

Developing York & North Yorkshire's Routemap to Carbon Negative

Community Climate Action Session

9th June 2022

Attendees: Trevor Barlow (Circular Malton CIC), Harry Baross (Scarborough Borough Council), Anda Baumerte (Northern Powergrid), Issy Burkitt (City of York Council), Sonal Choudhary (University of York, Management School), Tracey Flint (Hambleton District Council), Simon Gibbon (Climate Action Stokesley and Villages), Steffi Harangozo (North Yorkshire County Council, Energy Team), Ruth Stacey (North Yorkshire County Council, Energy Team), Caryn Loftus (Esk Energy and Climate Action Stokesley and Villages), Fiona Protheroe – (Craven District Council), Victoria Russell – (Community First Yorkshire), Joe Smee (Community Energy South), David Stone (Coast and Vale Community Action), David Tonge (Thirsk Friends of the Earth)

Staff: Katie Thomas (Senior Strategy Manager), Katie Privett (Energy Programme Lead), Erin Wheeler (Circular Economy Officer)

1. Session purpose

- 1.1 Following the analysis of stakeholder feedback from York and North Yorkshire's Routemap to Carbon Negative consultation, the session was focused on addressing key themes from the feedback in relation to the subject of community climate action.
- 1.2 The aims of the session were to:
 - (1) Agree a revised set of aims for the Communication, Engagement, and Movement Building section of the Routemap;
 - (2) Agree further interventions required and scope; and
 - (3) Agree key challenges/risks/ dependencies and mitigation approach.

2. Key messages from consultation feedback

- 2.1 KT provided an overview of the key messages from the stakeholder consultation in relation to the Communication, Engagement, and Movement Building section. This included:
 - There is a gap in how **communities can communicate to larger strategic organisations** and be **part of creating the regional vision and strategic projects**.
 - How can we go **beyond just gaining buy-in** from communities?
 - Concern around the Routemap being a very **top-down approach**.
 - Need to incorporate **young people's voices**.
 - There needs to be a **greater emphasis on the people who this will impact**, their co-benefits, and subsequently empowering communities to lobby for change.
 - Importance of **protecting vulnerable communities**.
 - Lack of mention of the **climate action/environmental groups** that are already in existence in the region. Economies of scale could be achieved combining the Climate Action groups with councils.
 - Importance of local, **community energy projects**.
 - The **circular towns and communities network** is a good example of a cross-cutting network. Could other similar networks be established?
 - Need to **create behavioural change**. Needs to be a strong focus on **evidence-based and tested citizen behaviour change campaigns**.

3. Strategic priorities: discussion around revising strategic priorities

3.1 The group discussed a series of questions arising from the stakeholder consultation, and whether the elements should be incorporated into the Communication, Engagement, and Movement Building section. A summary of the discussion is included in the table below:

Topics/Summary of Key Discussion Points
Overarching Feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It was recognised that the Routemap is ambitious, but it could be overwhelming to many people. In order to empower households and communities to take action, we need simple, tangible actions that can deliver quick wins, alongside tracking/monitoring to quantify our success, so that the public can see the benefit of the Routemap.• There are good examples of reporting through the Eco Schools scheme, as it is shown in a clear, visual, and accessible format.• As the Routemap is so ambitious, there was some concern about it's potential success if we tried to reach it in one go, and a phased approach was favoured.
What do we want to achieve?
Empower community climate action
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Showcasing the benefits of net-zero for communities is key.• We could drive engagement through hyperlocalisation - breaking our targets down to a town/community level to help make them more realistic and relevant for communities.• Equally, it was agreed that any behaviour change campaigns are targeted at a micro level should help drive action as residents feel that the whole town is involved in climate action that is grassroots, not top-down.
Flexible, holistic approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The group agreed that the Routemap should recognise that communities will have different challenges and starting points to reach net-zero, so the Routemap needs a broad focus, with flexible initiatives that take this into account.• This should be underpinned by flexible support that can help communities reach the targets set out in the document.
Incorporating young people's voices
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is already action in the region to bring young people's voices into climate action, so it is a matter of mapping and leveraging existing initiatives rather than creating new ones.
Increased coordination of community groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is a need to drive connection and communication between community groups and initiatives, to best leverage effective action. At the moment, there is a tendency for similar initiatives to run concurrently without knowledge of the other – creating a plan to synergise action and share ideas could be crucial to drive change. One example of this is the multiple mapping exercises currently happening within the region, which could be shared between organisations.• We should be looking at awareness raising (predominantly about decarbonisation), enabling and supporting communities and community organisations to achieve their own objectives and projects, and partnering with community organisations to deliver shared objectives and 'co-benefits' of decarbonisation.
Increased coordination between local authorities and voluntary groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Group agreed that there should be a clear definition between the work best carried out by councils, what is best supported by community and voluntary groups, and how these two lines of action complement each other.

- For some functions (e.g. energy advice, project coordination) paid expertise may be valuable, and free up time for voluntary groups to focus on other actions that they are better-equipped to handle.
- YNY should take the opportunity for a new council to help share best practice and create roles that can support delivery of the Routemap. The new council is due to sign off on the Routemap, and will be partially responsible for delivery, and the new combined authority should have funding to support new roles and projects.

Community energy projects

- It was recognised that community involvement was vital to helping local authorities (LAs) decarbonise, either through energy reduction initiatives, or energy generation projects.
- Energy reduction initiatives could deliver benefits more quickly than energy generation projects, as the latter is dependent on improving Grid infrastructure.
- With large parts of North Yorkshire still reliant on oil boilers, community energy is a natural partner to support the shift to clean power. LAs need to support these initiatives and recognise their potential impact in reaching carbon-negative.

Lessons learnt from Northern Powergrid (Anda Baumerte)

- It was noted that there was a lack of three key elements – funding, partnerships, and capacity building – when it comes to community climate action. Anda Baumerte from Northern Powergrid (NPg) spoke about the interventions NPg is putting in place in these areas, including recognising the advocacy role of community groups:
- Community energy is defined as any type of energy project with local ownership & control – the fact that it is something tangible & has lots of momentum behind it helps drive engagement.
- NPg believe community energy groups are integral to delivering net-zero, and want to ensure everyone can benefit from energy transition, including vulnerable people.
- NPg have had a programme of community energy since 2014, but have seen a significant uptake of activity and interest since 2020; over the past 2 years, they have had over 6,000 engagements with community groups around community energy.
- To support these groups, NPg offer regular events and training sessions, a quarterly newsletter, and work with other community energy groups & funders, such as Community Energy England.
- Community Energy England will be publishing their state of the sector report shortly; NPg will also be publishing a similar report of the regional landscape, which Anda is happy to share with the group.
- NPg have started a mapping activity of community energy groups.
- Key barrier for these groups is lack of capacity, as they are predominantly run on volunteer time, as well as a lack of expertise – there is significant knowledge needed to provide correct advice.
- There is also a lack of funding and grid connection costs – Government could support organisations with the latter.
- Regulation currently doesn't allow net-zero to be the most effective cost option for projects, which can also be an issue.
- Community Energy South has also been designing a framework of support for community energy projects in North East and Yorkshire, and developing a network. There are 3 key elements: a bespoke package of support with a peer-to-peer mentoring programme, a regional network to link people up and feed information both down and up, steering group for the work during this project and directing the framework post-project. There is an event to launch the network: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/338958924267>

4 Developing further interventions

4.1 Discussion included developing further interventions around the following areas:

- **Young people:** working with the youth forums or aligning with the work to engage young people that Jos Holmes (NYCC Climate Action Coordinator) is exploring, we can create concerted action.
- **Community groups:** support in transitioning to social enterprises could be beneficial, as this would allow projects to self-sustain once they're established.
- **Community gardens:** can be difficult to set up due to the need for coordination between landowners and communities, and a skills exchange is needed to ensure accessibility, but could assist with the cost-of-living crisis.
- **Nudge campaigns:** to enable consumers to make more sustainable choices, particularly in food shopping, and integrating sustainable food procurement in public sector and sustainable choices in schools.
- **Active travel projects:** have previously suffered from lack of investment, but could deliver co-benefits in creating healthier, as well as sustainable, communities.
- **Community heat pumps:** raised as a potential pilot study.
- **Community energy:** there was a suggested target of 1/3 of renewables to be under community ownership. However, we need to discuss with communities what they are interested in working on in terms of getting to net-zero – this is crucial to securing buy-in from communities.
- **Improving council messaging:** there is the desire to see strong, positive messaging around net-zero from the new unitary council.

5. Challenges & Risks

5.1 The group identified a number of key challenges and risks in delivering the strategic priorities and interventions:

Lack of funding: It was noted that the progress of many carbon reduction/active travel/circular economy projects is stymied by lack of funding, and that if we are to achieve our aims as set out in the Routemap, we must ensure that there is funding available to support communities to put these projects in place.

Community engagement: The issue of reaching 20-40-year-olds was raised, as these groups may offer a significant benefit in accelerating climate action, but are neither reachable through schools and may not read local newspapers – Anda Baumerte of NPg is running a community energy training session shortly which may help address this.

6. Next Steps

6.1 The Y&NY LEP team will revise the Routemap's Communication, Engagement, and Movement Building section following the feedback and outcomes from the workshop. Further stakeholder engagement will be undertaken to develop interventions as required.

6.2 Y&NY's Routemap to Carbon Negative will then be going to the main LEP Board in July for sign-off, followed by an official launch in October 2022.