

Climate Action Towns

Year Two Summary

Sharing our learnings

Architecture and Design Scotland's Climate Action Towns (CAT) project is supporting place-based climate action in a network of small Scottish towns, working collaboratively with local communities. The project is funded by the Scottish Government. This work explores the delivery of the place principle at a town scale whilst embedding climate action. The cross-cutting approach of Climate Action Towns ties together local considerations, with local authority initiatives and Scotland wide policies.

The approach taken in each town is tailored to existing systems, geography and initiatives in each place. This ensures climate actions are incorporated into existing local delivery mechanisms. The second year of Climate Action Towns has seen differing approaches in each town, with an overarching approach to share learning, consider systems analysis, and build community capacity.

In 2022 Benarty Communities and Drongan Rankinston and Stair joined the original Climate Action Towns of Alness, Annan, Blackburn, Campbeltown, Holytown, Invergordon, and Stevenston. Identification continued the data-driven approach and a metric of child poverty was considered, while work in the towns explores the co-benefits of acting on Climate Change.

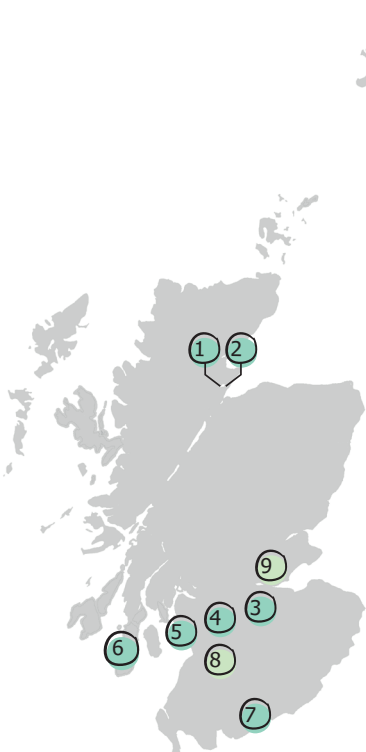
Seven become nine... welcoming Benarty and DRS

8 Drongan, Rankinston and Stair

Working closely with East Ayrshire Council's Vibrant Communities team, CAT will assist the three interconnected towns with a second Community Action Plan. DRS is a network of small coalfield towns, where deprivation is prevalent in the local communities. DRS will benefit from a share of windfarm funding, and CAT will assist the communities to develop a strong climate focussed plan to aid allocation of this fund.

9 Benarty communities

Through collaboration with Coalfields Regeneration Trust, CAT will help to deliver an enhanced revised Community Action Plan addressing climate challenges and adaptation opportunities in the local community. An additional factor present in this town was child poverty, which can be affected positively by climate actions. Benarty already has several strong community groups having previously delivered a Community Action Plan, however, the previous iteration did not prioritise the climate emergency.



Year 2 - a year of action....



Campbeltown

Building capacity and skills in each town has been important to ensure the work of Climate Action Towns is embedded beyond the life span of the project. We supported the South Kintyre Development Trust to create a social enterprise post, via Inspiralba, that would help enable progress for change on the ground. This post will play a pivotal role at a time when community capacity levels are stretched and will aid collaborative place-based working in the ongoing Campbeltown Community Action Plan and Climate Action Towns work. The team has already been progressing some of the actions, for example looking at potential active travel proposals, and local food growing. The Scottish Community Development Centre training resulted in a forum of community groups working together in Campbeltown.



Blackburn

In Blackburn, A&DS were able to pilot the Place Standard with a Climate Lens, working with a wide proportion of the local population. This generated considerable insight into the current issues in the town. Robust discussion was encouraged by getting climate focussed barriers, ideas, and current activity onto a map of Blackburn. Idea generation games with the Change in Blackburn Committee Young People and the Women's Social Services Group led to a wide range of feasible and creative Climate Action ideas. These were mapped as deliverable climate actions which will be incorporated in the refreshed Blackburn Future plan delivered as part of a collaboration with Climate Action Blackburn and West Lothian Council. Building Stronger Communities training led to Community Action Blackburn refreshing their work and taking the lead role for the Blackburn Future Group.



Holytown

In Holytown, the workshop outcomes, gathered at a variety of events have provided evidence around desired changes. For example, this helped to inform a Green Participatory Budgeting application, submitted by the Bellshill Men's Shed, to propose biodiversity and nature enhancements at Windsor Park in Holytown. Despite being unsuccessful on this occasion, it demonstrated a milestone in applying for investment. It highlighted the value of having baseline information, to inform proposals to take a place-based collaborative approach.

A whole place collaborative approach has led to opportunities that may have been missed. For example, around investment considerations regarding Active Travel but also potential locations for community woodland.





Stevenston

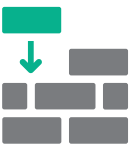
In Stevenston, Building Stronger Communities training sessions delivered by the Scottish Community Development Centre brought together several active community groups in the town. In these sessions, the groups assessed current strengths and weaknesses in the community and discussed wider influences. Mapping Activities exploring Stevenston as a carbon conscious place were carried out, amassing 295 ideas. These were built on in the first Climate Risk Adaptation Workshop delivered in collaboration with North Ayrshire Council which explored climate risks and potential to adapt to these in the town. Work continues to tie together North Ayrshire Council Strategy, national policy and the work of community groups in the town.



Alness

Climate Action Towns mapped Alness as a Carbon Concious Place last spring to understand the opportunities and barriers that exist in Alness around climate. The priorities identified include travel & transport, community growing and community energy.

The Alness Partnership is a community forum being reconvened to consider a Community Action Plan for Alness. Climate Action Towns are well placed to ensure the community includes climate actions in Alness, and within the Area-based Place Plan for Easter Ross.



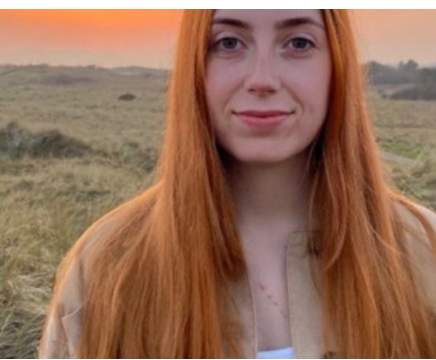
Invergordon

To increase the pace of adaptation and deliver place-based projects in the town, Invergordon Development Trust has convened the Umbrella Group to unite local community groups. Climate Action Towns are well placed to shape the content and cohesion of climate actions in the proposed plan, with the help of our partners at Highland Adapts, the Highland Council and Highlands & Islands Enterprise. This follows on from community projects such as the Saltburn Community Woodlands and the Mural Trail in the town centre.



Annan

The Annan Harbour Action Group (AHAG) project seeks to address climate change challenges and breathe new life into an existing warehouse, quayside, and estuary. In partnership with AHAG and other local organisations, CAT will deliver a series of citizen science activities exploring the fluvial flooding around the harbour. These activities will involve young people including pupils of Annan Academy and take the opportunity to use the harbour project as a real life example of climate action in place-based design.

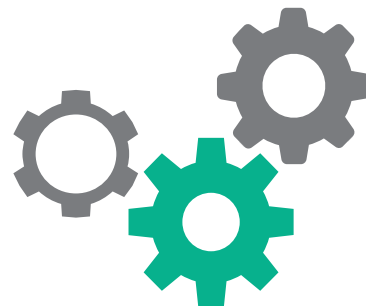


Year 2 - a year of understanding....

Systems analysis for community-led climate action

We have been thinking of systems thinking as a way of making sense of the complexity of the world by viewing it in terms of wholes and relationships rather than by splitting it down into parts. The Climate Action Towns project has viewed the nine towns through a systems lens and in doing so has mapped the systems that each community might employ to adapt their towns, regarding climate actions.

Four factors emerged as key catalysts or enablers of climate action; climate leadership and advocacy, community capacity, funding, access to information and knowledge. These key catalysts were a focus of our support in the second year of the Climate Action Towns project.



Breaking down silos

In each Climate Action Town, we are ensuring that work ties in with a wider initiative or area of work to ensure climate action does not sit in a silo. Climate Action Towns has been able to work across and connect different scales of governance, meeting regularly with local authority officers as well as community members learning and sharing from both.

This has helped to break down silos and create connections between different areas of the local authority and community groups. These connections and working relationships are essential to delivering a whole place collaborative approach to climate action which is respectful of both people and place.

We have been working with young people in Blackburn, which is helping empower them to contribute to the climate change debate.



The importance of community capacity and support

At the heart of delivering climate action in any place is strong community capacity. External support is also central to building strong collaborative networks with community groups. We see that successful climate action happens when well-structured community organisations are set up to deliver change.

We are working with towns to identify how and where gaps exist in climate change knowledge, and how to incorporate climate action into existing work and initiatives.

In a number of towns, we have been working with Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) to deliver training to develop community capacity. This is helping build confidence and capabilities within communities to create visions for their places, develop communication plans, and look at ways to encourage participation between groups across the communities.

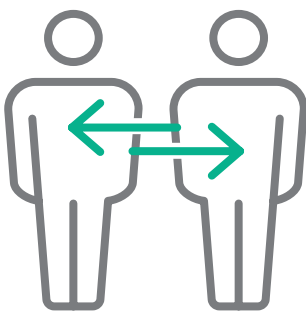


Collaboration and working together

Community groups are generally not of a size to deliver town-scale climate adaptation projects. To go beyond single-issue projects, collaboration and working together are key.

The ability to deliver coherent and extensive climate actions in a town depends on the ability of groups to collaborate through planning stages, and work together in the delivery phase of a project.

It can be beneficial for people to see incremental small scale improvements - to things like greenspace. This demonstrates change is happening, and can help to build momentum.



Summary


Year two of Climate Action Towns has seen the team engage across a range of opportunities in the towns, working collaboratively with community groups, partners and residents to understand the challenges and opportunities available in climate action work. We were also delighted to add two more towns - Benarty and Drongan, Rankinston and Stair - introducing child poverty issues in climate action work through the inclusion of these towns.

The thrust of the work in year two has involved community capacity building. We have engaged with Scottish Communities Development Centre to look at how we might build community capacity in each town through a structured training regime being careful to build confidence and create strong partnerships with anchor organisations. We have found that where there is a structured role in a community, such as a Development Officer, then tangible progress is easier to achieve.

Year three promises to be fast-moving. In some towns, we are on course to deliver climate action work centred on climate adaptation and mitigation projects. Where we are challenged on community capacity issues, Climate Action Towns will continue to engage and make inroads to ensure that the Climate Emergency is met head-on in Scotland's towns.

Next steps in Year 3...

We surveyed the Climate Action Towns participants to understand how best to meet the needs of the communities that we are working with in the project, as we go forward to year 3.



25%	Climate literacy events and activities
19%	Support and identify funding opportunities
17%	Making connections and learning from other CAT towns.
14%	Support developing plans and strategies with Climate Actions.
14%	Small changes being delivered on the ground