

CLIMATE READY GWENT CASE STUDY – Blaenau Gwent 50+ Forum

1. Nature of engagement

This describes the scope of the engagement to capture the lived experience.

Blaenau Gwent 50+ Forum is a group of residents which meet twice a year to provide input into Council policy and practice affecting older people in Blaenau Gwent. The Network, chaired by a lead local authority councillor, receives input from local agencies and advises on and informs service delivery in Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council. CRG engagement sought to capture older people's views of how the local climate had changed during their lives, understand how they perceived climate risk in the community from increased incidence of severe weather and key messages for decision makers for planning for changes in Blaenau Gwent's climate. CRG were particularly interested in the views and perspectives of older people of changes over time, but also, their insights into the impact of climate change on the elderly community.



Note: Blaenau Gwent has densely urbanised communities (Ebbw Vale, Tredegar, Brymawr, Blaina and Abertillery) and large tracts of open countryside ranging from 400-1200ft in altitude, with a population of approx. 70,000.

2. Establishing engagement

This describes how the engagement was developed with local groups and agencies to explore the lived experience.

BGCBC suggested that the CRG project should engage with the 50+ Network as part of one of its regular meetings on 20.02.19. The project team liaised with BGCBC officials on the length, method and focus of the session and the logistics of capturing the session using *MeetingSphere*. An 'offer' was agreed for the project team to run a session climate adaptation as part Network meeting also involving Gwent Police on cybercrime. The time provided the session on the agenda was 50 minutes, which limited the scope of the engagement.

3. Community and agency involvement

This outlines who was involved in the discussion of the lived experience.

The session involved: 25 people present at the Forum, including members of the public, Council officers and partners representing Gwent Police and Smart Money Cymru. Two members Blaenau Gwent People's First also attended representing a local charity who support and advocate for people with learning disabilities.

4. Formats and methods adopted

This summarises the methods adopted to stimulate discussion and record the lived experience.

The meeting was held in Ebbw Vale Action Learning Centre with IT facilities enabling the use of *MeetingSphere* to capture data.¹ The seating was in cabaret style to facilitate this and to encourage group discussion. The session comprised of:

- an opening 10-minute *presentation on climate impacts*, emphasising the need to manage climate risks into the future, the types of impact we can expect, the impact on infrastructure and services and how this may impact on the lived experience, as well as the basic elements of climate adaptation practice.
- Attendees were given an explanation of how to use *MeetingSphere* and invited to focus on the following questions for 12 minutes each
 - *Past* – participants experience of severe weather and what changes had been experienced in the seasons, nature and the weather throughout their lives.
 - *Present* – participants experience of severe weather now (which is likely to become more common and extreme under climate change) and how we currently manage.
 - *Future* – participants' advice for decision makers on how to plan for an increased incidence and severity in extreme weather in the future

¹ MeetingSphere is workshop software enabling data to be typed in directly to tablets by attendees and screened to encourage discussion and debate. It is a way of capturing and ordering data quickly and using this in a workshop setting as well as capturing large amounts of data for later analysis.

- Data was collected using *MeetingSphere* and referred to in brief discussions following each question.
- A short plenary session provided observations and commentary from the Network.

5. Relevant local information used

This summarises the local data and evidence which was used to stimulate discussion on the lived experience.

In order to 'localise' climate impact, photographs of extreme weather events from Abertillery, Blaina, Ebbw Vale and Tredegar were used to illustrate the range of conditions which are likely to become more prevalent and extreme. This included historic photographs available online of extreme weather in the area.

6. Key issues raised – Past

This summarises the perceptions of those involved, about how the climate has changed during their lifetimes and their memories of how severe weather has impacted on their lived experience.

Memories of extreme weather

In 1947 we had heavy snow up to the windows. Had to dig tunnels or climb through windows to get out of the house or buildings. Petrol was dropped by plane, so bakers were able to bake bread and Abertillery Battalion supplied food rations to the locally community.

I remember tarmac melting on the roads and having to carry water from the mountain spring during hot summers.

In summers tarmac melted and always ruined our white socks.

In 1976 I remember water harvesting for toilet use, watering plants and stand pipes for drinking water

In 1985/6, because of heavy snow I was stuck in work for three days and couldn't go home. I worked at the Steelworks

Changing seasons and weather conditions

The seasons were more defined.

There was a lot more snow in the winter

Seasons were more consistent.

Spring is earlier now

Summers were hotter and winters were colder.

The weather was more predictable in previous generations.

Winters were more severe in Tredegar; the snow would last for many weeks if not months.

Windier now than in previous decades

Changing Response

I can't remember hosepipe bans when I was younger

There was more community working and cooperation.

People were less reliant on public services and helped themselves and the neighbours more

There used to be more snow, and everything carried on, but now, one inch and everything stops!

People expectations were less in respect of public services.

7. Key issues raised – Present *This summarises the perceptions of those involved, about how severe weather impacts now on their lived experience.*

Preparation and response

*Stock up with food
 Check trees close to house are safe
 Stock up on bottled water and long- life food
 use fans and air con
 Listen to weather warnings
 Try to get hold of sand bags
 Keep curtains/blinds closed to keep house cooled.
 Check on the neighbours.
 Preparation in terms of salt and snow shovels.
 We keep an eye on our neighbours and help them more.*

“People are more selfish now. They don't help each other so much. Some people panic buy essential supplies, creating shortages.

“Elderly neighbours can be left struggling.”

“Several of us and neighbours dig out the street and assisted elderly or less mobile with shopping.

“It really exposed those who were community spirited and those who were not”

8. Key issues raised – Future *This summarises the perceptions of those involved, about key issues that decision makers need to manage, between now and mid-century, to plan for climate change.*

*Plan for worst-case scenario
 Plan better for more extreme events.
 Don't be complacent.
 Educate people from a very young about how their acts will affect generations in the future
 Engage the farmers, land owners, communities and schools around the issue
 Support decision makers on adaptive action.*

9. Risks to the community/place. *This summarises the risks identified by participants to the community, local environment, economy and services.*

Residents	Town	Economy & Business	Landscape & Nature
Access for emergency services Damage to infrastructure Damage to property Insurance premiums Isolated elderly residents Access to food Ageing demographic: demands on social and health services Less mobile individuals at risk from extreme weather	Road infrastructure maintenance Flood damage to roads Maintaining the road drainage Surface water flooding Damage to property from falling trees Flood damage from the rivers	Getting goods to large shops / outlets 'in time' in extremes of weather Business Finance: insurance premiums Smaller local businesses less able to adapt business practice	Fires on the uplands and common lands Stronger winds damaging trees (wind throw) Changes in agricultural practice causing fires and soil erosion Large areas of tarmac creating surface water run-off and flooding further down the valley

10. Managing Climate Risks *This provides an overview of how participants suggest these risks should be managed.*

- Services to provide salt and shovels to help with extremes in cold weather
- Local council to clear roads during extremes in cold weather.
- Grants for homeowner solar panels and household water storage
- Help for farmers to better manage farm waste and farm run off
- A reliable source of information about expected extreme weather events and what to do.
- (Not everyone on line or using smart phones.)
- Maintenance of drains and culverts to manage surface water run off along whole valley length
- Identify, restore or maintain water capture facilities in the area - former reservoirs.

11. Community role *This provides ideas from the community about how they can support climate resilience.*

- Community members to keep an eye on elderly and less mobile during extreme weather.
- Community members to access services for elderly and less mobile during extreme weather.
- Energy: community renewables e.g. solar panels on the roofs of houses and household insulation.
- Localised community power generation

12. Reflections on the engagement *This summarises key issues emerging from the engagement and how the information developed during the engagement could be used in ongoing dialogue between the community and by local agencies.*

- a) this was an hour-long session with people very new to the idea of climate risk and its potential impact on the community.
- b) Despite the limited time available the participants provided a rich picture of their thoughts on past and present severe weather, with some views on planning for more severe weather in the future. More time would have been useful to open-up discussion following each exercise and explore future planning.
- c) a focus on past, present, future works for this type of group. participants were able to enjoy sharing memories, capturing a rich and clear sense of change over time and concern about increased frequency of severe weather.
- d) they enjoyed telling stories and anecdotes from their childhood. the group were animated, with energy in the room from residents and agencies. participants enjoyed being listened to.
- e) their focus was on neighbourliness and preparation for individual incidents of extreme weather.
- f) there was concern on the impacts of climate risk to an ageing demographic in terms of physical and mental health and vulnerability to extreme weather incidents.
- g) there was consensus that decision makers should take the issue seriously and plan for future conditions – especially in terms of infrastructure and service planning.
- h) they provided clear insight into potential impacts on local infrastructure, economy, townscape and landscape. this included service level response on roads and culverts, but also the strategic approach water management in the landscape and energy resilience.
- i) ideas about carbon reduction were also offered, particularly in the sense of energy security in the community
- j) there was interest expressed from attendees in running similar session with the University of the Third Age and service users via the Council.
- k) people's conversations suggest that this isn't some distant inexplicable phenomenon, but a real issue that people want to engage with in their own language and do something about.

13. Recommendations for Gwent PSBs

Observations and suggestions for GSWAG and Climate Ready Gwent Working Group on how this case study informs their continued engagement with the community

- Blaneau-Gwent Council can use this case study to inform the PSB well-being assessment and well-being plan. NRW can utilise the information in their Area statement work.
- Gwent PSBs could utilise a similar technique to explore climate change and adaptation across Gwent with similar groups, interest groups and fora.
- this 1-hour approach is good for raising awareness of the issue and capturing people's lived

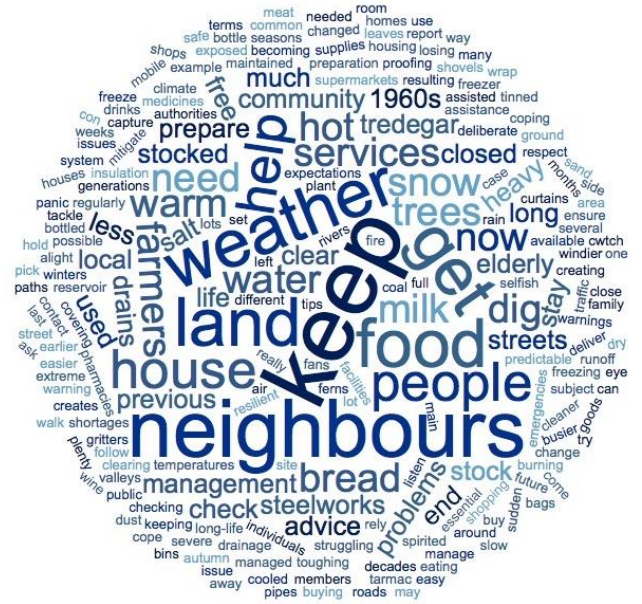
experience; however, it should be made clear to participants how the information might be used to inform service delivery and decision making (rather than potentially being perceived as a 'data grab')

- it would be interesting to get the young people in to discuss climate change with +50 For. With older people having a longer perspective / wisdom; younger people with the passion but not the direction. But a shared appreciation or understanding of place / their home / their community.
- here are opportunities for inter-generational learning using this technique (see recent missive from Older People's Commissioner for Wales' Commissioner's on this issue²)

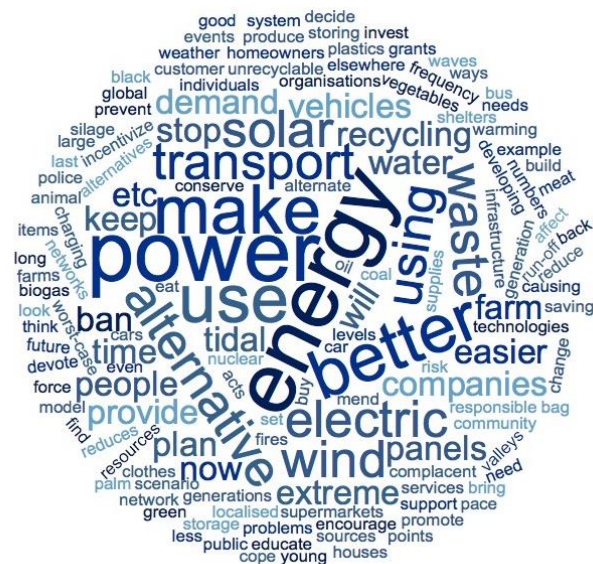
PAST



PRESENT



FUTURE



² http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/news/news/19-04-29/Solidarity_between_generations_is_vital_say_Commissioners.aspx?_cldee=ZGFmeWRkQHdbGxiZWluZ3BsYW5uZXIuY28udWs=&recipientid=lead-48c58d037254e811812470106faacba1-ecdadcf9461440d9affee321d8cee07b&esid=a23598b9-896d-e911-a98c-0022480050c6#.XNEhBNh7mUI