

FEL Climate & Energy Gathering 2026

Post-Event Report



Executive Summary

The FEL Climate & Energy Gathering, held in Stirling on 28th April 2026, brought together 144 stakeholders from communities, local authorities, industry, academia, and the third sector to advance climate and energy action across the Forth Valley. Through seven speakers, nine workshops, and an interactive expo, the event explored community energy, retrofit, energy efficiency, skills development, and just transition principles.

Participants reported increased awareness, stronger partnerships, and valuable networking opportunities. Feedback was highly positive, with attendees rating the event 4.63/5 overall.

After summarising the key takeaways from the event and feedback from the day, FEL have identified five strategic recommendations.

1. Develop a regional retrofit hub. FEL will engage with other regional stakeholders already working on this to contribute to its development and support coordinated delivery
2. Expand training and capacity-building initiatives to enable local action. FEL will seek opportunities to explore how activities, education and training organisations can contribute to this.
3. Improve access to funding and provide clearer pathways for communities to secure financial support. FEL will aim to improve signposting and work with partners to support grassroots activity through seed funding.
4. Establish ongoing knowledge-sharing platforms for maintaining momentum and supporting collaboration
5. Develop practical toolkits and guidance materials to help communities design and implement effective energy projects.

Climate and Energy Gathering 2026 – Post-Event Report

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1. Introduction

This report provides a detailed overview of the FEL Climate & Energy Gathering, held on 28th April 2026 at The Barracks Conference Centre, Stirling. The event was convened in recognition of the increasing urgency of climate change, energy insecurity, and the transition to net zero, and the need to bring together a wide range of stakeholders to collectively address these challenges. With a particular focus on the Forth Valley region, the Gathering created a space for communities, public bodies, industry, and third sector organisations to engage in meaningful dialogue and collaborative problem-solving. The event reflected a growing recognition that coordinated, place-based approaches are essential to tackling some of the most pressing issues facing current and future generations.

2. Event Overview

- Date: 28th of April 2026
- Location: The Barracks Conference Centre, Stirling
- Total attendance: 144
- Number of workshops: 9
- Number of speakers: 7
- Workshop participation: 9-27 participants per session (16 on average)
- Total event cost: £5,976
- Staff time investment: 28 staff days

3. Funding and Delivery

The delivery of the FEL Climate & Energy Gathering was made possible through funding from the Ofgem Energy Industry Voluntary Redress Scheme, managed by the Energy Saving Trust, and the UKRI JUST-Systems Programme. This support enabled the booking of the conference space as well as the development of a comprehensive programme incorporating speakers, workshops, and an interactive exhibition space. The funding also helped reduce barriers to engagement and maximised the reach and impact of the event. The collaboration between funding bodies and delivery partners highlighted the importance of cross-sector investment in enabling regional climate action.

4. Aims and Objectives

The primary aim of the event was to convene a diverse range of stakeholders to facilitate meaningful knowledge exchange and strengthen collaboration across the Forth Valley region. The event sought to support the development and scaling of community energy initiatives, while also addressing systemic challenges associated with energy demand reduction. A key objective was to explore practical approaches to retrofit and energy efficiency, ensuring that communities are better equipped to transition toward low-carbon systems. In addition, the event embedded principles of a just transition, prioritising fairness, inclusivity, and equitable access to opportunities, while recognising the important relationship between energy, place, and health and wellbeing outcomes.

5. Participant Profile

Participants included community representatives, local authorities, public organisations, energy industry stakeholders, third sector interfaces, and national bodies.

6. Key Themes

The event programme was structured around the interconnected themes of 'Powering Up' and 'Powering Down', reflecting the dual need to increase renewable energy generation while simultaneously reducing overall energy demand. 'Powering Up' focused on expanding community energy, strengthening regional collaboration, and supporting knowledge exchange to accelerate the deployment of renewable technologies. 'Powering Down' emphasised the importance of energy efficiency and retrofit in homes and community buildings as a critical pathway to reducing emissions. These themes were underpinned by cross-cutting priorities, including the delivery of a just transition, the promotion of health and wellbeing, and the development of skills and capacity across the region. Together, these themes demonstrate the need for a holistic and integrated approach to energy and climate action.

7. Speakers

The event started with a range of speakers representing various perspectives from across the energy sector. The speakers included:

- Clara Walker from FEL Scotland, introducing the event and the intersection between sustainable energy and the climate crisis
- Nikki Thomas from Fallin Community Voice, speaking about the Fallin Minewater Thermal Energy Project
- Kayt Howell from Fintry Development Trust, on community-owned renewable energy and Fintry's partnership with a wind farm developer
- Marnie Kavanagh from CVS Falkirk and District, speaking about Grangemouth's Just Transition Programme
- Laura McGee and Suzanne Milne from Scottish Power Energy Networks, introducing their community benefits programme and providing insight into energy infrastructure and grid challenges
- Tom Nockolds speaking about community energy's role in delivering a fast and fair sustainable energy transition in the face of climate change

Collectively, the speakers highlighted the role of community-led initiatives in driving local change, as well as the importance of community development and partnership working in finding solutions to the climate crisis. The sessions set the tone for the event by demonstrating the importance of both top-down and bottom-up approaches in delivering an effective and inclusive energy transition.

8. Workshop Programme

The workshops formed the main structure of the event, providing interactive and participatory spaces for attendees to engage with specific thematic areas in greater depth. Sessions combined technical insight with practical application and collaborative discussion, enabling participants to share experiences, identify challenges and co-design potential solutions. The workshops reflected a balance of strategic, technical, and community-focused content, ensuring relevance for a wide range of stakeholders.

8.1 Workshop Overview

A total of nine workshops were delivered, with attendance ranging from 9-27 participants, demonstrating strong engagement across all sessions.

8.2 Workshop Details

Co-designing Community Energy Reinvestment Priorities led by Cameron Duff (FEL Scotland): This session facilitated collaborative discussion on how revenues from community energy projects can be reinvested locally, focusing on priorities, governance, and long-term impact.

Generating Change Expo: Community Voices and Local Authorities from across the Forth Valley: This interactive session gave local authorities and community representatives a chance to share projects and discuss opportunities in delivering climate action. A list of participants in the expo can be seen below in Section 9.

Net Zero Heroes: Let's Co-Design a Community Energy Game led by Jen Dickie and Nathan Wood (University of Stirling, JUST-Systems): Participants contributed to the development of an educational tool aimed at increasing awareness and engagement with community energy and net zero concepts.

Solar PV: Basics, Barriers, Benefits & Ownership Models led by Anand Sajeevan and Carmen Lean (FEL Scotland and Community Energy Scotland): This workshop provided an accessible overview of solar photovoltaic systems, addressing technical considerations, common barriers, and different ownership approaches including community-led models.

Retrofit Made Simple: How a Regional Hub Can Support Households and Communities led by Matthew Clubb (North East Scotland retroFIT Hub): This session explored the role of regional retrofit hubs in supporting delivery, providing practical insights into coordination, funding, and implementation.

Energising Your Place: Community Place-Based Planning led by Kelly Clapperton (FEL Scotland): This session explored the importance of Local Place Plans and examined tools and methods that enable place-based energy and climate action.

Energy Efficiency in Community Buildings: A practical session focusing on improving energy performance in shared and community-owned buildings, including identification of common issues and potential solutions.

The Building Blocks of a Healthy, Enjoyable Life led by Rhonda Archibald (NHS Forth Valley): This session explored the links between housing quality, energy efficiency, and health outcomes, emphasising the co-benefits of climate action.

Low Carbon Passport Training led by Kieran Dick-Doyle (Built Environment – Smarter Transformation): This training-focused workshop introduced participants to low-carbon skills and competencies required for the transition to a sustainable built environment.

9. Generating Change Expo

The Generating Change Expo served as a central networking and engagement space within the event, showcasing a wide range of initiatives from across the Forth Valley region. It enabled organisations to present their work, share learning and connect with other stakeholders, and gave attendees the chance to see a practical demonstration of regional activity, highlighting the breadth and diversity of projects currently underway.

The Expo aimed to amplify community voices, strengthen connections between local authorities and grassroots initiatives, and provide a platform for knowledge exchange and collaboration.

9.1 Expo Showcases

- **Clackmannanshire Council:** Showcasing local authority-led climate and energy initiatives and partnership approaches.
- **Falkirk Council:** Highlighting strategic projects focused on energy efficiency and decarbonisation.
- **Stirling Council:** Presenting local policy and implementation pathways for net zero.
- **FEL Scotland and the Forth Valley Climate Action Hub:** Demonstrating regional coordination efforts and community engagement programmes.
- **Climate Forth:** Showcasing climate action projects across the Forth region.
- **Carron Valley Renewables:** Presenting a community-led renewable energy project model.
- **Limerigg Community Hall:** Highlighting local community building improvements and energy initiatives.

- **Sauchie Community:** Sharing grassroots experiences of local climate and energy action.
- **Callander Community Hydro:** Demonstrating a successful community-owned hydro energy scheme.
- **Forth Valley College:** Presenting education and skills development opportunities in sustainability.
- **FEL Scotland Climate Change Writing Competition Entries:** Showcasing how storytelling and creativity can support climate awareness.
- **Forth Valley Community Energy Map:** Providing a visual tool to map energy activity and opportunities across the region.

10. Key Outcomes

The event resulted in a number of significant outcomes, most notably the strengthening of relationships across sectors and the development of new and existing partnerships. Participants reported increased awareness of community energy opportunities, retrofit approaches, and funding mechanisms. The interactive format of the workshops enabled the co-design of ideas and fostered greater alignment between local priorities and regional strategies. The event also played an important role in elevating community perspectives and ensuring these are integrated into wider policy and delivery frameworks.

11. Feedback and Recommendations

Based on the evidence gathered through the event and post-event survey, several recommendations for future events and specific key takeaways have been compiled below.

11.1 Post-Event Survey

Nineteen attendees completed a post-event survey across a balanced set of quantitative ratings and qualitative free-text questions. This feedback helped provide a robust foundation for understanding how attendees experienced the day, what they valued most, and how future events could be improved.

The findings were overwhelmingly positive. Attendees rated the event highly across all disciplines, and the open-text answers showed a strong sense of satisfaction, gratitude, and enthusiasm for continued engagement. The data showed that the gathering succeeded as both a knowledge-sharing forum and a networking experience, with the venue, catering, and organisation repeatedly praised.

11.2 Quantitative Results

The quantitative results show that attendees' expectations were strongly met, with an average expectations rating of 4.63 out of 5, and a near-unanimous willingness to recommend the event in future, also averaging 4.63 out of 5.

Topic relevance scored a healthy 4.53 out of 5, while the perceived technical level sat at a more moderate 3.74 out of 5, suggesting the content was pitched at an accessible level that worked for a mixed audience of technical and non-technical participants.

Seventeen out of eighteen people (94.44%) felt networking opportunities had been provided.

These figures highlight the success of the event and show that it delivered against its core objectives to provide a space for knowledge-sharing and networking within the climate and energy space in the Forth Valley.

11.3 Areas for Improvement

The feedback also showed areas for improvement. Responses to the feedback form included:

- Requests for longer speaking slots
- Expanded and better-structured networking support
- Logistical refinements around layout and signage
- A larger conference space (if possible within budget constraints)
- Clearer name badges, with badges including organisations to improve networking experiences

11.4 Most Relevant Session

The feedback survey also asked attendees to indicate which breakout sessions were most relevant to their work, with respondents able to select multiple options.

The clear standout was the afternoon session '*Retrofit Made Simple: How a Regional Hub Can Support Households and Communities*' led by Matthew Clubb, which appeared in the vast majority of multi-select responses, reflecting strong and consistent interest in practical retrofit pathways. This aligns directly with the qualitative requests for more retrofit content and hub-development support.

Attendee quotes on 'Retrofit Made Simple' session:

- *"[S]pace for the technical folk without being exclusive (that's how it felt from a non-tech person)."*

- *"[E]xtremely well organised and run"*
- *"[F]riendly & welcoming."*
- *"[A]n excellent networking experience"*
- *"[L]ots of opportunity for networking and chatting with others which is such a key part of events like this."*

11.5 Strategic Recommendations

After summarising the key takeaways from the event and feedback from the day, FEL have identified five strategic recommendations.

1. Develop a regional retrofit hub. FEL will engage with other regional stakeholders already working on this to contribute to its development and support coordinated delivery.
2. Expand training and capacity-building initiatives to enable local action. FEL will seek opportunities to explore how activities, education and training organisations can contribute to this.
3. Improve access to funding and provide clearer pathways for communities to secure financial support. FEL will aim to improve signposting and work with partners to support grassroots activity through seed funding.
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12. Conclusion

The FEL Climate & Energy Gathering demonstrated the importance of convening diverse stakeholders to collectively address the challenges of energy transition and climate change. By bringing together communities, public bodies, industry, and third sector organisations, the event created a valuable space for dialogue, collaboration, and innovation. In the context of the Forth Valley region, the Gathering highlighted both the significant opportunities and the urgent need for coordinated action. As the impacts of climate change continue to intensify, events of this nature will play a vital role in enabling inclusive, place-based solutions that address the needs of both current and future generations.