

Institute for Public Policy Research



**THURROCK
CLIMATE AND
FAIRNESS PANEL
FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS**



**IPPR and the Thurrock
Climate and Fairness Panel**

June 2021

ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMISSION

The Thurrock 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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The contents and opinions expressed in this paper are the views of the Tees Valley and County Durham Climate and Fairness Panel, captured as faithfully as possible. They do not represent the views of IPPR.

The progressive policy think tank

ABOUT THE PANEL

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

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

20 residents of Thurrock, and nearby areas, 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 17 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’, ‘travel and place’, and ‘nature, what we eat and how we use the land’. 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 EMERGENCIES¹

We believe that a fair response to the climate and nature emergencies in Thurrock and the surrounding areas must ensure that action by local people and communities is not an alternative for government and businesses taking the leadership required.

Local and national government need to embrace their role in leading action on these emergencies. The action they take must be inclusive and responsive to the needs of local communities. The people who live in an area are the ones who know what is best for that area. They need to be empowered to make decisions and make the changes required, not just 'consulted'. Make the word consultation mean something - all consultation has to be meaningful and impactful. Government, at all levels, need to really listen to communities and give them the power and the tools to do things themselves.

We need to make sure that all decisions that are made are fair at the point of decision making and throughout their implementation. Decision making should be holistic. We have to ensure there is no unintended discrimination in the actions that are being taken. The decisions that are made should be transparent and explained in a language that people understand.

We need to be clear on the purpose of development. It needs to meet a clear need and be compatible with these emergencies. Government targets for developments that have an impact in local areas need to be agreed in partnership with those communities and based on their understanding of local need. The infrastructure and developments that are put in place need to be tailored to the needs of these people.

We cannot offset the impact of infrastructure that does harm to one community with more positive action elsewhere. Every community has the right to clean air and action has to be taken to improve the poor air quality in Thurrock. We need to ensure everyone has access to a healthy environment and protect green spaces and the green belt from further development.

Transport infrastructure must connect people to the places they need to go in a way that is safe and affordable. The poorest in society can't be left out of being able to afford to travel. We need to support people to make transport choices that are good for their health and the environment.

Housing needs to be affordable and meet local need. When affordable housing is promised as part of developments it needs to happen. We need to follow through with these commitments and hold developers to account for what they say they are going to do. There shouldn't be loopholes to get around the conditions that are agreed to improve people's lives and the environment. Developments must have infrastructure for nature and be planned to allow people to live well locally.

¹ A small group of volunteer jurors worked with an IPPR facilitator to write this statement on behalf of the jury. All jurors had considered their individual views on 'fairness' and ideas were discussed by the full group ahead of drafting this statement. This was then reviewed and amended by the whole jury over the course of the final two sessions.

Ensure we are informing people about the action we are taking and why. Take this message to where people are and give them the chance to respond to the action that is being taken. All the parties affected (be that communities, businesses etc) should be involved and consulted. Everyone should know how we are responding to these emergencies and have their say.

Education is crucial. We need to provide opportunities for people to be inspired to take action and be able to choose the kinds of jobs and future they want. People need to see that action on these emergencies is not going to stop them from making choices about their own lives and having a good life.

Recognise the existing needs of people and the ways they live their lives. A fair response has to be balanced between the wealthy and the poorest. We can't put too much demand on those who don't have the resources to act. Those with the money to do it, including large companies, can take more action for the environment immediately and start creating the conditions that others can follow.

Affordability has to really mean affordable for all. The things people need to live a good life, including housing and transport, must be genuinely affordable to the people who live here. These must be designed with the income levels of local people in mind.

We need to take urgent action to address the climate emergency. A fair response to this crisis has to address inequality and also provide the space for nature to thrive.



THE JURORS' WELLBEING FRAMEWORK: A BETTER LIFE FOR ALL

We believe in a better life for all in Thurrock.

This means a future where everyone ...



... is **safe** and feels **protected from crime, antisocial behaviour and climate threats**.



... is able to **access the food and shelter they need**.



... is in **good physical and mental health**; is able to be **physically active** and to **relax**.



... is able to **access clean air, nature and green space** and is also able to **conserve nature**.



... is able to **get to different places safely and sustainably** to explore and work.



... is able to **access learning and opportunities to develop, create and pursue interests**.



... is able to do **satisfying work that helps others** and which offers opportunities for **personal growth**.



... is able to **engage in activities and decisions that contribute to change**.



... feels like they **belong to a place, with community spirit and pride**.



... is **free to express themselves**.

We recognise that the elements of this framework are interconnected and support each other. Local and national government action is essential to enable many of these elements and government should be seen to be acting to improve wellbeing. New policies should ensure that everybody has the same opportunity to achieve a better life.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HOW WE MAKE DECISIONS

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

- **There needs to be greater transparency in how decisions are made**
 - The processes and language used by decision-makers should be clear and simple, not bureaucratic or inaccessible. There needs to be greater openness; this will lead to more accountability.
- **Communication from local councils should be more proactive**
 - Trying to build a community in which everyone is invested is very difficult when people don't see how decisions affect them. There needs to be proactive, two-way communication and engagement, using multiple channels (including social media).
- **Decisions should prioritise wellbeing and nature over profit and there should be incentives for businesses which encourage this.**
- **Local communities should have a significant say in decisions which affect them.**
 - The more a community is understood and respected, the more voices within that community will engage in decision making.
- **Meaningful inclusion is crucial to good, fair decisions.**
- **We should learn from others**, including places around the world that are making progress on restoring nature and reducing their carbon emissions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Decisions on development must prioritise environmental and community needs.** The value of nature and wellbeing should be built into decision-making frameworks used by the council when considering development, and money for green space should be ring-fenced.
 - Section 106 funding should only be allocated to support nature and address community needs – these should be considered in both the specific conditions placed on developers and in the general allocation of this funding.
2. **Community interest companies (CICs) should be easier to set up.** These allow the opportunity for people to take ownership of local parks, and other natural assets. We shouldn't make it hard for the community to help take action in their areas.
3. **Reduce the barriers for all citizens to participate in decision making**, and provide multiple channels for engagement that work for a wide range of people, including those without access to a computer or without IT skills.
4. **Expert reports to inform decisions should be commissioned by neutral parties** – not those with a vested interest in making a profit.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FAIRLY SHARING THE COSTS

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

- **We shouldn't put all the emphasis on consumers to change their behaviour** in the first instance but to change behaviour by **forcing large corporations to comply with stricter measures to meet climate change and nature targets.** They should be made accountable for achieving these targets. Then educate the consumer on smarter changes making suggested changes cost effective for all.
- **Costs shouldn't be passed on to consumers wherever possible,** and those on the lowest incomes should be protected.
- Where there are additional costs, like fossil fuel taxes, they should be phased in to **give people time to prepare and those on low incomes should be protected.**
- **The UK should seek to lead the world,** using things like its natural assets, to attract private investment.
- We need to **tackle the big problems** and not get distracted by small problems. We should act on the evidence of what's needed to address these emergencies – if dealing with something small now prevents it from becoming a bigger issue later then we should address it in a proportionate way.
- There needs to be **direction and investment from national government,** setting guidelines, ensuring that others, including councils, take action.
- **People have a right to know where their money is being spent by local authorities.** There should be transparency on where they spend money, including on climate and nature, and on the powers they have too. We need to know where investment is going but also what local authorities actually do.
- **There should be an annual vote for residents to input on council's spending,** adjusting how much is allocated to different 'pots' based on their priorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

5. **The UK should invest in cleaner energy sources** (for example, tidal power), new technologies, and research and development so that:
 - we ensure we're going down the right paths for the future and choosing the right technologies
 - we are able to lead the world. Where the government invests, business will follow, and it will attract investment here at home and from abroad
 - we can build technologies that can be exported, which can create jobs for people in the UK, focusing on creating jobs is vital given the increase in unemployment as a result of Covid-19.
6. **A national green tax should be applied to carbon emissions.** The level of the tax should rise over time but those on low incomes must always be protected. This tax must be designed to ensure it is fair to consumers and complemented by initiatives that help people to afford the alternatives. It must comply with our principles for who is responsible for acting on these emergencies.
 - *In a 'yes or no' vote conducted on the last day of the jury, 67 per cent of jurors supported this recommendation and 33 per cent did not. More details on the deliberation surrounding this will be included in the full briefing on this process.*

7. **The feasibility of community municipal investment should be explored by the local council.** This could be a good option for supporting new community owned initiatives. They need to be designed to be inclusive to people with low incomes, including providing safeguards on the funding they commit to these schemes, and not be seen as an alternative to investment from government (local and national).
 - *In a 'yes, maybe or no' vote conducted on the last day of the jury, 50 per cent of jurors supported this recommendation, 22 per cent said 'maybe' and 28 per cent did not. More details on the deliberation surrounding this will be included in the full report on this process.*
8. **Funding should support and prioritise community groups and volunteering** that address the climate and nature emergencies. This should **include more support and investment for community energy groups.**
9. A lot of companies are impacting the local environment so they should put back locally. **There should be incentives and requirements for companies to invest in environmental schemes in their local areas.**
10. **Developers should be required to set aside funds or get incentives to tackle climate change and restore nature.** These funds should be kept for residents to access on an ongoing basis to spend on schemes to enhance the local environment.
11. **Councils should encourage business sponsorship for local green schemes.**

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRAVEL AND PLACE

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

- There's no one answer to how we should change the way we travel to tackle the climate crisis and restore nature – we need multiple solutions, at the same time, to ensure that changes are fair.
- People need good alternatives to the car and those who really need a car should be able to use one.
- Action should be led by national and local government and those businesses which can afford it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

12. **Public transport needs to be affordable, joined up, convenient and quick,** and take people where they want to go safely.
 - Invest in electric or hydrogen buses.
 - Improve the number and convenience of bus routes (this could include eco-friendly river buses).
 - Copy the TfL model for running buses so that bus companies get paid centrally rather than relying on making their own profit. This can help make bus fares cheaper for everyone and mean buses serve more areas.
13. **The government should increase investment in both electric vehicles and in researching the other low-carbon alternatives, including hydrogen.**

14. **Improve the provision of outstanding schools, with enough capacity for every child in the area, so you don't need to leave the area for education.**
 - School provision needs to be thought about within new developments - developing for local need means having this infrastructure in place.
15. **Create low emissions zones and use the money to fund free transport for people on low incomes.**
 - Make sure there are exemptions for those that need to use large cars (for example, people with disabilities).
16. **Implement surcharges for all large vehicles and HGVs that don't meet green criteria, both international (for example, lorries coming from ports) and domestic.**
 - This money could then go on road maintenance and walking and cycling infrastructure.
 - Make sure there are exemptions for those that need to use large cars (for example, people with disabilities).
17. **Discounts for electric vehicles and bikes for disabled people.** Disability benefits for helping people to travel around should be spent on low-carbon options, as long as this is achieved fairly (e.g. through government investment or subsidy, rather than the cost being borne by the individual).
18. **Invest in cycle parking, storage and cycling lanes** so cycling is a safe and desirable option. This could be paid for by using money from surcharges for high carbon vehicles (for example, lorries coming from the ports).
 - For cycle routes, make sure to provide for disability adjusted cycling (for example, space for tricycles and mobility scooters).
 - Give farmers incentives to set up farm shops along cycle lanes to provide them with revenue streams but also increase attractiveness of cycle routes.
19. **The council should take more action on reducing congestion and safety during the school run.**
 - Help parents and children to understand the benefits of leaving the car at home.
 - Provide good, safe buses for children.
20. **Create weather-protected, secure community car parks for residents, with charging points for electric cars.** This would reduce on street parking and create more space for greenery and children playing on residential streets.
21. **Incentivise low carbon options through a combination of taxes and subsidies that do not penalise individuals but encourage more action from businesses who can afford it.**
 - There should be a national 10 per cent tax reduction on electric scooters and cars and other green vehicles.
 - There should be more affordable bikes and cycle hire schemes for people on low incomes.
 - Tax large businesses if they don't go green; give them benefits if they do.
 - Provide subsidies for individuals and small businesses to help them make green choices.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATURE, WHAT WE EAT AND HOW WE USE THE LAND

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

- We must prioritise **social justice concerns as highly as we do sustainability**, including for food.
- **Education** is key.
 - Make interventions for healthy eating at the earliest possible age – primary school onwards.
 - Public education will help social issues as well as the climate and nature crisis.
- There must be a **fair balance between action from the council and residents**.
In practice this means:
 - encouraging pride in the local area to reduce littering and fly-tipping
 - public education and local pride must be met with council action and investment to maintain public areas and social housing areas. Local residents can only do so much on their own, and without council support there can be a downward spiral
 - addressing the inequality between investment and decisions taken for areas with higher and lower incomes. We should be looking after all areas, not just those with the loudest voice. Often social housing areas are poorly maintained, left to fall apart and abandoned.
- **When development is necessary, it should meet the needs of local people and not damage nature or the climate, and even seek to have a positive impact.**
This should include:
 - improving the planning process so that unnecessary development is prevented
 - protecting green space and the green belt, as damage from development is often irreversible and has an impact on climate, environment and wellbeing
- **There should be access to green space for everyone, but this means genuine access for local people, not an excuse for developments such as ‘green villages’.**

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. **Local farmers’ markets should be supported and produce made genuinely affordable** (based on the income levels of local people). They could be made ‘celebrated’ events to attend where local authority investment supports educational about climate and the environment. These events could help create a profit for the local community.
 - Make local farmers’ produce available locally. This extra income could help them to help nature on their land. Increase marketing and promotion to ensure it’s worth farmers’ while, for example through free advertising and radio slots to promote local businesses and farms.
 - Sell local produce to local schools and companies.
 - Revisit rules that would hinder this (eg farmers not allowed to slaughter their own livestock).

- Reintroduce ‘grow your own’ and ‘pick your own’ farming in Thurrock and the surrounding areas.
- 23. Incentives should be provided by the government for farmers to make practices more nature and climate friendly.** This should include incentives for farmers to turn unusable areas over for nature.
- Energy crops should be used mindfully (they take land away from food production and are water intensive).
- 24. There should be education to support the public to change mindsets, to help people make more nature and climate friendly food choices.**
- This should include a focus on the social justice aspects as well as the environmental aspects of food. With high local obesity levels, education on healthy and sustainable food options is needed to reduce diet-related diabetes (which has particularly affected BAME community during Covid).
 - Make farm visits part of the school curriculum so children learn how food is produced.
 - Teach healthy eating and recipes to children through cookery classes in school.
- 25. Existing green space and green belt must be protected.** Protect areas like hedgerows and introduce replanting policies for things like road widening and other infrastructure schemes.
- 26. Introduce schemes to reduce food waste and increase the recycling and reuse of plastic and other packaging. This should include:**
- schemes and requirements for supermarkets to reduce the level of food waste and of all forms of packaging
 - a new incentive scheme for food delivery companies, such as Deliveroo, to encourage the return and then recycling or reuse of packaging by their customers.
- 27. Increase public education on nature including on reducing fly-tipping and littering and protecting green spaces.**
- Reduce irresponsible waste disposal – fly-tipping, littering.
 - Reintroduce park rangers and have them deliver talks in schools.
- 28. Healthy and nature-friendly food should be made more affordable and accessible.**
- There should be a focus on local shops to carry local produce, as well as farmers markets, but supermarkets should also create sections for UK food and local farmers’ food.
 - Encourage seasonal eating.
 - There should be more options in the quantities of foods for sale, so people aren’t forced to buy more than they need.
- 29. Invest in programmes and projects for restoring nature that create jobs. This could include ‘nature in the community’ education jobs.**
- 30. Introduce greater regulation, including on a local level, to reduce junk food consumption, including that of children.**
- Reduce demand for takeaway shops and junk food through education – through schools and government marketing campaigns.
 - Use advertising to educate and reduce demand for unhealthy and unsustainable food (use success of cigarette packets).
 - Educate and empower community groups to protect and restore nature in their areas, such as a speaker programme.

- 31. Introduce employer schemes where workers are given time off to restore nature in local areas of unused and degraded land.** Use employees' suggestions and local expertise to direct action.
- 32. Improve the rules around recycling centres to reduce landfill and encourage re-use of items by local residents.**
- Provide more options at recycling centres – rename to 'reuse centres'.
 - Change the rule that items at recycling centres cannot be taken away by residents.
 - Introduce a scheme for electric appliances to be reused at recycling centres.
 - Increase transparency about where profit from recycling centres goes to.

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