

## Climate and Ecology Sub-Committee

### A Brief Note on the :

- (1) Carbon and Co-benefits Decision Support Tool
- (2) Centre for Climate Change and Transformation (CAST)
- (3) Latest CAST Research Report

### Carbon and Co-benefits Decision Support Tool

Many local authorities have recently adopted ambitious decarbonisation targets to help combat climate change. Achieving these targets will be challenging: they must be integrated into many areas of responsibility – housing, mobility, economy, waste and more; and may have implications for other goals and obligations in the areas of equality and inclusion.

The Carbon and Co-benefits Decision Support Tool is a free, Excel-based tool that can be completed by local authority officers. It supports senior decision-makers to take a holistic approach to decision-making, by providing them with a clear and concise summary of how projects and policies impact across a range of strategically important areas including climate and environment, equality and inclusion, health, economy, housing and mobility.

The on-line site also has a Handbook to support use of the Tool, together with recordings of a webinar and training videos.

### The Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformation (CAST)

The Carbon and Co-Benefits Support Tool is produced by The Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformation (CAST) <https://cast.ac.uk>. The Centre is a global hub for understanding the systemic and society-wide transformations that are required to address climate change. It is housed at the University of Bath but is a partnership between University of Bath, Cardiff University, University of Manchester, University of York, University of East Anglia and Oxford-based charity Climate Outreach. It is funded by the UK government Economic and Social Research Council(ESRC).

### Latest CAST Research Report

A **CAST report (March 2023)** highlights the importance of putting people at the heart of climate change action and reveals how policymakers and practitioners can better engage people with climate initiatives.

**Most people in the UK want climate action.** We are aware of the urgent need to tackle climate change and we're willing to make sustainable choices. We want to be part of the solution. But changing habits and lifestyles can be difficult. And it often seems that politicians and businesses aren't doing their part.

**One thing is clear: individual behaviours and new technologies alone will not get us to where we need to be.** We need systemic, society-wide change, in the form of fair climate policies and strong leadership, that puts people at the centre of climate action.

That's the conclusion of CAST's latest report, '[Catalysts of Change: People at the Heart of Climate Transformations](#)'. Drawing on five years of CAST research conducted in collaboration with policymakers, local authorities, charities, businesses and community groups, the report synthesises key learnings and sheds light on how we can achieve the social changes needed to tackle climate change.

The report provides useful insights and recommendations for policymakers and practitioners working towards emissions reductions and net zero targets.

The main takeaway – We need to see people as agents of change

Our new [CAST report](#) is clear: people are essential in the fight against climate change. We will not achieve rapid emissions reductions without the support and cooperation of individuals across diverse contexts and roles.

The good news is most people are already on board. In fact, concern for climate change has remained high, [despite Covid-19 and the cost-of-living crisis](#). There is widespread [support for climate initiatives](#). Now we need to leverage that support into action.

How do we do that? Through [people-centred climate policies](#). The evidence shows that government policies are the most important factor driving and/or inhibiting social transformations – broad, deep and rapid changes to society towards low-carbon living. Policies that consider the needs, attitudes and values of individuals, in all their diversity, are more successful and [reduce backlash](#).

CAST's [research](#) emphasises that climate policies should be fair and accessible, enable freedom of choice, deliver non-environmental benefits and consider people's existing priorities. Climate policies should be developed through [diverse public engagement](#) and implemented across multiple sectors, contexts and scales.

Additionally, Governments must deliver strong leadership – by providing a clear climate strategy and proper resources, and by operating in line with their net zero ambitions.

## *Key Message 1 – People*

The first key message from CAST's initial phase of research is that we must “**put people at the heart of climate action**”. Building a more sustainable society requires individuals to make lifestyle changes and adopt new technologies and systems. Therefore, public buy-in and cooperation are critical. This is especially true in hard-to-decarbonise areas such as food, transport, material consumption and heating/cooling.

Engaging with a diverse range of stakeholders through public discussions, pilot projects and existing grassroots initiatives can accelerate rapid and fair change.

## *Key Message 2 – Support*

The key takeaway is that there is “**conditional public support for decisive action on climate change**”. Support is stronger for climate action that is fair (e.g. frequent flyer tax), retains freedom of choice (e.g. incentives for rail travel, rather than bans on flying), delivers non-environmental co-benefits (e.g. reducing pollution to improve health), and has proper government support (e.g. funding to upgrade home heating).

However, a successful transformation to a socially acceptable, low-carbon future can only happen if we take account of needs and desires at the local, as well as national, level.

We argue that the Government now needs to implement an ambitious public engagement programme to begin an ongoing public conversation about our future low-carbon lifestyles and bring people into the heart of climate decision making.”

### *Key Message 3 – Inclusion*

Another important insight asserts that **“transformative change should embrace diverse perspectives and break down systemic barriers”**. In other words, climate policy should consider how differences and inequalities affect people’s abilities to live sustainably.

Low-carbon choices should be practical, convenient, cheap and socially acceptable. Initiatives should connect with things people already care about (e.g. being healthy, looking after family) and coincide with moments at which people are particularly open to change (e.g. when moving house or having a child).

“For example, our work with a community-led initiative showed us how transport choices fit with everyday life. Residents were interested in reducing car use, but to effectively encourage active travel, they needed policy support and action from local authorities so that they can have safe cycle lanes and cheap public transportation options.

“It is important to understand that what is possible and convenient varies, because our social, cultural, and material contexts shape our everyday practices. Policies and programmes that encourage lifestyle changes must consider these contexts and differences; otherwise, there is a risk of exacerbating inequalities where low carbon options are only afforded to a few.”

### *Key Message 4 – Collaboration*

CAST’s report underscores that **“action across all levels of society and in all sectors is needed to drive impactful societal change”**. People can contribute to climate action through various roles – for example, as citizens, consumers, parents, employees and community leaders. Climate initiatives should tap into these different identities and enable collaboration between change makers across areas and scales.

### *Key Message 5 – Leadership*

Finally, CAST calls for **“clear leadership at all levels”** to shape the frameworks we need for system change. Governments must provide clear and effective goals, plans, information and resources to drive action, build trust, legitimise change and foster collective engagement.

Interviews revealed that [most MPs recognise the need for climate action](#). However, they are held back by narratives of delay (e.g. “climate action is too expensive”) in political and media circles. CAST highlights the important role that individuals, charities and academics can play in urging policymakers to act in line with the robust scientific evidence on climate change.