



Working together to tackle climate change and build a sustainable future for Sheffield

Tuesday 15th November 2022

Introduction

Representatives of organisations from across Sheffield were invited on behalf of the Sheffield City Partnership Board and Health and Wellbeing Board to attend a half-day session to explore the climate emergency in the context of public health. The aims of the event were to:

- understand what the climate emergency means for attendees and their organisations and for the people of Sheffield
- map the action that is already being achieved and explore how we can help each other
- plan how we can work together to create a Sheffield that plays its part in creating a better future for our city and the planet.

Attendees were encouraged to think about what they could do individually and together.

Eighty attendees from a range of organisations attended. The event opened with introductory words from Wil Stewart, Director of Investment, Climate Change and Planning at Sheffield City Council and from Greg Fell, Director of Public Health at Sheffield City Council. Attendees were encouraged to consider the assets at our disposal, and how each organisation can maximise both their impact on climate change, and work together with others.

The transition to a net zero city provides a wide range of cobenefits.

Wil Stewart talked about the potential for the transition to a net zero city which is adapted to the changing climate also presents us with huge opportunities:

- Upgrading our homes, and building homes fit for the future, will mean that our housing is healthy, comfortable, affordable to heat and desirable to live in
- Decarbonising our transport through fewer journeys, more active travel, public transport, and electric (and later hydrogen) vehicles, means less pollution and a healthier population
- Growth markets and investment in a future economy
- The scale of activity needed means that if we upskill our people there is the potential for new, meaningful jobs.

Climate change will dwarf all other public health emergencies

Greg Fell highlighted that climate change is the biggest public health emergency that we face, and that it is intrinsically linked with the biodiversity emergency. Ecosystem deterioration already affects more than 40% of the global population, and the climate crisis displaces 20 million people each year, and that the target to keep global temperature increase to 1.5°C exists for a reason – it is the temperature increase that can keep us in the safest landing zone with respect to the impacts of climate change. He noted recent indications that 1.5°C is now unattainable... but that every fraction of a degree still counts.

Tackling systemic failings is crucial

Greg highlighted that locally we have a role to act, but that lack of national and international action to address fossil fuel subsidies, and manipulation by the fossil fuel industry is the biggest failing.

A health-centred response to the coexisting climate, energy, and cost-of-living crises is crucial

A health-centred response to the coexisting climate, energy, and cost-of-living crises provides an opportunity to deliver a healthy, low-carbon future. Transitioning to clean energy and improved energy efficiency can avert the most catastrophic climate change impacts, while also improving energy security, supporting economic recovery, preventing the 1·2 million annual deaths resulting from exposure to fossil fuel-derived ambient PM_{2.5} (indicator 3.3), and improving health outcomes by promoting active forms of travel for greener cities. The associated reduction in the burden of disease will in turn reduce the strain on overwhelmed healthcare providers, and enable better care.

Adaptation is often a weak link

Increasing adaptation to climate change has the potential to simultaneously improve the capacity of health systems to manage both future infectious disease outbreaks and other health emergencies. Population exposure to heatwaves increased by 57% on average in 2010–19 compared with 2000–09, and by more than 250% in some regions, putting older people, young children, people with underlying chronic health conditions, and people who do not have adequate access to health care at high risk of heat-related morbidity and mortality.

Learnings from the morning

Attendees shared that trust, coordinated activity and a shared vision was important to people

The event revealed good practice, ambitions for future activity and helped people to make connections.

There was a strong message that trust is vital to achieve change, and that action should follow from the event. The potential for peer support and local community organisations to contribute to action was emphasised, particularly as trust and local relationships have been shown to be important predictors of action.

Achieving transformational change needs to be collaborative

There were reflections that the energy in the room was positive and the mapping exercise, feedback and commitments often referred to cultural and systemic changes as much as practical, as well as collaboration on shared priorities, and more ambitious bids for joint funding.

Achieving transformational change needs to be inspiring, hopeful and joyful

One attendee highlighted the potential for their organisation to bring joy and hope through nature, other reflections considered Sheffield's strengths in innovative and sustainable employee ownership and less traditional approaches to leadership and economy. The need to be able to imagine the future was considered to be important.

“Vision without action is a dream - action without vision is a nightmare – we need a collaborative, shared vision and coordinated action”
Unattributed quote from the mapping activity

Joined up working and communication is important for progress

Two themes were consistent throughout all groups: there is currently insufficient joined up working and planning and insufficient communication about the good work that is already happening in Sheffield. More sharing of best practice and expertise would be valued by attendees, and there was a willingness on the part of attendees to share expertise and experience. This is already happening to a degree in the business sector through the Sheffield Sustainability Network and Sheffield Sustainability Consortium, in schools through Schools Climate Education South Yorkshire and through the South Yorkshire Sustainability Centre, but there is potential for more joint planning, working and better communication.

Organisations have differing levels of confidence and capacity to act

Organisations are at different points on their journey. Some are just starting and aren't sure how best to proceed, or lack financial or other capacity. Others are acting at much greater pace. There is the potential for pioneers to support other organisations, but most organisations and employees are struggling for capacity.

Thematic sessions provided learnings about assets, strengths, challenges and opportunities

The mapping and idea development sessions produced a range of useful information, including highlighting projects and organisations which are assets that are already making a difference or could do in the future. Individual representatives contributed the actions that their individual organisations are providing and where appropriate these will be incorporated to the map which is planned to be developed and outlined in the next steps.

A summary of some of the learnings is appended.

Next steps

The action that is required to address the climate emergency is vast and all organisations are encouraged to action the commitments that they made at the end of the session, and to consider what more their organisation can do. Within current constraints, the immediate next steps coming out of the event are:

Communication and networking

- 1) The Sustainability and Climate Change Team are working towards developing an online engagement platform and, further in the future, a new microsite. The engagement platform will initially provide a route for research and consultation, and it is hoped that it will also give an opportunity to showcase some exemplar organisations and projects across Sheffield.
- 2) In the meantime, the Sustainability and Climate Change Team will send regular newsletters to update people and partners about what is happening and opportunities to be involved. The first is planned to be shared during March 2023.
- 3) Conversations will take place with organisations that have expressed an interest in being involved in communication. Other organisations are welcome to make contact.
- 4) The Council will invite relevant organisations to be involved in and consulted on the development of decarbonisation plans. There is potential for future plans to be more led by other organisations.
- 5) The Council will convene thematic project groups as capacity allows. Whilst there are aspirations to form standing networks, limited resources currently prevents this. A map will be developed to understand existing networks, and organisations wishing to form networks, are very much encouraged to self-organise.

- 6) Work will take place to explore how more thematic collaboration might be resourced, and attendees who have suggestions or are in a position to support are encouraged to make contact.
- 7) It is vital that engagement currently taking place to develop City Goals supports the city's commitment to net zero by 2030, and that the transition to net zero is woven throughout the goals. It is presumed that governance will be developed to support this which will further support the coordination of efforts.

Branding

Finding a "team name" or branding is proving challenging. The collaborative activity to identify a team name did not result in a clear choice with some concern raised that the initial suggestions (which were taken from the most popular in a survey, and suggestions from respondents to the survey, no ideas being provided during the registration period) were too "jargony". Some suggestions were made during the voting stage, and attendees were subsequently asked to vote on the most popular by email. The most popular response, narrowly, was Sheffield Climate Action Partnership, but concerns have been raised that this is too close to South Yorkshire Climate Alliance's acronym of SCA and that it is not sufficiently inspiring. Further consideration will be given to this and inspirational suggestions are welcomed.

Following up specific commitments, projects and ideas

A number of feedback forms and commitments referenced that attendees had welcomed the opportunities to make contacts and that they planned to have follow up conversations with others in their groups. There have been several reports of this happening since the event and of work starting as a result.

Where specific commitments or projects link into future work, the Sustainability and Climate Change Team will incorporate the outcomes of this session.

Feedback and learning

Attendees responded positively to the event

Of the 48 attendees who completed feedback forms, satisfaction was high. Overall average score 8.4, with only 3 attendees scoring below 7, and 24 scoring 9 or 10.

Common themes included appreciation for being able to make new contacts; the breadth of organisations and the need for action to result from the event.

"A really interesting and well managed event. We covered a really huge topic, really thoroughly. This felt like the start / the tip of the iceberg - it was valuable, lets do it again!"

We need to increase the diversity of representation

The range of attendees was in some ways wider than many similar "partnership" events, and particularly "climate" focused events, bringing together a diverse mix of organisations from a wide range of sectors, including many who for whom climate and sustainability are not (currently) considered their "core business". However, the diversity in terms of ethnicity, age and disability was not as was hoped, despite efforts made to attract a diverse range of attendees and delegates from equality partnerships. The voice of young people was represented through a display of their words, but efforts in finding young people to attend a session during daytime was not successful.

We will continue to work to improve diversity of attendance and voice in future work.

More space and more time were needed, which would help accessibility

The available space was smaller than anticipated (but with difficult acoustics), and it was cramped for the number of attendees in an active session. More time was needed for some of the exercises and to allow attendees to network. The cramped space was not ideal for people with visual impairments (and would have been even more difficult for anyone with mobility restrictions).

Venue sustainability

Cycle parking was limited and future events should take into consideration the high number of delegates potentially traveling by bike. There was no plant-based milk available (although this was available on request, but it was not requested). It is proposed that future events will take this into consideration and refreshments be plant based.

Thanks are offered to all involved

Thanks are offered to all involved, in particular the organisers and facilitators, those who helped with administration, speakers, those young people and organisations who contributed to the display, to Sheffield Hallam University for their donation of a copy of Mark Maslin's *How to save our planet: the facts*, the venue St Mary's and last but very definitely not least, to all the attendees.



Appendix: Summary of learnings from thematic groups

Transport

Assets recognised as supporting the transition in transport included:

- Tram and cycling route networks, both strengths but in need of further strengthening and improvement 2
- The Clean Air Zone (with opportunities to expand in size and to charge highest emitting vehicles)
- Forthcoming and existing cycle hubs and storage
- Transport related businesses, including cycle manufacture and refurbishment and hydrogen
- Behaviour change expertise within universities
- Grey to Green and the potential for making active and public travel an attractive experience

Key issues and opportunities include:

- Reducing bus services and routes
- Accessibility for disabled people on public transport and active travel
- The need for road space for a wider range of micro-mobility (e.g. electric scooters and disability scooters)
- Potential for more Park and Ride (including Park and Cycle) to support mixed modes of travel
- Potential for greater business delivery via ecargo bikes
- Tying active traffic neighbourhoods in with 10/15/20 minutes neighbourhoods and improving communication and engagement in their development
- The importance of ambitious and evidence-based decision-making that incorporates people's lived experience
- The potential for a workplace parking levy to support the funding of improved transport

The group exercise explored the potential for hydrogen fuelled waste and refuse services.

Business and Economy

Sheffield has a wide range of assets that have the potential to help the city to transition to a thriving net zero economy, including:

- existing exemplar businesses who have achieved or are on their way to achieving net zero and are supporting biodiversity;
- businesses and universities at the leading edge of sustainable technology and markets
- educational organisations that are increasingly including sustainability in their curricula.
- Co-operative/employee owned businesses
- the Outdoor City brand and economy sector were identified both as an asset, and a reason for action in that our outdoor environment is at risk from climate change.

Identified issues/opportunities:

- increase coordination of action;
- increase information and funding for businesses to transition to net zero economy;
- need for skills to support a future economy

- potential for action to scale
- support for the circular economy

The group activity discussed ideas to communicate community energy.

Communication

There was a clear desire for regular communication and story-telling about what is happening and needs to happen on climate change.

Strengths and assets included:

- creative sector
- media (mainstream and independent)
- museums
- universities
- existing networks and infrastructure organisations
- attendee organisations alone (particularly the Council, NHS and Universities) employ in the 10s of thousands and provide services to the whole city: potential to get messages out on mass
- The importance for trust means that trusted messengers and peer to peer support and activity has huge potential

Challenges and areas for opportunity:

- Creating a shared voice and vision
- Sharing existing success and activity across the city

The potential for improved communication appeared strongly throughout every theme but there was not a standalone group due to lack of interest in this as a theme.

Nature

A small number of attendees had a specific interest in nature, but Sheffield has many great assets in this area, including:

- Strong established organisations and partnerships
- Ancient and established woodland
- University research strengths, including the South Yorkshire Sustainability Centre's natural capital theme
- A strong culture of love of and pride in the outdoors which could support action, including the Outdoor City identity.

Challenges and opportunities included:

- The disparity in extent and quality in green space in different parts of the city
- Lack of explicit linkages between climate and the nature and biodiversity emergencies
- Over-reliance on trees as potential for carbon sequestration
- Burning of peat in the Peak for grouse shooting
- Potential for increasing skills for nature recovery and climate mitigation and adaptation

The group activity in this session considered the potential for support to be provided to businesses to encourage and support them to improve how they act to benefit nature.

Health

The potential for the health sector to impact on climate change, as well as to be impacted by climate change, is significant. Assets included:

- The number of employees
- Work currently happening through individual practices and collective action

- Hospital grounds
- The potential for churches to provide both warm and cool spaces – historic churches are often considered as a challenge to insulate, but are often cool in summer
- The green space available in the cities, including parks, rivers and churchyards
- Sheffield Business Together and University of Sheffield's work on green barriers and the potential to expand to more schools
- Existing data, and the potential to improve this to support prioritisation of climate work

Challenges and opportunities included:

- The number of patient journeys made by car
- Poor public transport links to the Northern general
- Potential for 15 minute neighbourhoods for health
- The impact of cold homes on health
- Potential for climate and well-being focused community programmes and for procurement to play a role in tackling climate change

The health groups considered the potential for bringing together plans from organisations across the city to create a “plan of plans” and how community organisations could be a lynchpin for health and well-being and climate action.

Community connections

Community organisations and the people in communities themselves have huge potential to support a just transition to a net zero society. Trust is vital and community organisations and local links often have high levels of trust. Assets include:

- Social justice is really important and some communities are disadvantaged: they need to be involved in planning for the future so that it is equitable
- Community infrastructure organisations, Local Area Committees; schools, libraries, neighbourhood policing services and religious organisations
- People themselves – peer to peer support networks developed through covid could be repurposed (and already are in some places) to support retrofit and energy efficiency, especially in light of the cost of living crisis
- Community buildings, including places of worship, can be warm and cool places for communities, and information can be shared in these places
- Cooperatives, employee ownership and community energy organisations enable community wealth-building

Challenges and opportunities include:

- Many VCF organisations are overstretched with existing demand and struggling
- A regional approach may be needed to support the drawdown of funding, but people's connections are often hyperlocal or identity specific

The group discussed the potential for building trust, empowering communities and building networks.

Buildings

Our buildings are crucial to transition to a net zero city, with energy emissions from our existing domestic buildings alone currently contributing to 33% of our city's direct emissions, whilst 57% of non-domestic buildings are rated at EPC level D or below.

Assets to support the transition of buildings in the city to net zero include:

- Local businesses with strong commitments and expertise, including structural engineering consultancies and architects and their social value programmes
- Universities and educational organisations expertise and opportunities to train up students and professionals
- Potential for council and social housing providers to scale up activity and stimulate the market
- Work being carried out by organisations to understand solutions for architypes
- Potential for peer to peer support to encourage retrofit at street and community level
- District heating network
- High Green solar

Challenges and opportunities

- Local Plan and viability limitations can restrict standards required on new build
- Ownership model of commercial buildings, and residential properties with multiple owners
- Local expertise – both strengths and need to increase capacity. Skills shortage risk to business, but opportunity for new economy
- Develop a map of retrofit examples and showcasing for other landlords and owners: “seeing is believing”
- Cost of electrifying heat – risk of increasing fuel poverty or potential for reducing it?
- Decarbonising and modernising the grid
- Potential for greater coordinate activity across SY e.g. bringing in funding at SY level based on recognised need or retrofit training
- Sharing expertise and approaches to housing decarbonisation
- Improve joined up thinking and influence on policy locally, particularly joining up the finance available and the need to address retrofit and retained buildings with some defined standards that could be incorporated for all buildings.
- Increasing PV on roofs

The buildings group discussed the challenge of domestic retrofit, identifying key issues including the need for a holistic approach incorporating policy, training, resources and information. The importance of different solutions for different audiences was felt to be important. Regather is interested in using its reputation as a trusted intermediary and setting up a retrofit service similar to People Powered Retrofit in Manchester.

Energy

Assets and strengths identified in the session included:

- Local businesses and organisations with expertise in renewable and low carbon energy, particularly hydrogen and nuclear (e.g. ITM Power, Magnomatics)
- Buildings available for renewable energy generation, both community and otherwise
- Community renewable organisations based in the city
- Energy Recovery Facility
- Biomass facility
- District Heat Network and heat network zoning pilot
- Work taking place to explore increasing energy generation from heat recovery, from small scale (coffee manufacturers and restaurants) to larger scale

Challenges and opportunities included:

- the relative lack of community energy installations in Sheffield and potential for more to increase generation and raise funds for future projects
- “leaky” buildings in Sheffield, and the need for increased retrofit and energy efficiency
- Inequalities – disabled people and people with poor health often have much higher energy needs than others in the population due to the need to charge machinery and adaptive equipment or to keep warm

Ideas for how organisations could work together included increasing communication on best practice, developing shared vision, research and policy and innovation.

Skills

Assets and strengths identified in the session included:

- The Schools Climate Conference South Yorkshire which has delivered two online conferences and is holding an in person conference this year, and Kids Plant Trees working in schools
- The universities have a range of relevant specialisms and outreach/civic engagement/knowledge transfer programmes
- Businesses and consultancies in the city have expertise they are willing to share
- Conservation and land management organisations are developing skills within workforces and community
- Council and Sheffield College are working together to develop skills interventions using Council buildings
- Some general carbon literacy has been delivered, e.g. by the council for employees and councillors

Challenges and opportunities include:

- Severe shortage of skills in a range of fields, particularly retrofit and green/blue land management and ecology skills
- The need to encourage creative thinking and imagination at all levels, from children to professionals and politicians
- Curricula are starting to develop in academic institutions and training providers, but matching demand and supply is challenging.
- Upskill designers on truly sustainable building technology
- Drive innovation in sustainability in construction
- The potential for professionals to educate our clients on why sustainability matters
- The need to provide greater social mobility in architecture, and increase equality, diversity and inclusion
- Sustainability based engineering challenges for students
- Placemaking – use digital tools to engage all

Skills was one of the areas with the greatest interest and there were two tables which explored different topics, including the potential for increasing general skills and understanding through better engagement and skills sharing, peer mentoring and coaching.

Food

There was a relatively small cohort of attendees with a special interest in food, and the group was combined with nature so learnings from this theme are fairly limited.

Assets and strengths identified in the session included:

- University expertise in sustainable food technology
- Carbon neutral local food businesses and food businesses working to reduce waste

- Community food initiatives which have the potential to reach across communities and reduce food waste, as well as hunger, through food banks and community fridges
- Allotments

Opportunities and challenges included:

- Potential to capture heat energy from food industry
- Cost to decarbonise and fund community initiatives
- Deliveries – potential for electric vehicles
- Potential for circular businesses to work with their customers to support them to become more circular