



Keep Scotland  
Beautiful

# Understanding Community Legacies: Community Action on Climate Change



Going Carbon Neutral Stirling  
Modelling a new future for Scotland  
2008-2012



Case Study: Going Carbon Neutral Stirling  
October 2016

***“ You can’t underestimate the value of having a dedicated team like GCNS in your area... it certainly changed the tenor of our discussion and put carbon on the agenda. ”***

Rebecca Maxwell, Assistant Chief Executive, Sustainability, Economy and the Environment, Stirling Council.

# Introduction

Keep Scotland Beautiful is pleased to present Understanding Community Legacies: Going Carbon Neutral Stirling (GCNS). This report summarises the findings and recommendations following a process of research into the legacy of the climate change community project, GCNS. This project was jointly funded by the Scottish Government and Big Lottery Fund Scotland between 2008 and 2012, and delivered in partnership with Stirling Council and the local community. The research for this report took place between September and December 2015, three years after the GCNS project ended and the final project report was written.

The purpose of this report is to set out the longer term legacy of the GCNS project and to identify the factors that contributed to their achievement. This report should be useful to:

- **The Scottish Government**
- **Public bodies**
- **Scottish communities**
- **Funding organisations** seeking to support effective community-led climate action projects.

This report aims to identify and assess the legacy of GCNS and its impact on current and future climate change activity in Stirling. In addition it provides information about community engagement methodologies, tools and guidance to enable others to improve and support community engagement and action on climate change.

GCNS was a four-year project managed and delivered by Keep Scotland Beautiful which sought to encourage people living or working in Stirling to reduce their carbon footprint.

Through the process of gathering information about the legacy of GCNS, it became apparent that the legacy or potential legacy for behaviour change and community engagement could be analysed using the Individual, Social, Material (ISM) behaviour change framework.

ISM is a framework for developing and evaluating plans and policies to take account of a range of factors that influence behaviour and decision-making within the Individual, Social and Material contexts. ISM is based on theory, practice and evidence from social psychology, behavioural economics and sociology.

This report assesses the legacy, and makes recommendations for future community engagement and behaviour change projects. It highlights broader themes and issues that should be addressed in future work. This Report concludes by drawing on the knowledge and experience from Keep Scotland Beautiful of managing, developing and implementing community climate action projects and environment initiatives across Scotland.



# GCNS project background

GCNS aimed to raise awareness and understanding of carbon reduction and climate change, support people to reduce their carbon footprint and influence policy to enable meaningful and lasting change. The project was innovative in its approach because of its new model of engagement and the ambition to change the behaviour of those not yet engaged in climate change.

GCNS launched in Scotland as significant national climate action was just taking off. During this time there were significant policy developments, both nationally in the Climate Change Act and Climate Change (Scotland) Act and internationally via the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, which was the first attempt for nations to agree a global deal on climate change. GCNS was initiated at the same time as the Scottish Government's Climate Challenge Fund (CCF) was established.

The success of GCNS was achieved through a variety of activities, including Carbon Cutter Plans, Cycle Stirling, Energise Stirling and the actions of the Low Carbon Alliance. GCNS was regarded as innovative in its approach to behaviour change and community-based climate change work. The project was operational from 2008 to 2012 and was joint funded by the Scottish Government and the Big Lottery Fund Scotland. The project sought to be an 'exemplar' for future work with communities on climate change. There are many examples of legacy of GCNS in the projects that were continued, instigated or inspired by the work. These include:

- Cycle Stirling (continued by Forth Environment Link)
- Grow Forth (continued by Forth Environment Link)
- On the Verge/Edible Borders (constituted group)

## Key successes of GCNS

- **261 groups**, over **10,000 people**, agreed to participate in a Carbon Clutter Plan (CCP)
- CCPs assisted individuals to identify actions which resulted in a total reduction of 5,508 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e lifetime savings
- Average carbon savings per person: **0.30 tonnes a year**
- **96%** of participants who completed a CCP and took part in our survey were still carrying on with their actions after one year
- Energise Stirling completed **252** home energy and footprint surveys
- Energise Stirling activity saved **159 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e** a year and **2,625 tonnes lifetime savings**
- **67 businesses** joined the Low Carbon Alliance. Of those, 15, around one in five, submitted award entries. Ten won awards: three gold, two silver and five bronze
- The Low Carbon Alliance achieved carbon savings were **154 tonnes** (annually) and **765 tonnes** (lifetime)

# Context

This analysis and report comes at a crucial time in the context of community-based climate action work in Scotland. Key developments throughout 2015 and early 2016 demonstrate that effective community engagement with climate change is, and will continue to be, an essential part of climate action work in Scotland. International and national policy developments have framed the current landscape in a way that climate change is again being bumped up the priority list. At this moment, it is key that we learn from previous actions and progress forward with the necessary urgency in our action and this report will assist with this.

In setting the context from this report there are three points that are of particular relevance:

- The commitment and urgency created by COP21 in Paris.
- The priority given to community empowerment by the Scottish Government.
- The ambition the Scottish Government has for Scotland to lead the world with respect to action on climate change.

**First**, and perhaps most important, is the renewed political, business and international commitment and sense of urgency created by the Paris UN Climate Change conference in December 2015. This has created a new framework and a source of increased motivation for climate change policies and agenda to progress more quickly over the coming years. In the months following the agreement, regional and local actors will need to put into action on the ground the projects and activities that match the scale and urgency of the Paris Agreement.

Keep Scotland Beautiful undertook research with over 800 individuals to identify their expectations of the UN climate change conference in Paris. The published report of this research can be found at [www.keeptoscotlandbeautiful.org/media/845617/conversations-about-cop21-summary-report.pdf](http://www.keeptoscotlandbeautiful.org/media/845617/conversations-about-cop21-summary-report.pdf)

**Second**, and often underestimated as a key element in developments on climate change, is the effect of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 on the future of community spaces in Scotland. As will be demonstrated further in this report, one of the **key findings is the relationship between behaviour and actions, and physical space and materials**. The potential of the Act to further facilitate changes in community engagement and community based climate action is significant and many of the key findings of this report can be considered in the context of the new policy landscape that this change creates in Scotland.

**Third**, the Scottish Government is currently in the process of developing the third Report on Policies and Procedures (RPP3) which will outline the route map for achieving a low carbon Scotland for 2028 - 2032. Community action on climate change is important in this context as it can support and facilitate the changes outlined in the current RPP2 and the next RPP3. Projects such as GCNS, their legacies and future community-based action on climate change should be recognised for what they contribute to achieving a low carbon Scotland.

# Context



For the past 50 years, Keep Scotland Beautiful has been supporting and facilitating community based environmental projects across Scotland. Specifically relevant to this report is the responsibility that Keep Scotland Beautiful has had in developing and managing the Climate Challenge Fund in Scotland for the past eight years. The Climate Challenge Fund (CCF) has supported 588 community-led organisations in Scotland to deliver projects to take action on climate change. Keep Scotland Beautiful has developed the Community Action Support Programme (CASP) as part of the CCF. CASP allows lessons learned from previous projects to be shared amongst interested parties as well as provide specific training to increase communities' capacity for action on climate change.

Keep Scotland Beautiful published a final GCNS project report in 2012 which described the activities and lessons learned by Keep Scotland Beautiful during the implementation of the project. This report made six recommendations:

**1. Experienced, respected and independent charitable or non-governmental organisations** should direct and manage projects of this nature to ensure community engagement; their ethos and approach **minimises bureaucracy** and allows for **greater flexibility and licence for courage.**

**2. Politicians, policy-makers and business leaders** must ensure a universal approach to carbon reduction through an **overarching policy and commercial context in which low carbon behaviour is normalised** and encouraged and the business and environmental **benefits promoted.**

**3. Project funders** should ensure that investment is **long-term, flexible enough to respond to learning and the pace of change;** and sufficient to employ professional staff who can provide the expertise, and the **level of face-to-face engagement and support which are determinants of long-term change.**

**4. Policy makers and project funders** should invest in mentoring and education programmes for carbon literacy in order to influence behaviour and improve practice within the public and business sectors.

**5. A "centre of excellence" or hub** should be established as a resource for policy makers and practitioners; to gather and promote information, research evidence and latest thinking on pro-environmental behaviour change; and to provide practical support for action

**6. Policy-makers and funders** should use the learning from this project as a basis for determining future policy and investment.

**Keep Scotland Beautiful remains committed to driving climate action at a local level. Keep Scotland Beautiful reviews its own activities, such as GCNS, to identify key learning points to enable the organisation to develop and improve the impact of future activities.**

# Key findings



## Re-considering ownership of community projects

One of the most difficult things to understand about the nature of short term grant funding of community projects is the movability or transferability of these projects and the distinction between a project's activities and the activities of a community group. A clear legacy of GCNS has been the **ownership of elements of the project**. For example Cycle Stirling, which has led to the continuation of this sustainable transport group beyond GCNS's lifetime.

In the case of GCNS **where elements of the project were transferred to initiatives elsewhere, the legacy was greatest**. This is made easier if the organisation managing the project (in this case Keep Scotland Beautiful managing GCNS) is willing to see this as a community initiative, and not something that defines the 'host' organisation.



**The conclusion is that if a project is to be a truly community led project, the community must feel ownership of the activity, not the project manager, the funder or even the community group that owns the initiative.**

# Key findings



## Skills and knowledge beyond the sustainability sector

Reflecting on project impacts and legacies, the impact of the individuals who designed, implemented, participated in or managed the project can be overlooked. GCNS is particularly important to think about in this way because the majority of the individuals that worked on the project **came from outside of the sustainability sector, and brought with them other experiences and areas of expertise.** The research has found that each of them is still making a

significant contribution to the sustainability landscape in Scotland and particularly in Stirling. Projects like GCNS should be seen not only as pilots for future community climate change initiatives in Scotland but also as development opportunities for new community leaders to facilitate further shifts towards low carbon lifestyles. Their legacy challenges the idea that only individuals from within the sector can drive change.

**Often the focus of a project's impact is on the social and material aspects of changes, because these are more palpable to see or feel, but in this case GCNS had a very strong legacy by and on individuals which demonstrates the key role of individuals in designing and implementing effective behaviour change projects.**

# Key findings



## Working within existing networks

GCNS achieved real success by working within the existing community networks and sought to influence social norms in these, rather than create new relationships. The approach that **behaviour change projects should go to places where people are already gathering** and use straightforward communications techniques to 'normalise' sustainable behaviours and lifestyles was effective.

This approach demonstrated that engaging existing community structures is crucial to influencing social norms which facilitates a community to change its behaviour, lifestyles and habits.

## Sustained change

To establish an enduring legacy **something has to be left when the project is complete**, whether this is something material, individuals that are still committed to the project and can act as a focal point for continued discussion and presence, or that the project evolves into other new initiatives.

This demonstrates that the importance of integrating Individual, Social and Material changes within a project cannot be underestimated and should be considered during the initial stages of project development.



# Key findings

## Addressing the value-action gap

Research into the legacy of GCNS indicated that the project contributed to a shift in the values of the community, however it was difficult to conclusively identify specific behavioural change. Behaviours **don't automatically change as a result of a change in values.** The complex relationship between values and behaviours is something that ISM approach seeks to help understand and resolve by helping to mediate across a range of perspectives and issues.

**Translating a change in values into a change in behaviours is challenging. The ISM approach establishes long lasting behaviour change by recognising and addressing the three contexts which influence people's actions.**



# Methodology

The process involved for the collection of data to inform the production of this report included both interview-style social research and data collection from records and reports. Further analysis of the information was completed for production of the report, conclusions and recommendations.

The interview-style research involved interviews and personal accounts gathered from individuals that were involved in the implementation of the project or volunteered or participated in the activities run by the project. Data collection came from reports and records kept by Keep Scotland Beautiful following the conclusion of the work by the GCNS staff team. The data analysis and the knowledge, expertise and experience of Keep Scotland Beautiful was combined to draw conclusions regarding the legacy of the GCNS project and make recommendations for future activities.

The ISM approach for understanding and influencing behaviour provided a helpful analytical framework for this report. Keep Scotland Beautiful has practical experience of using and enabling others to use ISM for a variety of low carbon challenges, including improving energy efficiency and increasing the adoption of sustainable transport choices. Developed as part of a Scottish Government research programme, ISM is helping to inform low carbon policy options to ensure that Scotland delivers on legally binding greenhouse gas emission reduction targets over coming decades.

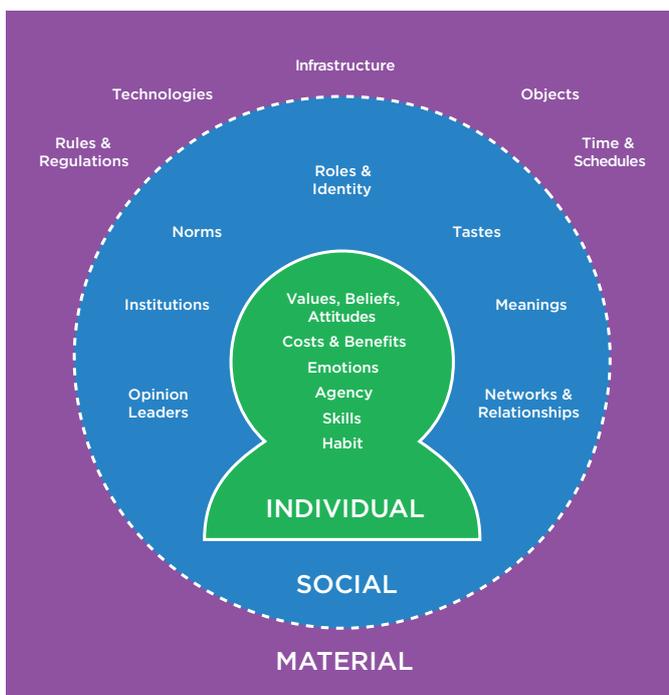


Figure 1: The ISM model [www.gov.scot/Resource/0042/00423436.pdf](http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0042/00423436.pdf)

## Individual context

Focuses on personal values, attitudes and skills together with other factors which drive our choices and actions.

## Social context

Recognises that individuals are strongly influenced by others and what society considers appropriate or desirable behaviour.

## Material context

Represents the external “environment” and factors such as infrastructure, rules and regulations and how these promote or constrain our behaviours.

# Individual

The ISM model outlines values, beliefs, attitudes, costs and benefits, emotions, agency, skills, and habits as the factors that shape individual behaviour.

Without exception, every single account, opinion and analysis began by speaking about the role of the individuals that worked on or participated in the project, individuals in the community, and the influence of people.

## Skills

The individuals that designed, developed, implemented and led the project played a key role in shaping the community and leading the direction of travel. A legacy of the project is that a significant number of the staff and participants working on the project came from other sectors and have gone on to continue to make a significant contribution in the Stirling community, as well more broadly across Scotland on climate change. These individuals brought with them a wealth of skills including how to influence peoples' values and behaviour, how to develop effective communication strategies and how to manage projects.

There are many specific accounts of individual attributes being impacted upon by the project. Some of the most significant of these include skills, costs and benefits. The impact of some of these changes can be seen today in the form of activities that are still taking place, including skills such as food growing and cycling, as well as financial and personal benefits from micro-renewable installation, energy saving measures, and energy efficiency and carbon reduction advice.





### Habits, values, beliefs and attitudes

GCNS identified the importance of influencing values, beliefs and attitudes, as well as the challenge in identifying any impact in this respect. While much of the research identified a consensus that changes had happened, and were lasting and significant, there were no specific examples given. Further to this, what is even more difficult to measure is whether and where there is an increase in value-action alignment. **The value-action gap is strongly influenced by an individual's sense of agency, and agency strongly influenced by the scale of the problem.** In the case of GCNS, we are analysing a locality, where the **project increased agency for individuals in the community.** The impact of this would have been very different for different sizes and scales of locations and communities.

**The relativity of agency means that methods for improving a sense of agency can't really be directly 'cut' and 'pasted' elsewhere. And so, any work to address the value-action gap in any specific community should be done in a way that is directly relevant to the community itself.**

GCNS engaged directly with 16% of the population of Stirling, which is a significant achievement particularly when you consider the context of what community projects tend to be able to achieve in terms of penetration and overall area engagement. By engaging many people across Stirling and influencing their values in relation to climate change the impact of GCNS and the potential for a lasting legacy was increased. This is evidenced by the fact that **96% of participants were continuing to live a lower carbon lifestyle a year after their initial engagement** with GCNS. It is important to note that there is a **direct correlation** between the habits and behaviours that have been established as a result of the project and the way that their relationship **to material changes like infrastructure, finance and personal benefits contributed to the establishment of social norms.**

# Social

The ISM model outlines opinion leaders, institutions, norms, meanings, roles and identities, tastes, networks and relationships as the factors that shape social behaviour.

GCNS aimed to work on the social factors of behaviour change in a significant way. The project pursued communication techniques used more traditionally in advertising and marketing sectors, and this made the project very visible at the time. This is an important step in creating opinion leaders in the community and changing social norms, however, the extent to which this sufficiently penetrated the psyche of Stirling residents for it to have a lasting legacy in the community is difficult to establish. Without the presence of the project, the impact of this work, where it wasn't continued by other organisations, or led to an infrastructural change, has faded.

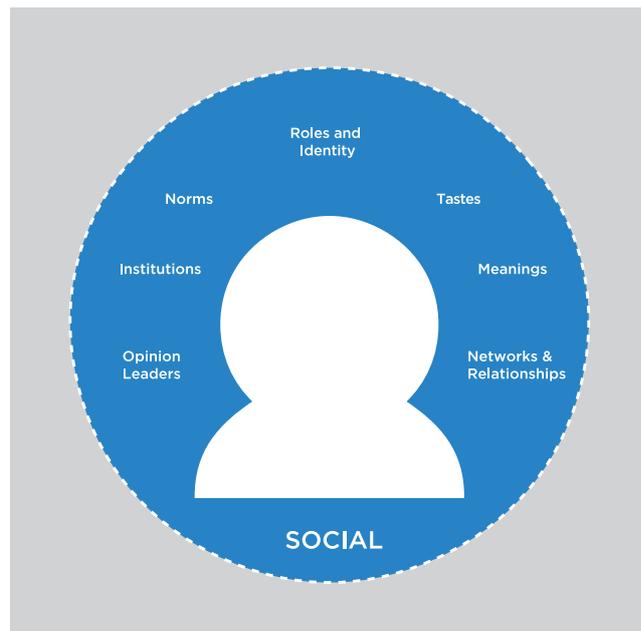
## Social norms

Where the project achieved success was that instead of creating new communities of interest, it worked within existing communities, networks and groups and sought to influence social norms within these.

This allowed for awareness of the project to spread much faster and more deeply than it would have otherwise, and is an important learning point for future work with communities. To create a new community of interest around a new topic or issue is immensely challenging because you are tackling all of the social factors at once. It is much more effective to work with an already existing community to try to change social norms because many other social influencers will be triggered, such as: opinion leaders, institutions, meanings, roles and identities, and networks and relationships. The project also identified the importance of using language that is meaningful to the groups that are being engaged.

An indicator of the impact of the individuals running the project, the impact on individuals in the community, the potential shift in values and beliefs, and the

progress of skills and perceived benefits of the project is the volume of CCF projects that have taken place in the Stirling area since GCNS has finished. Stirling has consistently been the local authority area with the highest volume of money per head given for community CCF projects – this represents 5% of the total number and 7% of the value of awards made, which equates to more than £5.2 million.





The research demonstrated that the continuation of any work was a direct result of demand within the community for these projects. This evidence of the lasting legacy of a project such as this even though the name, structure, and aims of the legacy initiatives should be seen as their own pieces of work. It should be noted that Forth Environment Link in particular was a key player in Stirling at the time of the GCNS project and so, as the project came to an end, any direct legacy from these projects is inherently intermixed with the impact of their continuing work. This demonstrates significant changes in the majority of the social factors in the ISM framework, including norms, relationships and networks, opinion leaders and tastes.

The transitioning of aspects of GCNS from Keep Scotland Beautiful to Forth Environment Link work is an example of **how short term community projects can develop their own identity and legacy**. It is difficult for a project owner or pioneer to realise that a short term project has an inherent fleeting nature to it, the idea that it is a project implies that it is short term, and actually moveable. **It is not necessarily linked to an organisation; it is linked to a community.**

**Unlocking the potential of partners is key to making the scale of shift and transition that is necessary to create a low carbon future. GCNS connected with stakeholders across Stirling and influenced key individuals who were able to impact social and material change to enable low carbon lifestyles.**

# Material

The ISM model outlines rules and regulations, technologies, infrastructure, objects, time and schedules as the factors that shape social behaviour.

Leaving something physical behind to ensure a lasting legacy was a consistent finding across all data analysis undertaken for this Report. This may be an obvious statement, however ensuring a physical legacy is important when tackling an issue such as climate change as it can be easily overlooked in the daily lives of communities. One respondent attributed the effect of 'kit' as part of a project's legacy as helping to remind community members of the bigger lifestyle changes that are needed and why.

Significantly almost every material change that the GCNS project created or facilitated has been either maintained or developed by people involved or connected to the project. Many of the material changes that took place have been maintained were dependent on the social aspects of the project and legacy. Some of these include:

- Efficiency and renewable measures installed in homes through Energise Stirling
- Bike and cargo bike loans have contributed to developments leading to Nextbike installation
- Edible Borders infrastructure
- Other community gardens and smaller energy efficiency changes as part of Carbon Cutter Plans

One of the greatest challenges of implementing projects that involve different elements of the community is that many of the material aspects are out with the control of individuals running the project. Balancing the needs and priorities of different stakeholders, partners, participants and funders is difficult. There is no easy solution to this issue. It requires time to develop trust and understanding between key partners. Acknowledging unrealistic expectations, honesty about different partners' needs and maintain flexibility in the face of change and uncertainty is essential for navigating the complex aspects of securing a meaningful legacy from a grassroots project such as GCNS.



# Final analysis

An important part of the legacy of the GCNS project is the way that learning from the experience **has influenced Keep Scotland Beautiful's community work** and assists it to develop its approach. This report will conclude with some reflections, both on the key ways that Keep Scotland Beautiful has learned from this project, but also to consider community behaviour change work in Scotland more generally.

Keep Scotland Beautiful has identified three features that contribute to the creation of an enduring legacy from community-based climate action projects. These are:

- **Gaining critical mass**
- **Integrating infrastructure and behaviour change activity**
- **Creating a positive vision**

## Gaining critical mass

Through this analysis it appears that the project expanded the number of individuals engaged with climate change and sustainability in the region. In order to shift an individual behaviour from an action, skill or habit and turn it into a social norm, a critical mass of engagement, participation and awareness is necessary. In order for community projects focussed on individual lifestyles to become drivers for changing the social norm, external factors must also change.

**Sustained behaviour change is not an easy win.** An important factor for success is beyond the scope of this type of work and depends heavily on the social and material elements of enforcing or reinforcing these changes.

## Infrastructure or behaviour

Often behaviour change is isolated from infrastructure and other material changes. The findings of this report demonstrate that this is an unhelpful way to consider behaviour change as these things cannot be isolated and worked on separately. This could be seen as a sort of “chicken and an egg” situation, which comes first? You need behaviours to change to create demand for new infrastructure, but then you need physical changes to enable changes in behaviour.

**In future low carbon behaviour change should be an integral part of infrastructure and community development.**

## Creating a positive vision

One theme throughout the research was the way that the GCNS project was trying to reframe the way that this community went about their daily lives. **One respondent said it very clearly: “Are we all not just adapting? Isn't mitigation a way to adapt to a carbon-constrained world?”** In this way the whole idea of behaviour change and low carbon behaviours is about adapting to a new reality of life. **It's no longer about voluntary changes, incentivised low carbon solutions, it's about future-proofing our lives.** In this way we can start to reframe the conversation about behaviour change to a place where we are no longer talking about fighting against ‘high-carbon’ behaviours, but **moving positively and constructively towards a different future** which we accept and recognise as the way forward. Keep Scotland Beautiful will explore this idea through behaviour change work that it supports and facilitates.

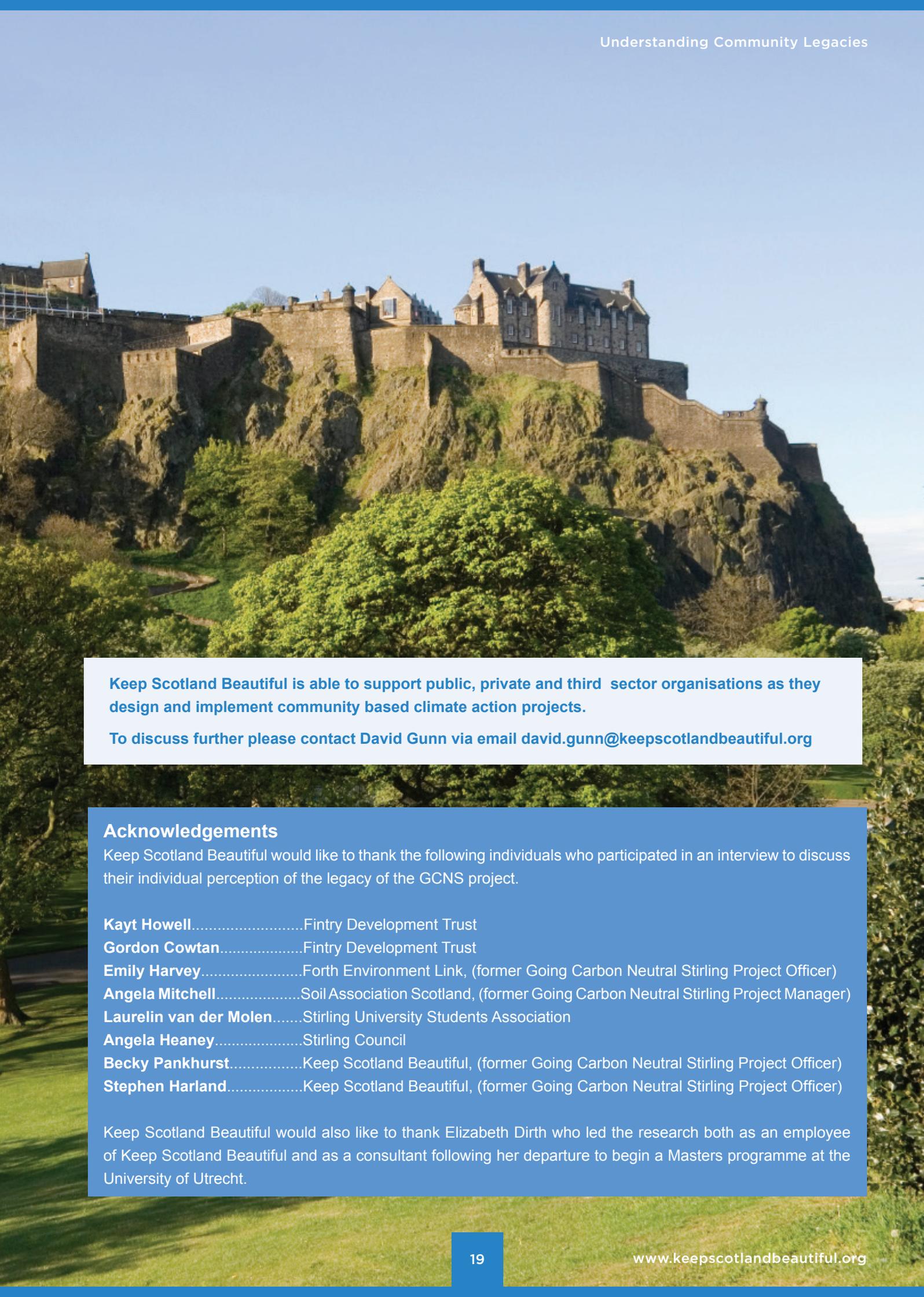
# Final analysis

Research and analysis supports Keep Scotland Beautiful's understanding that community-led climate action projects can have a continuing legacy beyond the end of their 'active' period.

To achieve this legacy it is important that the following factors, identified within this report, are considered:

1. Ensure the community affected by the project has ownership of the project activities.
2. Enable individuals with relevant skills outwith the sustainability sector to contribute to the development and implementation of the project.
3. Work with existing community structures rather than recreating new ones specifically for the project.
4. Wherever possible integrate behaviour change with infrastructure development.
5. Create a positive vision to motivate the community and encourage their commitment to the project's ambition.





**Keep Scotland Beautiful is able to support public, private and third sector organisations as they design and implement community based climate action projects.**

**To discuss further please contact David Gunn via email [david.gunn@keepscotlandbeautiful.org](mailto:david.gunn@keepscotlandbeautiful.org)**

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Keep Scotland Beautiful is the charity that campaigns, acts and educates on a range of local, national and global environmental issues to change behaviour and improve the quality of people's lives and the places they care for. We are committed to making Scotland clean, green and more sustainable.



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