

# THE GEOGRAPHIES OF CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES – Sustainable communities and youth for nature’s recovery in Staffordshire

- » This research project explores the role of cooperation and coordination between community groups, young people, and their local areas in efforts to tackle the climate and ecological emergencies that faces today’s society [1,2].
- » This focuses on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown’s influence on climate action amongst the communities of Staffordshire and exploring peoples’ (re)connection with nature.
- » Overall, the research considers the collaboration, barriers, and overall efforts towards a more sustainable Staffordshire, aiming to make sustainability a local issue.
- » In turn, helping to create a network of green communities, individuals, and organisations that contribute positive sustainable behaviour post COVID-19.

## Aim & Objectives

- The aim of the research project is **‘How can sustainable communities and young people join forces for nature’s recovery from the climate and ecological emergency?’**, with the objectives being:
- 1.** To explore the role of **young people** in the climate and ecological emergency and their involvement in **community initiatives**.
  - 2.** To understand best **practice** or **potential barriers** to community initiatives engaging with young people and vice versa.
  - 3.** To explore the **Staffordshire community’s efforts** towards **nature’s recovery**.

## Methodology

The website was created and shared through social media, email, and networks to recruit residents of Staffordshire. **The website used for the collection and dissemination of data is [www.alanawheat.com](http://www.alanawheat.com).**

- Questionnaires for young people, aged 16-24, (~200) and community initiatives (~15). With questions comparable to study by Natural England (2020) during lockdown period [3].
- Public participatory approaches are being used through the form of mapping of green spaces, place and community initiatives, and a photo exhibition ‘Sustainable Staffordshire’ [See Figures].

## Preliminary Research Findings



Figures from ‘Sustainable Staffordshire’ Exhibition  
Interpretations of the images can be found on the website.



Cloudy sky in Staffordshire - Anon



Flooding - Anon

## Young People

- So far, 56% of participants are **interested** in environmental issues, but are **unsure** on what to do, 37% are passionate and active, and 6% are disengaged and inactive.
- Barriers to participation in environmental activities include; **time; accessibility & transport; unaware of initiatives; anxiety; COVID-19; and the government.**
- Passion around the environment was driven by **place-attachment, documentaries, media, and education.**
- Those who are interested in environmental issues suggest **worry for their future** and everyday life. With barriers linking to **lack of environmental education** and support from politicians, and expensiveness of ‘environmentally-friendly’ alternatives.
- 75% of participants learn about environmental issues through the internet and social media. 43% from school and 31% from everyday experiences.

## Community Initiatives

- Lockdowns have dramatically changed how the initiatives work, with all turning to online meetings. Virtual communication takes place via Zoom, Facebook, Local News, and email.
- **Nature restoration work** has taken place by some local community groups, however, many operate as **campaigns** and **networks**.
- The initiatives are open to support from young people but appreciate barriers such as **confidence, representation, and transport.**
- The initiatives align to these **Sustainable Development Goals** the most:



**Research is ongoing, if you are interested in sharing and taking part, please visit [www.alanawheat.com](http://www.alanawheat.com).**

## Summary of Implications

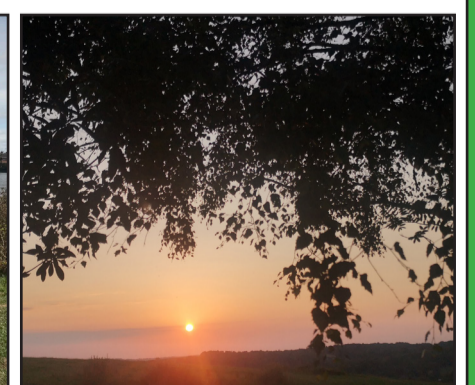
The research adds to the emerging dialogue considering human geographies of climate change, particularly that following the COVID-19 lockdown. It highlights further understanding of the barriers and enablers to environmental and sustainability engagement in Staffordshire, as well as connections to place.

### REFERENCES

- [1] PRETTY, J. (2011) INTERDISCIPLINARY PROGRESS IN APPROACHES TO ADDRESS SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL AND ECOCULTURAL SYSTEMS. *ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION*, 38:2, P.127-139.  
 [2] WALKER, C. (2020) UNEVEN SOLIDARITY: THE SCHOOL STRIKES FOR CLIMATE IN GLOBAL AND INTERGENERATIONAL PERSPECTIVE. *SUSTAIN EARTH*, 3:5  
 [3] NATURAL ENGLAND. (2020) THE PEOPLE AND NATURE SURVEY FOR ENGLAND: ADULT DATA Y1Q1 (APRIL - JUNE 2020). AVAILABLE AT: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/the-people-and-nature-survey-for-england-adult-data-y1q1-april-june-2020-experimental-statistics> (ACCESSED: 7TH DECEMBER 2020)



Walking local pool - Kate



Sunset Arch - Anon