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Glasgow Citizens' Assembly on the Climate Emergency

Recommendations and key findings

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Executive Summary

Background

Glasgow City Council commissioned Ipsos MORI to organise a citizens' assembly to hear from people living across Glasgow and understand how the city can work together to achieve net zero in a way that is inclusive, fair, and respectful to everyone as part of the legacy of COP26. The assembly considered the key question, **“How can we work together in Glasgow to tackle the climate emergency by 2030?”**

This executive summary presents the key recommendations from the assembly. The main body of the report presents the recommendations in full, highlighting the assumptions, supporting ideas, and conditions that apply to each one.

The recommendations

The assembly focused on four topics that the council identified as priorities for tackling the climate emergency which Glaswegians have not already been extensively consulted on and which the city is able to take action on. These were: the circular economy; the green economy, jobs and skills; home energy; and food and diet.

Assembly members were generally supportive of the proposals and ideas put forward on the topics and were largely encouraged to learn of the projects already underway in Glasgow. Members also contributed a range of additional ideas as the assembly progressed.

The assembly's 15 recommendations are shown below and are ranked in order of priority as determined by the members.

1	The council should immediately set out a road map for how Glasgow will adapt to the green economy with clear links between training, education, and concrete job opportunities
2	The education system should teach children and young people about the skills they'll need for a low-carbon future
3	The council should raise people's awareness of what home energy measures can be taken and how, from 'quick and easy' changes through to retrofitting
4	The council should encourage supermarkets, suppliers and retail outlets in Glasgow to play their part in tackling the climate emergency
5	The council, businesses, charities and community organisations should work together to improve circular economy mechanisms
6	The council should improve waste and recycling management (then introduce local community composting)

7	The council, businesses and national government should subsidise and incentivise training for entering the green economy, for workers at every stage of their careers
8	The council should establish a 'circular economy district' for Glasgow to help people to access reuse and repair outlets easily
9	The council should expand the financial support that is available to households to decarbonise homes, for example in the form of tax incentives, grants and loans
10	The council should repurpose derelict (uncontaminated) land or unused spaces where possible for people and organisations to take action at a local level
11	The council should lead on making Glasgow an attractive place to work and train in new green industries
12	The council should enforce home energy improvements among private landlords
13	The council must educate and help people to cut down on meat and dairy and promote the shift towards a healthier low-carbon diet
14	The council should accelerate the rollout of district heating wherever possible across the city
15	The council should introduce a local ambassadors scheme for people to promote green jobs and skills in their communities

Key principles

Cutting across these recommendations were key principles that underpinned the assembly's deliberations. These were:

- **Urgency** – it was broadly recognised that the climate emergency requires immediate action and ambition.
- **Responsibility** – everyone needs to play their part, including the council, businesses and everyone living in Glasgow.
- **Communication** – Glasgow City Council is seen to have an important role to play in promoting and communicating about net zero initiatives and projects so that Glaswegians are aware of and able to engage with these.
- **Fairness** – actions to address the climate emergency must ensure a just transition to net zero, with nobody left behind.
- **Cost** – there must be clarity on how much the transition will cost and how it will be paid for.
- **Education** – this will be fundamental to Glasgow's response, both within and outside of the formal education system.

Methodology

Since declaring a climate and ecological emergency in May 2019, Glasgow City Council has set the target of Glasgow becoming a net zero city by 2030 and stated a commitment to making the city 'one of the most sustainable places in Europe'.¹ As hosts of the UN Climate Change Conference, known as COP26, in November 2021, Glasgow has the opportunity to showcase its commitment to reaching net zero on a global stage and to catalyse efforts towards this ambitious target.

It is in this context that the council commissioned Ipsos MORI to design and facilitate a citizens' assembly to hear from people living across Glasgow and understand how the city can work together to achieve net zero in a way that is inclusive, fair, and respectful to everyone. The assembly considered the key question, **"How can we work together in Glasgow to tackle the climate emergency by 2030?"**

In this section, a brief summary of the methodology is provided. A more detailed overview can be found in the technical report along with the full set of materials produced for the assembly.

Advisory group

During the planning stages of the assembly, an advisory group was formed to help shape and guide the citizens' assembly. The advisory group - made up of officers from across the council - provided check and challenge throughout the process, suggested expert speakers, and contributed to the development of topic guides for each session.

For public engagement to generate meaningful and actionable recommendations, it is important to have a clear focus and set reasonable parameters for what can be achieved during discussions with citizens. The advisory group therefore recommended topics for the assembly, taking into consideration which topics the public had already been consulted on extensively, and the plans and strategies already in place for each. The four selected topics were: the circular economy; the green economy, jobs and skills; home energy; and food and diet. Other topics, such as transport, waste, and recycling were not included in the assembly as they have already been extensively consulted on. A statement from the council explaining this rationale was presented to the assembly during the learning phase of the process, and members were also invited to share their views on such issues if they wanted to.

The advisory group met on a weekly basis throughout the planning stages and during fieldwork. A list of advisory group members can be found in the technical report.

Recruitment

For any citizens' assembly to have legitimacy in the eyes of the public and the media, the recruitment process needs to be methodologically robust and representative of the chosen population. Sortition, a tried and tested approach for the selection and recruitment of assembly members, was used for this assembly. This involved mailing 10,000 invitations to a random selection of household addresses in Glasgow. Of those who registered their interest, a stratified random sample was selected for the assembly using quotas to ensure the assembly was broadly reflective of the Glasgow population (see table 1.1).

¹ <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/cop26>

Sortition is predicated on the idea that every resident should have an equal probability of receiving an invitation. Ipsos MORI partnered with the Sortition Foundation, an organisation which promotes the use of stratified, random selection in decision-making, for the recruitment of the Glasgow citizens' assembly. More details about the recruitment process can be found on their website and in the technical report.²

The final target profile was agreed between the council and Ipsos MORI to broadly reflect the demographic diversity of Glasgow as well as a range of attitudes towards climate change (see table 1.1). Overall, 55 people were recruited to allow for some dropping out before or during the process. In total, 50 members took part in the first session (with one unable to attend due to experiencing IT issues on the evening) and 51 were still participating by the final session. Please note that where figures do not sum to 100%, this is due to computer rounding.

Table 1.1: Assembly member demographics profile

Demographic	Target		Recruited	
	%	Number	%	Number
Gender				
Male	51	28	51	28
Female	49	27	49	27
Other	0	0	0	0
Total	100	55	100	55
Age				
16-24	15	8	15	8
25-34	24	13	26	14
35-54	31	17	31	17
55+	30	17	29	16
Total	100	55	100	55
City area				
North East	28	15	27	15
North West	36	20	36	20
South	36	20	36	20
Total	100	55	100	55
Ethnicity				
Asian or Asian Scottish	9	5	9	5
Other ethnic minority background	6	3	7	4
White	85	47	84	46
Total	100	55	100	55
Sexual orientation³				
Bisexual	1	1	4	2
Gay/lesbian	3	2	7	4
Heterosexual/straight	94	50	84	46
Other	1	1	4	2
Prefer not to say	1	1	2	1
Total	100	55	100	55

² Sortition Foundation website: <https://www.sortitionfoundation.org/>

³ Please note that variance in target versus achieved profile on sexual orientation is due to the recruitment profile agreed with the council to ensure sufficient representation from LGBT+ groups and computer rounding during the selection process. Across other groups, the random stratified selection was set up to select the number of participants within a range (for example, between 2 and 3 people who identified as gay or lesbian). This risked 0 being selected in some other groups, such as bisexual, as the incidence in the population is between 0-1. To ensure sufficient representation from each of the sexual orientation groups, a fixed minimum target was set on bisexual and gay/lesbian, as well as on those giving an answer of 'other' or 'prefer not to say'. This resulted in some groups being over-represented in the final randomly selected sample, allowing for any participants dropping out.

Long-term illness or disability	%	Number	%	Number
Yes	26	14	26	14
No	74	41	74	41
Total	100	55	100	55
Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) ⁴	%	Number	%	Number
Most deprived areas (SIMD quintile 1)	46	25	46	25
SIMD 2	16	9	16	9
SIMD 3	13	7	15	8
SIMD 4	12	7	11	6
Least deprived areas (SIMD quintile 5)	12	7	13	7
Total	100	55	100	55
Climate change attitude	%	Number	%	Number
Climate change is an immediate and urgent problem	68	37	69	38
Climate change is more a problem for the future	14	8	15	8
Climate change is not really a problem	5	3	2	1
I'm still not convinced that climate change is happening	3	2	4	2
Don't know/none of these	10	5	11	6
Total	100	55	100	55

Materials

Materials were developed by Ipsos MORI, with input from the council and oversight from the advisory group. Presentations were developed and recorded in advance by expert speakers. The recordings were played back live during the main plenary sessions and the speakers joined the sessions to answer questions from assembly members. Any questions that were not answered during the session were compiled in a Q&A document, which was shared with assembly members on an ongoing basis as written responses were added by the council and the speakers. Presentation recordings were made available on the council's website after each session, along with the final Q&A document.⁵

Assembly process

A successful citizens' assembly requires three clear and distinct phases:

1. **Learning**
2. **Deliberation and discussion**
3. **Decision making and prioritisation**

The Glasgow citizens' assembly was grounded in recognised industry best practice and followed key principles of deliberative engagement. More information on these can be found in Ipsos MORI's best practice guide⁶, developed in partnership with experts in the field, such as Imperial College and Involve⁷. The assembly comprised five online Zoom sessions scheduled over three weeks in August 2021 (see figure 1.1). The dates, times, and speakers are summarised below:

- **Session One: Thursday 5th August, 6-9pm**
 - Welcome presentation by Councillor Susan Aitken, Leader of Glasgow City Council

⁴ <https://www.gov.scot/collections/scottish-index-of-multiple-deprivation-2020/>

⁵ Glasgow City Council webpage on the assembly: <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/cop26citizensassembly>

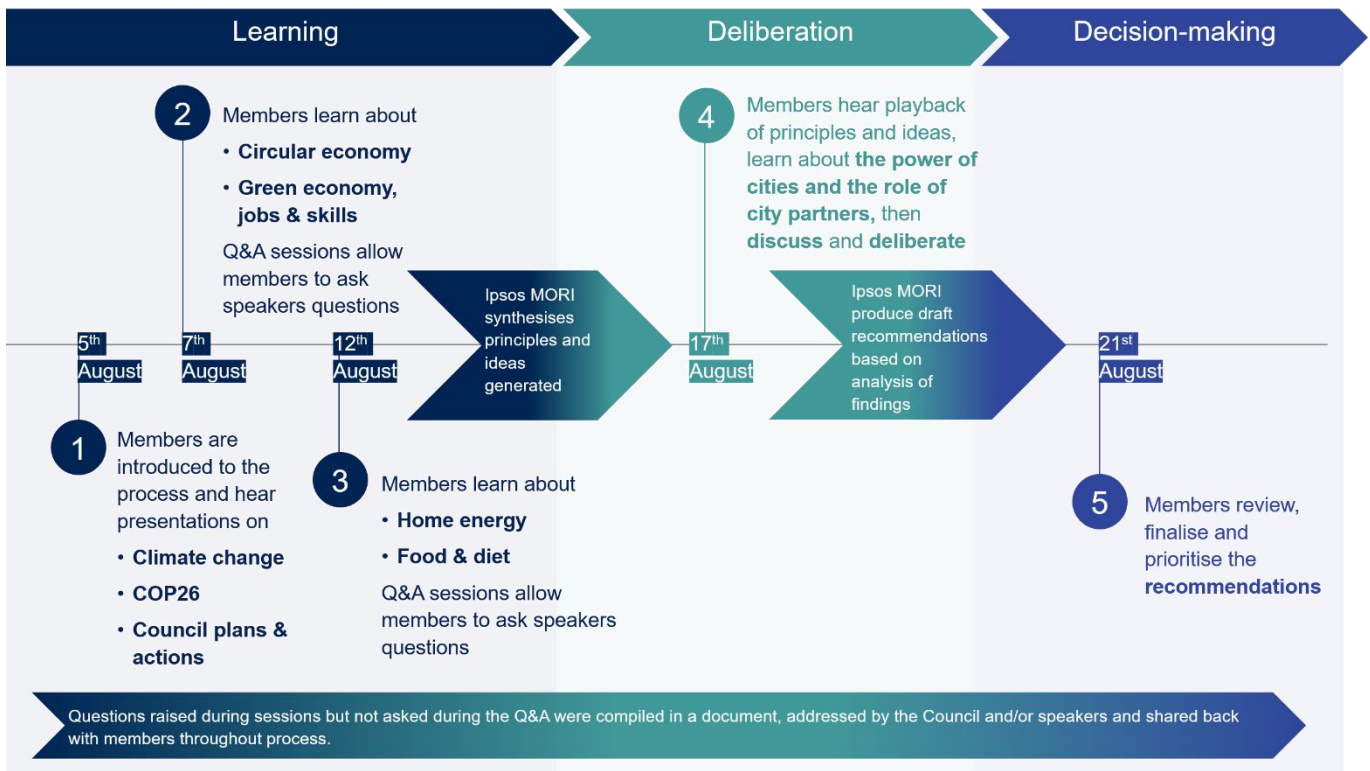
⁶ Ipsos MORI, Deliberative Engagement Best Practice Guide (July 2021): <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/deliberative-engagement-best-practice-guide>

⁷ <https://www.involve.org.uk/resources/knowledge-base/how-do-i-setup-citizens-assembly/standards-citizens-assemblies>

- Presentation on the climate emergency by Aoife Hutton, Keep Scotland Beautiful
- Presentation on COP26 by Colin Edgar, Glasgow City Council
- Presentation on the city's plans and actions towards net zero by Gavin Slater, Glasgow City Council
- **Session Two: Saturday 7th August, 10am-1pm**
 - Presentations on the circular economy, delivered by Cheryl Robb of Zero Waste Scotland and Julie Robertson of Glasgow City Council
 - Presentations on the green economy, jobs and skills, delivered by Kit England of Glasgow City Council and Professor Mike Danson of Heriot-Watt University
- **Session Three: Thursday 12th August, 6-9pm**
 - Presentations on home energy by Stephen McGowan of Glasgow City Council and Lucy Gillie of South Seeds
 - Presentations on food and diet by Abi Mordin of Propagate and Glasgow Community Food Network, and Sandy Paterson of Glasgow City Council
- **Session Four: Tuesday 17th August, 6-9pm**
 - Presentation on the power of cities by Dr Andy Kerr of Climate-KIC
 - Presentation on the role of city partners by Professor Jaime Toney of the University of Glasgow
- **Session Five: Saturday 21st August, 10am-1pm**

Following each set of presentations, members moved into small breakout groups to discuss what they had learned and reflect on the ideas and arguments put forward. In the breakout discussions, assembly members agreed on a clarification question which was then answered by the speakers in the plenary. This format applied to all the topics covered.

Figure 1.2: Assembly structure and format



Interpretation of the findings

When considering these findings, it is important to bear in mind what a qualitative approach provides. It explores the range of attitudes and opinions of participants in detail. It provides an insight into the key reasons underlying participants' views. Findings are descriptive and illustrative, not statistically representative. Often individual participants hold somewhat contradictory views - often described as 'cognitive dissonance'. Participants are provided with detailed information over the course of the five sessions, and thus become more informed than the general public - particularly so given the highly immersive nature of a citizens' assembly.

Acknowledgements

Ipsos MORI would like to thank assembly members and those attending in support of assembly members for giving up their time and engaging with such dedication throughout the process. We also thank the advisory group for their extensive input into making the process as effective and engaging as possible, the expert speakers who gave up their time to contribute their knowledge and answer assembly members' questions, community-led charity Refuweegee for their guidance and support in ensuring one refugee assembly member was able to participate fully, and to the council officers who commissioned the project and worked with us to navigate the development of materials.

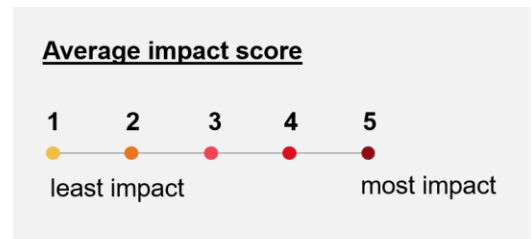
Recommendations

The assembly agreed 15 recommendations to tackle the climate emergency in Glasgow by 2030, focusing on the four topic areas of: the circular economy; green economy, jobs and skills; home energy; and food and diet.

The figure below presents these recommendations in order of priority and includes the assumptions, ideas and conditions that the assembly felt should be considered alongside each one (see figure 1.3). Members also gave each recommendation a score to represent the level of impact they thought each would have towards reducing the city's emissions, with 5 being the most impactful and 1 the least. The average impact score is shown for each recommendation and reflects what assembly members felt would be the impact of each intervention in helping Glasgow meet its net zero targets.

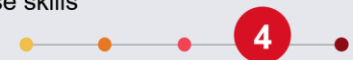
The assembly's 15 recommendations

Figure 1.3: The assembly's 15 recommendations



1 The Council should immediately set out a road map for how Glasgow will adapt to the green economy with clear links between training, education and concrete job opportunities

- Clarity needs to be provided on which types of skills will be most valuable in the future. If this is not yet known, the Council should state and show evidence in their road map how they will identify these skills



2 The education system should teach children and young people about the skills they'll need for a low-carbon future

- Such as green skills and home economics
- Including the five Rs (reduce, reuse, repair, remake and recycle) to encourage a shift away from 'throwaway' culture
- Include career advice/support with a focus on green skills/jobs
- Include a practical element if possible, e.g., not just raising awareness but requiring young people to plant trees etc



3 The Council should raise people's awareness of what home energy measures can be taken and how, from 'quick and easy' changes through to retrofitting

- People themselves, landlords, housing associations and businesses need to make the changes, but the Council should promote and provide guidance on home energy efficiency measures, communicate relevant funding, and direct tenants and landlords to relevant regulation
- Creative and active ways of showing people how the measures work – for example an IKEA-style showroom, local hubs with examples and advice (e.g. in empty shops), online marketing/videos (Glasgow specific), easily accessible advice online (dedicated website)
- Could link with the team supporting the local ambassadors (see recommendation 15)



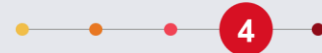
4 The council should encourage supermarkets, suppliers and retail outlets in Glasgow to play their part in tackling the climate emergency

- Make the case for changes to national legislation so that leftover food can be easily donated to charities by companies Encourage supermarkets/retailers to donate leftover food and out-of-season clothes to homelessness charities
- Encourage companies to promote low-carbon products and to report on their carbon footprint
- Encourage supermarkets to reduce packaging, have refill stations, sell wonky fruit and veg, promote seasonal fruit/veg and bottle return schemes. Play their role in encouraging people to change their behaviours
- More regulation of fast food outlets



5 The council, businesses, charities and community organisations should work together to improve circular economy mechanisms

- Make these options more appealing to people by highlighting the benefits and improving ambience / organisation of retail and repair shops and construction material reuse sites, and making it available online
- Include accessible drop-off points for people to donate their goods and explore feasibility of a pick-up service
- Consider branding to emphasise the uniqueness of second-hand goods, giving items a 'remade in Glasgow' identity / brand designed by Glasgow kids



6 The Council should improve waste and recycling management (then introduce local community composting)

- Improvements in waste and recycling management across the city must be made first – community composting is a good idea but first priority has to be fixing current system
- Improve communication on how to deal with waste



7 The Council, businesses and national government should subsidise and incentivise training for entering the green economy, for workers at every stage of their careers

- Introduce and promote 'Green Apprenticeships' and professional pathways to be available for people at all skill levels. New entrants and those currently unemployed, in addition to retraining packages for those at a later point in their career.
- Where businesses can afford to fund apprenticeships or retrain current staff for the green economy, they should do so, with the Council and government picking up the shortfall through grants and bursaries.
- Introduce 'equivalence papers' for skills and qualifications which are transferable from other careers to the green economy to avoid duplication of effort. These papers must be recognised by education authorities and industry regulators.




8 The Council should establish a 'circular economy district' for Glasgow to help people to access reuse and repair outlets easily


- Supported by a communications strategy to make people aware
- Active promotion of a circular economy map or directory at a local level
- Including transport support e.g. collection/pick up services
- It would be helpful to also offer expertise/classes where people could learn more about how to reuse/repair things themselves
- Develop online support/an app to help people know what to bring/upload photos of things to rehome etc




9 The Council should expand the financial support that is available to households to decarbonise homes, for example in the form of tax incentives, grants and loans

- Some financial support available already, e.g. through Warm Homes Scotland – though eligibility requirements can be a challenge and need to be widened to ensure equality for different circumstances
 - Could include incentives such as zero-rated VAT on renewable energy installations (e.g. electric heating, insulation, heat pumps)
 - Must be flexible for different tenures
 - Communicate this support widely and help make it easier for people to apply for these
- 


10 The Council should repurpose derelict (uncontaminated) land or unused spaces where possible for people and organisations to take action at a local level

- Use these spaces for activities such as food and plant growing (and extend allotment areas), circular economy outlets or recreation
 - Learn from what other Councils are doing on community gardening
- 


11 The Council should lead on making Glasgow an attractive place to work and train in new green industries careers

- Attract new green industries to Glasgow, e.g. hydrogen, solar, wind etc
 - Invest in appropriate, relevant training and education
 - Branding education providers as 'centres for excellence' or 'hubs' for green skills
 - Adapt council procurement for contracts linked to the green economy to prioritise local businesses and contractors and require green credentials
- 

12 The Council should enforce home energy improvements among private landlords

- Mixed levels of trust in current regulations and the extent, consistency and equality of enforcement
 - Ensure that tenants do not lose out financially from landlords making home energy improvements (e.g. introduce rent cap controls)
 - Proactively engage and communicate with landlords to make improvements ahead of enforcement being necessary
- 

13 The Council must educate and help people to cut down on meat and dairy and promote the shift towards a healthier low-carbon diet

- Partner with e.g. HSCP/NHS/NGOs (or create an overarching entity) to focus on this issue and combat low trust in council
 - Promote and facilitate locally grown and seasonal produce (including education from childhood on how to source and eat in a lower carbon way)
 - Lobbying national-level policy if possible, for example by encouraging the introduction of carbon labelling on goods to help consumers make low carbon choices, or policies to make locally grown fruit and vegetables more affordable (lead/trial/pilot these ideas to inform policy- incentivising the stores to bring in schemes)
- 

14

The Council should accelerate the rollout of district heating wherever possible across the city

- Will benefit people in these areas through lower bills, as well as reducing emissions
- Build into new developments from the outset
- The Council needs to work and communicate with communities and get permission before signing people up to it



15

The Council should introduce a local ambassadors scheme for people to promote green jobs and skills in their communities

- In addition to sharing knowledge from the Council with communities, paid ambassadors should also share their communities' ideas and feedback with the council to make it a two-way process
- They would need to engage with the community through multiple routes – e.g. Community Councils, schools, existing charities/other groups, visible activities in public places (e.g. supermarkets), social media (supported by the council with good materials) – they would need to be excellent communicators
- Needs to be clear who in the council is responsible for supporting this and how it fits in the 2030 timetable (needs to start asap)



Assembly members also discussed a sixteenth potential recommendation which they formulated during the assembly process. This recommendation was that *'the council should charge people living in Glasgow a tax that is raised specifically for retrofitting'*. The idea of a tax was met with mixed views during the deliberation phase and was prioritised low overall, with over two-thirds of the assembly - 35 of 50 members - ranking the tax on retrofitting as their 15th or 16th priority out of 16, and only five members ranking it in their top 10 priorities (more details can be found in the technical report). Furthermore, the perceived impact of such a tax on reducing the city's carbon emissions was perceived as limited, giving it a lower average impact score of 2 out of 5. It has therefore not been included in the final set of recommendations as it did not receive sufficient support from assembly members.

It is important to note that, while the recommendations above are listed in order of preference as agreed by the assembly collectively, individual priorities were diverse, with some recommendations - such as the reduction of meat and dairy or the introduction of local ambassadors - drawing mixed views and sparking deliberation over how they could be implemented in practice. However, the assembly as a whole considered these to be relevant and impactful interventions towards Glasgow's net zero ambitions. This was reflected in the impact scores given by assembly members, with 11 recommendations receiving an average impact score of 4 out of 5.

Key principles

Cutting across these recommendations were key principles that underpinned the assembly's deliberations. There was consensus among assembly members that the assembly's recommendations and the council's response to them should be guided by these principles, which were:

- **Urgency** – it was broadly recognised that the climate emergency requires immediate action and ambition.

- **Responsibility** – everyone needs to play their part, including the council, businesses and everyone living in Glasgow.
- **Communication** – Glasgow City Council is seen to have an important role to play in promoting and communicating about net zero initiatives and projects so that Glaswegians are aware of and able to engage with these.
- **Fairness** – actions to address the climate emergency must ensure a just transition to net zero, with nobody left behind.
- **Cost** – there must be clarity on how much the transition to net zero will cost and how it will be paid for.
- **Education** – this will be fundamental to Glasgow's response, both within and outwith the formal education system.

The remaining chapters of this report explore the assembly's views and deliberations across the four topics. Quotes from assembly members are included anonymously throughout the report to illustrate, in their own words, the issues raised and discussed during the assembly. An overview of how these recommendations were formed by the assembly, what happened at each stage of the process and how assembly members' views developed through discussion and deliberation is provided in the technical report.

Topic 1: circular economy

Overview of session and topic

In session two, as part of the learning phase, the assembly learned about the circular economy and focused on the ways in which Glasgow could reduce the amount of materials wasted. Members were shown two presentations on the subject of the circular economy:

- The first presentation was delivered by Cheryl Robb, Partnerships Manager at Zero Waste Scotland, (a not-for-profit organisation funded by the Scottish Government and the European Regional Development Fund).⁸ This presentation gave an introduction to the circular economy, and the 'five Rs': refuse, reduce, reuse, repurpose, and recycle.⁹
- The second presentation was delivered by Julie Robertson, Assistant Manager of Sustainable Glasgow at Glasgow City Council, in which she explained the council's plans for the circular economy in construction, food & drink, and textiles.¹⁰

The assembly produced three recommendations relating to the circular economy (see table 1.2 below).

Table 1.2: Recommendations on circular economy

Headline recommendation	Priority (overall, out of 15)	Impact (scale 1-5)
The council, businesses, charities and community organisations should work together to improve circular economy mechanisms	4	4
The council should encourage supermarkets, suppliers, and retail outlets in Glasgow to play their part in tackling the climate emergency	5	4
The council should establish a 'circular economy district' for Glasgow to help people to access reuse and repair outlets easily	9	3

Findings

Initial reactions

The expert presentations were well received, as informative and engaging, and members were surprised to learn the extent of waste in the current economy. While there was already some awareness of surplus food waste from retail and catering, wastage in the construction industry was more unexpected as such inefficiency would not be in construction firms' interest.

⁸ Zero Waste Scotland website: <https://www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/>

⁹ Presentation by Cheryl Robb, Partnerships Manager at Zero Waste Scotland, pre-recorded and presented to the assembly on 7th August 2021: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WQy8vpVFvUc>

¹⁰ Presentation by Julie Robertson, Assistant Manager of Sustainable Glasgow at Glasgow City Council, pre-recorded and presented to the assembly on 7th August 2021: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AtJmzTMjZts>

“I naively thought that because private businesses, in the majority of the cases, are maximising profit, [construction firms] would try to reuse and have as little waste as possible. So that was an eye-opener to me”

Assembly member, North East Glasgow, session two

The Five Rs' (refuse, reduce, reuse, repurpose, recycle) appealed to members as an engaging and memorable concept. They also appreciated additional measures on top of recycling, which some members perceived as limited in scope (with many products not recyclable) and poorly implemented at present (e.g. overseas waste processing).

The ideas mentioned in the presentations and the Q&A session were well received, from specific initiatives such as converting surplus bread into beer to 'sustainable retail districts'¹¹. Assembly members contributed additional examples, such as Pret A Manger's food donations to homeless charities and the Too Good to Go mobile application which connects customers with retail and catering businesses with unsold surplus. Another example was a recent French law mandating that businesses have to donate excess food. For those who had heard of these types of initiatives previously, the circular economy was viewed as already happening through a series of existing community/charity programmes that the council should work with or build upon, rather than as a new concept that needed to be introduced and explained.

“It struck me we're already doing that to some extent. We've got Facebook marketplace and local community websites so I think there are grassroots going on and I think these are the best initiatives”

Assembly member, South Glasgow, session two

Barriers to implementation

The habits and mindsets of individuals were seen as the single biggest barriers to implementing a circular economy in Glasgow, as far as assembly members were concerned. They believed that because most people had become accustomed to buying new products which were then quickly disposed of, these would be hard habits to break. While assembly members were optimistic about younger people and 'the next generation' adapting to a circular economy, they were more pessimistic about adults' ability to transition, even in spite of knowing about the linear economy's negative impact.

“We all know we should repair clothes rather than going to Primark and buying something new...it's good in theory but it's getting people to make that switch”

Assembly member, South Glasgow, session two

Members also pointed to various external factors that they believe lead to the linear economy mindset. These included: cheaper products being harder (or impossible) to repair; a lack of repair skills; second-hand products appearing lower quality than new ones; lack of physical infrastructure for implementing the 'five Rs' (e.g. repair shops); and the unaffordability of 'green' products for those on low incomes.

¹¹ Described by Julie Robertson, Assistant Manager of Sustainable Glasgow at Glasgow City Council, in the Q&A as “A retail district where there would be a mix of high end to low scale small repairs, and it would have more of a traditional shopping experience to it, you would have your cafes using locally sourced food and the retail there.”

“It’s also a bit of a classist issue. Quite frankly, recycled green products are often quite expensive. So that’s one of my concerns. How we can prevent making that a privilege”

Assembly member, South Glasgow, session two

Considering the broader knock-on effects, members also highlighted the importance of considering how products are sourced in the first place, both in terms of overall carbon impact and in terms of climate justice for poorer countries that manufacture many products and goods.

“Those who are selling these cheap fabrics, it’s often brought in from countries that don’t pay workers any sort of real wage and have horrific conditions. It’s not just about buying cheap clothes but everything has a knock-on effect”

Assembly member, North West Glasgow, session two

A more fundamental barrier, for some members, was the feasibility of the council being able to enact such systemic changes. One view expressed was that capitalism is too far-reaching and entrenched for any one local authority to challenge. Another view was that the ‘circular economy’, as a concept, was too abstract and needed to be refocused on concrete changes that impact on Glaswegians’ daily lives.

“I don’t know that there are enough solutions being presented. A lot of it is big ideas and we need to reduce but there’s no actual ideas...People need to start following these things in their day-to-day life. We need guidance of how to actually do these things.”

Assembly member, South Glasgow, session two

How to implement change

In terms of how to shift mindsets and habits, members believed that branding and promotion are important and that a ‘positive spin’ needs to be put on the circular economy. This included the creation of ‘circular economy districts’ as a retail destination, focusing on the ‘local’ (to help make a global crisis feel manageable) and branding products as ‘vintage’ or ‘retro’ instead of the more unfashionable ‘second-hand’.

“We need to remember the mindset of people. Reusing stuff is actually how they are marketed. If you class it as vintage, they will probably buy it”

Assembly member, North East Glasgow, session two

Similarly, members saw nostalgia as a powerful tool for promoting the circular economy in Glasgow. They recalled positive memories such as carrying glass to bottle banks, using the Scottish Nappy Company to reuse baby clothes, and learning home economics at school. Concerns were raised that, since the 1980s or 1990s, a dearth of practical subjects such as cooking, sewing, and woodwork has been contributing to the wastefulness of the linear economy. There was widespread support for reintroducing home economics, albeit without the previously gendered division of skills (e.g. sewing for young women, woodwork for young men).

“I was thinking again of schools when they stopped teaching children food economics and clothing... This should be a basic thing that should be used in schools now and taught. It would stop us having to go and buy clothes and use them once”

Assembly member, South Glasgow, session two

Another suggestion was that home economics-style classes should be expanded to adult education, in order to both equip people with the necessary skills to foster a circular economy and change the mindsets of those with more entrenched habits.

There was no consensus on who should be responsible for implementing a circular economy in Glasgow. Rather, there were two competing – and overlapping – perspectives, which neither individuals themselves nor the assembly as a whole could reach agreement on. On the one hand, members believed that large businesses, and local/national governments which determine the legislation that influences their activities, have more power to improve sustainability than individuals.

“It’s more about big companies rather than small individuals, and the power of Council and government to change legislation to push the industry in the right direction”

Assembly member, North East Glasgow, session two

On the other hand, members also thought that everyone in the city needed to play their part and contribute rather than expect the public sector to do everything for them.

“Rather than listening to councillors or politicians, maybe we need to take our own responsibility. Giving old clothes back to charity. It’s not just the councils or governments”

Assembly member, North East Glasgow, session two

Despite these differences of opinion, members thought that the circular economy needed to be financially incentivised in order to stop individuals and organisations from ‘doing what they are already doing’. This included both specific suggestions like retail promotions (e.g. a clothes voucher for donating second-hand items) and references to publicly-funded ‘incentivisation’, ‘grants’ or ‘subsidies’ – though the details of how these suggestions would work in practice remained somewhat vague. In addition to financial incentives, members also thought that promotion and awareness-raising would be vital to encourage the five Rs. Although a few members had heard of existing circular economy outlets or schemes in the city, it was wholly new information to many that these existed. It was suggested that any campaign should be done across different modes of communication to capture every demographic among the population of Glasgow.

“Put it on the side of a bus. Leaflets, flyers. Keep some real physical word communication for things. Not everyone is online and looking for things like that online”

Assembly member, South Glasgow, session two

Assembly members often stated that the city council should prioritise improving their existing waste collection provision before establishing additional circular economy mechanisms. This was based on personal experiences of recycling areas that are hard to access, bins that are over-capacity, the shift from segregated to combined recycling, and personal experience of neighbours not following rules and putting everything into landfill. The prioritisation of waste and recycling was discussed further when members considered the idea of introducing a community composting scheme and was ultimately included as a key caveat to the recommendation on community composting (see page 32).

“I don't try to compost food because every time I walk by that bin and look in it, people are just putting trash in it. At one point I was really irritated so I made signs and taped them onto the bins, nobody paid any attention to that”

Assembly member, North West Glasgow, session two

A suggestion was that, by making waste collection clearer, more accessible, and more frequent, the level of non-compliance, or 'people who can't be bothered', would decrease.

Other ideas

In addition to those ideas that were included in the recommendations shortlist, there were many other ideas generated that were not explored in detail such as community pantries or fridges for low income families to access food, reintroducing a re-usable nappy service, and levying a tax on companies selling cheap fabrics. These were not taken forward to the recommendations either because the idea had already been implemented, because there was a relative lack of interest among assembly members, or because they were out of scope of the assembly's four topic areas.

Topic 2: the green economy, jobs & skills

Overview of session and topic

In session two, as part of the learning phase, the assembly learned about how Glasgow might adapt to the green economy, the jobs this might create, and the skills necessary to carry these out. Members watched two presentations on the subject of green economy, jobs and skills:

- The first presentation was delivered by Kit England, Green Economy Manager at Glasgow City Council. This presentation outlined the carbon impact of different parts of the economy in Glasgow at present, and how this might change with a transition to a green economy.¹²
- The second presentation was delivered by Professor Mike Danson from Heriot-Watt University, a member of the Just Transition Commission, which aims to design policies in a way that ensures the benefits of climate change action are shared widely.¹³ His presentation explained the sectors and industries that are at risk from decarbonisation, and how the impact on them could be reduced.¹⁴

The assembly produced five recommendations relating to the green economy, jobs and skills (see table 1.3 below).

Table 1.3: Recommendations on green economy, jobs and skills

Headline recommendation	Priority (overall, out of 15)	Impact (scale 1-5)
The council should immediately set out a road map for how Glasgow will adapt to the green economy with clear links between training, education and concrete job opportunities	1	4
The education system should teach children and young people about the skills they'll need for a low-carbon future	2	4
The council, businesses and national government should subsidise and incentivise training for entering the green economy, for workers at every stage of their careers	7	4
The council should lead on making Glasgow an attractive place to work and train in new green industries	11	3

¹² Presentation by Kit England, Green Economy Manager at Glasgow City Council, pre-recorded and presented to the assembly on 7th August 2021: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ffmc1wfy7ns>

¹³ Just Transition Commission, on Scottish Government website: <https://www.gov.scot/groups/just-transition-commission/>

¹⁴ Presentation by Mike Danson, Professor at Heriot-Watt University and member of the Just Transition Commission, pre-recorded and presented to the assembly on 7th August 2021: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3FoaYc5fHM>

The council should introduce a local ambassadors scheme for people to promote green jobs and skills in their communities

15

3

Findings

Initial reactions

Assembly members' reactions to the presentations were typically positive, since they made them feel more optimistic that the climate emergency could be tackled. They were surprised to learn that the cost of decarbonising the UK are estimated to be less than has been spent in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and comparable with UK military spending. To them, this transformed their view of fighting climate change from impossible to possible.

“The cost of reducing our emissions was a lot less than I expected, to actually be comparable to the spend on the military and COVID actually shows that it’s something we can do”

Assembly member, North West Glasgow, session two

There was also enthusiasm for the concept of a just transition, with members expressing support for the shift to a green economy not leaving anyone behind and using transferable skills to mitigate the impact of this.

“It was really heartening to see how the equality of experience, making sure disadvantaged areas and poorer people aren’t unduly, their lives are not made worse by what we want to do, I think that is heartening to see that is a main and strong focus”

Assembly member, South Glasgow, session two

Although travel was not the focus of this session or the assembly,¹⁵ members felt this was an important consideration when thinking about how the city could transition to a green economy and to more green jobs and skills. They often noted that domestic transport was the highest emission in Glasgow’s economy according to a slide in the first presentation. They wanted to know what steps the council was taking to address this and stressed the importance of taking action on this alongside the themes discussed in the assembly. Members also gave personal examples of the perceived expense and inaccessibility of the city’s public transport system.

“Transport was the biggest single emission. Has Glasgow got a plan and targets and solutions that they are going to implement? Things like electric and hydrogen buses will help”

Assembly member, North West Glasgow, session two

Another view was that if commuting was too difficult using the city’s public transport system, workers would move to other cities and a green economy would not thrive in Glasgow.

Barriers to implementation

Although members tended to agree with the overall aims of a just transition, they felt frustrated at the lack of detail of how this would play out at a practical everyday level for Glaswegians.

¹⁵ See page 7, ‘Advisory Group’ section, paragraph 2

“So many laudable aims in both these presentations. I’d like to hear more about how it’s going to happen not just the aims”

Assembly member, South Glasgow, session two

While one view was that these details probably did exist and would be in the council’s and Scottish Government’s forthcoming plans, there was also the more sceptical view that details were not mentioned because these were currently unknown. For instance, members were positive about the new green jobs mentioned (e.g. retrofitting) but they wanted to know what other types of ‘green skills’ would be needed beyond the examples given.

“I think it’s scarier for those starting careers. I was reading an article about a panel and the experts said by 2030, 85% of the careers students will take haven’t been invented yet”

Assembly member, North West Glasgow, session two

As a potential solution, members requested more concrete examples of local and community initiatives for other people in Glasgow to take inspiration from.

“It feels these ideas are top down... What I’d like to see, and it’s not come across yet, is local examples taken by individuals and groups to be seen as an example for others to respond”

Assembly member, North West Glasgow, session two

Members also identified specific barriers regarding the examples they were presented with. In terms of transitioning from the oil and gas industries, there were concerns that these workers would struggle to take a significant cut to their salaries and be unwilling to make the change. Another view, however, was that there should be greater concern given to protecting the most precarious workers than those currently receiving high incomes. This led to a question as to whether the oil and gas industries should receive so much attention at all.

“I wonder if the “just transition” is very focused on oil and gas or if there’s other industries to focus on... There must be a lot of industries which will face drastic changes”

Assembly member, South Glasgow, session two

Retrofitting was met with mixed views. While there was seen to be potential for this to have positive impacts, creating new jobs and training opportunities, there was also a concern that these roles would be less attractive than ‘higher-tech’ industries like hydrogen and would be filled by workers from overseas instead of those already in Glasgow.

“People in engineering are used to high salaries, hoovered up by renewables or hydrogen industry. I don’t think they would go into retrofitting homes. I don’t think it can meet the demand. I think it will have to bring more people in from abroad”

Assembly member, North East Glasgow, session two

Assembly members’ perspectives on the practical barriers to retrofitting homes are covered later in this report under ‘Topic three: Home Energy’.

How to implement change

As with other topics, members suggested that local and national governments would need to provide funding to support and incentivise a green economy. This was particularly the case regarding education and training, which members reflected was already prohibitively expensive for many people in Glasgow across different sectors.

“I think it’s going to require a lot of financial input to get it going because we don’t have a lot in that way as it is... it’s difficult at the moment. Never mind if it’s a new industry, or a new part of an existing industry”

Assembly member, North West Glasgow, session two

The cross-cutting theme of promotion and awareness-raising was also raised in relation to green skills and jobs. One suggestion was to introduce a ‘local ambassadors’ scheme which would help to engage communities with green jobs and skills. When this was initially suggested, in session two, this scheme involved workers who have transitioned to the Green Economy demonstrating to their neighbours how they achieved this rather than the council or businesses simply telling workers what they ought to do. In session five, however, members adapted this to a broader role focused on raising community awareness of green jobs and skills, without necessarily having to be a representative from a transitioned or transitioning industry.

Due to the perceived urgency of the climate emergency, members tended to prioritise retraining existing workers or providing alternative career routes for those entering the workforce for the first time. Green apprenticeships appealed to members due to its applied focus and tangible links to a future career. Members were also enthusiastic about children and young people being taught about the green economy and green skills, though the view was also expressed that an undue focus on this group would shift the economy ‘too late’ (i.e. later than 2030).

Private businesses, according to members, should also play their part, whether through paying additional ‘carbon taxes’ for those that are high emitters, transparent monitoring of their carbon emissions, or directly investing in education and skills. The rationale behind companies providing training themselves was that they would need to transition to survive financially anyway, and that those who can afford to do this should do so without public sector financial support.

“Companies like Shell and BP are going to have to change their industry, presumably they are going to need people employed in windfarms, tide generating, hydroelectricity, presumably these big oil companies are going to look at sustainability in order to survive”

Assembly member, South Glasgow, session two

There was a perception that this should be more than possible due to the range of potential transferable skills, such as those working on oil rigs being able to apply this to other forms of construction and engineering.

Other ideas

In addition to those ideas that were included in the recommendations shortlist, there were many other ideas generated that were not explored in detail such as using an alternative economic measure to GDP such as quality of life, trialling free public transport, and rolling out electric buses across Glasgow. These were not taken forward to the recommendations either because the idea had already been implemented,

because there was a relative lack of interest among members, or because they were out of scope of the assembly's four topic areas.

Topic 3: home energy

Overview

In session three, as part of the learning phase, the assembly learned about home energy and discussed actions that could be taken to decarbonise homes in Glasgow. Members were shown two presentations:

- The first was delivered by Stephen McGowan, Manager for Housing Strategy at Glasgow City Council. This presentation gave an overview of the energy policy context in Scotland and outlined the council's affordable warmth programme in Glasgow.¹⁶
- The second was delivered by Lucy Gillie, Manager at South Seeds (a community-led organisation based in the South Central area of Glasgow)¹⁷ and explained decarbonising heat in sandstone tenements.¹⁸

Of the final set of recommendations, the assembly produced four relating to home energy (see table 1.4 below).

Table 1.4: Recommendations on home energy

Headline recommendation	Priority (overall, out of 15)	Impact (scale 1-5)
The council should raise people's awareness of what home energy measures can be taken and how, from 'quick and easy' changes through to retrofitting	3	4
The council should expand the financial support that is available to households to decarbonise homes, for example in the form of tax incentives, grants and loans	9	4
The council should enforce home energy improvements among private landlords	12	3
The council should accelerate the rollout of district heating wherever possible across the city	14	4

¹⁶ Presentation by Stephen McGowan, Manager for Housing Strategy at Glasgow City Council, pre-recorded and presented to the assembly on 12th August 2021: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASckYXueqjA>

¹⁷ South Seeds website: <https://southseeds.org/>

¹⁸ Presentation by Lucy Gillie, Manager at South Seeds, pre-recorded and presented to the assembly on 12th August 2021: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JwkevTfZ16k>

Findings

Initial reactions

Assembly members were generally supportive of the proposed measures to improve energy efficiency and decarbonise homes in Glasgow, recognising the necessity of these changes for Glasgow to become a net zero city. The home energy changes proposed, such as replacing gas heaters with renewable alternatives, replacing windows with double glazing and installing insulation, were positively received. In many cases, such measures to improve home energy efficiency were considered to be obviously beneficial to residents.

However, members were struck by the current levels of fuel poverty in Glasgow, which were covered in the first presentation. The issues of cost, practicality and fairness in implementing home energy changes were central to their discussions.

“We need to do it but how do we actually do it, some people are more or less fortunate”

Assembly member, North West Glasgow, session three

Members also remarked on the local actions of community-led organisation, South Seeds, in decarbonising tenements and responded positively to the practical steps outlined for improving home energy efficiency. For those who had been overwhelmed by the scale of the changes outlined in previous presentations, this was a welcome shift in focus away from the broader, systemic changes required to reach net zero, towards the actions that individuals can take.

“Lucy's presentation was useful and stuff we need to know. Practical things to make changes”

Assembly member, South Glasgow, session three

The city council's district heating project, first mentioned in session one as part of the council's plans and actions presentation, was also discussed by assembly members during session three. As members began to explore actions towards Glasgow becoming a net zero city by 2030 in the context of home energy, questions were raised as to how this could be utilised more widely available and why district heating schemes had not already been rolled out more widely across the city. Questions on the practicality and feasibility of district heating were addressed both as part of the Q&A session and in the Q&A document shared with assembly members.

Barriers to implementation

Although many of the home energy measures were considered to be necessary, realistic, and achievable, members also discussed the practical barriers to implementing them. Of these, the cost of decarbonising homes was seen as the overriding challenge. Recognising the prevalence of fuel poverty in Glasgow, members were concerned about how lower income households would be able to afford home energy improvements.

“The people who are needy are the ones who haven't got the means to do double glazing, central heating”

Assembly member, North East Glasgow, session three

The investment costs compared to the longer term savings was a common issue raised by the assembly, as well as the level of disruption that would be caused by the bigger interventions, such as retrofitting, installing heat pumps or rolling out district heating across the city. Despite the speakers' emphasis on decarbonising measures being cheaper, there remained some doubt over how affordable they would be

for everyone. Coupled with this was a lack of trust in the technology as a long-term solution. Members recalled some initiatives within the last 10-15 years to upgrade heating systems that had already become obsolete, leading to a degree of hesitancy around adopting new technologies and a desire for more information.

“How much is it going to cost to do this? How long will the payback period be over the existing system? And what level of disruption will you go through to get that?”

Assembly member, North West Glasgow, session three

It was also recognised that the diversity in Glasgow's housing stock, and varying types of tenure, would impact on the experiences of residents as they made home energy improvements. As previously outlined, the upfront costs, disruptions involved and the longevity of measures were all considered to be potential barriers for homeowners. For those renting privately or living in housing associations, tenants' lack of control over implementing changes, and the fear of the costs being passed onto private renters in the form of increased charges, were highlighted as key issues.

“It's very hard to get even a light switch fixed, never mind a whole heating system. It's coming back to how to get that from the landlords. I have no control whatsoever over the heating systems that they [the landlord] have bought”

Assembly member, North West Glasgow, session three

Assembly members highlighted an information and communication gap when it comes to home energy, which they felt was important to address. There was evident confusion about the renewable technologies mentioned in the presentations - such as heat pumps and district heating - in terms of how they work. As a result, a number of questions posed to the speakers during the plenary were in relation to technology.

“There is no communication on how you can achieve any of this. I'm only aware because I'm part of this assembly. How is the average Joe on the street meant to understand these options?”

Assembly member, North West Glasgow, session three

How to implement change

Given the perceived scale of the interventions proposed, education and communication were consistently identified as necessary prerequisites to action. There was a consensus that the council would need to educate people on how to make the smaller changes cost-effectively and coordinate residents on the larger interventions, while taking into account the different tenures and living situations of everyone in Glasgow.

“If the council want people to change, they need to show how to make changes in a cost-effective way [...] How and when, and what is that going to cost? How are you going to help people in private, social and housing?”

Assembly member, South Glasgow, session three

For the larger, more time-consuming and disruptive interventions - such as retrofitting - there was a suggestion to set up a centralised system for individuals or groups of residents to apply to and have their homes scheduled for retrofitting.

For the smaller 'quick and easy' changes that can be made by individuals, clear guidance was deemed fundamental to encourage action from residents. There was a clear perception that awareness of renewable energy - even of energy providers supplying renewable energy - is low and would require a comprehensive communications strategy to promote the benefits of decarbonising measures. Convincing messaging about the return on investment and cost savings would also be important, given assembly members' doubts that it is truly cost effective.

"We all need to be educated. We need to know why what we have at the moment isn't the best way. We need to understand, whatever it is, why that is the way to go"

Assembly member, North East Glasgow, session three

As the cost of decarbonising homes was identified as a significant barrier, financial incentives were suggested by a number of members as a way to encourage uptake of measures to improve home energy efficiency. There was a consensus that the council should offer financial support, particularly to low income households, for example in the form of tax incentives, grants and loans. It was largely agreed that this, combined with a strong campaign to build awareness, would be the most effective way to encourage people to take steps to decarbonise their home, such as by insulating or replacing windows.

Considering the range of experiences and living situations in Glasgow, another condition identified by assembly members was that home energy changes must be accessible to all regardless of tenure. There was a particular focus on the private rented sector and, while there were mixed opinions of landlords, members agreed that the council must ensure that measures to decarbonise homes – especially the bigger interventions – are fully regulated.

"I think not all landlords are big baddies that they are made out to be. I appreciate they have different experiences of that, but the government have got to make sure that everybody is impacted in the same way or at least at a level pace"

Assembly member, South Glasgow, session three

Assembly members also acknowledged that effective implementation of decarbonisation measures relies on advancements in renewable technologies, such as hydrogen, that were perceived to be a national government decision and beyond the remit of Glasgow residents or the council. It was generally agreed that the Scottish Government and Council should promote home energy measures and provide guidance to encourage uptake. There were more mixed views over the extent to which a more interventionist approach should be taken by the council in the private rented sector to ensure that landlords implement the necessary changes to generate sufficient levels of decarbonisation across Glasgow.

Other ideas

In addition to those ideas that were included in the recommendations shortlist, there were many other ideas generated that were not explored in detail, such as the council promoting green energy companies to raise awareness and encouraging switching; and expanding the installation of solar panels from school buildings (which the council already does, as highlighted in session one's presentation on the city's plans and actions) to more public buildings across Glasgow. These were not taken forward to the recommendations either because the idea had already been implemented, because there was a relative lack of interest among members, or because they were out of scope of the assembly's four topic areas.

An idea raised during discussions on home energy, which was included in the longlist of recommendations, was that a community tax could be introduced to raise funds for retrofitting Glasgow tenements. This was not included in the final list of recommendations because it received mixed views from Assembly members and was not widely supported. Members ultimately ranked this recommendation the lowest overall and felt it would have a limited impact on reducing the city's carbon emissions.

Topic 4: food & diet

Overview of session and topic

The final topic covered by the assembly was food and diet. Members discussed the current food system and were shown two presentations:

- The first was delivered by Abi Mordin, co-director and strategic lead for Propagate - a sustainable food worker collective¹⁹ - and Glasgow Community Food Network, which is a cross-sector project which aims to provide equal access to affordable, healthy food.²⁰ The presentation provided an overview of issues with the current food system in Scotland and Glasgow.²¹
- The second was delivered by Sandy Paterson, Assistant Manager (food growing) at Glasgow City Council and gave examples of projects happening in Glasgow to improve both the city's and the planet's health.²²

Of the 15 recommendations produced, four related to food and diet (see table 1.5 below).

Table 1.5: Recommendations on food & diet

Headline recommendation	Priority (overall, out of 15)	Impact (scale 1-5)
The council should encourage supermarkets, suppliers and retail outlets in Glasgow to play their part in tackling the climate emergency	4	4
The council should improve waste and recycling management (then introduce local community composting)	6	4
The council should repurpose derelict (uncontaminated) land or unused spaces where possible for people and organisations to take action at a local level	10	4
The council must educate and help people to cut down on meat and dairy and promote the shift towards a healthier low-carbon diet	13	3

Findings

Initial reactions

Members were surprised and encouraged to learn how much local growing is already taking place in Glasgow. Local growing projects described by the speakers - such as the vertical farms and market gardens described – were generally considered to be an effective use of space, good for health and wellbeing and aligned with the key principles of a circular economy. The concept of urban agriculture was widely supported and there was a clear appetite among members to learn more about these.

¹⁹ Propagate website: <https://www.propagate.org.uk/>

²⁰ Glasgow Community Food Network website: <https://glasgowfood.net/>

²¹ Presentation by Abi Mordin, co-director and strategic lead for Propagate and Glasgow Community Food Network, pre-recorded and presented to the assembly on 12th August 2021: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XgX1J2L46Z0>

²² Presentation by Sandy Paterson, Assistant Manager (food growing) at Glasgow City Council, pre-recorded and presented to the assembly on 12th August 2021: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u63sWpVBSOE>

“The vertical farm stood out for me. That was really interesting to see the use of that space. I would be interested to know if there is more opportunity for that in other places moving forward”

Assembly member, South Glasgow, session three

This positive response to the local actions being taken in Glasgow was tempered by the reality of the current food system as shown in the first presentation. One perspective was that reducing the amount of food wasted along the supply chain is a more pressing and urgent priority than the local growing initiatives. There was a perception that processed, convenience and high carbon foods tend to be cheaper and an overhaul of the entire system would be required to make low carbon, local and seasonal produce more accessible and affordable.

“Tragically, it comes down to cost. I was standing in the supermarket and there were packets of Morrison’s Own super noodles for 14p. How can you produce, package and transport anything worth putting in your body for 14p? That’s why we are eating things that aren’t good for the environment, bad for us”

Assembly member, South Glasgow, session three

Underpinning initial responses to the presentations on food and diet was a tension between intervention and choice, with members expressing a range of views on this. On the one hand, there were those that felt this is a tough challenge which would require the state to encourage a shift to a plant-based diet. On the other hand, there were those who were uncomfortable with the idea of the government or the council dictating to citizens what they should or should not eat. These views were closely tied to individual habits, attitudes and experiences. There was a consensus that food is a personal choice and driven by a range of factors, such as religion and household structure.

Barriers to implementation

Assembly members outlined a number of barriers to implementing changes to the city’s food system. Recognising its complexity, members questioned the feasibility of changing a model in which carbon-intensive foods are perceived to be cheaper, available out of season and more convenient than local, seasonal or organic produce. Members largely expressed support for locally grown food but considered it to be inaccessible and unaffordable for those on lower incomes, and that structural change - beyond the remit of residents or the city council - would be required to shift to a low carbon food system.

“I find the organic items are more expensive and budget wise it is a bit hard”

Assembly member, South Glasgow, session three

Members discussed the decisions and trade-offs that consumers face when they shop and there was some confusion over how to make low carbon choices.

“I think it’d be useful to have some more information on how, for instance, local meat compares in its carbon footprint to importing non-animal foods”

Assembly member, South Glasgow, session three

Between sessions three and four, assembly members were set the task of using the BBC's carbon calculator.²³ This exercise further highlighted the complexity of the food system and the misconceptions that exist in relation to the carbon footprint of food. For instance, some members were surprised when comparing the climate impacts of certain foods, such as avocados and meat.

"Avocados fly in from Chile and I'd have expected that to be comparable to a low carbon animal product, but it's not"

Assembly member, North West Glasgow, session four

Members highlighted a number of practical barriers to expanding local growing initiatives which included: the absence of space for local growing; long waiting lists for allotments; the limited outdoor space for residents living in tenements; issues of seasonality and limited choices; and the challenge of establishing enough space to feed a city. Members also pointed to a lack of awareness of current or prospective local growing initiatives and dearth of knowledge on how to grow food.

"I never realised there was so much being grown out in Glasgow, fruit and veg. Other than going to a supermarket or a big brand shop, I wouldn't know where to start to go and find it"

Assembly member, North West Glasgow, session three

Considering the complexity, practicalities and cost of changing the food system, there was a clear sense among members that shifting people's habits and mindsets would be a significant challenge. Members themselves held differing views on food and diet. Those in support of a plant-based diet tended to consider it a necessary change, while those less favourable towards this tended to view veganism as divisive. There was also a view that reducing (rather than removing) the intake of meat and dairy would have a positive impact on the climate but would be a personal challenge, and there remained some discomfort over the idea of government intervention on diet.

"I'd probably rather make my own decisions on what foods I eat. I don't feel like the government should do that too much"

Assembly member, North West Glasgow, session three

Given the disparity in perspectives contributed by assembly members, it was agreed that encouraging behaviour change would be problematic.

"It would be fantastic if everyone could pledge and commit to change their diet and engage in community garden spaces but I feel like there is going to be a huge amount of resistance to becoming more plant-based from lots of people"

Assembly member, South Glasgow, session three

How to implement change

To address the practical issues around space, there was a consensus that more space should be created for allotments and urban food growing initiatives by utilising derelict or unused sites. Assembly members pointed out that much derelict land in Glasgow is contaminated, and discussed various ways of working around this issue, such as using raised beds or providing a map to indicate land that can be utilised for growing.

²³ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-46459714>

“What worries me is derelict land, is that there isn’t something that could contaminate food, so they have to be very careful. But there should be schemes for community growing”

Assembly member, South Glasgow, session three

Once space is made available for urban agriculture, members felt that the council would need to help people acquire the knowledge and skills to start local growing initiatives in their communities. The suggestion of a community composting scheme was positively received by the assembly. However, it was suggested that improvements to the city’s waste and recycling management would need to be made first. A wider education initiative was also suggested to promote and raise awareness of low carbon food choices. There was some agreement that communication around changes to diet could be reframed, with emphasis on the benefits of a plant-based diet to people’s health and the environment, rather than promoting veganism and the removal of meat and dairy altogether, which was perceived to be unacceptable for some.

“It’s all about education and knowing what is the most appropriate and environmentally friendly way to eat. Trying to eat more healthily to live longer and live a healthier and happier life, the vegan thing puts people off sometimes”

Assembly member, South Glasgow, session three

In acknowledging the need for significant structural and systemic change, there was some discussion over what supermarkets and other food outlets can do to reduce waste and adapt to a low carbon food system. Pret A Manger and Starbucks were cited as good examples of businesses taking action to limit food waste by donating leftover food to charities or the homeless and it was widely agreed that businesses should be encouraged to play their part.

It was generally felt that actions on food would require a balance of input at a local and national level, with roles for government, business, communities and individuals to help Glasgow achieve net zero by 2030. For instance, one perspective was that if the council can create the space and promote existing urban agriculture, then communities can initiate their own growing projects. It was also felt that supermarkets, suppliers and retailers should be responsible for promoting low carbon foods and helping to reduce food waste, with support and regulation from government.

There were mixed views among assembly members on what role the council should play in encouraging a shift in behaviour. It was broadly recognised that food and diet are major contributors to carbon emissions, and on the one hand there was some support for the council taking a strong stance on the actions individuals should take to help bring emissions down. On the other hand, there was a preference for the council to provide guidance and information, rather than taking a strongly interventionist approach. There was some discomfort with the idea of the council taking a more directive role in people’s food choices.

Other ideas

In addition to those ideas that were included in the recommendations shortlist, there were many other ideas generated that were not explored in detail, such as the introduction of voluntary hours in schools to allow pupils to learn about food growing; lower taxes on fruit and vegetables or increase taxes on high carbon foods; setting up local foraging groups and food festivals; and setting up mobile shops selling local produce for those with limited access to shops or gardens. These were not taken forward to the recommendations either because the idea had already been implemented, because there was a relative lack of interest among members, or because they were out of scope of the assembly’s four topic areas.

Reflections on the future

This section summarises the themes emerging from the 'postcard to the future' exercise in session 5, where participants imagined they were in the year 2030, writing back to themselves in the current moment - 2021 - about the changes that have been made in Glasgow.

Optimism among assembly members

After learning about the topics, developing recommendations for the council, and then agreeing their priorities, there was a pronounced sense of optimism among assembly members.

Talking through issues with one another, witnessing the broad agreement that change is required, and hearing about the practical changes that could be made (or that are underway and could be expanded upon), meant that assembly members' initial fears about the scale of changes required were somewhat allayed.

This was especially apparent when writing their postcards from the future. Assembly members typically told a positive and upbeat story about a better future of electric cars and buses, of a Glasgow that is cleaner and greener, of healthier and locally sourced food, and of a more sustainable approach to reuse and repair.

Cleaner and greener

The imagined physical environment of Glasgow in 2030 – the look of the city, its public spaces, and the air people breathe – was a key feature of this optimistic narrative. Assembly members talked of less crowded roads within the city, where it is easier – and a more pleasant experience – to get around, whether on public transport or on foot.

"I know you were scared about giving up the car, but you hit your step count much easier now"

Assembly member, South Glasgow, session five

Transport matters

Effective public transport was central to this positive vision of the future. Given it was not explicitly a topic of the assembly, this emphasises just how important transport is to Glasgow's citizens. Assembly members spoke of electric buses ferrying people about a cleaner Glasgow in a manner that is more efficient and effective than they currently experience.

Dovetailing with their associations with cleaner and greener physical space, assembly members consistently noted a future that is quieter than the present. This, they imagined, will be facilitated by a near-universal switch to electric vehicles, whether private or public. The internal combustion engine was, for the most part, expected to be a "museum piece" by 2030.

Back to the future

Reuse and repair were very popular concepts. As outlined earlier in this report, this idea of reusing and recycling materials taps into common memories of a not-too-distant past. Across the assembly, this was reflected in the members' imagined futures. They described how a thriving reuse and repair sector will be partly responsible for reinvigorating the city's economy and wrote of Glasgow as a leading light in this area.

This sense of civic pride was apparent in other ways too – for example, assembly members drew comparisons with Glasgow's shipbuilding past when talking about an imagined future where Glasgow is a hub of renewable technologies such as offshore wind.

Homes, heating, and healthier diets

Assembly members expected great strides to be made by 2030 in terms of how homes are heated and insulated, as well as how and what those inside the homes will be eating.

They talked often of being “cosier” than now, of homes that are easier and cheaper to heat, in part thanks to the efforts of the council to push this agenda. And, although controversial in the assembly in terms of how this shift is achieved, healthier, plant-based, and locally sourced diets were another popular aspect of the assembly's imagined world of 2030.

Challenges along the way

Despite the widespread optimism about what the Glasgow of 2030 might look, feel, and sound like, assembly members did note several challenges that will need to be overcome. Key among these challenges was the sense that changing attitudes and behaviours will be hard and time-consuming work.

This, in turn, was linked to a fear that, despite people collectively wanting to change, not enough will be done, nor done quickly enough, to avoid permanent damage to the planet – there were those who felt that some effects of climate change were now unavoidable.

And, as seen throughout the assembly, there were also concerns that a better, greener future could be derailed without the necessary action by “big corporations and countries”.

The world, not just Glasgow

Ultimately, despite the challenges that assembly members noted, this largely optimistic vision for Glasgow's future was also a hopeful global vision. Assembly members consistently talked about how they felt the changes they might make to their own city would be reflected in a wider global movement, where people freely and actively share ideas and knowledge about creating a more sustainable world.

The postcards from the future talked about how the world could become a better place, with wildlife habitats protected and restored, fewer extreme weather events, better education, and better diets.

“Without droughts and famine, everything is better for the world. No more hunger”

Assembly member, South Glasgow, session five

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This is the international market research specific standard that supersedes BS 7911/MRQSA and incorporates IQCS (Interviewer Quality Control Scheme). It covers the five stages of a Market Research project. Ipsos MORI was the first company in the world to gain this accreditation.



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