

# THE CLIMATE COMIC

*Tales between generations*



The **Climate Comic** is a collaboration between south Wales communities, researchers, an advisory group and illustrator. It is part of the ‘Understanding Older and younger people’s Perspectives and Imaginaries of Climate change’ (OPTIC) project at Swansea University.



The OPTIC team is Dr. Merryn Thomas, Dr. Aled Singleton, Dr. Aelwyn Williams, Dr. Carol Maddock, Dr. Deborah Morgan, Prof. Charles Musselwhite, Prof. Tavi Murray and illustrator Laura Sorvala. The Advisory Group spans lifelong learning, creative practitioners, volunteers, charities, local authorities, and statutory bodies.

The research was approved by Swansea University’s School of Health and Social Care Ethics Committee (reference 108948, January 2023).

Published in August 2023. Printed by Harcourt Colour Print on World Land Trust recycled paper using vegetable-based inks. Fully recyclable.

Illustrations © Copyright 2023 Laura Sorvala



OPTIC was funded by the University of Stirling Ageing and Place: Pandemic Recovery and Action on Climate Change (APPROACH) fund, as part the Social Behavioural & Design Research Programme (UK Research and Innovation). It was supported by the Centre for Ageing and Dementia Research (CADR, Swansea University) with equipment provided by the Awen Institute. We received further funding from Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (hefcw) Research Wales Innovation Fund (RWIF) through Swansea University.



## Foreword

The greatest challenge facing every generation living on this planet is the urgent need to address the climate and nature emergencies. This is not a moment to pit generations against one another. It is a time to work together, learn from past mistakes and experiences, and draw on the vast well of knowledge that exists between different age groups.

This comic is just such an example of how generations can be brought together. It’s been designed with a view to kick-starting conversations between generations, to engender a greater sense of empathy and understanding, and to empower readers. We have to remember that there are things we can all do to help. We must act now, and we must act together, if we are to change things. And we must change things.

The people involved in this project are amongst the most inspiring people I’ve had the privilege of working with. The themes and topics that arise in the comic spring directly from younger and older people’s climate change perceptions and behaviours, as captured in workshops with 66 people in south Wales in 2023. These are stories rooted in the lives of people from our valleys, our streets, our schools and homes. I truly think that this comic will enrich the lives of the people who read it – and I hope that it will inspire readers to make positive change. Because again, there is so much we can and must do – together.

I hope that you will enjoy reading the comic and that it will spark a conversation with someone from another generation. Conversations can bring about change – let’s all play our part in making this change happen.

**Delyth Jewell MS**  
**August 2023**

Chair of the Senedd (Welsh Parliament) Cross Party Groups on Climate, Nature and Wellbeing, and Intergenerational Solidarity.



## The OPTIC project

OPTIC seeks to understand older and younger people's climate change perceptions, imaginaries and behaviours in the places that matter to them. In spring 2023, we carried out creative workshops with 66 people in south Wales: online, on a busy urban street, in a Valleys youth club, at a residential home and primary school, with a coastal walking group and a farming family. This comic shares their stories.

Turn to pages 21-24 to discover more about our workshop methods and how the comic was made. On pages 25-29, you can take part by playing the OPTIC dice game, colouring in a comic strip and creating your own comic.

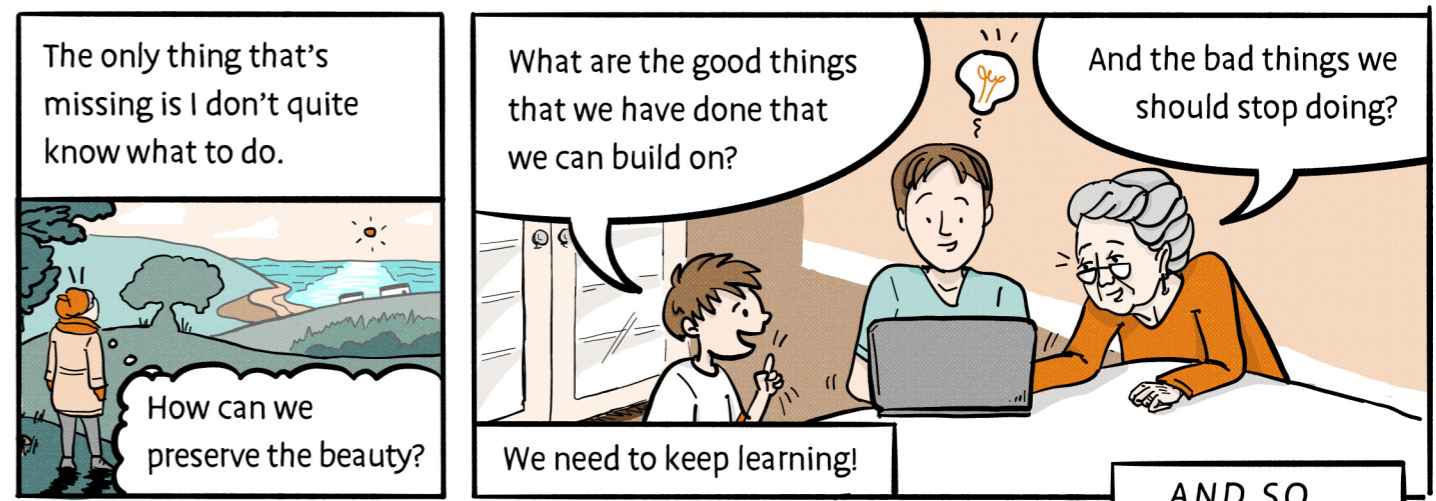
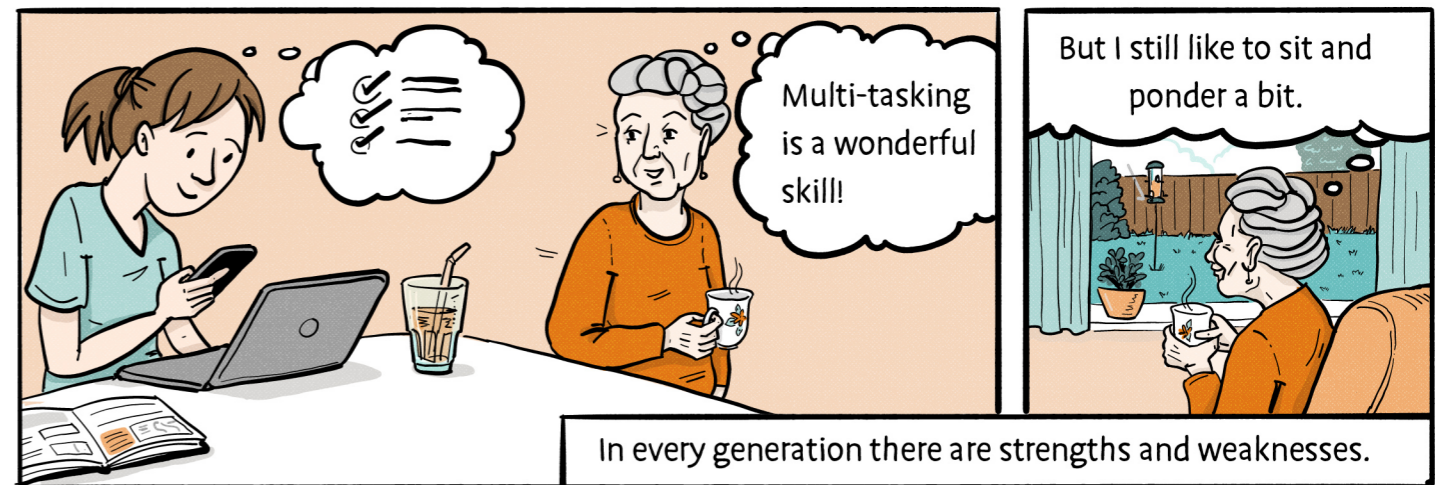
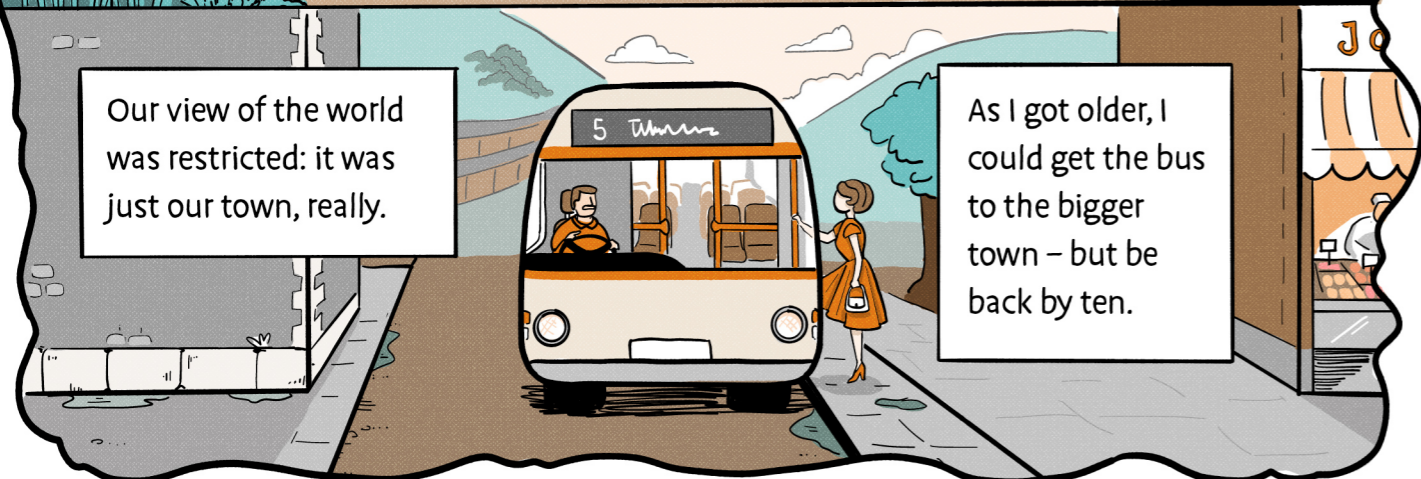
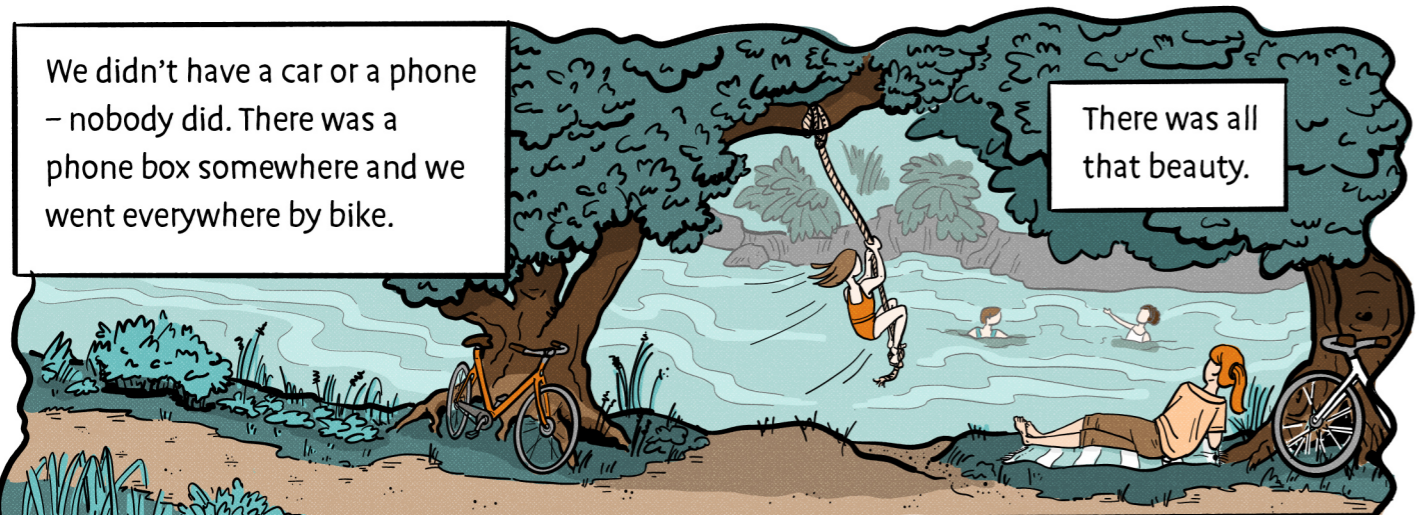
For more information and activities, please visit [www.climatecomic.co.uk](http://www.climatecomic.co.uk). We hope The Climate Comic inspires thought, conversation and action, and we would love to hear from you.

## Our heartfelt thanks

...to the communities we had the privilege of working with, including Newton Grange Residential Home, Oystermouth Primary School, Women4Resources, Hirwaun YMCA and Neath Port Talbot Black Minority Ethnic Community Association. We would also like to thank our advisory group for guidance throughout the project, and our funders.

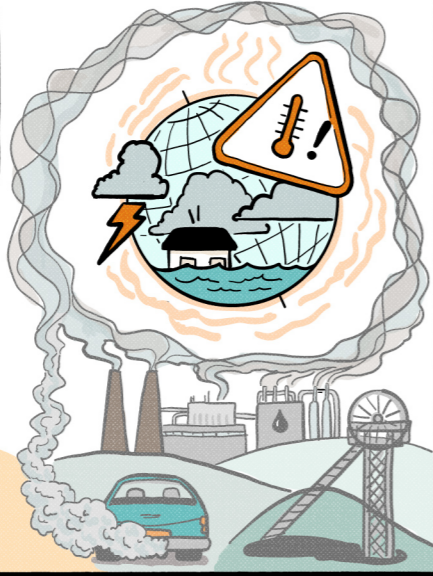
# The Climate Comic

## Tales between generations



AT A RESIDENTIAL HOME...

Well, Margaret, climate change is about pollution from factories, cars, fossil fuels that warm the planet...



I'm 90 years old and we never learnt that in school!



My father worked in a colliery: you know, factories and mines provided most of the jobs then.

The coal mine kept my brother out of the war!

It must have been really frightening in the war.

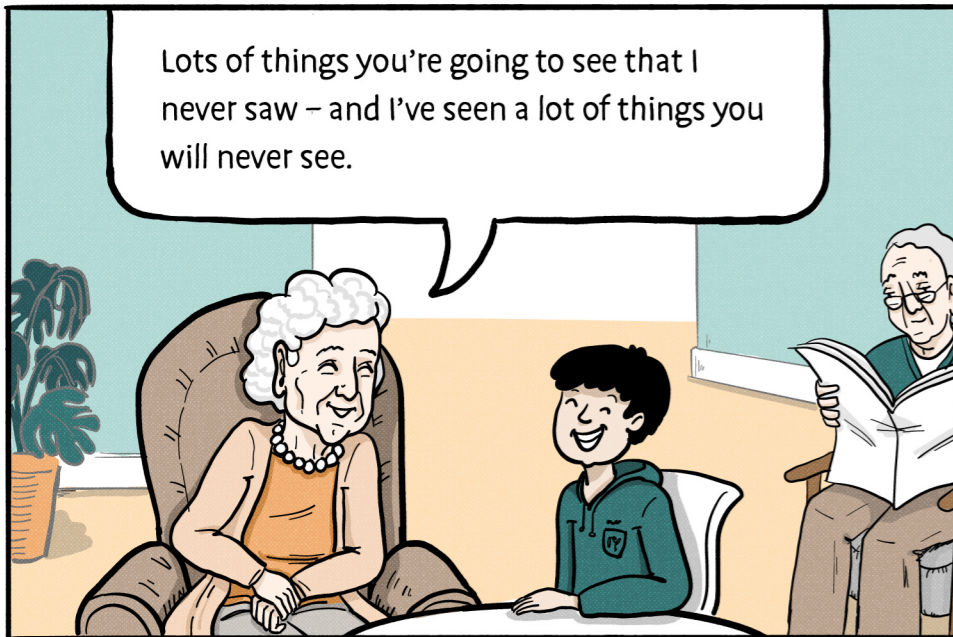


phew!

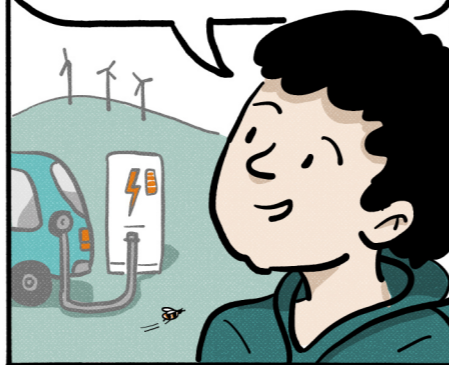
Those of us who came through were lucky.



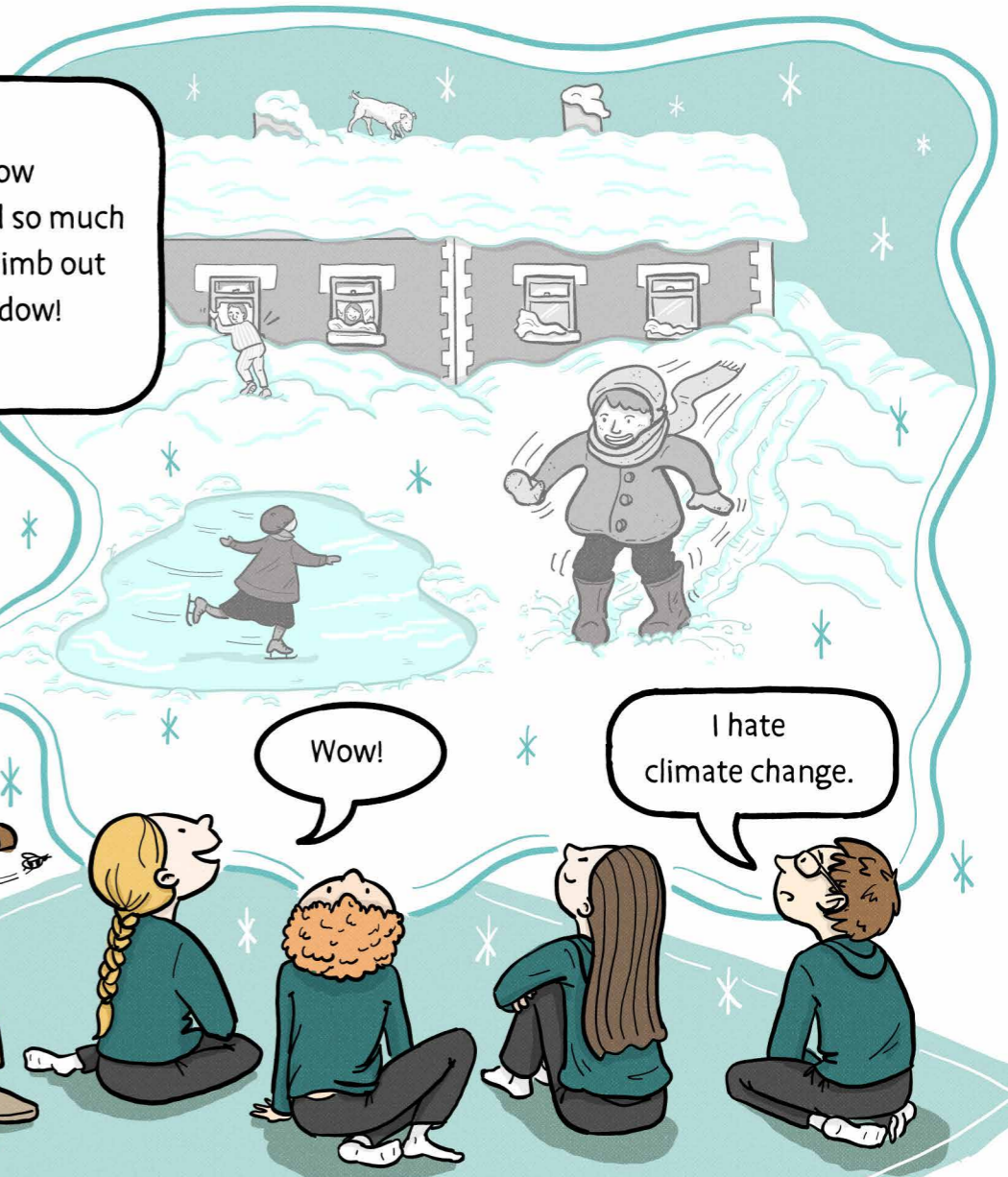
Lots of things you're going to see that I never saw – and I've seen a lot of things you will never see.



I imagine one day nature may grow back and we may be a bit more climate friendly.



We don't get much snow anymore. Once we had so much snow my dad had to climb out of a second storey window!



Wow!

I hate climate change.

I hope communities will help stop climate change.

Yeah, not drive so much!

Grow their own food – in the old days, our parents did.



IN FACT...

IN ANOTHER PART OF TOWN...

I live just up the road and we have a very diverse community here.

Shops sell such a variety of foods from around the world! It's good to buy local but there must be a carbon impact?

A lot going on but not much changing... what's going on over there?

We should make more use of empty spaces for biodiversity and growing our own food!

Was it hard to set up a community garden?

If you get people with enough passion, you can do anything.

Would you eat food grown "off the street"?

Yes, if we got rid of the cars!

We can reuse a lot of ideas from the 'Garden Cities' of old: like the 15-minute neighbourhoods with all the services you need in your local area.

It's nice to see old banks and chapels being converted into new community spaces...

...we shouldn't have buildings stand empty!

You can find local community groups online too, like baby banks and sell and swap groups.

Affording to live more sustainably is not accessible for everyone!

You don't notice how inaccessible streets are until you have a buggy, especially on a bin day!

You could do a lot here: green buses, get rid of cars... or at least limit traffic and build proper cycle lanes.

This is a good start!

MEANWHILE...

REMEMBERING THE BEACH...

There is so much more rubbish on the streets and the beach these days – but less life.

Empty skies, empty rockpools.



We used to go 'pop bottling'\* on the beach for the money.

It was a drop in the ocean: one less bottle and one more penny in my pocket.



Small actions are still important...

...together they can make bigger waves.

\*collecting bottles in the 1950s

We could scale the pop bottling idea up: returning bottles, plastic, rubbish and get some kind of a reward for it?

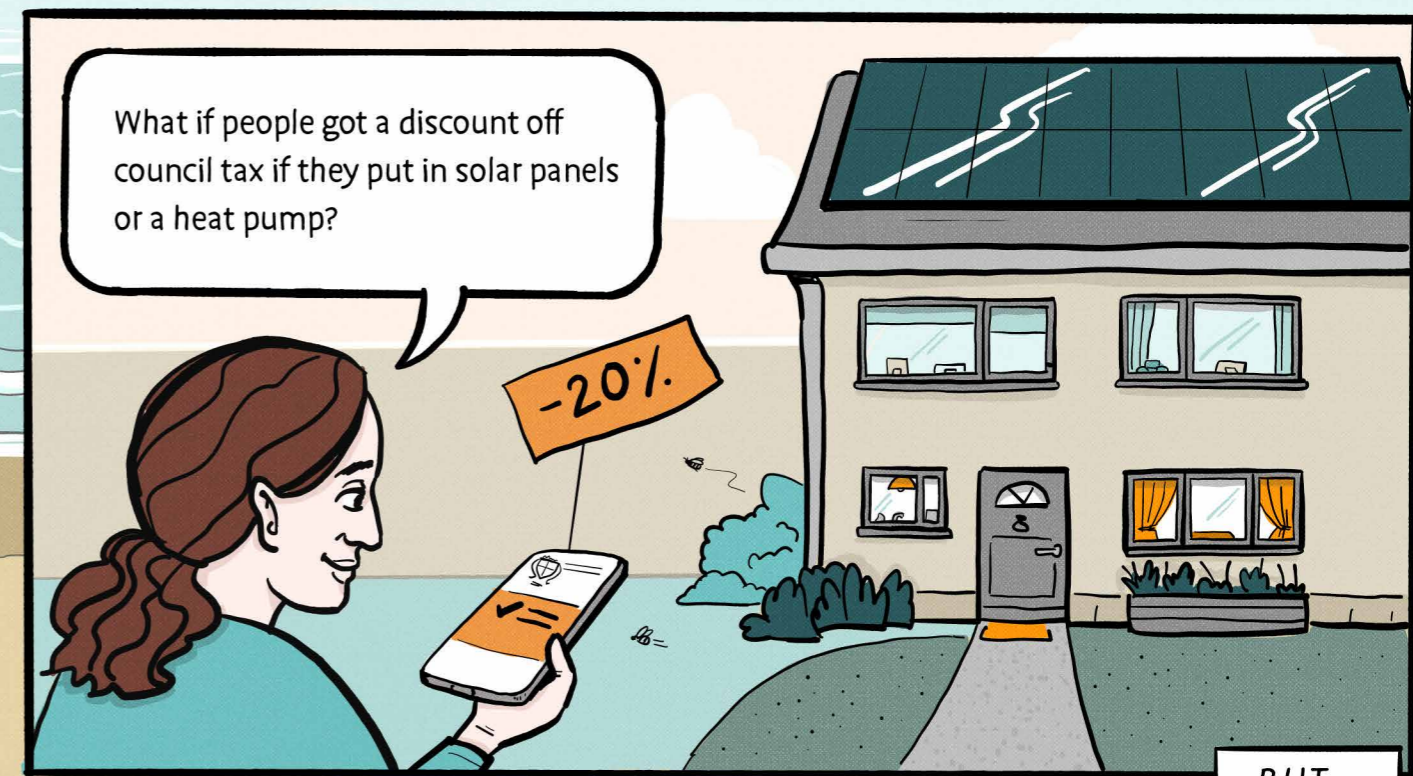
As long as the rubbish doesn't get dumped back into our rivers!



People will make changes if there's something in it for them!

Reducing emissions would make more of a difference to climate change...

What if people got a discount off council tax if they put in solar panels or a heat pump?

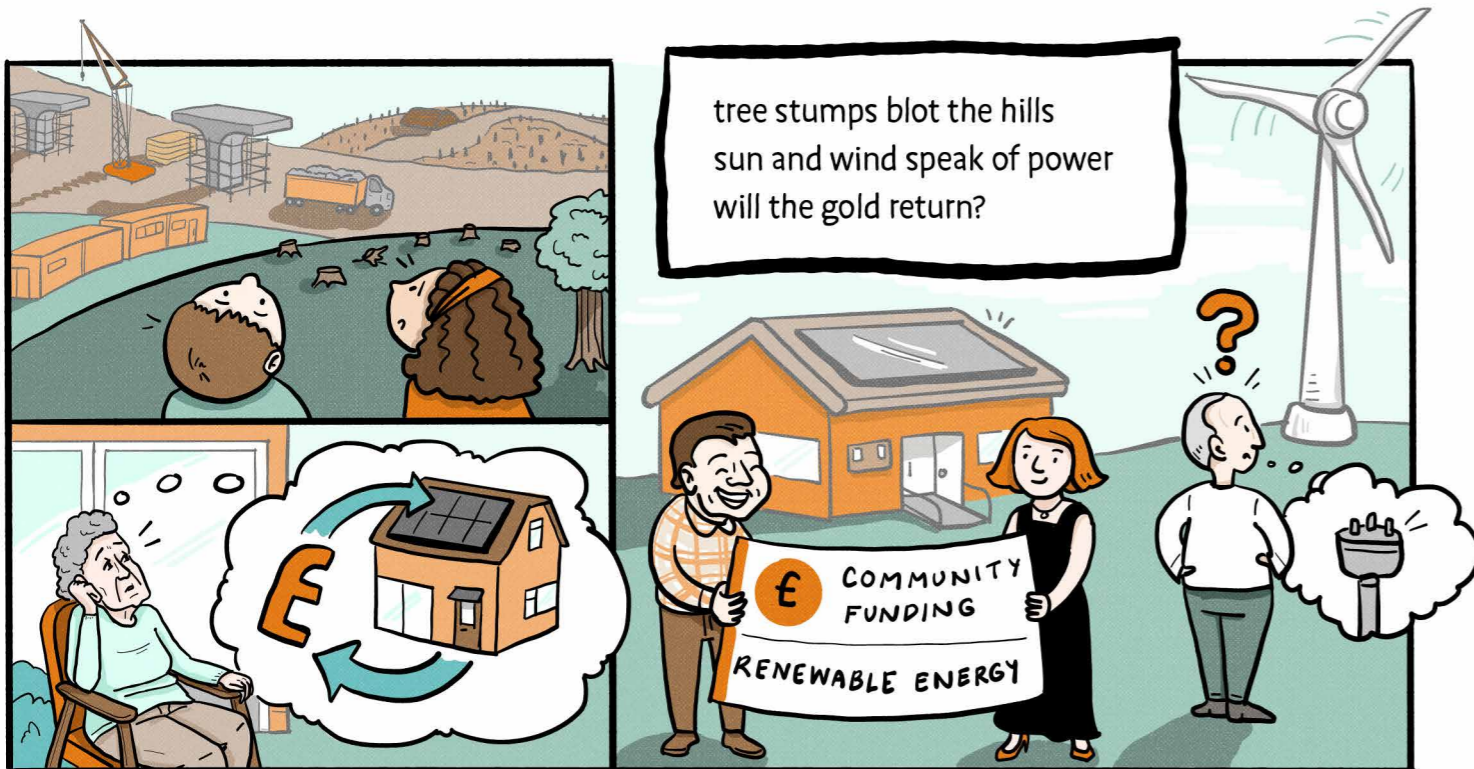


BUT...

IN A VALLEY NOT FAR AWAY...

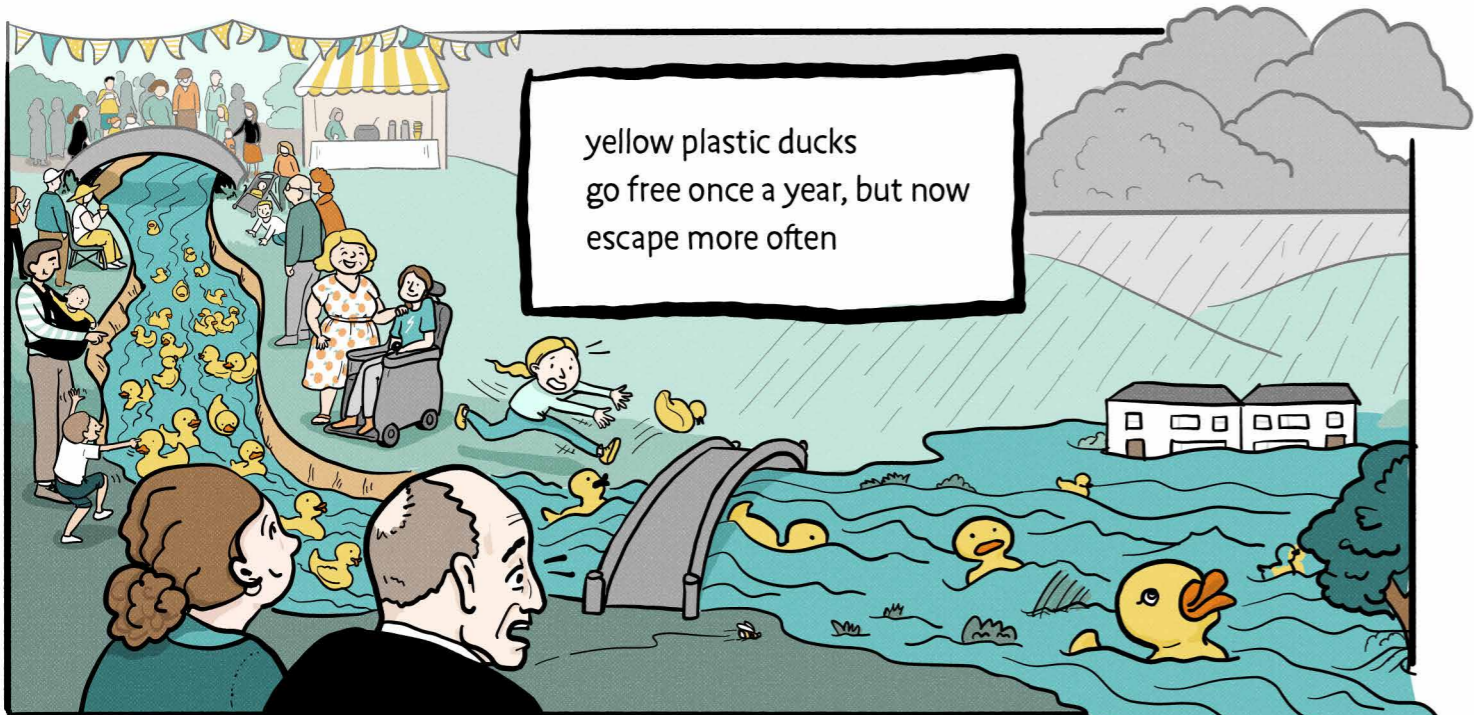


cheese grater pylons  
keep up with windfarms, because  
coal's long gone, a dream

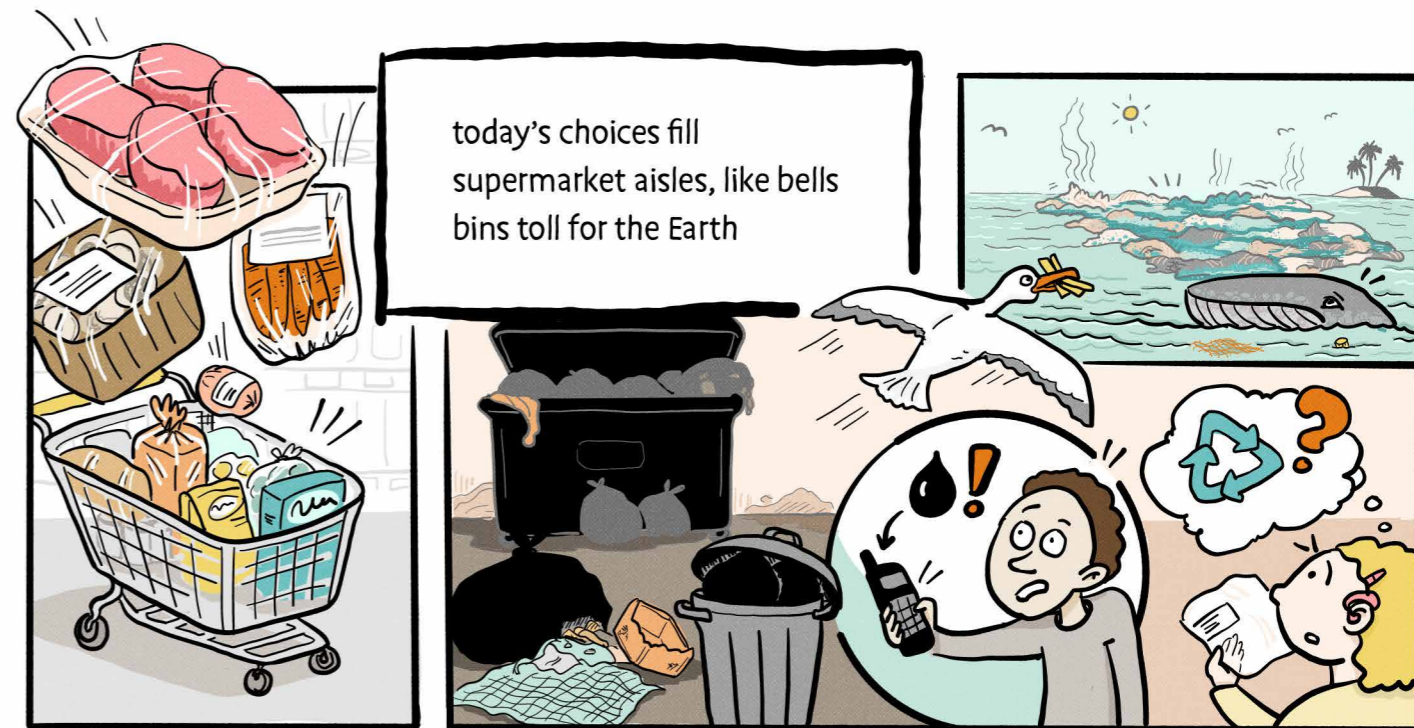


tree stumps blot the hills  
sun and wind speak of power  
will the gold return?

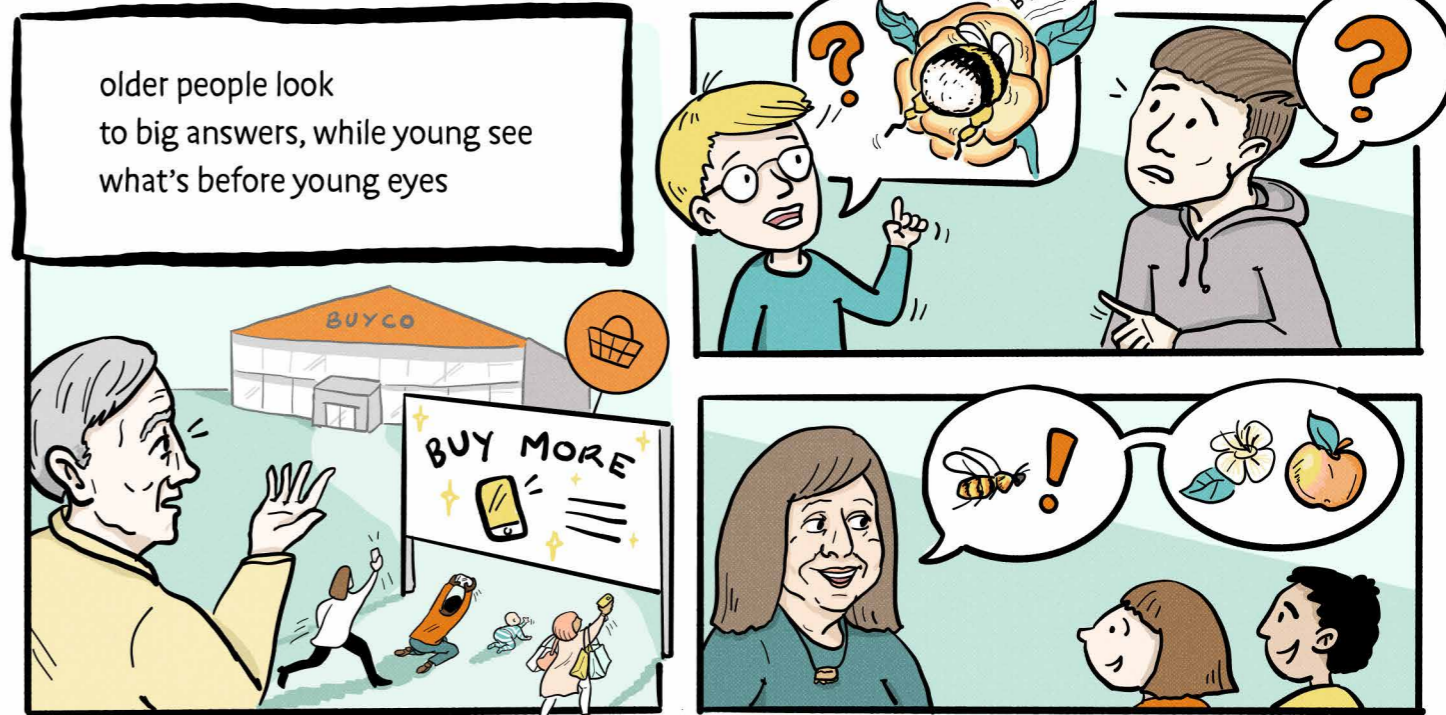
£ COMMUNITY FUNDING  
RENEWABLE ENERGY



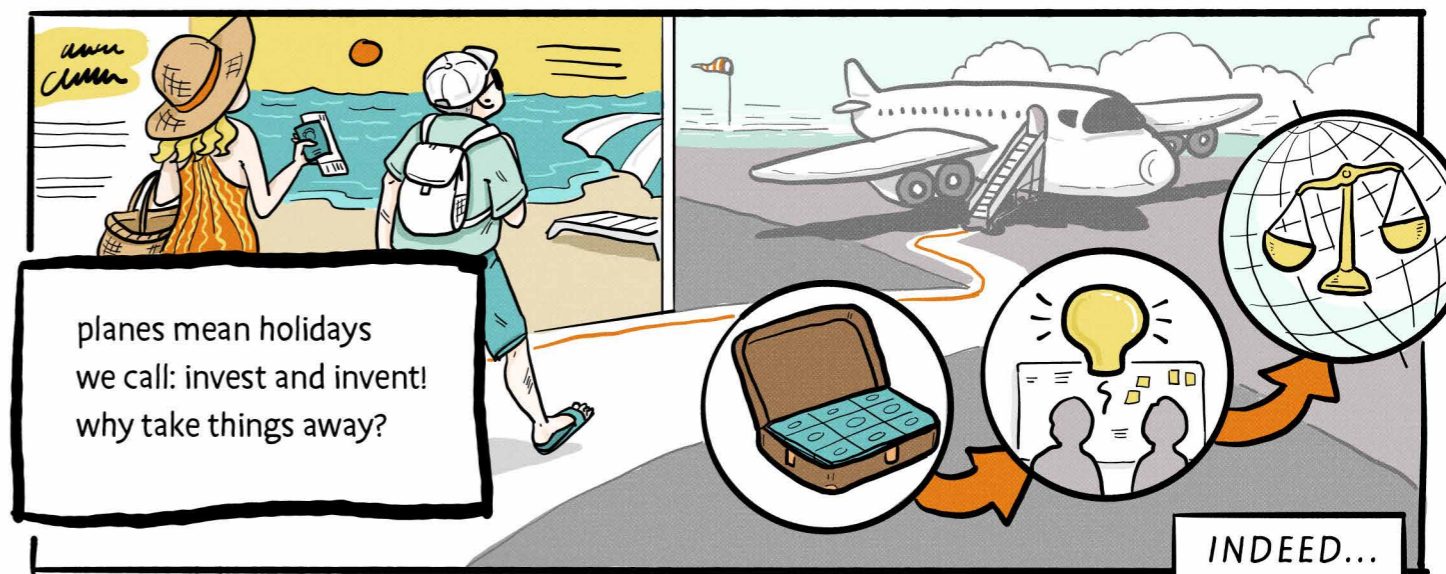
yellow plastic ducks  
go free once a year, but now  
escape more often



today's choices fill  
supermarket aisles, like bells  
bins toll for the Earth



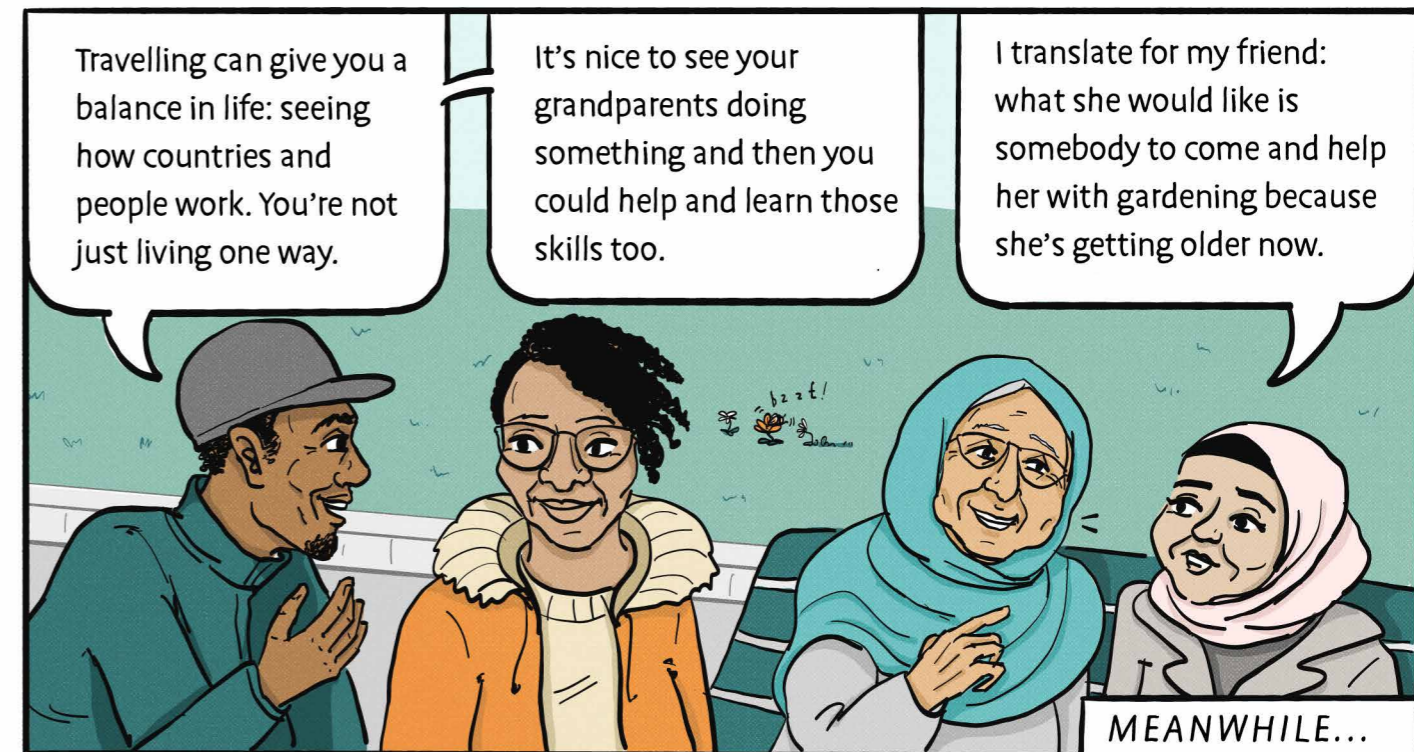
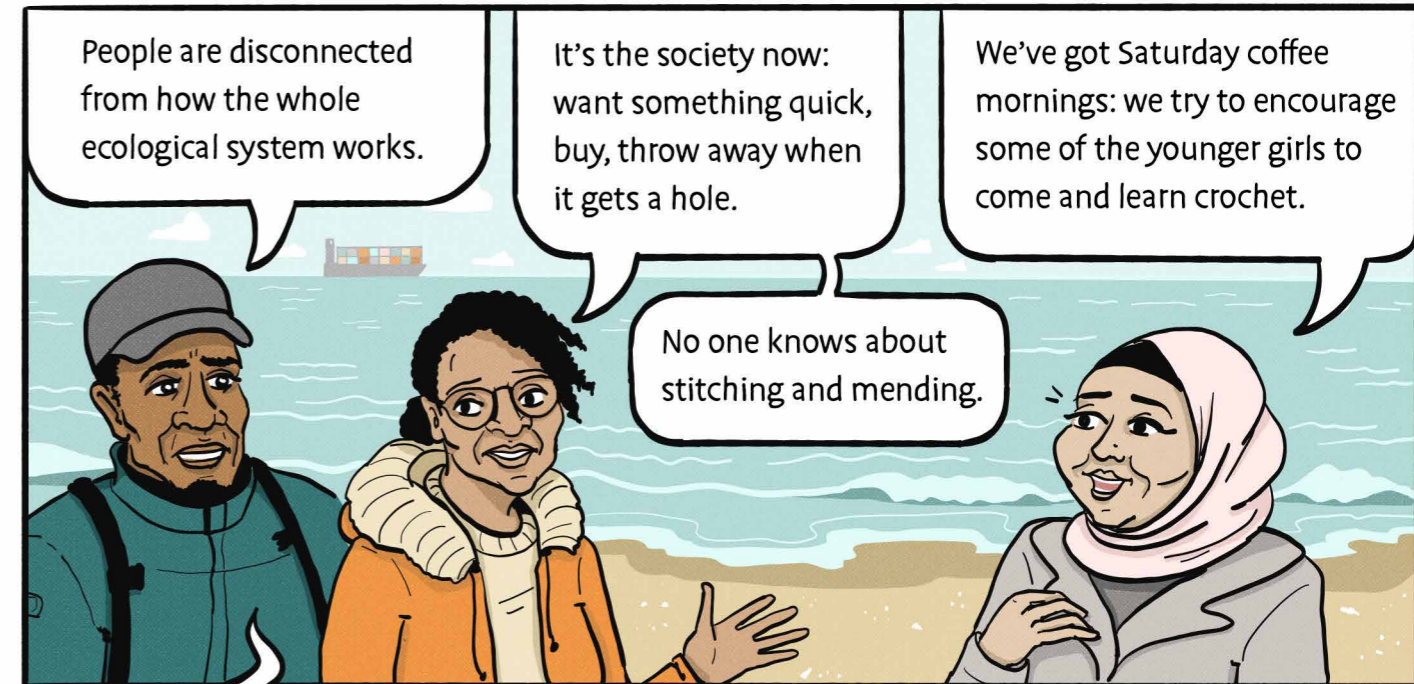
older people look  
to big answers, while young see  
what's before young eyes



planes mean holidays  
we call: invest and invent!  
why take things away?

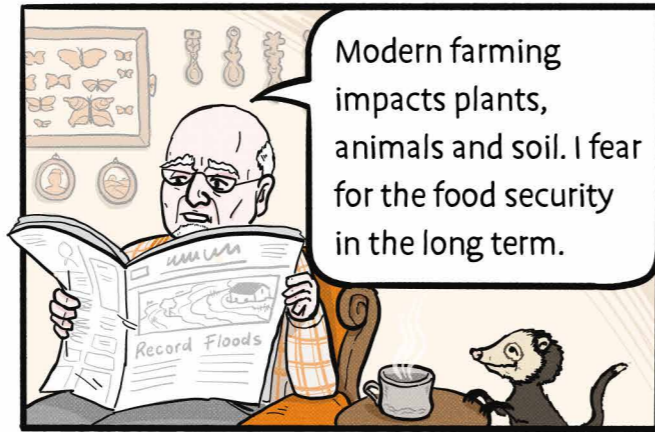
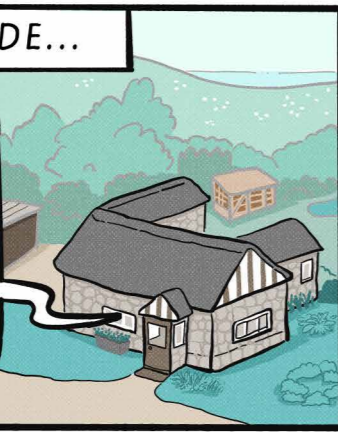
INDEED...





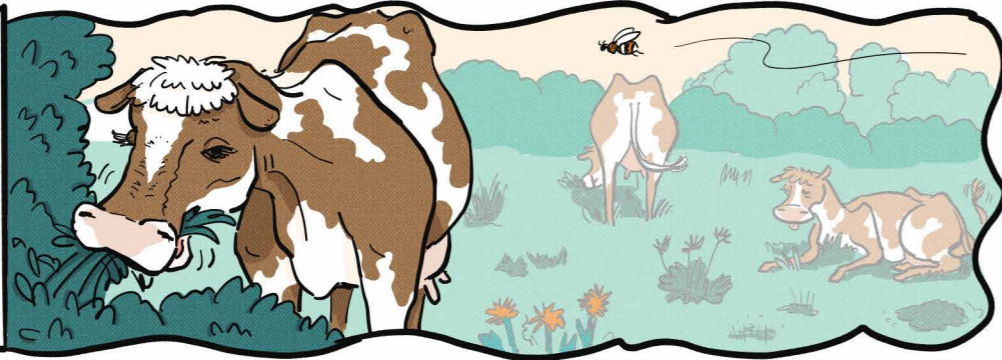
IN THE COUNTRYSIDE...

Farming has become more unstable because the weather has changed, no proper seasons anymore...



Modern farming impacts plants, animals and soil. I fear for the food security in the long term.

Old farms used to have "hospital fields". The sick cows went straight to the hedgerows, eating all the weeds and native plants.



On our farm we do things for nature: it's more hands on and letting things go a bit wild...



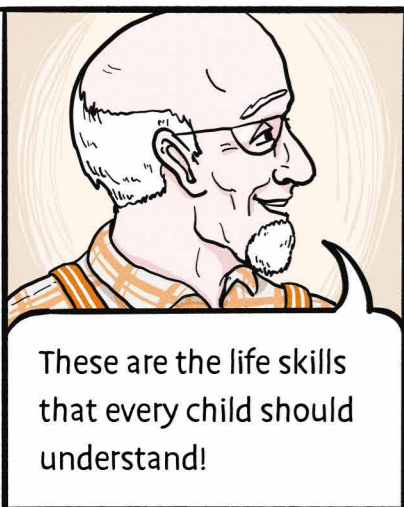
Couple of pints of water in the shower, or one bath a week.

That'll do!

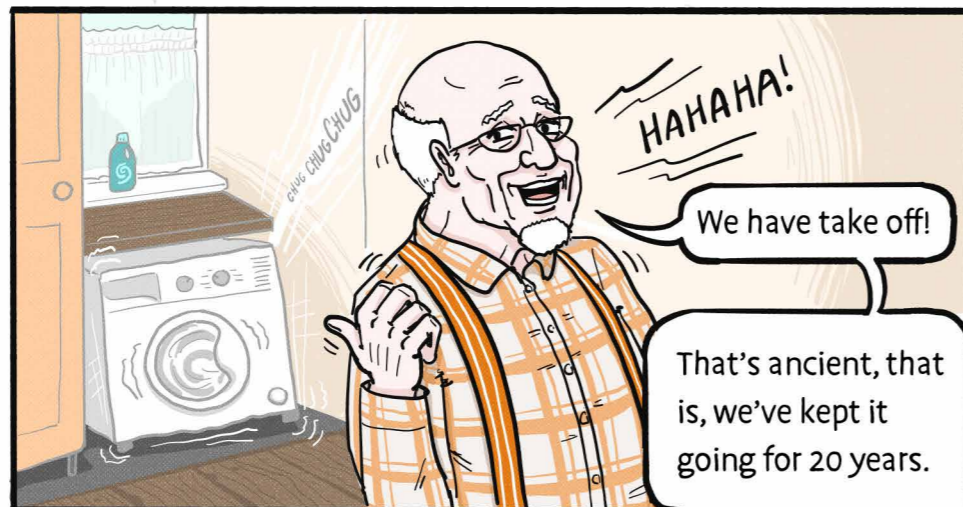
I fix things: I was taught as a kid how to darn the holes in my socks.



We try and buy cheaply, second hand clothes. We recycle absolutely everything!



These are the life skills that every child should understand!



HAHAHA!

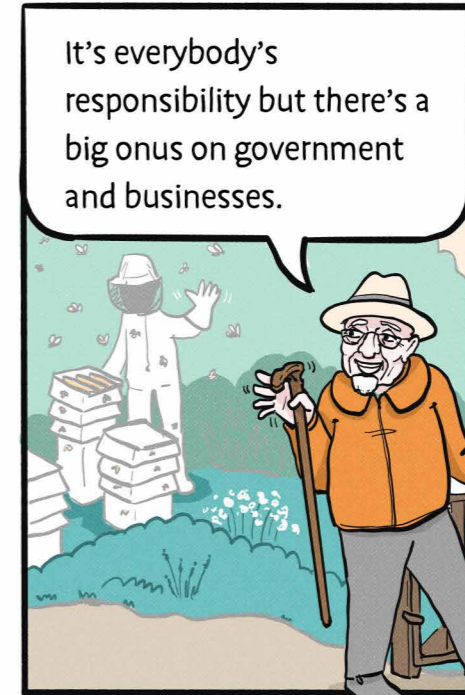
We have take off!

That's ancient, that is, we've kept it going for 20 years.

Everybody needs to look after their own patch. This is where I belong. To me, that's important.



It's everybody's responsibility but there's a big onus on government and businesses.



We have the potential and the capacity to resolve so many problems.



We've got all these technologies: we can put a satellite in space and yet we can't find packaging that can easily biodegrade!



And as for billionaires jumping on a rocket to escape...@#&!@!!



We already have an Earth! You are just ruining a planet and going to a different one!



Keep the one that you have nice and healthy so you can live on it.



The only way forward is to get the youngsters on board!

This is about living, isn't it, and how to save what we have got.

AND NOW... WHAT ABOUT YOU?

I wish nature was more accessible for everyone. And more people would be involved with not using pesticides so that butterflies and biodiversity would have more of a chance.

Elizabeth, busy street

I wish that businesses could take climate change seriously because they're not changing things that they should have changed.

Young girl, coastal walking group

I wish I could have my life over again, knowing what I know now. I'd fight even harder for the natural world.

Paul, countryside





I imagine an interlinked country where we are aware of the damage being done by travel using planes – also the damage we're doing to other countries.

Jennifer, busy street

Roll two dice and finish the sentence about climate change. Re-roll the dice if nothing comes to mind, or use one die.

Example:  +  = "with climate change, I imagine places that..."

-  I imagine
-  I wish
-  I remember
-  I love
-  I hope
-  I recall

-  communities...
-  places...
-  buildings...
-  nature...
-  hobbies...
-  businesses...

I remember when there were less trees in the city!

Oscar, Y6, primary school

Maureen, residential home

I would like more things to be able to walk around and see.

Seren, busy street

I recall buildings like social housing being developed in line with communities, with aspects like schools and things accessible.

I love communities because we can all work together.

Elizabeth, busy street

I imagine places would have more recycling bins.

I remember places that had no recycling bins.

I love places that have recycling bins!

Children, valleys community

I hope nature doesn't suffer with all the trees being chopped down.

Older person, valleys community

In the future I want parks not to be muddy.

Annabelle, Y2, primary school

Come on Dylan, you can't stay here all day...

Mrs Honey, Y2 teacher

Well, that was fun!

Sarah, residential home

I imagine buildings full of flowers.

Bob, Y6, primary school

I wish buildings had more solar panels.

Boy, valleys community

# How we made The Climate Comic

Page 5: Our **advisory group**, consisting of 15 older and younger people from a variety of backgrounds, has been essential to this project. They helped shape research materials, tested and developed ideas, made bridges with potential participants, and are informing future research directions.

During the **icebreaking activity** for an online workshop with the advisory group, Loz thought about the stories that an old stone would tell, if it could talk. She shared memories of growing up. The ensuing conversation encapsulated the project aim to connect generations and learn from each other.



Page 7: Twelve primary school students (Years 2 and 6) visited a care home to talk about climate change. The next day, Year 6 students **drew comics** about the visit. Cartoons can provide a way 'to think about other things' (Y6 student) and their comics featured a range of characters, timeframes and storylines. All the children who visited the care home included older people in their comics.

Several children made a comic about snow, based on three residents' recollections of very deep snow, and ice skating on their school pond.



Page 8: The primary school children taught care home residents how to play the **OPTIC dice game**, which prompted recollections, imaginings and wishes.

The game was particularly useful for adding an element of surprise and fun to the workshops. Reminiscences were shared by both younger and older participants, who interpreted the sentences in enlightening and surprising ways. Try the game yourself on page 27.



Page 9: Two workshops included a **group walk**. We stopped to talk about objects, nature, pollution, and more. There was space for people to share ideas and feelings.

This image is created from a workshop with volunteers on a busy street in central Swansea. The buildings, businesses and other features started conversations about online communities, walkable neighbourhoods, and the cost of living sustainably.

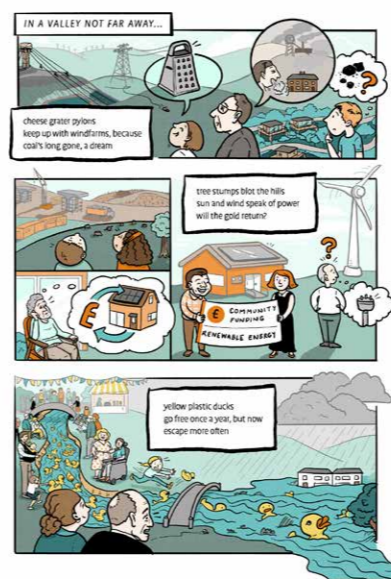
Page 11: The busy street workshop included a **storyboarding activity** where we each shared an experience related to climate change, and agreed on a combined story that captured the imagination. We sketched the frames of the story and added captions, as if preparing to make a film.

This story is based on Lynne's memories of pop bottling (collecting discarded glass bottles for money) on a local beach. It prompted a discussion of how past practices could inspire new forms of action.



Page 13: During a workshop with a valleys community, children described pylons in the hills looking like 'cheese graters'.

During the same workshop, children and older adults took an **'online walk'** using Google Maps. We stopped at a bridge and looked at the river. People remembered August duck races over previous years and explained how the water levels vary so much. Aelwyn and Laura wrote haiku to express the rich and lively experience of the workshops in a few words.

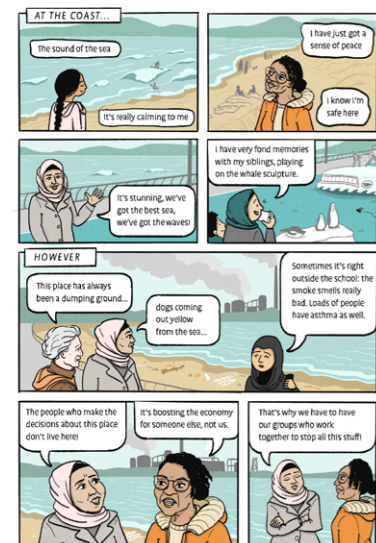


Page 14: During a **collaging** activity, people relaxed and became absorbed in the process of cutting and sticking pictures and words. There was dialogue about the importance of bees and how the landscape had changed. Bees were discussed in all the workshops, from older participants telling children about pollination, to Michael noticing fewer bees in his garden, and Paul showing Merryn the beehives at the bottom of his garden. Look closely and you might find a bee on every page.



Page 15: **Illustrator Laura** was given transcripts (workshop recordings made into text), with ideas for potential stories and quotes highlighted by the team. After reading the transcripts alongside each other, she began to look for emerging themes relevant to the overall project, and extracts that could bring a personal, human spark to the story.

The style of the comic was influenced by results of a **survey** completed by 98 members of the public. In general, people preferred bold, clear and colourful pictures for an intergenerational audience.



Page 16: Several comics and graphic novels **influenced this work**, including those about environmental issues and older people. Three were particularly influential. Chris Ware's *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth* (2000) inspired the ways in which we connect the stories throughout the comic; and we are indebted to Will Eisner's *The Dreamer* (1986) and Sarah Airriess' graphic adaptation of Cherry-Garrard's *Worst Journey in the World* (2022) for the idea of the annotation pages you are reading now.

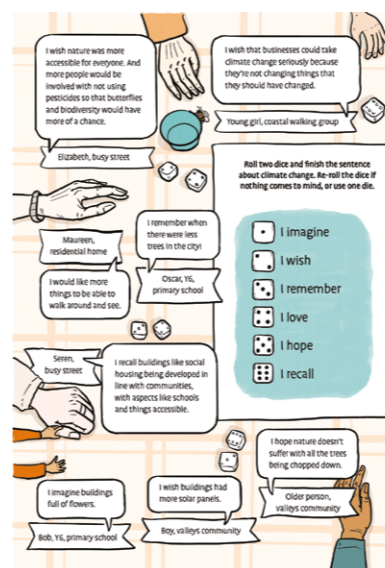


Page 18: On the final page of the comic, Paul leaves his garden and steps into the coastal scene. Here he symbolically joins the people from the coastal workshop. They share frustrations at recent advances in space exploration; a theme that came up in both sessions.

The **front cover** of *The Climate Comic* returns to this shared space, bringing participants of all the workshops together to watch the sun rising over the south Wales landscape.

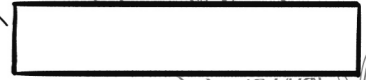
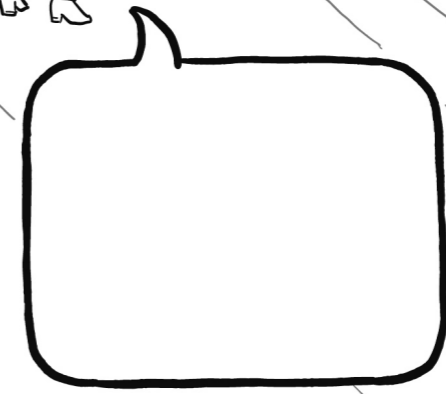
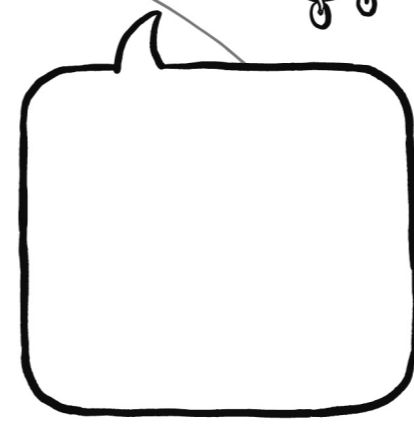
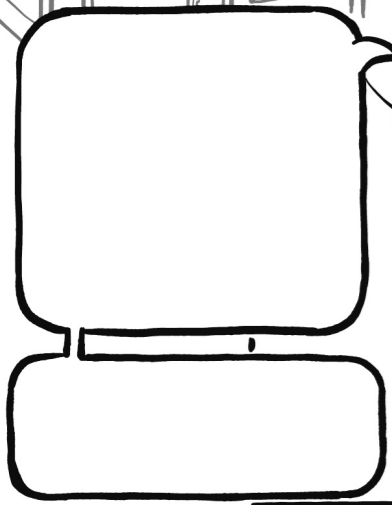


Page 19: These pages show some of the comments prompted by the OPTIC dice game, which we played in all the workshops. Try the game for yourself on pages 27 – 28 by rolling two dice and finishing the sentences about climate change. You can adapt the game by changing the words or topic, to explore a variety of issues. On the following pages you will also find **colouring activities** and a blank comic strip for your own stories.




We would love to hear how you use the comic and/or the activities – please get in touch at [optic@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:optic@swansea.ac.uk).

Add colour and captions:



Roll two dice and finish the sentence about climate change. Re-roll the dice if nothing comes to mind, or use one die.

 I imagine

 I wish

 I remember

 I love

 I hope

 I recall


Example:  +  = "with climate change, I imagine places that..."

 communities...

 places...

 buildings...

 nature...

 hobbies...

 businesses...

Draw your own climate comic:

