

Institute for Public Policy Research



ABERDEENSHIRE CLIMATE AND FAIRNESS PANEL

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS



**IPPR and the Aberdeenshire
Climate and Fairness Panel**

June 2021

ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMISSION

The Aberdeenshire Climate and Fairness Panel was organised by the IPPR Environmental Justice Commission.

The recommendations of the panel will be presented to local politicians and decision-makers and submitted to the major national cross-party commission, as part of a more detailed report on the process the panel has gone through.

The Environmental Justice Commission was created in 2019 with the aim of working with people across the UK to develop policies and ideas that will tackle the climate crisis and restore nature as quickly and fairly as possible, and that put people and fairness at the heart of the response to the climate and nature emergencies. The commission is co-chaired by Hilary Benn MP, Laura Sandys and Caroline Lucas MP, leading politicians from the Labour, Conservative and Green Parties.

ABOUT IPPR

IPPR, the Institute for Public Policy Research, is the UK's leading progressive think tank. We are an independent charitable organisation with our main offices in London. IPPR North, IPPR's dedicated think tank for the North of England, operates out of offices in Manchester and Newcastle, and IPPR Scotland, our dedicated think tank for Scotland, is based in Edinburgh.

Our purpose is to conduct and promote research into, and the education of the public in, the economic, social and political sciences, science and technology, the voluntary sector and social enterprise, public services, and industry and commerce.

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This paper was first published in June 2021. © IPPR 2021

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The progressive policy think tank

ABOUT THE PANEL

The Aberdeenshire Climate and Fairness Panel was convened by the Environmental Justice Commission to consider the question:

“What practical steps should we take together in Aberdeenshire to address the climate crisis and restore nature in a way that is fair for everyone?”

22 residents of Aberdeenshire, from both city and shire, came together online for over 20 hours of deliberation across eight sessions over six weeks. Collectively, they were representative of the area in terms of age, ethnicity, gender, locale (rural/urban) and qualification level. They started the process with a range of attitudes to climate change.

The jurors heard from over 20 speakers, providing a grounding in the climate and nature emergencies, the local context, and proposals for action across four topics: ‘how we make decisions’, ‘fairly sharing the costs’, ‘nature on land and sea’, and ‘work and industry’. The panel also developed their own ‘wellbeing framework’ to help guide their recommendations. These recommendations are presented here in the panel’s own words, captured as faithfully as possible by IPPR.



STATEMENT FROM THE JURORS

A FAIR RESPONSE TO THE CLIMATE AND NATURE EMERGENCIES

We believe that an equitable response to the climate and nature emergencies in Aberdeen city and shire must ensure that action is implemented in a way that is fair to everyone. This action must reflect the urgency of the situation. We need to act now. Leadership has to be shown by government, but everyone is accountable for taking action and should feel part of making the changes that are required.

Central to enabling this change is providing people with the information they need to understand the action required. We want to see clearly published targets that enable progress reporting on a local and national level. This transparent system will be accessible by the public and allow us to hold national and local governments to account for taking the action required. The public should be supported by an independent regulatory body that stops the nonsense – providing the focus that is needed on these emergencies – and has legal powers to drive action.

Education and training need to be right at the centre of the movement. Children and young people should learn about nature, climate, and the changes that they will see in their lifetimes within schools. The curriculum needs to provide both the skills and a pathway into careers in green industries. Young people will be the most affected and they should feel part of shaping this greener future.

We need to support people to develop the skills to work in greener industries. Oil and gas workers need access to training opportunities that will allow them to move quickly to new jobs that make the most use of their existing skills. To make sure these jobs exist we need the investment to be put in place now. We should urgently start the transition of Aberdeen from the oil and gas capital to a centre of excellence for renewable energy for Europe – building on what we know and our local assets. The cost of the training required for workers to transition to new jobs should not fall on individuals.

Agriculture is the pride of Aberdeenshire. Due to the scale of the land used for farming, particularly for grazing, there are big opportunities for our farmers to make changes that will improve the land for nature. There are a wide range of options for what this change should look like and support should be provided for farmers to make the right choices for them, and for their land. Fair incentives must be put in place for farmers to allow them to make these sustainable and nature-friendly improvements within our region. We need all landowners, across both city and shire, to make positive changes for nature – including tree planting, restoring degraded peatlands, and setting aside more space for wildlife. We believe that making these changes will support more jobs in the nature industries and help farmers, and other businesses, diversify their income.

Companies need to play their part in this transition. Government needs to work with businesses to incentivise and encourage action. Where their response is too slow, we need to put in place taxes and regulations that force the change we need to see from them. It should always be more profitable to run businesses that are part of the solution, rather than those that contribute to the problem. Companies should have greater incentives to reduce waste, which in turn can reduce litter and destruction to nature and the environment. We can support businesses and our communities by investing in making more ourselves – where possible manufacturing contracts should stay within Scotland.

We need careful oversight to ensure that the groups most affected are supported with the transition. We need to support those on low incomes to make changes in their lives that will improve their wellbeing and address these emergencies. People and small businesses are strapped for cash so the tax system, and the subsidies and incentives put in place to support action, need to help those with the least to overcome the upfront costs involved in the transition.

Communities should be supported to respond to the climate and nature emergencies in their local area. They need financial support, and their successes should be celebrated. We have heard from inspiring projects as part of this jury and more people should know that action is possible. Together we can get the ball rolling across our region.

To bring people with us on this journey we need to see this not as a sacrifice but as a progression to a more sustainable way of life. We need to be positive in our response to these emergencies. Initiatives like Aberdeen's hydrogen buses and safer routes for cycling show that people will still be able to access the things they care about in the future, and to do it in a way that is better for the environment.

We believe a fair response to the climate and nature emergencies will support the most vulnerable to thrive in a changing world.



THE JURORS' WELLBEING FRAMEWORK

We believe in a better life for all in Aberdeenshire. This means a future where everyone:



We recognise that **local government action is essential** to enable many of these elements. These elements are interdependent and support each other.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MAKING DECISIONS

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

- Decisions on how to tackle the climate crisis and restore nature need to be guided by a broad range of experts and also the views of the people who will be affected by the decisions.
- We need better education in both how to participate in decisions that affect us and about the climate and nature emergencies. Ordinary people need to have access to this information as well as the government.
- The decision-making processes and progress on what has been done should both be much more transparent.
- Communication is key to ensuring that good decisions are made and that the decision makers are held to account. How information is communicated should be tailored to meet the needs of different people within our communities. Information sharing should be two-way and there should be more accessible means of engagement, such as online polls.
- We need some top-down leadership on climate and nature, which prioritises what is needed over party politics. This should involve long-term target-setting and these targets should then be used to monitor the progress made by government and businesses, allowing them to be held accountable if targets are not achieved.
- Genuine, meaningful consultation is crucial to ensure that decisions are fair for local people. People should be involved before decisions get taken and kept informed. When people are asked to have their say they must be listened to and not overruled, otherwise trust is lost.
- Community projects have an important role in engaging people as well as making change happen.
- Lots of different voices and views should be heard in decisions on climate and nature as these decisions will affect everyone.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are ordered according to the level of priority given to them by the jurors as part of a final vote.

1. **Establish a panel of experts to give the government guidance on tackling the climate and nature emergencies**, learning from how experts have been used in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. These experts should come from a broad range of specialisms, including science and economics.
2. **Establish a panel of citizens to give the government guidance on tackling the climate and nature emergencies**, learning from processes like this citizens' jury. These people should come from different walks of life.
3. **Commit to ongoing ambitious targets that are grounded in the best available evidence**. These strategic goals need to be independent of political parties and include action for both climate and nature. The cross-party support for reaching net zero by 2045 is a good example of the regulation we need to see put in place on nearer term goals for specific parts of the economy.
4. **Involve local people in decision-making, including within both the planning system and in developing local action plans**. Each town or city should have a group of citizens advising them.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FAIRLY SHARING THE COSTS

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

- Action should not be regressive and make life harder for people already struggling. People should be supported to make the changes they need to.
- Action is urgent and we need to accelerate the pace of change. We need to increase the scale of investment and for this to align with the urgency of change required.
- The focus of public investment should be on actions that address high impact activities – start with these and people will be in a better position to tackle lower impact activities themselves.
- Businesses should be supported and incentivised so they can make their current operations more sustainable and diversify into activities that address the climate crisis and restore nature.
- Investment programmes need to be carefully managed and monitored to ensure that those most in need have priority.
- People and businesses should be made aware of the support available to take action on the climate crisis and restore nature.
- Public investment should be made transparently and public bodies should be accountable for how public money is spent. The public should be involved in democratic processes, such as participatory budgeting, to shape the way that public money is spent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are ordered according to the level of priority given to them by the jurors as part of a final vote.

5. **Develop a fair tax system that disincentivises activities that exacerbate the climate and nature crises** and taxes those having the greatest impact and are most able to pay, without causing harm to those individuals and businesses less able to pay.
6. **Invest in the development of low carbon and nature-based solutions to reduce cost and to support the adaptation of existing structures and technologies** (rather than always replacing old technology).
7. **Ensure that subsidies (including farming subsidies) are more clearly directed to support activities that address the climate crisis and restore nature.**
8. **Incentivise activities necessary to address the climate crisis and restore nature by reducing tax on key products and activities**, and by providing interest free-loans and grants.
9. **Do not invest public money in infrastructure, projects or activities that do not address the climate crisis and restore nature** – transparently justify how public investment contributes to achieving climate and nature targets.
10. **Encourage the integration of businesses where this might create efficiencies and speed up the transition** – especially oil and renewables to support the transition to a low carbon energy sector. This might include better co-ordination on training to reduce duplication and maximise transferrable skills, direct transfer of employees to reduce time out of work and shared strategic planning to increase certainty over the future of jobs.

11. **Consider government ownership of businesses key to the transition, if action is not fast enough**, to ensure that investment in these key sectors is for the benefit of people not shareholders. This might involve creating partnerships between the public and private sector to facilitate this.
12. **Consider direct government investment in low carbon technologies (such as heat pumps) for households.**

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATURE ON LAND AND SEA

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

- We should educate people about nature from a young age, including about the risks to wildlife and biodiversity and where food comes from. This will inspire them to protect nature and could encourage them to work in green industries.
- We need to teach people, young and old, the skills they need for careers in ecology, forestry, land management, etc – preparing them for the green jobs of the future and/or supporting them to change practices now.
- Low-carbon, nature-friendly diets should be more accessible and cost-effective.
- Land strategies need to balance the competing priorities of enabling access to nature and protecting nature from being damaged by us.
- We should harness the power of nature and the particular natural assets in Aberdeenshire, for example using tidal power and making the most of the carbon capture potential of the land and sea.
- Individuals and businesses need to take responsibility for reducing waste; this includes creating a culture of ‘repair not replace’. Local councils should make it easier for people to dispose of their waste responsibly.
- We need urgent and wide-reaching action to protect nature; things need to change in order for nature to recover and to thrive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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13. **Tackle waste through a combination of education, penalties and incentives.**
 - There should be heavier penalties for fly-tipping and a significant increase in action from councils to tackle the dumping of waste.
 - Repairing and recycling should be incentivised. Action on this should come from all levels of government, and also be led by businesses. For example, local councils could have repair hubs at recycling centres and businesses could be encouraged to make appliances that are easier to fix than to replace.
 - There should be public information campaigns on how to recycle and reduce waste.
 - Businesses should be taxed on single-use plastic and for the waste they create in general. Disposable products should be more expensive not cheaper for the consumer.

14. **Support farmers to change the way they use the land**, through a combination of information sharing, education, and subsidies for environmentally friendly practices.
15. **Education on nature should be mandatory and standardised across the UK** and start from a young age. Teachers need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to teach this.
16. **Create training academies for green jobs**, especially in improving agricultural practices where Aberdeenshire has the potential to really lead the way and create large scale change
17. **Planning decisions should prioritise environmental impacts**, particularly the impacts on climate change. If development is not going to have a positive impact on the environment then it should stop there and then.
18. **Incentivise businesses who make and sell food to promote low carbon and nature friendly diets and tax them more heavily for practices that harm the environment.**
19. **Increase communication from local councils on availability of land that can be used for community-led green activities**, like growing fresh produce and planting trees.
20. **Create a government-led accreditation scheme for companies/farmers if they take extra steps to rewild their land.**
21. **Incentivise using the land and sea for carbon capture**, including trees, peat, and seaweed.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WORK AND INDUSTRY

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

- Urgency is needed in the creation of new job opportunities, which must be equitably distributed across the country. This needs to be supported by a clear strategy and monitored over time.
- Ensure that all work, including care work and work in nature, is appropriately valued. This means fair pay and working conditions, as well as giving due recognition and reward for skills and experience, including those not captured by formal qualifications.
- Build trust with all workers as we move through the transition and support workers to participate in decisions in the workplace.
- Build on the local assets that Aberdeenshire already has, and utilise existing strengths whether that be skills, brownfield land, manufacturing assets or ports and harbours.
- Review the existing skills and education system, look at how we can improve it and ensure we are providing the necessary training, skills and education for the future, ensuring this is available locally.
- Create a balanced strategy that recognises the role of a range of sectors, including hydrogen and wind, and strikes a balance between addressing the climate crisis and restoring nature.
- Create the legal and financial conditions that support experimentation to encourage innovation and diversification.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are ordered according to the level of priority given to them by the jurors as part of a final vote.

22. **The government needs to have a vision and a strategy that can realise the potential in local sectors like hydrogen, wind and tidal, support local manufacturing and rebalance the economy across the UK.** We have huge assets – from our local industry to the skills, talent, and expertise of all who live in Aberdeenshire. There is a huge opportunity to build on these strengths, but we need a vision and a strategy to maximise them.
23. There needs to be **well-advertised education and training opportunities such as apprenticeships and re-training to support workers of all ages and backgrounds, funded by government.** This must include providing support to older workers who are already out of work from existing industries affected by the transition (including oil and gas) or who will need to transition in future. These jobs must be of good quality and well paid. Other climate-compatible careers, such as care work, must receive equal recognition and these jobs should also be well paid. Aberdeenshire should become a centre of excellence for a range of industries, including renewables.
24. **There should be a joint approach between business and government to invest and create new jobs and opportunities.** The right training must be put in place to support workers of all ages into these jobs.
25. **We need to look at recreating local supply chains to support more manufacturing and create jobs and opportunities in Aberdeenshire and Scotland.** Supporting new industries and manufacturing must be done in a way that protects nature with prioritisation of development on brownfield sites.
26. **Use procurement to promote renewable businesses that encourage design, engineering and manufacturing that is local** or UK-based and award contracts that are not based solely on price.
27. **Provide education and information, support, and incentives to enable smaller companies to diversify into activities, or to green their existing operations, to support addressing the climate crisis and nature restoration.** There are often small companies or business owners who want to do the right thing but need more information or support to do so.
28. **The government needs to provide far more information about the jobs and opportunities that will be available in the future.** This should involve careers advisors and job offices providing information and directing people towards the jobs available in renewables and nature, for example.
29. **Provide investment for experimentation, innovation and to back ideas whether that be for small businesses, individuals, or others.** Even if those ideas might not work!
30. **There needs to be a national strategy for the fair distribution of decent, meaningful and well-paid work across the UK and Scotland.** This could include the adoption of a ‘minimum income guarantee’ to ensure everyone, whether in or out of work, has enough to live on.
31. **Put in place regulations to ensure that workers have a voice at all levels,** from workplace to national, in developing a strategy for future jobs. Support organisational structures and business practices that allow workers to engage, raise their voices and be heard.

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