

Co-designing climate action in rural communities using the Climathon methodology

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Introduction

- The national conversation around net zero is only beginning to be decentralised and embedded at the community scale (Ward, 2023; Simmonds et al, under review).
- Planetary rural: a source of 'crisis'; a site of 'conflict'; a space of 'hope' and place to generate 'climate solutions' (Wang et al, 2023).
- How does this materialise in practice? Rural areas and communities are asked to play a key role in carbon sequestration and emissions reductions. However, often overlooked in Net Zero rhetoric.
- Rural communities face specific decarbonisation challenges (transport for instance). Areas with a higher proportion of livestock farming also face ongoing contention.
- New approaches to climate governance are needed to decentralise the Net Zero agenda. The UK's Climate Change Committee (2022) recommends incorporating more deliberative approaches into climate policy.

Today's seminar

- Climathon is a novel deliberative methodology we start by explaining the general approach and underlying rationale.
- The Climathon methodology can support rural communities in their net zero transition. However, we need to adapt the existing approach to align with rural communities (Maye et al, 2022). We explain how this can work, with a worked example (Cotswold Climathon).
- Focus of our work to date is on agri-food climate solutions.
- Closing reflections summarise key messages and learnings so far, including wider rural community applications and relations between local solution building and material participation.



Image: Short, intense
Climathon?Image: Short, intense
periodMulti-disciplinaryCity-based
panel of judges

Climate assembly



Participants

• Mini public

Epistemic foundation Facilitated deliberation

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Output

Set of recommendations





- Self selecting
- Facilitated ideation and idea development
- Locally-relevant climate solutions (winner chosen by panel of judges)

(EIT Climate-KIC, n.d., Elstub 2021, Goodin and Dryzek 2016)

Aims to bring farmers, rural businesses, NGOs and citizens together to debate their agri-food/rural futures, identify net zero ambitions and vision solutions in ways that are fair, just and democratic.



Climate-KIC

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SCAN ME

3. CREATIVE APPROACHES

Plan to incorporate these in the event to enhance the experience for participants. For example, creative methods can foster empathy as part of design thinking, or be used to record key messages from the event

2. ALIGNMENT WITH LOCAL INITIATIVES

1

Work with your local collaborators to plan how the event will add value to existing programmes, and avoid duplicating their previous work. Identify planned funding bids or existing projects that might provide a route to take solutions forward.

1. CONSORTIUM-BUILDING

Q Dedicate time and energy to working with local partners early on. Local knowledge and understanding are essential to moderate organisers' expectations, co-design the event structure, and ensure events are well-attended and adapted for the local context. Consider using a blend of online meetings and in-person recces to locations.

4. STREAMLINED STRUCTURE

Optimise the schedule to make it more accessible for the farming community and people with children. Consider utilising a hybrid structure with an online component for scene-setting and initial activities. Condense in-person event to one working day, or split across two half-days, informed by local collaborator advice.

Phase 1: Warm up

Phase 4: Follow-up

Phase 3: Awards

Phase 2:

Ideathon

RURAL CLIMATHON PLAYBOOK

LESSONS FROM ADAPTING THE CLIMATHON METHOD TO VISION FOOD AND FARMING NET ZERO FUTURES IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

5. LOCAL FOOD

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Provide appetising meals to attract participants and highlight local food. Work with local caterers to make meals a highlight of the event.



Build outdoor and experiential components into the programme. Purposes include demonstrating existing net zero solutions, providing time for participants to exchange ideas and ask guestions of local experts, energising participants after a long period of sitting indoors, and facilitating informal discussion among the group. This

may also increase the appeal to

farmers, given the popularity of

farm walks for social and educational purposes.



Create space for respectful dialogue, particularly when discussing contentious topics. Consider co-creating ground rules with participants at the beginning of the event, and consider prioritising inter-team dialogue over a competition with "winners".

The Cotswold Climathon





Phase 1: Warm Up



Worked with a consortium of partners across Cotswold District, Gloucestershire and the Cotswolds National Landscape.





Ensured the event complemented current work in the area.











Created **digital stories** to ensure farmer voices were heard at the event.









Phase 2: Ideathon (1)





Renewables

3





Phase 2: Ideathon (2)

5

Lunch was sourced from **local suppliers**.





Participants took part in the **RAU Amble** after lunch.



Phases 3 and 4: Awards and Follow-Up

7

Teams worked collaboratively to develop five locally relevant solutions.

- 1. Soil Wealth and Health assessing the carbon content of Cotswolds' soils and monitoring to improve soil health.
- 2. Over the (h)Edge hub for advice on multifunctional landscapes.
- **3.** Cotswold Low Carbon Connections sustainability rating scheme for local retailers and hospitality.
- **4. Sunny Winders** agrivoltaics trials at Hartpury and RAU to determine feasibility and suitable crop types.
- 5. Growing Together support for farmers to shift to agro-ecological practices.

Each team was given five minutes to present their idea. Our panel then provided feedback on the feasibility of the solution, before questions were welcomed from the floor.

Follow-up work for The Cotswold Climathon continues. The CCRI team are also working with new and established partners to deliver two more Climathon events.



Visual notes from the Cotswold Climathon © Amanda Steer, 2023.

Key points

- Territorialisation of net zero
- Climathons not an "easy win"
- Deepening vs. widening participation
- Time and local expertise
- Solutions generated linked to outcomes (e.g. roadmaps, local strategic documents, rural community or neighbourhood plans)
- Material participation, creative methods and creating space for imagination





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