The University of Manchester
Sustainable Consumption Institute

# Beyond the tick-box:
# meaningful inclusion of racialised communities in UK net zero policy

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## Executive summary

Without care, the pursuit of net zero could worsen social justice considerations, by placing burdens on those in society who are least able to shoulder them. This report aims to mitigate that threat. We explain how the UK's net zero policy can become more inclusive, comprehensive, and effective.

In this report, we identify patterns of exclusion, and more problematically, tokenistic inclusion of people who have been sidelined via existing net zero policy. In particular, we discuss how practices are experienced by people from Global Majority backgrounds who are often racialised as 'ethnic minorities', or marginalised by their religious identity. We bring new evidence to the climate sector from our interviews with people who identify as Muslim and have a Global South migration background. We explain why exclusion and tokenistic inclusion of these social groups lead to poor outcomes for citizens, policymakers, and the climate alike. In response, we share recommendations - particularly to national and local policymakers - for enabling *meaningful inclusion* within net zero strategy.

Enabling meaningful inclusion matters because of the growing demand for moving towards a decarbonised economy via fair and equitable strategies. It is increasingly common to hear that the green transition must leave no one behind. But even more than this ambition, the transition to net zero can be seen as an opportunity to redress actively the social and spatial inequalities that are worse in the UK than most other countries in western Europe. However, with a few exceptions, these aspirations are not being connected to social science research about how intersecting inequalities and power relations shape mainstream approaches to net zero. Moreover, there are opportunities to implement practical strategies for making climate action more inclusive and democratic that have yet to be realised.

We begin by explaining the importance of achieving a 'just transition', and explain how we understand 'inclusion' and 'exclusion'. In Section 2, we identify and explain *tokenistic inclusion* and why it is problematic. In Section 3, we present the promises and possibilities of more *meaningful inclusion* in climate action in the UK. Finally, in Section 4, we provide seven policy recommendations about how we can achieve meaningful inclusion of seldom heard voices in net zero policymaking.

## Brief overview of our seven recommendations:

### Recommendation 1

**Holding up a mirror:** reflect honestly and critically upon existing assumptions and practices.

### Recommendation 2

**Thinking intersectionally:** acknowledge diversity and power relations within communities to avoid homogenising groups into singular communities.

### Recommendation 3

**Building trust:** collaborate with a variety of intermediaries who are trusted and respected across their communities, and show it when their advice is implemented.

### Recommendation 4

**Making language and information even more accessible:** move beyond translation to find culturally resonant terms and concepts.

### Recommendation 5

**Ensuring cultural sensitivity, relevance, and resonance:** listen to why climate action matters to citizens, and frame actions accordingly.

### Recommendation 6

**Embracing the knowledge of diverse lay publics:** find knowledge assets rather than deficits in the expertise our citizens possess in a wide range of areas.

### Recommendation 7

**Increasing investment that creates paid work:** cultivate long-term experience through paid internships and work that celebrates the insights of communities such as people of colour and Muslims.

### A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

Finding the best word or phrase to refer to people who do not identify as 'white British' is challenging and controversial. Many terms that are commonly used, such as 'BAME' and 'ethnic minorities' are problematic, whereas others, such as 'people of colour' and 'Global Majority', are more accepted. In this report we are drawing on our interviews with people who have backgrounds in Global South countries (such as Pakistan and Somalia) who are also people of colour and Muslims. The intersections we draw attention to are racialised minorities, Muslim identity, and Global South migration background in the UK. These intersectional identities will therefore be referred to collectively or individually throughout the report.

## Pursuing a 'just transition': understanding exclusion and inclusion in the UK's path to net zero

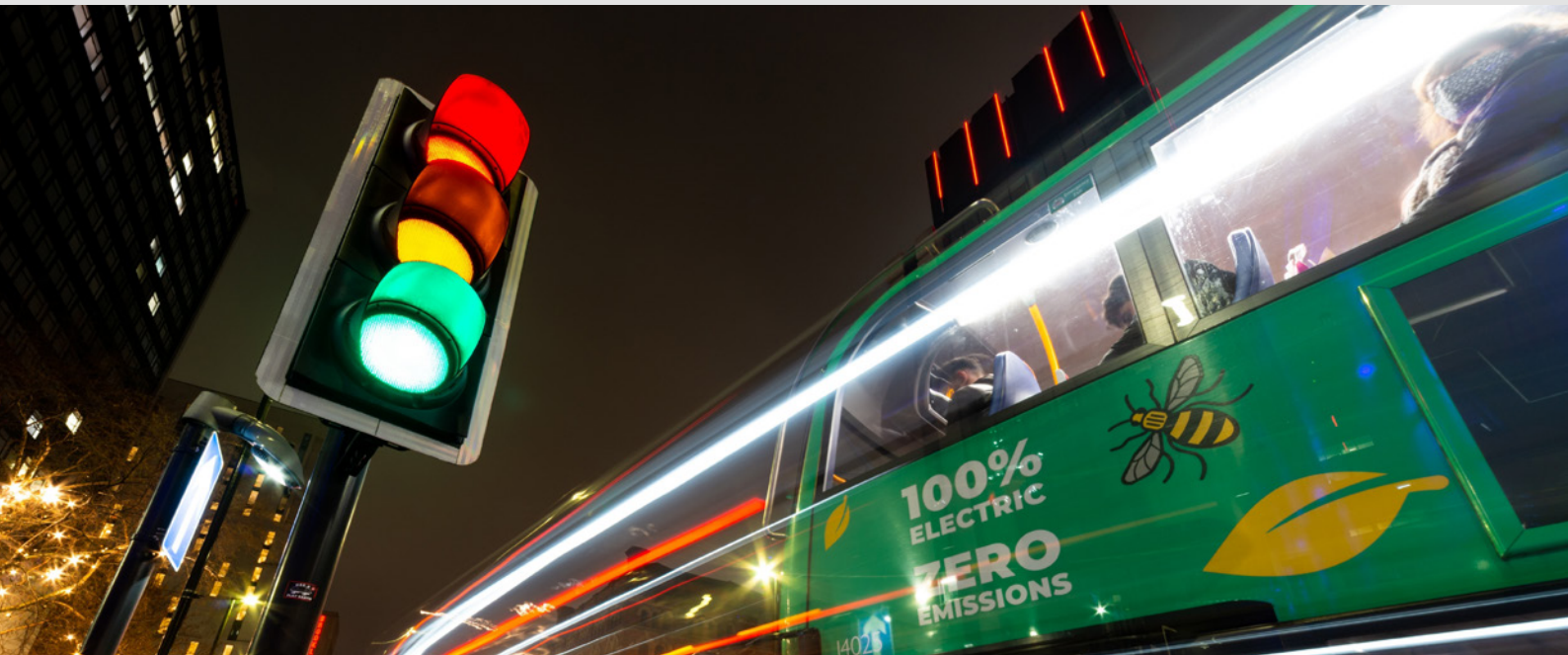
The UK has a legally-binding commitment to reach 'net zero' carbon emissions by 2050. Since the adoption of this commitment in 2023, there has been growing debate over which industrial strategies and economic policies will be most effective in achieving net zero. However, there has also been rising opposition to climate change initiatives from a range of interest groups, whose activities have been labelled Anti-Net Zero Populism. While some of this 'backlash' against net zero has been organised by influential actors behind the scenes, there are also important questions around the unequal impacts of any climate strategy, which must be addressed if the UK is to reach its net zero target.

Moving towards a decarbonised economy will not necessarily benefit everyone equally, which is why policymakers, campaigners, and academics are increasingly calling for a 'just transition', in which no-one is left behind. The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines a just transition as *"Greening the economy in a way that is as fair and inclusive as possible to everyone concerned, creating decent work opportunities and leaving no one behind."*

Proponents of the just transition approach argue that the current focus on industrial, technological, and financial aspects of net zero policy has meant that important social questions, concerning equality, fairness and diversity, have gone unasked and unanswered. Proponents of a just transition call for greater attention to the exclusionary nature of environmental policies and for the inclusion of a broader range of participants, representative of the UK population, in environmental decision-making processes.

However, even amongst groups and organisations in the UK who are calling for a just transition, there is a lack of attention to the twin problems of the exclusivity of the environmental sector and the exclusion of large segments of the population from it, and the implications for climate action. For example, the extensive changes needed in energy systems, green technologies, and built infrastructure, mean that the transition agenda is highly relevant to sectors dominated by men. This male dominance increases the likelihood that policymaking decisions result in biased outcomes regarding important and practical day-to-day issues such as jobs, leaving women wondering how investments in net zero will benefit them.

We can also see that environmentalism in the UK has failed to address the problem of white privilege. The vast majority of people involved in UK environmental and climate action and policymaking identify as white. Although the whiteness of the climate and environment fields is increasingly acknowledged and documented, there is an acute lack of research on the experiences, expertise, and actions of people of colour and Muslims in the UK regarding climate action. The few reports that exist make clear that there is little or no difference in the level of environmental concern between white majority and racialised people. Yet, in the UK as in other countries around the world, racialised (Global Majority) social groups are the most adversely affected by environmental problems. Moreover, the fact that this research has not yet been mainstreamed into policy debates means there is a lack of evidence to support the claim that just transition debates are exclusionary. And as a consequence, there are few concrete ideas for how policies and processes could be made more inclusive.



## What do we mean by inclusion?

In contrast to exclusivity and exclusion, what do we mean by inclusion? Many people will be familiar with the acronym EDI (equality, diversity and inclusion). EDI is used as a shorthand for the multidimensional process of eliminating discrimination on the basis of characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010. Adopted in many sectors, EDI is intended to change the culture of institutions, organisations and the wider society, so that everyone is treated fairly and can participate equally, and so that differences are celebrated. There are also important challenges to EDI for not going far enough or being proactive enough. Specifically, there are multiple forms of racism, misogyny, homo- and transphobia, ageism, ableism, and classism, which each hinder the creation of inclusive policy. People who do not have citizenship status face an even further form of discrimination, especially if they have migrated from a Muslim majority or Global Majority country. Entrenched power relations continue to normalise these inequalities. Moreover, these injustices intersect with one another, complicating easy solutions but also elevating opportunities for diverse collaborations. In this report, we emphasise the importance of intersectionality for considerations of meaningful inclusion.

In the climate policy sector, there is growing agreement that more needs to be done to improve EDI activities and outcomes, but there is a lack of sustained discussion about how to do so. The RACE Report found that the environmental sector is made up of less than 7% of people who are from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups, making it one of the least racially diverse sectors in the UK. We know from our own professional experiences, and from our own research with people in the sector, that whiteness (and absence of people of colour) is the elephant in the room in climate meetings, events and projects. White people, who form the majority of professionals within the climate sector, can find it difficult to challenge their own assumptions and behaviours. This difficulty means that proactive measures are needed to attract more people of colour into the field.

Unless proactively inclusive measures are implemented, there is a high risk that EDI will result in cosmetic or tokenistic policy decisions, seeking merely to tick the right boxes rather than address the structural power relations that sustain exclusion and prevent just outcomes. EDI activities that make superficial changes for 'box-ticking purposes' - for example, featuring photos of people of colour in campaigns - will never address the fundamental, structural causes of inequality and exclusion, and will prevent the UK from reaching its net zero goals.

## The voices of excluded communities who wish to support net zero:

**"I'm a woman and I'm Muslim. So that already is intersectional in itself... So, I have two glass ceilings going on there. In fact, they're not even glass, they're opaque."**

**"There's several factors intersecting... being first/second generation immigrant communities, I think that really impacts how we act on climate change. Secondly, again faith, and thirdly, gender."**

**"The intersectional element is really important, particularly for Muslim women who may make a lot of the decisions around the household."**

**"Policymakers say 'the religions are engaging. Tick, well done.' Not, 'wow, the religious groups can bring so much to the table.'"**

## Avoiding tokenistic inclusion

We next identify and explain tokenistic inclusion and why it is problematic. The section that follows presents the promises and possibilities of more meaningful inclusion in climate action in the UK.

By 'tokenistic inclusion', we mean the practice of including people from minoritised or marginalised groups to create the appearance of diversity and fairness, while leaving the underlying causes of exclusivity and inequality unchanged. Similar terms for this problem are 'performative inclusion' and 'diversity washing'. Drawing on our research and professional expertise, we offer the following examples of tokenistic inclusion that can be observed in the field of environmental and climate policy.

- Inclusion of people of colour at events to prevent criticisms of having an all-white speakers list is an obvious form of tokenism. Organisers of green events know that it is not a good look to only invite men and white people to speak about environmental issues. But what happens all too often is that they invite people to diversify the event.

**"I know straight away that I've only been invited on a panel to tick the diversity box, woman- tick, person of colour – tick, Muslim – tick. More airtime is given to the so- called experts, and it's frustrating because it makes me doubt my expertise, and I feel my opinion is not really wanted or valued. If I speak up then I'm being problematic, so I remain silent but visible."**

It is problematic when the person is an outsider to the field with expertise that may not be regarded as relevant to the audience. Moreover, when the same few people are asked to participate because they help avoid all-white panels, the result is stress and burnout for these experts. Climate Reframe was established to address this problem.

- Similarly, allocating menial tasks to volunteers, and then seeking to take their photos for the sake of 'diversity' is a form of tokenistic inclusion. As one Muslim environmental campaigner told us after volunteering at a Council-led environmental initiative, it is "demeaning" to be used as a prop for a photo. Moreover, such tokenism is especially damaging when relevant knowledge is being overlooked for the sake of press releases.

- Including racialised people in a process only to get what is needed to support (or corroborate) an already made decision is a form of instrumental inclusion. For example, many local and regional governments conduct public consultations in the process of developing multi-year environment plans, sometimes targeting specific groups that they deem 'hard to reach'. They may specifically engage leaders of mosques in order to claim input from 'the Muslim community' or to ensure the process appears inclusive.

Often this is presented as expedient and justified in light of the need for rapid action to meet carbon reduction targets. Instrumentalising people's participation can easily be viewed as tokenistic because it is done to support the decisions and structures that sustain exclusion. People on the receiving end of this approach are well aware that their time and energy has been used in this way, and for some it fuels cynicism, resentment and lack of trust that environmental policies are relevant to their lives and in their best interests.

- Policymakers are known to euphemise racialised voices as 'certain communities', or 'ethnic minority groups', who are framed as being 'hard to reach' for cultural and language reasons. From here, there is a habit of instead speaking to gatekeepers and leaders, such as Imams or male elders, as the sole 'voice' of those communities. Such practices are once again a form of tokenistic inclusion. For example, the individuals who speak on behalf of a community are unlikely to reflect the intersectional challenges facing the group they are asked to represent. Such tokenistic inclusion is problematic, as individual leaders can never be solely representative of a population, commonly meaning that the views of women, disabled people, or the young, are ignored.

These tokenistic, tick-box approaches to inclusion are common in the environmental sector. People see through them and know when the engagement is not genuine. Such tokenism undermines trust and fuels scepticism and cynicism, which can result in people making the understandable decision to stay away from net zero-related events, projects and organisations.

**"The way I would describe it is that they [policymakers] didn't want to get their hands dirty. What they prefer to do and have done for a very long time is go through gatekeepers and this kind of colonial mindset lies at the heart of why they won't do it. There's almost like a sense of disgust that I'd have to go down and have to like talk to them. Whereas, if I speak to Uncle Khan or Uncle Chaudry or Auntie something – job's done. This reliance on this gatekeeper is a terrible thing for communities because yeah you'll get the gatekeepers, but guess what? Do you really think they've gone and consulted their own community? No, they don't."**

## The voices of excluded communities who wish to support net zero:

**"It's a lot of tokenism that's happening in the early stages. They'll take pictures of a couple of black and brown people and put them in the front pages of wherever they are."**

**"I think they liked the fact that I was Asian... for, you know, a little colour... for diversity form-filling."**

**"There has been no meaningful action that has brought lasting change for improvement for the disadvantaged Asian community or integration."**

**"People just want to tick the resident engagement box, and ask the same questions over and over again."**

## Meaningful inclusion

To be meaningful, inclusion in net zero policy processes must not only challenge structural causes of social exclusion, including racism and xenophobia, and the exclusive nature of the climate field, but also entail substantive input into the way the challenge of decarbonisation itself is understood. An essential step towards avoiding tokenistic forms of inclusion is to do the work of opening physical, political and intellectual space for a wider range of people to be involved and engaged.

The first thing to consider is the excessively technical and specialised language that is used to communicate about climate change and proposed ways of tackling it, including net zero.

Incorporating inclusive language within sustainability communication is essential for broad public engagement and comprehension. The term 'net zero' for example is widely used in policy and advocacy, but often holds limited meaning for the average UK resident and may be even more challenging for those in communities for whom English is not a first language.

Our research highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity in crafting climate-related communications that resonate with diverse communities and enhance understanding of sustainability goals. To this end, policy approaches will benefit from the integration of culturally relevant terminology and concepts that reflect the lived experiences and beliefs of specific communities. For instance, the word 'dunya' (a word used in the Quran which comes closest to 'earth') carries significant cultural and spiritual meaning in Islam and so could be used to contextualise sustainability efforts within a framework familiar to Muslim audiences. This approach not only makes the climate change agenda more accessible, but also aligns with the values of communities that may otherwise feel disconnected from mainstream environmental discourse.

A key principle of justice is that sometimes equality of opportunity is not enough. When dominant structures and systems have resulted in some people consistently having much more than a fair share of the pie, it is fair and just to deprive them of having yet more pie so that their shares can be distributed to those who have gone without. In the case of public debates and processes around net zero, meaningful inclusion might mean centring some people – actively facilitating the move to the centre of people who have been marginalised and 'invisibilised' -– while people who have the most power and privilege (i.e., white men and some women) take a step out of the centre and into the sidelines to focus on supporting and listening.

Connecting meaningful inclusion with the question of expertise in paid roles, it is essential to recognise that while our current knowledge base may primarily focus on community and voluntary engagement, limiting the discussion exclusively to unpaid roles could undermine our efforts to achieve truly inclusive climate action. Tokenistic inclusion often appears in voluntary or community roles where marginalised voices may be invited to participate but without access to paid, influential positions. If we genuinely seek to advance meaningful inclusion, we need to consider pathways that move beyond voluntary engagement and towards creating avenues for diverse communities to access paid, decision-making roles in the climate sector. This approach ensures that inclusion extends not only to who is heard, but also to who holds power and influence within climate action frameworks. Taking an intersectional approach to policymaking is an essential part of the move towards meaningful inclusion at all levels.

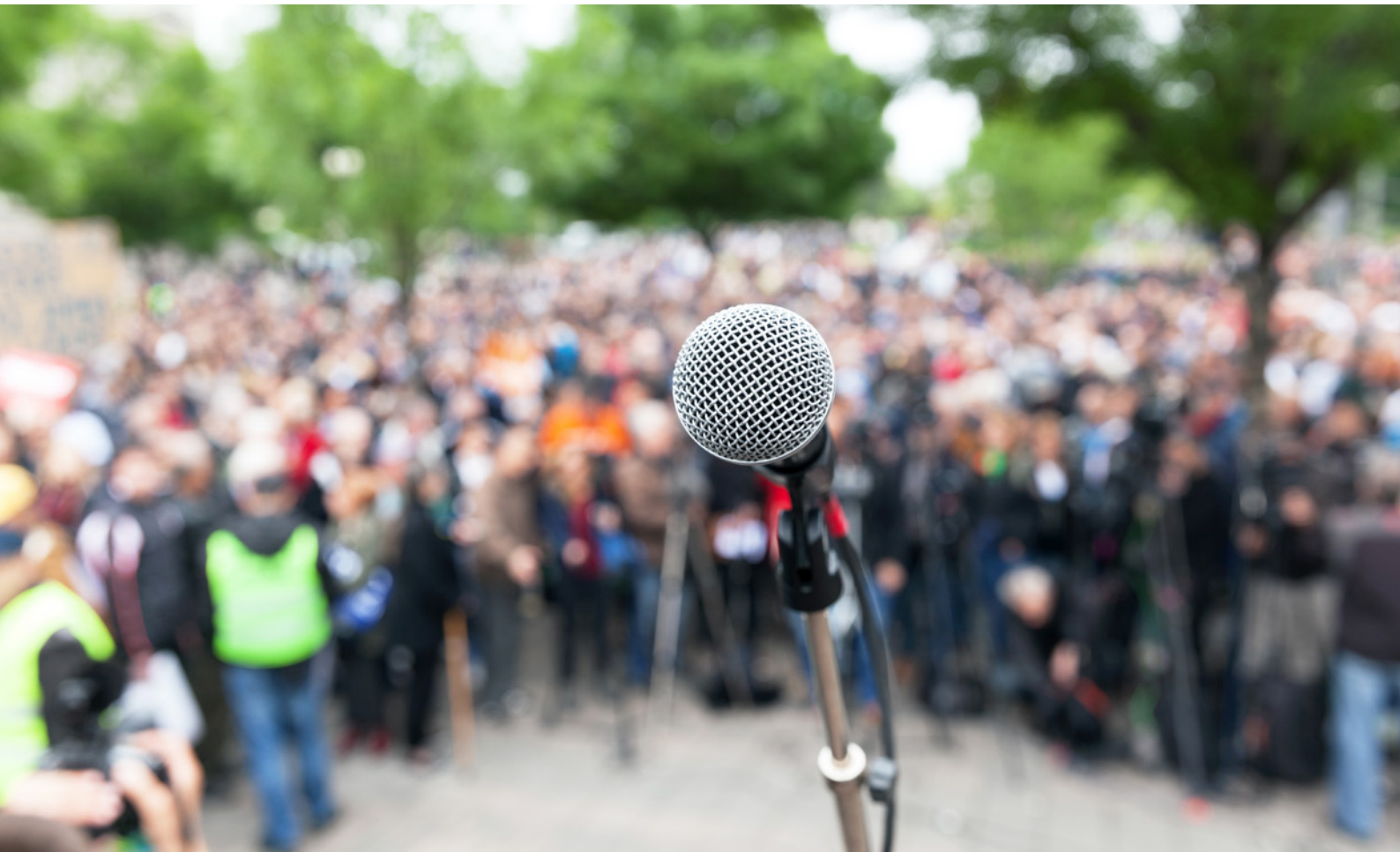
By discussing ways to attract individuals into paid roles in climate action, we can explore how to break down barriers for underrepresented groups, helping to cultivate a climate workforce that reflects the communities it serves. This process includes identifying potential structural barriers to entry, such as lack of training, resources, or networks, which may prevent marginalised individuals from accessing paid positions. From here, we can discuss policies or programmes that support skills development, professional pathways, and employment opportunities within the climate sector. This expanded approach could also widen the impact of climate initiatives. Paid, diverse participation brings both accountability and representation into the professional spaces where key decisions are made, moving beyond tokenism to foster more comprehensive, community-informed policies.

Rather than assuming most members of the public are uninformed and uninterested in net zero - which is known as the 'deficit model' - we propose that meaningful inclusion starts from a different place.

Research suggests that the majority of people in the UK are concerned and knowledgeable about climate change, and want to participate in the net zero transition. Starting from an assumption that public knowledge is an asset removes barriers to inclusion. Involving a wide range of views at an earlier stage in the policy process means that space is opened for ideas and suggestions that can challenge dominant assumptions and lead to better decisions. It matters who is represented at the decision making table from the start of a process, as diverse perspectives on the framing of a problem will ensure more inclusive decisions about how to approach solving it. Public engagement is more meaningful when it begins early and values different types of expertise participants can bring to it. Some common terms for this include co-production, co-design, and 'upstream' participation. This approach has potential to foster more meaningful and inclusive engagement and is the opposite of instrumentalisation. The successful implementation of this approach depends, of course, on people in leadership roles accepting that they may not be the only ones with valid knowledge and being willing to have their authority and expertise called into question.

To foster meaningful inclusion, it is essential to actively challenge the existing climate change narratives that engage in the 'othering' of minoritised and racialised groups. Media and policymakers' use of language of 'othering' certain groups in society means that they are perceived as problematic, ignorant, difficult to engage with, etc. For example, one research project found that the school curriculum around climate change presents Global South countries as disaster zones populated by flood victims and starving animals. This made pupils whose families had migrated from such places feel embarrassed and angry. Similarly, the TIES project has gathered data that challenge the false positioning of Global South immigrant communities as lacking environmental knowledge and concern about climate change.

It is not possible to foster meaningful inclusion for free. Meaningful inclusion requires resources beyond volunteer time and good will. Meaningful inclusion is the opposite of extractive: it is beneficial and reciprocal. In addition to extractive practices, often consultations and other participatory activities are not resourced and therefore create conditions of exclusivity. The funding question is central to the move toward meaningful inclusion. Special consideration must be given to the cultural and religious aspects of funding, alongside how intersecting inequalities limit people's access to resources needed to participate in political processes.



Funding environmental projects is challenging, especially for racialised communities who are more likely to be less financially secure than others. Funding systems based around interest payments (or 'usury') can be impossible for some faith communities, especially certain Muslim and Christian denominations. As a result, grant-based systems can be most appropriate. Yet, grants that rely on long application forms can prove an obstacle for those who do not have English as a first language, or have not benefited from high levels of education. Instead, it is important to consider simplifying and shortening application forms, and targeting their distribution to those groups with limited uptake of net zero initiatives. Even better, a targeted grant for communal spaces, such as mosques, gurdwaras and mandirs, that entails no paperwork or loans, could galvanise environmental action for those least likely to otherwise be involved. One celebrated initiative we learned about through our research was the Scottish Government's Climate Challenge Fund (2008-2022), which could serve as a template for future funding models.

The wider context of austerity in the UK, especially since 2010, has hit local policymakers especially hard. Local disenfranchised campaigners understand this context: "the local authority used to give us some funding for our youth projects. That all ceased many years ago... [now,] the agenda's huge and [there is] so much work to do". In response, racialised communities and faith groups would prefer seats at the table for allocating scarce resources, rather than a simple cessation of funds. In our recommendations section, below, we suggest a variety of methods of aiding meaningful inclusion within governance arrangements.

Finally, meaningful inclusion entails making sure participation does not inadvertently exclude people in subtle ways when they are invited into spaces and events that are mostly white and not welcoming of religious or cultural diversity. It is common for organisers to invite 'diverse' groups to participate, while also failing to make people welcome by not showing respect for their needs. For example, Muslims may need prayer rooms and halal food to be available. Events are unlikely to be attended during religious events and at prayer times. These accommodations can be small to highlight inclusivity, rather than big adaptations. If the processes that lead to making and implementing net zero policies are to become inclusive, comprehensive, and effective, it is important to create an inclusive space where all groups feel welcome to express their beliefs and practices.

## The voices of excluded communities who wish to support net zero:

**"Having diverse teams allows us to design and develop more diverse and more meaningful outputs and outcomes."**

**"That network, that platform... they become the synergies, the places for people to come. To connect, to learn, to talk, and to share, and to build on. That ends up turning into meaningful work, so I would like to see more work like that being done. I think that they're enablers."**

**"I've got involved in designing for charities and for special impact projects, helping raise awareness and money to help raise awareness and raise funds for meaningful projects where people really need it most."**

## Seven recommendations for enabling meaningfully inclusive net zero policymaking

### Recommendation 1
Holding up a mirror

First, we suggest that people in positions of power critically reflect upon their own assumptions and practices. This process is a necessary step in committing to the creation of meaningful inclusion in policy processes that are needed to accelerate a just transition to net zero. We call this process **holding up a mirror**, and it is an essential step in understanding and changing the power relations that create exclusions in the environmental field. It is the opposite of starting with the mindset that people who are currently not participating actively are the ones who need to be educated and 'empowered' to get involved. For example, the ideas that migrants from Global South countries are less concerned about climate change and harder to reach than UK-born citizens have been disproven by empirical research, and yet we know that these assumptions influence how minoritised communities are talked about and how they are engaged with (or not). So instead, we encourage policymakers to take a step back, acknowledge their own background and the backgrounds of those within key decision making positions, and reflect upon whether insights are currently being lost through a lack of meaningful inclusion within policymaking processes.

### Recommendation 2
Thinking intersectionally

Second, to create effective and empowering net zero policies, it is necessary to avoid homogenising and othering excluded communities. Instead, policymakers will benefit from seeing diversity and power relations within these communities. Even the term singular 'community' can be problematic if it facilitates a tokenistic approach to inclusion: who represents 'the [Somali, Libyan etc.] community'? We wouldn't ask this question of the majority white population group. A useful strategy for avoiding this problematic tendency is to always **think intersectionally**, to remember that people sit at the intersection of multiple strands of difference (including gender, race/ethnicity, class, religion, age, ability, citizenship status and so on) that shape their lives and relationships, and to avoid single individuals being the voice of pluralistic communities

### Recommendation 3
Building trust

Third, the importance of **building trust** cannot be understated in the search for meaningful inclusion. As explained above, it is impossible to build trust through tokenism. In fact, the experience of being treated in tokenistic and instrumental ways is why many people are sceptical and/or cynical about policy processes - and so choose not to engage in the first place. There may be high levels of mistrust caused by lack of inclusion and systemic injustice that need to be repaired before it will become 'easy' (or less challenging) to foster meaningful inclusion. As a result, time and effort need to be invested in establishing trust. Working in collaboration with a variety of intermediaries who are trusted and respected across their communities, and showing that their advice has been taken is a good place to start this process.

## Recommendation 4

### Making language and information even more accessible

Fourth, we recommend efforts to **make the language used to communicate about net zero more accessible to wider audiences.** This process involves translation into languages other than English, but not only that: some ideas and jargon (like net zero) cannot be translated directly into languages other than English. Indeed, even if terms can be translated, they may fail to resonate. Policymakers are encouraged to learn from existing research that identifies culturally resonant language and messaging strategies for a broader range of communities. Community-based researchers and organisers can offer insights into how to tailor campaigns and translate key messages for specific audiences. Such efforts will increase support for sustainability initiatives by ensuring that policy language and messaging are not only accessible but also meaningful to the populations they aim to serve.

## Recommendation 5

### Ensuring cultural sensitivity, relevance and resonance

Fifth, more can be done to **increase cultural sensitivity, relevance and resonance** in the net zero policy field. By 'cultural sensitivity', we mean ensuring activities and processes are designed in ways that respect the values of minoritised groups, rather than being designed to suit those of the white majority. We gave examples above around funding and event planning.

In addition, relevance and resonance may be enhanced by connecting conversations about net zero and climate change to religious beliefs, migration experiences, and personal ties to non-British cultures and places. One concrete suggestion here is to adopt an expanded appreciation of place when referring to effects of climate change. People who have moved to the UK from Global South countries will have frames of reference beyond the local: they may think trans-locationally, across more than one local place at once, and have strong ties beyond borders. Framing the net zero challenge as a global and translocation one will have greater resonance and therefore invite more meaningful participation by a wider diversity of people. Nevertheless, we want to emphasise the need to avoid homogenisation of communities: for example, second- and third-generation immigrants may not feel these same ties to other countries, while Muslim communities of Somali heritage will hold little connection to flooding in Bangladesh.

## The voices of excluded communities who wish to support net zero:

**"Look, solar panels are brilliant... it's not costing anything and you'll save money... [but] is there an interest payment? Interest could potentially be, in biblical terms and Islamic terms... problematic for Muslims and some Christians as well."**

**"There's so much work that needs to be done to really understand the intersections of communities. The more we understand those things that impact those communities, the more we can unpack these attributes: 'what are the values? 'what the drivers?' 'What are their behaviours?' 'What are the things that actually make a community tick?' "**

## Recommendation 6

### Embracing the knowledge of diverse lay publics

Sixth, there is much to do to open the existing highly technical net zero space to other types of knowledge. This process also means moving from a frame that centres behaviour and how to change it towards one that **centres knowledge that stems from different worldviews** and a diversity of lived expertise and experience.

An essential aspect of meaningful inclusion is to value and collaborate with alternative knowledge producers, including faith intermediaries, community race/climate action campaigners and organisations, in order to create a broader base of ideas from which to operate. It is vital to create space for recognising heritage- and migration-based knowledge and beliefs.

The lived experience movement advocates giving far more attention to the role of people and communities with direct experience of social or environmental issues in leading social change in the UK. While doing so, it is important not to assume a binary between lived experience and professional/academic expertise, where white people have the latter and people who have moved to the UK from countries of the Global South only have the former. People who participated in the TIES Project came from a wide range of backgrounds, from livestock farming to engineers and medics. The participants possessed a wealth of insight, not only about the environmental changes threatening their home countries of Pakistan and Somalia, but also about the complexities of government action and strategies for encouraging pro-environmental cultural change in the UK.

## Recommendation 7

### Increase investment that creates paid work

Seventh, to enable meaningful inclusion in net zero, there need to be proactive strategies for attracting **more people of colour and Muslims into paid jobs in the environmental sector.** Here we highlight the need for policies that support widening participation in environment-related programmes in higher and further education. There is ongoing need for paid internships and apprenticeships in environment-related businesses and research organisations. The Wellcome Trust's programme of supporting researchers from under-represented groups is a good model for this kind of action. There is considerable attention and advocacy of actions to increase the participation of people of colour in the US-based organisation Green 2.0, which has for many years criticised the overwhelming domination of environmentalism by white people, calling for action that addresses the problem at a structural rather than superficial level.

## The voices of excluded communities who wish to support net zero:

**"We would love to be able to [influence policy decisions] but at the moment we don't really have that much of a say in things".**

**"Not having diverse spaces means [policymakers] prioritise things that are not important to me and people who are like me", resulting in "strategies or assumptions that can be quite racist in nature".**

## Conclusion

The steps that the UK takes in lowering its greenhouse gas emissions have been, and continue to be, replicated across the world. Take for example, the UK's pioneering 2008 Climate Change Act, which has been replicated in many countries, leading to more emissions reductions than the UK could ever have achieved alone. But although the UK has performed well at lowering its emissions over the last 30 years, those achievements were 'low hanging fruit' compared to the more challenging transformations that will be needed in the years ahead. To achieve those goals, policies will need to be designed that secure effective action throughout our society.

To achieve the UK's legally-binding net zero pledge, we need to ensure that climate activities do not exclude the very communities who will feel the impacts of climate change most harshly, and whose actions could play a transformational role. As we have shown, tokenistic inclusion - from relying on gatekeepers' perspectives to giving menial roles to volunteers - not only increases the likelihood that voices will be missed, but also results in the design of climate policies that can be actively exclusive. In response, in this report, we have outlined examples of meaningful inclusion, and provided recommendations for how to implement such practices.

By recognising existing but overlooked forms of expertise, and acknowledging the inequalities the UK already faces - and those that may be created by climate policies - we can ensure that net zero is achieved in a collaborative, rich, and empowering way. To learn more about the research that this report builds upon, please see the free-to-read links listed below.

**Social inclusion is about working together as a society to foster active participation of, and equity for, all citizens... [and to] *change dominant systems of knowledge, power, and decision-making'***

(Teelucksingh 2019:47, emphasis added)

# Recommended resources

## Online reports, blogs and podcasts

Report by Esmee Fairbairn Foundation: 'Addressing the lack of diversity in the environmental sector' https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/latest-news/addressing-lack-diversity-environment-sector/

The Race Report https://www.race-report.uk/

Report by Runnymede Trust: 'Confronting Injustice: Racism and the Environmental Emergency https://www.runnymedetrust.org/publications/confronting-injustice-racism-and-the-environmental-emergency

Report by Ogunbode, C., Anim, N., Kidwell, J., Sawas, A., & Solanki, S. (2023). Spotlight: How People of Colour Experience and Engage With Climate Change in Britain. https://nottingham-repository.worktribe.com/output/25802298

Report by Sustainably Muslim & Two Billion Strong (2024) Muslim Climate Action https://twobillionstrong.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/LIVE-EDIT-Muslim-Climate-Action-report-2024.pptx.pdf

Blog by Zarina Ahmad: Sustainability lessons from diverse women, Climate Exchange https://www.climatexchange.org.uk/sustainability-lessons-from-diverse-women/

Blog by Sherilyn MacGregor and Nafhesa Ali: Why the success of a green recovery requires engaging with and learning from minority communities, policy@manchester https://blog.policy.manchester.ac.uk/posts/2021/04/why-the-success-of-a-green-recovery-requires-engaging-with-and-learning-from-minority-communities/

Podcast by Andres Jimenez, executive director at Green 2.0 'Why climate has a diversity tokenism problem' https://tedxlondon.com/podcasts/climate-quickie-why-climate-has-a-diversity-tokenism-problem/

Illustrated Sketchnote by Mandy Johnson: From Diversity and Inclusion Tick Boxes to Anti-racism (based on a session at the AMA's Conference Change For Good, 2021).

## Open Access research articles

Beyond inclusion? Perceptions of the extent to which Extinction Rebellion speaks to, and for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and working-class communities

Holding up a mirror: researching symmetrically to explore exclusion, othering and whiteness in local environmental governance

Muslims and climate change: How Islam, Muslim organizations, and religious leaders influence climate change perceptions and mitigation activities

The diversity penalty: Domestic energy injustice and ethnic minorities in the United Kingdom

"The religions are engaging: tick, well done": the invisibilization and instrumentalization of Muslim climate intermediaries

## Books

Karen Bell (ed) (2021) *Diversity and Inclusion in Environmentalism*. Routledge.

Jennie Stephens (2020) *Diversifying Power: Why We Need Antiracist, Feminist Leadership on Climate and Energy.* Island Press

Leah Thomas (2022) *The Intersectional Environmentalist: How to Dismantle Systems of Oppression to Protect People + Planet*. Souvenir Press.

## Organisations and networks

Black Environmental Network
https://ben-network.org.uk/

Climate Reframe
https://climatereframe.co.uk/

Ethnic Minority Environmental Network
https://theemennetwork.com/

Faith for the Climate
https://faithfortheclimate.org.uk/

Women's Environmental Network
https://www.wen.org.uk/

Two Billion Strong (Muslim Climate Action group)
https://twobillionstrong.com/

Sustainably Muslim
https://sustainablymuslim.org/

She Changes Climate
https://www.shechangesclimate.org/

Somalis for Sustainability
https://linktr.ee/somalisforsustainability

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