CLIMATE CHANGE PUBLIC CONVERSATION SERIES

Framework for Developing Conversations

One of three reports on the research behind Scotland's Climate Conversations 'How to' Guide

CLIMATE
outreach
formerly COIN

Greener Scotland
Scottish Government

About the Climate Change Public Conversation Series

In 2009, the Scottish Parliament unanimously passed the most ambitious climate change legislation anywhere in the world. The Scottish Government recognises that delivering on these ambitions is dependent on the support and involvement of the Scottish public.

The Climate Change Public Conversation Series (CCPCS) has been initiated by the Scottish Government to encourage discussion about climate change with the Scottish public. The guidance and materials provided by this project can be used by others, for example community groups or education institutions, and beyond Scotland.

The project was commissioned by **ClimateXChange**, and the research conducted by **Climate Outreach** with the help of consultants from the **Surefoot Effect**.

About Climate Outreach

Climate Outreach (formerly COIN) are Europe's leading experts on climate change communication, bridging the gap between research and practice. Our charity is focused on building cross-societal acceptance of the need to tackle climate change. We have over 10 years of experience helping our partners find their climate voice – talking and thinking about climate change in ways that reflect their individual values, interests and ways of seeing the world. We work with a wide range of partners including central, regional and local governments, charities, business, faith organisations and youth groups.

✉ The Old Music Hall, 106–108 Cowley Road, Oxford OX4 1JE, UK

📞 +44 (0) 1865 403 334 @ **info@climateoutreach.org** 🏠 **www.climateoutreach.org**

🐦 **@ClimateOutreach** f **Climate Outreach** in **Climate Outreach**

Project team

Lead Author

Dr Christopher Shaw, Senior Researcher, Climate Outreach

Contributing Authors

Dr Adam Corner, Research Director, Climate Outreach
Lydia Messling, Research Intern, Climate Outreach

Facilitators

Pamela Candea, The Surefoot Effect
Osbert Lancaster, The Surefoot Effect

Editing & Production

Léane de Laigue, Head of Communications and Training, Climate Outreach
Michael Fraser, Creative Director, The APS Group Scotland (**www.theapsgroup.com**)
Elise de Laigue, Designer, Explore Communications (**www.explorecommunications.ca**)

Acknowledgements

Cover photos by **foam**, available **here**, **here** and **here**.

SEPTEMBER 2016

About the four publications of this project

This research project lead to the publication of Scotland's *Climate Conversations 'How to' Guide*, along with three accompanying reports on the research behind the Guide.

Desk Review

CLIMATE CHANGE
PUBLIC CONVERSATION SERIES
Desk Review

*One of three reports on the research behind
Scotland's Climate Conversations 'How to' Guide*

Explains the existing research base used to inform the design of the workshops, where materials and scripts were trialled with members of the Scottish public.

Findings from the Workshops

CLIMATE CHANGE
PUBLIC CONVERSATION SERIES
Findings from the Workshops

*One of three reports on the research behind
Scotland's Climate Conversations 'How to' Guide*
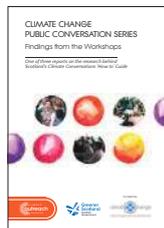
Presents a summary of the findings from the workshops in which the contents of the draft 'How to' Guide were tested and further developed.

### Framework for Developing Conversations

CLIMATE CHANGE
PUBLIC CONVERSATION SERIES
Framework for Developing Conversations

*One of three reports on the research behind
Scotland's Climate Conversations 'How to' Guide*

Provides background information on the development of the 'How to' Guide and offers guidance on capturing and analysing data from a one-off or series of conversations.

'How to' Guide

CLIMATE CHANGE
PUBLIC CONVERSATION SERIES
Climate Conversations 'How to' Guide
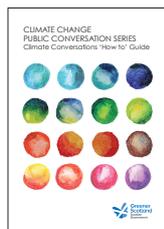
Provides a practical step-by-step guide to holding conversations about climate change with groups of people across Scotland, including materials to use. This is an accessible tool available to all groups, organisations and individuals wishing to hold their own conversations.

Any questions on the research reports should be directed to **info@climatexchange.org.uk** or **info@climateoutreach.org**.

Any questions about the 'How to' Guide should be directed to **climate.change@gov.scot**.

Contents

Introduction

The Scottish Government wishes to develop a sound knowledge of the Scottish public's understanding of and attitudes to climate change. Many measures to tackle climate change will also require public engagement and support.

The purpose of the Climate Change Public Conversation Series project (CCPCS) is to equip and enable the Scottish Government to have conversations about climate change with the Scottish public. The project's specific objective was therefore to develop guidance and supporting materials, which could be used to initiate and hold such conversations, both by the Scottish Government itself but also by other organisations and individuals.

Using this guidance and materials, these conversations would be able to:

- Engage the public in meaningful conversations about climate change, and about the measures that may be taken to mitigate its causes and effects

- Provide the Scottish Government with detailed information on public attitudes towards and feelings about climate change

This project has developed a framework, including process design and methodology, for holding conversations about climate change. This report describes the purpose of the CCPCS project and outlines the project methodology and outputs. It also provides background and guidance for the Scottish Government and others on using the 'How to' Guide for conversations aimed at capturing and analysing data on public attitudes towards and feelings about climate change.

The instructions, materials and suggestions in this framework draw on findings from a desk review, analysis of outputs from six deliberative workshops held with the public in different locations throughout Scotland, and the wider experience and expertise of Climate Outreach.

It is important to note that the focus of the CCPCS was not about educating the public about climate change science or to advocate particular behavioural change. Rather, the focus was on initiating and sustaining enjoyable and rewarding climate conversations.
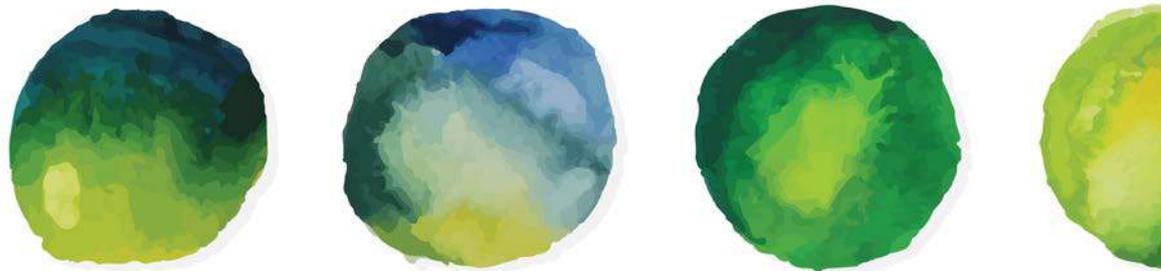
The reflections offered in this Framework (*and recommendations in the 'How to' Guide*) draw on the following key findings from the six workshops:

- Participants knew enough about climate change to be able to share their opinions on mitigation and adaptation options

- Participants enjoyed having the opportunity to be able to talk about these issues in a group

- We encountered little climate scepticism in the workshops

- Visual prompts, accompanied with everyday language, allowed participants to engage with discussions about climate change

- The facilitator has an important role to play in keeping conversations focused on climate change and giving everyone a voice in the discussions

- Participants are supportive of Government efforts to limit emissions and want more information about what else participants can do in order to play their part as a citizen

- Participants felt they are already doing a lot to limit their personal impact on the environment, and want recognition of their efforts

Photo: foam

Research methodology

Figure 1 -
The CCPCS research
and design process

- Desk review to identify best practice
- Practitioner expertise and experience

Knowledge synthesised
to design six workshops

- Research and pilot workshops held
- Iterative process of reflection and revision

Outputs analysed and initial
draft 'How to' Guide produced

- Draft 'How to' Guide presented to
  community organisations
- Feedback from presentation assimilated

'How to' Guide
and Framework produced

Four processes were employed to answer the research questions:

Desk review

A desk review was conducted to identify best practice for engaging members of the Scottish public in dialogical and participatory conversations about climate change.

The desk review findings were used to design three initial (Phase 1) workshops, which had a dual purpose: a) research current attitudes of the Scottish public towards climate change and climate change policies and b) trial activities and materials that could be used in the CCPCS. These workshops ran for 2.5 hours.

Results from the Phase 1 workshops were used to inform design of the Phase 2 workshops, which trialled the conversation structure and data collection methodologies detailed in the 'How to' Guide. These workshops ran for 70 minutes.

A professional agency was used to recruit participants for all of the workshops. Participants were recruited to reflect key characteristics of the towns where workshops were held.

Analysis of data

The data from the six workshops included transcriptions of conversations, preferences marked on activity sheets, lists and responses written up onto flipcharts during conversations, completed feedback forms, and follow-up email responses.

Practitioner expertise and experience

The Climate Outreach project team has extensive research expertise and practical experience in public engagement around climate change. This has been used as a 'sense-check' in the development of the core principles detailed in the Framework and Guide. Feedback from The Surefoot Effect, who were contracted to facilitate the workshops, has also been utilised in the development of the workshop materials.

Feedback from community group organisers in Scotland

Towards the end of the project, results from the research and recommendations for hosting a climate conversation were discussed with representatives from the Scottish Government, ClimateXChange and various community groups in Scotland. The feedback from that meeting was used to finalise the structure and content of the 'How to' Guide to ensure it best fulfilled the needs of those who wish to use it.

Evidence and rationale for the 'How to' Guide

A detailed suggested design for a replicable series of public conversations is described in the 'How to' Guide. Here, we outline the evidence and reasoning for the main features of that design to help guide users' choices. The design has been informed by findings regarding participant attitudes to and understanding of climate change and climate policy, which are summarised in this section. A more detailed account of these findings is provided in the 'Findings from the Workshops' report (see page 3).

Key recommendations for holding climate change conversations

The conversation should be 70 minutes long

Any longer than 70 minutes and it may be difficult to get people to attend.

70 minutes is long enough to explore the main issues and give everyone the chance to contribute, and is long enough to generate meaningful quantities of data.

A shorter length of time will make it difficult to have an in-depth conversation.

Evidence base: workshop research, practitioner expertise, feedback from community groups.

Focus on conversation

Feedback from participants showed conversations were enjoyed more than structured tasks. Materials presented in the 'How to' Guide work well as prompts for conversation and provide an effective, low cost way of capturing opinions and preferences.

Evidence base: workshop research.

Use a mixture of paired and whole-room discussion

Paired discussion offers a comfortable way for participants to explore ideas before sharing them with the rest of the group in a plenary. The plenary is also an opportunity for facilitators to make a record of opinions and capture data.

Evidence base: workshop research, practitioner expertise.

Begin with a relatively unstructured opening activity, using a visual prompt or aid

Using a visual prompt such as photographs or videos, along with general questioning about people's opinions and experiences, overcomes the abstract nature of many features of climate change and avoids the sense that there are right and wrong answers.

Evidence base: workshop research, practitioner expertise.

Have a second activity which provides a clear focus for the opinions and concerns raised in the first part of the conversation

Workshop participants were knowledgeable and enjoyed having the chance to talk in-depth about some of the issues about climate change that they are only fleetingly engaging with in their normal day to day life. These conversations also provide valuable data.

Evidence base: workshop research.

Employ a simple mechanism for feeding back key points and ideas to the Scottish Government

A range of options for capturing data are built into these activities (explored further in the next section) but asking participants to complete a short feedback form at the end of the workshop offers an unobtrusive way to provide evidence for policy. This should be combined with provision of an email and/or postal address for participants and organisers to use to feedback any additional thoughts to the Scottish Government.

Evidence base: workshop research, practitioner expertise.

Have two people facilitating if possible; one to guide the conversation and ideally another person as a spare pair of hands

Some experience of running an exercise such as this is useful (although not essential if the facilitator is confident they can generate and maintain a discussion). However, we would recommend two pairs of hands, perhaps interchanging the tasks, to help with the running of the group, data collection, and distribution of materials in the room.

Evidence base: workshop research, practitioner expertise, desk review.
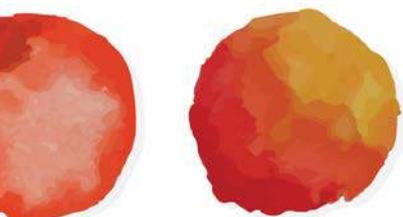
Summary of findings: knowledge, attitudes and engagement

The findings summarised below provide context for users of the Framework and 'How to' Guide to use in planning and running future conversations.

Public knowledge	Attitudes	Engagement
Many participants reported that they found talk of climate targets confusing and alienating.	We encountered little scepticism about climate change in the conversations.	Participants found the opportunity to talk about climate change issues with others educational.
Participants did not always relate extreme weather events (e.g. flooding) to climate change.	Participants responded more positively to messages which recognise the things people are already doing to play their part.	Participants enjoyed having the opportunity to learn more about climate change through these discussions.
Participants knew enough about climate change to have a meaningful conversation about options for mitigation and adaption.	Participants did not respond positively to vague messages about ambition – they wanted details about what is going to happen.	While participants accepted that climate change is happening they differed in their expectations of what the impacts might be.
Participants wanted more information about the science from a trustworthy source such as the government – they felt confused by the conflicting accounts in the media.	Participants responded positively to the idea of Scotland as a world leader in stepping up to the challenge of climate change.	Participants said they did not talk about climate change very often, if at all but felt more likely to do so as a result of participating in the discussions.
Participants frequently reported noticing a change in the seasons.	Participants felt the most immediate concerns for Scotland were the economy, health and housing.	Participants expressed concern about what climate change means for future generations.
Participants wanted information about plausible and meaningful actions that people can take in response to climate risks.	Participants did not show a marked preference for mitigation or adaptation – it is all seen as important.	Participants became increasingly engaged with climate change as an urgent issue as the conversation progressed.
Participants did not offer any criticism about the Scottish Government's plans to take action on climate change, but wanted more information about what is planned.	Participants were concerned about climate change but often viewed it as a global problem akin to war or terrorism, rather than something of immediate significance to Scotland.	
	There was a tendency for people to show preference for small scale responses (e.g. solar panels on roofs rather than large solar farms).	

Methodologies and materials to be used during the conversations to ensure objectives are achieved

Avoid focusing on climate science

In order to make the materials relevant for diverse groups and audiences, it is **important not to focus on a long-winded discussion of climate science, or use facilitators who are viewed by the group as climate change experts** (as this will encourage questions to be addressed to them rather than the group). The science is complex, and some areas of climate science are beset by profound uncertainties. These are short conversations and it would be easy to be diverted into long and unsatisfactory discussions of climate science which may well leave many participants marginalised from the conversation.

Evidence base: workshop research, practitioner expertise.

Use simple materials, with minimum text, that explore climate impacts and responses

We trialled approaches and materials that were primarily visual, with a minimum of text. This was to ensure conversations were **accessible to diverse audiences**. Information and knowledge transfer was deliberately kept to a minimum. The materials are simple to explain. Participants enjoyed the conversations prompted by these materials. These materials are cheap to reproduce and are not reliant upon other resources being available (such as a projector).

Evidence base: workshop research, practitioner expertise.

Use a mixture of open and closed questions

Closed questions, which can be answered yes or no, are useful prompts to begin opening up a conversation. But following up these questions with more open approaches – questions that begin with how, why, what or when – is crucial to allow the discussion to deepen and bring in a range of opinions and perspectives.

Evidence base: practitioner expertise, workshop research.

Use a variety of techniques to capture data in different forms

In order to provide a rich and robust data set for the research goals of this project we employed the following techniques:

Audio recordings: Consent forms will need to be signed at the beginning of the conversation giving permission for the use of recording equipment. These forms confirm that no comments will be attributed to a named person and specify who will have access to the data as well as how it will be stored.

Flip charts: As well as recording opinions and ideas by writing up key points, a flipchart can help participants keep track of what has already been said and deepen the conversation around key points listed.

Paper based activities: Many of the activities include opportunities for participants to mark preferences on to sheets of paper.

Feedback forms: These allow participants to outline what they might do as a result of participating in the conversation and what help they may need in order to take that action.

Evidence base: practitioner expertise, workshop research.

Photo: Climate Outreach

Using the 'How to' Guide

The 'How to' Guide is designed as a resource which can be picked up 'off the shelf' by anyone wanting to hold a climate change conversation. It includes a step-by-step guide for organising the space in which the conversation is to be held and recruiting participants, with a full facilitator script and guide for a 70 minute conversation. Examples of workshop materials are included, alongside instructions for their use. The Guide also includes instructions and examples of resources that could be used in broader communications. All the materials have been designed to be accessible to a diverse audience. The actions detailed in the 'How to' Guide are listed below, alongside a brief description of the evidence and specific notes for policy makers.

A step-by-step guide

This section provides details on planning and preparing for your conversation:

Action	Evidence	Note for users
Arranging the venue, timing, size of group, and facilitators	The instructions are based on a combination of the theoretical literature (e.g. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs), practitioner expertise, and experience in providing a comfortable space in which to hold the conversation.	Our guidance is based on the assumption that the organiser may need to pay for hire of a venue in an unfamiliar location, without full knowledge of the transport links and facilities available. This part of the planning is simplified if the organiser has access to a venue with which they are familiar. The materials and activities have been designed to be used by people without climate change expertise, but some experience in facilitation is recommended.
Recruitment	Getting people to join a climate change conversation can be a challenge. We used a professional agency to recruit members of the general public in order to meet the research requirements for this project. Participants received a financial incentive. This approach underpins some of the advice given. However, the 'How to' guide also explores options for recruiting through existing networks, such as community groups and clubs.	Findings from the workshops, combined with practitioner experience and consultation with community groups in Scotland, have shown that the opportunity for participants to have their voices heard by policy makers would likely be a strong incentive for people to participate in a conversation.

Action	Evidence	Note for users
Keeping a record of the conversations	There were a small number of participants involved in each conversation. They were an ideal mechanism for generating rich, in-depth qualitative data, but in keeping with all qualitative research of this kind, the findings cannot be assumed to be statistically representative of the general population. We provide instructions on recording the conversations using an audio device. Feedback indicates the recording and analysis of the recordings is a potentially onerous task for organisers, and currently no structured mechanism is in place for analysis of such data. Many of the activities allow for participants to mark preferences on sheets of paper and we recommend participants be provided with a feedback form at the end of the conversation.	The feedback forms may be the most effective compromise between the depth of data and costs involved in making sense of the data. The design of the workshops and 'How to' Guide allows for a variety of different data capture processes, but there is no 'one-size fits all' recommendation, given the cost implications of different approaches.
Instructions and materials for a 70-minute conversation	This format was developed by exploring the applicability of the Climate Outreach narrative workshop methodology, which was trialled in the first three workshops and requires approximately 2.5 hours. This allowed us to identify current levels of understanding of climate change amongst participants, what types of activities were most enjoyed and prompted the most conversation, and how long activities took to complete. Analysis of these results was used to refine the process down to a 70-minute format which allowed time to focus the conversation on climate change and explore specific policy issues. The Diamond Nine approach for the Scotland 2030 materials is recommended as the Diamond Nine sorting process supports a higher level engagement with the issues. Participants reported enjoying the conversations prompted by the Scotland 2030 activity.	The instructions give timings for each activity and we have provided a breakdown of alternative activities to use for a shorter engagement. For example, if limited to 30 minutes, one of the short videos we suggest accompanied by the questions provided would allow for a conversation off the back of that. It is important to recognise that any conversation will have to allow time at the beginning and end for settling in, introductions and additional questions so 70 minutes is the ideal minimum amount of time for a conversation.

| Action	Evidence	Note for users
Alternative materials	The feedback from the workshops showed participants enjoyed the conversations, in particular the discussions prompted by the visual materials. We did not include all the materials tested across the workshops in the final package of materials, only those which tested well and which used a minimum of text, to ensure the activities are widely accessible.	We can confidently recommend using these materials to prompt conversation and they are differentiated by the topic they address (e.g., adaptation choices, or preferences for supply side versus demand side policy interventions).
Communications and language	The examples of language to use in communications have been tested within these workshops and are aligned with principles emerging from other research. The photographs have been tested as part of the Climate Outreach 'Climate Visuals' project. Other images (e.g. cartoons and graphics) have not been tested but are aligned with best practice climate communication principles. One video (Stupidly Simple) was tested and prompted a good discussion which participants reported enjoying. Other videos were not directly tested, but are included to provide a range of options for facilitators depending on the particular audience and context. Participants may have mixed views on the content, but videos are generally responded to positively as a tool for provoking comment and conversation.	Throughout the testing, trialling and research design, we have based our approach on avoiding the use of resources which attempt to communicate climate science, and instead are rooted in stories, people and direct experience of the world. This is an effective route into discussions of climate policies and the effect of those policies on peoples' lives.
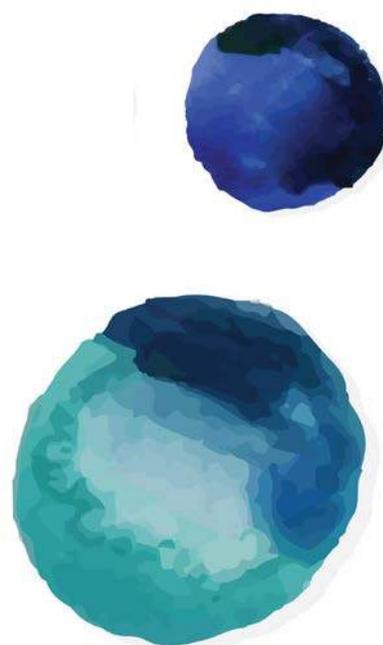
Recommendations for improvements to the Framework for future use

We were able to successfully pilot 70-minute conversations that gave all participants the chance to speak, whilst generating sufficient material for analysis. The materials we have provided can be reproduced at low cost and used with a minimum of facilitation expertise. These materials are accessible to audiences from diverse backgrounds. The feedback from the participants has been overwhelmingly positive.

We have identified the following elements of the materials and process, which have the potential for development and improvement:

- Some of the images used in the activities could be changed. There was not enough time within the workshops to trial different images within one activity. Feedback from the facilitators indicated that a small number of the photographs needed explanation for some participants, though there was not a general pattern of responses indicating issues with any particular photographs necessitating an immediate change.

- Additional research should be undertaken to trial even further reductions in the amount of text involved in the activities. The less text needed, the more accessible the activities become.

- Explanations for the purpose of the conversation should be made very clear at the start of the conversation, and the value of participating made explicit. This, to some extent, requires further consideration of the role of the conversations in policy development and what data and feedback processes are needed to fulfil that requirement.

- Participant feedback confirms the need to keep activities simple, and ensure clear instructions are given to participants on what is to be done with the materials provided and what the aim of the task is.

- It may be helpful to provide organisers with more extensive background sheets on the resources being used, detailing the policy implications and targets behind them so that they can briefly answer any basic questions.

- Feedback should be sought from organisers on questions arising during the workshop and the scripts should be extended or amended accordingly.

Observations and lessons for further roll-out of the Conversation Series

Encouraging attendance

There has not been any testing in this project of recruiting participants through networks without the offer of payment. The facilitators reported that for some participants there was a sense of mild embarrassment about accepting the payment, and that they would have been happy to come along without being paid.

We received several suggestions from community group organisers in Scotland for encouraging participation. These included:

- Making the conversations informal, for example by holding the conversations in a pub.

- Inviting people along for a fish and chip supper and a chat about climate change.

- Working with a range of clubs and groups, not necessarily ones already engaged with climate change or other related issues.

- Holding conversations in locations already used by existing groups. This may not only save costs but, as a familiar setting, can support a more relaxed and open conversation.

The Perth workshop (Phase 1) saw a noteworthy drop in the number of participants attending, compared to the other two Phase 1 workshops. It has not been possible to identify any specific reasons particular to the recruitment process, workshop location, or timing to explain this difference. This does reinforce the challenges in recruiting participants for conversations and, as highlighted in the 'How to' Guide, it is wise to have a list of 'reserve' people to call on if a large number of initial attendees drop out.

Creating a record of ideas and opinions voiced in the conversation

We recommend implementing a robust and reliable process for the collating, communication and analysis of themes emerging in the conversations. This could be as simple as a record of three suggestions for the Scottish Government elicited verbally at the end of the conversation. These could be noted by the organisers and included with the feedback forms and any other sheets that have been marked with preferences (if they have been used during the conversation). They can then be sent back to the Scottish Government for analysis. This would not be a process which skews, or otherwise hampers, the development of a free-flowing conversation.

We make this recommendation for creating a record of what is said in the conversations because the knowledge that their opinions will be heard by decision makers can act as a motive for community groups and others to participate in the conversations. In addition this information can be collated to build a reliable evidence base to inform policy development in the longer term.

Consideration should be given to incentivising organisers to share their own reflections from running the conversations. This will support an evidence-based process for the further development of the scripts and materials.

Follow-up activities for the participants

Attention should be given to exploring mechanisms for acting on the enthusiasm that participation generates, e.g. encouraging participants to be more proactive in reducing their carbon footprint, helping others to reduce theirs, talking to people about climate change at work, home or social settings and possibly becoming more involved in community climate change actions and events.

An online resource for participants to visit for further information and guidance on actions to take should be developed, based around the feedback received from the workshop participants.

Further research requirements

The progressive and positive principles underpinning this research project are pioneering at the national level, and the findings have substantial implications for building meaningful public engagement with climate policies not only in Scotland, but also the rest of the UK and further afield. In order to maximise the potential and impact of this research we recommend the following next steps:

Community-based piloting
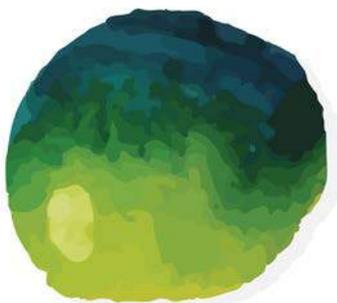
The piloting programme should extend beyond the Phase 2 workshops to include actual community conversations (i.e. with participants recruited through existing non-climate focused networks, conversations facilitated by a 'familiar face', and subsequent actions arising from the conversations taking place in the context of an established social network). This would entail running conversations as laid out in the 'How to' Guide with a researcher in attendance at some of the conversations. Findings from the conversations can then be analysed as part of a research project, providing robust evidence of how to improve and extend the conversation series. We anticipate that as a result of doing this, a more granular set of guidance can be offered for how to run conversations in a well-defined set of scenarios.

Follow-up engagement activities (and monitoring)

We trialled following up with participants by email a week after the workshops. This is a new development in the application of the Narrative Workshop methodology and has the potential to be a cost-effective means of extending, maintaining and deepening the engagement generated in the conversations. There is the possibility of using this extended conversation to enact and mobilise the interest sparked. To better understand the potential of this mechanism more systematic follow-up activities should be trialled and developed.

Deepening understanding of public attitudes in a conversation-based context

The need to meet a number of different research goals, as well as trial activities and materials, meant it was difficult to develop a systematic process for researching public attitudes to, and understanding of, climate change and climate change policies. The results demonstrate overall high levels of support for action on climate change. This analysis could be strengthened by additional research into different policy options and specific pathways for achieving them.

Coordination

As the CCPCS rolls out, there will be a fine balance to be struck between letting the conversations take on a 'life of their own' amongst social networks and community groups across Scotland, and retaining a sense of coherence and coordination (as well as a sound basis for monitoring progress and development). A central (non-Governmental) point of coordination for the CCPCS scheme as it takes root may be a highly valuable method of supporting it.