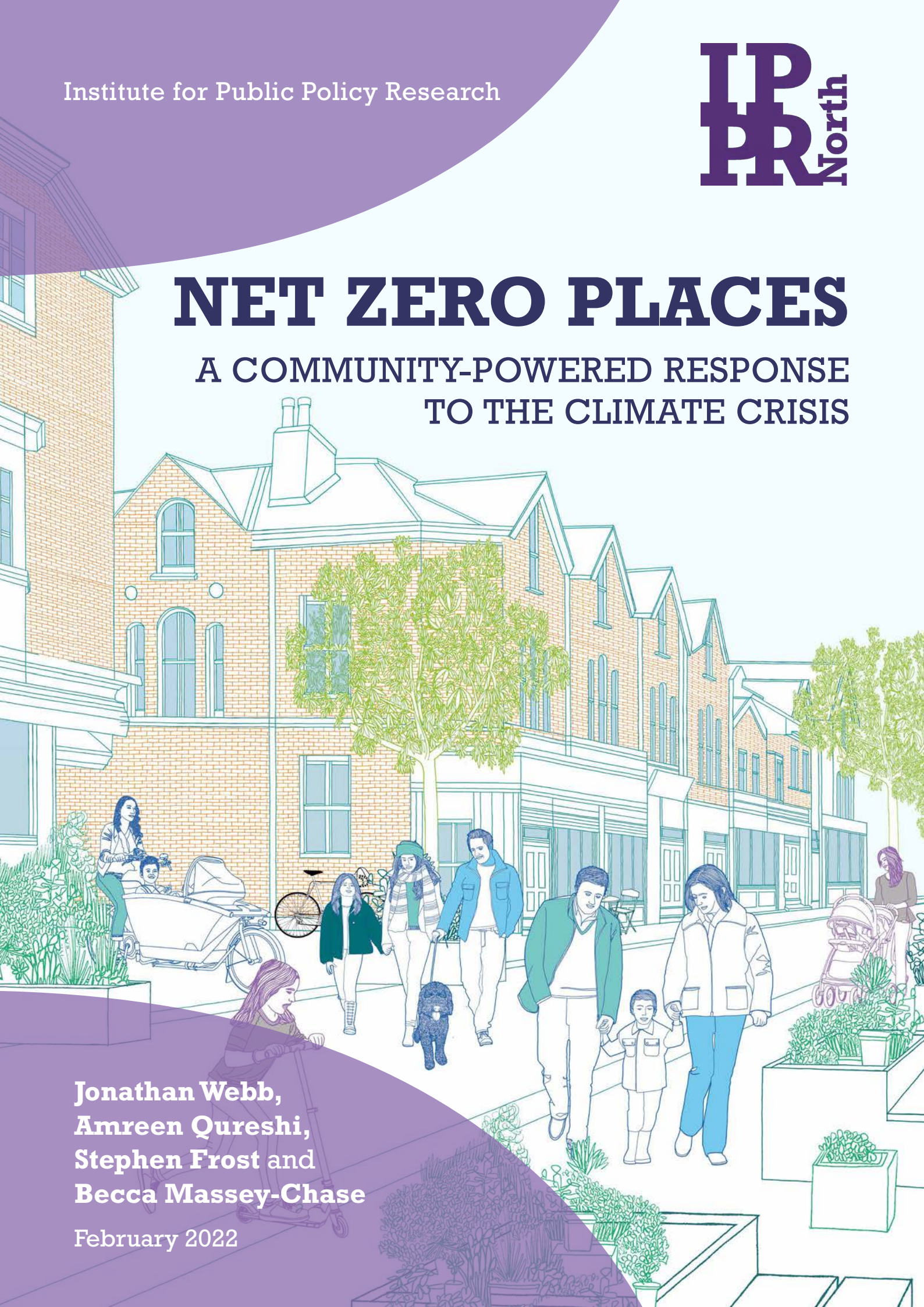Institute for Public Policy Research

IPPR North

NET ZERO PLACES

A COMMUNITY-POWERED RESPONSE TO THE CLIMATE CRISIS

**Jonathan Webb,
Amreen Qureshi,
Stephen Frost** and
Becca Massey-Chase

February 2022

The progressive policy think tank

CONTENTS

ABOUT THE AUTHORS
Jonathan Webb is a senior research fellow at IPPR North.

Amreen Qureshi is a researcher at IPPR North.

Stephen Frost is a principal research fellow and co-head of participative research at IPPR.

Becca Massey-Chase is a principal research fellow and co-head of participative research at IPPR.

SUMMARY

The transition to net zero will have a significant impact on everyone's lives. From how we heat our homes to how we travel, few aspects will be unchanged. Despite this, too often net zero policy is designed from above by policymakers and enacted upon people and places.

Not only are most of the decisions on net zero policy taken above the local level, but local government continues to see its ability to act in response to the climate crisis diminished. Despite needing to do more than ever to respond to this crisis, local governments' core spending power is lower now than it was six years ago.

This top-down policy approach risks exacerbating existing inequalities and locking in a sense that policy is done to people, not with people. In contrast, by working with communities, this research seeks to generate visions for what net zero places could look like. It aims to understand locally-led and community-inspired visions for a net zero future.

Two case study areas have helped us to understand the challenges that different types of places face. Liverpool City Region was chosen to represent a northern metropolitan city region and reflect the scale of change required to the UK's urban areas. The Isle of Anglesey was chosen as it represents a dispersed rural area at risk from climate breakdown, but which could also see benefits from the net zero transition.

Based on participative workshops with people from these two areas, we present two distinct visions for these types of places in this report:
- the child-friendly city region that builds on the things that make people proud to live there to create greener, safer and more community-focused spaces
- the rural community where cultural and natural heritage is celebrated as part of a place's sustainable future.

This research also revealed many commonalities between different communities and places. People express an immense pride in the place they call home. While they feel more needs to be done, they do not see the climate crisis as insurmountable. Instead, they believe more can be done if their communities have a greater say on what a net zero future looks like, and if more decisions are made locally.

The final part of this report outlines policy principles that could help realise these shared desires across communities. At the heart of these policy principles is a clear focus on delivering locally. By shifting power to the local level, net zero policies are more likely to be designed with specific places in mind. The visions put forward by the people we worked with are most likely to be achieved if we empower subnational government to work directly with communities to give them a greater role in shaping their net zero future. Only then can a community-powered response to the climate crisis be realised.

INTRODUCTION

Action on the climate and nature crises is necessary and few policymakers, or indeed the public, need convincing of this. The key questions are how, and how fast, we transition to net zero. The most ambitious transition paths should also improve our quality of life and tackle the injustices in our economy and society (Environmental Justice Commission 2021). To succeed in this, the transition must be done with people, not to people; change will need to be rooted in our neighbourhoods and communities (ibid).

Through this research, we set out to understand how different communities will be affected by the climate crisis. We worked with them to develop a positive vision of the future, one where places have both adapted to the challenge of reaching net zero and have seized the opportunity to better meet the hopes and needs of residents. The approach taken was informed by IPPR's Environmental Justice Commission (Environmental Justice Commission 2021) and placed local residents at the heart of developing a vision of a future that is both fairer and greener.

This report provides a vision drawn from people's hopes for the benefits that the drive to net zero could bring

This report provides a vision drawn from people's hopes for the benefits that the drive to net zero could bring. As part of our research, we ran participative workshops[1] in two very different case study areas: an urban city region and a dispersed rural area. While visions of sustainability, empowerment and community building were different in these two places, the desire for these things was something that they had in common.

The people we spoke with in our workshops want a more sustainable future that gives them a chance to play a more direct role in shaping what their local areas look like. In this report, we therefore recommend a set of policy principles that leaders across different levels of government in the UK should pursue to reach net zero in a way that gives real power to local people.

They believe more can be done if their communities have a greater say on what a net zero future looks like


1.
ABOUT THE PLACES

LIVERPOOL CITY REGION – THE NORTHERN CITY REGION

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) was established in 2014. It covers the local authority areas of Liverpool city, Sefton, St Helens, Wirral, Halton, and Knowsley. The combined authority is led by a directly elected metro mayor, one of eight new metro mayors created since 2014. LCRCA oversees and manages planned spending of approximately £498 million for the 2021/22 financial year and is accountable for bus franchising and developing spatial strategy (Johns 2021). The direct powers available to the mayor to coordinate spending and shape city region planning are significant when compared to those metropolitan areas without a directly elected metro mayor, and they give places like Liverpool the potential institutions to accelerate climate action.

Liverpool City Region is one of the driving forces of the North's economy and has been identified as a future UK leader in new green industries, such as the development and supply of hydrogen through initiatives such as the HyNet project (Boyle et al 2019). However, qualifications across all NVQ levels in the region are currently below both the North West's average and Great Britain's average (ONS 2021). Improvement in the provisions of education and skills will be crucial to ensure that people from the city region can access some of the best paid jobs in the new green economy.

FIGURE 1.1: THE MAJORITY OF EMISSIONS COME FROM DOMESTIC ENERGY AND TRANSPORT
Emissions by sector across Liverpool City Region (KtCO$_2$)
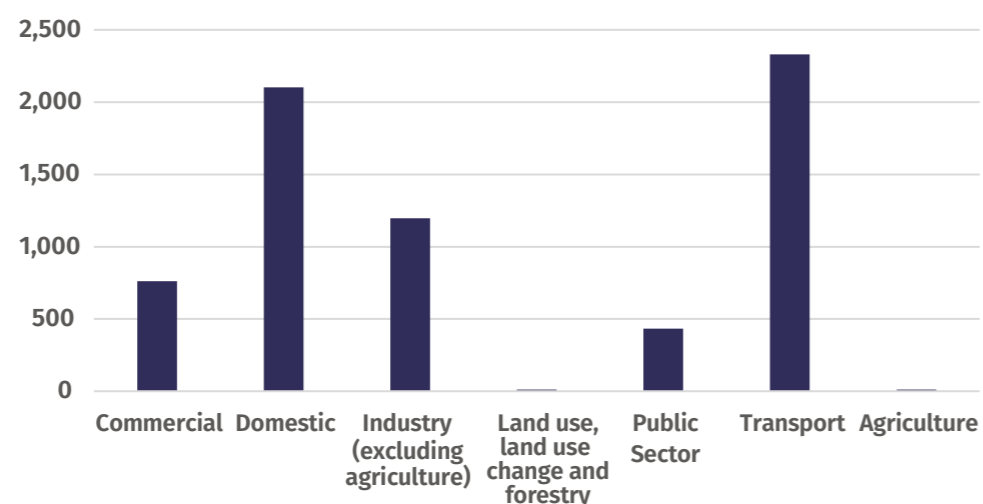
Source: Authors' analysis of UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics: 2005 to 2019 (BEIS 2021a)

Liverpool City Region also has significant challenges when it comes to transport and housing – particularly car use and home heating. As figure 1.1 shows, the majority of emissions in the local authority geographies come from domestic energy and transport; the concentration of emissions in these sectors are typical of metropolitan city ares. Also typical of city regions, Liverpool City Region's density provides opportunities for new decarbonisation innovations such as district heat networks (Karvonene and Guy 2018).

The powers and resources that places have significantly affects how quickly they can decarbonise, and the patchwork nature of devolution in England presents significant challenges to this. Even in places like LCRCA that have more powers compared to many others as a result of its combined authority powers (Johns 2021), local government has still seen its resources eroded in real terms. Between 2015/16 and 2021/22, local authorities in the LCRCA saw an average 2.8 per cent reduction in their real terms spending power; Knowsley in Merseyside saw a reduction of 4.1 per cent (DLUHC 2021a, 2021b; OBR 2021). The resources that local government have to support ambitious climate action is therefore increasingly limited. Overall, local government core spending power in England is approximately £240 million less than it was six years ago (MHCLG 2015; DLUHC 2021a) and this translates into falls in annual service spending by local authorities of £388 per person in England and £413 per person within the North (Webb et al 2022).

Liverpool City Region represents the archetypal English city region, a place brimming with potential, but one that also faces significant challenges to transition to net zero at the pace and scale that is needed.

> The powers and resources that places have significantly affects how quickly they can decarbonise

ANGLESEY – THE DISPERSED RURAL AREA

The Isle of Anglesey represents Wales' most northerly area. It is home to significant natural assets that will be vital for ensuring the UK reaches net zero. It is able to generate significant quantities of renewable energy from solar, wind, tidal and nuclear power (Buckland-Jones and Stevens 2019). In 2020, Anglesey generated over 150,000 MWh of renewable electricity, predominantly from its extensive solar and onshore wind sites (BEIS 2021a). In 1966, its coastline was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It also faces an existential threat from climate breakdown. Large parts of the island are already susceptible to flooding and this will only get worse if climate change remains unchecked and if adaptation policies are implemented too slowly (NRW 2017).

Anglesey has one of the smallest populations in Wales and the second lowest average earnings (Stats Wales 2021a,2021b). As shown in figure 1.2, Anglesey, like the Liverpool City Region, has high emissions from domestic energy and transport, with the majority of transport emissions coming from car use. Decarbonising transport is more of a challenge in this rural setting as the population is more dispersed, making public transport and active travel solutions harder to implement effectively (Powell et al 2018). In other countries, initiatives such as demand responsive transport are far more commonplace as a solution in rural areas. However, in the UK, the provision of such transport is fragmented and significantly impacted by central government underinvestment (Brand et al 2021).

FIGURE 1.2 THE MAJORITY OF EMISSIONS IN ANGLESEY COME FROM DOMESTIC ENERGY AND TRANSPORT USE

Emissions by sector across Island Of Anglesey (KtCO$_2$)
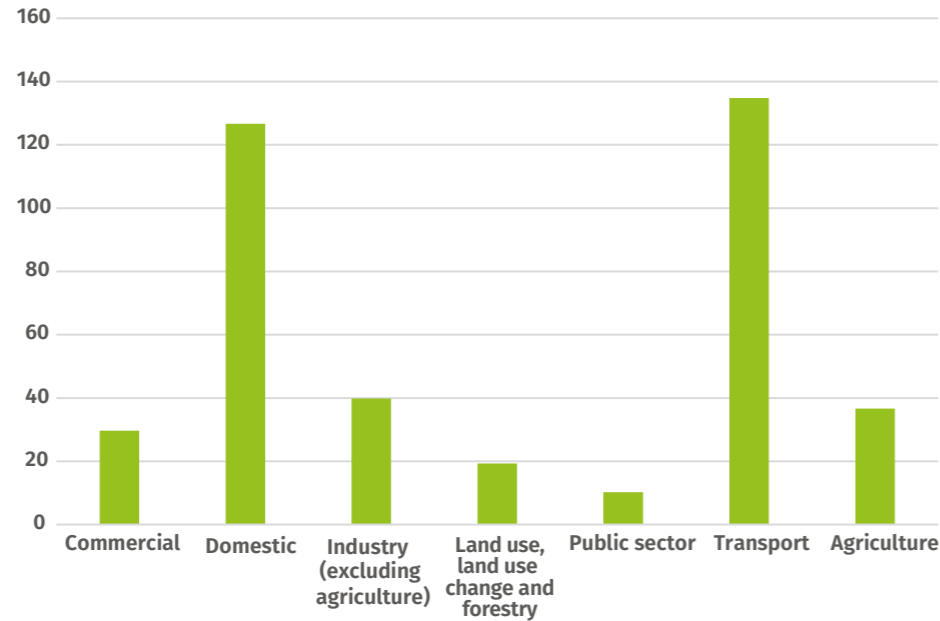
Source: Authors' analysis of UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics: 2005 to 2019 (BEIS 2021a)

Wales' devolution settlement gives the Welsh government significant powers to tackle the climate and nature crises. These include powers over transport, housing and economic planning. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the creation of a minister and deputy minister for climate change are unique in the UK and demonstrate the Welsh government's strong commitment to tackling the climate crisis. Major policy initiatives, such as pausing major road infrastructure projects on account of the climate emergency, indicate that climate action is being taken seriously by Welsh Government (Welsh Government 2021).

Despite Wales' devolved powers, many major policies that impact Anglesey continue to be steered from Westminster. This includes energy policy and, controversially, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Levelling Up Fund. These funds give Westminster the power to shape local infrastructure projects without consulting with Welsh government and moves decision-making power further away from communities like Anglesey.

Anglesey faces huge challenges to both decarbonise and avert the worst consequences of the climate crisis. It also has significant resources that will be crucial for aiding the transition to a more sustainable future.

2.
VISIONS OF THE FUTURE

CHILD-FRIENDLY LIVERPOOL – PROVIDING A GREENER, BETTER FUTURE BY BUILDING ON WHAT MAKES THE CITY REGION GREAT

SUMMARY OF THE PARTICIPANTS' VISION FOR LIVERPOOL'S NET ZERO FUTURE[1]

Liverpool should be a place that protects children's futures and ensures they feel safe, happy, and welcome, wherever they are in the city region. The public realm, particularly roads, should be a pleasant space for people to walk and cycle, with clean air and more space for street trees or urban meadows. The walk to school should provide a chance to play and an opportunity to encourage a connection with nature. A commitment to invest in children's future would mean youth centres and services are more accessible to all. All decisions made by local and regional government must be in line with addressing the climate crisis.

The city centre should be a low-car zone with more space freed up for greenery and social activities. Inclusive sustainable travel must be the easiest way to get around the city, with an improved bus network and local train services key to supporting more people to choose to leave the car at home or live car free. Neighbourhoods should be designed for all ages and people to live well, with the right mix of affordable and zero-carbon housing options. Better local amenities, services and shops would reduce people's need to drive and support them to adopt more sustainable behaviours – new community businesses can support people to buy local produce and zero-waste food, and to reuse, repair, or recycle other items. New communal gardens and allotments would encourage people to have a closer relationship with what they eat, and each other.

Through the response to the climate crisis, people can feel more connected to the decisions that affect them and community leaders can be given the resources to improve their areas, leading to improved trust in how the city is managed.

---

1   This vision of Liverpool's future is a summary of ideas put forward and discussed by participants during the second day of the workshop. They were asked to consider what the future of their neighbourhoods and city would look like if designed to make net zero achievable and support more sustainable behaviours. See appendix for further details on the process.

We need to think of ideas that immediately change the quality of life for kids, but also changing things now will help the kids' futures."

Insights from the Liverpool workshop

Participants in Liverpool want the region to be more child friendly and the needs of children to be central to decision-making. This would both ensure a successful response to the climate crisis, securing their future, and improve children's health and wellbeing today.

> *"The climate change issue – there should be more focus on the next generation. Liverpool policymakers at the moment, they are not family-focussed."*

> *"We need to think of ideas that immediately change the quality of life for kids, but also changing things now will help the kids' futures."*

There was significant concern within the group about the impact of congestion and poor air quality on children. Several participants reflected on how things had changed within their lifetime – many seeing the neighbourhoods they would have walked to school through as children now dominated by cars. As part of a wider shift to encourage greener journeys, they want to see immediate action to improve the environment around schools and make journeys to school safe, 'kid-friendly', playful and with opportunities for connections with nature along the way. Through the changes put in place for children, they saw the potential improvements for other users; safer, more walkable streets also help those with mobility aids to get around, for example:

> *"Sometimes the roads get congested, and people park on the pavement, so if a blind person is coming past or if they have a wheelchair, they have to go on the road first. Walking paths and roads need to be more accessible for people that have disabilities."*

The need to change how people travel, and the challenge in doing so fairly, was a key theme of the workshop. Participants came from different parts of the Liverpool City Region, some living closer to the city centre than others. However, they all predominantly relied on cars to get around. Within the group there was discussion about the potential benefits of electric vehicles, recognition that they were not affordable in the short term for all, concerns about their suitability for certain journeys, and an acknowledgement that a simple shift in the type of cars being used wouldn't solve the climate crisis or improve the environment locally. To shift behaviours, public transport would need to be more affordable and higher quality, with some wanting to see something comparable with Manchester's tram system:

> *"In Manchester, the tram system is integrated in their society, if they want to go to a match, or go to the Trafford Centre, they can go by tram. I don't know why it does not work here."*

For many, the only way to change things is to take more radical action:

> *"I would find a way to stop all cars from coming into the city centre – a car-free city a bit like Amsterdam."*

While believing that there are many things that could and should change as part of the response to the climate crisis, participants are proud of the city and its community spirit, and particularly of the neighbourhoods in which they live or grew up. For them, successful environmental action needs to build on what has already worked and makes the city a special place to live: its people. The importance of preserving and boosting community spirit was an essential issue for many of the participants. Achieving this means giving communities more power to shape and lead on climate responses:

> *"Our council is run by Westminster right now. The problem with that is they are so distant from Liverpool. We need trustworthy people."*

> *"Communities matter more. There is more trust in communities rather than a faceless bureaucrat."*

> *"Because we have lost faith in our local council, the community matters more because we understand that we are the driving force."*

Participants highlighted degenerated spaces and empty buildings within their neighbourhoods that had the potential to be used by communities as hubs that could support the shift to more sustainable behaviours. They also discussed how communities are already key to protecting natural spaces in the city and how these spaces can be central in bringing communities together:

> *"There are examples where parks are being threatened; communities are coming together to preserve those spaces. Nature is not just about having good communities to live in, but it can be a catalysing force to bring people together."*

Throughout the workshop, participants spoke with great affection for the parks, the communal green spaces, and the greenery dotted around the city. Some believed that parts of the city centre could incorporate more space for nature and that existing parks and green areas could benefit from maintenance and attention from local councils.

> *"We need to invest in the green spaces that we have got. We have great green spaces like Sefton Park and Princes Park, but they could do more. For example, they could make it more accessible for elderly people."*

> *"I think the Albert Dock could have more green; it's very concrete-like, there are no grassy areas."*

Participants saw the impact that developments were having on the city, its sense of community and the provision of green space. One reflected that:

> *"They just seem to be building new things everywhere – at what point is that going to stop, because you'll have to knock things down to create green space."*

Of particular concern was whether developments in the city centre are catering for families and older people or making it a place focused entirely on students and more transient populations who are "not going to want to contribute to the community":

> *"The way cities are being built, and places are being developed, are very age-dependent. Young people might move into flats in the city centre, but they probably don't want to put their roots down."*

Although many were happy with the city centre as a place to come for a day out or for work, there was a desire to see it reimagined to provide a greater sense of community and inspire more sustainable behaviours – a place you could spend time without spending money.
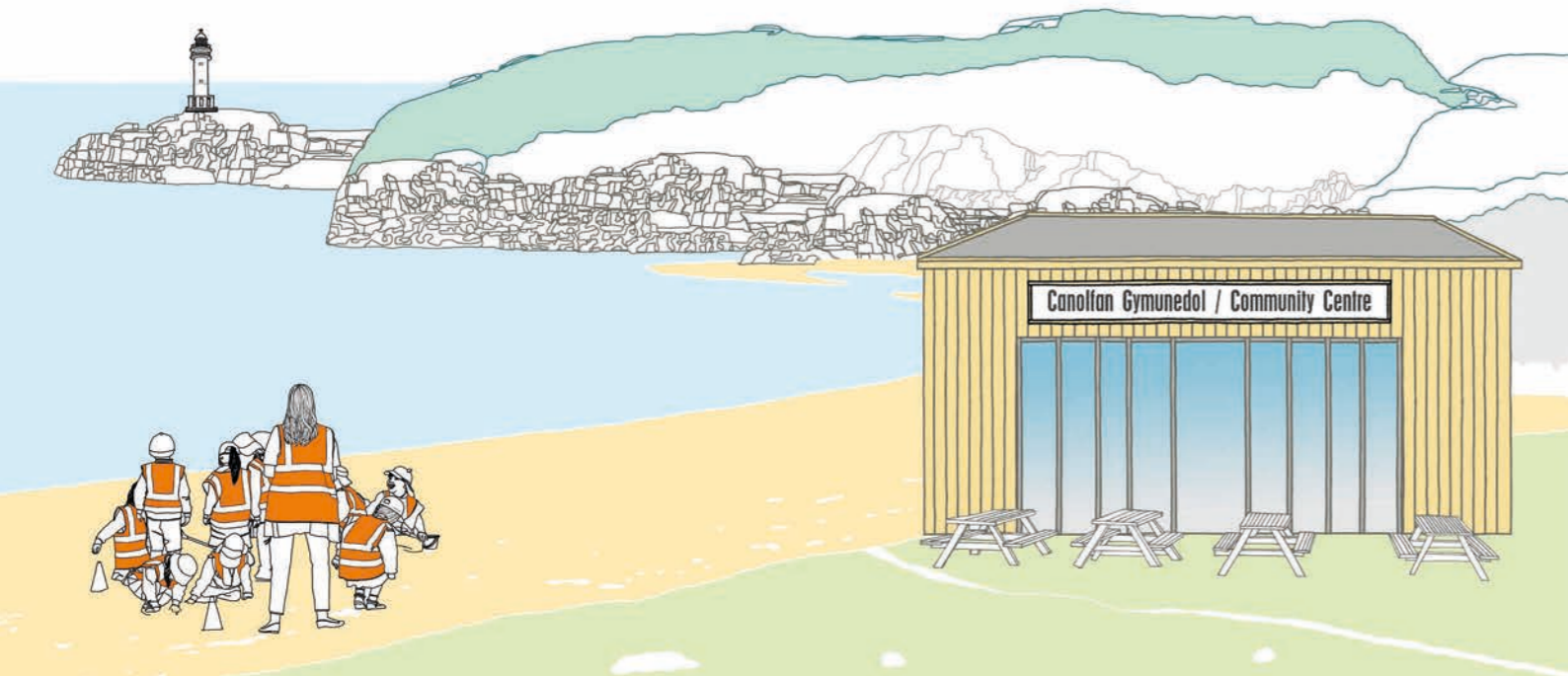
SUSTAINABLE ANGLESEY – A GREEN FUTURE THAT CELEBRATES ANGLESEY'S CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

SUMMARY OF THE PARTICIPANTS' VISION FOR ANGLESEY'S NET ZERO FUTURE[2]

Anglesey's sustainable future rests on understanding and celebrating the things that make it such a special place – the landscape, wildlife and the people who live there. Through its response to the climate crisis, people can develop a better understanding of and closer relationship with nature, working together to help wildlife to thrive. The Welsh language and local myths and stories should continue to play a central role in the island's future.

Community-led action for the environment should be the catalyst for wider changes in how the local economy works – more of the profits generated through its successful energy and tourism industries must stay on the island to support community businesses and the revival of its market towns, deliver affordable houses for young people, improve digital connectivity, and create new community spaces that can host the kinds of services that support people to live more sustainably.

People should be able to visit and travel around Anglesey in a way that benefits the economy but doesn't harm local life and nature – the area must become a model for sustainable tourism. Public transport needs to be designed to meet the needs of the local community and tourists, with investment put into connecting the smallest settlements with the main bus routes on the island. Getting around Anglesey without a car needs to be possible and convenient for all.

Insights from the Anglesey workshop

Anglesey's long social history and its natural heritage were a significant source of pride for participants. Throughout the workshop, they emphasised that the island's response to the climate crisis would need to be rooted in this history and make the most of its natural assets.

"We can educate people using our heritage, our language, our mythology."

"I would like to see Anglesey as the green model for the world… take our language and tradition seriously in its vision. We have the natural resources and community to do this."

They were clear that this did not mean that Anglesey should be an insular place. The connections to Wales, and beyond, would continue to be crucial to local people and the economy. In particular, tourism should remain a key feature on the island. However, this needed to work better for locals and be compatible with supporting nature to thrive.

" **I would like to see Anglesey as the green model for the world… take our language and tradition seriously in its vision. We have the natural resources and community to do this.** "

---

2   This vision of Anglesey's future is a summary of ideas put forward and discussed by participants during the second day of the workshop. They were asked to consider what the future of their villages and island would look like if designed to make net zero achievable and support more sustainable behaviours. See appendix for further details on the process.

"Tourism must not be intrusive to nature and animals. We need to be aware of this more and make sure that we educate locals and tourists as much as possible."

Through these discussions, the group raised concerns about the extractive aspects of the local economy – with developers, tourism agencies and other businesses making money from the island, despite not being resident, and not investing enough in its future.

"People coming in and buying land, parking spaces, and beaches who aren't from Wales; it leads to erosion of community."

"Money that's made on the island should stay on the island."

"There should be joined up development, done with people living in the area… We need to make sure that people brought up in the islands can stay on the island and work here."

Education was seen as a crucial starting point in encouraging more sustainable behaviours and participants wanted to see many more opportunities for people to learn about nature and climate action.

"Everybody needs to be educated on these matters, but also making it practical and relevant and easy to digest for people of Anglesey. It has to be something by locals for locals."

"In every community and every walk of life, you have a variety of people with different skill-sets, it would be brilliant to enable communities to carry out sustainable initiatives."

Participants saw an opportunity to make more of the assets in Anglesey, to the benefit of those who live there.

"If we have those energy projects on the island, why can't we benefit from it?"

"Local chapels and churches are being sold to developers to create holiday homes, but they should be used as communal spaces for locals. Reviving historic buildings, but using it as a way to gather and talk about the future."

How to fairly reduce carbon emissions from transport was a key theme of the workshop. Participants discussed how limited and infrequent public transport services and poor infrastructure on the island resulted in residents having to heavily rely on cars to travel for work, domestic or social reasons. This was further exacerbated by the number of cars connected with tourism, with few options available to tourists to travel sustainably. Although making electric vehicles more affordable and building better electric vehicle infrastructure were welcomed ideas, most felt that an overhaul of how public transport worked on the island was the priority.

"We need better bus routes and more bus routes. In some parts of Anglesey, there are no buses."

"You know how in London you have a day pass? It would be good to have something like that for tourists because it would mean less cars and they can then mingle with us."

"Having community ownership over mini transport schemes might work, it's like a local little industry that is ours. That also requires resources for it to work well."

They also saw the potential of this to reduce the need for people to travel as far through supporting new businesses to start on the island.

"There were market towns like Llangefni, Holyhead and Amlwch; they were fabulous. It would be lovely to have markets back, for the community."

"Most of the shops are geared to tourists, and are only open when tourists are around. They are pushing us locals to get things elsewhere, which adds more mileage to our journeys."

People also wanted to see cycling improved and more space for pedestrians.

"I would feel unsafe [to cycle] going from one village to the next at the moment."

"In towns we are lacking cycle lanes. Even if lanes do exist, they do not connect to shops and local amenities. So [if that happened] I would say that would be brilliant for Anglesey."

"We would like parts of our village to be pedestrianised. There is one main street in Bryn, and it gets very congested."

Throughout the workshop, participants highlighted how beautiful and peaceful Anglesey is, and the importance of preservation of its landscape and nature. There were growing concerns about the potential impact of climate change and rising sea levels and the impact this could have on local people and nature. They wanted to see flood defences on the island that worked with nature and for support for local wildlife to be central to how decisions were made about the island's future.

"We have a unique environment in Anglesey where red squirrels can thrive. How can we continue to make our wildlife and nature thrive?"
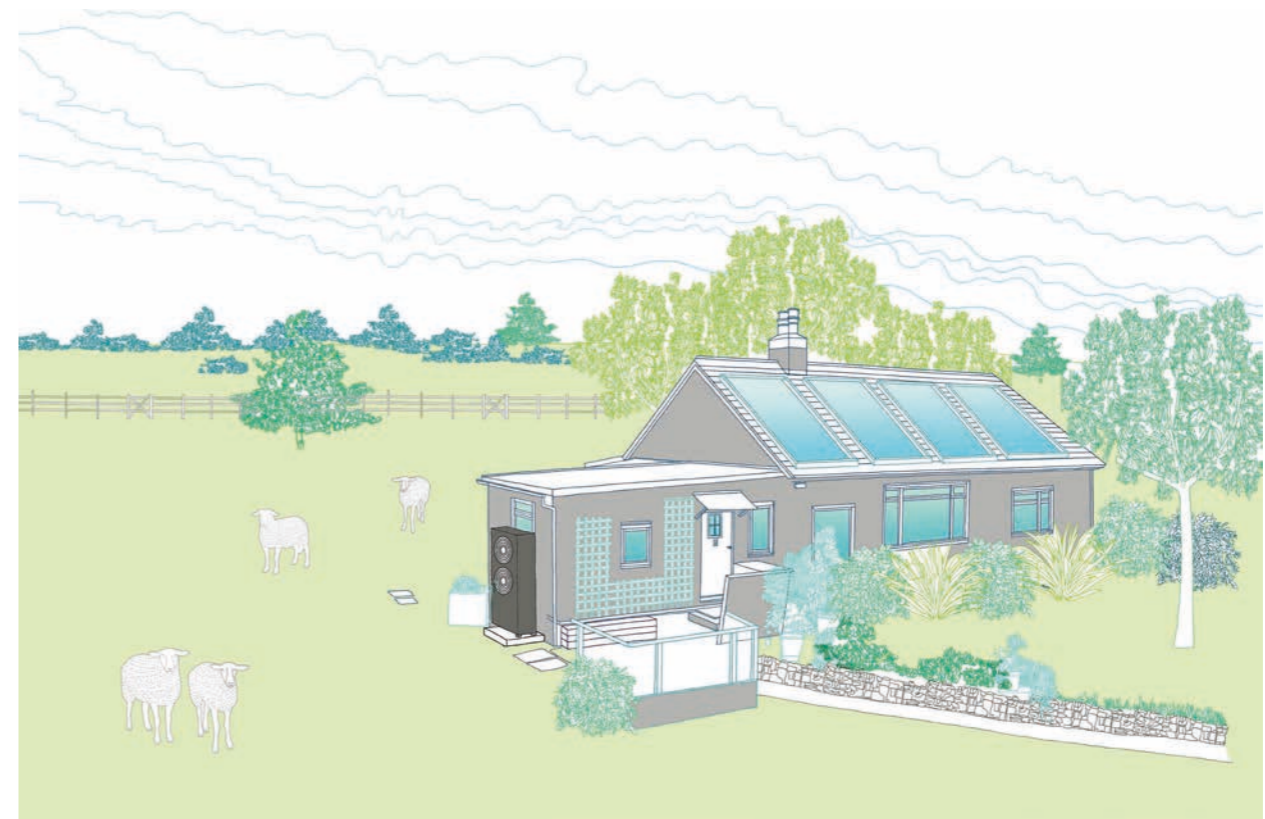
3.
POLICY PRINCIPLES FOR DESIGNING NET ZERO PLACES

The following principles emerged from the insights provided by our workshop participants. They capture the net zero future that our participants in Anglesey and Liverpool hope to see, and want governments to work with them to deliver.

How these principles are implemented will look different across different levels of government, but in all cases they should help decision makers to ensure communities benefit from action to address the climate crisis.

1. LEAVE NO PEOPLE OR PLACES BEHIND ON THE PATH TO NET ZERO
Our groups feel that they are being held back in the transition to net zero. To make sure places benefit from the resources they have, and that more of the benefits of the transition are kept locally, greater powers are needed for local areas.

Local authorities ultimately know their areas in a way that central government can't, and combined authorities can help coordinate action across different local areas at scale. Empowering subnational and local government is a necessary step to create policymaking structures that give local people a real say over net zero policy. Integrating activities such as citizens' assemblies and other similar initiatives into local decision-making processes will be critical for giving people a direct say and creating this new form of community-focused policymaking.

Currently, too much policy action is broad and doesn't focus on how specific groups – such as those on lower incomes, people less engaged with the topic, or older people – can be supported to make the changes needed. Local policymakers should give specific consideration to vulnerable or excluded groups in the design and delivery of net zero policy. The opportunity to engage – regardless of income, race, educational level, disabilities, and gender – is crucial if the transition is going to be successful and not add to existing inequalities.

2. HARNESS COMMUNITY PRIDE AND RESPOND TO WHAT MAKES PLACES SPECIAL – GIVE NEIGHBOURHOODS THE POWER TO SHAPE THE TRANSITION
The people we spoke with expressed immense pride in the places they are from. Instead of a one-size-fits-all approach to creating net zero places, policymakers should harness the pride and energy that communities have, and work with them to ensure the transition retains what makes places distinctive.

This principle for action should be implemented across all levels of government. It requires a shift in how we design net zero policy, which should be done with communities, not to them. A community covenant would see an agreed shift of power and resources to local government from central government, in exchange for their commitment to work with communities to enhance places (Webb et al 2022).

> In every community and every walk of life, you have a variety of people with different skill-sets, it would be brilliant to enable communities to carry out sustainable initiatives
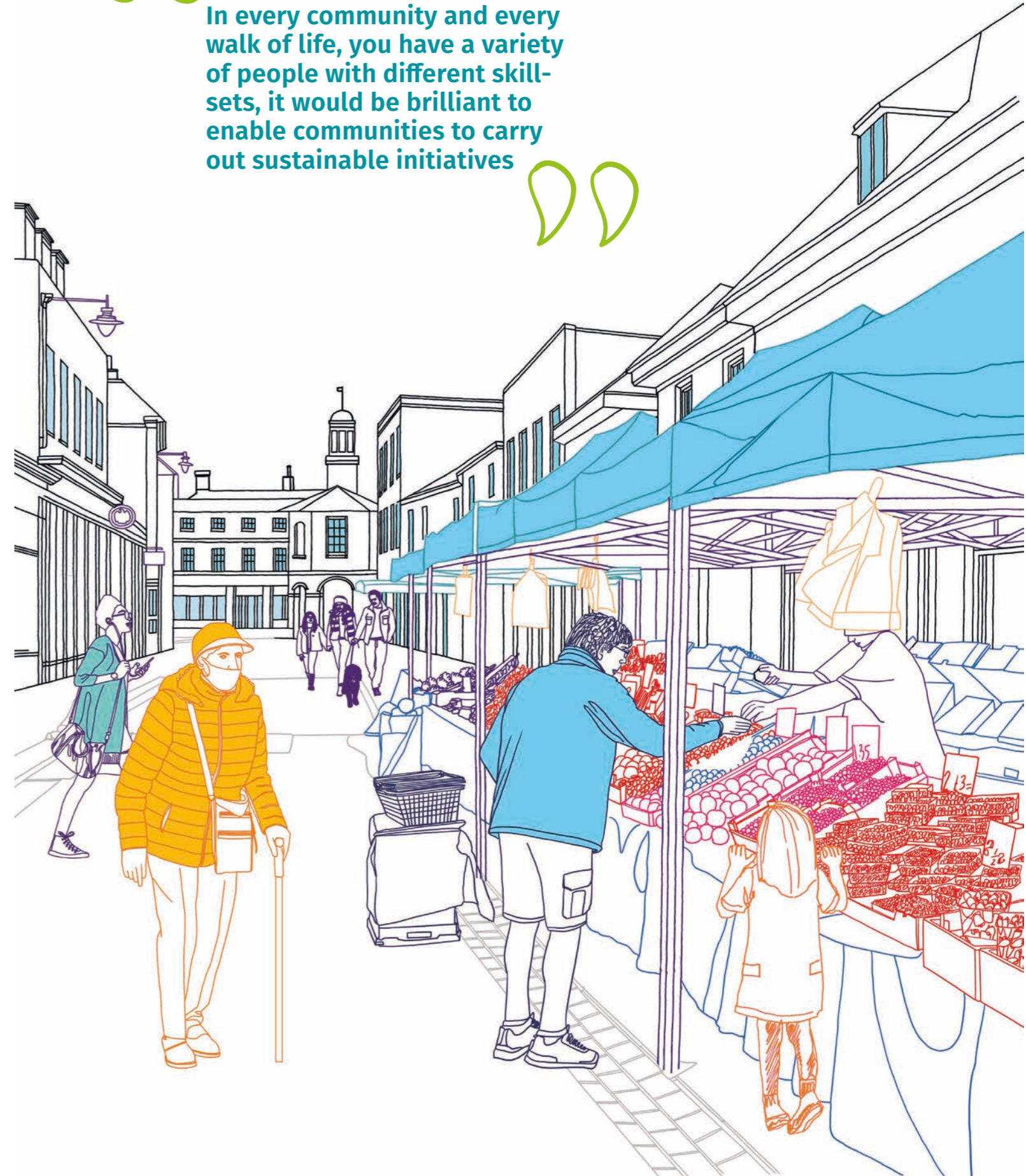
By shifting power towards communities, new approaches can be put in place to give the public a greater role in defining net zero policies. Neighbourhood or street votes would give local areas a say on what it is they want from the transition and what they believe the transition should look like where they live. For example, if residents on a street vote for more cycle storage and cycle infrastructure, this could be fed into and help shape planning and investment decisions. Local participatory budgeting, already committed to across Scotland, would provide communities with the resources to prioritise and make these changes themselves.

Engaging with communities at the neighbourhood level would also help deliver energy efficiency improvements in people's homes. Using ongoing participatory approaches to create new relationships between citizens and local authorities would help efforts to coordinate retrofit activity and deliver the scale of change required to the UK's housing with the urgency required.

3. GIVE COMMUNITIES OWNERSHIP OF ASSETS AND SHAPE A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY THAT WORKS FOR LOCAL AREAS

Talk of the green economy or green jobs will mean little if they don't deliver for the communities where they are located. Policymakers must ensure that local people benefit from the growth of green jobs, so that people in places like Anglesey and Liverpool have access to long-term employment locally. There are clear opportunities to be harnessed across the north of England and North Wales, with future hydrogen production and renewable energy generation likely to be major industries in the future.

To achieve this, communities should be given a greater say, both in terms of their ability to control assets and benefit from them. Community ownership will likely take different forms in different places, and could include direct ownership of renewable energy assets or working to develop community energy tariffs. Policymakers can play a proactive role in identifying where the opportunity for greater community ownership exists, such as the community-owned minibus scheme put forward by our participants in Anglesey, and empower it through convening and providing support to communities to access the funding that will help get these enterprises started. Existing businesses should also identify where they can help support communities to have a greater stake in the green economy, recognising the value this brings to the areas where they operate.

4. PROVIDE LOCAL ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT WITH OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE NATURAL WORLD

Education will be essential for people to understand what is at stake with the climate crisis and what they can do to tackle this. We heard from participants that people want reliable information, including any relevant financial support that they could access to make change happen – all in one place.

We recommend the creation of climate information hubs within communities that are funded by national government and administered by independent local not-for-profit groups. These would act as a source of information to people while also providing practical guidance on how households can finance activities such as switching to an electric vehicle or what individual actions they could take to reduce their carbon footprint.

These centres would also provide factual information about the climate and nature crises, as well as their impact at the local level. This would help communicate its consequences and give people further information about the actions they can take to respond to it.

Talk of the green economy or green jobs will mean little if they don't deliver for the communities where they are located
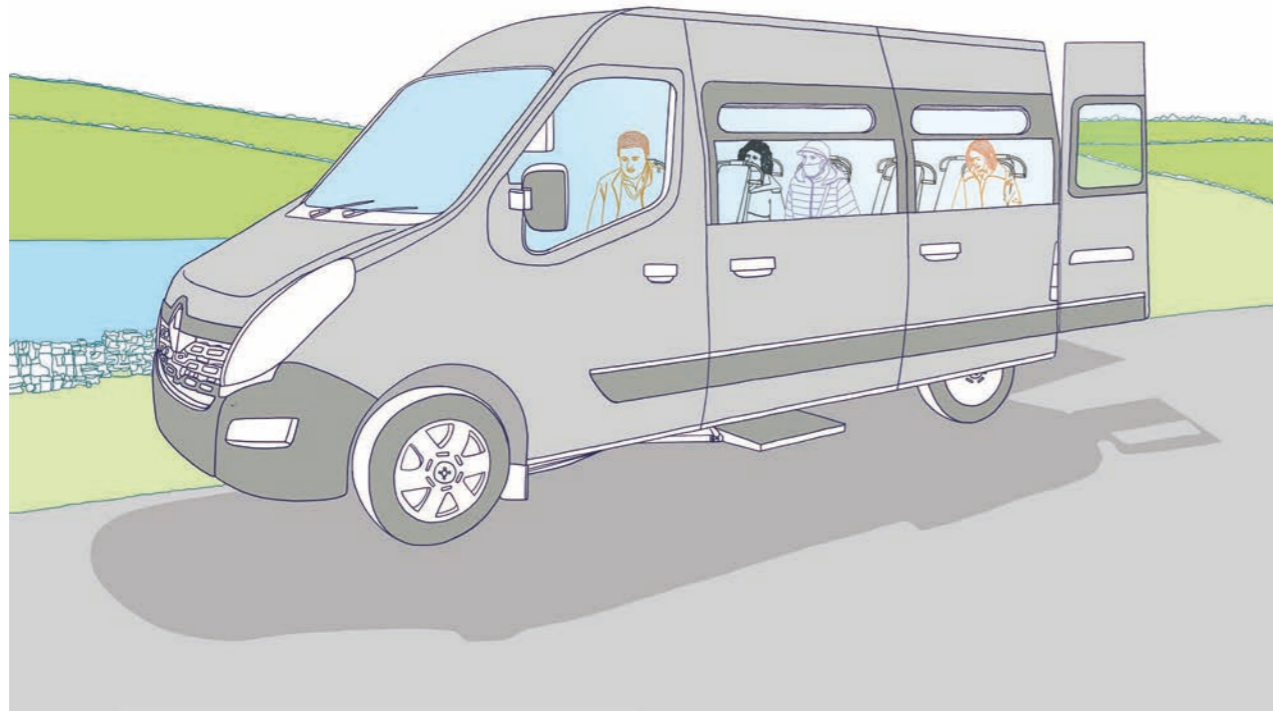
5. REIMAGINE PUBLIC TRANSPORT SO IT WORKS FOR EVERYONE

To reach net zero and deliver wider benefits in people's lives, we need to completely reimagine public transport. Far too many people are dependent on owning their own cars to access the things they need and care about – and this has to change.

While electrifying cars is an important part of the transition, there are many other benefits that could be unlocked by reducing the space taken up by cars. Better public transport and active travel options would make our places safer, reduce air pollution and provide more space for nature. This shift must be instigated by national governments pursuing a radical new approach to transport policy that is focused on modal shift.

Public transport must be free or low cost. Until it is cheaper and more convenient to take public transport, people won't switch away from cars. Public transport also needs to be comprehensive in its coverage and designed with communities in mind. In more rural places, this means designing more demand responsive transport. In urban areas, this means more integrated transport options to facilitate cheaper, seamless journeys across a city region.

6. CREATE PLACES FOR CHILDREN AND DESIGNED FOR THEIR FUTURE

Too often climate policy is designed without adequate consideration of what is at stake for children. For example, too many places – whether they are villages, towns, or cities – are not as safe and as welcoming for children as they could be. The net zero transition offers a chance to change this. By reclaiming spaces from cars and creating more green space, we can create safe streets for our children to walk or cycle to school, play, and learn about nature. Following the Welsh government's lead, the impact on future generations should be core to policymaking at all levels – all public investment and policy decisions must be compatible with supporting a thriving natural world, tackling the climate crisis and delivering long-term improvements in quality of life for everyone.

As well as making our public spaces more child friendly, we also need to connect young people to local opportunities in the green economy. Combined and local

authorities should be given greater powers over skills provision to ensure this aligns with future opportunities. Local labour clauses should be put in place for all climate and nature projects and businesses encouraged to recruit locally wherever possible.

7. MAKE SPACE FOR NATURE AND GREEN SPACES FOR PEOPLE

The climate and nature crises are inextricably linked and tackling them together is both necessary and offers opportunities for communities across the UK. The people we spoke with value the natural world and the green spaces near them; with local parks being seen as essential to both individual and community wellbeing. Wherever you live in the UK, it should be possible to see natural features from your home, with street trees and pocket parks the norm in urban neighbourhoods. People should be able to make their way to an accessible green space, such as a park, nature reserve or country walk, without needing to get in a car.

National governments must ensure that protections are put in place for green and wild spaces with investment available to ensure these are nature-rich and connected to each other through green corridors that allow wildlife to move safely within local areas and across the country.

Local authorities should work with relevant nature bodies to promote the diversity of green space, in all places. This includes places where people can sit and enjoy more landscaped greenery, and wild spaces that promote and enhance local biodiversity. Local authorities and major landowners should work collaboratively to ensure that their local plans look to expand green space in all its diverse forms, while also expanding access to green space for all people.

"
Wherever you live in the UK, it should be possible to see natural features from your home
"

REFERENCES

Boyle M, Crone S, Endfield G, Jarvis S and McClelland A (2019) Towards a Green Future for Liverpool City Region, Heseltine Institute for Public Policy, Practice and Place. https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/media/livacuk/publicpolicyamppractice/reports/Towards,a, Cleaner,and,Greener,City,(Long,Version).pdf

Brand C, Anable J and Marsden G (2021) The role of energy demand reduction in achieving net zero in the UK: Transport and mobility, CREDS. https://low-energy.creds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/CREDS-low-energy-demand-mobility.pdf

Buckland-Jones, S and Stevens R (2019) A plan for Wales' renewable energy sector: Essential actions to re-energise Wales by 2035, Institute for Welsh Affairs. https://www.iwa.wales/wp-content/media/2019/03/IWA_Energy_WP6_Digital-2.pdf

Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy [BEIS] (2021a) 'UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics: 2005 to 2019', dataset. https://data.gov.uk/dataset/723c243d-2f1a-4d27-8b61-cdb93e5b10ff/uk-local-authority-and-regional-carbon-dioxide-emissions-national-statistics-2005-to-2019

Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing [DLUHC] (2021a) 'Local government finance settlement 2021-22', webpage. https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/final-local-government-finance-settlement-england-2021-to-2022

Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing [DLUHC] (2021b) 'Local authority revenue expenditure and financing', webpage. https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-authority-revenue-expenditure-and-financing

Environmental Justice Commission (2021) Fairness and opportunity: A people-powered plan for the green transition, Final report of the Environmental Justice Commission, IPPR. http://www.ippr.org/research/publications/fairness-and-opportunity

Johns M (2021) Northern mayors: 100 days of a new term, IPPR North. https://www.ippr.org/research/publications/northern-mayors-100-days-of-a-new-term

Karvonen G and Guy S (2018) 'Urban Energy Landscapes and the Rise of Heat Networks in the United Kingdom', Journal of Urban Technology, 25(4): 19– 38. DOI: 10.1080 /10630732.2018.1463034

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government [MHCLG] Change in spending power: Final local government finance settlement 2015 to 2016. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/change-in-spending-power-final-local-government-finance-settlement-2015-to-2016

Natural Resources Wales [NRW] (2017) 'Public Service Board – Anglesey County Council Environmental information for well-being assessments', information document. https://www.llesiantgwyneddamon.org/Uploads/Pages/Documents/3-4-4-24-1-Natural-Resources-Wales-Anglesey-Information.pdf

Office for Budget Responsibility [OBR] (2021) 'Public finances databank' February/March 2021, adjusted', dataset. https://obr.uk/data/

Powell J, Keech D and Reed M (2018) What Works in Tackling Rural Poverty: An Evidence Review of Interventions to Improve Access to Services, Wales Centre for Public Policy. https://www.wcpp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/An-evidence-review-of-interventions-to-improve-access-to-services.pdf

Webb J, Johns M, Roscoe E, Giovannini A, Qureshi A and Baldini R (2022) State of the North 2021/22: Powering northern excellence, IPPR North. https://www.ippr.org/research/publications/state-of-the-north-2021-22-powering-northern-excellence

Welsh Government (2021) 'Freeze on new roads projects to be announced', press release. https://gov.wales/freeze-new-roads-projects-be-announced

APPENDIX: OUR APPROACH

We conducted research in Liverpool City Region and Anglesey. They serve as useful case studies for understanding the hopes and concerns of communities in a) metropolitan city regions and b) dispersed rural places comprised of small towns, villages, and more remote communities.

There are many other types of places that our case studies might not capture. Where possible through this research, we try to reflect on some broader lessons that might be relevant to those areas too.

To ensure that this research was responsive to local opportunities and challenges, IPPR North hosted a roundtable with policy experts in transport, business, housing, local government, and energy for each region.
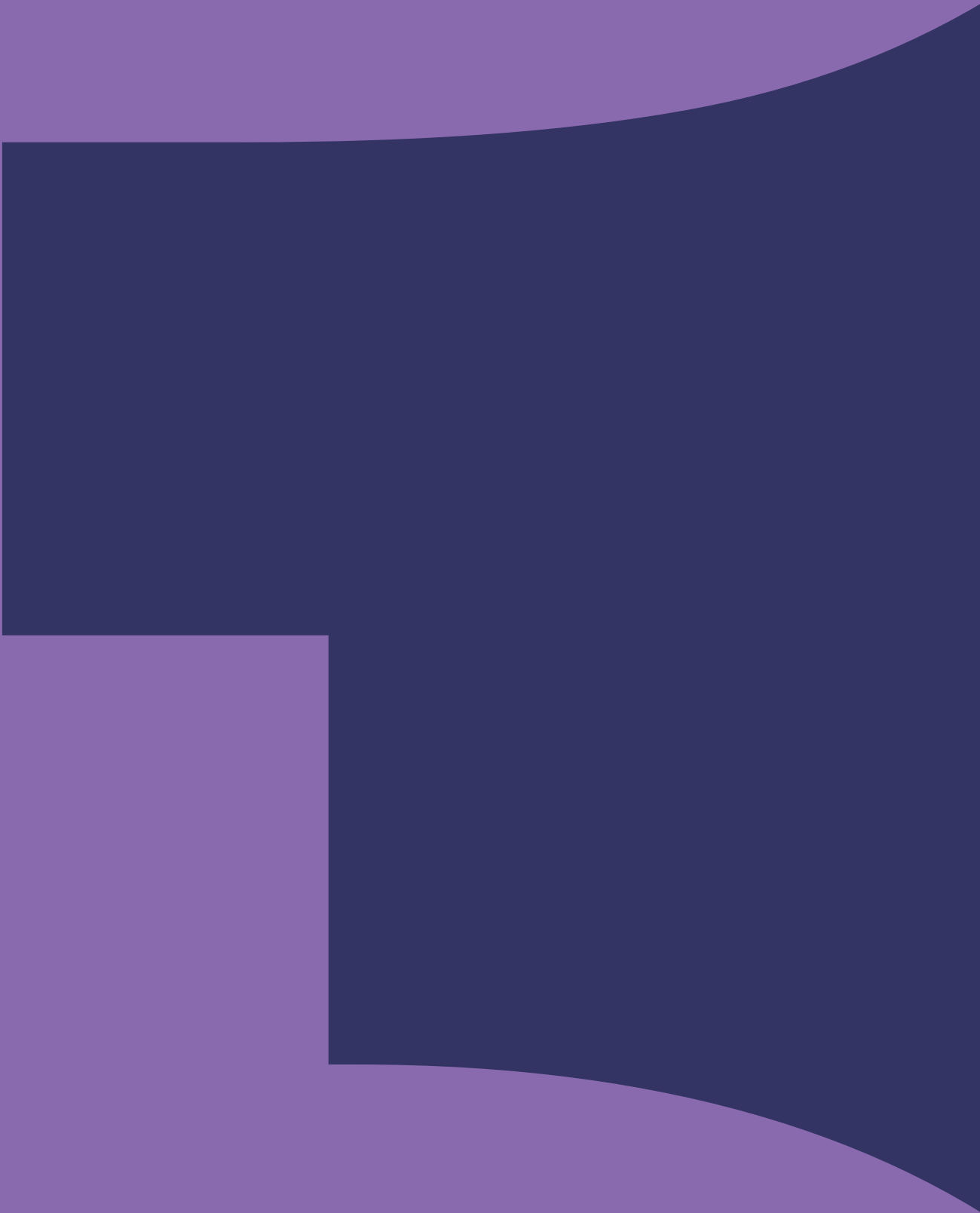
Organisations attending policy roundtables	
North West England	**North Wales**
Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership	Bangor University
	Bevan Foundation
Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership	
	Community Housing Cymru
Manchester City Council	
	Denbighshire Local Council (attending on behalf of the Welsh Local Government Association)
N8 Research	
Northern Powerhouse Partnership	
	Institute for Welsh Affairs
Northern Housing Consortium	
	North Wales Economic Ambition Board
North West Business Leadership Team	
	ScottishPower
ScottishPower	
	Wales Centre for Public Policy
Tameside Council	
	Welsh Government, North West Wales Regional Office
Transport for the North	

At the heart of this project were two deliberative workshops involving residents from Liverpool City Region and Anglesey. Deliberative workshops are designed to allow participants to consider an issue in depth and discuss this together before reaching an informed conclusion.

The Liverpool City Region workshop took place on 30 and 31 October 2021 with 12 residents, and Anglesey's was held on 6 and 7 November 2021 with 14 residents. The residents were recruited to be broadly representative of the demographics of their region by age, gender, ethnicity, and income/occupation. They covered the geographic breadth of each area. Participants started the workshop with a range of attitudes to, and different levels of knowledge of, climate change. The total time commitment for participants was eight hours and they received a financial incentive.

This workshop took the format of a 'futures workshop' – a method that engages people in an exploration of the current situation before collaborating with them to imagine a preferred future. Participants started by getting to know each other and sharing their existing levels of knowledge and concern about the climate crisis. They were then provided with a brief introduction to the climate crisis and net zero. Participants were then asked to discuss how they currently travelled and what they liked about the design of their communities. On the second day the focus was on creating shared visions of how their neighbourhoods and villages, as well as the wider region, should respond to the climate crisis and what they could look like in 2030 and beyond.

Institute for Public Policy Research

The progressive policy think tank

GET IN TOUCH