



Bristol Climate &  
Nature Partnership

# COMMUNITY CLIMATE AND NATURE ACTION MODEL



Community  
infrastructure  
is a valuable  
and essential  
civic asset for  
mobilising fair  
climate and  
nature action





“The Community Climate and Nature Action Model aligns well with Bristol City Council’s One City approach to climate and nature which includes asset-based community development and just transition principles. As a council we have successfully built funding bids around the community climate action plans, and draft policies and projects have been informed by the diverse insights of the Community Leadership Panel. Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership have developed the Community Climate and Nature Action Model with commitment, wisdom and skill and we look forward to continuing the collaboration, working regionally and sharing insights nationally.”

**Alex Minshull**  
Sustainable City and Climate Change Manager | Bristol City Council



# OVERVIEW

From 2021-2025 Bristol has been developing an effective place-based model for climate and nature action. By putting communities at the heart of local action, they develop leadership and agency which can shape and inform strategic climate policy and action, in an inclusive and accessible way. Our aim in Bristol has been to test a model which can be repeatable and beneficial to other places. This document introduces the Community Climate and Nature Action Model.

We are in an increasingly divisive time. Support for climate and nature action is high and widespread but for some is very conditional on the perception of the costs and benefits being fairly distributed across society. A just transition is required, which will only be achieved through sensitive and complex dialogue that ensure solutions reflect the views of local people and communities.

By just transition we mean an equitable transition, where opportunities are intentionally created to reduce rather than worsen inequalities. Where action for climate and nature doesn't expect those least responsible for carbon emissions to make the biggest sacrifices, and instead creates new opportunities to improve the quality of life for people locally and globally.

Community infrastructure exists everywhere, and community organisations are experts of their place, community and lived experience. It's essential that we harness the potential of the UK's community infrastructure to catalyse climate and nature action which involves and helps to improve the quality of life of local citizens.

“The transition to net zero provides a once in a generation opportunity to address systemic equality, but there is a real risk it won't and will instead compound existing inequity and create more barriers and divisions. Our Community Climate and Nature Action Model can unlock the power of communities and deliver upon this promise.”

**Amy Harrison** Head of Community Partnerships  
Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership

Community organisations provide stable, trusted – and often the only – local infrastructure to connect, support, and include new people within communities into climate and nature conversations. It is impossible to conceive how a just transition will happen without them. Community organisations are trusted messengers who meet citizens where they are at, framing their engagement around what matters to local people and their day-to-day lives.

The Community Climate and Nature Action Model positions communities as key agents of change, recognising and valuing the expertise and specialisms community organisations and the voluntary sector has. Their lived experience and knowledge of people and place is essential and makes community organisations strategic players in the national transition to net zero.

This mobilisation of community is what is needed for transformative and systemic change that will help ensure the UK's transition has a social mandate and local legitimacy.



# COMMUNITY CLIMATE AND NATURE ACTION MODEL

## ECOSYSTEM

Place based climate action network to coordinate

---

Supportive and engaged local authority

---

Strong community anchor organisations

---

Climate, nature, and carbon expertise

---

Funding and resource

---

Collaborative approach across sectors

## IMPACT

Wider and deeper climate and nature engagement in diverse communities

Communities are contributing to climate and nature recovery

Community climate and nature action is recognised as an essential strategic approach

A more just and inclusive society with better quality of life for citizens

## OUTCOMES

Increased community resilience to climate and societal changes

An enabling environment for other climate and nature action to receive support

Insights from communities shape wider strategic policy and decision making

Plan priorities provide a mandate for climate and nature action

Culture change in climate sector, local authority, voluntary and community organisations and citizens

## ACTIVITIES

Communities are inspired and supported to take climate action with social benefits

A lever for national investment

Investment into existing structures and organisations

A pipeline of community-led projects ready for investment and expansion

Network of community and equalities organisations

Pipeline of investable community climate projects

A wide range of people are engaged in climate action

Creative engagement activities

Community climate action plans

Community leadership panel

A collective of partners delivering climate and nature action which benefits local communities

## FOUNDATIONS

Community organisations supported via capacity building programme to build knowledge, confidence and resilience.

# THE COMMUNITY CLIMATE AND NATURE ACTION MODEL

The Community Climate and Nature Action Model provides a way to build the capacity, capability and influence of communities to decarbonise, build resilience and recover nature at scale whilst working with local authorities and policy makers towards shared aims and ambitions.

Through this model, Bristol has successfully supported the strategic inclusion of diverse communities – and their needs, everyday lives and interests – in low carbon transition plans and delivery. Early signs indicate this model is effective and therefore has the potential to be nationally significant.

The model is a social innovation on climate which has a dual focus on positive social, climate and nature outcomes. Through five years of coproduction and iteration with communities, the Community Climate and Nature Action Model has developed to be effective, legitimate, asset-based and human centred, whilst acknowledging the need for joy and creativity to sustain community resilience.



## ELEMENTS OF THE MODEL

- Strong local authority support for action on climate, nature and social – with a commitment to coproduction.
- Enabling local environment where the council and politicians; climate and nature organisations and businesses are part of an ecosystem in a local place which supports community led climate action to thrive.
- Collective of diverse and insightful community organisations and community leaders, from geographic and demographic communities as well as communities of interest.
- Independent coordination by a trusted, local, place-based organisation who collaborates both with local authority and with communities.
- Embedded carbon and biodiversity monitoring and climate communications expertise.
- Support from across the wider climate, nature and finance sectors.
- Funding, resourcing and understanding of the value of the contribution of the community sector.
- A commitment to an asset-based approach and just transition to a low carbon future.

## THE MODEL INCLUDES...

**CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMME** for diverse local ‘non climate specialist’ community organisations to develop knowledge, confidence and resilience.

### ➤ EXAMPLE

Learning and mentoring programme

**A CRITICAL MASS OF DIVERSE LOCAL COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS** coproducing strategic community-led climate and nature action plans with, by and for their community, through a process of community engagement and coproduction. Plans focus on both climate and social priorities as well as developing community leadership and agency on climate.

### ➤ EXAMPLE

Bristol’s community climate action plans

Through **WORKING WITH ARTISTS AND THE CREATIVE SECTOR**, the power of creativity is harnessed to engage more, and more diverse, people in the climate conversation in an accessible way at both the neighbourhood and city scale.

### ➤ EXAMPLE

Bristol’s creative commissions

Representatives from communities who have plans and insights from stages one and two form a **COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP PANEL** to help strategically share insights, champion community priorities and influence local policy and decision-making on climate.

### ➤ EXAMPLE

Community Leadership Panel on Climate Change and Just Transition

**COLLECTIVE OF EMPOWERED AND INFORMED COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS** with community climate action plans work together to respond to a citywide priority to maximise agency and leverage, for example transport. This demonstrates strong community leadership in action on a key issue that impacts the majority of the local population.

### ➤ EXAMPLE

Inclusive Transport Vision for Bristol

Priorities from community climate action plans form a **PIPELINE OF LOCAL ‘DEMONSTRATOR’ PROJECTS** ready for investment and implementation. These are presented in a ‘community prospectus’ for the city.

### ➤ EXAMPLE

Bristol’s community climate and nature projects and community prospectus

**DEVELOPMENT OF AN ‘ENABLING ENVIRONMENT’** in the city which champions community-led climate and nature action and has local council, climate and nature specialist organisations collaborating with the voluntary and community sector to create a connected and enabled ecosystem which catalyses change.

The model centres a just transition, supports both community and climate resilience and harnesses the social and community infrastructure which exists in all places. It also supports a cultural change in climate sector, local authority, voluntary and community organisations and citizens through positive collaboration, dialogue, and relationship building.



# BENEFITS OF THE MODEL



## COMMUNITY SECTOR BENEFITS

Increased community resilience and benefits to local communities through climate and nature action designed by and for communities

Greater organisational sustainability through bringing climate investment into organisational funding streams

Increased profile and agency

Community views, needs and insights are influencing policy

Increased skills, knowledge and confidence on climate and nature issues

A fairer and more inclusive transition with access to new funding streams for climate and nature action



## POLICY AND GOVERNANCE SECTOR BENEFITS

Climate and nature policy is better informed by diverse insights

Climate and nature policy is more fit-for-purpose, representative and legitimate

Increase in social mandate and levels of support

Wider and deeper engagement with diverse communities

Greater connection and consensus with communities on climate and nature issues

Valuable existing community infrastructure is harnessed to support climate and nature action

Community sector as trusted messengers supporting communications and engagement with citizens

A fairer and more inclusive transition



## CLIMATE AND NATURE SECTOR BENEFITS

Community sector informed and upskilled on climate and nature issues

Community sector collaborating with climate and nature sectors to champion and influence action on climate and nature

Wider and deeper engagement with diverse communities, bringing support and social mandate to climate and nature projects

Reduced risk of polarisation, misinformation and manipulation of the net zero agenda, including anti-environmental lobbying efforts

A fairer and more inclusive transition



## FUNDING AND FINANCE SECTOR BENEFITS

Increased social mandate for climate and nature action

Projects and policies which deliver on both social and climate priorities

Community sector collaborating and providing a larger scale, coherent portfolio of projects for investment

A fairer and more inclusive transition which helps deliver on ESG and social value



“We need our societal response to the climate crisis and nature emergency to be as varied and diverse as our nation’s communities. Communities offer an ideal, trusted point of connection and shared context to inspire people, unlock participation and convene perspectives to find new solutions. Communities must be in the mix for a just transition.”

**Lizzi Testani**  
CEO | Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership

“This is innovative and impressive work by Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership. A place-based approach to action on climate and nature, building up the power of communities and creating an enabling local environment, is a more inclusive, more equitable way of doing things, that will deliver tangible outcomes. I’m glad to see Bristol once again showing leadership on this front.”

**Kerry McCarthy**  
MP for Bristol East and Minister for Climate,  
Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

COORDINATED BY



Bristol Climate &  
Nature Partnership

FUNDED BY



WORKING TOGETHER



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



CLIMATE ACTION PARTNERS



Avon  
Wildlife Trust



The Community Climate Action Project is coordinated by Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership and funded by the National Lottery’s Climate Action Fund. This model has been developed by Amy Harrison, Head of Community Partnerships, and Lizzi Testani, Chief Executive Officer, with support from Mark Leach at Bristol City Council, and Harriet Sansom at CSE, and contributions from community partners and the wider Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership team.

[www.bristolclimatenature.org](http://www.bristolclimatenature.org)  
[contact@bristolclimatenature.org](mailto:contact@bristolclimatenature.org)