



**scottish universities
insight institute**

mobilising knowledge for a better Scotland

Leading from the front? Increasing Community Participation in a Just Transition to Net Zero in the North-East of Scotland.

Project Coordinators:

Professor Tavis Potts, University of Aberdeen

Dr Rebecca Ford, University of Strathclyde

Project Partners

Alison Stuart & Tara Murray – NESCAN Hub

Terri Vogt - Power Circle

Dr David Toke – University of Aberdeen

Dr Rachel Bray - University of Strathclyde



Final Report. December 2022

Correct citation: Potts, T. and Ford, R. (2022) *Leading from the front? Increasing Community Participation in a Just Transition to Net Zero in the North-East of Scotland*. Project Report. Scottish Universities Insight Institute. <https://doi.org.10.57064/2164/19722>

1. Background to the research

In line with Scottish Net Zero targets and the national strategy for a [Just Transition](#), the Northeast of Scotland is transforming towards a low carbon future with a number of high-profile industry and policy initiatives. With the region home to global energy companies and historical high levels of energy sector employment, the narrative on transition is predominantly framed within an industrial and technological context, including narratives on new opportunities in green jobs, green industrial development, technical innovation and new infrastructure to support energy transition.

As the energy landscape shifts in the North-East of Scotland, the impacts will be felt most keenly in communities from shifts in employment to changes to local supply chains. It is important to note that Net Zero ambitions will also change the nature and structure of communities in the region, for those within a shifting oil and gas industry and those without. **A just transition ensures that all voices are heard, engaged and included in the process of change, and that communities, including those who have benefited and those who have not, have a stake in determining the direction of travel of a changing society and economy of the North-east.** As a result, there is a need for a community-oriented perspective to transition which discusses a range of values and perspectives, the opportunities and resources available for transition and how communities of place can support the process of change toward Net Zero.

Social transformation is a key element of a just transition and community engagement, inclusion and participation is embedded in the principles laid down by the [Just Transition Commission](#). Despite this high-level recognition of social justice and inclusion at the heart of transition, there has been little move to understand what a just transition means in the context of local communities in the North-East.

This project aims to address this imbalance and promote the ability of communities to not only engage but to help steer net zero transitions. It seeks to uncover and build a stronger local consensus about the vision and pathways for civil society to progress a just transition in the Northeast of Scotland. The project aims to do this through bringing together civil society, academic, policy and business stakeholders across three interactive workshops to:

1. Empower NE communities to engage with the Just Transition agenda
2. Identify what are the key issues within a Just Transition and how they can be applied in the Northeast.
3. Directly support communities by providing training and resources to facilitate change by working in partnership.

The project funding supported the delivery of three professionally facilitated online workshops that were held over 2021/22 (Figure 1). Workshop 1 explored the global principles within a just transition and how these could apply to the Scottish context. Workshop 2 examined different pathways and options for transition in the context of Northeast Scotland. Workshop 3, in partnership with NESCAN explored operational challenges and best practices with community participants. The outcomes from the three workshops are explored in detail.

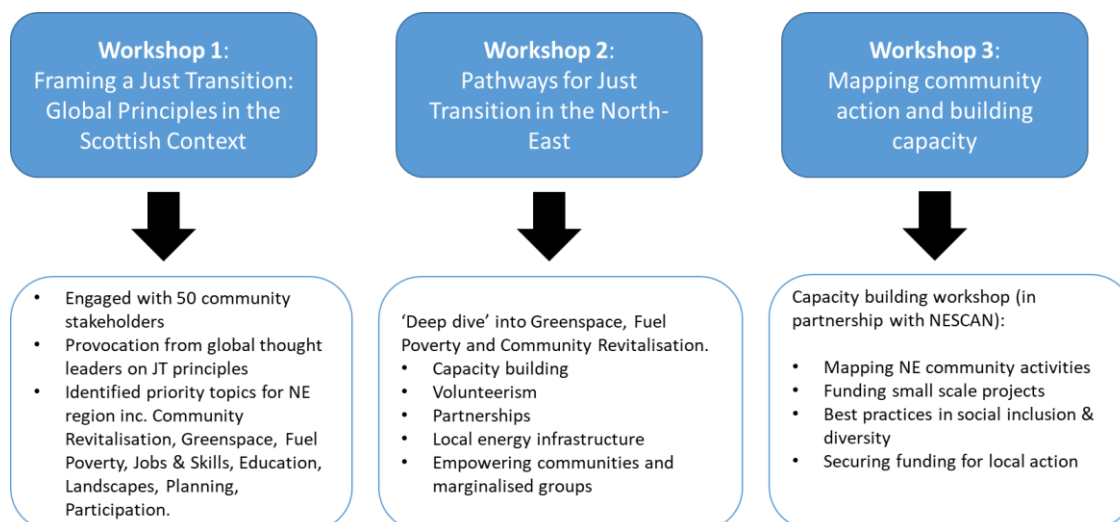


Figure 1 Workshop Design

2. Workshop 1: Framing a Just Transition.

Workshop 1 was held in May 2021 and was attended by 41 local organisations (Appendix 1) and 10 registered individuals. The workshop included a series of expert provocations designed to stimulate discussions and engagement from Just Transition experts¹ including:

- Professor Benjamin Sovocool. University of Sussex
- Benoit Luc. TotalEnergies Professeurs Associés
- Fraser Stewart (formerly U. Strathclyde now Regen)
- Professor Jim Skea (Just Transition Commission)
- Professor Karen Turner (U. Strathclyde).
- Ricardo Braun (Sustainability activist, Brazil).
- Tara Murray (formerly Aberdeenshire Council now NESCAN).

On the basis of the provocations, two breakout sessions were convened where delegates discussed two questions:

1. What does a just transition mean to you?
2. What are the key issues the workforce, communities, businesses and the public sector in the Northeast of Scotland face to make a just transition

¹ The video provocation can be viewed at:

<https://www.scottishinsight.ac.uk/Programmes/UNGlobalGoals/JustTransition.aspx>

Session 1 ‘what does a just transition mean to you’ stakeholders **identified a diversity of issues** on how a just transition is interpreted by community and civil society (Figure 2). Across the groups we clustered the issues, noting that all groups had similar and divergent views (Table 1).

Local economic development identified the role that communities, local business, and innovation (both business and social) play in supporting place-based approaches to a Just Transition. Drawing from ideas such as [Community Wealth Building](#) discussion entered on how a transition should be focused on revitalising communities in addition to industrial sectors. Groups² identified that there were opportunities in diversification e.g. *“Aberdeen finding a new purpose and identity through new business models and economic diversity”* [G1] and *“an opportunity to establish NE as a global leader in transition”* [G4]. A just transition should deepen *“job creation, focus on local businesses, skills and supply chains in a circular economy”* [G2] and noted concerns that *“change away from oil & gas is necessary.. but will there be as much prosperity in the future?”* [G2]. It was noted in G3 that the region *“should be proud on what it has achieved with previous industry”* and t be *“realistic about the timing of the transition”*. Several groups noted that economic development should be inclusive and transparent based on *“local action”* [G1], based on *“fairness in accessibility and pricing”* [group 2] and providing *“opportunities for all”* [G4]. Tackling the fuel poverty crisis was seen as a significant opportunity that needed to be at the centre of just transition plans with retrofitting and energy efficiency providing significant but untapped employment opportunities.

Education, training and skills are the foundation of employment opportunities and social empowerment. Groups identified the need for a more diverse and integrated skills system including *“integration across educational settings and development of diverse skills”* [G1] and *“lifelong learning to support career progression”* [G2]. G3 noted that a Just Transition should be committed to education facilitating *‘empowered and represented communities’* and multiple groups identified that the accessibility to Just Transition and Net Zero education and skills was important at all stages of education and both within and without the professional context, ensuring that *“no one is left behind”* [G3, 5,6].

Participation, inclusion, fairness and transparency were identified by every group as important values that underpin a Just Transition in the North-east. G1 identified that these values needed to be in place at all levels of governance and that *“local communities needed to be more strongly engaged”*. Group 2 noted that *“decision making should be less top down”* and *“all stakeholders need to be involved”*. Group 3 identified that there should be *“real participation, empowering trade unions and communities of interest, recognising multiple issues that communities face”* and that inclusion should consider *“not just middle-class voices and engage with lived experience”*. G5 noted that participation needs to be incentivised and called for *“reinvigoration of grass roots politics”* with G6 highlighting that *“citizen assemblies have role”* and *“community partnerships are key”*. Fairness orientated around the costs of transition to communities including the *“cost implication on lower income families”*, *“food and fuel equality”* [G1] and *“sustainable economic growth that benefits the wider community”* and *“fair work practices”* [G3] while G4 noted that *“everyone needs to benefit from transition, not just large companies and those that work for them”*. Transparency in decision processes and outcomes was consistently raised. G1 noted the need for a *“guiding long term vision with no groups left out”* and *“transparency in all decisions”*. Group 4 highlighted the importance of *“place-based community driven”* approaches. Group 5 identified that planning *“should not make assumptions or stereotyping around communities”* that there was a dominance of *“large industry*

² Groups are expressed as Group 1 = G1

voices in Just Transitions” and that there was a need for a just transition to “look at wider benefits beyond economic benefits”.

Environmental sustainability was cited as a foundation of a just transition, despite many concerns that it was being overlooked. Concerns about the critical role of greenspace were consistently expressed across a number of groups, particularly around some of the development challenges around transition that are being faced in Aberdeen. G1 identified that there should be “proper valuing of greenspace for carbon and wellbeing” and the “protection of greenspace and ecosystem services for deprived communities”. G3 noted that a just transition should strive for “greening of places and spaces” and G4 reinforced that there needs to be a “long term consideration of greenspace” and decisions that encourage “healthy biodiversity” and “adaptive solutions based on community resilience”.



Figure 2. What does a JT mean to you? Sample Miro Board from Group 3 (See Appendix 2 for full set)

Recurring Themes	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6
ECONOMY						
Business development	x	x	x	x	x	
Local jobs	x	x	x	x	x	
Local supply chains		x			x	
Circular economy	x		x	x		
Fuel poverty / fuel equality	x	x	x	x	x	
Fair distribution of costs and benefits of transition (distributive justice)	x		x	x	x	x
EDUCATION						
Education, training & skills	x	x	x	x	x	
PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY						
Inclusion (recognition justice)	x		x	x	x	x
Involvement in decision making (procedural justice)	x	x	x	x	x	x
Fair representation in decision making (procedural justice)	x	x	x	x	x	x
Transparent decision making	x		x		x	x
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY						
Greenspace	x		x	x		
Carbon reduction / scale of change required		x	x	x	x	x
No carbon offsetting overseas			x		x	
Sustainable buildings / retrofit				x		
Learn from what worked in the past			x			

Table 1. Summary of issues identified from breakout session 1 (workshop 1).

Session 2 explored the issues that *the workforce, communities, businesses and the public sector in the Northeast face in delivering a just transition*. The emphasis was to unpack and explore the ideas in the 1st session and identify place-based solutions, opportunities, impacts and barriers with a focus on Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. This allowed participants to dig deeper into the local context and explore the links between the concepts of a just transition and the local impacts and contextual factors. Figure 3 shows an example of a Miro board output (all board presented in appendices 3). A summary of the issues identified is shown in **Table 3 below**.

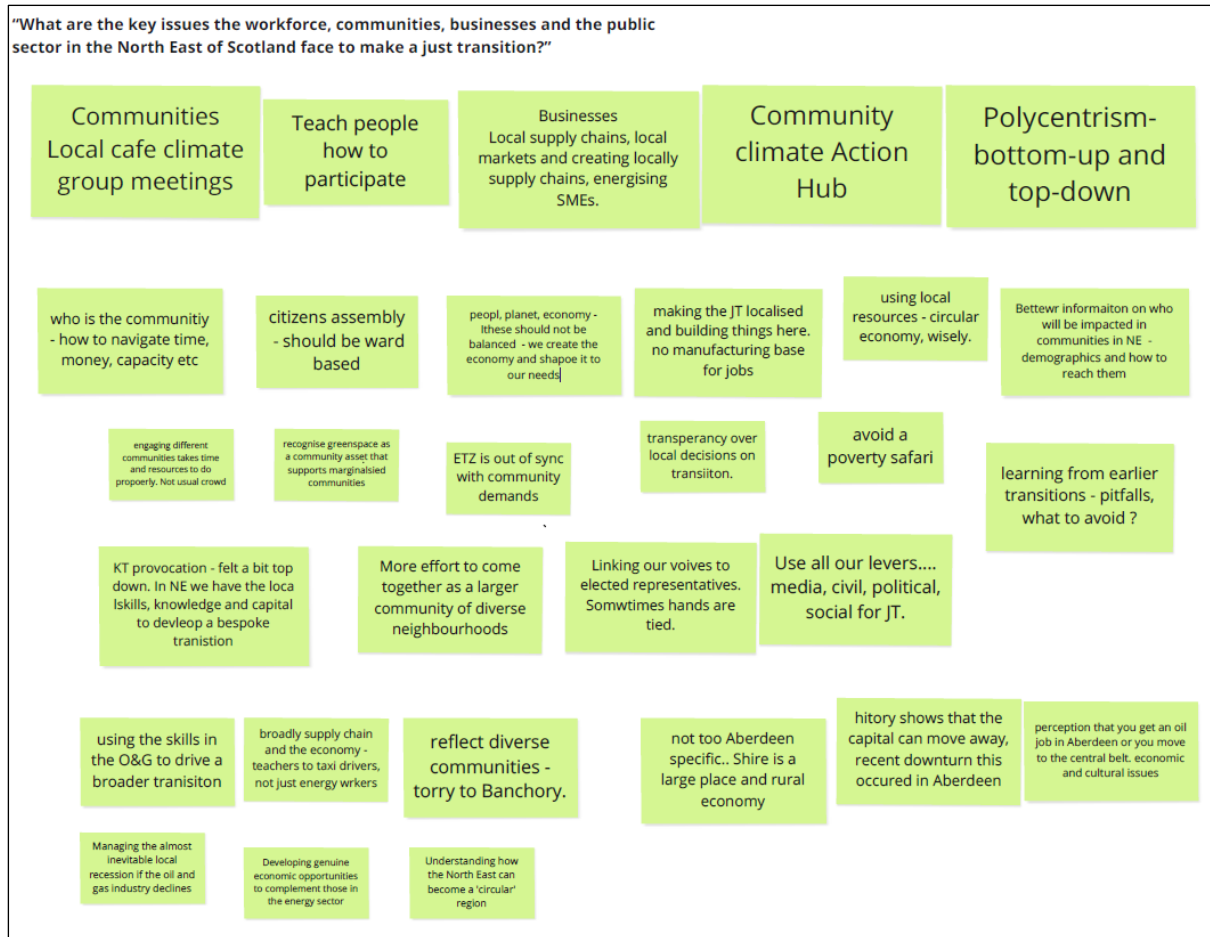


Figure 3 Miro board example from group 1.

Issue	Sub-issue	Group Examples [Group #]
Communities and Transition	Vision for a Just Transition	<p><i>"We need a clear vision for the region and how to get there." [5]</i></p> <p><i>"Transition council for the NE – holistic approach". [5]</i></p> <p><i>"How do we change our cultural identity from oil and gas capital in a positive way". [4]</i></p> <p><i>"Piecemeal versus transformative change" [6]</i></p>
	Learning from other transitions	<p><i>"We need to learn from other transitions, the pitfalls, what to avoid" [1]</i></p>
	Improving evidence on communities and how transition impacts them	<p><i>"Better information on who will be impacted in NE – demographics and how to reach them?" [1]</i></p> <p><i>"Who is the community? How to navigate time, capacity etc" [1]</i></p>
	Supporting Diverse communities	<p><i>"Getting people from different backgrounds and cultures involved." [5]</i></p> <p><i>"Focusing on difficult to reach groups." [6]</i></p> <p><i>"More effort to come together as a larger community of diverse neighbourhoods" [1]</i></p> <p><i>"There needs to be more recognition of different communities in NE – fishing, farming, migrants.. city and shire made up of diverse communities" [3].</i></p>
	Inclusive and transparent planning.	<p><i>"Engaging different communities takes time and resources – not the usual crowd." [1]</i></p> <p><i>"Ensure money coming into the region for JT is fairly allocated and made involving all stakeholders..." [5]</i></p>
Citizen Action	Building a social consensus and deepening participation	<p><i>"Expanding climate cafes, action hubs and citizens assemblies to all communities and wards" [2]</i></p>
	Supporting national climate action	<p><i>"Healthier lifestyles and new opportunities." [2]</i></p> <p><i>"Supportive legislation for sustainable behaviours". [4]</i></p>
	Fairness	<p><i>"Change the dialogue from technology and jobs to opportunity for a fairer society" [5]</i></p> <p><i>"Don't turn the discussion on justice to individual behaviour – need structural change." [5]</i></p> <p><i>"Transparency over local decisions" [1]</i></p>
Economic Diversification	Working across local business and supply chains	<p><i>"Make the JT localised and build things here. No manufacturing base for these jobs." [1]</i></p> <p><i>"Green upgrading affordable to all scales of business" [4]</i></p> <p><i>"Work towards a circular economy.." [5]</i></p>

	Economic Past and Present in Aberdeen	<i>"History shows the capital can move away, the recent downturn this occurred in Aberdeen" [1]</i>
	Supporting transitions for oil and gas workers	<i>"Dynamic, responsive training for new ET jobs, skills passports. Addressing skills challenges and needs in the oil and gas workforce and their role in transition." [3]</i> <i>"Oil & gas still needed while transition happens but aging workforce as young people don't want to work there due to bad press". [3]</i> <i>"Need to involve employees – not just managers & boards" [5]</i>
	Finance and investment	<i>"Funding not only for new projects but also fuel poverty organisations and initiatives" [5]</i>
	Decentralised energy	<i>"Training for transition beyond large infrastructure projects into social innovation e.g. heat pumps, solar, storage." [4]</i> <i>"Smaller more local energy systems provides opportunity for smaller businesses and jobs." [5]</i>
Place based solutions for the North-East	Local transport	<i>"Transport needs to be looked at and changed." [3]</i> <i>"Solutions to known limitations of E-vehicles are required" [4]</i>
	Rural communities	<i>"Acknowledge the rurality of the Shire -few buses, no public transport in areas, think carefully about travel options and infrastructure." [3]</i> <i>Sustainable agriculture in the NE has a major role to play in emissions reduction and employment. [5]</i>
	Housing	<i>Housing tenancy, rentals & social housing. How to address energy use in homes and new technologies? [3]</i> <i>"Energy in homes, insulation, heating, boilers...think about people who can't afford to adapt or cant because of tenancy issues". [3]</i>
Environmental sustainability	Including biodiversity and its benefits in planning & decisions	<i>"Biodiversity must be considered alongside the climate response." [5]</i> <i>"Recognise greenspace as a public asset" [1]</i>

Table 2. Breakout session 2 topics on workforce, communities, businesses and the public sector in the Northeast delivering a just transition

3. Workshop 2: Pathways for Transition in the North-East

Workshop 2 explored the **pathways for achieving a transition in the North-east** with an emphasis on ‘positive stories for change’. The event focused on three of the topics from workshop 1, with a ‘deep dive’ into the issues of **greenspace, community revitalisation and fuel poverty**. The emphasis of the event was to explore practical solution around managing change, learning from those on the ground who are engaged in real projects. Each session of the workshop was chaired by three practitioner-based groups and focused on questions and discussion on three topics, ‘what approaches work best’, ‘how can barriers to action be removed’ and ‘how can other communities addressing similar issues, learn from us and teach us?’ A detailed breakdown and summary of the event can be downloaded from the [Scottish Insight project page](#) including full videos of the sessions³. The summaries are presented below.

Session one explored issues on the topic of greenspace (Figure 4) with presentations from John Maslen ([Greenspace Scotland](#)), Scott Herrett and Susan Smith ([Torry Peoples Assembly](#)) and Elizabeth Stanyer ([Aberdeenshire Council](#)). Greenspace Scotland identified how greenspaces can be places of empowerment and development, exploring how these sites can support sustainable multiple use including community ownership. Discussions explored opportunities where the assets of greenspaces were maximised for community benefit whilst increasing biodiversity. Examples included horizontal ground sources heat pumps under football pitches to power local amenities, heat sourcing from local rivers and community asset ownership. Greenspaces were greater than urban parks and could be seen as potential sites for creating long term revenue and funding to communities from renewable energy and social capital.



Figure 4. Workshop 2: Greenspace session.

³ <https://www.scottishinsight.ac.uk/Programmes/UNGlobalGoals/JustTransition.aspx>

The St Fitticks Peoples Assembly explored the process and outcomes of a deliberative citizens assembly around the future use of St Fitticks Park. The site within Aberdeen is the focal point of a current conflict over the future use of the greenspace and its recent rezoning as an industrial site for 'energy transition'. The project aimed to build local power and engage communities in the future of the park, particularly to explore alternatives to industrialisation. It identified significant imbalances in power around decisions that shape the future of the city with communities and non energy interests often left out of the key discussions on the future of the city.

Aberdeenshire Council focused on the importance of greenspace for wellbeing and climate action. It noted that most greenspace is not managed for net zero and yet could provide significant benefits for climate and communities. There was a desire to increase community involvement in public space management, work on values and behaviours on topics of rewilding and 'untidy landscaping' and address challenges around short term costs vs long term gains. It was also noted that there was often a challenge around engaging young people in this space and diversifying local engagement.

Session two identified pathways of change for addressing issues of endemic fuel poverty in the region. Presentations were delivered from Lucy Gillie ([South Seeds](#)), Terri Voght ([Power Circle](#)) and Ian Davidson ([Aberdeen Heat and Power](#)). South Seeds is a charity that tackles fuel poverty in the communities on Glasgow's southside and has a portfolio of projects including direct advice, energy efficiency, renewables, community gardens and a tool library. It operates a drop in centre where people can directly access expertise and can focus on solving individual energy problems. It delivers a 'person first' service that directly engages with the community, builds trust and embeds behaviour change.

Increasing community participation in a just transition to Net Zero in the North-East of Scotland. **Workshop 2: Stories of Positive Change** Fuel Poverty

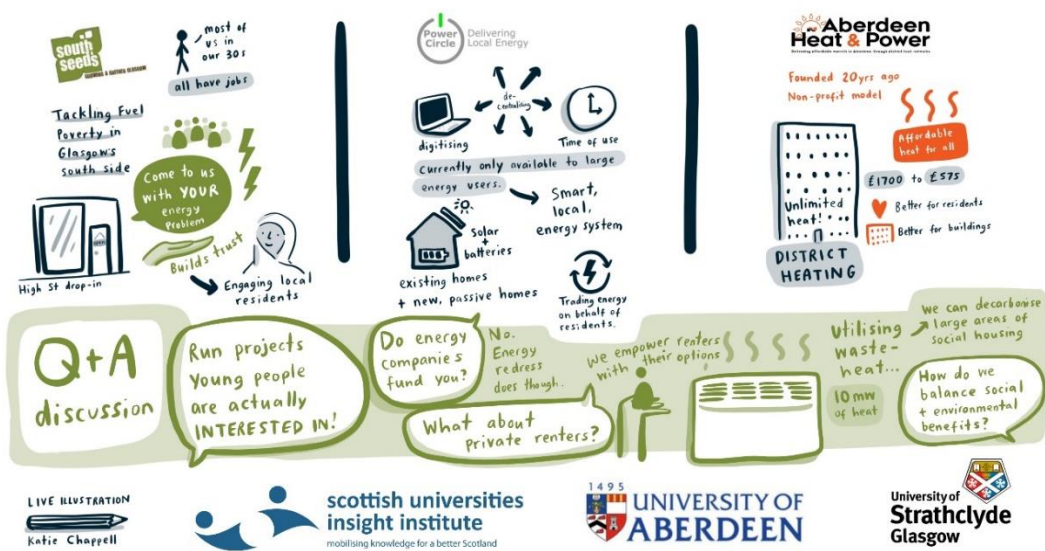


Figure 5 Workshop 2: Fuel Poverty

Power Circle is a social enterprise that tackles fuel poverty in the NE of Scotland. It is developing a range of smart local energy systems with an emphasis on decentralisation and using demand side technologies, smart grids, variable pricing and solar and storage. The enterprise is working on new

build systems and engaging directly with social landlords and communities, noting that a whole systems perspective is critically important. One of the key challenges is how to approach the rental market where developing relationships with landlords is key. Aberdeen Heat and Power is a district heating enterprise in Aberdeen. It currently has five gas CHP centres supplying hot water and heating to 3500 homes and also providing unmetered heat to support social housing and infrastructure regarding damp. The key challenge is how to decarbonise these systems and to do so without passing on costs to customers. AHP are actively exploring smart systems to support demand side response (for example charging a low rate for heat up to a cap to encourage efficiency) and exploring new heat sources across the city (e.g. waste incinerators, water sources and waste treatment).

Session 3 explored the topic of community revitalisation with presentations delivered by Matthew Club ([Zero Carbon Daviot](#)), Sarah Stone ([Vattenfall](#)), and Carolyn Powell ([Huntly Development Trust](#)). Zero Carbon Daviot explored a range of community initiatives in an Aberdeenshire community context. The community partnership in Daviot is a new organisation that brings together initiatives around active travel, access to local services, community energy and specialist experience in retrofit and energy efficient housing. There was a strong theme of strengthening local participation after the recent period of lockdown and strengthening local support and creation of social capital. The partnership is increasingly thinking about and delivering strategies and programmes on local retrofits and supporting communities in delivering energy efficient homes. There is an increasing need to link up across local groups to come together and build capacity for change.



Figure 6 Workshop 2 Revitalisation.

The Vattenfall presentation highlighted the opportunities for communities to engage directly with renewable developers. There was a message that wind developers can work with communities, however not all do so effectively. Vattenfall takes a strong partnership approach working across communities, councils and local supply chains to generate social and environmental benefits

alongside the development of renewable energy. Renewable developers often draw upon supply chains and small business from the regions where they work, identifying that there are local opportunities in decentralised green energy developments. It is in the best interests of developers to strongly engage with community partnerships and work together in delivering joint benefits, and this requires deeper cooperation, breaking down barriers and building trust with communities. The Huntly Partnership provided a perspective on how a rural community partnership can deliver action in regenerating a town centre. The existing town centre in Huntly has suffered from business closures and deterioration of listed buildings with consequences for the community life in the town. The Partnership has been successful in purchasing unused buildings in the centre and has successfully converted these into community owned businesses (the example was given of an old empty former bank building converted into a community bookshop). Work is progressing on a major project where a former department store being converted into a flexible working hub, retail, active travel and training space. The partnership emphasised that communities need to be ambitious and prepared to try new things and to double down on selling their vision, understanding the funding environment, getting communities passionate and engaged and building capacity.

4. Workshop 3: Mapping Community Action and Building Capacities.

Workshop 3 focused on developing capacities in the North-East community sector to support the delivery of a Just Transition. In previous workshops we identified recurring themes and ‘threads’ that cut through the ambitions for a Just Transition, including the need for **networking** and the **joining up** of civil society organisations in the North-east, **building capacity** for funding and training for building **meaningful, diverse and inclusive** projects, events and activities. The 3rd event, was held in partnership with the [NESCAN Hub](#) working through an online festival space ‘Hopin’, with 103 participants registered. NESCAN Hub is a regional community climate action hub, funded by the Scottish Government, that grew out of NESCAN and network of climate action groups in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. As NESCAN was a partner in our project it was decided that we would take a partnership approach and co-design the event to maximise resources, time and participation.

Session 1 was held in partnership with NESCAN explored a participatory mapping exercise to identify and map the diverse initiatives in the North-East (Figure 7). The full map is available [here](#) in addition to the mapping [report](#).

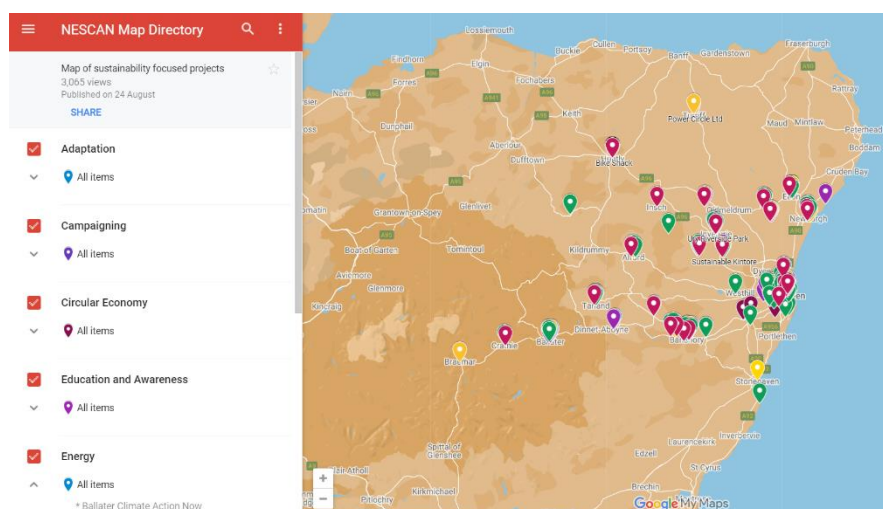


Figure 7: Participatory Mapping Outputs. Full interactive map available.

The aim of the mapping was to identify current and planned sustainability, climate change and biodiversity projects across Aberdeen city and Aberdeenshire. The purpose of this mapping exercise was to understand what climate change and biodiversity community work is currently being done in the North-east, including the type of projects and geographical spread, identify gaps in project type and location, and to reach out to those involved in community action to build relationships between them and the Hub and increase the membership of NESCAN.

Over 150 projects were identified by attendees in the 4 workshop groups. These were combined with the projects submitted through 38 completed questionnaires with an overall 254 projects identified in the process (Figure 8).

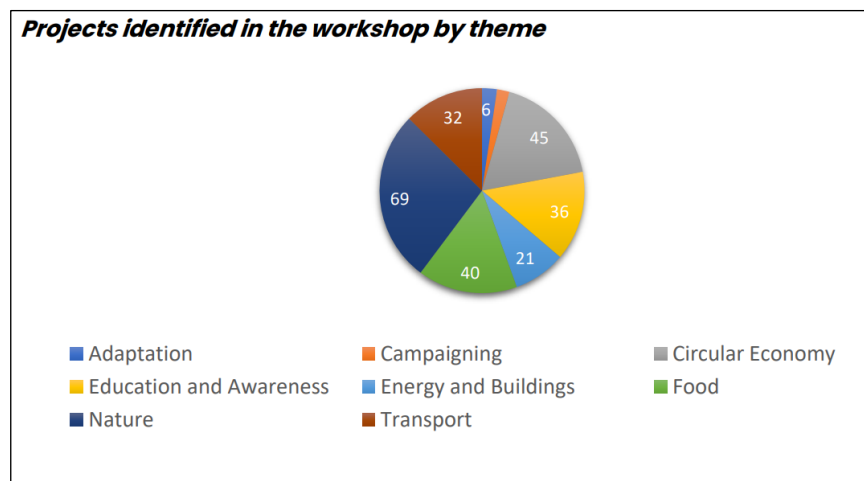


Figure 8 Project categories (NESCAN 2022 Mapping Report)

The projects cut across both topic and geographical diversity highlighting the range of activities and experiences in the North-east. Over a quarter of projects recorded focussed on Nature (27%), followed by Circular Economy (18%), Food (16%), Education & Awareness (14%), Transport (13%), Energy & Buildings (8%) and then Adaptation and Campaigning (both with 2%). **Nature** includes projects such as tree planting, community woodlands and community gardens and wildlife recording. **Circular Economy** includes upcycling and repair projects such as Men’s Sheds, mending and sewing workshops and community composting. **Food** includes food growing and preparation, reducing food waste, community fridges and food banks. **Education and awareness** includes workshops and talks, climate action networks, websites, social media and handbooks on various sustainability and climate change themes. **Transport** includes foot path creation and maintenance, bike repair and rental and installation of electric vehicle charging stations. **Energy & Buildings** includes retrofitting and carbon reduction in buildings, community hydro and windfarm schemes. **Adaptation** includes flooding and drought prevention and resilience, floodplains and mitigating erosion. **Campaigning** includes conversations with elected members, political campaigning and encouraging public involvement and action.

Session 2 delivered two workshops focused on sharing learning on increasing community involvement and social inclusion in climate change, followed by a workshop on how to identify and access climate change funding.⁴ The **first workshop**, ‘Social Inclusion in Community Climate Change Action’ was supported in a series of provocations by Robert Walley from the [University of Central Lancashire](https://www.scottishinsight.ac.uk/Programmes/UNGlobalGoals/JustTransition.aspx) and Oliver Armstrong and Tess Humble from the activism and training organisation

⁴ The workshop videos from these sessions are available from: <https://www.scottishinsight.ac.uk/Programmes/UNGlobalGoals/JustTransition.aspx>

[Breathe](#). Dr Walley identified the need to deliver free, engaging events that can attract the public. These events were not branded as climate change events, and used world music, low carbon food and participatory activities such as games to attract people. These use of these approaches enables communities, families and children to engage in these 'gateway' activities and 'stage 1' engagement where the aim is to stimulate discussions, questions and learning. Events were further supported by more in-depth activities such as expert talks and inspiring community leaders, with the requirement that all activities be engaging, participatory and relevant to the local area and to individuals and their circumstances and needs. Dr Walley also discussed his experience of running Manchester's first climate assembly and working with diverse stakeholders. The assembly enabled communities to collectively design local action plans in topics such as transport, buildings, energy, food and retail while simultaneously creating a local mandate that was presented to city policy makers. Such a mandate allows communities to directly engage in climate action, critically assess new developments and policies and empowers diverse local groups to enact change. They are not consultations, but active initiatives designed to progress action.

Tess Humble reflected on her role as an organiser in the [COP26 Coalition](#). The coalitions' aim was to bring marginalised voices together in conversations around climate justice and to link with youth action, faith and other societal groups to build solidarity and action across Glasgow. This project focused specifically on Glasgow during COP26 with the aim to hold space for marginalised groups on their own terms and in their own spaces using light touch facilitation techniques. It was considered important to not try and 'educate' marginalised groups on issues of 'climate justice' as this could make peoples concerns and their work invisible (for instance on issues around migrant justice and human rights). An observation was that we need to be sensitive to community concerns and not lead with or replicate top down narratives of climate justice (or science), employing active listening, and build solidarity and partnerships to advance social justice. Working in partnership and co-hosting events with different community, faith based and labour groups, there was an upscaling of activities to bring people together by creating virtual and physical spaces (often via the medium of food and music) to explore issues around Just Transition. A series of more formal and action-based assemblies were held where communities could exchange ideas and experiences around locally relevant JT issues and were connected to active campaigns on community land ownership and regeneration such as [Glasgow Against Closures](#) and [Still Game in the Valley](#). These approaches allow marginalised groups to build power in their communities, allowed exchanges between communities and those active in the climate justice and just transition space and created a sense of commonality and common cause between marginalised communities and climate activists.

Oliver Armstrong reflected on how Breathe is approaching community activism and climate justice. The emphasis was on creating 'safe spaces' that are empowering and care based, reflecting the need for support, encouragement and creativity in a movement that is often burnt out and suffering from increased climate anxiety. The use of storytelling as a strategy enables people to find common ground and understand the human context of the just transition. Oliver reflected on living in the NE of England with massive changes to industry, fishing and failed investments that has left communities decimated – an outcome that can't be repeated in a Just Transition. The focus has been on using creativity and climate justice principles to empower people, often where injustices are perpetuated, and political and economic systems are not working to support communities. The provocations were flipped to explore the questions a community should ask when external actors, power holders or climate experts come to work with them. The three things a community could ask would be i) *how is your work about us? Is it really about us?* ii) *How does your work put people central? Does it put the community at the centre?* iii) *Why is this work needed?* The provocation ended by highlighting that compromise has failed for communities and that communities should act

to demand more decision making power, aligning with Just Transition frameworks such the [US Climate Justice model](#) where power is explicitly devolved to local levels and [community wealth building](#) movements.

Session 3 delivered a workshop introducing community organisations to best practice approaches to fund raising, organisational structures and strategy. This workshop was delivered by [Truffle Pig Training](#) a Glasgow based consultancy that supports grant writing in the community sector now diversifying into training and capacity building. The session informed attendees of practical advice, guidance and 'next steps' in securing funding for community led initiatives. This is in the context of diversifying from volunteerism-based organisations to more funded and resourced initiatives that support communities, infrastructure, skills and employment in transitions to Net Zero.

The workshops discussed the different types of funding and the strategies to secure it; different ways of thinking about and marketing climate action giving examples from community celebrations, youth work, connectedness and social capital or wellbeing. The workshop explored different strategies around structure, finding innovative cases and inspiration for community centred initiatives. Specific funding pots at different scales and the strategies to achieve them were explored, including how groups can build at different scales from smaller initiatives to community infrastructure projects. The video of the workshop is available from the Scottish University Insight Institute [project page](#).

Overall the 3rd workshop provided a deep dive and practitioner based approach to delivering a Just Transition in the North-East of Scotland. Central to future successful efforts is building capacity for community action, and a step change in just transition partnerships that are led by community and civil society organisations. The mapping exercise highlighted the large number and diversity of individual projects at different scales and stages. The capacity building workshops provided pragmatic, inspirational and tried and tested tools and approaches to support and facilitate local initiatives in transition.

On reflection, combining two workshops with similar aims (NESCOAN Hub and SUII JT workshop) increased participation, attracted attendees who may have only come to one of the workshops and was more efficient for both the organisers, presenters and attendees who only had to attend one event. Combining resources to fund a professional facilitator [Alan Caldwell Associates](#) saved time, opened up the organisers to new ideas and methods of running workshops and engaging with attendees. This also gave the organisers access to ICT and online platforms such as Hopin and [Miro Board](#) and provided training for facilitators and postgraduate support students. One of the legacies of the project was that due to efficient use of resources and saving time and travel from using a digital platform, the project was able to **support the NESCOAN Seed Fund initiative**. The Seed Fund micro funds community climate and sustainability projects in North-east communities, with some of the funded projects directly originating from workshop ideas and discussions. The descriptions of the first round funded project that this project supported can be viewed at [NESCOAN](#).

5. Recommendations and Next Steps

Reflecting on the workshop structure in Figure 1, this project has demonstrated that diverse community and civic organisations can collectively understand, critique, plan and deliver a Just Transition at scale. The process facilitated an examination of Just Transition concepts and ideas and how they apply to Scotland and the North-east, the key themes and issues that are relevant for the region and the path-ways to a successful transition. We blended both the conceptual and practical, global and local, and celebrated positive real-world examples that can advance social innovation, learning and place-based development. The project has identified that i) **capacity building**, ii) **networking and connectedness** and iii) and **learning from ‘on the ground’ local action** are drivers of a Just Transition.

Drawing upon the experiences and deep local and expert knowledge presented in the workshops, we recommend five key action areas that would advance a just transition in the NE of Scotland. (Figure 9.)



Figure 9 Five Key Action Areas for a Just Transition

Community revitalisation prioritises community based economic and social development; applying the principles and practices of **community wealth generation**; building local capacities through new skills, training and employment in local net zero industries and movements. In this priority communities deepen local power by owning local land, assets and community energy and Net Zero infrastructure.

Net Zero (N-0) jobs identifies that the **knowledge and capacity from the oil and gas sector can support the development, construction and maintenance of a decentralised and community owned renewable energy sector**. Workshops highlighted the pride the region has in its industrial and engineering history, its ‘know how’ and how it has prospered from energy. After five decades of energy development there are strongly held local concerns about the future of the region and how it will navigate the transition and avoid the historical and contemporary examples where transitions have failed and resulted in deep social and economic impacts. We argue a key part of a just

transition is the successful diversification into several new Net Zero industries in **smart local energy systems; food and agriculture; land management; home retrofit and efficiency; transport and local infrastructure**. A consistent message is that these opportunities need to be raised alongside existing energy skills and employment strategies and that communities should take a leadership role.

Addressing **fuel poverty** is the central concern and focal point of any just transition in the North-east. With the ongoing cost of living crisis, the region is deeply affected by increasing energy prices, driven by step and unpredictable rises in the cost of gas and electricity. With Aberdeenshire a large rural constituency, many households and communities do not have access to gas and rely on costly deliveries, home kerosene or electrical heating, crippling to household energy bills. The workshops identified a number of priorities including investment into **smart local heating systems**, growing **heat networks**, and **diversifying low carbon and cost-effective solutions** for local heating. The main challenge, and the first priority, is to address the overall poor quality of housing in the North-east delivering a '**fabric first**' approach that can improve energy efficiency in thousands of homes, public buildings and commercial sites and creating regional employment.

Greenspace and the preservation and restoration of urban and rural biodiversity within a transition were consistent themes and discussions. Greenspace is recognised as critically important for **community health and wellbeing** and supporting **local climate action and adaptation**, in addition to a range of local ecosystem services. Greenspace was iconic as an indicator of local action and participation, with discussions identifying that no high value community greenspace should be lost in a just transition. Participants noted that greenspace was subject to development pressures and that all Net Zero development must be built around **social licence and community involvement**. The multiple use benefits of greenspace was explored as a means to support local action and social innovation.

Participation and empowerment were essential for successful just transition planning and development and often cited as lacking in existing processes and initiatives. More work was needed on **delegating power to local communities**, whether in the form of land ownership, local energy infrastructure and / or decision making. *Process justice* is an important underlying principle, where diverse and **marginalised voices are not only central to the discussion but central to the design and delivery**. Communities do not want further passive or one-way consultation or 'engagement'. They seek empowerment, partnership and community led action.

The North-east of Scotland is moving rapidly into a transition to Net Zero, with significant changes and debate about the nature of the future energy industry and its role in the region, the need for rapid and deep diversification into new Net Zero aligned industries, and the critically important need to transition in a way has both the support and involvement of local communities, workforces and citizens. Our main recommendation is to take this a step further into a *Just Transition*, where community and civil society knowledge, capacity and social innovation sit at the centre of the societal, behavioural and technological change needed to achieve a sustainable, equitable and fair society.

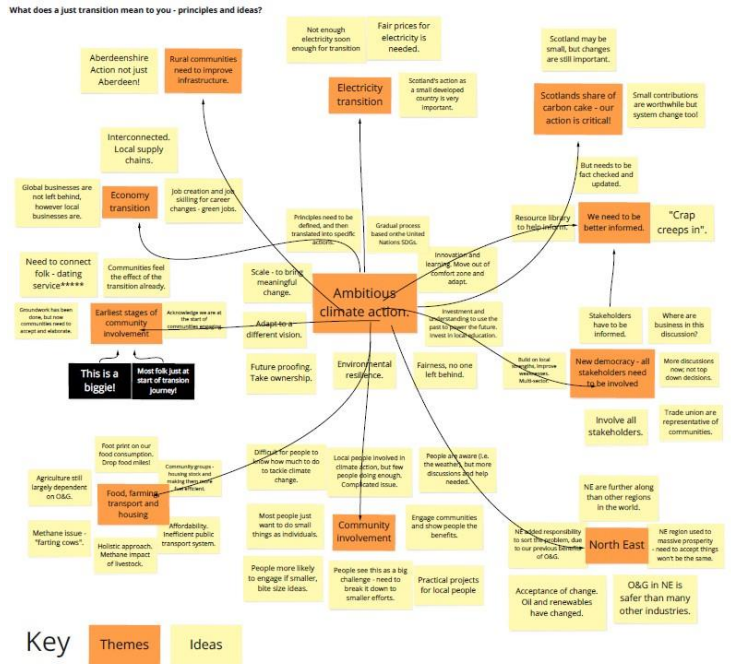
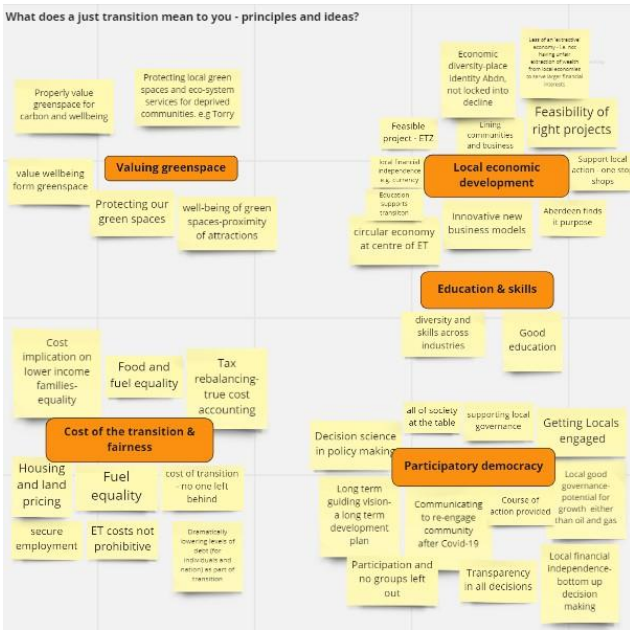
Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our funder the [Scottish University Insight Institute](#) for funding and supporting this project. We would also like to thank our **project partners NESCAN Hub and Power Circle** and the community and civil society groups, local stakeholders and individuals who joined us at our events.

Appendix 1 – Workshop 1 Attendees (carried through Workshop 2 and 3)

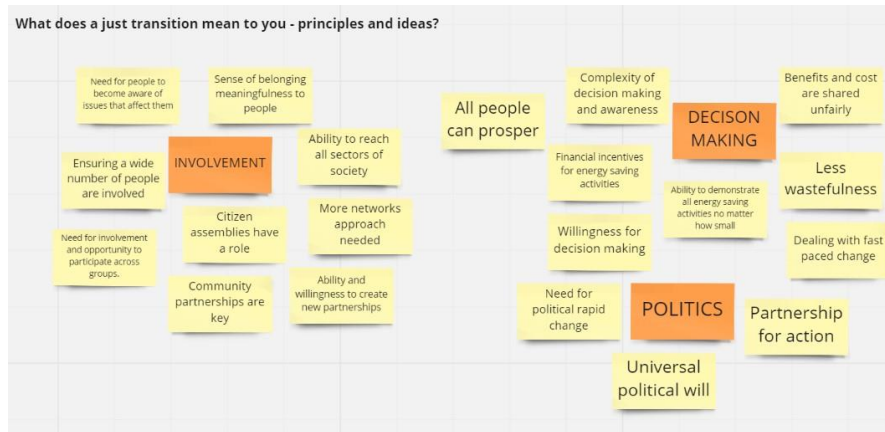
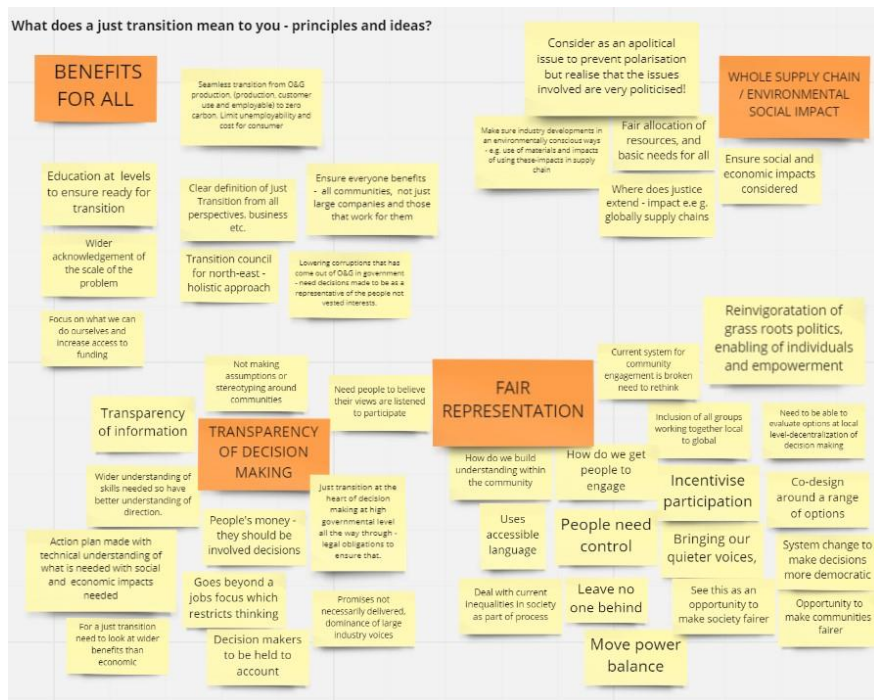
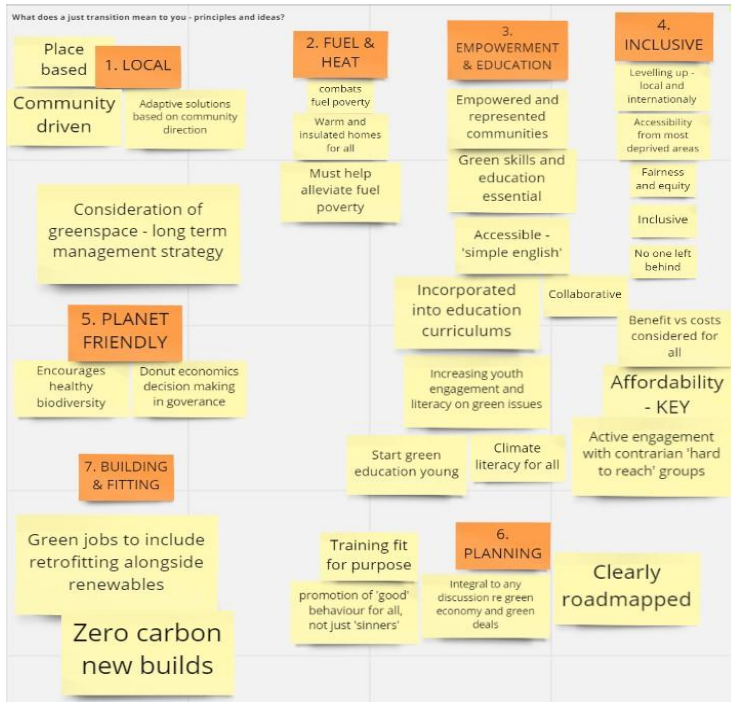
Registered Organisations
Aberdeen Beautiful
Aberdeen City Council
Aberdeen Climate Action
Aberdeen Heat and Power
Aberdeen Renewable Energy Group
Aberdeen University Centre for Energy Law
Aberdeenshire Council
Auchinhandoch Farm
Centre for Sustainable Practice
Community Energy Scotland
Community Rail Network
East Grampian Coastal Partnership
Edinburgh Law School
empowering people Network
Friends of St Fittick's Park
Friends of the Earth Scotland
Heriot-Watt University
Improvement Service
Bradford Art
Nestrans
NFU Scotland
Opportunity North East
Power Circle Projects
PUT Community SCIO
QX Church
Robert Gordon University
Scarf
Scottish Government
Skills Development Scotland
Social Enterprise Network Scotland
The Barn Arts Centre
The Habitat People
The James Hutton Institute
Udny Climate Action
UNA Scotland
UNISON
University of Aberdeen
University of Glasgow
University of Strathclyde
Weber Shandwick

Appendix 2 – Workshop 1 Session 1 outputs

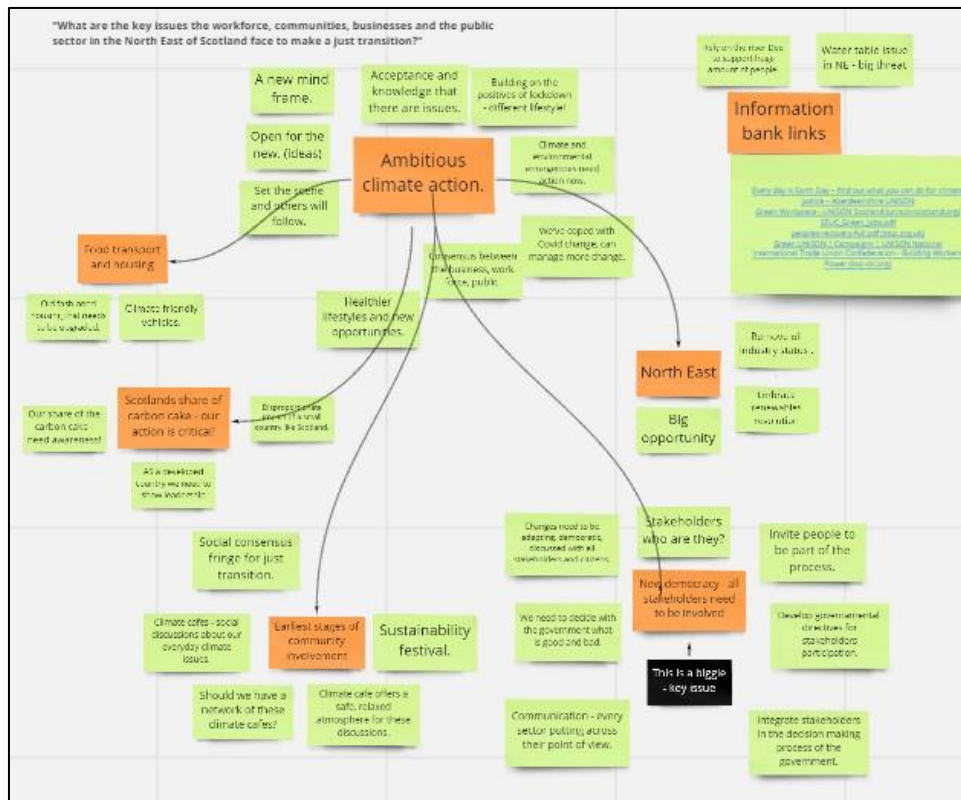
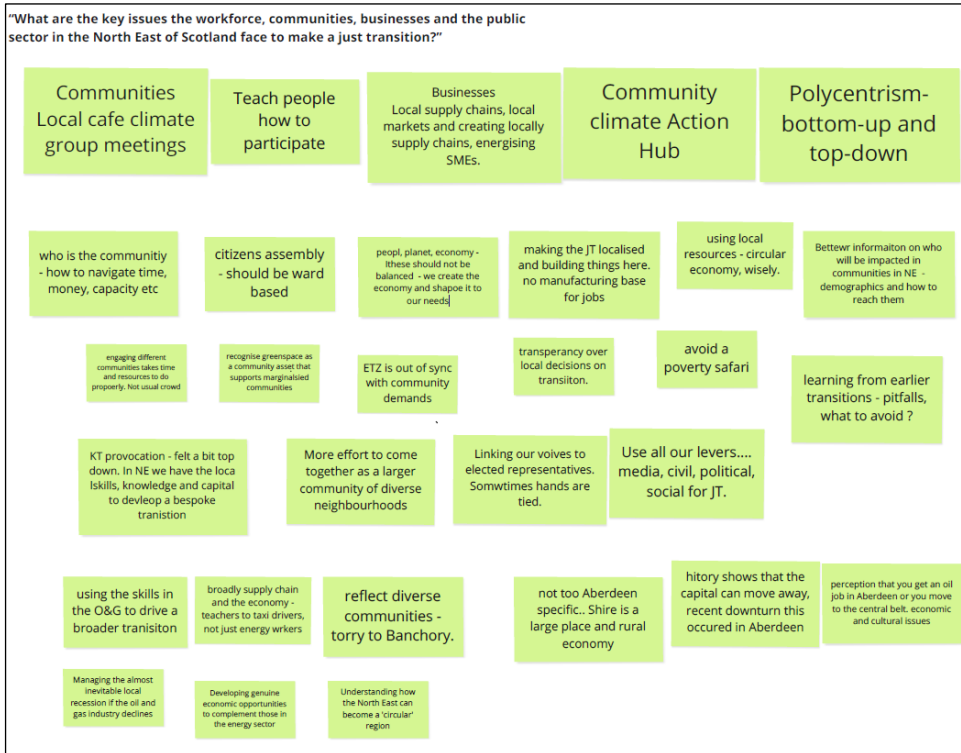


Key Themes Ideas





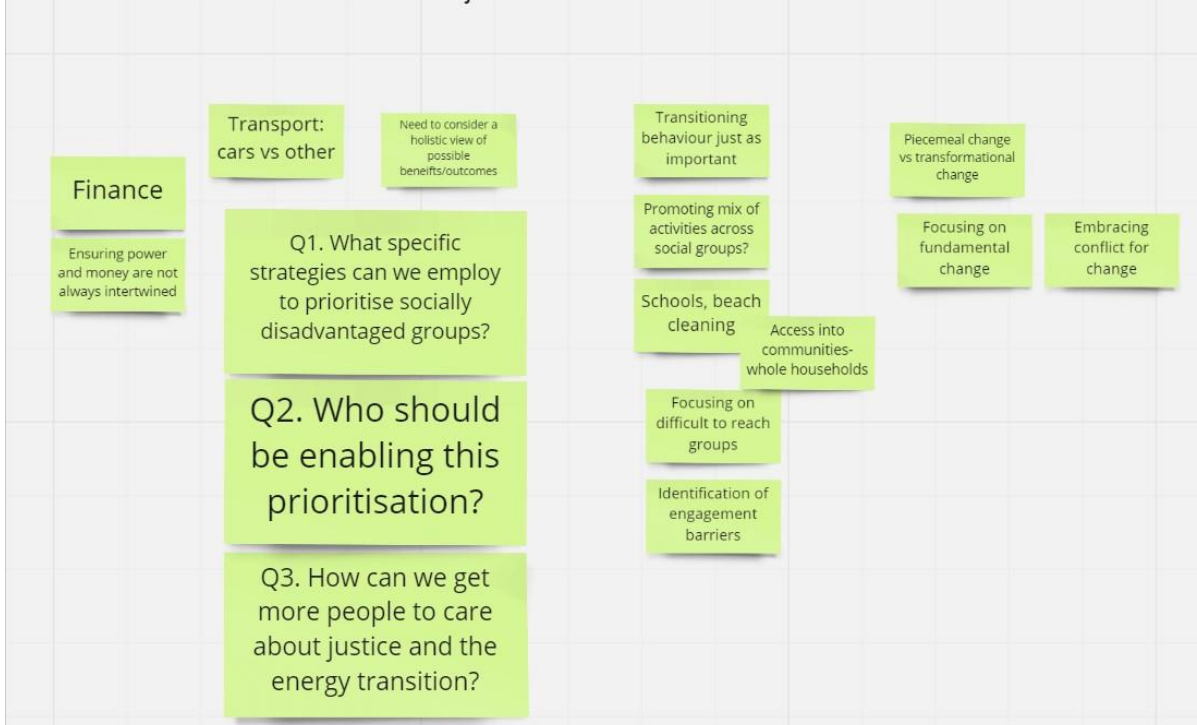
Appendix 3 – Workshop 1 Session 2



"What are the key issues the workforce, communities, businesses and the public sector in the North East of Scotland face to make a just transition?"



"What are the key issues the workforce, communities, businesses and the public sector in the North East of Scotland face to make a just transition?"



Appendix 4 – Workshop 2: Summary outputs (Hi Res version available [here](#))

