-environment
99 Ibid.

people from OPP worked with the 'Friends of the Arty Path' group to clear green waste from a local heritage site. The Mayor of Middlesbrough, Andy Preston, came to the clean-up and spoke with and congratulated the young people, leaving them with a real sense of achievement.[100] The young people are not assigned to environmental projects for the sake of it: the work they do is meaningful, valuable for the local community and wildlife, and inspiring many of them to pursue a career in environmental occupations.

Case study

Black and Green Ambassadors – Bristol

The Black and Green Ambassadors programme is helping to bring more diverse voices and leadership into Bristol's environmental movement. The programme involves training and developing environmental leaders from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds in Bristol so that they can undertake community research and engagement projects, build connections with local organisations and take part in conferences and other speaking events.[101]

100 'Cleaning up the Arty for Earth Day', Middlesbrough Council. https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/news/cleaning-arty-earth-day

101 'Black & Green Ambassadors', Thrive Renewables, (2021). https://www.thriverenewables.co.uk/latest-news/blog/black-green-ambassadors/

The idea for the programme began in Bristol's year as European Green Capital in 2015, when community radio station Ujima Radio organised a series of 'Green and Black' activities and conversations. Hearing from participants that the city's "green debate" was not inclusive enough of Black, African, Caribbean, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities,[102] Ujima Radio formed a partnership with Bristol Green Capital Partnership, Bristol University's Cabot Institute and community development organisation Up Our Street. The partners began to develop the Black and Green Ambassadors pilot project.

The pilot, which ran from October 2016 to October 2017, saw two young female 'ambassadors' receive leadership development training, mentoring, funding and support in order to: conduct community research on exclusion in the sustainability movement; share their learning and experiences on a monthly Ujima Radio show and through other media; and attend sustainability events and conferences to raise awareness of environmental inequality.[103] The Ambassadors engaged over a dozen local, national and international political leaders, including interviewing Senator Bernie Sanders at a Bristol Festival of Ideas event.[104] The Mayor of Bristol, Marvin Rees, and Deputy Mayor, Cllr Asher Craig, were prominent supporters of the pilot.[105]

In 2020, Bristol Green Capital Partnership and Ujima Radio successfully applied to the National Lottery Community Fund to scale up the Black and Green Ambassadors programme. From 2020 to 2023, a further nine Ambassadors will be recruited and supported to work with Bristol's diverse communities, businesses and organisations on environmental sustainability, equality, diversity and inclusion.[106]

102 Griffith, R. (2016). 'The Green and Black Report: A report on Ujima Radio's initiative to involve Black Minority Ethnic communities in the Green agenda' Bristol University. http://www.bristol.ac.uk/cabot/media/documents/green-and-black-report.pdf

103 https://www.blackandgreenambassadors.co.uk/story-so-far/

104 'Green & Black Ambassadors: Pilot project report'. Black & Green Ambassadors, (2017). https://www.blackandgreenambassadors.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Green-and-Black-Ambassadors-Pilot-Report-2018_Final.pdf

105 Ibid.

106 https://www.blackandgreenambassadors.co.uk/story-so-far/

Case study

Repowering London – London

A non-profit energy cooperative, Repowering London was founded in 2011 by a group of volunteers aiming to build sustainable community-led energy systems.[107] Repowering's first success came in establishing Brixton Energy Solar in 2012, which became the UK's first community energy project on social housing with the installation of 82 kWp of rooftop solar panels.[108] [109] With funding from organisations such as Power to Change and the People's Postcode Lottery, Repowering expanded its work in Brixton and launched projects in other London boroughs to bring renewable energy generation to some of the city's most deprived communities. All these projects are run by Community Benefit Societies to ensure that financial returns are re-invested into the local area.[110] As well as helping London communities develop their own renewable energy cooperatives, Repowering aims to train young people aged 16-19 in green skills and offer energy saving advice and practical support to fuel-poor households.[111]

107 'Reclaiming power: The rapid rise of community renewable energy and why the added benefits of local, clean power can help accelerate transition', *Rapid Transition Alliance*, (2021).

108 Solar panel systems are given a rating in kilowatts peak (kWp) which is the rate at which they generate energy at peak performance. More information: What is a kWp? - Evo Energy. https://www.evoenergy.co.uk/news-updates/what-is-a-kwp/

109 https://www.repowering.org.uk/our-story/

110 https://www.repowering.org.uk/our-model-2/

111 https://www.repowering.org.uk/

3) Communities are building powerful local alliances of neighbours, businesses and voluntary groups

By convening around a shared geographical space, community-led initiatives which have positive environmental impacts can draw in a range of stakeholders. In many examples, different people and organisations that might otherwise have different priorities and motivations are finding common cause around the goal of tackling climate change.

When communities mobilise together, they have the power to take others with them. Locally-set agendas have the capacity to create more meaningful conversations and movement. Local influence is also an important quality – people collectively identifying common cause builds more trust than if an initiative is imposed on an area with the perception of it being motivated by more remote or outside concerns.

Building diverse alliances is important because different types of organisations bring particular benefits and audiences with them. Local businesses might view their participation as an important part of their wider stake in the local economy, and as employers with influence and investment potential this can be powerful. The example of the Better Bankside business improvement district, which has committed to becoming net zero by 2030 demonstrates where business and climate interests can align with a focus on sustainable places (see page 55).

Faith groups bring with them significant amounts of trust across their networks. Established community groups might own or have access to assets such as community buildings, or be capable of activating a significant army of volunteers. Anchor institutions such as hospitals and universities are also often large employers with good routes to raising the profile of activity and have significant purchasing power. This range of partners are also likely to have specialist and technical insights into particular problems that atomised parts of the community or public services more generally may not have directly. As the example of Cambridgeshire Climate Emergency demonstrates (see page 56), developing a range of partnerships with different local organisations and institutions can bring a range of skills and capacity to bear.

Thus, by creating coalitions for change locally, communities can significantly enhance the impact of their activities. This type of collaboration has significant possibilities across smaller spatial scales, given alliances are built around shared interest connected to proximity and place. Plastic Free Caerphilly (see case study below) demonstrates how a tangible, practical goal can bring different organisations committed to the same outcome together. The evidence of the scale of practice demonstrates this is already happening across the country in many different ways, often responsive to local circumstances and opportunities.

Plastic Free Caerphilly – Caerphilly

Plastic Free Caerphilly is a group of local businesses and residents who came together in 2018 out of a shared desire to reduce plastic waste. Supported by Caerphilly Friends of the Earth, the group decided to launch a campaign involving local government, businesses, schools and community groups in the town to cut down on single-use plastics.[112] By July 2019, the town of Caerphilly and a growing number of its schools and businesses had been successful in achieving 'plastic free' status from marine conservation charity Surfers Against Sewage.[113] [114]

"It was a fantastic experience which galvanised local business owners, community groups and local residents around a common cause. It also led to new friendships and projects and was a huge boost to morale and community spirit in the town", notes Andrew Price, coordinator of Caerphilly Friends of the Earth.

112 https://friendsoftheearth.uk/cags/how-rid-your-town-singleuse-plastic
113 https://caerphilly.observer/news/978128/caerphilly-town-declared-a-plastic-free-community/
114 https://plasticfree.org.uk/

Better Bankside – London

Established in 2005 as one of the first Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) in the country, Better Bankside in the London Borough of Southwark aims to become carbon net zero by 2030.[115]

One of the programmes Better Bankside has developed to achieve this goal is Bankside Urban Forest, a business-led partnership approach to supporting active travel and creating more and better green space for people and wildlife. Since its launch in 2007, Bankside Urban Forest has planted over 250 trees in the Better Bankside area, increased green cover by more than 1,000m² and developed projects such as urban greening and a pop-up community garden.[116] [117] Better Bankside received Green Flag Awards in 2018, 2019 and 2020 for Bankside Urban Forest and remains the only BID in the country to have secured a Green Flag Award.[118]

The Better Bankside business community includes almost 1,000 businesses. In November 2019, 92 per cent of these businesses voted to renew the Better Bankside BID for its fourth five-year term and implement its 2020-2025 manifesto.[119] [120] This will see Better Bankside invest 13 per cent of its levy income, currently

115 A Business Improvement District is a business-led partnership in a defined geographic area. A levy is charged on all business rate payers in the area in addition to their business rate bill and used to develop projects which benefit local businesses. https://www.gov.uk/guidance/business-improvement-districts

116 https://betterbankside.co.uk/what-we-do/environment/bankside-urban-forest/

117 https://betterbankside.co.uk/bankside/urban-forest/union-street-urban-orchard/

118 https://betterbankside.co.uk/news/green-flag-award-2020-secured-for-third-year-running/

119 https://betterbankside.co.uk/who-we-are/what-is-a-bid/

120 'Bankside 2020: Shaping our neighbourhood together', *Better Bankside*, (2021). http://betterbankside.lhse.co/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/better_bankside_proposal_2020-25.pdf

amounting to £1,957,000 per annum, on continuing the Bankside Urban Forest programme. A further 18.5 per cent of levy income will be allocated to environmental innovation and 5 per cent on developing sustainable travel schemes. Up to 2025, Better Bankside plans to help its member businesses reduce their consumption of single use plastics; launch lunchtime gardening sessions and a Blooming Bankside Champions initiative for local employees; and continue developing the subsidised recycling scheme that helped member businesses save 4,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide in 2015-19.

In 2021, Better Bankside joined forces with the Mayor of London to develop an important aspect of the Mayor's Business Climate Challenge.[121] Twenty Bankside businesses have been recruited to take part in a pilot project to reduce their office building's energy consumption by ten per cent. If the project is successful, it will be scaled up and rolled out across London.

Cambridgeshire Climate Emergency (CCE) is a voluntary organisation founded with the objective of using community organising to galvanise community-led responses to climate change. [122]

121 https://betterbankside.co.uk/news/business-climate-challenge-x-bankside/
122 https://camemergency.org/

CCE aims to achieve this with a three-pronged approach:

1) Setting up community organising training to help people across Cambridgeshire start actions and conversations in their area
2) Creating a 'climate leaders' network' to support and connect people who have received the training
3) Working with communities to collect and evaluate data on carbon reduction in the county.

Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridge City Council and local business networks are supportive of the data project. CCE is collaborating with university students on the Cambridge Carbon Map - a map of data and stories on carbon reduction activities in Cambridgeshire to inspire local communities and businesses to minimise their own carbon footprints.[123] It is due to launch in Autumn 2021.

This section has focussed on the wide range of initiatives that are already being led by communities motivated to act on climate change in different ways. The case studies demonstrate three important qualities to this community powered response. First, all community work can have climate consequences – climate doesn't have to be the starting point to be the end outcome of community action. Second, community-led initiatives are demonstrating how in practice it is possible to align economic and climate goals around the convening point of place – which has significant implications for how we conceive of an impactful levelling up agenda. And third, community-led action on climate change is demonstrating how it can build diverse and powerful local alliances.

Before we consider how national policy could be better focussed on recognising and enabling community power to tackle climate change, the next section focusses specifically on the role of local government.

123 https://cambridgecarbonmap.org/

As a key anchor institution in places, with a direct democratic mandate and significant (albeit increasingly constrained) financial decision-making power, the role of councils is crucial in enabling community power in practice. The next section explores the role of local government in the context of the current challenge, including both the direct and indirect impact it is possible to have on decarbonisation and transition.

3. THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

So, in the context of the power of community led action on climate change, what is the role of local government?

Many councils have already demonstrated a clear desire to tackle climate change head on. Around three-quarters have declared a climate emergency[124] and set targets for carbon neutrality. This spans councils of all sizes, geographic contexts and political control. Councils have a range of capabilities which mean they are ideally suited to forge localised and community-based approaches to tackling different aspects of the climate change challenge. Beyond this, many have convened citizens' assemblies or other deliberative exercises to build on this momentum, and engage communities more fully as they approach the challenge.

Local authorities are subject to significant budget constraints and operate with an incomplete set of powers within a centralised national framework (we address this in section 4 more fully). Yet it is important to be clear about the range of impact it is possible to achieve within the existing system. This section distinguishes between hard levers and wider influencing roles councils are increasingly adopting, and discusses each in turn. Hard levers reflect a spectrum from management of directly council-owned buildings through to services, delivery and supply chains that will need to be decarbonised to reach net zero. We also identify three wider influencing roles councils are increasingly adopting

124 https://www.climateemergency.uk/blog/list-of-councils/

– mobilising, facilitating and convening. In many ways, these reflect how councils are having to operate to respond to 21st century challenges that require a different relationship with other organisations and with citizens themselves to secure impact. In the context of climate change specifically, they offer a route to maximising the potential of community power to meet the challenges of mitigation and adaptation.

Councils have a range of hard levers to reduce carbon emissions and achieve climate goals

Under current arrangements, many of the areas in which local government have significant powers are crucial for achieving net zero. Councils have broad responsibility over a range of carbon-emitting infrastructure including transport, waste management and social housing. They also have direct responsibility for proactive measures to reduce carbon such as planning and local environmental management. Effective and ambitious council leadership and action in these areas is therefore crucial.[125]

There are a range of resources available to councils when considering best practice in this area. Friends of the Earth have identified 33 actions local authorities can take on climate change.[126] Figure 6 illustrates some of these 'hard levers' available to councils. The financial implications of action have a significant range. Some actions such as staff behaviour change have no direct cost but the focus is more on communications, procedure and culture. In some cases there is a hard cost of investment, but even some investment activity can save or even generate income. The charity Ashden has produced a series of tools for councils including a spreadsheet to consider costs, carbon reduction and potential co-benefits of different actions.[127]

125 'A councillor's workbook on the pathway to net zero', *The Local Government Association,* (2021). https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/councillors-workbook-local-pathway-net-zero
126 '33 actions local authorities can take on climate action', *Friends of the Earth*, (2019). https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/insight/33-actions-local-authorities-can-take-climate-change
127 'Tools for councils', *Ashden*, (2020). https://ashden.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CAC-Chapters-all_new-brand.pdf

Figure 6: Examples of policies councils can enact with current powers *(Source: Friends of the Earth)*[128]

Policy Area	Low/No Cost Action	More Expensive Action
Transport	Introduce ultra-low emission zones	Invest in active travel infrastructure
Buildings	Enforce energy standards in private rented sector	Retrofit council-owned properties
Waste	Adopt circular economy waste policies	Zero waste to landfill commitments
Energy	Identify areas suitable for renewable energy	Form a non-profit green energy company
Procurement	Buy green energy	Require deliveries by electric vehicles
Green Spaces	Tree planting	Produce and deliver a green infrastructure strategy

128 Adapted from: '33 actions local authorities can take on climate action', *Friends of the Earth*, (2019). https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/insight/33-actions-local-authorities-can-take-climate-change

An important finding from research for this report is that many of the levers councils have at their disposal sit in areas not traditionally thought of as 'climate change policy'. It is likely that many officers and teams within councils that can have significant impact on carbon reduction, such as those responsible for social housing or overseeing significant procurement spend, do not necessarily view climate change as their concern, or as a criterion against which to measure their performance.[129]

Accordingly, for councils are to maximise their potential to provide local leadership on climate change, they need to take a whole-institution approach to the issue. This means thinking beyond climate change as a discrete and siloed problem that can be left to a single organisational service or department. Rather it involves a shift to addressing climate challenges in a much broader way, across all direct functions of the council and as an intrinsic part of future strategy and delivery. This would involve all councils understanding how much carbon they produce across their estate, and having an explicit strategy in place to reduce this to zero.[130] Beyond understanding and controlling these direct elements, carbon reduction needs to be a key impact measure across policy and delivery functions.

Maximising the impact of hard levers in practice

Making the most of all the potential areas where councils can have direct influence over carbon emissions involves taking a whole-place approach. This means across all the areas of council functions, identifying ambitious net-zero plans and moving towards reaching these with key milestones that are rigorously measured and accounted for. In a later section we will set out some key questions those within council leaderships can ask to shift practice and decision-making. Some areas to consider within councils are:[131]

129 From interviews.

130 Dudman, J. (2020). 'English councils set to miss carbon emissions targets'. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/jan/27/english-councils-set-to-miss-carbon-emission-targets

131 These areas are partially drawn from 'A councillor's workbook on the pathway to net zero', *The Local Government Association,* (2021). The report contains further useful reading and a wealth of resource and tools for further action and support. https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/councillors-workbook-local-pathway-net-zero

- **Effective political leadership and oversight:** Strong political leadership is important – a clear cabinet or even leader-level role for climate with oversight across the council. This should be reflected throughout the governance of the council including through scrutiny functions.

- **Data-informed and community-engaged action plans:** Ambitious action plans need to be informed by evidence of carbon baselines, in order to generate credible milestones against which to measure impact.[132] This data should be open and accessible for transparent tracking of progress. Developing action plans are an ideal opportunity for community engagement and active participation – some have been actively co-produced with the community.[133]

- **Workforce training and capacity building:** Making carbon reduction everyone's business starts with awareness raising. Carbon literacy training toolkits are easily and freely available online for councils, designed specifically for local authority officers and elected members.[134] Once equipped with greater knowledge, teams can then reflect on their practice and build carbon reduction into their roles and purpose. Drawing together a cross-organisation climate action team can be a good way of sharing ideas and practice between separate directorates and drawing in people at a range of levels to influence colleagues.

- **Decision-making and governance:** Putting decarbonisation at the heart of decision-making entails some shifts in practice and procedure. Ensuring corporate performance frameworks include climate indicators can serve to make climate action visible as part of day-to-day business of the council. Effective scrutiny will need to challenge on what active steps the council is taking to create or meet an ambitious action plan.

132 Local Partnerships and the LGA have developed a Greenhouse Gas Accounting Tool for councils seeking to calculate their own carbon baseline. See: 'Greenhouse Gas Accounting Tool', Local Partnerships. https://localpartnerships.org.uk/greenhouse-gas-accounting-tool/

133 Climate Emergency UK and mySociety have created an open database of council climate action plans. As of October 2021, 83 per cent of councils have a plan. See https://data.climateemergency.uk/

134 See https://carbonliteracy.com/toolkits/local-authorities/

Questions for councils

The Local Government Association (LGA) has identified a series of questions which councils can reflect on to identify 'hard' policy and delivery levers available to them to maximise carbon reduction.[135]

For example:

- Is zero-carbon a key consideration for new developments or for regeneration of existing sites/areas?
- Does the council require new buildings to be lower carbon than the level specified in current building regulations? [136]
- Is the council taking proactive steps to retrofit council housing and working with others to support retrofit and renewable energy measures in private sector housing?
- Is the council managing its service delivery in a caron and nature-friendly way?
- Does the council's procurement strategy reflect carbon reduction objectives?
- Is the council engaging with its current and potential supply chain on carbon reduction ambitions?
- Is the council ensuring its investments are climate friendly and is it looking at innovative ways of financing climate action? [137]

135 For the full list of questions and a comprehensive collection of resources and case studies, see A councillor's workbook on the pathway to net zero', *The Local Government Association,* (2021). https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/councillors-workbook-local-pathway-net-zero

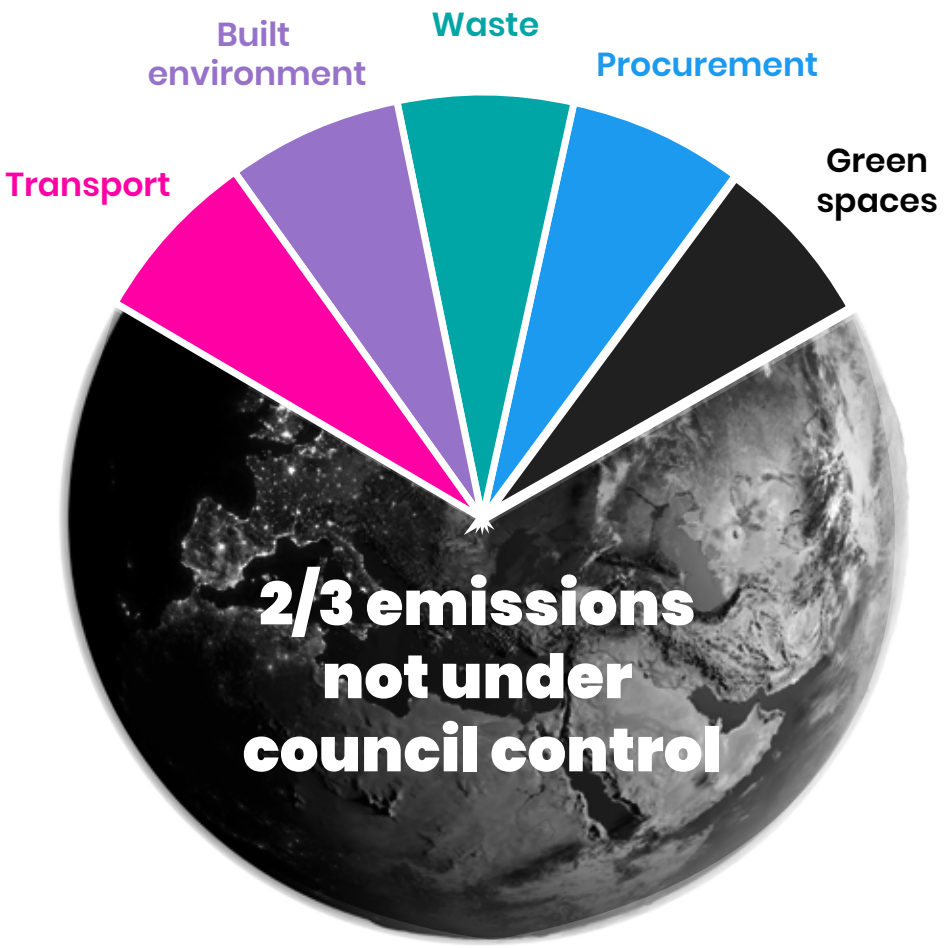
136 See The UK Green Building Council New Homes Policy Playbook https://www.ukgbc.org/ukgbc-work/new-homes-policy-playbook/

137 See, for example the LGA's Green Guide for Finance https://www.local.gov.uk/financing-green-ambitions

Councils need to operate beyond their organisational boundaries to influence meaningful change

Even accounting for the range of responsibilities outlined above, local authorities still only hold real influence over approximately a third of the emissions that are released within their local areas.[138] This is a significant amount, yet it leaves the majority of emissions beyond councils' immediate control – with the rest relying either on the choices of local people and institutions, or on decisions made in national government.[139]

Figure 7: Areas where councils have control of emissions as a share of the total[140]



138 Evans, L. (2020). *Local Authorities and the Sixth Carbon Budget*. Climate Change Committee. https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/local-authorities-and-the-sixth-carbon-budget/

139 Ibid.

140 Categories of control from Friends of the Earth (see reference 129)

So, if councils are to play a role in combatting climate change that has impact beyond their direct oversight, they need to consider how they can use their 'softer', influencing power alongside harder, more direct levers. Evidence of practice gathered for this report indicates that councils at the forefront are using the issue of climate change to pursue a new democratic relationship with their residents. In other words, many are conceiving of the climate change challenge as an opportunity to begin a different dialogue with their communities, based on honesty, common purpose and mutual commitment.

Many councils are conceiving of the climate change challenge as an opportunity to begin a different dialogue with their communities, based on honesty, common purpose and mutual commitment.

The opportunity for a new democratic relationship between councils and communities

Given the circumstances of the urgent threat posed by the climate crisis, there is an opportunity for local government to recast its relationship with citizens. Councils that are being most creative are adopting new roles that break free from the traditional paternalistic provider-user dynamic. They are instead recognising that because no single actor can solve the problem alone, everyone has a contribution to make. This means that the more transactional and directive 'council as service provider' mentality is recognised as insufficient, and approaches which draw in the insight and participation of communities have much more potential.

Deliberative approaches such as citizens' assemblies and citizens' juries have been popular methods to pursue this in practice for many councils.[141] Given the complexity of the climate challenge, methods which involve interrogation of information and discussion about the related trade-offs are better suited to grappling with the issues than traditional democratic methods such as a 'yes or no' choice in a consultation exercise. In addition, the focus on building consensus and commitment to action creates powerful legitimacy for councils as they develop increasingly ambitious plans to reduce carbon to net zero.

141 For a useful overview of where significant deliberative approaches have been used, see: UK Climate Change Citizens' Assemblies & Citizens' Juries', *Involve*. https://www.involve.org.uk/resources/case-studies/uk-climate-change-citizens-assemblies-citizens-juries

Yet these deliberative forums have their limits. Some have been relatively stand-alone exercises, not always enjoying the buy-in of elected members and they have not always resulted in wider follow-through that shifts the culture or approach of the wider council. Where they have been most successful, as the example of Camden (see case study on page 72) shows, they have been directly linked to an explicit action plan and continued participation beyond the original events. Deliberative democratic methods offer powerful tools for councils, but they need to be considered ongoing rather than separate and time-limited initiatives. The real potential of deliberation will be reached when the methods reflect back into the council and shift how it operates on a day-to-day basis, building in open and ongoing dialogue and decision-making more directly with communities.

By conceiving of their role and potential in new and creative ways, councils can rise to the challenge of the enormous shifts that await our society and economy as we adapt to climate change and transition to zero carbon. Partly this is about pursuing engagement within communities that is both deep and broad. It is also about seeking active participation in policy design and implementation that is sensitive to circumstances and capable of building on existing community assets.

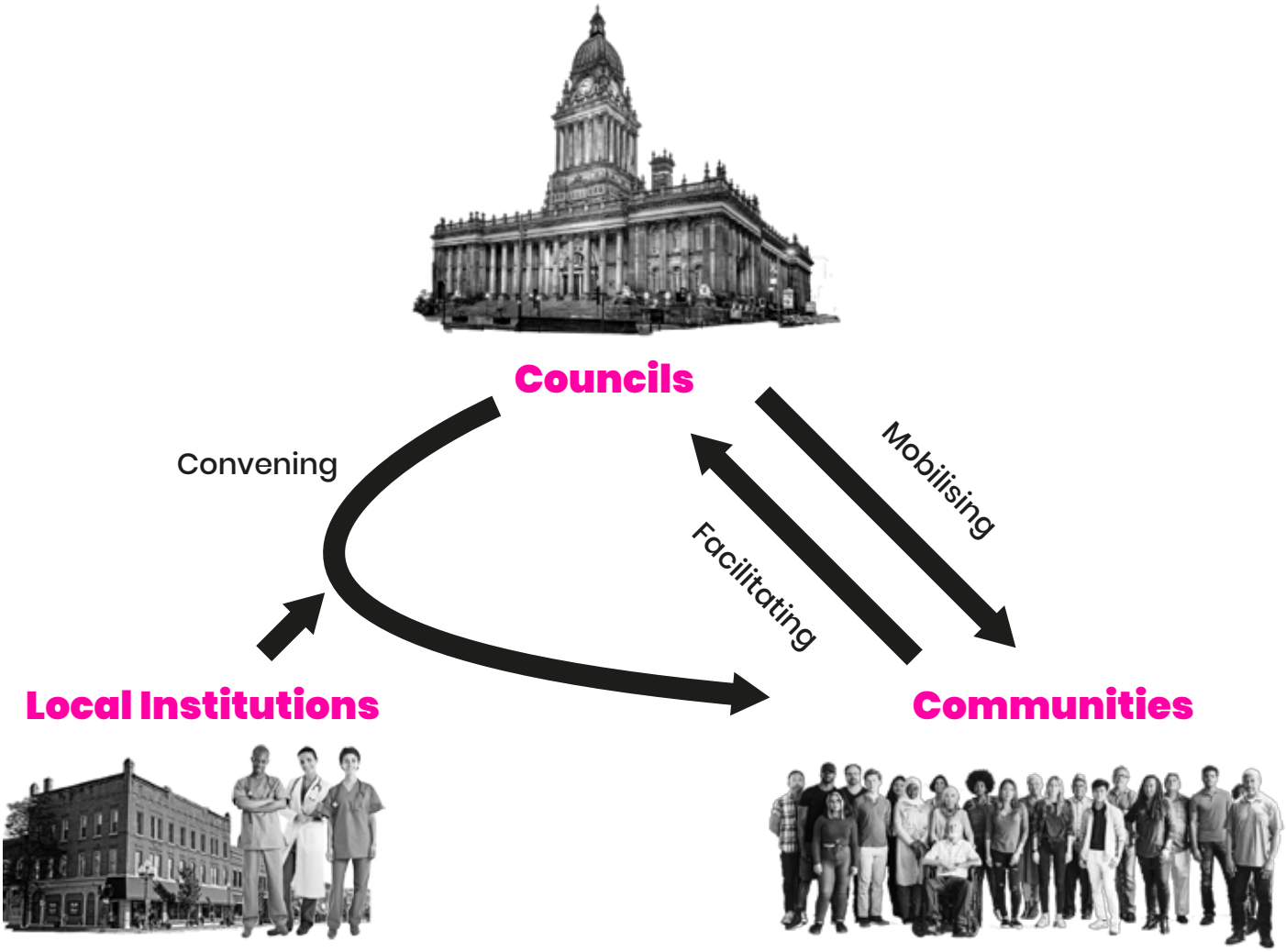
We identify three roles that councils are adopting in relation to tackling the climate crisis:

- **Mobilising:** Encouraging and incentivising communities to take action on climate change.[142]
- **Facilitating:** Working with existing action and energy in communities to support them to realise their self-defined goals.
- **Convening:** Creating powerful partnerships between local communities and other organisations such as voluntary groups and businesses.

142 For more on the process of community mobilisation and the role local government can play in it, please refer to Tiratelli, L. (2020). *Community Mobilisation: Unlocking the potential of community power*. New Local. https://www.newlocal.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Community-Mobilisation_New-Local-1.pdf

By adopting these approaches, councils can make progress in addressing the local emissions that they do not have direct control over. These approaches are not mutually exclusive, but each is distinct in terms of how the relationship with communities is calibrated in practice. Figure 8 shows how these dynamics relate and to an extent are self-reinforcing.

Figure 8: The approaches councils can take to engender local climate action



This section explores each role in more detail, and uses case studies to demonstrate how they are having an impact in practice.

1) Councils as mobilisers

When councils take a mobilising approach, they are looking to inspire communities to take action on climate change – to create new dynamics and new projects within their communities. As previous research by New Local has explored, community mobilisation is the process of building community capacity to become more active, networked and focussed on clear objectives.[143] This role has been adopted by councils when they seek to create action where previously there was none, and this process of galvanising communities into more participation may be aligned with wider goals of increasing engagement amongst disadvantaged communities.

As the case studies below demonstrate, there are a range of ways that councils can go about this. Bradford's Community Climate Action Fund created new funding streams devolved within the borough to kick-start climate action projects (see page 70). In Camden, a citizens' assembly proved a powerful starting point for a net zero action plan devised by members of the community, and then led to deepening engagement over time (see page 72). The Adapting the Levels App, supported by Somerset Council, is explicitly focussed on mobilising communities and local businesses to the requirements of adaptation, in a way that is directly meaningful to local circumstances, driven by their participation and input (see page 73).

The mobiliser role takes investment – whether direct or in-kind – and long-term commitment to develop activity and projects starting from scratch. The key to mobilising approaches is that they are about creating incentives and letting communities play the core role in setting the agenda.

143 ibid

Case study

The Community Climate Action Fund in Bradford

Following the declaration of a climate emergency in 2019, Bradford Council was keen to launch an initiative that would fully involve the city's communities in its ambition to achieve net zero carbon across Bradford by 2038. The council created the Bradford District Community Climate Action Fund to catalyse and mobilise people who are already interested in climate change and to raise awareness of climate change among people not currently engaged in the issue.[144]

How it works

Bradford Council is allocating over £300,000 to a fund for community-led climate action projects, £60,000 for each of Bradford's five constituency areas. There is a maximum of £5,000 available per scheme, but applications for larger amounts are being considered if initiatives are particularly inspirational or cross constituency boundaries.

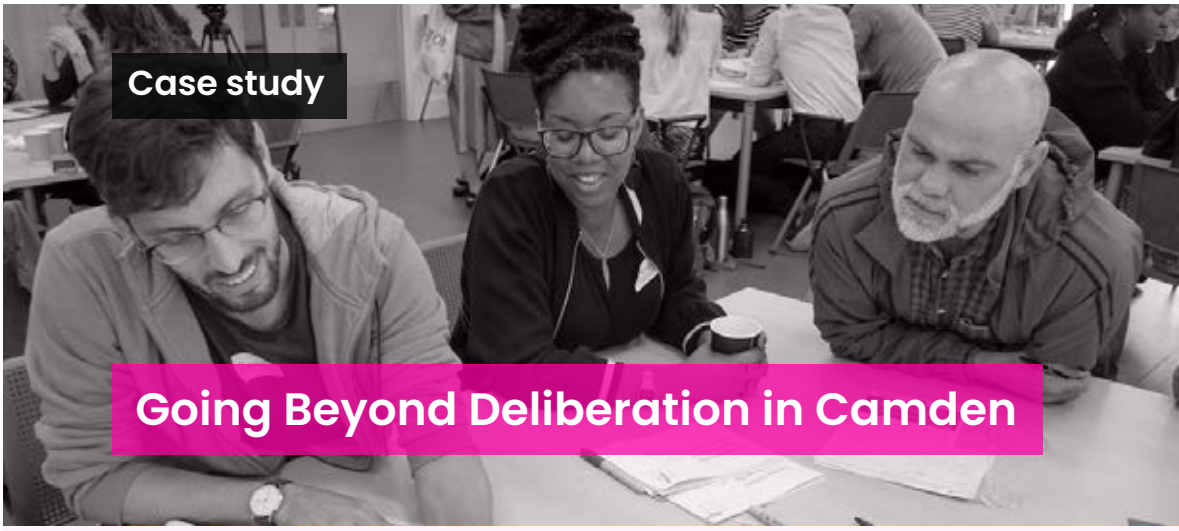
The council's vision for the Fund is that it serves as a catalyst for the creation of an "ecosystem" of community-led climate change and sustainable development projects throughout the district. The council already works closely with established local climate action groups and town and parish councils that have

144 'Bradford District Community Climate Action Fund', *Bradford Council*. https://www.bradford.gov.uk/your-community/community-grants/bradford-district-community-climate-action-fund/

declared a climate emergency. But these groups and councils tend to operate in areas of the city where residents already have the financial resources and social connections needed to start and manage their own climate initiatives. Through the new Community Climate Action Fund, the council is making an effort to reach communities in all parts of the city and support the best ideas for tackling climate change in Bradford. The council has so far received applications from over 80 local groups based in all parts of the city – a clear indication that it is resource, not lack of interest, that holds back communities in disadvantaged areas from setting up their own climate action projects.

The projects proposed by the 80 community groups vary from the small scale and hyper-local, such as litter picking, to the more ambitious and overtly climate-change framed, such as solar panel installation. This reflects the different kinds of motivations that people have in getting involved in environmental action. For some, it's born out of a sense of pride in place and a desire to improve their neighbourhoods. For others it's about improving quality of life and wellbeing or reducing energy bills. For a comparatively small number, the primary driver is responding to climate change.

A key reason the council has been able to attract applications from communities across the district is that it has appealed to a broad range of motivations in its promotion of the Fund, not focusing solely on the pressing nature of the climate emergency.



Case study

Going Beyond Deliberation in Camden

The London Borough of Camden held a citizens' assembly on the climate crisis in July 2019, in partnership with Involve and the Democratic Society. The assembly developed and agreed 17 'actions' to tackle the crisis at household, neighbourhood and council levels. Camden Council used the citizens' assembly's 17 actions to shape its Climate Action Plan for 2020-25 and have since continued to involve residents in climate projects.[145]

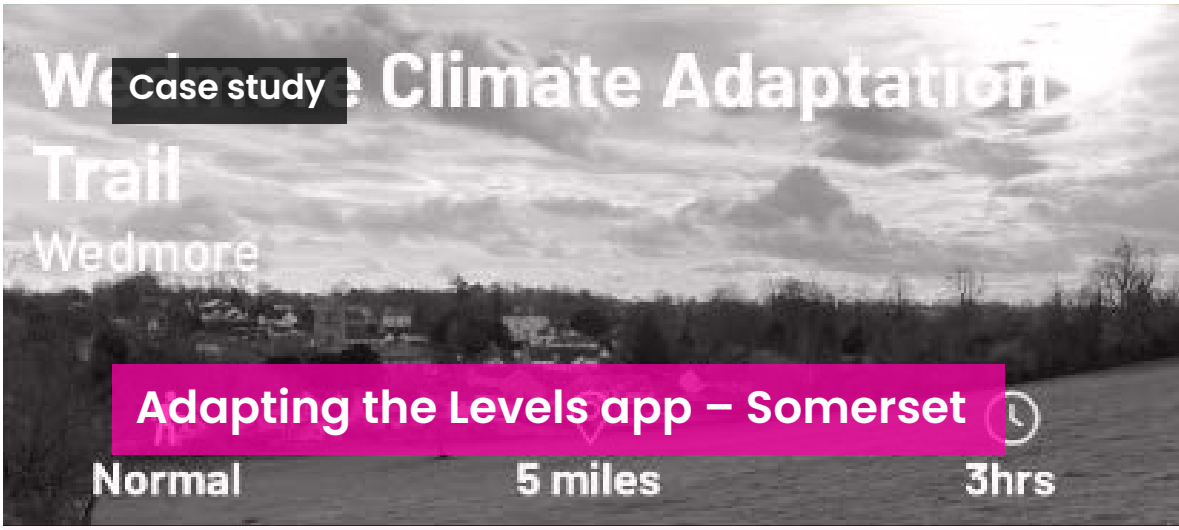
How it works

Camden's citizens' assembly brought together 50 randomly selected residents of the borough for three evidence sessions on the climate and ecological crisis and ways in which the worst impacts of the crisis can be mitigated.[146] The assembly's deliberations were aided by a "bank of ideas" submitted by the wider community in Camden through the council's Commonplace platform, engagement events held in local schools and feedback from local businesses.[147] But Camden Council's work with communities on climate action did not end with the citizens' assembly and the publication of a Climate Action Plan. In response to one of the assembly's 17 actions on scrutiny, the council has established the Camden Climate Citizen Panel. The

145 https://www.camden.gov.uk/how-are-we-tackling-the-climate-crisis-in-camden
146 https://www.camden.gov.uk/documents/20142/0/Camden+Citizens%27+Assembly+on+the+Climate+Crisis+-+Report.pdf
147 Ibid.

Panel comprises 15 people who live and work in the borough, meets on a quarterly basis, and is tasked with reviewing the progress of the council's Climate Action Plan.[148]

Another of the assembly's actions for the council was to mobilise existing community groups to work on tackling the climate crisis. Camden Council therefore set up a pop-up 'Think and Do' community space for residents to take part in, organise and develop ideas for activities that would involve more people in climate action projects.[149] The 'Think and Do' space was originally only open for six weeks in autumn 2019, hosting events and discussions organised by the council alongside networking, crafts and storytelling sessions run by local people. In February 2020, the space was reopened as a community café, which continues to host events aimed at promoting climate and social justice as well as serving ethical and affordable food.[150]



Adapting the Levels is a project bringing together policymakers, infrastructure experts, landowners, farmers and communities to develop a vision for enhancing climate change resilience in

148 'Citizen Panel', *Camden Council*. https://www.camden.gov.uk/citizen-panel
149 'Pop-up Think & Do community space for climate and eco action', *Camden Council*. https://www.camden.gov.uk/pop-up-think-do-community-space-for-climate-and-eco-action
150 Think&Do Camden (thinkanddocamden.org.uk)

the Somerset Levels.[151] As part of the project, a new web-based app has been created to help people and businesses think about adaptations they will need to make to their homes, land and premises in response to climate change and propose new ideas for collective action.[152] The app's 'adaptation pathways' – areas where adaptation will be required, such as for households and agriculture – were created in workshops with parish and town councils, businesses and local communities. The feedback and ideas that people share through the app will be used by Adapting the Levels project partners to formulate Somerset's climate resilience vision.[153]

2) Councils as facilitators

When councils adopt a facilitating role, they are being responsive to existing community-led initiatives and finding ways to help established local community groups and activists to become more impactful. This is distinct from the mobilising role since it doesn't require initiating action in the first place. Rather, it involves recognising where there is existing energy and commitment within the community, then understanding how the council can add value.

Councils have a range of assets available to them that community groups do not, and if deployed appropriately these can help them achieve their goals. This might involve contributing assets such as land where a strong community-led plan needs this. This happened in the case of Ambition Lawrence Weston for example, when Bristol City Council contributed land to build a community-owned wind turbine (see case study on page 47). It might also involve using the financial leverage available to councils. Cornwall Council's community energy scheme is underpinned by a significant financial commitment,

151 https://somersetnewsroom.com/2021/06/22/pioneering-website-helps-somerset-plan-for-climate-change/

152 https://www.adaptingthelevels.com/

153 Adapting the Levels is managed as a partnership between Somerset County Council, Somerset Wildlife Trust and the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group SouthWest. The project is funded by the EU's Interreg 2 Seas Regional Development Fund and Somerset Rivers Authority.

which has proved revenue-generating for the council and served to keep energy spend local. A loan by Oxford City Council to support the development of a solar farm has enabled the project to secure further investment (see page 77). As the range of activity developed by Hampshire County Council shows, sometimes the facilitator role involves relatively micro actions but targeted at the individuals, networks and communities that could take advantage of them, amounting to a significant broad impact overall (see page 79).

A council's roles as facilitator is focussed on a strong understanding of its communities; where support is most needed to propel activity, and sometimes when it is best to stand back and let communities take the lead. In this way it is a powerful approach to mitigate the weaknesses of community action by boosting capacity, and enhancing the strengths of community action by letting them take ownership.

Case study

Community Energy in Cornwall

Cornwall Council established its community energy Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) in summer 2012. The first of its kind in the UK, the RLF had a 20-year loan facility of £2.4 million to support community renewable energy projects. The entire loan facility has now been committed, with community projects benefiting from the RLF having collectively saved a total of 1,831 tonnes of CO2 emissions and generated a total capacity of 1.607MW, enough to power 510 homes.

How it works

In 2012, Cornwall Council decided to explore options to retain more of the benefits of Cornwall's energy spend within the county. At the time it was estimated that 98 per cent of Cornwall's total spend on energy was leaving the local economy.

The council concluded that assisting the development of community-led renewable energy projects would be the most attractive solution to the problem. Supporting community projects was seen as an opportunity to disrupt the dominance of the 'Big Six' national energy companies, as community groups would be more interested in maintaining energy projects for the long-term benefit of Cornwall and less likely to raise prices for profit. Cornwall Council was also keen to help communities become more engaged and emotionally involved in local renewable energy generation so that community groups could play a more central role in helping the council achieve its then Green Cornwall objectives.[154]

The Low Carbon Society, a community development finance institution co-founded by Cornwall Council in 2009, administered the funding, allowing the RLF to move at a similar speed to private investors to help community groups own local renewable energy projects and retain the benefits of the projects in Cornwall. A peer review group (including community representatives and the council) examined project applications before they were received by the council for final sign-off.

Community energy groups retained a percentage of any revenue raised from generation to further their ambitions and use it to develop other community projects. Since 2012, the RLF has unlocked £49,941 for a range of community benefit projects. This included supporting energy efficiency measures and essential maintenance to be carried out in seven community buildings and funding a computer literacy programme for vulnerable and elderly residents in a remote part of Cornwall.

154 https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/3624737/Green-Cornwall-Strategy-2011-2020.pdf

A revenue return to the council and the Low Carbon Society is built into the model. Nine years on from the launch of the RLF, now that returns are coming in, the council is considering how to design the next iteration of the RLF to continue facilitating the development of community-led energy projects.

Ray Valley Solar is a 19MW ground-mounted solar farm project situated in Bicester, north-east Oxfordshire. A loan of up to £3,385,200 agreed in summer 2021 by Oxford City Council is supporting the delivery of the project, which is set to become the largest community-owned solar park in the UK.[155]

How it works

The Ray Valley Solar (RVS) project is managed by the Low Carbon Hub, a social enterprise formed by Oxford City Council in 2011 to develop community-owned renewable energy schemes in Oxfordshire.[156]

155 https://www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/1867/oxford_city_council_provides_nearly_34m_of_funding_for_ray_valley_solar_park
156 https://mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk/documents/s60328/TH%20Cabinet%20paper%20-%20PSDS%20-%20June%202021%20-%201.7.pdf

Low Carbon Hub had already secured significant funds to aid the development of RVS, including raising £4.3 million of new investment through its Community Energy Fund.[157] The loan agreed between Low Carbon Hub and Oxford City Council will provide further support to the delivery of the project and unlock additional benefit to the community. As the loan from the council is low interest, Low Carbon Hub will be able to invest into community schemes with money that might otherwise have had to be paid back as loan debt. The council estimates that RVS will provide £13 million of community benefit funding over the 22.5-year lifetime of the project.[158]

Oxford City Council's backing of RVS will help realise its vision of reaching net zero carbon across council operations by no later than 2030.[159] The money loaned to Low Carbon Hub came from a grant of £10.9 million awarded to the council in early 2021 from the UK Government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund.[160] The council anticipates that RVS will generate sufficient to power over 6,000 homes and keep £2.6 million of clean energy spend in the local economy every year.[161]

Work on RVS is currently underway and expected to be complete in autumn 2021. Once the site is established, Low Carbon Hub has committed to provide additional habitat for a range of species with new hedges and wildflower grassland, pond maintenance and a new bee hive project.[162]

157 https://www.lowcarbonhub.org/p/projects/ray-valley-solar/

158 https://mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk/documents/s60328/TH%20Cabinet%20paper%20-%20PSDS%20-%20June%202021%20-%201.7.pdf

159 https://www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/1867/oxford_city_council_provides_nearly_34m_of_funding_for_ray_valley_solar_park

160 Council awarded up to £10.9m to reduce carbon emissions across key Council owned buildings | Oxford City Council

161 https://mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk/documents/s60328/TH%20Cabinet%20paper%20-%20PSDS%20-%20June%202021%20-%201.7.pdf

162 'Ray Valley Solar', *Low Carbon Hub*. https://www.lowcarbonhub.org/p/projects/ray-valley-solar/

Case study

Facilitating community climate action – Hampshire

Hampshire County Council is working with various partners to organise four key projects to facilitate community climate action. These projects start from the premise that there is already a great appetite for local action, and what communities need from the council is a helping hand to get initiatives off the ground.

- Solar Together Hampshire. The project helps homeowners and small-to-medium sized businesses to purchase and install solar panels on their roofs.[163] This scheme has so far seen over one thousand people commit to solar installation, which has greatly increased the renewable energy production capacity of the county.
- Community Energy Network. The council provides bespoke guidance and online training for communities who are interested in developing their own renewable energy and energy efficiency schemes.[164]
- A sustainability advice line. Residents can call the line to receive detailed, technical advice on questions relating to sustainability and climate change.[165]

163 https://www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/environment/climatechange/whatarewedoing/projects/solarbuyingscheme
164 https://www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/environment/climatechange/whatarewedoing/projects/communityenergy
165 https://www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/environment/climatechange/whatarewedoing/projects/freephoneadviceline

- The Greening Campaign. The scheme supports communities who are interested in climate change, to create small scale initiatives and campaigns (such as litter picking). From these small starting points, the campaign encourages communities to mobilise, learn more about climate change, and gradually become more ambitious in their activities and initiatives (with support and funding from the council).[166]

3) Councils as convenors

When councils take on a convening role, they use their unique position at the heart of an area to bring together a range of different local partners. Because of their inherent democratic legitimacy, councils have an ability to 'get people around a table' in a way that can lead to meaningful outcomes.

Where this route is being pursued, councils can network community initiatives into a wider ecosystem of local actors, including the private sector and local voluntary organisations, whose deep local roots bring with them valuable perspectives on local issues. In so doing, councils can help different actors align their interests, maximise their efficacy, and create coalitions for and narratives about local change and transformation. In the context of climate change, this creates the potential to draw wider goals, such as economic priorities, to the climate agenda. As set out in the first section of this report, this is crucial if we are to achieve a 'just transition'.

In practice, this convening role can take a number of forms. For councils like the London Borough of Islington, it can mean creating a local partnership of institutions interested in reducing their environmental impact. In mayoral combined authorities like Liverpool City Region, a focus is placed on bringing together a diverse range of specialisms

166 http://www.greening-campaign.org/

and sectors from external organisations to improve decision-making across the sub-region. The key is that within a local democratic space, there is a unique ability to connect groups who may not otherwise meet or find common cause, and as a result create the conditions for more impactful local action.

Case study

The Liverpool City Region Climate Partnership

During its 'Year of the Environment' in 2019, the Liverpool City Region became the first combined authority in England to declare a climate emergency and pledged to achieve net zero carbon by 2040. Liverpool City Region Mayor Steve Rotheram also announced that a Climate Partnership would be established to provide expert advice and support to the combined authority in delivering its climate action plans and Community Environment Fund. The rationale behind the creation of the partnership is simple: "no single body can tackle the problems faced [with the climate crisis] in isolation."[167]

How it works

Membership of the Liverpool City Region Climate Partnership comprises around 40 separate organisations. These include statutory bodies, academic institutions, local utility companies, environmental organisations such as Friends of the Earth, third

167 https://moderngov.merseytravel.gov.uk/documents/s43227/Item 9 - Report.pdf

sector groups and representatives of the local faith and student communities.[168] The Climate Partnership is chaired by Gideon Ben-Tovim OBE, who also chairs the Local Nature Partnership in the Liverpool City Region.

The Climate Partnership has already achieved notable successes. Recognising that a 2040 net zero action plan that is both evidence-based and incorporates ideas from all members of the community will take time to prepare, the Climate Partnership assisted the Liverpool City Region to develop a Year One Climate Action Plan published in March 2021.[169] The Year One Plan sets out short-term actions, such as launching an active travel campaign and making 1,120 homes more energy efficient. This ensures that the city region's response to the climate emergency builds swift momentum while the longer-term plan is drafted.

The Climate Partnership is also responsible for overseeing the establishment and delivery of the Liverpool City Region Community Environment Fund. Established in autumn 2020, the £500,000 fund aims to support community-led environment projects in the region and encourage a 'green recovery' from the COVID-19 pandemic.[170] The Climate Partnership identified target themes for the funding and scored applications, using their expertise and local knowledge to identify projects that would be most worthwhile and have the largest impact. Community projects that have received funding so far range from food waste reduction and upcycling to carbon literacy training and boosting bee populations.[171]

168 https://moderngov.merseytravel.gov.uk/documents/s48897/Enc.%201%20for%20Liverpool%20City%20Region%20Climate%20Progress%20Update.pdf

169 'One-year climate plan reveals immediate action to be taken as Liverpool City Region strives to be zero-carbon by 2040', *Liverpool City Region Combined Authority*, (2021). https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/one-year-climate-plan-reveals-immediate-action-to-be-taken-as-liverpool-city-region-strives-to-be-zero-carbon-by-2040/

170 https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/community-environment-fund/

171 'Environmental projects chosen to be supported by Liverpool City Region Fund', *The Guide Liverpool*, (2021). https://theguideliverpool.com/environmental-projects-chosen-to-be-supported-by-liverpool-city-region-fund/

Case study

Islington Sustainable Energy Partnership – London

The Islington Sustainable Energy Partnership (ISEP) is a network of over 50 public, private and third sector organisations in the London Borough of Islington that want to reduce their environmental impact and support local green projects. ISEP was formed in 2007 by Islington Council, which continues to assist the group with secretariat services.

ISEP provides advice, training and practical support to help its members measure, monitor and reduce their carbon footprint. To incentivise environmentally friendly business practice and recognise success, ISEP developed a Green Certification Scheme. Members apply for certification and are awarded Bronze, Silver or Gold Level based on their actions to reduce energy use and share their knowledge and experiences with other organisations. Since ISEP was formed, member organisations have cut their carbon emissions by over 31,000 tonnes and saved £6.7 million in energy costs.

ISEP also creates opportunities for member organisations to support environmental projects in the community. One such project was the installation of ivy screens at Prior Weston Primary School in 2019 to help mitigate the damaging effects of air pollution. ISEP led a crowdfunding and fundraising campaign in 2018 to support the project, which was also backed by funding from Islington Council and the Mayor of London. The money raised also enabled pupils to produce an air pollution walking map to encourage people to take less polluted routes to travel to school.

Groundwork's Green Doctors provide free energy advice to people experiencing fuel poverty. The Green Doctors visit people in their homes (or speak over the telephone during the COVID-19 pandemic), listen to their concerns and support them to manage energy debt and adopt cost-saving behaviours. The programme helps fuel poor households in the UK to make over £5 million of savings from energy bills every year.[172] The Green Doctors' advice on energy efficiency and behaviour change helps people in those households to live a more sustainable lifestyle, thereby aiding local climate action efforts. The Green Doctors work closely with local authorities and housing associations, which are among the programme's biggest funders, and have trained over 1,500 frontline workers in energy awareness and fuel poverty.[173]

Shifting towards mobilising, facilitating and convening in practice

There is no set 'off-the-shelf' recipe for shifting towards these new roles – they are as much about culture and clarity of purpose as about any rigid set of actions. But there are a range of practical considerations for councils thinking about more purposefully their role in tackling climate change. On page 87, we set out some questions to consider. Some core areas for councils are:

172 https://www.groundwork.org.uk/greendoctor/
173 Ibid.

> **All councillors, and teams across the council, need to be given clear permission to work both together across the council and directly with communities to develop climate plans.**

Clear political and managerial leadership

Responsibility for climate change action may organisationally need to 'sit' somewhere, with a particular cabinet member or a particular senior officer. But all councillors, and teams across the council, need to be given clear permission to work both together across the council and directly with communities to develop climate plans. This is as important for service areas not explicitly climate-focussed as those which are – as this report has demonstrated all community development work can have positive environmental and climate impacts.

A culture of frontline autonomy

Senior decision-makers within councils need to signal their commitment to enabling the autonomy and creativity across teams to develop an impactful response to climate change. This can be driven generally through council internal communications, and specifically through performance reviews and governance. But beyond formal process, a culture of permissiveness needs to be established that coalesces around the end goal of net zero, takes proactive steps to equip the workforce with knowledge such as carbon literacy, and then enables teams to develop and pursue ideas within their areas of responsibility.

Accessibility to the community

A common refrain from residents and community groups is that it can be unclear who to talk to within the council or how to get involved. Thinking about how information is provided externally through traditional communications such as an accessible website, is important, as is the use of social media platforms to network people and link to activity. For example, Facebook groups are a popular forum for connecting people locally, and rather than always setting up their own, there may be some already run by community groups that the council could consider engaging with to open up routes to accessing opportunities.

Identifying 'moments of impact' with the community

There will be various points in time or place where there is an opportunity to raise the profile of climate change and engage in a constructive dialogue over net-zero plans. At most extreme,

after a climate-related catastrophe like flash flooding, after the initial emergency response there may be an opportunity to engage communities affected in new ways more focussed on the experience they have just gone through. In more day-to-day council planning, where there are big initiatives such as new development schemes in train, there is an opportunity to bring the community into the planning and design process to develop net zero plans.

Identify opportunities for communities to get actively involved in plans for net zero Deliberative methods such as citizens' assemblies or citizens' juries offer individuals within communities the opportunity to engage in complex decisions, and participatory methods offer a wider set of the community the opportunity to influence decisions or budget allocations. Both have the potential beyond a standalone event to become much more mainstreamed into council processes, shifting the wider culture and approach of the council to be more open and deliberative. The focus of climate change offers a route to pursuing this more proactively, by drawing people into discussions around trade-offs and committing resource to activity that contributes to climate goals.

A flexible approach to building local networks
Many councils have sought the input of local stakeholders as they developed their plans for a net zero borough. This includes from a wide range of other public sector bodies and anchor institutions, the private sector including small businesses and large local employers, and the voluntary sector including larger more formal third sector bodies and smaller grassroots community groups. Partnership working is traditionally conceived of at a senior level, but a strong convening role in this regard will not always occur from the 'top down'. A range of more versatile day-to-day collaborative working should be enabled as far as possible to draw in a range of local actors to community-led initiatives. The council's convening role can be as simple as providing space for people to meet, or as formal as committing resource in kind to enable a project to get off the ground.

- **Understand what is already happening and adapt accordingly** For these influencing roles to have maximum impact, the council doesn't need to 'do' everything, but it should take steps to develop as comprehensive an understanding of what is already happening locally as possible. Convening discussions with communities and understanding where there is existing capacity and energy can then inform how best the council can support what communities would like to do. Conceiving of the council role as removing barriers to action more than directing action could be a good starting point.

Questions for councils

There are a series of questions councillors and officers could consider with regard to how their council's mobilising, facilitating and convening roles are being fulfilled in practice. This list is not definitive, but it sets out some areas which could be reflected on and developed within council teams.[174] For example:

- Does your council have an active plan in place to communicate and engage with residents about your net zero plans, and what is the 'ask' of your community to get involved in this?

- If a resident or group of residents want to get involved in climate action or local projects, does the council provide an easy route to finding information and connecting people?

- Has your council pursued any deliberative or participative engagement with your communities that engage in deep decision-making? If so, do you have plans to embed learning and practice within the council beyond the specific exercise?[175]

174 These questions are drawn in part from two direct sources: the workshop New Local held as part of this research, and as a specific resource, the very useful 'A councillor's workbook on the pathway to net zero', *The Local Government Association,* (2021). https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/councillors-workbook-local-pathway-net-zero

175 If your council hasn't yet pursued any such engagement, a useful resource as a starting point is '*How to run a citizens' assembly: A handbook for local government based on the Innovation in Democracy Programme*', RSA (2020) https://www.thersa.org/globalassets/reports/2020/IIDP-citizens-assembly.pdf

- Has your council identified opportunities for decisions to be decided jointly with communities to maximise climate impact, such as over the design of a new development or regarding a particular budget such as S106 contributions?

- Is your council actively looking for best practice (nationally and internationally) to inform decision-making? If there is an area in which your council considers its own practice to be exemplary, what active steps are you taking to share your learning and insights beyond your council?

- Does the council take active steps to encourage cross-team working within the council, and teams engaging with communities and other partner organisations directly?

- Does the council work proactively with partners in the public, private and voluntary sector around climate? Have local partners contributed to developing the council's net zero plans?

- Does the council seek to engage local businesses on net zero plans and emissions reduction strategies? Do local economic development plans have a focus on local industries and employers who will be affected by the transition to net zero? Is there a focus on local workforce development and accessing skills for a future carbon neutral economy?

The three new roles for councils, as mobilisers, facilitators and convenors, identified in this section are based on evidence emerging from existing practice. The challenge to maximise their impact in practice is twofold. Firstly, as this section has focussed on, it will be imperative to mainstream these roles into how councils operate culturally and day-to-day. These roles need to move beyond the actions of a few pioneering places and become more embedded in how local government uses its role to work alongside communities to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Building on a wider approach to ensuring the hard levers

councils possess are geared towards reaching net zero, these new roles have great potential to shift how councils and communities recast their relationship fit for the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Secondly, there needs to be change at the national level to understand, respect and encourage. Effective local action on climate change will require significant shifts in the mindset and practice of central government, recognising that net zero isn't something that can simply be mandated from Westminster. Achieving our national climate goals cannot be done without giving communities themselves the tools and resource to take meaningful action and shift practice and behaviours. The statecraft required for this is more sophisticated than setting targets for councils to meet or introducing a new ringfenced funding stream focussed on climate. Our national policy framework needs entirely recasting to pursue a much more radical form of devolution everywhere, explicitly aligned with climate goals. The next section will explore this second challenge in more detail.

“Effective local action on climate change will require significant shifts in the mindset and practice of central government, recognising that net zero isn't something that can simply be mandated from Westminster.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

> The shifts that will need to occur within our economy and society as we mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change cannot be mandated from on high. They will need to be encouraged, negotiated and collectively imagined at real, tangible and meaningful scales.

We are in a state of climate emergency. Taking a 'business as usual' approach is not sufficient to the scale of the transition required to reach a zero-carbon future. And yet change on this large scale requires a deft touch. The shifts that will need to occur within our economy and society as we mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change cannot be mandated from on high. They will need to be encouraged, negotiated and collectively imagined at real, tangible and meaningful scales.

As such, tackling climate change is not a policy issue: it is a governance challenge. We will need to ensure that people feel empowered rather than dislocated by the process of change, and so building legitimacy is imperative. The process of industrial shifts, with the impact on the labour market and need for reskilling, will need to be equitable. There is an opportunity to align this with measures to level up overall, but a real risk that without concerted efforts it could compound existing inequality.

This final section sets out a blueprint for making the required shifts across the piece: nationally and locally. The scale of the climate change challenge is such that all stakeholders will need to work very differently. Consequently, we propose reforms for all actors, including national government, local government, community groups and wider supporters of local action including businesses and third sector organisations. We set out a vision for a country in which a more empowered local level is able to mobilise, facilitate and convene action on climate change, with a national framework that supports and enables this, rather than undercuts it. We conclude with some recommendations for international bodies including the COP process, to recognise this galvanising potential of community power to tackle climate change.

The long term shift we need: A new devolved framework to reach net zero

There is a wealth of evidence and analysis which demonstrates how centralised the UK - especially England - is, in contrast to comparator countries.[176] This has direct consequences for regional inequalities because decisions about resource allocation are taken on a national level that do not factor in diverse local conditions and consequences, weakening their relevance and impact.

Like climate change, devolution to local areas has to date been seen as a policy issue – something overseen by a national government department and fitting within existing governance frameworks. This report has set out the impact that approaching climate change locally can have: being more responsive to the immediate circumstances of places, building legitimacy for action and pursuing the necessary measures to adapt, which will vary across localities. The case studies demonstrate how communities are already having impact: where activity to strengthen local bonds has pro-environment outcomes; where economic and climate goals can be aligned locally to sustainably level up; and how communities are capable of bringing together networks of stakeholders to build strong coalitions. The report has also identified how councils that reimagine their traditional delivery role and instead see communities as equals rather than just service users, can conceive of their impact in broader ways which mobilise, facilitate and convene powerful community action.

“A new, more fundamental approach to devolution would recognise that devolution isn’t an end in itself, but a means to achieving a more sustainable, resilient system of governance that is responsive to the demands of the climate crisis.

For this local action to reach its fullest potential, the national policy framework needs to be recalibrated to enable it. At present, it barely recognises it. A new, more fundamental approach to devolution would recognise that devolution isn’t an end in itself, but a means to achieving a more sustainable, resilient system of governance that is responsive to the demands of the climate crisis and capable of enabling the transition required to confront it. By aligning the two currently separate and siloed ‘policies’ of devolution and climate change into a deeper shift towards a more effective system of governance, we can become more capable of meeting the challenges of the 21st century.

176 For an excellent interrogation of this, see Raikes, L et al. (2019). ‘*Divided and Connected: Regional inequalities in the north, the UK and the developed world*’. IPPR. https://www.ippr.org/files/2019-11/sotn-2019.pdf

In order for a new devolved system of governance to effectively reach net zero, it must be driven by two core principles. One of these should be the concept of subsidiarity – the idea that decisions and actions are best made as close to citizens as possible. In this way the focus needs to be on communities, not institutions. Power devolved from national government would not stop at the town hall: it would be focussed on broadening active participation and deep engagement beyond traditional representative processes. This would build more legitimacy into the system and enable policymakers to work alongside communities as equals, bringing their expertise and insights to bear on difficult decisions and trade-offs. It would also mean that a big focus of activity is building capacity within communities to take on a leading role, state institutions shifting their stance to enabling rather than mandating.

The second principle guiding devolution to tackle climate change should be levelling up the country. The UK Government has a strongly stated ambition to level up communities, and has been clear that the mission is a cross-departmental endeavour. The levelling up agenda has political resonance and will need to make tangible progress for people in communities who feel decisions are made at a remove from them. There are signs the twin aims of empowering communities and improving the environment sit at the heart of the Government's emerging agenda. As Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Michael Gove has stated:

"[Levelling up]... Will mean empowering local government to make a bigger difference for good, allowing communities to take back control of their futures and creating greener and more beautiful places to live."[177]

Levelling up is an inherently place-based endeavour. The sense of dislocation and demise some communities feel is linked to the fabric of their locality, and the Government has explicitly identified the need enhance pride of place.[178] This inevitably leads to a focus on the local environment, taking measures such as making public spaces greener or improving air quality. There is certainly the potential for "quick wins" for what is currently a rather abstract concept to become tangible and

177 Rt Hon Michael Gove, Speech to Conservative Party Conference, 4 October 2021. Full transcript here: https://policymogul.com/monitor/key-updates/19230/michael-gove-s-speech-to-conservative-party-conference

178 Ibid.

real for people if their local neighbourhoods visibly improved. But we believe there is potential for the government to be bigger and bolder about anchoring the levelling up agenda in the target to reach net zero.

One big national strategy will miss the mark in different communities. We need a system of governance and resource allocation that enables multiple local responses to the different manifestations of climate adaptation.

The challenges of decarbonising could be an opportunity for levelling up, or a threat, depending on the extent to which communities are given the tools they need to minimise the fallout from the economic and social changes required to reach net zero. There is a real opportunity to match the goal of levelling up communities which have been left behind in previous industrial changes with the emergence of a green economy. But this will only happen if the focus is clearly on securing a just transition for all. In practice this means building responsive and active industrial, skills and employment strategies attuned to the circumstances of local economies. One big national strategy will miss the mark in different communities. We need a system of governance and resource allocation that enables multiple local responses to the different manifestations of climate adaptation.

Recommendation 1: Pursue an ambitious approach to devolution as the means to achieve our national commitment to net zero.

This would be designed to devolve powers and levers in order to better equip local areas to respond, build legitimacy and adapt to the challenges of climate change. This would include in areas such as infrastructure, economic strategy, employment and skills, backed up by devolved funding streams and new fiscal freedoms to ensure investment decisions can follow local commitment.

A programme of devolution in this way would be focussed beyond the town hall - communities themselves then need to be given the tools to manage the social and economic transition to net zero and to actively participate in shaping decisions that will directly affect them. The variable impact of the challenges of climate change and the regional inequality that already exists means that the two agendas – devolution and climate change – can no longer be viewed in isolation.

Recommendation 2: Commit to levelling up the country by achieving a just transition.

As the UK Government fleshes out what its ambition to level up the country means in practice, aligning this with the strategy for net zero should be a priority. The Net Zero Strategy[179] shows some recognition of the need to approach levelling up and a green transition together, but does not commit the tools or resource to local areas to make this rhetorical commitment meaningful in practice. Economic and climate goals can no longer be seen as separate, as we decarbonise our industries and make the necessary adaptations to the way we live. The Scottish Government has taken a first step by setting up a Just Transition Commission to support the production and monitoring of just transition plans co-designed and co-delivered by communities and wider society.[180] To ensure regional inequality is lessened rather than compounded, a devolved framework that is capable of matching policy and resource allocation to the different circumstances of places is crucial.

This deep shift towards a more devolved system of governance would be intended to be more capable of responding to the demands of different places and of bringing people on a journey towards net zero with minimal fallout. The approach we set out is ambitious and will not be achieved overnight. As part of the route to achieving this, there are several areas for recommendations that national government could pursue immediately, focussed on ensuring a consistent national approach and a more empowered local level.

Ensuring a consistent national approach and a more empowered local level

The National Audit Office recognises that delivering net zero in practice will require significant action on the part of local government.[181] Yet its recent report identified the ways in which aspects of the national

179 Build Back Greener', HM Government, (2021). https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1026655/net-zero-strategy.pdf

180 'Just Transition Commission', *Scottish Government*. https://www.gov.scot/groups/just-transition-commission/

181 'Achieving Net Zero'. *National Audit Office*, (2020). https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Achieving-net-zero.pdf

framework hold back this potential, including vagueness over local authorities' roles, diffuse accountabilities and piecemeal funding which is poor value for money. This all hampers the ability of local authorities to plan effectively for the long-term, build skills and capacity, and prioritise effort.[182]

"Councils have incomplete powers to take full control of local net-zero delivery.

These factors emerged strongly during research for this report, and deserve focus in turn. Firstly, there is a lack of clarity across national government over the role and recognition of local government in mitigating and adapting to climate change, and what their responsibilities are in terms of decarbonisation. Councils have incomplete powers to take full control of local net-zero delivery. This prevents work in local authorities being focussed and coordinated across different areas. It also hampers the ability of local actors to plan for the future, and to align local priorities with the overarching national net zero ambition. This overall lack of clarity can create an unhealthy 'parent-child'[183] relationship between central and local government. Local government officers in England feel that they work according to the whims of Whitehall, unable to get on with things for fear of changing priorities or misunderstood messaging. This further slows down the progress of local climate action, and prevents its impact from being everything that it could be.

Secondly, there is often a lack of coordination and consistency across government departments and bodies, particularly those under the purview of the UK Government. In practice, this means that different policies coming from different departments can cut across climate objectives. For example, the failure to address the social care crisis has enormous consequences for council budgets which are ever-more squeezed by rising costs, limiting the flexibility to invest in other areas. Some benign-sounding commitments such as the UK Government's ambition to build 300,000 homes a year are poorly aligned with net zero ambitions. Councils have weak planning powers to enforce carbon neutral buildings, and in many areas which don't have constrained supply, retrofitting existing housing stock is a greater priority.

Some national parliaments have taken steps to enshrine a focus on wellbeing in national policy, which creates a more consistent,

182 Ibid.
183 From interviews.

predictable framework focussed on sustainable outcomes. Wales has made good progress embedding environmental and sustainability considerations into all aspects of public policymaking through the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Act is focussed on improving social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being in Wales. It requires public bodies, including the Welsh Government and local authorities, to work in a more joined-up and collaborative manner and take into account the impact that a decision might have on people living in Wales in future.[184] This is creating the conditions for more long-term, preventative and joined up approaches to problems, working better both together and with people and communities.[185] For example, specifically on addressing climate change, Wales is adopting a 'team Wales' approach, with the Welsh Government and local public bodies working together in partnership to help achieve a net zero carbon public sector in Wales by 2030.[186]

A final barrier to local government working with communities to enhance their impact is the financial context in which councils are forced to operate. After over a decade of shrinking budgets as a result of austerity policy, and the costs associated with responding to the demands of a global pandemic, many councils are looking at significant budget shortfalls. Significant financial investment will be required in many areas, such as retrofitting housing stock, and in the current financial context for councils, taking the steps required is not realistic.

"The flow of money from the centre to the local is experienced on the ground as random, ad-hoc and unevenly distributed.

But the financial challenge relates not just to the overall insufficient sum of money invested locally, but to the way in which it is increasingly distributed. In recent years there has been a growth of different funding streams to councils in separate pots, each of which must be applied for separately and many are competitive between areas.[187] Scottish and Welsh councils face the added complication of applying to different funding programmes managed by different national governments (the Scottish or Welsh Government and the UK Government) operating in different policy contexts. As a consequence, the flow of money from

184 'Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act, 2015', *Gov Wales,* (2021). https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-06/well-being-of-future-generations-wales-act-2015-the-essentials-2021.pdf

185 https://www.futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/

186 https://gov.wales/team-wales-approach-tackle-climate-change

187 'Fragmented Funding', *Local Government Association*, (2020). https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/fragmented-funding-report

the centre to the local is experienced on the ground as random, ad-hoc and unevenly distributed.[188] This means that funding is given to the areas with the best capacity to apply for it, rather than being based on the principle of equity or need. So while some areas have made great strides on climate change, many more are further behind in their net-zero journey. Investment is following a self-reinforcing perception of 'competence' rather than actual need – a strategy that makes little sense if the goal is to achieve meaningful impact everywhere.

Even when funding is accessed, it is short term and attached to quantitatively measurable outputs.[189] This has two key negative effects. First, it prevents councils from being able to invest in the deep, systemic change that it is needed to actually deliver ambitious climate change goals – as it instead locks them into a cycle of eye-catching but surface-level one-off initiatives. Second, this approach means spending is highly regulated and constrained – local areas do not have the flexibility to commit investment where they identify it can have most impact, rather they must meet nationally determined priorities.

Central government's approach to funding local government in general, and for climate initiatives in particular, needs to change. We need to move away from a bid-based model that rewards those who have the capacity or knowledge to fill out forms correctly, and instead create a model that enables money to flow in a way that every area can predict, and plan for.

As part of this, funding allocations need to be much longer term, and incentivise the difficult work of reforming systems, rather than simply generating local headlines. This will necessarily mean adopting a broader and more holistic conception of what climate change work is – seeing it the round and in terms of how it interacts with other areas of policy. Flowing directly from this understanding, government policy in all UK nations needs to focus on ensuring national consistency around clear objectives and local empowerment to effectively meet them.

188 Consensus from interviews.

189 For more discussion of the problems that can come with this kind of approach, see Community Power: The Evidence, *New Local* (2021). https://www.newlocal.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Community-Power-The-Evidence.pdf

Recommendation 3: Clarify the role of local government in achieving net zero and a just transition.

National governments need to be clear about the role local government has in responding to climate change – both responding to mitigating the impact and brokering the necessary adaptations. The Net Zero Strategy has provided some direction but has not truly differentiated roles and responsibilities. Once this clarity is attained, an enabling national framework needs to commit the power and resources to local areas to fulfil these responsibilities.

Recommendation 4: Clarify the cross-government priority to achieve net zero and ensure policy from all government departments is assessed against this.

Local actors need consistency from national bodies, and the UK Government in particular, needs to recognise the challenges of operating in the context of sometimes contradictory messages from different departments. The UK Government and other national governments should learn from the example of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act in Wales, which has achieved a level of consistency that all public bodies, and the partners and communities they work with, can plan around.

Recommendation 5: Ensure sufficient, long-term funding for local areas, with full flexibility to commit resource according to local priorities, in the context of the national net-zero target.

To support effective devolution that genuinely creates the tools and mechanisms for communities to adapt to climate change, funding must meet two core principles: sufficiency and flexibility. This means national governments need to understand and respond to the level of resource required in local areas to meet the challenges of climate change. It then must enable full flexibility to commit that resource according to local priorities. Simply re-purposing existing funding earmarked for local areas such as the Levelling Up Fund or core council funding will not be sufficient. Government needs to increase the amount of funding locally overall, and rationalise the way it is distributed to be sufficient everywhere. Some big national priorities such as retrofitting both private and social housing stock will require significant investment from the Treasury, but local areas should be able to identify and meet specific priorities within that according to how best they can have impact. Such overall funding sufficiency and flexibility will mean that local government can develop new ways of working with communities, supporting their action with new forms of ownership and grant support, to make a bigger impact.

Recommendations for local government

In the context of a wider enabling national framework, there are a number of reforms for local government to consider, in order to effectively galvanise community power to tackle climate change. This report has identified three roles for councils: mobilisers, facilitators and convenors. These roles are part of a wider shift that local government, as 19th century institutions, often operating with 20th century mindsets, need to embody in order to be capable of tackling 21st century challenges. It has been increasingly recognised that the split between service deliverer and service user is outdated and unhelpful to working with communities.[190] It reflects paternalistic mindsets towards people on behalf of institutions inhabited by professionals – ignoring the expertise and insights communities possess. And it can lead to transactional relationships that are not capable of tackling complex, deep rooted problems that require trust and behaviour change.

190 See Lent, A and Studdert, J (2019) *The Community Paradigm*. New Local. https://www.newlocal.org.uk/publications/the-community-paradigm/

Fulfilling the potential of the mobilising, facilitating and convening roles will involve councils working with communities as equals. Given that responding to climate change effectively will reach into many aspects of personal behaviour and everyday life, effective adaptation is not something that can be done to people, it must be done with their full participation. In the context of a national framework that recognises and incentivises a more empowered local level, councils must focus on how to fully leverage the insights and expertise of their communities for more sustainable impact. We identify a number of areas of focus in this regard.

Councils should recognise the climate change challenge as an opportunity for a new democratic relationship with people. Rising to the challenge is beyond the ability of any one single individual or institution, and so by definition will require open, ongoing dialogue, trust and negotiation along the transition to different ways of living and working. Where this can feel monumental and overwhelming to individuals, local government has an opportunity to support communities to navigate this path and make incremental yet real steps. But it cannot do this using traditional behaviours and old ways of working that expect to work on behalf of people rather than alongside them.

Many councils have recognised that deliberation can be a powerful tool, embarking on citizens' assemblies or juries with a climate focus. These can be good opportunities to create space for people to consider the evidence, assess the trade-offs and reach consensus on the ways ahead. Indeed, many have come up with much more radical agendas for action than national or local policy currently envisages.[191] Yet too often, these processes have been used by councils as a one-off, time-limited exercise that is separate to the wider working of the council. In addition, there can be scepticism on the part of elected members who can view such deliberative exercises as a challenge to their status as elected to represent the views of their constituents.

191 See for example the outcomes of the four UK-wide citizens juries held for the IPPR Environment and Justice Commission: https://www.ippr.org/environment-and-justice/commission-publications/

Mitigating the effects of climate change and adapting to the changes required for net zero will require a very different local democratic interface with people. We believe local government is uniquely placed to lead these conversations and build this trust, but it has to be based on more open and active ongoing democratic relationships with people. This means more opportunities for participation in decision-making and moving beyond deliberation as an exercise to being more fully part of how councils operate, enabling deeper forms of participation such as co-production. Communities need to be involved in every aspect of climate change policy, from conception, to design, and then to delivery. There are particular opportunities to reach groups traditionally more alienated from representative democratic processes. For example, the evidence shows that young people are more motivated by the climate crisis than other age categories.[192] Since this is a cohort that traditionally gets involved less in formal democratic processes such as voting or consultations, there is an opportunity for councils to more creatively engage with them in ways which increase their efficacy.

Councils should seek to incorporate participation into their daily business on a new scale, to bring people from every background into the process of climate change policy making, and to allow them to shape the changes that are inevitably coming for all of us. This will require building systems and processes that actively seek the involvement of both residents and local community and voluntary sector groups who can act as interlocuters between people on the ground and decision makers in councils. This might in practice mean setting up new democratic infrastructure, for example permanent citizen's assemblies, backed up by resource to make consensually agreed decisions meaningful.[193]

192 Data from Eden Project Communities, 2021. https://www.publicsectorexecutive.com/articles/newham-council-launches-countrys-first-permanent-citizens-assembly#:~:text=July%2012th%202021-,Newham%20Council%20launches%20country's%20first%20permanent%20Citizens'%20Assembly,'beacon%20of%20democratic%20participation

193 Cromar, C. (2021). 'Newham Council launches country's first permanent Citizens' Assembly'. *Public Sector Executive*. https://www.publicsectorexecutive.com/articles/newham-council-launches-countrys-first-permanent-citizens-assembly#:~:text=July%2012th%202021-,Newham%20Council%20launches%20country's%20first%20permanent%20Citizens'%20Assembly,'beacon%20of%20democratic%20participation

Recommendation 6: Recognise that climate change is an opportunity to create new democratic relationships with people.

Councils should build in deliberation, participation and co-production as part of their core business, providing routes for people to engage on a deeper level in action to tackle the climate crises. This should lead to experimentation with new tools for communities to develop ownership, more directly commission services and develop capacity to address climate change over the long term. As councils realise the full potential of influencing roles with communities, focussed on mobilising, facilitating and convening, taking defined actions to move away from the traditional service provider-user spilt and working with people as equals is crucial.

Recommendation 7: Understand the different starting points of different communities and offer a range of routes to participation that meet this range.

Some communities are highly mobilised already and may require light touch support or the contribution of an asset to progress their ambitions. Other communities may benefit more from a more mobilising stance, in which work needs to be done to support activity to get off the ground. How councils shift in practice between facilitating, mobilising and convening roles depends on a rich understanding of their different communities – what the motivating issues are and where the latent energy lies.

In order to effectively fulfil this more energetic and open external role, some shifts are required within councils in order to bring their full organisational heft to bear on the challenge of climate change. There is a widely identified tendency within councils to see climate change (and environmental issues more broadly) as a discrete concern, occupying

a separate silo to wider council business. Yet reaching the net zero goal is too big an issue for this narrow approach to be sustainable. As we set out earlier in this section in relation to national government – climate change is not a policy issue, nor is it a specific delivery area. As such it cuts to the core of governance and has implications for every service function. Councils need to take not just a whole council, but a whole borough approach to respond to the range of challenges mitigation and adaptation will mean for communities.

In practice, shifting climate change outside of siloes means mainstreaming a 'climate in all areas' approach.[194] Just as people in all parts of local government take decisions mindful of budgetary constraints, we must move to everyone in local government being constantly aware of environmental constraints, and the effects that their decisions have on local and national net zero strategies. This is a massive cultural change, but one that can be driven by simple changes to working practices. For example, some councils are already creating tools that allow people in all policy areas to environmentally 'cost' their ideas.[195] This can greatly change people's mindsets, as can small fixes such as changing the procedures around formal submissions to cabinet to ensure that environmental concerns are foregrounded.[196]

Beyond this broad culture and practice shift, and in the context of greater funding sufficiency, councils will need to develop a better understanding of their carbon footprint. Without this, it will not be possible to measure progress towards net zero. There is evidence that despite widespread climate pledges, many councils do not have an understanding of emissions from council-owned buildings.[197] Councils need to understand this baseline, and use effective data and intelligence to understand a wider picture throughout their services, housing stock and wider infrastructure across the borough. This needs to then inform ambitious future strategy towards net zero and real time action meeting milestones towards achieving the overall target.

194 From interviews.
195 From interviews.
196 From interviews.
197 Dudman, J. (2020). 'English councils set to miss carbon emissions targets'. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/jan/27/english-councils-set-to-miss-carbon-emission-targets

Recommendation 8: Adopt a whole borough approach to tackling the climate crisis.

Climate change can no longer be seen as a concern specific to policy, service delivery area, or even just the council. It needs to be everyone's responsibility, underpinning council strategy and relationships with partners and the community.

Recommendation 9: Develop a clear understanding of council and borough-wide emissions profiles to inform policies.

This baseline should be used to assess progress towards net zero ambitions and recalibrate policy to meet targets.

Recommendations for community groups

The focus of recommendations thus far has been on public bodies with statutory responsibilities. However, as we have argued in other sections in this report – such bodies are not able to deliver on their own all the local climate work that will be necessary to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Everyone will have a part to play.

In this spirit, this section considers the role of community groups in responding effectively to climate change, and offers advice on best practice.

A key advantage to community-based action is that it brings an inherent legitimacy, as initiatives emerge from community concerns rather than being imposed by a public body or large organisation.[198] Indeed, the

198 Recommendations for community groups are drawn in part from an analysis of the publicly available case study database of community climate change initiatives held by Carbon Copy, an organisation that aims to "inspire more individuals to take collective action where they live to address the environment and climate crisis".

benefit community groups then bring to the table when working with such organisations is linked to their ability to represent the specific priorities and perspectives of people at a hyper-local with great authenticity.

To bolster this, and ensure that community groups are as representative and inclusive as possible, they must make active, ongoing efforts to reach out to and hear the views of all corners of their community.

No matter how well networked a community group may think it is within its community, there is always more out there. If a group makes itself truly accessible, people who were unknown to the core members will emerge, and bring with them new skills and ideas that can shape and improve local climate change focussed projects. Taking such an approach to being constantly open and accessible will also mean that communities can keep bringing new voices in even as the wider landscape changes.

Recommendation 10: Ensure the wider community is both represented and heard.

Active, outward-facing processes of engagement and routes to participation enable a diversity of perspectives to be involved and shape the activity. This can both increase people's own sense of influence which is personally motivating, and it ensures that as a collective the group reflects the community it is part of, increasing its legitimacy.

When communities come together, a natural starting point is to focus on the skills they have and the issues confronting their community, and they can grow organically from that point. As the experience of Ambition Lawrence Weston has demonstrated (see case study on page 47), general community development can lead to specific carbon reduction activity because, often, wellbeing and sustainability goals are aligned.

Different communities may have different starting points especially on an issue like climate change. There is evidence to suggest that areas where there are higher levels of social cohesion, residential satisfaction and/or place identification, people are more concerned with protecting

the local environment.[199] But this doesn't mean that areas with less social cohesion, satisfaction or identification wouldn't want to improve their environment, just that the starting point for galvanising action might not be climate-specific. The route to mobilising people might be less abstract and more anchored in everyday concerns around quality of life.

Recommendation 11: Start with what matters to your community most and see where it leads.

Climate action doesn't need to begin with a discussion about climate. Instead, it can start 'where people are', establish itself, and build outwards from that point.

Once a group has identified what it needs to achieve its goals, it can attempt to fill these gaps by seeking out strategic partnerships. Building coalitions bringing in other organisations linked to the locality, such as local public bodies including councils, businesses and the local third sector, can be a powerful way of building reach and impact. Partnerships should be formed around shared goals, and should be selected to fulfil defined needs and mutual value added. For example, working with local businesses who have a stake in a thriving local area might be a good way of attracting resource or promoting opportunities to participate. Working with the council might be a good way of plugging into wider local networks and assets. The key is to be openminded and prepared to seek alliances on a pragmatic basis.

Groups may also wish to think about forming partnerships with other community groups and more formal voluntary sector organisations. By working with the wider community sector, and by building the social networks that underpin community activism, there is potential for those interested in local climate action to gain greater reach and impact.

199 Uzell, D et al. (2002). 'Place identification, social cohesion and environmental sustainability'. *Environment and Behaviour*, 35(1), 26-53. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0013916502034001003

Recommendation 12: Proactively build local networks to grow and sustain community-led action on climate change.

Bringing together diverse groups of people across the community, local businesses and the local third sector can promote goals more widely and deepen impact. It also means that when working with public bodies, community groups with a wide reach are able to demonstrate broad legitimacy and a wide pool of advocates, increasing their community power in the broadest sense.

Recommendations for other supporters of local action

Beyond communities and local government, there are other actors who have a role to play in terms of bringing about local climate action. Two key actors are businesses and third sector organisations who often have strong community roots and can play a proactive role in supporting local action.

Increasingly, many businesses are considering the ways in which their actions impact the places and communities they operate within. For smaller, independent businesses, this tends to be a fairly uncomplicated process. Many recognise they have a direct stake in a thriving local area. They are reliant on local people to employ and be customers, which creates a natural insight into local concerns, and a vested interest in being seen to address them. Similarly, due to the ways in which such businesses are 'rooted' in their place, they will have a certain understanding of local environmental issues, and the impact that wider local conditions are having on the people who live there.

For larger businesses, seeking impact can be a more complex process. Larger private sector companies are increasingly aiming to be 'purpose-led', and are doing this through the prism of 'ESG' – meaning environmental, social and governance. This is laudable, and represents an improvement on the kinds of 'corporate social responsibility' plans that dominated in the private sector until relatively recently.

However, issues still remain. Firstly, the separating out of environmental and social impacts, as we have argued throughout this report, is often counterproductive. The social concerns of local communities are often informed by environmental conditions, and likewise, local environments are built and determined by local social forces. Secondly, there is an issue of the 'social' in ESG often being much less developed than the rest of the agenda.

Recommendation 13: Businesses should scale up investment in community-led climate action and give equal importance to the 'E' and the 'S' in ESG (environmental, social and governance) practice.

If big business is serious about being purpose-led, it needs to do more. Regardless of other pressures in the market, larger companies need to increase the level of resource they commit to community-led climate action. This needs to be a mix of human and financial resource, used to implement more sophisticated and better integrated approaches to environmental and social impact. These two things – the E and the S of ESG – are themselves mutually reinforcing and should be given equal weight.

A second significant group of local actors we have identified during this research are third sector organisations. Although part of the wider umbrella category of the "voluntary and community sector", these are often larger organisations with significant resource and reach, but who operate locally to support the development of local community infrastructure. Where communities organise together they can form groups and initiatives of many different kinds – but it is often third sector organisations that bring the resources, skills and knowledge needed to enhance and maximise impact. Fledgling community groups can be fragile, and third sector infrastructure organisations where they have strong existing local links can often play a critical role by acting as accountable bodies or providers of expert support that is responsive to specific needs.

In this report, we have seen, for example, the role that Local Trust have played in facilitating the work of the community in Ambition Lawrence Weston through the Big Local programme, where significant long-term resource of £1 million over 10 years has underpinned the capacity of the resident-led organisation realising the range of ambition in its community plan. The role of Groundwork was exemplified by the Communities Prepared initiative, which focusses on developing the knowledge, skills and confidence of volunteers to prepare for, respond to and recover from climate-related extreme weather events.

These third sector local infrastructure organisations act as supporters, mobilisers and boosters of organic community activity, and have the power to turn plans into realities. In addition to these capacity-building and support roles, there are some further distinct elements these bodies can add specifically to enhancing local action for environmental impact. Firstly, for some very small-scale local groups, they can bring greater diversity and representation to the initial community initiative, supporting broadening out to the wider community. Secondly, they can also play a crucial role in brokering the interests and ambitions of communities with the strategies and systems of local government and other statutory bodies.

> **International frameworks should deepen their commitment to local-level action, and community-led action in particular.**

Communities and councils can speak different languages, and sometimes there is a need for a locally trusted organisation to play a role that bridges the professional language of the public sector and the insights of communities. So this brokerage, representation and translation activity is often important in connecting and growing community power – helping councils understand 'who's out there' and how partnerships might be brought together.

Recommendation 14: Larger third sector organisations should ensure capacity-building is made available to community groups to help them grow and connect their climate-focussed activities.

Third sector infrastructure organisations should develop their capabilities to be able to provide effective and expert support on climate change, supporting the emerging energy within communities and addressing gaps in skills, knowledge or resource that may exist. This may include support with technical issues, impact measurement or ensuring the most widespread community engagement. Understanding this critical role within the wider local ecosystem also means being able to operate strategically and in partnership with the local public sector, including helping communities navigate and lobby for change in wider systems and processes.

By doing this, businesses will be able to engage with community concerns as they actually are, rather than separating them out. This is a particularly important thing to do when it comes to thinking about the challenge of climate change – because climate change is such a multifaceted problem. It is not a discrete concern, that can be reduced to a single metric – it is instead a phenomena that touches everything about our ways of life, including our ways of doing business.

Recommendations for international partners

We conclude this final section on recommendations by returning to the global level, and reflecting on how even at this scale, the role of community power could come into sharper focus as a convening sphere for action.

The local level does have a degree of international recognition in the context of climate change. Ever since the original Rio Earth Summit in

1992, the international framework for nations to tackle climate change has formally recognised local governments as 'essential partners for the global sustainability agenda'.[200] There is a formal body, the Local Governments and Municipal Authorities (LGMA) Constituency which has represented networks of local and regional governments at the processes under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) since the first COP in 1995. In practice, this means that COP gatherings include a focus on cities and regions and various initiatives are ongoing to support advocacy and mutual support on a cross-local government basis.

In the same spirit as the earlier recommendation on devolution, however, it is important to note that simply involving local government in proceedings is not the same as truly opening up the policy process and meaningfully harnessing the power of local action beyond formal institutions. This only occurs when power is shared with communities, and it is the key to forging the legitimacy, responsiveness and power over adaptation that we have argued can be associated with the local level.

Over the years climate change has progressed in the minds of many national publics from an abstract minority issue to a full-blown emergency, with life and death consequences. The COP needs to recognise this evolution and reflect how it is engaging communities generally in its processes, beyond formal governing institutions. The annual COP gathering, as the most visible manifestation of global action on climate change, does not particularly seek to be accessible to people and could to more to engage beyond VIPs and international leaders. Their agendas could be shaped to have broader appeal to everyday concerns and to increase the transparency of the talks.

200 https://www.cities-and-regions.org/

Recommendation 15: International frameworks should deepen their commitment to local-level action, and community-led action in particular.

This would involve the formal COP process on climate change strengthening the recognition of local and regional governance. Part of this could be a clear commitment to recognising and empowering local levels explicitly, as separate actors to national states, but without the active involvement of which national emissions targets are toothless. This would include recognition that local tiers are a democratic sphere capable of building and maintaining legitimacy with publics.

Recommendation 16: International frameworks for understanding and responding to climate change should seek to become more accessible, and appeal directly to communities.

This would involve the COP process formally recognising and platforming community-led actors and initiatives, not just governance institutions. Opening out the agenda in this way would make what is an abstract high level conference more meaningful to people and places on the frontline of the climate crisis. It would also shift the focus of high level scientific studies such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to produce material that is much more accessible to communities rather than only directed at narrow policy audiences.

Given they are capable of responding quicker to the demands of the crisis and the requirements of transition, the active participation of communities could encourage national governance bodies to move more quickly and radically than they might otherwise deem electorally possible.

CONCLUSION

This report has done three principal things. First, it has made the case for a policy response to climate change that is grounded in local communities and local places – explaining the advantages of work at this scale. Second, it has examined the key actors that operate at this level – namely: communities and councils – and provided case studies and analysis of effective practice. Finally, it has made a series of recommendations for across a range of levels which, if enacted, would allow for community-led, local climate action initiatives to become even more impactful.

The challenge of climate change becomes more acute by the day. The rising tide of protests and polling evidence to demonstrate the issue is rising up the political agenda[201] are the visible rumblings of a public not satisfied with the response of those in charge to the magnitude of the challenge. Yet knitting together this latent and growing appetite with the hard task of transition is an enormous task. We need to stop being overwhelmed by stretching international commitments and rhetorical national targets, and start making mitigation and adaptation real. Only by approaching these personal, social and economic concerns in a way that is meaningful will people be taken on the necessary journey.

201 https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/trackers/the-most-important-issues-facing-the-country

By conceiving of the challenge not as one single big one, but the culmination of lots of local contributions, we can begin to make progress. The latent commitment and pride of communities, so central to the levelling up agenda, can be a part of the solution and ensure the process of decarbonisation is equitable and empowering for all places. In this way, we can build resilience and sustainability into the future. For the biggest global challenge we'll ever face, the solution is local.

GROUNDWORK

Groundwork is a federation of charities mobilising practical community action on poverty and the environment across the UK.

We're passionate about creating a future where every neighbourhood is vibrant and green, every community is strong and able to shape its own destiny and no-one is held back by their background or circumstances.

To find out more, visit www.groundwork.org.uk

GROUNDWORK
CHANGING PLACES
CHANGING LIVES

GROSVENOR BRITAIN & IRELAND

Grosvenor Britain & Ireland creates and manages places where communities, business and nature thrive. We are part of a global property business that has been developing and managing land and property for over 340 years.

Our heartland is in London's West End, where we support 11,000 residents, c1,000 businesses and 60,000 workers every day. We also create and manage sustainable new neighbourhoods in London and across the South of England. We think long-term and give equal weight to the social and commercial impact of everything that we do.

To find out more, visit www.grosvenor.com/our-businesses/grosvenor-britain-ireland

GROSVENOR

EDEN PROJECT COMMUNITIES

The Eden Project is an educational charity and social enterprise. Our destinations and projects explore the interconnections between all living things and demonstrate the power of what people can do when they come together to protect the planet.

To tackle the greatest issues facing humanity, we need strong and resilient communities.

Through Eden Project Communities we bring people together to develop the skills and confidence to make positive change happen and build social capital for our collective future.

To find out more, visit www.edenprojectcommunities.com

CASE STUDY PHOTO CREDITS

Climate change leadership – Paris
Global Climate Action Summit, Nikki Ritcher Photography

Climate change adaptation – New York City
Ben Huff for Untapped Cities

Climate Change Participatory Budgeting – Lisbon
Paulo Evangelista on Unsplash

Sustainable energy community – Samsø, Denmark
David Huang on flickr

Eco-Streets –Groundwork Greater Manchester
Groundwork Greater Manchester

Green Jobs Fund – North Ayrshire
Councillor Joe Cullinane

Communities Prepared – Groundwork South, UK wide
Groundwork

Treesponsibility – Calderdale
www.treesponsibility.com

The Big Lunch – Eden Project, UK wide
www.edenprojectcommunities.com

Ambition Lawrence Weston – Bristol
New Local

One Planet Pioneers in Middlesbrough
Middlesbrough Environment City

Black and Green Ambassadors – Bristol
www.blackandgreenambassadors.co.uk

Repowering London – London
www.repowering.org.uk

Plastic Free Caerphilly – Caerphilly
Plastic Free Caerphilly on Facebook

Better Bankside – London
Better Bankside

Cambridgeshire Climate Emergency – Cambridgeshire
Cambridgeshire Climate Emergency

The Community Climate Action Fund in Bradford
The mirror pool, City Park, Bradford - © Phil Champion

Going Beyond Deliberation in Camden
Involve

Adapting the Levels app – Somerset
Apple App Store

Community Energy in Cornwall
Cornwall Council

A Community-Owned Solar Park in Oxford
Photo by Andreas Gücklhorn on Unsplash

Facilitating community climate action – Hampshire
Photo by Eldan Goldberg on flickr

The Liverpool City Region Climate Partnership
Photo by Ryan Warburton on Unsplash

Islington Sustainable Energy Partnership – London
Stephen McKay / Islington Town Hall

Green Doctor Energy Efficiency programme – Groundwork
Groundwork

Despite the ways in which we often think about it, climate change is an inherently local challenge. Its effects, be they extreme weather or ecosystem disruption, happen at small scales. Similarly, the activities that lead to emissions are unevenly distributed, meaning that transitioning to sustainable ways of life is going to mean different things in different places.

As such, we need to understand the local as a key level at which to combat climate change, and to understand that powerful actors at that level need to be made a big part of our response. Already, in many places, actors such as communities, councils and local anchor institutions are showing the impact that they can have in terms of curbing emissions and adapting to changing conditions. However, there is so much more they could do if they were properly resourced and empowered.

This report offers a road map to realising the full power of communities to tackle climate change.

Supported by:

eden project COMMUNITIES

GROSVENOR

GROUNDWORK CHANGING PLACES CHANGING LIVES