Environment Climate Change and Land Reform Committee

Community engagement on a green recovery, September 2020

Key Themes

Community Outreach Team

Summary

Three community meetings and **68 postcard consultations** were undertaken by the Community Outreach Team to engage members of the public who were unlikely to participate in a digital or other public consultation. **88 members** of the public **aged from 5 to 80** engaged through our work in during July and August 2020. Through virtual meetings and partnered community engagement we heard from people in **Arran, Edinburgh, Moray, North Lanarkshire and the Western Isles.**

We sought to hear from the **voluntary sector** and those with **lived experience.** Specifically, people and communities involved in the emergency response to the Covid-19 emergency. And to hear from individuals who may have been **adversely impacted by the crisis** and may be more **vulnerable to societal change to achieve net-zero.**

We heard from a range of groups and individuals within the groups below: Island and rural and urban communities; older and younger people; people with learning and or physical disabilities; people who are socially and/or economically excluded; people who are shielding.

Outcomes

The outcomes from the engagement can be broadly grouped into themes:

- **Communities emergency response to Covid-19**

- **Community Resilience** – strength in communities

- **Local Solutions** – recognition and support for the local

- **Community Empowerment** – a bottom up approach to a Green Recovery

- **Support for a 'Green Recovery'**

- **Behaviour Changes** – that happened during lockdown which impacted the environment, positive and negative.

- **Support needed to sustain and make change**: Time; Education; Infrastructure; Sustainable and available travel; digital ex/inclusion, Energy; Homes; Planning; Skills/Training/Jobs – especially for young people; Leadership – clear communication and messaging.

- **More general themes included:** Circular economy – local sustainable projects; Sustainable Investment approaches – for business, projects,

enterprise; Sustainable procurement approaches – eg. public transport; Equality- bridging the gap, (vulnerability), digital inclusion, prioritisation of social and environmental priorities.

Full notes from the community meetings and all of the submissions to the postcard consultation can be found here.

People and Organisations Involved

Postcard consultations

Northern Corridor Volunteers

- Cardowan, North Lanarkshire
- 20 young people aged 8 – 17 during the summer programme.
- Format: postcards used as part of creative session.

Edinburgh & Lothian Greenspaces Trust

- Out & About Project
- 12 people participated from: Residents at Old Farm Court Colinton Road; Oxgangs Walking Group; Oxgangs Roadshow participants; Best Bib n Tucker; The Quarries – Gilmerton; Moredun Roadshow participants; Zoom Gentle Fitness participants; Occupational Therapist working in Oxgangs took some to do with individuals she works with Volunteers at Gracemount Litter Pick.
- Format: postcards

Pilmeny Development Centre

- Leith, Edinburgh – Pages 15 – 31
- 20 people participated from: Leith Timebank members; Men's Group Health and Wellbeing (over 50s); Drop-in Group (over 50s social group); Volunteers; Youth Club (5 yr olds)
- Format: The respondents completed the consultation via postcards, email and phone.

Speak Out Group

- Advocacy Western Isles
- 18 people participated: Independent advocacy group formed in 2006 for adults with learning disabilities.
- Format: Postcards discussed during a Zoom call.

Community meetings

Arran community meeting hosted by - Arran Community Voluntary Service – with the Mary Davies Trust, Green Arran Future, Arran Elderly Forum, Lochranza Outdoor Centre, Arran Youth Foundation, U3A, Arran Sound, Umbrella Project, Keep Arran Talking.

Moray community meeting hosted by Tsi Moray with Saorse Sallen, 2 TsiMoray staff, and one individual.

North Lanarkshire community meeting hosted by Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire with Northern Corridor Volunteers, Voice of Experience Forum, Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire, Cumberland Resilience Group, Chryston Community Council, Green Health Volunteering, Getting better Together Project, Alzhemer Scotland, Friends of Canbusnethan Priory

Questions Asked

Postcard consultation

1. Have you made changes since lockdown that have benefitted the environment?
2. Would you like to keep up these changes?
3. What do you need to do that?

Community Meetings

1. What do you think a green recovery should mean?
2. How do the principles of sustainable development relate to your work, the people that you support?
3. Have you seen positive environmental changes as a result of how communities have responded to the crisis?
4. What are the barriers to delivering a green recovery in the voluntary sector?
5. What does your sector need to help protect the environment and to support the communities that you work with?
6. What key policiies, actions and immediate priorities are needed to deliver a green recovery in the voluntary sector?

Additional questions (agree, disagree, not sure, vote)

Do you agree or disagree that steps should be taken by the government to help the economy recover should be designed to help achieve Net Zero?

Do you think that, government, employers and or others should take steps to encourage lifestyle to change to be more compatible with reaching net zero?

Key Themes

Community Emergency Response to Covid-19

A clear theme running through was of the wide ranging, rapid community response to Covid-19. How people had come together and created new and vital support. Examples showed emergency, co-ordinated community response: providing food; prescriptions; mental and physical support; co-ordinated approach to solve transport etc. Many groups addressing immediate crisis did this found sustainable solutions and had their own environmental remit.

North Lanarkshire community meeting:

> 'We've seen things like Cumbernauld 'clean up group' emerge locally as lockdown eases as littering is becoming an issue.' 'Cumbernauld Resilience Group, with a Facebook group of 800 people, delivered 58,000 meals from the foodbank, prescriptions. Delivering food that is local, fresh and healthy, a sustainable food initiative.'

Arran community meeting:

> 'Arran people are very resilient, community spirited, help each other and are a good example of how to deal with practical issues.'

Moray community meeting:

> 'Communities have come together and recharged the local community minibus to take people to the surgeries so they don't have to take public transport. Little villages weren't really working together before.'

Northern Corridor Volunteers:

> 'Over lockdown we delivered 300 food and essentials packages to vulnerable households, walked dogs, shopped, collected prescriptions, tidied gardens, cleaned up local green space.'

Community Resilience – strength in communities

Local Solutions – recognition and support for the local

Community Empowerment – a bottom up approach to a Green Recovery

People asked for recognition of the community response during Covid-19 to be used as an example and solution for recovery going forward. A strong theme was of community resilience and a desire for that to be recognised and for local people to have a say and voice in planning and decision and problem solving. Local control, to be heard, local solutions and a recognition of how communities have worked together before and particularly during the crisis.

People discussed the barriers to community empowerment and the need for an infrastructure of support for community development.

Arran Community Meeting:

> 'We need things to help and sustain groups and projects that already help people'

> 'We need to start with what we have.'

> 'We need to go from the base up have local conversations and not leave people behind.'

Moray Community Meeting:

> 'Communities have the understanding and ideas, solutions to do things themselves but they need resources to facilitate these projects and ideas…. It needs investment rather than trying to control and direct community responses.'

> 'There are barriers to empower local people. There needs to be local solutions for people desperately in need, and money to support local projects.'

> 'People have come together locally, rapidly, effectively'

*Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspaces Trust postcard participant:*

> 'Government could help to create.. good relationships in the community'

North Lanarkshire community meeting:

> 'immediate priority needs to be to urgently identify and fund existing resources, ones that fit with a green agenda, which have been set up and run by the community and are truly community led.'

Behaviour Change

Northern Corridor Volunteers – young people's summer programme:
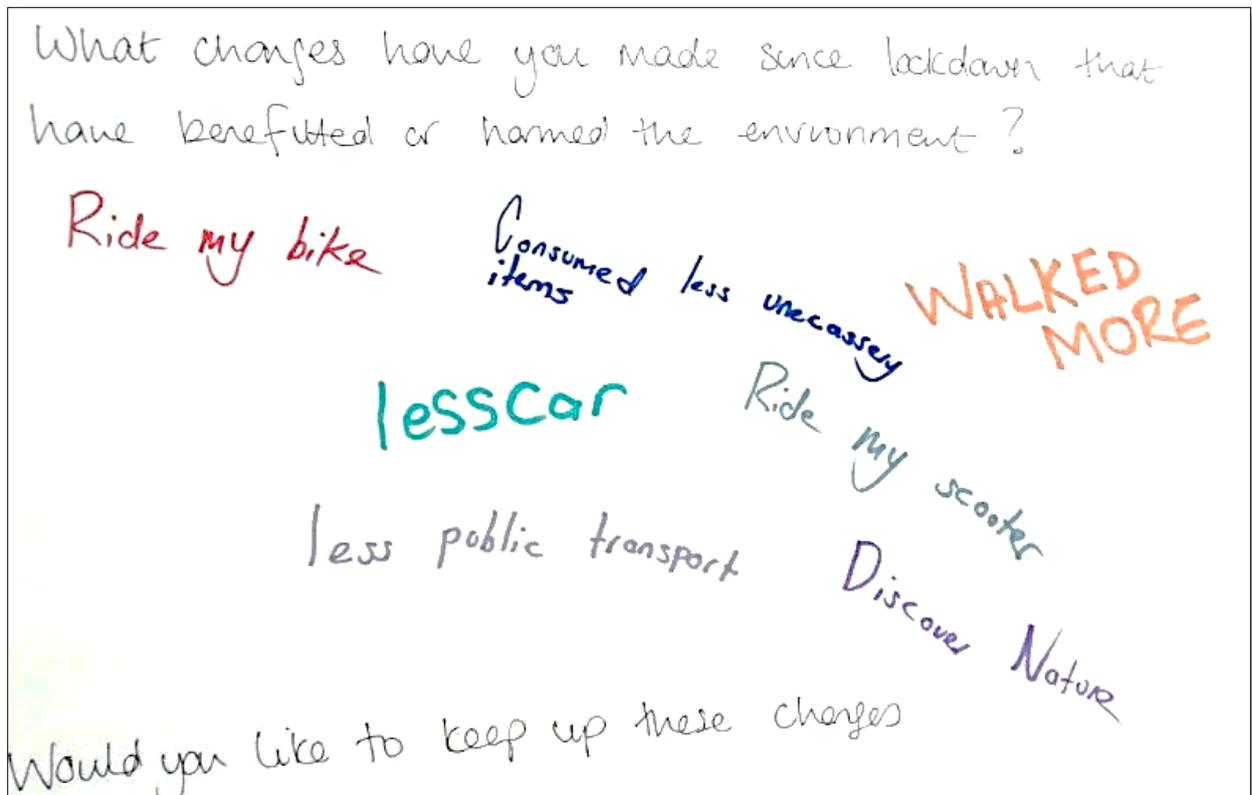
People described a number of changes that they had undertaken during lockdown that had benefitted the environment: gardening, growing food, cooking and planning cooking, less food waste, shopping local, upcycling, active travel – cycling, walking, less time in the car, volunteering, spending time to support others to get involved in nature and the outdoors, spending time in nature. Or considering staycations for the future.
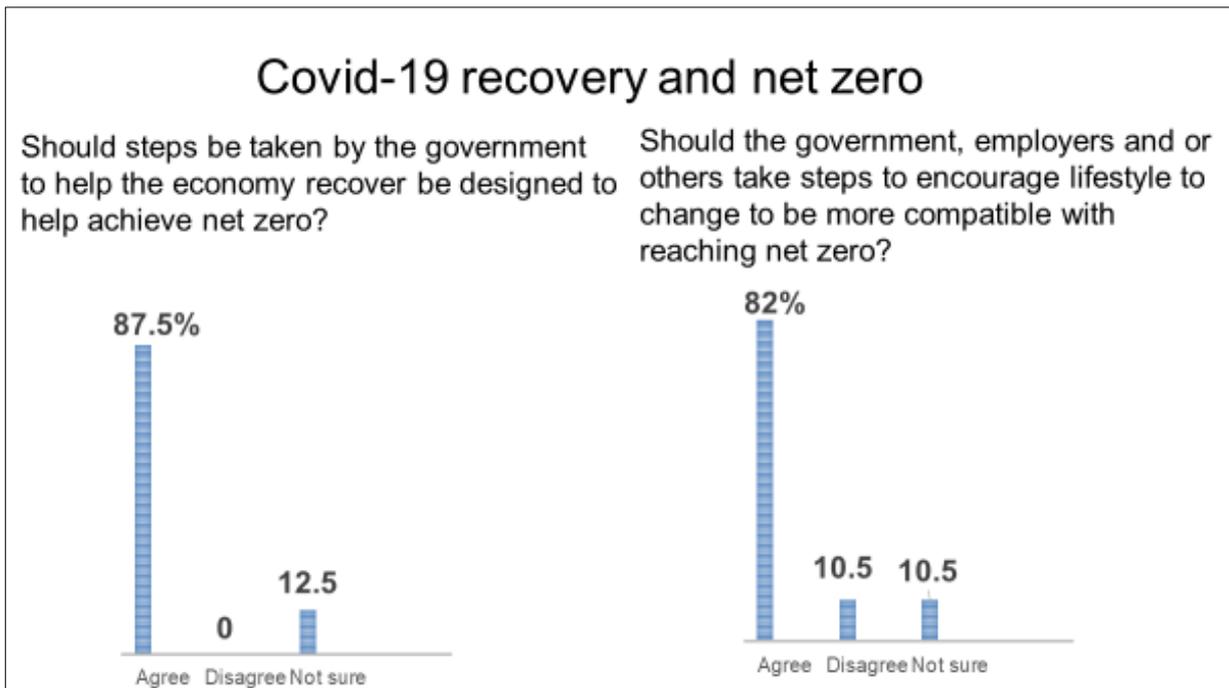
Pilmeny Development Project postcard participant:

> 'I have walked more to get my weekly food shopping using a rucksack and without buying additional plastic bags.'

> 'The biggest difference I have noticed (since lockdown) is I can breathe properly due to less pollution which has been amazing.'

People also described a number of changes that they had made that had a negative impact on the environment: using more chemicals for cleaning, using disposable masks, using more plastic bags in shops, using less public transport, more energy at home.

The support needed to sustain and make change and attitude

To understand people's attitude to a Green Recovery and how to achieve net zero in the community meetings we asked if people support actions to help the recovery and the environment. People were in support.

Covid-19 recovery and net zero

Should steps be taken by the government to help the economy recover be designed to help achieve net zero?

- 87.5% Agree
- 0 Disagree
- 12.5 Not sure

Should the government, employers and or others take steps to encourage lifestyle to change to be more compatible with reaching net zero?

- 82% Agree
- 10.5 Disagree
- 10.5 Not sure

We also heard in the postcard consultation that people are keen to support the environment and willing to make changes. They wrote enthusiastically about their support for the environment and told us about lifestyle changes they had been making during lockdown.

Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspaces Trust postcard participant:

> 'Just because the pandemic is ending it doesn't mean the environment should suffer'

Northern Corridor Volunteers postcard participants:

> 'Young people in creative sessions made models with themes emerging around, 'fresh food for everyone, houses and electric cars for everyone, protecting woodland, animals and insects, keeping seas clean.'

What is needed to support behaviour change

The key things that people said that they need in order to make and sustain change are:

- Time
- Education
- Infrastructure – travel, digital, energy, homes, planning
- Skills, training, jobs especially for young people
- Leadership

Time

A large number of people talked about how time was a big factor in being able to make and sustain changes. Time to think, plan and prepare and to undertake activities like cooking, freezing (less food waste) gardening, walking, cycling, upcycling, shopping local. And more energy for these activities. **Volunteering** was a big theme. As people and families were had time they helped others, support them to get involved in nature and environmental activities.

Arran community meeting:

> 'Working with older people we were able to get them more involved *(in nature/gardening)* with the support of their families…. It is dependent upon their families to support or encourage activities.'

Education

Some people felt education was needed and important in encouraging behaviour changes.

Arran community meeting:

> 'You can't make people do things, they have to want to, it takes education. If kids get educated, they take it back home to their parents and share learning. Once change happens, people get used to it, e.g. smoking ban, compulsory seatbelts.'

Pilmeny Development Project:

> 'I think educating the public would be the best thing, so they can understand their impact on the environment.

Infrastructure – travel, digital, energy, homes, planning

Many people asked for infrastructure to support more environmentally friendly activities. People described walking and cycling more during lockdown and being unable to sustain that once lockdown ended and roads became busier. Many people asked for increased public transport which is sustainable.

Speak Out Group, Western isles:

> 'Many of the paths are overgrown or full of potholes….the paths do not get salt on them…..All these things make it too dangerous for us to walk.

Arran community meeting:

> 'We need cycle paths and safe pavements, access to local food and packaging free shopping options

> 'Electric charging stations are out of order. If we want recovery we need the tools'

North Lanarkshire Community Meeting:

> 'A lot of people felt more able to cycle and walk when it felt safer to do so because of a lack of travel. Now that lockdown is easing, and more HGV's and cars are back on the road then less people are inclined to do so. We need to invest in better infrastructure…. It's too dangerous to cycle in our villages.'

Digital inclusion

Whilst some people had very positive things to say about increased digital use there was also a big concern that this is contributing to increased inequality.

North Lanarkshire Community Meeting:

> 'Digital exclusion is a concern and is creating a bigger divide.'

Arran community meeting:

> 'There is no substitute for face to face for old and young people. Long term, digital is not the solution.'

> 'We need to ask a range of people, a cross section. For example a survey about covid was done on Aran[1], but only online so some people were left behind.'

People asked for practical solutions:

Package in shops was raised by many as an issue. Shops that use sustainable packaging or none at all (many people asked for this); access to recycling; public transport that is green; electric charging stations that work; locally and sustainably produced food; equal access to green spaces.

Speak out Group, Western Isles:

> 'Only one supermarket on the island provides biodegradable bags'

> 'clearer information about the products (*cleaning)* we are using and what damage they may do to us and the environment.'

> 'The information is confusing, and it is different in many places. We would like something that is for us and our area so that we can understand.'

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[1] Arran Recovery Group Covid-19 survey

People asked for skills, training and jobs especially for young people

Arran community meeting:

> 'We need to look at young people and what we are building for them, think of green jobs for them.'

> 'Arran Rangers are being threatened with redundancy. Because of the lockdown and restrictions, they are at threat. That does not make sense we need to plant more trees. Think of different ways to engage people outdoors. There are opportunities to work with conservation and crop planting.'

Pilmeny Development Project postcard participant:

> 'Create lots of new employment in social useful environmental projects'

Leadership

People asked for clear policy and clarity of messaging.

North Lanarkshire community meeting:

> 'Mixed messages like being told that green spaces are important and then you hear about peatland being closed for housing developments.

Circular Economy

People asked for support for local environmentally, friendly and sustainable projects and initiatives, using renewables.

Pilmeny Development Project postcard participant:

> 'return to having small artisan industry'

> 'We should utilise what we have in this country such as land and sea.'

Arran community meeting:

> 'All grants to make buildings more energy efficient are for private homes… We need to support businesses and local orgs to be sustainable, energy efficient and make savings'

Investment and approaches

People asked for support for local, sustainable projects, initiatives and social enterprises. Invest in local: food, upcycling, buy and sell local. Investment in the voluntary sector to support community empowerment. Invest in business support, voluntary sector support and community empowerment.

Speak Out Group, Western Isles:

> 'spending more time in the garden growing and planting. …Some of us could also sell what we were growing and planting to our local communities, helping people to get items that the supermarket had run out of'.

Moray community meeting:

> 'One of the major barriers is the lack of investment in community development.'

> 'We need strong support from Scottish Government, commitment and genuine support, to enable people. Put local people in the foreground. Investment is needed.'

Procurement and financing

People asked that sustainable alternatives should be considered and alignment and prioritisation to support net-zero.

Arran community meeting:

> 'Transport on Arran is an issue. Contracts always go to private companies running large buses on diesel. We need to look at sustainable alternatives.'

Equality

Some people feel that they had been left behind. That going digital excluded people even more. Some people also felt concerned by a strong environmental agenda and a need to prioritise the most vulnerable right now. Others felt social and environmental issues should not be presented as separate.

Arran community meeting:

> 'We need to look at how green recovery is planned at the expense of others, eg. social care. For example, tax break for cars but no support for people in social care…'

> 'You can't ask people to do things for the environment when they can't put food on the table. You can't bring them along with you when they can't feed their families and worry about jobs.'

Speak Out Group, Western Isles:

> 'We have felt isolated and forgotten during lockdown and we feel that our general health and well-being should be more important right now.'

North Lanarkshire Community Meeting:

> 'Funding has gone to more affluent areas and projects and not those most in need.'

Moray community meeting:

> 'There is an artificial tension between economic recovery, sustainability, and justice. If we hurry to build back what we had before Covid we miss the chance to build a better future.

> 'No tension between the social and environmental but resources are not distributed in a fair way.'