

The VONNE Climate Project

Becoming England's Greenest Region

Progress Report at six months

1st December 2019

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Contact

Allison Madine
Project Support
VONNE Climate Project
Allison.madine@vonne.org.uk
0191 233 2000

¹ Endnotes to this section can be found at the back of the Progress Report as a whole.

Preface

Climate change is the defining issue of our time. In the future we will all be judged personally by how we responded at this time, when the impact of doing nothing has become crystal clear. The duty lies on us all – in the voluntary, public or private sectors, and in our own lives, to create a meaningful response. This report, six months after the VONNE Board agreed to engage with the climate crisis, sets out how we and our partners across civil society have risen to that challenge.

The Voluntary Organisations Network North East (VONNE) is the region's support body for the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector. It represents over 1200 member charities, voluntary organisations, community groups, networks and social enterprises across the region. The VONNE Climate Project has been initiated with two distinct but overlapping elements..

First, to research whether there could be a willingness across the public and private sectors to join with Civil Society across the region to create a strategic Regional coalition to address the triple challenges of climate crisis, ecology breakdown and the need for a just transition to a new low carbon economy. If so, to develop *a statement of shared ambition* to be launched in November 2020 at the time of the 26th UN Conference of the Parties (COP26) (under the UK's Presidency in Glasgow).

Secondly, to create a programme of action by Civil Society within and between communities to maximise the impacts our own sector can make within the coalition over the coming decade to address the 'triple challenge'.

Our region had a unique role in developing the engineering technologies – in deep mining, the railways and the generation and distribution of electrical power from coal fired power stations - that 'released the genie of coal in the world'. Today we argue that this unique heritage in the causes of the current crisis gives us a duty to set the highest possible bar for our response to it, and an opportunity for our voice to be heard nationally and internationally.

The public and private sectors have proved willing to work with us. So now we are looking to consolidate and formalise the coalition, and accelerate our work to develop our civil society programme.

In early Spring we will launch our *Project Prospectus*, setting out the process that will lead to our *Regional Climate Conference* in November and *statement of shared ambition for the North East*.

Sir Paul Ennals

Chair, Voluntary Organisations Network North East (VONNE)

1] Introduction

1.1] The preliminary research and consultation that led to VONNE's creation of its Climate Project was undertaken independently and informally by Peter Stark OBE between January and June 2019. The conclusions of the research are set out in the Background paper that is at **Section 3** of this report.

1.2] In June the VONNE Board accepted Peter's analysis and commissioned the further background research and consultation within its own constituency in 'open access workshops' throughout the Region and initial soundings with key potential partners over the summer months and then early autumn (**Section 4**). During this period '10 subsidiarity tests' that the region-wide dimension of the Climate Project had to meet were also developed and tested.

1.3] By September there was sufficient agreement from the VONNE constituency and from its partners on the 'Why?', some of the 'What?' and – in agreeing the subsidiarity tests - some of the 'How?' of the project to initiate more formal consultation. This phase of work also preliminarily identified and gained in principle support from key strategic 'coalition partners' and the 'delivery partners' who would be the enabling agents of connection and support to community-led activity on the ground in localities and sub-sectors.

1.4] During the autumn those formal consultations with strategic partners continued to the point where, in November, the VONNE Annual Conference (with Climate Change as its theme) was able to be told that the second phases of work could now begin, with consolidation and formalisation of the Regional Climate Coalition on the one hand and the development of themes and action plans for the Civil Society Programme to 2025 and 2030 on the other. (**Section 5**).

1.5] The autumn also generated an additional opportunity for the Climate Project with the announcement of the creation of a £100m Climate Action Fund by the National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF). The aim of the new fund is to 'reduce the carbon footprint of communities' and 'to support up to 15 place-based community-led partnerships to make the changes in their community they believe will have the biggest impact on climate change' as well as providing an initial base for a 'broader movement of change (that) will enable communities to do this within and beyond the communities' funded. Funding of up to £2.5m over five years could be available for a small number of the first phase projects with partnerships and programmes in place and with development funding available to others

1.6] It is in this context that the work of the winter will be to consolidate the coalition and to research and listen to climate and environmental community-based activists and projects. Working together we will develop themes and programmes across the region, across sectors within civil society and with links to the programmes of strategic partners within the wider coalition of public and private sector authorities, agencies and institutions.

1.7] As background for this next phase of work, **sections 6, 7 and 8** report on current thinking on a Programme Framework, on a governance and delivery structure and on Resources.

2] Executive Summary

Introduction

Climate change is the defining issue of our time. In the future we will all be judged personally by how we responded at this time, when the impact of doing nothing has become crystal clear. The duty lies on us all – in the voluntary, public or private sectors, and in our own lives - to create a meaningful response.

The VONNE Climate Project has two aims. First, to create a strategic Regional coalition to address the climate crisis, ecology breakdown and the need for a just transition to a new economy. We are convening the voluntary, private and public sectors across the region and across sectors to create a *shared and positive vision* for our region in the 2030s and *a statement of shared ambition* for the journey to realise it. Secondly, we are evolving within Civil Society our own *programme of action* ‘within, between and beyond’ communities to maximise the climate impacts we can make.

Our climate in crisis and our ecology breaking down

2.1] The UN Katowice Conference of the Parties (COP) on Climate Change (COP24) confirmed the targets for greenhouse gas reductions by 2030 established in Paris in 2015, and these are due to be reported against at COP26 in Glasgow in November 2020. Those targets – intended to achieve net zero emissions and limit global warming to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels by 2050 - were the minimum thought to be required to avoid catastrophic environmental damage by then and disaster by 2100. The UN report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services of May this year found that 1 million species are at risk of extinction, with climate change a significant factor

2.2] The UN International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report to COP24 indicated, however, that current trends had the world on track to increases of between 3 and 5 degrees. There is now one year in which to agree to act (and to begin acting) decisively to reverse the trajectory of emissions growth if this future for our children and grandchildren is to be avoided.

The North East’s contribution to the crises

2.3] It is sobering that circa 50% of the greenhouse gases now in the atmosphere have been produced in the 50 years since the science demonstrating their impact was available. A substantial part of the balancing 50% was released during the earlier years of the Industrial Revolution that began in the North East of England in the Derwent Valley at the end of the 17th century.

2.4] North East England is essentially the historic counties of Northumberland and Durham reaching from the Tweed to the Tees Valley. The Region is divided by the River Tyne but underpinned and profoundly connected for over 300 years – literally, economically, culturally, socially and politically – by the Great Northern Coalfield. Across those three centuries, that coalfield produced hundreds of millions of tons of coal with many multiples of that extracted and burnt in the UK and then more multiples again around the world.

2.5] The Region's engineer entrepreneurs of the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries developed and exported deep mining technology to get the coal, the railways to transport it and then the coal fired power stations to convert steam power to electricity and grid systems to deliver it to homes and factories. The Region's pits were essentially closed before the evidence of linkage to global warming was fully in place, but it was the engineers of North East England 'who released the genie of coal into the world'.

An unjust transition

2.6] The drive and entrepreneurial and engineering genius of these men transformed the world, but the industries also exacted a high price from the workforce, their families and the communities of the Region. As for the population, so for the environment. Using the phrase coined this century by Naomi Klein, the mining communities of the North East lived in the first 'sacrificial land'.

2.7] These conditions provoked, in turn, exceptional community solidarity, a vibrant working-class culture and a radical politics. The political movements in turn took control of local government in the early 20th century and were able to pioneer policies and implement them in housing, education, health, welfare and economic development well in advance of (and later alongside) national government.

2.8] Finally, between 1970 and the millennium, the Region lost (net) nearly 300,000 jobs in industrial production including power and mining at an average of 10,000 a year, as the North East of England became one of the world's first post-industrial regions. First in and early out, and now with hard won experience of the consequences for society, economy, communities and culture of such a sudden and traumatic loss of jobs and specialist knowledge, in an unjust transition to an insecure and too often impoverished future.

Making the connection

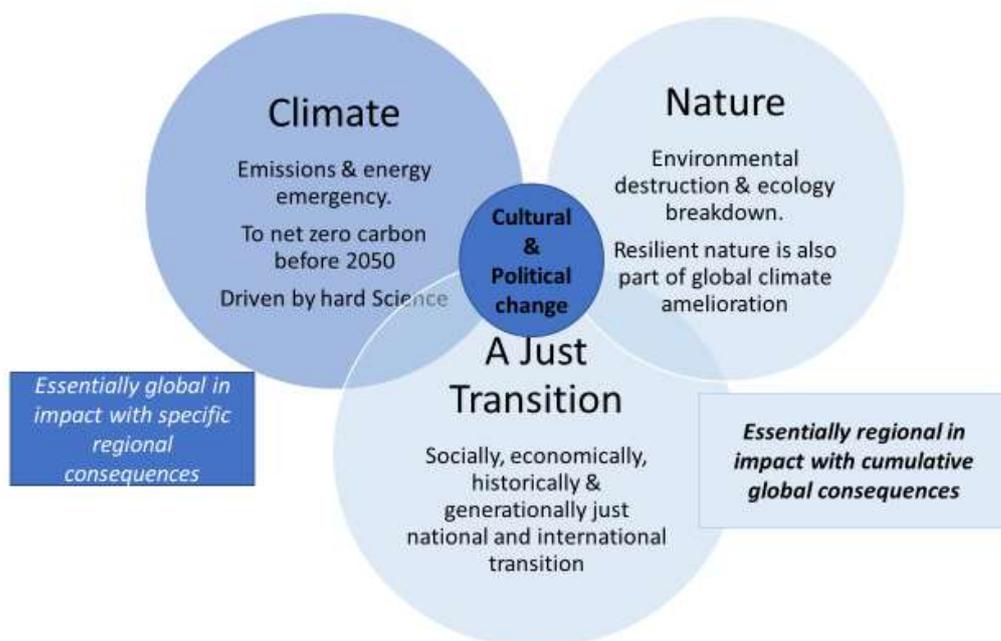
2.9] The VONNE Climate Project makes the connection between these histories and the challenges the Region – and the world - now faces. We believe that power can be drawn from the past to provide the energy to achieve both the radical targets needed for the reduction of emissions and energy and, this time, a 'just transition' to a sustainable, greener future for the whole Region.

2.10] If these twin objectives can be achieved – and we have accepted that our history gives us a duty to try - then the North East's unique role in the causes of climate change and its early experience of environmental restitution could enable it to set a standard for English Regions in pursuit of national and international targets.

2.11] The VONNE Climate Project has, therefore, been initiated by Civil Society in the North East of England to create a strategic coalition that brings together the voluntary, private and public sectors around a shared vision for our region in the 2030s. We will collaborate in the creation of such a unifying long-term vision and create our own programme to help to realise it. We have developed 'ten subsidiarity tests' to ensure that we focus regionally on what can be uniquely and best done in that space between the national and the local. (see 3.8 below)

2.12] We adopt a three-part framework for our address to the global, national and regional challenge: Climate crisis; ecology breakdown, and the necessity for a just transition to a low carbon and environmentally sustainable future. We recognise the scale of the changes that will be required from us individually and collectively in our personal lives and communally as well as regionally, nationally and internationally. We note that the responsibility to deliver the necessary reductions in global greenhouse gases must lie primarily with national governments working collectively.

Towards a Project Framework



Vision and Mission

2.13] Our vision is of a North East in the late 21st and 22nd centuries that can still be a sustainable, environmentally and culturally diverse and rich, just, economically resilient and beautiful place in which to enjoy long and well lived lives. A home we will be proud to have passed on to our successors. We recognise that to achieve this we will need the same community-based action, radical public politics and policies, and entrepreneurial and engineering innovation that informed our past. We have now tested a distillation of this vision in a mission that sees the North East:

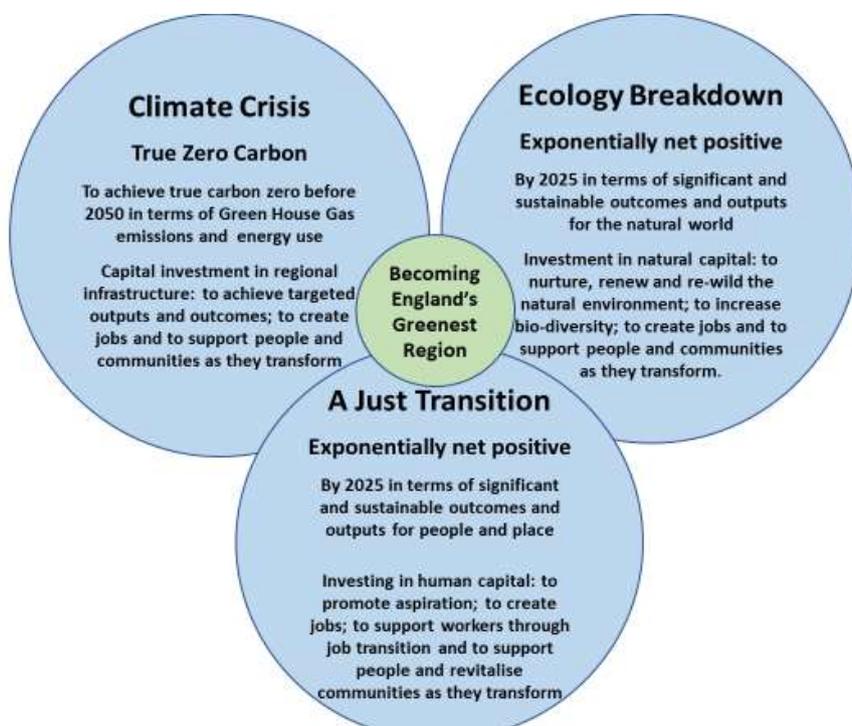
‘Becoming England’s Greenest Region’

2.14] Testing the idea indicated that it was believable and achievable (by defensible measurements) and – perhaps more importantly – it provoked warm recognition in individuals and smaller organisations that this was an ambition all could identify with and see that they had a contribution to make. Beyond that, there was the realisation that – when all such smaller local and sectoral actions were accumulated – the overall impact would be significant and would reflect the ‘duty’ our history gave us to seek to address the climate crisis ambitiously by 2030.

2.15] More importantly it could strengthen the cases for funding made by the structural partners who are particularly focused on attracting additional investment (largely from national sources) for:

- the reduction of emissions and energy use and infrastructure investment (e.g. LEPs, Local Government, Industry and major holders of the public estate such as HE and the NHS);
- bio-diversity and investment in natural capital (e.g. Nature Partnerships, Wildlife Trusts, Farming and Forestry) and
- supporting people and communities through transition to a low carbon future with investment in human capital (e.g. Health and Wellbeing, Social Care, Education and Training and local communities).

A possible Programme Framework



Who is already involved?

2.16] VONNE has initiated formal consultations with its own 1,200 member organisations and with the following potential strategic partners. All have offered support in principle with action in hand where necessary to secure more formal and practical engagement. (See section 3)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEOs of all 12 NE Local Authorities and 3 Combined Authorities • The NE Local Enterprise Partnerships • The Tees Valley Local Enterprise Partnership • The Environment Agency • The Health Strategy Group, Integrated Care system (CCGs, Hospitals, Public Health) • Schools North East (linked to 1,150 schools) • HE via Sustainability leads and a first group of Research institutes/departments • CBI, Chamber of Commerce and FSB • Regional TUC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The North East England Nature Partnership • The Tees Valley Nature Partnership • Groundwork NE & Cumbria • Youth Focus North East • Climate Action North • Northumberland Wildlife Trust • Durham Wildlife Trust • Tees Valley Wildlife Trust • Social Action Leaders Network • North East Cultural Partnership • NewcastleGateshead Initiative • The Common Room - NEIMME • Redhills – Durham Miners Association
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2.17] The project is currently driven ‘pro bono’ by the VONNE Project Review Group with a small number of hours contracted by VONNE to provide support to coalition consolidation, our own Programme development and a Project administrator. Some limited bridging finance has been received (from the Tyne & Wear Community Foundation and North of England Commissioning Support – NECS), and more is now sought for the coming six months..

What Happens Next?

2.18] We will produce a **Prospectus** for our project as a whole and for our programme in 2020 and 2021 (the year of the UK's Presidency of the COP) that we plan to launch – with the support of all partners - in the early spring (hopefully coinciding with the Government's Green UK week), drawing on the discussions with strategic partners and workshops with Civil Society over the winter.

2.19] The Prospectus will also set out our intention to produce a '**Statement of Ambition for the NE in 2030**' for the Region to launch at a Regional Climate Conference timed for just before COP26 in Glasgow in November 2020, when the UK assumes the COP Presidency through 2021. We have already begun work on the 'metrics/targets' that will underpin that ambition and that will be reported against annually thereafter.

2.20] During the coming months – reference timetables in Section 5 - we will be discussing, confirming and implementing the governance structures for the programme with our strategic partners and developing our resources.

2.21] We are in touch with Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) on their evolving plans for a nationwide and 'whole society' COP programme (sometimes called a celebration or festival) that will run in the build up to the COP and then for the following year. We intend and hope to play a significant part in that programme.

2.22] We have particularly welcomed the decision of the National Lottery Community Fund to establish a £100m and 10-year Climate Action Fund and we have submitted information on the evolution of our project to date and our ambitions for the future to them. We anticipate being able to make a substantial application to this fund in early 2020 with a decision in the early summer.

Governance and Delivery Structure

2.23] Until early in the New Year the current ad hoc Project Review Group will continue with new members as new partners become involved. We now envisage a structure for governance and delivery as set out in more detail in section 7 which can be summarised:

- a) a high-level Steering Group - convened by VONNE on behalf of Civil Society - on which our Regional 'Structural' partners from the public and private sectors would be represented
- b) an interim Project Management Group drawn from senior officers appointed by Steering Group members and charged with overseeing the development of the Prospectus.
- c) a small Executive core (perhaps a Director, an administrator and some PR/Comms and research capacity) charged with those core aspects of programme best undertaken regionally e.g. the Climate Conference or the production of region-specific learning materials or the operation of the Project's 'on-line' presence.
- d) Possibly three main programme co-ordinating groups reflecting the Programme Framework with memberships that reflected the responsibilities of each sub-programme.
- e) VONNE's own programme of civil-society-led action, developed collaboratively with the sector, providing the direct links to the 'local' and supporting 'people in the lead' at that level.

3] The Proposition

North East England and the climate crisis. From cause to effect

A] Climate Change and the future of our world

The UN Katowice Conference on Climate Change (COP24) confirmed the targets for greenhouse gas reductions by 2030 established in Paris in 2015 and due to be reported against at COP26 in November 2020. Those targets – intended to achieve net zero emissions and limit global warming to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels by 2050 - were the minimum thought to be required to avoid catastrophic environmental damage by then and disaster by 2100. The UN International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report to COP24 indicated, however, that current trends had the world on track to increases of between 3 and 5 degrees. There were, then, two years to act decisively to reverse the trajectory of emissions growth if this future for all of those who follow us was to be avoided.

It is of grave concern that, as it continues to be published, new research confirms both that the Paris targets are now inadequate and that far too many (and too many of them major) national contributors to greenhouse gases are falling far behind their own targets. Faced by this global climate emergency, national governments are too often objectively in default and politically in denial.

The IPBES report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services of May this year found that 1 million species are at risk of extinction with climate change a significant factorⁱ. The IPCC report on the Oceans and Cryosphere (now published) paints a similar if not darker picture in relation to the warming of the oceans, the thawing of permafrost and the loss of ice cover.

The IPCC report on Land and Food security (just published) details how a vicious cycle is underway, where degradation of land through intense farming, coupled with deforestation to free up more land for agriculture, is fuelling the release of more greenhouse gas emissions which in turn is driving further land degradation. If demand for food, animal feed and water continues to increase, combined with more resource-intensive systems of consumption and production, the world will be at severe risk of declining crop yields, increased food commodity prices, reduced nutrition, and potentially major disruptions to food supply chains. The report argues the need to immediately ramp up protection for existing forests and other carbon sinks, reduce food waste, and rapidly shift diets towards more plant-based eating if this downward spiral is to be broken.

This accumulating evidence led the UN Secretary General to convene a Climate Summit (21st to 23rd September 2019). He called on all leaders to come to New York with specific, realistic plans to enhance their nationally determined contributions by 2020, in line with reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 45 per cent over the next decade, and to net zero emissions by 2050. By the time of COP25 (currently still scheduled for December 2019 after Chile's withdrawal), more will be known and with more certainty about the scale and imminence of the new and greater challenges that will exist by then to our climate, bio-diversity and ecosystems, the world's capacity to rise to them and the role of COP26 in co-ordinating a global response.

B] How did we get here and what part did the North East play?

It is sobering that circa 50% of the greenhouse gases now in the atmosphere have been produced in the 50 years since the science demonstrating their impact was available. A substantial part of the balancing 50% was released during the earlier years of the Industrial Revolution that began in the North East of England at the end of the 17th century. The spread of ‘carboniferous capitalism’ around the world in the 19th and 20th centuries appeared to offer the prospect of cheap energy, power and prosperity for all but – as is now known - at a potentially deadly price.

North East England is essentially the historic counties of Northumberland and Durham reaching from the Tweed to the Tees Valley. The Region is divided by the River Tyne but underpinned and profoundly connected for over 300 years – literally, economically, culturally, socially and politically – by the Great Northern Coalfield. Across those three centuries, that coalfield produced millions of tons of coal with many multiples of that extracted and burnt in the UKⁱⁱ and around the world using technologies developed here. The Region’s pits were essentially closed before the evidence of linkage to global warming was fully in place, but it was the engineers of North East England ‘who released the genie of coal into the world’ⁱⁱⁱ.

C] Three centuries of North East engineering and innovation

At the end of the 17th century the Region was the first in the world to enter the Industrial Revolution, with 1,000 men employed on weekly wages at Crowley’s Iron works in the Derwent Valley creating the world’s first industrial proletariat^{iv}.

At the start of the 18th century steam power was located on a major coal field to drain the mines for the first time (at Tanfield Lee 1715), and over 1 million tons p.a. was being extracted, used and exported to London and Europe via a network of waggon ways, keels and sailing colliers.

At the beginning of the 19th century production of coal stood at 4.5 million tons p.a. with a regional workforce of 12,000. Mr. Craigg’s Academy at Crawcrook was producing a cohort of innovators, entrepreneurs and engineers^v who would sink the world’s first deep pit (at Hetton-le-hole 1820^{vi}), ally it to the first steam railways (George and Robert Stephenson) and steam colliers (Charles Palmer), found the North of England Institute of Mining Engineers (Nicholas Wood) and enable mining to take off exponentially around the world.

At the beginning of the 20th century coal production peaked at 56.4 million tons p.a. with a workforce of 230,000 and the Mining Institute had 2,300 members with 45% of them working abroad. Electricity was lighting the region’s houses and streets (Swan).

Three phase electrical power was delivered to heavy industry for the first time in the world in 1901 (at the Neptune Yard Wallsend). Then, thanks to steam turbines (Charles Parsons), switchgear (Alphonse Reyrolle), boilers and pumps (William Clarke & Abel Chapman) and the prototype of the National Grid (Charles Merz). Coal fired Power Stations and the infrastructure to fuel them and distribute their output were being exported globally.

For the centrality of the Region and its coal to the Industrial Revolution to be apparent, the glass, gas, iron, chemical, lead, steel, armaments, fishing, bridge and ship building industries (and more) need to be added with a particular focus later in the 20th century on the growth of petro-chemical industries in the Tees Valley.

D] The price paid by families and the environment

The drive and entrepreneurial and engineering genius of these men transformed the world, but the industries also exacted a high price from the workforce, their families and the communities of the Region. It was only in 1830 that Hepburn's strike secured a reduction in the length of shifts for boys (as young as 8) underground from 17 hours to 12 hours, and there are records of over 24,000 deaths in disasters and accidents during the life of the Great Northern Coalfield^{vii}.

Disabling injuries were common underground resulting in destitution and homelessness for the families and industrial diseases and grindingly hard labour (in the home as well as in industry) also caused early incapacity and death. In the 1920s, Dr Henry Mess carried out a survey of the industrial areas for the Tyneside Social Services Committee and charted the worst levels of TB and life expectancy and the poorest housing conditions in the UK.

As for the population, so for the environment. In the early 18th century Defoe commented upon the smoke from the fires at salt pans at South Shields that he had seen from South of Durham and from Berwick and by the 1840s the South Shields Chartists were protesting against the industrial pollution that was causing their garden crops, lawns and hedges to die. In 1860 there are the first records of trees dying because of acid rain.

By the time of J.B. Priestley's English Journeys in 1932 he describes Shotton, beneath its tip, as a 'Pompeii' with the whole village and everyone in it 'buried in a thick sulphurous reek'. By 1981, it was estimated that 66 million tonnes of colliery waste had been tipped on the black beaches of Durham affecting marine life over four miles out. Using the phrase coined this century by Naomi Klein^{viii}, the mining communities of the North East lived in the first 'sacrificial land'.

E] A response in communitarian values and a radical politics

These conditions provoked, in turn, exceptional community solidarity, a vibrant working-class culture and a radical politics: whether the earliest articulations of Human Rights (Thomas Spence); 'Physical Force Chartism' (Crowley's Crew's support of Harney); Republicanism (Joseph Cowen); trade unionism (Thomas Hepburn and William Crawford) or internationalism (Nobel Laureate Arthur Henderson). Local women were at the forefront of the campaign to abolish slavery (the Quakers Elizabeth Pease and Anna Richardson) and the region's formidable (radical and militant) suffragette movement played a major role in the battle for electoral equality (Emily Davison, Mona Taylor, Ethel Williams and women's organisations throughout the coalfield). During the 20th century the North East became a Labour Party fortress.

The political movements in turn took control of local government in the early 20th century and were able to pioneer policies and implement them in housing, education, health, welfare and economic development well in advance of (and later alongside) national government. Structural innovation in the Region continued before and after the world wars and then nationalisation in such areas as industrial estates (Team Valley), council housing (Gateshead), resettlement to smaller 'County' new towns and Regional Economic Development (NEDC).

Finally, between 1970 and the millennium, the Region lost (net) nearly 300,000 jobs in industrial production including power and mining at an average of 10,000 a year^{ix}, as the North East of England became the world's first post-industrial region. First in and first out, and now with hard won experience of the consequences for society, economy, communities and culture of such a sudden and traumatic loss of jobs and specialist knowledge^x, in an unjust transition to an insecure and too often impoverished future.

F] Making the connection

The challenges the Region now faces require the same combination of engineering innovation and radical approaches to politics and to social and economic policy that informed its history. Can power be drawn from those histories to achieve both the radical targets needed for emissions and energy and, this time, a 'just transition'^{xi} to a sustainable, greener future that also addresses the inherited foundations of inequality?

If these twin objectives can be achieved, then the North East's unique role in the causes of climate change and its early experience of environmental restitution^{xii} could enable it to become a natural gathering place for future debates on policy and practice and an active participant in them.

G] An international and regional framework and 'base' timetable

Given the global and international nature of the challenges and the centrality of the UN to their address, the UN and IPCC timetables and conclusions suggest themselves as a framework. That, in turn, produces a regional focus on COP26 in 2020 where national Climate Change targets for action by 2030 (if global warming is to be controlled sufficiently by 2050) established after the Paris Agreement in 2015 will be reviewed and reset. We also draw on the UK CCC and annual State of Nature Report as sources for our minimum targets.

COP26 will be convened in November 2020 and it is now confirmed that the UK will host the event in Glasgow and then assume the COP Presidency for 2021. This provides added support and momentum for the idea that a related North East event could be convened around the time of the main Conference and look forward to targets for the region to be achieved in the critical decade to 2030 and, beyond, to 2050.

4] Who is involved so far?

4.1] Beginning the process of consultation in civil society rather than local government was suggested by the austerity-caused loss of the Association of North East Councils (ANEC) which had brought all 12 local authorities together to work collectively on a wide range of issues. ANEC's pioneering and substantial work on environmental and green issues in the early 2000s, working through Climate NE, had been celebrated internationally for its collective leadership in the field.

4.2] The 12 Local Authorities in the region now work together in three separate Combined Authorities, North of the Tyne (NoTCA), South of the Tyne (NECA) and in the Tees Valley, with the first and last also having directly elected Mayors. The political leaders of the Authorities are also all members of the Boards of the two Local Enterprise Partnerships, one covering both North and South of the Tyne and the other the Tees Valley.

4.3] The base in and leadership role of Civil Society and VONNE (with 1200 members) provides a route to the population as a whole through a range of interest/issue/subject based organisations, but it is Local Authorities that can guarantee the route to the whole population through their geographical remits and it is Local Government collectively that can bestow representative democratic legitimacy on our project.

4.4] Sir Paul Ennals has now met with the Chief Executives of all of the Region's Local Authorities, and soundings are being taken by the Chief Executives with their political leaders around four propositions:

- that VONNE's analysis and initiative be supported
- that the right scale for the issue of Climate Change to be addressed is the whole NE Region i.e. all twelve authorities together and possibly using the formal ANEC structure (which still exists) to do so.
- that 'Becoming England's Greenest Region' could provide an effective 'campaign' within which to 'set' local government's own work (75% of our Authorities have now declared a Climate Emergency)
- that they combine to be represented on the intended Project Steering Group

4.5] The VONNE CEO, Carol Botten, has met with the Chair and Chief Executive of the North East LEP and secured their warm support for the project. The Chief Officer of the Tees Valley LEP was consulted as part of the Local Government consultation. Both LEPs are now represented on the Project Review Group. The Regional Director of the Environment Agency has been briefed, has endorsed the project and has offered practical support.

4.6] The Regional Directors of the CBI, Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Businesses have met, endorsed the project and are represented on the Project Review Group. The TUC regionally is fully supportive and a representative of the RMT Union sits on the Review Group.

4.7] Beyond the principal representative bodies of the public and private sector above, consultation has also begun with other potential region-wide partners who have all offered support in principle and an intention to partner in practice.

- The Health Strategy Group of the Integrated Care System (ICS) involving the CEOs of all the Clinical Commissioning Groups of the region, all of the hospital trusts, Directors of Public Health and regional Public Health England.
- Schools North East (the only schools led regional network in the UK) providing a route to connection with the 1,150 schools in the Region
- Higher Education through the Region's Universities' Sustainability leads and some of their directly relevant specialist Research Centres and Institutes
- The cultural sector through the North East Cultural Partnership (which already works with and is supported by all 12 local authorities)

4.8] In the case of Civil Society itself, we are steadily building a network of potential 'programme delivery partners' to act as the key 'connectors between the strategic superstructure of region-wide bodies and the delivery that will take place at local level. Those involved already include:

- The North East England Nature Partnership
- The Tees Valley Nature partnership
- Groundwork NE & Cumbria
- Youth Focus North East
- Climate Action North
- Northumberland Wildlife Trust
- Durham Wildlife Trust
- Tees Valley Wildlife Trust
- Social Action Leaders Network
- North East Cultural Partnership
- NewcastleGateshead Initiative
- The Common Room/ North of England Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers
- Redhills/Durham Miners' Association

4.9] The two Nature Partnerships with their quasi-statutory status and coverage of the whole region, and Youth Focus North East with its focus on young people whose voices are less heard and regionwide coverage, will also play a role as 'strategic partners'.

4.10] Nationally, we are in touch with BEIS (the government's lead department for both climate change and the COP) and its plans for a 'Whole Society' and UK-wide programme (sometimes called a celebration or festival) in the run up to COP26 in Glasgow and then for the year of the UK Presidency in 2021. BEIS have recognised that the NE has a compelling story to tell and that we are well positioned to play a role in these programmes.

4.11] In the particular circumstances of the North East, this emerging 'superstructure' also provides the foundation upon which effective and trusted collaborations can be built within the ten 'subsidiarity tests' we have set ourselves.

The 10 subsidiarity tests for a Regional Project

Any regionwide project must:

1. create an overall and positive vision of the Region in the future that everyone – including recent arrivals without connection to our past - can identify with
2. give clear added value to delivery partners regionally, locally & across civil society 'sectors', attract resources (at scale) and achieve national and international profile that could only be achieved by a region-wide initiative
3. adopt clear and necessarily ambitious targets that can be monitored and evaluated. 'We commit to meet them and we intend to beat them'.
4. deliver programme elements that can best be delivered regionally and that would be beyond the capacity of individual 'sectors' or parts of the region acting alone
5. empower and support community and sectoral leaders and their organisations in achieving, together and 'within, between and beyond' their own communities, a truly inclusive programme and in particular
6. support young people to develop their 'agency' in addressing the future and assist their connection to the region's past

A regionwide programme should not proceed if:

7. it does not command sufficient support from key agencies and organisations
8. it is not achievable on the resources that could believably be available
9. what is achievable is not of a scale to match the scale of outcomes required by the scale of the challenges
10. what is achievable does not add enough value to what would have happened anyway to justify the cost (including time from those delivering what would have happened anyway)

5] What happens next?

Consolidating the Region's Climate Coalition

5.1] VONNE – through the Chair, CEO and Coalition Strategic Adviser - will lead on this dimension of our work with some additional contracted strategic support. Workstreams will include:

- Formal confirmation of 'sign up' to the project by strategic partners including preparation of a formal partnership agreement.
- Agreement to be appropriately represented on the intended Steering Group, Interim Project Management Group and Metrics Working Group (see Section 7)
- Confirmation of bridge funding and longer-term arrangements
- Testing whether the currently suggested '3 part' approach to the overall Regional programme (Section 6) will work and collecting, collating and aggregating the existing targets of partners within the region to address the triple challenge.
- Inputting to and making arrangements for the launch of the Project Prospectus in April.
- Liaising with BEIS on appropriate elements of the COP Presidency programme, particularly the 'Cities and Regions' strand, and promoting the region as a location for appropriate 'national' elements of that programme.

Civil Society element of the Region's overall programme

5.2] VONNE – through the Interim Project Programme lead – will initiate and develop this dimension of our work with some additional contracted research and delivery support.

Workstreams will include:

- Vision 2035. Developing out of civil society, across the region, sectors and generations a short statement of the kind of region we would want to bequeath to our successors in 2035 and beyond
- Further research on current levels of knowledge about the triple challenges within civil society in the region, existing programmes and ambitions to address them and thoughts as to how the region-wide programme might assist.
- Developing and testing an overall approach to this programme that could have national significance as an exemplar/beacon and major contributor to NLCF ambitions
- Preparing and submitting information and then an application to the NLCF Climate Action Fund and pursuing other funding opportunities best accessed at the regional level by the project.
- Inputting to and making arrangements for the launch of the Project Prospectus in April.
- Liaising with BEIS on appropriate elements of the COP Presidency programme – particularly the 'Civil Society and NGOs' strand and promoting the region as a location for appropriate 'national' elements of that programme.

Documentation

5.3] We anticipate the production of two substantial documents over the coming year.

The Project Prospectus

- Evolving from the consultations and discussions of the winter months we target an illustrated ‘prospectus’ of a programme for 2020 and 2021 that integrates a celebration of the work of our strategic partners (e.g. Local Authorities, LEAs, Hospital Trusts, Universities) with the community-based activities programme of civil society. The Prospectus will also set out the process we will use to produce our ‘Statement of Ambition’ for the Region in 2030.
- We anticipate a launch for the Prospectus in March and that it will be available to support our anticipated submission to the NLCF Climate Fund

‘Statement of Ambition’ for the North East in the 2030s and looking forward to 2050

- To address the all three parts of our challenge and for each of 2020/2021, to 2025, then to 2030 and thence to 2050. The launch of that Statement of Ambition and the Programme of Action to realise it would then form the substance of our Climate Conference at or around the time of the COP26 in Glasgow

Programme Structure 2020 and 2021

Phase 1 November 2019 to March 2020

- The development and launch of the Prospectus with strategic partners
- Winter Workshops programme evolving richness in our ‘Vision’ of the Region in 2030 and developing programme content and structure for our own programme rooted in Civil Society to help the Region get there.
- Widening and deepening engagement with current and potential delivery partners and – with and through them – with local communities

Phase 2 March/April – December 2020

a. Consolidation

aggregating and developing the Region’s ‘Statement of Ambition’ and 10-year Programme of Action for 2020 to 2030 including intermediate annual targets to 2025

b. Pilot and developmental programme begins at community level

beginning to implement/pilot the programme at community level throughout the North East through the network of regional/sub-regional/sectoral delivery partners and alongside the activities of strategic partners and as part of the official GB-wide COP26 programme

c. Regional Climate Conference

Delivering the launch event of our ‘Statement of Ambition’ to ‘become England’s Greenest Region’ by the 2030s in a Regional Climate Conference at or about the time of COP26 and in the context of National targets.

Phase 3 January to December 2021

Year One of the Regional programme in operation leading up to the second annual Regional Climate Conference at the time of COP27 to review Progress

6] Towards a Vision, Mission and Programme framework

Vision 2030

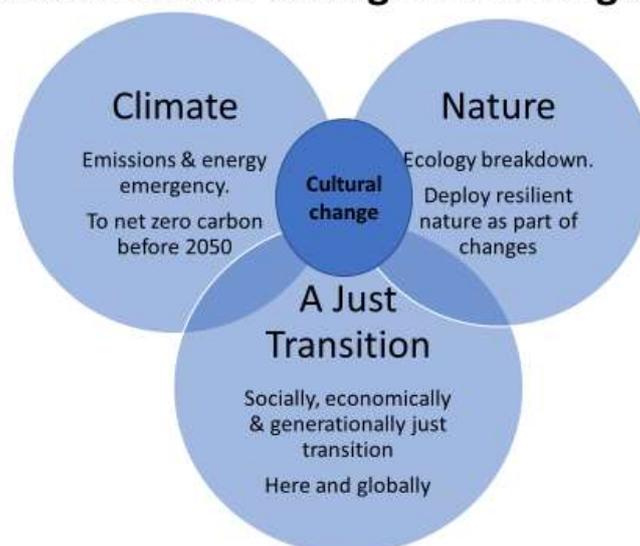
6.1] The Climate Change challenges are - necessarily in the UK and other developed nations – framed in terms of what we will all need to do less of, do very differently or not do at all. Our consultations to date have accepted this but have also argued for the need to offer a more positive picture of what a low-carbon North East could be like to live in.

6.2] The evolution of a draft statement of this Vision 2030 will be a central focus for the winter workshops and the Review Group. The current intention is to build it outwards from a picture of day-to-day life in a low carbon world but one where the necessary investments in regional capital infrastructure, the natural environment and preparations for a just transition have been made.

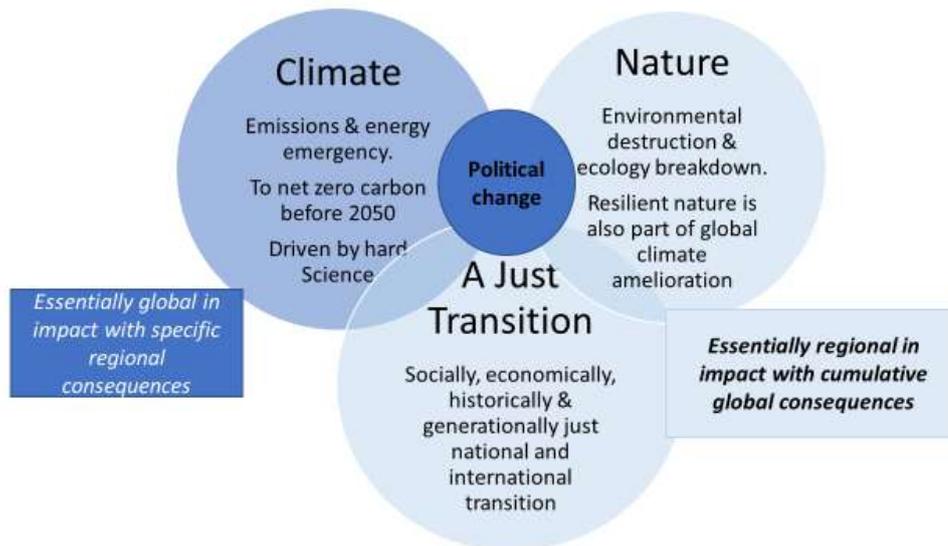
Mission

6.3] Throughout our consultative process we wrestled with the harsh reality that action at an individual, domestic or community level was – effectively – powerless to address the challenges of global climate crisis once what was possible was placed in juxtaposition to those challenges. We found a way forward when we began to realise the extent to which the action we could take to address the climate crisis was ‘different in kind’ to the actions we could take in relation to ecology breakdown and the achievement of a ‘just transition.

We started with a basic, three-part framework for thinking about Climate Change in the Region



We argued that Climate Change was 'different in kind' and not amenable to 'local' or even regional address



6.4] The emissions crisis is the single most important crisis facing us. If is not addressed effectively all of our efforts on the other 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals and in our own regions fall. Climate is a single, global, commons that has to be addressed internationally and with frightening urgency by national governments. There are now 15 months for nations to take action to reverse trajectories that are currently accelerating away from us.

6.5] This suggested that our project needed to help local organisations feel a connection to national and global campaigns to celebrate success, to call out vested interests delaying necessary action and encourage geo-political boldness but that, at the same time, we must also still do everything we can personally, locally and organisationally to reduce overall levels of consumption and net carbon footprints.

6.6] This implies a very major cultural change for us all, but perhaps a less dramatic shift for many people in the North East than in wealthier parts of the country. As with the UK so with the world. People and communities in the global north require far larger changes in their lives than those in the south who face the earliest and harshest consequences of insufficient action in the global north.

6.7] Given our unique history, the effective and ambitious action we now take on emissions and sequestration in the North East can contribute positively to national impetus on climate change. We can and should be pioneers again. Beyond this our focus can be on what we can achieve here to transform the way we live our lives well and the places we live them in. Could we find a simple statement of Mission that would unite and galvanise us?

6.8] In a meeting of the Review Group the chair of the North East England Nature Partnership (NEENP), Paul Brannen, suggested that the Region might have the capacity and natural assets to become - 'England's Greenest Region'.

6.9] Testing this on the road in workshops with a range of types and scales of civil society organisations there was a warm recognition that this was an ambition that all could identify with and see that they had a contribution that their organisation or project could make. Beyond that, there was the realisation that – when all of these smaller local and sectoral actions were accumulated – the overall impact would be significant nationally and would reflect the 'duty' our history gave us to seek to address the climate crisis ambitiously.

6.10] VONNE agreed to further exploration of the idea and to take it forward for testing in the next phase of formal structural consultation on the proposition that by, or before, 2030 the North East could commit to:

Becoming England's Greenest Region

6.11] That then mandated the need to ensure that that Mission connected strongly to all three dimensions of the climate, ecology and transitioning challenge. Could we construct a Programme Framework that would achieve this?

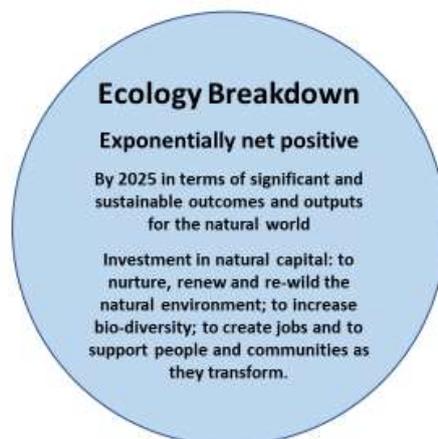
6.12] Input from Local Government led to the realisation that the common thread linking all three challenges was that of attracting an equitable and adequate level of capital and other investment from central government in programmes developed from deep knowledge of the specific circumstances of the Region. Adding that approach to our three challenge areas and ramping up our ambition to the achievement of 'True Zero Carbon'^{xiii} by 2050 produced the following three schematics using three different dimensions of capital investment.

What if our address to Climate Crisis was:



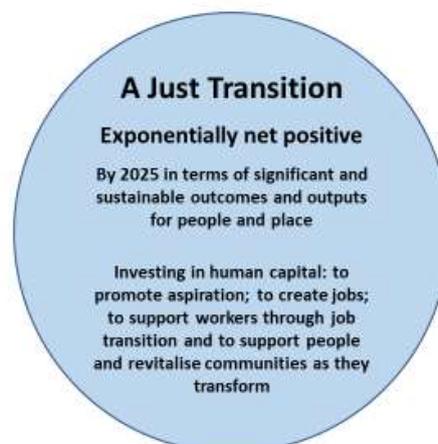
Investment in: Power generation, distribution, storage, insulation, housing, transport, industry, offices, public buildings, farming, digital, retail etc

That might produce this for Ecology Breakdown:



Investment in: land, rivers, sea and air, in farming, forestry and fisheries and in the natural environment in cities, towns, estates and villages

and this in terms of 'A Just Transition'

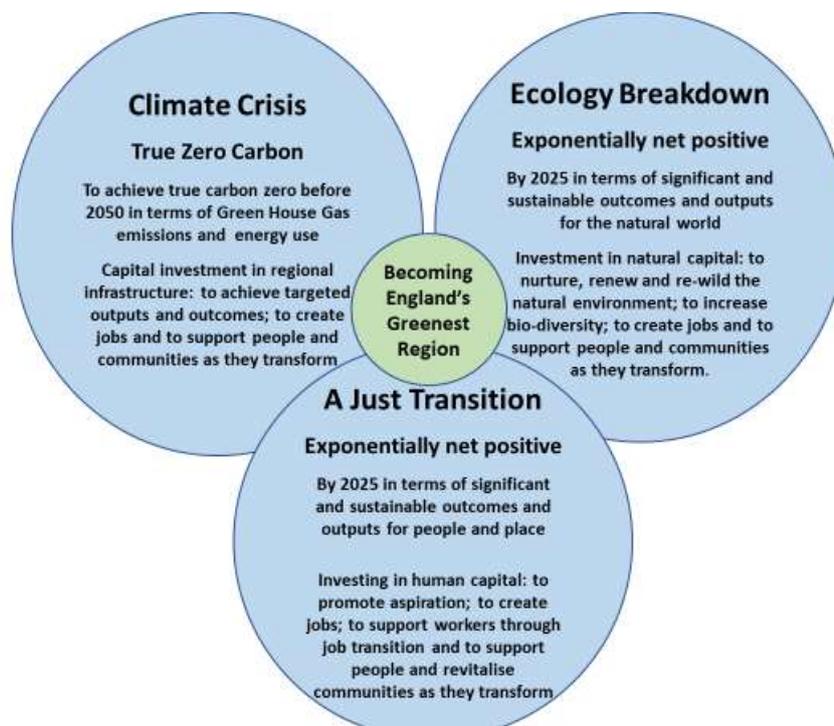


Investment in: Health and wellbeing; social care; education; skills and training; culture and heritage; local community facilities and the local environment

6.13] Bringing all three together seemed to create an image that illustrated the levels interconnectedness that we aspired to with the Mission located at the point of intersection. It also showed how a regionwide programme delivered by civil society at grass roots level could add value in all three areas of focus and act as a powerful force for collaboration and integration of effort.

6.14] Other synergies, such as those that could form around the export of products, technologies, expertise and knowledge and the attraction of students were also hinted at.

A possible programme framework



6.15] This in turn suggested a three-part structure for the development of our overall coalition programme in three 'Three Programme 'working groups'

- Infrastructure, Energy, Emissions and the Climate Crisis
- Natural Capital investment and Ecology Breakdown
- Human Capital investment and a Just Transition

Plus

- A cross-cutting civil society grouping charged with developing and delivering a region-wide programme of 'support for people and communities as they transform' and encouraging collaboration, sharing and learning
- An Evaluation Group charged with – inter alia - Development of Metrics and then 'internal audit'

6.16] Were the potential of such programmes to be invested in and realised then, perhaps, a title for our overall programme might justifiably be:

The North East Transformed

7] Towards a governance and delivery structure

Governance Structure

Project Steering Group

7.1] We currently anticipate a high-level Steering Group composed of our 'Structural Partners' such as the Local Authorities, Nature Partnerships, Local Enterprise Partnerships, Business Sector, TUC, Health Sector, Schools Sector etc. represented by political leaders and organisational 'chairs'. Clearly for many of these sectors, there would need to be a degree of consultation to arrive at a single representative, or alternates, (to make the Group manageable in size).

7.2] Such a high-level Steering Group would only be convened at the point that there was sufficient prospect of sufficient resources being available to develop and maintain a programme of sufficient scale (see the 10 tests at 4.8 above) to justify its creation

Interim Project Management Group

7.3] Over the coming months we will approach our 'structural partners' to nominate a senior officer to represent them on this group which would be charged – with any emerging Executive (below) and once sufficiently constituted – with developing the Project to the next stage.

Current Review Group

7.4] The current Review Group has provided an invaluable source of expertise and advice and its lack of a formal structure has enabled it to grow and flex as the Project has evolved. Current members have agreed to continue meeting monthly until early in the New Year.

Executive

7.5] In due course, we hope to be able to raise funding to appoint a small Executive core (perhaps a Director, an administrator and some PR/Comms and research capacity). As 'bridging' funds are raised, the current interim team will be able to be strengthened pro tem.

Programme delivery structure

7.6] Almost all of the work of VONNE's 1200 members is delivered with and through 'place-based' groups operating at the level of local geographical community. Our project seeks to empower and support the leaderships of these local groups in addressing the challenging subject of climate change through a growing network of regional and sub-regional 'delivery partners'.

7.7] During the winter we will be researching – and developing with the sector – the framework, content and structure for Civil Society's own programme of action. The driver for this investigation is currently thought of as a co-ordinating group of region-wide or sub-region-wide and usually sector specific 'core Delivery Partners'.

7.8] These organisations would act in turn as 'bridges' to the local action 'within, between and beyond' local communities and the 'people who lead them'. We anticipate that funds raised nationally and regionally for the programme would be managed by these sectoral and/or geographically based 'Delivery Partners' who would be eligible for an appropriate management charge partly to support capacity building to enable the overall Project to grow.

8] Resources

8.1] As per the ten tests (at 4.8 above), the Project can only proceed if its existence enables it to draw on resources that only a region and sector-wide programme of this nature could attract at a scale large enough to make the programme significant. Moreover, those resources have to be able to be deployed through and to the benefit of projects already based and active locally within the region.

8.2] There are clearly already a small number of major national trusts and foundations with established environmental programmes which might be interested in this way but we have identified three very specific opportunities that meet our criteria.

8.3] During September this year the UK was confirmed as the host nation for the UN's COP26 to be held in Glasgow in November next year and Claire Perry has been appointed as COP President, a role she will carry throughout 2021 (subject to the result of the General Election). The BEIS team and its advisers are now 'developing the architecture' for a 'UK-wide COP programme' that will promote the COP, its importance globally (and the role of HMG). We believe that this, national and 'whole society' programme could provide significant opportunities for the North East enhanced by our early start and regionwide structure. We are invited to meet the BEIS team before Christmas.

7.2] The NLCF have announced a £100m Climate Action Fund to operate over five years and they have indicated a maximum scale of award of £2.5m over five years. Clearly a major award – of this scale and longevity would be transformative to our project, enabling civil society delivery partners to plan with confidence for the long term. That confidence would also secure the collaborations with each other and with the public and private sector that will deliver both the maximum benefit to local organisations and their communities and secure the maximum possible impact on the climate crisis, ecology breakdown and help secure the just transition that we target.

7.3] With such an award, VONNE and Civil Society could arrive at the Regional coalition table that it had convened with a huge capacity to deliver 'on the ground' and with the certainty of core resource to act or collaborate strategically, regionally and nationally as well as being able to partner in supporting innovative models for effective action developed locally.

7.4] Beyond both of these is a larger offer that we believe the Region could – perhaps uniquely – make to government and other funders in the context of new national policies for the 'green revolution/green new deal'. We believe that the North East (and our project within it) have attributes that might commend it as a place where projects and policies could be piloted and where their complex impacts on, and interactions with, each other could be studied and evaluated cost-effectively.

7.5] Those attributes – probably uniquely in combination – are summarised overleaf.

The 10 Attributes of the North East as a test bed for national policies and programmes on climate, environment and transition to a low carbon economy

North East England:

- is the smallest English Region (affordability),
- is targeting becoming England's Greenest (ambition),
- has a mix of dense urban/industrial, coastal and rural upland and lowland communities (spatial diversity)
- has a Civil Society, deeply rooted in work with marginalised groups (reach)
- has an acknowledged track record of regional co-operation (believable delivery)
- is a 'left behind' region, vulnerable to the impacts of AI and Brexit (in line with priorities)
- is the only English region with a positive balance of trade (economic contribution)
- already contains nationally important innovatory projects across technology, engineering, environmental restitution and the address to the social and economic consequences of an unjust transition (policy integration)
- is ten months into developing a multi-sector regionwide programme (self-help)
- has a history that connects directly to current climate challenges (a compelling narrative)

Endnotes

ⁱ The average abundance of native species in most major land-based habitats has fallen by at least 20%, mostly since 1900. More than 40% of amphibian species, almost 33% of reef-forming corals and more than a third of all marine mammals are threatened. The causes identified are, in descending order: (1) changes in land and sea use; (2) direct exploitation of organisms; (3) climate change; (4) pollution and (5) invasive alien species. With the impact of climate change likely to increase substantially under current projections.

ⁱⁱ It is estimated (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/historical-coal-data-coal-production-availability-and-consumption>) that over 15 billion tonnes of coal have been extracted from deep mines in the UK over the last century alone.

ⁱⁱⁱ Barbara Freece in ‘Coal. A Human History’.

^{iv} An essay by Regional Historian Bill Lancaster summarises the research base for this position on the front page of the Land of Oak and Iron website. <http://www.landof oak and iron local history portal.org.uk/index.asp>

^v Margaret Jacob in ‘The First Knowledge Economy’

^{vi} ‘Geologists previously asserted that coal did not exist beneath the Magnesian Limestone, or, if it did exist, they said it must be deteriorated both in quality and thickness; but this colliery has been sunk through a bed of this stone, fifty eight yards in thickness ; and, so far from being deteriorated, the coal is excellent both in quality and thickness. The sinking of the shaft was commenced on the **19th December 1820** (*Meaning that the 200th anniversary of this event – the beginning of deep mining globally will take place just after COP 26*); the Main coal was reached on the 3rd of September 1822, at a depth of 109 fathoms’.

^{vii} The Durham Mining Museum records – and is dedicated to the memory of – the more than 24,000 men, women and children who lost their lives in mining related accidents in the North of England since 1293.

^{viii} Naomi Klein in ‘This Changes Everything’ referring to the Alberta Tar Sands and the Appalachian coal fields

^{ix} Data provided by Cambridge Econometrics data, constructed as part of the ‘Structural Transformation, Adaptability and City Economic Evolutions’-project (ES/N006135/1)..

^x In addition to the loss of jobs, the 1980s and early 1990s also saw the closure of R&D capacity (e.g. the International Research and Development Company established and owned by Reyrolle Parsons and then Northern Engineering Industries – NEI) that had been internationally important in renewable technologies: solar, wind, wave, tidal, geothermal, combined heat and power and heat pumps since the 1970s

^{xi} <https://www.ippr.org/research/publications/a-just-transition>

^{xii} The ‘black beaches’ of County Durham have now – forty years after the closing scenes of Get Carter were filmed there – been in the running for UK ‘best beach’ awards.

^{xiii} A commitment to achieve ‘True net Zero Carbon’ would encourage both substantial investment in the search for Negative Emission Technologies’ and programmes that currently ‘offset’ greenhouse gas emissions in the developed world by ‘green investment’ elsewhere BUT it does not allow either to be factored into targets for 2050 or earlier.