

Q&A follow up from webinar #7: Practical examples of transformational adaptation

Answers from Natalie Barnett, Climate Adaptation Officer, Somerset

Question 1: To what extent have these projects and plans targeted specific groups within the community e.g. older folks, people with disabilities, women, racially minoritised people?

Our sessions are open to all community members rather than targeting specific demographic groups. However, we do make a conscious effort to ensure broad community representation by linking consultation events to existing key community events where possible. This approach helps us reach a genuine cross-section of residents beyond the "usual suspects" who typically engage with environmental initiatives.

Question 2: Is this model likely to be rolled out by other Wildlife Trusts in other areas? Could it be?

While we are connected to other Wildlife Trusts through the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts and share learning via a climate community of practice, the rollout of this model to other Trusts will largely depend on funding opportunities available to each individual organisation. As with much of this work, projects tend to be funding-led, so wider adoption is possible but not guaranteed without dedicated resource.

Question 3: Is there much discussion about the rights to, and responsibilities for, adaptation. Is there expectation that adaptation will be 'provided' by external agents, or that adaptation is something that we will all be doing for the rest of our lives?

Communities participating in the programme have expressed frustration at the lack of meaningful action, implementation and support for adaptation from government. As Rob Hopkins, puts it "If we wait for the governments, it'll be too little, too late; if we act as individuals, it'll be too little; but if we act as communities, it might just be enough, just in time." This sentiment is really mirrored in the communities we work

with; they feel strongly that they cannot afford to wait and must take collective action into their own hands.

Question 4: Who is accountable for the actions in the community led plans? The embedding work seems like an exciting next step on this.

Before work begins with any community, a strong anchor organisation is identified to hold the plan and take responsibility for its delivery. This could be a parish, town or city council, or a local charity or community group, depending on who is most active and best placed within that particular community.

Below answers are from:

- Natalie Barnett, Climate Adaptation Officer, Somerset Wildlife Trust and MACC Hub Advisory Board
- Helen McCafferty, Project Manager, Green Action Trust

Question 5: It's great seeing all three projects taking into consideration all the other needs of communities. With transformational adaptation, we talk about co-benefits of adaptation a lot and tackling issues at their root cause, but does it ever get overwhelming trying to help people in a holistic way and how do you manage expectations (your own and theirs) of the scope of benefits your projects can provide?"

Helen: I think this is a very relevant question. It does feel overwhelming and I often think that we can do anything, but we can't do everything. We still see ripples now from consultation done a few years ago – the masterplan and visioning stage does, by definition, create ambitious plans. The very difficult thing is that the community don't forget the ambition and they, understandably, don't fully realise that those ideas are not committed-to concrete plans.

I like to consider how we try to avoid this in future projects – I think that managing expectations is very important. I think that tight, careful briefs to consultants could be a part of the answer i.e. if you produce something unaffordable you have not met our brief (I do realise this is over-simplifying!).

Transparent, honest communications on what any project can and cannot deliver at each stage has been crucial – it helps in the long term to try and build trust. We often hear from communities that many people promise things that are not ultimately delivered.

The last thought is that when any project finally gets to implementation, social media updates are very valuable and a bit of a curse. The (generally small number of) loud voices come out but there is a quiet majority that support positive change. As a project, we're still working to address genuine concerns but keep the updates coming for the many people that are genuinely behind us.

Natalie: Yes, it can feel overwhelming at times. Communities often have a very clear sense of what needs doing and how they would like to do it, but there is a chronic lack of capacity and funding, particularly when it comes to implementation. We signpost to other organisations and funding opportunities where we can, but the wider sector itself is stretched, underfunded and undervalued. Managing expectations, both our own and those of the communities we work with, is an ongoing challenge when the ambition and the available resource are so often out of step with one another.