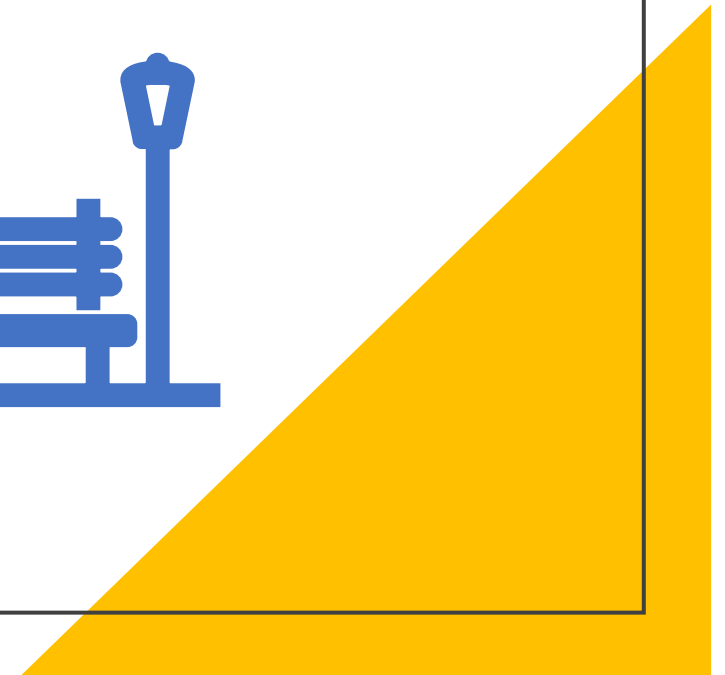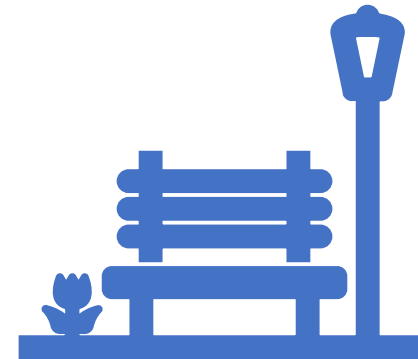# Climate-friendly Leeds: A workshop for members of the public and Leeds decision makers

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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Overview of workshop

9.30   **Introduction** (Prof. Sarah Irwin, Dr.Katy Wright, Dr. Katy Roelich)

9.35   **Overview** of Public Views and Climate Change research and aims of the workshop (SI, KW)

9.55   Set up small group discussions (Katy Roelich)

10.05   **Breakout 1 (small group discussion): *What matters? From ideas to principles***

10.35   **Whole group discussion: feedback from small group discussions** (All, Katy R)

10.50   *BREAK*

11.00   **Presentation: Reviewing the principles** (Katy Wright, Sarah Irwin, Katy Roelich). *We will summarise the principles and set up the second, follow on, small group discussion*

11.15   **Breakout 2 (small group discussion): *Can principles be put into practice?*** *How might the agreed principles inform decision making? How do Leeds citizens and decision makers best engage?*

11.50   **Whole group discussion: feedback and summing up** (All; Katy Roelich)

12.10   **Final Reflections** Cllr Neil Walshaw

12.20 **End**

A puzzle is identified within research into public views and the climate crisis

- The climate crisis as a grave threat to societies and humanity

- Complacency

- A failure to act in more 'climate friendly' ways despite extensive expressions of climate concern

- Attitude –behaviour gap

However..

Is public behaviour puzzling or – do we need an improved understanding of how and why people act as they do?

People's actions and behaviours are shaped by the contexts in which they live. Their relationships, their commitments and the constraints of everyday living are very important;

From this perspective, it is not necessarily puzzling that people's perceptions of the climate crisis do not match up with their behaviours and actions;

However, there is little social science research into how people do think about everyday life and the climate crisis.

Our research questions

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1. How do the public perceive and think about emissions, pollution and climate change in relation to their everyday lives?

2. How do they perceive and reflect on the tensions which arise?

3. How do they think about different levels of action, from the individual to society wide actions and systemic changes?

Our research study
(*Public views and climate change*)

- We explored our questions through a survey (1676 respondents) and 43 qualitative interviews

- The survey was distributed via diverse organisations and networks across Leeds

- Good mix of socio-demographic groups but some over-representation of older, and degree qualified, respondents and some skew towards climate-concerned citizens

- Our survey asked a range of attitudinal questions AND additionally asked several open ended questions to explore people's reasoning – for example in relation to everyday dilemmas about acting on climate relevant concerns.

Views on climate change and everyday action

- Widespread concern about climate change, for example:
  - 72% of respondents think about climate change most weeks or most days
  - 59% of respondents say they discuss climate change issues at least every month
- The majority foregrounded society wide changes necessary to reduce carbon emissions
- Respondents held diverse views about links – and disconnects - between individual action and wider societal changes
- Respondents engaged in nuanced ways with the complexities of everyday climate-relevant activities and decisions

Ideas about tackling emissions
(illustrates a range of views on individual action and society-wide change)

"Which comes closest to your views about if and how carbon emissions should be reduced in the UK?"

There are more pressing concerns for society, so reducing carbon emissions is not a top priority	8%
As a society we should encourage people to reduce their personal carbon emissions (eg. to fly and drive less) but it is up to them what they do	14%
As a society we should ensure significant cuts to carbon emissions (eg. taxing frequent air travel, limiting city centre car use, converting to renewables)	78%

There are more pressing concerns for society, so reducing carbon emissions is not a top priority (8%)

Themes	Example quotes
Climate scepticism	The amount of CO2 in the atmosphere has increased by one part per ten thousand over the past century. Climate alarmists believe this tiny increase can account for everything which makes them unhappy.
Inequalities, social class and unfairness	When people are losing their jobs and are worried about Covid. The country is now in billions of pounds debt. These climate changers will ONLY ever have a major impact on the those with little or no money. Middle, Upper class people never ever suffer they will still use their jets etc. Look at the carbon footprint of the rich and famous DO NOT PREACH TO ME we need to feed our families and heat our homes. We do not have the luxury of this as we need to work and earn money. We cannot afford anymore taxes etc..

As a society we should encourage people to reduce their personal carbon emissions (eg. to fly and drive less) but it is up to them what they do (14%)

Themes	Example quotes
Import of individual rights and responsibilities over state led or system level actions	"I am against the "Nanny State" interfering with our choices." "It's all about being personally responsible for themselves and their world. You can't expect someone else to do it"
Emphasis on individual choices as way to effect change	"I'm not sure governmental enforcement is the way to go in this issue, but I'm 100% sure it is up to the people to reduce their carbon footprint, and not up to governments. Individual choices are potentially much more powerful than a carbon tax or subsidies" "Although I think that some government intervention is required, I think nudging people towards better behaviour is better than punishing what could be seen as bad. Providing people with information about impact is paramount"
Complex overlapping dynamics	"I am a strong believer that action must be taken to protect the planet from the devastation of climate change, yet I am also a person whom advocates autonomy, I don't believe that a person should be taxed if they have to travel frequently - what if a child is visiting family due to studying away, or a father is travelling from work to home to see his children. There has to be a balance, and I believe that enforcing rules in this manner will push people away from caring rather than towards it - e.g. as the current pandemic law changes have proven" "i believe that the climate change is a natural phenomenon been accelerated by lifestyles since the industrial revolution. Telling people what to do will not be adhered to and increasing charges will mean the poorer people will suffer while the richer people will carry on with their lifestyles. i cannot believe how people have gone back to foreign holidays so quickly once the opportunities were there again contributing to the virus increase and

As a society we should ensure significant cuts to carbon emissions …. (78%)

Themes	Example quotes
Urgency/ need to act now	"Because we are in a climate emergency and if we don't radically reduce our carbon and ecological footprints, we can expect to see widespread societal collapse within our children's and possibly our own lifetimes" "Currently, all we do is talk about climate change, we need to stop talking about what we should do and take action to ensure that everyone plays their part"
Top down action needed	"A lot of people seem to agree that something must be done, but aren't able or willing to make small, simple changes themselves. Feel like we need a but more encouragement to start to make changes as soon as possible. Everyone said that less traffic was one good thing about lockdown but have just gone back to old habits now it is over." "The current state of pay in the UK is that it is either difficult, expensive or impossible for individuals to reduce their carbon footprint in a way that will lead to significant reductions in ghg emissions, without the intervention of government. People are slow to change, and we need a rapid and hard hitting change to our economy and society in order to reduce emissions enough to stabilise the climate before tipping point"
Cannot put the onus on individuals	"It's fantastic that individuals are making a change but this will never be enough we need wider change. Especially in leeds, the public transport system is poor, the congestion and pollution is horrendous. But you cant just punish people and put the responsibility on them. You need to facilitate behaviour change. Invest in renewables. Sort out a transport system" "Legislation is required to do this, which will in turn lead to investment in green technology lowering costs and building a virtuous circle e.g. lower cost of heat pumps v/s gas boilers. Individual choices e.g. eating less meat are important but will not deliver changes on the scale needed."
Incentives need changing / how can people act right when contexts work against it?	"We have been encouraging people to do the right thing for years. Poor wages, cheap air travel, lack of cycle lanes etc all mean it is too difficult to it off our own back. Government need to take control. Single use plastic, for example, how is the consumers supposed to avoid it - it's everywhere. We need a ban on it!" "Because people's behaviour responds to government initiatives like subsidies and taxes (e.g. Eat out to help out"!)
Combination of top down and individual change	"Because climate change is an emergency and requires society-wide changes; individuals can make a difference but the government needs to take action urgently and unequivocally" "there needs to be investment in alternatives (eg fuel, transport infrastructure) to make what we do at an individual level matter"

Views on individual action and society-wide change, continued

In the survey questionnaire we offered a definition of carbon footprint in order to ask people if this is something they think about or act on.

- Most commonly (75%) people said they '*do things to reduce it where they can*',

- next most common (27%) people said they '*would like to reduce their carbon footprint but need wider changes to do this*'.

They were then asked '*what wider changes would help you..*'. To illustrate:

.. the amount of carbon I'm responsible for is dwarfed in comparison to industry and those who commute by plane every week, for example. There needs to be structural changes to encourage wider change - it feels a bit pointless me doing the things I do when there's no onus on business etc. to do their bit too. I still do it, but it does feel a little like a drop in the ocean

At the moment the pressure is all on individuals to make changes - which are often costlier or more inconvenient. policy change would push change faster, and there needs to be a carrot and stick approach and it needs to be radical.

Example vignette: 'Vicky'

Part one:

Vicky has just finished her exams. She and her friends have planned to go on holiday (now that people are able to travel freely again). One of her friends has found a good deal for an all-inclusive holiday to Tenerife with flights included. Vicky is worried about climate change and does not want to fly. She thinks it would be fun for her friends to rent a house together somewhere in the UK or take a sleeper train to the continent. Her friends are excited about the possibility of going to Tenerife and Vicky is unsure about what to do. Should she:

- Not say anything and go on holiday to Tenerife with her friends anyway
- Tell her friends about her feelings and suggest that they change their plans
- Not go on holiday with her friends as she can make other plans
- Other - do something else (you need to say what)

Most people chose Option 2: tell her friends and suggest they make other plans

Reasons for answering 'tell her friends her feelings...'

We grouped responses into categories:

1	**Vicky should share her views as she might influence her friends**; educate them; make them aware and think about carbon footprint, influence them to change	**30%**
2	**Vicky should share her views as it is what friends do**; they may feel the same; they may be sympathetic; they could come up with a solution together; they should respect her position	**28%**
3	**By sharing her views, she might be able to push for / cause a change of plans**,	**12%**
4	**Sharing her views is what is right for Vicky personally,** e.g. for her own decision-making, integrity and abiding by her values. As a person who cares about climate change, it is the responsible thing for *her* to do.	**11%**
5	**Some people made a more political** statement, e.g. Don't fly; individual action won't work, or top down argument eg. For system change	**6%**
6	(two other categories: missing or not otherwise classified)	

Examples of answers categorised as "*share as its what friends do*"

> *I think it is important that Vicky expresses her views (and I hope her friends will listen to and respect them), however, if her friends chose to continue the original plan I don't think Vicky opting out will have much impact on climate change, carbon footprint, etc.*

> *Even if she ends up going with them she has made her friends aware of her feelings.*

Examples of answers categorised as "*share as she may influence them*"

They might agree a compromise and it enables her to possibly influence her friends or at least get them to think about consequences

It's important to make more people aware of climate change, you never know how many people you'll end up reaching from a group and maybe that person will reach someone else and so on

Vignette Part 2

In part two of the vignette, Vicky's friends in fact decide they are going to fly to Tenerife.The respondents were asked - what should Vicky do? They were given two different options:

55% suggested that Vicky should go with them anyway

- This was suggested for a range of reasons – ranging from 'conservative' responses to more critical reasons relating to avoiding blaming individuals for systemic problems

45% suggested that Vicky should make other plans

- This was usually about "being true to herself or to her beliefs"

"She should go with them anyway"

The plane is flying anyway

While flights are still happening and holidays are available, Vicky should not feel guilt for travelling. She is not individually responsible for the whole aviation industry. Grander, systematic changes need to happen to show the general public that flying is "bad" before individuals feel guilty

Public perceptions of complexity

- Vicky is not seen as an autonomous decision maker and, typically, people's advice about what she should do described how she might best balance her climate beliefs, relationships and commitments to her friends.

- People held a range of complex and varied ideas about what it means to "do the right thing", and act on her concerns, and how this can be negotiated.

- Example responses also hint at a range of ideas about how individual actions might – or might not – relate to social change

Aims of workshop

Recognising the complexity of everyday living (constraints, relationships, commitments)

How do you see options for climate-friendly interventions? We will take travel and mobility as *an example for discussion* and ask:

- Are there shared views about principles which might inform interventions?

- How might the public and decision makers engage and communicate about this?

Introducing Breakout 1: identifying principles

Working on another vignette:

A local authority wants to tackle air pollution in the town centre and are consulting the public on different options. They aim to cut car traffic (but will keep access for disabled people and delivery drivers). Assuming that public transport is efficient and affordable, which of the following options would you support?

1. **Pedestrianise all of the town centre, banning all non-essential cars**
2. **Charge private cars going into town at busy periods**
3. **Use a voluntary approach** e.g. working with employers to encourage flexible working where possible (e.g. flexi time or home working) to reduce congestion
4. **Other (you will be asked what)**

Breakout 1: identifying principles

In break out rooms:

- Reflect on answers to vignette

- Work together to identify 4 to 6 themes/principles running through the answers
  - What reasoning is used to explain why an answer is a 'good thing to do', for example; convenience, fairness and affordability

Come back to the main room:

- Feedback on key themes and points of agreement and difference

Breakout 1: identifying principles

Whole Group Feedback (10.35 – 10. 50; Katy R to chair)

10.50: **Break (restart at 11.00)**

Reviewing the principles

a. Summing up the principles (Katy Wright)

b. Thinking about <u>how we frame the question</u> of reduced congestion and decarbonizing travel: - survey data on views about the pandemic and altered mobility patterns (Sarah)

Contexts of mobility

When we ask our questions about ways to reduce pollution and congestion:

- we can think about changes in how we travel from 'a' to 'b' ..

- .. but we can also think about the overall need to travel (ie. more significant 'structural' changes in how our everyday lives are organized (urban design; 15 minute neighbourhoods; changes in work based commuting).

To illustrate:

"The pandemic has caused significant changes in how people live their everyday lives. Are there changes that you have experienced, or seen, which you would like to keep?"

Of 1676 respondents, 1591 offered a response; most offered accounts of changes they would keep.

Simple word count of commonly appearing words – by far the most common was 'Home' (827 mentions) – which includes: working from home: 407, home working: 97, WFH 26, remote 38

... Home working has its own limitations, stresses and pressures, (I do feel more isolated and often quite lonely, and work is in my head AND in my home, which I do not like) but I still prefer it. When lock-down was at its height, the air was cleaner, everything was so much quieter ... and when I was able to go out, I saw much more wildlife quite close to where I live........if people appreciate nature, they will value it and if they value it, they will want to conserve it. We shouldn't lose this moment.

Working from home instead of commuting to an office has been the single most beneficial thing for me. I am saving around 2.5hrs a day, and the associated costs of transport and prepared food. My mental health has improved

Introducing Breakout 2: can principles be put into practice?

How would we know if we were achieving these principles? Can they be used to guide real decisions?

Practical focus: *how to reduce rush hour traffic congestion on main roads into Leeds centre*

Breakout 2: can principles be put into practice?

In breakout rooms:

- Spend a few minutes agreeing on an initiative that might help.

- Now discuss each of these questions:

- Q1: What key things would you want to happen as part of the initiative?

- Q2: Does the design of the initiative square with the principles you identified in the first breakout?

- Q3: How might decision makers justify the initiative to the citizens of Leeds?

- Q4: How would you communicate the initiative /encourage public engagement?

Back in the main room:

- Feedback on putting principles into practice

Breakout 2: can principles be put into practice?

Feedback from groups

Final reflections

- TBC
- Councillor Neil Walshaw

For information about the research project go to:

https://flag.leeds.ac.uk/research/public-views-and-the-climate-crisis-values-practices-and-policy-change/

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