Stories from the Future

Three Years of Creative Climate Futures

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Welcome to our reflections from three years of Creative Climate Futures. These stories reflect the breadth of experience the project attracted, from community workers to climate professionals to artists. Their words capture what made this project special.

Creative Climate Futures spent three years working in Easterhouse and the Gorbals, collaborating with embedded artists and communities in new and exciting ways to unlock climate action. The project had climate justice at its centre – recognising that our response to climate change must also tackle inequity and its underlying causes. The result has been communities which act more confidently, speak more powerfully, and understand the necessity of adaptation and resilience.

Verture has been proud to act as the lead partner for Creative Climate Futures. This has been a genuine partnership, and everyone involved in the steering group, the Pioneer Neighbourhoods, and the wider adaptation landscape across Glasgow, has played a part. None of it would have been possible without the support of our funders at the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, and our steering group partners.

We hope you'll join us for the next steps along the path to a resilient and fair future for all. We believe that since communities are at the frontline of impacts, they must be at the centre of solutions. If you agree, I would love to hear from you.

Jo Kerr
CEO, Verture

Dani Waddell

I'm Dani, and I'm the manager here at Crossroads in the Gorbals. At heart, Crossroads is a community development organisation driven by social justice, and that's always been the lens through which I see our work. On a day-to-day basis, we deliver youth programmes for young people aged eight to 24, but what makes us slightly different is that we also do community development alongside that. There isn't really a drop-off point, we're thinking about people across their whole lives. That means youth work, but also supporting local people to come together, build relationships, and generate positive change for themselves. That kind of work doesn't usually start with big campaigns or grand plans. More often, it starts with people coming together around shared interests, having something to eat, playing bingo on a Friday, getting to know one another. Over time, those informal connections can lead to much bigger things.

Our involvement in Creative Climate Futures came about quite organically. What immediately stood out was the focus of the project. It wasn't just about climate change in the abstract, it was about bringing climate conversations into neighbourhoods that are already experiencing multiple forms of vulnerability. That felt like a no-brainer for us. The framing around climate justice, and the social injustice of climate change, aligned very strongly with our values as an organisation.

At the same time, in hindsight, we were fairly naive when it came to climate as a specific area of work. Like most people, we knew what we'd read and heard, but it wasn't something we'd previously seen as central to our role.

One of the biggest draws for me personally was the creative element, particularly the opportunity to work with an artist. Community art is often seen as "less than", or as something nice but not particularly serious. This felt like a chance to challenge that idea by working with highly skilled professional artists to create something meaningful and different. Realistically, the cost of doing that without support would have been out of reach for Crossroads, so that opportunity mattered. The combination of creativity and social justice is really what brought us into the project.

What's changed for me, and for Crossroads more broadly, is quite profound. That initial naivety around climate has completely shifted. As the project has evolved, we've learned an enormous amount, not just from the on-the-ground delivery, but from the partnerships and conversations that have emerged as a result. One of the clearest shifts has been in how we talk about climate internally. It's now part of strategic conversations in a way it simply wasn't before. Creative Climate Futures gave us access to information about things like urban heat and flood risk that, frankly, horrified me, not because the risks exist, but because that information wasn't readily accessible or understandable to local people. Seeing how urban regeneration, loss of green space, and increasing density intersect with climate impacts was a real wake-up call.

The change didn't happen all at once. That idea, "the process is the product", really resonates with me now. It's not about being able to say we worked with X number of groups instead of Y. It's about moving people from a place of "there's nothing we can do about this" to "we're not having this". That shift in confidence is hard to quantify, but it's incredibly powerful. Creative Climate Futures created the conditions for that by giving people time, space, and creative ways to engage. The involvement of artists was central to that. They allowed us to do things differently, to open up conversations that wouldn't have happened through more traditional engagement methods.

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That said, it hasn't all been straightforward. There were moments of frustration, particularly around roles, responsibilities, and sequencing. With hindsight, having artists embedded more fully, employed through the organisation or brought into planning earlier, might have created more cohesion. But I also recognise that when you're running a project where the whole point is that you don't fully know what it's going to become, some uncertainty is inevitable. If we were starting again, I think we'd still embrace that openness, we'd just be a bit more realistic about the level of guidance people need.

Why this change matters is really about legacy. The research work that's come out of the project has opened doors to new conversations with universities and multidisciplinary teams. It's positioned Crossroads as a credible partner in community-academic collaboration, which feels significant. We don't see research as an endpoint, we see it as leverage, something that can be used to make other things happen.

The partnerships that have developed through Creative Climate Futures are another crucial legacy. Knowing who to speak to, who can help, and how to navigate systems is invaluable for a small community organisation. And the flip side of that is that partners now see Crossroads as a place where meaningful, community-led climate work is happening. That visibility matters. It creates opportunities that simply wouldn't have existed otherwise.

Looking ahead, there are lots of things I'd love to see. On a very practical level, I'd love to make our building more energy efficient and to redevelop the outdoor spaces that currently flood and limit what we can do. More broadly, success for me would simply be Crossroads still being here in ten years' time, still operating with the same values, responding to emerging needs. Climate issues aren't going away, if anything, their impacts on local people will increase. We're under no illusion that local projects alone will solve global problems, but local solutions, grounded in social justice, can make a real difference.

Being part of Creative Climate Futures has genuinely changed the conversations we're having as an organisation. That, in itself, feels like a legacy.

Jordan Shaw

Hi, I'm Jordan, Project Coordinator for Creative Climate Futures in Easterhouse, and I've been with Pavilion since 2017. I've worked as a youth worker delivering various programs, but this was my first time leading a climate-focused project. I've done climate work before, mainly outdoors with kids and communities, and I was really excited to take on this role. It's been a really enjoyable experience.

When I started, the project was about building on existing connections in the community and creating new ones. The project is delivered on behalf of the Blairtummock & Rogerfield Partnership, which includes Pavillion, local colleges, housing associations, and other community organisations. My role was going out, talking to partners, understanding their interests, and connecting groups who weren't actively involved before.

There were partners who were disengaged or nominally part of the network but hadn't come to meetings or responded to emails. I found that most people were happy to talk once they had a new face engaging with them. My role helped bring the organisations together, which I think has really strengthened community collaboration.

Pavillion has traditionally been youth-focused, but it's definitely moving toward a broader community focus, which is great. Over time, people are becoming more aware of Pavillion, even if it still tends to fly a bit under the radar. The Creative Climate Futures project has helped with that, bringing more people into workshops and events.

For the community, the project has improved connections among local organisations. They're talking to each other, sharing resources, and collaborating on programs that better benefit everyone. I've noticed a real sense of confidence and empowerment within the partnership, which wasn't quite there when I started.

Personally, the project has shifted my focus beyond youth work to include adults and the wider community. It's given me a better understanding of Easterhouse, its organisations, and the community's concerns. I've also become more aware and active regarding climate issues, which is something I've always cared about but never approached in a structured way. It's allowed me to be more level-headed, informed, and practical in addressing climate and community challenges.

This increased confidence and collaboration matter because it allows larger initiatives to emerge. For example, we're currently in the planning stages for a large-scale destination park and an expanded Pavillion building. These projects respond to the community's needs, particularly for outdoor play spaces, and require partnership working to succeed. The trust and collaboration built through Creative Climate Futures make initiatives like this possible.

I think a big part of how it happened is patience and listening. At the start, I focused on talking to people, understanding their needs, and supporting their ideas rather than imposing my own. The project didn't have predefined outcomes, which gave us flexibility to respond to what the community actually wanted. Working closely with our embedded artists, particularly Rebecca, has been incredible. She brings creative ideas that I wouldn't have thought of, and my role is often to help implement them practically. That teamwork has been central to the project's success.

If I had to pick a highlight, it would be the Festival of Flora. I was incredibly stressed beforehand – the weather was bad, things went wrong... but seeing the community come together and enjoy the event was hugely rewarding. Experiences like that really underline the value of what we're doing.

If there were a “fairy godmother” for Creative Climate Futures, one idea I’d love to try is a climate escape room. It’s ambitious and time-consuming, but it would be a novel, fun way to engage people and get them thinking about climate issues in an interactive way.

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In the next five years, my dream is for an expanded Pavillion building where we can run more activities simultaneously for both adults and children, alongside the park, offering safe, engaging spaces for the whole community to connect with each other and the natural environment. I think helping people reconnect with nature is vital, especially for young people, because it fosters awareness of climate and environmental issues and a deeper sense of connection to the world around them.

Alex Cameron-Smith

I've been involved in Creative Climate Futures from the very beginning, actually from just before the beginning. I work for Verture as a Project Lead, focusing largely on community-based work, and I saw the project first when Ben Connor was developing and submitting the bid to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Even seeing the bid at that stage was interesting. It felt like an envisioning of a future process, and something quite different from other projects I'd seen. When the funding came through, I'd only been in post for a couple of months, but I immediately liked the sound of it. It felt fresh, experimental, and genuinely different from how artist-led or community projects often operate.

As the project developed, my involvement shifted. I became more engaged with the Gorbals neighbourhood specifically, and with decision-makers at Glasgow City Council, particularly the sustainability team. I was also involved in recruiting the project manager, which meant working closely with Ben to shape the operational backbone of the project.

Over time, my role moved away from day-to-day delivery. I stepped back from operational tasks and communications like newsletters and marketing, particularly once artists began taking on more of that outward-facing work. Now, I sit at a more strategic level, not removed from the project, but focused on the bigger picture. I look at how Creative Climate Futures connects to wider local, regional and national work, and how what we're learning can influence how embedded artists are used elsewhere. That shift has been rare and valuable: being part of a project flexible enough to allow roles to evolve like that is unusual, and I've found it really rewarding.

A lot changed – both in my role and in how I think about this type of work. Personally, the biggest change was moving from operational involvement into a strategic and influencing position. That allowed me to see how a project like this functions across multiple levels at once: neighbourhoods, partner organisations, councils, and national conversations.

I also saw how much flexibility matters. Creative Climate Futures didn't follow a rigid plan from start to finish, it evolved. What was proposed in the bid wasn't exactly what happened in practice, and that's been one of the most interesting things to observe. The project stayed open enough to respond to real conditions, relationships and challenges as they emerged.

Moments like experiencing the Future Spa fundamentally changed how I think about climate engagement. Creating calm, caring, wellbeing-focused spaces to talk about climate issues felt revolutionary. It proved that climate work doesn't have to be heavy or anxiety-inducing to be meaningful.

In the Gorbals, from my perspective, I saw a genuine shift in attitudes towards working with artists. Crossroads, in particular, had worked with artists before, but mostly in the "artist comes in at the end and produces something" model. This project asked for something different: long-term presence, relationship-building, and embedded working.

That shift wasn't seamless. There were challenges… staff turnover, uncertainty, and moments where relationship management and mediation were needed. That wasn't something I anticipated at the outset, but it became clear that simply placing people together doesn't automatically create good collaboration. Time and effort had to be invested in repairing, building and strengthening relationships.

In Easterhouse, although I wasn't as closely involved, the tangible outputs like Future Spa and Make Do felt genuinely new. Even in areas already familiar with working with artists, the forms this work took were different and unexpected.

The change was important because it showed what's possible when projects are allowed to be relational, adaptive and human.

One of the most significant lessons was around relationships. Without strong relationships, projects simply don't move forward. Funding models rarely account for this properly – they assume that delivery begins almost immediately. In reality, the first year of this project was largely about set-up, trust-building and figuring out how to work together across six partners.

That time investment paid off. It allowed deeper work to happen later, rather than rushing into activity without foundations. It also highlighted how embedded artists need to be brought into governance and decision-making earlier, rather than being added in once systems are already fixed.

The changes were also important because they influenced institutions. Glasgow City Council staff have explicitly said they feel changed by being involved in the project. That's significant. It suggests a shift in how engagement, participation and creative methods are understood at a structural level. Charlotte and Louise from GCC were willing to act as internal advocates and push for change. Without that willingness, structural influence would have been much harder.

The creation of resources like the toolkit for local authorities matters because those outputs persist beyond individuals. They allow learning to travel, to be shared, and to continue influencing practice even after the project ends.

On a more personal level, moments like experiencing the Future Spa fundamentally changed how I think about climate engagement. Creating calm, caring, wellbeing-focused spaces to talk about climate issues felt revolutionary. It proved that climate work doesn't have to be heavy or anxiety-inducing to be meaningful.

Resources mattered too. Time and funding allowed us to create materials, attend events, tell stories, and reflect properly. Those things don't happen by accident, and they don't happen for free.

Most importantly, the project allowed experimentation. Not everything worked perfectly. Some elements like the structured training programme probably didn't land as well as hoped. But even that taught us something valuable about assumptions and capacity.

Creative Climate Futures showed that transformation doesn't have to be grand or abstract. If one person's life is improved, that matters. If ten people feel more connected, that matters. Transformation happens through stories, relationships, and small shifts that accumulate over time. For me, that's the biggest takeaway: change isn't linear, tidy or predictable, but when you allow space for it, it can be genuinely transformative.

Colin Vincent

I became involved in Creative Climate Futures in December 2023, when I started as Manager of the Glasgow Climate Action Hub. Glasgow's hub model is a bit different from other areas... we don't have a single centralised body, but a partnership of around ten organisations working together. When I came into post, the partnership was already established and GCVS had already been involved in Creative Climate Futures through the steering group. My role wasn't to be a climate expert, that was made very clear from the outset. Instead, I was brought in to help to connect partners, support collaboration, manage tensions when they came up, and make sure the work was moving in a coherent direction.

At that point, one of the key strands of work within the Hub was the demonstrator grants. These were small, low-risk grants, usually under £5,000, designed to help organisations test new ideas for engaging communities around climate. In the first year, we supported just under ten projects, many of them from very small, community-based organisations. What I really liked about that stage was the range of ideas coming through. Some projects were about ecosystems and growing, others about upcycling and fast fashion, some about fair work or money and climate. It showed very clearly that people were already thinking about climate, just not always calling it that.

Creative Climate Futures came into my world at exactly the right time. What struck me straight away was that it was doing something similar to the demonstrator grants, but on a much deeper level. Instead of lots of small interventions spread thinly across the city, it focused on individual communities and supported them from start to finish, from the very first conversation right through to tangible outcomes. It wasn't parachuting in with a predefined agenda. It was about starting where people were, listening carefully, and letting the work develop in ways that actually mattered locally.

That experience changed how I think about engagement, both personally and professionally. Early on, I'd assumed that part of the Hub's role would be to design things like carbon literacy sessions or climate cafés and then offer them out to communities. What's become really clear to me through Creative Climate Futures is that this isn't always the right approach, at least not as a starting point. Most communities are interested in climate issues; they just don't necessarily see how climate connects to their everyday priorities, and they don't have the time or space to work that out on their own.

What Creative Climate Futures demonstrated, very clearly, is the power of starting with creativity. By creating open, welcoming spaces where people can talk about what matters to them, their neighbourhood, their health, their cost of living, their future, climate becomes part of the conversation naturally. One phrase that's really stayed with me is "the process is the product". Seeing that in action has been a bit of a revelation. The value isn't just in the final outputs, but in the conversations, relationships and confidence that are built along the way.

Why this change is important feels very obvious to me now. If climate engagement becomes a series of one-off interventions, a workshop here, a conversation there, nothing really sticks. People might attend, but there's no ownership. What Creative Climate Futures has shown is that when people are genuinely involved in shaping something, when they feel heard and respected, they start to care. And caring is the foundation for everything else. Behaviour change, advocacy, activism, all of that comes later. You can't tick boxes and expect transformation.

What Creative Climate Futures demonstrated, very clearly, is the power of starting with creativity. By creating open, welcoming spaces where people can talk about what matters to them, their neighbourhood, their health, their cost of living, their future, climate becomes part of the conversation naturally.

I've also seen how important partnership working is in making this kind of approach viable. The Hub has a very small core team, and the breadth of activity across the city is huge. Connecting the dots, sharing learning, and avoiding duplication all take time and capacity. That kind of coordination is often invisible, but it's essential, and it needs to be resourced.

Looking ahead, the learning from Creative Climate Futures will be central to how the Hub develops. We're at a stage where governance structures are evolving, and questions about long-term sustainability are very real. What this project offers is a strong foundation, a clear example of how to support communities from an initial conversation through to something more lasting. It would be a missed opportunity not to embed that learning into our future strategy.

If I had one regret, it's that we didn't have more capacity to be even more involved at ground level. Not because the project needed changing, I genuinely think the approach was right, but because there was so much nuance and learning happening in each place. Being closer would have allowed us to capture even more of that detail. But that's a reflection on resources, not on the project itself.

For me, Creative Climate Futures has reinforced something I now feel very strongly: climate action works best when it's embedded in everyday life, and when it connects across agendas, health, poverty, education, wellbeing. Climate isn't a standalone issue. It intersects with everything. Projects like this show how powerful it can be when we acknowledge that and work accordingly. That's the change I'll carry forward, and it's one I don't think I'd fully understood before seeing it play out in practice.

Lynda O'Neill

I'm directly involved in a project called Roots to Branches, which is an intergenerational project linking older people here with primary school children, mainly Primary 6s and 7s from Oakwood Primary School. It actually grew out of something quite simple at first. The kids would come here at Christmas, sing carols, have Christmas dinner with the older people, and we noticed there was a really strong connection forming between the two groups.

We didn't want that to just be a once-a-year thing. So instead of waiting until Christmas, we started bringing the kids in more regularly and building a proper relationship. Around the same time, we were facing a really difficult period – we had no funding, there was a real fear that we might have to close, and the school wanted to help us do something positive to raise money and support us.

That's where Roots to Branches came from. The school was doing work around climate and the environment, and we tried to bring that together with fundraising and intergenerational work. The idea was that the kids and older people would grow things together, plants, flowers, paint pots, make things, and sell them at a spring fair. The teacher actually came up with the name Roots to Branches, which just worked perfectly: young and old, growth, connection, climate.

That one spring fair raised over £5,000, which was unbelievable. The kids went round local shops, organised things themselves, and really took ownership. Since then, the project's grown far beyond what we imagined. We've won two awards, the Trees for Life Kids' Citizenship Award and the Age Scotland Best Partnership Working Award, and had people come out to film what we're doing. It's been properly recognised, not just as a nice idea, but as something meaningful.

I used to worry that if we put planters out, or grew things outside, they'd get wrecked or stolen. But nothing's been touched. Kids who use the building take ownership of it. They help keep the gardens tidy, they litter-pick, they take pride in the place. That really surprised me, and it's changed how confident I feel about doing more outdoors.

What's changed for me is my understanding of what's possible when you genuinely bring generations together and give them time. I've worked with older people for years, and I've seen how isolated people can become. I've also had the same assumptions about kids that a lot of people do: seeing them hanging about, thinking they're just causing trouble.

This project completely challenged that. I've seen older people who were shy, withdrawn, and reserved completely open up. And I've seen kids who struggled at school, some with additional support needs, some with very little confidence, absolutely flourish when they're given responsibility and respect.

One wee boy stands out. The school told us he had very little empathy before this project. Since he started coming here and working with older people, his family and teachers have seen a massive change in him. He's patient, caring, confident. At the spring fair, he spent most of his time sitting with the older people, showing them how to make crafts. That didn't come from nowhere, it came from relationships.

It's also changed how I see community spaces. I used to worry that if we put planters out, or grew things outside, they'd get wrecked or stolen. But nothing's been touched. Kids who use the building take ownership of it. They help keep the gardens tidy, they litter-pick, they take pride in the place. That really surprised me, and it's changed how confident I feel about doing more outdoors.

That change is important because communities like ours are tired of people coming in, doing something good for six months, and then disappearing when the funding runs out. That leaves a sense of loss and scarcity. What we're trying to do here is the opposite- leave something behind that people feel belongs to them.

Roots to Branches has shown how much social wealth exists already. People often say Easterhouse has a bad reputation, but when you speak to older people who grew up here, they talk about a strong sense of community. This project is about rebuilding that, not by importing solutions, but by reconnecting people who already live here.

It's important for older people too. Many of them don't see their grandchildren much anymore. They miss that everyday contact…just chatting, finding out about someone's day. This gives them that connection again, without it being forced or artificial.

And for the kids, it matters because they often don't have many places that feel like theirs. There aren't many safe, welcoming spaces where they can just be, especially teenagers. Getting them involved young, helping them feel proud of where they live, helps them see themselves as part of something bigger.

The change happened slowly, through consistency and relationships. We worked with the same class, the same teacher, the same group of older people. That continuity mattered. The kids didn't just come in once, they came back, recognised faces, sat at the same tables, built trust.

We learned a lot along the way. Not everything worked. Some sessions, especially outdoors at places like the allotments, were chaotic. Too many people, not enough planning, unfamiliar spaces. That taught us that structure matters. When things work best is when we're in a space we know, with clear activities, small groups, and enough time.

Gardening was a learning curve too. We didn't always buy the right things, and sometimes stuff didn't grow. But even that mattered, because when people finally harvested carrots or potatoes, they were genuinely excited. They came back proud, muddy, showing everyone what they'd grown. That sparked interest from others who hadn't been involved before.

What really made the difference was time. Having the chance to build something over more than one term, to adjust, to learn, and to respond to what people needed. That's what allowed trust to grow, between kids and older people, between the school and us, and within the wider community.

For me, Roots to Branches isn't just a project. It's proof that when you slow down, bring people together properly, and let relationships form, real change happens: quietly, but deeply.

Lewis Coenen-Rowe

I work at Culture for Climate Scotland, and my role in the project has mainly been supporting the embedded artists, Elena and Rebecca. I managed their recruitment, provided ongoing guidance, and participated in steering meetings to ensure that the arts perspective was fully integrated into the broader project. I saw my role as connecting their artistic work with other project strands, making sure it complemented and enhanced what other team members were doing.

Other colleagues were involved too: Ben, our director, contributed in the early planning and steering group discussions, asking challenging questions, while Eleanor White helped maintain continuity as I took on other responsibilities. Having this shared approach meant that the project could keep moving even when people were unavailable.

My role evolved as the project developed. Early on, it was more theoretical and planning-focused, but later it became about responding to practical challenges as they arose. Regular check-ins with Elena and Rebecca became central to addressing issues quickly. I also set up separate catch-ups with Andrew to make sure communication between the teams stayed clear. Communication quickly became one of the most important pillars of the project, because of the number of people involved, the different locations, and the variety of roles.

From this, I've learned the value of prioritizing communication in future projects. Even when it feels like there's nothing to discuss in meetings, those conversations often reveal unseen issues or developments. Making time and space for these discussions is crucial.

This project has influenced how I design artist roles and projects now. I've learned how to work effectively with community organisations that may not have an arts focus. Understanding their pressures, co-designing processes with them, and making sure they can fully engage with opportunities are now key parts of how I plan projects.

These lessons are already shaping projects I'm working on, including the Sea Change project and a smaller pilot initiative next year. They've influenced everything from the structure of roles to the ways we engage with communities.

I've thought a lot about embedding artists in communities. Elena started as more of an outsider but became embedded through intentional engagement and relationship-building in the Gorbals. I've seen how this kind of embedding allows artists to gain trust and understand local issues, while still bringing the benefits of an external perspective. Knowing when to challenge local organisations and when to support their existing priorities is a crucial skill in this context.

I've also noticed differences compared to Easterhouse, where artists worked more independently within defined areas. That approach avoided tension but also limited collaboration and the exchange of ideas. In the Gorbals, closer collaboration allowed richer learning and creative development.

Working in a multi-organisation partnership brought both challenges and opportunities. Having organisations like Platform involved made a big difference. They provided accessible spaces and strong local connections. In contrast, single-organisation partnerships, like Crossroads, required deeper embedding within the organisation itself.

One of the biggest challenges has been time... smaller community organisations often have competing priorities, which can make participation in meetings difficult. Flexibility, communication, and relationship-building are essential to make the project work in practice. Preparing for contingencies, like staff turnover, is also crucial.

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I've seen how simple, low-barrier creative activities, like printmaking, can be very effective in involving community members who don't see themselves as creative. These activities also help communities see the tangible results of their engagement, like signage for the walking trail or the Crossroads bench project. Combining creative processes with tangible artifacts helps embed change both culturally and practically within the community.

Earlier in the project, we assumed the artists shouldn't attend steering meetings so they could focus on creative work. I now realize that including them in decision-making from the start was crucial for equity and collaboration. I've also reflected on the pros and cons of freelance versus salaried roles for artists. Both affect who applies and how embedded they can be.

I've thought about how to make better use of the skills of steering group members and how to streamline communication chains. Flexibility, contingency planning, and allowing time for relationship-building are all lessons I've taken forward.

Despite challenges like time pressures, setup delays, and funding constraints, this project has been a positive learning experience. Both Culture for Climate Scotland and our partner community groups have grown in confidence and expertise, and the lessons I've learned here will continue to shape my work in culturally embedded, creative climate initiatives.

Elena Mary Harris

I've been involved with the Creative Climate Futures project as the embedded artist for Crossroads since February 2024. My role has been about facilitating creative engagement across the community, which meant connecting with people and organisations in the Gorbals, understanding what work was already happening, and finding ways to bring those voices and ideas into the project.

At the start, this was mostly about running small, drop-in workshops, testing the waters, and figuring out how people wanted to be involved. Over time, it evolved into helping plan and implement larger initiatives, like the creative walking route and the community science project, while staying connected with the different organisations and individuals in the area.

One of the biggest challenges early on was staff turnover. That created some uncertainty about decision-making and my role in planning. I was determined to keep the creative work integrated with the community engagement, rather than having the art and public involvement split into separate strands. Maintaining that integration was tricky with limited time, and our first year only allowed for around 35 days, so we had to be strategic about when and where to engage. But even with those constraints, I could see that the project offered a rare opportunity to work closely with a neighbourhood, build relationships, and link organisations that otherwise wouldn't have interacted.

Why is this change important? Awareness, attitude, and confidence are precursors to meaningful action, whether in climate issues or in community advocacy. By fostering these in a creative, accessible way, the project helps people see their capacity to contribute and speak up.

Personally, this project has been hugely rewarding. It's helped me see that my skills as an artist go far beyond making art. They include project management, community development, and connecting people. Before this, I wouldn't have described my work as community development, but I realise now that much of what I do involves building networks, facilitating collaboration, and supporting people to have a voice. Working in a small, tightly-knit community like the Gorbals allowed me to engage deeply, understand the area, and build long-term connections. I've carried that learning into other work, like a creative engagement role in Royston, where similar dynamics and community structures exist. Understanding the transferable skills artists bring to these roles has been a major growth point for me.

In terms of change in the community, I think the project has had several impacts. Firstly, it's sparked conversations about climate and local environmental issues, even in spaces where people might not have thought about them before. The creative workshops, walking route, and newspaper have offered a softer, more accessible way for people to engage with these topics, which encourages awareness and discussion without pressure. Secondly, it's strengthened the connections between local organisations. For many years, Crossroads has been a hub that's aware of and linked into the work happening across the area, and projects like the shared cargo bike or collaborative arts initiatives have built on that to create tangible collaborations that didn't exist before. Finally, it has given people, especially young people, a platform to have their voices heard, whether through art, workshops, or the newspaper. This kind of engagement is building confidence and capacity for people to advocate for themselves in their community, even if wider behaviour change around climate is slower to see.

Why is this change important? Awareness, attitude, and confidence are precursors to meaningful action, whether in climate issues or in community advocacy. By fostering these in a creative, accessible way, the project helps people see their capacity to contribute and speak up. Linking organisations is equally vital, especially as resources and staff are increasingly limited. Partnerships allow groups to share skills, spaces, and knowledge, extending the reach of services and initiatives far beyond what any one organisation could achieve. And for artists, recognising and articulating the broader skills we bring to projects, be it community development, project management, or facilitation, is crucial. It not only validates our work but helps commissioners and partner organisations understand the value of embedding artists in projects that aim for social and environmental impact.

The change happened through a combination of persistence, creative engagement, and careful facilitation. Starting with small workshops, we gradually involved a wide range of groups in the community, building trust and relationships along the way. Creative activities like the walking route allowed people to collaborate and showcase their work, while the newspaper and QR-linked signage gave a platform for voices that might otherwise go unheard. Having an independent artist embedded in the project was key, someone not already tied to existing politics or organisational histories could connect with people more easily and act as a bridge across the community.

Ultimately, this project has been about more than producing artworks or creative outputs. It's been about fostering connections, creating platforms for dialogue, and helping both individuals and organisations see what they can achieve collectively. For me, personally and professionally, it's reinforced the importance of artists as facilitators, connectors, and community builders. Not just creators of art, but enablers of change. And in a community like the Gorbals, where relationships, awareness, and collaboration are everything, that impact, however subtle, is significant.

Frankie Frankgate

My name is Frankie Frankgate. I'm a community development worker here at Crossroads in the Gorbals.

When I arrived at Crossroads, Creative Climate Futures was already underway. There was already a broad plan in place, and a sense of what the priorities were going to be. What wasn't fully decided yet was where exactly things would happen, who would be involved, and how people locally would shape it. That part was still very much open. At that point, I don't think I expected climate to become such a central part of my role. I graduated from Glasgow University about six years ago, and climate was never something I imagined would be front and centre in my day-to-day work.

But that's exactly what's happened. I've always worked around neighbourhood strengths and assets, but climate has ended up sitting at the heart of almost everything because it affects almost everything. Climate impacts show up in people's housing, in flooding, in energy costs, in food prices, in health, and in how communities experience their environment. So by default, through doing the job, I've become much more knowledgeable about climate issues than I ever expected to be.

One of the big shifts for me through this project has been understanding just how interconnected these issues are. When we first started looking at climate impacts in the area, we were thinking a lot about surface water flooding, urban heat, and economic deprivation. But through the work, air quality emerged as a major issue, and that wasn't something we'd initially identified as a priority.

I don't think it's just about funding, although funding is obviously part of it. What I've really seen is people starting to realise that you can't have social justice without environmental justice. The penny has dropped for a lot of people. Climate change isn't some abstract thing anymore, it's showing up in flooding, rising river levels, extreme weather, heatwaves, and higher living costs. People who previously might have been sceptical are now living with the impacts. And when you talk about climate through the lens of saving money or improving living conditions, that's often where the hook is, especially for working-class communities. As soon as people see that climate action can mean lower bills or more disposable income, it becomes very real and very relevant.

One of the issues that really struck me was how the Gorbals sits on the periphery of the Low Emission Zone and how much traffic passes through the area. That traffic brings pollution and contributes to urban heat, and because of the way the housing stock works – the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems – heat gets trapped. You end up with what I think of as an invisible umbrella over the Gorbals, where heat rises, pollution gets trapped, and then heavier particulates fall back down. So people here are getting hit twice.

As I dug into the research, I started to see how closely urban heat and air quality are linked, and how both of them drive health inequalities. We're now seeing connections with early-onset dementia, developmental problems, and impacts that begin before people are even born. That was a real moment for me, realising that this went far beyond heat discomfort or traffic annoyance. This is about long-term, structural health harm.

For me, this always comes back to class and social justice. Climate justice is inseparable from social justice. Projects like Creative Climate Futures can't just focus on carbon reduction in the abstract. When I first started talking about adaptation, mitigation, and resilience, it went straight over people's heads. So I had to break it down. Adaptation might mean putting your blinds down in summer to keep your flat cooler. Once you start there, people can come on the journey.

Another big change I've seen is people becoming more confident about questioning information. Air pollution is largely invisible, so people don't always believe it's a problem. But when you make the unseen seen, people respond. I've seen residents become much more comfortable asking questions, challenging assumptions, and wanting evidence. That's a real shift, and it feels like a step in the right direction.

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One thing Creative Climate Futures did particularly well was using creative and artistic approaches. That makes climate issues accessible to people who might feel excluded by technical language. It opens the door to conversations with people who might not be interested in "climate" as a concept, but who are interested in creativity, place, and community.

The air quality and sensor work has been the standout highlight for me. It feels like validation. For a long time, I felt like I was navigating uncharted waters, with no clear guidance. I wasn't always sure I was going in the right direction. Now it feels like the work is being recognised, and that we're ahead of where many others are in Scotland. When you start ruffling feathers in planning departments or council structures, that's often a sign you're pushing in the right direction.

Looking ahead five or ten years, I'd love to see much more pedestrianisation in the Gorbals, schools leading on climate work, and families feeling connected to these issues. I'd like to see the area protected from being treated as a dumping ground and instead recognised for its potential. This place could be incredible. What we're doing now feels like a contemporary version of community organising – educating, organising, and building confidence. I'd like the Gorbals to be an exemplar for other areas facing similar challenges, showing what's possible when communities are supported to lead.

Rebecca Fraser

I've been working as the Embedded Artist for Easterhouse on the Creative Climate Futures project, which has given me the chance to engage with the community in a really hands-on way. My role has involved running workshops that are sensory-focused, using things like clay for touch or aromatherapy for scent, to spark conversations about nature and the outdoors. It's been amazing to see how people of all ages, from preschoolers to those in their 80s and 90s, connect differently with the environment. Recording those conversations has been really valuable in shaping what the community might want from future projects.

From that, we developed Make Do, an intergenerational skill-sharing space. We wanted to bridge the gap between elders with life experience and the childlike enthusiasm of younger participants. The goal is for Make Do to be fully community-run, and we're slowly getting there, with more local skill-sharers and volunteers taking ownership. It's rewarding to see the project start to run itself, and it feels ethically better because it doesn't leave people hanging when funding ends.

Working alongside other projects in Easterhouse has been energising. I've been able to signpost people to things like the Games Jam, and The Festival of Flora have connected my work with other artists in nearby communities. It's inspiring to see other groups approach the same project in their own areas, and it pushes me to improve and brings a sense of camaraderie I don't often get as a freelance artist.

This project has also changed how I work. I'm now more embedded in Easterhouse, not just Platform, meeting new groups in health centres, schools, and community hubs. The project's duration has been a real gift, allowing relationships and connections to develop organically. By the second year, we're seeing people respond and engage in ways that wouldn't have been possible in a short-term project. For instance, the Bee Club who hosted the first Future Spa workshop in April 2024 have now become skill-sharers at the Make Do in January 2026, which feels like a natural outcome of the time and trust we've built over two years.

For the community, I've seen shifts in how people use the space. Make Do, in particular, has created a drop-in, flexible environment where families can spend the whole day, accessing different activities at their own pace. This approach helps break down barriers, encourages new experiences, and fosters local engagement. Longer-term changes, like the new park in Easterhouse, promise to create a destination that encourages outdoor activity and community pride, especially for children who currently gravitate toward screens and indoor spaces.

I also see a connection between this work and broader climate change objectives. While it's early days, Make Do has introduced ideas like circular economy and reusing materials, and the relationships we've built allow us to approach more challenging topics, like climate impacts, in a respectful and timely way. By embedding these conversations in everyday community life, we hope to foster cultural change and local action in a way that feels organic, ethical, and achievable.

Ultimately, the work is about fostering community strength, shared responsibility, and a sense of ownership. Projects like Make Do show that when communities are supported to meet their own needs, it builds resilience and prevents the feeling of loss that can come when funding ends. I want people to feel empowered, to recognize their own skills as valuable, and to be able to sustain activities locally. That, for me, is the most important change: seeing community life thrive on its own terms, while connecting people to their environment and to each other.

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Andrew Williams

My name is Andrew Williams, and I'm the Project Manager for Creative Climate Futures, alongside my role as Local Programme Manager at Verture. The project has been based in Glasgow and focused on community-led climate action, working particularly with neighbourhoods in Easterhouse and the Gorbals.

When I first applied for the role, my understanding of the project was very different to how it ultimately played out. I initially imagined Creative Climate Futures as something closer to an arts and culture project that would use creative practice to get people thinking differently about climate change, with some community work involved along the way. What it became, in reality, was almost the inverse of that: a deeply rooted community development project, with climate action at its heart, and creative practice used as a tool rather than the end goal.

From the outset, one of the defining features of the project was that it was intentionally not prescribed. We didn't tell communities what they were going to do, or what climate action should look like in their area. Instead, we created space for them to work that out for themselves, alongside artists and with our support. That blank-sheet approach was both the biggest opportunity and the biggest challenge. At many points, people understandably wanted clarity: "What are we actually doing?" The honest answer, often, was that we were still finding out.

My role, then, became less about directing activity and more about support – managing budgets and timelines, building relationships, and resisting the urge to jump in with solutions. I was there to help lift heavy boxes when needed, not to tell communities what kind of boxes they should be lifting.

One of the biggest changes for me personally was learning to let go of control in a very real way. As a project manager, the instinct is often to assess a situation quickly, decide on a course of action, and move things forward. This project forced me to do the opposite: to slow down, to trust other people's expertise, and to accept that my job wasn't to have the answers.

Instead, my role became about laying out the issues, providing tools and support, and then stepping back while communities and artists made decisions themselves. That was uncomfortable at times, but it has fundamentally changed how I think about collaboration and leadership.

I also saw a huge change in the people involved in the project. While I wouldn't say anyone lacked confidence at the start, I did see a shift in how people understood their own expertise. Over time, community partners like Dani, Frankie, Simon, and Jordan moved from seeing themselves as participants in a "test project" to recognising that they are experts in community climate action. They may not always describe themselves that way, but they absolutely are, and they could now speak with authority to funders, policymakers, or peers anywhere.

I saw similar shifts with the artists. Rebecca and Elena were already highly skilled practitioners, but the length and depth of this project changed how they approached their work.

These changes matter because climate action at a community level can't be delivered through short-term, top-down interventions. It relies on trust, confidence, and people believing that their knowledge of their own place is valid and valuable.

One of the key breakthroughs in the project was realising that communities didn't need to become "climate experts" in a technical sense. The issues they were already dealing with: cost of living, access to food, heating their homes, lack of green space... these are all climate issues, even if they aren't always described that way. Once that connection was made, it unlocked confidence. People realised they already understood the problem, because they lived it every day.

As a project manager, the instinct is often to assess a situation quickly, decide on a course of action, and move things forward. This project forced me to do the opposite: to slow down, to trust other people's expertise, and to accept that my job wasn't to have the answers.

This reframing was critical. It meant the project wasn't about importing expertise, but about recognising and legitimising what was already there. That shift allowed communities to design their own programmes of activity, rather than trying to fit themselves into funding categories or externally imposed priorities.

On a personal level, learning to step back and trust that process has been one of the most valuable professional lessons I've taken from the project. It's something I'll carry into future work, because it leads to more meaningful outcomes.

The change didn't happen all at once. The long early phase of engagement was crucial, even though it often felt like nothing tangible was happening. That groundwork made later activity possible, things like Make Do in Easterhouse, Future Spa, and large-scale engagement events in the Gorbals simply wouldn't have worked without it.

There were also moments of difficulty that ultimately strengthened the project. In the Gorbals, changes in personnel and working relationships were challenging, but they created clarity and allowed the project to reset in a healthier way. In Easterhouse, external pressures around land use and development unexpectedly accelerated thinking around the urban park, embedding climate work into long-term planning.

One of the most significant moments was receiving confirmation of the funding extension. That external validation, from people who had no prior relationship with the communities, gave everyone permission to think bigger and longer-term. It signalled trust, and that trust translated directly into momentum.

By the time we reached the later stages of the project, the work felt owned by the communities themselves. That's ultimately how change happened: through time, trust, friction, and a willingness – on my part and others – to stop trying to control the outcome.

Debbie Keenan

I'm involved in two strands of work here that feel closely connected: the community walking group and our partnership work with Frog Life, which focuses on nature-based activity for children. I don't lead the walking group directly, but I manage the staff around it and support how it runs. One of our team, Jodi, leads the group week-to-week, and Christine drives the minibus and walks with everyone as well.

The walking group itself came out of a local community survey we carried out about three years ago. What people told us very clearly was that there was a gap for adults who weren't young people and weren't older people – that middle space where there just wasn't much on offer. We went back and asked what might fill that gap, and the idea of a walking group came from there.

It's grown into a really mixed group. We've had people attending from two weeks old – literally a newborn – right up to people in their mid-70s. On an average week we'll have between 13 and 17 people walking, with about 25 registered in total. Most of our regulars are in their 60s and 70s, with a few people in their 50s, a couple of late teens and early-20s, and the occasional younger teenager coming along with a parent.

What's changed for me most is how I understand the power of simple, consistent activities – like walking or bug-hunting – to create real social connection and confidence.

With the walking group, I've seen people who were very isolated start to build friendships that exist outside the group. One woman joined after her husband died at the tail end of Covid. Her daughter struggled to get her out of the house, but found the walking group and brought her along. She's now been coming every single week for three years. She's built a wee friendship group through the walks, and about six months in, they all went out for lunch together for her birthday. Now they meet up during the week, go to other groups together, and even organise extra walks on their own.

That's been a big shift for me, seeing the group move from being something we provide, to something that people genuinely own. They've organised their own Christmas lunch, they message each other, they invite each other out. Staff are included, but we're not driving it.

The Frog Life work has shifted my thinking too. One moment that really stuck with me was hearing kids say things like, "Bethany was so brave, she held a spider," or "It took me so long to build up the courage, but I did it." That confidence wasn't coming from adults prompting them, it was kids encouraging each other.

The change matters because both of these bits of work are tackling isolation and disconnection in really practical, accessible ways.

For the walking group, the social side is probably the most important thing. It's social without spending money, not going to the pub or out for dinner, and it's something people can do for free while staying active. For some people, especially older adults, it's also about confidence. We have a woman who is blind who comes regularly. She's not confident using public transport, so the group gives her a chance to get out and visit places she simply wouldn't get to otherwise.

Having funding through Creative Climate Futures made a huge difference here. It meant the group became a solid part of our week, not just an occasional local walk. We could use the minibus, go further afield, and do proper day trips, to places like Troon, Ayr, the Kelpies, canal walks in Kirkintilloch. Some people in their 60s had never visited places like the Kelpies before, even though they're relatively nearby. That sense of exploration really matters.

That's been a big shift for me, seeing the group move from being something we provide, to something that people genuinely own. They've organised their own Christmas lunch, they message each other, they invite each other out. Staff are included, but we're not driving it.

It's also about access. Some of these kids had never used binoculars before. Some had never really looked closely at plants or insects. Seeing how excited they get, even just looking at a tree through binoculars, has completely changed my assumptions about what kids will or won't enjoy.

A lot of this change came down to having time, trust, and resources. For the walking group, funding was key. Having the money for the minibus meant we could respond to what the group wanted, not just what was easiest. The group now decides where they want to go, whether they're bringing packed lunches, and how the walks are structured. There's a WhatsApp group where people stay in touch, and staff make sure everyone is kept in the loop.

Consistency mattered too. The walk happens every week, regardless of weather unless it's genuinely unsafe. People wrap up and come out even when it's raining. There was one week where the weather turned really bad at the last minute, and only one person showed up – the woman who's blind. Rather than cancel, staff just walked her to the shops like she'd planned to do anyway. That kind of care builds trust.

For me, the biggest learning is that you don't need overly complicated programmes to create change. Walking together. Looking at bugs. Giving people time and space to connect. When those things are supported properly, they lead to confidence, friendships, curiosity, and a much deeper connection to place and nature.

That's what I see now – not just activities, but relationships growing quietly around them.

Ben Twist

Hi, I'm Ben Twist, and I'm the Director for Culture for Climate Scotland. I was involved mainly through the steering group. I was there right at the beginning, when we were putting together the bid and shaping the idea, trying to work out what the project actually was going to be. I work very closely with Lewis, and then with Eleanor when she took over. And I think my role has always been a bit of an overview role. I'm not deeply involved in the detail most of the time. What I tend to do is look at what's going on overall and, sometimes, ask awkward or difficult questions.

Often that's about saying, hang on a minute, are we getting a bit too bureaucratic here, or are we missing the point? This is meant to be an artistic project, a cultural project, not just another procedural exercise. So that's been my involvement really: being involved in shaping things, and occasionally stirring things up a bit.

So one of the things I think I brought to Creative Climate Futures was being the person who was willing to say, "Are we sure about this?" That's not always an easy thing to do. If nothing is obviously going wrong, it's very tempting to let things just develop. But we don't get many opportunities to do projects like this, and when we do, they have to count. Doing the same old stuff isn't interesting for artists, it's not great for communities, and it's not very satisfying for the people running the project either. So, I think there's a responsibility to push a bit, to try to do something genuinely different.

Part of that comes from the fact that, somewhere along the line, I stopped being afraid of saying what I think. I realised a while ago that if you don't speak up, nothing changes. You still have to think about how you say things, of course, but you do need people in the room who are prepared to challenge the status quo.

In terms of what's changed for me through this project, I think there's been a reaffirmation of what my role actually is. There was a point, sitting in one of the steering group meetings, where I had a moment of doubt about what I contribute. The meeting itself was fairly dull, if I'm honest, but one of the artists was there, and it suddenly reminded me of a project we'd done years ago, where an artist had done something quite wild and unexpected. So I threw in some ideas, which seemed to change the tone and the direction of the meeting – it became more expansive, more ambitious. Things changed after that in the wider project too. And it clicked for me: that's what I do. I help create the space for things to be a bit wild. I help projects take risks.

I've also seen change in others through the project, and this is something we see quite often. People don't necessarily come into these projects expecting to be changed, but they are. When you introduce different ways of thinking, different kinds of conversations, different stimuli, people shift. Most people don't get much exposure to that in their day-to-day lives. That's something projects like Creative Climate Futures can do. They open up different ways of thinking, and that matters.

In terms of how change happened within the project itself, one of the biggest shifts for me was around the role of artists. Midway through, I was quite worried. It felt like the artists weren't being given enough freedom, that they were being treated as deliverers rather than collaborators. They were doing good work, but it wasn't what the project was meant to be about.

I think this project has reminded me why this work matters. It's about creating space for risk, imagination, and transformation. Not just for communities, but for the people running the projects as well.

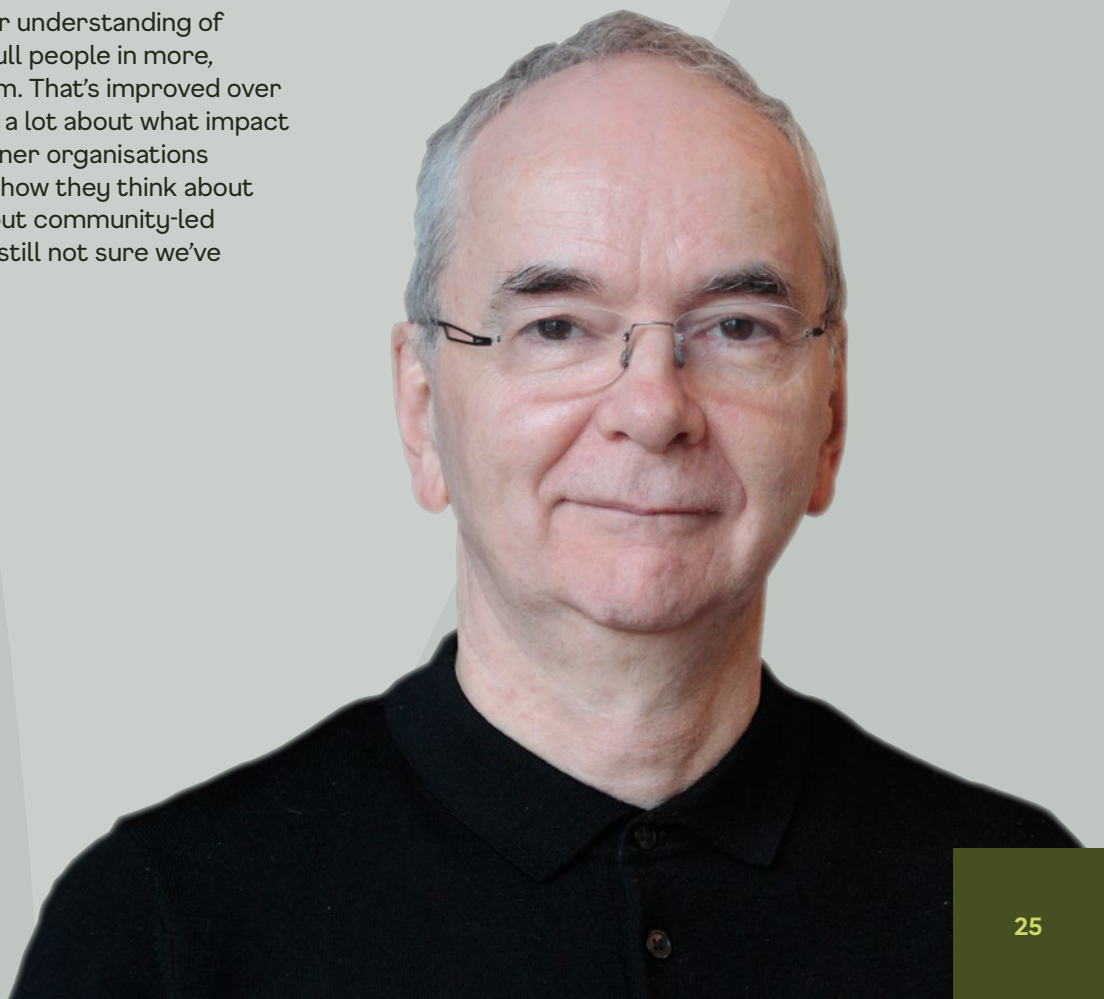
That, combined with work on the development of another project, Sea Change, led us to rethink how we employ artists. We made a deliberate decision to employ them as staff rather than freelancers. That meant they are part of the team. They come to meetings, they help shape decisions, and they have more time and security. It is better for them, and it is better for the work. They have become equals at the table, alongside funders and partners.

That shift has had real consequences. We've had artists in meetings saying, "We're not doing this, we're not focusing on that," and being right. That's exactly what should be happening. It's changed how we're running Sea Change, and it's a direct learning from Creative Climate Futures.

Another thing that's changed – and this is more uncomfortable – is our understanding of partnership. We've had to pull people in more, inspire them, challenge them. That's improved over time, but it's made me think a lot about what impact this project has had on partner organisations themselves. Has it changed how they think about artists? About climate? About community-led work? That's something I'm still not sure we've captured well enough.

Which brings me to impact. This isn't a project that lends itself easily to metrics and targets. The impacts are cultural, relational, and long-term. I'd really like to know what difference this has made to Crossroads, Pavilion, Platform. From what I can see, something genuinely different has happened at Crossroads in particular. There's been a shift in confidence, in voice, in willingness to try things. That feels important.

Overall, though, I think this project has reminded me why this work matters. It's about creating space for risk, imagination, and transformation. Not just for communities, but for the people running the projects as well. And when that happens, things can genuinely shift.



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