



Edinburgh
Communities
Climate Action



Spaces for Engagement on Climate Action

What we learned from workshops in
Edinburgh on climate engagement during
COP26 in and where to next.

Prepared by:



Sponsored by



Thanks to:

All the participants and volunteers who took part in workshops during COP26 and the City of Edinburgh Council for sponsoring this work.

Referencing Guidance:

Wright, C. (2022) 'Spaces for Engagement on Climate Action: what we learned from workshops in Edinburgh on climate engagement during COP26 in and where to next', EVOCC & OFE

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01 | Introduction

Background

Late 2020 the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) published its Net Zero strategy where it recognised that in order to realise the ambitious goal of net zero by 2030 CEC would require significant participation and collaboration from communities and residents from across Edinburgh.

Shortly before COP26 Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations Council (EVOC) and Our Future Edinburgh (OFE) were sponsored by CEC to work in partnership to develop a forum or engagement space for communities to actively engage in climate discussions and shared actions.

The new engagement space is tasked with maintaining an ongoing dialogue with citizens and communities about the transformation that needs to happen in the city, if we are to get to net zero carbon emissions by 2030. It is also intended that the space should produce practical actions, collective decisions and deliver change collaboratively.

In creating the forum EVOC and OFE decided that it was important to understand the current landscape of climate engagement in Edinburgh.

The partnership facilitated 2 online workshops and 1 physical workshop in the Old Fire Station on Lauriston Place. The workshops explored the nature of what participants felt is needed and what is desired from a new space for climate engagement in Edinburgh. The first workshop looked at what positive changes had happened in the past year, what kinds of spaces participants had seen and liked, and what things they feel are important for engaging communities with the climate emergency.

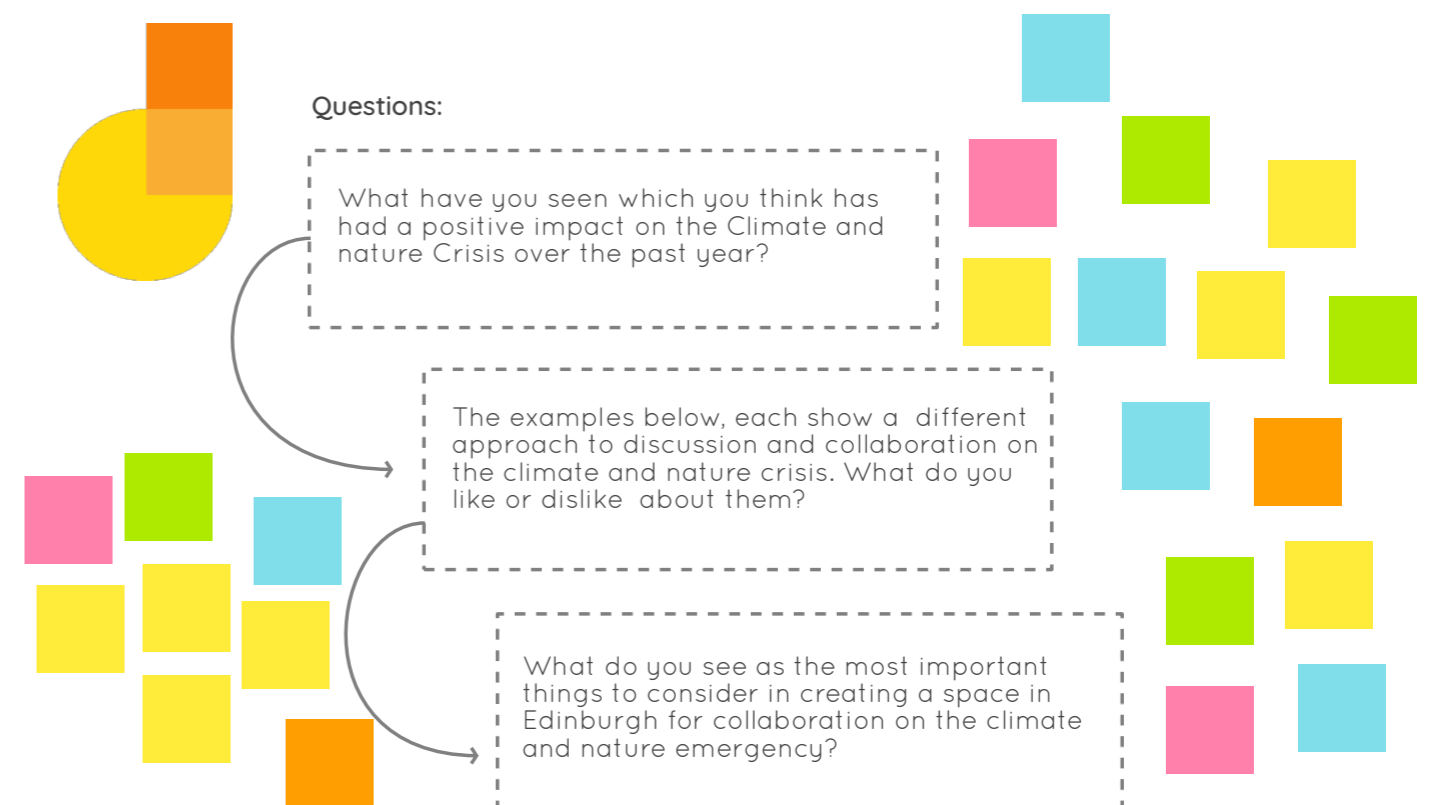
The second workshop was framed around what climate engagement might look like in the future and asked participants to imagine new climate engagement space(s) in depth.

The results from the workshops have been reflected in this report, giving an overview of the activities which took place during workshops and shows the results from that process. The report then summarises the results into Engagement Principles for Engagement on Climate Action as a blueprint for what the public can expect from the emerging engagement space which we will call 'Edinburgh Communities Climate Action'.

02 | Activities

Workshop activity 1: Lets design a new space for citywide climate action

The 'Lets design a new space for citywide climate action' took place online and used a combination Zoom online meetings and Google Jamboard as a way of brainstorming ideas and contributions. The activity arranged participants into focus groups where they were asked to consider and respond to the three questions shown below. (The second question also used visual aids to help participants have terms of reference).



Workshop Activity 2: What does climate engagement look like 1 year from now

The 'what does climate engagement look like 1 year from now' activity was a far more creative and involved activity. Participants were arranged into groups of 5-8 and asked to imagine Edinburgh 1 year from now. They were then asked to imagine what kind of engagement, resource sharing and collaboration could truly support the city's Net Zero 2030 ambitions.

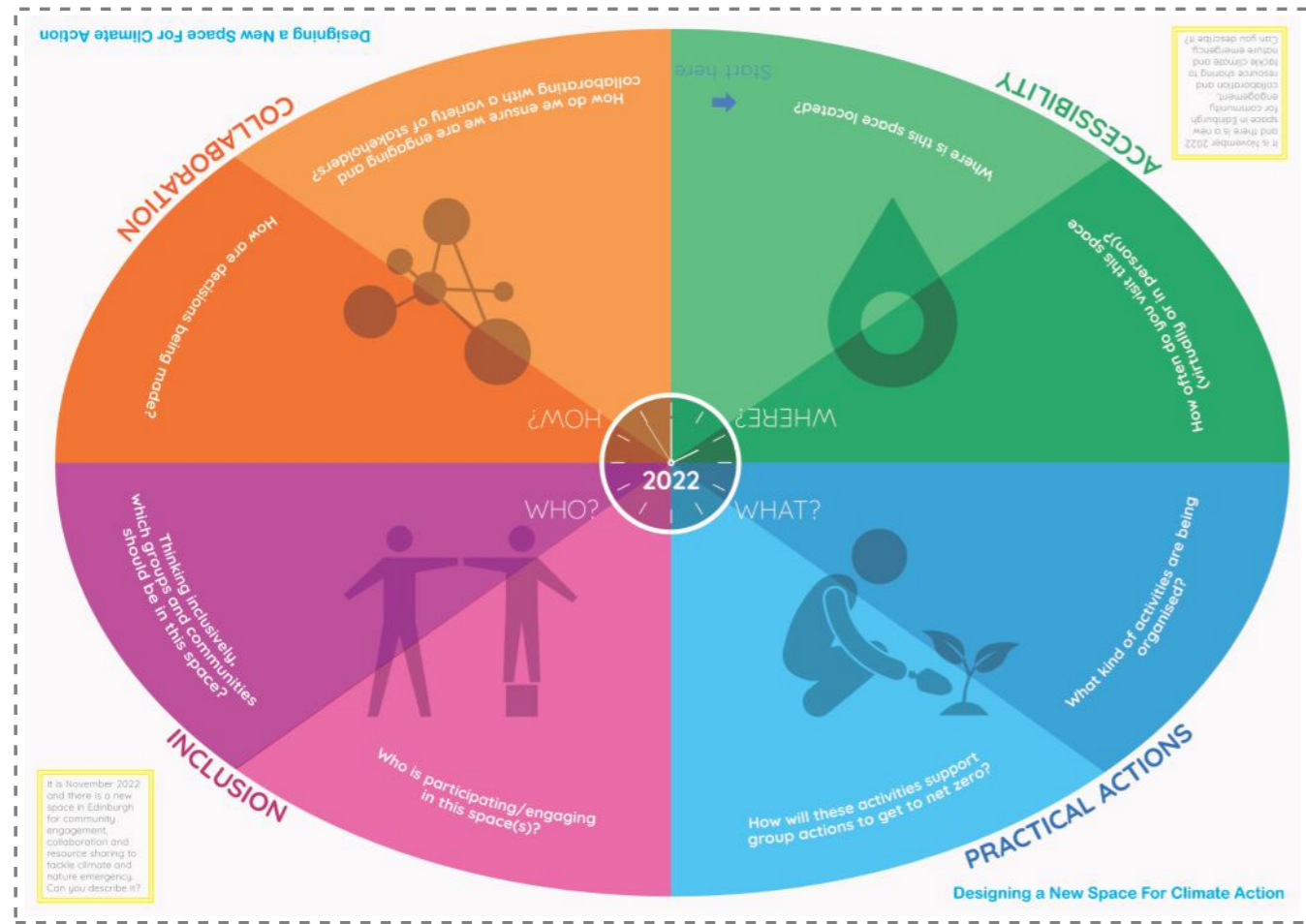
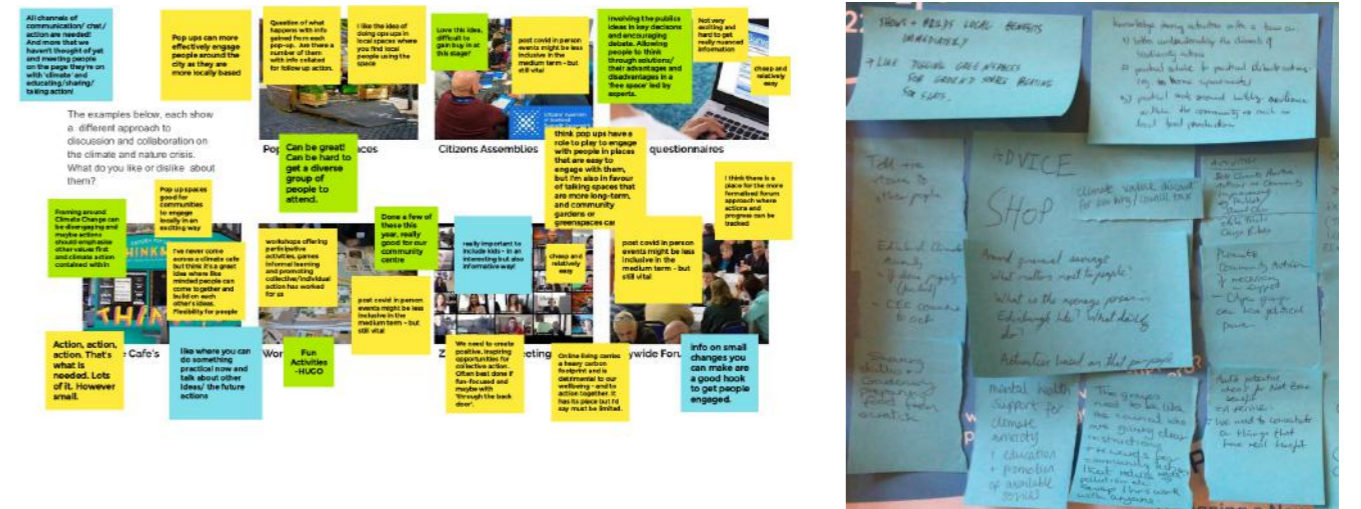
The groups were then asked to look at a wheel with a clock face in the middle and questions on the outside. The wheel was divided into 4 categories split into 2 sectors each and groups were tasked with recording their thoughts on post-it notes and sticking them in each of the 8 sectors. The categories asked participants to consider where the space might be located, what activities would happen there, who would be involved and how collaboration should happen.

As the groups worked clockwise around the wheel the participants were asked to consider key priorities for each category which they could present back to the rest of the workshop participants.

The learnings from this activity have helped develop a deeper understanding of community climate engagement aspirations and to develop robust principles which can be used as a road-map for the future climate forum.

Designing a new space

Once the activities were completed the results from the first activity were combined and comments and arranged into four key areas of learning. The first category was the 'location and accessibility' or 'where' the forum is located. The second category was 'inclusion and social values' or 'who', the third category was 'activities' or what' and the final category was 'collaborations and ways of working together' or 'how'. Once all the comments were categorised they were able to be refined into a set of design principles which could inform the development of the the community climate forum.



Types of Engagement Spaces Introduction

The second set of results processed from the first activity were derived from the following examples of different engagement spaces which participants were asked to review and comment on. These results have been used to help understand what spaces and approaches are popular and to determine questions that should be considered when using specific spaces and approaches.



Participatory Workshops

Participatory workshops are spaces where participants can approach issues in interactive ways using tools and approaches to foster meaningful discussion.

Participants Feedback:

Participatory workshops were a popular engagement approach for making content fun and approachable. Other points were that:

- Deliberative workshops could be a more regular alternative to citizens' assemblies
- They could be really useful for generating and refining good ideas
- workshops could be good for offering participatory activities, games, encouraging informal learning and promoting local initiatives
- Experience of previous workshops had been positive and could be again.

Key Questions:

- Will the Council recognise results, opinions and ambition of the people?
- How can workshops achieve good diversity when facilitated?
- post Covid in person events might be less inclusive in the medium term but might be vital anyway. How can we ensure that the processes are safe?



Online Engagement

Online digital engagement has been used significantly throughout the pandemic as another way of having face to face contact with people without being there in person.

Participants Feedback:

Using digital engagement tools online was positively received by participants and was seen as a way of involving more people and being inclusive. Other key points were that:

- on-line engagement scales well, reaches past physical challenges, making access more available and could have the most impact.
- Online meetings give access to people who struggle to meet in person
- Online meetings are good enabling a different level of accessibility and helping overcome traditional barriers (not just physical)
- Online meetings are good at including kids in an interesting but also informative way!

Key Questions:

- Online living carries a heavy carbon footprint and is detrimental to our wellbeing. It has its place but how can we manage it in a healthy and environmentally respectful way?

Temporary & pop-up spaces

Creative temporary spaces where locals can discuss issues, access materials and meet others

Participants Feedback:

Temporary and pop-up spaces received mixed reactions but it was felt that these could be combined with more permanent options to create a year round focus on climate issues in communities. Some of the key considerations raised were that:

- Pop-up spaces could effectively engage and inform people across the city as locally based outlets
- Pop-up spaces could be a good opportunity for communities to engage locally in an exciting new way
- Pop-ups in local spaces could be great for connecting local people using the space.

Key questions:

- How can temporary spaces lead to the building of longer term longer discussions and actions?
- What do temporary spaces offer which permanent buildings and spaces do not?
- What happens with information gained from each pop-up. Will information be collated and shared?



Climate Cafe's / permanent local climate centres

Climate Cafes are open, inclusive spaces for people to get together to talk and plan action on climate change. They are usually based in communities and can act as a hub of fun climate activities.

Participants Feedback:

Climate Cafe's/permanent local climate centres have been well received by participants who said that:

- They would be good for engaging audiences who are not yet involved in climate actions.
- Positive spaces for people on low incomes to access advice on saving money e.g reducing food waste, access to cheaper and nutritious food, more efficient heating systems.
- A good opportunity for like minded people to come together and build on each others ideas.
- A Flexible option for some people who might want to be involved at different times but who are often unable to attend regular meetings.
- A place where people can plan practical actions now and talk about other ideas for the future in comfort.

Key Questions:

- These spaces might have high overheads, how could we ensure their long term sustainability?

Questionnaires

Online questionnaires are frequently used as a way to gather quantifiable (countable) information in order to determine how popular something is or to learn how people feel about a specific issue.

Participants Feedback:

Questionnaires were not particularly popular but participants could see their utility as a tool for gauging opinions en masse, (see comments below):

- Could be interesting to explore digital tools including open idea generation tools, participatory budgeting (adapted for carbon budgeting).
- cheap and relatively easy
- Involving the public in key decisions and encouraging future debate.
- Allowing people to think through solutions/ their advantages and disadvantages in a 'free space' created by experts.
- They seem somewhat old-school, newer technology could be more productive
- Not very exciting and hard to get really nuanced information
- Self selecting so unlikely to get a diversity of views without a lot of hard work

Key Questions:

- How do we achieve maximum diversity when using questionnaires?
- Where do the results go and how are they used?
- Who sets questions and analyses responses?
- Could questionnaires take a community action research approach?



Local and neighbourhood events

Local and neighbourhood events can take many forms but examples might be street parties, markets and festivals.

Participants Feedback:

Local and neighbourhood events were considered to be a really effective and positive way to engage communities. Some the reflections below highlight this.

- Festivals and local events could be an inclusive opportunity for people to meet and get to know each other.
- Community festivals and events, could provide spectacle and excitement for climate action
- A community road show, moving around different communities could be really beneficial in engaging all communities.



Citizens Assemblies

Citizens' assemblies are randomly selected groups of people who are brought together to learn about and discuss an issue or issues, and reach conclusions about what they think should happen.

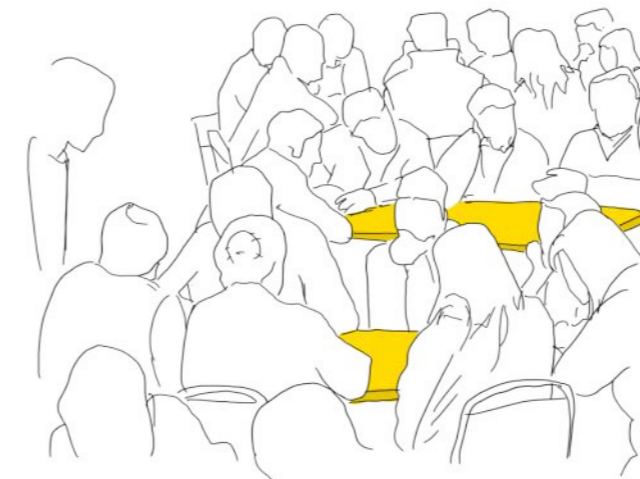
Participants Feedback:

Citizens assemblies were popular but there was a strong concern about the level of commitment and professional support required to implement. Other key points were that:

- Citizens assemblies if utilised properly are an essential way for citizens to influence policy makers. -we need urgent policy changes
- Are good to widen out/further democratise decision making processes but also stop narrow perspectives being taken.
- Communities of Interest need to be considered, particularly in context of 20 minute neighbourhoods; for instance people with disabilities or carers are often very isolated where they live and depend on services that are citywide etc.
- Need guidance from reliable sources of information
- Examples from elsewhere indicate that they need to be done carefully and are relatively resource intensive.
- There needs to be an understanding of the extent to which there is a commitment that outputs / recommendations be acted on.

Key Questions:

- How can assemblies reach beyond initial participant selection?
- How can the process avoid becoming too technocratic?
- How can the costs of assemblies be mitigated?
- Would it be difficult to gain buy in from the public at this stage?



Forums

Open spaces where anyone can join in discussions, learn about issues and engage in dialogue to find solutions.

Participants Feedback:

Forums were a popular engagement tool and there was support using them in a creative way. There was concern about them becoming talking shops though. See comments below:

- Good idea but need to pay attention to diversity in the room
- Needed for education and practical skills for career development
- Forums that enable ongoing discussions would be helpful. Not just one-off events with different participants at each.
- A really good space to hear peoples concerns
- Need a clear focus, could do a connected series in different communities.
- Needs flexible and creative formats
- Can be great! Can be hard to get a diverse group of people to attend.
- info on small changes you can make are a good hook to get people engaged.
- There is a place for the more formalised forum approach where actions and progress can be tracked.
- Need to avoid a talking shop, guidelines could be helpful
- post Covid in person events might be less inclusive in the medium term - but still vital
- could be really good but worry that council will not recognise ambition of the people

Key Questions:

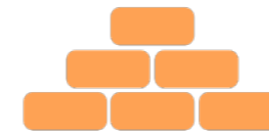
- How can workshops achieve good diversity when facilitated?
- How do we make sure that the forums are Covid safe?
- Will the Council recognise results, opinions and ambition of the people?
- How do we ensure pragmatic action and avoid talking shop?

Principles Introduction

This section explores the principles distilled from the workshops which have been separated into four distinct categories of principle. Under each principle heading there are bullet points which relate to the principle and conversation points during the workshops. The principles will guide the development of an engagement space for community climate action in Edinburgh.



WHAT- ACTIVITIES



Capacity Building

- Opportunities for upskilling, education, and training



Measuring Success

- Monitoring and Evaluation



Practical Action

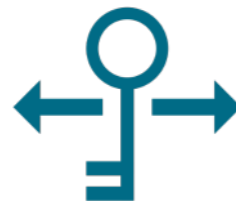
- Focus on practical solutions

WHERE- LOCATION & ACCESSIBILITY



Local focus building into citywide collaboration

- Local focus translating into citywide shared actions
- Engage Locally (using community centres, religious buildings etc)
- Engage using small spaces or temporary structures (pop-ups)
- Engage from city centre and community/town centres



Making participation accessible to all

- Combine online and physical engagement methods
- Engage in places where people already access services
- Engage people in the workplace
- Use a variety of public engagement approaches



Progressive of collaboration Style

- Fair collaboration with local decision making
- Energising and fun processes
- Working together strategically
- Co-development and involvement
- Building capacity and not extracting



Connecting and Sharing

- Showcasing successful projects & raising awareness
- Information and resources sharing
- Support and advice
- Connecting people & efforts



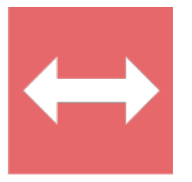
Collective bargaining

- Engaging and persuading larger organisations



Inclusive values

- Transparency and openness in forum processes and activities



Scale of Activities

- Need to engage with critical mass to affect citywide change

HOW - COLLABORATION & WAYS OF WORKING TOGETHER



Working constructively with important stakeholders:

- Working with and receiving support from government and local authority
- Involving local businesses



Cross cutting collaboration:

- Meeting people where they are with challenges which relate to them
- Approaching through cross cutting issues-breaking silos



Constructive shared actions:

- Starting with smaller actions initially to build confidence
- Focus on practical solutions together
- Collective funding and procurement



Diversity of Groups

- Seek help from groups & individuals with experience
- Involve influential people & groups
- Need to be welcoming to diversity of groups
- Engage with local businesses



Social Diversity

- Involve mix of social diversities Including: Cultural diversity; Racial diversity; Religious diversity; Age diversity; Sex / Gender diversity; Sexual orientation; Disability)



Diversity of Opinions

- Open to a range of opinions and lived experiences
- Approachable discussions (not too technical)

A new space for Climate Engagement in Edinburgh

From the Principles for Engagement on Climate Action we will establish a new space for dialogue, community engagement, collaboration and learning for Edinburgh which will have four core working areas to begin with. These reflect the need for third sector (community groups, charities and social enterprises) and engagement with local groups at various levels. This will involve a diversity of approaches, appropriate to the different stakeholder groups. The new climate engagement space will be known as Edinburgh Communities Climate Action and will be co-produced with community groups across the city. Below is the initial aim and focus, as well as core working areas of Edinburgh Communities Climate Action.

Edinburgh Communities Climate Action vision:

Community Climate Action Edinburgh’s vision is for communities and groups across Edinburgh to be working toward net zero by 2030. To achieve this, the goal of Communities Climate Action Edinburgh will be maximise community participation and leadership in local net zero actions within Edinburgh by working with community groups and organisations and using a diverse range of engagement approaches.

Focus of Edinburgh Communities Climate Action:

1. Dialogue: increased opportunities for groups, communities and stakeholders to influence policy and explore issues together at a strategic level.
2. Community Engagement: facilitating and encouraging engagements which can support learning, increased dialogue and community-led climate actions within communities through workshops and other participatory approaches.
3. Collaboration: connect, empower, and support communities and groups to take action on climate together across the city.
4. Learning: Improved knowledge and understanding as well as enhanced Capacity of organisations, groups and communities to deliver effective climate interventions across Edinburgh

Initial Work Areas of Edinburgh Communities Climate Action:

1. Mapping Groups & Projects

Mapping will be undertaken as a way of connecting with groups and their activities. Edinburgh Communities Climate Action will also explore community-led mapping at a local level as a way of deepening understanding of groups, resources and activities across the city.



2. Community Climate Forum

The Community Climate Forum will be a space for and shaped by groups and organisations across the city to discuss and plan strategic climate actions and policies. The citywide forum could be a space where key climate issues facing the city are explored and ways of addressing them identified. Resources, learning and skills could also be shared within the forum.

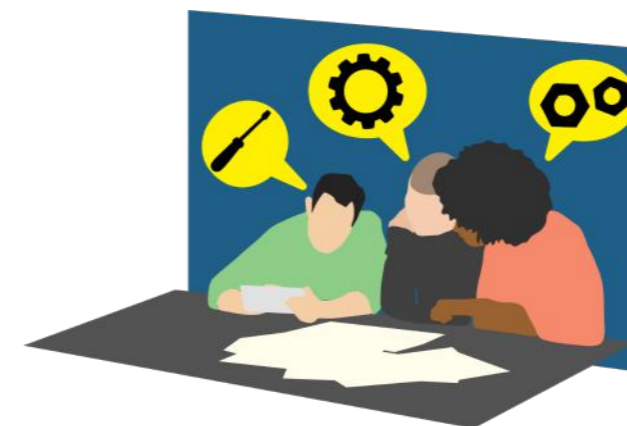


3. Climate Learning Room:

The Climate Learning Room will be a periodic set of themed workshops focusing on a specific issue (e.g retrofitting tenements) with different stakeholders from across the city who want to be or should be involved in addressing that problem at a strategic, policy and practical level.

4. Local Climate Engagement Projects

Edinburgh Communities Climate Action will encourage and support a small number of community engagement projects which are developed with local groups that contribute to achieving a community led net zero actions. These might include exploring creation of climate action spaces, net zero neighbourhood workshops and supporting facilitators to engage communities.



5. Collaboration Teams

Collaboration Teams will be a project area of Edinburgh Communities Climate Action forum which looks to create of small collaboration teams between third sector groups and other organisations. The aim will be for groups across the city to work together practically on shared priorities and projects.

