

Net Zero Now Training Programme Summary

Summary

Net Zero Now is a one-year project from Cambridge Carbon Footprint which was funded £15,000 in the initial round of the Zero Carbon Communities (ZCC) grant scheme. The Net Zero Now project provided free training for community action on climate change. It trained 12 individuals to become ambassadors for climate change in their local area. These individuals are now working on a range of initiatives including sustainability of the village hall redevelopment, toy and book swaps, bike repair schemes and an eco-festival.

The challenge

Many people want to act on climate change, but don't know what this would look like in their community, are unsure of where to start and are daunted by the scope of what they could do. Individuals could often benefit from training on communication and engagement strategies, and practical elements, such as how to involve volunteers and organise events. There is, therefore, a need to enable community leaders to drive initiatives in their own areas, to support and empower them and others to respond to the climate emergency.

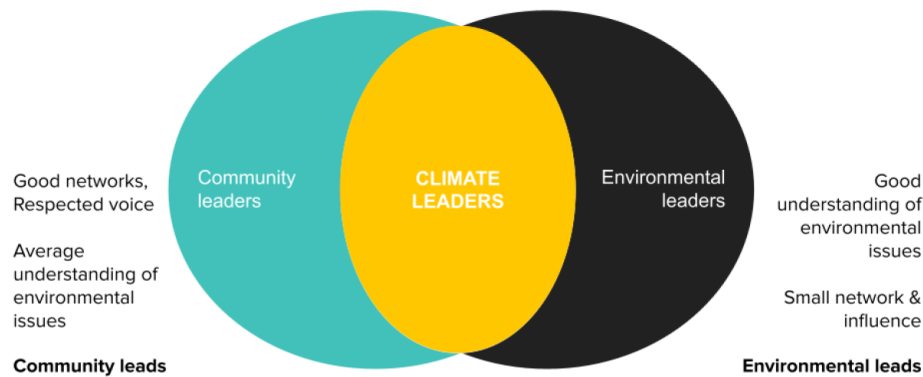
The solution

The Net Zero Now training programme, run in Summer 2021, trained and empowered community leaders. Participants learnt to communicate climate messages, put on climate related events, deliver carbon reduction activities, and educate and engage people from all backgrounds.

The Audience

When choosing the audience, the programme considered environmental leaders, who have a good understanding of environmental issues but a small network and influence. They then looked at community leaders, who are well respected and have well established networks, but have an average understanding of environmental issues. Local community leaders are best placed to deliver personalized support and action on what matters and is most important for their community. They can gain a good understanding of environmental issues to become Climate Leaders.

Empowering climate leadership



The Scoping Survey

Between February and March 2021, a scoping survey was conducted, comprising 63 respondents of a range of ages and locations. The results of the scoping survey can be summarised below:

- 82% of respondents were active in their communities.
- 100% were interested in both the community and the environment.
- 44% of respondents were unaware of local environmental groups.
- > 60% of respondents were interested in learning more about communicating environmental issues and connective with others.
- > 50% of respondents were interested in Live, online interactive seminars and an online platform to connect with others.

This scoping exercise allowed the programme to identify the areas which required the most focus and tailor it to this audience.

The Programme Structure

The programme comprised of live sessions, coursework and further reading. 8 seminars were organised with guest speakers over several weeks. The online platform Slack was used as an ongoing communication channel, and additional socials, 1 to 1's and clinics were also held.

The training programme focused on three key areas:

- Providing training in effective communication and carbon reduction strategies;
- developing practical organisational skills; and
- creating tools and resources to support carbon reduction activities.

The sessions included the following sessions split between more theoretical, and practical sessions:

	Title	Description
Theoretical	Climate Change and Carbon Footprints	How climate change has been tackled previously and cementing

		understandings of climate change language.
	Understanding Solutions and the Local context	How ideas can be implemented in a local context to provide solutions at every level.
	Communicating climate change	How to develop local initiatives to communicate climate change to rural audiences.
	Behaviour Change	How and why do people take on pro-environmental behaviours – what this means for developing projects.
Practical	Shaping your initiatives	What actions might be appropriate locally – How to review and prioritise those to take forward.
	Community Project Management	What needs to be done to make projects happen.
	Managing Groups	How to get volunteers to help out
	Communications and Events	Strategies for engagement

Through this, they learnt to structure their ideas and channel their ambition. A small number of community leaders were selected to take part and become ambassadors of climate action in their local community.

The Impact

12 individuals have been successfully trained through the course and have provided positive feedback. Participants feel more empowered and confident to lead climate action in their communities.

Throughout the training course, participants completed three surveys at the beginning, middle and end. They self-assessed their knowledge on topics including 'Individual action on climate change', 'behaviour change and barriers to change' and 'local climate action initiatives'. All areas saw increased knowledge over the course of the the project. The biggest change was seen in the knowledge of local climate initiatives which increased dramatically.

Participants also self-assessed their confidence levels. Confidence grew more quickly towards the end of the programme, particularly the confidence to raise funds for community action, and to create a project plan and programme of work. This

growth in knowledge demonstrates the clear benefits gained from the training programme.

These benefits can also be seen in the tangible outcomes seen through the case studies resulting from the training programme.

Location	Outcome	Quote
Oakington	New sustainability group launched including a comms campaign and future involvement with village events	A key outcome was 'Identifying the audience and how to tailor the message to them
Over	Villages signed up to Plastic Free Communities scheme. Investigating sustainable options for village hall redevelopment. Connecting with other Parishes	'I learned that one can make a difference and help others to make a difference
Stapleford	Declaring a Climate and Ecological Emergency. Holding an Eco Event. Planning toy and book swaps, bike repair and other sessions	'Making every effort I can to make ours and surrounding villages make change and work with each other'
Northstowe	Regular events e.g. swaps, repair cafes and workshops and have ideas for capturing more volunteers and organizing the groups	'Most relevant for me has been how to set up group, capture volunteers and communicate by identifying audiences and messages'
Haslingfield	Representation at parish council meetings leading them to declare climate and ecological emergency and develop and action plan. Plan to run summer eco-festival and launch a community survey.	'this course has helped me to feel able to put myself forward in these ways and the more I do, the more it seems possible to do'

How is the new approach being sustained?

By training individuals already active in local communities, changes made in communities, and actions taken as a result will be effective and long-lived. As the participants already have a standing in their community, they are in a good position to educate and engage others.

Due to the constraints of COVID, almost all of the planned activities in the training programme were transferred online through the website, Zoom and Slack. The programme now has a valuable breadth of online resources. These will help with the delivery of similar in-person and online courses in the future.

Lessons learned

As with many other projects for the past two years, COVID was pivotal in how the training programme was delivered. The restrictions prevented the intended in-person events, not allowing direct engagement. Although some of the training sessions would have worked better in person, the online resources developed were invaluable and increased accessibility for some members. The following thoughts were also considered following the training sessions:

Audience: The selection process targeted the right audience, contacting potential applicants before accepting them, and as a result had a low drop-out rate.

Structure: The course was 16 hours which was an appropriate length of time. Holding meetings over Zoom meant that they were more accessible to a lot of people, however, meeting in a face-to-face capacity was preferable with workshop-style sessions.

Content: The content included a balance of theory and practice, providing a variety of activities involving guest speakers. The sessions also provided an opportunity for participants to connect

Ongoing Feedback: Holding a scoping survey at the start of the project proved successful in finding applicants. Continuous monitoring surveys throughout the course was helpful in determining the participant's change in attitudes towards climate leadership.

Links to relevant documents:

[Net Zero Now – Cambridge Carbon Footprint](#)

[Course Outline](#)

[Resources and Reading – Cambridge Carbon Footprint](#)