

6. CLIMATE JUSTICE:

RETROFITTED HOMES & BETTER PUBLIC TRANSPORT

*“Our future is in jeopardy because of the current climate crisis, making us feel angry, scared and worried. Our energy, our transport, our housing and the cost of living are all affected. It’s overwhelming. Finding a place to take action when we are sad and angry is what unites us and drives real, solid change. **Nobody is taking responsibility for climate change, so all of us must do it.** It is not solely up to the younger generation, nor the scientists, nor the decision makers. It’s up to all of us to work together!”*

BENIKA, SHRISTI, HAFESA AND SADIHAH
FROM THE YOUTH CLIMATE ADVISORY
PANEL, CITIZENS UK BIRMINGHAM



OUR TRACK RECORD

- 1. Won reduced bus fares for young people in Tyne and Wear**
- 2. Challenged the Mayor of London to upgrade 100,000 fuel poor homes across the city to support people who are struggling to keep warm at home**
- 3. Improved parks and green spaces in Leeds for healthier and greener neighbourhoods**

Campaign overview

The climate crisis is impacting our communities right now, with those already disadvantaged being the most affected. We know that delaying making progress will ultimately make things worse, and cost us more. We want to put the economic security and wellbeing of our communities at the heart of action on the climate, and are seeking green solutions to issues putting pressure on people’s everyday lives.

What are we trying to change?

While the climate crisis can be overwhelming in scale, we want to focus on two issues that make a difference to people’s day-to-day lives.

The first of these is housing. Housing makes up 14 per cent of carbon emissions which is unsurprising given that the UK’s housing is draughty and wastes energy. There is no credible pathway to net zero without upgrading our homes. Too many homes fall far short of basic living standards and are in need of immediate repairs, with damp and mould becoming an underlying issue for some families. And combined with the cost of living crisis and soaring energy prices, housing and the cost of maintaining those homes is pushing more people into poverty - in some areas of the UK over 24 per cent of homes were in fuel poverty in recent years.¹⁸ In

2022, 13.4 per cent of households (3.26 million) were in fuel poverty in England, 24.6 per cent in Scotland in 2019, 14 per cent in Wales in 2021 and 24 per cent in Northern Ireland in 2019)

But it’s not just our homes that are affected. In much of the country, public transport isn’t fit for purpose either: people are late for their jobs because services are unreliable, restrictions on student concession fares can make them unfit for purpose and people prioritise car use because there aren’t good enough alternatives. Private transport is one of the world’s biggest sources of greenhouse gases, with emissions rising year on year, a trend that will not change without significant improvements to public transport infrastructure.



How are people in our communities affected?

Environmental and climate-related issues have long been a focus of local Citizens campaigns up and down the country. This year, more than 200 people took part in a 6-week online training course sharing their experience on what matters for local people and how they have won changes in their context. Seven local climate campaigns have emerged across Tyne and Wear, Leeds, London, Brighton, Greater Manchester, Thames Valley and Birmingham.

We have listened to community leaders across the country to identify the issues putting pressure on local people. Among many climate concerns mentioned, public transport and housing repair and upgrade were raised most frequently.



"I moved into a shared house in Brighton with some friends from university. We soon discovered, however, that the house had real problems with damp and mould. It now covers entire walls and ceiling in my bedroom. The mould completely took over the house despite our best efforts to remove it with bleach. I became really unwell due to the mould's impact on my asthma. I struggled to breathe in my home and it was impacting my education. I couldn't live like that. This whole ordeal hasn't only taken its toll on my physical health; it has had a significant impact on my mental health too. We all deserve a safe place to live and that was stolen from me."

**FRAN, A STUDENT AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX**

Across the country public transport is falling people. In Leeds, buses are unreliable, often late and cancelled and information at stops and via apps is not up to date. This means young people feel vulnerable and are often late for school resulting negative effects on their learning and the whole school day. Some pupils contact their parents or carers to leave work to take them to school when buses don't come. This is bad for the environment and affects work and earnings.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SOLUTIONS WE THINK MIGHT HELP?

- Homes where heating doesn't cost the earth: a massive council and social housing repair and upgrade programme that invests in current council and social housing stock to upgrade it with high-quality retrofits that reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions, with priority given to homes in urgent need of repairs to tackle mould and damp.**
- Affordable, green public transport: we want cities, towns and counties across the UK to have the powers and investment to build integrated, green, locally- responsive transport systems.**

