

RCT Climate Change Engagement Plan (2023 – 25)

Aims

The aim of this plan is to set out how we will engage with residents, schools, businesses, staff and the third sector in considering greener and more sustainable lifestyle choices, whilst raising the profile and increasing awareness about climate change.

This plan will enable the Council to implement new and innovative ways of engagement with our residents, e.g. through events, competitions and campaigns, whilst promoting and encouraging residents to consider their current choices and behaviours in their homes, at work, how they travel etc. and so reduce their carbon footprints'. The plan also ensures that the Council delivers the communication and engagement actions set out in the **Tackling Climate Change Strategy (2022-25)** – [‘Think Climate RCT’](#) across the Council and the County Borough, including

1. Providing clear, simple and practical ways to encourage everyone to play their part to reduce carbon at home, in work and getting about.
2. Listening to and understanding what our residents of all ages are telling us.
3. Inviting and encouraging residents, businesses, staff and their representatives to discuss what the Council can do to help them to reduce their carbon footprint and what they can do for themselves.
4. Working with young people, including through schools and their eco councils, youth groups and Arts projects in ways they can help shape our plans for their future.
5. Working with Community Groups, including Older Persons Advisory Group and those that are seldom heard so that they can contribute to and shape our plans for the future.
6. Developing intergenerational projects that enhance the skills and lives of people in our communities.
7. Providing opportunities for communities to become involved in developing local solutions through Neighbourhood Networks.

In doing so we will increase the number of opportunities for residents and communities to be involved in the ongoing climate change conversation.

Introduction

We are making progress to tackle climate change, but we all need to do more, and faster, if we are to reduce our carbon emissions, help to reverse the damage to our planet and adapt to the changes already happening, both within the Council and within the County Borough. The United Nations have declared that this must be a decade of action¹ if we are to reverse the last thirty years of damage and keep global temperatures from reaching the irreversible 1.5°C. Although higher industrial sector reductions and public sector action will both help contribute to the achievement of this target, everyone in Wales must also do their part. To play our part in this national climate emergency, Welsh Government have developed a [Strategy for Public Engagement & Action \(2022-26\)](#) and a [Climate Change Engagement Approach \(2022–26\)](#).

¹ UN, December 2019; [Decade of Action](#), ² CCC, December 2020; [Advice Report: The Path to a Net Zero Wales](#)

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Within both the framework and the strategy Welsh Government highlight the need for government, public bodies, businesses and communities across Wales to work together to tackle the shared challenges of the climate and nature emergency in a **Team Wales** approach.

To contribute to the 'Team Wales' approach, we have set out how we plan to involve, engage, and communicate with our stakeholders within a **Climate Change Engagement Plan (2023-25)**. The plan outlines our approach to achieving the targets set out in the **Tackling Climate Change Strategy (2022-25)** – ['Think Climate RCT'](#). All feedback will be used to help the Council understand stakeholder needs and behaviours and help target areas of concern e.g. food scarcity, flood risk cost of green energy, travel options etc. In addition, the approach outlined in the plans focuses on awareness raising and communicating key messages.

During the development of this plan, the country has been faced with an economic crisis, which creates financial challenges for a vast number of households including here in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The plan recognises the impact of these challenges and working with stakeholders, strives to create a framework that helps our residents and communities to overcome the financial and other barriers that they tell us are stopping them from changing to 'greener' habits.

We plan to combine the need to address action needed to respond to climate change and concerns about cost-of-living through the new 'Think Climate RCT' campaign to be launched in March 2023; spreading climate awareness particularly focusing on using less, wasting less and saving more – **'Use Less. Waste Less. Save More'**. As a part of this new campaign the Council will be renewing its climate change web presence on the Council's website and developing a new 'Let's Talk Climate Change' project which are set out in more detail in the plan below.

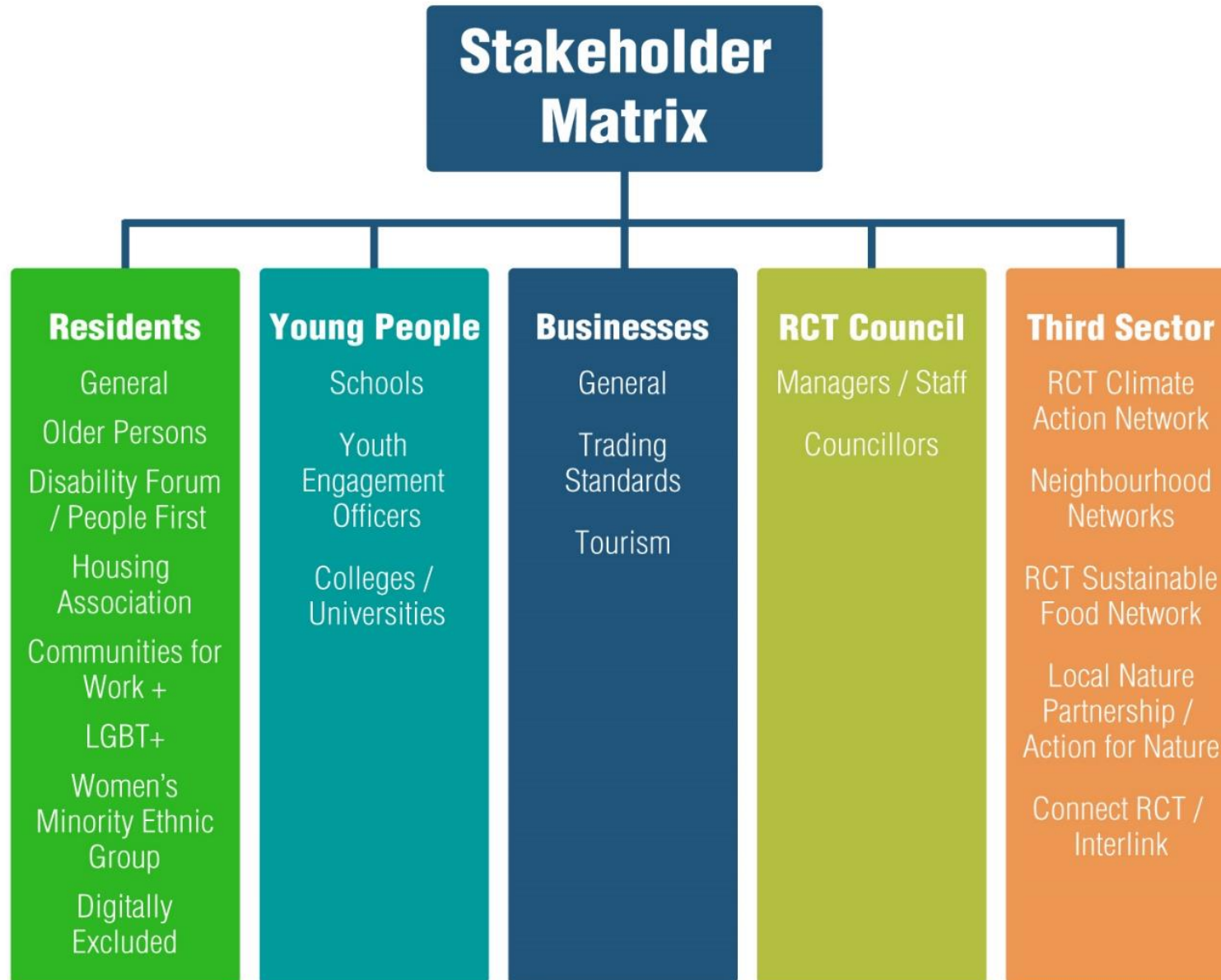
Our core messages are

- adopting greener or more sustainable behaviours which can also help to save money,
- we don't have to be perfect when it comes to reducing carbon, by changing one thing it could make a big difference for the planet and in our pocket.

Although progress is being made and there many people implementing more sustainable ways of living, further action is needed across all areas of society. Studies suggest that it will not be possible to achieve a Net Zero target by only pursuing an approach that focusses on industry and the public sector. 60% of the changes needed to achieve Net Zero will require some element of societal behavioural change². This supports to the need for Climate Change Engagement with residents and communities if we are to reach our climate change targets as a Council, across the County Borough and Wales.

To ensure that the Council takes a holistic approach to County Borough-wide engagement, the engagement matrix below aligns with the Council's [Involvement and Engagement Framework](#), and identifies the key stakeholder groups and Sub groups within the County Borough. It is vital that those who are seldom heard have a voice in tackling climate change as well as our key stakeholders who can support societal behaviour change. Whilst some stakeholders may not be accounted for in the matrix at this stage, this will be further developed and the work progresses.

¹ UN, December 2019; [Decade of Action](#), ² CCC, December 2020; [Advice Report: The Path to a Net Zero Wales](#)



1. Residents including our ‘seldom heard’ groups

As set out in the Council’s Involvement Strategy [Involvement and Engagement Framework](#), the Council is committed to involving and engaging with residents, communities and other stakeholders as part of our everyday business. The Council has a good track record of engaging with residents and the information collected is valuable, as it helps to understand what residents think, where the Council needs to act and how to improve Council services. The following subgroups aim to include the majority of our residents, including those who are seldom heard via a range of selected networks and groups. The Council recognises that this categorisation may not account for all stakeholders in the County Borough.

Subgroup	Method(s) of Engagement	Comms	Responsible Officer
General	<p>Let’s Talk RCT: Range of engagement tools available inc., online surveys, maps, ideas, stories etc. ‘Let’s Talk Climate Change’ to be updated as a live project to inform the Climate Change action/plans.</p> <p>Specific projects as requested by Cabinet and Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee e.g. ‘Let’s Talk Trees’, ‘Let’s Talk EV’. Must ensure feedback and reports are made available, so that people can see what was done as a result of the engagement.</p> <p>Face to Face Events: Face to face engagement for all strategic/high level projects. Aim to include face to face events aligned with each ‘Let’s Talk’ projects, where resources allow. Utilise existing events such as budget consultation to engage. Set engagement tools/graphics to be used at these events.</p>	<p>Develop a ‘Calendar of Events’ linking to national, global and local climate change awareness days and campaigns to promote projects/work items for example carbon monitoring/ reduction projects, ‘Let’s Talk’ site launches, events occurring across RCT.</p> <p>Use social media channels i.e. press releases, Twitter and Facebook for promotion and Call to Action (CTA)</p> <p>Develop more content via engagement to be included on websites i.e. blogs, videos, photos, case studies etc.</p>	Chris Davies working with responsible Officers

1. Residents including our ‘seldom heard’ groups			
Older Persons	<p>Meetings of Forums: All activity to be promoted across the wider Older Person Forums via the Older Persons Advisory Groups (OPAG).</p> <p>Digital/Standard Materials/Survey: Spread climate awareness by promoting Think Climate campaign. OPAG has 5 Fora across RCT with up to 500 members who are willing to engage and receive guest speakers.</p> <p>Intergenerational Activities: When possible, involve children and young people with older persons via OPAG to work together on projects utilising the different skills between the generations.</p>	<p>All content generated i.e. videos, photos, case studies and further information to be captured on website.</p> <p>Communicate/demonstrate how feedback is used via social media channels, blogs, website info.</p> <p>Promote all intergenerational activity via social media channels.</p>	Chris Davies
Disability Forum/People First	<p>Meetings of Forums: Consider other ways of contacting disabled service users for relevant projects, e.g. EV rollout and impact on disabled car drivers.</p> <p>Digital/Standard Materials/Survey: Spread climate awareness by promoting Think Climate campaign in plain English formats.</p>	<p>Communicate activity with the group in accessible formats.</p> <p>All content generated i.e. videos, photos, case studies and further information to be captured on website.</p>	Melanie Warburton
Housing Association – Trivallis	<p>Digital/Standard Materials/Survey: There are 30,000 people living in 14,000 social</p>	<p>A similar approach will be taken for what we identify as our seldom heard residents.</p>	Daniel Evans/ Keryl Lanfear

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	<p>housing homes in RCT. Trivallis manages 70% of these homes.</p> <p>Through using this existing network, we can engage with people to better understand our residents’ thoughts and attitudes around climate change.</p> <p>Promotion of the ‘Think Climate’ campaign via these networks provide access to money and carbon saving tips.</p>	<p>By taking a consistent and mirrored approach via our comms and engagement, we can ensure that feedback is collated accurately and feedback to residents is communicated clearly.</p> <p>All content generated i.e. videos, photos, case studies and further information to be captured on website.</p>	
Communities for Work Plus	<p>Digital/Standard Materials/Survey: ‘Communities for Work Plus’ provides a working/mentoring programme to get people back in the workplace.</p> <p>This is another network that would enable engagement with those who may not be engaged with Council/Climate activity.</p> <p>Promotion of the ‘Think Climate’ campaign via these networks will aid in money and carbon saving tips.</p>	Communicate/demonstrate how feedback is used via social media channels, blogs, website info, reports, infographics.	Andy Phillips
Women’s Minority Ethnic Group	<p>Digital/Standard Materials/Survey: Primarily a group where Black, Asian & Minority ethnic women meet to discuss various issues.</p> <p>Using this network, we can engage those who may feel seldom heard to better understand our</p>		Ginnie Davies /Melanie Warburton

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1. Residents including our ‘seldom heard’ groups			
	<p>residents’ thoughts and attitudes around climate change.</p> <p>Promotion of the ‘Think Climate’ campaign via these networks will aid in spreading climate awareness.</p>		
LGBT+	<p>Digital/Standard Materials/Survey: Opportunities through our various staff networks as well as ‘Project Unity’ to involve our LGBT+ residents directly into the climate conversation.</p> <p>Through using these networks we can engage those who may feel seldom heard to better understand our residents’ thoughts and attitudes around climate change.</p> <p>Promotion of the ‘Think Climate’ campaign via these networks will aid in spreading climate awareness.</p>		Ginnie Davies/Melanie Warburton
Digitally Excluded	<p>Standard Materials/Survey: The Council provides a number of alternatives to online engagement such as written communication, telephone/contact centre and freepost to ensure that hard to reach people, those having reduced or no access to the internet and those who prefer to engage through traditional methods have opportunities to contribute their views and opinions.</p>		Chris Davies

2. Young People			
<p>The Tackling Climate Change Strategy (2022-25) – ‘Think Climate RCT’ is clear in that the involvement of younger people will be key to creating, developing and delivering our plans over the long term and we will be continuing to progress this involvement through schools, school eco councils and our Youth Fora. A suite of age-appropriate climate related activities will include discussion about how we can implement and support sustainable behaviours and how we can help inform and prepare young people to about decisions about their futures in the emerging green sectors.</p>			
Subgroup	Method(s) of Engagement	Comms	Responsible Officer
Schools	<p>Surveys: ‘Your Voice’ Survey and Good Practice Questionnaire to establish baseline across RCT schools and further understand the attitudes of young people towards climate change as well as raising climate awareness.</p> <p>Corporate Communications: Ensure clear messaging on climate issues occurs before engagement activities are sent, allowing schools to prepare time for the young people to engage in materials.</p> <p>Climate Network: Setting up an education climate network of staff champions. Scope to involve learner champions as a part of this network – would be the duty of the staff champion to appoint learner champions and could link to climate related competitions.</p> <p>Climate Events: Hosting a pupil climate change event, developing a local ‘eco-schools’ award, piloting further</p>	<p>Share climate related activities achieved through schools through social media channels</p> <p>Promote RCT schools-wide competitions through social media channels – CTA updates</p>	Richard Bowen/Dan Williams

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	biodiversity projects within school grounds and carrying out school climate competitions.		
Youth Forums inc. Youth Parliament, Youth Clubs and thematic subgroups	<p>Climate Conversations: Opportunity to involve engaged young people in higher level discussions such as to how will the Council reach its 2030 goal of becoming Net Zero.</p> <p>Digital/Standard Materials/Survey: Aim to hold face to face and virtual climate change discussions with young people through the existing forums and through facilitation from the Youth Engagement & Participation Officers (YEPOs).</p>	<p>Utilise YEPS Instagram and website to post stories and posts such as polls, information, events etc.</p> <p>All content generated i.e. videos, photos, case studies and further information to be captured on website.</p> <p>Updates/posts through 'WICID'</p>	Rhys James
Colleges/ Universities	<p>Digital/Standard Materials/Survey: Set up specific engagement days/events at colleges across RCT and the University of South Wales (USW).</p>	<p>Press Release on USW Intranet</p> <p>Use social media channels i.e. press releases, Twitter and Facebook for promotion and Call to Action (CTA)</p>	Rhys James

3. Businesses			
<p>If we are to reach the Welsh Government’s Net Zero ambition by 2030, we must fully engage the many different types of businesses across RCT. We can achieve this by supporting local businesses, particularly small and medium sized enterprises, by helping them to develop the skills and knowledge they need to be better prepared to tender for suitable opportunities for Council contracts as they arise. We must also offer support via distributing information on sourcing more sustainable products locally and selling to local markets.</p>			
Subgroup	Method(s) of Engagement	Comms	Responsible Officer
General	<p>Meetings of Forums: Encourage members to include climate change on meeting agendas as standard item to stimulate discussion via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Town Centre Forums - Town Centre Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) - Chambers of Trade - Business Forums - Business Improvement Districts <p>Surveys: Raise climate awareness within the business community through the distribution of information/business surveys as appropriate and when available.</p> <p>Procurement: Consistently distribute information on Council contracts and sourcing local sustainable products.</p>	<p>Communicate/demonstrate how feedback is used via social media channels, blogs, website info, reports, infographics.</p> <p>Distribute new information via email when available.</p>	Darren Notley/Marc Crumbie

3. Businesses			
Trading Standards Networks	<p>Digital/Standard Materials/Survey: Night-time economy across RCT has a large Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic presence e.g. late-night shops, food business etc.</p> <p>Trading Standards feed directly into these groups so there is opportunity to engage businesses as well as our seldom heard residents.</p> <p>Promotion of the 'Think Climate' campaign via these networks will aid in spreading climate awareness.</p>	Communicate/demonstrate how feedback is used via social media channels, blogs, website info, reports, infographics.	Judith Parry/ Melanie Warburton
Tourism	<p>Climate Events: Working with our tourism partners and businesses enables us to improve our engagement with visitors/tourists in Rhondda Cynon Taf.</p> <p>For example, being stallholders at Aberdare Festival and Big Welsh Bite during the summertime.</p> <p>Procurement: Consistently distribute information on Council contracts and sourcing local sustainable products.</p>	All content generated i.e. videos, photos, case studies and further information to be captured on tackling climate change and tourism website.	Nerys Royal/ Scott Treeby

4. Inside the Council

All our Councillors and staff have a role to play in reducing the Council’s carbon footprint in the decisions they make, the services they deliver and by their everyday actions. Many staff will be directly involved in energy saving projects, others will have less obvious contributions, but these are as important. As Councillors also represent communities and over 80% of our staff live in RCT we can all play a key role in supporting and encouraging climate initiatives across the County Borough. To achieve this we have committed to putting in place training and awareness raising, providing opportunities for ongoing climate conversations with staff, listening to their views and ideas and reinforcing climate messages through clear and relevant messaging of the Council’s commitments.

Subgroup	Method(s) of Engagement	Comms	Responsible Officer
Councillors	<p>Climate Conversation: It is important for Councillors to continue to champion climate related issues in climate related staff events and comms, when applicable, to reinforce the message that Climate Change is a challenge for all levels of staff in Rhondda Cynon Taf.</p>	<p>A similar approach will be taken for staff at all levels as it is important that our messaging is clear and consistent that we must all play our part in tackling climate change, leading by example and demonstrating to residents that the Council is committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2030. We can communicate this to staff via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RCT Staff Email updates - Promote more sustainable projects via Council website and social media channels - Create climate change newsletter using information from services. - INFORM updates (staff/managers) - iTrent news updates (staff/managers) - Manager briefings (managers) - Weekly bulletins (councillors) 	Emma Wilkins
Managers/ staff	<p>Meetings of Forums Continue to update and encourage engagement, participation and involvement in the Climate Conversation via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff forums (Green Space) - Net Zero events <p>Training: Continue to and improve our current staff training opportunities via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Induction training - Mandatory e-learning training - Climate change bitesize sessions 		Lesley Lawson/ Dave Spencer

4. Inside the Council			
	Climate Competitions/Events: Encourage good practice within teams by implementing climate competitions and events i.e. active travel to work.		

5. Third Sector Organisations

We know there is lots of excellent sustainable and ‘green’ work going on in our communities by volunteers and well-established groups, networks and representative bodies. It is important that we recognise how we can best, support these community groups and our third sector and community partners to generate the most value from these projects/activities through our services. We are committed to working with Third Sector organisations, Neighbourhood Networks and other partners to maximise our collective resources to achieve a Carbon Neutral County Borough. Our ongoing climate conversation will maximise the information sharing and engagement opportunities already in place and seek to learn from community experts.

It is essential that the Council engage with community groups via our third sector partners keeping our messaging and purpose clear, open, transparent, and consistent in order to work cohesively and constructively across the County Borough.

Subgroup	Method(s) of Engagement	Comms	Responsible Officer
Third sector Networks e.g. Interlink/ Connect RCT	<p>Promote Ongoing Work: ‘Connect RCT’ already run climate change focussed events/ workshops such as information talks, organised litter picks, growing, repair shop days, environment walks etc. Interlink has a large ‘reach’ when promoting wellbeing and volunteering and enable the Council to run events through RCT Connect where there already engaged community members.</p>	<p>Drive engagement via media streams, promoting work that is already happening with the aim to increase volunteering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - include community events on ‘Let’s Talk Climate Change’ calendar - social media channels include CTA (Call To Action) - staff email - promote Interlink Newsletter that will contain information around events 	Simon James
Neighbourhood Networks	<p>Digital/Standard Materials/Survey: Neighbourhood Networks are Council ‘managed’ networks that have Climate Change as a standing item on their meeting agendas.</p> <p>This access allows us to provide surveys and information directly to the groups for their consideration. This consideration will, in turn, provide the opportunity for comprehensive</p>	Communicate/demonstrate how feedback is used via social media channels, blogs, website info, reports, infographics.	Deb Hanney/ Lynne Williams

5. Third Sector Organisations			
	<p>feedback and challenge, and a clear understanding of the barriers for residents and community groups focused on green activity.</p> <p>Promotion of the Think Climate campaign via these networks will aid in spreading climate awareness.</p>		
<p>Sustainable Food Network (SFN)</p>	<p>Promote Ongoing Work: Use digital and face-to-face methods of communication to involve residents in the various different food networks, projects and groups as listed below:</p> <p>Sustainable Food Network (SFN)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Community Growers' meet quarterly to share projects. - 'Food Pantry' meet quarterly to focus on community food support and redistributing surplus food - 'Big Bocs Bwyd' meet quarterly to focus on food surplus at schools <p>Land Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community Agroforestry Mapping - Food Growing Feasibility Mapping - Land Transfer Signposting Mapping <p>Food Hub</p> <p>Local procurement project to have one central</p>	<p>Help boost sales of 'The Vintage Kitchen' through promotion via media channels as well as a press release.</p> <p>SFN aims to reach gold certification long-term but must reach bronze in the short term. This can be achieved through driving engagement for networks within SFN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - social media channels - staff email - press release - awareness days (e.g., World Food Day – Annual/November) <p>All mapping work are essentially products allowing better access and information for residents. This is also the case for the Food Hub. Upon competition these products can be promoted via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - social media channels - press release - awareness days 	<p>Sam Evans</p>

5. Third Sector Organisations			
	hub for storing surplus food in the County Borough.		
Local Nature Partnership	<p>‘Let’s Talk Trees’ Project: Engagement page for residents to find information and share experiences with trees, as well as access to LNP.</p> <p>Planting/Growing Events: Promote events programmes listed on Local Nature Partnership website as well as the ‘Community Growers’ network within SFN.</p>	<p>The Local Nature Partnership encourages residents to take positive action for nature in RCT to protect local habitats and species and membership is open to everyone. Drive volunteering via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - awareness days (e.g., World Soil Day – Annual/December) - include on Council climate change webpage. <p>Use media channels to promote biodiversity walk and other climate activities that develop</p>	Elizabeth Dean
RCT Climate Action Network	<p>Promote Ongoing Work: RCT ‘Climate Action Network’ connects community projects focussed on Climate Change</p> <p>Council needs to be clear on approach to shared value with Third Sector; offering our services to help community groups grow through the networks identified, as well as promoting their good work through our media channels.</p>	<p>Use media streams to promote work that is already happening, driving engagement and more volunteers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - include community events on ‘Let’s Talk Climate Change’ calendar - social media channels include CTA - staff email - promote information about community events across the County Borough by distributing the Climate Action Network Newsletter 	Dawn Davies

5. Third Sector Organisations			
	Promotion of the Think Climate campaign via these networks will aid in spreading climate awareness.		