

Visions for a climate friendly future – Scotland in 2050



Ages: 7+



Time: 1 hour +

Purpose:

To imagine a positive climate future and think about how we can get there.

Youth work outcomes:

Outcome 1: Young people are confident, resilient and optimistic for the future

Outcome 3: Young people create, describe and apply their learning and skills

Outcome 6: Young people express their voice and demonstrate their social commitment

Outcome 7: Young people broaden their perspectives through new experiences and thinking

Sustainable development goals:



Materials:

Art materials, paper for writing, envelopes and stamps

Context:

As climate activists, campaigners, and just people who are worried about the impacts of the climate crisis, we spend a lot of time thinking and talking about the types of futures we don't want to see. We want to stop air pollution, put less plastic in the oceans, halt biodiversity loss, and avoid warming the planet by more than 1.5°C. This kind of thinking is what leads to eco-anxiety, feelings of powerlessness, and doom and gloom. It's easy to just keep thinking of more and more things to be worried or scared about, which makes it hard (especially for young people) to feel hopeful about the future.

What we don't talk about so much is what we would like to see in the future. Many of the solutions to the climate crisis that would reduce emissions or slow down biodiversity loss will also have a hugely positive social impact. Imagine if we were totally self-sufficient with the energy we used, and didn't have to worry about fluctuating oil and gas prices – or if we had access to free, reliable and electric public transport to take us wherever we needed to go with no hassle.

Visualising positive climate futures is a great way for young people to turn their eco-anxiety into optimism and action. It can also be a way to show decision-makers that young people are serious about creating change, and have alternatives in mind which are different to the status quo. Therefore, it can be impactful to send whatever drawings, poems or stories the young people come up with about the future to their political representatives, for example an MP, MSP or a Councillor, with a letter explaining why this future vision is important, and asking what the politician is going to do to make it a reality.

Visions for a climate friendly future – Scotland in 2050

What to do:

First, discuss with the young people what their fears are about the future. It's important not to ignore these or dismiss them as unimportant. After all, the climate crisis is an existential threat that cannot be underestimated, and what young people don't want to see in the future is the foundation from which to think about what they do want to see. You can use tools such as mentimeter, mind maps or sticky notes for this exercise, but don't spend too much time on it, as the main focus of the session should be the young people's visions for a better future.

Now, turn these fears around and ask the young people to imagine what their lives would be like in 2050 if the problems they're worried about didn't exist or had been solved. In their ideal world, what would they be doing every day? What would the world around them look like? Discuss potential solutions to the problems we have today, and how these would work. Don't get bogged down in whether something is practical or feasible, let your imaginations run wild and create a vision where everyone can live a happy and fulfilled life. For inspiration and ideas for solutions, check out [Adaptation Scotland's interactive website](#).

You can guide the discussion by suggesting different sectors of society that might need to run differently in this new world, and asking the young people to discuss how they would organise this. Start at the ideal end point and work backwards, for example if you're discussing food, the young people's ideal vision might be that in 2050, everyone has access to affordable and healthy food that doesn't damage the planet. From there, you can discuss how you would get to this goal, for example through local food sharing networks. Try not to rely too much on technology that doesn't exist yet in these future scenarios, instead focusing on how people came together to solve the climate and ecological crises and create a better world. After all, [we already have all the technology we need to solve the crises](#), we just need to make use of it. Of course, there is still room for some imagination!

When the young people have a good idea in their heads of what they'd like their ideal futures to look like, encourage them to express this either as a story of a day in their life in 2050, a drawing of what their local area will look like, a poem, or any other form of artwork. This will help them to visualise this future and make it seem more real.

When the young people are happy with their stories or artworks, they could use them as a starting point for discussions with friends or family about the future and the climate crisis (see also: Telling Your Climate Story). Another way to use these visions as a way to start productive conversations could be for the young people to send them to their MP, MSP or local councillor. Politicians receive hundreds of emails every day, but not so many hand-written or hand-drawn letters, so the young people's stories or artwork could make a big impression. Make sure to include an explanation of what the vision is and why the young person believes that we need a different future in order to solve the climate crisis. The young people could then ask the politician what they could do in their position to make these visions of the future a reality.