

Climate Action Leeds



Our City Planning Journey

SUMMER 2023
MID POINT REVIEW

Towards a zero carbon, nature friendly, socially just Leeds by the 2030s.

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Introduction to Climate Action Leeds

Climate Action Leeds is an ambitious five year programme funded by The National Lottery Climate Action Fund, providing a platform for people, organisations and communities to come together to take action on climate change in Leeds and beyond. Our collective purpose is to help shape a Leeds which is zero carbon, nature friendly and socially just by the 2030s. Our approach is focused on mobilising communities, campaign groups and sectors to plan and act together. Over 40 groups in Leeds contributed to planning the project, and many more are supporting it.

Climate Action Leeds operates through three main strands:

- eight ward-based Community Hubs (representing about a quarter of the city's 33 wards), and an associated micro grants programme, co-ordinated by [Together for Peace](#) [1]
- eight Sector Transition Partners inspired by and focusing on core priorities identified by the [Leeds Climate Change Citizen's Jury](#) [2], all developing transition plans, co-ordinated by [Leeds Tidal](#) [3].
- a City Movement Building strand comprising our City Hub, city-wide planning, a training programme, city-wide engagement activities and support for the Leeds Doughnut framework, co-ordinated by [Leeds Love it Share It](#) [4].

Our approach – tackling the triple emergencies

Climate Action Leeds responds to the triple emergencies Leeds faces – climate, nature and social. We are uniquely positioned in the city as the only programme of work in Leeds that supports and mobilises community action through all three aspects. Our approach on all three is essential – they cannot be looked at separately or in siloes. As we mitigate and adapt to climate breakdown, we have to do it in a way that also recovers, reconnects and regenerates nature and responds to the ongoing and deep-seated social inequalities in our city. One idea that is crucial for us is climate justice – that those least responsible for issues like climate breakdown and nature loss are often the most affected. Our work looks to change this and encourage other sectors and stakeholders to join us in exploring this approach to tackling the triple emergencies.



Our City Planning journey

Climate Action Leeds is supported by a city-wide planning process which aims to distil the learning, activities and strategic potential of our work linking community action with city wide change. We call it a planning journey rather than a plan, because we are involved in a live, ongoing and collaborative process. Our intention is not to create a single definitive plan that sits on a shelf. Instead, we are creating a suite of documents and associated activities that will support our evolving thinking. All these will come to life in our central City Hub – Imagine Leeds – our shared space for city-wide climate planning.

Making the kinds of big ambitious changes that we want to aim for by 2030 requires a broader city level planning process that brings together people from all sectors. We want to ensure Leeds City Council and other organisations are motivated and supported to make the necessary transformational changes that are needed. By the time our funded period comes to an end in September 2025, we want to contribute to the conditions for success that will get us to a zero carbon, nature friendly, socially just Leeds by the 2030s. Primarily we will do that by testing and creating successful approaches to city wide, sector wide and community led action that can then be further developed and invested in as the crises inevitably escalate.

This is one of a series of planning documents we are producing, following our [Guidebook \[5\]](#) to Climate Action Leeds (2020), and the [Leeds Doughnut City Portrait \[6\]](#) (2021). In this current document we summarise what Climate Action Leeds has achieved over its first two and a half years, and what we are planning to do in the remaining two and a half years – especially the Doughnut Economics approach and how this can support city-wide planning.

This halfway point provides an ideal opportunity to showcase what we have achieved so far and our journey towards our ambitious goals for a zero carbon, socially just, nature friendly Leeds. This report has been developed in collaboration with our Sector Transition Partners and Community Hubs.



City Planning for Climate Action

Climate Action Leeds has adopted a plan and review process based around what we have called the “megaphone” – with actions, relations and collective understandings expanding and gaining momentum over five years, starting in 2020. Each year has a broad theme:

Year 1

Integration

Establishing the programme, communities of action, transition sectors and our shared understanding.

Year 2

Vision and Priorities

Exploring our shared vision through Doughnut Economics, climate justice, just transitions and youth allyship, as well as our theory of change.

Year 3

Test and Learn

Undertaking selective community based testing on priorities identified by those communities and our transition partners.

Year 4

Fund and Embed

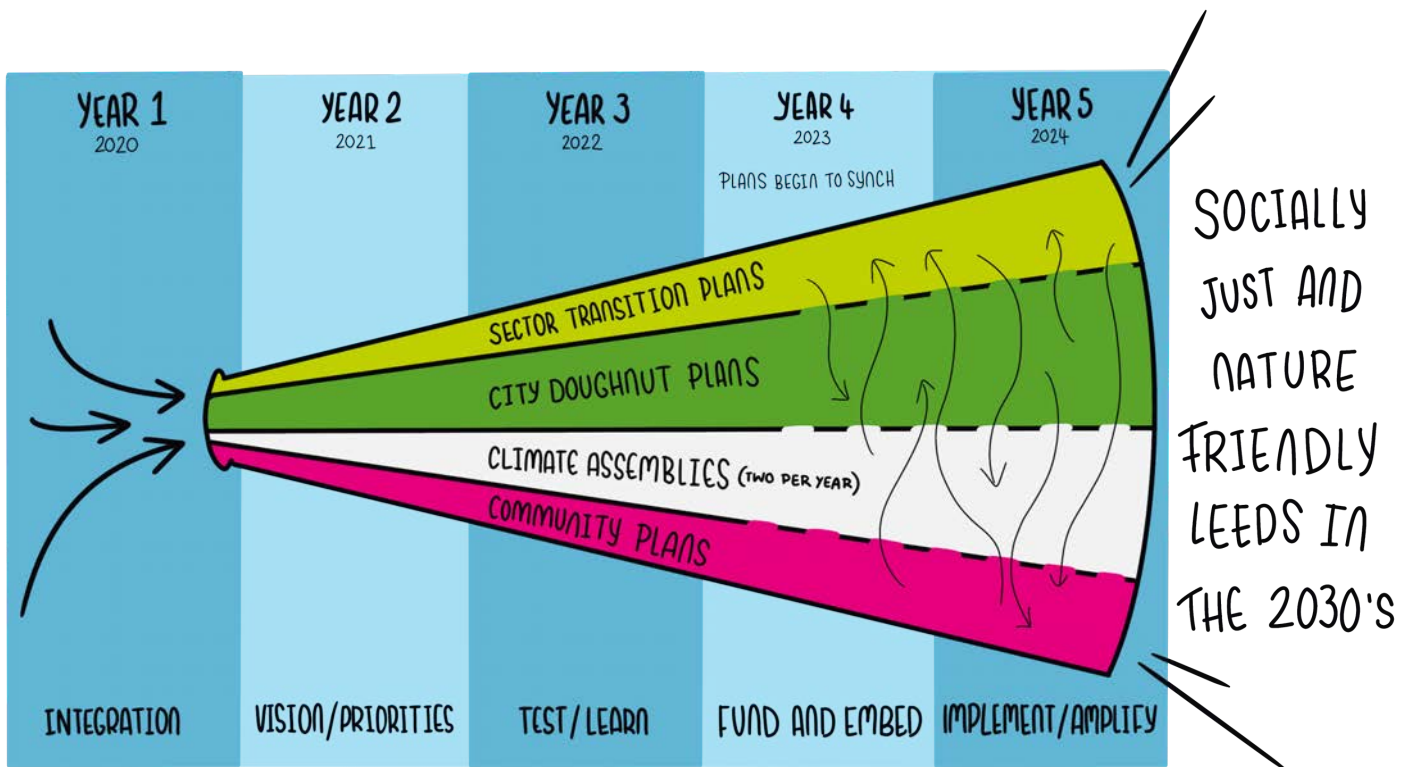
How can our experimental test activities be embedded and funded? This includes piloting a community funding stream.

Year 5

Implement and Amplify

How can we scale up our activities across Leeds and beyond to support transformational change in the face of the triple emergencies?

This city planning process interacts with, and supports our Sector Transition Plans and Community Plans to help accelerate the transition to Leeds being zero carbon, nature friendly and socially just. Our overall approach is informed by the Leeds Doughnut as a framework that can support city planning – where Sector Transition Partners feed in sector based expertise, then work together with the Community Hubs to identify what local communities are interested in and what they are able to deliver at the local level, and support activity on the ground.



Our five year planning journey

The ideas that shape our actions

The work of Climate Action Leeds has been closely guided by a number of key ideas. These include our theory of change – based around a three fold set of ideas that we call ‘Learn-Act-Build’. These ideas are drawn from social movement organisers across the world in recent decades including Joanna Macy [7], the Ayni Institute [8] and the Center for Story Based Strategy [9]:

Learn and unlearn

Explore new ways of thinking and acting, and unlearn those that cause harm

Act and Resist

Stand up for what is right and resist what harms.

Make and build

Create new projects and infrastructure that will help communities thrive and inspire further change.

Our values

we have developed five core values and principles that guide our work:

Acting together

Communities, relationships and power

We recognise that effective groups require patient nurturing to enable us to develop trusting relationships and, ultimately, collective power. We build on the strength of our communities to advocate for our vision for a more sustainable Leeds.

Fairness

Justice, equality and climate

Climate change has an unequal impact on different people in society, and different people have made different historical contributions to causing climate change. Our work attempts to ensure fairness amongst all people, by aiming to redress those imbalances, to achieve climate justice.

Care

Safety, personal health and wellbeing

We encourage people to care for themselves, care for each other, and to care for the natural world. This allows us to function effectively as individuals and as a team, and to ensure we continue to live on a habitable planet.

Nature

Learning, connecting, respecting and caring for nature

Climate change has an unequal impact on different people in society, and different people have made different historical contributions to causing climate change. Our work attempts to ensure fairness amongst all people, by aiming to redress those imbalances, to achieve climate justice.

People

Skills, knowledge and experience

The plants, animals and natural systems we are surrounded by have integral worth and value. We want to remember we are a part of nature, not separate from it. We can learn a lot about how to relate with each other fairly and how to deal with climate change by reconnecting with how nature works.

Our work is inspired by some **big ideas** from current social movements that we aim to put into practice. These ideas are reference points – they offer inspiration and guide us along our journey.

Climate Justice

Our efforts have to improve the lives of those most affected but least responsible for our triple emergencies, globally and at home.

Just Transitions

Our efforts to create a zero carbon city have to be based on social justice and embedded in the lived experience of those who have least access to power and resources.

Youth Allyship

The urgent need to privilege and amplify the voice of the youth climate movement as the next generation that will have to deal with the worsening impacts of our triple emergencies.

Community Wealth Building

Effective responses need to build community wealth through new community based organisations such as Community Land Trusts, co-operatives and community enterprises.

Decolonising Economics

Much of our triple emergency stems from an economy based on constant economic growth, extractive industry, and global supply chains that reinforce the power of the world's biggest corporate firms.

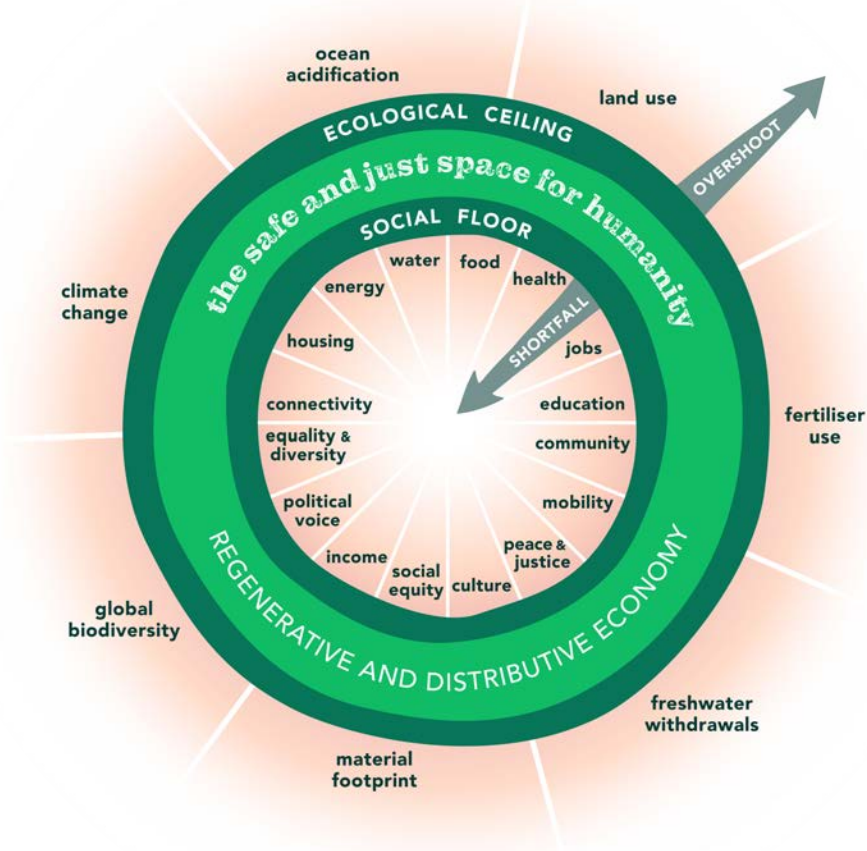


The Leeds Doughnut

Creating a city where people and planet can thrive

The Leeds Doughnut [10] was instigated by Climate Action Leeds 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 acts as a compass for Climate Action Leeds, 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.

The Leeds Doughnut is based on the idea of Doughnut Economics [11], conceived by economist Kate Raworth. It uses the shape of a doughnut to ask how people in a particular place can thrive without overshooting ecological planetary boundaries (carbon, water, air, soil, etc.) on the outside of the doughnut, and without falling below basic social standards that ensure a good life (education, health, equality, etc.) on the inner boundary. Our aim is that the work of the transition partners and community hubs is informed by this framework, and in turn provides practical experience of how Leeds could move towards the safe and just space of the Doughnut.



The safe and just space of Doughnut Economics

Doughnut Economics provides a framework for considering our ecological impacts while recognising that, even within Leeds, there are significant numbers of people in poverty, lacking access to basics that they need to lead thriving lives. The Doughnut framework is helpful to show how we can address the climate and ecological emergencies in a way that builds a socially just city, based on a more circular and community-based economy.

With part funding from the University of Leeds through their Policy Exchange Fund, the Leeds Doughnut Coalition has created an initial Doughnut Portrait of the city as a baseline assessment of Leeds' performance through the four Doughnut "lenses" (local social, local ecological, global social and global ecological). We found that of the 38 dimensions we looked at, 36 were outside the safe and just operating space of the Doughnut. This sets the scene and scale of the challenge for our city planning process.



A physical representation of "living in the doughnut" at the Leeds Doughnut launch, May 2022

While the Doughnut started as a citywide initiative, it is now being piloted at local level in some of our community hubs. Our plan is to support them to create Doughnut-inspired place portraits. We have also supported Doughnut work in Birmingham and Cambridge, and have developed a strategic plan to engage and communicate and build influence for the doughnut framework across Leeds.

Sector Transition Partners

A key part of the work of Climate Action Leeds is to establish what kinds of transitions are needed in various sectors in the city. We focus on eight sectors where there are established groups and activity: Racial Justice Network, Energy, Food, Housing, Nature, Transport, Work & Economy and Youth & Education. Below we outline their activities to date.



Racial Justice Network – Climate Justice learning and accountability partner

The Racial Justice Network (RJN) is an organisation, which along with a wide range of anti-racist organising and campaigning activities, also centres climate justice. It is in this capacity that they are a supporting partner of Climate Action Leeds (CAL). RJN brings together individuals, communities and organisations, across West Yorkshire and beyond, to proactively promote racial justice, end racial injustice and address legacies of colonialism. Specifically, with the Race and Climate Justice Group, they bring a vital and intersectional perspective and voice to the CAL project, enabling deeper insights, inspirations and connections to help inform a more engaged and diverse approach to existing discourse concerning environment and community. RJN's focus is on the colonial legacies which are at the root of climate injustice, through the vehicle of The 13th Recommendation Framework, which provides a distinct approach to the group's work by acknowledging the different knowledge systems, particularly those which are non-western and indigenous, when seeking planet repair solutions.

RJN have developed the groundbreaking The 13th Recommendation Framework in response to the more narrow approach of local climate governance initiatives that have not acknowledged that 'Leeds is not an Island'. What the Framework acknowledges is that for Climate Justice to be realised there needs to be a spirit of true internationalism, informed by the need to address the legacies of colonialism through conscientious solidarity. This highlights the need for a praxis of interconnectedness, in recognition of the interdependence of oppressions and struggles which have led to the exploitation, erasure and extractivism of the majority worlds.

RJN's work is focused on three key principles: creating collaborative and open learning environments; centring the most marginalised and mobilising Black and Brown communities, and thirdly creating a Principled Space based on an awareness of the impacts of power dynamics. RJN support Climate Action Leeds through a series of Race and Climate Justice Monthly Learning Sessions utilising community organising tools. The sessions are organised with and in, and are also delivered with and in, community as a pedagogy. They cover a variety of topics including coloniality, solidarity and empathy.

For a period of time this was supported by a deep dive into some of the less accessible elements of this approach, through a separate monthly session Soul Deep. In it participants were able to explore the more relational, emotional and historical attributes of the 13th Recommendation Framework and deepen their connections with each other, supportive of the principle of practising solidarities and a reparative ethic.



Energy – just energy transitions for all

Our Energy Transition Partner is [Platform London](#) [12], an organisation working towards a fair and cost-effective transition from fossil fuels. Their overall aim is to support a community led energy transition which embeds the principle of energy justice – where everyone has a right to affordable, green energy.

Energy use is a key transition area as it is one of main sources of greenhouse gas emissions, primarily through its use in buildings and for transport, but also consumption at home and in businesses. On a more pressing level, the affordability of energy is a major concern to many people in Leeds, with 16.8% of Leeds households in fuel poverty in 2019 [13], even before the recent price rises. The means to reduce home energy usage are also out of reach for many – this is something the Energy and Housing Transition Partners are working together on to address.

To date, Platform London's activity as our Energy Transition Partner has focused on domestic energy efficiency workshops. The Energy and Housing Transition Partners are working together to deliver information and opportunities for energy saving in the home. They are also jointly developing skills and capacity for housing retrofit, starting with a directory of existing providers, and working alongside other organisations such as Zero Carbon Yorkshire's Buildings Group and the Carbon Co-op.

Going forward Platform are leading on a city wide approach to community energy, this is being explored by a working group made up of members of many of the community hubs, local academics and energy experts and enthusiasts. The ambition is to create 'Leeds Community Energy' (LCE) an organisation to support communities across Leeds to create their own energy projects – a model which is already happening in Yorkshire cities such as York, Bradford and Sheffield. LCE will be focusing particularly on the development of opportunities for more solar and wind energy use in the city.



Food – promoting good local food

Our Food Transition Partner, [FoodWise Leeds \[14\]](#), is a partnership of organisations including Leeds City Council, Feed Leeds and Fareshare Yorkshire. FoodWise aims to create a healthy, fair and sustainable food system for everyone in Leeds. As the local food partnership, FoodWise delivers campaigns, engages in research to bring about policy change, and promotes good food initiatives from across the city.

Food is a major contributor of environmental damage, both in the carbon footprint of what we eat, and through land degradation, water use, chemical pollution and ecosystem damage. In addition, significant poverty in Leeds means many people are undernourished or have poor diets which can cause ill-health.

The primary activity over the last year has been to co-develop the [Leeds Food Strategy \[15\]](#) with Leeds City Council and other strategic partners. This strategy is Leeds' main policy document relating to food. The Leeds Food Strategy has been developed across three key areas: Health & Wellbeing, Food Security & Economy, and Sustainability & Resilience, and aligns with the Best City Plan. It underpins Leeds' application for a [Sustainable Food Places \[16\]](#) Silver Award. The Leeds Food Strategy went out to consultation at the end of 2022, and was revised following over 1,000 responses. A food action plan is now being developed with partners to deliver on the strategy. The goals are for more routes to market for locally produced food with more food grown locally, for Leeds City Council procured food not to be transported by air, and to improve overall affordability.

Activities have taken place across the city, most notably with local schools to reduce the carbon footprint of the meals served, and with local MPs to highlight the cost of living crisis in relation to food. The [Leeds Recipe Hub \[17\]](#) is an online resource for sharing nutritious and affordable recipes that can be made at home. FoodWise ran a local campaign in Gipton and Harehills to promote the use of fruit and vegetables amongst families. A community land mapping project was also carried out along with the Nature and Work & Economy Transition Partners to establish areas for local food growing.

Work with schools improved local sourcing and the carbon footprint of food, and within communities, Seacroft has been using slow cookers to help reduce cooking costs alongside the Ministry of Food programme. Both Seacroft and Garforth have introduced [Little Veg Libraries \[18\]](#) to share seeds, seedlings and surplus produce. The [Compost Collective \[19\]](#) piloted two community composting sites at the Climate Action Hubs in Seacroft and Garforth, diverting over 200 kg of food scraps in the pilot phase.



Housing – creating people powered homes

Our Housing Transition Partner is People Powered Homes [20], whose main activity is to support organisations and individuals to build economical and environmentally-friendly community-led housing. The overall aim is to increase the amount of decent, affordable, energy-efficient homes for all. They use a community-led vision and Housing Action Plan for the city that amplifies community voices and solutions for accessible, zero carbon, genuinely affordable community-controlled housing.

They have focused on supporting the retrofitting of homes to reduce energy bills and carbon emissions, in partnership with the Energy Transition Partner. They are also mapping housing resources and projects such as retrofit specialists and opportunities for future funding. Collaborations have included running joint events with the Energy and Work & Economy Transition Partners focusing on community led housing projects and domestic retrofit, and with Zero Carbon Yorkshire's Buildings Group on promoting low carbon housing developments, new low carbon methodologies and skills development in retrofit.

A working group of housing experts has been set up to support the Transition Partner, bringing in expertise from Zero Carbon Yorkshire's Buildings Group [21]. People Powered Homes runs events and speaks at conferences to raise the profile of CAL and the housing sector activities. They are engaging with the Carbon Co-op in Manchester and their People Powered Retrofit programme, a street-by-street retrofit model; and are investigating the concept of one-stop retrofit shop which could be based in the City Hub.

Next steps include working with anchor organisations to support and promote new retrofit schemes in the region including West Yorkshire Combined Authority's Better Homes Hub, looking into how to tackle the upgrade of Leeds' 300,000 homes, and supporting early stage community-led housing groups across the city. The role involves supporting independent community based retrofit and energy reduction at the Climate Action Leeds community Hubs.



Nature recovering and regenerating our city's ecology.

Our Nature Transition Partner is [Hyde Park Source](#) [22], who aim to improve people's health and well-being through improving the local environment. They work with local communities to improve their surroundings, designing and creating attractive, exciting and useful places for people to live, work and play.

Responses to natural challenges such as reduced biodiversity, poor air quality and flooding benefit from a nature-based approach which also strengthens resilient and regenerative urban communities. They have been focusing on three areas of work.



Our Nature partner's three key focus areas.

First, they work alongside the CAL Community Hubs and other community initiatives to start new nature projects – notably supporting the development of Community Forest Gardens, which are low maintenance, sustainable, plant-based food production and agroforestry systems based on woodland ecosystems. Their broader approach to nature includes new farming practices, and how local people have access to and a stake in developing and expanding the green spaces in their communities.

Second, in conjunction with [Land Explorer](#) [23], they are currently developing an urban greenspace mapping tool to show activity across the city – who is working where, what opportunities there are, and how Leeds City Council can be engaged around these. They are analysing current policy positions, reviewing progress, and considering where partnerships could be established or where pressure needs to be applied.

This mapping exercise with the Food and Work & Economy Transition Partners identified sites for food growing, particularly through forest gardens. Developing these low maintenance, sustainable designs is a core part of the sector's work, and Hyde Park Source are actively supporting forest gardens in Seacroft and Bedford Fields (near Little London). In addition, they support local groups, putting them in contact with each other, offering advice and support where required, and acting as a focus and central service for joint action. The longer term ambition is to provide design and consultation services for nature based projects.

Third, future work includes expanding the knowledge base to avoid dependence on a small number of individuals; providing training, online tutorials and brochures; and widening access to plants, shrubs and trees so people can get started. Further work will focus on a city-wide community service for food growing, campaigning work focusing on city-owned land and access for nature based projects, and creating an open map to support this. Network building will focus on a new city-wide platform called Leeds Green Activities Providers [24] that aims to connect organisations in Leeds that deliver nature-based activities to improve health and well-being.



Transport – creating mobility justice and a car free Leeds

The Transport Transition Partners are drawn from different sustainable transport backgrounds; Naomi Brown brings expertise in access to cycling from Leeds Bike Mill [25], former partner Hannah Kettle campaigned for Car Free Cities as part of national campaign group Possible [26], and new partner Dr Jane Turner brings academic experience in sustainable travel and climate change adaptation.

Transport is a key transition area as transport is the highest carbon emitting sector in Leeds [27]. The vast majority of these emissions are from cars, even though only about 68% of households in Leeds own a vehicle [28]. Further, air pollution contributes to up to 36,000 deaths annually in the UK, and around 300 annual deaths in Leeds.[29] The cars producing this pollution sit unused for 96% of the time, and at peak times, only 14% of cars are actually on the roads. The time for a fundamental rethink of transport has come. The new Leeds City Council Transport Strategy sets the tone for this ambitious rethink, and it is one we support and encourage to keep momentum and go further.

The focus for our Transport Partners is mobility justice – the understanding that everyone has the right to be able to move around the city in a way that is accessible, affordable and safe for them. Early activity focused on mapping stakeholders in the sector, engaging in conversation with them, and signposting individuals and organisations to the initiatives and decision makers who can further their aims. Behind the scenes they also work to influence city policy by offering support to relevant campaigns, and amplifying consultations to improve community input in decision making.

On the ground, the Transport transition partners supported community events for the annual Clean Air Day in June and Car Free Day in September, and continue to encourage people to run Play Street events and create Parklets, which turn car parking spaces into green areas for social and food growing. Past collaborations have successfully engaged people in different parts of Leeds, e.g. in Little London, where a “Clean Air Café” event highlighted the dangers of air pollution, and Beeston, where a street based [Car Free Vision](#) [30] has been co-created with the local community.

Going forward, the Transport Transition Partners will continue to share and regularly update their [Transport Opportunities in Leeds](#) [31] resource – which highlights a range of existing initiatives in Leeds that individuals and organisations can use to inform their own behaviour change or campaigning. Current work includes collaborating with the Clean Air Alliance on an action plan for active travel, and advising groups such as Sustainable Arts In Leeds on decreasing the carbon footprint of event travel. They will also continue to support a range of campaign organisations who seek to further the ambition of the local and regional authorities' transport strategies.



Work & Economy – Building Community Wealth

Our Work & Economy Transition area is led by Emilie Tricarico and Ronan Murphy-Coghlan, both graduates in Ecological Economics at the University of Leeds. The context for the sector is one of continuing locally inequality and damage to nature driven by a global economic model. This transition area is motivated to address the negative impacts of constant economic growth and the use of GDP as a sole measure of the health of an economy. Ever increasing levels of consumption, production and resource extraction are putting pressure on the planet's natural systems and creating socially undesirable impacts at home. Economic growth as an overarching policy objective has contributed to the undermining of public services, dismantling people's support networks and leading to unchecked levels of inequality [32]. A change of approach is needed.

This transition area actively explores what this change might be. Leeds City Council has adopted an “Inclusive Growth” model in its [Best City Ambition](#) [33], which does seek to rebalance some of the economic gains from rapid urban growth in Leeds. But our city still remains deeply divided, between richer and poorer neighbourhoods. As the city centre booms, for example, 142,000 people are living in absolute poverty [34].

To supplement the city's approach to more inclusive growth, our transition partners propose a remedial [Community Wealth Building \(CWB\) Strategy](#). [35] Community Wealth Building approaches have been successfully trialed and implemented in several UK councils including Preston, Ayrshire, the Wirral and Liverpool.

This model of local economic development working for people, places and the planet is well suited to the 21st-century challenges of the triple emergencies that Climate action Leeds uses as a focus. CWB is based on five pillars:

- Plural ownership of the economy
- Making financial power work for local places
- Fair employment and just labour markets
- Progressive procurement of goods and services
- Socially productive use of land and property

Elements of the CWB approach, such as local sourcing, have already been embedded in our work. For example, the Food Transition Partner, Foodwise Leeds, is undertaking work on local procurement, and productive conversations are underway with Leeds City Council about what a CWB strategy might mean for the city. The team is also mapping organisations across the Leeds economy, [36] putting together a comprehensive vision for change with links to case studies, policy objectives and recommendations for policy-makers. Our transition partners across Work & Economy, Food, and Nature Transition Partners are also working together to map land assets that could support CWB.

The next steps focus on building support for Community Wealth Building across Leeds, especially through engaging with Leeds City Council, the Leeds Climate Commission and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority. They are currently working on a place and people tailored report that details what an alternative Leeds economic strategy could look like, and movement building with trade union and third sector organisations.



A workshop event to launch a supporting report to the Community Wealth Building Strategy, April 2023



Youth & Education – embedding a climate curriculum

The Youth & Education Transition Partner include Leeds Development Education Centre [37] (DEC) an education charity specialising in supporting schools and communities by providing education which helps prepare people for living in our rapidly-changing and very unequal world and Angel House which works to empower young people and amplify their voices within our region, our city, and Climate Action Leeds.

In Leeds there is a lack of wider strategy and targets to support the decarbonisation of schools, as well as to engage and involve a broad cross section of young people. Our Youth and Education partners focus on climate change education in schools that goes beyond the science, helping young people understand climate justice, their agency and opportunities for action (for themselves, their families and the wider local community), the local and global mindsets that have contributed to the triple emergencies, and their own feelings and emotions about climate change.

Our youth and Education Partners' work has focused on the development and roll out of a climate curriculum for schools. This involved discussion with headteachers, a Climate Education Conference in May 2022, the promotion of the curriculum to school leadership and heads, as well as contact with West Yorkshire Eco Educators and other educational networks.

Events to date have included: a 4-week CPD programme delivered to 8 schools in the Otley Climate Hub, followed by others across Leeds in the autumn of 2021; hosting the Leeds Learning Alliance Diversity conference in February 2022; and a Climate Change Roundtable in June. Through these events a climate focused curriculum was developed with teachers with an aim to implement in all schools, and head teachers have been briefed on the importance of climate change in the curriculum.

Current work focuses on a Climate Change Roundtable in June 2023 at Leeds College of Building with the Leeds Learning Alliance, which aims to embed the climate curriculum as part of standard school teaching, using messaging focused on the urgency of the crisis and climate justice. A further event is planned later in June 2023 on fair trade and climate justice in the curriculum. In addition, work will focus on decarbonising school buildings and grounds, and showing pupils and students that schools are taking action to reduce their carbon emissions in practice.

In addition to collaborative work with Leeds Development Education Centre, Angel House has also focused on: Leading Youth Allyship Training for Climate Action Leeds staff; planning and coordination to bring together a new cross-generational coalition for a climate strike action at Leeds University in March 2022; and, hosting youth panels at public events, ensuring that youth activists have led in the development of goals, themes and organisation of the panels themselves. Examples of youth panels include: Youth panel at Kinder Leeds in October 2022 which included two key groups in the city – Youth4ClimateLeeds and XR Universities; and a Youth panel in support of the Regional Youth Climate Assembly's launch of their Manifesto for a Green New Deal, in October 2022.



Community Hubs

CAL chose eight Leeds communities to support community climate action over its five years. Our communities 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. In each community, we have developed a relationship with a local partner organisation to develop a local group and hub to promote community climate action. Our first two and half years have generated an amazing wealth of community-based climate action, and the sections below give a glimpse of this.

In addition to our place based community hubs, a supporting grants programme has been rolled out to provide flexible seedcorn micro funding for small scale community initiatives.

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	Inner 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



First Wave

OUR FUTURE BEESTON



Beeston is an inner city area to the south of the city and while it is vibrant and full of strong social networks it faces ongoing issues of poverty, poor housing and social problems. Climate change is often seen as being a secondary issue to those of basic survival where people rely on food banks and struggle to heat their homes, even though there are many possibilities for addressing both issues in parallel. Beeston is a diverse inner city area bordering affluent city centre housing, and suffers from severe traffic pollution from the M621 motorway which surrounds and cuts off the neighbourhood.

Health for All [38] is our Beeston local partner, making use of their Beeston Village Community Centre and their established work in the area. With support from our programme of work, they have established Our Future Beeston as a focus for community climate action. Activity to date has focused on food growing, green spaces and recycling, including developing the “bin yard” spaces in back-to-back housing areas and making planters with wood from Leeds Wood Recycling. Community sharing has included a well-used local ‘CRAP’ (Community Reuse Amongst People) group for unwanted items to find new homes. Transport work has included bike-fixing workshops and work on envisioning car free streets in the area. Our Future Beeston have also produced an Energy Saving Handbook, which has been used as a template for other neighbourhoods.

Activities in Beeston have been taking place in a number of locations around the area. They have worked extensively through local engagement in Beeston Festival and with Possible’s Car Free Cities campaign, which has produced visions for car free spaces in Tempest Road and the front of Elland Road stadium. Activities have focused on key local issues such as lack of resources, fuel poverty and the lack of green space; addressed through the reuse groups, Energy Saving Handbook and gardening activities respectively. They have been asking people across Beeston to commit to Climate Pledges as an introduction to taking further actions.

In the coming year, Our Future Beeston are continuing to work on the bin yard and green spaces projects, as well as on keeping unwanted items out of landfill. They are working on a “save money, save the planet” project, a network of local organisations, councillors and residents to campaign for fortnightly green bin collection to promote recycling and improve access to waste management. The group also plans to increase youth engagement in climate action, as well as support the community with ongoing cost of living pressures through energy efficiency advice.

ECO FRIENDLY GARFORTH

Garforth is a mixed income commuter town to the east of Leeds and also has a large proportion of retired people. Before Climate Action Leeds began work in Garforth, there were various resident-led initiatives focused on bringing people together around environmental actions such as tree planting and community food growing. There was enthusiasm from those involved in these various initiatives to join together, become more visible and collaborative, and grow the movement locally.

Our Garforth community hub is managed through [LS14 Trust](#) [39], and is constituted in its own right as Eco-Friendly Garforth. In its first year, it operated a pop-up hub in Garforth library, but in its second year the group is doing outreach through regular events such as the Clothes Swap and Repair Café, and series of workshops and talks.

Local collaborations have been developed with Incredible Edible and Zest around a community composting pilot; and with a local artist creating work with single use plastic. Stalls at the Garforth Summer galas and Breeze events as well as on Main Street, have brought in conversations with new people and children who were familiar with the group through its work in schools.

The group operates through a monthly Main Circle, with smaller working groups that get together to organise particular events or activities – Energy, Reuse and Repair, and Education. The Energy group is exploring options for increasing renewable energy within Garforth and raising awareness about this. The Reuse and Repair group is organising Clothes Swaps, a community composting initiative and Repair Cafés. The Education group is engaging with schools and offering training and workshops. A Communications Strategy is being developed, and collaboration with existing groups in Garforth is ongoing.



A model house being used to talk about home insulation and energy efficiency in Garforth

Otley is a mixed income commuter town in the Leeds District which provides an example of a commuter market town. Our community partner is [Otley 2030 \[40\]](#) which was formed following the Climate Emergency declarations of Leeds City Council and Otley Town Council, to pursue the aim of addressing the emergency within the town. They bring together people who work or engage with a number of other groups, developed a renewable energy feasibility study in 2017 and are also working on a Doughnut Economics model at local scale.

Their current community climate hub is in a local bar, though the group are currently in negotiations to buy a church, which comes with a house that will be used as an eco-friendly show home. A major focus of activity is developing alternatives to the proposed East of Otley development, where Otley 2030 managed to stall the proposals and produce a plan and guiding principles for how it could be redesigned as an exemplar for sustainability – providing more affordable homes in a 15 minute neighbourhood, reducing the demand for new roads, and increasing biodiversity.

Through support from Otley 2030, solar panels have been installed on the local library, a primary school and high school, and a Veg Box scheme has support from local businesses, delivering to people struggling to make ends meet. Funding has been secured to train a teacher in each school on the UN Sustainable Development Curriculum. In 2021, Otley 2030 hosted the town's first ever Festival of Kindness (FoK). The group decided not to repeat the FoK in 2022, instead focussing their attention on teaming up with local organisations and Climate Action Leeds to host the Otley Green Weekend in April 2023 – this three day event was attended by over 800 people. It included a bike-powered youth gig, a talk from Tom Heap, the Otley Green Fair, and a day of Climate Action Workshops.

Otley 2030 coordinate the Otley Nature Network of 15 local nature groups and organisations working together to combat the biodiversity crisis. A successful crowdfunding initiative, in collaboration with 10 other local groups, led to the purchase of the East Woods, an important, accessible greenspace for residents to the north of the river in Otley. They are currently in the process of establishing a Community Larder by collecting surplus food from local bakeries and delivering it to Warm Spaces (which they also helped coordinate).

Otley 2023 are also part of the Community Research Network which was successful in attracting government grant funding to build capacity for community led research. They also collaborated with Otley Town Council to successfully bid for a £39k Active Travel Hub grant from West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

CLIMATE ACTION SEACROFT

Seacroft is a large area of predominantly social housing on the eastern edge of Leeds, approximately 6 miles from the city centre. Newer housing developments are infilling green space in the area as well as expanding the built up area further east and therefore the area is in transition. It is currently ranked as the third most deprived area of Leeds. Seacroft represents areas of outlying social housing and the pressures of building on green space.

Climate Action Seacroft is overseen by [LS14 Trust \[41\]](#), a community led organisation who have worked in Seacroft for several years who run their own community hub and programme of activities. Climate Action Seacroft is resident led, and works across the local community. The Seacroft Climate hub based at LS14 Trust's Hub has run a number of events, including a Climate Forum, Summer Solstice event and Jubilee Celebration. They run weekly Craftivists and Hookers (craft clubs), regular monthly daytime drop in spaces across various venues in the community, including Kentmere Community Centre, St Richard's Church, Seacroft Library, Chapel FM radio studios & LS14 Trust's premises. They are arranging a series of visits to climate-related spaces. They work closely with Leeds City Council to redevelop green spaces, and ensure public consultation gathers the thoughts of local residents.



Community Composting event in Seacroft

Activities have included bringing back into use the Killingbeck Community Allotment as well as supporting a second allotment at the Chapel FM Arts Centre, the creation of a beautiful community forest garden, an active community composting programme, and the Get Growing Seacroft campaign, with four seed and plant banks for the community. Eco Workshops have introduced clothes mending and food waste reduction, amongst other things. They also provide training for other organisations, such as creating, maintaining and sustaining edible planters; and how to create seed banks. Climate Action Seacroft also supports the local Community Pantry by members volunteering, and providing items such as blankets, hats and scarves, made by the Hookers and Craft vists with donated yarn. They are also creating a sustainable craft store for the We are Seacroft collective.

During the pandemic a collaboration formed which led to a new, more integrated way of working between voluntary sector organisations & the public sector. This has now become established as 'We Are Seacroft' [42], with weekly meetings, a new website and partnerships being explored wherever appropriate. There are future plans to host a climate literacy course across the partnership delivered by DEC. Climate Action Seacroft has become integrated into We Are Seacroft. Our Hub Worker also works across the We are Seacroft collective, including working with young people and the Youth Service around issues of sustainability and recycling. They are working with the Primary Care Network Team to deliver fiddle mitts for patients with Dementia, and hope to deliver craft sessions in a local care home.

Priorities for the current year include engaging with young people, rolling out climate education to the whole community, the Get Growing Seacroft campaign, the development of an Active Travel hub, a local Doughnut Economics for Seacroft, and a continuation of the willingness to say "Yes".



SECOND WAVE

ALWOODLEY 2030



Alwoodley is a prosperous suburb about four miles from the centre of Leeds, with a high proportion of affluent homeowners, and one of the largest & most renowned private grammar schools in the north of England; but there are also pockets of deprivation within the area. Alwoodley is home to a large number of families and retired people. There is a diversity of faiths, with established Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities, each with local centres for prayer and community gathering. Alwoodley was chosen to explore how climate action could be embedded in a wealthier, more suburban location, especially in terms of some of the urgent challenges around engaging those in higher income suburban communities that might have higher carbon and resource footprints through commuting and consumer habits, and larger homes.

The neighbourhood activity is based around the recently formed Alwoodley 2030, an unconstituted community group, supported by a dedicated Climate Action Leeds development worker and a local hub worker. They do not yet have a physical hub location but plan to pop up in several locations as part of the process of finding a more permanent home.

Alwoodley 2030 started by engaging with existing local organisations in order to map activity and avoid duplication. The group kicked off with an awareness raising bulb planting project called 'the Alwoodley Buzz'. The group has since held two public meetings which generated the initial activities:

Nature & Biodiversity: activity has included a community tree planting day in partnership with the Gair Woods project from the University of Leeds, a neighbourhood walk to map potential relaxed mowing sites, developing a strategy to propose street tree planting sites to LCC in an effort to sequester more carbon and support more biodiversity by increasing the Alwoodley neighbourhood tree canopy, and hosting a wildlife gardening workshop.

Active Travel: an active travel event was organised on the Alwoodley Green as part of the Leeds 2023 events on July 9th. A citizen science project using member-built, low-cost, air pollution sensors popped up near local schools to measure levels of pollution during the school run, followed up by pop up bike repair on school sites to ensure that every child has access to a functioning bike.

Sustainable Food: Efforts are in place to identify a host for community composting.

Alwoodley 2030's Housing and Energy groups are also hosting two events in June. One is focused on convening tradespeople to discuss how they can upskill and offer green options for home improvement and building projects, and another for home owners who wish to do energy efficient retrofit on their homes.

CLIMATE ACTION ARMLEY

Armley is an inner city area with ongoing social issues. While being close to the city centre, it is physically separated by the river, roads and railways. Low housing costs have made it popular with immigrant communities and artists, making it a diverse area with a lot of community action. For example, 'The Real Junk Food Project' was established in Armley and the area has a long running Community Land Trust. These factors make it an ideal area to develop community climate action while addressing how to work with people experiencing multiple social issues.

Our local community group is called Climate Action Armley and is supported by [New Wortley Community Centre \[43\]](#). In their first year, the group is developing a community fridge and community planters for food and flowers. A local group that supports people recovering from substance addictions is involved in the group and they are being supported to develop a viable social enterprise involving soap-making.

The group have not prioritised a local hub in their first year, and aim to have activities in a number of different locations in the area to make the group more accessible to a wider range of residents. To date a number of venues have been used, such as New Wortley Community Centre, Armley Christ Church and the Armley One Stop Centre. Links were made with a number of local groups soon after the hub started, particularly around Asset Based Community Development (ABCD), local parks, nature and craft organisations. ABCD is focusing within the area following a history of the community struggling to engage with services who do not understand their needs. Much of the work within communities is proposed to be in mutually beneficial partnerships with existing local groups, passing on information and advice from experts to those who need it. An early activity was a trip to the Recycling & Energy Recovery Facility in Cross Green.

Climate Action Armley is focusing on developing links and forming activities based on local interest. They are developing a social media presence and doing stalls with children's activities to engage families during community events such as the Armley Spring Market. Future target activities include a repair café, an upcycling textiles workshop, an allotment, and community composting.



Family fun day activities in Armley

HORSFORTH CLIMATE ACTION

Horsforth is an outer suburb of North West Leeds, close to Leeds Bradford Airport and with mixed income levels. Local priorities are the lack of community growing spaces and involving local schools and nurseries in growing and nature initiatives. The identified needs were for community composting, public access to drinking water, and to encourage walking and cycling as alternatives to car use.

Horsforth Climate Action was established in 2022 – and is working towards becoming an independent constituted community organisation. The group is supported by a dedicated Climate Action Leeds development worker and local hub worker. Horsforth's St Margaret's Church employs the hub worker with a support and supervision group. There is not yet a physical hub location; but activities are spread across St Margaret's Community Centre and Church, The Grove Methodist Church and Horsforth Hall Park. The lack of community space in the town is a real issue.

Horsforth has set up a number of themed areas for its first year, focusing on education, repair and reuse, inclusion, food, nature, and transport. These will require continued engagement with the wider Horsforth community in order to develop practical projects and implement both personal and community change. Activities to date include:



Recycling: A Repair and Reuse cafe has been established and takes place monthly and has a good foot fall, and a virtual Library of Things has been established via Facebook. It already has almost 1,000 members.

Nature and Biodiversity: The Nature Group meets regularly and activities include a Green Gardening Fair (in partnership with the Food Group), the 'phone box' on Town Street with various wildlife displays, work with LCC Parks and Countryside to have relaxed mowing around the edges of playing fields (eg Drury Field) to increase biodiversity, distributing wildflower seedlings at Green Gardening Fair for people to look after and then plant out with us in areas of relaxed mowing, and meetings with the Sustainability Officer at the local Trinity University to discuss improving biodiversity.

Active Travel: As the first stage to encouraging active travel in the town, the Transport Group are undertaking a local survey; and Information on encouraging people to cycle more has been provided to local businesses, including grants to provide safe bike storage

Working with young people: The Schools and Young People group are meeting regularly and are now producing a regular newsletter for schools. They have held an information evening for teachers and youth leaders with speakers from Energy Heroes and Leeds DEC (Development Education Centre).

Sustainable Food: The Food Group have been active in supporting Horsforth residents to grow food, either in their own garden or on verges. They are also developing cookery classes to support local people using fresh ingredients.

Plans for the coming year include greater engagement with the wider Horsforth community and developing a sustainable structure that works to support HCA to continue developing.

CLIMATE ACTION LITTLE LONDON



Little London is just north of the city centre, dominated by modern Council housing and forms half of the Little London and Woodhouse ward. The area is close to the Universities and has some student housing alongside a number of marginalised communities including a number of refugee immigrant groups. This is an area of diverse but separated communities and challenges of poverty and the presence of transient resident groups. We chose Little London to represent our inner city multi ethnic community. Climate Action Little London is run by the Leeds African Communities Charitable Trust.



Clean Air Café event in Little London

Little London's themes include: Beautify, commissioning an artist to produce a mural alongside local children that raises awareness of climate action in the community; Food Justice, looking at access to food; Community Mapping, looking at the area's strengths and weaknesses, and adopting elements of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD); and Planters looking at developing underused areas to create pockets of zero carbon food production.

Activities have taken place since early in the hub's development, thanks to input from other parts of the CAL project, such as the Clean Air Café event co-organised with the Transport sector; and are focused around Little London Community Centre.

Little London's community engagement has focused on involving members of the community, particularly in the 'Beautify' theme with tree planting and community planters and has involved the planting of 200 mixed trees to help prevent future development. Following this, a litter pick took place during which a large amount of rubbish was collected. 'Food Justice' has been addressed through a food pantry and warm space in the community centre. The Cost of Living has been addressed through an event alongside Leeds City Council, the production of the Energy Saving booklet and a coat giveaway alongside providing advice on helping with rising costs. A Community Mapping strand will continually look at the needs of the community to ensure the project remains socially just. The Warm Space also provides a space for Leeds based social enterprise BARCA and their wellbeing team who provide health monitoring in a range of languages to potentially marginalised residents.

Future plans for Little London include a community mural and for hot meals alongside the community pantry to be a regular occurrence, as well as continuing the Community Mapping strand. There are also discussions regarding a forest school and shared community car.



GROWING THE CLIMATE ACTION MOVEMENT IN LEEDS



In our first two and half years, Climate Action Leeds has worked across a range of sectors and communities, and, collectively, these are making a large impact on the city through an amazing range of projects. Our Community Hubs have developed a diversity of projects and engagement methods driven by local residents in collaboration with supporting staff and structures from CAL. Our Transition Partners are undertaking detailed planning work on how to make transitions that can tackle our triple emergencies, and our City Movement Building team have put on a range of events and now set up a central venue for city-wide collaboration, networking, strategising and planning.



Training event at the Imagine City Hub



WHAT NEXT?

We now look forward to our next two and half years to double down on supporting a climate action movement in Leeds. We are currently in our 'test and learn' phase, and during this year, our priority is to test the strategies which are being developed in our neighbourhoods. We are also using the new City Hub – Imagine Leeds – to work on coordinating the city-wide activities of our sector transition partners so that we can communicate and collaborate with key city stakeholders, Leeds City Council, West Yorkshire Combined Authority, the business community, and the anchor institutions of the city; as well as directly with the public.

Our other main priority for this year is delivering our [grants programme \[44\]](#), in collaboration with Leeds Community Foundation, where groups across Leeds (not just in our eight neighbourhoods) can apply for small grants of up to £5,000 or microgrants of up to £1,000 for projects which support our aims to reduce carbon emissions and make the city more nature friendly and equal.

Going forward, our city planning work aims to support city wide debates, policy and action. For example, we have made contributions to the Local Plan Update consultation and are in the process of supporting the Leeds City Council with this consultation to ensure our visions of a more sustainable Leeds can be carried forward into policy. Our Food partner has co-written the city's Food Strategy, our Transport partner sits on Leeds City Council's Healthy Streets Partnership Board, our Youth and Education partner are engaging a broad network of teachers to embed climate in the curriculum. Our Work and Economy partner is championing a community wealth building approach for the city, and we continue to roll out the Doughnut Economics approach as a way to understand and act on the triple emergencies.



Joined up city-wide planning will be a crucial part of making sure Leeds becomes a nature friendly, socially just, zero carbon city by the 2030s. There are some huge challenges ahead and new development pressures across the city as it continues to grow. There will be flash points around the expansion of capacity at Leeds Bradford Airport, continued construction of luxury apartments, out of town retail, and car-dependent housing estates, and frustrations over the slow progress on bus reform and mass public transit. There are also many positive initiatives and cross-sector planning emerging, with ambitious strategies for energy and transport, a ground-breaking Local Plan update (undoing some of the excesses of the motorway city through the idea of 15 minute or Active Travel Neighbourhoods), and a focus on wellbeing and climate in the Best Council Plan. Organisations like the Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commission continue to build momentum and produce ambitious action plans, while the Mayor's office has made progress on transport and green jobs.

There is still much more to be done. Overall, our city planning process recommends a radical change of course for Leeds if we are to get into the climate safe, nature friendly and socially just space outlined by Doughnut Economics. We are not currently on course to meet the drastic carbon reduction targets needed to keep to the temperature limit set in the Paris Agreement to no more than 1.5°C of global heating. We need a radically different approach to protecting and regenerating local nature, which is under intense pressure from constant development, and increasingly erratic and extreme weather. We also need a renewed effort to share prosperity across our currently divided city.

We will explore what these changes might mean over the next two and a half years with our Community Hubs and Transition Partners as we look to scale up and share our action learning. We want our central hub, Imagine Leeds, to act as the focal point for debate, action and collaboration for the climate movement in Leeds, where we can learn together and rise to the challenge in front of us. There is no time to lose. Join our city-wide efforts and get involved in community-led climate action!



Endnotes

- 1 <https://www.t4p.org.uk>
- 2 <https://www.leedsclimate.org.uk/leeds-climate-change-citizens-jury>
- 3 <https://leedstidal.org>
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Contacting Climate Action Leeds

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Follow us on Twitter [@ClimateActLeeds](https://twitter.com/ClimateActLeeds) or Facebook ["ClimateActLeeds"](https://www.facebook.com/ClimateActLeeds)

Imagine Leeds: the climate action hub, is currently on the 7th floor of City Exchange on Albion Street, and is open most weekdays, please contact us in advance if you'd like to visit.

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