



Evaluation of the Impact of PCAN-supported Climate Commissions

FINAL REPORT



INFORMING POSITIVE CHANGE

London School of Economics

Evaluation of the Impact of PCAN-supported Climate Commissions

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Final report

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Executive Summary

The Climate Commission concept is an ambitious approach to participatory, place-based climate governance. The focus of this research was to evaluate the impact, so far, of the three core Climate Commissions supported through the Place-based Climate Action Network (PCAN). These are Belfast, Edinburgh and Leeds and the evaluation encompassed the role they are playing in the climate activities of their respective cities, and the extent to which they provide a replicable model for place-based climate governance.

The PCAN programme started in 2019. The Leeds Climate Commission was launched in 2017, which pre-dates the start of the PCAN programme in 2019. It was used as an example for the establishment of the Belfast and Edinburgh Climate Commissions that have been set up as part of the PCAN programme. All three commissions are independent but supported by PCAN.

This study set out to address the following key areas:

- where the Commissions sit in the local climate policy landscape (e.g. relative to other institutions) and how they are perceived by stakeholders
- the specific functions played by the Commissions (e.g. as a knowledge broker, policy innovator, consensus builder, etc.)
- types of capacity building enabled by the Commissions
- concrete areas of success and how these are evidenced
- areas of contention / difficulties
- the ability of the Commissions to facilitate not just dialogue but concrete climate (mitigation and/or adaptation) action
- how insights from each Commission could help build a replicable model

In general the research found that each of the three Climate Commissions is a valued and respected independent organisation in the climate change policy landscape of their respective city by both internal and external stakeholders and that they have all contributed to the development of local climate policy.

The research identified a number of findings for consideration by the PCAN steering group and individual Climate Commissions as they plan their work for the remaining PCAN funded programme and beyond, as well as the role of Climate Commissions more widely and how they can be supported. These are summarised below.

Of the functions undertaken by all three Commission, two were identified as being the most important. The first was a convenor role – bringing disparate organisations and individuals to work together to take action on addressing climate change in their cities. The second was an independent, evidence based advisor role – providing impartial, robust evidence and advice to influence policy and delivery of climate action.

A number of other common Climate Commission functions were also identified. These were: policy innovation, knowledge brokering, evidence provision (climate change), awareness raising, engagement, facilitation, and challenge.

The Climate Commissions have filled a niche that was missing in each of the three cities, during a period of change in the climate change policy landscape of the cities since the Climate Commissions were established. During this time, for example, each of the respective city councils have declared a climate emergency, there are more organisations who have publicly committed to working towards Net Zero (NZ) carbon emissions within their organisations and there are many more sources of advice and support available on a range of subjects on place-based climate action. **The research found that no other organisations fulfilled the convening and independent evidence-based advisory functions that the Commissions undertook, each considered important functions of the Climate Commissions in facilitating climate action in their cities.**

The focus of all three Climate Commissions has predominantly been on climate mitigation and much less so on adaptation. When considering the spatial scale Climate Commissions should cover, it was suggested that the city level may not be a large enough scale for adaptation to be effectively addressed by a Commission, which may be one reason for this.

In terms of impacts identified that had been facilitated by the Climate Commissions, building capacity in the local climate action landscape was one of the key areas of impact enabled by the Climate Commissions, with three different types of capacity building identified. These were: of citizens, of organisations and of Climate Commissioners. All three of these were found only in the case of the Leeds Climate Commission, with the Belfast Climate Commission identified as building capacity of both organisations and citizens and the Edinburgh Climate Commission as building capacity of organisations. This is likely a reflection of the shorter timeframe that both the Belfast and Edinburgh Climate Commissions have been in existence. In the case of the Edinburgh, this may also be due to the Edinburgh Climate Commission's greater business focus. Other capacities built and impacts delivered included: informing policy/plans/practice, delivering new forms of climate governance, and facilitating concrete climate impacts.

Examples of impacts facilitated by the Climate Commissions included:

- informing the development of the respective city councils' climate plans. The Net Zero Carbon Roadmap (NZCR) reports, produced by the PCAN programme for each of the three cities, were considered particularly important sources of independent evidence in informing climate change policy by the city councils in each of the three cities
- the Youth Summit organised by the Belfast Climate Commission to coincide with COP26
- the Edinburgh Climate Compact ¹ developed by the Edinburgh Climate Commission
- the Climate Change Citizens' Jury organised by the Leeds Climate Commission

¹ The Edinburgh Climate Compact is a commitment by the leading businesses and employers in Edinburgh to take action within their own organisation to contribute to a green recovery and radically reduce the city's carbon emissions' <https://www.edinburghclimate.org.uk/edinburgh-climate-compact>

- the work of the Belfast Climate Commission has also informed work of Government at the Northern Ireland level, with the evidence from the NZCR feeding into this
- work by Edinburgh and Leeds Climate Commissions to facilitate and inform NZ policy and practice of public and private sector organisations through their work on the Climate Compact and Green Investment Finance initiatives respectively

Delivery of concrete climate action, although not a main objective of the Climate Commissions, has been considered within the research. For the purposes of this research concrete climate actions have been interpreted as actions that deliver carbon emission reductions or climate adaptation measures. Limited evidence was found of concrete climate actions delivered so far that have been facilitated by the Climate Commissions. However, evidence was found of work underway on a number of projects that are intended to deliver concrete climate actions, such as the development of a Green Investment Finance model for Leeds, and collaboration and support on projects between Edinburgh Climate Compact signatory organisations. These are considered different and separate to capacity building impacts facilitated by the Commissions described earlier, as are focussed on project delivery. This shows that the Commissions are facilitating concrete climate action, it is just too early in their development and delivery for there to be much evidence of this. The Belfast and Edinburgh Climate Commissions are more than three years old and the Leeds Climate Commission more than five years old, but the research suggests that it takes a long time to move from the convening, evidence-based advisory roles that have been identified as important for the Commissions to the delivery of 'concrete' climate actions that these have facilitated. It is, therefore, still early days in terms of translating the work of the Commissions into tangible climate outcomes.

A learning point, therefore, is that Climate Commissions can play a useful role in facilitating concrete climate actions, but that it can take time for this to translate into actual project delivery.

Consideration needs to be given as to how the Climate Commissions can secure sustainable and appropriate levels of funding to enable them to continue to deliver both the functions identified in the research and the translation of work into tangible climate outcomes. This research has found that most of the impacts of the three Climate Commissions have been through capacity building, so moving forward, the Commissions may wish to reflect as to whether facilitating concrete climate actions should be one of their purposes.

As to be expected when undertaking a new way of working, a number of areas of contention/difficulties were identified in the setting up and operation of the three Climate Commissions.

Two areas of contention/ difficulty were experienced across all three of the Commissions. The first was a perceived lack of funding and resourcing of the Commissions (insufficient funding/ staff time/secretariat and also lack of transparency of resourcing), which has limited the operation and ability of the Commissions to deliver all the priorities they identified to deliver, such as the ability to commission additional research. This suggests that more funding is needed to deliver the functions and priorities identified by the Climate Commission than the PCAN programme is able to provide. The second was COVID; the lack of face to face Commission

meetings was felt to have had a detrimental impact on the operation of the Commissions in terms of relationship building between Commissioners.

Whilst each of the Commissions had clear Terms of Reference, Commissioners and individuals in supporting roles from both Edinburgh and Leeds Climate Commissions were not clear on the **Commissions' roles and purpose**. This meant that Commissioners had differing expectations of what they could do and the time and resources they were able to commit. For example, Commissioners not being aware that they would be required to lead individual projects on behalf of the Commission. Consideration should be given to how Terms of Reference are agreed and communicated within and outside of the Commissions.

The lack of a Northern Ireland Government for much of the time the Climate Commission has been in existence was identified as a specific challenge for the Belfast Climate Commission. For example, this was a contributing factor to there being no national climate legislation in place until 2022 to help shape the priorities of the Commission.

A key challenge encountered in the research was identifying causal links and finding evidence of attribution that work undertaken by each of the three core Climate Commissions has contributed to an outcome. It is likely that there are more impacts being delivered as a result of the existence and work of the Commissions than has been possible to identify and evidence within this research. There may be a number of reasons for this, such as the limited capacity of the Commissions to undertake detailed monitoring and evaluation of their work or produce resources documenting the nature and impact of their activities. Furthermore, the main fieldwork for this research took place in September 2022, so any impacts delivered or evidenced after that time were not considered as part of this research.

A number of key areas were identified through the research for consideration in developing a replicable model for new Climate Commissions. These are also relevant to the sustainability of the three PCAN-supported Climate Commissions and other existing Commissions moving forward. These include:

- developing a sustainable funding model that includes provision for an adequately resourced secretariat function. Examples of different models that could be considered are provided in the main report, such as financial contributions by all member organisations
- consideration of the best way to recruit Climate Commissioners in order to achieve a balance of having senior knowledgeable decision makers, but also individuals who can actively undertake work for the Commission
- determining the spatial scale that a Climate Commission should cover by identifying what it needs to address, i.e. 'form follows function'. However, it was noted through the research that city scale might not be large enough for a Climate Commission to address climate adaptation and also that it might be easier to sustain and resource a Commission operating at a larger spatial scale
- more fully embedding climate justice in the work and membership of the Climate Commissions. Lack of representation and specific actions to address racial justice as part

of tackling climate justice was identified as a key issue in the Leeds Commission, but is of relevance for all Commissions

- how should the Climate Commissions address key priorities to maximise limited resources

There was some support that Climate Commissions operating at different, overlapping, spatial scales can successfully co-exist, as different issues can be addressed at different spatial scales. The Leeds and Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commissions were identified as a positive example of this. The successful existence of overlapping Commissions at different spatial scales was regarded as being dependent upon having sufficient resource in place for this to happen.

Introduction

The Climate Commission concept is an ambitious approach to participatory, place-based climate governance. The research focus was to evaluate the impact, so far, of the three core Climate Commissions supported through the Place-based Climate Action Network (PCAN), which was established in 2019, and funded through the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) programme .

The three core Climate Commissions considered here are Belfast, Edinburgh and Leeds and the evaluation encompassed the role they are playing in the climate activities of their respective cities, and the extent to which they provide a replicable model for place-based climate governance.

The Leeds Climate Commission pre-dates the start of the PCAN programme, launching in 2017, and was used as an exemplar in setting up the Belfast and Edinburgh Climate Commissions, which launched in 2019 with support from the PCAN programme. All three commissions are independent but supported by PCAN.

This study set out to address the following key areas:

- where the Commissions sit in the local climate policy landscape (e.g. relative to other institutions) and how they are perceived by stakeholders
- the specific functions played by the Commissions (e.g. as a knowledge broker, policy innovator, consensus builder, etc.)
- types of capacity building enabled by the Commissions
- concrete areas of success and how these are evidenced
- areas of contention / difficulties
- the ability of the Commissions to facilitate not just dialogue but concrete climate (mitigation and/or adaptation) action
- how insights from each Commission could help build a replicable model

Each of the three Climate Commissions has two lead partners. In the case of Belfast, these are Queen's University Belfast and Belfast City Council, in Edinburgh these are the University of Edinburgh and the City of Edinburgh Council and in Leeds, these are the University of Leeds and Leeds City Council. Commissioners in each case are from the public, private, academic, and third sectors.

Methodology

The research used a mixed methods approach, employing three main methods:

- a desk based data review
- qualitative interviews
- focus groups/focus group survey

For the latter two activities, views were sought from individuals involved with the three PCAN-supported Climate Commission, as well as representatives of other Climate Commissions from the PCAN+ Network (York, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, Lincoln and Essex) and PCAN programme staff.

Regular meetings were held with the PCAN client steering group to discuss emerging findings, and to get agreement on elements of the following research tasks.

Details of the methods used can be found in Appendix 2.

Limitations

There were a number of limitations of the research.

One limitation was the sample of participants in interviews. As described earlier, ideally everyone involved in each of the Commissions would have been interviewed in order to get the most complete picture of each Commission, but this was not possible due to resource and interviewee availability.

There were some limitations to the methodological scope of the evaluation, For example, ideally everyone involved in each of the Commissions would have been interviewed in order to get the most complete picture of each Commission, but this was not possible due to resource and interviewee availability.

The number of participants engaging in some of the focus groups was also limited, again in part due to availability, but also likely to have been due participants' interest in the subject matter, which meant that there were fewer views captured to inform the research findings. The number of participants was higher in the focus group exploring 'the spatial scale that Climate Commissions cover' than the participants registered for the focus group on 'what Climate Commissions do/can do that is unique'. There were a good number of participants registered for the focus group exploring the resourcing of Climate Commissions, but fewer participants responded to the survey on this, when the focus group had to be cancelled due to the Queen's funeral.

Another limitation of the research is that that it was not possible to identify and review all available evidence within the available resource and timeframe for this evaluation. Climate Commission produced reports/information and relevant council reports were prioritised. Other

documents, such as key Commission meeting notes were reviewed as part of the evidence verification process.

There are two other linked limitations of the research. Firstly the difficulty in assessing causal links/attribution of activities/impacts to the work of the Climate Commissions. This was due to the second limitation, which was the limited amount of third party evidence and monitoring information available to verify the data collected through interviews and focus groups. That is not to suggest that the primary data collected is not valid, but caution needs to be applied in use of the research findings based solely on these data sources. Moving forward, consideration should be given to how to capture contributions that the Commissions make, e.g. in influencing policy in ongoing monitoring and evaluation of their work.

The research team has not had access to information regarding the amount, purpose and mechanisms of PCAN funding for each of the three Commissions, so has been unable to make an assessment of the scale, focus and processes of this in terms of whether it has delivered what was intended.

Analysis and findings

This section sets out the analysis of the data collected through the data review, interviews, focus groups and focus group survey, with key findings identified.

The findings are arranged under headings for each of the research areas that the study was required to provide insights on:

- where the Commissions sit in the local climate policy landscape (e.g. relative to other institutions) and how they are perceived by stakeholders
- the specific functions played by the Commissions (e.g. as a knowledge broker, policy innovator, consensus builder, etc.)
- types of capacity building enabled by the Commissions
- concrete areas of success and how these are evidenced
- areas of contention / difficulties
- the ability of the Commissions to facilitate not just dialogue but concrete climate (mitigation and/or adaptation) action
- how insights from each Commission could help build a replicable model.

In addition to these areas, the *How insights from each Commission could help build a replicable model* section has reflections on key issues that have emerged through the research, for consideration by the PCAN steering group and the individual Commissions.

Where the Commissions sit in the local climate policy landscape (e.g. relative to other institutions) and how they are perceived by stakeholders

A close working relationship between the Commission and the respective city council in each of the three Commission cities has played a key role in enabling them to provide independent, evidence based advice, for example the councils being receptive to contributions from the Commission to inform council policy and strategy. There is a balance to be struck, however, as one Edinburgh interviewee noted, that close working can make it difficult to challenge the council. Despite tensions between lead partner organisations at times, there is recognition that the Commissions have an important role to play in informing local policy development.

The Net Zero Carbon Roadmaps (NZCR), developed by PCAN, have been identified by each of the three Commissions as very important pieces of evidence based research that have helped inform local conversations and policy priorities for Net Zero (NZ). In the cases of Belfast and Edinburgh, some interviewees felt that these were outside of the Commissions' work, as they were developed before the Commissions were launched. However, for the purposes of this evaluation, these have been attributed to the individual Commissions as part of their role in contributing to the local climate policy landscape of each city.

There were suggestions through interviews that the work done by individuals involved in the **Belfast** Climate Commission contributed to the [Climate Change Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2022](#). "By virtue of my work with PCAN, I think PCAN can bear some credit for our work leading on Northern Ireland's first based climate legislation", reported one Commissioner. No evidence was

found to verify these assertions, so more evidence would be required to confirm the role the Commission and PCAN played.

The NZCR was thought to be very influential in Belfast, as was the first one produced in Northern Ireland and fed into different areas of government. The Commission also acted as a broker advising on the NZCR to other councils. A NZCR is now being developed for the Belfast city region, which will also update the Belfast NZCR.

There is a Resilience and Sustainability Board (R&SB) in existence in Belfast, established by the council, whose role is to advise and oversee the delivery and implementation of Belfast's Resilience Strategy² whereas the Climate Commission is tasked with producing evidence for the NZ transition in the city. The Commission should be informing the work of the R&SB, but as described later, there were mixed views about whether – and how – this works.

In **Edinburgh**, the Commission has played an important role informing policy development by the city council. An example of this was when the council adopted all the recommendations in the Commission's *Forward, Faster, Together: Recommendations for a Green Economic Recovery in Edinburgh* report. The Commission also informed the council's *2030 Climate Strategy*. A council officer described how important the Commission's contributions to the Strategy were – "Incredibly helpful how it influenced the Strategy, as some chapters would never have seen the light of day".

The **Leeds** Climate Commission has informed policy development of the city council. An example of this is that when the council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019, it used the NZCR as the evidence base to show how they would reach their target. An interviewee from the council said, "it was really helpful to say 'this isn't just a declaration, this is a declaration underpinned by [the] road map that we can show how we're going to get to net zero by 2038.'"

Another example was a piece of work started by the Commission on how to fund renewable energy systems through crowd funding on council buildings and elsewhere. This was developed as a Green Investment Finance project by the Commission and involved private sector Commissioners. One interviewee described it as "a piece of work that started in the Commission and then was taken up by the council ... that was a good example of the Commission influencing stuff in the local authority."

A different view was given by a council representative that on council policy, the Commission's influence has been through the consultation process, such as consultations on the Local Plan update and transport strategy. It's "a little bit of the council deciding on policy and telling the Commission."

Supporting other stakeholders to make changes, the council and the Leeds University also held a workshop with the city's highest emitters to ask how they could reduce carbon emissions to

² <https://yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk/belfast-resilience-and-sustainability-board>

meet the 2038 NZ target. No evidence has been found in this study as to whether this led to any policy changes by participants.

Conclusions

Each of the three Commissions has informed climate change policy and plans of their respective city council, with the evidence base from each of their respective NZCRs making an important contribution to this.

The work of the Belfast Climate Commission also informed work of Government at the Northern Ireland level, with the evidence from the NZCR feeding into government departments.

Work by Edinburgh and Leeds Climate Commissions has also been facilitating and informing NZ policy and practice of public and private sector organisations through their work, for example the Edinburgh Climate Compact – requiring organisations to publish their carbon emissions and annual benchmarking on this and Green Investment Finance initiatives, for example exploring use of crowd-funding for photovoltaic panels on council buildings in Leeds.

The specific functions played by the Commissions

Evidence from data sources that formed the data review, interviews and focus groups were analysed to identify the functions undertaken by each of the Commissions. There was limited external evidence of this, but some key insights of these were collected through interviews.

In **Belfast**, the Climate Commission was described as being “the analytical brain and the Resilience and Sustainability Board (R&SB), the delivery mechanism”, so suggests a clear distinction between the two. However, there was some concern over the lack of clarity about the different roles undertaken by the Commission and the R&SB “two bodies which are actually doing similar sort of things and sometimes hard to differentiate”. A member of the R&SB was also not clear on the role that the Commission had in relation to the R&SB.

In Belfast, the Commission was also identified as having a lead role on co-ordinating activity across the area and Northern Ireland for COP26.

The **Edinburgh** Climate Commission had a strapline of ‘Challenge, Catalyse, Convene’. It has aimed to challenge key stakeholders within Edinburgh, not just the council, to go further and faster in regard to responding to climate change, that includes the Scottish Government and businesses within Edinburgh.

An example of the Commission’s convening and catalysing roles was enshrined in the *Climate Compact*. This brought together public and private sector organisations to drive forward ambition at Edinburgh and to catalyse change by shining a light on issues or solutions.

The convening role was considered important, with the ability to engage with people at a fairly senior level across a variety of sectors. One Edinburgh Climate Commissioner described this as “The convening power of it was powerful.”

An important example of the Commission's advisory role was identified as being an independent adviser on the council's 2030 NZ Strategy.

The challenge role was also identified as important for the **Leeds** Climate Commission, in particular in relation to the council means the council hear different voices that sometimes "we might not want to hear - that challenge".

It's role as an innovator was also mentioned - coming up with new ideas. An example of this is the work on Green Investment Finance that has been developed over recent years.

A Commissioner from the private sector identified the most important role of the Leeds Climate Commission as being a 'bridge' between business, local policy makers, such as the council and academic institutions, such as Leeds University.

The data was analysed and distilled to identify a number of functions undertaken by the Commissions (see Table 1). This showed that all of the functions identified were undertaken by each of the three Climate Commissions, through their different activities. No functions were identified that were only undertaken by one or two of the Commissions, although as the local contexts are different for each of the Commissions, some of the functions are attributed to similar activities, but many are attributed to different activities undertaken by the Commissions. There are many instances where more than one function has been attributed to individual activities. The detail of this can be seen in Appendix 3.

Conclusions

Research participants regarded the two most important functions undertaken by all three of the Climate Commissions as the convenor and independent evidence-based adviser functions. In addition, a number of other functions were identified that were also undertaken by all three Commissions, albeit in different ways. Table 1, below, sets out the functions undertaken by all three Climate Commissions and their descriptions.

Table 1. Functions undertaken by all three of the Climate Commissions

Function	Description
Policy innovator	New tools, techniques and methods that might complement existing tools, help to improve policy processes and ultimately deliver better outcomes for citizens. ³
Convenor	Bringing together people for a purpose.
Knowledge broker	Developing relationships and networks with, among, and between producers and users of knowledge to facilitate the exchange of knowledge throughout this network and build capacity for evidence-based decision-making. ⁴

³ Based on description by the Policy Lab team: <https://openpolicy.blog.gov.uk/2020/05/22/policy-innovation-what-why-and-how/>

⁴ <https://www.researchtoaction.org/2017/04/three-ways-knowledge-brokers-can-strengthen-impact-scientific-research/>

Evidence provider (Climate Change)	Provides science-based evidence on climate change impacts and mitigation.
Independent, evidence-based adviser	Providing objective advice to other people or groups, based on the best evidence available.
Awareness raiser	Informing a community's attitudes, behaviours and beliefs with the intention of influencing them positively in the achievement of a defined purpose or goal. ⁵
Engagement	Interventions aimed at communicating with or mobilising the public, or changing their behaviours, choices or attitudes to positively contribute to reducing emissions. ⁶
Facilitator	Enabling groups to work cooperatively and effectively together and which emphasises the involvement of all participants in a meaningful way. ⁷
Challenge	Challenge organisations decisions/actions based on evidence and hold them to account on commitments.

Types of capacity building enabled by the Commissions and concrete areas of success and how these are evidenced

Information from the data review, interviews and focus groups were examined to assess what types of capacity building the three Climate Commissions had enabled. This may have been directly, such as raising awareness through delivering an event, or the NZCR informing a Climate Commission's priorities, or indirectly, for example through providing supporting for a successful climate action funding application. These were split into three different types of capacity building: of citizens, of organisations and of Climate Commissioners.

Each of the activities undertaken by the three Commissions was then assessed to identify which, if any, of the three types of capacity building were enabled by that activity. This can be seen in Appendix 3.

Following this, activities undertaken by each Commission were examined to assess whether they had delivered any concrete areas of success (see following section). Where there was evidence of delivery, these were considered together with the capacity building enabled as impacts that the Climate Commissions have achieved, using the following colour coding system:

- Green: evidence of impacts
- Amber: evidence of some progress towards delivering impacts

⁵Sayers, R. (2006). Principles of Awareness Raising. UNESCO: Bangkok, p. 11-12.

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001476/147637e.pdf>

⁶ public engagement for climate action <https://gulbenkian.pt/uk-branch/our-work/citizen-engagement-on-climate/>

⁷ <https://involve.org.uk/resources/knowledge-base/what/facilitation#:~:text=Facilitation%20is%20a%20process%20of,which%20roughly%20means%20'a business'>.

- Red: no evidence of impacts

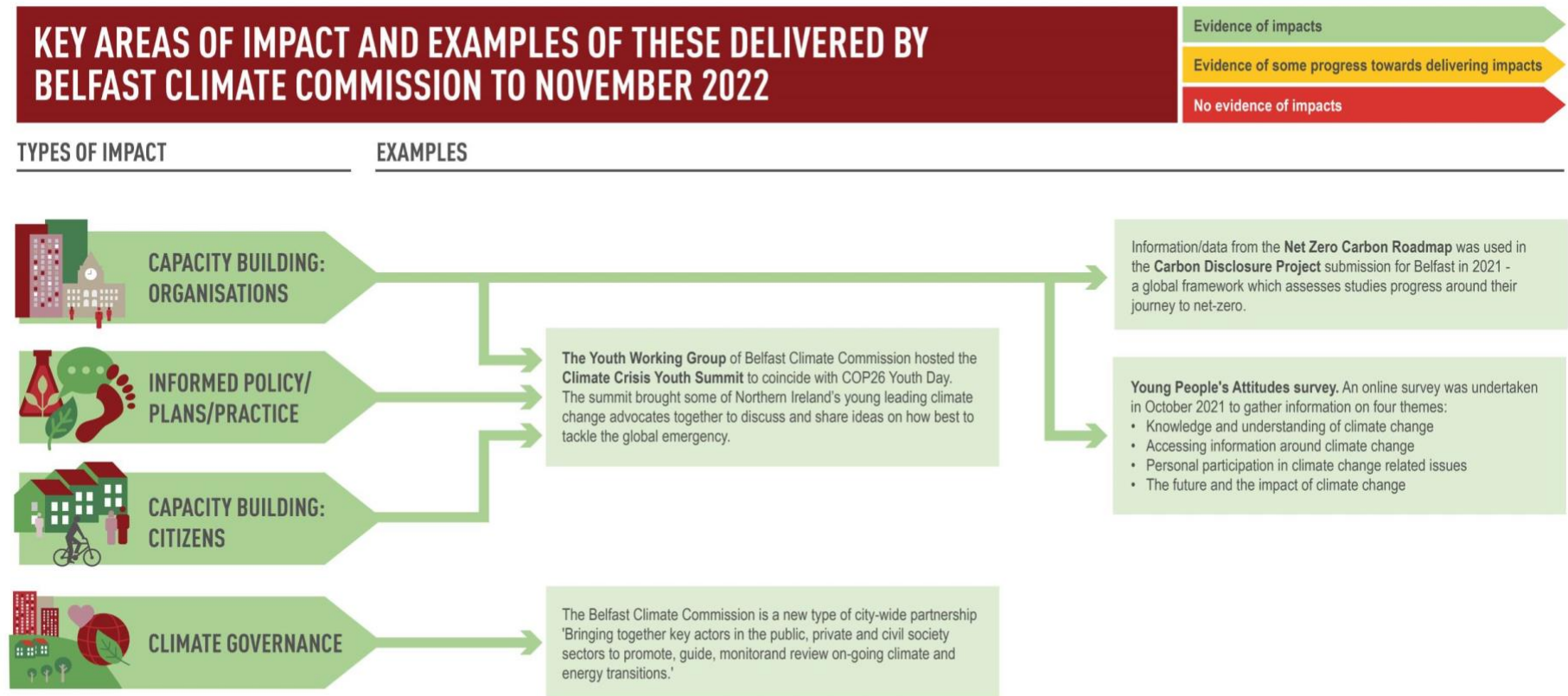
The following definition of impact has been used in assessing impact 'Positive and negative primary and secondary long-term effects produced by the intervention, whether directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.'⁸

Conclusions

The key areas of impact of each of the three Climate Commissions, with examples are set out in Figures 1,2 and 3 below.

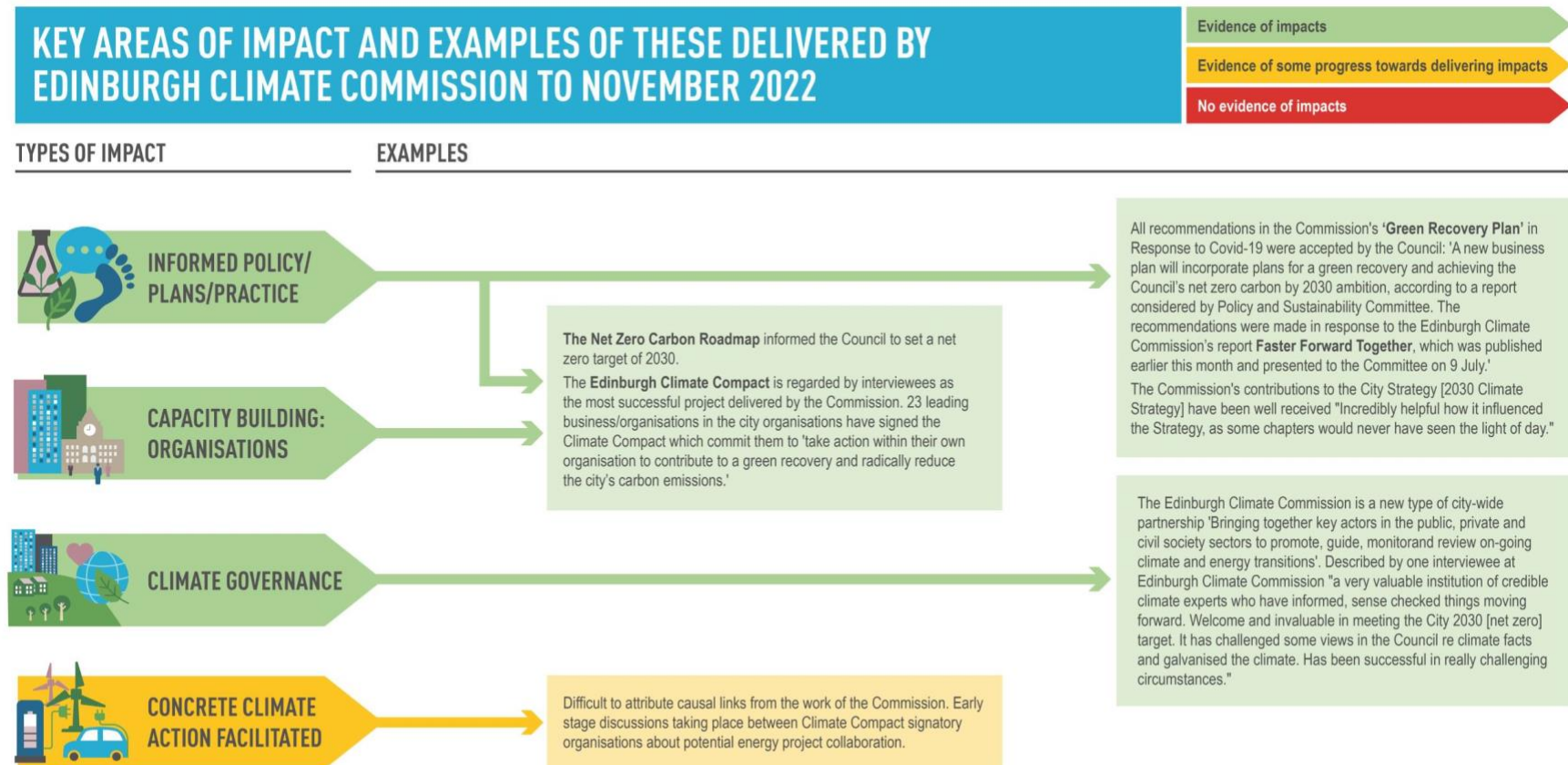
⁸ OECD-DAC criteria (OECD-DAC) https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/themes/impact_evaluation

Figure 1. Key areas of impact and examples delivered by the Belfast Climate Commission



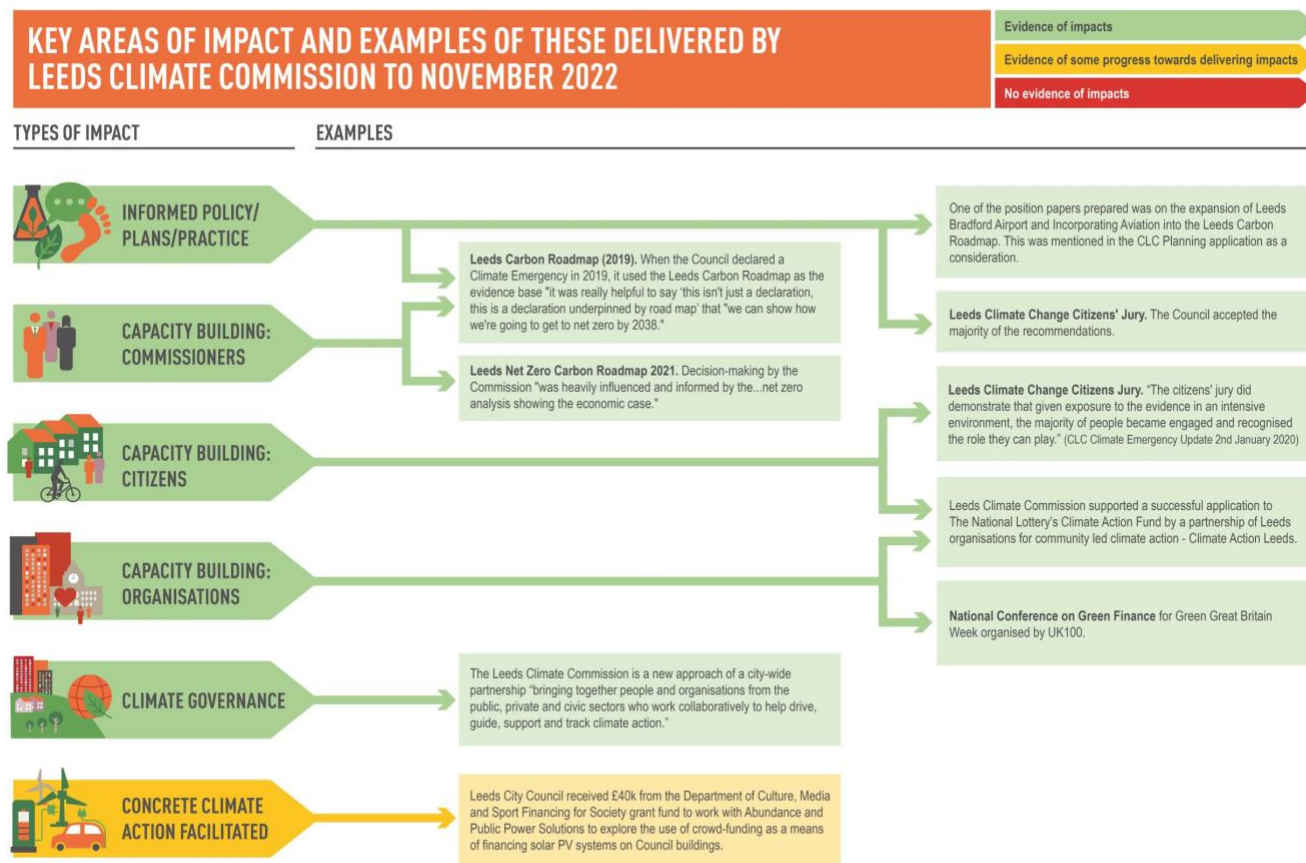
Through their work, the Climate Commissions make contributions to activities that will deliver some impacts that are not represented here, due to lack of evidence or attribution for these. Whilst delivery of concrete climate actions was not an intended function of the Climate Commissions, there are some instances where they have facilitated their development.

Figure 2. Key areas of impact and examples delivered by the Edinburgh Climate Commission



Through their work, the Climate Commissions make contributions to activities that will deliver some impacts that are not represented here, due to lack of evidence or attribution for these. Whilst delivery of concrete climate actions was not an intended function of the Climate Commissions, there are some instances where they have facilitated their development.

Figure 3. Key areas of impact and examples delivered by the Leeds Climate Commission



Through their work, the Climate Commissions make contributions to activities that will deliver some impacts that are not represented here, due to lack of evidence or attribution for these. Whilst delivery of concrete climate actions was not an intended function of the Climate Commissions, there are some instances where they have facilitated their development.

The process of assessing types of capacity building enabled and concrete areas of success relied on the availability of evidence to determine these, which was not always available. Instances where evidence was absent are noted in Appendix 3. This lack of evidence may be due to a number of factors. Some of these identified later in the report, such as the lack of resources and a lack of monitoring systems in place.

The ability of the Commissions to facilitate not just dialogue but concrete climate (mitigation and/or adaptation) action

Concrete climate actions, for the purposes of this study have been defined as actions that are directly contributing to the delivery of carbon emission reductions or climate adaptation measures. As can be seen from the functions identified for each of the Commission earlier, none of them have a direct delivery role in achievement of local NZ targets, e.g. delivering an NZ retrofit programme. Delivery of concrete climate actions would therefore be through facilitation, for example through the Green Investment model being developed Leeds Climate Commission. As can be seen in Figures 1, 2 and 3, there have been limited 'concrete' climate mitigation actions identified that have been delivered so far as a result of the work of the Climate Commissions.

In addition this study has identified that there have been no adaptation actions delivered yet that have been facilitated by the work of the Commissions. Action on adaptation was identified as a real gap in the work of the Commissions, demonstrated by a response from an Edinburgh Commissioner and someone who worked on the Leeds Climate Commission said, "it's very hard to attribute the Commission to actual emissions reduction...or an adaptation response, and there won't be any adaptation responses because we have a massive, gaping kind of hole in that regard." "We very quickly realised...with adaptation that we needed a bigger geography...to make sense about adaptation. So I think that was something that the Yorkshire Climate Commission will... better able to focus on."

Some mitigation actions were suggested through interviews but lacked evidence of any causal links attributable to the work of the Commissions and also of any concrete climate actions being delivered. One interviewee from Edinburgh cautioned against using concrete climate action as the measure of success /impact of the Commissions, as "within the noise of what's actually driven emissions reductions in Edinburgh in the last three years which is almost entirely been shaped by COVID and the reductions in activity. You're not going to find the fingerprint of the of the Commission in that in the last three years. So I would definitely caution against measuring success or impact on that basis because it takes years to get the actual emissions reductions to materialising in inventory following a policy change."

Many of the actions that have been suggested as being facilitated to some extent by the work of the Climate Commissions have not yet translated into concrete/evidenced climate actions. An example of this was given by a business signatory to the Edinburgh Climate Compact, who described that their business had made links to other Compact member businesses and offered support to initiate a heat pump project, but that work hadn't started on this yet. Some more examples of these are listed below. This may simply be a timing issue, as the Belfast and

Edinburgh Climate Commissions are less than three years old, and many climate actions will take a number of years to deliver.

This also highlights a couple of areas for consideration for the Commission moving forward:

- the first is the need for better monitoring systems for actions delivered or facilitated by the Commissions
- the second is that tangible actions may take more time to deliver than the remaining period of PCAN funding for the Commissions, so consideration will need to be given as to:
 - how to attribute causal links between the work of the Climate Commissions and climate actions, when there may be a number of contributing factors
 - how to monitor and report on actions that will be delivered after PCAN funding has ended

One interviewee from Leeds suggested that Climate Commissions should focus on capacity building and partnership building "that might be a...better model and...leave local authorities to concentrate on marshalling their resources, their assets, things like that which you know they...can do very successfully to make them themselves a key component of the...achievement of a low carbon local authority." As regards the Commission delivering concrete climate actions, they considered this to be "still a work in progress ... the tangible actions are in train, a work in progress, but we now run a real risk because of resource and that we're gonna lose out"

The Climate Compact in Edinburgh was identified by a number of interviewees as starting to lead to action, with sharing of knowledge and expertise, "that are not cited...whereby they've...copied what each other are doing and then brought some new kind of internal processes to bear within their company or private or public sector to do things." It was also suggested that it has galvanised the private sector and promoted the Compact through the Scottish Cities Alliance, being taken forward for SMEs in Glasgow.

Below are examples of work identified through the data review/interviews as being facilitated by the Climate Commissions, but are yet to deliver concrete climate actions:

- a private sector interviewee in Edinburgh identified work that is underway as a result of networks developed through the Edinburgh Climate Compact, but that has yet to deliver any concrete climate actions. "The Scottish Govt has funds to put into heat pumps. Given the successful experience ECC6 have of developing an 11 acre solar farm on site, the same people are managing the heat pump fund, so they have offered to work with business they have met through the Compact near the site. on a heat pump, or even assist them with application forms, as they have experience of doing this
- work of the Belfast Climate Commission helping to shape the climate legislation in Northern Ireland⁹

⁹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2022/31/contents/enacted>

- the example in Leeds of Green Investment Finance is assessed as having started work towards delivering concrete climate actions e.g. through the work underway exploring crowd- funding of photovoltaic panels on council buildings.
- work has been underway over recent years to develop a Green Investment Finance model for Leeds using the Bristol model and seeing how this could be adapted, e.g. for crowdfunding renewables on the council's estate and elsewhere. "There was a pathway that you could see from the work that the Commission had had done". Early work was done by Andy Gouldson hosting a workshop for investors, which then evolved into the PCAN Green Finance strand at a national level. A draft Investment Prospectus has been developed

In the previous section, both the Edinburgh and Leeds examples above were assessed as having '*evidence of some progress towards delivering impacts*'.

Conclusions

There is limited evidence of 'concrete' climate actions delivered so far that have been facilitated by the Climate Commissions. Work is ongoing on projects that are intended to deliver 'concrete' climate actions that have been facilitated by the Climate Commissions. Examples of this include as the work on a Green Investment model and new renewable energy funding models in Leeds, and collaboration of Climate Compact signatory businesses collaborating on projects in Edinburgh. This highlights challenges for the Commissions in supporting targets to NZ in each city. These include timescales required to deliver new models, but also how evidence is collected on an ongoing basis for projects they have facilitated/initiated to demonstrate the contribution made by the Commissions.

Areas of contention / difficulties

As could be expected when setting up a different way of doing things, a number of difficulties have been identified in all three Commissions. These were all identified through interviews, and some are explored in more detail in the *How insights from each Commission could help build a replicable model* and *Reflections on the membership and operation of the PCAN-supported Climate Commissions* sections later.

Some of these, such as COVID and the lack of Government and climate legislation for much of the time the Commission in Belfast has been in existence, are outside the control of the Commissions. Others identified here are areas that the Commissions could address. There were only two areas ideas in common across all three of the Commissions. These were funding/resourcing of the Commissions (lack of transparency of resourcing was included here and secretariat) and COVID. Resourcing of Climate Commissions is considered in more detail below. Lack of clarity of the Commissions' role/purpose was identified as an area of difficulty by both Edinburgh and Leeds Climate Commissions.

Resourcing

Of all the issues discussed through interviews, resourcing of the Climate Commissions was the one mentioned the most as a constraint for the operation and work of the Commissions.

In addition to the interviews, resourcing of the three Climate Commissions was further considered through a small survey, undertaken in lieu of the focus group that was to take place on the day of the Queen's funeral (see Appendix 4 for survey responses). Responses to this are considered below. Twelve direct survey invitations were sent out, plus PCAN leads for each Commission were asked to share the survey link with Commissioners. While only five survey responses were received, which ordinarily would suggest caution needing to be exercised in the analysis of these, many of the responses align closely with those given in interviews by Commissioners/individuals involved in the work of the Commissions, so provides a higher level of confidence of their veracity. Options to address the resourcing of Climate Commissions are given in the '*Insights/lessons learned that would inform a replicable model for Climate Commissions in the future*' section later.

To the question as to whether there is an annual budget and who provides this, one respondent answered that there was an annual budget of £50K, although this was not ascribed to the PCAN programme. Other responses aligned with those collected through interviews that there was a lack of transparency about the amount of PCAN funding provided to support the Commissions and what it could be used for. The funds were channelled to the respective university in each city. This was described as "the Commission did not have 'control' of those funds". One response described that the council had supported implementation of the Commission on the basis that it would be PCAN funded, with council officers offering support through engagement. However the council ended up playing a bigger role with in kind resourcing but this has never been a formally agreed allocation and the council is now unable to continue with it.

The survey explored what activities any funding received were used for – see figure 4. Not all respondents knew how funding was used, but of those that did provide a response, the key things these funds enabled were secretariat support, research and events.

The other activities funded include: Climate commission meetings - including working group meetings, networking events, modest research.

Figure 4. Focus group survey: Climate Commission activities that are funded

2. What does this funding enable the Climate Commission to do? (please tick all that apply)

[More Details](#)

● Secretariat support	2
● Research	3
● Events	2
● Deliver projects	1
● Other	4



Some respondents provided detail of other resourcing provided for the three core PCAN supported and other Climate Commissions, which includes:

- in kind funding to support work. This includes:
 - a small piece of research on cultural change in local government and providing support for research on local/national government NZ delivery, plus the Edinburgh Climate Change Institute (ECCI) also provided secretariat support to the Edinburgh Climate Compact
 - in kind staffing provided by the council, but this is unable to continue due to budget pressures
 - City of Lincoln Council provides in kind support such as secretariat, project management, support to complete funding bids, website hosting fee.
 - the University of Lincoln provides support for communications, funding bids, hosting events

Respondents were asked to consider what impact the available resources have had on the operation and impact of the Climate Commissions. Responses included:

- the majority of responses highlighted the need for a permanent, dedicated or viable secretariat, to enable the Commissions to function and plan. The lack of this impacting on the ability of the Commissions to plan ahead, including to undertake policy and research functions, consultation, marketing and educational activities
- there was a perception of a lack of transparency around the funding available. Responses included the “nature, control and access to PCAN funding has been unclear” and, “A process for securing research etc. needs to be in place and transparent to all. There is too much ambiguity and a sense of gatekeeping at present”

When asked what could be done to make the Climate Commissions more sustainably resourced, the responses were more varied. These included:

- Commissions should be regarded as a fundable part of the city's 'climate governance' institutional infrastructure
- a minimum of three years funding from a combination of local government and national government, with detailed information that this should cover 1FTE staffing, plus an annual operational budget under the control of the Commission of £50K for research and events and that clarity on the role that Edinburgh university can play
- core secretariat resource need to be understood, valued and resourced. A budget for other priorities set and agreed with the Chair and a transparent process for accessing budget. A plan for raising budgets should be supported by the secretariat
- a more equal contribution from member organisations would provide a regular income to fund climate commission projects and administrative resource
- another response suggested that committed contributions for a three year period are needed, from both public and private sector

These highlight the importance of certainty of funding for the Climate Commissions over the medium term to enable them to plan effectively and undertake activities. However, there may be risks to the independence of the Commissions in being funded by local government, or the private sector. Independence was highlighted earlier as an important aspect of their work and legitimacy in providing evidence based advice on transitions to NZ.

This challenge was apparent in other survey responses on resourcing of Climate Commissions, with a range of responses including:

- funding should be from central government sources
- having multiple funders or partners is not supported, that Commissioners are there in their own capacity and should not leverage funds from their organisations. It would be more stable and have a clearer mandate with a small number of core funders
- for a Commission that is primarily a networking partnership, access to funding programmes for feasibility, research work or community engagement would be beneficial
- charitable donations should be considered for aspects of a Commission's work; Commissions should operate independently of local and national government in particular with funding being trickled down via regional commissions to local Commissions like Leeds

Conclusions

Two key areas of contention/ difficulty/ were found across all three of the Commissions. These were funding/resourcing of the Commissions (lack of transparency of resourcing was included here and secretariat) and COVID. This suggests that more funding is needed to deliver the functions and priorities identified by the Climate Commission than the PCAN programme is able to provide.

Lack of clarity of the Commissions' role/purpose was also identified as an area of difficulty by both Edinburgh and Leeds Climate Commissions

Data collected highlight the importance of certainty of funding for the administration and operation of the Commissions, as well as some funding for research to further develop the data and evidence that will enable the Commissions to continue to provide independent evidence-based advice on climate actions. This departs somewhat from advice in the 'What is a local Climate Commission'

The survey also showed the importance of transparency and clarity on funding available to support the work of the Commissions and how that can be accessed by the Commissions to enable them to undertake activities, ideally with the funds being under the Commissions 'control'.

Funding models need to be developed that enable the Commissions to continue to provide independent, evidence-based advice. A number of resourcing models have been identified in this study that are in use by different Climate Commissions, in the 'Insights/lessons learned to inform a replicable model for Climate Commissions in the future' section later.

The lack of a Northern Ireland Government for much of the time the Climate Commission has been in existence was identified as a specific challenge for the Belfast Climate Commission.

How insights from each Commission could help build a replicable model

There are two interlinked aspects considered here:

- a. The first is the sustainability of the three existing PCAN supported Climate Commissions that are the focus of this impact evaluation
- b. The second is whether any insights/lessons learned from these and other Climate Commissions spoken to as part of this study that would inform a replicable model for Climate Commissions in the future

Sustainability of the three PCAN supported Commissions

The climate change policy, political and public awareness landscapes have changed significantly over recent years. This includes the Climate Emergency declarations in 2019 by Belfast, Edinburgh and Leeds City Councils, the first climate legislation enacted in Northern Ireland and the more ambitious UK Government target set in 2021 to reduce the UK's carbon emissions by 78% by 2035. Interviews conducted through this study suggest that this has provided opportunities for the Climate Commissions in terms of legitimacy with the councils and an increased profile. An example of this was the timing of the production of the Edinburgh NZCR report and how this was used to inform the target setting by the City of Edinburgh Council when declaring a Climate Emergency but also presents challenges for Climate Commissions to be delivering things that no-one else is or can, as the climate change field becomes more crowded.

Relevance and legitimacy of the Climate Commission is key to the survival of the PCAN supported Climate Commissions beyond the period of PCAN funding. If they are judged to be filling an essential role and the work they undertake is valued by partners, in particular the local authorities, then there may be opportunities for the Climate Commissions to a longer term role in supporting the transition to NZ in their cities. There are some key issues identified through this study that would need to be addressed in order for this to happen:

- sustainable resourcing of Climate Commissions. One of the biggest concerns and risks for the Climate Commissions identified through interviews has been the that the funding provided to the Commissions through the PCAN programme has not been sufficient to meet the needs of the Commissions, such as admin support within the secretariat and university research capabilities to support the work of the Climate Commissions. This issue was further explored through a survey in lieu of the cancelled focus group due to take place on the date of the Queen's funeral. Some options for resourcing of Climate Commissions are outlined in the 'Insights/lessons learned that would inform a replicable model for Climate Commissions in the future' section below.
- A transparent process for resourcing of Climate Commissions. As described earlier, there is a perception that there is a lack of transparency about the level, purpose and access to the PCAN funding of the Climate Commissions. This has resulted in frustration of some Commissioners and partner organisations and has potentially contributed to a fracturing of trust between the lead partners/Commissioners. This needs to be addressed urgently.
- There are more initiatives and organisations undertaking work supporting and delivering the NZ transition, so the Climate Commissions will need to ensure that they continue to be relevant and needed in the climate change landscape. The Commission will need to consider how they identify themselves and where they fit in the local climate action landscape. There has been more of a focus on informing policy in the early years of the Climate Commissions. Reviews have been/are being undertaken by each of the Climate Commissions and consideration will need to be given on an ongoing basis as to the roles that the Climate Commissions can play in supporting the NZ transition, if any, or if they should operate on more of a task and finish basis, with other organisations/partnerships able to take forward work that the Climate Commissions have initiated.

Insights/lessons learned that would inform a replicable model for Climate Commissions in the future

Resourcing

Of all the issues discussed through interviews, resourcing of the Climate Commissions was the one that was mentioned more than any other as an obstacle/constraint to the operation and work of the Commissions, described earlier.

A number of resourcing models have been identified in this study that are in use by different Climate Commissions. These could be explored when considering options for replicable models

for Climate Commissions in the future. In considering these, they should be viewed through the lens of how they will affect the roles identified earlier as important for the Commissions, such as the ability to provide independent evidence-based advice.

Member organisations commit to provide funding for a Climate Commission. An example of this is the Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commission, which is supported through contributions from its member organisations, which enables it to have a paid member of staff to support its work. Contributions and use of these are as follows: financial support for the first year of the Commission's activities has been provided by the Yorkshire and Humber Leaders Board (£40k), the Environment Agency (£15k), Yorkshire Water (£15k), Northern Powergrid (£15k) and Northern Gas Networks (£10k). Yorkshire Building Society is also providing £15K a year for three years (2022-2024). These resources are being used to employ a Director (1 day a week), a low-carbon analyst (1.5 days a week), a climate resilience analyst (1.5 days a week), a communications lead (1.5 days a week) and an administrator (1.5 days a week).

Importantly, regarding transparency and accountability, the Commission sets out that 'funding is only accepted on the basis that the Commission is an independent entity. All funding support will be fully acknowledged and an explanation of what any funds were spent on will be provided. Annual accounts will be publicly available.'¹⁰

Member organisations rotate the Chair, and the Chairs' organisations provide secretariat and other support for the Climate Commission for the duration the Chair is in post. The York Climate Commission is an example where this model is used, with the Chair being rotated every 12 months and the secretariat support being provided by the Chair's host organisations for the period they are in that role. Other support may also be provided by the Chair's host organisations during that time. A consideration if looking at this model would be how to ensure smooth handover of the secretariat support and how to facilitate institutional memory across the Commission.

A lead organisation provides the funding/resourcing for the Climate Commission. This model is in place for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Commission on Climate, where the funding/resourcing of the Commission is provided by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CA). The independence of the Commission was felt to be important by the CA, i.e. describing that the Commission "Had free reign" in deciding its priorities and that "the important thing...is that it was an independent Commission". For such a model there is a risk to its sustainability of changes in political leadership.

The perception of a lack of transparency about the amount of PCAN programme funding provided to the Universities to support the Climate Commissions, what this can be used for and how the Commissions can access was voiced by interviewees in both Edinburgh and Belfast Commissions. Given the Climate Commissions set out to try a new approach to place-based climate governance and supporting climate activities in their respective cities, it would not have

¹⁰ <https://yorksandhumberclimate.org.uk/about-yorkshire-and-humber%C2%A0climate-commission>

been possible to determine what level of resource would be required at the outset. As the work of the Commissions has developed, the level of resource needed has been more than could be provided through the PCAN programme. To avoid any potential breakdown in communications and trust on the issue of resourcing, a recommendation would be for information about the scale, purpose and access to funding provided to support the Climate Commissions be made available to the individuals and partner organisations involved in the Commissions.

Scale

The study has identified Climate Commissions operating at different spatial scales. The question of 'what is the optimum spatial scale for a Climate Commission to operate at' was considered through interviews, which provided a range of views. Table 2, below, shows the responses from the three Commissions and the PCAN programme/PCAN Network Plus Commission:

Table 2. Responses of interviewees from the three Commissions on optimum spatial scale for a Climate Commission to operate

Commission	Response and numbers for each
Belfast	<p>City scale is the right level.</p> <p>Belfast needs something, but not sure it has to be a Commission.</p> <p>Should be NI only.</p> <p>Belfast city and NI Commission can't co-exist.</p> <p>A regional and Belfast commission can co-exist.</p> <p>Should only have a regional Commission.</p> <p>Need to map out structures/systems and scale of these before deciding on spatial scale of a Climate Commission.</p>
Edinburgh	<p>City scale is the right level.</p> <p>Wouldn't want it any smaller than city level in Edinburgh</p> <p>Climate Compact at city level.</p> <p>The Climate Compact "I think I think on the city level, I think it works pretty well"</p> <p>Beyond the city to the regional level.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibility of a Commission for all the cities through the Scottish Cities Alliance • On a city region scale. • Regional level Commission <p>Need an option appraisal to ECCI</p> <p>Links needed to national level</p> <p>City level is important, but there need to be links with the national level</p> <p>For more rural areas may need to aggregate</p>
Leeds	<p>City scale is the right level</p> <p>for mitigation, but not adaptation</p>

	<p>"Being focused on Leeds, I guess gives a sense of pride to some extent - that this is what we can achieve together as a as a city."</p> <p>Not sure about optimum scale for green investment portfolio</p> <p>"It would be interesting to know what's happened around the work around the investment portfolio and whether that starts to make more sense at a larger scale. And I think that's an interesting example where I think local authorities, you know by their very nature, you know, tend to sort of think a little bit parochially."</p> <p>City region/larger scale more appropriate for some things</p> <p>e.g. Local area energy planning, adaptation, securing large scale investment - Financiers want larger scale projects.</p> <p>Some organisations will only be able to attend regional Climate Commissions, as don't have enough resources to attend every local Climate Commission.</p> <p>But people may not have an affinity with the Leeds city region scale, whereas they do in Manchester.</p> <p>Sense of place may be potentially as important as the scale in some to some extent.</p> <p>Different scales. Have a Climate Commission as local as possible, but climate change doesn't stop at border, so need a regional Climate Commission and a West Yorkshire Climate Commission – at CA level.</p> <p>A regional and Leeds Climate Commission can co-exist.</p> <p>The regional Commission should set the strategy for the whole of Yorkshire and the Humber and then sets local level work to be done by the Leeds Commission, Likens this to the National Committee on Climate Change (CCC) setting the national strategy and Y&H doing the regional bit of this.</p>
PCAN programme/PCAN Network Plus Commissions	<p>City level.</p> <p>Regional and city level Climate Commissions can co-exist.</p> <p>Some organisations can only be part of a regional Climate Commission.</p> <p>Need links between city and regional Climate Commissions to inform each other's work.</p> <p>It is for people at a local level to decide the scale of a Commission.</p> <p>It is the scale at which meaningful decisions can be made.</p> <p>Don't know (not enough evidence; too early to tell, but hunch is that cities are too small)</p>

This shows that there are mixed views in and across the three Climate Commissions and the PCAN programme team/other Climate Commissions of the optimum scale of a Climate Commission, with some favouring city level, some regional/city region and in the case of Belfast, one favouring a Northern Ireland Climate Commission. Those that did provide a response as to whether a city level and regional/city regional Climate Commission could co-exist thought they could. In Belfast, the question was whether a city level and Northern Ireland level Climate Commission could co-exist, and responses were split, those saying no was because of the small size/population of Northern Ireland.

Two questions were then explored through a focus group:

What factors affect the scales at which an area-based climate commission is effective?

Is it possible for Climate Commissions operating at different scales in the same area to co-exist?

- *what should/could their different roles be?*
- *what are/could the implications of this be?*

The three key issues that emerged from this were:

- the scale that a Climate Commission operates is a 'horses for courses' approach, that it has to be right for that place and there may be different considerations that determine this, e.g. that the 'right' people are able to join the Climate Commission, it has political support and resourcing and is a scale that people in the area can identify with
- it may be easier to sustain and resource a Climate Commission operating across a larger spatial scale, e.g. regional, city regional or county.
- in the case of Belfast that there is a case for both a city level and Northern Ireland level Climate Commission. This supports one of the views expressed in interviews but is different from the views expressed by two of the interviewees.

There is some support that Climate Commissions operating at different spatial scales can successfully co-exist, as different things can be addressed at different spatial scales. There does, however, need to be the resource in place for this to happen – see points earlier and also links/collaboration between the different levels.

There was also a view that the form, including spatial scale of a Climate Commission should be determined by what it needs to address, i.e. 'form follows function' and that local and regional Climate Commissions can miss out on the impacts the other can deliver, so some support for their co-existence.

Benefits identified of a regional Climate Commission include opportunities for shared learning. When considering replicable models for Climate Commissions, it would be interesting to explore whether this was an important consideration for member organisations when agreeing to

contribute funding to support the operation of the CC. There are also challenges of alignment that need to be addressed when a CC operates at a regional level.

There are specific comments from a Belfast perspective. One is at odds with the comment earlier that there should be just one CC in Northern Ireland, or if there was more than one that it could be on a task-oriented//task and finish basis. A point was also made that getting consensus on issues would be dependent upon who gets relevant ministerial posts, so CCs would need to be able to deal with that.

Reflections on the membership and operation of the PCAN-supported Climate Commissions

In addition to the findings for the key research areas above are some reflections on the operation of the PCAN-supported Climate Commissions.

Recruitment/membership of Commissions

The three Commissions have similar approaches to recruitment of Commissioners, in that individuals were identified by the lead partner organisations/Commissions Chairs who were then invited to join the Commission. In the case of Leeds, these individuals were encouraged to apply to join the Commission – this process being described as a “hybrid” between direct invitation and open recruitment. The approach of direct invitations or encouraging individuals to apply to become Commissioners has led to individuals representing key interest/sectors joining each of the three Commissions, which may not have been achieved through open recruitment.

In Belfast, there were a range of views expressed about the appointment of Commissioners. A process was agreed for Commissioner recruitment, with Commissioners being invited, but there were differences of opinion about how the appointment of Commissioners should have worked and what happened in reality. Some people were invited who there had not been agreement on which “skewed” representation on the Commission, with more business representation. This exposed different organisational cultures in the council and Queens University.

The direct invitation route led to senior people being Commissioners, which has been good, but that they lacked capacity to fully engage. An open recruitment process may have been better from an inclusion and justice perspective, which could have resulted in more committed people participating. The engagement of young people in the Belfast Climate Commission, however, has been good.

The Edinburgh Climate Commission deliberately set out to have a smaller number of Commissioners, described as an “operational” size. These were selected as they represented key industry/sectors and invited directly by the Chair. A long list of Commissioners was drawn up for the Chair to consider, then the Chair invited one person from each sector.

The Chair was recruited through names being suggested to the council chief executive by the council/university team, interviewed and then appointed.

Some different views have been given on the appointment process, e.g. "Would usually favour the appointment process to be open, as improves visibility in the city, but recognises that it has been good to have Commissioners with particular expertise". The approach to Commissioner recruitment may not have been the best one, as:

- it was difficult to find key issues/areas/projects that all Commissioners could contribute to (other than the Forward, Faster, Better report). Resulted in some Commissioners doing a lot of work, e.g. on the Climate Compact and others less
- it sometimes felt that subjects discussed at Commission meetings were just for one Commissioner

In Leeds the system for recruiting/appointing Commissioners was described a "hybrid" one not completely open, or direct invitations only. Individuals were approached to apply to become Commissioners after discussions between the university and council, in order to get "the people on board that you wanted." No views were expressed as to whether this affected how the Commission functioned.

Operation of the Commissions

Commissioner participation

There have been varying levels of participation by different Commissioners in each of the three Commissions. Comments by Commissioners is that despite the fact that there were Terms of Reference in place for each Commission, there was a lack clarity about the roles and expectations of Commissioners.

Decision making

The decision making process for each of the Commissions is generally described as consensus based, but there are some different views expressed through interviews about how decisions are made by Commissions, for example the process of presenting priorities for consideration by the Edinburgh Commission when Commissioners have already been approached and agreed to lead on some priority areas.

In the Belfast Commission, there was limited understanding of what the decision making process was amongst interviewees, but some felt it was consensus based. Difference of opinion on decision making processes for working groups, with some views that working group chairs have delegated authority from the Commission to do things and then report back, with others that working group Chairs were developing action plans without involving the Commission, but that there had been "roll-back on this.

Some views expressed were that the Edinburgh Climate Commission decision making process was collective/based on consensus.

There were some detailed decision-making processes described, e.g. In conjunction with the secretariat a work plan was drafted and then taken to the Commission meetings using an exercise to improve, develop, reject, change things. In advance of this discussions were held with

Commissioners to match individuals to themes, so the draft plan had a suggested lead Commissioner associated with it. Also that workplan proposals were informed by trying to fill the space/ not overlap with initiatives that the council had initiated, but rather complementing them. This involved working very closely with council colleagues to understand this and make sure it was evidence based as far as possible.

However, this did not appear to be understood by everyone involved in the Commission. There are other views on how decisions were arrived at, e.g. that priority themes for each year were presented to the Commission. These had been discussed in advance with some Commissioners to get their support/agreement to be involved/lead on priority areas. "Sometimes it felt potentially...was a bit too centralised and not quite socialised enough." This suggests that some people felt excluded from the prioritisation of themes/projects to be presented for the following year in advance of the Commission being asked to make decisions on these.

There was also a view expressed that the council secretariat may have influenced what was taken forward.

The process for decision-making in Leeds was also described as consensus based by some interviewees. "It was heavily, influenced and informed by the work PCAN research, the net zero analysis (NZCR) showing the economic case"

Effectively it was a guided 'consensus' process "There have been very few issues...which I would say have been really contentious."

One Commissioner from the private sector suggested that businesses should not have decision making power "in that forum" [within the Commission] - as it is a publicly funded body, but that "Business should be consulted."

Monitoring

There is little formalised monitoring of work undertaken by the Belfast and Edinburgh Commissions and some being undertaken for the Leeds Commissions as follows

In Belfast and Edinburgh, regular meetings/calls take place between Commission 'staff'/secretariat and Chairs, which provided an ongoing review of progress.

In Belfast, there has been a review of the Commission has been underway in parallel to this study, which may provide more detailed monitoring information on Commission activities.

KPIs form part of the Climate Compact for signatories.

Annual reports on the work of the Leeds Commissions work were produced in 2017, 2018 and 2020, with a report on the Big Leeds Climate Conversation, including the Leeds Climate Change Citizens' Jury, organised and funded by the Leeds Climate Commission produced in 2019. These are available on the Leeds Climate Commission website. Notes of the Commission's Strategy Group are also available on the website – the latest ones from March 2021.

This lack of formalised monitoring may be because the Commissions were set out to be “bureaucratically light”, or possibly due to lack of capacity. Moving forward, this may be an issue if Commissions are looking to secure funding for the future. They will need to provide evidence of what they have delivered to tell a compelling story as to why they should receive funding.

Climate justice/inclusion

This was not an area we were specifically asked to consider. However, one interview conducted as part of the study on racial justice highlighted a number of issues that the Climate Commissions should consider addressing. The interviewee described the process of being involved in the work of the Leeds Climate Commission and Citizens’ Jury as:

“Often, they feel their involvement is tokenism, politics of presentation, things not connected and can find this exhausting. They did not feel that the CJ/LCC was “standing in solidarity” with them. Sometimes they feel they have to fight so hard to sit at the table and often feels that it is a wasted effort to continue engaging due to lack of change as a result of doing this.

They feel that the Citizens’ Jury could have been better run, as “the way you set an agenda means you get the actions you want.” They found the first meeting they attended “toxic”, attendees were all white, middle class and mainly male and they were the only black woman in the room. This was really important, as felt no-one else there to back up points made.

On reflection, all of the stakeholders engaged in this study have been white, with the exception of this interviewee. There may be a number of reasons for this, including selection bias by the research team. However, it does highlight that the Climate Commissions appear to be comprised overwhelmingly of white individuals, which may not be inclusive or representative of the areas they cover. A recommendation from this study would be to more fully embed representation and climate justice in the work and membership of the Climate Commissions. For example are their opportunities to engage at an early stage with any Just Transition/Climate Justice partnerships operating in the respective cities that.

Conclusions

The Climate Commission concept is an ambitious new place based approach to support the step change in pace and scale of climate action required to deliver carbon reduction targets needed in an area. Through a process of data review, evidence collection and analysis, this study has drawn a number of key findings to answer the research areas, set out below.

Where the Commissions sit in the local climate policy landscape (e.g. relative to other institutions) and how they are perceived by stakeholders

In each case, the Climate Commissions have informed climate change policy and plans of their respective city council, with the evidence base of each of the NZCRs making an important contribution to this.

The work of the Belfast Climate Commission also informed work of Government at the Northern Ireland level, with the evidence from the NZCR feeding into government departments. There have been some challenges as well in Belfast as there has been no Northern Ireland Government in place for much of the time that the Commissions has been in existence.

Work by Edinburgh and Leeds Climate Commissions has also been facilitating and informing NZ policy and practice of public and private sector organisations through their work on the Climate Compact and Green Investment Finance initiatives, respectively.

The focus of all three Climate Commissions has predominantly been on climate mitigation and much less so on adaptation. When considering the spatial scale Climate Commissions should cover, it was suggested that the city may not be a large enough scale for adaptation to be effectively addressed, which may be one reason for this.

The Climate Commissions are highly respected both by internal and external stakeholders. This is demonstrated by the response from one council partner when asked how their organisation viewed the city's Climate Commission as "a very valuable institution of credible climate experts who have informed, sense checked things moving forward. Welcome and invaluable in meeting the City 2030 [net zero] target. It has challenged some views in the council re climate facts and galvanised the climate. Has been successful in really challenging circumstances."

The specific functions played by the Commissions

Each of the Climate Commissions undertakes the following functions, some of these through delivering different activities:

- policy innovation
- convening
- knowledge brokering
- evidence provision (climate change)
- independent, evidence-based advice
- awareness raising

- engagement
- facilitation
- challenge

Types of capacity building enabled by the Commissions and concrete areas of success and how these are evidenced.

Two of the research areas have been combined here, as are closely interlinked.

The work of each Commission has delivered a number of successful outcomes. These include: informing local climate policy and plans, the Youth Summit in Belfast to coincide with COP26, the Climate Compact in Edinburgh and the Climate Change Citizens' Jury in Leeds. Evidence of these was through third party sources where possible (Climate Compact and Citizen's Jury) and through interviews.

Through the research the activities undertaken by the Climate Commissions have been assessed in terms of impacts, shown in Figures 1, 2 and 3 earlier. Most of the impacts have been assessed as building capacity, whether of the Climate Commissioners, citizens or organisations. Examples include informing the development of the respective city council's climate plans, which has been demonstrated in each of the Commissions. Other capacities built and impacts delivered include facilitating concrete climate impacts, informing policy/plans/practice and delivering new forms of climate governance.

The ability of the Commissions to facilitate not just dialogue but concrete climate (mitigation and/or adaptation) action

Whilst facilitating concrete climate actions was not one of the key aims of the Climate Commissions, it was included within the scope of this research.

Limited evidence was found of 'concrete' climate actions that have been delivered so far that have been facilitated by the Climate Commissions. However, work is ongoing on a number of projects that are intended to deliver 'concrete' climate actions, e.g. development of a Green Investment Finance model for Leeds, collaboration and support on projects between Edinburgh Climate Compact signatory organisations, so the Commissions are likely to be facilitating some concrete climate action, it is just too early in the development and delivery of these for much evidence of this.

Some of the projects involve developing new approaches to project delivery that will contribute to the NZ targets in the cities, but it can take time to develop new ways of working. Leeds Climate Commission has been in existence for five years and Belfast and Edinburgh Climate Commissions less than three years, so it is still early days in terms of translating the work of the Commissions into tangible climate outcomes. This research has found that most of the impacts of the three Climate Commissions have been through capacity building, so the Commissions may wish to reflect as to whether facilitating concrete climate actions should be one of their purposes moving forward.

As regards what the Climate Commissions do that no other organisations do or can do, two key aspects emerged:

- providing independent evidence based advice is perceived as a valuable function
- convening individuals and organisations from across the sectors as members of and through the work of the Commissions

Areas of contention / difficulties

Two key areas of contention/ difficulty were experienced across all three of the Commissions. The first was funding/resourcing of the Commissions (insufficient funding/ staff time/secretariat and also lack of transparency of resourcing), which has limited operation and ability of the Commissions to deliver activities. As the three Climate Commissions are a new approach to place-based climate governance and supporting climate action in their respective cities, determining in advance the right level of funding and resources has proved to be a challenge. As the work of the Commissions has developed, the level of resource needed has been more than could be provided through the PCAN programme.

Other resources have been secured to deliver some aspects of the Climate Commissions' work, for example the Climate Change Citizens' Jury in Leeds and the secretariat support that has been provided by the city council in Edinburgh. Frustrations have been articulated by some interviewees about a lack of information available on the scale, purpose and access to the funding provided by the PCAN programme to support the Climate Commissions. To avoid any potential breakdown in communications and trust on the issue of resourcing, a recommendation would be for information about the be made available to the individuals and partner organisations involved in the Commissions. At the same time as providing information on the roles of the Commission.

The second was COVID, the lack of face to face Commission meetings was felt to have had a detrimental impact on the operation of the Commissions in terms of relationship building between Commissioners.

Whilst each of the Commissions had clear Terms of Reference, a lack of clarity was identified as an area of difficulty by interviewees from both Edinburgh and Leeds Climate Commissions of the Commissions' roles/purpose. This meant that Commissioners had different expectations of what they could do and time/resources they were able to commit. Consideration should be given to how Terms of Reference are agreed and communicated within and outside of the Commissions.

The lack of a Northern Ireland Government for much of the time the Climate Commission has been in existence was identified as a specific challenge for the Belfast Climate Commission.

How insights from each Commission could help build a replicable model.

In terms of insights on sustainability of the three existing PCAN-supported Climate Commissions and for a replicable model of Climate Commissions, there are a number of issues for consideration:

- The current funding/resourcing arrangements for the Climate Commissions, in particular for the Belfast and Edinburgh Climate Commissions are felt to be limiting the Commissions' potential and causing frustration amongst Commission partners and some Commissioners. Transparency and clarity on what funding is available to support the work of the Commissions and how that can be accessed by the Commissions to enable them to undertake activities has been identified as important.
- A key function that needs to be adequately resourced is the secretariat role for the Climate Commissions to enable smooth operation of the Commission.
- Linked to the above point is that sustainable funding models need to be developed as a matter of urgency for each of the Climate Commissions to enable them to continue to provide independent, evidence-based advice. A number of resourcing models have been identified in this study that are in use by different Climate Commissions, which could be considered. However, a key consideration should be how each funding model would support the independence of the Commissions.
- Regarding membership and recruitment of Climate Commissions, all three of the Commissions had at least some element of encouraging individuals to apply/become Commissioners. There are some benefits of this, for example you get individuals with the knowledge and expertise needed, or who hold senior roles in their organisations. However, there are some down sides of this, such as these individuals are often extremely busy and may not be able to dedicate time needed to the work of the Commission.
- The Climate Commissions need to more fully embed representation and climate justice in the work and membership of each of the Climate Commissions.
- In terms of the spatial scale a Climate Commission should cover, a preferred scale was not identified, but rather that the spatial scale of a Climate Commission should be determined by what it needs to address, i.e. 'form follows function'. It was noted through the research that city scale might not be large enough for a Climate Commission to tackle and also that it might be easier to sustain and resource a Commission operating at a larger spatial scale.
- There was some support that Climate Commissions operating at different spatial scales can successfully co-exist, as different things can be addressed at different spatial scales. There does, however, need to be the resource in place for this to happen.

Appendices

The following Appendices are provided separately:

- Appendix 1. Climate Commissions data review
- Appendix 2. Methodology
- Appendix 3. Climate Commissions interview analysis
- Appendix 4. Resourcing focus group survey responses
- Appendix 5. PCAN Climate Commission analysis and impact matrices Belfast. Edinburgh. Leeds



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