Climate Change in Wyre: Local Resident's Views – May 2021

Report Date & Version:

May 2021, Version 2

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1.   Background

1.1.   Aim

1.1.1.   An online survey was carried out between December 2020 and February 2021. This was promoted via social media, in conjunction with Blackpool and Fylde Councils.

1.1.2.   The aim was to engage with Wyre residents to gather their views about climate change. This evaluated participant's knowledge of the topic, perceptions of the impact of climate change locally, views on individual actions to minimise impact on the environment, and suggestions for actions the council could take to support change across the borough.

1.2.   Respondents

1.2.1.   In total, 102 respondents took part in the survey. Details of participants were broken down as follows:

- Gender: 52% were female, 42% male and 6% preferred either to self-describe or not to say;

- Age: Most respondents were aged 55 and above;

- Ethnicity: 93% were White (British/Irish/Other), 1% Black or Black British (Caribbean/African/Other), 6% preferred not to say;

- Work: Most respondents worked in professional, scientific and technical activities, or education. A large proportion of respondents were retired;

- Disability: 22% respondents had a limited disability or illness, 10% were disabled but not limited by it.

1.3.   Representation

1.3.1.   As the survey was advertised online and open to all, rather than sent to residents at random, those taking part are not representative of the Wyre population. Open surveys are likely to be completed by respondents with strong views on the topic, which may skew results.

1.3.2.   However, this survey provides an insight into general views on climate change locally, which is a useful starting point for the council to build upon.

2.   Results

2.1.   Knowledge and Trust

2.1.1.   When asked about the impact of human activity on the increase in global temperatures, 47% of respondents agreed this was 'definitely' responsible. A further 40% stated that human activity was 'probably' responsible, whilst only 12% believed other factors to be responsible. This suggests a relative consensus on human activity causing climate change, with limited scepticism among respondents.

2.1.2.   Most respondents (73%) described their knowledge on the affect and impact of climate change as either 'quite' or 'moderately' broad, with a further 13% indicating they had a 'very broad' knowledge on the topic (Figure 1). Only 2% reported not knowing much at all. This is likely to be due to the nature of the survey, which encourages responses from already invested individuals, although it suggests that most people already have a rough knowledge on the subject.
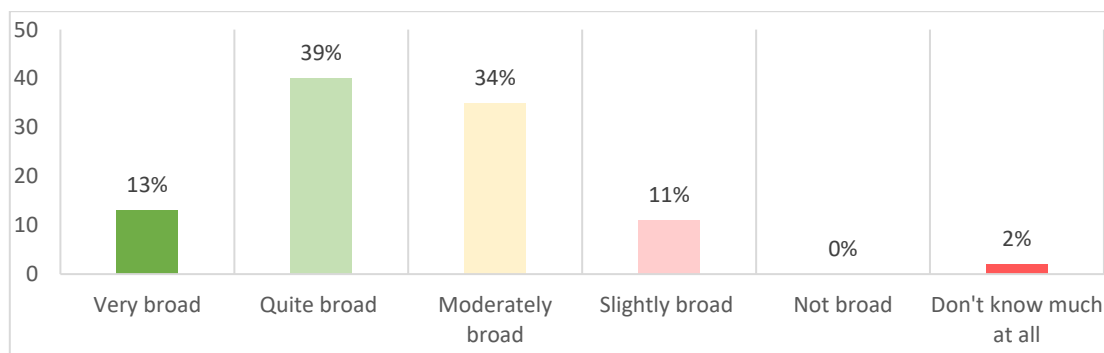

Figure 1: 'How would you describe your knowledge about the affect and impact of climate change?'

2.1.3.   Understandably, respondents mostly put their trust in receiving information about climate change from scientists and environmental organisations. Receiving information from family members, government bodies and colleagues was also trusted to a lesser extent. Conversely, energy suppliers were not trusted very much, followed by the media.

2.2.   Impact of Climate Change

2.2.1.   It was widely agreed that governments, organisations and individuals all have a vital role to play in addressing climate change, with greater onus on governments in particular.

2.2.2.   It was perceived by most participants that climate change has already negatively affected other places in the world a great deal (Figure 2). Most felt that the negative affect on Wyre and their local area has only been felt to some extent.
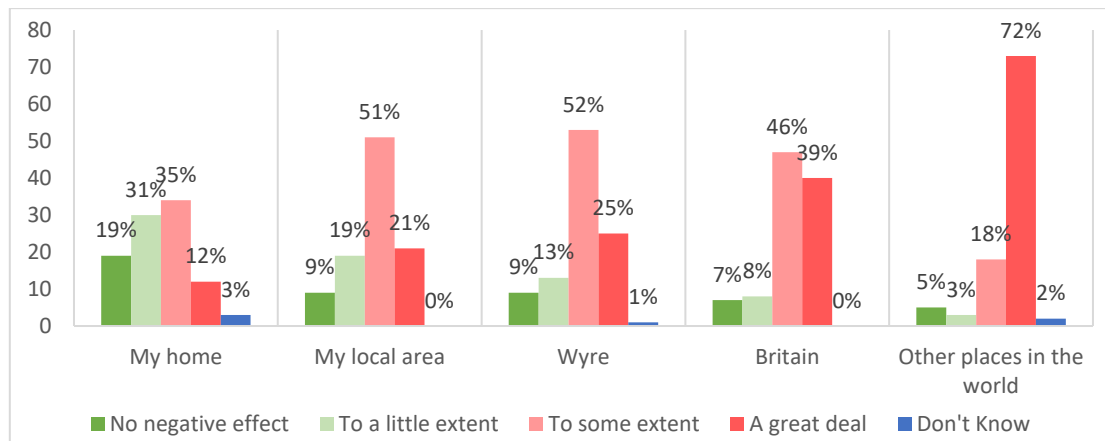
Figure 2: 'Do you think climate change has already negatively affected the following places?'

2.2.3. As such, most respondents were very concerned about the current effects of climate change in other places in the world, followed by Britain as a whole. In comparison, respondents were only quite concerned when considering Wyre, their own local area and homes.

2.2.4. Within the last 5 years, respondents identified that the greatest impacts of climate change locally were flooding from rainfall, less biodiversity and worse weather (Box 1). They also noted that changes included milder winters, longer dry spells and droughts effecting crops, and stranger behaviours from plants that are flowering or fruiting twice a year.

"I currently live in Inskip. We've only lived here just over a year and the roads in and out of the village have been flooded on several occasions."

"It's not just drought, we seem to be a lot wetter and have had to take flood prevention measures in Fleetwood to stop ingress into our house after downpours."

Box 1: 'What has been the impact on your local area within the last 5 years?'

2.3.   Individual Actions

Travel

2.3.1.   When evaluating changes respondents have already made to reduce their impact on the environment, most respondents reported that they regularly walk, cycle or use a scooter, with occasional public transport use. Driving an electric car or car sharing was least used.

2.3.2.   When asked why respondents do not use greener travel options, the majority indicated that electric cars were too expensive (Box 2). Residents without off-street parking also raised the issue that there is currently nowhere for them to charge an electric car.

2.3.3.   The effect of the pandemic has understandably reduced public transport use. However many respondents indicated that the public transport was poor due to the infrequency of services rurally, disconnect between residents and desired destinations, and inconvenience for users with reduced accessibility. In addition, car sharing was considered inconvenient for residents, and some indicated that travel by foot, bike or scooter was too dangerous.

"Electric cars are too expensive to purchase and maintain and I'm also unable to charge at my home as I can never get parked near my house (I live in a large terrace house)."

"I would love an electric car, but it's so far out of my financial reach I have no chance of ever having one."

"There is practically no public transport in my area and what there is never seems to go where I need it to."

"I am not able to walk very far, which means that getting to a bus stop or train station is quite difficult for me."

Box 2: 'If you do not use any of the above sustainable transport options, please tell us more.'

2.3.4.   When considering future changes to travelling activities, most respondents would increase how much they walk or cycle (Figure 3). This is followed using an electric car and public transport. Most respondents would not consider car sharing, and response is split over reducing the amount of individual travel.
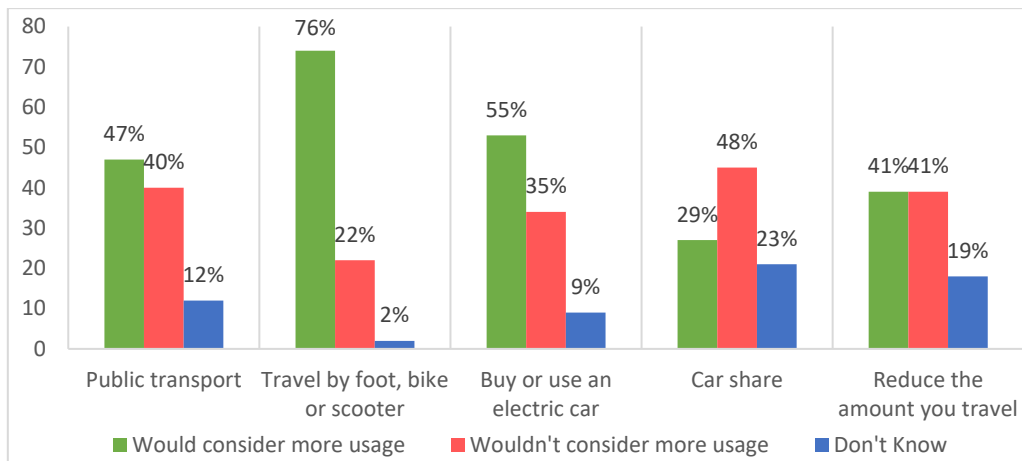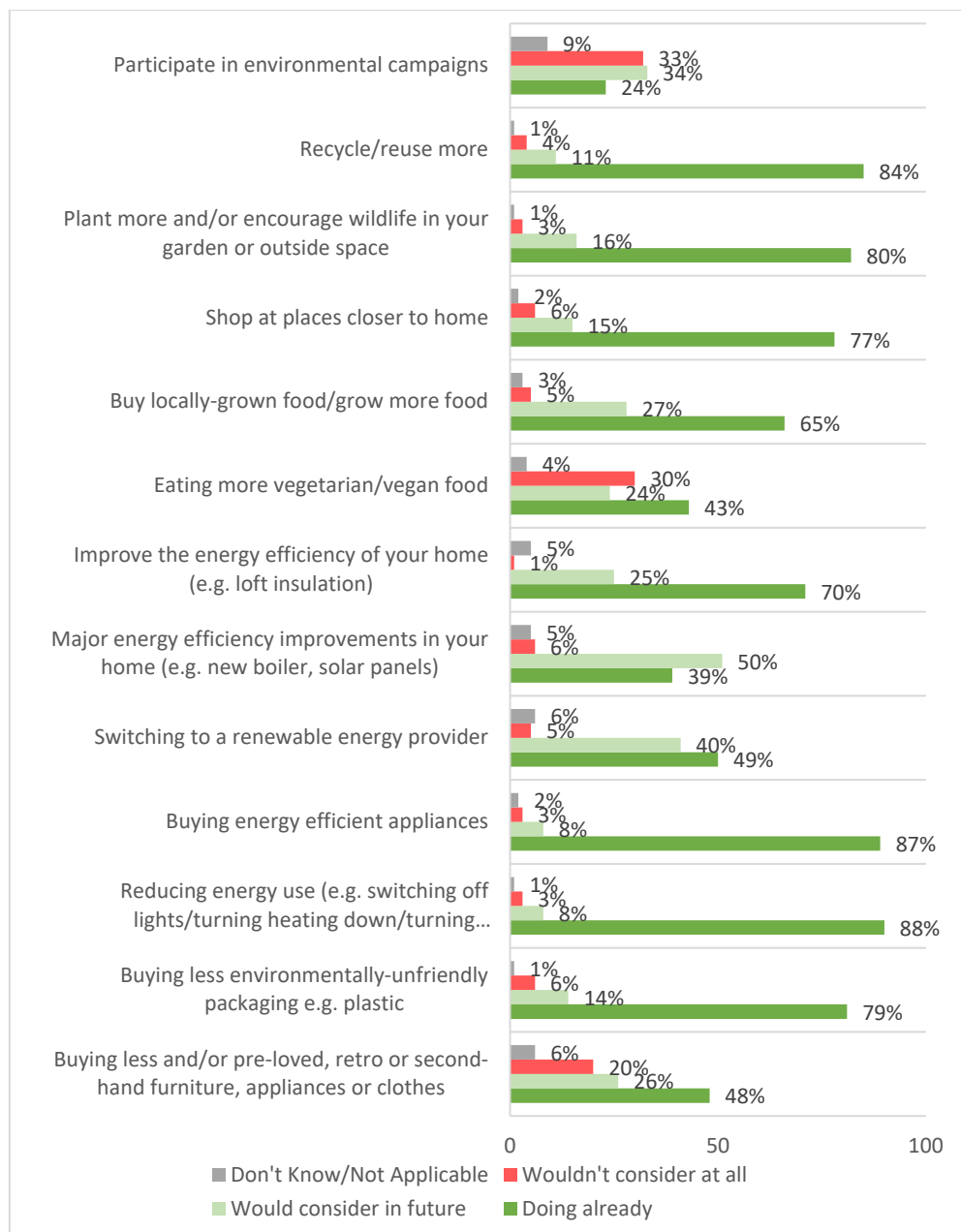
Figure 3: 'Which of the following behaviours, which would minimise your personal impact on the environment, would consider taking in the future?'

2.3.5. When asked why respondents would not consider more usage of the above options, answers were very similar to the previous question. This included poor public transport alternatives and concerns about the environmental impacts of electric cars.

Other Actions

2.3.6. Participants indicated that they are already doing a number of positive behaviours that reduce climate change (Figure 4). Actions most would consider in the future included major energy efficiency improvements in homes (e.g. new boiler, solar panels), as well as switching to a renewable energy provider. Fewer respondents would consider eating more vegetarian/vegan food, participating in environmental campaigns or buying less and/or second-hand items. Other behaviours suggested by respondents included using cloth nappies and wipes.

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Figure 4: 'Which of the following behaviours are you doing and which would you consider in the future?'

2.3.7. Those who would not consider any of the above actions gave reasons such as the perception that these have a high cost that they cannot afford on a low income, disliking second-hand items, and that they enjoy eating meat. Some elderly respondents stated that they did not like to campaign.

Motivation

2.3.8. The top three motivations for changing behaviours were thinking about future generations, health and saving money (Figure 5). High numbers also considered ethical beliefs and wanting to spend more time outside. Respondents were less influenced by other people.
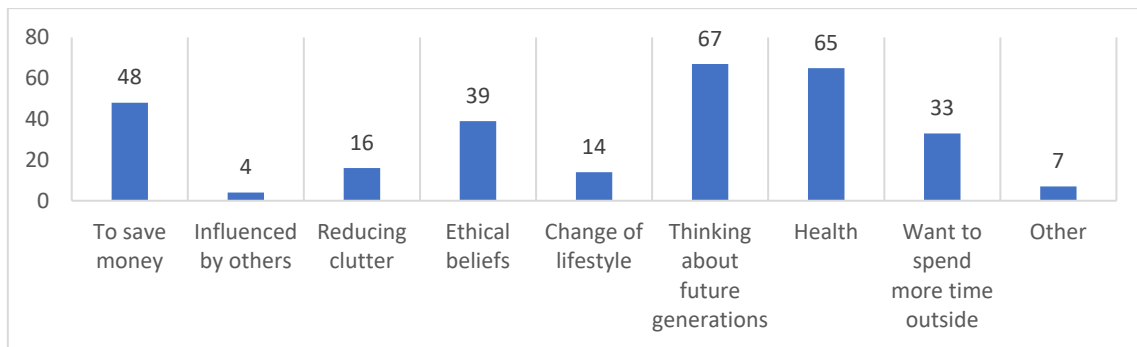
Figure 5: 'How would you describe your top 3 motivations for changing your behaviours?'

2.3.9. Respondents also suggested other motivations for changing their behaviour included the sustainability of the planet, protecting the environment and wildlife conservation (Box 3).

"My main motivation is to reduce pollution, protect the environment and reduce carbon emissions so that future generations will not be too adversely affected by the effects of climate change."

Box 3: 'Other motivations for changing your behaviour.'

Ability to change

2.3.10. Altogether, 78% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they were able to make changes that help to tackle climate change. Only 10% disagreed.

2.3.11. Respondents that did not agree they could make any changes to help tackle climate change indicated that cost was a limiting factor, along with the perception of government inaction meaning that their personal contribution would mean nothing (Box 4).

"Many ways require investment when people don't have much, if any, spare cash."

"The things that make the difference like keeping fossil fuel in the ground, reducing air travel by 50%, changing farming methods, getting people back to walking and cycling, creating jobs where people live and not via massive commutes, are all government-level decisions and these are just not being made."

"I can make changes that make some difference but individuals taking action will all be for nothing if government doesn't step up. The scale of the challenge is huge."

"It is countries and governments and also global companies that need to do far more to make a meaningful overall impact."

Box 4: 'If you do not agree that you could make any changes, please tell us more.'

2.4. Council Actions

Support for Changes

2.4.1. Most respondents thought that it was most appropriate for the council to introduce measures that encourage people to adopt environmentally friendly behaviour, with

less indicating that people should be forced into changes. They also agreed that councils should support local businesses with information and grants. Fewer people felt that it should be left to individuals and businesses to adapt their own behaviour.

2.4.2. Of the list of suggested actions for the council to take, respondents would strongly support the council setting tougher environmental standards for new developments, planting more trees and plants, introducing more recycling options, and supporting renewable energy generation (Figure 6).
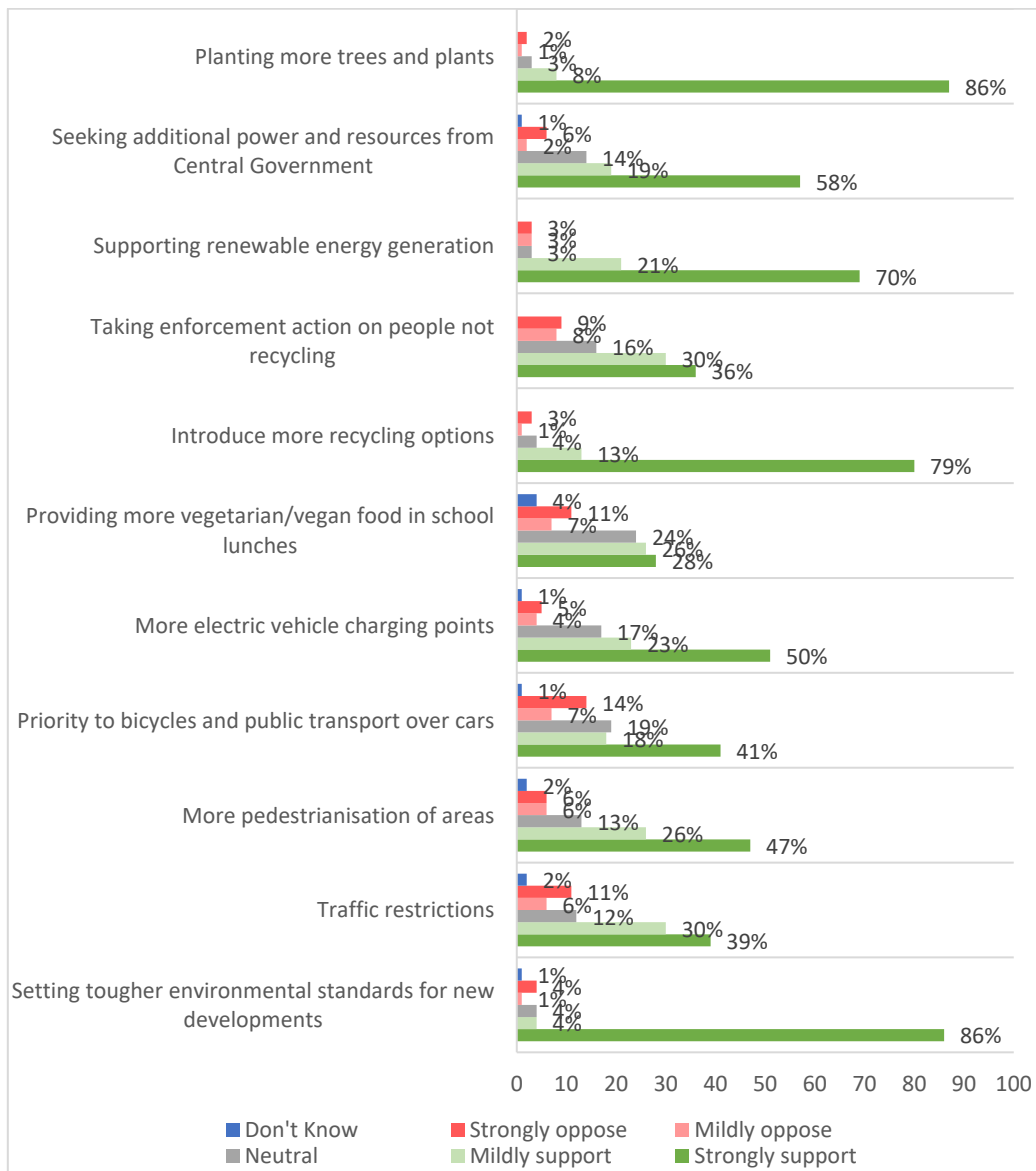

Figure 6: 'Which of the following actions would you support the council taking to address climate change?'

2.4.3. Respondents were in strong support of all suggested actions for the council to best support communities to tackle climate change and increase sustainable activity in the borough (Figure 7). The most popular actions were supporting local food production, changes to planning policy to encourage carbon neutrality in the community and educating and informing the community on the benefits of becoming carbon neutral.
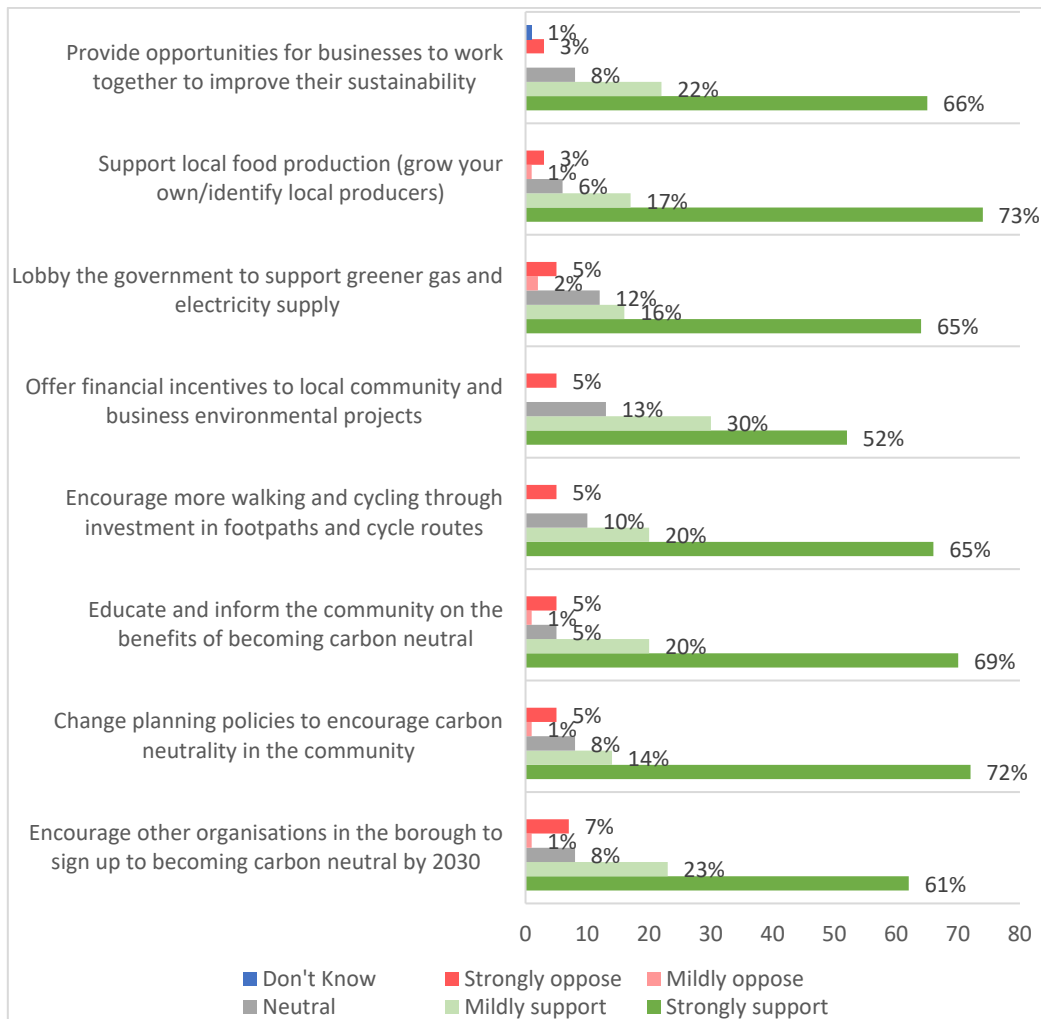
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Figure 7: 'How do you think the council can best support communities to tackle climate change and increase sustainable activity in the borough?'

2.4.4. When asked to select their top three areas of society for the council to work with, respondents indicated that the construction industry and manufacturers were most important. This was closely followed by working with public transport providers, retail and leisure businesses, tourism businesses and homeowners. Participants also suggested that it was important for the council to work with community groups, volunteers and the highways authority.

Suggested Actions

2.4.5. Throughout the survey, a number of suggestions were given for council actions to reduce climate change. These are summarised by theme in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Suggested actions for the council to implement in response to climate change.

Theme	Suggestions
Planning	- Restrict development on green spaces to protect these areas as a priority; - Restrict developers from felling existing trees and hedgerows; - Stipulate that all new houses should have solar panels built in as part of the development; - Use and encourage Green Design principles in new buildings; - Repurpose existing buildings or dated houses to create more homes for people, rather than building anew. - Enforcement to ensure developers carry out planning conditions.
Energy	- Invest in and support renewable energy locally, as a potential job creator; - Improve energy efficiency of buildings; - Encourage householders and businesses to use renewable energy suppliers.
Travel	- Improve safety measures for pedestrians, such as more crossing points on busier roads, to encourage more active travel; - Provide more safe cycle lanes and off-road cycle routes to encourage cycling, such as converting old railway lines to bridleways, or temporary road closures; - Provide secure cycle parking; - Encourage the continuation of online working to reduce vehicle use, including online shopping and home deliveries among businesses; - Provide more convenient charging points for electric vehicles; - Introduce car share incentives; - Introduce a policy not to idle vehicles when stopped; - Encourage the use of local based suppliers for businesses to reduce air miles on products brought in and sold in Wyre; - Encourage businesses to introduce safe cycle storage, changing facilities or car sharing schemes for employees. - Encourage electric vehicles for 'final mile' business deliveries and promote efficient driving, rather than harsh acceleration.

Theme	Suggestions
Waste	- Install more recycling bins in public places to encourage recycling when out and about; - Introduce more recycling options, including food waste; - Collect recycling more than once a month to avoid overflow going into general waste; - Set up or support a reusable nappy scheme; - Organise tours of recycling plants to educate on what can be recycled; - Encourage businesses to use less plastic packaging and develop using recycled materials, with market days to sell products and online advertisements; - Encourage manufacturing businesses to use recycled materials, utilising nearby recycling plants; - Offer businesses free or heavily discounted recycling services; - Set up local initiatives such as Repair Cafés or Care and Repair, to repair goods and help local people; - Provide more information on what can be recycled.
Environment	- Plant and maintain more wild spaces to encourage wildlife, introduce trail walks, carry out surveys with the public to count species in the area; - Run more tree planting schemes which people can volunteer in; - Stop mowing road verges and wildflowers; - Offer residents and communities trees to plant in their gardens and local areas; - Fine people who litter our beaches and green spaces; - Follow up environmental complaints as priorities.
Engagement	- Focus on educating people on the impact of climate change; - Educate people about simple, positive changes they can make to reduce climate change, which does not necessarily mean giving up many activities they enjoy; - Use a co-benefits approach to explain the benefits of a cleaner world, such as better health; - Work with organisations, businesses and community groups to find out their concerns and ensure the action plan is understood; - Provide information via localised information roadshows, and officers to visit and advise residents and businesses on actions they can take, such as how install green technology in homes; - Set up citizen juries/assemblies to engage residents and feed into the Climate Change Action Plan.

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Theme	- Suggestions
Businesses	- Encourage all businesses and organisations to have plans for reducing their impact on climate change, and ensure this is integral in all strategies rather than a tick box exercise; - Encourage businesses to review procurement policies to ensure local supply whenever possible; - Education and enforcement of standards for businesses.
Funding	- Offer financial help or grants to encourage sustainable projects, such as renewable energy generation; - Offer financial support for smaller businesses to make improvements; - Lobby to reduce the costs of the most helpful initiatives, such as electric cars, to help working families make changes.
Council Operations	- Make service vehicles greener; - Ensure everything is recycled; - Look at procurement policies to ensure local supply where possible; - Reconsider setting a challenging net zero target date from 2050 to 2030, monitoring against this and adjusting the action plan to ensure it's not missed; - Ensure the council is leading the way as an example of good practice.

3.   Summary and Implications

3.1.   Knowledge and Trust

3.1.1.   Overall, knowledge on the subject was moderately broad, with limited scepticism about the causes of climate change. Whilst this is likely to be due to the nature of individuals choosing to respond to the survey, it suggests there is already general knowledge on the topic of climate change, which can be built upon with campaigns to raise awareness and understanding.

3.1.2.   Most people placed their trust in scientists and environmental organisations concerning climate change. However, information from family and friends was also ranked fairly high, which suggests that distributing information via a range of methods, and increasing conversations on climate change locally is likely to encourage more people to engage in the topic and take action. This could be achieved via various methods as suggested in Table 1, including localised information roadshows, citizen assemblies, and activities with community groups and organisations.

3.1.3.   As respondents were shown to have limited trust in energy suppliers, the suggestion for information roadshows and officers to provide advice on how to make changes in their homes could encourage individual action, as councils are a more influential and trusted source of advice and guidance.

3.2.   Impact of Climate Change

3.2.1.   Respondents showed greater concern for the impacts of climate change on other parts of the world and Britain as a whole, with less concern for impacts locally. This is likely to be due to media portrayal of climate change as a distant threat, relating to issues such as melting ice caps and polar bears, which is largely unrelated to day-to-day life.

3.2.2.   Information campaigns should therefore focus on impacts of climate change locally, rather than globally, in order to raise awareness of this as a local issue that requires collective action. For Wyre, this mostly concerns flooding and increased extreme weather events. Any imagery should seek to avoid 'distant' threats of climate change, and engage residents on local risks they can relate to.

3.3.   Individual Actions

Travel

3.3.1.   When considering individual changes to travelling to reduce impact upon the environment, respondents were most likely to increase walking and cycling. This was reiterated in suggestions throughout the survey, which included improving safety measures for pedestrians, more off-road cycle routes and secure cycle parking. As a district level authority, Wyre would need to work with Lancashire County Council to explore and encourage changes to the highway. Addressing public transport concerns for rural residents would also require partnership with the highways authority.

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3.3.2. Respondents identified a number of barriers to the uptake of electric cars, including expense, lack of off-street parking for charging, and environmental concerns. The council is currently working to install additional charging points on council-owned car parks, which will increase access for residents without driveways. Parish councils are also being encouraged to look into opportunities to increase chargepoints across the borough.

Other Actions

3.3.3. Respondents are already carrying out a number of positive behaviours, which is likely due to the nature of those taking part in the survey. However, this highlights areas to target for information campaigns, including encouraging residents to eat more vegetarian/vegan food, buying less or second-hand furniture, appliances and clothes. This is particularly important as both diet and the consumption of goods and services account for roughly half of an average household's carbon footprint.

3.3.4. Campaigns should seek to address perceptions of increased cost for making changes, the dislike of buying second-hand items and unwillingness to reduce meat consumption. This could include introducing initiatives such as Repair Cafés to encourage reuse of goods, community growing and cooking classes, and sharing meat-free meal ideas.

3.3.5. Additionally, respondents suggested that they would consider actions such as major home-energy efficiency improvements and switching to a renewable energy provider. Providing information and impartial advice on how to achieve these changes would therefore be beneficial to residents.

Motivation

3.3.6. The main motivations for respondents changing their behaviours were the consideration of future generations, health and saving money. It is key to focus on these motivations in order to engage residents to make changes, as these are generally more relatable than the idea of 'reducing climate change'. For example, highlighting the co-benefits of changes, such as improved health, air quality, safety and money saving when choosing to walk/cycle over driving, would be more tangible and desirable for residents than considering the impact on the climate.

Ability to Change

3.3.7. It is encouraging that most respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they were able to make individual changes to reduce climate change. However, it is important to address the perceived barriers, including cost and concern that their individual contribution would have no effect. This would involve highlighting good examples of individuals, communities and businesses making changes, encouraging others to follow suit. This includes promoting actions the council are taking, leading by example.

3.3.8. As it is widely recognised that changes are needed across all levels of society, it is important to use the council's position to lobby the government to make significant changes, as well as enabling individuals and businesses to do the same.

3.4. Council Actions

Support for Changes

3.4.1. It was widely supported that the council should introduce measures that encourage people to adopt environmentally friendly behaviour, as opposed to leaving it to individuals and businesses to adapt their own behaviour. This suggests the community would welcome more action by the council locally.

3.4.2. A wide range of council actions were strongly supported by respondents, including setting tougher environmental standards for new developments, planting more trees and plants, introducing more recycling options, and supporting renewable energy generation. Most of these actions are already within the Climate Change Action Plan, such as the commitment to plant 25,000 trees by 2025, although others may require further exploration prior to implementation.

3.4.3. There was also strong support for all suggested initiatives the council can take to support the community, such as supporting local food production, which the council should investigate further.

3.4.4. Whilst the council should seek to work with all sectors and groups in the community to achieve net zero, respondents indicated that the construction industry and manufacturers were most important. This aligns with the borough's carbon footprint analysis, in which the industry and commercial sector contributes approximately 39% of emissions, and is therefore a key priority for engagement.

Suggested Actions

3.4.5. All suggested actions for the council to take to reduce climate change were collated by theme in Table 1, which will be evaluated and progressed where possible. Whilst not all actions are achievable solely at a district level, such as planning policy, recycling options and changes to the highway, some may be possible by working jointly with businesses, organisations, neighbouring councils and Lancashire County Council. The suggestions also offer an insight into the key issues the public are concerned about, particularly regarding planning and protecting Wyre's green spaces.

3.4.6. The council are already carrying out a number of actions, particularly those concerning council operations such as making service vehicles greener, or reviewing procurement policies. Some actions are also listed on the Climate Change Action Plan, such as increasing access to charging points, exploring ways to improve active travel, and engaging with community groups and local businesses. However, these suggestions provide a useful starting point from which to begin engaging these groups, as well as an understanding of people's main motivations and perceptions around climate change.