

Net Zero Thurso Community Consultation Report 2022



Thurso
Community Development Trust

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Contents

| | |
|------------------------------|----|
| Background | 1 |
| Community Consultation | 2 |
| Methods | 2 |
| Key Findings | 3 |
| Online Survey Results..... | 4 |
| Open Day Results | 10 |
| Next Steps..... | 11 |

Background

Thurso Community Development Trust formed in early 2018 with the objective of sustainable community led development for Thurso based on identified community needs and aspirations.

Their Vision is:

“that all members and sections of Thurso community are encouraged to think big and contribute to active involvement in local decision making. An ambitious, creative, healthy, active, empowered and environmentally sustainable place rooted in kindness with a thriving local economy and community facilities which create an extraordinary and secure legacy for future generations”

Climate action has been embedded into the work of the Trust as the organisation fulfils the role of a community anchor carrying out

sustainable community led development. Over the past 18 months the Thurso Community Development Trust has consulted extensively with the Thurso community on how they would like to address climate change. This has led to the development of several local level projects which aim to educate, support adaptation, and reduce local carbon emissions, whilst enhancing the natural environment.

Projects to date include:



Thurso Grows

The Thurso Grows project, which educates people about climate change through local food growing and food waste reduction.



The Love Local campaign, which encourages town center recovery and regeneration post-Covid-19, by encouraging, supporting, and advertising the use of local businesses and products.



The Socially Growing social enterprise is a combination of a zero-waste refill shop and greenhouses which grow vegetables and plug plants.

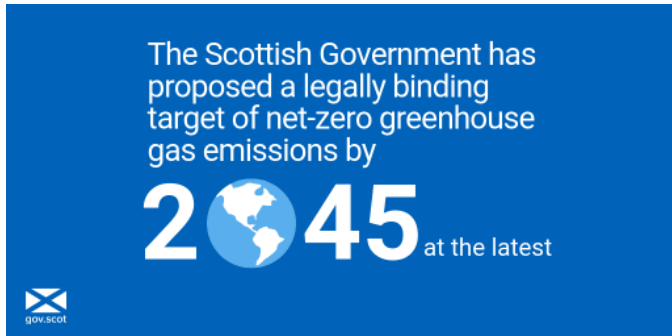
Sharing Shed



The Sharing Shed, which was established to help minimise waste by repurposing food that would often be thrown away or would not be bought.

Community Consultation

To continue their climate change mitigation and Covid-19 recovery journey, the Trust decided to scope community interest in transitioning Thurso to a Net Zero town.



In 2020, to address the impacts of climate change, The Scottish Government set a target of reaching Net Zero by 2045. The Trust agrees with the Scottish Government that climate change is a human rights issue and recognises that in planning to reduce emissions, nobody should be left behind. Therefore, the Trust is putting its community at the heart of their climate action approach to meeting Net Zero. To start this journey, the Trust began by asking the community for their views on a Net Zero Thurso.

Methods

To engage the community on their thoughts of Net Zero, Thurso Community Development Trust arranged a community consultation. This consisted of three methods for the collection of results:

- ❖ An online survey
- ❖ A paper survey, which was featured in a special issue of the Thurso Community Magazine
- ❖ In person community engagement at an open day



The surveys were conducted between November and December 2021, and in total, 164 survey responses were received (112 online, and 52 paper surveys). A further 30 people were

engaged with in person. A variety of open and closed ended questions were asked, with the initial questions asking about people's views on the environmental impacts of climate change in the Thurso area; and the latter asking more specific questions about the kinds of climate action people want to see implemented



Key Findings

Most respondents have noticed a change in Thurso's weather since they were a child

Most respondents appear to have some level of concern about climate change

97.4% of the respondents support putting Thurso on the map as the first Net Zero Town in Scotland

70% of respondents are trying to do more in terms of lifestyle changes to reduce their impact on the climate; with 24% already doing all they can

Most respondents' homes are heated with fossil fuels

3 in every 5 respondents have noticed a difference in Thurso and Caithness' environment due to climate change

A strong majority of respondents were in favour of the following actions/projects:

Community recycling & reuse schemes

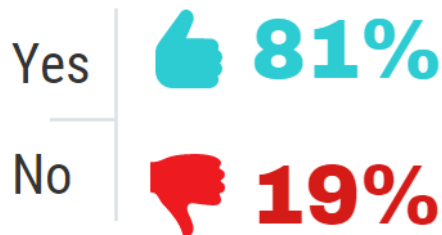
Support to reduce food waste

Ditch the disposables - cups, takeaway containers

Improved local food chain, more local food being grown, produced and reared

Online Survey Results

Question 1: Do you recognize a difference in the weather we have now from when you were a child?



Of 153 valid responses, 81% of respondents have noticed a change in Thurso's weather since they were a child.

The most frequently mentioned weather differences were "Less snow", "Warmer summers", and "Milder, wetter, windier winters".

"Longer winters"
 "Less really cold winters"
 "Less defined seasons"
 "Shorter summers"
 "Milder, wetter, windier winters"
 "Less snow" "More winds"
 "Warmer summers"
 "More flooding" "More rain" "Less sun"
 "More hailstones"
 "More frequent extreme events"
 "More extreme temperatures"



Question 2: Have you noticed a difference in Thurso or Caithness due to climate change?



3 in every 5 people

Of 156 valid responses, 3 in every 5 respondents have noticed a difference in Thurso and Caithness' environment due to climate change.

"Hotter and drier climate"
 "Wetter weather" "Overflowing drains"
"More wildfires"
"Flooding" "Landslides"
"Coastal erosion"
 "Lack of water in the rivers in summer"
 "Low river level in summer"
 "Higher risk of wildfires"

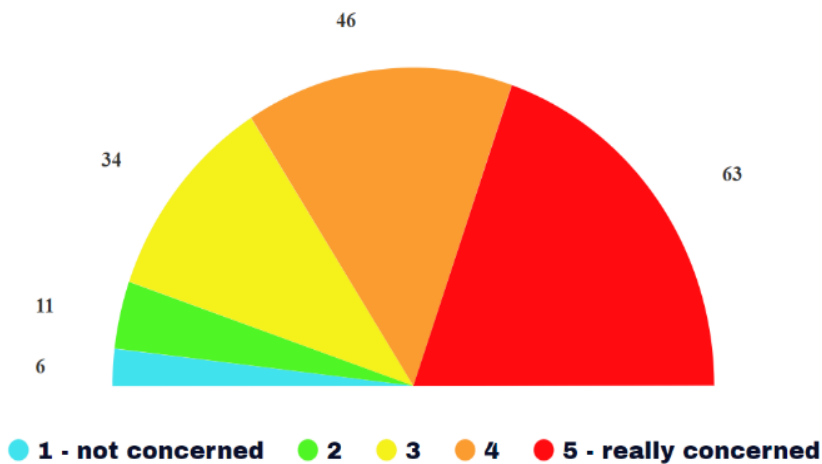


Many people mentioned the coastal erosion at the rear of the coast guard hut in Scrabster.



The most frequently mentioned environmental differences were “Flooding”, “More wildfires”, and “Coastal erosion”.

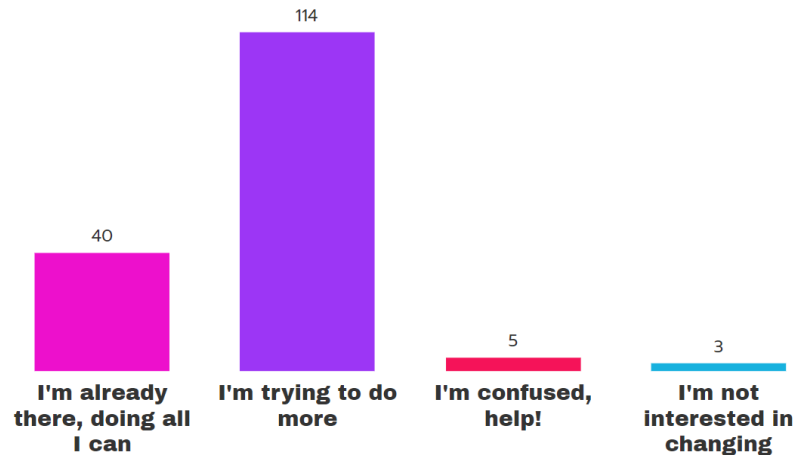
Question 3: On a scale of 1-5 with 1 meaning not concerned at all to 5 being really concerned, how worried are you about the threat of climate change?



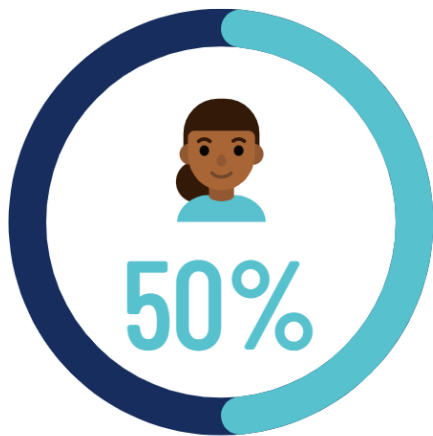
Of 160 valid responses, most respondents appear to have some level of concern about the threat of climate change.

Question 4: Which statement best reflects where you think you and your household are at the moment in taking small changes to protect the climate?

Of 164 valid responses, 70% (114) of respondents are trying to do more to protect the climate, whilst 24% (40) are already there, doing all that they can.

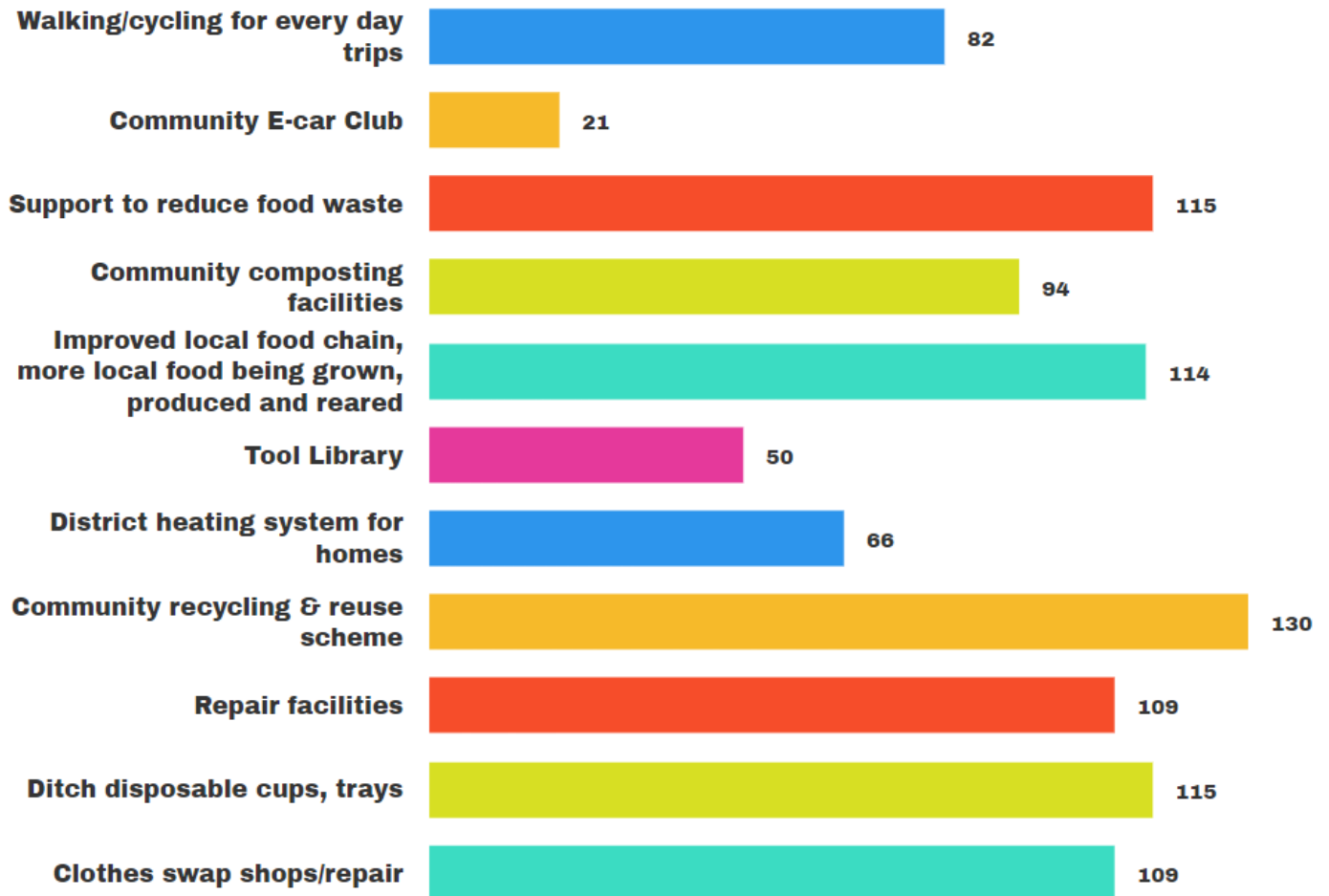


Question 5: Are you aware of your annual carbon footprint?



Of 159 valid responses, half of respondents are aware of their carbon footprint, whilst the other half are not aware of their carbon footprint.

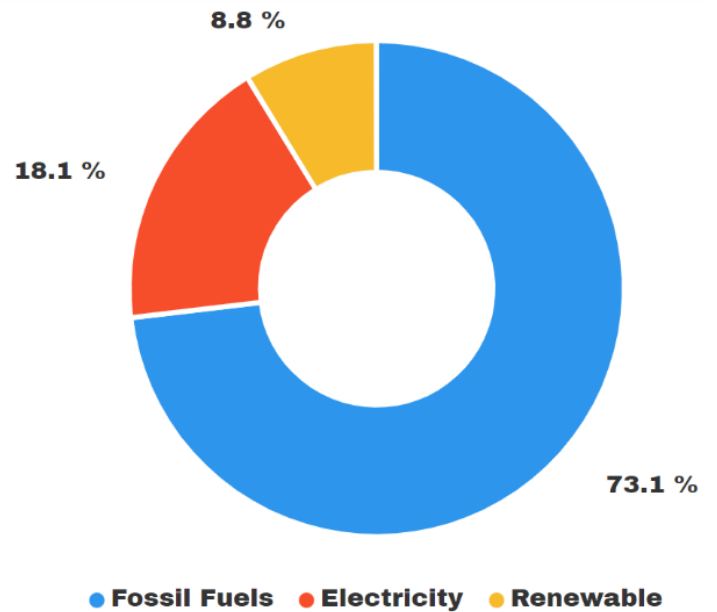
Question 7: Which of the following do you think you would be interested in or could adopt as change?



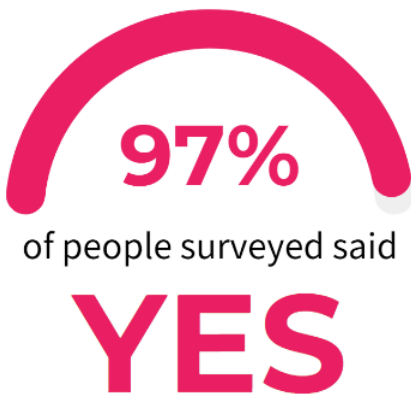
For the transition to Net Zero, respondents would be particularly interested in a community recycling & reuse scheme, support to reduce food waste, an improved local food chain, and in ditching disposable cups, and trays.

Question 8: How do you currently heat your home?

Of 160 valid responses, the majority (73.1%) of respondents' homes are heated using fossil fuels.



Question 9: Do you support us putting ourselves out there to agencies, Scottish Government, anyone who will listen to put Thurso on the map as the first Net Zero Town in Scotland?



Of 154 valid responses, most people support putting Thurso on the map as the first Net Zero Town in Scotland.

Question 10: Do you have anything else to add about Net Zero Thurso?

There were many relevant responses, with an emphasis on local electric buses, more cycle friendly routes, more charging stations for electric vehicles, and to encourage more walking, especially for short distance travel.

"Encourage landlords to use more environmental techniques"

"Digital ticketing system for public transport"

"Lobby to change Scottish laws regarding small wind turbines"

"Better public transport"

"Low carbon community hub"

"We need systemic change"

"Better house insulation"

"Start talking about sustainability"

"More litter bins"

"Planting more trees"

"Comfortable bus waiting stations"

"More walking for short distance travel"

"Electric local buses"

"More cycle friendly routes"

"More charging stations for electric vehicles"

"We need glass recycling bins"

"Gutter maintenance"

"Tree planting"

"Not just offsetting"

"River maintenance"

"Need for local action"

"A community heating system"

"Clear drains to prevent flooding"

"Sustainable heating options are expensive"

"Difficult to change from oil heating"

"A faster train to Inverness to encourage more use"

"More emphasis and publicity for ditch and beach cleans locally"



Open Day Results

During the open day, the community were asked to give their views on what they think would be their ideal “future Thurso”.

The open day provided more specific details of what the community would like their ideal future Thurso to look like. People wished for a greener town and streets, more paths and pavements, more gardens, improvements to and the greening of infrastructure, the promotion of more responsible beach use, better recycling and transport facilities, better land-use, and community energy.

Towns and Streets

"Stop using unnecessary weed killer in the streets"

"More greenery in the High St"

"More trees around Burnside Drive"

"An orchard in the town centre"

"More paths and hedgerows"

"Fruit and nut trees in the town"

"Green infrastructure"

"More nature and wildlife corridors"

"More trees around Lidl, Scrabster Rd"

Infrastructure

"Gardens for the Barchester Pentland View care home"

"Improvements to Ellon footbridge"

"A pavement to connect Thurso Business Park to town"

"Eco gardens for the primary schools"

"A trial pedestrianised street near the town centre"

"Improvements to the area near the harbour"

"A walking path to Murkle"

"Shelters around the main streets for pedestrians"

The Land

"Ensure that areas where dead trees are removed are replanted"

"Use more unused land for growing and nature"



Transport Facilities

- "Extended bus timetables"
- "A bus for Scrabster ferry arrivals"
- "More promotion of public transport"

Recycling Facilities

- "A central location for business soft plastics to be recycled"
- "Signposting to recycling points"
- "Composting facilities for those without a garden"

The Beach

- "Signage with local wildlife information"
- "A bag and litter pick station"
- "Signage to encourage responsible tourism"

Energy

- "Capitalise on nearby renewables developments"
- "Individuals who generate their own electricity should get incentives"
- "Community wind in Scrabster Hill area"
- "Community energy should be pushed"
- "District heating could be piloted"
- "Address fuel poverty"



Next Steps

Thurso Community Development Trust will pursue further community engagement and Net Zero activities with the community soon, and plan to write up a calendar of engagement for the next coming months.

Thurso Community Development Trust would like to say a special thank you to everyone in the community who took the time to complete the survey and come along to the open day.