



PRESS RELEASE
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Support for renewables and green jobs higher in rural areas

- Rural citizens more engaged on climate issues than city-dwellers.
- 75% of rural citizens think that cutting carbon emissions is an opportunity to create new jobs in the UK.
- Rural dwellers are more likely to take personal actions across a range of issues, from buying local to insulating their homes and holidaying locally.

Tuesday 9th February 2021 – Rural communities are more receptive to renewable energy generation than their urban counterparts, according to research commissioned by the UK100's Countryside Climate Network (CCN).

The research, entitled '*Equipping rural councillors to engage effectively on climate change*', was commissioned by the CCN and Purpose Climate Lab. Seeking to better understand rural attitudes towards climate solutions, it dispels the traditional notion of rural communities as resistant to change.

The research reveals that 75% of rural citizens think that cutting carbon emissions is an opportunity to create new jobs in the UK. Moreover, in communities with high employment in the oil and gas sectors, people do not want more of the same.

Polly Billington, Director of UK100 said:

"This research underscores the huge opportunity there is for levelling up across the UK in an inclusive green recovery and transition to Net Zero.

"This desperately needed insight into rural perspectives is something that has been missing for so long and the UK100's Countryside Climate Network is shining a light on this.

"We look forward to using this research with our rural members to help inform their climate action and continue to urge the UK government to provide more powers and investment to help them achieve their ambitions."

"It demonstrates that without significant government investment in a decarbonised infrastructure which provides viable alternatives to the private car, the perspectives highlighted in this research are unlikely to change. The CCN stands ready to work with the Government to address these challenges."

Key findings from the research include:

- 75% of rural citizens think that cutting carbon emissions is an opportunity to create new jobs in the UK.
- Rural citizens are more likely than urban citizens (55% vs 51%) to reduce electricity use at home and switch to a renewable energy provider.
- 87% of rural citizens are concerned about the impacts of climate change.

The research, conducted by Climate Outreach, also raised some concerns amongst the rural population with regards to transport. 45% of rural citizens were worried about the prospect of not being able to drive their petrol or diesel car and were also found to be less likely to walk and cycle than those living in better connected cities.

Steve Count, Leader of Cambridgeshire County Council and Chair of the Countryside Climate Network said:

"It is encouraging to see that rural communities are more receptive to renewable energy generation than urban areas. This accurately reflects our commitment in Cambridgeshire - a predominantly rural county - to reduce our carbon footprint and become carbon neutral by 2050. Although we have quite rightly been recognised at a national and international level for our efforts, it is vital that organisations such as UK100 work closely with urban areas to encourage them to follow our lead."

Over 80% of rural citizens are concerned about climate-related issues, including the natural environment (92%), plastic pollution (91%), deforestation (93%) and air pollution (90%).

In addition, 85% agree that "too much in our country is decided in London," which highlights the important role that rural councils can play in the shift to net zero.

The CCN is a group made up of 26 local authority leaders from across England. Its membership accounts for over 40% of England's land area.

The research was commissioned by the Purpose Climate Lab and UK100's CCN, to better understand how to communicate climate change with their communities as they implement climate action plans that have been developed over the past few years.

Jamie Clarke, Executive Director of Climate Outreach said:

"This research also shows for the first time that rural dwellers are more likely to take personal actions across a range of issues, from buying local to insulating their homes and holidaying locally.

"Enabling the guardians of our countryside to act further and faster on climate change will require local councils and national governments to engage with these citizens to create a climate safe future that is meaningful and relevant for them not just city dwellers."

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For more information go to: <https://www.uk100.org/projects/countryside-climate-network>

About UK100

UK100 is the only network for UK locally elected leaders who have pledged to play their part in the global effort to avoid the worst impacts of climate change by switching to 100% clean energy by 2050. The most ambitious - our Net Zero Local Leadership Club - are doing everything within their power to get their communities to Net Zero as soon as possible, and by 2045 at the latest.

To accelerate the transition to this Net Zero society, UK100 brings together local authorities, from cities to the countryside, to share knowledge, collaborate, and petition the UK government with their collective power. They are working together to create flourishing communities, seizing the opportunities of technology to create jobs and establishing a nationwide project of renewal, focussed on local needs and ambitions. UK100 works closely with elected representatives and policy experts to develop solutions to the challenges all our local leaders face, and to build public support for the transition.

About Climate Outreach

Climate Outreach is a team of social scientists and communication specialists passionate about building a social mandate for climate action. Through our research, practical guides and consultancy services, we help organisations communicate about climate change in ways that resonate with the values of their audiences. We have 15 years of experience widening and deepening public engagement with climate change, working with a wide range of international partners including government, international bodies, academic institutions, charities, businesses, faith organisations and youth groups.

About Purpose

Purpose is a social impact agency that collaborates with the world's leading nonprofits, philanthropies, and companies — helping them put purpose and participation at the core of what they do. We build and support movements to advance the fight for an open, just, and habitable world.

We use public mobilization and storytelling to help the leading organizations, activists, businesses, and philanthropies engaged in this fight, and we create campaigning labs and new initiatives that can shift policies and change public narratives when it matters most.