

Researcher Handbook: Identifying Community Climate Priorities

A 3-part journey to move a community from self-reflection to a unified voice

Workshop	Theme	Core Outcome
1	Community & Strengths	A map of local assets and social capital
2	Climate Impacts	A shared understanding of localised climate risks
3	The Manifesto	A clear list of community climate priorities and actionable demands

Things to Keep in Mind

Place-Based Adaptability

The activities outlined below are intended as a starting point. If your community group feels that a particular activity does not align with its character or preferences, please feel free to adjust accordingly

Resource-Light

We've designed this to work with basic stationery and local knowledge

Co-Production

The researchers are the community members themselves - they are the experts on their own neighbourhood

Introduction and Background

This resource pack provides a practical, community-led framework for hosting inclusive and equitable climate workshops. These templates were originally developed and piloted in Bradford through a partnership between the University of York and Bradford Council (via the Bradford Health Determinants Research Collaboration) to provide community-based evidence for the Council's Climate Action Plan.

The project trained six local residents as climate community researchers to support us in maintaining a person-centred, place-based approach. Working alongside partner organisations, these researchers co-designed and co-facilitated the workshops to ensure the activities reflected local lived experiences.

The pilot project took place across two wards in Bradford: Tong (in partnership with The Sutton Centre) and Bowling & Barkerend (in partnership with The Anchor Project). These areas were selected to ensure that communities potentially at risk of being left behind in the transition to net zero were given a direct voice in shaping climate policy.

The templates and activities in this pack were built to be flexible and adaptable for others researching community climate priorities. All materials in this guide can be amended and tailored to suit the specific needs and demographics of the communities you conduct your research in.

Looking for the detailed recruitment process?

For a full breakdown of our recruitment framework, ethical considerations, selection criteria, and practical steps for working with community partners and residents, please refer to Pages 9 and 10 of the [full report](#): Co-producing Bradford's Just Transition: Community Climate Evidence (Kennedy et al., 2025).



Workshop 1: Understanding Your Community and its Strengths

The Big Picture:

Before discussing climate change, this session builds trust and establishes a "positive baseline" by identifying the physical and social wealth already present in the community.

Pre-Session Setup: The "Car Park"

A simple tool to keep the conversation on track without making participants feel ignored.

What it is: A blank sheet of flipchart paper posted on the wall.

The value: Community workshops can easily go "off-topic" (e.g. local bin collection issues). Use this in all 3 workshops to acknowledge these valid concerns, "park" them visually, and promise to address them at the end or in a follow-up, keeping the main session focused.

Activity 1: Icebreaker

Time	Materials	Group Size
15-20 mins	Prompt 'menu' (poster or flashcards - see next page for example)	Full group

The Value:

By offering a menu of questions, you give participants agency over how much they disclose. This builds a sense of trust and safety, and also helps the facilitator gauge the room's energy level immediately.



Example: Prompt Menu

What is one thing you
are very passionate
about?

On a scale of 1-10 with
10 being the highest,
what is your energy
level today?

What is your favourite
season and why?

What is one thing that
has made you smile
this week?

What is a book, film, or
TV plot that has stayed
with you for a long
time?

What is your favourite
animal or plant species
and why?

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Read out the prompt menu (e.g. Passions, Favourite Seasons, Energy Scale).
2. The facilitator(s) should go first to set the tone (keep it brief and informal).
3. Have each person share one answer. Do not rush this part as it is the foundation of the group's "social asset."

Note for those who choose 'Energy Scale': If several people report a "3/10" energy level, you know to keep the next activities enthusiastic.

Activity 2: Community Asset Mapping

Time	Materials	Group Size
40 mins	Flip charts, coloured markers	Small groups (3-5)

The Value:

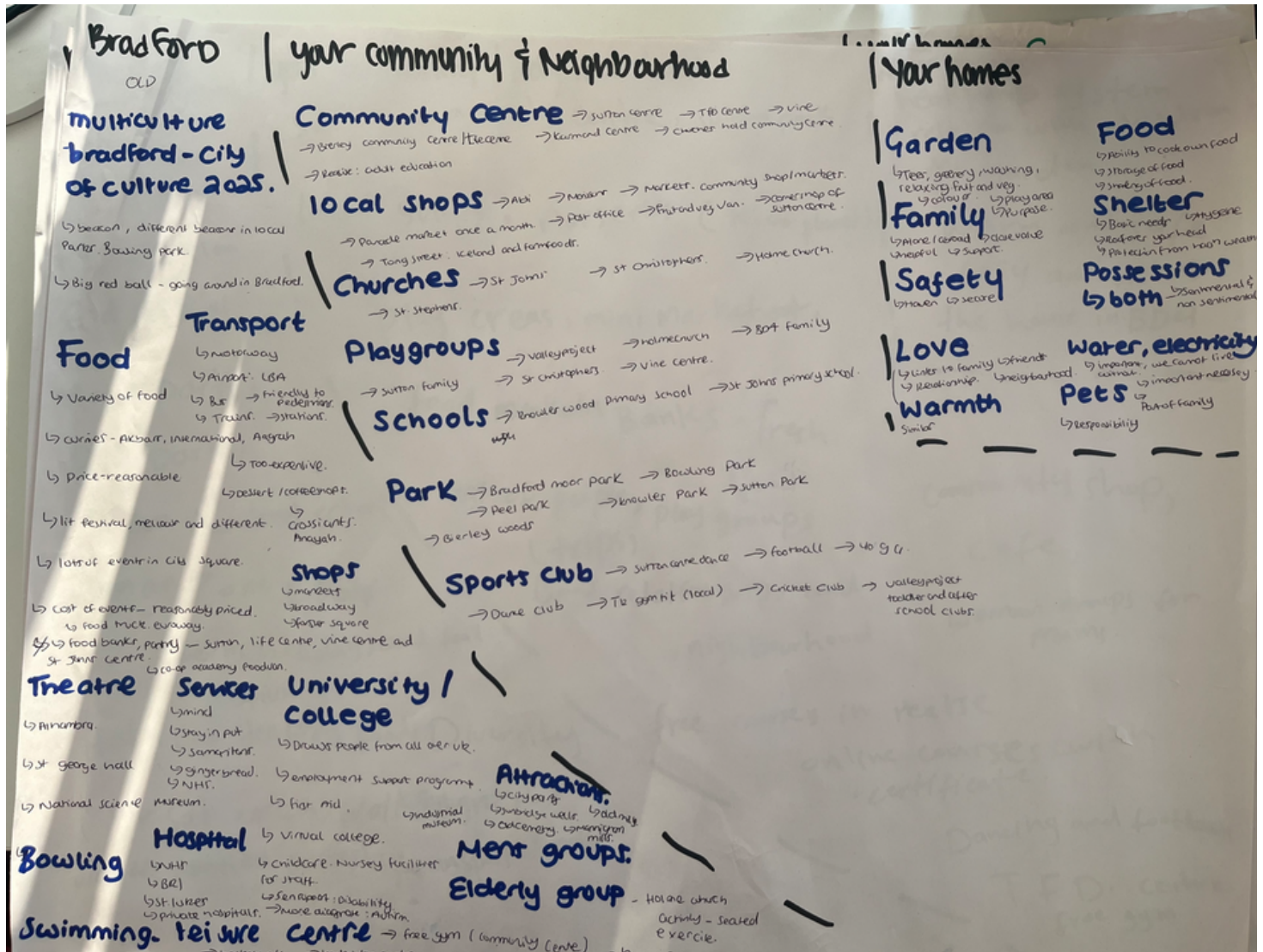
Climate conversations often start with "what is broken." This activity flips the script. By identifying what is great (buildings, parks, or even a helpful neighbour), we identify what we are trying to protect from climate change. It moves the community from a "deficit" mindset to a "power" mindset. See next page for an example of what this looks like in practice.

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Ask groups to divide their paper into three scales: Home, Local Neighbourhood, and The City.
2. Ask them to map two types of assets:
 - **Physical:** (Parks, community centres, robust housing, transport)
 - **Social:** (Strong neighbourly ties, faith groups, "pride")
3. **Important note:** Keep ahold of these maps after the session, you'll need them in Workshop 2.

Prompt: Encourage them to be specific: "The park" is good; "The park where the Wednesday football game happens" is better.

Example: Community Asset Map



Activity 3: Group Reflection

Time	Materials	Group Size
20-30 mins	Maps from Activity 2	Full group

The Value:

This is where the "research" happens. The activity is about asking the group to find consensus on their number one "asset". This helps identify core values. This asset becomes the anchor for the Climate Priorities activity in Workshop 3.

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. One at a time, have each small group present their maps to the full group. Ask the rest: "What surprised you about their map?"
2. Ask: "Now that you've seen the other maps, is there anything you want to add to your own?"
3. Ask the big question: "If we had to pick one thing that makes this community strong enough to face a challenge like climate change, what would it be?" (e.g. "Our resilience" or "Our diversity"). The facilitator should note down these examples as they will be needed for Workshop 2.

Pro-Facilitator Tip

If the group struggles to pick one "Number One Asset," look for a recurring theme on the maps. Often, participants won't realise they all wrote down the same local park or the same sense of "neighbourliness" until you point it out for them.

Recruiting Volunteer Readers for Workshop 2:

1. Explain that in the next workshop, we will look at how climate change might threaten these specific assets.
2. Before wrapping up the session, invite participants to take an active role in Workshop 2 by volunteering to read short, local stories aloud.
3. Explain the value of how hearing community voices brings local climate impacts to life.
4. Reassure volunteers by emphasising that the scripts require zero prep and use simple, plain language.
5. Place a sign-up sheet near the exit so participants can opt in on their way out without feeling put on the spot.

Instructions for this activity can be found both on the next page and on page 9

Pre-Activity Setup: Participant Recruitment & Preparation

The Ask (End of Workshop 1): Before closing, invite the group to take an active role. Ask: "We have a few short scripts about how climate change affects our local area. Would anyone be comfortable reading one out loud next time? It's a great way to hear from our own community."

The Last Minute (Start of Workshop 2): If you're short on volunteers, approach individuals during the "settling in" period. Look for those who were vocal in the first session.

Accessibility Check: Ensure scripts are printed in a large, clear font and written in clear, straightforward language (avoiding jargon or overly academic terms). Remind volunteers that a full explanation of the "Areas of Life" is available if they want more context before reading.



Figure 1. A person-centred, place-based approach to supporting household and community capability for net zero (Morrison et al., 2024)

Workshop 2: Climate Impacts and Our “Areas of Life”

The Big Picture:

Moving from global climate theory to local reality. Participants identify how climate change touches their front door and how their existing community strengths can act as a shield.

Activity 1: Icebreaker

Time	Materials	Group Size
10 mins	None	Small groups (3-5)

The Value:

Before discussing a divisive or scary topic like climate change, you need to build relationships and trust within the group. Finding "non-obvious" commonalities can build a sense of "we are in this together" before the rest of the workshop and discussions begin.

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Ask groups to find three things they have in common that aren't visible (e.g. *not* "we all have shoes" but something like "we all dislike mushrooms").
2. Quickly have each group call out their most surprising commonality.

Activity 2: Localised Climate Briefing

Time	Materials	Group Size
20 mins	Video, “Areas of Life” scripts, local area handouts	Full group

Pre-Activity Setup: Participant Recruitment & Preparation

The Ask (End of Workshop 1): Before closing, invite the group to take an active role. Ask: "We have a few short scripts about how climate change affects our local area. Would anyone be comfortable reading one out loud next time? It's a great way to hear from our own community."

The Last Minute (Start of Workshop 2): If you're short on volunteers, approach individuals during the "settling in" period. Look for those who were vocal in the first session.

Accessibility Check: Ensure scripts are printed in a large, clear font and written in clear, straightforward language (avoiding jargon or overly academic terms). Remind volunteers that a full explanation of the "Areas of Life" is available if they want more context before reading.



Figure 2: Areas of Life categories that will be impacted in the transition to net zero (Middlemiss et al., 2023)

The Value:

Standard 'expert' lectures can feel alienating. This activity asks community members to read co-created scripts so that everyone gets involved in sharing knowledge. Hearing climate risks explained by local peers helps bring these issues close to home.

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Play a short, high-level explainer video (keep it under 3 minutes - suggested video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h7PECxo5MSo>).
2. Distribute the "[insert town/city] and Climate Change" sheet (see next page for example)
3. Have pre-selected community members read the pre-written scripts for different Areas of Life (see Appendix for example).

Example: Local Climate Sheet

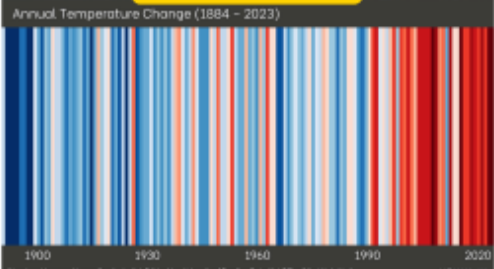
Bradford & Climate Change

What is Climate Change?

Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. Some of these shifts are natural, but based on research and data from scientists, academics, historians and other experts, **since the 1800s, human activities have been the main cause, primarily due to burning fossil fuels like coal, oil, and gas.** One way or another we all contribute to climate change, through the energy we use at home, the way we travel, the things we buy, and the food we eat.



Bradford Warming Stripes



Each stripe represents the average temperature in Bradford in a single year, from 1884 to 2023 - **it shows things are heating up at a very fast rate, we know primarily because of human activities**

Source: Prof Ed Hawkins, University of Reading

The Causes of Climate Change

- **Greenhouse Gas Emissions:** When we burn fossil fuels like coal, oil, and gas, we release greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane into the atmosphere. **Think of our atmosphere as having a natural, thin blanket that keeps the Earth warm enough to live on. But these extra greenhouse gases are like adding more layers to that blanket, making it thicker and trapping more and more heat.** This causes our planet to warm up, just like you'd get warmer under a thicker duvet
- **Deforestation:** Trees absorb carbon dioxide. Cutting down forests reduces the Earth's ability to remove these gases from the atmosphere
- **Industrial Processes:** Some industrial and business processes release greenhouse gases directly, including from factories such as those in Bradford



Effects of Climate Change

One way or another we will all be affected by climate change, like dominoes falling one after another. Effects include:

- **Rising Temperatures:** Leading to heatwaves, wildfires, and power cuts
- **Extreme Weather:** More frequent floods (*in Bradford, but also in places we have loved ones like Pakistan, Bangladesh and India*), hurricanes, and other natural disasters

 **Think of climate as a loaded die for weather. While a normal die (our past climate) gives you an equal chance of different outcomes (weather), climate change is tilting the odds.** This means even though any specific day's weather is still a roll, the chances of extreme events like heatwaves or intense storms are now much higher than they used to be

- **Food Shortages:** Changes in weather patterns are linked to reduced harvests and increased food prices. **Reduced harvest = less food available = higher costs for foods we usually buy**
- **Health Impacts:** Increased risk of illnesses, threat to life, spread of disease, and heatstroke in the UK
- **Economic Impacts:** Damage to the economy, loss of earnings, loss of property at home and overseas
- **Inequality:** Climate change may affect the poorest hardest, making inequality and poverty worse - Bradford already has higher rates of poverty than other places in England

Actions Bradford May Take

- **Switch to Clean Energy:** Help households and businesses move to solar, wind, and other clean energy so everyone can benefit regardless of income. **Clean = does not give off greenhouse gas emissions**
- **Improve Energy Use:** Use less energy in homes (*such as improving insulation in homes so they don't require as much energy to heat*) and in businesses (*such as installing timers so lighting and heating does not come on when the building is closed*)
- **Create More Green Spaces:** Planting more trees throughout Bradford to absorb carbon dioxide
- **Greener Practices:** Make it as easy as possible for people in Bradford to adopt environmentally-friendly practices in industry, food production and consumption, transport, and waste

Activity 3: The Household Climate “Superpower” Exercise

Time	Materials	Group Size
20 mins	Household drawing sheets	Individual

The Value:

Climate change feels abstract until you think about your own boiler, your own commute, or your own garden. This activity creates a personal "data point". It involves asking people to identify a climate "Superpower" (something they are good at) and a "Resistance Point" (something they refuse to change or would be a major barrier in responding to climate change) to understand community trade-offs.

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Ask participants to sketch out their home on the household drawing sheet (see Appendix) .
2. Ask them to annotate:
 - Current Impacts: What is happening now in relation to climate change (e.g. "my house gets too hot").
 - Superpower: One thing their household is great at in relation to taking climate action (e.g. "we are great at budgeting" or "we have a big spare room").
 - Resistance Point: One thing they are worried about or can't change that links to climate change (e.g. "I can't afford a new car").
3. Ask participants to share one "Superpower" with a neighbour.

Activity 4: Climate-Asset Overlay

Time	Materials	Group Size
40 mins	Workshop 1 community asset maps, sticky dots	Small groups (3-5)

The Value:

By placing climate impact "dots" onto their community asset maps from Workshop 1, participants see which strengths are threatened and which can be used to adapt. It moves the conversation from "climate is scary" to "how do we use our park/community centre to survive a heatwave?"

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Place the maps from Workshop 1 on the tables.
2. Give groups coloured sticky dots representing different "Areas of Life" (e.g. Red for Health, Blue for Transport, Green for Nature).
3. Ask: "How will climate change affect the assets you listed?" - if they listed a local park as an asset, and heatwaves are a risk, they put a "Health and/or Nature" dot there.
4. Ask them to circle assets they want to **preserve** at all costs and those that need to **strengthen** to cope.

“Homework” to prepare for workshop 3 (Post-Workshop 2)

This is a crucial step for the facilitator to prepare for the final session

The Task: After the session, take the asset maps and look for recurring themes. Are people mostly worried about housing? Food? Isolation?

The Outcome: Group these into 8–10 "Neighbourhood Themes" (e.g. "Energy and Warmth," "Public Transport"). Write each of these on new flipcharts. These themes will form the foundation of the Climate Priorities in Workshop 3. See next page for an example of what this looks like in practice.



Example: Neighbourhood Themes Flipcharts

ENERGY +
WARMTH

HOUSING

PUBLIC
TRANSPORT

COMMUNITY
SAFETY + TRUST

GREEN
SPACES

SCHOOLS +
EDUCATION

WASTE +
RECYCLING

FAMILIES +
CHILDREN

LOCAL
ECONOMY + JOBS

Workshop 3: Developing the Community's Climate Priorities

The Big Picture:

Turning "problems" into "proposals." This session synthesises all previous discussions into a clear, unified community voice that can be presented to decision-makers.

Activity 1: Icebreaker

Time	Materials	Group Size
10 mins	Flipchart / Post-its	Full group

The Value:

Creating a set of objectives can feel dry or overly technical. This activity ensures that the community's climate priorities are rooted in aspiration. This activity involves coming up with words that will form a core part of the community's climate priorities.

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Ask: "What is one word that describes your hope for a better, greener [insert town/city]?"
2. Write these words on a main board.
3. Explicitly tell the group: "These aren't just words; these are the principles that will guide the actions we write today."

Activity 2: Defining the Priorities

Time	Materials	Group Size
10 mins	Flipchart	Full group

The Value:

In this activity, you will guide participants to pull together their collective priorities for their community. To make the process of "policy-making" feel simple and accessible to everyone, you will introduce a straightforward framework that breaks down their priorities into four essential components: **Vision**, **Values**, **Actions**, and **Involvement**.

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Introduce the 4 Components: Explain that to build a complete set of priorities today, the group will be working through four distinct elements:
 - **Vision:** Our dream for our town/city (Where do we want to go?)
 - **Values:** What we believe in, like fairness or sustainability (How do we want to act?)
 - **Actions:** Specific things that need to change or happen (What do we need to do?)
 - **Involvement:** Who else needs to help or be included (Who do we need on board?)
2. Anchor with a Real-World Example:
 - Briefly walk participants through a quick, tangible example (e.g., a local community charter or a simplified climate declaration).
 - Point out how the example successfully connects the Vision, Values, Actions, and Involvement so participants can visualize what their own final output will look like.

Activity 3: Dot Voting

Time	Materials	Group Size
25 mins	"Neighbourhood Themes" flipcharts from Workshop 2, 10 sticky dots per person	Full group

The Value:

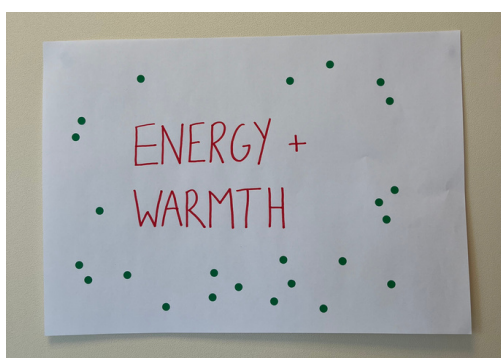
We can often fall into the trap of trying to solve everything. In a resource-constrained world, focus is power. **Dot voting** provides a visual, democratic way to see where the community's energy truly lies, ensuring that the climate priorities chosen represent what is valued, not exhaustive.



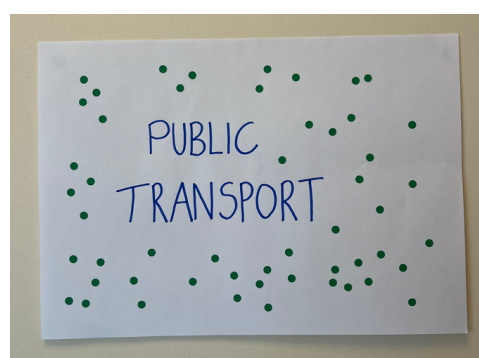
Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. **The Walkthrough:** Present the “Neighbourhood Themes” you identified after Workshop 2 (e.g. Housing, Transport etc) on different flipcharts spread around the room.
2. **Additions:** Ask: "Is there anything missing that we talked about last week?" Add it now.
3. **The Vote:** Give everyone 10 sticky dots. They can put them all on one topic or spread them out. Each dot equals one vote.
4. **The Tally:** Calculate the votes and identify the top 4 themes. These become the “chapters” of the community’s climate priorities

How this looks in practice:



= 24 votes



= 52 votes

Activity 4: Vision Writing

Time	Materials	Group Size
45 mins	Flipcharts (pre-labeled with each component), sticky dots	Small groups (3-5)

The Value:

This is the most "practical" part of the toolkit. By providing the prompt "The change we need is...", you help participants move from complaining about a problem (e.g. "The buses are late") to a solution-focused demand (e.g. "The change we need is a reliable, subsidised bus route to the town centre").

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. **The Vision Group:** One group works on the intro: "We envision a future where [insert town/city] is..."
2. **The Action Groups:** Each group takes one of the Top 4 themes.
3. Use different coloured sticky dots to indicate *who* is responsible (Council, Government, Local Business, Residents).
4. Turn rough notes into full sentences. *Example: "More EV chargers" becomes "Expand EV charging infrastructure equitably across all neighbourhoods."*

Closing: The "Roadmap"

Pro-Facilitator Tip

The most important part of the closing is the **"What Next?"** Community members often feel "research fatigue". By promising a Community Launch Event or a formal presentation to local policy-makers, you prove that their time resulted in a real, tangible tool for influence.

Appendix

Example: Areas of Life Script

‘What We Do For Work’

This is about our jobs and how climate change policies might affect them. We think there are a number of ways that people’s jobs could be affected.

Firstly, we think that people working in jobs such as mining, the oil industry, the steel industry, the petrol and diesel car industry will all be affected by climate policies. It is possible that people working in these industries will find their jobs at risk or will need to retrain to adapt to changes such as the shift from petrol cars to electric cars. This may mean for a car mechanic, they need to learn how to work on electric cars since there will be more of them. It’ll mean we’ll need to charge our electric cars with renewable energy to make sure they are sustainable and help the environment.

Secondly, it is not all bad news. The number of so-called ‘green jobs’, so jobs that help the climate rather than negatively impact it, is likely to increase. So for example there will potentially be more manufacturing jobs producing electric cars, more builder jobs installing solar panels, technology jobs developing bio-degradable materials for packaging.

What is important here is that people whose jobs are at risk are given the opportunity to re-train and access education to protect them during this period of change. At the same time, it is important that schools and colleges are teaching the knowledge and skills that we will need for these new green jobs.

Example: Household Drawing Sheet



References

Kennedy, K., Barnes, A., Baxter, M., & Snell, C. (2025). Co-producing Bradford's Just Transition: Community Climate Evidence. The York Policy Engine & Bradford Health Determinants Research Collaboration. <https://doi.org/10.15124/yao-7wmq-bw21>

Middlemiss, L., Snell, C., Morrison, E., Chzhen, Y., Owen, A., Kennedy, K., Themini-mulle, S., & Carregha, T. (2023). Conceptualising socially inclusive environmental policy: A just transition to Net Zero. *Social Policy and Society*, 22(4), 763–783. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1474746423000180>

Morrison, E., Themini-mulle, S., & Carregha, T. (2024). Our journey to net zero: Understanding household and community participation in the UK's transition to a greener future. Institute for Community Studies. <https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Our-journey-to-net-zero-full-report-February-2024.pdf>