



Paper for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel on Climate Change 1st October 2019

Jane Acton BSc MA Learning & Legacy Manager janeacton@torbaycdt.org.uk

THE PROPOSAL

Our vision at Torbay Community Development Trust is that the Bay could become a regenerative, resilient, sustainable community with new social enterprises established for food, waste, energy and transport. If citizen led Torbay Climate Action, Torbay Community Development Trust and Local Spark Torbay could work in a collaboration with Torbay Council and Torbay Development Agency then we believe we could galvanize the amazing resources we have within our community. This is ambitious and urgent. Together we need to create the right conditions to make it happen to prepare for climate change and eradicate poverty.

THE ISSUE

"As for the future, it is not a question of predicting it, but of making it possible." **Antoine de Saint Exupéry**, Citadelle, 1948

An IPCC special report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and **efforts to eradicate poverty.***

The words above are from latest report from the *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and feature in the first paragraph on the Devon County Council's website page on Climate Change. There is a Devon Net Zero Task Force set up in summer 2019 made up of academics and practitioners with a role to create a Devon Carbon Plan. Out of these 12 people, there is only one person from an agency which might know about eradicating poverty (Elaine Cook from Devon Communities Together) and there is no one from Torbay.

The Devon Net Zero Task force has been set up by the Devon Climate Emergency Response Group. The role of this group is to make:

1. A Devon Carbon Plan
2. A review of Devon's climate-related community risks and opportunities
3. A plan from each signatory to the Devon Climate Declaration, within 6 months of signing, to reduce their organisational carbon emissions

The Devon Climate Emergency Response Group is made up of all the other local authorities in Devon, but no one is listed from Torbay Council. It also has representation from health, business, utility and research institutions, again none from within Torbay.

Yet:

'the three towns of Torquay, Paignton and Brixham which make up Torbay are ranked the most deprived Local Authority in the South West region.

Torbay also has the highest level of domestic violence in the whole South West - in fact it is one of the worst in the country. Many believe there is a strong link between the deprivation and the domestic abuse.

The number of children looked after by the local authority remains among the two highest in England (second only to Blackpool).

"Central government has reduced the budget from £36m to £6m this year and that threatens to overwhelm the local authority. We will have to withdraw from providing some services. We are fire-fighting'. Says Leader of Torbay Council Steve Darling 23.9.19 Devonlive News

Torbay is now worse than the English average for:

- *Hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries*
- *Violent Crime*
- *Alcohol related hospital admissions*
- *Hospital Admissions for intentional self-harm*

(<https://www.devonlive.com/news/devon-news/torbay-problem-terrible-statistics-behind-3334873>)

THE SOLUTION

Locally



These are the words on the Torbay Council building. They read:

- To know that which before us lies in daily life is the prime wisdom.
- Health and cheerfulness mutually beget each other.
- Good company and good discourse are the very sinews of virtue.

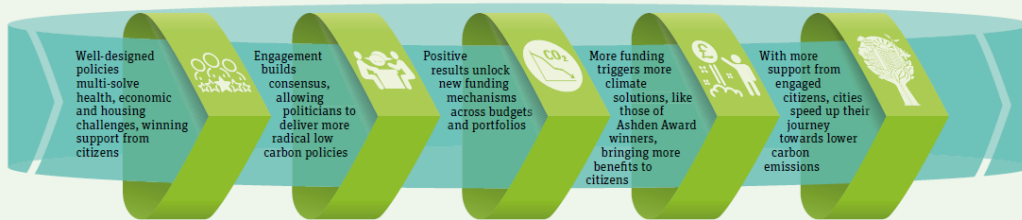
Here at [Torbay Community Development Trust](#) we have developed an approach over the last 4 years which has improved **health and cheerfulness** among our residents and improved **company and discourse**. The approach has led to people in the Bay voluntarily setting up over 200 citizen led activities in relation to the environment, health and well-being. We have all seen in recent days the global youth movement on climate change and our own Torquay Grammar School for Girls and so we are embarking on the same journey now with young people from across the Bay as part of the Imagine This programme.

We also know the staff of the environment and green sector in Devon can see the value of this approach in getting their message across. From an audience of over 150 people who attended the recent Water Resilience Convention in South Devon 52 people signed up to hear more and/or receive training in our approach. So we now **know that which lies before us** is the challenge of climate change in our daily lives.

Here at Torbay Community Development Trust we see kindness and compassion for all, natural human qualities we have for each other, to be the way out of the climate crisis. Co-operation is a survival strategy and can also bring inclusive shared power and ownership to undermine poverty.

How does citizen engagement drive action on climate change?

To avoid catastrophic climate change, we must radically cut carbon emissions – 80% of which are created by cities. Convincing residents they can benefit from climate action is key to creating change.



This is taken from the Ashden Trust Climate Action Toolkit (May, 2019). They suggest the first stage is to start with well- designed policies which ‘multi solve’ health, economic and housing challenges. Their second statement is to build engagement and that ultimately with more engaged citizens we can speed up our transition to a low carbon future. This type of work is already happening for example the Preston Model and the Wigan Deal.

Here at the **Trust** our ‘kindness’ approach to asset based citizen led engagement means we are ideally placed to support this work. We have 4 years of experience and numerical evidence in making this approach have positive impacts on health and well- being, improving economic opportunities also building resilience, equity and social cohesion.

We have a track record of building citizen led action partnerships across the Bay. Some examples of this work include the 13 Timebanks across the Bay where people have given up to 1000 hours of their time and this is used to fix community buildings, gardening projects where people grow food and improve their local environment. These are activities which people have set up for themselves with no financial back up from us. There have 250 citizen led activities like this where people set their own agenda and therefore have the energy to see it through. We simply need to help them to do it.

We are gearing up to become a lead agency in social entrepreneurship and would welcome an opportunity to play a role in helping to set up for example co-operatives or non-profit businesses to help us meet the challenges facing us.

Our involvements with the Community Partnerships across the Bay and the burgeoning Neighbourhood Plans lead us to believe some of our communities are already on this path with climate challenge activities written into their plans. Our community led connection approach is feeding into these new democratic approaches and the so called ‘hard to reach’ are increasingly involved in local decision making.

We have staff trained and experienced in building our community capacity specifically in readiness for climate change with for example food growing and transport projects. We are now urgently reviewing and improving what we are doing as an agency.

In May 2019 the Leader of Devon County Council proposed to establish a ‘citizen assembly’ Mr Hart said:

“We clearly can’t do this alone but I want Devon to take a lead in bringing organisations, communities and individuals together to take action.

“This is an issue that affects us all and requires action from all of us from large-scale corporate concerns to the individual resident.

“That’s why I’ve asked the Chief Executive, Phil Norrey, to lead on this to demonstrate how seriously we are taking it.

(<https://www.devonnewscentre.info/new-drive-to-cut-carbon-emissions-across-devon-2/>)

In Torbay we are uniquely placed to be part of the movement to engage ALL people in Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Planning. We would say the community needs to decide on the design of the plan.

Further afield

Many others are now on this path. There is comprehensive guidance from the Ashden Trust in which it is recognized the issues local authorities face:

‘Local authority climate change departments have been decimated in recent years; are their scarce resources better spent crunching data or going out and talking to people?’

(<https://www.ashden.org/news/climate-emergency-three-ways-to-help-local-authorities-turn-declarations-into-action-1>)

They have published a Toolkit <https://www.ashden.org/programmes/co-benefits> packed with tools, inspiration and case studies. It demonstrates how action on climate change can deliver many local benefits including better health, greater equality, economic opportunities and increased resilience. A platform for sharing best practice is also being looked at.

Here is a 1 ½ minute film, aimed at cities but also local authorities in general:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=93&v=VBjif6QwuZD4

The chapters include:

Health and Wellbeing

Economic Opportunity and job creation

Resilience

Equity and Social Cohesion

They are also recommending that these activities become statutory obligations with funding from central government for programmes of area specific activity helping areas to meet net zero targets without hurting the local economy and creating new green jobs. Also that public sector agencies could adopt a standard low carbon procurement strategy.

We could for example use the process adopted by nearby town Totnes. We know this is a wealthier area per head of population but the process they have used might be useful for us.

They have embarked upon a 10 point journey from developing a framework for action through to implementation. They have done with all 3 relevant local councils, many 3rd sector agencies and individuals. The town has been preparing for climate change for years leading the world with the Transition Towns initiatives. Totnes is up to Stage 5 of this process. Their Plan has 3 cross cutting Themes:

1. Seeking out good models of best practise and learning.
2. Information sharing.
3. Building public awareness and involvement.

The plan itself is on the Council's website and is open to the public to add comments. It is just that, *their plan* and ours would be different. However, for information, it's main headings are Food, Transport, Energy in Buildings, Responsible Management of Resources, Biodiversity, Economics, Water, Measure YOUR Carbon Footprint, Health and wellbeing measures.

Here are films of what the future might look like in Torbay. The first link is to a film of how one deprived community has responded to the challenge in America. 4 ½ minutes.

<https://community-wealth.org/content/cleveland-model-how-evergreen-cooperatives-are-building-community-wealth>

This next link is for a film of what life might look like in 10 years time if we get it right but, spoiler alert, it is in fact already happening. 2 ¼ minutes

<https://twitter.com/robintransition/status/1173556545952636928>