



Climate Change and Young People in Copeland:

A series of youth group activities
run in conjunction with the
Copeland People's Panel on
Climate Change



Acknowledgements

Thank you to the **young people** that participated in these sessions and contributed their valuable input that informs this report. We would also like to acknowledge the work of **Rachel Thomson** from the [Shackles Off Youth and Community Project](#) and **Jacq Darby** of the [South Whitehaven Youth Partnership](#) who worked with Peter Bryant of Shared Future to design the workshops as well as the youth workers who ran each session and collected the responses used in this report including Joanne Pears Lead Youth Development Worker: The Phoenix Youth Project and Christine Pattinson: Distington Club for Young People. The work was delivered through funding from [Cumbria Action for Sustainability](#).

About the authors

The content of this report was written by Maria Lucien of Shared Future using insights and perspectives from youth groups and the Copeland People's Panel on Climate Change. No legal responsibility can be accepted for any loss or damage resultant from the contents of this document. It does not necessarily represent the view of Shared Future in relation to particular policy of projects.

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We are a community interest company working across the UK. Our aim is to provide an excellent service that makes a difference to communities and individuals and works towards a fairer, more equal society. Our mission is to move those we engage with towards greater individual and collective authority and autonomy, by supporting their ability to act wisely, confidently and in community with others. Since setting up Shared Future in 2009, we've built a team of experienced practitioners with a diverse range of skills. We work together on worthwhile and stimulating projects that reflect our personal values.

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Produced February 2021



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Executive Summary

Four workshops on climate change were run in conjunction with the Copeland People's Panel on Climate Change with seven youth groups across Copeland. The workshops were an attempt to bring the voices and perspectives of young people into the local climate change debate, as well as to inform the People's Panel on what young people want in climate change policy. The aims of the workshop were to understand how young people see their communities and their futures, how they perceive climate change, and what they would like to see done in their neighbourhoods to tackle climate change.

In the first session, young people were asked to map their local communities to get a sense of how they view their areas, and in the second session, they were asked to envision what they thought their communities and their futures would look like in 20 years. They were only told that the workshops were on climate change in the third session, and the last two sessions focused on introducing the young people to climate change and getting them to suggest recommendations to feed back to the Copeland People's Panel.

Findings from these workshops show that young people are highly perceptive about where improvements could be made to their standard of living in their local area, and also show a great degree of concern about climate change. However, it is clear that young people, though many are knowledgeable about climate change from learning about it in school, often do not have specific information about climate change contributions in their local area – many were surprised at the actual statistics and information about climate change.

When young people were asked about their opinions on solutions to climate change in their local area, many reluctant to respond, stating that they felt there was no point in expressing their opinions as they felt no one listened to or cared about what young people thought. Most young people suggested solutions revolving around accessibility and affordability of public transport, using alternative modes of transport, and reducing waste and recycling. However, they also mentioned many solutions that would benefit their communities such as planting trees and having more public facilities such as toilets and bins, or more lighting on the cycle paths.



Introduction

This series of workshop activities for youth groups in Copeland was run in conjunction with the [Copeland People's Panel on Climate Change](#) as a way of bringing the voices and perspectives of young people into the climate change debate in Copeland. Young people may often feel marginalised, or unheard, especially in discussions around local policy and climate issues – issues which many young people are impacted by and feel quite strongly about. Experience has shown that this marginalisation can happen even within deliberative processes such as citizens' juries.

These workshops were developed in order to get a sense of youth perspectives on this critical issue and to incorporate these perspectives into the work of the Copeland People's Panel. The workshops ran over four sessions with seven youth groups, using games and activities to get young people thinking

about climate change, and how it impacts and influences their everyday lives and the area that they live in. Sessions were structured around building an informal and relaxed environment for young people to feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and opinions on how they viewed their local area and climate change, and what they thought could be done about it. Workshop activities were designed in conjunction with youth workers; Jacq Darby ([South Whitehaven Youth Partnership](#)) and Rachel Thomson ([Shackles Off](#)).

Following the workshops, the findings from the youth groups were collated, and presented to the Copeland People's Panel. Panel members then took the feedback and input from youth groups into account when writing their recommendations. Many panel members commented that they were glad to hear from young people, and that their perspectives had not gone unheard.



How did we do it?

The workshop activities took place between 16 August 2021 and 6 September 2021 across seven youth groups in Copeland over four sessions. Each session's activities were facilitated and run by youth workers who were trusted by the attending young people. Youth groups were run in the following areas:

- Seascale
- Millom
- Frizington
- Cleator Moor
- Whitehaven: Mirehouse & Woodhouse
- Distington

A total of 62 young people between the ages of 11 and 19 participated in the sessions. While attendance at each session was variable due to availability of both participants and facilitating youth workers, the average demographic in attendance across all sessions in each area is shown below:

	Average attendees	Percentages of totals	
		Males %	Females %
Seascale	7	65	35
Millom	3	40	60
Frizington	9	97	3
Cleator Moor	7	70	30
Mirehouse	15	33	67
Woodhouse	8	50	50
Distington	6	N/A*	N/A*
Averages:	8	59	41

*Data on gender distribution not available

On average, each session had around 8 participants and average gender distribution was 59% male and 41% female across all sessions.

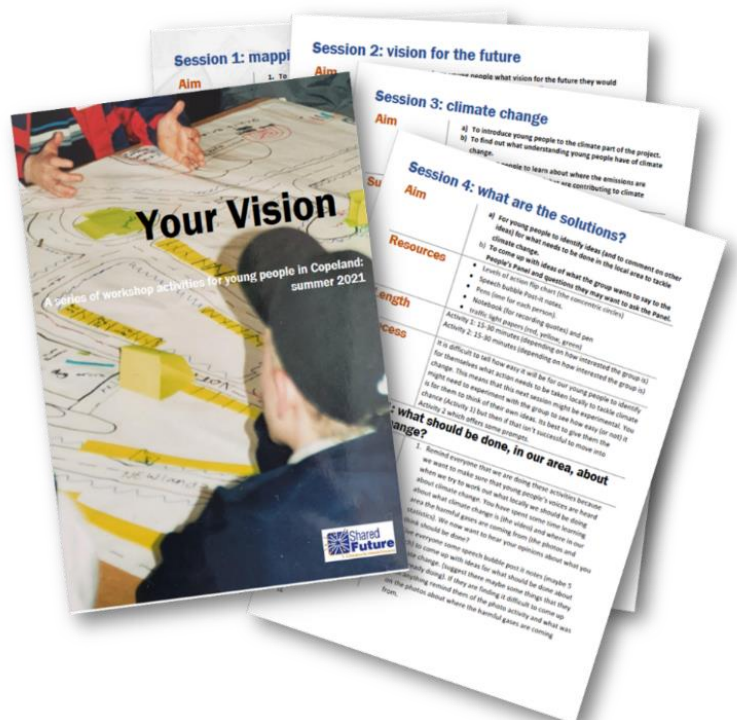
The overall aims of the workshop sessions were to:

- Enhance the inclusivity of deliberative spaces such as citizens' panels and juries by including the perspectives and experiences of local youth
- Frame the concept of climate change and policy in a comfortable environment to lay the foundation for further youth engagement with climate change

- Inspire and encourage young people to think about climate change in their local area
- Address the feeling among young people that they are being marginalised, or unheard, by giving them a platform
- Understand how young people view their communities, and what they envision for their future in a world impacted by climate change

Over four evening sessions, young people were asked about how they perceived their communities and neighbourhoods, and what they envisioned for their futures, and the future of their communities. After this, they were gently introduced to climate change and encouraged to think about where carbon emissions come from in Copeland, and how their communities contribute to climate change. They were then asked what they felt could be done about this, and how this could be communicated to the Copeland People's Panel.

Detailed instructions on all the tools were included in a 24-page resource guide which was shared with all youth groups as well as a box of resources.



Tool 1: Community Mapping

At this initial stage, youth groups were not made aware that the project was on the subject of climate change. Participants worked in their youth group to look at hand drawn large-scale maps of their local area, identifying familiar features and landmarks. They were then asked to write three positive, and three negative things that they associated with their locality. Participants were asked to explain their responses, and to think of three words to describe their local area.



Tool 2: Visualisation and Mapping

Young people were asked to think about how their communities would look in 20 years through a visualisation exercise. Participants then wrote or drew what they saw in their visualisations and chose three words that best described their visions.

Building on the map from Tool 1, participants mapped out positive visions or changes for their communities in 20 years.

Tool 3: Climate Change - One word 'shout-out' and Card Matching

Finally, the process introduced young people to climate change. Participants reflected on and shared their ideas and perspectives on climate change ahead of the activity, after which they wrote one word, image or phrase that they associated with climate change. These were then shared with the group anonymously. After watching a [short introductory video on climate change from the BBC](#), they took part in a group discussion about what they thought of the video.

Photographs were used to represent sources of emissions alongside A5 cards of statistics on carbon emissions. The information used for this activity were drawn from the People's Panel session on local emissions as well as those issues that members of the Panel had spoken about in their first few sessions. Participants were asked to match the card to the photograph they felt



corresponded to the statistic. Youth leaders then led a discussion with participants about why they made those choices, prompting conversations about the sources of emissions in Copeland.

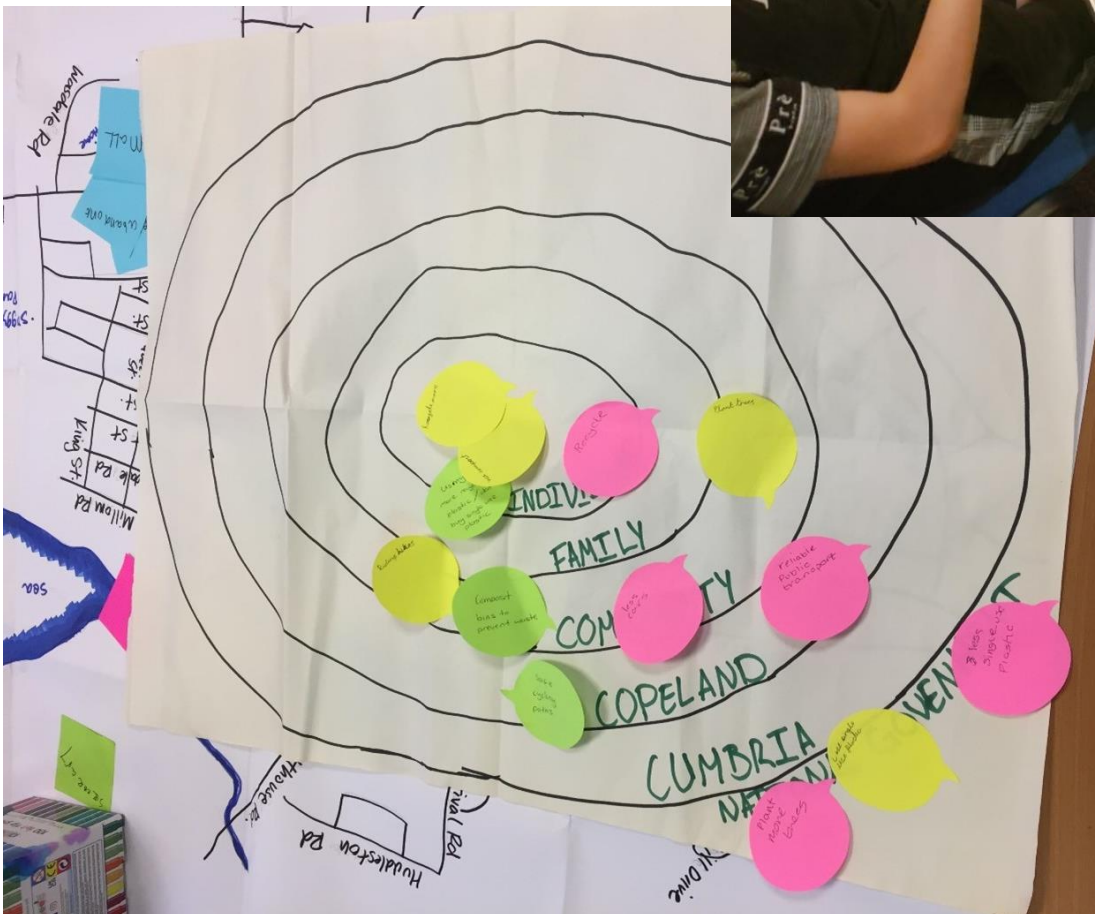
Tool 4: Concentric Circle Mapping, and Ranking

This tool was used in the last session to help young people identify ideas and solutions for their local area to respond to climate change, allowing them to think about what they might want to say to the People’s Panel and questions they may want to ask. Using a concentric-circles flip chart, participants put their ideas for what can be done on different levels (individual, community, councils and national government). They were also asked to explain why they chose their ideas, and what impact these solutions could have.

If youth workers felt this activity might be too difficult for some groups, they were also given the opportunity to rank the recommendations from the Kendal Citizens’ Jury on Climate Change held in 2020 (see below for the full list) to get a sense of what kind of solutions can be used to tackle climate change in Cumbria.

Participants were asked to raise a red card if they did not like the idea, a yellow card if they were unsure, and a green card if they felt that the idea

was a good one. This helped to prompt a discussion on what kind of solutions could be useful to Copeland, and why they felt some solutions may not be useful. This also helped to segue into a conversation about what the youth groups might want to say, and what ideas they would like to suggest to the Panel.



Research Findings and Key Themes

How do young people see their communities/neighbourhoods?

Tool 1: Community Mapping

The aim of the first session was primarily to introduce young people to the project and hear from them what they did and did not like about the areas they lived in.

**The infographics below show the responses from young people during the sessions – bigger speech bubbles show responses that were mentioned more often, and smaller speech bubbles show responses that were not mentioned as frequently.*

When asked to identify positives about their community and neighbourhood, young people spoke of enjoying available recreational areas such as cricket pitches, parks etc, as well as their local businesses and takeaways. They also talked a lot about having their family and friends. Generally, they mostly mentioned feeling safe in their communities, with some exceptions because of drugs and violence, and for some, they felt scared in certain areas: for example, one said he did not like it when all the drunk people came out of one of the local pubs. A 'dirty' environment and litter was also mentioned by some groups.

Young people often described their communities as 'boring' – they felt all too often that there was not much to do in their neighbourhoods. Some mentioned that the rural aspect of their area was comforting, but others disagreed suggesting that their villages were *'in the middle of nowhere'* and *'there isn't anything to do'*. Many youths cited their youth group as one of their positives about their community, with some stating that there was *'nowhere to go when youth club isn't on'*, and another saying:

'The youth club in our area is good crack, we get to socialise with our friends in a safe environment and have lots of fun.'



One of the groups said that there was no access to a bus in their neighbourhood, and that the train was unreliable and expensive. There were some concerns about the upkeep of the area as well, with some saying there were not enough bins around their neighbourhood, and the lack of lighting on the cycle track making them feel unsafe. Some described their neighbourhoods as 'dirty' and 'scruffy'. Some issues brought up included:

'No lighting on the cycle track, so it feels very unsafe.'

'Not enough bins around the estate.'

'The old care home building looks awful and is very dangerous.'



One youth group, when asked to describe their area, said ‘limited choices’ and ‘nothing’. Furthermore, one of the youth groups felt that the rural nature of the area resulted in a lack of accessible and affordable transportation in their area, as well as a lack of job prospects, with one young person stating that one of the negatives of their community was the ‘crap employment’.

How do young people see a positive future for the area?

Tool 2: Visualisation and Mapping

The aim of this session was to get participants thinking about what a positive future could look like for them, using visualisation exercises to help them imagine an ideal future.

Interestingly, visualisations of their futures appeared highly varied amongst young participants, with some viewing their futures as peaceful and idyllic with their families and dream jobs, and others perceiving the future as ‘scary’, seeing their

neighbourhoods as quiet, abandoned ‘ghost towns’. Many hoped that the negative aspects they discussed in the first session would be lessened 20 years in the future – some saw newly planted fruit trees, new buildings, electric cars, and owning their own home. One of the participants imagined ‘fresh air, with no pollution, the grass, flowers and trees’. Another imagined eating at new restaurants. One of the groups said they would ‘feel happy, chilled out and very proud of our lovely clean, safe and fresh area’. One group suggested that their future would be ‘safer, cleaner and friendlier.’

When asked what positive future changes in their communities might look like, participants primarily expressed there being more recreational activities for young people, better maintenance, and facilities for their neighbourhood as well as better employment opportunities so they would not have to leave:

‘More lit up areas, internet cafés, cheaper travel’

‘housing and closer places to work’

‘cleaner streets with less litter and dog poo around the streets and park’

‘Better jobs prospects, with more jobs in the area [so they did not have to] travel away’

‘More places for young people to go’

‘Public toilets’

In general, young people expressed a sense of excitement or optimism for their futures, paired with a feeling of uncertainty or concern for what it would bring. One participant said they felt excited but also a little apprehensive about employment, while another stated that they were excited to leave the area. Some other thoughts from participants about their future included:

‘Would still have nothing to do, and feel stuck in the area’

‘hoped to have a job but the area needs more employment for [them] to still be here’



How do young people see climate change?

Tool 3: One Word ‘Shout-out’ and Card Matching

In this session, participants were told that the project was regarding climate change – responses to this were varied. Many associated the phrase ‘climate change’ with ‘pollution’, ‘fossil fuels’, ‘the weather’ and ‘ice melting’. One said that they thought climate change was ‘just about the weather’. Participants were given a short questionnaire to gauge their awareness and perception of climate change (see below).

A total of 19 participants responded to the questionnaire. A majority of respondents felt they understood what climate change was. Some felt they already knew a lot about the subject as it had been taught in school, while others did not consider themselves as knowledgeable. On the question ‘I know what I can do to help tackle climate change’ – while most participants agreed that they knew what they could do, many were unsure, or disagreed with the statement.

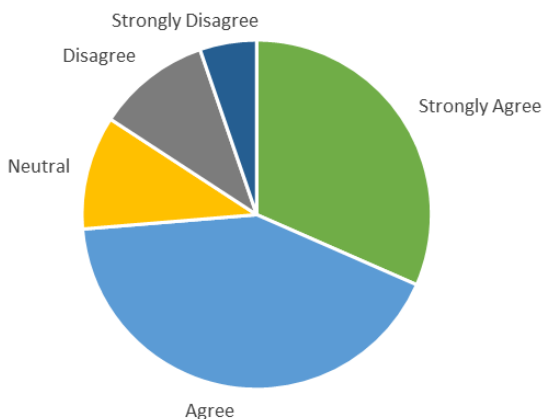
Interestingly, respondents seemed divided on whether their local area was doing enough for climate change, but around half of the respondents felt not enough was being done - a sentiment voiced by a few participants during the session, while many

Session 3: Activity 2
Which image goes with which statistic?
 The images represent two sets of information, firstly statistics from an analysis of Copeland’s footprint and secondly, things that the Copeland People’s Panel felt it was important for them to talk about.

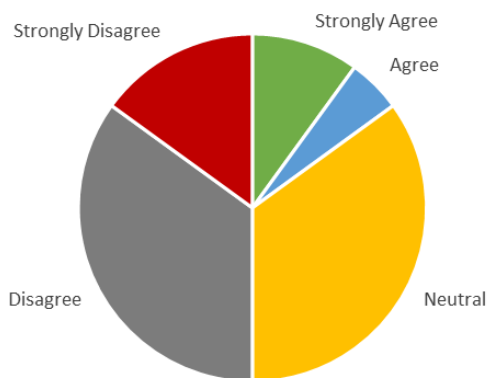
Image	Statistic	Extra info
1	-	Some of the Copeland People’s panels, wind turbines etc
2	C	14% of the average person’s fuel
3	B	6% of the average person’s
4	G	36% of the greenhouse gas from businesses?
5	F	25% of the average person
6	A	5% of the average person manufacture of cars
7	-	Some of the Copeland we get people to char educated about what
8	-	Some of the Copeland proposed new coal and how else can y
9	I	Roughly 12% of the absorbed back th
10	-	Some of the Copeland we can waste
11	E	4% of the ave
12	D	16% of the they’ve bo

were unsure. Only a small minority felt their area was doing enough to tackle climate change. Some young people said that they were unsure about what climate change was, and some had not covered it in school. Due to the small sample size, these results cannot be considered a comprehensive summary of young people's perceptions and attitudes towards climate change

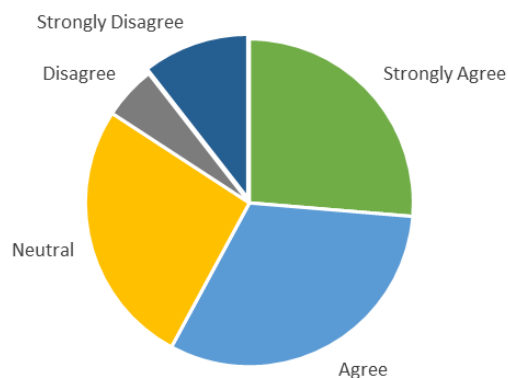
"I understand what climate change is"



"I feel my local area is doing enough to tackle climate change"



"I know what I can do to help tackle climate change"



in their local area. However, it does give us an interesting snapshot of how some young people might feel about climate change.

After watching the video, many young people were surprised, or shocked by the information and statistics that they learnt – many described the statistics as 'scary' and 'worse than they thought'.

The card matching activity was designed to engage participants in thinking about how Copeland contributes to climate change, i.e. where local emissions come from. Overall, young people tended to focus on transport, fossil fuel use, pollution and greenhouse gases. Despite many feeling that they understood climate change, and knew what they could do to tackle it, most young people expressed feeling shocked when the actual statistics of emissions were revealed at the end of the activity. One participant was shocked that 25% of greenhouse gases were contributed by home energy use. One of the groups was quite surprised that food accounted for so much of an individual's carbon footprint, and how much carbon businesses contributed. However, some were not surprised by this, remarking that it took a lot of energy to power a kitchen. A few mentioned that they expected flying to account for a higher proportion of emissions. One participant said he thought that *'the coal from the mine would add to greenhouse gases'*.

Overall, many of the actual statistics discussed in this exercise appeared to be surprising to many young participants, suggesting that while much of the group was aware of, and had a decent

3 Workshop 3: Matching statistics

'Shocking' that 25% of greenhouse gases come from homes

Thought that more greenhouse gases came from flying

'We think other people know about climate change, but it isn't talked about enough'

'Surprised' that food contributed so much carbon

'Worse than we thought'

'Surprised about where greenhouse gases come from on our estate... we don't do enough'



What solutions to climate change do young people want to see in Copeland?

Tool 4: Concentric Circle Mapping and Ranking

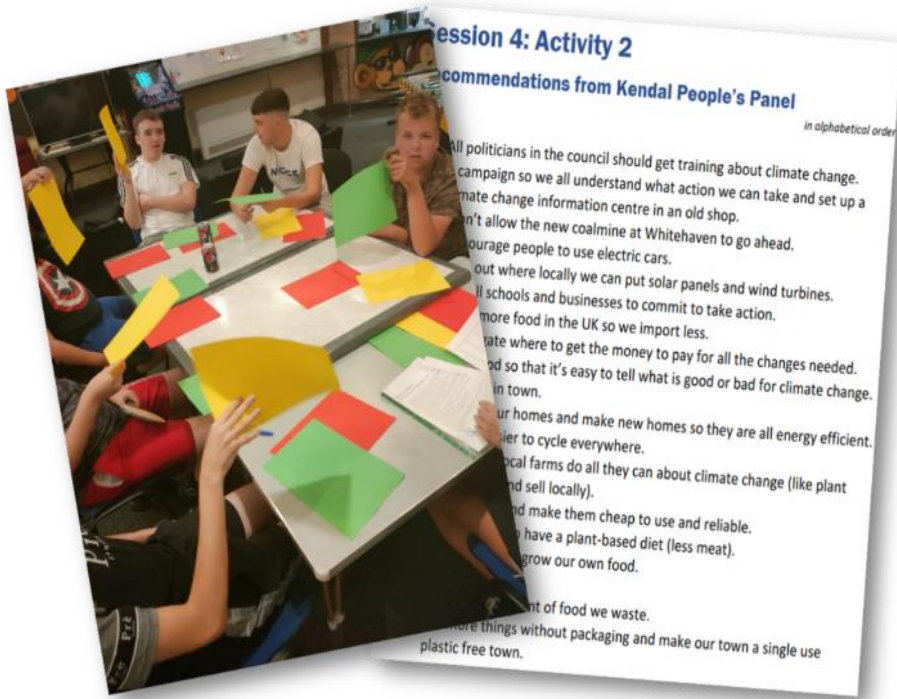
The main purpose of this exercise was for young people to identify ideas and solutions to address climate change, as well as to comment and reflect on previous ideas that citizens' juries have come up with in their recommendations. The aim was to get the youth groups thinking about what they might want to recommend to the Copeland People's Panel at the end of the session. Interestingly, youth groups were divided on the issue of the coal mine (prompted by the recommendation against it from the Kendal jury), with some agreeing that the coal mine should go ahead, and some suggesting that it should not.

Many young people also strongly disagreed with the recommendations of getting people to eat a plant-based diet, and some were against the idea of a climate information campaign.

In this workshop, young people were first asked to come up with some solutions that they felt might be useful to tackle climate change in Copeland on different levels, i.e. individual, community and national. Most young people mentioned recycling, cycling, using public transport and walking more, planting more trees, and reducing waste and plastic.

knowledge base about climate change, they were unaware of many of the details and information regarding carbon emissions and greenhouse gas emissions from individuals, homes and communities. One insight from a young person was: *'We think other people around us know about climate change, but it isn't talked about enough'*. Despite over half of the questionnaire respondents believing that they knew what they could do to tackle climate change, most young people felt they learned a lot that they did not know from watching the video and doing the matching exercise. Many young people said they felt worried about *'ice caps melting, and sea levels rising'*. One of the groups said the following: *'We were surprised about where greenhouse gases come from on our estate but everybody including ourselves don't do enough, we are careless really.'*





One suggestion that was raised repeatedly was the use of electric vehicles, with one of the groups also talking about the need for more charging ports to support electric cars. One of the groups suggested climate change pop up shops and more information from politicians to educate people about climate change. There was also some mention of growing food locally and reducing food waste from one of the youth groups.

Some also talked about using renewable energy instead of fossil fuels. In another youth group, there were comments about public transport needing to be more reliable to reduce the use of cars. One group recommended a complete ban on fossil fuels. One of the groups also mentioned the need for

national government to support individuals with purchasing solar panels and electric vehicles. One participant suggested better energy efficiency, with another suggesting using less water per household. One of the youth groups wished to send a message to the panel asking for more, simplified information on climate change to be available for young people.

At the end of the session, young people were told that the Copeland People's Panel wanted to hear from them on what

recommendations they wanted to see enacted in Copeland. Some still felt there *'wasn't any point because no one listens to young people anyway'*. Many also thought there was not enough being done in their area, with some commenting *'nothing ever gets done around here, things only get done in cities'*, and *'nobody does anything, especially the council'*. One of the young people suggested creating more scientific jobs, and another young person suggested planting more trees and putting up more wind turbines, stating that communities needed to be *'greener and cleaner'*. One of the groups said they felt *that 'cars were causing a lot of harmful gases in [their neighbourhood], especially when there is a line of them waiting all day'*.

Some suggested installing electric scooters and provide more *'group transport'*. Young people mentioned public transport, planting trees, renewable energy and electric cars the most. While employment opportunities came up often during session 2, when young people considered how they wanted their local area to look like in the future, it was not mentioned quite as much regarding climate solutions.

4 Workshop 4: recommendations to the Panel

Public Transport

Plant trees

Electric cars

Walking and Cycling

Recycling

Renewable energy

Improve cleanliness

Jobs and training

Overall, the most popular recommendations from all the youth groups are listed below, in order of frequently mentioned to less frequently mentioned:

1. Better, more affordable, reliable public transport
2. Plant more trees
3. Encourage people to use electric cars, and provide more charging points
4. Encourage walking and cycling – with better lighting and foot/bike paths
5. Encourage people to recycle more, and get the council to empty recycling bins more often
6. Use more sustainable renewable energy sources such as solar panels and wind turbines, and make homes more energy efficient
7. Improve the cleanliness of the area by providing more bins for public use
8. More jobs, especially green jobs, with training

While job opportunities in the area was a common topic amongst groups in the first two sessions that did not concern climate change, it was not mentioned nearly as much in relation to climate solutions. However, one of the groups did talk about the necessity for green jobs and training in the local area and did agree that the future of job opportunities in Copeland was in green energy and industries.





Presentation of findings to the Copeland People's Panel

Findings from the youth group were collated and presented to the Copeland People's Panel on Climate Change in session 9, at the recommendation writing stage of the panel process. A summary report of the findings from the youth group were shared with panel members ahead of the presentation. After the initial presentation of the findings, panel members heard from one of the youth workers, Bethany Taylor from the Shackles Off Youth and Community Project at Seascale, who joined the session to share her experience of leading the youth group in these exercises. Panel members then had the opportunity to ask her questions about the youth groups and how young people felt about climate change and what could be done in Copeland. These findings were then referred to by panel members as they wrote their final recommendations.

The findings were also shared at the stakeholder launch of the recommendations on 13 October 2021, during which Bethany was present to share her thoughts, as well as the public launch on 20 October 2021. When one of the members of the People's Panel came forward to share their thoughts on how the youth group impacted the Panel, they said, *"I was saddened to see that [young people] feel they are not heard – they are literally our future. So, I would like to leave a message on behalf of our Panel: we heard you, we value your input and efforts, and you are invaluable, so don't be disheartened to make yourself heard."*

Research Findings: Summary and Conclusion

In the first two sessions, where participants were asked about how they viewed their neighbourhoods currently, and in the future, most of the positive aspects emerging from these discussions centred around recreational activities and local businesses, with some mention of friends and family. Young people often mentioned visualising having their own families and owning their own houses in the future. However, there were several negative points brought up during the discussion, showing young people were highly perceptive about where they felt their neighbourhood could have been doing better. For instance, many young people suggested better lighting, and more bins, and these were echoed throughout different youth groups across all sessions. Most youth groups also brought up the lack of job opportunities in the area, suggesting that they may need to leave the area to find work. Clearly, this presents a concern for retaining young people in Copeland.

In session three, when participants were thinking about climate change, it was apparent that while many young people were learning about climate change and its impacts in school, they did not know a lot about Copeland's emissions specifically. Many young people were surprised about the facts and statistics they learnt.

In the last session, young people pinpointed a lot of popular climate solutions such as alternative modes of transport and renewable energy. Interestingly, some groups mentioned the need for government and local authorities to support these transitions by offering more reliable public transport, or more charging points for electric vehicles, or even financial support for more low-carbon choices. This indicates that the young people who took part in the activities acknowledge that while there are things

that they, and local people can do to help with climate change, they appear to believe there are also things that national government need to do to facilitate these solutions.

Most young people also mentioned climate solutions that would directly benefit their communities, such as the planting of trees to make their neighbourhoods greener, and providing more bins, and facilities to make their areas cleaner and better to live in. These were directly related to many of the problems in their communities brought up in the first two sessions.

The comments and thoughts from the youth group had a clear impact on the Panel, as many of their recommendations reflected the perspectives from young people who had participated in the youth groups, as shown in the words of the Panel's statement: *"We have been inspired by the work of young people in youth groups across Copeland and our recommendations echo what many of them have said."*

Recommendation 2 from the panel included the following text:

'Copeland needs a robust plan that responds directly to **our recommendations**. Progress on the implementation of the plan should be independently verifiable through regular scheduled meetings of the People's Panel plus members of the young people's consultation conducted during this process'

Climate Change and Young People in Copeland: Copeland People's Panel on Climate Change 2021

