

verture

the climate resilience charity

Exploring Climate Adaptation and Resilience in England

November 2026

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verture

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Introduction

Verture has a track record of over 30 years and is now the only UK charity dedicated to climate resilience. It helps people, places and systems prepare for climate impacts in ways that are fair, practical and grounded in lived experience.

As part of its 2026 to 2031 Just Resilience strategy, Verture is exploring whether and how it could contribute to the excellent and growing work already taking place beyond Scotland, beginning with England. Rather than starting with assumptions, we want to understand the existing landscape, where there are opportunities and challenges, and where Verture might be able to add distinctive value alongside and in collaboration with others.

This document summarises our findings from conversations with stakeholders between July and October 2026 and a light-touch mapping of regional and national adaptation and resilience partnerships and key infrastructure.

We are committed to working in the open to maximise opportunities for transparency, collective agency building and development of partnerships. This document is not intended as a deep or comprehensive analysis: there will be omissions, and the findings are a snapshot in time. However, we hope that sharing our learning will help others supporting climate adaptation and resilience work across the UK.

What Verture brings

Our value is often in the spaces between organisations and sectors. We don't need to be the organisation doing everything: our most useful role is helping others do things better together.

- **National:** Adaptation Scotland and Flood Resilience Knowledge Exchange turn climate evidence into practical decisions for public bodies, businesses and communities. We co-lead the Scottish spoke of the MACC Hub.
- **Regional:** Climate Ready Clyde, Climate Ready South East Scotland, Highland Adapts and Climate Ready Tayside bring councils, agencies, businesses and communities together around a shared plan for their place.
- **Local and community:** Creative Climate Futures works alongside the communities most exposed to climate impacts. Climate Ready Clyde and Creative Climate Futures were both cited as exemplars in the Climate Change Committee's *A Well-Adapted UK*.
- **Training and learning:** Becoming Climate Resilient training for charities, public bodies and businesses.
- **Just Resilience:** social justice and climate resilience are inseparable. Our 2026–31 strategy asks who is at risk, who benefits and who decides.

"The work of Verture and their just resilience strategy is central to ensuring adaptation efforts address existing inequalities and that climate action delivers a safer future for everyone."

Prof. Dave Reay,
co-chair, Just Transition Commission

How we work

We listen, connect people and knowledge, support practical action, influence decisions and investment, and learn what works – making sure learning travels both ways, from local experience to national policy and back.

Acknowledgements

Across five roundtables and a series of one-to-one and small group conversations, we spoke with around 70 people. Roundtables sought insight from groupings of community-level organisations, national charities, businesses, charity and funder collaborations, and philanthropic funding organisations.

We are grateful to everyone who generously shared their time and insights. Any errors or omissions are ours.

There were many others we were unable to speak with during the research period and we actively welcome reflections and further conversations.

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SOS UK, Meg Briar
Sustainability West Midlands, Anna Bright
Transition Together, Richard Couldrey
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Turn2us, Kenya Lamb
Tyndall Centre (University of Manchester), Carly McLachlan
UK Community Foundations, Jo Williams
UK100, Cecily Spelling
UN Global Compact Network UK, Alexandra Ranft
Unity Trust Bank, Joshua Meek
VCS Emergencies Partnership, Jon Vangorph
We're Right Here, Phil Frodsham
Wildlife Trusts, Zoe Quiroz Cullen
William Grant Foundation, Nick Addington
Working Class Climate Alliance, Chris Shaw
WSP, Paul Lambert



Conversations

What stakeholders said about climate adaptation and resilience in England

1. England has a lot to build on

- **Trusted community organisations and social infrastructure are already delivering climate resilience in some locations**, often without calling it adaptation. Funders recognise and support this.
- **Expertise and evidence vary considerably by issue.** Flooding is comparatively well developed, while heat, wildfire and understanding of how impacts differ between people and communities remain much less mature.
- **Strong regional/place partnerships exist in some areas,** for example, Climate Ready Manchester, London Climate Ready Partnership and Sustainability West Midlands. Other regions have useful support infrastructure such as Going Green Together.
- **Regional political leadership is seen as able to use levers more quickly than national government,** with London's clean-air policies cited as an example of regional success. Devolution is seen to offer growing opportunities.
- **Flood and coastal erosion risk management (FCERM) has a comparatively mature adaptation architecture,** including embedding adaptation pathways in strategic flood and coastal erosion risk management planning.
- **A Well-Adapted UK** has helped generate strong interest among local-authority officers in what practical action to take.
- **Climate risk literacy is increasing,** especially in parts of finance and larger business, where practical examples already exist, including local climate bonds, business/community pilots, water-resilience planning and regional/catchment initiatives.

2. English adaptation action is fragmented and uneven

- **Hazard-specific approaches mean risks are often dealt with separately,** reducing the ability to connect flooding, heat, drought, wildfire, water resilience and broader place-based outcomes.

- **National leadership and accountability** are described by stakeholders as weak: central government is siloed, Defra under-resourced and heat lacks a clear owner or duty.

- **Cross-sector coordination remains weak.** Government, business, civil society, funders and regional partnerships often work in parallel. Fragmentation also exists within sectors, for example, food system stakeholders operate with strong individual lenses such as animal welfare, climate/nature, health or supply chains, with limited reinforcement between them.

- **Local authorities are stretched by reorganisation and devolution.** Capability varies considerably. Adaptation capacity is highly uneven and can depend on a small number of experienced individuals. There is strong appetite to act, but many councils are asking basic questions about where to start, what skills they need and what to prioritise.

- **Grassroots knowledge does not reliably reach policy.** The role of people in adaptation remains comparatively unclear, and technical solutions often precede meaningful engagement. Communities may understand what needs to happen but lack the resources, authority or route through public systems to act.

3. Climate resilience is caught between emergency response and long-term adaptation

- **England already has a statutory resilience system, but adaptation does not have a clear home**. The resilience system covers “all crises and risks” through central government and Local Resilience Forums, but climate resilience is not always explicit within it. Longer-term adaptation is spread across local authorities, regional partnerships, sector bodies and infrastructure organisations.
- **A broader resilience frame can join up risks, but may weaken the climate focus.** Some participants argued that climate impacts should be considered alongside poverty, health, misinformation and social tensions rather than in a separate silo. Others saw value in keeping adaptation distinct enough to retain specialist expertise, attract funding and sustain attention on long-term climate risks.
- **Emergency resilience largely starts with disruption; adaptation needs to start before it.** Preparedness, response and recovery are built into the statutory resilience system. Adaptation is about longer-term changes to places, services and infrastructure so risks are reduced before they become emergencies.
- **Waiting for a crisis can make adaptation harder and more expensive.** Coastal participants described situations where institutions could not act preventatively because powers, funding rules or responsibilities did not fit the problem. By the time an issue qualifies as an emergency, vulnerable people may face greater harm and costs may be higher.
- **“Resilience” can become a label without a clear outcome**. Business participants warned against “resilience washing”, where the term is used without specifying what is being made resilient, to which hazard, for whom and whether the outcome is actually desirable.

4. Knowing the risks isn’t enough: capacity, governance and systems block action

- **Planning is ahead of delivery.** Risk assessments, strategies and partnerships are increasingly common, but delivery capacity and funding often stop short of implementation. Funding is too often short-term and fragmented, paying for projects or assets rather than the staff time, coordination and relationships needed to deliver across the wider system.

- **There is a gap in practical delivery evidence:** not just what might work, but what has actually been done, how it was made to happen, what it cost and what others can learn from it.

- **Short-term, siloed thinking, including short political and investment horizons, works against the long-term decisions adaptation requires.** Organisational mandates and funding structures make joined-up action particularly difficult where risks cut across housing, health, transport, infrastructure, business and communities. Relationship-building and lived experience engagement are rarely funded.

- **In business and investment, managing individual climate risk does not necessarily build wider resilience**. Organisations may reduce their own exposure without strengthening the place or community around them.

- **People and organisations can understand the risks but lack the power or permission to act,** particularly where decisions sit with landlords, infrastructure providers, regulators or national government. Policy, regulation and institutional structures can block delivery, even where there is willingness and evidence to act.

5. Building Just Resilience action is essential

- **Climate impacts amplify existing inequalities** – stakeholders expressed a common understanding that people have very different capacity to adapt. Income, disability, housing tenure, health, transport, geography and control over services affect both exposure and agency. Existing local infrastructure is valuable, but should not be assumed automatically to represent or reach everyone.

- **People remain less visible than technical solutions in adaptation.** There is limited evidence on how different groups experience and respond to risks over time, what people themselves are expected or enabled to do, and which interventions are effective and fair.

- **Adaptation can itself deepen inequality if poorly designed**. One-size-fits-all interventions can create new barriers, while private or asset-focused adaptation can protect individuals or organisations without strengthening the wider place.

- **Lived experience needs to shape decisions from the start** – stakeholders repeatedly argued that communities hold knowledge, relationships and practical insight that national and regional institutions often lack.

- **Existing community infrastructure is valuable but not necessarily inclusive**. Local networks may not reach disabled people, racialised communities, people experiencing poverty or others who are poorly represented in established structures.

"The adaptation world hasn't really been convened in Britain."

"National and regional bodies often hold the resources and levers, while communities hold the knowledge, relationships and lived experience."

"Show me concrete examples of something happening."

"Communities are the first responders and the last to leave."



"Adaptation is so much more dispersed and opaque that even though similar action is constitutionally possible, it's currently unthinkable."

"What we need is something that draws a lot of [the] threads together."

"We need to live well in a changing climate."



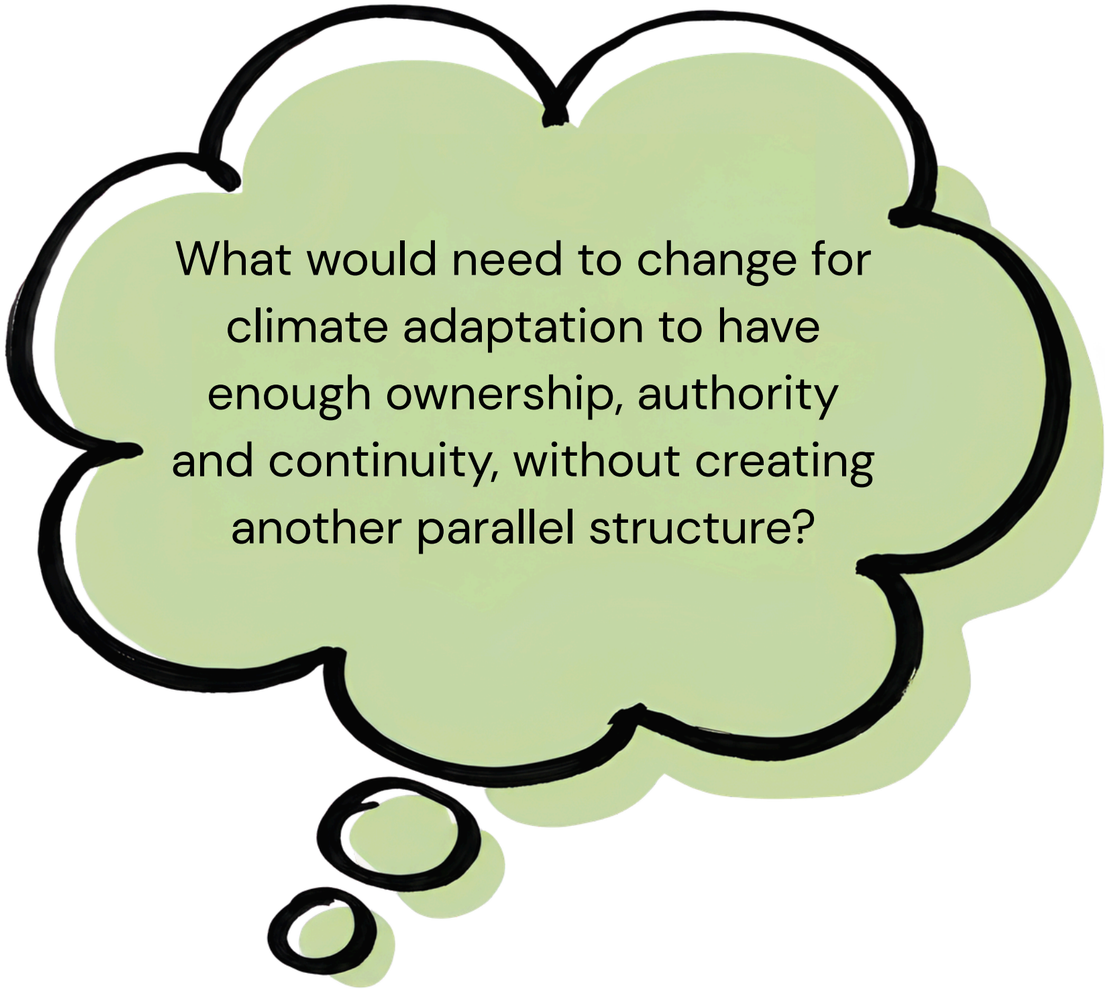
What we’re thinking about

Working hypotheses and areas for further exploration with others

1. Adaptation has no clear institutional home

England has a statutory resilience system, but longer-term climate adaptation is dispersed across multiple institutions, sectors and levels.

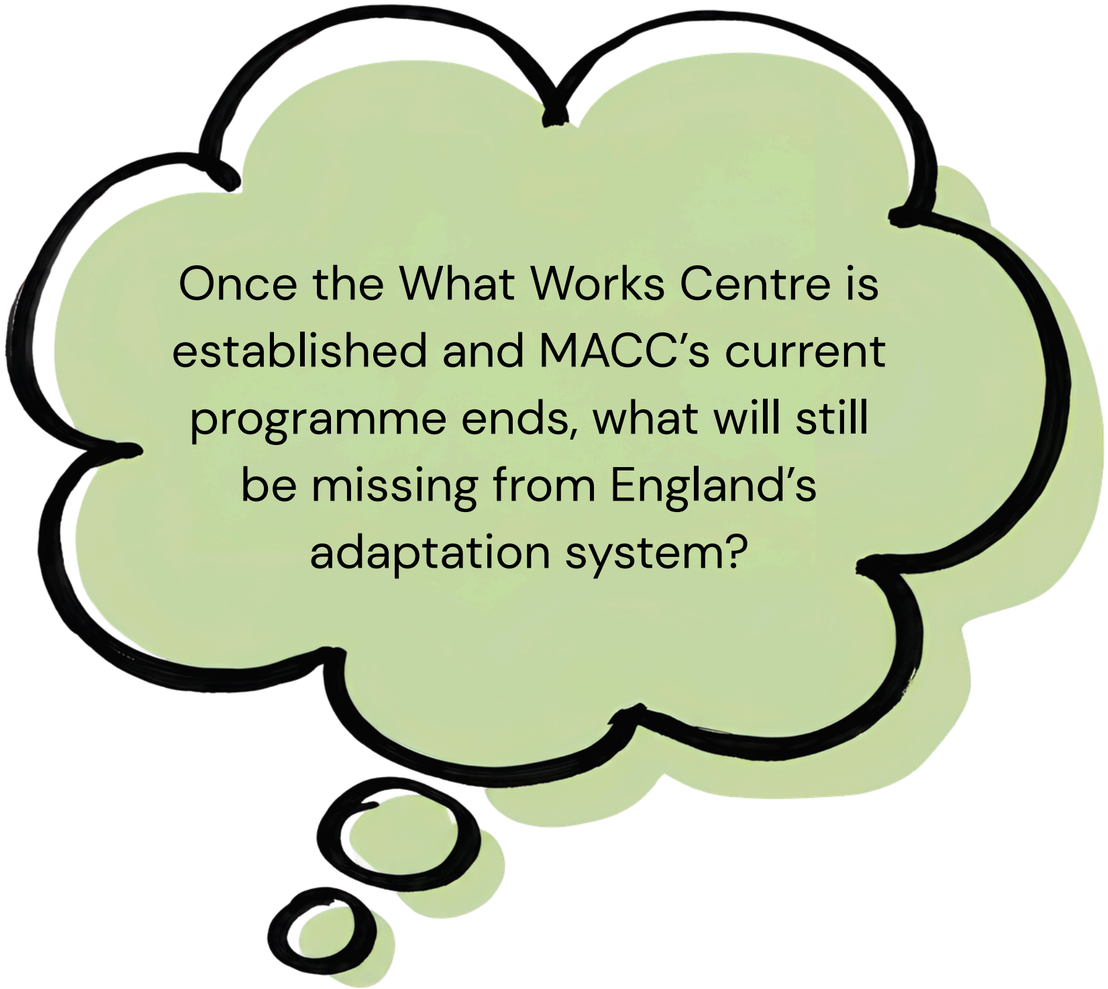
Hypothesis:
Working with others, Verture might help strengthen the links between the institutions already responsible for different parts of adaptation, clarify roles and connect longer-term adaptation more closely with statutory resilience and regional leadership.



2. The gaps in the system are not yet clear

Evidence, practitioner learning, community action, statutory resilience and sector support are already provided by different organisations. The What Works Centre for a Climate Resilient UK may cover even more of this.

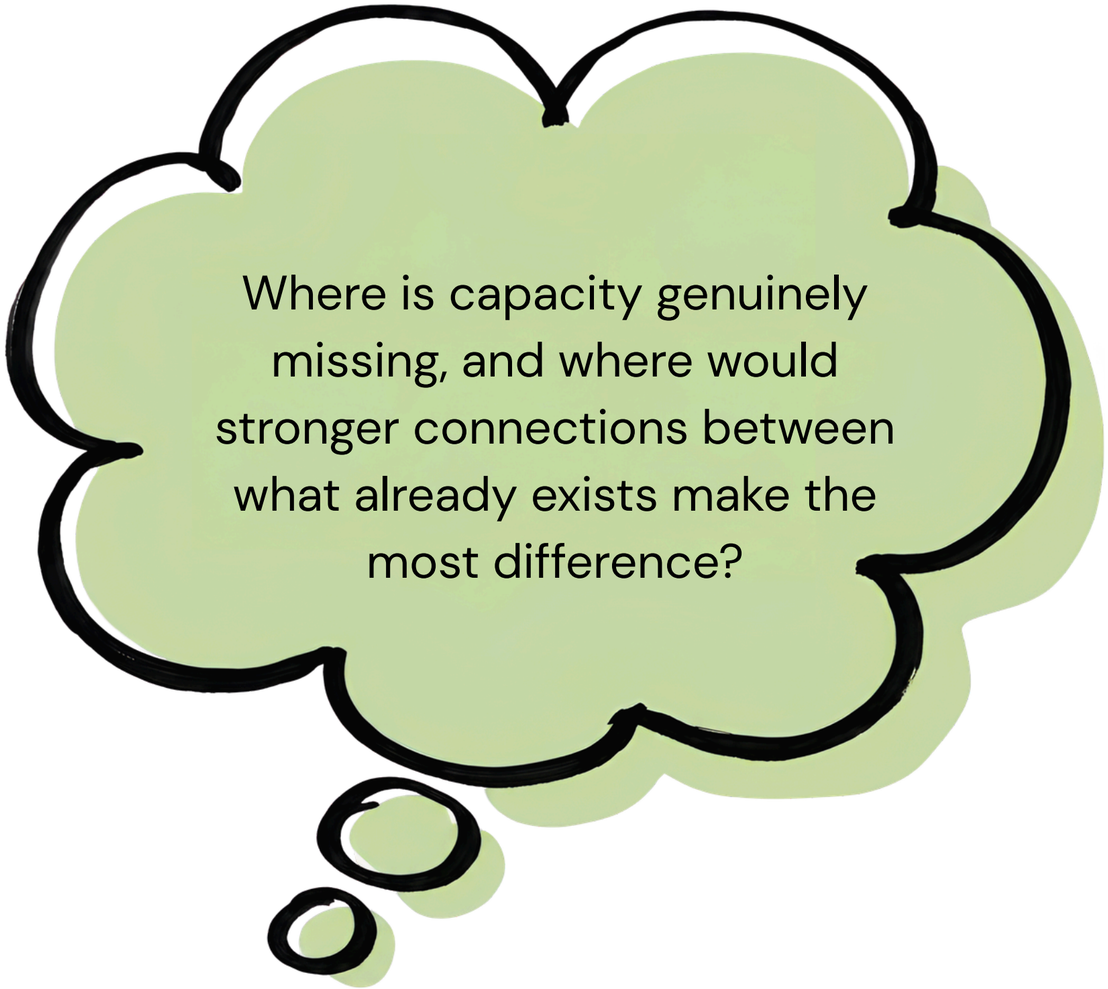
Hypothesis:
Working with others, Verture could focus on the functions and connections that remain weak once the emerging infrastructure is clearer, rather than replicating evidence, learning or network functions already provided elsewhere.



3. The gap may be connection, rather than more infrastructure

England already has a lot of relevant activity, but it is uneven and poorly connected across places, sectors and levels. Creating another network risks adding another layer.

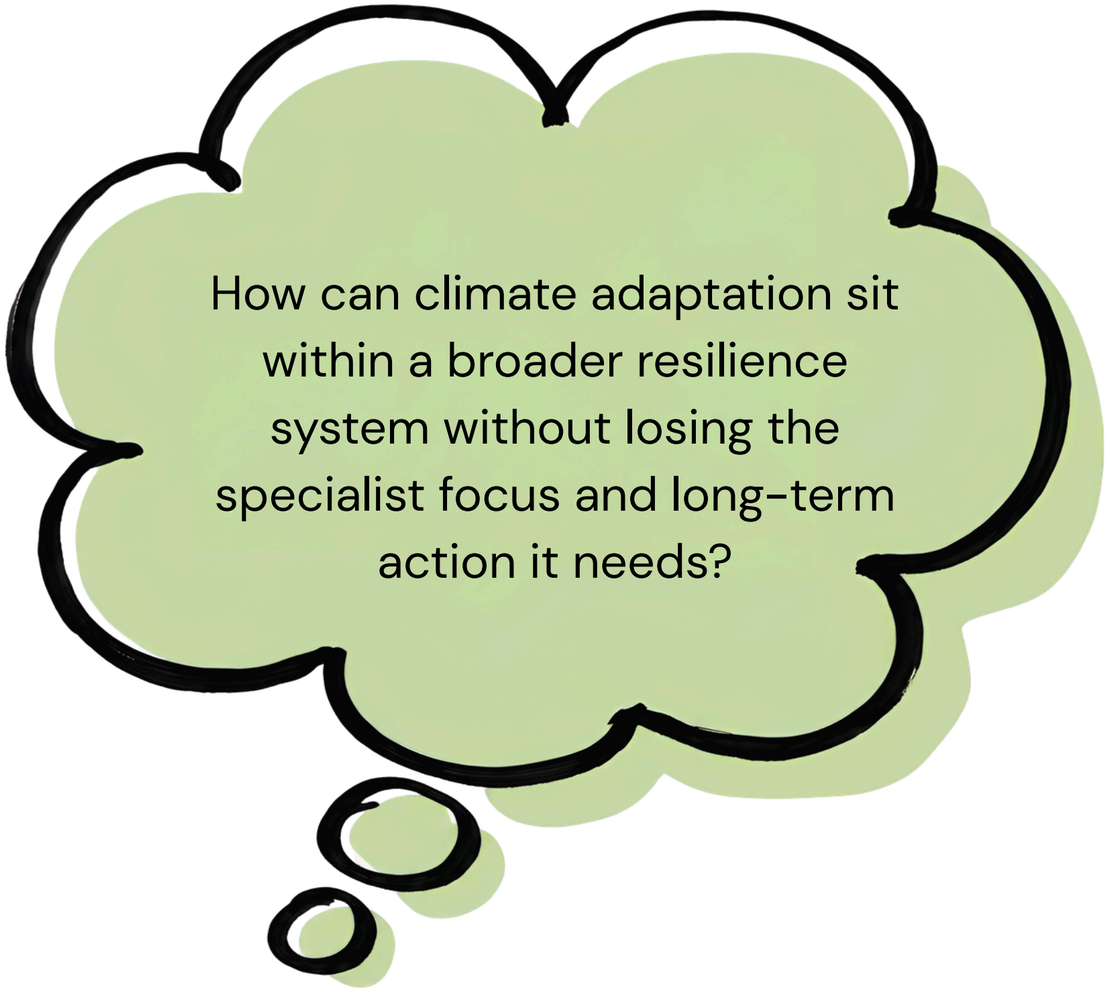
Hypothesis:
Working with others, Verture might add value by connecting and strengthening existing infrastructure, moving learning between places and helping organisations work across the gaps between community, regional and national action.



4. Climate adaptation and wider resilience need a better relationship

Climate adaptation and statutory resilience currently operate through different systems. A broader resilience frame can connect climate with wider social risks, but could also weaken the specific focus needed for long-term adaptation.

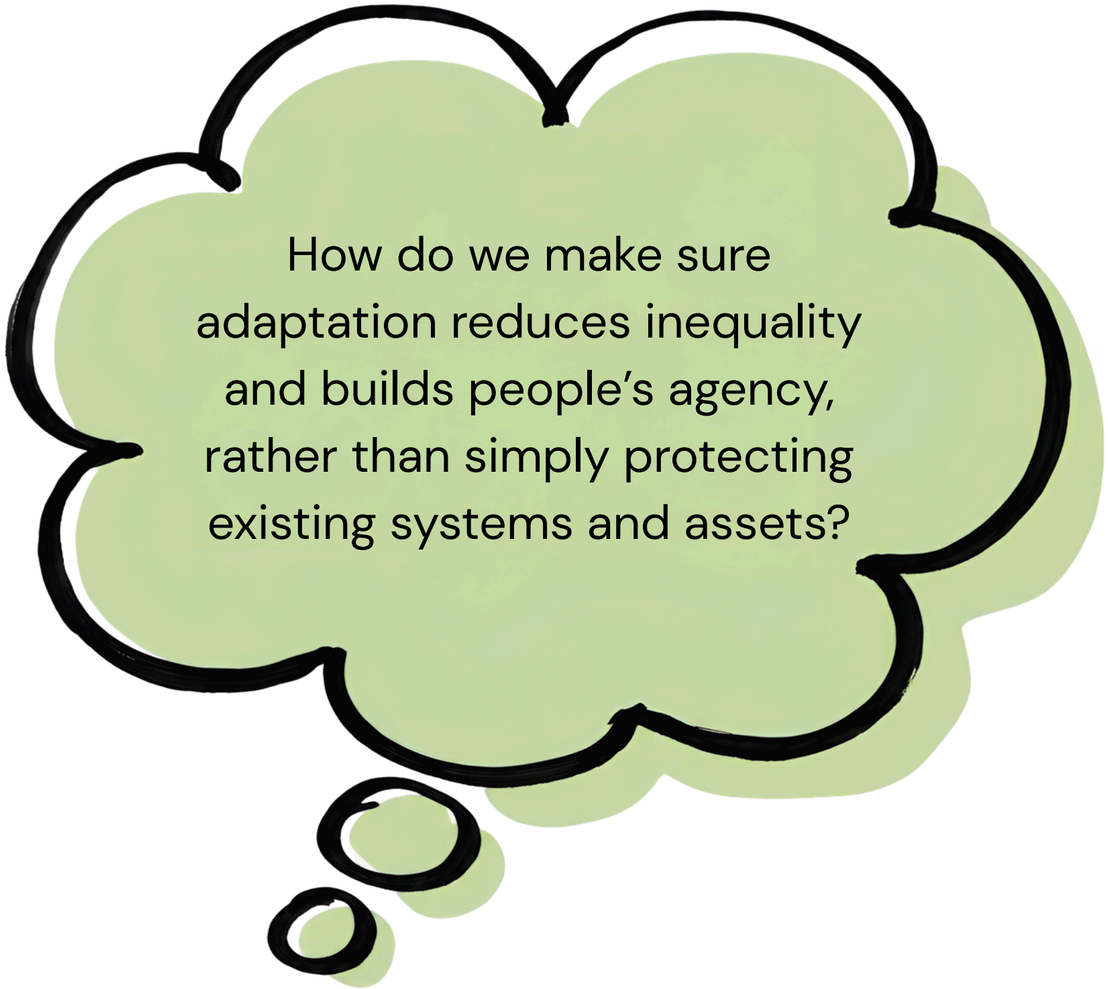
Hypothesis:
Working with others, Verture might help connect climate adaptation with wider resilience, bringing climate expertise into existing resilience structures while keeping longer-term adaptation visible.



5. Just Resilience needs to shape how adaptation happens

Climate impacts fall hardest on people already facing disadvantage, but adaptation can also shift costs, risks and responsibility onto those with least power. Protecting an asset or service is not necessarily the same as building wider resilience.

Hypothesis:
Working with others, Verture could bring its Just Resilience approach into adaptation decisions, helping partners consider who benefits, who carries risk, who has power and whether interventions improve people's lives as well as reducing climate risk.



Interested in partnership working? Or have reflections to share?

The team will be reaching out to potential partners. We would be delighted to hear from organisations that would like to explore opportunities as a potential partner and/or funder.

To continue the conversation please contact Verture's CEO Jo Kerr: jo@verture.org.uk

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