CLIMATE ACTION LEEDS

End of Programme Assessment Report

September 2025

Climate Action Leeds

Contents

Cover photo attributes:
Top image: Launch of Imagine Leeds. ***Climate Action Leeds.***
Left image: Seacroft's First Climate Action Forum. ***Tom Charlesworth.***
Bottom image: The Leeds Doughnut. ***Climate Action Leeds.***

Executive Summary

Climate Action Leeds (CAL), which was originally known as the Climate Emergency Community Action programme (CECAP), was launched in 2020. This was enabled by £2.5m funding over five years from The National Lottery's Climate Action Fund (CAF) to develop a new city-scale approach to community-led climate action, working for a zero carbon, nature friendly, socially just Leeds by the 2030s. The idea of the CAL programme emerged following Leeds City Council's climate emergency declaration and the recommendations from the Leeds Climate Change Citizens' Jury. Many groups and organisations were engaged in developing the (CAF) bid.

As the idea of the CAL programme developed, it was recognised that new ways need to be found to broaden and deepen engagement in climate action across the city to deliver CAL's overarching goal to help shape a Leeds which is zero carbon, nature friendly and socially just by the 2030s. Five Partner organisations were brought together to deliver the CAL programme through a 'test and learn' approach to mobilising communities, campaign groups, and different sectors to plan and act together:

- **Voluntary Action Leeds** is the anchor organisation for the voluntary sector in Leeds and was the accountable body and Project Management Partner for CAL, providing overall organisational and management services.
- **Our Future Leeds** was the City Movement Building Partner, leading on programme development and the curation and facilitation of city-wide stakeholder dialogues.
- **Together for Peace (T4P)** was the Community Hubs Partner, developing and coordinating the network of community hubs.
- **Leeds Tidal** was the Sector and Campaign Support lead, providing campaign and sector support for city-wide communities through Transition Partners and the Race and Climate Justice lead.
- **CAG Consultants** was appointed as the Learning and Evaluation Partner, co-creating and delivering the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework for the programme with CAL Partners.

Leeds Community Foundation joined CAL as a sixth Partner in the third year of the programme and was responsible for the management of the 'Onward Grants' micro and small grants programme on behalf of the Community Hubs Partner, T4P.

Voluntary Action Leeds
Supporting Communities Together

Together for Peace.
People, ideas and action towards a shared future.

CAG CONSULTANTS

love it share it Leeds

Our Future Leeds

LEEDS TIDAL

Leeds Community Foundation

As a new 'test and learn 'approach to community-led climate action at a city scale, with a new partnership of organisations, CAL has undertaken great work and achieved positive impacts in several areas, but more could have been done in other areas. CAL's experience highlights how challenging it can be to deliver 'everything all at once' on climate action across a city area.

Over the course of the five year programme, it is estimated that just over 30,700 people engaged in more than 600 events and activities delivered through the CAL programme. The majority of these have been through the work of CAL's community hubs, undertaking community-led work in eight neighbourhoods around Leeds. The community hubs part of the CAL programme enabled relationships and a wide-ranging programme of activities to be developed at a neighbourhood level. The community hub team also offered the Onwards Grants programme of micro and small grants to other communities in Leeds, within and beyond the hub areas.

CAL's seven Transition Partners, as sector organisers inspiring and organising change on climate-related themes such as Energy, Transport, Food, Youth and Education, have had a positive impact at both community level, including supporting work of the community hubs, and at a city-wide strategic level.

Further, CAL's City Movement Building team has delivered 'Imagine Leeds', the CAL climate action hub, in two different venues, enabling broad engagement with individuals and organisations across the city. They also delivered high profile events, such as the Imagine Leeds Launch and the Year 5 CAL Showcase events. Both were attended by Leeds City Council Members and Chief Executives, local MPs, community and voluntary sector organisations from across the city.

This report identifies some key challenges experienced through the programme, such as the lack of clear leadership in a flat structure partnership and lack of programme staff capacity. One of the most important areas where CAL needed to do more work was on embedding race and climate justice into the programme from the start. While a Race and Climate Justice lead was appointed, they were not a full CAL Partner. A race and climate justice partner should have been a CAL Partner from the start to ensure strong governance and skills in race and climate justice were embedded throughout the programme.

This End of Programme Report has been written by CAG Consultants, as part of their work as the CAL Learning and Evaluation Partner. It identifies key successes achieved through the programme, challenges experienced, and key lessons learned to inform future work of Partners, organisations and individuals involved in CAL, as well as other organisations who may consider doing something similar. It does not look at how money was spent or quantifies additional impacts.

The Climate Action Leeds team at Imagine Leeds.
Climate Action Leeds

1 Introduction

As described above, the Climate Action Leeds (CAL) programme was an ambitious five year programme funded by £2.5m from The National Lottery Community Fund to develop a city-wide collective action approach for community-led climate action. It was delivered by a partnership of Voluntary Action Leeds, Our Future Leeds, Together For Peace, Leeds Tidal, CAG Consultants and Leeds Community Foundation. CAL provided a platform for people, organisations and communities to come together to take action on climate change in Leeds and beyond. The overarching goal was to help shape a Leeds which is zero carbon, nature friendly and socially just by the 2030s, focusing on mobilising communities and sectors to plan and act together.

In addition to the Programme Partners identified above, eight community hubs were established, and seven Transition Partners and the Race and Climate Justice Partner were appointed.

Table 1 shows the archetypes used by CAL to select community hub areas, including the areas chosen. The aim was to use the 'test and learn' approach in a range of contrasting areas, some but not all of them being identified as 'in need'.

Archetype	Areas selected	Community Hubs
1930s social housing estates with a mainly white working class population	Seacroft	Climate Action Seacroft
Inner city ethnically diverse low income areas	Beeston, Little London and Woodhouse	Our Future Beeston Climate Action Little London and Woodhouse
Leafy better off suburban communities	Horsforth	Horsforth Climate Action
Poorer rural ex-industrial small towns	Garforth	Eco-friendly Garforth
De-industrialised low income areas in the city	Armley	Climate Action Armley
Better off towns on the edge of the city	Otley	Otley 2030
Wealthy areas / High emissions	Alwoodley	Alwoodley 2030

Table 1. Archetypes used to select community hubs.

Building on the priorities identified by the Leeds Climate Change Citizens' Jury, CAL selected seven key areas of focus for the programme's Transition Partners as follows (with their host organisations):

- **Energy** – host organisation Platform
- **Food** – host organisation Foodwise Leeds
- **Nature** – host organisation Hyde Park Source
- **Housing Transition Partner** – host organisation Leeds Community Homes
- **Transport Transition Partner** – host organisation Leeds Tidal
- **Education and Young People Transition Partner** – host organisation Leeds DEC (Angel House were the Youth Transition Partner in Years 1-2)
- **Work and Economy Transition Partner** – host organisation Leeds Tidal

The Transition Partners acted as sector organisers, inspiring and organising change in their areas of expertise.

A Race and Climate Justice lead – the Racial Justice Network (RJN) – was appointed in Year 2, until the end of Year 4. While it was originally envisaged that there would be a 'Climate Justice' Transition Partner, it emerged that this role needed to be more central to the CAL programme. The role of Race and Climate Justice lead was undertaken by Claude Hendrickson in Year 5.

Figure 1 below shows the structure and key elements of the CAL Partnership.

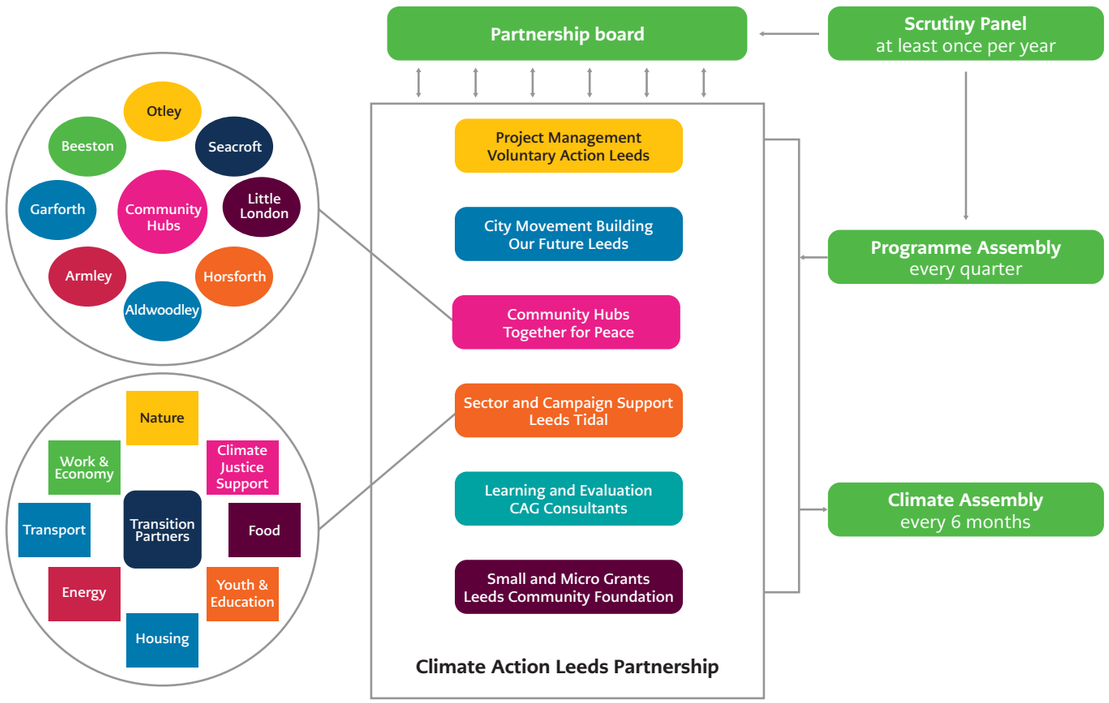

Figure 1. The Climate Action Leeds Partnership

The CAL Partners had bi-monthly partnership board meetings to discuss and agree operational aspects of the CAL programme. An annual cycle of key programme events was designed to underpin CAL's work. These were:

- **Quarterly Programme Assemblies**, where all CAL Partner teams came together to share information and ensure work was joined up. At these events, learning was celebrated and shared to inspire others.
- **Climate Assemblies** were held twice a year. These were open, cross-sector events where CAL engaged with the broader community of Leeds. The aim was to share, learn and plan together across the diverse communities and sectors in the city. These events celebrated learning and achievements but also focused on how to tackle real challenges together.

Two key underpinning principles of the CAL partnership were consensus decision making and co-production approaches.

CAL Year 1 was focused on programme initiation, Year 2 on programme development/delivery, years 3 and 4 on programme delivery and Year 5 on a combination of delivery, 'ending well' (for the Lottery funded programme) and legacy planning for the CAL programme.

Seacroft's first Climate Action Forum. ***Tom Charlesworth.***

2 Assessment Methodology

Co-production was a fundamental part of the CAL programme, so CAG Consultants, the CAL Learning and Evaluation Partner, built this into the design and delivery of programme evaluation and learning as follows:

- Co-created a CAL Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework in Year 1
- Co-created 10[1] criteria to assess progress across the CAL programme
- Introduced an evidence-based approach to annual self-assessment by CAL Partners
- Co-created a CAL carbon measurement tool
- Co-produced a video to share learning about CAL
- Supported Partner team members to amplify their work through measurement of impacts and production of case studies
- Produced Annual Assessment Reports.

In addition to the above, this end of programme assessment has also involved a review of 130+ documents, interviews with community hub workers, Partner team leads and previous Partner team leads prior to them leaving the programme, plus a facilitated end of programme review workshop with CAL team members and volunteers. This identifies key successes achieved through the programme, challenges experienced and identifies key lessons learned to inform future work of Partners, organisations and individuals involved in CAL, as well as other organisations who may consider doing something similar.

As the CAL programme involved a new city movement building approach to community-led climate action, with a new partnership, there was a desire within the partnership to use assessment criteria which focused both on how the partnership itself was developing and on its external impacts. Initially 11 criteria were co-produced with CAL Partners. These were then refined from Year 3, which resulted in 10 criteria being used for the remainder of the programme, see **Table 2**. A process of aligning the two sets of criteria was introduced to enable tracking of progress across the whole programme.

CAL Assessment Criteria
1. CAL partnership's work supports evidenced individual or community organisational practices that result in carbon emission reductions.
2. The CAL partnership agrees a vision and process for city-wide systems change involving and supported by partners and collaborators, that embeds climate justice and works towards a zero carbon, nature friendly, socially just Leeds.
3. The CAL partnership engages both: people who have not previously been engaged in climate action and those who have previously been involved in climate action, but through the work of CAL engage in wider climate action/activity.
4. Engagement in the CAL partnership becomes more representative of the Leeds city area.
5. The CAL partnership works in an inclusive and democratic way.
6. The CAL partnership is a learning partnership, internally and externally, demonstrating how it learns from its own activities and how it shares learning with and from other places.
7. The processes by which the CAL partnership operates are effective and meet the expectations of the CAL partners.
8. The CAL partnership is considered a trusted and effective partnership in supporting community led climate action across Leeds.
9. The level of resourcing within the CAL partnership is consistent with its ambitions.
10. Activities supported or catalysed by the CAL partnership are expected to generate co-benefits for those most affected by the impacts of climate change in Leeds.

Table 2. CAL assessment criteria.

Figure 2 shows the assessment of progress across years 1-5 on the criteria. This assessment formed a key part of each of the CAL annual assessments. The details of these can be viewed in the annual assessment reports[2]. Assessment levels range from 1 to 4, according to which rubric level has been achieved for each criterion used in the annual assessments, with 1 being the lowest and 4 being the highest level of performance. This shows that across years 1-5 there was progress on all criteria, albeit not necessarily every year. This figure also shows that it takes a long time to make progress on all aspects across a programme of CAL's scale.

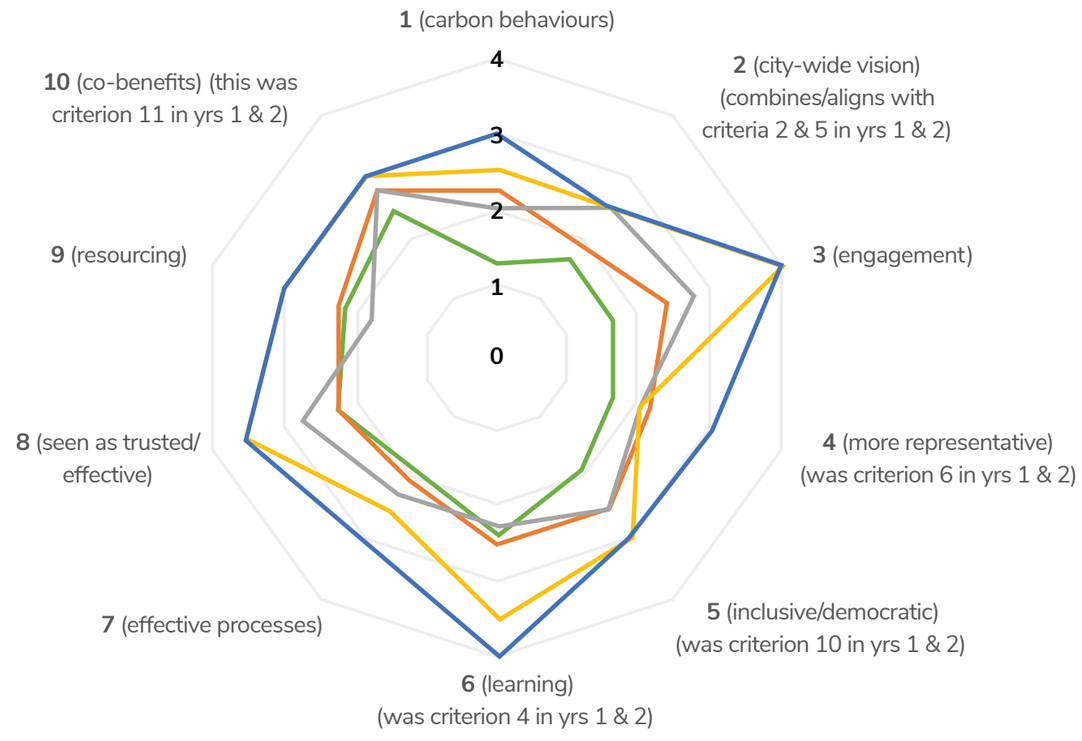

Figure 2. CAL Annual Criteria Assessment Years 1–5

[1] There were initially 11 criteria in Years 1 and 2 but these were simplified to 10 criteria in Years 3-5.

[2] CAL annual assessment reports for Years 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

3 The work of the Partner teams

The original plan was for there to be two cross-functional Partners ('Project Management' and 'Learning and Evaluation') and three delivery Partners ('City Movement Building', 'Community Hubs' and 'Sector and Campaign Support'). This was expanded to six Partners in Year 3 when Leeds Community Foundation joined the partnership.

3.1 Project Management

Voluntary Action Leeds (VAL) was the Project Management Partner and was responsible for the overall organisational and financial management of the programme. This included managing the delivery structure, ensuring agreed outcomes and outputs were met through a reporting system, as well as performance management and finance management. VAL also oversaw communications, programme promotion and reporting to the Lottery (including impact reporting and measurement). Partnership Board meetings were chaired and convened by VAL from Year 3.

3.2 City Movement Building

Our Future Leeds (OFL) was responsible for setting CAL's programme's ambition, direction, and values, aiming to create a citizen-led movement. Key activities included providing climate emergency training and establishing a central climate emergency hub (Imagine Leeds) in a city-centre location for information, advice, planning, workshops, and public events.
OFL was responsible for organising the quarterly Programme Assemblies, which served as the democratic heart of the programme for strategic decision-making and resource allocation.
The team also organised the bi-annual Climate Assemblies, for broader engagement, networking, and partnership-building across the city area.
Stakeholder engagement was facilitated by a seconded Leeds City Council Climate Emergency team member. OFL were also responsible for developing a city-wide Climate Action Plan based on evidence, community engagement, and learning from other localities. As part of this work, they pioneered the application of 'Doughnut Economics' principles within the city of Leeds.

3.3 Community Hubs

Together for Peace (T4P) was the community hubs lead, responsible for engaging people and community organisations in climate action at a neighbourhood level across Leeds. It was originally envisaged that this would involve three levels of engagement, although in practice activity was focused on levels 1 and 3 (for reasons explained below):

1. **Main Community Hubs:** These were established in neighbourhoods chosen from the archetypes set out in Table 1. The first set of four hubs (Beeston, Garforth, Otley and Seacroft) were launched in Year 1, with four further hubs (Alwoodley, Armley, Horsforth and Little London and Woodhouse) being launched in Year 2. The creation of each hub involved work by a Community Hub Development Worker on a two-month scoping period, three months of network building, three months for a community-led steering group to develop plans, followed by three years of hub operation with a local part-time Community Hub Worker and financial grants. The community hubs produced local action plans, encouraged behaviour change, facilitated carbon reduction activities and incorporated social, economic, and racial justice actions, with an allocated funding pot to deliver these.

2. **Mini Hubs:** The Community Hubs team also established eight Mini Hubs over years 2-4. This work was focused in marginalised & minoritised communities, including those experiencing deprivation, through eight commissioned projects. A call was put out for commissioned projects, whereby T4P would release funds to third party contractors to deliver development support to groups & organisations. T4P also set up a 'Wisdom Council' – comprising Simon Dixon from the City Movement Building Partner team, and Claude Hendrickson and Melany Zarate from RJN – to oversee the process and approve the commissioned projects. Eight mini hubs were commissioned in two rounds, under the three categories as follows:

   a. Supporting development of existing buildings in marginalised communities from a climate and community friendly perspective:
      i. Cross Green Growing Together
      ii. Belle Isle Tenant Management Organisation (BITMO)
      iii. Leeds Caribbean and African Centre (LCAC).

   b. Supporting development of existing groups with their next steps
      i. Harehills Action Team (HAT) – to register as a CIC and develop their capacity for climate action (including supporting work on a funding strategy)
      ii. Roundhay Environmental Action Project (REAP) – to develop a Doughnut portrait for the area via workshops & a survey (this also supported an objective within the CMB team to develop some local case studies on the Doughnut).

   c. Building on work already taking place within CAL & developing resources to share knowledge/expertise
      i. Hyde Park Source to trial the Community Streets approach in Hyde Park (in addition to Woodhouse & Beeston) working with the Cardigan Centre
      ii. Hyde Park Source to produce a 'how to guide' for the bin yards
      iii. Working with Jenni Brooks of the City Movement Building Partner team and Leeds Doughnut to develop a film, which was a T4P response to the Race & Climate Justice report, taking an everyday issue that people in communities deal with and presenting new ideas about it in an accessible way.

3. **Grant Funding:** A funding pot was made available from Year 3 onwards to support other climate action initiatives across the city, distributed through grants and participatory budgeting. This was a micro and small grants programme called 'Onward Grants', managed by the CAL Partner, the Leeds Community Foundation, when they joined the programme in Year 3. This used a participatory approach to grant-making, with volunteers from the community and grant applicants making all decisions on where funding was awarded.

Our Future Beeston Recycling Olympics. ***Our Future Beeston.***

Opening of Beeston bin yard. ***Our Future Beeston.***

3.4 Sector and Campaign Support

Leeds Tidal was the Sector and Campaign Support Partner lead, responsible for supporting and developing thematic groups across seven key transition themes: Transport, Energy, Housing, Food, Nature, Work and Economy, and Youth and Education. Each theme had a dedicated part-time Transition Partner (two days a week for 52 months), responsible for facilitating cross-organisational roundtables to develop visions and strategic roadmaps for their themes, co-develop resources and workshops, deliver training, empower affected communities, and feed into research and evaluation. In addition there was a Climate Justice theme, with another partner leading work on race and climate justice. This work package aimed to create productive exchanges and learning between sectors and community-led networks for transformative climate action.

3.5 Learning and Evaluation

As described in Section 2, CAG Consultants were the Learning and Evaluation Partner, appointed halfway through Year 1. CAG was a non-voting Partner and was responsible for co-creating and delivering a MEL Framework and carbon measurement tool, producing interim and final learning reports and sharing programme learning within and beyond the partnership. The aim was to ensure the partnership was self-aware, self-critical, maximised its potential, and shared its learning widely in Leeds and beyond.

3.6 Leeds Community Foundation

Leeds Community Foundation joined the CAL programme in Year 3 and was responsible for managing the micro and small grants programme 'Onward Grants' on behalf of T4P.

Eco Friendly Garforth's Community Garden. ***Eco-Friendly Garforth.***

4 Programme Milestones

There have been multiple key milestones in the CAL programme, which have been pivotal moments, whether in initiating the idea of the CAL partnership and programme, informing its development or enabling the programme to have wider impact. A summary of key milestones is presented below. This is not exhaustive but shows some of the achievements and challenges of the CAL programme. Key successes for each delivery Partner are identified in Section 5.

CAL Year 0
(pre Lottery funding, prior to 1st Oct 2020):

- March 2019: Leeds City Council declared a climate emergency.
- 2019: The National Lottery Climate Action Fund (CAF) was announced.
- 2019: The Climate Change Citizen's Jury launched its recommendations, and the Racial Justice Network (RJN) responded with its 13th Recommendation[3].
- The CAL Partnership was formed and submitted an application to CAF. They were awarded £2.5m for a five year programme from The National Lottery Community Fund's Climate Action Fund to develop a city-wide collective action approach for community-led climate action.

Otley Community Larder. ***Otley 2030.***

Simone Yasmin performs a poem at visioning session. ***Climate Action Little London and Woodhouse.***

[3] The 13th Recommendation

CAL Year 1
(1st Oct 2020 – 30th Sept 2021):

- The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown restrictions had a heavy impact on the first 18 months of the CAL programme, with only a few in-person meetings possible.
- Starting CAL during lockdown meant that initial team formation and induction was conducted online.
- A building in Bridge Street, central Leeds, that was leased by T4P and was planned to be the venue for the CAL hub had to be vacated due to major electrical works needed in the building. As a result, CAL Partners never got back into the Bridge Street building.
- The CAL training programme was launched (initially online), introducing newcomers to the CAL programme.
- The four round 1 community hubs – Beeston, Garforth, Otley and Seacroft were developed, engaging people in four neighbourhoods to establish local groups.
- All Transition Partners and the first set of Community Hub Development workers were recruited.

Otley cargo bike. ***Otley 2030.***

Seaforth Forest Garden Opening.
Linda Otley/Hyde Park Source.

CAL Year 2
(1st Oct 2021 – 30th Sept 2022):

- The Leeds Doughnut was launched in May, accompanied by reports and an animation, attracting over 150 attendees and leading to links with other cities.
- All eight community hubs became fully operational with Seacroft, Garforth, and Otley completing a full year of operation, Beeston hub progressing delivery, and initial development work completed in the round 2 hubs – Alwoodley, Armley, Horsforth and Little London and Woodhouse.
- Otley 2030 (the organisation leading the Otley community hub) was awarded charitable status.
- Seacroft Forest Garden was created, supported by Climate Action Seacroft, with the garden design developed with the Nature Transition Partner.
- Our Future Beeston produced an Energy Saving Handbook with advice on how to reduce household energy use and information on financial support available.
- Training on Movement Building and Conflict Transformation was completed.
- The Food Transition Partner co-produced the Leeds Food Strategy (2023-30) with Leeds City Council.
- The Nature Transition Partner secured £19,000 for a research project on connecting nature-based projects with NHS social prescribers.
- The Work and Economy Transition Partner initiated mapping public land ownership in Leeds, culminating in a successful public event in September 2022. This Transition Partner also developed a Community Wealth Building strategy for Leeds City Council.
- The Racial Justice Network (RJN) was onboarded as the Climate Justice Accountability and Learning Partner.

Armley Family Fun Day.
Climate Action Armley

Seacroft Family Fun Day.
Climate Action Seacroft.

'Wheel of Justice' Seacroft Family Fun Day. ***Climate Action Seacroft.***

CAL Year 3
(1st Oct 2022 – 30th Sept 2023):

- Imagine Leeds, the city-centre climate action hub, officially opened in March, becoming a significant focal point for community-led climate action. Its launch was a key success, garnering extensive local media coverage and attracting over 100 attendees. It regularly hosted 36 groups and external events and also served as a co-working space.
- Otley 2030 co-ordinated a successful crowdfunding campaign, raising almost £150,000 and secured a £70,000 loan to purchase East Wood, bringing it into community ownership.
- Eco-Friendly Garforth launched the Garforth Repair Cafe.
- The CAL Grants Fund (Onward Grants Programme) was launched in partnership with Leeds Community Foundation, with its first participatory grant-making round concluding in early July.
- Two Climate Assemblies were hosted, one in October at the City Museum and another in April as part of Otley Green Weekend.
- The Food Transition Partner's draft Leeds Food Strategy was accepted by full council in March 2023.
- The Nature Transition Partner secured £69,000 UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) funding for research on "Co-producing community use of unused / underused land in Leeds".
- The CAL mid-point film produced by the Learning and Evaluation Partner was launched in September.
- A CAL carbon measurement tool was co-produced with Partner team representatives.

CAL Year 4
(1st Oct 2023 – 30th Sept 2024):

- An estimated 15,041 people were engaged through 331 reported events/activities delivered or catalysed by CAL during Year 4. This includes 6,296 people engaged in projects funded through the Onwards Grants programme.
- Imagine Leeds continued to grow in popularity, hosting approximately 2,360 people in four months (October-January), before its lease ended on 1st February 2024.
- The Climate Assembly in October 2023 featured 'Art and Climate Week' at Imagine Leeds, in partnership with Yorkshire Life Aquatic, drawing 505 visitors.
- Many Partners, including RJN, contributed to delivering the Leeds International Doughnut[4] Festival in October 2023.
- Otley 2030 secured £49,540 from West Yorkshire Combined Authority for solar panel installations on community buildings and carbon literacy training.
- The Education Partner (Leeds DEC) delivered Leeds' first Eco Council Climate Schools Conference, opened by Leeds City Council's Chief Executive.
- The Transport Partner became a named partner in the £7.8m INFUZE EPSRC funded active travel research project, focusing on community engagement in excluded neighbourhoods.
- The site licence for Seacroft Forest Garden was taken on by Hyde Park Source (Nature Transition Partner), ensuring its continuation beyond CAL funding.
- The Racial Justice Network (RJN) formally withdrew from the CAL programme at the end of Year 4 due to systemic issues and concerns over climate justice not being centred across the programme.
- A successful 'Walk to School' week was supported at all seven primary schools in Alwoodley ward by Alwoodley 2030.

[4] What is Doughnut Economics?

CAL Year 5
(1st Oct 2024 – 30th Sept 2025):

- An estimated 7,922 people were engaged through 193 reported events/activities delivered or funded by CAL during Year 5. This includes 1,892 people engaged in projects funded through the Onwards Grants programme.
- VAL, as Project Management Partner was asked to attend an away day for the National Lottery's Funding Strategy, Communication and Impact Directorate, which the Climate Action Fund sits within. VAL's Project Coordinator gave a presentation on CAL and took questions from an audience of 100+ Lottery staff from across the UK. The organisers commented afterwards: "Your presentation sparked some great discussions and feedback during and after the session."
- A new Imagine Leeds venue, owned by Leeds University, was secured and Imagine Leeds re-opened in November 2024, facilitating renewed collaboration and engagement.
- A CAL showcase event was held in July 2025, attended by over 100 people, including MPs and city executives, to reflect on past achievements and share a vision for the movement's future.
- Claude Hendrikson was appointed as the City Movement Building team's Widening Participation Lead and CAL's Race and Climate Justice lead, strengthening engagement with diverse groups.
- Building on the 2024 pilot, the Walk to School Week (W2SW) expanded in May 2025 to include Alwoodley, Otley, and Horsforth, with 1,713 primary school children participating.
- A Movement Building toolkit was created and launched by Andrew Metheven of the City Movement Building Team.
- Horsforth Climate Action organised a successful Green Festival at Horsforth Hall Park.
- The Community Streets Project in Woodhouse and Hyde Park as part of Climate Action Little London and Woodhouse, recruited 100 volunteers and secured £40,000 in additional funding, evolving into a multi-agency partnership.
- The Compost Collective Armley was established through Climate Action Armley with support from Foodwise Leeds and the Armley Common Right Trust.
- The Food transition partner secured £10,000 through Communities Innovating Yorkshire (CIYF) to develop the Leeds Food Growing Network.

Alwoodley Walk to School Week. ***Alwoodley 2030.***

5 Successes

The Climate Action Leeds (CAL) programme has achieved numerous successes across its various facets, from city-wide movement building to specific community-led projects and strategic partnerships. This section highlights some of the programme's most significant successes overall and of the three delivery Partners in Tables 3-6, showcasing the depth and breadth of the work of the CAL Partners.

Table 3. Overall Programme Successes

Overall Programme Successes
CAL has been successful in drawing communities and groups into debate and in delivering positive climate action. A large number of community activities have taken place, making meaningful and sustained change in communities. Many case studies and blogs on these are available on the CAL website[5].
The programme has captured and harnessed enthusiasm and eagerness to address the climate emergency at both local community and city-wide levels. This has resulted in an enormous amount of activity across Leeds, uniting communities and fostering collective, community-led actions.
The Lottery's investment has enabled Partners to utilise existing networks and develop new organisational capacity.
CAL has demonstrated progress across all 10 assessment criteria from Year 1-5, with some criteria achieving the highest assessment levels in years 4 and 5.
A ripple effect is being observed, where CAL is catalysing other climate action activities, such as a community-led research network, the Leeds Doughnut Coalition, and securing funds for exhibitions, such as the Deep Water immersive exhibition at Imagine Leeds.
The programme facilitated/secured new investment for climate action, including the achievement of just under £404,000 of new investment in Year 3.
Production of collaborative case studies for projects, involving more than one Partner team, showed impacts through numbers of people engaged, the carbon savings of the projects and what carbon impacts would be if activities were scaled up across the city[6][7].

Fruit Tree Pruning workshop at Seacroft Community Garden. ***Linda Otley/Hyde Park Source.***

Seacroft Forest Garden. ***Linda Otley/ Hyde Park Source.***

[5] Climate Action Leeds
[6] Alwoodley Walk to School Case Study
[7] Seacroft Forest Garden Case Study

Table 4. City Movement Building Successes

City Movement Building Successes
The “Imagine Leeds” climate action hub was a major success, enabling broad engagement with individuals and organisations. The launch of the first venue in Year 3 was considered a key success, receiving extensive local and regional media coverage and attended by over 100 people, including high-profile city leaders.
During Year 4, in venue 1 and in Year 5 in venue 2, Imagine Leeds was visited by just over 8,800 people. It is estimated that 30% – 2,640 of these were involved in events and activities organised by CAL. It continued to enable closer collaboration among CAL staff and volunteers and welcomed many other groups. It also served as a co-working space for sector and community Partners, as well as local campaign and policy groups.
The City Movement Building Partner team organised the successful city-wide Climate Assemblies. These were in different locations, each with a different focus to engage a wider range of people. They were well-attended, with positive feedback from participants. The Climate Assembly as part of Arts and Climate week, hosted at Imagine Leeds, engaged 200 people, including children, young people, and individuals from racially marginalised communities, many new to climate action.
The Leeds Doughnut project and its launch event in May 2022 was well-attended, generating associated reports and an animation, and has led to links with similar initiatives in other cities.
Development of the City Plan for climate action using the "Leeds Doughnut" approach has been an open and collaborative planning process led by the Leeds Doughnut Coalition.
A network of volunteer trainers was established to deliver training on climate action across the city areas, supported by a tailored programme of training.
A Movement Building Toolkit was created and launched by the City Movement Building Team.
A "Place in the Sun" approach was developed by the City Movement Building team to look at potential legacy beyond the CAL programme, and was welcomed by CAL Partners for supporting people to clarify strategic aims.

Leeds Repair Cafe in Horsforth.
Horsforth Climate Action.

Table 5. Community Hubs Successes

Community Hubs Successes
The majority of people engaged in the CAL programme in years 4 and 5 were engaged through community hub activities, with over 4,900 people engaged in Year 4 and over 5,000 in Year 5. Many people engaged were new to climate action, attracted by activities related to nature, transport, saving money/waste or improving their local environment.
Many hubs have developed legacy plans (e.g. becoming Community Interest Organisations (CIOs), community collectives, or securing external funding) and many projects are continuing with new resources beyond the Lottery funded programme.
In Year 3, Otley 2030 supported the successful raising of £230,000 through crowdfunding to purchase East Wood, bringing it into community ownership for community benefit and nature recovery. Solar panels installed by Otley 2030, with support from Leeds City Council's Community Climate Grant, saved 602 kg of CO2, produced 3,150 kWh of energy, and saved social and football clubs £860.
Alwoodley 2030 ran a citizen science project using low-cost air pollution sensors and pop-up bike repair workshops at schools. They also successfully ran the "Alwoodley 100 Nature Friendly Gardens Club," which saw 61% of respondents observing animals drinking from water bowls and 36% spotting birds in nest boxes or hedgehogs. This project also attracted local business sponsorship.
Eco Friendly Garforth ran regular clothes swaps, repair cafes and sewing workshops (e.g. ‘Sew a Thermal Cook Bag') engaging new participants.
Climate Action Seacroft created a community forest garden.
Climate Action Armley delivered successful seed sowing events, leading to the establishment of Incredible Edible Armley.
Horsforth Climate Action set up a virtual Library of Things on Facebook, delivered a "Walking the Talk" event that attracted over 700 visitors, made over 100 bug hotels, facilitated over 20 bike donations for repair, and engaged many in nature-related treasure hunts.
The Repair Café model, often collaborative, has been highlighted as working well and has been successfully implemented by Horsforth and Beeston hubs.
Little London and Woodhouse hub's Community Streets Project recruited 100 volunteers and secured £40,000 in funding, bringing people together to improve their own streets.
The bin yard projects in Beeston and Woodhouse turned previously derelict bin yards into a ‘blooming environment’ where residents can relax and grow flowers, fruit, and veg.
The ongoing Grants programme of micros and small grants has been a real success, supporting 41 projects, engaging 8,188 people so far, with eight projects still underway. A successful participatory process was used to decide which projects should receive the grants.

Table 6. Sector and Campaign Support Partner Successes

Sector and Campaign Support Partner Successes
The Food Transition Partner successfully led collaboration with Leeds City Council to develop and launch Leeds' Food Strategy which was accepted by the full council and will guide the city towards a more resilient, sustainable, and socially just food system. They also launched #GoodFoodStories to build a good food movement and a network of nine community composting sites.
The Transport Transition Partner is a named contributor to INFUZE, a major University-led research project that is designing future transport systems not based on individual car ownership. They developed a "Transport Opportunities" document and a Highway Code blogpost. CAL's involvement in the INFUZE project was taken up by T4P when the Transport Transition Partner left the programme. Following discussions between the Sector and Campaign Support Partner and Project Management Partner, underspend from elsewhere in the programme was utilised so that a project developed by the Transport Transition Partner could be launched and maintained beyond CAL's original funding period. The Travel Well Leeds website will be maintained by Leeds Bike Mill, an active travel hub based in an inner-city area.
The Education Partner (Leeds DEC) developed a groundbreaking Climate Curriculum used by teachers and young people across Leeds. The curriculum has received interest from schools across England and the Natural History Museum. • They delivered Leeds' first-ever Eco Council Climate schools conference, opened by Leeds City Council's Chief Executive, with speaker contributions from Leeds's Mayor. This conference engaged 19 teachers and 99 young people. • 65 young people participated in 13 school-based climate workshops in one reporting period. • They delivered a Climate Justice Twilight training to 30 teachers.
The Nature Transition Partner (Hyde Park Source) secured £69,000 of UKRI funding in partnership with the University of Leeds, for research on 'Co-producing community use of unused/underused land in Leeds'. They also supported community hub activities like Seacroft Forest Garden and brought together the Leeds Green Activity Provider Network.
The Energy Partner (Platform) helped establish a Community Energy Network and supported low-carbon planning for two community centres.
The Work & Economy team successfully brought together members of the labour and environmental movements, thanks to collaboration with Unite Community Leeds, Wakefield, and York branch, generating public debate around Community Wealth Building.
RJN (Racial Justice Network) delivered a session on Climate Justice at the CAL Programme Assembly. Their learning sessions and reports were valued by CAL Partners.

6 Challenges

As a new partnership of very different organisations, embracing a 'test and learn' approach to find new ways of delivering community-led climate action at a city scale, inevitably a number of challenges were experienced. Some of these were outside the CAL partnership's control, but Section 7 identifies lessons learned where relevant. The key challenges experienced are set out below.

As identified in section 4, the first major challenge was that the CAL programme started during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many restrictions were in place. This had a significant impact on CAL's wider stakeholder engagement during the first 18 months, when only a few in-person meetings or events could take place, mostly in community hubs. It also constrained the initial stages of partnership development and relationship building within the CAL team, because all initial team formation and induction had to be conducted online.

The loss of the planned city hub venue right at the start of the programme also had a significant impact. This meant that the City Movement Building team did not have a physical base, which was described as having a bigger impact than initially realised: it "rocked the boat". Considerable amount of time and effort had to be invested by the City Movement Building team to find new premises for the hub, named 'Imagine Leeds'. This delay and the subsequent search for new venues were seen as a major challenge and consumed a lot of time and energy which could have been spent on other programme activities.

Other challenges have been grouped under six themes as shown in **Table 7** on the following pages.

Foodwise Leeds serving #Just One More Veg at the Roots of Change event. ***Foodwise Leeds.***

Table 7. Other challenges faced by the CAL Programme

Theme	Challenges
Capacity and Resourcing Challenges	Capacity was a significant challenge across many parts of the project. Many hub workers reported working well beyond their contracted hours (typically 15 hours/week), often unpaid, to meet community needs. A significant minority of CAL Partner team members (15.3% in Year 2, increasing to 43.8% in Year 3, and still 30% in Year 4) reported being unable to achieve programme deliverables within their set hours.
	Many programme staff worked for CAL only one or two days per week, making cross-partnership coordination/working more challenging. This structural issue of "dicing and slicing itself too thin" contributed to part-time workers struggling to find time for training, delivering their roles effectively and being able to engage in the work of other Partner team members, which may have impacted cohesion across the partnership.
	The co-production approach to developing CAL systems and processes that underpinned the CAL programme was not matched by the resourcing of team members to engage in this. This led to a perception by many CAL team members that contributing to cross-functional work, such as programme-wide systems, communications, and evaluation was outside their remit.
	The programme experienced a high churn of team members, some due to short-term, part-time contracts and the difficulties of team members managing their own work. This affected institutional memory and created challenges for consistent delivery. Some individuals considered leaving or left the programme due to unaddressed capacity issues and stress.
Programme Structure, Governance, and Leadership	A lack of strategic clarity and overall leadership was consistently identified as a weakness, throughout the CAL programme. The flat structure of equal Partners and the consensus-based approach often led to a "failure to be more than the sum of our parts" and a lack of overall leadership. There was a general feeling that CAL "doesn't have 'a leader'".
	There was a consistent lack of clarity around Partner roles, responsibilities, and priorities. This resulted in confusion, inefficiencies, and a feeling that input sought from Partners was met with "That's not my role, that's others' role".
	Decision-making was described as a longer, more timing-consuming process due to: • The consensus-based approach. • Issues with procurement and public funding requirements created "blockages" and were "hugely resource intensive". • There was also a lack of clarity regarding the communications team's responsibilities, leading to frustration. • Some Partners felt overwhelmed by the number of different systems and platforms used.
	The programme lacked a conflict resolution procedure, which became evident during difficult discussions, such as those related to the Israel-Gaza conflict. This contributed to ongoing tensions and strained relationships.
	The time needed to integrate project elements and build a new partnership was consistently underestimated, extending the "integration stage" well beyond Year 1 into Years 2 and 3, which may have been exacerbated by the overarching challenges of covid lockdown and no physical venue in the early years of the programme.
Partnership Dynamics and Relationships	Structural issues arose in trying to turn small grassroots organisations into delivery Partners rather than collaborators. These organisations often struggled with public funding requirements, such as tendering and procurement, and administrative burdens like setting up bank accounts.
	There was a lack of clarity about roles, leading to mismatched expectations between CAL and Partners like RJN. RJN felt they were asked to deliver things that "really weren't" a comfortable fit for them, potentially having had their "arms twisted" to get funding.
	Communication, both internal and external, was a significant and persistent challenge. This included a lack of regular updates, poor social media presence, and inconsistent sharing of information from the Partnership Board.
	The programme started with relationships that were "untested and fractious", and COVID-19 restrictions negatively impacted initial relationship forming and structural work.
	Issues of power dynamics, especially in contracting with smaller, often racially marginalised organisations were evident. There were also governance challenges and "blurred lines" about Partner team responsibilities within the partnership that were unhelpful.
Inclusion, Diversity, and Climate Justice	The CAL partnership and those engaging with the programme lacked diversity, with relatively low engagement amongst younger people, men, and individuals from racially marginalised communities. Efforts were made to increase the diversity of those engaging in the programme, but this remained limited.
	The involvement of the Racial Justice Network (RJN) highlighted significant issues. RJN felt their contributions were often overlooked or erased, and that race and climate justice were treated as a peripheral rather than an underpinning issue. They experienced "epistemic harm and invisibility" and felt their engagement was sometimes "tokenistic" or exploitative. RJN noted a reactive approach to issues, often based on fear or assumptions: explicit racism was encountered in learning events, where concerns of racialised people were dismissed.

Inclusion, Diversity, and Climate Justice *continued...*	Discussions around the Israel-Gaza conflict exposed weaknesses in CAL's governance and a lack of knowledge and skills to respond to racial justice issues in line with its values. This contributed to the withdrawal of RJN from the programme at the end of Year 4.
	Unclear Climate Justice Integration: The co-designed criterion for climate justice was too wide to allow full assessment of how it was embedded across the programme. There were also missed opportunities to embed equity, diversity, and inclusion from the outset.
Operational and Delivery Issues	The co-produced carbon measurement tool was not widely used by Partners. Limited information was received from Partners for carbon reduction activities.
	While CAL adopted a "test and learn" approach, capacity issues and resource constraints meant that staff could be overburdened, and the initial integration stage extended well beyond Year 1 into Years 2 and 3.
Community Hub Specific Challenges	It took a long time for the Lottery to reach a decision to allow the Onwards Grant programme, which significantly delayed the launch of this.
	The name "Climate Action Seacroft" (and similar names) was perceived negatively by some, limiting engagement in some communities by making people think it was "for/about tree huggers" or "too middle class".
	Many hub workers felt isolated or disconnected from the central CAL team, describing "the hubs being over here and CAL over there". They felt programme assemblies should celebrate their work more.
	While the archetype approach for selecting hubs was ambitious, lower-income communities (like Armley and Little London and Woodhouse) struggled more than others due to socio-economic factors and existing community infrastructure, which was not factored into the support needed for these hubs.
	Community hubs experienced inconsistent levels of pre-development work, leading to frustration among some residents who were not included in the narrowed focus of the project. Learnings from Round 1 hubs were sometimes "missed" for Round 2.
	Navigating relationships with decision-makers in Leeds City Council was described as "mysterious and challenging," leading to duplication of effort and inefficiencies.
	Being the only paid worker among volunteers (e.g. those on the voluntary steering groups leading each hub) created a "tough dynamic" for hub workers, making managing expectations and responsibilities challenging.
	Some Hub workers felt under-resourced to plan for sustainability, leading to concerns about a "cliff edge" as CAL funding ends, although some have secured funding to continue some hub activities.

7 Lessons Learned

One of the CAL assessment criteria was that the CAL partnership should be a Learning partnership. The CAL partnership has learned many lessons over the course of its five years of Lottery Funding and is keen to share these for any CAL legacy programme or for any groups thinking about doing something similar. The key lessons identified are:

Partnership and Collaboration

Developing a large and ambitious city-wide project requires more time than initially anticipated to integrate project elements and build a shared understanding of complex system change. For CAL, this integration phase extended beyond the planned Year 1 into Years 2 and 3. Future programmes need to ensure that time for integration is built in from the start.

A desire to be inclusive in decision-making often leads to longer processes. For CAL, this challenge was exacerbated by a “thin spread” of staff (e.g., working only one or two days a week), which made timely decisions and feedback difficult. Getting agreement on how to manage the balance of inclusivity vs speed is important.

In a programme with distributed leadership, clear roles and responsibilities are essential, and the limits of co-production should be negotiated early to ensure effectiveness. It is critically important to have clear roles and responsibilities and mechanisms for accountability within a large partnership and that these are understood across the partnership. Unclear roles can lead to misunderstandings and the perception of leaders being separate from the wider partnership.

Trust is fundamental to learning and honest communication within a partnership. Investing time in getting to know Partners and building relationships from the outset, especially in a large network, is crucial as relationships are often more important than structures.

Collaborative conversations, especially when preparing for events like Climate Assemblies, highlight the value of increased dialogue between partners with overlapping areas of interest, such as the Racial Justice Network, Doughnut Economics, and the Work and Economy team.

Community-led climate action relies heavily on the involvement and voice of grassroots organisations in broad-based partnerships. It is important to pay significant attention to their drivers, motivations, and working practices from the very beginning.

Leeds Trees and Woodlands event. ***Hyde Park Source.***

Capacity and Resources

Capacity has been a recurrent and significant challenge, particularly in the Community Hubs where development worker hours were reduced in the later years. A substantial number of staff reported struggling to achieve deliverables within their contracted hours, often working unpaid overtime.

Having many staff working only one or two days per week complicated cross-partnership coordination and co-production processes, making effective delivery difficult. Consideration should be given to having fewer members of staff, working more time on the programme.

Individuals have considered leaving the programme due to stress from being asked to do more than their contracted hours, underscoring the need to prioritise deliverables within realistic resource limits to avoid staff burnout.

It is essential to build in time to enable staff to contribute to programme-wide tasks which require input from all Partners, such as communications, programme-wide events, and evaluation. Otherwise, staff tend to think "That's not my role" when asked to participate in these tasks, particularly when they are time constrained.

Community hubs should not all have received the same level and types of funding and resources. For some areas experiencing socio-economic challenges and/or a lack of existing community infrastructure, more resourcing and support may be required.

Engagement and Inclusivity

Engaging new audiences is most successful when activities are tailored to local interests and needs. Providing tangible "entry points" like repair cafes, community composting, and sewing workshops can effectively initiate conversations about climate action.

The programme consistently struggled to achieve representative engagement, particularly with younger people (under 44), men, and individuals from racially marginalised communities. This indicates a need for sustained effort in widening participation from the start of a programme.

When promoting active travel, it is important not to "shame" parents who have no realistic alternative to driving their children to school.

Having a specific activity to draw people and children in, such as a treasure hunt, significantly boosts visitor numbers and engagement. Being present at already established community events (e.g. fairs, festivals) also widens reach.

Youth Parliament presentation at the Vision To Action Climate Assembly. ***Climate Action Leeds.***

Programme Management and Strategy

The initial phase of mobilising a large, ambitious city-wide project can take a considerable period before tangible impacts are fully visible.

A lack of clear strategic direction and leadership in the CAL partnership was identified as a weakness. Even in a flat-structured partnership, there is a need for someone to take responsibility for overall programme leadership and strategic direction.

Regular and effective communication is vital for a multi-partner programme, requiring diverse media and clear messaging both internally and externally. A central, well-resourced communications function is essential.

CAL systems and processes were not widely understood or consistently communicated, potentially due to capacity issues. This indicates a need for simpler, agreed-upon systems and consistent communication of Partnership Board decisions.

An evaluation Partner needs to be in post at the start of the programme to ensure that simple, agreed, programme-wide evidence collection systems for ongoing data input are introduced from the start, rather than 'retrofitted' once a programme has already started.

Race and Climate Justice

There was a critical learning that without centring justice, communities are left behind in climate action efforts. This was not initially central in the CAL bid-writing phase but was recognised as essential for achieving the overall programme goal. Where race and climate justice are seen as peripheral issues rather than fundamental to all climate work, this can lead to racialised and epistemic harm. Appointing a Race and Climate Justice Partner as an equal Partner at the start of the programme, with agreement on programmes of work is essential for a programme such as CAL.

It is vital for programmes such as CAL to be clear about what is and is not possible within their capacity and to demonstrate integrity by only committing to what can genuinely be delivered when addressing complex issues like climate justice.


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Climate Action News

Climate Action Leeds

Community climate action builds hope

Leeds residents are working together to protect people and the planet and make the city a great place to live. From warmer homes and clean energy to supporting nature to create a happier, greener city, we are thinking big and acting now on climate change. The Roots of Change event at the Leeds Caribbean and African Centre celebrated community climate action projects across our city.

Exciting projects, big impact: pages 2-12

Councillor Jane Dowson and residents at the opening of the Leeds Caribbean and African Centre Community Garden. Picture: Paul Chatterton.

Grassroots food revolution Page 3

Woods saved by community Page 10

Leeds opens one of UK's first climate action hubs Page 11

NATURE | ECONOMY | TRANSPORT | FOOD | HOUSING | ENERGY | JUSTICE | EDUCATION

Climate Action Newspaper. ***Climate Action Leeds.***

8 Conclusions

Climate Action Leeds was an ambitious five year programme funded by £2.5m from The National Lottery Community Fund to develop a city-wide collective action approach for community-led climate action. It was delivered by a partnership of Voluntary Action Leeds, Our Future Leeds, Together For Peace, Leeds Tidal, CAG Consultants and Leeds Community Foundation. CAL provided a platform for people, organisations and communities to come together to take action on climate change in Leeds and beyond. The overarching goal was to help shape a Leeds which is zero carbon, nature friendly and socially just by the 2030s, focusing on mobilising communities, and sectors to plan and act together.

Has CAL achieved its ambitions? As expected for a programme that is as large and complex as CAL, with staff and volunteers, the answer is that it has done great work in some areas and less so in others.

In terms of numbers of people who have engaged in the CAL programme, over the course of the five years, it is estimated that 30,700 people have engaged in more than 600 events and activities delivered through the CAL programme. The majority of these have been through the work of the community hubs, including the Onwards Grants programme of micro and small grants.

The community hubs part of the CAL programme enabled relationships and programmes of activities to be developed at a neighbourhood level on a whole range of activities. Community hubs worked better in some areas than others. As described in section 7, some areas needed more support than others due to pre-existing socio-economic and social infrastructure challenges, rather than all community hubs having the same level of resourcing.

The work of the Transition Partners has had a positive impact at both community levels and at city-wide strategic levels. An example of their community level impact includes the Nature Transition Partner providing support for the development of Seacroft Forest Garden leading to their host organisation , Hyde Park Source taking on the site lease to enable the garden to continue). An example of strategic city-wide impact is Foodwise Leeds' collaboration with Leeds City Council to develop and launch Leeds' Food Strategy which was accepted by the full council to guide the city towards a more resilient, sustainable, and socially just food system.

The City Movement Building team delivered "Imagine Leeds", the CAL climate action hub, in two different venues, enabling broad engagement with individuals and organisations across the city. The team also delivered high profile events, such as the Leeds International Doughnut Festival, the Imagine Leeds Launch and the Year 5 CAL Showcase events. The latter two events were attended by Leeds City Council Members and Chief Executives, local MPs, community and voluntary sector organisations from across the city.

There are many important challenges experienced in the CAL programme identified in this report, including a number regarding the structure and processes of the CAL partnership, such as needing clear leadership and spreading the staff resources too thinly to support them to deliver their work effectively. Arguably, one of the most important areas where CAL needed to do more work was on embedding race and climate justice into the programme from the start. A race and climate justice Partner should have been one of the main CAL Partners from the start to ensure that strong governance and skills in race and climate justice were embedded throughout the programme.

This is made possible by the partnership of

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