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Climate engagement

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Blackpool community conversation 2024

The project

As part of innovate UK's net zero living programme, Blackpool Council worked with Involve, Forum for the Future, Ipsos, and Quantum Strategy and Technology to deliver a community conversation process.

This brought together 15 residents, who were broadly reflective of Blackpool's population, to discuss how Blackpool should adapt to climate change whilst making the town a better place to live.

The group met for four sessions in October and November 2024. They heard from expert speakers on climate change, the co-benefits of climate action, and received training on how to be 'conversation starters' in their communities.

They were then tasked with having conversations with members of their community to help them respond to the question:

"What can we all do to prepare for the impacts of climate change, whilst making our town a better place to live?"

Between the 15 participants, they completed 420 hours of learning and had 53 conversations within their communities. In the final sessions, the group discussed what they had found from their conversations.

The group then agreed on, and collaboratively wrote a 2035 vision for Blackpool and a set of recommendations responding to the question. The 9 recommendations covered five key themes- housing, transport, greening, community engagement, and decision making.

Sessions 1 and 2

The first two sessions were held on a Friday evening and the full following day in October 2024. In the first session, Scott Butterfield, Blackpool Council's strategy and climate lead, presented what the council is already doing to address the climate emergency. Louise Marix Evans, director of Quantum Strategy and Technology, spoke to the group about the benefits of taking action on climate change.

In the second session, Robert Snape, technical lead at Climate Proofed, gave an introduction to climate change and the impacts locally. Participants then worked with the facilitators from Involve to practice their 'conversations', co-designing the script and role playing the conversations.

Sessions 3 and 4

Three weeks after the first session, the group reconvened for the final two sessions which were held across two full days in November 2024. The final two sessions were focused on discussing what they had found out from their conversations in the community.

The group also heard from two further speakers on topics the group had requested. They heard from Tom Burditt, CEO of Lancashire Wildlife Trust who spoke on agriculture, nature, and wildlife. Stephen Dunstan, climate lead at Blackpool Coastal Housing, also presented on improving social housing in a changing climate.

At the end of session 3, participants provided the council with a list of suggested actions for feedback on. Blackpool Council provided feedback to those actions at the final session, before the group deliberated and agreed upon a final vision and set of recommendations for the council to consider.

After the process

Involve produced a [report](#) which gives an overview of the project and contains the vision and recommendations made by the residents.

Blackpool Council committed to formally responding to each of the recommendations. The council's response can be found [here](#).

This response was presented to the climate change and environment scrutiny committee in March 2025 [Scrutiny Report.pdf](#). The response was presented by the climate team and a representative from Involve, as well as two residents from the community conversation process.

Climate assembly

The project

Following Blackpool Council's climate emergency declaration in June 2019, a climate assembly was held in Blackpool in January and February 2021.

We wanted to make sure that the local community got to have a real say in decisions and were involved in shaping climate projects that were right for them.

TPXimpact (formerly FutureGov) ran the assembly for us in Blackpool. This ensured the process was independent.

The assembly brought together 40 residents, who were broadly reflective of Blackpool's population in terms of things like age and gender. They group met online over 4 sessions to hear from experts and discuss how Blackpool as a town should address the climate emergency.

The assembly agreed upon a list of principles to guide the response to climate change, a set of eight priority issues, and a set of recommendations for the council to consider to help Blackpool achieve net zero emissions by 2030.

You can read more about the process [here](#)

After the assembly

TPXimpact produced a [final report](#) which gives an overview of the project, and sets out the recommendations made by the assembly.

Blackpool Council formally responded to the [recommendations](#), which were presented to a scrutiny committee in June 2021.

The recommendations made by the assembly supported the development of the [Blackpool climate emergency action plan](#). This plan sets out how the council and the town will address the climate emergency. Many of the actions in the plan were recommended by the climate assembly.

Assembly sessions

You can find out what happened during the climate assembly sessions, which took place in January and February 2021.

Four sessions took place, which included expert guest speakers and discussion about the climate emergency in Blackpool.

View the details from each session below, follow our social media pages and [sign up for email updates](#).

Session 1

Session 1 was focused on introductions, getting participants comfortable with the assembly format, introducing members to the idea of a climate emergency, hearing about solutions, and creating a long list of principles to guide the assembly's recommendations.

The session began with an introduction and welcome from Councillor Jim Hobson, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change for Blackpool Council, who explained why Blackpool Council had declared a climate emergency and commissioned an assembly. We then heard from Eva, the moderator, who went through ground rules.

John Blackledge, Director of Community and Environmental Services at Blackpool Council talked about existing plans in place to reduce emissions in Blackpool. Two young people from Junior Park Rangers, Rosa and Julianne, then gave a young person's perspective on

hopes for the assemblies and future action.

Participants were then split into 9 small groups hosted by a facilitator. The participants introduced themselves and explained the reasons they'd volunteered to take part in the assembly.

After a short break, the participants heard from five speakers who explained the areas of focus that will have the biggest impact on reducing emissions in Blackpool. The speakers were:

- Polly Billington -[UK 100](#)
- Rob Hatcher -[Carbon Trust](#)
- Jonathan Atkinson -[Carbon Co-op](#)
- Xavier Brice -[Sustrans](#)
- Samia Robbins -[Arup](#)

Following the presentations, the group participated in a short question & answer session with the guest speakers.

Finally, participants joined small group discussions where the facilitators supported them through a discussion on the principles that will guide the assembly's recommendations. At the end of the sessions, there was a brief report-back from several facilitators about their group's discussions. After a short introduction into next week's session, the group adjourned for the evening.

Session 2

The aim of session 2 was to recap on the presentations from session 1, review the draft principles, understand how local government, businesses, and residents can take action to combat climate change, and develop a long list of issues that participants think the assembly should focus on.

The session began with a welcome from the moderator, who then reminded participants of the ground rules, and summarised the highlights from the guest speakers who presented in session 1. The participants were split into 8 groups, each led by a facilitator. In the previous session, groups had discussed principles to help guide the recommendations the assembly will make. These results had been summarised and the common principles that were decided were presented. Each group reviewed the principles and discussed if they agreed with them, which ones were most important to them, and why they matter.

The assembly principles shared in this session were as follows. Recommendations from the assembly should:

- Focus on future generations
- Be realistic and fair
- Be locally focused
- Be community-driven
- Be transparent and accountable
- Be bold and ambitious
- Hold organisations to account

Following this, the participants heard from two guest speakers.

[Cornwall Council](#)

First was Peter Lefort, who is the Carbon Neutral Cornwall Partnerships Manager at Cornwall council, who spoke about decision-making tools used by Cornwall council.

[Camden Climate Assembly](#)

The assembly then heard from Beverly Rich, a member of the Camden Climate Assembly, who spoke about her experience in the assembly and her continued involvement in climate action. After their presentations, participants were given the opportunity to ask questions of the guest speakers.

After a short break, participants went back into their small groups. Each group heard from four different guest speakers where they had time to learn about what businesses and organisations in Blackpool are doing to address the climate emergency. Participants heard from:

- Rob Gomm -[Upside Down Cafe](#)
- John Butler -[Premier Cabs](#)
- James Carney -[Blackpool Transport](#)
- John Child -[Sandcastle Water Park](#)

- Debbs Lancelott & Emma Threlfall -[Houndshill Shopping Centre](#)
- Jonathan Hutchinson -[Grange Community Farm](#)
- Rebecca Trevalyan -[Library of Things](#)

The speakers introduced themselves, explained how they were taking action, and then engaged in a conversation with the participants who had the opportunity to ask them questions.

Finally, in small groups the participants discussed the issues they would like the assembly to address through their recommendations. These issues were collated into a long list, which will be used to create recommendations in sessions 3 and 4.

Session 3

The aim of this session was to recap on the presentations and discussions from session 2, review the compiled list of issues participants said the assembly should focus on, agree on the issues the assembly wants to prioritise, and start identifying problems and formulating recommendations.

The assembly kicked off with the moderator welcoming participants, going through the ground rules again, and explaining the aim and objectives of the session. The moderator then did a brief recap of the content from the presentations and discussion groups from session two.

Following this, participants went into their breakout groups. The facilitator shared the list of issues the participants had said the assembly should focus on in session two. Groups were given time to identify any gaps and then had a discussion about what the gaps were. Facilitators fed back the gaps back to the wider group.

Each break out group then reviewed the updated list of issues and were given time to think about the five or six priorities they would like the assembly to focus on and make their decisions in line with the assembly's principles. Each participant voted on their priorities, with the facilitators reporting their group's overall results to the wider group. The issues were:

- How homes are heated and powered
- Reducing emissions from commercial business and industry
- Reducing emissions from transport
- Promoting active travel - cycling and walking
- Using council power and influence on design and promote low carbon living
- Generating and buying clean energy
- Protecting green spaces, nature, and biodiversity
- Reducing waste
- Influencing central government
- Supporting community action
- Networking and collaboration

The project team reviewed priorities and gave each breakout group one or two issues to focus on. The group discussed and agreed on the problems related to the issues, causes of the problems, what has been done to combat them already, and began generating ideas for solutions. Finally, each facilitator reported back on their group's ideas to the wider group.

Session 4

The aim of this session was to give participants the opportunity to finalise the assembly's recommendations, communicate the report writing process, thank the participants for taking part, and letting them know how they can stay in touch on Blackpool Council's climate action following the assembly.

The session began with the moderator explaining the aim and objectives of the session, followed by a recap of previous sessions. The Assembly then heard from two young people, who took part in the Blackpool Youth Assembly, a parallel process for young people aged 11-18, who presented their recommendations.

The participants then went into their original breakout groups and discussed what they felt about the young people's presentations and how their views and opinions should influence this assembly's recommendations.

Following this the participants reviewed the list and descriptions of the issues the assembly was focusing on and made any necessary adjustments. Relevant information from the presentations had been pulled together, and the facilitator also did a recap of that

information to ensure participants were able to make well-informed decisions.

The issues the climate assembly focused on were:

- Education and awareness
- Generating and buying clean energy
- Reducing waste across the system
- Community action
- Transport
- Homes
- Network building and influencing national government
- Biodiversity

After this exercise participants were then given the opportunity to contribute to 3 other issues that they were passionate about. The facilitators stayed in the same rooms, focusing on the same issues, but participants were able to move to 3 different rooms of their choice, every 15 minutes.

Participants then went back into their original groups, and refined the recommendations they wished to make, by agreeing with the group which one to take forwards and then refining them to state who the recommendation was for and a timeline for how long it should take to implement.

Finally, the Assembly came back together, and a representative from each group was given the opportunity to feed back their group's recommendations. The moderator explained the next steps for writing the report, and to finish off, Councillor Jim Hobson, Blackpool Council Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change, thanked participants for taking part.

Getting involved in other ways

There's lots you can do to get involved with the climate emergency in Blackpool.

- Read the climate assembly's recommendations when they're published
- [Receive email updates about the climate emergency](#)
- [Get 10 top tips for helping climate change at home](#)

Additional information

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