

BUDE CLIMATHON

Report for Participants and Partners

June 2022



Westcountry



Rivers Trust



UNIVERSITY OF
GLOUCESTERSHIRE



Climate-KIC



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Introduction

Bude Climathon took place on 24th and 25th May 2022, at The Falcon Hotel in Bude. Participants were asked “How might we optimise farming and land use in the Bude area to achieve net zero?” Working in teams, they developed two creative solutions, and visited local food businesses to learn about their sustainability approaches. The event was organised as two related components: a webinar, to set the scene for participants, introduce the idea of net zero, learn about existing projects and begin the process of identifying local priority actions; and the in-person event, where participants worked together in teams to build net zero projects for the Bude area. The agenda for each component is provided in Appendix 1, with a summary of the outputs generated from the two elements summarised in the following sections.

Part 1: Webinar

The Climathon kicked off with a webinar on Tuesday 24th May, which gave an overview of the net zero challenge and how this applies specifically to the Bude area (see Appendix 1). Robert Uhlig, who was representing Bude Climate Partnership (Figure 1), spoke about the challenges facing Bude as a result of climate change. He introduced a number of development projects (12 in total), funded as part of a Big Lottery Community Fund grant, which are taking place in the Bude region to help the local community respond to climate change. This includes a 'climate resilience catchments project', which connects rural areas and the wider landscape as part of an integrated system to better withhold water in times of rain. Robert shared a video to explain more about this particular strand of work the partnership has been doing in collaboration with Westcountry Rivers Trust. In the video, we heard from Simon Browning about the importance of managing rivers and streams, and how this connects to maintaining healthy soils. We also learned that Bude is one of the areas in the UK most vulnerable to sea level rise, and is remote in terms of access to public services, with a need to build resilience and future proof the community through local actions.



7 Core Partners

Responsible for delivery and governance



Figure 1: Bude Climate Partnership, courtesy of Robert Uhlig 2022

Alex Bebbington from Duchy College then spoke about the Farm Net Zero project, which involves 40 monitor farms undergoing carbon footprinting using the Farm Carbon Calculator. Alex explained the balance of emissions and sequestration taken into account (Figure 2), and highlighted some of the innovative ways local farmers are seeking to reduce their emissions. The audience had a lot of questions about the methodology and impacts on soil organic matter under different types of cultivation. Anyone interested can sign up to the project newsletter here:

<https://farmcarbontoolkit.org.uk/farm-net-zero/>

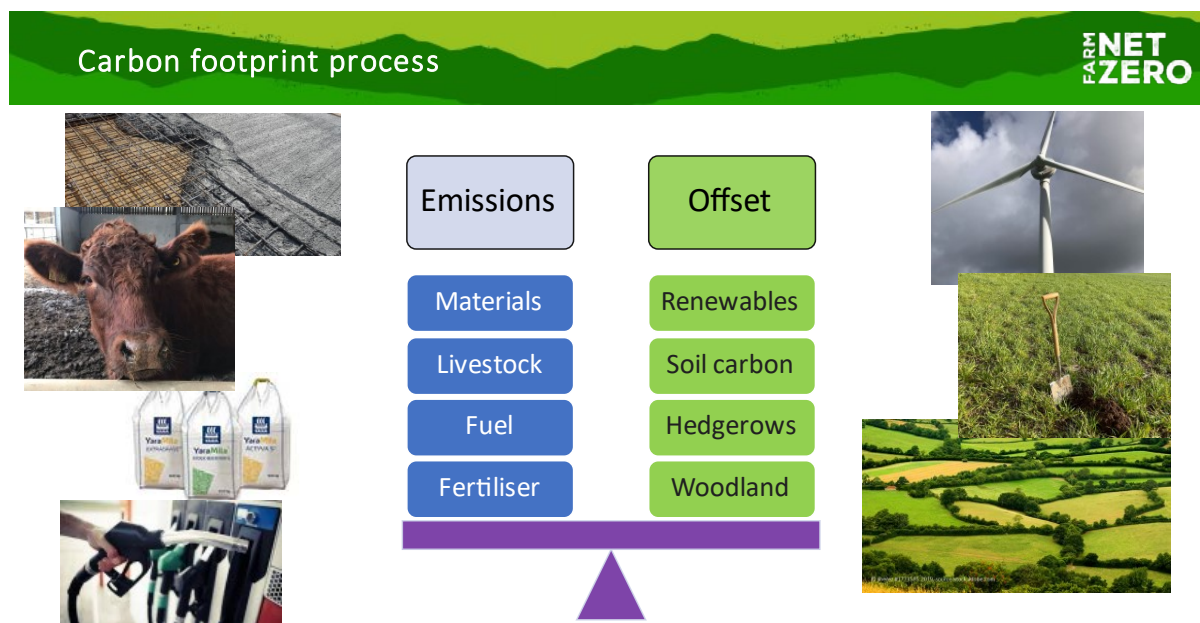


Figure 2: Balancing emissions and offsets, courtesy of Alex Bebbington 2022

Damian Maye from the CCRI oversaw the agenda, and led everyone through a couple of exercises in which participants wrote down their ideas for net zero solutions on virtual sticky notes – this was intended as a ‘warm up exercise’, but also instructive to get a sense of how participants engaged or not with net zero and its multiple meanings.

Activity 1: What words come to mind when you think about net zero in relation to farming and land use?



Figure 3: “What words come to mind when you think about net zero in relation to farming and land use?”

As we can see in Figure 3, some participants associated net zero with specific solutions (already thinking in a climathon mindset!), whilst others associated net zero with the balance of emissions and sequestration; and others were focused on the wider opportunities and benefits for farmers and land managers (peer learning, cultural norms). We identified some themes in these initial ideas and moved them into clusters to help inform our work on the second day.

Activity 2: How might we optimize farming and land use in the Bude area to help achieve net zero?



Figure 4: "How might we optimize farming and land use in the Bude area to help achieve net zero?"

Activity 2 (summarised in Figure 4) led to a couple of main themes- one focused on farming and farmer-led research, the other on local food and ensuring routes to market for local produce. These would be shown to participants again when they met in person.

Part 2: In-person event

Morning introductions

The following morning, we gathered bright and early at The Falcon Hotel beside the canal in Bude. After introductions, housekeeping, and some background from the CCRI team, the group collectively set some ground rules for the day (Figure 5).

These included: "Bring in a farmer's perspective", "Agree to differ", and of course "Be kind!".

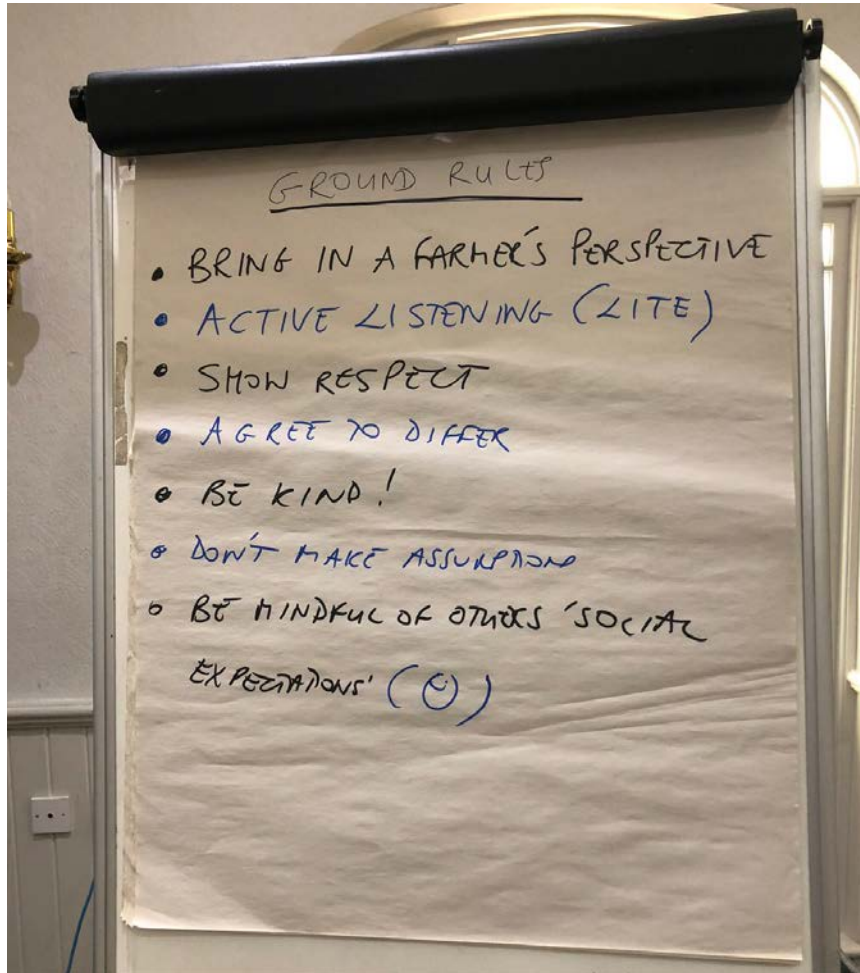


Figure 5: The group agreement

We then viewed a digital story created with a local farmer involved in the Farm Net Zero project, in which he reflected on changing agricultural technologies and increasing inputs over the years. This prompted some reflections from participants, and hopefully helped to foreground a farmer's perspective before we began coming up with solutions.



Figure 6: Viewing a digital story together

Brainstorming, team formation and idea development

Now better acquainted, participants were guided through a series of brainstorming activities, beginning with writing down ideas individually then discussing them with other people at their table. Each table ended up with 3 or 4 favourite solutions, which they fed back to the whole room and discussed.

Time for a coffee break- while participants mingled, the UoG team reviewed the shared solutions and searched for themes. Solutions were organised into six main themes:

- Farmer peer-peer learning and discussion groups
- Carbon auditing, volunteer soil testing, baseline data, access to carbon markets
- Farmland diversification and transfer of land to horticulture/ community food growers
- Implementing physical measures to hold water in the landscape (e.g. soil health, riparian restoration)
- Building routes to market for local food
- Energy, fuel and buildings

With everyone re-caffeinated, we resumed to discuss these themes and review the ones generated at the webinar on the previous day. Interestingly, there was a greater focus on local food than we had seen at Eden Valley Climathon a few weeks previously, with fewer technical farming solutions discussed and more emphasis on what we might term 'low-carbon community food actions'. There was a recognition that engaging local farmers and landowners and, in particular, accessing land (even

if relatively small parcels) was important and also a persistent challenge. This emphasis on community-level action likely reflected the demographics in the room and their strategic priorities, as well as being physically distant from the farm environment.

Participants then voted on which themes they saw as a priority for the Bude area, and which they preferred to work on today. This left us with three themes representing three teams, and participants moved to sit round the table corresponding to the theme they wished to work on. After some reshuffling we ended up with two teams, to make sure each had a good mix of skills and experience. The following teams were formed:

1. **BudeChain (also known as Binder)**- farmer peer-peer learning and discussion groups
2. **Diversify Bude**- farmland diversification and transfer of land to horticulture/community food growers

Participants felt that building routes to market for local food was also a strong priority for the Bude area, however they decided to focus on the above two solutions as these could include routes to market.

The new teams had to then work to prioritise which specific solution they wanted to work on within their theme. Using voting templates to identify preferences, and classifying solutions as “Most Exciting”, “Most Rational”, and “The Long Shot”, helped them think through what could work.

After an intense morning of activity, each team shared what they planned to work on in the afternoon, and it was finally time for lunch.

Rural Climathon Solution Voting

Team name: Diversify Bude

Problem addressed:

How might we... enable the food and farming system in the Bude area to become more resilient through diversification?

Ideas

- ACCESS TO LAND
- HAVE THEY GOT A
SPARE HECTARE?
- EXAMPLES

HORTICULTURE?

- ON FARM
PROCESSING
- PROPORTION OF
OWNERS/TENANTS

Votes

Most rational:

Most exciting:

The long shot:

Chosen idea to develop

SLURRY
CO-OP

"NEW ENTRANTS"
SUPPORT?

CSA PLUS
Crowdfund
Crowd Farming

- JOHN EVANS
- ROB SALMON

Figure 7: Diversify Bude solution voting

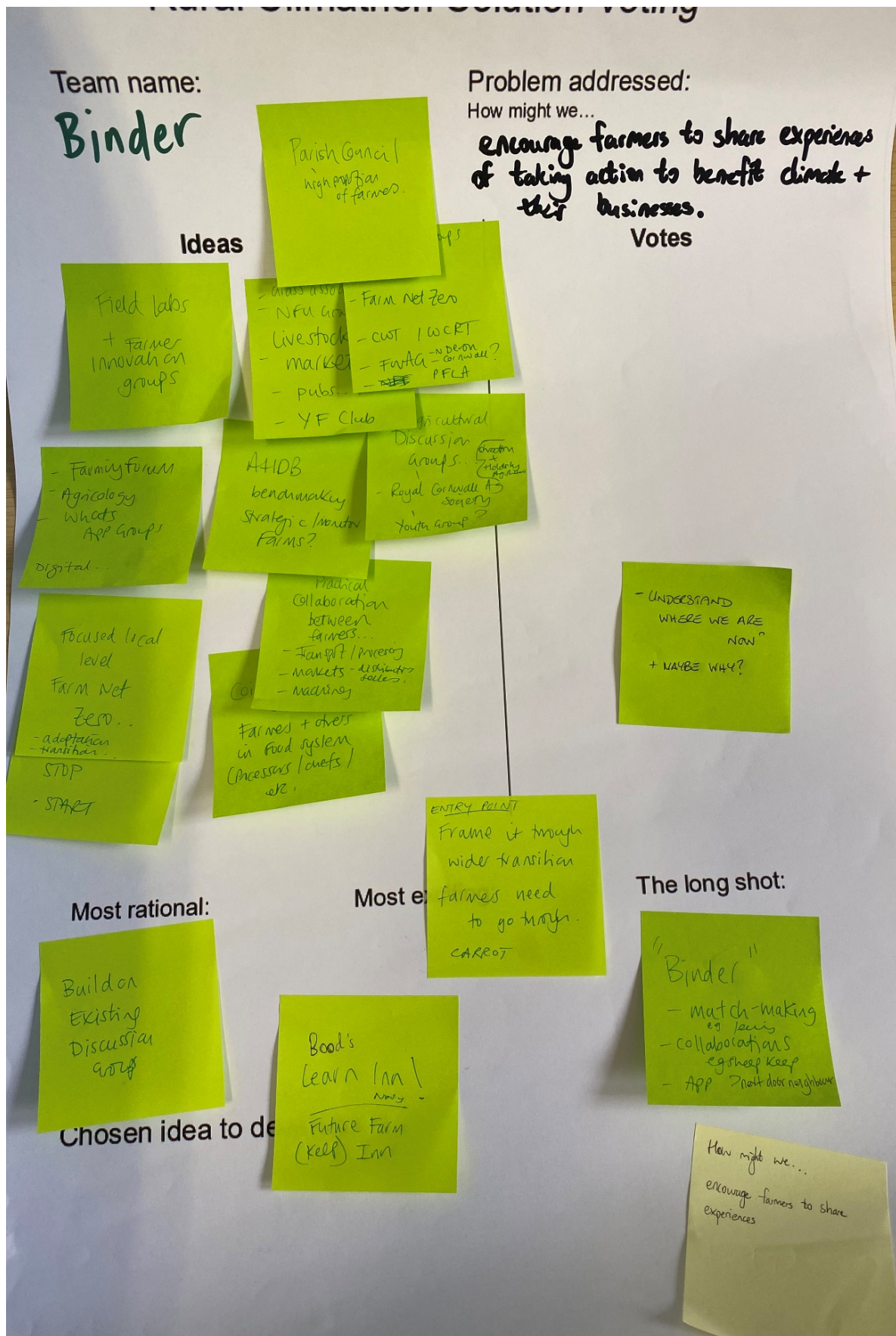


Figure 8: Binder/BudeChain's solution template



Figure 9: Narrowing down solutions to work on

Walk and site visits

Despite a rainy morning, the sun came out for our scheduled outdoor activities. Participants were encouraged to ask questions during this time, and make the most of the expertise in the group as they thought about how to develop their solutions. We began with a walk along Bude canal, led by Simon Browning of Westcountry Rivers Trust. Simon explained the historical straightening of the river and how this impacted flood events, as well as some of the potential options for improving water quality and mitigating flood risk through careful management of surrounding parcels of land.



Figure 10: Learning about the River Strat/Neet

We then moved on to the Electric Bakery; a sustainable bakery housed in old shipping containers on the site of a former power station. There we were greeted by chef Alex Bluett, who explained how the company had developed and showcased his famous “Three Mile Loaf”; a loaf of sourdough made from heritage grains grown on his family farm three miles away, then milled in-house and baked.



Figure 11: Visiting the Electric Bakery

The final stop on our tour was Neetfield Market Garden just south of Bude. There, gardeners Rosie and Tom showed us round their no-dig beds and polytunnel, explaining how they supply veg boxes to the local community as well as starting to hold pizza nights using their on-site pizza oven. This was a great example of farmland diversification, which highlighted the difficulties involved in getting access to land- especially for young people from non-farming backgrounds.



Figure 12: Neetfield Market Garden

This two-hour excursion helped keep participants energised, and provided real world inspiration for the solutions they were to develop for the rest of the afternoon.

Solution development and presentations

Following the walk, it was time to get down to work. With just over an hour available, teams worked intensively on their solutions, trying to nail down the What, Why, Who, When, Where, and How of their proposals. A couple of additional participants joined for the afternoon, bringing a fresh perspective. The CCRI team had their eye on the clock, working to facilitate and gather feedback from participants while not taking too much time away from the ongoing deliberations. Before too long, it was time for the teams to present what they had prepared.

Questions for developing solutions

What? What is the solution and what does it contribute to net zero?

Where? Where is the solution targeted (scale and geographical location)?

Who? Who is the solution for, who is responsible for delivering it, who else needs to know about it?

Why? Why is this needed and does it add to existing work?

When? When can the solution be implemented, when will it end (timescale)?

How? How does it work, how will it be implemented, how will you overcome hurdles and challenges, how will you fund/resource the project, how will you know it's been successful?

Figure 13: Guidance for solution development

BudeChain

This team were interested in connecting up farmers and businesses interested in low-carbon farming practices (hence the original name- Binder- an app for connecting like-minded people). Their approach would be farmer-led with a dedicated facilitator, and a focus on on-farm events where good practices could be showcased and knowledge shared. They highlighted the issue of agricultural spaces often being gendered, and thought through some options to make events more accessible to women, such as providing child care and targeting all generations of farming families. The emphasis on 'BudeChain' was important to think not only about farms, but to connect them to the local supply chain. Funding could hypothetically come from Bude Climate Partnerships upcoming National Lottery bid, and success would be measured on the levels of engagement and specific case studies.



Figure 14: BudeChain presenting their solution

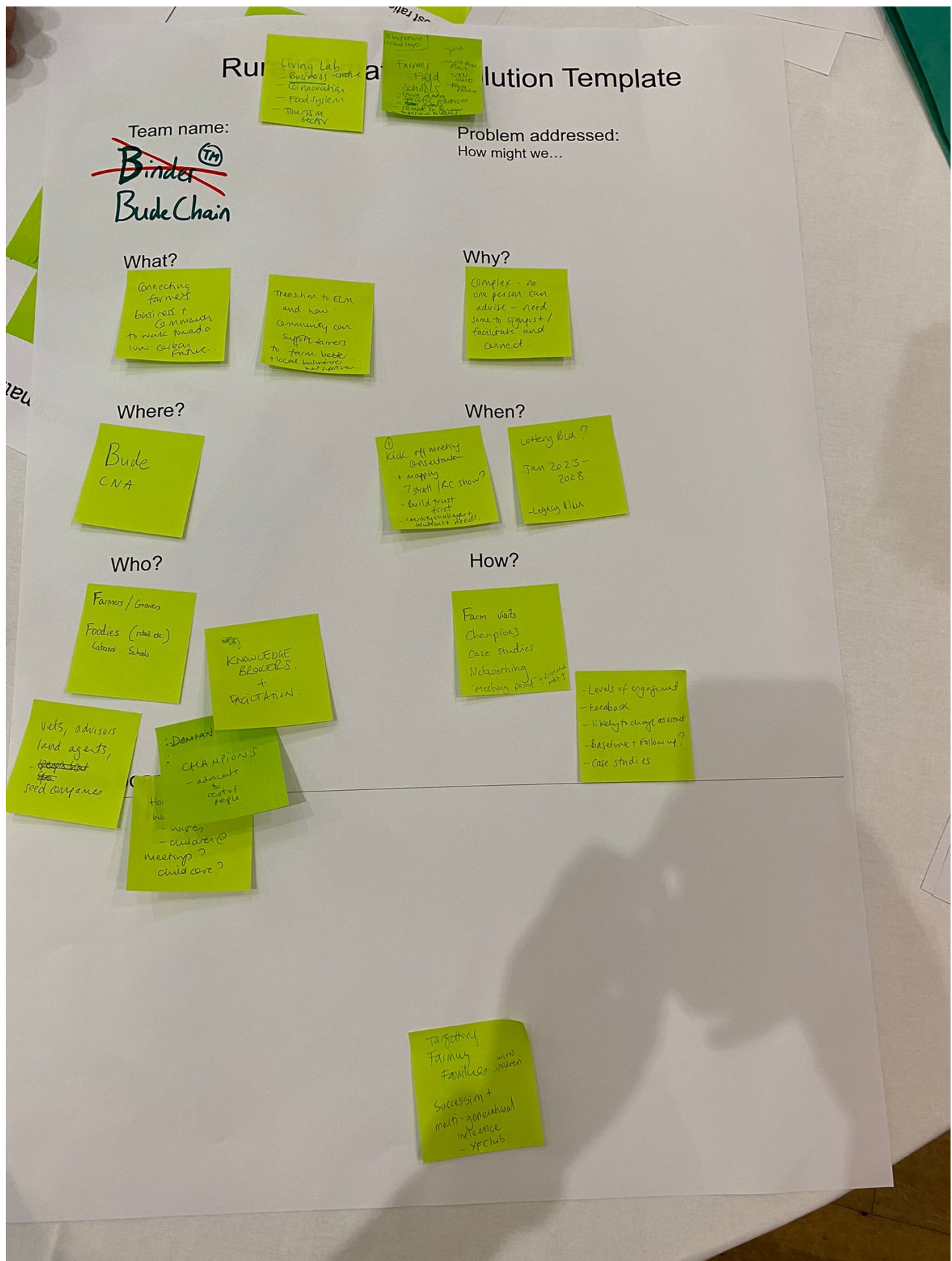


Figure 15: BudeChain's solution template

Diversify Bude

This team addressed the question “How might we make Bude resilient by diversifying the land and breaking down barriers for experimentation?”. Their goal was to become an exemplar for how coastal communities can diversify their land, which they would achieve first through scoping and mapping stakeholders to develop a coherent pitch, then sense-checking it with farmers and landowners. In this way they sought to facilitate access to land through making parcels available for horticulture and other uses. The group considered a range of models to deliver the project, including a CSA option, a land bank and a community benefit society. What emerged from the discussions was a sense that this type of land diversification project is essential, but first a series of baseline steps are needed to better understand farmer and land user types surrounding the town, as well as learning from successful land diversification models and case studies elsewhere. The next step would be to start with some local early adopter champion farmers and community members to pilot experimental work on plots of land as demonstration sites, with the goal of inspiring others to join and get involved.



Figure 16: Diversify Bude presenting their solution

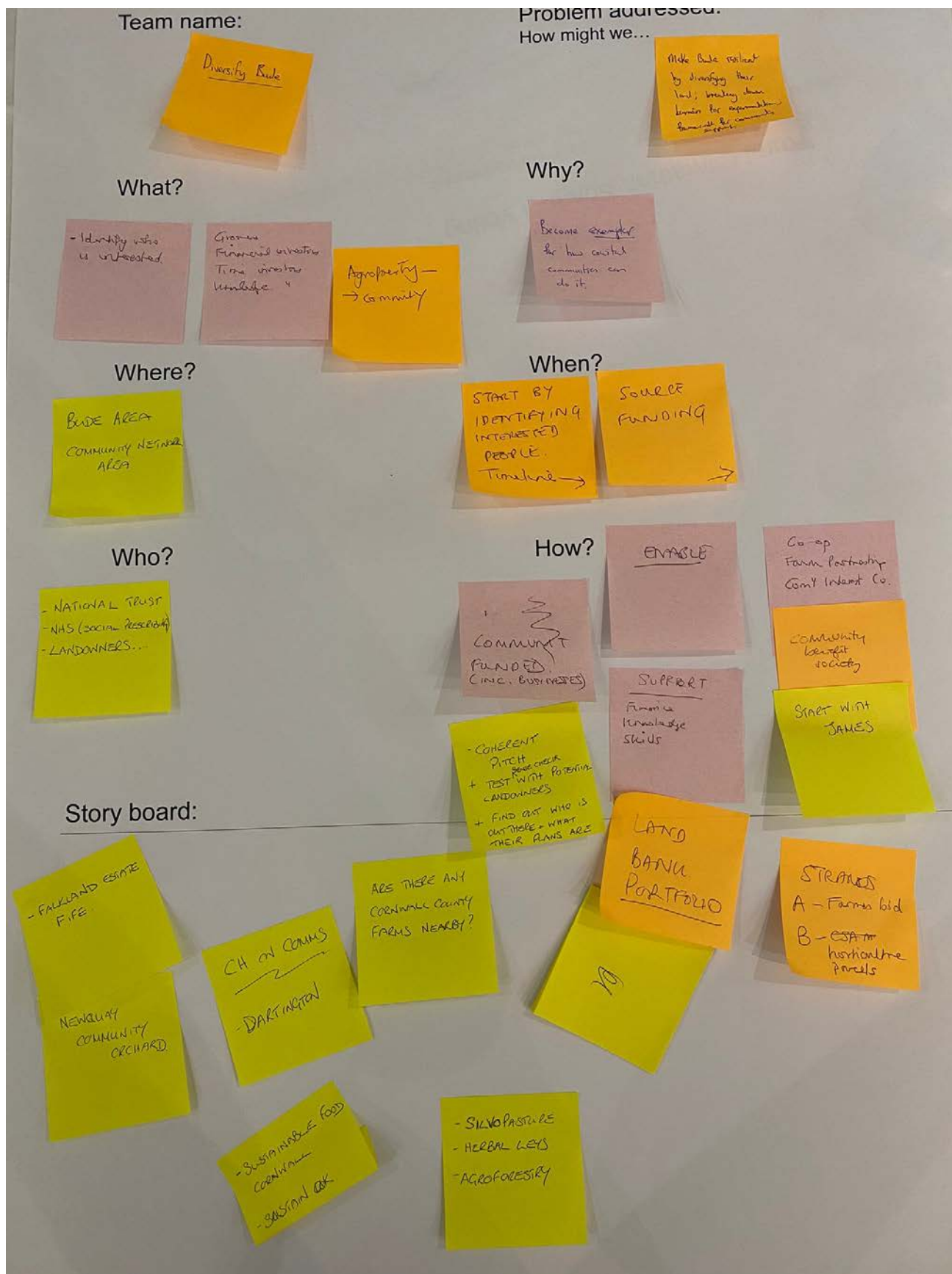


Figure 17: Diversify Bude's solution template

Following each presentation, the teams received questions and comments from their peers, which sparked further discussion and highlighted some of the overlapping themes between the different solutions, as well as a collective sense that low-carbon community land and local food actions are needed.

Despite the limited time and fast-paced nature of the day, Bude Climathon participants created two exciting and well-argued solutions. Furthermore, new connections were forged, and most went away having learned something. At last it was time for dinner and a pint, giving everyone a bit of time to debrief and catch up on non-Climathon topics (including learning a bit of Cornish).

Figure 18: Illustration of Bude ideas and solutions by Mikayla Shuker



Next steps

All participants are invited to an Exchange Webinar with Eden Valley Climathon at 12 noon on Wednesday 15th June. This will be a space for the two communities to hear about one another's local context, the solutions generated by the Climathon process, and any initiatives being taken forward. We hope this will be a useful opportunity to reflect on the experience, as well as creating new connections and potentially inspiring some new ideas.

The UoG team will prepare a further report for BA in due course, with analysis of data collected from the two Climathons. We will also create a "Rural Climathon Playbook" detailing what we have learned about adapting this city-focused format for rural settings. We'll be happy to share these documents with participants, and to discuss the lessons learned with anyone who wishes to go on and host their own Climathon in future.

Acknowledgements

This project was coordinated by a team of researchers from the Countryside and Community Research Institute (CCRI) at the University of Gloucestershire, with funding from the British Academy. The event wouldn't have happened without a lot of support from local partners, including Westcountry Rivers Trust, Farm Net Zero, and Bude Climate Partnership. Live illustration was by Mikayla Shuker.

This document was prepared by the CCRI project team- Philippa Simmonds, Damian Maye, Sofia Raseta, Abigail Gardner and Julie Ingram. We are very grateful to Simon Browning, Alex Bebbington Robert Uhlig and Ian Saltern for their help with planning and facilitation. We are also grateful to the local farmers who gave their time to share their stories with us.



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Appendix 1: Bude Climathon agenda

Objective: To enhance existing partnerships and on-going climate work in the local area through providing a safe, convivial environment within which to build trust and explore future possibilities.

Warm-up Webinar (lunchtime on Tuesday 24th May):

- 12:00-12:10 Introduction to the project (Damian)
- 12:10-12:30 Net zero and land use in Cornwall and the Bude area (Robert Uhlig)
- 12:30-12:45 Farm Net Zero project (Alex Bebbington)
- 12:45-13:00 UoG team shows digital stories from local farmers
- 13:00-13:10 What is a Climathon? Structure for tomorrow, challenge, objectives (Damian)
- 13:10- 13:25 Interactive initial round of ideas for solutions using Jamboard (Damian and Sofia)
- 13:25-13:30 Summary and Q+A session
- 13:30 Webinar close

Webinar will be recorded and sent to participants who have signed up through Eventbrite

Agenda:

- 08:30-09:00** *Arrivals, registration, completing informed consent forms*
- 09:00- 10:15** Intros, objectives for day, brainstorming
- 10:15-10:30** *Coffee break*
- 10:30-12:00** Team formation and idea development
- 12:00-13:00** *Hot lunch*
- 13:00-15:00** Walk and site visit
- 15:00** *Coffee available*
- 15:00-16:30** Teams develop their solution
- 16:30-18:00** Teams present their solutions
- 18:00** *Buffet dinner served, time for informal discussion and networking*
- 19:00** Event close