

# Climate Action Pioneers: weaving a new story

## Interim Report -Collation of Themes from interviews

### Executive Summary

'Climate Action Pioneers' is a project of the Scottish Communities Climate Action Network. Facing up to the climate crisis is a complex, dynamic, 'wicked' problem that no single sector can tackle alone. This short (14 page) report summarises some common themes that emerged through a series of conversations with individuals from a wide range of backgrounds and sectors across Scotland. It forms part of a larger project seeking to build mutual understanding of how the work of individual sectors fits into a larger whole, to build a shared purpose and to identify key leverage points for rapid and radical systems change as we start to weave a new story for Scotland.

The declaration of a Climate Emergency was welcomed as a first step in a more radical, transformational response and for the space it is opening up for new and different kinds of conversation about the interconnected challenges we face. However, interviewees emphasised the need to match words with rapid mobilisation of an appropriate level of resources, re-orientating the economy as necessary. A strongly emphasised common theme was the need for fresh economic thinking, clearly focussed on wellbeing and environmental regeneration. The need for government regulation, along with financial and tax systems and infrastructure that support long-term thinking and development of sustainable and more local, inclusive and circular economies that 'work for people' was emphasised. Clear leadership, a coherent approach and guarantees of ongoing demand and investment will also be necessary to ensure development of the necessary skills and supply chains, particularly for refurbishing our housing stock and public buildings.

There was strong criticism and frustration expressed with the planning system and the dominance of big developers and missed opportunities to design places that nurture community. There was frustration also with a food and land use system that fails to provide healthy nutritious food for all, with Scotland's extraordinarily distorted land ownership structure and with the lack of any truly local democracy. A need was expressed for many more people to have a stake in the land and to move rapidly to upwards of 30% tree cover. There was felt to be potential for multiple wins and to create a landscape which brings real public goods -whilst recognising that there could be a painful adjustment involved, for example in getting sheep off the hills.

A wide range of 22 ideas for leveraging transformational change were proposed with the clear understanding that interventions need to go to the heart of what drives the current system. Two leverage points that arose repeatedly were 1) the need to widen understanding and knowledge of the systemic nature of the climate and environmental crises through training for workforces across all sectors, together with up and re-skilling programmes and 2) recognition of, and investment in, community-led action to create empowered and resilient communities (of place and of interest). These ideas are explored in some detail in the main report.

The next step for this project will be a creative thinking and innovation retreat to encourage creative, collaborative thinking and relationship building. We will be looking for opportunities to develop new approaches, possibilities for collaborative work and the development of interventions that support system change.

# 1. Background

'Climate Action Pioneers' is a project of the Scottish Communities Climate Action Network<sup>1</sup>. Facing up to the climate crisis is a complex, dynamic, 'wicked' problem that no single sector can tackle alone. The project grew from our perceived need for a better understanding of the state of climate action in Scotland as a whole, to build trusting relationships across sectors and mutual understanding of priorities and aspirations, so that we all see our work in context - as part of a larger, more diverse and more powerful whole. By doing so, we anticipated that we should be in a much better position to, collectively, identify key leverage points for action that can 'change the story' to allow for the radical and rapid systems change we believe is essential.

We believe that this relational approach, with its emphasis on shared values, deepening connection and creative thinking, is unusual to find at a national level, although it is common in community contexts. It is a unique and much needed piece of the puzzle of how we respond effectively to climate change, for it is as people, with networks of relationships and connection to the places that we live in, that we will find the resources to drive and sustain effective climate action.

This report is a summary of the key findings, common ideas and themes that emerged during the first phase of the project between May and September 2019. Between seeing the need for this project, developing the idea and eventually securing funding in Spring 2019, we found ourselves in the midst of a rapidly changing landscape. With Extinction Rebellion's actions, the School Climate Strike movement, and the raised profile of Greta Thunberg in particular, the climate and ecological crises were suddenly mainstream news. The Scottish Government declared a Climate Emergency and set a target of net-zero by 2045. Many Scottish Local Authorities have also declared Climate Emergencies, some with a target to be net-zero by 2030. Many different groups and organisations including the 'Climate Emergency Response Group'<sup>2</sup>, the Royal Scottish Geographical Society<sup>3</sup> and Commonweal<sup>4</sup> have started developing and launching proposals for responding to the climate crisis.

## 1.1 Scope of interviews and range of interviewees

The first phase of this project involved searching out and meeting with a range of people from across different sectors for a series of one-to-one interviews. We were looking for people who have both a strong personal commitment to action and big ideas about how their sector can be as effective as possible in Scotland's rapid transformation (whatever the extent of their success to date).

We sought to have, confidential, in-depth conversations to explore personal motivations and concerns as well as the future they are working towards, the particular challenges facing

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.scottishcommunitiescan.org.uk>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/about-us/news/twelve-point-plan-tackle-scotlands-climate-emergency>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.rsgs.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=0b78fc0d-0713-4427-b93b-1e877eda7adb>

<sup>4</sup> <https://commonweal.scot/our-common-home>

their sector and key opportunities they see for leveraging rapid transformation to a net-zero future for Scotland. So far, in this phase, we have spoken with 28 people from the public and private sectors and from civil society and with a wide range of backgrounds and interests including in planning, democracy, economics, food and farming, forestry, education, health, ecology, resource use, housing and construction, energy, water and more. We have interspersed anonymised quotes from interviews (in italics) throughout this report.

## 2. Key findings, common ideas and themes

### 2.1 Climate Emergency Framing

Almost all our interviewees welcomed the framing of the climate crisis as an emergency. They welcomed the fact that the climate crisis is now front and centre of the agenda, that *'the voice of young people speaking with fear for their futures is creating a nexus right now'* and the sense that an awakening of public consciousness is creating an opportunity to *'knock on doors and be more challenging'*.

Even if nothing much has actually changed yet, they felt that declarations of an emergency do at least provide a first step in a more radical, transformational response to this issue, opening up space and providing opportunities for new and very different kinds of conversation. *'The landscape has changed from 'we must do this' to 'how do we do it?'*

However, there was also concern to emphasise that:

- this is not just a climate emergency - the climate crisis is intimately connected with other challenges including the critical loss of biodiversity
- most people are largely unaware of the scale of the challenge and haven't fully grasped the radical implications for our society and economy
- some people are trying to bring about change from within the existing system, and to retrofit that system, when actually it is that system itself that is the problem - so systems change is needed, not tweaks to behaviour
- declaring an emergency is meaningless unless matched with decisive action and with the mobilisation of very significant resources
- our situation is unlike a normal conception of an emergency -that a 'war footing' may have more resonance in terms of the need to re-orientate our economy around a common purpose and a common goal, for however long it takes
- we need a strong sense of Climate Justice and to ensure that in responding to climate emergency we don't marginalise or disenfranchise vulnerable people and communities.

It was also highlighted that, whilst we are at a bit of a tipping point in terms of awareness of the need for rapid emission reductions, there is much less awareness of the need for adaptation to cope with the consequences of climate change that is already inevitable.

## 2.2 Economic Systems Change

A key finding was the need for economic systems change, which appeared consistently across interviews. The imperative of moving away from a 'carbon economy' is opening up space for discussions around wealth and wellbeing. What is the economy actually for? Where are we actually trying to get to? How can we create a wider reimagining of society and economy and '*recognise that our 'common wealth' is actually our planet, and nothing else matters*'?

A theme that emerged in all conversations was of our current economic system and its growth imperative as a key driver of the climate crisis. There was a repeated sense that we are working from outdated economic thinking that sees nature as a resource to be plundered and which sees constant growth as necessary in order to create the revenues to redistribute. For example, '*We talk about sustainable, inclusive economic growth and that is really because we are lacking the language to talk about the fact that our economic models create all these inequalities, and all the rest of it..... there is a fundamental issue around the fact that these models aren't working.*'

Building from this, some felt Scotland's need to evidence it can sustain itself as an independent nation makes the Scottish Government particularly sensitive in seeking to demonstrate the strength of the Scottish economy. This insecurity was perceived by some to feed into a reluctance to engage with fresh economic thinking (such as Kate Raworth's Doughnut Economics<sup>5</sup> and Tim Jackson's Prosperity without Growth<sup>6</sup>) even whilst Government promotes the move from a linear to a circular economy. This creates a fundamental contradiction at the heart of Government: '*it has been argued that we can decouple growth from consumption of carbon and other primary resources. I don't think that is realistic. We have just outsourced our emissions.*'<sup>7</sup>

Further, as the need for growth is inbuilt to policy and governance the challenge of making changes in an economic system driven by market logic was noticeable in many interviews, as one participant noted: '*When change is left to the market, the market doesn't factor in climate change...this should be what Governments do*'. Food was described as currently being understood as a 'commodity' while the fact that the 'planning system is market driven' was stated plainly. In practice, this was seen to have real implications for change. Several interviewees noted that there are 'perverse incentives' in play at the moment which encourage a focus on the short term and which lock in fossil fuel dependence. Similarly, it was consistently noted that the industry and private sector, who are oriented towards profit, have no incentive to change what they are doing or to participate in any stakeholder work as there is no '*legal obligation for private sector to participate in processes*'. Finally, procurement was seen as an area with great potential for leveraging change so as to break the stranglehold of big business and open up opportunities for smaller more local businesses

<sup>5</sup> See: <https://www.kateraworth.com>

<sup>6</sup> See: <https://timjackson.org.uk/ecological-economics/pwg/>

<sup>7</sup> And by outsourcing our emissions, we are also driving modern slavery which is closely linked to environmental destruction (<https://www.antislaverycommissioner.co.uk/media/1241/fisheries-field-forests-factories.pdf>)

to participate -supporting the development of more localised and environmentally sustainable economies.

These views on the need for economic systems change go well beyond what may have been expected from interviews on responding to the climate emergency. It is critical to note that the framing of the problem informs the recommended actions. Whilst a focus on carbon and net-zero presented certain ways forward for some, for many others, the systemic relationship between climate and a wider extractive economy means responses need to go well beyond achieving net-zero and instead must '*go to the heart of what drives the system and keeps it in place*'. As such, a truly circular economy will need different financial and tax systems that support bringing materials back into circulation and maintaining their value as long as possible. This may require an increase in devolved powers. In addition, there is a need to reorient housing, food and planning systems so they '*work for people*'. Further still, some pointed to the potential of making wellbeing and 'Gross National Happiness' the primary purpose of Scotland's economy and to the transformative impact this could have.

As one participant noted: '*It's good to have some games where some people win but it's also good to have some games where everybody wins. We need to change the rules of the game so that everybody wins, and the planet wins. It's not impossible!*'

## **2.3 Land use, land ownership and Infrastructure**

There was much criticism of the current planning system and models of development. Interviewees highlighted examples of how the current market driven system and the dominance of big developers is making a mockery of local democracy, whilst new housing developments, focussed on numbers of houses, are locking in car dependence and missing opportunities for designing places that nurture community. *Communities can't even get to the first stage of realising a different sort of housing development because the mechanisms aren't in place to enable them to get hold of the land or the necessary expertise.*

In relation to built infrastructure, interviewees also expressed frustration with the emphasis on reducing upfront, capital costs. Life cycle costs of construction are not being considered, either in housing or in public buildings such as schools and hospitals, locking in future fossil fuel dependence and revenue costs -for both heating and cooling- whilst PFI contracts disempower end-users from engaging with emission reductions. '*Teachers have very little leverage to green their schools -as this is down to the facilities management companies who are just interested in maximising profit.*'

In terms of refurbishing existing housing stock, clear regulation and government support has successfully led to significant upgrading of Scotland's social housing. How to do the same across the private rented and owner-occupied sectors will be a huge challenge but will also provide a great opportunity to address emission reductions and fuel poverty. How to finance and support this transformation and how to ensure that the necessary skills and supply chains are in place will require clear leadership, a coherent approach and guarantees of ongoing demand. Whether to aim for slower, deeper retrofitting or faster, more superficial refurbishments is another question to be addressed.

Some basic infrastructure to support local circular economies will be needed in every community. There are already successful models, for example of tool libraries, repair cafés, reuse hubs etc., that could easily be adapted and replicated locally across Scotland. *'We all want broadband and don't keep reinventing how to access this, basic community scale infrastructure that is needed, dependent on the scale and context. Let's start building it, that's the thing about an emergency, we know what to do, let's start doing it. If we were on a war footing, we would just say we have to do this. Don't design another fund that requires innovative applications....we've done that and figured out what works -now let's do it!'*

There was criticism of our market driven food system that is manifestly failing to provide healthy nutritious food for all. The lack of processing and distribution infrastructure and skills was identified as a key barrier *'without having a 100% planned economy there are things we can do in a stable country like Scotland with putting in public or not-for-profit or cooperatively owned infrastructure to enable change to happen and to solve problems or meet needs that we know are going to be there for the long term.'*

Regarding land ownership and land use, attention was drawn to Scotland's extraordinarily distorted land ownership structure, our low level of tree-cover and the fact that a fifth of Scotland's land area is currently managed for grouse shooting. A need was expressed for:

- many more people to have a stake in the land
- moving rapidly to upwards of 30-45% tree cover (compared to less than 20% currently)

It was recognised that there could be a painful adjustment involved, particularly in reducing livestock numbers and the area managed as grassland, as well as in upland management and in getting sheep off the hills but that *'there's the potential for multiple wins and a landscape which brings real public goods.'*... *'But how will the benefits from this new bio-economy be shared, so this doesn't simply become a new version of the clearances?'*

## **2.4 Broken Politics**

There was a strong sense that our current political process is not fit for purpose in terms of being able to drive the changes at the scale and pace needed and *'bringing people with us'*. For some, the parochial and tribal nature of Scottish politics was highlighted while, for others, Westminster was a serious obstacle, with the unfolding of Brexit, in particular, seen to be a distraction from facing up to the Climate Emergency.

The challenge of the electoral cycle of 4-5 years was noted as lacking the coherence needed for what really needs to be a 10-year process whilst the culture of politics was also flagged as an issue -requiring avoidance of making mistakes in the public eye and expecting politicians to provide certainty.

There was repeated sense that, whilst national policy frameworks are essential, more opportunities may exist at regional and city level to make things happen quickly away from

the slower world of national policy. But there was concern about the current lack of truly local democracy in Scotland and about the need to widen representation in local politics.

### **3. Levers for Transformation**

*'Interventions from here must go beyond the shiny and superficial, they need to go to the heart of what drives the system and keeps it in place'*

All our interviewees were asked about their ideas for what could leverage transformational change. This brought out a wide range of ideas that are summarised below. Two key leverage points were proposed repeatedly across almost all interviews. We have therefore highlighted specific ideas around these two particular leverage points, 'Training and Continuing Professional Development' and 'Community and Collective Action', in more detail in sections 3.1 and 3.2.

#### **1. Leadership**

Articulation of a vision and bold and clear leadership is needed at all levels. We need to move from a directive to an enabling mindset -from a model of leader as hero to one of leader as facilitator. MSP's and other politicians and officials and leaders at all levels need to embed awareness of the climate emergency in everything that they do.

#### **2. Policy and Regulation**

All policy must be assessed in terms of its impact on carbon, biodiversity etc.. Financial incentives and regulation will be essential to force change in particular sectors and industries such as land, housing and construction, planning, and fossil fuels. But we also need to be aware that focussing on legislation is sometimes very slow.

#### **3. Scale**

We need local and institutional emission reduction targets and reporting mechanisms, not just national. Big change comes from lots of little changes.

#### **4. Divestment**

Divestment from fossil fuels by Government, Churches, universities, pension funds etc. is very important in leading the way and creating new norms and role models.

#### **5. Community Planning**

Make the Climate Emergency a statutory issue for Community Planning Partnerships

#### **6. Placemaking**

Include addressing the Climate Emergency as part of the Place Standard Tool and require a new Design Quality Standard for all new developments that factor in embodied energy, resource depletion, enhancing wellbeing, enhancing biodiversity and supporting a sense of community.

## **7. Land-use Planning**

Rebuild the planning system from the bottom up, empowering communities through local democratic reform and properly resourcing development of local 'place plans' to tie together land-use and community planning.

## **8. Building and Construction**

Require all new building to be to Passivhaus standard. Bold regulation for upgrading existing housing stock combined with clear, long-term support and incentives for property owners and supply chains.

## **9. Energy**

OFGEM needs a much stricter duty to reduce carbon emissions. Clear signals from Government (for example re. the future of the gas grid) are essential to enable industry to invest and to allow development of supply chains.

## **10. Land Prices**

Take measures to reduce our currently grossly inflated land prices -perhaps through a Land Value Tax.

## **11. Reforestation**

Strict enforcement of deer target numbers and financial support for natural regeneration of woodland -allow the trees to plant themselves. Incentivise farmers to plant trees and 'farm carbon'.

## **12. Public Health**

Recognise the Climate Crisis as a looming public health catastrophe. Make the prevention agenda paramount both in future proofing of public health infrastructure and in person-centred approaches to health care (including greenspace strategies).

## **13. Accounting**

Make it a statutory requirement that accountants must make an environmental risk assessment of the business part of their independent examination of company accounts/audits -likewise this should be part of due diligence for banks/investors.

Change practices around capital and revenue accounting for new building and infrastructure (eg for schools and NHS facilities) -oblige assessment of long-term, lifecycle cost to remove perverse incentive to only consider the short-term, upfront cost.

## **14. VAT**

Review VAT and other taxes to support, incentivise and encourage more circular economy businesses -including zero rating of building refurbishment work.

## **15. Procurement**

Change procurement priorities and rules (and support procurement managers) to ensure that procurement decisions support environmental aims and the development of local enterprise and economic resilience.

## **16. Finance and Investment**

Redesign our financial and investment systems to support and encourage circular, systems thinking. Support proper resourcing, and development of alternative funding mechanisms, for Local Authorities, including support for the use of Municipal Bonds to raise capital for investing in low-carbon infrastructure (Local New Green Deals) <sup>8</sup>.

Use model of the German KfW Bank to make low-cost finance available for housing refurbishment.

## **17. Scottish Funding Council**

Make consideration of environmental and social justice issues key criteria for funding of further and higher education and research.

## **18. Food**

Refocus the way we support farmers and farming, and rural areas more generally, to put the climate and ecological crises front and centre. Challenge the dominant narrative around the necessity of technological solutions to 'feed the world'.

## **19. Personal Resilience**

Support a culture change to normalise discussion of personal and emotional responses to the climate crisis (including in the workplace).

## **20. Education and Young People**

Recognise the importance of better preparing our young people for the challenges ahead. Support Local Authority Heads of Education to prioritise Learning for Sustainability in schools. In particular, support teachers to take a much more cross-curriculum approach to the early years of secondary education emphasising key skills for the future (Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, Creativity and Imagination, Citizenship, Digital Literacy, and Communication and Collaboration).

## **21. Training and Continuing Professional Development**

Widen understanding and knowledge of the systemic nature of the climate and environmental crises through training and CPD programmes. Upskill and re-skill workforces across sectors -land, forestry, farming, planning, building, energy, finance, education etc. See more detail in section 3.1 below.

## **22. Community and Collective Action**

Recognise and invest in community-led action to create empowered and resilient communities (of place and of interest). See more detail in section 3.2 below.

<sup>8</sup> <http://financeforcityleaders.unhabitat.org/handbook/part-2-designing-financial-products/chapter-7-green-municipal-bonds>

## 3.1 Training and Continuing Professional Development

All interviewees highlighted the urgent need for widening understanding and knowledge of the systemic nature of the climate and environmental crises and for upskilling and re-skilling workforces across sectors: land, forestry, farming, planning, building, energy, finance, education etc. The possibilities this would create for new opportunities to be tied to local economic regeneration were emphasised.

### 1. Schools and Teachers

Teachers don't currently have the skills, knowledge and confidence to realise the potential for delivering 'learning for sustainability' aspects of the 'curriculum for excellence' in ways that engage students and properly link different subject areas. They need resources and models to follow, CPD training and ongoing mentoring.

There are many opportunities being missed to better prepare students for a challenging future, to look at systems change and to bring in a human rights angle. There are particular opportunities in S1 and S2 when there is more flexibility. There is also still a need to overcome longstanding prejudice and assumptions prioritising academic over practical skills.

### 2. Design and Construction

Education and training of architects, construction professionals and tradespeople must prioritise addressing the Climate Crisis, through teaching and practical skills training in building physics, sustainable (passivhaus standard) construction and refurbishment methods.

### 3. Economics, Accountancy and Finance:

Education and CPD training for accountants, bankers, investment managers and grant funders in the climate crisis, systems thinking and circular economy. Rethink the teaching of economics.

### 4. Farmers and land managers

Introduce obligatory CPD training in the climate crisis, soils and regenerative agriculture for farmers as requirement for financial support for achieving social, economic and environmental outcomes.

Need for skills training in woodland management and natural regeneration for young people, for farmers and land managers -and for the development of appropriate tools/technology for small-scale forestry.

### 5. Community Change Agents:

Provide mentoring and support and skills development for community 'change agents' including skills in developing personal resilience. Build capacity and create new spaces in communities and to connect up groups within and across communities to change the narrative and facilitate development of local emergency response plans that tap into local knowledge and collective intelligence.

## **6. Local Authorities:**

Training and support needed for Local Authority Finance Officers, to be able to embrace new financing mechanisms such as Municipal Bonds, and for Procurement officials to ensure that they have the confidence and knowledge to be assertive in using procurement to support local economic and environmental goals.

## **7. General Public:**

Everyone needs to understand and recognise their own patterns of consumption and the radical shift that is needed. This will need to be framed to support understanding of the depth of change needed and the positive opportunities it could bring.

## **3.2 Community Scale and Role of Collective Action**

Almost all interviewees also emphasised the importance of collective and place-based action. A key question raised by interviewees was around *'how the top-down can create the conditions for an emergency response to happen from the bottom-up. How can the top-down be an enabler, tying into the community empowerment agenda?'*

As members of the Scottish Communities Climate Action Network, a volunteer-run organisation that exists specifically to provide a support network for community organisations, we were particularly interested in the insights of our interviewees around the role of community scale and collective action. We have collated direct quotes from the interviews into the six interlinked themes that emerged.

### **1. Communities at the heart of conscious cultural change**

Communities were widely seen as the places where climate action can get under people's skin and become normalised. The potential to draw on shared values and to base our motivation for action in our care for our families, neighbours and places was seen as a crucial element in the shift to a new, climate friendly, normal.

- *The heart of the challenge is to change passive consumers into active citizens.*
- *Working at the local scale is the best way to connect to people in their daily lives.*
- *Only so much we can do as individuals, we can do much more by working together - communities can take local control and ownership*
- *Communities are central to building individual resilience*
- *Key influencers (eg. Doctors, teachers, midwives, priests) can play a particular role in communities and can create a sea-change in public attitudes.*
- *I think communities have a particular authenticity in this conversation. The crucial thing is their influence on the 'social environment'. That whole idea around how we do things in our town, around local social norms and pride in place is quite a powerful influence still. So, if we can say that we are a zero-carbon town, then people get a sense of 'this is what we do'.*
- *Curriculum change will come through pressure from students. Perception that the students are really pushing for more and it is the energy from below that will influence curriculum.*

## **2. Placemaking**

There was a strong view that climate action could align with and add value to other initiatives aimed at making the places we live in better. The drivers of climate change also drive social inequality and a host of other environmental problems. Serious action on climate change needs to be at the system level and will address all of them at once.

- *A place-based approach makes it easier to engage and join up different stakeholders.*
- *Placemaking allows an emphasis on using resources effectively, enhancing wellbeing, enhancing biodiversity and supporting a sense of community.*
- *Places have a key-role in framing the debate -it needn't be about sacrifice, it is about better homes and stronger communities.*
- *Locally is the appropriate level to organise because it helps build community in a time of alienation and we will need that given the likely rocky road ahead.*
- *Rebuilding the planning system from the bottom up would allow it to become about creating 'good places'.*

## **3. Resourcing**

There was a recognition that community action on climate change has so far relied on huge levels of largely unacknowledged work by those who 'got' the climate issue early. The impact that this has made in terms of creating new infrastructure, piloting innovative techniques and helping to shift public perception should not be underestimated, but has been tiny in comparison to what is needed - and what could be possible - if such work was properly recognised and resourced. In the context of a climate emergency valuing, resourcing and creating the conditions for the expansion of such work needs to be prioritised.

- *Communities have a key role in providing locally trusted, door-to-door handholding and advice work for households. But this must be properly resourced so that it becomes part of the furniture rather than being reliant on ad-hoc project funding.*
- *Currently communities don't have access to the resources to do what they really want to do. We need to provide that resource and to subsidise services where necessary (as we do to Local Authorities).*
- *Government needs to have a better understanding of the role of communities.*

## **4. Innovation and transformation**

Communities were recognised as hotbeds of innovation, where new ideas can be developed and trialled. The relatable scale, level of commitment of activists and the fact that huge amounts of energy and goodwill can be generated very quickly when needed, were seen to make communities ideal places to experiment and share new ideas.

- *Local, pilot projects can demonstrate what works and can be rapidly adapted and replicated elsewhere. This can be transformative.*
- *They matter so much...building a community of practice, creating demonstration of alternatives and the difference and local impact that they make.*
- *Existing spaces are locked into a path dependency and difficult to change but where communities are creating new spaces there is scope for more flexibility and innovation*
- *Localised energy solutions have best hope of combining better energy practice with most efficient forms of generation and use.*

- *Community-led projects are showing a new way forward -but currently very dependent on fluke of right people being in the right place at the right time.*
- *Working at local scale can make environmental challenges much more manageable - and enables local solutions that tap into local knowledge.*
- *Local assemblies could provide a means of meshing wider strategic knowledge with local in-depth knowledge to get appropriate solutions.*
- *If you paired municipal bonds up with community mobilisation around the delivery of them or adding value to them that could be really, really powerful and transformative but we need to get those mechanisms right.*

## **5. Inspiration**

The positive energy and inspiration that has been built over many years of community climate action was seen as a real source of motivation. Building on this, supporting more innovation and finding appealing ways to spread the ideas that work, were seen as important factors in creating and maintaining a head of steam on the national level.

- *They can make an alternative vision visible.*
- *They can demonstrate that young people needn't follow mainstream, 'business as usual' career paths.*
- *Positivity, as demonstrated by many community energy projects can be infectious ... it feels like we are on the cusp of creating a real transformation in Scotland. The next two or three years will be really pivotal in that.*

## **6. Structural Change**

Communities were seen as pivotal in getting wider buy-in to the more radical action and structural changes that are necessary. Opinion was somewhat divided on whether communities should drive the pressure for such change, or whether they would provide the necessary changes in awareness of what's needed to allow for such change. In reality there's a complex dynamic between each of these, which we can influence with perseverance, goodwill, the courage to insist that entrenched patterns need to change and the inspirational, pre-figurative work that demonstrates the new reality.

- *Public demand will be a key driver of changing business models.*
- *You won't get systems change without people challenging the political systems behind that.*
- *Demonstrating public support is crucial to keep pressure on politicians.*
- *They start to show to politicians that it matters; they have a signalling role.*
- *People in communities are going to start demanding this. Political system/government is playing catch-up. I think that is where the power will come from -from a groundswell of demand from communities. But that is inconsistent across communities -there is a question of how can that be spread to all communities?*
- *Local action mustn't block the work that needs to happen at societal and structural level, whilst business as usual goes on. Community initiatives need to connect horizontally and vertically.*
- *Community initiatives are incremental steps but they need to be radically incremental. They need to do more than help people cope with the current system, they need to be linked to wider transformation.*
- *Making sure that we get community involvement and engagement right will be really important. What we need to do must be done with permission from the public... we*

*don't have the democratic mechanisms in place. The public need to accept radical action done with public money...it has to be accountable...but we also need people involved in the delivery of them because that scale and that ambition demands it.*

## 4. Conclusion

We are very grateful to those we interviewed, who were without exception enthusiastic to speak to us and generous with their time and expertise. We experienced a real openness to wide ranging discussion of the root causes of climate change, its continuing drivers and the interventions that could make the most difference, both within the sectors of those we were talking to and across society. We were surprised to find how much common ground emerged across such a wide range of interviewees from different backgrounds and sectors.

So, what do we, as a small group of community activists within a volunteer run network, have to offer to the national level of action on climate change? Our contribution is to cross-reference attempts to address climate change across many sectors with our shared experience of living and of taking action in communities of place. We have been creating a container of informal but focused conversations which look in two directions: towards the macro - at the wider context for the climate emergency and towards the micro - at the everyday places where we live and work which is where we will personally experience the change that's necessary. This aims to ground wider theories of change in the human implications of how change will look in our day to day lives, breaking down siloed thinking and contributing to the sense of shared endeavour needed to deal with this crisis.

The next step for this project will be to hold a creative thinking and innovation retreat in January 2020. This process is emergent and it would be premature to speculate on what will come out of it, but we will be looking to create a context for relationship building, to encourage creative thinking that can open up opportunities to develop new approaches, possibilities for collaborative work and the development of interventions that support system change.

This report will be circulated to those involved in the interviews and we'll be seeking to publish it in the near future as a contribution to the national and international conversation on how to deal with this defining issue of our times.

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Scottish Communities Climate Action Network

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