



The Climate Action Fund Learning Signposts #2

# Climate Action Leeds – Working Together to Create a Zero Carbon, Nature Friendly, Socially Just Leeds by The 2030s

Produced by Rhona Pringle, CAG Consultants, on behalf of The National Lottery Community Fund

# Climate Action Leeds – Working Together to Create a Zero Carbon, Nature Friendly, Socially Just Leeds by The 2030s

## Who is this for?

This learning signpost is primarily intended for people involved in Climate Action Fund (CAF) projects, as well as other community-based climate action projects. It shares learning and impact from one of the projects funded through the Climate Action Fund programme.

This document is accompanied by a video that introduces the project and some of the key learning.

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## Introduction

The Climate Action Leeds (CAL) programme is an ambitious five year, city-wide collective action approach for community led climate action, funded by £2.5m from The National Lottery Community Fund. The project is delivered by a partnership of Voluntary Action Leeds, Our Future Leeds, Together For Peace, Leeds Tidal, CAG Consultants and Leeds Community Foundation. It provides a platform for people, organisations and



communities to come together to take action on climate change in Leeds and beyond. CAL's collective purpose is to help shape a Leeds which is zero carbon, nature friendly and socially just by the 2030s. The approach is focused on mobilising communities, and sectors to plan and act together.

The Structure of the CAL partnership and key programme events is shown in Figure 1. Two partners have cross programme support roles, they are Voluntary Action Leeds who are responsible for project management and CAG Consultants who are responsible for programme wide learning and evaluation. There are also three key delivery partners – Our Future Leeds is the partner developing relationships and partnerships for city-scale climate action, Together for Peace is the community hubs partner, managing the work of the eight community hubs. Leeds TIDAL is the sector and campaign support partner, managing the work of the eight sector Transition Partners and Leeds Community Foundation supports the work of the community hubs team through management of a small grants programme. The work of the CAL partnership is described in more detail later.

The CAL partners have bi-monthly partnership board meetings to discuss and agree operational aspects of the CAL programme.

There is also an annual cycle of key programme events that underpin the CAL programme work. They are:

- The Programme Assemblies, where all CAL partner teams come together to share information, ensure work is joined up and learning is celebrated and shared to inspire others.
- The Climate Assemblies are open, cross sector event where CAL engages with the broader community of Leeds. The aim is to share, learn and plan together across the diverse communities and sectors in the city. It is an event to celebrate but also to focus on how to tackle the real challenges ahead together.

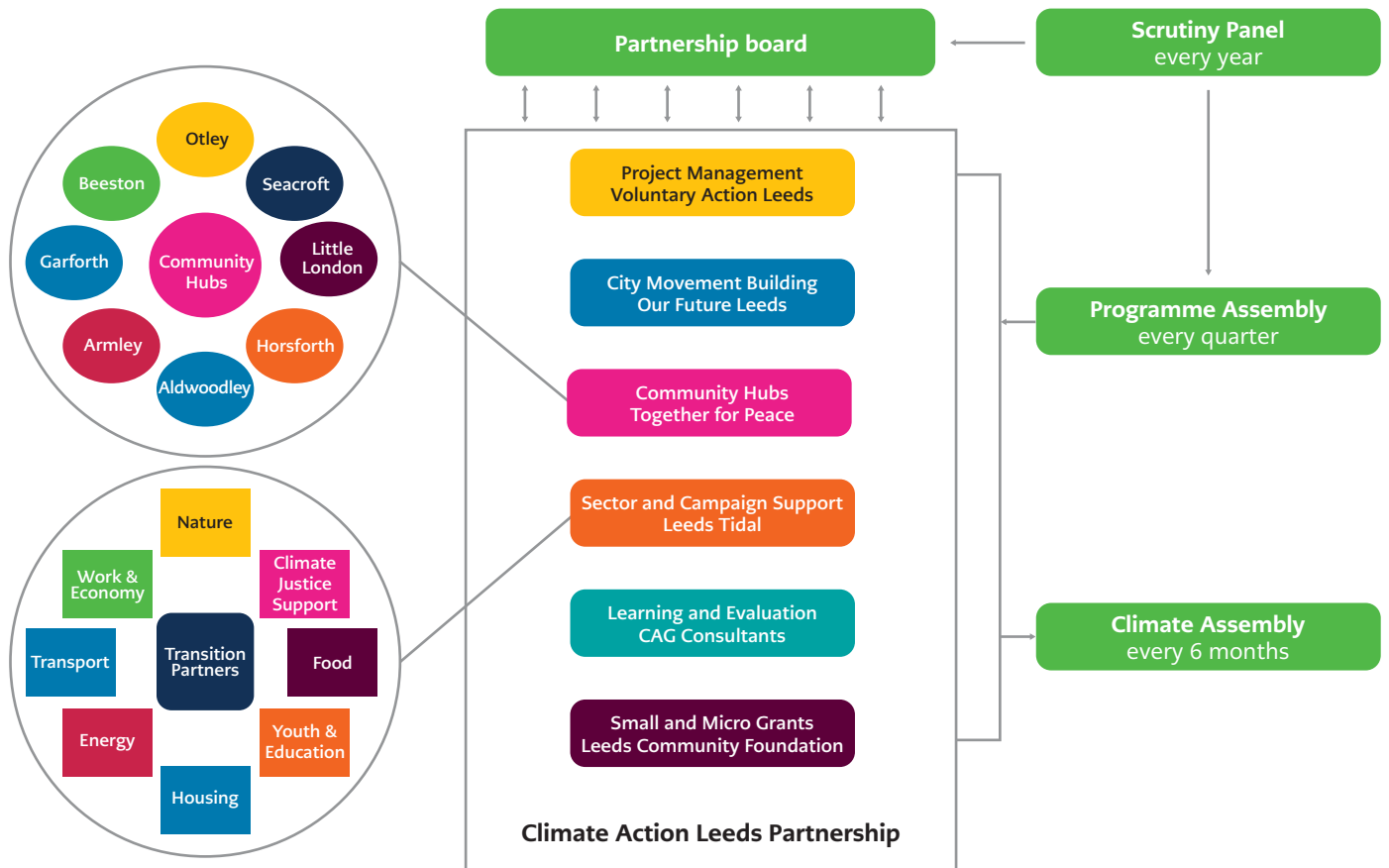


Figure 1 - The Climate Action Leeds partnership

# Summary of key lessons



## Do:

- **Prioritise having a physical base for a large partnership programme.** This has been invaluable in enabling relationship building, cross fertilisation of ideas and wider engagement within and beyond the partnership.
- **Focus on community engagement** ensuring proposals for policy change are grounded in communities' lived experience.
- **Ensure that the roles and responsibilities of each partner in the partnership are clearly identified and communicated** to everyone involved in the partnership, and also with stakeholders outside of the partnership.
- **Identify who is responsible for overall leadership of the programme.** Even when working in a flat structure partnership, there is a need for someone to take responsibility for overall programme leadership and strategic direction.
- **Demonstrate organisational values** in everything you do as a partnership.
- **Communicate regularly what is happening across the programme,** both within and beyond the programme and use a range of different media to do this.



## Don't:

- **Underestimate the amount of time needed when developing a new partnership.** The integration stage in year one – see figure 3, extended into years two and three.
- **Have lots of programme staff working one or two days per week,** as this makes cross partnership co-ordination and working more challenging.
- **Be afraid of trying new approaches.** CAL has adopted a 'test and learn' approach to find new ways to promote collective action and build partnerships/alliances across the city.

# Impact and key successes

- **The Climate Assemblies** are large events held every six months to engage with the wider Leeds community on climate, nature and social justice. The purpose of the Climate Assemblies is to help build a community of people committed to taking action on climate, nature and social justice. A variety of event styles are used to bring in a more diverse range of people, and to try new ways to engage people. Recent Climate Assemblies have focussed on engagement with young people, the community where one of the community hubs is based and families. The most recent Climate Assembly event was embedded into a weeklong Arts and Climate Project, in which CAL was a named partner, which engaged more than 500 people in debate about the impact of climate change on our oceans.



- **The Leeds Doughnut** was launched in 2022. The development of the Leeds Doughnut was instigated by CAL and is now managed by the Leeds Doughnut Coalition, a partnership of people and organisations working towards a Doughnut Economics model for the city. The Leeds Doughnut is based on the idea of Doughnut Economics, developed by Kate Rawlinson<sup>1</sup> and acts as a compass for CAL, helping to broaden the debate on the challenges we face and what we are trying to achieve: a city where people and planet can thrive.

- One of the key aspirations of CAL, as a city scale, collective action approach for community-led climate action is to engage with people new to climate action through its events and activities. In the last year the programme engaged with just under 1500 individuals who hadn't previously been involved in climate action.
- The programme also provides advice to individuals and organisations on a range of issues relating to climate change and climate action and in the last year, more than 2200 individuals and 150 organisations were supported.
- The opening of **Imagine Leeds** – the climate action hub has facilitated increased and broader engagement both between CAL partner teams and with individuals and organisations across the area. Just under 50 groups use the Hub to co-work, deliver events and discover synergies between their work.
- The programme levers in additional funding for climate action activity. This was just under £404,000 of new investment in year three.
- A ripple effect is being seen, indicating that the CAL programme is starting to catalyse other activities within the climate action space, such as the development of a community led research network, the [Leeds Doughnut Coalition](#) and the securing of funds for the [Human Aquarium exhibition](#).



<sup>1</sup> [doughnuteconomics.org/about-doughnut-economics](https://doughnuteconomics.org/about-doughnut-economics)



- **Together for Peace in partnership with Leeds Community Foundation,** has launched a Climate Action Leeds Community Grants programme. Over the next two years a total of £150,000 will be awarded, through small grants of up to £5,000 and microgrants grants of up to £1,500, to support community climate action projects. The grants will support local groups to put their ideas into action to enable a ‘zero carbon, nature friendly, more socially just Leeds’s in their own neighbourhood. The small grants are allocated through an innovative process of participatory grant making, a process, which received positive feedback from participants. Applicants included several groups that were not previously known to the CAL partnership. Grant recipients include: a citizen science project working with young people to measure air quality, and a project to shut a major sub-urban thoroughfare for a clean air day to demonstrate the positive change that road closures could have on quality of life.



Leeds  
Community  
Foundation

- Examples of key successes and impacts by the Community Hubs include:
  - £230,000 was raised through crowd-funding (donations and a loan) by the Otley 2030 Community Hub to buy East Wood, bringing it into community ownership for community benefit and nature recovery.
  - Our Future Beeston developed an Energy Saving Handbook that was distributed across the area and shared with the other hubs.
  - Eco Friendly Garforth runs regular clothes swaps and repair cafes.
  - Climate Action Seacroft have created a community forest garden.
  - Alwoodley 2030 ran a citizen science project using member-built, low-cost, air pollution sensors near local schools to measure levels of pollution during the school run. This was followed up by pop up bike repair workshops on school sites with the aim for every child to have access to a functioning bike.
  - Climate Action Armley have delivered successful seed sowing events, which has led to the establishment of Incredible Edible Armley.
  - Horsforth Climate Action has set up a virtual Library of Things on Facebook.



Figure 2 - The launch of Imagine Leeds: climate action hub, Climate Action Leeds

- Examples of key successes and impacts by the Sector and Campaign Support team include:
  - The Food Transition Partner was the lead collaborator with Leeds City Council to develop and launch the [Leeds Food Strategy](#) which will guide the city's path to more a more resilient, sustainable and socially just food system.
  - The Transport Transition Partner is a named contributor to a major University-led, research project to develop active travel corridors in the city. They will lead on engaging communities in debates about how to build confidence in active travel solutions. A research bid has reached its final stage and the team are awaiting approval for delivery during years four and five of the Climate Action Leeds programme.
  - In partnership with the University of Leeds, the Nature Transition Partner has secured £69,000 UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) funding, to undertake research on 'Co-producing community use of unused/underused land in Leeds'.
- Large programme events, such as the Leeds Doughnut and Imagine Leeds launches have helped to raise the profile of CAL receiving extensive coverage in local/regional media and with more than 100 people attending each of these.

# The approach in more detail

## The Partnership

CAL is a partnership of six very different organisations, each bringing their distinctive set of skills and knowledge in working towards the partnership in working towards a zero carbon, nature friendly and socially just by the 2030s. The structure of the partnership and the roles of each partner are described below.



**Voluntary Action Leeds (VAL)** is Leeds' leading third sector representative body, with significant and established capacity, reputation and networks. VAL leads on programme management and programme communications.

**Our Future Leeds (OFL)** is a citizen-led group focusing on citizen leadership in Leeds responding to the climate emergency. OFL acts as strategic advisor across the programme, supporting overall programme design and ambition and with responsibility for the city plan, Leeds Doughnut, training support, climate assemblies, and the Leeds city hub. OFL is supported by Leeds Love it Share It (LLISI). LLISI is a Leeds based Community Interest Company focusing on new models for city development and change. It provides employment and logistical support as well as legal oversight and guidance for Our Future Leeds.

**Together for Peace (T4P)** is a charity comprising a network of skilled practitioners in community outreach, community building, facilitation, climate action, peace and reconciliation. T4P leads on community engagement, development and capacity building to deliver the community hubs, community climate action groups and community plans.

Eight communities were selected to support community climate action through establishing community hubs over the five-year programme. The selection of this drew on the process used to select members for the Leeds Climate Change Citizens' Jury of having six archetypal community descriptions in the Leeds district to reflect the diversity of the city in terms of characteristics of location, demographics and income. Communities were chosen in two waves starting in 2020 and 2021.



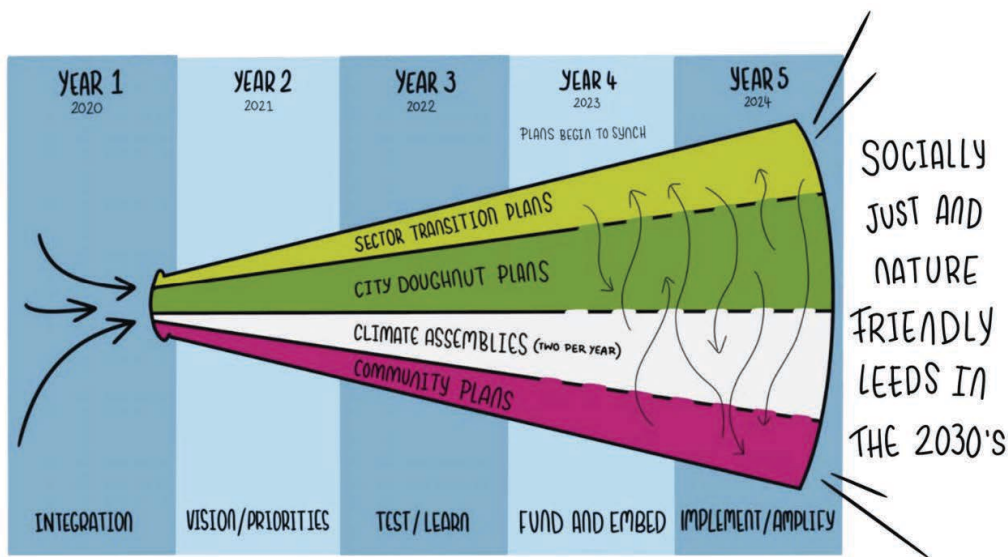


Figure 3 - Climate Action Leeds 5-year planning journey

**Leeds TIDAL** is a long-standing campaign, solidarity, justice and movement-building organisation with extensive local and international networks. TIDAL leads on supporting transition partners in different sector and campaign areas to ensure a focus on a just transition and climate justice. Through the work of eight Transition partners, they are looking to establish what kinds of transitions are needed in various sectors in the city. Each Transition partner focuses on a specific sector, these are: Climate Justice learning and accountability, Energy, Food, Housing, Nature, Transport, Work & Economy and Youth & Education.

**CAG Consultants** are experts in evidence-based research, advice, and engagement for environmental, economic and social sustainability. CAG has a strong track record in supporting clients and partners in evaluation, support and learning of community led climate action and other programmes addressing climate change. They lead on Climate Action Leeds programme wide evaluation and learning and are a non-voting member of the partnership board.

**Leeds Community Foundation** distributes vital grants and gives trusted advice to Community Organisations across Leeds and Bradford to influence positive change. Leeds Community Foundation manages the CAL community grants programme, which will award a total of £150,000 over the next two years through small grants of up to £5,000 and microgrants grants of up to £1,500, to support community climate action projects. These will support local groups to put their ideas into action to enable a 'zero carbon, nature friendly, more socially just Leeds's in their own neighbourhood.

## Key elements of Climate Action Leeds

CAL has developed [five core values and principles](#) that guide the work of the programme. The partnership has a flat structure and has adopted a co-production approach to partnership working and a consensus-based approach to decision-making.

The CAL programme follows a plan and review process based around the "megaphone" – see figure 3, with actions, relations and collective understandings expanding and gaining momentum over five years, starting in 2020 with each year having a broad theme.



Figure 4 - Climate Assembly poster

CAL has developed an annual cycle of assembly meetings which have built a rhythm and momentum to the programme.

The first are the quarterly **Programme Assemblies**, for everyone involved in programme. They are intended to be the ‘beating heart’ of CAL – where the CAL partner teams can co-develop an effective process of democratic engagement and participatory decision making on programme issues. It is the space where CAL/programme leads can hear from and connect with every aspect of the programme, where synergies can develop and partner teams can work together and learn from each other.

The **Climate Assemblies** take place twice a year, in different locations and take different forms. They are open, cross-sector events which engage with the broader community of Leeds, offering a platform for networking and outreach, and to amplify the city-wide conversation on climate action. The aim is to share, learn and plan together across the diverse communities and sectors in the city.

## Developing relationships and partnerships for city-scale climate action

The City Movement Building team are responsible for Imagine Leeds, the climate action hub venue for city-wide collaboration, networking, strategising and planning, the City Plan, training and delivering a range of events, including the Climate Assemblies.

## Community Hubs

Locations for the CAL ward-based community hubs were chosen to reflect the diversity of the city in terms of characteristics of location, demographics and income. Communities were chosen in two waves starting in 2020 and 2021 – see Figure 5. In each community, a relationship was developed with a local partner organisation to develop a local group and hub to promote community climate action. A huge range of community-based climate action events and activities are being delivered across the community hubs (some of these described above), with knowledge and expertise shared between them. Their work is co-ordinated by Together for Peace.

COMMUNITY	DESCRIPTION
Beeston (first wave) Our Future Beeston	Inner city, south, diverse, lower income
Garforth (first wave) Eco Friendly Garforth	Outer east market town, mixed income
Otley (first wave) Otley 2030	Outer west market town, mixed income
Seacroft (first wave) Climate Action Seacroft	Outer suburb, lower income
Alwoodley (second wave) Alwoodley 2030	Outer suburb, medium-high income
Armley (second wave) Climate Action Armley	Innter city west, diverse, low income
Horsforth (second wave) Horsforth Climate Action	Outer suburb, low-middle income
Little London (second wave) Climate Action Little London	Central Inner city, diverse, low income

Figure 5 - Climate Action Leeds Community Hubs





Figure 6 - Composting stall, Seacroft Community Hub, Climate Action Leeds

## Transition Partners

There are eight sector Transition Partners inspired by and focusing on core priority areas identified by the Leeds Climate Change Citizen's Jury. These are Climate Justice learning and accountability, Energy, Food, Housing, Nature, Transport, Work & Economy and Youth & Education. The Transition partners are developing transition plans, co-ordinated by Leeds Tidal.

## Independent Scrutiny Panel

The Scrutiny Panel meets once a year. Its role is to check that Climate Action Leeds is sticking to its aims, promises, and principles. The panel members report on how well Climate Action Leeds is meeting its goals. The panel is made up of people from the wider Leeds community.





# Learning so far

## Effective engagement

Having a physical base for a multi partnership programme such as CAL is hugely important. Covid restrictions contributed to the delay in being able to secure premises for the hub. The opening of Imagine Leeds: climate action hub in year three has played a pivotal role in facilitating increased and broader engagement both between CAL partner teams and with individuals and organisations that until now have been outside the CAL programme.

The design of the twice-yearly climate assemblies has evolved, so that each event is distinct, focussing on engaging particular groups/communities in different aspects of climate action. This includes having a different theme for each assembly, hosting in various locations across the city and involving a diverse range of contributors. Climate assemblies held include one with a youth focus, another as part of a green weekend with one of the community hubs and a family oriented assembly with an arts theme.

Engaging with individuals through the community hubs has resulted in a huge range of locally-led climate action events and activities being delivered in those communities.

For many people taking action on climate changes is not at the top of their list or priorities, so when considering how to engage with different groups and communities, it is important to understand what is important to them and what support can be provided that will address these issues, but may also have some climate benefits. For example, providing information on affordable home energy efficiency measures can help reduce energy bills, but may also reduce carbon emissions.

Evidence collected during the annual programme assessments suggests that more work is needed to increase the diversity of people engaging in the programme.

Figure 7 - Launch of the Leeds Doughnut, Climate Action Leeds





## Partnership working

It takes time to develop a new partnership and systems processes. Developing good partnership working in a new partnership has taken much longer than envisaged. The integration stage – see figure 3, was originally planned to take place during year, but has continued into years two and three. The co-production approach adopted by CAL for systems, processes and events also takes time and resources, which needs to be built into budgeting and project planning at an early stage.

Many CAL partner team members work one or two days per week, which has presented challenges for programme co-ordination and co-production processes.

Like many projects that started during covid, this significantly impacted the development of the relationships, system and processes necessary for establishing a new partnership way of working in the first year of the programme.

## Communications

Effective communications for a multi-partner programme, such as CAL is really important. Programme updates, events and activities need to be regularly shared and promoted across the partnership and beyond the programme, using a range of media, as people access information through many different platforms.

### Links

To find out more about Climate Action Leeds, see:

- [climateactionleeds.org.uk](https://climateactionleeds.org.uk)
- A [video](#) about Climate Action Leeds

## Acknowledgements:



We are grateful to the following for their help in compiling this resource.

- Richard Warrington, Voluntary Action Leeds
- Andy Goldring, Our Future Leeds

## About the Climate Action Fund

The Climate Action Fund is a ten-year £100 million fund supporting communities across the UK to take action on climate change.

## About The National Lottery Community Fund

We are the largest non-statutory community funder in the UK – community is at the heart of our purpose, vision and name. We support activities that create resilient communities that are more inclusive and environmentally sustainable and that will strengthen society and improve lives across the UK. We're proud to award money raised by National Lottery players to communities across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and to work closely with government to distribute vital grants and funding from key Government programmes and initiatives. As well as responding to what communities tell us is important to them, our funding is focused on four key missions, supporting communities to:

1. **Come together**
2. **Be environmentally sustainable**
3. **Help children and young people thrive**
4. **Enable people to live healthier lives.**

Thanks to the support of National Lottery players, we distribute around £500 million a year through 10,000+ grants and plan to invest over £4 billion of funding into communities by 2030. We're privileged to be able to work with the smallest of local groups right up to UK-wide charities, enabling people and communities to bring their ambitions to life.

National Lottery players raise over £30 million each week for good causes throughout the UK. Since The National Lottery began in 1994, £47 billion has been raised and more than 670,000 individual grants have been made across the UK – the equivalent of around 240 National Lottery grants in every UK postcode district.

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[www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk](http://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk)



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