FLiNT Methods Report

Communities and Climate Change in a Future Wales

Creative Futuring Methods Report June 2022

GIG CYMRU NHS WALES | Iechyd Cyhoeddus Cymru | Public Health Wales

Comisiynydd Cenedlaethau'r Dyfodol Cymru | Future Generations Commissioner for Wales
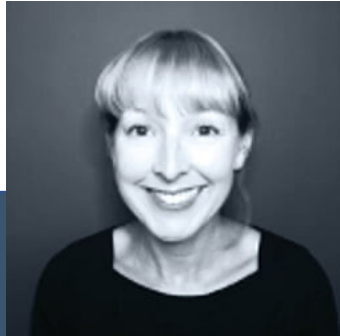
FLiNT

FLiNT – Futures Literacy through Narrative
Who Are We?

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Genevieve Liveley is Professor of Classics, RISCS Fellow, and Turing Fellow at the University of Bristol. She is a narratologist with particular research interests in narratives and narrative theories (both ancient and modern), and their impact on futures thinking. She is the author of *Narratology* (OUP 2019) and has published a number of books and articles examining the stories that programme cultural and sociotechnical narratives about human interactions with new technology.

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Will Slocombe is a Reader in English and Co-Director of the Olaf Stapledon Centre for Speculative Futures at the University of Liverpool. His research focuses on speculative and science fictions, particularly fictions of technology and representations of Artificial Intelligence. He is interested in how speculative futures narratives provide a repository of ready-made scenarios as well as how different narrative genres, modes, and forms can be used to enhance the communication of novel concepts.

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Emily Spiers is Co-Director of the Institute for Social Futures and Senior Lecturer in Creative Futures at Lancaster University. Her work focuses on future-oriented, innovative trends in communicative and literary practices. She explores how futures are being envisaged, anticipated and made through art and literature – and how creative narratives can help articulate multiple possible futures in fields as diverse as defence, education and climate change.

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Contents

FLiNT

What was the project?

Background

The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the five ways of working

The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 – embeds sustainable development and health in policies across public bodies and policy sectors. Wellbeing Goals include health, equality, resilience, global responsibility; the Five Ways of Working are **long-term thinking**, **prevention**, **integration**, **collaboration**, **involvement**.

All Public Services Boards must publish a Wellbeing Assessment and Plan every 5 years for their local authority areas

Welsh Government Programme for Government 2021 aims to: "Embed response to the climate and nature emergency in everything we do"

However, in the last set of Wellbeing Assessments (2017) "there was a lack of interpretation especially of climate impacts and how they might impact on landscape, particular communities, or vulnerable groups" (Netherwood et al. 2017).

The purpose of this project was therefore to understand how particular communities and vulnerable groups feel about the impacts of climate change, and how these impacts might exacerbate existing inequalities. This **involved** participants, identified through working **collaboratively** with community partners, to prompt discussions informed by **long-term thinking** about climate and inequalities, and considering what problems might need **preventing**, with the findings **integrating** with other studies and projects in the field.

Background

Inequality in a Future Wales Report

The project was prompted by the findings of the 2021 report for Welsh Government: *Inequality in a Future Wales: Areas for action in work, climate, and demographic change*. The Report found that:

"Understanding existing intersecting socio-economic inequalities provides a platform to avoid the unintended consequences of new climate and work policies.

By ensuring their redistributive intent in the short term, we may avoid entrenching new inequalities in the long term.

This approach also ensures policy changes in work, climate and demographics are viewed as intersecting: that is, shaped by each other", p. 9

This **Communities and Climate Change in a Future Wales** project set out to use creative futuring methods in a pilot study to find new ways towards a deeper understanding of these issues. The project elected to use the elicitation technique of storytelling in a quest to understand the viewpoints and experiences of people in disadvantaged communities as they face the future effects of climate change. These included the effects of flooding, of pollution, of decarbonisation in local industry, and of wider net zero initiatives in their area. We were especially keen to reach people whose voices aren't usually heard by government and policy makers.

Our use of storytelling helped to mitigate against survey fatigue in affected communities as well as to garner a rich source of qualitative data on this topic.

The aims and objectives of the **Communities and Climate Change in a Future Wales** project were:

To ensure the voices of marginalised and/or under-represented communities are heard in the development of climate change policy in order to avoid future trends carrying existing inequalities into future generations.

To use creative elicitation and innovative futures literacy techniques to empower these communities to imagine their priorities and preferences, hopes and fears, around future climate change in order for their views to shape policy thinking.

To provide resources and learning to public bodies and other decision makers to enable them to use these approaches in their work and so embed community involvement and long-term ways of working in their own activities.
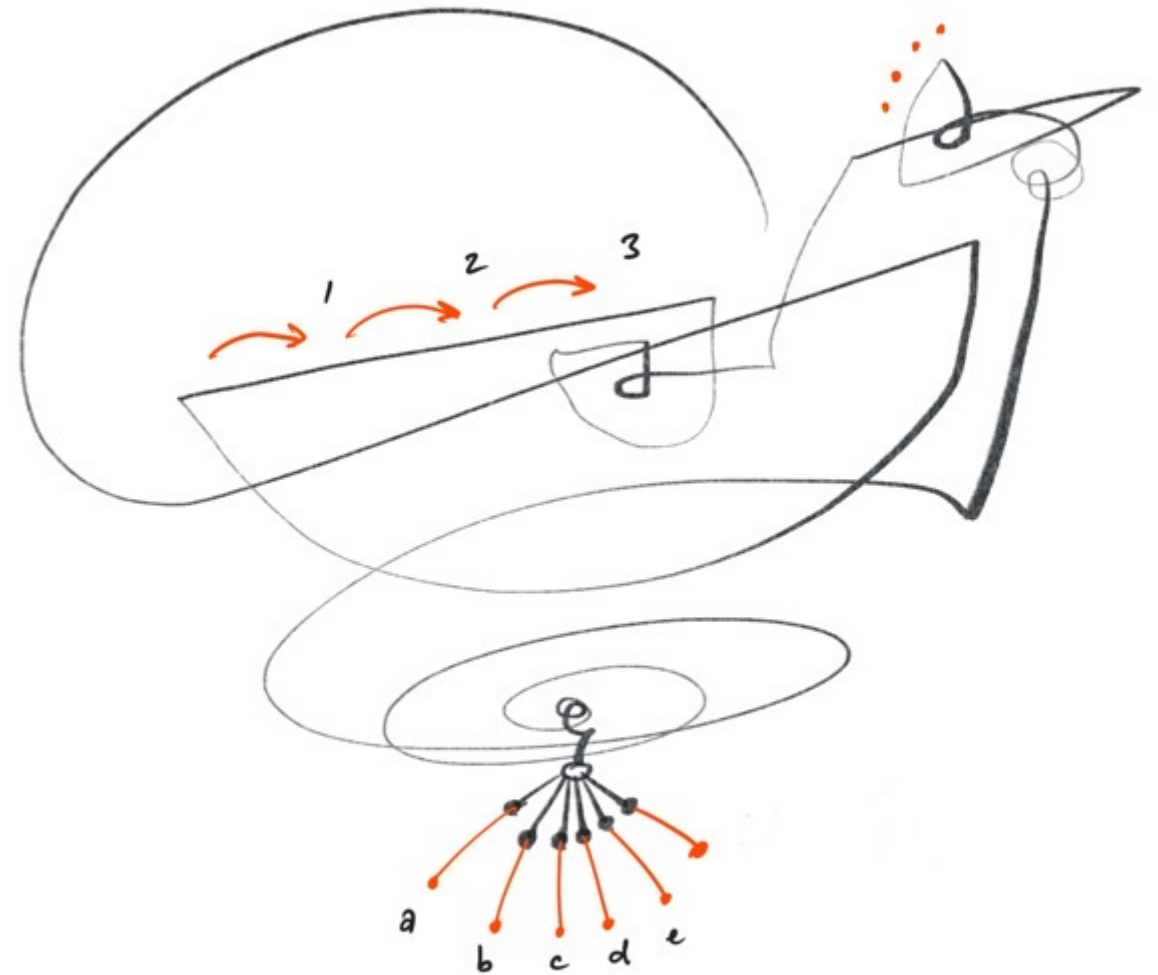
Project Overview

To achieve these aims, the project team (working in close collaboration with Public Health Wales, the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, and community leaders) co-designed a suite of activities targeted towards accessing specific hard to reach – 'need to reach' – communities.

Key community stakeholders (representing groups and areas with current lived experience of inequalities in Wales) were identified by Public Health Wales, the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, and community leaders (through two dedicated focus group meetings) and invited to participate in the project.

Using creative character-led storytelling activities run as workshops (lasting up to three hours) and storytelling competitions, participants were asked to share their particular insights into the future impacts of climate change now and into the longer-term.

Activities were conducted using in-person facilitated workshops, or online video conferencing platforms (Zoom). No stories, conversations, or workshops were digitally recorded (in order to encourage participants to speak candidly) but in each case an (anonymized) story or set of story notes was collected from each participant and considered for analysis and illustration.

No participants are identified or identifiable as a named individual (or network of data points) in any output arising from this research.
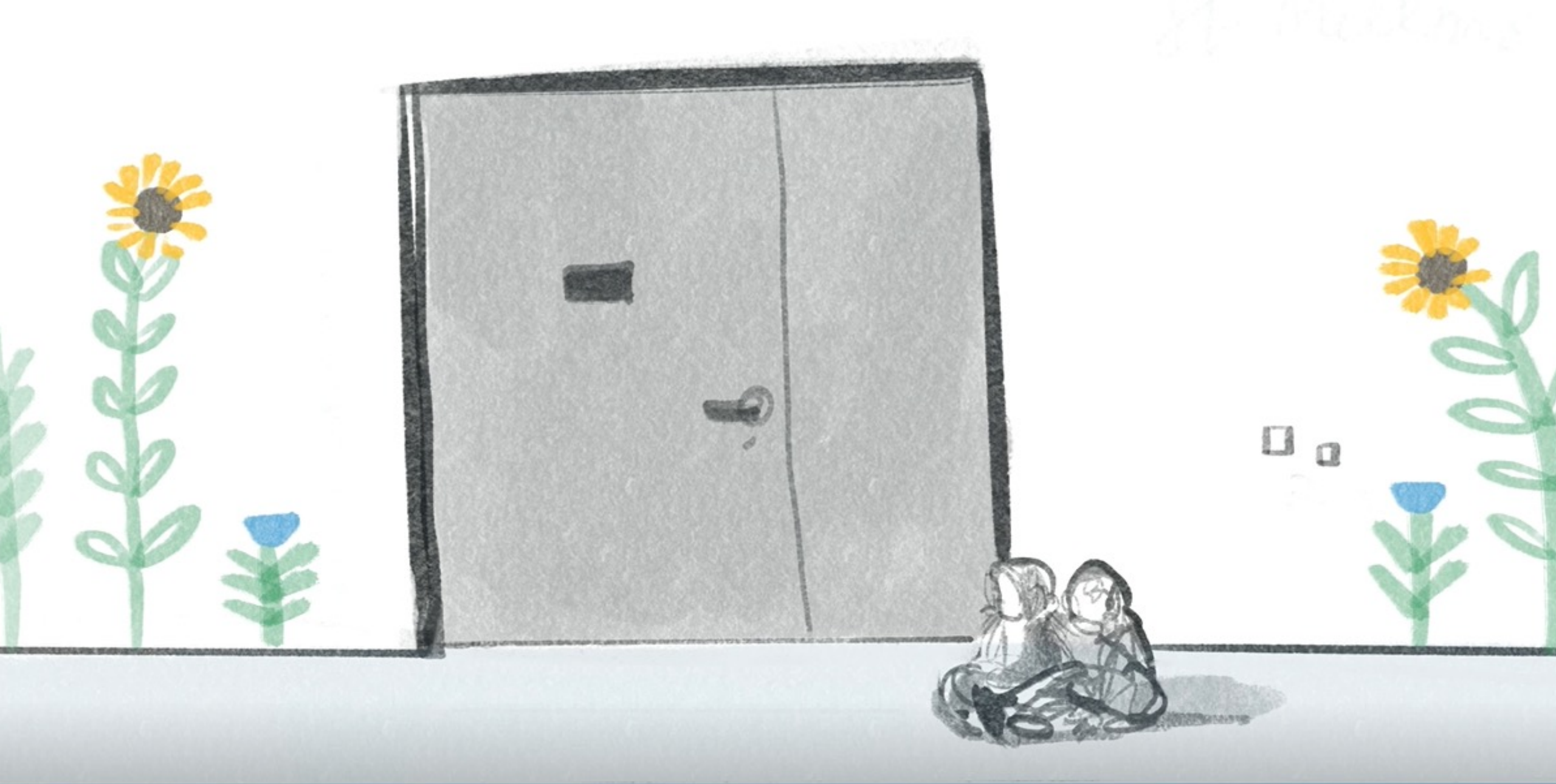
Project Timeline

December 2021 — Preliminary meetings with FLiNT, Public Health Wales, and the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales to co-design the project brief

January 2022 — Focus group meetings with community group leaders to identify potential project partners and to refine the project brief

February 2022 — Meetings with project partners and co-design of workshop materials

March 2022 — Delivery of workshops and launch of story competitions

April 2022 — Analysis of workshop materials and report writing

May 2022 — Analysis and story competition entries and report writing

June 2022 — Illustration and completion of reports, animations, and storybook

Communities

Building upon recommendations and introductions brokered by community group leaders in a series of focus group meetings, the target stakeholder groups for this project were identified as:

A. Communities already affected by climate change, e.g., by flooding/decarbonization

B. Social renters and landlords

C. BAME women and refugees

D. Disabled groups

E. Rural & farming communities (especially in North Wales)

The sample for this pilot study was not intended to be wholly representative but rather to provide a salient selection of key stakeholders with lived experience of inequalities to test and develop ways of working that could be adapted for use across a broad spectrum of future stakeholder engagements by public bodies and others

Intersectionality was assumed as a key feature of each group – with complex identities, cross-over characteristics, and concerns recognized and factored into each case and activity

Communities & Activities

Mindful of these intersectional characteristics between and across groups, we tagged the community stakeholder groups according to activity, output and the target community they broadly represent:

Story competition (all in the form of Letters/Postcards to the Future)

- Young Farmers Cymru – Group E
- Bishops Vaughan Catholic School – Group A
- Cyfarthfa High School – Group A

Letters/Postcards to the future

- Bishops Vaughan Catholic School – Group A
- Cyfarthfa High School – Group A
- Women Seeking Sanctuary Advocacy Group Wales – Group C

Character-led storytelling (some outputs in the form of Letters/Postcards to the Future)

- Disability Wales – Group D
- Hafod – Group B
- RHA Wales – Group B
- Cwm Taf–People First – Group D
- Tai Pawb – Group 2
- Women Seeking Sanctuary Advocacy Group Wales – Group C

Project Activities

Short Story Writing: We curated a storytelling competition ('Write a letter or postcard to or from your future self') with two schools and with Young Farmers Cymru.

Storytelling Workshops: We convened a mix of virtual and in-person workshops with five community stakeholder groups using Character-Led Storytelling to explore the long-term impact of climate change (and mitigation policies) on the lived experience of inequalities in Wales, with a focus on intersectional deprivation. Three of these workshops were directly facilitated by FLiNT, and two were facilitated by community leaders with back-up support, materials, and upskilling provided by FLiNT.

Story Sharing: We produced a digital 'storybook' featuring 'gif-able' vignettes of selected and synthesised community narratives and voices talking about how lived experience is shaping their hopes and fears for the future. A methodology animation was also produced for the project.

Design Principles

Accessibility: All materials (including participant information sheets, consent forms, etc) were made available in Large Print, digital and hardcopy formats, and BSL and Palantyping support was available for all group work. Form templates are available here: Inequalities in a Future Wales – FLiNT

Welsh Language: All materials were made available in Cymraeg and English, and simultaneous Cymraeg translation was made available to each group

Fair Reimbursement: Each participant was reimbursed for their time via voucher or BACs payment. Each community group was paid a fee to cover their administration costs

Recording: A Welsh graphic artist (Chris Glynn) illustrated each event/activity and captured key messages but no audio or video recordings were made

Materials: Each group (with the exception of Disability Wales – for whom all activity was online, by request) was sent a printed activity pack containing picture prompts, writing paper, blank postcards, character development prompts, hardcopies of participant information sheets, consent forms, debriefing sheets – and SAE for returning forms and stories to the project team

Group Size: Each workshop group was composed of 8-20 participants

5 Ways of Working: Every activity was informed by the 5 Ways of Working (https://www.futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/)

Project limitations

The study included work with and narrative input from **8 core stakeholder groups**, and it involved a total of **142 individual participants**. Although relatively limited in number and self-selecting, the participants represented a wide age range and were all able to speak of their first-hand lived experience of inequality and disadvantage. The open and semi-structured nature of the character-led storytelling workshops, and the open brief for the short story competitions, enabled a broad yet deep examination of the topic.

Limitations on the project design, scope, and delivery were imposed by the tight time schedule, plus pandemic restrictions on in-person and public meetings in the winter/spring period of 2021/22. The original project design made virtual workshops plus school- or home-based competitions the default mode of activity. However, acute digital inequalities in the target stakeholder group and a lack of access to online services meant that it was necessary to hold some activities in person.

All in-person events were held in accordance with Public Health Wales guidance and laws in force during the period, following social distancing and Covid-safe protocols as advised by Public Health Wales.

As recommended by community leaders, the project held one workshop as a women-only group. In the future, we suggest that a men-only group also be considered. Workshops were all held during the working week and we further suggest that some future activities be held in the evenings or at weekends to widen the pool of potential participants.

We approached community groups from across the nation and attempted to cover a representative geographical range in the participant sample but recognize the urban and south-west bias to the final study. The valuable input from Young Farmers Cymru offers an important corrective in bringing voices from the rural North.

What methods did we use?

Choosing the Right Futures Method
Tools & Options

There are hundreds of different futures methods and toolkits available to policymakers. The GoScience Futures Toolkit, the Future Makers' Toolbox, and Save the Children all offer useful selections:

- **GoScience Futures Toolkit:** The Futures Toolkit: Tools for Futures Thinking and Foresight across UK Government (publishing.service.gov.uk)

- **The Future Makers' Toolbox:** Futuremaker's toolbox – Sitra

- **Save the Children Strategic Foresight Toolkit:** The Future Is Ours: Strategic Foresight toolkit – making better decisions | Save the Children's Resource Centre

When working with communities and/or trying to gather qualitative (rather than quantitative) data, creative elicitation techniques have been shown to be highly effective – both in engaging people in the first place, and

in gathering stories and pictures that bring statistics and projections to life. Creative engagements (such as storytelling workshops) are particularly useful when working with groups who may not respond to surveys or questionnaires.

Creative futuring techniques bring in a wealth of information in both image and free text form – which can be challenging when it comes to analysis. Wordclouds can help to identify key themes quickly and text tagging allows for deeper analysis – whether freehand with highlighter pens or with text mining, text analytics, or Natural Language Processing (NLP) software tools: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7WfoYl-EPtI

Once you have gathered a representative set of common themes, headlines, and stories, these should be cross-checked and validated against wider research on the policy or topic area – and, ideally, with the community groups who provided the original data.

Futures Method 1

Futures Literacy

Embedded across the full suite of activities carried out for this project were the key principles of Futures Literacy.

Futures Literacy is the skillset that guides our anticipatory thinking and action in all spheres of life – whether writing a shopping list, telling a story, making a packed lunch, watching a film, crafting a policy document, planting a garden, or preparing for climate change.

UNESCO calls Futures Literacy **an** 'essential competency for the 21st century'.

It is 'the skill that allows people to better understand the role of the future in what they see and do. Being futures literate empowers the imagination, enhances our ability to prepare, recover and invent as changes occur.'
Futures Literacy (unesco.org)

Storytelling plays a fundamental part in this imaginative process and through sharing stories about the future we open up new insights into stakeholder relationships with volatile, uncertain, and complex futures.

Futures Literacy helps build a better understanding both the possibilities and the limitations of the human imagination when it comes to futures thinking – to think and to communicate effectively about what is possible , preferable, and probable in a future Wales.

Futures Method 2
Character-Led Storytelling (CLS) in Workshops

Character Led Storytelling (CLS) opens up a safe space for thinking about the future.

It draws upon the techniques of oral storytelling, improvisation, and collaborative theatre to imagine and build future storyworlds. It involves guiding workshop participants to develop fully realized characters, or fictional human beings, in order to unfold possible future worlds collaboratively and performatively.

The method allows people to see through the eyes of another imaginary person and consider what new, previously hidden, insights into the world such characters and contexts might reveal. It also provides an opportunity for the ensuing scenarios and stories to be captured as accessible and impactful futures outputs that engage audiences with possible futures in audio-visual form.

The method engages people with the 'present future' – an idea of the future that informs the present – allowing them to stake a claim in the shaping of their futures. CLS futures workshops require participants to develop their characters, with guidance from the facilitator, in isolation and in conversation with the rest of their group. Next, they spend time collaboratively devising a possible world that could bring the characters together out to a given future date.

As characters talk, pictures of the world unfold in a conversation between participants and participants speak to their peers using their characters' names, using 'you' instead of 'she' or 'he'. At times, they might speak directly in the first person when responding to a question, then slip back into referring to their characters in the third person.

Futures Method 3
Postcards to/from the Future

Writing Postcards or Letters to or from the Future is a well-established creative 'futuring' activity. Participants write to (or from) their present or future selves – or to an imagined/fictional friend or relation from a future generation (such as a great-grandchild).

Writers are asked to imagine what important changes have taken place in the intervening years (20, 40, or more years into the future). Their letter or postcard then describes the way their lives are different (or the same) in the future, and the important steps that were taken to get there. The writer usually expresses gratitude (but can extend blame) to the people from the past for their hard work and acts of care – or their lack of the same.

This method is particularly useful in helping to promote positive visions of the future, and for imagining practical actions to get there.

Because the exercise is relatively broad yet brief, it can elicit highly creative and imaginative responses and ideas.

The front of the postcard can be used if desired for a drawing or diagram, and key themes plus images from the postcards and letters can be used to shape and illustrate outputs.

What did we learn?
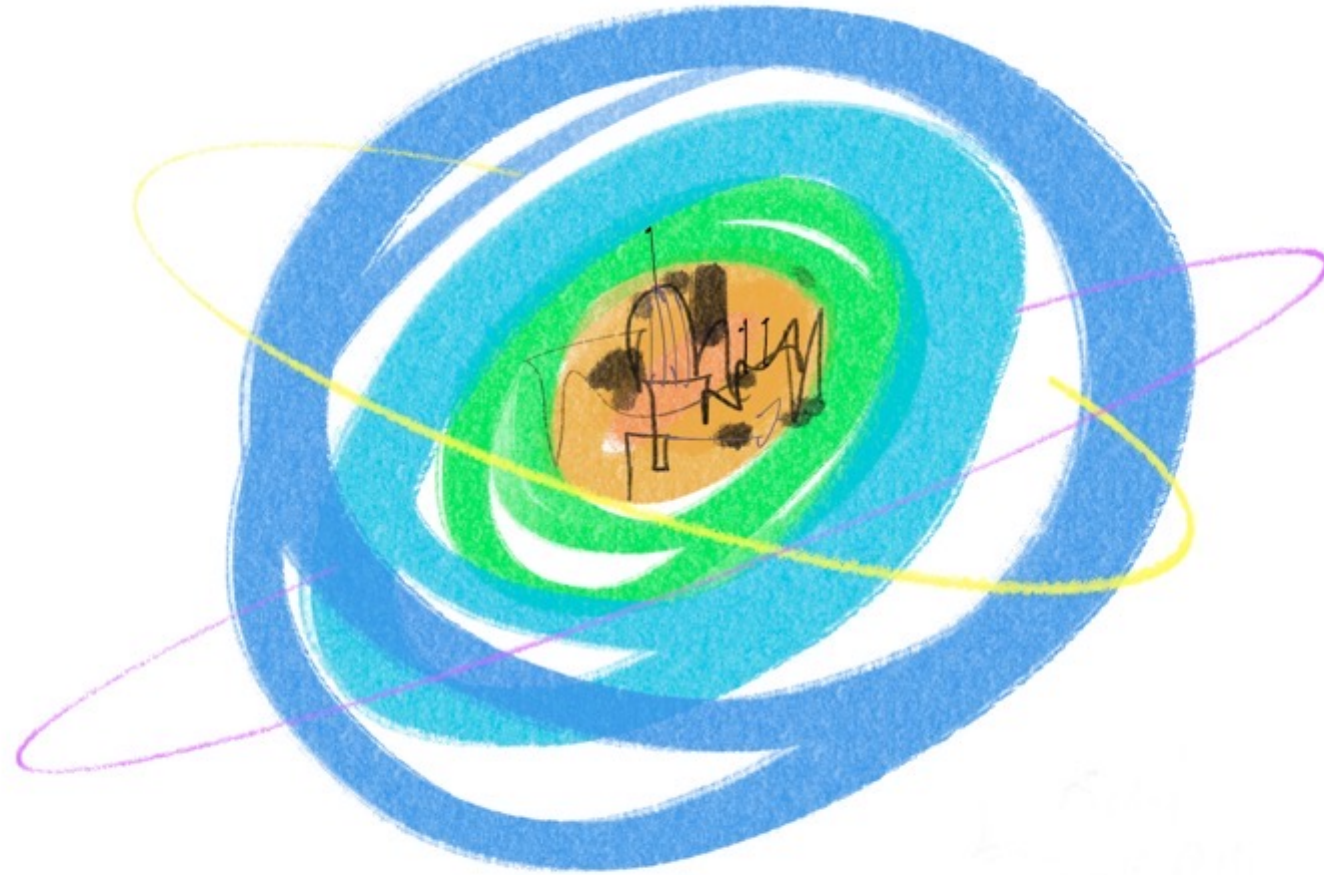
About communities and climate change

Summary findings #1

Our findings show that climate change issues do not exist in isolation but intersect with a range of other issues.

Climate means home: Communities do not think about global climate issues, the environment, and local neighbourhood matters as separate, disconnected things.

Green Futures: Communities were keenly aware of the value of engaging with the natural world, especially its flora and fauna, for their physical and mental health.

Hard Learning: Disadvantaged communities have often developed strategies for living that are both 'green' and cost-effective.

Communities come first: Tackling climate change and achieving net zero 'takes a village', and participants recognized and celebrated the value of their communities.

Left behind by transport: Net-zero transport ambitions are causing anxiety in several communities.

About communities and climate change
Summary findings #2

Community concerns about climate change are shaped by other recent concerns – especially the legacy of Covid.

Some younger participants were interested in optimistic techno-utopian futures (including electric cars, drones, autonomous vehicles, skyrise and urban living) or the rewilding of Wales. However, most findings were broadly pessimistic in outlook and all communities were concerned about their future health and wellbeing in relation to climate change and …

- the cost of living crisis, war and Covid

- the future health and wellbeing of friends, family, and pets

- social and/or physical isolation and its impact on their mental health

- the extinction of animals, birds, and insects (particularly through loss of habitat)

- new vaccines and cures for cancer and other diseases

- worsening of pre-existing conditions (such asthma, heatstroke, and allergies)

- loss of local facilities (shops, schools, GP surgeries, parks and community gardens)

- hopes of having children and a large family

- major incidents such as pollution, floods, and wildfires

- domestic issues such damp, litter, rats, graffiti, cold homes

About how to do community engagement well
Key takeaways from the project #1

In the beginning…

- Ensure all 'Five Ways of Working', and all relevant Ethics and Data Protection protocols are embedded in your project at the design stage. Where there is a tension, maximise protection of individuals over granularity of data.

- Work with community partners to co-design and refine your project brief, and to make recommendations and introductions to wider stakeholder groups as needed.

- Build flexibility into your project and be prepared to adapt your approach to suit the needs of different groups and different circumstances; don't limit planned activities in a way that might discourage or limit participation (e.g. digital or physical access requirements, proficiency or familiarity with a given method). One size does not fit all.

- Work with pre-existing groups and piggy-back on to their local activities and schedules (rather than organising one-off 'town hall' events for large disconnected groups in unfamiliar venues). Trust community partners to know their communities.

- Use comfortable 'safe spaces' which stakeholders are already using (food banks, community centres, schools, online meeting spaces, etc) where possible.

- Pay all community and individual stakeholders a fair honorarium for taking part, and offer prizes for any competitions you run.

- Pay attention to detail (ensure groups are provided with all the resources they might need: pens, papers, picture prompts, SAEs, translators, BSL, etc; and build in appropriate comfort breaks).

About how to do community engagement well
Key takeaways from the project #2

In the middle...

- Be mindful of framing biases and the language used in project communications (to avoid patronising stakeholders or guiding their stories in particular directions).

- Maintain flexibility and allow the project design and methods to develop organically as needed.

- Have 'back-up' solutions and adaptable offerings (such as options for both online and in-person activity; options for those with and without access to tech/digital devices; options for those with and without good literacy levels).

- Offer a blend of both 'active' facilitator-led workshop activities and 'passive' or 'reflective' at-home or at-school worksheet-guided activities; enable

participants to work at their own pace as much as possible and be cognizant that all collaborators and participants are contributing in their own time.

- Use a note-taker and/or illustrator but avoid audio or video recordings (which can stifle free-flowing conversations – you are trying to encourage participation).

- Consider the needs and preferences of different personality types (one size does not fit all: some like to prepare 'homework' , others to do everything on-the-day; some people like to draw, others to write, or speak their stories; some have instant ideas, others like time to reflect).

About how to do community engagement well

In the end…

- Manage expectations (discuss what you will be doing after the activity and what will happen next).

- Provide suitable debriefing materials and follow-up support if discussing sensitive topics.

- Follow-up and share your findings and any outputs with the groups and stakeholders you've worked with.

- Consider the best formats for your outputs (a formal written report is unlikely to be the most effective vehicle for sharing your findings with community stakeholders or with policy makers).

- Be mindful that institutional finance systems may not mesh well with the requirements of individuals, who may not have access to email or computers, may not have bank accounts, etc.

- Leave something useful behind (enable groups to adapt your activity for their own future needs).

- Reflect on the 'added-value' or unintended learning outcomes of your project (has it helped build 'futures literacy', brought a community together, started a conversation, allowed for knowledge-transfer on wider issues of health, climate change, etc?).

- Analyse the themes that emerge in your outputs: read them, think and talk about them in your teams, validate them.

Resources

Tools and templates

For free use in future projects

All stories and notes herein are copyright CC-BY-NC-SA, crediting FLiNT 2022
(FLiNT - Futures Literacy Through Narrative).

Illustrations are copyright CC-BY-NC-SA, crediting Chris Glynn 2022 (https://www.chrisglynn.net/).

Templates for research ethics protocols, etc, for use in future projects can be downloaded from the FLiNT website: Inequalities in a Future Wales – FLiNT or by following these links:

- Participant information sheet
- Participant consent form
- Participant debriefing sheet

Character-led story activity prompts:
CLS-Workshop_Stories-of-the-Future.pdf (flint.org.uk)

Postcard/Letter to the future activity: Postcards from the
future - Create the Future

GoScience Futures Toolkit: The Futures Toolkit: Tools for Futures Thinking and Foresight across UK Government (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Institute for the Future (IFTF):
Systems Mythology Toolkit

The Future Makers' Toolbox:
Futuremaker's toolbox – Sitra

Save the Children Strategic Foresight Toolkit: The Future Is Ours: Strategic Foresight toolkit – making better decisions | Save the Children's Resource Centre

Text mining, text analytics, or Natural Language Processing (NLP) software tools
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7WfoYl-EPtI

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Research Ethics & Governance

The project study was approved by the School of the Arts Research Ethics Committee at the University of Liverpool and by the Faculty of Arts Research Ethics Committee at the University of Bristol and complied fully with these Universities' Research Governance and Ethics protocols.

In accordance with this ethical approval, all data were managed in full compliance with guidance on information security and data retention and removal as provided by the University of Liverpool ([Data Protection Policy - Legal & Governance - University of Liverpool](#)), the University of Bristol (http://www.bris.ac.uk/infosec/uobdata/research/), and a Data Protection Impact Screening Assessment by Public Health Wales. No personal data was processed as part of the study. No potentially identifiable information was attached to or included in any stories, notes or transcripts. Thematic tags were used instead of actual names to label stories, notes and transcripts.

Informed consent forms and fully anonymised transcripts and notes will be retained until the end of the project or by 1 July 2022 at the latest.

Acknowledgements

With thanks to:

FLiNT, the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, and Public Health Wales would like to thank the following organisations – and members of these organisations – for their involvement with the work of this project:

- Bishops Vaughan Catholic School
- Cyfarthfa High School
- Disability Wales
- Hafod
- RHA Wales
- Cwm Taf – People First

- Women Seeking Sanctuary Advocacy Group Wales
- Young Farmers Cymru
- Tai Pawb
- Women's Equality Network Wales