

Report on the 2023 Durham Citizens' Forum on Climate Action

The Citizens' Forum was organised by Climate Action Durham (CAD), in partnership with Durham County Council (DCC)

Report written by CAD in November/December 2023

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1. Executive summary and recommendations

The 2023 Durham Citizens' Forum on Climate Action gave Durham citizens an opportunity to hear directly from DCC officers about the progress made in DCC's climate action. It allowed citizens and officers to discuss climate action in facilitated topic-based small groups, identifying areas for further improvement to be considered in the next iteration of DCC's Climate Emergency Response Plan (CERP3).

Outcome 1: The event concluded by DCC and CAD agreeing to continue discussions in the below mentioned small groups with a view to incorporating outcomes into CERP3.

Outcome 2: DCC agreed to make the Durham Citizens' Forum on Climate Action an annual event, to be included in CERP3.

Outcome 3: DCC agreed to consider including in CERP3 the creation of a Climate Emergency Centre to give citizen engagement in local government climate action a physical home which can deliver information exchange and visibility for climate action and can catalyse the speeding up of collaborative projects.

The discussion prior to the event and during it in small groups resulted in the following list of recommendations; we provide good practice examples and recommendations formulated by leading experts to demonstrate that all recommendations can realistically be implemented today under UK conditions:

Recommendation 1 – Transport: DCC should increase the cost of car parking, and begin to differentiate costs based on emissions, potentially for residential permits, on-street parking, and council-owned car parks¹.

Recommendation 2 – Transport: DCC should introduce traffic filtering, road charging or bus priority measures on main bus routes into Durham City to speed up public transport from the rest of the county, encouraging car traffic onto the A690, A691, A167 and A177 instead, thereby allowing the historic arterial routes to become quieter 20mph residential zones for walking, cycling and public transport.

Recommendation 3 – Transport: DCC should use "school streets"², parking enforcement and restrictions on student cars, coupled with safe cycle routes and other infrastructure to ensure that the next generation develops the habit of using walking, cycling and public transport to get around with greater independence.

Recommendation 4 – Food and Waste: DCC should monitor and evaluate the impacts of waste incineration in a continuous participatory process with affected communities and groups such as and including CAD³.

Recommendation 5 – Food and Waste: DCC should minimise the emissions from waste through minimising recycling contamination, developing a circular economy, expanding the campaign to

¹ See [Ashden, Friends of the Earth and CDP: 31 Climate Actions for Councils](#). Action 1 "Introduce a workplace car parking levy and/or similar initiative to fund sustainable transport."

² See e.g. <https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/citylife-news/transport/third-school-street-scheme-launch>.

³ See [Ashden, Friends of the Earth and CDP: 31 Climate Actions for Councils](#). Action 26 "Use food waste hierarchy of prevent, reuse, recycle, and use remaining biodegradable waste to generate biogas."

reduce single use plastics, and strengthening the Sustainable Local Food Policy with a focus on the sustainability of supply chains⁴.

Recommendation 6 – Engagement, Education, and Behavioural Change: DCC should produce and publicise an engagement strategy (a Climate Emergency Centre should play an integral part in this), as part of which participatory mutual learning and action planning involving residents and officers can happen on a continuous basis.

Recommendation 7 – Engagement, Education, and Behavioural Change: DCC should produce an annual climate action progress report which is easy to read and answers, amongst others, the fundamental question: Are we on track to reaching the decarbonisation targets for the Council and County as set out in the carbon budget mentioned in CERP2 (p.115).

Recommendation 8 – Decarbonising heating and energy provision: DCC should create a method (e.g. as part of the Climate Emergency Centre) to deliver trusted information about how to reduce the carbon emissions of residential homes and business premises.

Recommendation 9 – Governance and finance: CAD suggests an additional consultation strand to be initiated between DCC, CAD, and possibly other civil society organisations. CAD would like to discuss with DCC its position on financial issues (e.g. pensions divestment⁵, investment in airports, raising more funds for climate action) and governance (e.g. scope 3 carbon accounting, accounting for emissions due to waste incineration, ensuring that climate action is not undermined by inconsistent decision making across DCC departments⁶)

CAD commends DCC for its commitment to climate action past and present, including its support of the 2023 Durham Citizens' Forum on Climate Action. This event would not have been possible without significant investment of officer time, their goodwill to work with CAD and their willingness to engage in an open, collaborative relationship. CAD look forward to developing more formats for deeper public engagement in climate action.

2. Introduction

The 2023 Durham Citizens' Forum on Climate Action took place on 7 November 2023 in Durham City Town Hall. The event was attended by approximately 70 residents and over fifteen Durham County Council officers. The programme of the event can be seen in Appendix 1.

CAD's Richard Lilly opened the event and Fiona Dyer's introductory remarks set the scene from a CAD perspective; see Appendix 3 for details.

DCC's Alan Patrickson presented key achievements of DCC's climate action and remarked on the high priority climate action has for DCC. He mentioned the high demand from Small and Medium Enterprises whose demand for support in climate action at times has outstripped DCC's capacity to supply it. He pointed out that changes to the climate are not slow and imperceptible anymore: DCC have to respond to increasingly frequent extreme and destructive weather events, so adaptation

⁴ See [Ashden, Friends of the Earth and CDP: 31 Climate Actions for Councils](#). Action 30 "Engage with schools to ensure meals are delivered in accordance with the official Eatwell Guide, the majority of options on menus are healthy and plant based, with less and better meat."; see also Bristol City Council <https://bristolgoodfood.org/action-plans/>

⁵ DCC should follow the leading examples mentioned at <https://www.divest.org.uk/commitments/>: Five local authority pension funds have committed to fully divest from fossil fuels. Two from coal.

⁶ See e.g. [here](#); and an example of how Bristol City Council uses their [Eco Impact Checklist](#).

should become more of a focus for future engagement, in addition to the current focus on mitigation.

3. Transport

Maggie Bosanquet introduced the session on behalf of the Council. Matthew Phillips (CAD) then gave a short presentation on the challenges and progress in tackling transport emissions, and introduced in turn the three discussion topics:

- Car parking
- Traffic filtering and bus priority
- Other

The group was divided into three tables, each with an officer and a CAD note-taker / facilitator. Each of the topics was discussed for about fifteen minutes. Notes from the three discussion groups have been consolidated. Some items may appear to be duplicated, but have been included to reflect the different nuances in how each group expressed them and allow the authentic voices of the public to come through. Practical examples naturally focus on Durham City but the same principles could be applied to other larger towns.

The suggestions are **not** listed in order of priority or to indicate the level of support.

3.1. University student cars

1. **CAD supports making student life in Durham City car-free.** Following the example of the University of Cambridge, students should not usually be permitted to possess a car in the city. See the full regulations and possible exceptions in the [proctorial notice](#); see also the student-facing page [here](#). This has wide support from Elvet residents and Durham University's Vice Chancellor. DCC would need to join the coalition to enable this significant change to the city and would be needed to support the provision of alternatives for students to private car use, i.e. safe and attractive active travel options, high quality public transport, and yet to be developed innovative transport solutions (e.g. autonomous bus and/or taxi routes etc).
2. Roads are too busy with student cars in University term.
3. Properties in the CPZ converted, extended or built after 2000 should not be issued with permits: this is a policy which the council adopted but has possibly failed to apply.
4. Deny parking permits to properties with a student exemption from council tax.
5. Limit the number of permits for each area with a waiting list: permanent residents would rise to the top.

3.2. School travel

1. Secondary school students should be walking / cycling / using buses.
2. Cutting back of **school buses** has not helped.
3. More **enforcement of parking**: parents can sit in car with engine idling not paying for parking while waiting to pick up children.
4. Close streets at school pick-up / drop-off time: "school streets": makes walking/cycling safer and reduces convenience of the car.

3.3. Parking

1. **Increased car parking charges in Durham City** to nudge people to Park and Ride or enter the city by public transport/cycling or walking.
2. Charge per car for the Park and Ride, rather than per person.
3. Do not increase the Park and Ride charges: **increase the city centre parking charges** instead.
4. New housing should not be built round cars: all new housing developments should **reduce car parking spaces** from the current 2 cars per house and move parking to outside any estates, or decouple home ownership and private parking spaces. (+)
5. Sniperley Park and Ride could double as residential parking for new estate, so people would walk to their houses in parkland setting instead of car-dominated layout.
6. People buy terraced houses without a right to park a vehicle: return to this type of development.
7. Car parking should not be visible from the road (not sure if this was applying to residential, employment, retail, or all of these).
8. Higher parking charges for SUVs and other large cars, both for **on-street parking** and for **residential permits** to nudge people into more sustainable choices.
9. Reduce permits to one per household.
10. Price large cars and SUVs out of the market: they are responsible for more emissions, more dangerous for other road users.
11. Charge for car parking at the Arnison Centre, Dragonville etc. to encourage sustainable travel, via Workplace Parking Levy or planning system.

3.4. Traffic filtering and road space reallocation

1. **Improve flow of buses** with more filtering, smart lights that change to green for the buses, more bus lanes.
2. **20 mph speed limits** in residential areas & **one-way streets** with space reallocated to walking and cycling (+)
3. Quite strong **support for traffic filters** in all three groups, but some dissent over details.
4. **Discourage short car trips** using modal filters and encourage walking and cycling to local shops: “15 minute cities”.
5. Make streets more attractive: more pedestrianisation, “making life better”.
6. Stop the primacy of the motor car: take space away from cars; reassign road space to walking, cycling and buses.
7. Give **equal importance** to walking, cycling and small electric transport.
8. Safe **separated cycle lanes**, e.g. Framwellgate Moor Front Street.
9. Cycling is not easy in Durham, but it's a safety issue, not primarily the hills. Separated cycle lanes and e-bikes will help.

3.5. Buses

1. Positive marketing of buses, countering perception that “buses are for poor people”.
2. A transport levy for all homes to support **free bus travel** – either £500 per household or a sum set as a proportion of the rateable value of the property.
3. Free bus travel for under 18s. Get children active and normalise it.
4. Buses too full of students travelling walkable distances in Durham (consequence of cheap fares for Durham University staff and students through University deal with Arriva?).
5. Buses: improve reliability, frequency, mixture of fixed route and DRT (demand responsive transport, particularly in rural areas).

6. Effective public transport.

3.6. Other

1. Improve car sharing – see Co-wheels: <https://www.co-wheels.org.uk/>
2. To encourage cycle use there is a need to provide **safe and secure shelters for bicycles**. (+)
3. **ULEZ** in large towns and cities in the county – funds from charges used for supporting public transport including scrappage for diesel buses.
4. Electric cars are only a part of the answer.
5. EV subsidies should also include e-bikes, which have lower carbon footprint.
6. Better use of taxis: better regulation and reliability.
7. Design cars out of people's lives.
8. Comparing driving with smoking: make it less socially acceptable.

4. Food and Waste

A list of discussion points we were hoping to cover in this group had been emailed to Jo Blackie in advance, following an initial preparatory meeting, but had unfortunately not been seen by her.

In giving her presentation on County Durham Waste Resource Management, however, Jo sought to weave the discussion points into the information she was giving us, which was very helpful.

The discussion points were set out in the following sections:

Household Waste and Recycling. Circular Economy. Single Use Plastics. Food.

As was anticipated, there was insufficient time for the discussion to move beyond the first section. But we were able to touch on some interesting facts and figures regarding current waste and recycling levels, issues related to the contamination of recyclable material, recently announced (and long-awaited) legislation to come into force from March 2026 and the part in waste management which is expected to be played by the Tees Valley Energy Recovery Facility (TV ERF), potentially from April 2026. At the end of the session Jo offered to send the whole of the presentation slides to CAD so that we could have access to the rest of the information there, which was much appreciated. These have since been received.

Some priorities coming out of the breakout group were noted to the plenary as

- i) finding ways to work with the council to minimise the problem of contamination and
- ii) further investigating and monitoring some of the issues relating to the TV ERF, some of which are held to be contentious.

We also intend to continue to find out more about the issues that we didn't have time to discuss at the event. These include looking for ways to encourage and enhance the council's positive actions relating to Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) collection, repair cafes, Stainton Grove Reuse Shop and the Single Use Plastics Pledge.

We'd also like to know more about how the Sustainable Local Food Strategy might develop.

We intend to contact Chartwells, the catering company with the contract for school meals, to discuss the benefits of serving less meat - perhaps by introducing a meat-free day as is the case in many local authority schools nationally.

Following a meeting with Kieran O'Leary, and discussions with Durham University, it has already been agreed to create a cross-organisational waste working group to enhance efforts in waste education in Durham City - a very positive development.

5. Engagement, Education, and Behavioural Change

This group was co-chaired by Sarah Banks (Climate Action Durham) and Andriana Christou (Durham County Council, Climate Change Communications and Engagement Strategy Lead). It was attended by 18 people.

Andriana Christou presented a summary of key actions and achievements by DCC and the vision for the future as follows:

Engagement, Education & Behavioural Change

Working together with our communities, partners, and staff to raise awareness, build skills and knowledge to tackle climate change will help us become the UK's greenest, environmentally ethical, sustainable, carbon neutral county.

Where we are now in 2023	Laying foundations for 2030	County Durham's Vision for 2045
We have established communication channels with several engagement opportunities both digital and face to face, along with campaigns to support messaging, awareness and behavioural change.	Everyone will have a good understanding of what climate change means, the impacts that it will have and what they can do about it. Messaging will be clear and transparent building on foundations and learnings set within the CERP.	Everyone will have an excellent understanding of what climate change means, the impacts that it will have and what they can do about it. Partnerships will be strong across sectors working together address local and national issues and campaigns.

Key Challenges

There is still a lack of understanding about the implications of climate change, stemming in some part from a spread of misinformation and climate denial.

Key Achievements

- Branding
- Community website
- Durham COP
- Facebook
- Community, organisation and business engagement events across county Durham
- Climate champions internal network
- Countywide engagement network being developed in early stages

- ECO2 COP Smart Schools Conferences
- Software procurement which will help simplify CERP into visual story

Sarah Banks commended the County Council for their progress and emphasised the vital importance of education and engagement in tackling climate change. Without buy-in from citizens, politicians do not take the issue seriously enough. It is important to reach people beyond ‘the green bubble’ and engage with people and groups from a diverse range of backgrounds with different interests, experiences and expertise - including older and younger people, rural and urban dwellers, people from different ethnicities and religions, gender identities and abilities. Public and community engagement is of vital importance in spreading the climate message and above all encouraging small-scale and large-scale actions.

Three areas of questioning were identified for discussion in small groups, as follows:

1. Communication channels

a) DCC currently uses a variety of communication methods to inform and educate people about climate change issues (eg website, Facebook, DCC newsletters, consultation events). How well do you think this is working and how could communication be improved to reach all sections of the population?

b) What recommendations does your group have for specific actions that could be taken?

2. Public participation

a) DCC is organising a public consultation about the next version of the Climate Emergency Response Plan (2023). How do you think the public could be more involved on an on-going basis in influencing DCC’s plans and how they are implemented?

b) What recommendations does your group have for specific actions that could be taken?

3. Community engagement

a) DCC includes climate-related issues on Area Action Partnership agendas, offers small grants and supports work in schools. How can more people be encouraged to work together on responses to climate change in their local communities?

b) What recommendations does your group have for specific actions that could be taken?

Participants then broke into break-out groups, for 25 minutes, each tackling a different area of questioning. Brief reports from the groups are given below.

Group 1: Communication channels, Facilitator, Rupert Friedrichsen

Six participants identified a range of communication channels, suggesting ideas for development and what priority they would give to each channel as shown in the following table.

Online, print, in person	Communication channel	Points made by participants regarding status quo	Ideas for future actions suggested by participants	Number of dots*
Online	www.climatecountydurham.org.uk	Didn't know about Climate County Durham website	Real time updates on action delivery and their impact ("are we on track with CO2 reductions?")	4
	DCC climate Facebook page	Wasn't aware it existed	Map of where projects are taking place	0
	DCC corporate website	Too difficult to find CERP quickly	Add a map of where projects are taking place	3
	Instagram	Not currently used by DCC	Could be better for students and young people	4
In person events			Could have a strategic approach to events attended e.g. focus on the bigger ones such as Seaham Food Festival which will have best reach.	2
Print	County Durham News	Some useful info on energy efficiency efficiency		1
		Go through it regularly but not much on climate change Too waste focused sometimes in the green news		
TV		Not currently used by DCC	National TV campaign	0

* No. of dots: Each person at the table had three dots to indicate three most important channels (more than one dot per channel was allowed)

Whom do these channels not reach? Students are not reached.

One point raised that was not allocated to a communication channel: Raise awareness of financial co-benefits of avoiding pollution and taking action.

Group 2: Public Participation, Facilitator Romey Chaffer

Six people participated in this group with a range of interests, including: Durham City Parish Councillor, Lecturer/Church connection, environmental activist, students. The following points were noted:

1. **Town and Gown** - Apathy from many students about climate change, but, understanding their workload and financial pressures. A "Town & Gown" division still exists and needs challenging from both directions. Community and Council to connect more with students – two-way process needs initiative and innovation. Suggestion – encouraging students to go outside the City – invitations from the community. Talking to each other – pubs and churches. (Apparently Council already has a University Green Group involvement, but many other climate groups are not connected. *(A new student came hoping to learn more about climate change)*. University expertise on climate change and environment should be used in the community.
2. **Importance of small, local environmental projects** - Where we live (our immediate environment) matters. Small changes in nature observed/experienced can translate to an

understanding of the wider issues of the climate crisis and a desire to take action. Experiences of small environmental groups within the town and the university could be pooled by the Council. Perhaps an overall view of the many small projects would be of benefit. Also other community projects, e.g. archaeological digs, bring people together where climate change can be talked about.

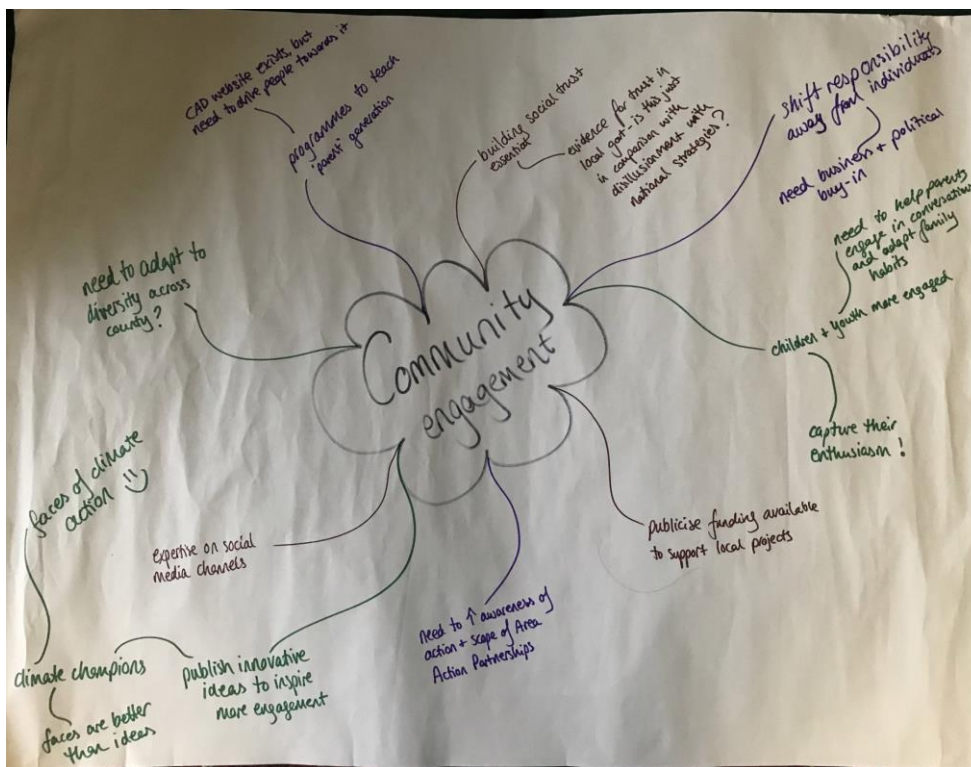
3. **Focus on how to create change** - Suggestion that Council and campaign focus is on “How” people can implement changes, rather than just “Why”. E.g. “This is how you may be impacted”, while recognising the majority population is concerned with the cost-of-living crisis and not climate change, and offering solutions e.g. reducing energy costs, food costs, etc. Understanding concern about job losses and the need for opportunities for green jobs and training.

Group 3: Community Engagement, Facilitator Sara Jackson

Six people engaged in discussion in this group. Key points raised included:

- How to ensure that a diverse group of people are reached?
- The Oasis educational and engagement model, used with young people in schools, is very successful and could be adapted for use with older people, religious groups, etc.
- The importance of building social trust – making clear what has been achieved. People’s climate stories could be publicised. E.g. use large banner to publish a story and photos of action in a particular community, or by a particular person.
- The importance of shifting responsibility for behavioural change and climate action to groups rather than just individuals.

The group created this diagram:



Each group then fed back to the others and some key points were noted by Andriana Christou for further action by DCC. The group heard about plans by DCC to introduce a new IT tool which will enable DCC to report on carbon emissions and emission reductions in real time and transform data into visual stories. Some key points fed back from the small groups were:

- climatecountydurham.org.uk should be further developed as the main digital **communication channel** for climate-related information, with more detailed information on it, including an annual easy-to-read report answering “are we on track?” directly
- The success of DCC’s work with schools (through OASES) is to be commended; **community engagement** should have building trust (as an antidote to misinformation) and celebrating climate champions (individuals or organisations) at its core
- Bringing university and non-university audiences together, and building **public engagement** up from places which could even include pubs could help reach more groups in Durham with hands-on solutions that address both the cost-of-living crisis as well as reducing carbon emissions

Additional comments by CAD:

The following additional priority topics for CAD to discuss with DCC in relation to CERP3:

- What is the public engagement strategy and plan?
- Is an equalities impact assessment carried out and acted upon?
- Can an easy-to-read annual report be produced which answers “are we on track” regarding DCC’s own annual reduction targets as required to stay within the carbon budget?
- What could be steps towards a Climate Emergency Centre? CAD wants to review best practice with DCC and identify approaches that could work here; see [this example](#); and [that one](#).
- What are the lessons learned from the £130,000 allocated to Durham Community Action?
- How can Parish Councils become impactful partners in Durham’s joint climate action efforts?⁷

6. Decarbonising heating and energy provision

The small group discussion revealed:

- A desire for the council to act as a trusted source of information about how to install heat pumps / low carbon technology. Could council offer
 - Signposting
 - a counter to misinformation
 - clarity over confusion
 - clear outline about what it takes to decarbonise homes
- Frustration about planning process for heat pumps and noise criteria
- Frustration about planning process for low carbon technology in conservation zone

⁷ See the example of Winchester <https://www.local.gov.uk/case-studies/winchester-city-council-community-and-parish-climate-engagement> where Parish Councils and community groups have received carbon footprint reports to inform climate action, motivate residents, target carbon reduction efforts, and increase the impact of climate action.

- Group pleased to hear all the progress Council is making on its own buildings as well as the action to assist fuel poor households

7. Reports back from small groups and closing plenary

Representatives from the four small group discussions reported back key results to the plenary.

Richard Lilly and Alan Patrickson concluded the event by commending all involved in the event on the outcomes and agreed on

- Co-hosting a Citizens Forum on an annual basis moving forward
- Continuing substantive discussions among CAD small group leaders and DCC officers to feed into the development of CERP 3
- DCC considering supporting a Climate Emergency Centre as part of CERP 3 activities

8. Appendices

8.1. Appendix 1: Abbreviations

CAD: Climate Action Durham

CERP 1: Climate Emergency Response Plan 1:

CERP 2: Climate Emergency Response Plan 2:

CERP 3: Climate Emergency Response Plan 3; to be drafted and adopted in 2024, covering mid-2024 to mid-2027

DCC: Durham County Council

TV ERF: Tees Valley Energy Recovery Facility

8.2. Appendix 2: Event Programme

Date: 7/11/23

Time: 19:00-21:00

Place: Durham Town Hall

Purpose: Give Durham city and county residents the opportunity to

- **learn** about the County Council’s actions to combat the climate emergency,
- **ask questions**, and to
- **comment and discuss** the progress made, challenges encountered, and future plans that will be formalised in the Climate Emergency Response Plan 3, to be written in 2024)

Time	Activity	Purpose
19:00-19:05	Welcome	Welcome attendees and DCC representatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is CAD? (mention citizens’ forum 2022)
19:05-19:20	Introduction to the event format	Explain context and purpose of the event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why are CAD working with DCC? • What is the purpose of the Citizens’ Forum 2023? • Why is this important?

19:20-19:35	Introduction to DCC's climate action (CERPs 1, 2, ecological emergency declaration)	Introduce key aspects of DCC commitments and work programme
19:40-20:40	Small group discussion	Inform about, review, and assess (including against score cards) progress made, and discuss challenges and future plans in the respective 3 or 4 topic areas
	1. Transport	
	2. Education, engagement and behaviour change	
	3. Food and Waste	
	4. Heat, Energy, Electricity, New Development	
20:45-21:00	Closing plenary (one CAD representative from each small group; DCC representatives are invited to join too)	Summarise some key points from small groups and generate more engagement

8.3. Appendix 3: Revised purpose statement

As part of the discussions in the run-up to the event, CAD reviewed the original formulation of the event's purpose and agreed on the more specific following wording. The purpose of the event is to

1. Find out what progress DCC is making in delivering its Climate Emergency Response Plan.
2. Appreciate why it is important that CAD & local people support & challenge the Council in its development of the next Climate Plan.
3. Discuss & share ideas in small, facilitated groups
4. Increase the level of Durham residents' engagement in DCC's and overall climate action

8.4. Appendix 4: Edited excerpts from the address given to the first plenary by a CAD member

Why is local climate action important? Collaborating with our county, town & parish councils is very much in line with CADs objectives; of furthering the exchange of information, advice & knowledge & promoting practical responses to the climate & ecological emergencies.

We are keen to use local democracy to shape local development, much needed in these times, when the opinion of most of the population on climate matters is not being translated into action by the government.

Citizens assemblies & forums, of various types, are growing in popularity, seen as ways of giving ordinary people more of a voice. Not only a voice but real influence too.

CAD, & you folks here, hopefully, are wanting to support AND challenge Durham County Council to fully deliver it's Climate Emergency Response Plan, also to have input into its 3rd iteration, CERP3, due in 2024.

So this year's climate forum brings us back together to discuss progress made in delivering the councils climate plan, focusing on what has gone well, what needs developing further &, maybe, what you think is missing.

For anyone who has not looked at the council plan it is extremely detailed, covering most aspects of the climate & ecological emergencies & can be viewed on the council website.

The challenges of delivering CERP2 & developing CERP3: The biggest reduction in emissions to date, both in the Councils own building & activities & countywide has been in emissions from electricity. However it is the low hanging fruit accounted for by switching to renewable energy sources, economy measures & energy efficient appliances.

Smaller reductions have been made in reducing heat & transport. emissions. Transport emissions are possibly the most difficult to reduce, a real challenge, but this could be helped by the formation of the new, regional mayoral authority next year. A more comprehensive, joined up public transport system could be achieved regionally.

Are we on track to reduce carbon emissions in line with DCC's own target and carbon budget?

The UK is legally required by the UN Paris Agreement on Climate to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 100% by 2050, compared with 1990 levels. All 193 countries that signed the Paris Agreement have these Nationally Declared Contributions. Year on year, the Council has carbon budget targets to guide them and they have raised their ambition since CERP1, setting the target of 2045 for the County to be carbon neutral. Of course, any council must weigh up carbon reducing measures with delivering the services people need, via a just transition.

It will be difficult to pick the 'higher hanging fruit'? CAD would like to give the council ongoing support to tackle the difficult challenges ahead, by way of follow up sessions from tonight & ongoing.

The Climate Emergency UK Scorecards⁸: Overall, comparatively speaking, Durham has scored quite well this year on its delivery of CERP2. Annie Pickering, Co-Director at Climate Emergency UK said:

'The low scores across the board show that there are national barriers for local authorities that make it harder for most councils to deliver the necessary climate action. A lack of funding and government policy U-turns are some of the barriers to effective, local climate action. Yet national barriers alone cannot explain every low score. Local factors, such as political will and community support, are at play in determining the action councils are taking to combat climate change.'

CAD members have been looking at the Climate Emergency UK Action Scorecards. They were published last month. All 409 UK councils were scored on the action they have taken towards net zero. I emphasise action because last year's Scorecards measured Councils' plans. Each council ass given an overall score & the 91 scorecard questions are grouped into 7 different sections.

We know systems that score & rank organisations don't always give the full picture, but the Scorecard methodology has been rigorous, not perfect but the aim was to be as fair as possible, & all councils have had the right to reply before publication.

The Local Government Association has not been wholly enthusiastic about the Scorecards but overall, I think the small CEUK team have done a very useful piece of citizen's research & they plan to develop it further.

Overall, this year's scores were much lower than the year before, which was expected. It is easier to write a good plan than to deliver it & delivery, obviously, takes time. Also, there are significant difficulties for underfunded councils, lacking vision & practical leadership from central government.

I think it's useful to look at the scores comparatively & look at any high section scores, then delve deeper to find out how those councils achieved them.

⁸ See <https://councilclimatescorecards.uk/> by Climate Emergency UK for County Durham's scores alongside a wealth of good practice examples and a full description of the methodology used for scoring.

The aim of the CEUK project from the start has been to help councils learn from each other through good, often innovative practice & to help them 'up their game'. Various levels of training & other resources from CEUK support this objective.

The Scorecard data, collected by hundreds of trained volunteers, is easily accessible to the public via the CEUK website. It is all evidence based & is a wealth of information which can help us bring some structure & objectivity to reviewing council climate plans, also to see strengths & weaknesses.

CAD would be happy to run a workshop on the Scorecards, at a later date, if there is enough interest.

DCC's score in the relevant areas are

- Building & Heating is respectably above average.
- Transport, & Planning & Land Use are around average.
- Biodiversity, which was a weak section on the 2022 Plan Scorecard is now showing above average.
- Collaboration & Engagement was awarded a CEUK star! as a top scorer! This too was a weak section on the Plan Scorecard.
- Waste & Food is also above average.

So there is a bit to be applauded there. Some hard work is being done and Durham is ranked top for the Northeast region!

The media likes to talk about the cost of climate mitigation, but adaptation to climate change, in all its breadth, will cost a fraction of what will be incurred by future damage from eg, floods & heatwaves. Also, we must focus on the positives, the co-benefits - of improved health, reduction in fuel poverty, enjoyment of improved outdoor spaces & air quality.

We have to be radical! Six of the nine planetary boundaries have already been breached. Global emissions are still RISING, forecast to be a 1% increase this year. At the current level of emissions, for a 50% chance of keeping warming to 1.5 degrees, the remaining global, carbon budget will be spent in just 6 years.

Business as usual is not an option. Neither is talk of year-on-year economic growth.

Whatever the future holds I am sure we will need creative, cohesive & resilient communities. Encouragingly, there is a huge groundswell of grass roots activity across the world and an understanding that we need a fundamental shift in our thinking and values, moving away from a focus on endless growth and exploitation to a focus on sustainability and connection. I think our best hope is through progressive, citizens activism, 'think global & act local'.

So please join CAD, with more people we can be more ambitious.

8.5. Appendix 6: Event evaluation

Evaluation data

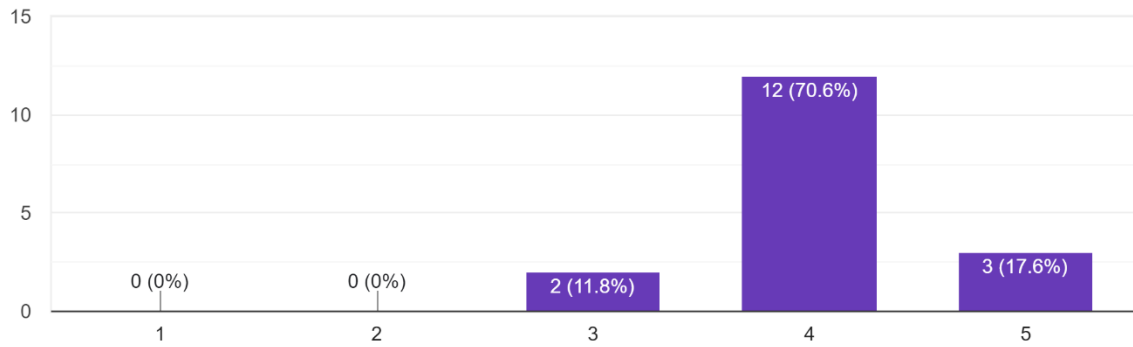
On 10 November, all attendees who had registered online to complete were asked to complete a short online evaluation form; facilitators were also invited to respond to the survey. We received 17 responses. The answer options ranged from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree).

Results

A) Overall feedback

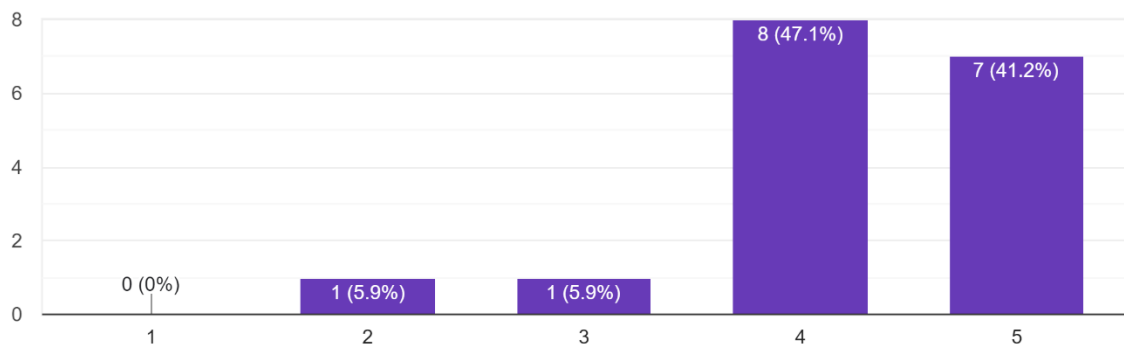
My overall expectations of the Citizens' Forum on Climate Action were met.

17 responses



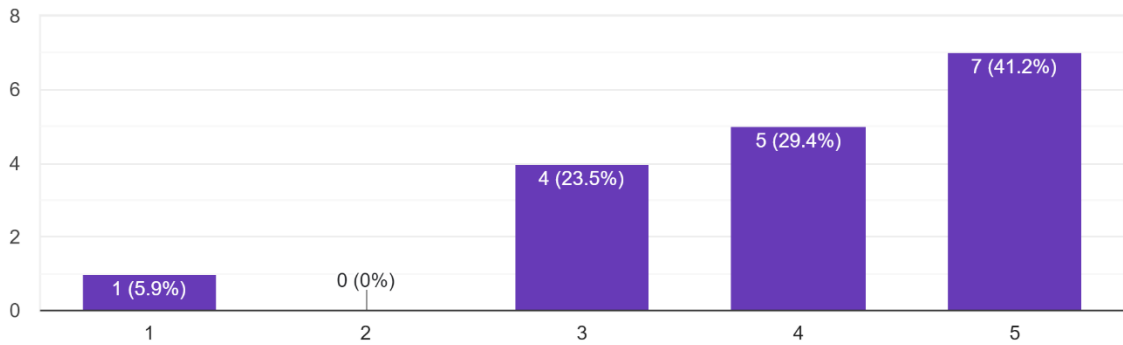
I learned about what Durham County Council does to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

17 responses



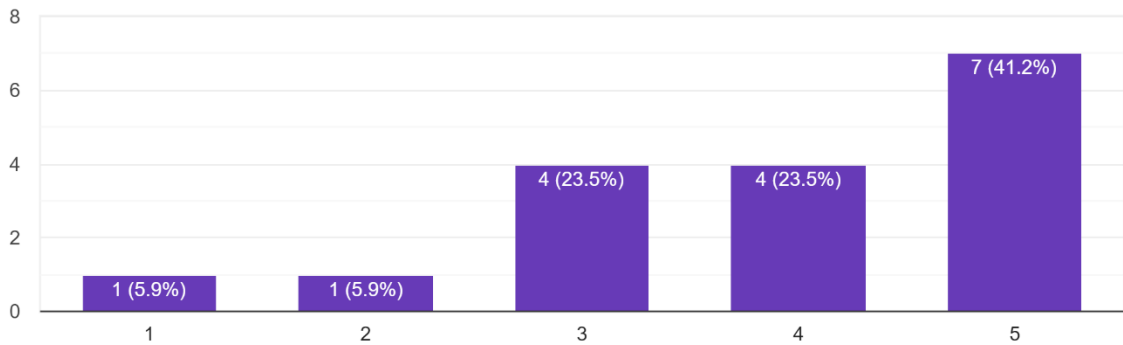
The Citizens' Forum is a good way to hold Durham County Council accountable for its progress to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

17 responses



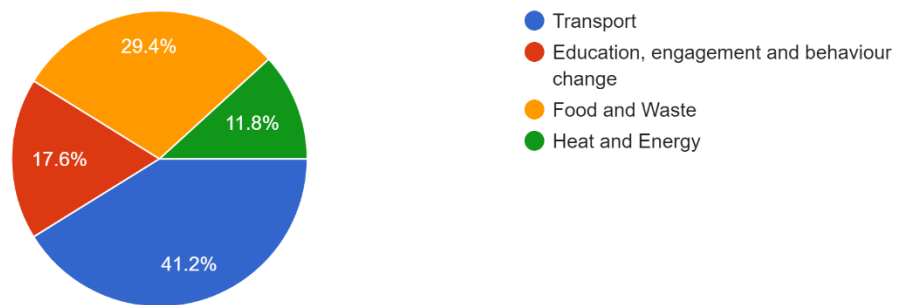
The Citizens' Forum motivated me to do more to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

17 responses



I attended the small group focusing on

17 responses

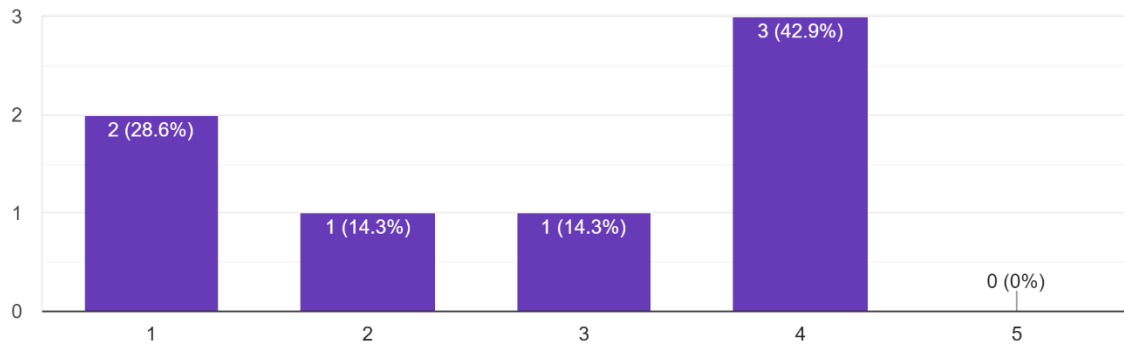


B) Small groups feedback

TRANSPORT

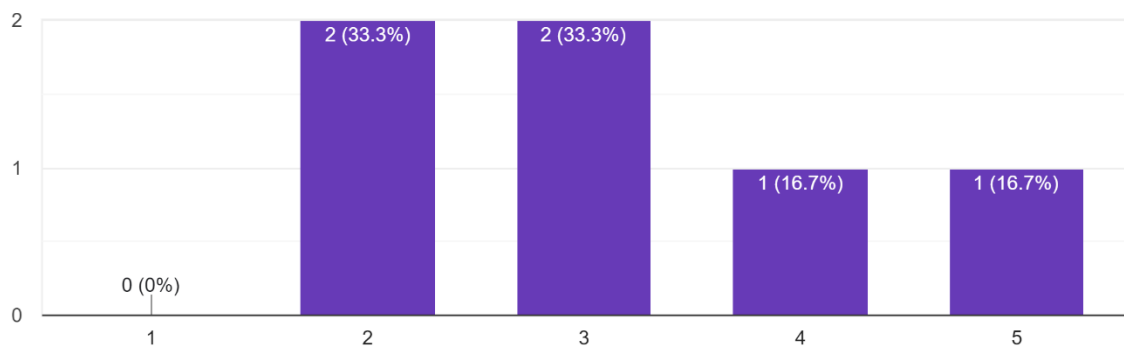
I learned new things about reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transport.

7 responses



I could discuss and share my own ideas about about reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transport in depth.

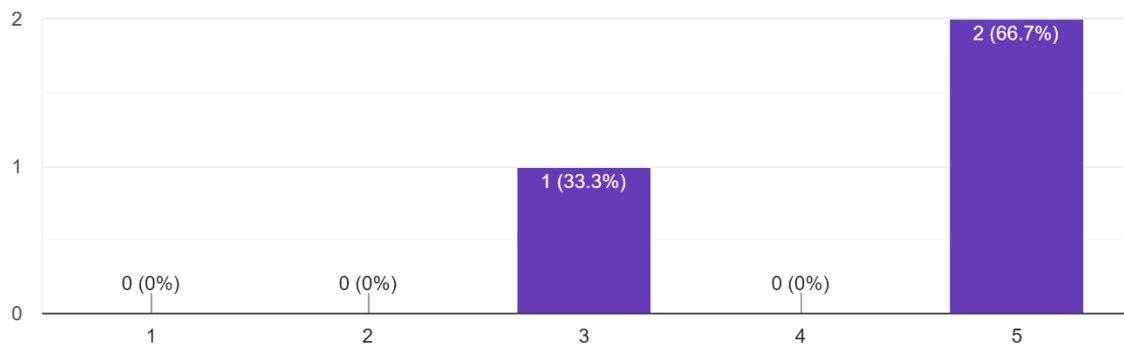
6 responses



EDUCATION, ENGAGEMENT AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

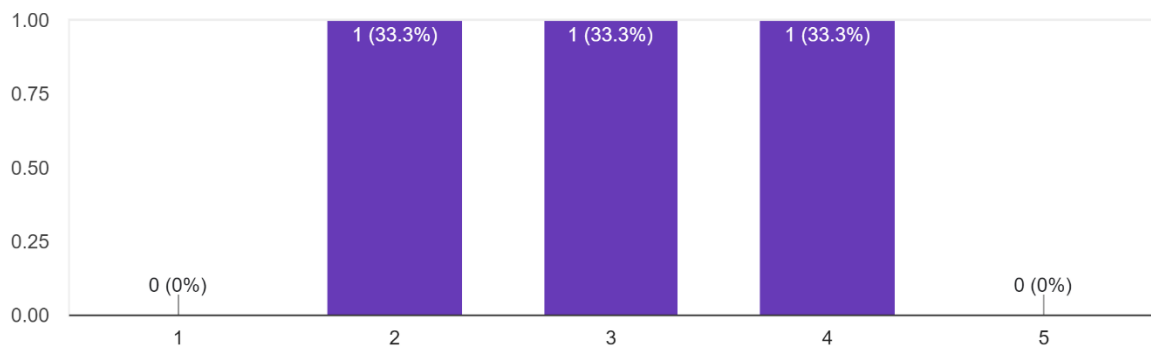
I could discuss and share my ideas on education, engagement and behaviour change regarding climate action in depth.

3 responses



I learned new things about education, engagement and behaviour change for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

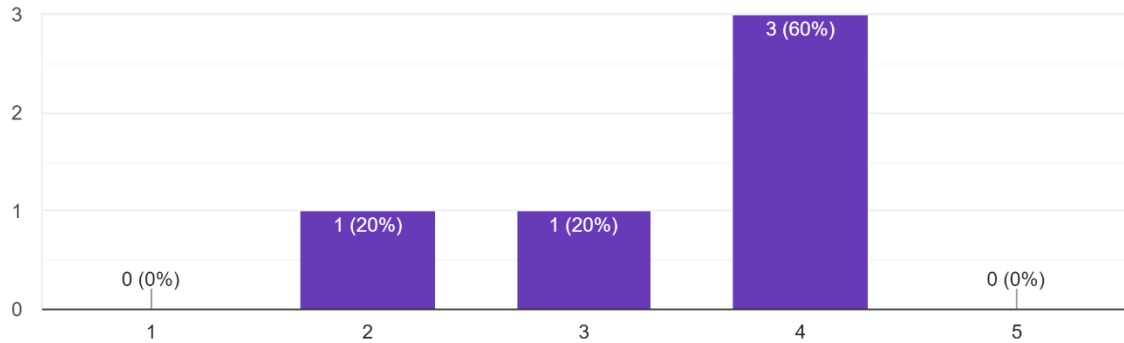
3 responses



FOOD AND WASTE

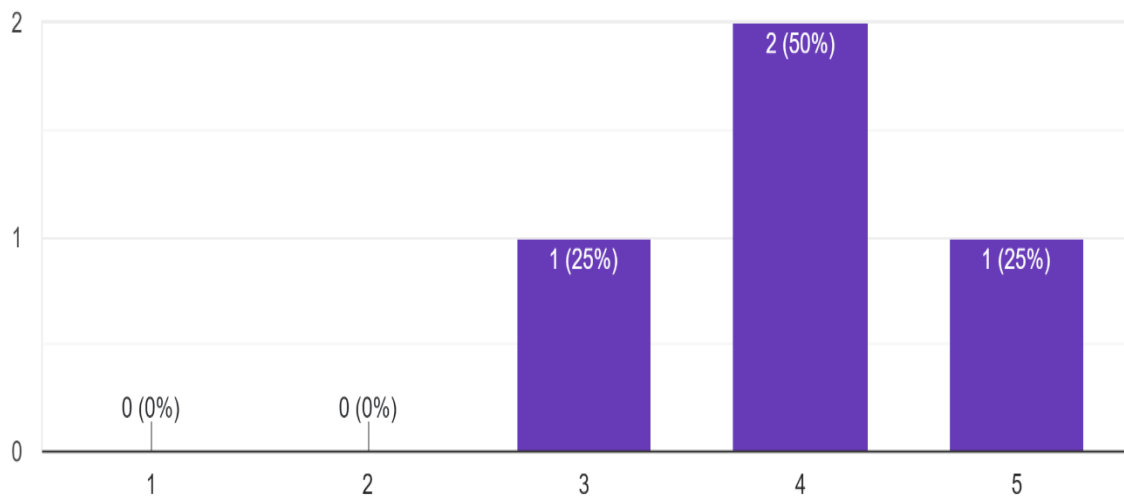
I could discuss and share my ideas on more climate-friendly food and waste issues in depth.

5 responses



I learned new things about reducing greenhouse gas emissions from food and waste.

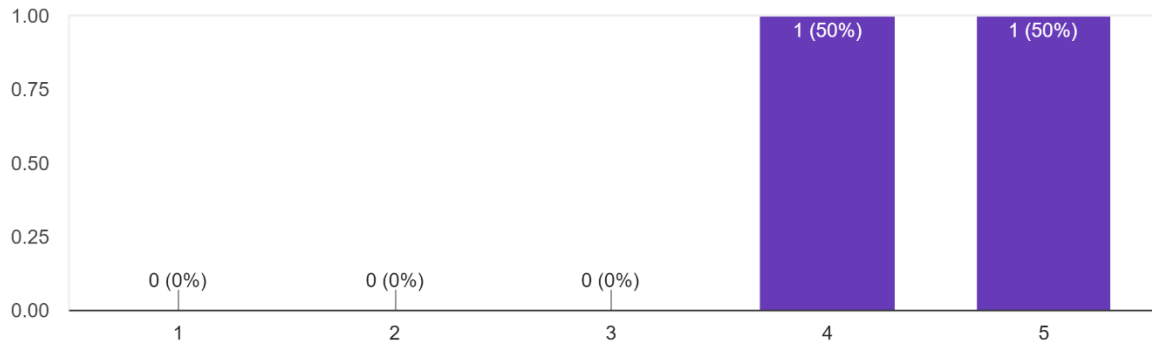
4 responses



HEAT AND ENERGY

I could discuss and share my ideas on how to reduce emissions from heating and energy use in depth.

2 responses



I learned new things about reducing greenhouse gas emissions from heating and energy use.

2 responses

