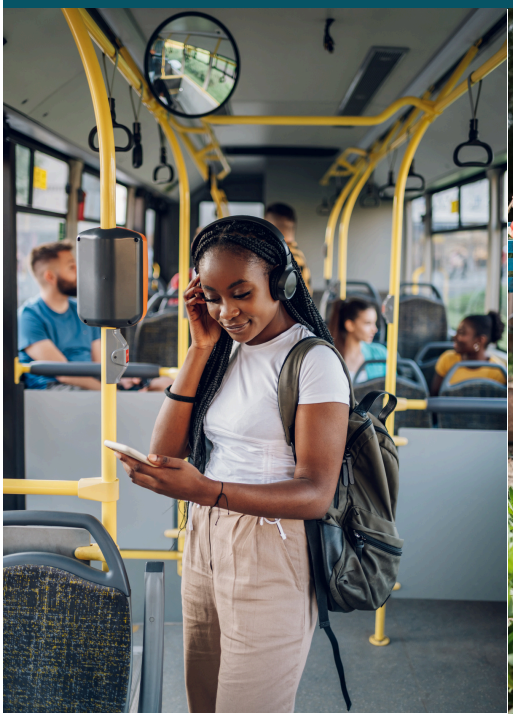
CAST BRIEFING 49 - November 2026





Public visions of Wales in 2035: Climate action across land use, housing and transport

Key messages:

- **Future of Wales:** People in Wales want a future where climate action is built on community, education, and financial support, but there is uncertainty about whether this vision is achievable by 2035.
- **Future of agriculture and land use:** By 2035, people want community-based food systems, greater availability of local produce, and changes to how supermarkets operate.
- **Future of housing:** By 2035, people want retrofitting their homes to be easier and more affordable, with clearer rules and less bureaucracy to support low-carbon housing. They also want other buildings (such as supermarkets and schools) to use low-carbon forms of energy.
- **Future of transport:** By 2035, people want well-connected public transport, improved active travel infrastructure, and better links between rural and urban areas.

Centre for **Climate Change** and **Social Transformations**

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Background and context

This briefing is intended as a resource for Welsh Government policymakers and other stakeholders interested in how to design climate policies that consider the changes people in Wales want to see across land use, housing, and transport by 2035.

Wales is entering a critical decade for climate action. People's lifestyles will increasingly be affected by the changes needed to meet Wales' climate change targets. Therefore, to ensure successful climate action in Wales, it is increasingly important that the public engages with climate policy and that policymakers listen and respond to the public's needs, views and experiences. The Welsh Government is committed to meaningfully involving people across Wales in shaping the actions needed to address the climate and nature emergency.

One useful method for engaging the public on climate change is 'future visioning' workshops. In these workshops, participants are encouraged to imagine what life and places might look like in the future, and to discuss both how the world might change and how they would like it to change.

This briefing paper describes the findings of the future visioning workshops conducted by CAST in collaboration with the Welsh Government, in which residents of Wales discussed what climate action could look like over the next ten years. Conversations focused on three key areas: (1) agriculture and land use, (2) housing, and (3) transport. The workshops were conducted to trial the future visioning workshop method across different topic areas and with different organisations.



Recommendations

To increase the successful delivery of climate action in Wales, policymakers should:

1) Address cost and inequality as central barriers to climate action

Financial barriers—including the cost of living, limited grants (e.g., for retrofitting homes), and inequitable access to incentives—were consistently identified as preventing people from adopting low-carbon behaviours across all three areas. The Welsh Government should ensure that financial support mechanisms such as grants and targeted incentives are accessible to a range of different households, not just those who can already afford to act.

2) Invest in the infrastructure needed to make climate action possible

People in Wales identified inadequate infrastructure as a significant barrier across housing, transport, and land use. The Welsh Government should prioritise investment in public transport, active travel, EV charging, and housing retrofit, alongside planning reform, to reduce bureaucracy and support decarbonisation.

3) Increase in-depth public engagement about climate action in Wales

Feedback from participants highlighted that using future visioning methods allowed them valuable time and space to explore changes to their own lives and wider society in Wales. A large majority of participants (72%) believed that taking part in the workshops will make them think more about climate issues in the future, and over half said they will talk to others about the workshop and engage in more Welsh Government initiatives. Participants particularly appreciated hearing directly from Welsh Government, as it assured them that policymakers "are listening to the people" and "have an eye on the future". The Welsh Government should therefore offer more in-depth, deliberative engagement sessions on climate change.

Methods

CAST and the Welsh Government held two three-hour future visioning workshops in February 2026 in mid and north Wales, with 31 participants in total (Wrexham: 12; Builth Wells: 19). In each workshop, participants were split into three breakout groups, with one group in each workshop conversing in Welsh.

Participants discussed what climate action in Wales might look like over the next ten years (2026-2035), with a focus on agriculture and land use, housing and transport. Rather than testing reactions to specific policies, the workshops explored what people in Wales consider good and fair climate action, how they see the three key areas connecting, and what they think needs to be done over the next decade to achieve a low-carbon Wales.

The workshops consisted of several activities:

- Each workshop opened with a short presentation from the Welsh Government Climate Change Division on climate impacts and action in Wales, followed by a short Q&A
- Participants first discussed what prevents them from taking climate action
- Next, they discussed and were invited to modify a vision of Wales in 2035 that had been co-developed by CAST and the Welsh Government, based on existing policy frameworks
- Participants then created fictional characters living in that 2035 vision of Wales and discussed what such a future would mean for those characters
- At the end of the workshops, participants were asked to write a 'postcard from the future'—from Wales in 2035—to someone living in the present day

Participants were recruited online to share their views on big-picture topics and how everyday life in Wales might change over the next 10 years. This meant that the workshops involved participants with a range of views, not only those who were concerned about climate change. However, recruitment through online channels and the workshops' fixed locations may have limited demographic diversity, and the sample may therefore not be representative of the broader Welsh population.

Findings

Here is what workshop participants felt could happen between now and 2035 to support Wales in reaching a desirable low-carbon future. Quotes from participants are included throughout.

Cross-cutting themes

Participants spoke about **community** as a foundation for climate action, yet felt it was currently lacking or could be better utilised. People wanted formal spaces such as **community hubs** and **shared community assets** (e.g., car sharing, community fridges, allotments). They felt better links across Wales would enable community **connection** and **knowledge sharing**, wanted climate action to be based on good practice internationally, and for differences between rural and urban climate action to be recognised.

> "This very thing we're doing today shows that there's a willingness of people to feed into that change and that culture shift."

Many wanted **better and more public engagement.** There were mixed opinions about government and council involvement. Nevertheless, people wanted better **campaigns and use of social media**, with "clear messaging" about climate change. Other ways of increasing knowledge and awareness—including **formal education** and "a central point of information like a governmental hub"—were also important.

> "You see 'Join the military, recruit today.' [...] 'If you've got this skill, you can become a pilot'. Where is that for green jobs or climate change?"

Cost was a key barrier. Participants thought this could be overcome through **financial support**, such as incentives, grants and support for community-led initiatives.

There was **uncertainty and pessimism about the future**, with some participants seeing the future vision of Wales as a "utopia" and "far-fetched", despite it being grounded in reality and policy frameworks. Nevertheless, people did **engage with and support the positive vision of a fairer, healthier and low-carbon future.**

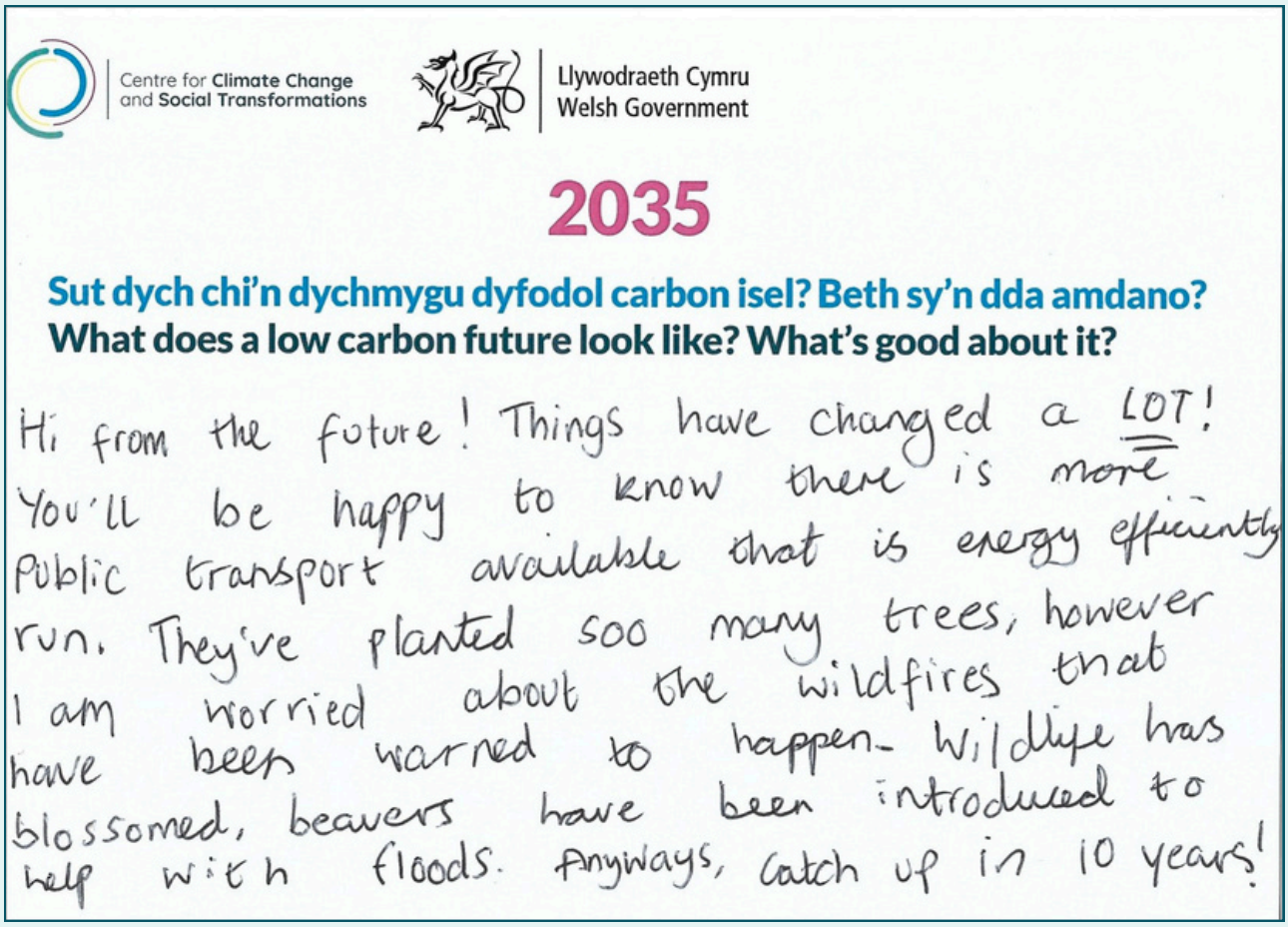


Figure 1. *Postcard from the Future, Builth Wells workshop*

Agriculture and land use

Participants felt there were **financial challenges** from production (e.g., farmers having second jobs) through to consumption (e.g., price of sustainable food, convenience of supermarkets).

Individual and community level changes were felt to be needed (e.g., people growing their own produce, community gardens, community markets). However, participants thought these needed to be supported by changes to business and policy (e.g., local food in supermarkets, improving public access to land, changes to how developers use land).

> "Preferential rent rate reductions [...] Little joint ventures between maybe the local authority and [...] individuals to open that type of shop."

Concerns around lack of **knowledge** about farming and the carbon impact of food were raised. People identified these as areas where changes in habits, education, sharing local knowledge, and accessibility of quality foods are needed.

Housing

People thought there are challenges with **existing infrastructure** (e.g., practical and aesthetic issues related to upgrading existing housing stock), as well as with newer buildings and the availability of electric vehicle (EV) charging in homes. Such challenges **linked to cost** and financial support.

> "Someone who's got money, who can afford a detached house, is benefiting from an easy ability to charge their car. [...] It's disadvantaging."

Bureaucracy, planning and policies were raised as barriers to action that needed to change. For example, raising energy efficiency standards could encourage the uptake of low-carbon upgrades, and regulations could mandate low-carbon aspects of new houses (e.g., solar panels).

There was a **perceived trade-off between different ways of using land**: should land be used for homes and energy, for farming, or for nature? Linked to this was the suggestion of commercial and public sector buildings "leading by example" such as having solar panels on supermarkets and schools.

> "If big infrastructure projects are being built, ecologically sound government projects, council projects, it sets the example and does become normal."

Transport

Existing travel infrastructure and the **cost of lower-carbon options** were issues that people felt required change. This included better and more affordable public transport and active travel infrastructure to enable work, education and leisure activities. There were several other interlinked issues such as **convenience, time and reliability** of different travel methods, as well as **safety** and **social desirability**.

People thought the **link between work and travel** could be improved. For example, active travel could be encouraged by upskilling people to fix bikes, providing more shower facilities at workplaces, and developing cycle paths and walkways between towns. Participants also discussed how localisation of jobs and education could reduce travel demand.

> "If we can get more employment in Wales so you don't have to travel far away, then it will help the environment."

Further reading

- Latter, B. (2026). Climate change in 2050: How athletes envisage the future of sport. CAST Briefing 45.
- Thorman, D., Latter, B., Zuckerbrod, S., Capstick, S. (2024). How Wales can speed up decarbonisation: Insights from transport and mobility, food and agriculture, and the circular and sharing economy. CAST Briefing 31.
- Verfuerth, C. et al. (2026) Envisioning low-carbon futures: Exploring the relationship between individual lifestyle change and systemic transformation. Energy Research & Social Science 139, 104875.
- Wilson, M., Venables, L., Nash, N., Derbyshire, D.W., Nicholls, N., & Mitev, K. (2025). From awareness to action: The role of community climate hubs in encouraging low-carbon lifestyles. CAST Briefing 44.
- Zanin, B., Verfuerth, C., Demski, C., Cherry, C., Whitmarsh, L. & Powell, D. (2024). Five principles for good public engagement: How to get people involved in the climate conversation. CAST Briefing 29.

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Image credit:
Image featured on page 2 is of the Horncastle Over 50s Youth Club. Credit: Elliot Manches.

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Underpinning CAST's research is a question of immense significance: how can we transform society in order to live better and address climate change?

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