

# Mapping public engagement with energy system transitions

*6th RD20 International Conference, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2024*

Professor Jason Chilvers

Co-Director, UK Energy Research Centre



# The importance of public engagement



“[A]ll clean energy transitions should be truly people-centred and inclusive ... this is essential to the success of energy system transformation at the pace and scale required to deliver global ambition for climate change mitigation.” (IEA, 2021: 2)

“A people-centred approach ensures the benefits and costs involved in the transformation of our energy system are distributed fairly and in a way that protects the most vulnerable in society.” (IEA, 2021: 2)

# A new direction for public engagement



Three perspectives on public engagement with clean energy transitions:

1. **Communication to the public**
2. **Drive to develop discrete forms of public engagement**
3. **Public engagement as diverse, interrelated and systemic**

*Clean energy transitions are a systemic challenge but existing approaches to societal engagement are not systemic. UKERC has pioneered a **whole systems approach to public engagement**.*

# The UKERC Public Engagement Observatory

- **Mapping:** pioneering new methods to map diverse public engagements with energy system transitions on an ongoing basis
- **Network:** making connections, learning and capacity building across wider systems of public engagement in the UK and internationally
- **Experiments:** with partner organisations to put mappings into practice and make clean energy decisions and transitions more responsive to society

The screenshot shows the website's homepage with a teal header. The navigation menu includes 'ABOUT', 'MAPPING', 'NEWS & EVENTS', 'NETWORK', 'EXPERIMENTS', and 'RESOURCES'. The main heading is 'Public Engagement Observatory' with the subtitle 'An Observatory for Public Engagement with Energy and Climate Change'. Below this are three featured cards: 'Mapping' (with a photo of a large illuminated structure), 'Network' (with a photo of a protest), and 'Contribute' (with a photo of hands stacked). A second row features 'Latest Publications' (with a photo of a group of people), 'Latest Case Studies' (with a photo of a building), and 'News & Events' (with a photo of a crowd). The bottom of the page has a decorative network diagram.

**UKERC**  
Public Engagement Observatory

ABOUT MAPPING NEWS & EVENTS NETWORK EXPERIMENTS RESOURCES

## Public Engagement Observatory

An Observatory for Public Engagement with Energy and Climate Change

**Mapping:** The Observatory maps the ways people are engaging with energy and climate change

**Network:** Explore diverse cases of public engagement with energy and climate change

**Contribute:** Contribute your own examples of public engagement with energy and climate change

**Latest Publications:** Mapping Participation for Democratic Innovations: An experiment in evaluating a citizens' panel on home energy decarbonisation

**Latest Case Studies:** Conditioning Demand

**News & Events:** Mapping Participation: Call for papers

23 Feb 2024

# Explore

UKERC / Mapping / Explore

Welcome to the Observatory's interactive mapping dataset of diverse cases of public participation and engagement with energy, climate change and net zero occurring in the UK since 2010. Here you can explore multiple different cases of public engagement, and filter the case study dataset based on the form, topic, participants and location of engagement.

## Filter case studies

Search ▾ Forms of Engagement ▾ Public Participants ▾ Topics ▾ Locations ▾ Period ▾

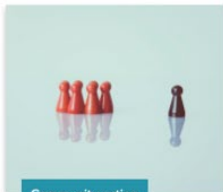
### Latest case studies



Everyday practices

#### Conditioning Demand

Qualitative study exploring interview data from 2 UK projects: 'Carbon, Comfort and Control'



Community action

#### Academic research on exclusions in community-based sustainability groups

Southern Connecticut State University research drawing on in-depth focus group conversations...



Activism & Protest

#### The Time is Now Rally

The Time is Now rally was a UK nationwide activism campaign demanding from legislators to take...



Co-inquiry/ Co-production

#### The People's Republic of Energy

Building on an existing



Maker/ hack-spaces

#### Fixfest UK



Activism & Protest

#### Just Stop Oil

Just Stop Oil is a climate activist coalition of groups

Explore

Visualise

Contribute

Digital methods

# Visualise

UKERC / Mapping / Visualise

Welcome to the Observatory's interactive mapping dataset of diverse cases of public participation and engagement with energy, climate change and net zero occurring in the UK since 2010. Here you can further explore the mapping dataset by visualising the frequency of case studies by form of engagement, type of participant, topic and location.

First, select a category to visualise in the first drop down list, below. You can then choose to include all cases in the dataset or filter them using the second drop down list. Cases can be ordered by frequency or alphabetically. You can click on the bars in each graph to see the cases of public engagement included.

Category

Form of Engagement ▾

Filter

All Case Studies ▾

Order

By frequency ▾

## Number of Case Studies by Form of Engagement



Explore

Visualise

Contribute

Digital methods

# A systemic mapping of UK public engagements

ARTICLES

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41560-020-00762-w>

nature  
energy

Check for updates

## A systemic approach to mapping participation with low-carbon energy transitions

Jason Chilvers<sup>1</sup>, Rob Bellamy<sup>2</sup>, Helen Pallett<sup>1</sup> and Tom Hargreaves<sup>1</sup>

Low-carbon transitions demand long-term systemic transformations and meaningful societal engagement. Most approaches to engaging society with energy and climate change fail to address the systemic nature of this challenge, focusing on discrete forms of participation in specific parts of wider systems. Our systemic approach combines comparative case mapping of diverse public engagements across energy systems with participatory distributed deliberative mapping of energy system futures. We show how UK public participation with energy is more diverse than dominant approaches posit. Attending to these more varied models of participation opens up citizen and specialist views, values and visions of sustainable energy transitions, revealing support for more distributed energy system futures that recognize the roles of society. Going beyond narrow, discrete understandings of communication and public engagement towards systemic approaches to mapping participation can provide plural and robust forms of social intelligence needed to govern low-carbon transitions in more socially responsive, just and responsible ways.

Transitioning to net zero has become a central goal for governments and businesses around the world. While ensuring secure and affordable energy systems around the world have been a priority, such change, through a range of social, economic, and technological factors, however, that low-carbon energy transitions require deeper forms of citizen engagement with energy. Programmes to engage citizens over the past two decades have not achieved desired levels of engagement at 7.4% reduction in energy consumption. Through a systemic approach to mapping participation with energy, we focus on energy consumption surveys and deliberative ability of new technologies to engage citizens with energy. Through a systemic approach to mapping participation with energy, we focus on energy consumption surveys and deliberative ability of new technologies to engage citizens with energy.

**UKERC**  
Public Engagement Observatory

## Mapping Public Engagement with Energy, Climate Change and Net Zero

Jason Chilvers, Phedee Stephanides, Helen Pallett & Tom Hargreaves

<https://doi.org/10.5286/UKERC.EDC.000962>

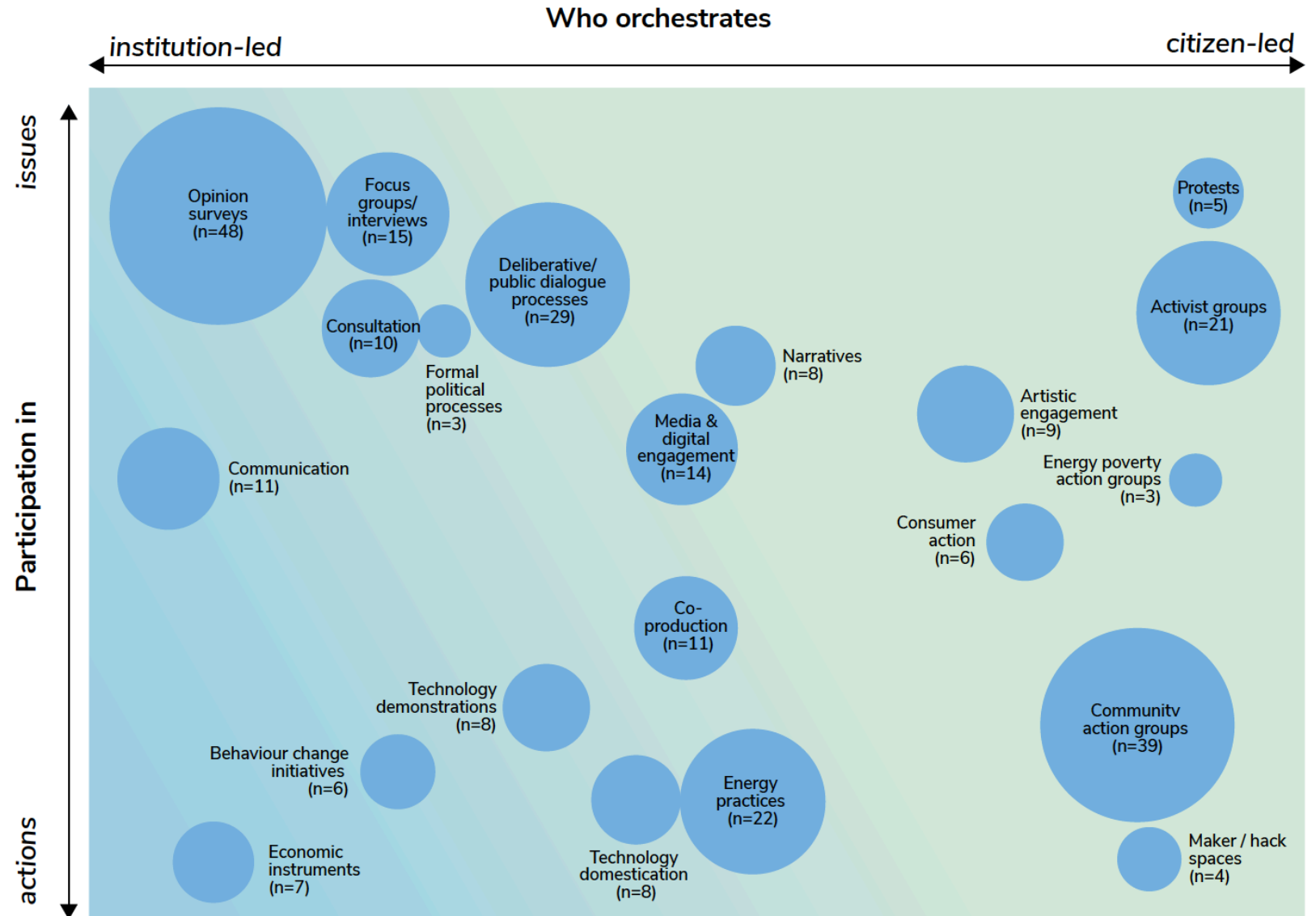
June 2023



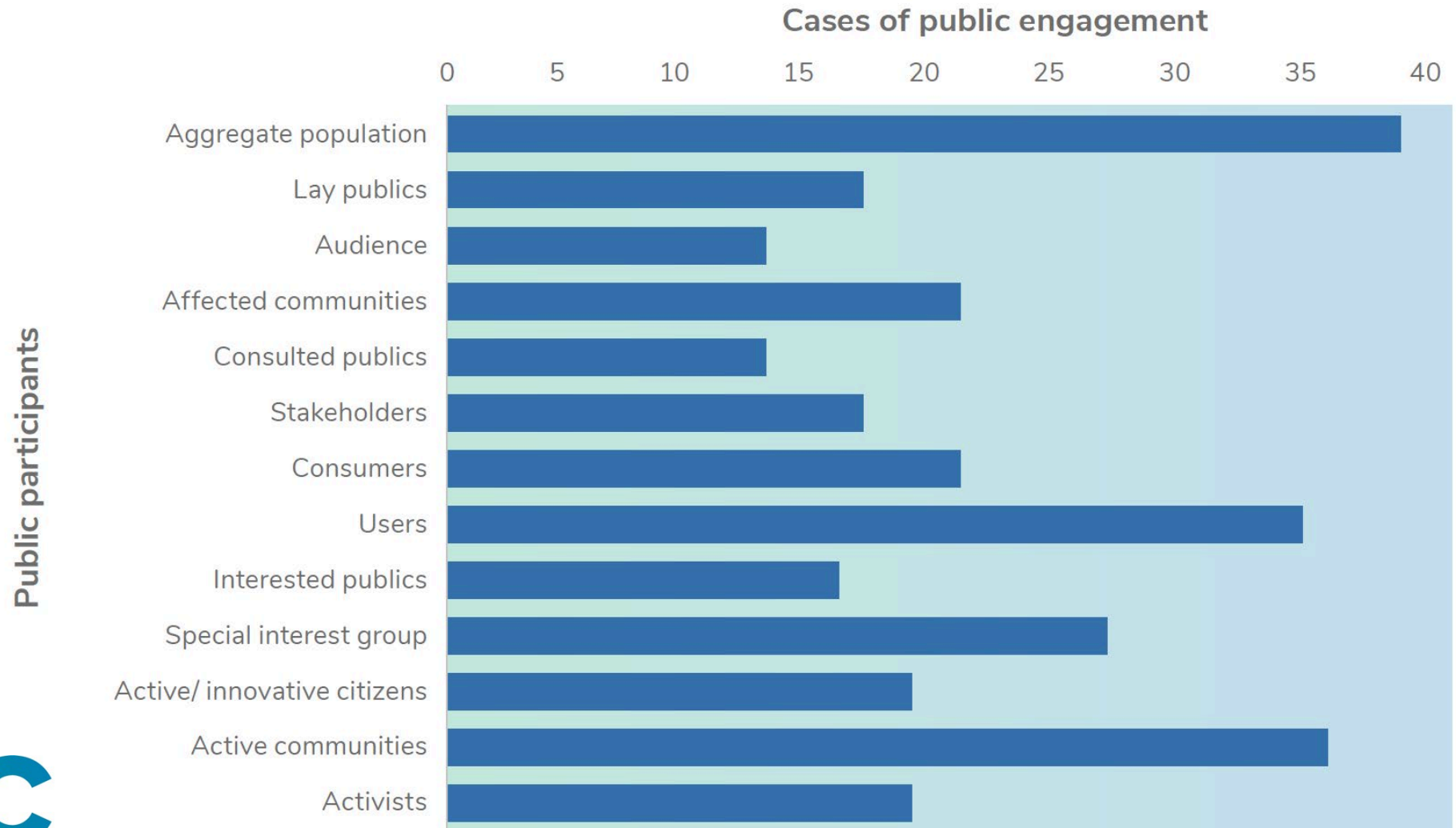
<sup>1</sup>Science, Society & Sustainability, University of York

250

(Chilvers et al. 2021, 2023)

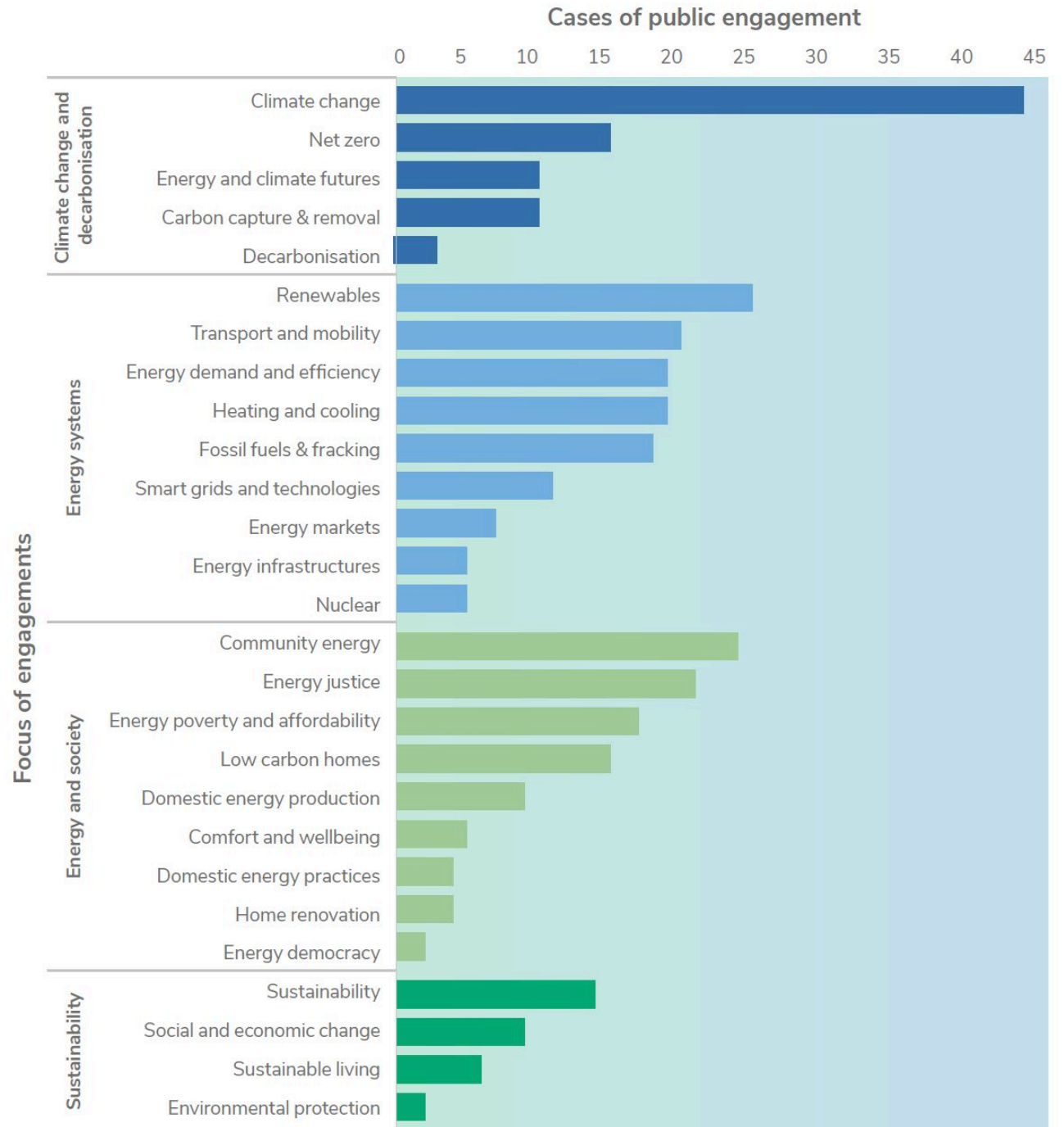


# Who is engaging – which publics?



# What are publics engaging in?

- Climate change and decarbonisation
- Energy systems
- Energy and society
- Wider sustainability issues





# Observatory collaboration experiments

Informing net zero policies & engagement strategies



Department for  
Energy Security  
& Net Zero

Participation mapping for  
Dutch climate policy



Ministry of Economic Affairs  
and Climate Policy

**TNO**

Shaping new democratic  
innovations

**Climate  
Citizens**

 Climate  
Change  
Committee

Responsible innovation of  
hydrogen technologies

love  
every  
drop.   
anglianwater

Developing a public  
engagement lab for  
nature and biodiversity

**NATURAL  
ENGLAND**

# Conclusions

- Mapping participation provides more comprehensive evidence of public engagements, views and actions across energy systems
- Communication and invited engagement is important but institutions and decision-making must also respond to diverse public engagements
- UKERC Public Engagement Observatory experiments are helping to make clean energy decisions and transitions more responsive to society
- Systemic approaches to public engagement with clean energy transitions are urgently needed and observatories have a key role to play in this

