



**RJ Working**  
Restorative Approaches to Harm

---

# Youth-led Climate Action Report

by RJ Working

With thanks for expertise, mentoring, and guidance from James Noble,  
nationally-leading Theory of Change consultant

[www.rjworking.co.uk](http://www.rjworking.co.uk)

Supported by:

**phf** Paul Hamlyn  
Foundation



RJ Working  
Restorative Approaches to Harm

# RJ WORKING'S THEORY OF CHANGE

Illustrations by Jack Cowley

## Contents

---

- 4 Executive Summary
  - 7 Theory of Change Summary
  - 8 Problem Context – What do we want to Change?
  - 10 The Relevance of the Restorative Model
  - 12 Theory of Change
  - 19 Numbers and Outline Stories of Change
  - 20 Story of Change 1: *Young People’s Relationship with Nature*
  - 22 Story of Change 2: *Food and School & College Lunches*
  - 24 Story of Change 3: *Questioning Consumerism*
  - 26 Story of Change 4: *How we Source and use Energy (Green Careers)*
  - 28 Story of Change 5: *Youth-designed Consultation Surveys*
  - 31 Story of Change 6: *Stop Ecocide Campaign*
  - 33 Story of Change 7: *Activist Education*
  - 35 Story of Change 8: *A Youth-led Climate Action Festival*
  - 37 Story of Change 9: *Youth-led Community Climate Conversations*
  - 39 Story of Change 10: *Climate as Safeguarding – BASW National Conference*
  - 41 Conclusions and Next Steps
  - 47 Credits
- 



# Executive Summary

This Report presents interim findings from consideration of the **Youth-led Climate Action Programme** undertaken by **RJ Working**, using the **Restorative model**, which broadly emphasises '*making things better*' in accessible ways. Restorative practice invites people to face up to harm together and nowhere is this more necessary than in the Climate~Nature crisis. The Programme is supported by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation Youth Fund.

The scale of complex harms that comprise the Climate~Nature crisis can seem overwhelming; it helps to think of four big themes covering human activities that we need to change, these are: **i) learning to cherish and protect nature, ii) what we eat and how we grow it, iii) questioning consumerism, iv) how we source and use energy**. We offer stories of change to illustrate ways to tackle these; in the body of the Report.

The Report first introduces our context – the geography where the Youth-led Climate Action Programme and Projects have taken place, the schools and FE Colleges which have partnered in this work, the nature of the team. We consider the barriers to the needed social (relational) and emotional needs for hope, meaning and purpose in the face of the crises.

Then the team has co-created, with support from expert James Noble, a structured Theory of Change to explain **i) our activities, designed to enable experiences of meaning, purpose and affirming relationships ii) the immediate emotional and relational effects, iii) intended outcomes (young people's strengths, assets and capabilities), and iv) intended long-term impact**. A diagram of the process is provided on page 7 and again on page 18.

**Restorative practice can be understood as a global movement, promoting citizenship at local, national and international levels. It centres relationships between different perspectives and interests, to achieve new ways of understanding and enabling change**



Next, we provide the numbers of young people who have been worked with over a two-year period, with **ten 'stories of change'** to bring the numbers to life. The first four each illustrate the four big themes identified above: young people's relationships with nature, food, consumerism and energy. Each story moves beyond individual responsibilities, to collective bonds and collective changemaking. This sense of social purpose and meaning continues through the other six 'stories of change' as the four themes emerge in different patterns via informative consultations (on paper or in person), events and campaigns. All have used Restorative practice as their means to create relationships and connections for next steps, this sense of connection with others is a central Restorative principle. It is evident from the challenges

already being faced that adaptability and resilience are two of the key needs of individuals and communities for moving forward. As well as skills and knowledge (associated with hands and head) there is a need for the cross-cutting social and emotional learning (heart learning) which strengthens relationships, builds shared motivations and the capacity to collaborate.

Bearing in mind our intention that this work will be useful to others, recommendations have been made at the end of each change story. Our learning has been sometimes incremental, sometimes a step-change. **It is dynamic and ongoing, in keeping with Restorative practice, this is 'not the end of the story.'**

### Key takeaways are:

<p><b>1</b></p> <p>Integrate Restorative principles every step of the way so that they become embedded in the teamwork and leadership of the young people being trained and supported</p>	<p><b>2</b></p> <p>Enable each group to develop its own ideas for its own context</p>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p>Translate abstract language into grounded accessible phrases – for example 'climate breakdown' becomes 'extreme weather: extreme heat and cold, extreme wind and rain'.</p>	<p><b>4</b></p> <p>Ask participants about their relationship with nature, what it means to them</p>	<p><b>5</b></p> <p>Ask participants about their relationship with food, fashion and travel similarly</p>
<p><b>6</b></p> <p>Value the engagement and contributions of everyone in the Restorative conversation, not putting guest speakers on a pedestal, strengthening community</p>	<p><b>7</b></p> <p>Rather than magnifying differences, enable people to see the connections between them and their contributions (eg they both care about how others will cope)</p>	<p><b>8</b></p> <p>Use the diagram we have developed to illustrate a 'Journey of Progressive Change' so we are supporting participants to seek the next segment rather than too big a leap</p>	<p><b>9</b></p> <p>Value fluidity and adaptability, recognise the risks of 'stuckness' and broken relationships.</p>	<p><b>10</b></p> <p>Look after ourselves and each other as we go.</p>





## Hope is very important to us.

Our youth-led team wants and hopes to become part of a wider community using the **Restorative approach to Climate~Nature issues**. This community may emerge from a new or existing network of organisations or funders; we think the key issue to share is a focus on young people's leadership of social change to support the practical changes needed. We hope that both our content and our methods can be adopted and adapted to other varying contexts and settings and that other teams of young people will make them their own. We hope for new initiatives such as national level tracking of young people's attitudes to the natural environment.

Hope is very important to us.

### Youth-led Climate Action Team

#### RJ Working

Registered Charity number 1197378

Registered Address: The Elms, 61 Green Lane, Redruth, Cornwall, TR15 1LS



# RJ Working: Youth-led Climate Action Programme

Target group: young people in Cornwall, (mainly with experience of complex disadvantage) activities tailored according to characteristics / needs / age groups.



# Problem Context – What are we wanting to change?

## Problem Statement

The Earth's climate and ecology are in crisis due to human activities<sup>1</sup>. Scientists are showing that this Climate~Nature crisis is having a range of catastrophic consequences across society and the economy, further embedding and compounding existing inequalities<sup>2</sup>. There is considerable urgency<sup>3</sup> as the situation is recognised as escalating. Young people are affected most of all, but they lack opportunities to take collective action and have their voices heard, which in turn contributes to feelings like frustration, hopelessness, anxiety and depression.

Education settings are not yet adapted to support or meet young people's needs and can pose institutional barriers to these being met as an element of education. Young people need support and encouragement in relation to the causes and social and emotional consequences of climate breakdown and nature depletion.

## Rationale for our Problem Focus

The causes of the Climate~Nature crisis are complex and covered extensively elsewhere; in short, we accept the consensus that it is due to human activity, and that therefore solutions or constructive responses are a human responsibility. The outcomes of the Climate~Nature crisis are well-established; these manifest as extreme weather (heat, cold, rain, wind), species extinction and loss of habitat for people as well as animals. RJ Working has developed an understanding of the potential of affirming relationships, together with feelings of meaning and purpose, to unlock relevant capabilities, opportunities, motivations and behaviours in young people.<sup>4</sup> Our problem focus is therefore the barriers to young people engaging socially and emotionally with the Climate~Nature crisis, and the ways that these barriers result in their inactivity.

## Barriers to engagement & action about the Climate~Nature crisis faced by young people in Cornwall, and further afield:

- 1** Young people do not know enough about climate breakdown and environmental harms. Schools tend to pigeonhole the issue as a 'scientific' challenge and are not teaching the whole story (eg the urgency, how economic choices and systems affect the environment, and how environmental harms are linked with social injustice). Schools lack the resources and training to adequately cover the issues, and the majority of teachers may not feel equipped or ready for conversations about the Climate~Nature crisis. For example, 50% of textbooks used for KS4 /GCSE Geography were published before the UK's declaration of a climate emergency in 2019<sup>5</sup> while a survey by Teacher Tapp on teachers' knowledge of climate change found that only 27% of teachers received a perfect climate change knowledge score, while more almost a third (31%) were not even close!<sup>6</sup>
- 2** There is a sense of distance from the issues. Other pressures, priorities and harms in young peoples' lives can feel more pressing (cost of living, school, social pressure, housing). People don't necessarily appreciate how environmental harms interlink with other challenges (especially poverty, and ill-health). For illustration, in a survey conducted in 2024, climate change and the environment ranked 4th out of 10 priorities for young people in Cornwall<sup>7</sup> behind culture, health and the economy, which is similar to the figure for the rest of England.
- 3** There is wider cultural denial/resistance and disapproval around climate activism (for example in the right-wing press). This stems from i) powerful opposition to change generally and ii) narratives that focus on individual responsibility for climate change mitigation rather than wider system change.
- 4** There are few forums, spaces and opportunities for young people to share their views, connect with others, feel heard and take action. Moreover, some young people (and the adults who care for them) fear that engaging in environmental harms is going to be upsetting or depressing so avoid discussing it. Time constraints and inequalities between young people also affect their ability to participate at a practical level (eg in tackling the issues associated with transport). So, young people often don't know where to start, contributing to the sense of hopelessness described above.





## Consequences of the problem

### Because of the barriers above, young people in Cornwall (and beyond) are at risk of:

- A sense of powerlessness, lack of agency, feeling overwhelmed, that action is futile, that individual actions cannot make a difference.
- Not feeling heard or listened to.
- Feelings of anxiety, depression, alienation from society.
- Lack of a sense of common purpose or belief in the power of collective action.
- Not being equipped with the words, ideas and skills to understand the profound effects of climate change on their lives.
- Inequalities in social and emotional capabilities which in turn compound wider inequalities.
- Increased risk of conflict due to depleted resources, for example between generations or blaming others for problems (like refugees) rather than seeing the causes.

Ultimately, a key consequence is that the social movements we need to tackle the crises, and environmental harms are not forming (or forming slowly). and that less practical action is taken, both now and as a consequence of now, in the future.



Community Conversation at St Day

## Rationale for Restorative Climate Action

Young people and the communities around them, need more and better opportunities to engage with critical Climate~Nature issues, and work together to take collective Restorative action to tackle and reduce environmental and climate harms. This involves developing relationships and shared understandings about meaning and purpose among young people and in communities.

### There are key areas where change is needed and young people can lead:

- i) how we cherish and protect nature
- ii) what we eat and how we grow it
- ii) questioning consumerism and travel
- iv) how we source and use energy<sup>8</sup>

Young people's creativity can support cultural norms for these changes. Cornwall can exemplify a process that other areas can follow in their own contexts.

1. Attenborough, Sir David "Extinction: [The Facts](#)"
2. Ahmed, Nafeez, [White Supremacism and the Earth System](#)
3. Stern, Professor Nicholas, see: <https://globalassembly.org/>
4. COM-B Model
5. SOS-UK, August 22, 2024, [GCSE Geography students let down by outdated textbooks teaching inaccurate climate science](#)
6. Teacher Tapp, 1 April 2019, [Teacher Stress & Saving The World From Climate Disaster](#)
7. [Make Your Mark 2024](#)
8. ['How to be a hero for all our children'](#)



# The relevance of the Restorative model for creating this change:

**RJ Working is a children and young people's charity, serving the communities of Cornwall and contributing to wider networks. RJ stands for Restorative Justice, established as a constructive way of responding to harm and wrongdoing, that brings people together with a shared focus on repair and recovery. The Restorative approach can be understood as a global movement, encouraging citizenship at local and wider levels. Since Restorative Justice made a significant contribution to the peace process in Northern Ireland, in 2014 RJ Working apprenticed itself to Ulster University. We are also an active member of the UK Restorative Justice Council, which sets standards in the field.**

**The Restorative model** is supported by extensive research and study<sup>1</sup>, but our focus is pragmatic: encouraging young people to adopt a Restorative mindset and enjoy participating. Since 2017, RJ Working has championed the principle that every child and young person deserves to learn Restorative principles as part of their education.

## **These principles include:**

1. Building & maintaining relationships to 'hold' conflict and make repair more likely
2. Circle practice as a framework for every voice to be heard, passing a 'talking piece' to signify who is talking, who is listening
3. Co-designing increasingly ambitious questions for the circle
4. Co-creating deeper discussion content, within the circle ritual and framework
5. Teaching the skills of third-party support for enabling recovery from hurts and harms
6. A commitment to deep listening, detecting commonality and shared humanity between people in conflict, and beyond expressed differences: genuine inclusion

RJ Working has pioneered the use of Restorative practice for talking about and tackling injustices relating to identity such as racism: promoting support for accountability and challenging to promote change. These issues are threaded through all our work, every training, workshop and event. In short, 'Restorative' simply means 'making things better' and RJ Working uses the Restorative model to tackle inequalities by supporting young people's agency and emotional literacy, strengths known to be significant for life chances. Whether bringing people together for addressing harm, or for tackling challenges to prevent further harm, the Restorative model is essentially collaborative, building understandings, connections and relationships. It can therefore be described as strengthening communities.

## **Restorative practice for Climate and Environmental Harms**

In 2021, with encouragement from PHF, RJ Working converted from a CIC to a registered charity. Listening to young people led to one of our charitable purposes becoming 'advancing environmental protection using Restorative practice to educate & build

community to prevent further environmental harm.' RJ Working understands the Climate~Nature crisis to be the biggest overarching problem facing young people and future generations, generating harms which compound all other inequalities.

## **Youth-led Climate Action Team (YCAT)**

Through 2021, the young people in and close to the RJ Working team became preoccupied with climate and nature issues and started to make films and hold discussions about how to raise awareness of the harms. In particular, we were concerned that the social costs of covid-19 might lead to long-lasting disruption and disconnection from climate issues. The young people involved are highly aware of the impact of the Climate~Nature crises on their generation, but often feel this concern is not understood or faced honestly by older generations. Youth leadership of intergenerational work is therefore all the more important for bridging this gap. YCAT has led the work in this report, supported by a 3 year grant from Paul Hamlyn Foundation Youth Fund.



## Approaching the Climate Crisis Restoratively

A central difference between superficial punishment approaches and the Restorative model is the focus, not on 'what rule has been broken' but on 'what harm has been caused' and the meaning of the harm for those involved. This is particularly relevant for tackling the many complex harms to climate and nature which are woven into the ways that we currently live and social norms. Before covid-19 many Local Authorities and even Parliament declared a 'Climate Emergency' but the pandemic displaced this in our national consciousness. Since then, apathy and hopelessness have set in, along with desensitisation to the urgency of the challenge and the need for immediate action. In short, our culture is unaware or incapable of facing up to the harms it is perpetuating against climate and nature. Restorative practice can address this because its fundamental purpose is to examine harm collaboratively. The process is as valuable as the outcome because it is redemptive: generating new understandings, levels of engagement, motivations and relationships, needed to meet the challenges created by the harm. It also helps achieve the necessary changes in response, at an individual level and more importantly at the collective level.

## Climate Literacy and Oracy for Young People

RJ Working aims to equip young people with the language and transferable principles of Restorative practice, which they can adapt and use for any challenges they encounter. YCAT has the parallel aim: to support young people in becoming familiar with the language, concepts and principles for talking and problem-solving in relation to climate and nature. This climate literacy and oracy effectively contribute to meaningful changes at levels of thoughtful discussion, social understanding and practical problem-solving (head, heart and hands). As with social and emotional learning, climate literacy and oracy will develop at different rates for different young people, depending on various factors including their own experience and the peer group of which they are a part.

## Shared Responsibilities

One of the principles of Restorative practice is that everyone who has had a part in creating the problem will have a stake in finding ways forward and 'making things better.' This core concept of shared responsibility suggests a seismic shift as society realises the scale of the challenge and the importance of the 'no one left behind' principle. As global resources are depleted, resilience,

creativity, and well-being will be important priorities for maintaining buoyancy and continuing to strengthen relationships within and between communities. Restorative practice can support new kinds of participatory democracy and active citizenship being modelled as part of education. This will help restore recognition of interdependence with nature and the potential for recovery.

*Redruth Wall Art. quoting Chief Seattle, 1854*



# RJ Working's Theory of Change (ToC) describes how we have designed our Youth-led Climate Action Programme



One of our Programme goals is to develop a replicable cascading youth-led model that enables more and diverse young people to have their voices heard

## Location of Programme

This work has, to date, been delivered in the geographic communities of **Cornwall**, the most peripheral South West peninsula, where 17 areas are among the 10% most disadvantaged in the UK. There are nearly 60,000 young people aged 15-24 in Cornwall and 32 secondary schools, (10 with sixth forms). There are also 9 Further Education College sites where most young people move to at the age of 16. According to the latest figures, 23% of school children in Cornwall are 'Pupil Premium' the indicator of deprivation in the school system.

Here we describe **our Youth Climate Action Programme** and its goals using the 'Theory of Change' approach, having set out the Programme's context earlier. This is a well-established way to describe anything aiming to make a positive difference in the world. The process of developing this Theory of Change involved consultation and co-design across RJ Working with substantial input from young people, helping the Youth-led Climate Action Team to think further about its role and purpose.

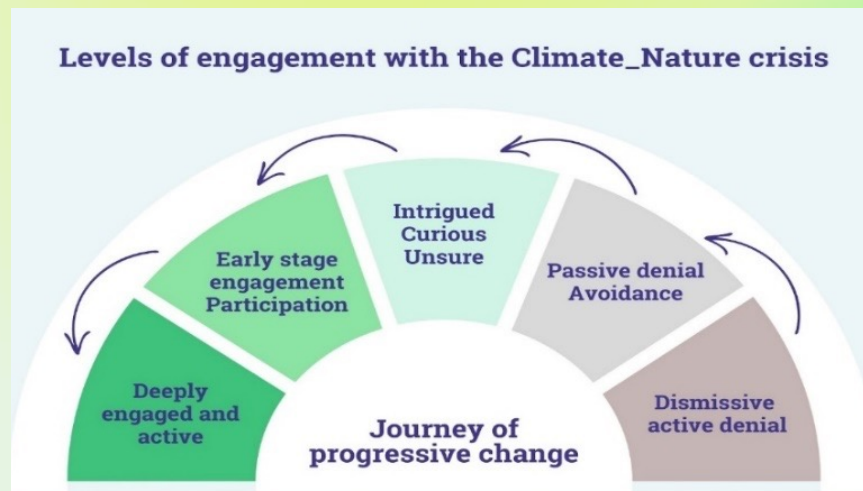
**Flexibility and adaptability** are key characteristics of the Programme: centring relationships means we are responsive and we must also update our work constantly to reflect the social and political context. So our Theory of Change is fairly loosely defined: while we describe broad goals and use the Restorative method consistently, what we deliver varies in different settings. One of our Programme goals is to develop 'a replicable cascading youth-led model that enables more and diverse young people to have their voices heard, locally and more widely, to achieve more system change' and we hope people can see the relevance of the flexible, adaptable Restorative model for this. Our Theory of Change follows an established format from target group through to the long-term impact of our contribution, with the summary diagram at the end.



### Who is the Programme aimed at?

The Programme has a twin focus on i) young people and ii) schools and colleges. RJ Working's mission is to tackle and reduce inequalities without stigmatising, generating benefits for wider groups and communities. While the Programme welcomes all interested young people in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, our activities are tailored and delivered to actively support inclusion of young people who are struggling in some way. Groups of diverse young people meeting repeatedly, learn about each others' identities, strengths and needs; they will be at various stages in their relationship with the issues itemised in the 'problem context' section above. We use the Restorative model to support them to keep their relationship with the issues fluid, dynamic and moving in a positive direction.

We see this diagram (based on an original about racism shared by HOPE not Hate) as a useful simplification:



The Youth-led Climate Action Team especially want to reach and connect with young people who can be inspired to tackle injustice, often through their own lived experience. We use the Restorative model to support experiences of progressive change, individually and collectively, without expectations that groups and their members move more than incrementally and inconsistently to the next segment.

The contextual gatekeepers are institutions where young people are found in large numbers – schools and colleges. Significant pressures and competing demands on their budgets and staffing, make it difficult for outside organisations to engage and influence so generally the process is slow and unpredictable. To achieve any sense of partnership, educational charities generally find it helps to align their goals with those of the schools and colleges. Unfortunately, there are few current expectations on schools/colleges to engage students in climate issues outside limited parts of the curriculum. Often climate education depends on interests of individual staff members and the extent to which they integrate this into teaching and learning. However, there are other relevant education priorities to which RJ Working already contribute: including student voice, inclusion, developing positive school culture & morale, stability, motivation, emotional well-being and health.

**The Youth-led Climate Action Team especially want to reach and connect with young people who can be inspired to tackle injustice, often through their own lived experience**



### Activities: what the Programme does and how

The dynamic of the Programme is cyclical, with various possible entry points. Some activities have a wider reach and might be built into school/college days or timetables. The main aim of these activities is to inform and initially engage young people and serve as a route to further engagement.

### These kinds of activities include:

- Climate action **surveys/consultations**: Online tools to engage young people in climate awareness.
- **Assemblies** – traditional school assemblies led by young people, or more developmental consultation assemblies led by young people both in school/college and in wider public settings.
- **Campaigns** such as 'STOP Ecocide' and 'School Food': a focal point for further engagement.

More in-depth Restorative activities are extra-curricular, with the further potential to cascade to younger people or peer groups. These in-depth Restorative activities include:

- **Events** eg June 2023 Climate Action Festival involving a youth-led exchange of learning and inspiration.
- **Campaign training** that uses Restorative practice to support and encourage young people to run their own environmental campaigns, while developing teamwork, leadership and active citizenship.
- **Green Careers Workshops**. A half-day interactive workshop to help young people consider their life and career choices, in the collective move towards a sustainable future
- **'Green Ripple Effect' training**: A group programme that involves learning about Restorative practice through connecting with nature.
- **Co-creating resources and education materials** by young people using Restorative practice
- **Media based opportunities** like film screenings and podcasts to give young people opportunities to capture and amplify their campaigns and engage wider audiences.
- **Creative projects** such as growing food and art projects to support or illustrate young people's teamwork, leadership and influence
- **Activities aimed at school and college adults** eg Twilight Training: workshops to support whole staff teams to embed environmental learning & action into the culture of their school community.

These activities can be a menu from which young people and schools or colleges choose depending on their needs and interests. Each project or activity is conducted through Restorative practice, introduced as a way of supporting deeper conversations and forging new relationships. In particular, consultation and problem-solving is approached through the structure of Restorative circles, where each young person's voice can be heard, and shared next steps identified.



### Qualities & mechanisms: how the Programme 'works' to create change

Here we describe how the activities above engage young people and cause the change we want to see (which is described below in 'outcomes' and 'impacts' sections). Reflecting the Programme dynamic described earlier, this is sequentially organised from initial stages aimed at driving interest and engagement, to the later stages for those young people who choose to get more involved. This sequence is often cumulative; so, confidence and connections gained in earlier stages support mechanisms in later stages.

Qualities that the programme will deliver	Intended reactions from young people ('mechanisms' in Theory of Change terms)
Raising key facts and questions about: i) how we protect and support nature ii) what we eat and how we grow food iii) how we consume and travel iv) how we source and use energy	Intrigued, surprised, curious, wanting more Young people continue to engage into later stages – increasing attendance, participation and engagement Schools ask RJ Working to come back
Offer a range of restorative activities/options for future engagement	Young people experience activities as enjoyable, fun and a new way of seeing things Feel excited, inspired, 'fired up' Relationships and bonds form between young people
Provide time, space and opportunities to engage deeply with the issues	Everyone, (especially those at risk of exclusion alienation, or with experience of prejudice or discrimination), feels safe and able to explore feelings and take next steps about climate change – with a growing capability of talking about the challenges and complexities (climate literacy)
Through Restorative practice	Emotionally rewarding: listening, connecting, building relationships and confidence Increasing levels of participation and commitment
Encourage open dialogue and communication	Participating – offering their thoughts and opinions Feeling seen and heard. Encouraged to know that their voices are important, valid Feel empowered Become familiar with use of circle practice
Focus on group activities/collective action Facilitate links to new/different networks	Developing new connections and friendships (socially rewarding) Gradually connecting with others in a deeper way through a shared purpose and desire to change things (confirming we're not alone, that we are able to change things together). Feel part of a community on the same journey
Providing and encouraging 'routes to action' Provide access to 'activism resources' and links to wider/national campaigns and other groups	Start to develop their own ideas about actions to take ("buzzing with creativity") Able to take the lead, organise and run their own activities/campaigns, sharing responsibility, feeling safe to be brave Exploring more together in their own time
Through their campaign actions	Feel they are making a difference/their work is having an effect Feeling part of a wider community – locally and potentially nationally



### Intended outcomes

Outcomes are the short-term influence of the Programme for the young people and schools reached. We think of outcomes as 'assets' or 'capabilities' the Programme aims to equip young people with, in turn influencing their longer-term outlook and behaviours (see impact section later). There is a rough sequence: with the first one or two outcomes applicable to all young people reached, while those that come later relate to those young people who engage more fully.

### Capabilities

- Young people are increasingly informed about the Climate~Nature crisis; including its urgency; its reinforcing unfairness & inequality, through household costs, especially food, heating and its corrosive effect on well-being of individuals and communities.
- Increased confidence and ability to talk knowledgeably about the Climate~Nature crisis (as extreme weather) and its consequences locally, nationally, globally.
- Better able to critically assess, question and challenge misinformation and bias narratives.
- More skilled and experienced in helping other young people to join the conversation.
- Increased understanding and application of Restorative practice principles and language to communicate, problem-solve, agree next steps, and build community.
- Identify links between Restorative practice and ways to tackle the Climate~Nature crisis.
- Gain wider skills such as teamworking, leadership, a sense of collective agency.

### Motivations

- Increased feelings of empathy and wanting justice for the people and environments most harmed by the Climate~Nature crisis (locally, nationally and globally).
- Feel more connected to nature – personally and collectively.
- Better able to share and navigate the difficult emotions related to the Climate~Nature crisis (grief, anxiety, guilt, depression) and to move from those feelings into motivated positive action.
- Able to imagine (with others) the world they want to create and use this as motivation.
- Inspired, committed, empowered and supported to make a difference.
- Stronger belief in collective power to respond to climate challenges: feeling a sense of togetherness and part of something bigger, a sense of shared hope and purpose.
- Feeling more inclined to become engaged with community work and opportunities.

### Opportunities

- Stronger networks - more young people collaborating with others in their school, college and geographic communities.
- A culture change of empowerment and agency in communities, schools and colleges, supported by Restorative practice.
- Space/slowness/time gives people opportunities to further their thinking and efforts.

### Behaviours

- Personal choices/behaviours that reduce harms (while understanding that these changes cannot reduce overall harm at the rate needed and that there's a need for system change).
- Talking to friends and families about the issues and reaching a wider public audience in schools, colleges, communities.
- Active engagement (getting 'stuck in'): organising events/assemblies, running campaigns to make changes directly in school and college communities and more widely.
- Creating system changes in school and college settings and beyond.
- Culture of problem solving and communication, everyone's voice being heard, designing the best questions, building shared meaning.





## Longer-term impacts

Finally, 'impacts' are the longer-term goals we want everything already described to contribute to. Ultimately this is about young people making choices to engage and act.

It helps to think of these as the Programme's intended legacy, divided into two parts:

### a) Impacts for young people themselves:

- Young people act together, independently of RJ Working, towards climate and environmental goals: 'owning' their ideas and actions beyond their time with RJ Working. Ultimately, this means more young people involved in campaigning, events, advocating for change, & more activities and actions.
- Sustained communities of young activists with a shared purpose, who support and encourage others - spreading the word about Climate~Nature crisis & how to tackle consequences (ripple effect).
- Through collaborative action, young people have reduced eco-anxiety and generate a stronger sense of hope, positivity, health and wellbeing.
- More widespread use of Restorative practice (values and methods) to effectively build communities and solve problems

### b) Further impacts in the wider community

- Young peoples' voices are increasingly heard, represented and have more power and influence in institutions and on decisions (eg schools, local government, businesses, other generations).
- Schools' cultures, policies and food systems have environmental protection at their heart, complemented by tangible policy & law changes (eg votes for 16-year-olds, regulations to protect nature).
- Society as a whole gradually develops a better relationship with nature, so that life can continue and thrive: seeing nature as interdependent ecosystems of living beings of which we are part – not resources to be exploited and depleted.
- Reduced inequality through successful mitigation of environmental/ climate harm (extremes of heat and cold, floods and winds, negatively impacting food and energy supply) and accompanying social disadvantage.
- Reduced neglect, depression, anxiety and isolation through thriving community relationships.



Climate Action Festival at Heartlands

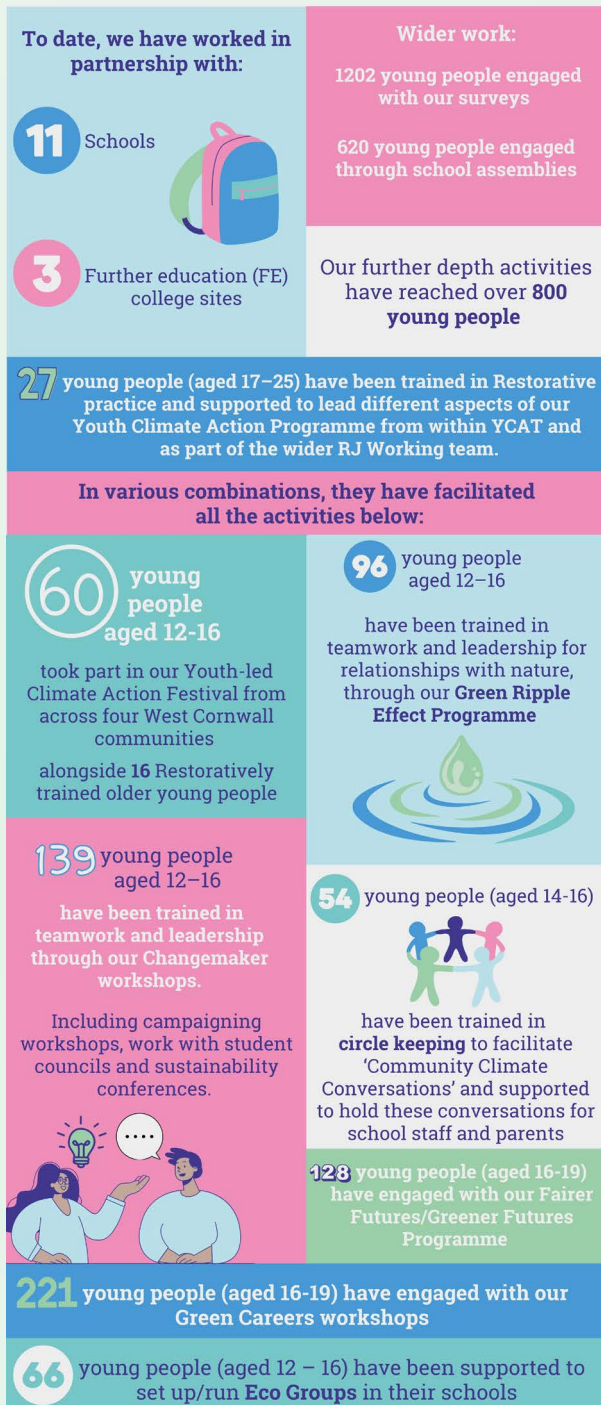
This is about young people making choices to engage and act



# RJ Working: Youth-led Climate Action Programme

Target group: young people in Cornwall, (mainly with experience of complex disadvantage) activities tailored according to characteristics / needs / age groups.





# Theory of Change in Action

## Numbers!

This Report considers the work undertaken by the RJ Working Youth-led Climate Action Team February 2023 – January 2025. The scope and reach of the work is understated because it does not include those reached indirectly (through knock on effects). In most cases participants have a 'cascade' role through intentional structured communication with other community members and may also affect others informally, so our work also has indirect reach. However, the numbers summarised in the infographic here reflect participants who have clearly undertaken very specific activities. The infographic describes 1,822 reached through surveys and assemblies and further in-depth activities reaching more than 800 young people.

Our ten 'Stories of Change' bring these numbers to life. Some are big stories and others are about smaller experiences; they all add up to a wider, more complex, tapestry of changemaking.

The first four stories here, highlight the four themes identified in our Rationale for Restorative Climate Action (page 9):

- 1. Nature:** how we learn to better cherish and protect wildlife, restore its habitats
- 2. Food:** what we can choose to do differently, individually and collectively
- 3. Consumerism:** what is the real cost and how can we better understand the associated harms
- 4. Power:** how to source and use energy for industry, homes and transport differently

**Stories 6-10 crosscut these four practical themes**, illustrate and emphasise how our collective relationship with problems and ways out of them are primarily social and communicative. Whether running workshops at a 'Climate Action Festival', or training students to hold circles for school staff, or visible vulnerability at a national conference; whether the content is a mix of nature, food, transport, fashion, recycling, solar or wind power, the recurring twin themes are young people's teamwork and leadership. The feelings and relationships described in the Theory of Change as mechanisms and outcomes are evident.



# Stories of Change

## Story of Change 1

### Supporting Young People's Relationship with Nature

#### Context:

Our relationship with nature is essential to our well-being. Humanity is part of the natural world yet often views it as a 'resource' for exploitation. This has led to destruction and depletion, endangering our future. A Restorative approach helps young people see themselves as 'part of something bigger', recognising harm, repairing it, and nurturing nature. Restorative principles – Respect for, Relationship with, and Responsibility to nature – provide a framework for positive change. Structured Restorative circles enable young people to connect with one another and the environment, exploring relationships with the natural world.

*Circle of young people on their Green Ripple Programme*



## The Green Ripple Effect Programme (July 2023 - March 2024)

### Engagement:

• **Falmouth and Penryn:** 72 students participated, each group of 12 enjoying a total of 11 hours learning Restorative practice outdoors, developing a sense of wonder and awe at Trebah (a Victorian garden with woodlands, a lake and a beach onto a tidal river). They also visited a community food garden, 'Loveland', an opportunity to see and learn about food growing, to see vegetables, taste herbs, and share food together. Activities included sitting circles for sharing reflections (eg talking about mortality and natural cycles), sharing what had been noticed, using descriptors for sensory experience and deepening self-awareness.

• **Isles of Scilly:** Five Islands Academy had already embedded Restorative practice, (recognised by the Restorative Justice Council and by OFSTED) had two groups of 12 students participate in an outdoor Nature Connection and Wellbeing Week. Activities explored health and wellbeing, identity, relationship challenges and local beaches and community gardens.

### Feedback:

• **Falmouth School:** 88% of participants reported increased confidence, and 81% felt less lonely. Positive feedback from parents indicated a profound impact.

• **Penryn College:** 78% reported improved health and wellbeing, and 83% agreed their social network had grown. An autistic student significantly improved their engagement and communication.

• **Five Islands Academy:** 88% felt more able to listen and understand others, and 75% improved their ability to maintain relationships, including with nature. This collaboration across year-groups promoted a sense shared of purpose in the school setting and small island community.

### Outcomes/Impact:

Participants engaged in outdoor Restorative circles, learning about themselves, others, and nature. They gained confidence in discussing nature and the Climate~Nature crisis, strengthened their connection to the environment, and expanded their social networks, ready to advocate for change.

They made practical suggestions about how their school grounds could be used differently to foster nature connections across the school community.

### Learning Points/Recommendations:

• **Work with young people outdoors: a strengthened connection with nature forms a foundation for a deep respectful commitment to the natural world**

• **Develop partnerships to enable gardening in schools, fundraise for polytunnels, plant orchards, and support local efforts to rewild.**

• **Encourage young people to take meaningful action on environmental concerns. Build wider networks to face the Climate~Nature crisis with shared purpose and commitment.**

• **In 2025, YCAT wants to develop a partnership with WildCard, a citizens' movement campaigning for a wild and fair countryside. A new young Trustee from WildCard will bring valuable learning to our Board and team.**



# Stories of Change

## Story of Change 2

### Restorative Approaches to Food in Schools and Colleges

*School Food Conversations at CSIA*

#### **Context:**

The foods we eat, and the ways they are grown and transported, significantly contribute to the Climate~Nature crisis. YCAT uses Restorative practice to support questioning and changing these systems. We promote sustainable food practices in schools, encouraging students to understand and take action in ways that relate to local, national, and global climate impacts. Our assemblies and workshops empower young people as changemakers.



### Engagement:

• **Camborne Science and International Academy (CSIA):** In November, 2023, three young members of YCAT delivered an interactive assembly to 220 Year 9 students on food systems: food miles, pesticides, food waste (an annual average of 122kg per person in Cornwall), the food economy, and hidden ingredients. Post-assembly, 180 students participated in workshops featuring small circle discussions on the significance of food and potential School Food Council initiatives. High energy and engagement were observed and felt throughout the sessions.

### Feedback:

• Students shared insightful reflections on food's role in family, friendship, ritual, identity, community, conversation and survival. Camborne's Mayor supported the initiative, emphasising food's importance for enjoyment and employment.

### Outcomes/Impact:

• Feedback from the circles was documented and analysed to create a report and booklets for the school. YCAT was asked to assist with selection interviews for the School Food Council and introduced youth-led movements like 'Act4Food Act4Change.' The Council will be supported to continue using Restorative participatory processes for consultation so that it is effective among peers.

### Learning Points/Recommendations:

- **Support a group of students to become Food Ambassadors and create a 'School Food Council.'**
- **Review school lunch contracts for value in terms of health, value for money, local economy, carbon footprint.**
- **Promote interdisciplinary learning through food, explore apprenticeships in cookery and food technology, and teach carbon counting as a 'budget' to spend (see 'How Bad Are Bananas?' by Mike Berners-Lee) .**
- **Involve parents in projects such as planting fruit trees, creating school recipe books, use food as a shared interest which can bring down barriers, grow community spirit.**



# Stories of Change

## Story of Change 3

### Questioning Consumerism

#### Context:

Overconsumption is a critical issue in sustainability, involving system, transport and supply chain challenges, as well as personal choices. We worked with young people on sustainability in fashion and recycling, through key events: i) A youth led event in Penzance called 'Questioning Fashion' in June 2024, ii) an interactive presentation at the Camborne Youth Conference (CYC) in October 2024 and iii) the Youth Sustainability Conference at Richard Lander School, involving groups from six other secondary schools.

*Beyond the labels group at Questioning Fashion event*





### Engagement:

• **Questioning Fashion:** 13 young people (aged 16-25) participated in 'Questioning Fashion', featuring practical, creative workshops and discussions on sustainability in fashion. The event was co-designed by YCAT and the group of young people from another RJ Working programme 'Beyond the Labels'. Their plans and ideas were building on 30 weeks of workshops that engaged over 100 young people deeply and reached an additional 225. Activities included clothes repair, upcycling, and a collage workshop, which expanded the conversation's reach.

### • Youth Sustainability Conferences

Camborne Youth Conference engaged 44 young people from eight schools, introducing Restorative methods and sustainability principles.

The event at Richard Lander School focused on the six R's of sustainability (Rethink, Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repair, Recycle) and inspired climate-positive behaviour.

### Feedback:

Participants reflected on their thoughts and learnings through facilitated discussions and recorded their insights on film. Feedback highlighted strong engagement, with participants connecting themes of fashion, identity, and consumption habits, and finding hands-on activities (creative repair and upcycling) particularly impactful.

### Outcomes/Impact:

Attendees gained a better understanding of Restorative practice and the Climate~Nature crisis, as well as knowledge about supply chains and social justice issues in textile production. They now have the confidence to discuss and question assumptions. Practical skills in clothes repair and upcycling encouraged personal behaviour changes to reduce harm and connections were made with other local initiatives.

### Learning Points/Recommendations:

- **Timing of events is crucial, as exam season and weekdays can affect attendance.**
- **Young people involved suggest school uniform swaps to promote reusing clothes and reduce costs.**
- **Young people identified that questions to ask before making any purchase are 'Who made it?' and 'How much were they paid?' before assessing for fairness and finalising their decision whether to buy or not.**



# Stories of Change

## Story of Change 4

### Green Careers: How We Source and Use Energy

#### Context:

YCAT's initiative took place during Green Careers Week in November at a local FE College that cites 'Sustainability' as a core value. Team members shared information about climate as 'patterns of extreme weather' and the 'The Future is Green' project led by local universities. We incorporated circle consultations into our presentation, highlighting the value of Restorative practice for communication, problem-solving, and teamwork. These capabilities are essential for transformative new projects like Floating Offshore Wind (FLOW) predicted to mean 8,000 new jobs in the South West.

*Youth-led Climate Action Team members with solar panels*



### Engagement:

- At Cornwall College, the YCAT team members engaged 128 young people through seven 90-minute sessions.
- At Truro & Penwith College, we worked with 39 young people across two campuses.

These sessions introduced Restorative practice and explored clean energy opportunities relevant to the futures of the young participants.

### Feedback:

- Mixed reactions from students and staff. Some were enthusiastic, saying they would cascade their learning others and look to RJ Working for further involvement.
- A minority were sceptical, even some college staff denying climate breakdown is happening, disregarding the evidence.

### Outcomes/Impact:

- Over 70% of participants felt the conversation improved their knowledge and understanding of climate issues.
- They discussed the impact of extreme weather and highlighted the vulnerability of groups like children and people who are elderly or physically vulnerable.
- Some participants expressed interest in follow-up activities, with several attending a subsequent event titled 'The Future is Green'.

### Learning Points/Recommendations:

- **While many students were intrigued and curious, most were hesitant to commit to a weekly group. Flexible, one-off opportunities may increase engagement, but traditional beliefs appear to be deep-rooted.**
- **Most significantly the publication of the Governments Action Plan for Clean Power by 2030 could transform the local economy through employment in this sector. The associated research points to the need for culture change to remedy poor public understanding and less than 10% of young people able to explain "green jobs".**
- **These developments are we hope likely to be high-profile in the imminent school curriculum review and should feature in citizenship not only science & technology. There is the potential for a national awareness campaign.**

*An off-shore wind turbine blade with scale provided by over 100 people*



*Off-shore wind turbines planned as a huge development in the South West*



# Stories of Change

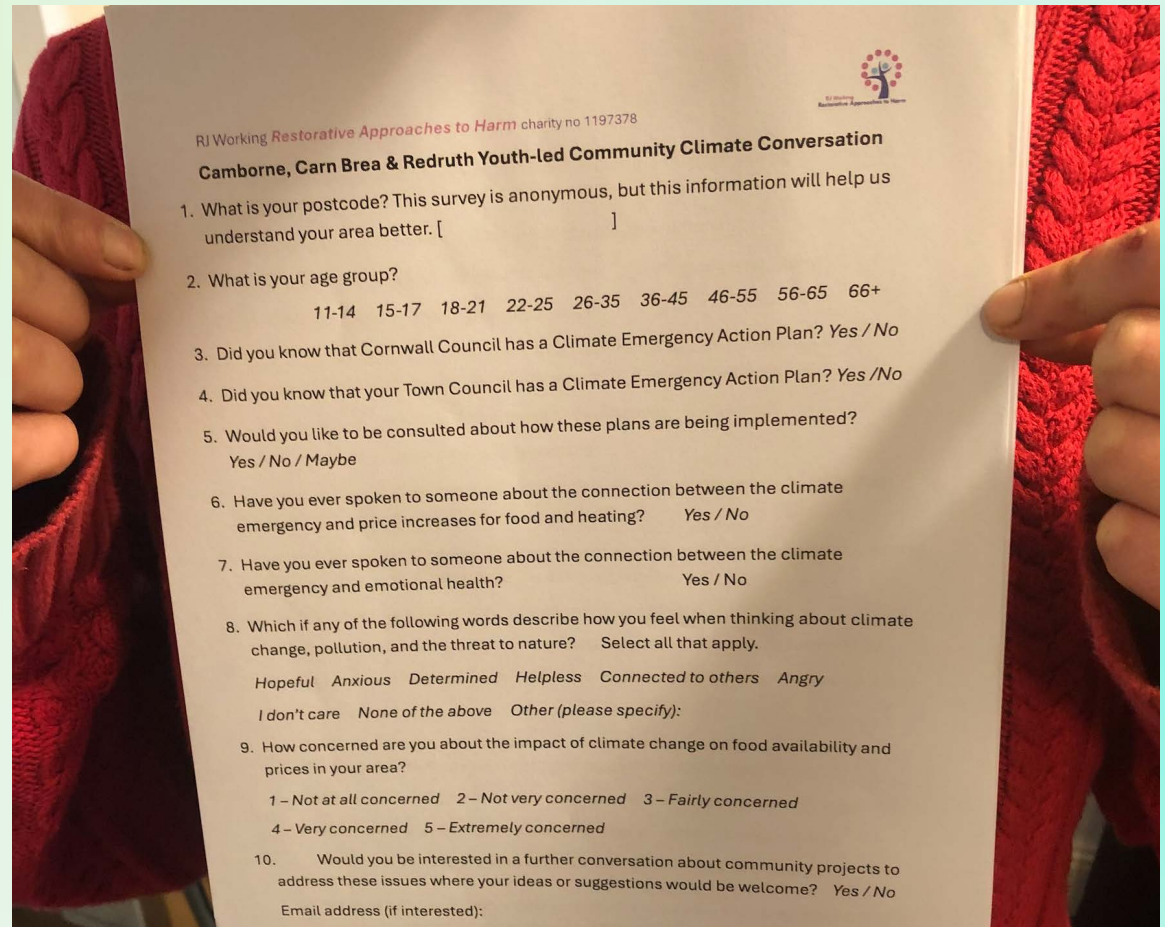
## Story of Change 5

### Youth-designed Consultation Surveys

Climate Conversations survey

#### Context:

RJ Working uses surveys to engage young people, introduce ideas, and foster deeper conversations about the Climate~Nature crisis. RJ Working has been involved with three surveys, most recently two designed and promoted by the Youth-led Climate Action Team (YCAT). Analysis of responses can amplify young people's voices (see infographics p30) and help schools and colleges gain insight into young people's perspectives.



**Engagement:**

- **Truro & Penwith College:** 567 students (aged 16-21) participated, with 36% wanting to learn about campaigning in their communities.
- **Camborne Science & International Academy (CSIA):** 635 students (aged 11-16) participated, with 191 expressing interest in deepening discussions on climate change.
- At CSIA, over 40 students indicated a desire to continue conversations with RJ Working, highlighting potential student leadership opportunities. The surveys connected climate issues to social impacts like resource depletion and injustice around household bills for food and heating. The analysis of responses mapped respondents' engagement on the 'Journey of Progressive Change' framework, identifying opportunities for positive action and for meaningful dialogue even when responses were negative.

**Outcomes/Impact:**

The surveys showed students the context of broader structures like town councils and government, introduced the social and economic impacts of the Climate~Nature crisis, and encouraged community engagement through events, assemblies, and campaigns. They can also spark discussions with peers, family, & school staff about Climate~Nature and raise personal awareness of respondents' own environmental impacts and actions.

**Many young people gained confidence** in discussing these issues and expressed a **desire to protect nature and local people**. Participation potentially fostered critical thinking, bias awareness, agency, community power, and leadership skills. Analysis also detected the need for safe spaces to share concerns, including worry or disengagement ('not caring').

At Truro & Penwith College, survey findings were presented to the Sustainability Committee and senior leadership, leading to formal adoption of recommendations in the College Sustainability Strategy – a longer-term impact in the language of our Theory of Change.

**Learning Points/Recommendations:**

- **Involve young people at each stage of survey design and creation.**
- **Use surveys to start engagement, not as an end goal; follow up with assemblies, leadership initiatives, and curriculum integration.**
- **Record staff contact details to facilitate communication following up completed surveys.**



## CLIMATE-NATURE SURVEY AT CSIA

CSIA ACHIEVED A FANTASTIC LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT, 635 PARTICIPANTS TOOK PART IN THE SURVEY!



191 students want to continue the conversations about climate change.

Over 60% of respondents believe the government can make the most difference in tackling climate change



Let's make climate action plans accessible and engage with our local MPs

44% of respondents felt motivated to act on climate issues



Let's support these students to become leaders in their school and inspire further community involvement



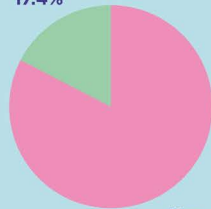
### Community Engagement

CSIA students would like to participate in or want to see:

#### Top 5

- 1 Better transport links
- 2 Renewable energy projects
- 3 Waste reduction initiatives
- 4 Community food gardening
- 5 Social media campaigns

No  
17.4%



Yes  
82.6%

82.6% believe that Community-Led Action Plans could be more effective than individually tackling Climate Change



## CLIMATE-NATURE SURVEY AT TRURO & PENWITH COLLEGE

TRURO & PENWITH COLLEGE ACHIEVED A FANTASTIC LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT, WITH 567 PARTICIPANTS TAKING PART IN THE SURVEY!



When asked how motivated they feel about acting in response to climate change, the average response was 5 out of 10

### Who students feel have the most power to create change:

1. The Government
2. Businesses & multinational corporations
3. Communities
4. Campaign groups
5. Individual

### What is important to students?

i) changes in environmental law, ii) a sustainable economic system, (iii) protecting wildlife & natural habitats, (iv) becoming more sustainable consumers (which requires access to sustainable choices)

75% said that nature is very important to them.



and 58% of students felt very worried about the impact of climate change on nature.

Let's support the protection of wildlife & natural habitats.

### What inspires these students to create change?

- 1 Exposure to climate related disasters (52%)
- 2 Family and/or friends (52%)
- 3 Sadness and grief for the losses (39%)
- 4 Efforts made by your local community (35%)
- 5 Anger about injustices (32%)
- 6 Activist groups and individuals (25%)

Truro & Penwith College students want opportunities to take action together as a community and connect with others.

71% of students see the benefit of their College having a Climate Action Plan



# Stories of Change

## Story of Change 6

### Stop Ecocide Campaign

#### Context:

RJ Working's Youth-led Climate Action Team (YCAT) engaged with the STOP Ecocide campaign, producing a #StopEcocide film to communicate with younger audiences. The film was launched at the Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Ecological Emergency Summit in May 2023, resulting in multiple sign-ups and pledges.

The short 5 minute film can be viewed [here](#)

*YCAT Team speaking at the Ecological Emergency Summit*



## STOP Ecocide at PHF YFLN

### Engagement:

With support from a Youth Worker, two YCAT members presented their film at a Paul Hamlyn Foundation Youth Fund Learning Network (YFLN) event. They used the Restorative model to foster deeper conversations about campaigning. The virtual circle also enabled a 'held space' to process and share the feelings associated with the need for a law to protect nature, because the natural world doesn't have a legal voice.

### Feedback:

The session was well-received, with participants appreciating the impact of the STOP Ecocide film, the need for the campaign and the value of Restorative practice for young people. The YFLN Co-ordinators wrote: **"YES RJ WORKING TEAM! Thanks so much for yesterday-it was a brilliant session, and everyone really appreciated your energy, focus and presence"**.

## STOP Ecocide at Treviglas School

### Engagement:

YCAT worked with the Eco-Group at Newquay Treviglas Secondary School, serving communities in the 10% most disadvantaged nationally (IMD). Nine students (aged 14-16) were introduced to Restorative practice and learned how to be effective changemakers. They designed a 75-minute assembly about the STOP Ecocide campaign, using the YCAT film, and led this for 140 Year 7 students and 30 Year 6 visitors.

### Feedback:

Participants found the interactive sessions engaging, loved learning about biodiversity and the importance of collective action. Their comments fit the aspirations of our Theory of Change as an initial response. YCAT team members reported a sense of community and enthusiasm among the students.

## Outcomes/Impact:

Participants rethought their relationship with nature, gaining a better understanding of biodiversity. They learned the principles and language of Restorative practice, and campaign strategies. Their confidence significantly increased, reflected in new capabilities: they worked as a team to lead an assembly for 170 younger children.

The film is so effective it has been requested (following a showing at a Regional Conference in Bristol) by the international STOP Ecocide campaign organisers. This is evidence of longer-term impact in the terms of our Theory of Change.

## Learning Points/Recommendations:

- YCAT recommend that the film is most effective when integrated with Restorative practice as in the two examples, with designed circle questions enabling a developmental response and identification of next steps. Otherwise there would be a risk of a passive audience (a risk which can be usefully discussed).





# Stories of Change

## Story of Change 7 Activist Education

### Context:

RJ Working was invited by Truro and Penwith College to run enrichment sessions on social and environmental justice. Students attended weekly extra-curricular sessions, 'Activist Academy', 'Greener Futures' and 'Fairer Futures' held every Wednesday.

*YCAT team facilitating a People's Assembly at Penwith College*



### Engagement:

- **Promotion:** Drop-in workshops and activities reached 235 young people with initial conversations and interactive activities like quizzes and badge-making.

- **Weekly Sessions:** Core groups of up to 8 students at each campus attended sessions on activism, Restorative practice, environmental themes (Active Hope, collective action), and social justice themes (racism, migration, trans rights, Pride).

- **Student Initiatives:** Students led initiatives like a whole-college Climate Consultation, a People's Assembly, and workshops on 'Living Sustainably on a Budget,' 'Green Careers,' and 'Fast Fashion.'

### Feedback:

Participants appreciated the structure of sessions, learning new concepts like Active Hope, working collaboratively, and felt these sessions improved their emotional health and wellbeing.

### Outcomes/Impact:

Fairer Futures Group successfully planned and ran a People's Assembly, creating productive dialogue between 20 students from various courses and a similar number of staff. Key outcomes included i) a Report analysing recommendations from the assembly, shared with the College and ii) a subsequent Climate Consultation across Truro and Penwith College.

Both groups were enthusiastic exhibiting the feelings and qualities listed in the Theory of Change 'mechanisms'. They became knowledgeable about building a sustainable community of changemakers and achieved the outcomes described above which demonstrate new capabilities and behaviours, together with impacting on the institution for the longer-term as described.

### Learning Points/Recommendations:

- **Recruiting for weekly groups was challenging due to students' competing priorities. To address this, we extended our reach by offering roadshow workshops and drop-in events, engaging a wider audience and providing core group members opportunities to develop their confidence and leadership skills.**

- **This longer-term work over an academic year enabled witnessing of more significant progression for the young participants which YCAT team members have described as 'inspiring'.**



# Stories of Change

## Story of Change 8

### Youth-led Climate Action Festival

#### Context:

One of our first projects was an Interclimate survey partnership with nearly 3000 young people sharing their views. This led to this led to Cornwall's first Youth-led Climate Action festival in June. The Festival aimed to develop climate literacy, exchange ideas and build community. The event was youth-led; not only by the YCAT team, also through young people from schools, having prepared with YCAT for around two months, taking the opportunity to to bring their own projects to share.

*Dandelions made by the Eco group at Mounts Bay Academy*



### Engagement:

Young people led every aspect of the Festival, with 60+ participants aged 13-16 years. Key decision makers and education staff watched in awe as young adults facilitated the event. Four groups, from Redruth, Hayle, Penzance, and Helston, had planned their contributions and presentations with members of YCAT over two months.

Highlights included:

- **Hayle:** Created beautiful banners, a 'tree of promises,' and a podcast on Spotify (EcoPod).
- **Redruth and Helston:** Created artistic displays on 'fast fashion' and 'ocean plastic pollution.'
- **Mounts Bay:** Brought giant dandelion sculptures, celebrating this plant and challenging the misjudgement which describes it as a weed!

### Feedback:

A YCAT member said, '**Although young people feel worried about the future, they are also incredibly hopeful and have channelled their hope into taking action**'. The day fostered connections between students, who shared their feelings about the future during circle conversations.

### Outcomes/Impact:

Young people gained skills in discussing climate issues and presenting to peers. They took on roles as filmmakers, comperes, workshop hosts, and creatives. Activities included themed presentations, podcast creation, filming interviews, making art, solar light making, ivy weaving, dance, Letters to the Earth, craftivism, and Active Hope campaigning. The preparatory sessions developed their creativity, project planning, and teamwork. Films and photos from the event were shared with schools, and some young adults joined the wider RJ Working team afterwards.

Filmmaking has become a key way in which we capture young people talking about the climate. [Here](#) is one of several outreach films we published.

### Learning Points/Recommendations:

- **The event required extensive planning & communication with the four schools.**
- **Preparatory sessions were vital for developing understanding & giving time for young people to create something to share on the day in which they took pride.**
- **Films, an obvious medium for young people, were an integral part of the event, used by YCAT for [advance info](#) about their workshops; inspiration was offered by film of the Prime Minister of Jamaica & YCAT's STOP Ecocide film.**
- **The festival highlighted the power of collective action, inspiring future steps.**



# Stories of Change

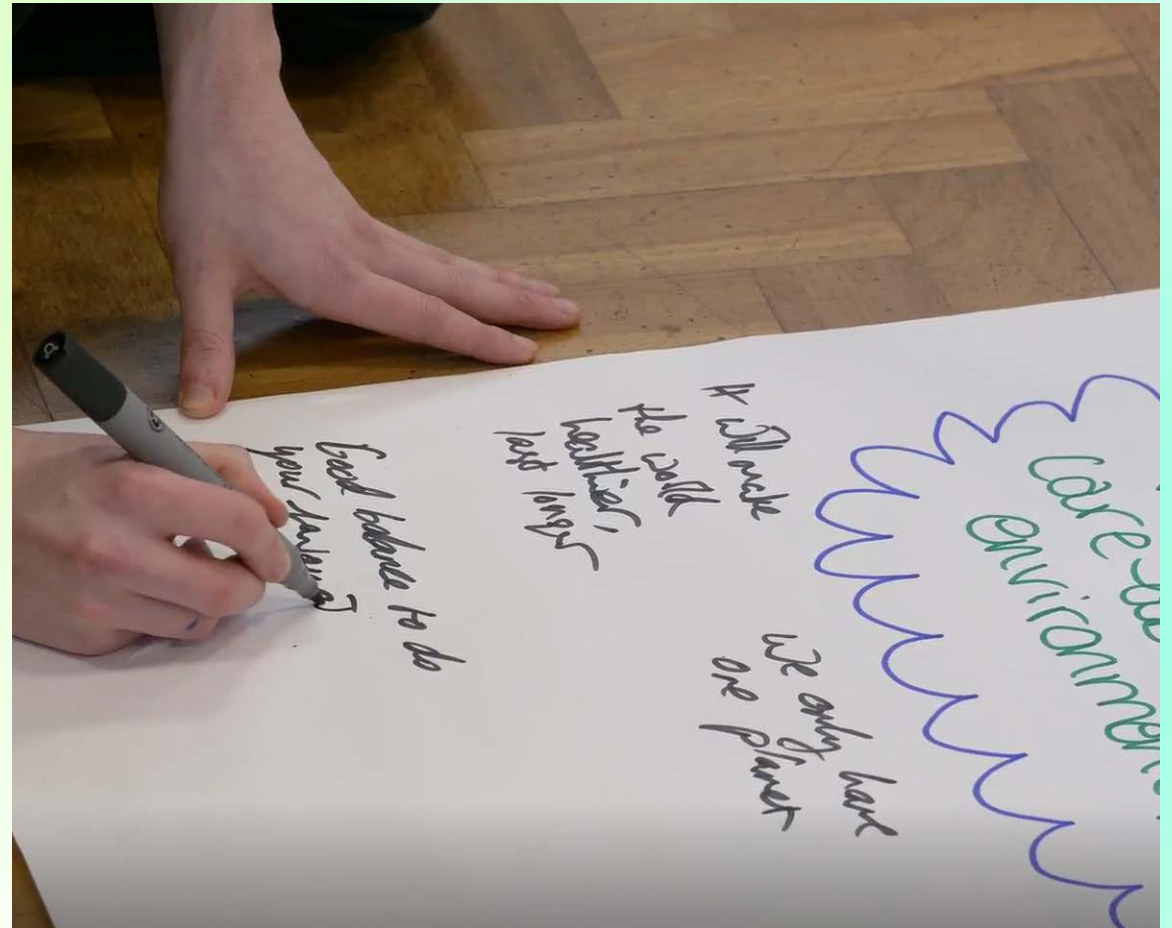
## Story of Change 9

### Youth-led Climate Conversations

Engaging students in Community Climate Conversations

#### Context:

YCAT members provided 'Teamwork and Leadership' training in three secondary schools in a disadvantaged area, where over 25% of students qualify for 'pupil premium' status. The training introduced Restorative language and principles to prepare members of each group to become leaders of a 'Community Climate Conversation' event for teachers, parents and other students.



### Engagement:

The training spanned a whole school day, delivered through a Restorative circle structure by two YCAT members. In all, four groups of 12 young people were each supported by a participating staff member to train as Circle Keepers. Additionally one group of 5 was held on a Saturday, so the total is 54 participants. Conversations exceeded expectations and headteachers have confirmed this from their perspective.

### Feedback:

Some students were initially sceptical, but by the day's end, all demonstrated thoughtful and reflective responses to the Climate~Nature crisis. Many recognised its disproportionate impact on vulnerable communities in the Global South and engaged in discussions about habitat destruction and nature loss. Students adapted to working in circles, listening empathetically, and understanding the need for collective community action. They used attentive listening skills, social awareness, and demonstrated respect throughout. By the end of the day, they had shared opinions, brainstormed initiatives, and designed circle questions for the event they were planning to lead together.

### The Community Climate Conversation:

The subsequent Conversations provided a safe space for everyone to share their thoughts. Young facilitators held their circles with respect and understanding, impressing teachers with their emotional wisdom. Participants' insights enabled adults to open up new elements of their working relationships with young people. Though some facilitators followed their planned structure rigidly, informal conversations at the end of the event revealed candid reflections. A headteacher felt 'inspired' by participating. Quotes from young participants included: '**Active listening can help us talk about climate,**' '**We need to look after nature to look after ourselves,**' and '**Nature needs a voice.**'

### Outcomes/Impact:

100% of trained young people reported feeling '**more engaged with climate awareness**' and left with actionable ideas for initiatives. Participants gained confidence and skills in facilitating discussions and expressed enthusiasm for future action. One student exclaimed, '**I didn't realise I loved talking about the climate like this so much!**'

### Learning Points/Recommendations:

- **Adults who know the students provided valuable affirmation, as young people exceeded expectations.**
- **Ongoing support may be needed from these adults to enable access to further opportunities for young people to further practice their skills and capabilities.**
- **Young people were highly motivated following the Community Conversations and YCAT will revisit them to see what they have been able to achieve following these memorable milestone events.**



# Stories of Change

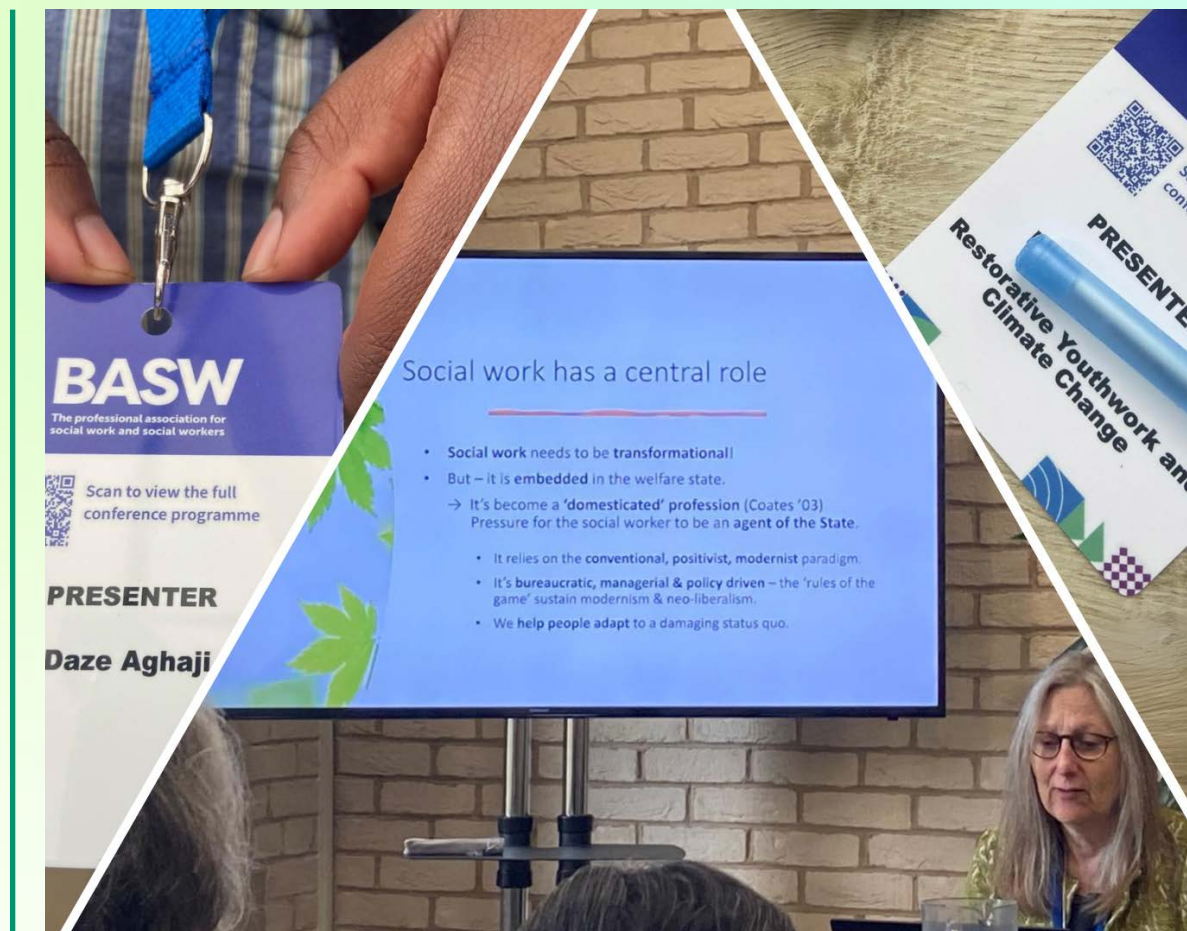
## Story of Change 10

### Climate as Safeguarding: BASW National Conference

#### Context:

RJ Working contributed to the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) national and online international Annual Conference held in June 2024 in Edinburgh. The conference theme was 'A Sustainable Future for Social Work,' exploring how social work can tackle ecological and climate change and create and support sustainable communities. RJ Working designed a 'Restorative Youthwork and Climate Change' workshop and with the multidisciplinary Climate Child Protection and Safeguarding Team, also co-designed a 'Climate means Safeguarding' workshop.

*RJ Working participated in vital discussions*



### Engagement:

- Both workshops were selected from a competitive field and achieved strong interactive participation.
- RJ Working assisted in planning the opening plenary, which featured two young people in an open conversation with Climate Psychologist Caroline Hickman. This reached a large audience, including senior professionals and regulators.
- The harms to children and young people caused by climate breakdown were itemised as physical, emotional, psychological and social. This set the scene for our workshops and enabled participants to derive more value from them.

### Feedback:

Audience members were deeply moved by young people's testimony on the impact of climate change. Senior leaders commended the work and offered ongoing support. Both workshops achieved a high level of interactive engagement.

### Outcomes/Impact:

RJ Working raised awareness of climate breakdown's impact on children and young people, both immediately and in the longer-term. Young voices were heard, furthering the longer-term impact goals in our Theory of Change: increased representation of young people's voices and for these to potentially achieve more power and influence in organisational policy.

### Learning Points/Recommendations:

- **The slide decks developed for both workshops can be used in future online training which RJ Working is in the process of designing.**
- **There is potential for a national and international campaign to recognise climate as a Safeguarding issue (requiring additional resources).**
- **We are committed to remembering that the impacts of the Climate Crisis are felt first and worst by those least involved in the causes, particularly in the Global South.**





# Conclusions and Next Steps

This Report is made at the end of the second year of a three-year programme. It is clear to us that there is much more to do, locally and nationally. Young people need a culture around them which acknowledges the Climate~Nature crisis, which encourages and enables everyone to play their part in tackling the issues collectively and collaboratively. Here, we highlight our ambitions and how we are thinking about developments based on the learning we have achieved so far, our Theory of Change and early-stage evaluation.

## How we talk about Climate~Nature

The work of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)<sup>1</sup> shows that over 99% of scientists agree climate change is caused by human activity. Their predictions are being confirmed as **species become irreversibly extinct**, tipping points are approaching with uncertain impacts, and **global resources are depleted** through flooding and desertification. In the UK, reduced carbon emissions and other necessary adaptations are reported to Parliament and the public by the Climate Change Committee.<sup>2</sup>



Young people talking about climate

**The inability to talk about it is the greatest barrier to tackling the Climate~Nature crisis**

At the start of our programme, members of YCAT thought about **how to communicate the urgency** and seriousness of this situation. We looked at tools like the Local Climate Adaptation Tool<sup>3</sup> which offers local decision-makers (across the UK) information about what changes to anticipate and who is vulnerable. We learned it was more effective to **contextualise circle discussions** simply by recognising climate change as extreme weather (heat, cold, wind and rain). We have learned that the inability to talk about it is the greatest barrier to taking steps to address the Climate~Nature crisis. As we hope we have demonstrated through stories of change 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, there are many ways of helping to dismantle this barrier, and many more are needed, not least in the national press.

Over the coming years, we hope that **climate and nature will become integrated into everyone's thinking, feeling and actions**, into our structures, systems, and culture. It needs to be seen as a fundamental part of citizenship – not only taught this way in schools but even more importantly, **felt by young people as their opportunity to create positive change in the world**.

1. <https://www.ipcc.ch>
2. [www.theccc.org.uk](http://www.theccc.org.uk)
3. <https://lcat.uk>



## Influencing beyond Cornwall

The Youth-led Climate Action Team at RJ Working is part of **established national networks**, such as PHF Youth Fund Learning Network and Co-op Future Communities Network (supported by IVAR) and RJ Working is a Quaker Recognised Body. While we can talk about climate and nature in these settings and contexts, we don't want to be 'specialists,' as we believe these issues can and must be **integrated into every organisation's work**, especially those involved with and supporting young people. We aim to offer our knowledge in ways that are **accessible and transferable** to areas beyond Cornwall. We will ask significant contributors, such as The Children's Society in their national annual survey and the Children at the Table campaign, to centre climate and nature. YCAT wants and hopes to become part of a **wider community** using the Restorative approach to engaging with Climate~Nature issues, perhaps through a new or existing network of funders or organisations. We think the key question is how to realise the **potential of young people's leadership** of social change to support the practical changes needed. We hope that both our content and methods can be adapted to varying contexts and settings and that other teams of young people will make them their own. We want to see **new initiatives** such as national level tracking of young people's attitudes to the natural environment.



**We aim to offer our knowledge in ways that are accessible and transferable to areas beyond Cornwall**

*Members of the team after delivering campaigns*



### How we plan to reach more young people and communities in Cornwall

Locally, in our own region, we are positioned to expand the part of our Programme called '**Consulting Communities through Youth-Led Climate Awareness**' (illustrated at 'Story of Change 9') which uses Restorative practice to **empower young people in disadvantaged communities** and supports their leadership of intergenerational events. This is funded by central government through Local Authority contracting, with significant written reporting and accountability.

Young people have enjoyed making films of this Programme as evidence of their success and YCAT are intending to adapt and replicate it in more localities, which include more communities in the most disadvantaged 10% nationally.

**We are positioned to expand our programme**

### Supporting the transfer of leadership to younger young people

**Sharing responsibilities is a core principle of Restorative practice** and is a dynamic and evolving process. At first, YCAT takes responsibility for explaining our offer to each unique school or college setting, and setting up circle keeper training. Then one of the questions for each newly formed team is who they will invite to participate in their circles as a next step. YCAT wants to be increasingly 'light-touch' providing follow-on activities, so that young people take more responsibility for initiating and developing projects and explaining to school staff what they need.

Encouragingly, some schools are moving towards having an eco-group in each Year Group rather than a more symbolic group for the whole school. We also want to support schools to consult in ways that point to strategic-level Climate Action Plans and School Food Strategies. If circle practices are used well, these can be informed by student and staff voice: consulting on a deeper level builds a sense of teamwork and creates stronger engagement on the bigger issues.

We are exploring the extent that YCAT needs to revisit to actively support these initiatives, (educators find it difficult to make time and space for new practices as discussed in the problem definition of YCAT's Theory of Change). Ultimately, we are aiming to establish the immediate and long-term benefits of adults hearing young people's voices and this work becoming truly intergenerational. To evidence all this, we are looking to **establish metrics to track participation, behavioural change, and community engagement**, using data insights to refine programme delivery, demonstrate impact and align with local and national climate priorities. In all of this, we want to offer, explain, reference and further develop our Theory of Change.

**We will support schools to consult in ways that point to Climate Action Plans**



## New ways of engaging young people, especially those who experience barriers

### Tackling injustice is part of addressing climate and nature Restoratively. Some further ideas and learning for development are:

- Using **sports** to talk about the effects of climate eg. matches cancelled due to flooded pitches and the predictions of pitches increasingly under water.
- Using **creative arts** to communicate the issues in innovative ways, overcoming communication barriers, while supporting young people's well-being.
- Finding and creating **new spaces** to amplify underrepresented voices.
- Recognising '**green jobs**' as an opportunity to address growing divisions between young women and men, and **stereotypes which can compound disadvantages and limitations**. eg young women who didn't succeed in traditional terms at school could be encouraged into trades and construction rather than being directed to hair and beauty only.
- Valuing oracy, practising the **skills of voicing views and ideas**, with mutual peer support.
- Using our '**Journey of progressive change**' model (see page 13) to encourage acceptance of those voicing '*it's not true*' beliefs about climate change or '*i don't care*' feelings. Offering the 'supportive challenge' which is central to Restorative practice only when group members have engaged sufficiently to develop trust and connection.

## Supporting young people's wellbeing and resilience in relation to climate and nature

- 1** This is an area of **ongoing learning** for RJ Working and we want it to be an area of ongoing learning for everyone who cares about young people.
- 2** Young people are strengthened by gradually **integrating difficult knowledge and ideas in age-appropriate ways** rather than being given more than they can digest
- 3** Young people know **at a deep level** that we are in trouble as a species, this is apparent from daily news and weather programmes.
- 4** Adults who care about young people are often struggling with their own feelings of anxiety and feeling out of their depth. **Adults naturally feel protective**, and teachers in particular may be unfamiliar with 'not knowing' and uncertainty.
- 5** However, shutting down young people's expressed concerns or questions is counter-productive and could lead to a sense of isolation and associated depression.
- 6** It is a matter of young people's voices **being truly heard** at a heart level. It really is a different experience to grow up with the sadness of the Climate~Nature crisis as formative and the associated frustration, disappointment and anger.
- 7** Young people are strengthened by **knowing that they are not alone** in their ongoing relationship with climate and nature questions.
- 8** **Young people do not want to feel the weight of responsibility** for 'sorting things out', they want to hear that those who have caused the problem are doing something about it.
- 9** **Adaptability and flexibility** will be essential to wellbeing and resilience as we move forward together. Overcoming hardships and challenges need to be practised and **these capabilities cared for, and valued**, from early childhood onwards.

**Young people do not want to feel burdened:  
this is an intergenerational responsibility**



### Supporting young people's employment and employability in new kinds of work

As public awareness and the national picture develop, the urgent need to reduce carbon emissions is likely to affect young people's employment opportunities and choices. Without information and awareness, young people will be vulnerable to the risk of being left behind.

**Cornwall has significant numbers of young people who are marginalised through unemployment** (formerly recognised through European Social Fund support). Many grow up around worklessness, in some families over three or four generations. Getting this right in Cornwall would grow young people's ambition and morale, neither of which have recovered from covid-19, and we have a widening inequality gap, with Climate's impact on living costs potentially compounding and embedding all other inequalities.

Recently published research in the Government's Clean Power Action Plan Assessment of the Skills Challenge<sup>1</sup> says 63% of those aged 16 to 24 have never heard of green skills and don't know what they are (Worldskills UK) and only 27% of all young people having heard the term 'green jobs' are able to explain what it means (Public First). Clearly this is a critical area for development and **young people need more information to increase their awareness of employment pathways** which will help to create the needed changes. These will include local challenges, such as coastal erosion, agricultural sustainability, and flood resilience.

RJ Working has already established that Restorative practice supports young people to develop skills and work readiness, for example in the critical areas of communication and problem-solving. As part of a wider partnership, we have been **contracted by Cornwall Council to work with groups of marginalised young people at all FE College sites**. We want to explore the extent to which young people's motivation will be affected by shared understandings of 'green jobs' as important and meaningful for helping to protect all that we care about, including friends and family. This would require educators to better explain the importance, and the opportunities, in a range of age-appropriate ways, empowering choice and agency.

1. [www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-power-2030-action-plan-assessment-of-the-clean-energy-skills-challenge](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-power-2030-action-plan-assessment-of-the-clean-energy-skills-challenge)

**63% of those  
aged 16 to 24  
have never heard  
of green skills**



## RJ Working's recommendations:

### 1. Get involved

Or if you are involved already, get more involved! Whether you are a big or small organisation, school or college, you can make a Climate Action Plan that is relevant for your own context and community, grow ownership of it, get more people involved in finding ways forward, hold stakeholders to account, review the Plan together, extend it and so on.

### 2. Help to develop the role of education, formal and informal

Climate education must move beyond Geography's factual focus to include opportunities for young people to contemplate repair, recovery, and restoration. Preparing them to collaborate on these challenges is essential for the future. Practical discussions about vulnerability to climate extremes (heat, cold, wind, and floods) must become integral to education. Every subject can support the learning needed, for example learning to calculate carbon emissions in maths using 'How Bad Are Bananas' by Mike Berners-Lee, or in English using 'Letters to the Earth' for motivating creative writing.

### 3. Build citizenship and grow hope

From primary school lessons on 'sharing nicely' to fostering international citizenship, we need to strengthen collective action and build consensus about what is needed. Addressing the Climate~Nature crisis restoratively can be sociable, exciting, and meaningful – *'What if we all push for change?'* Together, we can demonstrate what's possible and inspire hope for the future.

**We are excited about continuing to test and develop our Theory of Change.**

**Youth-led Climate Action Team (YCAT)**

**RJ Working**

2025



# Credits

*With thanks to:*

## **Youth-led Climate Action Team:**

Zunaira Malik, Mia Powell, Seb Ramdin, Phil Green, Becky Ndegwa, Fran Houston, Thalia Lichtenstein, Jakob Pegler, Annelie Huggins, Ibrahim Khan, Hannah Jacobs, George Brock, Harry Rogers, Ash Sharma, Jack Cowley, Ashling Williams, Anna Kingston, Matt Whitley, Ed Hart, Maya Ronchetti.

*Supported by:* Lucy Pearson, Nicky Abrahams, Deborah Mitchell, Jack Lowerson and Eleanor Capper

## **Schools and Colleges:**

Richard Lander School, Redruth School, Mounts Bay Academy, Hayle Academy, Helston Community College, Truro & Penwith College, Five Islands Academy, Falmouth School, Penryn College, Cornwall College Camborne, Camborne Science & International Academy, Pool Academy.

## **Partnerships:**

Trebah Gardens, Loveland, University of Exeter, Jola Associates, Cornwall Council, Isles of Scilly Council, Camborne Town Council, Redruth Town Council, CN4C, all the schools and colleges above.

## **Funders:**

Together with core funding from Paul Hamlyn Foundation Youth Fund, the activities described in our stories of change have been supported by the Co-op Foundation Future Communities Fund; Garfield Weston; Cornwall Community Foundation; People's Health Trust; tnl Community Fund; Good Growth SPF; Cornwall Council and the Council of the Isles of Scilly.



With huge thanks to Paul Hamlyn Foundation Youth Fund who have enabled this work to be collaborative, co-ordinated and drawn together in this way.

**phf** Paul Hamlyn  
Foundation





**RJ Working**  
**Restorative Approaches to Harm**

Empowering young people to create  
fairer communities through  
Restorative Leadership programmes  
[www.rjworking.co.uk](http://www.rjworking.co.uk)

**Contact:**  
[deborah@rjworking.co.uk](mailto:deborah@rjworking.co.uk)  
07535 656007