

Case Study: Visualising Climate

Creative Associate Award

The Visualising Climate project involved workshops for students aged 16-18 to explore the potential for creative participatory processes to foster young people's sense of empowerment in communicating the climate emergency. The research project aimed to explore knowledge and awareness of the issues among young people from a diverse range of backgrounds and to elevate their voices. Alison Anderson, Professor of Sociology at the University of Plymouth, collaborated with Carey Marks from Scarlet Graphics to create a series of 20 visual aids depicting the causes and effects of climate change. During the workshops the young people were shown the visual aids and asked to prioritise them in terms of importance, which prompted the students to start discussing the issues. The project team saw the visual icons as key to engaging the students in discussions, particularly since they tend to get their information about climate change from video or image based social media platforms.

"I think using visual means to get young people to open up was really effective, particularly for the reason that they tend to source their information from highly visual media platforms." Professor Alison Anderson

"From my point of view, I feel those visual aids were imperative really. I don't think we would have got anything near as much unfolding of the narrative from the young people if it wasn't for those aids." Carey Marks

Creative partner James Ellwood from Fotonow CIC brought over a decade of experience working with young people to the project. James filmed the students' discussions and undertook individual interviews with the participants to explore their views on climate change in more depth to produce a film, due to be launched in spring 2022.

"The film process was crucial to the project outcomes." James Ellwood

The Impact

Professor Alison Anderson was invited to present the findings of the project at COP26, the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties in Glasgow in November 2021, which included snippets of the film produced by James Ellwood. The presentation was live streamed. This opportunity provided a platform to reach a wide-ranging audience and led to local, national and international media coverage. The Times



Photo credit: Carey Marks

Education Supplement covered Alison's presentation at COP26 and highlighted the need for schools to have more climate change education and the potential for this to be embedded in the curriculum and not confined to science and geography lessons.



Illustration credit: Carey Marks

Following on from her presentation at COP26, Professor Alison Anderson has shared the research findings at several events. She participated in the Communicating the Climate Crisis session which was aimed at young people discussing climate change at the Illuminate Festival held in Plymouth in November 2021. In January 2022 Alison hosted the webinar 'How do young people feel about the climate emergency?' part of the Future Plymouth 2030 webinar series. She took part in the University of Plymouth event Spillover 2022, a day of insightful discussions about creative interventions, innovation and sustainability and also presented the film from COP26 at the Festival of Tomorrow, an exhibition exploring the wonders of science, technology and research to share new discoveries, delivered in partnership with UK Research and Innovation (both in February 2022). She also submitted the research findings as evidence to the Environment and Climate Change Committee's inquiry on 'Mobilising action on climate change and environment: behaviour change'.

"I certainly think this funding, and also the wider media publicity, will really help in attracting future funding to do more around this area which has been incredibly beneficial to me." Professor Alison Anderson



Illustration credit: Carey Marks

All of the project team valued the experience of being part of the Creative Associate Awards. Professor Alison Anderson is planning to build on this research project further, with the research contributing to an impact case study for the Research Excellence Framework (REF). Both Carey Marks and James Ellwood plan to continue to collaborate with academic colleagues in the future.

"I think it is a valuable fund and was a great experience personally, and for the organisation working with academics. I will continue to be open to that collaboration." James Ellwood



Illustration credit: Carey Marks