

## **CUMBRIA CLIMATE ASSEMBLY CASE STUDY TRANSCRIPT**

### **Key:**

A- Archie Brown  
R- Rowan Harris  
K- Kyle McCafferty

### **Transcript:**

A: So would you like to introduce yourself and the role in the implementation of the climate, uh, assembly?

R: Yeah. So, um, I'm Rowan. My, uh, role at Shared Future is an engagement lead. So it's sort of a mix of different things that I do. Um, I did the facilitation for it. I did a lot of the background organizing stuff. So, um, liaising with, uh, the participants, making sure that, uh, like, the event runs smoothly,

A: Perfect. Thank you. So I've got five questions to start with, and then we'll talk about the Graham Smith framework, if you're familiar with that.

R: I'm not sure, actually.

A: Okay, I'll explain it when we get to it.

A: So the first question is, so in your own words, can you briefly describe the purpose of the assembly?

R: Yes. So the assembly was, uh, a little bit different to, uh, climate assemblies that have taken place, uh, previously in that it was much more focused on how citizens can be involved in shaping the decisions around climate change that affect them.

A: Thank you, my second question is when you were carrying out the citizens assembly, were there any important features of the local conditions that might have moderated the impact of the process?

R: I'll tell you what's a bit different about this process. So we had, uh, it was sort of a hybrid, uh, process, so partly online and partly in person. Cumbria's obviously quite big and quite difficult to get around, uh, if you know it. So we had people coming from, uh, like the west coast of Cumbria all the way to Penrith, and for them, that was quite a big ask of them. So I think it, I think that in itself made it more impressive, uh, for people when it came to presenting it to, uh, members of the council or other stakeholders. I think as well that, I mean, this process was commissioned by an organization outside of the two. It wasn't commissioned by the councils, it was commissioned by Future Proofed Cumbria, um, which is a little unusual for a climate assembly as well. Normally, we work directly with the local authority, so we've taken a slightly

different approach with this, where it's a bit more, uh, I guess, a bit more of an advocacy role, one step removed from working directly with the council, if that makes sense.

A: Okay. So where it was carried out in Cumbria, you say about how it was impressive that people could get there and get involved. Do you think it would've been easier in somewhere like London to do that? Do you think it would've been easier to implement? Or is it easier in Cumbria?

R: I mean, probably easier transport-wise, yeah. I mean, C- Cumbria, getting around is not easy. It's, you're basically stuck if you don't drive

A: Okay

R: We had one dude who, uh, got the train about an hour and a half each way.

A: Oh, really?

R: Yeah, it shows commitment

A: So if it was carried out in London, would you say you wouldn't have to do, like, the online aspect?

R: No. I think sometimes it's good to have a mixture of online and offline purely because people like to work in different ways. Some people find it easier to just, uh, clock on for two and a half hours in the evening, um, where they can be in their, in their pajamas or whatever, and not have to come face to face with people. But on the flip side, yeah, it's, it's great when you can have everyone in the room together 'cause I think it really brings something else to the process and, um, yeah, make sure people are really invested in it as well.

K: Leading on to the next question. Do you think that had you been granted some more money to conduct a climate assembly with, you have done anything differently? You could have done something more to aid you in your investigation?

R: I mean, I think it's always a thing with these processes. It doesn't feel like you have enough time to, uh, to really dig into the issues. At times it felt a little bit rushed, um, but that's the case with a lot of these, uh, assemblies. Um, so yeah, it would be nice to maybe have another day to work on, uh, work through things with people. That's probably about it really.

K: So you thought that, um, the funding that you were granted covered all the aspects that you wanted to cover?

R: I think so, yeah.

K: Okay thank you

A: As the investigation was hybrid, were there any barriers in the technology that was used? So were some people not able to show up online? Was that an issue?

R: We had people who were less technologically literate, for sure, and people who had dodgy Wi-Fi, and so part of that was we used Zoom and I would be on the phone to people trying to get them to dial in rather than use the Wi-Fi. We had one person that couldn't use her tablet, so again, it was a case of explaining to her where the buttons were on her tablet that she needed to press, all that kind of stuff. It's kind of standard with this. But we've got the staff resource, I guess, to be able to spend that time at the beginning of each sess-session to get everyone in. So it wasn't too much of an issue in the end.

A: Okay. Do you think it was harder carrying out in person or online?

R: Uh, I think maybe slightly harder online in the sense that we had, I don't know what, 43 people in the end. So if you can imagine trying to gauge who's got their hand up on a screen full of 43 people, it's a little bit harder. Naturally as well, people start inadvertently talking over each other a bit because they can't read the visual cue that someone's about to speak, or someone's internet's slightly laggy or whatever it is. Um, yeah. I wouldn't say it was much harder, though.

K: As an overview of the Climate Assembly, what was the most important lesson that you thought that you learned during the experience?

R: Blimey.

K: It can be a couple of things. It doesn't have to be just one. It doesn't necessarily have to do with the assembly itself. It could have been something social about the people that you learned.

R: Yeah, no that was what I was thinking. I guess maybe just a reflection is that I never would've thought that this group of people who've come from all across Cumbria, like I said, would have carried on working together to this point. So we're still seeing these people now a year after, and they're doing so much more to campaign for the recommendations to be implemented. So it's really quite impressive, and I didn't think that you'd be able to keep a group of people together like that, given that they've come from all across Cumbria.

A: Thank you. So the final area we're gonna move on to is the Graham Smith framework, talking about democratic goods. So you said you weren't aware about what that is, right?

R: I've not read it, no.

A: Okay. So the Graham Smith framework talks about the four democratic goods and two institutional goods that are measured in the process of a democratic innovation. Consisting of inclusiveness, capacity building, popular control, transparency, and then the two institutional goods are efficiency and transferability.

K: So from this, how did you maintain transparency in the entire process?

R: One element of that is making sure that all of the videos were recorded and they're shared publicly, like at the time that the process is happening. We recorded all the stuff that's being written up during the sessions and shared that back with participants throughout so nobody thinks that anyone's ideas are being messed with or whatever it might be. Also, we actually had pretty open conversations with participants as well about who was being invited to speak, and they could suggest their own speakers as well.

K: Okay, Archie, do you want to ask about another one of the goods?

A: Yes. How do you think that the results that you yielded from the Cumbria Climate Assembly would be transferable to other climate assemblies?

R: So what do you mean results?

K: So what you found out from or concluded from the assembly about what the participants would have wanted for their community. How do you think that would be transferable to other communities? Say maybe Devon or Dorset or something like that. Do you think that they would come to a different conclusion down in Dorset, or do you think that it would be mostly the same thing they came up with?

R: I think it'd be quite similar. I mean, uh, one of the things with whenever you run an assembly process is you quite quickly realize that the people who take part have never, often never had such an opportunity before, never been listened to in this way before, and they sometimes find it quite intoxicating. Like some of them just really love the fact that they've got a chance to influence policy for the first time, and so naturally they tend to want more of it. So some of the recommendations that came out were like, "Oh, we need to have a permanent assembly in Cumbria," for instance. It was all based around how you involve citizens in climate decision-making, and not surprisingly, they all want to have more involvement. I think if you run that process anywhere in the UK, you'd get a similar result just because people don't feel heard at the minute. I think there's, there's a few different statistics we cite in the report that explain the extent to which people feel this across the UK.

K: So you think that in a broad sense, the average person in Britain is disassociated with the current political model that we've got?

R: I don't want to speak for them, but I'd imagine that if you put them through a process like this, and they felt like there was space for them to have their opinion heard, then they probably would, yeah, ask for more of that.

A: So linking back to transferability, do you think you could replicate that model, or is there anything that you would change to it, or anything that would have to change?

R: So the structure of this assembly would work fine elsewhere. You could easily transfer how it was funded as it is basically the National Lottery money. So if you think of this as like sitting at arm's length of the local authority, no local authority is probably gonna commission a process that is about how local authorities should involve citizens as they don't really want to change the way that they work. But we were fortunate to have Futureproof Cumbria as a partner, and one of the things we did was to decide on the question we worked with, with six different stakeholder groups that they had within their network. So first of all, this wasn't something that was arrived at by anyone. It wasn't Futureproof Cumbria's idea or Chat Futures idea, it was organisations across Cumbria that decided this was the issue that they wanted the assembly to focus on. So there's an element of chance there as well. I certainly think unless you had another similar funding setup as we had here, you probably wouldn't see that kind of process commissioned by a local authority.

A: Perfect! Kyle, do you have any more questions for Rowan?

K: I don't actually.

A: Great, we pretty much have got everything that we need to finish this case study. So thank you very much for taking your time to talk to us. I really appreciate it.

R: No worries.

A: Thank you very much.

K: Thank you, Rowan.

R: Thank you. Good luck with your assignment.

K: Thank you.

A: Bye. Cheers.