



# Footsteps

## Faiths for a Low Carbon Future



### Faith Insight Paper

## JUST TRANSITION

### 1 Introduction

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Footsteps' faith insight papers are intended to provide a faith community perspective on the Birmingham City Council Climate Emergency (R20) Task Force's work. In particular they seek to identify how problems need to be re-framed and new mindsets adopted to achieve a net zero carbon city by 2030 or as soon after as a just transition permits.

The values of love and justice, care for the earth and hope for a better future shared by Birmingham's faith communities provide a powerful moral compass and source of inspiration to act in response to the city's climate emergency declaration. These values are not exclusive to faith communities and are shared by many concerned Birmingham residents. The faith communities, though, are well placed to provide a vision of a fairer, healthier and sustainable Birmingham and demonstrate how it can be achieved.

### 2 Faith community perspectives

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#### 2.1 Faith values

Faith traditions share beliefs that we have a collective responsibility to care for the earth and to love and care for people. Many people of faith believe that another world is possible and they can help to create that world on this earth. Faith communities are working and supporting initiatives that 'care for the earth' and help people live sustainably within the resources the Earth provides. In addition many individuals are inspired by their faith to take action both in their own lives and in their communities. At the practical level, places of worship are reducing waste, making their buildings more sustainable, caring for their grounds, and engaging with local communities. (Footsteps, 2019)

#### 2.2 Vision and hope

Many people of faith share the belief that a better world is possible and that we can help to create that world. Religious faith is underpinned by hope. Hope is not the same as optimism. It is not a naive belief that everything will turn out alright, or that what happens in this life doesn't matter.

Buddhism teaches that the more desperate our situation is, the more profound the potential for transformation (RfP, 2016, p. 22). Sikh scripture talks about the spirit of chardi kala - courageous optimism - in the face of adversity.

In the Christian tradition hope is founded in God's love for humanity, made present by the Holy Spirit; 'Hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us' (Romans 5:5).

Hope does not mean living in the clouds, dreaming of a better life. It is not merely a projection of what we would like to be or do. It leads us to discover seeds of a new world already present today. Hope is, in addition, a source of energy to live differently, not according to the values of a society based on the thirst for possession and competition. (Taize, 2004)

Faith based vision and hope for the future resonates with pictures of a healthy, live-able Birmingham and a just transition.

**VISION** of a healthy, liveable city



A city where people want to live and work. A city that is unpolluted, well-planned, powered by sustainable energy and clean technologies. And a city that has warm energy-efficient homes, workplaces and public buildings and low-carbon transport.



Photo: Ashden

Sustainable buildings by design



Photo: Ashden

Shuttl crowdsourced digital demand for, and creates, rush hour bus routes

**JUST TRANSITION:** solutions must have the potential to benefit everyone, particularly the most vulnerable – who are most at risk from the effects of climate change. The very best innovation in this area has the potential to address the failures of the past, enable better living today and create a brighter future. (Ashden)

Birmingham with its diverse communities and wide connections has the potential to be a leading city in developing creative approaches to become a sustainable city where residents want to live and work.

Source. (Ashden, 2019)

### 2.3 Global faith communities

Most Birmingham local faith communities are naturally part of wider national and global networks and movements. Some are connected to parts of the world already directly affected by the effects of climate change, including flooding, drought, erratic weather patterns and loss of agricultural output. Birmingham’s faith communities are involved with international efforts to help affected communities adapt to these effects of climate change which are also potent sources of conflict and tension. These initiatives include SEWA (Selfless Efforts for Welfare of All), Islamic Relief and Christian Aid.

Faith community contributions are widely recognised by others.

“All religious traditions view creation as a sacred gift and have a critical role to play in calling for climate justice”

Ovais Sarmad, UNFCCC deputy executive secretary

## 2.4 Climate justice, poverty and conflict connections

Climate change and poverty negatively reinforce each other in a vicious circle. Many poor countries face severe environmental, economic, social and political pressures and climate change acts as a 'threat multiplier' by contributing to land degradation, floods and food and water insecurity. Those least responsible for climate change are already being the most affected. (Adelman, 2017)

### Love and justice

"Developing countries and poor and marginalised people are disproportionately affected by climate change - even though they have contributed less to the problem. Climate change is a moral issue of social justice" (Islamic Relief, 2019)

In Laudato Si, Pope Francis writes about integral ecology and there being an intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet (Francis, 2015)

## 3 Interfaith contributions to just transition

### 3.1 Interfaith submission to Talanoa Dialogue 2018

The unconventional Talanoa Dialogue process was used to bring together governments and civil society during the Fijian presidency of the 2017 UN climate talks. In Fijian, 'talanoa' means to hold a conversation in an inclusive, receptive space and is a traditional method of solving differences in the Pacific. It builds on the way in which empathy can be one of diplomacy's best weapons. Enabling dialogues are involved, seeking to sidestep power struggles inherent in negotiations. Confrontation and criticisms of other participants are forbidden, and round tables abound. These approaches resonate with faith communities and their emphasis on relationships. (World Council of Churches, 2018)

### 3.2 Ethical, moral and spiritual basis of just transitions

Spirituality has an important role in fostering transformation. Care for creation is intrinsically interwoven into different spiritual traditions. Despite rich diversities there are elements in spiritual traditions which converge significantly, not least through harvest-related festivals which have a strong element of gratitude and honouring of the Earth. Other spiritual practices like fasting, frugal living (understood as not wasting) and ethical principles, such as causing no harm to others, aim to liberate individuals from greed. Faith communities rejoice in these commonalities whilst also respecting differences. The ability of faith to inspire change at different levels cannot be discounted. Several religious traditions emphasise how aligning the outer political will with the inner spiritual will is an essential part of transformation.

The magnitude of the climate crisis mandates people of faith to work together with all people of goodwill. However, we recognise that just transitions are often not a case of 'one size fits all'. Rather, they entail finding the 'one size that matters'. In other words, a just transition needs to be shaped locally in interaction with local factors and contexts. In this regard there is a strong need for approaches which recognise the wisdom and visions of the impoverished and vulnerable - the 'early warning systems of the world'.

The Just Transition is an essential tool in moving away from a 'growth-at-all-costs' model to a 'leave-no-one-behind' model of the economy.

(WCC (2), 2019) and (WCC (3), 2018)

## 4 International Agreements and UK Climate Act

### 4.1 Occurrence

'Just transition' has long been the basis of fair and inclusive approaches to transformation and adjustment at times of structural and economic change. A 'just transition' is also a key part of international climate agreements.

### 4.2 Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage

An important aspect of climate justice is the 'polluter pays' principle. This addresses the loss and damage associated with the impacts of climate change which fall disproportionately on developing countries. COP19 (November 2013) in Poland established the *Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts* (Loss and Damage Mechanism), to address loss and damage associated with impacts of climate change, including extreme events and slow onset events, in developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. (UNFCC)

This important mechanism remains in place but was not included as part of the legally binding 2015 Paris Climate Agreement.

### 4.3 Paris Agreement

The 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change incorporated the need for governments to take into account "the imperatives of a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs in accordance with nationally defined development priorities". COP24 then moved the just transition to the centre-stage in climate policy and action, although still a contested concept across different countries and stakeholders. (Robins, 2018)

### 4.4 Solidarity and Just Transition Silesia Declaration,

The UK Government is a signatory to the *Solidarity and Just Transition Silesia Declaration* made at COP24 in 2018 held in Katowice deep in Poland's coal country. The Declaration crystallised the rising concern about stranded workers and communities as the transition to a low carbon economy picked up speed, as well as about real opportunity for decent work and quality jobs in the growing green economy. The Declaration also recognises the importance of the participatory and representative social dialogue processes involved. (UNFCC, 2018)

### 4.5 UK Climate Act

The UK Climate Change Act in 2008 legislated to achieve at least an 80% reduction in UK greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels by 2050. This is consistent with keeping the global temperature increase to around 2°C. The Committee on Climate Change was established to oversee a system of carbon budgets that guided and monitored progress. The 2015 Paris climate agreement, however, has the more demanding objective of holding the increase to "well below 2°C and to pursue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C." In 2019 the UK became the first G7 country to legislate for Net Zero Carbon by 2050 for England.

In early 2019 West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) commissioned work to identify the implications for the CA area. The June 2019 *Setting Climate Change Commitments for WMCA Area* report then identified the CA area needed to stay within a cumulative carbon dioxide emissions budget of 126 million tonnes 2020 – 2100 in order to make a 'fair' contribution towards the Paris Climate Change Agreement. At 2016 emission levels the **entire budget would be used within 6**

**years.** Working with national government and constituent local authorities to deliver **cuts in annual emissions averaging 13%** every year would, though, enable the CA to meet Paris Climate Agreement aligned objectives.

Figures for Birmingham specifically are currently being developed as part of the Birmingham City Council commissioned baseline and carbon dioxide reduction scenario exercise. The CA figures do indicate, however, that steep cuts in emissions are needed to enable Birmingham to be ‘part of the solution’ rather than ‘part of the problem’. If emissions are not cut from present levels, within about six years Birmingham will have used up its share of the carbon that remains ‘relatively safe’ to burn. (WMCA, 2019)

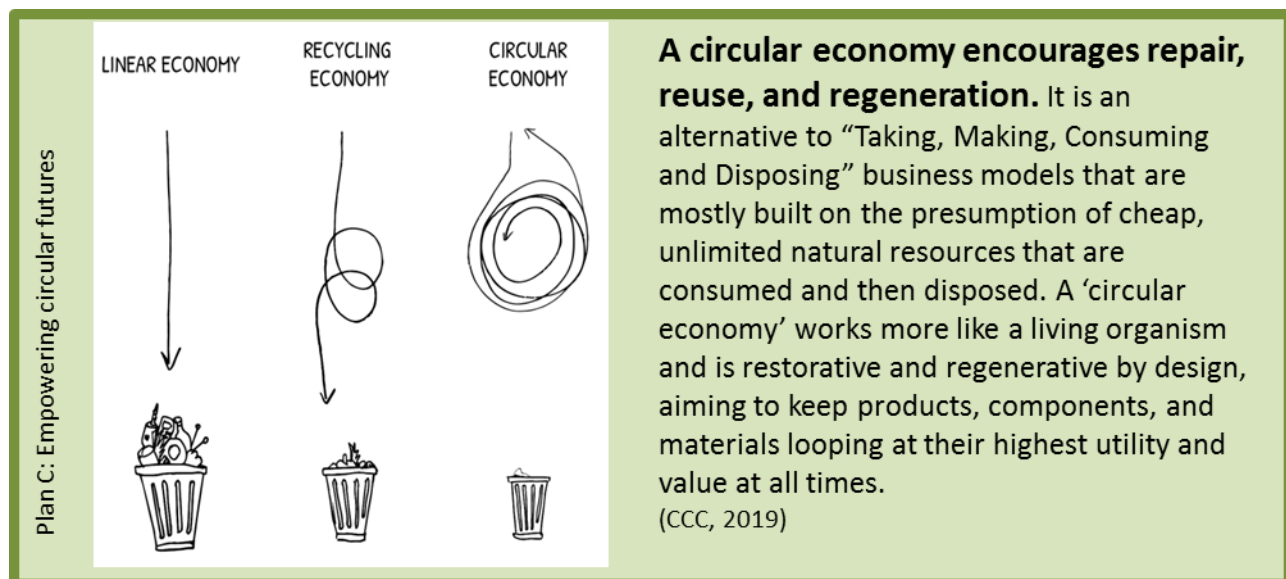
Faith communities, with their concerns for climate justice, would be extremely troubled to be part of a city that was actively contributing to climate heating.

## 5 Different facets and processes

### 5.1 New mindsets

Just transitions involve new mindsets, reframing problems, creativity and different economic models.

A just transition involves a long-term commitment by all parts of society and the economy. It is based on a clear understanding of the urgency of the climate action needed to limit the rise in global temperatures to less than 2°C. It recognizes the impact of extreme weather events and how economic and natural disasters impact most dramatically on the poor and marginalised.



Just transition also means rethinking models of growth and development so that responses to climate change become inclusive by design. For the UK, the LSE Growth Commission report (LSE, 2017) shows why it makes sense for environmental sustainability to be at the heart of the country’s growth strategy so that growth is sustainable, balanced and inclusive.

**Creative financial solutions** Affecting all sectors of the economy, we face no greater issue than the global climate crisis. Big issues demand big solutions, which will be born from new thinking, new ways of working and unprecedented collaboration. Broad-based partnerships will be critical in retrofitting the UK building stock to meet energy efficiency levels by 2050 ... and involve the development of new financial products and solutions for customers and clients

Anne Marie Verstraeten, UK Country Head, BNP Paribas Group

## 5.2 Decent jobs

Just transition involves creating decent work and quality jobs.

The transition to a zero carbon city involves the city shifting from fossil fuels to renewable energy, building a sustainable transport system that serves residents, creating energy efficient, warm housing, reducing waste and adopting a circular economy. There will be major changes in jobs, skills and employment and the changes should not be at the expense of affected workers.

Skills development measures are needed to reap the benefits of job creation in new green economic activities and addressing the social challenges involved in shifting to more sustainable models of energy generation, production and consumption across sectors. Massive deployment of skills development and active labour market policy measures will be needed to enable countries to implement the climate change targets, maximize job gains and address negative impacts while transitioning to low-carbon economies (ILO, 2019).

A new approach to employment is needed where jobs are rewarded in terms of how they contribute to a sustainable, low carbon future.

## 5.3 Cooperative approaches

A just transition involves change processes that are cooperative and inclusive. It requires particular attention being paid to the needs of place and the spatial dimension of the transition. Bottom up and context sensitive approaches are needed.

Some engagement processes, such as citizens' assemblies, focus groups and local community action groups, are characteristic of just transitions especially when residents are empowered and part of a decision making process.

### Greater Cambridge Citizens' Assembly

.... On reducing congestion, improving air quality, and providing better public transport in Greater Cambridge.

Over two weekends 53 carefully recruited assembly members from the travel to work area heard evidence from experts, views from local stakeholders and discussed examples from other cities.

The Assembly concluded by voting on preferred ways of:

- Reducing congestion and creating road space
- Improving air quality
- Raising funds for improved public and active transport
- Managing demand to improve congestion, air quality and public transport

and voting on particular measures being part of the solution to improving congestion, air quality and public transport.

The assembly was supported by a £60,000 award and expert support from the Government's Innovation in Democracy Programme.



Photo and information:  
Involve charity website

Maintaining Birmingham's cross-party, non-partisan approach is very important from a faith community perspective.

## 5.4 Innovative finance

A just transition to a sustainable economy involves innovative sources of funding, new relationships with investors and is not just supporting a 'green' sector within the traditional economy.

Finance is always at the heart of climate policy and that is no exception with the just transition. Ensuring that the transition is not only fair but positively contributes to an inclusive economy should lie at the heart of policy (Robbins, 2018). A balance will need to be achieved between funding mitigation and adaptation measures and the interests of different beneficiaries.

A just transition involves all forms of finance ranging from property secured mortgages and bank loans through to long term pension fund investment and the funding of risky innovations. Companies, however, also need to recognise how their business models are vulnerable to climate change. Investors have different motives and time-scales and vary in the degree that financial returns are prioritised above all else. Climate risk financial disclosure requirements will also result in companies disclosing their contribution to climate change and their policies for reducing impact. There is a complex relationship between finance, risk, companies and climate change.

Making the shift to a net zero economy will require the UK's financial system to manage climate risks effectively and efficiently by channeling capital towards sustainable activities. A decarbonised, net-zero economy could involve extra investments of 1–2 per cent of UK GDP per year until 2050. Financial innovation is needed to help reduce the upfront capital costs in the transition to net zero. The threat of not only 'stranded assets' and 'stranded enterprises' but also 'stranded workers' and 'stranded communities' must be recognised and managed as about one fifth of current jobs will be affected by greening the economy. (Grantham Institute, 2019).

**Bristol City Leap** is a series of energy and infrastructure investment opportunities ..... It will help to create jobs, maintain our economic competitiveness, de-carbonise the city, build strong partnerships and empower people to take their future into their own hands. .... and includes attracting, facilitating and delivering up to £1bn of low carbon and smart energy infrastructure investment in Bristol's energy system over the next ten years

Mayor of Bristol, Marvin Rees

A wide range of new approaches are being taken to financing just transitions ranging from private direct investment and crowd funding through bank finance to Green Bonds and sector-based schemes.

### **New net-zero carbon buildings finance initiative** -

the Coalition for the Energy Efficiency of Buildings (CEEB) backed by the Green Finance Institute, is developing the market for financing net-zero carbon and climate-resilient buildings in the UK by accelerating the pace of financial innovation and scale-up. Speaking at the COP25 climate change conference last November, the chief executive Green Finance Institute, said:

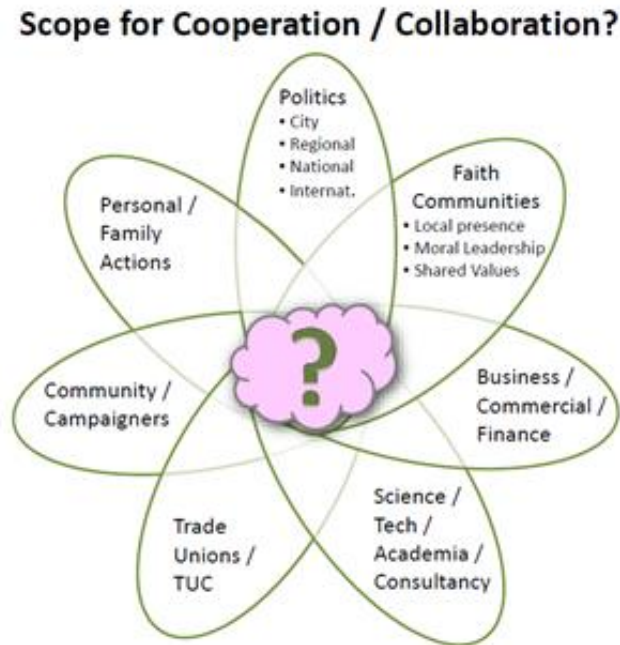
"Financial markets need to play a leading role to meet the needs of our society, and to mobilise capital to address the climate emergency. The Green Finance Institute's role is to convene innovators, sector specialists and policymakers to harness their creativity to identify and overcome the barriers to the deployment of green funding. The CEEB's goal is to accelerate capital flows towards retrofitting and developing UK homes to net-zero carbon, resilient standards through the development of real-world finance solutions that appeal to home-owners, landlords and investors."



## 6 Conclusions

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Taskforce member CANWM has developed the stakeholder diagram below that identifies the features of the main stakeholders in the transition to Birmingham becoming a net zero carbon cities by 2030. The central overlap area identifies the undefined need for cooperation and collaboration between stakeholders.



This paper suggests that the four elements of a 'just transition' represent the key changes and processes needed to enable Birmingham to become a net zero carbon city by 2030 and occupy the centre of the CANWM diagram.

- .. **New mindsets** - reframing problems, using creativity, adopting different economic models.
- .. **Decent jobs** - re-skilling, meaningful work, rewarding sustainability, redeployment
- .. **Cooperative approaches** - context sensitive, collaborative, non-partisan, empowerment
- .. **Innovative finance** - values based, balance, mitigation v. adaptation, crowd funding

These four facets are all consistent with faith community values and practices. This suggests that some of the approaches and ideas that are common place within faith communities could be usefully adopted as part of Birmingham's transition to net zero carbon by 2030.

## 7 End note

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This paper has been researched and written by Chris Martin, Footsteps faith community representative on the R20 Taskforce and a Quaker. It has been reviewed by Canon John Nightingale, also a member of the Footsteps steering group and member of Birmingham Anglican Climate Action. Useful comments on drafts were received from Mike Clark, Ario Advisory and Peter Nicholls, All-believers.

Comments and feedback can be emailed to: [footstepsbcf@gmail.com](mailto:footstepsbcf@gmail.com)



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