

Narrating Change: Co-Producing Climate Adaptation Targets in Scotland

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PROJECT SUMMARY

The *Narrating Change* project, led by Dr Emma Yule (Department of Political Economy), explored how communities and policymakers in Scotland can collaboratively define meaningful climate adaptation targets. In partnership with the Scottish Communities Climate Action Network (SCCAN), the project brought together community groups, local authority officials, and national government representatives for a participatory online workshop.

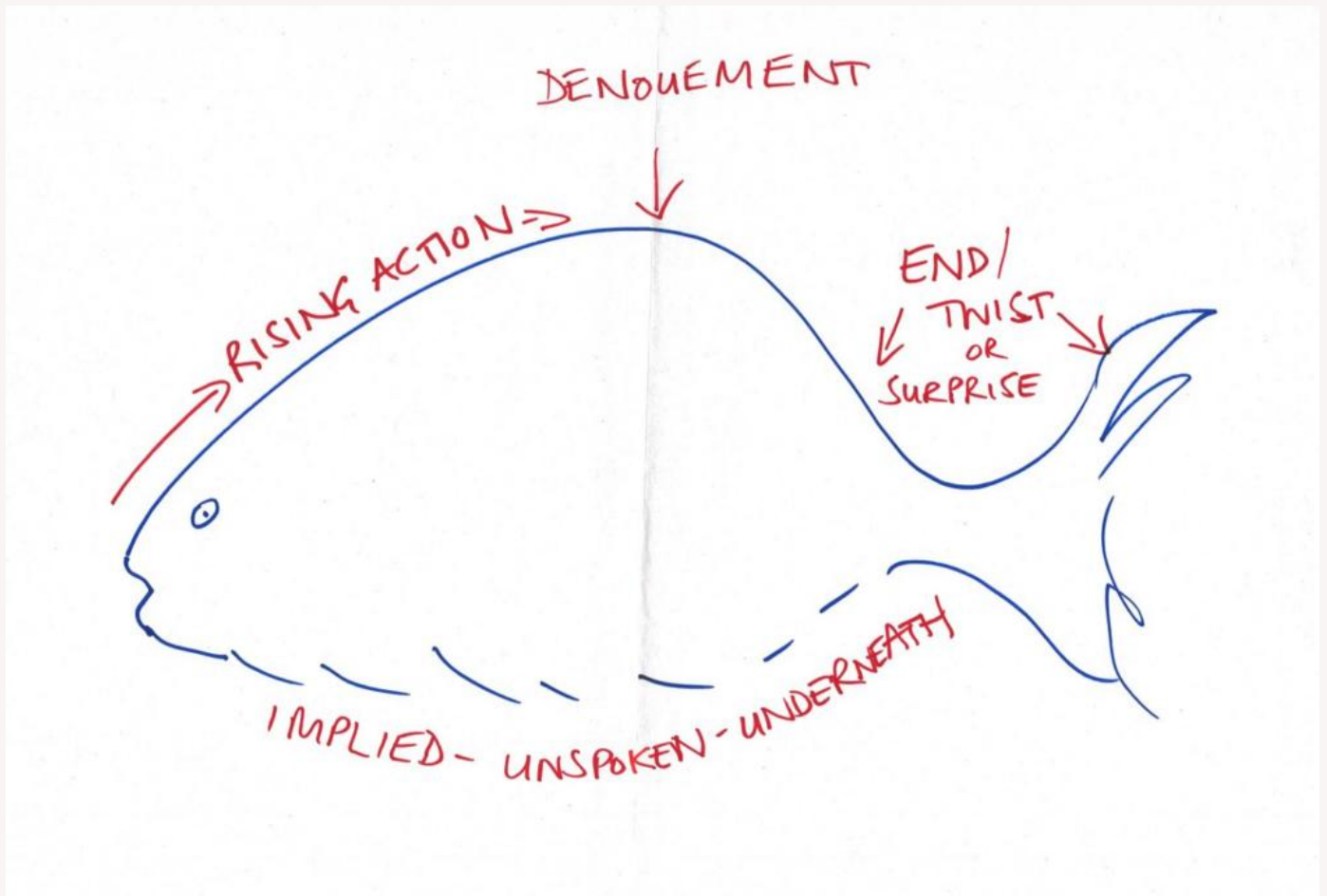
At the heart of *Narrating Change* is a unique storytelling approach. The project created a space for community members and policymakers to envision a well-adapted future together and to define the changes needed to achieve it. Through these shared stories, community members and policymakers explored what changes were needed to reach their climate goals, and whether using targets would help or get in the way. The aim was to move beyond top-down, technical approaches and focus on real experiences and local needs.

The project culminated in several outputs, including a blog post, an academic case study (in development), and a podcast aimed at community groups. Although constrained by time and funding, *Narrating Change* succeeded in fostering inclusive dialogue and shaping the foundations for more equitable, locally relevant climate policy in Scotland. The project also opened new avenues for collaboration between King's College London and SCCAN, with hopes to replicate or expand the model across other communities and regions.

HOW DID THE PROJECT COME ABOUT?

The *Narrating Change* project grew out of ongoing research by Dr Emma Yule and colleagues on the challenges of setting fair and effective climate adaptation targets. While co-production is often cited as a solution, real-world examples remain rare. As a board member of the Scottish Communities Climate Action Network (SCCAN), Emma saw an opportunity to bridge this gap. Together with Dr Francesca Vantaggiato, Dr James Porter, and drawing on SCCAN's extensive community networks and storytelling expertise, the team co-designed a project that would bring community groups and policymakers into dialogue.

The timing was particularly crucial: the Scottish Government was in the process of drafting its third National Adaptation Plan (SNAP3), and the UK Climate Change Committee had recommended the inclusion of quantified adaptation targets. *Narrating Change* aimed to influence this policy moment by demonstrating what co-produced, community-informed adaptation targets might look like—and how they could be developed through participatory dialogue. It marked the first formal collaboration between King's and SCCAN, built on shared values of inclusion, participation, and lived experience.



WHAT HAPPENED?

The *Narrating Change* project was built around a half-day online workshop that brought together a diverse group of participants, including community organisers from across Scotland and representatives from local authorities and national government agencies. All attendees had some prior experience or understanding of climate adaptation, allowing the group to move quickly into meaningful conversation.

Participants were selected through a survey circulated to SCCAN's 600+ members, which also gauged their existing views on adaptation and what a well-adapted place might look like. This preparatory work helped ensure a thoughtful mix of perspectives in the room. The workshop itself was structured around a storytelling arc, developed by Joana Avi-Lorie and SCCAN's Storytelling Circle. This creative approach asked participants to imagine a resilient future, reflect on what changes would be needed to get there, and consider whether adaptation targets could play a role. Rather than focusing only on technical metrics, the workshop explored emotional and social dimensions of climate resilience.

Each breakout group was supported by a facilitator and note-taker to ensure inclusive and focused dialogue. For many, it was the first time they had engaged directly with those outside their usual sector; community groups speaking with policymakers, and vice versa. This cross-sector dialogue was seen as especially valuable. Participants completed a post-workshop survey, and informal feedback indicated that many had gained new insights and were keen to replicate the format in their own local areas. Outputs from the event included a blog post, plans for a podcast, and an academic case study, all aimed at continuing the conversation and sharing learning across communities and institutions.

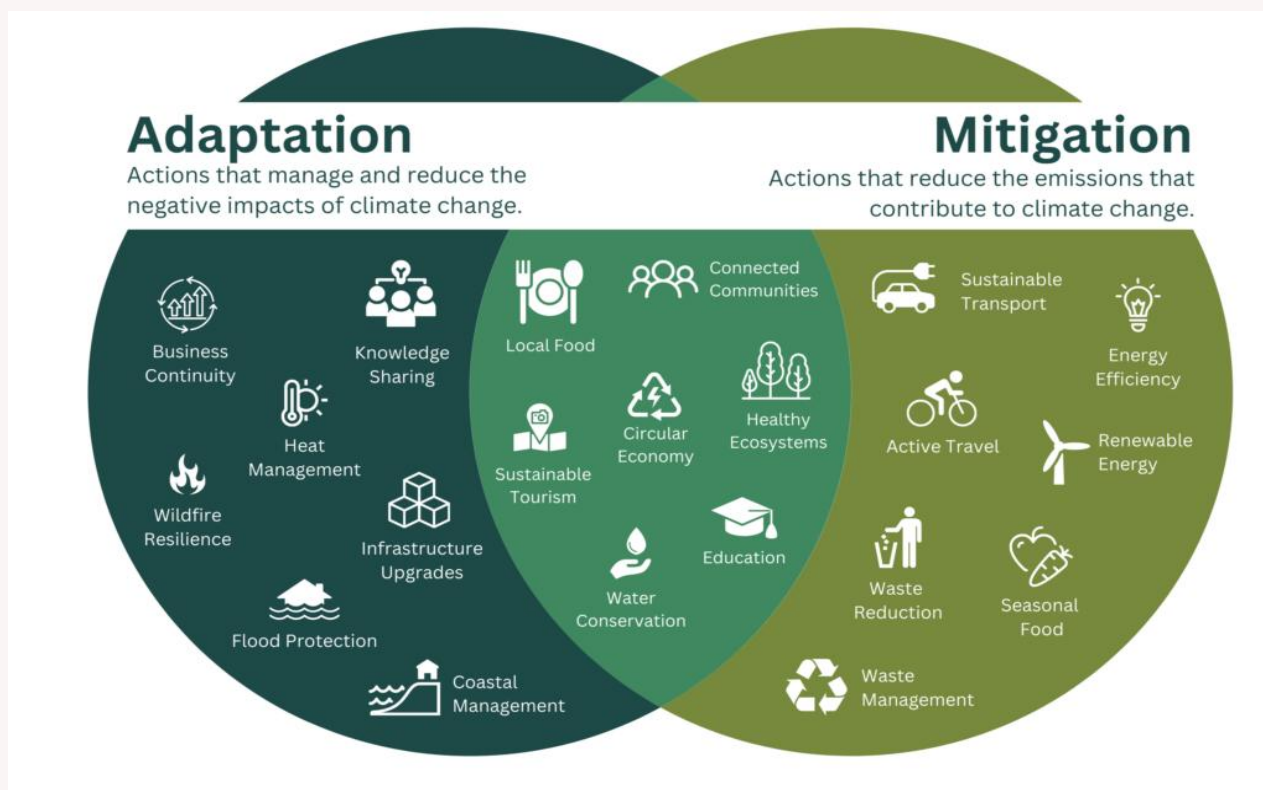


Image Credit: Cumbrae Community Climate Action Plan

WHAT WAS THE PROJECT'S IMPACT?

The *Narrating Change* workshop created space for a rare and meaningful exchange between community groups and policymakers on the topic of climate adaptation. For many participants, it was the first time they had spoken directly with people from the “other side” of the adaptation process: those implementing policy or those living with its consequences. This helped build understanding across sectors and laid the groundwork for future collaboration.

Community participants reported that the storytelling framework made the concept of adaptation more tangible and personally relevant. This approach enabled a different kind of dialogue; one that acknowledged fear, hope, frustration, and care as central to how people experience and engage with climate change. Several attendees expressed interest in running similar workshops in their own local areas, using the format to spark conversations around resilience, change, and local priorities.

Feedback from public sector participants indicated a greater awareness of the value of community perspectives in shaping effective adaptation strategies. One participant later contacted the organisers to say the workshop had helped reframe how they think about climate adaptation in their role.

Despite its small scale, the project has already generated several outputs, including a blog post, plans for a podcast, and an academic case study in progress. These will help share the workshop's insights more widely, such as within SCCAN's network, among policymakers, and across academic communities. The project also highlighted the importance of thoughtful engagement design, including how people are invited into conversations and how shared language and creative methods can make policy processes more accessible.

Crucially, *Narrating Change* has laid the foundation for future partnerships and demonstrated the importance of co-produced, community-led approaches in shaping just, grounded, and locally relevant climate policy.

EMMA'S TOP TIPS FOR IMPACT

1. Make space for a different kind of knowledge

Use creative and narrative-based methods to invite emotional, lived, and community knowledge into policy discussions. This approach helps shift the conversation and deepens engagement.

2. Co-design with care

Build relationships with your partners from the start. Regular meetings, shared planning, and flexibility help ensure the process is collaborative, not extractive.

3. Be realistic and purposeful with your format

If time or funding is limited, short online sessions can still create meaningful impact, especially when they are thoughtfully designed and accessible to people across locations.

FURTHER READING

- You can read the blog post here: [Weaving Stories and Adapting Together – Scottish Communities Climate Action Network & Transition Scotland Hub](#)
- A community adaptation routemap for those wanting to build adaptation capacity in their local area: <https://adaptation.scot/take-action/community-climate-adaptation-routemap/>
- The SCCAN story collection: <https://sccan.scot/1000-better-story-collective/>



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Or visit: www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/research/impact