

# Centre for Alternative Technology – Zero Carbon Britain – Scaling Up Community Action Thursday 6 March 2025

**John Anderson ZCB** gives introduction - CAT established 1977 in a former slate quarry. ZCB Research Reports 2007, 2010, 2013, 2014, 2017 - 'Making It Happen', 2019 - all available on the CAT web site - <https://cat.org.uk/info-resources/zero-carbon-britain/research-reports/zero-carbon-britain-rising-to-the-climate-emergency/>



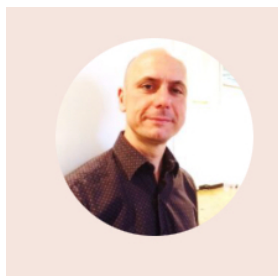
**Paul Allen ZCB** speaks to changes to benefit us all, mentions the record high global temperatures in January 2025, adverse impacts yet there are opportunities. UN Emissions Gap Report published 24/10/2024 highlights the gap between rhetoric and reality in meeting NDCs. PA has observer status at COP, recently attending online, and blogs via the CAT website. COP 29 received improved NDCs from UK, UEA and Brazil. These **must be rooted in equity**. COP30 will be held in Brazil. CAT is researching possible end-point scenarios to 'catalyse' action. Physical realism is the basis of CAT's work, yet there is a gap between the physics and political will.

Ten years of real world data available to download from CAT website. CAT also supports communities around the UK, suggesting a four direction approach (downwards: climate emergency, sideways: sharing good practice, inwards: training and roles, upwards: building alliances). Sharing information about real life projects is powerful. The Ashden Trust give annual awards for innovative projects - Energise Barnsley won in 2024, and another example is BRO DYFI Community Renewables gives returns to local people. **'Multi-solving' maximises the benefits beyond reducing carbon emissions.** Tyndall Centre research 2.5x more action in cities where co-benefits are quantified. For example the Bradford Clean Air Zone saved the NHS £30k per month in its first year. Tim Lang gives an annual lecture at CAT '7 steps to narrow the UK's gap in civil food resilience' as part of a national preparedness programme, where for instance work with the agricultural community is helping farmers to adopt agri-voltaics: combining solar arrays with farming. **A CBI report 'The Future is Green' in February 2025 concluded the net zero economy has expanded by 10.1% over the last year and is a significant driver of job creation and productivity.** Paul points to a focus on 'multi-solving' to increase resilience for example social prescribing of community growing can improve mental health. Use of the UN's sustainable development goals and the Welsh 'Future Generations Bill' can be used to promote well-being. There was some discussion about sourcing fairtrade solar panels.

**Rachel Tuckett** ZCB Innovation Lab Manager talked about co-creating the future and how we get there matters. Taking a holistic approach, a successful innovation lab should build capacity for implementation and networks to sustain results, creating solutions with deeper understanding of root causes. Rachel explored the definition and derivation of community and then went on to discuss co-creation. Ripple effects are important. How we **work together** determines the type of change achievable.



One definition of **co-creation** is a **participatory process** in which multiple actors work together to a mutually agreed solution. Useful for complexity and diffusing disagreement or tensions between actors. **Inclusive, diverse, reciprocal**, equalising and human centred. The process is carefully designed, but the outcomes are emergent as co-learning creates space for new possibilities. Recognition of participants with remuneration where possible.



**Mark Leach** Climate & Nature Engagement, Sustainable City & Climate Change Service, Bristol CC role includes setting up and supporting local climate & nature groups. Mark mentions 'Planning for Real' in the 1990s and about structures, hierarchies and cultures - channeling what works. For example, Easton Community Centre had difficulty with the Council in allowing solar panels on the roof of their Council owned building which was overcome in time to meet the FIT deadline.

**Trust, exchange of ideas**, representativeness, let go of preconceptions, **acknowledging that things take time**. Nurture development: community development model 'to', 'for', 'with', 'by' - an hour a month of Officer time can be transformative, smoothing the way to support grants, helping with bids, navigating the hierarchical structures, achieving system change. Mention was made of Mark Lynas writing in the Guardian in 2008 on concern about climate change. Also Mark Pepper driving force behind Ambition Lawrence Weston <https://www.powertochange.org.uk/evidence-and-ideas/case-studies/ambition-community-energy/> large wind turbine in an area of Bristol. Start from where people are at. Bristol established a Climate and Nature Partnership with businesses in the 2000s. The Community Climate Action Project secured five years of funding via the National Lottery, and a year long mentoring project with climate themes including jobs, and areas chosen were predominantly those experiencing inequalities. A community panel on a just transition and climate change was established, with panelist's paid for their time. Supporting advocacy, unlocking and unblocking, reaching otherwise unheard groups, reducing risks of unintended barriers, building trust and dialogue, enabling community wealth and building local economy. Preston was cited <https://www.preston.gov.uk/article/1339>. In discussion Rachel Tuckett drew a distinction between council led and community led (with council invited) - the need for **transparency** and to build **relationships** before holding workshops were stressed. "Follow the energy."

**Rowan Harris** Citizens' Assemblies and Scaling Up Community Climate Action - Rowan works with Shared Future, a NW not-for-profit ([https://sharedfuturecic.org.uk/team\\_members/rowan-harris/](https://sharedfuturecic.org.uk/team_members/rowan-harris/)) to facilitate citizen juries and participatory budgeting covering subjects such as climate change, rising sea levels, and air pollution. Citizens' Assemblies are broadly representative of the population. Forty plus people are chosen by lottery to deliberate and make recommendations on various topics including climate change. A deliberative democracy enables thoughtful discussion, exchange and diversity of ideas.



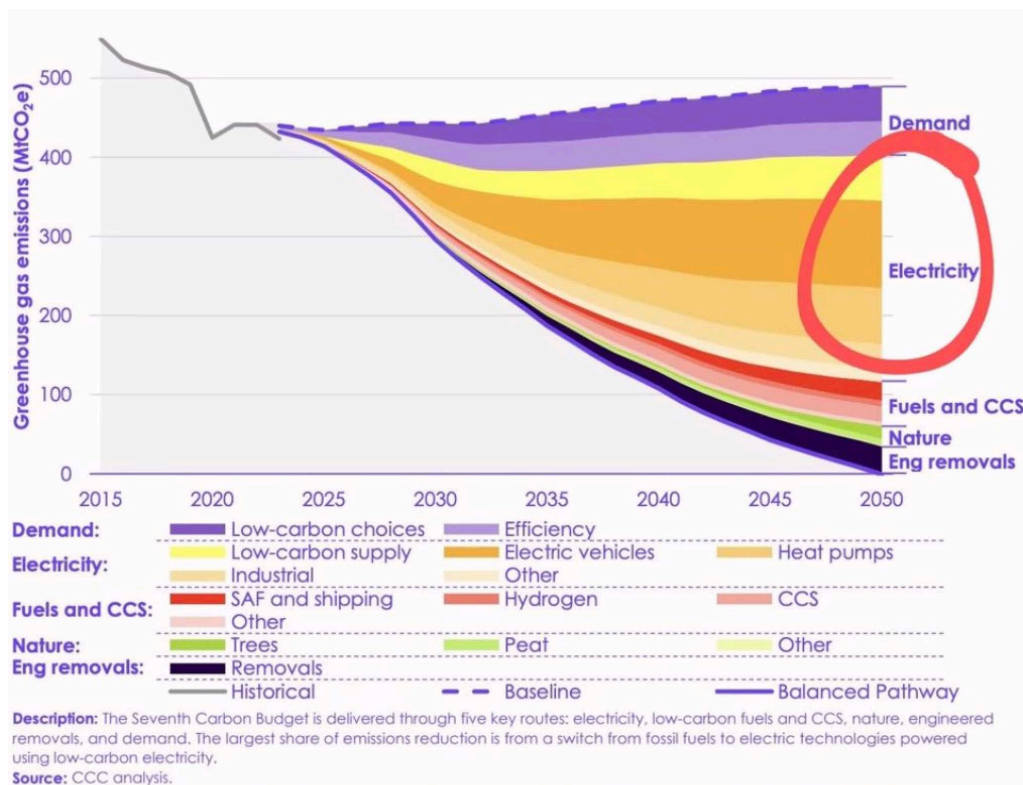
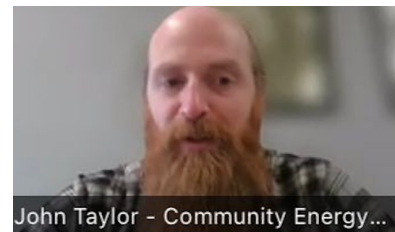
There was mention of 'sortition' meaning selection by lot, so everyone has a chance to join, and of representativeness'. The process was standardised. Terms such as 'jury' and 'panel' are used to differentiate from popular assemblies. Citizens' Assemblies explore individual's experience whilst learning from commentators, to make recommendations and spread the word. Starting with a clear question with ethical and justice dimensions, citizens' assemblies should last for about thirty hours, be a panel with balanced oversight, be independently facilitated, reflect diversity of the population, be inclusive, pay expenses, allow participants to set the agenda, produce recommendations through structured deliberation (including dissenting opinions) and be transparent. Whereas popular assemblies are self-organised, less diverse, accountable or transparent, low budget, quicker to set up and more responsive.



**Davie Philip** Cultivate Ireland - community climate coaches - ERASMUS funded, and part of ECOLISE network and <https://communitiesforfuture.org> engage, connect, envision, nourish, amplify, co-evolve. Each county in Eire has two officers working on their public participation network facilitating community wellbeing and climate resilience (the capacity to anticipate, address and adapt to challenges - and thrive). Municipal district hubs provided sessions on connection to community and the natural world, identifying and mapping strengths, and community conversations (<https://sustainable.ie>).

Mention was made of community wealth building and the Three Horizons Framework. "There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about." Cultivate Ireland offers training and resources such as templates, slides etc with focus on nature and resilience. The project finished in summer 2024, and now seeking further funding. Paul Allen asks whether learning from social history for instance of pre-industrial Revolution use of water and wind power is important. DP - essential. Rachel Tuckett asks how community coaches were taken up to speed. DP - public participation network used to identify groups who were offered training as CPD for work they are already doing. There was general agreement that it is important to go where people are.

**John Taylor** - **Community Energy England** (Head of Capacity Building) is a strong believer in **power of stories** towards a positive future. Focus is on prioritising action, lots of renewable energy, electrified transport and heat pumps instead of gas boilers - as in Climate Change Committee chart (below).



The example of the Cambridge Solar Park & Ride scheme was given, with its fleet of 12 electric buses and plans to scale up to 30, and solar canopies providing an EV charging hub. Another example was a community owned solar farm and solar 'allotment'. One 254kW solar array near the village of Reach is enough to power 50 homes, raised the £340k for implementation from 112 people in a community share offer, and now offers annual donations for local environmental action. **Westmill Solar and Wind Farms** have a 75GW solar target generating £25m annually, shared ownership and best use of both technologies (see next page). More onshore wind is likely now government restrictions have been lifted. Grid connections for sites generating less than 5GW shouldn't cause delays, larger schemes more problematic. Hockerton Community Owned Wind has a turbine on their village sign. Local Energy Planning: Future Energy Landscapes - an initiative from the Centre for Sustainable Energy (<https://www.cse.org.uk/my-community/future-energy-landscapes/>) aims to give people a say in the design of energy solutions. The **University of West London** in Ealing has a **rooftop array of solar PV and solar thermal panels** (see next page) along with Ground Source Heat Pumps. In a community retrofit programme houses in four streets in Hove have become carbon neutral. A 'grow your own insulation' scheme was mentioned. David Attenborough was quoted saying "we will not protect what we do not love", and then John returned to the theme of telling a better climate story, citing the 2009 movie 'Age of Stupid' (see below). Restoring peatlands should be a good news story. The CEE offer peer mentoring.

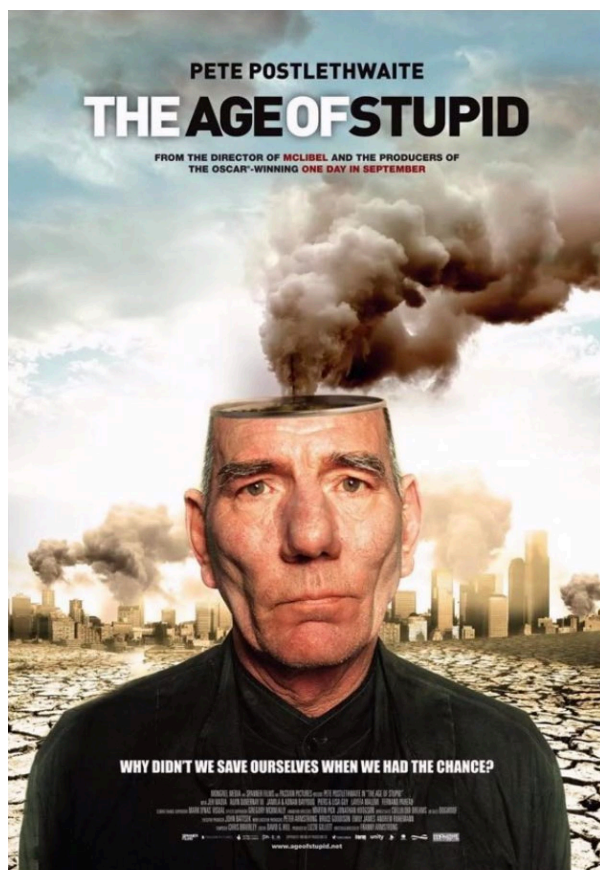


### **Westmill Solar and Wind Farm**



### **University of West London Solar PV and Solar Thermal Array linked to Ground Source Heat Pumps displaces > 3GWh of gas per year**





Sunita (Zero Carbon Harrogate)

Related to telling better climate stories and imagining a better future: graphic novel entitled 'Dreams of a Low Carbon Future', <https://lowcarbon.leeds.ac.uk/dreams-of-a-low-carbon-future/> <https://lowcarbon.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2018/01/ADreamofaLowCarbonFuture2013opt.pdf> and an interview with the illustrator <https://www.resilience.org/stories/2019-01-08/james-mckay-the-man-who-draws-the-future/>

**Mark Chivers** - Zero Carbon Dorset [markchivers@zcdorset.org](mailto:markchivers@zcdorset.org)

What would Net Zero look like in Dorset? Could we feed ourselves? Could we provide electricity? Began with setting out a clear framework and an overriding vision: by 2030 overwhelming majority of the population leading happier lives. Dorset 2030 Report ([www.dorset2030.com](http://www.dorset2030.com)). Across Dorset 125+ stories, 100+ individuals involved.



We can and must think locally but many solutions require national and international action. Not put off by lack of a central agenda. Lots of opportunities for councils to lead - but they weren't doing so. Stories were the most powerful tool. Established a CIC for funding applications, and you-tube channel. Produced annual reports. In 2023 Sustainable Dorset and Zero Carbon Dorset set up their own COP ([www.dorsetcop.info](http://www.dorsetcop.info)) as a process held in the Corn Exchange in Dorchester. Interested groups and individuals ran workshops - but they needed to know what were the take-aways? There were 250+ attendees from 100+ groups. A declaration of demands was called for, but they backed away from that as not all could sign up to them - others wanted more. A second COP was held in November 2024 at the University of Bournemouth with 350 people. There was a speakers' corner and community exhibition sharing stories and inspiring ideas. It led to a new network in Bournemouth and the restructuring of the Architectural course. Although the political landscape has changed with the US backing away from its carbon reduction commitments, the power of communities is recognised. How can communities be at the forefront? What do communities need over the next 5 to 10 years? **How resilient is your community?** Conversation starters: **water down your street, food shortages, severe heat ...**



## Break out groups

We were then moved into breakout groups to discuss three questions:

- what was most relevant to you?
- what are your next steps and what do you need to be able to take them?
- what would be useful from CAT?

I was in a group facilitated by Jake Levy from CAT. Jake works with John Anderson ZCB at CAT.

The group included Rowan Harris (the speaker on Citizens' Assemblies), some local councillors and a recently appointed staff member from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation Social Investment Fund. In the concluding plenary session mention was made of CAT offering Carbon Literacy Training. CAT is an authorised provider of the scheme pioneered by the Manchester based Carbon Literacy Project.

### Most relevant

- ❖ rooted in equity
- ❖ co-creation and multi-solving
- ❖ participatory process – inclusive, diverse and reciprocal
- ❖ trust, and exchange of ideas, acknowledge things take time
- ❖ transparency and relationships
- ❖ connect, envision, nourish
- ❖ public participation network on Eire facilitating community wellbeing and climate resilience
- ❖ Community Energy England has wealth of expertise
- ❖ power of stories
- ❖ ambition of Zero Carbon Dorset asks how resilient is your community and suggests conversation starters: local floods, food shortages, severe heat

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27 March 2025

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ZCB Rachel Tuckett



Three Horizons process - we've used this extensively in the Innovation Lab, and CAT can offer facilitation of this - feel free to get in touch if you'd like to chat about it. Future Stewards (amongst others) offer training in this: <https://futurestewards.com/> H3 Uni is a great website with lots of resources: <https://resources.h3uni.org/tutorial/three-horizons/>

The Work that Reconnects is a group process based on the work of Joanna Macy and Active Hope. It's possible train as a facilitator for this process: <https://workthatreconnects.org/>

Association of Facilitators is a not-for-profit that runs facilitation training at a range of levels, and can also help with finding a facilitator: <https://associationoffacilitators.co.uk/>

A few people have mentioned the World Café Method - good page on this here: <https://www.innovationtraining.org/the-world-cafe-method-teaching-and-facilitating>